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AIR STORIES

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BY MAJOR L. S. METFORD

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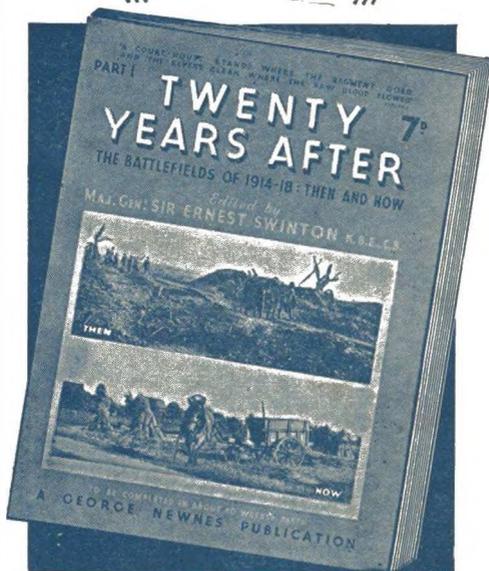
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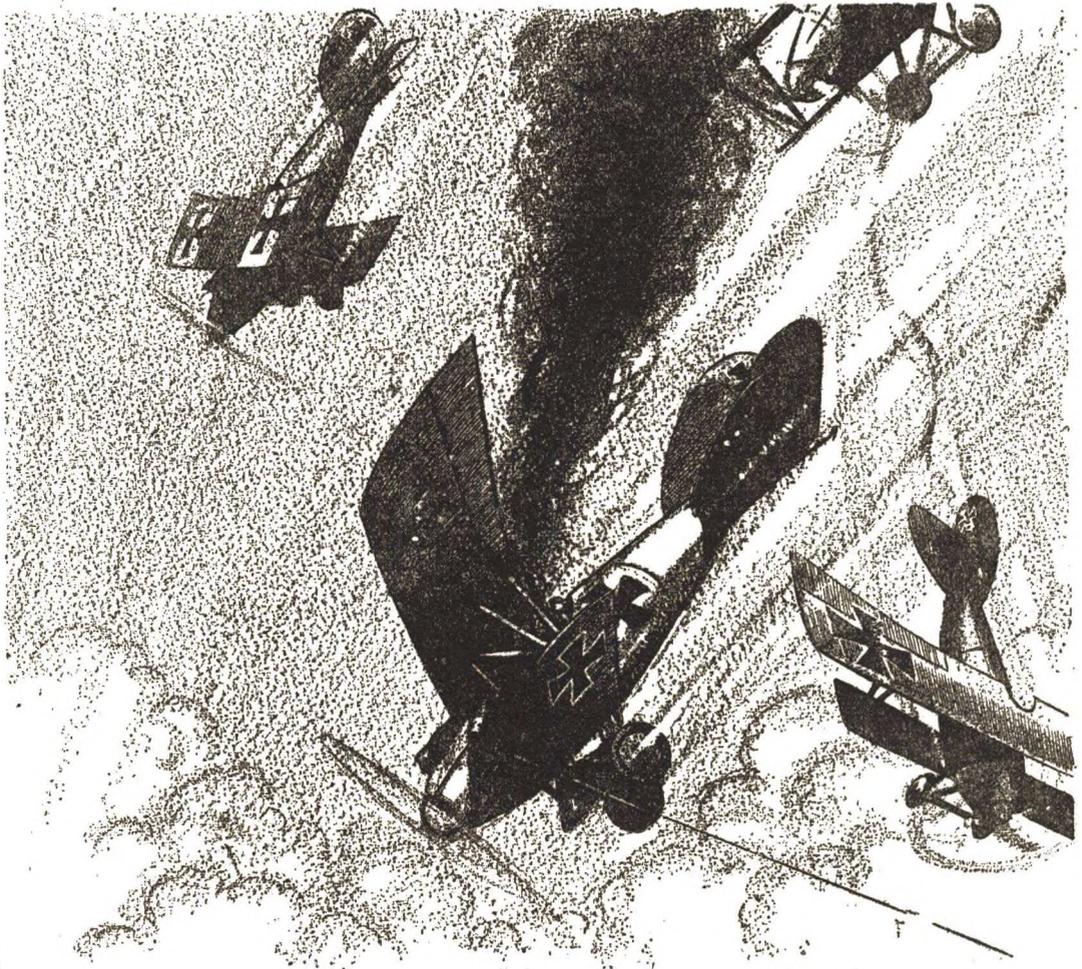
LONG COMPLETE WAR-AIR ADVENTURE		PAGE
TOO GOOD TO MISS	Major L. S. Metford	480
One after Another the British Batteries were Blown out of Existence— until a Pilot Returned from the Dead to Reveal the Secret of the Phantom Gun Ranger		
GREAT MODERN AIR THRILLER		
DEATH STRIKES ON AIR DAY	A. J. Pelham-Groom	527
The R.A.F.'s most Secret Bomber carried its Murdered Pilot to a Watery Grave when England's Enemies staged a Daring Plot on Empire Air Day		
TWO DRAMATIC REAL-LIFE STORIES		
ACE OF THE BLACK CROSS	Ernst Udet	494
The Amazing Life Story of Germany's Greatest Living Air Ace		
THESE MEN WERE FIRST	J. Coltman	540
A Stirring Record of the Pioneers of Aerial Warfare		
THREE THRILLING AIR WAR STORIES		
THE ACE OF RABBITS	"Vigilant"	512
Augustus Barton was the Rabbit of all Rabbits and Herman Kranz the Sector's Ace of Aces		
THE SKY RAIDER	E. N. T. Meller	545
The Night-raiding Baron von Ekkehardt was the Scarlet Pimpernel of the Western Front		
WELL-ENGINEERED	J. Railton Holden	563
The Call of the Mad Mullah Turned a Quiet Desert Oasis into a Seething Hive of Arab Fanatics		
SPECIAL AIR FEATURES		
BRITAIN'S WAR 'PLANES	By A. C. Leverington	510
THE ACE THEY COULD NOT KILL	By A. H. Pritchard	553
MODEL SECTION (The Pfalz D.12)	By J. H. Stevens	557
AIR BOOKS	Book Reviews	562
HERE'S THE ANSWER	Replies to Readers	556
CONTACT	By The Editor	573

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TOO GOOD TO MISS



Black smoke poured from the engine cowling of the Albatros . . .

A Long Complete Story of War-time Adventure in the Air

CHAPTER I

Introducing a Dumb Egg

HONEST poultrymen will tell one their feathered flocks are responsible for several different kinds of eggs: good, bad and indifferent—with several grades in between; though they probably all started from “scratch.”

Amongst the larger and non-feathered bipeds there is an even greater assortment, including good eggs, bad eggs, tough eggs and a variety unknown to the barn-door fowl—the dumb egg.

“Polly” Flinders belonged to this latter category; the dumbest of dumb eggs—at least to all appearance, but even as the grocer’s bad egg differs but little in externals from the fresh variety—this may have been deceptive.

To begin with, his name wasn’t Polly at all. According to “Bolo”* it was Second Lieutenant George Polkinghorn Flinders, but his second and last names being what they were, he just naturally had to be “Polly.”

* “Bolo House”: The R.F.C.’s slang term for the Air Ministry

One After Another the British Batteries were Being Blown out of Existence, Annihilated in an Instant of Time with an Uncanny Persistence that Defied Explanation Until a Pilot Returned from the Dead to Reveal the Grim Secret of the Phantom Gun Ranger

By MAJOR L. S. METFORD

Late of No. 13 Squadron, R.F.C.

Polly was no beauty ; not that that mattered, as the R.F.C. was not running a pulchritude show at any time, but—well, Polly had a kind of underslung body with a wide track and the maximum wheel-base allowed by law. He was said to take No. 13's. His legs were short and he had a sort of off-set look in one of his very blue eyes, although nobody could ever tell which.

His head was long, and his cap sat on the top of his reddish thatch like a cabby on the dickey-seat of a hansom cab. But he had a most prognathous jaw.

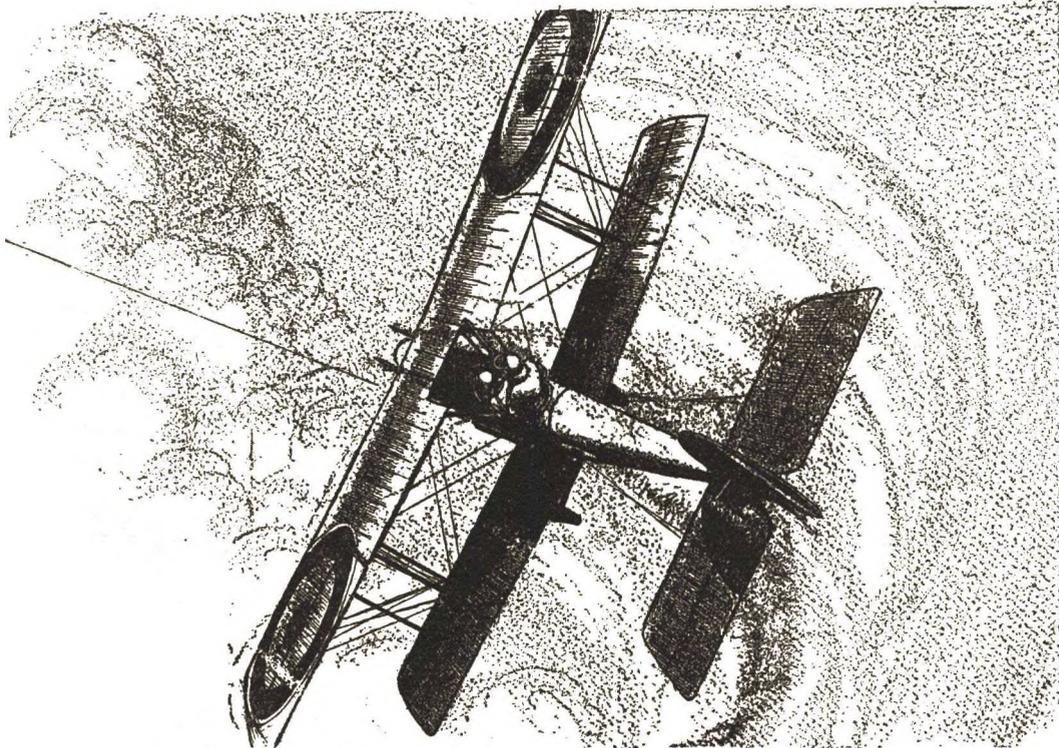
He came to No. 783 Squadron at Froiselles as a replacement. Major Thornton looked up from his paper-littered table when he entered the squa-

dron office, gasped : " My God ! Look what they've sent us," and fled, leaving him to the tender mercies of his one-armed recording officer.

Two hours after his arrival, Polly was piloting an R.E.8 over the lines, whilst Captain Lockhart in the rear seat immersed himself in the joys of tapping Morse.

That he was flying over the lines within so short a time of his arrival at the Front deserves some explanation. As has been mentioned before, Polly had arrived as a replacement and the man to whose place he had been so hurriedly posted had been Lockhart's pilot.

Now this same Captain Lockhart was a pilot himself, but a pilot who, for



. . . as the arc of tracer from the R.E.8. bit deep into the vitals of the diving 'plane

AIR STORIES

some reason of his own, preferred to observe.

The Powers-that-Be permitted this, since, although pilots can be made, observers of the kind who could turn in reports like Lockhart are born—and then but rarely.

Between the time of Polly Flinders' arrival and his departure for, to him, parts unknown, there had taken place a short but distinctly one-sided conversation between him and Captain Lockhart, who, as a matter of fact, had sought him out, whilst he was stowing his kit in his quarters, for just that purpose.

"I'm glad you've been allotted to me, Flinders," he smiled as he took a seat on Polly's cot, "because you look the sort of fellow who'll do what he's told without arguing. That's just what I want. When you see your 'bus, you'll notice it's fitted with dual. I'm a pilot myself and the idea is that if either of us gets, er—damaged as it were, the other can carry on. Good idea, don't you think?"

"Um—yes, sir," assented Polly slowly and a little dubiously, "but what happens if I want to go one way and you want to go somewhere else?"

"Well, in that case, of course," smiled Captain Lockhart once more, "you'd be a bit out of luck, wouldn't you? However, that's not likely to happen. All you've got to remember is that art. obs. is my particular 'pigeon,' and that what I say goes; first, last and all the time. As long as you keep that idea before you, we'll get along first rate. See you at two. So long."

AT two o'clock precisely, Polly Flinders and Captain Lockhart set out on their first joint patrol.

As Polly looked down and saw the war-torn earth, smoke-blanketed and riven by incessant flashes of fire which belched from the muzzles of guns many miles apart, he marvelled; marvelled that he had already lived through two years of this in the trenches; marvelled that he had crossed and re-crossed that shell-torn strip of shattered terrain below him untold times in raiding parties with-

out being hit; marvelled at the monstrous luck which now permitted him to sit comfortably behind a hundred and forty racketing horses, pulling him through the air at ninety miles an hour instead of crawling on his own belly through barbed wire and mud and unnamable things at a speed which would have made a self-respecting snail draw in its horns in disgust.

To and fro, back and forth he droned, watching beneath him the titanic duel being waged between the Allied and the German artillery. Now and again an invisible large-calibre shell rumbled past him with the noise of a tramcar and disappeared in the distance. From where he crouched, left hand on joy-stick, right arm leaning on the padded fuselage, he could have sworn that the opposing batteries were in plain view of each other, were it not for the fact that he was flying over a sector of the line his own Battalion had held for several months. For at that hour of the day there were few shadows and everything looked on the same dead level.

So much so that, but for various landmarks indelibly imprinted on his mind during many weary weeks, he would never have recognised it for the broken, hilly countryside he knew it to be.

He saw the British trenches being hammered by the German artillery. He saw shell after shell burst on parapet and parados. Then suddenly they began laying down a creeping barrage, behind which he could see a wave of *feld greu* figures crawling ant-like towards the west. The barrage swept forward, slowly, inexorably, with deadly accuracy. He leaned over the side to see better until a tinny voice sounded in his earphones:

"Thirty degrees south and keep her so," and Polly's eyes flicked back to his compass.

For an hour and a half he flew steadily back and forth with Lockhart's orders coming over the double Gosport set* from time to time.

* Gosport set: speaking tubes and headphones enabling the occupants of a tandem 2-seater to converse with each other; originally introduced for training purposes at the Gosport R.F.C. flying-school.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

TOO GOOD TO MISS

He had lost sight of the German advance by now, but in the intervals of scanning the skies for enemy aircraft he wondered how his old comrades were faring down below. But he had little time for such thoughts. His job, besides the purely mechanical one of obeying his observer's orders, was to see that his highly technical one of tap-tapping corrections back to the artillery commander was not interfered with by hostile aircraft, and he did it thoroughly.

He did it so thoroughly that he saw the four Albatroses up in the eye of the sun long before Lockhart was aware of their existence. Banking over quickly, he climbed to meet them, until his observer's voice, coming over the 'phones, asked what the blazes he was doing.

He told him—shortly. "Four Albatri. Going after them."

"You'll do nothing of the sort. You carry on with your job. I'll look after them with the Lewis when they get within range. Get back on your course."

A SLOW feeling of anger swept over Polly Flinders. Of course, Lockhart was a captain, and he had to take his orders, but, just the same, he had always understood that the pilot was in sole charge of his own 'plane.

Besides, he felt none too secure with nothing to protect his back from eight Spandaus but one Lewis gun!

"No," he decided, with his jaw sticking out a little farther than before, "I'm going after the beggars. Not going to lose a chance like this; first time out, too."

Therefore he slid the throttle forward as far as it would go, leaned back and took the stick with him.

Then, with a wrenching shudder, the Harry Tate zoomed upwards on a climbing turn, its extensions flipping wildly as if about to part company with the upper planes. The Albatros pilots, apparently taken by surprise by the unexpected manoeuvre, carried on.

Pivoting on a wing-tip, Polly, with two years of machine-gunning behind him, pressed the Vickers trips just as the foremost of the D.2's crossed his sights.

The flattened arc of blue and smoky tracer bit deep into the vitals of the diving 'plane. Black smoke poured from the engine cowling and an instant later the petrol-tank exploded, scattering fragmentary components all over the Flemish countryside.

By this time the other three Albatroses were beneath him, and he banked over and stuck his nose down in search of them. Separating, they sped upwards, and Polly got in a couple of quick bursts on one of them as it flashed past him, but without seeming results.

He followed on its tail, sticking to it in all its aerial convolutions as if attached by an invisible cable. Then the fuselage vibrated as the rattle of the after-Lewis in its Scarff-Dibovski mounting came to his ears. He grinned and carried on, his eye never leaving the jazzing shape before him. Then a voice came to him over the tubes.

"All right, Flinders," it said sharply. "That's enough. We've got 'em on the run. Get back on your course. I've bagged one of 'em—that's two between us."

Without taking his eye from the ring, Polly made a quick movement with his hand, and the two brass plugs from his earphones dropped beside him.

"Can't be bothered with him," he muttered. "Puts me off my aim."

An instant later his Vickers stammered once, twice, then the little articulated brass serpent which fed the breech stopped wriggling. Casually he looked round for the twin brass plugs and re-connected them.

"What's that you said just now?" he asked, looking over the side to where his second victim was rolling slowly over and over on its way to the earth.

"Damn it, man!" gritted Lockhart's voice angrily. "I told you to cut it out and get on with the job."

"Where's the one you got?" asked Polly, looking carefully beneath him. "I can't see him."

"Not likely to by this time," growled the observer. "He must have crashed by now. Get down south again—quick!"

AIR STORIES

Polly obediently edged his right foot forward, and as he did so, looked over-side again.

"Well I'm dashed," he muttered to himself as he saw two Albatroses flying east a thousand feet or so below. "What an unholy liar. He never got one at all." He ducked his chin and spoke into the mouth piece :

"Captain Lockhart, you . . ."

Then he stopped short. What did it matter, any way? If Lockhart wanted to claim a victory which he hadn't gained, what was it to him? He'd tell him when he landed—or not. No good making an enemy of his observer on his first flip. Still, he'd bear it in mind.

A quarter of an hour later he received orders to go home.

"Pretty work," greeted Captain Lockhart with a bland smile as they walked up to the sheds together. "Not at all bad for a beginner. But next time don't forget, youngster, we're out to help the gunners—not to bag Huns. Remember that and carry out my orders implicitly, and we'll get along together top-hole."

"Not a bad blighter," thought Polly slowly as the words sank in. "Evidently doesn't bear any grudges. Thought I was in for a bit of a wiggling."

CHAPTER II

A Casualty "Listens In"

THEREAFTER for many days Polly coaxed the old Harry Tate, for which he seemed to have conceived an inexplicable but warm affection, into the air whilst Captain Lockhart, in the rear seat, played everything from a fugue to a grand march on the wireless key in his cockpit.

Of enemy aircraft they encountered but few, which rather surprised Polly, who had always imagined that every British machine to take the air was immediately beset by at least a dozen hawks with black Maltese crosses on their wings. Also, it might be added, he noted the comparative emptiness of the air in their immediate vicinity with some regret for he yearned from the bottom of his machine-gun loving soul

for a chance to add more scalps to the brace he had collected on his first trip over the lines.

But opportunities were scarce. Once when an inquisitive pair of Fokkers swooped down upon his tail, he skidded round to fight them off, but Lockhart's heavy foot on the rudder-bar behind him rather cramped his style, and he had perforce to obey the curt orders in his earphones to carry on, whilst the solitary Lewis in the rear played a syncopated solo for a few moments and was still.

Polly looked over his shoulder. His observer was turning back to his wireless-key with a satisfied grin on his face and a few seconds later Polly sensed the eternal *iddy-iddy-umpty* going on behind him as if it had never been interrupted.

But he was not happy. Strangely enough, perhaps, considering his uncouth appearance, he was popular in the mess. For one thing, 783 Squadron had never before possessed anyone who could produce anything but "Mademoiselle from Armentieres" and "We're glad to see you're back dear lady," out of the warped and decrepit apology for a piano the squadron had acquired from Heaven only knew where, and wouldn't tell.

Polly sat down at it on the first night of his arrival, played half a dozen chords on its yellowed keys which made them all sit up and take notice, and then walked out into the night, muttering under his breath.

Two evenings later, with a comic-looking gadget the squadron blacksmith, in collusion with "B" Flight's fitter-sergeant, had turned out under his directions, he set to work, whilst the rest of the mess looked on interestedly, gave advice and ragged him gently as he strewed bits of piano apparently haphazard about the ante-room.

By midnight or soon after, that elderly relic of a piano was eating out of his hand. In tune for probably the first time in, perhaps, a dozen years, it gave of its grateful best whilst the others sat round and fairly lapped it up.

There seemed to be nothing Polly could not play. Classical stuff like

TOO GOOD TO MISS

Beethoven, Brahms and Mozart ; bits from " Chu Chin Chow " ; Harry Fragon's latest hits, and even when little Babson came and hummed something in his ear, saying : " If you can play this thing, old son, I think I c'd warble it," he played that, too, adding at the end an unprintable extra verse which practically stole the show.

Yes, Polly was popular, although he did not seem particularly interested one way or the other ; but he was not happy.

For one thing, something was happening which he did not understand. There were probably plenty of others, but this one worried him most. His job, jointly with Captain Lockhart, was to range for the artillery, as he well knew. Well, they were doing it, but things were not going right somehow. Why was it, for instance, that although the C.O. was always congratulating his observer on his excellent reports and fire control, the British batteries were continually being blown out of existence ?

Four times had he seen it happen from the air. They would be flying back and forth with Lockhart buzzing away behind him when suddenly, with no warning whatever : *Wham ! Crash !* and the battery they were spotting for would disappear from the face of the earth in the midst of a maelstrom of fire and smoke.

Each time he had searched the skies for possible E.A.,* but none was ever in sight. Yet the destruction must, he thought, have been directed by E.A. for those German gunners simply dropped everything they had, including, apparently, the kitchen stove, right on top of that battery.

It was uncanny—positively eerie.

HE spoke about it in the mess one night. Of course the others had noticed it, too. The Divisional Commander, it appeared, was ready to go into a flat spin about it all. The casualties were terrific. But, apparently, nothing could be devised to prevent it.

" D'you think it's spy work ? " hazarded Polly thoughtfully.

He knew nothing about spies, but it seemed to him a helpful suggestion. One or two agreed with him that it might be, but Captain Lockhart, entering with the C.O. at the moment, laughed sarcastically.

" How'd you think they'd set about it, Polly ? " he grinned.

Everybody called him " Polly " now except the C.O., who smiled to himself whenever he looked his way. " The espionage systems of both sides are well known to be extraordinarily efficient, but there are limits beyond which they cannot go. And one of these, it seems to me, is ranging artillery on a battery position which has only been occupied a few hours—like one of those this morning. Why, dash it all, man, they wouldn't be able to get their information through in time."

" It must be something like that, though," put in Masterton, who commanded " B " Flight, " otherwise how d'you account for the fact that every blasted battery in the sector's gettin' blown to hell ? In each instance—isn't this right, sir ? " he asked, turning to Major Thornton for confirmation—" the forward observer's report says a single ranging shell comes over and ten minutes later, well, there just isn't any ruddy battery."

The C.O. nodded his head worriedly. " Mm. ; just like that. Staff's goin' cuckoo about it. If it isn't spy work—and I'm inclined to agree with Lockhart about the impossibility of that—then nobody knows what it is. It isn't spotting from the air. Our scouts aren't letting a single 'plane through ; they all swear to that. None of you fellows on art. obs. have seen any, have you ? " he asked, looking round. " If you have, you haven't reported it."

A chorus of denial from half a dozen voices assured him of the utter emptiness of the air lanes on the Allied side of the lines, and all knew that from the enemy side none of the batteries, so carefully and arduously dug in and camouflaged, was visible from the air.

Shortly afterwards, Polly, ignoring requests for music, strolled out of the

* E.A. : Enemy Aircraft.

AIR STORIES

room. Something in the turn the conversation had taken had awakened in his brain a thought which had been simmering for the past few days. It was hot and stuffy in the smoke-laden atmosphere of the ante-room. He could think better outside.

He walked slowly up and down for a while, thinking hard; then, making his way to his quarters, he picked up a flashlight and went quickly over to the hangars. He spent, perhaps, half an hour there, then hurried over to the N.C.O.'s quarters. Thence he dug out one, Sergeant McBean, who accompanied him to the wireless hut. This they entered and were seen no more for a couple of hours or so.

At the expiration of that time they left the hut together, McBean returning to his quarters with the stealth of a stage conspirator, strictly tongue-tied under threat of dire penalties if he breathed a word of the matter in hand for a period of four days, and Polly, with slightly bulging tunic pockets, in the direction of the hangars.

AT seven the following morning, Polly Flinders, having slept for two hours and a half and feeling as fresh as the proverbial daisy, missed his footing as he clambered over the side of his R.E.8 and fell awkwardly to the ground. He regained his feet at once, however, but Captain Lockhart, looking over from the rear cockpit, saw his left hand was already bluish and beginning to swell.

"Sprained, eh? Damn! Think you can carry on?" he asked anxiously.

Polly dangled the limp wrist before his eyes and touched it gingerly. He shook his head.

"Think I'd better let the M.O. have a look at it," he said.

"All right. Tough luck! I'll get someone else to take me up. Flight-Sergeant!"

"Sir!" Flight-Sergeant Williams ran up alongside the R.E.8 and saluted.

"Mr. Flinders has had a slight accident. Send my compliments to Captain Masterton at the double, and ask him to detail me another pilot at once will you?"

"Very good, sir."

And as Polly walked slowly and thoughtfully over to the M.O.'s little shed shortly afterwards, he encountered Second Lieutenant Babson hurrying towards the tarmac.

"Tough luck," he grinned sympathetically. "No concert to-night, eh? Hope it'll soon be all right again. Cheerio!" And he ran on.

By the time Polly reached the M.O.—and he took his time—his wrist was quite puffy and his hand was beginning to swell.

"Just stay quiet and don't use it for a day or two and you'll be all right," the Medical Officer advised, after investigating and bandaging it carefully. "No bones broken; only a strain. Strange how quickly it came up though," he added thoughtfully. "Quite unusual."

Had this excellent disciple of Æsculapius pursued his investigations a little farther afield, say, for instance, to where his patient was now comfortably ensconced, he would have thought the matter still stranger.

For Polly was seated at ease in the middle of a little clump of bushes not far from the aerodrome, with a pair of earphones on his red head and an open Field Service Pocket Book on his knees.

The bandage was off his left hand, and he was busily engaged in rubbing baking soda into his swollen wrist. As he rubbed, the pale blue discoloration disappeared, leaving his hand the same colour as the other.

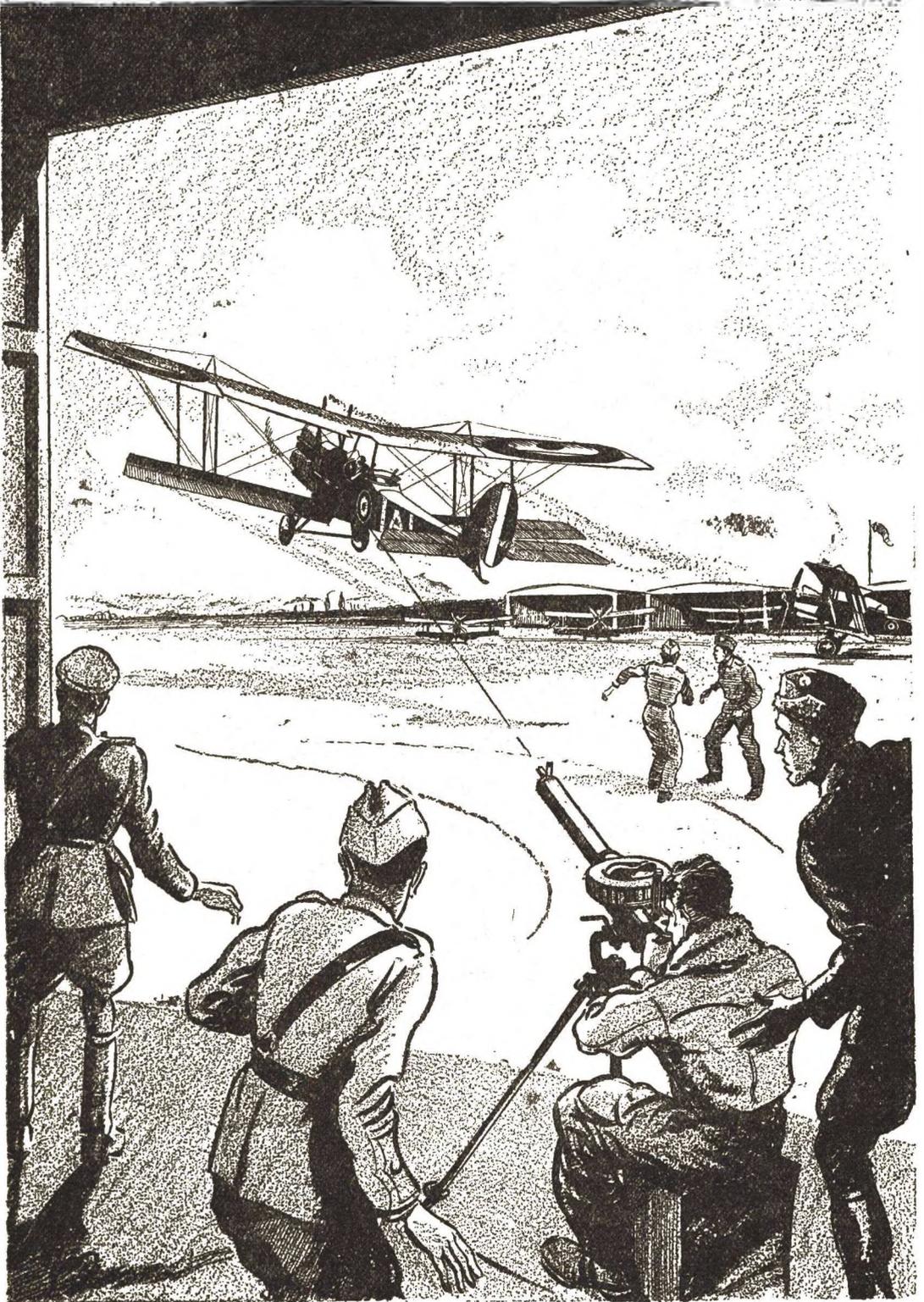
Suddenly he grew tense, and his off-set blue eyes narrowed as he drew a pencil from his tunic pocket.

Thereafter, for almost two hours he sat there, so utterly absorbed in whatever queer business he was engaged in that he scarcely noticed how cramped he was becoming. From time to time he altered the vernier adjustment of a tiny tuning-coil; then, with a glance at his wrist-watch, he jotted down the time and went on scribbling.

In between whiles, he studied a large-scale map partly unfolded beside him. On this, after referring to his notes, he marked little numbered crosses, very neatly.

Later, as the low hum of a returning

TOO GOOD TO MISS



The drum raced as Polly squeezed the trigger and tracers fled towards the fast-moving R.E.8, already in the air and beginning to climb

AIR STORIES

'plane came to his ears, he rose to his feet, disconnected the various parts of the little receiving set and stowed them about his already bulbous person.

Then, dexterously rewinding his bandage, he strolled casually towards the tarmac, whereon his R.E.8 had just come to rest.

"Well," greeted Captain Lockhart with his usual smile, as he swung his legs over the side. "How's the wrist?"

"Better, thanks," returned Polly shortly. "Be all right to-morrow."

After dark he borrowed a motor-cycle—without permission—pushed it down the road in neutral until he had reached a safe distance from the transport lines, and then *pop-popped* down the dusty road on a very private mission.

At about the time he was returning the machine silently to the place whence he had purloined it, terrific activity in the region of the British artillery lines some ten miles away might have been observed.

Batteries, carefully dug in and concealed during weeks of sweating labour, were suddenly hitched to limbers and dragged away by straining gun teams, to the vast annoyance of their battery commanders, who cursed and swore fluently at all their wasted labour.

Why the crimson Hades couldn't the Divisional Staff be of the same mind for two consecutive days—blast 'em!

Polly Flinders, having safely restored the motor-cycle, made for the wireless shed once more. There, anxiously awaiting him, he found Sergeant McBean. Together they walked across to the hangars, and for half an hour or so twin pin-pricks of light thoroughly explored every inch of the inside of the old Harry Tate.

Then the two returned to the wireless shed, becoming extremely busy with yards of steel cable, brass grommets and a small soldering iron.

CHAPTER III

The Man Who Was Too Clever

POLLY had slept for two and a half hours the night before; which was

just two and a half hours longer than on this occasion.

Just before dawn, sleepy but content, he crawled out of the R.E.8 and strolled unhurriedly towards his quarters with his peculiar rolling gait.

After a quick wash and a shave, he went over to the mess, where the pilots and observers on early flying duty were swallowing down a sketchy breakfast.

"All right this morning?" smiled Captain Lockhart, looking up as he entered. Polly Flinders nodded shortly, holding up his carefully-bandaged wrist in reply.

"Certain you can manage? Don't want you to let me down, you know."

"I'm all right, but anyway, you've got dual, though you won't need it," mumbled Polly, sliding into his seat as the roar of engines warming up on the tarmac boomed across the intervening field.

A quarter of an hour later they were in the air and Polly plugged in his earphones.

"We'll make for M—19—23 first," ordered Lockhart as they nosed towards the lines.

"All right," replied the pilot in a bored voice, almost as if he had known their destination beforehand.

As they cruised back and forth Polly leaned one arm on the side of the fuselage and looked overboard. To his ears came the thin buzzing of Captain Lockhart's wireless-key sending corrections to the listening batteries.

For once Polly seemed interested in what was going on below him, and when on three separate occasions British gun positions erupted suddenly into the air and settled down again in a thick cloud of dust and debris and smoke, he smiled as if in complete contentment.

But his smile disappeared very suddenly as a whiff of tracer flicked above his head and he heard the rattle of Spandaus behind him.

At the same instant Lockhart's voice sounded in his ears:

"Why the devil don't you keep your eyes open? That's all you've got to do. Why don't you do it?"

TOO GOOD TO MISS

"Sorry," he answered. "Didn't see them."

He kept on flying, straight as a hiving bee, whilst tracers zipped like hornets above his upper planes. Strangely enough the thin smile had returned to his lips. He seemed perfectly at ease and without a care in the world. Dumb? It would seem so.

"Well, what about it?" gritted Lockhart's angry voice again. "What the hell are you doing? Why don't you scare 'em off?"

"Who—me?" The flat tones registered surprise.

"Who else—damn it all!"

"Why, last time you told me off for scrapping. I thought you wanted to do it all."

The old R.E.8 kept on its course unwaveringly whilst Polly could hear his observer's voice growing more and more furious.

"Don't be a dam' fool. Get after 'em—quick, I tell you."

"Have it your own way," muttered Polly, and the Harry Tate kept on, never deviating a degree whilst its pilot, still grinning, saw over his shoulder Captain Lockhart's hunched back as he swivelled the Lewis in its circular mounting.

Rat - a - tat - a - tat - a - tat! Polly saw tracers smoking all around the foremost of three Fokkers poised just above them. From its twin muzzles streams of fire spewed downwards. Suddenly the German 'plane seemed to stagger in mid-air; the hail of lead stopped in the same instant and the machine slipped over and over like a kite with a broken string.

"Good shooting, sir!" yelled Polly with a wide grin. "There's another!" he shouted as a second black-crossed 'plane dropped into the vacant place, whilst the third shot downwards as if to find the blind spot beneath their tail.

Captain Lockhart glanced over his shoulder and swore.

"Dammit!" he yelled. "Why don't you do something? Think I can keep all these blighters off by myself? Dodge 'em—dammit—dodge 'em!" He spun the empty tray; clipped on a new one and pulled the cocking handle.

The R.E.8 flew steadily along in a straight line. Looking beneath him, Polly could see the first Fokker slowly spinning. Almost on the ground, it seemed the pilot managed to regain control and the 'plane skimmed along towards the east.

Polly nodded his head slowly and contentedly, turning to see what was happening behind him. He laughed suddenly and dropped the nose. A moment later he climbed with a sickening upward lurch which flung Lockhart off his balance. As he clutched the side of the Scarff mounting, the Fokker pilot, an instant before riding unscathed in the midst of a ring of Lewis tracers, ceased firing.

Up came the R.E., over on a wing-tip. For a moment, as she slewed round, Polly caught a glimpse of a whirling prop., which was not his own, and pressed the trips. The prop. disintegrated into thin air whilst the engine, uncontrolled by the pilot who had jerked upwards in agony with a bullet through his throat, tore itself out of its bearers.

"All right," Polly heard. "Wash out. That's scared the guts out of 'em. We can carry on now."

BUT Polly, his chin jutting out farther than ever, decided otherwise. He remembered the first Fokker, contour-chasing for home. He remembered the circle of Lewis tracer flying round it but never hitting it, and he saw red. Without a word in reply he dropped the nose of the R.E. and made for the third German machine despite frenzied orders from the observer in the rear seat.

At last he succeeded in aligning the Fokker in the ring. As he squeezed the trip, he felt the rudder-bar move beneath his feet; the nose of the machine yawed aside and the burst went wide.

White with anger, he dropped his hand from the trips, jerked at a stout cord, and a little pin came out of each control cable.

"That'll fix him," he muttered grimly, pivoting on a top extension. Again he pressed the trips, holding the stick with all his strength against the pressure Lockhart was exerting from behind.

AIR STORIES

Rat-tat-tat-tat. Rat-tat-tat-tat. He saw the line of steel-jacketed lead and tracers run up the fuselage of the Fokker in front. *Rat-tat-tat-tat.* The pilot slumped forward on his controls limply, and as the German 'plane dropped from sight, Polly heard a sharp crack behind him.

With a red-hot iron searing his brain, he fell forward, hearing faintly with his last remaining consciousness, the voice of Captain Lockhart :

"Too clever, by God ! That's what happens to pilots who get too clever."

CHAPTER IV

Returned from the Dead

POLLY had no idea how long he remained in oblivion, but gradually sensations began to seep into his clouded brain. There was, for instance, something which kept thumping him in the chest. For a while he took no notice. His head was aching badly and he felt very sick. Gradually, however, thoughts took shape and by degrees his brain cleared. He moved his arm slowly and laid his hand on the stick, discovering that it was this which pressed against his chest.

"Careless," he muttered to himself, "damn careless of me. Ought to have thought of that. Should have guessed he'd have a pistol on him."

His mind went back to the gossip of the mess ; of how Captain Lockhart's former pilot had been shot down and of how Lockhart had earned much praise for having flown the 'plane back with the dead pilot in the front seat. Now, doubtless, he, too, was being flown back ; but with a difference. He did not happen to be dead, though how badly wounded he was he could not tell, but he could feel the warm blood trickling down his scalp.

When they arrived at the aerodrome things—interesting things—ought to happen.

He grinned to himself, tight-lipped, and next time the R.E.8 tilted up a wing, he rolled realistically against the side of the fuselage and lay there, his head

lolling in the slipstream. He could now see they were within sight of the aerodrome, but the 'plane was yawing from side to side, flying crazily. For a few moments he wondered why, until he remembered Lockhart was deprived of his rudder since he himself had pulled out the pins carefully inserted very early that morning.

Now, since he was anxious to arrive in comparative safety, he steadied the rudder-bar, although with the instinct of the artist, he was careful to allow the nose to swing within limits.

Some ten minutes later, therefore, they landed at Froiselles and taxied up to the tarmac. Whilst Lockhart swung himself over the side, Polly's hand slid quickly to his pocket. As his fingers encircled the butt of his automatic, Major Thornton came hurrying up.

"My God, Lockhart," he greeted the observer, with an anxious glance towards the front cockpit, "what's happened ? Is he badly wounded ? "

"I'm afraid so, sir," Captain Lockhart saluted smartly. "I'm very much afraid he's dead. He never moved after they got him. I had to fly the kite home myself. Lucky I had that dual fitted."

He turned and took a step towards the machine with the C.O.

Then both stopped dead, for Polly Flinders was sitting very erect, his automatic steadied against the edge of the fuselage and a blue eye gazing truculently from a blooded face as it looked along the little barrel.

"Put 'em up, Lockhart," he ordered crisply, and there was none of the usual slow drawl about Polly's voice this time. "Put 'em up, and be dam' quick about it. Stop that," he yelled as the observer's hand flashed to his pocket.

There was a sharp crack, and the revolver dropped from Lockhart's powerless hand, down which a stream of blood began to pour.

"What the devil's all this ? " shouted the Major, advancing quickly. "What d'you mean by shooting like that you dam' young fool ? Put that pistol down ! "

But Polly did nothing of the kind.

TOO GOOD TO MISS

With the automatic still pointed squarely at Lockhart's head, he answered without moving his eyes from the man he had shot.

"I want him arrested, sir. He's a dam' spy. When he discovered I was on to him, he tried to kill me upstairs. I'll tell you all about it later, sir, but for God's sake don't let him get away."

"What have you got to say about this, Lockhart?" demanded the C.O., turning and looking at him fixedly, obviously at a loss to understand the extraordinary situation.

"Frankly, I don't know, sir," replied Lockhart blandly, as he twisted a handkerchief round his forearm. "I'm afraid the wound in his head must have affected his brain. I'd suggest he's taken over to the M.O. at once. I'm going, too," he smiled, "as soon as I've given you my report, sir."

Unseen by Polly, intent only on Captain Lockhart, a couple of pilots had approached the machine on the far side. At a nod from the C.O., they sprang upon Polly and disarmed him, and a minute or so later, battling and shouting, they bore him off towards the hospital shed.

Suddenly he stopped struggling and stood still.

"Listen, you fellows," he begged breathlessly. "This is dam' serious. The blighter's a spy. I know what I'm talking about. How did Saunders die? Shot in the back, wasn't he? Yes. He discovered something. Lockhart shot him and brought his body back. He tried the same thing on me, thought he'd shoot me through the head for a change, but aimed a fraction of an inch too high. For God's sake let me see the C.O. before it's too late! What's that?" he screamed, turning quickly as the sound of a running engine came to them across the tarmac. "Look! My old 'bus! He's had it turned round and started up! He's making off in it. Quick, you chaps. Give me a hand with this. It's our only chance!"

Overawed and impressed despite themselves, by his tones, they seized the Lewis on the tripod used for range testing, standing just inside the nearest shed, and

swung it towards the fleeing 'plane. One slipped on a drum of .303 whilst Polly dropped on to a tin seat and gripped the handle.

Brrrrrrr. Brrrrrrr. The drum raced as Polly squeezed the trigger. *Brrrrrrr. Brrrrrrr.* Tracers fled towards the fast-moving R.E.8. *Brrrrrrr.* It was already in the air and beginning to climb. Polly cursed as he elevated the muzzle and fired again. *Brrrrrrr.*

Something seemed to happen to the R.E. It looked as if it had suddenly tripped over something in the air. Then one wing dropped. It half turned, then side-slipped sickeningly.

A moment later Polly had heaved himself into the vacant seat beside the driver of a Crossley tender and they were driving flat out, bumping over the aerodrome in the direction of a cloud of dust which was slowly settling.

Climbing through a hedge, they raced towards it. Polly, wounded and scarcely able to stand, staggered along behind the others. When he reached them, they had already got the pilot out of the wreckage and laid him on the ground.

He was quite dead, with a little round hole drilled neatly through his head from behind.

CHAPTER V

A Matter of Intelligence

"I SUPPOSE," said a tall grey-haired Intelligence Officer, smiling down very affably upon Polly Flinders, "You won't mind filling in the gaps for us now?"

"There's not much to tell, really, sir," grinned Polly, his red hair hidden by a very white bandage.

He was sitting up in a cot in the nearest C.C.S.,* thoroughly happy and not at all embarrassed by the distinguished company in which he found himself, including as it did, the Divisional Commander, his Chief of Staff, Colonel Watson of the Intelligence Department, and Major Thornton, still looking very much at sea.

"Got a good man there, Thornton,"

* C.C.S. : Casualty Clearing Station.

AIR STORIES

proclaimed the General loudly enough for Polly Flinders to hear.

"Yes, sir ; excellent," agreed Thornton quickly, rather red about the gills, remembering his reception of the "good man" on his arrival so short a time previously. "Er—very glad to have him, sir," he added nobly, making *l'amende honorable* to the best of his ability.

"I should say so," put in Colonel Watson warmly. "Well, how did you get on to the darn' feller, Flinders?"

"Well, sir, I couldn't understand why he seemed so anxious to do all the gunning himself," replied Polly slowly, "especially as he seemed so keen on art. obs. Besides, unless he was an awfully dud shot, he couldn't possibly have missed all those Albatroses the first time we went out together. Why, they just stayed above our rudder nicely within range and pumped tracers into the air all round us. They were wonderful shots, sir, I'll say that for them, or they couldn't have missed us so accurately."

"Hurrumph," said the General gustily. "Too good to miss, eh? First time I've ever heard a fellow's marksmanship praised on account of his being a good misser. Go on, Flinders."

"Then, sir," continued Polly, thus prompted, "he claimed to have got one of them when I could see his tracers going carefully wide all the time. When the fellow went down, I could have sworn not a shot had hit him. Besides, he pulled out near the ground and contoured-chased for home. He got frightfully fed up with me when I downed one or two myself, and that made me think a bit, too."

"Yes ; but what made you suspect he was spotting for their gunners as well as ours?" asked Colonel Watson.

"Partly himself, I think, sir. You see he insisted so hard that no spies could get the information back in time for it to be of any value that I began to wonder about it. Then, too, he swore there were no enemy aircraft about. Of course, we all knew that. We hardly ever saw any on our side of the lines. So I went and looked at his wireless set. I know a bit about it, and I got Sergeant

McBean to give me a hand, and one night we did a bit of experimenting and between us we rigged up a little portable set I could tune in on him with from the ground. I went sick and listened in on his signals while Babson took him up instead of me, and I got all his messages. First he'd send corrections to our batteries and then he'd tune in on some other ground station and send them messages. After that . . ."

"But how did you manage to listen in when you were sick?" interrupted Major Thornton. "Was that when you sprained your wrist?"

"Yes, sir," grinned Polly.

"How's the swelling now?"

"All right, sir, thanks."

"When did all this happen?" put in Colonel Watson interestedly.

"Yesterday, sir."

"And it's all right now? Rot! How did you hoodwink the M.O.?" demanded the General, the twinkle in his eye belying the sternness of his tone.

"Bee sting, sir. I put a little blue ink, very diluted, on it overnight and then stuck a bee's hind-end against it about an hour before I was due to go up. Worked splendidly, sir. It swelled up no end."

FOR a moment there was a stupefied silence then the General put his head back and let out a roar, in which the others joined an instant later.

"Pretty work," he said when he got his breath, "but don't go and broadcast your methods. The Medical Officers have got enough skrimshankers to deal with as it is. And how about your visit to my Headquarters last night? How did you get hold of the information that our friends across the line intended blowing our new battery positions into the air early this morning? You know we got all the guns out in time, I s'pose—thanks to you?"

"No, sir, I didn't know it, but I hoped so. I saw the Huns blow up the whole site when I was up this morning. I heard Lockhart giving them their positions yesterday and checked them up on the map. That's why I ran over to your

TOO GOOD TO MISS

Headquarters, sir. There's no mistake about what he was doing," he added earnestly. "I got his messages to both sides, and when I checked them back, I found more than half of them contained pin-points on our side of the lines. That settled it, sir."

"But what I don't see," interrupted Colonel Watson, "is why he shot you. What made him suspect you had tumbled to him?"

"I don't know, sir," answered Polly slowly, "unless it was when he saw me laughing at the way every one of their shots went purposely wide, and I went after that last Fokker after he told me to keep off it. It was either that or my disconnecting his rudder-bar from my controls when he spoiled my shooting. I think it might have been that, sir."

"And then he potted you to prevent

your giving evidence against him, eh?"

"Looks that way, sir, just as he must have done to Saunders who used to pilot him before I was posted here," added Polly.

"Well, Flinders," said the General genially, rising and holding out his hand. "Time's up. Got to go. You'll get a medal out of this if it's any satisfaction to you. Come and dine with me when you get better. In the meantime, I can't thank you enough for what you've accomplished. My only wonder is that Lockhart was such an infernal idiot as to try and fool a fellow of your intelligence. What d'you say, Thornton?"

And Major Thornton, catching the eye of the dumb egg, had the grace to turn the colour of a very fine beetroot as he agreed that it was indeed most remarkable.

WHERE THE WAR BIRDS FLY AGAIN

The Air Section of the Imperial War Museum in London Houses a Unique Collection of Allied and German Air War Material

EVERYONE who is at all interested in aerial warfare will find much to fascinate and instruct him at the new Imperial War Museum in London, where a special section has been devoted to a permanent exhibition of aircraft equipment and relics of the Great War in the Air.

The numerous exhibits, probably the most comprehensive collection of its kind ever gathered together under one roof, are excellently displayed. Actual warplanes on view include a Sopwith Camel, a B.E.2c and a Bristol Fighter, all in the Air Section, an R.E.8 in the Artillery Section and a Short twin-float seaplane in the Naval Section. Examples of air service equipment, representative of both Allied and German practice, comprise actual Vickers, Parabellum and Lewis machine-guns and their mountings, photographic and wireless equipment, sectioned bombs, aero engines, ammunition and a Constantinesco synchronising gun-gear mounted on a panel to illustrate its working principle.

Of special interest, as illustrating the evolution of aircraft during the war years, is the collection of beautifully-made scale models of warplanes ranging from a Maurice Farman "Longhorn" to the largest type of multi-engined Gotha bomber.

Among the war relics are such treasured mementoes as the uniform worn in France

by the late Captain Albert Ball, V.C., and stained with oil and cordite from many a gallant flight, a dented cigarette-case retrieved from McCudden's last crash, and the gloves of Sergeant Mottishead, V.C. In another show-case will be found a piece of the fabric from the wing of Richthofen's red triplane, a message dropped on a British aerodrome by a German pilot, and other mementoes of similarly historic interest.

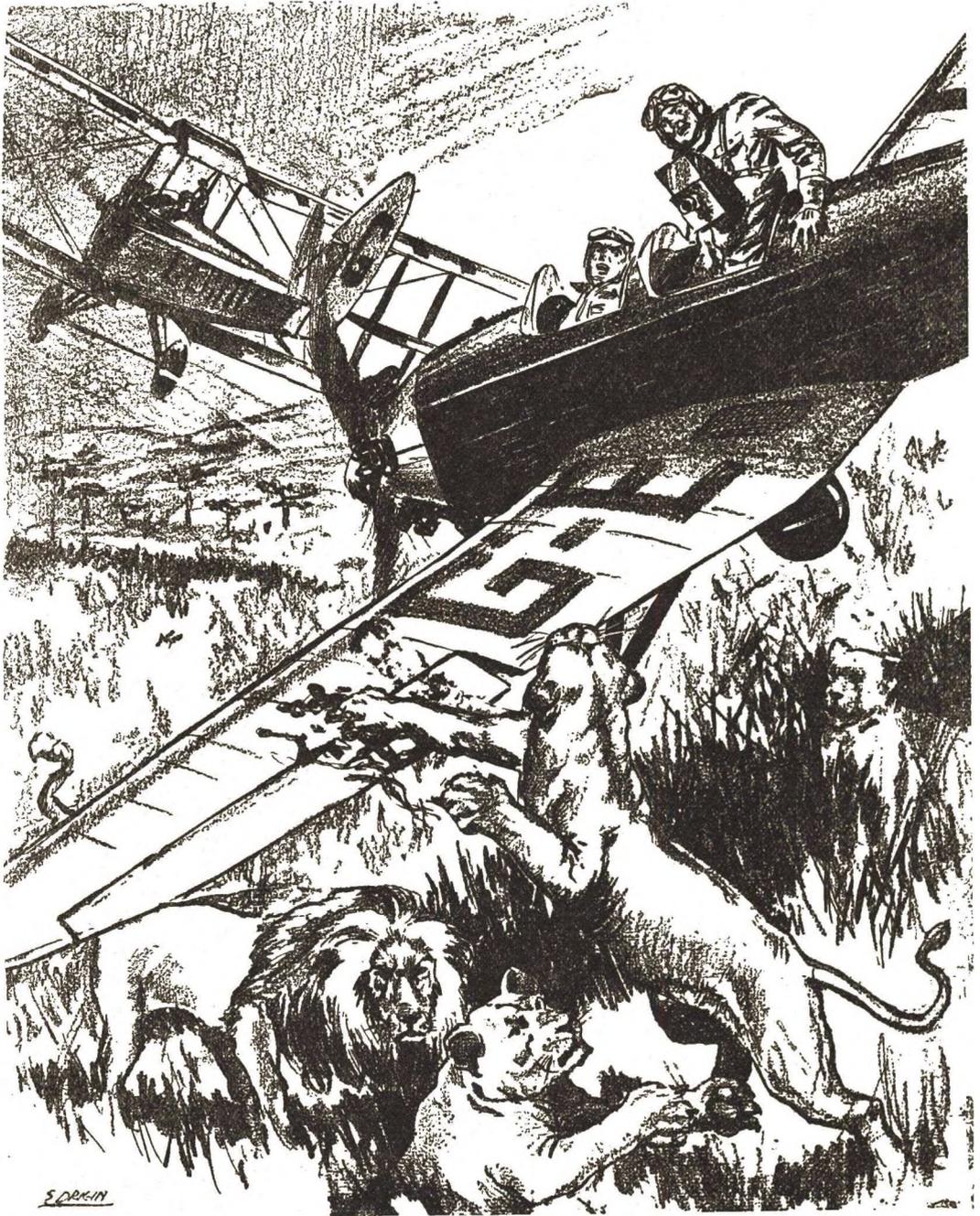
Pictures of Aerial Warfare

AND when the Air Section has been thoroughly examined there are the adjoining picture galleries, where is to be seen a fine collection of portraits in colour of famous "aces," and striking paintings depicting vivid scenes of aerial warfare.

There is also a unique collection of photographs of the air services to be seen in the Reference Department of the Museum, illustrating all aspects of the work of the R.F.C., R.N.A.S. and R.A.F., the more important types of aircraft used, and the damage caused by air raids.

The Museum, which was recently transferred from South Kensington to its present more spacious premises, stands in a public park off Lambeth Road, in South London, on the site of the old Bethlem Hospital, and may be visited, without charge, on any week-day.

ACE OF THE BLACK CROSS



S. DORGIN

The paw of the lioness struck the wing . . . the machine staggered . . . scraped the ground

*The Thrilling Life-Story of Germany's Greatest Living
Air Ace and Former Member of the Famous Richthofen
Circus*

—The Autobiography of Ernst Udet

Concluding an Epic of Aerial Adventure — An Amazing Record of Thrilling Flights above African Jungles and Arctic Ice-fields, of Peacetime Adventures in the Air as Exciting, and as Dangerous, as Any that Befell this Famous Fighter of the World War in the Air

By
ERNST UDET

Translated from the German
By KENNETH KIRKNESS

PART IV

Hunting Big Game from the Air

BENEATH the star-decked sky of an African night, four men sat talking around a camp-fire. The jungle loomed darkly behind them and from time to time there came the harsh laugh of a hyena or the long-drawn howl of a prowling jackal. Only a few yards from the camp lay Lake Manjara, a pool of molten lead in the moonlight.

The four men were members of an expedition that had been sent out to East Africa to film big game from the air. Now they were resting after the labours of the day.

One of them, Schneeberger, the cameraman of the expedition and a small, wiry individual, was the hero of Casteletto in the Great War. With eight men he had held a position that had been mined by the enemy. He held out for six weeks and when he was relieved they found fifty-two of the enemy lying dead around him. He spoke little, but when he did it was usually very much to the point.



A recent sketch of the Author—by Algernon Rowe

Then there were Suchocky and myself. We were the pilots of the expedition.

The fourth member of the little group, Papa Siedentopf, was telling us a story, his famous story of Köttersheim. From time to time, as the flames of the camp-fire blazed up, his thin, dried features became visible. He had once been one of the richest men in German East Africa, with an estate as large as a county, full of valuable minerals and well-stocked with game and water. He had lost everything and was now the leader and adviser of our expedition.

“In the steel-plated gate of the fort,” he was saying, “I saw someone open a small spyhole. It was a spyhole such as you see in the curtain at the theatre. We were lying three hundred yards away, under cover. ‘Now I’ll show you something,’ I said to my lads. I took aim, and pressed the trigger. The spyhole over the way immediately closed. I had hit my man. It was. . . .”

“. . . The British commander of the fort,” supplied Schneeberger, “and now

AIR STORIES

I think it's time we started looking for our sleeping-bags."

Siedentopf stood up. "It's damnable," he said sadly, "there isn't a man, from the Cape to Cairo, who doesn't know the story of Köttersheim. But this is only the third time I've told it to you. . . ."

EVERY day we flew above the great African "ditch." This great hollow, which cuts through practically the whole of the Continent, is full of game. Great herds of gnu, groups of giraffes, families of lions and powerful, thick-legged rhinos fled from the shadows of our aircraft.

Visibility was extraordinarily good, and in the glass-clear air we could see for several hundreds of miles. Despite this advantage, however, our work was difficult. From the 'plane the scenes passed beneath so rapidly that the camera could not possibly take them all in. We had to throttle down and fly into wind as close to the ground as we dared. Only by this means could we secure anything like satisfactory pictures of the animals.

One day, in the Serengeti, we came upon a group of lions consisting of two males and three lionesses, and I flew about eighteen feet above them, taking photographs, with the joy-stick held between my knees.

The lions lifted their heads once or twice, eyed me suspiciously, but remained lying down. Not so the lionesses. They sprang to their feet, and, never for an instant taking their eyes off me, began to thrash the sand with their tails.

Suddenly one of them hurled herself into the air, and very nearly touched the right wing of my machine. I was so surprised that I almost dropped the camera.

Suchocky and Schneeberger were following me in the second machine. They were flying very slowly, barely ten feet off the ground. Realising their danger, I turned round, waved my arms, and tried to warn them. But it was too late. Like a streak of lightning, the yellow body of the lioness left the ground. Her paw struck the wing, Suchocky's machine staggered, scraped the ground, rose again, and flew very low in the

direction of our camp, trailing long ribbons of silvery fabric behind it.

I, too, turned back to the camp, and when we landed we discovered that Suchocky's machine had suffered considerable damage. The force of the blow must have been terrific. Claw marks, hair and bloodstains were clearly to be seen on the damaged wing, and it was a miracle that the machine had been able to remain in flight.

This was the only instance in my experience of an animal attacking a machine in flight. In the ordinary way they were only liable to attack us after we had landed, or if we disturbed them in their own preserves.

ON another occasion we were flying above the valleys of the Esimingor—Suchocky and Siedentopf in their Klemm, myself alone in a De Havilland Moth. Below us we saw desert scrub and the dull, dusty green of Euphorbia forests.

We wanted to land and get some pictures. Suchocky made the first attempt but hardly had he touched the ground when I saw him shoot into the air again. A round, flat stone, which had been lying on the ground, had suddenly risen and rushed towards him: it was a rhinoceros.

The incident was over so quickly that my eyes had difficulty in following it. Suchocky's machine reeled, struck a giant ant-hill, and crashed. A cloud of dust arose, and the machine came to a standstill, with its tail sticking in the air.

I landed close by. The rhinoceros circled round the machine, gradually getting closer. A couple of shots were fired, and the heavy beast disappeared snorting into some undergrowth.

"Suchocky! Siedentopf!" I shouted.

A mournful voice answered from halfway down the fuselage, "Here we are." The severity of the blow had evidently forced Suchocky back into the tail of the machine.

It was impossible for one man to right the machine, so I took my bush-knife and slit a hole in the side. Suchocky crawled out with difficulty, stretched himself cut on the ground, and lay

ACE OF THE BLACK CROSS

prostrate. The crash must have given him a bad shaking.

I then ran round the machine, seeking for signs of Siedentopf. Under the wreckage of the machine I saw a brown hand—it was motionless.

“Siedentopf !” I shouted. “Siedentopf !” and pushed with all my strength against the side of the 'plane.

There was silence. Endless seconds passed, and then I heard the old fellow's voice : “*Verfluchte Schweinerei !* This place stinks like the plague.”

After five minutes' work with the bush-knife, I managed to free him, and then took them both back to the camp. Suchocky had to go to bed, but Papa Siedentopf appeared as usual at our evening meal in the tent. He was bent and lame, and swore fearfully, but, nevertheless, ate enough corned beef for two ordinary men.

Three months later—we had returned to Germany some time before—I visited Suchocky at the hospital in Hamburg. His face was as small as that of a ten-year-old child, and he weighed less than six stone. Diseased liver, said the doctors.

Then Suchocky showed me a letter which Siedentopf had written him from Dar-es-salaam. With it he had enclosed a photograph, which showed that the old campaigner, too, had grown exceedingly thin. The doctors said that his liver was diseased.

The two men died almost on the same day a few months later.

I cannot explain the coincidence, but it is my belief that the place where they crashed was poisoned with carrion. The doctors with whom I discussed their cases shrugged their shoulders. What it was they could not tell me.

CHAPTER II

Down in the Jungle

WITH Suchocky and Siedentopf both in hospital, Schneeberger and I carried on the expedition's work alone, and soon after their departure we transferred our base to Babati, in the territory of the Ufume negroes. We took-off early

in the afternoon, and landed at our new base three-quarters of an hour later. By car the journey would have taken us ten hours.

We made our headquarters in the Fig Tree Hotel, a curious place that looked rather weird, even from the air. There were four small, round, straw-roofed huts which, from a distance, looked like beehives. Close beside them was a long, flat building, which resembled a miners' dormitory. Before it stood a giant fig tree.

The hotel had been established by Lord Lovelace for motorists and airmen, and was one of the strangest hotels I have ever come across.

Each of the huts contained two spotlessly white beds ; otherwise furniture was conspicuous by its absence. In the main building, however, there was a bar whose stock-in-trade would have done credit to a European *hotel de luxe*.

We slid on to the tall bar-stools, and enjoyed civilisation in fluid form. The door stood open. One could see the shady forecourt, and, far beyond, a giant expanse of steppe country, which gradually lost itself in the haze that hung about the horizon.

“Plenty of scope for our work here, I imagine,” said Schneeberger. I nodded.

The sky gradually became overcast. On our flight here we had noticed a narrow, ominous-looking bank of clouds gathering in the north-east. Now it had grown into a solid wall. A blue shadow passed over the yellow, sunbaked earth.

“Not a bad idea to get the Moth under cover,” I suggested.

We went out, and walked towards the small landing-ground where we had left our machine. It had suddenly grown very dark, and the blue sky could no longer be seen. We took a tarpaulin, and started to pull it over the Moth.

At that moment the clouds split, and a whirlwind hit us, tearing the tarpaulin from our grasp, and sweeping our machine and ourselves before it, like so many dried leaves. And then came the deluge. A veritable flood descended upon us, soaking us to the skin in a few seconds.

AIR STORIES

It could only have lasted a minute, and then the cloud-burst ceased and gave way to steady rain. But the damage had been done. About a hundred and fifty yards away from me stood what was left of the Moth. It might just as well have been a perambulator or a capsized canoe, so little did it resemble an aeroplane.

"Schneeberger!" I shouted in a mournful voice.

He emerged from behind the wrecked machine, his hair covering his face, and looking like a drowned rat.

We made tracks for the bar, and found that the barman had removed our glasses. "I thought you weren't coming back, gentlemen," he said, with a friendly smile. We ordered another brandy, which we drank in silence.

Should we capitulate, abandon the wrecked Moth, and return home? Or were we prepared to try our luck again, patch up the wrecked machine, and make a fresh start? That was the problem we had to decide.

The brandy warmed us. Outside, the storm had passed, and the evening sun shone brightly in the west. The moisture rose steaming from the puddles and the steppe grass.

We had another brandy, and decided to repair the machine.

On the following morning we made the journey to Arusha, where we enlisted the services of Baier, a mechanic, and two German carpenters, Glaser and Bleich. Full of zeal, they set about their task of rebuilding the Moth.

They were kept busy for days, while Schneeberger spent all the daylight hours with his camera, taking snaps of slim Babati girls, broad-chested, proud men and numerous native children. "They're so nice," he said, "provided you don't look at the dirt."

I just killed time and amused myself by studying the many curious individuals who stopped at the Fig Tree Hotel. The majority were motorists, many of them sinister figures, with sinister business with the tribes farther in the interior. More attractive were the farmers. Any one who could live here year after year

and keep sane in such lonely surroundings had to be a man, or go to pieces.

THE Moth had not long been back in commission when the dreaded rainy season was upon us, and it was time for us to move out. The main body of the expedition had already left Arusha and returned to the coast by car.

Schneeberger and myself decided to follow them by air, flying together in our reserve machine, a B.F.W. The Moth had, it is true, been patched up, but was far from being in a fit state to undertake a long cross-country flight.

The day of our departure was a sort of national festival. Babati girls danced round the machine, the barman waved his white hat, and a farmer with whom I had been out shooting came over specially from his farm. Under his arm he was carrying something tied up in strong brown paper. It looked rather like a coat-hanger in shape, but turned out to be the horns of a buffalo that I had shot.

"You're a sportsman," he said, and shook my hand until my arm nearly came out of its socket. It was the greatest sign of affection which, in his sober state, he was capable of showing.

Then we took-off.

The plains quickly disappeared, and soon the ten thousand feet high peaks of the Mau Range came into view. Presently we saw the huge, silvery expanse of Lake Victoria, and, away to the north, the green tops of vast virgin forests. As we flew low above the tree-tops a sickly-sweet, putrid smell rose up from them.

Schneeberger was busy over the side with a film camera when suddenly we felt a blow, as though someone had struck the undercarriage with a hammer. Glancing forward, I saw that the reserve petrol-tank had worked loose from its bearers and was swinging to and fro. We were then about two hundred and fifty feet above the trees, and there was no sign of an opening or a native settlement where we could land. On our right lay the waters of Lake Victoria, and in the shallows near the shore

ACE OF THE BLACK CROSS

crocodiles floated like drifting logs. One could see them quite distinctly.

A nasty crack-up seemed inevitable, when Schneeberger suddenly got up, stretched as far forward as he could reach, wrapped his arms round the tank, and, with the weight of his own body, held it in place. If he could keep it there until we reached Jinja we were saved. We were then passing close above the trees and the stench from the forest was almost unbearable. Higher up it was cooler and perhaps Schneeberger would be better able to hold out.

"Can you manage it, Schneeberger?" I shouted as I eased the 'plane up into a gentle climb.

My words were lost in the noise of the engine, but Schneeberger still held on to the tank like grim death.

Jinja . . . the Ibis Hotel. It was like a remnant of civilisation that had wandered into the African jungle. We shut off, and landed. I had to help Schneeberger out of the machine for he was so stiff that he could hardly move. And that night he developed a high fever.

A Ford agent helped us repair the damage to the tank, but he was not optimistic as to our chances. "If I were you I'd stick to the big motor road through the Sudan," was his advice as we were about to take-off—"just in case. . . ."

All went well until we were flying above Lado, looking down on great herds of elephants which were stamping through the long grass, throwing up clouds of dust in their track. Then our petrol lead broke, and we had to make a hurried forced landing.

Our only chance was to land as close to the motor road as possible and luckily we found a clear patch within a few yards of it.

The ground was as hot as the inside of an oven, and there was no house within sight. We spread a small tarpaulin over the machine, and crawled underneath to rest until it became cooler. A rapid examination of the engine had shown that the necessary repairs were altogether beyond our resources. Schneeberger's

fever grew worse, and soon he was groaning for water.

I set out to look for some. At one place the grass was greener than elsewhere, and I assumed that there was moisture there. I continued the search, and came across some stale, evil-smelling swamp water. I filtered it through my pyjamas and Schneeberger drank it in long, thirsty draughts.

In the evening, a couple of natives strolled past our improvised tent. I signalled to them, but they disappeared. Presently one of them returned and approached. He happened to be a son of the local chief.

It was very difficult to make him understand, but, eventually we learnt that we had landed in country inhabited by the Lau tribe. They had seen aeroplanes before, and displayed great fear of them.

But as soon as they noticed that our machine was crippled their manner instantly changed. We were in their power, and they took care to let us know it.

I asked for some milk. The man brought me a tinful, and held out his hand.

"Five shillings," he said.

I shrugged my shoulders, and offered him a cigarette-case. It was a bronze case, made by a Munich firm which specialised in artificial metal-ware, and it shone like gold.

He took it, looked at it carefully, and scratched the opening-catch. He was looking for the hall-mark. He then contemptuously curled his thick lips, and handed it back to me.

"Not gold," he said.

After that I did not dare even to mention the glass beads which I was carrying with me.

FOR two whole days we were stranded in that desolate spot with Schneeberger's condition growing steadily worse, and the natives becoming more impertinent each hour. I had to stay near the tent to prevent them from stealing our possessions. The heat was unbearable, and the strain on our nerves was intense.

AIR STORIES

Gradually I began to despair: my friend was ill, we had no provisions, and were surrounded by hostile natives. Moreover, the rains were due at any moment, and weeks might pass before a car came along the road.

Then, on the morning of the third day we heard the distant hum of an aero engine. Presently it became a drone, and at last a Puss Moth hove into sight and came speeding, low down, towards us. I tore the cover off Schneeberger, and waved it frantically in the air.

The airman immediately saw it, circled us twice, and landed. A slim, wiry man wearing khaki walked towards us.

"Campbell Black," he introduced himself, and never shall I forget the debt we owe to that gallant, quiet Englishman. He had brought with him cigarettes, and, most important of all, fresh drinking water.

Later, Campbell Black told us that the Shell petrol station at which we had last filled up had, after we left, telegraphed to enquire whether we had arrived, and on learning that we were overdue, a search-party had at once been organised.

In the afternoon a big R.A.F. two-seater landed, bringing with it tools to repair our machine, a fresh supply of fuel and an invitation from Wing Commander Sholto Douglas to visit him in Khartoum.

We arrived there in the evening. The Wing Commander received us with a smile, but, as I started to thank him, he interrupted me.

"We were on the same sector of the front in nineteen-seventeen," he said, "and that's good enough. Even if we were on different sides."

CHAPTER III

International Air Races

THE air vibrated with the noise of aeroplane engines. At least fifteen machines were flying above Cleveland Airport—rolling, looping and stunting, practising for the American National Air Races which were due to begin in three days' time.

I landed. Mechanics ran towards me,

and behind them came a man with horn-rimmed spectacles and a list of competitors.

"Colonel Udet from Germany?" he asked.

"Oberleutnant Udet," I corrected him.

"We've got you down as Colonel." He looked at me severely.

"Very sorry, but I'm only a subaltern."

"Well, we'll split the difference, and call it Major," he announced, saluting with the tip of his pencil.

Two gentlemen wearing check suits informed me that they were reporters from the Cleveland local Press. They wanted to see the Flamingo, my aerobatics machine.

I pointed to the 'plane I was in:

"This is it," I said.

They looked at the machine, then they looked at me. The Flamingo was now eight years old, the first machine of her type. In her youth she had been very imposing; to-day she was showing her age.

"Say, that's interesting," said the gentlemen of the Press. They were polite people, and were anxious not to insult a guest of the National Air Races.

I remained on the aerodrome for a while, watching the others practise. There were some smart performances. Many, with their high-powered engines, shot through the air like shells from a gun. "I shall have all my work cut out," I thought. My one-hundred horse-power "sparrow" was going to compete against hawks.

A racing machine roared over my head, and circled the pylon. As it turned I saw a thin wisp of white smoke, followed by thick, dark fumes. The machine was on fire.

The pilot acted like lightning, threw the machine on her back, turned her nose to the sky, and fell out of the cockpit. When he was within a few hundred yards of the ground his parachute opened and he landed about a hundred and fifty feet away from where I was standing.

I ran towards him. He had scrambled to his feet, and stood brushing the dust from his clothes. Mechanics ran towards him.

ACE OF THE BLACK CROSS

"Any damage done?" he asked.

A man in a boiler-suit answered: "No, thank God, it didn't fall on any of the buildings."

"O.K.!" said the airman, dragged a packet of cigarettes from his overall pocket and slowly lit one. I watched his movements. The hand which held the match was as steady as a rock. Cool customers, these Americans!

On reaching my hotel I looked at the entries in the register, and saw that Flight Lieutenant R. R. Atcherley, the British R.A.F. pilot, Orlinky, the Pole, and de Bernhardt, the Italian, had already arrived. The best men flying the best machines. And Germany was represented only by a 100 h.p. Flamingo sports 'plane. For, by the terms of the Peace Treaty, we were not allowed to build machines of higher power.

I had several sleepless nights. As an individual it is not hard to lose. One enjoys the contest, and does one's best. But to represent one's country, and then lose, is rather a different matter.

However, my Flamingo quickly became a celebrity in Cleveland. It was the sort of fame enjoyed by the man who attends a banquet wearing a tail-coat and light-brown shoes.

AT last the day of the National Air Races arrived. It was a day of brilliant weather and the pilots from the foreign teams were fetched from their hotels by car.

Crowds of people arrived from Cleveland, Chicago and New York, and from all parts of the country. They came by rail, road and air. It was a national holiday in the air.

The programme began at nine in the morning and continued until nightfall. Then followed a firework display. On the next day it began all over again. There was flying every day for a whole week.

"A hundred thousand spectators," announced one of the committee-men, proudly inflating his waistcoat.

Once the contests had started, one event followed another in an unbroken series. Great air-liners nose-dived

towards the 'drome, looped above the heads of the crowd, and shot into the air again.

Then came the American Air Force, resembling a swarm of giant hornets. A hundred bodies detached themselves from a hundred machines. A hundred parachutes opened and slowly glided to earth. The crowd roared its applause.

"Major Udet from Germany," the loud-speakers announced, as I was climbing into my machine.

Then I went to work. I had very carefully thought out my programme beforehand. Obviously, I could not compete on the same lines as the other 'planes with their far more powerful engines. They climbed, turned, and looped at a speed far and away beyond the abilities of my low-powered Flamingo.

Instead, I planned to fly very slowly, close above the heads of the spectators—the very opposite to the type of flying that they had hitherto been seeing.

I flew on my back, close to the earth. I looped with the engine shut off, climbing again when my machine was only a few yards from the stands. Then I finished up with a "plate" landing on the very spot from which I had taken-off.

My competitors, no doubt, would have done equally well if their machines had been as light and handy as my Flamingo. As it happened, they had the heavier machines, and I reaped the victory.

As I landed people jumped from their seats, shouted, and waved hats, arms and handkerchiefs. A radio-reporter seized me by the arm and dragged me before the microphone. There I found Colonel Rickenbacker who, with twenty-six victories to his credit, was America's most successful wartime pilot. He was a tall, lean man, with sharp features, and looked rather like a white Indian. We stood together on a raised platform high above the heads of the crowd.

"We met for the first time near Soissons," announced Rickenbacker, his voice carrying over the ground. "Seventy of us started off, but, when evening came, only twenty-five returned to our camp. We fought many other battles afterwards, and many a man was shot down. But

AIR STORIES

we two have been spared, and that's the great thing. And so now we can shake hands and show young Americans that honourable opponents can be honourable friends when fighting is over."

Rickenbacker held out his hand. Cameras clicked, and the crowd shouted their approval. We must have looked like our own statues as we stood there hand in hand, with immobile features.

Then Rickenbacker bent down, grinned, and whispered in my ear.

"Got a drink here for afterwards," he said, tapping his hip-pocket significantly.

It was during the period of the Great Drought. I nodded. And then again we stood like statues, receiving the applause of the crowds with stony faces.

EACH day of the Air Races was held in honour of a different nation. For the "Deutscher Tag" a special surprise had been prepared. The idea was that when I had finished my exhibition flight, I should publicly be introduced to Lieutenant Wanamaker, whom I had shot down above the Western Front in July, 1918.

Wanamaker duly arrived accompanied by his wife, and he had evidently already made up his mind what he was going to say.

"Hallo, Ernest!" he said into the microphone as soon as we met, "Why, you've got quite fat." The crowd roared. They rather enjoy personal remarks in America.

I then produced a piece of canvas which I had been hiding behind my back. It was the number of Wanamaker's machine, which I had cut from the wreckage of his Nieuport soon after it had crashed.

At the sight of this grim relic of the past his carefully prepared speech was forgotten.

"Say, that's mighty nice of you," he stammered—"fine of you to think of that."

He completely forgot that we were standing in front of the microphone, our words heard by several thousands of people. "Tell you what," he said.

"When this riot's over, come and stay with us over in Akron. My wife will be delighted. Won't you, Mildred?"

Mrs. Wanamaker, a trifle embarrassed, nodded. "Yes," she whispered, and her reply was drowned in the roar of cheers that broke out from below. Wanamaker had been a success, probably a much greater success than if he had been allowed to carry on with his Wild West speech.

After the Air Races I drove over to Akron. The Wanamakers lived in pleasant country some way from the city. In the evening Wanamaker produced some German wine in my honour. It was hock, and he saw to it that my glass did not long remain empty. We talked about his civil job: he was in the public prosecutor's office. And then we talked about the War. But our recollections of those days were a little obscure. It was not until I went to my room that everything came back to me.

It was July 2nd, 1918, very early in the morning. I had been awakened by anti-aircraft fire, which sounded very near.

I ran to the window and shouted "Berend!" When he came I told him to get my machine ready. He sprinted to the hangar.

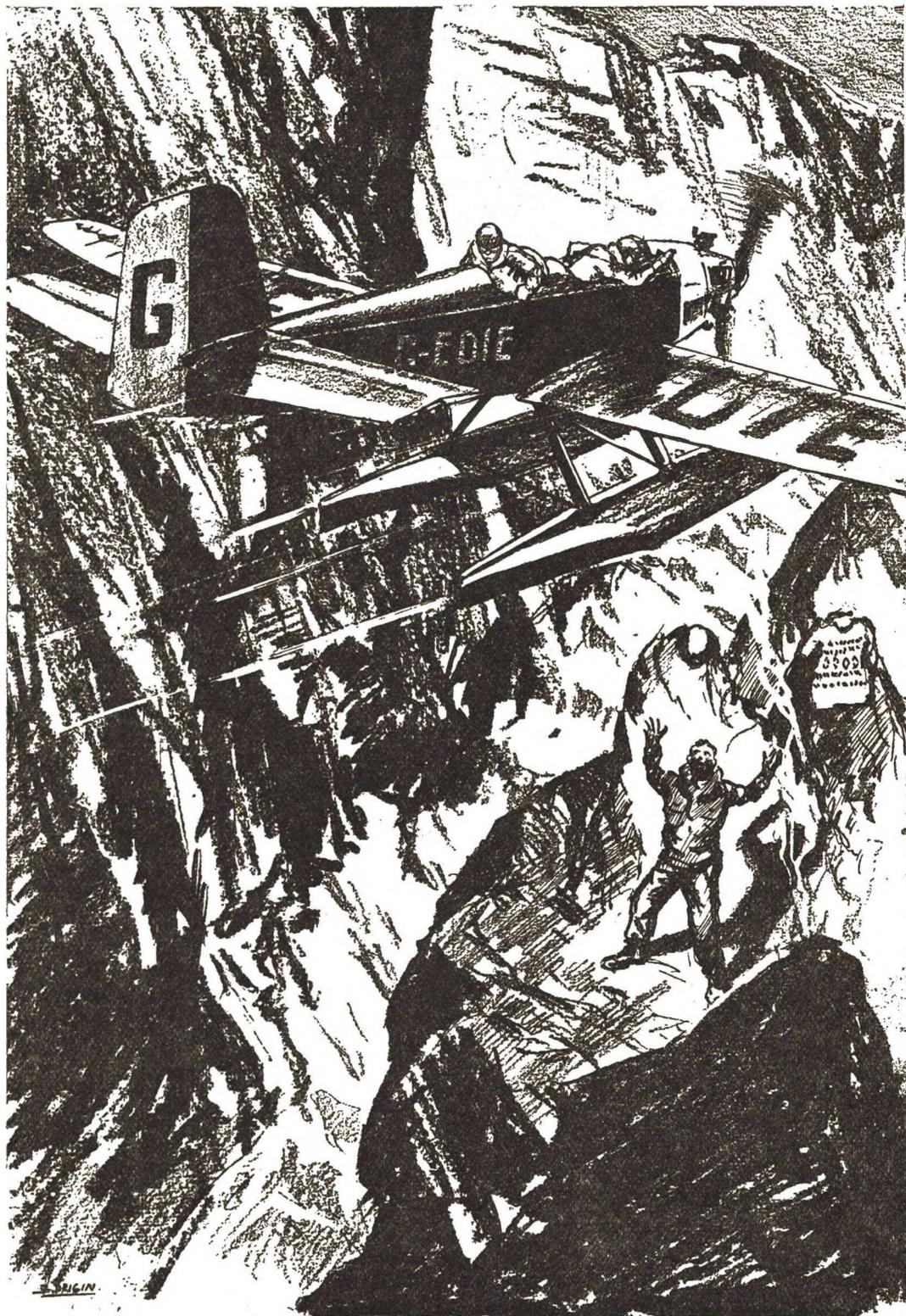
I came down in my pyjamas, and took-off. I climbed to ten thousand feet. It was bitterly cold. Bursting shells showed the way. Two flights had come to grips. There were eight Nieuports against seven Fokkers.

I recognised Löwenhardt, who was chasing an opponent. Another enemy machine caught him in the rear. I tried to drive him off, and free Löwenhardt from his perilous situation. But I dared not fire, they were too close to each other and there was the risk that I might hit Löwenhardt.

Suddenly Löwenhardt looked round, recognised his danger, and turned. A moment later a burst from my machine-gun struck the Nieuport's engine. The machine caught fire, fell, and crashed.

I landed nearby, and as the pilot crawled out of the wreckage, I walked over and offered him a cigarette. He

ACE OF THE BLACK CROSS



We circled above him as he danced round the fire, frantically waving like a priest of Baal

AIR STORIES

thanked me, and as he lay on the ground he introduced himself as Lieutenant Wanamaker of the U.S. Air Service. His teeth were tightly clenched, and he pointed to his thigh : it was fractured.

Stretcher-bearers came and lifted him up. A man in field-grey ran past us. "Three Americans have just come down!" he shouted. Wanamaker asked what he had said, and I translated it for him.

"Seems like a pretty good morning for us!" was his comment. And that was the last I heard of him.

Now I looked at the family pictures hanging on the walls of my bedroom. There were groups, and portraits of individuals. Several of them were very old-fashioned and brown with age.

Had Wanamaker died I should never have visited this comfortable home, and the woman with the fair hair would have hated me as the man who had killed her husband.

I switched off the light, and went to sleep.

CHAPTER IV

Aerobatics in Hollywood

WHEN I arrived in Hollywood I was quite unknown, at least from the point of view of being famous as a film star. Three days later, however, everyone seemed to know me. I was invited here, invited there, handed round, and interviewed.

It subsequently appeared that one of the directors of Fox Films had said : "I shall have a few words to say to this Major Udet," and that was quite enough to establish my fame—in Hollywood.

From then onwards I was a frequent visitor to the film stars' country houses. Generally they were pleasant, simple, hard-working people. They cultivated their fads simply for the sake of advertisement, and there was one fad which they all seemed to share—a swimming-pool.

Everyone fought bitterly for possession of the biggest, finest and most luxurious swimming-bath. As far as I was able to judge, first prize at that time went to

Harold Lloyd : you could walk all the afternoon on the bottom of his bath if you cared to don a diving-suit.

Mary Pickford showed a keen interest in aerobatics, and for her benefit I demonstrated how easy it was to pick up a handkerchief from the ground with the wing-tip of my Flamingo.

The following morning a gentleman called at my hotel.

"Do you own a motor-car?" he asked.

"No."

"Do you want one?"

"Perhaps. If it isn't too expensive."

Apparently it was to cost nothing. The car stood outside the hotel. It was a four-seater saloon. If I could remove a handkerchief from its roof with the wing-tip of my plane the car belonged to me. The firm's advertising manager was already there with a photographer.

Ten minutes later I was the owner of a motor-car.

Altogether, I spent three weeks in Hollywood, and then heard from Fox Films. One of their agents asked me to attend an interview. He went at once to the point. "We want to shoot a Richthofen film, and we need a technical adviser," he said, and mentioned a fantastic fee.

I thought for a few moments. Richthofen? No! It was too big a theme for Hollywood.

"Sorry, can't be done," I said.

The agent shrugged his shoulders. "A pity," he said. But he did not press me to reconsider my decision, nor did he ask my reasons for refusing. He was completely objective and unsentimental. Typically American.

"Have a drink," he said.

This time I did not refuse.

THE chairman raised his voice. He was a man of dignified appearance, with a long white beard.

"... and now I have a pleasant surprise for our airman friend. Among us is a man, a fine fellow, who in 1918 rescued Leutnant Udet from the enemy's bullets. Herr Grabe, come forward, please."

ACE OF THE BLACK CROSS

CHAPTER V

On the Edge of the World

There was a roar of applause from the assembly. It was in Chicago, and some five thousand German compatriots were present.

A man ascended the platform. His manner was hesitant and embarrassed. Rather under average height, he was thin and pale—he looked underfed, and I could have sworn that I had never set eyes on him until that moment.

“Now, Herr Grabe,” said the chairman encouragingly, “we want you to welcome Herr Udet.”

Grabe began to speak, in an almost inaudible, shaky voice. “I am delighted,” he said, “to have this opportunity of meeting you again, Herr Major.”

I examined him more closely. His sleeves were frayed, and his shoes were patched and down-at-heel. There was an expression of anxiety in his blue, protruding eyes, the fear of a broken-down man whom life had served very harshly. He was a man staking everything on a last hope. “Give him a chance,” I thought, and advanced towards the platform.

“Many thanks, Herr Grabe,” I said aloud, and shook hands with him. Thunderous applause broke out in the room. Grabe turned red, but began, in a stronger voice, to relate his story. He described how he found me lying unconscious on the barbed wire, how he picked me up and carried me back through a hailstorm of bullets. When he ended there was such a tumult of cheering that it was a long while before the chairman could make himself heard again.

Below, in the body of the hall, I could see Grabe in the centre of a crowd of reporters. Occasionally he looked in my direction and smiled in a rather pathetic sort of way. Then he continued answering questions.

A few days later one of my friends wrote saying that Grabe had been given a job in a German slaughter-house. Before that he had been unemployed. It was his first job for many a long day.

“Give him a chance,” I thought. It was America’s favourite election slogan, and a pretty good slogan too.

DAVID had shot a sea-lion. He threw it on the sand, skinned it, and opened it up. It was a lean specimen for, at that time of the year, the early summer, seals do not carry much flesh on them.

We were sitting on a bench outside a small hut in North Greenland watching David. Behind him flowed the sea, grey-green in colour, and with a slight swell. Giant icebergs floated on the water, gliding on their way like huge, silent swans. Occasionally one of them would split in two, and there was a roar, like a battery firing, which resounded through the fjord and was echoed back to us by the perpendicular basalt cliffs on the mainland opposite. The berg had “calved,” and cast before it giant waves, fifteen feet high, which broke noisily on the beach.

David finished his work, and wiped the blood from his knife on his bearskin trousers. He moved away, followed by his wife. She carried the *kajak*. Then came their children, carrying on their backs as much meat as they were capable of lifting. As David passed us he greeted us, in grave and measured tones. For he was a great hunter. His wife smiled at us, displaying a set of flashing white teeth.

All that now remained of the sea-lion on the beach were the bones and the intestines and on these the dogs were soon at work, a mass of hairy bodies, so closely packed that it was impossible to distinguish one from the other.

Suddenly they sprang howling to one side, forming a lane. Through it strode “Nanunsiarssuit,” the “Bear-hunter,” the biggest and strongest dog in the village, the dog-king of Igdiorsuit.

The others left their meal and sat round in a circle, growling fiercely. The “Bear-hunter,” however, paid no attention to the others. He sniffed at the skeleton, and what remained of the intestines, snorted contemptuously, then turned round and walked slowly away. Again a lane was made for him to pass through.

AIR STORIES

Schneeberger jumped to his feet. "I must have that dog," he said.

Schriek and I watched him go, and smiled. We had then been six weeks in Igdiorsuit, long enough to know that David would rather part with his right hand than sell his "Nanunsiarssuit."

Away to the north, above the waters, we saw a red rocket, which was quickly followed by two green ones. They hung poised in the air for a few moments, and then plunged into the sea. It was Fanck's signal: filming was about to begin and Schriek and Schneeberger were wanted.

Two Eskimos, wearing rubber waders, hurried from the village on their way to the beach to launch Schriek's machine, while Schneeberger and Schriek ran into the hut to don their furs for the flight.

I watched their little Klemm take-off and disappear from view, flying northwards. Against the tall cliffs of the fjord it looked like a white sea-bird.

Nagaitsiak, their destination, lay sixty kilometres farther up the fjord, and was the main camp of the expedition, where Dr. Fanck and most of the other members were stationed. They were "shooting" the film "S.O.S. Iceberg."

Schriek, myself and the mechanics were stationed at Igdiorsuit. For here we had the only flat beach along the whole of the fjord, and we needed a sandy beach in order to beach our seaplanes.

Occasionally Schneeberger came along to visit us. We had been together in the making of the two Alpine films "*Pitz Palü*" and "*Stürme über dem Mont Blanc*." And we had been together in Africa. A comradeship had sprung up between us similar to that which existed among men in the trenches.

COLLABORATION between the ground party and the men in the air had been difficult to arrange at first, but, by degrees, we devised means whereby an understanding could be reached. Rockets summoned us from afar, and coloured bunting on the roof of Dr. Fanck's white tent at Nagaitsiak gave us our instructions during the taking of the film.

Latterly, we had even established

postal communication. Post-bags were suspended between two tall poles, and when we flew over Nagaitsiak we caught them up, and, in return, dropped our own letters. These mails were even stamped. Rockwell Kent, an American, designed and hand-printed them. He lived for nine months of the year here in Greenland, at Igdiorsuit. The Eskimos loved him like an older brother. He was a great nature-lover, and had a heart that understood simple people.

The flying itself also caused us some trouble at first. Close to the surface of the sea there was drifting "blue" ice. It was very transparent, as clear as glass, and almost impossible to see from the air. If our floats struck any of this submerged ice on landing they were badly holed, and in the first few weeks Baier and Buchholz had to repair forty holes which had been caused in this way.

On one occasion my engine cut out, and I had to alight between two icebergs. The bergs drifted rapidly towards each other, and I was in some danger of being crushed between them. Climbing out of my cockpit, I balanced on a float, swung the propeller, and just had time to grab the joy-stick and taxi clear before the two hundred feet high walls of the giant bergs met with colossal impact.

In the evenings we used to sit on a little bench outside the small wooden church, in whose upper storey we had our quarters. Sometimes we played the accordian. Then the girls, wearing their gayest clothes, would come out to listen to us. Generally, however, we sat in silence and smoked. Then Old Daniel, David's father, would come out to us. He had been a great hunter in his time.

He would sit down beside us, stretch out his horny hands in the pale sunlight, and chew *matak*. It is taken from the belly of the whale, and cut into small cubes. It tastes rather like a walnut.

Daniel often cast longing eyes at our tobacco, but he never begged. He was far too proud for that.

One evening, after we had given him a glass of *schnapps*, he grew somewhat cheerful and talkative. Rockwell Kent,

ACE OF THE BLACK CROSS

who was with us at the time, translated what he said. The old fellow began to tell us the story of his encounter with a bear.

They were alone, he said, far away on the fringe of the inland ice. The dogs sat in a semicircle round the bear and growled. One of them jumped up, and hurled itself at the white foe, only to fall back on to the snow with a broken backbone. Another, struck by the bear's paw, also fell. A third dog met the same fate.

Then Daniel himself tackled the bear with a harpoon, for in those days there were no firearms.

With his old, shaky hands he took a paddle that was leaning against the wall, and began to spar about with it. His antics were weird, but by no means ridiculous. For here was a man reacting heroic deeds of the past.

The bear seized the harpoon in his teeth and paws. It broke like an icicle in a child's hands.

Daniel then whipped a long knife out of his boot and hurled himself at the bear. He managed to elude its deadly embrace and plunged his knife into the bear's heart. Blood spurted all round him . . . the blood of his enemy. Then the bear sank . . . and the dogs rushed upon him. . . .

Old Daniel was seized by a fit of violent coughing. He coughed so badly that he had to lean against the wooden planks of the church for support. Then he spat on the sand. He spat blood.

He shook his head, grinned slightly, and without another word turned and walked towards his hut. He was consumptive, and could not last very much longer.

There are many consumptives up in Greenland. During the Northland summer which we spent in Igdorsuit seven out of the seventy inhabitants of the village died of the disease.

CHAPTER VI

Lost on a Glacier

THREE rockets soared up above the camp at Nagaitsiak. They were a signal that I was to land.

It was not altogether an easy order to obey as the only clear water was in the lee of a high, stony beach. But with the help of two men waiting in the water to catch my wing-tips I managed it, waded ashore and walked towards the tents.

I found the camp in a state of great excitement. Dr. Sorge, the scientist of the expedition, had disappeared. Eight days ago he had left for the north in a portable canoe. His destination was the Rink Glacier, and he should have been back within five days.

"*Sieben Tage kannst du ohne Sorge sein*" ("For seven days you need have no worry") he had said to his wife as he started off. "But if I don't return on the eighth day let Fanck and the others know."

He had then stepped into his little *klepper* boat and disappeared among the pack-ice. He was quite alone. Some Eskimos had wanted to accompany him, but he had sent them back.

Now it was the eighth day, and that morning a hunter had arrived at the camp on his return from the Kangerdluk Fjord, where he had been shooting sea-lions. Close to a big waterfall he had found the wreckage of a folding-boat which had been crushed in the pack-ice. He showed us a piece of the wrecked boat. Without the slightest doubt it belonged to Sorge's canoe.

Schneeberger and I set off immediately. We flew above the pack-ice of the Kangerdluk and between the black walls of the Fjord, which rose to a height of nearly three thousand feet.

We circled near the waterfall, which looked like a giant white marble statue standing against the dark basalt cliffs.

We could see the glint of the water in the gaps between the ice, and, occasionally a small black shadow on the pale blue surface. But when we drew nearer we saw that it was only a clod of earth that had been carried away on the ice,

For several hours we kept up our search and then shortage of petrol forced us to return. When we landed the whole camp ran to meet us.

Slowly I made my way to Sorge's tent

AIR STORIES

where his wife was waiting. She was seated on a small camp-bed. Leni Riefenstahl was at her side, with her arm round her shoulder.

Gerda Sorge did not weep. She sat silently, her features set, wringing her hands until the knuckles showed white. The hands of a woman in despair can be more poignant than her tears.

When my machine had been re-fuelled I prepared to start off for the second time, alone. But, just as I was about to take-off, Schneeberger scrambled into the machine. "Two pairs of eyes are better than one," he said.

This time I planned to fly farther north, for it occurred to me that Sorge might have been stranded farther away, and that his wrecked canoe had drifted to the south.

We flew between the cliffs, at about half their height. Occasionally we had to make a slight detour to avoid the ragged tops of giant icebergs. The fjord grew narrower and darker as we went on.

The Rink Glacier at last—Sorge's goal. It was a mass of gleaming ice, about three hundred and fifty feet high and about a mile wide—a pale green wall standing out of the sea. Here the inland ice forced its way to the sea.

We flew along the wall of the glacier, but could see no trace of Sorge. Then, happening to glance upwards, I saw a thin column of smoke curling skywards from the dark rock on the southern edge of the glacier.

We turned and flew towards it. Schneeberger held out his arm and pointed down below. Two figures—veritable giants—stood guard on the rock. I flew towards them, to find that they were tall stones on which Sorge had hung some of his clothes: we recognised his gaily-coloured sweater and his cap. Evidently they had been placed there to show us the way.

Then we saw Sorge himself. A thin, wiry man, wearing an "expedition" beard, he was dancing round a fire, like a priest of Baal, frantically waving his arms.

We circled above him, and waved. Holding the joy-stick between my knees, I quickly scribbled a few words on a

scrap of paper. "Boat will start for you in two hours." I placed the piece of paper in an empty cartridge-case and dropped it overboard. We waited until he had picked it up, and then flew back.

On the way we met our motor-boat. Slowly it edged its way through the pack-ice, and headed for the north. We dropped a message indicating Sorge's position.

IN the camp, when we landed, there was great joy and excitement. All the petrol which remained was commandeered, and we hurriedly prepared for a third flight, as there seemed some doubt whether the motor-boat could reach Sorge in a single day.

On this last trip there was no room for Schneeberger. In the observer's seat, tied together with a piece of string, was a big sack containing provisions, fuel and blankets.

Sorge heard me approaching. He stood on the edge of a rock and signalled. I circled close above his head, then took the sack and lifted it out of the observer's seat. At the same moment I felt a sharp tug at the throat, and my head was forced back, hitting the back-rest of the seat. The string attached to the sack had wound itself round my neck and was throttling me!

The 'plane side-slipped dangerously close to the rocks. I whipped out my pocket-knife and cut the string—I was free!

I took the joy-stick again, and glanced down below.

The sack fell right at Sorge's feet. He had not noticed my predicament, and stood waving cheerily to me.

Six days later Sorge returned to Nagaitiak. He had witnessed a remarkable spectacle, one of the most extraordinary sights ever seen by man. The Rink Glacier had "calved." Enormous masses of ice, together as big as all the houses in London rolled into one, had crashed into the sea, throwing up fountains of water to a height of over a thousand feet. The tidal wave which followed had caught his boat—which, for safety, he had placed on a rocky

ACE OF THE BLACK CROSS

ledge twelve feet above the beach—wrecked it, and carried the wreckage away to the south, where it had been found by the hunter.

THAT afternoon we held a shooting competition. I was in charge of its organisation, and offered my Winchester repeating-rifle as a prize for the best performance. All the male inhabitants of Igdiorsuit were invited to compete.

They all turned up, bringing their rifles with them. These included many curious old blunderbusses, while one was actually a muzzle-loader.

I am not a bad shot, and during the contests we held in the days of the Richthofen Squadron I generally managed to hold my own. But I was no match for those Greenlanders.

They loaded slowly and thoughtfully, and took very deliberate aim. They stood like statues, and their hands were so steady that they might have been carved in stone. Every second shot was a "bull," and most of the rest were "inners."

The decision, and the rifle, went to Imerarsuk, "Little Water-bag," as he was known. He hugged it, stroked it, and ran off laughing to his hut.

In the evening David came to see me. His father was dying, and had one last wish: to be taken up in my 'plane over the Fjord and Igdiorsuit.

"All right," I said. "Tell the men to get their waders, and have the machine ready. Then bring your father down to the beach."

Two of them carried Old Daniel and lifted him into the machine. I helped him don a flying-helmet, and adjusted his goggles. He laughed like a child.

We took-off, climbing steadily into the evening sky.

The sea lay below us, coloured yellow in the light of the sinking sun. White icebergs swam on its surface. The year was ageing, and winter was already harnessing its black horses in the North. Soon would come the night, the long night.

We climbed higher and still higher. . . . The mud huts of Igdiorsuit had grown as small as wormcasts, and the church spire looked like a finger pointing towards the sky.

The mountains were below us, and looking to the north one saw a vast expanse of inland ice stretching as far as the horizon, glittering in the light of the setting sun.

It was wonderful to see how the old man in front of me followed each movement of the machine, and how he "went with" her as each change of direction was made. The hunter who is accustomed to handling a *kajak* in all sorts of weather is at home in all the elements.

The engine droned on. Land and sea slipped smoothly by below us.

Then, suddenly, came a human voice, gradually swelling, rising above the noise of the engine.

Old Daniel was singing.

HE was still singing when we landed, and he continued to sing as they carried him from the machine and took him to his hut. Singing, he disappeared into its dark interior.

Next morning David was waiting outside my door. "My father died during the night," he said.

I gave him my hand.

"You are my friend," he said. "You can stay with me for as long as you wish."

But I had to be going on. Soon the long night would fall, a long night in which life stands still in the North.

THE END

STARTING NEXT MONTH!

FALCONS OF FRANCE

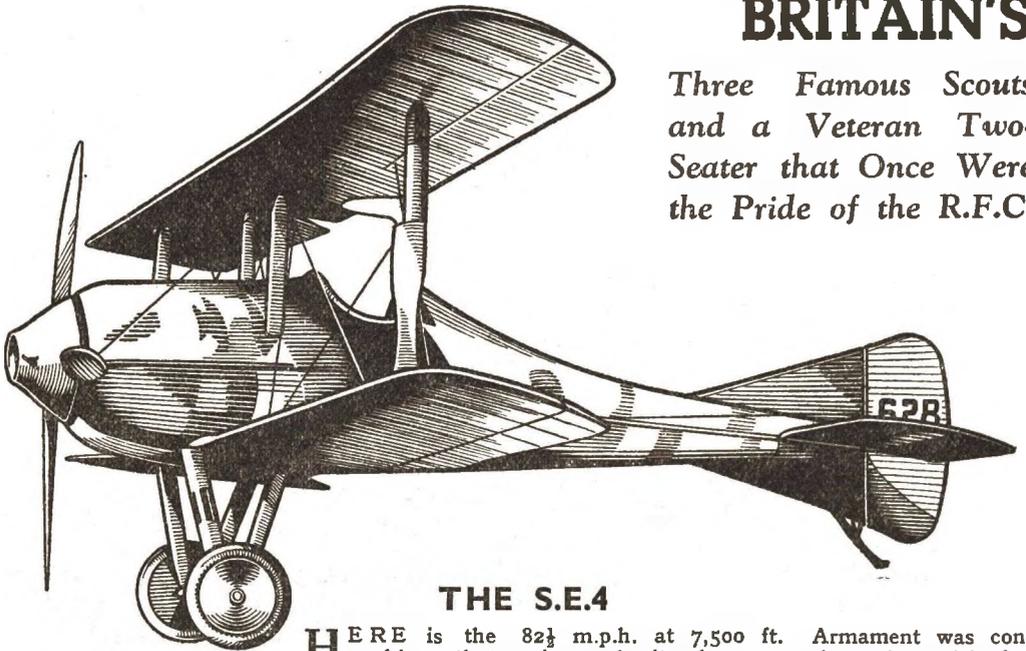
The True and Entrhralling Story of the Part played by the French Air Service in the World War in the Air, with Complete Lists of the Men and Machines that made Air History for France

By A. H. PRITCHARD

Author of "Wings of the Black Eagle"

BRITAIN'S

Three Famous Scouts
and a Veteran Two-
Seater that Once Were
the Pride of the R.F.C.



THE S.E.4

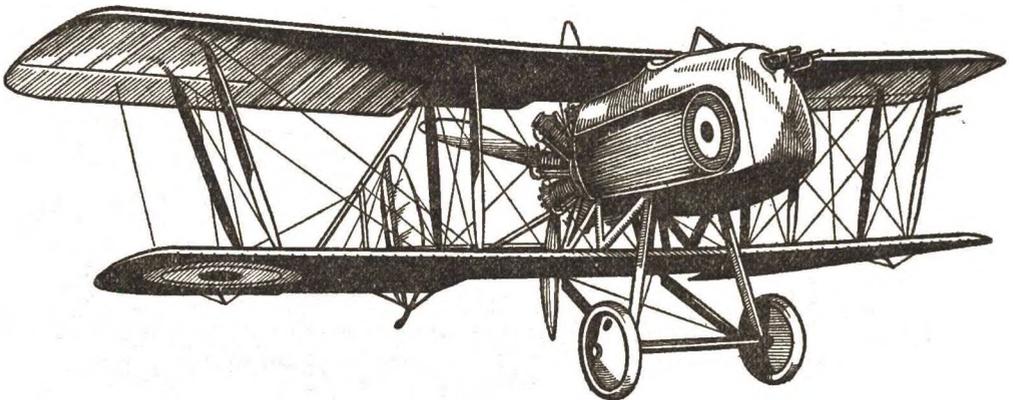
HERE is the machine that has been the subject of so much recent controversy in AIR STORIES—the S.E.4 single-seater scout of 1914 and the ancestor of the famous S.E.5. In many ways, the design of the machine was ahead of its time, notably in its clean lines and remarkably well-streamlined engine cowling and airscrew spinner. An 80-h.p. Gnome-Monosoupape engine, driving a four-bladed airscrew, gave it, according to our records, a speed of 92 m.p.h. low down and

82½ m.p.h. at 7,500 ft. Armament was conspicuous by its absence on the early models, but late in 1914 experiments were made with Webley automatic rifles bolted to the fuselage at such an angle as to clear the propeller arc. The letters "S.E." originally stood for "Santos Experimental," but with the advent of the S.E.2 became "Scouting Experimental." Approximate dimensions of the S.E.4 were: span, 27 ft. 5 in.; length, 21 ft.; height, 9 ft. 10½ in.; chord, 6 ft.

THE VICKERS VAMPIRE

THE last and one of the most successful pusher-type fighters of the war, the Vampire was produced late in 1918. Designed mainly for trench "strafing," it was one of the heaviest scout types ever built, all vital parts being protected by steel plating to a total weight of some 500 lb. The unladen weight of the whole machine, including armour-plating, was 1,870 lb. and the laden weight, 2,438 lb. A 200-h.p. Bentley rotary drove a four-bladed propeller rotating between two metal tail-

booms, and, despite its great weight, the Vampire could do 121 m.p.h. at 5,000 ft., 115 at 10,000 ft., and landed at 54 m.p.h. Rate of climb was 5,000 ft. in five minutes and 10,000 ft. in twelve minutes. Armament consisted of two or more fixed Lewis guns. The chief dimensions were: span, 31 ft. 6 in.; length, 22 ft. 11 in.; height, 9 ft. 5 in.; chord, 5 ft. 6 in.; gap, 4 ft. 4 in. Petrol capacity was 29 gallons and oil capacity 6 gallons.

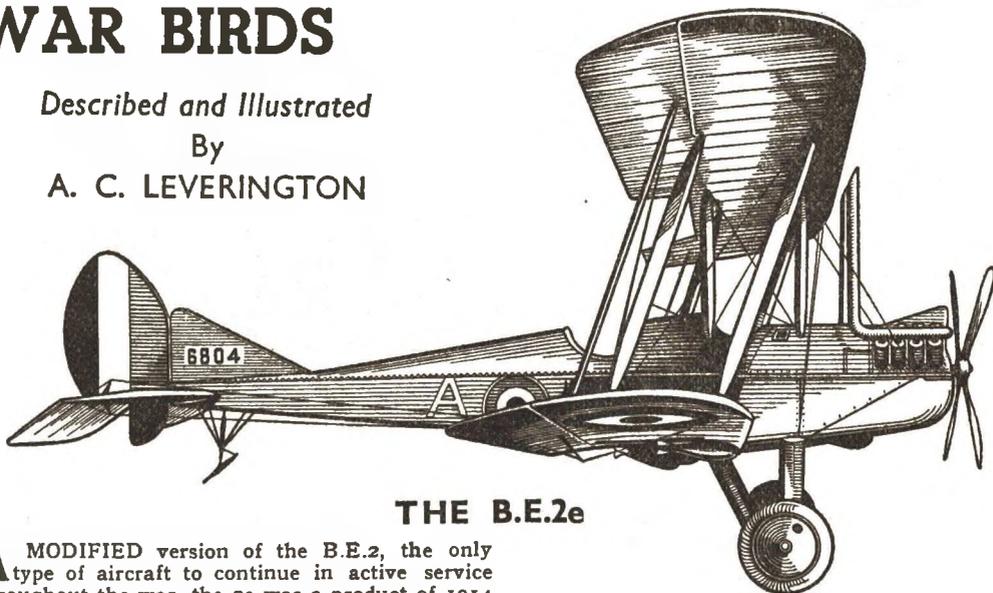


WAR BIRDS

Described and Illustrated

By

A. C. LEVERINGTON



THE B.E.2e

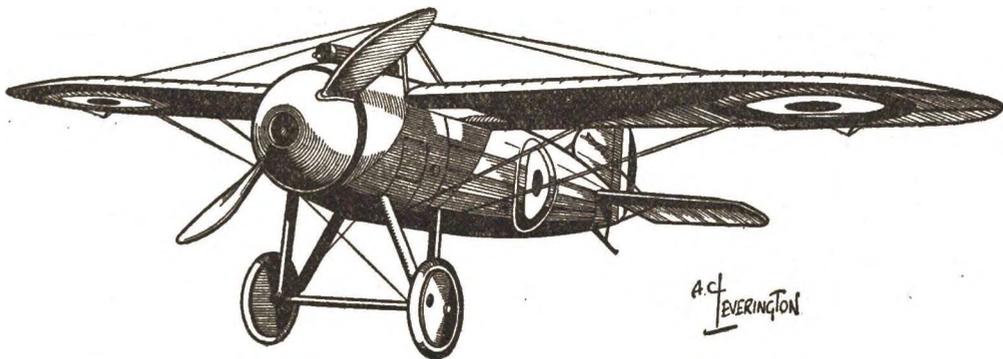
A MODIFIED version of the B.E.2, the only type of aircraft to continue in active service throughout the war, the 2e was a product of 1914 and figured all too prominently in the victory lists of the early German "aces." Designed by the Royal Aircraft Factory at Farnborough, the 2e could stagger along at about 97 m.p.h. with the aid of the notorious 100-h.p. "Raf" engine, of which it was slanderously said that "the Raf engine is an eight-cylindered air-cooled engine whose cylinders blow off in the order of firing!"

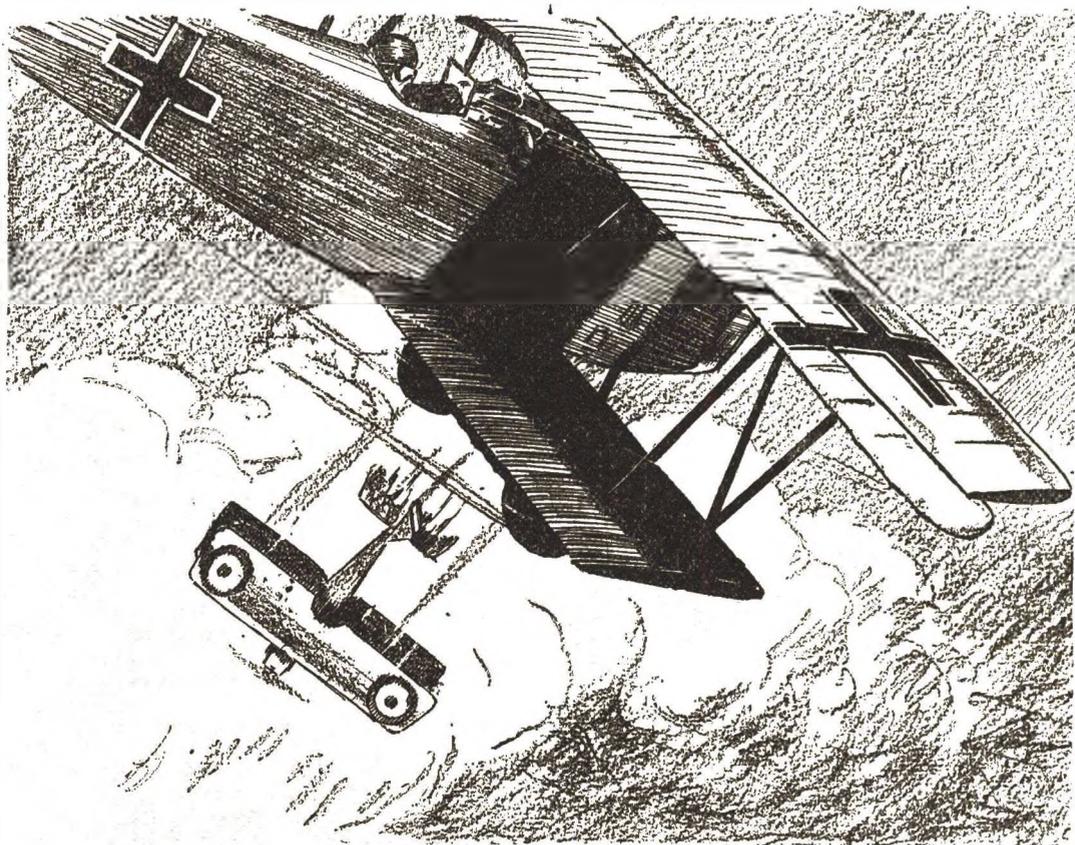
Initially, the 2e carried no armament other than a rifle or revolver and when, later, a Lewis gun was fitted, the speed dropped to about 86 m.p.h. The letters "B.E." stood for Bleriot Experimental, a tribute to the early Bleriot design from which the type originated. Principal dimensions of the 2e were: span, 36 ft. 10 in.; length, 27 ft. 3 in.; height, 11 ft. 1½ in.

THE BRISTOL SCOUT

PRODUCED early in 1916, this Bristol Mono-plane Scout saw considerable service on the Eastern Front during that and the following year. Fitted with a 110-h.p. Le Rhône, it had a speed, low down, of 130 m.p.h., did 127 m.p.h. at 5,000 ft. and 117 at 10,000 ft. It could climb to the 15,000-ft. level in nineteen minutes, to 10,000 ft. in nine minutes, and to 5,000 ft. in three minutes nine seconds. Fully loaded, it weighed 1,300 lb. and empty, 850 lb.

This Scout was the first machine to reach France, on March 25th, 1916, carrying a Vickers gun synchronised to fire through the propeller, but the type was never used to any extent on the Western Front; a curious fact, for it was a sturdy machine and as fast, if not faster, than any machine of its day. The principal dimensions were: span, 30 ft. 9 in.; length, 20 ft. 4 in.; height, 8 ft.; chord, 5 ft. 11 in.; wing area, 145 sq. ft.





Freddie had meant to pass beneath the diving Fokker but he was a second too late

**Augustus Barton was the Rabbit of all Rabbits and
Hermann Kranz was the Sector's Ace of Aces. Yet
this is Not the Tale of the Rabbit who Became an Ace
—Rather is it the Very Reverse**

CHAPTER I

A War Bird Returns

MAJOR COLE thought it his duty to look after the youngsters in his squadron. He took it for granted they could neither shoot nor fly when first sent out to France, and if he could have had his way they would not have been allowed within five miles of a German machine for a couple of months.

Bill Seacroft, Cole's cousin and the leader of "B" Flight, thought otherwise.

"If you keep a pup on a lead all the time, he'll break loose one day, and then a car will run over him," he summed up

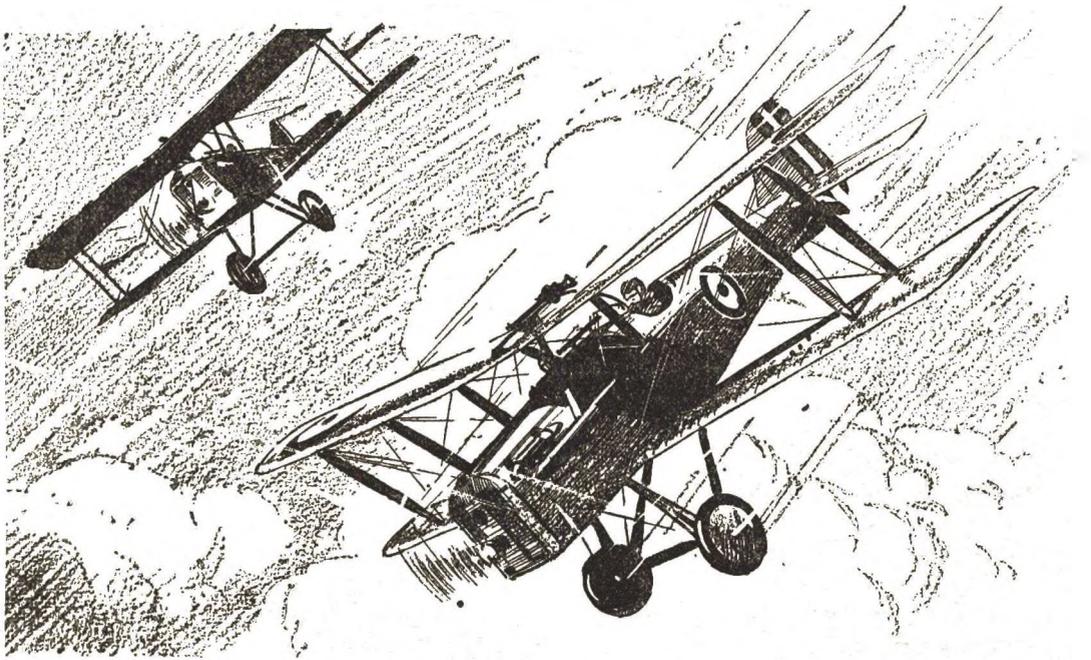
the situation to Captain Wittlesham of "C" Flight.

The result was an understanding between them to wangle every new man into "B" or "C" Flight, where they gave those rabbits just as much experience of aerial warfare as they could digest. Usually they turned them into decent fighting pilots, and Cole attributed their success to the merits of his system.

This story begins when Freddie Furley, of "B" Flight, had just returned from leave.

"London's a bit too hectic for me," he told Rudge Masters when he entered the hut they shared.

Rudge stared at him. "Glad to see



. . . . and the bullets bit deep as his S.E. caught the full force of the attack

THE ACE OF RABBITS

A Thrilling Story of Aerial Warfare in an S.E.5 Squadron on the Western Front

By "VIGILANT"

your ugly mug, old man, but we didn't expect you back for another couple of days."

"Why not? My leave is up to-day. And a damn good thing, too. I'm glad to be back where there's nothing to bother me but an occasional Hun and your snores at night."

Rudge stared at him again.

"Then you didn't get King Cole's wire?" he inquired.

"What wire? Why should King Cole wire me? Did he want to yank me back here before my time was up?"

"No. He was going to give you a couple of extra days, you mutt. But as you say you've no use for them——"

"No use for them?" yelled Freddie. "What d'you mean?"

"Only that yesterday King Cole got word they were sending him out a replacement for poor old Mason. A chap called Barton, whom no one knows anything about, so he's a rabbit, I suppose. Well, when they told King Cole this bloke was to fly out here on his lonesome, he tore his hair and called the Mess to witness that the whole Air Ministry was dotty, and that the poor fellow was bound to miss his way and land on some Hun aerodrome, because no one had ever taught him to read a map."

Freddie nodded. "Usual bilge!" he sighed.

"Well, when our worthy C.O. had thrown half a dozen fits, Bill Seacroft suggested you mightn't mind spending

AIR STORIES

a couple of extra days in London so that you could fly out with him. The Old Man brightened up no end at that, stood drinks to everyone within reach and wangled two more days' leave for you. Then he sent you a wire."

"And when did all this happen?" asked Freddie in a hollow voice.

"Last night, old thing."

Freddie's brow puckered as he tried to recall the events of the night. They were hazy, but he had a vague recollection of someone handing him a wire during the early hours of the morning. Yet he could not remember having read it.

He thrust a hand into his tunic pocket and pulled out a buff envelope. It was still unopened.

"Two more whole days in London," he groaned. "Rudge, what a ghastly war this is!"

"Better suppress that wire," advised the practical Rudge. "Old King Cole will have to believe you when you tell him you never got it, and, anyhow, he'll be too busy cursing the Air Ministry for sending him out this bloke on his lonesome to bother about having you shot at dawn."

Rudge was right. All that evening Major Cole told the mess his candid opinion of the authorities at home. His wrath was so mirth-provoking that Freddie even managed to forget his disappointment over the loss of those two extra days.

Any chance visitor to the mess that evening would have gained a totally inaccurate impression of the Squadron. Certainly he would have been surprised to learn that its commander was a redoubtable warrior and an efficient leader, whose only fault was, in fact, this nursing of the rabbits sent to him as replacements. Perhaps it was a fault on the right side when one considers the number of youngsters who lost their lives because they had to meet the Jagdstaffeln before they had been taught their business properly. But, unfortunately, Major Cole carried his caution to excess.

ON the following morning "B" Flight was due to leave the ground at eleven o'clock, and as Freddie strolled out on to the 'drome a few minutes before the hour he noted an unusual air of efficiency pervading the hangars.

"Old King Cole's coming up with us," whispered Rudge.

"Going to work off his paddy on the inoffensive Hun?" asked Freddie.

"That's it. Cruelty to animals, I call it."

"B" Flight had no bombers or photographers to escort that morning, so that their sole duty was to make it hot for any enemy aircraft they might meet. They crossed the lines at sixteen thousand feet, ignoring the black shrapnel cloudlets sent up by the German "Archie" battery they knew as "Crotchetty Conrad," and sailed on into Hunland.

Freddie leaned back in his cockpit, his fingers caressing the stick and his eyes fixed on Cole's machine. When it changed course or height, he made automatically the movements needed to keep his place in the formation. It seemed to him that he had been flying in formation every day for years, while London had become such a dim vision that his mind balked at the idea that he had been enjoying its delights less than forty-eight hours previously.

He peered out at the sky, but could see no Huns. He shook his head gloomily, for he felt certain that there ought to be some foemen in this part of the world. Their absence foreboded a cunning ambush, from which some wily Fokker would doubtless drop upon him at an unexpected moment.

Suddenly the leading S.E. went into a right-hand turn, a sure sign that the Major had seen something. Freddie peered out again as he toed the rudderbar, but failed to locate the cause of the Major's concern.

"A bad business," he thought, "King Cole's spotted the blighters, and I haven't. That's what comes of late nights in London!"

Down went his stick as the formation dived on half a dozen Fokkers which

THE ACE OF RABBITS

suddenly materialised a few thousand feet below. He watched the Major single out the streamered machine of the enemy leader ; then he found an opponent and bore down on him.

He put in a short burst, but realised that he had fired too soon. "Strange how a fortnight's leave can spoil a fellow's eyesight," he reflected, and resolved to try no tricks until he had got the hang of things again.

Next moment he was engaged in a battle of turns with an opponent who was good enough to put a number of holes in the S.E.'s wings before he could get another shot at him. But Freddie did not worry. He had no desire to become an ace ; he was just an ordinary fighting pilot good enough to stand up to any average opposite number provided there were no complications. So he settled down to keeping the German off his tail while he waited for the chance to put in a really effective burst. He even found time to observe the enemy's war paint, which consisted of blue wings and yellow fuselages, with different colours for the noses and tails. His own opponent had a white nose and tail. He could not remember having met these Huns before and thought they must be new to the sector. But undoubtedly they were good.

Crack! crack! Woodwork splintered in Freddie's machine.

"Must pull myself together!" he muttered, realising that he had earned that nasty burst by his own carelessness.

Next moment the white-nosed Hun was on his tail. Freddie zig-zagged to spoil his aim ; then he saw a couple of machines ahead and forgot his pursuer's wrath as he threw his machine into a sharply-banked turn to avoid the impending collision. But he failed to ease out of it quickly enough and a few seconds later was going down in a steep spiral.

"At any rate this gets me clear of Mr. White-nose," he reflected, and when an upward glance showed him no sign of his opponent, he knew that he had been saved by his own clumsiness. Probably the Hun had thought he was

out of control, and had taken on another opponent.

Freddie glanced at his altimeter. With sufficient height to recover at his own convenience, he gave himself plenty of time before levelling out. But at last he started to climb back into the dog-fight, and as he approached it he saw a German machine go down in a cloud of steam.

"Radiator pipped!" he chuckled.

A moment later two more machines left the fight. Freddie saw that one was Seacroft's S.E., carrying the Flight Commander's single streamer. But the other was a Fokker with two streamers.

He stared at them in amazement. The German was chasing Seacroft all over the sky, and yet Bill was the last man in the world to turn tail on any Hun unless either he or his machine was very badly damaged.

CHAPTER II

King Cole to the Rescue

FREDDIE pushed his stick down again and dived on the German leader. It was a long straight dive which ought to have brought him on to his opponent's tail, but it failed because Seacroft started zig-zagging to spoil his enemy's aim, and the Hun leader zig-zagged after him. Freddie could not calculate the extent of those zig-zags, and although he put in a burst as he whizzed past, he knew it was about a thousand to one against any of his bullets hitting their mark. Then he went into another banked turn, hoping to catch the Hun before he finished Seacroft off. It was a beautiful turn, but the Fokker leader seemed to have eyes in the back of his head, for at once he abandoned his pursuit and turned upon Freddie.

The next five minutes were the warmest Freddie had ever known in the course of his career on the Western Front. In the first of them he became aware that he was up against a better fighter than he could ever hope to be, and although Seacroft turned back and tried to join in, his efforts did not appear to worry the German.

AIR STORIES

The Fokker dived; Freddie dodged, swung round and watched out for the zoom. It came; the Hun pilot was literally hanging on to his prop. when he fired up at Freddie, who saw that this foeman had a cherry-coloured nose and tail.

"What's Bill doing?" he wondered, glancing down in a moment of temporary safety, and finding his Flight Commander some distance below the Fokker. He decided to keep the enemy in play until Seacroft could zoom up and get him.

But Seacroft kept on turning, making no attempt to zoom. Freddie swore between his teeth; then he looked down again and saw the reason. Seacroft's elevators were in shreds; he could turn but he could not climb, and with every turn he lost height, and his prospects of getting home receded.

Freddie realised that he had to do something about it. He dived, feeling certain the German pilot would easily dodge him. The Fokker rolled away, and came down after him, as he knew it would, so that Seacroft was able to fire as it passed him. But the distance was too great for him to do any damage.

Now Freddie zoomed, intending to loop at the top of his climb, if he was still alive. He had an alarming vision of Cherrynose hanging on to his prop., with the tracers from his Spandaus cutting perpendicular lines. Then another S.E. screamed into the fray, and from its two streamers Freddie saw that Major Cole was its pilot.

THE German had no objection to taking on the pair of them. Freddie saw him lean out of his cockpit, point to Seacroft and wave. "I don't want to fight a cripple," his gesture said plainly.

Seacroft limped off home, leaving the other two to deal with the Fokker. The German pilot turned and twisted; every now and then Freddie felt certain one or other of them must get him, but at the critical moment he always wriggled clear by sheer superior flying skill.

Zip! Crack! Ping! Ping! Freddie had meant to pass beneath the Fokker,

but he was a split second too late and the bullets bit deep into his machine.

To his surprise, Freddie found that he was still alive and unscratched, but his machine had caught the full force of the attack. There were not many clocks left on his dashboard and even though the oil pressure gauge had survived, its pointer dropped to zero even as Freddie looked at it. His rev-counter was dropping, too, while the roar of his engine had died down to a fitful barking.

"You'll have to carry on alone, King Cole," he muttered. "No good my trying to be a little hero; you can manage better without me!" He went into a turn and headed for the lines, thankful to find that his controls were still intact.

FROM 1,100 to 1,000, from 900 to 850. The rev-counter wobbled round to the last figure and decided to stay there. Freddie shot a backward glance and saw that the dogfight had once more swallowed up the Major and Cherrynose. The landmarks beneath him grew familiar, but they were altogether too close and distinct for his liking. His altimeter was out of action but he did not need its aid to know that he was already dangerously low. Then his eyes fastened on to a speck ahead, which he guessed to be Seacroft.

Puff! Puff! He saw two little black cloudlets, followed by four others, and presumed that Crotchetty Conrad was having a pot at Seacroft.

"Oh, Lord!" he gasped as he saw the machine ahead dip suddenly.

Another bunch of shrapnel came up and masked it, so that he could not tell whether it had been caught by a direct hit or was making a desperate dive for the lines.

"Happy landing, Seacroft!" he murmured.

Meanwhile, he was fast approaching the region of the enemy's "Archies," and for a moment he toyed with the idea of a right-hand turn which would bring him within the radius of "Gloomy Gretchen" higher up the line. Gretchen

THE ACE OF RABBITS

was reputed to be a poor shot, but he was losing height every moment, and there were ominous signs that his engine might die on him before he got across.

"Better the devil you know . . ." he decided and kept his course for Conrad's territory.

Woof! Woof! The first black cloudlets were uncomfortably near his machine. It was a desperate situation which demanded a desperate remedy. Down went his stick.

"Ugh! What a stink!" he spluttered and coughed as he dived into one of the black cloudlets; then his watering eyes caught sight of field-grey figures below him. He pressed his triggers and saw men scuttle like frightened ants. A moment later he became aware of a fearful din as if every German battery on the Western Front was firing at him, with a brigade or so of infantry joining in the fun.

"Ow!" Something stabbed his right arm, there was a sudden searing pain, and he saw blood ooze from his sleeve. A tentative movement proved that he could still use his arm, and already he had run the gauntlet of Conrad's "hate" and was across the lines. Now he had only to carry on until he found a stretch of level ground upon which he could put his 'bus down.

CHAPTER III

The New Member Arrives

FREDDIE came down in the park of an old chateau which had been turned into a hospital, and the Squadron, knowing the nursing staff, were fully agreed that he could not have chosen a better spot. He made a smooth landing and was told by the doctor who looked after him that he had sustained no worse damage than a flesh wound which would prevent him from flying for about a week. He lunched with the medical staff, learnt over the telephone that Seacroft was all right, had a brief flirtation with a nurse off duty, exchanged yarns with an old school friend and returned by tender to the Squadron in time for tea.

The mess was buzzing with two topics. Firstly, the Jagdstaffel which had scrapped them that morning contained the toughest bunch of Huns they had ever met, and their leader seemed to be almost as good as Richthofen himself. Secondly, Old King Cole had got his step up at last, and as soon as his successor arrived he was to go off to England for a brief leave before taking command of the 84th Wing.

"Good for King Cole," was Freddie's comment. "And who's to be our new boss?"

"Fellow called Ponsonby," Rudge told him. "No end of a big pot; I believe he's got a V.C. Bill Seacroft knows him; he's been on home establishment for a few months because he got knocked about in a scrap last winter, but the docs. have passed him fit again, and he's coming along to us!"

"Jolly good news! But, all the same, I shan't forget King Cole in a hurry," said Freddie. "He just about saved my life this morning. Anyone know who that Hun is?"

"No idea. Chief rang up Intelligence this afternoon, but the bloke there couldn't tell him anything. They seem to be a crowd new to these parts; maybe they've been fighting in some French sector down the line."

Freddie realised that there was a bright side to his wound when he learnt that "B" Flight had the dawn patrol the following morning, and it was a pleasant change to wake up and listen to the flow of language from Rudge's bed when their batman carried out instructions faithfully by pulling the clothes off him. It was equally pleasant to be able to turn over and fall asleep again with the knowledge that he could roll along to breakfast at any old time.

But the rest of the day seemed strangely empty. Having written home to announce his wound, he could find nothing to do. He had read most of the literature in the mess library, and his arm was too stiff to let him play ping-pong.

Then, just after tea, he remembered that the new man, Barton, was due to

AIR STORIES

arrive at any moment, and had barely finished his tea when his ears caught the drone of an engine.

Major Cole always made a point of being on the aerodrome if a new pilot arrived by air, and invariably summed up his capacities by the first landing he made. If it happened to be a bad one, Old King Cole's language was well worth listening to.

Freddie and Rudge sauntered out with a casual air. By twos and threes the rest of the Squadron followed at discreet intervals, everyone trying to think of a good excuse for his presence on the aerodrome.

THE drone of the engine grew louder. An S.E. circled over the aerodrome and landed. But its markings were familiar, and Freddie remembered that Seacroft had gone off to St. Omer immediately after lunch on some errand or other.

"Seen anything of the new man, Bill?" Cole asked him.

Seacroft jerked his thumb upward in reply, and, following the gesture, Freddie saw a black speck over against the far horizon. Then his ears caught the faint sound of an engine.

Five minutes later another S.E. hovered over the field. It made three or four wide circuits, as if uncertain of the right place to land, and then started down.

"Holy smoke!" gasped Freddie, and felt his hair stiffen at the roots.

The newcomer was trying to land downwind. For a moment every man on the aerodrome stood spellbound.

Then, "Ambulance! Fire extinguisher!" yelled Cole. "Don't stand there gaping, you numskulls! Do something!"

The wheels of the S.E. were almost touching the ground; then the machine rose again and went into a turn. Once more it came down, heading into the wind this time. It overshot the landing mark and charged at the sheds, but at the last moment it cleared them and wandered across to the road flanked by two rows of tall poplars. It seemed to be trying to skim their branches.

Cole's language was sulphurous when it returned and did its best to pancake onto the roof of a shed. Having apparently thought better of it at the last moment, it shot up to five hundred feet, stalled, pulled out and came down crosswind. A series of hops followed; then the pilot started to circle round again.

Little groups discussed the situation. Bets were freely offered concerning the newcomer's chances of coming down uninjured. Meanwhile Major Cole's flow of language ceased; he had exhausted even his rich vocabulary.

Never, surely, had a war aerodrome been invaded by such a hopeless rabbit as this. The Squadron had seen some raw specimens from time to time, but this man had not the remotest idea of flying. It was almost impossible to believe he had ever flown solo before. The ambulance and fire-extinguishing squads watched his every movement with eyes which never relaxed their vigilance for a second, their muscles taut for a rush to the spot where their services would be needed.

Suddenly the machine charged at a group, which broke and fled precipitately. After scattering several others it flew off to the mess hut and pilots' quarters, as if looking for a landing-place there. It soon returned, and for the next ten minutes it did everything that any instructor would tell any pupil not to do. It made continual attempts to land downwind, upwind and crosswind; its efforts to knock the wind-sock down stimulated some lively betting. It came within an inch of charging into a shed, and at various times constituted itself a danger to every living soul on the aerodrome.

At last a hollow groan escaped from Major Cole's lips. Bassett, the leader of "A" Flight, gripped his arm and led him back to the mess, where he swallowed three neat whiskies in silence.

"Send him to me in the orderly room if he gets down alive," he muttered and then fled, while, outside, the object of his despair upset all the betting by making a perfect three-point landing opposite a hangar.

THE ACE OF RABBITS

CHAPTER IV

King Cole Relieves His Feelings

FREDDIE and Rudge followed Seacroft to the machine as the wheels came to rest.

The pilot jumped out, and when he had removed his helmet and goggles, Freddie saw a couple of innocent blue eyes in a round, pink, dimpled face. The newcomer fumbled inside his flying kit, pulled out an eye-glass and adjusted it in his left eye.

"My name's Barton," he piped in a childish treble. "Is this No. 233's aerodrome?"

"It is," replied Seacroft grimly.

"Well, that's all right then. Sorry I took so long about the landing. My weak point, you know."

"We all have our little troubles," Seacroft suggested tactfully. "Meet the crowd, or such of them as are here. My name's Seacroft, and the scarecrow on my right is Freddie Furley. The imbecile on my left is known as Rudge Masters."

They walked off to the pilots' quarters, ignoring the incident of the landing. Having shown him his hut, Seacroft suggested a drink, and they adjourned to the mess, where they found most of the other pilots.

"Be kind to him," Seacroft whispered to Freddie on the way. Freddie nodded.

Now, glass in hand, Barton was beaming on the assembled company. "You know, I call this a damn good squadron," he squeaked, "and I think I'm damn lucky to be here."

With the memory of his sensational attempts at landing still vivid in their minds, his companions did not venture to dispute the statement. There followed an embarrassed pause, for no one knew what to say when it was quite obvious to them all that Barton's sojourn in their midst would not be of long duration if King Cole had his way. After all, there was a limit even for rabbits.

"I say," piped up Barton once more, "you've not told me yet which jolly old Flight I belong to."

"'B' Flight," was Seacroft's bland

answer, while Freddie did his best to repress a shudder, and wondered whether his arm could be induced to develop some minor form of blood-poisoning which would keep him on the ground until someone made the air safe for democracy again.

An orderly entered. "Major Cole would like to see Mr. Barton, please."

"I'll show you the Old Man's cubby-hole," volunteered Seacroft, and led the way to the squadron office, into which he ushered his still beaming companion.

Major Cole had wrestled with himself, and outwardly he was calm when he shook hands with Barton and motioned him to a seat.

"All right, Bill," he said in a firm voice, and the Flight Commander withdrew.

"And now, young man," he continued, turning to Barton, "where did you learn to fly?"

"Hendon, Ayr and Turnberry, sir," was the cheerful reply.

"Then why the ruddy Hades did no one teach you to land?" roared Cole. The vision of an S.E. trying to pancake on the shed which housed his own pet machine had risen before his eyes, and the flood of his wrath was up.

"My instructors said I could land all right, sir," protested Barton, surveying him benignly through his eyeglass.

This was too much for Major Cole. The floodgates of his wrath broke down and for the next five minutes Barton learnt in detail and with the utmost candour exactly what Major Cole thought of his instructors.

"Dear me, is it as bad as all that?" Barton interposed suavely when the Major paused for breath.

"Far worse, young man. I cannot find words to describe it." Nevertheless he continued to do so for a further five minutes.

Barton sighed when the flow of abuse ceased. "We seem to be in rather a mess, sir, but it isn't my fault. They passed my landings and sent me out, so what could I do but roll along?"

Major Cole was a just man. "I suppose you couldn't do anything else,"

AIR STORIES

he admitted. "But what the hell am I to do with you, that's what I want to know?"

"Couldn't you take me in hand, sir? Teach me to land and a few other necessary things?"

Cole stared at him, but his vocabulary had run dry. "I'll have to think it over," he growled. "Run away now; I'll let you know to-morrow."

Five minutes later he was on the aerodrome. "My machine, sergeant," he commanded. "And a few hand grenades. I feel I could blow something to pieces this evening."

MAJOR COLE did not meet Cherrynose that evening, but four other members of his Jagdstaffel were in the air, and the surviving two landed with a tale of a mad Englishman who charged into their midst. A Rumpler crew also had the shock of their lives that evening when a devil incarnate chased them back to their aerodrome and shot up their machine on the ground. Crotchetty Conrad got the hand grenades, and Major Cole returned in a calmer frame of mind.

But the problem of Barton had still to be settled, and, after dinner, Major Cole summoned his Flight Commanders to a conference.

"I want to hand over a decent squadron to Ponsonby," he told them, "so what the deuce are we to do about that idiot Barton? He actually suggested I should teach him to land."

"Can't you pack him off home?" suggested Bassett of "A" Flight.

"I'd like to, but, my dear fellow, it would mean a lot of correspondence with the Air Ministry, which would follow me about when I take over my Wing. A damned uncomfortable business! No, we'll have to smarten him up somehow before Ponsonby comes. But how?"

"It can't be done, sir," maintained Bassett, and Wittlesham agreed with him.

"Let me take him in hand, Stanley," suggested Seacroft. "84 Squadron have got a school machine knocking about their aerodrome. Lord knows how it

came there, but I expect I could borrow it for a few days."

Major Cole clutched at the idea as a drowning man clutches at a straw. "Get hold of it to-morrow, Bill, and consider yourself washed out of all patrols for the present. I'll lead your Flight; I'd like to have another smack at that Fokker crowd before I clear off."

So it was settled, and on the following morning Major Cole contrived to see little or nothing of the latest addition to his squadron. He led "B" Flight's patrol, and a Pfalz Jagdstaffel reported several casualties.

At lunch that day he questioned Seacroft, who had secured the Avro and started his course of instruction.

"Not so bad, Stanley," was the verdict. "Barton is willing and able to learn. His education's been neglected, that's all."

"Gad, you're right, Bill. It's those damned schools again," and for the rest of the meal he favoured Seacroft with his candid opinion of them.

At the other end of the table Freddie and Rudge were chatting to Barton, whom they had decided was "quite a decent cove." They had even given him a nickname.

"You see," he had informed them in a burst of confidence, "a misguided god-parent christened me Augustus and at my first prep. school some equally misguided youth spouted some footling rhyme which began 'Augustus was a chubby lad.' Of course, after that, I was 'Chubby' for the rest of my school-days, and between ourselves I think it was a pretty lucky break for a fellow with a name like Augustus!"

The rabbit, in fact, appeared to be a bit of a wag. And since he could not help being a rabbit, the squadron decided the best thing they could do was to be very kind to him for the short time he was likely to remain in the Squadron.

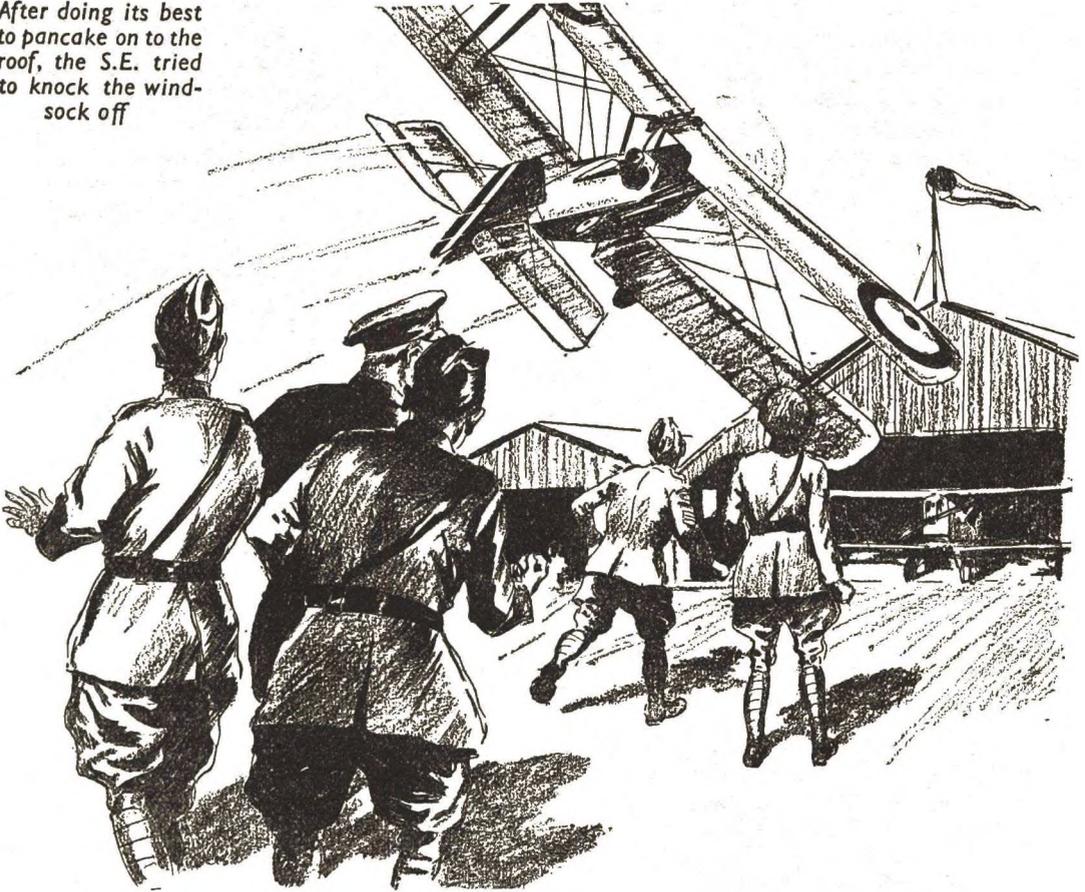
CHAPTER V

A Challenge from Cherrynose

MAJOR COLE had an appointment with his Wing Commander that

THE ACE OF RABBITS

After doing its best to pancake on to the roof, the S.E. tried to knock the wind-sock off



afternoon and flew off to keep it soon after lunch was over. He stayed to tea but declined an invitation to dinner on the plea of business.

It was only a matter of ten miles to his aerodrome, but there were a lot of clouds and he was a wary pilot. He therefore climbed high, in case any German machines should be about. They were not generally found on the British side of the lines in that part of the world, but there might be exceptions.

There was an exception that evening, and if the Major had been a thousand feet lower, it would have jumped on him. Instead, however, he found himself engaged in a battle of turns with an expert fighter. While they circled round each other he had a closer view of his opponent, and saw that his machine had blue wings, yellow fuselage and a cherry nose and tail. Major Cole knew he was in for a hard tussle.

A few seconds later he knew he was

up against a better man. Like Freddie, he had made the painful discovery that there was no trick in his repertoire which Cherrynose could not do just a little bit better. When he half-rolled, the Fokker half-rolled too; when he spun down, Cherrynose went after him. He came out of his spin into a roaring dive, zoomed, looped, but all in vain. Cherrynose stuck to him like a leech, waiting for the moment when he could put in a fatal burst.

Major Cole never relaxed his attention for a moment, but the moves and counter-moves of aerial warfare were so ingrained in him that his mind found room for other thoughts. They were not pleasant ones.

His war service dated from January, 1915. He had been in some tight places and his body bore the marks of wounds received in aerial combat. No one could say he had not done his bit or grudge him the comparative safety of a

AIR STORIES

Wing Commander's job, but now, just on the threshold of this goal, his luck had deserted him. Major Cole felt it was hard to die at such a moment.

They were circling round each other now, but the German gained at least ten feet in every turn. It was only a question of seconds before the Fokker got on the S.E.'s tail, and put in the death-burst.

The circles narrowed. Cole banked desperately, and the Fokker flashed into his sights. He pressed his triggers—but no bullets came from his barrels! Both his guns had jammed!

It was the end. But though Cole knew it, he still worked away furiously at the stoppages, feeling too angry to anticipate the death which was so inevitable.

He could do nothing with his right-hand gun and turned to the left one. But as he bent over to hammer at it, he saw with amazement that the Fokker was flying alongside him. Its pilot stretched out an arm and waved; then he put his machine into a turn and made for the lines.

Major Cole read the message of that wave. Cherrynose had seen his plight and refused to fire on a defenceless opponent. His luck, after all, had not let him down at this last critical moment!

IN the mess that evening Major Cole was in a jovial mood. He questioned Seacroft about Barton and was delighted to hear that the youth was making good progress. He even made a point of buttonholing the rabbit after dinner, gave him some kindly advice, and promised that he should go out on his first patrol as soon as he was fit for it.

His joviality even continued at breakfast the following morning, but just as he was about to move off to the orderly-room to transact the routine business of the day he heard an engine overhead. It was followed by furious barking from the "Archies" near the aerodrome; then there was silence.

"That's a Boche with a message," Freddie explained to Chubby Barton. "As soon as the gunners see the white

streamers on his machine they cease fire and let him drop it."

Five minutes later a sergeant brought a canvas bag into the mess-room. Seacroft opened it and extracted a letter.

"To the commanding officer of No. 233 Squadron" was written on the envelope. Seacroft took it into the orderly-room, where Major Cole broke the envelope and stared at the sheet of paper it contained. Then he handed it to Seacroft in silence.

"Same place, same time, same height, to-day, and we'll fight it out. Kranz, Staff-leader," was the message it bore.

"What are you going to do?" asked Seacroft.

"Meet him!" was Cole's curt answer.

"I don't see why you should," objected Seacroft. "Besides, I seem to remember there was an order from the Wing forbidding such duels."

"Was there? Well, I can't remember it. You can look into the matter tomorrow, Bill. I'm busy now," said Cole, ripping an envelope open and becoming absorbed in its contents.

"But, look here, Stanley," pleaded Seacroft, "there are limits to this so-called chivalry of the air. You know perfectly well that neither you nor I nor any pilot of No. 233 stands a chance with this Kranz. We're ordinary blokes who can tackle the ordinary Boche pilots all right, but Kranz is a top-notch, and only another top-notch can whack him in single combat."

"He made all that pretty plain to me yesterday, Bill."

"Then why the deuce do you want to let him kill you?"

"Do you suppose I want to be killed?" growled Cole.

"I don't. Then why fight him at all?"

"Because I can't help it—after yesterday."

Seacroft tried another tack. "Stanley, if you won't be fair to yourself, think of your country. You're a good man at your job, and you've got your step up because you're wanted for a bigger one. It's your duty to keep yourself alive."

Cole looked up from his papers and glared at his cousin. "I don't need you

THE ACE OF RABBITS

or anyone else to tell me my duty, Bill. But I do know it's your duty to instruct that rabbit Barton. Get busy with it ! ”

Seacroft shrugged his shoulders and walked out, knowing that further argument was useless when his cousin was in an obstinate mood. Instead, he told Wittlesham, who took “ C ” Flight on patrol that morning, that he had better find Kranz and let daylight into him.

Unfortunately “ C ” Flight did not find Kranz in the air. Neither did Seacroft when he took-off about noon. But five minutes later Cole, coming on to the aerodrome, found Barton smoking a cigarette, with his legs dangling out of the Avro's cockpit. “ Where's your instructor ? ” he asked.

“ I think he's a bit tired of instructing sir,” drawled Barton. “ He's gone up for a breath of fresh air in his S.E.”

“ Has he ? ” snapped Cole. “ Then tell him to put in overtime when he gets back.”

Ten minutes later Seacroft rang up to report that engine trouble had forced him to land on No. 304's aerodrome at Vivry.

“ Return at once and look after your pupil,” commanded Cole.

“ Can't, Stanley. My 'bus is in the hands of 304's mechanics, who've found a spot of trouble. It won't be ready till to-night.”

It suddenly occurred to Cole that Seacroft might be plotting some scheme with 304's F.E.'s, which would involve their interference with his fight. “ I'll send a tender for you at once,” he growled.

CHAPTER VI

The Stranger in the Sky

SEACROFT arrived back at the mess in time for lunch, and found the whole squadron aware that their commander was going out to get himself killed that afternoon. He made the best of a bad job.

“ Tell everyone to carry on as usual,” he warned Freddie. “ It won't make

things any easier if you're all in the dumps.”

Nevertheless, lunch was not a cheerful meal. Every pilot knew he risked death each time he took-off, but he did not know definitely that he would be killed. On the contrary, he hoped and believed he would survive. And to sit down to table with a healthy man who was absolutely certain to be a dead man a few hours later was an ordeal which tried the nerves of even the most stoical of them.

After the meal, the squadron broke up into whispering groups which eyed Cole furtively while he drank his coffee and until, at last, he disappeared into the orderly-room with Bassett.

“ Now then, you fellows, get together,” sang out Freddie.

“ What's it all about ? ” asked Seacroft.

“ Mutiny in the ranks. An indignation meeting. You can take the chair, Bill.”

“ Right ho ! Get it off your chest, Freddie.”

“ Well, Bill, we're all agreed we're not going to let this ruddy Hun do Old King Cole in. There's no patrol fixed for the hour at which he goes to his execution, so why shouldn't we all take-off about ten minutes before the time fixed for it. This Kranz can't tackle the lot of us.”

“ You know, I call it a damn good idea,” observed Barton, beaming on Seacroft through his eyeglass. “ Shows the right spirit for a squadron, eh what ? I'll come along, too.”

“ No, you won't, Chubby,” hurriedly interposed Rudge. “ You're not up to it.”

“ Well, I could give you my moral support, even if you won't let me join in the scrap.”

“ You can give us that from the ground,” said Rudge firmly. “ Well, what about it, Bill ? ”

But before Seacroft could reply, Bassett entered the mess. “ Special orders from the chief,” he announced. “ ‘ B ’ and ‘ C ’ Flights will escort the F.E.'s of No. 304 on a bombing show at Courtrai.

AIR STORIES

Take-off at 4 p.m. ; Wittlesham to lead the formation."

"What about me ?" asked Seacroft.

"You carry on with Barton. 'A' Flight to escort No. 189's D.H.4's. in a similar show at Bezelles. That's all."

The conspirators stared at one another in dismay. It was obvious that Major Cole had anticipated their scheme and somehow arranged with his Wing Commander that they should all be employed elsewhere at the hour when he met Cherrynose.

At last Seacroft spoke.

"Do you know what this palaver is about, Bassett ?" he inquired.

"No, but I can guess. Sorry, old thing, but it's napoo. The chief will see you all off the ground before he goes up."

No one had anything further to say. Plots behind King Cole's back were all very well, but none of his subjects had yet dared to disobey him to his face.

But Barton had no such qualms. "I say, old bean," he remarked to Seacroft, "you and I will be up in our Avro this afternoon. Couldn't we butt in and lend King Cole a hand ?"

"Chubby, you priceless ass !" yelled Freddie, and the tense anxiety of the assembled pilots was relieved in peals of hysterical laughter.

AS Bassett had predicted, Major Cole was on the aerodrome to see his flights take-off for their special duties. The pilots knew that any farewells would only harrow his feelings, and did their best to behave as if nothing unusual was afoot.

When the last machine had left the ground, Cole turned to Seacroft.

"Better get along now, Bill. Let Barton handle the controls as much as possible. We've got to bring him on somehow."

"Right ho, Stanley. I'll do my best to make a pilot of him." And that was their leave-taking.

"I want my 'bus ready in fifteen minutes, Sergeant," said Cole.

Freddie watched him return to the mess ; then he hurried to the aerodrome. On his way he made certain motions with

his right arm, wincing at the pain they caused him. But the main thing was that he could handle the controls and shoot.

"I want to try my 'bus out, Sergeant," he announced. "My arm's fit again, and I'm returning to duty to-morrow."

Flight Sergeant Richardson's face was devoid of expression. "Sorry, sir, but it can't be done."

"Why, nothing wrong with the 'bus is there, Sergeant ?"

"No, sir, but the Major said as how I wasn't to let you have it."

Freddie whistled. "Did he, by gad ! Well, that's that, Sergeant !"

Defeated, Freddie returned to his hut and tried to read a detective story, hoping that he would not hear the engine when Cole took-off on his last flight.

Out on the aerodrome the Major was seated in the cockpit of his S.E. examining his guns. Satisfied at last, he ran up his engine, and a few moments later was climbing fast out of the aerodrome.

As he climbed, he experienced a sense of relief. The ghastly hours of waiting were over ; now he had only to find Kranz and settle the business as quickly as possible.

He heard the sound of anti-aircraft fire and saw a row of shrapnel clouds appear in the sky. They were white, and told him that a British "Archie" was already firing on his opponent. His conscience smote him for not having warned those batteries to let a lone Fokker through—though probably, he reflected, they would only have joined his rebellious squadron in trying to stop the coming fight.

"Ah !" Cole's expert eye caught a minute black speck which he recognised as a Fokker. Kranz had won clear of the "Archie" and was making for the chosen battleground. Cole glanced down at his altimeter.

All fear of death vanished as his S.E. hurtled ahead at full throttle. His eyes were fixed on the Fokker which loomed ever larger and larger. He did not intend to try any fancy stunts which could only delay the end, but to make straight for his man and ram him, so that both

THE ACE OF RABBITS

machines would go down together. Thus alone could he make sure of ridding the Western Front of Kranz !

"Now for it!" he hissed between clenched teeth—then gasped with amazement at the sight of another S.E. which had shot across from his right and was already at grips with Cherrynose. It was an S.E. carrying streamers like his own—a machine flown by the leader of a squadron !

But that was impossible ! There was no other S.E. squadron within miles. And yet Cole knew that it could not be flown by any of his own men, for although they might try to disobey him and fight Cherrynose, none would dare to usurp his streamers of leadership.

Cole went into an uncertain turn. The two machines, and one was certainly Cherrynose, were now closely engaged, and as there was no way by which he could warn the other Englishman that the German was his particular pigeon, he could only keep his distance and watch the fray.

One glance told him that this mystery pilot knew his business. He was as good a man as Cherrynose. Or better ? Cole could hardly trust his eyes and ears when he heard the crackle of machine-gun fire and saw the S.E. on Kranz's tail. It looked as if the Fokker must go down, but at the last moment it rolled away and passed out under the S.E. But the relief was only temporary, for once more the unknown was on its tail and putting in another burst.

Then followed an amazing display of aerobatics. Cherrynose succeeded in shaking off his opponent, whom he attacked with a quick Fokker zoom. The S.E. dodged it in a banked turn, dived, climbed and came down in an Immelmann. For the next ten minutes the two machines spun, dived, zoomed, looped and rolled. Sometimes one, sometimes the other, seemed to be in the better position, but some daring and brilliantly executed manoeuvre always enabled his opponent to slide out of harm's way at the last moment. They fought each other all over the sky until it seemed as if there could be no decision and that they must

finally break off the fight for lack of petrol or ammunition.

Then Cole saw the Fokker dart suddenly eastward, as if making for the lines. The S.E. was above it—it dived—the Fokker pilot twisted and turned—but he was cut off—lower and lower sank the two machines.

Cherrynose was beaten. He made one more desperate effort to escape, but the S.E. seemed poised above him, spraying warning bursts all round his wings and gradually forcing him lower and lower, and all the time edging him farther and farther inside the British lines.

HALF an hour later Major Cole was in the mess, drinking cocktails with Freddie and a lithe, keen-faced young German, who assured him in perfect English that it had been a glorious fight, of which he had enjoyed every minute.

"But who was my opponent?" he asked.

"My dear fellow, I can't tell you," was Cole's reply. "I've not the foggiest notion!"

The German stared at him incredulously. Then Seacroft entered. Cole turned to him. "Bill, this is Lieutenant Kranz. Do you know who it was who forced him down?"

"I've got the bloke outside."

"Then for Heaven's sake bring him in!" ordered Major Cole, and nearly choked over his drink as Augustus Barton, monocle in position, sailed gaily into the room.

"Good Lord, it's Chubby Ponsonby!" exclaimed Kranz.

Barton extended his hand. "Glad you got down safely, Hermann."

"Good show, Chubby! But then I always knew you would whack me if we ever met."

"Oh, I'm not so sure. You nearly got me several times, Hermann. By the way, my name's Barton now."

"But I don't understand," spluttered Major Cole. "What is all this?"

"Perfectly simple, sir. You see, my aunt died last month and left me a whole barrel of money on condition I took her name of Barton. It seemed a fair swop

AIR STORIES

to me so I became Barton instead of Ponsonby, complete with deed-poll, advertisement in *The Times* and everything."

"Then you're——" began Cole.

"Our new squadron leader," gasped Freddie.

"Yes, all perfectly simple, really, but not quite simple enough for the Air Ministry, who mixed me up with another chap called Barton, who was just through his training. The result was I got two sets of orders to join this squadron, one as Ponsonby and one as Barton. I obeyed them both. Then . . . enter Seacroft as the villain of the piece."

"Why, what on earth had Bill got to do with it?" asked the Major, more at sea than ever.

"Oh, I met him at St. Omer when I landed on my way out here, and told him about the Air Ministry's muddle. Then I was fool enough to say it would be rather a rag to turn up as the rabbit Barton. All very wrong, of course, but I thought I could get to know the pilots better if I introduced myself as one of themselves and not as their C.O. Seacroft bet me a bottle of bubbly I wouldn't keep it up for a week and, well, I took him on."

MAJOR COLE took a deep pull at his glass. "Then that rotten landing——"

"Was the best exhibition of stunting I ever saw," Seacroft informed him.

"I intended to keep it up for the week, Wing Commander, because once I'd started it, the rag was rather amusing,"

Barton resumed. "Then my old pal, Hermann, here, sent you that challenge. You see, Hermann lived in England before the war, and we both took our tickets at Hendon a few days before the shemozzle started."

"I went back to Germany at once," said Kranz, taking up the tale, "but when Chubby and I said good-bye, we both agreed we'd join our respective flying corps. I often wondered whether we'd meet in the air."

"So you see, I simply couldn't miss the chance of a scrap with old Hermann when he sent that challenge," Barton continued. "Sorry for butting in, Wing Commander, but, after all, he did challenge the leader of this squadron, and that's me, isn't it?"

Major Cole looked from one to the other. "But how did you get hold of a machine?" he asked at length. "I thought I'd made sure that no one but myself could meet Herr Kranz."

"That villain, Bill Seacroft, again, Wing Commander. He flew one over to Vivry for me in the morning and then rang up to tell you it was napoo. This afternoon we slipped across in the Avro, and I collected it. In fact, the one snag in the whole business, so far as I'm concerned, is that I've lost my bet."

He rang the bell. "Bottle of best fizz," he ordered when the waiter appeared.

"And book it to my account," added King Cole. "It looks bad for a new C.O. to start off with champagne on his wine account."

TWENTY YEARS AFTER

Photographs of the Battlefields of the Western Front as they were during the War and as they are To-day

EVERY ex-Service man who served overseas during the Great War will be interested in the new weekly parts publication, "Twenty Years After," the first number of which is now on sale.

This novel work shows, for the first time, actual photographs of hundreds of villages, towns, farms and other places on the battlefields of Flanders and France as they are to-day, alongside war-time photographs of the same places taken as nearly as possible from the same angle!

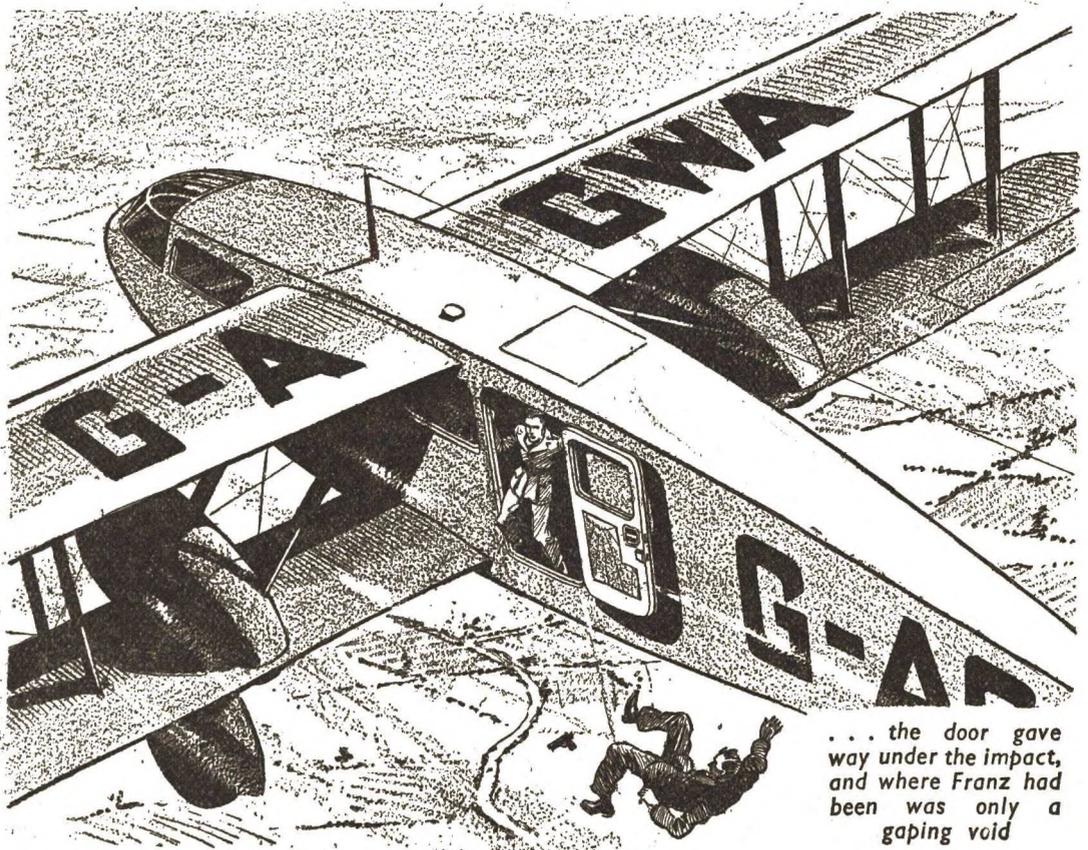
For many months a number of special photographers have been touring the Western Front taking these striking pictures, and the transformation brought about by time is truly astonishing.

No matter in what sector a man fought, "Twenty Years After" will show him the battlefields as he knew them—and as they are now.

"Twenty Years After" is edited by Major-General Sir Ernest Swinton, K.B.E., famous for the part he played in bringing the tanks into the War; and special contributors include such brilliant writers as Ian Hay, R. H. Mottram and Major E. W. Sheppard.

There are, too, many of those human sidelights written by Tommies, gunners and other fighting men who lived and served through the thick of the War, and to every ex-soldier "Twenty Years After" will bring back a host of memories of those never-to-be-forgotten years.

DEATH STRIKES ON AIR DAY



... the door gave way under the impact, and where Franz had been was only a gaping void

The Air Ministry lost Its Secret Cypher and the R.A.F.'s most "Hush-hush" Bomber Carried its Murdered Pilot to a Watery Grave when England's Enemies Staged a Daring Plot for Empire Air Day

By A. J. PELHAM-GROOM

CHAPTER I

Relations with the Press

THE excitement started when "Windy" Storm breezed into Mohune's office, or, to give that gentleman his full title, Flight Lieutenant Peter Mohune (which is, of course, pronounced Moon), M.B.E., R.A.F.

"Breezed" is the only word which adequately describes "Windy's" entrances. There is a rush of sound, a laugh, and there he is. On this occa-

sion, however, the incoming tempest had but little result. Its effect can best be compared to that of a handful of wind hitting a wind-sock. It lifts its tail for a moment and then lets it fall back despondently against the staff. So with Peter Mohune, a brief smile and then his frown returned.

"You look pleased with yourself," grinned the newcomer.

Mohune grunted ominously, and continued to draw a green line across the large graph on the desk before him.

AIR STORIES

"Cheerful little fellow, aren't you? You'd be a riot at a funeral."

In desperation Mohune flung down his pen. "Cheerful," he growled. "Cheerful. Hell's delight! How the devil can anyone be cheerful with a job like mine? Administrative Officer! I ask you! Nothing more than a blinkin' magistrate. Morning 'till night stewing in Summaries of Evidence, hearing charges. . . ."

"Do you get as many as all that?"

"No, not really. The N.C.O.'s take a lot off my hands. . . ."

"Well, what are you grouching about, then?"

Mohune glanced down at the chart and then up at Storm. "Damned if I know, to tell you the truth," he admitted, "but the fact is, I can't get used to sitting on a chair in an office. I want to be flying again. You see, after that show in Scotland I was in hospital for a couple of months, and now they won't let me fly again until I've had my next C.M.B."*

"When's that?"

"Heaven knows! And another thing that's worrying me is this confounded change in uniform. Here's Empire Air Day coming along, and I'm bound to get a job of work to do. New pattern slacks, new type cap, blue shirts. S'teeth! It's a foul life."

"You're right about Empire Air Day. As a matter of fact that's why I looked in. The C.O.'s given you the job of Press Liaison Officer. . . ."

"There you are!" snarled Mohune, throwing his pen from him in an eloquent gesture of disgust. "I might have known that it never rains but it ruddy well snows. Now where in Heck do they think I am going to get the money to buy a new uniform?"

"Dear Old Gieves," was the prompt reply. "You've an account with them, haven't you?"

"Listen, fool. I've just had two new suits from them, to say nothing of a watch and the quart tankard I got for C. J.'s wedding. *Malaish!* Gieves it'll

have to be. Does the Old Man want to see me?"

"He certainly does."

Gathering up his gloves and cap, Mohune swung out of the office. "Press Liaison Officer," he muttered. "Heck and S'teeth, we do get some jobs."

AN airman saluted smartly as Mohune turned in at the H.Q. offices, then the corridor echoed to his footsteps as he hurried over the polished linoleum.

"Can I see the G.C.?" inquired Mohune as he saluted the Station Adjutant.

"Shouldn't think so," remarked that gentleman. "What's it about?"

"Empire Air Day—and the Glorious Press."

"Oh, yes. You're looking after them. Well, I can tell you everything you want to know. Squadron Leader Bateman is arranging the programme. You'd better get in touch with him. As for the Press, 'tell 'em nothing' is a good principle as a rule, but in this case you can give them a fairly free hand. Have you got a copy of A.M.P. 92?"

"No, what's that?"

"'Relations with the Press.' They'll give you a copy in the Orderly Room, but bring it back when you've finished with it, and see that they don't take any photographs of the aerodrome. Oh! and you'd better have a hundred or so indemnity forms roneoed off."

"Great stuff. Is that all?"

"Yes, I think so. . . . No, wait a minute. You'd better get hold of the Diary and write up a brief history of the Station, the Press'll probably like to have it. Oh, and while you're on the job you'd better arrange for the Press to come up one day for a flight. Before the show, I mean, so that they can give us some free advertising."

"*Jamahe!* You're sure you can't think of anything else while I'm here?"

The Station Adjutant glanced up sharply. "Now I come to think of it," he said, with a gleam in his eyes, "I can. I may want you to go up to Catterwell on June 1st to ferry a 'plane back. . . ."

* C.M.B. : Central Medical Board.

DEATH STRIKES ON AIR DAY

"Nothing doing," came Mohune's prompt reply. "Firstly, I'm off flying, and secondly, I shall be on leave."

"Hum!" said the momentarily-baffled Adjutant, and then, "Well, we can always stop leave, you know."

Peter Mohune grinned and, having presented "Authority" with a crashing salute, vanished before the Adjutant could think of any more unpleasant jobs.

Squadron Leader Bateman, surrounded by files, looked up as the Flight Lieutenant entered.

"Hello, Mohune," exclaimed. "I hear you're going to give me a hand. Chuck those files off that chair and sit down. Have a cigarette?"

"Thanks, sir."

Peter flicked his lighter into action, and for the next two hours the two men discussed the flying programme.

"I had hoped," remarked Bateman, rising to his feet at last, "that we would have had the P.V. 66's* here by then, but I've arranged with Neethley to have at least one here for the show. That should prove an attraction to the Press, as they're only just off the Secret List. I'll send a signal to the C.O. at Neethley and ask him to send one along for your preliminary canter."

"Splendid. Well, I'll get along, sir, and try and wade through this stuff."

Laden with files, and a long list of the newspapers whose representatives were to be invited to attend, Peter hurried back to his office, to find that in his absence his "In" tray had filled up again. With a groan he jabbed one of the bell-pushes screwed to the table top, and, as though the bell was a magic lamp, a Warrant Officer appeared in the doorway.

"Sir?"

"These damned letters! Where have they all come from?" Peter demanded.

"The Adjutant, sir. Urgent, I believe. Transport for Whitsun leave—draft

arriving from the Depot to-morrow—Sergeant Henshaw posted to Daplow—tenders for laundry contract—entries for Bisley—Sanitary Diary—funeral party at. . . ."

"All right, all right. That's enough to go on with. And these?" Mohune held up a sheaf of papers.

"Applications for interviews, sir. Leave, allotments and concession vouchers."

"O.K. Quarter to twelve to-morrow."

"You've a mess meeting, sir."

"So I have, damn it! Well, I'll see them at two o'clock to-morrow, then."

"Fire Committee, sir."

"Hell! Make it eight o'clock."

"Very good, sir. Will you inspect the huts now, sir?"

Mohune passed a hand across his eyes. "I suppose so," he wearily agreed.

But the Warrant Officer had not yet finished with him, and as the two men went out together he fired his last salvo. "By the way, sir, you're on a court martial on Tuesday next at South Coates!"

CHAPTER II

Taken for a Flight

THE next two weeks passed in, a turmoil of activity. A programme was agreed to. One of the new type bombers, known as P.V. 66, was to be flown to Kenholt from Neethley and, in moments stolen from his already crowded routine, Mohune interviewed the gentlemen of the Press.

At last the great day, so far as the Press was concerned, arrived, although there was still a fortnight to elapse before Empire Air Day.

The reporters were met by Mohune and ushered into Squadron Leader Bateman's office, where introductions took place. Great London papers had sent their representatives to join their lesser colleagues in this demonstration of England's latest long-distance bomber.

"Sit down where you can," invited Bateman, "but mind your head on that safe," he continued, drawing attention

* P. V.: (Private Venture). New types of R.A.F. aircraft are occasionally built by constructors as private enterprises as distinct from the more usual procedure of building to an Air Ministry specification.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

AIR STORIES

to a cumbersome wall safe which jugged dangerously into the room.

"I'm not going to give you any instructions," went on the Squadron Leader, "I'm leaving that to Flight Lieutenant Mohune, but if you want to ask me any questions, now's the time."

There was silence for a moment, and then the rapid fire commenced and continued for nearly half an hour.

"Is that all?" grinned Bateman. "You know, I think that it would have been easier if I'd given you the keys of that safe and let you help yourselves. We've got all the secrets you've been trying to get out of me in there."

"But we can print all that you *have* told us?" inquired one of the reporters dubiously.

"Surely."

"That's fine."

"No more questions? Right-ho, Mohune."

Taking his cue, Peter led the assembly back to his own office.

"Now, you chaps, as soon as you've handed me your passes and signed your blood-chits we'll get over to the hangars."

"And a blood-chit is what?" demanded a tall Press photographer from Universal Photo's.

Mohune smiled. "Easy to see that you haven't flown in our craft before," he said. "A blood-chit is a form excusing the Powers that Be from singing 'Silver Handles' and 'Hello St. Peter' at your funeral. In other words, if you insist on juggling with death in a P.V. 66 the blood's on your own head."

"Explicit," grinned the photographer, bending down to sign. "By the way, you're going to have these machines stationed here, aren't you?"

Mohune winced. "Aircraft, laddie, please. 'Machines' is a word which like 'airplanes' and 'aerodromes' does much to tarnish the Brass Hat. Those words are anathema, and are simply not used."

"Sorry!" replied the photographer, and added, "I suppose that safe I nearly cracked my head on would contain some fairly juicy secrets?"

"It certainly would—but that's not in the programme for to-day. Now, are we ready?" Mohune picked up the passes issued by the Air Ministry. "Let me see, now. There are eleven of you. I'll send you up in two lots of four, and then you three from the Universal Photo's can go up last. That suit you all? Grand! Well, let's get along."

Gathering up the blood-chits, Peter led the way to the hangars.

"Now, here's Sergeant Bamcock, who will help you on with your harness; the parachutes themselves are in the 'plane.'"

"Hello, P.M.," announced a cheerful voice.

Mohune swung round to face a tall young officer in flying-kit. "What'cher, Toombs," he greeted the newcomer. "I didn't know that you'd brought the P.V. down."

"Yes. I thought I'd come along and go back to-morrow. We might do a flick to-night, or a gentle pub-crawl."

"Grand idea. See you later. Your first victims are ready. Stay up about half an hour."

Two minutes later the bomber had taken-off and disappeared into the clouds, and Peter, feeling like Dan Leno's Beef-eater, proceeded to show the other reporters round the aerodrome.

IT was just an hour later when the three photographers from Universal Photo's were being assisted into their parachute harnesses.

"Oh, Mr. Heeks," said Peter, addressing the tall one's back, and, as there was no reply, he called again.

"Mr. Heeks."

"Oh, er, er, yes? Sorry, I was thinking, you see, I . . . er, I'm awfully sorry."

Mohune, taken aback by the profuse apologies, hastened to put the photographer at his ease.

"That's quite O.K. I was only going to say that since this is the last trip, and your confrères are at this minute leaving the aerodrome, I'll be coming up with you, so if there's anything you want to know. . . ."

"Oh, don't trouble. . . ."

DEATH STRIKES ON AIR DAY

"No trouble at all, laddie," Peter assured him. "I'm as anxious as you are to have a trip in one of these kites."

The other photographers exchanged a worried glance behind Mohune's back.

"You see, I'll be flying them myself before long, so I'm quite keen to get the feel of them. Now, in we go."

Peter stood aside as the pressmen stepped through the wide doorway in the fuselage, and then quickly followed, slamming the doors behind him. Next instant he had turned and, having opened a window, was frantically beckoning an aircraftman to him.

"Here, catch hold of these," he exclaimed, "and take them to my office." Peter turned to Heeks. "Nearly did a damn fool thing then. Those were the blood-chits. The dependents of the deceased might have got compensation out of the Ministry after all!"

Inside the bomber was comfort. Well-padded seats had wide tables set before them. Perfect visibility through wide windows on all sides gave the illusion that this was a luxury air-liner and not a 200 miles-an-hour instrument of destruction.

"Sit yourselves down where you like," invited Mohune, "and remember, no cameras out until we're clear of the aerodrome. O.K."

Flying Officer Toombs glanced round, pulled his side-window to, and taxied out into wind. The murmur of the twin engines increased to a roar. There was a slight quiver as the aircraft moved across the hard ground, and then they were off.

In the long cabin the engines seemed strangely quiet and Mohune walked to and fro expounding the points of interest in the R.A.F.'s latest acquisition: the green lights before the pilot's eyes which disappeared when the under-carriage was drawn up into the fuselage; the padded floor in the nose where the bomb-aimer lay, surrounded by knobs and switches for fusing his deadly messengers, and all the gamut of gadgets that go towards worrying the life out of a modern bomber pilot.

"And those lockers?" inquired a

photographer, pointing to a row of metal containers standing to one side of the cabin.

Peter Mohune raised an eyebrow. "Not for demonstration or publication," he smiled.

"Why, more official secrets?" asked Heeks.

"I shouldn't be surprised."

"The new bomb-sight?"

Mohune was taken off his guard. "What do you know about that?" he demanded swiftly.

"Oh, nothing much," was the casual reply. "Saw a mention of it in some aviation paper somewhere. I should think we could start work now, couldn't we?"

"Yes, I should think so. I'll go up with the pilot so that you can have full use of the windows."

Mohune went forward and took the seat beside Toombs.

"Where'll you take 'em?" he inquired.

"Oh, just round about," replied Toombs. "There's a flight up that I'd like to intercept for them."

"Grand. I'll keep a look-out."

NO sooner was Mohune out of the cabin than the tall pressman known as Heeks got busy.

"Keep between me and those fools," he muttered, and instantly, as though it were an order from a senior officer, the other two photographers formed a screen between him and the pilot, still keeping their gaze fixed on the windows as though seeking targets for their cameras.

Safely hidden from view, Heeks dropped on his knees before the prohibited locker and from his pocket came a bright instrument. There was a sharp snap and the green-painted door sprang open.

"Blitzen!" gasped the alleged pressman as a book fell into his hand. "The Air Ministry cypher, by all that's holy!"

"What are you going to do with it, Carl?" demanded a companion.

"What do you think, you damned

AIR STORIES

fool? Keep it, of course. That bomb-sight is not here, but this is more important than any gadget we could find."

With a gentle movement the pressman addressed as Carl pushed the door of the locker back into place.

"Can you copy it?"

"Not a hope. There's about 700 pages of it. We'll take it with us."

"But they'll discover it's gone."

"Maybe, but not until after we're off the aerodrome."

"I know, I know," persisted the other impatiently, "but they'll find out soon afterwards and then. . . ."

"Then what?"

"They'll change the damned thing."

"We'll have to chance that," retorted Carl, and moved across to a seat.

"I say."

Three heads swept round to find that, standing close behind them, was Flight Lieutenant Peter Mohune.

"I'll have that book, please." There was a smile on Mohune's face, but the eyes seemed to imply that he was intending to accept no argument.

"Not so fast, young man," answered Carl, and deliberately slipped the book into his jacket pocket.

"Don't be a damned fool," snapped Peter. "I want that book. Where did you find it, anyway? It's bad enough to take advantage of the chance we've given you fellows to come up in the P.V. 66 at all, but if you only realised the hell on earth you've let loose by even looking at that damned book you'd commit suicide. Hand it over, please."

"That be damned. . . ."

"Are you quite mad?" Mohune swung round and returned to the pilot. "Home, James! These Press coves have gone batty. They've got. . . ." he broke off as a hard object was jabbed into his back.

"Not so fast, please," murmured Carl. "We're not going home just yet. Make for the coast. You may turn round, Mr. Mohune, but do it slowly, and you, Mr. Pilot, do as I say. Turn through ninety degrees and make for the coast."

SLOWLY Mohune turned, and discovered, as he had half expected, that the pressman now had a gun in his hand.

"Sit down there."

Mohune slid into the seat indicated while another of the photographers clambered up into the seat by the pilot and ostentatiously displayed another automatic to the unfortunate Toombs.

For a moment there was silence, then Mohune laughed. "Would you mind telling me what kind of a game this is?"

The muzzle of the pistol remained in a direct line with his heart.

"You would like to know, eh?" grunted Carl, who had called himself Heeks. "Well, Mr. Mohune, you have caused us to change our plans. As you may have gathered by now—if any ideas can ever get into your simple head"—Peter bowed ironically—"we are not from Universal Photo's. We knew that three pressmen were coming from them so we . . . er just intercepted their car and came instead. We had hoped to go up alone with the pilot, as we wanted to examine the bomb-sighting apparatus of this machine. This we could have done while the pilot was busy with his job. Unfortunately you decided to come with us, and though we haven't yet had an opportunity of examining the sight we propose to do so at once."

"You seem very certain about it all," Peter remarked.

"I am."

"I wouldn't be if I were you. You see, there isn't a bomb-sight on board. As you know, this kite has only been lent to us for the day."

Carl frowned. "A pity, but we have the cypher, which is worth even more."

"Don't delude yourself. When we get back. . . ."

"We're not going back," Carl interrupted. "The tanks are full. We are going to fly to the territorial waters of my own country and then sink the machine."

"What good will that do? We'll salvage it, and when the book is found to be missing, they'll just change the code."

DEATH STRIKES ON AIR DAY

"No one will find a machine lost at sea. It will be just another R.A.F. disaster. What a lot of crashes the R.A.F. are having this year, aren't they? Poor . . . !"

At that moment the bomber lurched suddenly, the floor tilting to an alarming angle as the machine dropped into a steep side-slip. The sudden motion shot Carl on to Mohune who, quick to grasp the opportunity, knocked the pistol to one side and, putting his whole weight behind the blow, drove a smashing fist into his assailant's face.

In the narrow space between the seat and the table there was only room for two to fight, and Mohune, physically fit, was gaining. The pistol fell to the floor as Mohune's grip changed quickly to Carl's wrist, forcing it back and up.

But another shock was to come. The staccato crack of a pistol told Mohune that another of the gang was at work, and with sudden fear he visualised the pilot, intent on bringing the P.V. 66 to earth, at the mercy of an armed killer.

His fear was soon realised, for the machine was brought out of its meteoric side-slip and settled once more on to an even keel.

But Peter was still full of fight. He had a leg free now from the entangling supports of the table, and, waiting the opportunity, he brought his knee up with a vicious jerk. It caught Carl dead on the mark and with a groan of anguish he slumped to the floor.

But his victory was short-lived, for even as he scrambled to his feet a stunning blow landed on his temple and sent him spinning into unconsciousness. Carl's henchman had seized his opportunity and hit him with a compass hastily grabbed from a bracket.

CHAPTER III

A Desperate Decision

MOHUNE opened his eyes. The sunlight burned into his brain like a hot iron and his immediate world was spinning viciously. With a sigh of pain he closed his eyes again. A brief pause

and he repeated the experiment, until at last the objects around him assumed their correct proportions.

He found that he was gazing at the glazed roof of the aircraft, which was still in flight. He turned his eyes to the right and a dagger of fire went through his brain. He closed them, but not before he had taken in the situation.

A member of the gang was at the controls, and lying close to Peter's side was the inert figure of Toombs. Mohune's left side was pressed close to the side of the aircraft. He moved his left hand, and hope soared again. His fingers were against the petrol cocks. If he could shut them anything might happen, but at least it was improbable that any of the gang would know how to turn them, since there was a definite sequence through which the four black knobs had to be manipulated.

Slowly Mohune's hand sought the first control; slowly it moved. The pain was agonising, but with his teeth set he stuck to his task. Number two! Again that backward movement.

Another pause as Mohune gathered strength to start on the next tank. His head was singing as though he was amidst a company of insane harpists.

Number four! A slight click as it slipped back into the "off" position.

Only one left now.

The muscles of his arm ached as though strung with red-hot wires.

Number three. Off!

Almost immediately the twin engines started to cough. The pilot glanced round anxiously, and through half-closed eyes Peter saw Carl hurry forward.

"What's up?" he demanded harshly.

"How in hell should I know?"

The engines gave a final cough and stopped.

"You're flying her," snapped Carl.

"What do you think it is?"

"Petrol, I should say."

"Petrol!" The word was snapped out with the vehemence of profanity as Carl flung himself to the window to inspect the giant gauges let into the starboard wing. "Rot," he screamed, "the tanks are three-quarters full. Have

AIR STORIES

you turned the cocks off, you ham-fisted . . .”

“Don't know where they are. Anyhow, it'll be too late in a minute, we're nearly down.”

In an uncontrolled fury of rage Carl aimed kicks at the two helpless officers, and for the second time within a few minutes everything turned black for Peter Mohune.

MOHUNE dreamt that he was hanging by his ankles in an ice chest and that Carl, with a sardonic grin playing about his thin lips, was forcing Castrol oil into his mouth. Even when at last he woke up, the feeling of inversion persisted and the rank taste of oil remained. He found that he was still lying on his back, but that his feet and, indeed, the whole fuselage as it stretched away towards the tail, were canted up at an angle. Water, cold and mixed with an iridescent film of oil, was seeping about his head.

With an effort he pulled himself into a sitting position and then, bracing his feet against the bulkhead of the cabin, forced himself to his feet.

There was no noise from the engines now ; indeed their massive cylinders were submerged beneath the surface of a particularly cold-looking sea.

The pilot still lay sprawled upon the floor and about him the water, which had slopped in through the open cabin door, was tinged with red.

Peter Mohune closed his eyes involuntarily in a futile attempt to stay the singing in his head and then dropped to his knees and pulled the airman up the inclined fuselage.

But Flying Officer Toombs was long past feeling the biting cold of the sea. A stained patch in his tunic showed where a bullet had torn its way into his lungs.

With a feeling of horror Mohune let the head back gently and scrambled to his feet again.

Through the green water in the nose of the aircraft he could see that the bombing-trap was open, obviously an attempt, although a futile one, to scuttle

the machine, and foiled only by the buoyancy of the massive wings. The door of the cabin had been left open, too, but whether this had been a deliberate attempt to allow the waves to break into the aircraft or just carelessness by the departing “pressmen,” Mohune could not decide.

Turning about, he looked upwards and saw that all the lockers had been broken open and their contents strewn about the floor. A feeling of utter loneliness came upon him as he staggered to the door and looked out. As he had expected, there was a gaping hole in the top of the starboard plane where the collapsible dinghy had leapt out ready for use.

All around the sea encompassed him, unbroken as far as his vision could reach.

How long would it be before the 'plane would sink ? . . . And then . . . ? Mohune shuddered. He had an airman's fear of drowning.

His thoughts turned to the Verey pistol and he started to climb upwards towards the rack that should house it. Empty ! He had half-expected it, but with the discovery came realisation of his utter helplessness.

And now came a new horror as the aircraft began to show signs of settling down. Hurriedly Mohune inflated his life-jacket and waited for the moment when he must leave the doomed 'plane and take his chance in the water. It was not long delayed. The water rose steadily, and soon Peter was forced to seek refuge on the tail. Then came a shudder and the giant aircraft slipped from beneath him into the depths, leaving Mohune bobbing on the foam-flecked surface.

Minutes turned into hours—the afternoon aged into evening, and Mohune lost all feeling in his legs. He could not tell how far the water-logged bomber had drifted and his mentality was quickly becoming as numbed as his body.

In the west the sun, a golden ball, was dipping towards the horizon. With its disappearance would go Mohune's last hope of life. His eyes kept closing, but as he rode the top of each successive

DEATH STRIKES ON AIR DAY

wave he forced them open and then, when despair had all but enveloped him, he saw the grey bulk of a destroyer forging its way towards him.

CHAPTER IV

A Man from the Dead

MOHUNE lay in the Commander's bunk, shrouded in blankets and sipping a hot drink.

"We've been looking for you for hours," said the N.O. "Got a message from the 'Glorious.' One of her machines spotted you some time back. You seem to have had a pretty grim time?"

"Grim's the word," Mohune agreed. "Any sign of poor old Toombs?"

"'Fraid not. Did he get away?"

In tense sentences Mohune told his story.

"My God! Sounds impossible," gasped the astonished Commander when Mohune had finished. "I wish to heaven we'd been on the scene a few hours earlier."

The destroyer landed Mohune at Lee-on-Solent from where he was flown in an amphibian back to Kenholt. A certain amount of trepidation possessed him as he thought of his forthcoming interview with the C.O. The loss of a cypher-book meant at least a court of inquiry, possibly a court martial, though, to him, the cypher seemed of little importance compared to the tragic death of his brother-officer.

As it happened the interview turned out to be much less terrifying than Mohune had expected, for when the C.O. had heard the full story of the adventure he took the view that the blame was in no way attributable to Mohune or anyone at Kenholt, and that the parent unit of the ill-fated P.V. 66 must take all responsibility so far as the cypher was concerned.

Already, however, an all-station signal had been sent declaring it obsolete and a new one was immediately brought into force.

"You'll have to attend the court of inquiry," concluded the C.O. "But in

the meantime I suggest you go on leave. You're doing some damn fool stunt in the Barfield Carnival, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir," replied Mohune. "That's the day before Empire Air Day."

"All right, then. Put your leave forms in and push off. Squadron Leader Bateman can carry on without you, but be back in time for the Air Day—but not before. And meanwhile," he added significantly, "don't say anything to anyone about the crash—and don't be surprised at any reports you may read about it. We may not have seen the last of your friend Carl."

That night the public heard news of the disaster from the B.B.C. :

"A Royal Air Force machine was wrecked in the Channel this morning," stated the announcer. *"The crew—one Flight Lieutenant and one Flying Officer from Kenholt and three civilian passengers are believed to have been drowned. No sign of the wreckage has been discovered."*

"Wrong again," grinned Mohune, but Carl, who had also been listening at a house not many miles distant from Kenholt, smiled his satisfaction.

"That simplifies things a lot," he announced. "With the inquisitive Mr. Mohune at the bottom of the sea and the Air Ministry thinking that we're with him, our little job can be satisfactorily concluded at some future date."

And, since the Air Ministry did not see fit to correct the broadcast inaccuracy and the Press were given no further details concerning the crash, Carl found no cloud to mar the sun of his expectations.

THE fortnight went only too quickly, and the day before the Air Force threw their stations open to the public Mohune returned to Kenholt to prepare for his part in the Barfield Carnival. Having arrayed himself in a costume complete with wig and mask, which rendered him a passable imitation of Claude Duval, he set off in his car, accompanied by another officer known as "Bungy," who was similarly arrayed, to the local riding-stables.

AIR STORIES

From there, mounted on suitably prancing steeds, they set forth to waylay the unwary in the sacred name of charity.

The day was hot, the road to Barfield dusty, and an ancient hay waggon driven by an equally ancient farmer arrayed in an old-time smock gave them a welcome excuse to pause.

"No chance of that barrel being full, I suppose, Gaffer?" laughed Mohune, indicating a cask erected on trestles in the centre of the waggon.

"Eh, it be that. I'm a-taking it to the Carnival."

"Grand. Well, will you sell us a mouthful . . .?"

At that moment a fast-looking sports-car gave warning that it wished to pass. Mohune was about to pull his horse to the side of the road when a casual glance at the driver of the car drove all thoughts of liquid refreshment from his mind.

"Hold the road, 'Bungy,'" he shouted. "Duty calls me."

As he reached the side of the car another pulled up behind it and blaringly announced its annoyance of hindered progress. Ignoring this interruption, Mohune swept off his plumed hat and addressed the girl who had caught his eye in the first car.

"And shure I must be after a small collection from ye," he announced, proffering his collecting-box.

"What do you want?" A pair of bright blue eyes laughed into his.

"An' faith it's the jewels in those eyes that I'd be after stealing. . . ."

His flow of eloquence was rudely interrupted by a renewed burst of furious hooting from the second car. Raising an eyebrow, Peter turned to bestow on the two occupants his maledictions, but they were never uttered.

The driver was Carl! Carl with a soft hat pulled well down over his eyes, but Carl nevertheless.

THANKING his stars for his mask, Mohune turned to 'Bungy' who had come up alongside. "That, my friend, is Carl, of whom a debt I wouldst collect. Catch hold of my reins when I jump off, and stand by for some excitement."

"May I go now?" inquired the girl as she prepared to let in her clutch.

"Not on your life? Stay where you are, I . . ."

At that moment Carl decided he had waited long enough, and swinging his wheel over he moved forward. His off wheels mounted the bank, there was a roar, and he was away. Mohune's reaction was immediate. Throwing himself from his horse he leapt on to the running-board of the girl's car and clambered in beside her.

"After that man," he snapped, and then to Bungy, "Get to a 'phone-box. Tell the police to stop XXX.0003. Get Kenholt. Tell 'em I'm after Carl. Come on, lassie, step on it!"

The car shot forward.

"Is this a new kind of police trap?" his companion calmly asked as they skidded round the first corner.

"Hardly. That man in front is a murderer."

"Really? And what do we do when we catch him?"

"Lord knows. We've got to catch him first."

The chase roared on through villages and towns, sweeping at times over road surfaces like billiard tables, at others over bone-shattering ridges resembling corrugated iron, and always about a mile ahead was Carl.

Several times when the road twisted they thought their quarry had escaped them, but at last, sweeping round a bend, they discovered they had gained considerably.

"He's ours," began Mohune, when suddenly the engine coughed. He looked at his driver apprehensively, then at the dashboard. His hopes sank, for the pointer on the petrol gauge registered an unmistakable zero.

They came to rest at the side of the road.

"And now what do we do?" asked the girl.

"Haven't you a reserve?" Peter inquired.

She shook her head.

"And the last village is only two miles behind us, a mere nothing! I'll just

DEATH STRIKES ON AIR DAY

amble back. Oh heck !” Mohune had remembered his clothes. Claude Duval seemed strangely out of place calling at a petrol pump.

However, it had to be faced, and no sooner had Peter started on his journey than the ubiquitous small child appeared, to be joined by all the members of his particular gang of demons long before Mohune reached the village. So it was with perspiration streaming from his forehead, a long curled wig in his hands, and cries of “Where’s the fair, Guv’nor ?” ringing in his ears, that Peter finally staggered into a garage and was able to return to the rescue of his newly-found accomplice.

The drive back to Kenholt was a silent one, Mohune thinking of the blisters caused by the loose top-boots and the fact that Carl had eluded him again, and the girl striving to stifle her laughter at the thought of his triumphal journey to the village.

They parted at the mess with a mutual promise to take tea together in the Ladies’ Room after the show the following day.

CHAPTER V

The Stranger from the Skies

EMPIRE Air Day ! Has anyone ever stopped to think how much work and organisation those three words command ? Probably not, but to those who know it is not surprising that when the girl arrived at the aerodrome early in the afternoon she found a harassed and withal furious Flight Lieutenant. Harassed because he was Press Liaison Officer and furious because the camp tailor had let him down. His slacks, ordered specially for the occasion, had not been ready and instead he had been forced to wear a pair lent to him by the tailor. In fact the only bright spot in the day so far had been when Mohune, as he left the shop, had asked whose trousers he was actually wearing. The reply, “The C.O.’s,” had shaken him considerably, but as he remarked, “sitting in the seats of the mighty” fitted the occasion with a vengeance.

The programme went on without any untoward occurrence. Furies screamed blue-nosed across the sky, autogiros behaved like drunken skylarks, parachutists swung to earth, Bulldogs puffed coloured smoke from their exhausts, and the public ate their sandwiches on the grass.

Then came the tea interval. The Station band tuned up and the favoured guests moved towards the mess. Peter and the girl were about to follow suit when a civilian Dragon glided in to land.

“Hello, what’s he doing here ?” Peter ejaculated. “Excuse me a moment I’ll just go and see what he wants.”

“May I come, too ?” demanded the girl.

“Rather, if you want to,” was Peter’s ready reply.

They strolled over to the Reception Flight, which was situated just near the Station Headquarters, and arrived just as the pilot was stepping from his plane.

“Hello,” he called. “Bateman asked me to look in. Wants me to take some people up for free trips after tea. Said I’d find him in his office.”

“That’s right, he’s there now. Do you know the way ?” asked Peter.

“Oh, yes, rather. Look here, I’ll leave her ticking over, as she’s a bit of a cow to start. That O.K. with you ?”

“Anything you like. This is Empire Air Day.”

As the pilot swung round on his heel and made for Headquarter’s offices, Mohune turned to the girl, to find her eyes staring wide and her small fist pressed against her mouth.

“What’s the matter ?” he inquired solicitously. “Hiccoughs ?”

“Don’t be silly ! Didn’t you see who that was ?”

“No. Your husband ?”

“No, you idiot ! Why, that’s the man who was with your friend Carl yesterday.”

“WHAT ! Look here !” Mohune’s mind was acting quickly. “Dash over to the new type park and tell Pine—he’s a Flight Lieutenant and you’ll recognise him by a long nose and a string of medals—tell him to pass on the news to Bateman at once. I’m going to bag that Dragon.”

AIR STORIES

"But . . ."

"But me no buts but get going, angel."

The girl ran off, and Peter sprinted over to the machine. With a quick twist he opened the cabin door and stepped inside.

"Well, this *is* a surprise," said a familiar voice. "No, don't move. I've got you covered and I am quite good with firearms."

Mohune sank into the nearest chair, and a figure who had been crouching behind a chair at the back came forward and slipped sideways into the pilot's seat. Suddenly the identity of his visitor seemed to dawn on him. "But . . . but you're dead . . . drowned," he muttered.

"Sorry to disappoint you, Carl," said Mohune, fast recovering from the shock of the unexpected encounter with his old enemy. "But, you see, it isn't easy to kill me. I was born that way, you know."

If only he could play for time! Play until the girl had got her message to Pine, then they'd bag the lot of them.

The door of the cabin swung open and Mohune's hopes soared.

"No, you don't," rapped Carl, as Peter attempted to rise to his feet. "Here, Franz," he went on, addressing the newcomer, "take this gun and shoot the young fool if he moves. You've got them, I suppose?"

"Certainly." Franz pulled open his coat to disclose a roll of papers.

"Good!" Carl straightened himself at the controls, the engines roared out in full power, and next moment the Dragon was skimming, tail-up, across the aerodrome.

NO sooner were they in the air than Peter, without waiting for permission and ignoring the levelled revolver in the steady hand of Franz, swung the window back and peered out astern. But only disappointment awaited him. There were no machines in pursuit.

He sank back into his chair and was silent for a while as he pondered the chances of a sudden attack on Franz. But the gunman, as though fearing some such attempt, kept at a safe distance

and his gun never wavered in its menace to Mohune's body.

"One more move from you," he threatened as Peter made as though to rise from his chair, "and I'll let daylight into you!"

"I think you might as well," came Carl's voice from the pilot's seat. "We're going to dump him, anyway, as soon as we're over the coast."

A shudder of fear prickled Peter's scalp.

"Oh, I wouldn't do that, you know," he said, and then glanced out of the window again.

"By George! I really wouldn't," he continued exultantly, "you're surrounded. Look! Furies to right of you, Bulldogs to left of you."

Momentarily taken off his guard, Franz glanced towards the window, and in the instant Mohune's foot shot up, the pistol sailed from the man's hand, and Peter had him by the throat. They broke apart, Franz hurtling backwards under the impetus of a sudden left hook from Mohune.

But he was on his feet again before Mohune could follow up his advantage and a well-aimed kick caused Mohune to duck with pain. Then, as Franz stepped in Mohune jerked his head up. There was a crack as it hit the man's jaw, a thud as Peter's right found his plexus, another as a left landed on an ear. The man staggered back, his arms up to shield his face, his back to the cabin wall.

His chin sunk lower as Peter punched at his stomach. Then came a vicious uppercut which tore through the gunman's ineffective guard. There was a sudden rush of air and then where Franz had been was only a gaping void. The door had given way under the force of the sudden impact, and only by flinging out his arms was Peter able to save himself from following his opponent. He turned, and was just in time to avoid Carl, who had left the controls and was now almost upon him.

The two men closed with each other, but Carl was fresh, and now it was Peter who was on the defensive, struggling

DEATH STRIKES ON AIR DAY

hard to parry the damaging blows that were raining upon him. A vicious blow on his temple and things began to swing dizzily before him. The 'plane was falling. Not spinning, thank God, but falling. Well, in that case they'd both go out together!

Peter made a last desperate rally. His left streaked out, with all his weight behind it. It missed! His fist passed harmlessly under Carl's shoulder, between his body and his arm, and Peter's elbow was locked beneath Carl's right armpit. The man's left hand went back for a hook but, like a flash, Peter's hand swept down from the captive elbow and, pressing on the nape of Carl's neck, forced the head down. Up came Peter's knee into the other's face, bone met bone in a sickening thud, and Carl was out.

Pausing only to grab the pistol from the floor, Mohune leapt for the controls, even as the ground came rushing up to meet him.

With a wrench he strove to force the 'plane on to an even keel as he throttled back the engine. It was too late. There was a loud crash, followed by a crescendo of cracking sounds, and the nose of the Dragon, neatly skewered on a tree, snapped clean off and dropped from view.

For a second that seemed like an age the rest of the machine hung poised on its leafy pedestal and then fell, to the accompaniment of snapping spars and twisting longerons. Dazed and cut, Peter scrambled from the twisted wreckage of what, a few moments before, had been a proud carriage of the skies.

Wiping the blood from his eyes, Mohune pulled the *débris* aside, searching for Carl, and when at last he found that human wreckage, lying twisted and mutilated beneath one of the heavy engines, he turned away with a shudder. Then, faint from exertion, he sank to the ground, completely oblivious of the

Fury that was even then attempting a landing a few yards away.

"HERE you are, drink this!" A flask was pressed to Mohune's lips and the fiery stimulant sent vigour back into his brain.

A pilot was bending over him. "Well done, old man, well done!" he was saying.

"What happened?" demanded Mohune feebly.

"Quite a bit. Your boy friend, cool as ice, walked into 'Bimbo' Bateman's office, socked him over the head, took his keys, opened the safe and got the plans of the P.V. 66, the bomb-sight and Lord knows what else. Then off he soars into the blue, taking you with him."

"I'd gathered that much myself," interrupted Mohune with a ghost of a smile, "what I wanted to know was how did you get on to us so soon?"

"Well, if it hadn't been for your girl friend," his informant continued, "we probably wouldn't have known anything about it even now, but as soon as she raised the alarm we were up and after you. Actually saw everything, though we couldn't do much about it. Saw one laddie come hurtling out like a pea out of a shooter, and guessed you were getting to work. Then we watched you do one of your typical landings and came along to collect the remains. You know your pal's dead, I suppose?"

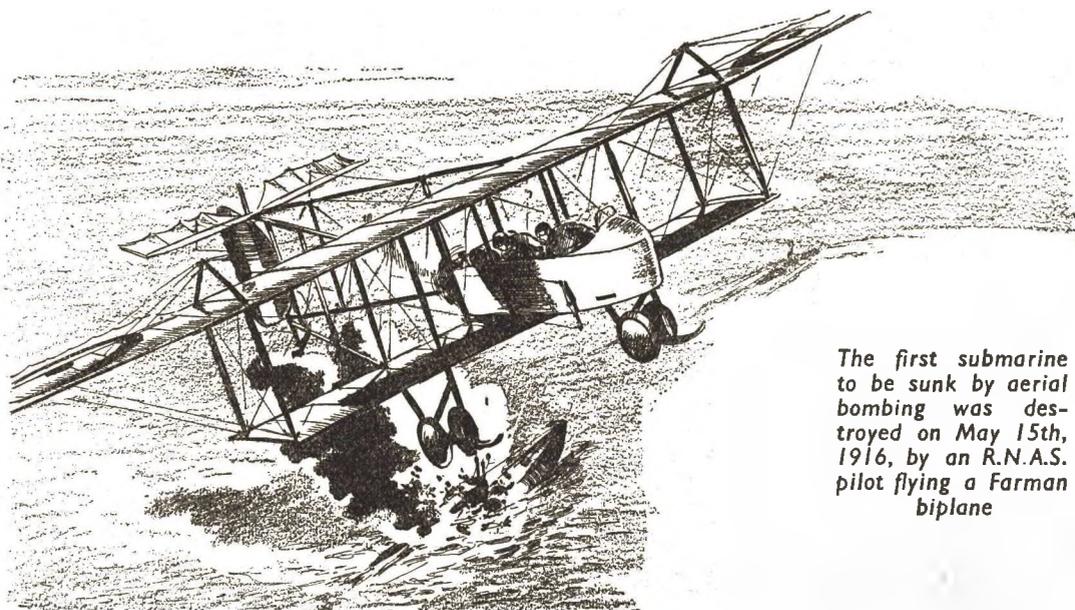
"Oh, Lord!" ejaculated Mohune, suddenly sitting bolt upright.

"Don't waste your sympathies, he deserved all he got."

But it was no thought of Carl's demise that had caused Mohune's ejaculation. He had suddenly realised that his nether parts were excessively draughty, and a tentative fumbling had confirmed his worst fears. His trousers were entirely lacking a seat!

"Oh, Lord!" he repeated. "The seats of the mighty—the C.O.'s pants!"

THESE MEN WERE FIRST



The first submarine to be sunk by aerial bombing was destroyed on May 15th, 1916, by an R.N.A.S. pilot flying a Farman biplane

A Stirring Record of the Aerial Pioneers of the War whose Daring Achievements Must Ever Remain Unrivalled

By J. COLTMAN

THERE are some records in aviation which, no matter what great developments the future of flying may hold, will ever remain unchallenged and unbroken. These are the records of the men who were first—those pioneers of war- and peace-time flying who achieved something that no man had ever done before.

The names of some, such as Ross and Keith Smith, who first blazed the air trail to Australia, and Alcock and Brown, makers of the first non-stop trans-Atlantic flight, are already imperishably inscribed on Aviation's roll of fame. But there are also others, less well known, the daring pioneers of the War days whose historic experiences were too often allowed to pass unsung and unrecorded amid the turmoil and hurry of those eventful days. Before the records are lost under the accumulated dust of the past, and while the events themselves are still within living memory to correct

or confirm, let us put on record some of the most historic "firsts" of the World War in the Air.

So far as the Royal Flying Corps is concerned, pride of place must obviously be given to the first British pilot to land in France after the outbreak of war. This was Lieutenant H. Harvey-Kelly who, as the pilot of a B.E.2c of No. 2 Squadron, R.F.C., landed at Amiens at 8.30 on the morning of August 13th, 1914.

No. 2 was one of the four squadrons which, together with Nos. 3, 4 and 5, constituted the first detachment of the R.F.C. to go overseas. Their strength was 105 flying officers and 755 other ranks and their equipment comprised a total of some 63 machines of various kinds. All four squadrons landed in France on August 13th, the day after war had been declared.

Six days later, on August 19th, the R.F.C. carried out its first aerial recon-

THESE MEN WERE FIRST

naissance of the war—the pilots being Lieutenant G. W. Mapplebeck of No. 4 Squadron and Captain P. B. Joubert de la Ferté of No. 3—while, on the 22nd, the first aerial combat took place and the first British machines were shot down by gunfire from the ground.

Opinions vary as to the identity of this first victim of German anti-aircraft fire. Some say that the Gnome-engined Avro which, piloted by Lieutenant Waterfall, with Lieutenant Bayley as his observer, fell in flames on August 22nd, after being hit by rifle fire, was the first casualty, while others maintain that Blériot No. 387, piloted by Lieutenant G. F. Pretymann and carrying Major L. B. Boyd-Moss as observer, was the first. The latter made a crash landing behind our lines, and neither occupant was injured, for, on September 15th, we find Lieutenant Pretymann credited with the honour of taking the first aerial photographs of enemy positions.

To Lieutenant Waterfall, however, who died from injuries received in his crash, probably belongs the honour of having been the war's first casualty as a result of enemy action, though he must have gained the distinction by a narrow margin from Sergeant-Major D. S. Jillings who, on the same day, was wounded in the leg by a bullet.

Apart from enemy action, the first recorded casualties after war had been declared were when Lieutenants R. R. Skene and R. Keith-Barlow were killed when taking-off from Netheravon on August 12th, 1914. It has been argued, however, that as they were not actually under orders for France they cannot be classed as war victims, and that the first war casualties were Lieutenant R. R. Smith-Barry and Corporal F. Geard, who were killed in a crash at Perronne on August 18th, though here again their deaths were the result of an accident unconnected with enemy action.

The First Allied Air Victory

WHO scored the first Allied victory? For several years it was credited to a Sergeant Franz of the French Army, who shot down a German Aviatik on

October 11th, 1914, with an army rifle, and received the *Medaille Militaire* for his deed. Yet, as early as August 25th, the records show that Lieutenants C. W. Wilson and C. E. C. Rabagliati brought down a German 'plane behind the British lines at Le Quesnoy. On the same day, a German Taube was brought down by three pilots of No. 5 Squadron, R.F.C., who forced it to land by crowding it.

In those early days, although machine-guns had been tried out with indifferent results on British aircraft as early as 1913, they were still far from being part of an aeroplane's standard equipment—in fact, at that time, it was not considered altogether a gentlemanly thing to shoot at an enemy pilot! On the German side, however, a machine-gun was used on a 'plane for the first time by Max Immelmann, who fired on a French Henri Farman near Amiens on October 20th. Corporal Strebeck, the attacked pilot, managed, however, to bring his 'plane home safely.

Roland Garros, in 1915, attached a machine-gun to his 'plane and fastened metal bands round the propeller to deflect the bullets. He was shot down after a brief career with his new weapon and Anthony Fokker, to whom the device was shown, rapidly improved on Garros' idea—which was itself an adaptation of an earlier invention of Eugene Gilbert—and brought out the first really efficient synchronised machine-gun. The rate of fire was regulated by a complicated series of cams, as opposed to the oil pulsation system used on the gear invented by a Roumanian engineer, Constantinesco, and universally used by the Allies.

Herr Fokker's invention was tested out on a Fokker E.3 on June 30th, 1915, by Oswald Boelcke, who fired on a French 'plane with no apparent result other than deterring it from attack. It was left to Immelmann, who received the second "*Eindekker*," to claim the first victim with the new gun, a B.E. two-seater on August 1st, which fell near Douai. Incidentally, Immelmann and Boelcke were the first pilots to be awarded the *Ordre pour le Mérite*, or

AIR STORIES

"Blue Max," as it was called, which came after their eighth victories, on January 12th, 1916.

To Boelcke also belongs the credit for the "circus" system, for on September 17th, 1916, Jagdstaffel 2 took the air for the first time. Every member of it, Manfred von Richthofen, Erwin Bohme, Reimann and Boelcke, scored a victory on that first flight.

Boelcke, too, was Germany's first "ace," scoring his fifth victory a few days before Immelmann followed suit and became Germany's second "ace." England's first "ace" was Major L. G. Hawker, while Lieutenant Roland Garros was the first to score five victories for France. Lieutenant Douglas Campbell, of the 94th Squadron, U.S.A.S., was the first to reach the "ace" category for America.

Downing the First Zeppelin

THE first Zeppelin to be destroyed by an English pilot was bombed in its hangar on October 8th, 1914, by Flight Lieutenant R. L. G. Marix. Flying the smallest of all British 'planes, the Sopwith Tabloid, he flew to Dusseldorf and bombed the sheds, causing great damage. Marix belonged to the Royal Naval Air Service, and it was to fall to the lot of a member of the same service to shoot down the first Zeppelin from the skies.

Flight Lieutenant R. A. J. Warneford had gone out to bomb the Zeppelin sheds at Gontröde. Several Zeppelins had set off from there to raid England, and one, the L.Z.37, encountered Warneford's Morane Parasol as it was returning home. Warneford's only armament was a rifle and six "jam-tin" bombs. Nevertheless, he succeeded in bringing the Zeppelin down in flames by flying above it and dropping his bombs on to it. For this deed he was awarded the V.C. on June 9th, 1915, only to be killed in a flying accident ten days later.

Lieutenant W. Leefe Robinson, of 39 (Home Defence) Squadron, brought down the first airship to be destroyed in England. It was not a Zeppelin, but a Schutte-Lanz airship, and its destruction

took place at Cuffley on September 3rd, 1916, and gained the V.C. for Robinson. Altogether, there were 19 V.C.'s awarded to airmen during the war, Second-Lieutenant W. B. Rhodes-Moorhouse being the first to gain the coveted award after a brilliant solo patrol, and Major E. Mannock the last.

In all, the British Empire produced well over 200 "aces," of whom 52 scored 20 or more victories. Germany produced 167 aces, or *kanone* as they were called, of whom 68 scored upwards of 20. France, with some 160 "aces," only had 14 surpass the 20 mark, while only one out of the 105 American "aces" reached over 20. Italy had 41 "aces" when the Armistice came, 5 having scored over 20 victories, and Belgium, out of her 8 "aces," pointed to one with over 20. Austria showed 5 "aces," 4 of whom topped the 20 mark. Russia had 3 "aces," but the highest score was 17. Last, but not least, Roumania had an "ace," a Lieutenant Suk, who is credited with 7 victories.

The leading "aces" of the war were Baron Manfred von Richthofen, with 80 victories; Captain René Fonck, with 75; Major Edward Mannock, with 73; Major Francesco Baracca, who scored 34 for Italy; Captain Willi Coppens, who, out of his 36 victories for Belgium, included no less than 26 balloons. Captain Brunowsky, with 34 *descendus*, heads the Austrian list, while Captain Edward Rickenbacker leads the Americans with 26 victories. Captain Kossakoff, with 17, stands at the head of Russia's list of "aces."

It sounds incredible that an aeroplane could be brought down by fire from a balloon observer, yet a case is on record and is the more remarkable for the fact that the weapon was a Colt automatic. On September 2nd, 1918, Lieutenant Paul H. Neibling, 1st Minnesota Field Artillery, A.E.F., attached to the 73rd Company, French Balloon Corps, was forced to jump out of his balloon, which was shot down in flames by a Fokker D.7. The pilot, in attempting to shoot the observers, Lieutenants Neibling and Carroll, came near enough for Neibling to fire five shots

THESE MEN WERE FIRST

at him from a Colt '45. The 'plane flew off towards Germany, suddenly wavered, and crashed. Neibling said he was never able to prove that his bullets did the damage, but, nevertheless, he was awarded a D.S.C. and Croix de Guerre for his extraordinary achievement.

Another strange feat was the sinking of a German submarine by aerial bombs. The first men to accomplish this were Flight Sub-Lieutenant Viney and a French observer, the Comte de Sincey, on May 15th, 1916. Flying an old Henri Farman, they attacked two submarines, dropping two 65-lb. bombs. The first missed, but the second blew a submarine in half. Flight Lieutenant J. G. Struthers made a hobby of this form of destruction, for between February 12th and December 8th, 1917, he bombed no less than ten enemy submarines. Yet the combat was not entirely one-sided, for there is an account of a British seaplane having the unique experience, on July 23rd, 1915, of being shot down by a submarine by a well-placed shot crippling the 'plane while it was flying at a low altitude.

The First Air Raids

THE first air raid on Paris was in August, 1914, and is usually credited to Max Immelmann, who flew over the city in a Rumpler-Taube and dropped four small bombs accompanied by a note demanding the surrender of the capital. Actually, however, Immelmann was the second enemy airman to visit Paris, as a few days earlier Van Hiddeson, also flying a Taube, had raided the city.

Although the Germans bombed London in an attempt to destroy morale, the British did not seriously think of retaliating by bombing Berlin until it was too late. Yet Berlin was bombed—once. A Frenchman, Lieutenant Pierre Antoine Marchal, fitted special tanks to a Nieuport and, in July, 1916, "bombed" Berlin with pamphlets stating that he had shown them that, after all, they were not invulnerable to bombing raids. Lack of petrol forced him down forty miles from the Russian frontier, and he was taken prisoner.

Incidentally, all Great War claims for

dropping the first bomb from an aeroplane are invalid, as this form of warfare was initiated well prior to 1914. Italy, for example, had used a 'plane for bomb-dropping on the Arabs in Tripoli in 1912, while during the course of the Balkan War, early in 1913, a Bulgarian pilot dropped thirty bombs on Adrianople, killing two persons and wounding five.

Reverting to the Great War, on January 28th, 1915, No. 1 Battle Squadron of the Imperial German Air Service made air history by flying in formation at night. Fourteen 'planes swept down on Dunkirk and, though they did little material damage with their bombs, they established a precedent.

The first night-landing to be made by a German pilot was accomplished by Lieutenant Bruno Loerzer and Lieutenant Hermann Goering, both of whom are still flourishing in Germany, on Christmas Day, 1914, in an old Aviatik on the aerodrome at Stenay. The first real night flight of the war, however, was made by Commander C. R. Samson, who, on December 21st, 1914, set out in an old Maurice Farman pusher to bomb the submarines in Ostend Harbour. His return landing at Dunkirk was accomplished amidst bursting shrapnel by the aid of a pocket flashlight. The war's first night bombing pilot was a Frenchman, Lieutenant de Dreuille, who made regular night bombing flights in 1915.

Mention of night-flying inevitably recalls to mind the hazardous task of spy-dropping and spy-contacting, a job tactfully called "a special mission." Some pilots specialised in it, though all were liable to be called upon for the task. Lieutenant Jules Vedrines was the first to carry out such a mission, and he made regular flights to pick up spies from the German back areas. Two others who specialised in this task were Bert Hall, an American pilot who did missions for the French, and Count Casa Grande, who made a habit of dropping Italian spies into Austrian territory and later bringing them back—dead or alive!

Balloon-"strafing" was popular with few pilots, and most airmen would rather have fought a dozen enemy 'planes than

AIR STORIES

attack a balloon. A novice was warned off balloons as a matter of course.

Captain Happe, an outstanding figure in the early days of France's aerial war, on January 20th, 1915, attacked a German balloon over Nieder-Marschwiller while flying a bomb-laden Maurice Farman. He destroyed it and returned safely home, the first French pilot to "down" a balloon.

Captain Willi Coppens was the Belgian specialist in this form of suicide, downing no less than 26 German *drachen*. Among the British, although balloons were not officially credited as victories, a number of air pilots had good balloon scores. Perhaps the leading R.F.C. specialists in this dangerous field were Lieutenant Proctor with 16 balloons to his credit, F. F. Hazell with 10, L. E. Bennet with 9, S. W. Highwood and C. R. Thompson with 6 each—and there were dozens more.

Lieutenant Maurice Boyan scored 24 balloons out of a total of 35 *descendus* for France. Among the Germans, three pilots stand out as balloon specialists: Lieutenant Heinrich Gontermann, who destroyed 16 balloons in his 40 credited victories; and Lieutenant Ritter von Roth who took up balloon-shooting because, he confessed, he could hit nothing smaller. He scored 17 balloons and his friends wondered how he managed to hit the 9 'planes which were also credited to him. Thirdly, there was Lieutenant

Rudolf von Eschwege, "Eagle of the Aegean," who, though he downed only 4, became seized with the fatal "balloon fever," and was killed when, on November 21st, 1917, he attacked a mined balloon at Orylak. His total score was 21. Lieutenant Frank Luke, an American, scored 16 balloons, in addition to two 'planes, before he flew off, never to return, on September 28th, 1918.

Six Victories in One Day

LASTLY, another sort of honour was won by three pilots—that of scoring six victories in a day. The first to accomplish this feat was Captain J. L. Trollope, R.F.C., on March 24th, 1918. Next to do the double hat-trick was another British pilot, Captain W. G. Claxton, of No. 41 Squadron, R.F.C., who scored six victories on July 4th, 1918. The only other man on either side to achieve this record was René Fonck, of France, on September 26th, 1918, though a German pilot, Lieutenant Heinrich Gontermann, came close when he downed a Spad and four balloons on August 18th, 1918.

These are but a few of the pioneers of the war days, and there were many others to whom posterity has given no memorial. Their deeds lie hidden in the dusty archives of the past—for they are members of that gallant company—the forgotten heroes of the Great War in the Air.

THE STORY BEHIND THE COVER

The R.A.F.'s Latest Fighter-Bomber is as Fast as any Fighter yet in Service anywhere in the World

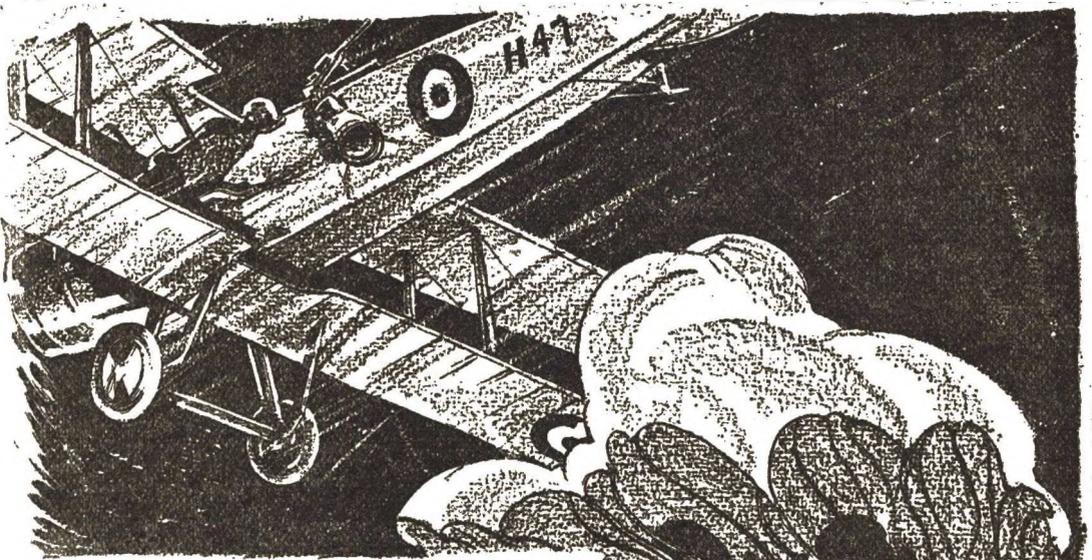
THE subject of this month's striking cover picture by S. R. Drigin is the new Handley Page Type 52 "fighter-bomber" monoplane. Possessing speed not exceeded by the fastest single-seater fighting 'planes yet in service with any of the world's air forces, great load capacity and flying range, and astonishing powers of manoeuvre, the new machine has just been ordered in large quantities by the Air Ministry, and will be supplied to the R.A.F. next year.

A twin-engined craft, the H.P. 52 has an unusually slim and deep fuselage at middle height, and in this deep and very narrow flat-sided metal case are accommodated the crew and military load. Calculations show that, set on end in this way, the forepart creates only about one-half the "drag" (head resistance) it would cause if it were placed on its side. Another important advantage of this "flying suitcase" design is that the slim fuselage permits location of the two engines closer to each other than is possible with the usual rounded fuselage, which means that in the event of failure

of one engine flying trim may not be so seriously disturbed.

The cantilever wings taper sharply towards the wing-tips and are fitted with slots and slotted flaps, giving the craft an exceptionally wide speed range and enabling it to operate with heavy loads in and out of small aerodromes. Undercarriage and tail-wheel are retractile, the main wheels and struts going upwards and back into the rear of the engine nacelles. The tail unit consists of twin fins and rudders, widely separated, with tailplane and two elevators between them. Forward is a totally enclosed gunner's post and pilot's compartment; while, from another turret at the back of the "suitcase" below the wings, a gunner can sweep the rearward hemisphere with an almost unrestricted field of fire.

Power is provided by two Bristol Pegasus air-cooled engines, each supercharged to give more than 900 h.p. at heights of several thousands of feet above sea-level. All data concerning performance and dimensions are strictly secret at present.



THE SKY-RAIDER

Here, There and Everywhere,
but Never in the Same Place
Twice, the Night-Raiding Baron
von Ekkehardt was the Scarlet
Pimpernel of the Western Front

By

E. N. T. MELLER

“**S**IR ! I've got a scheme for putting the whole of von Ekkehardt's squadron out of action without a single loss to ourselves !” Second Lieutenant Jeff Lumsden got it all out in one breath and waited, eagerly watching his commanding officer's face.

Considering von Ekkehardt's fame as a leader of nocturnal raids, and taking into account the nightly havoc wrought by his bombs, the effect of this startling announcement on Major Lisk was disappointing in the extreme.

The dapper little commander of 899 Squadron raised one eyebrow, wrinkled his nose, twisted his mouth until his two little black moustaches seemed on the point of changing places, and went on



*There was a moment of dreadful nightmare
as he let go and fell headlong into the empty
darkness below*

AIR STORIES

appending his signature to the batch of requisition forms that the adjutant had set before him. One thing at a time.

So Jeff Lumsden allowed himself to relax into the stand-at-ease position, and stared round with bright but unseeing eyes at the familiar lay-out of the squadron office. In his mind he was going again over the details of his great plan. "Unless he insists, I won't let him know how it is going to be done," he told himself. "He'll only say it's hare-brained and bound to fail. He said that about my other two schemes"—his blue eyes twinkled suddenly—"and yet I brought them off, both of 'em!"

As a matter of fact, this great plan of Jeff Lumsden's was not yet half an hour old and, surprisingly enough, he was indebted for the germ of the idea directly and indubitably to his old Aunt Agnes.

That old lady simply could not get it into her head that Jeff had grown up since she had last seen him ten years ago, and her annual birthday presents to him regularly took the form of some toy or game admirably suited to a child of eight, but not quite the right thing for a young airman on active service.

This time—it was Jeff's birthday today—he had recognised Aunt Agnes's writing in time, and had tried to smuggle the parcel out of sight without opening it. But there is no privacy in a Nissen hut occupied by six lusty young flying officers. Somebody had smelt a rat, and Jeff had been compelled to disclose his treasure.

"Shares, young Lumsden! Shares! Didn't we all share out at Christmas? 'Course we did! Make him open it, the porker!"

With reddening cheeks Jeff Lumsden unwound about three yards of corrugated paper, and disclosed a brightly coloured cardboard box on which was emblazoned "The New Game of Fishing."

There was a roar of laughter. Palgrove snatched up the box-lid. "It says—it it says, 'A game that will keep the kiddies amused for hours,'" he gurgled.

"Just the thing for a wet afternoon," spluttered Masters from over his shoulder.

"Here, give me one of those fishing-rods, you fellows!"

The cardboard "fish-pond" had already been set up on a table by chuckling subalterns. He snatched up one of the little wooden sticks from the end of which a small magnet hung from a string. "Wish old Baskerville was here; he'd enjoy this!"

There was a few seconds' silence; Baskerville had been forced down in German territory only a few days before.

Palgrove was tossing the paper "fishes" into the pond. A small metal ring was fitted to the nose of each. "The fellow who catches the fish with the highest number wins the game," he announced. "Down on your knees, chaps! No looking over the sides of the pond, t'aint fair! We'll let young Lumsden have the first go—after all, he wrote home for the game!"

Jeff Lumsden, grinning good-naturedly, let his line down into the pond and drew up a fish bearing the number "2."

"Two! A mere tiddler! Bad luck, Jeff! Watch me, you fellows. Don't shake the table, Masters! What do you think I'm fishing for—jellyfish! Hello——!" Palgrove stopped in the act of letting down his line and stared at Jeff Lumsden.

Aunt Agnes's nephew had thrust his fishing-rod into his tunic pocket, and was striding quickly up and down the length of the hut with an expression on his face suited only to severe toothache or abstruse calculations in higher mathematics.

"What's up, Jeff?"

"He's sulking because he's only got a 'two'."

But Jeff Lumsden's only answer was to fling open the door of the hut and walk out into the night.

DEEP in his thoughts, he made two circuits of the moonlit aerodrome with his hands thrust deep in his pockets, and then presented himself at the squadron office. By that time there was a look of intense excitement in his eyes.

At last the dapper little commander of 899 Squadron threw down his pen.

THE SKY-RAIDER

"What's that?" he rapped out. "Shoot up von Ekkehardt's bunch? How? When? Where? Why? Sit down!"

"It's not exactly shooting them up, sir." Jeff Lumsden neatly fielded the tin of fifty cigarettes that came shooting across the table towards him, and sat down.

"But my dear fellow, von Ekkehardt is here, there, and everywhere. One night he blows up an ammunition dump at Amiens, next night he's bombing a rest-camp somewhere else. There's no saying where the man'll turn up next!" He drew at his cigarette. "As a navigator he's a genius; all his travelling's done above cloud-banks, and when his calculations tell him he is over his target, he just dives through, drops his eggs, and is up under cover again before our folk have got a single searchlight trained. What is this plan of yours? Decoy?"

"No, sir." Jeff Lumsden leaned forward and for the next quarter of an hour he explained his great scheme—or as much of it as he thought necessary—while the jerky little major's eyes fixed him with a penetrating stare. The twitching of the little black moustaches served as a kind of barometer to indicate to Jeff how each of the details of his plan was being received.

"So you see, sir," he wound up, "we collect all the motor-cycle combinations we can find, man each with an armed officer and a mechanic who can scorch, and as soon as the pigeon brings back my message, each side-car takes up its position and we are ready for 'em. With any luck at all we shall snaffle at least one of these new Gothas before they can fire it." Eagerly Jeff watched his C.O.'s face for the verdict.

"It's clever—dashed clever, Lumsden. But it's also extremely dangerous—for you. I don't like the idea of your being alone on the other side of the line—even though you do speak German like a native. If they catch you, they'll shoot you, Jeff. Not nice."

Jeff Lumsden almost blushed; it was the first time his C.O. had ever called him by his Christian name.

"Not if I go in uniform, sir," he explained eagerly; "and there is no reason why I shouldn't—seeing that it is all night work." He walked over to the big wall-map and put his finger on a patch of green. "During the day I shall lie up here, in this forest; it's only a couple of miles from von Ekkehardt's aerodrome."

"Great thing for the Allies, if you could get away with it," mused the Major. "Von Ekkehardt is a thorn in our side at present. Must be quite a sportsman, though. Did they tell you that one of his men dropped a message to say that young Baskerville was safe? He's the guest of the squadron apparently. Been wounded in the foot."

"I know, sir. If I can get in touch with Jim Baskerville my difficulties will be halved; he'll know the lay-out of the hangars and the routine of the aerodrome. Save me days of preliminary spy work. And now, sir, will you let me try it?"

For a moment the little black moustaches twitched in silence, and then: "On this condition, young Jeff Lumsden, that if on the fourth night you find yourself still unable to work your plan, you send back the pigeon with the pinpoint of a suitable landing-place. I shall then send over a two-seater by night to pick you up."

AN hour before dawn on the following day, when the moon was behind a bank of low cloud and the aerodrome dark and unfriendly, a lone Bristol Fighter went racing across the turf and slid screaming into the air. This was the deadest hour of the twenty-four, when human courage is at its lowest ebb, and Palgrove, who sat at the controls, felt as though he were acting as the accomplice in a murder. Up to the very last moment he had tried to dissuade Jeff.

He climbed steadily to a height of twenty thousand feet, and then switched off his engine and turned towards the line. Except for the faint whistle of wires, the Bristol Fighter crossed it in utter silence. Not a searchlight came near it as it glided over German territory. It was down to nine thousand feet when

AIR STORIES

Jeff Lumsden touched him on the shoulder. "Here we are. The aerodrome is a little to the left. I get off here—over the forest."

Already he had checked up his belongings: a pigeon in a wicker cage, a revolver fitted with a silencer, iron rations for three days, and a few other important oddments.

Palgrove thrust out his hand. In his own mind he was certain that he would never see Jeff Lumsden again. "Good luck, old boy. Good luck!"

Setting his teeth, Jeff Lumsden put one leg over the side of the Bristol and felt for the mounting-step. Like many perfectly normal people, he positively loathed the idea of a parachute drop, but there was no help for it. He took one look down at the empty darkness below, and then, with a prayer that was more than usually earnest, let go.

Whee-ee-ee-eessh! There was a moment of dreadful nightmare, and then, as the 'chute was jerked out of the container, the big, silken umbrella bellied out above him, checking his drop with a jerk that almost shook him out of his skin. But Jeff didn't mind that; he felt like shouting for joy. He was through with the most unpleasant part of his mission.

The shape of the forest below he had memorised by copying it from the map on a score of scraps of paper; he could recognise it in any position. So that when, with a rough welcome of rustling leaves and snapping branches, it received him in its bosom, he knew pretty accurately in what part of it he had come down.

His first action, on letting himself drop from a low branch to the ground, was to retrieve as much as he could of the silken parachute from the branches above. His next was to roll himself up in the largest piece he had recovered, and fall asleep. It still wanted a little time to dawn.

When he awoke it was nearly thirty. He had no intention of going near the German aerodrome until dark, but the forest was thick and the undergrowth tangled; it would be as well to find out the way to the road as soon as possible. So, compass in hand, he made

his way through green glades and thick scrub. Every now and again he paused and placed his ear to the ground, but the forest was apparently deserted.

A quarter of an hour's cautious going brought him to the white road which he knew led past the German aerodrome. Here he sank down amid the ferns, screened by bushes from the road, and opened his map to verify his position. Once a column of lorries rumbled past in a cloud of white dust, but otherwise there was little traffic. In the depths of the forest behind him a robin began to sing, and farther off still the branch of a tree snapped and fell with a crash.

Tock—tock—tock! Jeff Lumsden started and, silently folding his map, crouched lower behind his cover. Something was coming down the road. But what?

Tock—tock—tock! The tapping on the flint road was as regular as a pendulum. Silently Jeff broke off a couple of stems of fern, and, holding them in front of his face, peered through a gap in the foliage. A hundred yards away a man in uniform was swinging briskly towards him on crutches. He was about to creep to a safer locality when something about the fellow's uniform made him delay his going. A moment later, with a barely repressed shout of delight, he was bounding out of cover and racing towards Jim Baskerville.

HALF an hour later the two friends were still lying full length in a secluded glade of the forest. Jim Baskerville was shaking his head, and there was a look of prophecy in his eyes which disquieted Jeff in spite of himself.

"You will never do it, Jeff," Baskerville said with conviction. "If I hadn't given my parole, I'd help you all I could, but even then we shouldn't succeed."

"Why the deuce not?" Jeff Lumsden was annoyed.

"You don't know von Ekkehardt," the other answered quietly. "There's something tremendous about him—some spiritual force or something—I can't explain it. You can't get the better of a man like that, short of assassinating him

THE SKY-RAIDER

—and if you assassinate that gloomy old hero, Jeff Lumsden, you'll have me to reckon with. Jove ! If that man were an Englishman, I'd—I'd follow him anywhere ! ”

Jeff Lumsden stared. “ What's he like ? ” he said shortly.

With his hands behind his head Baskerville lay staring up at the leafy ceiling of the forest. “ D'you know anything about Praise-God Barebones ? ” he asked. “ Thought not. Neither do I ; it's just a name in a history book, but somehow it just suits Baron von Ekkehardt. Queer old bloke ; he has all his meals alone, and they say he asks God to punish England four times a day by way of grace. He didn't when he asked me to dine, though ; he's jolly courteous in his gloomy way—didn't ask for information or anything. The rest of the Staffel treat him like a sort of god.”

“ What does he look like ? ”

“ He's about six and a half feet high, grey hair, and a face like a famished hawk. Apart from his complex about the English, he's a pukka sahib—bluest blood in Pomerania, so they tell me.”

For some time Jeff was silent ; the magnitude of his task was beginning to be borne in on him. Suddenly he jerked round his head.

“ If I delay my stunt till to-morrow, will you withdraw your parole to-day and give me a hand ? ”

Jim Baskerville considered. Then : “ Sorry, Jeff, I'd love to. But for two reasons it would be useless ; for one thing I should be no help to you with a foot bandaged like this, and for another, it would only arouse suspicion if I suddenly withdrew my parole.”

Jeff rose to his feet. “ Then, by Jiminy, I'll do my stuff to-night ! ” he exclaimed. He strode over to where he had set down the pigeon in its wicker cage, and, tearing a leaf from his notebook, wrote his message to Major Lisk. “ Tremendous luck. Met J. B. almost at once. To-night about 11.30.”

He was standing with the pigeon ready to release in his hand, when Baskerville spoke urgently. “ Jeff ! It's no good,

I warn you ! You'll never do it. Write another message, asking for a machine to take you back.”

“ No ! I'm going to do what I set myself to do.” The pigeon fluttered upwards, and breaking through the leafy ceiling above them, disappeared from view.

Baskerville reached for his crutches. “ Well, I warned you, Jeff.”

Long after Baskerville had gone *tock-tocking* down the road, Jeff lay staring thoughtfully up at the green foliage overhead. He had everything now : a map of the aerodrome, knowledge of its routine and the habits of the German officers. The only question was : was he man enough to pit himself against the god-like Baron ? To-night he would know.

THE Hauptmann Georg Schenkel limped through the darkness, kicked open the door of his hut, switched on the light, and sat down at his desk with a sigh. A glance at his wrist-watch told him that it was 10.15. He would have just fifteen minutes before the raid began. He picked up his pen and drew towards him a trayful of forms. Besides being von Ekkehardt's observer, Schenkel was adjutant.

On the camp-bed his flying-kit had been laid out by his batman : flying-suit, helmet, goggles, silk and woollen gloves, and gauntlets. There was also a pot of grease for his face ; Schenkel, having had frost-bite when he was in the trenches, had no intention of getting it again.

All was silent on the aerodrome except for the low rumble of the twelve Mercedes engines ticking over. The men were at supper, the officers attending the Staffel-commander's pow-wow. The adjutant's pen scratched busily at one signature after another : G. H. Schenkel, Hauptmann—G. H. Schenkel, Hauptm—

Suddenly his pen stopped moving and then completed the signature in the darkness. There had been a faint click, and simultaneously the electric light had gone out.

AIR STORIES

Muttering angrily, the adjutant besought his Maker to punish all electricians and was about to rise when there was a swift patter of feet in the darkness, and a hand of steel gripped his windpipe. He could not breathe; he struggled furiously, but the attacker had all the advantages. Suddenly the grip was released. Schenkel took a great gulp of air—or tried to—and found to his horror that a soft cloth with a sickly smell had been placed over his nose and mouth. He struggled frantically. There was a sound of rushing waters in his ears, and then utter blackness.

With a passable imitation of Schenkel's limp, Jeff Lumsden made his way through the darkness to the foremost machine of the formation of six big Gothas. Jim Baskerville was standing beside it as they had arranged.

"If anyone comes along, whistle," he ordered in a whisper, and climbed into the pilot's cockpit. There he made certain arrangements. A long piece of string which ran from the front to the rear cockpit was a feature—and other things came into play. He had been at work seven minutes before he flicked out his torch.

When Jeff Lumsden climbed down again to the ground he seemed in the worst of bad tempers. Nerves, Baskerville thought.

"Look here, young Baskerville, I've got a bone to pick with you. What the deuce did you give your parole for?"

"Why——!" began the astonished Baskerville. "I could hardly get away with a foot like this, could I? What do you mean, Jeff?"

"Only this," said Jeff grimly. He gave a sudden push with both hands, knocking the other completely off his crutches. For a moment Baskerville lay on his back, too astounded to open his mouth. A sickly smelling cloth was pressed over his face. Chloroform! The word hammered on his reeling senses, but it was too late to make any effort to release himself, and with a slight sigh he sank into an inert heap upon the ground.

"SCHENKEL!"

"Ja, Herr Oberst?"

"Gut! Wir sind fertig. This cloud-bank has been sent for our purpose. *Gott sei Dank!*" The tall, stooping figure of the Herr Oberst Baron Ludwig von Ekkehardt emerged from the darkness and climbed on board. He glanced round at his formation, circled an electric torch once round his head, and opened his throttle. An answering thunder broke from the five other bombers. Then, with engines roaring, all six machines rumbled to windward over the uneven turf. Another touch on the throttle and the twelve Mercédès power-units were thundering all out. The big bombers gathered speed and, racing tail-high across the aerodrome, rose screaming to clear the further hedge.

One circle round the aerodrome and the famous night-raider settled down on his compass course, and climbed steadily for the cloud-bank. Soon the damp mist enclosed the whole armada.

It was just after he had emerged into the clear moonlight that a sudden exclamation of annoyance broke from the German leader. He leaned forward and impatiently tapped on the glass of his compass. *Teufel!* The thing would not move.

"Schenkel!"

"Ja, Herr Baron?" came the helpful voice of Schenkel—alias Jeff Lumsden.

"This *verdammte* compass is awry. Give me the compass bearing 203."

"Ja, mein Herr!—Am links—Noch ein *wenig*—Still more to the left. *Gut! Jetzt haben Sie es!*"

For twenty minutes exactly by Jeff Lumsden's watch the armada rode the cloud-bank, filling the night with a racket of sound that sent French peasants below scuttling in panic to their shelters.

"We should now be approaching the aerodrome, if my calculations are right," Jeff muttered. "Now for some dirty work!" He pulled out his revolver and knelt to find arm-rest.

Training the weapon on the whirling blades of the port propeller of the rear-most machine of the formation, he pulled the trigger.

THE SKY-RAIDER

Thanks to the silencer, only a faint click was audible above the din of the engines, but that rearmost machine, with its propeller shattered, dropped quickly behind. Not too quickly, however, for the marksman to send another silent messenger to put out of action its starboard propeller.

"Good!" Jeff Lumsden watched the helpless Gotha nose slowly down towards the cloud-bank and disappear into its fleecy bosom. He chuckled. "And not a soul seems to notice he's lost a little friend! Now for these other blokes!"

In a few minutes' time the great night-raider was leading a formation only in his imagination. Jeff leaned over to him.

"Herr Baron, it is here that we descend."

Slowly the big German turned his head, and in his face there was no comprehension. It took Jeff five long minutes to make the situation clear—and much demonstration of the revolver.

"And now turn back, Herr Baron; we have overshot. And make a good landing; I have a wounded man on board."

"If it is the Lieutenant Baskerville," said the Baron bitterly, "I would point out that that officer gave me his word of honour——"

"Nor did he break it," Jeff explained gently. "I drugged him and bundled him on board three minutes before you arrived."

The big Gotha was down to fifty feet now. The dark shapes of trees, haystacks, and houses were racing past beneath them at dizzy speed. Unnoticed by Jeff Lumsden, the Staffel-leader had not only brought down his machine until it was flying dangerously near to the ground, but also he had opened his throttle to the full.

"Turn, Herr Baron!" ordered Jeff sharply, but the Baron turned only his head, and there was just the trace of a smile—a smile of quiet resignation—on his gaunt face.

"Shoot if you must, young Englishman. It has never been the practice of the Barons von Ekkehardt to be taken

prisoner." He pulled back the stick a fraction, and the nose of the racing Gotha rose just sufficiently to avoid collision with a farm-house. Then it continued its crazy progress across the darkened countryside.

Jeff Lumsden didn't know what to do. To shoot, dope, or use force in any way was suicidal. And he had Jim Baskerville to think of.

MEANWHILE on the ground below, dapper little Major Lisk, racing about from point to point in his car, was very well pleased with the arrangements he had made. A score of motor-cycle combinations, each carrying an officer with a revolver and driven by an eager mechanic similarly armed, had been posted at strategic points. There was one of them waiting with engine ticking over at every cross-road within seven miles of the aerodrome, the officer almost cricking his neck in an effort to keep the whole sky under observation, the mechanic trembling with eagerness to let in the clutch and be off.

The dark shape of the first of the crippled Gothas had no sooner nosed down from the cloud-bank than it was caught by the mobile searchlights waiting ready for it. Instantly three side-cars, driven at reckless speed, went streaking down three different roads to converge at the spot where the hapless raider must land.

One by one four Gothas nosed down in their turn.

Soon the whole countryside was a-roar with streaking motor-bikes, whirling round corners, over-shooting, racing back, taking incredible risks to be on the spot in time to prevent the German officers from setting fire to their machines.

One after another green Verey lights shot up into the air to announce capture, and motor-cars with armed guards were despatched to take over the prisoners. There was a job that night for every officer and every man in the squadron.

"Here's one going to land on the aerodrome, sir!" Masters, standing at the elbow of Major Lisk, pointed to a

AIR STORIES

shadow looming across the eastern sky, and a moment later, with a wailing of wires, a big Gotha glided down close above their heads.

"Got your gun?" jerked out the Major. "Into the car! We'll snaffle this one ourselves!" A moment later, with the C.O. himself at the wheel, they were racing across the aerodrome in pursuit.

But this time there was no hold-up. The first figure to drop from the fuselage of the big Gotha was Jeff Lumsden. He caught his commanding officer urgently by the arm and drew him aside.

A zealous little mechanic with bayonet fixed rushed up belligerently towards the German Staffel-leader as he dropped to the ground. "'Ands up, you!"

But the tall, gaunt Baron, ignoring him entirely, calmly lighted a cigar, and turning, stalked up and down beside his machine as one waiting for a 'bus. When he halted, it was to lend a hand in evacuating Jim Baskerville.

"And so you see, sir," Jeff Lumsden finished breathlessly, "I had to come to terms with him. He was streaking across the countryside, going all out, and we were only twenty feet above the ground. Rather than surrender he would have charged full tilt into a farmhouse or something and killed both of us, as well as Jim Baskerville." He paused. "If—if you can't see your way to ratifying the promise I made him, I must resign my commission, that's all."

"That'd never do, Jeff!" Major Lisk's moustaches were twirling like a catherine-wheel. "I'll see to it." He moved over to the waiting von Ekkehardt. "Herr Baron, you are, of course, free to take-off whenever you wish—according to the agreement you reached with this young man. But I hope that you will at least accept our hospitality in the mess for an hour or two."

The big German bowed. "You will forgive me, Herr Major, but, unlike you, I have no cause for celebration. *Gute Nacht, Herren!*" He raised his hand in a salute to which every English officer

replied, and a moment later was climbing into his machine.

"WHAT we want to know," shouted **V** Masters, sitting on Jeff Lumsden's chest, "is how he worked the trick, and he's not getting up until he explains!" The hut was crowded with returned Gotha-snatchers.

"It was quite simple really." Jeff Lumsden dusted himself down and drew from his pocket a small magnet. A couple of yards of black twine were attached to it. He grinned. "I expect you'll all recognise this. Well, with the help of Jim Baskerville here, I fixed this up in the Baron's cockpit so that when I pulled the string tight the magnet was drawn up in close contact with the pilot's compass. I pulled the string as soon as we crossed the line. The magnet, of course, put the compass out of action at once, and von Ekkehardt was forced to ask his observer for the compass-course. That observer, as we had arranged by a little dirty work, was me. Well, all I did was to lead the formation over this aerodrome and shoot off their propellers with a silencer-gun. That's all it was."

"And some more—a lot more," came a voice from the end of the hut. Jim Baskerville was lying on somebody else's camp-bed, his own having been sent back to England with the rest of his kit.

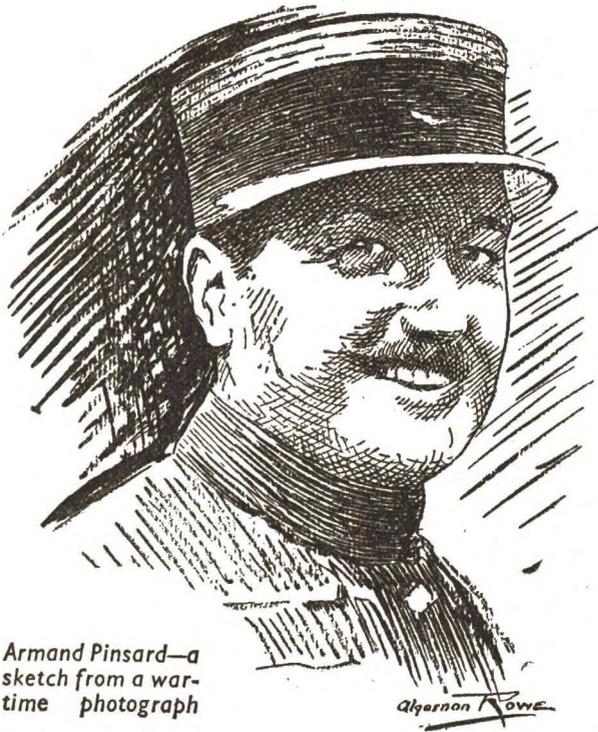
A newcomer, bursting in with news, hoiked himself high above the shoulders of the crowd that surrounded Jeff Lumsden.

"Straight from the horse's mouth! A fortnight's leave and recommendation for the D.S.O.! I've just heard!"

"Hooray!"

Shoulder-high, Jeff Lumsden was carried into the ante-room. Champagne was on the mess that night. Major Lisk, his moustaches twirling as never before, rose to his feet.

"Gentlemen! The toast is a little old lady at home in England. As far as she knows, she has only one nephew. But to-night the whole squadron adopts her! We drink to Aunt Agnes!"



Armand Pinsard—a sketch from a war-time photograph

The Ace They Could Not Kill

Shot Down and Injured, Wounded by Shell-fire and Captured by the Enemy, Armand Pinsard of "The Storks" Survived a Hundred Hazards to Become a Leading Ace of France

By

A. H. PRITCHARD

THE subject of this month's brief biography is Armand Pinsard, eighth on the list of French "Aces," and his story is unusual inasmuch that, after being shot down far behind the German lines and spending nearly a year in prison camps, he escaped and shot down twenty-seven enemy aircraft.

Pinsard embarked on a military career by joining the cavalry, and as early as 1905 was mentioned in Army Orders for a daring attack on an Arab stronghold, a feat which brought him the Moroccan Medal in June of that year. When the French *Aviation Militaire* was founded in 1912, Pinsard, then twenty-five years of age, was one of the first twelve officers to enter the new service, his request for a transfer being granted on May 16th. Securing his brevet on a Morane, he soon won a name for himself as a skilful and spectacular pilot, and was awarded the *Medaille Militaire* for a series of daring flights, made during the great Picardy manœuvres of 1913.

Three days after the outbreak of war, he was assigned to Escadrille Morane-Saulnier 23, and within six months had received eight citations for exceptional

bravery and devotion to duty, the first coming when he flew forty miles with one wing of his machine shattered by shell-fire. On October 22nd he was forced to land behind the German lines with oiled-up sparking-plugs, but, by a stroke of luck, the area was deserted, and after an hour's hard work he managed to get the engine going again. But just as he was climbing into the machine to take-off, a group of Uhlan cavalry came galloping across the field, and all seemed lost. Not to be beaten at the eleventh hour, Pinsard taxied the Morane straight at the charging Germans and, terrified by the roaring engine, their horses bolted, leaving just enough room for a take-off. For this exploit Pinsard received more "barnacles" to pin on his *Croix de Guerre*.

Such good fortune, however, could not last, and late in February, 1915, the fates turned against Pinsard. While out on a long-distance reconnaissance, his Morane was hit by rifle-fire and he made a crash-landing on German territory, breaking two ribs and suffering slight concussion. To all intents and purposes his war career was over, for, after five weeks in hospital, he was

AIR STORIES

packed off to the discomforts of prison life. Within three weeks he had made two attempts to escape, but after a brief hour of freedom was recaptured and had to endure the rigours of solitary confinement.

Undaunted by these failures, he made twelve more attempts, and on one occasion was within two miles of the Dutch frontier when he was caught by a party of farmers. For this last attempt he was sent to the supposedly escape-proof Prinz Karl Fortress at Ingolstadt. Three long weary months went by before another opportunity to escape presented itself, but on March 26th, 1916, Pinsard and a certain Captain Meynard dug their way through a wall twelve feet thick, and had obtained a six-hour start before an alarm was raised. The perils that beset them during the next three weeks are too numerous to describe—sufficient to say that, on April 2nd, two half-starved airmen presented themselves at the French Mission in Switzerland, and asked to be re-assigned to active service.

Appointed to "The Storks"

ARRIVING back in France, Pinsard found that the war in the air, which was only in its infancy when he had been shot down, was now advanced far beyond his knowledge, and that it would be necessary for him to learn the flying game all over again. Such a trifling matter did not worry the man who had once been the most decorated pilot in the service, and within a month he had won a Nieuport Scout brevet, and by July had become so expert that he was sent to the élite squadron of the French Air Service, Escadrille No. 3, *Les Cigognes*. His first victory was secured while flying with such good company as Guynemer and Heurteaux in a ground-strafting expedition on August 7th, and was achieved at the expense of a Rumppler that fell in flames near Verdun. After this initial success, he was slow in scoring, and it was not until March 6th, 1917, that he secured the victory that was to make him an "Ace," the flaming debris of the Rump-

pler he destroyed on that day falling on the town hall at Laval. Victories now came to him with astonishing regularity, and by April 14th he had eight confirmed *descendus* to his credit.

On April 18th, while flying alone, he spotted an observation balloon suspended tantalisingly before his nose, and thereupon decided to try his luck at "sausage" hunting. Then it was that he learned his first and last lesson about the clumsy looking gas-bags. Before he had time to trip his guns, German "Archie" bursts blossomed all around him, and in answer to their signal, five Fokkers roared down from the clouds. As the Fokkers came down, Pinsard zoomed, and drilled the leading machine's petrol-tank. The Fokker went down, blazing like a meteor, but Pinsard never saw it for he was scooting "hell for leather" homewards. Not to be outdone by a lone stork-marked Spad, the remaining D.5's gave chase and overhauled him before he could cross the lines. Only one thing remained to be done and it lay in Jimmy McCudden's famous maxim, "the best form of defence is attack," so Pinsard turned on his pursuers. Bullets flicked through his Spad from all angles, and everywhere but the cockpit seemed to have received a year's quota of Spandau lead, but once again Pinsard was lucky, and a quick burst sent another Fokker down in flames. Taking advantage of the momentary respite, the Frenchman swooped to within a few feet of the ground and, hedge-hopping his way home, landed unhurt, but in a machine so badly bullet-shattered that it never flew again.

The next day he downed an Albatros Scout near Brimont for his tenth victory, and during May he destroyed two Rumpplers, an Aviatik, a Fokker D.5, and an Albatros D.3 to make his score fifteen.

Early in June he experienced the first of another series of narrow escapes, but again his luck held good and he emerged unscathed. On June 4th he went down on a two-seater, and after putting several effective bursts in the enemy machine and seeing the observer's hands waving frantically in token of sur-

THE ACE THEY COULD NOT KILL

render, he gestured for the pilot to land. That worthy was made of better stuff, however, and before Pinsard was aware of his intentions, the German took up the attack. Bullets flailed the French machine, one cutting the ear-pad off Pinsard's helmet, and another neatly slicing the top off his control-stick and ploughing a furrow across the back of his hand. That was enough for Pinsard, and within thirty seconds the two-seater went crashing down into the Forest of Rheims. On another occasion, shortly after a brush with a trio of enemy scouts, an anti-aircraft shell burst a few feet under his Spad, shattering the edge of one wing, cutting the aileron cables, and filling the cockpit with flying fragments of a battered instrument-board. How the machine held together can never be explained, but it did, and when Pinsard took off his flying coat, after landing the wreckage, eleven splinters of steel were found embedded in the leather.

A Dangerous Mission

TOWARDS the end of the year Pinsard was withdrawn from combat work and assigned to many of the "special missions" so beloved of the French Air Service. Just what many of these "special missions" were will never be disclosed, for they are the closely-guarded secrets of the French *Bureau Militaire*, but it is known that the majority of them covered more than the mere dropping of spies. Accounts of some of these missions have filtered out since the war, and although it has never been officially confirmed or denied, Pinsard is believed to be the perpetrator of one of the most daring missions of all.

Readers are, no doubt, familiar with the details of the capture of Roland Garros and Pierre Maréchal, the only Allied pilot to fly over Berlin, but who has heard the story of their escape from Germany? According to the known facts a message was smuggled to Garros and Maréchal in Cologne prison, informing them that arrangements had been made for them to escape on January 23rd, 1918, and that on the following

day a 'plane would pick them up at a prearranged spot. So it was that Lieutenant Pierre Quette, flying a three-seater, and Armand Pinsard, flying a Spad for protection, landed behind the German lines at 12.15 a.m. on January 24th. Contact was made and the fugitives were picked up and later landed at an unknown rendezvous somewhere near the Swiss border. Great secrecy was maintained, and it was not until April that the French War Office announced that the two airmen had escaped and returned to France by way of England. Just what decorations Pinsard received for his part in their escape is not known, but about this time he was made a member of the Legion of Honour.

Pinsard returned to combat work just a month before the German Army was shattered by defeat in that Black "August" of 1918, and found plenty of action. The German pilots were determined to die fighting, and proved to be tough opponents, but Pinsard survived this hectic period and scored ten more victories to make his final total of twenty-seven. During the course of these victories he was shot down "out of control" by the gunner of a Halberstadt C.L.2, but going up that same evening in a borrowed machine, he met the identical machine that had defeated him, and this time it was the German machine that went down, in flames. Another time he attacked a formation of five Fokkers, D.7's, from Gontermann's old Staffel 15, and sent one down in flames. The doomed machine crashed into the next in line and, locked together, the two machines plunged to oblivion.

Pinsard's last victory was achieved at the expense of an armoured A.E.G.C.4, at this time one of the most formidable machines in the air. He had been busily "strafing" the retreating German infantry and was on his way home when he spotted the A.E.G. performing the same duties against the French infantry. Despite the fact that his gun-belts were almost empty, Pinsard attacked, and incidentally, had one of the hardest fights of his career, even though his

AIR STORIES

Spad was almost twenty miles an hour faster than the A.E.G. The German gunner's arc of fire covered every angle, and even if he attacked from underneath, Pinsard was met by a Spandau that could be fired through a trap in the floor. After half-a-dozen feint attacks, Pinsard threw caution to the four winds and slammed everything wide open. For a few brief seconds that seemed an eternity, the air was thick with leaden wasps of death, then the German gunner's head was bathed in his life-blood, and the machine's fate was sealed. The pilot was almost helpless, and within

a few seconds he, too, had made his last flight.

To many war-birds the Armistice was a finish to their fling at glory, but not for Pinsard. Unlike many of the French war pilots, Pinsard stayed with the *Aviation Militaire*, and as the years pass by, he rises to fresh glories. At the moment he is Lieutenant-Colonel Armand Pinsard, commander of the 7th *Escadrille de Pursuit* at the great air base of Dijon, and is still going strong. Now fifty-four years of age, Pinsard is the Peter Pan of the French Air Service. May his wings never fold.

HERE'S THE ANSWER

Whatever you want to know about Aviation, AIR STORIES' staff of experts will supply the answer. Questions of general interest will be answered in these columns, but ALL enquiries must be accompanied by a stamped, addressed envelope for postal reply, if necessary. Address your enquiry to Information Department, AIR STORIES, 8-11 Southampton Street, London, W.C.2

THE BLACK FLIGHT (D. Kennet, Leominster). The five Sopwith Triplanes which comprised the famous Black Flight of Ray Collishaw were variously named "Black Roger," "Black Sheep," "Black Death," "Black Prince" and "Black Maria," the latter being the name of Collishaw's own 'plane.

HEIGHT RECORD (R. V. Walsh, Walton, Surrey). The aeroplane used for the R.A.F.'s recent altitude record flight was a Bristol Type 138 monoplane specially built to Air Ministry order for high-altitude research purposes. It is fitted with a 9-cylinder radial Bristol Pegasus engine of a special and secret type and runs on a special type of ethyl fuel. The airscrew is of the four-bladed type, 12 ft. 9 in. in diameter and with a pitch of 14 ft. The machine has a span of 66 ft., is 44 ft. long and 10 ft. 3 in. high. Top speed at ground level is 123 m.p.h. and the rate of climb ranges from 1,040 ft. per minute from ground level to 1,430 ft. per minute at 40,000 ft. and 580 ft. per minute at 50,000 ft. The upper surface of the wings and fuselage were painted black to avoid dazzling the pilot by reflection of the very bright light at high altitudes.

PARACHUTING (G. J. Stockley, London, S.W.16). (1) Exhibition parachutists must hold an Air Ministry permit, to be eligible for which the applicant must have made ten trial descents and hold a current Air Ministry licence as a Ground Engineer in Category X, Section 3 (Parachutes). Temporary permits are issued for the necessary trial descents. (2) No, there are few openings for professional parachutists in this country and the supply already exceeds the demand.

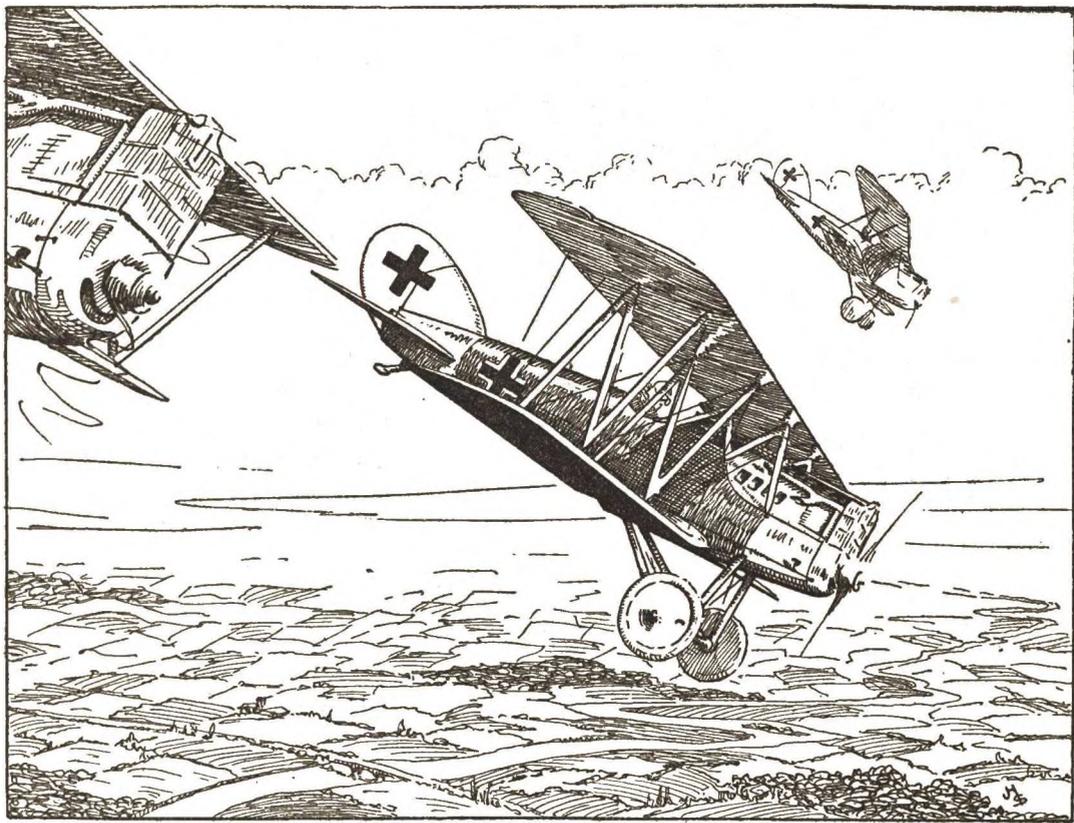
SERVICE MARKS (H. J. Sands, Broadstairs). The key letters, followed by a series of numbers, seen on Service aircraft, originally denoted the purpose for which the machine was intended. Fleet Air Arm craft, for example, bore the prefix

"N" and Home Defence land 'planes the prefix "K." This system has now been abandoned, however, and all new aircraft now being delivered to the R.A.F. bear the prefix "K," irrespective of the use for which they are destined.

OUTBOARD GUNS (Robert Eden, Clapham, London). Outboard machine-guns, such as those mounted in the wings or in the "trousers" of the undercarriage, are usually fired by electric solenoid trigger motors connected, through the battery circuit, to the trigger switch mounted on the pilot's joy-stick. Their loading handles are operated through remote control gear, but it is, of course, impossible for the pilot to clear major stoppages.

WARTIME FLARES (J. S. Deane, Southport). (1) The war-time ground flares used for night landings usually consisted of cotton waste soaked in paraffin. This waste was stored in open petrol tins and ignited just prior to an expected landing. The tins were set out in the form of a long "L" in such a way that the pilot, landing down the long arm of the "L" would be heading directly into wind and would know that he must pull up before reaching the short arm of the "L." (2) Yes, the versatile old F.E.2b was even used as a bomber. Many different types of bomb releases were tried and the bombs used ranged from 20-lb. Coopers to 200-pounders.

ALTITUDE CONTROL (C. Furse, Cheam, Surrey). The altitude, or mixture, control is a valve in the induction system of an aero-engine, by means of which the mixture of petrol and oil to the carburettor can be varied to allow for the rarefied air at high altitudes. It is usually operated by a lever beside the main engine throttle lever in the pilot's cockpit.



A SCOUT THAT PILOTS HATED

The Story of the German Pfalz D.12 Scout, With Full Instructions For Building a Solid Scale Model

By JAMES HAY STEVENS

DURING the Great War the Pfalz Flugzeugwerke was well known as a source of good scouting aeroplanes, even though its output was not as prolific as that of the Albatros, Fokker and Roland works.

In the early days of the war there was a Pfalz fighter monoplane which was very similar in appearance to the Fokker but with superior armament in that it had two guns, instead of the Fokker's one. Late in 1917 another Pfalz chaser came well to the fore and continued in service almost to the end of the war. This was the D.3, a machine built generally on the lines of the Albatros but with a somewhat slimmer fuselage

and very much lighter in construction. In 1918 the D.12 arrived at the front. It represented an endeavour to combine the design characteristics of the Fokker D.7 with the structural features of the earlier Pfalz machines, but the result was not wholly satisfactory.

The wings had a plan form somewhat similar to that of the D.7, and the resemblance to that famous scout was further emphasised by the incorporation of horn-balanced ailerons and N-shaped interplane struts. No attempt was made to adopt the "wireless" wing system other than the omission of the centre-section cross-bracing wires. The latter were replaced by wires bracing the

AIR STORIES

rear lower wing spar roots to the rear centre-section strut attachments in a manner reminiscent of the centre-section bracing on our new Gloster Gladiator. A thin high-speed wing section, very similar to the British "Raf 14," was used for both upper and lower main planes, the latter being in one piece with two wood and plywood box spars extending throughout the span. A light auxiliary plank spar ran continuously along the span midway between the rear spar and the trailing edge and it was upon this spar that the ailerons were mounted.

The main spars were braced to each other by means of steel tube compression struts with tie-rod and piano-wire cross-bracing. The main ribs were of three-ply with plentiful lightening holes and the usual wooden capping-strips. A light wooden strip from the leading-edge to a point aft of the auxiliary spar served to prevent the fabric sagging between the ribs. In addition to this strip there were two nose ribs between each pair of ribs. The leading-edge strip was of wood while the trailing-edge was a wire. The whole wing was fabric covered. The M-shaped centre-section and N-shaped interplane struts were made from streamline steel tubes. The lower wing was identical with the upper one in construction, but was made in two halves and bolted to stubs built into the fuselage.

Constructional Details

THE fuselage was similar to that of the D.7 in elevation, but was quite different in section, being almost oval—notably at the after part. Construction was that of the popular plywood mono-coque used on most German aeroplanes.

The engine was enclosed with aluminium cowling panels like that of the D.7, and had a car-type radiator in the nose. The entire fuel supply was carried inside the fuselage just ahead of the pilot's cockpit, which was unusually roomy and had a large opening. Two Spandau guns were mounted on top of the fuselage, firing through the airscrew with the aid of the customary interrupter gear.

The engine was a 180 h.p. or a 200 h.p. Mercedes six-cylinder in-line water-cooled type, but the customary ash and walnut laminated airscrew of German aeroplanes was replaced, in this case, by one made from alternate layers of mahogany and walnut.

The tail unit was of normal construction, both fin and tailplane, as was usual with German aeroplanes at that time, being cantilever structures. The rudder and the elevators were horn balanced.

The undercarriage was of the steel tube "vee" type, the struts being cross-braced by wires in the plane of both front and rear legs. Springing was obtained by lashing the axle to the apices of the "vees" with rubber cord.

The available data regarding this aeroplane are few, and not too reliable. Fully equipped with ammunition and nineteen gallons of petrol, the D.12 had a top speed of 125 m.p.h. Slower than the D.7 and less manoeuvrable, the Pfalz would probably have been more popular if it had not suffered so much by comparison with the paragon. As it was, the German pilots loathed the D.12, and considered it hard to fly and land, while the mechanics shared their lack of enthusiasm because it required much more attention than the Fokker and had to be rigged with far greater care.

HOW TO BUILD THE SCALE MODEL

Details of Tools, Materials and Method of Construction

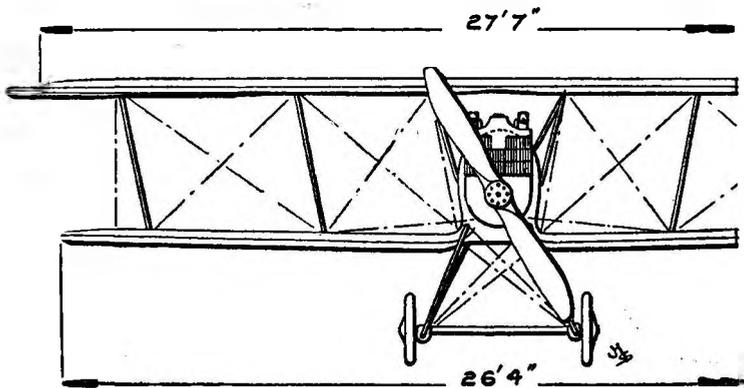
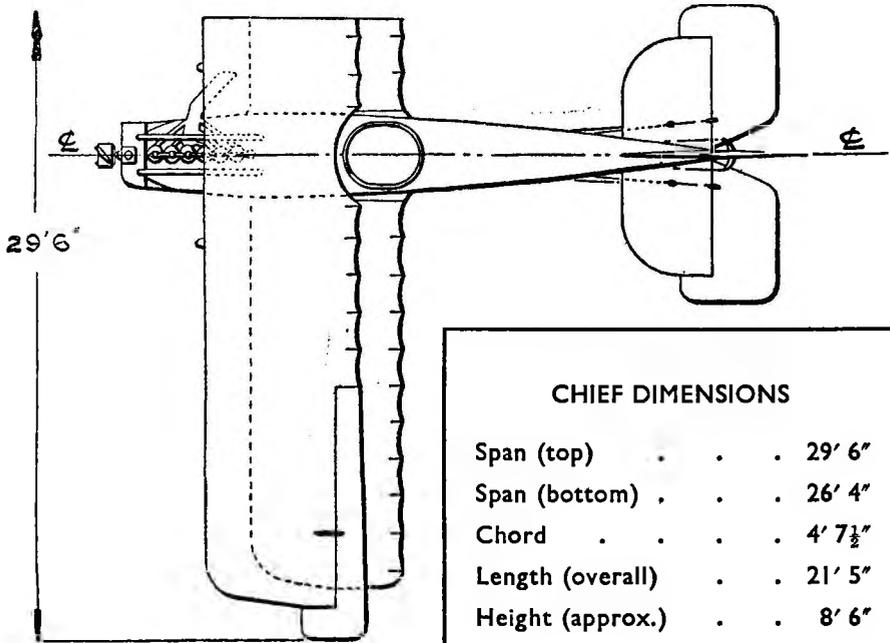
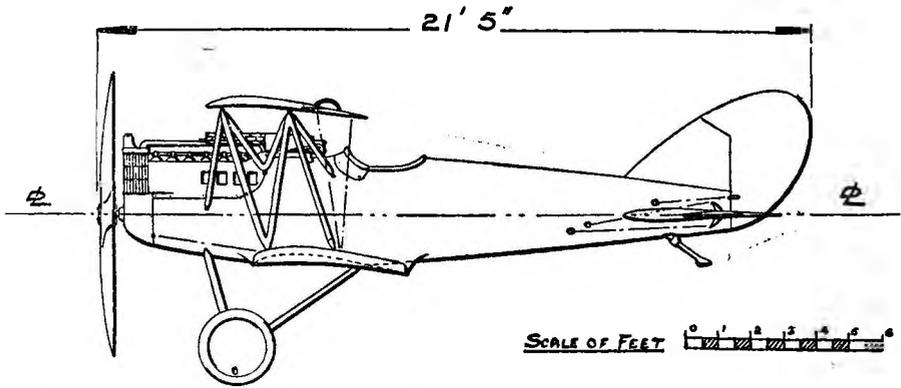
THREE-VIEW General Arrangement Drawings of the Pfalz D.12 are reproduced opposite. These drawings are planned to the uniform scale of $\frac{1}{72}$ nd, which has been adopted for this series, but if it is wished to make the model to a different scale the alteration is simply effected by

re-drawing the plans to the desired size with the aid of the scale measure shown.

Materials and Tools

FOR a $\frac{1}{72}$ nd scale model the following materials will be required: a block of wood $3\frac{1}{8} \times \frac{5}{8} \times \frac{7}{16}$ in. from which to

THE PFALZ D.12 SCOUT OF 1918



A General Arrangement Drawing showing Three-view Plans of the Pfalz D.12 Single-seater Scout 'plane

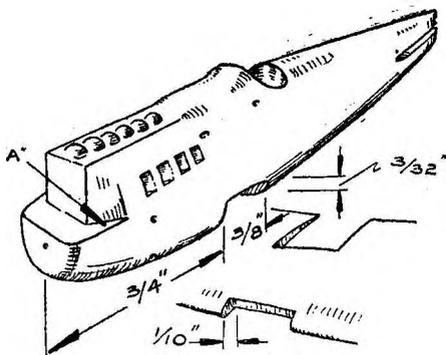


Fig. 1.—The fuselage block after carving but before installation of any fittings

carve the fuselage; another piece of wood $5 \times 2 \times \frac{3}{32}$ in. for the wings; for the tail unit, a sheet of fibre, aluminium or celluloid $4 \times 2 \times \frac{1}{16}$ in.; the various struts can be made from a couple of feet of 20-gauge brass wire; the various bracing wires for the wings and undercarriage are made from fine gauge florist's wire.

Odd parts, such as guns, airscrew, wheels and various small fittings, are made from odd bits of material, or may be bought in cast form, thus saving a great deal of time and trouble, as they are somewhat tricky parts to make.

The essential tools are: $\frac{1}{4}$ -in. chisel, small plane, penknife, oilstone, fretsaw, small half-round file, $\frac{1}{16}$ -in. bradawl, small long-nosed pliers, plastic wood, tube of cellulose glue and a penny ruler measuring in $\frac{1}{10}$ ths, $\frac{1}{12}$ ths and $\frac{1}{16}$ ths of an inch.

Method of Construction

THE first, and perhaps the most important, instruction to impart and, above all, to follow, is to read and understand the instructions thoroughly before starting work. Admittedly they are dull, but making a part twice because the first one is wrong is even duller. Having read the instructions and got a fair working knowledge of what is to be done and how it is to be accomplished, care should be taken to ensure that all the tools and materials are ready to hand before starting work.

Trace the outline of the side elevation of the fuselage from the G.A. Drawing

on page 559. When making this tracing, it is best to leave out the radiator and the details of the engine. Lay the tracing on the block of wood which is to be used for the fuselage, pin-prick the outline and then line it in with a pencil. Cut away the surplus wood. Draw a centre-line along the upper and lower surfaces of the block, draw the plan of the fuselage and again cut away the surplus wood. Now comes the shaping of the fuselage. The cross-section is roughly oval throughout its length. There is a break in the engine cowling ("A," Fig. 1) behind the radiator. Another point to remember when carving the nose is to make the six small knobs which represent the cylinder heads.

Fig. 2 shows some details of the built-up sections of the nose. A piece of wire is glued along the tops of the six cylinder heads to represent the camshaft of the overhead valve gear. The rectangular radiator is made from an odd piece of wood, and it should be noted that the port side has a rounded front corner, whereas the starboard side is sharp cornered. The ribbed effect of the radiator tubes can be obtained by ruling closely spaced lines with a scribe on the wood. Glue the radiator on the nose. Two wires are used to represent the water-pipes connecting the top of the radiator with the rear of the engine. The exhaust pipes may be cut from a piece of sheet aluminium or they may be built up with wires. It is a good idea to mount the two machine-guns at this stage and the fuselage is then a completed unit.

Draw the outline of the planes on the sheet of wood and cut out with the fretsaw. Camber the planes with a plane and

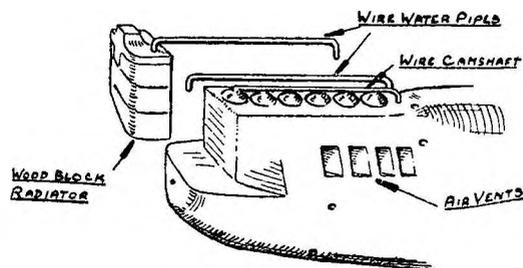


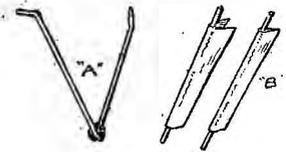
Fig. 2.—Details of the engine, including camshaft, radiator and air vents

A SCOUT THAT PILOTS HATED

finish off with a smooth file or glass-paper. The aileron outlines are best marked by scoring them with a bradawl and ruler. The serrated trailing-edges of the wings are most easily made by using a half-round file in a fore-and-aft direction.

The tail unit is cut from fibre (or one of the other materials mentioned, as preferred) in a similar manner to that used for the wings. Fin and rudder are made in one piece and stuck directly on to the fuselage. The tail-plane and elevators are also made in one piece, but

Fig. 4.—Showing (A) how to bend undercarriage vees and (B) method of fairing axle with paper



the fuselage without glue. Set the top plane in place and adjust it for alignment, gap and correct stagger. Do not be surprised if it is all "lop-sided" at first as it requires an extremely good (or lucky) workman to get it right at the first attempt. A little adjustment in the lengths of the struts, however, should quickly correct any mal-alignment. Once the top plane is satisfactorily adjusted, remove it and the struts, glue them, re-assemble, and allow to set.

Fit the undercarriage "vees" and adjust them for height and track. Thread the wheels and axle. If metal wheels are being used burring the ends of the axle wires will keep the wheels in place.

Glue the tail unit in place, taking great care to get these parts "square" to each other and to the fuselage and wings. Finally, add the last details, such as tail-skid and airscrew.

Wires may be made from fine florist's wire with all "kinks" removed, cut dead to length and held with *small* spots of glue at each end. The semicircular aileron cranks, the rudder and the elevator kingposts are made from pins.

Painting and Colour Schemes

BY the end of the war, most of the German scouts were painted in more or less camouflage colours. For this reason the majority of the Pfalz seen on active service were painted dark greens or browns with light-coloured under-surfaces. The lower surfaces of the wings were either clear doped or painted pale blue. Plain crosses with a white outline were invariably used when painted on dark background colours.

The ordinary 2d. or 3d. pots of enamel, obtainable from most ironmongers, make the best paints for the job. Use an ordinary camel-hair brush—for fine detail a liner's brush is useful.

(NEXT MONTH : The R.A.F. Autogiro)

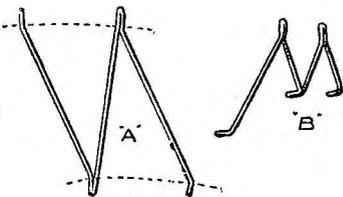


Fig. 3.—Showing method of bending interplane and centre-section struts

are glued into a slot in the rear of the fuselage. At the moment, however, it is necessary only to cut them out, camber them with file and glasspaper, and score in the outlines of the control surfaces.

The N-shaped interplane struts and the M-shaped centre-section ones are made from 20-gauge wire as shown in Fig. 3, A and B. The undercarriage "vees" are also made from brass wire to the shape shown in Fig. 4 A. The axle has a large streamline fairing, which may be made from a piece of folded paper glued over its length—Fig. 4 B. The tail-skid is a plain piece of brass wire.

The methods for making the wheels and airscrew have been described so frequently that it should suffice to refer the modeller to back numbers of AIR STORIES.

Method of Assembly

MAKE the small dihedral ($1\frac{1}{2}$ degrees) on the lower plane by gently bending between fingers and thumbs over a candle-flame. Glue the plane into its slot beneath the fuselage, adjust it "squarely," and make sure that the dihedral is even on each side. When the glue has set, fair the wing-roots into the fuselage with plastic wood.

Fit the interplane struts to the lower plane and the centre-section struts to

AIR BOOKS

Reviews of the
Latest Books
on Aviation

THE AIR POLICE GO TO WAR

"Eagles Restrained" : By Brian Tunstall : George Allen & Unwin Ltd. : 7s. 6d. net.

THIS interesting and prophetic novel concerns a war between Germany and Poland in 1954, and deals with the difficulties encountered by an International Air Police, acting under orders from the League of Nations, in their efforts first to prevent the war and afterwards to put an end to it.

To the aviation enthusiast its special interest lies in its envisagement of a World Peace maintained by an international pooling of air power and in the author's conception of the aircraft of twenty years hence. Geared wings, new alloys, combined auto-giro and cyclogiro machinery, photo-electric cell navigation, directional bombing and invisible fabric are the principal features incorporated in the design of these aircraft of the future. The most advanced types, of which the Police have a monopoly, are large multi-engined cabin craft, which are catapulted into flight from their hangars and provide all the luxury of an air-liner for their police crews, including an air-conditioned and gas-proof cabin. Performance, unfortunately, seems to have deteriorated and a speed some 100 m.p.h. slower than our present-day fighters is the best the Police 'planes can manage, while, in spite of, or perhaps because of, their elaborate giro equipment, a forced landing, even at 20 m.p.h., can still be attended by disastrous results.

The hero of the story is a young English officer in the Intelligence Branch of the Police, and if he becomes a little shadowy at times there is plenty of interest in the reactions of his fellow-officers, pledged to carry out ruthless police action regardless of their national feelings, and in the exciting accounts of sabotage on a grand scale, street fighting with dope traffickers and disastrous aerial encounters with flame-throwers and "death rays."

BRITISH AIRCRAFT OF TO-DAY

"Aircraft of the British Empire" : By Leonard Bridgman : Sampson Low Marston : 5s.

WHEN this work made its first appearance in 1934 it filled a long-felt want as an inexpensive yet comprehensive guide to the appearance, performance and construction of every current type of British military and civil aeroplane. That first edition is now out of date and in this new 1936 edition the publishers make the welcome announcement that, henceforth, the publication will be an annual one.

This year the price has been reduced from 7s. 6d. to 5s., but there is no lessening in either quality or quantity of contents. On the contrary, there are 103 full-page photographs of British aircraft, as compared with 77 in the first edition, and three-view outline drawings are given for 72 of these machines. The value of these plans, taken in conjunction with the dimensional data given for each machine, will not be lost upon builders of model aeroplanes. Specifications of thirty entirely new aircraft have been added, and all data relating to those aeroplanes described in the first edition and still in current use have been brought up to date.

A new and useful feature is the inclusion of a Canadian Section with photos, plans and specifications of Canadian-built aircraft. Altogether, a well-produced and invaluable book of reference.

A FLYING CLUB NOVEL

"The Flying Shadow" : By J. Llewellyn Rhys : Faber and Faber : 7s. 6d.

HERE at last is the book we have long been waiting for and almost despaired of seeing—a first-rate novel about those whose daily life is flying, written by one whose literary competence and aeronautical experience are alike worthy of the novelty of the theme.

The setting is that of an English flying club, and from the first chapter, when a new instructor is introduced to the club bar with the warning "You'll be surprised at the wonderful flying that goes on here," the book strikes the authentic note, and the reader, if he has ever known a flying club, knows that he is in good hands. Every character, too, is true to type, and none more so than the flying instructor about whom the story revolves, a story not of heroic flights or supermen, but of the daily work of an ordinary club instructor, of his relationship with the aerodrome staff and those he teaches to fly, and of his tragic love for one of his pupils.

From this unambitious theme Mr. Rhys has created a novel of unusual interest, in which the atmosphere of a flying club, the intricacies of test flying and the routine training of club pilots are brilliantly blended into a story that lives and moves. Not always a pleasant story, perhaps, and hardly a flattering portrait of flying-club life, with its background of drink, intrigue and ambition, but a grand book none the less.

A MINE OF INFORMATION

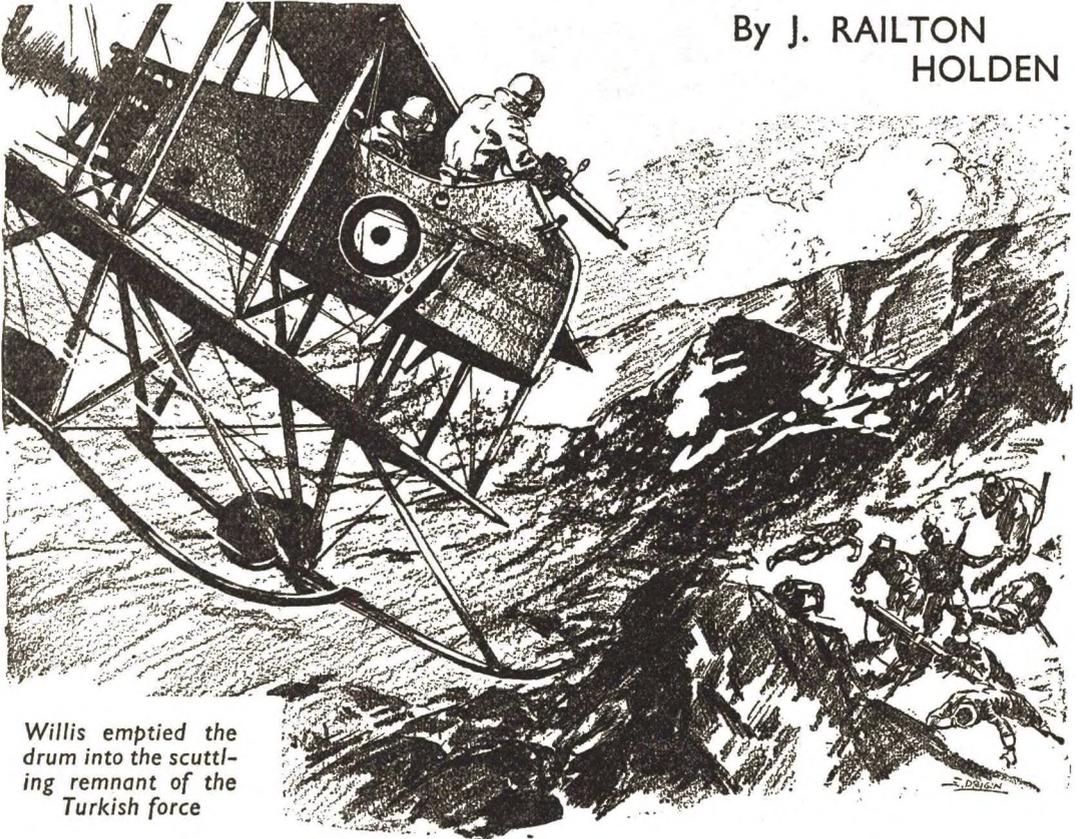
"Marvels of the Air" : Edited by T. Stanhope Sprigg : George Newnes : 3s. 6d.

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WELL ENGINEERED

By J. RAILTON
HOLDEN



Willis emptied the drum into the scuttling remnant of the Turkish force

The Call of the Mad Mullah was the Signal that Turned a Quiet Desert Oasis into a Seething Hive of Arab Fanatics Lusting for the Death of Two Australian Airmen who had Committed the Unforgivable Sin

CHAPTER I

Rouse Parade

THE Suez camps were showing signs of pre-“Reveille” movements : a wisp of smoke spiralled upwards from a cook’s fire, volumed out from under the mat roofing, and continued up into the grey-blue dawn sky, tinted a rose colour by the low sun. A dixie lid chattered ; a sergeant drummed on the guard tent to waken the relief for their last two hours of duty.

The ferry chain rattled over its rollers as a gang of natives wound it up from the Canal bed, ready for the first crossing

of the day. Lower down along the stone embankment the pontoon bridge creaked into place, hauled by a dozen *fellahin* labourers chanting :

“*Up y'allah ! Up y'shwaiah ! Up y'kaman !*”

A hundred camels squatted nearby, barracked near the white mosque after their nightly visit to the desert outposts with rations and water. Here they waited to cross over the Canal to the west bank, adding their gurgling and roaring to the gradually growing fulness of sound which heralded another blistering day on the defences.

From a tent in the aerodrome encamp-

AIR STORIES

ment there came a volume of vitriolic Australian vituperation, followed by a bulging of the canvas.

Lieutenant "Spider" Stockwell brushed yet another wingless fly from his face and looked for the hole in the mosquito netting through which it had crawled. His glance rested for a moment on his sleeping tent-mate and became murderous in its ferocity. For it was Lieutenant "Nugget" Willis who was responsible for the crawling army of maimed and buzzing flies that now inhabited the tent.

He had scoured out the inside peak of the bell-tent the previous night with a paper torch, removing all but a few of the black mass of insects which clung nightly to every tent in Egypt. He had not succeeded in exterminating the plague of flies; he had merely provided an easy meal for the several jerboas which now hopped about in excited chase.

Stockwell watched one of the tame little creatures as it seized upon a bloated bluebottle, and then held it between two forepaws whilst it nibbled daintily at its victim.

The sight changed his mind. He decided not to murder Willis; he also shelved the idea of scaring him out of his sleep with a shot from his Webley fired into the sand—a crazy trick such as the squadron had come to expect of him.

No; there was the material for refinements of torture in that tent, he decided, which would put a Canton Tong wallah to shame. All through the night he himself had been tortured by the failure of his companion's brainwave attempt to exterminate the plague of insects. He had wondered how Willis had managed to keep out the flies. Now he knew.

Willis' mosquito curtain was tucked in under his paliasse all the way round. It formed a cage into which no crawling thing could enter—unless inserted by hand.

That was the idea: inserted by hand. And something larger than a fly!

The jerboas were tame; he had often fed them with biscuit on hot nights when sleep was impossible. He had no difficulty in capturing two of them now.

Willis' bare feet were exposed at one end of his blanket. Like nearly every other member of the British Egyptian Expeditionary Force he slept in his khaki shorts, and a goodly portion of his back was exposed. Stockwell introduced the two mice and tucked in the mosquito curtain again.

He watched the result with grim glee for nearly five minutes. Willis first wriggled his toes to remove the disturbers of his peace, and the jerboas hopped in fright on to his head and shoulders. A restless twitching of his muscles and an outflung arm sent them scampering back to his feet.

And so, backwards and forwards the fun flowed, with Stockwell a delighted and amply revenged onlooker. He lighted a cigarette and lay there, chuckling to himself. A glance at his wrist-watch told him that another few minutes would see "rouse parade" in full swing and that further sleep was impossible.

He was wondering how long his tent-mate would spend trying to cover up his nakedness when an infantry bugle close at hand sounded "Reveille." A melodious echo came from the trumpets of the Indian cavalry regiments in the next camp.

Willis sat up with a jerk.

"Damn, blast, and set fire to your eyes——" he began, when he caught sight of his two four-footed tormentors. Stockwell's hearty guffaw told him the rest, and for the next few minutes he was busily engaged in catching the elusive jerboas and shaking them off through the netting.

WHEN the chase was over Stockwell tossed him a cigarette as a peace-offering, and for a while they lay yawning and smoking, awaiting their batman with the hot water which he always managed to produce.

A loud voice reached them from the neighbourhood of the hangars.

"Arms . . . upward . . . bend!" echoed Stockwell. "Sergeant-major Crowther seems to have it in for the riggers and mechanics this morning. Thank Gawd we've no physical jerks to

WELL ENGINEERED

perform in this perishin' climate. That would be the plurry limit."

Willis emitted a noisy and prolonged yawn without replying. There was no dawn patrol for them that morning and, judging by the absence of the usual sound of engine-warming from the hangars, the physical drill parade had been substituted for other duties.

"*Hands on yer 'ips!*" came the stentorian voice of the Sergeant-major. "*Knees bend . . . raise . . . bend . . . raise.*"

A fumbling at the tent-flap told the two pilots that further procrastination was useless; their batman had arrived with the water.

"All right, Stokes, leave it outside!" Stockwell called out. "I'll undo the ropes."

"Ah'd better bring it in, sir," the batman suggested. "Yer might go off to sleep again and the Adjutant told me to tell you there was a parade on."

"Say that again," growled Willis, and to Stockwell remarked in an aside, "I'll bet it's the Commander-in-Chief coming to review us in bed socks and woollen helmets. These 'pommy' brass-hats seemed to be paid a commission on every blasted new idea for a parade they can think of. Burn their boots!"

"It's for physical jerks, sir," explained the batman, poking his grinning face in through the loosened tent-flap. "There's a rumour that we're going to chase Johnny Turk up the desert at last. Every unit from 'ere to Suez 'as to do it . . . every bloomin' morning except Sundays."

Private Stokes was well aware of their antipathy to parades of any kind and, with a sly rearward smile as he left the tent, went to inform his fellow-batmen that "Them there two Aussies is fair wild. Ah bet you don't see them on this 'ere parade."

And his judgment was entirely correct so far as intention went, for the two pilots were already turning their thoughts to the best method of evading the parade.

"Are you going to give it a go?" asked Willis, still lingering under his mosquito netting.

"I am not," was the definite and

irritable assurance. "We're only attached to this mob for rations. As members of the Air Intelligence we take orders only from Moreton, and he's down at Ismailia with the Chief."

"Then we don't go?"

"We don't. . . . This gut-sweat parade is all right for the sand-groppers who've got to foot-slog it into a scrap, but in a perishin' climate like this, excessive exertion is a sure form of suicide. I know! I've had some in the Never-Never country, buddy."

"Then we'll oversleep."

"That's the ticket!"

FIVE minutes later the Adjutant himself appeared at the tent-opening.

"Show a leg, fellows!" he called in cheerily. "Parade's in ten minutes. Sorry I didn't post it on the board last night. Forgot all about it. Did the batman warn you?"

"He did," replied Stockwell from beneath the blanket. "But we've decided it's too strenuous, thanks all the same, Hattersley. Count us out of it."

The Adjutant laughed and walked along to the next tent, taking Stockwell's reply as one of his usual pieces of humorous repartee.

He returned to their tent exactly twelve minutes later to find them still stretched out on their camp beds, Stockwell with his length protruding over the end and Willis curled up into a tight ball.

"You two are holding up the parade," he observed quietly.

"Say, Hattersley, you know we've been permanently transferred to Air Intelligence," protested Stockwell.

"You are both still on the strength of this squadron for duties and discipline in Captain Moreton's absence," replied the Adjutant. "You know darn well that I'm not the one to cram King's Regs. down your throat without cause. You're letting me down. If you object and think I'm out of order, then protest to Intelligence Headquarters afterwards."

Captain Hattersley knew his men and the way to tackle them. He knew also that rigid army discipline could not be expected of Colonial troops of the inde-

pendent calibre of the Australians in six months. He himself had been a volunteer with an O.T.C. training behind him.

Stockwell sat up grumbling.

"Come on, buddy!" he said in resignation. "Hattersley's right. I'm going to do a hell of a lot of protesting when Moreton gets back. But we'll save Hattersley's face for him."

They rolled up on the sandy parade ground dressed like the remainder of the squadron in shirt, shorts and helmet. And they spent the remainder of the day planning other methods of escaping the new burden.

CHAPTER II

In Search of Turks

FOR two consecutive mornings the two biggest reprobates in the Australian Expeditionary Force attended "rouse parade" like lambs. They felt that, in the absence of their own C.O., the squadron commander was exceeding his authority, but they had painted Port Said red so often of late that they decided to lie low and obey.

When on the third morning they faced another day of inaction, with no message from Intelligence Headquarters, human endurance cracked.

After the Adjutant had dismissed the parade, Stockwell wandered slowly towards the Canal. Willis, equally subdued, accompanied him. Neither was in the mood for an early morning swim.

As they passed the sand-bagged "Signals" dug-out Willis hung back and looked hopefully down into its depths.

"Be with you in a minute, 'Spider,'" he said to Stockwell, and jerked his head below. "I'll see if there's a message."

He went below. The night check was still on duty. The despatch-rider was fast asleep on one side of the dug-out and the telegraphist on the other. The sergeant in charge was taking the last two hours at the keyboards, and a flicker on one of the keys began even as Willis asked:

"Any news from Ismailia, Sergeant?"

The Sergeant turned his head to blast any intruder from the sacred precincts of the office, but, seeing a Flying Corps

officer in silhouette in the doorway, he swallowed and changed his intended "What the devil—" to "Just a minute, sir. There's a priority message coming through on the 'earth-return.'"

Willis was familiar with "Signals" parlance from his own Light Horse days. He knew that "metallic circuits" were the more permanent means of communication, and that a message on an "earth-return" would be coming from one of the desert outposts.

Being a "priority" it would not be the usual routine message concerning strength and rations. A "priority" from the desert was almost always news of an outpost affair and well worth listening to.

While the Sergeant took down the message, Willis pulled a pad towards him and tested his old skill at receiving. He found that he had not lost touch. Before the final "A.A.A." of the message had been rapped out on the key he was thankful that he could still take his thirty words a minute. He also thanked providence that he had happened to enter the Signals dug-out at that particular moment.

With one hand he stuffed his scribbled message into the pocket of his tunic, and with the other he made a grab for the top sheet of a pink "priority" pad before the Sergeant could turn his head.

He did not advertise his knowledge of telegraphy by showing undue interest in the message, but repeated his question about his own expected message from Captain Moreton at Ismailia as soon as the Sergeant had tapped out his "K.T.A." acknowledgement.

"No, sir," the man replied; "nothing through from the Intelligence."

"Thanks," said Willis and hurried out on to the Canal bank.

Stockwell's nude body was flashing through the water in a fast crawl stroke to the side. On hearing his companion's triumphant yell, he levered his six feet of length over the stone embankment and lay panting on the sand.

"If it's good news, spill it quickly," he gasped. "If it's bad, save it 'till the next binge."

WELL ENGINEERED

Willis handed over the message he had taken down.

"I'll say it's good, buddy," he declared. "It saves us a physical jerks parade to-morrow morning."

Stockwell slowly deciphered his companion's scrawl.

"Enemy well-engineers and labour gang reported by friendly Bedouin to be at Bir el Maghreb A.A.A. Square 542—Map 4. A.A.A."

He frowned and looked to his fellow-pilot for enlightenment.

"It is addressed to O.C. No. 1 Section," he observed. "How does that get us off 'rouse parade'?"

"Come along to the tent and I'll show you," remarked Willis, with a grin of anticipation. And when they arrived there he asked, "Have you an indelible pencil? We must have it all in order."

He pulled out the blank priority form from his pocket and carefully altered the message. When at length he handed it to his companion, it read:

"To Lieutenant P. Stockwell: Air Intelligence, Kantara."

"Enemy well-engineers and labourers seen Bir el Maghreb A.A.A. Confirm and report. A.A.A."

Stockwell's snigger of amusement went through various stages of amplification until it ended in a loud appreciative laugh. He clapped Willis heartily on the back.

"Buddy, that's fine! We'll give it a fly!" He chuckled.

THE sergeant of the guard had to drum on their tent only once the next morning. They dressed by candle-light.

Already they could hear the spluttering back-firing of their Maurice Farman outside the hangars. At length it caught up its uneven revolutions for a quarter of a minute and was then switched off.

The faulty plug had been changed and the engine was purring contentedly as they climbed into the machine and took-off towards the vague suggestion of dawn in the east. And by the time Sergeant-major Crowther was bawling sleepy-eyed mechanics and riggers to life and Captain

Hattersley loosening up the limbs of his pilots on the parade ground, Stockwell and Willis were approaching Bir el Maghreb, watching the straight-limbed Arab girls filling their *goulahs* at the open well. These soon scattered indoors, leaving their utensils behind them.

There was no sign here of the Turkish excavations—the expected camel transport with its bags of cement, sectional pumps, and tools; nor had the earth near the well been disturbed.

The mud houses were newly daubed with whitewash made by the Arabs from burnt sea-shells. The inevitable mosque dome raised itself above the green palm grove, looking, from their height, like a button mushroom poking through long grass.

Every member of the village was hidden from sight as they flew low over the place; even the group of Arab boys tending the sheep and goats on the hillside had disappeared into some cave in the rocks.

"Damn funny—that, buddy!" yelled Stockwell. Willis turned round, and though he could not catch the observation owing to the roar of the engine, he guessed that his fellow-pilot's frown was due to the Bedouins' behaviour. It had also struck *him* as very peculiar.

They had flown over this very oasis on previous occasions, and every member of the community had come out into the open to watch them, the young children waving their hands excitedly. The only sign of life they could see now was an occasional small black face peering up at them round the open doorways. And soon even these were quickly withdrawn, as if the children had been jerked suddenly into the shadows by their parents.

Stockwell circled the oasis once more and then headed for the aerodrome. They had accomplished their purpose in cutting "rouse parade," and there was no further object in tempting providence by cruising around any longer. Every engine in Egypt had let its pilot down at least once in his flying career in that sand-laden atmosphere.

It was, therefore, unfortunate but by

AIR STORIES

no means unusual, that the engine of their machine should choose a moment when they had covered less than five miles on the return journey to splutter and fade right out.

Stockwell pushed the nose down, and automatically switched off and pulled back the throttle.

"It's us for the wallaby track, buddy!" he yelled to Willis with a rueful grin.

Willis looked over the side. The *wadis* looked as if they had been ground out of the earth in the Ice Age and the low *tells* offered only sawback ridges. He could see that Stockwell was circling for the softer landing on the more undulating ground they had passed. He curled himself up in a ball in expectation of the sure crash that was ahead of them.

Then the machine gradually opened out once more. Stockwell had switched on and pushed forward the throttle again. He was as surprised as Willis when he obtained a full-throated roar. Quickly he straightened out and began to climb for height as he turned for home again.

Once more the engine slowly died out. He tried the same manoeuvre with switch and throttle, and obtained the same result.

"I might make the oasis yet," he called out cheerily during the third comparative silence. "I'll try for that millet field."

The machine was gradually losing height all the way; but each time that the engine recovered its revolutions he gained sufficient flying speed to carry him over the palms, and finally to drop the machine safely on to the sand.

As Stockwell dropped to the ground from the cockpit he presented the appearance of a man emerging from a Turkish bath, in spite of the coolness of the early morning.

"I'll bet one of the mechanics has left his overalls inside that carburettor," he growled, as he wiped the rivulets of sweat from his neck.

"Spot of sand in the jet!" pronounced Willis. "Every time you closed the throttle it allowed the petrol to flood

it away. When you opened out again, the jet sucked it back into position. Bet you fifty piastres I'm right."

"The bet's off," declared Stockwell grimly. "Doesn't look as if I'd be able to collect it if I won it, judging by this sheikh johnny's armed escort——"

"Keep your hand off that revolver," warned Willis. "Don't forget what the Chief said about stirring up trouble out here. I guess he wants to keep 'em in a good humour ready for our advance up the desert. Leave him to me! . . . *Fi'ardak!*" he called out to the advancing mob of Bedouins, and held up both hands as a sign of peace.

The rather undersized Arab, whose dignity of office was marked by his *argal* of pure gold and his silver-embossed scimitar, the hilt of which he clutched in one hand, raised his rifle aloft as he called out, "*Beiti beitaq.*"

"What's that mean, buddy?" asked Stockwell anxiously.

"You can have the run of his harem," interpreted Willis with a grin.

Stockwell gave a sigh of relief.

"That's bonza!" he exclaimed, "I thought he was saying 'Off with their heads!'"

CHAPTER III

The Call of the Mad Mullah

THE two airmen were lying in the cool shade of one of the mud huts at the end of the village. After a gruelling morning under a grilling sun, the engine had responded to their efforts. Now, exhausted by their labours, Stockwell had suggested that the afternoon siesta was of more importance at the moment than a quick return to the aerodrome.

"I don't like things, 'Spider,' old man," declared Willis as he acquiesced and flung himself down on a sheepskin couch. "That old goat of a sheikh is too oily."

"Then you can keep watch while I have forty winks," announced Stockwell, grinning widely.

"No plurry fear! I'll toss you for it." They tossed, and Stockwell won. He immediately stretched out on his back,

WELL ENGINEERED

and covered his face with a damp handkerchief to keep off the flies.

Philosophically Willis resigned himself to first guard duty.

Although the village had become more normal and life had flowed more freely between the paddy fields and the mud houses during their arduous morning's work, he could not help noticing that even the inquisitiveness of the children had been confined to a distant scrutiny of the aeroplane. And now, during the heat of early mid-day, the village was deserted. Furthermore, the sheikh had been, for a Bedouin, most obsequious in his obvious desire to see the last of them.

After half an hour of inactivity inside the hovel, Willis walked outside and sat in the shade with his back against the wall. The only sound to disturb the silence was an occasional tinkle of a sheep-bell from the hill. Finally, this also ceased to trouble Willis' ears, for the sense of security in that peaceful atmosphere had lulled him to sleep.

STOCKWELL awoke with every nerve vibrating in response to danger, every muscle aquiver to obey his waking command.

There it was again—that cry !

“*Allāhu akbar . . . Allāhu akbar.*”

Of the few ready-made Arabic phrases he had picked up, this was the one best known to him : it was the cry given by the followers of the Mad Mullah as they drove their spears through General Gordon's body on the steps of the Residency at Khartoum.

“*Allāhu akbar—*”

He leapt to his feet and saw that Willis was missing. He knew that his companion would never have left him in the lurch, therefore he must have been—

An oath escaped him at the thought.

“*Allāhu akbar,*” came a third time, and the cry was much nearer now.

He plunged recklessly out into the open, revolver in hand. Many Bedouin lives should pay for the death of his fellow pilot. He prayed that he himself could live just long enough to reach the Lewis gun on the 'plane. It should

stutter out its hot lead to good purpose on these treacherous desert scum.

As he ran he shaded his eyes towards the village against the sun's glare. Vaguely he saw figures standing, others kneeling. There was no doubt in his mind now ; they had enticed him out of the hut by their cries in order to shoot him down whilst running. It was their savage idea of sport.

He commenced to dodge the expected shot.

“Hey, you big stiff !” came Willis' gasping cry from behind him.

He looked over his shoulder while slowing up.

It was actually Willis, and he was running strongly, as if untouched.

The cries of the Bedouins were now redoubled, and Stockwell could see them swarming down the hillside towards him. Those without rifles were flourishing lances and swords.

He held out a hand to his smaller companion who was staggering wildly in the loose sand. Willis ignored it as he ran at his side, and gasped :

“What . . . the hell are you . . . dodging, buddy—submarines ?”

“I thought they'd . . . got you,” jerked out Stockwell in reply. “Come on ! We'll beat 'em yet.” He increased his pace towards the 'plane.

“But what . . . made you break up . . . the *salāt*, you boob ?”

“The . . . what ?”

“The plurry prayer meeting, of course. Have you . . . no dam' sense ?”

“Oh, my hat ! Is that what it was ?”

“Of course it was ! Now you've fairly upset 'em. We're 'for it,' buddy. We'll never reach that machine before them.”

Stockwell swore as he ran. He could see that it was hopeless. They still had to cross a deep irrigation ditch and the palm grove. Even he could never outrun them, good as he was.

“Stop !” he suddenly cried, and from his pocket pulled out his large silk handkerchief and spread it on the sand in front of him.

“I can hear a 'plane up somewhere,” declared Willis.

AIR STORIES

"Never mind the 'plane. On your hands—down!" cried Stockwell, dropping full length.

Willis looked down at him in amazement.

"Lower . . . raise . . . lower . . . raise!" Stockwell called out, and to Willis, in an aside, growled, "Get down to it, buddy!"

Then Willis' brain cleared and he dropped prone in imitation of his companion.

"On your feet . . . up!" came the next order, followed by, "Hands on your hips . . . knees bend . . . stretch . . . bend . . . stretch!"

Out of the corner of his eye, Willis could see that the tribe had come to a halt some distance away, like a curious herd of cattle investigating something they could not quite understand.

AS the machine that had set out in search of them swooped down to a landing, the two pilots ceased their antics and made a dash for their own 'plane.

Instantly the spell was broken and there was an uproar from their rear. There were wild cries of "*Yâ nasâra khandâzir*—Christian pigs! . . . Allah is greatest! . . . Feed them to the dogs!"

Stockwell and Willis dodged the desultory musket fire, badly aimed by men on the run, in and out of the palm grove. The cultivated flats, where the two aircraft were now standing side by side, lay a hundred and fifty yards ahead of them.

Stockwell's long legs could have given him a substantial lead. But this was not the first occasion on which the two pilots had fought as a team. Together they had painted Port Said red on frequent occasions in their Light Horse days, and together they had wriggled out of many tight corners into which their amiable imbecility had led them.

They knew the odds against them now, and at once commenced to reduce them in a manner perfected from frequent use.

Stockwell raced into the lead, flattened himself against a palm bole, and turned a murderously accurate fire on their pursuers.

"Two out of three shots, buddy!"

he called out as Willis flashed past him and imitated his tactics. "Make it five piastres a shot. . . . That's all this scum's worth."

He reloaded the three chambers as he ran, always saving three shots.

Three shots in quick succession came from Willis.

"A miss!" he called in disgust. "Another, damn his eyes. . . . And a bluebeard. . . . I'm counting him as two," he gasped as he passed his companion.

"No plurry fear!" and another shot came from Stockwell, who turned, and tripped as he ran.

The Bedouins gave a frenzied yell of hate and triumph, and exposed themselves recklessly to be in at the death.

Willis, half-blinded with sweat and with lungs rasping harshly, hesitated a moment and threw a quick glance over his shoulder. A hundreds yards to go, and still no sign of support from the relief 'plane!

Stockwell was grovelling on hands and knees. He looked half-dazed, and a trickle of blood closed his right eye.

Willis ran back to him.

"Down—quick, buddy!" came the incisive command.

Willis did not ask questions; he fell prone. And as he did so a stream of hot lead whistled close to his ears, thudding against green wood, pattering through the palm leaves, and raising shrieks of pain from the Arab attackers.

"Did you stop one, 'Spider'?" asked Willis anxiously.

Stockwell grinned back at him; and the grin had all his carefree assurance behind it.

"That's Jock Fraser on the gun," he explained. "I saw him and 'Tick' Wilkinson manhandling it off the machine. Crawl, buddy! Leave 'em to mop this crowd up. I've got a date with a 20-lb. Cooper bomb before we leave."

And on hands and knees, bellies to the hard brown sand of the palm grove, they reached their machine.

"Stick it until we get into the sky, Jock!" Stockwell yelled, and raced across to the relief machine. Clambering

WELL ENGINEERED

up into the front cockpit, he unslung the bomb he knew to be there and raced back to his own 'plane.

CHAPTER IV

The Secret of the Hill

AT five hundred feet Stockwell flattened out and headed the Farman direct for the hillside. He could see Fraser and Wilkinson still peppering the palm grove, and the mob of Bedouins beating a disorderly retreat for the shelter of the village.

What had escaped his eye on first circling the oasis was now marked out clearly on the ground below him.

He pointed over the side to a spot on the shoulder of the hill where they had seen the nomad shepherds tending their large flock of goats and sheep. The flock was still there, munching contentedly at heaps of *bersim* carried there by hand.

Willis gave a nod of understanding. He, too, could now penetrate the clever camouflage. He held the improvised bomb release in readiness.

"Don't forget," yelled Stockwell as he manoeuvred for position. "One chance—and no missing!"

He stalled the machine into a slow Immelmann to give Willis a better chance with the extemporised bomb-rack. Away it sped earthward, truly aimed, to land dead in the centre of the flat shelf from which the sheep and goats were stampeding as the machine roared above them.

The dull *whoof* of the explosion reached their ears only a split second ahead of a volcanic gush of shattered earth, air, and water.

For a moment the engine faltered as they almost hung on the propeller, buffeted, deafened and dizzy. Willis clawed his way back into the cockpit, his right foot hooked through the cross-bracing wires behind the seat, and one arm driven through the canvas side of the nacelle in his desperate effort to save himself from being flung out. One moment they were on one wing-tip and the next pirouetting on their

tail; tossing and whirling in the turbulent air.

Missing the boulder-strewn hilltop by feet, Stockwell managed to get the Farman back on to an even keel and climbed for height out of the sheltered *wadi* into which they had been blasted.

He came back into position above the hill to meet a hail of shot from below. The sound of splintering wood in his immediate vicinity warned him of a marksmanship superior to that of the Arabs. Holes appeared as if by magic in the canvas under his feet.

He ruddered into a split-S turn as a glance over the side showed him a couple of machine-guns pointing skywards, and a group of Turkish infantry directed by a top-booted and gesticulating Austrian engineer. Even as he watched, men continued to swarm out of the caves where they had been in hiding.

Willis' gun stuttered. Stockwell circled lower and lower, giving him a bead sight all the while on his target. A couple of machine-gunners collapsed by the side of their gun, one of them leaning against it for a moment as if in the second posture of prayer. Then he toppled face downwards and was rudely thrust aside by the boot of the officer who took his place.

Willis was smiling quietly as he thumbed the trigger trips. The smell of spent cordite was as balm to his soul. He steadied himself against the overwhelming airstream and emptied the last few shots of the drum into the scattering remnant of the force.

Stockwell jerked his thumb backwards. The relief machine was now in the air clear of the oasis and roaring up to be in at the death. Between them they cleared the hillside, and then, satisfied with their work, turned for home.

THE mat-hut which did duty as the officers' mess was full to overflowing that night. Contact with enemy airmen was so rare that a patrol with a thrill in it was welcome news.

Jock Fraser, the only pilot in the squadron who could look over Stockwell's head, seized him by the arm as he entered and led him to the trestle table

AIR STORIES

which, supported by empty beer barrels, served as a bar.

"Come on, 'Spider' . . . blood money!" he demanded with a grin. "You'd have been cold meat in another ten minutes if we hadn't arrived."

"Too right we would," agreed Stockwell. "We were having a pretty bad spin with those Arabs. Where's that side-stepper of mine to foot his share?"

A loud burst of laughter came from the long table where a poker game was in progress. Willis was relating the story of their cutting "rouse parade" with relish.

". . . and the big stiff mistook a Moslem prayer meeting for a desperate attack," he declared, chuckling reminiscently.

"So that was what you two were doing when we arrived," interrupted Fraser. "I never saw two heathens turn to the true faith so quickly."

"Not on your life!" exclaimed Willis. "Why, the feller's so ignorant he didn't even turn his face to Mecca when he tried to kid the tribe."

Stockwell strode over and dumped two bottles of whisky on the table. He took the leg-pulling in good part.

"That's the real Mackay, cobbbers," he declared. "Drink up! The joke's on me. I never sweated so much at physical jerks in all my life. I'm sending a bottle of this stuff across to the Sergeant-major. I didn't know enough to turn my face to Mecca, but I guess that brainwave of mine came from his direction. That 'On your hands down . . . bend . . . stretch!' business was the nearest approach to an Arab praying I could think of."

When the laughter had subsided, Willis turned to his fellow pilot with a query that had been on his tongue since they landed.

"How did you manage to spot that concrete cistern built up on the hill, buddy?" he asked. "I've never seen anything so well camouflaged."

"Neither have I," echoed Fraser. "That idea of throwing fodder down and grazing the sheep over the area they had covered in was a masterpiece."

"It sure was," agreed Stockwell. "And if it hadn't been for this"—he touched the bandage over his right eye—"I should never have suspected it. You see," with a grin, "I tripped over the pipe-line in the palm grove. They had only time barely to cover it——"

His explanation was interrupted by the mess orderly.

"The Adjutant would like to see you and Mr. Willis at once, sir."

THEY made their exit together, and as they approached the squadron office, Stockwell remarked:

"I guess he's found out that there's no copy of that telegram at the signal office, buddy. We're for it. Well—I guess it was worth it."

"Oh, Stockwell," remarked the Adjutant as they entered, "here's a message that came through an hour after you left. It seems to confirm the one you showed me yesterday."

Willis craned his neck over Stockwell's shoulder to know the worst. He read:

*"To Lieutenants Stockwell and Willis,
Air Intelligence, Kantara.*

*"Confirm presence of enemy engineers at
Bir el Maghreb. Report direct.*

"Moreton."

"Er—yes," muttered Stockwell, at a loss for the moment whether to smile and say nothing, or offer some explanation.

"I sent your report in," remarked the Adjutant coming to their rescue, "though I did not add that you had anticipated orders by nearly twenty-four hours."

"Well, Hattersley, we carried 'em out, didn't we?" broke in Willis, with an assumption of innocent bewilderment.

"As it happens—yes," was the quiet reply. "But I'd advise you to destroy the message for which the signal office cannot find the C.398 receipt, and which, I noticed, bears neither the office of origin nor the sender's signature."

Stockwell's salute was nearly military as he backed out of the office.

"Oh, and before you leave," added the Adjutant with a dry smile. "'Rouse parade' will be at the same time tomorrow morning."



Editorial Offices: 8-11 Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2

AN ex-R.F.C. pilot recently put forward in these columns the view that the days of the single-seater fighter were numbered. He prophesied that, very soon, this class of aircraft would be superseded by high-speed bomber-fighters, as fast and almost as manoeuvrable as a single-seater fighter but with a far more formidable armament. In support of his argument he cited the new Fairey Battle and Bristol Blenheim bombers as machines almost as fast as our latest fighters, but with a much wider field of fire and capable of mounting heavier guns than any fighter.

That the subject is one which had already given many readers food for thought is evident from the large number of letters we received on the subject. Equally evident is the fact that the majority of our correspondents are convinced of the lasting superiority of the single-seater fighter. Space does not permit of more than a few extracts from the most interesting letters, but the following, from Mr. R. G. White of Clapham, London, is typical of the general trend of the arguments in favour of the fighter :

"Assuming a combat between a 3-gun-position bomber and a fighter like the Hurricane," he writes, "the fighter would dive at approximately 500 m.p.h. and open fire as soon as it was within range. The range of air fighting is 300 yards or less, so that if the bomber is doing 260 m.p.h. the relative speeds of the two machines are 500 - 260 m.p.h. = 240 m.p.h., or 352 feet per second. Thus, the fighter will be within range for not more than approximately 2.5 seconds.

"The firing rate of a flexible gun is about 900 r.p.m. at most, and that of a fixed gun 1,000 r.p.m., so that the bomber's rear gunner will have time only to fire 38 rounds before he is overtaken by the fighter, who, firing all 8 of his guns at the combined rate of 8,000 r.p.m., will be able to get out 334 bullets in the same 2.5 seconds period. It follows, therefore, that the likelihood of securing a hit is in the proportion of 9 to 1 in favour of the fighter pilot, whose chances of survival are also greatly increased by the protection afforded him by his engine."

An interesting argument this, but why the assumption that the fighter alone will increase its speed by diving? And what about motor-cannon with their effective range of 500 yards, or the latest $1\frac{1}{2}$ pdr. quick-firers which are accurate up to ranges of 4,500 yards?

Shock Tactics in Air Fighting

SHOCK tactics are relied upon by Mr. L. Manley of Upper Norwood, London, in his support of the fighter.

"In dealing with a bomber of the Whitley type," he argues, "three fighters attacking simultaneously from different directions should be able to put the forward turret out of action and then deal with the bomber at leisure. With a one-turret bomber such as the Blenheim or Anson, their task would be still easier.

"The real menace to the single-seater fighter seems to me to be in bombers of the American Boeing 299 type, which has five ingeniously-placed gun turrets.

"Incidentally, why could not a special gun be fitted in the tail of a single-seater to fire a 'spray' of bullets like the old-fashioned blunderbuss? It would certainly solve the problem of keeping machines off your tail!"

Our correspondent rather begs the question by assuming the numerical

superiority of the fighters, which, even with the help of his novel sting in their tails, would find it far from an "easy task" to cope with an equal number of the new Boeing bombers. So perhaps it is just as well that, whoever may attack Britain in the future, it is least likely to be the United States.

War 'Planes on View

HOW many readers, we wonder, know that there is on view in London a permanent, free exhibition of war air material ranging from specimens of almost every item of equipment used by the air services to five actual ex-war aircraft of famous types? A reader who recently visited this exhibition is Mr. R. Trebell of Brockley, S.E.4, and he sends us the following enthusiastic recommendation :

"Last Saturday," he writes, "I visited the Imperial War Museum in Lambeth Road, a fine place full of interest to any person who likes 'planes. The main thing of interest might well be the real war 'planes, such as the Camel, Brisfit, B.E.2c and, in the artillery section, an old R.E.8. I am sure that if the wonders of this Museum were brought home to your readers, they would call down eternal blessings on your head for giving them a really good tip for an afternoon of wonderful free entertainment."

We fully endorse our correspondent's recommendation, and we give on page 493 information about some of the many other interesting exhibits that are to be seen in the unique collection housed in the Air Section of the Imperial War Museum.

Was this Cobby's Victim?

A BRITISH airman's drastic retaliation on a German "ground strafers" is recalled by Mr. F. Taylor of Leytonstone, E.11, who was an eye-witness of the fight. He writes :

"In a recent issue you recorded that Captain A. H. Cobby destroyed an Albatros on April 10th, 1918, at Estaire, and I am wondering if it was the same incident I witnessed on that day.

"At dawn on that date my regiment, the Royal Guernsey Light Infantry (29th Division), 'debussed' from a fleet of ex-London 'buses on the outskirts of Estaire, which was then being evacuated by the civilian population and heavily

shelled by the enemy. Whilst we marched through the town, an enemy 'plane appeared, peppered us with its guns and forced us to scatter and take cover in doorways.

"Later on, as we left the town and crossed the River Lys towards Levantie, the same machine dived and fired on us. As there was no available cover, we opened fire on it, but almost immediately a British machine appeared on the scene, engaged the enemy 'plane and quickly set it on fire. It came down slowly and finally crashed some distance on our right flank in the direction of the railway.

"That same afternoon we reinforced the Portuguese troops who were retiring and so began the Battle of the Lys. The following day came Sir Douglas Haig's 'Backs to the Wall' order."

It is possible that the victorious airman was the famous Australian scout pilot, though identification would be more certain had our correspondent recalled the presence of other British aircraft in the vicinity at the same time. For the official records state that when Cobby destroyed an Albatros near Estaire he was one of a group of scouts flying "protection" to a squadron of D.H.9's. We imagine, however, that our correspondent had little time to spare for sky-gazing at that particular moment.

A Great Feature for Next Month

OUTSTANDING among the several features of special interest in next month's issue will be the true and enthralling story of the part played by the French Air Service during the Great War, contributed by that brilliant air historian, A. H. Pritchard. It combines information with thrilling adventure in the same masterly manner as did this author's memorable "Wings of the Black Eagle," and includes detailed lists of the men and machines that made air history for France during the World War. It is an epic narrative that on no account should be missed.

In the same issue we also hope to publish an article for which we have had numerous requests—no less than the full, inside story of the Guns of the War in the Air, how they worked, the different types used, the special ammunition provided, in fact the whole fascinating story of one of the most important yet least-known aspects of the War in the Air.

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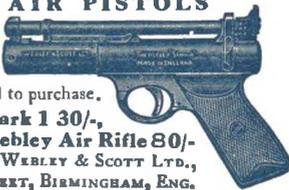
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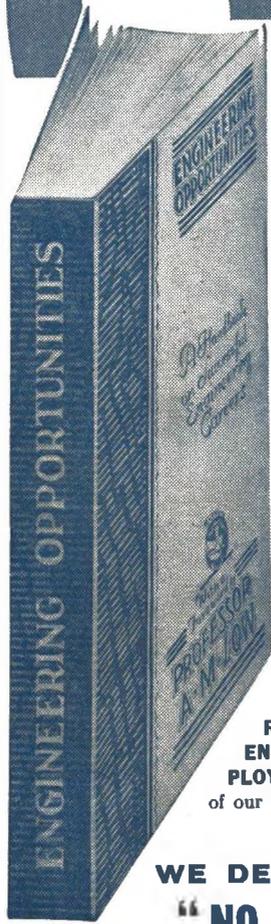
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