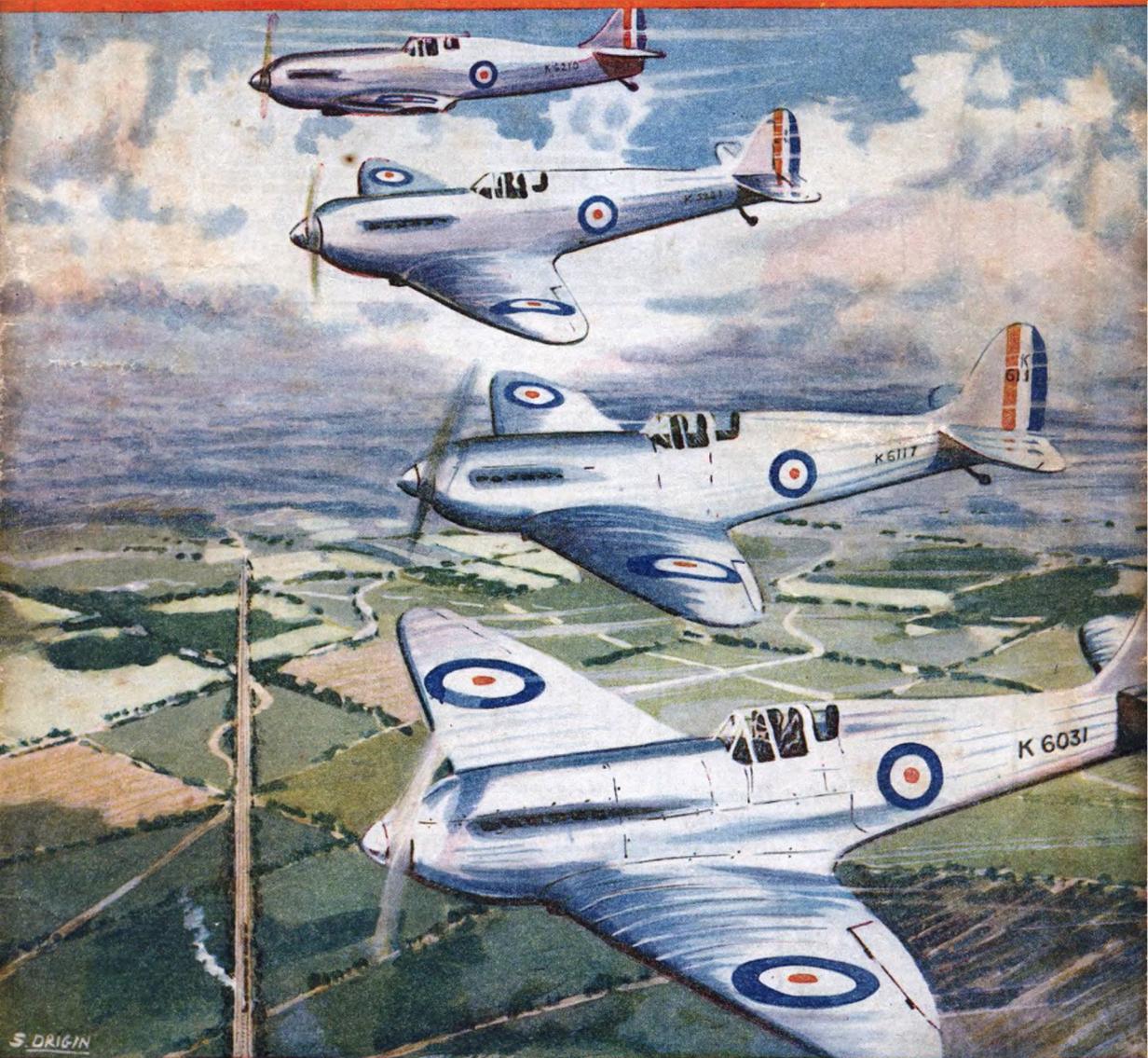


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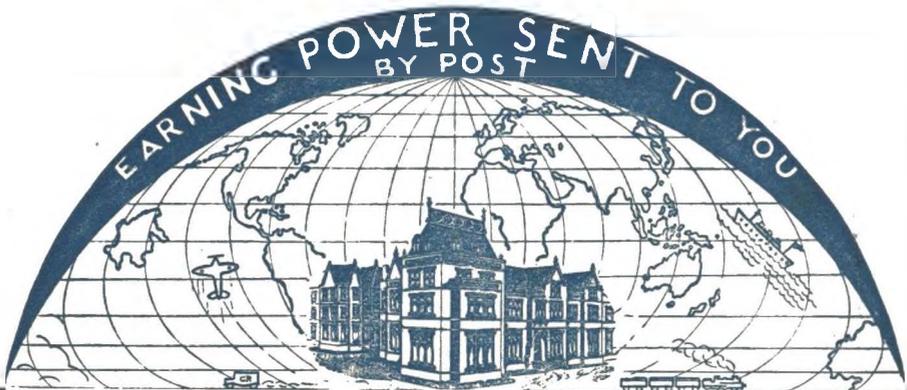
THE ALL BRITISH MAGAZINE OF FACT AND FICTION



RAIDERS OF THE NIGHT
BY G. M. BOWMAN

OCTOBER
THE ZEPPELIN FIGHTERS
BY A. H. PRITCHARD

ACE OF THE BLACK CROSS
— ERNST UDET'S AMAZING AUTOBIOGRAPHY —



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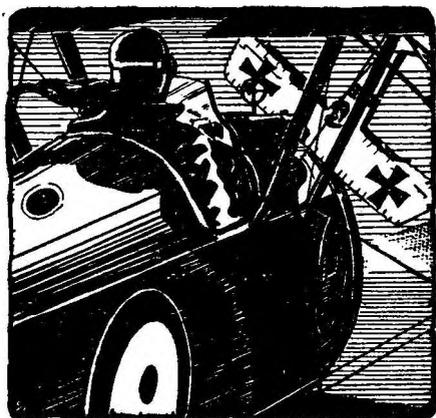
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OCTOBER, 1936.
Vol. 3. No. 4.

7d. per copy
9s. a Year

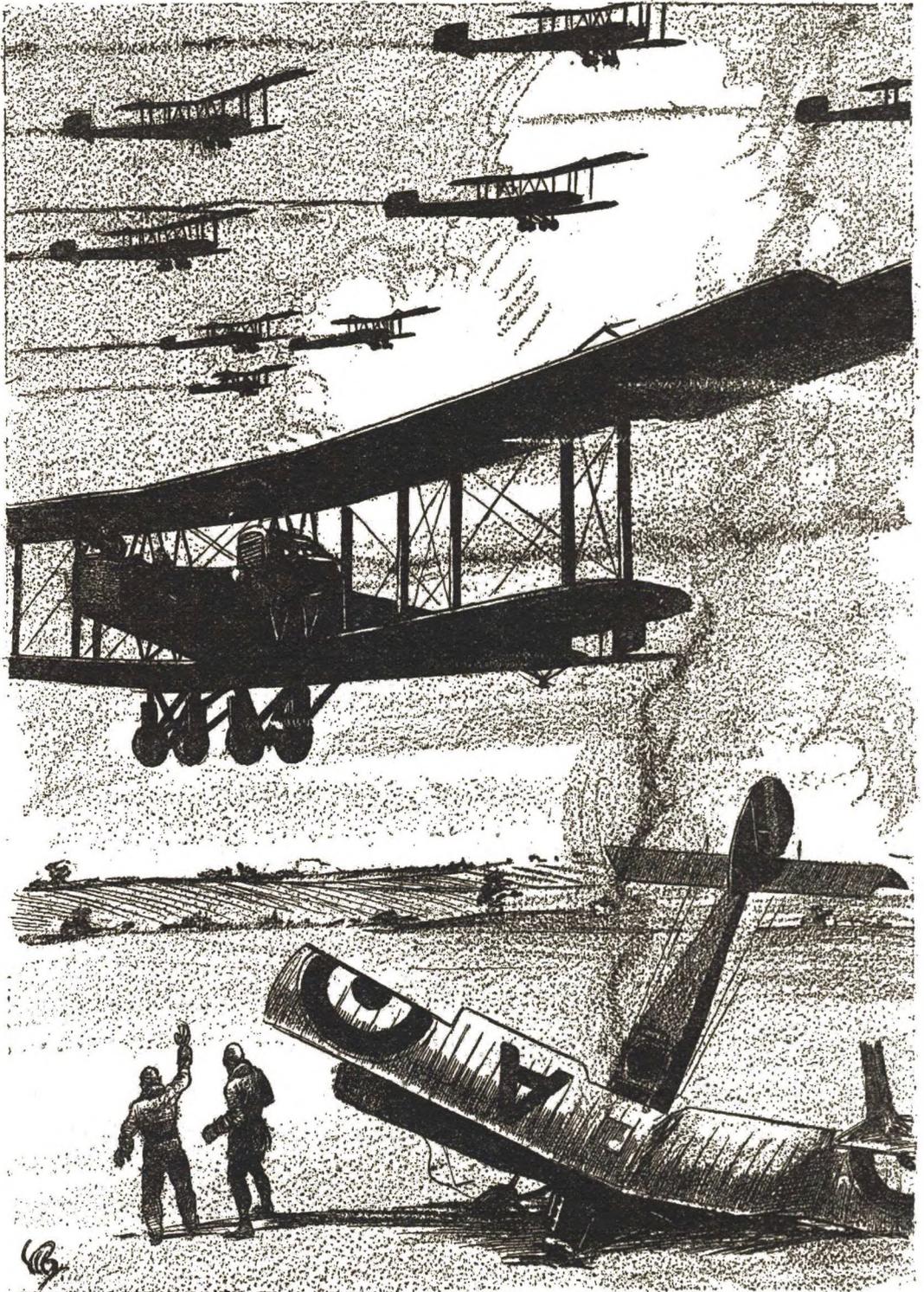
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Subscription Price to any part of the world, post free, for one year, 9s. (Canada, 8s. 6d.). Registered at the General Post Office for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Published by George Newnes Ltd., 8-11 Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2. Printed in Great Britain by The Whitefriars Press Ltd., Tombridge. Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Gordon & Gotch Ltd. Sole Agents for South Africa: Central News Agency Ltd.

RAIDERS OF THE NIGHT



The leading bomber swung down and made for a landing on the wide downland. . . .

Up from a Darkened 'Drome on the Western Front Rose the Strangest Convoy That Ever Sailed the Night Skies of Flanders, a German Bomber and a British Fighter Bound Together on a Desperate Mission, Bringing Death to Many That More Might Live

By G. M. BOWMAN

CHAPTER I

A General Misunderstanding

AIR-MECHANIC SAMUEL DOOP walked round between Nos. 1 and 2 hangars of the newly-established aerodrome just outside Bail-leul, which was generally known as the headquarters of the "Y.M.C.A." Squadron. He approached a length of old R.A.F. wire, upon which certain pieces of cloth were hung—cloth whose varied hues suggested skilful camouflage.

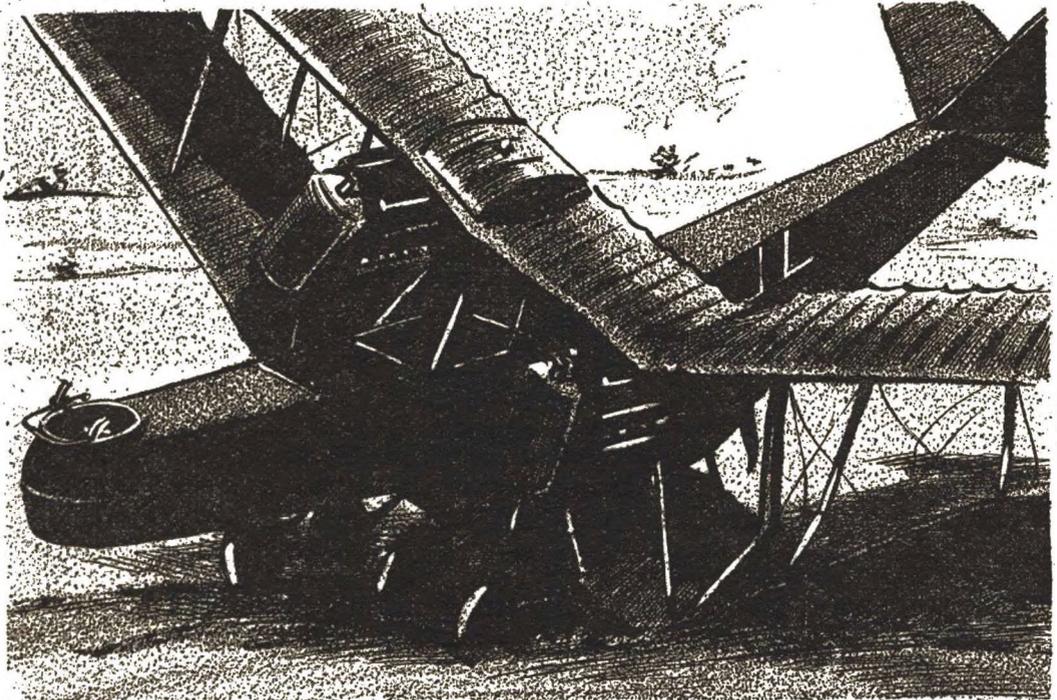
Air-Mechanic Doop, who did not suffer from a sense of humour, was quite prepared to describe these textile articles as newly-washed and dried towels.

But, as he approached the improvised

clothes-line, he looked beyond it, his attention caught by the roar of approaching engines. Framed between the big hangars, he saw one of the most dramatic and impressive pictures of modern warfare.

From the heights of the eastern sky, seven machines were diving down in perfect formation, their wings blood-red in the light of the sinking sun. The drone of their plunging engines increased to a deafening thunder as the machines zoomed steeply over the hangars and broke formation in a spreading "fan," the uproar seeming to shake the very ground between Doop's feet.

Spitting expressively in a whirling



. . . where the two castaways were standing by the wreckage of their two machines

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reek of castor-oil fumes, he ducked under the primitive clothes-line and ran forward on to the tarmac.

In the first machine Major "Bucky" Buchanan heaved himself up on to the fairing and lit a cigarette whilst mechanics ran to grab his wing-tips. He saw Doop running towards him, and sighed.

At the old No. 6 Squadron, when Bucky was a young newcomer from the Pilot's Pool, Mr. Doop had been allotted to him as rigger. Two days later, Bucky applied to the Squadron Office for an assistant who gave evidence of having seen an aeroplane once or twice before—instead of one who had apparently received his training at the hands of an inebriated piano-tuner.

Air-Mechanic Doop had a long, anxiously-cheerful face, watery blue eyes and a sniff. From the very first he had adored the exasperated Bucky with as much loyalty, and about as much usefulness, as a large and clumsy Newfoundland dog. And, after a checkered career, he had become Major Buchanan's own batman, since—to quote Bucky himself—it was the one position in which he would be least dangerous to the personnel of the Royal Flying Corps.

"Glad you've 'ad a good trip, sir," shouted Mr. Doop, tripping over nothing in particular, and righting himself with an effort that made the machine rock. "Glad you've all come 'ome, sir—all seven. First time we ain't 'ad no casualties for munce and munce——"

"There'll be a casualty around HERE, right now, if you put a finger on my machine, Doopey!" said Bucky, swinging down to the ground. "Bunk off and get me some hot water, if you can manage to do so without blowing up the mess and scalding yourself to death."

Doop turned away, grinning cheerfully. All was well. His Major was safe, swearing healthily, and smiling.

MEANWHILE Bucky waited as a tall, rather sleepy-looking individual climbed out of the second machine and strolled up, fingering a monocle.

"Nice quiet afternoon, George, my boy," said Bucky. "Nobody stopped to

argue the toss with us. Friend Hun has suddenly become very shy; which, undoubtedly, means that friend Hun is up to some kind of monkey-trick."

"How true, how true!" said George, sleepily. "Most extraordinary what a wily bird the Hun is! Shortly, he will be aiming shrewd kicks at the seats of our respective pants, my noble leader; so I'm glad I was once a Boy Scout and learnt to be prepared. Meanwhile, I shall prepare myself with that cleanliness which is next to godliness—and a double whisky and soda. Come on."

Bucky came on, grinning. It was George who had christened the new Squadron the "Young Men's Crashing Association."

But then, as he was in the habit of pointing out, a man whose real names are Percival Edwin, and who insists on being called "George," has to cling to a sense of humour as a drowning man clings to a straw.

Peeling off gloves and unbuttoning Sidcot suits, both made for the half-ruined mess building and sought the refreshing comfort of soap and water. The rest of the incoming pilots followed them.

Bucky found soap. He also found water. But, having applied both those useful elements to his face, he failed to find a towel.

Bucky gulped, swore, managed to upset the wash-basin over his own field-boots, and nearly put his hand through a window as he behaved with that blind helplessness typical of any man in his predicament.

"Doop!" he bellowed. "DOOPEY, you dim-witted, dunder-headed——"

Bucky gave a highly-coloured description of Mr. Doop.

"A towel!" he howled. "I've got the flaming soap in my eyes. I'm being blinded. Doopey, where the hell-and-high-water——"

Still swearing with concentrated talent, he blundered to the door, but there a tall and coolly-smiling individual came to his rescue. The helper moved into a room opposite, whipped up a towel from the washstand and came out, to

RAIDERS OF THE NIGHT

thrust it into Bucky's hands just as Doop appeared at the end of the corridor clutching the results of his washing-bag to his bosom.

"All right, sir," gasped Doop. "I'm a-coming. 'Old on, sir, 'ere——"

He thrust his way into the room past the tall, khaki-clad figure who had already proved such a friend in need to the sufferer.

"'Ere you are, sir," said Doopey, dropping his bundle of towels on the bed and proffering one. "All freshly washed an' dried, sir. I 'urried as much as I could, sir—*Ow!*"

Mr. Doop's last remark escaped in a surprised shriek. For he had suddenly caught sight of the tall newcomer's face, and the gold laurel-wreaths with cross-batons which graced his shoulder-straps. Doopey realised that he was facing a full-blown general, and none other than General Sir William Harding Knox, supreme commander of the Royal Flying Corps in that part of the war-area!

And a general who had earned the nick-name of "Hard Knocks" was definitely not the sort of person to be trifled with.

Doop squeaked again, ducked, and ran.

BUCKY continued to swear. He dried his agonised eyes, screwed them up to look at the figure in front of him, and gestured furiously at the dimly-seen khaki form.

"Get out!" he gasped. "Get out and go to hell! If my sight's permanently affected, I'll slit your throat from ear to ear, and have you stuffed full of T.N.T. and blown up! I'll——"

"Very enterprising of you, I'm sure, Major Buchanan," said the General, stepping back a pace and leaning negligently against the door. "Meanwhile, please finish your dressing. Do you mind if I smoke?"

Nonchalantly he took out a gold cigarette-case, and carefully extracted a cigarette.

Bucky gave a jump that lifted him quite three inches clear of the wet floor.

His smarting eyes were still misty, but he saw the face that Doop had seen, and the gleam of those rich red tabs.

"Great Snakes!" he gasped. "I do beg your pardon, sir, but really—you see, my batman——"

The General lit his cigarette and flicked the match out through the open doorway.

"Your batman seems to have been saved from an untimely end by my arrival," he said blandly. "But I suggest we discuss him some other time. Just at the moment, Buchanan, I want to have a little chat with you and your second-in-command. Perhaps you'll be good enough to give him a call."

"Certainly, sir," gasped Bucky, grabbing for a comb, and hastily putting his hair straight before whipping up a jacket. "If you'll come along to the Squadron Office, sir——"

"I'd rather remain here, if you don't mind," said the General, surprisingly.

"Here?" echoed Bucky, instinctively looking down at the sodden floor and the general surroundings, which were as untidy as only Doop knew how to make them. "But—but, sir——"

"Here!" repeated the General, and sat down on the end of the bed. "Forgive me, but I have a special reason; and, by the way, I am in rather a hurry."

Bucky dragged his coat on, staggered dazedly out of the room and came back in a few moments with the equally surprised George, whose eyes, for once, had lost their sleepiness and become wide awake.

"Shut the door, please," said the General, as the two entered. He offered cigarettes hospitably, slipped the case back into his pocket and brought out a folded sheet of paper on which a map had been roughly drawn.

"Now, Buchanan," he said, glancing up, "I came along here to-day in a side-car without escort, and with a plain mackintosh over my uniform. I pulled up at the rear of the mess and came in quietly, so there's no need for you to bullyrag your guard for not having turned out and all that kind of

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thing. But the point is, as you've no doubt realised by now, that I was at some pains to make this visit without advertising the fact unduly."

"Yes, sir," gasped Bucky, smoking nervously. He shot a glance at George, whose long, rather vacuous face had resumed its expressionless calm.

"Now," said the General, "taking a line due east from here, we come to the town of Lindenthal in the Dusseldorf district. For some time, it has been general knowledge that the Hun has a large explosives factory there. But more recent information from the Intelligence brings to light a matter of even greater importance. Lindenthal is now not only a manufactory for explosives, but the central dump and distribution point in enemy territory for the whole of the Western Front. Something like three months' store of high explosive and ammunition is kept there always. In other words, the town is nothing but an enormous heap of the stuff."

He flicked the ash from his cigarette and gave a curious, hard smile.

"I want the place bombed," he finished.

CHAPTER II

A Plot is Hatched

BUCKY stared at him uncomprehendingly, but one of George's eyebrows went up, so that his gold-rimmed monocle fell from his eye and swung on its silken cord.

"Quite—quite so, sir," said Bucky, "but I don't understand. We're not a bombing squadron. We haven't the machines——"

"No," said the General, "but I have. Now look here, I'll come down to brass tacks right away. Last week, a German Gotha landed, practically intact, just south of St. Pol. Most of the crew were dead and all of them were wounded. But, directly I heard of the matter, I had the machine dismantled immediately, carted off and quietly overhauled. Now it is on its way to this aerodrome in carefully camouflaged lorries, and it will arrive shortly after dark. A speci-

ally-picked crew will assemble it right away."

George shifted his feet.

"I think I see the idea, sir," he said in his drawling voice. "You've kept all this dark so that there won't be the slightest chance of anything leaking out through espionage. And you want Bucky—I mean Major Buchanan—and me to fly that bomber over Lindenthal and set off the fireworks?"

"Thank you, Captain Philipps," said the General. "In a nutshell that is the whole idea. I purposely didn't choose an officer of one of our own bombing squadrons for the job. I wanted to work this little scheme in the most unexpected manner possible. Espionage is the greatest danger and, therefore, when everything was ready, I determined that the raid should be carried out without the waste of an unnecessary half-hour, so that the machine might reach its objective before any message could be got through to the other side."

"Then you mean—you mean to-night, sir?" breathed Bucky, whose keen, practical mind had been positively racing. "But—but if you'll excuse me, sir, there are one or two difficulties. I've heard about Lindenthal. I was talking to one of the chaps from a night-bombing squadron only to-day. He told me that it's the most heavily-guarded place anywhere in the German back area. All German machines are forbidden to fly over it. In fact the Ack-Ack gunners have orders to bring down any aircraft, even of their own side, that go over. That, of course, is to prevent anything like—well, anything like the scheme which we are considering now. And there's the question of getting back, sir."

"My suggestion is this," said the General, quietly. "It's open to expert advice, of course. But I have arranged for a two-seater with an extra petrol-tank to follow the bomber to Lindenthal. The pilot can land in a field that I've marked, south of the town, and pick up the bomber pilot who will land there also, after he has exploded the dump. The extra petrol-tank can be pulled out and thrown away, and the two-seater will

RAIDERS OF THE NIGHT

thus have enough fuel to bring both men home. There will be considerable confusion immediately after the explosion. It's a ticklish job, but by no means suicidal."

He planted his hands on his hips and looked at the two squarely.

"The Hun is preparing for a big push in the Spring," he finished. "Now, at this moment, he is altering tactics, and playing a defence game. You've probably noticed it yourselves. If we can blow Lindenthal off the map, we'll paralyse him. Such a thing, gentlemen, may alter the whole trend of the war."

"**W**E'LL take it on, sir," said George, "but since you said you were open to suggestions, I have one to make. I suggest that the bomber *tows* the two-seater, otherwise, in the blackness of a moonless night like this, we're bound to get far apart by the time we reach Lindenthal. It might mess up any quick action that's necessary together. We can have a wire connecting the two machines, with a simple release mechanism at my end. If Bucky doesn't mind, I'll handle the two-seater. We can make a careful take-off, each under our own power, and get to ten thousand feet. Then I can shut off my engine and let Bucky tow me all the way to the dump. A Gotha with only one pilot and one bomb on board will easily manage the job. And I'll have a full tank when we get there, so that I'll easily be able to fly Bucky home after he's landed and I've picked him up. In that way we can't lose each other and nothing can go wrong at the critical moment."

"Better still, sir," said Bucky, his eyes gleaming, "I won't fly straight to Lindenthal, but I'll make for a point about five miles to the west of it, just when dawn's breaking. Then George can drop clear of the wire and pretend to attack me. I'll pretend to put up a fight and get the worst of it. I'll swerve over sideways, and make it look as though I'm being driven dead over the dump. By gosh! I can even have a smoke-pot in the machine, which I can start going, so that it'll look as though I'm on fire."

"That's ingenious——" began the

General, but the excited Bucky could hardly contain himself.

"The guard batteries won't fire at me in a case like that," he said. "I'll just be swinging over the town at about four thousand feet, well alight. I'll be in one of their own machines, and they'll think I'm blazing and done for, anyhow. Once they see I'm not going to crash into the dump they'll wait until George is well clear of me, and then concentrate their fire on *him*. Meanwhile——"

He grinned almost from ear to ear.

"Meanwhile I'll chuck a dummy out on a fouled parachute," he chuckled. "We'll sew the bomb up inside the dummy! The Hun will see the dummy fall, and think it's the bomber pilot jumping for his life. And they won't have the slightest suspicion that the whole dump is going up directly my bomb-dummy hits the ground."

The General suddenly held out his hand.

"Carry on, gentlemen," he said in a tone of quiet satisfaction. "You've taken my little scheme and turned it inside out, so that I'd hardly recognise it. Which——"

He laughed quietly.

". . . which is precisely what I hoped you would do!" he finished.

And turned to the door.

CHAPTER III

The Raiders Set Out

THE black darkness of the Y.M.C.A. tarmac shrouded a nightmarish scene which looked rather as though an army of glow-worms was attacking the bodies of two enormous birds.

One bird was much larger than the other. It was, in fact, a full-sized Gotha twin-engined bombing machine, which an army of men with small torchlights had just finished assembling. Other men on ladders were filling up the tanks with petrol and oil. A special party in the charge of a sergeant-mechanic was fixing a strong tow-wire to the Gotha's tail-skid. A hundred yards or so behind, stood a two-seater Bristol Fighter, and mechanics were attaching the tow-wire to the cross-bar of its undercarriage.

Major Buchanan was already up in the

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front cockpit of the Gotha, muffled to the ears in a thick Sidcot, and engaged in earnest conversation with an Intelligence officer, who was explaining the various German words and instructions on the dials of the dashboard.

Beside the Bristol Fighter, Captain Percival Edwin Philipps, also muffled to the ears, was superintending the attaching of the tow-wire with its release-mechanism. This was controlled by a second wire leading up to the cockpit, and, for the last ten minutes, he had been jerking it again and again to make sure that the wire would drop clear each time.

"I think it's O.K. now," he breathed at last, jamming his monocle firmly into place. "I'll have to be sure that the wire's out of tension when I pull the release, that's all. Righto, leave it. All we've got to worry about now is the take-off."

He looked across the dark aerodrome towards the vague shape of the big bomber ahead. In the blackness the tow-wire was completely invisible, and George frowned slightly.

"I'm not taking any chances," he muttered. "It's not going to be easy to judge his speed and mine exactly. Even with the lights on, I'll never see that wire. And if I overrun it, I'll wind the damned stuff round my wheels and break it before we get into the air. Now, *how* the devil——?"

George turned suddenly and raced for the mess building. He had had a sudden idea, and when he found the entrance blocked by Air-Mechanic Doop, he spoke somewhat testily.

"Out of it, Angel-face!" he breathed. "Come on, Doopey, out of the way——"

Then he started slightly, for he found a thermos flask thrust into his hand.

"'Ere y'are, sir," said Doop. "Nice 'ot coffee with a dash of whisky in it, just to make it 'otter! I made one for Mr. Boocannon and one for you. And I've got some sandwiches——"

Awkwardly he produced from his pocket two grimy-looking paper parcels.

George gulped and laughed.

"My little ray of sunshine!" he said.

"What should we do without you

around the happy home? Thanks for the coffee, it'll come in useful. But the—er—sandwiches, I think not. Give 'em all to the Major, with my love. He probably relishes that touch of piquance which a thumbmark of castor oil can lend to cold beef. Besides, it'll be good for his liver! And now, darling, out of the way, before I pull the Mess up by the roots and bang you over the head with it!"

Air-Mechanic Doop grinned and obeyed. He lumbered out into the darkness towards the big bomber where the mechanics were already swinging the propellers to warm up the engine. It was typical of him that he nearly put his head into the arc of a spinning blade as he tried to scramble up high enough to thrust the second vacuum flask into Bucky's hand. There were impolite yells, and Mr. Doop was only saved from extinction by someone taking a firm hold on the slack of his pants and pulling him out of danger.

BY this time, George had returned to the Bristol. He had returned with the first white object that had caught his eyes inside the mess building; which was a complimentary description of one of Mr. Doop's newly-washed towels which were still lying in a heap on Bucky's bed beside the open door.

George ran to the tow-line, felt for it with his feet, and then tied the towel in a knot round it at a point about fifty yards ahead of his own machine. Then he scrambled up into the cockpit and marked the towel's position with reference to his own engine-cowling.

It was a neat idea, and a simple one. Directly both machines were on the move, George had only to mark that faint white blot where the towel was tied to the wire. If he kept that white mark exactly in the same position in front of him he would know that he was not over-running the wire and risking getting it wound round his wheels.

"Switch off, sir!" yelled a mechanic in front. "Petrol on. Air closed——"

Automatically, George repeated the familiar formula and felt for switch and engine levers. The propeller was swung

RAIDERS OF THE NIGHT

asthmatically. Ahead, the bomber was now grumbling and roaring as both its well-warmed engines got into their stride.

There was a distant shout and the violent wagging of a torch-light—the pre-arranged signal.

“Contact !” bellowed George’s mechanic.

“Contact !” shouted George, and gave all his attention to the interior of the cockpit as he moved the switch and set the controls carefully, while the man at the propeller gave a mighty heave.

IN the middle of the aerodrome, the disgruntled Samuel Doop trotted along between the two machines, completely invisible in the darkness.

He was annoyed. There had been a lot of fuss and bother when he handed the vacuum flask up to his beloved Major, and the Major, being in one of his more profane and hasty moods, had merely stared at the thing uncomprehendingly for a second and then aimed it at Mr. Doop’s already-endangered head. The flask smashed on the ground and the deeply-wounded Doop took his departure from the midst of shouting comrades who swung unfriendly boots at his nether extremity.

And, like a friendly dog who seeks sympathy, he thereupon made for George’s machine to see if there was any little thing he could do.

He pulled up suddenly at the sight of a towel in front of him. It was a new towel, in Doop’s opinion, snow-white and unsullied. It bore the red cotton initial “B,” which, with his own fair hands, he sewed on all his beloved Major’s belongings. And here it was, sacrilegiously tied to a bit of wire !

“Who the ’ell——” breathed Mr. Doop in virtuous anger. “One of our best towels ! Now, who brought it out ’ere and tied it——”

He untied it. With a swift movement he jerked it off the wire, shook it out pettishly and folded it.

He was suddenly bathed in a blinding flood of light. Engines began to roar deafeningly, and voices rose in a crescendo of angry shouting.

By arrangement, the floodlights were not turned on until the actual moment when all was ready for the take-off. Bucky and George were following the General’s example of leaving nothing to chance, nothing that might be seen by any wandering enemy machine that happened to be in the neighbourhood.

Now, as both George and Bucky signalled that all was ready, their engines turning over healthily, the word was given. Powerful lamps set round the aerodrome were switched on. Bucky opened up with a mighty roar, and the bomber began to move, taking up the few feet of slack left in the tow-line.

George opened up also. Carefully he stared out over the engine-cowling to pick up his towel mark and keep it dead in place.

He saw nothing at all !

If he did catch sight of Doop’s running figure, whilst infuriated mechanics were yelling at that worthy to get out of the way, it meant nothing to him. He looked for a knotted towel, saw nothing, and yelled instinctively.

But it was too late !

His machine jerked as the powerful bomber tautened the wire.

“Gosh !” yelled George. “Hi ! Hold on a minute ! . . .”

But, in order to prevent the tow-line breaking under the strain, he was forced to open-out more.

And, on the steps of the mess building, General Sir William Harding Knox smiled with admiration and pleasure.

“Good work,” he muttered to himself.

“Excellent work. Those two youngsters have run everything without a hitch.”

But the General spoke too soon. He had reckoned without Air-Mechanic Samuel Doop.

So had George.

Where and how the towel had disappeared he had not the faintest idea, as he sat tensed in the front cockpit of the Bristol, and watched the bomber sliding towards the lights at the farther end of the aerodrome. He was like a cat on hot bricks. He glanced at his air-speed indicator and saw that it was climbing to forty fifty sixty.

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The bomber started to rise, and he saw the clear lights flooding the space beneath it. George eased his stick back gingerly, but sat as rigid as a rock, not even daring to swear. All his senses were concentrated on that dark shape ahead. He knew if he lagged too far behind, there would be a sudden jerk and the wire would probably break.

But, if George had only known it, he had already over-run the wire considerably, so that it was now hissing through the grass in a circular bight, just behind the tail of his own machine!

Bucky, ahead in the Gotha, had pulled-off as soon as possible, reasoning that the sooner the wire was up in the air the safer it would be for everyone concerned.

And, without anything to mark dead-distance, George over-ran because he entirely misjudged their relative speeds, owing to the difference in size between the Gotha and the Bristol.

As the rumbling of his undercarriage wheels stopped and the Bristol rose into the air, George let out a long breath of relief. The worst was over. If the wire had wound itself round his undercarriage wheels, he would have felt it before now.

Ahead, the Gotha swung over the lights at the aerodrome edge, and uncannily disappeared instantly in the gloom beyond.

With his engine at three-quarter throttle, George followed, thanking all the lucky stars in his own peculiar Heaven.

Yet, hissing along the ground fifteen feet below and between the two, was a curling bight of tough wire which swept right across one of the lamp-swivels with a roaring noise that made the attendant mechanics leap aside in alarm.

It was as well that they did so, for the wire acted as wire always does act. The lower part of the curve, being slackened in tension, kinked. It half-rove round the spindle-adjustment, and jammed up solid with a slam. The heavy lamp was wrenched out of its swing-arms, whilst its beam swung like a white pole clean across the sky.

There was a fine sparking and splashing of broken power-leads, and a flash as the lamp shattered its way through the

hedge behind.

Then the towing wire broke right through!

The mighty force of the strain tore it clean away from the Gotha's tail-skid, in the same instant as one of the lamp's swivel-arms smashed completely off.

CHAPTER IV

Major Buchanan Carries On

BUCKY felt the jerk and looked round, cursing, but was quickly reassured when he saw the Bristol rising close in his wake, silhouetted against the glow of the floodlit aerodrome. All seemed to be well. No doubt, the jerk was just due to George tautening the wire by rising a little too slowly. Had anything been seriously wrong, George would certainly have been making some kind of a signal.

But George was making no kind of signal at all, and for the very good reason that he had felt nothing of the wire-break and had not the faintest idea that anything was amiss. His end of the tow-wire, with the lamp swivel-arm at the end of it, had given no jerk at all. The tension had been at the front section when the break occurred.

Certainly George had seen that lamp overturn. Its beam had flooded his own machine for a second, as he passed over. But, against the roar of his engine, he had heard nothing to suggest trouble. He merely thought that a man was swinging the lamp to keep both machines in focus as they roared upward to the black heights.

So George kept on. From the moment his wheels left the ground he had been feeling almost weak with relief. Wire in the undercarriage wheels would have meant a sixty-mile-an-hour, cart-wheeling crash on to the machine's nose—practically certain death. But once clear of the ground, all such danger was over.

George sat back in his cockpit, squared his shoulders and actually laughed.

He could see nothing ahead whatever. Far behind, and well below, the aerodrome was still floodlit, although the lamps seemed to be snapping on and off in an unusual manner. Very occasionally,

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as the bomber swung slightly, he caught glimpses of exhaust-pipe flames, otherwise screened by the engine housings. That was all. Meanwhile, he had merely to climb steadily with his air-speed indicator needle at its present mark until the altimeter showed ten thousand feet.

After that, according to plan, he would throttle down, wait for the tow-rope to tauten, then switch off, and be towed like a glider for the rest of the journey.

In the big Gotha cockpit, Bucky was also experiencing considerable satisfaction. Two or three times he had turned round after that first jar. But since, by arrangement, he was flying in a straight line away from the aerodrome, he had its lights behind him the whole time. And against that diminishing patch of light George's Bristol showed consistently in the same place, just where it should have been, within a dozen feet or so.

So, at a steady climb, Bucky bored his way through the black velvet darkness into the cold upper heights. He watched his altimeter needle climb from five to six, six to eight, and up into the last divisions over nine thousand feet.

He then mentally steadied himself and turned to look behind again.

He could see nothing whatever, although that did not surprise him. Undoubtedly, George was there. The thunder of his own engines prevented his hearing anything of the Bristol. Besides, he knew that George, at this height, was to shut down his engine and allow the tow-line to do the rest.

Bucky anticipated a jerk, either of large or small dimensions, as the slack of the wire was taken up. Slowly he opened out to full throttle, so that increasing speed should take up the slack with the least possible strain.

Behind him George throttled down with equal caution. He brought his engine revolutions down to 1,100, to 800, then as low as 600, which did not mean as much as flying-speed.

"Perfect!" breathed George "Golly, this must be my birthday. I must have been running with that wire taut all the time! There wasn't the slightest suspicion of a yank."

Much the same thought was passing through the mind of Bucky, in the Gotha, at that precise second. There was not the least alteration in the trim of his machine, no jerk, no lessening of speed.

Yet, while he fondly imagined that he had the Bristol on a tight wire a hundred yards or so behind him, the grim truth was that George was already nearly three miles in the rear!

AT that moment George was jerking his machine up out of a sickening 'pancake' dive, with appalled curses spluttering from his lips.

All his attention had been concentrated on controlling the engine. He had brought her down from full revs. with painstaking skill, and he had not even glanced at the air-speed indicator.

But, now, as the machine suddenly lost all flying speed and lurched down in that sickening manner, George left his seat the few inches that his safety-belt would allow, and very nearly bit his tongue in half.

At first, he could not understand what had happened. Until his eyes fastened on the speed-dial he had the vague impression that Bucky and the Gotha must have gone into some appalling dive. Then, and only then, did he see the tell-tale needle pointing between thirty and forty miles an hour, as the Bristol side-slipped half tail-down like a drunken crow.

Then George realised the truth. The wire had broken!

It seemed incredible, for, since that first light jerk when the bomber moved forward on the aerodrome, there had been no indication of the wire's tension at all.

Not until hours afterwards was George to realise how it had hung down beneath him, rove tightly in the broken-off swivel-arm of a lamp. All he thought of now was that the carefully-thought-out scheme, which had seemed to be working so perfectly, must be abandoned. Without the tow-rope to hold the two machines together, and to reserve George's own petrol supply for the return journey, the raid was suicide for both. It could not go on.

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"Suffering snakes, this *would* have to happen," panted George. "But where the devil is Bucky? We'll have to be careful, or we'll go bashing into each other as we turn for home."

The instinct for caution made him switch his engine off completely, so that he could hear, even if he could not see, the whereabouts of the Gotha.

But the only thing George heard was a distant, rhythmic drone, that was drawing quickly away into the blackness of the east; and it had the unmistakable rhythm of Gotha engines!

Bucky was carrying on!

"It must have been the release-gear," said George in a sudden, curiously-strained voice, as he switched on and plunged down into the depths to get his propeller moving. From the sound of that receding machine, he knew, with ghastly clearness, that Bucky was unaware of what had happened. He could not know that the tow-line was broken, or he would be circling round and making for home again.

George's mind leaped to the most natural reason for the break, the sudden opening of the release mechanism by an unforeseen fault. That, certainly, would explain the removal of the link between them, smoothly and without shock. He 'caught' his engine, roared up in a sweeping zoom, and headed due east.

For he still had one wild hope. If he could only catch up with Bucky, if he could fly close, risking a collision—anything, in order to demonstrate what had happened and the need of returning home. But, in that black darkness, he knew that the hope was no more than a gamble, at odds of millions to one.

CHAPTER V

The Raid on Lindenthal

LIKE most people who present only an air of lazy flippancy to the world, George's real character was utterly different from what he liked people to think it was. Part of his endless jesting and sarcasm came from a deep-rooted desire to see the truth of things, no matter how they might be disguised with false sentiment. Although his chief delight seemed

to be in "kidding" his nearest and dearest companions, he never deceived himself. In the silent court-room of his own mind, he was in the habit of playing judge and jury, bringing himself to task for faults and failings and showing no mercy in his judgments.

He did not kid himself now.

"I," said George to himself from between set teeth, as he looked at his petrol-level, "I have one hour to go. If I can catch up with Bucky inside the hour, and show him what's happened, we can both get back. If I can't——"

He did not complete the sentence. It was unnecessary. The Bristol's tank would take him as far as Lindenthal, and perhaps twenty miles back on the return journey. It would then leave them stranded and helpless on enemy territory.

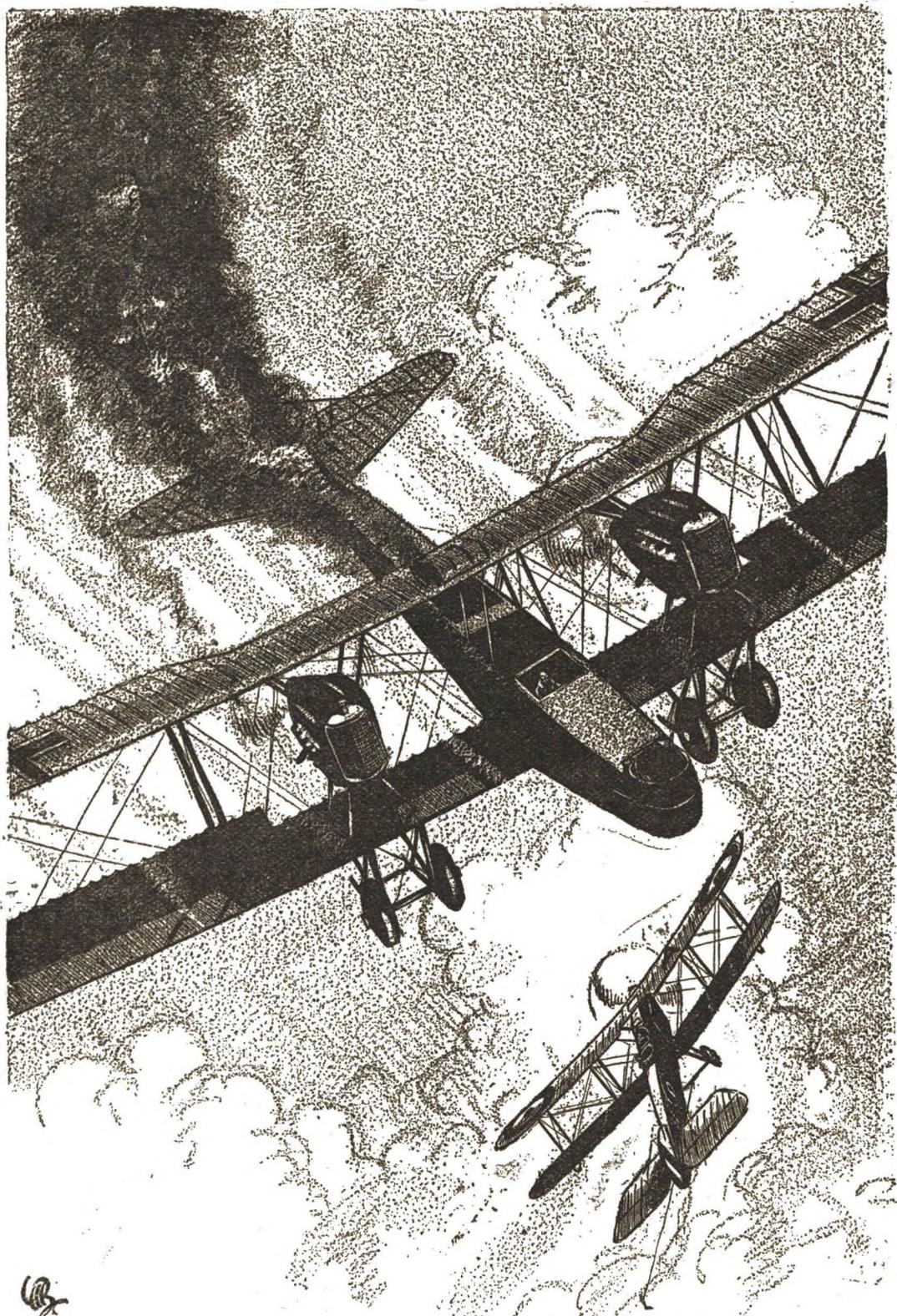
Meanwhile, Bucky in the Gotha was steadily carrying on. Completely unaware of what had happened, he was aiming to reach Lindenthal just about dawn, and then wait for George to drop clear and start the sham fight.

With an icy feeling along his spine, George knew that he would hover about in a clearing light, presenting a perfect target for massed batteries of anti-aircraft guns trained with merciless accuracy. It was more than probable that his machine would be blown out of the sky before he could get near the dump. And if he did survive long enough to drop a bomb in the heart of that mass of explosives, he would have to land, without hope of being picked up, in an area where the mood most certainly would be to shoot him down on sight.

So George knew that he would have to go to Lindenthal. At all costs the raid must be carried out and Bucky picked up. After that—well, George nursed a fleeting hope that, if they could get as far as twenty miles away from the shattered town of Lindenthal, they might at least fall amongst people who would be inclined to grant them a reasonable trial before shooting.

George carried on.

The trouble was that he had no guide whatever now. He had an idea that a



He stuck the Gotha's nose down into a diving turn as the Bristol Fighter half-rolled and came back again with guns blazing

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strong wind was blowing and, in his loss of flying speed and subsequent lurching about, he knew he might have been blown miles away from his correct starting-point. The aerodrome lights had long since been switched out, and Heaven knew where the aerodrome lay in that vast black pit below.

He could only fly roughly in the direction of that distant Gotha drone. He dared not shut off his engine in order to try and hear it again; he would only pile up the odds against himself.

That his task was hopeless George did not for a moment doubt. Inside that cold court-room of his own mind he had already passed judgment upon himself as a quixotic fool.

Bucky, in the Gotha, was most certainly going to his death. What was the use of flying after him? There was really no hope of saving Bucky. George's own action was just crazy, and nothing else.

So the Lord Chief Justice in his own mind told him. And, having done so, the Lord Chief Justice passed sentence of death upon George also, for carrying on with such a crack-brained, useless mission.

George carried on.

He could only trust to his compass. He could only fly on steadily, keeping his eyes away from the petrol-gauge, which had reached the half-empty mark while he was still thundering ahead into black hopelessness, from which now, certainly, he could not return.

Steadily, at ten thousand feet, his machine cut through the darkness with its wing-tips invisible to the white-faced pilot's eyes.

At last, with a strangely unexpected effect, George realised that the dark was becoming filmy. From dead ahead over the far eastern horizon came an imperceptible glow. Then a range of hills actually became quite clear, clouds, high above his own soaring machine, materialised like ghosts, became white, then flushed to a delicate salmon-pink. Down below, the vast spreading relief-map of the ground took on detailed shape and contour.

George shifted cramped limbs, wiped

his goggles with the back of a glove, and stared round.

But of Bucky there was no sign. The sky appeared to be completely empty. Below, as the dawn glowed and grew brighter, he could see only miles and miles of spreading fields, scattered forestland and a few winding streams. In the far distance to his left a faint lancet-gleam indicated a railway line.

"Damn!" said George viciously. "I've missed him! I've wandered right away from the target. By now, I ought to be right over Lindenthal, but——"

George started violently.

From somewhere far away to his right he heard the thud of gun-fire. Instinctively he kicked the Bristol round in an almost vertical turn. And then in the far distance, he saw peculiar, flickering lights, rather like magnesium flashes, among the dim clouds at about five thousand feet.

"That must be Bucky," gasped George. "They've seen him. The silly ass has gone sliding right over the dump, and they're popping stuff up at him as hard as they can go——"

He rammed the Rolls engine full open, and even went so far as to dive slightly to crowd on speed. But, within the first three minutes of his headlong career, he was rewarded by the sight of a distant spreading town which had been hidden, at first, by a long ridge of woodlands.

George did not know for certain that it was Lindenthal and he did not care. For, as he raced towards the place, he saw other star-shells bursting in the heights beyond the town's edge.

And then, out of a high cloud bank, the big twin-engined Gotha slid suddenly into view.

BUCKY was having a bad time. Ever since the first pale glow of dawn, when he had looked round to wave a signal to the towed George, he had been in a state of dazed amazement. For George, naturally enough, was not there.

Bucky had no idea when he could have dropped clear on the release mechanism. For a while, he circled above the cloud-

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banks, straining his eyes through the uncertain light as the dawn glow penetrated the heights.

He could not think that the tow-rope had broken. Throughout the long flight he had felt nothing of any jerk or jar. George, however, he knew as an inveterate practical joker—yet it seemed incredible that he should try any funny tricks at a time like this.

"If the ruddy fool is trying to be funny," gasped Bucky furiously, "I'll—I'll—"

Words failed him. He slid down through a break in the clouds, wondering if the absentee might be flying about below. It was an unwise move, for it brought him into clear sight of the ground beneath him, almost on the edge of the forbidden city. As a result, those ground batteries immediately sent up a warning scatter of star-shells, preparatory to letting fly with high explosives unless their erring comrade quickly steered his machine away from the town.

Bucky saw the flashes, gasped sharply, and thundered out of danger at a sharp angle, making for the nearest cloud-bank. He had seen nothing of George, and he now felt very cold, and very lonely indeed. For he knew he had not enough fuel to take him back to the home lines again.

And having got this far, he felt it his bounden duty to bomb the dump.

Such an action, he well knew, would almost certainly result in his own death, now that there was no one to pick him up and remove him from the avenging local troops.

"Damn!" breathed Bucky. "I've got to do it, of course. I'll just have to dive straight through all the muck they'll start sending up, and drop the dummy over. They'll probably fill me full of holes before I ever reach the ground. Perhaps it'll be as well—"

He sighed slightly as, tense and grey-faced, he brought the big bomber down into a clear cloud-break and turned the controls to head it directly towards the town. In those few seconds his mind flashed queerly from one past incident to another.

"Oh, well," breathed Bucky, "I sup-

pose I can't grumble. It's been a good run, and I got my squadron."

In that moment he nearly sprang clean out of his seat as a burst of ten bullets passed close to his left ear, skilfully aimed by the errant George!

Up over the Gotha the Bristol roared in a climbing turn, and then stalled to dive again with both guns spitting viciously, apparently straight into the back of the pilot's cockpit.

"The infernal fool!" gasped Bucky. "The fool—by gosh—"

Without realising it, he was laughing wildly, on an almost insane note. But he had not even time to think. Here in the cloud-break he was still on the edge of the town. He grabbed down inside the cockpit, jerked a wire, and immediately smoke began to pour forth from beside the petrol-tank in black, whirling volumes.

Bucky stuck the Gotha's nose down, put it into a diving turn, and wrenched it up with a lurching, awkward movement. The smoke was now coming out in a whirling black mass, exactly tracing every movement he made in the sky. He cut off one engine, and played jerkily with the control of the other, making it thud and bang in a series of realistic misfires.

Meanwhile, George dived beneath, swept up over him, half-rolled and came back again and again, apparently shooting the "blazing" bomber full of holes, even though it was already doomed.

And because he kept close to the smoking wreck, the furious gunners below held their fire. An angry Oberleutnant stamped and fumed in front of the central fire-control tower in the town's centre.

"*Mein Gott!*" he panted. "We must give those poor devils a chance. We must wait until that Englander sheers off. But then, by ten thousand thunders, he will find no range which we cannot fill with shrapnel! *Ach, mein Gott!*"

THE Leutnant's last remark came as the Gotha lurched over sideways, almost turning on to its back, and swerved so that it passed dead over the centre of the town at a height of about four thousand feet. As it did so, the

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figure of a man detached itself from the doomed machine and fell in an awkward almost dummy-like cartwheel of arms and legs, with an opening parachute ragging out above him.

The Gotha finished its swerve, seemed to take a level keel for a few minutes, and then shot off at a tangent and actually passed clear away across the town's boundary.

The parachutist still fell. Yet the parachute did not open at all! It merely ragged behind the falling figure, a tangled mass of lines and bubbling white silk.

"The poor devil," gasped the Oberleutnant. "His parachute must have become entangled and will not open. Ach! But now the Englander shall pay. Now he shall learn how we shoot——"

Which were the very last words uttered by the Oberleutnant in charge of the fire-control of No. 1 battery in the town of Lindenthal.

For, in that same second, the falling "body" smashed through the glass roof of a great shed devoted to the manufacture of nitro-glycerine. And, as the "body" struck the floor, the three-hundred-pound bomb inside it exploded!

To describe the end of the town of Lindenthal is not easy. Some men have tried it, some who, from hill villages in the distance and among the woods, stood appalled as the city seemed suddenly to shimmer and writhe all over its spreading, orderly surface.

There are those who say that a vast column of flame like a yellow steeple rose up from the nitro-glycerine shed. White fire seemed suddenly to boil and bubble at its base, spreading, sweeping, heaving—breaking out here, there and everywhere into vast blossoms of nightmare hideousness and macabre colours.

For the first instant, it all seemed to happen in dead silence. Then the crash came!

It was a cataclysmic, appalling, annihilating crash, which actually killed men and animals by sheer concussion, at distances up to almost a quarter of a mile. It was a crash that seemed to still the very motion of the earth, that roared to split the ear-drums, echoing and re-echoing,

until finally it dwindled into a dull rumbling. And above all was a vast and whirling pall of black smoke which, like a titanic mushroom, grew to a size that threatened to encompass the whole earth.

CHAPTER VI

Bombers to the Rescue

GEORGE was standing on his head. To be more explicit, he was upside-down in a two-seater that had been blown six hundred feet and tossed about like a drifting leaf. He was completely breathless; momentarily, the concussion had blotted out his consciousness. Even now, as he dazedly fought for something like control and pulled the machine out of a power-dive earthwards, he could not hear his own engine.

He had lost all bearings, and felt as though his brain had turned to a handful of bolts and nuts which were rattling about inside his skull.

Then he came within twenty feet of a Gotha which, with one enormous wing-bay tattered and crumpling, was lunging drunkenly earthwards.

Bucky, in his better-protected cockpit, had felt less of the explosion-force, although his bigger machine had suffered by far the worse in that scorching blast. Now, smoke-blinded and gritting teeth which seemed to have been shaken loose, he was trying to get the machine down anywhere beyond that vast circle of leaping, boiling flame which had once been a manufacturing town.

To fly it was impossible. His only hope lay in trying to land the Gotha before it fell apart.

And this, a considerable tribute to his skill, he managed to do within the next three minutes, without suffering anything worse than a badly-bleeding nose from forceful contact with the dashboard, and an interesting if somewhat painful assortment of bruises and cuts.

Actually, Bucky landed at the edge of a wood which bordered farmlands two miles to the west of the town. The Gotha was a complete and utter write-off. Only by putting the one good wing straight into the ground in a lurching side-slip did he manage to break the shock of impact and

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save his own life. Then, spitting blood and explosive-fumes, he staggered away from the wreckage towards George's Bristol, which had made a reasonably good landing about fifty yards off.

For the first time since the explosion he began to hear things again. He could hear the roar and crackling of the blazing crater which had once been an ammunition town. He saw George's mouth move as that worthy stood up in the Bristol's cockpit, and vaguely heard faint and far-away words.

"I'm out of juice," piped George, dabbing with the back of his glove at a cut cheek which was bleeding profusely. "I may be able to make ten miles, but no more. The damned tow-rope's busted. I think it must have been the release-gear. Anyway, I had to follow you and——"

Bucky's heart seemed to turn to ice. After that appalling explosion two English pilots could hardly expect any welcome, other than a firing-party, if they were found in the neighbourhood. His eyes were blank, but they suddenly centred on the still-closed release-hook which showed on the Bristol's undercarriage bar. The rest of the wire, as it tailed out behind was invisible.

"Release, my foot!" bellowed Bucky. "It's still there. Why, you back-handed, clumsy goop, I felt a jerk just as we were taking-off! I was scared you'd hung back and busted the line then. Why the hell didn't you make me a signal while I could still see you? Now—now——"

Even Bucky's artistic flow of language dried up in the face of this appalling situation. George stared down at his own undercarriage with unbelieving eyes. The certain failure of the release-catch to function had been his one comfort throughout those ghastly hours.

But, now, there seemed to be direct and unpleasant evidence that he had been at fault, after all.

THE judge and jury in that cold courtroom of George's mind suddenly became more grim and accusing than ever. He, who privately considered himself one of the slickest pilots in the business, had made a mess of a simple if delicate job

like this.

"The towel!" he gasped blankly. "Somebody pinched the towel, and then I couldn't judge the distance properly——"

He tried to explain as Bucky scrambled up into the back cockpit, but Bucky was in no mood to listen. He had stopped swearing and was ominously quiet, a sign which even Air-Mechanic Doop recognised as dangerous.

"Get going!" barked Bucky. "Use up what juice is left. If any survivors of that blow-up catch us here, we'll be torn to pieces. We'll be lynched. After all, bullets are cleaner."

George got going. In utter misery he opened out the engine. The machine surged forward—and George very nearly shot out on his head!

The reason being that the trailing tow-rope, which had merely run across open grassland when he landed, had now caught in a hidden tree-stump and jammed there just as George was taking-off.

Fortunately the wire broke at the release end this time, but it was sufficient to bring the Bristol down, smash its undercarriage to pieces and stand it up on its nose!

The leader of the "Y.M.C.A." squadron and his second-in-command disentangled themselves from the wreckage and looked at each other dumbly.

George nearly wept.

Then an entirely unreal thing happened. From out of the eastern sky there suddenly came a droning roar of such magnitude that it seemed more like a dream than anything else. And following the drone, flying low, came bombing machines carrying the red, white and blue cockades of the Royal Flying Corps.

Dazedly George counted twenty, twenty-five, and then gave up counting altogether. He decided that he had gone out of his mind.

Bucky held his head and stared at that vision in amazement. Suddenly, he let out a strangled shout as the leading bomber swung down out of the formation and made for a landing on the wide downlands not far from the two castaways.

Bucky and George ran. They ran

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madly. Neither of them could recall afterwards much of the incidents which attended their leaping up on to the side of that newly-landed Handley-Page and being hauled by willing hands through the side door in the fuselage. But both nearly collapsed at the sight of General Sir William Harding Knox, who appeared to be in charge among the empty bomb-racks of that gloomy interior !

The General talked, as a sergeant-mechanic busied himself with a whisky bottle and a first-aid outfit.

"It was just bad luck" said the General, soothingly. "You over-ran the wire, Philipps, and the light of it caught one of the flood-lamps. Jolly good job it did, too, otherwise we shouldn't have known that the thing *had* broken. But when you didn't return inside ten minutes I gathered that, for some reason, Buchanan hadn't realised that the break had occurred."

He glanced curiously at George.

"Why on earth did you follow Buchanan when you knew the line had broken?" he asked. "Surely, man, you *knew* you couldn't fly here and back again!"

"Suicidal!" snapped Bucky, although there was a growing warmth in his eyes as he regarded his miserable-looking subordinate. "The ass realised that he'd made a mess of the take-off. Lost me in the dark and couldn't signal to me what had happened. So I suppose he wouldn't let me come on here alone. Ought to be shot!"

"A most likely conclusion to the whole thing," said the General drily. "Ten minutes after you had left, I had these three bombing squadrons off the ground after you. Thought I'd better come along myself, too. And, now, it's just a matter of seeing if we can fight our way back for a hundred miles or so, until the scout escort-squadrons can pick up with us and discourage interference. It may be a lively trip. But, in any case——"

He laid a hand on George's shoulder.

"Don't worry, Philipps," he said. "That take-off was a ticklish job. The best pilot in the world could have made a mistake in such circumstances. And—

you two have done your job. Whether we get back or whether we don't, I can tell you that the finish of Lindenthal has probably meant saving the lives of a good many thousands of our troops in the line. And now I'd better be going to see how things look outside."

He turned away up the short companion ladder towards the front cockpit.

THE trip back was certainly a lively one. Fortunately, the annihilation of Lindenthal had had an effect even more widespread than General Knox had expected. Four guardian aerodromes had been set ablaze by flaming wreckage rained down from the sky. The vast pall of smoke made attack against the raiders practically impossible for the remaining squadrons. And not until the great bombing flight was nearly home did German fighters appear in swarms.

But bombers in daylight are more than a match for most opponents. They can fire from every known angle, and their flight is steady and ponderous, so that gunners can aim with cool efficiency.

In that first attack, two went down in flames, but they accounted for four Halberstadts before doing so. General Knox got a bullet through the knee, as a result of which he was destined to limp for the rest of his life. George lay flat over a tail-gun for somewhere about two hours and did not even notice that he was cramped. He got three complete "write-offs," but never even claimed them. At the sight of the flaming fall of those two Handley-Pages, he went a little crazy, and writhed, tortured by self-hatred.

Then British scout squadrons from all along the line appeared in their usual miraculous fashion in the morning sky, and, from then onwards, matters deteriorated into a general dog-fight from which the tattered bombing squadron ponderously winged its way to safety.

OUTSIDE the mess of the "Y.M.C.A." aerodrome, Bucky paused for a moment and spoke to George for the first time since he had made those rude remarks on German territory.

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"Thanks, George," he said briefly. "Decent of you to come along. If you hadn't been there to help, I'd never have got over the dump at all. They'd have blasted me to bits. Those guns had my range perfectly."

It was obvious that Bucky wanted to say a lot more, but it is always at such times that a man is stricken dumb.

George said nothing. Beneath his bandage, his face was strained and white. He merely nodded shortly and walked into the mess to seek his bedroom. In the corridor, Air-Mechanic Doop greeted him with an effusive welcome.

"Thank 'Eavens you're both back, sir!" said Doop. "'Specs you'd like a wash and brush up, sir—and here's a nice clean towel for you, sir."

But George hardly heard. For hours now, one thing had been revolving secretly in his mind. He ought to have left nothing to chance. At that moment when the bomber first moved off, and the wire jerked, he ought to have known that it had broken. Just for that piece of carelessness, twenty or thirty good fellows had lost their lives. The ghastly picture of the falling bombers was vivid in his mind.

"Thanks, Doop," he breathed. "Thanks. But buzz off now, I'm—I'm tired."

"I'll bet you are, sir," said the cheerful Doop. "I'm a bit tired meself, as a matter of fact. 'Aven't 'ad a wink of sleep all night. We all 'eard what 'ad 'appened to the tow-line. And if you arsk

me, sir, there was some dirty work going on out there larst night."

He gestured expressively.

"Someone playing skylarks," he went on. "Found one of my best towels, new-washed, too, tied to the tow-wire out on the aerodrome. And what any darned fool was doing, tying——"

"What's that?" exploded George. "Doopey, are you telling me that you went and pulled a knotted towel off that tow-line? Do you mean it?"

"Not 'arf I don't, sir!" said Doop, assuming importance. "I told the Sergeant, sir, but 'e wouldn't listen to me. I says to 'im, 'I reckon there's probably spies about,' I says. 'Someone's been trying to muck up this 'ere tow-wire ——'"

GEORGE laughed. He laughed suddenly on a cracked, strained note. He laughed as a man might who finds himself perfectly innocent, after being tortured with the idea that he has committed a murder by culpable negligence.

And Major Buchanan, walking beside General Sir Harding Knox into the corridor at that moment, pulled up short, and gasped in amazement. The General stared until his eyes nearly came out of his head.

For both were regarding the amazing spectacle of a trusty and popular captain of His Majesty's Royal Flying Corps clasping a mechanic of the third class and whirling him around the room in an exuberant embrace!

THE STORY BEHIND THE COVER

In the Supermarine Spitfire, Britain has the fastest Military Aeroplane in the World To-Day

BBRITAIN'S latest type of single-seater interceptor fighter, the Supermarine Spitfire I, is depicted in this month's cover painting by S. R. Drigin. A large number of these machines has recently been ordered for the re-equipment of the Royal Air Force and they are claimed to be the fastest and most formidable fighter 'planes yet produced anywhere in the world.

A low-wing monoplane, with an undercarriage that can be fully retracted into cavities in the underside of the wing when in flight, the Spitfire is surprisingly small and light for a machine of its abilities and is, in fact, said to have a structure weight lower than any hitherto achieved in the modern single-seater fighter class. Performance figures, dimensions and armament details are, of course, still

secret, but it is known that the Spitfire is capable of well over 300 miles an hour, has a wing-span of 37 feet and is armed with more machine-guns than have ever been carried by any fighter yet used in the R.A.F.

The pilot in the Spitfire is accommodated in a glass-enclosed cockpit which, in addition to making him a less obvious target for hostile gun-fire, also affords him greater protection from the slipstream, and the cold at high altitudes, than is possible in an open-cockpit fighter. All the guns are fixed and trained to converge in a cone of fire some distance ahead of the machine. They are aimed by directing the nose of the machine on to the target and fired by levers attached to the spade-grip of the control-column or "joystick."

The Amazing Autobiography of
Germany's Greatest Living Air
Ace, Victor in Sixty-two Aerial
Combats with Allied Airmen
and a Member of the Famous
Richthofen Circus

ACE OF THE

PART II

On the French Front

EARLY in 1917 our single-seater squadron, Jagdstaffel 15, received orders to evacuate the Habsheim Aerodrome. The instructions arrived one day at noon and by the evening we were ready to entrain at Mülhausen station.

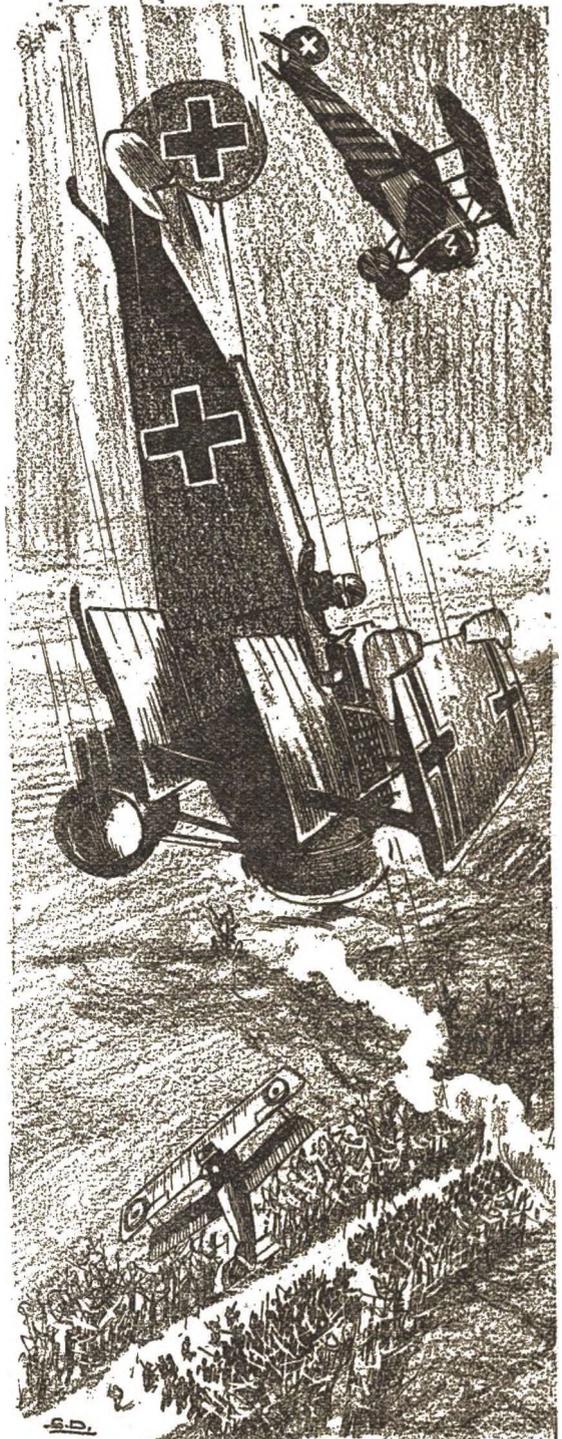
The platform was crowded, and in the pale light of the lamps, which had been dimmed as a safeguard against the attentions of hostile aircraft, the people looked ghostlike. There were many women among them; nearly all were in tears. For over two years a detachment of our Air Service had been camped outside the gates of the city and every minute of leave had been spent there. No wonder that the parting was hard.

My particular friend and fellow pilot, Esser, was in the same compartment with me, and his fiancée had come from Freiburg to see him off. A fine-looking girl, with pride and self-control, she did not give way to tears, but chatted in steady tones with Esser, who was leaning out of the window.

I heard her say, "Take care of your gloves and your linen," but her mouth twitched as she said it, and one knew that she wanted to say something very different.

Then the train started, gathered speed, and disappeared into the night. Our destination was unknown; all we knew was that the quiet life we had been leading was over, and that we were to begin anew in a sector where the fighting was fast and furious. The prospect filled us with a certain excitement and, I might add, a certain measure of anxiety.

For three days and three nights we were shunted backwards and forwards behind the line. It was like living in a huge goods-yard. Munition trains rolled past us, and hospital trains, with their



Richthofen set the nose of his red Fokker towards the ground and dived . . .

BLACK CROSS

*The Authentic Story
of a German Airman's
War-time Adventures
in a Scout Squadron
on the Western Front*

By

ERNST UDET *



... and the Sopwiths scattered like chicks
from a hawk

hidden misery, passed on their homeward journey.

On the evening of the third day we detrained. We looked round us, and then at each other. "Lousy Champagne!" our leader grumbled, and there seemed justification for his description as we gloomily surveyed the cold, fine rain that was clothing the open landscape in grey desolation, and watched the lean poplars at the roadside shivering in the keen March wind.

We were quartered in the small village of La Selve, and Esser and I managed to get billeted together. Our room was miserably bare, but Esser, the old campaigner, knew a trick or two. With the help of his batman, red velvet curtains were brought in from a neighbouring deserted castle and draped on the walls of our new home. An artistic lampshade was constructed with the aid of a pair of red silk pyjamas, and at night our room looked pleasantly snug—when it could be seen through the "fug" of tobacco smoke in which it was usually enveloped.

Facing us across the lines, we had the *elite* of the French Air Force, and it was said that, in addition to Nungesser, Guynemer, the "Ace of Aces," was in the opposite camp. Our opponents flew single-seater Spads, equipped with 180-h.p. Hispano engines—very fast, handy machines, and far superior to our Haifisch and Albatros types, especially when it came to diving. If we attempted a very steep dive our wings showed visible and alarming signs of not being able to stand the strain, and we were always in fear of their imminent collapse. The better-con-

* Colonel Udet is the present chief of the technical department of the German Air Force and regularly carries out test flights of new military aircraft.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

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structed Spad, on the other hand, could safely be dived with full engine, and this gave their pilots an important advantage in fighting.

In addition, ground defences were very much more highly developed here than in the Vosges. I had unpleasant proof of this during my first flight over the enemy lines when my wings were so peppered by anti-aircraft fire that it was only with the greatest difficulty that I managed to reach home.

As a result of our inferior equipment and the efficiency of the enemy's defences, nearly all our aerial duels were left undecided, and we grew more despondent from day to day. In the evenings, Esser and I would retire to our room with an aged gramophone that his resourceful servant had produced from somewhere. We had stuffed some old rags into the horn to tone down the noise, and the resultant sounds were as melancholy as the song of a peasant girl in the backyard of a town house on a Sunday afternoon.

Esser also spent a good deal of his time writing to his fiancée. He wrote daily, and his letters were filled with plans for the future.

ON April 16th our Staffel registered its first success, when Glinkermann shot down a Caudron and Esser accounted for a Nieuport. But Esser had not returned. The others had seen him flying towards the west in pursuit of an enemy machine. No news of him came through, and with a heavy heart I spent that night alone in our room with its red-curtained walls.

Next morning we received a telephone message from the front line trenches. Our Staffel leader went forward, to return by car in the evening with a sack—a sack so small that it might have contained the body of a dead child. That was all that remained of Esser.

The C.O. wrote to his parents, while the task of informing his fiancée was left to me. It was a difficult letter, the hardest that I have ever had to compose—and I was to be called upon to write many similar letters in the days that followed.

On the morning after Esser's remains had been taken away I had a visit from

Puz. His round, boyish face, with its small, stumpy nose, expressed keen sympathy.

"Frightfully sorry, Knägges," he said to me; "I know what it must be like to be left in a room with an empty bed. If you like, I'll move in and join you."

We shook hands on it, and that evening one of the batmen placed a small white visiting-card on the outside of the door. Instead of reading "Leutnant Esser," it now read "Leutnant Hänisch."

A few days later, on April 24th, I had my first success on this sector of the front. Above Chavignon I met a Nieuport, and brought him down in flames after a short, sharp duel. The wreckage fell in a field among the shell-holes. It was my fifth recognised air victory, for after my first success at Mülhausen I had brought down another three machines before we left Habsheim.

Two days later it was my birthday and all my friends were invited to the "Red Room," as it was now called. With Berend's help, three *Napfkuchen* were baked, cocoa was prepared, and with the white cloth on the table the room looked for all the world as though it were set for a children's party.

We sat and talked, waiting for our C.O., Oberleutnant Reinhold, to arrive. At two o'clock that afternoon he and two others had left on a flight over the enemy lines. At three o'clock the others returned and reported that they had lost sight of him in the course of a dog-fight. He had dived into the clouds on the tail of his opponent and they had not seen him again.

The two men were embarrassed. Certainly their description of what happened might have been correct, but, none the less, a shadow remained. In the air, a formation should be inseparable, like hand and arm, or head and body. Each was responsible for the life of the next man, as though it were his own. The whole idea was that the leader, in his position in front, should not have to worry about what was happening behind him; he was to be left free to concentrate his whole attention on the battle.

We waited a while longer and then, at

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last, I said, "Well, you fellows, we'd better make a start! If he comes in later he'll have to eat alone."

They began to eat, but, although they were hungry and the cakes were excellent, I noticed that they left two of everything. Reinhold was with us in spirit. No one mentioned him, but our thoughts were continually turning to him. It was noticeable, too, that conversations were started and broken off, just left in mid-air for no apparent reason.

At five o'clock the telephone rang. Glinkermann, who was sitting next to it, took up the receiver and signalled to me to answer it. The others, too, had heard it; there was a deathly silence in the room.

A bored voice was speaking at the other end of the wire: "Is one of your pilots missing?"

"Yes, that's right," I answered hastily.

There was a lengthy interval of silence at the other end, which was followed by a whispered dialogue . . . now and then I could pick up fragments of what was being said. . . . "What did he look like, you fool?" Then the bored voice returned to the 'phone. "Did your man fly without a helmet?"

At once I remembered that Reinhold always flew in an ordinary military peaked cap, with the earflaps pulled down.

"That's right!" I shouted. "Is Oberleutnant Reinhold there?"

"Well, we haven't found any papers," said the voice, and then, aside: "What was the number of the regiment, Otto?" Then louder, to me: "Hundred and thirty-five was on his epaulettes."

"Dead?"

"Yes."

"Where are you? We'll come along right away."

"At Lierval. You can see the aeroplane for miles round."

I replaced the receiver and looked at the others. They knew without need of words. "Let's be going!" I said. We ran to the car and tore along the road to Lierval.

Reinhold's 'plane was lying out in the open. It was so little damaged that it

looked as though it would be perfectly simple to restart it.

We ran across the grass to the machine. Infantrymen told us that Reinhold had been seated in the cockpit when the machine landed, his right hand on the trigger of the machine-gun. His face still bore an expression of excitement, his left eye was closed and the right eye wide open as though he were still aiming at an invisible enemy.

And so death had surprised him. A bullet had bored its way into the back of his head, emerging between the eyebrows.

There were two small holes where the bullet had entered and left. We lifted our dead comrade and took him back with us.

"That's the way I'd choose to die," Glinkermann said to me.

CHAPTER II

My First Command

SEVERAL days later our new Staffelführer, Leutnant Gontermann, arrived. A big reputation had preceded him, for he had already accounted for twelve aeroplanes and six observation balloons. He was reputed to be the best man we had at the dangerous pastime of bringing down balloons.

His tactics were completely new to us. Before opening fire against an opponent he endeavoured to force him down by superior flying. Then, when he actually did open fire, he seldom needed more than a dozen rounds to bring his man down. He practically flew into the draught of the other's propeller, and never used his gun until he was within sixty feet of him.

His very presence was reassuring, and seldom did his coarse, peasant features show the slightest excitement. He had unlimited faith in himself. But there was one thing about him which caused me to wonder. If, when he landed, bullet-holes were found on his machine, he was intensely annoyed. He regarded them as proof that there had been something wrong with his flying. He argued that if you conducted your campaign in the right manner your opponent should never get the chance of a shot at you. In this respect he was very different from Rich-

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thofen, for the "Red Baron," if his mechanics reported hits on his machine, simply shrugged his shoulders and forgot about them.

ALMOST immediately after Gontermann's appointment, our Staffel was withdrawn from La Selve and sent to Boncourt, which was an ancient French castle, with many fine rooms and situated in the centre of a beautiful park.

The owner, an aged nobleman, and his wife and two daughters, were still living there. They had withdrawn into the back rooms, leaving the principal reception rooms in the front of the house to us. In all probability they hated us, but their behaviour was always scrupulously correct. If we met one of them in the castle or in the park we were greeted coldly, but politely.

One day things were different. Gontermann told us about it during lunch. He had met the old gentleman, it seemed, and discovered him weeping. Pressed for the reason, the man had revealed that every day his daughters had to go to the village and work in the fields, where the village commandant, a lance-corporal, was doing his best to make their lives unbearable. And now the younger daughter, a delicate girl of about fifteen, had been forced to suffer unwelcome attentions from him. Gontermann had promised to have the matter looked into, and his face, as he told us about it, was red with anger.

In the afternoon, the lance-corporal trotted up on a farm horse which he had confiscated from somewhere. We were drinking our coffee outside the castle, under the shade of the trees, when he arrived, and as the windows of Gontermann's room were open we could hear every word that was spoken inside.

"There has been a complaint about you," Gontermann began. He spoke quite calmly, though a trifle louder than usual. "It seems that you work the women too hard, and keep them at it too long."

"That's for me to decide, Herr Leutnant." The lance-corporal's tone was challenging.

"What do you mean?"

"If the women are impudent and rebellious they have to be punished for it."

Gontermann's voice grew a shade louder. "Furthermore, you have been paying unwelcome attentions to several of the women."

There was a long pause, and then we heard Gontermann's voice again: "For example, the young countess from this castle."

"I am not responsible to you, Herr Leutnant, for what I do. I am in command in this village . . ."

During the next few moments we listened to a torrent of abuse from Gontermann which made our flesh creep.

"Who do you say you are? You low rascal, you blackguard! A fellow like you ought to be put against a wall. Here we fight with honourable weapons against an honourable opponent, while you do your best to drag our name in the mud!"

It was like a mediæval punishment. For five whole minutes Gontermann continued his tirade. He was fighting, not with his fists, but with words, and the effect was devastating.

"I'll have you in front of a court martial, my man!" he shouted in conclusion. "Now, get out!"

The lance-corporal passed us at the double. His face was ashen-grey and covered in beads of perspiration. He was in such a hurry that he forgot to salute, and actually departed without his horse.

Then Gontermann came out to us, as calm as usual, and we set out on our evening flight. Gontermann shot down a Nieuport, and I a Spad. It was my sixth victory.

On the following day, about noon, I heard from Berend that the village commandant had departed under military escort. Gontermann's influence was far greater than his modest rank led one to expect. The people above knew what sort of man he was. Even in the fortnight that he had been with us he had already brought down eight enemy machines—a record that earned him the *Pour le mérite* decoration and a month's leave. On the

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evening before he left, he handed over his command to me until he returned.

WE flew every day, that is, whenever the weather would permit us. Generally we took-off three times a day, in the morning, the afternoon and in the evening. Most of these flights were in the form of raids on the enemy trenches, and air duels were infrequent occurrences. For the Frenchman, we found, went to work in the air very cautiously, but when he did get going his tactics were extraordinarily skilful. We all had the feeling that our opponents in this part of the front were much better at the game than we were. Not only did they derive an advantage from their superior equipment, but they had also had twenty months' experience in a hot corner of the fighting, and hundreds of duels had hardened them to a stage which we had yet to reach.

On May 25th we flew over the enemy lines, in arrow formation, myself in the lead, the two brothers Wendel behind, and Puz and Glinkermann bringing up the rear.

We climbed to a height of about six thousand feet. The sky was clear and one or two small white clouds, very high up, were all that was to be seen. It was nearly noon, and a hot sun beat down upon us. Far and wide there was no sign of an enemy machine.

Periodically, I turned round and waved to the others. They were still in formation behind me : the Brothers Wendel, Puz and Glinkermann—all was in order.

I am not prepared to swear that there is such a thing as a sixth sense, but certainly on that flight I had a sudden feeling that all was not well, that some hidden danger threatened us. I made a half-turn, and a moment later I saw Puz's machine enveloped in smoke and flames. Puz was sitting perfectly still, his body stiffly erect in the cockpit, his face turned towards me. He slowly raised an arm to his helmet. It might have been a last struggle, but it looked exactly as though he were saluting me for the last time.

"Puz !" I shouted. "Puz !"

But in that instant his machine broke

up, the engine dropped like a flaming meteor, and the broken wings fluttered after it.

For several moments I was incapable of thought. I simply stared overboard at the fallen wreckage.

A hostile 'plane hove into sight, about fifteen hundred feet below me, flying at high speed towards the west. The red-white-and-blue cockades seemed to stare up at me like vicious eyes. Immediately something told me : "That can only be Guynemer."

I dived furiously at him. But the wings of my Albatros were unable to stand the strain. There were clear signs of warning that a little more would cause disaster and that the machine would break up in mid-air unless I pulled out of my dive.

I gave up the pursuit and returned home. The others had already landed, and I found them standing in a group on the flying-ground, dejected, and talking in low voices. Glinkermann stood a little apart from the rest, immersed in thought, and scribbling designs in the sand with the point of his walking-stick. His dog was beside him, rubbing his nose against his master's knee. But Glinkermann was beyond taking notice of the animal ; his thoughts were elsewhere.

As I approached him he lifted his head and looked at me.

"You mustn't blame me, Knägges," he said, "I really couldn't prevent it. He came down at us straight out of the sun, and by the time I realised what was happening it was all over."

Pain had distorted his features. I knew him, and realised that he would torture himself with reproaches and doubts for weeks to come. Having flown in line with Puz, he would keep telling himself that he ought to have prevented his death.

But I knew too well that it was no fault of Glinkermann's. When I flew in his company I felt absolutely secure, knowing full well that he would let himself be shot to pieces rather than allow me to be vulnerable from the rear.

"Don't take it too badly, Glinkermann," I said, placing my hand on his shoulder ; "no one can do anything

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about it, and if anyone's to blame all of us are equally responsible."

I then went to my room, wrote my first official report and then a letter to Hänisch's parents.

But death had not yet finished with us. An orderly woke me up from my mid-day nap. There had been a 'phone call from Mortiers to say that one of our machines had come down: the pilot, Acting-Sergeant-Major Müller, was dead.

I went to Mortiers. Two old campaigners, grey and weathered like the Champagne mud, received me. They had placed Müller in a barn, to which I was taken. His features were calm and peaceful; his must have been an easy end. I asked for an account of what had happened, and then returned to Boncourt.

IT was very quiet at the aerodrome. In the afternoon all the machines went up, and towards evening they returned, in twos and threes.

Glinkermann did not come back.

The two men who had been flying with him had lost sight of him. He had disappeared in the clouds, and was last seen flying towards the west. The old story, the old, bitter story. . . .

On the flying-field, plunged into the soft turf, stood a walking-stick. A military peaked cap hung from the handle. Glinkermann's talisman. When he started out on a flight he left them there, and on his return he took them away with him. A big, wolf-like Alsatian wandered restlessly up and down near the stick. As I walked over the field he trotted to meet me. He never did that at other times. He was essentially a one-man dog, and growled fiercely at anyone who came near Glinkermann. Now he buried his cold, damp nose affectionately in my hand.

I had the greatest difficulty in concealing the despair that I felt. But Gontermann had handed over his Staffel to me, and I was determined that no one should see me displaying signs of weakness. At the office I gave orders that all front-line units that could be reached by telephone were to be rung up and asked whether a German pilot had landed near them.

"Ring all of them?" asked one of the clerks.

"Yes, of course—all of them!" I shouted at the man. "And if there's the slightest clue anywhere let me know at once. I shall be in my room." I had regained self-control, and gave the latter part of my order in a reasonably calm voice.

Night came slowly. I sat by the open window and stared into the gathering darkness. A new moon rose from behind the big trees in the park. The noise of the crickets was unusually loud and unbearably irritating. The atmosphere was sultry: there would be rain before morning.

I had Glinkermann's dog in my room. The wretched animal could not settle down, but walked continually backwards and forwards to the door. Occasionally, he howled dismally.

Glinkermann, Glinkermann! A week before he had brought down a Spad that was about to dive on to the tail of my machine, and on the next day I drove off an enemy 'plane that was making things rather uncomfortable for him. He had to come back! I could not be left alone!

At ten o'clock an orderly rushed into my room. "Herr Leutnant, you are wanted at once on the 'phone by an infantry unit near Orguevalles."

I heard a deep, gloomy voice. Yes, a German machine had come down near them. The pilot had black hair, parted in the centre. That was the only description he could give me—the rest of the body was burnt beyond recognition.

As I replaced the receiver without a word the dog howled so appallingly that I had to put him out of the room. I lit the lamp on my writing-desk, and told an orderly to bring me Glinkermann's belongings. I found a tattered wallet containing a little money and the photograph of a girl. There was also a love-letter. It had just been started—it would never be finished.

At noon on the following day an army waggon drove into the camp. Inside it there was a wooden box. The box was unloaded and taken into Glinkermann's

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tent. We placed his cap and his walking-stick on the top, and then we covered the bare wood with flowers and green foliage.

Two days later Glinkermann was buried, and on the morning of that very day came the news of his promotion to lieutenant. Had he lived it would have been the greatest day of his life. I got a man who was going on leave to Mülhausen to take the commission to his parents. He also took the dog with him. The poor brute had to be dragged from Glinkermann's tent, and as it was driven away in the car its howls were heart-rending.

On June 4th Acting-Sergeant-Major Eichenhauer fell. And on this day I wrote to Grashoff, who was one of my best friends at Habsheim: "I'd like to get transferred to another sector; I'd like to join you."

For now I was the only survivor of Jagdstaffel 15, the only man remaining of those who had left Mülhausen for the Champagne.

CHAPTER III

A Duel with Guynemer

JAGDSTAFFEL 15, which had been formed from the old single-seater fighter command at Habsheim, now consisted of four machines, three acting-sergeant-majors and myself, the flight-commander. We generally flew alone.

There was a good deal of activity along the fronts, and it was rumoured that a big offensive was being prepared on the other side. Every day we saw long rows of captive balloons, which, against the summer sky, looked like a string of over-size sausages. These balloons annoyed us and we decided that something would have to be done about them.

So one morning I started out early, at a time when I should have the sun at my back as I made my dive at the enemy balloon. I flew very high, higher, I think, than I had ever flown before. The altimeter showed fifteen thousand feet, the air was thin and it was very cold.

The world below me looked like a huge aquarium. Above Lierval, where Reinhold had fallen, I sighted a hostile

machine. From the distance it looked like a minute water-beetle.

Then, from the west, a small object rapidly approached. Small and black at first, it quickly grew in size and soon I recognised it as a Spad, an enemy fighter on the look-out for trouble-seekers like myself. I braced myself in my cockpit, for I knew that there was going to be a fight.

We met at the same altitude. As the sun caught it I saw that the other man's machine was painted light yellow. Soon we were circling round each other, playing for an opening. From below we probably looked like two great birds of prey indulging in springtime frolics, but we knew that it was a game of death. The first man to get behind the other's back was the winner. In the single-seater fighters you could only shoot forward, and if your opponent got on your tail you were lost.

Sometimes we passed so near to each other that I could see every detail of my opponent's face—that is, all that was visible of it below his helmet. On the machine's side there was a stork and two words painted in white. The fifth time that he flew past me—so close that I could feel the draught of his propeller—I managed to spell out a word: "*V-i-e-u-x*," I read. And "*Vieux Charles*" was Guynemer's insignia!

And, indeed, there could only have been one Frenchman who handled a machine with the skill that he showed. He was the man who, like all really dangerous beasts of prey, always hunted alone. Guynemer it was who made a practice of diving at his victims from out of the sun, destroying them in a few seconds. In this way he had shot down my friend Puz. He had some thirty victories to his credit, and I knew that I was in for the fight of my life.

I threw a half-loop, with the object of getting at him from above, but immediately he grasped my purpose and half-rolled out of the way. I tried another manœuvre, but again Guynemer forestalled me and the jockeying for position continued.

Once, as I was coming out of a turn,

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he had the advantage of me for a few seconds, and a regular hailstorm of bullets rattled against the wings of my 'plane.

I tried every trick that I knew—turns, loops, rolls, and side-slips—but he followed each movement with lightning speed, and gradually I began to realise that he was more than a match for me. Not only had he a better machine, but the man in it was the superior duellist. But I had to fight on, to turn away would be fatal.

I went into a steep turn, and for a moment I had him at the end of my sights. I pressed the trigger . . . there was no response . . . my gun had jammed!

Holding the stick in my left hand, I hammered at the gun with my right. But my efforts to clear the stoppage were unavailing.

For a moment I considered the possibility of escaping by diving away from him. But with such an opponent that would have been inviting disaster. In a few seconds he would have been on my tail, and could have shot me down with the utmost ease.

We still flew in circles round each other. It was a wonderful flying experience—if one could forget that one's life was at stake. I have never had to deal with a more skilful opponent, and for a while I completely forgot that he was Guynemer, my enemy. It seemed to me, rather, that I was having some practice over the aerodrome with an old friend. This feeling, however, did not last for very long.

For eight minutes we had been flying round each other in circles, and they were the longest eight minutes that I have ever experienced.

Suddenly Guynemer looped, and flew on his back over my head. At that moment I relinquished hold of the stick and hammered with both hands at my gun. It was a primitive remedy, but it sometimes worked.

Guynemer had observed my actions and now knew that I was his helpless victim.

He again passed close above my head, flying almost on his back, and then, to my great surprise, he raised his arm and waved to me. Immediately afterwards

he dived away towards the west, in the direction of his own lines.

I flew back home, stupefied.

There are some people who believe that Guynemer himself had a machine-gun stoppage at the same time. Others claim that he feared that I, in desperation, might ram him in the air. I do not believe any of them. Rather do I believe that Guynemer gave proof that even in modern warfare there is still something left of the knightly chivalry of bygone days. And, accordingly, I lay this belated wreath on Guynemer's unknown grave.

GONTERMANN returned from leave on June 19th. His lips tightened as I told him of the losses which the Staffel had suffered in his absence.

"Then we two are the only survivors, Udet," he said sadly.

I had already written to Grashoff asking for a transfer, but at that moment I had not the heart to mention it. I deferred speaking about it until the evening.

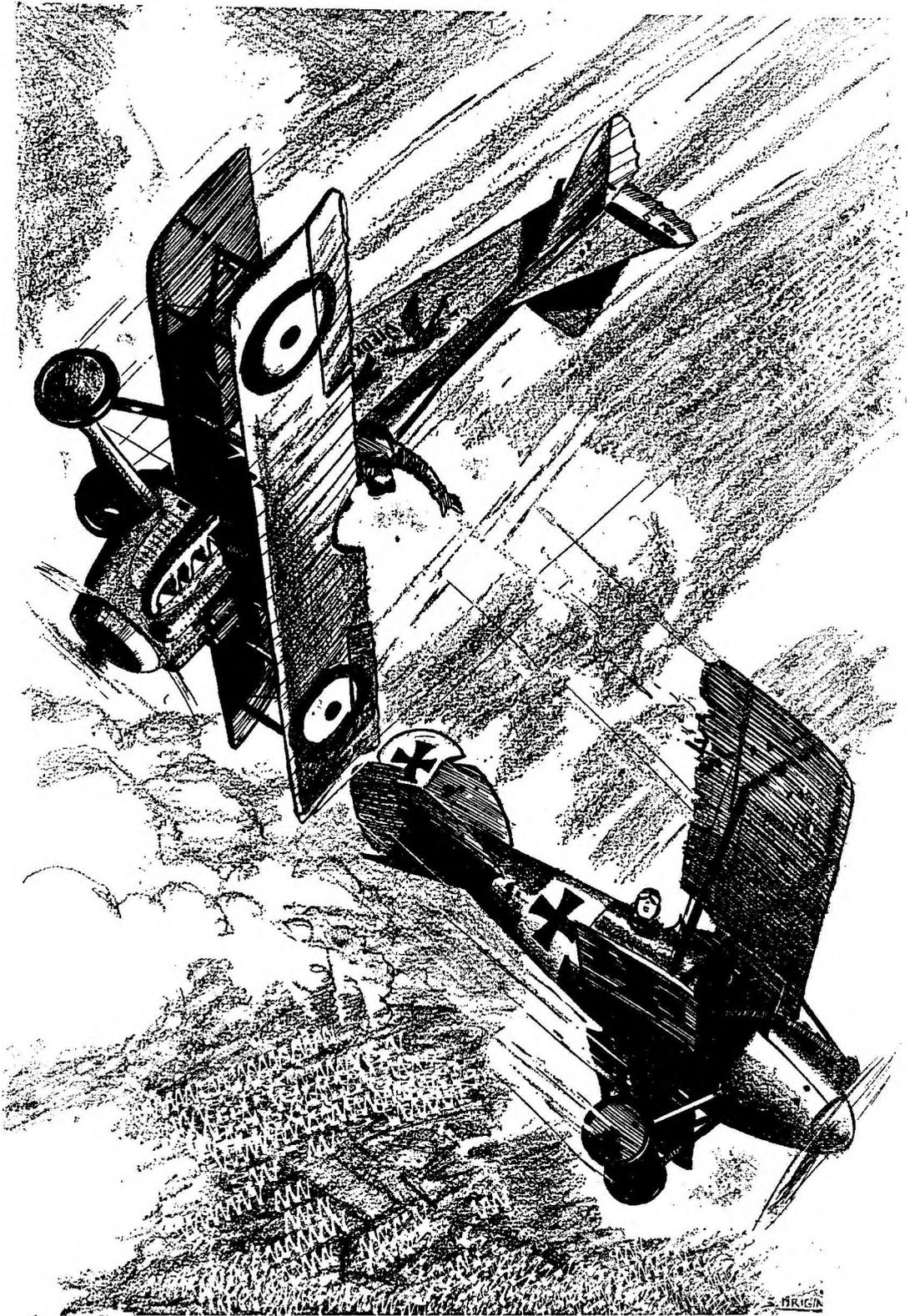
In the afternoon, not many hours after his return, Gontermann made his first flight. He brought down an enemy machine, and returned home with twelve hits on his own 'plane. I met him as he landed on the 'drome and walked back with him to the castle.

This was the first occasion I had seen him just after his return from a fight. His face was pale and covered with beads of perspiration. Of his accustomed *sang-froid* there was no sign. It was only too evident that his nerves were overstrained and that the man was "all in." Realising this, I could not help wondering at the admirable self-control which he exhibited at all other times.

As we walked along together he swore quietly to himself. The bullet-holes in his own machine were the cause of his annoyance.

I reasoned with him. "If you go about shooting at other people," I said, "then you must expect to be shot at yourself."

We walked along the loose gravel path leading through the park to the castle. A small, white garden table stood close by us. Gontermann halted, picked up a leaf and a handful of pebbles. Placing the



Guynemer passed close above my head, flying almost on his back, and then to my great surprise he raised his arm and waved to me

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leaf on the table, he opened the palm of his hand and slowly released the stones. As each fell there was a sharp metallic sound as the pebbles hit the metal surface of the table.

"It's like this, Udet," he said, "the bullets fall all round us"—he pointed to the leaf—"and gradually they get nearer and nearer. Eventually they hit us. We're bound to get hit in time."

With an impatient movement of the hand, he swept his playthings from the table. I was watching him from the side. Obviously he was in a highly emotional state, and the longer I was with him the stranger his character seemed to me. My desire to get away from the place increased a hundredfold. The Boncourt air depressed me: it was tainted with too many sad memories.

"I want to transfer to Jagdstaffel 37," I blurted out.

Gontermann spun round. "You want to leave me?" His tone sounded reproachful. But in a second he had regained complete self-control, and with set features and icy voice said, "You may rest assured that I shall not place any difficulties in your way, Leutnant Udet."

I guessed what he was thinking, and quietly added, "Several of my old friends from Habsheim are there, men I knew at the single-seater command. But, of course, I won't leave until the new men have settled down."

For a while Gontermann was silent, then he held out his hand and said, "Sorry you're not staying, Udet—but I think I understand."

Gontermann fell three months later. Like many of our best men, he fell through no fault of his own. His triplane lost a wing while he was flying above his own aerodrome, and he crashed. Without regaining consciousness, he died twenty-four hours afterwards. It was a good death.

CHAPTER IV

My Meeting with Richthofen

FOR about six weeks I had been in command of Jagdstaffel 37. We

were stationed at Wynghene, a little town in the centre of the fenland of Flanders. The terrain was difficult, full of hillocks and ditches, and a successful forced landing was practically impossible. If one climbed fairly high one could see as far as Ostend and the sea. To the north, a dismal, grey-green landscape stretched away farther than the eye could reach.

Many people in our Staffel were surprised that Grashoff had chosen me to take over his command when he was suddenly transferred to Macedonia, especially as there were several men who were my seniors both in years and rank. But I had been promised his command since the previous autumn, when I shot down three English machines above Lens. It was a surprise coup, carried out in the Guynemer style. I flew straight out of the sun and surprised them before they were aware that I was anywhere near. Diving at the man on the left flank, I fired a short burst of five rounds and brought him down. Then I turned to the right-hand man, and then the leader. The other two were so nonplussed that they had no chance of getting in a shot at me. It was all over in about twenty seconds, and reminded me of the time when Guynemer brought down my friend Puz. As an airman in time of war you must learn your trade or perish. There is no other alternative.

When I landed, Grashoff had already made up his mind. "If I have to leave here, Knägges," he said, "you shall inherit the Staffel."

And so I succeeded to the command of Jagdstaffel 37. Our "opposite numbers" were young Englishmen—very smart young fellows, who would take up any challenge and, almost without exception, fight to the very last. Nor were we in any way behind them. That depressing feeling of inferiority which had lamed us at Boncourt existed no longer. Our Staffel had an imposing list of victories to its credit, and I, myself, had already brought down my nineteenth opponent.

As the winter of 1917 drew on, we spent less and less time in the air. There was a good deal of rain and snow, and even on "fine" days the clouds hung so low

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that flying was almost out of the question.

We, therefore, spent most of the time in our quarters. I was living in a house owned by a lace manufacturer. Often, when I was seated by the window, I could see the workpeople—lean, bent figures—trudging through the snow to deliver their consignments of lace.

The son of the house was serving in the Royal Flying Corps, and his people made a point of reminding me of it. "He is doing his duty, and you are doing your duty." That was their view, and they cared not who knew it.

On his sister's birthday this British airman flew over the house and dropped a bouquet of roses. They fell right on the roof. I climbed up and got them and took them to the young girl, who was just eighteen. As I handed her the flowers I noticed that tears were in her eyes. "*Merci, Monsieur,*" she said; "*je vous remercie mille fois.*" And I was glad, too—glad that it had not been a bomb!

In the spring of 1918 there were signs of restlessness along the German front from Flanders to the Vosges. The unrest was not due to the spring alone, for both officers and men spoke of a big offensive that was soon to take place. But no one knew anything for certain.

On March 15th the Staffel received its orders to move. Machines and men were to be entrained for a destination unknown. We realised then that the long-expected offensive was due to start.

As soon as we arrived at our new aerodrome we set to work erecting the big marquees for our 'planes by the side of the road leading to Le Cateau.—It was raining, a penetrating drizzle that was slowly but surely covering everything in liquid mire—even the trees, houses and people.

I had pulled on a leather jacket and was helping my mechanics to drive in the tent-pegs when a motor-car drove along the road. So many cars passed us that we took no notice of it. We continued our work, silently and doggedly.

Then I felt a tap on the shoulder, and turning round saw—Richthofen. Rain

trickled from the peak of his cap and ran down his face.

"How d'you do, Udet," he said, negligently acknowledging my salute. "Nice weather we're having to-day."

I looked at him and noted the calm expression and the big, cold eyes, half-shaded by heavy lids. He was the man who at that time had brought down no fewer than sixty-seven machines—our best fighter.

His car was waiting at the side of the road, and he had climbed down the embankment in the rain to speak to me. I waited.

"How many have you shot down up to date, Udet?" he asked.

"Nineteen recognised, one waiting for confirmation," I replied.

He raked the mud with the point of his walking-stick.

"Hm, twenty," he commented. Then he raised his eyes and scrutinised me for a while.

"That about qualifies you to join us. Would you care to?"

Would I care to? It was the most attractive suggestion anyone had ever made me. If it had rested with me I would have packed up and followed him then and there. There were many good Jagdstaffeln in the German Army, and Number 37 was by no means the worst of them. But there was only one Richthofen Squadron.

"*Jawohl, Herr Rittmeister,*" I said.

We shook hands and he left.

I watched him—a tall, slender, fragile-looking man—as he climbed the embankment. He then jumped into the car and disappeared into the rain.

"Well, between us we managed that nicely," said Berend, as I turned to help him with the tent.

I HAD not long been a member of the Richthofen Squadron before I began to discover the secret of its successes.

Other squadrons lived in castles or small villages, fifteen or twenty miles behind the lines, but Richthofen's unit was housed in portable corrugated iron buildings that could be taken down and re-erected in a few hours. It was seldom

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more than fifteen miles behind the front-line trenches. Whereas other units took-off two or three times a day, Richthofen and his men made five or more flights in the same period. In bad weather the others ceased flying, but Richthofen's machines were nearly always in the air.

But what surprised me most were the pilots' seats on the aerodrome. They were an idea of Böelcke's, Germany's master airman, and the scheme had been adopted by Richthofen, his most brilliant pupil.

A few kilometres behind the front, often within reach of the enemy shells, we used to sit, in flying kit, in deck-chairs which had been placed in the middle of the aerodrome. Our machines stood close by with their engines running. As soon as a hostile 'plane appeared on the horizon we took-off. Sometimes only one went up, sometimes three, and at other times a whole flight took-off.

When the battle was over we landed, again reclined in our deck - chairs, searched the sky with our binoculars, and waited until the next opponent put in an appearance. Patrol flights Richthofen permitted, but did not encourage. "Sentry-go in the air damps the pilot's fighting spirit," he said. And so we seldom took-off unless there were definite prospects of a fight.

I REPORTED for duty to the new squadron at ten o'clock one day, and at twelve on the same day I made my first flight with Jagdstaffel 11. In addition, Staffeln 4, 6 and 10 belonged to the squadron. Richthofen himself led No. 11 Flight. I was made a member of it because he liked to have all newcomers where he could keep an eye on them.

There were five of us. The Rittmeister took the lead, then came Just and Gussmann, and Scholz and myself brought up the rear. It was the first time that I had piloted a Fokker triplane.

We flew at an altitude of about fifteen hundred feet, setting a westerly course. Above the ruins of Albert we saw, just below the clouds, an R.E.8, a British artillery co-operation machine that was evidently spotting for the guns. Although

he was somewhat higher than ourselves he apparently did not observe our approach, and continued to fly in circles.

I exchanged a quick glance with Scholz, who nodded. I left the flight and went to challenge the Briton.

I attacked him from the front, and opened fire at such close quarters that his engine was positively riddled with bullets. He at once crumpled up, and the burning wreckage fell close to Albert.

A minute later I had rejoined the flight and continued with them towards the west. Scholz signalled his pleasure by waving to me, and Richthofen, who seemed to have eyes everywhere, also turned his head, and nodded to let me know that he had witnessed the incident.

Below, to our right, we saw the Roman road. The trees were still bare, and the columns of troops marching along the road looked as though they were moving behind iron bars. They were proceeding towards the west, English troops who had been beaten back by our offensive.

Flying low over the tops of the trees were several Sopwith Camels. These British single-seaters had the task of protecting the Roman road, which was one of the main arteries of their communication system.

I had no time for further observations, for Richthofen set the nose of his red Fokker towards the ground and dived, with the rest of us following close on his tail. The Sopwiths scattered like chicks from a hawk, but one of them was too late—the one at the end of the Rittmeister's sights.

It happened so quickly that one could hardly call it an aerial fight. For a moment I thought that the Rittmeister would ram him, so short was the space that separated them. I estimated it at thirty feet at the most. Suddenly the nose of the Sopwith tilted downwards, and a cloud of white smoke shot from the exhaust. The ill-fated machine crashed in a field close to the road and burst into flames.

Richthofen, instead of changing direction as we expected, continued to dive until he was close above the Roman road. Tearing along at a height of about thirty

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feet above the ground, he peppered the marching troops with his two guns. We followed close behind him and copied his example.

The troops below us seemed to have been lamed with horror, and apart from the few men who took cover in the ditch at the roadside, hardly any one returned our fire.

On reaching the end of the road the Rittmeister turned and again fired at the column. We could now observe the effect of our first assault: bolting horses and stranded guns blocked the road, bringing the column to a complete standstill.

This time our fire was returned. Infantrymen stood, with rifles pressed against their cheeks, and fired as we passed over them. Machine-guns, posted in the roadside ditches, fired viciously at us as we flew overhead. Yet, despite the fact that his wings were riddled with bullets, the Rittmeister still continued to fly just as low as before. We followed in close formation behind him, firing burst after burst from our Spandaus. The whole flight was like a united body, obeying a single will. And that was how it should have been.

Our leader left the road and climbed. We followed, and at a height of about fifteen hundred feet we turned back to our aerodrome. When we landed I noticed that it was just half-past twelve. But it was Richthofen's third flight that morning.

By the time my machine had touched the ground he had already climbed out of his plane. He came towards me and smiled.

"Do you always attack your man from the front, Udet?" he asked. From his tone I gathered that he did not altogether disapprove of my tactics.

"Oh, I've found it worked very well on several occasions," I answered, endeavouring to sound as casual as possible.

He again smiled and said, as he turned to go: "By the way, you can take over No. 11 Flight, starting from to-morrow."

I had known that I was soon to have command of one of his flights, but the casual way in which the great news was communicated to me robbed the honour of much of its value.

Then Scholz slapped me on the shoulder: "The Rittmeister seems to have taken a fancy to you, old boy!"

"Can't say I've noticed it," I observed rather peevishly.

But apparently it was so, though, first one had to get accustomed to realising that, if Richthofen liked a man, it was for purely material reasons and that sentiment or favouritism had nothing whatever to do with it. His whole life was dedicated to an ideal, the ideal of country, and he demanded the same service from his pilots. His estimate of a man was formed by what that man achieved for the cause, and whether he happened to be a good fellow or not was a secondary consideration. But once you had proved your worth, he supported you by every means in his power, and with his whole personality. If you were a failure, he dropped you without a second's hesitation, without the flicker of an eyelid. A single mistake on the part of a pilot and he had to leave the squadron—on the same day.

Granted, Richthofen ate, drank and slept like other people. But he ate, drank and slept simply and solely in order to be able to fight. When food supplies grew difficult to obtain, he used to despatch Bodenschatz, a prince among adjutants, in an old plane with orders to see what he could "scrounge" at the base. Bodenschatz on these occasions took with him a large number of photographs bearing Richthofen's own signature. In the quartermaster's stores at the base these pictures were highly valued, with the result that the Squadron never went short of sausage and ham.

CHAPTER V

A Prisoner from the R.F.C.

ONE evening, soon after I had been given my Staffel, several Reichstag deputies, who had previously announced their visit, arrived in a large limousine. Their manner was very pompous, and the occasion was evidently a very important one in their eyes. One of them had even gone to the length of wearing a tail-coat and top hat, and whenever he bowed his

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coat-tails stuck out like the stern of a water-wagtail.

After dinner in the mess we had to listen to speeches which we found rather nauseating. One of them, addressed to Richthofen, began, "Herr Baron, when you mount into the air in your aeroplane on your way to meet the enemy . . ." Richthofen sat perfectly still and listened, his features like granite.

After another bottle of wine they continued to speak of "youthful heroism" and the "Fatherland," while we sat with our eyes fixed on the table. Without being able to express it in words, we felt that there were certain things which were better left unsaid, and these were just the things these wretched deputies were saying.

At last the gentlemen were put to bed. They slept, like ourselves, in small corrugated iron buildings, so that when they returned home they would be able to recount their impressions of life at the front.

We stood in groups on the aerodrome and waited until the last lights in the tiny windows had disappeared.

"It's a pity," said Maushacke, reflectively, "if they're going home to-morrow, that they can't see a bit more of the war."

Scholz closed his right eye significantly and casually enquired: "Air raid?"

It was all that was necessary: we understood the rest.

A ladder was brought and carefully placed against the wall of the building in which the deputies were sleeping. "Wölffschen" climbed warily to the chimney-stack, carrying an armful of signal-lights and blank ammunition.

A few seconds later there came from inside the building the sounds of alarming explosions, followed by yells and cries.

There was a full moon and so we stood on the shadowy side of one of the other huts. Presently a door opened and through the opening burst three figures, draped in long white nightshirts. The Rittmeister laughed until the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Air raid! Get under cover!" a powerful voice shouted across the 'drome,

and the three white forms sprinted back to their hut, where they spent the night cowering under their beds.

Next morning they were in so great a hurry to leave that they would not even stop to have breakfast with us.

WE laughed about that incident for a long time afterwards. Humorous incidents were few and far between at the front and anything that afforded an occasion for amusement was received with gratitude and its memory treasured.

Almost equally funny was the incident of our prisoner at Bernes. Lothar von Richthofen, the Rittmeister's brother, had brought down his fortieth opponent, an English major, who crashed not far from our camp. As there were no infantry in the neighbourhood we decided to keep him as our own prisoner, and on his first night with us he appeared at dinner in the mess with Richthofen, who introduced him to us. He was a tall, slender man, rather casual in his manner and a trifle reserved. At the same time he was thoroughly sporting and likeable—in brief, he was a gentleman.

We discussed the Kiel Regatta, the Epsom Derby, horses, dogs and aeroplanes. The war was not even mentioned. We had no wish to make him feel that we were trying to "pump" him for information.

In the middle of our conversation he turned to his neighbour and whispered something. He then stood up and went outside.

Lothar, with a troubled expression, watched him. "Where's he off to?"

"Asked me if I could tell him where the toilet was," answered Maushacke.

There was a moment of awkward silence. The resort in question was nearly three minutes' walk from the mess, and, moreover, was situated on the edge of a wood. For an active man such as our Major, escape would be a comparatively simple matter.

Opinions differed as to our best course of action. Maushacke, our well-nourished comrade from Brunswick, was for immediate action. He wanted to follow the Briton and keep an eye on him. It would

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be perfectly easy to do it. Lothar held the opposite view.

"Up till now we have treated the man as our guest," he said, "and he has given us no cause to believe that he would take advantage of us."

However, our uneasiness continued. After all, we were responsible for the prisoner. If he got away there would be the deuce of a row.

One of us went to the window and watched his departure. A few seconds later seven or eight of us followed him—at a respectable distance. I was one of them.

The Briton advanced with long strides. For a moment he halted, lit a cigarette, and looked round. We immediately ducked under cover. After all he was our guest, and our suspicions might offend him.

Soon he disappeared behind a wall constructed of deal planks. The partition did not quite reach to the ground and so we could see his boots. That, at least, was reassuring.

But Maushacke's detective sense had been fully aroused.

"I say, you fellows," he said breathlessly, "they're his boots all right, but how do we know he's still in them? I'll bet he's climbed over the other wall and got away in his stocking feet. The boots wouldn't be standing as still as that if . . ."

He gave us a demonstration of how, in his opinion, the boots should be placed in the circumstances.

But just at that moment our prisoner emerged from behind the screen. We bent double and sprinted back to the mess, and when our guest returned we were once again talking about Kiel, the Derby, horses, dogs and aeroplanes.

Our Major resumed his seat at the table.

"I am sorry to have inconvenienced some of you," he said with a slight smile, "but I should never forgive myself if I had even thought of deceiving such charming hosts." He then drank our health, which we, feeling rather foolish, acknowledged in suitable terms.

On the following morning, a short, rather comic-looking *landsturmer* came to escort our prisoner away. As the Major

left, he turned round several times and waved to us.

Five days later Meyer returned from Ghent and related a curious story. An English prisoner, it appeared, had overpowered his escort and made a getaway dressed in German uniform. He had escaped from the lavatory of an express whilst the train was moving. The escort was found locked inside.

"Was he a Major?" asked Maushacke, excitedly.

"How on earth did you know that?" demanded the surprised Meyer. "As a matter of fact he was a Major in the Royal Flying Corps."

"So he did it after all," shouted Maushacke, slapping his thigh, "and I'll bet he left his boots behind."

Meyer regarded him with deep suspicion, while the rest of us laughed until our sides ached.

SOMETIMES we flew alone, sometimes in flight formation, but we flew every day. And nearly every time we went up there was an air battle.

On March 28th, 1918, I was flying in company with Gussmann on a patrol flight above Albert. It was afternoon and the sun was already sinking in the west. Its glaring rays tortured our eyes, and from time to time we had to shade them with our hands in order to see whether any enemy 'planes had appeared over the horizon. Surprise attacks were not at all welcome. Guynemer's tragic death had been a lesson taken to heart along the whole front.

Suddenly I spotted an English 'plane above us. He made a dive at Gussmann, who turned and then dived. Three hundred feet lower down I saw them struggling for the advantage of position and looked for an opportunity of attacking the Briton without hitting Gussmann.

Just then I caught sight of a second enemy 'plane, which opened fire at me from a distance of about two hundred and fifty feet. It was impossible to get out of the way, and so I flew straight for him. *Tack-tack-tack*, went my machine-gun; and *tack-tack-tack*, came his reply.

Only sixty feet separated us. It looked

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as though at any moment we should ram each other. A quick movement and he passed just above my head. I could feel the draught of his propeller and smell the oil fumes from his engine.

I went into a turn. "This is where the roundabouts begin," I thought. But my opponent had also about-turned, and now we were rushing at each other again, shooting furiously, in a manner which reminded me of the old-time tournament riders charging at each other with lances. This time it was I who pulled up at the last moment and went over his head.

Again we turned. Again I saw him directly in front of me. We opened fire again, the thin, white wisps of smoke from the tracer bullets hanging in the air. His wheels almost touched my top wing as he flew above me. I saw, in black letters, painted on the fuselage, the number "8224."

For the fourth time we faced each other. I felt my hands grow damp. Opposing me was a man fighting the battle of his life. It was either he or I—only one of us would be left—there was no alternative.

We turned for the fifth time. My nerves were beginning to feel the strain, but my head was still cool and clear. I felt that the decisive moment had come. I took him in the centre of my sights and flew straight at him. I was determined not to budge a single inch from my course.

A memory flashed through my mind of something I witnessed at Lens. An air battle was in progress in which two machines hurled themselves at each other and crashed head-on. The fuselages, masses of tangled metal, plunged towards the earth. The wings flew on for a bit and then commenced their downward course.

We rushed at each other like two enraged bulls. If he kept his nerve we were both lost.

Suddenly he slightly altered course as though to fly past me. And in that moment I let him have a burst from my Spandau. His machine stalled, turned on to its back, and plummeted earthwards, to fall, at last, into a giant shell-hole. Fountains of earth and smoke shot into the air. . . . I circled the place where he

fell. Down below men in field-grey uniforms waved and shouted to me.

I flew back to the aerodrome, my skin soaked in perspiration and my nerves in a desperately excited state. At the same time I felt a dull, persistent pain in my ears.

I had made it a rule never to let myself worry about the men I shot down. He who fights should not look at the wounds he inflicts. But, on this particular occasion, I felt an irresistible desire to know who my opponent had been.

Towards evening, in the dusk, I made my way to the scene of his crash. A field-dressing station stood quite close to the spot where he had fallen and I assumed that he had been taken there.

I asked to see the M.O., and when he came his white coat had an uncanny appearance in the hard light of the carbide lamp. My opponent, he said, had been shot through the head: his death was instantaneous. The doctor handed me his wallet.

On a visiting-card I read his name. He was a Canadian lieutenant in the Royal Flying Corps. Also in the wallet were a picture of an elderly woman and a letter. It said: "*Don't be too reckless. Think of Father and me.*"

A hospital orderly brought me the number of his aeroplane, which he had cut out of the wreckage. It was covered with little spots of blood.

I drove back to my unit. Somehow one had to try and get rid of the thought that a mother wept for every man one shot down.

IN the days that followed the pain in my ears grew steadily worse. It felt as though someone were working on the inside of my skull with a gimlet and chisel! But I kept on flying, and on April 16th I brought down another machine. It was a Sopwith Camel that I singled out from among an enemy squadron. This victory marked my twenty-fourth successful engagement.

When I landed from the fight the pain in my ears was so intense that I could hardly crawl. Richthofen was on the 'drome, but I walked past him, hardly knowing what I was doing, and omitted to salute.

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Entering the squadron-office I enquired for the first-aid man, as there was no doctor attached to our unit. The orderly was likeable enough, but I do not think he knew very much about his job. He prodded my ear with a number of instruments, until I had an idea that he was trying to saw my head off. Finally he announced: "The base of your ear is a mass of pus."

The door opened and Richthofen walked in. "What's wrong with you, Udet?" he asked. The first-aid man explained.

*(Another Long Instalment of this Vivid Autobiography will be
Published Next Month)*

The Rittmeister slapped my shoulder. "You're for leave, Udet," he announced.

I protested. "It'll probably pass off." But Richthofen immediately cut me short: "You'll travel to-morrow; you're no use to us until you're fit again."

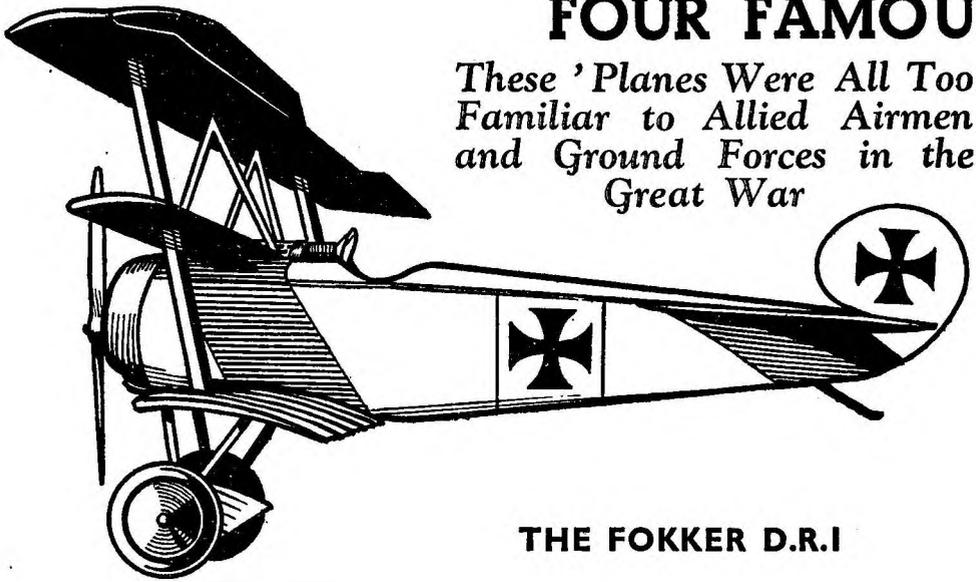
On the following morning I left the aerodrome, and Richthofen himself came to escort me to the old two-seater which was to convey me back to the base. As we took-off he remained standing on the aerodrome, waving to me with his cap. His fair hair shone in the sun.

ERNST UDET'S VICTORY LOG

Date	Time	Type	Place	Date	Time	Type	Place
1916	Single-Seater Command, Habsheim			1918	No. 4 Flight		
Mar. 18	5.10 p.m.	Farman	Mülhausen	June 6	11.40 a.m.	Spad	S. of Faverolles
				" 7	7.0 p.m.	Spad	E. of Villers-Cotterets
				" 13	5.45 p.m.	Spad	N.E. of Faverolles
				" 14	8.0 p.m.	Spad	N. of St. Pierre Aigle
Oct. 12	3.30 p.m.	Breguet Michelin	Rustenhart	" 23	12.10 a.m.	Breguet	La Ferte Milon
Dec. 24	11.0 a.m.	Caudron	Oberspach	" 23	8.15 p.m.	Breguet	Nr. Crouy
1917				" 24	10.0 a.m.	Breguet	S.E. of Montigny
Feb. 20	Noon	Nieuport	Aspach	" 25	6.45 p.m.	Spad	Longpont
Apl. 24	7.30 p.m.	Nieuport	Chavignon	" 25	6.45 p.m.	Spad	Chavigny-Ferme
May 5	7.30 p.m.	Spad	Viller Forest	" 30	8.0 p.m.	Spad	Faverolles
				July 1	11.45 a.m.	Breguet	Pierrefont-Mortefontaine
				" 1	8.55 p.m.	Spad	E. of Faverolles
Aug. 15	10.25 a.m.	Sopwith	Pont à Vendin	" 2	8.15 a.m.	Nieuport	Bezu St. Germain
" 14	8.30 p.m.	Bristol	Lens	" 3	8.25 a.m.	Spad	E. of Laversine
" 21	8.45 a.m.	D.H.4	Ascq, S. of Lille	Aug. 1	9.30 a.m.	Nieuport	N.E. of Cramaille
Sept. 17	7.30 a.m.	D.H.5	Izel	" 1	12.15 p.m.	Breguet	N. of Muret-Crouettes
" 24	12.20 p.m.	British	Loos	" 1	8.30 p.m.	Spad	N. of Baugeux
" 28	6.0 p.m.	Camel	W. of Wingles	" 4	8.05 p.m.	Spad	S. of Braisne
" 28	6.0 p.m.	Camel	W. of Wingles	" 8	5.30 p.m.	S.E.5	Fontaine le Cappy
Oct. 18	10.35 a.m.	Camel	Deulement	" 8	6.30 p.m.	S.E.5	S.E. of Barleux
Nov. 28	1.40 p.m.	D.H.5	Paschendaele-Poelcapelle	" 8	8.40 p.m.	Camel	S.E. of Foucaucourt
Dec. 5	2.30 p.m.	S.E.5	Westrosebeeks-Poelcapelle	" 9	4.25 p.m.	Camel	S. of Vauvillers
1918				" 9	9.20 p.m.	Camel	S.E. of Herleville
Jan. 6	4.15 p.m.	Nieuport	Bixschote	" 10	11.30 a.m.	Camel	S. of Marcourt
" 28	4.55 p.m.	Sopwith	Bixschote	" 10	7.45 p.m.	Camel	S. of Fay
" 29	Noon	Bristol	Zillebeke	" 11	10.0 a.m.	D.H.12	Chaulnes
Feb. 12	10.50 a.m.	Camel	Zandvoorde	" 12	11.30 a.m.	S.E.5	Nr. Peronne
				" 14	7.0 p.m.	Bristol Fighter	S. of Vermandovillers
				" 15	5.15 p.m.	Camel	Herleville
Mar. 27	11.50 a.m.	R.E.8	Albert	" 16	10.40 a.m.	Spad	S. of Foucaucourt
" 28	9.10 a.m.	Camel	Albert-Bapaume	" 21	6.30 p.m.	S.E.5	S. of Hebuterne
Apl. 16	2.15 p.m.	Camel	Hamel	" 21	7.15 p.m.	Dolphin	S. of Courcelles
				" 22	8.30 a.m.	Camel	N. of Braie
				" 22	12.30 p.m.	S.E.5	W. of Maricourt
May 31	1.0 p.m.	Breguet	S. of Soissons	Sept. 26	5.10 p.m.	D.H.9	Nr. Montingen
June 2	11.50 a.m.	Breguet	N.W. of Neuilly	" 26	5.20 p.m.	D.H.9	S. of Metz
" 5	Noon	Spad	S. of Buczany				

FOUR FAMOUS

These 'Planes Were All Too Familiar to Allied Airmen and Ground Forces in the Great War



THE FOKKER D.R.I

ONE of the best known of Germany's war-planes, the "Tripehound" was highly esteemed by most of the great German "Aces," and, although it had a nasty habit of shedding its wings in a power dive, many an Allied pilot paid the penalty when trying to out-zoom it.

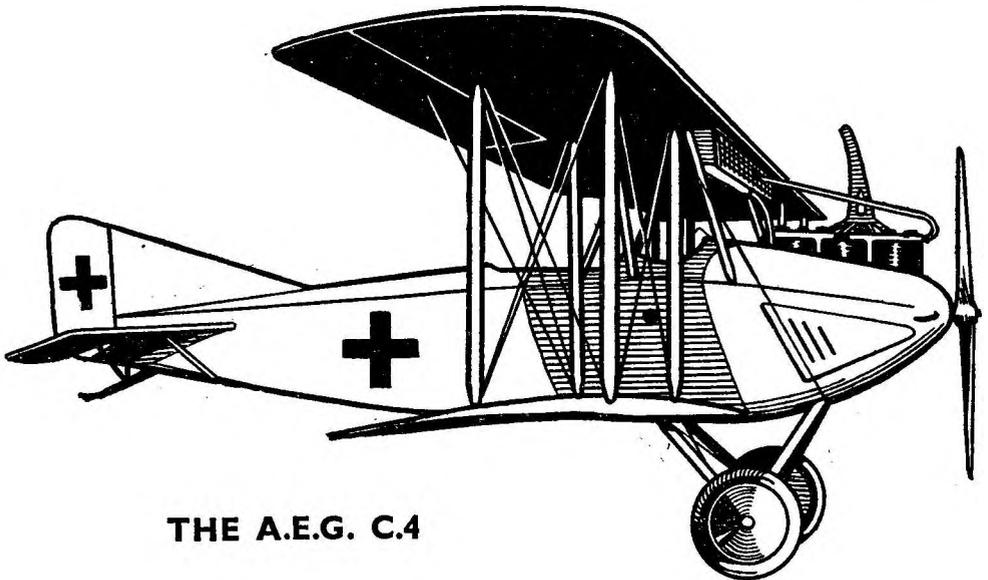
Armed with the usual twin Spandau machine-

guns, this type of machine claimed more than 1,000 victories during the War in the Air. Various types of engines were installed, the most popular being the 110 h.p. Oberursel, which gave the machine a top speed of 121½ m.p.h. at 8,000 ft. Its principal dimensions were a span of 26 ft. 8 in. and a length of 23 ft. 7½ in.

KNOWN as the "Flying Tank," the C.4 was the ideal type of ground-strafer, and, going to the Front late in January, 1918, it did valuable work in this capacity during the great March offensive. The machine was heavily armoured and almost bullet-proof, but its speed of 86 m.p.h. made it an attractive target for A.A. gunners.

The armament arrangements were unique at that time, inasmuch as the pilot was also the bomb-dropper, while the observer operated both forward and rear guns. The front-fire twin

Spandaus were tripped by electrical control from the rear cockpit, the observer also having a Parabellum that could be fired through a floor-tunnel when attacking ground targets or repulsing aerial attacks from below and behind. The principal dimensions of the A.E.G. C.4 were span, 42 ft. 6 in.; length, 23 ft. 7 in.; height, 9 ft. 11½ in. Many types of engines were tried in this machine, the most successful being the Mercedes 180 h.p. and the 200 h.p. Benz.



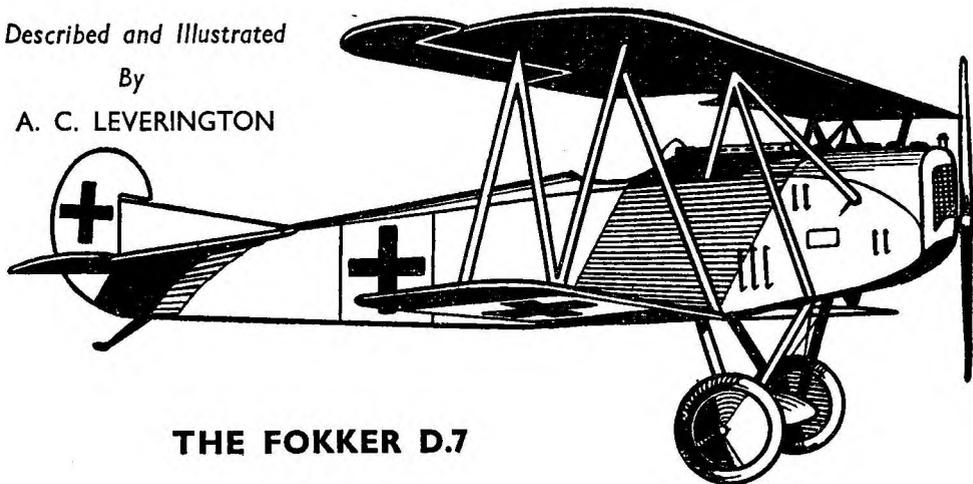
THE A.E.G. C.4

WAR BIRDS OF GERMANY

Described and Illustrated

By

A. C. LEVERINGTON



THE FOKKER D.7

WINNER of a great single-seater fighter contest held in Germany in January, 1918, the Fokker D.7 was ordered in large numbers for the re-equipment of the Imperial Air Service, and proved so successful that it very nearly enabled Germany to win supremacy of the air. Powered with a 160 h.p. Mercedes engine, it had a top speed of 119 m.p.h. Subsequently, a 185 h.p. B.M.W. engine raised the speed to 124 m.p.h., and finally a 200 h.p. Mercedes was used, giving a top speed

of 135 m.p.h.

The machine was highly manoeuvrable, though somewhat tricky to land owing to its rather high stalling speed.

Chief dimensions were span, 27 ft. 5½ in. ; length, 22 ft. 11 in. ; height, 9 ft. 3 in. ; chord, 5 ft. 3 in. Incidentally, several Fokker D.7's are still in service in Holland and Switzerland, whilst one American film studio has a fleet of twelve of these machines for stunt flying purposes.

THE HALBERSTADT C.L.2

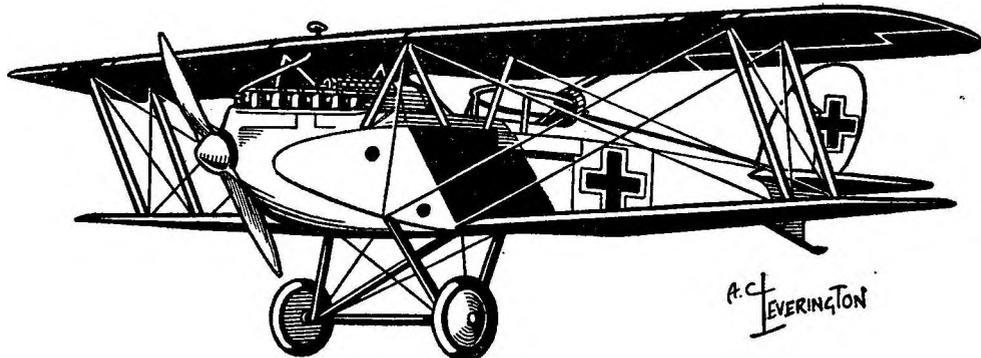
DESIGNED primarily for trench "strafing" and low-flying attacks on ground targets, the Halberstadt C.L.2 was protected against rifle and machine-gun fire by thin steel plating on the underside of its fuselage.

Owing to the nature of its duties, its best performance was given low down, and at heights under 500 ft. it could attain a top speed of about 97 m.p.h. with its 180 h.p. Mercedes engine. Though performance deteriorated with height, it could reach 10,000 ft. within 24½ minutes and had

a service ceiling of 13,850 ft.

The pilot was armed with a single forward-firing Spandau, while his observer had a Parabellum on a movable mounting. The observer's equipment also included bomb-toggles, sacks full of hand-grenades, numerous signal lights—and a camera with which to occupy his leisure moments.

The chief dimensions of the C.L.2 were a span of 35 ft. 3½ in., a length of 24 ft. and a height of 10 ft. 6½ in.



THE AIRSHIP ALIBI

An Aeroplane that Flew Backwards was the Strange Clue that Provided Flight Lieutenant Kinley with the Missing Link Between the Mysterious Disappearance of a Lone Flier and the Invisible Death that Lurked in the Night Skies Above the Grim Peaks of the Dolomites

By

CAPTAIN J. E. GURDON, D.F.C.

CHAPTER I

A Lone Flier Crashes

BECAUSE England-Australia flights no longer rank as sensational, and anyway Bill Lindsay's name was almost unknown to the general public, the evening papers devoted barely half a column apiece to his crash.

It was Tony Carew who brought the news to the Kensington flat which he shared with Kinley. Silently he handed him a paper folded at the middle page, and in silence waited until he had read the report to its end. Kinley's lean face seemed leaner still as he laid aside his pipe and put the paper down, for Lindsay was one of his oldest friends.

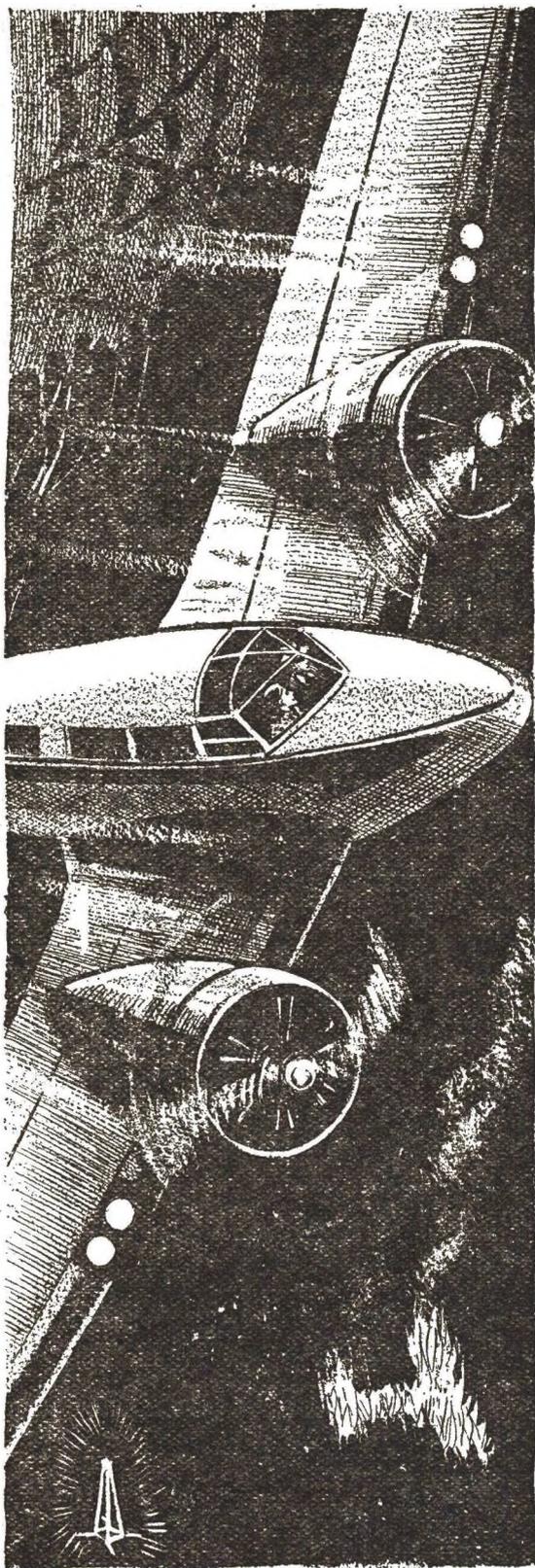
"Fog — night — the side of a mountain—finish!" he sighed. "Well, it was quick, anyway. I don't suppose he knew what was happening."

Tony made a gesture of finality.

"It must have been the very devil of a smash," he agreed. "The machine was burnt to a cinder, and they haven't even found his body yet."

"So I see. It's grim country, that stretch between Innsbruck and Trieste, particularly where you have to cross the Dolomites."

Abruptly he broke off, snatching up the paper again.



They were flung against the wall of the cabin as the machine side-slipped hideously with racing engines.

THE AIRSHIP ALIBI

"Odd," he mused. "Bill crashed north-east of Lienz. Now what the dickens was he doing up there? It's some miles off his course."

"Lost his bearings, I suppose. It was a foggy night and——"

"Bunkum! Bill was just about the finest navigator I've ever met in my life. Besides, there are beacons now along the whole route from Frankfurt down the Dalmatian coast to Scutari, and then across to Stamboul."

"Oh!" Tony seemed taken aback. "I didn't know that."

There was a gleam of amusement in Kinley's eyes as he rose, fetched a large-scale map from a shelf, and spread it out upon the table. Catching that sardonic glance Tony blushed.

For a month past he had been in the throes of one of his frequent but inconclusive love-affairs, and at such times he lived in a world of his own, scarcely conscious of what might be happening around him.

"Of late your interests have been centred elsewhere," murmured Kinley, flattening out the map with practised fingers. "You can, however, take it from me that the night-flying ground organisation of Pan-European Airways has been partially operating for the last ten days. And a very efficient organisation it's going to be, too. Now then, let's see."

A finger moved slowly down the section covering Bavaria, Salzburg, and Carinthia, pausing now and then to point out a little green circle or red triangle.

"The circles," explained Kinley, "show the places where directional radio beams will be sent out very shortly. The red triangles are light beacons already working."

Still pink about the ears, Tony leaned over his shoulder.

"Looks a pretty good show to me," he remarked. "Same as the American system, isn't it?"

"It will be as soon as the beams get going. Meanwhile, the beacons seem to be doing well. That's why I can't imagine how Bill went astray. He not

only had his ordinary navigating instruments, but there were all these lights to show him the way. They're only twenty miles apart, and each gives a distinctive signal followed by a red flash. Most of them are automatic, perched on the top of mountains or in the middle of forests. They light themselves up at dusk and put themselves out at daylight. Dash it all, man, Bill should have found his way along that route as easily as you find your way to the nearest pub in a strange town!"

Tony ignored the comparison.

"It was foggy," he persisted. "He simply must have been lost. There's no other explanation."

FOR many seconds Kinley did not reply but stared down at the map through narrowed eyes, while Tony watched him curiously. It was an expression which he had often seen since the day when Kinley finally laid aside his duties as a flight lieutenant, and left the Royal Air Force to serve the Government in ways more intimate and dangerous. Well enough did Tony know its portent. Kinley had picked up a scent, faint, maybe, and elusive, yet of a tang that aroused his hunting instincts.

"There's no other explanation?" he echoed thoughtfully. "I wonder! It seems to me there are a goodish few prickly points for that same explanation to cover. It's not only got to account for the fact that a chap with eyes like a hawk was behaving like a bat, it's also got to give a sound and watertight reason for the crash itself. What pulled him down so low that he bumped a precipice or something? Can you answer that one?"

"Perhaps," suggested Tony, "he was looking for landmarks."

Kinley grunted with impatience.

"Bill wasn't a fool," he retorted; "and only fools go nosing round mountains in the dark!"

"Perhaps he ran out of juice."

"Is that likely when he was carrying enough to take him on to Stamboul?"

"What about engine failure?"

"Have you ever known a Gloucester

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'Lion' to conk? They don't. Bill's machine was a 'Wanderer' fitted with two, and one of them alone will keep her in the air. Do you believe for one moment that both those engines packed up so suddenly that a man of Bill's ability couldn't avoid charging a cliff?"

Tony scratched his head.

"Put that way," he allowed, "it certainly does sound a bit far-fetched. Do you think, though, it's possible they were simply running badly, and that he was forced down by ice forming on the wings?"

"Hm. We'll check up on that."

He reached for the telephone and dialled a number.

"Wash out," he reported some minutes later. "Air Ministry swears that the temperature over Central Europe was well up to summer average, also that the patch of fog which Bill flew into, although decidedly bad, was a local affair—a more or less permanent fixture that sits down on those particular valleys four nights out of five at this time of year. A few miles farther east the weather was so clear that the "Graf Zeppelin" paid a sort of state visit to Vienna, and was ambling about over the city for an hour or more. No, Tony, the more I think about this crash the more convinced I am that it needs looking into. . . . Did you ever run across Schreck?"

"The Viennese sleuth who worked with you on that smuggling case? No, I never met him. He was a bit before my time at this game. Why? D'you think he might give us a line?"

"It's worth trying, anyway. Schreck's got the keenest nose in Europe, and if there's the faintest whiff of a scent he'll follow it home if it takes him the rest of his life. He's retired now and living near Salzburg. Only a little while back I got a letter from him bemoaning a dull life and asking me to roll along some time. I think we'll flip across to-night and see him. There's just time to get the special visas through if we hurry. Ring up Heston, will you, while I pack a spot of food, and ask them to have the Envoy filled up for long distance

non-stop? Gosh, I wonder—I more than wonder—I believe!"

Tony eyed him with bewildered concern.

"I do wish," he complained, "that you'd try not to gibber! What is it that you wonder and believe and all the rest of it!"

"I believe," answered Kinley deliberately, "that there's been some very dirty work somewhere."

CHAPTER II

The Mysterious Mr. Burrian

AS they sat at Otto Schreck's breakfast-table on the following morning, Tony realised that their host shared his own lack of faith in Kinley's suspicions. Small, yet almost aggressively military and erect, he listened with the most scrupulous attention while slowly shaking a close-cropped head in silent disagreement.

"Surely, my dear Oberleutnant," he protested at last, "surely you are barking up der wrong gum pole that isn't there! Surely you have nothing on which to progress but a haunch?"

A fleeting smile lit up Kinley's tired features. He had spent the night alternately piloting through driving rain and dealing with a dreary sequence of argumentative frontier officials.

"No, Herr Schreck," he returned, "I am not relying altogether on a hunch. I'll grant you that there's mighty little positive evidence to go on, but——" He grinned slowly. "Let me put it this way. Suppose someone came to me and said, 'Herr Schreck, of the Vienna Central Criminal Bureau, was recently made the victim of a confidence trick in his own office, and on his way home that night a common pick-pocket got away with both his watch and wallet.' Supposing somebody told me that—what would you expect me to do about it?"

The crockery jumped convulsively as Schreck banged the table.

"I should expect you to call him a domned liar," he roared, "und give him a ponch on der coco!"

THE AIRSHIP ALIBI

"But," insisted Kinley, "let us now suppose that he produced indisputable evidence that those events had occurred. What then?"

The Austrian opened his mouth to speak but checked himself, leaning forward on his elbows.

"So!" he breathed. "I begin to understand. If you knew I really had been so foolish you would also know I had been made drunk, or dugged, or mad. Und because your friend did something which, for him, was equally foolish, you smell fishes."

He pursed up his lips and smacked them appreciatively.

"It is a good argument," he grunted. "But who do you think could have done such things? Und why should they have done them?"

Kinley shrugged.

"I'll agree," he admitted, "that the whole thing sounds fantastic. So far as I know Lindsay hadn't an enemy in the world, and who but a personal enemy would want to interfere with an inoffensive Australian flying home? All the same the plain fact remains that he oughtn't to have crashed at all, and that he certainly had no business to crash where he did."

"Very good. Now what do you want me to do?"

"I want you to vouch for Carew and myself to the authorities, and ask them if we may use our machine from your field. After that—if it isn't expecting too much—I want permission for us to visit the scene of the accident, examine the wreckage, and poke about generally."

Like a marionette jerked by a string Schreck leaped to his feet.

"It shall be done," he promised, "and I will drive you myself in my auto. Herr Oberleutnant, I am grateful. I have been getting lazy und fat. I need to get my teeth into something. I will get my teeth into your haunch."

"Er—thanks awfully," murmured Kinley.

IN spite of Schreck's energy and impassioned wrangling, the formalities concerning their machine and its licence

proved so complicated that it was evening before the three were able to leave Salzburg.

"So!" grunted the little man, viciously letting in his clutch. "So!" He changed gear. "So—und—so! Now we are off! Fools, chomps, und coco-nuts! They are jealous, see you, because I was bigger than ever they can be. Und now that I am civilian they think they order me about und make me mad! *Ach!*"

"If it hadn't been for you," Kinley pointed out tactfully, "we should never have got clear at all. Anyway, there wouldn't have been time to do much to-day, and it's top-hole evening for a drive. How far is it?"

"One hundred und twenty kilometres. We will stop then und sleep in a good little hotel I know. It is quite close to der Schloss. To-morrow early we go on up und call upon Herr Burrian."

"Who's he?"

"You do not know his name? That is not strange, perhaps, for England is a long way off. I can assure you, though, that in Mittel Europe there are many men who talk about Herr Burrian. *Ja*, und think about him, too!"

"Why? What is he? A politician?"

"No, no. Politics, so he says, do not interest him. He is a financier, a millionaire. At least," added Schreck cautiously, "he is said to be a millionaire."

In some dim cranny of Kinley's mind a quick thought stirred, then was lost, leaving behind a ripple of vague excitement.

"You mean," he inquired, "that Herr Burrian may not be quite so solid as he looks?"

The military shoulders hunched expressively.

"*Pouf!* Who knows? They come und they go, these millionaires. They make their millions und ruin their thousands, then—*zut!*—a bullet in der brain. Perhaps Burrian is like that. Perhaps, again, he is all that he claims to be. Time will show. I do not know und I care less."

Although still vague the ripple of

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excitement rose and spread.

"Was it on this man's property that Lindsay crashed?"

"At Schloss Kapps, yes. But it does not belong to him. He is der tenant und he only came one month, two months ago."

From the back of the car Tony called out in sudden interest.

"Look! There's one of the beacons. Up there on that crag."

Across the valley which the road now skirted a jagged coxcomb of crags loomed grey and rose against a sky already dimming into night. Like a star on the topmost pinnacle a white light shone, vanished, shone again, then changed to a clear red glow that lasted several seconds before being quenched like a blown flame.

"A beacon, yes," rumbled Schreck. "One of der 'blazing trail across Europa.' To-night it shines clear, but on der night before last, when your poor friend was killed, I passed this way und scarcely could see it. Of what use are these beacons, then, if they only serve in fair weather?"

"Hardly that," laughed Kinley. "Of course, if the weather's exceptionally foul they're not much use, but those rays will penetrate a good long way through any ordinary fog. The reason why it seemed so dim to you was that you were looking up at it from the ground where the fog was thickest. Most of the light is thrown upwards and outwards, and if you had been in the air you would probably have been able to see it for miles."

"All der same," Schreck objected, "the fog was so very bad that der night mail-plane from Munich dared not venture through until nearly dawn. If your friend had been equally discreet no doubt he would still live. . . . Herr Oberleutnant, really I do beg of you to be more careful! If you seize my arm so sudden you will have der auto off der road und down der brecipice!"

IN moments of agitation Schreck's accent always became more markedly national. Kinley apologised.

"I'm sorry. It was a fool thing to do, but you gave me an idea like a kick from a horse. Listen. Do you know any man in the post-office who would give you special information about the mails that 'plane was carrying?"

"Certainly," assented Schreck with dignity. "I may only be a civilian, but I still have what your English police call 'sources of information.'"

"Good man! Then d'you think we could stop at the next telephone and get in touch with your—er—source, and ask him to have some information wired in code to the place where we are going to spend the night?"

Schreck flickered a speculative side-long glance at his companion, then nodded towards the lights of a village twinkling a mile ahead.

"I telephone from there," he announced with a throaty chuckle. "I read your thoughts, my friend, und I smell der trail grows hotter. You wish to know, of course, if der mails were specially valuable und——"

"And I want to know," interrupted Tony very clearly, "how far the nearest beacons are from this man Burrian's den. I come from Cornwall, Herr Schreck."

The Austrian cocked a puzzled eye at Kinley.

"What does he say?"

"He means that he's jumped a stage ahead of us," interpreted Kinley, "and I shouldn't be surprised if he's landed on both feet."

"I still don't onderstand."

"That's my fault. The explanation was a trifle oblique, I'm afraid. It's like this. Cornwall, which is the part of England that Carew comes from, has a notoriously dangerous coast, and in days gone by some of the inhabitants used deliberately to lure ships on to the rocks by faking navigation lights. Then, of course, they looted the wrecks. Carew's idea is that the same sort of game might quite easily be played with these beacons. That's the scheme, isn't it, Tony?"

"Yes. What's more——"

The rest of the sentence was drowned

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by thunderous guffaws. Otto Schreck was giving expression to amusement.

"Ach, mein friends, mein friends," he boomed, "you will be the death of me! Never have I run upon such haunches! Give you a little bit of thread und—*pouf!*—you have spun a net to catch half der crooks in Europe! You hear of an aeroplane accident, und you do not think it should have happened. *So—foul play!* You hear of a mail-'plane held up by fog. *So—der 'plane is full of treasure und der has been dirty work at der cross-roads!* You hear of a rich man who may not be so rich as he seems. *So—he monkeys with der beacons in order to wreck der mail-'plane!* *Wunderbar! Prachtvoll! Kolossal!*"

He was still laughing as he pulled the big car to a standstill outside the iron gates of a house half hidden by trees on the outskirts of the village. Huffily silent, Tony watched him climb to the ground. Schreck beamed upon him and tapped his shoulder affectionately.

"Do not look so fallen in der crest," he chuckled. "We may be honing wild geese's nests, but aren't we having lovely fon? Now will you two please wait here while I 'phone? This is der village pastor's house und he is an old friend of mine, but with strangers he will talk, talk, talk! If I take you in we have to stop der night. Myself alone I shall not be long. While I am gone you try to think of more people to arrest!"

NEITHER spoke as they watched the jerky little figure disappear through the iron gates, then Kinley sighed irritably.

"Sorry, Tony," he growled. "Afraid I've let you in for helping me to cause us both to make infernal asses of ourselves."

"Say that again," begged Tony. "I didn't quite catch the last few pages."

Tired by thirty-six sleepless hours, depressed by the inevitable reaction of damped spirits, Kinley refused even to smile.

"Oh, you follow all right," he declared bitterly. "You know as well as

I do that I'm a prize nincompoop and you've just begun being another. I'm glad, though, that Schreck had the decency to laugh here and now instead of letting us wander further up the garden. Mail-'planes, millionaires, Cornish wreckers! Did you ever hear such piffle? Sounds like something out of a Sunday paper! What you and I need——"

"Is something long and strong with not too much soda in it," finished Tony. "Stop grouching, you old croaker, and try to recapture a spot of that first fine careless rapture. Things are just beginning to hum instead of petering out. I'll freely confess that I thought you were nuts when you insisted on rushing over here last night, but since hearing about Brother Burrian I'm prepared to lay a fiver to a farthing that we're on to something hot."

"Just because Schreck says there are rumours——"

With all the perversity of the overwrought, Kinley was bent upon demolishing those very theories which but a short while before he had been cherishing. Tony interrupted sententiously.

"There's never smoke without fire," he quoted. "Nor do you ever find a whole string of coincidences that aren't joined together somehow. Cause and effect, I mean. You said yourself there was something very fishy about the why and the where of Bill's crash. Next thing we observe is an equally fishy financier actually on the premises. That same financier lives within a few miles of the beacon route. It was a foggy night, and a valuable mail-'plane was due over about the same time that Bill appeared——"

"How do you know it was valuable and the time it was due?"

Tony took the objection without turning a hair.

"I don't yet," he returned calmly, "but I'll lay a hundred to one that Schreck comes back and tells us I'm right. That being so our proper course is obvious."

"Glad to hear it!"

"We shall," proceeded Tony, quite

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unruffled, "get in touch with this Burrian person, kid him into believing that we're surveying the route before flying over with the Rajah of Bhong's jewels, perform the flight, and so induce him to play the same trick on us as he played on Bill. He's bound to fall for it since he bagged the wrong bird last time and must be getting desperate. Ah—here comes Schreck."

The little man appeared running, shouting farewells to a corpulent shadow that panted in his wake.

"So!" he puffed, as the car sped away. "The only way to stop him talking was to make him lose his breath. He wanted to light a lantern and show me his asparagus beds! A saintly man! . . . Well, my friends, your haunches are not so bad."

"Aha!" gloated Tony.

"Not so bad," repeated Schreck. "But also not so good. About der mail-'plane I have found nothing interesting. She carried der ordinary mails. That is all. But I find something that is interesting. Porlezza, the great merchant of Trieste, had engaged an aeroplane to fly at der same time, but did not do so because of der fog. He often flies up und down this route. Now Porlezza, as all der world knows, is der bitterest enemy of Burrian. In fact many say that der Italian will ruin him. It would have been good for Burrian, eh, if his enemy had been killed instead of Herr Lindsay?"

Once again hope and keenness tingled through Kinley's veins. This news put the affair in a completely different light. It might be incredible that any man should seek to wreck a mail-'plane and expect to dispose of the loot; but it by no means passed belief that a desperate adventurer should try to get rid of his rival.

"Motive!" he breathed.

Schreck nodded wisely.

"Quite so, mein friend. Der is motive und to spare. But dere is also a snag. Have patience while I tell you. I telephone a man who once was colleague of mine in der Central Criminal Bureau. His name is Carek, he also is

retired, und he lives at Lienz. As soon as I mention Burrian—not by name, you know, but in a way we both understand—he says 'Oho! Stop! I also am on der game, und I will meet you at your hotel!' Und then he says 'Dammit,' he says, 'I want you to tell me how der blighter can be in two places at once. Last night he was in Vienna.'"

"What's all that mean?" asked Kinley.

"I do not know. I do not even know why Carek is on der game, or what der game is. But I do know that if Burrian was in Vienna he could not have monkeyed with der beacon, und he would not put himself into der power of another man by employing him to do it alone. So that little haunch, Herr Ober Leutnant, is coming ungommed. Now let us be silent, if you please. I have thoughts to think."

CHAPTER III

The Aeroplane that Flew Backwards

WHEN they pulled up at a lonely roadside inn an hour later, an immensely fat man lumbered forward to greet them, and led the way to a private room. This man, whom Schreck introduced as Anton Carek, shook the Englishmen's hands in a bear-like grip, made sure that all were well supplied with wine, then addressed his colleague in a torrent of sibilant Hungarian, the while they pored together over a roll of photographic negatives.

Schreck was smacking his lips delightedly as the torrent ceased.

"My friend has a long tale to tell," he announced, "but I will be short in telling it. Briefly, then, we may be sure that Herr Burrian is getting near the end of his rope. He is, in fact, doing desperate und dangerous tricks. His last trick is clever. He sends a messenger to his Bank in Vienna with a cheque for thirty thousand pounds und a letter to authorise payment. Der letter und cheque seem genuine und der Bank pay up. It is der last money he has in his account.

"A little afterwards Burrian tele-

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phones der Bank to say he is presenting a big cheque. Der Bank reply der cheque is for thirty thousand pounds und has already been paid. Burrian raves und says it is a forgery. He has never signed der cheque, nor sent der messenger, nor seen der money. Der messenger is arrested. He swears Burrian gave him der cheque at Schloss Kapps und that he went back to Schloss Kapps with der money. Burrian swears he was in Vienna der whole time und can prove it. But der Bank believe Burrian lies, und send Herr Carek to inquire. Burrian is nice und friendly, und shows him der proof. Here it is."

He handed over the roll of films to Kinley and Tony, who spread it out between them.

"Observe der glossy side," he said, "because that is most important. It shows der order in which der pictures were taken. They were all taken by Burrian's secretary with a lens und film very good for night photographs.

"Do not worry about der first three. Der shutter had stuck und they are wash-out. But look closely at numbers four, five und six. Numbers four und five show pictures of der Graf Zeppelin und an aeroplane in der searchlights when der airship flew over Vienna der night in question. There can be no doubt about them und they fix der time at midnight. So we come to number six. *Ach*, number six! It shows Herr Burrian und a pretty lady. But—" Schreck broke off to emphasise his points with painful jabs in Kinley's ribs—"but that roll of films was taken by der secretary to a newspaper photographer in Vienna to be developed at twenty minutes past twelve. Only twenty minutes after der Zeppelin pictures! Und Burrian is there, as large as life, in full evening dress with a pretty lady! How, then, could he have been at Schloss Kapps to sign cheques und write letters, which is what der messenger says he was doing at midnight?"

"Might have signed the cheque earlier in the day and then have scooted to Vienna," suggested Kinley.

"Impossible. It was from a brand-

new cheque-book, und was sent out with other documents from der Bank at Burrian's request by special messenger in an auto. Der post would have been too late. When der Bank messenger got to der Schloss at eleven o'clock he was told that Burrian had left for Vienna long ago."

"Was he, by gad! Then, if the cheque-book couldn't have reached Burrian before eleven, and if, as this photo shows, he really was in Vienna round about midnight, it looks as though his yarn is true—in which case, of course, the Bank loses the money. What's more—dash it all—if that cheque actually is a forgery, then the man's also got a water-tight alibi in the matter of the crash. Hmmm. Let me have a long, lingering look at those airship pictures. No chance of their being faked, I suppose?"

"None whatever. They have been examined by an expert."

"In that case. Oh, my hat! . . . Oh, glory, glory!"

"WHAT is it? What do you see?" Schreck was hopping from foot to foot. The Hungarian's pendulous jowls glistened and quivered. Of the four in the room only Kinley seemed unmoved, although his eyes were narrowed in the manner which Tony knew.

"Have you ever seen an aeroplane flying backwards?" he asked. "If you haven't, and if, like me, you don't believe in it, this alibi of Burrian's bursts with a bang. Look here."

He held the strip of film up to the light, the glossy side towards them, while the others clustered round.

"That shows the order of exposure from one to six, doesn't it? The first three are duds because the shutter jammed or something. The fourth shows the Zeppelin with an aeroplane circling towards her. The fifth also shows the ship and the same machine. But"—Kinley paused to chuckle joyously—"but the aeroplane is farther away in number five than it was in number four! Which means either that the machine was flying backwards, or else

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that those exposures were made in reverse order."

"Gott!" spluttered Schreck. "It is impossible!"

The chuckle changed to laughter.

"Not a bit. What Burrian did was to take an unexposed roll and re-wind it on to another spool. That spool he loaded into the camera with the result that number six came up for exposure first. On number six he had a picture taken of himself and his lady friend. That exposure, of course, may have been made at any time. Someone then goes to Vienna, takes a couple of snaps of the Zeppelin to fix the time, fogs the remaining three, and re-winds the whole outfit back on to the original spool. The exposures are now in their original and correct order, and off he buzzes to a photographer who'll naturally swear that Burrian must have been photographed in Vienna some time between midnight and twenty past. Tony, old scout?"

"Hello."

"This is where we try your Rajah of Bhong stunt."

"Trap the brute, you mean?"

"Yes—though the bait'll be something he values even more than loot. It's his liberty or life. Just a few more minutes, Herr Schreck. I'm sorry to be so long-winded, but I've got an idea."

"A haunch," corrected Schreck.

"Just as you like, but the point is this. You can, of course, rope Burrian in on the strength of that faked film alone. But if you do, you'll only get him on a charge of fraud. You mustn't forget, though, we have reason to believe he's also killed a man. Isn't it more than likely that the alibi he worked out for his bank fraud was also meant to cover his attempt on Porlezza—the attempt which caught Lindsay by mistake in the fog? Don't you believe that a man capable of switching those photos would also have the brains and nerve to fake a light beacon?"

"Agreed," grunted Schreck. "What then?"

"We've got to make him give himself

away, and we've got to do it at once. If you arrest him now the chance is gone for good. But if we force him to try the same trick, we've got him."

"So! Good! Und what is der trick?"

"That's what we've got to find out."

"How?"

Kinley glanced at his watch.

"It is now just after ten. We can get back to Salzburg by twelve. Carew and I will be over here in our machine by one o'clock. Meanwhile, Herr Carek gets his agents to work. It's the sort of game that you fellows play better than anyone in the world. You've got to get Burrian rattled—panic-stricken—and give him no time to think. You've got to get an agent in touch with him and convince him that whatever he's heard about Porlezza's movements is all wrong. Porlezza, you'll tell him, has actually got hold of these photographs and has spotted the fake. He's taking them down to Trieste to instruct the police there. It would be the natural thing to do because that's the town where he has most influence. Make Burrian believe that his pet aversion will be flying over here at one o'clock in a machine carrying double navigation lights on the wings—that'll identify us—and, as sure as the Lord made little apples, he'll have a shot at bringing him down. Meanwhile, you can station men to watch what he does, and as soon as he makes his break you jump on him. Carew and I will carry on and meet you at the police bureau in Vienna."

Schreck caressed his chin between stubby fingers.

"So!" he nodded. "It can of course be done. But what will happen to you in der air?"

"Haven't the faintest idea," said Kinley.

CHAPTER IV

The Beacon of Death

IN the Envoy's cabin the silence was unbroken except by a throbbing drone from the engines. Kinley hummed happily to himself as he sat at the

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controls, hands and feet moving with expert negligence, a practised eye flitting constantly from one illuminated instrument to another. Sitting beside him Tony alternately scrutinised a map and peered through the glass-panelled sides.

"That's the fifth beacon since Salzburg," he said, pointing to a glowing Neon light ahead. "It must be the sixth one that Burrian is faking, and it ought to appear about five points east of the course. The distinctive signal is two long flashes, both white, then a short one followed by the red."

"Answer correct. Full marks. D'you know," continued Kinley chattily, "I have a considerable respect for Brother Burrian? No matter how much a pilot trusts to his instruments he's bound to trust a light even more, particularly when there's only a few points difference. And how sweetly easy it is to rig up a light on top of a lonely old castle and screen it so that it can't be seen from the ground! Yes, I distinctly admire Comrade Burrian."

"I'd distinctly admire you more if you'd attend to your job," grumbled Tony.

"Tut tut! Nervy? Then calm yourself by considering that very neat little alibi of his. If only he'd been content with one exposure, or if only there hadn't been an interfering aeroplane snooping round you couldn't have bust it with a sledge-hammer. But I suppose the poor bloke daren't run the risk of taking only one and having it turn out a dud. The fatal error, my dear Watson, the fatal error. D'you know I fancy Burrian must have been reading Einstein? About Time flowing backwards and all that sort of thing, I mean. One might, in fact, call this 'The Case of the Einstein Alibi.' It reminds me of the unfortunate chap in the limerick who 'went out one day in a relative way, and got home the previous night.' Only the other way round, if you follow me."

"I don't. Shut up. There's the light."

Away on the port quarter a white

light flared, twice, then once, and a red glow followed.

"Now," said Kinley, suddenly serious, "we'd better watch our step. I wonder what's the next move."

Apprehensively Tony stared around into the night.

"Perhaps," he suggested, "there's a fighter buzzing round ready to shoot us down."

"Or an Ack-Ack battery waiting to blaze away from a mountain-top? Perhaps. Don't you think, though, that such goings-on might arouse passing comment in the neighbourhood?"

"All the same," Tony pointed out reasonably, "the blighter's got to do something."

"Certainly, certainly. Unless I'm very much mistaken he's beginning to do it now. Look down there."

Not far from the beacon a tiny orange object had appeared against the sombre background of the forest. It was cross-shaped, picked out in flickering flames, and seemed to be smouldering fitfully.

"Good Lord!" gasped Tony. "A burning machine!"

There was a ring of grimness in Kinley's answer.

"Or a bait! That's to lure us down, my son, and could you beat it? What pilot, seeing those flames, would fly on without at least going low in the hope of helping? Keep your eyes skinned, Tony. Something nasty's due to happen any second now, and——"

THE words were wiped from his lips as though by an unseen blow, and Tony was flung against the wall of the cabin as the machine side-slipped hideously with racing engines. Vaguely against the night sky he glimpsed a vast grey sphere, and a fringe of dangling whip-like things that lashed in the gale of their passing.

Something grated and jarred, and the side-slip baulked to be merged with the swirl of a spin. Three times the great wings chopped around, jerkily like a rusted windmill, then the motion ceased with a cracking wrench that shook the machine from stem to skid.

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Once more on an even keel the Envoy thundered onwards. Shakily Tony climbed to his feet.

"What was it?" he whispered.

"Balloon apron," snapped Kinley through clenched teeth. "Like the things they used in the War. Couple of balloons with a cable between 'em and dangling wires. Deadly brutes! Might have guessed it was something of the sort. You can use quite small balloons, too. Inflate or deflate 'em in a few minutes. Half-a-dozen men sufficient, and in country like this no one would ever be any the wiser."

He laughed, but the laughter cracked.

"Close call, that! Only just saw it in time to avoid going in nose on. Lucky for us the side-slip pulled us free. Now how about getting along to Vienna? I feel like a drink!"

OF all the close-packed thrills of the Einstein Alibi none so touched the spirits of Kinley and Tony as the moment when, after hours of weary waiting at the Central Criminal Bureau, Schreck and Carek arrived from Schloss Kapps. The little Austrian bounded into the room like a toy soldier on springs, seized Kinley's hand between both his own, and wrung it until he was hot and breathless.

"Mein friend!" he gasped. "Mein friend! What news! *Ach*, Herr Oberleutnant, what news! We have him. All is well. He is safe!"

Kinley smiled mechanical congratulations. Now that the strain was over he felt utterly worn and limp. His head was singing and the lights of the room swam before his eyes.

"Splendid," he murmured. "I'm glad, and I hope he gets it in the neck. That apron of his was altogether too darned efficient! How many assistants did he have? Did you bag the lot?"

Schreck made a magnificent gesture of brushing aside insignificant trifles.

"*Pouf!* That is nothing. Yes, yes, we took der bags from all. Seven there were, und der two balloons, und der secretary as well as Burrian. But I do not speak of him. He is only a little spud. I speak of your friend—of Herr Lindsay. He is safe! We found him! He is in hospital!"

Kinley fought against a sudden weakness at the knees. Long hours without sleep were taking their toll.

"Eh?" he croaked.

"Herr Lindsay! We have sent him to hospital! He was in der Schloss, hurt but not too badly. He escape der crash und Burrian burn his machine und keep him until he could skip der country. *Ach*, mein friends, how *prachtvoll*, how *kolossal* are your haunches!"

With a dazed but happy grin Kinley caught hold of Tony's arm, then looked round in bewildered fashion for a chair.

"That reminds me," he mumbled. "D'you mind if I sit down?"

IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE :

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The Dramatic Story of a British Pilot's Amazing Adventures in the Aerial Warfare of the Spanish Revolution

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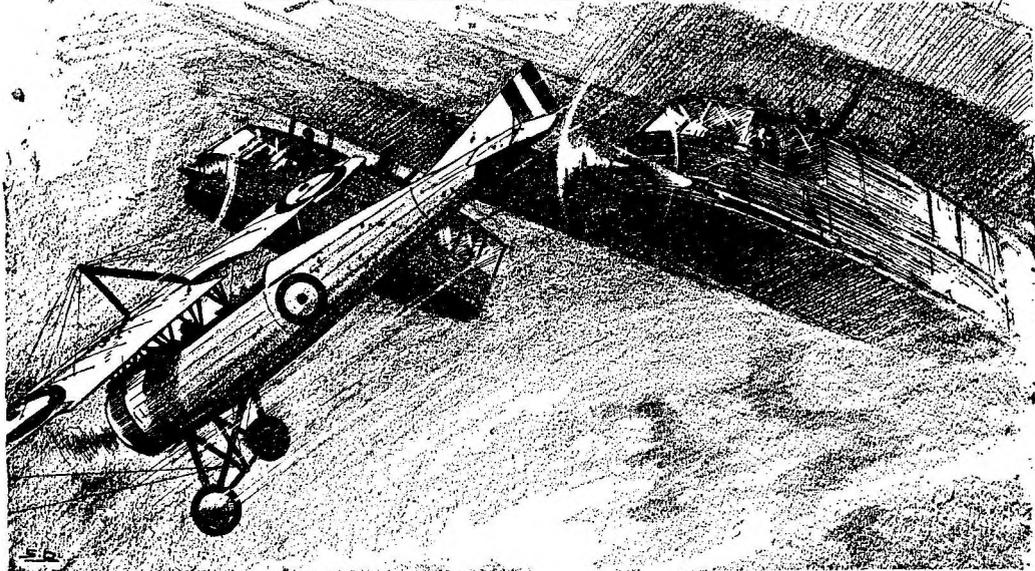
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November Issue

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On Sale, Oct. 9th

THE ZEPPELIN FIGHTERS



Warneford dived his Morane upon the Zeppelin, and was met by a hail of lead from the gondola guns.

The Eventful Story of the Men who Freed Britain's Skies from the Terror That Flew By Night

By A. H. PRITCHARD

TAKE cover! Zeppelin raid!" So rang the cry that, during the grim nights of 1914-1917 sent a tremor through the stoutest of hearts. Experts to-day are liable to scoff at the capabilities of these aerial dreadnoughts, partly due, no doubt, to the numerous tragedies that have resulted from post-war lighter-than-air ventures. Maybe so—but let those same experts remember that they, too, dashed hurriedly for cover when the moonlight brought the war-time raiders over England and death roamed the darkened streets.

Most people are familiar with the record of the various Zeppelin raids on this country, for it is a story that has been told many times, but less well known is the story of the Zeppelin Fighters—that small band of determined men who, by dint of unparalleled bravery

and devotion to duty, freed our skies from the terror that flew by night.

During the early days of the Great War, the War Office had made no provision for defence against aerial attack, and when, on January 19th, 1915, the Z.3 and Z.4 raided Yarmouth and King's Lynn, they gave the "Powers That Be" something to think about. Anti-aircraft guns and one-pounder "pom-poms" began to appear on the roofs of municipal buildings and in the public parks, while the Royal Naval Air Service was ordered to make reprisals in the form of raids on the Zeppelin bases.

Several such raids were carried out, with varying results, but not until May 17th, 1915, were the naval pilots able to engage their mammoth enemies in the air. On this particular date, three Zeppelins, the L.Z.37, 38 and 39

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were sighted off Dunkirk in the early hours of the morning, and nine machines were sent up to intercept them. The honour of making the first aerial attack on a Zeppelin thus fell to Sub-Lieutenant R. A. J. Warneford and Commander Spencer Grey, who attacked the L.Z.39 only to be shaken off when the Zeppelin dropped her water ballast and rose far above the ceiling of their machine. She was not to escape unscathed, however, for over Ostend she was surprised by an Avro piloted by Flight Commander A. W. Bigsworth, who swooped to within twenty feet of her back and dropped four bombs, but failed, as it happened, to set her on fire. Again the L.Z.39 escaped by dropping water ballast, but reports that filtered through from Germany indicated that she had been severely damaged, and an officer and five men had been wounded by bomb splinters—the first casualties inflicted on the Zeppelin Service by British pilots.

At this time, Evere was the main base for Zeppelins raiding England, and it was a dirigible from this station that carried out the first raid on London, when the L.Z.38 bombed the metropolis on the night of May 31st. Incidentally, she was attacked by Second Lieutenant (later Colonel) R. H. Mulock, but again the dropping of water ballast proved her salvation, and to show his contempt of the defence force, Linnarz, her commander, dropped a card inscribed with the words :

" You English ! We have come and will come again soon to kill or cure ! German ! "

THIS insult so roused the ire of the R.N.A.S. pilots, that they decided that Evere required a little of their attention. A deputation therefore took-off on the night of June 7th in the shape of Lieutenant J. P. Wilson and Sub-Lieutenant J. S. Mills, who were to attack Evere, and Lieutenant R. A. J. Warneford, who was to attack the companion base at Bercham St. Agathe.

Arriving safely over Evere, Wilson dropped three bombs, but was rewarded only by a dense cloud of smoke. But Mills had better luck. Swooping low,

in the face of a terrific ground fire, he let all his bombs go down together, and a split second later the sky was lit by the funeral pyre of the L.Z.38 and its shed. One raider would cheek the R.N.A.S. pilots no more.

In the meantime, Warneford had been fighting his way through a heavy mist, and had almost given up hope of ever reaching his objective, when a great silver cigar glided through a swirling cloud of mist and came steadily towards him. Recovering from the momentary shock, he realised that, by a remarkable stroke of good fortune, he had caught the L.Z.37, evidently on her way home after a raid. Calculating his chances, Warneford decided to stalk the dirigible and wait a more favourable opportunity to attack. Over Bruges that opportunity presented itself, and he climbed his Morane towards the Zeppelin, only to be greeted by such a hail of fire from the gondola guns that he was forced to withdraw and plan a new angle of attack.

Climbing to eleven thousand feet, he dived at the broad, gleaming back of the L.Z.37, and, holding his dive until he was less than a hundred feet above it, he laid six 20-lb. bombs dead in line along that same back. With a blinding flash and a terrific roar, the L.Z.37 exploded at once, and the concussion was so great that Warneford's machine was hurled up nearly two hundred feet and turned upside down. By the time he had regained control of his plunging machine, the engine had stopped and a forced landing thirty miles inside enemy territory was inevitable. Once down, he found that the trouble was due to a broken petrol pipe, and in half an hour had repaired the damage and escaped just as a patrol of cavalry came galloping up. The flaming wreckage of the L.Z.37 unfortunately fell on a convent near Ghent, and several nuns were killed. A helmsman of the Zeppelin had a miraculous escape from death, for, as the blazing wreckage fell, he jumped clear and, crashing through the convent roof, landed, unhurt, on a bed.

Warneford received the V.C. for this

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gallant exploit, and ten days later went to France to be decorated with the Croix de Guerre. After the ceremony he took an American war correspondent, a Mr. Needham, for an exhibition flight but, for some unknown reason, the Farman stalled and hurtled to the ground, both Warneford and Needham being killed instantly.

This twofold loss of the L.Z.37 and L.Z.38 was a very serious blow to the German Airship Service, and in order to avoid a repetition of the June 7th raid, they abandoned their Belgian sheds, withdrawing the L.Z.39 to the Russian Front. Still the Zeppelins kept up a series of long-distance raids, and on August 9th the L.12 bombed Dover, but was badly damaged by anti-aircraft fire. Steadily losing gas, she was forced to land in the sea near Ostend, and it was there that she was bombed and wrecked by Flight Commander J. R. Smyth-Piggott. After this, the Zeppelin commanders became more wary and flew at very great heights, with the result that during the next seven months our pilots could only record a few indecisive skirmishes.

The night of March 31st, 1916, however, found seven Zeppelins on their way to England, complete with full loads of steel visiting cards. Over Belgium, two had to return with engine trouble, but the remaining five carried on and unloaded their cargo on Essex. One Zeppelin, the L.13, commanded by Heinrich Mathy, had a narrow escape when an anti-aircraft shell lodged in her rudder without exploding, but, despite her damaged gear, she reached home safely. Her sister ship, the L.15, was not so lucky, for she was attacked by Second Lieutenants C. A. Ridley and A. B. Brandon. By dropping most of her water-ballast, she managed to elude Ridley, but Brandon refused to be shaken off. Over Brentwood he managed to climb above her and scored several hits with small incendiary bombs. Still the L.15 flew on, finally to crash into the sea with a broken back, where, after being fired on by an armed trawler, her crew surrendered.

On April 24th, Lieutenant W. Leefe-Robinson attacked the L.Z.97 and, although she escaped, the force of Leefe-Robinson's fire damaged her so much that she had to abandon the raid.

A Mass Attack on London

ALL this may sound simple enough, but those who may be tempted to think how easy it was for our pilots, in their fast scout machines, to destroy the slow unwieldy Zeppelins, can be quickly disabused.

In the first place, the early Zeppelin fighters seldom had scout machines, or, if they had, the machines were obsolete types. The majority of the Home Defence and R.N.A.S. machines consisted of Maurice Farmans, old Avros, Moranes, with an occasional Short or Bristol Scout thrown in for good measure. On the other hand, the Zeppelins, while not quite so fast as their opponents—the difference being not more than ten to fifteen miles an hour—could climb to immense heights in a few moments and, unless they were caught completely by surprise, could soon leave our pilots "standing still," or gasping for breath in the rarefied air. Then, again, pursuit of the raiders often led them far from land and many were the hair-raising experiences that resulted from forced landings. Take, as an example, the experience of Lieutenant C. J. Freeman.

On August 1st, Freeman was on patrol in a Bristol Scout when two Zeppelins appeared within half a mile of him, and despite the fact that his machine had no machine-guns, he attacked the raiders with hand-grenades. Once above them, Freeman began to toss out hand-grenades as fast as he could pull the pins and one lucky hit damaged one Zeppelin's port propeller. Even as the grenade exploded, a hail of machine-gun bullets smashed Freeman's engine and he was forced to land in the sea. Having no flotation gear, the Bristol soon began to sink, and within an hour only one wing remained clear of the water. The stranded pilot was just casting off his

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cumbersome flying-suit and steeling himself for a desperate swim in the icy water, when a small steamer hove into view and saved him from a watery grave. No, Zeppelin fighting was not so simple as it sounds.

September 2nd saw the German Airship Service launch its greatest offensive, when twelve naval airships and four military types set out to raid England, and it was during the course of this raid that Lieutenant W. Leefe-Robinson won the Victoria Cross for the destruction of the first airship over English soil. With Lieutenants Mackay and Hunt he was returning from a fruitless pursuit of one raider, when, over Edmonton, he sighted the S.L.11 bowling merrily along at 11,500 feet. For ten minutes he poured Brock and Pomeroy incendiary bullets into the great gas-bags until his third attack, delivered within a few hundred feet, brought a tiny flicker of flame leaping out from between the main petrol-tanks and within a few seconds the whole dirigible glowed like a fiery cigar. The wreckage fell at Cuffley and burnt for two hours, all the crew perishing with their "ship."

The S.L.11 was not a true Zeppelin, but a Schutte-Lanz, having a wooden framework instead of steel, and, after this loss, no more wooden-framed airships were built.

So it was that the first great mass attack ended in dismal failure, for the terrible fate of their companions was too much for the other airships, and, dropping their bombs at random, they abandoned the raid.

The 23rd of September brought three of the latest-type Zeppelins, the L.31, L.32 and L.33, over London, and although Mathy, in the L.31, was very successful, his two companions flew their last flight. The L.32 was attacked by a B.E.2c piloted by Lieutenant F. Sowrey, and within six minutes was falling in flames, the wreckage dropping at Snails' Hall Farm, Great Barstead, Leutnant Peterson and all his crew being killed. In the meantime, the L.33, after bombing Stratford, had been damaged by an anti-aircraft shell that had torn one of her

main gas-bags, and was limping along over Chelmsford when she was attacked by Lieutenant A. de B. Brandon. He fired at her for twenty minutes, and, though he failed to set her alight, she was so badly crippled that, after a vain attempt to cross the sea, she turned back and landed in a meadow near Little Wigborough, where her commander set her alight. Although she was completely burnt out, all the L.33's structural details remained intact and from drawings made on the spot our own rigid, the R.33, was subsequently built.

Flying-Boat versus Zeppelin

ON October 1st, Heinrich Mathy, most famous of all the Zeppelin commanders, set out in the L.31 on what was fated to be his last flight. As was usual, he attacked London, but failed to do much damage, and was turning across the north-east side when he was sighted by Second Lieutenant W. J. Tempest.

In spite of the danger from anti-aircraft shells which were blossoming all around the L.31, Tempest attacked from above. During his dive his pressure pump stopped working, and he had to use the hand-pump to keep his engine running. But, despite this handicap, Tempest delivered three attacks from close range, and after the third he saw, to use his own words, "the Zeppelin beginning to go red inside like an enormous Chinese lantern." In a few moments it had exploded in a seething mass of flames. So close had Tempest been when delivering the fatal attack that he had a narrow escape from being engulfed by the falling wreckage, both he and his machine being badly scorched. The wreckage fell at Potters Bar, Middlesex, and it is there that the remains of Mathy and his crew lie buried.

After the loss of Mathy and the L.31, the Zeppelins had lost half their terror, and the majority of the subsequent raids ended in disaster for the raiders. In fact, the very next raid, on November 27th, saw the defence pilots claim another two victims, when ten airships made an

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attack on the Northern Counties. The L.34, commanded by Kapitanleutnant Max Dietrich, was busily unloading her bombs on West Hartlepool, when she was surprised by Second Lieutenant T. V. Pygott, who sent her down in flames near the mouth of the Tees. The L.22 was forced to retire in the face of a terrific anti-aircraft barrage, while the L.21 was attacked over Lowestoft by Lieutenants Cadbury, Pulling and Fane. Fane's gun jammed in the first attack, and he was forced to withdraw, but Pulling and Cadbury battered away until the L.21 burst into flames, and Kapitanleutnant Freyberg, with all his crew, found a watery grave in the grim North Sea.

From November, 1916, until May, 1917, our pilots could claim no further victories, but their next success, when it came, was a memorable one, inasmuch as it was won by a flying-boat. It occurred on May 14th, when an H.12 flying-boat, of the Yarmouth station, piloted by Sub-Lieutenant R. Leckie and Flight Lieutenant C. J. Galpin, found the naval Zeppelin L.22 patrolling near the Terschelling Lightship at 4.50 a.m.

Leckie dived the flying-boat to within twenty feet of the starboard gondolas, and Galpin opened fire with his bow Lewis guns. After a long burst, both guns jammed, and the H.12 drew off to give Galpin time to make a clearance. But no clearance was necessary, for the L.22 burst into flames, and within ten minutes all that remained of her was a heap of ashes, smouldering on the water.

One month later, still another Zeppelin fell to a flying-boat, this time from the Felixstowe station. The L.43 was caught over Vlieland by Sub-Lieutenants B. D. Hobbs and R. F. L. Dickey on June 14th, and in eight minutes she, too, was a mass of flaming wreckage lapped by the waters of the North Sea. Three days later the L.48 was shot down by Second Lieutenant L. P. Watkins, near Theberton. Her commander, Kapitan Schutze, thinking that the ship was about to fall into the sea, ordered his

men to cast off all their heavy flying clothes and be prepared to swim. All but three obeyed and, when the L.48 crashed on land, these three were the only survivors.

The next victory, on August 21st, was also a memorable one, for the victim, L.23, was the first Zeppelin to be destroyed by a scout machine launched from an aircraft-carrier. A platform had been fitted to the light-cruiser "Yarmouth," and when the Zeppelin was sighted near Lynuig, Sub-Lieutenant B. A. Smart took-off at once in the "Yarmouth's" Sopwith Pup. Incidentally, it was the first time he had ever taken-off from a ship.

Within eight minutes the L.23 was falling in flames, and Smart was faced with the problem of making a landing. Deck-landing was in its infancy at this time, so Smart did the only thing possible and landed in the sea, from which he was rescued by a boat from the "Prince," just as the Pup disappeared beneath the waves.

An Epic of the North Sea

BY costly experience, the German Airship Service had by now realised that their only chance of success lay in height, and so it was that the next half-dozen raids were carried out at heights that made it impossible for our pilots to reach the airships. Not for nine months could we claim another victory, but on May 10th, 1918, Captains T. C. Pattison and A. H. Mundy destroyed a Zeppelin with their giant F.2a flying-boat and met with a remarkable series of adventures in the process.

Over the Heligoland Bight they attacked the L.62, but after a brief exchange of shots, the Zeppelin climbed above them. Whereupon, to their great surprise, they found that instead of being the attackers, they were now the attacked, for the L.62 proceeded to bomb them, several missiles coming far too close to the F.2a for comfort. A second attack by the flying-boat proved successful, however, and, hit

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by explosive bullets, the L.62 fell in flames.

Still the adventure was not over for the victors, and seven enemy destroyers, attracted to the scene by the burning Zeppelin, made things decidedly hot for them. Indeed, one sliver of red-hot steel screamed between Mundy's legs and severed a petrol-pipe. The F.2a managed to glide out of range before coming down, a repair was effected, and two happy airmen went home to report the day's events to their aptly-named base at Killingholme.

The date of July 19th had been set aside for a raid on the Zeppelin bases, and at 3 a.m. that morning, three Sopwith Camels took-off from the "Furious," each machine carrying two 50-lb. bombs as a present for the Tondern sheds, and at 3.40 a.m. four more Camels set out for the same objective. Of the entire force, only one machine found its way to Tondern, and Captain B. A. Smart, its pilot, dropped his visiting-cards with delicate care. Two great sheds mushroomed skywards in a great burst of orange flame and two of Germany's latest Zeppelins, the L.54 and L.60, were completely destroyed. The Germans seem to have been well informed as to the perpetrators of this raid for, on the 21st, the commander of the L.42 wrote in his diary to the effect that "*Those English have raided our sheds at Tondern and have completely destroyed our two great ships, the L.54 and L.60. The leader was the same Captain Smart who destroyed the L.23 during last year. They were brave men, for they flew*

over eighty miles back to their base under most terrific fire."

The Death of Strasser

BUT now "Black August" had approached for the Fatherland, and in a last desperate effort to demoralise the public, the Airship Service made a final raid on August 5th when Peter Strasser, chief of the service, led his five latest Zeppelins against England. The whole formation was attacked off Cromer by a D.H.4, with Major E. Cadbury as pilot, and Lieutenant R. Leckie as observer. Leckie riddled the L.70 with his first burst and, according to Major Cadbury's report, the whole ship was consumed in less than a minute, Strasser perishing with his crew. The D.H.4 then turned on the L.65, but Leckie's guns jammed, and they were forced to return to Yarmouth. Shocked at the loss of their leader, the remaining Zeppelins dropped their bombs into the sea and returned home without even striking a blow.

Fittingly enough, the last Zeppelin fell to the last war-time method of interception. On August 10th, Lieutenant S. D. Culley and his Sopwith Camel were on a lighter that was being towed by a destroyer of the Harwich Patrol, when the L.53 was sighted directly overhead. Culley took-off at once, and within five minutes the L.53 fell in flames near Ameland Island, the last victim of that gallant band of airmen for whom no odds were too great—the Zeppelin Fighters.

An Amazing Escape from death, after his parachute had become entangled with the tail of his doomed Triplane, is described by Ernst Udet in next month's dramatic instalment of his autobiography

ACE OF THE BLACK CROSS

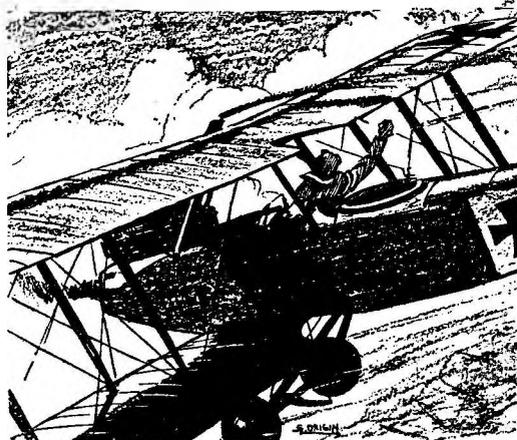
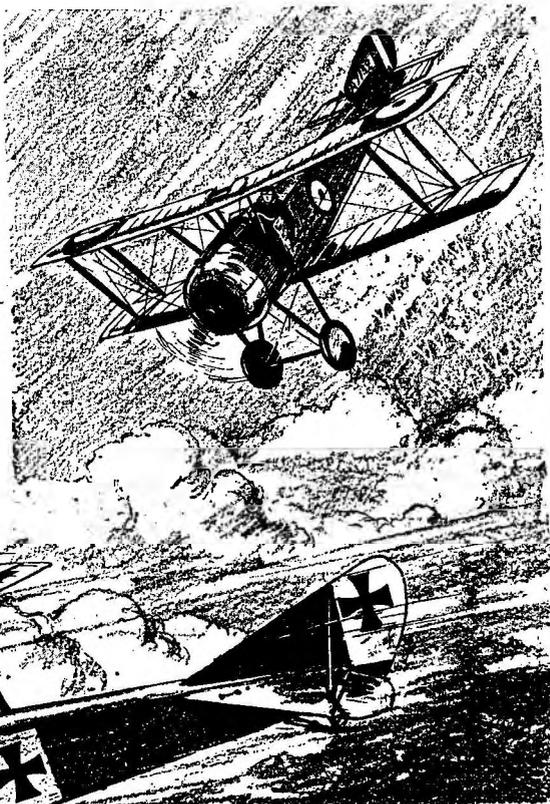
He tells, too, of the desperate fighting that marked the final stages of the War in the Air, of massed French formations of 50 to 100 machines at a time, and of his own extraordinary record of 20 victories in as many days. Then comes the tragic aftermath of War and the no less eventful story of his bitter struggle to gain an airman's precarious livelihood in a Germany torn by revolution and hampered by Allied restrictions.

**Read This Amazing Chapter of an Airman's Adventurous Life
In the November AIR STORIES, On Sale Oct. 9th**

A PILOT OF PUPS

A Great Story of War-time Adventure with a Pup Squadron on the Western Front

By
MILFORD HYDE



As the startled pilot jerked round, gesticulating wildly, Yates fired another purposely-wide burst and pointed down.

CHAPTER I

A Question Mark Takes Wings

THE names which his parents had bestowed on him—in deference to the wishes of a devout, exceedingly affluent, yet promisingly decrepit uncle—were Wesley Hezekiah, and since his surname happened to be Yates, it was almost inevitable that from his very first week at school W. H. Y. should have been known as “The Query.” Nor is it remarkable that, once given, the name stuck to him with the viscosity of dope.

Any humane writer of fiction endowing his hero with such a name would have compensated him in the last chapter by conveniently making the rich uncle

die and leave a fortune to his nephew. In real life such things seldom happen, though, as a matter of fact, the wealthy relative fulfilled the promise of his decrepitude by dying suddenly within a week of the christening—but disappointed the fond parents' hopes by leaving his fortune to a home for indigent missionaries.

Perhaps if he had lived longer he might have altered his will. On the other hand he might not. For the trouble with Wesley H. was that he fitted his name as a piston-ring fits its cylinder. His eyebrows arched in perpetual interrogation, and from his earliest years Kipling's six honest serving men discovered that in The Query's vocabulary they were the victims of sweated labour.

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He was perpetually seeking to be informed about something, and it is recorded that the first time he saw an aeroplane he asked seventy-three questions without stopping, and would undoubtedly have reached his century but for the fact that his distracted parent boxed his ears and sent him to bed.

Perhaps it was this repressed craving for knowledge on matters aeronautical that created in him an aviation complex: at any rate, though planted in a Government office by his father at the beginning of the Great War, he gave his superiors no rest until he had obtained a transfer to the R.F.C. He wanted to find out for himself the answers to the twenty-seven questions that had remained unasked.

The period of his training was punctuated by interrogation marks. At Reading he sent a sergeant-major into an apoplectic fit by asking why the left foot should necessarily have preference over its comrade in the matter of "stepping-off." At the training squadron he drove his instructors frantic by his continual desire to be informed why a B.E.2c should be known as a "Quirk." But he caused the greatest sensation at a famous "finishing school" on Salisbury Plain by innocently asking a bombastic fighting instructor why, since he had apparently been so successful at aerial combats, and seemed to regard shooting down Huns as the only pastime worthy of an Englishman, he had condescended to leave this work in less capable hands and return home to the comparatively tame business of lecturing to pupils.

Naturally he was not popular with the instructors. They thought—and it must be admitted that they had justification for so thinking—that Yates was trying to take a rise out of them. The truth never occurred to them: namely, that Wesley H. was simply seeking information. Knowledge was the consuming passion of his life. In his examinations at Reading he had come out with full marks in all the theoretical work. He knew exactly why an aeroplane flew, and why certain woods were preferable

to others for the construction of longerons or spars. He knew just how the Constantinesco gear preserved the propeller from untimely disintegration, and how to find his way across unknown territory by map and compass. He knew what to do if his engine cut out when taking-off, and what metals were used for every part of every known engine. In short, in theory, he was the perfect airman.

But it was at the point of theory that his perfection stopped, and when eventually he passed his tests and was sent overseas as a Pup pilot it was only because a demand for this particular brand of Spandau-fodder had reached Yates' C.O., and there happened to be no one else available at the moment to send.

WESLEY H. dropped into his place in a Service squadron rather gradually. It took the other pilots a little time to get used to his idiosyncrasies, but when they discovered that there was no hidden barb to his often pointed queries they treated him as a joke and filled him up with every possible and impossible kind of information.

He was posted to "B" Flight, and his flight commander, Captain Farleigh, took him under his wing—or, more correctly speaking, over his starboard plane—and taught him to keep formation and recognise the country. And, after a week of tooling round the neighbourhood of the aerodrome, The Query was pronounced fit to go on his first O.P.*

"And don't forget," reminded Farleigh as they prepared to set off, "to stick to me at all costs."

"But why must we stick close together? Shouldn't we be more likely to draw the Huns into combat if we spread out a bit?" Yates put his question with a puzzled frown.

"My dear good man. If we meet any Huns there will be at least a dozen of them. We, as you may have noticed, are six. Moreover, the Huns will be flying Albatris which are at least thirty

* O.P.: Offensive Patrol.

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miles an hour faster than any Sopwith Pup. You'll certainly draw Huns if you stray away, but I don't recommend you to try it."

"I see. Thanks. You don't mind my asking, do you? I'll stick to you as close as I can."

They crossed the lines almost at the limit of their height, and it was not until they were some way over that Farleigh dropped a couple of thousand feet and Yates experienced his first taste of "Archie." The first salvo—black and boisterous—unfolded its smoky tentacles dead ahead of the formation, and Yates did not see his leader's machine stagger because his head was ducked in the cockpit, but he watched a moment or two later the Pup with the two streamers dip and lift its nose some half-dozen times and then turn west in a gentle glide.

"I suppose he's doing this switch-backing to see if he can shake me off," thought Wesley H. to himself as he followed faithfully the manoeuvres of the other machine. "But he won't get rid of me as easily as that."

He settled himself once more behind Farleigh's starboard plane and then glanced round to see where the others were. To his astonishment there was no sign of the other four.

"Why aren't they following?" was the question that formed itself in his mind, but there was no one to whom he could propound it just now and he had to supply his own answer. When one occurred to him he chuckled.

"Golly! They've all lost him but me. I'll bet he'll be annoyed with them."

He looked round again to see if he could discover the missing patrol, and when he next looked for his leader he got something of a shock. Farleigh's machine had vanished. With a spasmodic jerk, Yates flung his 'bus over and pushed open the throttle. He had made a complete circle before he discovered the other Pup far below him, going down in a drunken sideslip, but having spotted it he stood on his rudder until the pitot registered 180, nor did he ease the stick

back until he was again within reasonable distance of his flight commander.

It was a bit thick, he thought, to try these tricks on him on his first patrol. And why, he asked himself, was Farleigh coming down so low and in such a manner? Surely there would be no Huns to be found so near the ground.

He noticed, too, that strange crackling noises were penetrating the engineless silence, while weird balls of fire squirmed their way up to greet them as they descended. Perhaps these were signals of some sort. He would have to ask about these when they got home. There were a lot of things to be learnt about this war.

It was not until he saw wisps of fabric fluttering from his wings that it dawned on him that he was being fired at from the ground. He looked at them curiously. It didn't seem quite safe somehow, and he felt like turning aside, but he remembered his instructions: "Stick close to me at all costs." So he stuck.

THE other machine was on an even keel now, but wobbling badly. He saw it settle down and pancake in a shell-hole in the centre of a field. Five seconds later his own wheels touched the ground and he came to rest not twenty yards from his leader. A wisp of smoke was already curling from the other Pup as Farleigh ran over to him.

"Bad luck, old man. Set fire to your machine. Quick!"

"Set fire to my machine? Why?" Yates jaw dropped in amazement.

"Hell's bells! Because we're in Hunland, of course."

"In Hunland? But why have you landed here?"

"For the same reason that you have, I expect. 'Archie.' Got my engine, and took two struts clean out of the centre-section. Hurry up and get out, confound you!" As he spoke a few desultory bullets whined unpleasantly near.

The Query winced and paled, but he lived up to his name.

"What made you think my engine had conked?" he asked.

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"You gave the dud sign at the same time as I did, didn't you? You don't mean to tell me now that your 'bus is O.K.?"

"Perfectly. Didn't you tell me to stick close . . ."

"Look out! They're coming. Switch on!"

As Farleigh shouted the warning he doubled round to the propeller and gave it a mighty heave and the Le Rhône—still warm—returned to life. The flight commander stepped clear and signalled frantically for the pilot to proceed, but Yates shook his head and beckoned. Farleigh dashed to the cockpit side.

"What the Hades are you waiting for?" he roared.

"For you, of course. Didn't you tell me to stick . . ."

There was no time to argue, and Farleigh swung himself up as Yates flicked open the throttle. Slowly the Pup gained momentum as the nearing crackle of rifle fire redoubled its viciousness, but the smoke-screen from the now blazing Pup in the shell-hole was between the enemy and themselves. The Pup took the air with its dual load unscathed, and thus, aided by the shouted directions of Farleigh, Yates returned from his first offensive patrol.

Farleigh gave a glowing account to the C.O. of the new man's coolness in rescuing him from capture, omitting to mention that Yates had come down without realising he was behind the German lines, and The Query found himself regarded in the light of a hero by the whole squadron. He took his place in "B" Flight, had his trade mark, a large interrogation sign, painted on his centre-section, did his job with average success, and continued to ask questions on every conceivable subject.

CHAPTER II

Wanted—One Hun

MAJOR ASHBOROUGH, Yates' C.O., was a conscientious squadron commander. He was desperately anxious to keep his pilots in tip-top fighting

trim and make his Squadron the finest on the Western Front, and to this end he was continually organising contests of skill between the three Flights. Being exceedingly wealthy, he stimulated a friendly rivalry by offering tempting prizes to the winners of his ingenious competitions. A shield, to which a silver plaque was added each month with the name of the winning Flight inscribed thereon, hung on the ante-room wall, and in addition the winners were treated to a first-class dinner in Merville as a reward for their prowess.

The Squadron had taken to his idea at once, and on the first morning of each month when the winner of the previous month's honour was announced and the details of the coming month's contest posted on the mess notice-board, there was never any pilot late for breakfast.

Yates joined the Squadron in the middle of April, and on the first of May the C.O. pinned his notice on the board and sat down to his bacon and eggs with a twinkle in his eye. The scrum to read the result had just started when Farleigh and Yates entered the mess together.

"Why is everybody looking at the notice-board this morning?" demanded the junior man.

Farleigh's answer was a blood-curdling whoop as he suddenly remembered the date, and without vouchsafing an explanation he plunged into the seething mass of pilots while Yates stood surveying the tumult in astonished wonder. His wonder was increased when he heard his name shouted by a dozen voices and found eager hands smiting him roundly between the shoulders.

"Jolly good work. That puts 'B' Flight one up on 'C.' I thought all along you'd pull it off for us," declared Farleigh as he seized the hand of the astonished Yates.

"But what's it all about? What have I done?"

Farleigh led him to the breakfast table. "You've won 'B' Flight a free dinner in Merville."

After breakfast the flight commander herded 'B' Flight into his room and

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proceeded to explain the competition system to his new pilot.

"Last month's prize was offered for the coolest deed of the month. It had to be something that wasn't just foolhardy—like landing on a Hun aerodrome in broad daylight."

"Would that have been foolhardy?" queried Yates.

"Some folks would give it a worse name than that. However, several of the fellows have had a go at this competition. Veeley of 'A' Flight was considered to be well in the running. He went up alone and attacked a whole bunch of Albatri single-handed. He got away with it too; brought two down and came home unhurt, though his machine was practically a write-off."

"Well, why hasn't he got the prize?"

"Because the C.O. says he doesn't consider that daring; only damned silly. Then there was Tander of 'C' Flight. He went over and dived down on a Jerry staff-car with a brass hat in the back seat. He claims to have shot the brass hat, but then his gun jammed and the car got away."

"And wasn't that considered daring enough?"

"Oh, yes. But Ashborough says he considers that a British flight commander alive counts more than a German general dead, so taking all things into consideration he's given the top marks to 'B' Flight for your stunt in fishing me out of Hunland last week."

"And jolly well deserved too," put in Booker, the deputy leader. "We all think it was a damned good effort for a first patrol. Now what about winning this month's competition?"

"You all know what it is, I suppose. We've got to bring down a Hun machine intact on this side of the lines. It's a bit of a proposition, isn't it?" And the flight commander rubbed his chin thoughtfully as he concluded.

"What does it mean exactly by intact? I mean, suppose the 'bus comes down with a few holes through the fabric; would that disqualify one from winning?" asked Yates.

"No. The Major has defined what

he means on the notice. I copied it down." And Booker fished a scrap of paper from his pocket. "Here it is. The usual prize will be given to the Flight which first brings down during May a German aeroplane intact on this side of the lines. The machine shall be considered intact if it is capable of being taken-off the ground and flown with reasonable safety without any attention or repairs. In the event of no Flight bringing down a machine intact, the Flight which brings down an enemy 'plane in the best condition will be judged the winner of the dinner, but only an intact machine shall qualify for the shield."

"Well, that's pretty clear," opined Farleigh. "You can put as many holes as you like through the fabric, or smash up the instruments, but if you shoot up a main spar or bust a longeron, you're disqualified for the shield. Now, chaps, what about it?"

They discussed ways and means until it was time for them to go up on patrol, but the general consensus of opinion was that the shield would not be won that month. It was felt that the Major had given them too stiff a problem to tackle with any hope of success, and the other Flights apparently thought the same.

VARIOUS attempts, however, were made to score, but stray Huns willing to be lured across the lines were few and far between, so that the middle of the month had arrived with no prospect of even the dinner in Merville materialising.

Meanwhile the Squadron, when not in the air, gave itself up to a spasm of gardening. This was another idea of the C.O.'s. He had a theory that to keep pilots in good health they must have a plentiful supply of fresh salads and greens.

"Nothing like it for keeping your cylinders decarbonised," he was wont to remark. "Besides, the exercise will do you good, too. From what I hear we're likely to be here some time, so get to it. Each Flight will take a plot and work it."

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"But what are we to grow, sir?" asked Yates.

Captain Abbey, the "C" Flight skipper, nodded sagely. "We'll grow apple pips in ours. Nothing like an apple a day for keeping off the jolly old M.O."

"Don't be an ass. You wouldn't get any fruit for five years at least," scoffed Booker.

"Perhaps not. But after that we should be well in until the end of the war. Just a spot of pruning now and then, and nothing else to do but pick the juicy Ribstones at leisure. You other fellows will get sick of digging your plots over year by year, and in another twenty years you'll be wishing you'd done what we did."

Eventually, however, it was decided to concentrate on salads as being the quickest-growing produce, and "A" Flight sowed about half a pound of radish seed, "B" set out a couple of hundred lettuce plants, while "C"—still hankering for fruit—purchased fifty tomato plants. Thus, as Captain Abbey put it, the gentle art of horticulture came to soften the harsh lives of these callous bird-men, and for one week at least an orgy of slug-catching, spraying, and weeding occupied the spare moments of eighteen officers of the R.F.C. After that, at any rate so far as "B" Flight was concerned, it was left to Yates to minister to the wants of the succulent cos, and at odd moments he was to be seen, armed with a watering can (née petrol tin) and a hoe (once part of a cowling and now attached to a piece of longeron) pottering about among his lettuces with all the enthusiasm of a cottage pensioner.

IT was thus that Booker found him lone evening in the middle of May.

"Leave your bally rabbit food alone and come up to the Skipper's bunk. He wants to see all the Flight at once," he ordered.

"Rabbit food? It's curious you should call them that? As a matter of fact something has been eating them off lately. I believe it must be rabbits."

And Yates put away his tools and followed the deputy leader up to the hut where the others were already assembled.

"Come in, you chaps. There's room on the bed for two more, if you don't mind being squashed." Then, when the newcomers were settled. "I suppose you've heard the news?"

"What news?" from The Query.

"'C' Flight have brought down a Hun. They found an old two-seater without an escort, potted the observer, and hustled it over the lines. It's down behind Laventie."

"Is it intact?" asked one of the Flight quickly.

"No. They shot up the controls, and the pilot did in the undercarriage in landing."

"Then it doesn't count for the shield."

"No, fathead, but it counts towards the binge. We've got to do something about it."

They discussed plans for some time without making much headway, and finally Farleigh asked each pilot in turn to give his views on how the capture of a Hun 'bus might be effected. Yates' turn came last, and as Farleigh turned to him he was sitting with a faraway look in his eyes.

"Come on, Query. You're good at asking questions. Answer one for once. How are we to catch one of the beggars?"

Yates pulled himself together with a start. "Catch one? Well, couldn't we use snickles?"

Farleigh gasped. "How the blue Hades can you catch a Hun with a snickle?"

Yates blushed. "Did you say a Hun? I'm sorry, I thought you were talking about rabbits!"

"Yates' lettuce bed has been raided, and it's preying on his mind," explained Booker when the rest had recovered from their mirth.

In the end, however, the conference broke up without deciding on any plan. As the others left, Farleigh laid a detaining hand on Yates' shoulder.

"Look here, son," he said kindly. "I don't want you to think I'm being

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hard on you after what you did for me, but you must take a little more interest in your work. Your mind was on your garden this evening instead of on the question we were discussing. Don't you realise we've got to beat Abbey's crowd of ham-handed blighters ? ”

“ Didn't the C.O. say that salads would help to keep us fit ? ” countered Yates.

“ Maybe. But they're a poor substitute for one of the Major's dinner parties in Merville. There. Run along back to your lettuces and shoo the bunnies away. Perhaps while you ply your busy hoe some bright idea may strike you.” And Farleigh ushered his pilot out with a pat on the back.

CHAPTER III

Captain Abbey is Annoyed

BY the time of the morning patrol, however, no scheme had occurred to any member of “ B ” Flight, and they took the air with nothing more original than a determination to emulate “ C ” Flight's plan of hustling a two-seater.

They found one, too, doing art. obs. at eight thousand feet just on the lines, but this one was not unescorted, as they discovered to their cost, and they had to pull out of their dive in pretty slick time to cope with the attentions of eight Fokker D.5's which gave them a hot ten minutes. Farleigh got one of them with a lucky snap-shot that put paid to its account, and Booker beat another on a vertical bank and sent it down minus its port planes, after which the Huns dived away. But by this time the two-seater had packed up and gone home, and eventually the Pups came home no nearer to equalling “ C ” Flight's effort than they were when the month started.

Yates had to have some adjustments made to his controls on getting back from the lines, and after lunch he decided to take his 'bus up and give her a test. He climbed to ten thousand feet and wandered aimlessly round, throwing an occasional loop or half roll, but his mind was on rabbits rather than on rudder controls, and when he came to

himself with a jerk it was because “ Archie ” had snarled a greeting that tipped his 'plane on to its nose for a few heart-gripping seconds.

He righted the 'bus and looked down to pick up his bearings, and discovered he was just on the lines. It was the first time he had been within range of the enemy alone, and it gave him an unpleasantly cold feeling down the spine. He turned west, opened the throttle and shoved the Pup's nose down until a good five miles separated him from hostile territory. He was hastily making back for the aerodrome when, happening to glance over the side, he received a shock. There, some two thousand feet below him, sailing serenely across the landscape, was a perfectly good Hun 'bus, its black crosses throwing a challenge to the skies.

Yates blinked to make sure his eyes were not deceiving him and, when the vision still persisted, he began to look round to see whether any British machines were in sight. But the sky was deserted save for himself and the stranger.

Something had got to be done. He thought of the competition, and realised that the honour of “ B ” Flight was in his keeping. If he didn't bring this Hun down intact Farleigh would never forgive him.

He slid the joy-stick forward and the throttle back, and made a bee-line—or rather, a Pup line—for the Hun.

“ What on earth is the beggar doing so far over our side ? ” he asked himself. “ And why hasn't anyone attacked it ? And why isn't it being ‘ Archied ’ ? ”

He was near enough to see the enemy clearly now. It was a two-seater, but the back seat was empty—a fact which struck him as strange. Perhaps, he reflected, the machine was carrying a load of bombs. He glued his eyes to the Aldis sight and his thumb was on the gun-trip when a thought struck him. Suppose he hit some vital part of the machine : that would ruin “ B ” Flight's chance for the shield. He refrained from firing and pressed closer, noting with satisfaction that the pilot had apparently

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not yet seen him, and when within twenty yards he fired a burst over the Hun's top planes. He saw the begoggled countenance of the startled pilot jerk round, and an arm gesticulated wildly. Yates replied by firing another purposely-wide burst, and pointed down.

He was slightly astonished when the Hun pilot made no attempt either to fight or run for home. Instead he dived westward as if the one thing he wanted to do was to oblige his pursuer by landing on Allied soil, and Wesley H. shoved down his nose and beetled after him with a tremulous joy in his heart.

TEN minutes later an excited Yates burst into the ante-room and rushed up to Farleigh.

"What do you think I've done?"

Farleigh looked at him speculatively. "Caught a slug on your lettuces?" he suggested.

The Query snorted. "I've brought down a Hun, intact."

Farleigh threw down his copy of *La Vie Parisienne* and leaped to his feet.

"What! You! All by yourself?" he exclaimed.

"Why shouldn't I? Do you want to see for yourself? It's on the aerodrome. At least, almost. As a matter of fact the pilot rather overshot and perched on 'C' Flight's tomato-bed. Do you think Abbey will be annoyed about that?"

"He'll be a damn sight more annoyed at losing the dinner. Where's the pilot?"

"Coming along. Some of our chaps ran over to him when he landed, so I came on in here to let you know. Aren't you bucked about it?"

"Bucked? Of course I am. But you're sure it is a Hun? I mean, you haven't brought down an old Harry Tate or something?" The flight commander eyed his subordinate doubtfully.

At this moment there was a commotion outside the door, and a second later Captain Abbey stormed in, followed by a bunch of his angry followers.

"What the hell do you think you're up to, Yates?" he demanded hotly.

"I'm awfully sorry, Abbey, but I can easily get you some more tomato plants, and after all, I couldn't help the blighter landing there, could I? I mean to say, it's not my fault that he happened to be a rotten pilot, is it?"

Abbey went a rich shade of purple. "Rotten pilot yourself! You'd be in a stew if some idiot was trying to pot you as you came down. It's a darned good thing for you I didn't crash the 'bus altogether."

Yates turned pale. "Were . . . were you flying that Hun 'bus?" he asked incredulously.

"Don't try to kid me that you didn't know. It's the one we brought down yesterday near Lavantie. A crash party went out and repaired it this morning. You knew perfectly well I was fetching it because I told everyone at breakfast this morning."

Farleigh interposed quickly in defence of his protégé.

"Yates was orderly officer. He didn't get in to breakfast till the rest of us had finished. You can't blame him for attacking you when he didn't know."

Captain Abbey remained unmollified. "I believe it's a put-up job on 'B' Flight's part to try and make me crash the thing. Anyhow, it didn't come off, because I didn't even strain the undercarriage."

A light leaped into Yates' eye. "Then you mean she's quite O.K.?" he demanded eagerly.

"Of course she is. Didn't I say she was repaired this morning?"

"Then in that case," declared The Query triumphantly, "why shouldn't 'B' Flight claim the shield for this month?"

A yell of protest arose from the "C" Flight pilots, but Farleigh raised his hand.

"You can't get away from the fact that Yates has fulfilled the conditions," he said when he was able to make himself heard. "The shield was to go to the Flight which first forced down a German 'bus intact on this side of the lines. It doesn't stipulate that the 'bus is to be flown by a Hun at the time."

A PILOT OF PUPS

And Farleigh winked solemnly at Yates as he ceased speaking.

Before the outraged skipper of "C" Flight could recover his speech in the face of this brazen claim, the C.O. entered the room. He sensed at once that something was amiss and demanded to be told what the trouble was about. When the matter had been explained to him he scratched his chin thoughtfully. Then he turned to Abbey.

"Why didn't you have the British markings put on the 'bus before you flew her home?" he asked.

"I had them put on the bottom planes so that 'Archie' would let me alone, but I didn't think it mattered about the top ones. I'd told all the fellows—or I thought I had."

Major Ashborough turned to Yates. "I'm afraid your claim won't stand, Yates," he said. "The machine you brought down was no longer a German machine. The fact that it was captured by 'C' Flight automatically made it a British possession, even though the markings had not been entirely altered. I'm afraid 'B' Flight will have to try again."

CHAPTER IV

"Downed" for Dinner

FOR a few days there was a good deal of leg-pulling over the incident, both Yates and Abbey coming in for their share. It was especially against the junior man that the badinage was directed, and only Farleigh loyally stuck up for the man who had saved him from a German prison camp, with the result that Yates betook himself in dudgeon to his lettuces and kept out of the way of banter.

One evening, about a week after his disappointment, he came into the mess after a bout of weeding, and threw himself down on a seat before he discovered that the occupant of the next chair was Captain Abbey.

"How are the jolly old green-groceries coming on?" asked the leader of "C" Flight with a grin.

"Still plagued with rabbits," responded the other gloomily.

Abbey raised his eyebrows in mock surprise. "I should have thought a fellow who could catch Hun 'planes would have no difficulty in nabbing a few rodents. Why don't you put salt on their tails?"

"Why don't you come and do a bit of gardening yourself instead of making fun of other people's efforts?" countered Yates. "A bit of exercise would help you to get rid of those spots before your eyes that upset your landing judgment."

But Abbey only laughed, and the indignant horticulturist moved haughtily away to another chair.

"Salt on their tails, indeed!" he muttered to himself. No doubt they thought it a huge joke that his plants were being nibbled off night after night, but after all, he was only carrying out the C.O.'s wishes. Salt on their tails! Idiots! And then an idea struck him and he smote his hand on his knee so that Farleigh who was sitting near looked up from his book.

"Got a brain-wave, son?"

"What made you say that? As a matter of fact I have."

"Well, I hope it's a better one than the last. We've only got another week to snatch that dinner from 'C' Flight's hungry jaws."

But it was "A" Flight who performed this feat. Two days later a triumphant patrol, led by Veeley, escorted back an Albatros that had foolishly straggled from its formation. The pilot was wounded and the machine riddled, but no vital parts were hit, and only a tyre was damaged on landing so that, though out of the running for the shield, it was felt to be a distinctly better achievement than "C" Flight's. The pilots of "B" Flight sank into the depths of despair.

Yates had been away in Estaires buying supplies for the mess when the "A" Flight patrol landed to report their capture, and he only learnt the news on his return.

"And for heaven's sake don't try any of your funny tricks when I bring her in to-morrow morning," cautioned Veeley. "If any 'B' Flight Pup comes

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within a mile of me he'll get a dose of Spandau medicine where he won't like it. You aren't going to pinch the dinner from me like you tried to pinch it from 'C' Flight."

Yates drew himself up with offended dignity.

"Why address your remarks to me?" he asked coldly. "I shall be on patrol to-morrow morning. And may I remind you that the dinner isn't yours yet. Aren't there still five days left?"

"Quite so," replied Veeley with a sarcastic grin. "But if you will cast your optics through the window you will see that it's raining like hell, and looks like keeping on for a week."

"Raining? So it is. And I'd just bought some stuff to put round the lettuces to keep the rabbits off. I shall have to wait until it stops."

But it didn't stop, and the next three days provided weather conditions equally inimical towards either gardening or flying. The rain streamed steadily down, and the pilots either sat in the mess around the card tables or departed in tenders to seek the delights of Merville. "A" Flight were frankly jubilant at their chances, "C" Flight resigned, and "B" moodily despondent.

BUT on the thirtieth of the month the weather lifted, and blue skies gleamed down once more on the sodden earth. Farleigh hustled his men out at dawn, for they were on the early show.

"Come on, you fellows. Get your hot gargle from the mess and then get a move on. We push off at five prompt."

They took the air with racing props, eager to take advantage of the respite from the rain, praying for a chance to boost their fallen stock by hook or by crook.

Farleigh's intention was to look for lone two-seaters. He thought they stood a better chance of nabbing one of the slow artillery machines than of cutting out an Albatros from its friends. With this plan in view, he crossed at fifteen thousand feet and made his way well into Hun territory before turning west again. He hoped to be able to get on

the east side of an L.V.G. where the sun would enable him to stalk it, and then by a simultaneous attack from above and below, force it west over the lines.

This was the plan he had outlined to his followers, and it was arranged that Farleigh himself, with Yates and another, should attack from above, while Booker and the rest should concentrate on preventing the Hun from diving east.

They patrolled their beat for an hour before they saw a likely quarry, a moving speck of green against the shell-scarred brown earth below, and then, shading his eyes for a final gaze round the upper regions, Farleigh dimmed the roar of his Le Rhône and sank steadily, keeping the Flight in line between the unsuspecting Hun and the sun.

The needles of their altimeters traced their anti-clockwise course until only a bare five hundred feet separated them from their quarry, and then Farleigh raised his hand—the prearranged signal—and with a roar the rotaries leaped to full vigour, and six Sopwiths pounced on the all-unconscious victim.

But the attack never reached its mark, for out of the brassy glare above them a devastating hail of Spandau spawn shrieked and whined, and the roar of diving Mercédès engines drowned the shriller notes of the Le Rhône; for even as the Pups had stalked the L.V.G., so had they in turn been stalked by the wily Albatri.

A round dozen there were of the enemy, though the Sopwith pilots never had a chance to count them. Each Englishman was fighting for his life within ten seconds of the first flicker of tracer.

Yates slewed round in a flat spin when the initial burst struck splinters from his centre-section, and found himself the object of attentions of an unwelcome kind from a flaunting scarlet and black machine. He remembered some advice he had once heard, and threw his Pup into a vertical bank, but the Hun on his tail, instead of attempting to beat him on the turn, flew straight on past him and looped a flawless loop which brought him just behind the

A PILOT OF PUPS

Sopwith's tail again as Yates centred the controls. In frenzied haste the Englishman shoved on opposite bank and rudder, but the twin Spandaus had spoken, and the tortured Le Rhône packed up in sullen silence.

It was no use attempting to glide into the British lines. To attempt it meant certain death. There was only one thing to be done and Yates knew it. He pulled the stick back and thrust out his right foot and went down in a spin. Thank the Lord, no Hun could plug him in the head while he was doing that. Perhaps the Hun would be kidded into thinking that he was out of control and leave him in peace. Then he might even yet reach the trenches.

He tentatively slid on to an even keel at six thousand feet, but a glimpse of the scarlet and black Albatros behind him convinced him of the wisdom of returning to a corkscrew mode of descent, and it was not until he was down to two thousand feet that he again ventured to centre the stick. All hope of returning home was gone now, and he cast a swift glance round to pick a suitable spot to land on. He gave a wan smile as he recognised below him the very field in which he had parked his 'bus on his first trip over the lines. He picked up the wind direction and set his mind to judging his approach.

The Albatros was circling near, making no attempt to shoot now that escape was impossible for the Pup, and Yates reflected bitterly that the pilot was probably chortling with satisfaction as Yates had done less than a fortnight before at the sight of Abbey's two-seater. Every foot he descended brought home more fully the sense of his plight. There would be no jolly times in Hunland, no binges, no gardening to occupy his time. Even as he automatically eased the stick back to land he thought of his lettuce bed. The rabbits would eat their fill now, rot them, and no one would worry.

The wheels touched and the machine came to rest, and Yates climbed stiffly out. The Hun was landing too, and Yates remembered that he must set his machine on fire. He threw a handful

of blazing matches into the cockpit, and as he returned the box to his pocket his hand encountered a paper packet. He remembered idly that he had bought it in Estaires three days ago, and the weather had prevented him from using it. Now he would never use it. A lump came in his throat, and he brought his hand up to wipe a suspicious moisture from his eyes. The Hun was down now, and he must show a cool front to his captor.

HE watched the German climb down hand approach, revolver in hand, and as he braced himself for the encounter he discovered that the hand he had withdrawn from his pocket was still clutching the little packet.

"Hände auf!"

The tone, rather than the words suggested what was required of him, and he raised his hands aloft. It all seemed so unreal. It was rather like taking part in a play. But this, of course, was deadly earnest, and the automatic pointing at his stomach was no stage property. The thought of it going off made him clench his fists in apprehension, and he felt the paper packet burst with the tension of his nails.

"Was haben Sie in Ihre Hand? Geben Sie mir!" The German held out his left hand as he spoke, and the meaning of his command was evident. Yates hesitated a fraction of a second, and then things seemed to happen all at once. He saw the Teuton's finger tighten on the trigger, and instinctively leaped sideways at the same instant that his right hand shot out and flung the burst packet full in the German's face. The automatic went off, and Yates felt a searing pain in his left arm. The next moment the German had dropped his weapon and was clutching at his eyes, shrieking in agony.

Yates paused only to pick up the fallen automatic, and sprinted for the Albatros which stood with its prop. sweetly ticking over, rocking in the slip-stream as a racehorse strains at the bridle impatient for the gate to rise.

Without another look behind him he

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swung himself up with his good arm, took a hasty but comprehensive glance at the dashboard, and pushed open the throttle.

WHEN the rest of "B" Flight, tattered and torn by conflict, but saved from annihilation by the timely arrival of a patrol of Fees, landed on their aerodrome they were astonished to find a scarlet and black D.3 parked on their tarmac, and a jubilant Yates, his arm in a sling, proudly exhibiting his capture to an admiring crowd.

"What do you think of that, eh? Intact to the last turnbuckle. What about the shield now?"

"You're a ruddy marvel, son. But just tell us in confidence how you did it. The last we saw of you, you were making a bee-line for the coffin shop."

Yates gave a rapid outline of his adventures, forsaking for once the rôle of questioner for that of narrator. Nor had he reason to complain of any lack of attention to his story.

"But what the Hades was the stuff you chucked in the Jerry's face?" demanded Abbey when he finished.

"It was what I got to keep the rabbits off the lettuce. You gave me the idea when you were trying to be funny. It was red pepper."

"Red pepper?"

"Sure. Your witty suggestion about salt made me think of it. Damned hot stuff, too. I got a whiff of it when I picked up the Jerry's gun."

And then the unaccustomed part of narrator slipped from him, and the old rôle reasserted itself.

"Why doesn't someone offer me a drink?" demanded The Query.

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

HE FLEW WITH BISHOP (J. Holbrook, Kingston, Portsmouth). Yes, the Eliot White Springs who wrote "War Birds" and other excellent books descriptive of war flying in France, served in the R.F.C. as a member of Colonel Bishop's squadron. He is now living in America.

A DIVE-BOMBER (R. Weston Sharp, Jamaica, B.W.I.). (1) The Hawker P.V. 4 is a two-seater biplane designed for day-and-night bombing and specially strengthened to withstand the stresses of dive-bombing with 1,000-lb. load of bombs. In its latest form it is fitted with a Bristol Pegasus X engine, and has a top speed of 215 m.p.h., but in dive-bombing, in which the attack is made at a nearly vertical angle, the P.V. 4 reaches a velocity of more than 300 m.p.h. (2) "P.V." stands for "Private Venture" as distinct from a machine built to order or to conform to an Air Ministry specification.

SHORT SCIPIO (G. Ibberson, Salford, Lincs.). The Scipio flying-boat used by Imperial Airways on their trans-Mediterranean services has a top speed of 137 m.p.h. at 5,000 feet, and cruises at 105 m.p.h. Climb to 5,000 feet takes seven minutes, absolute ceiling is 18,000 feet and range is 450 miles. Top wing span is 113 feet, lower wing 92 ft. 6 in. Length 78 ft. 3 in., and height 28 ft.

D.H. ALBATROSS (L. E. Cartwright, Hooton, Cheshire). The two landplanes recently ordered by the Air Ministry for experimental flights across the North Atlantic are four-engined De Havilland Albatrosses (Type D.H. 91), and these are now under construction. The Albatross is a scaled-up

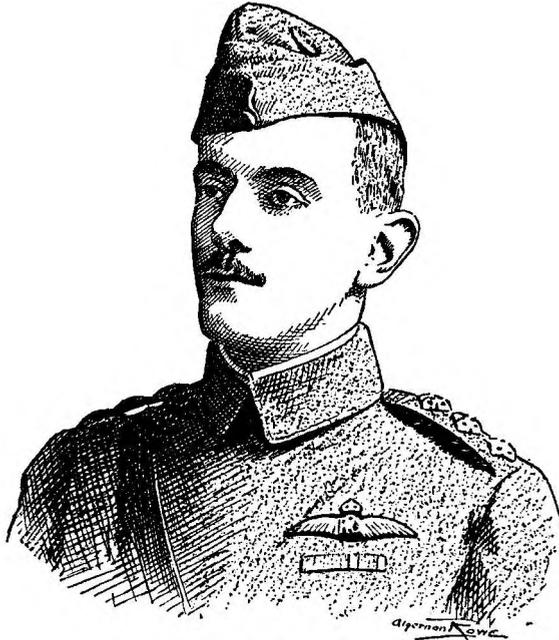
version of the twin-engined Comet which won the England-Australia race in 1934, and will have four Gipsy 12-cylinder engines. Fully loaded, it will weigh about 25,000 lbs., and its top speed, with a big load of passengers and mails, is expected to be in the region of 250 m.p.h.

BEARDMORE INFLEXIBLE (John Archbold, Isleworth, Mddx.). The Beardmore Inflexible was an all-metal monoplane built experimentally in 1928 to test out the German Rohrbach system of metal construction. It was a cantilever high-wing monoplane driven by three 650-h.p. Rolls-Royce "Condors" and had a span of 157½ feet, a length of 75½ feet, and was 21 ft. 2 in. high. Loaded weight was 37,000 lbs. We cannot trace any performance figures having been divulged.

BOMBERS OF TO-DAY (J. E. Bowden, Highgate, N. 6). It is impossible to say which are the three most formidable multi-engined bombers in existence to-day, as each nation naturally maintains secrecy regarding its newest military aircraft. From what little information is available, however, we would say that Great Britain, America and Italy are the three Powers with the most formidable long-range bombers to-day. Britain probably leads with the new Bristol and Handley-Page twin-engined bombers with speeds approaching 270 m.p.h. America has a new Boeing (four 700 h.p. engines) which carries a crew of ten and a ton of bombs, and recently flew 2,300 miles non-stop at 255 m.p.h. Italy's best may be the new Savoia S. 73M. which is capable of flying from Turin to London and back non-stop with a ton load of bombs.

England's First Air "Ace"

Victor in
Numerous
Lone-handed
Air Battles
against
Superior Odds



Victim of the
"Red Baron"
in One of the
Longest and
Most Keenly
Contested
Duels of the
War

**The Brilliant Record of Major G. L. Hawker, V.C.,
One of the Most Daring and Skilful Scout Pilots of the
Great War in the Air**

By A. H. PRITCHARD

WHENEVER airmen foregather in a reunion party, the name of Major George Lanoe Hawker, V.C., D.S.O., is practically certain to crop up. Rightly called England's first "Ace," Hawker's war record is still something of a mystery. No official figures have ever been published as to the number of enemy aircraft Hawker destroyed, while unofficial figures vary between nine and fifty, the latter figure obviously being incorrect. But no matter how many personal victories he obtained, he was the power behind many another Ace's record, and in this short biography it will be seen what a great influence Hawker had on the development of combat flying.

Born in December, 1890, Hawker was educated at the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, and, later, the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, thus being designated for an army career at an early age. He secured a commission in the Royal Engineers in 1911, but two years

later was one of the small group of officers selected for training as pilots in the Royal Flying Corps. He proved an exceptionally good pupil, and on March 4th, 1913, was awarded Aero Certificate No. 435, passing out from Hendon on a Deperdussin Monoplane.

When war was declared, he flew an R.E.5, with a 120 h.p. Beardmore engine, of No. 6 Squadron across the Channel, and was an aerial witness of the fall of Antwerp on October 8th.

Once firmly planted on Belgian soil, the Germans lost no time in erecting their Zeppelin hangars, and so bringing their raiders within shorter range of England. These bases soon became a very sharp thorn in the side of the Allied commanders, and it was decided that they should be bombed without delay. That decision came to a head on April 18th, 1915, and it was on that day that Hawker climbed into a B.E.2c and took-off for the Zeppelin hangar at Gontrode.

Arriving over his objective, Hawker

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was at once greeted by a veritable curtain of fire from ground machine-guns—fire that had been summoned by a balloon observer stationed there for the express purpose of signalling the approach of enemy aircraft. Ignoring the ground fire, Hawker launched his attack. It must be remembered that this was 1915, and he had no proper bomb-racks or sights. All he had were three French melinite bombs and a haversack full of grenades; his eyes were his bomb-sight, the power of his arm the bomb-racks.

His first two bombs missed by a wide margin, so he flew lower and tossed out most of the grenades. Again he missed, and a sudden pounding behind him made him reach for altitude. Still bullets whistled uncomfortably close, and he discovered that the balloon observer had a Maxim in his basket and was blazing away for all he was worth. "Time to change my affections," thought Hawker, and a grenade that burst a few feet from the basket put both gun and gunner out of action.

Using the now silent balloon as a shield, he spiralled to within two hundred feet of the hangar roof and dropped his last bomb. It sped straight and true, and one brand-new Zeppelin shed dissolved in a mass of liquid flame. Returning to his own 'drome at Abeele, after being away three hours, Hawker counted no less than thirty-eight bullet-holes in the old B.E.

For this raid he was awarded the D.S.O., the citation for which reads:—

"For conspicuous gallantry on 18 April, 1915, when he succeeded in dropping bombs on the German airship shed at Gontrode from a height of only 200 feet, under circumstances of great risk. Lt. Hawker displayed the greatest ingenuity in utilizing an occupied German captive balloon to shield him from fire whilst manœuvring to drop his bombs."

Shortly after this raid Gontrode was abandoned as a Zeppelin base—the Germans had had enough of Hawker.

Hawker had a mania for tinkering about with machinery, due in no small part to his training in the Royal Engineers, and when he received a

Bristol Scout in June, he lashed a rifle to the fuselage and went in search of enemy aircraft. The weapon failed to come up to expectation, so he dismantled it and rigged up a gear for carrying a Lewis gun.

A Private Intelligence Service

IN THOSE early days, German machines were difficult to find, and even more difficult to entice into a fight, so Hawker, not wanting to waste good petrol on aimless wanderings over the lines, formed an intelligence service of his own. He had his machine standing ready for immediate flight at all hours of the day, and posted mechanics up in the front lines with strict instructions to 'phone him the moment an enemy machine showed its nose on the horizon. He also used the clumsy old B.E.2c's of No. 6 Squadron as decoys, and if an L.V.G. or Aviatik pounced on the unarmed B.E., down would come Hawker in his Bristol to blister its tail with hot lead.

Like all the other pilots in the squadron, Hawker had to take his share of the daily round, which consisted of bombing and reconnaissance patrols, and his career nearly came to a sticky end during one of these routine patrols. On April 22nd, the Germans launched the first gas attack of the war, and on the following day several machines, Hawker's among them, were sent to investigate the rumour that the enemy had withdrawn to a reserve line. The rumour was confirmed, and every available machine was sent over to bomb this new stronghold. While flying very low, Hawker ran into a veritable tornado of rifle fire, one bullet shattering his oil-gauge at the very instant another tore through his foot. Fortunately, the wound was only slight, and within a few days Hawker was back in action.

Shortly after his return, Hawker performed the epic deed which was to win him the Victoria Cross and everlasting fame in the history of aerial warfare. Early in the morning of July 25th, one of his observers 'phoned that an Aviatik was prowling over the British lines, and Hawker took-off after it. His initial

ENGLAND'S FIRST AIR "ACE"

attack was so fierce that the German pilot did not stay to fight, but pushed his nose down and kept it down until the Aviatik had made a crash landing inside the German lines.

Going up again in the afternoon, Hawker found another Aviatik serenely taking photographs over Houlthalt Forest, and a well-placed burst sent the camera 'plane down in the British lines. Returning home in the pre-dusk of evening, Hawker encountered yet another E.A., this time a Rumpler. The German observer brought his Parabellum into action and a hail of angry steel bees buzzed round Hawker's ears. The Bristol Scout dived below the two-seater, fastened itself on to the blind spot beneath the tail, and it was all over—thirty rounds from Hawker's Lewis gun sending the Rumpler down in flames.

Late that night, Hawker drove up to the lines to obtain a souvenir of his first victory that day, and took the dead observer's Iron Cross. Upon going through the German's papers Hawker found a detailed map which showed the position of several long-range guns that had been causing the "Brass Hats" much loss of sleep and not a few grey hairs. Such a find could have only one result, and a formation of British bombers soon reduced the latest productions of Frau Bertha Krupp to just so much scrap iron.

The citation for Hawker's V.C., taken from the Gazette of August 24th, 1915, reads :—

"For most conspicuous bravery and very great ability on the 25th July, 1915. When flying alone he attacked three German aeroplanes in succession. The first managed eventually to escape, the second was driven to the ground damaged, and the third, which he attacked at a height of about 10,000 feet, was driven to earth within our lines, the pilot and observer being killed. The personal bravery shown by this officer was of the very highest order, as the enemy's aircraft were all armed with machine guns, and each carried a passenger, as well as a pilot."

Such an achievement as this immediately showed the War Office that Hawker was a born fighter pilot, and would make a fine squadron-commander.

The Powers That Be, therefore, had him packed off to Farnborough, where he assumed command of No. 24 Squadron, equipped with the new D.H.2 single-seater fighter, a machine that had been designed for the express purpose of putting "paid" to the growing account of the Fokker monoplanes.

Hit by an Anti-Aircraft Shell

AFTER five months of intense training, No. 24 Squadron was ready for war and, crossing to France on February 8th, 1916, quickly began to take toll of the enemy airmen. Second-Lieutenant D. M. Tidmarsh downed three Fokkers on April 2nd, and had an unique experience a few moments after his third victim had gone down in flames. An anti-aircraft shell hit his machine, passed across his thighs, and tore out through the side of his cockpit. Yet, apart from a few scorches, he was unhurt.

It was during this month of April, too, that Hawker showed another side of his inventive genius. The D.H.2 was a cold, draughty little 'bus, and to protect his legs and feet from going numb with cramp, Hawker made himself a pair of sheepskin thigh boots, which very soon became the standard equipment of all R.F.C. pilots—and are still used to this day.

On May 4th, Hawker was out hunting with Lieutenant S. E. Cowan—who afterwards became a flight commander with the Military Cross and six victories to his credit—when they spotted two Albatros C.3's over Clery. Within a few moments, both enemy two-seaters were going down in flames, but Cowan appeared to be in difficulties, and landed just behind the German lines. As Hawker started down to attempt a pick-up, the grounded D.H.2 took the air again, and a much-relieved Hawker escorted it back across the lines. It appeared that, when shutting his engine off to manœuvre, Cowan's blip-switch, set on top of the control stick, had jammed, and he was forced to land with a dead engine. The jolting of the rough landing shook the switch loose and the engine had opened up again.

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By the summer of 1916, No. 24 Squadron was famous throughout France, and under Hawker's skilful leadership its pilots' victories steadily increased. During June they could claim the destruction of seventeen enemy aircraft; for July they beat all records by claiming twenty-three; August, fifteen; September, fifteen, and October, ten. By November, however, the D.H.2 had shot its bolt and Nemesis appeared over the other side of the lines in the shape of the Albatros D.1.

Hawker's Last Fight

ON November 22nd, Hawker landed at Bertangles aerodrome in a machine that fell to pieces the moment its wheels hit the floor. A German shrapnel shell had burst less than five yards from the tail of his D.H.2 and split the tail-boom, while another chunk of steel had split the centre-section support. By all the rules, the machine should have broken up in the air, but Hawker nursed it home and, stepping from the wreckage, had his photograph taken with the mortal remains of his machine as a background. Superstitious pilots looked upon this as a

rebuff to Lady Luck, and the events of the following day certainly bore them out, for on November 23rd Hawker was destined to fight his last fight.

Flying alone, he was patrolling between Bapaume and Albert, when five Albatros Scouts hove into view. Without hesitation he attacked the leader's red machine and what followed is now history. For thirty-five minutes Hawker and Richthofen whirled in their merry-go-round of death, Richthofen hammering away at every opportunity, while Hawker reserved his scanty ammunition for a no-deflection shot. Finally, with petrol running low, Hawker had to make a dash for his own lines, and Richthofen seized the opportunity. A split second before his Spandau jammed, ten rounds spat from the muzzle and one tore through Hawker's skull. The D.H. faltered, then flew on with engine full out until it smashed into the side of a ruined house.

So passed Hawker, of whom his destroyer said, "He was a brave man, a sportsman, and a fighter"—an epitaph and a death such as Hawker himself would have wished.

AIR BOOKS

New Books of Aviation Interest

"Complete Model Aircraft Manual": By Edwin T. Hamilton: The Bodley Head: 12s. 6d. net.

TO the enthusiastic model-builder this comprehensive and well-produced book should prove a useful addition to his library on the subject. Everything that a modeller could wish to know, from the first stages of construction, the tools and materials required, down to the completion and actual flying of the models, can be found in its 600 pages, which are filled with practical information, clearly and concisely conveyed.

Although it is an American production and most of the models described are American types, the model-making enthusiast should find it none the less interesting for that. It is true that the list of dealers given at the end of the book is useless to the British modeller, but this is more than compensated for by the general excellence of the contents and the invaluable help they give to both the beginner and the experienced modeller.

The models described cover a wide range of stick, solid-scale, flying and non-flying scale types, and

include gliders, single-seater fighters, sports 'planes, commercial aircraft, autogiros, and even a blimp.

The copious illustrations, which include detailed plans and diagrams, deserve special mention and are an admirable aid to the text. A complete aviation dictionary and a glossary of model-making terms are given at the end of the book.

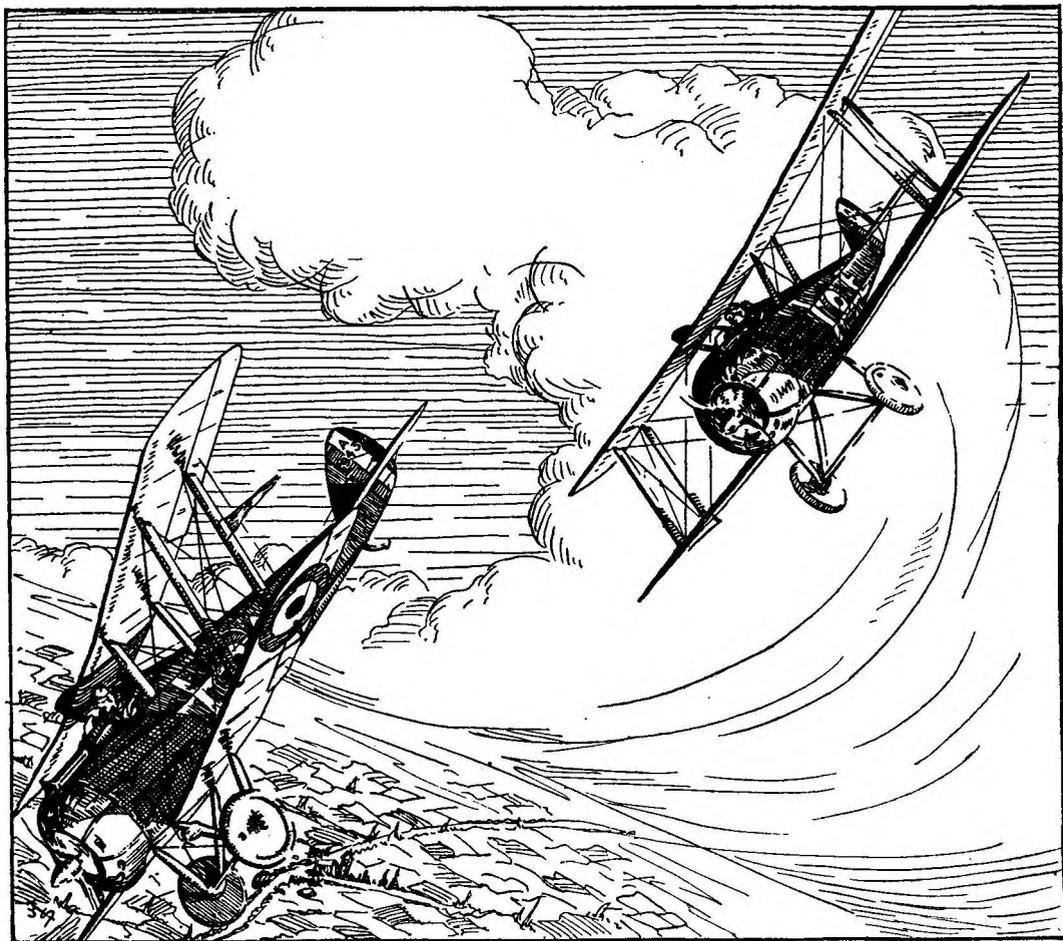
The author was an officer in the Royal Air Force during the War.

THREE AIR THRILLERS

"The Mystery 'Plane'": By John Bolton.
"Vultures of the Sky": By Phillip Conde.
"The Phantom Pilot": By Phillip Conde
(All published at 3s. 6d. by Wright & Brown.)

GOOD stories of flying adventure are still so scarce that their occasional appearance is an event to be noted. The three listed above are all straightforward yarns of the "thriller" class with plenty of flying action, exciting plots and with the interest well maintained from start to finish. Whether your preference is for the detective work of a brilliant young pilot and amateur sleuth temporarily attached to the R.A.F. to solve an international mystery ("The Mystery 'Plane'"), the pirating of cross-channel air-liners carrying bullion ("Vultures of the Sky"), or the lawless exploits of an ex-war ace turned criminal ("The Phantom Pilot"), these three yarns can fill the bill, and it will be a jaded reader indeed who does not extract a full quota of thrills from each.

A SCOUT OF THE WAR DAYS



A Description of the De Havilland 5 Scout 'Plane, with Full Instructions for Building a Scale Model

By JAMES HAY STEVENS

ONE of the most essential features in a fighting aeroplane is that of a good view, and in the De Havilland 5 the R.F.C. had an aeroplane that had been specifically designed to obviate, as far as possible, the bugbear of the "blind spot." By using a very heavy back-stagger it was made possible for the pilot's seat to be in front of the top plane, where he had an entirely unimpeded view both forward and upward. Naturally, the backward view was bad, but this did not matter greatly, as it was no part of a

fighter pilot's job to let others get on to his tail.

Aerodynamically, however, the design of the D.H.5 had disadvantages, and though its back-staggered wings gave the pilot a good view they also involved a considerable loss of efficiency due to increased air turbulence between the upper and lower planes. In consequence, a higher landing speed is to be looked for in machines with this wing arrangement, and the D.H.5 was no exception to this rule. It was, in fact, generally conceded

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to have been the least successful of Captain de Havilland's designs. It was not, however, by any means a bad aeroplane, and by very careful attention to streamlining and to structure weight, it was found possible to give the machine a good all-round performance despite the loss of efficiency due to back-stagger.

Structurally, the D.H.5 was very similar to the D.H.9, described in the August issue of AIR STORIES. The forward part of the fuselage (that is, from the engine-mounting back to the rear centre-section strut attachments) had a spruce and plywood framework. The rear portion had wooden struts and longerons braced by wires. The whole length of the fuselage was built up by light formers and stringers, covered with fabric, to its distinctive polygonal section.

The pilot was armed with one synchronised Vickers gun mounted on top of the fuselage to starboard of the centre-line.

Little need be said about the wings, for they were entirely conventional in construction. There were two spruce main spars with lattice profile ribs and built-up compression ribs covered with fabric. Ailerons were fitted to all four planes and were interconnected by wires.

Engine and Performance Figures

THE engine fitted was of the Le Rhône nine-cylinder rotary air-cooled type. This engine gave 110 h.p. at 1,295 r.p.m. for a weight of 308 lbs. Petrol was

carried in a tank inside the fuselage just behind the pilot's seat. A gravity feed reserve tank was mounted on top of the starboard plane, and a wind-driven petrol pump was fitted on the port undercarriage strut to pump petrol from the main fuel tank.

The tail unit was the usual wooden-framed, fabric-covered structure, braced by wires. The rudder and fin were of typical De Havilland shape, but were of unusually small area. The undercarriage and tail-skid were entirely conventional in appearance and construction.

The main figures for the D.H.5 were as follows :—

Weight, empty	-	-	1,012 lbs.
Disposable load (apart from fuel)	-	-	260 lbs.
Weight, loaded	-	-	1,492 lbs.
Petrol capacity	-	-	25 gallons.
Top speed at 10,000 ft.	-	-	102 m.p.h.
Top speed at 15,000 ft.	-	-	89 m.p.h.
Landing speed	-	-	50 m.p.h.

The D.H.5 was built late in 1916 and was used in large numbers at the Front in the following year. It was particularly noted for strength, and, according to contemporary reports, could be dived from great heights without any risk of breakage. During the big offensives it was found that the pilot's clear forward view made it an ideal machine for ground "strafing"—that is, ideal from an offensive point of view, for the casualties in this dangerous form of attack were notoriously high.

HOW TO BUILD THE SCALE MODEL

Details of Tools, Materials and Method of Construction

REPRODUCED on p. 363 are three-view General Arrangement drawings of the D.H.5 drawn to a scale of $\frac{1}{72}$ nd. The scale is the same as that chosen for the other models in this series of modern and historical aeroplanes. To change the scale from $\frac{1}{72}$ nd to one better suited to a modeller's particular purpose is a simple matter.

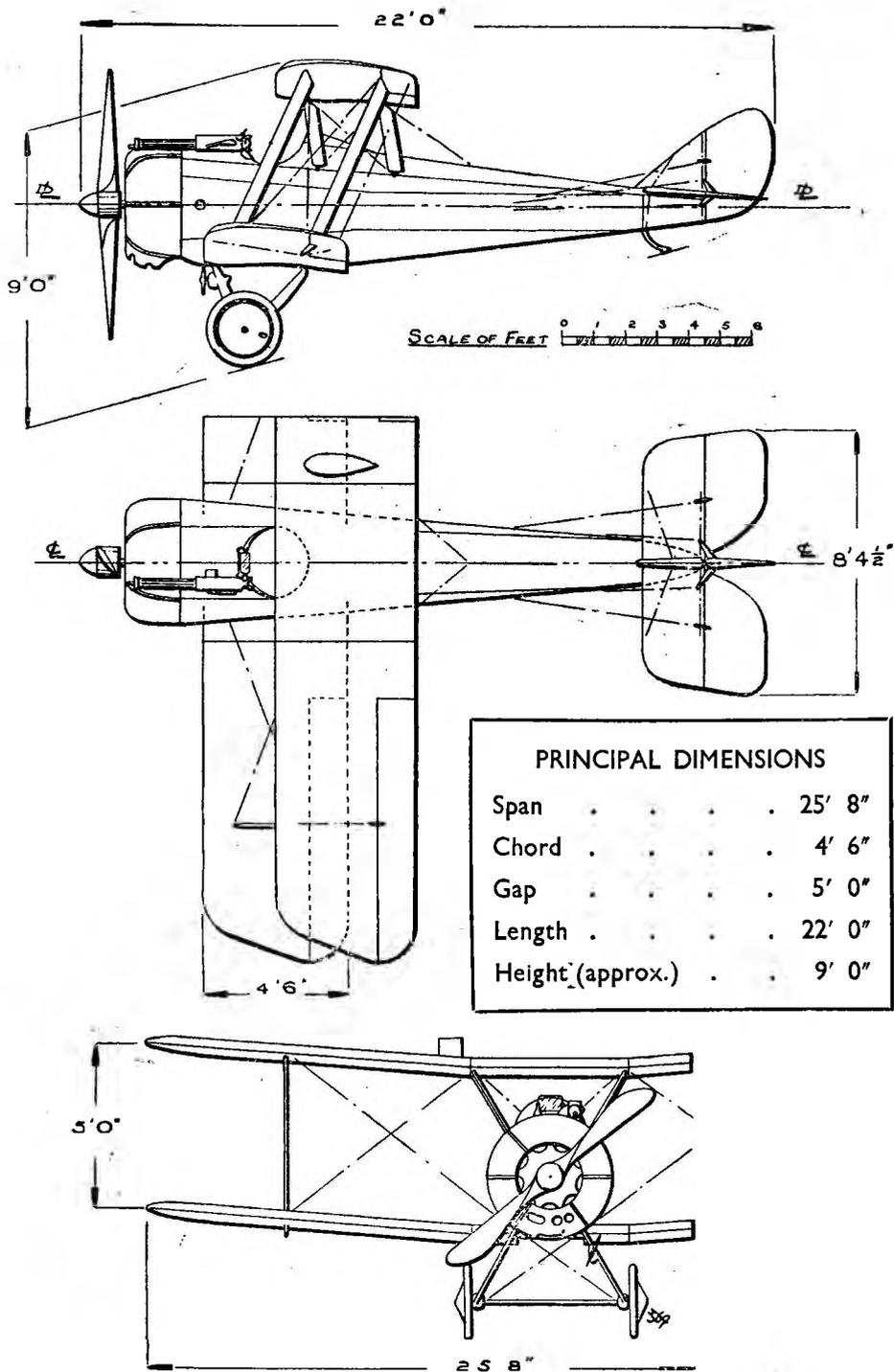
Materials and Tools

THE following materials will be required for this model : a block of wood

$3\frac{1}{8} \times \frac{3}{4} \times \frac{1}{16}$ in. to use for the fuselage ; a piece of wood $4\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{1}{10}$ in. from which to make the wings ; a sheet of fibre, aluminium or celluloid $2\frac{1}{2} \times 1 \times \frac{1}{16}$ in. for the tail unit ; 18 in. of 20-gauge brass wire to use for struts (alternatively a piece of 22-gauge sheet brass or aluminium may be used) ; a coil of fine florist's wire for rigging.

Such parts as airscrew, gun and wheels may be made from odds and ends of material, or, for the less energetic

THE DE HAVILLAND 5 SCOUT



A General Arrangement Drawing showing three-view plans of the De Havilland 5 Scout Biplane.

modeller, there is a series of cast accessories on the market which includes these fittings.

The most essential tools are : a $\frac{1}{4}$ -in. chisel, small plane, penknife, oil-stone, small half-round file, $\frac{1}{16}$ -in. bradawl, fretsaw, small long-nosed pliers, plastic wood, tube of cellulose glue, a penny ruler measuring in $\frac{1}{10}$ ths, $\frac{1}{2}$ ths and $\frac{1}{8}$ ths of an inch. If it is proposed to make a large number of models, it is advisable to get a 6-in. steel rule. These rules, which measure in fractions as small as $\frac{1}{100}$ th, $\frac{1}{8}$ th and $\frac{1}{64}$ th of an inch, may be bought at most tool shops for about 1s. 6d. each.

Method of Construction

IT is to help the beginner over the few odd snags which lurk for the unwary that these notes are primarily written. They will, therefore, have little, if any, interest for the experienced modeller, but may serve to lessen slightly the amount of knowledge which the new modeller would otherwise have to learn by experience.

The first step is to read the instructions and make sure that they are thoroughly understood. Then, with tools and material ready to hand, trace the outline of the fuselage as shown in the side elevation of the G.A. drawing. The engine cowling may either be included

or left out and a turned wooden cowling added later. (Wooden turnings of rotary engine cowlings for $\frac{1}{72}$ nd scale models may be purchased for a few coppers at most model or toy shops.) Next place the tracing on the fuselage block, pin-prick the outline and line it in with a pencil. Provision has to be made for a small cut-out to accommodate the lower plane (see Fig. 1). Now carve away the surplus wood with saw and chisel.

The next step is to draw a centre-line down the upper and lower surfaces of the block and, thereafter, draw the plan of the fuselage on it. Again remove all surplus wood. The fuselage of this machine was polygonal in section, and the shape should appear as in Fig. 1. Forward of the cockpit, the section is circular with a slightly flattened bottom ; aft, it is that of an uneven octagon as far as the tail-plane where it becomes rectangular. At this stage, holes should be made for the centre-section and under-carriage struts. It will be noticed that the cowling for the engine on this model has large "swages" at the joints. To represent these, draw their exact position in pencil, then carefully glue pieces of cotton thread over the lines. When the glue has set, any hairiness of the threads may be removed by singeing them *very quickly* with a lighted match.

Except for the cut-in in the lower plane, which fits the fuselage, both upper and lower planes are identical. Draw the outline, cut them out with the fretsaw and camber them with plane and glass-paper. The outline of the ailerons may be indicated by scoring with a ruler and bradawl. To obtain the dihedral, warm each wing in turn over a candle flame or in the steam from a kettle and bend gently between thumb and fingers, taking care to get the angles on upper and lower planes alike. Now make the holes for interplane and centre-section struts.

The tail unit is simple. Draw the outline of the tail-plane and rudder units (for this purpose the tail-plane and elevators are regarded as a single unit, and the rudder and fin as another), camber them with file and glasspaper, then score the joint between the control

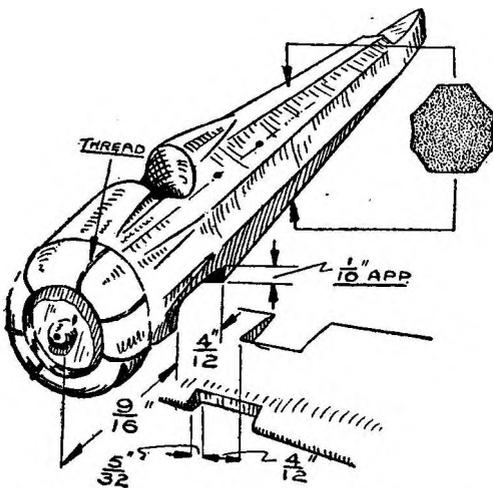


Fig. 1. The finished fuselage block, showing cut-out for lower plane, octagonal cross-section and threads representing cowling joints

A SCOUT OF THE WAR DAYS

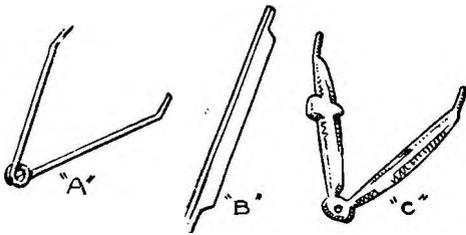


Fig. 2.—Two varieties of struts. The plain wire vee ("A") and the sheet metal type ("B" and "C"). "B" is an interplane strut before streamlining, "C" is the finished left-hand undercarriage vee with petrol pump and the fixed surface with ruler and bradawl.

The interplane, centre-section and undercarriage struts permit of two methods of manufacture. They may be made from wire, in which case the wing struts are plain straight lengths and the undercarriage struts simple vees, as shown in Fig. 2 "A" or they may be cut from sheet metal, when they will look like Fig. 2 "B" and Fig. 2 "C." Cutting struts from thin brass or aluminium is quite a simple matter if a good quality fine fretsaw blade be used.

Wheels are most easily purchased or may be made from linen buttons of appropriate diameter, slit open and filled with plastic wood. The size and shape of the airscrew is shown in the G.A. drawing. It should be made in a similar manner to the fuselage by drawing and cutting out the front view, then cutting out the side view and, finally, by shaping the blades. Build the spinner up from plastic wood. The tail-skid is made from wire. The petrol-tank can be cut from an odd piece of surplus wood.

Method of Assembly

GLUE the lower plane in place beneath the fuselage. Adjust it so that it lies "squarely," and so that the dihedral is even on both sides.

When set, fit the interplane and centre-section struts (without glue) and thereafter the top plane. Adjust the planes for gap and stagger, making any small adjustments to the lengths of the struts which may be necessary. Once everything is snug, dismantle and reassemble with glue.

Glue the undercarriage struts in place and adjust this unit for alignment, track and height. Glue the tail-skid into a hole in the bottom of the fuselage. The tail-plane and rudder units are next glued in place and these should be lined up very carefully with the main planes and with each other. Add the final details, gun, windscreen, airscrew, petrol-tank, and the model is complete.

Bracing wires will improve the appearance of the model, but will limit its scope. Once wires have been fitted, dusting will prove tricky, and it will be necessary to keep it in a fairly dustproof case. Wires should be cut entirely to length, all kinks smoothed out, and they should be held in place by a spot of glue at each end.

Painting and Colour Scheme

THE D.H.5 was almost invariably painted dark green. The under-surfaces of wings, fuselage and tail were left the creamy colour of clear doped fabric. The engine cowling was either grey or green. Struts were of varnished spruce. R.A.F. cockades were painted on wings and fuselage—those on the top plane and the fuselage had a narrow white outline. The rudder had the customary red, white and blue stripes; there was a machine number painted in black, outlined with white, on the rudder, or else painted in white on the fin. The squadron marking and the machine's individual squadron letter or number were painted, usually in white, on top of the upper plane and on the fuselage.

The secret of good painting is to ensure that the wood parts are thoroughly smooth before applying any paint, and, when applying it, to make sure that it is put on evenly and thinly. By using a piece of worn-out glasspaper, the wooden parts of the model can be made very smooth before painting.

Small 2d. or 3d. pots of ordinary enamel and ordinary camel-hair brushes are quite satisfactory for this work. A small liner's brush will be found helpful for detail painting, and in all cases a coat should be given plenty of time to dry before another one is applied.

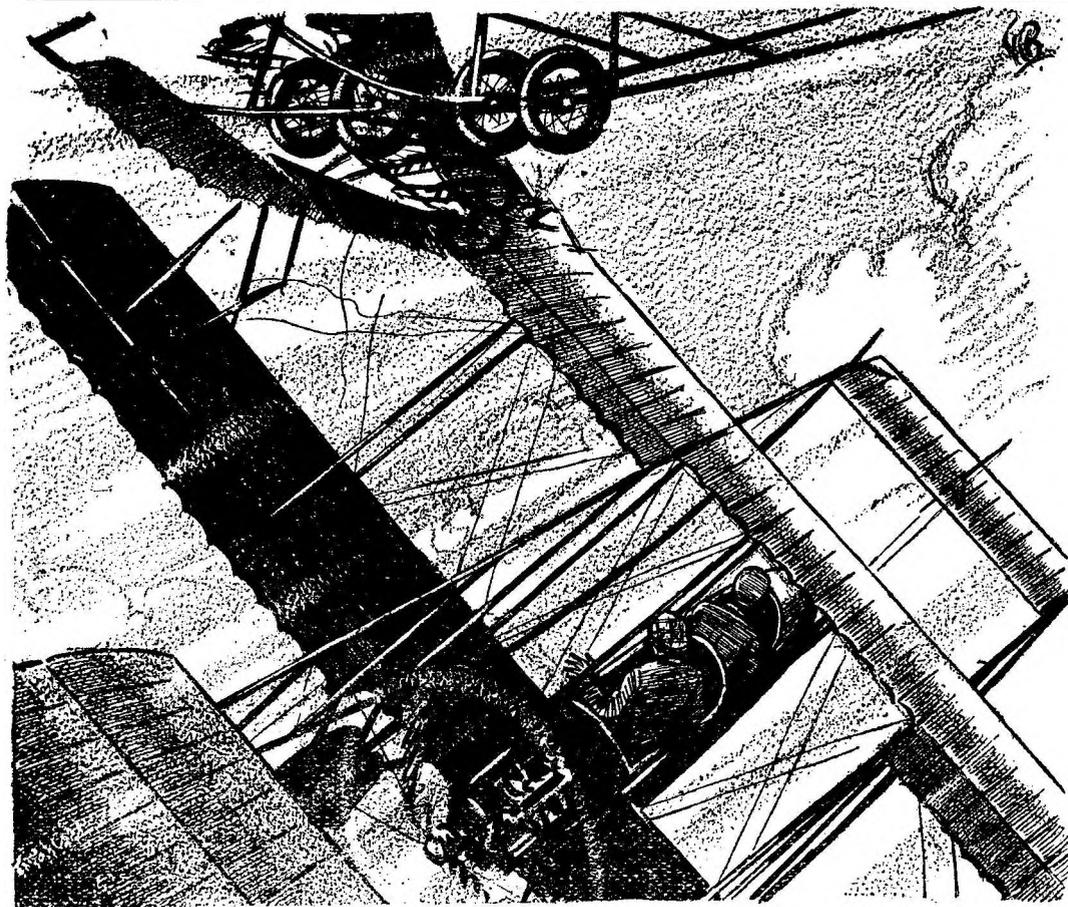
(NEXT MONTH: *The Fairey "Fox"*)

BRITAIN'S WAR BIRDS

The Nieuport Scout



EXTENSIVELY used by both French and British squadrons, the Nieuport Type 23 was perhaps the most successful of the long series of French-designed Nieuport scouts. Produced in 1916-17 and fitted with a 120 h.p. Le Rhône engine, it had a speed of 105 m.p.h., and was flown by such famous "aces" as Ball, Mannoek, Fonck and Guynemer. The Type 23 had a span of 27 ft., a height of 9 ft. 2 in., a length of 19 ft. 1½ in., and, with full war load, weighed 1,203 lbs.



The Caudron's undercarriage slashed across the Farman's wing-tip in a tangle of spars and fabric

A LIFE FOR A LIFE

**War, it is said, Knows Neither Rules nor Restraint, but
in the Realms of the Sky where Men Meet in Combat,
Like the Knights of Old, there May Still Survive a Chivalry
Stronger Even than the Lust of Battle**

By RUSSELL MALLINSON

CHAPTER I

Disaster in the Air

GERRY RENSHAW first handled a joy-stick in the good old days of aviation when a sceptical world was prone to regard flying in the light of the elderly lady who protested in a letter to *The Times* that if humans had been meant to fly, they would have been provided with wings by the Almighty.

To obtain anything approaching a regular income from aviation at that

period was a rare achievement. So when Gerry landed a job as an instructor at Hendlands' newly-formed flying-school in the early summer of 1914, it seemed like the answer to the airman's prayer.

Until then Gerry's flying career had proved precarious. He had extracted a bare living from exhibition flying, looping a 50-h.p. Gnome-engined Bleriot over gaping crowds at flower-shows and fêtes and seaside galas.

It was a suicidal business. The

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Bleriot monoplane, having the gliding angle of a brick, could be pushed into a vertical dive with a minimum of persuasion. But to drag the mono over a loop, with the doubtful assistance of a protesting Gnome laboriously sucking petrol from a hollow crankshaft, required some fearsome yanking.

Gerry collected a percentage of the gate money, and there were additional "perks." Sixpence a head was charged for a close-up view of the roped-off Bleriot, whilst the "daredevil airman" (*vide* local press) explained the controls with a watchful eye for autograph fiends who were wont to scratch their initials on the wings with an enthusiasm that periodically punctured the fabric.

"Sky crashers," who, it was libelously stated, mostly possessed a Scotch accent, congregated outside the flying-ground and obtained a free view of the primitive aerobatics. Gerry dealt with them by means of a simple reprisal. A box was handed round, bearing the appeal "Be a Sportsman," and this subterfuge usually extracted a certain amount of conscience money.

Gerry was not sorry to leave this air circus performance behind him. For, apart from easing the financial situation, instructing at Hendlands Flying School also provided an opportunity of flying new types of machines and of meeting equally varied types of humans.

The school machines were a weird and wonderful collection: French Deperdussin monoplanes with Monosoupape engines, little bamboo and piano wire Caudrons, a 70-h.p. Gnome-engined two-seater Bleriot, and an unwieldy Farman biplane with a rotary engine mounted on bearers a few feet behind the pilot, who sat suspended over space with his back against a cylindrical petrol-tank.

Yet Hendlands was the Mecca of adventurous youth, a meeting-place for wealthy young sportsmen attracted by the new thrills that flying offered, for army and naval officers seconded from their units for instruction, and for a sprinkling of youthful foreigners.

Many of that small coterie of sportsmen were to meet death or glory, or

both, in the Great War, which soon was to flame across the skies. But as, from early morning to dusk, Gerry Renshaw tooled round Hendlands Aerodrome instructing the young idea, the only war that was waged was the constant one of fighting the elements with low-powered machines whose aerodynamic qualities were a nebulous factor and whose stresses and strains were more often calculated by rule of thumb than with wind-tunnels or slide-rules.

INSTRUCTING from the back seat of the lumbering Gnome-Farman one July morning, Gerry watched approvingly his pupil's smooth handling of the machine.

Edrik Baumen, a young German student, was one of Gerry's most promising pupils. A member of Heidelberg University, he was spending a vacation with friends in England, and the opportunity thus presented to him of learning to fly at a safe distance from parental opposition had been too good to miss.

Baumen was an instinctive flier. Like a born horseman, he had good hands, long and narrow, with strong flexible fingers—an airman's hand, quick and sure.

He was still raw, but Gerry, who had developed a sixth sense for appraising flying talent, was aware that Edrik Baumen would go far, if he survived the hazards of those first fateful hours when he must learn to fly alone and carry his fate in his own hands.

Gerry bent forward and tapped the young German's shoulder.

"Climb her," he shouted, "and we'll practise some spirals."

The big front elevator tilted. The Farman climbed slowly, its great planes cushioning the air.

Below, the July sunshine threw the fleeting shadow of the Farman on the smooth grass two thousand feet below. Like a mechanical toy with a plume of white cotton wool curving from its funnel, a train rolled along the railway line flanking the southerly extremity of the aerodrome.

Out of the summer sky a little buzzing

A LIFE FOR A LIFE

Caudron glided down to land. Gerry watched it thoughtfully, knowing the blind spots of the Caudron. The little blue-winged biplane was cutting across the Farman's path and losing height rapidly.

Gerry called to his pupil.

"Right rudder, and don't be afraid of the ailerons."

Sluggishly the Farman turned to the right. Gerry, anxiously watching the swiftly-dropping Caudron, swore beneath his breath. Baumen had not got the wing down. He was almost flat turning. He had noticed it before—the young German's faltering right turns—the only fault he had found with his flying.

The shadow of the Caudron's wings swept across Gerry's face. He gave voice to a sudden shrill cry of warning.

"Stand on that rudder, man! Stand on it!"

He saw Baumen's mouth twist queerly, almost as if with pain. The Farman rolled away from the path of the gliding Caudron. But even now the right wing did not drop steeply enough.

Gerry groaned. If only he had his feet on the rudder-bar. But in those days there was no dual control.

His eyes were fixed tensely on the Caudron as, with painful slowness, the Farman banked away from the path of the dropping machine.

Too late! The Caudron's under-carriage slashed across the Farman's wing-tip. There was a horrible sound of splintering spars and ripping fabric, as the biplane shuddered and fell convulsively away on to its splintered wing. The extremity had been carried away in a cloud of flying splinters and with it had gone the port aileron.

Baumen switched off with the coolness of a veteran and slammed the stick across.

The swift manoeuvre had the effect of momentarily lifting the shattered wing. But it fell away again and the Farman, with something that was a combination of a dizzy side-slip and a flat spin, began to lose height with alarming rapidity.

A pale Gerry rose in his seat as he

made a swift decision. Grabbing the nearest interplane struts he yanked himself out on to the wing. The rush of air beating against his body almost dislodged him, but he hung on grimly, slowly making his way towards the outer extremity of the buckled plane, clinging to the struts with rigid hands.

Gradually his weight took effect. The wing dropped as he accomplished what the single surviving aileron had failed to do.

The Farman was almost on an even keel as it glided earthwards with Baumen still fighting the juddering stick.

A blur of tree-tops swept beneath the hurtling planes.

"Pull up her nose!" Gerry yelled as he clung for dear life to the swaying wing.

Baumen yanked back the stick. The Farman canted skywards and hung poised for a moment that seemed an eternity. Then, robbed of flying speed, it dropped.

The trees held the machine before it could whip down its nose in a spin. There was a splintering crash, a chaos of rending woodwork and tearing fabric. Then, with a last convulsive shiver, the biplane lay draped across the branches of the sturdy oaks like a monstrous crumpled butterfly.

GERRY slithered off the tilted wing, cursing volubly as he ended in a tangle of branches that broke his fall.

He clawed himself to safety, and as he slid down into a fork of the tree he saw the ambulance speeding along the road to the wood.

Something splashed on his hand. He looked up and saw petrol dripping from the fractured tank. An instinctive fear of fire stirred his confused brain into action.

"Baumen! Baumen!" he shouted. "Are you all right?"

Above him, a tangle of fabric and splintered struts heaved convulsively. Then the young German crawled out from the debris, his crash-helmet tilted ludicrously over one eye.

With a sigh of relief, Gerry settled

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himself more firmly in the tree-fork, and lifting his arms, grasped Baumen's shoulders. Cautiously he lowered him down through the branches until the German straddled the branch beside him. Then together they slithered to the ground.

Baumen straightened, his sensitive mouth working.

"Gott . . . I am sorry . . ." he said unsteadily. "I am a *dummkopf* . . ."

"Sorry be damned," snapped Gerry. "It was that ruddy Caudron. . . ."

He paused to wave a reassuring hand to the ambulance men as they came running across the clearing.

"We're all right," he shouted. "You'd better look after the Caudron pilot. I think he may need some iodine. . . ."

Through a gap in the trees he watched the little blue biplane crumple on to one wing as it landed on the fringe of the aerodrome with a buckled wheel.

The ambulance gave the two shaken airmen a lift back to the clubhouse and then lumbered across the 'drome to the comparatively minor Caudron crash.

In the deserted lobby a grave-eyed Baumen grasped Gerry's arm.

"I owe you my life," he said in his slow pedantic English. "If you had not climbed out on to the wing we should have spun into the ground. Thank you. I shall not forget."

"Rubbish," jerked a suddenly embarrassed Gerry bluntly. "If you had lost your head nothing I could have done would have saved us. Come and have a beer. I can do with one. . . ."

GERRY went to the bar. As he ordered drinks he noticed Baumen standing before the notice-board reading a cablegram he had just opened.

The young German's mouth twisted queerly as he thrust the flimsy paper into his pocket and came over to the bar with a pre-occupied air.

"*Prosit!*"

Baumen lifted his tankard.

"Soft landings," said Gerry, and drank deeply.

Replacing his tankard, he rubbed his

bruised forehead reflectively.

"If you hadn't fozzled that right-hand turn, Baumen," he said judicially, "we should have cleared that ruddy Caudron. You've the makings of a good pilot, but that flat turn of yours was just plain bad flying."

Baumen looked down at his right leg.

"Hein, it was what you call a bad show. But you do not understand. I had a riding accident when I was a boy. I injured the muscles of my right thigh, and there is still a weakness. My right leg has not the strength to put a heavy machine like the Farman into a vertical bank."

"A pity," said Gerry sympathetically. "In an emergency you can't always rely on a steep left bank to pull you out of trouble."

Long afterwards, Gerry was destined to remember those prophetic words.

They drank in silence for some moments. Baumen was restless, like a man who had something weighing on his mind.

He said at last :

"I am afraid we have had our last flight together, Renshaw."

Gerry stared in surprise at the young German's earnest face with those intelligent blue eyes.

"Our last flight," he echoed blankly. "You're not going to tell me that the crash has put the wind up you? It's all in the day's flying, my lad."

Baumen shook his head.

"It would take more than that to stop me flying. Nevertheless, we've had our last flight together, my friend."

"What on earth do you mean?" answered Gerry, a trifle impatiently.

Baumen glanced round the deserted lobby and then bent towards the Britisher and spoke in quiet undertones.

"I have received a cablegram from my father. I must return to my home in Dusseldorf at once."

"I'm sorry about that," Gerry said genuinely. "Bad news?"

Baumen was silent for a moment. His face was oddly strained and his eyes held a strange wistfulness.

"My father has warned me," he

A LIFE FOR A LIFE

said at last. "He is a Government official in Berlin and he knows much. Soon there will be war between your country and mine."

"War!" Gerry echoed with a laugh. "Rot! You mustn't believe everything you read in the newspapers, my lad."

For, like most people in those fateful July days of 1914, Gerry, though aware of the unrest in Europe, little dreamt of the imminence of war.

"My father must know," Baumen insisted earnestly. "He is not an alarmist. I must leave for Germany to-night." His voice faltered as he held out his hand. "Good-bye and thank you for all you have taught me, Renshaw. Perhaps we shall meet again. Who knows?"

Mechanically Gerry grasped the proffered hand.

"If I didn't know you, Baumen, I should think this was some kind of a joke."

Baumen shook his head.

"I wish I could think that. *Auf Wiedersehen!*"

Then with a click of his heels he turned away and a rather bewildered Gerry watched him go slowly through the doorway to where his shabby sports-car stood on the tarmac.

He turned for a moment and waved his hand. Then with a clatter of exhaust he was gone.

CHAPTER II On the Western Front

LIKE glittering fireflies in the evening sun, the formation of Camels climbed steeply away from their Flanders' aerodrome and headed for the lines.

His coloured streamers jazzing in the propeller slipstream, Captain Gerry Renshaw glanced back approvingly at the tight formation echeloned behind his vibrating tail.

Something of the instructor still survived in Gerry, an eye for trim flying without unnecessary frills. Where formation was concerned he had moulded his Flight into a plastic unit of fighting efficiency. Wily Huns who hung around to cut off stragglers were seldom suc-

cessful when Gerry Renshaw led a formation on an offensive patrol.

But he was an older, more hard-bitten Gerry. Lines of strain were graven about his eyes and his sensitive mouth. Three years of aerial warfare had left their mark upon him.

Those peaceful days at Hendlands now seemed far away, almost in another world. Flying was a grim business now, with death at one's elbow. Yet so far Gerry had been singularly successful in avoiding the sickle of the dark reaper.

For the first few months of the war he had been kept at Hendlands training pilots for the R.F.C. and R.N.A.S., and he had cursed the fate that compelled him to remain in England when he was itching to get out to France. At last his persistency, aided by the fact that even in those early days he was by way of being a veteran pilot, resulted in Second Lieutenant Gerry Renshaw, with a shining Sam Browne belt and a very new split-air hat, reporting to Adastral House for posting overseas.

He joined a squadron operating on the Belgian coast and participated in the early bombing raids on Friedrichshafen and the German submarine bases at Hoboken and Ostend, flying an Avro biplane with little more power or efficiency than the Bleriot he had light-heartedly looped over rustic flower-shows.

Later he flew B.E.2c's over the Ypres Salient, target-spotting for the artillery. It was all rather primitive, yet it was pioneer work which made possible the highly efficient Art. Obs. organisation which eventually developed.

With the rewards of survival, Gerry gained his three pips and a Flight in a Camel scout squadron. Now he was back in the Ypres salient and, as he leant over the cockpit of the climbing Camel, his brain almost unconsciously registering the familiar landmarks, the sombre desolation of the shell-scarred ridges brought a vague depression.

When first he had floated over that familiar salient in a droning 2c there had been green fields and farmhouses and woods, and lone Huns had trailed

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about the skies to be challenged in sporting combat.

Now, like a giant Moloch, war was sweeping everything into a common pattern of desolation and ruin and destruction. In the air, machines hunted in packs, with 100 per cent. higher efficiency in their killing power.

It seemed to Gerry that war was no longer a sporting affair, but a serious business. The mechanical element had destroyed the adventure as he had known it in the first flush of his youthful enthusiasm.

That the continuous flow of new and youthful pilots to the fighting squadrons served to re-kindle the enthusiasm which inevitably had waned in older men who knew Death played with loaded dice, was not altogether appreciated by Gerry. He was war-weary and a little unbalanced in his mental reactions, though he would have been the last to suspect it.

GERRY led his formation over the Glines at twelve thousand feet. An "Archie" barrage heralded their entry into the enemy zone.

Crump! Dirty smudges of black smoke unfolded around the climbing Camels, smoke slashed with fire and reaching towards them like flaming fingers.

Gerry cursed as his Camel plunged. A touch on the rudder and he changed direction sharply, banking away from the immediate danger zone.

The machine on his right edged closer and flew abreast of his Camel. Dunbar, the sub-leader, a red-headed fighting Scot who had chased many a snooping Hun off Gerry's tail, grinned as he wagged his wings and pointed up into the evening sky.

Huns! Gerry saw them bunched against the horizon. As they wheeled, their wings gleamed momentarily in the sunset glow, like warning heliographs.

Gerry turned east and climbed to meet the hostile formation. As he watched the circling Fokkers, he found himself wondering, as he had done before, if Edrik Baumen might not be in one of those hurtling cockpits.

Strange, how the thought persisted that one day he would meet Baumen again. Memories brought a twisted smile to Gerry's lips. A queer business, war. Officially, Baumen was his enemy to be shot down without mercy if he chanced to cross the path of his flaming guns. Yet he felt no personal animosity towards the likeable young German, and he could hardly imagine Baumen including him in his daily hymn of hate.

The longer one survived, mused Gerry, the less impersonal air fighting seemed to become. He wished his opponents no greater harm than sufficient disablement to prevent them from killing him or any member of his Flight.

The Camels climbed with a snarling discord of Clergets.

Gerry was clawing for height. His opening tactics seldom varied—a concerted dive to bring a maximum concentration of gunfire to bear on the hostile formation. The morale value of the first kill could not be over-estimated. He nosed up into a cloud bank, grey vapour swirling against his face like ghostly hands.

The Britishers were hidden from the Fokker pilots now. But from the clear air above the cloud strata Gerry foxed his quarry, as he manoeuvred over a widening gap in the drifting cumulus.

He rocked his wings and then pushed forward the stick. Wind screaming through their wires, the wedge of Camels dived down through the cloud lane. The Fokkers leapt into the gun-sights and a flame of tracer rippled from the Camels' noses.

The Huns scattered like chaff as the Britishers slashed through their formation. A menacing dark shape streaked across Gerry's Aidis, and his thumbs clamped down on the triggers. A stream of tracer tore into the swerving Fokker. Gerry saw the pilot clap his hands to his blood-streaked face and slump over the controls. The next moment, flaming petrol was pouring from the cockpit.

First blood! Gerry eased the stick slightly towards him and the Camel pulled up in a zoom. Behind him came

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the reassuring snarl of Clergets. Dunbar and the rest were clinging tenaciously to his tail.

The Fokkers circled above them, banking their wings to the sun, the silver discs that were propellers reflecting queer flickering lights.

Swiftly regaining formation, they came screaming down on their leader's flanks like plunging hawks. Spandaus belched tracer at the British machines from every angle. It was the usual thing. The opening chess-board manoeuvres had speedily deteriorated into a general dog-fight.

Gerry found himself twisting and turning amidst a whirl of wings, dodging collisions and ripping a burst of tracer at any Hun whose black-crossed wings swirled across his sights.

It was every man for himself in this mad *mêlée*. Impossible now to recognise his Flight individually. Only fleeting visions of iron crosses or red, white and blue cockades shocked him into sudden realisation of who was friend or foe.

He tensed as he heard the whip and crack of bullets close to his head and kicked on rudder. As the Camel screamed into a vertical bank, a flaming burst from the Fokker riding his tail missed the single-seater's vitals by a fraction of an inch.

Gerry flashed into a tight circle, the Hun still clinging grimly to his tail. His blood pounded and his mouth was dry. He dare not pull out of his turn. That split second when he would present a comparatively stationary target would be his requiem. He had got many a Hun that way himself.

R*AT-tat-tat-tat!* The clatter of a machine-gun unpleasantly close vibrated against Gerry's ear-drums. But it was not the Spandaus he expected. Dunbar's Camel came hurtling down from the blue in a characteristic rush. A salvo of lead lashed into the Fokker cockpit and the machine heeled over and went down in an uncontrolled dive.

Gerry breathed a prayer of gratitude

for young Dunbar's timely aid. He pulled out of the vertical bank and turned his attention to a chequered Fokker that slid diagonally across his sights. He let loose a burst, but it was difficult shooting, and he saw the stream of tracer curve ineffectively past the tilted wing of the side-slipping Boche.

It was a costly miss. The Fokker was diving on a Camel, and Gerry swore as he heard the clang of Spandaus and a close-range burst tore the British machine's tail assembly into a shambles.

A rather white-faced Gerry kicked on rudder and fanned round to fasten on the killer.

He got his Aldis on his elusive quarry, but the Fokker pulled up sharply and Immelmanned back, to dive like an arrow on the Camel's tail.

Gerry pulled up vertically to escape the chattering Spandaus. Heeling over at the top of a ragged loop, he fired as he dived and saw his tracer etch a jagged line along the Fokker's fuselage and rip across the cockpit.

The single-seater fell earthwards, spinning violently, and Gerry slammed the stick forward and went after his quarry in a headlong power dive.

He held his fire, waiting for the Hun to come out of the spin before putting in his final burst. But the Boche evidenced no inclination to pull out of the spin. Gerry saw the ground coming up at an alarming rate, fields and trees and roads swelling as if in the lenses of powerful binoculars. His hand moved restlessly on the stick. Caution urged him to pull out of the dive. The Hun might be foxing, leading him into a trap. The Fokker was spinning down towards a wood which might easily conceal an A.A. battery.

Next moment, he knew that the Boche was not flying to plan. The Fokker slammed down into the trees, and where a few seconds before there had been a spinning machine, there was now only a cloud of debris flung up from the disintegrating fighter and the broken tree branches.

The pilot must have been unconscious or dead when the Fokker started to spin,

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Gerry decided and he cursed his waste of time and effort. He pulled back the stick to regain altitude, and it was then that the Clerget coughed metallically and the prop. began to jerk with a violence that vibrated the Camel convulsively. A few moments later the propeller stopped dead with all the unmistakable signs of a solid seize-up.

Yet, instinctively, Gerry threw over the tap of the two-way tank and sought to remedy the trouble by playing with the switch and engine controls.

There was no response. The Hun's last burst must have crippled his engine, Gerry reflected drearily, and he braced himself for the inevitable forced landing.

Thrusting up his goggles, he leant over the cockpit and surveyed the unfamiliar landscape. The strengthening wind had carried him far into Hunland. It was impossible to glide back over the lines and there seemed nothing for it but to land and give himself up as a prisoner.

He glanced behind and above him to where, high in the sky, fitful bursts of gunfire drifted faintly to his ears.

The hope that one of his pilots might come down to his aid and give him a lift home, faded. Dusk was swiftly deepening into night. He could barely discern the machines now merging into the darkening sky, and he himself was scarcely likely to be visible against the sombre landscape.

He chose a field flanking the wood into which the Fokker had crashed. It was not too close to a main road and was partially masked by trees. He might gain time to get the Clerget revving if that were humanly possible, and if that failed he wanted the opportunity of burning the Camel before he was captured.

CHAPTER III

In the Enemy's Country

GERRY came in low over a hedge and landed in semi-darkness with sufficient way on to carry the Camel into the shadow of the trees.

Dropping down on to the stubble he ducked beneath the wing and made a

rapid examination of the damaged Clerget.

He saw at once that the damage was beyond repair. The engine cowling was ripped with bullets that had penetrated a cylinder. He tried to pull over the prop., but it might have been riveted to a congealed mass of immovable metal.

The throb of a fast-moving car drifted over from the distant road, and with a shrug of resignation Gerry groped in the cockpit for his Verey pistol. The car had pulled up on the road and he saw figures running towards him across the fields.

He lifted the pistol and pulled the trigger. A white light flared into the cockpit, and in a few moments the Camel was a blazing inferno.

Gerry turned and ran, plunging into the cover of the trees. "I'll give 'em a run for their money," he muttered.

He stumbled on through the gloom, zig-zagging between the trees, urged on by a certain cussedness, rather than any hope of avoiding capture.

Bleak visions of a prison-camp flitted through his tired brain and when, suddenly, he tripped over a tangled bush and fell headlong he swore lustily, not so much because of his physical discomfort, but in general spleen against the fate that had brought this futile end to his fighting career.

As he rose to his feet, he saw that his headlong flight had brought him close to a road that ran along the fringe of the wood. He found himself studying that road with quickening interest, examining the line of shell-torn poplars stretching away into the dusk and the shattered spire of a ruined church which lay beyond.

They merged into a pattern, that twisting road, the square-shaped church and the wood, a trinity of landmarks which gave the map-minded Gerry a clue to his position.

He calculated that the wood lay east of the Menin road and close to Menin itself. There was a German aerodrome there, just beyond the railway-crossing on the right. He had led a bombing

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raid over that 'drome only two weeks before, and the familiar landmarks were still fresh in his memory.

Hope stirred in his heart. If he could reach Menin aerodrome, he might yet be able to bag a Boche machine and get away. A forlorn hope, but he consoled himself with the thought that sometimes even the hundred to one chance came off. Anyway, it was better than rushing round without any definite plan—merely asking to be shot on sight.

He started violently as something touched his face. He put up his hand to his cheek and when he withdrew it he was staring at a smear of oil on his fingers. Lifting his head, his puzzled gaze searched the tree branches above him. Then he saw the crashed Fokker hanging nose downwards in a network of boughs, like a giant bat with wings speared by the branches.

The cockpit in the tilted fuselage was empty. Gerry's gaze traversed the ground and he discerned a huddled mass lying across a tangle of bushes.

He crawled forward and bent over the dead body of the German pilot. He was little more than a boy. A bullet wound in his temple explained why the Fokker had not come out of its spin.

A bitter hatred of war stirred in Gerry as he gazed down at the youth he had sent to join his comrades in Valhalla. Then, with a cynical twist of his mouth, he crushed those emotions as often he had done before. War was a merciless business. At this very moment he was being hunted, and he shivered a little as somewhere out in the darkness he heard muffled crashing sounds, warning him that his pursuers were combing the wood.

With sudden decision Gerry rose to his knees beside the dead German. With gentle hands he commenced to strip off the black leather flying-coat and the grey-green officer's uniform beneath.

HIS limbs cramped and chilled, Gerry lay behind the low hedge which afforded him scanty cover whilst he watched the fitful lights and vague figures moving about the hangars of

Menin aerodrome.

For what had seemed an eternity, he had lain sprawled on the undergrowth, calculating his chances of getting near to an unattended machine and making a last desperate effort to fly back to home and safety.

So far his luck had held. It was a pitch black night, and in the confusing darkness he had succeeded in eluding his pursuers by keeping to the fields and the woods during the nightmarish journey which at last had brought him to the railway-crossing and on to the narrow road leading to Menin aerodrome.

The flying-ground was less than fifty yards away. He could see the machines standing before the sheds with mechanics, in curious round hats, tinkering with them.

Gerry's attention was concentrated on a Fokker standing at the end of the line of hangars. A mechanic, apparently testing the engine, switched off and, climbing out of the cockpit, walked away to a neighbouring machine.

Gerry's thoughtful gaze rested on that unattended Fokker. Nicely warmed, for quick starting, it might yet prove his salvation.

He rose cautiously to his knees and peered over the low hedge. He saw that his direct path to the aerodrome was barred by a line of Flemish cottages which appeared to be used as billets.

He swore softly. He had the choice of a wide detour round those cottages, which would waste precious time, or he could risk coming out into the open and walking boldly along the short road leading to the aerodrome boundary.

He decided on the latter course. The black flying-coat and the German officer's tunic beneath, with which he had replaced his own uniform back in the wood, would help his bluff. The chances were that he would not be challenged. But he had no illusions. If he were caught masquerading as a German flying officer, he would be summarily shot as a spy.

He drew a deep breath and slid through the hedge out on to the deserted road.

His heart hammering, he began to

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walk along the road, past a shadowy group of buildings from which sounds of a carousal drifted from behind dingy shutters.

If he were observed, Gerry sought to reassure himself, he would probably not excite suspicion. He would appear to be an officer making his way to the aerodrome from his billet.

He strolled along with a studied nonchalance, although every nerve in his body urged him to run. The aerodrome was not twenty yards away now. Gerry spotted a gateway leading to a small field bordering the flying-ground. He could slip past that gateway and, concealed by the darkness, await his chance to vault the low wire fence and bag that unattended Fokker.

He tensed as a car swung suddenly round a bend in the road, then he moved quickly into the shadows of the huddled group of houses.

But to his dismay the mud-splashed Opel tourer pulled up almost alongside him. As Gerry hesitated, wondering whether to run for it, the car door swung open and a crowd of noisy, laughing figures bundled out on to the cobbles.

They were German officers in various stages of drunkenness. That much Gerry realised, and his panic faintly subsided. As he quickened his pace to move past the swaying figures, he breathed a prayer that they might be too drunk to notice him, or to be particularly observant of his attire.

But that hope was short-lived, and, next moment, he was surrounded by the noisy throng. Swaying on unsteady legs, a flushed young German officer clapped him on the back and hailed him as a friend.

A thoroughly-frightened Gerry heard a clamour of guttural voices in his ears, shouting words he did not understand. But they were friendly, good-natured voices, entirely lacking in any hint of suspicion. The irresponsible crowd of revellers had accepted him unquestioningly as a brother officer and were intent on sweeping him into their merry-making.

Gerry forced a rigid grin to his lips

and with a friendly wave of his hand tried to thrust his way through the jostling throng.

But he was helpless. Someone gripped his arm and he was swept through the doorway of the estaminet on which his unwelcome escort had descended in further pursuit of Bacchus.

Gerry found himself in a dimly-lit café reeking with the smell of beer and stale tobacco. Candles stuck in bottle-necks stood on the cracked mantelshelf and stained tables.

One thought hammered in Gerry's brain; "I've got to get out of this. . . ."

The hectic crowd, clamouring for drinks, had momentarily transferred their disturbing attentions from Gerry.

He leant against the whitewashed wall away from the circle of light thrown by the flickering candles, and watched for a chance to slip through the doorway.

He edged guardedly along the wall and then suddenly he tensed.

A slim young officer, seated at a table near to the door, had sprung to his feet, the glass from which he had been drinking a moment before slipping from his fingers to the floor with a tinkling crash.

"Good Lord!" muttered Gerry, as across the smoke-filled atmosphere he looked into a pair of familiar blue eyes.

Then he laughed, but with a cold sense of defeat, for Gerry knew that the joke was on him.

For it was Edrik Baumen, officer of the Imperial German Air Force, who stood staring at him in incredulous recognition.

CHAPTER IV

A Life for a Life

GERRY'S first impulse was to make a dash for the door. But a rather pale and resolute Baumen now barred his path and his old-time friend had only to raise the alarm to bring a dozen or more fellow officers to his aid.

Gerry relaxed against the wall, resigning himself to the inevitable. His lips twisted. He was thinking of a

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July morning back in England when he had said good-bye to Edrik Baumen and had laughed at his warning of war.

"Perhaps we shall meet again. . . ."

Baumen had proved himself a true prophet, but even he could never have foreseen the strange circumstances of their meeting.

Gerry thought with sudden irritability born of overwrought nerves: "Why the devil is he standing there gaping at me as if I'm a blasted ghost? Why doesn't he get on with it. . . .?"

Now Baumen was walking round the table, a queer, strained smile on his lips. Then the young German was beside him and Gerry felt an arm about his shoulders, urging him towards the door.

For a moment Baumen's eyes held his in an unspoken message of warning. Then he began to talk rapidly in German, and laughed foolishly as though he was sharing some inane joke with his companion.

The noisy crowd clustered round the bar did not heed them. A bewildered Gerry heard the door slam behind him, and next moment felt the cold night air on his face as Baumen, his arm still about his shoulders, drew him rapidly along the darkened street.

Clear of the shadow-shrouded group of buildings, Baumen stopped, and grasping Gerry's shoulders looked into his face.

"Gerry . . . you great *dummkopf* . . . what game is this?"

He spoke haltingly, hesitating over his words as if he had not expressed himself in English for a long while.

Gerry grinned feebly.

"For heaven's sake give me a cigarette and I'll tell you."

Baumen drew a case from the pocket of his tunic. Gerry took the proffered cigarette and, lighting it, inhaled gratefully.

"Damned funny our meeting like this, Baumen," he laughed. "*C'est la guerre*. No, I'm not a spy if that is what you're thinking. I'm a perfectly respectable British flying officer who pinched one of your bloke's uniforms

when I was shot down to-night a mile or so west of Menin. The fellow who crippled my engine crashed and I found him in a wood after I had pulled off a forced-landing. Thought I might get away by using his uniform to bluff my way on to your aerodrome and bag a machine." He ended with a shrug of his shoulders. "But unless I give you a sock on the jaw it's good-bye to all that. . . ."

A smile twitched Baumen's lips.

"Before you—how do you say—sock me on the jaw, perhaps you could do with a drink?"

"Gad, I could!" Gerry ran his tongue over his dry lips.

"Then we will go to my billet. We can talk safely there."

Gerry hesitated.

"It's damned decent of you, Baumen, an' all that, but aren't you forgetting that there's a war on? You'll let yourself in for a hell of a strafe if you try to conceal me. No, my lad, you'd better march me along to your *Ortskommandant*, or whatever you call your Town Major, and get the job over."

"*Donnerwetter!*" Baumen snapped, "must you shout?"

He gripped Gerry's arm and unceremoniously thrust him across the cobbles to a narrow turning between two rows of dingy, shuttered houses. Gerry did not resist. He felt too weary to argue.

WHEN, a few minutes later, Baumen piloted him through a gloomy doorway and into a bare room leading from the passage, Gerry subsided into a tattered arm-chair with a sigh of relief.

Baumen locked the door behind him and, crossing to the fireplace, tossed some pieces of broken ammunition-boxes on to the flames.

Gerry stretched out his chilled hands to the fire.

It was all wrong, of course. He ought to be making some endeavour to escape. He should be displaying the offensive spirit, or whatever they called it in the Air Ministry reports.

But how could a fellow make himself offensive to funny old Baumen standing

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there solemnly pouring out two foaming glasses of beer?

Baumen came across from the cupboard and handed Gerry a brimming glass.

Gerry lifted it, a twinkle in his eye.

"*Deutschland über Alles!*"

Baumen grinned.

"*Strafe der Kaiser!*"

They drank deeply and Gerry put down his glass on the upturned crate beside the camp bed.

"Remember the last time we had a drink together, Baumen?"

The German nodded.

"At Hendlands, before the war. How long ago it all seems!"

Gerry stared into the fire. The war had fallen away from him in that quiet room with the firelight flickering on the walls. He was back at Hendlands, flying over English meadows with the song of wires in his ears.

"Keep the cowling on the horizon. That's better. Little more left rudder. . . ."

He spoke aloud and he heard Baumen laugh.

"Yes . . . I remember, Gerry. And I still fizzle my right turns. . . ."

"The deuce you do," said Gerry. "Bit awkward for air fighting, what?"

Baumen shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm still alive." He broke off abruptly, his hand pressed to his chest and for some moments he coughed violently. "Excuse me. I had a bullet extracted from my lung. It still troubles me."

Gerry looked at him with sympathy. Baumen's pale face seemed older, as if with some ageing of the spirit, and there were purple shadows about his eyes and sensitive mouth.

Baumen turned to the bed and gathered up his helmet and goggles and flying-coat.

"Well, it's been nice, this little talk of ours, Gerry. I've enjoyed it. But we are wasting time."

Gerry rose.

"I'm ready, my lad. Think of me sometimes, eating your damned black bread and watered gruel behind barbed

wire."

Baumen said quietly: "There won't be any prison-camp for you this time, Gerry. I'm going to get you out of this."

GERRY'S rugged face softened. For some moments he was silent.

"Oh, no, my lad," he said at last, "you're not going to risk a court martial for yours truly. It's all in the luck of the game and I've just got to take my medicine. . . ."

Baumen waved an impatient hand.

"Don't behave like a damned fool. All through the war I have had one dread, the fear of being taken prisoner. I know how you must feel, Gerry. Besides, once you saved my life. It is fortunate that I can now repay that debt. . . ."

"Oh, that," muttered Gerry, his face rather red. "Forget it. . . ."

"Listen," Baumen broke in decisively. "I'm testing a Rumpler two-seater to-night. It's fitted with some new night-flying equipment on which I have to report after a prolonged test. . . ."

Gerry ran his hand through his tousled hair.

"What's all that got to do with me . . . ?" he asked.

"A great deal. You will wait for me in a field half a mile from here. I'm going to drive you there now and for heaven's sake try and look more intelligent—like an officer of the Imperial German Air Service. I shall land the Rumpler there and pick you up and fly you back to your side of the lines."

Gerry gasped.

"You're a darned good sport, Baumen. But it's impossible."

"If you are ready to start," came the young German's laconic voice, "we will go. But there is one condition. . . ."

"What's that, Baumen?"

"You will reveal nothing of what you may have observed on our side of the line."

"Of course," Gerry agreed at once.

"Dammit, that's the least I can do. . . ."

"Good. Then we will go."

With a spontaneous gesture, Gerry gripped the German's hand.

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"Thanks, Baumen," he said a trifle huskily, then he laughed, a laugh that held a world of relief. "It's a hell of a war. We ought to be flying at each other's throats instead of drinking good beer as if we're at an old school dinner. By the way, may I have another spot?"

"Certainly, Gerry."

Baumen replenished the glasses. From somewhere out in the darkness came the distant rumble of heavy gunfire.

They did not hear it. Together they drank a silent toast to a friendship which that night had proved to be stronger than the bitterness of war.

CHAPTER V

A Meeting in Mid-Air

MAJOR BARKER leant across the orderly-room table, his lean face a picture of incredulous disbelief.

"You mean to tell me, Renshaw," he said slowly, "that a Boche pilot flew you back to our lines?"

He was staring at a weary-eyed Gerry as if he wondered whether his senior flight commander had taken leave of his senses.

Gerry laughed weakly.

"I admit it sounds a pretty tall story, sir. But it's true. You see this particular German—and, in the circumstances, I think you will allow me to conceal his identity—imagined that he owed me a debt. I happened to have taught him to fly in England just before the war, and on a certain occasion I pulled him out of what promised to be a rather sticky crash. . . ."

The Major drummed his fingers on the desk.

"Remarkable. Sounds as if you've been damned lucky, Renshaw. Tell me what happened, and . . . er . . . take a pew. You look dead beat."

Gerry relaxed into a chair, and for some moments only his tired voice broke the silence. He, too, was conscious of a sense of unreality as he recounted the extraordinary events which had led up to the final curtain when, in a darkened field, he had clambered into the back seat of a Rumpler, and

Baumen had set off into the western sky.

"It was the most extraordinary experience of my life, sir," Gerry went on, "being flown back to my aerodrome by a Boche—and we both had a good deal of wind-up about our gunners or night patrols shooting us down. Fortunately it was a pitch black night, and the Rumpler flew high. We weren't worried much by 'Archie.' The Rumpler landed in a field just beyond the cross-roads, and I hopped out before the machine stopped rolling, so that the pilot would lose no time in opening out and getting away. . . ."

"Most irregular," snapped the Major, but his eyes were sympathetic. "The proper course would have been to have prevented the machine from getting away by some method or other. . . ."

Gerry looked straight at the C.O.

"Would you have done that in my place, sir?"

Harker cleared his throat.

"Umph. Perhaps you're right, Renshaw. But I'm thinking of the attitude the Wing will take up. They'll have you on the carpet for fraternising with the enemy or some such nonsense." He bent over the table, a faint twinkle in his eye. "You'd better vary your report in certain details, Renshaw. You could state that you were knocked out in the crash when you forced landed, and the . . . er . . . amiable Boche who considered himself under an obligation to you insisted on flying you back to our lines whilst you were semi-conscious. That should save you quite a spot of bother."

"Excellent, sir," murmured Gerry.

Whereupon he promptly fainted.

FOR the next week a protesting Gerry was kept on the ground by the M.O., who insisted that he needed a rest.

His story, which promised to be a nine days' wonder, faded into the background before the intensified activity into which the squadron was whirled with the opening of the Spring offensive.

Gerry fretted, hating his inactivity

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when his fellow pilots, weary with the strain of constant combat, flew on offensive patrols from dawn to dusk. He found himself haunting the tarmac, smoking incessantly whilst he watched the eastern sky for returning patrols and counting their sadly depleted numbers as the machines glided in to land. Dunbar, Carstairs, young Marney, fresh from the Pool, and half a dozen others went west during that grim week.

Gerry yearned for the feel of a rudder-bar beneath his feet, for the song of a Clerget in his ears—anything to dispel his depression. Yet, outwardly, he was still the same, the old cheerful Gerry, keeping up the morale of the troops. And, mentally, he kicked himself for ingratitude to the fates in general and Edrik Baumen in particular for having saved him from a German prison camp.

ON the morning that Gerry's period of inactivity officially ended, he woke with a sense of reprieve. His Flight was detailed for trench "strafing" and firing on ground-targets. It was an evening show to assist the advancing infantry to consolidate their position. In the afternoon Gerry lectured the young idea on low altitude tactics, secretly alarmed at the rawness of the pilots recently posted from the Pool. Most of them had had only a few hours' grooming over the lines.

But Vincent and Sandys, who had already survived three months of air fighting, could be relied upon, and Gerry was grateful for their steadying influence on his flanks when towards six that evening he led his formation off the ground.

Storm clouds drifted across the sky with a threat of rain. Below, the evening mists crept over the dreary landscape. The low ceiling did not worry Gerry, but the bad ground visibility threatened the success of the show.

As they neared the sombre desolation of the lines, he found himself groping for familiar landmarks. The havoc of the intensive artillery concentration seemed to have crumpled the definite trench lines into a hopeless morass of

mud and shell-holes.

He came down to five hundred feet and, spotting khaki-clad figures in a shallow trench, knew that he had not yet reached his objective. He flew on through the mists, and salvos of shell-bursts, traversing the battle-ground, rocked the Camel's wings.

Suddenly, the grim tattoo of a machine-gun rose above the roar of the engine. Like a steel whip, a line of slugs slashed through his starboard wing and a flying-wire twanged as a bullet snicked it. Gerry threw his weight on the rudder-bar, yawing the Camel away from the flaming tracer. He caught a fleeting vision of grey-clad figures crouching in a belt of shell-holes, and fired a green Verey light as a signal to his Flight to break up for the attack. Then he pushed the stick forward and dived.

Shell-holes, with fetid green waters gleaming dully, raced into his line of vision. He pumped a burst of lead on a dead sight into clustered grey figures sprawled on a muddy slope. He pulled up in a zoom and, banking steeply, dived back to the attack.

Tracer reached up at him like flaming fingers as he skimmed the ground. But he was an elusive target, and his speed demanded the maximum deflection. He banked dizzily on one wing and wheeled for a fresh attack, diving again and again through a smoking hell in which he felt strangely alone.

Yet the chatter of machine-guns around him and his fleeting glimpses of diving Camels zig-zagging on to their targets told him that the rest of the Flight were as busily engaged.

Gerry worked his rudder-bar like harmonium pedals. His legs ached, and he felt the cold sweat at his temples. Then his gun stopped suddenly and he zoomed out of the chaos. A jam. Gerry leant forward, straining against the safety-belt, and working feverishly to remedy the faulty lock.

He got it right at last and let loose a trial burst. Then, as his hands relaxed on the grips, there was a sudden crackle at the back of his head, and he felt the longerons quiver under the bite of steel.

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He kicked the rudder over and slammed the stick across, and as he cartwheeled into a screaming bank he caught a glimpse of a chequered Fokker diving down on his tail like a hawk.

He side-slipped away from another arc of tracer, and thanking heaven that his gun was functioning again, pulled back the stick and zoomed for altitude.

The Fokker banked to follow him, the pilot turning with an oddly uncertain right turn which stirred some chord of memory in Gerry's brain. But in the stress of those moments he did not at once realise then the significance of that faulty manoeuvre.

At the top of the zoom Gerry kicked out, his head swivelling from side to side. In a split second he registered his quarry and went down, with the Fokker leaping into his ring-sights. He had a fleeting vision of iron-crossed wings, of a cockpit, in which a lifted face suddenly stood out clearly, a familiar face that brought a gasp from Gerry's lips.

It was Edrik Baumen.

CHAPTER VI Shot Down!

GERRY'S hands faltered on the grips and his flaming burst went wide. A moment later he had paid for his weakness with a shattered instrument-board as a line of slugs slashed across the cockpit.

But he scarcely heeded the damage. One thought alone was hammering in his brain. The Fokker pilot was Edrik Baumen, who would kill him if he did not kill him first.

Masked by his engine as he had dived, Gerry realised that Baumen could scarcely have recognised him. And if he had, Gerry thought with tightening lips, would Baumen have withheld his fire? This was war. Friendship and gratitude had no place in the rules on either side. His duty as an officer was "To display the offensive spirit in the face of the enemy. . . ."

He heard the scream of wires as the Fokker dived, and a feeling of nausea came over him as he knew what he must do.

He wrenched the Camel round with the whip and crack of bullets close to his head. The Fokker hurtled past him as he banked and Gerry kicked on rudder and went down on the single-seater's tail. He saw the Fokker's nose begin to rise, as he had anticipated. Baumen was too old a hand to provide a sitting shot by holding into the dive. Another moment and he would bank into a tight circle, pull out, either to the left or to the right.

A memory flashed into Gerry's brain, a memory of a firelit room where he had sat listening to Baumen's laughing voice.

"I still fizzle my right turns, Gerry."

And it came to Gerry in those moments when his hand was cold on the gun-grips, that Baumen *would not risk a faulty right turn*. It was a hundred to one that, instinctively, he would pull out to the left.

The slip-stream smashing against his face, Gerry eased the rudder, deflecting his guns a trifle to—the right. He would give Baumen a chance. It was madness, perhaps, but he had not the heart to take advantage of his gammy right leg.

He let loose a flaming burst, confident that it would miss the hurtling Fokker. He might not have fired at all, had it not been for the realisation that the duel was now being watched by members of his Flight, fast climbing to his aid.

The flaring tracers reached down. The Fokker faltered and then, with a juddering right turn, banked clean into the burst.

Gerry's hand clenched convulsively on the stick. The Fokker's wing-tip had disappeared in a flying medley of splinters and an aileron floated away in the slipstream.

For what seemed an eternity to Gerry, he watched the stricken machine fall slowly away on to its crippled wing, and then, because his rigid hand had not pulled the Camel out of its dive, he found himself flashing perilously close to the spinning Fokker. As he passed he caught a fleeting glimpse of Baumen's pale face peering up from the tilting cockpit in startled recognition. Then

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something that might have been a smile twitched the German's lips and he raised his hand. . . .

Next moment, the spinning Fokker was gone. Gerry circled, watching the dim outline of the machine grow fainter in the mists. He saw a flash of flame and something caught at his heart like physical pain.

Mechanically, he reached for the Verey pistol beside him and fired a red flare to reassemble the survivors of his Flight.

THERE was a hectic binge in the Squadron mess that night, and Gerry Renshaw was the leader of the revels. He drank deeply with a dull resolve to stifle thought and to forget. He had a lot to forget, the memory of a Fokker spinning down to its doom in the mists. The memory of a brave man's last salute, the smile on Baumen's lips when he went.

His hair awry, Gerry sat at the piano thumping out a popular song. He was drunk, but not quite drunk enough. He reached with an unsteady hand for the glass of whisky and soda on the piano. His violent start, as from somewhere out in the darkness there came the sudden snarl of an unfamiliar engine, made him realise how overwrought were his nerves.

There was a sudden tumult of voices and a rush for the door.

"My God! What infernal cheek!" gasped Major Harker. "It's a

Boche . . . !"

A swaying Gerry stood in the doorway watching the iron-crossed raider as it zoomed back into the night sky and was lost in the prevailing gloom.

But something had fluttered down from the Fokker D.8 and there was a rush of figures across the 'drome to retrieve it.

Gerry turned slowly back into the mess and had just retrieved his drink when he heard the Major's voice from the doorway.

"That impudent Boche dropped a streamer-message and it's addressed to you, Renshaw!"

"To . . . me?" Gerry echoed thickly.

He took the envelope from the Major's hand and opened it with unsteady fingers. Then as he read the words in sharp German handwriting, he sobered. It was a message from Edrik Baumen, and as he read it there came upon him a sense of loss, of parting, and yet with it a feeling of deep relief.

"Good shooting, Gerry," he read. "But you didn't get me. I piled her up nicely and got clear before the petrol went up. But I'm finished just the same, old chap. I knew when the doctors patched me up last year that I had only a few months to live, and now my flying days are drawing to a close. Perhaps we shall meet beyond the last horizon. If so, we shall be in good company. Auf Weidersehen."

A CORRESPONDENCE CLUB FOR READERS OF "AIR STORIES"

FOR the benefit of the many readers who have asked to be put into touch with correspondents interested in Aviation the following scheme has been instituted and is open to all readers of AIR STORIES.

FIRST write the usual letter you would first send to a new friend with whom you had never corresponded before—giving your age, your particular interests in aviation, your hobbies, and a general idea of the kind of correspondent you seek and whether he should be resident at home or abroad.

THEN send this letter to us, together with a stamped self-addressed envelope. From the letters at our disposal, we then select one from a reader

whose age and interests are in common with your own and send it to you, at the same time forwarding your own letter to this particular reader. If there is no suitable correspondent waiting at the time of receiving your letter, we will retain it until one is available.

Readers living abroad must enclose a postal reply coupon instead of a stamped self-addressed envelope.

All letters should be addressed to "Correspondent," AIR STORIES, 8—11 Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2. If, at any time, an additional correspondent is required, it is only necessary to write us another letter, on the same lines as before, when a further exchange will be made.



Editorial Offices: 8-11 Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2

THE remarkable developments that are now taking place in the performance and armament of military aircraft have so revolutionised all previous conceptions of aerial strategy and tactics that few experts to-day would care to venture a definite opinion as to the lines on which any future air war will be waged, or even to prophesy the types of military aircraft that will predominate in, say, five years' time.

The lessons of the last war are of little use as a guide to the future, for whereas in those days the scout 'plane, or single-seater fighter as it is now called, invariably had a substantial speed supremacy over the two-seater or bomber and could engage or break off the action at will, to-day the position is very nearly reversed. Certainly, our latest types of bombers, such as the new twin-engined Bristol Blenheim and the single-engined Fairey Battle, can out-fly any single-seater fighter yet in service in the world to-day, and, protected as they are by their formidable defensive armament, they are not easily going to be deterred from attaining their bombing objectives. True, we have in new machines, such as the Hawker Hurricane and Supermarine Spitfire, single-seater fighters considerably faster than any now in service, but, even so, their margin of speed over the new bombers is nothing like so great as in the war days.

The problems involved by these amazing advances in performance are fascinating ones—for those upon whom

there rests no responsibility for decisions that may affect the future safety of a nation—and we were particularly interested in a recent letter from an ex-R.F.C. reader who has some rather startling ideas on the subject. Though he prefers to remain anonymous, he is known to us as a pilot with a distinguished war record.

He writes as follows:

Is the Fighter Doomed?

"AS a former member of the R.F.C. with the average scout pilot's experience of aerial warfare as gained from the butt-end of a Vickers gun, I have often wondered whether the knowledge we won at such great cost in the last war is ever likely to be of any use to us in the event of another big 'trouble.'

"For example, if all we hear as to the speeds and gun-power of our latest bombers is correct—and I see no reason to doubt it—surely the single-seater interceptor fighter ceases to have any excuse for further existence? Even in its very latest form, it can be only slightly faster than our fastest new bombers, and therefore exceedingly unlikely to be able to live up to its description and 'intercept' a modern bomber.

"Further, assuming that it did manage to find and catch up with one of these new raiders, how could it hope to bring it down? What with nose and tail gun-turrets, and prone gunners' posts in the floor, there are mighty few 'blind spots' in a modern bomber, while even a Spitfire, it seems, is just as vulnerable from the rear as was my old Camel. Superior manoeuvrability, you say? I doubt it. A well-handled bomber like the Fairey Battle would not give much away in this direction to the fastest fighter, apart from which, manoeuvrability without superior speed is of no great offensive value.

"My guess is that the single-seater fighter, with its one-way line of fire, is finished, and that its place will very soon be taken in every air force by high-speed bomber-fighters carrying a crew of two and armed with enough remote-controlled guns to cover as many possible angles of attack as the design permits. I may be wrong, but I have yet to

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see a good case made out for the fighter of to-day. Perhaps an AIR STORIES reader will take up the cudgels ? ”

Our correspondent certainly succeeds in fairly effectively damning the single-seater fighter, and, though all such arguments must necessarily be largely theoretical so long as the exact performance of our latest warplanes remains an official secret, we will gladly publish any letters that present the other side of the case.

Selling Britain's Warplanes Abroad

THE next war in the air is also a matter of concern to another reader, Mr. F. D. Ashton, of Spalding, Lincs.

“ Why is it,” he asks, “ that Great Britain sells to other countries, that one day may be fighting against us, such up-to-date machines as Hawker Furies, Nimrods and Gloster Gauntlets, while our own Air Force is equipped with the same and even inferior machines ? ”

“ Japan has Nimrods, Finland has Bulldogs, the Danish Army has Gauntlets, and there are many other examples. Even Spain is being supplied with Hawker Furies of the latest type, and if at some future date she takes it into her head to want Gibraltar back, and tries to take it with the aid of some other country, our pilots will be shot down by British machines ! Why is this allowed ? I suppose the next machine to be sold to a foreign country will be the Fairey Battle ! ”

The position is not quite so bad as our correspondent imagines. Actually, before any British-built military machine may be exported, permission has to be obtained from the Air Ministry, and this is granted only when the type in question is already obsolescent and there is in hand a newer machine of even higher performance. Thus, whilst we are now selling Furies abroad, we are re-equipping our own Air Force with Hurricanes and Spitfires, which are considerably faster and altogether superior.

It is true that, under the present system, there is a brief interim period when a foreign buyer may be using machines identical with those actually in service with the R.A.F., but, even so, we are usually safeguarded by a great superiority in numbers.

Reminiscences of the War

FROM the British West Indies comes the following letter from a reader who is so interested in Air-War history that he has decided to begin collecting a library on the subject. He is Mr. E. H. Evans of Kingston, Jamaica, and he writes :

“ As an ex-soldier and an ardent admirer of the Royal Air Force, I have long been a subscriber to AIR STORIES.

“ I remember when Major Bishop was sent home from a nearby unit with a transfer to the R.F.C. and have always followed his career with special interest. I was also somewhere around Arras when Richthofen was reported killed by rifle or machine-gun fire from troops whom he was attacking during a British push. I say ‘ reported killed ’ as, of course, I have no authentic evidence.

“ As I am now intending to keep a library of air fighters’ achievements in the World War, I should be much obliged if you would supply me with a list of some of the best-written memoirs of air fighters—British, French and German. The Germans are so bombastic that I imagine their books will be somewhat highly-painted, but I should, nevertheless, like to read some of the best-translated reminiscences of their scout pilots.”

We have sent our correspondent a list of suggested books for his library, and we think he will find, on investigation, that the memoirs of most of the leading German warbirds are no less modest than British books of war-flying reminiscence, and are written by equally good sportsmen.

A New Service for Readers

SO many applications are now being received from readers wishing to exchange letters with other aviation enthusiasts that it has become impossible to find space in the magazine for all their names and addresses. A new and simple method of introduction has, therefore, been devised by which any reader who wishes to take advantage of this AIR STORIES’ service can be put into touch with a suitable correspondent with the least possible delay. Full details of this new system are given on p. 382 of this issue, and no charges of any kind are made in connection with the scheme.

Next month’s issue will be notable for a particularly good story of aerial warfare in Spain, written by a former R.A.F. officer who has an intimate knowledge of Spain and was actually in the country on the outbreak of the revolution. G. M. Bowman contributes another of his great stories of war-time flying adventure, and Ernst Udet, Campbell Hughes, W. E. Johns and A. H. Pritchard combine to make the coming issue one of outstanding interest.



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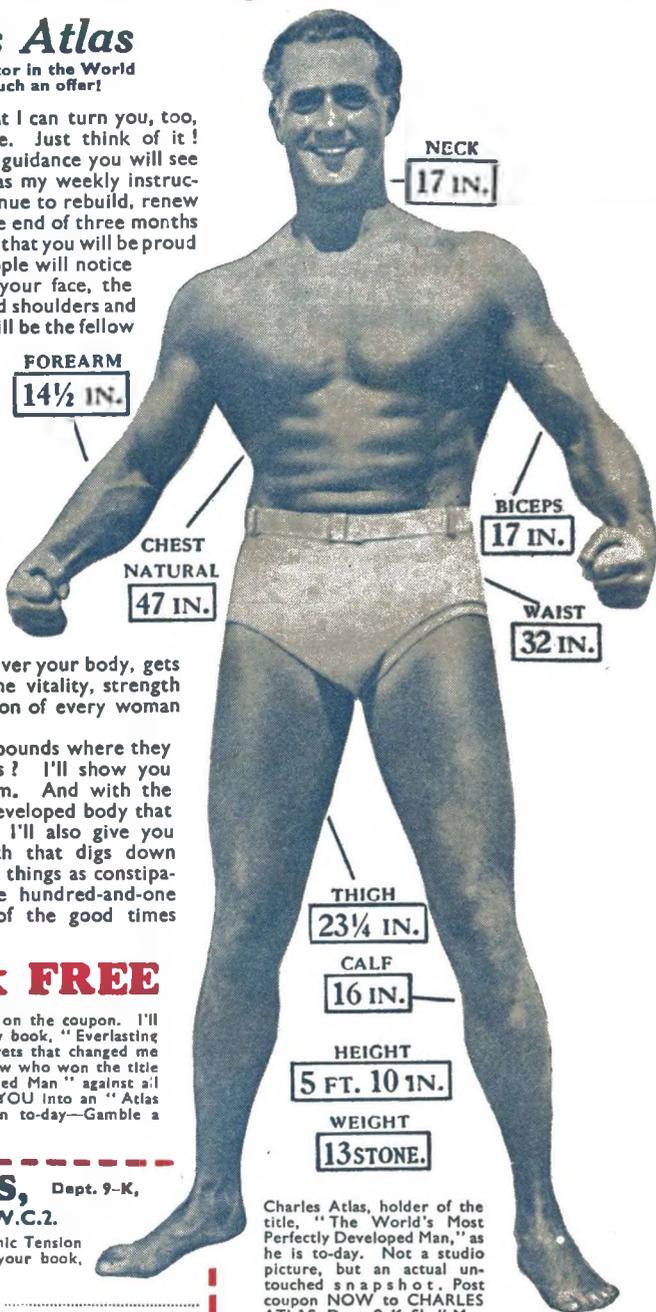
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