

10¢

THE LONE EAGLE

FEB.



FIGHTING ACE

A THRILLING PUBLICATION



MONKEY FACE
A Complete Novelette
By **GEORGE BRUCE**



FEATURING THE WORLD'S GREATEST
SKY FIGHTER IN WINGED THUNDER
A Full Book-Length
WAR-AIR NOVEL

ALSO
HUGH JAMES
DARRELL JORDAN
LT. SCOTT MORGAN

Missing page
Inside Front Cover

BIG MUSCLES - SMASHING STRENGTH GLOWING HEALTH!

I'll Prove in the first 7 days - that I can Make You a New Man!

DO YOU want big, smashing, sledge-hammer muscles all over your body? Husky, broad shoulders? A deep, powerful chest? All the pep and vigor of a "hard as nails" athlete?

Give me just 7 days—one short week. That's all I need to give you the **PROOF** that I can make you a *new man*—give you a real he-man build and glowing health that resists sickness, ends pimples, skin blemishes, constipation and other troubles.

Read the reports below from just a few of the hundreds of fellows whose bodies I have made over. That's the kind of **RESULTS** you can get with my discovery—*Dynamic Tension*. My free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength," tells how I can give YOU a body that women will admire and men will envy.

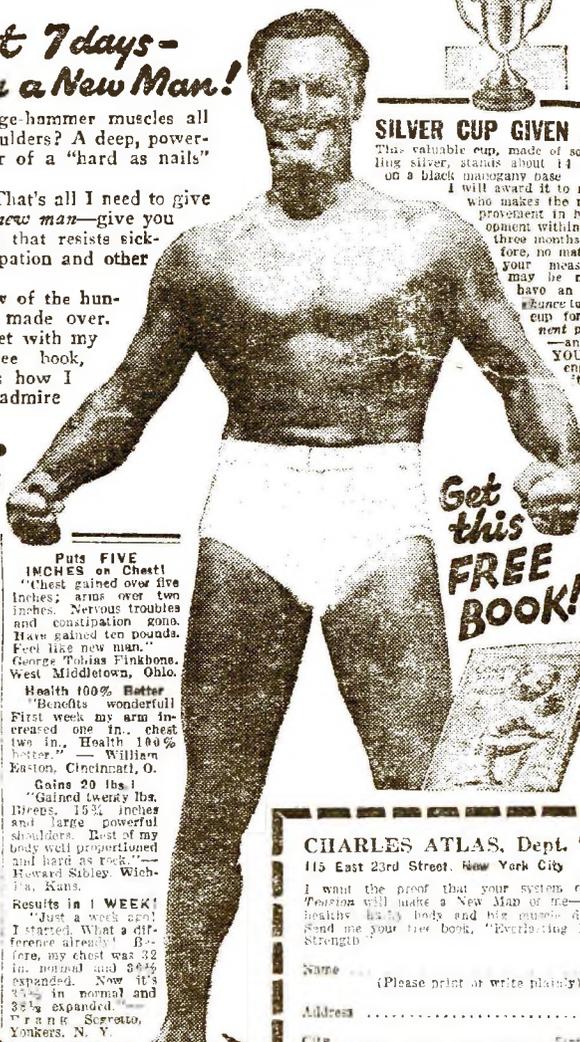
The 97-lb. Weakling Who Became "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man"

LOOK at this new photo of me. This is *exactly* how I look today. Yet once I was a soft, skinny, 97-lb. weakling! I always felt timid, self-conscious—never had good times—couldn't eat a square meal and feel well forward. Then I discovered the secret of *Dynamic Tension*—my entirely new and different method of body building. It changed my entire life—gave me the body you see here. It has twice won for me the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man"! And what my amazing system did for me—what it has done for hundreds of other fellows like yourself—it can now do for YOU, too!

I back up that promise with **RESULTS**—quick **RESULTS**. You begin to SEE and FEEL the difference at once. What's more, it's actual fun to build a husky body by *Dynamic Tension* way, at home, in just a few minutes of your spare time daily. And you don't have to buy any contraptions or gadgets that might strain your heart or other vital organs.

Mail Coupon for My Big 48-Page Book — FREE!

Make me **PROVE**, in just 7 days, that I CAN give you the big, smashing muscles—powerful shoulders—deep chest—and glowing, all-around health you have always wanted. Take the first step today. Mail coupon for your **FREE** copy of my big Book, "Everlasting Health and Strength." Address me *personally*. I'll send you the book by return mail. Show me your e-mail action. Do it NOW! CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 77-A, 115 East 23rd Street, New York City.



SILVER CUP GIVEN AWAY

The valuable cup, made of solid sterling silver, stands about 14 in. high on a black mahogany base. I will award it to my pupil who makes the most improvement in his development within the next three months. Therefore, no matter what your measurements may be now, you have an equal chance to win this cup for permanent possession—and with YOUR name engraved on it.

Get this **FREE BOOK!**



Puts FIVE INCHES on Chest!
"Chest gained over five inches; arms over two inches. Nervous troubles and constipation gone. Have gained ten pounds. Feel like new man."
George Tobias Finkbone, West Middletown, Ohio.

Health 100% Better
"Benefits wonderful! First week my arm increased one in., chest two in., Health 100% better." — William Easton, Cincinnati, O.

Gains 20 lbs.!
"Gained twenty lbs. Broke 154 lb. bench and large powerful shoulders. Best of my body well proportioned and hard as rock."
Howard Sibley Wichita, Kans.

Results in 1 WEEK!
"Just a week and I started. What a difference already! Before, my chest was 32 in. normal and 3 1/2% expanded. Now it's 34 1/2 in. normal and 3 1/2% expanded."
Frank Scretto, Yonkers, N. Y.

CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 77-A
115 East 23rd Street, New York City

I want the proof that your system of *Dynamic Tension* will make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, happy body and big muscle development. Send me your free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

Name (Please print or write plainly)
Address
City State

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THE LONE EAGLE



FIGHTING ACE

Vol. X, No. 2

BRUCE McALESTER, Editor

February, 1936

A Full Book-Length War-Air Novel

Featuring the Lone Eagle in

WINGED THUNDER

By LIEUT. SCOTT MORGAN

(Profusely Illustrated)

A Grim Scourge of Blindness Suddenly Strikes Airmen of the Allied Cause—and It's Up to John Masters, World's Greatest Sky Fighter, to Roar Through Flaming Skies in Quest of a Fiendish Hun Secret..... 14

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Manuscripts must be accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes, and are submitted at the author's risk.



Read our companion air magazine: SKY FIGHTERS—10c at all newsstands

I'LL SEND MY FIRST LESSON FREE

It shows how EASY it is to learn at home to fill a GOOD JOB IN RADIO



J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute.
The man who has directed the Home-Study Training of more men for the Radio Industry than any other man in America.

Here's Proof

\$1,000 A YEAR WHILE LEARNING



"During the course of my training, I spare time earnings from sales and service netted me an average of \$1,000 to \$1,500 yearly. For about two years, while other work was practically out, I cashed in nicely on Radio."
JAMES R. RITZ,
3525 Chapline St.,
Wheeling, W. Va.

\$5,000 ON REPAIR WORK ALONE

"I am doing around a \$5,000 business in repair work alone, not counting the new Philco Radio sales."



C. D. THOMPSON,
R. F. D. 2,
Troy, Alabama.

DOES POLICE RADIO WORK



"I am now doing the work on the Radio cars of the Police Department of West Seneca township. This is not a full-time job, but averages about \$25.00 a week. Besides this, I am working as assistant manager in a local Radio store and average \$20.00 a week on this job. I say, 'Take the N. R. I. Course—it is the best.'"
J. M. TICKNOR,
111 Edison Street,
Buffalo, N. Y.

Clip the coupon and mail it. I will prove to you that I can train you at home in your spare time to be a **RADIO EXPERT**. I will send you my first lesson **FREE**. Examine it, read it, see how clear and easy it is to understand. Then you will know why many men with less than a grammar school education and no technical experience have become Radio Experts and are earning more money than ever before as a result of my training.

MANY RADIO EXPERTS MAKE \$30, \$50, \$75 A WEEK

In about 15 years, the Radio Industry has grown to a billion dollar industry. Over 300,000 jobs have been created by this growth, and thousands more will be created by its continued development. Many men and young men with the right training—the kind of training I give you in the N. R. I. Course—have stepped into Radio and quickly increased their earnings.

GET READY NOW FOR JOBS LIKE THESE

Broadcasting stations use engineers, operators, station managers and pay up to \$5,000 a year. Manufacturers continually employ testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, servicemen, buyers, for jobs paying up to \$4,000 a year. Radio operators on ships enjoy life, see the world, with board and lodging free, and get good pay besides. Dealers and jobbers employ servicemen, salesmen, buyers, managers, and pay up to \$75 a week. My book tells you about these and many other interesting opportunities to make more money in Radio.

MANY MAKE \$5, \$10, \$15 A WEEK EXTRA IN SPARE TIME WHILE LEARNING

The day you enroll I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets which quickly show you how to do Radio repair jobs common in most every neighborhood. Throughout your training, I send you information for servicing popular makes of sets! I give you plans and ideas that have made good spare time money for hundreds of fellows. My Training is famous as "the Course that pays for itself."

TELEVISION, SHORT WAVE, LOUD SPEAKER SYSTEMS INCLUDED

There's opportunity for you in Radio. Its future is certain. Television, short wave, loud speaker systems, police Radio, automobile Radio, aviation Radio—in every branch, developments and improvements are taking place. Here is a real future for men who really know Radio—men with N. R. I. training. Act now to get the training that opens the road to good pay and success.

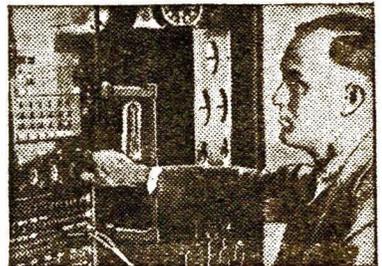
YOU GET A MONEY BACK AGREEMENT

I am so sure that N. R. I. can train you satisfactorily that I will agree in writing to refund every penny of your tuition if you are not satisfied with my Lesson and Instruction Service upon graduation.

FREE 64-PAGE BOOK OF FACTS

Mail the coupon now. In addition to the sample lesson, I send my book, "Rich Rewards in Radio." It tells you about the opportunities in Radio, tells you about my Course, what others who have taken it are doing and earning. This offer is free to any ambitious fellow over 15 years old. Find out what Radio offers you without the slightest obligation. **ACT NOW!** Mail coupon in an envelope or paste on a 10 postcard.

J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute, Dept. 6B99
Washington, D. C.



You Get PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE with Radio Equipment I GIVE YOU

I'll show you how to use my special Radio Equipment for conducting experiments and building circuits which illustrate important principles used in such well-known sets as Westinghouse, General Electric, Philco, R. C. A., Victor, Atwater-Kent and others. You work out with your own hands many of the things you read in my lesson books. This 50-50 method of training makes learning at home easy, interesting, fascinating, intensely practical. You learn how sets work, why they work, how to make them work when they are out of order. Training like this shows up in your pay envelope—when you graduate you have had training, and experience—you're not simply looking for a job where you can get experience.

I have helped hundreds of men make more money



MAIL THIS NOW!

J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute, Dept. 6B99
Washington, D. C.

I want to take advantage of your offer. Without obligating me, send me your Free Sample Lesson and your book, "Rich Rewards in Radio."
(Please Write Plainly.)

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CITY..... STATE..... "R"

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Choose Your Field NOW For Success

Will you master fate or will fate master you? That's a question deserving your honest answer . . . right now! Actually it is all up to you. You can do with Life almost what you will. LaSalle will help you establish yourself for real success by providing you with the comprehensive, specialized training for which it is so famous. Choose your field . . . now! Check the coupon below for the free booklet you want us to send you. It can be your first step toward assured success.

Opportunities in Traffic Management

The field of Traffic Management offers real opportunity only to the man who knows. Spare time study and the will to succeed have pushed scores of Traffic employees up the ladder to financial success. Many LaSalle-trained traffic managers—both in the railroad and industrial field—now command salaries of \$3,000.00 to \$5,000.00 a year—and better. Investigate. Find out how you can qualify for these higher positions through LaSalle home-study and guidance.

Law for Business Success

And it isn't necessary to practice law to get this Success. In fact probably most of the men who study law today have no idea of taking the bar examination or becoming lawyers—they want law training to give them mastery of men and situations in business. You know that—

- (1) the man with legal training is a leader—not a follower.
- (2) legal training keeps your mind—clears away the problems that stump the ordinary fellow and makes you master instead of man.
- (3) knowledge of law simplifies the complications of executive work.
- (4) Many top executive places are filled by men who have studied law.

No matter whether you are in a big corporation or a small business—in a great city or a little town—a practical knowledge of law cannot fail to be of real and vital help to you in making a more successful career.

In every state in the union you'll find law-trained men who came up through LaSalle. What others have done, you can do.

And LaSalle offers either a full law course leading to LL. B. or a shorter business law training—whichever you prefer. All text material, including valuable 14-volume Law Library. Training comprises the most effective features of modern law instruction.

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The demand for skilled accountants—men who really know their business—is increasing rapidly. New state and federal legislation requires much more, and more efficient accounting from business—big and small. Corporations are in constant need of expert counsel in matters relating to Auditing, Cost Accounting, Business Law, Organization, Management, Finance. Men who prove their qualifications in this important branch of business are rapidly promoted to responsible executive positions—given an opportunity to earn real salaries. The range is from \$3,000.00 to \$15,000.00 a year—even to higher income figures.

Under the LaSalle Problem Method you can at home acquire a thoro understanding of Higher Accountancy, master its fundamental principles, become expert in the practical application of these principles—this without losing an hour of work or a dollar of pay.

Your training will be under the direct supervision of a staff of legal, organization and management specialists, business efficiency engineers and Certified Public Accountants.

Preliminary knowledge of bookkeeping is unnecessary. We train you from the ground up, or from where you now are, according to your individual needs.

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Why aren't you making more sales—more money? Is it you—or your proposition? Check up first on yourself. Other men—no better than you—have found their earnings jump and stay up when they trained with LaSalle. Literally thousands of men—many of them years at the game—have increased their sales volume and earnings through home study with LaSalle guidance. Sound—practical—usable—right from field experience. Train for top-notch production with LaSalle.

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY, Dept. 2329-R, Chicago

I would like to have your special booklet—without any cost or obligation to me—about my opportunities and your success training in the business field I have checked.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Law: Degree of LL. B. | <input type="checkbox"/> Expert Bookkeeping | <input type="checkbox"/> Business English |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Modern Salesmanship | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective Speaking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Modern Foremanship | <input type="checkbox"/> Stenotypy |



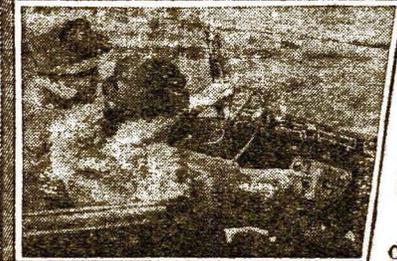
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Position.....Address.....

New INVENTION

SAVES GAS!

3 to 7 MILES MORE PER GALLON
MOTORIST SAVES \$180.00 a YEAR



Saves up to Thirty Per Cent On Gas.
 Provides Faster Pick-Up--More Power--
 Greater Mileage and Smoother Running.
GET FREE INFORMATION

VACU-MATIC

the Carburetor Control that "BREATHES"

AT LAST! Automotive engineers have smashed down the barriers to perfected combustion! The new VACU-MATIC solves the secret of greater power! With almost magical action, this amazing invention instantly puts new life and pep in any motor. It adds mileage to every gallon of gasoline . . . produces split-second pick-up, sensitive accelerator response, greater speed and smoother running

New- Automatic- Nothing Like It!

The self-starter--four wheel brakes--knee action--streamlining . . . and now VACU-MATIC! The greatest motor improvement of recent years! With it, engineers have achieved a practical means of balancing air and gasoline automatically for all speeds. Vacu-matic is *entirely different!* It is AUTOMATIC and allows the motor to "breathe" at the correct time, opening and closing automatically as required. No idling troubles--no carburetor adjustments necessary. Just put it on and forget it! Sharply cuts fuel wastes, saves dollars in gas cost, reduces carbon and gives your engine new pep, greater power and longer life.

Fits All Cars

VACU-MATIC is constructed of six parts, assembled and welded into one unit, correctly adjusted and sealed at the factory. Nothing to regulate. Any motorist can attach VACU-MATIC in ten minutes. Once in, its only reminder is the surge of instant power and speed it gives to the motor and the savings it affords your pocketbook.

Agents and Salesmen
 If you are interested in earning unusual profits, check coupon. Exclusive territories are now being granted.

THE VACU-MATIC CO.

Wauwatosa, Wis.

CHRYSLER

Have tried the Vacu-matic and it sure is fine. Better pick-up with a 30% gas saving.—John C. Martin, Pa.

PLYMOUTH

I am amazed at Vacu-matic performance. It's giving me 5 more miles per gallon.—Walter Zielinski, Ill.

FRANKLIN

With Vacu-matic I have increased my mileage from 10.1 to 14.2 miles per gallon. I figure I save over \$75.00 a year in gasoline. R. K. Radtke, Wis.

SAVES \$180 A YEAR

On my Plymouth 6 I obtained an average of 22 miles per gallon, an increase of 7 miles. This means a saving of \$15 a month or \$180 a year. F. S. Peck, Calif.

ALL WELL PLEASED

Enclosed find order for 12 more. Everyone I have sold is giving from 4 to 6 more miles per gallon. I have 3 more orders for V8 Ford. Every body is well pleased.—J. O. Carl, Texas.

NASH

On my Advanced 6 Nash gained 17 1/4% in mileage. The car will idle down to 3 miles an hour and then take gas without a complaint.—J. Showalter, Mo.

DODGE

Just completed 2310 miles on 92 gallons in my 1933 Dodge 6. This figures 25 miles while before I averaged only 20 miles per gal. on trips.—Al Fruzyna, Calif.

OLDSMOBILE

I am well pleased with Vacu-matic on our Oldsmobile. A test proved it to give 18 miles per gal. Before we considered 13 good.—Arthur Williams, N. Y.

Above are just a few of the many unsolicited letters received from Vacu-matic users.

V-8 FORD

I installed both Vacu-matics and they work excellent. On my own V8 Ford I notice wonderful performance in pickup, get-away and gas saving.—Burt Burnett, Mich.

BUICK

Everything you claim about Vacu-matic is true. I now get 20 miles to the gallon. Before I was only averaging 15 1/2 miles.—C. Constantino, Fla.

CHEVROLET

Please send me a claim about Vacu-matic for a Model A. The mileage let jumped from 18 to 22 miles per gal. with Vacu-matic.—Paul P Haas, Mass.

MODEL A FORD

Have been using the Vacu-matic for a month. I used to get 20 to 22 miles per gal. Now I get 30 to 33 miles. It is amazing the difference it makes.—James W. Barr, Canada.

Guaranteed Gas Savings

The VACU-MATIC proves itself on every car. It is guaranteed to give worth-while gas savings, quicker pick-up, and more power or it costs you nothing."On a test I gained an average of 4 miles on a gallon," writes Alex Wertz. "Vacu-matic is the best I have ever tried." Clarence Rutzin—"I have tried the Vacu-matic on several tests and find that I get between 5 and 6 miles per gallon increase, have more mileage, have greater pickup."

Free Details

Learn about this remarkable device that so greatly affects the entire performance of your motor. Learn why your car is costing you extra money to operate without VACU-MATIC. See why your VACU-MATIC equipped car will keep away from traffic without sputter or hesitation. Discover a new driving thrill and enjoy the savings. Get the facts! Write today!

FREE OFFER COUPON

THE VACU-MATIC COMPANY
 7617-138 W. State St., Wauwatosa, Wis.

Gentlemen: Please send me full particulars concerning the Vacu-matic and details of your Free Offer. This of course does not obligate me in any way.

Name

Address

City..... State.....

Check here if interested in selling proposition.

THE VACU-MATIC CO.

Wauwatosa, Wis.

Prepare Quickly at Home in Spare Time

FOR A,
Good Pay Job
 IN THE
Fast-Growing
AVIATION
INDUSTRY



WALTER HINTON: trail blazer, pioneer, explorer, author, instructor, AVIATOR. The first man to pilot a plane across the Atlantic, North to South America. The man who was a crack flying instructor for the Navy during the War; who today is training far-sighted men for Aviation. Hinton is ready to train you at home in your spare time. Get his book.

My famous course trains you right in your own home—gets you ready for one of the good ground jobs—or earns many weeks and many dollars from flight instructions. Send for my big free book today.

Don't sit back and envy the men who are in the midst of the romance, adventure and fascination of Aviation. **YOU DON'T HAVE TO.** For right in your own home, in your spare time, I'll give you the training you need to get started in this growing, well-paid industry. Get my **FREE BOOK.** It tells all the facts.

Many Make \$40, \$60, \$75 a Week

Through the simple method I have worked out, I can train you at home to fill many well-paid jobs in Aviation. Naturally, before you can fly, you have to have additional flying instructions and practice. Even on that instruction I save you time and money. But when you graduate from my course you have the necessary foundation to begin such work as Airport Manager, Metal Worker, Assembler, Wing Doper, Transport Worker, Welder, Instrument Maker, Inspector, Wood Worker, Airport Worker, Mechanic, and scores of other well-paid positions. Some of my graduates have landed jobs paying \$40, \$60 to \$75 a week. Others with the additional low cost flying instruction I arrange for, have become pilots at \$300 a month or better. Send for my free book now and get the interesting particulars. Learn how I fit you to fill a good job in Aviation.

Aviation Is Growing Fast

Get into Aviation now—when you can still get in on the ground floor of a new industry—when you have a chance to forge ahead without having to displace lots of older men. Aviation is a young man's industry, where young men earn real money. Most famous pilots are in

Here are just a few of the many well-paid jobs in the fast growing Aviation Industry:

- ON THE GROUND**
 Airport Superintendent
 Instrument Specialist
 Electrician
 Shop Foreman
 Hangar Crew Chief
 Traffic Manager
 Purchasing Agent
 Aerial Mail Clerk
 Motor Expert
 Radio Operator
 Airplane Mechanic
 Field Work

- IN THE AIR**
 Air Express Agent
 Air Mail Pilot
 Aerial Photography
 Airport Manager
 Test Pilot
 Aerial Passenger Agent
 Private Piloting
 Weather Observer
 Flight Instructor
 Commercial Pilot
 Field Manager
 Transport Pilot

their early thirties, or even younger. It is a young industry, which means that there are plenty of opportunities to forge ahead. But just because it is run by young men, don't get the idea that Aviation is a small business. Millions are being spent yearly to develop and improve airways and planes. Thousands of men earn good livings from the business. And more thousands will enter it in the future. It is a great and growing industry, this Aviation, an industry that still brings romance, excitement, thrills—even while it is bringing big opportunities and good pay.

My Training Is Thorough, Practical, Up-to-Date

I've put my eighteen years of experience—including five years of instructing officers and men in the Navy—into my thorough, quick Training. And I've made it all so clear that almost anybody can understand it. My Aviation friends know that Hinton-trained men are well qualified to work for them.

Send For My Free Book Now

Now is the time to act. Don't sit content with a humdrum, no-future, low-pay job. Act now—to get yourself into Aviation—the industry that is quickly growing into a giant business. Get into Aviation. Study at home in your spare time for a well-

paid job with a real future. Mail the coupon for my free book today.

WALTER HINTON, Pres.
 Aviation Institute
 Washington, D. C.

Flight Included

"Give her the gun!" You're off! Yes siree, as soon as you complete my course, I arrange a flight for you at an accredited air field. It doesn't cost you a penny extra. It is my graduation present to you.

Mail Now for Facts

Mr. Walter Hinton, President 910-P
 Aviation Institute of America, Inc.
 1115 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, D. C.

Please send me a Free copy of your book, "Wings of Opportunity," telling all about my opportunities in Aviation, how you will train me at home for them.

Name
 (Print Clearly)
 Address..... Age.....
 City..... State.....

These Men Made Good With My Training

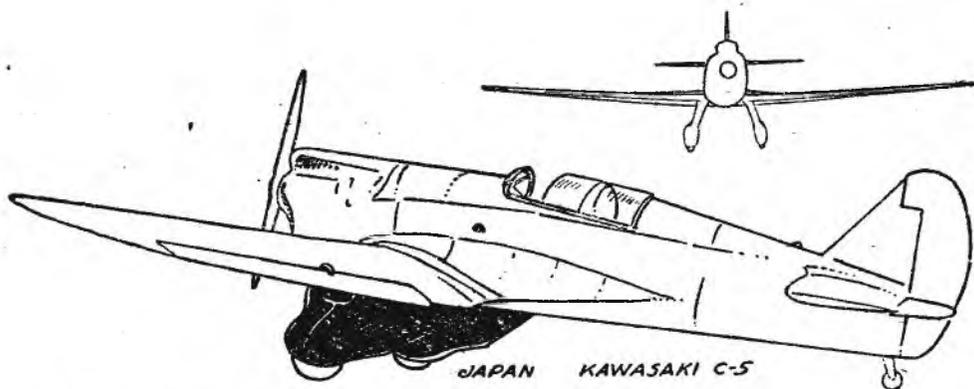
Accepted for Royal Canadian Air Force

"I sent your letter with an application for enlistment in the Royal Canadian Air Force and I received a letter stating that my application is accepted and I can enlist as soon as there is a vacancy." Joseph J. Reisio, Melville, Sask., Canada.

Perfectly Satisfied with Course

"I am perfectly satisfied that the results obtained to date from your Course have made its cost insignificant. Rest assured that you have a life-long booster for Aviation Institute of America." L. W. Archer, P. O. Box 58, Curacao, D. W. I.

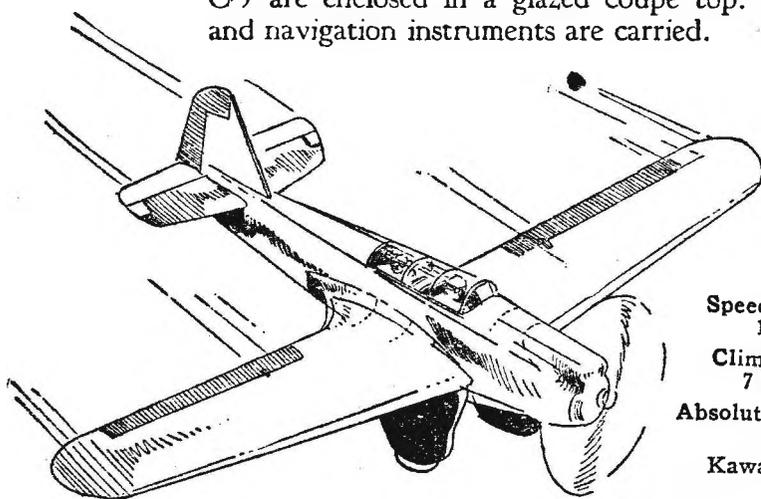




The Ship of the Month

JAPAN has a lot of new territory in Asia under her protection and it is necessary for her to police it to protect her people from bandit raids which menace the countryside at all times. The Kawasaki C-5 is designed for a communications plane, a great necessity in undeveloped regions. It is a high performance monoplane of all metal construction even to the covering. The undercarriage is enclosed in streamline fairings over each wheel.

The Kawasaki Dockyard Co. has the license to construct the B.M.W. motor which gives this ship a high speed of 208 m.p.h. with a range of seven hours. The three seats of the C-5 are enclosed in a glazed coupe top. Modern radio and navigation instruments are carried.



SPECIFICATIONS

Span 43' 11"

Length .. 30' 4"

Wing area
322.8 sq. ft.

Total weight
5,991 lbs.

Speed at 13,120 feet
187.5 m.p.h.

Climb to 9,840 feet
7 min. 30 sec.

Absolute ceiling 22,960 ft.

Engine:
Kawasaki—B. M. W.
800 h. p.

See it first in *THE LONE EAGLE*

THE "SWAP" COLUMN

Here's where you can exchange something you have but don't want for something someone else has that you do want. This is a FREE service.

For example, if you have a camera and don't use it, and would like to have a stamp album, write: "Have Eastman camera No. 1, Jr., make, 3 years old, good condition, will exchange for stamp album with 3,000 stamps, 25 countries.—John Smith, 49 Park Street, Albany, N. Y."

Limit your request to 25 words. No goods for sale listed, nor requests concerning firearms or any illegal articles.

Types or hand-print clearly, in submitting announcements. THE LONE EAGLE will not be responsible for losses sustained. Make a very plain list of what you have and just what you want to "swap" it for. Enclose a clipping of this announcement with your request.

Will swap duplicate match covers. Have match covers from Pittsburgh and Buffalo districts. Send any number and receive same amount in return. Louis Stephens, 542 Dixon Street, Homestead, Penna.

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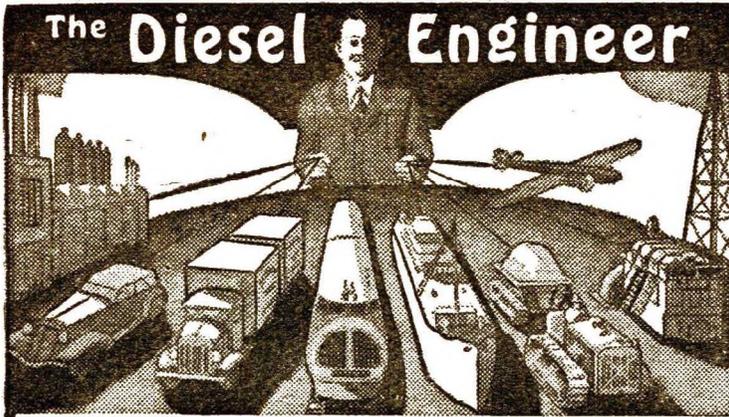
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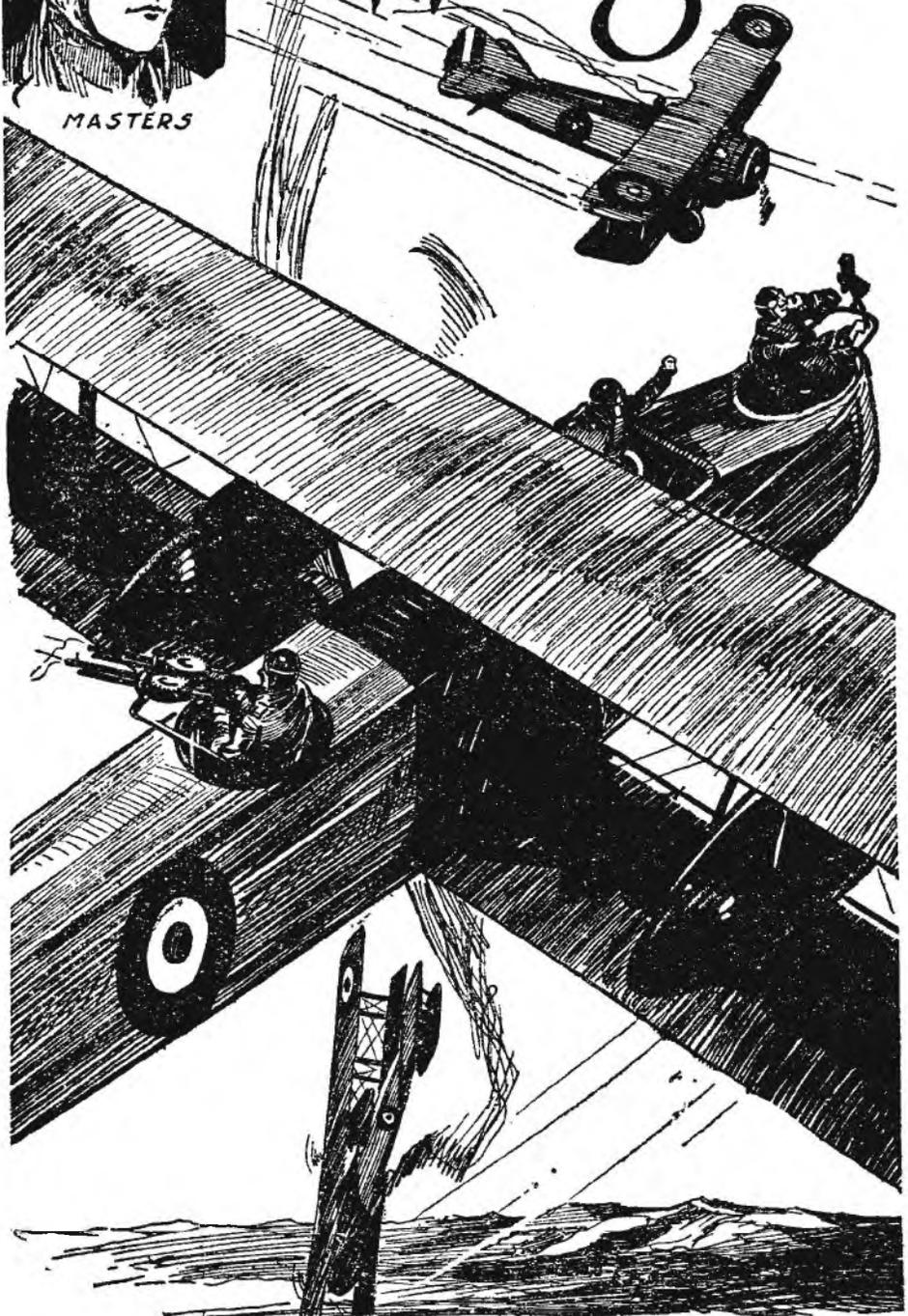
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MASTERS

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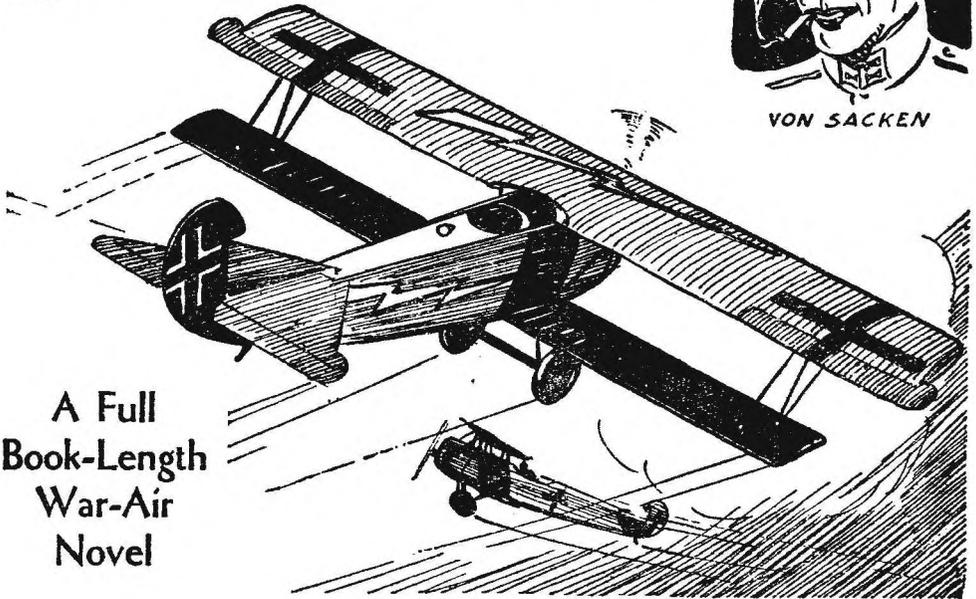


In a few minutes the men in the Handley-Page would feel the slimy film slipping across their eyes (Page 52)

Thunder



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A Full
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Novel

*A Grim Scourge of Blindness Suddenly Strikes Airmen
of the Allied Cause—and It's Up to John Masters,
Fighting Ace, to Roar Through Flaming Skies
in Quest of a Hellish Hun Secret!*

By **LIEUT. SCOTT MORGAN**

Author of "Terror of the Skies," "Fighting Wings," etc.

CHAPTER I

Tarmac Strafe

THE stillness of the late summer afternoon was torn to shreds by the thunderous beat of motors and the scream of the siren on the roof of the Operations Office. Men shouted, ran to their posts, some in the machine-gun pits and others to the long line of Spads standing on the tarmac of Two-Ten.

John Masters had just picked up the telephone and was talking to

Colonel Tremaine, chief of Yankee Air Intelligence, when he spotted the first of the Hun raiders slanting down out of the blue bowl of the heavens.

"Hold it, Colonel," he barked into the mouthpiece. "The field is being raided!"



CUMMINGS

"I'll call you as soon as it's over—that is, if there's anything left of this office. Gonna see if I can head them off."

Masters slammed the instrument back into its cradle and leaped to the door.

"Spin it!" he shouted to the two mechanics standing by his ship. He ducked toward the pilot's dressing hut to get his helmet and goggles, watching the onrushing line of Hun ships over his right shoulder.

"Wonder what Tremaine was talking about?" he mused as he finally stepped from the hut and yanked his chin-strap taut. "Blind—prisoners—plenty of them. We've got some over here. Can't see anything to worry about from that quarter—yet he seemed sort of excited. Damn these Huns, anyway! Couldn't stand there talking over a phone while they hammered this field to bits!"

He leaped for the cockpit, swung his legs over the cowling and settled into the seat. His eyes swept across the instrument board. Oil, fuel—they were okay. The red fluid in the thermometer had not dropped below a hundred yet, for he had only set down on the field a scant fifteen minutes ago, and found the urgent message from Colonel Tremaine asking him to get in touch with him at once.

THE Spad leaped out across the field and then caressed the sod with its left wing-tip as the Lone Eagle curled into a graceful climbing turn. Behind him he heard the throbbing roar of the other Spads leaping to meet the invaders.

He punched the cocking handles and loaded his Vickers. His lean fingers felt for the Bowden controls and sent a hissing stream of tracer into the air. He glanced over his shoulder a moment, studying the Spads coming up from below, following him in his attempt to head the

black-crossed ships away from the field.

Above him, thundering out of the east, was a horde of Fokkers, grim grey ships, wheeling through the sky like sharks in a blue sea.

Between his pounding cylinders he caught a glimpse of a Fokker going over in a steep bank. His fingers pressed the trips, his Vickers beat out their grim tattoo. Tracer snickered through the air, glanced off the tilted wings and then screamed away into space. Masters' eyes opened in surprise. The maneuver of the Hun had been so smooth and easy that he knew that he had only punctured the fabric on one of the wings.

"That Jerry is a pilot," he said. His hand tossed the stick over in the corner of the cockpit. His foot jammed on the rudder. But the Fokker was gone. Another pair of black crosses took its place. Masters was on it with a snarl of fury, determined that this one would not escape him.

Once again his guns snarled their defiance. Their muzzle cups were tipped with flame while they poured smoking lead through the sunlit skies. As he watched his tracer eat its way through the square-cut fuselage and into the cockpit, his lips tightened. This man who sat in the Fokker staring death in the face, was not of the same caliber as the one who had so easily evaded his first chattering burst.

The Fokker, caught in that tangling mesh of death, stumbled and then lifted its tail, boring toward the waving sod on the tracked tarmac below.

Another ship slid into view. Masters forgot the crate which he had just blasted from the air, and turned. "Heading for the supply hangar," he husked as he swung his ship around to head it off. "Funny they haven't started to lay their eggs yet."

As the thought flashed into his

mind, the first Fokker which he had missed was back on the scene of action. Masters banked steeply, his motor sending out an ear-splitting roar that mingled with the scream of tortured flying wires.

He wanted that ship.

His guns bucked and leaped on their mountings. His tracer leaped through the air, bloodthirsty little pellets of death. He saw them bounce off the fuselage, corrected his aim and sent them toward the cockpit. They seemed to flatten out and were smothered in the drifting ship.

An exclamation of surprise escaped the Lone Eagle's grim-lipped mouth. His eyes popped open. His fingers relaxed their pressure on the Bowdens. For there, flying directly in front of him, sailing serenely through a hail of twisting lead was the Fokker. It seemed to taunt him, coaxing him closer, almost wavering into a position where the Lone Eagle would be bound to come down on the dodging Fokker's tail.

Yet Masters held back. For the first time in his life, he hesitated about attacking a black-crossed ship. There was something uncanny about this plane. Something that puzzled him, warned him of impending danger. He recognized the old signal that had saved his life on more than one occasion. That prickling sensation at the back of his neck. It was there again. Why, he did not know. But he did know, for his keen eyes were staring hard at the turning Fokker. He saw that the ship in front of him was curling over the airdrome with apparently no hand to guide it.

The cockpit seemed dark and empty. The hail of twisting lead from his smoking guns seemed to have no effect as they smashed their way through fabric. Any other time the ship would have folded up. Now it continued its course, apparently

unscathed by the withering blast of his guns.

Beneath him he saw a couple of Fokkers drag a fiery path across the field, their guns clattering their song of war. Lead streaked in all directions. Another ship flashed across the field from the south, curling around the towering tongue of black smoke coming up from the ship which the Lone Eagle smashed down. Lewis guns stuttered in the gun pits, and a fountain of fiery sparks tried to follow the ships milling over the field.

MASTERS pulled his eyes away from the ships below. Any of them would have been easy meat for his guns. He was too much engrossed with this sinister ship which hovered over the others to bother swinging in low and planting a burst or two in the ships close to the ground. He wanted the answer to this riddle. He wanted to know more about this strange grey ship which tooled its way through the air, no visible hand to guide it in its corkscrewing flight.

What was it doing? Did it have any connection with the strafe going on below him?

Masters mulled the question over as he crept closer. His keen eyes studied the streaked lightning insignia on the fuselage. Now he noticed that the same insignia was painted on the top wing, zigzagging out from the center section in both directions. It was on the bottom wings, too.

He caught the ship in position again. His guns hammered away, throwing that blasting streak of lead that had been the downfall of so many black-crossed crates.

But this one, despite the fact that Masters had held his vicious burst full on the cockpit, turned away and took up a position that would make it easy for the Lone Eagle to close in on the other side.

By now Masters was on the alert. He felt, that an effort was being made to suck him into a trap. Bravery was all right in its place, and Masters was brave. But he had learned to temper valor with caution. His eyes narrowed. He watched every movement of that strange ship.

Bombs were already beginning to let go below him. He could hear their crash above the roar of the motors.

Ships screamed through the air around him. A Fokker flashed across his path and Masters let drive. His guns spewed their hate; the black-crossed ship vomited gobs of black smoke as the Lone Eagle's tracer hammered into the motor. The ship wavered, and then wove a streak of black against the sunlight as it headed for the ground.

TWO Spads swept across his field of vision. His heart leaped to his throat, he didn't know why, as they bored down on the tail of the grey Fokker which he had been stalking. From the side, his quick eyes caught a blinding flash of light from the rear of the Fokker's cockpit.

At first Masters thought it was the reflection of the sun on some burnished part of the ship. But then it was gone, and despite the fact that the ship was in the same position he could not see the glare.

The two Spads continued their mad flight, fighting desperately to plant a burst in those uptilted wings. They were in position time and time again, right on the tail of the Fokker, yet they could not slap a cluster of slugs into the vitals of that ship. It seemed to hover into a position where it looked as if it were an easy target, then with a swift, effortless curve it was gone, banking in the opposite direction.

"Smooth," murmured Masters as he watched for the two Spads to head the Fokker in his direction, hoping

that he could catch the Hun with a withering broadside.

But the Fokker continued to play with the over-anxious Spad pilots; and Masters, struggling to get into a position where he could try once again to nail the ship, always found himself cut off by a Fokker coming in from another direction. He saw two of the Hun ships pass right by the Spads without firing a shot. One of them, Masters was certain, could have picked off a Yank ship without a speck of trouble.

Then the Fokker, with its lightning insignia, seemed to have enough of the game. It broke away.

Masters cursed as he bent lower over his controls, fighting to get close to the sinister ship. A Hun crate crossed his path, blotting out the Fokker. With a curse of rage Masters snapped his stick over and pounced on the blundering Fokker with his guns spitting fire. Over his shoulder he saw a Spad curl up and then begin to wither in a snarling pall of flame and smoke. His quick eyes caught the markings on the doomed ship before the flames leaped back to the fuselage.

"Not one of the crates that the Fokker was playing with," he muttered. Then with a terrible calm he pulled the nose of his ship a trifle to the left and let the interfering Fokker have it.

It seemed to burst into a thousand pieces, cluttering the sunlit air with smoking debris. The pilot dropped from the mess and went earthward, tumbling end over end.

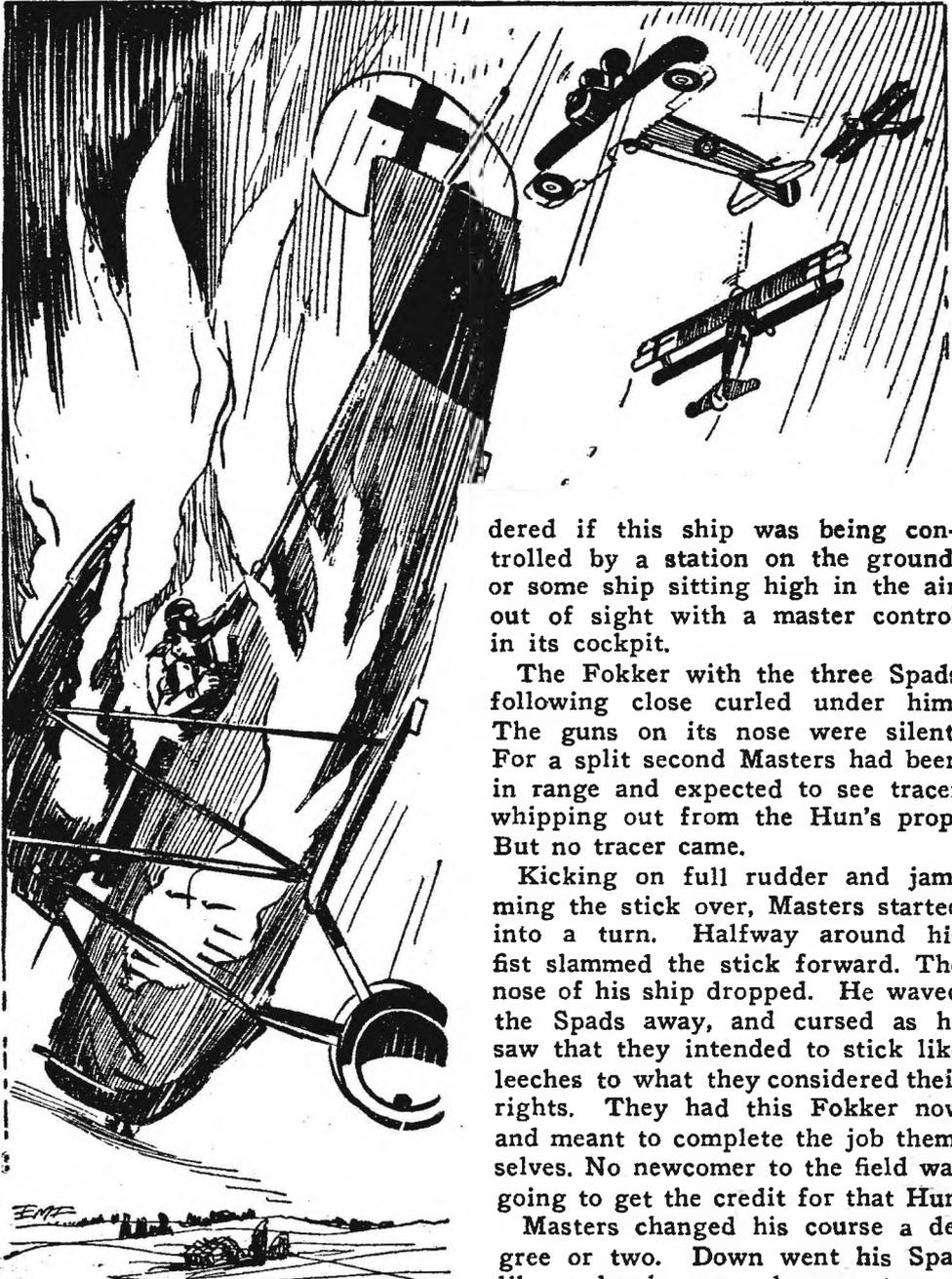
Masters' eyes flamed as he swung around and tried to force his way through the fight. On the far side he could see three Spads milling around the grim Fokker, first one then the other taking a turn at going down on the ship's tail.

As yet the Lone Eagle had not been able to make out the pilot. He had looked into that fuselage two

or three times, and each time he was certain that no pilot controlled that swiftly moving ship.

Once again he scanned the skies above him. He had heard that the

Huns were experimenting with remote control with launches up in the North Sea. He had heard rumors that they were able to control speedboats by wireless, and he won-



A ball of fire ended the path flown by the stricken ship (Page 20)

dered if this ship was being controlled by a station on the ground, or some ship sitting high in the air out of sight with a master control in its cockpit.

The Fokker with the three Spads following close curled under him. The guns on its nose were silent. For a split second Masters had been in range and expected to see tracer whipping out from the Hun's prop. But no tracer came.

Kicking on full rudder and jamming the stick over, Masters started into a turn. Halfway around his fist slammed the stick forward. The nose of his ship dropped. He waved the Spads away, and cursed as he saw that they intended to stick like leeches to what they considered their rights. They had this Fokker now and meant to complete the job themselves. No newcomer to the field was going to get the credit for that Hun.

Masters changed his course a degree or two. Down went his Spad like a hawk on a dove—a ton of metal, spruce and fabric shrieking

through the sky, adding its din to the symphony of death.

His Vickers took up their snarling challenge. Fire spurted from their muzzles. Lines of curling grey slithered through the air, showing a glowing spot of phosphorus at their tails. This time Masters was pouring a steady fire into the fuselage, just behind the wings. Under ordinary circumstances the ship would have gone down with the first well placed burst. But this one continued its flight.

DETERMINED to down this incomprehensible Hun, Masters flung his ship over in a breathtaking bank, and despite the efforts of the others continued to hammer away at the lightning-insigniaed ship.

He was forced into a slanting angle by the Spad pilots who would not relinquish their position. He edged in closer, and then a fluttering burst of tracer gushed past his cheek and buried itself in his dash.

Masters cursed as he straightened out. He knew that there was a Hun coming down on him in an angling dive. The next burst would be closer. And if it were, he would be through. He threw a swift glance over his shoulder to get the direction of the attacker's angle of flight and spotted the new enemy. There, hanging grimly above him, hosing him with a twin stream of lead, was another Fokker.

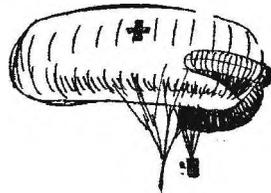
He swore softly as he pulled his stick back against his belt and kept the nose of his Spad on the horizon with plenty of top rudder, and then turned his head to see how the three Spads were making out with the ship that seemed impossible to shoot down.

He was just in time to see another flash of light from just behind the dark cockpit of the weird Fokker. Just a glaring flash of light—that was all. Yet Masters knew in an in-

stant that that flash had not been made by the sun. For the Fokker was heading directly west as the flash occurred.

"A light of some kind," he muttered as he turned swiftly to keep an eye on the man who was trying to drop him. He brought the roar of his Hisso up to a higher pitch. A lightninglike yank on his stick and he was screaming up toward the blue bowl of the heavens. His stick slammed to the side as he reached the peak of his zoom. His rudder kicked over and the Spad was hurtling back toward the earth again, this time laying its sights dead on the attacking Hun.

For a moment Masters forgot about the mysterious ship as he concentrated on knocking his victim down. His guns hammered out a short tat-



too. The Fokker twisted to evade the clawing web of grey. But Masters' strong hands and nimble feet held his ship sure and steady.

In a second it was over. The Hun ship staggered through the fight, scattering ships right and left, as pilots saw the telltale scarf of black pouring from the cowlings. A ball of fire ended the path flown by the stricken ship and it went into the grim waltz of death.

Masters swung around, battered another Fokker from the fight with two bursts and then turned his attention to the Fokker with its queer, flashing light and apparently empty cockpit.

There was a riddle, and being the Lone Eagle, the ace of Yankee Air Intelligence, his business was solving riddles.

CHAPTER II

Blind Aces

THE Lone Eagle's mottled Spad flashed over. His eyes were narrowed to purposeful slits as he curled on a course which put him back in the middle of the Huns who were trying to reform for their flight east.

Back of him, he heard the thunderous roar of Hissos as the other Spads came barging after.

Through the throng of milling ships he could see the Fokker with the sinister insignia taking up its position at the head of the Hun formation. It seemed to be protected on all sides by black-crossed Fokkers and snarling Spandaus. Masters wanted that ship. He wanted the answer to the questions which had been rushing through his mind like a swarm of insistent bees.

As he tried to edge in closer, the Fokker nearest him, banked and tried to force him away with a clattering burst. But Masters, driving at a single objective, did not mean to be driven off by any cluster of Hun lead. His ship swung in answer to his pressure on the rudder. His own guns ticked off a dozen or more rounds.

The Fokker literally disintegrated in mid-air. Its fuel tank exploded in a sheet of fiery flame, and the whole crate flew to bits, a mass of blazing, wind-blown parts.

With a jab of his stick and a little more rudder, Masters moved his blazing streams of death to another quarter and another Boche crate shivered under the impact of his slugs. It hung in the middle of a turn and then slid away, crabbing downward to its last landing.

Masters looked away from the falling ship in time to see a Spad take advantage of the opening and slip

in close to the grey Fokker at the head of the outfit.

Then his eyes opened in surprise. The other Huns, instead of closing in around the ship which had taken a position on the tail of their leader, scattered to the four winds like gale-blown leaves.

Masters shook his head. He was getting more puzzled all the time. He knew that the natural instinct of a war pilot would have been to let drive at a man in that position. Yet Fokkers milled away from their comrade like rats running from a doomed ship.

The Spad pilot was blazing away, holding a position that kept Masters from opening up with his own guns. And Masters watched breathlessly. For a second he had a respite from the other Huns who seemed only too glad to get away from the vicinity.

Then Masters strained forward in his seat. His lips cracked open in surprise. There was that mysterious flash of light again. Just a second it held at the back of the Hun cockpit and then it was gone. And as it faded, the Fokker held its course a moment longer and then curled away in another of those easy banks. The Spad pilot's tracer was whining away into space, screaming, cheated of human flesh.

Masters' muscles tensed. He fairly hurled his Spad through the air. The Fokker was swinging his way, broadside now, an easy target. Bending low over his sights, moving the nose of his ship with a gentle tread on the rudder bar, lining up the cockpit on the outer edge of the ring to allow for deflection, the Lone Eagle let drive.

His guns bucked and growled. Two long lines of tracer flashed out in front of the roaring Spad. Then they curved and smashed their way into the grey Fokker. Through the clear, bright, lens of his Aldis sight

he could see his slugs spattering against the sides of the Fokker. But the Fokker only turned and raced in the opposite direction, offering Masters a shot at the weaving tail assembly.

But the screaming slugs smashing down on the cowling of his own ship, tearing through metal, battering at rocker-arms and cylinder jackets, forced him to turn his attention away from the sinister Fokker. He could not ignore the clustering bullets raining around him. He must turn his attention back to one of the attackers, or be blasted from the skies.

As he roared around to meet the challenge he saw the Spad wheel and take up a position on the grim Fokker's tail again. Then for the next few minutes he was busy evading the clutching fingers of the Grim Reaper.

A FEINT to the left, a rapid curve to the right, a half roll, and he had his Hun in position. A gentle jab at the Bowdens and his guns were doing their work. He saw the Fokker waver.

Without waiting to watch it, confident that his slugs had done their work, Masters wheeled between two Boche crates, evaded a quartet of hosing streams of grey by an eyelash, and turned his attention on the Fokker again. Once again the other black-crossed crates had closed in around the strange ship, blocking all paths to Masters' quarry by grim lines of awful death.

A snarl of defiance flashed between the Lone Eagle's teeth. Fokkers or no Fokkers he was going to drop that ship before it crossed the lines with its sinister secret. His sights lined up. A black cross slid across the ring. His fingers tensed, all set to blast another of the sheltering ships from the battle.

But his fingers never closed down

on the Bowdens. A fleeting shadow crossed his vision and Masters, with a cry of dismay, stood his Spad on its tail. Another Spad, a Yankee ship, screaming as if in mortal agony hurtled through the sky directly at him. He held his breath as his own ship stalled.

Would it hold long enough to let the other pass under? It settled, slowly, inches—then feet. The Spad motor roaring at full throttle, whirled under his trucks. His ship jerked madly and then fell off on one wing.

In the fleeting glance he had of the runaway Spad, he saw a crumpled wing-tip, and a wheel imbedded between the ribs.

"One of my wheels," Masters moaned as he realized what had caused the sudden jerk. "Almost got me."

The Spad was flying jerkily. Then it slowed down and went into a glide, brushing past another panic-stricken Yankee pilot. Masters watched it. He had seen no action, save his own, at the time the Spad had so suddenly gone berserk. Yet there it was, a doomed ship, curving wildly even in a glide. Its nose came up, then dropped. The wings began to whirl, slowly at first and then faster. It stopped spinning, hung a moment as it went into a stall, and then dropped away again.

Masters turned his horror-stricken eyes away from the doomed ship and looked for the Hun crate with the lightning insignia.

It was gone.

Far off in the distance he could see its grey wings flashing in the settling sun, as it high-tailed for home, with the remaining escort of Fokkers fanned out behind.

"Never catch them now," mused Masters as he watched them. "They'll be around again. I've got that bus spotted. I'll get him!"

Disappointed, Masters pivoted on

one wing and took up a position behind the formation of Spads who were reforming for the flight home.

"Tremaine'll have some job for me that will keep me too busy to nail that crate," Masters muttered.

He slumped lower in his cockpit, his mind busy with the question of how that Fokker had flown with no visible hand to guide it. He was more interested in that than he was in the light. The light had evidently been some sort of signal.

His eyes looked straight ahead through the glinting arc of his prop. They were narrowed in thought at first, but they gradually widened. Ahead of him flew two Spads. Two bobbing ships that seemed to be drifting closer and closer.

"If those birds are trying to show off they better cut it out," Masters growled to himself as the Spads seemed to slide sideward in front of him. "They'll lock wings in a minute."

His mouth dropped slack. The ships bobbing gently ahead of him were now only a foot apart. A scant twelve inches separated their wing-tips. Now about ten inches—now six. Yet there seemed to be no apparent attempt on the part of the pilots to swing away from each other. He noticed a sort of hesitant movement of the ailerons and elevators, as if the pilots were not quite sure of themselves.

For a moment Masters was tempted to fire a warning burst, even at the risk of puncturing a wing, but he held back, fearful lest a man in the front of the formation should wheel directly into the line of fire. The Lone Eagle sat spellbound, waiting for the crash to come. He was certain that it would. There was nothing he could do. Only the two pilots swinging away from each other could avert the coming smashup.

Then it came. The wing-tips brushed, swung away and then im-

mediately came back. The fabric folded up as the wings locked. A spar broke. A rib stuck out, the clean white spruce gleaming in the golden rays of the sun. The fuselages pulled together, locked, hurtled earthward, twisting and turning in their drunken course.

And as the two doomed ships gyrated Masters caught a glimpse of their markings. "J and M!" he gasped. "The two ships that hopped the Fokker first! It can't be—Can't—"

HE watched the formation begin to gather again, all except one ship. A single Spad which had not taken its place, but was wandering off on an erratic course, despite the frantic signals of the squadron leader.

Masters slammed his throttle forward. The Spad leaped ahead and he tooled it closer to the wavering ship. It curved and staggered across the sky, nose dipping and then jerking up as if the man in the cockpit had lost his senses.

He worked his way closer, his hand steady on the stick. Now he could look into the cockpit of the staggering Spad. He saw the pilot sitting limply in the cockpit, working at his eyes with two gloved fists, forgetting all about the ship.

The Spad shot upward. Masters yanked his own stick back and half-rolled to the right, missing the Spad by a hair's breadth. Now he had a full view of the Yankee pilot. His goggles were off. He gazed into the sky, staring fixedly at a spot high in the heavens. Masters looked, but there was nothing there. He glanced across at the stricken Yank again, in time to see the Spad wallow through a bumpy current of air and throw itself into a dive.

Down and down it went, motor roaring, rudder twisting madly as the pilot's feet jerked at the controls. Then it suddenly shot sky-

ward, zooming almost back to Masters' level before it fell off again. This time it kept its course of death, hurtling madly toward the ground, motor chanting the song of death.

"Blinded," whispered Masters, as he watched the ship go to its doom. "That's what was the trouble with the man who almost crashed into me back there! Blinded! Damn them!" he shouted suddenly. "They've got another beastly trick—those men were sent to their deaths blinded! I know they were—and there goes another."

Off to his left, another ship had suddenly skyrocketed out of the formation, Masters kept his distance while the Spad danced the awful waltz of death high in the sunset skies. Ships scattered in all directions to evade a mid-air crash with this plane that seemed to be piloted by a madman.

NOT a minute could be lost now. He had to get back to Tremaine. The enemy had put another of its dastardly plans into effect!

Roaring through the skies, Masters pulled ahead of the scattered formation and headed back toward the tarmac. He left the panic-stricken men behind him, circled the field once and then came around into the wind.

One hand resting on the throttle, the other caressing the controls, jockeying his crippled ship lower and lower, Masters waited tensely for the moment when his one remaining wheel would touch the tarmac. Masters crouched at the alert. He dare not crash now. Too much depended on his being able to walk away from that Spad when he had it on the ground.

Then the wheel touched. The Spad wobbled and then bounced as the Lone Eagle poured the juice to the motor. The ship slid forward, gathering speed as he slammed the stick

over to hold the right wing up. The wheel touched again, held. Now the Spad was sputtering across the field as he pulled the throttle back slowly. The ship began to lose momentum. The right wing began to drop. Easy at first, then faster, as the foil began to lose its grip on the air. At last the wing kissed the grass. Masters jerked the throttle all the way back and almost in the same motion snapped the switch to "Off."

The motor died away with a gurgle as the wing-tip dug in. His fingers jerked at the catch on his safety belt as the left wing came up with a sickening heave. The Spad began to slew around. The prop flew into a thousand splinters as its whirling tip smashed into the ground. The tail lifted. The fuselage buckled, and Masters leaped clear over the center section as the wing cracked.

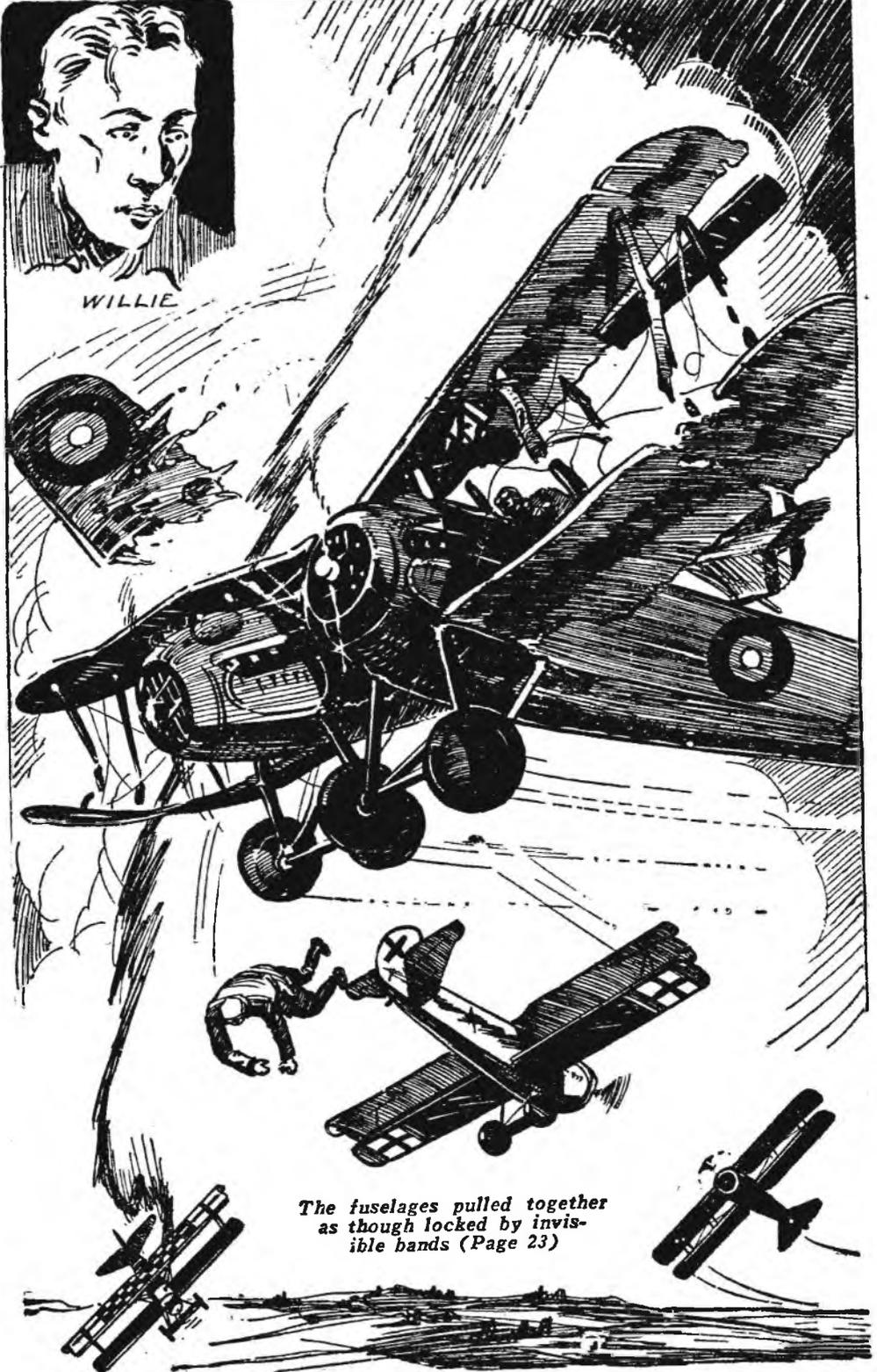
He rolled and came to his feet. The cracked-up Spad was erased from his mind. His thoughts were all on those pilots coming in behind him. How many of those men were doomed?

Tearing his helmet off, he raced toward the spot where he thought the ships would set down, and then stopped. A ship was wavering at the edge of the field. Its motor beat spasmodically as the pilot leveled off. Masters could tell from the action of the ship that the man was not sure of himself. He was acting more like a cadet on his first solo than a war-time flyer. But Masters guessed the reason why.

Across the field the ship staggered. Once it forced another incoming Spad to zoom and circle the field again to avoid a crash. Now other pilots were getting the wind up. One by one they fed the juice to their Hissos and leaped into the blue again. They had seen too many of these staggering ships during one day.



WILLIE



*The fuselages pulled together
as though locked by invis-
ible bands (Page 23)*

Alone, waiting tensely, his blue eyes watching every move of the ship, Masters stood in the middle of the field. The Spad was flattening out too soon. Another second and the bus would pancake in. Its wing caught in the upturned tail of his crashed Spad, swung the ship around and crumpled it just a few feet from where the Lone Eagle was standing.

In a flash Masters was at the ship's side. His hands reached into the cockpit and snapped off the switch. He tugged at the moaning pilot, and soon had him laid out on the grass.

"Got dark early," gasped the pilot as he struggled for breath. "Could hardly see the field. Can't see anything now."

The man's head rolled from side to side. Masters bent over him, passed his hand back and forth in front of the man's eyes. The eyes failed to follow the movement.

The Lone Eagle's grim lips moved, and formed the word, "Blind." His face was pale and drawn. He bent closer, trying to comfort the battered pilot while he studied those eyes. They were covered with a whitish film. The bloody lips of the cracked up Yank were moving:

"No stars out tonight. Lots of them last night. Must be a storm coming."

Masters nodded. "Yes, Buddy, there's a storm coming. And I'm going to be right in the middle of it!"

A step sounded behind him and Masters looked up to see the squadron M.O. come up with a couple of stretcher-bearers. He got to his feet slowly, motioned toward the pilot who lay groaning on the ground, pointed to his eyes and then pressed his finger against his lips.

"No use saying anything now, Doc," he cautioned.

"But what's happened to them all?" gasped the M.O. "Just saw another bus spin in over there." He

jerked his thumb toward the field back of the hangars. "Fellows are still flying around as if they had a flock of Huns on their tails."

Masters looked down into those unseeing eyes and then into the grey eyes of the M.O.

"I don't know what's up. But I'm on my way to find out—"

CHAPTER III

Blind Allies



AN hour later, Masters stepped into the tiny makeshift office of Colonel Tremaine. The head of Yank Air Intelligence had moved closer to the front, and whenever he did that, Masters knew that there was plenty of trouble brewing.

"Smash things up much at Two-Ten?" asked Tremaine as Masters stopped to shake hands with General Viaud, head of the French Espionage Corps, before taking the chair by the desk.

Masters shook his head. "Don't think they were trying very hard," he said slowly as he slumped to the chair. "They were testing out another one of their dirty schemes, from what I could see. And believe me, this is a dirty one—a foul trick!"

Viaud leaned forward. Tremaine paled. "You don't mean to tell me that they've started something else! I was trying to tell you about something suspicious that was going on behind the Hun lines when the raid started."

"It's not behind the Hun lines any more, Colonel," said Masters. "They've brought it over and laid it right on our front door-step."

"You don't mean blind men?" cried Tremaine leaping to his feet.

Masters nodded. "I mean just that. They came over this afternoon

and blinded a bunch of Two-Ten's pilots right over their own field. Just a bit of my luck that I didn't get a dose of it."

"You mean that we have blind pilots on our hands now?" husked General Viaud.

"Only one," answered Masters. "And I think that he will die from his injuries. I tipped off the M.O. not to say anything about his being blind. But I think the pilots that got out of the scrap are suspicious. Four of our pilots dead and the other is in the hospital. Maybe more. Every one of them blinded, I think. They acted that way in the air."

"But what happened?" asked Tremaine. "Tell me—I've got a hunch that it ties up with the one clue I've got."

In a few terse words Masters explained what had happened that afternoon.

WHEN he was through, Tremaine reached for a cigar, fondled it a moment or two in his stubby fingers and then lit it.

"Then you think that this queer Fokker had something to do with it?" he asked.

"I'm sure of it, Colonel," replied Masters.

"And the light?" asked Viaud. "You think they caused this blindness by means of a beam."

Masters shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know," he replied slowly. "But it would look that way. Another thing that puzzled me like the devil was that ship that seemed to fly by itself. Uncanny the way that bus could take a hammering."

For a moment the three men were silent. Tremaine kept pacing the floor. "Blind men. A bright light—and then a ship that flies by itself. You've got something to solve now, John. If they get working on our troops with a thing like that there's no telling where it will end. I'll

bet rumors are flying up and down the front already. Their rotten agents will see to that!"

"But the clue you said you had!" exclaimed Masters.

"I've got to get every scrap of information I can get a hold of if I'm going to stop them, or they'll blind our whole Air Service. Think of what it will mean! Our men will be afraid to get anywhere near a Hun plane if this thing leaks out!"

Tremaine touched a button. "Bring in Private Cummings," he commanded an orderly.

"I've got one of those blind men right here," said Tremaine.

"Is he able to talk?" demanded Masters.

Tremaine nodded. "But he hasn't the slightest idea of what caused his blindness. The Germans told him it was the effect of a new gas which we sent over the lines one night. All a lie. He says that they took pains to tell him how the wind shifted it and drove it back into our own trenches. An act of God, they said."

The door opened and a figure stood staring into the room with fixed eyes. Masters stepped across the room and took the man by the arm.

"Come over to the light," he directed. Swinging the desklight around so that its rays were full on the face of the blinded American, Masters peered into the sightless eyes. "This came on you suddenly, didn't it?" he asked.

The man nodded. "I had been reading, in the camp where we were kept, and had gotten up to take a walk around the barbed wire when I felt a funny, itchy feeling in my eyes. Before I realized what had happened I was blind. They said it was a slow-acting gas that lay dormant in my system for a week or so and then suddenly attacked my eyes."

"There were more blind men?" asked Masters.

"I think I was the first," answered the stricken American. "Other fellows were going blind—a couple new ones each day—"

"Then they kept up their story about the gas from the American lines?" said Masters.

"Yeah!" smiled the American, despite his affliction. "That's where they made their mistake. "We got suspicious when more of the fellows who had been taken prisoner with us began to go blind. Before it happened we had a guard all rigged up to let us out and take us to one of the Belgian guides who escort Allied soldiers and agents into Holland. We couldn't all make it, being blind, but we drew straws. I got the break and contacted the guide. He got me through the wire into Holland, and here I am. I kept my mouth shut until I reached American Intelligence, because I had a hunch they were getting ready to pull something with this stuff."

"Then you're sure that the enemy caused your blindness?" asked Masters.

"Sure as I'm in this room talking to you," replied the blind man. "Everyone of us got the stuff in the same place."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Tremaine suddenly.

"I mean we noticed that our eyes began to burn at the same place in the prison enclosure. Everyone of us got it while walking through the alley between the main barracks and the commandant's office. Sometimes fellows could walk through there for a couple of days, then first thing you know a bird would come out into the yard complaining of itching eyes. A little while later he would be blind."

"Then you have no idea what it is?" asked Viaud, making notes of the man's statements.

The blind man hesitated. "I remember a queer light flashing in my eyes."

"Where is this camp," asked Masters.

"About five kilometers outside of Le Blanc," answered the American.

"And you say a light flashed in your face," said Masters looking over at Tremaine. "Bright light?"

The man nodded.

Masters said nothing as he led the man to a chair by the desk and then stood over him, examining those sightless orbs covered with the grey film. He moved the light so that its rays fell obliquely across the man's pupils. The film of grey began to shimmer with a peculiar scintillation. The Lone Eagle bent closer, his eyes lighted with renewed interest.

"Any of the doctors examined him?" he finally asked.

"Some of our best," answered Tremaine. "Not one of them say what has caused it."

MASTERS pulled the blind man to his feet, motioned for the orderly to lead him from the room. When the door closed he turned to Tremaine and Viaud.

"Either one of you ever been to Mexico?" he asked.

Tremaine nodded, but Viaud shook his head.

"Ever hear of a place called Oaxaca, or Tiltepec? Way inland, in the mountains—"

Tremaine, wondering, replied that he had never heard of the spot mentioned.

"I'd never heard of it either," said Masters slowly. "That is, not until I was sent down there by my paper to get a story about a Doctor von Sacken who had disappeared."

"What has it got to do with this blindness?" asked Tremaine a bit brusquely.

"Just this," answered Masters.

"All the natives that live in and near Oaxaca are blind. They are not born blind, but seem to be struck with it after a certain age. And that blindness is just exactly like the grey film that covers that man's eyes."

"What causes it, Masters?" asked Viaud tersely.

"Nobody knows," Masters went on. "It has been studied by scientists from all over the world. Only a few of them have come out of the valley with their eyesight intact."

But tonight is the first time I've seen that film of grey that seems to shimmer under oblique illumination. It's the same. I'm certain of that."

"Then what about the light in the Fokker?" exploded Tremaine.

"May have caused it," answered Masters steadily. "No one knows why the natives of the valley down in Oaxaca go blind. There are all sorts of theories. Some say it is the dust in the air, which is full of minerals and may cause the sun to



He bent forward, trying to comfort the wounded pilot (Page 25)

"And this Doctor von Sacken?" demanded Tremaine.

"Von Sacken went down there to study the disease," said Masters. "He was never heard of again. Some of the natives said that he had been hit by the plague and wandered off into the open country. He was a German. Perhaps you recall the case?"

"But what makes you think that this blindness is the same?" Viaud asked.

"I've seen lots of blind men since I left Mexico," said Masters. "Always sort of interested in the disease since my experience down there.

reflect a ray of which we know nothing about. Others claim that it is caused by a microscopic caterpillar which chooses the conjunctiva of the eye as a hatching place for its eggs. Others say that a mosquito is the cause of the infection."

"And the natives?" asked Viaud eagerly.

"The natives attribute their blindness to the exhalations of a plant they call *la verguenza*."

"Never heard of it," said Tremaine.

"Its scientific name is *Ipomea*," Masters said. "Belongs to the morn-

ing-glory family, of which there are about four hundred species."

"Then we don't know whether this thing the enemy is using is a poison, or if it's that bright light on the Fokker."

"No. And I don't know how that Fokker was being flown. But I'm going to find out. Call that man in here again."

When the blind man returned to the room Masters began to question him. Everything about the prison camp at Le Blanc was wormed from the man. The names of the other prisoners. The name of the commandant. How the American was taken prisoner, and the date of his escape.

When he was through, Masters studied the man for a moment and then turned to Tremaine. "If you don't mind, Colonel, I think I'll take this fellow to Paris with me. I want to study him a little more and ask a few more questions."

"Certainly, John," answered Tremaine. "But I thought maybe you would stick around here and try to nail that Fokker."

Masters shook his head. "From what I saw of it this afternoon it will take more than a beltful of slugs to knock that ship down. I'm going to work on this thing from the inside. I'll be back here tomorrow morning and get a ship. See you then."

He led the blind man to the door and then paused. "Have the M.O.s go over the men who went blind this afternoon. If the one who crashed on the airdrome is alive and able to talk, find out when his eyes began to bother him."

"You mean they might be slipping that stuff to the pilots on this side?" queried Tremaine, his face going white.

"Anything might be the answer," said Masters. "I'm going to cover this from every angle. See you in

the morning. Don't mind if I use your car, do you?"

Tremaine waved his assent and the door closed.

The two chiefs of Allied intelligence services, walked to their chairs and slumped into them without a word. They both realized that once again their safety, the safety of the Allied cause rested on the square shoulders of the young Yankee ace who had just stepped from the room.

Once more the Lone Eagle was going to match his wits and nerve with the enemy. If he failed, the Allies would find their countries peopled by blind men—men who would wander in total darkness till the end of their days—

CHAPTER IV

Desperate Mission



BRISK morning breeze was tearing the mist into long wisps of grey as John Masters jumped his Spad into the air and headed for the domain of the enemy.

He wore the uniform of an American private. His broad shoulders carried no bars denoting rank. Even his ship carried no identifying mark, save the cocarde of the American Air Service. Its wings and fuselage held no squadron marking by which he could be identified from the air. For John Masters, the legendary Lone Eagle of war-torn skies, worked alone. Only Colonel Tremaine and General Viaud knew his real identity.

Once again he was playing his dual role. On the ground he was merely a drab-uniformed man, supposedly a war correspondent for a Chicago newspaper. But in the air, still wearing that drab uniform, he was the thundering scourge of the skies—the Lone Eagle.

And the uniform he wore that morning was meaner than any he had worn before. No self-respecting war correspondent would have been caught in one such as the Lone Eagle was wearing. For Masters had changed in Paris with the blind man. Now he wore the outfit in which the stricken American had escaped from the German prison camp. With the help of a Belgian guide he had worked his way into Holland, and from Holland to the American Intelligence Headquarters.

IN his pocket, closely wrapped in a tiny metal box, was a gadget with which he expected to complete his disguise—when the time came. He was going into the lair of the Hun; but as usual, he was going prepared.

The long crooked scar of No Man's Land crept into view through the whirling blades of his prop. His face hardened. His eyes narrowed as he slid lower in his seat. The territory of the Hun lay dead ahead. There was grim business to be attended to, before he could hope to return to Tremaine and Viaud with the word that another pitfall of the enemy had been avoided.

The shell-pocked soil of the Front slid under his bobbing wings. Long, double lines of battered poplar trees lined the long dusty road that disappeared over the distant horizon in Hunland. Tiny specks moved along the surface of the highway over which the enemy brought his supplies and guns.

But aside from the casual glance of a trained observer, Masters paid them little attention. He was after bigger game that morning. He was heading toward the vicinity of Le Blanc where the blind American had escaped.

A few scattered Archie shells broke around him, and their woolly black balls of smoke were torn to shreds in a moment by the stiff

breeze. Masters pulled the stick back, lifting his nose toward a bank of fleecy clouds. He knew what that cluster of anti-aircraft shells signified. He had seen a lone bunch like that one break before, and a few minutes later a flock of black-crossed crates always appeared on the scene.

Masters was not eager to meet Boche planes that morning. The cracking down of a ship or two would not lead him any closer to the answer of the great riddle.

As he swung between two towering clouds, watching a tiny hole in the floor of the misty valley, Masters saw a shadow flit across the billowing surface of the cloud on his left. He swung around in his cockpit, looking apprehensively over his right shoulder. He was certain that the fleeting shadow had been a ship.

He banked to the left, then to the right. He scanned every inch of the space between the clouds. The air reeked with danger. He could feel it on every side. His fingers rested on the spade grip, his thumbs on the Bowden. His guns were ready, eager to answer the challenge of Spandaus.

Across the mist-bound valley of clouds he roared, seeking the shelter of a towering mass in front of him. If he could gain that, he might stand a chance of slipping away and continuing on toward Le Blanc.

Suddenly, and just as he had expected, the air was ripped to bits by the scintillating knife of a long line of tracer. Twin lines of grey mingled with the wisps of wind-torn mist. Spandaus crackled to the left of him. Then to the right, and another team of guns broke out in back of him.

He saw them now. Coming down on him out of the clouds were five gayly painted, vicious Albatrosses, each and every one of them spewing lead from their blazing guns.

The Lone Eagle smiled grimly as

he curled around to evade the nearest of the Hun crates. A minute before, he had been alone in the valley formed by the towering clouds. Now he had five enemy planes—and death—for company. Whipped on by the Grim Ringmaster, the five ships came at him, a host of whirring propeller blades, roaring Mercedes and raging Spandaus.

There he was, one against five, and if he were to avoid death, he must fight. He must fight alone. He could not look for aid, and there was little chance of getting back to his own lines. Besides, Le Blanc lay dead ahead. He had started for Le Blanc—and he was going there!

He yanked the stick back. The Spad zoomed amid a blasting rain of fire and steel. He came out at the ceiling, flattened out while he contemplated the Huns, whose guns were momentarily stilled as they crept closer.

They came swinging into action again. Charging up at him, like unleashed hounds of hell, the five Albatrosses came snarling. Spread out at first, then drawing nearer, fanning at him with hosing tracer, encircling him with lines of grey. Spandaus kept up their maddening clacking, throwing lead at him in funneling lines.

Masters' eyes followed their every move. They had the numbers. His advantage was the will to fight, a will born of iron purpose. Easily, steadily, he moved his ship closer to the three jobs that barred his path. His shoulders rounded slightly as he slumped lower, his steady eyes searching for black crosses in the Aldis sight.

His thumb touched the Bowden with almost a caress. The Vickers jerked convulsively on their mountings. Their hungry blocks sucked up the bronze-coated slugs from the belts and tossed the empty cases out into the raging slip-stream. A dev-

astating double thread of tracer hissed across space, sang its vicious, blood-curdling song and plunged into the fuselage of the nearest Albatross.

The sun-browned skin along the Lone Eagle's jaws grew taut as the Albatross wavered in mid-air and then fell off on one wing. For a long, tense moment it slipped away, then righted itself, and hung suspended in the sky; then with a sickening lurch it faded away, falling, one wing over the other, weaving a gossamer scarf of oily black smoke in the morning air.

Masters touched his rudder. The nose of his screaming Spad moved and caught another glinting wing. His fingers touched the trips again, and once more his Vickers chanted.

Steel whined around his head. A strut splintered and threw a silver sliver of spruce back into the fabric of the fuselage where it stuck, quivering like an arrow in the heart of a swan.

A FLYING wire sang, thrummed, snapped and then curled up against the center strut fitting.

Despite this storm of hate, Masters' clear eyes never left the sights. His strong, lean fingers kept up their pressure on the Bowdens. The Vickers never stopped their wicked sputtering as they answered the Spandau challenge.

Cluster after cluster of molten lead poured into the heart of the nearest Hun. It staggered before the flailing blows and reeled as the whistling slugs ate into its vitals. Then it dropped, a wingless thing, a bunch of splintered wood and twisted metal, tumbling through the skies in the gruesome dance of death.

His lips closed in a thin line as a smoking slug plucked at the joystick, shaking it in his firm grasp. His feet pressed tighter in the rudder.

der stirrups as he nursed the Spad into a bank. As he came around he threw a quick glance at the towering cloud through which he was trying to fight his way, but the Huns had taken up a position which forced him to continue in the mad circling maneuver.

Just as he leveled out to crack down at an Albatross that was slipping across his course, a new note in the hymn of hate hit his keen ears. His eyes left the Albatross which he was about to attack and scanned the crest of the mountainous clouds.

"Fokkers," he murmured as he saw the specks leap over the lip of a snowy cloud and pour down into the arena of death. There were red ones, green ones, blue ones and a job painted a solid black, but not a sign of the grey one with lightning painted on its wings.

He summed up the situation in a split-second. The Fokkers were coming down on him in a screaming dive. Their guns were already working. The three remaining Albatrosses were skimming closer fighting to force him into the spitting funnel caused by the fire from the hurtling ships above. A circle was out of the question now. He would have to throw his ship around as it had never been thrown before.

Slamming the throttle against the last notch, he yanked the stick back. The Spad clawed for a level which would at least put him on an equal footing with the new enemy crates.

From behind him he heard the *clack-clack-clack* of stuttering Spandaus as the Albatross followed him in the zoom. In front of him and on all sides came the roar of a storm of lead. The Fokkers were in range now.

Throttle wide open and Hisso thundering, the Spad knifed the air like a quarrelsome king bird. Up and up she went with Masters hold-

ing the stick back against his belt. Then she turned over like a black bass striking at a moth in a mill pond.

Masters' head snapped back against the pad and he watched earth and sky change places. His struts trembled, and the wing fabric puckered along the outer bay.

FOR a second he hung there, with Albatrosses and Fokkers milling below. Some were converging on the spot where he must drop out of the loop. He smiled grimly as he watched an Albatross and a Fokker maneuvering for the spot where, to all intents, he should come screaming out of the maneuver.

But instead of completing the loop, the Lone Eagle jammed the stick forward and came hurtling down from the heights on his back. He held the Spad with a firm, restraining hand. With his trucks pointed toward the tops of the fleecy clouds he came swishing down through that mist-bound valley at a spot just behind the two ships which were struggling for a place to send in their death thrust.

Before they could untangle themselves, Masters was on them like a flash of lightning. His Vickers chattered and twin streams of lacy smoke curved from his red muzzle cups. For a brief second they connected a green Fokker with the mottled Spad. Then they moved on, swiftly and surely, leaving the Fokker to shed its upper wing, while they hammered at the Albatross.

The Albatross wavered into a half-hearted turn as the panic-stricken pilot realized that he had been outwitted. Masters saw a pale face turned toward him. Then the face turned to a mass of pulpy red as his slugs smashed through. The Hun slumped like a half-filled sack of oats and fell against his stick. The ship, riddled from stem to stern,

started out on its last course, piloted by death.

A gleam of hope flashed across the Lone Eagle's face, as he saw the other crates scatter for a moment. But the pilot in the black Fokker was waving them back to the attack.

But the Lone Eagle was not to be held back. His guns snarled, hurling long lines of grey from ship to ship, striking three blows for every one he received. Another Fokker went down, drowned in a bath of orange flame. Masters shuddered as he saw the pilot leaning back, his hands held before his face to guard it from the searing fire.

"Hate to see 'em go that way," he mused, and then swung on another ship. "But it's war, and that's why I hate it." For, despite his glorious record over the lines, Masters really hated war. He hated the needless slaughter of innocent men, brought about by the greed of rulers who never reached the Front or heard the scream of a shell, or felt the impact of a slug in their flesh.

His vicious guns lashed out again. An aileron ripped loose on a Fokker and fluttered away like an oak leaf. The Fokker slipped from side to side, winging a drunken course toward the trees below.

Another Fokker crossed his path. His thumbs pressed the trips. The left-hand gun took up the song, but the right coughed twice and was silent. Masters cursed savagely as he punched the cocking handle. Once again his thumb sought the Bowden. But the right-hand gun was still.

Despite his frantic efforts, the gun refused to function. A bad cartridge, or a part of the feed block warped, had silenced his Vickers. There was no time to clear it now.

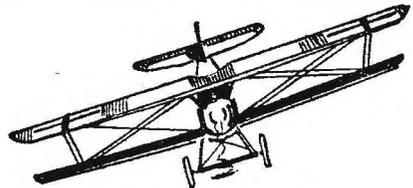
With only one gun working and no idea of how many shells he had left in the belt, Masters fought doggedly on. Hun slugs snapped over his center section.

By sheer determination he kept forcing the battle more and more toward the edge of the cloud bank that hid Le Blanc. He must win through. If he went west, the Allies would be left staggering in darkness, struck down by this new and horrible threat of the enemy.

JUST as he figured that he had won his goal, the coal-black Fokker appeared out of nowhere to bar his path. For a moment it seemed to hesitate. It feinted toward the left as if it meant to curl in and let drive at the Spad. But instead it turned and ran away as if seeking to hide in the misty mass of moisture.

Masters was on it in a flash. His left hand gun began to yammer. Only a round or two ticked off before his fingers went slack on the Bowdens. And the Lone Eagle's jaw dropped. His mouth opened in surprise as he found himself staring into a flash of bright light coming from the fuselage of the black Fokker.

Throwing his hands before his face, he jammed the rudder to the right. The partially controlled Spad



sliced through the air as Masters, unmindful of the course he was taking, sought to shield his eyes from the blinding glare.

"Worked me into position and then let me have it!" Masters cried into the slip-stream. "Had me off guard because it wasn't a grey Fokker flying by itself. Be using it all over the front, and then we'll be licked! Should have ducked the whole bunch of them. I knew about the light and yet I fell for it!"

The crackling of the guns died away behind him.



Masters whirled, his automatic jerking up (Page 36)

Masters slowly withdrew his hands from his eyes and reached for the stick. A low moan escaped his lips as a curtain of grey blotted out everything. "They got me!" he gasped. "I'm through—"

His hand encountered the stick. He felt the ship lift as he centered the controls. He could see nothing. Everything seemed blanketed in grey. Through the shadows he could dimly see his dash. The white needles quivered faintly and up front he could hear the throb of an invisible motor. He tore his goggles from his eyes and threw them over the side.

So far there was no smarting sensation in his eyes. He supposed that would come later. He wished now he had asked the blind American more about how the blindness had come on him. He had not expected the thing to work quite so fast. The

other pilots seemed to have been struck down quite some time after they had encountered the flashing light. One had lasted until he had reached the airdrome and then crashed.

That man had complained of darkness coming too soon.

The grey curtain grew heavier. Masters' heart beat faster. He couldn't keep the ship on an even keel. He couldn't see the wing-tips through the grey shroud that had dropped over his eyes. He sat tensed in the cockpit, and then yanked the throttle back.

"Have to put her in a glide and then guess," he murmured. He shook his head. "Not a chance. I'm through—licked before I started! If I could only see the ground long enough to set down—"

He sat staring into space, seeing nothing—

CHAPTER V

Blind Pawn

UHN MASTERS lived a lifetime in those few minutes while the Spad slid silently toward the ground, motor throttled back. His face grew greyer. His lips moved in silent prayer, as he sat tensed waiting for the crash. The curtain of grey seemed to eddy and shimmer across his eyes. And then, suddenly as it had appeared to blot out his vision, it faded. The green earth whirled slowly before his stilled prop.

Masters could hardly believe his senses. The earth stopped spinning as he neutralized the controls and brought the ship out of the spin into which it had dropped. There it was, unbelievably beautiful, mottled with green and brown. Never had the world looked quite so magnificent as it did at that moment.

And then a sheepish grin stole across the Lone Eagle's face, bringing color back to the cheeks which a few moments before had been a deathly grey.

"Seeing that light and then barging into that cloud with my hands in front of my face sure put me in a frame of mind to believe that my eyes were done for," he grinned as he eased the throttle forward. "Shows what mental suggestion will do!"

Then the smile on his face disappeared. The color faded again. Was he free of the effects of that light? The question seered its way into his brain.

The others had not been struck so swiftly. Even now it was only a few minutes since he had gazed into that sinister light on the fuselage of the black Fokker. There was still time enough to have that shroud of grey drop before his eyes forever.

As he realized that he was still in danger of losing his sight, Masters looked around for a spot to land.

Below him, just at his right wing tip he saw an L cut into the middle of a dense oak forest. He glanced about him. The sky was clear. The Huns were no doubt milling around on the other side of that cloud bank, expecting him to make for his own lines instead of carrying on. He knew too that he was flying over a very quiet sector and that very few troops held the terrain below him.

Cutting the gun, dropping his nose, and S turning silently through the air, Masters glided swiftly toward the long, crooked cut in the woods.

Down and down he went. Not a sound came from his ship, save the faint sighing of the wind in his flying wires. Now and then he rubbed his eyes anxiously. He was still afraid of that curtain of grey.

At last he banked just at the corner of the L and set his ship down in a long tree-shaded lane. The trucks rattled over the uneven ground and came to a stop.

He crawled out of his cockpit and dropped to the ground, and stood listening. He felt that somebody was looking at him, yet there wasn't a human being in sight. He stepped behind his machine and drew his automatic. Every muscle in his body was tense. He was sure that some one was near him, yet he heard no sound save the twittering of a pair of birds high in the branches of an oak.

"You wish aid in mounting again," *monsieur?*" The voice was like a whisper over Masters' shoulder.

He whirled. His automatic came up with its barrel pressed in the stomach of a man who looked like a tramp. His face was blacked with dust and woodsmoke. His black eyes bored deep into the Lone Eagle's. His hands were thrust into the

pockets of a tattered thing that passed for a coat.

"You had better put that gun down, *monsieur*," said the stranger. "I have you covered!"

Masters let his arm go slack. The automatic hung apparently carelessly in his fingers.

"Who are you?" Masters asked.

The stranger smiled. "It would be better if you told me who you were, first. You see, I have the advantage."

"I'm an American pilot. I was just shot down," said Masters steadily.

The stranger grinned. "It is very funny. There were no planes near you when your motor stopped. There are plenty of fields at the edge of the forest, yet you choose to land here on this narrow cut, far away from the open. You are not deserting, are you?" The last sentence came in a hiss and gave Masters his clue.

Masters grinned. "I had reasons for dropping in here, my friend. I am not running away from the war. I came over here for a purpose. If you would be so kind as to tell me who *you* are, and what you are doing here instead of fighting for your country against the Boche, we might come to an understanding."

The man in tatters looked Masters over from head to foot, and smiled. "We both look like a pair of tramps. It is strange to see a man dressed as you are, flying a ship. I thought all your pilots were officers."

Masters glanced toward his ship without saying a word. He was not ready yet to put his cards on the table.

The man who spoke with a slight accent eyed the uniform which the Lone Eagle wore. A slow smile crept across his face. "Shall I inform you how that tear came to be in the elbow of that tunic?"

Masters glanced down at the rip in his sleeve. Had he left something

undone? Had he forgotten something when he took that worn outfit from the blind American? He looked up into the steady eyes of the man in front of him.

"How did it get there?" he asked softly, watching every move of the man.

The man laughed softly. "That sleeve caught in the barbed wire as Private Cummings was slipping into Holland."

"You know Cummings?" asked Masters, trying to be casual.

The stranger nodded. "I aided him in getting into Holland. It was hard and dangerous work escorting a blind man across a terrain held by the enemy. Now I ask you again: why are you here in Private Cummings' uniform? Are you by any chance going to Le Blanc to find out why men go blind?"

Masters held his tongue. He was trying to place this man. There was something familiar about the lines in his weather-tanned face.

"Perhaps you intend to go to the prison camp at Le Blanc?" continued the stranger.

MASTERS shrugged his shoulders. There was little use in trying to bluff this man. He seemed to know too much.

"Perhaps I am." He looked down at the guns poking through the holes in the man's pocket, waiting to see what effect his words would have.

The stranger nodded and withdrew his hands. "You can put your gun up now. I was not quite sure of who you were at first. It is quite a while since I saw you last, John Masters."

The words sent a chill through his body and his fingers clenched on the butt of his automatic. It came up in a flash. He had the man covered now. The tables were turned.

"Who are you?" he rasped. "What do you know about me?"

The stranger folded his arms

across his chest. "First I will tell you what I know about you. Then perhaps I will tell you who I am. You are John Masters, known all over the front as the Lone Eagle. A brave man, hated by the enemy. I have seen you before, but I never dared disclose my identity. At the time I was masquerading as a Boche soldier. If matters had come to a head I would have aided you, but you always managed to slip from their clutches by yourself."

"When, may I ask?" crisped Masters.

"Once when you and H-Eleven were in the hands of Baron Imbert and R-47. It was very clever the way you had escaped while you and H-Eleven were digging your own graves. I was just preparing to go into action myself—I was one of the firing squad. You drilled me in the arm, but I managed to get one of the others in the darkness. You should have heard R-47 storm when she returned and found that you had escaped. Then on another occasion I was in the old slaughter-house when you foiled von Bader. And you may also wonder who has been getting messages through to General Viaud, time after time, informing him of plans which the Huns were preparing. I think he wonders too, does he not?"

"Who are you?" asked Masters again. "I can't recall ever having seen you before, yet there is something familiar about your face."

"No doubt," smiled the stranger. "People always said I looked like my father."

"And who is your father?"

"General Viaud," said the stranger softly. "I trust he is well."

"Viaud!" exclaimed Masters. "Why—Pierre Viaud is dead! The general told me—how his son Pierre was killed during the first year of the war. Why, I've even seen your grave!"

The man laughed softly. "It is cruel to carry on and let my own Father think that I am dead. But I have never found an agent whom I could trust to bring the message back. I have smuggled many messages to him giving him news of the Boche plans, but not once did I dare reveal my identity. If the messages had been intercepted—and many of them were—my work for France would have been finished. You are the first to know that another was buried in my place, and that I saw my opportunity to carry on for my country. Believe me, I am Pierre Viaud, the son of the grandest man in France."

Masters looked deep into the dark eyes of the man in front of him. He could not help but believe him.

"Can we manage to hide my ship around here?" he asked. "I might need it."

VIAUD pointed to a thick tangle of vines. "There is an old wood-cutter's road to the left of that. We can push it in there and hide it in the ruins of the old stable. I have my hut there, too."

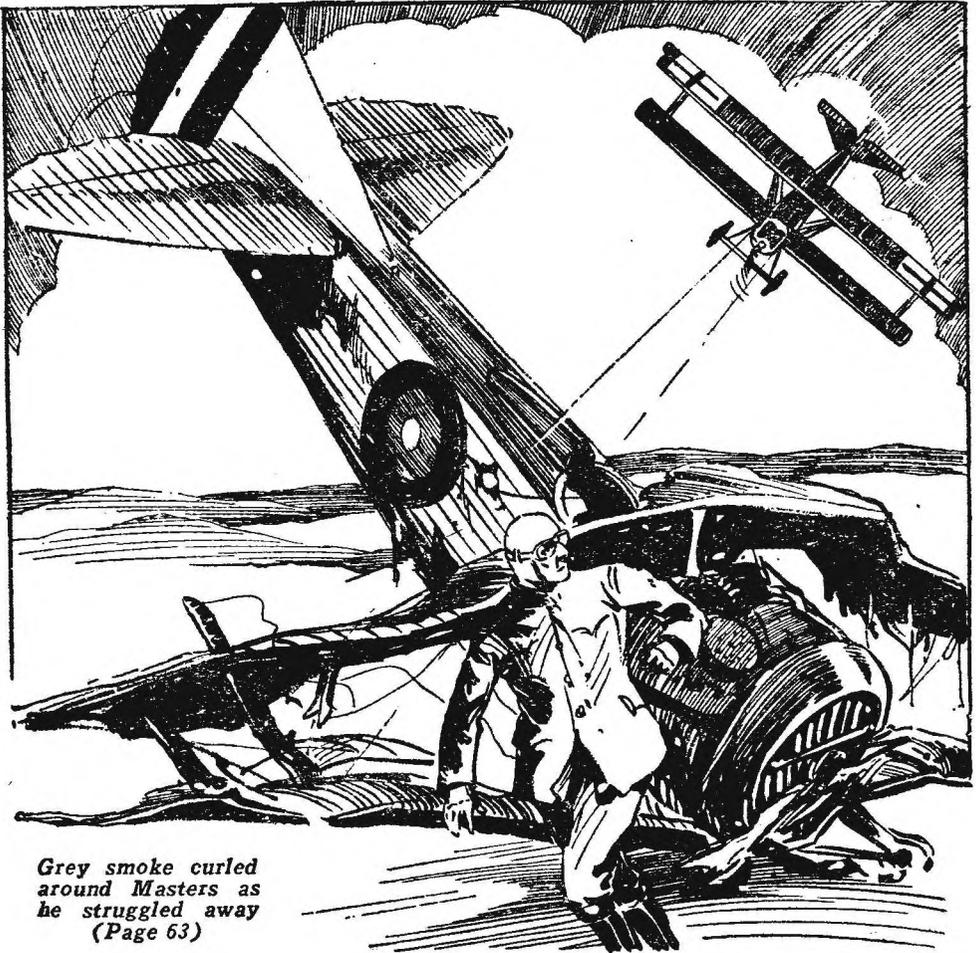
The two men set to work, and soon had the Spad wheeled behind the screen of leaves and into the wide door of what years ago had been a stable.

"There," said young Viaud as he finished placing some branches over the nose of the Spad. "They will have to look close to see that. Now what?"

"I'm going to get ready to go to Le Blanc," replied Masters as he stepped behind the machine.

A few moments later he emerged. A gasp of astonishment escaped his new ally's lips as Masters shuffled slowly across the dusty floor.

"How do you do it?" demanded Viaud as he gazed into Masters' face. "Your eyes are covered with a grey film, just as Cummings' were!"



Grey smoke curled around Masters as he struggled away (Page 63)

The Lone Eagle smiled. "You think I'll pass? Have I got my face made up right?"

"Perfect!" smiled Viaud. "I would take you for Cummings himself. But the eyes—tell me how you did it."

Masters' hand went to his face. They passed gently over his eyes and then came away. His eyes were clear and blue again. In his outstretched hand lay two curved bits of opalescent glass. They seemed to shimmer as the light from the open door caught them.

Masters explained. "They are made of thin glass, colored like the eyes of Cummings. They fit exactly over my eyeballs, and give me the appearance of being blind. See the

tiny pin-hole in the center of each one? You cannot see it when I wear the lenses, but they enable me to see, even if my field of vision is narrowed. They'll move too, as I move my eyes, yet they appear to be sightless."

HE slipped the curved bits of glass under his eyelids again and stood facing Viaud.

"Are they not painful?" asked the Frenchman.

"Not exactly painful," said Masters. "But they're annoying till you get used to them. I got the idea from a Chinese bandit, Old Ling Ho, who used to disguise himself as a blind beggar and sit in the market

place at Yunnan and pick up word of rich caravans. I helped him once and he showed me his secret. I have never tried to use it until now. Does the rest of my outfit look all right? See, I have even worn my shoes thin. I want them to think that I have been wandering around the country without knowing where I was going."

Viaud grinned. "I can help you. They humor me because they love to tease half-wits. I'm sport for them; but they pay for their fun. Let me lead you. I will put you on the right track to Le Blanc." He picked up a handful of the dry dust from the stable floor and rubbed it carefully over Masters' uniform and then wiped his hands on the Lone Eagle's face. "Now you look as if you had been on the road for the necessary time— Are you ready?"

Masters nodded.

Soon the two of them had emerged from the woodland and were walking slowly along the ruts of a country road. Masters stared straight ahead, his right hand resting on Viaud's shoulder which had suddenly become stooped and crooked, as the Frenchman fell into his role of a feeble-minded charcoal burner.

Masters' heart beat faster as Viaud led him into a village. On all sides he could see the equipment of the Kaiser's grey-clad horde. Wagons stood in orderly rows along the walls. Horses champed, nosing piles of dusty hay. Through the pin-holes in the grey lenses over his eyes he saw troopers hurrying about their daily chores.

He heard the shouts of officers ordering the war-weary soldiers to move faster.

At last they stopped in front of a low, dirty-walled building. A creaking sign over their heads informed Masters that it was the village inn. Within the building he heard the ribald songs and coarse shouts of

men who were off duty at the moment.

Save for a soldier who paused now and then to stare curiously at the pair, no one seemed to give them the slightest notice. Sometimes a trooper would call from the other side of the street and hail them.

"Willy has a new comrade," he heard a soldier laugh as the two men stood in front of the inn. "We will have to have them over to the mess tonight. It will be sport. We'll get them drunk."

MASTERS' hand suddenly tightened on the shoulder of his companion. Viaud had started up the worn steps. He was going right into the lair of the enemy.

"Couldn't you give Willy and his companion a glass of beer?" he heard the Frenchman ask in broken German. "We have traveled far and are thirsty. He is a poor blind man I found in the woods."

A low curse sounded from the tap-room. A chair scuffed across a stone floor and Masters heard the sound of boots coming in their direction. A gruff voice rang out in the narrow entrance and Masters found himself propelled into the low-ceilinged room.

"Where did you find him, Willy?" the harsh voice asked.

The Frenchman giggled. "In the moonlight," he drooled. "Look, he cannot see a thing!" Viaud passed his fingers close to Masters eyes.

"How long has he been with you?" came the voice again, as the Hun officer pulled Masters to the light, Viaud's fingers worked spasmodically as he went through the motions of trying to count off the days. But he seemed to get lost in his count as the fingers tangled. At last Viaud shrugged his twisted shoulders. "I don't know. Maybe two days—no, two weeks—"

"Sure it wasn't two years?" somebody snickered.

"Ah, yes, two years! That is it—two years ago!"

"Silence!" roared the man with the rough voice, 'and the pin-holes in Masters' glasses registered on the Hun as he stepped to the window and stared at the Lone Eagle.

"It is the one!" he snarled. "How did you get out of the camp at Le Blanc?" he suddenly asked.

Masters shrugged his shoulders. "I was looking for a drink of water, and I walked and walked. I never got it until Willy gave it to me. I did not know that there were so many trees in the camp. I kept bumping into them. I'm tired of walking, too. Willy keeps saying that he is taking me back to my quarters, but—I don't know—I think he is fooling me."

And while he talked he stared at the red-faced Boche by the window. He had seen that cruel face somewhere before, either in the flesh or in a picture. And then he remembered.

It was von Sacken! Von Sacken, the German scientist who had disappeared in the valley of Oaxaca. He had carried his picture too long in the search for the missing man. Masters had finally given up and returned to his paper with the story, told by the natives, of how von Sacken had been struck down by the dreadful malady and wandered off into the sun-drenched wilderness to die.

Yet here in front of him stood the man who gave the natives of Oaxaca the lie. Von Sacken was alive and in the same room with Masters!

Masters did not hear Viaud's wild ramblings as he tried once again to explain how he had found the blind man wandering aimlessly in the forest. He did not hear the keen questions of von Sacken. He was too busy trying to piece the bits of the puzzle together. Blind men,

pilots struck down by this sinister weapon of the enemy. Grey film, the disease of the natives at Oaxaca.

Von Sacken had been in Oaxaca. He was supposed to have been stricken, his eyes gone, curtained by the shroud of grey, blind, wandering into the wilds to die alone, unheard of for years. And now he stood, glaring, roaring questions, eyeing the tattered uniform of the Lone Eagle.

Von Sacken seemed relieved. "I thought you had slipped away, Cummings," he rasped. "I'll see to it that you do not start for another drink of water. And you, Willy, get out. Keep away from Le Blanc. And keep that prattling mouth of yours closed. Here, buy yourself a glass of beer. I suppose I must reward you for easing my mind."

Viaud grabbed at the coin and stepped to the bar. "Beer!" he mumbled as he leaned back against the sloppy wood and stared toward the ceiling. "I'm going back to guard my airplane now. Take good care of my friend—"

Masters heard Viaud rattling on as von Sacken called two guards. A few minutes later he was led from the room, smiling as he listened to Viaud's promise to guard the plane, their rendezvous.

CHAPTER VI

Blind Alley



MASTERS, his eyes shielded by those thin grey lenses, presently found himself in the wired prison yard at Le Blanc. All around him were men, stumbling men, men who made their way

by cautious steps, tapping the hard-baked soil of the compound with hastily cut sticks, feeling their way along the strands of barbed wire as they made their way from sleeping

quarters to mess hut, or wandered about the enclosure.

The Lone Eagle stumbled too. Now and then he bumped into a tottering American. He observed their glazed eyes. They were all the same. A heavy grey film which shimmered when the rays of the sun slanted on them right, covered each and every orb.

Masters cursed softly to himself and made his way slowly toward the narrow alley which Cummings had mentioned. He had been led through that alley once, and he could not forget how his heart had pounded while the Boche trooper held his arm and guided him along the path between the commandant's office and the sleeping quarters of the prisoners. He had watched the German, but the man seemed to have no fear. Yet he might have been wearing some secret device which protected him from the thing that blotted out light from the eyes of men.

HE had examined every inch of the yard, watching stumbling men, listening to them curse the thing which had robbed them of their eyesight. And he thought of the men he had seen the day before. Men who could not curse, because the loss of their eyes had robbed them of their lives.

His field of vision was restricted by the tiny pin-holes in his lenses. Yet he missed not a single inch of the prison camp. He heard men greet him and answered back. The word had spread that Cummings had been caught.

"We'll have to try again, old-timer," a burly American had whispered when he had taken Masters in tow, after the Hun had left the yard. "Three more fellows came into the camp yesterday. I heard him cussing a little while ago and I guess they've got the same dose."

"Heard anything new?" Masters

asked as he brushed along the fence that led to the alley.

"Not a thing," growled the blind man at his side. "I heard this crazy German, von Sacken, out here yesterday, cussing in general. He sure was worried when you got out. What did you tell him?"

"Haven't been brought up for a real questioning yet," said Masters quietly. "I suppose von Sacken will put me through a third degree. Did you fellows tell him anything?"

"Only that we heard you stumbling around that night and then go out into the yard," replied the American.

"That's good enough," said Masters. "I told him I was looking for a drink of water and couldn't find my way. Meaning that the gate had been left open. I think he'll swallow it. Let's sit here for a while—I'm tired."

Masters slumped down in the sun. His eyes appeared to be staring vacantly into space, but they were watching the shadowy valley between the two buildings. It was there, according to Cummings, that the men must have been struck down with the grim weapon of the enemy.

He heard the rattle of a rifle as it scraped along the barbed wire. The tall gate at the end creaked and Masters turned his head, his eyes focused on the other end of the yard. His breath hissed between his teeth. A smiling Yank stood within the compound and surveyed the scene. Masters noticed the puzzled frown creep over the young American's face as he watched the stumbling men, feeling their way from pillar to post.

He saw the man hesitate a moment and then at the gruff command of the man at the gate start for the sinister alley and its grim secret.

Masters' muscles quivered. He wanted to reach out and hold the man back. He might save the newcomer's eyesight, perhaps his life. Yet, he held himself in check. A

false move, a hasty step, might give him away.

The American marched by Masters and his companion with a steady step. Masters leaned back, and held his breath as the stranger stepped into the shadows between the buildings. He could see the whole stretch from where he sat.

"If I could only save him!" he murmured as he cushioned his head on his arms and watched.

The American was in the alley now. Masters could not take his eyes from the advancing man's back. A few seconds more and the living death would make a pass at him.

Then it came, suddenly, swiftly, taking Masters by surprise. That flash of light! It bored into the shadows for a split second and then was gone. Masters closed his eyes quickly, then opened them again. The American was marching steadily on.

The Lone Eagle felt the blood drain from his veins. For the second time he had looked into that light. He could not understand it. The first time, when he had cracked down on the black Fokker; that was hours ago, yet he still had his eyesight. Perhaps he had been fortunate. Perhaps the light had not hit his eyes at the right angle. But now he had looked directly into that quick flash.

He shuddered. Perhaps it had hit him right this time—

The American who had walked through the alley was gone. Masters had seen him turn in at a door. The alley was empty. He saw the dust kick up between the two buildings for a moment and eddy skyward. Masters felt no wind where he sat. And it made him wonder. The puzzle was getting not only more difficult, but more frightening.

The man at his side kept chattering, but Masters did not hear a word of what he said. He sat tensed against the fence, watching the alley,

wondering whether his eyes would soon begin to film over. He must not lose eyes which were the keenest in the Allied Intelligence service. Yet there was nothing to do but wait. He had inadvertently looked into that flashing light again.

Suddenly a pair of heavy boots grated on the pebbles in front of him. Somebody stopped.

"Cummings," came a harsh voice. "The *Kommandant* wishes to see you. I need not guide you. You know the door at your left in the alley. You have been there before. Hurry—"

Masters crawled to his feet. His hands trembled as they reached for the guiding strands of wire. "Headed right?" he asked hesitantly.

"That's right," came the reply from the guard. "Straight ahead. When you come to the door on your left, turn in. Wait inside. Von Sacken will call you into the office."

Masters stumbled straight ahead. Was this a trap? Did von Sacken know that he was masquerading as a blind man? Did he intend to make certain that he would be one? He rubbed the back of his hand across his mouth. His lips were dry. He had to walk through the hellish alley to reach the door. The long shadowy path which he felt certain held the secret.

"Hurry!" snapped the voice behind him.

MASTERS pushed one foot after the other. There was no other way of reaching the door. He must go on. He must take the risk. And then his shoulders squared. If the light was the answer, he need not look into it. He could close his eyes and keep his head bent until he reached the door. It was the only way. But he did want to know whether that light flashed as he walked toward the door. If it did, it meant that von Sacken had found him out. If it didn't, he still had time to foil the Hun.

For Masters felt certain that this man—the man who had been in the valley of Oaxaca—was the Hun behind the plague of blindness.

Foot by foot he dragged his way toward the passageway between the prisoners' quarters and von Sacken's office. Any moment now he might be struck down. His left hand played along the surface of the building at his left. A few yards ahead of him, he knew, was the door. He came nearer. He took a desperate risk and partly opened his eyes, taking the precaution, however, of keeping them cast down.

He moved forward, waiting tensely for the glaring flash of the light. The alley was cool and shadowed. No light flashed to erase the shadows.

He reached the doorway. He had to fight his inclination to rush into the building.

FOR the moment he was safe. The door was closing on the alley behind him. He stood within the building which held von Sacken's office. An orderly hurried by.

"Wait here," he snapped at the Lone Eagle. Then Masters was alone in the anteroom.

Wondering whether keen eyes watched his every move, Masters shuffled noiselessly across the room, hands outstretched as if looking for a chair. But he knew where he was going. Just ahead of him was a door and on the other side of that door he heard voices. No one could blame him if he stopped by that door. He could act bewildered, and he was supposed to be a blind man.

He reached the door. He stopped, but his long steely fingers kept groping through the air as if trying to make contact with something solid. He held his breath as he listened.

"Yes," he heard the grim voice of von Sacken. "I think your eyes have been touched by this awful gas you Americans are using. They do not

realize that gas waves can only be used when there is a steady breeze. It has blown back into your own lines. And your generals were not wise enough to wait until they had perfected gas masks which would protect their own from its effects."

"Then you mean that I'm going to be like those out there?" came the panic-stricken voice from the other side of the door. And Masters knew that it was the young American who spoke.

"I'm afraid so," came the voice of von Sacken. "How do your eyes feel now?"

"They itch like the devil."

"You had better go to your quarters," suggested von Sacken. "Keep out of the light as much as possible. It may prolong your vision, but I'm afraid you are doomed, my good man. Too bad." There was no sympathy in the voice of the Hun, despite an attempt to convey that there was. Masters, from his position on the other side, could detect an ill-concealed note of triumph.

The door opened. Masters dropped to a chair just as the American emerged rubbing his eyes. The man rushed from the room and out into the alley from which the blindness started.

Masters waited, every muscle on the alert, wondering what awaited him in the lair of von Sacken. He expected to be summoned in there, now that the American was gone. His grey-shielded eyes stared straight ahead at the blank wall on the other side of the room. His mind buzzed with questions.

"Wonder why he fills them with this bunk about American gas?" he mused. "Is he just covering his tracks in case anything goes wrong—if one of them escapes? Might be it. Only reason I can see."

He held his breath. He heard a buzzer sound somewhere behind those wooden walls. A door opened.

A sickly sweet smell permeated the little room and a rubber-aproned man hurried in front of Masters, yanking off a pair of wet rubber gloves as he entered von Sacken's office.

Masters strained forward, listening to the sounds which came from the other side of the door.

"We are ready, Thomas!" he heard the cruel voice of von Sacken exclaim. "The last one began to feel the effects in five minutes. His eyes are beginning to cloud already! That's better than the twenty-minute interval we had yesterday. Too much can happen in that time. I was afraid that it was not going to take effect at first. But when I saw that first Spad flying crazily through his own formation I knew we had the answer. We can use it from the air now, and feel certain that their eyes will go in far less time. Too bad we have not the apparatus to use it along the front on their troops."

"It is also too bad that we cannot use it on all our planes," added the other voice. "We are handicapped. If more planes were equipped as your grey Fokker is, we could have the skies swept clear in no time."

Masters' mouth dropped slack. Here was a new one! The man on the other side of the door had just stated that the grey Fokker was the only ship equipped with the thing that seared men's eyes. Yet he himself had seen a black Fokker flash one of the lights the day before.

The black Fokker had acted just like this craft von Sacken talked about. The light seemed the same—yet Masters realized now, that although he had looked into that light, nothing had happened to his eyes. There was something deeper and more sinister than this blinding light. Something, perhaps, about the angle at which it struck. For, just a few moments ago, he had been caught unawares and had looked into the light. The American had too, and now the



Two hulking Huns kept the Lone Eagle pinned close against the boards (Page 68)

American was going blind while he still retained his eyesight.

And then part of the answer came from the other side of the door. Von Sacken laughed.

"We are the only ones who know that my grey Fokker is the only ship that can blind them. Kurtz has his

black Fokker faked, and our agents on the other side are doing the rest. Kurtz himself tells me that ships scatter to the four winds when he flashes that light. They do not know that it is harmless. But every flier along the front will steer away from a flashing light after yesterday!"

The two men laughed in unison. "That's a good one," the other man finally said. "Then they know that men are being blinded in the air?"

Von Sacken answered: "One of them crashed yesterday without killing himself. He is in the hospital now. A carrier pigeon has just come in with the report. The doctors know that the man was blinded, but they do not know how. We have the upper hand at last! I shall continue to work with my grey Fokker. These Americans will be afraid to fly in a few days. And by the time a week is up we will be ready to use it on their troops."

The conversation ended in a few muffled words. Masters slipped back to his chair again and leaned back as if he were sleeping. He heard the door open. Someone stopped in front of him, and he was being shaken.

"Wake up!" They shook him harder. "Wake up, you are wanted inside."

Masters then sat erect. His hands reached up and tried to brush the other's from his shoulders. "Let me alone. I want to sleep—"

"Come, come," demanded the man in the rubber apron. "You are wanted in the office."

Masters was pulled from his seat and pushed toward the door. It closed behind him. He spread his hands out in front of him and moved slowly toward the harsh voice which came from the other side of the room.

"Stand where you are, Cummings," the rough voice shouted.

And as Masters halted, his nostrils quivered with the sickening sweet

scent he had noticed when the rubber aproned man had first appeared.

CHAPTER VII

Escape



OR an hour Masters stood by, parrying the questions thrown at him by the man who was not quite satisfied about the escape of one of his blind prisoners. And while the questions were being thrown at him one after the other, he stared vacantly around the littered office, keeping his grey lenses partly screened by his long eyelashes.

There were retorts, tall thin bottles half full of greenish fluid, coils and reflectors littering the long table by the window. The usual apparatus of a man who was experimenting, working out a death-dealing scheme.

At last von Sacken was through. He had learned nothing save the fact that the man he thought was Cummings had somehow blundered through an open gate. He would see that this never happened again. The guards at the gates would be doubled. The Hun rang for an orderly and while Masters waited, von Sacken reached for his phone.

"Have the Fokker warmed up," the German barked over the wire when he had his connection. "Yes, the grey one, of course. Tell Kurtz to have his men ready for a patrol. In fifteen minutes I will be there with the apparatus."

He hung up just as an orderly entered the room. "Take him back to the others," he snapped. "And tell the man who guarded the gate the night this man escaped to come here. I'll make an example of him. It will never happen again."

Masters let the youthful orderly lead him from the room. At the door he passed the man with the

rubber apron again. Once more the sweetish smell filled the room.

"It is ready—"

Masters lost the rest of the sentence coming from the lips of von Sacken's aide. The closing door drowned it out.

Quivering with apprehension, Masters found himself standing in the bright sunlight in front of the prisoners' sleeping quarters. He knew that von Sacken was starting out that afternoon to use his perfected apparatus. Or was von Sacken himself going? True, Masters had heard him order the grey Fokker to be prepared. Yet Masters had seen that Fokker flying over Two-Ten's tarmac and he had seen no pilot sitting in the cockpit. He, himself, had fired round after round into the crate with no effect.

Masters dropped to the wooden steps, and allowed his head to slump down on his arms. He could not make it out. Men were being blinded by a ship which had no pilot. How? He lashed his brain to find some answer to the riddle. Was it the light? Did that pilotless ship carry some powerful electric ray which burned the corneas of men's eyes and left them covered with that grey, pellucid tissue? Why had the light in the alley not affected *his* eyes?

In the distance Masters heard the faint throb of motors. The Fokkers were being warmed up. In a short time other Americans would be left staggering through the air, their ships out of control.

And he, sitting there on the steps of a prison barracks, could do nothing to help them. He heard the roar of a motorcar from in front of von Sacken's office and knew that the sinister Hun was on his way to strike another blow at the Allies. Masters groaned at his utter helplessness.

Now, with von Sacken gone, there might be a chance of slipping into his office and having a look around.

He might find a clue which would help him solve the riddle. From what the Hun had said, he had a week or two before the plan would be put into general effect along the lines. Once that happened, the Allies were beaten. In the meantime a few American airmen would sacrifice their lives while the Lone Eagle fought alone to save the destiny of nations.

The thunder of planes grew in the distance.

"They're taking off," murmured the Lone Eagle. "If I could only get at them! If I could only nail that grey Fokker before it did any more harm!"

The planes swept out of the distance, hurtled the trees on the horizon and thundered over the prison camp. Blind men threw back their heads and listened, their sightless eyes looking into the sun without blinking.

MASTERS slumped back on the steps. He watched the armada of Huns swing over the camp. In the lead rode the grey Fokker. It broke away from the main group, half-rolled over the camp as if mocking the blind Americans and then curled back into its position.

And as it curled over, Masters' eyes flashed to the cockpit. The ship was low. He had a full view of the fuselage, and only saw blank space where a pilot should have been. His eyes turned from the ship and slowly counted the others.

There was the black Fokker which he now knew belonged to Kurtz. It, too, carried a light, but Masters knew that that light was a fake. He also knew that panic-stricken pilots would fly in consternation before that blinding glare, and he could not say that he blamed them.

The planes disappeared toward the west.

Masters held his post on the steps,

struggling, fighting madly to figure out some way of discovering what this thing was, and how to stop it.

Hours passed. The flock of Huns had returned. Only thirteen, counting the grey ship and Kurtz' black Fokker. Three men had paid with their lives this time. How many Allied airmen lay dead along the front, their filmed eyes staring heavenward, Masters did not know. Once again he had seen the grey Fokker wing its way over the prison camp in triumph and once again Masters had been unable to see any pilot in the cockpit.

The sun sank in the west. Darkness dropped over the world. Masters had gone into the mess for appearance's sake. He forced himself to eat. He was not hungry. His mind was too occupied with the sinister riddle to bother about food. After the meal, he had returned to the yard and rested his eyes by taking out the thin, grey glass which had covered them through the day.

He sat hunched by himself for an hour or more, still struggling to evolve some scheme by which he could get into von Sacken's office. He wanted a clue. He wanted to find some way of combating this evil thing.

“It might help if I could get to Tremain and tip him off that only the grey Fokker carries this thing that makes men blind. The fellows wouldn't have to be afraid of other ships, and could keep clear of that grey crate. That would help—put a monkey wrench in the works anyway. Then maybe he could figure out some way of downing the grey job. After that I could come over and nail von Sacken—”

He looked around him for some avenue of escape. He had none to call on for assistance save a bunch of blind men. The place was well guarded. He had seen two guards take their posts at the gate and a

guard patrolled each side of the square prison pen.

He started to get up when something fell at his side. He glanced down and saw something white. His fingers closed over it, and felt paper wrapped around a stone. As if nothing had happened, he arose, slipped the glass lenses over his eyes and sauntered toward a square of light coming from the sleeping quarters.

As he shuffled along, tapping at the ground with a stick, he unloosened the paper and let the stone fall to the ground.

Reaching a spot where the light fell over his shoulder, he unwrapped the paper and held it cupped in his hands. A jumble of words met his eyes. His forehead wrinkled as he tried to make out the hastily scribbled words. They were meaningless.

Glancing about him to make sure that he was not being watched, by someone who had set a trap for him, he bent over the paper again. His lips moved slowly as he read what seemed to be a fragment of a letter dropped, apparently by one of the blind prisoners:

*Fold saw five today where you sitting
Things are worse if you do come
Do you wish to get closer. Will cut
out and tell them stuff and you can
I am on the outside roll where shadows are*

Masters turned the scrap of paper over and looked on the other side. There was nothing there. Then he read the words again. They didn't make sense. He walked back to where he had dropped the stone, and as he stumbled to his knees, pretending that he had stubbed his toe, the first word on the bit of paper flashed into his brain.

“Fold,” he breathed as he scrambled to his feet and made his way, very slowly and very clumsily back to the spot of light. “That's it,” he

murmured as his fingers swiftly folded the scribble down the middle.

Now he had two columns of writing, two columns which, read separately, made sense. "Fold." Masters eliminated that word, for now he recognized it as the key. The first column on the left of the fold read:

Saw five today. Masters knew that the five meant five Allied planes that had gone down before the cruel onslaught of the grey Fokker. He went on:

Things are worse. Do you wish to get out and tell them. I am on the outside. Masters turned the paper over and read the other column where the message continued: *Where you are sitting—if you do come closer will cut stuff and you can roll where shadows are.*

The message needed no signature. Masters knew that Pierre Viaud was on the outside of that wire, waiting to help him. And just at that moment he needed help. He wanted to get back to Tremaine and warn him of the grey Fokker, and also to ease things a bit by informing him that the other lights were just a bluff.

Masters quickly stuffed the ragged bit of paper in his mouth and chewed it to a pulp while he took a round about way of getting back to the spot where he had been sitting.

He slumped to the ground and leaned back against the wire, struggling to be patient while he waited for Viaud to make the next move. Behind him he heard the steady tramp of the sentries' hobnailed boots. He wondered how Viaud would get around that obstacle. *Crunch, crunch.* The boots ground into the cinder path around the prison pen and then halted just behind Masters.

The Lone Eagle's muscles tensed. He hardly dared breathe as he listened. Had the sentry heard something suspicious? Did he see something moving in the shadows? There

wasn't a sound to be heard. Silence lay like a cloak on the compound.

Metal scraped against metal. There was a faint click and the wire, against which Masters leaned, gave. He held himself from falling. Again there was a click and then the muffled command for him to roll under the remaining strand.

"Keep rolling," came the cautious voice which Masters recognized as the younger Viaud's. And he kept rolling, rolling silently across the path until he had reached the shadows. There his body struck something which yielded. He put out his hand and touched a human form. "It is the guard," came Viaud's voice out of the shadows. "Come, we must make haste— You want to get to your plane, do you not?"

Masters stopped only long enough to slip the grey lenses from his eyes, and then hurried after the form of his friend which was already melting into the shadows.

VIAUD knew the shortcuts to the forest where the Lone Eagle's plane rested in the stable, waiting to carry Masters back to Tremaine with the warning. And inside of an hour the two men stood in the clearing, Viaud swinging the prop and Masters handling throttle and switch.

As the motor slowly ticked over, Masters leaned over the side of the cockpit and yelled into Viaud's straining ears. "Thanks a lot, old man. You'll see me back here tomorrow. I'm going to get that grey Fokker—and then I'm going to nail von Sacken!"

Viaud nodded as he reached up and tapped Masters' shoulder. "Tell my father that I am alive, please. Explain to him that I could never safely send him the word that I know will make him glad—"

"I'll do that, Pierre," said Masters. He glanced down at the luminous needle on his tacometer as he buzzed

the Hiss. "She's all set now. See you later."

Viaud stepped back into the shadows. Already he was stripping off the grey uniform that hid his disguise as the half-witted charcoal burner.

The Spad leaped through the shadows. Overhead, Masters could see the stars carpeting the skies. His trucks left the sod as the wings caught hold. Up and up he tooled his way through the night until he came out of the clearing and leveled off over the forest.

His wing dipped and he turned toward the west, taking a course which would set him down nearest Tremaine in the shortest length of time.

Dead ahead lay the fragment of hell called No Man's Land. Beyond its fringes were Colonel Tremaine and General Viaud, both anxiously awaiting word from the man who had set out to thwart this latest attempt of the enemy to wrest victory from the Allies.

He must reach them with his information. He must broadcast the warning of the grey Fokker, and warn them of the coming attempt to use this hellish scheme along the front. And if possible, he must help them map out a plan by which von Sacken could be stopped before he had blinded all the pilots in the Yankee Air Service.

CHAPTER VIII

Midnight Battle



HE prop whirled with a maddening scream as Masters sat slouched in his cockpit. His eyes were narrowed as he stared straight ahead. There, framed by the center - section struts, were blurred pictures painted by his imagination. They walked haltingly across the field backed by the spin-

ning propeller; blind men, hands on the shoulders of the man in front, a staggering parade. And after them came white-faced Yankees, pale with fear, their eyes pleading for someone to annihilate this cruel machine of the enemy.

The Lone Eagle closed his eyes to blot out the vision. He knew that he was doing his best to stop von Sacken. He also realized that as yet his best had not been good enough. There in the inky well below him, spread-eagled on the tortured ground, men lay staring, dead, their glazed eyes covered with a film of grey. Men who had met the grey Fokker that afternoon. And tomorrow the gray Fokker would take to the air again—

Masters bit his lip at the thought, and then jerked forward in his cockpit. His fingers flashed to the trips, and then he recalled that one of his guns was out of commission. Only one gun to fight the shadows he had seen flit across a star.

Another blotch crossed the skies. Then another. Searchlights penciled the skies with silver. A bright beam knifed the darkness and fastened on the bobbing hulk of a huge bomber.

"Handleys!" Masters cried, and his thumb relaxed on the Bowden. "The Independent Air Force is sending out a bunch of eggs for Jerry tonight!"

The wavering paths of light moved closer. Now they were centered on the leading bomber. Its long wings stood out blackly against the gleaming rays, and stars began to sparkle around the bobbing ship.

Masters saw it bank away, lost in the shadows for a moment and then held in the clutches of one of the lights again. More anti-aircraft began to beat the night air to a sparkling froth. Then they stopped. Tiny specks of zigzagging fire took their place. Long streams of hot tracer flashed through the air, lost for a mo-

ment in a bright beam and then continuing, midget messengers of death.

The Spad banked under Masters' guiding hand. He still had one gun that would pump lead. And as long as he had that he would go to the aid of his comrades. The ship whistled through the shadows, flashed through the formation of Handleys, giving heart to the men now pressed on all sides by black-crossed ships.

A blinding light held him for a second, but he dropped it as he swerved on the fringe of the formation and went screaming in on a Fokker with his single Vickers spattering lead in front of him.

The ship wavered, caught its grip on the air, but slipped off again as Masters corrected his aim. A flare of light blossomed out from its fuselage, turned to an orange glow as the fiery tongues licked back toward the elevators. The ship was through. The first of the barricading Huns was wiped from the path of the bombers.

Off to his left he saw a stream of tracer hosing down from the gunner's cockpit of the leading Handley. It caught a Fokker in the middle of a turn, its pilot partly blinded by a knifing finger of silver from the ground. Another stream of hate from another Handley fastened on the staggering ship, and between the two streams of fire the Fokker was literally sawed in two by the buzzing slugs.

"That's two," murmured the Lone Eagle as his eyes sought another target. His stick came back. The Spad leaped up like a thing alive. It seemed as if this roaring machine of steel, wood and fabric was anxious to avenge those other ships of its own kind, which had been smashed to splinters because their pilots had been stricken by the infernal machinations of a ruthless foe.

Up and up the Lone Eagle leaped, gritting his teeth as he fought to get

every last r.p.m. out of the barking Hisso. His blue eyes continually darting about the starlit skies, searching north, east, south and west for a target. He must get these Handleys on their way. For all he knew, Tremaine had discovered the lair of von Sacken.

Perhaps those bombers were on their way to lay their steel-coated eggs on the tarmac where the grey Fokker reposed.

He looked upward and to the east. His keen eyes picked up five sets of little fiery pinpoints, coming down out of the skies from the back areas. Reinforcements coming to help stem the tide of Allied invaders. He nodded his head and scanned the skies anxiously. Could that grey Fokker be flown at night? The very idea sent a chill chasing through his tense frame.

Inching forward on the seat in his anxiety to catch a glimpse of the newcomers before they hit the battle, Masters forgot, for the moment, the ships which were now milling below him.

HE could hear the dull rumble of their motors and the sharp staccato rattle of Spandau, Vickers, and Lewis. He saw a flare in the sky. Another ship was going down, but he kept his eyes glued to the exhaust flares of these new ships hurtling into the fight.

His face hardened until the grim mask which war had stamped on his youthful features became a distortion of fear: the fear that the machine of von Sacken might be coming out of the black dome of the sky to blind the crews of the Handley Pages, struggling so valiantly below him to get to their objective.

Suddenly the hair at the nape of his neck grew stiff; his skin prickled as the chill breath of Death came into the fuselage over the back of the cockpit. The old warning was on

him again. Whirling with a curse, he looked over his shoulder.

For a second, he saw nothing. Then a double stream of hot tracer slithered through the night and smashed against his rudder. Some of it ricocheted against his top wing, tearing long, jagged holes in the fabric.

The Lone Eagle yanked his ship into a tight turn. He caught the diving ship as it passed by on his right and flailed it with a battering stream of lead. It limped away into the darkness, and he was certain that it had had all the fight it wanted for one night.

But there were other lines of blinding fire coming down out of the night. Other ships were attempting to blast this single Spad from the air that they might have clear sailing against the lumbering bombers.

But Masters was not to be enticed away from the charges he had taken under his wing. He was sticking close, holding a position just above and in front of the onrushing Handleys. He wanted to be there just in case the grey Fokker slid out of the sheltering curtain of shadows and tried to take a position in front of the leader.

HE had seen enough of that Fokker to realize that the dangerous spot in mingling with the grim ship was right on its tail. Although it seemed a useless tactic, attacking the grey Fokker from in front or from either side was at least safe. And there was always the possibility of finding a vulnerable spot in which to plant a slug.

As he curled around in another breathtaking turn, keeping well above the leading bomber, dropping only when he saw the ships hard pressed by one of the Fokkers, Masters kept up his vigil for von Sacken's deadly crate.

A swift hosing of tracer from a Fokker which was stalking him from

above, turned Masters in his course. He could not see the ship, and was satisfied to evade its withering burst of lead. With only one gun pumping and no knowledge of how much ammunition remained in the belt of the Vickers that was functioning, Masters had to conserve his shells. He had to make every slug count.

When he swung back to his former position he glanced over the side just as a broad-beamed searchlight cleft the darkness with a silvery beam. It bathed the nose of the leading Handley, held it in its blinding grip, despite the efforts of the pilot to shake it off. And at the edge of the tapering beam Masters saw something that turned the blood to ice in his veins.

There, partly hidden by the night, partly visible in the edge of the light, was a grey tail. A black-crossed ship, its wings hidden by the shadows. But those grey elevators, that wavering rudder—Masters had seen them before.

With a curse of rage he kicked on rudder and slammed his stick over. But even as he hurtled through the night he saw the flash of the light. He had seen it before. Now he knew what it foretold. In a few minutes men in that Handley would feel the slimy film slipping across their eyes. A few minutes later the big ship would be wandering aimlessly through the skies, a blind pilot fighting the wheel.

The Fokker held steady, despite a withering blast from the guns in the forward cockpit of the doomed Handley. Masters saw the twin stream of tracer flicker through the searchlight and bury itself right in the fuselage of the Fokker. Yet the Fokker merely flashed its light again, and then it was gone.

Mad with frustration, Masters hurled his ship into the darkness. He was sick at heart. Von Sacken had struck again. He dared not look

back at the Handley. He had heard the Hun say that it only took five minutes for the film to begin to cover the eyes now. In another few minutes the pilot would be blinded.

He thought he caught a glimpse of a dark blot in the sky ahead of him. Then he was sure as his keen eyes picked up the flickering glow of a set of exhaust stacks. He was at twelve thousand now, screaming in pursuit.

The blotch was gone. The exhaust flares had been drowned out in a wisp of scudding cloud. The grey Fokker and its secret were hidden by the night.

Masters turned back toward the Handleys. The searchlights were still bathing the ships with silver, outlining them with light, making them a perfect target for Hun slugs.

But no Boche bullets whistled through the air. It seemed like the lull before the final lash of a hurricane. Only the steady throb of motors split the still night air. The crackle of machine-guns was gone. And Masters knew why.

The Grey Fokker, like a vulture, was still hovering in the vicinity, waiting to strike its talons into the eyes of Allied pilots.

He had seen black-crossed Fokkers scatter before when this sinister crate flashed its eye-searing light. The Huns themselves had no stomach for this evil thing that clawed at eyes.

Masters' eyes swept the formation as he came diving down to their level. He counted four black blots in the sky. He saw the exhaust flares of four sets of Rolls Royces. The fifth, the leader, was gone. He knew that it was wavering somewhere out there in the darkness, while blind men wondered what had hit them. He knew that another attempt would be made to claw at eyes, the absence of the other Fokkers foretold it.

As he turned in to take up a position at the left wing-tip of the Hand-

ley which had taken the lead, he caught a glint of fire in the heavens above him. It grew in zigzagging lines, curling through the night, reaching fiery fingers for his mottled Spad.

Quick as a flash, he jammed on rudder and slammed the stick over. The Spad keeled on one wing, seeking to turn from this hail of death which was coming down on it from among the stars.

For there, flailing the skies with a blazing shower of slugs, was an enemy crate. Tracer slithered through the darkness, curving in over his wing. Tiny groups of splinters mushroomed from his struts and drifted into the night.

MASTERS felt the blood drain from his face. The hail of lead continued to find him as he curled into a tighter bank. A light flashed into the sky, cutting through the air between him and his unknown attacker. Now he saw the other ship racing through that blinding beam, its doped sides gleaming evilly in the light.

"That's Kurtz," cried Masters into the slip-stream as he made out the trim black Fokker he had seen the day before. "You're going to pay now," he snarled. "I'll finish your game of bluff."

Masters straightened out. A plan by which he could spring Kurtz into his own trap, flashed into his mind. His hand gripped the stick. His feet moved the rudder, slowly but steadily, and the Spad slid off to one side allowing the black Fokker flown by Kurtz to cut in in front of him.

A grim smile played across his face as he saw the black Fokker take the expected position. He knew from his experience of the day before that Kurtz would flash his light. The light which von Sacken had said was a bluff to frighten other men into thinking that it could tear the sight from their eyes.

Masters waited grimly, tensely, his thumb resting on the Bowden of the Vickers that still worked. Then it came.

A flashing flare of white light. It wavered out over the tail of the black Fokker and for a split second bathed the hurtling Spad. And in that split second Masters went into whirlwind action. His gun stuttered and hammered on its mounting. The light on the Fokker disappeared. Fiery tracer took its place, boring steadily into the fuselage of the ship flown by the man von Sacken had called Kurtz.

FOR one wild moment Masters thought he had run up against another of the crates that could not be knocked down. For the Fokker was weaving gently just ahead of him. He could see the reflection of the searchlight in its shiny black fabric. He jabbed the Bowden again. His gun answered, and before it had ticked off half a dozen rounds he realized that he had nailed it with his first burst. The tables had been turned. Kurtz had expected the Spad pilot to turn in panic-stricken horror when the light flashed. His answer was a body-drilling cluster of lead.

Masters saw the Fokker jump skyward, curl over in a sloppy half roll and then with motor still roaring its challenge of hate, it bored into the black depths of the night. It was gone, wiped out of existence by one well placed burst from the Lone Eagle's smoking Vickers.

"That's one of the brood out of the way," he panted. "Now, if I could nail that grey Fokker—then von Sacken, my job would be finished!"

He turned back toward the Handleys. His eyes popped open in horror and surprise. Another of the lumbering crates was weaving out of position. Masters saw its huge hulk looming up in front of him and

yanked his stick back against his belt. And none too soon. The ship was on him with a thunderous scream. It passed under him, wings tilting crazily for a moment and then straightening out.

"Damn his hide!" Masters cried. He tried to pierce the curtain of darkness. But the night hung like black velvet before his straining eyes.

"If I could only get that slippery crate! It's had a shot at another of the Handleys while I was cracking down on Kurtz. Always slipping in, doing its dirty work and then hiding, either behind a cloud or behind a flock of Hun ships. It'll have to be crashed, even if I have to fly into it!"

He saw the three remaining Handleys wheel and head back toward the lines. Their pilots had seen that flash of light. Now, besides a warning, they had seen the effect of that sinister glare. Here was something against which man could not fight. Masters watched them, and he could not find it in his heart to blame them. He was frankly glad to see them turn back before the grey Fokker struck again. There was no need for them to sacrifice themselves uselessly.

He wheeled and took up a position behind them. And as he rode the night air, a hundred feet or more above the level on which they were flying, he kept watching to see if another of the ships would begin to waver and then fly away into the darkness.

As they crossed the lines he caught the glint of a rising starshell on taut fabric. He cut across the lines at an angle and soon found himself flying alongside of the first ship which had bumped into the grey Fokker and its white light.

"Somebody in the crew has taken it over," he said with a sigh of relief. "They're not all done for, then. I'm going to stick with it when it

lands. Might get a clue from one of the men—"

The hulking bomber and its little escort toiled through the sky. At last a blazing L gleamed through the night, marking the tarmac of the stricken ship.

The flaring exhaust stacks paled. The big box-like tail tilted toward the stars. The bomber was going home.

And Masters, shoving his stick forward followed suit. There were questions he wanted to ask before he saw Tremaine.

CHAPTER IX

A Promise



HE SWUNG his Spad in on the lighted airdrome and wheeled up to the line. Behind him he heard the dull rumble of big ships setting down. One by one they puffed and stuttered across the field until three of them stood in front of the yawning hangar doors. The fourth stopped to one side. He could hear excited shouts, moans of anguish and curses of rage as he ran across the sod to the ship.

He helped men who could not find the rungs of the little iron ladder leading from the trapdoor. He steadied them against the green sides of the big ship and turned to lend a helping hand to others.

At last they stood on the ground. Four men who held their hands before their eyes, and a fifth, the rear gunner, who was chattering madly.

"It's a lucky thing Larkins taught me something about flyin' one of these buses. We'd all be wearin' wings if he hadn't. Maybe I can get my transfer now, after this hellish night's work. That's if I want it. Not sure that I do—not with the Huns usin' this new thing."

Others ran up to help. Some had

stopped to listen to the excited chatter of the man who had escaped the new terror which had struck at them out of the night. Others began to lead the stricken men toward the M.O.'s tent.

Masters motioned them back with a single gesture.

"It's no use, fellows," he stated firmly. "Nothing the doctor can do now. I just escaped from the camp where they've been trying out this damned scheme. That grey Fokker's the one that causes it all. Got to crash that job!"

"But I poured a steady burst right into him," sobbed the man who had been in the forward cockpit of the leading Handley when the grey Fokker had struck. "Never bothered him a bit. And I know you won't believe this, but I'll swear there wasn't any pilot in the blasted ship."

"I know," said Masters as he laid a comforting hand on the blind man's shoulders. "I ran into him the other day. He's the same fellow that messed up the Spads of Two-Ten. I'm trying to nail him. Now tell me—you were closest to him—what happened?"

The gunner hesitated. He rubbed his eyes a moment and then took his hands away. The light from a flashlight in somebody's hand revealed them covered with the telltale film. Masters heard the hiss of intaken breaths.

Then the gunner said slowly: "All I can remember is blazing away at that damned Fokker. Then the flash of light. For a minute I thought I had gotten it. Then it was gone. I looked back to where the other fellows were sitting in the control cockpit. I could just see them. The pilot, the bombing officers, all sitting there staring into the darkness. Then I began to feel this itching in my eyes. It got darker and darker, and first thing I know the ship was pitchin' all over the skies. I could feel

it heavin' but I couldn't see it. Like a dream—a bad 'un."

"And you?" Masters asked of the next man. And then the next. Their stories were all the same, except for the rear gunner. He had seen no light. He had heard the shooting up front, but had not realized that anything was amiss until the ship started to screw around the sky, out of control. He had known enough about flying the ship to take the wheel out of the sightless pilot's hands and bring it back to its home field.

Masters left them at the Operation's Office and walked back to his own ship. He shook his head slowly. It would be hard to get an Allied pilot into the air next day. This story of the four blind men would spread up and down the front like wild-fire. In the shadows around the hangars he heard mechanics talking in whispers about the ship and its crew who had not returned. They were frightened, he could tell it from the way they talked. Some were already rubbing their eyes, wondering if the thing had struck behind the lines.

AND Masters knew that supremacy in the air was in the hands of the enemy as long as this grey Fokker cruised. The whole load now rested on his shoulders. He alone could face the task.

An hour later, haggard and bedraggled, Masters walked into Tremaine's secret headquarters. His face was pale. His lips were drawn and bloodless as he slumped into the chair.

"We're up against it this time," he said slowly. "I've been in the camp at Le Blanc. I saw a man hit by this blindness. A few minutes later I walked the same path he had taken and yet I haven't got the slightest idea of how von Sacken's doing it."

"Von Sacken!" exclaimed Tremaine just as General Viaud walked into the room. "I thought you told

us that he had gone blind in Mexico and had wandered into the wilderness to die."

"That's what I thought," said Masters. "But von Sacken is alive. Not only alive, but he can see."

Masters looked up into the kindly face of General Viaud and started. "There's someone else that's alive, General," he said quietly. "I bumped into the chap who has been sending you these warnings and scraps of information about the movements of the enemy. You always said you'd like to find out who he is. And you're going to be surprised. Better sit down while I tell you."

Viaud smiled faintly, sat down. "Who is it?" he wondered.

"A brave man by the name of Pierre Viaud," smiled Masters, glad that he could at least bring one bit of good news back from Hunland.

"Pierre!" exclaimed the old man. "You mean—my son?"

Masters nodded. "And he's just as fine a chap as you always said he was. He's wandering around behind the lines, picking up information and sending it back to you. He's supposed to be a half-wit charcoal burner, that's the reason he never dared take the risk of sending word back to you that he was alive. But, believe me, he's alive and far from being the half-wit the enemy thinks he is."

"I can't believe it! After these long years— I thought my son dead. And to think that he is the brave man I have always wondered about, and sought to reward for his good work!"

"Pierre is getting his reward by helping France, General," said Masters as the excited Frenchman leaped to his feet. He was headed for the desk and the telephone.

Masters reached out and grasped him by the arm.

"Don't do that, General," he said softly. "Wait until you can deliver

your good news in person. You might spoil everything for him."

Viaud paused. A slow smile crept across his face. "You are right, Masters. In my joy I forgot that there is a war on. I forgot that others are suffering just as I have suffered. Pardon my stupidity—About these blind men—"

Masters told them of his meeting with Pierre Viaud, and of his entering the prison pen at Le Blanc as Cummings. He showed them the two little lenses and they marveled at his craftiwork. He told them about von Sacken, and of the American who had been blinded while he was in the camp.

"I was going to have you send out word that the light in the black Fokker was a fake, but there's no need now, I knocked it down tonight."

"But what about the grey Fokker?" asked Tremaine nervously. "The fellows are jittery all along the front. And then the report on the Handleys tonight. It's going to be hard to get men into the air tomorrow. And I won't blame them, poor devils. It's bad enough to go up there and fight fair, but when a man springs a stunt like this it's more than the ordinary run of men can stack up against."

Masters sat in silence for a moment. "Both the light and the grey Fokker have got me stopped. I saw that forward gunner take a shot at it tonight and it hardly bothered moving out of the way. Just sat there and let that light blink and then it was gone."

"Could it be a ray of some kind?" asked Viaud.

Masters shrugged his shoulders. "If it was all worked by means of a ray I should think they would be able to make more of the devilish things."

"But perhaps they have discovered some new metal, some new element that is vital to the machine, some-

thing scarce, which they have very little of. Just enough, perhaps, for one machine and that is the grey Fokker."

Masters shook his head. "They've got me stopped," he growled. "But I assure you gentlemen, I'll know what it's all about before the sun sets tomorrow. I'm going to haunt the air over Le Blanc. I'm going to nail this grey Fokker if it's the last thing I do. I might be able to ruin their plans long enough for the Allies to bring the war to a close. If I can stall this von Sacken off it might help."

"But we can't afford to lose you, John," said Tremaine as he caught the meaning behind Masters' threat. "You might crash it, but if you go, von Sacken will be alive to start all over again. What he has done once he can do again."

MASTERS rose to his feet and began to pace the room. "Couldn't we attempt once more to bomb the field outside of Le Blanc and perhaps get that grey Fokker?" asked Viaud.

"Once more?" asked Masters, pausing in the middle of the room. "Were those Handleys on their way over there tonight?"

Tremaine nodded. "One of the Spad pilots that got back safely yesterday afternoon saw the grey Fokker head toward that field and got the hunch that it might be its headquarters."

"Too late now," said Masters sadly. "That machine is in the air the minute there's even a threat of a raid. You saw what happened tonight. It even flies in the dark. And besides, you're going to have a hard time getting pilots to go over that far now. They're scared to death of this damned Fokker and its light. I am too, but I'll get it!"

Masters started to drop into a chair, but straightened his tired frame with a jerk. His fingers

snapped. "Von Sacken!" he exclaimed. "He must know some way of curing that, blindness! Those natives couldn't have been wrong. That man was blind at the time—and now he can see! If I could only find his cure, then we wouldn't have to be so afraid of the damned stuff!"

Tremaine nodded in agreement. "But," he added. "It might take some time to affect a cure. We'd be licked anyway. But still, it would be something to restore sight to the men who have been struck down by his hellish scheme. And there will be more too—unless—"

Masters turned sharply. "I've stopped these schemes before, and I can do it again. I'll get von Sacken and that grey Fokker of his. I promised to do it by sunset tomorrow. That promise still holds. If I fail— See you later." He went out, slammed the door after him.

CHAPTER X

Another Day



Slipping low in his cockpit, Masters stared into the rosy glow of a new day. The raging propeller clawed the air, tore it to shreds and tossed it back along the quivering sides of the Spad. Ahead of him lay the lines. Beyond lay Le Blanc, and beyond Le Blanc was the unknown.

As he slipped over the lines and began to dodge the crackling clusters of anti air-craft shells that broke in black blossoms around him, his keen eyes scanned the ground. He was looking for the Handley Page that had been struck down because a grey film slid over the eyes of its pilot.

The breath eased between his teeth. His hand clutched the stick a bit tighter and he leaned over the side of the bobbing Spad. There, far below him, sprawled in a twisted

mass on the ground, lay the wrecked Handley. Its blinded pilot had flown the ship straight into the side of a hill. Beside the jumbled heap Masters saw five white things against the charred grass around the ship.

Five men had paid the price. Five men had been struck down by von Sacken's foul hand.

Masters swore softly as he turned to scan the skies for enemy ships.

"If I ever get the chance I'm going to drill you proper, von Sacken!" he breathed into the cool slipstream. "I'll drill you and stop this grey Fokker of yours!"

He prayed fervently that he would be able to keep his promise to Tremaine and Viaud. Already the sun was rushing over the horizon. It seemed to be racing, chasing after the shadows of night, anxious to run its course and drop behind the western horizon.

Clouds began to scud across the sky like frightened sheep as Masters saw Le Blanc come into view. And from behind these clouds came a flock of raging ships. Hun ships, each with its Spandaus blazing, chattering, spewing lead. They fanned around him, determined to bar his path.

And Masters, equally determined, with two good guns in front of him, a trusty Hisso roaring its song of power, and a ship that answered every call from the controls, moved steadily onward.

They drove forward with the desire to kill. Masters drove on to save lives; purpose, determination, duty lay behind his every move.

Already the slugs were criss-crossing in the air before his beating prop. A twin stream of grey spattered against his cowling, and a move of the rudder took Masters out of its line of fire. His fingers dropped to the Bowdens, poised, tense, waiting for the signal.

A second later Masters let drive.

He was going into a turn as his fingers jammed the trips home. A startled Hun pilot looked up from his ring-sights to find a rain of lethal death pouring into his cockpit. He did not move. He couldn't. He was nailed fast by that one short thundering burst of lead from Masters' guns.

The Lone Eagle had his man cold. Had him riddled, before his enemy even knew he was turning in that direction.

Crash!

He whirled in his cockpit. This time he was on the receiving end. An alert Jerry pilot had crept up during that brief second in which Masters blasted the life out of the first man who had crossed his path. And in that interval, Spandaus began their stuttering bark, and the Lone Eagle was being battered with Hun-made slugs.

He slipped to the side, his cockpit was free of the snarling lines of grey. Now they hammered at his wings, clawing, ripping at his fabric, shredding struts, striking sparks from metal.

And while he kept his Spad in that terrific skid, his eyes were lowered to the Aldis sight. He watched, looking for a target through the polished glass, and at the same time keeping an eye on the hail of lead seeking to find him through the drifting smoke of the battle.

He charged to the left. His guns broke out in a yammering roar. Tracer streaked from their hot muzzle cups and smashed their way in a scream through the air. The slugs seemed to break into a million fiery sparks when they crashed against the side of a Mercedes.

Rocker-arms leaped into the air under the impact. Steam drifted back along the sides of the Fokker on which Masters held his leaping guns. His feet were steady on the rudder. His steely fingers moved

the stick a fraction of an inch and the sizzling tracer streaked back into the cockpit of the Hun crate.

Masters saw the pilot slump forward, and withheld his fire. He did not wait to see the doomed ship go down, time was too short for that; time was valuable and his own safety depended on his keeping his eyes peeled to all sides.

A downed Hun was a downed Hun to him. The death of an enemy was nothing to gloat over. For Masters was sick of killing men. He found no glory in seeing his tracer eat their way into human flesh. He hated war and its endless bloodshed, and longed for the day when the carnage would become a thing of the past, not a barbarous reality of the present.

A WAVERING column of smoke arose in front of the Spad, the signature of the departing Fokker. Masters cut through it, holding his breath lest he smell the odor of scorched flesh, and then straightened out in a short dive which placed him on the tail of a Hun coming out of a half roll.

A short, crisp burst flashed from his guns. He saw the splinters fly, and tattered fabric drift back into the air like leaves in the fall. Another Fokker was brushed from the battle. But for every one that he either sent crashing from the fight or limping away to lick its wounds, three more seemed to pop out of the skies, until the arena of hate appeared to be jammed with snarling crates, and lines with grey streaks which spelled death in any language.

A half dozen Albatrosses dropped from the clouds and added their bit to the din of battle. Their props slashed savagely at the air, and their hot Spandaus lashed a devastating hail of death in the path of the lone Spad.

Masters thrust his stick forward

to cut under a charging Fokker. A handful of .303s poured from his guns and caught the Albatross in the middle of a turn. Death's cloak dropped over the black-crossed ship, smothered it, decorated it with scintillating orange streaks as the ship upended and headed for the terrain below. Fire-spitting Fokkers curled in closer to the Lone Eagle, battling to force him into a pocket where they could hammer him to earth at will.

Angry, leaden wasps droned past the Lone Eagle's ears and gnawed at the glass dials on his instrument board. The web of death was drawing its meshes tighter.

Left rudder, left stick. Right rudder, right stick. Level, banked twisting and turning, dodging from clear spot to clear spot, his guns searching and then lashing out in fitful bursts, Masters was all over the skies. Huns scattered before his desperate charges and then closed in again as he turned his attention to another ship.

HIS ship bobbed and wove through the storm of hate like a vessel on a heaving sea. Waves of tracer rushed toward him and then broke, their fiery crests splashing against the Spad. But the Lone Eagle carried on, one eye on Le Blanc and the other on the whirling Huns.

The odds grew. More ships flashed out of the rising sun and added their smoke to the already tainted air. Slugs hammered against Masters' mottled ship as it clawed madly at Hun after Hun always leaving its mark.

Then, in a moment, the battle area seemed to clear. Black-crossed ships drew off to one side like vultures waiting for death to strike before they picked the bones clean. Masters looked about him. There was a reason for this sudden withdrawal. Some signal had passed between the

ships, some trap was about to be sprung.

His muscles tensed to bands of steel as he scanned the skies. Just ahead of him was an opening, almost inviting him to wing his way on to Le Blanc. And as he studied it, his face grew pale, his cheeks went taut, his lips closed in a straight grim line over his teeth, choking off a curse welling up from his throat.

For there, winging its way from side to side in a tantalizing series of S-turns, was the grey Fokker!

It stalked into the arena of death almost as if challenging Masters to single combat. If it had been on the level the Lone Eagle would have picked up the gauntlet in a flash. But he was wary. He had seen the results of pilots slamming down on what had appeared an easy target. He had seen those same pilots stagger away a few moments later, blinded by this dastardly thing controlled by von Sacken.

Masters turned his ship toward the grey Fokker. The others moved, away, giving the combatants plenty of room in which to maneuver.

"I'm going to find out something this time," the Lone Eagle growled. And in a flash he had whipped his Spad over in a screaming turn and was curling on a course which would take him directly in front of the oncoming Fokker.

He held his breath, waiting tensely, waiting for the chatter of Spandaus as he cut across the path of the Fokker. But the only sound to reach his ears was the raging roar of the motors, and the scream of wind through his own flying wires. He glanced swiftly over his shoulder. He could see no Spandaus through the sheen of the prop whirling in the blunt nose of the black-crossed ship.

"Not a gun," Masters said. He yanked the stick over to the side and leaped into the air just as the Fok-

ker attempted to cross his own path. "Depends on the light or whatever it is. Couldn't kill a man clean. Blinds him and then watches him stagger to his death."

For the next few minutes he was hard pressed to keep that ship from getting in front of him. Any other time he would have been striving for that position on the Fokker's tail. But not with this Fokker. Death stared over those waving elevators and weaving rudder.

Twice he came hurtling through the air, both guns hammering away, and his tracer spitting right into the side of the grim ship. And twice the Fokker slid out of the line of fire and deliberately turned tail, almost coaxing Masters to come in close and shoot it down.

But Masters, cautious, cool, collected, kept his distance, firing only when he had a broadside target. Not once did he allow himself to be maneuvered into a position where he could look over those elevators into that flashing light.

From side to side the two ships swung through the air. Sometimes the Fokker was behind the Spad, but not for long. Three times Masters had to fight back the temptation to crash into this slinking crate and take it with him to the death. But that would have availed him nothing.

"I've got to wait and get von Sacken," he muttered each time the opportunity had presented itself. "I'd be spoiling everything. While he's alive the Allies are in danger."

It became a battle of wits. Masters found himself flying and fighting against a machine that seemed to be an automaton. The mysterious ship made no mistakes, and even when it appeared to Masters' slugs, they seemed to bounce away like darts from an elephant's hide.

Then the battle suddenly changed. Instead of the two ships fighting in a huge sky-ring surrounded by black-

crossed crates, Masters noticed that the other ships were beginning to close in. The ring was getting smaller, as if they were trying to force him in behind that dirty grey Fokker.

Tracer began to fleck the air again, picking at the fabric on the Lone Eagle's ship. Tattered rags flew from riddled wings like feathers. Slugs began to pound on his fuselage, beating him closer and closer to the Fokker that fairly loitered through the milling ships.

AND always, when it got near a group of other Hun ships, Masters noticed, they scattered like flying fish before a porpoise. And he guessed why. He himself had been doing that selfsame thing. No one wanted to get near that ship. Everybody avoided it like the plague.

A pair of Fokkers came thundering out of the skies. Their guns yammered frantically, tossing long lines of smoky grey in front of Masters' ship. Once again they were trying to feed him to this aerial monster which slunk through the skies.

The Lone Eagle whirled with a savage curse. He was tired of this game. He could not crack down on this sinister Fokker, but someone else would pay for his apparently wasted efforts.

His Vickers woke up under the pressure of his thumbs. Lightning streaked from their smoke-fouled muzzle cups. A hail of lead clattered into the nearest of the diving Fokkers. It seemed to explode in mid-air as his slugs tore through the belt case and set the cartridges to yapping angrily right in the startled pilot's face.

A cloud of grey smoke streamed away as the ship curved to the right, brushed wings with an Albatross, and then went down.

In a flash he was on the other one,

clawing, biting with fangs of hot lead, smashing with a well placed burst, battering the ship from his path.

And as it wavered from the fight, Death leaped across the sky and sat on the wings of the mottled Spad. A shower of molten lead was funneling out of the skies. The concentrated fire of a dozen ships was poured into his own. Pilots had seen enough of the Spad and the dirty grey Fokker chasing each other over the clouds without doing any damage. These men were out for blood. If the Fokker couldn't draw it, they would.

Bullets beat a tattoo on his ship. He fought to swing clear but a shower of streaking tracer always found his ship. Burst by burst he was being slowly battered to the ground. His stick danced in his hand as a vicious burst found his elevators. His rudder throbbed. His ship was being weighted down with Hun slugs.

IN the middle of a wild turn to escape the onslaught of the enemy, his motor quit cold. His prop stopped its churning, and began to let the nose of the Spad drop.

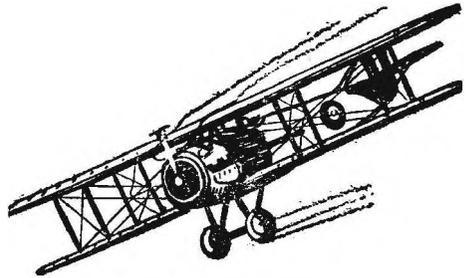
Masters was through. He knew it, knew that he could not get back to his own lines, much less reach Le Blanc.

But his eyes opened wide as a plan popped into his head. There was a way into Le Blanc. His hand slapped the stick to the side. His feet crossed the rudder and the ship went into a mad spin. It was all so sudden. The Fokkers and Albatrosses, taken by surprise, and thinking that they had finally done what the dirty grey Fokker had failed to do, split to the four winds and withheld their fire.

And Masters, his face suddenly grown pale, held the stricken Spad in the spin, defying death at every

revolution of the riddled plane. His teeth clamped on his lower lip, almost drawing blood. It was not the spin that had caused the look of consternation to cross his weather-tanned face. No, not that. Masters was used to spins. But he was afraid of that flashing light on the Fokker.

In the third turn of his spin he had dropped right past the slinking crate's tail and the light had flashed.



It had been too late to correct his maneuver. He knew what was coming, and prayed for luck as he quickly turned his head.

Down, down he went. The earth swung in front of him like a pinwheel driven by a gale. Behind him he heard the thunder of motors, sounding faintly over the shriek of his tortured flying wires.

He watched the whirling ground. His eyes were wide as he saw the green rush nearer, fearful that it would disappear behind a curtain of grey. He tried to reassure himself by the fact that he had been a little to one side as he flashed by the tail of the Fokker. But he had seen the light, looked right into it for one fleeting second. Others had done the same and he had seen the result.

Jamming the stick to dead center and neutralizing the rudder, Masters eased the ship out of the spin and began to glide toward an open field. He glanced over his shoulder. Far above him he could see black spots, and off to one side was the grey Fokker scurrying for the field on which he was going to land.

He kicked the ship from side to side. "I'll make 'em think I've got it," he suddenly decided. "They want to see a ship stagger in for a crash, do they? Well, I'll show 'em."

Grim determination gleamed in every line on the Lone Eagle's face. He saw a way of getting back to Le Blanc. A way of getting near the sinister von Sacken again. If he got close to him this time he would kill him, and let him take his secret to the grave.

S-turning, falling off slightly on one wing and then the other, almost stalling at times, Masters toiled the ship nearer and nearer the ground. His trucks hit at last and then bounced. Masters kicked on full rudder, slewed around in a death-defying skid and tore the undercarriage from his ship as she dug in. Wings crumpled around him as struts snapped; metal ground against metal until the crate finally lay in a jumbled heap in that field far behind the lines.

Masters crawled through the wreckage, paused a moment, struck a match and tossed it back into the cockpit. Flame leaped skyward. Grey smoke curled around the Lone Eagle as he staggered away. And when he reached the clear, and stood looking into the sky, he saw the grey Fokker streaking toward Le Blanc.

When the troopers who had seen the crash from the road rushed up and grabbed the Lone Eagle's arm to keep him from staggering right into the flaming ship, they gasped in surprise to see that his eyes were covered with a grey film.

"Another one," he heard a Hun mutter. "This one is alive. Come, we must take him to Le Blanc. There is a reward for returning a blind man to them." They led Masters away. His face was grim, but he smiled inwardly. He still had a chance!

CHAPTER XI

"La Verguenza"

DAWN was bright in the heavens. It threw the bars which guarded the narrow window of Masters' cell in slanting rows across the dusty floor. And the Lone Eagle, sitting alone, dejected, after having tried every stone, the door, the floor boards without finding a way of escape brooded over his failure.

"The morning is gone and I have not accomplished a thing," he moaned softly. "Only a few hours of daylight left. And I was hoping that I'd get next to von Sacken—instead of being taken to his office he had me put in here without even looking at me."

Von Sacken had done just that. Without realizing that he had the Lone Eagle, which every Hun hated, in his hands, he had brusquely ordered his men to put the prisoner in a cell, saying that he would call for him later.

The Lone Eagle sat listening. For the past hour he had heard a bustle of excitement and preparation around the building. He wondered if von Sacken was preparing to launch his scheme along the whole front as he had said. Then he heard the sound of voices. They seemed to be coming from a tiny grilled ventilator high in the wall over the table.

Despite the fact that his eyes smarted from the tiny lenses he kept them covered. He dare not take the grey things out for the fear that someone might be watching. But he bore the discomfort, happy in the knowledge that once again he had escaped this thing that emanated from the grey Fokker. He still had his sight, although the enemy seemed to take him for another of von Sacken's victims.

The voices droned on. Masters became interested and after listening at the door, crawled up on the table and looked through the rusty, cobweb-covered grill.

His lips parted in surprise. His eyes narrowed as he gazed on the scene in the next room. "Von Hindenburg — von Mackensen — Prince Rudolph. Wonder who the other one is. Looks like a general of the line." He listened. Von Hindenburg was talking in his rough, half-muffled roar.

"I do not like it," he growled. "It may be a fine scheme and all that, but I do not like this idea of blinding men. It is not war."

VON SLACKEN smiled. "Anything is fair," he began.

Von Hindenburg waved his hand. "Enough of that! I tell you I do not like it. But my hands are tied. Orders have come through that you are to go ahead. I wash my hands of the whole affair."

"But," said the strange general whom Masters did not recognize, "will it not meet with your approval if we can cure these men after we beat the Allies?"

"Can you do that, von Sacken?" exclaimed von Hindenburg.

Von Sacken nodded. "I discovered the cure while I myself was blind. I was once like the men you saw out there in the yard."

"But the flyers?" demanded von Hindenburg. "What of them?"

"Ah, that is very unfortunate," smiled von Sacken. "I cannot cure men who have fallen from ten thousand feet. Although there was one who managed to land today before he was blinded."

A look of disgust crossed the old field marshal's weathered face. "I cannot bring myself to give the order. You must get someone else to do it. It is not warfare—not the kind I fight."

"But think, General," von Sacken went on. "Think of the hold we will have on the Allies when the war is over. We will refuse to cure the men who have been blinded until they have met with all our terms. Only then will we apply the drug that can be dropped into their eyes and cure them. They will come to terms quickly. They will not be able to put off the settlement with excuses. Public sentiment will demand that they settle so that these men might see again. And when the public starts out to see that a debt of war is paid it is usually paid in short order. You recall France in 1870—Bismarck gave them their choice and they paid in full."

Von Hindenburg got up from his chair, his great hulking body towering over the others. "Even Bismarck would refuse to do it. Bismarck was a soldier. This is no longer a war of soldiers and officers. It is a war of chemists and tortured men! Good day, gentlemen. All I ask is that you let me know what sector you are going to use it on. I'll go on leave during that period." The door slammed and the field marshal was gone.

Masters slid from the table and stood in the middle of the room, quivering with apprehension. "So von Sacken is ready to use it in the lines," he husked. He turned and dropped weakly to the chair.

For a few moments he rested his head in his arms as he fought the horrible thoughts that lashed through his brain. He tried to sweep them away so that he might evolve some way of stopping von Sacken before he went too far.

Once a sector had been impregnated with this thing that caused men to go blind the war would be lost. And the loss of the war—

Masters tried not to think of the consequences, he knew the price

would be great. There would be no sympathy. And men would wander the streets of the world, blind until the debt was paid.

He heard the key in the lock turn. The door opened but Masters was too busy with his own thoughts to pay any attention as someone took him by the arm. "Come, von Sacken wishes to see you."

Masters allowed himself to be led from the room and into the littered office of the man who gloated in his ability to steal the sight of Allied airmen and prisoners. He had no fear of the Hun recognizing him now. He was no longer Cummings; the mask he had used then was gone.

But as he stepped into von Sacken's room he wished with all his heart that he had not discarded the disguise he had used the day before. He still wished that he had on the tattered uniform and the few marks on his face that helped him to look like the man who was now safe on the other side of the lines. For there, standing with her back to the window, a black beret pulled over her head, her eyes gleaming as Masters walked through the door, stood R-47! The one Hun agent who knew him by sight.

Masters had last seen her running terrified from the old mill with flames tearing at her clothing. He had meant to stop her that time, but had been too busily engaged in preventing the use of the sinister short waves which gave men fever. And now she stood, an evil smile playing across her face.

"So we meet again, John Masters," she smiled.

Masters stopped in the middle of the room, looking from side to side as if he could not quite make up his mind just where the voice came from. He heard the light step of R-47 as she crossed the room. He heard the faint gasp of surprise which escaped her beautiful lips.

"You are blind," she cried, and Masters detected the triumph in her deep, rich voice. "Von Sacken," she called eagerly, as the German entered the room, "do you know who this is?"

"Certainly," grinned von Sacken. "He is the man that I got this morning, although the price wasn't worth it. He is a maniac in the air. I lost five to get this one."

R-47 stepped to von Sacken's side and pulled him around to stand in front of Masters. "That man," she exclaimed, "is John Masters! Perhaps you have heard of him as the Lone Eagle."

THE papers in von Sacken's hand fell to the floor. His face paled as he looked up into the face of the man above him. Then a cruel smile crossed it as he murmured: "So you are the Lone Eagle! You are blind—blind and in my power. Your work is over. Never again will those eyes go prying into our secrets. You will be one who will never regain his sight—"

"Will the others?" asked Masters, staring upward into the corner of the ceiling. "You have a cure?"

"I have!" snarled von Sacken.

"Guess I'll have to believe you." Masters smiled grimly, still staring fixedly at the corner. "I was sent into Oaxaca to find you. They said that you had gone blind and wandered out into the desert to die. Too bad you didn't."

Von Sacken laughed and stooped to pick up the papers which had fallen from his hand. R-47 stepped closer and motioned for the guard to keep Masters covered. "You recognized my voice, did you not?"

"I recognized it—how could I forget it?" said Masters steadily. "The last time I heard it you were screaming in fear."

"And pain, John Masters," R-47 hissed. "My hair was burned from

my head that night in those horrible, crackling flames. It is just starting to grow in again." Her voice broke into a shrill laugh. "And to think that the great Lone Eagle has finally fallen into a trap from which there is no escape! You are blind, blind. It is too good to be true." Her hand lashed out and struck the Lone Eagle across the face, but he did not flinch. He continued to keep his eyes fixed on the spot in the corner.

The door behind him opened. Once again he caught that sickening sweet odor. He knew that the man in the rubber apron was in the room again. His nostrils quivered. His eyes boring straight at the fixed spot, allowed him to concentrate as he never had before.

There was something familiar about the overpowering smell. His pulse quickened. His mind started back over the years to the time he had been in Oaxaca. He recalled a night by a campfire with the gentle breeze coming from the forest. He also recalled the nervousness of the men, and their insistence that they move on to another spot. Now he had the answer to the riddle, or at least part of it,

THE door closed behind him again. He was alone with R-47 and von Sacken. The German was now standing before him, leering, as he sorted the papers in his hand.

"So," he finally said. "The great Lone Eagle attempted to learn my secret, and fell into the trap himself. I must admit that I did not realize whom I was bringing down today. But now that you are here, in my power, I must admit I am very happy, and my beautiful companion seems to be more than overjoyed."

"Yes, von Sacken," Masters answered slowly. "I admit that I fell into your trap, but not before I learned your secret. The Allies know of it now."

"You lie!" cried von Sacken. "You do not know my secret. Only I and my assistant know that. He knows almost as much as I. Yes, Masters, I am afraid you are bluffing this time."

Masters smiled. His lips moved. "You forget, von Sacken, that I was sent into the valley of Oaxaca to find you. I did not find you, but I did learn something about *La Verguenza*. I know that you are raising some of the plants around here. And Cummings—"

Von Sacken's hand flashed out. It grasped Masters by the arm. "What about Cummings?" he snarled. "Where is he? He has escaped for the second time."

"You will never learn from me, von Sacken," smiled Masters, as his shot went home. "But I will tell you this: Cummings is in safe hands. He may have fallen into your trap as I have done, but he learned enough to give me the vital information which I in turn transmitted to my superiors."

The Lone Eagle paused. He felt that his bluff was working. He had von Sacken worried. He turned his head slowly until the pinpoints of clear glass in his grey lenses were on the German. "It might interest you to know that Cummings was also able to give me the formula by which you cured yourself. It is on the other side of the lines now."

"Only I possess that formula, Masters," sneered von Sacken. "It has never been out of my sight."

Masters took a chance. He must know where that formula was hidden. His eyes seemed to bore through von Sacken as he slowly said: "You forget, von Sacken, Cummings was in this room yesterday."

Von Sacken's face paled. His hand flew to his breast pocket and then dropped. The German smiled in relief, Masters smiled faintly, for he had learned the secret. He knew

where von Sacken kept the precious formula which would restore the sight of blind men.

And the German, braver now, certain that his captive was bluffing, grinned.

"So you know about *La Verguenza*," he said. "You know that I am raising some of the plants. You are right. I now have enough under cultivation to blind half of the Allied armies. I am distilling their precious nectar every day. I am ready to put my plan into operation on a gigantic scale. Victory will be ours. Perhaps you would like to see my hotbeds—ah, pardon me, I forgot you are blind. I should say, visit them so that you may smell their fragrance before you die. It might remind you of old times."

"No, no, you mustn't, Professor," interrupted R-47. "It is dangerous. You have never been up against this fiend before. He will kill you if he gets the opportunity."

"But how can he?" exclaimed von Sacken. "He is blind, he has no weapons, and he is well guarded. One false move and my men would shoot him down. Come, it will delight me to let him see." He motioned to the guards to step up on either side of the Lone Eagle. They grasped him by the arms and escorted him through the door which von Sacken was holding open.

Through a corridor, down a series of damp steps, and Masters found himself in a long room with a glass roof. The sweet smell was overpowering. Before him, their roots clinging to moist black soil, was row upon row of vinelike plants, their blossoms nodding in the sunlight, streaming through the windows overhead and drops of moisture hanging from their petals.

"I have improved the strain," von Sacken began to explain. "See, my assistant is gathering the nectar from which I distill the thing that

will win the war for us. It took me years to find the right temperature in which to grow them. I flew many miles over the jungles of Mexico and South America to find the right species of *Ipomea* to use in my work. For I alone realized its value as an agent of war. I alone knew how to cure the blindness resulting from a tiny infinitesimal drop of the fluid entering a person's system. I bribed an old native priest in Mexico for the secret. I had to get him drunk to learn it, and when he sobered he tried to kill me, but I killed him instead."

Masters shrugged his shoulders as if he had no interest in von Sacken's tale. "I knew enough about this stuff yesterday to warn the Allies," he said casually, stalling desperately for time. "I knew that you were using a liquid from *La Verguenza* and sprayed it from a fine nozzle in the tail of your plane. You get a man up close—"

MASTERS paused. He had made a mistake. Another word and von Sacken would be calling his bluff. He still had to find out how that ship was being flown alone. In his excitement he had almost forgotten all about it.

"Go on," von Sacken was coaxing. "You know my secret, tell me more. Tell me about the light. I suppose you know the secret of that, too."

And Masters did. His active mind had seen through the scheme of the flashing light the moment he discovered that von Sacken was using a distillation of *La Verguenza* for his nefarious work. His eyes, covered with the fake flim, stared at the back of the rubber aproned man who went on with his work of gathering the hellish nectar which would tear the eyes from men.

"Of course I know about the light," Masters said slowly. "You had some of them bluffed for a while,

thinking that you were using a powerful ray of some sort to blind men. But I discovered that it was all a bluff. There is no more danger to the light in the grey Fokker than there was in the black Fokker that Kurtz flew—up to last night.”

“Then you—” von Sacken gasped.

“Yes, I drilled your precious Kurtz,” and quick as a flash he turned to von Sacken. “Did you see it?”

But the Hun smiled. He refused to answer. This time he was not being tricked by any words of the Lone Eagle. But he did shake his head in admiration. “You are a clever man to guess the secret of the light, Masters. It is too bad you are fighting on the wrong side.”

“Were, you mean, do you not, Professor?” R-47 broke in.

Von Sacken nodded. “Yes, were is the word. Before the day is over we will be able to say that the Lone Eagle was quite a man. A clever man. I suppose you also know about my system for keeping the stuff which I distill from my pretty blossoms at the proper temperature, until the time when it is sprayed out into the face of some over-anxious pilot, such as you were today. And I suppose you know that I have very delicate thermostats in here to keep this glass enclosed room at the proper temperature, and that if these plants were exposed for five minutes to the outside temperature and dryness that they would die and be useless. No, you don’t, I can see that you do not. You have been guessing. You do not know that the fluid which is sprayed from the nozzle in the tail of the grey Fokker, must strike human lungs within four seconds after it is released from the thermos tank. You are not as clever as you think you are. I think it has been luck that has carried you far. You try to frighten me by telling me how much you know.”

“But I told you that I knew that you were using *La Verguenza*. And that the flashing light was a fake arrangement to throw us off the track. I also warned you that I sent the formula of your cure across the lines last night after Cummings gave it to me. If I’m wrong, why don’t you produce this Cummings? Bring him in here to give me the lie.”

Masters stopped. He saw von Sacken start forward and then stop as R-47 laid a restraining hand on his arm. The Hun’s face turned first pale and then red. He had worked his enemy into a frenzy of hate. He tensed himself, certain that the Hun would attack him.

But von Sacken caught himself in time. He kept out of Masters’ reach. “I suppose that being that you are so brilliant you will be able to tell me how and when you are to die?”

“I can’t tell you how, von Sacken,” Masters retorted. “But I can tell you that it will be a long time after they plant you, with one of your slimy *Ipomeas* in your hand.”

“I can tell you how you are going to die,” smiled von Sacken, his eyes lighting cruelly. “Come, I will show you.” He pointed toward the door and Masters was led away.

CHAPTER XII

A Promise Fulfilled



IN front of the hangars, the sun was throwing slanting shadows as Masters was led from the car in which R-47 and von Sacken had escorted him to the field. Now he stood in the golden glow of a sun which was about to sink in the west, listening to von Sacken issue crisp orders to grease-covered mechanics.

The Lone Eagle stood with his back to the wall of a wooden supply

shed. Through the tiny clear spot in the grey glass which covered his eyes, he surveyed the busy field, trying to discover some avenue of escape.

But the pointed steel, held close to his chest by two hulking Huns kept him pinned close to the boards. He could not move without having one of those gleaming bayonets slip between his ribs. He would gladly have taken the wounds which would mean his death if he could only feel certain that he had beaten von Sacken. But von Sacken was still alive, busy preparing the Lone Eagle's death by the light of a dying day.

At last the German motioned the guards to lead Masters out toward the line of ships. As he stumbled along between the two men he spotted the grey Fokker standing beside a trim little Albatross.

"If only I could get close to that bus," he thought, "I'd like to see what's inside it. He didn't spill the secret." He halted. Von Sacken motioned the guards to place him by the side of the Albatross.

"Be sure to take the spinners off," he heard von Sacken caution a mechanic who lay under the ship. "And disconnect the bomb releases."

A few seconds later the mechanic crawled from under the ship, handed four tiny metal spinners to von Sacken and walked slowly toward the grey Fokker. Masters would have given anything to be in that man's boots. He would then know the secret of how the Fokker flew alone.

"Von Sacken," he finally said, keeping his eyes turned toward the sky, "you are preparing to kill me, aren't you?"

"A very clever guess," snarled the Hun.

"Well, tell me this," said Masters slowly. "How do you manage that grey Fokker? I couldn't see any pilot in it."

Von Sacken laughed. "You know so much, try and guess it for yourself. Ah, you are not so clever after all. There is one secret you shall not know before you die, and I hope your curiosity keeps you wriggling in your grave—for in a few moments you will be dead."

Masters did not hear the rantings of the Hun. He was looking over von Sacken's shoulder, watching the mechanic pull a sliding lid from the cockpit of the grey Fokker. He saw the cleverly painted top, painted to simulate shadows, giving all the appearances of an empty cockpit. His straining ears caught the faint tap of metal on metal as the mechanic slowly tapped the slide and the sides of the grey Fokker.

The light of understanding flashed across the Lone Eagle's face. He studied the control wires of the sinister ship which up to then had been such a mystery to him. He saw that they were of flattened steel, and double. He saw the tiny shields, where the wires fastened to the posts on elevators and rudder.

HIS face lifted. His eyes sought the skies again and a faint smile lighted up his face.

"You're wrong, von Sacken. I just wanted to see if you'd tell me. I know that your Fokker is a fake. I know that it isn't empty. Sure, I even know all about the light armor plate you have enclosing your cockpit—and the cleverly camouflaged lid to protect you from our slugs. Afraid to go up there and take your chances with the rest, or do you have that armor plate so that you can take the chance and let a fellow come up for his sniff of *La Verguenza*? I knew that we couldn't knock you down with those double flying wires and the guards over the terminal posts. You didn't fool me. I got a good look at you through my glasses the first day you came over.

"I'll admit it looked as if your crate was empty—that painter did a swell job. You should see that he gets the iron cross for saving your rotten hide."

"Masters," von Sacken interrupted, "I have had enough. In a few moments you will be through for ever. Your stupid pilots on the other side will go on thinking that they are fighting against a pilotless ship. Your death ship sits behind you. In the next few minutes you will have a very enjoyable time. Then the crash. It should be a fine one. Now listen carefully and I will tell you how you are to die. You will appreciate it more by knowing what to expect."

The Hun stepped closer, but still beyond the Lone Eagle's reach.

"You will get into that plane. The motor will be started. One of the mechanics will pull the throttle back and you will go bouncing into the air. Your instinct as a flyer will make you try to control the ship. Perhaps you will manage to hold it in level flight for a few seconds, but you will eventually crash. Then will come the real part of the show. The racks under the fuselage contain four twenty-pounders. I have had the spinners removed and they are ready to let go at contact. That contact will be the crash of your plane. I doubt whether there will be enough of you left to bother burying. Now get in!"

Masters' heart leaped in his chest as he realized that von Sacken was playing right into his hands. He allowed them to turn him, place his feet in the step and help him into the Albatross. He dropped into the cockpit clumsily, searched blindly for the stick, although he could see it very clearly through the tiny clear spot in his lenses.

A mechanic reached over the side. "Shall I fasten his belt?" he asked of von Sacken.

The Hun nodded, and the mechanic reached into the cockpit.

"The bomb release is still fastened," came the mumbled words. "And there is enough gas to take you to the lines. I'll carry on."

Masters did not move his head. He knew that Pierre Viaud was the man who leaned over him snapping the safety belt around his legs. "Thanks," he breathed. "Your father knows."

The wings trembled under the impact of the cylinders. The motor popped and sputtered and then broke out into a rhythmic roar.

"Good-by, John Masters," the throaty voice of R-47 sounded over the edge of the cockpit. "This time it is really good-by. From now on my work will be easier."

"I may come back to haunt you, R-47," Masters yelled, as he looked straight ahead. "If I can find a way of doing it I will. Beware!"

"I am not afraid," cried R-47, "and I have asked for the privilege of opening the throttle, and I am doing it."

HER hand gave the throttle a quick shove. The Albatross began to move as she leaped backward. And Masters' hand dropped by his side and completed the job that R-47 had started.

The ship leaped ahead, tail in the air, nose pointed toward the setting sun.

A grim smile spread across the Lone Eagle's face. "I'll give them a show. They've asked for it," he laughed.

The Albatross tilted its wings. One wheel left the sod. The ship staggered drunkenly. The wing scraped the grass and then came up. Then both wheels. They dropped, smacked into the dirt and then rebounded, throwing the ship into the air. For a second it seemed to stall. Its nose started to dip, the motor increased its beat until Masters was

getting every last rev. He held her for a second or so, gathered speed and then began to jockey the ship around close to the ground.

Time after time he bounced his wheels on the sod as he came around and headed for the hangars. The Albatross acted more like a bucking bronco than an airplane as it heaved and leaped across the tarmac straight at the line of ships.

He laughed to see the mechanics and officers ducking for cover to escape this plane gone wild. He saw von Sacken and R-47 make a dash for the rear of the supply house; looking frantically over their shoulders at this machine which was supposed to have crashed at the other side of the field. Now it was coming their way, tearing along close to the ground with its motor wide open.

The only man who stood his ground was the mechanic who had fastened the Lone Eagle's belt.

Pierre Viaud was not afraid. He knew that Masters had his eyesight, and that the Albatross was under perfect control. He looked around him for von Sacken, but the Hun was gone. Then walking leisurely, taking advantage of the excitement, Viaud sauntered from the field, to go back to his old disguise.

On and on, its prop screaming as it bit the air, came the Albatross. Masters' hands were steady on the stick. His eyes, clear and bright now, for he had slipped out the tiny lenses which had covered them. His eyes were confident, for he knew that now he had the power to stop von Sacken for a little while anyway. He could ruin that glass-roofed house and expose the hellish *La Verguenza* to the air and kill it. After that he'd plan his next move.

Zooming across the line of hangars with a thunderous roar, Masters banked to the left and cut over toward the prison pen. He saw it now, that long house with its glass

roof, looking for all the world like a tiny lake in the slanting rays of the sun.

Masters tried his guns as he slashed across the building from which came the stuff that made men blind. But they were empty. There were no slugs in his cartridge belts. It didn't matter. He could finish off that hot-house with those four twenty-pounders. Not a petal would be left. His hand reached for the bomb toggles, jerked it, once, twice. Then he put the ship into a bank and watched.

Glass glinted in the sun like a shower of diamonds as the first two of the bombs hit their target. A cloud of black earth and green vines leaped into the air and began to trail back to what had been von Sacken's pride and joy.

Masters, the light of triumph on his face, curled around. The long glass roof had collapsed. Its iron framework was buckled and twisted. Not a pane of glass rested in the frames. He reached for the release again. This time he was more careful.

HE came in lower, took his time before he gave the yank that sent the remaining eggs earthward. They went, twisting and shrieking through the air right into the office where von Sacken had his retorts and records. That part of the job was complete.

Leaving von Sacken's treasure a mass of smoky ruins behind him, Masters cut back toward the flying field, and then straightened out and swung directly right as he saw a ship climb over the trees.

"The grey Fokker," he cried. "Von Sacken's after me—going to try and nail me this time!"

The Albatross seemed to waver drunkenly as Masters headed due west, into the orange orb of the sun which was already halfway below the

horizon. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the Fokker take up the pursuit, and Masters, determined that von Sacken was not going to get in front of him, high-tailed it for the lines.

The Fokker gained on him, bit by bit, but Masters was not afraid as long as the nose of the Hun crate was in back of him. He realized now, that von Sacken had had to sacrifice his Spandaus in order to carry that armor plating which protected his cockpit. He had nothing to fear as long as the grey Fokker was in back of him.

On and on they went. The Fokker gradually drawing up on even terms with the Albatross. And behind the Fokker Masters could see other ships, all hurrying to the aid of their commander. Ahead of him lay the American lines; safety was there. Masters watched it. They seemed to creep towards him at a snail's pace.

NOW von Sacken was even with him. Masters looked across at the bobbing Fokker and saw that the lid was still back. Von Sacken was no longer trying to make him believe that the Fokker was capable of flying without a pilot. No, the Hun, red with anger and chagrin, glared over the side of the cockpit into Masters' smiling face.

"Is he burning up?" muttered Masters. "I think he's mad enough to crash me. Now he's trying to pull ahead. He can do it, too; his is the faster crate."

Just then the crooked smear of the trenches slid under the Lone Eagle's wings. His smile faded to a look of determination. The time had come. He was no longer fleeing from the dirty grey Fokker, he was at bay, his teeth bared in a snarl, whipping around into a bank, drawing the Fokker in closer.

Then Masters swung into one of the strangest battles of his long ca-

reer. He had no ammunition in his guns. Von Sacken had no guns. Up to that point it was an even combat. But von Sacken did have a deadly weapon in his tail, waiting there like the sting of a whip ray.

The two men milled around each other. First one had the advantage and then the other. Four times Masters had been in a position where if he had had ammunition for his Spandaus, he could have poured slugs into the Fokker. But he knew that they would have done no harm. That ship was too well protected.

The light of day was dying. Time was slipping by. In a few minutes it would be dark. Behind him like black buzzards hung the other Fokkers waiting to see their leader finish this American once and for all. And Masters kept working the fight further and further behind the lines. He saw a flock of Camels come along and drive the Fokkers back to their lair, while he continued the odd fight against von Sacken.

Suddenly the Lone Eagle whipped in close. His long waited opportunity was at hand. Von Sacken was in front of him and just a little below, flying slower, trying to coax the Lone Eagle in on his tail.

And that was just where Masters was going. He was going to risk the deadly *La Verguena* in order to rid the world of this hellion who thought nothing of blinding men wholesale.

All through the last stages of the battle Masters had been forcing his breathing, clearing his lungs, waiting for the final effort. The moment was there. The opportunity was in front of him. As he jammed his throttle home his lips parted and he sucked a deep breath into his lungs. His eyes narrowed. The Albatross leaped ahead.

Like a falcon striking down a duck the Lone Eagle swooped in on the grey Fokker. He saw the light

flash, it meant nothing now and was more than likely attached to the valve that released the sinister fluid. But the light disappeared behind a grinding shower of wood from his propeller and fabric from the elevators and rudder of the Fokker.

He held his breath until he thought his lungs would burst. The Fokker fell away from in front of him with a scream of tortured metal and twisted control wires. Down, down it hurtled through the gathering dusk.

And Masters, fighting for the mastery of his crippled ship, drew in clean air as he followed after. He at least had a chance. His prop was gone. A wing was badly torn, but he had control. That was more than the evil von Sacken had. For the Hun had lost his elevators and rudder in Masters' daring stroke. He was doomed, going to his death in the plane that he liked to make people believe would fly alone.

Masters followed swiftly. His eyes were burning with excitement. He saw the Fokker dig in, a black twisted mass in the lengthening shadows.

Then gracefully as possible under

the circumstances, Masters set his crippled ship down close to the wreck. He was out in a flash and running across the field. He stopped by the twisted heap. There at his feet, spread-eagled, eyes unseeing, staring at the golden glow of the sunset, lay von Sacken, thrown clear by the terrific impact.

Masters bent and carefully extracted a tiny package wrapped in oiled silk. He slid his fingers under the flap and took out a bit of folded paper. He saw the chemical symbols and knew that he had the formula by which he could cure the men who had already been struck down by von Sacken's *La Verguenza*.

"You chased me too far that time, old chap," he murmured. "I didn't dare try it over there. I wanted this."

The tiny square looked like a golden reward in the light. Masters looked up. The edge of the setting sun was still visible over the horizon. A smile crossed his face, erasing the lines of worry which had been there for the last few days.

The rim of the sun suddenly slipped from sight, but the Lone Eagle had kept his promise.

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PROBAK JUNIOR

Monkey Face

*They Treated Him More Like a Mascot than a Soldier
—this Undersized Brat of a Man Who Was to Spring
a Rip-Roaring Surprise on them All!*

By **GEORGE BRUCE**

Author of "Limpy," "Five Yards to Hell," etc.

CHAPTER I

Birth of a Bearcat

HE WAS a little, weazened-faced runt. He couldn't have been more than eighteen, but his face had the wrinkles and creases of a man of sixty, and



Willie Wilson

there was a certain quality in his eyes which said that he had lived forever, had been a personal observer of all the phases of history, and within his little pinch-top cranium was con-

tained all of the knowledge of all the world.

And that was distinctly false. For if a dumber, more futile, more helpless little monkey had ever shuffled around the limitations of a worldly horizon, he had not put in his appearance up to October, 1918.

What the sergeants and corporals said about him was unprintable. Any sergeant or corporal attached to the 9th O.B.S. could sum up Monkey-face Wilson's qualifications for membership in a flying outfit in not more than four words, all ending with exclamation points. In fact, those four words would have completely covered any field of endeavor, civilian or military, open to Monkey-face.

What the pilots said of Monkey-face could be indited only on asbestos—if they said anything at all.

What the major said was: "If I didn't have a feeling of pity concerning my brother officers in the service, and if it would not be a form of cruelty to animals, I'd transfer you to the Sanitary Corps, where you could help the enemy win the war by digging ditches for the duration. For heaven's sake get out of here—sergeant, take him away."

But corporal, sergeant, lieutenant or major, it was the same to Mon-

MALCOLM

A
Complete
War-Air
Novelette

EMF

The burst ripped into the Albatross, and a spurt of flame gushed forth

keyface Wilson. He grinned that little monkey grin, and his little blue eyes took on a dazed, blank expression, and the wrinkles over his forehead grew deeper, and he walked away, completely unimpressed, completely unchastised and completely dumb.

Not that any man in the outfit would have carried out his threats concerning Monkeyface. Deep down in their hearts they loved the little brat, grinned at him—and his absence would have been keenly felt. They pitied him, but they would never show that pity openly. He was a regularly enlisted member of the outfit, but they treated him and regarded him as more of a mascot than a soldier.

THEY knew he had lied like a trooper in offering himself for enlistment in the very first days of the war. Offered himself when men were thinking up excuses important enough to keep them from making the ocean voyage to France, and later contracting matrimony, measles and misfortune to escape the command of the little green cards sent around by the draft boards.

Before the little green cards were thought of Monkeyface was in the uniform of the United States, demanding to be led forthwith against the enemy, screwing up his thin little face in grimaces of hate and blood lust, thrusting out his bony little chest in an attempt to fill a uniform. The smallest size provided for warriors by Uncle Sam was three sizes too large for Monkeyface.

He hurled his one hundred and six pounds over bayonet runs, dragging a rifle with fixed bayonet, stabbing it into the stuffed dummies which represented the enemy. Stabbing it? Well, hardly. He might have scratched a living enemy with the ferocity of his attack, but he went about the mock business grimly, fu-

riously driven on by the growling, bloodthirsty voices of sergeant-instructors who stood along the bayonet run telling the infantry in training:

"In the gizzards—up to the blood groove! Drive, you dogs—you're not supposed to tickle those squareheads—you're in earnest, you're out to kill. You want to run those bayonets into the stomach—and *twist*—get it—*twist*—wrap the stomach right around those bayonets! Come on now—a little life—run—blast it!"

And Little Willie Wilson—that was Monkeyface's other name—would run, a little sick at the thought of plunging his bayonet into the middle of a living, breathing human; a little sick and dizzy with the hard-hearted, vicious comments of the instructors. But he would screw up his face and nerves to ecstasies of ferocity—because Willie was in the business in earnest.

He tried, harder than any of the six-foot, hundred and eighty pounders who served in his company. He ran with them and he lugged his heavy rifle with them, and he matched them step by step; until the white of exhaustion showed in his face and his eyes were bloodshot and his legs dragging weights, and the rifle in his hand became a ton weight of lead. His little chest panted and the breath whistled through his mouth in hoarse gasps, and the voices of the instructors sounded harsh, always right at the back of his neck.

"Wilson—put some zip into it. Get down in those lousy trenches—and get back up—climb out—you're not out on a picnic. *Pick up that piece*—carry it in front of you. Oh, for God's sake!"

And one night Willie spent lying face down on his cot, his body numb with fatigue and his legs and arms dead and a searing pain in his chest. He cried—all night that night—be-

cause—well, because the instructors said that he'd never make a soldier, that he didn't have what it took. Nerve—plenty; ability, none; stamina, none. He just couldn't make the grade.

So they attached him to the company headquarters for want of some other place to stick him; tried to give him paper work to do, while Willie's heart was out there with the guys climbing in and out of the dummy trenches. But he couldn't make the grade as a clerk either, because—well, Willie had forgotten to go to school most of the time.

He didn't mind losing that job—after all, you can't kill an enemy by writing requisitions for "Can, 1, garbage, G. I." or "Can, 1, meat," or "Boat, 1, China, gravy."

He then was attached as a runner to the company commander. He ran all right, fast and far, stiff with the importance of being the mouthpiece of the C. O. But he had a bad habit of losing the written orders mysteriously, and of forgetting what had been told him orally, in the excitement of getting to where he had been sent in the shortest possible time.

Things went along like that. Monkeyface always came to bat with two strikes on him. But he did learn one thing thoroughly. He learned machine-guns.

Those machine-guns had a fascination for him. He looked at his first gun, saw a corporal instructor handling it, firing at targets two hundred yards away, watched the slugs ripping out of the muzzle and crackle against the targets, and immediately great dreams of Willie Wilson in the role of Hero filled his mind.

Here was something so deadly, which operated with so little effort, that even if a guy couldn't run a mile with a bayonet, he could mow 'em down with a machine-gun. Just

sit behind the gun, with both hands grabbing the handles, and the thumbs on the trips, squint through the sights, and turn her loose. The gun would do the rest! What the hell was a man with a bayonet—at the most he could only kill one enemy at a time. But a guy with a machine-gun—well, that was a tank in another mud hole entirely.

And Willie would lie on his back in the night, and see visions which excited his imagination and sent his blood pressure to soaring, and his pulses to hammering.

Dreams, wild dramas, prompted by the sheen and glitter and ominous look of a machine-gun.

AND the dreams became so forceful that finally Willie summoned courage enough to ask his captain to be detailed for machine-gun instruction.

"I—just feel—somehow, sir, that if I could have a crack at a machine-gun—I'd be an expert in no time. It ain't like running the bayonet courses, sir. Even a little guy like me can be a swell machine-gunner—" And he stopped short, overcome by emotion and the enormity of speaking directly on a personal matter with the czar of the company.

So the captain, with a sigh of relief, assigned Willie to machine-guns; and with a grin of unholy glee, because he didn't like the machine-gun officer particularly.

But Willie fooled 'em. He went after machine-guns with determination.

He went after them like a hungry man after an order of steak and French fries, and from the very beginning it was evident that Willie had a vocation for machine-guns.

After ten days the machine-gun officer said to the company commander:

"Where in the world did you dig up that monkey-faced little brat you

sent me for machine-gun instruction?"

And the company C. O., scenting the usual howl coming, said blandly and innocently: "Why?"

"Well, he's the dumbest-looking, skinniest, goofiest-looking soldier I've seen in this man's war—but he's going to be a bearcat with a machine-gun. Listen, he's making men who have two months' instruction on the gun look like amateurs. In no time at all he set the record blindfolded for stripping a gun down and setting it up again. He doesn't know two and two make four, and he has a supreme contempt for windage and judgment of distance, but when he cracks down on a target—boy, he annihilates it. He's a machine-gunner, and no kidding!"

The captain was a little sore.

But the Fates who grin over the trials and tribulations of mortals were waiting up a dark alley for Willie, with a sandbag in each hand.

CHAPTER II

Certificate of Disability



NATURALLY, the thing every man in Willie's outfit wanted most was orders for France. The business of sticking bayonets into dummies was getting monotonous in spite of the driving ferocity of the sergeants. The men wanted to see what would happen when they stuck those bayonets into living stomachs. And the machine-gunners and grenadiers wanted to see what happened when they got real targets to operate on.

And, of course, Willie Wilson was generating white heat in his eagerness, and his dreams were getting so big and so hot that every night he stopped a whole German division single-handed. It grew to the point where his heroism became so out-

standing that he was being sent home at least once a week to receive the personal thanks of the President of the United States.

And then the orders came, and there was quick, nervous preparations. Great secrets, whispered orders, glances out of the corners of eyes for the presence of spies, subdued whisperings of U-boats and sinkings at sea. Oiling of rifles, packing of equipment, serving out of war loads of ammunitions and iron rations. And the company lined up to move out of the cantonment.

For three days Willie had been seeing funny things out of his eyes, like little black bugs walking on the horizon, and his mouth had been dry and his throat parched and his body felt hot, dry and tight. He said nothing to anyone concerning those little black bugs—because he was afraid of them.

They might want to find out about the bugs—doctors were crazy anyway, so he went about, packing up his precious machine-gun, rolling his full pack. And his ears rang and there was a dead weight in the middle of his chest, and his bones ached, and his tongue was swelling, and he felt like hell.

"It's just the excitement," he kept telling himself as he lined up with the company, ready to march out of the cantonment for the very secret port of embarkation.

Up ahead somewhere a voice barked:

"Squads right—column right—*March!*"

And Willie took one step—the first toward France—and stumbled. He fell on his face, tripped up the men behind him, so that they fell on top of him, and spread confusion and dismay throughout the whole company.

"Why in hell don't you look where you're going, you monkey-

faced little—" But the man getting to his feet looked down at Willie, stopped short, his anger flooding out of him, and stared. A sergeant came galloping, and a platoon commander.

"What's the rumpus here?" demanded the sergeant. And the man who had tripped over Willie could do nothing but stare and point.

For Willie was completely out. His mouth was babbling words which were born out of the hectic, wild dreams which had prevented him from sleeping at night.

"It's nothing at all, Mr. President!" Willie was mumbling in a delirious tone of complete modesty.

They dragged Willie out of the line, sent him to the hospital in an ambulance and the company marched on.

In the hospital the surgeon took one look at Willie.

"Influenza!" he told the orderly. "And one sweet case. Gosh, he must be running a temperature of a million. He's got one chance in a million. Isolation ward—on the run."

Days later, Monkeyface woke up to discover that his company had sailed for France without him, and that the dreams were shattered. His beloved machine-gun was in France, in strange hands which would never be able to understand it—and he wished he were dead.

He wasn't even listed as a soldier on the hospital records. He was an orphan, a military outcast, a pariah. The record said: "Willie Wilson, Casual—Influenza."

He spent two months in that hospital. His body felt dead, overwhelmed by a terrific sense of fatigue he could not throw off, and his bones still ached—but, he kept telling himself, he had to get to France. He had to tell the men in the company that he wasn't yellow, that he hadn't run out on them—and he had to find his machine-gun.

One night he asked the medical

corps sergeant: "Sergeant, where is this here, now, Point of Embarkation—the place they send all the troops from as is going to France?"

"Lot of 'em," answered the sergeant out of his superior knowledge. "Hoboken mostly, but Brooklyn a lot, New Orleans; Charleston, South Carolina; Savannah, Georgia. Why—you ain't goin' nowhere. They're fixin' to give you a discharge on a S.C.D."

Willie Wilson's eyes opened wide. He started at the sergeant.

"What's an S.C.D.?" he asked in a queer, choked voice.

"Hell! Don't you know nothin'?" demanded the sergeant. "S.C.D. means 'Surgeon's Certificate of Disability.' It means a sawbones says you aren't physically fit to be a soldier—and there's no use keeping you in the army. So they give you a medical discharge and send you home. After they had looked at the X-ray plates of your lungs, they found that you got spots—the 'flu probably—but you're going to get out the easy way."

"Oh!" said Willie, in the same queer, strangled voice. "Oh! That means I gotta get out whether I want to or not—and I can't wear the uniform any more—I won't be in the army."

"What the heffl have I been tryin' to tell you?"

AND Willie turned his face away. There was a tightness and a fear and a sense of suffocation in his throat.

That night he went A.W.O.L. from the hospital. He stood along the road in his uniform. He had been very clever about that, he told himself, sneaking his uniform out of the closet and putting it on under his hospital gown. Waiting until the ward was dark, and going to the bathroom in his bare feet, where he had hidden his shoes and socks, and

then climbing out of the bathroom window, down three flights, from sun porch to sun porch to the ground. And getting past those sentries all around and on the gates had been pretty good, too.

He stood and thumbed a ride. He had a hazy notion that Brooklyn, or Hoboken, was near New York, somewhere. He didn't dare ask the man who picked him up. It might sound suspicious.

He merely said, with a note of subdued pride in his voice:

"I'm a soldier. I'm goin' to Hoboken—port of embarkation—to sail for France."

And the driver said: "Well, that's just fine, my boy. I'm going right through there, within a couple of miles. Ain't you a little young—and kind of frail—for soldiering?"

"I'm a machine-gunner—an expert!" said Willie. "Us machine-gunners don't have to pack the beef them doughboys cart around. They pick us for brains. Takes something to be an expert machine-gunner."

And so he got to Hoboken.

He saw a ship for the first time—and then he saw a dozen more ships. One ship had a gangway down, and troops were marching up the gangway, onto the ship. They were going in silence; only the *thump, thump, thump* of field shoes on the dock, and the clink and clatter of field equipment swinging from bodies.

Willie attached himself to the column. He asked no questions. He tried to look like a soldier. He held himself very straight to make himself taller. He wondered if he'd be stopped because he didn't have a rifle. He decided to trot—to look important. He trotted, and the breath wheezed out of his flu-stricken lungs. He passed the checker at the gangway.

"Company runner!" he flung at him—and kept trotting up the gangway.

He was aboard! The planking of the deck was under his feet. He was in the midst of a wildly excited, starry-eyed gang of doughboys. And then—after a long while, during which he suffered the tortures of hell expecting to be discovered, flung off the ship, or arrested as a spy—the great transport hooted once, solemnly, and made its way out into the river.

CHAPTER III

A Place in the War



IT may have been that Willie Wilson would have made his stowaway voyage to France without discovery if he had not fainted from exhaustion and hunger on the fourth day out. During the four days the officers and men had been too busy with drills and life boat stations and a hundred and one other bits of training to pay a great deal of attention to Willie Wilson, even if they had noticed his presence. Corporals and sergeants called the rolls and reported all present a dozen times a day, but Willie's name was on no list in that regiment.

And he acted his part of being very busy, doing nothing.

But he was afraid to join a mess, to ask for food. That might have betrayed him. The smell of beans and bread, of bacon and coffee tortured him when the troops messed. But he fought with himself and conquered. Until—he went dizzy one morning right after breakfast, and fell on his face on the deck.

It was another case of being sent to the surgeon, and the surgeon had no difficulty in diagnosing the case as starvation. Naturally there were questions. Men do not have to starve on transports, and Willie, tears running down his cheeks and his fists

clenched in the misery of his soul, broke down and told the whole story—after which there was a stunned silence on the part of all the officers present.

"I'll be hanged if I know what to do in a case like this," admitted the officer of the day.

"Outrageous. Never heard of such a shocking breach of discipline and military authority!" said the colonel. "By God, I ought to have him under arrest—but what the hell, he's such a helpless little tyke, and so damned in earnest—you simply cannot penalize such spirit, gentlemen!"

The adjutant of the regiment looked very hurt.

"But it's so irregular, sir. We simply cannot do anything about him. We can't absorb him into this command, because we have no orders—no service record. It would jumble things up tremendously. He is A.W.O.L. from his own command—

"You're too damned military, Johnson," said the colonel to the adjutant. "Well, see that he's fed and taken care of, and when we land—there's nothing for it but to turn him over to the provost marshal. Damned shame—they tell me they don't handle these kind of cases with kid gloves in France."

And Willie, his stomach stuffed, spent his time, for the rest of the way across, telling the men that he was a machine-gun expert—and that as soon as he got to the front and found his company and his machine-gun, the war would begin in earnest.

THEY scowled and thundered and huffed and puffed at Willie Wilson in France. They threatened him with sudden death against a stone wall for desertion in time of war. They threatened him with prison for the rest of his life when he was tried.

But Willie was lucky. He was given a summary court and not a

general. And the officer who acted as the court was young, and he looked at Willie's little weazened, earnest face and the light in his eyes, and he felt himself going soft inside in spite of the majesty of military law. So he ordered Willie sent to a casual company—an outfit of half-breeds and blotted brands, awaiting orders to somewhere or other.

And one day, after he had been a "casual" for a week, a sergeant with a paper in his hands, came around and asked the men:

"Any of youse misfits mechanics? Any of youse know anything about motors?"

And Willie, sensing a break and a chance to escape from the dubious company of the casuals, stepped forward and told a monumental lie with a perfectly straight face. The kind of a lie he had told the recruiting officer who enlisted him.

"Yes, sir!" said Willie. "Why, I'm an expert automobile mechanic. I worked in a garage. I know all about motors. I can take 'em apart blindfolded and put 'em back together."

The sergeant said: "You're probably a lousy liar, but that's no skin off my nose. I'm told to pick out men who say they're mechanics and to send the names in—that's all I know." And he wrote Willie's name down on the paper.

The miracle occurred the following morning. An order was published. Among other things it mentioned: "Wilson, Willie, Pvt., attached to the 9th Observation Squadron, mechanic."

And Willie, joy in his heart, life flowing strongly through his withered-up, frail little body, found himself in a motor lorry, bound for the front and an airplane squadron. Airplanes! Why, he'd never dreamed that some day he might actually come close enough to an airplane

to look at it—and here he was, a full fledged member of an airplane squadron, with orders, and everything.

Of course, it bothered him that he had told a lie about being a mechanic—but after all, when he got there he would tell them that he might not be a mechanic, but he was a machine-gun expert. A machine-gun expert was far more valuable than a mechanic, and they'd probably be glad to get a real expert.

And he coughed and coughed, and the cough left him blue in the face and breathless, and the driver of the truck said: "You got a nasty cold there, kid."

And Willie nodded and said: "Yeah—just got it. Be over it in a couple of days. I'm a machine-gun expert—have to keep on the job. Little thing like a cold can't stop us machine-gun experts—we have to do our stuff."

Two hours after he arrived on the field of the 9th O.B.S., he was unmasked. A master sergeant stood in front of him with his hands on his hips and his legs spread wide apart.

"I ought to beat hell out of you, you little monkey-faced ape," he bellowed. "I ought to teach you not to tell lies—I ought to teach you just what kind of a mechanic you're not."

"I wanted to explain," said Willie, white-faced and shaken in the face of the sergeant's wrath. "I'm a machine-gun expert, not a mechanic, and that was the only way I could get to the front. You don't understand about being mixed up with a gang of casuals, goldbricks—that's what they were, sir, goldbricks—I had to get up here. You see, I'm a machine-gun expert."

Maybe it was the "sir" that knocked the edge off the sergeant's wrath. Maybe it was the stricken light in Monkeyface's eyes, or the queer, tense expression of his face.

Maybe it was the knifelike cough that racked him, even when he fought to swallow it.

"Machine-gun expert!" exploded the sergeant, but his great wrath at the deception was gone. "I'll give you machine-gun expert! You grab hold of one of those buckets, and a sponge, and you start laundering the underside of those ships on the line. And if I see so much as a speck of dirt or grease on 'em, I'll skin you—got that?"

"Yes, sir!" said Willie.

IN the days that followed, he tried to tell everyone on the field, to explain about his being a machine-gun expert. The men looked at him, at his hollow cheeks and too bright eyes and puny body, and they howled with laughter. They looked at his grease and grime-smear face, and smelled the odor of gasoline which oozed from him, and they howled again. He was nothing more than a little chimney sweep.

It became a joke in the outfit, as Willie sank lower and lower in the scale of usefulness around a flying field.

"Tell us about being a machine-gun expert, Monkeyface," the men would say, with winks back and forth. And Willie, not knowing that he was being kidded, and so very earnest, would begin the tale. And always, he ended it with:

"Wait till my chance comes. I'll show you what a real machine-gun expert is like, how valuable he is to his command. He's the key man, he has to hold 'em and to turn the enemy back—sure, that's his job. My captain used to say to me: 'You hold 'em, Willie—that's orders!'"

And he believed his captain had said that, for somehow, the dreamings and the realities were coming to be all mixed up in his mind. Sometimes he felt as if he were dreaming all day. And he was a

little afraid. Because, when he coughed hard now, he felt little liquid bubblings in his chest, and when he spat on the ground there was blood.

So he didn't spit on the ground any more; spat into his handkerchief or a piece of waste, so no one would see the blood and perhaps report him to another surgeon.

CHAPTER IV

Man of Action



IMLY Willie knew that the 9th was catching hell from the enemy and that men were dying, and the major was tearing his hair out, and the pilots were grave. He saw officers on one day who seemed to belong to the squadron—and then they just disappeared.

One day Lieutenant Malcolm came in, his ship riddled with bullets, and with blood oozing through some of the bullet holes. And Monkeyface saw that Lieutenant Green, Malcolm's observer and gunner, was hanging in his belt, half in his seat and half out, in a crazy sort of way. There was blood all over his face, and Lieutenant Malcolm was crying like a baby—right out in front of everyone—sobbing, with tears running down over his chin.

They carried Lieutenant Green out of the ship—and the next day Lieutenant Malcolm flew alone, with an empty back seat.

"He won't have anyone else," said a voice almost in a whisper, as one mechanic talked to another. "He begged the skipper not to assign him another observer for the back seat—not yet. He's sure all broken up over Green. Great guy, Green. But the great guys always get it first. The louses live forever."

Day after day Lieutenant Malcolm flew out alone. And it was just

as well, for the squadron was short-handed, and the major cursed and raved over the fact that the pool took a lifetime in sending him competent replacements to keep his command up to full strength so it could perform its duties.

And then, one day, Monkeyface happened to hear Lieutenant Malcolm say to a knot of other officers:

"If I just had a gunner, a good gunner in that back seat this morning I'd have made it up for Tommy Green. I had two Albatrosses dead when they attacked. Any kind of a gunner would have dropped 'em both. Gosh, why don't they train machine-gunners as carefully as they train pilots? I'd give a month's pay to fly just once with another gunner like Tommy Green, keepin' 'em off my tail."

Something exploded in Willie Wilson's head. Something that said, over and over: "You're a machine-gunner—and expert—you show him." And all night he rolled and tossed on his cot and stuffed the end of his blanket in his mouth to smother the coughing, and dreamed of Lieutenant Malcolm making a landing on the field, and leading Willie down from the back seat, and telling the whole squadron: "Boys! I want to introduce you to a *real* machine-gun expert."

Just before dawn the next morning, Monkeyface crept across the field, into the back cockpit of Lieutenant Malcolm's D.H., crouched down low against the forward edge of the cockpit and against the floor boards. The mechanics had finished checking over the ship before the take-off. The motor was turning over. The D.H. was ready to fly.

Willie heard Lieutenant Malcolm's voice speaking to his mechanics:

"Everything ready, boys?"

"Yes, sir."

"Okay."

And then movement, motion, rush

and roar—and for the first time in his life, Willie Wilson's body was lifted from the earth and carried into the heights. The first time he had ever been in a plane, on the ground or in the air. And he shook all over his body, and in his excitement forgot to cough. He wondered if Lieutenant Malcolm would turn and go back if he found Willie in the back seat. He wondered if he should show himself, and reach over and touch Malcolm's shoulder and say:

"You said you wanted a machine-gunner. Well, here I am."

But he knew that he would never be able to make himself heard in all the roar of the motor and the scream of the slipstream. So he decided to stay put until Lieutenant Malcolm needed the machine-gunner, and then he could show himself, and prove what an expert he really was. He looked at the gun rack. A Lewis—two Lewises, mounted in pairs. Well, he knew Lewises; they had had a whole course on Lewis guns while he was becoming an expert.

He crouched there in the cockpit. His body was cramped. The fumes of raw gas and hot oil seeped in and got into his lungs, seemed to rasp the raw tissues. He put his hands over his mouth so that he would not cough.

The big D.H. droned on and on, and the noise of the air on the underside of the fuselage, and the droning of the motor and hum of the struts through the air, along with the smell of gasoline, seemed to act as a drug on Willie. He felt very tired. His head began to be heavy. He had not slept all of the night before—and then there was the accumulated fatigue which had seemed to grow up within him since the flu struck him down back at the cantonment in the States.

He fought the heaviness and the blackness which surrounded him—

but it pressed against his eyeballs like weights, and his head went down to rest on the observer's seat—and after a while it seemed that consciousness was snatched from him, and he knew nothing.

THEN he awoke with a start. The first thing he noticed was that the sun was streaming into the cockpit and shining in his face. And then he heard something, and felt something. The big ship seemed to be sloshing about. The floor of the cockpit rose with him, seemed to become a wall in back of him, and the sky whirled and he had an instant sight of the ground. All of it swirled around like muddy water in a glass, and the ship was straining itself and the motor was racing crazily. The struts and wires were not humming now; they were screaming as if in fury and rage.

But one sound, above all other sounds, held Monkeyface transfixed. A stabbing, chattering, ripping sound. It was over his head, it was all around him, it hemmed him in—and a sound he had not heard in months was back with him again. How well he knew it! How many times had he thrilled to that sound! How proud he had been of it! How many days had his whole life centered about such sounds!

Machine-guns stuttering! That was the sound. It went through him like a bugle clarioning a charge. For the first time he drew himself up in the cockpit and dared to show his head—just a little above the top of the seat.

He saw Lieutenant Malcolm's head turned to the front and twisting now and then to observe something Willie could not yet see. Something that seemed to be on the D.H.'s tail, and to be in front of the ship. He heard Vickers guns from the nose of the D.H. in a staccato burst of sullen fury.

Then, without so much as understanding that he should wrap himself in the gunner's belt, he climbed to his feet, clinging with his hands to the sides of the cockpit. And he saw his first enemy! Directly behind him, diving in like hunting falcons, spitting death at the D.H. And in front of Malcolm, two other enemy ships, trying to cut him off from either side.

Willie did not even know what kind of ships they were. He only knew they were enemy, because he knew that the enemy insignia was a black cross. And the ships charging the D.H.s tail had the biggest black crosses Willie had ever seen, even in pictures.

A sudden glow came into his eyes. Here it was. Here was the beginning of that dream! Face to face with the enemy. His own side unable to escape. Willie—at the guns. And his hands reached out for the Scarff and he pulled himself up to the guns, tripped them, raised the muzzles, squinted through the sights.

He forgot this was an airplane. He forgot that he had never been in an airplane. He forgot that the D.H., which was the tripod for his guns, was moving at a hundred miles an hour and the ships behind must have been moving at two hundred. He merely flicked the muzzles of the Lewises up, covered the ship diving in on the right, waited until he had it centered exactly on the cross hairs of the sight, and squeezed the triggers.

The double Lewis guns flamed, and the flame ignited tinder within Willie's soul. This was the minute. The enemy—the guns—he had to show that he was an expert! He stared through the sight. No target had ever done anything like that before. Dissolved into a black cloud of smoke. Seemed to run into a stone wall. Fluttered about with its wings threshing in the smoke.

He swung the gun muzzles over to the second target. He picked it up, squared it in the sights, even allowed for speed, moved the guns forward to fire an intercepting burst. He did not have this target as a head-on, pointblank thing as he had had the first. This second pilot, attacking a ship which he believed to be without a machine-gunner, had watched his wing companion die—and a machine-gunner appear from nowhere in the back seat of the D.H. to strike out with sudden, vicious death.

This second pilot was in the attempt to carry his ship in a sharp slip to the left to escape those twin Lewis guns, when Willie Wilson squeezed the triggers. The intercepting burst ripped out in front of the Albatross. The enemy ship flew into it, headlong. A tracer transfixed its motor mounting. Slugs thudded into its B.M.W. Smoke drifted up from its crankcase, filtered through the pilot's cockpit.

The pilot banked hard and high to wing over; and Willie Wilson, with the calm assurance of a trap shooter making a wing shot, followed with the guns and ripped another intercepting burst at the Albatross' nose.

And like the first, this second ship went down spinning and burning, the shell of its motor shattered by the direct hits of twenty slugs.

CHAPTER V

A Dream Come True



WILLIE was examining the pans to see how many rounds were left before he had to change. He had forgotten Lieutenant Malcolm completely. Suddenly he saw a reflection of sunlight on glass of goggles. It was shining in his eyes. He turned his head.

He saw Malcolm's face turned toward him. It seemed that Malcolm's face was strangely white and strained. Malcolm's mouth opened. Willie did not have to hear what he said—he could read what he said.

"Monkeyface!" said Malcolm, half crazily.

AND Willie, answering in the same pantomime, said: "Yes, sir!"

In spite of the two following Albatrosses, Malcolm cut his gun.

"How in the hell did you get here?" he demanded foolishly.

"I—just kind of climbed in, sir," said Monkeyface. A spasm of coughing shook him. "I heard you saying to the gentlemen officers, last night, that you wanted an expert machine-gunner. Well I'm an expert machine-gunner. I tried to tell them, but they laughed at me—you see."

"Listen," said Malcolm, hard glints in his eyes, and watching the maneuvering enemy Albatrosses carefully. "You see those ships?"

"Yes, sir."

"They're out to get us. One is going to attack from the front, and the other from the rear. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"I can only fight one of 'em at a time."

A nod from Willie. Now it was coming. Now it was going to happen.

"Think you can hold the one that comes in over or under the tail?"

A thrill like a shock ran through Willie. His body seemed to expand. Red spots came into his cheeks. He drew himself up. Malcolm didn't need to be a lip reader to understand that answer. It came to him—ringing—and Willie Wilson had rehearsed it hundreds of times against the coming of this minute.

"Yes, sir! Don't worry. I can hold him! I can hold a dozen like him—don't bother about me!"

And suddenly Malcolm was grinning, a wolf grin. "You remember Lieutenant Green, Monkeyface?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, a couple of ships like these killed him. Let's go!"

The enemy Albatrosses were in position for the attack. Carefully planned, executed with expert maneuvering. They were beautiful, sleek red things. It seemed to Willie that it was a shame that anything so beautiful could be an enemy—and had to be killed.

He heard Malcolm pour the throttle to the D.H. and felt the mighty surge of power through the fabric and frame of the two-seater. Then he kept watching the Albatross on his tail, moving the muzzle of his gun to follow it. Twice it flicked in and out, threw short, fast bursts and slithered out of range before Willie was ready to cut in the Lewises.

The crackle and whine of those enemy slugs sounded around his ears. He crouched over in the seat, clinging to his guns, his face wrinkled, looking a thousand years old, his hands white with the strain of keeping his balance and control of the guns. The D.H. surged and bucked with him, as Malcolm followed the second of the Albatrosses, riding it hard, trying to make a pursuit ship out of a lumbering D.H.

But Willie knew nothing about the points of flying, nor of the comparative speeds of airplanes, nor the advantages claimed for one-seaters over two-seaters and vice-versa. Willie was not an expert on flying. He didn't claim to be—he was a machine-gun expert.

And he proved it again in the next second. The Albatross on the tail decided to risk everything on a plunging, headlong dive at the D.H. An attempt to overwhelm everything with raw speed, and to cover the dive with a continuous burst of ma-

chine-gun fire as it came in, hoping for a lucky hit on the gunner.

And Willie, quite calmly, because he didn't know how to be afraid when he was handling machine-guns, stood there in the midst of the inferno of crackling slugs, and waited until he knew he could not miss. And then he gave the Albatross both barrels. Quick, sure bursts to keep from overheating the guns and wasting ammunition. Bursts like short, deadly right-hand shock punches to the jaw.

Something struck him in the chest and in the stomach. He hardly felt it. Just like hot metal chips against the skin. He kept his eyes on the ship and the gun-sight. And, somehow, the third Albatross ran into that stone wall, formed of the thud of slugs through red fabric, zoomed straight up, a dead pilot at the controls, and never recovered from the zoom.

It stalled in place, fell off on a wing, dived and went into a flat spin out of a whipstall.

Willie was coughing. Not like the usual cough. This time each time he coughed, blood came to his mouth and the bubbling sensation in his chest was worse. Then there was a dead feeling in his stomach and it was coming alive—to burn—as if he had swallowed a hot coal of fire.

He turned his head to see Malcolm. It was hard to see him. A thick scum was growing before his eyes. He saw Malcolm taking the D.H. down, fast, wide open, diving at an Albatross which was also diving. Somehow, Willie knew that if the Albatross pulled out of that dive, went up fast, it could make the maneuver before Malcolm could follow with the D.H., and then the Albatross would be over the top of them, ready to pounce down, to rake them with machine-gun fire before Malcolm could recover.

And that was what the Albatross

did. Tricked Malcolm into following in the dive until he had worked up a tremendous speed, and then the enemy pilot zoomed straight up—leaving Malcolm to flounder about and to half-rip the wings off the two-seater trying to follow.

But the enemy pilot never completed the maneuver. There was a little blood-framed smile about Willie Wilson's mouth. He remembered the voice of his sergeant instructor of other days—a raucous voice, but a voice one never forgot:

"In shooting at a moving target—lead it!"

So, Willie "led it." He covered it with his guns as it zoomed, followed the red silhouette as it went up, sighted in front of the Albatross, and squeezed the trigger. He didn't even need to look at the result of that burst. He knew. The "trigger feel" was there. It was a hit, right on the target. An expert machine-gunner, or an expert rifleman, knows that feel.

DEAD bird! That's what an expert called it. Willie's mouth was forming the words.

The burst ripped the guts out of the tanks of the Albatross. The pilot, gasoline spurting out of the punctures under pressure blinding him, carried the Albatross around in a wingover. Then there was a spurt of flame from the red ship—and it was burning.

And Malcolm was throttling down the D.H., his eyes fixed on the burning Albatross.

He turned in his seat, cut the gun. "Where in hell did you learn to shoot that way?" he demanded of Willie. And Willie, who had wiped the blood off his mouth, drew himself up, fought down the pain in his stomach and spoke softly so as to escape the bubbling in his lungs.

"You don't learn—it's a gift!" he said. "That's what my instructor

used to say. Expert machine-gunners are born, not made. I kept trying to tell—everybody—I was an expert machine-gunner—only, I didn't look like one—so they—laughed at me.”

And the red tide Willie had known before surged up in his throat, choked him, and he was fighting the blackness again. Fighting in his moment of glory—for the blackness was not a part of the dream vision.

BUT the Fates were kind. They let him live his moment of glory. They let him live long enough for Malcolm to get him home, to be lifted out of the ship in Malcolm's arms and carried into the major's quarters and put down on the major's own cot. All the time, Willie was fighting to stand on his own feet, but no one knew it because Willie was fighting in his mind. His body had nothing left to fight with.

And the major listened to Lieutenant Malcolm, and then he looked down at Willie and he said:

“Confound it—I'll get him the Congressional Medal or I'll tear the War Department to pieces. He's a hero—the kind that is only born once in a lifetime—and we made fun of him.”

And there was a choke in the major's voice and pain in his eyes—and the master sergeant was standing at the major's elbow, and the master sergeant, a big, rough, tough two-hundred pounder, was crying. It

all seemed very unmilitary to Willie.

And Willie said, as he had dreamed of saying it a thousand times:

“It's nothing at all, sir—just—my—duty—” and the words died away to a whisper. Miraculously, the pain seemed to go out of his body, and the fire out of his stomach, and for the first time in months he felt a complete rest. He was sopping with it—and he sighed because it was so beautiful. He opened his eyes once more to look at Malcolm.

“You'll tell 'em—won't you, Lieutenant—that I was—I really was—an expert—machine-gunner?”

And Malcolm said, huskily: “I'll tell 'em, lad—and I'll beat the ears off all the guys who laughed at you before—with my own hands.”

“No, don't do that,” Willie said. “They just didn't know an expert—when they saw one.”

And he went to sleep.

Later, the major took up Willie Wilson's service record. It gave his name, place of enlistment, and rank: “Pvt.” The major put the record in his own typewriter with his own hands, and wrote:

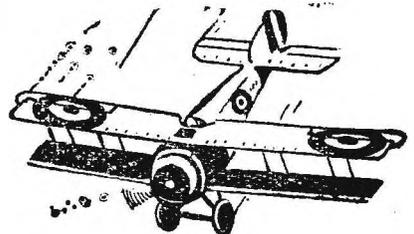
Promoted to Sergeant First Class, Machine-Gun Expert, October 9th, 1918. Recommended for Congressional Medal of Honor for extraordinary heroism above and beyond any call of his duty, for having shot down, in succession, four enemy airplanes during his first flight, and saving the life of his pilot, Lieutenant Malcolm, 9th O.B.S. Squadron.

*Next Month: A Gripping Novelette
of Skies Red with Flame*

TEN DAYS TO LIVE

By

GEORGE BRUCE



And Many Other Exciting Stories and Features

The Story of the Cover

By EUGENE M. FRANDZEN

THE Nieuport 17C1 had the qualities that a fighting scout must show to be in demand by fighting squadrons. The Allied pilots of France, Britain and the United States clamored for it because it had what a pilot depends on to down the enemy, quickness in maneuvering combined with a high speed. It was often spoken of as the "one and a half plane" because the lower wing was so narrow that it was barely an excuse to attach the V strut formation.

The Halberstadt CL2 was a two-seater fighter but not to be confused with the ordinary two-seater of the war skies, which usually had the lumbering qualities that made them easy pickings for scouts. The Halberstadts were in a class by themselves among German two-seaters. They had maneuverability comparable to a single seater with the advantage of the tail protection afforded by the observer's gun which had an exceptionally clear range of fire.

Career of Capt. Heurteaux

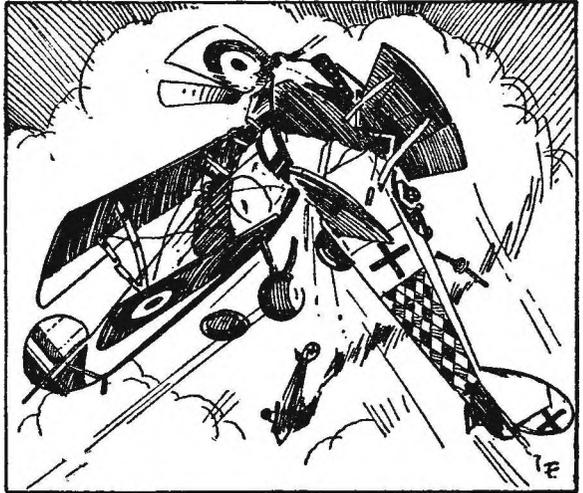
Capt. Heurteaux began his military career in Saint-Cyr, which is the French West Point, just in time for service in the cavalry at the beginning of the war. Later transferring to aviation in the famous Escadrille N. 3 (Nieuport 3), he gave proof of such skill that he was chosen Chief of the squadron by its former commander, Brocard, although Heurteaux held only the rank of lieutenant at the time. Heurteaux piled up a score of twenty-one victories in the exact space of one year to the day when he was so severely wounded on May 4, 1917, that it was a miracle that he could have survived.

Active hand-to-hand encounters with the enemy while in the cavalry, the dangerous period of training for aviation, observation duty in early bombing raids and then the actual air combats with enemy planes gave this French hero a miraculously long period of actual fighting, despite the fact that he was incapacitated for service during the last year and a half of the war.

Aviation Firsts and Lasts

Firsts in aviation usually are marked up to credit some aviator with performing an outstanding feat of skill which in some way advances the knowledge of aviation. Not so in the picture on the cover. Firsts, yes! But there are lasts also.

In the Nieuport's pit is a Frenchman on his first lone hunt for the foe. Likewise in the pilot's cubby in the Halberstadt is a new pilot with dreams of running up a



score equal to if not greater than Germany's first ranking ace. Such dreams have all men who go to battle high in the clouds.

Vickers and Spandau front guns burst into life simultaneously. The rear gunner in the German ship swivels his gun wildly to get in a burst at the attacking French ship. He yells to his pilot to swing the ship, spar for time, see what this Frenchman has in fighting ability. The German pilot shakes his head and crouches lower over his stick. Slugs are lacing through his whirling prop both ways. Vickers bullets whiz past his head. One nicks his shoulder and thuds into the observer's chest, knocking him down into the rear part of the double pit.

Man Against Man

The German pilot grits his teeth. Now it is man against man. Both ships are still separated by a considerable gap. But that gap is tightening at over 200 miles per hour. Both guns hammer continuous streams of killing lead. Head on, closer and closer roar the ships. Each pilot thinking that the other must swerve from his path, locks his hands tighter around his stick.

Then both become panic stricken, realizing that it is a stubborn stalemate. Both sticks are yanked back at once. Snarling propellers chew into each other. Wood and metal embrace with a thunderous roar. Locked together, with only the sound of rushing air moaning through the smashed structures, the planes carrying the shattered dreams of brave men, scream downward. Their first try for fame became their last!



FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND—EQUIPMENT

WELL, gang, you know all about finding your way when you have a railroad or other landmarks to follow. That's good stuff for short hops. But where an airplane really fits in, where it is really important, is on long hops. When you learn to fly you want to go places, not just poke around your own neighborhood. You might even want to take a look-see at what the North Pole looks like. Folks will be including that point in their sight-seeing trips pretty soon, provided they own a fur coat.

So, in order to get around without benefit of railroad tracks, we've got to

And in doing that we also have to bear in mind that a good airplane motor eats up more gasoline per hour than the average man would like to pay for. And so, to keep down expenses and save time he wants to go as straight from one place to the other as the flow cries—or the fly crows—or the crow flies. As straight as an arrow.

THE DANGER OF DRIFT

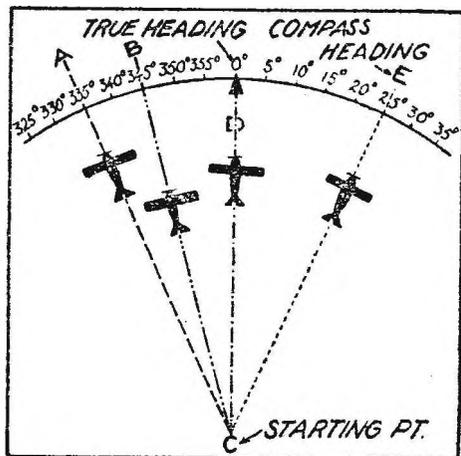
And in order to do this you have to compensate for a whole lot of errors and other things that come in to your calculations. You have to chart a course and figure the errors in advance, and keep on checking them as you go. And as evidence of what a difference it makes when you don't do that, take the following case:

Suppose the wind is on your side instead of directly ahead or behind you. Suppose it blows you off your course only ten degrees, or you have drift, which it is called, of ten degrees over a trip of a thousand miles long. In that drift caused by the wind you would be thrown off your course a hundred and eighty miles! You'd be lost. And you would have to fly more than an other hour to get to your destination, and besides that means burning an extra hour's supply of gasoline which would run into considerable unnecessary expense if you did a lot of flying.

THE ART OF NAVIGATION

All right. There are three ways of finding your way, or navigation, as the technical name for it is. They are dead reckoning, which is the simplest, radio, and regular astronomical navigation by getting your position from the sun and the stars, etc. The latter two methods are used in ocean and other long trips where there is a professional navigator along to do the work, because you can't tend to your flying and work out problems in navigation at the same time. There are plenty of us, as a matter of fact, that couldn't work them out very accurately even if we didn't have to attend to our flying.

At any rate, we're concerned right now with the simple method of dead reckoning. You're equipped with common sense enough to understand that or else you wouldn't have become flyers. Taken step



Charting corrections for Variation and Deviation. Desired direction Zero or North. Variation 10 degrees West, and Deviation 15 degrees West. Total error 25 degrees West. To correct you would steer 25 degrees East of Zero in order to fly toward Zero. C-A would be direction flown (Total West error) if no corrections were made. C-B direction-flown with error of Deviation not corrected. C-E is course on compass, 25 degrees East allowed to offset error. C-D or Zero direction wanted, true direction flown when compass reads 25 degrees. Thus the rule: Add degrees of West error to true course wanted, and subtract East error.

learn some more things about going places. We've got to be able to find our way through fog and over water and anywhere else we want to be without depending on landmarks.

by step it is easy enough to understand. So here goes.

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

You will find most of the gear you need is standard equipment in any ship. The compass and altimeter and air speed meter, and in the better ships a drift indicator built into the compass, or else a pelorus, which is just a dummy compass. We'll get to that in a minute. You will also find on the dashboard an inclinometer and fore and aft level. This combined gauge is just a pair of spirit levels which show you when the ship is level fore and aft and laterally, like an ordinary carpenter's level with liquid in a tube and a bubble in the liquid. The bubble travels right or left as it inclines from level.

We've already been introduced to the compass. Let's now get on intimate terms with it. The directions on an aerial com-

allowed for in all your calculations. It is called degrees East or West.

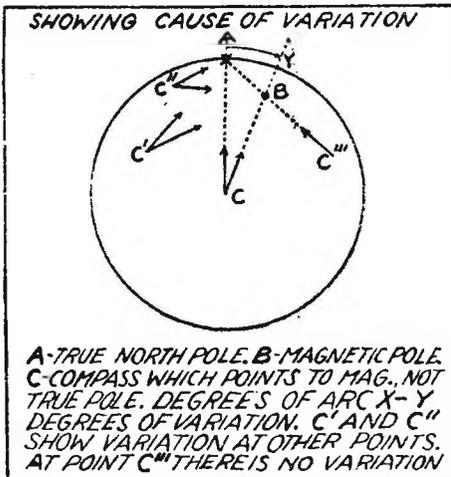
The second cause of error is that the magnet of the compass is also affected by the metal near it, the motor and the electricity generated—and this error is called Deviation. It is figured in degrees East or West.

ALLOWANCES FOR ERRORS

To get a true compass course, then, you have to make allowances for these errors. And to make allowances you have to know how much allowance to make. You can get the Variation from a chart, and make that allowance. And with this knowledge, you can figure the Deviation and correct as much of it as possible and then make allowance for the rest of it.

The correction and checking of the compass for deviation is called compensating the compass. It must be done before you start on your trip, and checked up at different times later.

To do this, you draw a big circle on the ground, big enough to surround your ship. Then you take a correct compass out and pit it squarely in the middle of the circle, and with that you mark true north, south, east and west and the intermediate points on the rim of the circle. In other words you have drawn a correct compass on the ground with true directions on it. Then you put the ship in the middle of it with the center axis of the ship on the central point of the figure on the ground, the ship headed due north by the ground direction.



pass are not called East and West, but are given in degrees, Zero for North 90 for East, 180 for South and 270 for West, and of course, 360 would be back at North again, or Zero, there being 360 degrees in a complete circle.

COMPASS VARIATION

But, due to errors of two types, a compass never points to true north. The north magnetic pole is not squarely at the north pole, but is south of it, so if you are not directly north or south of the magnetic pole the point of your compass will not point to the real north pole. Therefore, wherever you are, unless the two poles are in a direct line with each other from you, the compass point will be a few degrees away from pointing to the north pole. This varies according to where you are. There are charts for every position in the world which show how much this variance is. It is called Variation, and it has to be

ARRANGE THE MAGNETS

You will find, then, that the compass in your ship does not correspond to that reading, due to the deviation caused by the metal in the ship and the electricity generated while the motor is kept running, which it must be while you are doing this. In your compass there is a box or a block of wood with holes in it; in the holes little magnets which have an effect on the compass needle. You keep taking out some on one side and putting in on the other side until you have them arranged until the ship's compass also reads Zero, or north.

Now you turn the ship on its axis until it heads south. This changes the direction of the influences on the compass and it will again be out of kilter, having a few degrees of error. This time you correct it until you have overcome half its error, using the little magnets. Then so on all the way around the compass. Finally you will have it so that when the north direction is all right you can't reduce the errors in the other directions any more without throwing it off true Zero. You have done all you could. So you then make a record of the number of degrees the compass is still off at the points of 90 degrees, 135 degrees, 180, 225, 270, and 315 degrees.

DEVIATION CHART

Now you have two records, the constant Variation at your locality on the map, and

the deviation on your ship. The deviation chart will probably look something like this:

True Heading	Compass Heading	Deviation
Zero	355	5 East
180 (South)	185	5 West

Deviation in degrees, of course. The chart will have those for the whole compass instead of just two, of course. The chart above would mean, if you were flying 355 degrees by your compass you would really be flying due North or Zero. (Making no allowance for the other error, or variation.) And if you wanted to fly due south, or 180 degrees you would have to fly 185 degrees according to your compass. And so on.

CHARTING THE COURSE

Now, knowing our two errors, we want to fly to a place a thousand miles due south of us. Our true course on the map would be to fly in the direction of 180 degrees on the compass—if the compass were right. But it is wrong. However, we know just how much wrong it is, and therefore we can make allowance for that.

Let's chart our course, then. On the chart or map of the district we see that the Variation from the magnetic pole is ten degrees West. We see by the Deviation Chart we made for our own ship that our compass is also off six degrees west. Since both errors are west we add them together to get the total error of our compass, which is sixteen degrees west.

We know now, that if we head 180 degrees by our compass we will be flying actually sixteen degrees less, or in the direction of 164 degrees (sixteen less than the 180 we wanted.) So, to fly South, we add the 16 degrees error to our 180 reading and fly 196 degrees by our compass. We have made allowance for our errors and are actually flying due South as we wanted to go.

STUDY THE ILLUSTRATIONS

But suppose both the Variation and the Deviation were both East instead of West? By looking at the illustrations of this lesson, you can see that if the errors were both East, and totaled 16 degrees, and we flew 180 degrees by the compass we would be flying 180 degrees plus 16 degrees of error, or 196 degrees. So, we have to deduct the known error from our reading (180 minus 16 degrees) and set our course for 164 degrees on the compass.

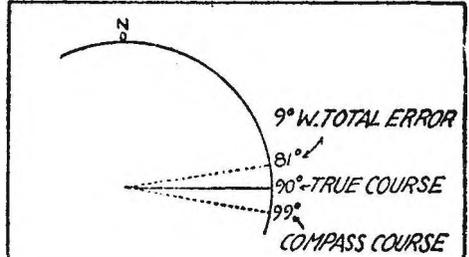
Then we'll actually be flying our 180 degrees.

Thus, since the degrees of a compass run from Zero to 160 clockwise from North to East to South to West, or from left to right, you add the total of error when it is West error and subtract it when it is East. And, of course, when one error is east and the other west, you subtract the smaller from the larger. Then you take the difference and add it to your course if the total error is West, and sub-

tract it from the course if it is East. Thus, Var. 20 W., Dev. 10 E. Total 10 W. added. Or, Course desired, 90 degrees (East). Var. 2 degrees East, Dev. seven W. 7 W. less 2 E. equals 5 W., total error. 90 degrees plus 5 degrees equal 95 degrees, compass course. See the accompanying diagram for more examples.

INFLUENCE OF THE WIND

That's the whole secret of the compass course, folks. That's the way you would

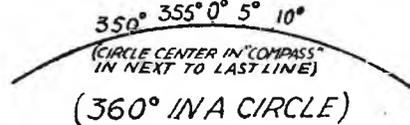


PROBLEM:

TRUE COURSE WANTED 90° E.
 DEV. 15° W. VAR. 6° E.
 TOTAL ERROR (15° W. - 6° E. = 9° W.)
 90° + 9° = 99° OR COMPASS COURSE

PROBLEM:

TRUE COURSE WANTED 354°
 DEV. 19° W. VAR. 7° E.



19° W. - 7° E. = 12° W
 354° (DEGREES WANTED) +
 12° (ADD W. ERROR) = 366°
 360° = N. OR ZERO. ZERO + 6
 = 6° OR COMPASS COURSE.
 (IF E. AND W. ERRORS ARE
 EQUAL THE COMPASS AND
 TRUE COURSE ARE SAME)

set your course if the air were perfectly still.

But the wind blows a little everywhere all the time.

So, next time, we'll learn how to make allowances for the sideways motion caused by the wind. In the meantime, study this lesson and figure out a few problems for yourself. It comes in handy to know, and it will add interest to your reading stories of great flights in which the flyers navigated their way to unknown places without landmarks.—BRUCE McALESTER,

HEROES ALL

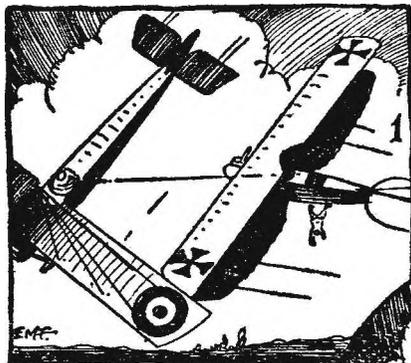


LEGION OF HONOR

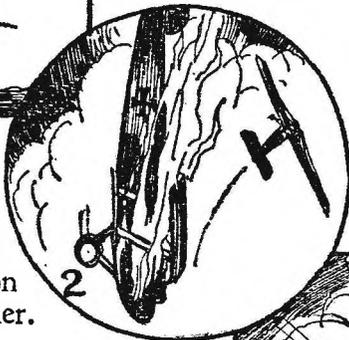
Official
Citation
of
CAPT.
GEORGES
GUYNEMER—
Légion
d'Honneur



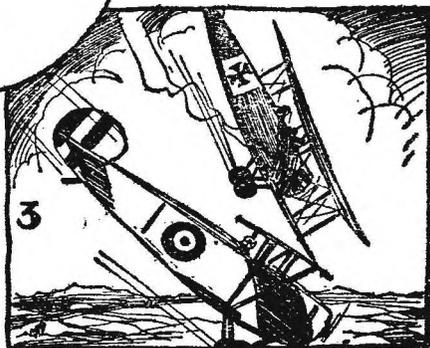
GEORGES GUYNEMER



2. He has proved his valor, energy and coolness by accomplishing as a volunteer an important and difficult mission during stormy weather.



3. He has not ceased giving the finest instances of boldness, courage and self-possession in carrying out the most perilous missions successfully. He has just succeeded for the second time on Dec. 8th, in beating down an enemy aeroplane, its two passengers being killed.



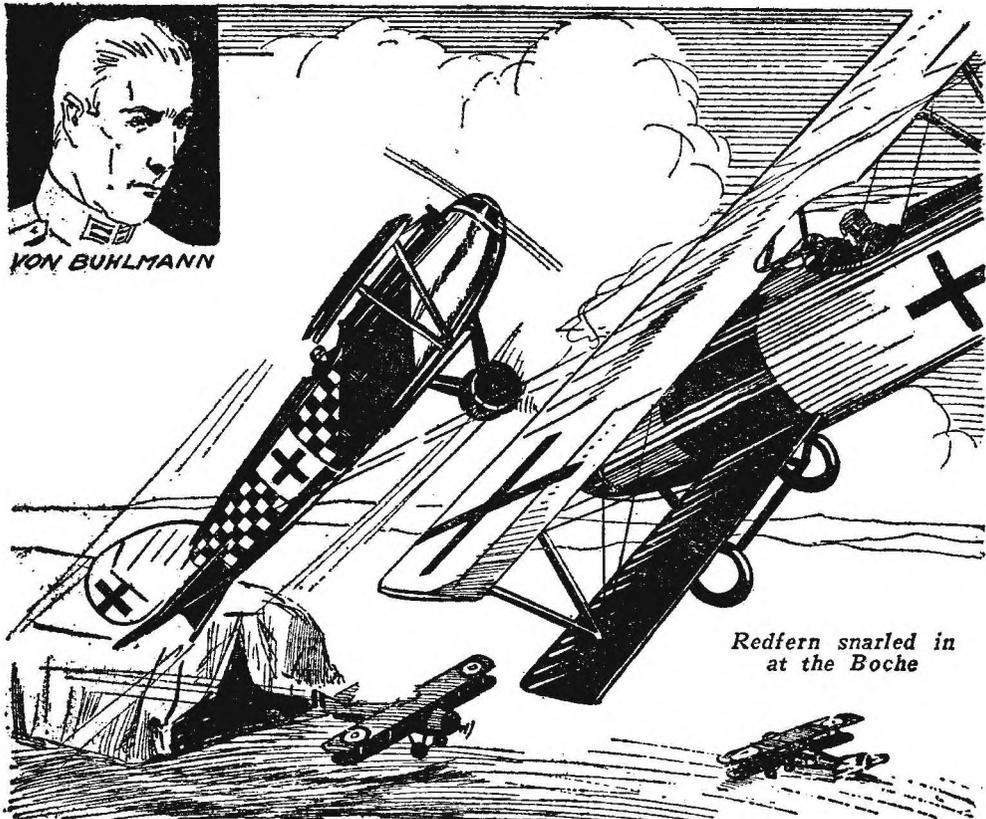
1. Pilot of Great Valor, filled with devotion and courage. Within six months he has carried out two missions requiring the finest spirit of sacrifice and taken part in thirteen combats in the air, of which two ended in burning and downfall of enemy aeroplanes.

Next Month:

MAJOR RAOUL
LUFBERY

American Flyer

Maniac Mission



Redfern snarled in at the Boche

Von Buhlmann, German Ace, Had Lieutenant Redfern Jinxed—and, Nerves Shattered, this Once Plucky Allied Fighter Planned to Give Up His Brilliant Career in the Skies!

By DARRELL JORDAN

Author of "Wings from the Grave," "The Purple Devils," etc.

FIRST LIEUTENANT HARRY REDFERN faced Major Boland across the battered desk in the 48th Squadron's dingy Operations Office. With a stony face he listened to the slow words that fell like the tolling of a death knell upon his churning mind. At last it had come, the thing he had been expecting and

dreading for days. Though his bronzed features clung to a stoical calm, chaotic thoughts reeled through his tired brain.

"I hate to say this, Redfern," Major Boland continued the inexorable sentences, "but my hand has been forced. I've watched you for days, watched you go out with offensive patrols,

only to return alone with full belts and shaky alibis. You've had a fine record up to now, and that's why I've postponed this interview as long as I possibly could.

"But there no longer appears to be the slightest doubt of your trouble. In short, Redfern, *Kapitan* von Buhlmann has your goat! You're afraid to face him! You're no longer an asset to this squadron. Lieutenant, your days as a fighting man are over!"

"I've faced von Buhlmann before," said Redfern in a choked voice.

"True," Boland nodded, "twice. And on both occasions the *Hauptmann* crashed you! I think I understand your case, Redfern. Von Buhlmann has a jinx on you. Your mind has built up a complex revolving about this one German, that unconsciously won't let you fight him again. In a way I can't blame you. But we're opposing von Buhlmann's outfit here, and a pilot who runs from him can't do us any good."

"You're leading up to something, Major," Redfern blurted in that instant of dead silence. "Let's get the thing over with."

BOLAND suddenly ceased his nervous toying with the mass of reports before him and cleared his throat. He was manifestly ill-at-ease, and had the man facing him not been blinded by his mingled emotions, he might have seen that each word was an effort for the C.O.

"It means," came Boland's tense words at length, "washout for you, Redfern!"

"Blois?" Redfern whispered the word, that name for the final destination of broken officers.

Boland nodded, and buried his face in a handful of papers as Redfern stumbled blindly from the office.

As Redfern strode unsteadily across the tarmac an inner voice repeated again, hatefully, certain thoughts that had hammered at his tortured brain

for weeks. Boland was right; the charges were true. It was a fact that his nerve was gone, that those two crashes after hectic encounters with von Buhlmann had been the final straw needed to crack his war-weary courage.

For weeks he had dreamed of von Buhlmann's dark, snarling face, the tiny orifices of his twin Spandaus spitting spiteful scarlet flashes. Flashes that had meant two washed-out Spads for Redfern, searing bursts of steel-clad death that had shattered the Yank's nerve and, at last, his war record.

As he traversed the hundred yards that lay between the Operations Office and the tiny squadron field hospital, a desperate plan flashed into his mind. A plan that had lain dormant there for days, hourly growing in resolve. At first the thing had appalled him, but gradually the enormity had lessened until his twisted brain could see no other course.

But he couldn't leave before seeing Chalmers again: Chalmers, who had trained with him, fought and binged with him for eight long months. And now Chalmers was strapped to a hospital cot, with a broken leg and bullet-drilled shoulder garnered from a lively dusk patrol two days previous.

Redfern stood looking down at Chalmers' pale face, and a grudging envy stole over him. Battered and bruised though he was, Chalmers' spirit was unbroken. It was plainly revealed in the eager light that flashed in the sunken blue eyes.

"Don't look so damned glum," the wounded man chafed. "Hell, I'm not half finished yet! In a couple weeks I'll be back up there, cuffing Jerry around like nobody's business!"

Redfern stared at him blankly. "Sure you will, Spud, and good luck to you. You know, you're a lucky bird at that. But that isn't what I stopped in to say. Just remember this, Spud, will you? No matter what you

hear about me, don't—well, don't think too tough of me, will you? So long, and happy landings!"

Chalmers stared at Redfern's disappearing back with brows furrowed in bewilderment.

"The guy sounds goofy! Something's biting him; now I wonder—"

Redfern walked straight to the hangars and ordered his ship warmed. He thought there was a shade of insolent contempt in the leisurely manner in which the ground sergeant prepared the Spad.

"I've earned it," he muttered bitterly. "Just another guy who's turned yellow and is taking the easiest way out!"

He was in the pit and revving up the twin-banked Hispano when he saw Boland hurrying toward the hangar. The C. O.'s shouted words were inaudible above the roar of the straining Hisso, but his waved arms carried an unmistakable order.

"Wait?" snarled Redfern. "Like hell I'll wait! The war's all yours, Major Boland. You can run it without my help from now on!"

WITH a savage movement he cuffed the throttle wide. The Spad's tail flipped up as the trim little pursuit job scurried across the tarmac. Another movement, and the afternoon air was flung back by the whistling prop in a surge of grateful coolness against Redfern's burning face.

Lieutenant Harry Redfern was deserting. At last the desperate plan he had rejected for days was being put into effect.

He'd fly to Le Bourget, where he had a friend who was under heavy obligations, and who would arrange to smuggle him aboard some tramp ship sailing for South America or an equally distant destination. He felt sure the thing could be done. He'd even suggested the matter to the fellow on his recent Paris leave, and a tentative plan had been evolved. Once

past the field officer at Le Bourget, the rest should be easy.

Redfern jerked his attention back to the present with a start. He leaned overside and cursed as he caught sight of the familiar parallel slashes in the gutted brown earth. Subconsciously, from force of habit, he had flown toward the lines, over the same route that his daily patrol ordinarily led him.

Cold sweat broke out on Redfern's face. Of all the hare-brained things to do, now of all times! He whirled the Spad about swiftly, casting a fugitive glance around the sky. Thank heaven it was empty of E. A.

But was it? What were those three tiny dots hurtling down from that cumulus cloud? He watched, his heart choking in his throat. With the inexorable swiftness of doom the dots grew larger, sprouted wings. And upon those wings the last rays of the setting sun suddenly picked out the familiar ominous black crosses of Germany!

Again the jinx settled upon the Yank as hysterically he batted the throttle against the quadrant post for an extra ounce of power. But the Hisso was already doing its best, and the three Albatrosses, with the added momentum of their screaming power dive, were gaining like falcons swooping down on a fluttering dove.

The grinning specter of Death perched then upon Redfern's engine cowling, leering back at him knowingly. The leading Albatross flashed across the Spad's nose in a perfectly timed maneuver to cut the Allied ship off from its own territory. The two others came boring in and the Spadau tips glowed cherry red. *Tac-tac-tac!* A short, skillful burst zipped down through the Spad's center section, marking out a neat pattern of tiny round holes.

Instinctively, his muscles acting without seeming volition, Redfern thrust the Spad into a sideslip,

wrenched out of it into a *vrille*. His hand shot out to the charging handle, worked it automatically.

The Vickers chattered briefly as Redfern warmed the oil with a short burst. He sensed dimly that one of the Albatrosses was beneath him, swinging into position for a shot. Redfern rolled the spad out of the *vrille* upon its back, gunned the Hisso full on and shot into a vertical dive. For a split-second of eternity, the following Boche was caught flatfooted. To avoid what seemed like sure collision the German straightened and loomed gigantic in the cross-hairs of the Aldis sight.

The Spad's Vickers raved again, viciously. The Albatross flopped its graceful, fish-shaped fuselage bottom side up, then lurched into the first sickening swirl of a spin. A thin, growing plume of smoke trailed back behind it.

A MOMENTARY flash of exultation came to Redfern that disappeared as a handful of Spandau slugs splattered the cockpit, smashed the instrument board into shattered fragments, and pinged vengefully against the firewall. A darting lance of flame needled through Redfern's hip, wiping out for a second the whole field of his vision in a welter of pain.

Then the first shock passed and again the Spad was battering, like a rat at bay, at the elusive shapes of its enemies. In that first darting encounter, Redfern had seen that his attackers were from von Buhlmann's *Staffel*. The green-nosed ships, with fuselages striped with broad bands of orange, proved that. But the familiar black pennons of command were missing, and Redfern knew von Buhlmann was not present.

Against the brightly painted Boche ships, the khaki-colored Spad seemed a drab, lifeless thing as it turned and twisted desperately. But the Huns were wary now, coldly efficient as

they set about their task of wiping out this lone Yank. Again and again Redfern flung the Spad in berserk random at one or the other black-crossed ships, only to have it lightly avoid the twin penciling of tracer as its mate hailed leaden death upon the harried foe.

The Yank swept the surrounding sky with agonized gaze. If only an Allied flight would appear—but the heavens remained coldly empty. Sweat mingled with blood and oil splatters upon his distorted face as he fought on with increasing feebleness. The Boche seemed to sense their approaching, for they pressed in more boldly, like wolves who at last see the dying quarry at bay. And, enveloped in a dim haze of pain and exhaustion, Redfern handled the controls and triggers through seconds that were in themselves eternities.

The end came with sickening abruptness. An Albatross lunged upon the Spad's tail vindictively, just as Redfern rolled twice and shrieked in at the other Hun. Two pairs of guns spoke in long, stuttering bursts, bursts that marked the end.

The Vickers clattered until the end of the belt shuttled through the breeches. Oblivious to the torrent of death that was creeping toward his back, Redfern saw his antagonist lurch and the Albatross' nose flung up in a stall. For a breathless moment the black-crossed bus hung motionless as its pilot turned a blood-smeared, contorted face back toward his conqueror.

But Redfern didn't see his last victim crash. For at that instant something smashed through his shoulder, another blow banged his head against the tattered instrument board, and his senses disappeared in an all-enveloping wave of blackness. Satisfied that his enemy was doomed, and too nervous and shaken to remain longer in Allied air, the lone Hun whirled to disappear in the northwest.

Redfern had accomplished one thing in that shambles; he had held the Huns from forcing him into their territory. Briefly the gods of war seemed to favor him, for the battered Spad did not spin, but fell instead into a shallow glide that the American's feet, braced against the rudder bar, held. He had slouched down in his seat instead of slumping over the stick; and, bare hundreds of feet from the ground, consciousness began to struggle back to him.

An icy blast of air smote his face, and reason reasserted itself. Below him in the gathering dusk he could make out the crumbling mass of an ancient stone building, bordered by generous stretches of weed-grown lawn. It might be a dream, but he summoned the last of his strength for the landing.

The wheels struck heavily and the Spad bounced. One wing was low as the ship sagged again. It hooked into the grassy sward, swinging the pursuit job in a dizzy ground loop. The prop dug in with a snapping crackle, the Hisso screeched a final protest as the tail swept up and over. In the heart of the debris, Redfern felt himself sinking in a bottomless void.

HARRY REDFERN groaned as the midnight lightened, then was wretchedly nauseated. He was dimly conscious of a bearded form bending over him, then the Stygian darkness engulfed him once more.

A vagrant beam of sunlight filtered through the wide windows of a high-ceilinged room and played across Redfern's bandaged face. His vision whirled for a moment as he opened his eyes, finally steadied.

"The squadron hospital," he muttered, and knew as he spoke that he was wrong. This room was not the hospital, and the bearded Frenchman who suddenly entered certainly was not the M. O. Full remembrance rushed back to the battered Yank

then. The fight, the grey stone chateau, the grassy lawn, and finally, the crash. The bitter irony of the whole episode crushed him for a moment. He'd planned to desert, *had* deserted, only to fall victim to von Buhlmann's Albatrosses on the eve of his success. And now—what?

"You feel better now, *mon ami*?" asked the Frenchman.

Redfern looked up into a determined, bearded face from which gleamed indomitable black eyes.

"Yeah, much better." He struggled to a sitting position, fought back a wave of dizziness, and looked questioningly at the Frenchman. Aside from a dull ache in his side, and a smarting scalp, he felt almost normal.

"I am Marquis de Beauchamp," stated the little Frenchman. "You are in the chateau which has been the ancestral home of the Beauchamps for centuries. You will recall you crashed in my lawn. I pulled you from the wreckage of the plane, and as I happen to have considerable medical knowledge, I was able to attend to your wounds. If you're sure you're feeling better now, there is something I have to do."

De Beauchamp picked a syringe filled with a colorless liquid from a table and reached for Redfern's arm. The Yank asked no questions as the marquis injected the liquid into his wrist.

"Now suppose we have a little talk," de Beauchamp said quietly. "You are acquainted with the Hun, *Hauptmann* von Buhlmann?"

The color drained from Redfern's startled face. "How did you know that?"

"It has now been three days since your crash," the Frenchman returned steadily, "and much of that time you have been—what do you say, delirious? You talked, *oui*. And of many things!"

"Then you know," said Redfern hoarsely, "you know what I—"

"I know what you were planning to do," the other nodded. "I know you intended to desert, and that von Buhlmann had something to do with that decision."

"Then what are you waiting for?" snarled Redfern. "I'm already posted as a deserter! Why don't you turn me over to the American provost authorities?"

The answer was soft, almost a whisper. "Because I have great plans for you, *mon ami!* I feel you can help me! In return for the care I have given you—you must realize I saved your life—I feel you will be willing to return the favor."

"I'll listen," muttered the American. "I've got no choice!"

"We must go back away into ancient history," de Beauchamp murmured, turning to pace the room. "Back to the feud that has existed for a hundred years between the de Beauchamps and the von Buhlmann family. How it started is unimportant now. *Monsieur*, I had four sons two years ago. Two fell at Verdun, and the others—Pierre and Robert were pilots of the *Cicognes*. A year ago they were stationed at the same drome which is now occupied by your own squadron. Opposite was von Buhlmann's *Staffel*.

To be brief, von Buhlmann hunted my sons down, laid for them, ambushed each of them. Now they're gone. After each death he sent me taunting messages of insult. As Frederic von Buhlmann is now the last of his family, so am I the last of the de Beauchamps. If I die first, you comprehend, *mon ami*, the von Buhlmanns win!"

"All this is leading somewhere," said Redfern. "To what?"

"Just this." The marquis leaned forward and lowered his voice. "I want you to avenge me!"

The American's jaw sagged. "You mean—"

"Exactly. I want you to kill *Hauptmann* von Buhlmann! Consider, my

friend, that I am an old and broken man. There is a war in progress. What possible chance have I to avenge my two sons except by proxy? But it is different with you. You are young, and a flyer. You can meet von Buhlmann in his own element!"

"You're crazy!" Redfern cried hoarsely. "In the first place, I have no ship."

De Beauchamps smiled. "That I can arrange. When Pierre was shot down by the *Hauptmann*, he managed to land here, much as you did, except that his plane was not damaged. I hid it, kept its existence a secret from the authorities. That ship is waiting for you!"

"And what assurance have you that, once away from here, I'll carry out this mad bargain?" Redfern asked derisively. "What's to prevent me from heading for Paris in accordance with my original plan?"

A dark smile crossed the Frenchman's face.

"I am not entirely a fool. You will recall that a few moments ago I injected a liquid into your arm? In twenty-four hours that liquid will turn you into a raving maniac. It is a drug well known in medical circles, but the antidote that will counteract it is not so well known. I doubt if there is any of it in France.

"But I have a supply, and it is yours, if, within twenty-four hours, you return here and show me the laughing skull insignia of Frederic von Buhlmann, cut from his plane. That will be the proof, *Monsieur*—and that is my proposition."

"You are a devil!" gasped Redfern. Darkness whirled before his eyes. "But I accept your terms!"

AS the first shades of dusk settled down over the Neuville sector, Redfern sat in the pit of a cocarded Spad which thundered toward the lines. De Beauchamps had produced the Spad from its hiding place, a spa-

cious building that had once been a stable.

Again and again the Yank told himself that the whole thing had been a ghastly nightmare, that the Frenchman was mad, and that he, Redfern, was a fool not to turn toward Paris. But each time he swung the Spad's nose toward the back areas, that warning of de Beauchamps flashed through his mind:

"In twenty-four hours you will be a raving maniac!"

Was it only imagination, or did he already feel the fiery tongue of the drug racing through his veins? Cold sweat beaded the American's face as he resumed his former course.

There was still a chance, he told himself. He was well acquainted with the location of von Buhlmann's drome. Suppose he were able to land nearby, and under cover of darkness creep to the hangars. If he could find the German's Albatross, it would be only the work of a second to slash loose the insignia that de Beauchamps coveted. That was it; that was the only way.

A shadowy forest slid beneath his wings. A few miles to the north lay the Boche field, and any place that offered room for a landing was now his goal. Suddenly he saw the spot he wanted. The stick shot forward and the Spad nosed downward.

So engrossed was Redfern in his approaching landing that the four ghostly shadows that flitted into position behind him went unnoticed. Then a staccato clatter stabbed through even the high pitched whine of the Hisso. A delicate tracery of tiny holes magically appeared on the Spad's left wing, to creep inexorably toward the cockpit. With a startled oath the Yank glanced back, back into the winking muzzles of four pairs of Spandaus.

As the steel-shod hail of death plummeted down, Redfern made one desperate effort to turn, to fight his way clear. But even as the Spad's nose

rose in the first maneuver, the Hisso, cylinders clogged with gases from the glide, coughed, spat, and died! The Spad came within a hair's breadth of stalling into a spin.

Redfern frantically dove his ship, striving to spin that slowly failing prop. But he was too near the ground; there was no time. And steadily the pursuing Albatrosses drowned the cocarded ship with torrents of hissing lead.

Only the growing darkness kept the bursts from riddling Redfern; then he became aware that the Germans, seeing his helplessness, had ceased firing. The dark earth swam up to meet him as the Spad's trucks crashed down. Redfern's head slammed against the crash pad and a deeper gloom momentarily enveloped his brain.

WHEN his head cleared the Spad was surrounded by a squad of chattering, grey-clad infantrymen. With businesslike precision they dragged him from the cockpit, hustled him swiftly across a strip of woodland to a larger, busier field. The four Albatrosses were slanting in for their landing as Redfern was marched to face a dark-featured, hawk-nosed Prussian whose uniform bore the insignia of a *Hauptmann*. *Kapitan* von Buhlmann!

The German stood impatiently slapping his gleaming boots with a swagger stick as Redfern was halted before him. The American felt all his old dread of the man surge over him as von Buhlmann turned a piercing pair of black eyes upon him. But the *Hauptmann* hardly favored him with a glance as the *Feldwebel* in charge of the guard poured out a flood of explanations.

"Ja," von Buhlmann snapped at last, "lock the *Schwein* in the storeroom back of my quarters. I will question him later. At present there are more important matters."

"Danke, Herr *Kapitan*," replied the

Unteroffizier. Then, to Redfern, "Vorwaerts!"

In the gloom of the small square room, with a sentry pacing to and fro outside, the full significance of his plight swept over the Yank. This was the end. No hope now of returning to de Beauchamps before those fatal twenty-four hours were gone. Oddly, a kind of fatalism came to Redfern then, and he sat down to face the finish with a stoical calm.

He was aroused by heavy boots thudding upon the floor of the adjoining room. He heard von Buhlmann's harsh voice and the respectful answers of two other officers.

"This must be thoroughly understood," the *Hauptmann* was saying, "for tonight I even two scores. First, with the *verdammte* Yankee 48th Squadron, and lastly, with an old enemy of mine!"

AT the mention of 48, Redfern snapped to his feet. 48, his own outfit! He slid to the connecting door and pressed his ear to the keyhole. Either von Buhlmann, in the midst of his greater affairs, had forgotten Redfern, or else he was confident that the American could not understand German. At any rate, he made no effort to speak quietly.

"The decoy flight—that has been arranged?" queried another voice.

"Ja. They will fly first, cross south of the drome of the 48th, shamming an attack at the munition dump at Thierry. When the news reaches them, the Yankee squadron will naturally take the air to protect the dump, as they are the nearest pursuit unit. By the time they have left on their futile errand, we will arrive, bomb every hangar and building on the field! *Ach*, so I will repay the *Schwein* for that time a week ago when they strafed this field!"

"But you said you would not be with us!" the other exclaimed.

"*Das ist richtig*," von Buhlmann

boomed in reply. "As soon as we cross the lines I shall take two ships and fly on a little bombing flight of my own. And when I return, the von Buhlmann-de Beauchamp feud will be finished! Now, see to it that the bomb racks are filled, and the ships prepared. We take off in ten minutes!"

As Redfern straightened, his brain, whirling, the Huns tramped from the other room. In another moment the barking thunder of Mercedes motors filled the night as, one by one, ships were started warming up. Redfern swung to inspect his prison, heart thumping as a mad plan flashed through his brain.

The room in which he was locked was evidently used by the *Hauptmann* as a storeroom for personal property. Several uniforms hung upon the wall, with a greasy helmet and a pair of cracked, discarded goggles. On a shelf was a scattered assortment of office supplies, ink bottles, pens and report forms. Redfern's eye lighted on a bottle of red ink and for a moment he stared at it thoughtfully. The next moment he seized it and hurried to the outside door. Just beyond the barrier he could hear the measured tread of the sentry.

Noiselessly, Redfern opened the bottle and poured its scarlet contents on the floor at the threshold. In the gloom the ink made a dark, ominous stream as it oozed under the door. At the same moment the American flung himself to the floor, uttering a strangled groan which he allowed to trail off into a gasping cough.

Outside, the guard's pacing came to an abrupt halt. Redfern heard his startled "*Was ist das!*" He could sense the fellow bending to peer at the scarlet liquid seeping beneath the door. The lock grated and a saw-edged bayonet, followed by a helmeted head, poked through the opened door. One amazed glance of Redfern's prone figure and the Boche bent over gingerly.

Instantly two steely hands shot up,

clamped about the burly Hun's throat. One choked gasp, then silence, save for the muffled thuds of bodies locked in mortal combat.

The guard was heavy and powerful, a full fifty pounds heavier than the lean American. Yet Redfern's muscles were swelled by his desperate resolve and he fought like a madman. In a space of seconds he arose from the German's prostrate body and peered cautiously from the door. In the confusion and the thunder of warming engines, the brief scuffle seemed to have passed unnoticed.

Redfern closed the door and jerked one of the uniforms from the wall. No time to change; he drew the tunic on over his own. The helmet and goggles followed. It would be hard to penetrate that disguise in the darkness. As noiselessly as a wraith, the Yank slipped through the door and edged his way toward the tarmac.

A DOZEN or fifteen Albatrosses stood on the line as mechanics completed last-minute checkings. The American noted the demolition bombs snuggled in the racks beneath the sleek fuselages. For a moment he paused in the shadow of a hangar, indecision gripping his mind. Most of the pilots were already lounging beside their ships, but a few had not yet appeared.

At the sound of approaching voices, Redfern shrank deeper into the shadow. Two pilots appeared, swinging their helmets and talking. They halted not ten feet from the hangar as Redfern waited, his heart in his mouth.

Suddenly one of the Germans uttered an exclamation of annoyance, turned and ran back the way he had come. The other went on toward the ships. Somewhere a whistle shrilled; guttural voices barked orders. The tardy pilot appeared on the run. As he lunged into the strip of shadow that extended from the corner of the

hangar, Redfern made his supreme bid for escape.

He swung solidly in front of the hurrying Hun, and his right fist swept up with pile-driver force. The impetus of his victim's run doubled the weight of the blow. Something cracked, horribly, and the German flyer slumped without a sound. In the same breath of time Redfern was loping toward the ships, goggles and helmet covering his face.

Only one Albatross was without its pilot now, and Redfern ran up, scrambled into the cockpit with a brassy German voice bellowing oaths at his tardiness. The next second the flight rolled forward, to the accompaniment of a mighty thunder of surging motors.

Redfern found the controls of the Albatross awkward and unfamiliar, and the ship wobbled as he pulled it into the air. But in a few moments he had felt out the strange craft until he felt confident of his ability to handle it skillfully.

Von Buhlmann led his armada skyward in great sweeping circles. When at length the flight gunned toward the Allied lines, they were flying too high for Archie to trouble them. As he flew Redfern strove to find an answer to his problem. At last he nodded slowly. When the lines had been crossed, and von Buhlmann and his two-ship patrol turned aside for their murderous bombing attack on de Beauchamps' chateau, he would turn also, follow them. By a surprise attack he might be able to turn them back, save the chateau and—the antidote.

The parallel gashes in the earth that marked the trenches flowed slowly behind them, and the droning planes roared on deeper into Allied territory. In a few seconds now von Buhlmann would be turning aside. Then Redfern saw them, three ships swinging away from the main flight, edging toward the north. And in that blazing

second of thought, two pictures flashed through his churning brain—de Beauchamps, who had given four sons to France, and who still had only the thought of fighting his ancient foe to the end. And the other, brighter picture—the deserted, defenseless drome of 48th Squadron—and Spud Chalmers lying helplessly on his back in that gloomy hospital. When the bombs began to fall, if the hospital should be hit—

In that instant Redfern got a clear vision of his own acts of the past few weeks. Von Buhlmann had had him buffaloed, had turned him yellow. If he flew on toward the 48th's drome, it meant that his last chance for life was gone, for with that drug churning in his veins—he again remembered de Beauchamps' prediction. But this way held a chance partly to repay the squadron and Major Boland for the manner in which he had let them down.

WITH a clear idea of what his decision meant, Redfern flew on.

A mile ahead, the broad tarmac showed bright and cold in the soft moonlight. Thirty seconds more, and the bombs would be dropping. Redfern kicked left rudder and whirled the Albatross sharply at the Hun nearest him. The twin Spandaus blasted their sparkling gutters of flame into the gloom. The Hun turned a transfixed face to stare blankly at Redfern; then his ship spouted orange splashes of flame and smoke. The Albatross slid off on a wing, went screaming earthward.

Like a maniac, Redfern was in the midst of that Boche flight, guns spouting a scalding stream. Another Hun plummeted to his doom as his companions milled in mad confusion. The Yank knew he must work fast, for once the Huns recovered from their momentary panic, once they spotted the number of the berserk plane, then the end would come swiftly.

But if he could hold them back for minutes only, there was a chance that Major Boland's decoyed squadron would return from its futile errand. And Redfern bored in, crouched behind two stuttering engines of destruction, and squinted oil-spattered eyes through the ring-sights.

If the Huns had divided their numbers, sent half on for the bombing, and blasted Redfern down with the remainder, their mission could still have been accomplished. But filled with towering fury at this traitorous Albatross, each Hun wanted to be the one to crash it.

Redfern snarled in at a Boche and the fellow whirled aside. Another black-crossed ship whipped in a violent bank to escape, skidded, locked wings with the first German in a flat deadly crash. Like two monsters clasped in a macabre embrace, the doomed wrecks swirled downward.

Lead pattered behind Redfern. A numbing blow jerked his leg from the rudder, and his helmet flew off as the strap was clipped by a scorching Spandau slug. The Albatross' altimeter disappeared with a crash as bullets screeched against the firewall. Redfern whipped an agonized glance back over his shoulder, cursed as he spotted two winking glitters of flame. At last they had him spotted; that Albatross was on his tail like a leech.

In that one split-second, Redfern found time to be aware of one amazing thing. The jinx was gone! The old exultation was back again, and he knew he could have faced even von Buhlmann at this moment, if the *Hauptmann* had been in the fight. If crash he himself did, and surely he must, he could ride those few brief seconds down to the earth with all the old unnerving fear behind him!

From that moment on, he concentrated every nerve on the Nemesis behind him. He did not know even when Major Boland, with ten Spads behind him, came roaring into the remnants

of the scrap. Only a dim wonder why just this one Hun snarled at him; that was all.

Rolls, renversements, loops and breath-stopping dives; every maneuver known and some invented in the heat of that hectic struggle, he tried. Ears became dead to everything except the pulsing scream of motors and clatter of guns. Eyes only squinting endlessly through indistinct sights.

Blood had formed a little pool at Redfern's feet and his bloodshot eyes peered from a mask of oil and powder stains. But a happy grin split his face, and his touch on rudder and stick was firm and true.

The end came when the German skidded in a too-steep bank. Like a swooping falcon, Redfern closed in. The Spandaus chattered their final song, and the last cartridge case tinkled overside. The black-crossed ship flung its prop skyward like a wing-shot bird. Then it fell with a dismal wail of wind and vibrating wires.

REDFERN never remembered that landing. Nor did he remember being stretched on a bed next to Spud Chalmers. But it was there he found himself when dawn peered through the window, and Major Boland was smiling down at him.

"You've been doing a lot of talking, Redfern, about some frog named de Beauchamps. And I wonder if what we saw on our way back from the wild-goose chase that the Huns gave us ties up with it?"

"What was that?" Redfern asked hoarsely.

"You remember the old chateau near Les Chemes? We saw tonight

that it had been bombed. In fact, three Boche ships were just pulling away. After we cleaned up here, one of the fellows went back. An old Frenchman lay on the lawn where a bomb fragment got him. He had this note clutched in his hand, and the funny thing about it is, it's addressed to you!"

Redfern silently took the note from Boland's hand and opened it.

Monsieur le Leutnant Redfern:

The Boche are coming; I can hear the motors in the distance. But do not worry about the drug. That was only a trick on my part. The liquid I injected into your arm was nothing but water. So you see, I trusted you after all!

Marquis de Beauchamps.

Redfern smiled softly. "He wanted von Buhlmann to go first, but I failed him after all. Because von Buhlmann still lives!"

Boland stared blankly. "I don't get this. Von Buhlmann alive? Well, hardly! Man, didn't you know that von Buhlmann was piloting that Albatross you were scrapping when we broke into the dog-fight? We identified his body after he crashed. I suppose the fact that his ship flew no streamers fooled you. But I guess von Buhlmann decided, like a lot of the rest of the German leaders, that pennons attract too much attention!"

"Then what about me?" Redfern demanded. "The charges—desertion, and all the rest."

Boland slammed his fist into an open palm.

"Listen, Redfern! I don't know everything that's happened with you, and I don't want to. All I know is you've licked the jinx! And that's enough for me!"

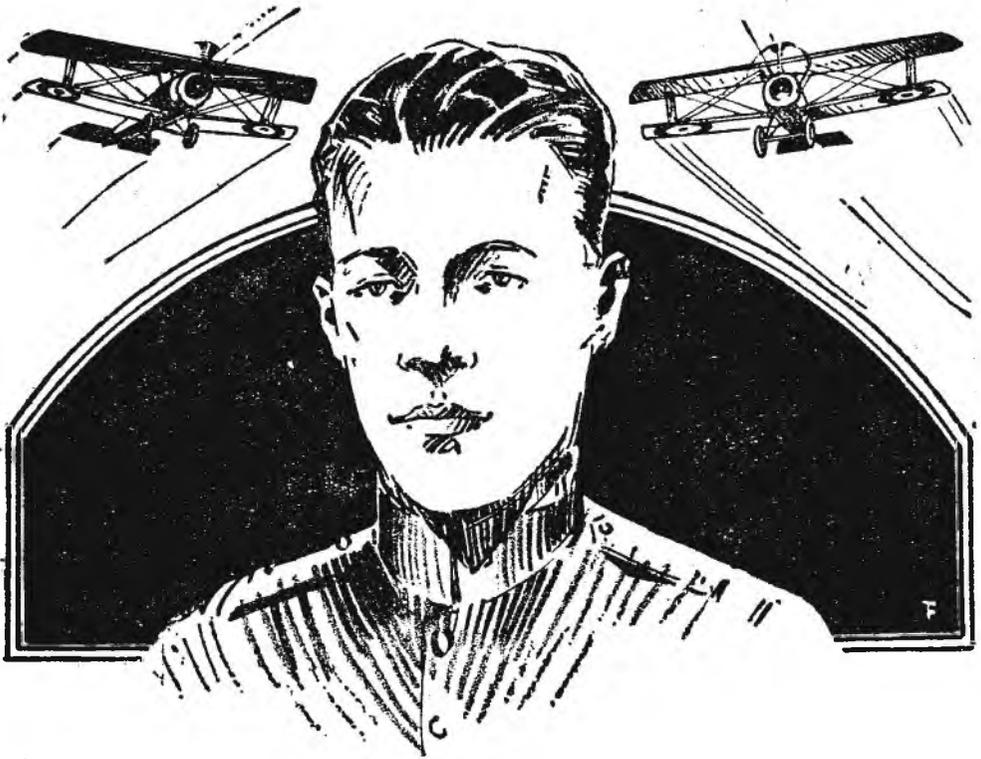
Hi, Buddy! You're Invited to Become a Member of

THE LONE EAGLES OF AMERICA

Join Now! There's a Coupon on Page 125

**Missing
page 105**

**Missing
page 105**



Lieut. Kenneth MacLeish

"Thanks," was all he said, but his clasp on his friend's hand told the true warmth of his appreciation.

Ingalls returned to his formation and Kenneth MacLeish, when he was not assigned to testing out new ships, resumed the drudgery of teaching advanced pupils the art of aerobatics. His test flights began to attract attention the following afternoon. By noon of the second day, he had received a warning from the C.O. to be more careful.

A Startling Event

That afternoon, the colonel was entertaining the gentry of the neighborhood at what was known as "high tea." Not only was the curate of the post church present, but a bishop as well, resplendent in episcopal gaiters

and shovel hat. The colonel buzzed from one group to another, taking tea with one, Scotch with a second and rum neat with the third. The dangers of the air, especially aerobatics, were frequently discussed.

"Really is dangerous, you know," the colonel admitted. "But you should jolly well see—"

The mighty roar of an aerial monster broke in upon his words. The guests at the "high tea" looked skyward to see a Sopwith Camel shooting down at the garden, directly at them. The motor was wide open, belching like a thing gone mad. The curate took one glance and dove under a tea table. The bishop flitted toward the house with more speed than dignity. The colonel stood transfixed. First his gills turned a vio-

A TRUE STORY of the WORLD WAR

lent purple. Then the blood ebbed and they were a light apple green.

Madman Tactics!

"Orderly—orderly," he shrilled, outraged. "Tell that madman to go away from here." He gestured at the swiftly diving Camel.

The man started on the run for the gate leading to the dugouts. He had no way of climbing into the air to carry out the colonel's orders, so he merely faded as rapidly as possible. Shrieks rose from the women visitors as the plane dropped, nose down. The messmen detailed as waiters tossed their trays into the rose bushes and departed. The colonel used language that burned the air. Then, with a roar, the Camel zoomed.

"Who is that idiot?" the C.O. demanded of a patent-leather adjutant.

"MacLeish, sir."

"That American—"

"You might have known it was an American, Colonel," the curate popped his head from beneath a tea table to observe.

"Yes, sir—the one who wants a transfer," the adjutant explained. "I believe you refused—"

Breathless Moments

The rest of the man's words were swallowed by the demoniacal roar of an over-sauced engine. The Camel was dropping again, shooting straight for the roof of the colonel's quarters. Every indication pointed to the fact that it would strike and not stop until it reached the drawing room. The pale faces of frantic batmen appeared at the windows. The colonel raised his walking stick as though in defense. His face was apple green, mottled with purple spots.

A mighty bellow and the aviator spun his wheels on the colonel's roof. He zoomed, then sideslipped as though he were coming down for tea. Shouts brought a platoon of guards and rifles were raised, threatening

the aviator. A wave of the pilot's hand and the machine circled. Then the engine was cut and it glided once more toward the garden. The tea party ended with a rush for the house, and the Camel's engine roared once more as the aviator closed the switch.

The plane wheeled and flew away. It landed a few minutes later; and Kenneth MacLeish found a squad of Tommies waiting for him, their bayoneted rifles telling him that he was under arrest. Next he was facing the colonel. The color had returned to the C.O.'s face. It was now a deep purple.

"Young man, you evidently want to kill your fellows. Why not use that impulse against the Hun?"

"I'd like to, sir," MacLeish responded with alacrity.

On His Way to France!

"You shall have the opportunity," was the wrath-filled reply. "You will report to the commanding officer of Squadron 213 as soon as you can pack your kit and leave."

"Yes, sir." The American held back a cheer through sheer force of will. "I'll leave tonight, sir."

"Try to make it this afternoon," said the colonel.

MacLeish rushed to his quarters. The sun had not set when he was on his way to France. Thought of joining the 213th thrilled him. The squadron flew fleet-winged Camels and acted as escorts to the huge Handley-Pages that carried tons of high explosive into German territory. He would have been satisfied to have piloted a bomber, but to ride a Camel and fight the Hun filled his glass of joy to the brim.

Reveled in Battle!

The next day saw him at the front. Captain Green, his new commander, welcomed him. Green knew Ingalls, Di Gates and other stars of the Amer-

ican Navy contingent; and these Yale stars had told him that Kenneth MacLeish was a man worth developing. Green took the hint, and the young American was soon battling with the squadron deep within German territory.

He took to war like a polar bear to ice. He reveled in it, and his slashing speed and rare daring made him a favorite from his first week with the squadron. His fame began to spread. An offer came from the Wing offering him the place of squadron commander of a freshly launched bombing formation. He would have a lieutenant-commander's commission and command more than three hundred pilots, mechanics and ground crew men.

"If you don't mind, I'd rather not," was his answer.

He preferred to be a lieutenant with a fighting formation than be honored by a command that would keep him at his desk in a purely executive position.

His British companions cheered his decision and a special Hun hunt was started in honor of the occasion. MacLeish fought that day as he never had before. Daring the impossible, he carried battle to the Hun and crashed a squadron commander after putting up a fight that is discussed to this day among the men who witnessed it.

His Fame Spreads

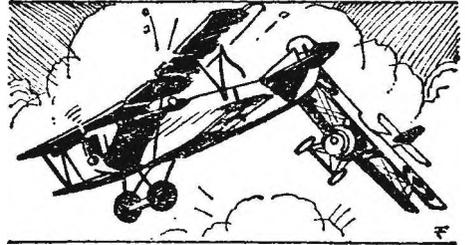
The summer waned and MacLeish grew in fame. Decorations came to him. Occasionally he saw Dave Ingalls and Di Gates, the leaders of the American contingent. Then came September 10th, 1918, when Di Gates disappeared. Going out with a French formation, the former gridiron star was last seen fighting desperately against a full flight of Huns. He did not return and the American Navy contingent went into deep mourning.

Although they did not know it at

the time, Gates had been made a prisoner. He did not return until the war's end, and during the early weeks of October his comrades mourned him as dead.

Frenzied Fighting

None was more affected by the loss of the famous athlete than Kenneth MacLeish. To him Di Gates had always been a hero, both on the gridiron and in the sky. A frenzy entered his fighting, and he was in the air every hour he could spare. He hunted with squadrons other than his own,



He came in so close that his bullets could not miss

taking advantage of rest periods to carry battle to the Hun.

Four days after Di Gates' disappearance, MacLeish took off with Captain Green, his flight leader, and Lieutenant Allen. They had hardly crossed the lines when they saw two German planes flying far below them. MacLeish was the first to sight them. He signaled to Captain Green, asking permission to attack. The leader nodded.

MacLeish's Camel roared as he sauced it to the limit. Then he tossed the tail into the air and dove with power full on. The wind shrieked through his braces, sounding like a mad banshee. The American leaned forward, peering through his ring-sights. Captain Green watched him, thrilling to the sight of the intrepid attack.

Faster, still faster. The Camel was traveling at a speed where a pull-up would be dangerous—but Kenneth

MacLeish had demonstrated that he was a pilot of more than ordinary skill.

Decoy Planes

Captain Green stiffened in his seat when he saw one of the German machines waggle its wings. Sudden realization came to him that the two planes were decoys, flying alone to attract the British. He swept the sky with his glasses. No hostile ships were in sight, although the clouds were hanging low. He signaled the *alerte*, and Lieutenant Allen winged alongside.

The two threw their tails into the air and dove down to join the American. Green knew he was menaced, although he could not yet see the enemy concentration he knew was near. The two Camels went down with a roar.

Throbbing Guns

The German planes had turned toward their own hinterland, running like hares before the hound. MacLeish was after them, his guns throbbing. Captain Green tried to signal the American to turn and nose for his own lines, but the young man was too intent upon his battle. Since the disappearance of Di Gates, MacLeish had hunted Huns with a savagery that was an obsession.

"I kept firing short bursts to attract his attention," Green said later, "but he either did not hear them or thought they were part of the general combat that soon followed."

Flashing into German territory, the two Germans spun to give MacLeish battle. He roared at them, his guns ablaze. The nearest machine tried to avoid his rush, but the young athlete would not be denied. He shot his Camel at the Hun with a speed that made the slower German plane helpless. In so close that his bullets could not miss, he sent drag after drag into the Fokker.

The dark ship staggered, as though it had struck some unseen obstruction. Then its nose dropped, and the narrow wings began that turning movement which is the birdman's dance of death.

Flames appeared and the stricken craft sped to its doom.

Enemies Galore

Flushed with his speedy victory, MacLeish carried the battle to the second decoy. At that moment, a dozen Fokker D7s dropped down. The fighting force which had hidden in the clouds was made up of veteran pilots eager for a kill. Their guns concentrated on Kenneth MacLeish, and a dancing haze of tracer broke around him. He paid no attention to the oncoming swarm, but bored in with greater zeal.

Captain Green dropped down to signal frantically. MacLeish saw him, but shook his head and pointed to the second German. Green's orders were to retire in the face of a superior force, and he gestured commands for both MacLeish and Allen to cross the lines into their own territory. Neither man obeyed.

Heavy Odds

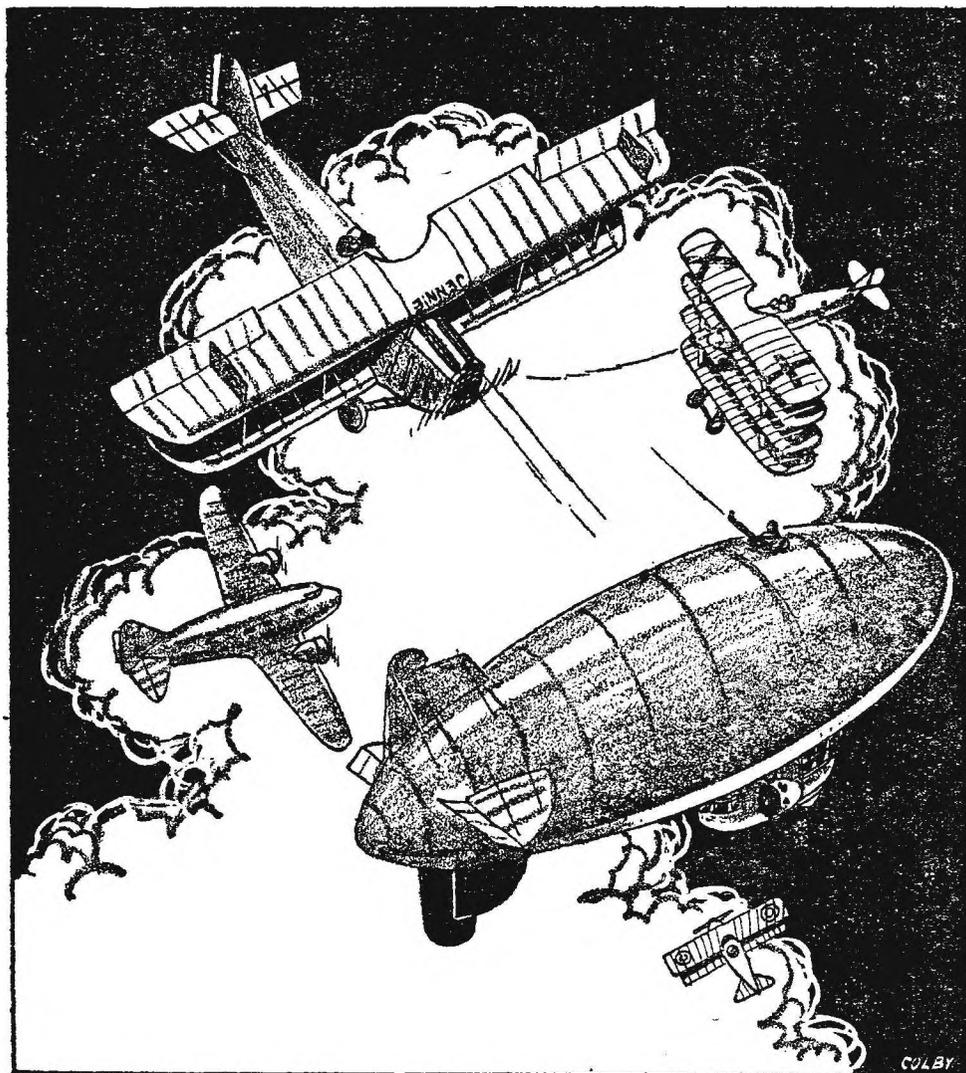
The Fokkers were down now and a dog-fight raged, a battle in which more than a dozen planes attacked two. Lieutenant Allen remained with the Yale man in spite of Green's orders. The two turned to meet the onslaught of the Huns.

Mounted on D7s, the peer of anything in the air, the Germans quickly surrounded the two. Their spitting Spandaus clattered without cessation. Captain Green swung around and headed for the lines. Instinct prompted him to remain and fight it out, but his orders were to quit if attacked by overwhelming numbers. He gunned his Camel and quickly withdrew from the combat.

(Concluded on page 128)

CAN YOU FIND 'EM?

*We'll Say There Are Plenty of Errors in this Picture—
but Can You Spot Them All? Try It Now!*



The Jennie in the upper left was not used in warfare as it was purely a training plane. Also, it did not have its name on the top wing—and the cockpit shown in the goofy drawing above is too small for a pilot to fit into.

There you are! Three errors handed right to you—start your list with them and go on from there.

For the benefit of newcomers—this is one of a series of special knowledge tests that give you a chance to show what you know about airplanes. Our artist goes out

and gets pie-eyed, makes a drawing (?) and then we put it up to you to discover all his mistakes.

List 'em yourself, now, with paper and pencil. There are more than 25 boners this month.

Then—turn to page 123—where the C.O. has put down his own list of errors—and check up with it to see how you rate. But don't look at the C.O.'s list first, or you'll spoil all the fun.

Ready? Go ahead!
Happy landings!

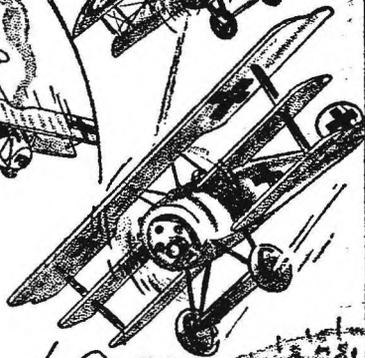
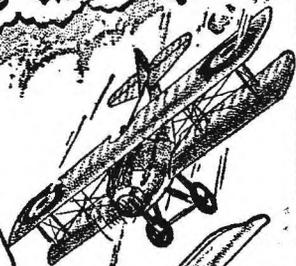
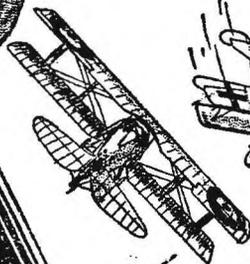
TEST YOUR AIR-WAR KNOWLEDGE—
FILL IN THE BLANKS BELOW— C'MON YOU

Swy Wnitors



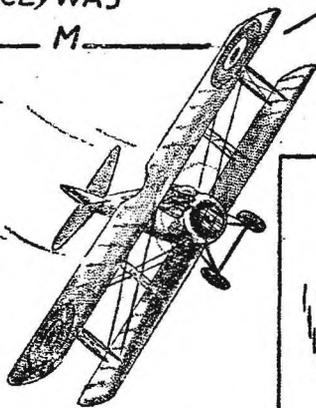
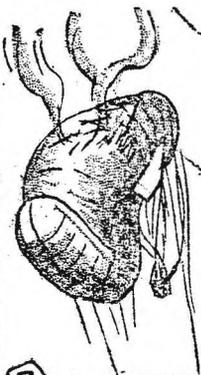
1

"THE FLYING GENERAL,"
COMMANDER OF THE A.E.F.
FLYING FORCE, WAS
GEN. W _____ M _____



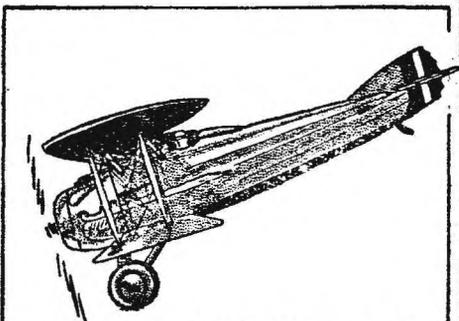
2

BARON VON
RICHTHOFEN, THE
FAMOUS GERMAN ACE
OF THE WORLD WAR
WAS SHOT DOWN BY
CAPT. R _____ B _____



3

F _____ L _____
WAS THE AMERICAN "BALLOON
BUSTER" WHO SHOT DOWN
14 BALLOONS AND FIVE
PLANES IN LESS THAN 2
WEEKS OF ACTUAL COMBAT!



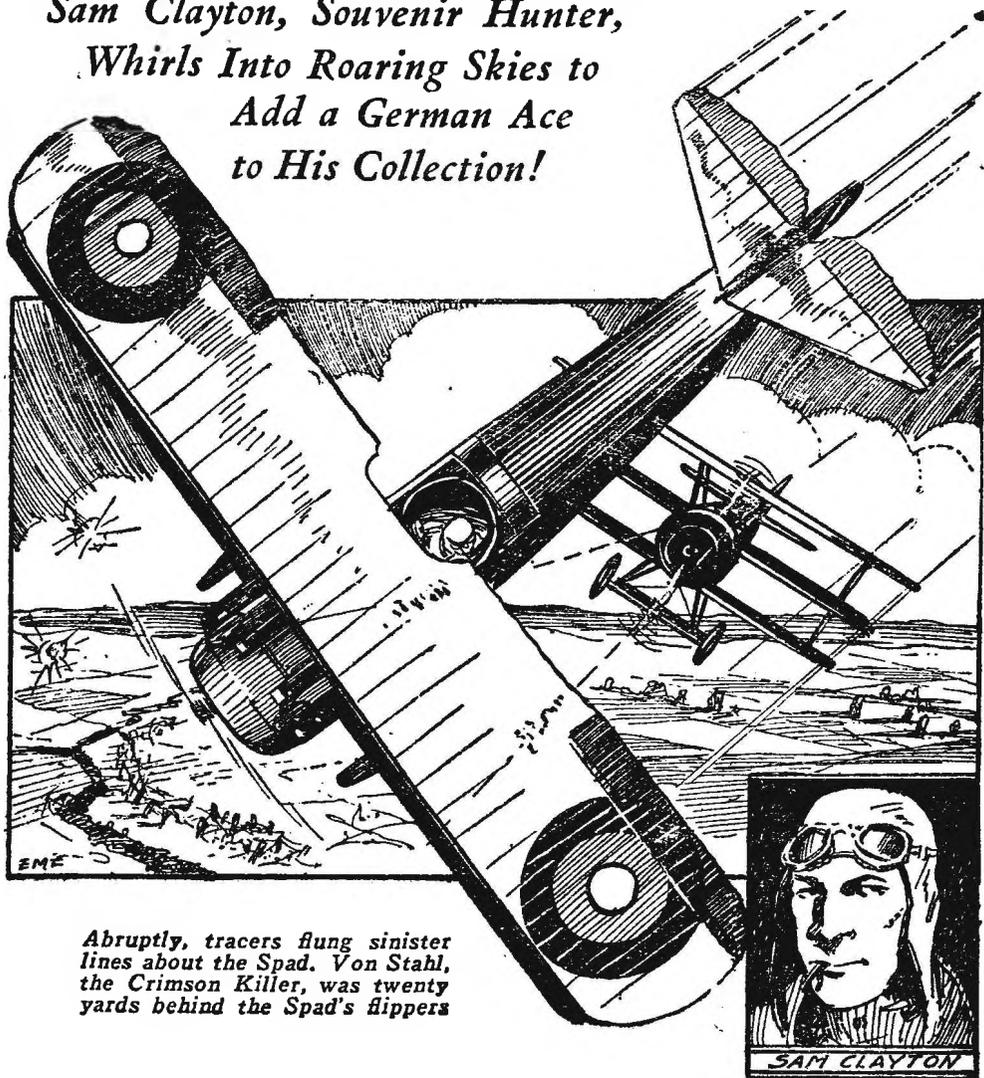
4

THE NAME OF THE
ABOVE WORLD WAR
PLANE IS S _____ !

The correct answers are on page 126—if you MUST look!

Hell on Wings

*Sam Clayton, Souvenir Hunter,
Whirls Into Roaring Skies to
Add a German Ace
to His Collection!*



Abruptly, tracers flung sinister lines about the Spad. Von Stahl, the Crimson Killer, was twenty yards behind the Spad's flippers

By **KENNETH L. SINCLAIR**

Author of "Flunkey Flight," "Pariah Patrol," etc.

THERE it was, in black and white: Sam Clayton, lieutenant, detached 130rd Pursuit, ordered to report at No. 78 Day Bombing Squadron for special protective patrol duty. Clayton took a

last fond look at the order sheet. Then, closing the throttle, he slipped the sheet into his pocket and aimed the Spad's blunt nose at the roof of the 78th's op. shack.

To Clayton, the cold, typewritten

words of the order were the fruit of a month-long struggle against official red tape and the stubborn dumbness of the brass hats. To the average man in the Bourlon sector they would have meant nothing at all—until somebody mentioned the fact that Clayton was the famous Souvenir Sam. There'd be whistles of astonishment, then; and perhaps the comment:

"Blimey! There's a set-up for you! Souvenir Sam in Bullhead Harrigan's outfit. Wonder wot Sam's up to this time. Hell on wings 'e is, that lad!"

WHEN Clayton taxied his Spad between two D.H.s and stopped neatly at the deadline, Harrigan was waiting for him—a hulking, formidable bulldog figure with thumbs hooked into his Sam Browne and a scowl engraved deeply in his features.

Clayton smiled pleasantly and waved a greeting. Then he squirmed and wriggled to get out of the pit—which wasn't easy, since this cockpit carried perhaps the greatest collection of plain and fancy souvenirs in France. There was a spiked helmet, a bayonet, a dud grenade, a Swiss watch—Clayton had gotten the watch on the day when he bombed a Kraut pillbox, then landed between the enemy's first and second lines to see what he could find in the way of a memento of the occasion.

Finally, he managed to get out of the ship. Facing his new C. O., he saluted and proffered the order sheet.

"Reporting for duty—" he began.

"You don't have to tell me!" Harrigan barked. "I got word from Wing. What I want to know is, why in hell'd you pull wires to get posted to my outfit?"

"Why, I thought I might be able to help. Your losses—"

"Don't talk to me about losses! Everybody's yelling about 'em—but I'm C. O. here, see; and I've got

orders to blow that railroad station at Somain right off the map. I've never fallen down on a job yet, and I'm not falling down on this one, even if I have to get replacements every six hours."

"You've been bombing that station for six weeks," Clayton pointed out, mildly. "You've lost an average of three ships a week—six men—"

"That damned von Stahl has got his Fokker outfit stationed right outside Somain—every time we go over, they jump us. And the damned station is bomb-proof."

Clayton spread his hands. "Well, then, why keep—"

"I've got my record to think of, you saved-off sap! Every job Wing has ever handed me has been done, see? And you're not fooling me any, Clayton—you're here because you're afraid your pal Morgan will get killed. You've got some scheme up your sleeve, hoping you can force me to give up the raids. Well, forget it! We're going over in ten minutes!"

The C. O. turned on his heel, and banged the door of the op. shack behind him. Clayton shrugged; and presently he meandered into Hangar One. Grease monkey's were loading 112-pound bombs into the racks of the D.H.

It didn't take Clayton long to make friends with the non-com.

"Harrigan's crazy!" the sarge growled. "Promotion crazy! Got his sights on a soft job at Wing—out to make a record that'll cinch him the job. Aims to make the record even if he has to do it with the blood of the boys. It's awful, the way von Stahl's been knockin' 'em down.

"Worst of it is, it's all useless—the Krauts have built that Somain station bomb-proof. They run their ammo trains in there, so they'll be safe from our bombs! Always have one or two ammo trains under the

roof. An' that's the place Bullhead's 'tryin' to—"

A hand clamped on Clayton's shoulder. He' turned, and faced Cal Morgan.

"Sam, you old sidewinder!"

"Cal, you lop-eared wonder!"

Cal's greeting was too hearty, too strained. Clayton's shrewd, meditative eyes did not miss the droop in his friend's face, the sag of his shoulders. The strain of fighting uselessly, hopelessly; of watching wingmates go down in flames, of having replacements step into vacant places only to be shot down, was beginning to tell on Cal Morgan.

It would tell on any man. One can fight when there is purpose in the fighting, when there is a chance. But against the great von Stahl, the man who took no prisoners—

Morgan was losing his spirit. And for a fighting pilot, that was fatal. Sooner or later a Fokker would get him into a tight spot—and he would not have the snap, the flash, to pull himself out of it.

Clayton contemplated the floor of the hangar. Then he turned to the sarge.

"Say, can you get me a twenty-five-pound bomb? I want to take it with me when we go over."

The non-com couldn't help grinning. "Say, a twenty-five pounder'll do about as much as a fly swatter against that station."

"You don't understand. I want it for a souvenir. I'll carry it in my pit."

The non-com stared, swallowed, and shook his head.

"It's your funeral," he pointed out.

A little later Clayton ambled out of the hangar, carrying the bomb nestled in the crook of his arm.

The 78th, with Clayton's Spad flying protection, crossed the swamps near Aubigny-au-Bac and headed for Somain. Clayton had the small bomb cradled in his lap; but that

didn't keep him from twisting first one way, then the other, scanning the sky for black-crossed wings.

Trouble was, the milking stool on which he sat was none too comfortable—he had picked the thing up in England, as sort of a memento of the Zep he shot down while flying the London patrol. But in order to crowd it into the pit of his Spad, he had found it necessary to remove the bucket seat.

Oh, well, if souvenirs could be put to practical use, so much the better.

Over Somain, the D.H.s strung into line behind Harrigan. Ignoring the storm of Archie that Kraut gunners were sending up, the C. O. led his outfit straight for the huge railroad station.

Clayton banked his Spad in a flipper turn; and, leaning against the padded coaming, he inspected the situation with thoughtful eyes. There was just one main track leading into the station; and, a mile or two away, a supply train was puffing laboriously toward the sanctuary offered by the bomb-proof.

ABRUPTLY, tracers flung sinister lines around the Spad. Clayton turned, unhurriedly, in the pit. Von Stahl, the Crimson Killer, as they called him, was twenty yards behind the Spad's flippers, swinging his Fokker trips in savage little arcs. This von Stahl was a pretty famous guy, more famous even than Clayton; and not for the same reason.

Von Stahl didn't believe in taking prisoners. To him, the only good Frenchman, Englishman, or American was a dead one. Von Stahl could see no reason why the hard-pressed Fatherland should waste precious food on prisoners of war.

Clayton spun back to his controls. Half closing the throttle, he switched on and off, on and off again. Black smoke spurted from the Hisso's stacks. Clayton sideslipped, nosed

down, stalled, made two turns of a *vrille*, then straightened out uncertainly and staggered down to a landing in a meadow near the tracks.

Leaving the motor idling, he tumbled from the ship and dropped into a ditch that was covered with high, dead grass. As he did so, he heard the guttural boom of Harrigan's bombs, and saw that the eggs were making no impression at all on that railroad station. Smiling tautly, Clayton stretched at ease in the bottom of the ditch.

When he left the Spad's pit, he had taken with him the milking stool. Now, gripping the husky little chair with one hand, he lay motionless, hidden, waiting. The German had earned the fame by his tactics of picking on one opponent, following him until he made the kill, then turning methodically to the next.

WITH wires sighing and exhaust barking, the Fokker settled to a landing near the Spad. It was not von Stahl's way to let an opponent escape with his life, not even when that opponent was downed by what seemed to be motor failure.

The Fokker trundled to a stop; and presently von Stahl's boots whipped through the grass as he strode to the side of the Spad. Lifting himself on the balls of his feet, he looked into the pit.

He had not seen Clayton; and the collection of objects that met his eye in the cockpit of the Spad seemed to daze him. At any rate, he relaxed his watchfulness for just an instant; and in that fragment of time Clayton leaped from his hiding place and brought the milking stool smartly against the German's helmeted skull.

Von Stahl gave a little groan as he went limp. Catching the man, holding him so that he remained erect, Clayton took possession of the Luger. Then he carried von Stahl bodily to the railroad tracks a few

paces away. As he did so, he opened the front of the German's flying suit, exposing the ornate uniform and the rows of glittering medals.

The train approached slowly. Clayton, who was a small man, was completely concealed behind the German pilot. He lifted von Stahl's right arm in a commanding gesture. The engineer of the train leaned far out of his cab, tooted the whistle several times, then brought the train to a stop. "*Halte!*" Clayton bellowed, in German. "Uncouple the train from the tender."

There were guards atop the train, but none on the engine. The man in the cab spread his hands.

"But *Exzellenz*, the train will coast back down the grade!"

"You have your orders, swine!"

The engineer winced—he had of course, recognized von Stahl, partly by the crimson Tripe, partly by the uniform—and it was a notorious fact that von Stahl would kill any man of lower rank who dared stand in his way. The fireman clambered over the tender and freed the coupling.

Slowly, the heavy train drifted back down the hill, leaving the engine and tender standing alone.

Clayton let the unconscious von Stahl slump into the ditch at the side of the track. With the Luger he fired two slugs over the heads of the astonished engineer and fireman.

"Run!" he ordered.

They ran.

With no apparent hurry, Clayton trotted to his Spad, lifted the bomb from its pit, and carried it to the engine. With some wire he fastened the bomb to the front of the engine. Giving the detonator release a spin, he darted into the cab, released the air, and opened the throttle wide.

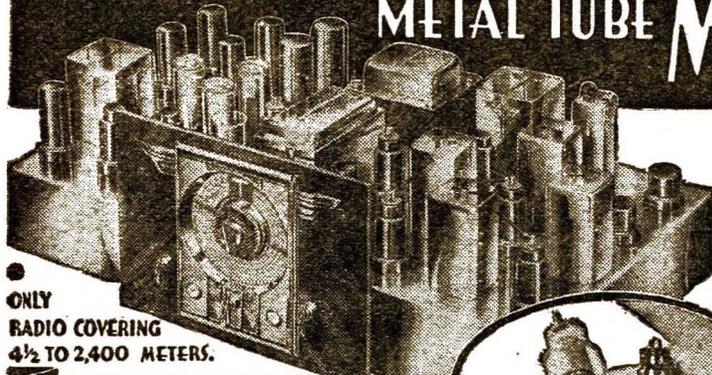
The engine started with a snort, sparks spurting from the wheels as they spun on the rails. Clayton dropped from the cab, landed on his

(Continued on page 118)

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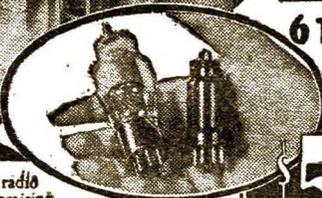
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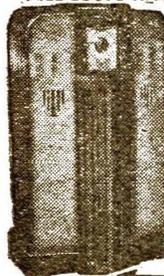
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Kidneys Cause Much Trouble Says Doctor

Successful Prescription Helps Remove Acids Works Fast

Dr. T. J. Rastelli, famous English scientist, Doctor of Medicine and Surgeon, says: "You can't feel well if your Kidneys do not function right, because your Kidneys affect your entire body."

Your blood circulates 4 times a minute through 9 million tiny, delicate tubes in your Kidneys which are endangered by drastic, irritating drugs, modern foods and drinks, worry, and exposure. Beware of Kidney dysfunction if you suffer from Night Rising, Leg Pains, Nervousness, Dizziness, Circles Under Eyes, Acidity, or Loss of Pep.



Dr. W. E. George

Dr. Walter E. George, for many years Health Director of Indianapolis, says: "Insufficient Kidney excretions are the cause of much needless suffering with Aching Back, Frequent Night Rising, Itching, Smarting, Burning, Painful Joints, Rheumatic Pains, Headaches, and a generally run-down body. I am of the opinion that the prescription Cystex corrects such functional conditions. It aids in flushing poisons from the urinary tract, and in freeing the blood of retained toxins, Cystex deserves the endorsement of all doctors." If you suffer from Kidney and Bladder dysfunction,

delay endangers your vitality, and you should not lose a single minute in starting to take the doctor's special prescription called Cystex (pronounced Sliss-tex) which helps Kidney functions in a few hours. It is swift, safe and sure in action. Gently tones, soothes and cleans raw, sore membranes. Brings new energy and vitality in 48 hours. It is helping millions of sufferers and is guaranteed to fix you up and make you feel like new in 3 days, or money back on return of empty package. Get guaranteed Cystex from your druggist today.

(Continued from page 116)

hands and knees beside von Stahl, and remained in that position for a moment, watching the engine streak down the track toward the station.

Souvenir Sam had his feet on the op. shack desk when Harrigan came bursting into the office.

"Damn you!" Harrigan roared. "What happened to that station? It blew sky-high. I never saw such an explosion in my life! You pulled some kind of a damn' stunt, Clayton; what was it? They warned me you were hell on wings—"

"Who, me?" Clayton said. "Somebody must have been kidding you. All I wanted was a souvenir; so I faked a forced landing, knowing that von Stahl would follow me down to make a kill. Well, when I got on the ground I remembered the twenty-five pounder I had in my lap. So, using Stahl for a front, I stopped the supply train, made them cut loose the engine, and put the bomb on the front of said engine.

"Then I started the engine down the track, without anybody in it, throttle wide open. I knew there'd be ammo trains inside that bomb-proof station, you see; and when my engine rammed into one of those trains at full speed, and the twenty-five-pounder let go, it started the shells and ammo on those trains—and up went the whole shebang.

"Nothing very hell-raising about that, is there? And the railroad station is wiped off the map—so you won't need to raid it any more."

Harrigan scowled. "Yeah?" he said unpleasantly. "You landed to get a souvenir, all right. Well, where's the souvenir? You haven't got any proof— Say! I've got a hunch you landed to communicate with the enemy. I can have you court-martialed for that, smart guy! And I've got another hunch that I'm the bird who blew up that station— get me? I'll get a promotion for this. You'll keep quiet, or else—"

GRANDER and GAYER
THAN EVER!

The New

COLLEGE
HUMOR

NOW
15c

ON SALE EVERYWHERE

Clayton shook his head.

"Oh, I've got my souvenir. Bring him in, guards!"

The door of the adjoining room opened. A couple of M. P.s escorted the hawk-faced von Stahl into the room. "My souvenir," Clayton explained mildly. "I tied him on the wing of my ship—"

Harrigan was staggered—but not for long.

"By damn!" he barked. "The Krauts' biggest ace, taken prisoner! There's a feather for my cap! I'll—"

"Colonel, you can come in any time now," Clayton said.

One of the Wing colonels strutted in from the adjoining room. Harrigan opened and closed his fists spasmodically, saluted, gulped.

"Colonel, I—that is, we— What did you hear through that door?"

"Plenty!" the colonel snapped.

Clayton strolled out of the shack. When Cal Morgan found him, a while later, the little pilot was sitting on a box, looking worried.

"What's the matter?" the bomber pilot asked. "You've got nothing to scowl about—the colonel says he'll recommend you for C. O."

"Cal, I'm a man tripped up by his hobby. I've got a souvenir in there, and don't know what to do with him. Can't stick a pin through him and mount him like a butterfly."

"Maybe," Cal suggested diplomatically, "about four drinks will help. And while we're hoistin' 'em, you might explain just how that Wing colonel happened to be sitting in that back room of the op. shack."

"Why," Clayton said earnestly, "he's a souvenir collector, too. This morning, I called Wing and told him I'd have an interesting specimen for him to look over if he dropped around here. He was just giving von Stahl the once-over, that's all."

"Oowah!" Morgan groaned, lifting his hands. "Lead me to them drinks before I faint!"

WINNER OF
MANY CONTESTS
FOR PHYSICAL
PERFECTION



WINNER OF
MORE STRENGTH
RECORDS
THAN ANY LIVING MAN





I CHALLENGE
any man to
make this
AMAZING
AGREEMENT

IF YOU DO NOT ADD
3 INCHES TO YOUR CHEST
2 INCHES TO YOUR BICEPS
... it won't cost you one cent!

YES SIR! Two inches of muscle added to your biceps and at least three inches to your chest or it won't cost you a penny! So many of my pupils have gained tremendous physical development that I am willing to stake my reputation that I can do the same for you. Remember . . . if I fail it costs you nothing!

Those skinny fellows who are discouraged are the men I want to work with. I have developed real he-man's physiques for them . . . covered their bodies with layers of muscles . . . made them strong and proud . . . eager to face the world with their new power!

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Around the Hangar



A Department

for Readers

WELCOME to our hangar, readers! Drape yourself around a chair and listen to the C.O. spill some aviation news that ought to scatter pessimism to the four winds.

There has been, unfortunately, quite a lot of Mr. Pessimism around lately. Just because no records of any importance were broken at Cleveland during the air races last year.

Some wise birds have been flapping their wings this way:

"Uncle Sam's slipping in aviation. There hasn't been any progress to speak of, lately. We better step on it!"

Sure—it's always advisable to keep stepping on it — but if you think America hasn't been making grand progress lately,



you're certainly mistaken. Since the beginning of 1935, we've been zooming ahead at a great rate, and the outlook for 1936 looks fine.

Some Achievements

Recently, three records were broken in this country—and if they weren't broken at Cleveland, this old ack emma doesn't see that it matters. The three records were:

The world's speed record for land planes.

The world's speed record for amphibians.

The women's nonstop transcontinental record.

The Thompson Trophy race was won at Cleveland at a speed of 220.194 miles per hour. If that snail's pace (!) doesn't excite you—why, just a short while later, Howard Hughes flew over a fixed course at Santa Ana, Cal., clocked officially at 352.46 miles per hour. More like it, eh? Well, it broke the record.

And on the same day that that happened—at Detroit, Maj. Alexander P. de Seversky flew his amphibian at a speed of 230.03 miles per hour. The very nature of an

amphibian plane, built for comfort rather than speed, so to speak, makes Seversky's feat remarkable. He flew 39 miles per hour faster than anyone previously has flown in a machine of this type.

So, at the same time, the land plane speed record and the amphibian record were broken right here in this country—yet the pessimists rave on!

Women's Record

Miss Laura Ingalls, on her third attempt, exceeded the mark set by Amelia Earhart. She went out for the women's nonstop transcontinental speed record—and broke it wide open with a margin of three and a half hours. Los Angeles to New York in 13 hours and 34 minutes!

Her Lockheed was powered with a Pratt and Whitney 550 horse power motor. It was equipped with Hamilton Standard propeller.

That Isn't All

But the unusual accomplishments I've been telling you about are only part of the story. America's setting a new record in number of planes—the big appropriations for the Army and Navy aviation corps are warming the hearts of air fans from Maine to California—and our newest bombers are the best in the world! There aren't any, anywhere in the world, to compare with them in construction, speed and practicality.

Slipping? Not a bit of it. We're holding our own—and more. Steadily marching forward to world supremacy in the skies!

Transatlantic Flight

Daring aviators are still braving dangers in order to make difficult trans-oceanic



flights—and one of the latest exploits is that of Felix Waitkus, Lieutenant in the
(Continued on page 122)

The only man
who could talk
to the
Superintendent



For several years, he was just like a score of other men in the plant—a good, honest, fairly capable worker, but only that. There was nothing distinctive about him or his ability—nothing to make him stand out from the crowd—no reason, as a matter of fact, why he should ever receive a raise.

Then one fortunate day he decided that the reason he wasn't getting anywhere was because he lacked special training. He searched around a bit—asked a great many questions—and then enrolled for a home-study course with the International Correspondence Schools.

"Soon after I began studying," he wrote to us the other day, "we had a change in management at our plant. The new superintendent said that only

men who had really studied their work were in line for positions as foremen.

"I certainly was glad then that I had decided to study in my spare time. For, thanks to my I. C. S. course, I was the only man in the organization who could talk to the superintendent in his own language. As a result, I was promoted over men who had been here from ten to twenty years."

What are *you* doing with the hours after supper? Can you afford to let them slip by unimproved when you can easily make them mean so much?

One hour a day, spent with the I. C. S. in the quiet of your own home, will prepare you for success in the work you like best. *Yes, it will!* Put it up to us to prove it. Mail this coupon today.

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—that's what our graduate, L. F. of Canada is making. \$3900 for W. R. K.—of N. J. He writes that just two contracts brought him that sum. \$3360 a Year—that's what our graduate R. K. K. of Mich. is drawing as an Art Director.

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THE FEDERALS ON THE TRAIL!



Gripping Novels and Stories of Man-Hunting Thrills
in

G-MEN

At All Stands — Price 10c

(Continued from page 120)

U. S. Army Air Corps Reserve, who landed at Ballinrobe, County Mayo, Irish Free State, on a journey which began at Floyd Bennett Field, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Waitkus flew 22 hours, mostly blind flying, at an altitude of between 10,000 and 13,000 feet. He ran out of gas—was forced to land on a rough field and his ship was damaged.

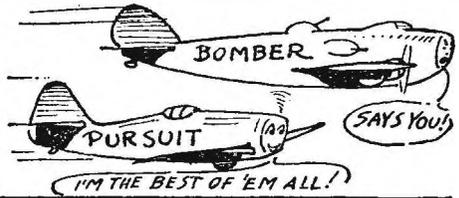
This pilot, who plans even more sensational flights for the future, is 28, of Lithuanian parents. His ship is a Lockheed Vega 5C, powered with a Pratt and Whitney Wasp motor of 525 horse power.

Waitkus flew solo. The only other four aviators who successfully attempted the Atlantic in this fashion are Lindbergh, Amelia Earhart, James A. Mollison, and Wiley Post.

Bombers vs. Pursuits

Which type of planes will be more important in the future as weapons of defense: pursuits or bombers?

This question has been mulled over quite a bit lately—and has engaged the attention of air experts all over the country. What do you think? I'm very anxious to get



your opinion and the next time you write the home hangar—I hope you do so soon—let me know.

All air improvement comes from the air races, some persons claim. Many single-seat fighters are certainly the outcome of experience gained at these meets—but bombers are far from being air-race developments.

Modern bombers, however, are so fast they can pass up the ordinary pursuit ship like a hare can outrun a snail. And besides, they can act as aggressors or defenders—in addition to laying deadly explosive eggs.

America is fortunate in that it leads the world in the quality and efficiency of bombers.

Yet there is a good deal to be said for the pursuits too—and I'm waiting to hear what you have to say about them in your letters.

Those \$700 Planes

We're still curious about those \$700 planes for the use of Americans, announced quite a long time ago but not yet materializing.

Last month I told you about the Flying Flea—the light plane used in Europe which an ambitious fan can build right at home.

There are plenty of Americans who
(Continued on page 124)

PEN PALS



Here are some new members of **THE LONE EAGLES OF AMERICA**—all air fans. Many others will be listed next month. The figures in the parentheses are the ages of the members.

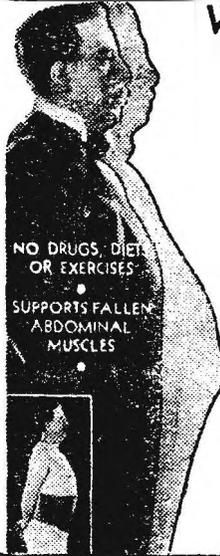
- Rocco Ferraro (15), 17 William St., Summit, N. J.
 Geo. Waddy, Jr. (12), 2236 N. W. 15th St., Oklahoma City, Okla.
 Clifford Ward (16), 10 Simonds Road, Melrose, Mass.
 Bernard Caswell (14), 427 E. 3rd St., S. Boston, Mass.
 Wendell Norland (17), 20 Mase Ave., Dover, N. J.
 Stanley James (18), Schenley, Pa.
 Ellis W. Guthrie (22), "A", 2nd Batt., East Lancashire, Reft. "Nanking Bks.", Hong-Kong, China.
 Leo Powojski (16), 4091 31st St., Detroit, Mich.
 Earl Anderson (14), Wharf St., Nanaimo, B. C., Can.
 Walter Sorenson (12), 3647 26th St., San Francisco.
 Robert Wise (13), 141 N. 17th St., Wheeling, W. Va.
 Evelyn Ross (21), 1058 Indian Creek Road, Overbrook, Phila., Pa.
 Bill Aiken (11), Box 641, Sunnyside, Wash.
 Willard Reedy (16), 8243 Peoria St., Chicago, Ill.
 Wm. Porter (54), Box 31, El Centro, Calif.
 Fred Jacobs (24), Main St., Espy, Penna.
 Bernard Emerick (15), 17½ Harry St., Wilkes-Barre, Pa.
 Laurence Christman (18), Toccoa Falls Institute, Toccoa Falls, Ga.
 Chas. Wolfe (11), 6034 E. 16th St., Kansas City, Mo.
 Floyd Gilliland (22), 1717 Granview Ave., Portsmouth, Ohio.
 Ben Gifford (26), Salida, Calif.
 Wm. Langshaw (17), 929 S. W. West Salmon St., Portland, Oregon.
 Deane Combs (15), 508 Second St., Kellogg, Idaho.
 Lui Edgar (14), Erste und Legion, Clarksville, Tenn.
 R. Glenn English (18), 2514 Buena Vista St., San Antonio, Texas.
 Lawrence Kitchen (10), 1600 McCall St., Charlotte, N. C.
 Wm. Gertz (17), 18 S. 12th Ave., Mount Vernon, N. Y.
 Arthur Russakoff (14), 693 Pont Reading Road, Ardmore, Pa.
 John Rigney (16), 3066 Memphis St., Phila., Pa.
 Robert Carr (12), 1724 W. Fayette St., Baltimore, Md.
 John Combas (19), 2819 Lemnave St., St. Louis, Mo.
 Anthony Taradena (17), 1519 Fourth Ave., Arnold, Pa.
 Arthur Sassone (20), 1419 Coney Island Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.
 Wydham Mildon (13), 1 E. Wall St., Plymouth, Pa.
 Thos. Smith (16), 165 E. Broad St., Westfield, N. J.

LIST OF ERRORS

(See Page 111)

- SMALL SHIP (EXTREME LOWER RIGHT)**
 Ribs not straight and no rudder
- JENNIE (UPPER LEFT)**
 Not used in warfare as it was a training plane; did not have the name on top wing; both ailerons going up; cockpit too small for pilot; no interplane strut wires; no insignia on the wings; no spreader bar between wheels; no control cables from ailerons; one machine-gun a Vickers and one a Spandau.
- BLIMP (LOWER RIGHT)**
 Not used in warfare; insignia too small; no propeller; one elevator up and one down; no blimp has cockpit on top; top rudder guyed fast; no control cables from elevators; no control cables from rudder.
- MODERN TRANSPORT SHIP (LEFT CENTER)**
 Not in existence during war; no ailerons on wings; elevators not balanced.
- QUADRUPANE (UPPER RIGHT)**
 Fuselage should be at bottom, not the top; insignia on right wings not correct; no divide between elevators and stabilizers; no propeller.

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■ The Weil Reducing Belt will make you appear many inches slimmer at once, and in 10 short days your waistline will actually be 3 inches smaller... 3 inches of fat gone... or it won't cost you one cent!

■ It supports the sagging muscles of the abdomen and quickly gives an erect, athletic carriage. Don't be embarrassed any longer with that "corporation" for in a short time, only the admiring comments of your friends will remind you that you once had a bulging waistline.

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■ You will be completely comfortable and entirely unaware that its gentle pressure is working constantly while you walk, work or sit... its massage-like action gently but persistently eliminating fat with every move you make!

■ Many enthusiastic wearers write that the Weil Belt not only reduces fat but also supports the abdominal walls and keeps the digestive organs in place... that they are no longer fatigued... and that it greatly increases endurance and vigor!

Don't Wait... Fat Is Dangerous!

■ Fat is not only unbecoming, but it also endangers your health. Insurance companies know the danger of fat accumulations. The best medical authorities warn against obesity, so don't wait any longer.

■ We repeat... either you take off 3 inches of fat in ten days, or it won't cost you one penny!

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 Gentlemen: Send me FREE your illustrated folder describing The Weil Belt and full details of your 10 Day FREE Trial Offer.

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Learn

DRAFTING

FROM AN ENGINEER



HERE'S an important message for all who have aptitude and earnestness; for boys 16 to 18, for men 40 to 50. (High school education *not* needed.) Boost your pay! Get a better job. As business picks up draftsmen are the *first* needed! I furnish you all tools and a drawing table. And I'll teach you in a very short time by mail in your spare time until you actually have a desirable draftsman's position so that you are fully satisfied with your easy work and better pay.

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Opportunities opening up in auto work, aviation, electricity, machinery, and certain building lines. You'll be amazed how quickly you can prepare yourself in your spare time for **MORE PAY** by my practical method—now used for over 34 years. Thousands won *Success!* Everything made plain by my practical method *right from the start*. Send for free book.



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(Continued from page 122)

would welcome our own version of the Flea—but though many designs have been submitted, and extensive plans made, it's still not possible to zoom into the blue in a \$700 plane with your arm about your best sweetie, one-arm piloting.

Now there's a great deal of controversy—aviation experts claiming that the \$700 plane is a poor idea, and can't be adopted. Objection is made that the light type of motor to be used will not provide sufficient power.

On the other hand—**LIGHT PLANES OF THIS TYPE** have already been used successfully! That's why I believe that the "eyes" will have it—that, eventually, America will build inexpensive planes better than any country in the world. Eventually, yes—but why not now?

Join With Us

If you are interested in the subjects discussed above—if, in short, you're a true-blue air fan and have opinions on current problems, you certainly ought to belong to **THE LONE EAGLES OF AMERICA**.

There's a coupon on Page 125 and you are welcome to belong—and entitled to our swell membership card. No dues. No fees. Sign up—and belong to the fastest-growing outfit of air-minded folk in the land!

As a member, you're eligible to receive, **FREE OF CHARGE**, twelve portraits of famous World War aces. They're cracker-jacks. To obtain the portraits, just send three name-strips from three front covers of **THE LONE EAGLE** taken from three consecutive issues dating no further back than 1935. Enclose six cents in stamps for mailing.

Two name-strips and ten cents in stamps or just the name-strip on the cover of this issue and fifteen cents in stamps, will also do the trick if you want your portraits in a hurry.

From Our Mail

Let's take a look into our mail box—and see just a few of the flock of letters received at the C.O.'s headquarters during the month. To start, here's a note from Billy Somerville, 1446 South Water, Wichita, Kan.:

I'm rarin' to go! Interested in aviation! Settle an argument for me: were parachutes worn during the war? Boy oh boy, does the Lone Eagle nail those Jerries! Your novels are certainly enjoyable.

We lost a great pilot—and a great air fan—when Wiley Post and Will Rogers went to death. It happened quite a while back, but I just can't forget about the tragedy.

Neither can we, Billy—nor will the nation. These two brave men cannot be replaced.

As to parachutes—they were known but mostly used in connection with balloons, and considered a novelty rather than a practical device. Of course they have been vastly improved since those days.

Now let's listen to Everett Handy, Harrison, Idaho:

Say, kiwis, if you know what's good for you you'd better vote for an insignia for **THE LONE**

EAGLES OF AMERICA—write the home hangar and tell 'em you want it. I think every Lone Eaglet would be proud to wear an insignia of the sort suggested by Eugene Sager. It would make us stick out our chests and boost **THE LONE EAGLES OF AMERICA** more than ever.

THE LONE EAGLE is the best magazine of 'em all—and the **SHIP OF THE MONTH** feature and others, sure hit the spot. The Lone Eagle in **FIGHTING WINGS** was swell. The flying course is valuable, and when I read it I can feel the stick in my hands and visualize myself roaring over the field. George Bruce's **HELL CRUISER** was a dandy yarn.

Your pocket membership card and the folder are fine—and soon I'll send for my portraits of World War aces. Fellows—write me some time.

Here's La Vern Hansen, of Eden Valley, Minn.:

I've been interested in aviation and in being a pilot ever since I was knee-high to a grasshopper. There are only a few fellows who are interested in aviation around here, and most laugh when you talk of its greatness and possibilities.

I have been in an airplane several times. I hope that the United States will have the largest air force in the world within a couple of years for I believe Americans have a special ability at flying.

For about a year, I have read your magazine
(Concluded on page 126)

LONE EAGLES OF AMERICA,
22 WEST 48th STREET,
NEW YORK CITY

Gentlemen:

Please enroll me as a member of the **LONE EAGLES OF AMERICA**. I am interested in flying, and I hereby pledge myself to work for the advancement of aviation.

Name
(Print legibly)

Street

City and State..... Age.....

Do you want to be listed as a Pen Pal?.....

State whether you are a pilot, can fly, have ridden as passenger, or intend to become a pilot

Date

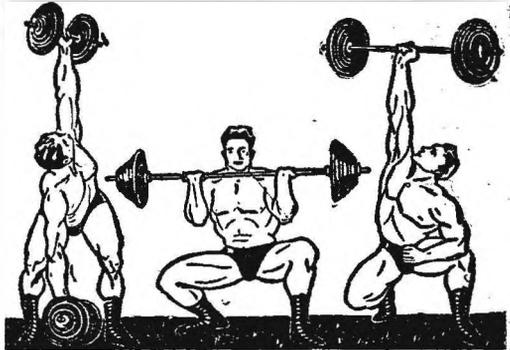
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2-36 If already a member check here

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THE BEACON

22 West 48th Street Dept. 2 New York City

(Concluded from page 125)

and every copy is a definite improvement over the one previous. I do hope you'll accept me as a member of your organization.

Welcome, La Vern!

George Neal, Box 118, Route 1, Chattanooga, Tenn., asks for pen pals who want to write him about modern and future aviation. Get in touch with him, won't you?

Virginia Lee, 20 Winter St., Forest Hills, N. Y., would like to see a modern air story in THE LONE EAGLE occasionally. Well—we've decided to give you just that—a modern air story every now and then. This is quite a change in policy for THE LONE EAGLE and I want to know what you all think of it. Also tell me how you like SKY WRITERS—a special feature this month. (See page 112.)

Clark Smith, Delmar, Ind., writes as follows:

I have five solo hours, flown a couple of years ago in Pennsylvania. I am now with the Maryland infantry.

That page you are now running—HEROES ALL—is swell and I hope you keep it up. Also, the true stories of the World War are fine.

John Masters is great! Most of the lads in my company also read THE LONE EAGLE—and we have hot arguments about various questions in connection with aviation. Sometimes we almost come to blows—but not wanting to break any gun stocks, we refrain from hitting each other.

Here's Marguerite Zachary, one of our English cousins — of 7 Orchard Street, Reading, Eng.:

I am very interested in flying and I think that all young people should be.

I hope you will enroll me in THE LONE EAGLES OF AMERICA at once as I am very eager to join.

As you see I am English, and live in England—but I note that many of your members likewise do.

There is a civil airrome here at Reading, but it is not yet very important. I hope it will become so.

As to the idea of an organization insignia—if it's adopted, I hope to wear one. I'm game for everything—and want to be a real member in every sense of the word.

There's lots more in my mailbag I'd like to show you, kiwis—but as I'm coming to the end of my space, I'll have to start down for a three-point landing now and next month there'll be a big batch of letters.

That issue next month, by the way, will be a wow! John Masters does some of the fastest fighting in his career in a bang-up, rip-roaring complete full-length war-air novel—SKY DEVIL'S SPAWN. This is one of the best yet—and it packs a mighty wallop.

GEORGE BRUCE will be on hand with a zooming novelette, TEN DAYS TO LIVE—and there'll be stories by other well-known authors and another chat with —BRUCE McALESTER.

ANSWERS TO SKY WRITERS

See Page 112

1. William Mitchell. 2. Roy Brown. 3. Frank Luke. 4. Spad.

False Teeth



Here's Proof:

"My plate fits so perfectly that I forget I have it, only when someone remarks on my beautiful teeth," says Mrs. D. L. D. of Barrickville, W. Va.

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"I ate with my plate 15 minutes after I put them in my mouth. I slept with them in my mouth, never bothered me a bit."—E. P., Lake City, Colorado.

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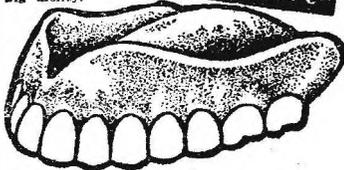
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Warning! This sensational book will not be sold to minors!

STUNTING ACE (Concluded from page 110)

As he neared the lines, he looked back. Kenneth MacLeish had turned on the German leader, and his blasting Vickers were ripping the Hun to pieces. Disregarding the fire of a dozen Fokkers, the American was holding on the Hun commander. The streamered ship crumpled, its right wing falling off. Flames appeared, and the crate began the death plunge.

"I wish I'd stayed," Green growled, "but—"

Into the Blue

Then he saw Lieutenant Allen in the center of a black circle. The Germans were tearing him to bits. His Camel was afire, the flames reaching up to sear the gallant pilot. Another blast from the Germans, and the British ship staggered. Kenneth MacLeish tried to break through the ring surrounding his companion. His guns flamed, and he fought with the desperation of a maniac.

"Damn it—I'm going back!" Captain Green swung his ship around.

But when he leveled off, the sky was bare of target-marked Camels. Neither Kenneth MacLeish nor Lieutenant Allen was visible. Both had disappeared for all time. Riding side by side, they had flown off into the blue, pitched against overwhelming odds.

Weeks of waiting brought no word. At the coming of the Armistice, the British advanced, to find one grave. Whose it was, they were not sure. The Yale men honor it as that of Kenneth MacLeish. On the other hand, the British survivors of Squadron 213 declare it contains the body of Lieutenant Allen. To this day no man knows for sure.

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