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WINGS

A Complete
War-Air Novel
By

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OWEN ATKINSON

Missing page
Inside front cover



Only by Actual WEIGHT RESISTANCE can you obtain muscles like these!
 My system does not depend on the mere "flexing" of muscles. I use disc dumbbells that can be graduated in weight for the reason that I believe that no other method can give you a strong, supple weight lifting muscular

Send for **"MOULDING A MIGHTY CHEST"** A Special Course for Only 25c.
 It will be a revelation to you. I give you my secret methods of strength development illustrated and explained as you like them. Don't wait... mail your order NOW!

IF YOU DO NOT ADD 3 INCHES TO AT LEAST YOUR CHEST

... it won't cost you one cent! — Signed: **GEORGE E. JOWETT**

THREE SOLID INCHES of muscles added to your chest and at least two inches added to each of your biceps, or it won't cost you a penny. I know what I am talking about... I wouldn't dare make this startling agreement if I wasn't sure I could do it.

All I want is a chance to prove it! Those skinny fellows who are discouraged are the men I want to work with. I'll show them how to build a strong man's body... and do it quickly. And I don't mean cream-puff muscles either. Wouldn't you, too, like to get a he-man's chest like the idealized figure above? I will show you how to get real, genuine invincible muscles that will make your men friends respect you and women admire you!

So many of my pupils have gained

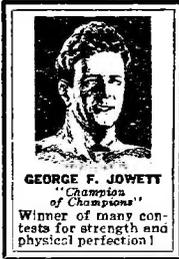
tremendous development that I am willing to stake my reputation that you can do the same... remember... if I fail it will cost you nothing!

Nothing Can Take The Place of My Weight—Resistance Method With Progressive Dumbbells!

The Jowett System features the weight resistance method that has been tested and endorsed by many of the world's most famous strong men. By using this proven, scientific system of graduated weights, you can quickly develop your muscles and broaden your chest!

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- Moulding a Mighty Grip, 25c
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- Strong Man Stunts Made Easy, 25c
- All 6 Books for \$1.00. l.

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Address _____



SKY FIGHTERS

Vol. VII, No. 1

LIEUT. EDWARD McCRAE, Editor

October, 1934

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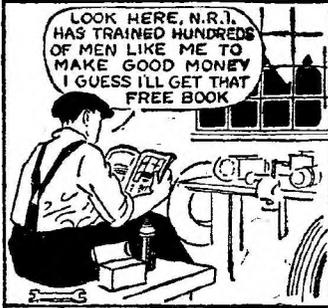
BUT JIM, I DON'T SEE HOW WE CAN AFFORD TO MARRY.



MARY'S RIGHT, I REALLY CAN'T SUPPORT A WIFE.



GUESS I HAVEN'T A RIGHT TO ASK A GIRL LIKE MARY TO MARRY AN ORDINARY MECHANIC.



LOOK HERE, N.R.I. HAS TRAINED HUNDREDS OF MEN LIKE ME TO MAKE GOOD MONEY. I GUESS I'LL GET THAT FREE BOOK.



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OH! JIM, IT'S WONDERFUL, NOW YOU'RE ON THE WAY TO SUCCESS. YES MARY, AND THERE'S A REAL FUTURE FOR US IN THIS RADIO FIELD.

I'LL TRAIN YOU AT HOME

In Your Spare Time For A

GOOD RADIO JOB

Mail the coupon now. Get the facts about Radio—the field with a future. N. R. I. training is the only training with the manufacture, sale and operation of Radio equipment. It fits you to go in business for yourself, service sets, operate on board ships, in broadcasting, television, aircraft, police Radio and many other jobs. My FREE book tells how you quickly learn at home to be a Radio Expert.

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J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 4K09
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.



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The man who has directed the Home-Study Training of men for the Radio Industry since any other man in America.



Read how these N. R. I. Graduates Succeeded



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"I am with R. C. A. Victor. I have been promoted several times. My salary ranged from \$30 to \$70 a week." Louis F. Lyet, 277 Harvey St., Philadelphia, Pa.



Spare Time Jobs Earn \$15 a Week
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Owes His Success to Radio Training
"Since 1929 I have earned my living in Radio. I owe my last three jobs to N. R. I. I am now in the main control room of one of the large broadcasting chains." Sergio A. De Somov, 1516 Library Ave., New York City.



J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 4K09
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me, send your book which points out the spare time and full time job opportunities in Radio and your 50-50 method of training men at home in spare time to become Radio Experts.

(Please print plainly.)

NAME..... AGE.....
ADDRESS.....
CITY..... STATE.....



A Personal Message from

CAPT. J. ERROLL BOYD



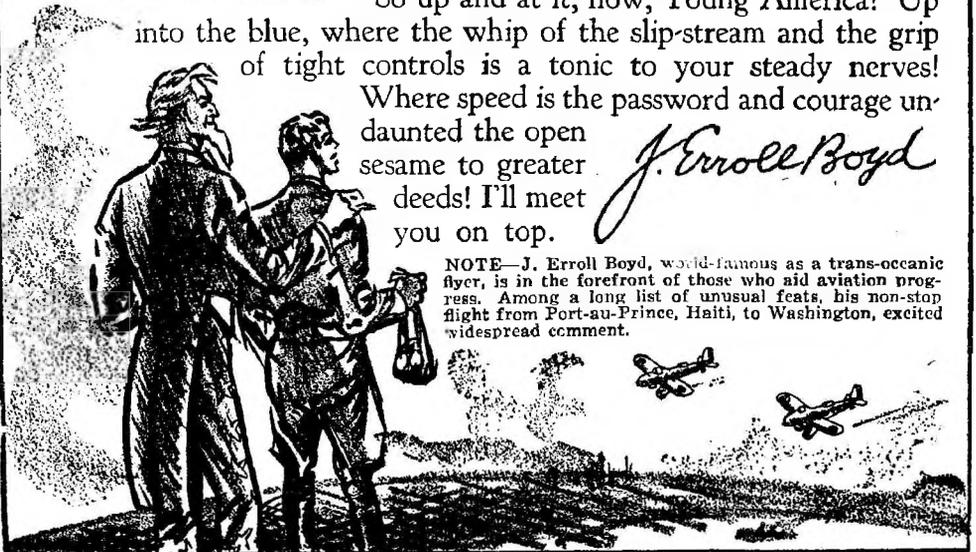
THE next war will be fought in the sky—a battle of birdmen! There will be no time, then, to learn and master the art of flying. The protection and fate of America will depend on those who have already trained and equipped themselves. Those commercially trained will be as valuable as those trained in the Army, Navy, or Marines!

So up and at it, now, Young America! Up into the blue, where the whip of the slip-stream and the grip of tight controls is a tonic to your steady nerves!

Where speed is the password and courage undaunted the open sesame to greater deeds! I'll meet you on top.

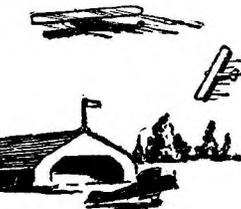
J. Erroll Boyd

NOTE—J. Erroll Boyd, world-famous as a trans-oceanic flyer, is in the forefront of those who aid aviation progress. Among a long list of unusual feats, his non-stop flight from Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to Washington, excited widespread comment.



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Good Pay Job
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WALTER HINTON: trail blazer, pioneer, explorer, author, instructor, **AVIATOR.** The first man to pilot a plane across the Atlantic, the famous NC-4, and the first to fly from 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 cuts many weeks and many dollars from flight instructions. Send for my big free book today.

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- Electrician
- Shop Foreman
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- Purchasing Agent
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- Radio Operator
- Airplane Mechanic
- Field Work

IN THE AIR:

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- Air Mail Pilot
- Aerial Photography
- Airport Manager
- Test Pilot
- Aerial Passenger Agent
- Private Pilot
- Weather Observer
- Flight Instructor
- Commercial Pilot
- Field Manager
- Transport Pilot

in their early thirties, or even younger. It is a young man's 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 can good livings from the business. And many, many 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.

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Mr. Walter Hinton, President 898-X
 Aviation Institute of U. S. A., Inc.
 1115 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, D. C.

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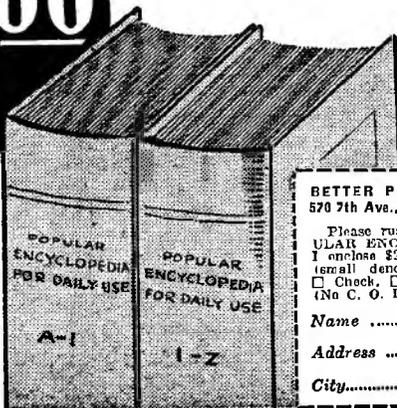
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- What causes Cancer?
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- What is the right way to ventilate a home?
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- Where is Manchuria?
- Is Astrology a Science?
- What are the symptoms of sleeping sickness?
- Who invented Movies?
- What firm once employed 115,000 men?

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REDUCE YOUR WAIST 3 INCHES IN 10 DAYS

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■ You will appear much slimmer at once, and in 10 short days your waist-line will actually be 3 inches smaller... three inches of fat gone...or it won't cost you one cent.

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■ Now there is an easy way to reduce without exercise, diet or drugs. The Weil Health Belt exerts a message-like action that removes fat with every move you make.

■ It supports the sagging muscles of the abdomen and quickly gives you an erect, athletic carriage. Many enthusiastic wearers write that it not only reduces fat but it also supports the abdominal walls and keeps the digestive organs in place...that they are no longer fatigued...and that it greatly increases their endurance. You will be more than delighted with the great improvement in your appearance.

NO DRUGS, NO DIETS, NO EXERCISES

■ For 12 years the Weil Belt has been accepted as ideal for reducing by men in all walks of life...from business men and office workers who find that it removes cumbersome fat with every movement... to active outdoor men who like the feeling of protection it gives.



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In a bathing suit... I was immense. The day I heard some children laugh at me I decided to get a Weil Belt.



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It seemed to support the abdominal walls and keep the digestive organs in place... and best of all, I became acceptable for insurance!

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Here You Are, Buddies!

Win a SWELL PRIZE in SKY FIGHTERS CONTEST "A"

GET ready to zoom to new heights of glory on the wings of your air knowledge.

Just put your ringsights on these ten questions:

1. What French engine beginning with the letter "S" was a radial motor?
2. In which branch of the service was Richthofen, the greatest of Germany's aces, before he entered aviation?
3. Was the synchronized Vickers gun fired by oil pressure or by means of mechanical gears connected to the engine?
4. Was the synchronized Spandau gun fired by oil pressure or by a system of cogs actuated by the engine?
5. What countries or country did Germany fight on the Eastern front?
6. Give names of the leading ace of each of the following countries at the end of the war: France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, United States.
7. Could a U. S. citizen be admitted to the French aviation section with no preliminary service in any other branch of the French army?
8. What was the name of the one plane manufactured in the United States which actually saw service at the front?
9. How many planes did an aviator have to down before he officially became an ace for the United States? For Great Britain?
10. In what country was the Lewis gun invented?

THEN TURN IN YOUR REPORT

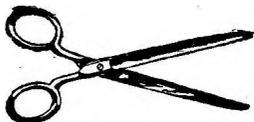
NOW do what the typical sky buzzard used to do after downing ten planes before breakfast—turn in an OFFICIAL REPORT to the home tarmac of SKY FIGHTERS. In it, list your answers to the ten questions above and also include a letter of 50 words telling what you think of this issue of SKY FIGHTERS. This is the first of a series of GREAT NEW CONTESTS.

For the best list of answers, accompanied by the best 50-word letter (and don't be afraid to criticize if you feel that way), we offer a GRAND PRIZE of a genuine leather flying helmet with goggles to match. These are not toy articles but the same as used by famous flyers, and mighty good looking. How would YOU like to be handed a set? We thought so!

To the next nine balloon-busters that almost grab the first prize but not quite, the judges will award genuine gabardine flying helmets as second prizes. These too, are the real thing, and will stand all the hard use you men will give them at the field. Mighty fine prizes!

Everyone allowed to compete but members of the staff of SKY FIGHTERS and their families. Have your entry in before November 30, 1934, or you'll be grounded and you won't get credit for your victories! Winners will be announced shortly after that date!

*Mail to SKY FIGHTERS, CONTEST EDITOR, 570 Seventh Avenue,
New York, N. Y., and Put a Big Letter "A" on the Envelope! Do It Now!*



TO MEN WHO WANT TO MAKE **more money**

You don't "get" raises these days—you earn them!

THESE are strenuous times in which we are living. Competition is keen . . . the demands for efficiency are constantly increasing.

The day is gone when you can "hit the boss" for a raise and get it "on your nerve."

You get raises these days on your ability — and your training!

Today a man must think about himself — and his future. Remember this: If you're just getting by, you're falling behind. Tomorrow your present job may be only a memory. The way to be sure of the future is to be sure of yourself!

Men are realizing this — a new era in the utilization of spare time to acquire specialized training is here! Men who a few years

ago thought they were "sitting on top of the world" today are coming to International Correspondence Schools for additional training. Still more are enrolling because they see the handwriting on the wall. They want to make more money.

Do you want to make more money? If you do, we challenge you to mark and mail this coupon! It has been the beginning of success for men all over the world.

But don't bother if you're a quitter! It takes fight and hard work to get ahead these days—and weak-kneed, spineless men have no more chance of helping themselves by spare-time study than they have of getting a raise tomorrow!

If you have the old fight, if you're willing to risk a three-cent stamp on yourself — mark and mail this coupon *today!*

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

"The Universal University"

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Building Estimating | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Heating <input type="checkbox"/> Ventilation | <input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry <input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wood Millworking | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Coal Mining Engineer |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Bridge Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Refrigeration | <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> Fruit Growing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Lighting | <input type="checkbox"/> Bridge and Building Foreman | <input type="checkbox"/> R. R. Locomotives | <input type="checkbox"/> Poultry Farming <input type="checkbox"/> Radio |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Welding, Electric and Gas | <input type="checkbox"/> Gas Engines <input type="checkbox"/> Diesel Engines | <input type="checkbox"/> R. R. Section Foreman | <input type="checkbox"/> Marine Engineer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Shop Blueprints | <input type="checkbox"/> Aviation Engines | <input type="checkbox"/> Highway Engineering | |

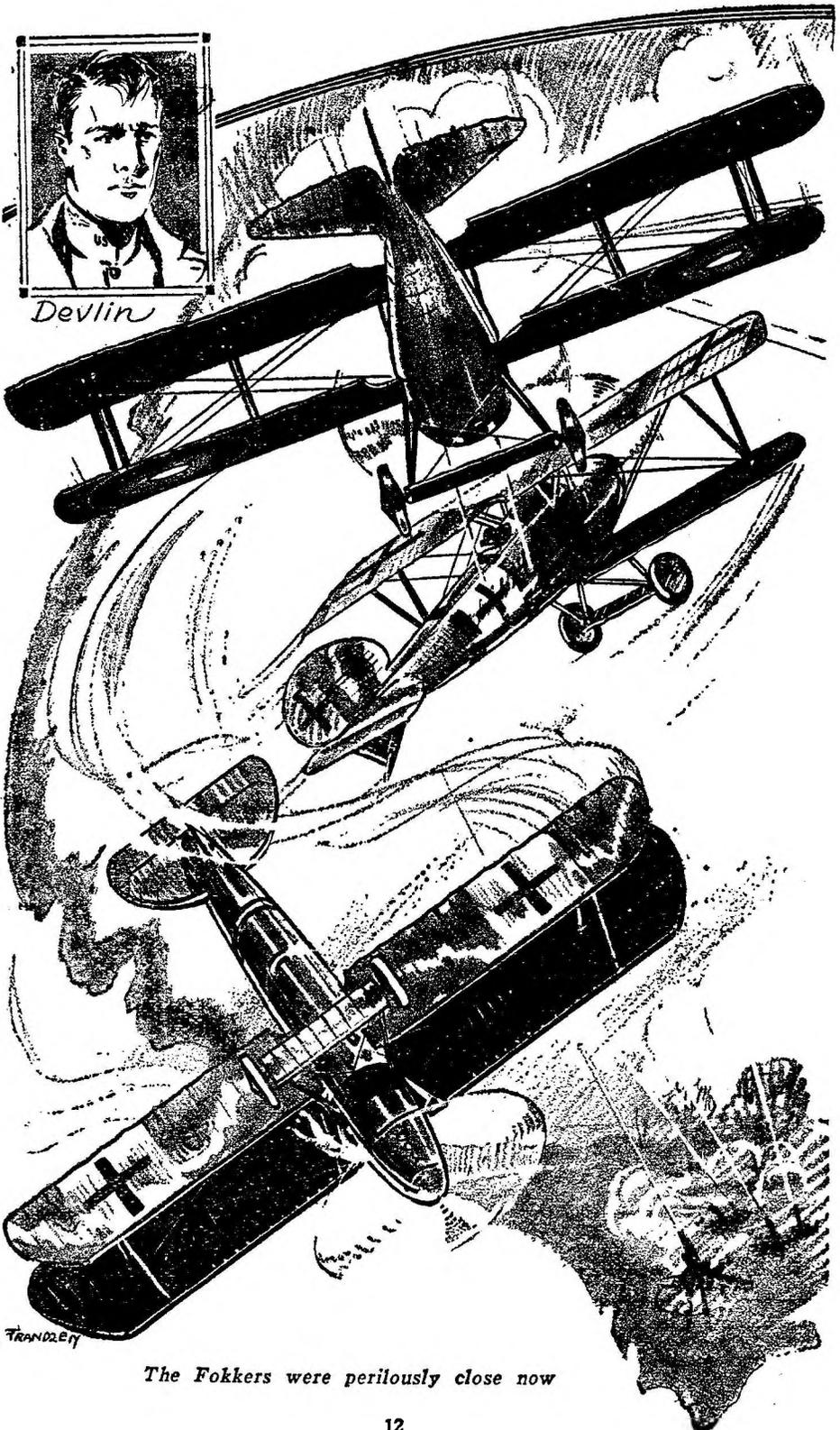
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Secretarial Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Complete Commercial | <input type="checkbox"/> College Preparatory |
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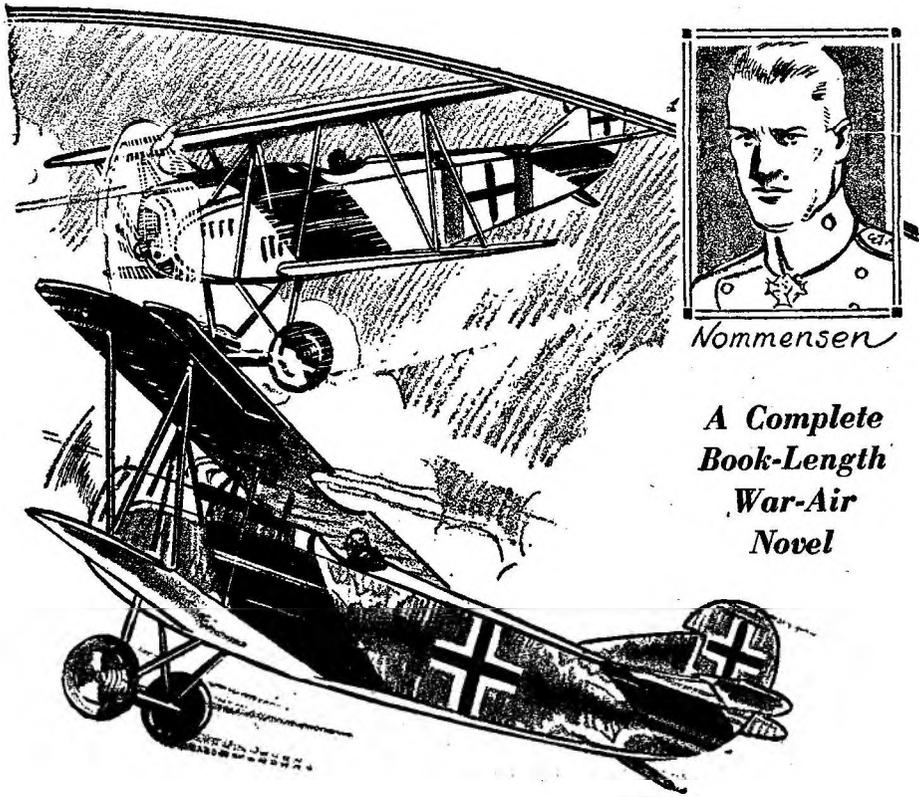
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Devlin

The Fokkers were perilously close now



*A Complete
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War-Air
Novel*

Dead Man's Wings

Follow Lieutenant Jack Devlin, Daredevil Flyer, Through the Battle-Scarred Blue as He Faces Diabolical Foes in this Hell-Busting Novel of Flaming Vickers, Screaming Spandaus and Savage Vengeance!

By **ARTHUR J. BURKS**

Author of "The Devil's Speedway," "The Bludgeon," etc.

CHAPTER I

Race Against Time

THE gaunt face of Lieutenant Jack Devlin was streaked with lines of fatigue, plainly evident even through the bloodstains which had dried on his cheeks. He was coming back out of Germany after accomplishing one of the

toughest jobs he had ever tackled—coming back with the knowledge that no sooner would he land his fleet Spad than another job of the same kind, or worse, would be handed him.

He had successfully flown into Germany, thirty kilometers behind Conflans, and dropped a spy. It had been done with a parachute.

And he had scarcely started back

before an Aviatik had attacked with savage ferocity. It had been the longest single combat Devlin had ever gone through. His wings had been riddled with Spandau bullets. His struts looked as though they wouldn't hold up to get him home, even if he were not attacked again.

And he was still fifteen kilometers inside the German lines. It didn't matter that he flew at the ceiling of his Spad, far above the elevation ordinarily part of the skylanes of the fighting ships of Germany. If, right now, he were compelled to dive, his wings would pull off.

HIS hand on the stick trembled with fatigue. His eyes were heavy as lead. His whole body was slumped down as though he would never be able to raise it again.

Jack Devlin had almost reached the end of his rope.

But one thought burned in his brain, something he would not forget this side of the grave. While he had been battling the Aviatik, two Fokkers had slanted down toward the spy he had dropped by chute—and had done the ghastly, the unforgivable. They had circled the helpless falling man, and had peppered his chute with lead.

The chuter was a spy, yes; but even a spy deserved a chance for his life. Steven McGregor was given none. The two Fokker pilots had played with him. They had all but ripped the chute to bits over his head.

All his life, hereafter, Devlin would see McGregor drifting slowly down, while the Fokker pilots amused themselves by cutting at his umbrella and his shroud lines, spinning faster around him as he neared the ground. They had waited until he was within five hundred feet of the soil—and then come in close, making his body jump and jerk in the shroud lines like a dead

fly caught in a spider web and stirred by a high wind.

They hadn't been satisfied merely with killing McGregor; they had hammered away at his body, ripping it to bits, smashing at it without let-up, until the bundle which had been a man, bloodstained and ghastly, had settled to earth.

The least they could have done was land below him and take him prisoner. Even then he would have faced a firing squad, but he would have had a chance for his life. To kill a man in a falling chute was the most horrible breach of ordinary humanity a flyer could be guilty of—and they hadn't stopped with that. Even when it sprawled on the ground they kept hammering at his body, flying over the spot where it lay.

Some day, Devlin promised himself, he would punish those two whose identification marks he would never forget. Now he must get back to report, so that someone might do the job at which McGregor had failed.

A SENSE of duty kept him going; that and the knowledge that after a cigarette and a cup of coffee, and treatment for his wounds, he would feel differently about things, be ready as always to take on the toughest jobs Wing could hand him.

"But haven't they anybody else fool enough to tackle these things?" he asked himself. "A guy succeeds at a job and they give him another with the thought that where he has succeeded once he can succeed again. They never stop to think that each new job increases the odds against his survival. Oh, well, if I get back I suppose I'll volunteer for everything that comes along. I should have listened to the old-timers, who never speak up for anything!"

But he knew, deep in his heart, that he shouldn't have done anything of the kind. He wasn't an

old-timer. He was twenty-two years of age and had been in American air just over a year. He had seven German planes to his credit, and three Austrian planes he couldn't claim because he had knocked them down while on a special mission, where they couldn't be confirmed by Allied officers.

"I'm tired!" he groaned to himself. "How can a guy keep on going and going and going? For weeks I've asked myself that, and kept right on moving."

SUDDENLY he straightened in his pit. Some of the tiredness went out of him, for coming up toward his level, in speedy spirals, and some five kilometers ahead, was a Fokker. He had expected this long since. It meant that his lonely fight with the Aviatik had finally been reported ahead, and that word had gone out that he mustn't get home. If it could be proved that he had dropped a spy he would himself be treated as a spy if captured.

There was no mistaking the intent of the rising German. Devlin gritted his teeth. He was almost done. Everything that could happen to an Allied airman had happened to him—except death. And he was beginning to wonder, paradoxically, if the surcease of death would ever be granted him.

Often he had gone to bed with the unspoken hope in his heart that he would die painlessly in his sleep and never have to waken again. He had cursed himself for the desire, and had fought even harder upon waking, as though to make up to his country for his rebellious thoughts.

He glanced at his map. He knew that he had barely enough gas to get him home to the field which was westward from Masmunster. He couldn't take time out for a fight, and yet he didn't see how a fight could be avoided.

His eyes were narrowed. He had to get back to make out his report, and no German must be allowed to down him. After he had got home, maybe he would get a trip to Paris, or somewhere, where he could forget the sky battles which seemed to be without end. No matter how many Germans he knocked down, it seemed that anywhere from one to a dozen rose into the blue to take their places. He was fed up, sick and tired of the whole blasted war.

But still he must go through the motions.

He put his nose down slightly, studied his wings to estimate how much they would stand, and slanted under full power, straight for his own field. He wouldn't, he told himself, deviate from his course unless absolutely compelled to do so by attacking Germans.

His eyes became bleaker when he saw two more German crates bearing in to head him off. They were taking no chances on his escaping them this time. They were intent on making sure that this was his last flight. Did they know definitely that he had dropped a spy? If he could be sure that they didn't maybe he would allow himself to be forced to land and taken prisoner. That would definitely end the war for him.

HE swore at himself angrily for his feelings. After all, this was war, and every soldier owed it to the flag of his allegiance to do his damndest as long as he could move. He wiped any disloyalty from his mind, kept his crate in its long glide, and watched, while his speed gradually increased, as the three German crates closed on him with the efficient surety of the Germans.

They hadn't signaled one another, he knew, but the trio were working together as surely as though they had planned it all in advance. Each one saw where he could fit properly

into a concerted attack on this returning spy-dropper, and each was moving to his appointed place. It had all the juggernaut-like surety of a sentence of execution being carried inexorably into effect.

Devlin had forgotten his fatigue. This was a race against time and death. If he couldn't get through the lines before they reached him he must down all three, or force them to quit, or himself die. It was as simple as that—and he had already been through a nerve-shattering hell. It was almost too much.

BUT while he awaited the coming of doom he became an American again. After all, plenty of Americans were fed up. He wondered how French, British and German soldiers stood it, when so many of them had been fighting without let-up for over three years.

He saw that he wasn't going to slide over the oncoming trio and win free. There would be a fight. The first Fokker he had seen would be the first to reach him. But—and he grinned as he noticed—her pilot was careful. He would attack alone if he had to, but he preferred to have help. He was keeping to one side of Devlin's line of flight, waiting for his comrades to join him. It wasn't to be a fight then, against odds, but a simple execution.

"I'll show the kraut-eating Heines!" Devlin told himself through clenched teeth. In the prospect of battle he forgot that a few moments before he had been too tired and dispirited to show them anything or wish to.

Planes to right and left were very close. He saw their pilots exchange waves of the hands. He gave his crate a bit more juice, though he noted that the wings were beginning to bow back with the speed of his glide under power. Well, let them go. There was no disgrace if a

man's wings folded about his neck. There might be if he were defeated by the flyers for Germany.

Devlin's hand hovered over the trips of his Vickers, pressed them. Bullets speared through his propeller arc. His guns were in working order. The trio of Fokkers were getting into position. The first was disputing Devlin's flight to the front. The other two were planning to take him from either flank.

He kept his glide, even increased his speed a trifle. The first Fokker rose directly into his path. Devlin slammed the throttle full open, roared directly at the Fokker with his Vickers going. The German could roll out of line of sights or receive the nose of the Spad in the middle of his cockpit, just as he elected. But the German did neither. His Fokker hovered, hesitated—and it was Devlin himself who had to steepen his dive to escape the Fokker.

The Boche crate nosed up furiously as Devlin went under it, then fell so quickly that Devlin held his breath as it slipped past his tail. He let his breath out in a sigh of satisfaction as the Fokker burst into flames and dropped toward the earth with a comet-tail of orange flames. The kill had been easy!

THE other two came in faster now. Frantically Devlin looked at his gas supply. There wasn't possibly time for a fight if he were to get inside his own lines. Even now the chances that he could stretch his glide to the edge of his own field were slim indeed.

He decided to run for it, while he gritted his teeth and swore at his own impotency. But the best flyer living couldn't fly and fight without gasoline to keep his motor going; and without his motor, his guns and his wings were utterly useless.

But he could see the lines now,



*They all but ripped
the chute to pieces
over his head*

and knew that if he weren't shot down by his enemies, he would at least fall within Allied territory when his gasoline gave out. He even dared to increase his speed slightly.

Devlin fingered the trips of his guns. They had jammed! But it was scarcely surprising when he considered how much they had been used during the past few hours. He hammered at the breech mechanism with hands which were numbed by his desperate blows.

One of the Germans slanted past him, close enough to see what he did. And he saw the German's face break into a smile that covered his

face like a mask. The German threw back his head and laughed. Devlin could almost hear the laughter. The German mocked at his predicament, which made it possible for him to knock Devlin down without the slightest danger to himself.

Cold, sullen anger burned within Devlin. He himself, whatever duty might have dictated, had never deliberately killed a man who couldn't fight back. And though he would have resented receiving his life from the hands of the Germans in this fashion, the knowledge that they intended to shoot him like a dog, and in the back besides, was even worse than to have his life given back to

him. Sportsmen didn't fight like that. And there were two of them!

"If I live to get through this," he apostrophized the Germans, "I'll never stop until I've downed you both—preferably together, just to show you what difference guns make!"

The nearer German banked away to join his wingmate.

The grim irony of all this rested in the fact that the two Fokkers were the same which hadn't given McGregor a Chinaman's chance!

Devlin looked back as the two Fokkers swung into position. They would soon be chattering at him with their deadly Spandaus, and he realized from the perfect flying of the two crates that the men behind the guns would know how to handle their weapons with complete efficiency.

And the next moment twin hails of lead hummed and snapped past his ears. He looked back at his enemies, whose grim faces he could see through the blurs of their propeller arcs. They were purposefully intent on the job of killing him.

A SLEDGEHAMMER seemed to crash down upon Devlin's head. But he didn't fall. He didn't even lose consciousness. Everything seemed to become suddenly unreal. The sky rocked. The earth spun. The stick fell from his hand and began to thresh madly about in his crate. Something fell into his eyes and he saw the world through the color of blood. He knew that he had been hit—and nothing seemed especially to matter.

The plane was spinning, he knew that much; and from both sides, from the rear, even from in front, the two Fokker pilots were lacing him with lead. His Spad shivered and shook to their impacts.

An odor, faint yet unmistakable, came to his nostrils. It came, the

odor of burning gasoline, of stinking oil, coincident with the blossoming of black smoke from under his motor housing. He leaned his knee against the stick instinctively.

CHAPTER II

Back From the Dead



OMEHOW, he never could remember just how, Devlin managed to drop the right wing of his crate. Somehow, anyway, it had come out of its spin. The whirling Fokkers were unreal, almost invisible, as they clung to his falling Spad like a pair of savage hornets. He could see them dimly, and hear the droning of their Mercedes as from a vast distance. The whole world seemed to be drowned in a sea of sound, a composite of roaring Spandaus and motors, of shrieking wings.

He noted now that his own propeller was visible. That meant that somehow, when he hadn't known that he had done it, he had cut his switch—or that his gasoline had played out before he had expected it to. But he understood, in that dim way in which he realized everything, why he could hear all the other sounds. He himself, save for the screaming of wind through his superstructure, dropped earthward without sound.

No wonder the others seemed so loud. He could even hear, rising up to meet him, the chattering of Maxims and Brownings, of Lewises and Chauchauts on the ground below, where Allies and Germans were battling to the death for little strips of ground which were of no value to anyone.

The war was rising to meet him—the war which men fought in the trenches. And he was dropping down from the war which birdmen

fought, hoping to land within his own lines.

There were little hiatuses in his thinking, as though for seconds at a time he had lost consciousness. Yet even in the midst of these, he managed to keep the Spad with her wing down, so that the flame from under his motor housing was washed away from him, along the other upward-slanting wings.

And around him, like hawks which know that the fall of their prey is certain, darted and dived and spun the pair of Fokkers which he hadn't been able to engage. They were still unreal, though in a hazy way Devlin knew that they were hammering his crate to a sieve, and that their bullets must inevitably strike him in a vital spot and put his lights out entirely.

He was conscious that his head was lolling on his cockpit coaming and that his body was almost inert in its seat. His feet were so jammed against the controls that the plane continued to sideslip, with ghastly speed, toward the ground.

His bleared eyes, which he kept open by force of tremendous will, noted how the flames were denuding the upward slanting wings of fabric. He knew that when he crashed not even the Angel Gabriel could pull him out of the crate before it exploded and burned. He couldn't draw himself out; that was certain. Therefore, why fight against the inevitable?

BUT he did fight, even though it was only with his mind. He refused to die or even to think of death in connection with himself.

One of the Fokkers dived over him, raking the falling wreckage of his crate with Spandau lead. The bullets missed him by a series of never-to-be-explained miracles and something clicked in his brain—the identifying marks of the two Fok-

kers. He would remember them, he told himself, even though he must look back from beyond the grave.

But still he couldn't move. He couldn't do anything but wait. And as he waited, the identifying marks of those two Fokkers, which were determinedly following him into the very ground, never left him.

THE sound of ground battle, he guessed, was now slightly behind him. He found reason to be happy at this, for it proved that he wouldn't fall on, and be buried in, German territory. What more could a man on the brink of death desire?

He fought with an amazing effort of will to get his right hand into position to loosen his safety belt, even as he knew that he couldn't make it before the ground received his Spad and shattered its wreckage all over the place. But he fought on just the same, refusing to look down to see whether or not his hand obeyed the will of his brain and unfastened the belt.

The ground seemed to hurl an echo up at him. The sound of battle shrieked to him that he must crash in within a matter of seconds. But, miracle of miracles, his body was even more limply affixed in his pit, proof that his hand *had* unfastened the belt, even though he hadn't felt the caress of it under his palm.

But what good did it do? He couldn't level off, was as far from being able to save himself as before.

The Fokkers dived over him again, deluging his crate with lead, but on her side as the Spad was they couldn't seem to get a straight shot at the pilot who now hung partially out of the pit. Devlin didn't even hear the crates their last time over. And this time, satisfied that this American had flown his last flight, the Fokkers zoomed away, followed by bullets from the rifles of American doughboys, and the projectiles

of anti-aircraft. But even the dough-boys and the Archie fires, watching the fall of the Spad, knew that they hadn't been able to save the man.

He was doomed. All the odds were against his being alive before he went into the ground. After he struck—well, they would, hours later, take his blackly charred body out of his ribbed funeral pyre. Or the projectiles of their own artillery, away behind the lines, would crash down on the wreckage, making sure that, in the event the Germans were able to move forward, they would be unable to salvage any secrets of construction from the debris.

The Spad went in. It struck on its left wing and did a strange thing. It cartwheeled so quickly that the flames and smoke had no opportunity to play over the cockpit wherein Jack Devlin lay like a dead man. It cartwheeled, slowing as it spun, and the bundle of humanity which had been Jack Devlin cartwheeled with it. His body fell out of the pit as the Spad spun.

The ship spun again. It struck a shell hole, and fell away from the direction toward which its pilot leaned, as though the fates themselves were swinging their influence so that Jack Devlin might not die in the flames.

THE body of the spy-dropper fell free. And because it fell limply, and slithered into the mud where rain had filled another shell hole almost rim-full, the body took no injury save a jarring which could scarcely do it serious harm!

The Maxims increased their chattering. The Lewises and Brownings answered the chattering of the Maxims. On the German side, men in *feldgrau*, wearing *pickelhaube* helmets, lifted their heads and tried to make out the condition of the flyer at the edge of the shell hole. Men in khaki did likewise; and bul-

lets hammered back and forth as opposing riflemen tried to pick off their enemies before they could do further damage.

Devlin had landed in the muck and slime, and the force of his hurling had slid him through it until his body, head uppermost, lay over the rim of the hole. But for the speed of his fall, and the fact that the fates must have been serving him, he would surely have drowned in the slime.

A HARDBOILED sergeant peered over his protective barrier, deliberately disregarding the bullets which snapped past his face. He turned and spoke profanely over his shoulder to the men on the firestep behind him.

"The bird buzzard moved out there, I think," he said conversationally. "I reckon we'd better drag him in before the artillery plants a couple of flying freight cars in his breadbasket."

He didn't ask for volunteers, though his statement might have been taken as a hint to the men around him. But they were veterans, and veterans didn't volunteer for anything. The sergeant considered. A lot could happen to a man out in the open while a sergeant was asking for volunteers.

So the sergeant spat a stream of tobacco juice to his left. A dough-boy swore because his shoes immediately needed shining—as though they didn't always need shining in the trenches—and then swore afresh as he watched the sergeant's heels disappear over the parados of the trench. The sergeant wasn't waiting for help. He was going on his own account.

He reached Devlin, flopped down beside him and pulled the flyer onto his back after feeling for his heart and finding it fairly busy for that of a potentially dead man. The sergeant hesitated until the whispering

of lead above his body should subside for a moment. Then he heaved himself to his feet, with amazing speed for a man who drawled so lazily in his speech, and made a mad run for his lines again.

He made it, rolling into the trench with Devlin on his back.

Outside, the Spad was a raging furnace.

Nobody gave it any thought. Its work was done anyhow. The sergeant sat on the firestep, industriously chewing tobacco, his jaws distended with the size of his cud. His dirty fingers were feeling over the skull of Jack Devlin.

"He may have a bellyful of lead," said the sergeant. "But I don't think so. See this here crease in his skull? Well, one bullet did that, my friends. It was enough to have knocked a bull back-end upwards. No wonder he came down. Well, I hate to waste good chewing tobacco, but maybe this buzzard would like to fly again."

The sergeant removed the chaw from his mouth, hesitated, divided it into two parts, put one back in his mouth, and smeared the other half into the gash on Devlin's head. Then he placed him on the firestep and sent word for the stretcher-bearers.

THE tobacco-chewing sergeant was just one of the many non-coms in the lines, just one of the lads who served.

"You oughta get a medal for this, Serg," said one of his men.

"I'll likely get patted in the face with a shovel next time I go over," said the sergeant. "Non-coms never get famous in this here *guerre*. The world never hears of you an' me."

The sergeant never dreamed that he was wrong—nor that some months later one Sergeant Alvin C. York was to become known to the world as the greatest individual hero of

the war. And the rescue of Jack Devlin was not even listed among his accomplishments!

IN his black dream of oblivion, Jack Devlin was pursued through ebon space by two Fokkers with certain identifying marks. They never gave him a rest; and even when, how much later he had no way of knowing, he awakened to the smell of disinfectants in his nostrils, and diagnosed a hospital, he still remembered the two Germans who thought they had destroyed him.

He could look back at his dreams which had been so real. In them he had lived over and over again his fight with the two Germans—and what they had done to McGregor. Devlin should have been killed—and hadn't been. The faces of the two Germans, gloating over his misfortune, and their cowardly murder of McGregor, were sharply etched on the retina of his memory.

And it didn't help him any, when he first returned to consciousness, to receive a visit from a white-faced Intelligence agent.

"Too bad you didn't come out of it after you crashed, Devlin, if only for a minute. If you had been able to tell us that McGregor hadn't landed, nobody can estimate how many lives might have been saved. As it was, we did not receive news of a certain attack, which we expected McGregor to get for us—and it came as a surprise, in a totally unexpected quarter. The Allies, thinned out in that sector, were driven back three kilometers. It will cost many more lives to get that territory back!"

Devlin groaned. All this, because two cowardly Germans had murdered McGregor.

But he shut McGregor from his mind, forcing himself to forget in order that he might concentrate on the Germans whose faces had fol-

lowed him, literally, into the very shadow of death.

For now he had come out of the Valley of the Shadow to avenge himself upon the Germans—all Germans, but especially upon the two—for what had been done to the Allies, McGregor and himself.

For under cover of the fight which had driven Devlin to the very gates of hell, a certain *Leutnant* Woller had been able to slip over the Allied lines with one of Germany's greatest secret agents in his after cockpit—to drop him successfully and return!

It was another score against the two murderers which must be wiped out!

CHAPTER III

Strange World



JACK DEVLIN, on his own power, walked out of the hospital into a strange world. Far behind the lines, the war did not obtrude here. It was a place where the birds sang in trees about the compound, trees which hadn't been blasted by the shells, the flames and the ghastly gases of mortal conflict.

The odor in the air had nothing in it of decay, of blood, of burned powder.

Away from the smell of antiseptic, the air was fresh and cool. Devlin staggered a little, for his legs were weak. He knew, because he had looked at himself in mirrors he had passed on the way out, that he was gaunt and thin—so much so that his uniform fitted him loosely, making him look even taller than his six feet of height.

His usually ruddy cheeks were very pale. His gray eyes were tired and deep sunken—and where the bullet of one of the Germans had

creased him was a thin streak in which the hair was becoming gray.

Devlin had gone into the Valley of the Shadow and was coming back again to life—and to the hell of war.

And he was light-hearted about it. Strange thoughts had come to him during his convalescence. Queer conceits had grown in his mind. He was not overly superstitious, though he ascribed to the various little superstitions all pilots affected to believe, but his conceit struck him as amusing. And he found himself, therefore, strangely immune to any sort of fear, and looked forward to his return to active duty at the front with real eagerness.

And only—how long ago had it been when they had taken him into the hospital without giving him any real chance to survive?—only a while ago he had been fed up, had almost wished for death to bring him surcease from the endless tragedy of conflict.

He chuckled as he remembered, and there was something joyous in his chuckling. He staggered a little with weakness, and his hand went out to touch the boll of a tree he was passing. The feel of the rough bark, of the tree rampant with life because it did not know war, was pleasant to his hand. Like the man in the ancient myth who was renewed when he touched the bosom of Mother Earth, fresh strength and courage seemed to flow into him from the sturdy tree.

OUTSIDE a motorcycle orderly with a side-car awaited him. The orderly grinned at him.

"You look kinda peaked, Lieutenant," he said.

"Yeah, I do, son; but I never felt better in my life. I'm raring to go."

"Some of you guys never know when you've got enough, do you?"

"I can't," said Devlin enigmatically, "ever get enough—not now."

There was something strange in his words which caused the orderly to look at him queerly. His eyes were alight with something for which the orderly could find no name.

His cheeks were flushed as though he had a fever.

"You quite all right, sir?" asked the orderly, in the act of starting his motor.

Devlin laughed.

"I'm not batty, if that's what you mean," he said, "though I can't say I blame you for thinking so. I'm really having the time of my life. I shall continue to do so until I die—only, you see, I won't die!"

The orderly's face was a study.

He lowered his eyes, started the motor of the cycle, watched Devlin slide into the side-car. Devlin looked at him.

"Are you a good driver, son?" he asked. "Never mind, it doesn't really matter—not to me—whether you are or not. But I was just thinking of a friend of mine who went up to the front from Paris in one of these gadgets. He had a desire for top speed and the orderly obliged. The whole thing ended when the orderly tried to pass a tree at ninety miles an hour, having forgotten the side-car; which plastered itself, amidst the smeared remains of this friend of mine, against the tree."

THE orderly's mouth hung open. "What a hell of a thought," he said.

"No, it isn't, really. If you're a good driver, son, I want you to step on it all the way to the tarmac of the 11th Pursuit Group, see? Take all the chances you want to. I've a theory to work out."

The orderly was sure now that his passenger was a bit "off," but one couldn't say as much to an officer.

Besides, this orderly liked to speed himself.

"All right, sir," he said.

The motorcycle spun quickly, lifting the side-car. Devlin laughed. The sudden motion, which might well have spilled him all over the place, hadn't even given him a start. His heart action, he was sure, hadn't increased by so much as a beat per minute. The experience had been mildly exhilarating, that was all.

THE car spun away. In a matter of seconds the trees along the way had become a green blur. Devlin held his helmet in his hand. The wind, which he sucked into his lungs in great gulps, played over his face like a caress. His eyes grew brighter, more eager for what might lie ahead.

The wheels of the motorcycle skimmed the ground. They dropped into ruts, jumped many feet, jarred Devlin from head to heels, but he only laughed his enjoyment. Lord, it was good to be alive—just to be alive and able to travel like this, at top speed, with the wind in your face and tearing through your hair like invisible hands.

The road was a blur that wound across the countryside. Ahead was a marching column of troops. Devlin looked at the orderly, who hadn't offered to slow down in the slightest. The troops slipped to the right and the motorcycle careened past them. Their oaths of exasperation were lost in the wind of the cycle's passing. Officers shouted and brandished their arms. Devlin laughed aloud.

The orderly looked grimly to the front, watching for ruts, for turns in the road, for puddles of mud which might cause disaster—and he drove like a man possessed. Either the desire for speed possessed him, or he was eager to be through with this wild man who was his passenger. Devlin didn't care which, as

long as the motorcycle driver kept traveling.

The barking of the motorcycle reminded Devlin of the chattering of Vickers and Spandaus, and he found that he was eager for the sounds of guns—his own and those of the enemy. His strange thoughts made him wonder what manner of man he had become.

THE kilometers reeled back of them. They cut out of the road to escape a stalled ambulance, or ammunition truck, or food wagon. They skirted columns of infantry slowly moving up to add their bit to the horror of war. They were in the center of the road and traveling like the wind, bouncing, careening, traveling at eighty miles an hour. They were off the road, but still with the motor full out, and the orderly clinging to his handlebars like grim death.

Devlin looked at the orderly, but the orderly did not look at him.

The orderly was grimly intent on his business, which was to get Devlin to the tarmac of the 11th as fast as he had expressed a wish to reach it.

Now they were coming into the zone of the big shells. Ahead and to the right a high explosive shell, which had come miles out of Germany, dropping yet other miles down the sky, struck in a field and exploded, geysering black earth skyward. Yellowish smoke spread over the land, after the debris had settled back. Off to the left another shell exploded.

Far ahead, and a little to the right, columns of troops, in line of combat groups, were marching over the horizon, like figures on a frieze seen dimly through a screen. Devlin knew that they carried bayoneted rifles in their hands—and probably were swearing, and in deadly fear that the next big shell would destroy them.

Even as he thought this a big shell did strike among one of the groups—and parts of things which had been men went upward with the dirt and debris. And the yellow smoke spread over the land again—and in the midst of it he saw men fling down their rifles, clutch at their throats, and tumble face foremost into the dirt.

Something clutched at his own throat as he watched, and all his hatred for the enemy came back. And he remembered—because the vision had never been out of his mind even in delirium—the two Fokkers which had ridden him into the ground the day he had “died.”

The motorcycle turned right, angling off to the southeast. The going became rougher. Trees here were denuded of their branches, and some of them had ugly splotches on them like fungoid growths, caused by the searing bite of gas which at one time had possessed this land—and would possess it again if the Germans were ever able to retrace their steps and retake the soil they had lost.

OVERHEAD, as they approached the field, a triad of Spads was flying eastward. The droning of their motors was lost in the cracking of the motorcycle's sounds, but Devlin could hear every beat of each of the Hissos, could smell the odor of burned gasoline, could taste hot oil on his lips. In his mind he wiped his face clear of the streaks of oil and of blood, and swore softly at Germans who attacked. Only, as yet, no Germans had attacked the three Spads. They vanished into the east, behind a drifting pile of cumulus clouds.

The motorcycle roared on. Devlin was conscious that a dozen times orderly and passenger escaped death by a miracle. But it didn't trouble him. He took it for granted because of this strange conceit of his in

which reason caused him to place no credence whatever, yet which reminded him so forcibly of the old adage:

"Lightning never strikes twice in the same place."

He knew the saying was not true, but that didn't matter, either. In his case it might be true. If he held to the conceit there was nothing he couldn't do—and it did no harm, silly as reason told him it was. It was like a dying man willing himself to keep on living—such willing did more to bring him back than all the medicines of doctors or instruments of surgeons.

It would do no harm to keep his belief.

THE motorcycle drew up before headquarters building, 11th Pursuit Group. There was a lilt to Devlin's stride as he stepped from the side-car, carrying his helmet in his hand, and entered the office of Major Lonsdale, commander of the 11th. The major looked up as a shadow fell across the desk. Then he jumped to his feet and grasped the thin hand of the man who had come back.

"Lord, Devlin," he said, "it's good to see you back again. We all know what happened to you. I suppose you know you should really have died? That you're living on overtime? That every minute you keep on living is borrowed?"

Devlin grinned.

"Yes, sir, only I don't look at it that way. Having died once, sir, I have the crazy feeling that I can't be killed again—and a crazier feeling that I'd like to try it out as soon as possible. Give me anything to do you wish to and I'll do it—understand, I won't *try* to do it, I *will* do it!"

Lonsdale looked at Devlin as strangely as the orderly had. But he waved his hand, granting Devlin permission to begin his duties.

CHAPTER IV

The Sentence



WITH little real belief that the pilots of the two Fokkers which had ridden him into the ground had survived the weeks since he had been in the hospital fighting for his life, Devlin described the markings of their crates to Lonsdale. He found, as he explained, that eagerness crept into his voice. He knew he *wanted* the two Germans still to be alive and fighting.

Lonsdale considered for a moment, his eyes intent on Devlin. Then he said:

"They're both still flying, and raising hell in this sector. I'd like to see them downed. One's name is Hans Nommensen—funny name for a German—and the other is Luther Morgen. Both are aces several times over. Any ideas about them?"

"Yes, but if I told you what they were you'd believe me crazy. If I am, it's a sort of happy kind of crazy, I guess. And now, I'm getting busy. I suppose I still have *carte blanche* except when on a definitely assigned mission?"

"Of course."

"Then I'm on my way."

"What do you plan for right now?"

"Just a friendly little visit to Baron Laubestein's drome across the way. I have a yen to drop friendly letters to the enemy."

There was a blazing light in Devlin's eyes, and Lonsdale felt that it boded no good to the recipients of those letters. But he didn't blame Devlin. The man had suffered more at the hands of the Germans than anyone, to Lonsdale's knowledge, had in this war.

He knew his man too well to ask too many questions. Devlin, a smile on his lips, a lilt in his speech, eager-

ness written all over him, quitted the office.

Lonsdale went to the door of the office to watch the thin man stride across the tarmac. He grinned. Devlin looked as though he were almost able to fly without wings. The major grinned thoughtfully to himself. He had a feeling that Devlin would be heard from, beginning right now.

Devlin shook hands with the sergeant in charge of the greaseballs who would handle his crate. His own Spad had been lost, but there was an extra crate ready for him. Devlin checked it carefully as soon as it had been drolled to the dead-line. His lips still held a faint smile as his plan began to click into place. He scarcely heard the never-ending thunder of guns, scarcely felt the quivering air as big shells burst behind the Allied lines. He was conscious of nothing save his plan and the carrying out of it.

The prop ticked over. The motor caught at once, roared into life. Devlin laughed aloud. Never had he heard a sound which gave him such pleasant sensations. The Hisso was a sweet motor. The Spad tugged at its chocks as though its pilot's impatience had communicated itself to the senseless wood and fabric of the ship. Devlin climbed into the pit, adjusting helmet and goggles.

TWO Spads came down and landed.

Their pilots climbed out before Devlin was ready to get away. They recognized him, waved at him, raced across the field to shake his hand. He had no time for words and did not cut his motor to listen to their congratulations. But he knew that they, too, believed he was living on borrowed time. The thought tickled him.

He settled down in his pit, grinning over the cockpit coaming at his wingmates—Lieutenants Sanders and

Harbord. They grinned back, a bit doubtfully. They had noted the paleness of his cheeks, felt that he was pushing himself too rapidly. But he wouldn't stay to be talked out of flying. Besides, it would have been a waste of time; he could no more have kept from flying today than he could have remained flat on his back on a hospital cot.

HE signaled for the chocks to be yanked free, after he had spent some time with pencil and a piece of paper, the latter rubbed out smooth against the side of the cockpit. He had weighted the paper with a bullet. Now he thrust it into the pocket of his flying togs.

The chocks were pulled. Devlin fed the juice to his crate. The air vibrated with the savage roaring of the Hisso as her wheels started rolling.

Down the field, tail off in a brief run, flashed the trim gray Spad. Devlin held the stick forward until he had flying speed, marveling at the fact that in spite of his recent experiences, he had no slightest fear of flying, of the air, or of German guns. Maybe, after all, he couldn't be killed; maybe, after all, what he had spoken in jest might have the semblance of truth to it. There were things over and beyond the ordinary understanding of men which no amount of reasoning could explain away. Maybe this was one of those things.

He yanked the stick back into his belly when the field under his wheels had become a brown river flowing blurredly backward, when the blasted trees ahead, and to right and left, had become mere walls without identity—when the wall ahead was rushing at him with express-train speed.

Then the trees at the end of the field were under him and he was banking away toward German-held skies. Once off the field, with the

even droning of the Hisso in his ears, he lifted his nose for altitude to cross the lines. He had no mind to be downed by Archie fire before his scheme had had a chance to work out. Not, of course; that he had the slightest idea that he would be in danger from Archie shells, no matter how close he flew to the gunners, or how slowly he traveled while they aligned their sights on him.

NOW he could see the trenches under him. Men were crossing No-Man's-Land with bayonets at high port. The sun glinted on the steely weapons, which so soon were to be dyed with the deep red of humanity's life blood. The opposing forces clashed, and the bayonets came down to the position for thrusting, parrying, jabbing.

Then Devlin was past them, while behind and above him the black flowers of the Archies blossomed vainly. Nothing had come even close to him. His altitude was nine thousand feet. He was already deep in German territory. Off to his right an Albatross swerved in his direction, but Devlin sheered off, went on toward the field he wished to surprise with the strangest sentence of death ever passed upon human beings.

He laughed as he recalled his intention, and fingered the piece of paper in his pocket. Grimly he flew on. German planes were approaching from several directions now, and as a sort of after thought he tripped his Vickers, listened with a grin of satisfaction as bullets fed through the arc of his propeller in response to the touch of his thumb. He was ready. The Spad was ready from prop to tail-skid, and the Vickers were in perfect working order, ready for the hunt.

Devlin stared ahead toward the field, whose outlines were beginning to show through rifts in the broken woods below. Now he could see the

field. There were many crates at the deadline. Mechanics were busy with the crates, under the lashing authority of gutturally commanding officers and non-coms. They hadn't yet become aware of him.

But even as he was able to make out moving forms, the Germans at the field saw him. Men scurried to man the Maxims mounted on standards to protect the field from ground strafing; and Devlin saw the grim muzzles of half a dozen Maxims spun to face him. In a few moments when he started his dive, they would be probing for his very life in the Spad.

But he felt in his heart that though they might riddle his Spad, they wouldn't hit him. His belief had the surety of a promise, of sincere conviction, even though reason told him that the Germans would be as good gunners today, and tomorrow, as they had ever been.

He tilted his nose down as he came onto the field, diving with motor screaming at top voice. He didn't hold the stick with his knees. His hands did not touch the trips. He was merely paying a visit this time; but tomorrow, or even half an hour hence, it would be something else.

DOWN he sped. Bullets were crackling about his ears now, but he merely grinned. As well try to shoot a hummingbird as to down this diving Spad, he told himself. The German didn't live who could kill him today, at least before he had carried out his strange conceit.

Bullet holes appeared in his wings. He had a slight fear for the safety of his prop, but since a broken prop would spell death, and he didn't believe that anything could kill him, he shrugged that fear away. And the prop was not struck.

Now he was right over the field. He even reread his note before he dropped it. It was addressed to

Lieutenants Nommensen and Morgen. It said simply:

You should have killed me and didn't. I won't die until I have destroyed you. Knowing this, I am invulnerable to your wingmates. I shall delay my vengeance until I have slain enough of your wingmates to pay me for my recent experience in the hospital. There is no use to challenge me to personal combat, for I shall come for you in my own good time, and you can no more escape me than McGregor could escape you in his chute.

—Jack Devlin.

HE dropped the weighted message over the side as he crossed the center of the field, and it fell almost at the feet of an officer. Devlin studied the planes at the deadline as he zoomed out of reach of the Maxims—and the planes of Nommensen and Morgen were at that line!

He took this to be an omen of good fortune to come. His face became hard, for despite the conceit which he was riding for all he was worth, he still had a duty to perform for his country and was acutely conscious of it. That duty was to do much harm to the enemy, and to prevent him from retaliating.

Devlin saw a man dart to the message, lift it, open it, and read. Even as he watched, the Maxims kept hammering at the Spad. The officer shook his fist at Devlin. Then he motioned to the group of men at the deadline, and two officers stalked forth.

Devlin knew they were the two to whom he owed the fact that he should have died and hadn't. They were, without doubt, Nommensen and Morgen, murderers.

They read in their turn, and lifted their faces to where Devlin's plane circled the field at a safe height. But it was significant that they didn't wave their hands or shake their fists. He knew that both were trying to recall him. Maybe they'd have to

go to their records to identify him.

They didn't wait long. They raced for their crates. Devlin laughed into the slipstream, and the wind of his passage swallowed any ironic sound he might have made.

The two crates started across the field. He knew they expected him to dive on them and down them on the take-off, but he did nothing of the sort. He would surprise them strangely indeed.

They took off, rose in swift spirals to his level—and then Devlin did the strangest thing of all: he put his nose toward home and let his motor full out. He was running away! So it must have looked to the pilots of the two pursuing Fokkers. But as he ran, Devlin was studying the sky ahead—where two Albatrosses were cutting in from right and left to head him off, so that the two behind him might destroy him at their leisure.

Devlin noted that one of the pilots ahead wore the streamer of command.

CHAPTER V

The First Notch



DEVLIN looked back. The two Fokkers, faster than his Spad, were coming up fast. But they wouldn't be fast enough to get to him before he had established contact with the two Germans ahead. Devlin grinned again. Everything, so far, was working out exactly as he wished it to.

The Germans behind would witness what he was about to do. He had no fear of the outcome. Only the two flyers behind him had ever had him in danger of death—and he had escaped them. Never would other Germans even come close.

Devlin looked at his Vickers on the hood, gleaming cruelly in the sun. They were ready and eager to

spit their messengers of death. He was ready to start their song, to act as orchestra leader to their dance of death. His face went grim.

The change in expression would have been imperceptible to an observer. One moment he was grinning the carefree grin which had been on his face since he had come back from beyond the curtain of death. Next moment, and though the grin was still there, it looked like a snarl on his mask of a face. The color in his cheeks had vanished. His jaw muscles stood out.

The Fokkers behind him were coming on.

The planes ahead were preparing to dispute his advance.

Over beyond the latter were the lines, and beyond them the field on which Devlin intended to land within the next fifteen minutes—without a mark on him.

The two advancing crates began to veer to right and left and he knew that they intended to get him in a savage cross-fire at the moment of passing. Then they would fall in behind him, joining Nommensen and Luther Morgen and drive him into the ground by sheer force of numbers and superior speed. Devlin knew their thoughts as well as though a loud speaker had droned them into his ears.

HE studied the two crates. One of them flew with the unmistakable mastery which spoke of an expert at the stick. The other, by those little motions of wings, by those little differences in flight, the lifted nose or dropped nose, the veering to right and left and the slow correction, proved that a flyer not yet a master held the stick and kept his trembling feet on the rudder bar.

"I'll take the better one first," thought Devlin.

No sooner had the thought come to his mind than he changed direc-

tion in midflight, aiming the nose of his crate directly at the ship to his left. He gave his crate full gun, watched it devour the abyss between at top speed. His knees grabbed the stick, his hands went to the trips, his eyes automatically glued themselves to the ring-sight.

BULLETS began to spit through his propeller arc as his guns roared their savage diapason of sure death. The German whom he attacked, nothing loath, swung to meet him with the courage of the flyer who knows that he has but one life to give for his country and that it makes little difference just when or where he gives it. And that German was sure that Devlin was important, else there wouldn't be two Fokkers on his tail, driving him home out of German territory.

Devlin welcomed the direct attack. His eyes had never been clearer. He had never before seen a target so sharply etched across the wires of his ring-sight. Through the propeller arc of the enemy he saw the crouching form of the German pilot. Devlin's tracer smoke ended against the very spinner cap of the enemy crate. He saw the white face of the German as the latter pressed forward, hands managing his Spandaus, and knew that those same Spandaus were jumping on their mounts as the bullets exploded through his propeller.

The man's face, hooded like that of a falcon, was very white. Next moment and it was red as blood.

Devlin knew he was making no mistake about that. He saw so clearly. It was almost as though he had, a minute before, been able to see into the future and watch come to pass what was now occurring. He had known it would happen this way, and now it was happening.

The German tried to fling up his arms, but in the midst of the ges-

ture of resignation his arms dropped. Then he himself dropped into his pit. Smoke burst from under the motor housing of the German crate.

The Albatross started down, spinning.

Devlin waited for no more. He banked right with the speed of light, figuring that the second German would expect him to follow his last victim down. He fastened the leaden fangs of his Vickers bullets in the side of the second crate before the slower thinking second man could realize what was happening.

The second crate nosed up, stood on its tail, and Devlin knew that, with his last convulsive effort, the German had yanked the stick back into his belly. He hadn't done it purposely. It had been wrung from him in agony, that last gesture—and now the second crate was falling off on one wing, trying to swing around for the last long plunge down through seven thousand feet of space.

The Fokkers behind were very close now. Devlin regarded them for a moment. If he stayed to fight them, when they hadn't yet had time to realize how greatly he intended to punish them, they had every chance of slaying him—of really slaying him this time—provided his conceit did not hold true and he could be slain.

HE looked at the second crate he had downed, which would pass him in another split second—and deliberately dived under it, to perform the craziest stunt any flyer had ever attempted.

He had his nose down, his tail pointing up at the falling crate. He gauged the speed of the German's fall, and kept just ahead of the Albatross. He even managed to slow down, bringing the falling crate so close to him that a sudden lurch would have caused it to tangle with his tail surfaces.

The two pursuing Germans were at a loss how to attack him. They wouldn't fire so close to their own; for all they knew he still might have a chance for life.

But that chance disappeared even as they might have been thinking about it, for the falling crate burst into roaring flames. Devlin looked back, grinning. This was perfect for what he had in mind. The two Fokkers dived above, but well back from the falling plane, waiting for the Spad to cut out of line, to break away from the falling crate for freedom from attack.

DEVLIN looked down. The ground was coming up with express-train speed. In another minute or two he would have to break free. The ground below was dotted with trees, most of which had been denuded of leaves and branches by the endless years of the war.

Closer and closer came the ground.

Behind and above Devlin roared the crate he had crashed.

Behind the Albatross, but never close enough to be dangerous as long as Devlin held to his course, were the two Fokkers. Devlin grinned tightly.

Now the trees were right under him; about, he estimated, a hundred feet below. It never occurred to him that his wings might be sheered off when he pulled out. That was a minor consideration entirely. The Spad had to stand the pull out, and it must come now, fifty feet from the ground.

The Albatross crashed in, but Devlin had cut to safety, standing on one wing, missing the limbs of trees by miracles. Straight and true toward his own lines he drove, leveling off to hop over the tops of trees, making his best possible speed, to get as far away as possible before the two Fokkers saw what he was doing and dived on him. Having

witnessed what he had done they might become sufficiently desperate to come down to his level, which was so close to the treetops as to be suicidal. But every second he gained was valuable, when he had to consider the superior speed of the two Fokkers.

They were firing at him, but they were taken by surprise and were out of position. Their bullets went wild, and Devlin chuckled into one slipstream. They didn't even score on his flashing wings, but just to make doubly sure, to rob them of the satisfaction even of touching his wings or fuselage, Devlin began to yaw to right and left the instant bullets started snapping past his ears.

The Germans came on. Devlin eased every possible bit of speed out of his Spad. It roared across the trees, which were a veritable river of skeletons behind and under him. Any one of them, had he touched it, would have ripped apart his crate as though it had been the blade of a razor.

THE Germans did not come down to his level, and so were faced with the impossible necessity of getting him from a steep angle, of having to figure his dazzling speed and make their bullets tell. The gunner didn't live who could register direct hits in such a case, unless by the purest accident—and Devlin had little fear of accidents. When it came to luck he believed that his own was in—that all of it was on his side. Hadn't it been, so far? Why should it change?

Now he was approaching the lines. Men who manned the Archies were racing for their guns. Machine-guns were being swung to cover him, but he was over them, over the lines themselves, before the gunners on the ground realized that he had passed. After all, it was seldom

that any flyer flirted so outrageously with death at such a slight altitude.

Devlin allowed himself a laugh.

He looked back again. Desperate, Nommensen and Morgen were diving down to his level, daring the Archie burst of the Allies. And ahead—a fact which made Devlin grin his delight—a flight of Nieuports was coming down to see what all the shooting was about.

NOW Devlin was safe, for the Nieuports—and he fervently hoped that they were all bad gunners and wouldn't endanger the lives of Nommensen and Morgen—dropped down behind him and began spouting lead at the two Fokkers.

The Fokkers tried to get through and were met by the swift shooting lead of the Nieuport pilots. They swerved, tried to circle the Nieuport flight to get back on Devlin's tail—but the Nieuports would have none of it. They didn't know what it was about, but a Spad was being driven home by two Fokkers, which was enough for them.

They fought the Fokkers to a standstill, and the Fokkers battled with their best skill to keep from being downed. It must have been with bitter hearts that the Boche pilots watched Devlin wing safely toward home.

The Nieuports drove the Fokkers halfway back to their own drome before they went on with whatever business had sent them aloft in the first place. Devlin, laughing into the slipstream in high glee, reached the edge of his own field, cut his motor, and started to shoot a landing.

He went in fast, setting his wheels down almost at the near edge of the field. The Spad rolled across the tarmac almost to the deadline. Devlin, grinning—to the utter amazement of the greaseballs—jumped from the Spad the instant it had

stopped rolling, and started toward headquarters building.

On the way he called to a flyer lounging in the shade of one of the hutments.

"Hey, Larry, I want you to take a note to some friends of mine at Baron Laubestein's field. I think they'll be glad to hear from me so soon after we parted!"

CHAPTER VI

Hand of Fear



IT WAS an entirely different Jack Devlin who returned across the threshold to Lonsdale's office from the Devlin who had departed from it, grinning, to begin his new work against

the Germans. This new man was the Devlin who was seeing the working out of a queer scheme of retribution, whose success with his plan was such as to make him believe that it would work out for him to the bitter end.

Lonsdale looked up.

Outside a Spad's motor blasted into life. The major looked at the door.

"I asked Larry Haines to get ready to mail another letter for me, sir," said Devlin quietly. "I'll write it now, if you don't mind."

Lonsdale said nothing. Devlin wrote out a combat report, couching it in the tersest of terms. Then he scribbled a note on a piece of paper, weighted it with a bullet as he had done the first note. It, too, was addressed to Nommensen and Morgen, and it said.

Every day, as long as it pleases me to spare your lives, I shall destroy at least one of your wingmates. When I have finished with them, I shall slay both of you. Be ready when your time comes.

He told Lonsdale the contents of the note he had already dropped. He

read the new note to him. Lonsdale pursed his lips in a soundless whistle. Devlin called the major's orderly.

"Take this to Lieutenant Haines, son," he said. "He's on the apron, ready to take his Spad off."

The orderly darted away. Devlin turned back to the major.

"Well," said Lonsdale, "where does all this get you—if you can bring it off?"

"Suppose you try to put yourself in the places of the Germans," said Devlin grimly, "and tell me!"

Lonsdale considered for a moment.

"Let's say, first, that I am Baron Laubestein," he said. "I would know the contents of that first note. And by now I would know that you had shot down two of my best flyers. They must have been good, else they wouldn't have been flying in pairs instead of in a larger formation.

"I would have the reports of Nommensen and Morgen, which would admit failure to catch this upstart known as Jack Devlin. I would start asking those two flyers questions. I would discover that you had every right to want vengeance.

BEING a commander of men, I would know how strong in men the desire for vengeance really is. I would know that men so imbued would stop at nothing. I would understand that such men were doubly dangerous, that they would be tough customers for any one German flyer, or even two, to tackle with any degree of success.

"I would order Nommensen and Morgen to quit all other work and concentrate on downing Jack Devlin."

Devlin heaved a sigh of relief.

"I figured that way," he said, "or else I would have been dubious about allowing Nommensen and Morgen to live, if they were still a danger

to Allied flyers. It might be my duty to concentrate on them first, and then go after the others. But I figured, as you have figured, that Laubstein would hear the story. He would not understand all there was to understand about it, but realize that it was more or less up to those two; and he would tell them, simply, to get Jack Devlin. Since you agree, it's probably what the baron has already done. What next?"

"Now I'll put myself in the places of Nommensen and Morgen," went on Lonsdale thoughtfully. "I would, I think, live over the fight in which I was sure I had killed you, only to have you turn up again with threats to get me for my failure. I would realize that you had marked me for death, and that you would carry out your schemes if you could. It would be up to me to stop you as soon as possible!

"There would be several reasons for arriving at this inevitable conclusion. Friends of my wingmates whom you had shot down, which number two at the moment—with more promised tomorrow—would begin to regard me as a sort of jinx, would begin to blame me for the fatalities, would demand that I do something about it. They would begin to believe that unless I stopped Devlin, the whole squadron had a swell chance of being wiped out by the American, picking the individuals off one at a time.

"**M**Y own wingmates would begin to ride me to death, would drive me to the verge of insanity. If I were a phlegmatic German it might not trouble me greatly—only Germans are not nearly as phlegmatic as the world believes.

"If I were Nommensen and Morgen, then, it would begin to weigh on my mind. I would see Jack Devlin in all sorts of situations, beginning with the one in which we

failed to kill him, going on through today's battle in which we failed not only to kill him but even to get a good shot at him. I'm afraid, German or no German, phlegmatic or not, I'd begin to get nervous.

"I'd begin to be afraid, if the slayings continued, that this Devlin would make good on his challenge, get as many of my wingmates as he wanted to, and end by getting me. I'd get nervous and jumpy, begin to consider myself as a man condemned to certain death—"

"**E**XACTLY," interrupted Devlin. "That's the way I figured it out. I want those two to get troubled. I want the whole squadron to become troubled, to believe with me—oh, I'll put that into future communications—that I can't be killed as long as Nommensen and Morgen are alive, because they have already as good as killed me once; that I am living now on borrowed time which I can pay back only to Nommensen and Morgen.

"In this way I'll throw the fear of the devil into every member of Laubstein's squadron—and men afraid are men that a good flyer can handle."

Lonsdale let his breath out explosively.

"It's crazy," he said softly, "but so far it has worked. If you can just keep alive until you've done a few things more, I'll begin myself to believe in your invincibility. And if I can harbor such a belief, I can imagine what the Germans will be thinking before you've finished."

"It isn't," said Devlin, his brow puckering thoughtfully, "that I'm especially vicious. I've followed men into the ground myself, sprinkling them with lead all the way. So have most of us. But Nommensen and Morgen were plain yellow. I'll never forget how they went for McGregor—and for me when my guns jammed. Everything they get, they

deserve, and I'm going to hammer at them with all I'm worth.

"I don't, of course, believe at all that I can't die, can't be killed, but I'll try to sell myself on the idea because I find it helps. Just as it helps a man when he thinks his luck is in at the roulette table, and he rides it to the limit."

"I sort of feel sorry for Nommensen and Morgen," said Lonsdale.

Devlin grinned.

"*Et tu, Brute!* Think, then, how sorry they will be feeling for themselves. Now, Major, I'm going back across the line as soon as I've had some sleep and something to eat—about ten hours of sleep, and the side of a cow for food. It's just come to me that I'm not as strong as I might be, after all. It isn't such a strengthening process to spend weeks on a hospital cot."

The roaring of motors sounded over the field. Lonsdale and Devlin strode onto the tarmac. Up above, Larry Haines was fighting to get down to the field, and he was being harassed, fired at from all angles, by two Fokkers which spun and dived about him as though flown by men gone crazy, eager to risk their very lives, to take the wildest of chances.

THE chattering of Spandaus, the clattering of Vickers, came plainly down. The air vibrated with the screaming of Hissos and Mercedes motors. But Larry Haines was an incomparable flyer. Right at the moment when it seemed that nothing could save him from destruction, he rolled easily out of danger, hesitated as though taking a deep breath, then hurled himself at his nearest adversary. He forced the Boche to flop out of danger in his turn—whereupon Haines dropped a little closer to his own tarmac.

The Germans followed him down, desperately increasing their dizzy speed, desperately hurling more lead.

Lonsdale looked at Delvin, his brows arched.

"Yes," Devlin answered the unspoken question, "those two flyers are Nommensen and Morgen—or some other German flyers flying their crates, which doesn't seem probable, somehow. Apparently my two friends are burned up. I gather from what I see that they were expecting me to fly back, or expecting some other message, and were waiting to pounce on the messenger.

"I'm glad I thought to send Haines. The Germans will be convinced that I am enjoying plenty of laughs at their expense—unless, of course, they happen to get Haines. But I'm thinking they're too mad to get him. Larry's a cool flyer; none cooler anywhere."

Lonsdale grinned.

OTHER members of the 11th came up to watch the bitter fight waged above the field. Their faces were filled with questions, but Devlin shot a warning glance at Lonsdale. The men need not be told the feud part of the story. No use their thinking that Devlin was a little off, as they probably would. He didn't know himself how he had happened to fall into this particular plan of action against the Germans. He only knew that it was succeeding, and that he wished to continue his success; a word, even to friends, might somehow upset everything.

Lonsdale pursed his lips and Devlin knew the major would never say anything. Lonsdale himself was eager to see how the thing would work out.

Now, with the two Fokkers riding hard on his tail, Larry Haines was shooting a landing at full speed. He was coming in far too fast, but he was preparing to set his wheels down right at the edge of the field. The Fokkers were riding him hard, but they were too close for their

mounted Lewises to be brought to bear. It was entirely up to Haines himself. Lonsdale and Devlin and the rest of the 11th watched quietly, unperturbed.

Haines set his wheels down.

The Fokkers trailed him.

The Spad started to slow down.

Haines jumped from the crate, landed limply, rolled fifty feet, rose at top speed and streaked it for the woods. He flung himself down when the Fokkers spun and went back over him, jumping back to flop down so that the Spandau lead splattered the ground right in front of his face. Then he rose and ran on, while the Fokkers maneuvered for position again.

But this time, when the Fokkers came back, Major Lonsdale yelled a warning—which wasn't necessary at all. The 11th, amidst pleased oaths, and while the Lewises took up their chattering, had broken for cover behind the hutments. They gained the woods without the loss of a man.

The two Fokkers went wild over the field.

They splattered the roofs of hangars with lead. They sprayed the top of headquarters building. They went back and forth across the field, spraying everything in sight. But every member, officer and enlisted, of the 11th, had scurried for cover. Finally the two flew away, as though their wrath had been appeased to some extent.

HAINES came limping across the field. His face was smeared with blood; his clothing was in tatters. But Haines was grinning. He lifted his hand to Devlin.

"Hey," he said, "I think your friends were expecting *you*. They didn't like me two cents' worth as a messenger!"

Devlin didn't answer. He was watching the departing Fokkers, and

his hands at his sides were slowly becoming fists.

CHAPTER VII

Repeated Scoring



S Jack Delvin stalked to the deadline next morning, fifteen minutes in advance of the time he promised Nommensen and Morgen that he would fly again, his face was grim and set.

He had dropped all pretense at grinning his enjoyment. Pure chance had given him a strange weapon against the Germans, and he intended using it to the uttermost, and exactly as he had outlined it. He was a soldier first, out to perform a soldier's duties.

If a legend, of however brief duration, were to grow about him, well and good. It would aid him materially in his work. But the grinning belief in his own invincibility was gone. Yesterday's pretense had started the ball rolling. Now the matter was serious. After the initial impetus, it was up to Jack Devlin to play through. And he realized that he had his work cut out for him.

The hands of every German would be against him.

Nommensen and Morgen would be assigned the task of downing him ahead of all other duties. He would avoid them, however, thus adding to their turmoil and the "riding" they must be receiving from their wing-mates, until he had done everything possible to his other enemies. Then—and he knew he couldn't avoid it, nor did he want to—he would tackle Nommensen and Morgen.

And Jack Devlin knew very well that they would hereafter be flying together; and that he would have, in the end, to fight them both at once.

The prospect troubled him not at

all. He'd fight them gladly. It would be some payment for what they had put him through when he had been too fatigued, too cornered, to give a decent account of his fighting ability.

The greaseballs looked at him strangely. They had heard stories. He could almost see the questions on their faces, in their eyes.

"Is this man really invincible?"

"Will he really live until Nommensen and Morgen are dead?"

"If he kills the two Germans, how long will he live afterward?"

"Did he come back from the dead with a charmed life?"

Devlin gave their unspoken questions little thought. Yet, deep inside him, there was still a certain lilting feeling, a certain enthusiasm, which told him that the conceit he had brought from the hospital was yet a part of his being.

He examined the instruments on the dash, looked to nuts and bolts, to struts, flying wires and ailerons, to motor and longerons, to wings and tail-skids. The Spad was in excellent working order. There were only six small crosses on it, scattered all over the crate, to show that the bullets of yesterday had come even close to him.

HE climbed into the pit, revved up the motor. Joyously the Spad tugged at its chocks, as though it had been imbued with the eagerness of the pilot for combat. Devlin wondered what he would face today, how he would emerge from combat, whether he would still be able to keep away from Nommensen and Morgen. More than ever he had no intention of engaging them until he felt he had worked a system of psychological torture on them, until they were almost ready to beg for mercy. Queer thoughts actuated men in war, when they walked constantly with death.

He signaled for the chocks to be yanked free. He revved up his motor again. The crate started rolling, got its tail off, jumped into the sky. Devlin looked briefly around the horizon, seeking German crates. Then he swung into the east, heading directly for the German field. He would, today, get at least one German flyer, and it would be neither Nommensen or Morgen.

HE was grimly intent on this—and he didn't look directly to the west as he slid up to five thousand feet for the dash through the zone of the Archies. Why look into the west, where only friends flew? Which was why he missed the low-flying, swift-scudding wings of two Fokkers, flown by determined men with grim jaws and haunted eyes.

But the 11th saw the two pass over, and Lonsdale gasped with consternation. Devlin wasn't even looking back. Probably his first knowledge that the two were dogging him would come only with a brace of savage bursts in the back.

But nothing could be done. Lonsdale ordered seven planes off ahead of regular patrol time, but even as he did so he knew that they would never be able to fly fast enough to get in ahead of the two Fokkers and warn Devlin. Maybe, just maybe, Devlin would look back in time! Lonsdale's face was very white as he watched the two Fokkers vanish with the speed of light toward Germany, blanketed by the trees, so near the ground did they fly.

"It's up to Devlin," he told himself. "It's his fight, his plan of attack."

Meanwhile, Devlin flew on.

Behind him, rising slowly to his level, came the two Fokkers.

Far ahead, and Devlin noted them with satisfaction, German crates were rising, perhaps with Nommensen and Morgen among them. He

would always be able to identify these two, he felt, even if they changed to other crates to fool him. Something inside him would always recognize the two who had sent him deeply into the Valley of the Shadow, but had failed to block his return.

A sound reached him, slightly strange. He leaned forward in his pit, listening, shutting out the roaring of the wind past his ears in the slipstream. The motor sounded normal, natural, eager. He lifted his head once more, and again heard that slightly off-natural sound. The beating of motors, strangely muted, a weird alien sound, mingled with his own motor. Then he got it, and whirled to look back.

He saw the two Fokkers just as they were swinging in behind him, wing and wing; just as their pilots were leaning forward to get him; just when they must have been sure that he was cold meat.

Instantly his hands and feet leaped into action.

His nose dropped like a shot bird. His motor roared full out as he streaked for the ground.

BULLETS passed through the air where he would have been had he not dived, missing by a safe margin. But he sensed, if he did not hear, their crackling past his ears. Even as he dived, laughing a little as he fancied the discomfiture of Nommensen and Morgen, he searched the skies for other Germans, for the Germans he had seen taking off ahead.

The German formation, somewhat to the north, was veering toward him. Nommensen and Morgen had got him between the two fires. If he were not skillful beyond all skill, his doom was sealed here and now. But still he laughed into the slipstream. He would win free, he knew. Nothing could stop him.

This situation suited him to a T. It was better than if he had planned it himself.

Above the treetops, dashing straight into Germany with the top speed of his crate, he looked back at Nommensen and Morgen. They were daring greatly today. They were coming down to hedgehop with him, and he could read determination in the chances they were taking to get him. But they still were too far away to open fire with any chance of success. His quick dive had temporarily disconcerted them, and in the air split seconds were the difference between life and eternity.

ON came the Germans ahead. He could fancy them looking down, laughing at this Devlin upstart who had been trapped so easily. They couldn't know that he was laughing, too. Almost imperceptibly he began to nose up, to meet them, timing himself as carefully as he knew how. At fifteen hundred feet elevation, with the Germans still a quarter of a mile ahead of him, and Nommensen and Morgen again preparing to crack down, he put his ship into a screaming dive, let his motor full out, dropped until his wings were about to bow back with the tremendous strain put upon them—then yanked his stick back into his belly.

His wheels hadn't been a score of feet from the ground, and the crate bounced toward the dome of the sky as though his wheels had actually touched at the terrific speed he was making. And now he forgot Nommensen and Morgen entirely, concentrating on the German flight dead ahead and above him, toward which he was spearing as though shot from a catapult. His knees gripped the stick. His hands went to the trips of the Vickers.

The Germans were already trying to break formation, but the broad bellies of their Fokkers were in his

sights, so many of them that for a brief second he couldn't make up his mind which to take and almost delayed until it was too late to get any of them.

His motor was beginning to feel the pull of gravity, was beginning to groan against the strain of the climb. Split seconds counted now more than ever. His Vickers began to chatter. His ring-sight was aligned on the belly of one Fokker. He saw his tracers go straight into it.

The Fokker seemed to hover for a moment in mid-air. Devlin couldn't actually see the pilot through whose body, from below, he knew he had sped a burst of hot lead, but he knew as well as though he actually saw, what had happened. He knew it by the behavior of the Fokker.

The German's body had slipped down into the pit, after being almost lifted from it by the terrific impact of bullets from below—bullets which must have filled the body with splinters, bits of fabric, and burning lead. The body had jammed the controls. The Fokker was preparing to answer to its controls—but how?

Devlin wasn't left long without an answer, as the Fokker dropped its right wing and started to corkscrew around. Its speed increased. Devlin had to level off, had to slide away to the right to escape the tight spinning of the doomed Fokker.

BY this time the disorganized German flight was, as individuals, banking in from all sides. Their noses were pointing down to get the Spad in a devastating cone of fire from which there would be no escape.

Devlin nosed down savavely, addressing his crate as though it were human.

"You've got to stick with me!"

Then he nosed up, giving her all she would take. Up—up—and up. His Vickers were going again, as

desperately he tried to make the Germans keep their heads down until he could rise among them and force them to hold their fire for fear of hitting one another. Bullets smashed through his wings and fuselage.

Another pilot took a burst of lead directly in the face, not because he was the man at whom Devlin was aiming, but because he flew directly into the field of Devlin's fire. The Fokker started down, and Devlin said to himself:

"Might as well make it a triple, and give the Heinies something to talk about!"

He banked away, straight for a third German cockpit.

CHAPTER VIII

Escape Again



THE behavior of the Germans, after the first surprise at the activities of Jack Devlin, proved to him beyond a shadow of doubt that they all knew of his notes and his threats. They were preparing now, by aerial maneuvering, to break whatever jinx he had caused to hover over them.

They flew with incomparable skill, and their intention was evident the moment they began.

The Germans of whom Devlin had downed two were deliberately refraining from slaying him. But by sheer force of numbers, by sheer weight of wings, and by reckless flying, they were pocketing him, forcing him toward Nommensen and Morgen. It was as though they were actually delivering him into the hands of the two whom he had sworn to destroy in his own good time. It was as though they said:

"Here he is; let's see what you can do with him."

Devlin considered the matter for a

moment. He was safe for a brief space of time, because these Germans whose wings encompassed him had no intention of slaying him out of hand. They merely meant to bring him within reach of the guns of Nommensen and Morgen.

"And if, after they've made delivery, Nommensen and Morgen again fail to get me, won't life be happy and joyous at Laubestein's field for those two buzzards!"

Thought of outwitting them all, of again avoiding combat with the two Germans, pleased Devlin immensely, little chance though he knew he had to bring it about.

Nommensen and Morgen were winging up to the midst of the German flight, instantly cognizant of the intentions of their wingmates. Once inside the circle of wings, they would jump Devlin, and no matter how he turned and dived and spun to escape them, there ahead of him would be the wings of other Germans to turn him back into the muzzles of their Spandaus.

It was perfect for Nommensen and Morgen, impossible for Devlin. And yet the Yank enjoyed every minute of it, for in anticipation he was enjoying the discomfiture, again, of his two arch-enemies.

BUT if the Germans were sparing him for Nommensen and Morgen, he was under no obligation to do the same for them. He continued straight for the cockpit at which he had been aimed when the sudden plan of the Germans had made itself manifest to him by their maneuvering. That German did not fire at him. He rolled out of line of sights instead, and Devlin then stepped out to show what he could do as an aerobat. He dived with the German, rolled with him, spun with him—and his Vickers were already probing in the vitals of the Fokker for the life of the German.

Devlin didn't have to fight long, for he clung like a bulldog, shutting out everything but the German ahead of him, concentrating on him until the fellow should go down. He saw his tracers eat their way along the fuselage toward the cockpit; and when they reached the pit itself, and the German flung up his hands and fought all about him in the pit as though he strove to drive off a swarm of angry hornets, Devlin held his trips down for a lengthy burst.

The German disappeared into his pit, and in his mind's ear Devlin could hear the others groan. He had counted coup again, and Nommensen and Morgen hadn't yet cracked down on him.

HE had shot a triple on his second day.

He had promised Nommensen and Morgen to get at least one German each day until he was ready to handle Morgen and Nommensen themselves. Would they realize that he was keeping his word even if, near the end of this fight, he were to turn against the two and destroy them?

Perhaps. He doubted if they were not alive to every delicate phase of the whole scheme. He had already accomplished three promised days of execution in the few minutes of a dog-fight. And he still flew, his guns still ranted and chattered—and he hadn't been hit.

Now, leapfrogging the man he had just shot, Devlin cut straight into the midst of a trio of Fokkers. He got one of them between himself and Nommensen and Morgen, who were swinging into position, again wing and wing, to smash him down. They were forced to hold their fire until the German had got out of line of sights.

But he didn't get out so easily, for Devlin spewed lead at him, though he had to fire in a flash and

didn't get a good aim. His Vickers bullets merely smashed the German's prop. The German, however, was out of the fight, had to go down to a landing; hoping, as he dropped, to stop his motor before, off balance now with the prop shattered, it shook itself free from its bed.

Jack Devlin was not to know for many months that fate, in the shape of a broken enemy propeller, had kept him from destroying a man destined to become one of Germany's greatest aces—and who then was the youngest German combat flyer in the war: Woller, who had started his spectacular career by flying left wing for the mighty, almost legendary *Rittmeister* Manfred von Richthofen!

Because Devlin could not follow this man down, a great ace was saved for his country's adulation.

Devlin wished to follow the crate down, to make sure of her pilot, but Nommensen and Morgen were too close. If he dived they would get him—so he banked on a dime and placed himself between the two crates of the original triad, again trusting to the proximity of Germans to keep Nommensen and Morgen from firing on him.

It was then that he witnessed a strange thing.

THE Germans on either side of him were signaling Nommensen and Morgen, bidding them fire without regard to the safety of the signalers. It was the highest compliment the Germans could have paid Devlin, for it showed how important his death was to them.

Delvin grinned, banked right, fastened his fangs in the side of one of the Fokkers. But before he could do more than rip pieces of fabric from the tail surfaces, the Fokker had rolled out of line of sights, and the other Fokker—as Devlin himself had done—had banked in toward

him. The intention of her pilot, so close Devlin could see his dead white face, was very plain. He intended to decide the issue, once and for all time, by crashing Devlin in mid-air.

And but for the fact that Delvin stood on his tail after shoving his throttle wide open, he would have done just that. As it was, Devlin almost dropped tail first into the German cockpit as the Boche passed under him, nosing up belatedly as though still to smash Devlin in passing.

DEVLIN was now enjoying himself. He had downed three crates, killing their pilots. Two others had been forced out of the fight, and one of them was just going in to a forced landing on a clearing far below. He sighed as he saw that crate roll to a stop, the pilot clamber out, stand erect and wave to his comrades.

Nommensen and Morgen were now like wild men. They took reckless chances with their own wingmates in trying to reach Devlin. All the Germans were so intent on the Yank that thought of all else had been closed out of their minds. Bullets began to smash about the Spad pilot's ears as the Germans desperately ignored the possibility of slaying their own by cracking down on him when he swam even close to their line of sights.

Devlin suddenly flung back his head and laughed. For he had happened to look up.

And down from the heights, like hammers of Thor, the 11th was dropping to the rescue. They came like wild men, with their Vickers already raging!

Nommensen and Morgen saw them, but gritted their teeth and smashed straight for Devlin, who eluded them with ease, stalling for time until the 11th should arrive. He felt no reluctance to accept the aid of

the 11th, for nothing could take from him the fact that he had downed three crates and forced two others out of the fight before the 11th had taken a hand. So it was that he watched the diving 11th with thanksgiving in his heart.

Even Nommensen and Morgen couldn't believe that he had failed one iota in carrying out his promises and his threats.

Then the sky was turned topsyturvy, and friend was separated from friend, as the seven crates of the 11th settled into the fight with Vickers blazing.

CAPTAIN MACK, commanding the seven crates, dived past Devlin, waving him out of the fight—and Mack's face was a smiling mask. Mack was enjoying his part in this queer drama of the sky. Devlin grinned back, shook his head. Mack repeated the command, which this time could not be disobeyed.

Devlin swung suddenly out of the fight. Nommensen and Morgen, who seemed to have single track minds, swung after him.

Three Spads dived ahead of Nommensen and Morgen. The two Germans tried to slide past them, tried to jump over them, tried even to plunge straight through them—but the trio of Spads would have none of it. And Devlin was constantly stretching the distance between himself and the Germans. Lonsdale's men were playing their part—which they didn't really understand at all—with a vengeance.

Devlin took stock of himself, once he had passed through the Archies without trouble. He hadn't even been nicked. But he had come closer this time, for his dash was a mass of wreckage. Flying glass had missed him as by a miracle. And there were bullet holes in his wings, plenty of them.

One of his flying wires stood

straight out behind him. His struts had been almost gnawed through in several places. On a prolonged dive—well, the Spad simply wouldn't stand it. But again Devlin was almost ready to believe that, having once gone to death, he could not be slain again. Actually, he knew that it was because of his incomparable flying that he had not been hit; but it was a knowledge so deep down inside him that he was not actually aware of its presence.

Besides, he had never regarded himself as an incomparable flyer, merely as one who had been extremely lucky.

He slanted down for a landing.

The field swam under him. He looked back. The 11th was coming home. Some of the Germans were limping into the east. He knew that Nommensen and Morgen had been saved for his future activities. He was satisfied with the work of the day.

He wasn't even tired.

HE rolled his crate to a stop. Greaseballs gaped at him. The sergeant choked a little as he told Devlin that he had witnessed the whole fight from the roof of a hangar. The greaseballs knew it all, too—and nobody could have told them that the story of invincibility that Devlin had encouraged didn't have at least a grain of truth in it.

He clambered from the pit. His step was buoyant as he strode across the tarmac to headquarters. Lonsdale looked up, grinned at him.

"By the Lord Harry, Devlin," he said, "I don't know what's got into everybody. But we've whipped the Germans for two days in a row, and done a mighty swell job of it. As long as we keep that up, I don't care what you do or how you do it!"

"Thanks," said Devlin grimly, "but tomorrow I'm going to break the spell deliberately. I'm going after

Nommensen and Morgen. They almost got me today."

Lonsdale, thus proving that even men of reason sometimes get queer ideas, so far forgot reason as to ask:

"Aren't you afraid you'll get bumped off after you've downed those two buzzards?"

Devlin, shaking his head, laughed outright.

CHAPTER IX

Finale



GRIM tension gripped the field of the 11th on this, the third day of Devlin's return from the dead. Devlin himself was aware of it, as well as any other. A note had been dropped on the German field challenging Nommensen and Morgen to combat. Nommensen and Morgen had replied to the challenge, naming the place of contact, since Devlin had failed to do so. And there was grim significance in their selection of a sky arena.

They had named Hill Forty-seven as the rendezvous.

And it had been over Hill Forty-seven, several weeks previously, that Devlin had engaged the flying Germans. They must have grinned to themselves, if they still felt like grinning, when they had made the selection. They were deliberately defying the legend Devlin had started to build about himself. In effect they were saying:

"We downed you here once. This time we'll make certain."

Even Lonsdale, despite the fact that he decried all superstition or anything remotely resembling it, seemed concerned. But he passed it off by saying:

"They are two little fellers whistling past the graveyard."

Devlin, however, regarded the whole thing as merely the carrying out of another mission. He had too much sense actually to believe in his conceit. He was too brilliant to have lasting faith in hunches. But he did believe in the might of his Vickers and the surety of his own abilities as a sky fighting aerobat. He asked for no more.

The odds were two to one, and the two were desperate; but it wasn't the first time he had fought against such odds, and he had held against fighters even greater. It was all part of the day's work—and he fully believed that when darkness came down tonight, he would be alive to fight again another day.

As he walked to the deadline, therefore, he was the most unconcerned man on the field. Lonsdale and Mack were with him, and Mack was saying:

"We'll come after you as we did yesterday and blast those two buzzards out of the sky in a split second.

Devlin shook his head.

"Promise me you won't or I won't take off," he said firmly.

AND Mack, plainly dubious, perforce was compelled to promise to keep away from the fight.

"There's a mental hazard for you in this," he insisted. "You're flying into a fight right where you once dived out of one—into a hospital. The Germans were smart enough to realize that. This time the two of them have something on you."

"I don't believe in such nonsense, really," said Devlin, and meant it.

He climbed into his pit. He wasn't wasting any more time. He revved up his motor, started his crate to rolling, and didn't even look back as he hopped his Spad off the field after a brief run, nosing her up for altitude. Then he smashed away toward the lines, sped through the

Archies without giving them a thought and—

Inside German territory a strange feeling came to him. It was the feeling that every bit of today's flight was exactly the same as some other flight. He had flown exactly through here before, exactly in this manner, to meet exactly these two Germans.

Only, the first time he hadn't known whom he was to fight. He hadn't come this way, but had been coming home out of Germany. Yet the feeling persisted.

He shrugged it away.

He flew on, his face grimly set. He came in sight of Hill Forty-seven. Above it flew two Fokkers, circling lazily, awaiting his coming.

Devlin's eyes were bleak. As he angled toward them with his motor full out, he glanced down at the lines over which he had flown that never-to-be-forgotten day which had landed him in the hospital—when it really should have landed him in an unmarked grave, or seen him burned in the funeral pyre of his blazing crate.

The two Germans spotted him, ceased their circling, started toward him. They were going to meet him about where they had met him before. His challenge was being answered with a vengeance. They were reminding him forcibly of that other day by doing everything as nearly as possible the way they had done it before. Devlin grinned tightly.

HE cleared his Vickers. They answered to the touch of his hand on trips with a satisfying efficiency. As closely as human hands could manage, he was in readiness for whatever might transpire. He could ask no more. And, he told himself, he had no sense of facing a mental hazard. Lightning might actually strike twice in the same place, but lightning had no connection with

Jack Devlin, even when it came to speed!

The two Fokkers came on. Close to him, they circled him widely, making sure of his identity, allowing him to make sure that he actually faced Nommensen and Morgen.

Then they held up their hands, simultaneously, as though by mutual consent. They were asking him if he were ready to engage. Devlin touched his forehead in half salute to them both by way of answer.

NOMMENSEN and Morgen waited for no more. They split asunder, slanted away, one to the right and one to the left—and even this was like the last time he had fought these two. Above him, while he grimly waited for them to make the first move, they banked around, and came down from either side with their Spandaus aflame.

Devlin let his breath out sharply as he suddenly fed juice to his crate and zoomed out of danger. They lifted their noses, sprayed his wings and tail surfaces with lead.

It came to Devlin then that the Germans were intent on carrying out the ritual of their last meeting to the letter—for they might just as easily and surely have sprayed Devlin himself as his wings. They intended to blast him down and follow him as they had followed him before. Only, and this was all too evident, this time they did not intend that he should escape. Nommensen and Morgen were going to "lay the ghost," were going to prove to their wingmates that the whole thing was nonsense.

Still Devlin was unconcerned.

Again the Fokkers circled him, as once before they had. Bullets snapped past his ears. Now he knew they were probing for his gasoline tank, sending bullets into his motor housing. It was time to get into action.

He banked toward Nommensen.

blistered his tail with a hail of Vickers lead. This much, at least, was different from last time—for he hadn't had a chance last meeting to blast away much at either German. But, if in so little he could change the course of destiny, why could he not change the whole thing?

He settled down to business.

Blasting away at Nommensen, he uncovered his tail to Morgen, who jumped at the advantage. The Boche's bullets ripped shreds of fabric from Devlin's crate. Devlin spun around, hurling lead even as he dragged Morgen into his ring-sight. Morgen rolled away. Nommensen jumped on.

Devlin went into a savage bit of acrobatics to throw off the sights of both flyers; but even as he spun down—realizing that his spin was almost the spin of yesterday—his eyes were glued to his ring-sight and he was probing for Morgen's life.

His bullets were coming close, he knew. He saw them go into the back part of the cockpit, knew that they actually went there, for Morgen half stood, clear against the dash, to avoid them. Devlin grinned a little.

Nommensen and Morgen now tightened the cordon of wings about Devlin. They were forcing him down, beating at him with their leaden talons as he came closer and closer to the ground. They were deliberately trying to set him afire, deliberately trying to repeat that last fight in all its vicious details.

NOMMENSEN dropped a burst of lead right behind Devlin's cockpit—and Devlin, deciding in a flash what to do, did it. He put his crate into a spin for the ground, allowed his head to loll on his cockpit coaming.

He could almost hear the exultant shouts of Nommensen and Morgen. They were all around him. They were probing for his motor without ceasing. They were reaching for his

body, unabashed by the fact that the Spad was spinning so madly that they had little chance of hitting him.

Devlin grimly held to his sudden scheme. If they wanted it as it had happened once before, it was all right with him, and they should—almost—have it. His eyes watched the spinning of their crates as they tried with every trick they knew to bring his body into line and, failing in that, to blast flames from his motor. Except for one thing, Devlin would have cut his switch to add to his scheme, but he needed his motor at least once more.

NOW he knew that the ground was close, for he could hear the firing down there, where men in the trenches fought the war to the bitter end. He dared not look down, for any movement on his part would prove he hadn't yet died, and he preferred for them to believe he had at least been critically wounded. But he was, instead, carefully watching his enemies, trying to decide which should be the first to fall.

One thousand feet above the ground—five hundred—and Nommensen was selected for the honor.

Devlin suddenly straightened, yanked his crate out of the spin faster than either Nommensen or Morgen could have done it, with all their mastery of their planes, and both Germans dived on past him. But even as they dived, Devlin's eyes were on his ring-sights, and Nommensen was in line.

The Yank's teeth showed in a snarl as he set his Vickers to going. His eyes were glued to the broad back of Nommensen, who was desperately trying to get out of line of sights, and trying to look back to see how much time he had left.

But the Boche didn't make it.

A crimson handkerchief blossomed in the back of Nommensen as the

Vickers lead smashed into him. He jumped, jerked, flopped into his pit—and the Fokker continued the spin from which it was never to recover.

Devlin started to follow, to give it one more burst, only to make a heart-breaking discovery. His guns, in that last savage burst in which he had been over-eager to make his kill, had jammed!

But Morgen must not know that! Devlin banked toward him, flying like a bat out of hell.

Morgen tried to get away as Nommensen had done. His horrified eyes were watching Devlin's spinner cap for the blossoming of tracer smoke which would spell the end. Devlin held his fire because he couldn't fire, and smashed directly at the second German. So far, the fight had been a departure from that day he had gone into the Valley of the Shadow, and he was determined that it should, hereafter, resemble it not in the slightest.

Morgen rolled, dived, spun.

DEVLIN was right on him, using his advantage of height. Now he was over him. Then Devlin deliberately nosed down, grazed the tail surfaces of the Fokker with his right wheel, nosed up, and smashed straight across the German cockpit before Morgen could realize his intention. His spreader-bar struck the German squarely in the face, lifting him from his pit, hurling him over the side.

But Devlin himself was smashing nose down for the earth. The terrific impact of his spreader-bar against the German's body had stood him on his nose.

He fought to get out, managed to level off, and saw something that made him gasp aloud.

That something was his wheels, falling down the sky, leaving him

only the belly of his fuselage on which to land!

"I guess," he told himself ruefully, automatically setting his course for home, "that I *do* stand a swell chance of checking out, now that both Nommensen and Morgen are gone!"

But he slid down to a landing, fishtailing. He nosed up, stood almost on his tail to cut his speed, leveled, dropped straight—and pancaked in.

And the fates were good to Jack Devlin, for he walked out of the wreckage—though a flyer on either side of him held his arms.

LATER Lonsdale said to him: "You still think your overtime is in your favor, that you've died once and can't be killed again?"

Devlin shrugged.

"Bunk!" he said. "But I'm still not above using the superstition of other men who believe such stuff to help me do my bit in this war."

"But the fight this morning with Nommensen and Morgen? The mental hazard? You know how flyers who crash are forced to fly again right afterward, so they won't get a phobia against flying."

Devlin shrugged again.

"This morning," he said, "was just a job of work—and if you'll look back, you'll remember that it was a job I set out to do in the beginning. Even if I stopped to pick a few daisies on the way—if German flyers can, by any stretch of the imagination, be called daisies—doesn't it contribute to the ultimate accomplishment of what we're all fighting for? And now, Major, what next?"

Lonsdale paused as though thinking deeply. Then solemnly he said:

"You might, come tomorrow morning, hop across the lines and fight a few Germans!"

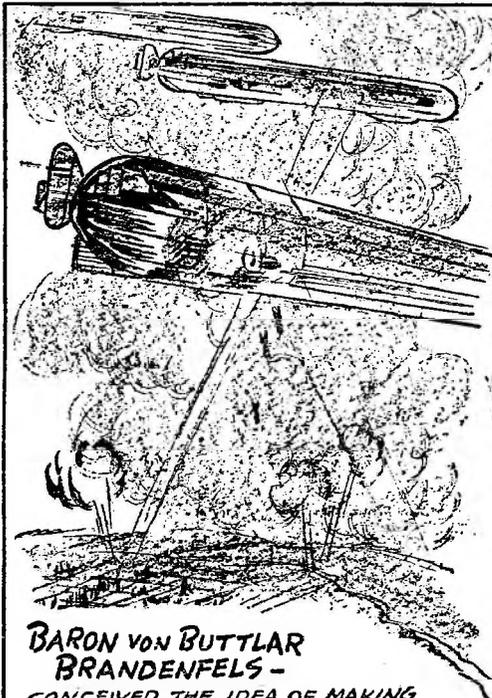
Famous SKY FIGHTERS



CAPT. HAMILTON COOLIDGE,

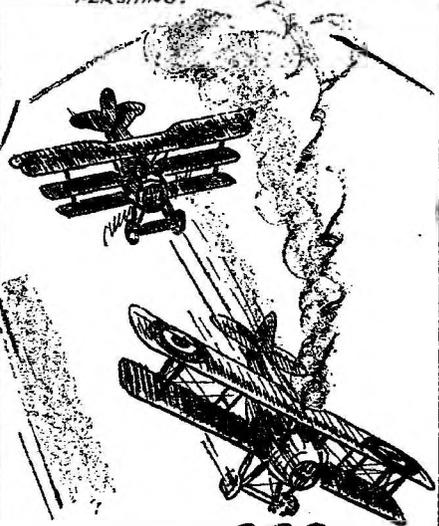
FAMED AMERICAN SKY FIGHTER OF THE 94 TH SQUADRON, 1 ST PURSUIT GROUP, WAS NOTED FOR HIS ABILITY TO OUT-MANEUVER GERMAN FLYERS. ALWAYS WELCOMING A GOOD SCRAP AGAINST ODDS, COOLIDGE OFTEN WENT TO THE ASSISTANCE OF OBSERVATION PLANES BEING ATTACKED.

COOLIDGE DOWNED 12 PLANES AND FOR HIS COURAGEOUS FLYING WAS AWARDED THE CROIX DE GUERRE WITH PALM, THE D.S.C. AND CITATION BY GENERAL PERSHING.



BARON VON BUTTLAR BRANDENFELS -

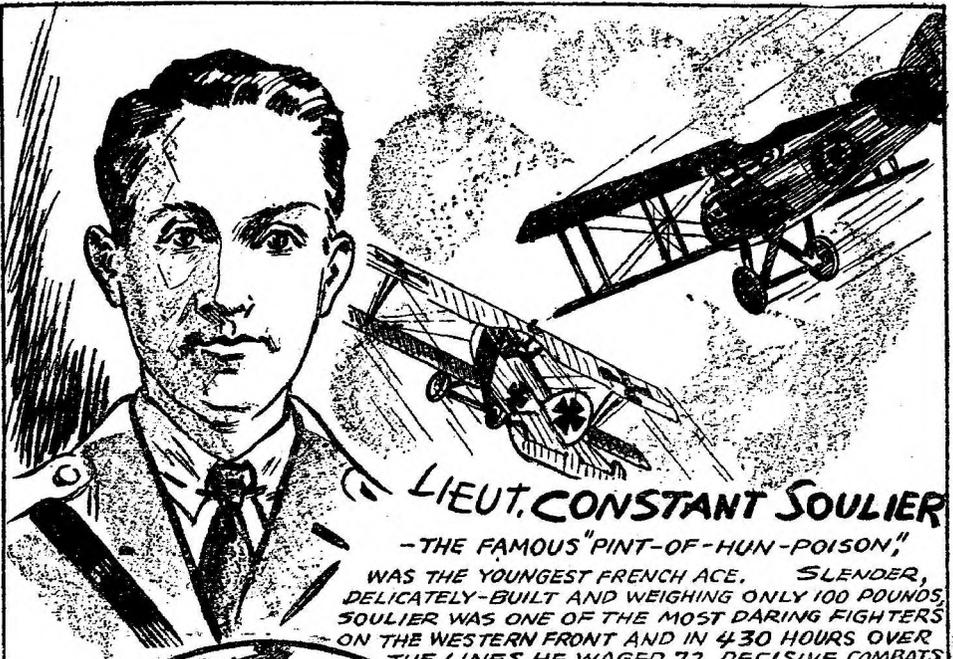
CONCEIVED THE IDEA OF MAKING ZEPPELIN AIR RAIDS OVER THE ALLIED CITIES AND ON THE NIGHT OF AUGUST, 25, 1914, FLEW THE "MONSTER OF DESTRUCTION" OVER ANTWERP AND LATER OVER LONDON.



LIEUT. COL. BOB ROCKWELL

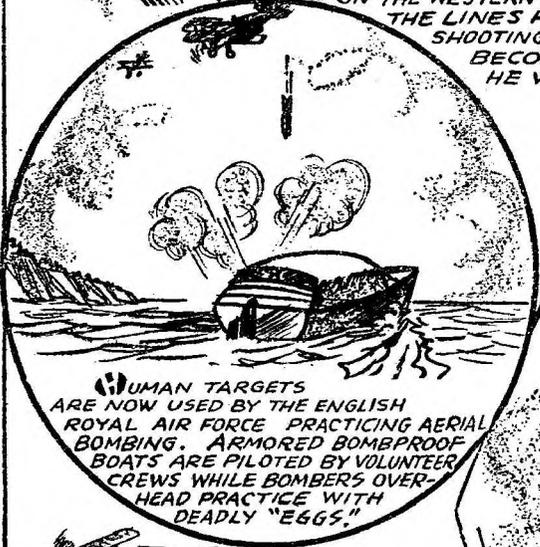
NOW SQUADRON COMMANDER IN THE U. S. ARMY, WAS THE "MOST SHOT DOWN" PILOT DURING THE WORLD WAR.

ROCKWELL WAS PILOT OF SIX PLANES WHICH WERE SENT EARTHWARD BY THE ENEMY, YET HE ESCAPED SERIOUS INJURY.



LIEUT. CONSTANT SOULIER

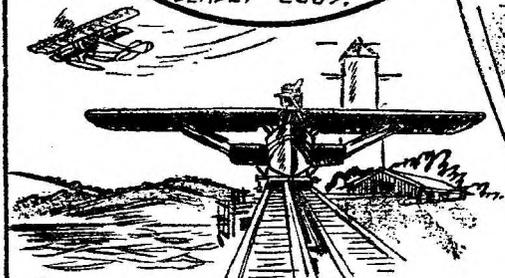
- THE FAMOUS "PINT-OF-HUN-POISON,"
 WAS THE YOUNGEST FRENCH ACE. SLENDER,
 DELICATELY-BUILT AND WEIGHING ONLY 100 POUNDS,
 SOULIER WAS ONE OF THE MOST DARING FIGHTERS
 ON THE WESTERN FRONT AND IN 430 HOURS OVER
 THE LINES HE WAGED 72 DECISIVE COMBATS,
 SHOOTING DOWN 16 ENEMY PLANES AND
 BECOMING AN ACE BEFORE
 HE WAS EIGHTEEN YEARS
 OF AGE.



HUMAN TARGETS
 ARE NOW USED BY THE ENGLISH
 ROYAL AIR FORCE PRACTICING AERIAL
 BOMBING. ARMORED BOMBPROOF
 BOATS ARE PILOTED BY VOLUNTEER
 CREWS WHILE BOMBERS OVER-
 HEAD PRACTICE WITH
 DEADLY "EGGS."



MAJOR "JIMMY"
DOOLITTLE
 WAS THE FIRST
 TO "DO" THE
 OUTSIDE
 LOOP!



A GERMAN SEAPORT HAS
 INSTALLED A CATAPULT TO LAUNCH
 SEAPLANES INTO THE AIR
 FROM LAND.

Flying HELL

*With His Squadron's Honor
at Stake, No Power on
Earth Could Swerve
Jackson From His
Grim Purpose!*

A Complete Novelette
By **GEORGE BRUCE**

Author of "Courage of the Damned," etc.

CHAPTER I

A Dead Lieutenant

THEY found O'Keefe's body almost by accident. When the ragged little urchin who haunted the cellars of Briacourt brought the note to the flying field, Rand laughed and passed the note around for the boys to read.

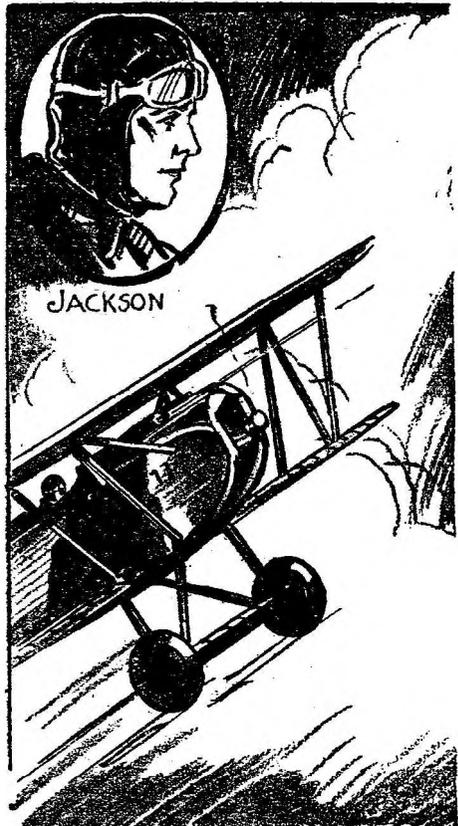
"Someone is trying to pull the old army game on me," said Rand.

The gang read the note. It was very short and in French, written by a woman. The writing exhibited a degree of refinement and education. The note said:

Your Lieutenant O'Keefe is dead. You will find him in my room in the old burgomaster's house. He has been dead since last night. He was shot. He deserved it. I am sending this message by the boy. If you wish you may come and get him. If not, I will notify the French provost general.

Adrienne de Longpres.

Rand took the note back in his hand.



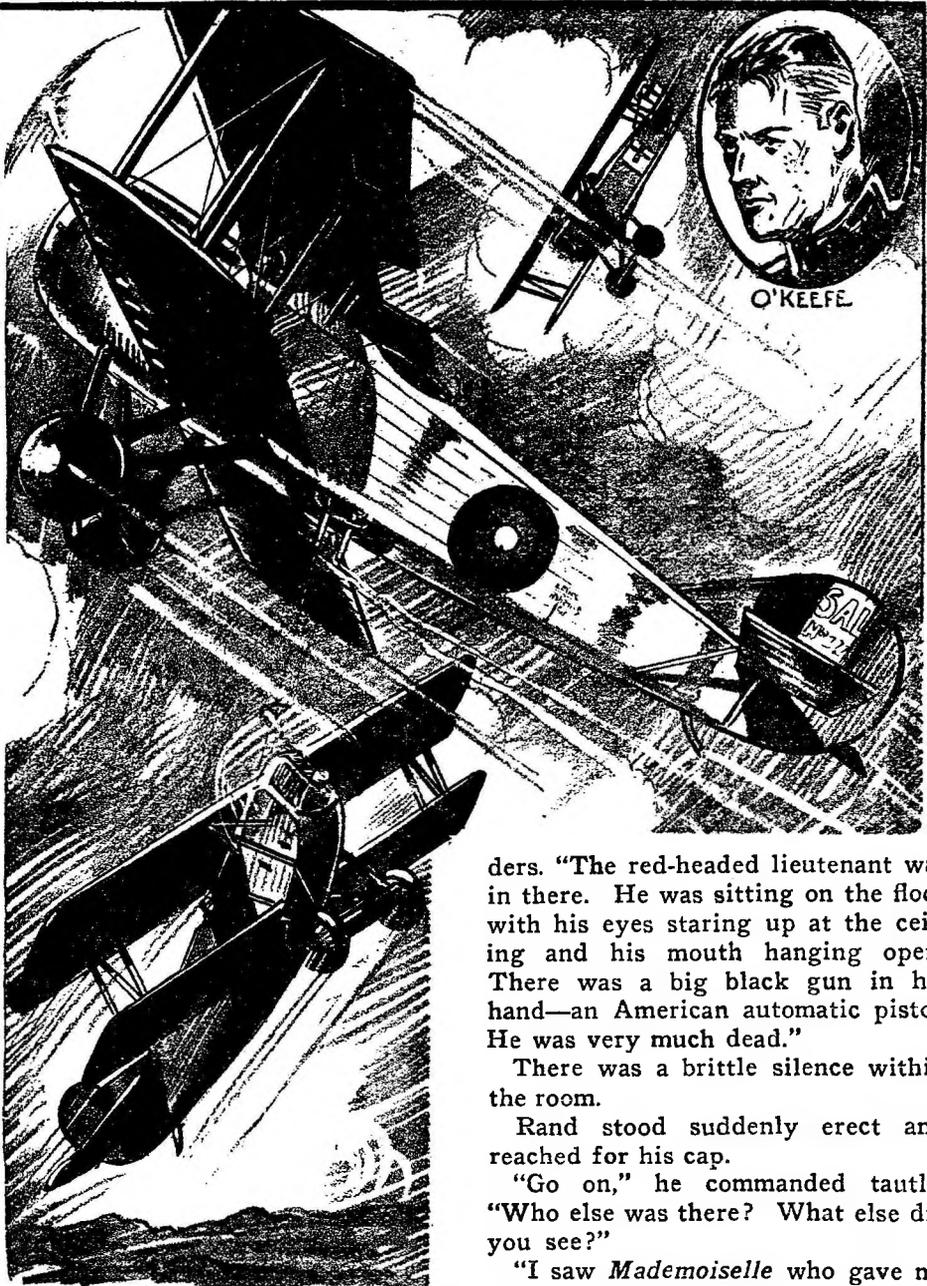
"Who gave you this?" he demanded of the boy, handing him two franc pieces.

The boy grinned.

"*Mademoiselle de Longpres,*" he declared. "She gave it to me. 'Take it to the American flying field,' she said. 'They will know what to do.' Her face was very white."

"You know what she wrote here?" questioned Rand.

"But, of course," grinned the boy. "I know everything in Briacourt. It is about the red-headed American lieutenant who came last night. He was very drunk. I heard shooting. Then another American lieutenant marched out of the house, his body very straight and his eyes looking to the front. After a little while, I looked in the window. It is really very easy. One merely climbs up the trellis outside the burgomaster's house."



The Fokker came darting upward under the Salmson's tail

"Well?" demanded Rand impatiently.

The men about the table were leaning forward, eyes fixed on the pinched face of the urchin.

"Well?" with a shrug of the shoul-

ders. "The red-headed lieutenant was in there. He was sitting on the floor with his eyes staring up at the ceiling and his mouth hanging open. There was a big black gun in his hand—an American automatic pistol. He was very much dead."

There was a brittle silence within the room.

Rand stood suddenly erect and reached for his cap.

"Go on," he commanded tautly. "Who else was there? What else did you see?"

"I saw *Mademoiselle* who gave me the note, sitting in the room in a chair, staring at the dead red-headed lieutenant—sitting and staring—just like that, without moving."

"This 'American lieutenant' who walked out of the house after you heard the shooting—who was he?"

"Who was he?" repeated the boy in a surprised voice tinged with pity

for such a dullness of comprehension. "Who else was he but the American lieutenant, Jackson? Is he not always with *Mademoiselle* de Longpres? Did he not tell the red-headed lieutenant to stay away?"

Rand swung around.

"Come on," he ordered Doak and Manners. "If somebody is having a good time at my expense I'll beat him to a pulp."

He took the boy by the arm.

"Come on," he said harshly. "You take us to *Mademoiselle*."

BRIACOURT was three miles from the field, but the squadron auto made it in five minutes over a rough road. Briacourt was a mass of piled up ruins, with the very fallen stones blistered and scorched black from the flames which had burned and re-burned the debris.

The gaping facades and walls, tumbled down and shattered by shell-fire, were like skulls smashed and splintered with giant hammers. There were only remnants of buildings left standing. One of the remnants was the house from which the burgo-master of Briacourt had fled after the first German advance and retreat.

The house was a gutted wreck. There were three or four rooms intact. The others were trampled into rubble.

The boy skillfully piloted the three officers through the rubble and up the exposed steps to a door. He pounded upon the door with a grimy fist.

"*Mademoiselle*," he shrilled. "It is Jean Jacques with the American officers."

"Come in," a toneless, dull, dead voice answered from behind the door.

They entered, the boy pushing a way into the room against the legs of the officers.

Rand stood still and stared. O'Keefe was propped up against the wall, just as the boy had described. He was dead. He had been shot through the

stomach seven times. His own gun was in his hand. It had been fired four times.

The girl sat there, staring straight in front of her with dead eyes. Her hands, resting in her lap, did not move. Her face was livid, deathly white. Her hands were the same. There was a complete lack of animation about her.

"How did this happen?" snapped Rand.

She did not lift her head.

"I killed him," she said in the same toneless voice.

"I killed him."

"Where was Jackson when you killed him?" demanded Rand harshly.

"He was not here." The voice welled up from a crater within her chest.

Rand glanced at the boy. The boy shook his head. Rand compressed his lips until there was a white circle about his mouth.

"Take him downstairs and put him in the car," he directed the two officers.

They carried the red-headed lieutenant down the steps, out to the car, placed him on the seat in the tonneau.

"You'll have to come with me," Rand informed the girl.

She shrugged her shoulders indifferently and stood stiffly on her feet. Rand took her by the arm, led her to the car.

They drove back to the field.

RAND stalked into the operations office.

"Where's Jackson?" he demanded in a splintery voice.

The non-com at the desk glanced at Rand's face and then at the squadron roster.

"Jackson's flying, sir," he said. "It's his trick this morning. He's been out for half an hour." He glanced at his wrist watch. "For thirty-eight minutes," he corrected. "He should

be in in about an hour. Anything wrong, sir?"

"Don't bother," growled Rand. "Just see that I know the minute he gets back."

He strode out of the office. He hurled questions at the girl. She said nothing. She merely sat, her shoulders drooping, her eyes staring straight ahead—big, burning eyes. When she did speak it was to utter over and over the same monotonous phrase.

"I killed him. I killed him."

CHAPTER II

Jackson Flies Combat



WATERS lifted his head now and then to glance at Jackson's face. Waters' hands were busy with the camera. His brain was chortling over a series of swell pictures. Waters had the artist's exaltation. He loved squinting through the wire sights of the camera at the earth below, squeezing the trigger of the camera, and feeling the thump of the plates as they changed themselves automatically in the steel box.

Waters was the best photo man on the front. Ten thousand times that had been said by enthusiastic mosaic men; by Intelligence officers, by divisional commanders and by the men he flew with. Not only that, but Waters was the best machine-gunner that ever rode in the tail pew of a Salmson.

The plates in the camera thumped with a regular routine. Waters looked now and then at Jackson's face. There was enthusiasm and admiration in the glance. Swell business to go out picture-taking with a guy like Jackson. No screaming at him, no cursing him for veering off the camera track. Jackson flew his crates right on the line, and he went where

there were pictures to be taken and he brought them back.

Old "Hell and Leather" Jackson, the kid with the soft eyes and boy's face. Riding the Salmson with Jackson was the photographer's heaven. No specks coming over the horizon made Jackson scoot for home.

Jackson was the kind of guy who kept flying until the buzzards closed in around him. Then, just before he carried the war to the buzzards, he would cut the gun for a minute, and would turn around in his seat and grin at his gunner and yell: "Keep the tail clear, old-timer, and let's ride!" That was the kind of pilot a gunner could go for.

Only, today Jackson's face was very white, and his mouth was very grim. His eyes were staring through his goggles, straight ahead.

There was something gnawing at Jackson's mind. But the ground was flowing under the wings of the Salmson, and the plates were thumping, and half-wings have a job to do. Waters was very busy.

Right now he was taking some swell shots of an enemy flying field. He was doing it while his lips were puckered up in a whistle of astonishment. This Jackson boy sure had his nerve. Taking the photographs, he had missed the depth of penetration behind the enemy lines.

THIS was all new stuff. New territory. He studied the horizon and landmarks over the Salmson's tail. There was not a familiar mark in sight, and the horizon was dissolved into a purple haze. God only knew how far the "line" might be back there—and Jackson was flying steadily north.

Well, Jackson was the pilot. It was his show, as long as they were getting the pictures—and what pictures! Why, the wheel tracks on that enemy field were easily visible in the camera sight, and there were

crates standing out in front of the line—men worrying around those crates.

Funny kind of a flying field at that. Brick buildings, sheds with G. I. roofs, barracks and tents—and a whale of a lot of airplanes. Big joint concentration point for Jerry air.

But Jackson's face was like marble, with eyes like polished brown stone. The muscles of his jaw were set in rigid lines. He was staring, like a mummy, dead ahead, and flying—

A BLACK burst of smoke broke out of the red core of an explosion. The Salmson rocked lazily. The smoke puff drifted five hundred feet above them and slightly to the rear.

Jackson nosed the Salmson down gently, slipped to the right. The second smoke puff blasted a chunk out of the sky where the Salmson had been cruising but a moment before. Waters looked at the burst with appraising eyes. But Jackson had not so much as turned his head. He was still staring front and center—still flying north.

There was a criss-crossing barrage of anti-aircraft shellfire about the Salmson. Now and then a wicked fragment of shrapnel whistled and crackled around the big two-seater. Waters kept his head down over the camera finder. His forefinger, crooked around the camera trigger, worked automatically, lapping the takes with a fine precision.

Thump, thump of the camera plates. And then suddenly the rocking motion of the fuselage as Jackson moved the ailerons up and down to attract his attention. Waters' head came up with a jerk. He moved it quickly from side to side. His hands left the handle of the camera and grabbed for the shoulder rest of the double racked Lewis guns.

He had awakened from his camera musings many times before, left the

camera for the machine-guns, to find himself in the presence of enemy ships. It was all in the day's work.

But this time they were close! So close that they looked double the size of ordinary Fokkers. Close, and coming down with a rush. Coming down right over the center section of the Salmson—four or five of them.

Green and white babies. Sweeping down—diving at the Salmson's nose—trying to turn it—to put it to flight.

There was the chattering of the Vickers from in front of Jackson in the front seat. The guns bucked and jolted, and the belts ran up like little brown snakes made out of vertebrae and swallowed up in the breeches of the guns.

The leading Fokker zoomed sharply, presented the bottom foils of its wings and the length of its fuselage. Its tail skid almost hooked the leading edge of the Salmson as the fast flying enemy went overhead with a whining roar.

Waters swung around with his rack and kept his eyes fixed on that leader of the Fokkers. He knew what was going to happen. That baby was going to keep circling in descending spirals under full throttle, and then, suddenly, whip up under the Salmson's flippers—whip up into the well known blind spot for the spraying of a little hot lead.

BUT Waters had figured out the answer to that one long since. He kicked at the turn button built on the fuselage floor of the Salmson's back seat. A little vane on the underside of the fuselage dug into the wind. A space in the bottom of the fuselage flew open, a little trapdoor set on hinges.

Looking down through the door, one commanded the area under the Salmson's flippers. But Waters did not depress the muzzles of the Vickers when the trapdoor opened. He wanted the Fokker pilot to come

driving into his own surprise party.

Behind his back the Vickers were chattering angrily. He could hear the rush and wail of enemy wings and wires cutting through space overhead. But he did not turn his head. Jackson was flying the front seat. Keeping the nose clean was Jackson's business.

The Fokker came darting upward under the Salmson's tail. That Jerry had fought two-seaters before. He knew to the inch just how much area the flippers covered. He kept within that area. He zoomed with a rush. The Spandaus came into line.

Waters heaved his Lewis guns forward and downward. The muzzles thrust themselves through the trapdoor in the body of the Salmson. The drums rotated crazily. The recoil jerked and pounded against the racks and against Waters' right shoulder.

The twin stream of slugs from the Lewises smacked into the center of the Jerry's motor, thudded and ripped into the space between the motor and the cockpit, swept the top of the motor cowling, snatched a long streamer of fabric out of the under side of the upper wing directly over the Jerry's head.

THE Fokker seemed dazed. It wobbled for an instant. The head of the pilot moved rapidly from side to side. The Lewises beat a mad staccato a second time. The head of the pilot was driven back against the crash pad. It jerked a few times before it fell forward upon the leather protection of the Jerry's flying coat.

The Fokker swirled and churned, beating at the air with futile wings. It slid back on its tail after a stall. It went away in a spin.

Waters jerked the guns up out of the opening in the fuselage. A green and white outline flitted alongside of the Salmson's fuselage at a distance

of fifty feet. Waters followed the outline like a trapshooter. His sights intersected the path of the outline. His finger was curled around the trigger.

The Lewises spat flame and fumes. A double burst combed the green and white outline from nose to tail—guttered it, like a butcher's knife opening a chicken.

The green and white flash wobbled—seemed to groan and to thresh about in the agony of its hurt.

WATERS turned his head and swung the gun to command the area over the Salmson's left wing tip.

He wondered why Jackson didn't swing around and run for it. They must be twenty miles behind the lines. The joint was lousy with Fokkers. He was keeping his head down over the sights, pumping short, vicious bursts at the flying shadows rocketing about the Salmson.

Waters took a pot-shot at a green and white rocket. He saw his tracers sock into the fabric of the enemy. The pilot ducked and dived to escape those deadly Lewises. There were three or four other Jerries milling about like frightened birds, diving in here and there, ripping at the flanks of the Salmson—but keeping out from under its tail.

Waters beat upon the camel back with his fist.

"Hey—you crazy nut!" he shrieked. "What's the idea?"

He nearly lost his grip on the gun handles. Jackson cut the motor with a deliberate sweep of his arm. Cut the motor, with the sky vomiting Fokkers and Spandau slugs. Cut it and turned his head.

For the first time Waters had a direct view of Jackson's face. It was stiff and white and immobile. Jackson's eyes were staring at him, almost without seeing.

"Hey—I'm back here!" shrieked Waters. "I know there are no land-

ing fields in Berlin—not for this crate. Turn back, you crazy fool!”

The wires and struts of the Salmson were hissing and moaning in the glide. The Fokkers were watching closely, scenting a trick, watching for a chance to slip in under those deadly Lewis guns in the rear seat.

JACKSON'S mouth moved. His voice was like a lead hammer beating upon a lead plate.

“I killed him,” he said tonelessly.

Waters nodded.

“Sure, I saw him go. Right on the old button. Teach that guy better manners than to fly across a Salmson's course. I burned two babies back here myself. So far the shooting has been splendid, Sir Montmorncy, but I don't crave any more—so let's for home, Bruno.”

“I told him I'd kill him,” said Jackson's mouth.

Waters stared at Jackson's face.

“What's the matter with you?” he shrieked, the bite of panic in his voice. “Who are you talking about?”

“O'Keefe,” said Jackson's mouth. “I told him. I went there last night. He was there—crashed his way in again—drunk and spoiling for a fight. I walked in and told him to get out. He laughed and grabbed at her arm. He said: ‘Come here, baby, papa wants to talk to you—and don't pay any attention to the Boy Scout.’

“She hit him across the face with the back of her hand. He laughed and pulled her across the room. I let him have it on the jaw. I told him I was going to kill him. He must have realized it. He went for his gun. He shot before I had my gun out of the holster. He hit me in the ribs and in the arm—almost point-blank. But he was too drunk for close shooting. I shot him seven times through the stomach—emptied the gun.”

Waters was acting out of desperation. He threw up the gun rack

and turned loose a burst at the bottom of a Fokker diving in from overhead.

“Jack!” he screamed. “Talk later. Please—for the love of God—you don't know what you're doing! We can't stay here!”

“Why not?” asked Jackson's white mouth. “I can't go back. I'm not going to hang for that louse. He had it coming.”

“You won't hang,” begged Waters. “Listen, son, I've been with you all the way, flying this crate day in and day out. You can't do this to me! You're trying to let them bump you off. You want it. But you can't do it to me—you've got to give me the break.”

Jackson's eyes were filled with the first light of comprehension. He looked for a long moment at Waters' face.

“That's right, Tommy,” his mouth said slowly. “I can't do it to you. That's right. Hang on.”

He turned his body back to the front. His arm reached out and opened the throttle. A Fokker slashed in over the Salmson's nose. The white, blunt battering ram nose of the Salmson lifted a trifle, and the twin Vickers transfixed a green and white enemy with crackling steel.

Then the nose of the Salmson went down with a rush, and the motor screamed as it picked up speed.

IN the rear seat, perspiration from Waters' head was running down in his eyes, blinding him, even as he swung the muzzles of the Lewis guns around the heavens, blasting at shadowy shapes of enemy fighters attempting to shoot the Salmson out of the sky.

There was a weakness flowing through Waters. No sensation he had ever experienced before, but he knew the sensation. He was understanding that he had stood on the threshold outside the House of Death and had

looked at the grinning skull of the keeper.

Going home was a nightmare. Dimly Waters understood that Jackson was flying like a demon and that twice he had gone so close to earth that the undercarriage had torn away light branches of trees.

Flying like a madman with the Fokker pack in full cry after them. Forcing the heavy Salmson to an incredible speed and taking it down to where the Fokkers had no room to maneuver and were forced to accept a running fight—so that Waters could sit on top of his Lewises and shoot down anything that came his way.

An eternity that went on and on, with Waters breathing the acrid tang of burning powder from his own guns; with his eyes drunk from following the green and white outlines flashing about him.

And then the Salmson was going up the steep side of a wing over. A curtain of green rose up from under its wings, and Waters was standing on his head, staring down at the green. Staring down at ten hangars and wheel tracks and at the white contours of other Salmsons.

A thought oozed its way into the smear within his brain. Jackson had brought the Salmson through that hell, to bring his buddy in the back seat home.

THE Salmson grunted and settled down for a landing.

Waters, through instinct, pawed at his camera box. Through instinct he lit a cigarette, with the motor in the two-seater turning over at idling speed to cool it out. Jackson merely sat there.

Someone came around the wing and spoke to Jackson.

"Captain Rand wants to see you immediately, sir, in the operations office."

Jackson nodded absently and

climbed down out of his seat. He walked across the field with the stride of a sleep-walker.

Waters, lugging his plate holders, ran after him with little steps and grabbed at his arm.

"Listen, big boy, I don't know what kind of an assignment you're flying, or what's written on the board—but I'm flying it with you. Get it? I'm riding in the back seat."

Jackson's white mouth broke into a sudden smile, and the smile cut at Waters' heart.

"You can't fly the back seat in this crate, old-timer," Jackson said quietly. "I'm going in to be arrested for murder. I told you—back there. I shot O'Keefe. Seven times in the stomach. I counted every one."

CHAPTER III

Esprit de Corps



RAND was sitting in the operations office. With him, sitting at either side, were Doak and Manners. Rand's cap was pulled down over his eyes. He sat half slumped down in his chair, his jaw jutting out like the jaw of an angry bulldog, his eyes snapping.

They were all three watching the door, and as Jackson entered, his face still stained with the grime of flying, and his flying coat still buttoned around his body, their eyes never left his face.

The girl was there. She was sitting on Rand's cot, in the shadows of the office. As Jackson came in, she made an attempt to rise from the cot. She uttered a little sigh, like a groan of anguish.

"Sit down!" Rand's voice barked.

She collapsed back onto the couch, her eyes looking hungrily at Jackson's face.

Jackson seemed very young, and

very weary. His eyes stared at the face of his superior. His hands hung at his sides. He looked once at the girl and once at Doak and Manners. Then he gave his entire attention to Rand.

WATERS shoved his way into the tent, minus his plate holder. He stood close to Jackson's shoulder.

"Who sent for you?" demanded Rand gruffly. "Get out. If I want you, I'll send for you."

Waters' eyes looked at Rand coolly, almost insolently.

"Sorry, Skipper," he said tautly. "Jack and I have flown most of our assignments together. I don't think I want to be left out of this. I'm kind of used to looking at action over his left shoulder."

"Suit yourself," growled Rand.

He was silent for a minute, his eyes glowering at Jackson's face.

"Well," he said suddenly. "What have you got to say for yourself? I'll warn you in advance. I know most of the story. Not from her. She keeps insisting that she did it. Out with it, you idiot. What did you kill O'Keefe for?"

Jackson's face was like a white mask.

"I killed him because he wasn't fit to live," he said in a low, vibrant voice. "I'd do it all over again. I let him fire the first shots. He missed. Then I let him have it through the stomach. That's all."

"No, it isn't all," rasped Rand. "I want the whole story."

There was a moan from the girl.

"He didn't!" she said. "I did it. I killed him."

Jackson's mouth moved while his eyes were fixed on the girl. He seemed to speak in the manner of one talking out of a dream.

"She had nothing to do with it," he said. "I did it—with my own gun. I told him that I'd kill him if he didn't stay away from her. She

had enough grief without the O'Keefe kind. He was a louse and a rat.

"Maybe you never heard him talk about his 'way with women.' I've heard him, and I've watched him. He told me that he had his eye on a 'little French baby' in Briacourt. He knew that there was only one girl in the place and she was Adrienne. He boasted that he would go in and 'give her a whirl' when he got ready.

"Well, Adrienne had told me all about herself and her family. About her two brothers who were killed in action, one of them a pilot in the Storks, one of them an infantry officer at Verdun.

"She told me that the first invasion swallowed up her mother, and that her father had just disappeared. She told me that she stayed in Briacourt because she had no place else to go, and because she hoped that some day her mother or her father might come back.

"She didn't tell me about the days and nights of hell she has known. She didn't tell me about the grief and heartbreak over the loss of everything in the world, the fear that must possess any young girl who finds herself without a soul in the world—alone—on her own, in the middle of a hell like this.

"But I could read it all in her eyes, and in the way she talked to me, and in the gladness in her face when I went to see her. And I loved her for it.

"TO me she was the only clean, decent, beautiful thing in this whole war. Each time I went to see her, I felt clean and new and rested. She was more to me than just a girl. She was—kind of—my hope of living. But you couldn't understand that.

"And then O'Keefe boasted about how he would 'handle' her. He said I wasn't man enough to hold her. I hated him—hated his little green eyes and his lousy, red, sweaty,

freckled face, and his slobbering voice when he was drunk, and his all around nastiness. I could endure him as long as he laid off Adrienne, but when I thought of him bothering her—well, it made me boil.

"I drove him away from her twice—and he laughed. Said he wasn't ready. Then, last night, I went to see her, and he was there, drunk. I knew I was going to have to kill him, to keep him away from her. If I was killed in action, and wasn't there to protect her, O'Keefe would get her.

"Well, when he grabbed her and yanked her around, I saw red. I told him I was going to kill him. He went for his gun. He hit me twice. Then I let him have it—until the gun was empty. No matter what happens, he won't bother her. That's all that matters."

"That louse O'Keefe has been a foul ball ever since he joined this outfit!" Waters spoke with a choke in his voice. "A guy that would run in a pair of passing dice in a friendly crap game with his brother officers is no good, and every man in the outfit knows that O'Keefe did that and laughed about it. He didn't belong in this kind of an outfit. He should have been in the Bat d'Af."

Jackson's eyes were staring at Rand's face.

"I'm sorry, Skipper," he said tonelessly. "I tried to save you all this trouble and worry. I was a little out of my head, I guess, knowing that I'd have to—get it over with—and I wouldn't even have a chance to say good-by to the boys—nor to—"

HIS eyes lifted and rested on the girl's face.

"He was going to make an ass of himself," explained Waters gruffly. "I didn't get it at first. But he was going to wade into a bunch of enemy ships and keep flying north, and fighting, until they dropped him. He was crazy enough to cut the gun in

the middle of the hottest dog-fight we were ever in, to tell me about this O'Keefe mess."

"I forgot about Waters," said Jackson dully. "I couldn't go—and take him with me."

"**A**WFUL mess," growled Rand. "And don't get me wrong. I see men get killed every day, and it does not bother me. But this kind of a mess—dragging in the whole outfit, casting a reflection on every man in the squadron. One of our officers killing a brother officer over a woman!

"That's what it amounts to. When it gets down to brass tacks and a court of inquiry, it's just a plain case of a killing over a girl—murder. How can I smear the whole outfit with that kind of a brush? We'll be famous for this episode, and the good name of the squadron will be lost."

He glared at Jackson.

"I'm sorry, sir," said Jackson softly.

"Sorry, hell!" barked Rand. "The minute I make this report, the whole A. E. F. will be buzzing about it like a beehive. We'll be carted off to court. I'll have the pleasant duty of standing up and sending one of my officers to death or life imprisonment. Our work up here will be busted up."

"I'm sorry, sir," half-whispered Jackson.

"I could kill that louse myself," spat Rand.

Waters moved forward.

"Over my dead body," he said grimly.

"I'm talking about O'Keefe, you brainless idiot!" thundered Rand.

Waters subsided.

Rand's face was hard; his eyes were staring out of the office door.

"Oh, Lord," he finally groaned. "There's nothing else for it. It's got to be done. Good name of the outfit or not, personal feelings or not—the report has to go in."

He glanced up at Jackson's taut

face. There was something akin to pity in the depths of his eyes which toned down the rasp in his voice.

"Lieutenant Jackson," he ordered. "You will consider yourself under arrest and confined to the field until further order. I suppose I can accept your word of honor that you will make no attempt to evade or escape arrest pending orders from Division?"

Jackson's eyes were haggard.

"I shall make no attempt to escape, sir," he said. "I never desired to escape."

"That's all," barked Rand. "Stay within the field until further orders."

He picked up a pen from the top of his desk. He was about to write on an official report form when there was a knock on the door of the operations office. He lifted his head.

"Come in," he ordered gruffly.

A motorcycle dispatch rider from Division lunged into the tent. He fumbled in his dispatch case and handed Rand a sealed envelope. Rand signed the book and ripped the edge from the envelope. He read for a minute in silence. Then he lifted his head.

"WHERE the devil were you two cowboys today?" he demanded.

Waters glanced at Jackson.

"I don't know exactly," he confessed. "Jack was doing the flying. I couldn't discover a single landmark I knew."

"Well?" demanded Rand of Jackson. "Where were you?"

"North," said Jackson briefly. "North—way north."

"Nerts!" declared Rand with a baffled look. "Is everything gone screwy? Can't you answer a simple question? North? What kind of an answer is that?"

"I don't know, exactly," explained Jackson. "I wasn't bothering about location. I wasn't thinking about coming back. It wasn't important."

Rand tossed the communication from Division into Waters' hand.

"Get a load of that," he suggested. "And you both tell me you don't know where you were. What kind of a report will that make?"

WATER'S eyes were devouring the typewritten message:

Inquire immediately exact location of flying field photographed by Observer Waters and turned in for developing within the last hour. Examination of the prints under magnification seems to establish the fact that this enemy field is the manufacturing center for new type enemy aircraft designed especially for front line action against infantry and artillery. In confidence, you are informed that one of our agents succeeded in penetrating into this factory and was able to send us fragmentary reports on this new weapon. Even the fragmentary reports are sufficient to show us that the enemy is in possession of a flying weapon which will be infinitely dangerous to us, and may succeed in destroying all advanced lines established by infantry and artillery before we can develop a defense against this weapon.

Information reaching us states that this enemy aircraft will be powered with two motors, equipped with a new type machine-gun firing an explosive bullet of terrific force and destructive powers; will be equipped with bomb racks for the dropping of a new type liquid explosive contained in twenty pound cases. It is reported that the enemy claims one of these bombs will denude one square mile of territory of all life, and that the effect of the explosive is so ghastly that nothing can live within the bombed territory for months following the bombing, and that the soil so bombed will never again grow grass or crops.

This explosive, plus its chemical components, is designed to sweep the entire Allied front bare of men and guns, after a series of quick night raids. We are informed that a shortage of vital materials is the only thing limiting the enemy preparation of this weapon and that the secret is being more closely guarded than was the seventy mile gun.

It is imperative that these officers make an immediate report of the location of this field. The ships contained upon these photographs are of an entirely new pattern, and the set-up of the field and buildings closely tallies with the report and

description given us by the M. I. agent who penetrated the zone.

D. M. I. G2.

Waters whistled softly.

"Well, fancy that," he said. "Two Sherlock Holmeses—and never knowing it. They are sure worried about those little airplanes we mugged and that field."

"Well?" grated Rand. "Where was it? The report has to be made. Come on, snap out of it."

There was a queer light in Jackson's eyes.

"I don't know," he said with a hint of stubbornness in his voice. "The only way I could ever get back there—is to fly back."

"This gets nuttier and nuttier!" groaned Rand. "Get out of here. I'll attend to you later."

He picked up the telephone, and called Division.

CHAPTER IV

Trial by Ordeal



LATE that afternoon Waters strode into the operations office and planted himself in front of Rand.

"Look here," he said.

"I don't know what you intend to do about Jackson," he said belligerently, "only I know this. I'm not going to stand around and see that boy go insane waiting for it to happen."

"I'm going to have him tried," announced Rand grimly, "if it's any of your business. It's out of my hands."

"Well, get it over with," snapped Waters. "I've had just about all I can stand. I don't intend to sit around and watch a boy I've flown through hell with go to pieces, just through feeling he's a criminal."

"I don't care what he did. He's performed enough miracles in flying to balance the scales of justice. I don't care what anyone else says

about him, or what they do to him: I'm for him—right down the middle."

"What's the occasion for this outburst?" asked Rand, with a spark of interest in his eyes.

"He's out there, working like a slave, without speaking to anyone or noticing anyone. He's been working on his Salmson since we had the session in here. He's got something up his sleeve, and he means business. When he looks like that, hell is going to pop. This thing is driving him nuts."

There was a sudden mistiness in Waters' eyes.

"What's he doing?" Rand asked.

"He's cut the back seat out of his crate, and he's lined the fuselage with aluminum plate, and he's wired the crate and has built in a switch on the instrument board. He won't talk, but I watched him for a while, and as far as I'm concerned he's building himself a flying torpedo."

Rand stalked into the hangar with Waters at his shoulder. Jackson's eyes were preoccupied. They hardly noticed the skipper. Jackson's hands went on with their delicate work. Rand thrust his head into the open fuselage and studied the operation for a long moment. When he lifted his head again his eyes were baffled.

"What's the big idea?" he demanded of Jackson.

JACKSON'S mouth moved in a slow smile.

"I'm trying to save you a little trouble—and the outfit from the stigma of my own disgrace," he said quietly. "I'm fixing up the chariot to go out in a burst of glory."

"What do you mean, 'glory'?" asked Rand.

"Division is pretty excited over that new 'weapon,' as they call it, isn't it?" reminded Jackson. "They've got to put a stop to that factory we photographed or else be haunted by

nightmares for the rest of the war. Nightmares with men burning to cinders and whole areas wiped out in one breath.

"I've been thinking it over. Maybe if a guy could get in there and kind of knock that Jerry set-up flat, Division and the rest of the world might forget unpleasant things connected with the bird who does the job—merely out of relief at having the nightmares chased away?"

"What the devil are you talking about?" grunted Rand.

"**Y**OU'RE going to have me tried, aren't you? You have no other choice. Well, suppose the prisoner just flew out and knocked over that factory and knocked over the nightmare at the same time—and didn't come back. The knocking over of the factory would be a sight more important than being cheated out of a court-martial, wouldn't it?"

"You're talking through your hat," declared Rand.

"You see, I'm the only man in the world who knows where that Jerry factory is located—the place Division is so excited about. I found it by accident. I can fly back there right now. No one else can—and Division wants sudden action.

"You're going to let me run the show. You're going to let me fly back there and handle this business my own way. After that—" his voice broke a little—"you'll discover that all of the nightmares have been chased, including me."

"You're under arrest," reminded Rand. "Your orders are not to leave the field unless Headquarters wants you."

"Headquarters can want me," declared Jackson, "but it won't do Headquarters any good. So long as I keep my mouth shut and refuse to answer questions they'll never know the location of those photographs. And those new Jerry crates are ready

to fly. I'm playing this hand my own way. I don't need a court and I don't need a judge."

"He's raving," said Rand to Waters.

"I'm fitting this Salmson for the business," gestured Jackson. "I'm gutting it to make room for about four hundred pounds of T. N. T. I'm going to pack the stuff in tightly and seal it. I'll fix a war head to the prop boss, and other war heads all along the fuselage so that the slightest contact will blow this crate higher than Jupiter. I'm going to fly it back to that field. I'm going to point it at that Jerry clump of buildings.

"If I live to get it within striking distance, I'll explode the torpedo where it will do the most good. If not—when the crate falls in the center of them it will explode itself. That's just as good."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," declared Rand out of a white mouth. "That's just a form of suicide."

"What difference does it make?" Jackson asked tonelessly. "I go that way—or I go the way 'a court-martial may direct'. I'd rather go my way. A firing squad or a life sentence won't blow up that Jerry plant. I figure it's my one way of sentencing myself so that other people won't have to do it, and so that the whole outfit won't suffer."

RAND was staring at Jackson's shirt and arm. Jackson's body was stiff with blood, and the arm was swathed in bloody bandages.

"For God's sake, man," he blurted. "You're hurt—you're wounded!"

"I told you that O'Keefe shot me twice," Jackson reminded.

Rand turned his head away. His cheeks were suddenly wet. Waters walked out of the tent door and stood staring up at the blue of the afternoon sky.

"You see, Skipper," said Jackson softly. "Someone has to do it. It's

the only way it can be done. And it has to be me. It's my job. Understand? I'm glad to do it—only—I'd like you to look after Adrienne. I wouldn't want her to know. Couldn't you just tell her that I was shot down in action?"

"If you think I'm going to stand by and see you pull this crazy stunt, you're crazy," growled Rand. "No power on earth can ask a man to take on this kind of a job."

"Except the man himself," explained Jackson wearily. "I'm asking myself to do it. You don't understand, Skipper. I couldn't stand up and hear a court send me to prison for life. Neither could you. This is my out. It's my only weapon of self-defense. I know where to go and what to do."

Rand's hand fell on Jackson's shoulder.

"You're a man, son," he said huskily. "I hope that O'Keefe rat roasts in hell."

ALL the rest of the afternoon Jackson worked on the Salmson. The T. N. T. was packed carefully into its vitals. He would permit no man to help him. The danger was too great.

It was dark when he finished. Waters brought him a sandwich from the kitchen and a mug of coffee. Waters was strangely silent.

"Do you mind telling her goodbye?" asked Jackson. "Somehow—I can't—I wouldn't know what to say. Just tell her that she doesn't have to worry any more—that she'll have enough to be comfortable. I fixed that. I'm going in a few minutes, as soon as I pour gas in the crate and get her warmed. S'long, old-timer, it's been swell having you with me. When I fly out I'm going to look around at where the back seat was—and I'm going to miss you like hell."

They stood there, hands biting

each other in a fierce handclasp.

"S'long, kid," mumbled Waters. "Take care of yourself."

He stumbled away, his throat choked, his eyes blinded.

CHAPTER V

The Flying Torpedo



HE ghostly outline of the Salmson stood poised for flight. Jackson's head made a dim outline over the curve of the front cockpit. He had trundled the ship gingerly away from the line and into the wind. He sat there. He seemed to be filling his soul with one last look at this place—at every tree and hangar and tent.

There were other shadowy forms of men in front of the hangars. Indistinct, blurred outlines, with white blobs against the darkness marking their faces. They were silent, watching with grave eyes.

There was the sudden, frightened padding of little feet on the turf of the field. The men in the shadows stirred uneasily. They tried to avert faces, but they were forced to look.

The girl was clawing at the edge of Jackson's cockpit, fighting to draw her body up to the level of Jackson's face. She was deathly white in the moonlight and her black hair hung over her shoulders in wild disorder. Her jerky voice, sobbing, came to the men on the line.

"Jack," it begged, "please don't! I've told them I did it. I'll make them believe me. What do I matter? I'm of no importance. They can't fool me—I know what you are doing. I heard them whispering—looking over here while you were working. Please!"

They saw his hands move, removing her gripping fingers from the cockpit pads.

"Don't!" he said in a voice that

was meant to be cheering. "I'm not doing anything much. A matter of duty, that's all. And besides, I'm leaving Waters here to look after you. Why, everything is going to be all right, angel. I'll be seeing you—in a little while."

Waters marched stiffly out to the ship. He put his arm around the girl.

"Come on," he said gruffly. "You'll get hurt—knocked over by the slipstream. Jack's going on an assignment."

The Salmson's engine barked and spat. Then it settled down to pulling under full throttle. A barrage of dust and grass engulfed Waters and the girl. It tore at them, ripped at her skirt, snatched at her hair. Waters held her, shielded her from the blast.

The big two-seater moved slowly, gathered speed, settled by the nose, grew buoyant with the urge to fly. Then it was off the ground, pounding around a shallow bank, heading into the north.

It was Rand who stirred first, whose voice lifted in a growling shout.

"Anybody who thinks I'm going to stay here and watch a man go out to die like that is crazy. I'm going with him. Part of the way, at least. Roll out my crate."

THERE was a sudden activity about the hangars. The thump of heavy wheels and the scraping of tail skids.

That night no man in the squadron took time to warm his motor. He merely flopped into his cockpit, called for contact, and flew. Motors sputtered and protested, but the white two-seater ghosts leaped up off the field in hungry pursuit of Jackson's ship, with Rand in the lead.

There was a snatch of words from Waters to the girl.

"He told me to look after you," he

said, with his eyes fixed frantically upon the ships rolling out. "But I reckon he comes first. I've been with him up to now—I think I'll stay with him. I'm going. Please go across the field—wait till we come back."

He sprang away from her, threw himself into the rear seat of Rand's Salmson just as it rolled for a take-off.

Rand looked back and waved his hand.

MAD flight through the darkness with the white Salmson's spread over the sky. Men flying them with gargoyle faces and hands gripping the controls. Men peering into the night skies, fighting for a glimpse of Jackson's ship.

Rand picking up the firefly-like exhaust of Jackson's motor, tracking it like a red Indian tracking prints across the vast expanse of an empty plain. Jackson's ship, heavy with its load of concentrated destruction, making slow time, giving the remainder of the squadron ships a chance to close up the gap.

They flew along, wing to wing, thundering a tremendous challenge out of the night to anything which moved or lived upon enemy soil.

And all the while, Waters crouched in the back seat of Rand's ship and fingered the butts of the twin Lewises and kept his eyes fixed on the pale shadow of Jackson's Salmson.

They flew through a double barrage of A. A. fire. In the night the bursts were like rockets breaking soundlessly out of an inky void.

Twice night flying enemy scouts slashed down at them, and instinctively they made a protecting circle around Jackson. Standing up in Rand's back seat, Waters swung those vicious guns on the rack, blasting the devil out of the flying shadows, keeping them from diving down upon Jackson's tail.

They flew endlessly. The tension

increased. Lights stabbed up at them from the ground, crossed and criss-crossed, swept the sky, rested for breathless instants on the fabric of the white ships. Boiling bursts of shellfire stabbed upward from the earth.

Then, they came to the field Waters had photographed. A white moon broke out from under banked up masses of cumulus. There was no mistaking the place.

THE moon touched upon a triple line of strange looking ships standing before a factory. Ships with great wing spread, ships of peculiar design. Men were racing about that field, attempting to herd the new ships out of danger.

Searchlights probed up from the field. Flame leaped from the long snouts of concealed anti-aircraft rifles.

The wires from the front had been busy. There was no secret concerning the approach of the Salmson squadron. There was a mass of protecting E. A. a-wing.

The wings of the night flying enemy beat about the heads of the Salmson pilots. The scream and surge of rioting motors raged through the skies under the pale moon. The stutter and staccato hammering of machine-guns rose and fell, stabbed, clubbed and raved.

Here and there a shape tumbled down through the white light, tumbling end over end like a bat suddenly stricken with death in mid-flight.

Waters stood up in his seat. There were tears blinding him. He was cursing—mechanically and without meaning. And with each burst, the two muzzles of the Lewises spat venomous green flame, and writhing white tracers flicked through space toward a fast flying enemy.

Out of the maelstrom of action above the field, a white shape suddenly plunged downward. There was

a Fokker outline on its tail. The Fokker's Spandaus were spewing lead. There was no protecting gunner in the rear seat of the white shape.

Rand went in with screaming motor and hammering guns. Waters swung the Lewis rack around to fire over the leading edge of the upper wing of his own ship. He was firing over Rand's head. The flame from the Lewis guns was blistering Rand's neck, but he did not so much as turn his head.

The four guns picked up the attacking Fokker, struck it in unison. It seemed to groan and to half roll under the whiplashes of steel beating against its tender body. Then it skidded off on a wing tip, and fell in an inverted spin, wheels clawing at moonlit space—going down.

And the white Salmson plunged downward recklessly for the field below—for the brick buildings and the line of ships and all of the horrible threat contained on that hidden field.

It seemed to grow bigger and more luminous as it dived. It swept over the roof of a factory building. It hovered for a moment, picking its mark. There was a faint flutter of white from its bottom. Then it drove headlong into the brick wall of the plant.

There was a breathless instant.

AT the end of the instant, the Salmsons flying above were caught up in a tidal wave of concussion released out of a blast of white flame from the factory. The building seemed to explode with a white light gutting its center. Great masses of flame leaped upward to a height of five hundred feet.

The explosions repeated themselves down the line of buildings. The ships on the line dissolved into shapeless masses of rubble.

Above, the Salmsons bucked and shuddered in the hot, churned up air. The pilots were staring over the side

at the destruction one man—Jackson—had created. The Fokkers and defending enemy ships were suddenly missing as if they had been blasted out of the sky by the terrific impact of the explosions.

Rand forced his dulled brain to function. He gathered the white Salmsons. They flew south, low and fast. With Waters riding in the back seat, his head pillowed on his forearms, sobbing, his body racked with the convulsions within his chest.

That night a funereal pall hung over the field. Men did not go near the girl who stood at the door of the operations tent, looking with blind eyes toward the northern horizon of the night heavens.

They did not approach Waters, who was making himself drunk in his quarters—sitting there in black mood pouring endless gurglings out of a cognac bottle into a tin cup and drinking them without tasting the fiery liquor.

A man had died—had stood himself before a firing squad—had pulled the very triggers on the guns which killed him, after passing his own sentence.

THEN, with the dawn, a fast flying Pfalz single-seater roared in over the field. It made a swooping bank at the head of the field, raced low over the turf. There was a flutter of fabric from under it as the pilot hurled a weighted something with a trailing ribbon down at the ground. The Pfalz zoomed with a rush, flirted its tail, drove for the front.

Rand opened the communication. There were two sheets of paper in a shell casing from a German .77. The first was written in German script. It said:

As a tribute to a brave man, who has taught even Germans something of cour-

age and self-sacrifice, we are glad to send this message to his comrades, and to add our congratulations.

THE second was in Jackson's handwriting. Rand stared at it with unbelieving eyes. A message from the dead. Handwriting labored, scrawled, exhibiting pain and a terrible concentration on the writing. The second message said:

Maybe you'll think I cheated, but I figured that if I pulled it off, it was worth my life, and so, anything that I could salvage from the life I owed you belonged to me. So I bailed out just before the old crate went into the side of the building. It was close. I hit the ground and it knocked me cold. A piece of roof or something fell on top of me. They dug me out late last night. After they fussed around they told me I was going to be almost as good as new. They insist on my staying over here as a house guest for a little while—very sporting about it, everything considered.

Please tell her not to worry. I'm coming back—soon.

Jackson.

Rand held the note for a long moment. His face was working and very white. Then he went into the operations office and stared down at his desk. There was the beginning of an official report there.

It began:

From: The Commanding Officer, 86th Squadron.

To: The Divisional Commanding Officer.
Subject: Request for Court in the death of Lt. O'Keefe.

1. The Commanding Officer, 86th Squadron, feels it his duty to report the death, by shooting at the hands of Lieutenant Jackson of this Command, of Lieutenant O'Keefe, also of this Command—

His hand reached out and his fingers crumpled the sheet into the palm of his hand. The fingers rolled it into a small ball.

Then the fingers tore the small ball to tiny shreds.

NEXT MONTH: Another Great Story by GEORGE BRUCE—KILLED IN ACTION! Rip-Roaring Thrills from Start to Finish!

The Ships on the Cover

By EUGENE M. FRANDZEN

THE Halberstadt C.L.2 was, with its sister ship the C.L.4, a bright spot in Germany's output of two-seater fighters. It was simpler in design than most of the German ships of this type; probably thereby lays the reason for its very good performance. Kicking over 1,385 r.p.m.'s at 10,000 feet, it could travel at around 100 m.p.h. It was not so hot on climbing, but was light on its controls and could be maneuvered with ease.

The other ship on the cover is the Avro "Spider," a job turned out by the famous A. V. Roe & Co., Ltd. It had "It" when it came to speed, maneuverability, and climb. Its trick triangular system of interplane bracing obviated the use of flying or



landing wires. And when it came to visibility that "one holer" in the top wing gave the pilot a look-see up and ahead. Even downward vision was good as the chord of the lower wing was very narrow.

Let's slip back about half an hour before this crackup that's pictured on the cover.

A Trophy of War

Consider yourself planked on an Allied tarmac. Out in front of number one hangar is a captured German ship; a Halberstadt. A group of British aviators are standing around admiring their trophy. Greaseballs have tuned her up, she is idling beautifully. One of them with three pots of colors is ready to paint the British cordages on this German ship. There is darn good reason for this art work on captured machines. It's to save the Allied test pilots who take up the captured ship back of the lines from getting popped down by some other Allied aviator who might think a German was at the stick.

Standing among the British aviators is a young man with a very dejected expression on his square face. His goggles are shoved back. His collar ornaments are German. To the Allied aviators, whose

captive he is, he is just a flyer who happened to work for the wrong side. Much wine and spirits have trickled down all throats since the capture of the German. All hands are buddies, friends; in fact old pals. What if Fritz did pop at them from his Halberstadt? It was all in the game.

Just a Joy-Ride

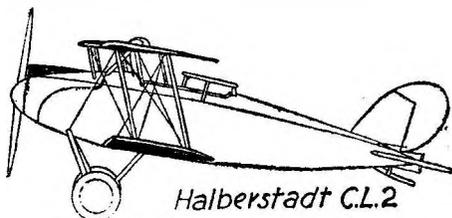
"Let's have a little ride in your old war chariot, Fritz," suggested Lieutenant Mills, who had forced the German down.

So Fritz climbed in at the controls after it was certain his front and rear guns were harmless. Lt. Mills tucked a pistol into his pocket and heaved himself up on the side.

Smack!

Fritz fist clipped the Britisher on the button. The Mercedes roared. Dirt blasted into the other's eyes on the ground.

An Avro roared throatily in the next hangar. Lt. Mills was in it in a jiffy, gunned the Bentley and blasted down the drag and up into the air. It took him twenty minutes to catch Fritz. Then came ten minutes of systematic sniping at engine and wings. Finally the Halberstadt's engine sputtered, died. Down she came, flopping and shuddering. As her undercarriage



hit the ground her wings folded and called it a day. Lt. Mills landed close by, rubbed his aching jaw and walked over to the wreck. Fritz crawled out, felt himself all over and indicated that he was not injured. He then shoved out his jaw and Lt. Mills carefully planked a beautiful right uppercut home. Fritz took it standing up and grinned.

Mills produced a flask—"Cheerio," he grinned.

"Prosit," replied Fritz.

NINE LIVES

Lieutenant "Leather" Wyeth, Under the Shadow of Disgrace, Flies into Hunland on a Perilous Rescue Mission in this Rip-Roaring Sky Yarn

By OWEN ATKINSON

Author of "The Gangway to Hell," "Sky Wolves," etc.



HE 85th Pursuit Squadron didn't welcome Lieutenant "Leather" Wyeth. His reputation had preceded him. Cap Coatsworth, the C. O., greeted him gruffly, checked in his transfer papers, assigned him to a hut by himself.

"Hope you fit in here," said the major as if he doubted it. "I'll introduce you to the gang at mess. The orderly will show you where you're to live. See you later."

Now, Wyeth sat in his tiny cabin, surrounded by his baggage. He stared gloomily out of the window. Coatsworth had recognized him, all right. The whole squadron would know. He'd been sent down to the 85th to get a new start. But they knew about him already.

A fine chance he had to start with a clean slate here!

Leather Wyeth didn't look unreliable. He was a well set up young man with crisp sandy hair, a hard chin, cold gray eyes and small ears set close to his head. He'd served a hitch in the Marines, so they called him "Leather." He could fly. And he could fight.

It was that affair at Essey which had wrecked him. He'd gone out with the flight leader on a balloon busting raid. The flight leader had crashed behind the Boche lines, had walked away from the wreck, it was said, and signalled for Wyeth to

come down and get him. Wyeth had turned and fled, it was rumored, and the flight leader had been killed by German infantry before he had a chance to surrender.

A nasty business! Hard to explain. And one trouble was that Wyeth hadn't bothered to explain. So Wing had transferred him to a new squadron, thinking he'd get a new start there, where he wasn't known.

WYETH laughed bitterly. What chance did he have? The 85th knew all about him. They'd send him to Coventry, refuse to speak to him except in the line of duty, just as his former wingmates had done. Make life a living hell for him. Well, he could stand it. He'd never been licked yet.

The floor of the hut swung open and a cat entered and sat on the floor, looking at Wyeth. He was a sad, unhappy looking cat. He was black and he had a long tail and a small pointed fox-like face, with melancholy brown eyes. His coat was cut and scarred and ragged from many an ancient wound. One leg had been broken and had healed crooked, which gave the animal a queer rolling gait, like a drunken sailor.

His name, Wyeth learned later, was Trouble, and he was the unofficial and unwanted squadron mascot. He had appeared out of the dark, attached himself to the Yanks. Nothing could drive him away. Sev-



With inches to spare, the Fokker shot up in a loop

eral attempts had been made to rid the squadron of Trouble. He had been placed in a bag and taken twenty kilometers away and dropped in a ditch beside the road. The next morning he was back — muddy, scratched and gloomy — hanging around the hangars as usual.

WYETH felt a sudden sympathy for this sad, drooping animal.

"Hello, Kitty," he said in a friendly voice.

Trouble pricked up his ears in astonishment. This was the first kind word he had received in months. Most of the flyers heaved a boot at him when he came around. They didn't like black cats, evidently. Trouble advanced cautiously, one eye cocked for a flying shoe.

Wyeth reached down and stroked

his ragged coat. Trouble began to purr. "Meow," he remarked.

He climbed up into Wyeth's lap and curled his tail around his head. He was starved for affection and now he had found a friend. "Meow," he said sadly, "meow."

"Reckon I need a pal," mused Wyeth. "A cat's better than nothing. Even a black cat."

The cat followed Wyeth to mess that night. He sat back and watched solemnly while Coatsworth introduced the newcomer to the men of the 85th. The C. O. called off the famous names, "Blondy Alexander, Duke Pell, Como Campbell, Holy Joe Peterson," and each man nodded stiffly at Wyeth. The major motioned Wyeth to an empty chair.

Conversation and laughter broke out along the table. Nobody paid

any attention to the new member of the squadron. Nobody but Trouble.

The cat perched himself on the back of Wyeth's chair, went, "Meow, meow," as if to say, "This guy is my pal, anyway."

Coatsworth cleared his throat noisily. "That's a funny thing, Wyeth. That damn cat had been around here for months and you're the first man who's had anything to do with him. Not superstitious, I take it."

"Not me," drawled Wyeth. "It takes more than a black cat to bring me bad luck."

"Call it bad luck if you like," the remark came from the end of the table. "We've got another name for it."

Wyeth turned and saw that Duke Pell was gazing at him steadily, challengingly.

"Just what do you mean by that crack?" demanded Wyeth evenly.

Pell grinned wickedly. He was about to reply when the door opened and a mud-spattered orderly came lurching into the room. "Major Coatsworth? Message from Wing, sir. Urgent, they said."

Coatsworth took the sheet of paper, studied it thoughtfully. "H'm," he called for attention. "Listen to this, men." He read from the flimsy:

Our agent behind the German lines reports presence of an American flyer hiding in old farmhouse two kilos east of Baulney on Metz road. Flyer near starvation. Immediate rescue necessary.

A BUZZ of conversation broke out around the table. One or two pilots leaped to their feet as if to volunteer for the mission. The major held up his hand for silence.

"There's a footnote by Captain Cameron, adjutant."

The footnote read:

The above information is subject to doubt as G-2 reports that our messages

have been tampered with by the Boche. This may be a trick. Use your own judgment.

PELL and Blondy Alexander, that huge, smiling giant, got up and crossed to the sector map which hung on the wall of the mess-room.

"Here's the farm, all right," announced Pell. "Looks like a fairly good landing field right next to it, too. In fact, it looks too damn good. The Boche have been trying to capture one of our new Spad 17s ever since we got them on this front. Old Reinhold von Holt and his Falcons would sacrifice their last Fokker to get their hands on one of our new ships. This Yank flyer hiding in a farmhouse seems phoney to me."

"Yes, but listen, Duke," cut in Alexander. "Five of our men have gone down behind the Boche lines in the last month. Suppose that was Damon, or Kirk, or Wynn or one of the gang hiding over there? Waiting for us to come and get him. Half nuts from worry and hunger. I tell you, we've got to make sure."

"He's right," Wyeth entered the conversation eagerly. "The message may be straight. I'll take the job. Be glad to risk it."

Pell turned on him, eyes blazing. "We take care of our own, here," he snapped. "We never desert a friend when he needs us."

"Gentlemen!" barked Coatsworth. "No time for personal quarrels. I'll decide who does this job."

Alexander looked out of the window. "Just twilight, sir. Now's the time to go if we're going to save him."

"We'll make this a squadron affair," Coatsworth decided. "Stage a bombing raid on von Holt's drome. That will keep him occupied while two of us go down and look for this mysterious hidden flyer. Pell, you'll be the one to attempt a landing. It'll be dangerous—but it's the only way. Then there ought to be one ship in

the air to protect the man on the ground."

"I'll go, sir," put in Alexander anxiously. "Pell and I have worked together before."

All the pilots shouted protests, came crowding about the major. Coatsworth waved them away, seemed deep in thought about something.

The major caught Wyeth's eye, saw pleading hope there. Wyeth was asking for a chance—an opportunity to show what he could do, to prove to his new wingmates that he wasn't the yellow-bellied coward they all thought him to be.

"And Wyeth will accompany Pell," the major finished. "Get going, now. Every plane on the line, including my own. Cooper bombs for each ship except Pell's and Wyeth's. We take off in ten minutes."

Trouble caught the excitement. He awoke with a start, saw that everybody was bustling about, crowding through the door, talking in high pitched, eager voices. The cat leaped to the table, shot up into the air, came down on the shelf over the door and crouched there making uncomplimentary remarks at the chattering humans who had disturbed his rest.

PELL and Blondy Alexander were waiting for Wyeth in the doorway, blocking it.

"Listen, soldier," Alexander caught his arm. "No tricky stuff. Duke's a friend of mine. If you come back without *him*, you'll answer to me. Get it?"

"Rats!" scoffed Pell. "I can take care of myself."

"Pell and I have got to work this thing together," Wyeth reminded them. "Got to depend on each other. If one of us flops, the other hasn't got much chance. It's a fifty-fifty bet either way."

"You got any ideas about how

we're going to pull it off?" demanded Pell.

Wyeth shrugged. "Circle low, drop a flare, go down for a landing and trust to luck."

"I'll go down," Pell told him grimly. "You stay aloft to protect my take-off. Let's go."

Hisso's thundered on the lines as the men of the squadron ran to take their places in cockpits. Cap Coatsworth shouted final instructions.

"We attack the drome but the real idea is to keep any Boche ships away from Baulney. Pell, we'll give you and Wyeth half an hour. After that we all come home. All right, gentlemen, we're on our way."

THE squadron rolled down the tarmac with Coatsworth in the lead. Flame blasted from exhausts, motors roared. The Spads leaped into the air, fell into formation and went boring away to the east. Wyeth found himself flying on the right wing of the flight, Pell thundering along not twenty yards away. A grim, fierce joy surged through Wyeth's body. He was aloft again, flying a new ship, headed for danger, excitement. And a chance to prove what he could do.

They might be flying into a trap, heading into the black cloud which was death. Wyeth didn't care. All he wanted was a fighting chance. A chance to wipe the slate clean.

Something rubbed against his leg. He jumped, looked down. He saw a pointed fox-like face topped by sharp black ears. Trouble! How had that cat got into his cockpit? Wyeth cursed and lifted the animal by the scruff of his neck, dropped him in his lap. Trouble purred like a small Hisso, rubbed his head against Wyeth's arm.

This was a hell of a note, Wyeth told himself. This condemned cat had come along, would get in the way, perhaps block the controls. He

couldn't very well toss the squadron mascot over the side. He couldn't turn back now to take the cat home. That would look like desertion.

"You picked a swell time for a joy hop," he shouted into the wind stream. "But what the devil. We both have nine lives. Better get ready to lose a few of them."

THE main body of the squadron swerved off toward von Holt's drome. Pell and Wyeth turned in the other direction, headed for Baulney. It was almost dark now. The ground below was under a deep shadow; the upper clouds were still rosy with light from a sun well below the horizon. Peering down, Wyeth could just make out the ruins of the town, the white line of a road leading away eastward.

Pell wagged his wings, cut his motor and began to drift down. Wyeth did the same. It was very quiet, except for the wash of the prop. Archie hadn't discovered their presence yet. A line of tall poplar trees stabbed up through the dark. Roads and hedges and fields appeared below.

A bomb boomed through the night. Another, another. Coatsworth and his merry men were over von Holt's tarmac. Lights began to lance through the dark skies. Archie popped irritably. More light blossomed from the dark shadows of the ground. The air was filled with black puff balls of smoke. Lights swayed and darted in all directions in a frantic effort to spot the Yank ships.

Wyeth could hear the drone of the squadron's motors as the flight circled to cross over the drome again. Bombs chugged in rapid succession. The shrill howl of a Mercedes motor cut into the bedlam of sounds. Von Holt's Falcons were taking the air.

Pell cut downward, fell into line over a dim highway, followed it

along, wings almost brushing the trees which lined the road. Wyeth held his altitude, motor drumming. No need for silence now. The thing was to land, pick up the stranded flyer, get away with all speed.

A flare shot down from Pell's plane, hung smoking over a field. Wyeth could see the wreck of a farmhouse surrounded by a courtyard and old stables. A man ran out of the house, stood in the courtyard waving his arms excitedly. Pell skidded down for a landing, leap-frogged a wall, hit in the field beyond and went bouncing and bumping down wind. The man ran from the farm across the field, still waving his arms. He leaped onto the lower wing of Pell's ship, huddled there.

Wyeth saw fire spurt from exhausts as Pell gunned his motor, goosing his Spad around. Flame splattered in the night as he gave her full throttle for the take-off.

THEN a black shape came slicing out of the skies, twin Spandaus hammering. Wyeth hurled his ship into a zoom, tripped his own guns and came over to meet the enemy. The Fokker shot past, banked and turned to the attack. Wyeth raked it with a blast of fire, kicked right rudder and spun to face the charging Boche.

Tracer fanned about his head, slugs pinged through his fabric as the German lunged with full motor, guns chattering. Wyeth held his triggers, watched sparkling tracer leap out and harpoon the pilot in his cockpit. The Fokker shot up into a loop, stood on its tail awkwardly, fell off with a sickening lurch and spun to the ground. It smashed with a blaze of fire. Ugly black smoke ballooned upward; flames ran along the wrecked wings and crackled brightly.

Wyeth looked for Pell, expecting to see him streaking for home. The

air was empty. He looked down. There was the wreck of Pell's Spad piled against the stone wall in front of the farm. As he stared down, unbelievably, Wyeth saw two dark figures stagger away from the wreck, headed for the protection of the farmhouse.

The cat clawed at Wyeth's elbow and he pushed it roughly aside. He had no time for cats now. He circled, came thundering back low over the farm. The burning Fokker gave plenty of light. As he flashed over the house he saw Pell standing in the courtyard. He waved his arms, motioned toward the Allied lines. Clearly, he was telling Wyeth to go back to the squadron's drome, signalling him not to land.

There, Wyeth told himself, was a man with courage. He was lost and he knew it. But he didn't want Wyeth to run the risk of a landing.

The situation was familiar. Once before Wyeth had watched a wing-mate on the ground signal him to go home. That time he had done it. And had been called a coward. Well, he wouldn't make the same mistake again. He cut back, circled low and headed for the field.

He slid over the wall and hit on rough ground.

THE Spad slewed around and Wyeth steadied her, pulled the tail over, went lurching down the field toward the burning Fokker. He skidded to a stop, eased the throttle forward and turned slowly, went rocking and lurching back to the wall. Here he turned again, left the Hisso running, leaped from the cockpit and raced for the farm.

Pell met him in the courtyard.

"You fool!" he raged. "You'll never get off again. Why in hell didn't you run for it?"

"Where's the man we came after?" snapped Wyeth. "Get him out to the ship, quick."

Pell laughed bitterly. "Think you can take us both? You're crazy."

A ragged figure came staggering out of the shadows. The flying 'jamas it wore were torn to ribbons; the soft leather boots were worn away from the feet, leaving them bare and bloody. A heavy, dirty beard made the man almost unrecognizable. But not quite. Wyeth gasped, sprang forward and seized the tattered figure by the shoulders.

"TOM BOWLING!" he shouted. "By God, we heard that you were dead."

"So you came back for me, Leather?" Bowling stumbled forward, almost fell. "I thought I told you to get away. I'm your flight leader, remember. Got to take orders from me."

"You mean this—this guy is Bowling, the man you were supposed to have deserted in Boche-land?" Pell demanded. "The flight leader you got into trouble about?"

Wyeth nodded. "I did go back for him. Landed. He wouldn't go with me. Said he was going to stay—try and find out whether the Boche were planning a drive or not. He ordered me to leave without him."

"And you never told about that?"

"What was the use? It would have sounded like a faked alibi."

"Well," barked Pell. "Let's don't stand here all night. Grab him and we'll tie him to a strut. You can fly him back to the squadron. His testimony will clear you."

"And what about you, Pell?"

"Have somebody come for me—tomorrow." Pell gazed steadily into Wyeth's eyes.

"A sweet chance they'd have—landing around this neighborhood. Every Boche within twenty miles will be on the alert."

A pair of fiery eyes glowed in the dark by the wall. Trouble came strolling forward, his long tail whip-

ping over his back. "Meow," he remarked. He rubbed against Wyeth's leg, bounded up and sat on his shoulder.

"That cat seems to like—" Pell began, then stopped suddenly.

Three black shapes came howling down out of the night skies. They banked and whipped over the burning Fokker on the field, turned and came roaring back.

"There goes your Spad," shouted Pell. "We better get under cover."

The first Fokker dived and poured a stuttering burst into Wyeth's ship. The second Boche came down and blasted the prop to splinters. The third gave the Yank plane a finishing burst which splashed into the motor, setting it on fire. The Spad blazed fiercely for a second, then exploded, as fire ate into the fuel tank.

The three Fokkers came back and raked the farmhouse with vicious streams of slugs. Again and again they dived, firing enthusiastically. Wyeth, Bowling and Pell, lying in the cellar, heard the patter of steel hail over their heads. The cat prowled about in the dark making uncomplimentary remarks about the situation in general.

PRESENTLY the Fokkers had exhausted their ammunition. They flew off into the distance, the drone of their motors fading away into the dark.

"We'd sure better get out of here," announced Wyeth. "They'll telephone to the infantry as soon as they get back and in about five minutes this place will be surrounded. Better move while we've got the chance."

"Right. But where are we going?" asked Pell.

"Down the road," muttered Bowling. "Boche drome in that direction. Down the road."

"Not a bad idea," conceded Wyeth. "Let's be on our way. Come here, Trouble. We're going to travel."

"You're not going to take that lousy cat?" protested Pell. "He'll only be a nuisance. Give him a kick and chase him to hellangone away from here."

"The cat goes with me." Wyeth picked the animal up, placed him on his shoulder. "Can't desert a friend for the Boche to pick up. Grab onto Bowling. We've got to move fast if we don't want to be caught in this dump."

THEY moved out of the farmhouse into black night. The planes were nothing but glowing piles of coals now which gave off little light. Wyeth led the way along the wall and down to the road. They crossed over and followed the hedge on the other side.

Once a car came thundering along and they lay flat behind a log until it had passed. Two motorcycles swept past, stopped by the farm house. A truck loaded with infantrymen now lumbered by, stopped at the farm. A flare shot upward, sputtered over the ruined buildings. Rifle shots began to pop in the night.

"Just got out in time," Wyeth chuckled. "They'll fool around there for an hour or so before they find out we're gone. In the meantime, we've got to make tracks."

They went on, following the road, but keeping well away from it, traveling through fields, woods, crossing old trenches. They almost stumbled into a barracks in the dark, a low black building where hundreds of the enemy slept and sentries paced up and down before the door.

Wyeth seemed to have a sixth sense. He could see like a cat in the dark. He found paths and roads that Pell didn't know existed. Bowling was little help to them. So exhausted was he by the hardships of the last month that he could barely walk, and Wyeth and Pell were forced to lead him.

After what seemed hours of stumbling around in the dark they came to a clearing in the woods. Lights flickered here and Wyeth could make out the rounded domes of hangars. The outline of a flying field stretched before them.

"Wonder what outfit this is?" mused Wyeth. "We've got to know where we are."

"Von Holt's Falcons," croaked Bowling. "I hung around here for a week trying to steal a plane."

"Sh-h-h," warned Pell. "Somebody coming!"

THEY dropped and lay quietly. Voices floated through the night. They did not come any closer and Wyeth crawled forward to investigate. Presently he was back.

"Boche sentry post," he said. "Three of 'em in there. They've got a fire and everything. How about it, Pell?"

"Let's go," snapped Pell. "They'll have rifles, ammunition."

Wyeth turned to Bowling. "Hold this cat," he ordered. "Stay here until we come back."

Two gray shadows slid through the dark. The three Boche in the sentry box were chattering over coffee and sausages. Their rifles leaned in a corner. Wyeth flung open the door and was in their midst before they knew what had happened. His pistol rose and fell with meaty sounds. Pell came crowding behind him.

One Boche put up a fierce struggle, lashing out with the stool on which he had been sitting. The blow caught Pell on the temple, knocked him flat. The Boche bent over to finish the job, when Wyeth's gun butt laid him cold. Another German tried to get to his rifle but Wyeth kicked it away from his clutching fingers and dropped the man with a blow over the ear.

They found a coil of wire in the corner, tied all three sentries, stuffed

cloth into their mouths, carried them out behind the hut and dumped them into a ditch.

Bowling fell on the sausage and coffee with savage hunger. Wyeth watched him eat and wondered if the same fortune was in store for him and Pell. The three Yanks crouched inside the hut now, enjoying the fire. Pell had a rifle in his hands and was experimenting with the bolt and locking device.

Wyeth found a pad and paper and a pencil. He began to scribble a note.

"A last message for your best gal?" asked Pell with grim humor. "Just to tell Coatsworth where we are," Wyeth looked up and grinned. "And to ask him to send a plane over for us."

"Yeah," jeered Pell. "How you going to send it to him, by mental telepathy?"

"Why, no," countered Wyeth. "Why do you suppose I brought the cat along?"

"You mean—Trouble? The message? He'll take it back?"

"I hope so. It's our only chance." Wyeth tied the message about the cat's neck with a strip of cloth, made sure it was tight so that he couldn't claw it off.

"Well, good-by, old son," he told the cat. "It's not two miles across the lines. Don't stop on the way to flirt with any tabbys."

HE opened the door and put the cat out. Then he closed it tight and came back to the fire. Trouble prowled about the shack for a while, calling plaintively. It was cold outside and the cat didn't like it. "Meow, meow!" he protested. He clawed at the door.

"Go on—get out of here," Pell shouted at him.

"Meow," said Trouble bitterly. He moved off into the dark. Wyeth, his new friend, had deserted him. He was going home where he could lie

in front of a nice warm fire and perhaps have liver for breakfast.

"He's gone," said Pell. "What did you say in that message?"

"Asked the major to bring the entire squadron and blow this drome to hell. Told him we had Bowling, where we were hiding. Said that we'd do our part with rifles. Requested that he borrow a Handley-Page bomber from that British outfit down the line to take us back."

"Fair enough," conceded Pell. "And by the way, Wyeth, I'm—I'm sorry about how I acted. I might have guessed you wouldn't pull a dirty trick on a friend."

"Forget it, old man," Wyeth told him. "Now, we'd better take turns at sentry go until daylight. We don't want any Boche stumbling in here and finding us all asleep."

"You think Coatsworth will get the message? Think he'll come?"

Wyeth shrugged. "Your guess is as good as mine, brother."

THE slow night dragged on for endless hours. Bowling, well fed for the first time in days, slept like a log. Wyeth and Pell took turns on guard. Just before dawn Wyeth happened to be on duty and so it was his privilege to hear the beat of distant motors and to see the great wedge of planes which came swooping down out of the clouds. Behind the formation of fighting ships lumbered the giant bomber.

"Wake up, Pell," Wyeth shouted excitedly. "Shake Bowling and give him a rifle. The show's started."

A faint smear of gray tinged the east as the leader of the high flying formation nosed down and came screaming for von Holt's drome. The flight behind him followed one by one. The big bomber began to circle high over the enemy tarmac.

The first bomb hit in the middle of the field, sent a great cone of mud rocketing skyward. A second one

crashed on the hangars. Boche machine-guns began to stammer. Another bomb exploded in a blinding flash of orange light, blotting out the German machine-gun nest. Two Spads came down, wing to wing and flew low over the hangars, Vickers pounding. They zoomed upward and took position in the swooping flight. More bombs burst with ear-stunning force. The Handley-Page let go two huge aerial torpedos which burst together in the wreck of the hangars. A great blanket of smoke flowed like water over the German drome.

OUT of the smoke cloud rocketed a black Fokker, another and another. Von Holt and his fighting birds were in the air at last. Up and up they spiralled, to meet Coatsworth and the huge Blondy Alexander and Holy Joe Peterson, who grinned at death, and Como Campbell, the red-headed devil of the air. All the squadron was there, eager to find the three men on the ground.

A crowd of Boche appeared through the smoke with a light Maxim and began to set it up. Wyeth and Pell crawled forward to the edge of the field with the rifles. Pell picked off a gunner; Wyeth punctured the jacket of the gun.

High overhead a battle raged. The air was lacy with tracer. Red hot motors howled and guns raged and the ships looped and dived.

A Fokker came smoking down. A Spad followed, spinning on a wrecked wing. It crashed on the edge of the tarmac. The pilot lay dead in the twisted mass of junk.

More men appeared with machine-guns. Wyeth and Pell cut them down. The Boche didn't understand where the fire was coming from. They kept looking into the air, trying to locate the source of the slugs.

The great bomber circled again and dropped two more steel eggs. Fountains of fire leaped into the air

where they exploded. A group of six black Fokkers which had been run out from the undamaged hangars were wiped out of existence by the mighty explosion.

Another Boche plane came tumbling down through the smoke screen. It crashed with a mighty splintering of wood, and smoke gushed from the hood. Von Holt crawled out of the wreck and stood, arms hanging limp, dazed by the shock of his miraculous escape.

Wyeth lifted his rifle, hesitated.

"Hell," he growled. "I can't shoot him in cold blood. Most dangerous pilot the Boche have got, too. Guess we'd better take him back with us."

He ran forward through the smoke, seized the Boche ace by the arm, dragged him back to the shelter of the hedge. Pell jabbed a pistol into the man's ribs and ordered him to lie down.

Down through the rising smoke came the Spad flight. One by one the ships dived, raking the tarmac and crumpled hangars, zooming aloft, only to return again and again until every moving object was cut to ribbons by the concentrated fire. The Spads then withdrew and the great Handley-Page came floating in for a landing. The big ship bumped, slewed around and ran gracefully across the tarmac, carefully avoiding the huge holes.

PELL helped Bowling; Wyeth held von Holt. The four started for the bomber. A door in the side opened. A young British officer beckoned them forward. He helped them inside the rear compartment, slammed the door and yelled to the pilot forward. Instantly the mighty engines began to throb as the bomber rolled forward and took to the air.

The Britisher noticed for the first time that one of the rescued men wore a German uniform. "My word," he cried. "Who's this chap?"

"Von Holt," Wyeth told him. "We are taking him back as a souvenir."

"Fancy that," marvelled the Britisher. "But tell me, how the devil did you chaps get word back to your C. O. where you were? I mean to say, how was he to know that you were hiding at this special drome?"

"We sent a cat with the message," said Wyeth.

"A trained cat," added Pell.

The Englishman looked blank, then he grinned.

"You Americans," he chided. "Always trying to pull a fellow's leg. Jolly good show you put on. Thanks for letting us do our bit."

WHEN the Handley-Page came thundering down on the 85th tarmac, a crowd of flyers and greaseballs, headed by Cap Coatsworth, were waiting. Pell climbed down from the bomber, helped Bowling, turned and assisted the still half stunned von Holt. Wyeth swung down, reached for a cigarette. A ragged cheer greeted him. Major Coatsworth, with Trouble riding proudly on his shoulder, came striding forward.

"Glad to see you, Wyeth," he cried enthusiastically. "I want you to know that from now on you're one of us. This squadron doesn't give a rap what you've done in the past."

"The devil," cut in Pell. "You're wasting your sympathy, Cap. The guy we rescued happens to be the flight leader Leather was supposed to have deserted in Boche land. He admits that he gave Wyeth orders to go home without him." Pell grinned at Wyeth, lighted a cigarette, offered one to the German ace.

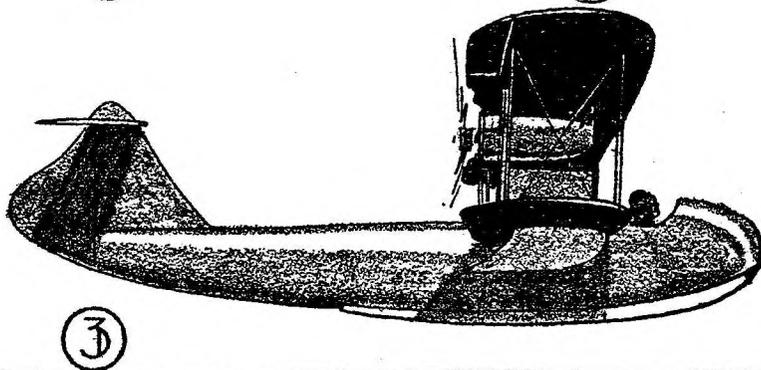
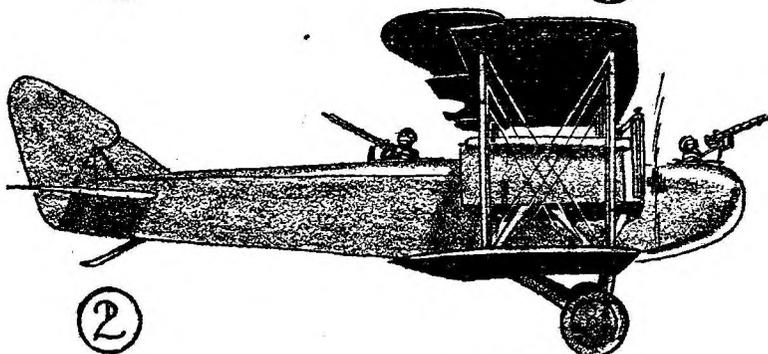
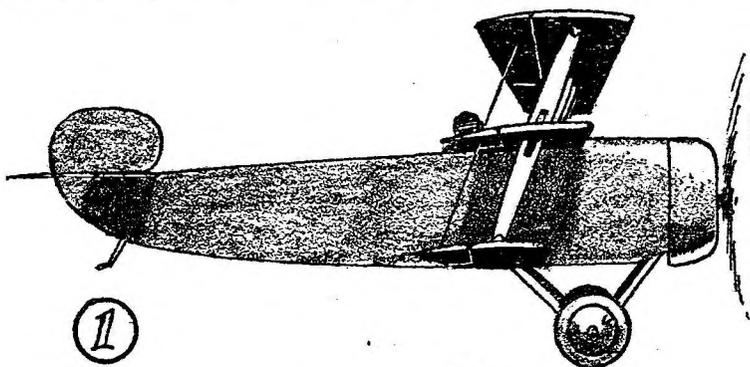
"This is *der Herr* Major von Holt, by the way. He's going to visit with the Allies for a while."

The great von Holt appeared to be a pleasant young man, not at all the flaming devil he seemed in the skies. He bowed stiffly.

"*Jawohl!*" he said. *Jawohl!*"

Can You Unscramble

Try It—Test Your Knowledge



Above are pictures of six planes used in World War combat. Here are their names—but in the wrong order, with the letters scrambled:

1. SYUBPAEBREMNAIR

2. HEAGNADPYEL

3. SEONPAWLIPTIHRT

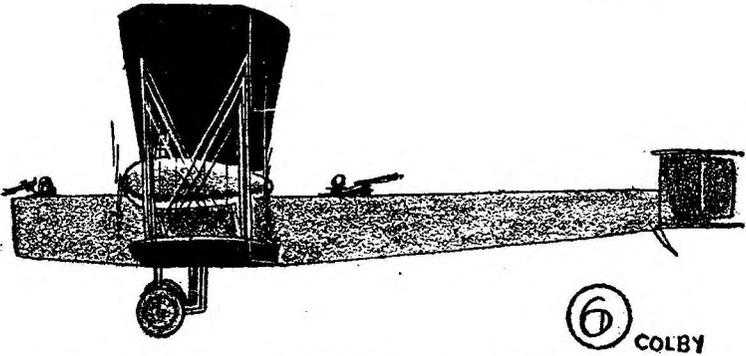
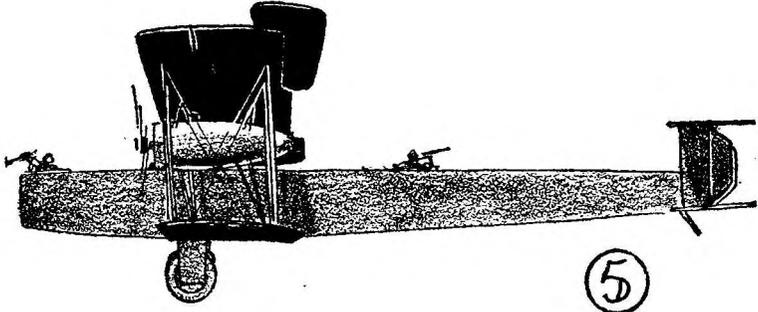
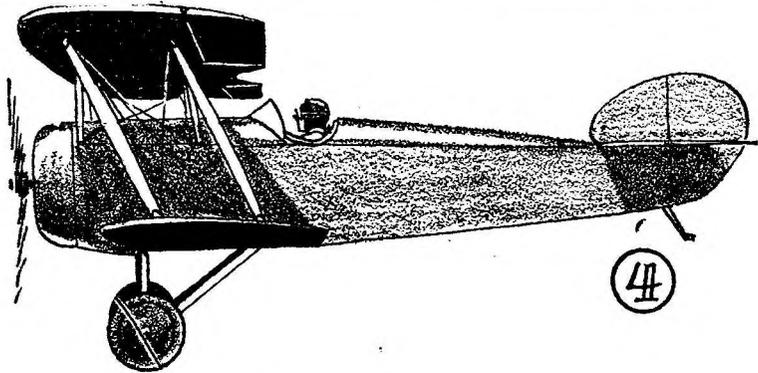
4. ZTENPAPIEGLNI

5. GGEERAMNA

6. SPOUPPWHTI

These Jumbled Ships?

of World War Fighting Crates!



Examine closely the crates pictured above.
 Then: First unscramble the names of the planes—second, list the planes in the proper order.

Write your list below before referring to the answer on page 122:

- 1. 4.
- 2. 5.
- 3. 6.

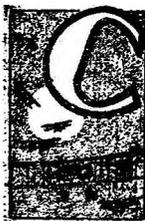
A Bag of Oranges

You'll Thrill to the Noble Deeds of Stout-Hearted Victor Chapman and Elliot Cowden, Buddies of the Lafayette Escadrille, in this Stirring Story of a Spunky Pilot

A Gripping True Story of the World War

By HUGH JAMES

Author of "The Sky Wager," "Into the Blue," etc.



CRACKLES of machine-gun fire roared over Verdun. Vickers and Spandaus spat at each other. Planes spun and dodged, lunged and twisted. Others staggered helplessly, as pilots were stricken by vengeful foes, who let their automatic weapons fire until their victims were hopelessly riddled.

Rocketing ships fell to their doom as flames wreathed them. Others limped toward the lines, wounded pilots trying to nurse their battered crates to a safe landing.

The Lafayette Escadrille had entered the great battle raging over the French citadel which the German Crown Prince was striving vainly to overcome. Seven men, whose names are now immortal, were the nucleus of an organization long to be remembered. But in those flaming moments above Verdun, its members suffered their first wounds.

What Happened to Them

William Thaw, destined to lead the organization, sustained injuries that put him out of action. Victor Chapman received a wound that laid his scalp open, stunning him, his machine tumbling through the clouds until he snatched it up when it threatened

to crash on the shell tortured earth below.

Elliot Cowden saw Victor Chapman's fall and his heart half-stopped. They had been buddies since their first training. Both were Harvard men and old boys at Fay. Their friendship had ripened with the scarlet days through which they had lived.

"Gosh, Vic—I thought they had you," Cowden said, when they had returned to their airdrome.

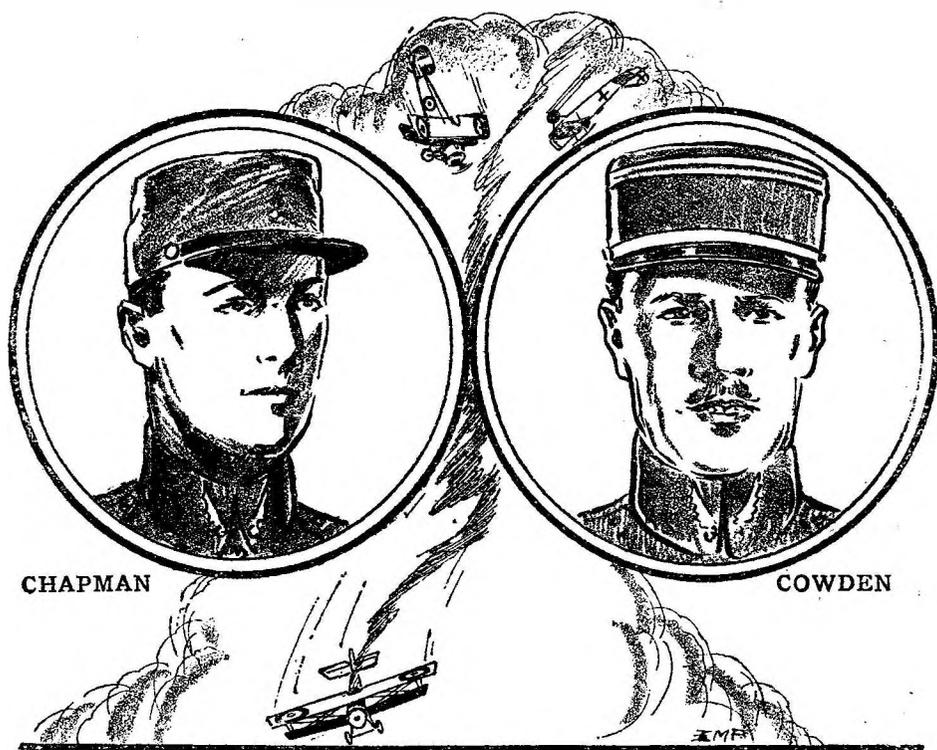
"They may get me—some time. I'll smear some of them first," the other answered.

"I hope they conk me first," Cowden growled. "Gees—this outfit wouldn't be worth while with you pushing up the poppies."

Brotherhood of the Escadrille

The Lafayette Escadrille had a brotherhood of its own. The camaraderie of those days still lives, although only one of the immortal seven survives. The ancient motto of the Musketeers, "One for All and All for One," was engraved deep in the Lafayette escutcheon.

With Thaw in a hospital and Chapman held to the ground by surgeon's orders, a call for replacements was issued. Chapman and Cowden knew of a youngster training at Pau, whom both had met and liked from their



Two Great Buddies of the Battle-Scarred Blue

first sight of him. They suggested the name of Clyde Balsley to Captain Thenault, their commanding officer.

Balsley Is Ordered to Front

Thenault hesitated. Then McConnell, another of the original seven, was hurt in a crack-up landing, and Balsley was ordered to the front. Chapman and Cowden met him at the station, escorted him to the Escadrille headquarters.

By common action they included him in the bond of friendship that had been formed between them. They took him into the air to test his flying ability before making a sortie against the enemy.

Down on the ground again, they called him into a conference huddle.

"When do you think I'll get my chance at the Hun?" the youngster asked breathlessly.

Had Much to Learn

Although he had not finished his

course at Pau, his progress had been so rapid that he had been permitted to go to the front. But to the experienced eyes of his companions, he had much to learn of battle in the air.

"You're not ready yet, Clyde," Victor Chapman answered. "We like you and—we don't want to see you killed off."

"But at Pau—" Balsley began.

"Brother Boche fights differently from those guys who go in for sham battles," Cowden put in, "and the lead he throws hurts. When you lose a pal up here, he's gone for keeps."

Swift Separations

Although none of the original seven had been killed, the Escadrille had seen other formations riddled by the enemy. War, they knew, made for quick friendships and swifter separations.

Cowden and Chapman took Balsley up again and struggled to teach him

the tricks of combat. New ones were being discovered with each brush with the enemy. The flying schools would not hear of them for weeks or months. The game changed every day at the front.

Then came Captain Thenault's announcement that Balsley was ready for trial by battle.

Chapman and Cowden demurred. They had grown to like Clyde even more in the days he had been a member of the Escadrille.

"He'll be all right in a duel," Chapman told their commander, "but if one of those big Hun formations jump us, he'll be murdered."

A Guardian

"I'll see that he doesn't get into trouble," the Frenchman answered.

Both Cowden and Chapman argued, but they could not shake their commander. The pressure on Verdun was increasing. Every plane that could be launched must be in the air to hold back the masses of black-crossed German machines.

"You've got to watch out, Clyde," Victor told Balsley that night, "Elliot and I don't think you're ready, but the skipper does and he commands this outfit."

Wants Taste of the Real Thing

"But I am ready," Balsley protested. "I've learned all I can at mimic fighting. I've got to taste the real thing."

"You're right there, buddy," Cowden admitted, "but for the love of Mike, watch your tail. There are lots of Boche in this man's sky."

"I'll do that little thing and—thanks a lot, fellows, for the interest you've taken. I'm going to do my best."

Chapman and Cowden grinned and shook the youngster's hand.

They Head for Verdun

The following day, June 18, 1916, saw Clyde Balsley taken into the blue

by Captain Thenault. Norman Prince and Kiffen Rockwell made up the remainder of the party. They headed for the lines over Verdun. The great battle was still raging. The air was dark with enemy planes.

Furious Fighting

Captain Thenault led his little formation away from the thick of the fighting, but hardly had they reached the front than massed squadrons swooped down upon them. Ground observers swore afterwards that not less than forty Germans attacked the four. Only three of the quartette were experienced pilots. Balsley, the fourth, was a cub making his first flight above the lines.

The combat lasted for more than fifteen minutes. The Huns raged in, trying to separate the Americans. Captain Thenault signaled his men to retire, but the charging Boche made coordinated maneuvering impossible.

Balsley found himself attacked from all directions. He used every trick he knew to avoid the sleeting squalls of Spandau fire that raked his Nieuport from one end to the other. He fired at foes that swept before him, sending one staggering for his own lines, but the enemy crowded in, knouting him with leaden whips.

He looked around, but could see none of his companions. He turned toward the airdrome from which he had hopped, hoping to make haven before he was destroyed. The Boche pursued, beating him down.

Outnumbered Ten to One

Balsley fought back, but he was outnumbered ten to one. He struggled, battling with a furious savagery that made the Hun retreat. Then came a blow that half-lifted him from the cockpit. In another moment his plane was tumbling, an unconscious pilot clinging grimly to the stick.

But Clyde Balsley was not doomed to death. His suffering was to be greater and it led to the first major

tragedy in the Lafayette Escadrille. He came down within his own lines, but with a wound that would have killed most men. An explosive bullet had entered his stomach and detonated when it struck his spine.

He had managed to make a crash landing and was rescued by a squad of daring *poilus*. An hour later he was in a hospital under a surgeon's knife. Eleven fragments of the bullet were taken from him.

A Limited Diet!

Victor Chapman and Elliot Cowden were outraged. Their youthful protege had been made a sacrifice. They visited him in the hospital and he greeted them with a pale but cheerful smile. Upon the table beside his bed he had collected the eleven bits of the explosive bullet.

"He can eat nothing but orange juice—and a little champagne," the surgeon told the two.

"Then see that he gets them. We'll pay the cost," they answered.

"I am sorry, but zat ees eempossible—no oranges can be found," the doctor answered.

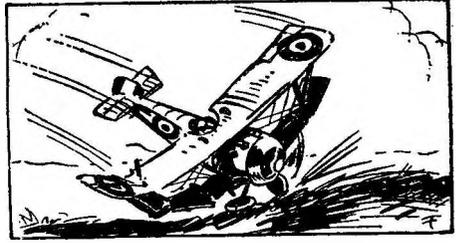
But Victor Chapman and Elliot rode winged steeds. They flew to widely separated parts of France looking for oranges. At last they found them. Daily trips were made to insure fresh fruit.

Nothing was too good for an injured buddy.

Champagne and Oranges

Although he should have been in the hospital himself, because of his head wound, Victor Chapman continued to fly his regular patrols and make daily trips to Balsley's bedside. Champagne and oranges had always formed the cargo of his swift winged Nieuport.

Next came June 23, 1916. After the morning patrol, Victor Chapman flew off to get a supply of oranges and champagne. He returned to the field at Bar-le-Duc in mid-afternoon to find



Clyde Balsley came down within his own lines

Raoul Lufberry and Norman Prince preparing to take off on a scouting expedition.

"Come on and get a Boche with us?" Lufberry invited.

"I'd like to, but—Balsley can't eat anything but orange juice and champagne and—I'm not going to let the kid starve to death. Wait until I get back."

"We're going now," said Prince.

The two took off. Victor Chapman had his plane serviced for a flight. He telephoned to the hospital, sending word to the wounded pilot that he was on his way.

Dread Hours of Waiting

Clyde Balsley waited, waited until the lowering shades of night told him that Chapman would not reach him that day. Worry gripped him. Victor had never failed to come when he said he would.

He asked that a telephone call be put in Bar-le-Duc.

The inquiry produced a sensation. The members of the Escadrille thought Victor had been staying late with Balsley and would fly back by moonlight.

Inquiries were made. O. P. officers were asked if they had seen anything of the missing Nieuport. Back areas were searched. Finally a flyer in a neighboring French formation told of seeing two Nieuports of the 124th unit fighting a cloud of Boche and retreating before superior numbers.

"That was us," said Raoul Lufberry and Norman Prince.

"But," the French pilot continued,

"another Nieuport of the same formation came up and attacked the enemy."

The Shattered Ship

"That was Victor Chapman," the Americans said in a single voice. "What happened then?"

"The last thing I saw of him was a dive with full power on. He could not have pulled up. He disappeared behind a line of trees."

The Lafayette Escadrille hunted that night, but found no trace. Morning saw them take to the air again. They circled over the sector where Chapman was last seen. At last they

saw the wreck of a Nieuport. Their sticks went forward and their planes glided down. A few minutes later a circle of mourning friends gathered about the shattered ship.

The first of the glorious seven had met his doom. He had died on a double mission, a visit of mercy to a wounded comrade and a race to aid others who were engaged with superior numbers.

Tears filled the pilots' eyes as they took the lifeless body from the wreck. Clutched in the hand, now stiff in death, was an unbroken bag of oranges.

COMBAT FLYER'S PUZZLE

Oh, Mama, look at the funny pictures! Oh, yeah, so you think they are funny, do you? Well, just wait 'til you've tried to put this puzzle together and maybe you won't think this is so darn funny as all that.

Here's what the idea of this month's puzzle is. Each of these groups of three little pictures represents the name of a World War plane, either Allied or German. Each picture represents one syllable of the name, or in some cases, a whole word.

These are all well-known ships and ones that you should know very easily. Here's the way they work. Supposing in the first picture there was a man calling another man "AL," in the second picture was a baseball BAT, and in the last picture was a man calling another man Mr. ROSS. The name of the ship would naturally be "AL-BAT-ROSS." Get it, you buzzards? Simple, isn't it, but just try these!

If you have to give up on one or two, go on, and then after you have done the best you can with the puzzle, look on page 122 and see how near you came to the correct names as illustrated.



COLEBY

Talons of the "Dove"

*Dovely Was the Queer Egg
of "C" Flight—But He
Sure Knew His Botany!*

By HAROLD F.
CRUICKSHANK

Author of "Von Satan's Lair," etc.

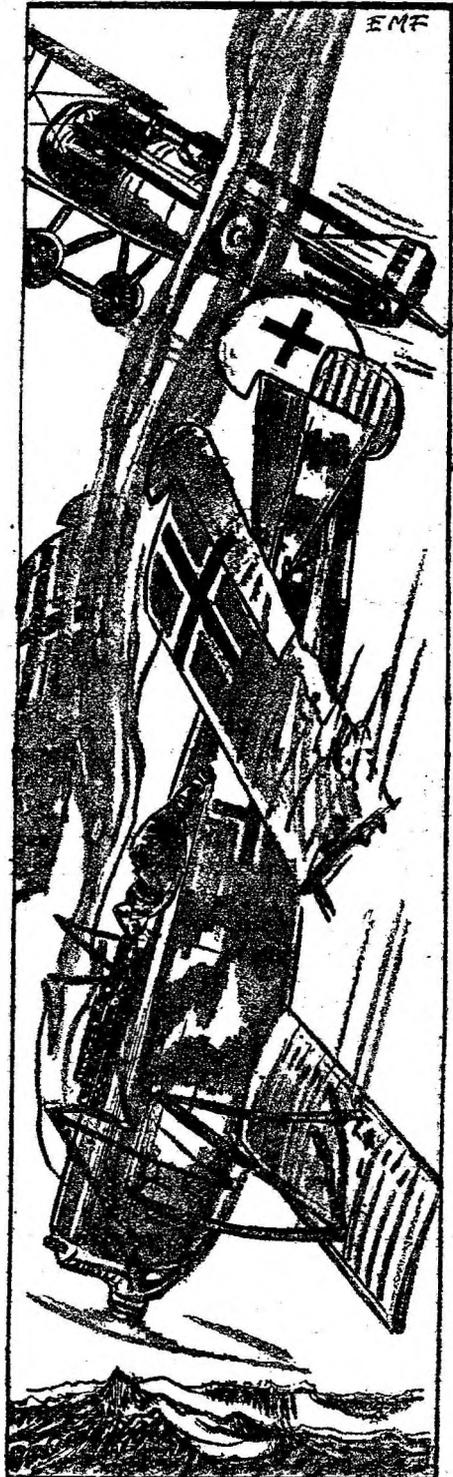
CAPTAIN DAVE DILLON emptied his mouth of a volley of unsuppressed oaths. It was not often that Dillon swore like this, or made any show of temper, on the ground. He found no reason to resort to bullying to get the best out of his men. And, until Lieutenant Harcourt Bryson Dovely joined "C" Flight, of which Dave was skipper, Dillon was considered a mighty easy-going, albeit a stern and efficient, flight leader and sky fighter.

Dillon had been pacing the office hut floor for upwards of thirty minutes. Until, in fact, the C. O. had threatened to throw him out on his ear.

"You're like some fussy old hen who's lost her chicks," the major of the 78th Pursuit Squadron had snorted. "Who's out now? That precious roughneck Fergy? Thought they were all checked in."

A wry smiled toyed on Dillon's thin lips.

"So they were all in," he snarled;



*A horrible burst of flame leaped
from the Fokker engine*

"that is, all but that darn cuckoo you wished on to me a couple of weeks ago. Why, he—"

"You mean Dovely?"

"Yeh, an' that was a dirty, low trick, George. I thought you and I were pals. Man alive! That sap's nuts from the heels up."

Major George Malcolm smiled. He had a powerful regard for Dillon. Together, they had taken over and organized 78 Squadron from its inception.

"H'mm. . . . It would be odd as hell, Dave, if this 'Dove' bird of yours turned out to be a real dyed-in-the-wool eagle, eh? Look at this."

MALCOLM reached into a desk drawer and fished out what appeared to be the dried stem of some weed. Actually, that was what it was—a weed.

"That egg's got brains, Dave," the C. O. resumed. "This thing, for example. For years, American chemists have been searching for the source of this—er—damned if I know its proper Latin handle; Dovely can give it, though. It's one of the main properties in antidote formula for some kind of poisoning. Ask Dovely some time, he'll give you the whole story.

"Last Friday, when he was out with Ferg, he was forced to land beyond the forest of Le Breuille. He spotted this plant, and risked his neck to bring in a sample. That takes nerve, when you're in German territory, old son. Of course, I don't approve of such work; and if he pulls it again I'll have to earmark him for Blois. But—he's a chemist and right now has pulled a big stroke for his profession. He—"

"He's pullin' a stroke oar in my flight, an' I'll be damned if I'm going to stand for any plant or bug-hunting," Dillon exploded. "Mebbe you're right. He's likely a clever botanist, but what the heck do I want with a little Dove runnin' round 'C' Flight,

in action, with a bit of weed in his bill? I'm going to— Listen! Spad!"

Dave hurled himself to the door. A Spad was roaring down on the tarmac. Malcolm joined him on the tarmac, as the diving ship leveled off to a sweet three point, and to scud up to a stop almost outside the office hut.

"Fergy," Dillon jerked. "Looks bad, Major. I'm afraid our little Dove has gone where there aren't any weeds. Humph! Here comes Ferg. Let's hear what he has to say."

Jim Ferguson lounged up, pushing his goggles back and revealing a heavy frown.

"Any sign, Jim?" Dillon shot.

"No, Skipper, not of the Dove, but I sure ran into a nasty mess of Hun hawks. Lookit my crate—like a sieve. Seven Pfalz, all in a lump. I'm afraid our little bug-hunter's gone West. Sorry—but, I'm mighty lucky to be here."

Dave Dillon turned to the C.O. and shrugged.

"I'm sorry, too, George," he breathed. "I hate to see any man go out. If you think another search would be any use, I'll turn out the whole flight till dark."

BUT Major Malcolm realized that if Fergy had found no sign, there wasn't much use wasting the energy of the whole flight. Fergy had an eye like a falcon, and the courage of several.

He had combed every inch of that sector in which Dovely had been missed from patrol.

Slowly, in silence, the officers strode on to the mess hut. It was tough even to lose an oddity. After all, Dovely had been an in-offensive, gentlemanly little devil, ever ready to advance assistance to mechanic or pilot who was down on his luck—a man who never frowned, or spoke back when an extra patrol was called.

Darkness had settled over 78 Drome. Dave Dillon played an indifferent rubber of bridge. Until he got confirmation of Dovely's whereabouts, he wouldn't be able to settle at anything.

"Think I'll turn in and read, gang," he at last mumbled, getting to his feet. "Get Johnson to take my place." Yawning, he moved to the door. A signaler met him, informing him that Brigade Headquarters was on the phone.

EAGERLY the skipper trotted to the office hut. He snatched the receiver up and barked into the mouthpiece. Major Malcolm was absent from the squadron for the evening.

Dave was second in command.

"No—Dillon speaking—Captain Dillon. What's that? You're confirming two Jerry washouts—a flamer and another which crashed beyond the Breuille woods. Say that again, will you? No, I mean the Spad's lettering. S Five—holy mackerel!

"Oh, never mind, I was just—Hello, what happened to that Spad? Crash, huh? Oh—Either in No Man's Land or—beyond the enemy wire. I—see. You've got an infantry patrol out, an' will let me know, huh? T-thanks—thanks a lot—"

Dave slowly clamped the receiver in its hook. Two Hun washouts. Dovely— He turned to the door. It was not long since he had made caustic reference to a Dove skittering round "C" Flight with a piece of stinkweed in its bill.

The skipper came to an abrupt halt out on the tarmac, his eyes focused on the mad eastern horizon where chains of jagged flame slashed gaps in the sky. Was it possible that Dovely was out in that inferno!

Dillon was lost in the weird fantasy for a long moment of thought. His shoulders suddenly hunched in a gesture of finality, and his teeth grit-

ted hard. Dovely was an utter darn fool! In pre-Victorian times they employed a much better term: "Popinjay!" In modern America, "little squirt" might have been applied.

"I'm handling men of nerve—skymen, not plant and butterfly chasers," Dillon growled. "Too bad if he's washed up, or taken prisoner. But—they will give these college boys commissions. I—tcha!" He spat disgustedly, and moved on to the mess hut.

Dovely's victories should be properly recorded, and the strange little lieutenant given full credit. After that—well, pilots came, and went. Dillon and his hard, battle-bitten flight had learned to take losses.

* * * * *

But sleep failed to overtake Dave Dillon's tired frame. He lay back in his bunk, wide awake, smoking—thinking. At shortly after two o'clock, an orderly tiptoed into the billet, with a message from the signaler on duty.

"Wanted by Seventh Infantry Brigade, sir. Urgent," the man snapped.

"Thanks, Walter. Better roll in now." The skipper jerked himself to the floor. "Reckon this is news on Lieutenant Dovely."

MEBBE, sir. Hope he's okay. Kind of a queer little egg, but—gosh!—say, was he good to us grasshoppers! One day he cornered me in Number Two hangar an' pinned me down while he talked for a whole hour on plants. I got hell from the C.O.; but—the Dove handed me twenty francs. Think he's all right, sir?"

"Umph! Don't know, Walter, I'll soon hear. Don't wake up Fergy. He's tired out—" Dave shot a glance across the room to a mound of blankets. Fergy, his deputy leader, was part of that mound. His breathing was deep, steady— If it had been Fergy who was posted missing, Dave

Dillon would have slept in the cockpit of a ready Spad.

With a sharp click of his teeth, Dave moved out on the heels of his orderly.

His stride quickened as he neared the office hut.

He eagerly snatched up the telephone receiver.

"Yeh—Captain Dillon speaking," he gruffed into the mouthpiece. "You say what? You did, huh? The Spad was found, b-but, its pilot was nowhere around. Patrol hunted for an hour, huh?"

"Then you think it likely the pilot was taken prisoner by a German patrol? Likely—yeh? Have you exact map location? Thanks."

Dave swung from the phone. Both the orderly and signaler had their eyes focused on him in wide stares.

"Captured!" This from the orderly.

"Guess so, but button up your mouths, boys," Dave returned. "Too bad—to land in No Man's Land, then have those Krauts pick you up. Walter—get me a cup of coffee, and order the side car. Make it plenty snappy. There's a couple of hours, nearly, till dawn."

"You goin'—"

"I'm going out into No Man's Land," cut in Dillon. "And it's nobody's business, get me?"

WALTER understood. He had been with Dave Dillon too long not to understand that the skipper would never rest until he had confirmation either of Dovel's death or his whereabouts.

"He'd go right clean through to hell even for that bug-hunter," the orderly informed the signaler, as Dillon tramped out of hearing.

"Yeh— But I wouldn't, buddy," growled the telephone operator. "If that Dove bird had done what he was supposed to do, he'd be on his back now, under a brown blanket, an' alive. I heard some of the looies talkin'.

Hell, Walter, when you're flyin' Spads, you're huntin' Jerries. Or ain't you?"

"I ain't got time to argue, Pete. Got to get the skip his coffee. But, you can't convince me the Dove was just plain dumb. Didn't he get him two Kraut crates? Don't overlook that. Fergy, one of the best there is, has only got five."

"Yeh, but Ferg's also got all of Fergy left, brother. Go brew that there dishwater you call coffee, Walter. You can't convince me the Dove ain't just a plain dove bird. I got to try pick up some code."

A MINENWERFER shattered a period of local quiet, close to the American wire. Captain Dave Dillon, together with an American infantry scout, flattened low to the clay. The burst had been close, too close for comfort, but Dave had known such nights before, when he had been a platoon officer in the line.

He nudged his companion, and they flung themselves through the wire. A Maxim chattered, spraying the zone with sleeting lead. Flares *sooshed* skyward, to burst with blinding brilliance; but between bursts, Dave pushed on.

Now they arrived at a shambles of brick and masonry—an old sugar refinery long since crushed beyond all semblance of architecture, save for the odd steel girder and clinging fragment of fractured brick wall.

A screaming salvo of whizbang fire sent Dillon and the scout diving for cover. For the next ten minutes the German gunners combed No Man's Land with a raking of H.E. and shrapnel.

"Think they must have seen us, sir," whispered the scout.

"Not us," Dillon jerked. "Nobody saw us. Must have been somebody, or something, else put the wind up those Jerry sentries." And as he voiced his opinion, Dave's breathing

became sharper, his nerves more tensed.

"What's that? Look out, sir!" hissed the scout, jerking up a Colt revolver.

Dillon clamped a hand firmly over the man's gun arm. He too had caught the scraping of a boot on metal. But, in the inky blackness, he knew they were safe, comparatively safe, so long as they remained still.

OFF to the left front, in a small broken woods copse, Dillon had glimpsed the tail of a Spad silhouetted against the horizon—

Voices! German voices. A work party was approaching from somewhere, or a patrol. Suddenly, Dave glimpsed a shadowy shape take animate form before him. A hatless human shape was backing toward him. Dave breathed a whispered command to the scout at his side.

"Just cover him. Don't shoot until I give the word," he cautioned. The skipper's heart was beating madly.

All at once, a number of scuttle-shaped helmets emerged from behind a mass of broken bricks. There was a quick move on the part of the man crouching ahead. Two shots ripped out, then pandemonium broke loose. Dave jabbed his scout in the ribs, and leaped forward to the further cover of a broken wall.

He had seen, in a flash of gunfire, a teddy suit—flying leathers. *Dovely!*

What other thought would flash to his mind!

Crack! Crack! Luger and automatic fire blasted the quiet. Flares shot skyward from both sides of No Man's Land.

Dave Dillon jumped forward. His automatic spewed a burst of flame. Two forms were clinched, off to his right. One of these was *Dovely*, who weighed no more than one hundred

and thirty-five pounds. The German, who had the advantage of a throat hold, had also an advantage of some fifty or sixty pounds of weight.

With a crisp order to the scout, Dave hurled his big frame forward. He struck with the barrel of his Colt. A Luger flashed. *Dovely* sagged. Dillon whirled, and his gun spoke again.

A burly German *Hauptmann* gurgled and sank to the debris. Now the German front line was stirred. Men were leaping the bags. Dave Dillon's breath came in hard-won gasps. He called to the scout, who stood reloading his Colt.

"You'll have to cover me," the skipper jerked. "This boy's out, bleeding badly. I've got to get him in. Watch yourself. Give 'em plenty, but see you get in yourself."

Stooping, Dillon raised *Dovely* in his arms. Blood soaked his coat as he stumbled on. Alert, ever ready for an emergency, the American seventy-five gunners now cut loose a withering barrage on the German front line. But, it was a game at which two could play; and, in turn, the German artillery opened fire on the American wire.

DAVE DILLON was forced to drop to cover in a shell crater, while the gods of war snarled and tore at each others' throats around him. He found that *Dovely's* left arm had been slashed below the elbow. Quickly the skipper applied a tourniquet and field dressing.

Now he caught the flash of a signal lamp from a sap head at the American sector.

"This—way—this way," came the message. The American outpost company was signaling the only possible gap through the hellish wall of flame and flying steel. Dillon watched for a moment, hoping to glimpse the scout. Then, with a grunt of satisfaction, he again raised the limp

shape and tore on to the sap, Dovely hanging limp and pale in his arms.

"BUT, what I can't get into my head, Dovely, is why in heck you didn't make a strike for the American lines as soon as you cleared your Spad."

Dillon looked down at the pale, twitching face of Lieutenant Dovely, stretched out on a cot at the hospital hut of the drome.

"Ah, yes. It does sound a bit foolish, old man, doesn't it? It'll likely sound more so, when I tell you the whole story. You see, as soon as I hit into that copse, there was just enough light to tell me that I'd made a find—a rare botanical find. Right under the blessed under-carriage was a clump of wild *digitalis purpurea*, one of the specimens we've been hunting for, throughout the world, for months."

Dave Dillon groaned, and shot a glance at the C.O.

"But, you see, Dovely," he snapped. "You ought to be spanked, an' sent to Blois. You had no business, at any time, chasin' moths an' weeds. You were up here to fly, to chase Halberstadts, and Fokkers. Hell's fire, man, you've darn near made a nervous wreck of me. To hell with your digitalis. I've grown it in my backyard—lots of it. Now, you've got yourself nicked, and came near getting me washed out."

"I reckon you know you're washed up, as far as flying goes. In spite of your two-ship victory yesterday, I've got to recommend that you be passed out of the American Air Service. That arm won't bother you much, now it's stitched up. I'm sorry, but you're out, as a flyer."

Dave Dillon's voice had lowered a couple of tones as he finished. He squeezed the pilot's good arm, and then got up from the side of the cot.

"Yes, of course, I quite see your point, Skipper," Dovely breathed.

"You're a man of blood and—er—fire, aren't you? It's just plain nerve that counts with you. Brains, unless they run in the groove of the physical butcher, don't count, do they? Well—listen to me." Dovely had raised himself on his good elbow.

"The search for the proper specimen of digitalis was no flight of fancy. We weren't after specimens to press and mount in some one-horse museum. We are after a chemical neutralizer against a new gas the Germans are about to discharge; we want a solution for use in forward hypodermics—" Dovely paused to let his words sink in.

"Captain Dillon," he resumed. "As soon as my left arm gets well, I'm going to smash you one on the nose; not because I don't like you. I do, immensely. But, I want to have the satisfaction of just—er, as you'd put it, busting you one."

"NOW listen: While hunting for more of the digitalis, I became hemmed in by Germans. My only course was to strike for that old sugar refinery. I received an awful fright there, when forms began to emerge from underground. By George, I was in a mess. Then it dawned on me that I had hit onto something—something sinister, something which Intelligence might like a line on."

Dovely paused, and reached with trembling fingers for a glass of water. Dillon shot out an arm, and held the glass to the lieutenant's pale lips.

"Thanks—Thanks, Skipper. Now, where was I? Oh, yes. I understand German very well, so I backed away, to listen. Dillon—I'd stumbled onto a find," Dovely resumed. "I had found the last air shaft in the great mine system, which has had Intelligence and Infantry completely at a loss for so long. By George, I could see the Hun officer of the Engineers studying a plan, or specifica-

tion. So—oh, hang it all, it's in my report. Read it."

Again Dillon shot a glance at Major Malcolm, who nodded. The squadron surgeon darted in to catch Dovely, but the pilot had slipped into unconsciousness—a dead faint.

FOR the next three days, Lieutenant Dovely stuck around the tarmac. His arm had healed nicely, though still carried in a sling. These three days had been heart breakers for Dillon and "C" Filght, for all possibility of flying had been smothered by a burst of vile weather, which drenched the entire sector. Fogs, hurricane blasts of drizzle-laden wind.

The skipper of "C" prowled the tarmac like some caged jungle beast. But, at dawn of the fourth day, four Spads throbbed on their chocks at the deadline. Dave had called his pilots about him, in a huddled conference. Major Malcolm was just leaving the drome in his side car. Spare pilots stood by, ready to take off at a second's notice.

"And get this, gang," Dillon jerked. "This flight's for Dovely. We sort of got him all wrong. He's done more in the past few days, more for the Allied cause, than all us punks have who've been out here for years. We called him the 'Dove.' Why, we've only sprouted battle pin feathers compared to that buzzard.

"Now, here's what: Beyond the forest of Le Breuille, is the gas plant from which the German engineers discharge their new lethal gas. How this gas is transported forward, is still a mystery, but we think it's conveyed underground. From Dovely's report, we get a good idea of the Boche plans. They cut loose this gas, then explode their mines. Just get a picture of what'll happen. Get it!"

"So we go over an' shoot up the main plant, is that the idea?" Fer-

guson asked, snapping his helmet straps shut.

"No. We cover one of the biggest bomber flotillas that ever crossed the lines," Dave prompted. "The 19th Squadron's Handley Pages and the 27's D.H.'s. A flight of Sop Snipes'll cover their own Handleys and we will ride herd on the D. H. squadron, and keep a general eye over all. Boys—this isn't going to be any picnic. The German command is on the alert. Take your orders skyside, and keep formation unless I give you the nod. Right. Get aboard."

Dave Dillon looked about him. He had hoped to shake Dovely's hand before he took off. There was a chance that he—wouldn't get back. But Dovely was nowhere in sight.

With a shrug, the skipper climbed aboard and beckoned to a man at the chocks. Four Hissos roared wide open. Dillon gave the signal. Chocks flew, and a line of trim Spad shapes cut the horizon.

The weather gods had favored the Allies. The blanket of fog, and switching winds, had held up the discharge of German gas. As he pulled up hard for altitude, Dave Dillon's lips moved. His big chest bulged, then he hunched himself over the control stick. His job now was to pick up the bomber flotilla, and then—Fate, the gods of battle, would decide.

IT was scarcely full dawn, when Dillon shot a glance to the small radium dial of a watch on his instrument panel. He next took a reading of his altimeter. In exactly eight minutes, the heavy guns of the American and Allied artillery would open up a monstrous bombardment. In exactly eight minutes, Captain Dillon's charges, a flotilla of monster bombing planes, would be due to unload their death eggs on the buildings screened beyond the forest of Le Breuille.

But, the German air force was

not asleep. Nor were the ground engineers, who now rushed to their tunnel shafts to complete the last of the tamping of their mines. Today, they must not fail. If the Le Breuille sector were not definitely won for the Fatherland, the idea of attempting to hold important points of vantage along the Meuse to the south was futile. Hindenburg had issued his great order of the day. The Le Breuille zone must be taken fully, and consolidated at once, at all cost.

DILLON frowned at a long arm of drift cloud coming out of the east. A freshening nor'easterly breeze had sprung up—ideal for the discharge of gas. The skipper shot a glance down overside. Far below, a covey of British Snipe planes scudded eastward at the head of a droning echelon of Handley Pages. Above the bombers, a covering flight of Camels ripped along, darting in circles about their charges.

Dave ran his keen eyes over the formation of D. H.'s, riding to the north of the Handleys. Never had he seen so great an Armada of sky ships in one formation. Now, thundering Archies began to clutter the sky with blood-red splashes of flame and inky black smoke.

It was amazing, to Dillon, to watch the way those heavy bomber pilots jockeyed their ponderous machines out of the line of fire. The Yank skipper's heart seemed to leap to his throat on more than one occasion, when a murderous burst of black-red seemed almost to envelop a bomber. But—the flotilla of death kept on—on, heavy 360 motors roaring defiantly.

Dillon thought of Lieutenant Dovey, the pilot who had brought all this action to a head.

"Too bad the little devil had to get winged," he breathed. "I'd have liked him alongside; an' I reckon he'd have liked it too. He—"

Further rumination was cut short. Ferguson had zoomed up over his chief's ship to inspect the far side of the floating cloud mass. Now he came down on his prop in a screaming power dive, his Vickers slitting a fiery lane ahead of the diving ship. Fergy was pouring out a warning burst from his guns.

Almost in the same second, five black Fokkers split the cloud bank. Ten Spandau guns crashed in a fearful, ear-splitting concerto. There was little time for Dillon to even waggle his wings in signal. However, a hand came overside, and he screamed off in a long, slicing skid.

Ferguson had gone tearing by, to carry the warning to the Camels in the next elevation below. Now "C" Flight came out of slip-offs, or dives. Each pilot knew what the skipper expected. They were shock troops, their duty being to hold those Fokkers—

Dillon knew that, in turn, the Fokkers were just an advance guard ahead of a big German battle formation. The skipper's lips tightened. He couldn't afford to lose a man now. With a snarl of rage, at having been nearly trapped, Dave pressed home his throttle lever and stabbed the sky with flame from his guns.

THE American flight was quick to learn that this Fokker formation was no rookie flight. As Dillon zoomed to the fight, the Hun leader half-rolled in spectacular manner, his Spandaus crashing even before he reached level again. Bullets spattered through Dave's instrument panel. His watch was blasted clean from its socket, and a bullet tore open his helmet close to the right temple.

Now the Yank skipper set his teeth hard. His red-rimmed eyes were slit-
ted, shooting glances this way and that, head weaving like an angered cobra. Suddenly his nose tipped

down. His wings waggled before his Spad took the bit between her teeth in a dive—a crafty signal to his boys to keep hands off.

SNARLING excitedly, the Boche leader looped showily, to come down in to a dive on Dillon's tail. Spandaus crashed, but the Hun had grandstanded just a little to the extreme for accurate sighting. His lead did little more than score one of the Spad's struts. However, it was close, murderously close; but not as close as Dillon expected it might have been. Dave had purposely ridden right on the edge of the rim-rock of hell, in order to bait the Hun chief down.

Ripping a volley of gutturals through his set lips, the crack German pilot now settled himself in a crouch, his thumb ready on the trips. Something must have gone wrong with the controls of that *verdammte* Spad below! That was no fake dive. No sane man would hold in that position for as long as Dillon did, with a brace of deadly Spandaus at his back.

It was this thought that lost the Hun skipper his one big chance. Even as he touched the trips with his thumb, the Spad below gave a sudden upward flirt of her prop. Her rigging bulged defiantly, as Dillon forced her over in an Immelmann.

"*Gott im Himmel!*" The expression came in more of a gasp from the German's throat for, at the half turn, that silver devil Spad had suddenly hurled herself off. She came over in a tight vertical, and two gushers of flame spouted from the snouts of those grim Vickers guns.

Cut through the chest, shorn of his big chance, the Boche pilot cursed himself soundly. Blood oozed from his chest wound, but his brain was clear. For the moment his hands were off the stick, and the black Fokker took her own head. Now she rolled.

She was kicked out of it. But, Dillon came down like a merciless plummet, breathing flame—terrible flame.

The Fokker pilot gasped as a starboard strut buckled. His upper spread folded. With a snarl he whipped out his Luger and turned in the pit. He faced flame, a sheet of it, grimly menacing—the end. But, Dave Dillon took his thumb off the Vickers trip, and zoomed. A thin smile of half-pity, half-admiration, cracked the Yank's set features.

"Game as a cougar," he breathed. Then his eyes snapped shut. A horrible gout of flame gushed from the Fokker's engine area, an enveloping mass of red-black death.

Dave forced his Hisso to the last notch. His buddies had drawn the fight back up to the upper altitudes again, and now, it seemed that the sky was part of some infernal region—a place of hell's design, blasted, ripped by flame and sheets of whining steel and lead.

TEN minutes later, Captain Dave Dillon led three of his ships eastward. One of his flight was missing—Jones, a pilot who'd been with "C" for four months. No one had seen Jones go down. Now, far below, and ahead, the sky eggs of the Handleys and De Havilands were threshing the earthworks of the gas plant with murderous, gouging missiles.

Dave could see the British Snipe flight in trouble, a horde of Albattrosses milling above them. That was his next objective. With a signal to his boys, he put his prop down—down, in a long, oblique dive. His guns began to chatter at extreme range. Again "C" was enfolded in a terrible mill—a pall of smoke and flame.

Below, and to the eastward, a fearful bombardment raged. Empty Handleys were gunning back to the west, mostly alone, harassed by Archie—One of the big ships lay

wallowing in a mass of smoking wreckage; close by, was the scarred shape of a Camel.

THE four Spads sliced skylike red-tipped arrows, splitting two Albatrosses, which were converging on a single Snipe. The Britisher waved his thanks, as he staggered out of the fight. His guns were jammed; he was hit fairly badly. Now, like rampant eagles of death, "C" Flight barged full into the fight, and Dave Dillon became detached.

The major task assigned to them was done. That is, the plant below was utterly demolished, but those nervy bomber pilots and navigators had still to get their ships home. It was Dillon's job to see that they made it.

But, it was the job of the German sky command to make sure that they didn't.

Dave was forced out by sheer weight of numbers. Four red devil ships had singled him out as their meat. He was on the spot, being driven farther and farther to eastward. Now, as he catapulted over in a saving Immelmann turn, he was faced with the full odds against him. Smoke and drift cloud shut out all signs of his flight, or the other Allied ships.

He snarled bitterly, as he next touched his trigger trips. There was only one thing left to him—one move in his bag—and that was to blast a way through those sitting ships ahead. He gave his bus the gun, jamming the throttle in to the last notch.

Then, his Vickers crackled.

But the Germans were wise. They banked out, off, to come screaming

on in at the Yank's tail. Dave began to jockey his stick. He wanted to pull the Boche back into the main fight. But a bullet smacked his left shoulder, driving him hard against the side of the pit. He sagged, a million blinding lights dancing before his blanked vision. Still, there was a powerful reserve of cold nerve back of Dave's mind. He staggered out of the fog. He touched his stick down. By God! Now he would at least take a Hun down to Valhalla with him! A noble thought this, the nervy last thought of a man who hadn't very much chance of saving his life.

As he came into the zoom, a silver shape flashed across his bows. Dave ducked, instinctively, as he glimpsed red flame leap out from that shape ahead. Great Heaven! Had he run into a trap again?

DAVE didn't complete his loop. A fast flying ship had circled his tail, a pair of Vickers guns describing a fiery arc about him. Below, off to starboard, an Albatross kicked and wallowed in a maze of flame. Dillon dashed sweat from his eyes. He was staring—staring, wild of eye, unbelievably now at the tail of a lone Spad which bared its teeth in a mad red flash of firing Vickers. One lone word hissed a way through Dillon's set lips.

That lone pilot ahead flew with his left arm strapped to his side.

"Dovely!" Dave Dillon came completely out of the fog. And when his last round of ammo was expended, he streaked down to put his wing-tips alongside the "Dove's." It was thus they landed together on 78's tarmac.

SEE PAGE 10 FOR FULL DETAILS OF OUR

GREAT NEW CONTEST

WHICH SHOULD INTEREST EVERY AIR-FAN IN AMERICA

My Most Thrilling Sky Fight

Actual true accounts of thrilling moments in the lives of famous
War Aces told by the Aces themselves

Collected by ACE WILLIAMS

THE FIRST AIR BATTLE

by Lieutenant Adolphe Pegoud
French Flying Corps

Foreword:

Adolphe Pegoud was a famous flyer before the war began. In 1913, flying a tiny Bleriot monoplane, he astonished the world by doing a series of intricate air maneuvers. Later, he made an upside down landing, the first and to this day the only aviator deliberately to perform such a stunt.

With Pourpe, Garros, Vedrines, and several others, he made up the first French air squadron to see action in the World War. In those days planes, frail contraptions of wood, linen and wires, were not armed. The pilots usually carried a rifle or shotgun when going aloft, and sometimes darts and hand grenades. Plane to plane fighting was unknown. The crafts were used for scouting. Pegoud changed all this when he initiated the first air battle. He tells about it in the account below.



Lieut. Adolphe Pegoud
French Flyer

WHILE I had always carried arms while on my trips over the Boche lines and many times had passed within fifty or a hundred meters of Taube pilots, I had never thought to try out my marksmanship on the flying targets. But on this day when I was ordered aloft, I decided that I would allow no more Taube pilots to pass me by so nonchalantly. At least, I was going to let them know that there was a war taking place.

And lucky for me, I encountered my first Taube the same day I was filled with that resolve. I met him just beyond the Fortress of Verdun. He was just a speck when I first glimpsed him off to my right, but I ruddered toward him, flying as fast as my machine would carry me. At one hundred meters distance, the Taube pilot stood up in his seat and waved at me. That fact made me mad. Here I had come to kill him (if possible) and he greeted me with that friendly gesture. I waved my Lebel in the air over my head and shouted at him in French to beware. Of course, he couldn't hear because of the noise of the engines.

He continued on past me and I swung around and followed him. This maneuver seemed to surprise him. I continued on, coaxing my machine to its greatest speed. Finally I was not more than ten meters to the rear of his. I shouted again, made faces, then put the rifle to my shoulder and fired a bullet over his head to let him know my intentions. Though I had firmly resolved to shoot at the pilot, I realized now that I could not, for he was apparently unarmed and had been so friendly.

When I fired at him, he must have seen the smoke from my Lebel or saw it flash. He knew then that I was not fooling and tried to escape from my plane by streaking down toward the earth. But I followed intently, my mind occupied now, not on shooting the pilot, but damaging his machine so it would have to land, thus he would be unable to accomplish his mission.

I stood up in the pit and fired two shots at his gas tank, but nothing happened. Then I had to sit down and maneuver my plane again. The Taube pilot was zigzagging. I got closer and stood up again. This time, he too, stood up, and hurled a hand grenade back at me. But his aim was wild. It hit on the ground far below and exploded there sending up a puff of blue smoke. I aimed my rifle and rapidly fired all my remaining shells at the gas tank again.

Now I saw that something had happened. The Taube began to wobble crazily. The Boche pilot seemed frantic. Finally the motor stopped turning. Then I saw what had happened. One of my bullets had cracked the propeller, and it had shattered, throwing the Taube into terrific vibration and forcing the pilot to cut his engine.

He had to go down. I wished then that I had not been so hasty, for as it was he landed inside his own lines. If I had waited, I could have captured him by forcing his landing on our side. A fresh Taube and its Boche pilot would have been a great trophy to take home and show my mates.

Next Month: WILLY COPPENS

HOW THE WAR CRATES FLEW



This technical department is a regular feature of SKY FIGHTERS. It brings you, each month, the underlying principles and facts concerning expressions and ideas of war-air terminology. In every issue, a new topic of interest is discussed.

WHAT MADE 'EM FLY

By LIEUT. EDWARD McCRAE

NOW you wise young sons and daughters of a double eagle, or maybe it was a buzzard, maybe you hadn't noticed it before but if you had looked a little carefully at all the nice pictures of the war crates on the covers of SKY FIGHTERS you might have noticed that nearly every one of them without exception had something peculiar about it. Whether you noticed it or not, they all had engines in 'em.

Yes, sir, they carried whole gasoline engines up in the air. Some of them had one and some had two and some had more than that—even back in the early days of the war.

Now if I know anything about you clucks you're just as likely as not to come asking me why those aviators wanted to load themselves down with a lot of machinery. It would be just about like you.

So I'm going to head you off and tell you something about those powerhouses we used to take upstairs along with us. And don't be asking me why they carried more than one of 'em. I'm going to get to that if you'll let me. Mary, don't you throw that spitball!

You Gotta Have an Engine

Maybe your papas have let you look under the hood of the old family car, in which case you might have learned the secret that a vehicle just can't get along without an engine if it's going

to do any good running at all. Honey, it's the same way with an airplane.

So I'm going to tell you a few simple things that won't be too difficult for your shallow pans to remember so you will have a little inkling of why they have all different kinds of engines when it would look for the world like if they got a good one they would keep using it instead of trying to think up other designs and shapes to use.

You might have noticed that some of the engines when they were looked at from the front looked like stars with a lot of cylinders all sticking out every which way from the center. And others looked more like a common every-day automobile engine. How come it and why?

Air and Water Cooling

The answer is, my precious little dunderheads, that some of them were air-cooled and some water-cooled.

They learned that an engine that didn't have to tote its own drink along with it weighed about three-quarters as much as another of the same horsepower that was water-cooled. And they learned also that for every pound you could reduce the weight of it you could add two pounds of useful load, or what amounts to the same thing, you could have a bigger engine and more power for the given weight.

Now the reason you could get those

two extra pounds where one grew before was that when you took a pound's weight away from the engine you could reduce the weight of the ship

extra pound of engine weight. That's as clear as mud, isn't it?

But unfortunately that added strength didn't always show as engines got bigger. After they got so big, an air-cooled engine wouldn't weigh any less than a water-cooled one for the same horse power.

So they used one or the other depending on the performance they wanted.

The Air-Foil

Now when you start trying to recognize the different kinds of engines you want to look at the front of them. That way you can see what kind of a surface, or air-foil they present to the wind. That's the important thing for you to consider.

When you look at them that from that aspect you will see that there are only about three different general groups of designs. Of course, these differ among themselves in slight ways, but after all, even human beings in one family have slight differences.

Take a look at the figure which I have very cleverly called Figure 1. In that you will see the front view of a few of the stationary cylinder engines that are water-cooled and whose fathers got the idea of their design from our old friend the automobile engine. Now this group shows some outline forms of the engines themselves, but there is a fly in the amber. They don't show the radiators, and a water-cooled engine has to have a radiator and that presents a big flat surface to the air to reduce your speed.

Rotary Engines

So then you have next in what for want of a better name I have called Figure 2, the rotary engines that were used during the war. Some of the names of these are Gnome Rotary, the Le Rhone Rotary, and the Clerget Rotary.

These were funny power plants. You might not believe it when I tell

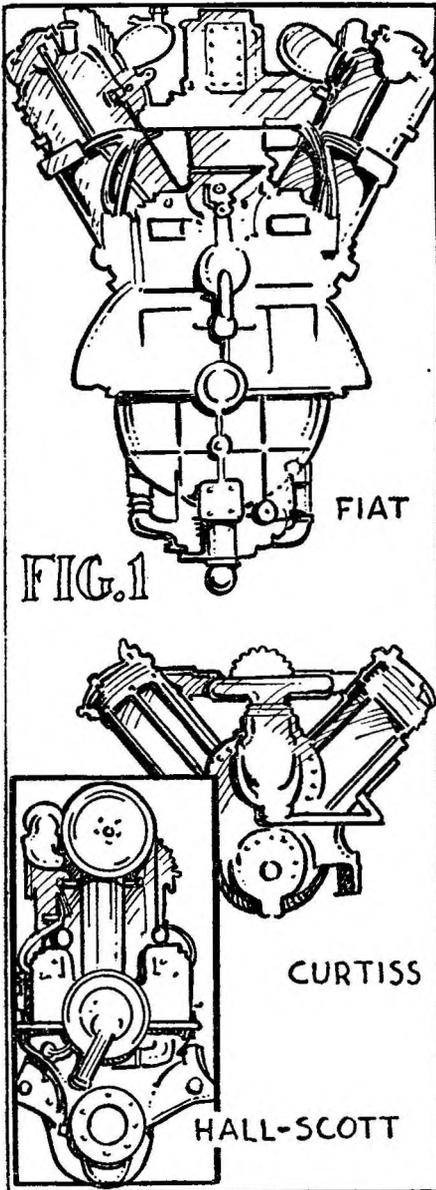


FIG. 1

by another pound that was necessary to strengthen it to support the pound you took away, and you could further reduce the weight of your ship by another pound that went to strengthen the wing so it would support that

you, but it is a fact that the crank shaft stood still and the whole engine itself revolved around it! That sounds kind of Chinese, doesn't it? But it isn't. What with those cylinders whirling around at a thousand revolutions or more, they kept cool pretty well, but once in a while one of them would fly off the handle and scatter cylinders all over No Man's Land.

And then they had another feature that the brass hats didn't seem to bother about, but which we didn't like at all. They were lubricated with castor oil!

Hot Castor Oil

Our objections to it came, not because we had to share their fuel oil, but because the engineers didn't think castor oil was bad enough cold, they let it get hot in the motor.

And brothers and sisters, you have not smelled nothing yet until you have got a nose full of red hot castor oil. And you can smell it for miles—and that is not an exaggeration! We were afraid the Heinies could always tell we were coming by just sticking their noses up in the air and taking a deep breath. Boy, it was awful!

And then you might take a glimpse at a figure that I have designated as Figure 3, even though you can't count up that high.

Those figures in that picture are some outlines that look almost like those rotary babies. But they aren't. Their cylinders stick out from a common center just like the rotaries, but there is some sense in the way they act. The cylinders stay still and the crank shaft revolves just like any respectable crankshaft ought to do.

We Had 'Em Long Ago

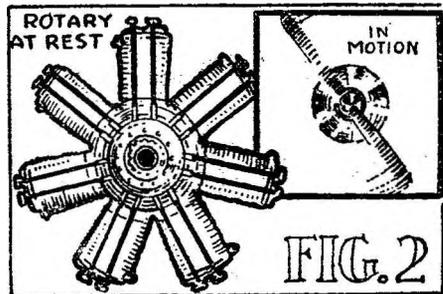
We had them in the old days, and they had all the way from three to twenty cylinders stuck around the shaft.

Those were the babies that have turned out best since the war. But

we had a lot of satisfaction out of them. A couple of these babies we liked in those days were the Salmson and the Cosmos Jupiter.

And just to prove how practical these air-cooled babies were, if you will take a glance around an air field today you will see more air-cooled radial motors than any other kind. Babies of that pattern since the war were the first to cross the North Pole, first to fly the English Channel, first to span the Atlantic, and about the first for everything of any importance.

And now that you know all about



the different kinds of engines, I'll give you that promised dope about why they had different numbers in different kinds of ships.

Why the Extra Engines?

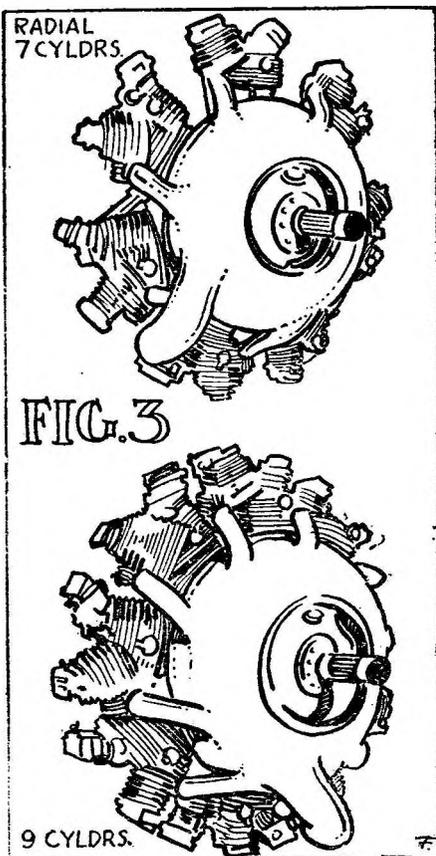
There are two reasons they put more than one engine in a ship. One is to increase and distribute the lift and the other is to increase the factor of safety. These two reasons don't always both appear in the one ship.

But even you pupils of mine ought to be able to see that if you have two engines and one conks you've still got a chance to get back safely over your home trenches, and if you've got three engines to do the same work there's almost no chance at all of your having a forced landing in a mess of Krauts. I know about a Handley-Page bomber that went out and got a direct hit that reduced its whole lower wing to a mass of shreds and tatters and knocked one of its engines clear out of it, but the pilot steered it sixty miles back to his home tarmac! Which is

something different from landing on your nose in the middle of a few rosettes of shrapnel.

Helps in the Lift

And then in the matter of lift, you will find the heavy bombers had more than one engine so they could lift a lot of weight. You would first think



they would just build one big engine to carry it, but that wouldn't be so good. Let me try to show you why.

Suppose it took a thousand horsepower to lift the desired bomber and its load. They could build one engine of a thousand horsepower all right, but they wouldn't get a propeller that could use up and deliver all that power. But if they, say, built two five-hundred horsepower engines, they had two props which could use up all that power and besides they had the additional safety factor of the two

motors I just spoke about. You might not remember it well, Tillie, but we had plenty of ships with more than one engine during the war.

The Germans were the first to come out with them, although the French were at work on them even before the war broke out. The first German flew with two engines in 1915.

But the French quickly matched them with the old twin-motored Caudron, and the British followed right off the bat with the twin-motored Dyott, which didn't last a very long time, however. The Government never did put its official okay on the old Dyott, but it was not a bad heavy crate, and it had a lot of features the German Gotha later incorporated.

Then the Italians in the person of the well-known Mr. Caproni burst out across the field with a three-motored ship. It had two eighty-horsepower tractor motors and one ninety-horsepower pusher. Some ship, eh, Tony!

And toward the end of the fracas the British got real ambitious and brought out a ship with four—count them—motors. It just had engines stuck all over it.

They Went in for Numbers

But once they started going in for numbers, do you think the Germans were going to let anybody get ahead of them? No, my masters, not those boys.

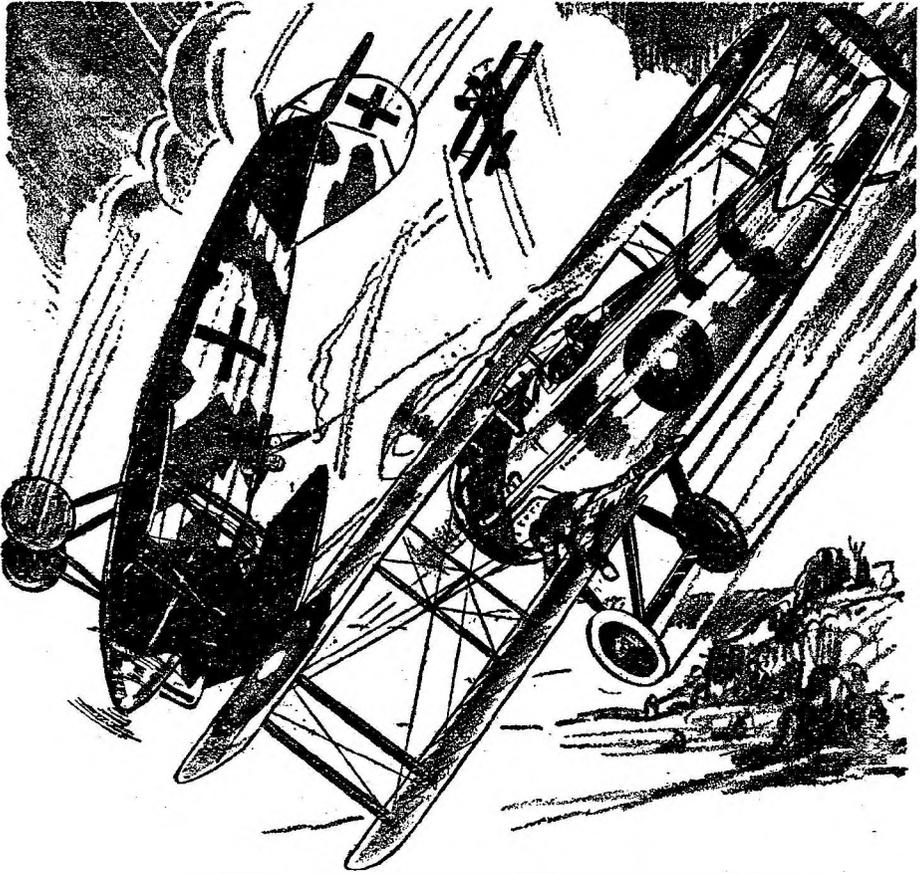
We knocked down one of their big bombers in France, and we thought somebody had attached wings to the machine shop itself.

That crate had five motors sprouting out of it.

That might not be a lot of motors these days, but my children, I've been talking all this time about the war that was fought a long, long time ago.

And now, take my blessing, and go out and jump in your ten-motored kiddie cars and zoom out of my sight. Or else I'll be counting motors instead of sheep in my sleep.

ZERO HOUR



Orth swung on the nearer of the two crates

*While His Wingmate, Lieutenant Gabriel, Waits for
Death by Firing Squad in Bocheland, Silent Orth
Faces the Toughest Problem in His Career!*

An Action-Packed Silent Orth Story

By LIEUT. FRANK JOHNSON

Author of "Orth's Fight Against Time," "Coventry," etc.

THE entire 11th Pursuit Group poured onto the field, hugging the hangars and office buildings for protection, when the droning, high-pitched and defiant, of the Fokker hammered over the tarmac. It was coming like a bat out of hell.

Silent Orth stared moodily into the eastern skies, trying to pick out the fleeting wings of the enemy. Somehow he knew that a message was coming, and he dreaded its receipt. It came too soon after the departure of Lieutenant Gabriel for Paris.

Gabriel had departed considerably from regulations in the take-off for Paris, in that, due to the coolness of the morning, he had worn an ordinary civilian coat over his flying garments. He had been out of uniform. And somehow it hadn't seemed right. Yet Orth and the rest of Gabriel's wingmates had not protested. The high strung Gabriel had deserved a slight break. His nerves had been close to going. He had downed ten enemy crates in a period of two weeks—enough, surely, to make any man nervous. For the Germans were great on retaliation.

However, it couldn't have anything to do with Gabriel, Orth told himself, for Gabriel had headed straight for Paris. Orth had watched him fly over the horizon westward and vanish with a scudding of fast wings.

And yet—

Orth couldn't down the fact that Gabriel might have got into trouble. But how? And why from the direction of Germany?

NOW the entire 11th could see the roaring Fokker. It was spinning down from an immense height. The major in command had shouted to the gun crew. Tripoded Lewises were already swinging into line to cover the elusive target as it spun in, making many evolutions to throw off the aim of the American gunners. It was diving so that the wind through its superstructure was a mad paean of defiance as it headed for the end of the field. And while it was still spinning it dropped past the trees at the end of the tarmac.

The Lewises were chattering. They

were smashing bullets at the enemy as fast as lead could pour through the barrel of the swiveling gun. But the Fokker kept on diving. It leveled off with a smoothness and precision which argued a master at the stick, and flashed across the tarmac at full speed. Something dropped from the belly of the crate, to hit the ground and bounce.

Then the Fokker zoomed. It was fifteen hundred feet up, already headed for Germany, by the time the Lewises' sights could be re-aligned. Then it was too late.

AN orderly brought the message to the major, who tore it open, his face a mask of wonderment. His hand trembled when he had read the missive.

He looked around at the faces of his men. Orth's inner forebodings were realized.

"It's Gabriel," the major said. "The Germans have got him. This message says that he was forced down near Sonnenberg's field and captured unharmed. It also states that he was not in uniform. You all know what that means. Not to be in uniform when captured means to be a spy.

"Whatever possessed the hair-brained fool, anyhow? He must have cut back into Germany for a final fling at Sonnenberg's men before going on to Paris. Well, he'll never make Paris now. You all know what it means?"

Solemnly the 11th nodded.

To be taken in anything except one's own uniform spelled the firing squad—and the slimmest of excuses would suffice the Germans where a man who had downed ten of their best was concerned. Lieutenant Gabriel was doomed—and he was Silent Orth's best friend.

Orth stepped up to the major.

"I'd like permission to try to get Gabriel back, sir," he said. "I know

how the Germans operate. They're as methodical as bookkeepers. This means that Gabriel is still alive, else they would have said that he had been executed. If I know Germans at all they'll put him in front of a firing squad at dawn tomorrow—after giving him a hell of a big party tonight."

The major shrugged.

"What can you do?" he asked. "You can't land and take him in with you. The first sight you'll get of him, to be able to identify him, will be when he actually faces the squad. Then it'll be too late."

"Still, sir," said Orth softly, "I'd like a try at it."

"It's hopeless, Orth, even for you," said the major. "But I can't allow them to rub Gabriel out without making some attempt to save him. Go to it."

Orth went to his hutment to make plans. His face was grim. He was earning his sobriquet, for not once during the day did he speak to one of his wingmates. He was harshly intent on what he believed he had to do. He ate with the others that night without taking part in talk. He went again to his hutment for a good night's sleep against the forthcoming ordeal.

HE had scarcely hit the pillow when the major sent for him.

He reported to headquarters. The major's face was white, grim, somehow relentless. There was a brass hat with the major whose face expressed nothing whatever. The major cleared his throat.

"It's all off, Orth," said the major. "Gabriel will have to be sacrificed."

A cold hand seemed to fasten itself at Orth's heart. He knew that the brass hat had something to do with the cancellation of his plans, which meant the sure death of Gabriel. But he waited to hear more.

"Colonel Manning," the major in-

clined his head, "has a job for a man like you. You understand, of course, that you're not ordered to do this job, but when you hear what it is I'm sure you'll volunteer. Wing has expressly requested that you do so."

Orth said nothing. The colonel's eyes were narrowed as he studied Orth, this silent man who had accounted for so many of the enemy.

"It will mean honor, Orth," he said, "and public decorations."

"Begging the Colonel's pardon, sir," said Orth. "I do not care for decorations."

NOT a good thing to say, when the colonel's own breast literally sprouted all the decorations possible for a desk soldier to collect.

The major went on:

"Somewhere around dawn tomorrow, perhaps a half to three quarters of an hour after, one of our spies will signal to a ship from a German clearing, probably with diminutive panels. The ship is to go down, land, take him on and bring him back. It calls for a cool head, sure airmanship, and a smart hand at guns and controls. I think you're the only flyer we have who can do it."

"Near dawn?" said Orth in a dead voice. "That means that it would be impossible to do anything for Gabriel without taking a chance on letting this spy down!"

"The life of one man is nothing when weighed against that of thousands of our troops," said the colonel tartly. "This spy has information which is of vital importance to all troops in this sector. He has risked his life to get it, is constantly risking his life—and the loss at the same time of the information—until we have landed him safely on Allied soil. The death of Gabriel—who went to his fate at a personal whim—is little compared to the life of this spy."

"The spy also knew what risks he was running," said Orth, knowing that his objection was weak and would be instantly spotted as such.

"Right!" snapped the colonel. "But he went anyhow. His courage will never be properly paid for. Spies get only such glory as may be given them in secret. Will you try to bring him back? Remember, it may save the lives of thousands of our men."

Orth considered for a split second. In his mind's eye he could see Gabriel facing that firing squad, refusing the blindfold, taking bullets in the heart without a whimper, without crying out. Orth himself had once commanded a firing squad which had executed German spies. He knew the commands, and all the heartache and brutality which went with them, as even Gabriel could not know them—as even these two puppets of war could not know them:

"Make Ready! At the Heart Take Aim! Fire!"

Then the crashing volley and the limp figure, knocked backward by the crashing impact of eight bullets, falling on its face to kick its life away. That's what Orth was arranging for Gabriel, when he nodded.

And his head, as he signified his willingness to take on the job, felt as though it had been weighted with lead. In his mind's eye he could see Gabriel so very plainly, could hear with the ears of his imagination the rattling of musketry, see his friend fall to the ground; still, perhaps, with the civilian coat around him which had spelled his death sentence.

O RTH didn't sleep that night. He walked the floor of his cubicle. When the orderly came to waken him, and found him, his face haggard and drawn, pacing the floor, his mind had been made up. His lips were white. But he was determined.

To carry out his determination meant that he must do the impossible, must fly better and faster than he had ever flown in his life before, be better with his guns—be twice the man that Orth was supposed to be; and all this after a sleepless night when he had finally refused to think of all the dread potentialities of failure. He was, if the colonel had told the truth, literally gambling with the lives of thousands of his own troops. But he was going through with it.

"And not all of Sonnenberg's flyers or his butchers will keep me from it," he told himself. He waved away the steaming mug of coffee. He didn't even think of a cigarette. His propeller was ticking over in the pre-dawn coolness.

He looked at his watch. It was six in the morning.

I N half an hour at most Gabriel would be facing his Golgotha. The spy would be preparing right this moment for the arrival of the ship which was to bring him out with his information.

And that spy would be suffering the uncertain tortures of the literally damned. He would be surrounded by enemies. His plight would be even worse than Gabriel's, because for Gabriel there was no uncertainty. He would know that he faced the firing squad.

Orth stepped into his crate. The motor blasted. The propeller became invisible with speed. Orth had tested out his instruments. The Spad was ready for any emergency. He was as ready, today, as he ever would be. But his nerves were singing like taut bowstrings in a high wind.

He started the Spad down the field, shoving the stick forward for flying speed. Then he literally jumped the gray ship off the field, headed it into the east for the German lines. His watch told him that

his time was short. German executioners waited neither for time, tide nor man.

The Spad rose swiftly to two thousand feet. Orth looked down, with eyes that scarcely blinked. It was as though he feared that even to blink would lose him a trick in the great game he was already playing. Would the Germans be expecting an attempt at rescue? If they were, he hadn't a chance. On the other hand, the very audacity of his plan might give him a chance to succeed.

Early as it was the German Archies were ready. They filled the sky about him with their black flowers of death. His wings rocked and rolled with the concussions. His feet and hands corrected easily for each little disturbance of his wings caused by the explosions. His Hisso blasted skies asunder with the roaring of its might, let full out for this race with death.

Orth knew about where the spy would be awaiting him. Colonel Manning had been very explicit on this point. And that spy must be brought back. Cursing savagely, Orth gave his crate all the juice she would take, tried to shove the throttle wider when it already was full open. He was through the Archies. His oath had been for the fate which rose out of the woods ahead to thwart the impossible thing he had to do.

SPLIT seconds of time counted this morning. The field where the spy was to be taken on, or the clearing, rather, was fully four kilometers from where he believed that Gabriel would face his fate. Impossible! And yet—

The two Fokkers, warned of his coming by telephones which had jangled at the lines, had never been closer to destruction than they were at this moment. For Orth had resolved that nothing should stop him.

Back and beyond, and below the two oncoming Fokkers, two other crates—one an Albatross, one an Aviatik—were lazily rising to follow the Fokkers, as though, in purely routine fashion, to back the play of the two which were plainly coming to attack.

Orth flew on. He had made a resolution. His jaw muscles were ridges of determination. He wouldn't stop or turn back or change his plans in one iota. He felt he had gone too far to turn back. His watch told him that not even a minute could be spared if he were to succeed.

THE Fokkers were very close now. They were spreading apart. He knew why. They planned on taking him from either side. They were coming on at top speed. He aimed at the space between them and let his Hisso rave. He cleared his guns with a single burst. They were in working order.

Orth held his nose down slightly. His eyes swiveled from one crate to the other. Now the crate to his left was swinging its nose around. In a second or two it would be in position to fire.

He waited for the blasting of its Spandaus. A row of holes appeared in his wings. He yanked the stick back into his belly, counting. He had a minute to spare, no more. One—two—three—four—he was counting the seconds.

At the top of his flashing zoom he banked swiftly to his left, bringing the motor of the Fokker into his line of sight. He forced his crate around until the German was squarely in his line of sights, and already frantically trying to roll out of them.

His Vickers ranted savagely in a long burst. He saw his tracers end at the side of the cockpit, just below the German pilot's shoulders. The pilot jumped and jerked in his pit.

Bullets whispered past Orth's ears

as the other Fokker pilot let go with his Spandaus. Orth went up and over in a wingbuckling turn. He hadn't once stopped counting. He had got to twenty. That he had done the impossible and slain an enemy in less than twenty seconds meant nothing to him. A flyer often had to do the impossible.

The first Fokker was going down, wreathed in flames, when Orth spun around, bringing his nose into the line of fire from the second Fokker. Even as he spun, his knees held the stick and his thumbs were on the trips. His Vickers were raving in a long stuttering burst. It was wide. Frantically he swiveled to bring the Fokker cockpit into line. The German rolled out with ease.

Forty—forty-one—forty-two—

Orth tilted his nose, hurling his crate straight at the Fokker cockpit. The belly of the enemy crate, rolling away from him, was right in his sights. He let his guns go again. The Fokker seemed to hesitate.

It didn't roll back to an even keel. It slanted down the sky. Orth came on back around, into his original position, and his count had reached fifty-two. Two Fokers in less than a minute! But he thought only of valuable time lost, and that eight fingers on as many triggers could blast a man into eternity in far less time than that.

THE Albatross and the Aviatik had speeded up. They were coming on with determination as Orth lifted his nose and climbed for the skies. His eyes were like two burned holes in a blanket. His lips were almost invisible, a mere slash in his face, so tightly were they compressed. He had resolved to take a desperate chance on his own speed and that of the two enemies to get him to where he was going.

He leveled off at seven thousand feet, where he could see Sonnenberg's

field, dead ahead, and lashed for the enemy tarmac. The Albatross and the Aviatik, expecting him to attack, had sheered off. He laughed a little.

Precious time would be lost by the two Germans to get back on his tail. That time would be valuable to Silent Orth.

He gave his crate full gun, and now he was holding her nose down slightly to get all the speed he possibly could. His eyes searched the ground below for a sign. There were trails through the woods from the German field, now faintly seen, now invisible. On one of them, in the midst of the guards, Gabriel would be marching.

ORTH strained his eyes to pick up the firing squad, strained them until smarting tears rolled down his cheeks. Behind him now the Albatross and the Aviatik had started a devil's duet with twin guns on their nacelles.

Orth didn't look back. His taut back constantly expected the smashing impact of bullets, more bullets than ever would be fired at Gabriel. But Gabriel would have no chance—Orth made his own chances as long as his crate held together and flew.

And now, with bullets whispering and spitting past his ears, oddly like the droning of mosquitoes and the buzzing of hornets combined, Orth made out the party which he knew would be executing Gabriel. They had debouched into a clearing about a kilometer from Sonnenberg's field. An officer was marching Gabriel to his place. It all stood out with startling clarity. Orth could even recognize Gabriel by the civilian coat which he still wore.

Orth looked back. Then he looked down again. The firing squad was being ordered into formation for the execution.

None of its members had, apparently, noticed Orth and his diving

Spad, or maybe they also noticed the Albatross and the Aviatik on his tail. He started down. Hell's bells, the thing was wild, mad, impossible—but he was going to take a crack at it, come what might.

He started to spin when the going behind him became tough. Bullets hammered at his wings, ripped through his fuselage. But so far no bullet had touched himself. He flew as he had never flown before, to save his own life for Gabriel's sake.

He didn't stop to think now of failure; he didn't dare fail. For by this time the spy would be scanning the skies for rescue, his miniature panels in readiness to arrange the signal. If nobody answered, and his panels were seen, he would die as Gabriel was now preparing to die—and his information would die with him.

It couldn't be. Orth wished there were a few seconds left in which to turn on the two who followed him down. But already the officer in command of the firing squad was marching pompously to his place to give the fatal commands which hadn't ceased to ring in Orth's ears since he had agreed to undertake the colonel's mission.

THE firing squad was swimming up to meet him. The German officer had drawn his sword. Orth leveled off for a second to take a quick look through his ring-sights. The whole firing squad was visible in the crossed wires.

The elevation was twenty-five hundred feet. He didn't dare miss. He saw Gabriel's white face lifted toward him, knew that Gabriel felt he hadn't a chance to do what he was planning. Then his guns were going.

The German officer, his sword lifted to give the first command, fell in his tracks. His fall might well have signaled the squad to do its job, for their rifles spoke.

Gabriel toppled into the dirt!

Sick at heart, Orth went after the firing squad with the fury of despair. He raked them with lead from his guns, yawing right and left to cover them all. Some broke and tried to run, and he cut them down with ruthless savagery. They had destroyed Gabriel; they had downed him.

HE looked over the side as he swooped over them. Not a man of the squad moved. That all were dead and therefore not to be protected by the flyers in the Albatross and Aviatik was proved by the spurt of dust where Spandau lead, missing the diving Spad, rocketed into the ground.

Orth glanced aside at the prone figure of Gabriel—and a shout rose in his throat!

Gabriel was rising to his feet. Gabriel was running. His left arm hung limp at his side. So much, then, had Orth's dive disconcerted the firing squad, or else Gabriel had flung himself down just in time for the volley to pass through the space where he had been standing.

Orth swiveled around. As long as he moved with all his speed the two behind him had no chance. The woods on either flank were vomiting German soldiers, firing now at Gabriel, who was running for the woods.

Orth swore, sliced down in a screaming sideslip, marveling that so many bullets had missed him thus far. He set his wheels on the ground, bounced fifty feet, caught his crate with stick and rudderbar, set her down again. He was trailing Gabriel, Gabriel was looking back, fighting to make some use of his dangling left arm. He was running at top speed, trying to match the speed of Orth.

Orth fishtailed to cut his express train dash across the clearing. The

Spad slowed down. The Albatross swept over Orth, its Spandaus trying to cut down Gabriel. Gabriel went down again, rolled to his feet when the Albatross had passed.

Orth couldn't fire on the Albatross.

Gabriel was close now, and the Spad was going far too fast. If Gabriel missed—

But he dare not miss. Orth cut his speed to almost nothing as he came directly up to Gabriel. Gabriel clutched at the entering edge of the Spad's lower wing. When the crate moved on, Gabriel did not appear. Orth saw his right hand hooked over an inner bay strut. Could Gabriel ever pull himself up with only one good arm to help him?

Then Gabriel's head appeared. His face was set in a mask of agony—an agony of effort. But necessity seemed to make him strong. Somehow, anyhow, he got his stomach over the entering edge of the wing, managed to hook his left arm around the strut, to draw himself up.

At the same time he jerked his head at Orth, bidding him take off.

Orth didn't wait. He couldn't. He spun around as the two crates came over again, looking at his watch as he did so. So far, he was still in time. He slammed down the clearing, praying that its sparse crop of grass and weeds didn't hide stumps which would destroy him, took his crate off the second he felt he had flying speed.

HE didn't wait for altitude. With Gabriel clinging to his strut for dear life, and the two Germans harassing Orth, there was no time for anything. Orth slanted for a break in the trees at the edge of the field. His dropped left wings went through the opening. His own weight rolled Gabriel against the fuselage, where he clung like a leech with both legs and one good arm. Nothing short of an aerial earthquake—if there could

be any such—would shake Gabriel off that wing.

Now above the trees, with his Hisso roaring full out, Orth dared to level off. Gabriel was looking at him, jerking his head at the pursuing crates. He nodded, moving closer against the fuselage.

If the motor took fire, Gabriel wouldn't have a chance. But heroic measures were necessary. At least, now, Gabriel had a chance he hadn't had when he had faced that firing squad. Orth swiveled, favoring the wing on which Gabriel crouched.

His teeth had bitten his tight lips through. Blood ran down his chin. Precious seconds were being used up.

ORTH swung on the nearer of the two crates—the Aviatik, and sent it down with a long savage burst of flame. Then he decided to outrun the Albatross, taking advantage of the momentary discomfiture of the German who had just witnessed the killing of his comrade, and who had seen Silent Orth knock down three of his wingmates. Certainly he had reason to pause for thought.

Then Orth was away, setting a beeline for the spot where he was to pick up the spy. He refused to think what it would be like, trying to lift two men on his wings, when one already made the crate loggy. And over and beyond that, he must get both of them home! They would be attacked from all sides. It was hopeless, couldn't be done. Yet Orth never thought of not trying. Without the spy to consider he had already worked a miracle. Was he capable of still another?

Grimly he nodded his head.

Now his eyes were searching for the clearing where he was to locate and take off the spy. The whole countryside seemed to be pock-marked by clearings. What was to prevent the spy from shifting to a

clearing whose location he hadn't got back to Manning? What was to prevent his being forced to do that by circumstances?

Orth had to take the chance. The Spad had never behaved more bravely. But the sky now seemed full of crates. None of them, as yet, was trying for Orth, but some of the Germans must certainly have seen the fall of the Aviatik. Yes, two crates were cutting out of two different formations and racing to the scene.

Orth gritted his teeth. This was to be a close thing, then.

Then all at once he saw a German, a small, slender German, race into the center of a clearing and spread two white strips of cloth on the ground in the shape of a cross. The cross indicated wind direction, but Orth didn't consider that. For Germans in the woods were firing at the slender man—who had flung himself to the ground and was frantically waving at Orth.

Orth caught Gabriel's eyes again, pointed down. Gabriel eased to the edge of the wing, looked over. His face was thoughtful when he looked back at Orth. He made a signal with his free hand for a second. The signal said:

"Nod, old man, and over I go. I get it all—and that guy is more important than I am."

BUT Orth didn't nod. He merely set his teeth more firmly and dived straight for the clearing, running a race with death—against the soldiers of the Fatherland, and the flyers who were closing in on his fleeing Spad.

Again he must set his wheels down and this time he must save Gabriel all over again. The tug and pull, the savage drive of necessity, made Orth feel like a superman—as though he could outwit and outfly the best in Germany. He set his

wheels down. The Albatross went over him.

Bullet holes appeared in the wing so close to Gabriel that Gabriel made a face at the Albatross, would have shaken a fist at it had he been in position to release his deathlike clutch on the strut. The wind of Orth's passage literally held Gabriel pinned to the fuselage, which must have been hotter than a furnace at his back. But Gabriel wasn't one to complain. Now, perhaps, he was glad of that civilian coat which had caused all the trouble, since it provided an extra bit of padding against his back.

THE ground was right under Orth's wheels. There was a stump in his path which he must hurdle. He did, fishtailing as he reached for the ground beyond it.

Then his wheels touched. Dead ahead, turning to come back, the Albatross was getting set to blast bullets into his very prop as he tried to take off.

Orth considered as the crate lost speed. The spy—who, after all, might not be the man he sought—was racing for the slowing Spad, arms outstretched. The "German" saw Gabriel on the right lower, changed his course to clutch at the left wings.

Then, even as he rolled onto the wing, grabbing with both hands, bullets hammered at his lower limbs. His legs seemed almost to rip from their sockets. The man's face was a mask of agony, as Gabriel's had been. But he clung, face down against the wing. Orth saw blood on the wing beside him. But the spy, suffering veritable torture clung with all his power.

Orth blasted down the clearing, swinging at right angles when he had sufficient speed, to miss the bullets of the diving Albatross which would surely have got him if he hadn't swerved.

Bullets ripped through his tail surfaces. The Spad shuddered. Viciously Orth gave his Hisso the gun. It could never lift such a load, yet lift it it must. And it did. Orth put the nose down in the very face of the trees, to get all the flying speed he could possibly manage, then literally jumped his Spad out of the clearing. His wheels touched the tops of the trees. His speed was little more than half that of which the Spad was capable without its triple load.

AND now the sky seemed to be filled with enemy crates. The Germans were at last alive to the situation. They must have known that a spy was being taken back, even as all Germany by this time must have known of the rescue of Gabriel.

If Orth got away with this—well, Germany would have plenty of cause to remember him. Both sides of the lines would ring with his name. The Allies would make a legend of him; the Germans would array their very best against him. But he would welcome all this, if only he could get his passengers home.

The Albatross came for him, Spandaus raving. And he saw at once that the Albatross pilot was deliberately concentrating on the two figures on the wings, especially on the slender man in German uniform. Bullets hammered at this one, missing by fractions of inches. The spy looked at Orth beseechingly. Orth cursed to himself.

He suddenly banked left, when the Albatross slanted away after a particularly vicious thrust at the gray figure on Orth's wing—and tried to bring the German crate into his line of sights. But the German was too wary, had seen quite too much of this man's flying and fighting ability.

The German was holding Orth there, until help should arrive. But the second Orth swung back toward

him, the Albatross came back. Orth could have looped and had a fair chance of getting him. But neither Gabriel nor the spy could remain on the wing in a loop. Or could they? Orth signaled to Gabriel. Gabriel nodded and literally hugged the strut, which a stream of bullets could rip away from him to let him fall the fifteen hundred feet which now separated the Spad from the ground.

Gabriel was game. Orth looked at the spy. The spy had fastened on as Gabriel had done. Orth noticed that a growing smear of crimson marked the wings where the man was sprawling. He gritted his teeth. The two would have to look out for themselves. The German would never expect him to loop with those two on his wings.

The surprise was complete, as Orth, almost shutting his eyes when he thought of all the gruesome possibilities, yanked the stick back into his belly. The crate responded with a rush. Its nose came over. On his back, Orth glued his eyes to his ring-sight. Coming over he tried to bring the German into his crossed wires. The German was firing frantically, trying to get him with a fatal burst before Orth could get into position to retaliate.

THE German took desperate chances to make his bullets good, knowing that he faced death if he failed. Perhaps he depended much on his greater maneuverability because he was more lightly loaded, to take him free when Orth's bullets began to hammer at his cockpit.

But he delayed too long, and for a moment, as his Vickers ranted and raved, Orth forgot the two who clung to his wings for dear life. His one purpose in life was to get that Albatross. His tracers hammered into the cockpit, seeming to end there.

A great sobbing shout came into Orth's throat as he saw the German jump and jerk in the cockpit of the Albatross. The hand on the trips of the Spandaus fell away as though smashed down by a sledgehammer weight. The German slid out of sight, and Orth had to roll—which he did with his heart in his mouth—to escape the final upward lunge of the Boche crate in its death throes.

He leveled off, to find Gabriel and the spy still in place, but with faces white as death, and hands almost ready to release their grips on the struts. But they were still on the plane.

Orth now settled down for the race home.

OTHER crates were coming in. He looked toward Allied skies, where a flight of Nieuports were deadheading into Germany. He gritted his teeth anew and headed his Spad directly at that formation. The Germans were all around him now and he was racing against time and death as he had never raced before.

He dared to put his nose down and give his crate full gun. The last of his original four enemies had scarcely had time to crash in, trailing its fatal comet-tail of smoke, shot through and through with orange flames, when he was too far away to see what had happened. His wings were in shreds, threatening to bow back or upward with the speed of his mad flight.

The Nieuports were coming on, speeding up as though their skipper sensed the necessity which drove this Spad out of Germany in such an erratic flight to meet them. They were coming on, bulking larger and larger with the combined speed of their flight and that of Silent Orth—who was praying for perhaps the first time in his life, at least in this war, for the strength of wing and motor to see him through.

Bullets hammered at his wings.

He dived. He spun. He yawed right and left. But now he didn't take time out to fire. He didn't dare. Gabriel and the spy were clinging like grim death to their struts. Once a stream of bullets almost chewed Gabriel's strut through at the middle. Orth could see Gabriel literally glue himself to the wing as he sought to favor the weakened strut.

Orth's tail surfaces were blasted to hell and gone.

His crate was almost a wreck. Two Fokkers were coming in on his tail for a final burst. He dived. He rolled. His passengers clung. And then, with a roaring Niagara of sound, with guns chattering and raving, the Nieuports rolled over his head and the Germans were fighting for their lives, with the sole objective of getting home with all their crates intact.

Orth settled back with a sigh of relief. Now, for the first time, he realized what a ghastly chance he had taken. He had gambled with the lives of thousands to make good on the task he had assigned himself. He had disobeyed orders. He might well be cashiered, sent to Leavenworth for twenty years, for what he had done, quite regardless of the fact that he had brought the spy back.

And he knew that the major would know all about it, even before he landed.

AND yet—he was happy. What did he care about a prison sentence, the disgrace of court-martial, as long as he had done what he had set out to do?

His crate rolled to a stop.

Strong, willing hands took the spy and Gabriel from the wing. The spy was carried to a staff car at the headquarters office. Gabriel was taken to the drome hospital. The major looked at Orth, white faced and grim.

"Orth," he said, "you've done a glorious thing; but it's my painful duty to place you under arrest in quarters, pending trial by court-martial for disobedience of orders! But I wish I had done it myself."

"Yes, sir," said Orth, facing smartly about, moving directly to his quarters.

In headquarters the major snapped at his adjutant:

"Make out a recommendation for court-martial in the case of Lieutenant Orth. Charges, disobedience of orders. Specification — well, you know the rigamarole. We'll have to satisfy Manning."

But the major almost looked a hole into the face of his adjutant. The adjutant nodded stiffly, went to his own cubby of an office, looked at his clerk.

"You heard?" he asked the clerk.

"Yes, sir."

"Then listen carefully. If some-

thing happened to the recommendation for several days—up here where so many things happen that today's mistakes are forgotten tomorrow—and the papers got 'inadvertently filed'—"

He left it there. The clerk got busy. The typewriter clattered. But when the papers were ready the clerk took something on himself. He put the papers on the very edge of the captain's desk. Then, somehow, his elbow slid them off into the wastebasket.

After all, a mere enlisted man, and a clerk at that, could only get thirty days in the guardhouse on bread and water, with full ration every third day, for negligence in the case of important papers—and the heavy firing of big guns so disturbed the stomach of the clerk, usually, that he was never very hungry anyhow.

The war went on as though nothing had happened.

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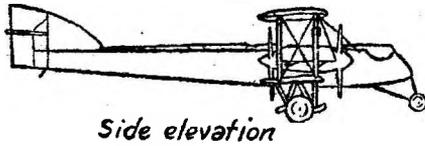
J. EDWARD LEITHEAD

—who wrote "Conquering Cowboy"

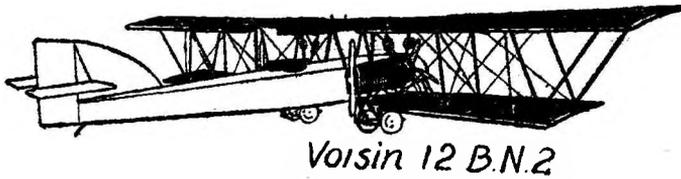


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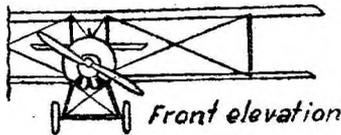


France

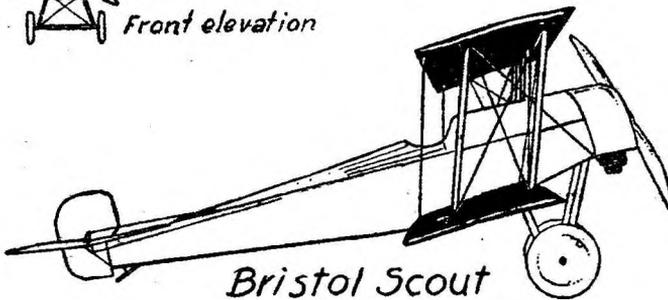


Voisin 12 B.N.2

The Voisin 12 B. N. 2 was made by the French Voisin firm who were the oldest airplane manufacturers in the world, the Brothers Voisin founding it in 1905. This big night bomber (the B. N. standing for Bombardment de Nuit) was a four-engined biplane. The engines were Hispano-Suizas of 220 h.p. each. The wings folded back at about a 130 degree angle making a folded span of approximately 54 feet. Its full span of 100 feet was a third again greater span than the modern twin engined Boeing Transport. Dimensions: Length, 54 ft. 8 in.; height, 14 ft.



Great Britain

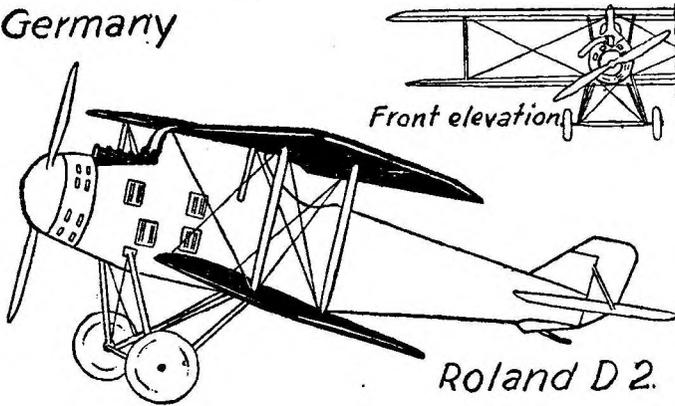


Bristol Scout

The Bristol Scout was a product of the British and Colonial Aeroplane Co., Ltd., of Bristol. This firm was the first of the large British manufacturers, as they produced airplanes from 1910 on. This Scout was an earlier model than their famous fighter of the late war years. The design of the machine was very simple with an absence of external contraptions. The wings were staggered and both fitted with ailerons. It had a maximum speed of 100 m.p.h. The engine was a Rhone of 85 h.p. Dimensions: Span, 23 ft.; length, 21 ft.

WAR PLANES

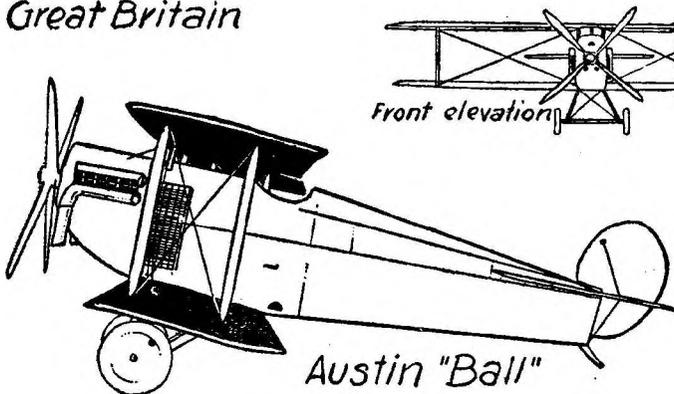
Germany



Roland D 2.

The Roland D. 2 was a product of the L. F. G. (Luft Fahrzeug Gesellschaft) the firm which succeeded the old German Wright Aeroplane Co. The single seater fighter D. 2 was a model of 1916-17. A superstructure on the fuselage between the cockpit and the engine was attached to the upper plane, which gave the pilot a very poor view to the front to use his Spandaus despite the wind-screens on each side of the central ridge. The motor was a 160 h.p. Mercedes. Dimensions: Span, 29 ft. 3 in.; length, 22 ft. 10 in.; height, 9 ft. 8 in.

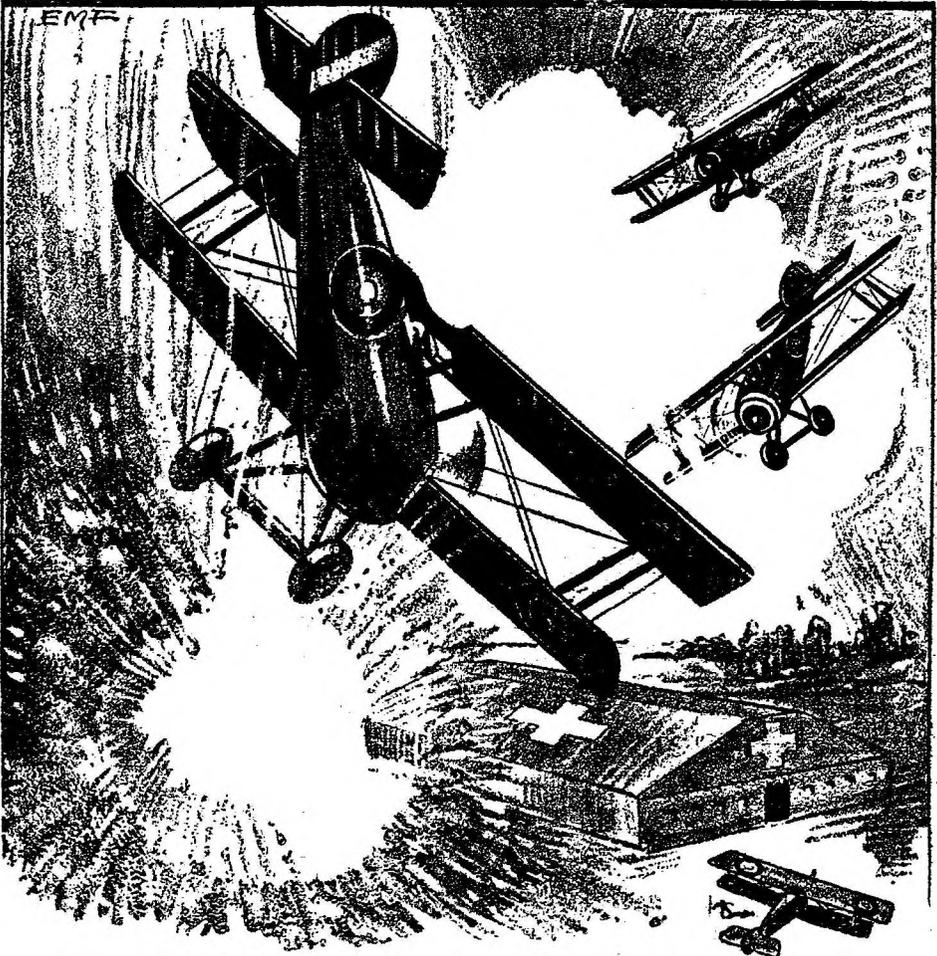
Great Britain



Austin "Ball"

The Austin "Ball" was made by the British Austin Motors, Ltd. This plane was designed especially to conform to the ideas of the famous British ace, Albert Ball, of what a fighting plane should be. This single seater scout biplane was unusual in the extremely deep fuselage which came close to the top plane. The engine, a 200 h.p. Hispano-Suiza, was well cowled in and the radiators were placed on the sides of the fuselage under the front center section struts. The low down speed was 138 m.p.h. Dimensions: Span, 30 ft.; length, 21 ft. 6 in.; height, 9 ft. 3 in.

Red Rockets



He grinned triumphantly as he released a white magnesium flare

*A Mysterious Death-Dealing Plane that Bombs Hospitals
Arouses Dark Suspicions of Nefarious
Treachery in this Unusual Story*

By ACE WILLIAMS

Author of "Wings of Memory," "Dead Man's Bunk," etc.

THE major turned from the map on the wall of the Operations Office and eyed the three pilots assigned to carry out the night patrol.

"This is the third time the same report has come into my squadron," he snapped, eyes glinting coldly. "The third hospital to be bombed, and by an enemy pilot flying iden-

tically the same kind of ship as our own. He has to be stopped—stopped cold. Get me?"

Lieutenant Wardwell, who had been out on previous interception patrols, saluted stiffly.

"Sir," he replied respectfully, "I have done the best I could. I saw no enemy planes cross the lines in my sector. Yet, a few minutes after landing, I get the report that another Red Cross hospital in my territory has been bombed." The lieutenant shook his head from side to side.

"Sir," he suggested, resuming, "don't you believe it might be possible that the enemy bomber comes from our own side of the lines—that one of our own pilots might be a traitor—"

The major's hand shot in the air, palm forward. His eyes flamed.

"Are you insinuating that one of your own mates is a traitor?" he screeched, his strident voice climbing high. "That this squadron harbors a German agent?"

The other two pilots glared at Wardwell. The major's fists balled, shook in front of him.

The tall angular Wardwell held his ground. "I was only suggesting," he said. "I made no accusations."

"You're casting a devil of a lot of suspicion on the whole squadron!" Lieutenant Westner flared, his square face flushing crimson.

Captain Cohen, the patrol leader, remained silent. But he was tight-lipped, grim.

"I AM going out as usual," the major broke in, "a few minutes after your patrol takes off, to check up on your movements. I'll keep the Lieutenant's suggestion in mind," he finished coldly.

Cohen saluted, led his men out into darkness. Wardwell smiled wanly, nodded perceptibly. Westner muttered something under his breath,

kept as far away from Wardwell as he could.

Five minutes later, three black-painted planes, night-flying Camels, zoomed off the tarmac of the 186th Night Pursuit Squadron and disappeared into the blackness mantling the front lines. Each pilot proceeded immediately to the sector he was assigned to patrol. Each carried fully loaded bomb racks and extra ammo bandoliers.

Two minutes later, a fourth plane, also a black-painted night-flying Camel, roared across the tarmac and slid off into the night.

WESTNER bent off to the left as soon as he took the air. Captain Cohen zig-zagged forward toward the front. Wardwell banked hard to the right and flew to his designated sector, where he patrolled back and forth for five minutes.

Then he zoomed suddenly and went spiralling for the ceiling.

But five minutes after the first patrol had taken off, each pilot had lost sight of the other in the welter of heavy blackness that overlaid the battle terrain. There was no moon, no stars, only the flare of occasional bursting shells, allied and enemy alike, to break the dreary monotony of the ebony night.

Ten, fifteen, twenty minutes passed after Wardwell had zoomed for the ceiling, when a sudden red rocket flare bloomed in the black sky void beneath him and some distance to his right. It floated down slowly, a crimson sunburst in a field of black.

Wardwell nosed down abruptly, banked, headed for the dropping parachute flare.

As he drew closer to it, he noticed that it was circled by a revolving halo of sputtering light. Then the halo suddenly faded. An instant afterward, another red flare burst into flame on the ground, revealing in its steady glow a black-

painted plane that had just landed on the ground.

Wardwell grinned triumphantly, leaned overside and released a white magnesium flare. It burst in brilliant luminance and revealed, immediately beneath, the giant white cross painted on a field hospital roof.

And in the field next to the low rambling buildings of the hospital was the black-painted plane, slowly rolling to a complete stop.

WARDWELL cut his motor, nosed down, landed not more than fifty yards behind it. Even before his plane had stopped rolling, he was out of it, having leaped over the gunwales with gleaming automatic in hand, to race toward the plane that had landed ahead of him.

When he was almost to it, the major leaped from the cockpit, faced Wardwell.

"My engine conked out. I had a forced landing," he said grimly.

Westner and Cohen, seeing the magnesium flare and the giant white cross revealed on the terrain beneath, banked swiftly and raced for the spot, motors wide open.

"Yes," Lieutenant Wardwell said, idly swirling the heavy automatic around his forefinger, "I see you did. I expected this. That's why I got down so soon after you did."

The major looked up at Wardwell peculiarly.

Two more white burning magnesium flares burst overhead, dropped from Cohen's and Westner's ships as the pilots glided down for a landing. They cast a brilliant light across the thick night sky.

"It's rather unusual," Wardwell said casually, still thumbing his automatic, "that you fired a red rocket instead of a magnesium flare when you came down for a landing, and that you fired another one when you touched the ground, isn't it?"

The trucks of Cohen's plane and

Westner's touched at the same instant. The black-painted ships rolled toward Wardwell and the major.

"What's up?" Cohen shouted, leaping from his pit and racing toward them.

The tall angular Wardwell smiled broadly. "I've captured the Hun who's been bombing the Red Cross hospitals," he replied cockily.

"What! You intimate that I—"

The major's words were choked off suddenly, when the muzzle of Wardwell's automatic rammed his ribs.

"Yes, you're the dirty son," the flyer grated. "I caught you red-handed with the red rockets. I've been suspicious all along. With the aid of a few pieces of wire and a pair of pliers, I fixed your bomb trips so that they would release the red rockets and cut your motor, instead of releasing the death-dealing bombs—"

The major's face went ashen. Then it suffused suddenly crimson. He made to leap at Wardwell's throat.

"Liar! Damn liar!" he cursed.

But Wardwell jammed the gun into his ribs, pushed him back.

"Another word, another movement, and I'll blast you to hell," he rasped, mouth tightening.

WESTNER was wide-eyed, Cohen grimly silent for a long moment. Finally they spoke—together.

"But, how'd you figure out it was the major?" they gasped.

"I didn't," Wardwell replied. "I fixed your ships the same way, then sat up in the sky above you and waited for the red rocket signal. This dog here tripped his bomb releases when he was over the hospital. He spelled out his own doom—"

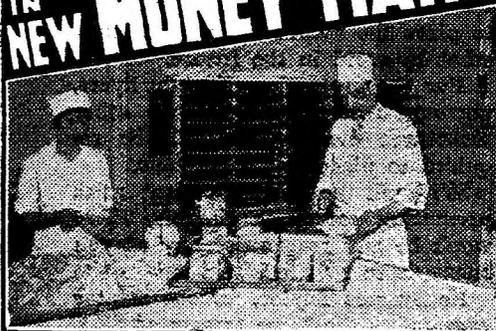
The erstwhile major ducked, leaped sideways, made a dash for freedom.

Wardwell whirled. There was a sharp report, a dull thud as the running figure hit the ground face foremost. That was all.

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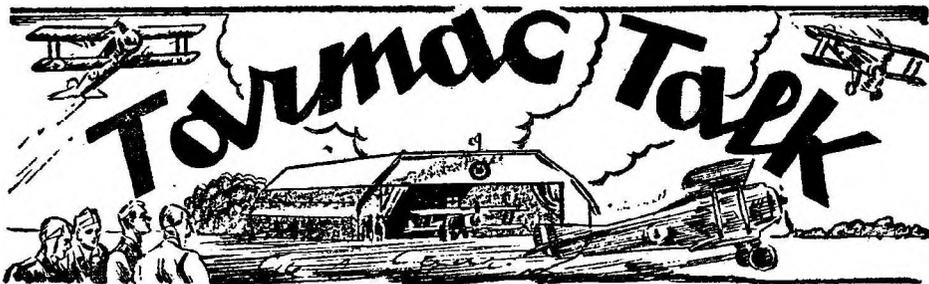
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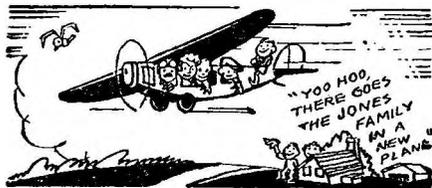
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to place the responsibility and learn what to avoid in the future.

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As Swanee Taylor, famous aviator who makes the home tarmac of SKY FIGHTERS one of his stamping-grounds, says: "Pretty soon people won't go 'out' any more. They'll only go 'up.'"

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(Continued on page 118)

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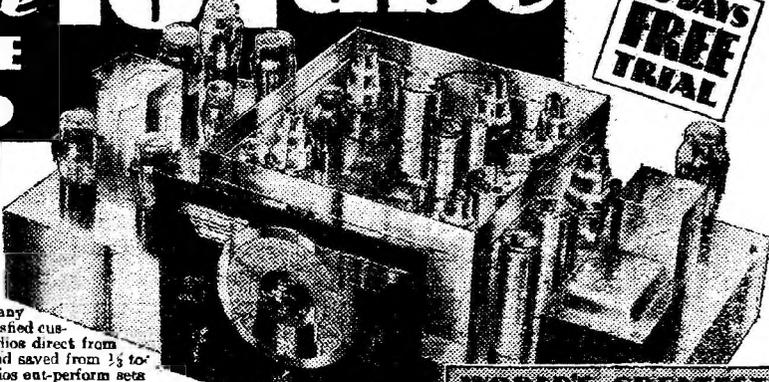
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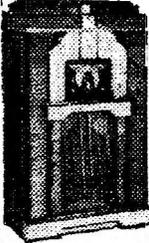
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 Raymond F. Ackerman (17), 717 Lyndhurst St., Baltimore, Md.
 Thomas Demers (13), Franklin Apts. No. 4, Sabmokia, Penn.
 John Wildmann (14), 861 Crotona Park North, New York.
 John Hofstetter (21), 80 E. Tyler St., St. Paul, Minn.
 Charles A. Shagensky (19), 412 W. Center St., Mahanoy City, Penn.
 John E. Stevenson (17), 117 East Arvada St., Colorado Springs, Col.
 Sherman R. Higdon (14), Box 474, Canyon, Texas.
 Edith Norcross (16), Box 417, Owens, W. Va.
 Georgia M. Scheisier (16), 194-17 115th Road, St. Albans, N. Y.
 Albert E. Hill (27), 118 Exton Ave., Trenton, N. J.
 Harry G. Cline, Jr. (14), 1044 Spottswood Ave., Norfolk, Va.
 Sydney Parkinson (25), Room 4, B. Block, R.A.F. Base, Calshot Fawley, Hants, England.
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 Sumner H. Hoffman (12), Granite Lake Camp, Munsonville, N. H.
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 Peter W. Zyorick (20), 181 Princeton Ave., Jersey City, N. J.
 Edith Uhl (11), Fitzsimmons Hospital, Denver, Colo.
 Bernard Resnicoff (14), 1020 W. Sayette St., Baltimore, Md.
 William J. Reardon (17), 32 Bay St., Dorchester, Mass.
 Steve Hensael (22), 2419 N. Lorel Ave., Chicago, Ill.
 Louis Selkin (15), 1269 Grand Concourse, New York.
 James W. Driskill (19), Queen Theatre, cor. Elm and Akard St., Dallas, Tex.
 Robert Hillburt (13), 7907 Hamilton Ave., Pittsburgh.



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Name _____

Address _____

Age _____

(Continued from page 118)

send the name-strip on the cover of *this* issue, and fifteen cents in stamps. Fair enough? The original price of these photos was 75c, and they sold like hot cakes—but we want every one of you to have 'em, and that's the reason for this special offer.

Any Swaps Today?

Look at Page 123 for the first batch of "swaps" in our new column. Keep 'em coming. This is only one of many services SKY FIGHTERS is planning to do for you FREE. And how do you like our great new contest? See Page 10 for details. If you don't compete you're worse than a kiwi. You'll be grounded!

And whatever you do, don't forget about forming squadrons! Get your friends together and send us their names—six members constitute a flight, and each squadron must have at least two flights. Every member must be a member of the *Airmen of America* and a reader of SKY FIGHTERS. Name your squadron—appoint your flight—and let the home tarmac know everything you do so that we can tell air-minded folk all over the world about it in the columns of this magazine.

What's that I hear from a balloon-buster over in that corner of the hangar? He hasn't joined *Airmen of America* yet! Hurry up and come in with us! There's a coupon on page 128.

You've Got to be Active

Never before was an intelligent public opinion favoring aviation progress and growth needed as it is today.

Talk national air defense to everyone you meet—train yourself mentally, morally and physically to serve in the aviation field in the future—learn all you can about planes, engines, airports and flyers—bother your Congressman to support bills which will benefit aeronautics! *Do*

all these things, and like a good member of *Airmen of America*, write and tell us about your activities.

We've quite a batch of mail on hand right now, and here's a peek at it, you old brass hats!

To start off, here's F. Davis Campbell, a true-blue flyer, who invites correspondence:

Please sign me up as a member of *Airmen of America*. I've been doing my part for aviation progress for five years and intend to keep it up.

I've been through two aviation schools and had a ship of my own. I've had a hundred hours "upstairs" and expect to put in some more soon.

Would like to hear from any pen pals that would care to write, and I'll be sure to answer and tell 'em how it feels to sail the blue.

Here's Sanford W. Binns, of 106 N. 7th St., Richmond, Va. Binns writes the home tarmac regularly, and several of his letters have been previously published in this department. Get his habit, air-fans! This time Binns has the following to say:

I haven't pestered you for a little while, so that you may think I've crashed up. But no. I'm still an enthusiastic reader of the fact and fiction in SKY FIGHTERS. It's swell.

I've received a number of letters lately about cheap flying courses. To my mind, the world's best course is that of the Army Air Corps. "Cheap" flying courses are non-existent—they cost plenty unless you take 'em from some unlicensed pilot with an unlicensed ship. Their prices are inexpensive but you've got to figure on "burial expenses" or funds for your stay in the hospital.

To any boy or young man—or for that matter, young lady—who is capable of passing a rigid examination, I'd say learn to fly where they pay you: The Army Air Corps.

Harry Leach, of 28 Le May Road, Toronto, Ont., is another reader to urge the inclusion of a flying course in SKY FIGHTERS. This course would be written by an expert—a famous aviator—and comply with all the high standards of instruction

(Continued on page 122)

"Stop Worrying..."

NOW I CAN TELL YOU THE TRUE FACTS ABOUT

SEX!

WOULD YOU like to know the whole truth about sex? All of the startling facts that even the frankest books have heretofore not dared to print are explained in clear, scientific manner, vividly illustrated, in the revolutionary book—"The New Eugenics". Here at last, the naked truth stands forth, stripped of all prudery and narrow prejudice. Old fashioned taboos are discarded and the subject of sex is brought out into the bright light of medical science by Dr. C. S. Whitehead M.D. and Dr. Charles A. Hoff, M.D., the authors!

SEX ATTRACTION

Sex appeal and sex satisfaction are the most powerful forces in your life. To remain in ignorance is to remain in danger of lifelong suffering. It is the purpose of this great book to show sex-ignorant men and women how to enjoy safely the thrilling experiences that are their birthright. It not only tells you how to attract the opposite sex, but also how to hold the love of your mate throughout a blissful married life.

DAINGEROUS!

Unless you know the true facts about sex! Ignorance leads to shame, despair, worry and remorse.



Do you know how to add variety to your love-making? The most innocent kiss may lead to tragedy if you are ignorant of sex relations.

WILL FEAR

grip you on your wedding night? ... or will it be the tender, thrilling experience that is your birthright!



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Send me the "The New Eugenics" in plain wrapper. I will pay postman \$1.98 (plus postage) on delivery. If I am not completely satisfied, I can return the book within five days and the entire price will be refunded immediately. Also send me, FREE OF CHARGE, your book "The Philosophy of Life".

Name _____

Address _____ Age _____

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Banish Fear and Sex Ignorance Forever!

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Are you an awkward novice in the art of love-making or a master of its difficult technique? The art of love-making takes skill and knowledge. The sexual embrace as practiced by those ignorant of its true scientific importance is crude, awkward and often terrifying to more sensitive natures. Normal sex-suited people are torn apart because they lack the knowledge that makes for a happy sex life!

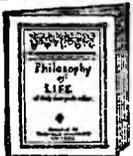
Sex Facts for Men and Women

- Twilight Sleep—Easy Childbirth
- Sex Excesses
- The Crime of Abortion
- Impotence and Sex Weakness
- Secrets of the Honeymoon
- Teaching Children Sex
- The Dangers of Pating
- What Every Man Should Know
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July 31, 1933.—"I continue in good health and am still praising Nacor. I have no signs of asthma."

—Mrs. Mary Bean
FREE—No need to suffer asthma torture when blessed relief can be yours. For years Nacor has helped thousands. Their letters and booklet of vital information sent **FREE**. Write to Nacor Medicine Co., 378 State Life Bldg., Indianapolis, Ind.

(Continued from page 120)

demanding by government officials. If you'd like to see such a feature in SKY FIGHTERS, write and tell us.

James W. Driskill, of Dallas, Tex., promises to form a great big squadron in his home city. He has a theater available for a meeting-place! Go ahead with your plans, Jim, and we're with you all the way!

Tom Hetherington, 828 Denver Blvd., San Antonio—another Texan—intends to join the Air Service as soon as he's of age. Tom visits many flying fields. He wants mail buddies to write him, and he's in favor of our printing a modern air story now and then. What do the rest of you fellows think of that idea?

Alfred L. Macaraiza, 491 Leveriza, Pasay, Rizal, P. I., asks where he can get pictures of World War aces. Well, Al, we told you some paragraphs back—and we're waiting for you to send for 'em.

Listen to a lady. Martha Wise, of Woodmont, Ct.:

A flying course in SKY FIGHTERS, I'm sure, would be interesting as well as educational.

America ranks sixth in national air defense. That's not so good. We've got to do something about it!

That's wise, Martha!

Sydney Parkinson, Room 4, B Block, R. A. F. Base, Calshot, Fawley Hants, England, would like to hear from some American air-bugs. He writes:

I have just finished reading your won-
(Continued on page 124)

CORRECT ANSWERS TO "SCRAMBLED SHIPS"

(See page 76)

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Sopwith Triplane | 4. Sopwith Pup |
| 2. German A.E.G. | 5. Handley Page |
| 3. Supermarine Baby | 6. Zeppelin Giant |

ANSWER TO PUZZLE ON PAGE 82

Name of Ship Number One:
DE - HAVI - LAND DeHaviland
Name of ship Number Two:
NIEU - PORT - SCOUT Nieuport Scout
Name of ship Number Three:
FOKK - ER - "RAZOR BLADE" — Fokker
"Razor Blade"
Name of ship Number Four: 8-E-5

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, 8 years old, good condition, will exchange for stamp album with 8,000 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.

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

Have real cowboy stuff, musical instruments, portable Corona, bound fiction books. Want printing press, good sleeping bag, shop tools. B. P. Kunkler, Winslow, Wash.

Have ten volumes rare 1868 Chambers encyclopedia valued at fifty dollars. Want typewriter, printing press, or—John Kapsak, Sellersville, Pa.

Offer large auditorium size guitar and case, new or ivory and ebony piccolo perfect condition for a B-flat Boehm System clarinet. A. T. Wheelless, Kent, Ill.

Have a six-string guitar and old Italian violin in good condition. Will exchange for B-flat metal or wood clarinet. Gene Mardone, 2612 Foster Avenue, Baltimore, Md.

Will give U. S. higher values, current stamps, for precancel mixture. 100 for 100. Sam Palladino, 236 Winston Street, Los Angeles, Calif.

Swap ukelele in very good shape for one-quarter or one-third electric motor. William Lawler, Sherman Station, Me.

Will swap foreign stamps for U. S. stamps, Indian head pennies, post marks, old envelopes (must still have stamp on) or what have you? D. Bennett, 624 Bond Avenue, Barnesville, Ohio.

Have stamps, books, courses and arrow heads to trade for old U. S. coins and bills. Send stamp for complete list. H. R. Jones, Box 403, Limon, Colorado.

Will swap books for other books. Send list. Kendall Rhodes, Jackson County, Coalton, Ohio.

Will trade one lot U. S. and foreign stamps all different, for four Mother's Day or Maryland stamps. Emmett Onesenberry, Hiwassee, Va.

Movie fans, will exchange photos of movie stars. Have hundreds. Trade for your favorites. Have list. M. J. Hellenack, 115 W. Clark Street, Iion, New York.

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Send today . . . NOW . . . for FREE illustrated information. No obligation.

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—THE PUBLISHER.

(Continued from page 122)

derful magazine, which I have found both interesting and valuable.

For some time I have been a member of the Royal Air Force. I would like to correspond with some of your readers, and will exchange photos of interest to the air-minded.

As you will notice from my address, I am stationed at Calshot, the scene of many a Schneider cup race. I was present at the last two races. Oh, yes—my age. I'm 25.

And here's Sherman K. Higdon, Box 474, Canyon, Texas. (Boy, we're getting a lot of letters from that big state. Come on, the rest of you, uphold the rep of your own corner of the world.) Higdon says:

I am deeply interested in aviation, and will do all I can to further its advancement. I intend to become an aviator and I now make model airplanes and read all I can about the World War.

I readily and eagerly second Mr. Snedeker's idea, recently published in your department, about running a story of a modern, imaginary war.

If some aviator who's had thrilling experiences will write me, I'll be tickled.

Charles Herudon, Box 56, 3812 Douglass, Normal, Tenn., has a suggestion I'd like to get some reactions on:

I think it would be a grand idea for **SKY FIGHTERS** to print definitions of both French and German words. Many of us find it hard to understand foreign words in stories.

Some day, I hope to visit Europe and it sure would be a help to have a smattering of the languages to start with! I like both **SKY FIGHTERS** and **THE LONE EAGLE**.

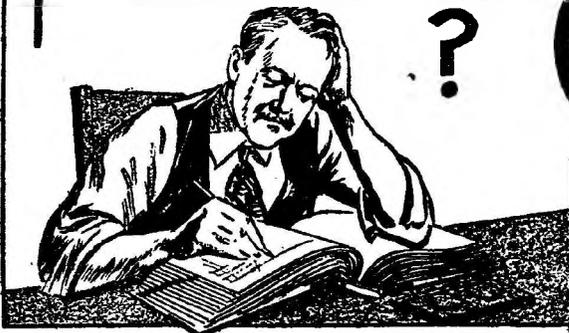
Buddies, write to the above *Airmen of America* or to anybody else whose name you see in the magazine. Don't neglect your Mail Buddies either. You'll find the list on page 119.

Next Month's Issue

The November **SKY FIGHTERS** starts off with a bang—a blast from the story Vickers that will sure hit

(Concluded on page 128)

T I R E D O F D R U D G E R Y



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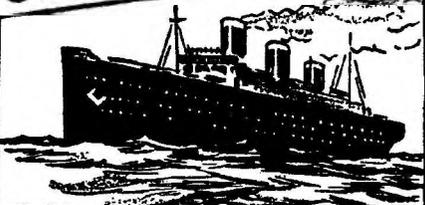
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(Concluded from page 124)
 the spot—NEVER FLY BACKWARDS, by Arthur J. Burks. A complete book-length novel of a pilot who never learned the word "retreat" and would fly into the very jaws of Hell itself with guns yammering a song of victory!

Then there will be a complete novelette by the popular George Bruce—KILLED IN ACTION—in which you'll meet a great hero! It's full of zooming, whirling, roaring thrills and gripping action. Short stories by Frederick C. Painton, Ralph Oppenheim and others. A real hum-dinger of an issue!

So long. And don't run up against any air pockets before I greet you again next month.

—Eddie McCrae.



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For delayed or irregular periods use Dr. Rogers' great successful Relief Compound. ACTS QUICKLY. Relieves many long stubborn unnatural delays in two to five days without harm, pain or inconvenience. Mrs. S. Ala., writes: "Had missed five months. After a few doses it started." Mrs. W., N. Y., "Within two days I had splendid results." Don't suffer or be uncertain. Send today for this amazing doctor's remedy. Full strength \$2; two boxes \$3.50. Famous Triple-X Regulator, specially compounded for very obstinate cases \$5. Sent same day order received. Send 25c for trial size. "Intimate Talk to Women" free. ROGERS REMEDIES F-33, 4303 Cottage Grove, Chicago.

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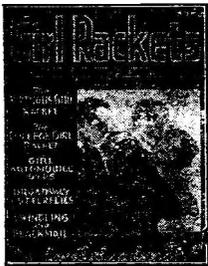
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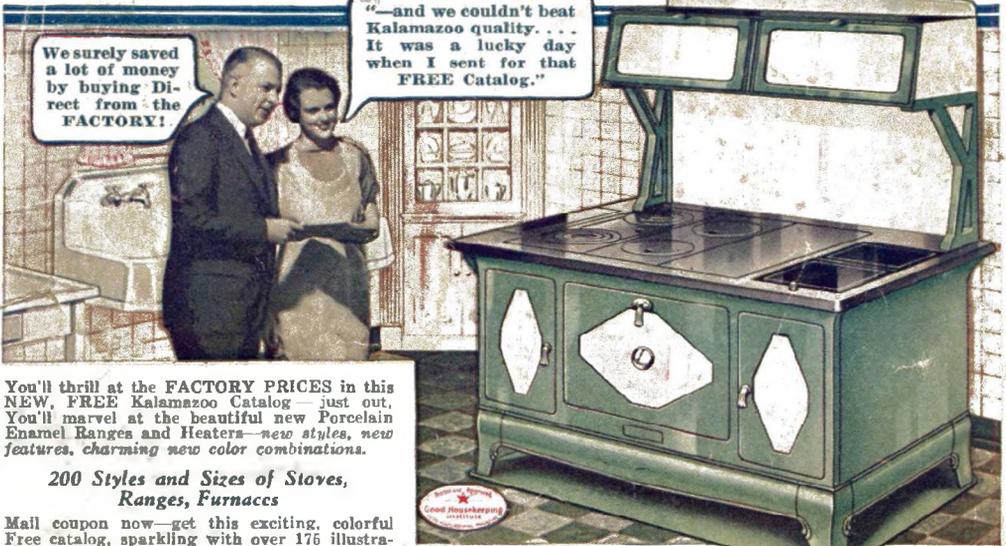
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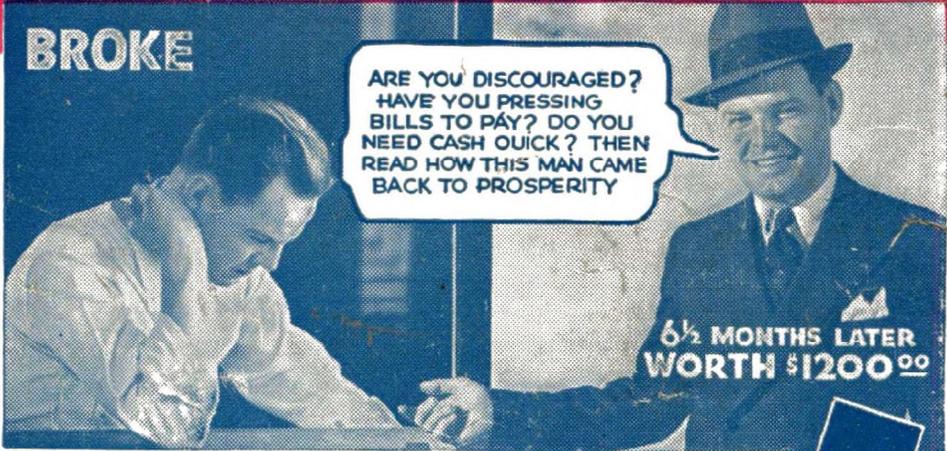
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