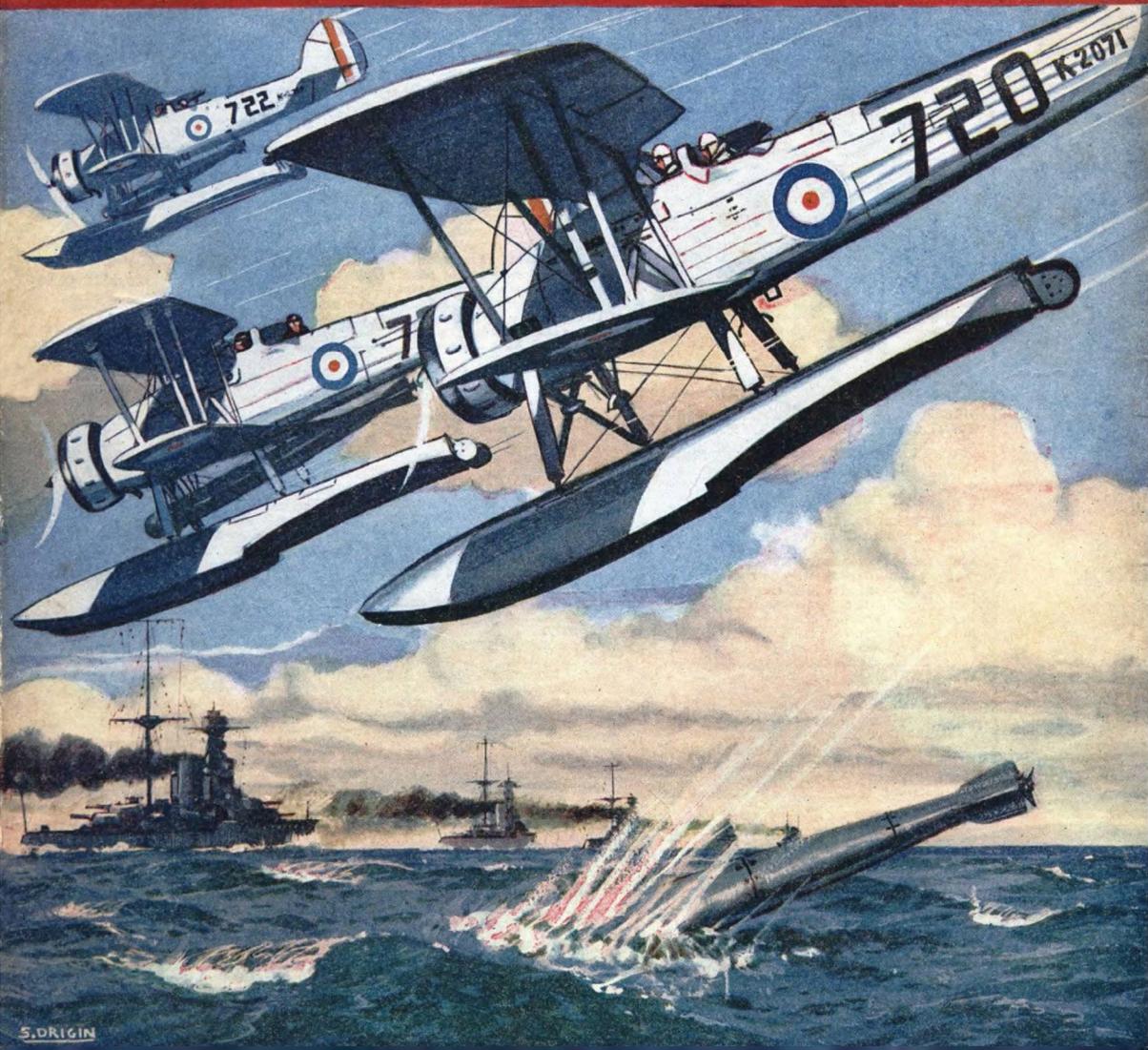


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STORIES

THE ALL BRITISH MAGAZINE OF FACT AND FICTION

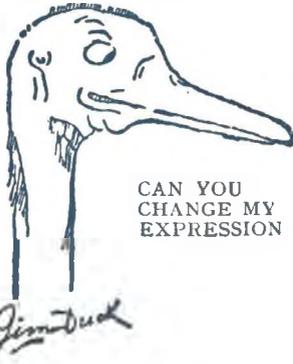
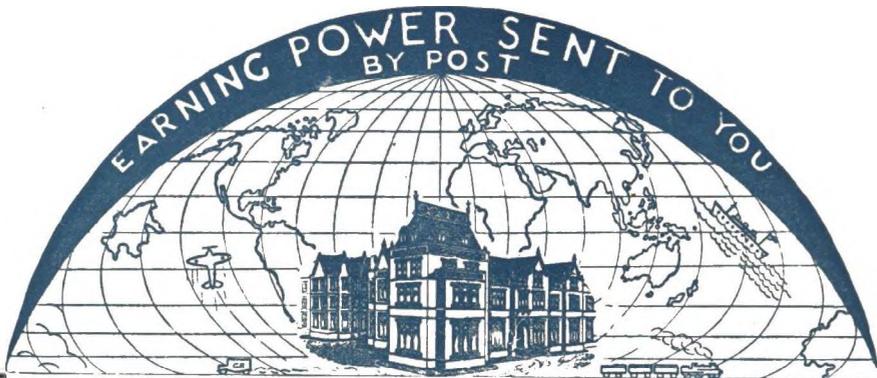


S. DRIGIN

SOLO SPECIAL
BY MAJOR L. S. METFORD

SEPTEMBER
THE PENALTY IS DEATH
BY WILFRID TREMELLEN

ACE OF THE BLACK CROSS
THE WAR MEMOIRS OF ERNST UDET, ACE OF GERMANY



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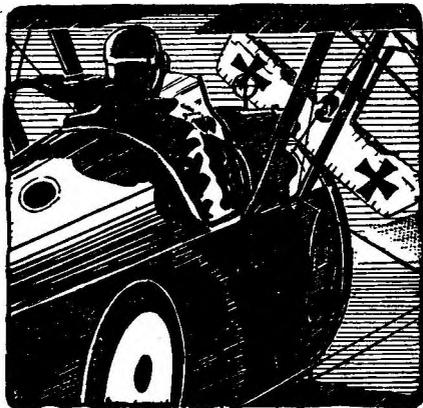
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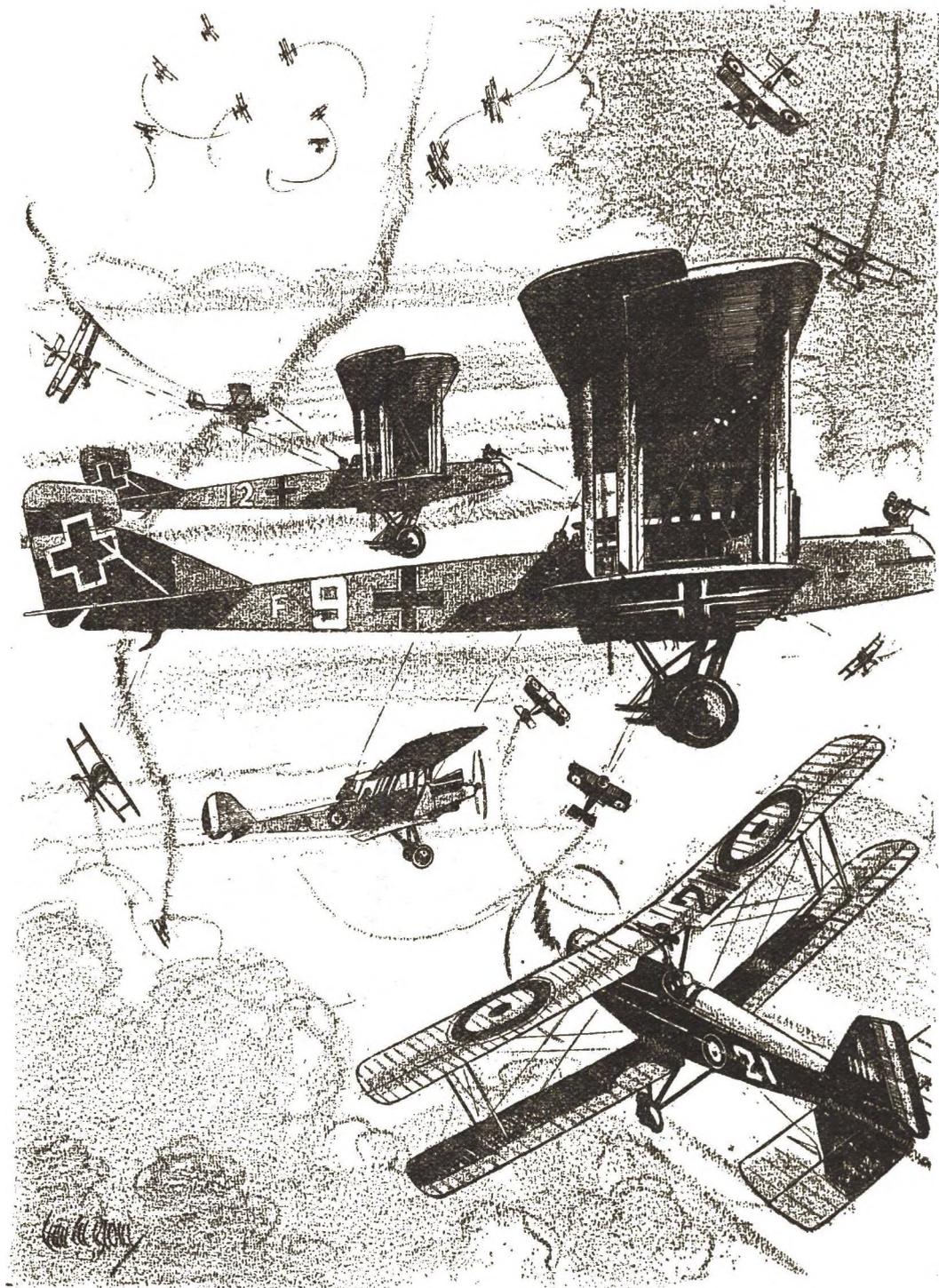
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LONG COMPLETE AIR-WAR ADVENTURE		PAGE
THE PENALTY IS DEATH	Wilfrid Tremellen	195
His Life in Forfeit to the State, a Lone Pilot Flew into the Heart of Hunland bound on a Desperate Raid of Redemption		
THRILLING REAL-LIFE STORY		
ACE OF THE BLACK CROSS	Ernst Udet	232
The Amazing Autobiography of Germany's Greatest Living Air Ace, who Fought and Flew against the Leading Fighters of the British, French and American Air Forces on the Western Front		
TWO GREAT MODERN AIR STORIES		
THE MOUNTIES RIDE HIGH	Edward Green	219
A Dramatic, Founded-on-Fact Story of Aerial Adventure in the Canadian North-West		
CUSTOMARY CARGO	Captain W. E. Johns	248
Though the Law Requires Aircraft from Abroad to Land at a Customs Airport, Determined Gentlemen with Guns may Sometimes be a Law unto Themselves		
DRAMATIC AIR-WAR ADVENTURE		
SOLO SPECIAL	Major L. S. Metford	261
The Story of a Pilot who set out alone on a Special Mission with Orders to Avoid Combat—and Returned as an unwilling Passenger in a Bullet-riddled Machine		
THRILLING AIR-WAR HISTORY		
No. 40 SQUADRON, R.F.C.	W. MacLanachan	255
The Stirring Story of One of the Most Famous Fighter Squadrons of the R.F.C., told by a Former Member of the Unit		
SPECIAL AIR FEATURES		
NEW R.A.F. WARPLANES	Described and Illustrated	230
EAGLE OF THE ALPS	By A. H. Pritchard	277
MODEL SECTION (The Avro Anson)	By J. H. Stevens	281
BRITAIN'S WARBIRDS	The Blackburn Kangaroo	276
CONTACT	By The Editor	287

Cover Picture by S. R. DRIGIN

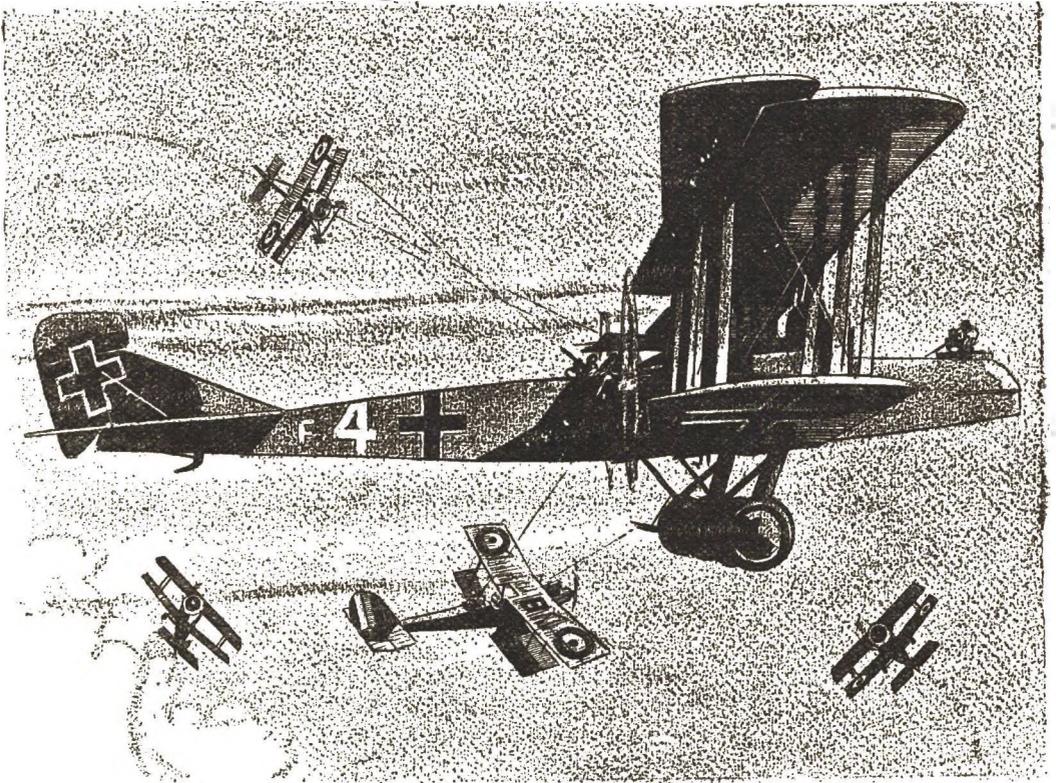
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. . . The Camels were buzzing like flies round the big Friedrichshafen bombers. . . .

A Dramatic Story of War-time Adventure with the Royal Flying Corps on the Western Front



... while the R.E.8 observers exchanged murderous streams of lead with the raiders' gunners

THE PENALTY IS DEATH

His Life in Forfeit to the State, a Lone Pilot Flew into the Very Heart of Hunland Bound on a Desperate Raid of Redemption that was to Rank as One of the Greatest One-Man Exploits of the War in the Air

By WILFRID TREMELLEN
Lieutenant, R.A.F. (retired)

CHAPTER I

The Pilot from Out East

TEDDY McFANE knows nearly everything, so I asked him: "Teddy, what is it that stinks like hell but is worth a pot of money?"

Teddy was in the armoury-shed and had just finished filling a Vickers machine-gun belt with tested rounds. He grinned. "Now I'll ask you one: what is it that goes up a chimney down, but won't come down a chimney up?"

"An umbrella, of course," I said crossly. "But this is a serious question, Teddy. Do you know anything that stinks like hell and yet is worth a pot of money?"

Teddy screwed up one eye and blinked the other thoughtfully at the small heap of cartridges he had discarded as "doubtful." Teddy is a chucklehead if ever there was one, but in addition to his well-known capacity for nosing into other people's business, he has a sharp imagination and a scholarly kind of mind.

AIR STORIES

"Ever been near a peasant's lavender-still in the South of France?" he asked after a moment's thought; "—I mean the gimcrack affair run by a fellow with a couple of acres of lavender."

"Oh, I know all about crude lavender-oil; I've seen it distilled in Portugal. But that won't do; it certainly stinks like hell, but it's not worth all that."

"Worth all what?"

"Well the stuff I'm trying to think of must be reasonably small in bulk, as well as stinking like hell and being worth a pot of money." I waited a bit and then gave him a playful dig in the ribs and turned to go. "I see you're no good to me, Teddy—just another ignoramus. Fellow with brains is what I'm looking for."

That touched Teddy on the raw. "Well, if I can't tell you," he flung after me, "there's nobody in the Three Squadrons who can!" Which was probably true, though I didn't test it out. You can't go round asking everybody you meet if they can think of something that stinks like hell and at the same time is worth a pot of money.

IT had all begun on the previous night—or it might have been in the small hours of the morning. I couldn't sleep, or only fitfully anyway, and lay on my back staring up into the darkness. The only light in the Nissen hut I shared with my friend "Woggy" Wane and four others, was the faint, yellowish glow from the windows at each end; they were "glazed" with aeroplane fabric instead of glass as a precaution against enemy bombs, and this was all the light they allowed to penetrate. In the camp-bed next to mine I heard Jimmy Enwright stirring restlessly in troubled sleep. There was no sound except the distant rumble of the guns up the line and the gentle snoring of Woggy Wane on the other side of me.

Suddenly the voice of Jimmy Enwright spoke—spoke with a kind of excited urgency that compelled attention. The voice said: "You're right; it does stink like hell. But it's worth a pot of money.—I tell you I *know*! There's five thousand pounds' worth of it there!

—Don't be a fool, Cator! Put that handkerchief away and help me. Dammit! It's not just a bad smell; it's a fortune, man! A fortune!"

You know how eerie it sounds when you have been lying awake a long time and then the silence is suddenly broken by someone talking urgently of vital matters. You begin to wonder which is the real world, your world of silence and darkness, or his world, equally invisible, yet invested by the very earnestness of his voice with all the colour and drama of real life.

I listened because I couldn't help it; there was nothing else to listen to. Now, it seemed, they were quarrelling, Jimmy Enwright and the other fellow. "You swine, Cator! You swine! Didn't I tell you what it was. Didn't I? Didn't I? You low-down cur! I know you saw it first! But you wanted me to shove it away because it stank so. Yes, you did! I told you what it was! Worth a fortune!" The voice rose to a frenzied scream of indignation. Someone at the other end of the hut sat up with a start.

"Curse you, Jimmy!" growled Haltrick. "For the love of Mike shut up! I'm on the dawn patrol if you're not; lemme go to sleep!"

Jimmy Enwright stirred, smacked his lips and swallowed noisily, as waking men do. "Sorry," he muttered. "Was I snoring?"

Deep sleep came to everyone after that. But not to me. That name "Cator" stuck in my mind. Where had I heard it before? Somewhere, and quite recently. Then I recalled a scrap of casual conversation that had taken place just as we were going to bed.

Woggy Wane, pulling his tie undone, had asked: "Anybody know anything about this new flight commander who's coming to take over 'C' Flight?"

"It's a bloke named Cator," Haltrick had answered. "Last stationed out East, so I hear—Singapore, or somewhere. Hallo! D'you know him, Enwright?"

On hearing the name "Cator," Jimmy Enwright had suddenly stopped unrolling his puttees, and looked up, startled.

THE PENALTY IS DEATH

"Cator? Did you say Cator, Haltrick?"

We all stared. It was unusual for the self-possessed Jimmy Enwright to show emotion—or even to talk at all. Generally he didn't listen to casual conversation.

"Yes. Why?" Haltrick answered. But he was addressing the top of Jimmy's head. Jimmy was bending down to unroll his other puttee. He paid no further attention.

That was all the incident was—the mere mention of a name. Yet that name "Cator" apparently had such emotional significance to Jimmy as to cause him a nightmare.

YOU must know about Jimmy Enwright. Jimmy was a wizened little ex-overseer from a rubber-plantation out in Malaya. He had a lean, sun-bronzed face, sad little monkey eyes, and kept his lips pursed up as though he were perpetually savouring the taste of vinegar. He gave you the impression that he had had many experiences with many men in many lands, and that generally he had come off worst. In our squadron, he had no enemies and did nothing to deserve them, but because he kept himself so completely to himself, he had no particular friends either. He was noted for three things: his little rough-haired terrier "Nipper," his water-colour paintings of aerodrome scenes, and his utter and complete abstinence from alcohol. If Jimmy was offered a drink, he didn't say "No," he just turned away.

In this connection there was a story which, like all other stories connected with people's private lives, came from Teddy McFane. (How Teddy finds out these things nobody ever knows; Reuter and the Central News aren't in it with him.)

The story was that in August, 1914, when in every corner of the British Empire men were rallying to the call of the Motherland, a very shaky little man staggered up the steps (with a great deal of help from the hand-rail) of the R.A.M.C. doctor's bungalow in Kuala-

Baran, Federated Malay States. It was Jimmy Enwright, come to offer his services to his King. The doctor sniffed suspiciously once or twice (he knew Jimmy well), and then took a box of matches out of his pocket, struck one, and approached it to Jimmy's mouth.

"No," he said; "it doesn't quite."

"What d'you mean, Doc.?" Jimmy mumbled, blinking like an owl.

"Why, Jimmy, I was just seeing if your breath would catch fire. Look here, man. D'you suppose that in your present condition you are any good to yourself or anybody else? Stretch out your hand!—Straighten the fingers! Tcha! Look at that!—quivering like aspen leaves! Can you write your name? Try!"

Jimmy tried, and the result was like the footsteps of a spider's fox-trot. The M.O. put a hand under his arm and helped him to the door. "Take more water with it," he advised. "Or, better still, cut it out altogether. Pull yourself together, Jimmy! There's good stuff in you, or you wouldn't have come here at all."

You see, Jimmy Enwright living that lonely life in the jungle, had got himself as-near-as-doesn't-matter to the borderline of D.T.'s. He was in a ghastly state. Now a man with less stuffing in him might have said: "Pah! I've offered my services and they've turned me down; what more can I do? Boy! Bring me the squareface bottle and the prickly water!"

But Jimmy wasn't like that. On leaving the doctor's bungalow, he took a rickshaw back to the railway station and, as the barefooted coolie padded through the streets of that oven of a town, he thought of cool, green England. He thought of things he had almost forgotten, of the lights of Piccadilly Circus at night; of staring up at the Nelson Monument, black against a night sky of smoky blue; he thought of the smell of London pavements after rain, and of rain-wet lilac in Kew Gardens. And as he dwelt on these things with affection, he thought how extremely undesirable it would be if honest Lon-

AIR STORIES

doners were compelled to step off their own pavements into the gutter to make room for swaggering trios of cub-officers of an invading army—which would be one of the lesser consequences of losing the war. The thing seemed so utterly undesirable to drink-sodden Jimmy Enwright that he resolved that he really must do something about it.

Accordingly, when he had returned to his own plantation he duly resigned his post of overseer and journeyed to the bungalow of a friend. To this friend he handed a largish cheque and a Smith and Wesson revolver. His friend was in the act of mixing himself a "sundowner."

"Tom," Jimmy said, "I'm planting myself on you for two months as a P.G.*" And he told him why. "And," he concluded, "if ever you see me touching a drop of that poison there, just blow my brains out with this, 'cos I'll be no good to myself or anybody else. D'you get me? In two months I want to be fit for service overseas."

"Why, Jimmy!" said the friend heartily. "This is going to be just fine, having you here! Sit down! Make yourself at home! Have a dr—Have some coffee! I'll order some." He clapped his hands for a "boy" and then went out of the room to make arrangements.

When he came back he heard a rattle like castanets, which indicated that Jimmy was trying to set an empty glass down quietly. He looked at the gin bottle from which he had been mixing himself a gin *pahit* when Jimmy arrived, and saw that the level was three fingers lower. He set upon Jimmy then, and knocked him about with great vigour—which was a queer, but very effective way of welcoming his newly-arrived guest. After that they sat down the best of friends and he gave Jimmy a drink—of coffee.

He was understanding in other ways, too, that friend. He supplied Jimmy with condensed milk and soda, to replace the drink—as much of it as he could put

down—and Jimmy shut his eyes and the prickly feeling in his throat came to be a kind of second best. After a few days he even began to eat a proper breakfast, which he hadn't done for years, his breakfast having been the kind that you pour out of a bottle and splash soda into.

BUT friend Tom knew that it wasn't going to be much good if Jimmy had nothing to occupy his mind. So one morning, "I'm going to develop your hidden talents, Jimmy!" he said, and after roping together the necks of all his bottles of drink and letting them down to the bottom of the cistern where Jimmy wouldn't find them, he clapped his hands for a "boy," had his horse brought round, and rode into town.

It was dark when he got back. He found Jimmy on the verandah, lying back and admiring the silvery effect of the moonlight on the shiny leaves of the coco-palms. He noted the glass of condensed milk and soda at his elbow, and gave a sigh of relief.

"What's that you've brought back?" Jimmy sings out.

The friend undoes the parcel. Jimmy looks doubtfully at the box of paints, the brushes, and the two blocks of cartridge paper. "But I can't *paint!*"

The friend grins. "Neither can I. We're going to learn—both of us. If you don't find the colour you want, you mix two of 'em together—the man said so."

"Yes, but——"

"It's something to keep us amused."

He must have been an understanding fellow, that friend of Jimmy's. How well he succeeded in the painting line himself I can't tell you, but he certainly brought to light a hidden talent in Jimmy. Jimmy took to painting like a duck to water, and at the time I am writing of his water-colours were the pride of our ante-room—the sort that made guests from other squadrons take their cigarettes out of their mouths and approach for a closer examination.

Mostly they were of aerodrome scenes, and you were really *there* when you

* P.G. : Paying Guest.

THE PENALTY IS DEATH

looked at them. You could imagine the ear-splitting racket outside the hangars when a pilot sits in the cockpit testing the engine all-out before taking-off; the mechanics hanging on like grim death to strut and tailplane to prevent the machine over-riding its chocks; the engine-note screaming up the scale; the tornado of slipstream from the propeller; the screwed-up faces of the ack-emmas, and the hair blowing into their eyes; the ripples racing across the wind-flattened grass. You could imagine it all.

Or the beauty of a machine landing, with engine throttled back to a tick-over and propeller flickering lazily; the coquetry of the wheels of it, holding off from the ground, holding off, holding off, and then the gentle sinking to the kiss, and the forward run in contented unity with earth.

There were grimmer pictures, too, pictures which "Tiggy Wiggy," our C.O., had asked should not be hung in the ante-room. One, I remember, depicted an R.E.8 being badly shot up by a swarm of enemy scouts. The pilot's head is half-turned towards the rear, and he has just realised the full significance of the motionless figure that hangs with drooping arms half out of the rear cockpit; at one blow of fate he has lost his friend and his only chance of escaping from his enemies. "The Silent Rear-Gun" was one of Jimmy's best.

But most of the pictures were of life on the aerodrome, and a curious thing was that they nearly all had one feature in common, which admiring visitors never failed to remark upon; the fact that the artist's little rough-haired terrier "Nipper" was almost always included somewhere or other in the picture.

I THOUGHT a lot about Jimmy Enwright before going to sleep that night. Before taking his pilot's course at Duxford, he had been engaged as an observer, submarine-spotting out East, the scene of his peace-time activities—Singapore or somewhere.

Singapore! Yes, by Jove! Why didn't I think of it before? Hadn't Haltrick said that Cator, the new flight commander's last unit, was stationed at that same spot? Certainly he had.

Putting two and two together, I assembled the elements of a first-class squadron mystery. Mentally I spread it out for examination, and the available pieces fell into position something like this: Our Jimmy Enwright is visibly disturbed on hearing of the coming of one Captain Cator. Both have served in the East—probably in the same squadron—perhaps together in the same machine as pilot and observer. There has been a violent quarrel between them over something that "stinks like hell and is worth a pot of money." This quarrel has made such a deep emotional impression on Jimmy that the mere news of the other man's approaching arrival causes his brain to conjure up again in sleep that dramatic incident, whatever it was, in all its intensity. The result is a nightmare.

CHAPTER II

Woggy Wane Gets Into Trouble

YOWOO-OO-OOL! With a shrill scream of wires the Pfalz scout dived on Woggy's tail. *Tacca-tacca-tacca!* Jets of flame stabbed out from the muzzles of its Spandaus. I held my breath; Woggy's reaction seemed so slow, so terribly slow. His attacker was within a hundred feet before he flung himself into a vertical bank and nosed round to temporary safety.

We were in a bit of a mess, Woggy and I. Three Huns had engaged us, and one of them knew his trade. It was unfortunate that that one had picked on Woggy, while the two lesser lights were dealing with me. In a lull in the combat I glanced downwards and saw to my joy that a British machine, some three thousand feet below, was laboriously climbing up to our height. I guessed who it was; someone whose help could always be relied on in moments of danger. If Woggy could only hold out—

AIR STORIES

I could do nothing to help my friend except keep the other two Pfalz engaged. But even that was beginning to be as much as I could manage. They worked as a pair, those two. Each took it in turn to worry me with short bursts, while his comrade climbed for height. Then, having reached a position of advantage, the climber would come pelting down like a ton of bricks, straight out of the eye of the sun, with both guns jickering like fury. I hated it. I knew that I could manage to give the fellow on my own level as good as he gave, but that top-deck diver was getting on my nerves. Every time I heard him coming, I felt just as I do when the dentist screws a fresh drill into the bit, and croons, "Open it wider, please." Confound it! It was true that my pair of Huns were no Boelckes, but they couldn't miss *every* time.

In the ordinary way I might have spun down and taken my chance of hedge-hopping home; there was a nice little Funk-hole* that I might dodge through—two poplars with their upper branches wired to catch the unwary Hun—but I daren't leave Woggy Wane in his present circumstances. Woggy is the nicest fellow in the squadron, but he is never likely to be one of the Twelve Great Pilots of All Time.

I glanced over towards him and felt a cold chill creep down my spine. He had lost the initiative again. His opponent, after recovering from a dive, was zooming up underneath Woggy for one of those "submarine" shots. I saw the tracer streak from his guns.

Suddenly a machine came shooting past underneath my wheels, going all-out. I jerked my head from the right side of the cockpit to the left and saw that it was Jimmy Enwright to the rescue. Good old Jimmy! His eye was pressed against the rubber ring of his Aldis sight. He was racing towards Woggy's antagonist. *Tacca-tacca-tacca! Tacca-tacca-tacca!* He threaded that Hun

on a long burst of fire, catching him almost motionless, while he was hanging from his prop. The German slid back on his tail and then, dropping his nose, went down in an uncontrolled spin. That burst of Jimmy's probably saved Woggy's life. If so, it was not the first time.

Woggy and Jimmy came streaking over to me then, and joyously we set about the remaining Pfalz brothers, who promptly put up their tails and turned for home.

I accounted for one myself, and then turned to watch Jimmy at work. I always enjoyed watching our Jimmy in an air combat. The ferocity of his tactics as a fighter-pilot was in such marked contrast to the unassuming character of the man on the ground.

Now, without losing any of his height, he put his machine on the same course as his diving opponent and held that course for some time, waiting. Then, at precisely the right moment, he dipped down his nose and, with the additional speed lent him by gravity, sent his S.E. screaming down towards his victim. That dive brought him within twenty yards of the Hun's tailplane. *Tacca-tacca-tacca!* Jimmy never wasted bullets. In a moment a trail of black smoke was smirching the sky. Then the three of us got into formation and flew home.

YOU would never have thought when we landed that Jimmy Enwright had returned with two Huns to add on to his score. His little lean, sunburnt face was as composed as ever. He was pleased to have been of help, but cut short congratulations by the simple expedient of turning away to collect his gear.

As we walked over to the hangars, Woggy flung an arm over his shoulder. "You're a modest little bloke, you know, Jimmy," he chaffed. Jimmy only grunted. He was looking ahead and not paying much attention. Suddenly his face lighted up in one of his rare smiles. I followed the direction of his eyes.

He was looking towards the open door

* For details of the Squadron's Funk-holes, see "Bring 'em Back Alive!" by Wilfrid Tremellen in the April issue of AIR STORIES.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

THE PENALTY IS DEATH

of the Photography Hut some fifty yards away. A small black and white form had just appeared on the threshold. For a second or two it stood stock-still in evident uncertainty, head up, nostrils a-quiver, gazing intently towards us. Then like a streak of lightning it shot forward and never checked its speed until it had reached its master's feet.

"Come on, Nipper! Up, boy, up!"

It occurred to me then what an extremely nice smile Jimmy had, and how seldom he made use of it.

CAPTAIN CATOR had arrived that morning. After getting rid of our Sidcot suits, Woggy and I walked over to the ante-room. Jimmy was a few yards behind us; he had been throwing his flying-helmet for Nipper to run and fetch. Cator was standing on the steps.

He looked a formidable customer, if only because of his size. He was a big, broad, florid-faced ox of a man with folds of red skin at the back of his neck and a guffaw that could shake the roof. He was wearing a G.S. tunic with three pips on the shoulder-straps and all of the buttons but one were unfastened to reveal a cardigan of canary yellow.

That was how he was dressed as he lounged on the top step leaning against the door-post. But he should have been wearing a check suit, there should have been a top hat on the back of his head, and a fat cigar in the corner of his mouth. Then he would have been a perfect representation of the bookie of the caricatures. For the rest, there was—I mean it, there actually *was*—a diamond solitaire ring on his finger. If you can think of a more unnecessary article to bring out on active service, I should like to hear of it.

As Woggy and I passed him and went into the ante-room, he nodded affably, looking at us as though we were just the very fellows he was hoping to get to know later. "Morning, ol' man—Morning!" (He turned out to be a confirmed "ol' man-er"; the less he knew you, the more "ol' man's" he showered on you.)

I turned my head and looked back

as soon as I decently could, because ever since that nightmare of Jimmy's I had been intensely interested to see what would happen when those two met.

It was curious. Cator evidently didn't know that Jimmy was going to be in his new squadron. For a moment he just stared at him in open-mouthed astonishment. Then he gave tongue with the heartiest and most almighty bellow you ever heard.

"Why! Jimmy Enwright, by all that's wonderful! Funny little Jimmy Enwright! Ho, ho, ho! Well, I'm *darned*! Ho, ho, ho! D'you remember, Jimmy?" he bellowed. "D'you remember? Eh?" He placed a red paw on each of Jimmy's shoulders and, leaning forward, shouted into his ear: "*It stinks like hell, but it's worth a pot of money!* Ho, ho, ho! And so it was! So it was! Ho, ho, ho!"

Jimmy, whose face had gone pale with anger, managed to struggle from beneath the weight of those paws. Then he made his escape—not into the ante-room, which had been his obvious destination—but in the direction of his hut. Nipper trotted at his heels.

Woggy Wane and I looked at each other. "No doubt about those two having met before, my dear!"

I nodded.

"Isn't that what you heard Jimmy saying in his nightmare—something about something that stinks like hell and is worth a pot of money?"

I nodded again. "And it looks as though that mysterious something is the corner-stone of our little mystery. Jove, how Jimmy hates that fellow! Did you see his face?"

CHAPTER III

Golden Coffin-nails

CATOR did not improve on closer acquaintance. Woggy and I found him altogether too "hearty" for words. He enjoyed his food, enjoyed his drinks, and enjoyed his practical jokes. But most of all he enjoyed standing squarely on his feet, throwing

AIR STORIES

back his head and bellowing with laughter.

His manner was always breezy and always confident, and provided you were not put off by the anomaly of that mean, tight-lipped little mouth in his big red face, you might put him down at first as a good fellow and "one of the boys." Only at first, though; later on you became aware that, though he professed the greatest interest in you and your doings, he was only listening with half an ear and would drop you at once when someone more important came along. He strove greatly after popularity, and met with success in some sections of the squadron; he certainly had personality, any amount of it, and most people found that when Cator bellowed with laughter at his victim's discomfiture, it was sometimes pretty difficult not to join in.

The mess-orderlies liked him, or pretended they did anyway; he seemed to have any amount of money, and was the kind that said "Have one yourself!" to the barman, thus greatly embarrassing those who knew what was "done" in an officer's mess, and earning for himself a cheap reputation for "democratic" good-fellowship among those who didn't. But with a personality as "hearty" as Cator's you can get away with a great many minor *faux pas*.

BUT I am running ahead. Our new flight commander was determined, as I said, to be popular, so that night, as soon as the other senior officers had cleared out, he celebrated his arrival by ordering champagne for all present. The normal number of drinks had already been disposed of, but Cator looked round the room and noisily counted heads. There were twelve.

"Orderly! Bring in a dozen bottles of Pol Roger!" he shouted grandly. "We'll make a night of it, boys!" There were beads of perspiration on his forehead; he had already had quite as much as was good for him. Suddenly he changed his mind and jumped to his feet.

"No! As you were, orderly! We'll have Golden Coffin-nails!"

The man hesitated. "What's that, sir?"

"Wha-a-at? You don't know what Golden Coffin-nails are!" He turned to Jimmy Enwright. "Jimmy, ol' man, he doesn't know what Golden Coffin-nails are! What an orderly! What a squadron! Here, you! Bring in nine of Pol Roger and two of brandy—the best! We'll show 'em, won't we, Jimmy?"

"Leave me out of it," said Jimmy shortly.

Cator's eyes flickered, but he made no objection for the moment. Soon there was an explosive popping of corks and the spilling of much froth upon the floor. The generous benefactor was voted "one of the lads."

"Now," he shouted, "let every man fill his glass three-quarters full!" He seized the unopened bottles of brandy and snicked their necks off by hitting them against the iron stove. "Three parts champagne, one part brandy—that's a Golden Coffin-nail!" He seized a brandy bottle in each hand and went round filling up glasses from both simultaneously. "Pour it down, boys! The finest drink you ever saw—and the most expensive!"

He had worked round to Jimmy Enwright. Woggy Wane, sitting next to me, looked anxious. "None for me," said Jimmy.

"Wha-a-at?" shouted Cator. "Why, that's rot, Jimmy ol' man!" He turned to the crowd. "Boys! Are we letting Jimmy get away with that? Are we?"

"No!"

"No! Take your shot, Jimmy! It won't hurt you for once!"

Woggy Wane got on his feet. "Leave him alone, chaps! If he doesn't want to drink, it's his affair!"

"Rot!" exclaimed half a dozen voices. "Sit down, Gran'ma!" Woggy was pushed aside, and there was a scuffle in which Jimmy was borne to the floor under a struggling heap of enthusiastic "Coffin-nailers."

I pulled Woggy back into his seat.

THE PENALTY IS DEATH

"I shouldn't interfere. You can't do anything when the crowd gets into this state."

"I'm mixing a special one for Jimmy!" bawled Cator at the top of his voice. "Hold him down, you fellows!" And while Jimmy was held spread-eagled on the floor, the "special one" was poured down his throat. From the colour, it must have been more than half brandy.

"Now let him up!"

Jimmy got up grinning sheepishly and licking his lips. An armchair was pushed under him.

"There, Jimmy! Didn't we tell you it was good stuff?" clamoured the "Coffin-nailers." "Why not finish the glass?"

Jimmy finished the glass, and required no great persuasion to finish several more. From time to time I saw Cator watching him narrowly out of the corner of his eye; the gallant captain was by no means as soused as he was pretending. At an almost imperceptible nod from him the barman brought in another bottle of brandy.

Woggy rose to his feet. "I'm going to bed," he announced. "Coming, Trevelyan?" As we passed through the bar he beckoned the barman to him and said in a low voice: "If any more brandy is ordered, you are to say it's all gone. Understand?"

"Yessir." Amongst the mess-orderlies what Woggy said went; he was P.M.C.*

"That's a bad business," he said to me as we stepped out into the moonlight. "We ought to have stopped it."

"We shouldn't have done any good if we tried. Is it as serious as all that?"

"I think it might well be," Woggy answered slowly. "Jimmy Enwright has been teetotal for two or three years. From what I hear, there was a time when he was very much the reverse."

"Well?"

"Nothing. Only I didn't like the way he mopped up his second and third doses."

"It's all right. Jimmy'll never go in seriously for that sort of thing again. He's brought down seven Huns and is as keen as mustard." You see, he'll never touch the stuff after this."

I was wrong.

"CAN'T think what's wrong with Nipper," Jimmy said one day to Woggy Wane. "Off his feed completely. Hasn't eaten a proper meal for three days now." Nipper wagged his tail and gambolled joyously. Woggy stooped down to pat him. He was an expert on dogs.

"Why, Nipper's as fit as a flea—nose damp and everything! There's nothing wrong with Nipper, man!"

Jimmy picked up the plate of kitchen scraps that Nipper hadn't touched and handed it to the batman.

"Beg pardon, sir," Sakes interposed, "but there ain't nothing wrong with the dorg 'cept he can't eat two meals."

"Two meals?"

"Yessir, Cap'n Cator 'as already given him as much as 'e can get outside. Nipper's all right, sir."

Jimmy said nothing, but I saw that his sunburnt face had suddenly turned dark with anger.

As a sequel to this mean trick of Cator's to draw Nipper's affections towards himself, there was an incident in the ante-room. It was the first of several.

It was known that a big rat had made its home near the kitchen incinerator. "Come on, Nipper!" Jimmy said, making for the door. "We'll go and see if that fellow's about."

Cator, who was lounging unbuttoned in an armchair, looked round. "Nips! Nips! Good boy! Come along here!"

Nipper was following at Jimmy's heels. Now he stopped and turned round.

"Nipper!" said Jimmy sharply.

"This way, Nips!" wheedled Cator. He had leaned over the side of his chair and was beckoning with his fingers close to the floor. "Come along here, Nips!"

The little dog hesitated, looked up at

* P.M.C. : President of the Mess Committee.

AIR STORIES

Jimmy's face, and then made a move towards Cator.

"Nipper! Come here!" Jimmy ordered sternly.

Cator was snapping his fingers. "Over here, Nips boy! Over here!"

Nipper stood undecided, turning his head from one to the other in perplexity. Then Cator thrust a hand into his tunic pocket and rustled a paper, pretending to produce a tit-bit. That turned the scale. Nipper trotted up to him and sat down expectantly beside him. Everybody in the room was watching now.

"Nipper, come here!" shouted poor Jimmy, now red in the face.

"That's right, Nips ol' man!" wheezed Cator, stretching out two huge paws to secure the dog. "Up on to Uncle's knee!"

Crimson in the face, Jimmy strode forward. "D'you mind not interfering with my dog!" He snatched up Nipper in his arms.

"Ho, ho, ho!" roared Cator. "You don't know how to manage dogs, Jimmy ol' man! He likes me better than you, don't you, Nips? He stretched out a red paw to stroke the dog, but Jimmy whirled him out of reach and marched out. Gusts of brassy laughter from Cator followed him through the door.

But his was the only laughter. The fellows who had witnessed the incident looked at each other, Dash it all! A fellow's dog was his own! Up to then the general opinion had been that the big man's persecution of Jimmy was just in the nature of banter and ragging, and Jimmy was rather condemned for not taking it in better part. But now it was seen that there was real malice in Cator's treatment of him.

"Why the deuce does he do it?" I asked Woggy. "Jimmy has done him no harm; it's all the other way from what we can make out."

"That's just it, my dear," Woggy answered. "You never forgive a person you have let down in the past. You mark my words; some time or other, when they were both out East probably, Cator played some dirty trick on Jimmy Enwright, and now he hates him like

poison. All that heartiness and ragging is just a cloak to hide it, so that popular opinion doesn't turn against him."

"He can't hate Jimmy," I said "more than Jimmy hates him."

"I know; there'll be murder in this squadron if we don't keep our eyes open."

By that time, though he never appeared in the bar, it was known that Jimmy was drinking heavily. The proof of it came by accident. Woggy and I had come upon Nipper playing with the French dogs in the village street. Jimmy was nowhere in sight. We looked into the *estaminet*; there was nobody. We were turning to come out, when Nipper, who had slipped in between Woggy's legs, pattered over to an inner door and began scratching at it with his paw. Woggy opened it. And there was Jimmy in an armchair, staring moodily at his boots. At his elbow was a glass and a half-empty bottle of cognac. He didn't even look up. Woggy closed the door quietly.

"Bearing in mind Jimmy's previous record," he said as we came away, "things are just about as serious as they can be. We were idiots! Why the devil didn't we interfere that night when Cator forced a Coffin-nail on him?"

CHAPTER IV

Teddy McFane Picks a Pocket

WITH Jimmy Enwright things went from bad to worse.

One evening as I was gliding down to our aerodrome after doing the last patrol of the day, a most extraordinary sight met my eyes. I was coming in low over the roofs of the Camel hangars and looking forward to the place where I should touch down.

Near the middle of the aerodrome, seated on his home-made stool in front of his home-made easel, was Jimmy, industriously plying his brush. Nothing particularly remarkable about that except the position he had chosen. The remarkable feature of the scene was the antics of a group of six or seven fellows a

THE PENALTY IS DEATH

score of yards away. They were stealthily approaching him from behind. Apparently it was a game of "Indians." They were all flat on their stomachs, creeping forward as noiselessly as snakes—as though their very lives depended on not being observed by the unsuspecting artist at the easel. Their leader, distinguishable by his greater bulk, was Cator, the "jovial" Cator, and next behind him crawled Teddy McFane.

I LANDED and taxied up to our hangars. Haltrick was standing near. I went up to him and leaned on him while I drew my feet through the legs of my Sidcot. "What's happening? Are they all mad?"

"Jimmy Enwright's drunk again," Haltrick explained without looking round.

"Looks to me as though he's the only one that's sober!"

"Is he, by gum!" Haltrick pointed with his finger. "See that thing sticking up in the grass close beside him? That's a souvenir German bayonet. I tell you, Jimmy's dangerous when he gets like this."

"But what are the others doing—Cator and company?"

"They're stalking him," Haltrick explained, without taking his eyes off the scene in front of him. I shook his shoulder impatiently.

"Yes, yes! Go on!"

"Well, Jimmy came in tight, you see. He'd been soaking up cognac for an hour or so at the *estaminet*, and when he came into the hut, he solemnly set up his easel, got out his paints and stuff and started painting a picture."

"Painting a picture?"

"He was muttering to himself as though he'd gone goofy, but his hand was steady enough and his picture seemed beginning to make sense. Well, the story got round of the state he was in, and the hut was soon crowded out with fellows who wanted to get a squint at Jimmy's goofy painting. They started making remarks and giving helpful advice, and in the end Jimmy got his rag out and chased them out of the hut

with a bayonet. Well, you know what the fellows are. They started poking their heads in at the windows and shying water over Jimmy's painting. So Jimmy packs up all his traps, marches out and plants himself bang in the middle of the aerodrome, hoping for a bit of peace."

"And what are these fellows doing now?"

"Trying to see what it is Jimmy is painting, of course. The stalking idea is Cator's."

"It would be." I watched the stealthy approach of the seven crawlers. An R.E.8 with sighing wires glided in twenty feet above their heads, but neither Jimmy nor they gave it a glance.

"Look!" said Haltrick suddenly. Cator, the leader of the raiding party, having approached within two yards of Jimmy's stool, was rising on to his hands and knees. With infinite caution he reached forward for the bayonet that was sticking in the grass and placed it out of Jimmy's reach. Then he rose noiselessly and peeped over Jimmy's shoulder at the mysterious painting. Teddy McFane, the nearest of the other stalkers, was still five yards away.

"Hallo!" Haltrick jerked out. "What the devil——?"

Suddenly there was uproar in the middle of the aerodrome. It had all happened in a few seconds. Having caught one glimpse of Jimmy's painting, Cator gave a bellow of rage, stretched out his hand to snatch it, tore it twice across, and thrust the pieces into his pocket. Then, before our astonished eyes, he whirled up his arm and, knocking the easel spinning, dealt Jimmy a five-fingered slap across the face that would have rocked a statue.

The cold-blooded brutality of the action made me gasp.

"Hell!" ejaculated Haltrick, as Cator strode off towards his hut. "What a swine that fellow is!"

The remaining half-dozen "stalkers" rose to their feet now, looking remarkably foolish, and went to minister to poor Jimmy, who was lying on his back, holding his jaw with both hands and wondering how it had all happened.

AIR STORIES

Haltrick and I walked across, picked up the easel, and helped the others to cart Jimmy's painting gear back to the hut. He looked sobered, but completely dazed, and offered no comment whatever.

"What *was* that painting of Jimmy's?" I asked Teddy as we came away.

Teddy looked at me keenly with his lips pursed up as though he were thinking hard. "I don't know," he said at last, full of suppressed excitement. "I can't tell you. Never mind that for the moment. Will you do something for me, Trevelyan?"

"What?"

"Invite me to dinner at your mess to-night."

Teddy is in the Camel Squadron by rights, but being nosy by nature, he generally contrives to take his meals (free ones) with the squadron that promises the greatest news-value at the moment. "But to-night isn't our Guest Night," I objected.

"Never mind; I want to be there."

"All right, Teddy," I agreed. "If you'll remember that you're not in the Camel mess, and brush your hair, and refrain from eating peas off your knife, you may come."

THE meal was without incident, and if Teddy was hoping to pump Jimmy Enwright, he was disappointed; Jimmy didn't turn up.

As soon as we moved into the ante-room for coffee, my guest shamelessly deserted me and went over to join the group round Cator. He stayed there all the evening, graciously accepting drinks from all in turn. You need a hide like a rhinoceros to behave like Teddy does.

"Teddy seems to be enjoying himself over there in the bawdy corner," Woggy Wane remarked to me. "Look at him and Cator hobnobbing; they're sitting as close to each other as ten-past-two. What's Teddy's game?"

It was true. Teddy's arm was flung affectionately over Cator's shoulder, and he was listening with all his ears. I was a little disappointed in Teddy. Cator was telling stories of his amorous

experiences out East; the best of them were cheap, and the worst of them gross. I was certainly surprised at Teddy; he wasn't usually interested in that sort of thing. Now he was drinking in every word.

Suddenly, as I watched, I saw Teddy slide his arm unobtrusively down Cator's back, and slip his hand stealthily into Cator's pocket. What the devil——?

CHAPTER V

It Happened at Singapore

I DIDN'T see Teddy by himself till next day, when I ran across him in the village at the *épicerie* of Veuve Maupin. Teddy always shops at Widow Maupin's, because the old lady is the fountain-head and source of all the village scandal. She and Teddy are as thick as thieves.

On seeing me pass by outside, he bid a hasty farewell to the old lady, rushed out and seized me by the arm.

"What's all this about, Teddy?"

Teddy made no answer, but bundled me into the *estaminet* next door. "*Deux café-cognacs!* he chirped to the *patron*. Then he turned excitedly to me. "I've got it! And I've stuck it together again!" He looked eagerly at me as though expecting that I should break into loud cheers. I am afraid my face remained blank.

"My poor Teddy, what is it you have got, and what is it you have put together again? If this is some obscure reference to Humpty Dumpty——"

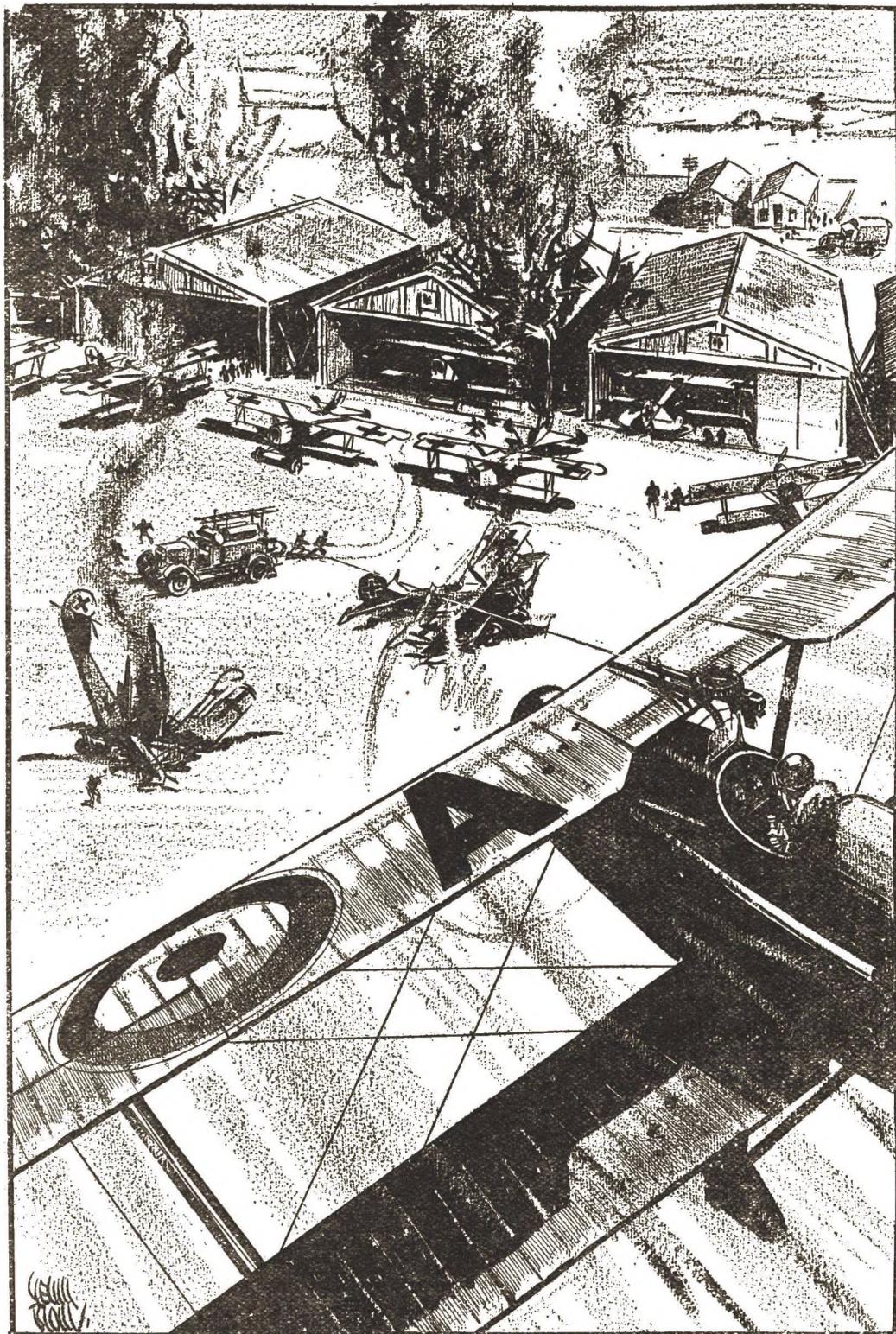
Teddy rootled in his pocket and unfolded a water-colour painting that had been torn into four and remounted on a paper backing.

I looked him coldly in the eye. "Teddy!" I said severely. "Last night I happened to see you picking a pocket. If this article——"

Teddy turned a little pink. "It was sticking half-way out!" he expostulated with a great show of indignation.

"Teddy! Teddy! D'you know what happens to little boys who tell whoppers?" Considering that Teddy had

THE PENALTY IS DEATH



Jimmy was doing on that aerodrome the sort of things that lion-tamers do in lion-cages. . . .

AIR STORIES

got himself invited to dinner for the sole purpose of stealing that torn painting out of Cator's pocket, the "sticking half-way out" part was rather rich.

"Never mind, Teddy," I said. "It doesn't belong to Cator, anyway. Let's have a look at it."

The graceless Teddy recovered himself at once and smoothed out the painting on the table. I looked at it curiously.

In the foreground was a seaplane floating motionless on what looked like a tropical sea. The two cockpits were empty, but kneeling on the starboard float was a big man in flying-kit. He seemed to be doing his best to drown another man, who was in the water. Of this second man only the head was visible, and the big man was holding him by the throat.

I looked up at Teddy and found that he was watching my face. "That's Cator," I said slowly, "that man on the float. The one in the water——"

"Is probably Jimmy."

For a moment or two Teddy and I looked thoughtfully into each other's eyes. "H'm! So it was like that," I said at last, "—attempted murder!" And Teddy nodded gravely.

"You are missing something, by the way," he said. "Take another look."

I took another look at the painting and saw that lashed on to one of the further float-struts was a large, shapeless lump of some substance of a whitish grey colour. It might have been suet. "Yes, I see." I held the picture up to the light. "What is it, Teddy?"

"That," Teddy answered, "is something 'that stinks like hell, and is worth a pot of money.'"

I stared at him. "That's certainly an idea, Teddy! But do you know what it is?"

"Yes."

"Go on, curse you!"

But you can't get information out of Teddy like that. I saw that we were in for a long session, and signalled to the little *patron* for two more *café-cognacs*. Teddy is always an expensive informant.

"BEFORE I tell you what it is," Teddy began, "let's reconstruct the scene of the crime—like the 'detectives' do. With the help of the picture and the scraps of one-way conversation you heard Jimmy babbling in his nightmare, it's quite easy."

I was suspicious at once; it didn't seem to me to be at all easy. "Look here, Teddy," I said, knowing my man. "Have you had any other information about Jimmy and Cator?"

Teddy's eyes flickered. He hates to be caught out when he's trying to appear more clever than he is. "Well, as a matter of fact I met a fellow named Sellman in Amiens a few days ago. He had just come from the squadron at Singapore that those two belonged to, and he——"

"—gave you a few tips. I see. Let's hear the reconstruction of the scene then."

But Teddy likes spinning things out. He dipped the edge of a lump of sugar into his little glass of cognac, watched it turn brown, and crunched it noisily between his teeth.

"You knew, of course, that Jimmy was Cator's observer when they were out East?"

"I guessed it. Get on, Teddy!"

"Well, you know what a quiet little bloke Jimmy is—never has much to say for himself; and you know what a loud-check sort of bounder Cator is, and how he likes to rule the roost."

"Don't I see it every day?"

"Well, though Jimmy's an unassuming little fellow, he's independent and resourceful, like all Colonials, and he and the big 'un didn't pull together so well, see? But nothing very much happened, until one day when they were out at sea looking for submarines fifty miles or so out from their base, their engine conked and they had to come down on the water.

"It was nothing much—plugs sooted up from over-lubrication, or something, and when Jimmy had taken them all out to clean them, they were ready to start off again. Cator is the kind that never does a stroke if there's anybody

THE PENALTY IS DEATH

else around to work for him, and all the time Jimmy had been sweating away at scraping the plug-points, the big 'un was lounging in his cockpit drinking iced lager out of a thermos.

"Well, Jimmy had nearly finished the job, when Cator looks up and suddenly sniffs. He puts down his lager and fetches out his handkerchief. Then he peeks over the side of the cockpit and sees something in the water bobbing up and down near the starboard float. He lets out a yell.

"Hey! Jimmy! There's something dead bumping up against us! Nip down on the float and shove it away! Quick, or we'll catch the plague!"

"Always willing to oblige, Jimmy climbs down on to the float and takes a look. Then he lets out a yell too. 'Hi! Cator!' he shouts, 'd'you know what this is? It's not a stink; it's a fortune, man! Put your handkerchief away and come down and help!'"

"What was it?" I asked quickly.

"A socking big lump of ambergris," Teddy solemnly replied.

"Ambergris!"

"I see your General Knowledge is weak. It's stuff that you find in sick whales' tummies—or else floating about on the sea—and every ounce of it is worth the deuce of a lot.* It stinks, too, when you find it fresh—got a ponk that would knock a policeman over. And the funny thing is that when it's refined, it's used as the basis of all the most expensive scents."

"I see. Well, that's enough of your cigarette-card information, Teddy. Now tell me what happened."

"The information runs a bit dry here," Teddy admitted. "But it's easy to guess what happened. Cator saw the stuff first, and claimed the whole lot. Jimmy pointed out that if he hadn't been there, Cator wouldn't have known what it was. He claimed a half-share. Then Cator, being a thoroughly nasty piece of work, decided to try and grab the whole of the loot for himself. Judg-

ing from this picture, I should say he started off by trying to drown Jimmy—accidentally, on purpose, you know—and though, obviously, that didn't work, he must have managed to find some other way of double-crossing Jimmy and pocketing the boodle. Anyway, whatever he did——"

"*Messieurs! Messieurs!*" Teddy was interrupted by a sudden shout from the little *patron* of the *estaminet*. Up to then he had been tranquilly leaning up against the door-post, watching the passers-by. Now he was wildly excited.

"*Messieurs! Les avions Boches! Regardez! Là! Par là!*"

We both leapt to our feet and followed the direction of his pointing finger. Outlined against the distant sky was a formation of seven twin-engined bombers. The faint far-off drone of their engines came to us on the breeze. They were heading for our aerodrome.

CHAPTER VI

Daylight Raiders

"YOICKS!" roared Teddy McFane. "Come on!" He dashed across the road and flung himself across the saddle of a motor-cycle combination which some luckless D.R.* had left standing outside the *mairie*. "Get yourself on board, man!" He crashed his heel down on the self-starter.

I took a running jump that landed me in the side-car. Then Teddy let in the clutch with a jerk, and we shot down the road. At the corner we skidded ten yards or so and upset somebody's hand-cart, but a thing like that was a detail when Teddy was driving. He flicked open the throttle to its widest as we came round, and with a roar that shook the chimney-pots, we got on to the straight and went streaking back towards the aerodrome.

"Cheek!" Teddy bellowed. "The ruddy cheek of those Huns! Raiding us in broad daylight!"

* The largest lump known, which was sighted by a sailor on board a whaler, weighed 248 lbs. and fetched £13,200.

* D.R. : Dispatch Rider.

AIR STORIES

I had turned my head back and was eagerly searching the sky. "There's an escort!" I yelled back. "A whole swarm of scouts are flying in the rear! We'll have our work cut out! Get a move on, Teddy!"

A minute later we arrived opposite the aerodrome. Teddy wrenched over the handle-bars, jerked them upwards to leap the grass verge and sent us streaking over towards the Camel hangars. That was no good to me.

"Hi! I want to get out here!" I shouted.

"Tip yourself out, then!" Teddy yelled back.

He slowed down a fraction and I threw myself out, fell sprawling, and got up to double towards the S.E.5 hangars. Lord! What a din there was! The whole aerodrome was an ant-heap of activity. When your hangars are about to be bombed, the best thing you can do is to get every possible machine into the air, send your mechanics into the bomb-raid shelters, and hope that some at least of the buildings will escape the flames.

As I ran, I had constantly to alter direction to avoid the Camels, the S.E.5's, and the R.E.8's that came racing towards me, tail-high for the take-off. Once I had actually to fling myself full length to avoid being cut in two by a Camel's wing-tip. The combined racket of all those engines was deafening.

As I was panting up towards our own hangars, a slowly-trundling S.E.5, moving with short bursts of engine-power, bore down on me, its tail unit dancing on the tail-skid. On seeing me, the pilot throttled down and pushed up his goggles. It was Woggy Wane. "Thought you'd come back!" he shouted. "I've had your engine run up.—Goggles and helmet in the cockpit.—Goo'-bye! Goo'-bye!" His engine thundered as he pushed forward the throttle-lever, and his little S.E.5 went racing forward side by side with two others. Good old Woggy!

As I darted round in search of my machine, I saw a little man standing up in his cockpit methodically checking

the action of his Vickers. One thing at a time, his manner seemed to say. Utterly engrossed in his task, he never made a hasty movement, and never made a slow one. I recognised the little lean brown face under the fur turn-up of his helmet. The apostle of efficiency was Jimmy Enwright. Jimmy on the ground and Jimmy in the air, or preparing to get into the air, were two different people.

As I put my foot in the mounting-step of my own 'bus, the flight sergeant came running up to see me off. "You know the orders, sir?"

"No, what?"

"The S.E.5's are to engage the escort. The Camels and the R.E.8's are to deal with the bombers."

"Thanks, Flight!" I taxied out, and a few seconds later was roaring up over the hangars at the windward end of the aerodrome.

THE Three Squadrons had of course been warned over the telephone of the approach of the bombing armada—the line "Archie" takes care of little jobs like that—and long before I could reach an effective height, our Camels were buzzing like flies round the big Friedrichshafen bombers, while the R.E.8's sailed along on a parallel course, their observers exchanging murderous streams of lead with the gunners of the raiders. The noise was like a boiler-makers' jamboree.

I wasn't concerned with the Friedrichshafens, though. I headed for the big mix-up between my own squadron and the bombers' escort. Our C.O., Major Tignell-Wingate, was leading the attack. It was one of "Tiggy-Wiggy's" rare outings, for, as a squadron commander, he was not permitted to cross the line. Tiggy-Wiggy fired the first burst, and Tiggy-Wiggy drew the first blood. The whole squadron exulted.

Because Tiggy-Wiggy, though the most lion-hearted of little men and the best commander a squadron ever had, was never in the first rank as a fighting pilot. On this particular day it was rather a fortunate thing. It kept the squadron

THE PENALTY IS DEATH

together ; for there was hardly a man amongst us who would not have taken it as a personal reproach if anything had happened to Tiggy-Wiggy. We followed his streamers into action as the English at Creçy followed the plumes of the Black Prince.

THE dog-fight stage had been reached by the time I arrived. I took a deep breath and plunged into a world that consisted of nothing but jickering machine-guns, whirling aircraft, and thundering engines. There was no time to think ; all actions were reflex. A machine, or a part of a machine, would flash across your sights, and if it looked familiar you held your hand. If it looked "enemy," your fingers automatically crisped over the firing-lever and, wrestling with joystick and rudder-bar, you strove to keep it as long as possible in the lens of your telescopic sight. Inevitably though, it would soon lose itself in the maze of whirling duellists, and you looked round for some other target. Anybody was liable at any time to be dived on from behind by an enemy, and the main preoccupation of the good "teamster" was to forget about his own blind spot, and devote himself to dusting the Huns off other people's coat-tails.

When the battle had spread itself a bit, I felt far happier and, picking on a green-and-black Aviatik, hoped that I should be allowed to fight it out with him undisturbed. We made one or two preliminary circles of tail-chasing, and when each held his fire for lack of a reasonably good chance of hitting the mark, we were both able to form the opinion that the other was no novice. Once I got him fairly well on my sights, only to see him side-slip sharply out of the lens ; and once he kept me for several minutes going round and round in a vertical bank. This vertical bank business is quite the safest manoeuvre to indulge in at difficult moments—stick right back and full engine, or you are liable to lose height.

It was while I was chasing my tail in one of these "parson's collars"

that I suddenly noted with alarm that my oil-pressure gauge was registering practically zero. The deuce ! It meant that the engine was liable to seize up at any moment. The sooner I was in a position to switch it off altogether and glide down, the better. I edged nearer to the main combat with the intention of handing over my waltzing partner to the care of somebody else.

I was lucky. An S.E.5, turning away from a smoke-trailing Fokker that it had just been raking with lead, saw my urgent signals and, dipping its nose, came streaking down on my green-and-black Aviatik. I felt, rather than saw, that my rescuer was Jimmy Enwright.

But no sooner had Jimmy begun his dive than another S.E.5 that seemed to have been cruising about spare, suddenly wheeled round in a tight bank and came shooting down in the very slipstream of Jimmy's machine. I knew then that I was safe and switched off my labouring engine. But something made me delay my get-away, and instead of putting down my nose and spinning earthwards, I put my 'bus into a glide.

Jimmy, diving steeply on the Aviatik, held his fire ; it was never his custom to waste bullets in long-range shooting. But not so the pilot of the S.E.5 immediately behind him. He must have been mad, that fellow. In spite of the fact that Jimmy's machine was in a direct line between him and the German, he opened fire. The thing made me gasp. *I saw his tracer actually pass between strut and fuselage of Jimmy's machine !* There was no room for doubt ; that crazy attack had been delivered in two separate bursts with a pause between for aim-correction, and in both cases tracer had whizzed past within a few inches of Jimmy's head. It was the sort of thing to make you rub your eyes.

Now there were only two possibilities : either the pilot of that second S.E.5 had lost his head in his excitement, or else he was taking advantage of the extremely favourable circumstances of the dog-fight to stage a murder. The first possibility I ruled out at once, because the pilot of the second British

AIR STORIES

machine was flying the streamers of a flight commander, and every instinct told me that that flight commander was Cator. Yes, I felt certain of it. Cator had just made a dastardly attempt to murder Jimmy in mid-air.

Luckily for me, Jimmy didn't seem to notice that someone behind him was doing his best to send a burst of bullets through his back. He never altered course, but thundering down on the green-and-black Aviatik so riddled it with bullets that it shed its starboard top plane and shot downwards like a plummet.

On my glide down (I was prepared to kick over into a spin at the slightest sign of danger), I had full opportunity of examining the state of affairs. My squadron, under the gallant Tiggy-Wiggy, had not only succeeded in engaging the attention of the entire German escort of scouts and preventing them from coming to the help of the Friedrichshafens, but seemed to have considerably reduced their numbers. How many machines we ourselves had lost I couldn't tell.

When I came within sight of the aerodrome I saw that two of the R.E.8 squadron's hangars were blazing; that the green expanse was pocked with dark craters enough to keep the mechanics at work all night; and that lying upside down across the hedge on the leeward side of the aerodrome was the burning wreckage of a giant Friedrichshafen. Far away towards the north-east I made out four surviving bombers beating it for Hunland. Whether they would succeed in crossing the line seemed problematical; for the Camels and the R.E.8's were "seeing them home." When I turned again to see what was happening in my own section of the battle, I saw that that, too, had receded in the direction of the line. On the whole we had done well.

As soon as Jimmy got back (he had added three Huns to his score, had our Jimmy), I told him that somebody in our squadron had nearly written him off with a burst of bullets, and I told him that I was morally certain that it was Cator. I felt I ought to tell him,

so that he should be forewarned. Jimmy didn't betray the slightest surprise. "Don't worry," he said grimly; "I'll probably get him before he gets me."

The knowledge that two members of the squadron harboured thoughts of murder in their minds didn't make me any happier at all.

CHAPTER VII

Murder Flight

I WAS standing about in front of the "B" Flight hangars when Jimmy Enwright came up looking rather worried.

"Have you seen Nipper?"

No, I hadn't seen Nipper. I heard Jimmy moving along the hangars pursuing his inquiries among the mechanics. Nobody had seen Nipper. Jimmy moved on towards "A" Flight's machines.

I sat down on an empty petrol-tin and lazily watched the evolutions of a pilot carrying out some minor rigging test. The machine flew streamers from the struts and tailplane; one of the flight commanders it would be.

In ten minutes or so back came Jimmy Enwright. "No sign of Nipper yet?"

"Sorry! Haven't seen him at all," I replied.

Jimmy frowned. "Where the deuce can the little beggar have got to?"

One of the "C" Flight ack-emmas who happened to be passing looked round and came back. "'Scuse me, sir, but if you're looking for the dorg, he's 'aving a joy-ride."

"Eh?"

"Cap'n Cator's took him up in the cockpit with 'im, sir." The man indicated the machine circling overhead. "'E's only up for a short test; 'e'll be down in a minute."

Jimmy said nothing in front of the mechanic, but when I looked at him he had sucked in his cheeks and pursed his lips. I knew those signs in Jimmy; inside he was raging.

I threw an arm over his shoulder. "I shouldn't worry. Nipper's quite safe; Cator's as fond of him as you are."

THE PENALTY IS DEATH

It was the wrong thing to say and I realised it at once from the jerk that Jimmy's shoulder gave. I felt that I positively loathed that man Cator. In stealing the affections of Nipper he had hit on the very policy which wounded Jimmy most. The low cunning beneath that mask of joviality infuriated me.

To make matters worse, just at that very moment Cator, who was circling a hundred feet above our heads, sounded his Klaxon * to attract Jimmy's attention and then supported Nipper against the side of the cockpit, so that the little dog could look down at us. He began barking; probably Cator was pinching him.

Woggy Wane chanced to come along then—just when Jimmy was near boiling-point. "Don't worry, Jimmy!" he said. "He's only trying to get your rag out. Nipper's as safe as houses."

But at that very moment there was a kind of yelping scream from above that made your blood run cold. It grew suddenly and terrifyingly louder, as a small, dark shape came hurtling downwards with a blur of little flickering legs. It landed with a thud not twenty yards from us.

"My God!" gasped Woggy. "It's—it's the dog!"

I spurted with him over to the spot, and we knelt beside that poor little beast as we might have done for a comrade.

"He's dead—mercifully," Woggy said in a low voice as he rose to his feet. "Poor old Jimmy! Jim, I'm sure Cator never meant——" He looked round. But Jimmy wasn't there.

Jimmy was nowhere near. Jimmy, without helmet or goggles, was scrambling like a madman into the cockpit of an S.E.5 standing outside the hangars with engine ticking over. "Good Lord!" Woggy jerked out. "Stop him!"

It was too late for that. There was a shattering burst of engine-power as Jimmy slammed open the throttle. The

machine trundled swiftly forward. A few seconds later, with engine thundering all-out, it was streaking tail-high across the aerodrome. We stared after it in dumb amazement. Jimmy Enwright was taking off to kill the man who had killed his dog!

Then Woggy and I left the dead Nipper lying and ran for all we were worth towards the hangars. There was only one thing to do. We hailed every pilot within sight. "Get into your 'bus! Get into your 'bus and take-off!" we yelled to them. "Quick! Or there's going to be a murder!"

Never had there been such activity on the aerodrome since the day of the Boche raid. "What have we got to do?" gasped the late-comers, cramming on helmets.

Woggy jabbed his finger twice at the sky. "Keep this fellow from shooting down that one! Never mind your helmet! Come on!"

SEVEN or eight machines, S.E.5's and Camels, racing two and three abreast across the aerodrome, slid into the air and went roaring up over the further hangars. As I leaned down to wind back my tail-trimming gear, I put my head over the side of the cockpit and looked forward. Cator was heading for the line, and Jimmy was racing in pursuit a couple of thousand yards in his rear. I looked about me. Woggy was flying on my right, screwing up his chubby face against the slipstream as he strained his eyes to keep in touch with the fugitives. On my left was Haltrick, his machine dipping and swaying as he flew hands-off while striving to get his flying-helmet over his head.

Tacca-tacca-tacca! Tacca-tacca-tacca-tacca-tac! Jimmy Enwright had lessened the distance between himself and Cator, and was trying a long shot. One of our pack pulled out a Verey pistol and a red ball of fire went hissing forwards and upwards. It described a lofty parabola and, falling, passed between the machines of Jimmy and his victim. What was the use of that? I wondered.

* Klaxon horns were sometimes used for signalling purposes in contact patrols (co-operation with infantry).

AIR STORIES

Now we were approaching the line and the German anti-aircraft gunners joined in. When the first black bursts began mushrooming out in front of him, Cator changed his mind. He decided to turn and fight. Diving slightly to gain the necessary speed, he pulled back his stick and raised his nose up, up, up until he was flying on his back. Then a swift half-roll brought him face to face with Jimmy.

We watchers held our breath. At a combined speed of something over 300 m.p.h. the two S.E.5's came streaking towards each other. *Tacca-tacca-tacca-tacca!* Almost at the same split second flame jetted from their guns. My heart was in my mouth; a collision seemed certain. For Jimmy was holding his course, willing that both he and his enemy should be smashed to jelly in one overwhelming thunder-clap.

But Cator thought otherwise. At the last moment he pulled back his stick and went zooming sharply upwards. The two machines flashed past each other with only inches to spare.

As Cator came tearing towards us, I saw that his head was over his shoulder; he was watching to see what Jimmy would do. We opened out to let him pass through.

The rest wasn't difficult. By the time Jimmy had got round, we were ready for him. We banked round ourselves and, under Haltrick's leadership, we "formatted" all round him and headed back for the aerodrome. Poor Jimmy had no choice but to come with us; there were S.E.5's all round him, a Camel above, and a Camel below. He gave in.

Back at the aerodrome, we circled once to give Cator a chance to get himself out of sight, and then shut off our engines and glided down. We landed all together, as a formation, and then we dropped down from our machines and crowded round Jimmy.

By common consent we acted just as though we had returned from an ordinary patrol. No mention was made of the shooting, or of Cator. Everyone was very kind.

Jimmy was overwrought and sullen, and would say nothing. But, to our relief, he seemed to have lost all interest in Cator. Someone spoke a few clumsy words of sympathy about Nipper, but Jimmy shook the fellow's arm off his shoulder and, turning on his heel without a word, left us flat.

I was afraid there would be the most almighty row about the affair; but it was not so. We got together and arranged our story, and senior officers were fobbed off with a yarn about a high-flying Fokker that the "Archie" people must have missed. That accounted for us all tearing off in such a hurry. For the rest, as no shooting could have been heard from the aerodrome, the matter was dropped.

At the time, though, we were not a little anxious. "Look here!" Haltrick said. "It's essential that we all tell the same pack of lies. What about Jimmy? Somebody ought to go and tip him the wink."

Somebody went, and came back with the report that Jimmy had gone down to the *estaminet*.

"Poor old Jimmy!" Haltrick said. "He'll need a few to-night—to help him forget Nipper."

"I vote we club together," proposed Woggy, "and get him another terrier as soon as we can find one."

CHAPTER VIII

An Account is Squared

THE dinner that night was a dinner which nobody in our squadron is ever likely to forget. It was a dinner which reached the "savoury" stage, and got no further.

The other night, while up in London, I happened to come across the proprietor of a midnight coffee-stall who had been a mess-orderly at the squadron in the old days, and we spoke of that very dinner—eighteen years ago, it was, to the day almost.

"Yes, sir. I remember every detail, every detail," he told me, leaning his arms reminiscently on his oil-cloth

THE PENALTY IS DEATH

counter. "Sardine-on-toast was the savoury I served that night; an' when it was all over, I 'ad to go round with a fork, collecting them all back on a big plate. Not one of the officers 'ad touched 'em!" The queer things that people remember!

Cator had come in early. He stood behind a chair and looked round in his usual breezy manner as the fellows came filing in. But at the time when Tiggy-Wiggy gave the signal to be seated by sitting down himself, the two chairs on either side of Cator were significantly vacant. It was testimony most eloquent of what the squadron thought about the death of Nipper.

Then Haltrick came in late and, after apologising to the C.O., looked round for a seat. There were none except those beside Cator, and he was obliged to pull out the chair on the big man's left and sit down beside him. But all attempts at conversation he coldly repulsed. Soon, even Cator, who had a hide like a rhinoceros, began to realise that there was a certain atmosphere of "Coventry" around him. But he was not done yet. He leaned heavily over to Haltrick and said behind his hand:

"Is that lunatic of ours under lock and key? If not he ought to be." Haltrick made no answer. "Making all that fuss over a dog! As though it's my fault if the little tyke wanted to break its neck!" Haltrick took no notice, but took up a knife and fork to begin on the sardine-on-toast that had just been placed in front of him.

Suddenly the latch of the door clicked open. There was no reason in that why anyone should even turn his head, but there was that psychic influence in the air which made the whole squadron do so to a man. The clatter of knives and forks ceased suddenly as though a bomb had exploded. Orderlies leaning over to hand plates, held them poised. The door opened.

And there stood Jimmy Enwright. His face was expressionless; his eyes were luminous and unseeing. The dead body of Nipper was in his arms. He was very, very drunk.

Moving with exaggerated care, he walked slowly down the space between the two long tables. Never to my dying day shall I forget the picture of Jimmy clasping his dead dog.

Solemnly he stopped opposite Cator. His eyes were shining like pieces of glass. He spoke in a gentle voice that was almost a croon. There was a note of appeal in it; it seemed as though he really wanted to know the answer to his question.

"*Did you kill my dog, Cator?*"

There was a ghastly silence in the room. Cator's face had turned grey. He knew what was coming. He was gibbering with fear. He was catching his breath like a man rising from a plunge into icy water.

The question was put again, even more gently.

"*Did you kill my dog, Cator?*"

The big man opened his lips to speak, but no sound came.

Then it was seen that Jimmy's hands were fumbling under the dead body of his dog.

Suddenly half-a-dozen chairs simultaneously crashed backwards. Someone screamed out, "My God! Stop him!"

It was too late. There was a deafening report. Jimmy had placed the muzzle of his revolver carefully between Cator's eyes, and pulled the trigger. Then, in the silence, the revolver clattered to the floor. The big man collapsed like a sack.

When they took Jimmy away he was as submissive as a child.

THE next day was the most depressing I ever spent on any aerodrome. Rain and low clouds prevented war-flying of any kind, and, throughout, the morning-patrol people stood about in small groups, gloomily discussing the tragedy. I heard no good word for Cator; for Jimmy, after the first horror at his action had worn off, there was heartfelt sympathy amongst both officers and men for the ghastly plight he had got himself into. Wing H.Q. was hurrying on arrangements for a court martial as fast as it was able. There could only be

AIR STORIES

one verdict, and the sooner, felt Wing H.Q., the whole grisly business was got over and done with, the better for the squadron and for the Royal Flying Corps.

Meanwhile, pending other arrangements, Jimmy was confined in the Guard Hut. In the morning, the Padre spent a couple of hours with him, but of the rest of us, only Woggy Wane (a budding barrister) succeeded in getting permission to see him.

Of that interview he would say nothing, even to me, but I could see from the haggard lines on his face that the affair had affected him more deeply than anyone else in the squadron. In twenty-four hours he seemed to have aged ten years. Woggy Wane has a keener sympathy for others than anyone I have ever met.

One of the most distasteful features of that dismal day was the scraps of conversation you couldn't help hearing whenever you passed a group of mechanics :

"You don't get no Union Jack over your coffin—not if you does a—not if you does someone in! 'Course you don't! What are you torkin' abart?"

Or: "Quicklime! They puts their bodies in quicklime at 'ome in England! But they won't find none o' that round 'ere!" And so on, until it made me feel positively sick. All the same, I couldn't help noticing how all the gossipers, even those who had known Jimmy least, always somehow contrived to avoid using the word "murder." Jimmy had been greatly liked.

There was none of the usual ragging after dinner in the mess that night. People went to their huts early, and read books in bed. It had been a wretched day.

CHAPTER IX

The Raid of Redemption

I WOKE up early next morning—before the first grey of dawn was in the sky. I woke up because Woggy's camp-bed was creaking; he was getting

out of it. I heard him pull on his sheepskin flying-boots and reach down his British warm. Thinking he was leaving the hut for an ordinary purpose, I turned over and went to sleep again.

How long I slept I don't know, but I was awakened next by the scream of an S.E.5 taking-off from the aerodrome. I raised my head and looked at the luminous dial of my watch; it still wanted some minutes to dawn. Then I noticed that Woggy's bed was still empty. Hastily I threw back the blankets and felt for my flying-boots. Why in Heaven's name was Woggy taking up a machine at this time? I threw open the door of the hut.

But it was not Woggy that had taken-off. Woggy was in the grey twilight just outside. He was standing with head bowed in an attitude like the attitude of prayer. He made no sign of having heard me.

At that moment the S.E.5 that had just taken-off banked round towards us, dipped, and at a height of only about a hundred feet came thundering towards us. And as it swept past, its pilot raised up his hand in salute. It was a slowly-begun, deliberate kind of salute that I shall always associate with a final farewell. Suddenly I felt the air tense with emotion. I felt rather than saw Woggy Wane at my side draw himself up and solemnly return that salute. Without in the least knowing why, I did the same.

The sun had not yet appeared; the eastern sky was a miracle of pink and grey. We watched the lone scout get smaller and smaller and finally melt into its loveliness. And then the spell suddenly broke.

"Woggy!" I burst out. "What on earth have you done? *That was Jimmy!*"

But Woggy turned away without answering and pushed his way into the hut. His shoulders were shaking.

I wouldn't let it go at that. I caught hold of his arm and dragged him out again. "What have you done? You've got to tell me!"

But Woggy could scarcely speak.

"He won't be coming back," was

THE PENALTY IS DEATH

all he could get out. "Not ever. Not ever."

HOW Jimmy fared on that "raid of redemption" into the heart of Hunland we were able to piece together from two independent narratives of prisoners. They recounted such a saga as to thrill every man of the Three Squadrons with pride. It was one of the greatest one-man exploits of the war.

He had chosen the largest German aerodrome on our sector, and he launched his attack not long after dawn. The anti-aircraft batteries had given no warning of his coming; he had hedgehopped for miles to ensure this. He burst in on the enemy like a thunder-clap.

There was panic as he came screaming all over the confines of the aerodrome. For as he came he was sounding his Klaxon for all he was worth, honking away for dear life to give the impression that he was merely one of a score of raiders. The din was enough to wake the dead.

Nine machines were standing in front of the hangars, and on some the propellers were flickering. Two more were in the act of taking-off into wind, one considerably behind the other. They were coming straight towards Jimmy Enwright; it was a "no deflection" shot. He dipped his nose, sighted quickly, and pressed the firing-lever just as the foremost Hun lifted his wheels from the ground and began a climbing turn. Taking Jimmy's burst full in the engine, he stalled, dropped his nose, and went crashing down to finish in a tail-high pile-up. One.

The second pilot had had his warning. Lifting his machine off the ground, he came tearing towards Jimmy, wheels spinning, guns jickering, engine roaring crescendo. Jimmy held his course, and while the German's wheels were still spinning, he put in a short accurate burst that splintered his propeller to matchwood. Flopping down on an undercarriage that crunched beneath him, the black-crossed machine lay

where it had fallen, in the attitude of a broody hen. Two.

There was no one else ready to take-off yet, so Jimmy raced on towards his main objective, the hangars. He had four 20-lb. Coopers in the racks. Banking round he dipped low and, aiming with care, dropped one of his murder-eggs through the roof of every third of the twelve hangars. The idea was that the fires should spread over all; he had thought out all these things in the Guard Hut.

By this time every machine-gun on the aerodrome had been manned, and every gunner was doing his damndest to shoot down the impudent *Englander*. Besides which, several observers had leapt into their cockpits and were now opening fierce fire with their swivelling Parabellums. The din was terrific. Wherever he flew, he flew through a hail of bullets, but Jimmy didn't care; what had he come for but to seek out Death in the most likely place? Before he went out, though, he wanted to strike for England just as hard a blow as he possibly could. Already he had done well. From three of the four hangars he had bombed, promising columns of smoke were now rising. Soon the flames began to mount.

The pilot of a Fokker triplane, sneaking along the edge of the aerodrome to avoid the fate of his comrades, slid into the air while Jimmy's attention was engaged elsewhere. He climbed and came bursting down on Jimmy from behind. *Tacca-tacca-tacca!* But he was no match for Jimmy. Jimmy turned on him like a tiger, fought him burst for burst, out-mancœuvred him, and shot him down in flames. Then, seeing fire-engines being rushed towards the blazing hangars, he dived on them and peppered the crew until they were abandoned. The fires roared merrily.

Panic redoubled. At the back of the Germans' minds was still the idea that Jimmy was merely the forerunner of a large band of raiders. At any moment they expected a low-flying armada to swoop at them from over the hedges. It was all to the good. Meanwhile

AIR STORIES

Jimmy had come, had seen, and had conquered. He was doing on that aerodrome the sort of things that lion-tamers do in lion-cages. If a fire-engine was rushed out, Jimmy sprinkled the crew ; if a machine got into the air, he shot it down ; wherever men collected into groups he sprayed them with lead.

Then, greatly cunning, the Huns started up three machines simultaneously under cover of the unburnt hangars. They came streaking across the aerodrome three abreast. Jimmy disabled two of them before they left the ground, and the one that got into the air he shot down in flames. It was massacre.

IT was then, when his ammunition was almost expended, that temptation must have pressed very hard on Jimmy Enwright. He might easily fly off to another Hun aerodrome, land, and give himself up as prisoner. Or he might even do better for himself : he might make his way back to his own aerodrome and, adducing the havoc he had wrought on the King's enemies, sue for the King's Pardon. But Jimmy did neither of these things.

There was the group of hangars that still remained intact ; there were machines inside them, he could see, machines with their tails up on trestles, machines awaiting repair. They also must be destroyed. Through a hail of bullets he flew over towards them.

The Germans must have thought that he was making for home, for he zoomed up, roared over the roofs and headed away. But when he had flown a short distance, he banked round and shut off his engine.

Then, to the amazement of all, he came whistling down in a steep sideslip that threatened to end up against the hangar-roofs. It did. Jimmy held his machine in that sideslip until with a rending crash his right wing concertina-ed itself into half its span. Then, with the help of the engine's weight, the fuselage crashed half-way

through the framework of the roof and remained stuck. Jimmy found himself suspended in mid-air, the sky above him, and below him the dark interior of the hangar.

He had suffered not even a scratch. Peering into the semi-gloom below, he could make out the shapes of Pfalz scouts and Fokker triplanes. Letting himself drop down on to the canvas wing of a Pfalz, he slid to the ground. Then taking out of his pockets the supply of "fireworks" * that he had brought with him, he pulled the buttons with his teeth and tossed them glowing into the cockpits of the neighbouring aircraft. Then, revolver in hand, he walked out to meet his death.

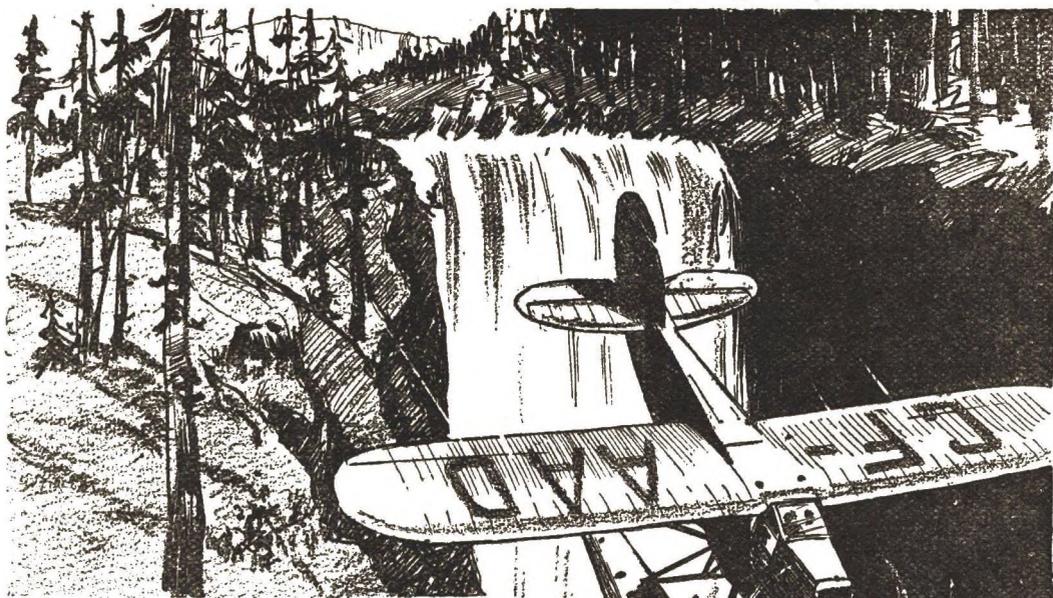
The whole of the aerodrome's personnel that was not engaged in fire-fighting came rushing forward, spreading to surround him—or perhaps to avoid him. Calmly Jimmy went forward to meet them. Using his left arm as a rest, he picked off the ones wearing flying-kit as coolly as though he were shooting vermin. Bullets went spanging past him. In two yards he was hit five times.

"*Ergeben Sie !*" snarled an officer with an oath. At the same second Jimmy took a bullet full in the stomach. He sprawled forward, but struggled momentarily to his knees and struck a last blow for his side by hurling his empty revolver in the officer's face. They bayoneted him in the back.

* * * *

That, then, is the story of Jimmy Enwright, some time a drink-sodden overseer on a plantation out East, who, with the help of condensed milk and soda, a box of paints, and a trusty friend, so far regenerated himself as to be able to cross the seas and fight and die for his country. *Requiescat in pace !* Let all else be forgotten.

* Incendiary devices issued to all pilots to enable them to destroy their machines in the event of a forced landing in enemy territory.



THE MOUNTIES RIDE HIGH

The Dramatic Story of An Aerial
Man - Hunt in the Canadian
North-West

By EDWARD GREEN

CHAPTER I

The Back of Beyond

"OF all the God-forsaken holes I ever saw, this is about the worst."

Having delivered himself of this profound observation, Shorty Tuckett, independent pilot, flung a challenging glare at Bill Tomlins, radio operator for Aerial Explorers Ltd., who happened to be gazing out the window on to the bleak expanses of Kiskasou Lake.

Bill sighed, turned from the window and looked about the tiny shack. He examined Shorty as though he were a new specimen slated for the Zoo and sighed again.

"Why, Shorty?"

"Aw, what is there here? I fly a covey of yapping dogs and crummy trappers in to their dumps and then sit

... It seemed as though the 'plane would bury its nose in the boiling waters below

AIR STORIES

down and wait until they're ready to come out. Same thing month after month, nothing ever happens here. This is the last place ever made—and it was never finished."

"Now, now, Shorty," the operator chided gently, "you know you're kept pretty busy. This is the first time you've been set down for three months. You must have enough dough put away by now to get that new Fairchild 82 that you've practically ordered several times."

"Well, maybe I have," was the reluctant admittance, "but that doesn't change this dump any. Look out that window again, what do you see; tell me."

"Rocks, a few trees and a nice lake filled with trout. What'd you like to see: a comic opera?"

Shorty snorted.

"I'd like to see a flock of cuties in silk dresses trying to beat me to the swallow on a few thousand Scotch highballs. I'm so lonesome I could cry. Turn on the radio."

Bill grinned. Shorty was in one of his characteristic fits of the blues. He grumbled whenever he had nothing to do. His five feet seven inches of toughened whalebone, which biologists would call his frame, cried for excitement. Nothing satisfied him so much as to jockey his ancient hybrid 'plane over uncharted air trails. Peril was his consort, and he loved her. When dull days or "in-between seasons" * came on, Shorty was like a kodiak bear with a headache; he growled and snapped at all who came near.

Yet for all of that he had a heart as big as a hangar and was as resourceful as an Arctic fox.

Bill tuned his set to a distant station and soon the pleading tones of an overfed tenor came through. The singer seemed to be having trouble with a girl who had dreamy eyes.

Shorty snorted disdainfully.

"He's a dope, a milksop, a daisy, and that's a hell of a programme—get another."

Bill obligingly turned the dial until another station came through. A blues singer was moaning about her lover going sour on her. Shorty threw both hands in the air and howled like a lonely malemute.

"Oh boy, if they gave that dame an Eskimo husband and fed her on seal-fat and moss she'd have something to chew on."

Bill laughed heartily.

"Mukluks † for breakfast, dinner and supper," Shorty raved on, "and a clip on the ear if they weren't chewed soft. Me, I'm so disgusted I'm going out to pick a fight with a polar bear."

He rose to his feet and strode magnificently towards the door. With his hand on the latch, he turned to deliver another scathing denunciation of radio singers and the glamour of the North.

Before he had a chance to open his mouth, the door shot open, and he was flung unceremoniously across the floor. A huge figure of a man barged in and caught sight of him.

"Come on, shrimp," he bellowed, "never mind sitting there admiring the ceiling. Get that junkpile of yours moving right away. There's hell to pay at Coon Lake."

SHORTY leaped to his feet and dusted his trousers. Fire blazed in his deep blue eyes.

"There'll be more'n that to pay here if you ever do that to me again, you big 'ahwik."

The big fellow seized him by the collar and propelled him towards the door.

"Never mind calling me a walrus," he laughed, "just get that engine going. Jake Silsby's trying to kill Jack Barne's wife and kid. The Mounties are on their way here now. Scram!"

"Who's doing what?"

* "In-between seasons": The period between spring and summer or autumn and winter when the ice on the lakes and rivers is unsafe for aircraft. The period usually lasts about two months when change-overs from floats to skis, or *vice versa*, are made.—AUTHOR'S NOTE.

† Mukluks: Eskimo boots made of sealskin. During the night they harden, and the lord of the manor tosses them to his wife to chew them soft—the reason why all Eskimo women have bad teeth.—AUTHOR'S NOTE.

THE MOUNTIES RIDE HIGH

"Silsby, he's 'bushed,' killed his partner and then tried to get into Barne's cabin. Jack's away at Blood Rapids, and his wife and kid are there alone. An Indian runner brought the news."

Shorty's reaction was swift. He ran from the shack and called loudly for his mechanic.

"Doc." Seager, his air engineer, tore out of a shack where a poker game had been in progress. His red hair streamed in the wind and he glared at Shorty.

"The first time to-day I've held a winning hand, and you had to go and butt in. What's the trouble?"

"Plenty; how's the airship?"

"She's ready for anything but flight; petrol, oil and tool-kits aboard. And I think the engine might start if we coax it."

"Well, toss a rifle and two sleeping-bags aboard and save your wise-cracks about my 'plane for your pals who trim you at poker."

SHORTY cast expert eyes over his 'plane. True, it was on its last legs, but it furnished him with excitement, thrills; its very uncertainty was the reason he had kept it so long. He could afford to purchase a new one at any time, but, until now, he had never seriously considered a change. The floats were badly battered and dented at every conceivable point. Patches clung to every part of them and the wings were no better. Yet, despite these drawbacks, the machine had tremendous lifting power—if you could keep the engine going, which Doc. usually managed to do. There were few 'planes "north of the steel" with the enviable record of old "Ack-Donna" as Shorty affectionately termed his aged seaplane.

Satisfied that the 'plane wasn't going to sink or collapse offhand, Shorty returned to the radio-shack in time to meet Sergeant Crosby and two constables of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

"You guys ready?" he snapped.

The sergeant nodded. He didn't speak for the moment. He was remembering what had happened to the last Mounty patrol that had gone out after a mad

trapper. He didn't want anything like that to happen this time, yet, duty was duty, and he must bring the man in unharmed, if possible.

"We've got a bad man to handle, Shorty," he explained. "This Silsby used to be a peace officer somewhere south of the line. He's ready to shoot to kill if necessary. He's already killed one man, his partner. He's full of home brew and that makes things worse."

"It don't improve things," Shorty retorted crisply. "Let's get going."

He inspected a wall map and saw that Coon Lake was about seventy miles to the north-west. The sergeant was speaking again.

"Jack's wife is in the cabin. As far as I can make out she has a 22-calibre rifle and a butcher's knife. She can hold Silsby off for a while, but she's had no sleep for more'n thirty hours. Besides that, she has a sick kid, and there's no water or wood in the cabin. Lucky it's summer time."

"Yeah," Shorty agreed absently. He was thinking of a woman, alone in a cabin with a sick child and a raving, drunken lunatic at the door trying to kill her. It was a far from pleasant prospect. He had begged for something to break his monotony. He was going to get it now—with a vengeance.

He caught the sound of his engine "running up."

"We're ready now," he flung at the sergeant.

"O.K." The sergeant called his men, and they made their way down to the 'plane.

Shorty was about to leave when Bill handed him a slip of paper.

"More news for you, Lazybones," he grinned. "Alaska Traders want their furs picked up from Agati Post and put aboard the next Limited going east. You, mister, were squawking for action. You're getting it."

Shorty grabbed the message. He was, it seemed, getting rather more action than he wanted for the moment. The Alaska Traders were a big concern. They paid him excessively high rates to take their furs at once, on demand, and

AIR STORIES

deliver them when they wanted them. If he missed one call his contract would be cancelled. To lose their contract would be disastrous. To ignore the call of humanity from Coon Lake would be equally so.

It was a nasty jam, but not for one moment did he contemplate leaving the lone woman to fight a losing battle. It was just a question of the best way to do both jobs. He glanced at his watch.

"If I can dump the Mounties at Coon Lake in an hour I can skip across to Agati while they're catching Silsby. It's only eighty miles to Agati from Coon Lake, but if anything went wrong I'd be in a hell of a fix."

"You've been in them before," Bill pointed out.

Shorty thought of his aircraft. He'd have to push it to the limit. He turned to Tomlins.

"Come out of the fog and send a radio message to the Fairchild outfit. Tell them I'll take delivery of that new 'plane to-morrow at Prince Albert."

Bill stared.

"What, take the Mounties in, pick up your furs and then go through to Prince Albert? Fly more than seven hundred miles before night?"

"I've got ten hours—and that's plenty," Shorty snapped, and raced for his 'plane.

CHAPTER II

Running Repairs

DOC. SEAGER wasn't any too hopeful. Like Shorty, he always predicted disaster to anything he attempted, but it was seldom anything but a success.

"This engine isn't so hot, Shorty," he mumbled as he was casting off the mooring lines. "One of them cylinder jackets is leakin' a bit."

Shorty said nothing. He was looking at the sky—bright blue, like molten glass. The sun blazed down in sullen fury, and the heat was tossed back from the mirror-like surface of the lake. It was stifling, close, as though a storm was about to break.

The North was like that. One extreme to the other. Blazing heat in the summer and searing cold in the winter. Unfortunately, the winter was twice as long as the summer. It was a hard land for hard men.

Doc. glanced at the engine with trepidation. He knew that owing to intense heat, the water in the radiator would be boiling long before the 'plane could get off the water. Many times it had been impossible to "get off" in hot, windless days. That was one of the serious drawbacks to water-cooled engines for Northern work.

He was still gazing at the radiator when Shorty taxied far out into the lake for the take-off. Once they were in the air the water would drop back to a lower temperature, but until then it would be touch and go.

The big Hall-Scott vertical engine set up a frenzied roar as Shorty slammed the throttle open. He drew up his water-rudders and the tiny ripples behind the floats grew into a wash as the speed of the 'plane increased. Doc. drew a stick of chewing-gum from his pocket, thrust it into his mouth and watched the radiator.

Shorty see-sawed his stick, trying to break the suction of the water on the float bottoms.

"Lousy floats," he grumbled, "they hang on to the water like fleas to a dog."

Doc. said nothing. He chewed gum and watched the radiator.

Shorty's strong arms see-sawed the stick savagely. The nose of the 'plane rose and fell. An instant later she came up on her steps.

Riding high on the steps, the 'plane tore on across the lake. Doc. felt a spot of water splash on his face. It was hot water, and he looked at the radiator cap. Steam was fizzing forth. He nudged Shorty and pointed.

Ordinarily, Shorty might have thought better of taking-off for the time being, but a lonely woman needed help. He glanced at the air-speed indicator, his lips vanished into a thin white line and he jerked the stick back, forcefully.

The floats left the water, showers of

THE MOUNTIES RIDE HIGH

spray streaming behind like jewels glittering in the sunshine. A rainbow mist spumed from them as the slipstream spattered the drops into iridescent vapour. The roar of the Hall-Scott grew deeper and the engine temperature began to fall.

IN a tiny log-cabin on Coon Lake, a terrified woman crouched in the corner farthest from the door. Furniture was piled high against the door and the wooden latch was nailed down. A table was before the woman, and on it lay a 22-calibre rifle and two butcher's knives. A short-handled hunting axe lay close to hand. A frightened whimper came from behind her skirts as her child tried to hide from the raging terror outside.

"Hush, Jimmy," the woman soothed, "we'll be all right soon."

She heard a savage growl from outside, and something hit the door a terrific smash. She seized the rifle.

"Open that door, or I'll break it in," raged the madman outside.

The woman's face blanched. She gripped the rifle tighter.

"You get away," she warned, "or I'll shoot you the minute you come near the door."

Silsby's maniacal laughter chilled her.

"I'll get away, but I'll get you too—and it won't be long now."

She heard his footsteps shuffling through the brush near the cabin. There was the sharp crack of a rifle, and a bullet sang through the tin stove-pipe. Another report lashed out and the window glass tumbled into the cabin.

SHORTY raced on, flying "all out." His engine was running sweetly, and Coon Lake was only fifteen miles ahead when Doc. punched him on the arm and pointed to the engine. A tiny trickle of water was seeping from a water-jacket.

If Doc. expected Shorty to register alarm he was disappointed. He merely glanced at the leak and snapped:

"Fix it."

While Doc. rummaged in the tool-kit

for emergency repairs, Shorty watched the country ahead. For as far as he could see, rocks, lakes and trees, stunted trees, growing thinner the further north they flew, met his view.

"Yep," he soliloquised, "they sure forgot to finish this place."

Doc. had slipped open a side panel of the cockpit and was climbing out on to the engine mounting. There was a small steel ladder riveted to the longerons which afforded him a good foothold, but he'd have to hang on near the engine with his hands. It was a perilous position, but Doc. had been there before.

A tiny crack near a valve port was opening. Doc. fiddled in his pockets and produced a light hammer with a small ball on the head. Using the small end, he tapped gently against the crack. Under the impact of the tapping, the crack closed. With a satisfied grunt, Doc. slipped the hammer back in his pocket.

At that instant, the 'plane hit a bump and Doc. was thrown hard against the engine cowling. His hand slipped, and as he fell his clutching fingers wrapped themselves around one of the rungs of the steel ladder and he hung there, between earth and sky, five thousand feet of thin air beneath him.

Shorty, seeing Doc.'s plight, instantly put his machine into a gentle bank, away from the side Doc. was hanging from. As the 'plane heeled over, Doc. felt his knees touch the lowest rung of the ladder. A moment later he scrambled up, crawled back to the cockpit and gave Shorty a reproachful look.

"Go on, look," Shorty barked, "that's a swell thing to do—trying a flying trapeze trick when you know I'm in a hurry."

An outsider would have been shocked to hear Shorty's apparently heartless abuse, but Doc. knew it was his way of hiding his true feelings. There was a deep and simple understanding between the two that nothing but death could separate. Shorty's heart had been in his mouth when Doc. slipped, though he wouldn't have let him know it for the world.

AIR STORIES

A few miles ahead, Shorty recognised the rocky shoreline of Coon Lake. He tapped a signal back to the cabin and the Mounties unslung their weapons. Shorty wondered if they were too late.

CHAPTER III

Storm from the North

SILSBY'S rage was terrible. He stormed about the outside of the cabin firing shots at random. He was as bad as any Redskin that ever hit the war trail, and the frantic woman inside prayed that rescue would come soon.

As though in answer to her prayer, she heard the roar of an aeroplane engine. Crying with relief, she dashed to a window—to find herself staring straight into the reddened eyes of the madman who had crawled close to the window. She could smell his reeking breath and the scent of home-brew liquor sickened her. His bearded face was contorted with malevolent hate. She gave a piercing scream and swung her rifle up.

Silsby snarled like an animal, then raced for the bush just as the terrified woman jerked the trigger of her weapon. The slug whizzed harmlessly by. He turned and shook his fist.

"You've got help just now," he screamed, "but I'll get you yet. I'm goin' to Rat Island and those fellows had better leave me alone."

He fired a parting shot from his rifle just as Shorty taxied ashore, and a moment later was racing into the scrub.

The Mounties immediately spread out in an effort to trap the madman while Shorty hurried over to reassure the frightened woman who had collapsed with the coming of her rescuers.

"That's all right, Missis Barne," he soothed, "you just sit here awhile and Doc.'ll look after you. He's a real man with the ladies."

Doc. grunted.

"What happened?" was all he said.

"Silsby came here yesterday," sobbed the woman. "He sat down and started

to tell me a story. He knew Jack was away. I thought he sounded queer, and then I realised he'd been drinking. He told me he'd killed his trapping partner, said he'd been trying to steal his furs. He asked me if I'd run away with him. I didn't know what to say. He went outside, and I barricaded the door. Then he got mad. He had liquor with him, and he camped by the well all night."

"Don't you worry, we'll get him," Shorty gritted, and ran for the bush, leaving the protesting Doc. with the woman.

He was just entering the bush when the spiteful crack of a rifle sounded and a bullet whined past his ear. He threw himself to the ground. Several more shots rang out and then the sergeant came through the bush holding his carbine.

"Did you get him, Crosby?" Shorty called.

"No, he got away. I missed him."

Shorty quickly explained about his fur cargo at Agati. Could the sergeant manage without him for a little while so that he could run over to Agati and pick up his load? The sergeant agreed, and Shorty sprinted for the cabin.

"Come on, Doc.," he yelled. "Our luck's in again."

SHORTY'S optimistic announcement was a trifle premature. Coon Lake was less than forty miles astern when the sun suddenly vanished and storm clouds blew down from the Polar regions. The air became very bumpy and black fog commenced to roll. Like the crack of a gun, the storm broke.

Northern weather never upset Shorty's calculations. He was used to its abrupt changes and governed himself accordingly. For the next few minutes, however, he had his hands full.

Rain pelted down in solid sheets, penetrating even the cockpit hood. Doc. closed his tiny window and sucked his breath through his lips.

"Phew, what a rotten break."

"What's the matter; afraid of getting wet, Daisy?" Shorty snorted.

THE MOUNTIES RIDE HIGH

"Yeh, from that water-jacket. Look at it."

"I don't want to," Shorty replied truthfully, and bent to his task.

Bitter gusts of wind squalled down, throwing the straining 'plane around like a straw. Shorty corrected each bump with a smoothness born of long practice. Vision was blotted out by rain, and the ground became a dull blur. Ominous rumbles of thunder sounded and the sky was rent by vivid flashes of chain lightning. Doc. pushed another stick of gum into his mouth and looked at Shorty.

"Compass seems to have gone nuts," was Shorty's comment.

"It's the storm, and besides, we're close to the Magnetic Pole."

The compass-card was gyrating madly as the 'plane drove farther into the storm. But electrical disturbances were common in these latitudes, and Shorty was not unduly worried.

"I'll have to get down lower," he remarked. "Can't see the ground at all."

"Don't forget your altimeter is in the tool-box."

"I don't need it. See that black blob down there?"

"Yeh."

"Well, that's the ground—I think."

Doc. said nothing. He was past being surprised by anything Shorty said or did. He knew the little fellow would bring his 'plane through to Agati Post without veering very far off the trail, compass or no compass. He had been out too many times with him to be fooled by his apparently casual manner.

CHAPTER IV

A Case for the "Doc."

IF Shorty was having a bad time in the storm, the sergeant and his men back at Coon Lake were also far from happy. Their quarry had scuttled through the thick brush, and when they next caught sight of him he was a mere dot bobbing far out on the lake. They could see his arms moving in the short, choppy

Indian stroke as he paddled his canoe further away from shore.

"Well, of all the damned luck," Crosby fumed, soaked to the skin, "and Barne's canoe will be with him. I'll bet there isn't a boat around here."

His bet was correct. From Mrs. Barne they learnt that the only canoe on Coon Lake was the one now being paddled by Silsby. Her husband had taken his to Blood Rapids. Crosby cursed beneath his breath, and wondered when Shorty would be back.

Could he have seen the irascible Shorty at that moment he would not have given much for his chances of returning for many days. For he and Doc. were ruefully regarding the torn bottom of a float as their 'plane lay jacked up on the beach at Agati Post. A piece of driftwood protruding from the hole furnished the reason.

Neither Shorty nor Doc. were ones to be disturbed by anything like trouble. Even now they were pondering on how to effect a repair. They considered for about five minutes, and then Shorty announced:

"We'll patch it."

Doc. didn't reply. He was busy pulling the stick out of the rent and calling orders to a greasy Eskimo standing by.

The Eskimo grinned and walked quickly back to the trading-post. He reappeared a few minutes later with a pot of pitch and a piece of sealskin.

Doc. was already tapping the thin duralumin smooth around the edges of the rent. When the Eskimo gave him the pitch he smeared plenty of it on the inside of the float and then pressed the sealskin tightly to it. The tear was thus closed, but the job would not be very strong.

Shorty, however, was preparing two pieces of board. He cut them the length of the patch and gave one to Doc. He placed this inside against the skin, while Shorty smeared the other with pitch and placed it over the rip on the outside. A half-dozen screw nails, taken from the tool-kit and driven through the bottom board, gripped the top one and brought them tightly together, making a waterproof patch.

AIR STORIES

Still the patch was not strong enough. The water pressure when the 'plane was taxying would be terrific and would soon force the bottom of the float upward. It would be liable to pull the boards away and allow the water to creep in. Doc. completed his inspection of the job and then cut two more pieces of dry board. These he placed inside against the inner board, in a vertical position, one end against the top and the other pressing firmly against the bottom. Thus braced, the patch board could take a lot of buffeting.

"There," Doc. breathed, when the work was complete, "if you look where you're going from now on we can get along."

Shorty gave him a withering glance.

"Get your Eskimo playmates to heave these furs aboard. We're not here for a vacation."

Two thousand white fox pelts, neatly baled, were stowed aboard the 'plane. When they were lashed in place, Shorty signed for them from the trading-post official and signalled Doc. to "wind her up."

"I don't like the look of that cylinder," Doc. remarked as they were taxying down the lake for the take-off.

"Why not—what's wrong with it?" Shorty demanded.

"Looks as though it's going to let go at any time."

Shorty looked at him carefully.

"As if I don't get enough bad news without bringing you along to spread the sunshine. If it goes, it goes—I can't help it."

SHORTY'S fatalistic philosophy carried him well until Agati Post was far astern. He had forgotten about the cylinder and was wondering how the Mounties were getting on when an ominous "*phheet-phheet*" caused him to glance at the engine. Doc. was already on his feet, fire-extinguisher in hand. He was taking no chances on that dread enemy of all pilots, fire in the air.

The shrill "*phheet-phheet*" quickly grew deeper. It now resolved into a "*phwunk-phwunk-phwunk*" as the engine raced on.

Suddenly the tortured cylinder emitted a shrill squeal and water cascaded from a suddenly-opened rent. Shorty glanced below.

He saw the long, narrow surface of Techapi Lake, terminating in a waterfall more than three hundred feet in height and spilling into a narrow rocky gorge. It wasn't the best place in the world to "set her down," but Shorty hadn't much choice.

Safely down, Doc. examined the cracked cylinder ruefully. He pecked at it with the blade of his penknife while Shorty stood on a float.

"That's what comes of flying around in a junkpile with a lunatic," he said softly.

"What did you say?" Shorty bristled.

"I said it's a bad crack, but we might fix it."

"*Might* fix it! We've got to fix it. Get going. Remember Jim Sewell, the mining engineer forced down in Northern Saskatchewan? He fixed one with a chunk of native copper."

"We haven't any native copper," was the doleful reply, "and there's no ore around here."

But Shorty's resourcefulness was no rumour. He glanced into the cabin of the 'plane and saw the rifle. Seizing it, he stepped ashore and fired three shots. Then, picking up the brass casings he threw them to Doc.

"Have you gone nuts?" that worthy uttered in astonishment.

"No. We haven't any copper, so we'll use brass. It'll harden better when you're tamping it. Get yourself organised."

Doc. needed no urging. He probed the crack again and slit one of the cartridge casings into a thin strip. Edging one corner of it into the crack, he used a light hammer and a fine-pointed chisel.

There was nothing casual or slipshod about the way Doc. went at the job. There was too much at stake for his actions to match his words. Each blow of the hammer was calculated to do so much and no more. Minute after minute he tapped like a woodpecker

THE MOUNTIES RIDE HIGH

working on a tamarac tree. Slowly but surely the crack was being firmly packed with rapidly hardening brass.

After what seemed hours to the impatient pilot, but was actually no longer than fifteen minutes, Doc. straightened up with a satisfied grunt and inspected his work.

"There," he breathed, "that's nice work, but it isn't worth a hoot in hell."

"Why not?"

"It'll blow out at the first pop."

"You're nuts; burr the casting down over it. Tap plenty of it in for a binder."

Doc.'s artistic chisel went to work again. Working carefully, he tapped the edge of the crack over, the forged steel being skilfully tucked over the brass like a boilermaker rolls and beads a tube in a boiler. When he had finished, the brass was scarcely discernible beneath the neatly-turned steel.

"Now," Shorty ordered, "here's a piece of steel from the tool-kit. Loosen that water-gasket screw and put this steel beneath it and then tighten it up hard. The end of the steel will bear down right on the crack and help keep the brass in."

Doc. dutifully withdrew the cap screw and thrust it through the hole in the end of the curved piece of steel. He followed Shorty's instructions and a moment later pronounced the job finished. A canvas water-pail was dipped into the lake and fifteen minutes later the engine was turning over.

"And now," Doc. announced, "we're in as bad a fix as ever. We can't get off this lake until the wind changes."

Shorty said nothing. He stepped ashore and walked to the falls, a few hundred feet below the beach.

Standing on a rock near the brink, he noted there was plenty of water at the lip of the fall. The drop was close on three hundred feet and terminated in a gorge not more than two hundred feet wide. Directly in the centre of the gorge, less than five hundred feet from the falls, was a tall spruce tree. Its topmost branches were as high as the falls. It stood like a lone sentry challenging Shorty's daring plan.

"Say," Doc. gasped, when he caught the idea of Shorty's careful inspection, "you're not thinking of taking-off over here, are you?"

"Why not, it's the only way, isn't it?"

Doc. threw his hands in the air. He had been with Shorty in many narrow escapes and hazardous attempts, but this promised to be the king of them all. Imagine, a sane man trying to take-off over the brink of a falls into a narrow gorge with a big spruce tree directly in his path. Doc. shuddered. Shorty grinned.

"We'll go over there like a bird on the wing," he prophesied.

"Sure," was the mournful reply, "and down like a ton of bricks."

CHAPTER V

Over the Falls

THE rumbling blast of the Hall-Scott sounded across Techapi Lake. Shorty dropped his water-rudders and steered off from the shore. He taxied slowly to the upper end of the lake and then swung round to face the falls. Doc. pushed some gum into his mouth. He felt he might soon be needing it.

The 'plane came up on her steps as she raced forward under the urge of a wide-open throttle. Doc. watched the repaired cylinder, but Shorty was watching the falls. The thin white line of foam at the brink seemed to rush towards him. He glanced at Doc.

Doc. was wondering what would happen if Shorty had misjudged his distance. In the mad race down the lake he wondered if Shorty fully realised the possibilities of the lone tree in the gorge. He didn't like to think of what would happen if this hare-brained pilot had made an error in his reckoning.

Shorty sat tense and alert, his strong hands gripping the stick and his blue eyes narrowed to slits. He glanced swiftly at the air-speed indicator and saw he was still at least fifteen miles an hour short of flying speed. The falls were a scant hundred feet away.

AIR STORIES

Doc. saw the line of foam. He shut his eyes and swallowed hard. He was about to speak when the water dropped away from beneath the floats. He opened his mouth and yelled :

"We're in the air !"

He closed it just as suddenly. The tall spruce tree was directly in the path. He had thought the 'plane had taken-off before reaching the brink of the falls, but the sickening plunge off the brink had been but momentarily successful. The 'plane was now falling like a stone.

Shorty sat watchful and alert, gripping the arms of his seat. The narrow walls of the gorge seemed to close in as they shot by at terrific speed. The tall gaunt spruce stood squarely in their path and there was no hope of dodging it, and not enough room between its boughs and the canyon walls to allow the 'plane to get around.

Shorty never wavered. He held the 'plane in a breath-taking dive until it seemed as though it would bury its nose in the boiling waters below. Then, when a crash seemed inevitable, Shorty, judging to the last inch, drew back on his stick. The 'plane flattened out and raced on, direct at the tall spruce.

Doc. sat entranced. He was paralysed. He saw the spruce a few feet away and closed his eyes.

Shorty's nerves were like ice. He had flying speed now, but he needed extra speed for the zoom that would take him clear of the spruce. He must stick to his purpose to the last possible foot.

Fifty feet from the spruce he breathed a silent prayer and pulled back hard. The 'plane rose in a swift neck-snapping zoom and the gods of all aviators smiled on a daring man.

Doc. felt the wicked "swish" of the branches as they clipped the floats, but he breathed easily. They were safely past, and already Shorty was swinging back on his course, and gazing confidently ahead as though nothing out of the way had happened.

COON LAKE lay below. Doc. was chewing his gum again and was ready for another good-natured argument

with Shorty. But his pilot was not looking for arguments just now. He was seeking the Mounties, and they were not in sight at the cabin.

Mrs. Barne met them as they taxied to shore. She smiled bravely at Shorty.

"You're just in time," she explained. "The Mounties have Silsby in his cabin at Rat Island. It's barricaded and they don't want to risk anyone getting killed. An Indian came along here and they took his canoe. You can get to Rat Island in five minutes."

Shorty thought quickly. He turned to the woman.

"Have you any dynamite around here ?"

"No, Jack was going to get some, but he hasn't brought it out yet."

Shorty and Doc. were disappointed. If dynamite had been available they could have made improvised bombs and dropped them on the trapper's cabin. He'd already killed one man, and they had no intention of giving him a chance to kill others. The Mounties, bound by their oaths, could not resort to rough methods except as a last hope. Shorty and Doc. were tied by nothing but their own sense of reason—and that was very elastic when the occasion warranted it.

"All right," Shorty snapped, "let's unload these furs and we'll get some rocks aboard. A guy hates having rocks dropped on his roof."

Mrs. Barne smiled wanly as she watched Shorty and Doc. deposit their furs on the beach and load big boulders into the cabin. She saw Doc. tie the cabin door firmly back and then pass a rope around his feet. He lay on the floor, close to the door with a pile of big rocks close to hand. The improvised bombing expedition was about to start.

"Now," Shorty was saying, "don't make any dud moves or bad shots. I've got to get into Prince Albert tonight."

Doc. nodded understanding, and a few minutes later the 'plane was in the air, bound on the strangest mission of its by no means uneventful life.

It was also a mission of mercy, for if Silsby caught sight of a Mounty, he

THE MOUNTIES RIDE HIGH

would shoot first and ask afterwards. It was certain death for any of those brave men to show their faces within his range. Silsby seldom missed, and was known far and wide for his deadly accuracy with a rifle.

Rat Island came up swiftly and Shorty could discern the figures of Mounties crouched in the thin brush surrounding the cabin. He waved a signal to them and called out to Doc. to be ready. Then, nosing down, he came in fast and low over the log cabin.

Doc., half hanging from the door, his feet securely held by the rope, saw the roof of the cabin rushing towards him. Judging the distance to a nicety, he launched a heavy rock, and it hurtled downward at terrific speed. A gaping hole appeared in the roof of the cabin.

Shorty banked quickly and came back on his tracks. Jake Silsby's nerves might have been shaken by this sudden and unexpected attack, but he was unhurt, and as the 'plane roared over the rent in the cabin roof, the trapper flung up his rifle and sent a shot at the speeding 'plane.

Shorty roared up, turned and came in again, lower than ever.

Doc. could not miss when he launched his next projectile. The heavy rock plunged down and struck the centre pole in the roof of the cabin, which collapsed like a pack of cards. Smoke started to creep up from the wreckage.

SILSBY had had enough. He could shold off a dozen Mounties in his cabin stronghold, but he could do nothing with the pair of maniacs who were hurtling overhead, dropping great boulders through his roof. His home-brew was finished,

and a smatter of sanity was returning. He tossed his rifle through the wreckage of a window and came out of the cabin with his hands in the air.

As the Mounties surrounded him, fire broke out among the wreckage of the cabin, and by the time he was securely handcuffed it was a roaring furnace. The trapper glanced towards the inferno.

"My partner's in there," he said simply.

Sergeant Crosby knew it—and could do nothing about it. He detailed one of the men to wait until the fire died down and then to stand guard over the remains until a 'plane could pick them up and bring them in for an autopsy. Then, loading his prisoner into the 'plane, he directed Shorty to get going.

Shorty dropped down at the Barne's cabin. He turned to Doc.

"Get those furs aboard. You're staying here until I get back. I haven't room for all of you and, another thing, I have to buy a new 'plane because you're too dumb to fix this one."

Doc. opened his mouth to protest.

"Shut up," Shorty ordered sternly. "I don't know what you'd do if we were in a territory where anything happens and we really had to work. I'd need a new 'plane every week."

Doc. opened his mouth again, and closed it. He had caught the twinkle in Shorty's eye.

The furs were quickly stowed aboard, and Shorty paused for a parting shot at Doc.

"I'll be back here to-morrow, 'plane wrecker. I hate to come, but I can't leave a helpless guy like you in this man's country."

IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE

RAIDERS OF THE NIGHT

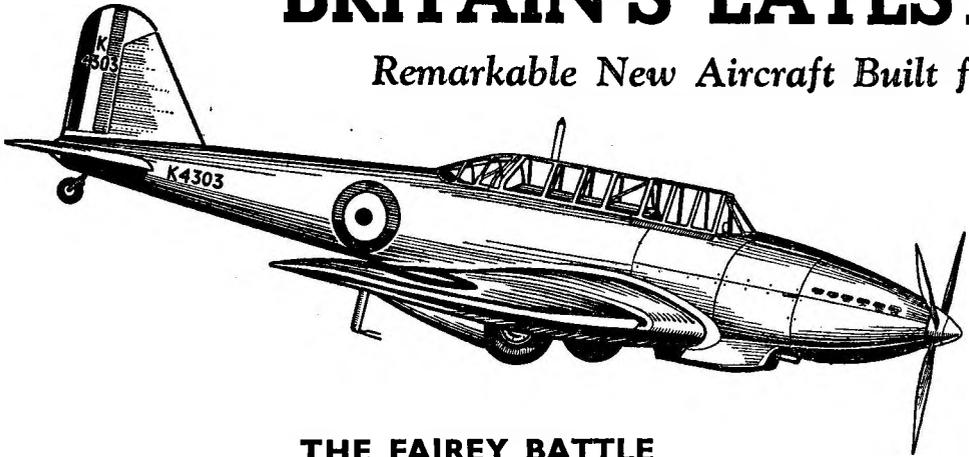
A Thrilling War-Air Story of Desperate Adventure
in Night Skies Above the Western Front

By G. M. BOWMAN

And Many Other Great Air Stories of Fact and Fiction

BRITAIN'S LATEST

Remarkable New Aircraft Built for



THE FAIREY BATTLE

THE world's fastest single-engined bomber, the Fairey Battle has recently been ordered in large quantities for the re-equipment of R.A.F. squadrons. A two-seater, low-wing monoplane, it is built entirely of metal, with the exception of the rudder, ailerons and elevators, which are fabric-covered. The roomy cockpit houses a pilot and gunner observer, seated in tandem, and is enclosed by a glass covering, sections of which can be slid back, as when using the rear gun. The undercarriage can be withdrawn into cavities

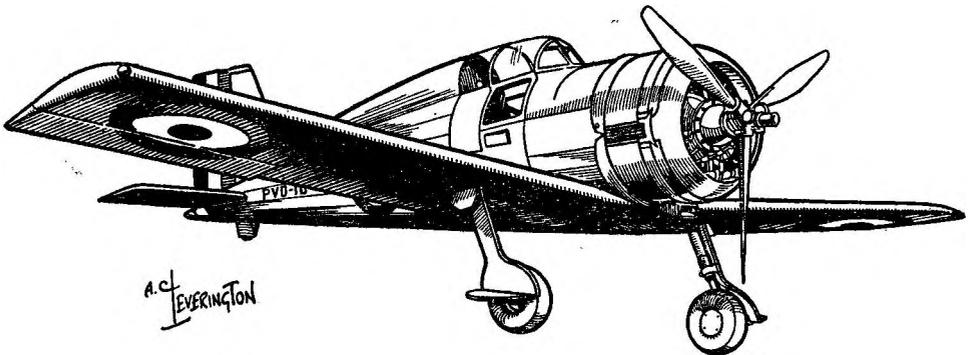
in the underside of the wing and flaps are fitted to the trailing edges of the wings to decrease the landing speed. The engine is a 12-cylinder V-shaped liquid-cooled Rolls-Royce Merlin, the exact power of which is an official secret. The machine's performance is similarly secret, though it is authoritatively stated to be capable of "slightly under 300 m.p.h." The principal dimensions are: span 54 ft.; length 42 ft. 1½ in.; height 15 ft. 6 in.

THE VICKERS P.V. FIGHTER

KNOwn as the Vickers "P.V.," or "Private Venture" Fighter, to distinguish it from a machine built, as is usual with military aircraft, to an Air Ministry specification, this new Monoplane created a minor sensation when first flown in public at a recent trade display of new aircraft. Though smaller and less powerfully engined than the new Merlin-engined fighters, its shorter wing span renders it much more manœuvrable and its speed, though secret, has been shown to be something exceptional. Of particular interest is its highly secret Bristol Aquila engine, a new type of sleeve-valve supercharged radial and the first

of its kind ever to be fitted to a British fighter. The pilot is seated in a cockpit with a sliding glass roof, and the machine is fitted with wing flaps to reduce landing speed, a three-bladed variable-pitch airscrew and an electrically retractable undercarriage.

This new fighter is a recognisable development of the earlier and experimental "Jockey" monoplane fighter produced by the same firm and which was also fitted with an air-cooled engine. The P.V. Fighter is only 24 ft. 2 in. in length and has a wing span of 32 ft. 9 in.



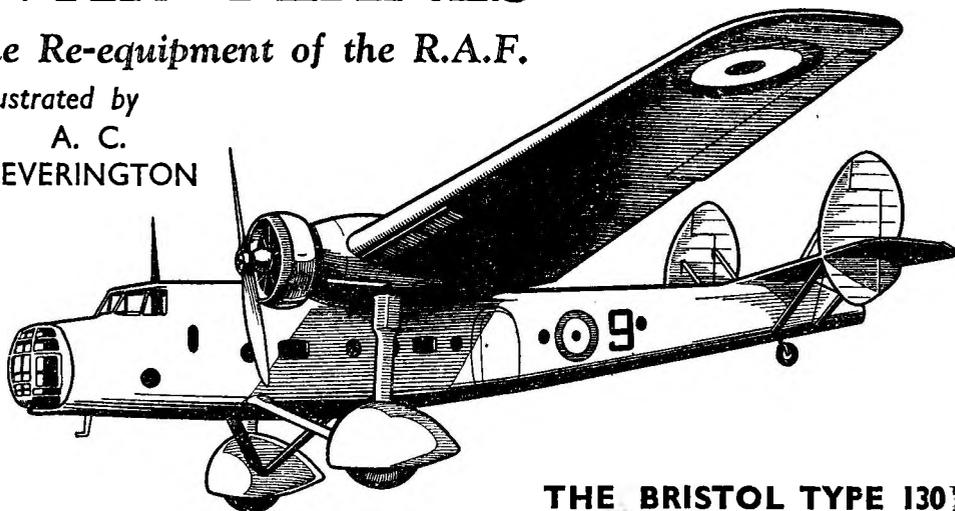
WAR 'PLANES

the Re-equipment of the R.A.F.

Illustrated by

A. C.

LEVERINGTON



THE BRISTOL TYPE 130

RECENTLY adopted by the Air Ministry and now in production for early delivery to R.A.F. squadrons, the Bristol Type 130 is a high-wing monoplane driven by two Bristol Pegasus air-cooled radial engines each of 960 h.p. Officially designated as a Bomber-Transport, it is primarily a long-range bombing machine carrying a heavy explosive load, but can also be used, when necessary, as a troop transport. For the latter purpose, it has a roomy cabin which can accommodate twenty-four men with full military equipment. Of "stressed skin" metal construction, the Type

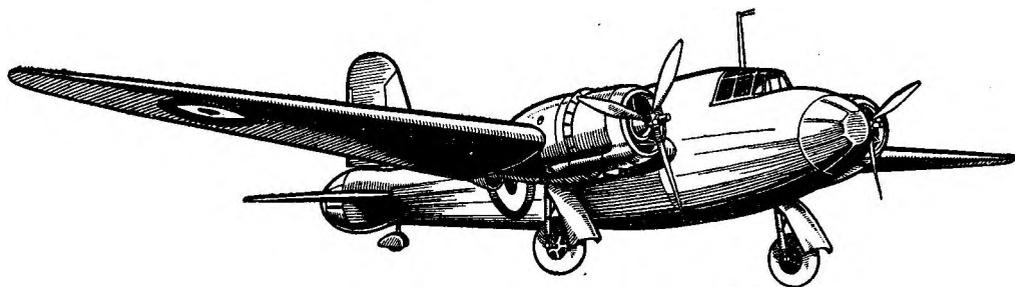
130 is fitted with a rotatable gun turret in the bows and, in its very latest form, a similar turret in the extreme tail. The pilot and navigator are housed in an enclosed cockpit forward of the wing, where they have an unobstructed view over a wide arc. The undercarriage is of the fixed type. The machine is 67 ft. 9 in. in length, 16 ft. high, and the single wing has a span of 96 ft. Performance details may not yet be published, but in speed, range and load capacity, the Type 130 is known to surpass any comparable craft now in service.

THE VICKERS MEDIUM BOMBER

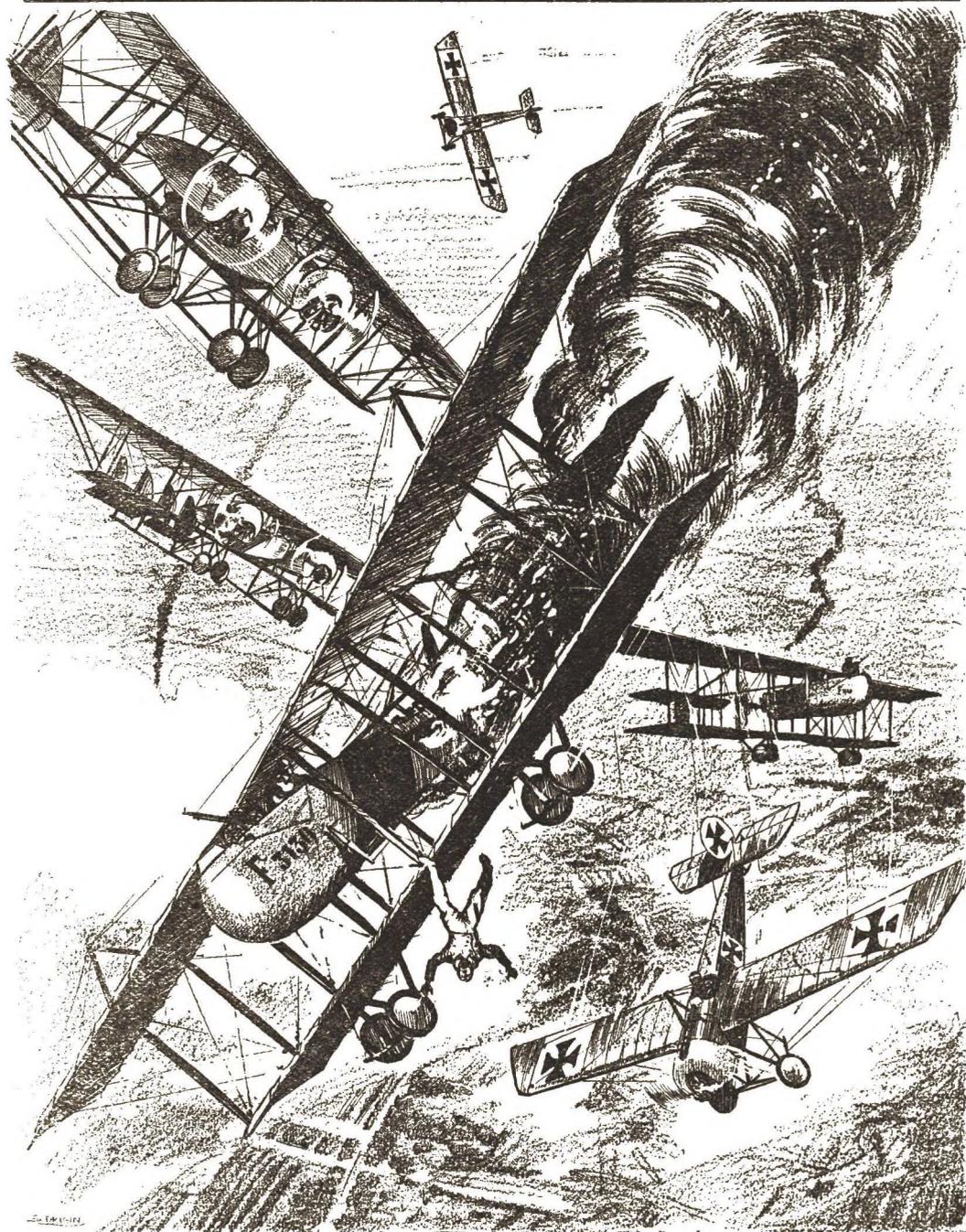
A HIGH-SPEED medium- or day-bomber, this new Vickers monoplane twin-engined aircraft follows the prevailing fashion, and is of the mid-wing design. Its main structure is of the Wallis geodetic type, a new form of light-weight, but very strong construction first used in the Vickers Wellesley general purpose monoplane. It is powered by two Bristol Pegasus engines driving variable-pitch airscrews and has a span of 86 ft. The retractile undercarriage and trailing edge flaps are hydraulically operated. Two new-type gun-turrets, one in the nose and the other in the tail, are fitted to the Service model, though in the

prototype from which this sketch was made these "stings" in nose and tail had been temporarily concealed by rounded fairings to preserve their secrecy.

This machine is in the same class as the new Handley-Page and Bristol twin-engined bombers, and, together with the single-engined Fairey Battle, these new high-speed bombers have revolutionised all previous conceptions of air war tactics, as they are faster than single-seater fighters now in service, and in some cases little slower than even our latest "300 m.p.h. plus" fighters.



Udet's First Victory—A French Farman "Downed" in Flames



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

ACE OF THE BLACK CROSS

The Authentic Story of the War-time Adventures and Amazing Escapes from Death of Germany's Greatest Living Air Ace, who during Three Eventful Years on the Western Front Fought and Flew Against the Leading Fighters of the British, French and American Air Forces

By ERNST UDET

Translated from the Original German

By KENNETH KIRKNESS

CHAPTER I

Disaster in Mid-air

IN the summer of 1915, a Lance-Corporal instructor of the Air Reserve Group at Griesheimer Sand had just finished a day's work and was strolling back to his quarters when he received a message that was to alter the whole course of his life. That fateful message, as well as I can now recall it, was :

"Udet, report at once to Lieutenant Justinus, he has sent for you twice already."

I corrected the slant of my cap, saw that the badge was in line with the bridge of my nose, and set out across the grey asphalt of the barrack square. Pupils from the flying-school filed past me carrying rifles and packs. They had just returned from a route march.

I was wondering why Justinus wanted to see me. Could it be that he had heard of that little episode of pouring petrol on the tail of the Captain's dog? It would be strange if he had allowed that to worry him. He had been sent over from Darmstadt specially to look for

pilots for his section. The private affairs of the Air Reserve Group were not his business.

On a narrow door a notice stated, "Lt. Justinus." I knocked, and stepped inside.

Justinus was reclining on the bed. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and in the second buttonhole of his tunic, which hung over the back of a chair, I noticed the ribbon of the Iron Cross.

I stood to attention.

"Take a seat, Udet," said Justinus, raising a leg to kick a bundle of newspapers from the chair on to the floor.

I sat down and waited for him to begin.

"By the way, how old are you?" came his unexpected opening.

"Nineteen, Herr Lieutenant."

"Hm, rather young," he said.

"I shall soon be twenty," I hastened to add, "in April, next year."

Small creases about the eyes betrayed his amusement. "You seem in a bit of a hurry," he commented. "How did you come to take up flying?"

I began to have an inkling of why he had sent for me.



Ernst Udet, a sketch from a war-time photograph

AIR STORIES

"At the end of 1914 I got my discharge as a volunteer motor-cycle despatch-rider," I eagerly related, "and I at once applied for admission to a section of the Air Reserve. Unfortunately, they wouldn't take me."

"Why not?" Justinus inquired.

"I was too young at the time," I hesitatingly admitted.

Justinus smiled again. "And after that?" he asked.

"I took a course in civil flying—at the Otto School in Munich."

"At your own expense?"

"My father paid down two thousand marks and refurnished Herr Otto's bathroom for him."

I was going to add to the story when Justinus, with a movement of his hand, stopped me. "That's all right," he said. Then, standing up, he rested his chin in the palm of his hand and gazed long and steadily at me. At last, apparently satisfied, he spoke again.

"Would you care to come along as my pilot?" he asked me.

Although this was what I had been hoping for, I could not prevent myself from colouring with pleasure. For Justinus was a great man—a "damned smart fellow," as his flying pupils were accustomed to put it.

"Of course I would, Herr Lieutenant," I replied quickly, having at that moment little thought for the regulations. He acknowledged my acceptance with a friendly nod.

"Then that's fixed."

I got up, clicked my heels, and turned to go. As I reached the door he called me back.

"Doing anything in particular this evening?" and when I replied that I was free, he added, "Then what about a little celebration of the new marriage, 'Emil'?"

"By all means, Lieutenant 'Franz'." In the circumstances, I thought I might risk this familiar answer, for "Emil" in the Air Service vernacular meant the pilot, while "Franz" was the observer. But "Franz" alone was more than I dared to say.

It was nearly dawn when we returned

to our quarters after that celebration. I had long overstayed my leave, and so Justinus lent me his officer's cape which allowed me to pass the sentries in safety.

On the following morning, during the school flights, my thoughts were so engrossed with the exciting future ahead of me, that I was nearly the cause of a disaster. My pupil was a large, thickset grocer, who always "flattened-out" too soon when landing, and I very nearly forgot to give him the usual "reminder" when the psychological moment had come. The "reminder" consisted of dealing him one over the head with a walking-stick that I carried in the cockpit for that special purpose. In the nick of time I realised what was happening, gave him his crack, and all was well.

FOR a fortnight I had been with the 206th Flight Section at Heiligkreuz. Justinus and I made a couple of flights every day, and most of our time was spent in co-operating with the artillery of our sector, helping them to calibrate their guns. This meant that we nearly always had the same landscape beneath us—cornfields and a black and white lake whose waters were shaded by the slopes of the Vosges Mountains. From our viewpoint it appeared like a pool of molten lead.

Seldom did we venture far afield, though on one occasion we travelled far enough to afford me a glimpse of the round tower of the church of Saint-Dié, just visible beyond a ridge of hills. It was in that district that we had done our despatch-riding in the early days of the war. Was it nine months or nine years ago? In August, 1914, there had been five of us; in December only three came home. One man was sniped by the French; the other, unable to stand the strain of war and the strenuous duties, committed suicide. How long ago it all seemed! There were times when I imagined that all these things must have taken place during a former existence.

From time to time we caught sight

ACE OF THE BLACK CROSS

of the enemy, but they were observation machines, and we left each other alone. We were very lightly armed, and both sides knew it, so we passed each other like ships at sea.

With the beginning of autumn, the war in the air became more intense. At first machines were content with dropping barbed arrows on the troops below, but soon bombs were invented whose effect was nearly equal to that of shells. To bring home in full force to the enemy the effect of this new discovery, a bombing raid, in which all available machines were to participate, was fixed for September 14th, 1915. The objective was Belfort.

Justinus and I accompanied the raiders. It was an overcast day, and we had to climb more than ten thousand feet before we penetrated the clouds. Above them it was miraculously calm, and our white Aviatik B, which was fitted with a 130-h.p. engine, sailed along like a swan. Justinus took frequent glances over the side, and below us, through gaps in the clouds, we could catch occasional glimpses of the ground.

Suddenly there was a sharp metallic sound, like the snapping of a piano-wire, and immediately the machine began to side-slip to the left and plunged down into the clouds. Justinus turned round and leant over the backrest of the observer's seat, but I could only shrug my shoulders in reply to his unspoken question, for I had not the vaguest idea of what had happened. All I could do was to force the lateral control over as far as it would go, wrenching at the joy-stick until my arms ached.

We fell three thousand feet before the machine righted itself. It was still barely controllable, but the slipping had ceased, and we began to have hopes of making a safe landing. It was only then that I remembered we were a good ten miles from our lines, and that a landing meant certain capture.

Just then my companion pointed excitedly to the right upper wing-tip, and at once I saw what had happened. The metal support on the wing which

held one of the wire cables had evidently broken, and the cable was being blown about by the wind, while the wing fabric, under pressure of the air-stream, had ballooned out like a fully-inflated sail.

THERE was nothing we could do but to glide eastwards, towards the Swiss frontier. Every now and then I opened the throttle in the hope that we might maintain our height. But as the machine answered each burst of engine by a dangerous list to port, and as the angle of the list increased more and more, I began to fear that the side-slipping would recommence. I closed the throttle.

Above Montbéliard we emerged from the clouds. The altimeter registered five thousand feet, and the Swiss frontier was still more than eight miles away. There seemed no hope of reaching it.

Then Justinus climbed slowly out of the observer's seat and began to crawl out on to the lower right wing. Having reached the half-way mark, he settled into a sitting position, his legs dangling in the air. We were then 4,800 feet up, and dropping fast.

I again opened the throttle, and again the machine listed badly. I could feel how Justinus was trying to adjust the balance, but the task was too much for him. The strain of forcing the stick back was also beginning to tell on me, and I realised I could not hold out much longer. I could feel that the muscles in my arms were giving out, and I signalled desperately to Justinus for help. "Come back!" I shouted. "Come over here!" The "Lieutenant" and all the rest of it I had completely forgotten.

Slowly Justinus began to feel his way back along the steeply-slanted wing.

A few seconds later, when I was almost at the end of my tether, the machine trembled under two powerful blows and the thin wooden wall of the observer's cockpit was smashed to pieces. Two bleeding hands made their appearance, hands torn by the splintered wood. They rested for a moment in the air, and then made a grab at the joy-stick. Justinus

AIR STORIES

had come to my aid in the very nick of time.

I caught a momentary glimpse of his face, pale beneath its coating of tan, and covered with small beads of perspiration. "We must stick it out somehow!" he shouted. "Make for the Swiss border!" Our altitude was then three thousand feet, and we were still about five miles from the frontier.

Beneath us the country was completely untouched by the war. We saw villages with their red-roofed houses lying in a pleasant landscape of green orchards and fields.

Suddenly I gave a start. In the centre of this landscape I saw a line of barbed wire, the barricade which had been placed there to prevent deserters from crossing into Switzerland. We crossed the frontier near Saint-Dizier, at an altitude of only eighteen hundred feet.

"Switzerland!" I yelled to the man in front of me. Justinus' face again appeared over the splintered wall of the observer's cockpit. "Make for Germany!" he shouted back.

I opened the throttle for a short while, and then resumed our glide. We were now flying very low, and people in the villages stood open-mouthed and gaped at us as we flew over their heads. Courtemaiche that must have been—now Vendlincourt! And then we were over another line of wire entanglements—the German frontier!

WE landed in a freshly-ploughed field. We jumped out of the machine, looked at each other, and then gave full rein to our feelings. No longer were we Lieutenant Justinus and Corporal Udet; we were simply "Franz" and "Emil," two youths who began to dance like Red Indians round the stake. When we had had enough of that we pelted each other with clods of earth, as if they had been snowballs.

But our landing had been observed, and as people came running across the field, we adopted a more dignified attitude. Justinus gave orders to a cyclist to go to the nearest village and put through a call to Heiligkreuz.

The number of spectators increased, while we walked backwards and forwards near our machine. Suddenly Justinus slapped me on the shoulder. "Do you know what we are going to do? We'll have the damage repaired here, and fly back under our own power."

A grand thought! The village smith looked rather dubious when we presented the damaged part for his inspection. "I can let you have a new one in three hours," he said. We returned to the machine, with people running after us as though we were freaks escaped from a circus. Then the centre of interest shifted.

A grey-coloured car dashed up the road and came to a halt. Out of it stepped an officer, and the people who surrounded us made way for him to pass. The officer belonged to the Air Force staff.

Justinus made his report. The staff officer shook us by the hand. "You fellows have done magnificently!" He stepped up to the machine. "Where is the damaged part?"

Justinus beamed: "At this very moment being repaired, Herr Captain."

The staff officer whirled round: "What's that?"

He was evidently extremely angry. It was a firm rule that any defective part had to be handed in for official examination. We ought to have known that perfectly well. In gloomy silence we entered the car and drove to the village smithy. The smith met us at the entrance, his face glowing with a craftsman's pride.

"There you are!" he beamed, holding out the new part.

"Where is the old one?" snapped the staff officer.

The farrier jerked a broad thumb in the direction of the yard. The door stood open, and we saw a huge rubbish heap, on the top of which a number of cackling hens were scratching about in the sunshine.

"Go and look for it," the staff officer told me.

The damaged part was quickly found:

ACE OF THE BLACK CROSS

it was right on top of the heap. We washed it under the pump, and then tendered it to our superior officer. The latter looked at it and thrust it into his coat pocket. We paid the smith, then re-entered the car. We were to travel as far as Mülhausen. The smith, shaking his head, watched as we drove away.

The staff officer still seemed somewhat upset. "Blockheads!" he kept muttering to himself. Then he gave a sigh, turned round, and said to us in a different tone:

"Gentlemen, you must excuse my abruptness, but only to-day two men from your section have crashed—Lieutenant Winter and Acting-Sergeant-Major Preiss. They came down on Hartmannsweilerkopf—probably owing to a similar defect. Both were killed."

A shadow passed over our joy.

A week later it was announced in the Orders of the Day that Lieutenant Justinus had been awarded the Iron Cross of the First Class and Lance-Corporal Udet the Iron Cross of the Second Class, for their services in saving one of their country's aeroplanes.

CHAPTER II

An Aviatik is Written-off

WE had been detailed to take part in another bombing expedition. This time our objective was a number of fortified places in the Vosges Mountains. The flight would probably occupy some time, and so our tanks were filled to their utmost capacity. In addition, we took a couple of machine-guns on board. French fighter machines were said to be making the neighbourhood an unhealthy one; and it was even rumoured that the great Pégoud himself might put in an appearance.

Right from the take-off I felt the effect of our extra weight. The machine rose like an overfed swan whose body has become too heavy for its wings. The machine-guns, the full-to-bursting tanks, the new wireless equipment, the bombs—all did their best to keep us

back on Mother Earth. Once in the air, I banked steeply and began to climb. Below us we saw the aerodrome—the dull green of the grass and the pale grey of the sheds. The climb took longer than usual; slowly we reached three hundred—six hundred feet.

Right above the sheds I put the machine into a steep turn, but instead of righting herself when I tried to straighten out she went into an alarming side-slip. Full opposite stick had no effect, and a second later the machine was on its nose and going into the first turn of a spin.

It suddenly occurred to me that Justinus would be killed if we struck the ground, as the engine would drop back and crush his legs, and I struggled frantically with the controls. In front of me I saw an arm outstretched to reach the top wing as, with a sudden jerk, Justinus pulled himself out of the seat, and squatted on the backrest of the observer's cockpit.

"Udet," he yelled, "Udet——" There was a gurgling sound—then a crash—then everything turned black. . . .

After what seemed to me a very, very long time, I heard a voice: "You all right, Herr Udet?"

Standing over me was my mechanic, Berend, his flabby features lined with paternal anxiety. Four strong arms then grabbed me, and I was extracted from the tangled mass of wood and iron that had been an Aviatik. A knee stuck fast, and a steel rod had to be bent back before I could get free.

"Where is Justinus?"

Berend pointed to the grass. Justinus lay there, on his back, his face towards the sky. His eyes were closed.

"Dead?" I shouted.

Berend reassured me: "Not he! He's made of pretty tough stuff. Already been asking about you."

They took hold of me, one on each side, carried me gently over to Justinus' side, and laid me on the grass.

Slowly I turned my head in the direction of Justinus. His eyes were still shut, and a thin stream of blood trickled from his mouth to his chin. Was he . . . ?

AIR STORIES

Then his hand began to search in the grass for mine. Cautiously, I advanced my hand to meet his. His grip was firm, the genuine grip of a friend. We said nothing, it was not necessary.

Behind us the mechanics were busy with the machine. I heard Berend's voice: "Lucky for them, but a pity all the same, that the bombs didn't go off!"

Hospital orderlies then came and hoisted us on to stretchers. We were loaded into the ambulance, like loaves into a baker's oven, and driven to the hospital in Colmar, where we were separated.

Justinus, who had been flung from the machine as it struck the ground, was suffering from cuts and bruises, while my leg had been badly twisted at the knee-joint.

TEN days passed before I could leave my bed and hobble through the corridors. During the whole of this time I had received no letters from home, and not one of the men from my unit had been to see me. It was just as if I had been reported missing. I managed to hold out for another four days, and then informed the doctor that I wanted to rejoin my unit. The M.O. raised his eyebrows, but finally decided (a) that I was not an infantryman, and (b) that it was not his leg. And so he gave me my discharge for the following day.

The first man I met on the 'drome was a friend with whom I had often spent my leave; he was one of our pilots. I shouted to him, but he gave me a curt nod and passed on. It might have been a coincidence, but three men were standing in front of the big tent, and as I approached they too turned and walked away.

Finally I saw Berend. That worthy scratched his head, and with a considerable display of secrecy drew me into a dark corner. There was the very devil to pay! It seemed that as soon as we crashed, the C.O. got into touch with the Staff by 'phone, reported that Lance-Corporal Udet was guilty of dangerous banking, and requested his instant

dismissal and severe punishment. "Exemplary punishment!" he had shouted into the 'phone; and all the orderly-room clerks had heard him. My successor, said Berend, had already arrived, and the best thing I could do would be to apply for my papers, and report to Neubreisach, my new destination.

That afternoon I sat on the sofa in my quarters with my injured limb outstretched, while the landlady knelt on the floor, and packed a bag under my instructions. Her face was wet from weeping, and her sighs were heart-rending, for I had always been a model lodger; and, moreover, I had not deducted the cost of insect powder from the rent.

Mid-way through the packing there was a knock on the door and Justinus came towards me, pushing me back on to the sofa as I struggled to regain my feet.

"Don't let it worry you, Udet," he said, in the friendliest of tones; "couldn't be helped. One day we're on top, next day we're at the bottom. That's all we expect in the Air Service."

He slapped me on the shoulder, slipped a large box of cigarettes into my hand, and was gone. He had to be off on an observation flight with my successor.

I never saw Justinus again. Subsequently he joined a fighter squadron, and fell on the Western Front in 1917.

CHAPTER III

Seven Days' Arrest

"**A**H ha! So here we have the Gentleman who is so expert at steep turns," were the words with which the Sergeant-Major greeted me on my arrival at Neubreisach aerodrome. As it was late, I was sent at once to the store to draw blankets, but that night I found it impossible to sleep.

Next morning, the flying pupils fell in on the parade-ground, but I was ordered to stay in barracks. After a while someone came to fetch me, and I was led out on to the parade-ground where

ACE OF THE BLACK CROSS

the Captain stood, leaning on his sword, and frowning as I approached. My legs felt as if they were made of rubber.

When I had approached within six paces of him, he gave the command, "About turn!" A hundred pairs of eyes stared at me in cold curiosity.

"Look at him!" a voice behind me thundered. "This is the man whose dangerous flying has cost the Fatherland a valuable machine, and whose thoughtlessness placed the life of his observer in the gravest peril."

The pupils looked at me as they might have looked at a particularly repulsive species of reptile.

A paper rustled, and the Captain began to read, in measured, businesslike tones:

"Lance-Corporal Udet, whose thoughtless conduct while flying destroyed a valuable machine and endangered the life of his observer, is sentenced to seven days' arrest. In consideration of his former good conduct in the field a more severe sentence has not been imposed."

"Let this serve as a warning to all of you!" he added in a threatening tone. Then, turning to me, he barked, "Dismiss!"

I WENT to my room, fetched my blankets, handed them back to the store, and drew a loaf of bread. It was to last me for seven days. Immediately afterwards a corporal, with rifle at the slope, came and marched me away.

The way to the military gaol led through the town. We marched—myself in front, the corporal bringing up the rear—not on the path, but in the roadway. Sounds of halting feet told me that many people stopped to turn and stare at me.

The military gaol, an old fort, was a dark and forbidding building. The prison warden, an individual with a long beard, accompanied his work with a running commentary:

"We'll have these in case you try hanging yourself," he said, as he removed my braces. "And this, in case you should want to stab yourself,"

was the explanation he gave for relieving me of my pocket-knife.

"And now your teeth!"

"What—my teeth!" I gasped.

"Yes, in case you should try and bite through your jugular vein in your sleep," he said. The others laughed, but my sense of humour for the moment had left me.

With that I was locked in my cell. It was a small, bare apartment, containing a wooden bench, a stool and a wash-basin. Small windows, like the portholes of a ship, were fitted with iron bars and one's only view was a minute strip of sky seen as though from the bottom of a deep well.

The key turned in the lock, and I was left alone with my thoughts—but not for long. Soon there came the tramp of feet on the stone sets of the corridor. The door was flung open, and I saw the prison guard on "visiting rounds."

The N.C.O. in charge of the guard, an old sergeant-major, said: "Recite this after me: 'Lance-Corporal Udet . . .' His voice echoed strangely in the bare room.

"Lance-Corporal Udet . . ." I repeated. Then, word for word, I was made to repeat the rest of the story.

". . . whose thoughtless conduct . . . destroyed a valuable machine . . . and endangered the life of his observer . . . is sentenced to seven days' arrest."

The guard marched away. In the evening they returned. The senior N.C.O. began: "Lance-Corporal Udet . . . is sentenced . . ."

The next day I needed no prompting, I had the story by heart, and could recite it without assistance. During my prison stay I had to perform this pantomime fourteen times, as the "visits" took place twice daily.

My first lunch I left untouched. It consisted of a kind of porridge, and was served without flavouring matter of any kind. In prison language it is known as "Blue Heinrich." The red-bearded warden expressed no surprise as he removed the tin plate and its untouched contents.

AIR STORIES

"Your appetite'll improve in time," he commented drily, as he turned to go. When evening came, he made another appearance, and threw a mattress into my cell. It was filled with bracken. When darkness came and obscured my view of the sky, I prepared for sleep, but I had not long been on the mattress when I felt a sharp prick in my thigh, and shortly afterwards another in the left shoulder . . . Bugs!

It was a very long night. Part of it I spent on the bare boards of the bench, then I tried the mattress again, and finally I experimented with the stone floor.

The vermin were bad enough, but my thoughts were even worse. The windows acted like large, attentive ears on the prison walls which caught, magnified, and re-transmitted to my cell the sounds from beyond. The aerodrome was not far away, and from early morn till nightfall I could hear the noise of the engines and the whirl of the propellers as they thrashed the air. I felt that I should never again feel a joy-stick in my hands, or see the world sink beneath me in a blue haze.

What had I done? I had turned steeply. Certainly, in certain circumstances this was prohibited. Only a month before, Rieger had been hauled before a court-martial and given a year's fortress arrest for stunting over the aerodrome. "For deliberate insubordination in the presence of the other ranks," were the words of the finding of the court. In comparison with this sentence, therefore, I had escaped lightly. But, nevertheless, I regarded this absurd regulation as paper nonsense, designed by office clerks who had never sat in the cockpit of an aeroplane.

I felt that I had been unjustly punished. On the other hand, I could hardly lodge a complaint, for the fact that I had crashed seemed to place the others in the right and myself in the wrong. Question upon question I put to myself, but it was hard to find satisfactory answers.

I thought of my parents. Although my father had never shown it, I well

knew how proud he was that his son was a pilot. Now they would discharge me as unfit for further service. To me the hardest blow of all was that I should never be able to fly again.

Those seven days seemed like seven years.

On the last morning Redbeard came with my coffee.

I shook my head: I had no wish to drink it.

"It's included in the cost of the board and lodging," he informed me.

More than anything else I wanted to get back to my unit; I had to know what was to happen to me, though I had little doubt that my next job would be in an office.

"Lance-Corporal Udet, sentenced to seven days' arrest for . . ." This label would be chained to me for the rest of my life, I thought. I was soon to learn differently.

CHAPTER IV

Transferred to Fighters

RELEASED at last, I hurriedly made my way back to the aerodrome to find it the scene of considerable commotion. A bombing raid had been ordered against Belfort, and all available machines were to take part. The last machines had already taken-off, and everyone was excited and absorbed by the magnitude of the event.

"Hi, you—Lance-Corporal!" someone shouted to me. I turned round, and saw an officer who was a stranger to me. Evidently he had only been at the 'drome a few days.

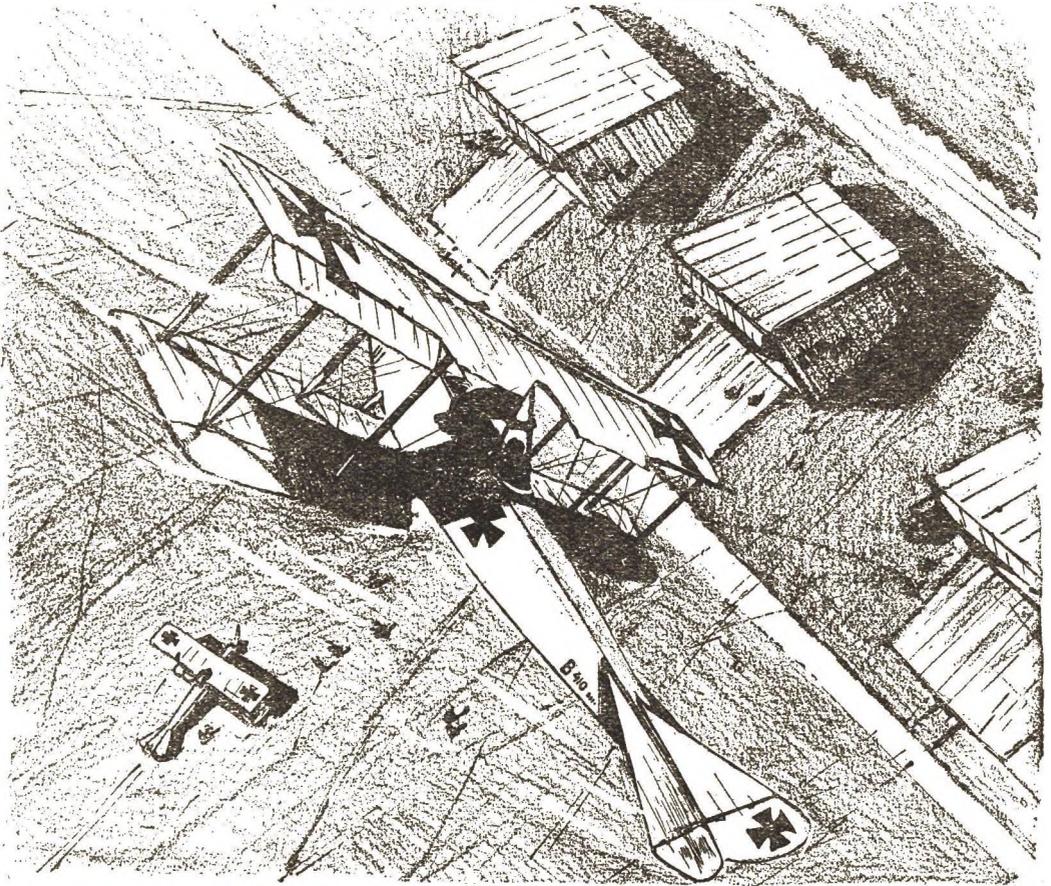
"Are you a pilot?" he asked, somewhat out of breath.

A spark of hope leapt up within me. "Yes, Herr Lieutenant."

"Well, heavens above, man"—his attitude implied both reproach and astonishment—"get a move on, or we shall miss the rest."

We both ran to the hangar. An ancient L.V.G. was being filled with petrol. The subaltern, bristling with zeal, drove the mechanics away from the machine,

ACE OF THE BLACK CROSS



Justinus pulled himself out of the cockpit as the Aviatik went into an alarming side-slip.

and ordered the 'plane to be brought out of the hangar. The engine was started up, and a number of small bombs were stowed in the observer's cockpit. We climbed aboard.

"Ready?"

"All ready!"

"Stand clear!"

A few hops over the grass, then the machine began slowly to detach herself from the earth. We were off.

It was a ramshackle old kite, probably an ex-school machine, that had been foisted on to us. But despite that, the wonder of flight has never been impressed on me so strongly and vividly as in those moments. I was in the air once again—at the controls of a machine!

It was a warm day in the late autumn. The wind sang softly in the wire cables, and, before us, slow-moving white clouds grew in a blue sky.

The enemy had already been warned

by the approach of the others. Coming towards us from the direction of Belfort were two Farmans and a Morane monoplane. There was no sense in challenging them, for we were without a machine-gun, and it was as much as our machine could do to stagger up to five thousand feet.

My observer turned round and pointed to the south. We altered direction. It was just noon, and we flew directly into the sun.

Above Montreux, my "Franz" began to grow concerned. Below us were a number of depôts and barracks, the last chance we should have of making good use of our bombs. I described a wide circle of the town, like a bird of prey waiting to pounce on its victim. My observer had his own method of bomb-dropping and, instead of throwing them overboard, he opened a small trap-door in the floor of his cockpit,

AIR STORIES

and slipped them through. Results proved the idea to be a good one, for as I looked over the side I saw slates from the roof of a building fly in all directions, and a great cloud of smoke rise up into the air.

Suddenly my observer turned round, registered signals of horror and distress, and pointed down below. One of his bombs, I found, had got caught in the fuselage. A slight concussion would have sufficed to explode it; and that would have been the end of us and our machine.

With great care I began to bank. "Banking forbidden!" was the thought that passed through my head. And at the same time I wished with all my heart that the Commandant of the aerodrome was seated at the controls in my cockpit. The bomb followed the movement of the machine, slipped to the left, and then remained stationary. I banked to the right. Promptly the bomb slid to the right, like a ring on a curtain-rail.

The observer then disappeared from view. He was crouching on the floor of his cockpit; and presently he poked a leg through the trap-door and raked about in a desperate effort to dislodge the bomb. Unfortunately, his leg was too short, and he failed to reach it.

The only thing I could do was to stand the machine on end—the first time I had ever attempted the manoeuvre—and in this way try and get rid of our unwanted passenger. The old 'plane slowly, and very unwillingly, obeyed.

There was a slight rattle, and the bomb freed itself and fell to the ground. I righted the machine, and watched the course of the bomb. It fell in a ploughed field, and a fountain of earth shot high into the air.

We turned back, and took the shortest route to our 'drome. "Franz" was still raking about with his leg, desperately trying to withdraw it from the trap-door. But it had stuck fast, and had to stay where it was until we landed. Beyond the ridge of blue hills, Neubreisach and our aerodrome came into view.

MECANICS and several pupils came to meet us as we landed, for we were the last to return from the Belfort raid. When we had climbed out, my observer shook me by the hand. "Delighted to have made your acquaintance," he said.

An orderly ran across the field towards us. I was to report at once at the C.O.'s office.

In the office I found the Captain—the one who had addressed me in front of the paraded troops—seated at his writing-desk. I clicked my heels, and reported, "Lance-Corporal Udet back from arrest, sir."

He looked at me for some moments, and then said, "You are transferred to the single-seater fighters at Habsheim. Your machine will be here in two days, and as soon as it arrives you may go."

Having said this he began to turn over a number of papers on his desk, taking not the slightest notice of me as I stood at attention, utterly overcome by this unexpected news. Eventually the Captain looked up from his papers: "Dismiss!" he snapped.

I left the office in a daze and stood for a moment on the aerodrome trying to realise my good fortune.

Transferred to the single-seaters! The fighting machines! That was what we all dreamt of. It was hardly credible. . . .

One of the orderly-room clerks approached carrying two coffee-pots.

"Hullo, Herr Single-Seater!" he said in greeting, and placed his coffee-pots down. Orderly-room clerks are knowledgeable fellows, and if you give them something to smoke they can be quite communicative. I held out my cigarette-case. He understood immediately. Giving a sly grin, he took three, lighted one of them, and told me what I wanted to know.

That morning, it seemed, the staff officer at Mülhausen had rung up to know whether Lance-Corporal Udet had yet been released from arrest. Everyone was sent in search of me, and then it was discovered that I had accompanied Lieutenant Hartmann on the Belfort

ACE OF THE BLACK CROSS

expedition. This was reported to Mülhausen.

"Was that as soon as he returned from arrest?" asked the staff officer.

"As soon as he returned," the Captain answered.

Mülhausen then put down the receiver. Two hours later the order came through that Lance-Corporal Udet had been transferred to the single-seater command at Habsheim.

"More luck than brains!" the Captain commented as he replaced the receiver.

The orderly took up his coffee-pots and said, as he walked away, "Well, good luck, Herr Single-Seater!"

When the sun is high, it grows warm in the valley. The pupils, who for some time had regarded me as a kind of outcast, now began to "cultivate" me. "Single-seaters at Habsheim? Good business!" And they wanted to know how I got my Iron Cross. I gave them the information they sought—though in rather superior tones I am afraid.

Two days' later my new machine arrived, a brand new Fokker E.3. A wonderfully graceful craft it appeared, vastly different to the old Aviatik B which I had flown with 206 Squadron.

As I was about to start I found that nearly half the pupils had come to see me off. "Practise hard, you fellows, and maybe you'll be scout pilots too, one day!" I shouted to them, waving my hand.

The brake-blocks were drawn aside, the Gnome engine purred louder, and I was off. Hardly had I risen from the ground when I found the machine lurching to the right. I tried every means to right her, but nothing happened. The hangars drew near with astonishing speed; there was a crash, and splinters flew past me. I had rammed the wall of one of the hangars!

For some time I sat perfectly still, petrified with fright. Then I raised myself on trembling knees and clambered out of the cockpit. I had suffered no injury, but the machine was a complete wreck.

Pupils, followed by mechanics,

doubled across the field. Everyone, including those in the barracks and the orderly-room, had witnessed the crash. They stood round in a semicircle, then advancing on the machine, began to examine it curiously. Several people asked me questions which I was unable to answer. I stood silent, trembling like a leaf.

The Captain arrived, looked at me, and said, "So that's that!" as though he had rather expected something of the sort. I stammered something about the stick having jammed and that I could do nothing to help myself.

"We'll have that investigated," he said, giving the head mechanic a nod.

I went to my room, sat by the window, but saw nothing of what was going on outside. I had no desire for company, and the others realised it and left me alone.

In the evening the result of the examination was made known. The controls had jammed, the mechanic had photographed the interior of the cockpit, and I was absolved from blame. Another machine was placed at my disposal, this time a more elderly Fokker.

On the following morning I took-off for Habsheim and, this time, there was no one to bid me farewell—or to listen to my good advice!

CHAPTER V

My First Duel

THERE were four pilots at the single-seater station at Habsheim. The senior officer was Lieutenant Pfälzer, himself a pilot, and the other three were Acting Sergeant-Major Weingärtner, Corporal Glinkermann and myself. All four of us were young, and we lived like princes in the empty house of a rich American, who had hurriedly vacated it on the outbreak of war.

There was a pleasant, friendly atmosphere in the mess, and I was soon on excellent terms with Weingärtner. Actually, I found that no one who had known Weingärtner for as long as three days could fail to make a friend of him. He was that sort of man.

AIR STORIES

Glinkermann was reserved and more difficult to get on with. In the evenings one would find him seated among the mechanics, smoking a short pipe, and gazing into the drifting clouds of white mist that gathered above the flying-ground. I have an idea that he was badly off and rather sensitive about it. Certainly he had to suffer a good deal of leg-pulling, particularly on account of his unsoldierly appearance. Invariably, his puttees had slipped down displaying to view a generous strip of white underwear. None the less, he was an excellent pilot, one of the best I have ever met.

Our work was light and agreeable. Once or twice a day we took-off, and flew for about an hour on patrol. Seldom did we catch sight of the enemy. The December sky was cold and clear, and the ground was frozen hard, but provided one put on plenty of clothes and greased one's face, flying was a sheer delight—rather like tobogganing on the clouds.

Away in Flanders and in the Champagne, where there was fighting and pilots on both sides fell every day, they spoke of us as the "sleeping army in the Vosges." They said it a little contemptuously—and perhaps a little enviously.

One morning I was aroused early by some unusual news. Forward observers had reported that a Caudron had passed over the lines, and was believed to be heading in the direction of our aerodrome.

I climbed into my machine, and took-off. The sky was overcast, and the clouds were no more than twelve hundred feet above the ground. I plunged into the grey mist and climbed steadily up.

When I had gained a height of six thousand feet, I found a pale-blue sky above me, lit by the weak rays of the December sun. Then, far away on the horizon, I caught sight of a minute dot, like a ship seen far out to sea. It was the Caudron. We quickly drew near to each other, and soon I could detect the wide span of the other's wings, the two engines and the long, narrow, vulture-like body of the machine. We were both flying at the same height, and the

distance between us diminished rapidly.

This was against all the rules of the game, for the Caudron was an observation 'plane, and should have turned away in alarm on sighting my fighting machine. Still it came on and, as soon as the range was short enough, I opened fire with my machine-gun and sent a volley which was intended to warn him of the danger he was running. But still that confounded Caudron continued to fly to meet me.

Very soon he was so close that I could see the observer's head. With his rectangular goggles he resembled some great ferocious insect bent upon my destruction.

The moment had now come for me to shoot in earnest—but I was quite unable to do so! It was as though horror had turned my blood to ice, taken the strength from my arms, and numbed my brain. I sat passively in the cockpit, flying straight ahead, and staring idiotically at the Caudron as we passed each other. Suddenly the Caudron's machine-gun opened fire; there were sharp metallic sounds as the bullets struck my Fokker, the machine gave a shudder, and I felt a hard blow which smashed my goggles. Mechanically I reached to my face to feel the splintered glass, and when I withdrew my hand it was covered in blood. I pushed the stick forward, and nose-dived into the clouds. My mind was in a whirl. What had happened, what was the reason for my strange conduct?

"You miserable coward!" the engine seemed to say. And my only thought was, "Thank God, nobody saw it!"

I PASSED the green belt of fir-trees, and landed on the 'drome.

Mechanics ran to meet me but, without waiting for their help, I climbed out of the machine and walked past them to the station buildings.

First-aid men got to work and removed the splinters of glass which had embedded themselves in the flesh round my eyes. The operation must have been painful, yet I remember nothing of it.

I then went to my room and threw

ACE OF THE BLACK CROSS

myself on to the bed. I wanted to sleep, but my thoughts refused to let me rest.

"Is one a coward just because one fails in one's very first fight? I tried to reassure myself; told myself that it was just a matter of nerves—a thing that might happen to anyone.

But my conscience was not to be easily appeased, and there remained the cold, hard fact that I had failed miserably, and all because, at the crucial moment, I had thought of myself, and had trembled for my own safety. Now I knew something of the strength of character that lay behind that simple term "a good soldier."

And there and then I vowed to make myself a "good soldier." I would shoot better and fly better, until I was in a position to rid myself of the stain that now lay upon my honour.

With the help of Berend, who had followed me to Habsheim, I set to work. We rigged up a target in the form of a silhouette of a Nieuport, as seen from above and behind—the usual angle for attacking a machine of this type.

In the evening, when flying for the day was over, I had the target erected in the middle of the aerodrome. Then from a height of about a thousand feet I dived, and at about three hundred feet I opened fire. When I had nearly reached the ground I caught up the machine, climbed again, and began all over again. It was Berend's job to count the hits, and signal the results to me. All hits in the "enemy's" engine counted double, and if there were ten of them Berend was to be rewarded with a glass of beer. Frequently, far too frequently, we had to wrestle with machine-gun stoppages, and often it took us until late in the night to clear the gun. None the less, I began rapidly to improve, in fact my sudden improvement in marksmanship was positively miraculous—until I discovered that Berend's craving for the promised beer had affected the accuracy of his arithmetic!

Shortly afterwards I was obliged to curtail these practice flights as an official decree had been issued ordering us to be sparing with ammunition. To make

up for this we set out on a number of aerial attacks on the French trenches.

CHAPTER VI

First Blood

ONE Sunday afternoon I was alone in our quarters—the others had gone into town—when, at about half-past three, our telephonist came running out to me. A message had been received from our forward observer to the effect that two French machines had passed our lines and were rapidly approaching Altkirch. I leapt into the car, and tore along the road to the aerodrome. I had no ready-made plan of campaign, and was none too sure what sort of adventure faced me, but my instinct clearly told me that a scrap was in prospect, and it was my duty to get into it.

I found that my machine had been started up, and mechanics were ready for me, so all I had to do was to climb into the cockpit and take-off.

I gained height as rapidly as possible, and made off in the direction of the front line. Realising that if I was to enjoy the advantage in the coming fight I had to be higher than my opponents, I climbed up to some eight thousand feet before setting a course for Altkirch.

Just as I was passing over the town I saw them. I counted, one . . . two . . . three . . . four . . . I felt for my glasses; that couldn't be right! The black dots, I thought, must have been splashes of oil from the engine. I quickly wiped my goggles with the back of my glove, and lo! the spots were still there, growing larger every second.

I counted seven, seven in line, and behind them another line, then came another five and then . . . As they drew nearer, I counted twenty-three of them, sharply silhouetted against the afternoon sky. They were bombers of the Caudron and Farman types.

Like a swarm of angry hornets they approached, making no attempt to maintain any sort of formation. High above the others was the queen of the swarm, a mighty Voisin. I climbed still higher,

AIR STORIES

and we approached each other at astonishing speed. Without doubt, they must have seen me, but they showed no signs of recognising my existence. They did not increase their altitude by a single centimetre, and they ploughed steadily along on their course, steering straight for Mülhausen.

Hurriedly I looked round, but the sky behind me was all too clear. None of my comrades from Habsheim had come to join me ; I was alone.

Above Burnhaupt I met the enemy. Nine hundred feet above their heads I turned to follow them, setting my course east north-east, in the direction of Mülhausen.

I leant over the side : the squadron below me numbered twenty-three machines, and in their centre was a great Farman. Through the gaps between the massed wings I could see strips of the ground, blue roof-slates and red bricks.

The moment had come.

My heart beat furiously, and the hands which held the joy-stick were damp. It was one against twenty-three !

My Fokker flew above the enemy squadron like a hawk singling out its victim. The hawk followed, but did not pounce. But even as I hesitated, I realised that if I failed to open the battle immediately I should never have the courage to do so afterwards. In that case I would land, go to my room, and then, in the morning, Pfälzer would have the task of writing my father that there had been a fatal accident while I was cleaning my revolver.

We were now above Dornbach, not far from Mülhausen. People were seated in the gardens of the cafés and *gasthäuser*—round, white discs, representing upturned faces, standing out plainly against a green-brown landscape. In a moment they were running in all directions, gesticulating, and pointing heavenwards.

By that time I had taken the plunge.

I saw but one object : a big Farman in the centre of the squadron. I opened the throttle and dived with the engine full on. The bomber grew in size, and almost immediately I could distinguish

every detail, as though I were examining the machine through a microscope. The observer turned round—I could see his round leather helmet—and trained his machine-gun in my direction.

I had intended opening fire at a distance of about 180 feet, but I now determined to make quite certain of my target. Closer and closer we drew together—150 feet, 100 feet—90 . . . I let him have it for all I was worth . . . *tack, tack, tack !*

Suddenly the great bomber faltered. A blue flash darted from the exhaust, to be followed by a cloud of white smoke—he had been hit in the petrol-tank ! *Klack, klack, klack !* I heard the metallic sounds of enemy bullets striking my own machine, and jerking my head round, I saw two Caudrons peppering me from the rear. But now I was perfectly calm, and carried on as though it were merely a practice manœuvre. Putting the stick forward, I dived about a thousand feet, and then caught up my machine.

Like a giant torch cast from the heavens, the blazing hulk of the Farman shot past me. As it fell, I saw a cloud of black smoke, pierced from time to time by flashes of bright flame. A man with outstretched arms and legs fell from the blazing machine : the observer.

AT the time the thought that those Amen were human-beings never once occurred to me ; I was only conscious of one sensation—victory, triumph ! The iron band about my chest snapped, and the blood coursed freely through my veins—the tension was over, I had been blooded.

Above me now the air was filled with the drone of engines and the staccato bark of machine-guns. All the available machines from Habsheim had been sent up, and were now getting to grips with the enemy. Their savage onslaughts had caused the French squadron to open out, and several dog-fights were in progress. Wherever one glanced there were machines diving and looping in a desperate effort to gain the advantage of height.

An isolated Caudron was making a

ACE OF THE BLACK CROSS

hasty exit towards the west, and as no one was following him, I opened the throttle, and set out in pursuit. The excitement of my first duel was over : I had sobered down, and my actions were cool and calculated. My single aim was to destroy the opponent ; nothing else interested me. At 450 feet I opened fire, but immediately stopped—I was much too far away. At about 250 feet I fired another burst, and now I could follow clearly the effects of my fire. A tremor seemed to pass through the Caudron, and a wisp of smoke emerged from the starboard engine. The beat of the propeller died away, and finally the revolutions ceased altogether. The pilot looked round, caught sight of me, and dived.

I followed, and as he only had one engine running it was impossible for him to escape me. Soon I was so close that I could feel the draught from his slipstream. Another burst of fire and the pilot crumpled up, collapsing over his joy-stick.

And then my gun jammed. The speed of the dive had interfered with the loading of the cartridges, and though I hammered with both fists on the barrel, the gun remained stubbornly silent.

I was now out of action, and had to leave the enemy and fly home. I landed on the Habsheim flying-field at twenty-five past five, having taken-off at sixteen minutes past four. The events which I have just described had all occurred in little over an hour.

In the middle of the aerodrome stood Captain Mackenthun, the officer commanding the Habsheim district. He stood, legs wide apart, watching the duels through his binoculars. I walked towards him :

“ Acting Sergeant-Major Udet returned, sir,” I reported. “ Two-seater Farman shot down.”

He lowered his glasses, and looked at me. His features were set. “ Our big machine has just been reported brought down over Napoleon’s Isle,” he said.

I knew what he meant. The pilot was Lieutenant Kurth, and Kurth was Mackenthun’s best friend. I saluted and went to the hangars.

IN the evening we had an opportunity of going over the events of the day. The French air raid, the first big-scale raid in world history, had been beaten off. Five enemy machines had been brought down on our side of the line. Of nine officers from one flight, only three returned in the evening. “ *Tu finiras aussi à l’île Napoléon,*” soon became a favourite saying in the other camp whenever one of their men showed an inclination to become too daring.

Three of our men we saw no more : Kurth, Hopffgarten and Wallat, the crew of the Bauernschreck, the big machine belonging to the 48th Squadron. They were tackling a Farman, it seems, when in a last desperate gesture, the latter turned and rammed them. They fell together to destruction, both machines plunging to destruction on Napoleon’s Isle.

That was on March 18th, 1916, and that night the lights in our Habsheim villa were to be seen until the small hours of the morning. Casualties there had been on this day, but this time we were not among them ; instead, each of us—Pfälzer, Weingärtner, Glinkermann and myself—had accounted for his man.

We were young, and victory had to be celebrated.

(To be continued)

In next month’s instalment of this vivid autobiography, Ernst Udet records his transfer to the French Front and describes an extraordinary encounter with the great Guynemer, who, when the author was entirely at his mercy with both guns jammed, was too fine a sportsman to take advantage of “ cold meat.” This instalment describes, too, the curious manner in which Udet, with 20 victories to his credit, became a member of the famous Jagtstaffel II and fought side by side with the great von Richthofen against the R.F.C. on the Western Front

CUSTOMARY CARGO

Though the Law Requires that Every Aircraft from Abroad
Shall Land at a Customs Airport, Determined Gentlemen
With Guns Can Sometimes Be a Law Unto Themselves
—and Their Pilots

By Captain W. E. JOHNS

"TALKING of flying strange freight, I'll tell you a story of something that happened to me a little while ago ; I doubt if anybody has had an experience quite like it," I said, looking round the pilots' room at the airport where I, with most of the others present, was employed.

Work was over for the day, and those of us who had no reason to hurry home had foregathered for the usual evening chat.

"As I say, it happened some time ago, before I was taken on by Transit Airways, so I don't think there is any harm in telling you about it now ; but it wouldn't do to talk about it outside, as you'll realise when you've heard it."

"Go ahead, Tommy," invited Ben Garrick, our senior pilot, stretching out his feet to the fire, for the weather was none too warm.

"The thing started," I continued, "by my spotting an advertisement in the personal column of *The Times*. I was out of a job, and kept my eye on the column more in the hope that something would turn up than confidence that it would. The advertisement, as near as I can remember, ran something like this :

"Wanted urgently. An aeroplane pilot. Must be experienced, of exceptional ability, and able to undertake a long-distance flight. Generous fee to the right man. Applications, stating qualifications, must be made to Box 0812, at the office of this paper."



"You do as you're told," he said, and he looked as if he meant it.

CUSTOMARY CARGO

“ Well, my ability might not be exceptional, but I’d certainly got the experience, so I lost no time in pushing an answer along to the box number. Frankly, I didn’t expect an answer for some days, if at all—you know what these things are—so you can judge my astonishment when I got a reply the following evening from a fellow named Julius Day, asking me to meet him in the lounge of a certain hotel that same night, when he would tell me what it was all about. I was there dead on time, as you can well imagine, and this was the proposition he put to me.

“ **H**E had, he said, bought an aeroplane when he was in the south of France—at Marseilles, to be precise—and wanted it flown over to England. The outward trip would have to be made by rail and boat, of course, but he would come with me and fly back in the machine. Nothing very difficult about that, you might say, and you would be right. I expected something far more difficult, a job that would take some time, particularly as he was offering one hundred pounds for the round trip and all expenses paid.

“ Well, it wasn’t for me to quibble. The job suited me all right ; in fact, it looked like money for jam. A hundred pounds isn’t to be sniffed at at any time, but when you’re pretty well on your uppers, it becomes even more alluring. Naturally, I said yes, I’d go. When were we due to start ? When he told me that we were to start the following morning, catching the ten o’clock boat-train from Victoria, I must confess that I was a bit taken aback ; but it didn’t take me many minutes to put my kit into a suitcase, and at a quarter to ten the next morning I was on the Continental platform waiting for my benefactor.

“ I was a bit relieved to see him come striding down the platform because even until the last minute the job seemed too good to be true, and I half suspected that it would fall through. These easy-money propositions seldom materialise, as you may have noticed. This one did, though.

“ As soon as we were in the train he

handed me ten five-pound notes, being half the agreed fee ; the balance, he said, would be paid on the safe delivery of the machine in England.

“ There’s no need for me to tell you about our trip across France. It was all perfectly straightforward. We had three hours to wait in Paris, where he stood me a jolly good dinner, and we caught the nine thirty-five to Marseilles, arriving there about eight in the morning. I thoroughly enjoyed the journey because Day was an extraordinarily interesting fellow, and entertained me with stories of some of his adventures. He must have been getting on for sixty years of age, and had travelled all over the world, so he could reel off yarns about the most amazing out-of-the-way places. Anyhow, the time passed quickly enough, and at half-past nine we were walking down the tarmac at Marignane—which, as you know, is the airport for Marseilles—towards the shed in which the machine was housed.

“ Everything went well until the moment came to start. The machine, which turned out to be a second-hand, single-engined Berline-Breguet, such as is used on some of the airlines in France, was there all right, and seemed to be in flying trim. The tanks were full, and the engine, when I ran it up, gave its full revs., so it seemed that there was nothing more to do except fly her home. And that’s where I struck the first snag.

“ ‘ Where are we making for, Lympne or Croydon ? ’ I asked.

“ ‘ Neither,’ he replied promptly. ‘ Can you read a map ? ’

“ ‘ Of course,’ I told him.

“ Whereupon he took an ordnance survey map of East Anglia from his pocket and pointed to a field near a small hamlet, just north of Stowmarket.

“ ‘ But we can’t land there,’ I protested.

“ ‘ Why not ? ’ he asked, apparently surprised.

“ ‘ Because we’ve got to clear Customs,’ I said, ‘ which means that before we do anything else, we’ve got to land at a recognised airport. After we’ve got a clearance certificate you can go on to

AIR STORIES

anywhere you like, but you can't just hop off from here and land in any old field in England that suits your fancy. No, sir.'

'He wouldn't have that. He said it was all red-tape nonsense, and he wasn't going to mess about signing papers, and so on and so forth.'

'When he had finished I told him there was nothing doing. Either we were going to land at a proper airport or he could fly the machine home himself, because I wasn't going to lose my ticket, and perhaps get six months in quod into the bargain, for the sake of a hundred pounds. 'And anyway,' I said, 'what have you got in that case in the cabin?' For the cabin was pretty well filled with a whacking great packing-case.

'That's my business,' he answered curtly.

'That's where you're wrong,' I told him. 'It's my business as well as yours.'

'Well, we argued for a bit, and then, as if he had suddenly made up his mind, he said we'd go to a proper airport, after all—Abridge, in Essex, for preference, that being the nearest to his home.'

OFF we went, but no sooner were we in the air than he shook me by offering to make the fee two hundred pounds if I would land the machine in his field, which, I gathered, was on his estate, and right by his house. But in making the offer he over-reached himself, for people—not honest people, at any rate—don't chuck money about like that. For the first time I became really suspicious, and wished I had insisted on seeing what was in the case inside before we took-off. He, by the way, was sitting next to me in the second pilot's seat. By this time we had passed over Lyons and were approaching Paris, and I began to turn over in my mind the possibility of landing at Paris, and demanding to know what was going on.

'Mind you, the matter wasn't made easier by the fact that I liked the old man. He'd been absolutely charming from the very beginning, and had done me well in the matter of hospitality, so I felt loath to start a serious row. It also explains

why I changed my mind about landing at Paris and flew straight on, deciding that, whatever he said, I'd land at a customs airport. His offer of two hundred pounds I turned down flat.

'Now, in spite of all that had passed, I was quite unprepared for his next move. It is all very well for you to say that I might have expected something of the sort, but then you haven't seen the old man. He looked as if he couldn't hurt a fly, and I hadn't the slightest doubt in my mind about who would win if it came to a real show-down. That's the worst of being over-confident. And anyway, in these enlightened days one doesn't expect a passenger—but wait a minute; let's keep things in the right order.'

'We crossed the Channel, roared on over Kent, and had left the Thames behind us, when the old man, who had gone back into the cabin for something, reappeared and said, 'Where are you making for?'

'Abridge, of course,' I replied. 'We shall be there in ten minutes.'

'I turned sideways to look at him, and a nasty sight awaited me. The friendly look had gone out of the old man's eyes. In his hand was an automatic, and on his back was a parachute which he had apparently just fetched from his suitcase.'

'What's the big idea?' I snapped.

'You do as you're told or you'll see,' he declared. 'If you make a move towards Abridge, I'll blow you in halves,' and he looked as if he meant it.

THERE was no need for me to ask what he was going to do in an uncontrolled aeroplane if he shot me. That was plain enough. He was going over the side with the parachute, and by the time the wreck of the machine had burnt itself out on the ground, with me in it, it was hardly likely that such a little thing as a bullet-hole in my body would be noticed.

'It was a nasty position, as you'll admit. I didn't want to break the law if I could help it, but all the same it hardly seemed worth while virtually to commit suicide for what might, after all, be nothing more than a technical offence

CUSTOMARY CARGO

against regulations. Moreover, it seemed to me that if any hanky-panky was going on—smuggling, for instance—I could show him a thing or two as soon as we were on the ground.

“So I gave him a dirty look and went on to his perishing field. It was there right enough, with a whacking great mansion of a place standing on the edge of it. I cut the throttle, went down, landed, and taxied up to a barn near the house which he told me was to serve as a temporary hangar.

“I don’t quite know just what I intended doing when I got on the ground, but whatever it was, it didn’t come off, for as I stepped out, with Day still keeping me covered with the gun, two niggers, who looked big enough to eat me, came trotting out of the barn and grabbed me by the arms and neck.

“Now I’m no chicken, as you know, but two fourteen-stone wild men, plus another fellow with an automatic, was a bit beyond me, and I knew it. Not for one moment did I attempt to persuade myself otherwise. I’m only a pilot, not a prize-fighter.

“Into the house the big boys from the Dark Continent marched me, and heaved me into a little room with one tiny window high up in the wall. Then they went out, and locked the door behind them.

“Things didn’t look so rosy, as you’ll admit, and I was ready to kick myself to death for being such an ass as to walk into the trap with my eyes open. What the end of the affair was to be I couldn’t imagine. Were they going to keep me a prisoner for the rest of my life? Or were they going to murder me and dispose of my body quietly as soon as it was convenient? It was plain enough that anything could happen to me now without anyone being the wiser. No; the more I thought about it the less I liked it.

“I SUPPOSE I had been sitting in the room about an hour when the door opened and in walked Day, followed by one of his ebony thugs with a tray on which a meal had been laid. By this time it was well after tea-time, and having

had no lunch, I was ready for a bite. There was no longer anything aggressive about Day. He was more like his old self, smiling cheerfully, and full of apologies. He waited for the coloured gent to set down the tray and depart, and then he turned to me with an air of real regret.

“‘A thousand apologies, my dear fellow,’ he said. ‘I have treated you shamefully—foolishly, and I have decided to tell you the reason if you care to listen.’

“‘Go ahead,’ I said shortly, helping myself to some sandwiches. ‘I’ve got a pretty good idea of what you’re up to. What’s in the case: cocaine or saccharine?’

“He stared at me for a moment and then burst out laughing. ‘Good heavens!’ he cried. ‘What do you think I want to do—poison the entire nation?’

“I saw his point, for the case, which, judging by the size of it, must have weighed several hundredweight, could hardly have contained drugs.

“‘Well, what’s the answer?’ I asked.

“‘First of all,’ he said, ‘there’s another little matter to settle.’ And he handed me another ten five-pound notes. ‘I should like to add an honorarium to that,’ he observed. ‘But I will not, for fear you should think that I am trying to bribe you. And now go on with your meal while I tell you my story, which I trust you will not find uninteresting.’

“There was something so sincere about the old man’s manner that my anger fizzled out, and I listened to his story without a single interruption, for, as he had promised, it was not uninteresting. On the contrary, I found it very interesting indeed.

“‘I’VE spent the last ten years of my life in the African Bush,’ he began. ‘I’ve been prospector, planter, and big-game hunter, and during most of that time I have been completely out of touch with civilisation. I mention this for reasons which will presently become apparent. Bear the fact in mind. Up to twelve months ago I owned a small coffee

AIR STORIES

plantation in Kenya. It was rather off the map, my bungalow being about seventy miles from that of Major James, who was my nearest neighbour. It was quite a pleasant spot, but it had one serious drawback—leopards. I've travelled a lot, in Africa particularly, but never in my life have I struck a district so infested with leopards—which, in case you don't know, are a good deal more dangerous than lions. Anyway, I've never had an unprovoked attack made on me by a lion, nor have I ever been afraid of lions ; but I've been afraid of leopards.

“ ‘To make a long story short, I lost a lot of boys through these confounded beasts, and things came to such a pass that I had a job to get labourers at all. Those that stuck to me refused to move a yard without an armed guard, and I can't say that I altogether blamed them. But this doubled my wages bill, and in the end I declared war on the whole tribe of these spotted devils. I hunted them with my rifle morning, noon, and night, and I killed a lot, chiefly with the assistance of my dogs. But good dogs were the difficulty. Few breeds will face a leopard, and precious few will go into the bush to turn him out.

“ ‘The best dog I ever had for the job was a bull-terrier. He was afraid of nothing on four legs, or two. But he grew old, until it was no longer fair to hunt him. His spirit was as fine as ever, but neither his strength nor his teeth were what they had been. So I sent to a famous kennels in England for another bull-terrier—a lady this time, with the idea of raising a pack of leopard hunters. I told the kennels just what I wanted, and I must say they sent me a fine animal. She was as gentle as a kitten with me and the boys, but the very smell of a leopard sent her fighting mad. And after she had been mauled by one she became a thousand times worse. She lived for one purpose, and that was to hunt leopards.

“ ‘Buster, my old original terrier, was still with me, and in due course Judy—that was her name—presented me with four fine puppies, all brindled like herself,

which pleased me no end, as you can well believe. With five dogs of fighting breed the leopards were going to have a thin time. The months rolled on and my pack became famous, and I suppose the pups would be about two years old when the incident occurred that put an end to my sojourn in Africa.

“ ‘I was sitting on the verandah of my bungalow one evening, sipping my after-dinner coffee, and watching the sun go down. This verandah, I may say, was quite a low affair, probably about a foot from the ground. I'd had a long day, and was very tired, which may account for the fact that I had carelessly left my rifle inside instead of having it within reach. Usually I took it out with me, as I often got a shot from the verandah. I couldn't see the pups or their mother, but I didn't pay much attention to that, for I knew they wouldn't go far away.

“ ‘The first intimation I had that something was wrong was when old Buster, who was lying at my feet, jumped up with his hackles bristling like a tooth-brush. Before I could get on my feet, the leopard, which must have been stalking me for some time through the long grass that surrounds the bungalow, made its spring. It landed fair and square on me, and half in and half out of the deck-chair as I was, I hadn't a chance. Over I went with the leopard on top of me. But as I fell I yelled one word—Judy. I knew she was my only hope ; there was no chance of getting at the rifle.

“ ‘I did all I could. I shoved my arm in the beast's throat, and that may have saved my life.'

“ ‘Day pulled up the sleeve of his coat and showed me his arm, and I shuddered as I saw the terrible scars on his forearm.

“ ‘**Y**OU may well shudder,' he went on. 'That is what the leopard did to my arm. I thought it was all up with me. Once the brute got its hind claws up into my stomach it would rip me open like a paper bag. I felt it clawing its way over me for that purpose, and at that moment Judy arrived. Not only Judy but her four stalwart sons. They

CUSTOMARY CARGO

didn't make a sound. They just went straight at the leopard. What a battle ! I've never seen or heard anything like it.

" "They went at the leopard, and where their teeth sank they held on. Through a sort of red mist I could see that Judy had it by the throat. The beast left me, of course, and I managed to get on my feet in time to see a whirling mass of dogs, leopard, blood, and hair. The leopard was an enormous brute, and I knew that unless I did something quickly there would be little left of either my dogs or the leopard. I staggered into the living-room, snatched up my rifle, and returned. The verandah was a shambles, and the dickens of it was that for a moment or two I dare not shoot for fear of hitting one of the dogs.

" "Finally, however, my chance came. I shoved the muzzle of the rifle into the brute's ear and pulled the trigger. It rolled over dead, and I flopped across it in a faint.

" "When I came round I was lying in a pool of gore—some of which was my own. Not one of my boys had come to my aid, the cowardly rascals. Such was their fear of the leopards that they had bolted for their lives at my first cry for help. One of them was up a tree, and when he saw me get to my feet he called the others and they came back. A lot of use it was then.

" "Well, we sorted out the living from the dead. Poor Judy was dead. Old Buster, game to the last, was dying, and the four pups were so badly mauled that I thought none of them would survive. Yet curiously enough they recovered, and when I left hospital two months later with doctor's orders to return to England forthwith, in case my wounds turned septic, I was anxious to bring them home with me. Would *you* have left your dogs behind ?

" "And I didn't see any reason why I shouldn't bring them home, and that is where my ignorance of English laws let me down. When I got to Marseilles I learned to my horror that dogs could only be brought into England on the understanding that they were left for six months at a quarantine station.

" "The idea of leaving my dogs—dogs that had unquestionably saved my life—for six months *anywhere*, was unthinkable, and for the first time in my life I sat down and racked my brains for ways and means to evade the law. Don't overlook the fact that I felt I was doing no harm. My dogs would not be allowed to run wild where there was a chance of their biting anyone, thereby starting an epidemic of hydrophobia—the reason for which the strict quarantine regulations were made. They would be here with me, miles from anywhere. What possible harm could they do ? After what had happened I should have taken good care that they came to no harm.

" "You can guess what I did. I bought an aeroplane, left it—and the dogs—with an agent in Marseilles, and then came home to get the place ready for their reception. All I wanted was a pilot. I advertised, and I found you. Now you know what was in the case in the cabin."

" **A**S he finished speaking, Day crossed over to the door and pushed it open. Four brindled bull-terriers poured into the room, leaping and mouthing over the master they evidently adored.

" "Well, that's the story. What could I do ? The old man looked at me, and then he looked at the dogs, with tears in his eyes.

" "You must do what you think right and proper," he said. "If this business lies heavily on your conscience, go to the police and tell them what you have done. They will fine me. That doesn't matter. They will take my dogs. That will upset me. They may even destroy them after what has happened. That, I think, would be more than I could bear."

I looked round the room at the other pilots. "What would you have done in my place ?" I asked. "No ; you needn't tell me. I know. You'd have done what I did, which was to shake hands with the old man and go my way, regardless of regulations or anything else. I——"

But Ben Garrick had sprung to his

feet, with his eyes blazing. "How long ago did this happen?" he demanded.

"About two years ago," I told him, startled. "Why?"

He flopped down in a chair, buried his face in his hands, and laughed until he sobbed, while the rest of us stared in amazement at his extraordinary behaviour.

"Here, come on," I cried. "What's wrong with you? What's the joke?"

Ben looked up and wiped the tears from his eyes. "I did the same show for the same chap a few weeks afterwards, and he told me the same tale," he explained. "I wonder how many other pilots have been taken in by that double-crossing, oily-tongued old smuggler."

HERE'S THE ANSWER

Readers' Questions are invited and should be addressed to AIR STORIES, 8-11 Southampton Street, London, W.C.2. A stamped, addressed envelope must accompany ALL enquiries.

IMMELMANN TURN (Ian J. Rutherford, Ontario, Canada). The object of the Immelmann Turn, which consists of a half-roll off the top of a loop, is to enable a pilot to regain height after a dive and reverse direction at the same time. The manoeuvre was first performed by a British pilot in 1912, but Max Immelmann was the first to adopt it during the War and used it with such success that its invention became generally, but wrongly, attributed to him.

THE FLYING TANK (S. H. Barnett, Wembley Park, Middx.). (1) From the information you give, the German 'plane nicknamed "The Flying Tank" was probably the A.E.G. C.4 "Ground Strafer," an armour-plated two-seater biplane fitted with one Parabellum and four Spandau machine-guns. It was produced in 1918 and, with a 300-h.p. Benz engine, had a top speed of 86 m.p.h. (2) The ratchet type of centre-section mounting as used for Lewis guns during the War is no longer employed on modern R.A.F. fighters owing to the physical impossibility of manipulating and loading an outboard gun of this type against the air stream set up by the very high speeds now attained.

AIRCRAFT DATA (H. Davison, Bridlington). Following are the principal dimensions of the 'planes you list: Handley-Page Type 51, span 90 ft.; length 78 ft. 4 in.; height 15 ft. Bristol Type 130, span 96 ft.; length 67 ft. 9 in.; height 16 ft. Hawker Hart, span 37 ft. 4½ in.; length 29 ft. 4 in.; height 10 ft. 4 in. Avro 504K, span 36 ft.; length 28 ft. 11 in.; height 10 ft. 10 in. Handley-Page 0/400, span 100 ft.; length 62 ft. 6 in.; height 22 ft.

KURT WINTGENS (R. H. Craig, Taunton School, Somerset). We have no record of the Wintgens mentioned by Haupt. Heydermarck in the book you mention. Certainly he was not the Kurt Wintgens whom Ball shot down over the Western Front, as this Wintgens never saw service overseas.

AIR V.C.'S (D. Griffiths, Cheadle, Cheshire). Squadron Leader G. S. Inshall, V.C., gained three victories, and Flying Officer Alan Jerrard, V.C., scored two. No V.C. was awarded to any airman named Coury or Craig, though a Lieutenant William Benson Craig gained five victories, and was awarded the D.F.C.

SHORT SERVICE COMMISSION (R. Bardell, Ipswich). (1) Holders of short-service commissions in the R.A.F. serve for four years

on the active list and, if not invited to extend their period of active list service, return to civil life, with a gratuity of £300, on transfer to the R.A.F. Reserve for a period of six years. (2) Remuneration of short-service officers ranges from £212 a year (£330, including allowances) for an Acting Pilot Officer, to £328 a year (£445, including allowances) for a Flight Lieutenant, the highest substantive rank to which the short-service officer will normally attain during his four years' service on the active list.

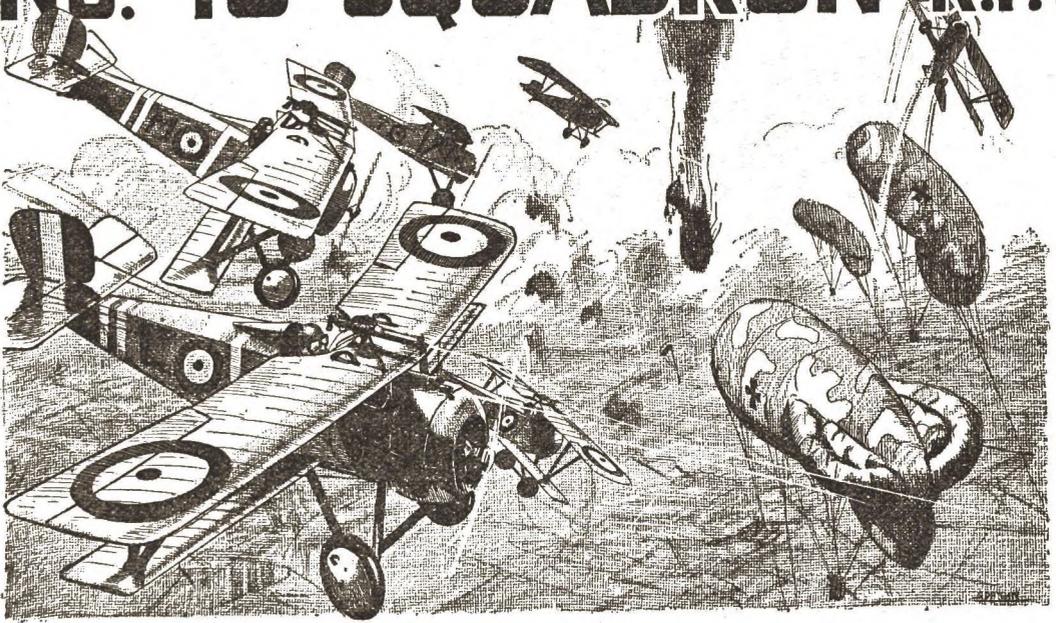
OLD CROCKS (J. B. Sharman, Worcester Park, Surrey). The Caudron which took part in the "old types parade" at the recent R.A.F. display at Hendon was the Type G. 3, and was fitted with its original 90 h.p. Anzani engine. The Farman biplane demonstrated was neither a "Henry" nor "Maurice," but a cross between the two, popularly known as a "Horice" Farman. The four war-time aircraft shown were a Bristol Fighter with a Rolls-Royce engine, an S.E. 5a with a Wolseley Viper, a Sopwith Triplane and a Sopwith Camel each fitted with a Clerget rotary engine. All the above, with the exception of the Camel, were demonstrated in flight.

SUPERMARINE SPITFIRE (F. Barnes, Glasgow). No performance figures have yet been divulged regarding the Supermarine Spitfire, but this machine is officially stated to be the fastest military aeroplane in the world. It is fitted with a Rolls-Royce Merlin engine and has a wing-span of 37 feet. Compared with the Hawker Monoplane Fighter, the Spitfire is probably slightly faster, considerably smaller, and carries less disposable load.

GUNS FOR SALE (O. Beckett, Sparkhill, Birmingham). We know of no sources from which you could obtain obsolete British or German machine-guns as used during the War. If, as you say, out-of-date Vickers guns are obtainable in the United States at 35s. each, we do not think you could do better elsewhere, and the duty, at this price, should be low.

COOLING LIQUID (A. Briscoe, East London, South Africa). (1) The radiators of our latest single-seater fighters, such as the Supermarine Spitfire and Hawker Monoplane are not filled with water but with an ethylene-glycol coolant mixture. (2) The power developed by the new Rolls-Royce Merlin engine fitted to these machines is an official secret, but it is known that the Merlin is the most powerful yet installed in R.A.F. aircraft.

No. 40 SQUADRON R.F.C.



A Brief History of One of the Most Famous Scout Squadrons of the Great War

By **W. MACLANACHAN**

Late of No. 40 Squadron R.F.C.

LIKE most squadrons of the R.F.C., No. 40 began with a small nucleus. It was formed at Gosport on February 26th, 1916, when six officers from No. 23 Squadron were placed under the command of Captain G. R. Howard, D.S.O. Equipment consisted of several Avros and B.E.2c's and the first training of the squadron was in photography and artillery observation duties.

In March, the command was given to Major Robert Loraine, and in the beginning of August, 1916, the squadron went overseas as a fighting squadron equipped with F.E.8's, a pusher type scout. The flight commanders were Captain D. O. Mulholland, Captain F. J. Powell and Captain G. D. Hilland, and the three flights had their full complement of pilots. At first, the squadron

operated from St. Omer, but afterwards moved to Treizennes, near Aire. At the outset, its principal duty was line patrols which allowed the pilots to become acquainted with their section of the front, which extended from Armentières in the north to Arras in the south.

Although there were one or two encounters with enemy machines during August, it was not until September, 1916, that any real fighting began. On the 9th, Second Lieutenant K. S. Henderson attacked an Aviatik, and on the 20th of the same month Captain Mulholland, in a desperate fight, drove two enemy scouts into the ground. With increasing experience the keen pilots soon developed the technique of their craft, and Captain Hill, Captain

AIR STORIES

Powell, Second Lieutenants Henderson and Hay with Sergeant Darvell, followed by Lieutenant H. S. Pell and Second Lieutenant Benbow each recorded victories over two-seaters and Fokkers.

At this time, aerial activity was increasing all along the front, and although previously it had been easy for single bomber or reconnaissance machines to penetrate far into enemy country, the time soon came when the defensive measures adopted by the enemy made it necessary for us to employ scouts to protect the heavier two-seaters while the latter were carrying out their work. In this way, 40 Squadron's pilots were asked to provide escorts for the F.E.2b's of No. 25 Squadron and the Sopwith two-seaters of No. 43 Squadron.

The bad weather prevailing from October until the end of the year made conditions difficult, and the more outstanding fights fell to the lot of Captain Mulholland and Second Lieutenant Benbow. Despite almost incessant trouble with stoppages in the single Lewis gun with which they were armed, these pilots each succeeded in bringing down several of the enemy, mostly in flames. Captain Powell, P. H. Smith, Pell, Hay and Sergeant Darvell continued to obtain victories whenever their slow F.E.8's were able to attack the much faster Albatros.

The advent of a single-seater fighter on the front had caused considerable excitement amongst the ground forces, particularly with the anti-aircraft batteries, and such was the interest taken in the work of the F.E.8 pilots that on December 20th one of the batteries sent a telegram complimenting Second Lieutenant Benbow on his splendid manoeuvring to bring down an Albatros to the south of Lens.

The Nieuports Arrive

IN the early part of 1917 the squadron's list of victories grew steadily and, with encouragement from the gunners and older pilots, the youthful element soon proved themselves capable of main-

taining the *esprit* of the squadron with very few losses. On the promotion of Major Loraine the command was given to Major L. A. Tilney.

On March 9th, however—"Black Friday" as it was ever afterwards called—the squadron received a severe set-back; three of the junior pilots: Shepard, Hills and Haseler being reported missing after a desperate battle with Richthofen's flight.

In March, a welcome change was made when the squadron was equipped with Nieuport Scouts. These were of the well-known type in which Ball fought most of his victorious battles and, after two or three weeks of practice flying, the flights again commenced their activities over the lines. For the first month, the work consisted mainly of offensive patrols between Lille and Douai, and in providing escorts for No. 43 and 25 Squadrons on photographic-reconnaissance and bombing. The Nieuports soon allowed the pilots to show their real mettle, for, despite the superior speed of the Albatros, the Nieuport, properly handled, was better than the Albatros as a fighting machine. Lieutenants de Burgh, Napier and McKenzie with H. C. Todd, L. B. Blaxland, H. E. O. Ellis, R. N. Hall and G. O. Brewis all recorded victories before the end of April.

Although the squadron would have become famous by virtue alone of its association with men like Mannoek, McElroy and Dallas, it had also an additional claim to a place in history on account of the balloon "strafing" ventures with which it was entrusted. Bringing down one or two isolated balloons was usually the voluntary work of enthusiasts but, in 1917, it was occasionally necessary completely to "blind" the enemy by keeping his observation aircraft away from the lines and by bringing down all the balloons on that particular front.

In April, an experimental stunt of this nature had been essayed by McKenzie, Todd and Walder, who flew at approximately one thousand feet, while Napier and Hall performed the

NO. 40 SQUADRON R.F.C.

equally dangerous task of following the others in order to see what happened in case the three did not get back. The balloons were attacked with success and the pilots returned; but after due deliberation it was decided that, to make reasonably sure of the success of a whole frontal attack, the pilots would have to avoid, as much as possible, the inevitable machine-gun and flaming-onion fire from the ground. Unanimously, the pilots decided that to fly at anything over one hundred feet was more dangerous than "hedge-hopping" at between fifteen and fifty feet, and the latter method was therefore agreed upon.

Events proved the wisdom of their decision, for on the first organised attack on May 2nd, 1917, K. McKenzie, W. T. Walder, B. B. Lemon, W. A. Bond, L. L. Morgan, and S. Thompson carried out a brilliant attack and all returned safely to our side of the lines.

A typical report of these low-altitude balloon "strafes" might have read as follows:—

"Crossed trenches S.E. of Liévin at 10-15 feet; steered towards Drocourt where two balloons were at approximately 3,000 feet. Machine-gun fire was severe. Observed one German machine crashed in ruins near Saullaumines.

"Nieuport attacked northernmost balloon, firing 40-50 rounds at 100-200 yards range. Balloon burst into flames at 400 feet.

"Nieuport then attacked second balloon from the east, and although hits from Buckingham were observed no result was obtained. One observer was seen to jump with parachute from this second balloon. In both cases Nieuport suffered severe fire from machine-guns and flaming onions fired from positions west of balloon.

"Returned to our lines and was forced to land at Vimy owing to petrol-tank having been pierced and engine disabled by machine-gun fire from the ground and from E.A."

The Germans were taken completely by surprise by this new stunt, and, knowing that it had not been carried out merely for amusement, they replaced the balloons as quickly as possible.

On May 7th, five days later, seven

balloons were again in the air and 40 Squadron's pilots had again to bring them down. This time Morgan, Redler, Parry, Mannock, Hall, Cudemore and Captain Nixon went over to tackle an enemy who were now obviously better prepared to resist a second attack. Captain Nixon was brought down after a magnificent fight against five Albatros, while all the machines of the formation were so badly damaged that Mannock was the only one to return to the aerodrome at Bruay. Even his Nieuport was so badly damaged that it had to be "written-off."

At this time there were several fighters developing in the squadron, prominent among them being Mannock, Keen, Godfrey, Bond, Hall and Morgan. Several of the older pilots were sent home to take command of flights or squadrons, and very quickly the personnel of the squadron changed. Fighting on the front had been very severe during the Canadians' advance along the Vimy Ridge and, instead of meeting isolated Germans, the patrols were encountering flights of from five to twelve enemy machines, frequently two-seaters escorted by Albatros or Halberstadts. In May, the principal victories credited to the squadron were obtained by Ellis, Morgan, MacKenzie, Walder, Gregory, Basset, Godfrey, and Bond.

Mannock's First Victory

ON June 7th, 1917, Mannock obtained his first victory while escorting a reconnaissance flight of No. 25 Squadron's F.E.2b's. An enemy flight attacked the F.E.'s and in the ensuing dog-fight Mannock succeeded in firing thirty rounds into an Albatros which was seen by Blaxland and Lemon to spin down out of control.

In June and July, Bond, Mannock, Keen and Godfrey were the chief scrappers, nobly supported by several new pilots, including Crole, Rook, Barlow, Pettigrew and Kennedy.

Offensive patrols and defensive line patrols were carried out regularly, but now a new form of enterprise was added. The German artillery - observation

AIR STORIES

machines worked at heights between one thousand five hundred and three thousand feet, and whenever a gap occurred in the wing patrols of No. 8 Naval and No. 40 Squadron, these two-seaters would become venturesome and approach the lines. To check this tendency, 40 Squadron was given an advance landing-ground at Petit Sains (or Mazingarbe), only one and a half miles from the trenches, from which the Nieuports could take-off to attack the enemy. Being equipped with telephone and wireless, the squadron succeeded in making it unprofitable for the German art. obs. machines to come near the lines, for, on hearing of the approach of one of them, a Nieuport would climb quickly towards the sector indicated in the message. In addition to these interception duties, low "strafing" of the German trenches at dawn—another unpleasant task—was effectively carried out from Mazingarbe.

On August 9th, another balloon "strafe" was ordered, this time the pilots being Pettigrew, Barlow, Herbert, Harrison, Tudhope and myself.* The organisation for this attack was almost perfect, and with the assistance of an artillery barrage through which "safety lanes" were left clear for us, the German infantry was prevented from doing much damage. The forces behind the German lines were again taken by surprise and the balloons were duly brought down. All the pilots returned safely from this excursion, the majority of the machines being riddled with bullet-holes. Tudhope, incidentally, managed to "collect" over a hundred feet of telephone wire which had become entangled in his propeller.

This "strafe" was in preparation for an attack on the environs of Lens on August 15th, and in this minor battle both 43 and 40 Squadrons were actively

engaged. The former carried out the dangerous contact patrol duties while 40 Squadron's pilots were entrusted with the task of keeping the enemy fighters and reconnaissance machines away from the battle area.

This was the prelude to a long period of activity on the front and the aggressive spirit of the British fighters was well evidenced by the fact that, with two exceptions on which Mannoek and Tudhope each brought down an Albatros on our side of the lines, the vast majority of victories were obtained many miles over enemy country, and even over the German aerodromes.

Mannoek's achievements during July had brought him promotion to the command of "A" Flight, and it is a noteworthy fact that in September the principal victories were obtained by "A."

A Change to S.E.5a's

IN October, another improvement was made in equipment when the squadron was supplied with S.E.5a's. These were 25 to 30 m.p.h. faster than the Nieuport, and although they were not so easily manœuvred in a dog-fight, their extra speed and diving power made them better interceptor fighters. The slight disadvantage of having a "ceiling" at nineteen thousand feet instead of twenty-two thousand, as with the Nieuport, was not important, as the enemy machines were similarly handicapped. In addition, the S.E.5 was equipped with a synchronised Vickers gun firing through the propeller as well as a Lewis gun on the top plane, against the standard Nieuport's single Lewis gun on the top plane.

Owing to the defective engines with which 40 Squadron's S.E.5's were fitted and to the miserable weather, the squadron's list of victories mounted very slowly. The activity on the front was not really renewed until the following January and February, when many junior members of the squadron came to the forefront, notable among them being G. E. H. McElroy, Harrison, Wolff, Usher, Wade and Walwork. Meanwhile Tudhope, Napier and Horsley,

* Since this is the author's sole reference to the conspicuous part which he himself played in making history for No. 40 Squadron, it may appropriately be recorded that he accounted for twenty-one enemy aircraft whilst serving with this famous fighter squadron, and, on this particular "strafe," succeeded in bagging two balloons from a height of less than 500 feet.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

NO. 40 SQUADRON R.F.C.

the three flight commanders, continued, as was to be expected, their aggressive policy with full vigour. McElroy soon showed himself to be the most aggressive fighter in the squadron, for in the eighteen days of February, prior to being posted as a flight commander to No. 24 Squadron, he brought down no less than seven enemy machines.

Throughout the autumn and winter of 1917 the Germans had been preparing for a spring offensive on the ground and in the air, hundreds of new pilots and machines were supposed to make a bid for the aerial supremacy, a factor in the war of which the generals in command had come to recognise the importance. The Albatros and Halberstadts were followed by the Pfalz and Fokker D.7's, as well as the German reply to the Sopwith Triplane, while the D.F.W.'s and Aviatiks of 1917 were replaced by Hanoveranners.

As it had been proved in the battles of Messines, Ypres and Cambrai that low-flying fighter machines could seriously harass infantry and supports, a welcome addition to the S.E.5's armament was now made in the form of a rack to carry four 20-lb. bombs. In March, 1918, when the Germans launched their offensive, the squadron undertook several low-flying attacks, although really intensive work in this direction was not carried out until later in the year.

On the death of Major Tilney in March, the command of 40 Squadron was given to Major Dallas, a gallant officer who had previously commanded No. 201 Squadron.

As a result of the reinforcement of the German Air Force, the fighting on the front was severe, and it was no uncommon thing for the flights to encounter formations of as many as thirty enemy machines. Spurred on by the example of Major Dallas, who had won the D.S.O. and D.S.C., the squadron was now at its highest pitch of efficiency and, ably led by Harrison, Tudhope and Napier, all three flights did considerable damage to the enemy formations; Learoyd, Wolff, Rusden, Usher and

Sutton, in particular, doing noble work. In some of the dog-fights at this time, the fighting was so close that no pilot could say which machine he sent down out of control and in one or two cases the only available evidence was that of the anti-aircraft batteries who reported "several enemy aircraft came down completely out of control."

Dallas is Brought Down

IN the late spring of 1918 the full weight of the German concentration on fast fighter machines was felt but, despite the superior numbers of the enemy, the patrols of the really aggressive British squadrons were still carried far into enemy territory and as evidence of the continuance of air supremacy there are the unquestionable records of many daring attacks made on enemy balloons.

At the end of May, Major Dallas was killed. His gallant spirit had made him the ideal commander for a fighter squadron such as No. 40, and he had ever inspired it with the example of his own gallant work, having registered nearly fifty victorious combats. His place was taken by Keen on his return to France after a spell on Home Establishment.

On his return from No. 24 Squadron in June, 1918, McElroy, while flying alone, carried out some valuable experiments with various kinds of ammunition for balloon "strafing"—either the incendiary "Buckingham" bullets, or flaming "tracer." In an attack on three German balloons four or five miles on the other side of the lines he succeeded in sending the second one down in flames. This and the experiments that followed led to a revival of the squadron's "balloon strafing" fever.

On July 31st the squadron suffered another severe blow when G. E. H. McElroy, M.C. (two bars), D.F.C. (one bar) was killed. In his last month, hardly a day passed without his being able to record a victory, and it had seemed that he would rival even the achievements of Mannock, with whom

AIR STORIES

he had a friendly rivalry and whose pupil he had been.

Another brave young pilot was I. L. Roy, a protégé of McElroy's. This plucky youngster showed the same aggressive spirit as the two leaders and succeeded in bringing down eight or nine enemy machines in little over a fortnight's flying.

During August, "balloon strafing" was at its height, when D. S. Poler and L. Bennett each sent several gasbags to the ground in flames. Bennett's achievements are particularly noteworthy. On the 17th he brought down one, on the 19th four, on the 22nd two, but in yet another attempt on August 24th, after destroying his eighth balloon, the Germans exacted the full price for his valour. He never returned.

In this month the most outstanding work was done by Major Keen, D. S. Poler, L. Bennett, A. R. Whitten, Captain G. C. Dixon and Captain Middleton, in fighting against the latest type of Fokker, the D.7. In August, another gallant C.O., Major Keen, was killed, and his place taken by Major R. T. O. Compston.

In September, the ground forces turned the tables against the Germans and 40 Squadron threw itself with enthusiasm into the work of demoralising the retreating enemy. Low "strafing" of troops and transport was carried out with renewed vigour and, in holding

the German fighters at bay, the work done by the squadron must have added a great deal to the final rout of the Germans. In October, the squadron, which had been forced to retire to Bryas in April, now advanced to Aniche.

A Record of Achievement

UNLIKE several of the other famous squadrons of the R.F.C., No. 40's history was a steady record of achievement, with no periods of inactivity caused by forces other than the weather and changes of machines. Throughout the war in the air, 40 Squadron kept abreast of the latest developments in equipment, and, as might have been expected on account of the increase in numbers of machines on both sides, the summer months of 1918 proved to be the most destructive of its whole period of service.

The total number of victories claimed by the squadron were 273, while no fewer than 40 balloons were destroyed or damaged. Its losses were 3 killed and died of wounds, 23 reported as presumed dead, 18 taken prisoners and 14 wounded. The fact that 41 of its members were brought down on hostile territory bears out the remarkable aggressiveness of the squadron.

In December, 1918, No. 40 Squadron moved to Orcq, where it remained until it was reduced to cadre strength at the beginning of 1919. It was finally disbanded in England in July, 1919.

THE PICTURE ON THE COVER

FLIGHT of Fairey Swordfish seaplanes carrying out a mimic torpedo attack on a battleship forms the dramatic subject of this month's cover painting by S. R. Drigin. The torpedoes used in this form of attack weigh nearly a ton, and, apart from the absence of the explosive war-head, are similar to those actually used in warfare and which are capable of disabling the largest craft afloat.

The torpedo is carried slung between the twin floats and is launched when within range of the target by an electrically-operated cartridge release controlled by a switch in the bomb-aimer's station and duplicated in the pilot's cockpit. Provision is made in the Swordfish for electrical-heating of the torpedo to ensure that its surface propulsion mechanism is not "frozen up" and put out of action in very cold weather or when flying at high altitudes.

Officially classified as a Torpedo-Spotter-Reconnaissance aircraft, the Swordfish is the latest machine of its type to be produced for the use of

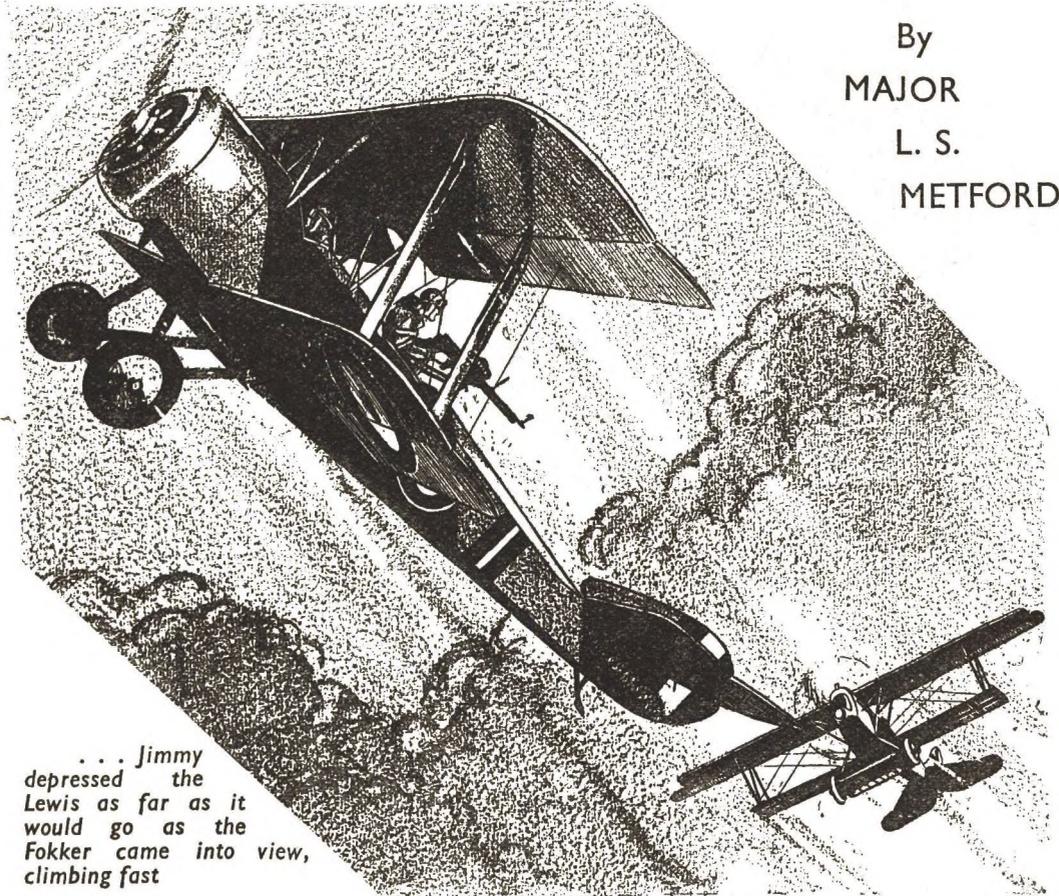
the Royal Air Force, and is designed to perform the functions of a General Purpose aircraft in addition to torpedo carrying. It can be supplied in either landplane or seaplane form and provides accommodation for a crew of three.

The pilot occupies the front cockpit and has a fixed Vickers' gun mounted in an accessible position on his right hand side. The rear cockpit accommodates two persons, and is equipped to serve the needs of observer, navigator, radio operator, bomb-aimer, photographer or Lewis gunner. When three are carried the two rear cockpit occupants sit back to back with the gunner facing aft and a Lewis gun on a high-speed mounting within easy reach.

A collapsible dinghy for use in emergency is cleverly concealed in the root end of the port upper wing and is covered by a fabric panel which is burst open by the dinghy when the latter is inflated from an air-bottle, controlled by a lever in the pilot's cockpit.

SOLO SPECIAL

By
MAJOR
L. S.
METFORD



. . . Jimmy depressed the Lewis as far as it would go as the Fokker came into view, climbing fast

When A Pilot who Sets out Alone on a Special Mission with Strict Instructions to Avoid Combat, Returns as an Unwilling Passenger in his Own Bullet-riddled 'Plane, His Mission May Have Been Successful as Well as Eventful

CHAPTER I A Solo Job

*"We're glad to see you back, dear lady ;
We are glad to see you back.
Where have you been ?
What have you seen . . . ?"*

AND that is just as far as the scratchy needle of "A" Flight's decrepit gramophone got with Elsie Janis.

Lieutenant Jimmy Lovelace, R.F.C., could stand it no longer. There was a rustle of leaves, followed an instant

later by a skidding screech as last week's *La Vie* shot through the air and swept the tone-arm across the worn record.

"My goodness gracious," piped Mickey Bayliss in an affected high falsetto. "What has come over our James ?"

"Shut up, you young ass," growled Captain Hawkins, with a warning shake of the head. "Don't blame him. Damn thing's getting on everybody's nerves. Give it a rest for a bit. What about a game of *vingt-et-un*, Lovelace ?" he suggested, glancing over his shoulder.

AIR STORIES

But Lovelace was not there. By the time the aggrieved Bayliss had stopped the spinning turn-table of his beloved gramophone, he had clumped out of the mess-room and slammed the door.

For a moment he stood there on the threshold of the old farmhouse near the Amiens-Doullens road, letting the cool night air blow across his aching forehead, then, lighting a cigarette, he sloped across the muddy farmyard towards his sleeping-quarters in the barn.

He fumbled in his pocket for matches and lit the swinging lamp. Then he looked about him in the dim light. He swore under his breath and his eyes smarted as he saw the two cots. In the middle of one of them were neatly piled the earthly belongings of his friend, Tommy Smithers. He swore again gently as his eyes fell upon the little black octagonal case which held his concertina. On top of that stood a small wooden elephant, carved one wet day out of a bit of ash from a crashed under-carriage strut.

He turned away and slumped on to his cot, eyeing the assortment sadly.

"Dam' shame," he muttered. "One of the very best. To think of poor old Tommy being snuffed out like that."

He got up and ground his cigarette under his heel.

"Wish I hadn't pulled his leg so much about that darned concertina of his," he muttered. "Just one tune—and that always flat. And then young Bayliss has to go and play it on that blasted gramophone the day he goes west. Damn Bayliss, anyway," he concluded unnecessarily, for Bayliss was quite an unoffending youth, though altogether without tact.

Half-a-dozen hours before, Jimmy Lovelace had returned to the aerodrome at Villeron with the rest of "A" Flight. The O.P. had been comparatively uneventful. They had tangled with a flight of Fokkers, but the odds being about even, the Huns had sheered off after losing one of their number and as petrol was running low in the tanks, the flight commander had wagged regretful wings and led them home.

As Jimmy Lovelace had cut the switch after taxiing up to the tarmac, he had turned with a grin to his observer and said something sarcastic about Huns in general and the flight they had just encountered in particular.

Receiving no reply, he had slipped the pin from his safety-belt and stood up in the cockpit.

Tommy Smithers, with a round hole drilled neatly through the centre of his forehead, sat there, his face a crimson mess.

Lovelace had no idea when it could have happened. His own 'bus had scarcely been engaged at all and there was not a hole in fuselage or wings. Just a stray bullet which had found an unexpected billet.

"Wonder who they'll give me for an observer next," he thought casually. "Gosh; what does it matter, anyway," he said aloud. "He won't be a patch on Tommy."

He resumed his pacing up and down, smoking cigarettes chain-fashion. Finally he glanced at his wrist-watch. "Nine o'clock," he muttered. "Time to go over for orders."

He shrugged into his slicker and went over to the mess.

ON the way, he met the motor-cyclist orderly returning to the Squadron Office after delivering the nightly buff slips to the flight commanders.

He pushed open the door and blinked as the yellow rays flooded out.

"Anything special for me, Skipper?" he asked, forcing himself to speak casually and calmly.

Captain Hawkins looked up from the slip of paper he was studying.

"Looks like it," he said. "How would this do? 'One pilot,'" he quoted, "'to fly solo to map square A.12.F.3, arriving between nine and nine-thirty. Make written note of code letters on Popham panel* and return after doing one circuit to show signals seen. This

* A portable signal panel with which messages may be visibly transmitted to aircraft by a ground operator.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

SOLO SPECIAL

is urgently required by Wing and pilot detailed is to avoid combat at all costs.' How'd that do?" demanded Hawkins, looking up with a smile.

Lovelace felt the colour draining from his tanned face as he considered the matter before replying. Then he grinned, tight-lipped.

"Like it," he gritted sharply. "Mm. 'Bout as much as the Devil likes holy water. Sounds dam' silly to me. Why solo? You know the wily Hun patrols that part of the sector as if he jolly well owned it."

"Well, it's his side of the lines, isn't it?" grinned Mickey.

Lovelace regarded him sourly. "When I want your silly comments, I'll ask for 'em," he retorted. "Why can't I take a gunner along?" he demanded, turning to the flight commander.

Hawkins tapped the buff slip in his hand. "Orders, old bean—orders. Rather gather the Major put that bit in so as to prevent whoever was detailed for the job from scrappin'. Well, I'll put you down for it, anyway."

He turned to the others and allotted the various jobs.

"Well," he remarked, "that's all for to-night. Let's get on with the game. Goin' to cut in, Jimmy?"

"Not to-night, thanks. Don't feel like it. Cheerio, you fellows. See you in the morning."

HE stepped out into the darkness and lit another cigarette, noting with disgust that his hands were none too steady as he cupped them round the match.

He moved off slowly towards his quarters, then stopped with something like a groan. Then turning to the right, he strode towards the double iron gates leading into the lane between the water-logged fields. There he hesitated again and finally splashed off down the narrow, wheel-rutted cart-track which led to the Squadron Office.

A thin pencil of light shone beneath the door, and once more he came to a halt.

"It's hell," he muttered, "absolutely

hell, but now I'm here, I s'pose I'd better get it over and done with."

"Come in," invited a harsh voice in answer to his knock.

Major Sharpness was sitting at a rough table, littered with papers, piled several deep. It was never tidied up. The only clear space was occupied by two wire baskets. One was marked "IN," the other "OUT." They were never used. They had been placed there and carefully labelled by the clerk—an orderly and optimistic soul—hoping eternally but almost despairing of ever evolving any kind of cosmos from the awful chaos.

From time to time Sharpness would do a nose-dive into the midst of the muddle and emerge triumphantly with some document or other which he needed.

He had just come up for breath with a request for a return of the number of machine-guns on charge at his unit in his hand, when Lovelace entered.

He was in a bad temper; rather worse than usual. And that meant something. He disliked making out returns. It was his Recording Officer's job to look after them, but he was away in Amiens at the moment and the matter could not wait.

"Well," he demanded. "What's up?"

The opening was unpropitious.

Lovelace saluted, wishing himself anywhere else.

"Good evening, sir. I . . . er . . ." He stopped short. It was proving harder than he had expected. Sharpness regarded him with disfavour.

"Um," he grunted. "You've been detailed for that solo show in the morning, eh?"

Lovelace started guiltily.

"How did you know, sir?" he breathed.

"See it stickin' out a mile. Now look here, Lovelace," he continued, leaning back in his rickety chair and reaching for his pipe, "this has got to stop."

"Er, what has, sir?"

"Your objection to flying alone."

Lovelace mopped his damp forehead and looked away.

AIR STORIES

"You've got wind-up and got it badly," continued the chunky little Squadron Commander. "No use for it in my squadron. Said so before. Thought everybody knew it by this time."

"It's not that, sir," urged Lovelace, goaded into speech. "I'm not windy. It's just that I don't like solo work. I don't give a hang who I've got up with me, even if it's only a brass-hat on a Cook's tour who doesn't know the cocking-handle of a Lewis from the sear spring. Any kind of passenger'll do, just so long as there's somebody there."

He stopped breathless, despising himself for his confession, but at the same time feeling a certain relief at having confided in someone—a confession he had hoped he would never be called upon to make.

Sharpness puffed at his pipe until it was drawing well, then spoke. There was a curious tenderness in his harsh voice; a tone which few had heard.

"I'm glad you had the guts to tell me this yourself," he said. "I've known it for some time past. I hoped you'd get over it, and I'm telling you now that if you don't, out you'll jolly well go. Is that clear?"

It was, very clear, and Lovelace said so.

"Very well, then. Now listen. I told Hawkins to detail you for this job. It's your last chance. There are a dozen pilots I could have sent instead of you, but I picked you on purpose. Now then. There's nothing unusual about having wind-up. There's not a pilot in the Service who's never had it, unless," he interrupted himself quickly, "unless he's such a dam' fool he doesn't know enough to be scared at times. I tell you," and he leaned forward, jabbing his pipe-stem to accentuate his remarks, "I've been so damned scared at times, I've nearly lost my dinner."

Lovelace gasped like a gaffed salmon. The idea of the hard-bitten little man before him, whom everybody in the squadron believed immune from any sensation of fear, being no stranger to

it and even admitting it freely, almost stunned him.

"You, sir?" he murmured incredulously.

"Why not, man? D'you take me for a ruddy fool?"

Lovelace shook his head. There was nothing to say, so he wisely refrained from comment.

"That's all," concluded the Major brusquely. "You'll get over it. Keep a stiff upper lip and a good look-out behind you. Now get out and good luck. I'll expect your report about half-past ten and for the Lord's sake, don't get into a scrap. The thing's dashed important. A lot depends on your getting back quickly. G'night." He turned back hurriedly to his papers.

"Good night, sir." Lovelace saluted and went out.

As he closed the door behind him, he heard a harsh voice calling down maledictions upon the heads of Wing Adjutants who demanded armament returns at inopportune moments.

LOVELACE turned right-handed from the Squadron Office and made for the hangars. It was late and he was chilly, but he had been having trouble with bulged rounds recently and had decided that in future he was going to caliper up every cartridge himself.

"Not," he decided stubbornly, "that I'm going to do this show alone in the morning. I'll wangle out of it somehow. Always have. Funny how the Old Man spotted it though. He's a 'wiz' if ever there was one."

He pushed aside a corner of the canvas front of one of the hangars and made his way in.

Seated on empty petrol-cans were two dusky shapes.

Hanging between them was an extension from the lighting plant in the workshop lorry standing by the roadside at the rear.

He could hear the steady pop-pop-pop of the little six horse-power Austin coupled to the generator.

The crouching figures rose to their feet as he entered.

SOLO SPECIAL

"What are you men doing here?" he demanded, seeing that one of them was his engine fitter and the other was also an "A" Flight mechanic. "What's up?"

"Filling Lewis drums, sir," replied the former.

"Give 'em a miss. I want to caliper up a couple of Vickers belts. Move over and I'll give you a hand. I'll attend to the calipering and you two can do the filling."

"No Lewis guns to-morrow, sir?" inquired the second man.

"Not on my 'bus. Solo stunt on. Can't reach back far enough to use 'em," he grinned. "Only Vickers."

For a quarter of an hour, the three heads were bent over their task, fingers flying. What the thoughts of his two helpers were, Jimmy had no means of telling, but he knew only too well of what his own consisted. One word. But that word ran continuously through his head with metronomic beat. Solo. Solo. Solo.

"**W**ISH I was goin' along with you, sir," offered his mechanic suddenly, straightening his back.

"Eh? What's the idea? You aren't a gunner, Wellman."

"I can shoot, sir," he asserted stubbornly. "The Cap'n won't use me as a gunner 'cos of my eyesight and 'cos he says I'm too short, but the Armament Sarge puts me on to testin' in the butts frequent, sir."

"E's a fair caution wif a Lewis, sir," chimed in the second man, nobly backing up his friend. "Wears specs dahn at the ranges, sir, an' 'e can knock the reg'lar gunners inter a cocked 'at, sir."

"That so?" commented Jimmy interestedly. "I'm afraid you wouldn't have much luck in the air though. The wind'd blow your glasses off, you know."

"I've 'ad a pair of goggles made wif special lenses in, sir," proclaimed Wellman; "jest in case a chance come my way, sir. Couldn't you put

in a word for me, sir?" he pleaded.

"I'd make a go of it all right, sir."

"I might some time," replied Jimmy absently, regarding the diminutive form of the air mechanic with some amusement. "What was your job in life before you enlisted?"

"Me, sir? Jockey, sir. Mr. Martin's stables dahn Newmarket way."

"That so?" commented Jimmy, looking at the youngster appraisingly. "What do you go? Eight stone?"

"Useter ride seven stun dead, sir," Wellman answered proudly. "I go near eight now, though. Hafter keep the Turkish baths busy when this show's over, sir," he grinned.

"Um," agreed Jimmy, rather wondering how he had managed to get enlisted. "Let's get on with the job. It's getting late-ish."

But as they threaded the cartridges into their separate clips, making a continuous belt of the whole, although he continued to caliper the rounds mechanically, throwing out an occasional bulged round, his mind was furiously at work on other matters.

By the time the twin brass serpents were completed and carefully coiled away, he had made up his mind. He would do his flight in the morning and, so far as the rest of the squadron was concerned, he would do it solo.

"All right, you men," he said, rising to his feet; "you can break off now."

But as the two saluted and moved away, he called the ex-jockey back.

There ensued a lengthy but low-toned conversation, mostly one-sided but punctuated by expressions indicative of extreme satisfaction on the part of the little mechanic.

"And don't forget," concluded Jimmy Lovelace, knowing full well that first-class air mechanics were not usually employed in such a menial capacity, "ostensibly you're on cook-house fatigue to-morrow morning. I'll attend to that, and remember if you let out so much as a single peep or show even a fingertip before I hammer on the canvas cover, I'll break every bone in your shrimp-like body when we get back. See?"

AIR STORIES

"Very good, sir," grinned Wellman, hugely delighted at the prospect before him. "I won't let you dahn, sir."

CHAPTER II

A Message is Received

IN the morning, Jimmy Lovelace went, and Major Sharpness was there to see him off. Glancing with apparent casualness towards the gunner's cockpit, he nodded thoughtfully as he saw the canvas cover neatly buttoned in place.

Then he walked on to where Captain Hawkins was superintending a top-overhaul to an engine.

The chocks were jerked away and the Sopwith One-and-a-Half Strutter sped down the field.

As Jimmy pulled the 'plane into the air and began to circle for altitude, he grinned reflectively.

"This is going to be quite a stunt," he communed with himself. "Hope young Wellman's as good as he says. If he is, I'll pull it off again another time. Gosh; the lad's certainly a lightweight all right," he decided, noting his speed of climb. "Maybe, too, the new engine they put in yesterday's got something to do with it."

Then as he straightened out and climbed steadily on his course, he tried to reason out his hatred of solo flying.

It was not exactly fear, he knew. If it were, he would obviously feel the same with a passenger behind him.

It had something to do with loneliness; with the vast empty space encompassing him on every side. It had to be overcome, somehow, he swore to himself, before it overmastered him entirely.

And Sharpness had felt it too, he remembered suddenly with great surprise, that iron little man with the grim face and the everlasting red muffler round his neck. Sharpness, of all men! Sharpness, of whom he could have sworn no braver ever lived.

Well, if he could overcome it, why not himself?

Mechanically he repeated the orders he had committed to memory: "Fly

over map square A.12.F.3. Letters on Popham panel. One circuit to show signals seen. Return immediately, avoiding all aerial combat."

"We'll see about that," he muttered to himself. "Wish poor old Tommy was here. Wonder if Wellman's really hot with a Lewis?"

He glanced behind him, but Wellman, apparently, was keeping his promise to the letter, and above the canvas cover not a finger tip showed. Or possibly—the awful thought struck Lovelace—possibly, his diminutive observer, unaccustomed to flying, was already grovelling on the cockpit floor in the throes of air sickness! But there was no time to investigate.

Already they were crossing the lines, and "Archie" was paying them undivided attention. He had expected that. Big black fluff-balls. All round him. Scared stiff, he dived away, spinning down a thousand feet, zig-zagging to put the sweating gunners off their mark. Then he climbed again, leaving them behind.

"They'll be on the look-out for me coming back," he muttered. "I'll fool 'em and cross farther north."

He carried on. Presently he referred to his map and altered course a little. He knew the country well and had no difficulty in finding his way.

"Ten miles more, roughly," he calculated, looking at the little red circle he had inked in before starting out.

Later, he saw it, set in a tiny clearing in the woods; well hidden from any prying eyes not directly overhead. He sucked the end of the pencil, tied by a bit of string to the message-pad strapped to his knee.

The fellow who was working the panel knew his job. Five seconds to the letter. Then flip—and the next appeared. Flip again and Jimmy read "Toc." Once more and it was "Don."

Twelve letters to the minute. In three minutes he had it all down, making nothing of it whatever. Then the white marks disappeared.

"Good enough. That's all. Now a circuit and all out for home."

SOLO SPECIAL

Over went the rudder and on came the bank.

"I'll make it snappy," he grinned, "and get out of this. Don't like it—not a little bit."

Then he swore beneath his breath. The fellow was sending again.

Steadying his 'plane with one hand, he tore off the sheet and crammed it into his pocket. Then he began to take down the silent dictation once more. He stopped for an instant, pencil poised in mid-air.

"Confound the blighter. He's repeating the whole blessed thing over again."

Resentfully he proceeded to write it down once more.

"Ack-ack-ack—message ends," he translated mentally. "Only bit I can understand. Conscientious bloke; running it all off twice. Right spirit, though," he conceded grudgingly.

He began to circle once again, looking carefully overside.

Far below him, he could make out a tiny ant-like figure rolling up the canvas panel. Then it disappeared amongst the trees, carrying its bundle with it.

Jimmy Lovelace straightened out and started for home.

He had done his job and was feeling distinctly pleased about it.

"Wonder what the message means," he thought, his eyes drooping to the pad on his knee. "Urgently required," he considered, his mind on his orders of the night before. "Bet that was one of our spies, and the message is something to do with the big push to-morrow."

He was concentrating so deeply on the cryptic letters that he never saw the three 'planes converging on his tail. The first thing he knew about their existence was when a whiff of tracer sizzled past his head.

LOVELACE jumped as if a bullet had hit him fair and square. The next instant, gyrating on a wing-tip, he had thrust a long arm behind him and was thumping on the canvas cockpit cover with his fist.

"Wake up, Wellman!" he shouted. "Now's your chance!"

Then he straightened out and dived upon the nearest of his pursuers. But they eluded and flashed past him, three parti-coloured streaks.

As Jimmy slipped off into a skid and turned sharply, he shot an anxious glance behind him, expecting to see the head and shoulders of young Wellman at the butt of the rear Lewis.

"Damn the fellow!" he swore. "Must be air sick. Get up, darn you!" he shouted, thumping on the decking between the two pits. "Get on the job!"

There was no time for more; they were on him at once.

He fainted at one, then jerked stick and rudder aside and poured in a burst at another, but they passed him unscathed.

He looked wildly behind him, and leaving the whipping joy-stick and rudder-bar to their own devices, pulled the pin from his belt and climbed on the seat.

Tearing savagely at the canvas cover behind him, he ripped it aside and peered in. The gunner's pit was empty save for a Lewis gun lashed to the side of a strut!

The 'plane, uncontrolled, was gyrating wildly, and it was all he could do to regain his seat and fasten his belt.

As he fought the controls, his mind worked in an agony of fear as he realised he was alone—that somehow the young mechanic had failed him. He was too terror-stricken even to try to think how his plan had miscarried. He writhed this way and that, not daring to turn his head, trying desperately to avoid the leaden hail which slashed around him.

He felt he was doomed. There could be no escape. He sat there, his head in his hands, crouched low over the stick, waiting—waiting for the inevitable end.

Forgotten were his orders as to the importance of the message on the pad; so important indeed that he had been forbidden to take a gunner with him, lest he be tempted to be drawn into a scrap.

AIR STORIES

His mind was a blank—utter and complete.

Suddenly there came to him the memory of the ant-like figure in the clearing, sending code, repeating it carefully letter by letter, that there might be no mistake.

And something seemed to snap inside his head. That other fellow must have been scared stiff, too, but he'd done his job. The thought flashed through his mind.

He pulled himself together with a mighty effort of will and swore luridly as his own cowardice stood revealed to him.

"I'll give the blighters hell!" he muttered, grabbing for the stick. "I'll let 'em have it."

Looking over his shoulder as he fought the controls, he brought the nose up; up and over in a tight loop. A half-roll on the top of it brought him face to face with the enemy—three brightly-painted Fokkers, now opening up to let him through, that they might attack him in the rear once again.

"Avoiding combat," Jimmy gritted between his teeth. "Avoiding nothing."

As he drove on full throttle against one of the enemy 'planes, he scarcely noticed that his fear had left him. If he had, he would only have laughed. Once again he was the cunning pilot, with light hands and steady foot-work, striving to catch a fleeting black-crossed 'plane in his ring-sight.

Suddenly his thumb, poised above the trigger, pressed down.

The Sopwith shuddered as the leaping Vickers muzzle danced on the forward cowling. One burst—two. That was all, and he pulled hard on the stick to avoid colliding with the staggering 'plane before him.

A few moments later he saw it weaving earthwards, a long plume of smoke billowing from its exhaust stacks.

Whether the pilot were killed or wounded, he had no time to discover. It was enough that he had one adversary less to contend with.

Rat-tat-tat-tat! Lovelace banked over and skidded away from the menace

in the rear. As he turned, he saw from the corner of his eye the second Fokker dropping upon him, its twin Spandaus stabbing fire. Up came the nose of the Sop. and they roared against each other, head on, with guns blazing and bucking madly.

Then something red-hot and very heavy seemed to strike the British pilot on the top of the head with stunning force.

He gasped with the pain of it and his hand jerked spasmodically to his helmet.

Dimly he heard the sound of machine-gun fire and saw that his wind-screen had been plucked apart as if by invisible fingers.

As the slip-stream whipped his face with trebled fury, he felt his senses leaving him. It did not seem to matter, but the noise worried him and it was growing strangely dark.

If only those cursed guns would stop their infernal chattering! Slowly and gropingly, for he could no longer see through the crimson blur, his fingers sought the switch.

Then he sank back with a sigh of relief as the roar of the engine died away into silence and the awful thrust of the rushing wind ceased to trouble him.

CHAPTER III

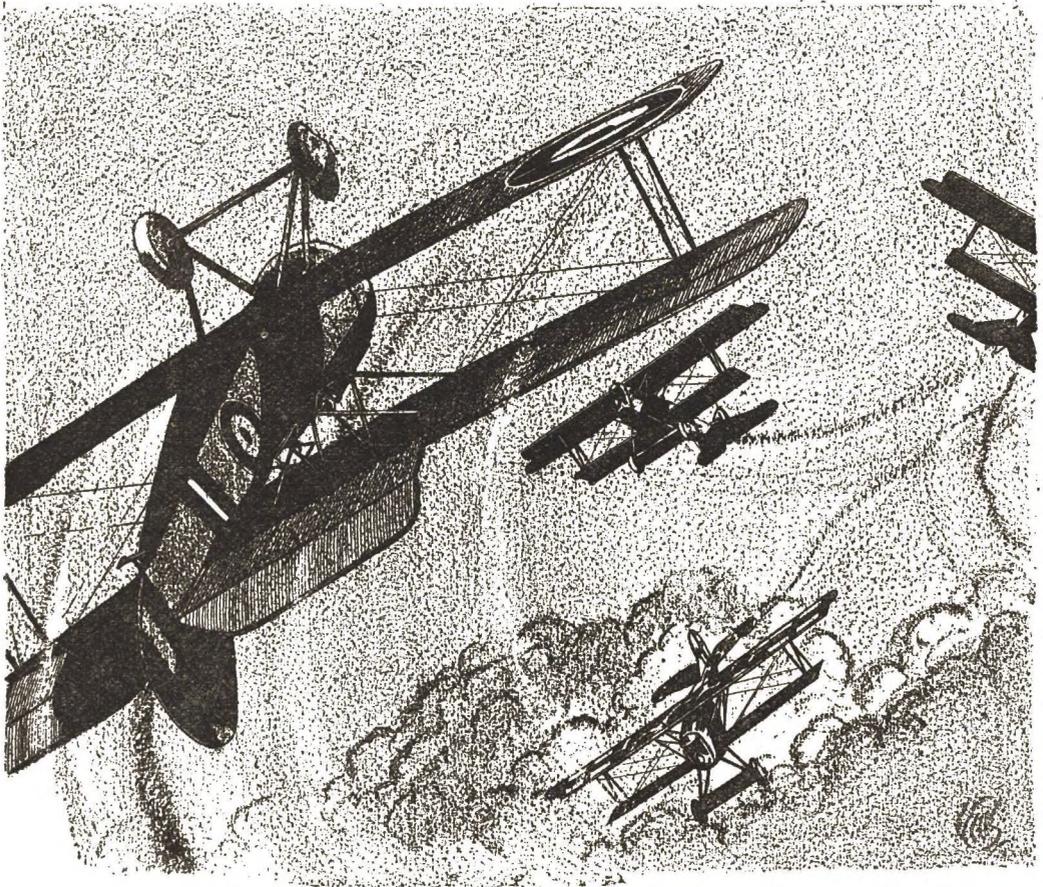
Murder in Mid-air

HOURS or days or weeks afterwards—what did it matter how long a time had passed?—he heard voices. They came to him as from a vast distance, distorted by a strange buzzing in his ears.

His brain, throbbing and burning, was trying to burst his head, around which steel bands seemed to have been riveted.

He tried to remember what had happened, but no memory came to him, nor did he know where he was.

Slowly, experimentally, he moved his fingers. They came in contact with something soft and yielding. Plucking gently, little pieces came away. He thought it must be grass. Then he realised he was lying on his back.



A half-roll on top of the loop brought him face-to-face with three brightly-painted Fokkers

Painfully he tried to open his eyes, and at last, with infinite difficulty, succeeded. He saw a greenish-yellow translucence above his head and heard a gentle dripping sound.

Gradually he realised that he was lying beneath the wing of a 'plane and rain was dropping from its edges.

Slowly his senses returned to him and he remembered vaguely what had happened.

With memory came the object of his flight and he raised his head with great pain. Then he sank back with a groan as he saw the message-pad had gone.

The voices came to him again, as from a distance, and he saw two men in flying-kit walking towards him. They were gesticulating wildly and seemed to be arguing about something.

They came to a halt close to him and he closed his eyes.

"I tell you," one of them was saying, "I am your superior, and I order you . . ."

"Softly ; softly," replied the other. "It is not so. We are of equal rank. Therefore I do as I please. I shot him down, and he is my prisoner. Therefore it is I who will fly him back with his machine which is fortunately undamaged. Also, I repeat, I will take the message I found on him. After that I shall return for my own 'plane which will be perfectly safe here for a little while."

"Nevertheless," retorted the first speaker arrogantly, and Jimmy blessed his more than slight knowledge of German at that moment, "I am a Prussian, and since when has a Prussian obeyed the orders of a Bavarian ? Also

AIR STORIES

it is not agreed that he is your prisoner. We were both firing at him when he fell. Come ; give me the message ! ”

“ Never, ” declared the other. “ I have the message and I will deliver it myself. Was it not I who landed first and who threw myself on to the tail of the two-placer and thus prevented it running into the tree ? Come, *mein freund* ; be not so foolish. We waste precious time. The message is doubtless of some importance. Help me to lift him into the seat of his machine and I will fly it . . . ”

But Jimmy Lovelace heard no more. Although he strove mightily to retain possession of his senses, he passed again into unconsciousness and the rest of the discussion was lost to him.

THE roar of an engine brought him back from his coma and he opened his eyes again.

He found he was strapped into the rear seat of his own Sopwith, with the back of a broad Teutonic head in front of him.

Below him he saw the Prussian pilot standing with one gauntleted hand gripping the edge of the front cockpit, as he braced himself against the slipstream of the propeller.

He was shouting something inaudible above the noise of the engine. He was obviously in a violent rage and his thin face was working with passion.

Then the Bavarian, evidently losing patience at last, drew back his arm and hit him full on the nose with his fist.

The Prussian staggered back with his hands to his face as the pilot opened the throttle and sped down the field.

Gradually the keen air and the stinging rain-drops had the effect of clearing Jimmy's brain of the fog which was numbing it. He began to think more clearly. His head still ached crazily, but thoughts began to form themselves with more clarity.

He realised amongst other things that he was being carried back as a prisoner in his own machine. He did not like that, nor did he care to think that the

message he had copied down so carefully, and which was the cause of all this trouble, was being borne in the wrong direction.

Whether or not it would convey more to the German Imperial Staff than it did to himself, he could not tell. All he knew was that the 4th Army Headquarters which had wanted it so urgently would never see it.

Slowly, as he found some of his strength returning to him, he wondered what he could do in the matter. It was unthinkable that he should be taken prisoner in this absurd fashion.

The round head surmounting the thick neck of the pilot in front of him seemed to fascinate him. He knew he could not reach him, but it gave him an idea, although he was not quite sure if it were workable or not. But it was worth trying.

Painfully and gradually, husbanding his scant reserves, he began to manœuvre the Lewis from its lashings beside him.

Inch by inch, he edged it upwards, holding it with all his power against the slipstream which threatened to tear it from his grasp, until finally, with all the strength oozing from his muscles, he slipped in the pin which secured it to the Scarff mounting.

Then he clipped on a drum of .303.

“ Now, ” he whispered to himself, a thin smile of satisfaction playing at the corners of his pain-twisted mouth, “ all I've got to do is depress the dam' thing till I've got it trained on the back of this bloke's neck. Then he'll fly *me* home—and like it. ”

But before he could put the idea into execution, a strange thing happened.

He heard the syncopated chatter of Spandaus almost in his ear and a line of steel-jacketed lead was neatly stitched across the top plane in front of him.

The German pilot turned his head hurriedly, his mouth open wide as he banked swiftly round.

As he did so, Jimmy, looking upwards, saw the face of the Prussian, his nose and mouth bleeding, staring evilly down upon them from the Fokker wheeling above them.

SOLO SPECIAL

It came to him with the force of a blow that the man was actually bent upon revenging the affront by nothing less than the murder of his fellow !

LOVELACE had heard before of the Larrogance of the ruling military caste in Germany in its relations with those of other degree, but never had he credited its exponents with such ruthlessness. Yet here was a concrete example before his very eyes.

His captor, unused to a Sopwith, was evidently no match for the other, who was circling easily above them, keeping out of range of the forward Vickers and awaiting his opportunity to pour in a death-dealing burst.

Jimmy Lovelace realised the fellow held all the cards. What could be easier than for him to bring them down with no possibility of his action ever being discovered ? He would have been merely attacking an enemy 'plane. How could he be expected to know that it was being piloted by one of his own companions ?

He could see it all clearly now. The Prussian was gradually edging the Sopwith over the field they had recently left. When he brought them down, he would see to it that they crashed not far from the Bavarian's own machine. He would doubtless then land, remove the dead body from the Sopwith and place it in the seat of the Fokker on the ground. Then he would pocket the message and return home ; perhaps even burning the other machine to destroy every atom of evidence against him.

As for himself . . . Jimmy shuddered involuntarily as he realised he would doubtless have passed on in the ensuing crash. One did not survive two "*atteris-sages brusques*" in the same day. Not usually, at all events. He had been very lucky to get away with one.

But he had no intention of going out like that ; not while he had a machine-gun and three hundred rounds of ammunition to play with.

Moving slowly, both because he had to and also because he did not desire to attract undue attention to his actions,

he seized the Lewis and edged it round the turn-table, slipping the pin from his belt so as to move more freely.

Finally he had it pointed over the tail.

He turned back as he placed it where he wanted it and saw his pilot regarding him with such obvious surprise that he could not refrain from laughing, sick with pain though he was.

Then the man grinned, nodding his head encouragingly. For some unexplained reason, this pleased Jimmy immensely, and he turned back to his job.

Not ten seconds later, a fusillade of bullets ripped up from beneath the tail, and little flecks of canvas flickered skywards along the top of the fuselage just to the right of the centre fairing strip, missing him by scant inches.

The pilot must have pulled the stick right into his belt, for the 'plane stood on its tail and Jimmy, wobbling unsteadily to his feet, depressed the muzzle of the Lewis as far as it would go without blasting off the top of the rudder.

Then, just as the Sopwith stalled and the Fokker came into view, climbing fast, he drew back the cocking-handle.

The gaudy 'plane was not fifty feet away and as the top centre-section swam into the ring, he squeezed the trigger.

The Prussian pilot drove straight into the midst of the stinging hail of lead, and died as he deserved to die with a hole drilled neatly between his eyes, whilst Jimmy held the bucking muzzle in place with all his fast-ebbing strength.

Then as the Sopwith fell over on to one wing, with all flying speed gone, he slumped back into his seat, never knowing how close he had come to falling out whilst the Bavarian wrestled with the controls.

JIMMY LOVELACE lay sprawling where he had fallen, dazed and breathless, but as his strength returned to him, he came to realise that but half his job was done. The other still lay before him.

He edged the Lewis round the track until he had it pointing straight at the back of the pilot's head. Then he elevated it a few degrees and fired a short warning burst.

AIR STORIES

The pilot hunched his shoulders for an instant, then looked round with a grim smile, raising both hands momentarily above his head.

Then, turning slowly, as if with regret at a wonderful victory snatched from his grasp almost at the moment of success, he flew west.

From time to time, he looked behind him and Jimmy motioned him to left or right as occasion demanded.

Suddenly the German flicked his hand into the air, and something white was whipped behind them fluttering towards the ground. He had evidently determined that even if the tables had been turned so disastrously and unexpectedly, the message, whatever it was, should not reach the hands for which it had been intended.

Then Jimmy realised there was a strong smell of petrol in the cockpit. Looking downwards, he saw a tiny stream rippling along the fabric on the floor and knew there was either a leak in the fuel line or one of the Prussian's bullets had punctured the tank.

It began to worry him and he hoped they would have enough to get home on. But he was by no means certain, especially since the engine had been missing badly for some time.

However, they had plenty of height, and the lines were well in sight. At the altitude at which they were flying, they would be able to glide in if they could only carry on for another few minutes.

But the smell of escaping petrol was growing stronger and stronger, and he wondered how the pilot was faring. It would be much stronger in front.

"I bet he's hating it," he thought unhappily. "P'raps he thinks all our 'buses stink like this. Shouldn't wonder."

He could see the aerodrome now, far ahead and indistinct through the misty rain. At the same instant the engine coughed once or twice, spluttered and died away into silence.

The pilot looked round worriedly, raising his eyebrows.

Jimmy motioned him on and shouted to him in German.

The other looked surprised at the sound of his own language and turned back to his controls.

The aerodrome lay straight ahead. They might just scrape in, Jimmy thought. If he could only close his eyes for a moment—for a few seconds perhaps—enough to ease the pain behind his eyes. But he knew he dared not. They were not there yet.

CHAPTER IV

A Pair of Prisoners

ON the tarmac at Villeron, there was an excited scurrying to and fro, a searching in odd corners, a prying into divers cubby-holes; a veritable game of grown-up hide and seek.

For Major Sharpness had finished his return of machine-guns and had ordered an inspection of all guns on squadron charge to check it up before telephoning it into Wing H.Q.

It is not surprising that he found himself one short.

"What I can't understand," he was telling his flight commanders wrathfully, as they were gathered about him in an unhappy huddle in one corner of a hangar, "is why you silly blighters can't keep tab on your stuff. There are eight Lewises out on jobs; they're accounted for. But there's still one missing."

He turned on his heel as the Armament Sergeant came up at the double and saluted.

"Well?"

"It's number M.L. nineteen-forty-three, sir, that's missing," the N.C.O. reported, breathing heavily, for he was a portly man and disliked running about.

Sharpness traced his finger down a typed column on a slip of paper.

"That's on 'A' Flight charge," he rasped. "What about it, Hawkins?"

"I've four 'buses out and three Lewises, sir. That's all. You'll remember Lovelace went solo and didn't take one, sir."

"Um; yes. By the way, he ought to have been back long before this," he added, glancing at his wrist-watch.

SOLO SPECIAL

"Hope he hasn't run into any trouble."

"Perhaps we should have sent along an escort, sir," remarked Captain Hawkins diffidently, knowing the C.O. did not take kindly to suggestions.

"Escort be damned!" exploded Sharpness. "One 'bus flying alone had a fair chance of getting through. A formation or even an escort of a couple of 'planes wouldn't have had a dog's earthly.

"That's why Wing ordered a single 'plane, flying light. Also," he added, becoming for him strangely communicative, "the I.D. don't want to attract undue attention to that particular spot. If we'd sent along an escort, it would have been bound to be seen, and every blasted Hun staffel in the sector would have been told to keep an eye on it from now on."

The orderly pilot hurried into the hangar and saluted.

"'Plane coming in now, sir," he announced. "Seems to be in some kind of trouble. Can't hear his engine, and it looks as if he'll land short."

"Where is he?" demanded Sharpness, running out on to the tarmac with the others close on his heels.

The orderly pilot pointed with outstretched arm.

A couple of miles or so away, about two thousand feet up, they saw a 'plane gliding in. It was not a straight glide. It was yawing from side to side, though not in the manner of a machine whose pilot was sideslipping to lose height.

Sharpness barked an order and made for the nearest 'plane. As he vaulted into the seat, Hawkins mounted behind him in the rear cockpit, whilst mechanics ran to prop. and chock cords.

A few moments later they were in the air, streaking across the aerodrome towards the incoming 'plane.

They climbed above it and followed it down, recognising it instantly as Lovelace's machine; and the look in Sharpness' eyes boded no good to the pilot when he noticed a huddled figure in the rear cockpit and the missing Lewis in its Scarff-Dibovsky mounting.

But the look changed somewhat when

he saw that the battered 'plane was apparently out of control with its pilot leaning forward limply in his seat.

He opened the throttle and sped alongside, shouting at the top of his voice, whilst the other 'plane yawed dangerously close to him.

Finally, not two hundred feet above the field just outside the aerodrome, he banked aside, knowing he could do nothing; waiting for the inevitable crash.

Then they saw a strange thing. From the rear cockpit, a blooded figure arose, hoisting itself with apparent difficulty by the circular gun-mounting.

As they watched, spellbound, it hunched itself forward and a long arm stretched out and gripped the pilot's collar. And as he pulled, the pilot stirred slightly. Then, letting go with its free hand, the rear figure smote again and again upon the pilot's head.

Gradually the nose of the 'plane came up. A man's height above the ground, it stalled, settled slowly on a level keel and then fell away.

It bounded once on wheels and skid, and the figure in the gunner's cockpit fell back. Twice more it bounced, then ran round in a half-circle and came to a stop in a corner of the field.

SHARPNESS landed close alongside and ran towards it. Climbing nimbly on the lower wing, he looked inside.

"What the crimson Hades?" Hawkins, close behind him, heard him bellow. "Who the deuce are you?"

Hawkins ducked under the engine cowling and climbed upon the other wing. Then he and Sharpness stared at each other in amazement across the fuselage.

"Who the devil's this fellow?" demanded Sharpness. "He's not one of our men?"

"No, sir," came a cracked voice wearily from somewhere out of sight beneath the edge of the rear cockpit. "He's — a Hun. We — took each — other — pris'ner."

AIR STORIES

SOMEWHAT later in the day, Major Sharpness paid a second visit to the Casualty Clearing Station some five miles west of the aerodrome.

Jimmy Lovelace, feeling sore and very much knocked about, but quite cheerful now that his head injury had been dressed and neatly bound up, was filling his pipe.

In the cot next to him lay the German pilot, puffing away contentedly at a cigarette and wincing occasionally as he moved his right leg, from the thigh of which the M.O. had just extracted a Spandau bullet.

As Sharpness entered, the two turned their heads towards each other and grinned in friendly understanding.

"*Der Kommandant, nicht war?*" asked Leutnant Fritz Heimberg.

"*Ja wohl,*" answered Jimmy. "*Er ist sehr—wie heissen Sie 'hot stuff'?*"

"*Ich weiss nicht,*" replied the other, shaking his head. "*Warum hat Er einem . . .*"

"*Seid ruhig!*" muttered Jimmy warningly. "Shut up. He always wears the darn thing round his neck."

"WELL?" grinned the Major, as he drew up a chair and seated himself between them. "You don't look too bad. Much better than you did a few hours ago. I want to know how all this funny business happened. Where did you pick up our friend here? You speak English, eh?" he demanded, turning to the German pilot who was studying his red muffler wonderingly.

Receiving no answer save a polite and smiling shake of the head, he repeated the question in a louder tone, convinced, as is the average Briton, that if the English language is only spoken loudly enough, any ignorant foreigner is bound to understand it.

But Leutnant Heimberg shook his head decidedly this time.

"*Nein—nein, Herr Kommandant. Ich verstehe nicht.*"

"Well," said Sharpness, turning to Jimmy. "Let's have it. How did he come to be piloting your 'bus?"

So Jimmy "let him have it," right

down to the time when the Bavarian, badly wounded in the leg by one of the Prussian's bullets, had collapsed in mid-air soon after the engine had run out of petrol.

"What I don't understand," puzzled Sharpness when he had finished, "is why the beggar didn't pot you with his Luger. He had one in his pocket all the time. We took it from him."

"Is that so, sir?" asked Jimmy in surprise. "I'll ask him," he grinned.

There ensued a short exchange of rapid German gutturals between the two pilots whilst Sharpness looked on with interest. He probably noticed they both looked a little embarrassed.

"He says, sir," Jimmy translated briefly, "he's not a Prussian; that I'd just saved his life from one and he felt he owed it to me or something of the sort. Queer business."

But Sharpness nodded understandingly.

"Good show," he muttered, glancing at the wounded prisoner with quick approval.

"You got the paper out of my pocket, sir?" asked Jimmy, suddenly remembering.

Sharpness nodded. "Just what the Wing wanted to know. The Colonel asked me to thank you personally. That all there was?"

"Yes, sir. The fellow repeated it, but the lad on my right pinched the other copy and chucked it over the side of the 'bus on the way back," he grinned.

"Hm. Damn lucky you took it all down twice instead of just checking it off the second time. What about Wellman?" he shot out suddenly.

"Er—who, sir?" stammered Jimmy Lovelace blankly, sparring for time. What on earth did the Old Man know about Wellman, he wondered fearfully.

"Wellman. Like to tell me anything about him?"

"Er—no, sir. I don't think so, except that he's my engine man. Very good fitter, too. Why, sir?" he asked uncomfortably.

"Nothing much," answered Sharpness

drily, "only I caught him stowed away in the rear seat of your 'bus just before it was run out of the hangar this morning. Little blighter sneezed as I was passing, so I undid the cover and hoicked him out."

"Really, sir? How odd. Did he say why he'd done it, sir?" he asked, trying to keep his anxiety from showing in his voice.

"Oh, yes. It seems he's always hankered after being a gunner and has had special goggles made. Short-sighted or something. He'd heard you were going solo. Lord only knows how. Thought he'd slip along, too. Darn little nuisance. He's in the guard-room at the moment while I make up my mind what to do with him. Rotten bad discipline. Can't have that sort of thing going on."

"He's a top-hole engine man, sir," put in Jimmy quickly, with a brief

prayer of thanksgiving that young Wellman had kept his own counsel; "and if he's anything of a gunner, why couldn't I take him along at times, if he's as keen as all that, sir?"

"How d'you feel about solo flying now?" asked Sharpness, leaving that point unsettled for the moment.

And Jimmy Lovelace, remembering that, in some strange fashion when he had found himself alone, he had fought and conquered his fears for all time, answered confidently:

"You can count me in from now on, sir. You remember I was on my own one way this time, sir," he grinned.

"That's so," admitted Sharpness drily, as he rose to his feet and gave his red muffler another twist; "but you didn't know it."

And as he stumped out, Jimmy wondered a trifle uneasily how much the little man really knew.

AIR BOOKS

New Books of Aviation Interest

AVIATION IN AMERICA

"This Flying Game": By General H. H. Arnold and Major Ira Baker: Funk & Wagnalls Ltd.: 12s. 6d.

THOUGH preponderantly American in style and appeal, this book may be of interest to British readers as a popularly-written and broad survey of modern aviation, with particular reference to its practice in the United States. The authors are two of America's most distinguished military airmen and, starting in the traditional manner, with the Early Flights of Man, and an exposition of the Theory of Flight, they touch upon the whole of American aviation from the training of America's commercial and military pilots and the organisation of the U.S. air lines to aircraft construction, ground engineering and airships. A chapter of special interest is a description, from the pilot's point of view, of a flight across the American continent in a modern high-speed day-and-night flying air-liner.

The accuracy of those sections of the book dealing with American aviation are presumably vouched for by the distinction and experience of the authors, and it is therefore the more unfortunate that a feeling of distrust is liable to be aroused in the British reader by the several glaring errors that are to be found in references to British aviation. It would be difficult, for instance, to cram more inaccuracies into any one statement than have the authors in their reference to "Lieutenant" Boothman of "The Royal Flying Corps"

setting up a "land-'plane" speed record—unless it is their subsequent reference to Stainforth's achievement in 1931 while "flying his country's Gordon Bennett winner of that year."

Careless mistakes such as these must inevitably detract from what is otherwise a well-conceived, lavishly illustrated and, so far as America is concerned, a comprehensive account of the development and present position of military and civil aviation.

FOR MODEL-BUILDERS

"The Boys Book of Model Aeroplanes": By Francis A. Collins: D. Appleton-Century Co.: 6s.

THIS is a third and revised edition of an already popular American guide to the design and construction of flying models of aircraft. Much new and advanced information has been added since the last edition was published, and the introduction of new photographs and drawings greatly enhances the value and clarity of the fully detailed yet concise building instructions.

For the newcomer, the book's comprehensive contents, ranging from a simple explanation of the theory of flight and the mathematics of model aeroplane designing to a dictionary of aeronautical terms and hints for the conduct of a model aeroplane club, should serve as an admirable introduction to a fascinating hobby. For the experienced model-builder, the up-to-date practical information given will prove invaluable. A book to be recommended.

BRITAIN'S WAR BIRDS

The "Blackburn Kangaroo"



A LATER development of the twin-engined seaplane used by the R.N.A.S. in 1916-17, the Blackburn Kangaroo, was a long-range bomber driven by two 250 h.p. Rolls-Royce Falcon engines and capable of a top speed of nearly 100 m.p.h. It carried a crew of four and was extensively used for anti-submarine patrol work over the North Sea as well as bombing raids. Chief dimensions were: length 46 ft.; height 16 ft. 10 in.; span (top wing) 74 ft. 10½ in.; (lower) 47 ft. 9½ in.

Eagle of the Alps

**Bearer of a Charmed
Life and Hero of a Dozen
Hairbreadth Escapes from
Death, Colonel Scaroni
Lived to Become Italy's
Second Greatest Air Ace**

By

A. H. PRITCHARD



A sketch from a war-time photo, showing Colonel Scaroni wearing one of the peculiar "crash helmets" used by Italian aviators

NO Italian airman has yet figured in this series of articles describing the records of famous fighters of the Great War, and of the forty-one Italians who attained "acehood" during the war days there could be no finer representative than Italy's greatest living war "ace," Colonel Silvio Scaroni.

Colonel Scaroni's score of twenty-six victories places him second only to Major Francesco Baracca in the list of Italian "aces," and his skill and daring won for him every honour his country could bestow. Although air fighting was not such an everyday occurrence on the Italo-Austrian as it was on the Western Front, many airmen won honour and met death over the grim white peaks of the Alps, and this story from a little-known Front is, perhaps, of unusual interest.

When, in May, 1915, Italy cast in her lot with the Allies and declared war on Austria, Scaroni was in the artillery, and soon decided that he was not seeing enough action. Man-handling heavy guns up rocky mountain-sides, dragging huge shells on sledges, and discharging great lumps of steel at a foe he never saw, was not his idea of war, and he requested a transfer to the Air Service. He was

lucky in his application, inasmuch that it arrived just as the force was being enlarged, and he was ordered to the training-school at San Gaisto almost at once. There he developed a natural aptitude for flying and, after two months' training, was sent to the 4th Observation Squadron, late in August, 1915.

Less than three months after reaching the Front, he had a very narrow escape from death. While flying over an Austrian reserve area near Trieste, on November 7th, an anti-aircraft battery registered a direct hit on Scaroni's engine and that very necessary piece of equipment shook itself free and began an eight thousand feet flight of its own—straight down. By skilful juggling with the controls, Scaroni managed to glide his engineless machine home, but not before a piece of shrapnel had torn through the fuselage between pilot and observer, miraculously without scratching either. A few months later he was attacked by five enemy scouts, his observer riddled, controls shot to pieces, and nine bullet-holes burned in his coat—and yet he escaped again. His comrades swore that he bore a charmed life and, when next he returned with a

AIR STORIES

dead observer and a machine so shot up that it fell to pieces on landing, they knew by instinct that he was unhurt.

Transferred to Fighters

FOR nearly two years Scaroni flew bombers and observation machines, losing observers and bomber officers, but still emerging unscathed, until, in August, 1917, his work was rewarded and he realised his greatest ambition—a transfer to a single-seater fighting squadron, or *Stormi Da Cacci*, to give it the Italian title. He arrived just at the time when the Italian airmen had begun to suffer a serious reverse. Until their ground comrades suffered their defeat at Caporetto, the fliers had ruled the air, but, when the Austro-German armies began to advance, they brought with them six crack Jagdstaffeln from the Western Front, and six crack Flying Sections, the equivalent of our observation squadrons.

Such was the state of affairs when Scaroni ventured over the enemy lines on the morning of November 15th, 1917, to be immediately attacked by two Albatros two-seaters. Bullets hummed past Scaroni's ears like angry bees until one over-anxious pilot made the mistake of crossing the Nieuport's nose and one swift burst of fire sent him down in a flaming coffin that hit near Colbertadoi. On his first offensive patrol Scaroni had broken his "duck" and thereafter his victories increased almost daily. Another two-seater took the last dive on the 18th, and an Albatros D.3 followed the very next day. By December 19th he had six victories to his credit, a score which he soon raised to nine by a half-hour's daring fight on the 26th.

On Christmas Day, our own Major W. G. Barker, V.C., D.S.O., then stationed on the Italian Front, had raided the Austrian aerodrome at Motta, and in retaliation for this attack, twenty-three bombers raided Istrana aerodrome. In the face of a terrible fire, with bombs bursting all around them, Scaroni, another Italian pilot, and several British Camel pilots took-off in an attempt to

drive the bombers away. In the fierce battle that followed, no less than thirteen Austrian bombers were shot down, of which total Scaroni claimed three, and not a single Allied pilot was lost.

Attacking an F.A.W. two-seater from twenty-five yards range, Scaroni sent it down to a crash landing on his own aerodrome, where the occupants, one of them the leader of the enemy formation, set fire to their machine and surrendered. Chasing after the now fleeing enemy, Scaroni caught another two-seater over Camalo and, after a brief exchange of fire, it plunged to eternity in flames. His third victory on that memorable day was achieved at the expense of a Gotha, the first to be destroyed by an Italian pilot. The main wreckage fell at San Giaetano, but so fierce had been Scaroni's attack, that the machine broke up in the air, and a gunner was found in a small piece of wreckage four miles away.

A Stalker in the Clouds

SCARONI opened his scoring for 1918 with two victories over the peculiar Austrian scouts made by the Brandenburg Company, whose unusual bracing arrangements won them the name of "Star-Strutters." The first went down on January 10th, and two days later he caught another one over Asiago, a long burst through the struts causing the wings to collapse, and the machine to fall to pieces. February brought him four victories, including a double on the 11th. This double came as the result of attacking seven Kondor Scouts, and brought him another large slice of adventure.

Italian front-line observers had reported a large formation of enemy bombers crossing the lines and seven machines took-off to intercept them. Losing his companions in the mist, Scaroni flew on alone and, coming out of a cloud bank, found himself flying in the centre of an Austrian scout formation busily patrolling over Cismon. To say that Italian and Austrians were amazed would be to describe it mildly, but Scaroni woke up first, and, shooting

EAGLE OF THE ALPS

one machine down in flames, had withdrawn into his protecting cloud before the enemy had time to open fire. The formation scattered like rabbits and made full speed for home, while, all unseen, Scaroni stalked them from the clouds. As the machines broke up for a landing, he plunged at the leader and shot him down in flames, zooming up and away, before the entire Austrian squadron. The doomed 'plane crashed straight through the armoury hut and the ensuing display of fireworks razed one hangar to the ground, destroyed two machines and injured fourteen men. Anti-aircraft batteries went mad, and how Scaroni lived through the hell of fire that erupted all round him is a miracle he can never explain, for the Austrians were renowned for the accuracy of their anti-aircraft fire. As it was, one large slice of shell-casing sheared off the top portion of the peculiar type of crash-helmet favoured by Italian pilots, and the heat scorched his hair to a cinder. Of all his adventures this was, perhaps, the closest "shave" he had ever experienced. His reward for the scalped pate was the Silver Medal of Valour.

With the start of the Austrian spring offensive, the Italian commanders hit upon a plan that later made history on the Western Front. A total of 120 scout machines were grouped together in what was known as a "*massa da caccia*," or massed fighting formation, and this aerial armada was launched against the Austrian troops, whole platoons of advancing infantry being cut to pieces by the concentrated fire of small bombs and nearly 300 machine-guns. Not only were the Austrian troops demoralised, but Italy's aerial supremacy, lost in the previous autumn, was quickly regained.

By the end of May, Scaroni had sixteen victories to his credit, and added ten more within the next five weeks, a very fine effort when one takes into consideration the scarcity of enemy machines. June 8th saw him destroy an Albatros D.3 for his twentieth victory, the first of six that fell that month. Over Conegliano, on the 25th, he and

two companions attacked five D.3's that were flying protection to two Albatros two-seaters. One Italian pilot was shot down in flames, his blazing 'plane crashing into a two-seater, and, after driving one scout down, the other Italian was forced to pull away with jammed guns. Left alone with five enemy 'planes, Scaroni had a hectic twenty minutes, but, after shooting the wings off the observation machine, he managed to elude the scouts. Thirsting for revenge, the Albatros pilots chased him for nearly twenty miles, only to decide that discretion was the better part of valour when he turned at bay and sent one of their number down in flames.

Shot Down

A WEEK went by before Scaroni scored again, and, to make up for the interval, he scored his second triple on July 7th. With a squadron mate, Lieutenant G. Ticconio, who finished the war with six victories, Scaroni was on an offensive patrol over Asiago when a mixed formation of Phoenix and Brandenburg Scouts hove into view. One burst from Scaroni's gun and a "Star-Strutter" went down, with a headless pilot at the controls. Feeling slightly ill, Scaroni turned in time to see his companion send a Phoenix down in flames, and then became aware of a furious drumming sound coming close to his own headrest. A quick zoom and turn, and another Austrian fell blazing to death on the jagged peaks below. Chasing the now fleeing survivors, both Scaroni and Ticconio destroyed another Phoenix before calling it a day.

For their epic fight, both pilots were decorated, the ceremony being performed on their own aerodrome, and a two-day feast was held in their honour.

The following day, July 12th, dawned bright and clear, and, with Scaroni flying protection, three observation machines took-off to observe the effect of Italian artillery fire on the fortifications of Mount Grappa. Over the lines, the four Italians were pounced upon by a large enemy patrol and things

began to look black. Then three more Italian Scouts joined in, closely followed by a patrol of British Camels, and within the blink of an eye, the sky was raining 'planes. Pulling out of a merry-go-round with an Albatros, Scaroni smacked a burst through the floor-boards and riddled the pilot through and through. A Phoenix two-seater was next to take the plunge, a split second before Scaroni's brain went blank and the world swirled crazily around him. A bullet marked with his name had found its owner.

For five thousand feet his Nieuport plunged to its death dive, until, less than a thousand feet above the Austrian lines, the rush of air temporarily cleared Scaroni's befogged brain, and by sheer will power he managed to make a fair landing in No Man's Land. By a stroke of good fortune, the machine ground looped, and tossed Scaroni into a shell-hole, from which haven of safety a patrol of infantry brought him in.

Five months in hospital passed slowly by, and by the time his wounds were

SCARONI'S VICTORY LOG

- 6 Albatros Scouts.
- 9 Albatros two-seaters.
- 5 Brandenburg "Star-Strutters."
- 2 Kondor Scouts.
- 2 Phoenix Scouts.
- 2 F.A.W. two-seaters.

healed the war was over. But such a record as his could not go unrewarded, and in 1927 he was given the command of a Scout Wing, and shortly afterwards was appointed Italian Air Attaché to Washington, U.S.A. The life of a diplomat quickly palled upon him and, at his own request, he soon returned to his beloved fighting 'planes.

Of all his decorations, honours and trophies, the treasure he prizes most is the plaque presented by the townspeople of his native Brescia. He is represented as a winged centaur and the plate is inscribed "With wings of lightning he struck our enemies."

DIVE-BOMBING AT 300 M.P.H.

Remarkable British Bomber which Carries Over 1,000-lbs. of Bombs at a Speed of 215 m.p.h.

HIGHLY successful results in recent trial flights have been obtained with the Hawker P.V.4 biplane, a new military machine which combines great strength, to withstand the stresses of dive-bombing, with high performance and the ability to carry a big military load.

This rugged machine was designed for day-and-night bombing, for "general purpose" military duties in the Middle East, including desert patrol, and for dive-bombing—that spectacular and accurate form of attack on surface targets in which the aeroplane itself is aimed in a dive lasting for 10,000 ft. or more from a height of 12,000 to 15,000 ft., and the missile is released just before the pilot levels out.

Long Range and High Speed

IN outline the P.V.4 recalls the Hart series of single-engined military aircraft. In its latest form it is fitted with a Bristol Pegasus X engine, which gives it a maximum level speed of 215 miles an hour. On the less powerful Pegasus IV engine the aeroplane reaches 200 m.p.h. at a height of 15,000 ft. and cruises at 172 m.p.h. for 675 miles. Its service "ceiling" (the height at which rate of climb falls to 100 ft. a minute) is 25,000 ft., and with full load it climbs from sea-level to 15,000 ft. in 12½ minutes.

Day and night bombing duties and general purpose flying require the installation, in addition to

the usual fixed equipment, of two machine-guns, full night flying gear, two 250-lb. bombs and racks, four sighter bombs and racks, a desert emergency load of 140 lbs. in rations and drinking water, and radio transmitting and receiving apparatus. The structure was designed to cope with the immense strains and loads involved in launching by dive-bombing 1,000-lbs. of bombs.

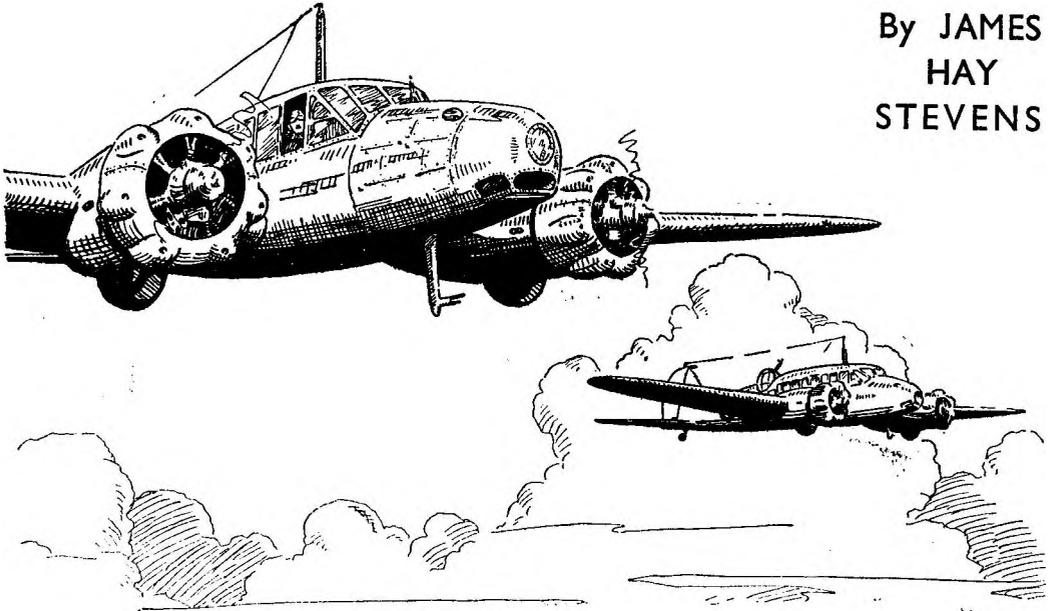
All-Metal Construction

THE framework, and all of the main structure of the aeroplane, is metal. Notwithstanding the strengthening needed to deal with dive-bombing conditions, the structural weight of the airframe is only 27½ per cent. of the fully laden weight of the aeroplane—a remarkably low figure. In the dive to attack, which is made at a nearly vertical angle, the P.V.4 reaches a velocity of considerably more than 300 miles an hour. It can be converted rapidly to seaplane form by substitution of floats for the wheel undercarriage, with which it is normally fitted.

Dive-bombing is now generally accepted as the most accurate and effective form of aerial attack on defended ground targets, but, whilst this method has for some time past been widely practised in the Royal Air Force, the Hawker P.V.4 is the first machine to be designed, as a private venture, with this duty specifically in view.

A TWIN-ENGINE WARPLANE

By JAMES
HAY
STEVENS



A Description of the R.A.F.'s Latest and Fastest Coastal Patrol 'Plane With Full Instructions for Building a Solid Scale Model

EARLY in 1935 A. V. Roe and Company produced a special charter monoplane for Imperial Airways, the twin-engined Avro 652, of which two examples were built. This aeroplane achieved a remarkably high performance considering the comparatively low-powered engines used, with the result that the Air Ministry considered it would make an economical machine for coastal patrols.

The official designation of the resultant military version, the "Anson," is General Reconnaissance Aircraft, and it is intended for long patrols along the coast and out to sea, where her occupants can observe, and report upon, the movements of any hostile shipping. For the purpose of this work an aeroplane with a long range, good turn of speed and capable of its own defence is required. A large bomb load is of no great use, and the weight saved by its absence may be more usefully employed in carrying petrol.

Constructional Details

THE "Anson" is almost identical in construction with its civilian predecessor the 652; a factor which leads to a big saving in time and in initial expense during its production. The wing is entirely of wood and is of a type developed through the Avro Company's association with the Fokker Company. A pure cantilever built in one piece, the wing has two box-spars built up from spruce and plywood. The ribs have plywood webs and spruce flanges, and the whole structure is covered with plywood. Wide span, narrow chord Frise-balanced ailerons are inset from the wing-tips. Very generous fillets have been used to fair the thick wing-roots into the fuselage.

The fuselage is constructed from welded steel tubes. The main framework is rectangular in cross-section, the rounded section of the finished fuselage being attained by means of light wooden formers and stringers. The whole cover-

AIR STORIES

ing is of fabric with the exception of the Elektron metal nose-piece.

The equipment and the crew's accommodation are arranged in the following manner. In the extreme nose is a Harley landing headlight, together with bomb trap, sights and releases. The bombs themselves are stowed inside the centre-section of the wing on each side of the fuselage, the apertures being covered by small doors. The navigator acts as bomb-aimer and, when doing this duty, lies prone inside the nose.

In the fore-part of the cabin is the pilot's seat, and dual control may be fitted for instructional purposes. A fixed Vickers gun is mounted in the nose on the port side of the fuselage. The navigator has a chart table, instruments and compass behind the pilot. Behind the navigator, beside his transmitter and receiver, is the wireless-operator's position. Windows stretch along the whole of each side of the cabin.

Behind the cabin, and reached through a door in the rear wall, is the after-gun position. This gun is a Lewis and is mounted in an Armstrong-Whitworth patent revolving turret, designed to allow the gunner to operate his weapon in comfort and with efficiency in air streams of two hundred miles per hour. A wireless-mast projects from the roof of the cabin and the aerial stretches from it to the top of the rudder-post.

A Dinghy for Emergencies

THE engines are Armstrong Siddeley "Cheetah IX" seven-cylinder super-charged radials rated at 310 h.p. at six thousand feet. The standard airscrew is a fixed pitch duralumin Fairey-Reed. The engines are carried on welded steel tube mountings attached to the wings. The curious helmeted engine-cowling has been developed in an attempt to give the pilot the best possible lateral

view. Each helmet covers the valve-gear of one cylinder, the actual cowling fitting closely round the heads of the cylinders. Behind the engines, the nacelles are partially covered with aluminium cowling panels, the rear portions being fabric covered. In the top fairing behind the starboard engine there is stowed an inflatable rubber dinghy, and, should the aeroplane descend into the sea, this is automatically inflated from a bottle of liquid carbon-dioxide.

High Performance on Low Power

WITH the above engines, the "Anson" weighs, empty, 4,870 lbs., and loaded, 7,650 lbs. The usual bomb load is two 112-lb. and four 20-lb. bombs—should eight 20-lb. bombs be carried the petrol load is less and the duration is reduced to 4½ hours. Performance figures are as follows :

Maximum speed at sea level	174 m.p.h.
Maximum speed at 7,000 feet	188 m.p.h.
Cruising speed at 6,000 feet	160 m.p.h.
Landing speed	57 m.p.h.
Climb to 5,000 feet	6.1 mins.
Climb to 15,000 feet	21.2 mins.
Service ceiling	21,400 ft.
Absolute ceiling	24,000 ft.
Duration at 160 m.p.h. at 6,000 feet	5 hours.

The tail unit on this aeroplane is somewhat unorthodox. The fixed tail-plane is placed very low, and is chiefly remarkable for its inset elevators and its curious whale-like outline. The fin merges smoothly into the tail of the fuselage, and the rudder, like the elevators, is mass-balanced.

The retractable undercart is neat and simple. The shock absorbers are of the oleo-steel spring variety, and two are fitted to each wheel. When retracted, the backward sloping rear leg forms part of the engine nacelle fairing, leaving nearly half the wheel protruding. A castoring tail wheel is fitted.

A TWIN-ENGINED WARPLANE

BUILDING THE SCALE MODEL

Full Details of Tools, Materials and Method of Construction

THIS model is the twelfth in this series of model warplanes, and it is also the largest to date. In view of the advantages of keeping to one scale for all models, the drawings are still for a scale of $\frac{1}{72}$, but they are arranged in a different manner. Owing to the size of this aeroplane, it has been necessary to give a $\frac{1}{72}$ nd scale drawing of the fuselage side elevation and a smaller scale G.A. drawing. As regards the actual construction, it will be found to be a simple model to make. Unfortunately, it would take many pages of drawings and instructions to cover modelling the interior of the cabin, so this part has had to be left to the modeller's own knowledge and ingenuity.

Materials and Tools

THE following materials will be necessary for this model: a block of wood $7\frac{1}{16} \times \frac{10}{12} \times 1$ in. for the fuselage, another block $4 \times \frac{8}{12} \times \frac{8}{12}$ in from which to make the engines and their nacelles; a sheet of fibre, aluminium or celluloid $6 \times 1\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{10}$ in. for the tail unit, and a short length of 18-gauge brass wire for undercarriage legs. If it is proposed to hollow out the cabin (and it greatly improves the appearance of the model to have transparent windows) some transparent sheet celluloid, about $\frac{20}{1000}$ in. thick, will be needed and should be obtainable from any good garage.

Some tricky work is entailed in making wheels, airscrew, and especially the gun cupola. All these items are available in cast form for $\frac{1}{72}$ nd scale models, but

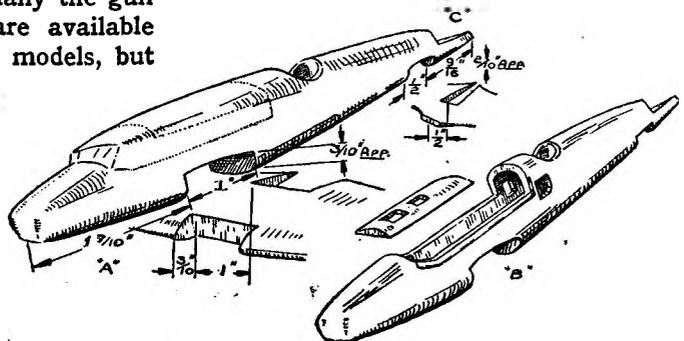
for the independent modeller, methods of constructing these fittings are given in their appropriate places.

The essential tools are as follows: $\frac{1}{4}$ -in. chisel, small plane; sharp pen-knife; oil stone; small half-round file (smooth cut); $\frac{1}{16}$ -in. bradawl; fretsaw; small long-nosed pliers; plastic wood; tube of cellulose glue; a penny ruler measuring in 10ths, 12ths and 16ths of an inch.

Method of Construction

A TRACING of the side elevation of the fuselage is the first thing to make, then a tracing of the side view of the engine nacelle. When making the fuselage tracing, make allowance for the cut-out which is destined to take the main plane. Place the tracing on the side of the fuselage block and carefully pin-prick the outline on to the wood and line-in with a pencil. Cut away the surplus wood and draw a centre line down the top and bottom surfaces of the block. Draw the plan of the fuselage and again remove the surplus. Now is the last chance to decide upon a solid or hollow cabin. The fuselage will now look like Fig. 1 "A," and the block should be cut as shown by the dotted lines if it is desired to make a hollow cabin. Fig. 1 "B" shows the hollowed cabin ready for assembly with celluloid windows; the frames of the side windows and of the windscreen should be made from brass wire—anyone who is neat at soldering

Fig. 1.—Showing the position in the fuselage block of cut-outs to take wing and tail-plane. "B" shows the method of cutting out the cabin interior.



AIR STORIES

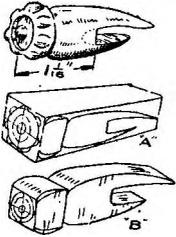


Fig. 2.—Stages in the carving of an engine nacelle from a block of wood. Note the cut-out to fit the wing.

can make a strong workmanlike job of the windscreen. Next, drill a hole $\frac{9}{16}$ in. in diameter for the gunner's cupola.

The engine nacelles are best made in a similar manner to the fuselage. The tail-end should be cut, as shown in Fig. 2, to fit into the main wing. It is distinctly easier with this model to carve the engine cowlings from solid blocks. Anyone at all doubtful as to his ability to tackle this detail will find it easier to make the engine cowling separately from the nacelle.

Figs. 2 A and 2 B show the stages for marking the nacelle. Note the way in which the positions of the helmets are marked radially on the front of the nacelle and also how sufficient wood is left to form these helmets.

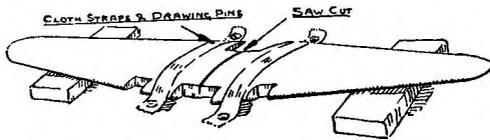


Fig. 3.—Jig for giving dihedral to the main plane. The wing is supported on blocks near the tips and held down by straps.

The main plane is easily made. Mark the outline in plan, cut it out; then taper the plane in front elevation and camber both the upper and lower surfaces. Slot the centre-line of the wing with a saw-cut for about two-thirds of its thickness. Fill the slot with glue and hold the plane with its correct dihedral till the glue has set. Fig. 3 shows a simple jig for this operation. This sketch also shows the cut-outs for the nacelles, their correct size and positions.

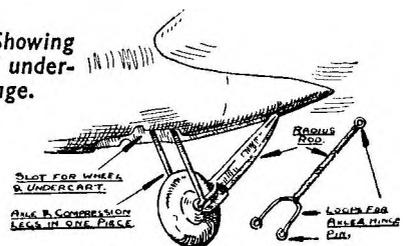
The tail-plane and elevator unit is drawn in plan upon the fibre or celluloid, cut out and cambered to a symmetrical section. Note in Fig. 1 "C" how the tail-plane is made to fit the cut-out in the

bottom of the fuselage; this rather curious arrangement is necessary because of the low-placed tail-plane. The fin and rudder are made as a single unit and must fit accurately on to the tail of the fuselage. This part must also be cambered to a symmetrical section.

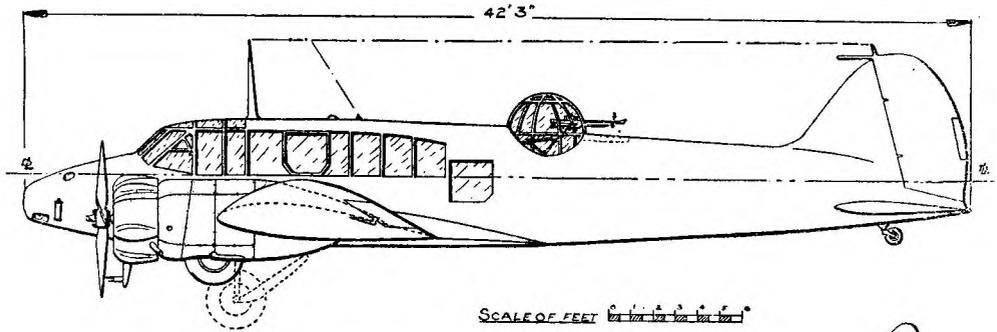
The undercart may either be made retractable or left fixed in either the up or down position. In the former case it will not be possible to model it quite so accurately, but there is a certain satisfaction about a working part. If, however, the model is to be seen hanging up, model the undercart retracted; if it is going to stand mostly, model it extended. It is comparatively easy to make this particular undercart retract, but the problem of locking it in the down position calls for very neat work. Fig. 4 shows a simple unit.

The compression legs and axle are made from a U-shaped piece of 18-gauge wire and the radius-rod fork from a piece of 20-gauge wire twisted as shown. The fork is built up to its correct shape with plastic wood. In the bottom of the nacelle a slot must be cut to fit the radius-rod and the wheel—when the undercart is retracted the bottom of the nacelle is smooth save for the projecting portion of the wheel. Drill a $\frac{1}{32}$ in. hole laterally through the rear of the nacelle and use this for the hinge-pin of the radius-rod, which should be made from 20-gauge brass wire. Two $\frac{1}{16}$ -in. holes have to be drilled up the nacelle to take the retracted legs. These holes should be exactly over the centre of the wheel when retracted (fit wheel and radius-rod and find the position by trial and error). When lowered, the tops of the legs are locked by moving back into two $\frac{1}{32}$ -in. holes placed $\frac{2}{12}$ in. behind the others.

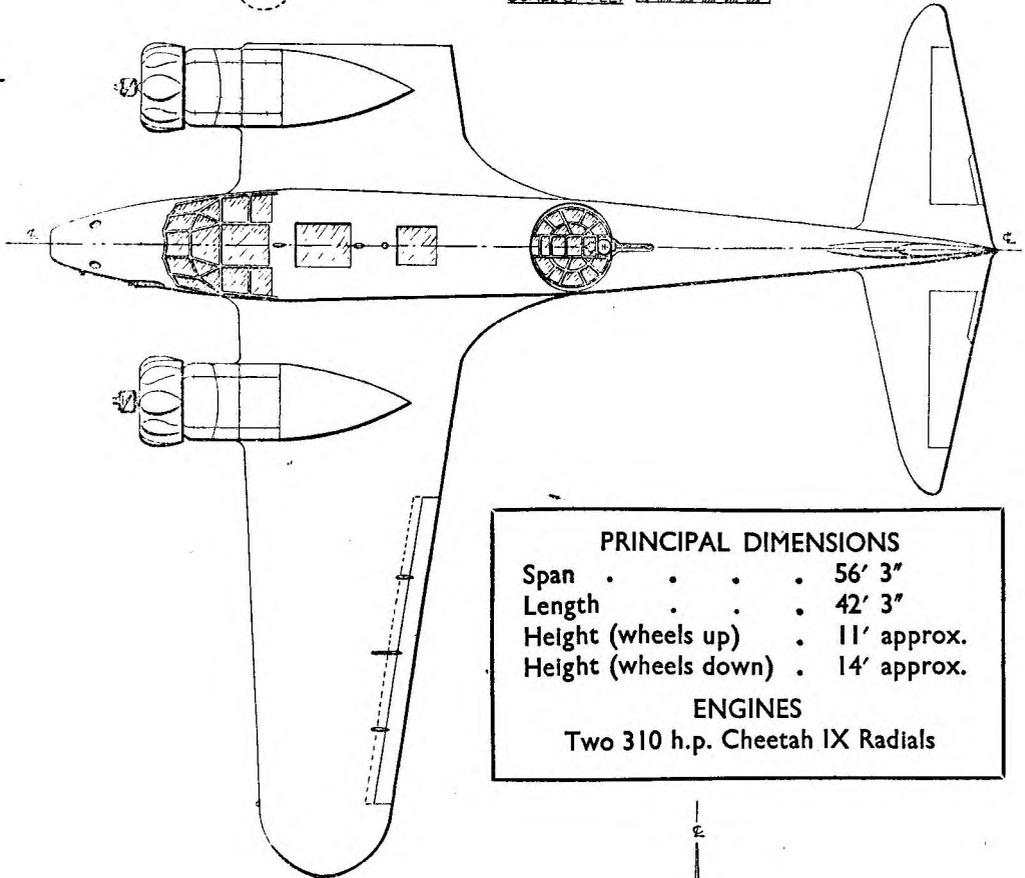
Fig. 4.—Showing details of under-carriage.



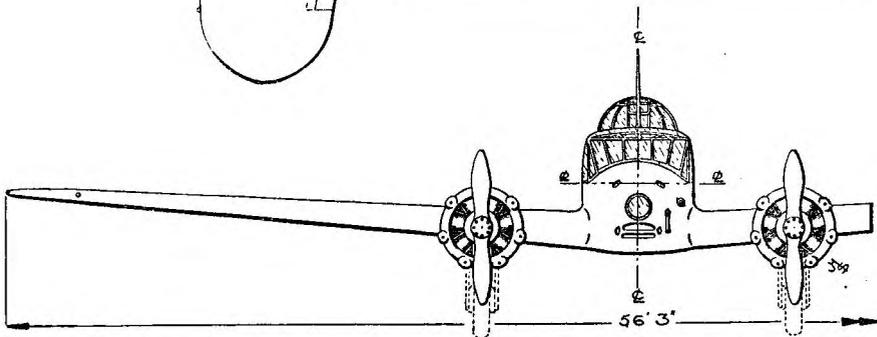
THE AVRO "ANSON" RECONNAISSANCE 'PLANE



SCALE OF FEET



PRINCIPAL DIMENSIONS	
Span	56' 3"
Length	42' 3"
Height (wheels up)	11' approx.
Height (wheels down)	14' approx.
ENGINES	
Two 310 h.p. Cheetah IX Radials	



A Three-view General Arrangement Drawing of the Twin-engined Avro "Anson" General Reconnaissance Aeroplane.

AIR STORIES

THE AVRO "ANSON"

The airscrews are made from wood or aluminium. The size is shown in the scale drawing, and when making the airscrew from wood, it is sawn and carved with a penknife. It is quite simple to file one out of a small piece of aluminium, and if it is finished off with fine emery cloth and metal polish it will look very smart. The blades should be given a coat of clear cellulose to keep them bright.

Method of Assembly

GLUE the lower plane into its slot beneath the fuselage and, when the glue has set, fair it in carefully with plastic wood or barbola paste. (It is presumed that the cabin has now been finished and that only final details remain to be fitted.) Glue the two nacelles in place and fair them in the same manner as the fuselage.

Fit the rudder and tail-plane units and carefully fair them with plastic wood. The large gap beneath the tail-plane may either be filled by building up with layers of plastic wood, or by glueing in a block of wood and cutting away the surplus afterwards.

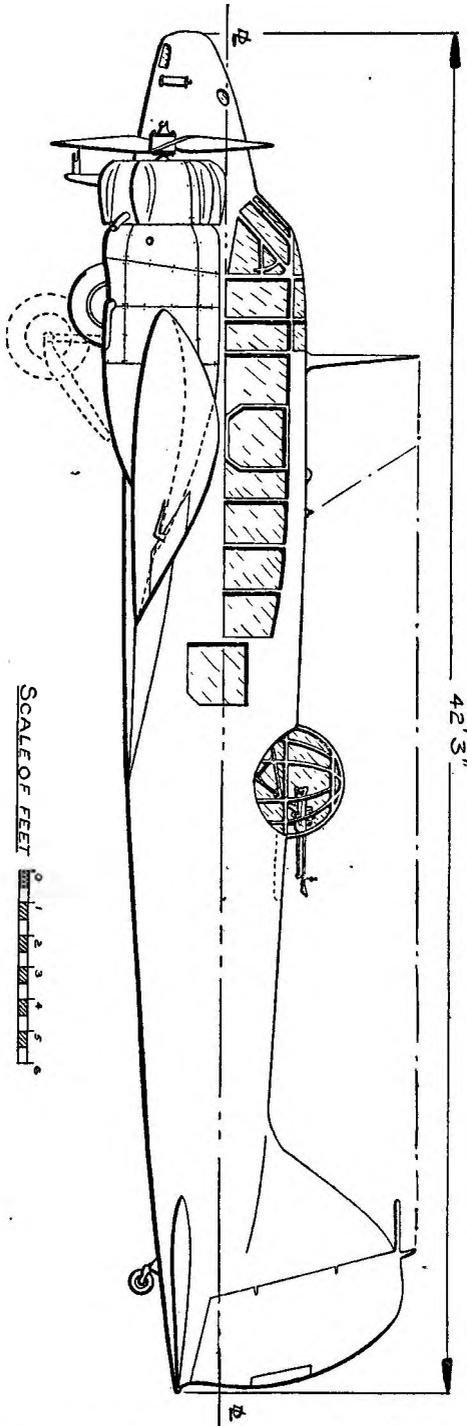
Finally, fit the undercart and tail-wheel units. All that now remains is to add the last details, airscrews, wireless-masts, mass-balance on rudder and the rest. The gun cupola can be purchased or may be made from 22-gauge brass wire soldered together. A model Lewis gun may also be bought for models on this scale.

Painting the Finished Model

THE "Anson" is painted entirely silver and carries R.A.F. cockades on wings and fuselage. The machine number is painted on the sides of the fuselage and rudder and on the upper and lower surfaces of both planes between the engine and the nacelle.

On the top surface, looking down on the machine from behind, the port-hand number is right way up, and the star-board upside down. Looking from below and behind, the same rule holds. The backs of the airscrew blades are black.

NEXT MONTH: The De Havilland 5.



A side-elevation view of the fuselage drawn to a $\frac{1}{2}$ nd scale.



Editorial Offices: 8-11 Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2

MANY readers have been good enough to try and identify the alleged Vickers Bullet which a correspondent recently mentioned as having visited his aerodrome in France early in 1918. Altogether, the mysterious machine has been "identified" as fourteen different types of aircraft, including a number that were not built until several years after the war. All our informants, however, are unanimous in agreeing that the machine was *not* a Bullet, and the consensus of opinion is that the visitor was actually a Vickers Vampire—a verdict with which we are inclined to agree.

The first letter identifying the machine as a Vampire was received from Mr. Anthony J. Allen, of Hall Green, Birmingham, who wrote:

"If the alleged Bullet seen by your correspondent, Mr. Burgess, in 1918 was really a Vickers product, I think it may have been a Vickers Vampire. This was a single-seater pusher biplane fitted with a 230-h.p. B.R.2 engine and had a top speed of about 134 m.p.h. It was produced in 1917, as a development of the Vickers F.B.12c, and was supposed to be a very good stunter."

This machine certainly seems to conform in all respects with the description given by our inquirer and on his behalf—and subject to any future objections from our expert and highly critical readers—we take this opportunity of thanking those many correspondents who assisted in identifying the machine.

Stranger Than Fiction

WE had been under the impression, supported by frequent letters of praise from readers, that our stories about present-day aviation were pretty good and as generally popular as our more numerous war-air stories. Apparently, however, we have at least one dissentient in the person of Mr. Kenneth J. McKelvie, of Marlborough, Wilts., though the fact that he is the son of the distinguished Major J. A. McKelvie, R.F.C. (retired), who commanded No. 22 Squadron, may have something to do with his partiality for stories of the War in the Air. At all events, he writes to us as follows:

"Though I do not withdraw the high praise I gave AIR STORIES in my first letter, I must say that I am disappointed that there are so few war stories in your fine magazine. Begging all the different authors' pardons, I think that the modern stories are very much too fantastic and I hope that in future we shall have more and more WAR stories."

As we already print far more war-air than modern stories in each issue—the proportion is actually about 75 per cent. war-air stories to only 25 per cent. modern stories—we can hardly fulfil our correspondent's last injunction without cutting the modern air interest down to about one very short story, and we gather that this would be a far from popular move with the great majority of our readers.

As regards the stories themselves

AIR STORIES

being too fantastic, we imagine that quite a number of our readers, not excepting Mr. Kenneth McKelvie, scoffed audibly at the incident of a Canadian pilot taking-off over a waterfall when reading "The Mounties Ride High" in this issue.

Just to remind them that fact can sometimes seem even more fantastic than fiction, we quote an extract from the author's letter which accompanied this story :

"This yarn I am sending you," wrote the author, Mr. Edward Green, "is built around the character of Jack Harms, a trapper who killed his partner recently and then terrorised a woman until help came. He has since been sentenced to death. The falls episode is correct. It is not fiction. A pilot mining engineer of the Consolidated Smelters Ltd. patched his cylinders with native copper and took-off over a waterfall exactly as I have described. 'Shorty' Tuckett, though that is not his real name, is none the less a very real man, a fine pilot who is always grumbling if he isn't in the air from dawn till dusk."

So there's one story, at least—and one of the most apparently incredible yarns from a flying point of view that we have yet published—about which no one will be able to write and complain that it is too fantastic to be true.

A War Bird Passes

A KIND but anonymous correspondent in Johannesburg, South Africa, sends us a cutting from the "Rand Daily Mail" recording the recent death and funeral in Johannesburg of Hans Joachim Rolfes, who, the report states, was a German "ace" with a score of thirty-four victories and a former member of the Richthofen Jagdstaffel.

Recording incidents in his war-flying career, the account mentions several narrow escapes from death, including a forced landing in No Man's Land in which his machine was blown to bits by gun-fire a few seconds after he had flung himself into a shell-crater nearby. It is also stated that, with seven other pilots, Rolfes accounted for 100 Allied machines in seven months and was the holder of the Iron Cross (first and second class) and a Companion of the Order of the House of Hohenzollern.

Curiously enough, we have so far been unable to find any trace of this airman in the German records, the

nearest approach to his name being a pilot called Rolff who served with Jasta 6 of Richthofen's Jagdschwader No. 1. This airman, however, scored only three official victories—a Breguet, a Nieuport and a Camel, all in 1918—and was either killed or seriously injured on August 19th, 1918, when the wing supports of a Fokker D.8 collapsed during a test flight. He can, therefore, hardly be the man who recently died in Johannesburg, and it would be interesting to know whether any of our readers, from their collection of war-air data, can trace any references to Hans Rolfes, who, judging by his victory score and decorations, must surely have been a prominent member of Richthofen's squadron.

Next Month's Great Issue

THE brief outline at the end of this month's instalment of "Ace of the Black Cross" gives some hint of the enthralling nature of next month's instalment of this exciting autobiography. In particular, Udet's account of his extraordinary encounter with Georges Guynemer, the French ace, will provide material for argument between those who maintain that chivalry has its place even in war and those who assert that a soldier's only duty is to kill his country's enemies.

Guynemer, idol of France, had Udet at his mercy early in the War in the Air, but, because he was too chivalrous to take advantage of a helpless opponent, he held his fire—little dreaming that the man whose life he was sparing was destined to rank second only to Richthofen as the greatest aerial enemy of France and her Allies!

Udet also describes the curiously casual manner in which he came to join Richthofen's "circus" and, from intimate experience, casts a new light on the character of this much-discussed air fighter.

In addition to this outstanding life-story, next month's issue of AIR STORIES will contain a number of extra-good war-air stories by some of our most popular authors, a special fact article of a new kind, and a full complement of all the usual features.



A STORY

Crashing—tearing—leaping its way through the thick growth that it was intended to destroy, stopping only where the growth is too thick and resists all its efforts to break through—ripping and tearing great gashes in the surface as it passes—sliding over the top where the growth bends under its onslaught—slashing—slipping—crashing its way to freedom, leaving a ragged trail behind, to arrive at its destination worn, tired and entirely unfit for any further service.

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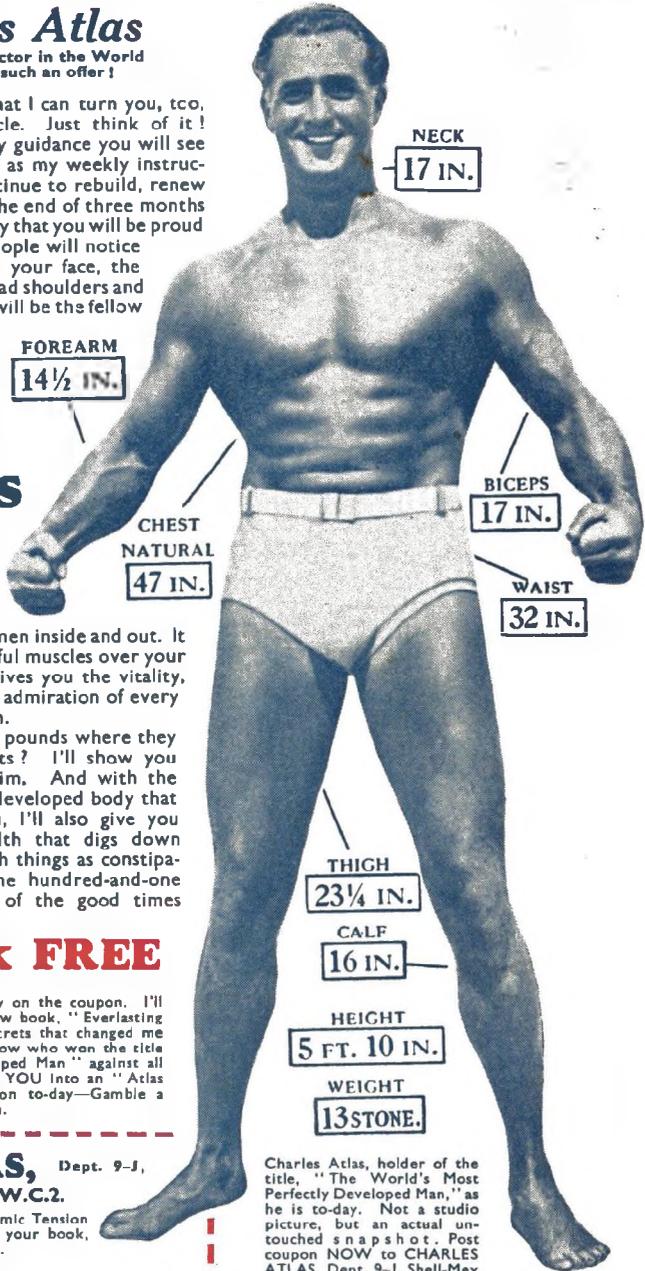
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