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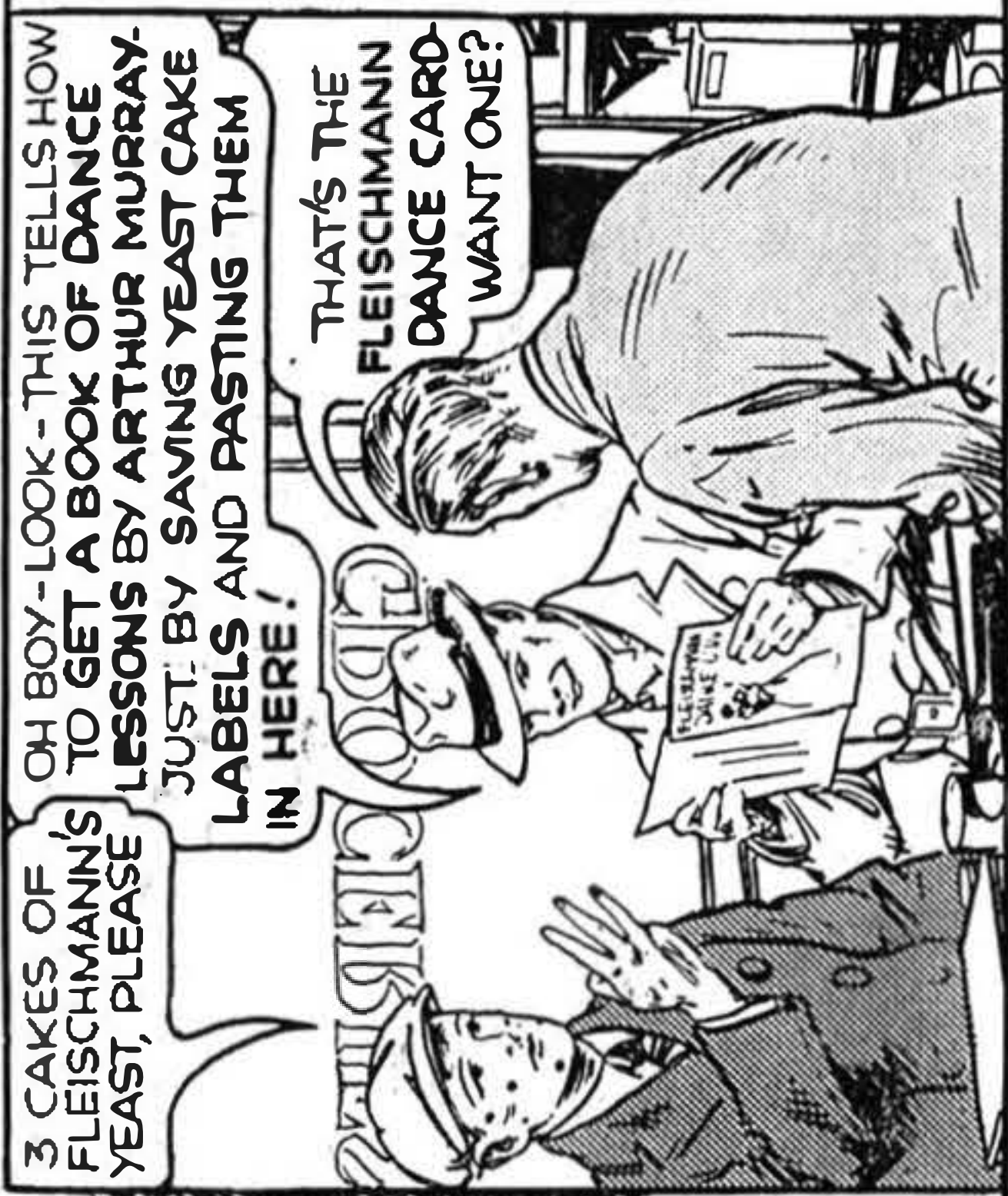
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SKY FIGHTERS

Vol. XVII, No. 1

LIEUT. EDWARD McCRAE, Editor

May, 1937

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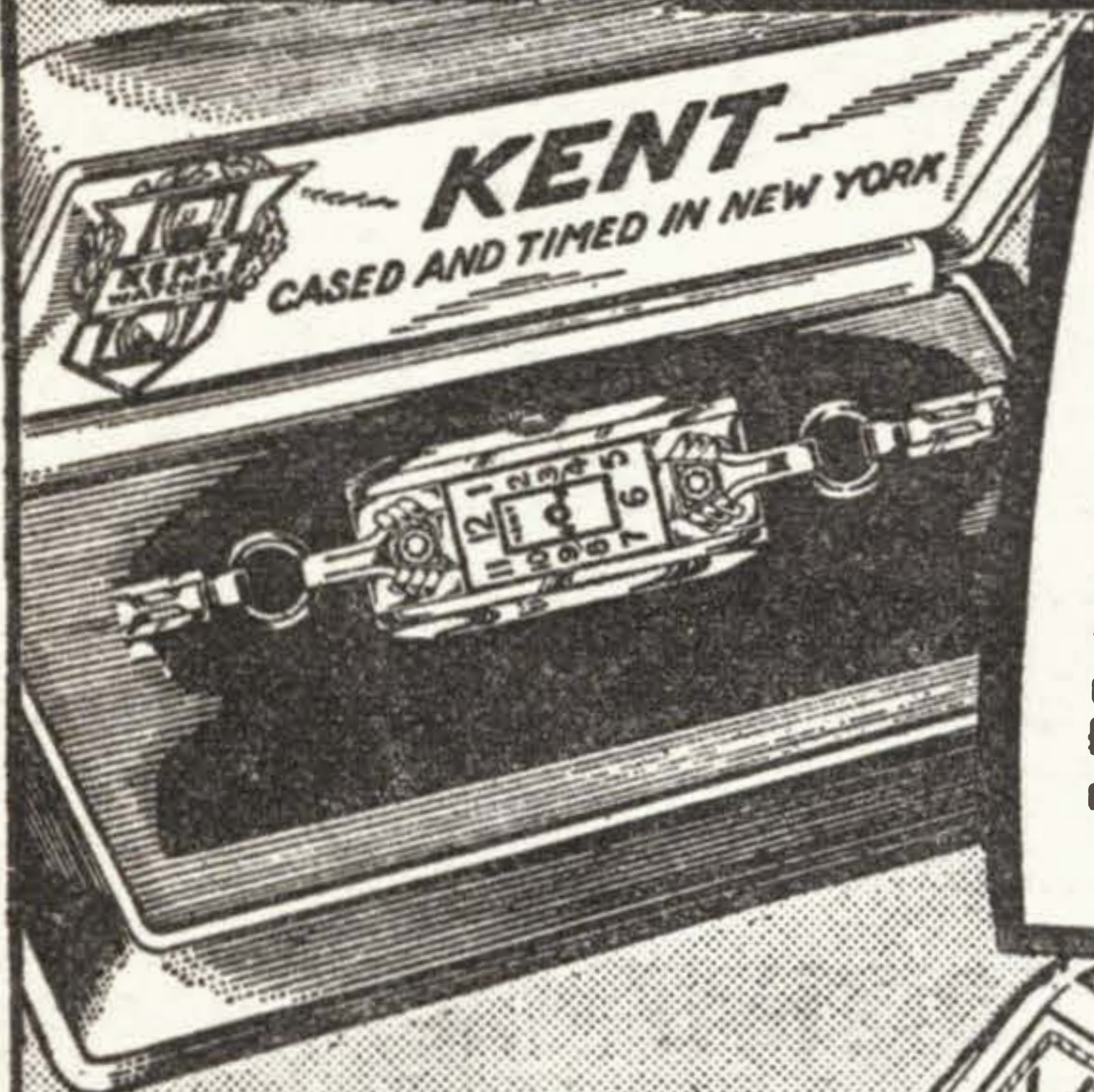


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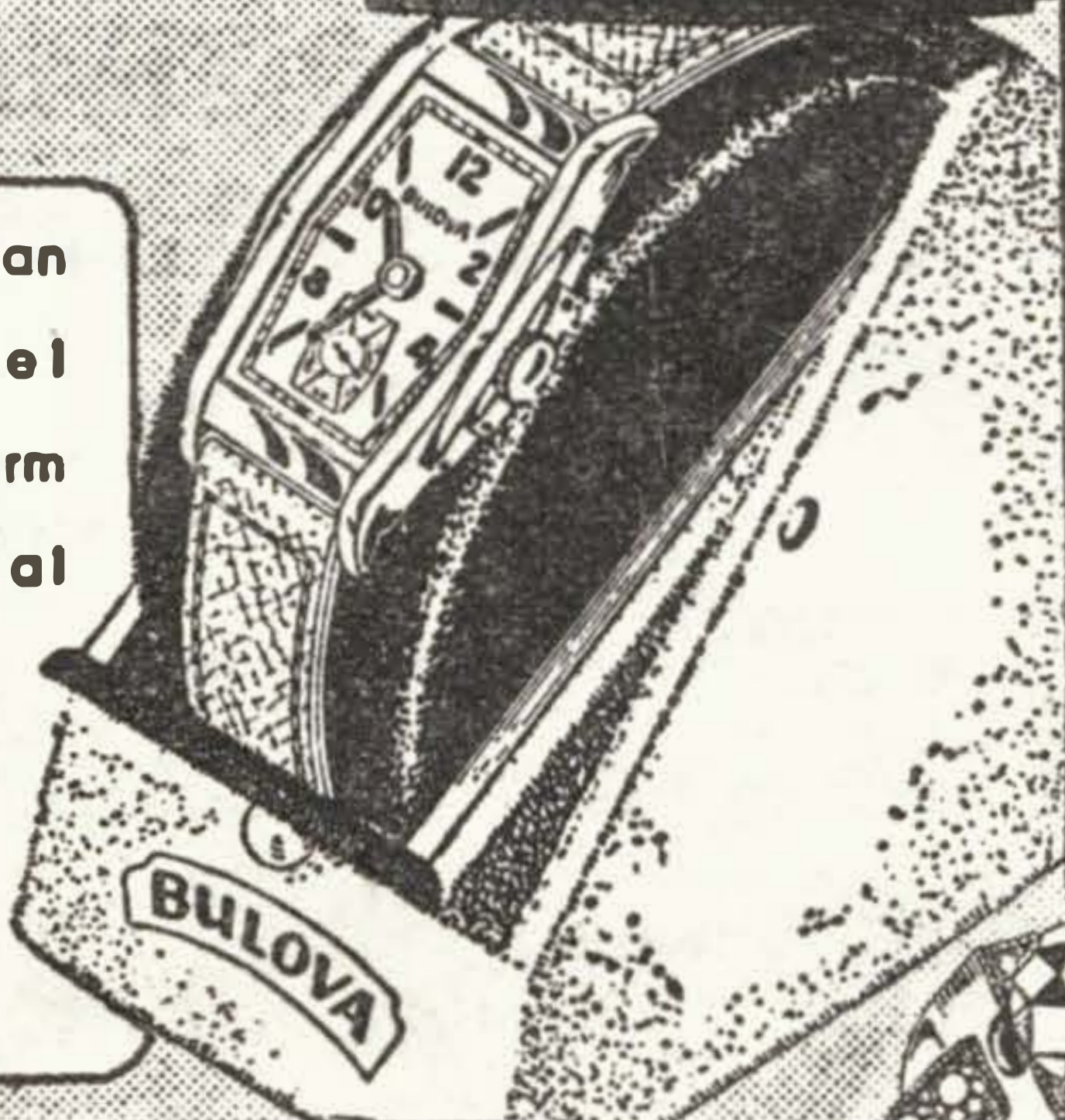
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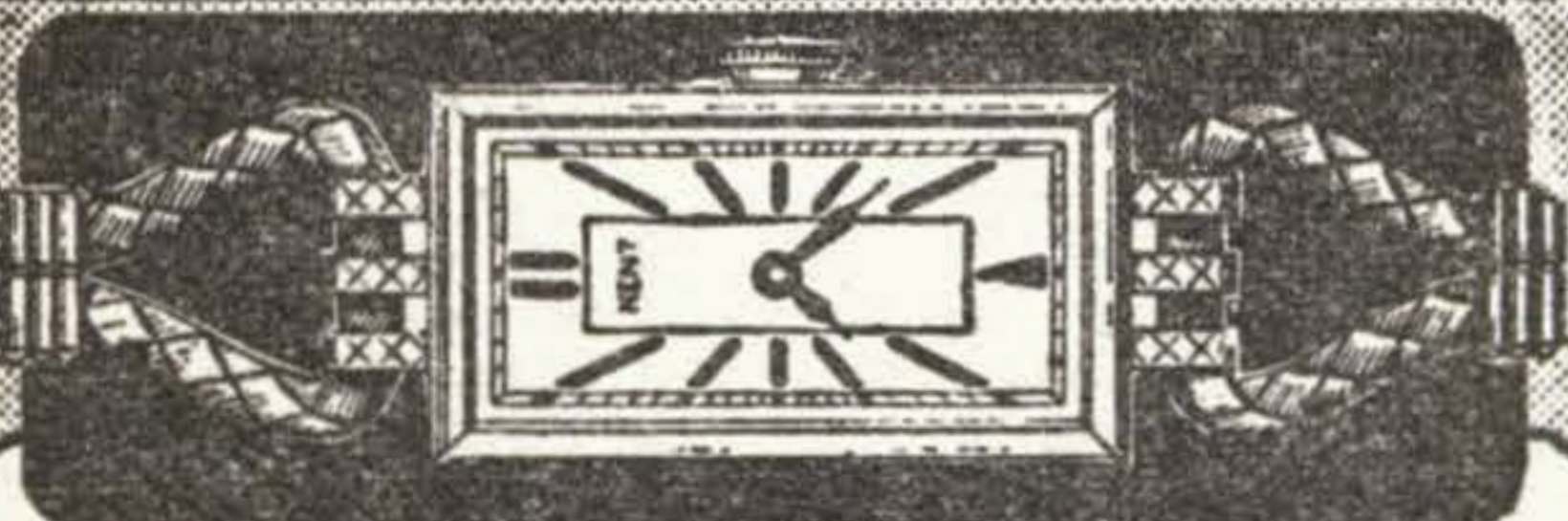
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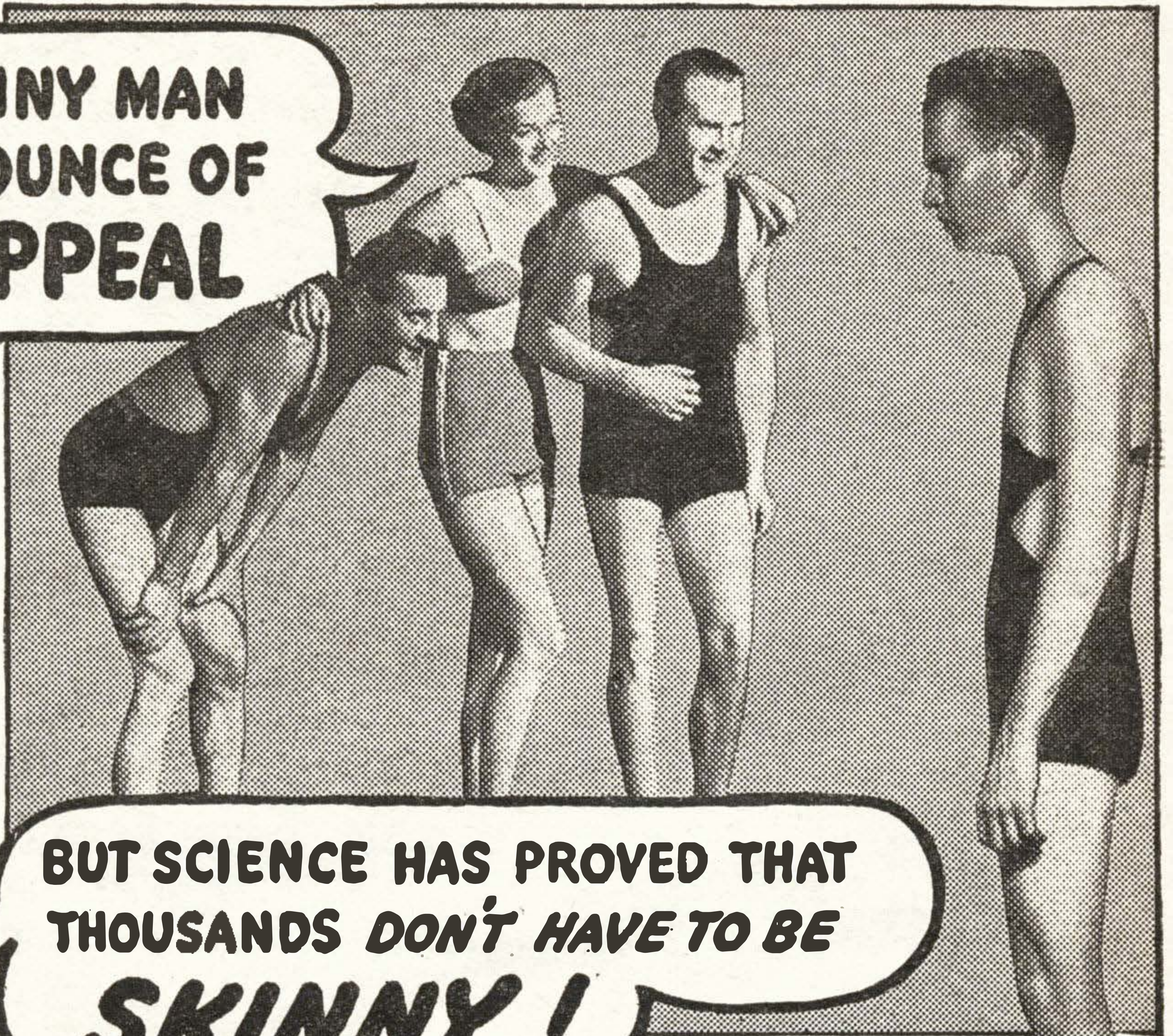
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THE 16th Pursuit Squadron planes rolled out onto the middle of Selfridge Field, in Michigan, engines turning over easily as the ships taxied to formation position.

The Squadron had received orders to participate in the opening of the Century of Progress and they were preparing to take off for Chicago.

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Gas Running Low

The run to Chicago was uneventful. The aerial display the formation made over the Windy City and its gala celebration is history. But what isn't generally known is that Lieut. Burnett, after participating in the maneuvers, had to break away from the formation for he noticed that his gas was running low. He saw that he had just enough to reach the Landing Airport, in South Chicago, where he planned to refuel and rejoin the Squadron.

Just outside the airport, the motor coughed, sputtered and gave up the ghost. The nose of the ship dropped in a glide and in an effort to restart the engine, as he noticed that his gas pressure had dropped, he started working the wobble to raise the pressure in his gas tank. But instead of responding properly, the engine suddenly burst into flames.

The dive of the plane forced the flames

back toward the pilot's cockpit and his eyes, and throat were soon filled with the dense black smoke that blew back from under the cowling. The flames licked at the windshield, and the fairing, with its five coats of highly inflammable acetate dope, soon was ablaze, and the flames swept back over the cockpit of the ship in a fiery blanket, almost enveloping the pilot.

Frantically he tried to rip the fabric off the front of his cockpit, but failed. His hand was badly burned as he sought to check the fire as it reached backward over him.

It was only a matter of seconds then that he realized he could not save his ship as the flames rose to the center section and then crept out on the wings denuding them.

A Head-First Dive

Coughing and desperately trying to get his breath, he stood up on the seat of his cockpit, raising the parachute out of reach of the flames, then leaped over diving head first.

The ship followed him down a mass of flames, and as his 'chute domed out and checked his rapid descent, he saw the flame-seared and smoke-scarred skeleton of the ship strike some mud flats and sink into the mire not more than a hundred yards away, from where he himself, landed unhurt but for the burned hand.

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Radio already gives jobs to more than 300,000 people. In 1935 over \$300,000,000 worth of sets, tubes and parts were sold—an increase of 20% over 1934! Over 1,000,000 auto Radios were sold in 1935, 25% more than in 1934! 22,000,000 homes are today equipped with Radios, and every year millions of these sets go out of date and are replaced with newer models. Millions more need servicing, new tubes, repairs, etc. Broadcasting stations pay their employees (exclusive of artists) more than \$25,000,000 a year! And Radio is a new industry, still growing fast! A few hundred \$30, \$50, \$75-a-week jobs have grown to thousands in less than 20 years!

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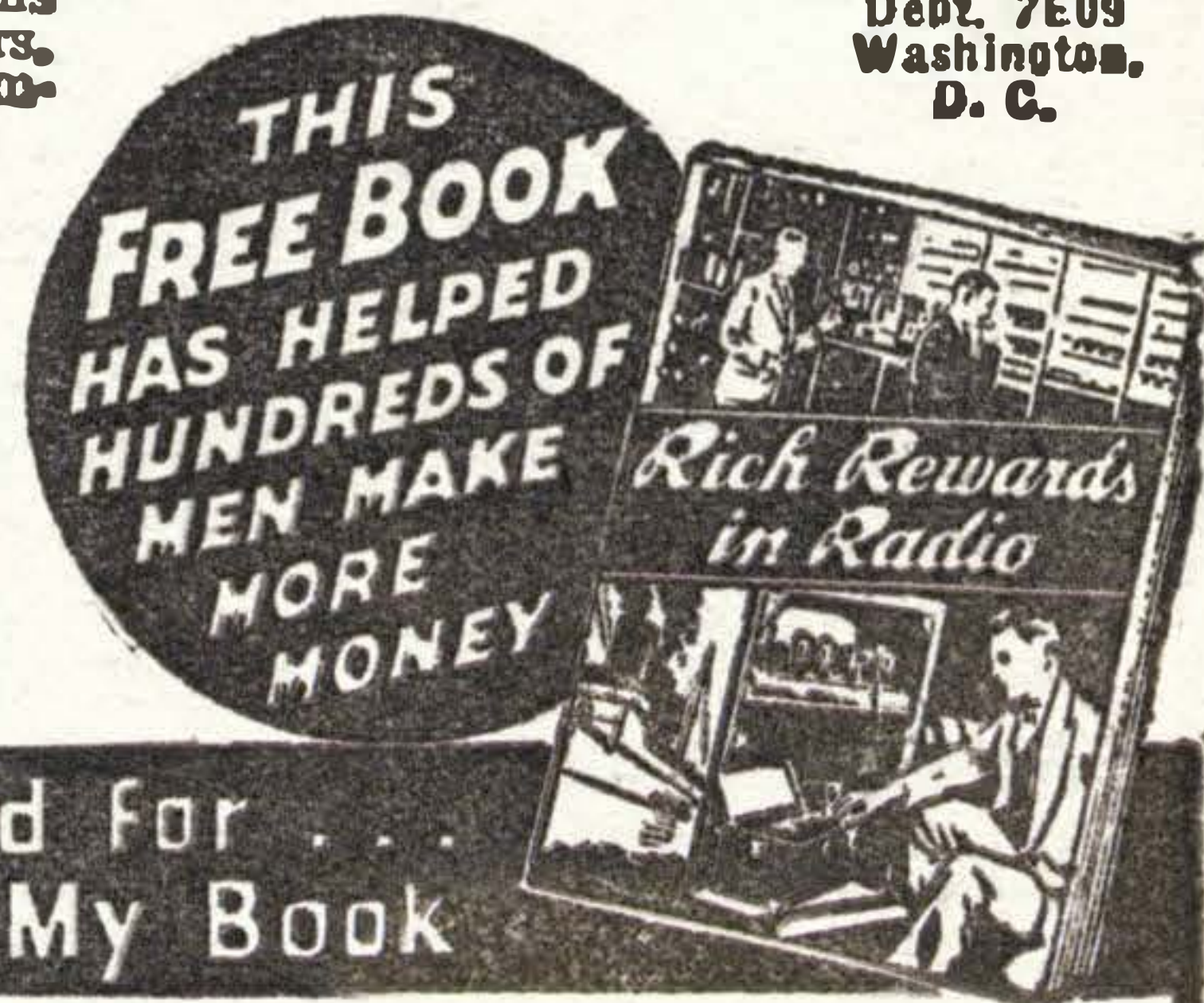
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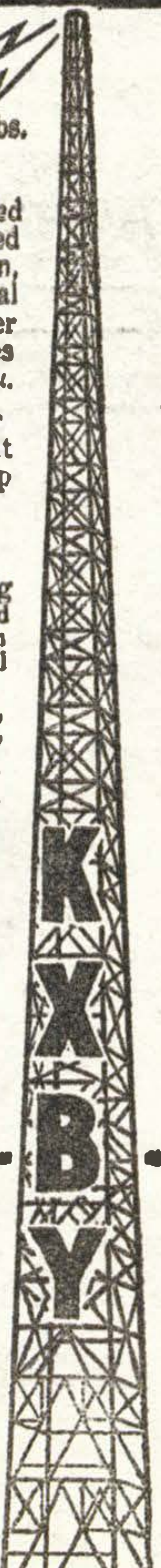
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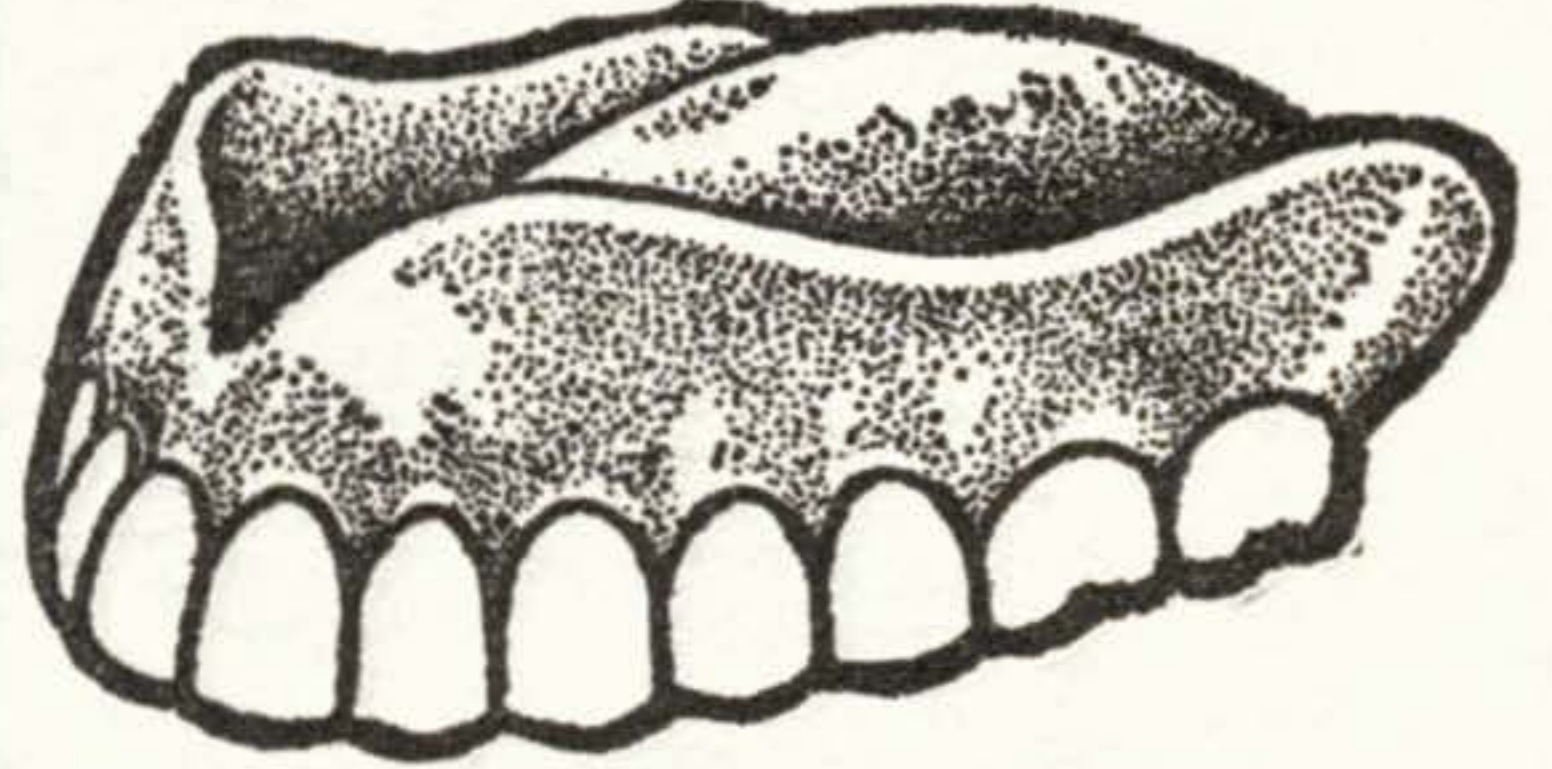


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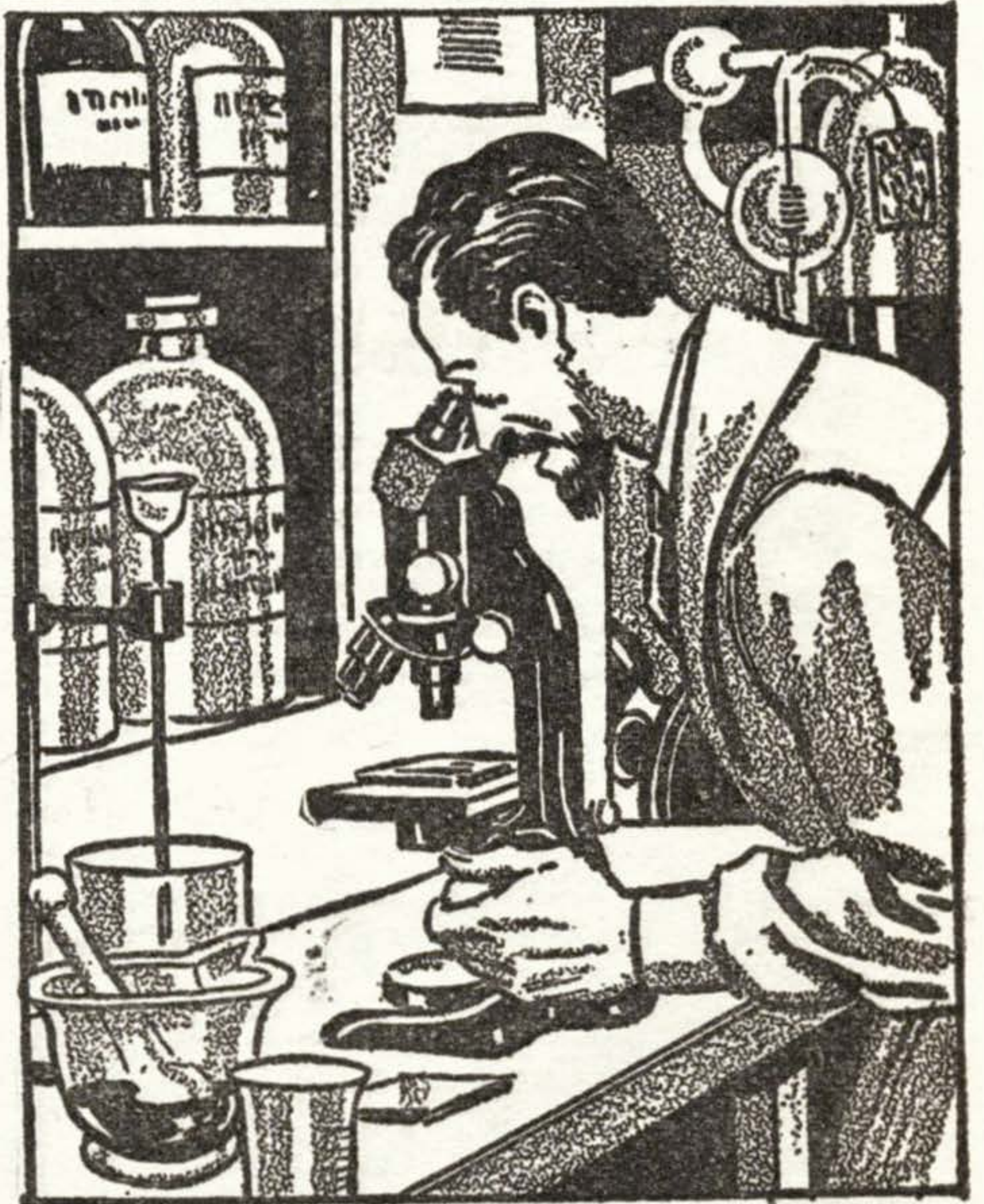
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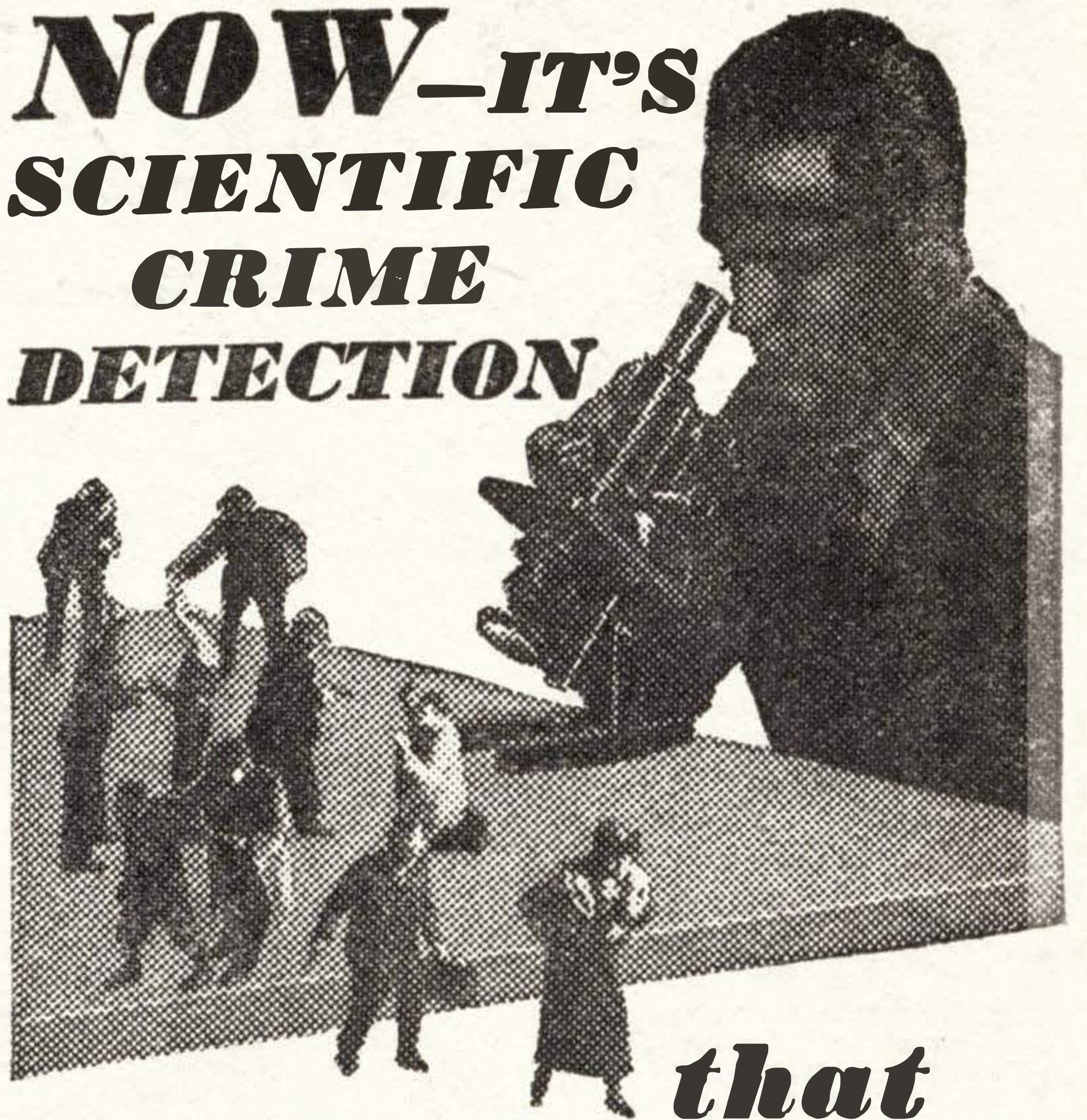
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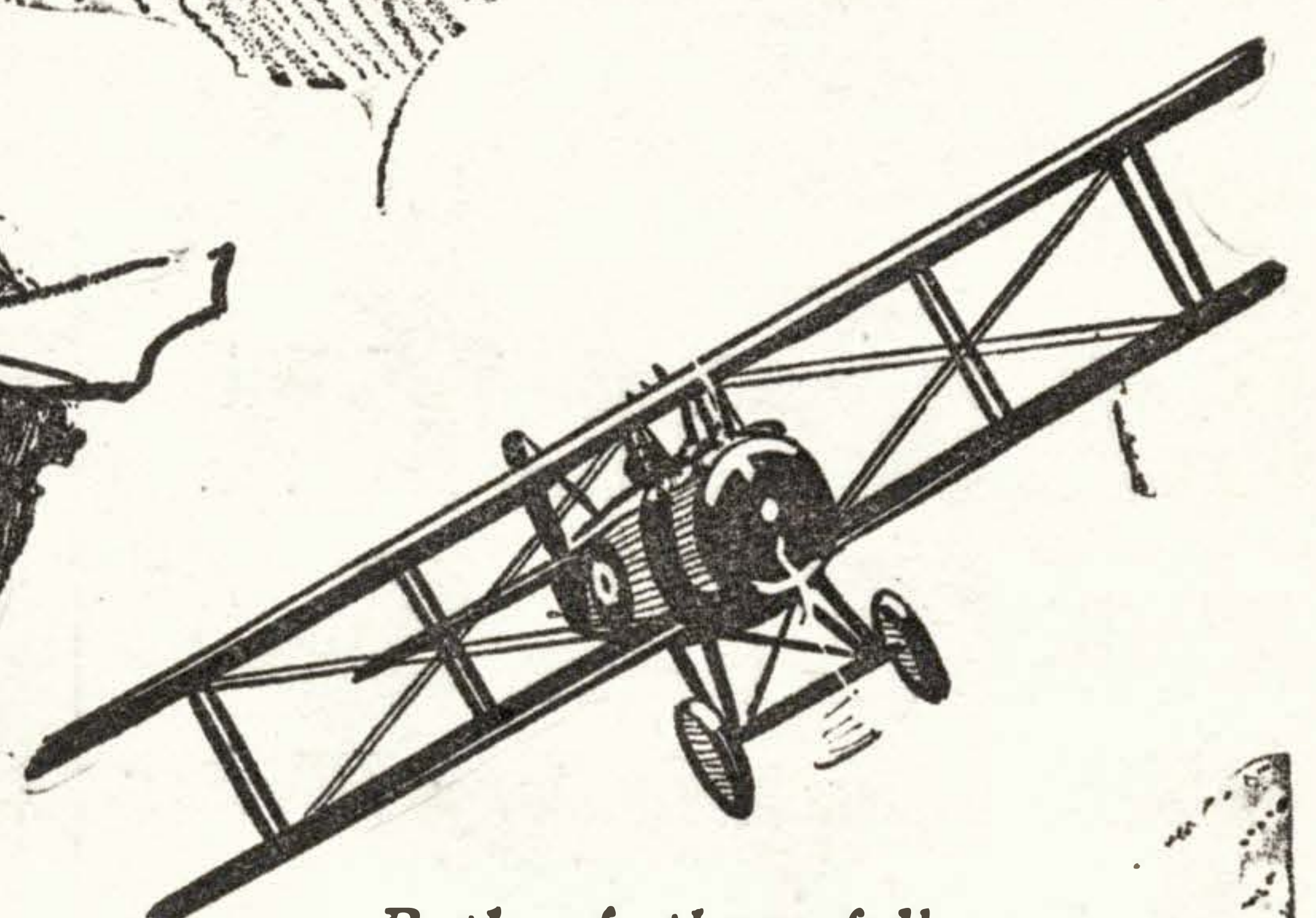
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BOURKE

The TOUGH



*Both of them fell
dead as the Fokker
sprayed them*

A Complete Novel

By **FREDERICK**

Author of "The Gods Destroy,"

CHAPTER I

Offensive Patrol

THE door of the operations office of the First Foreign Legion Observation Escadrille banged open before a thick boot.

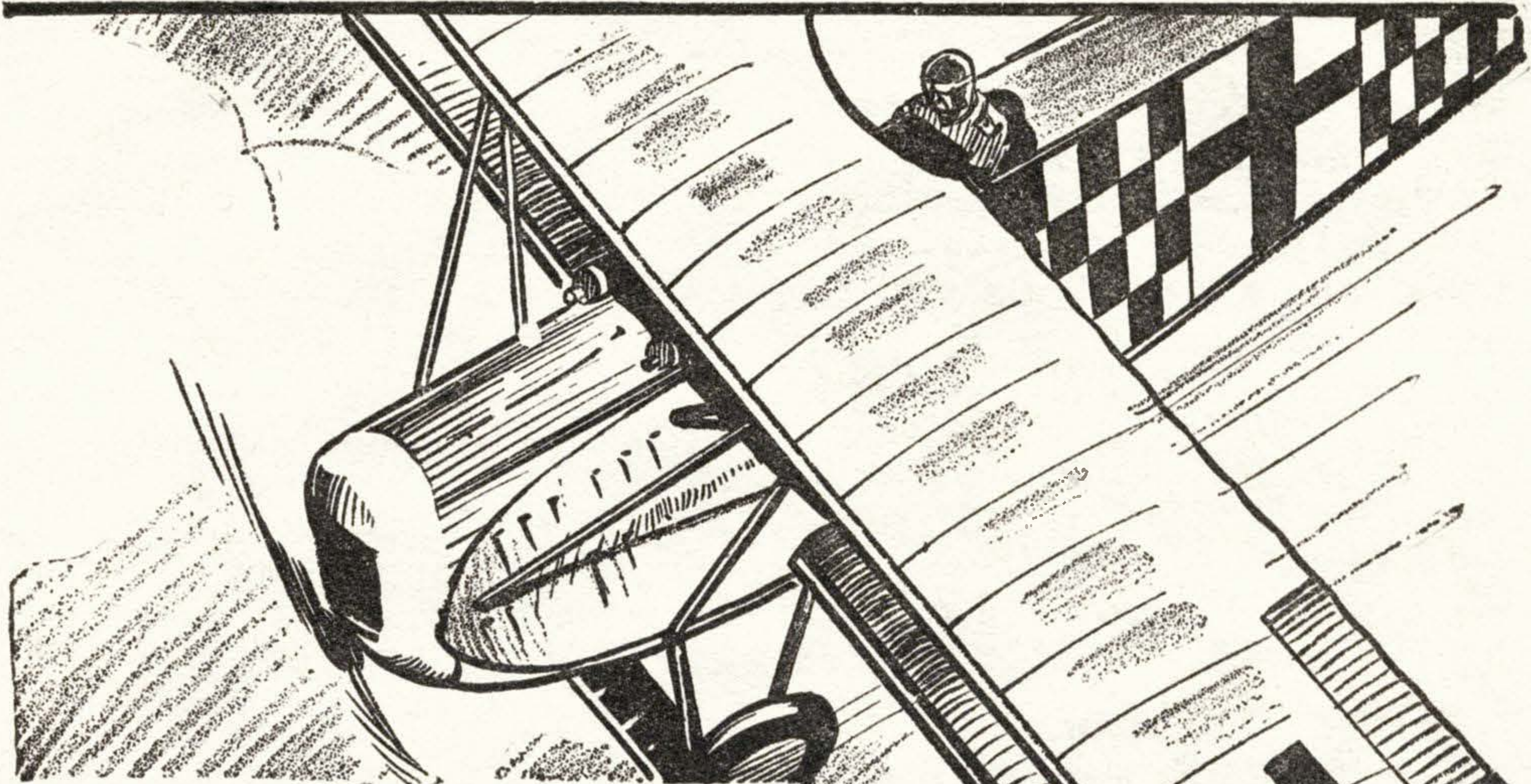
Captain Honore Rochfort shoved his fat face and part of his bulging stomach out.

"Corporal Bourke! *Venez-ici!*" he shouted.

On the dead-line a tall bronzed youth of twenty-five or so, who stretched the seams of his dark blue uniform with solid bone and muscle, desisted from tinkering with the CC mechanism of prop-synchronized Vickers machine-guns. He frowned

All Life's Meaning for these Brave Pilots

DON'T PRAY



of War-Air Action

C. PAINTON

"Stars Must Fall," etc.

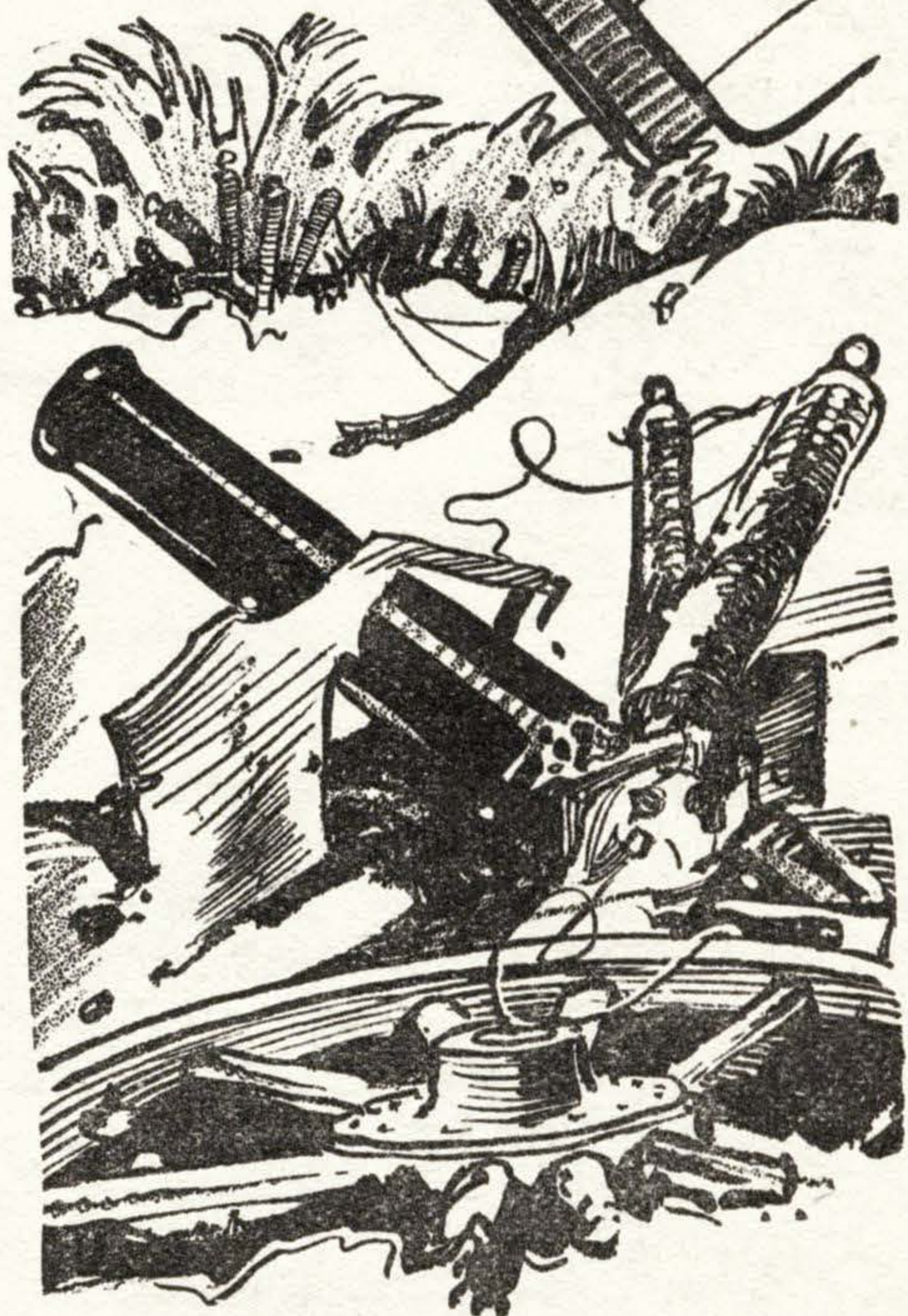
because he was due for the eleven o'clock patrol in ten minutes.

"Set up the lever screws so it throws easier, Pierre," he said to a bearded mechanic. "I'll be right back."

"Understood, Corporal."

With a long lithe stride Corporal-pilot Darcy Bourke headed toward the operations office. Through the window Captain Rochfort, massaging his big belly watched him.

"Corporal Bourke is one of my best men, Sergeant," he observed. "In the last enemy offensive he had three *descendus*, he brought back valuable photographs, and never once was his report of enemy positions inaccurate. He has lost only two observers in three months." He



is in Reckless Combat in Flaming Skies!

turned his round moonlike face. "You are an American, Drake, so perhaps you already know him."

The new replacement observer (also a qualified pilot, from his bronze wreath and wings) stared eagerly through the window. His level grey eyes suddenly blazed, and their searching stare missed nothing of this lean-legged man approaching him.

"Why—er—no, Captain," he said. "I don't know Corporal Bourke but I would like to." He smiled grimly. "I've looked forward to this for a long time."

SERGEANT DRAKE shot a quick glance at the captain. The captain was watching the approaching corporal. Swiftly, hiding it with his hand as much as he could, Sergeant Drake drew a small piece of paper from his pocket. His eyes swung to Bourke, then back to the paper as if he were making a comparison. At Captain Rochfort's sudden turn Drake stuffed the paper into his pocket. But his eyes suddenly glowed with joy.

"He will take you on the patrol today," Rochfort said. "It will be nothing much; a reconnaissance over Villers-Cotterets. The enemy are quiet now, and we like to break you newcomers in gently. You last longer." He laughed.

"A man lasts as long as he can shoot straight," remarked Drake, his piercing gaze still on Bourke.

"*Bon!*" nodded Rochfort. "You two should make a grand team— Ah, Corporal Bourke, let me present your new observer, Sergeant Drake. He has just come from Chateauroux and you will test his calibre by taking him into Bochelant."

Automatically Darcy Bourke reached for the extended hand. Observers came and went with him. The last one took ten machine-gun slugs in the chest. The one before that, foolishly unbuckled his belt and

fell two miles. He was hoping this one could shoot and had sense. A fool and his life were soon separated.

But as the firm muscular fingers closed around his own Bourke lifted his bold blue eyes. For an instant he and Drake stood thus, hands clasped, eyes interlocked. Bourke instantly disliked the man, mistrusted him. It was as if an electric spark of antagonism had shot between them. For one brief second suspicion leaped high within him. Then, as swiftly, he dismissed it.

He had been four years absent from America, had been vanished so long that no one could trace him. He smiled and tried to forget both suspicion and dislike.

"Glad to have you with me, Drake," he said genially. He glanced at his wrist watch. "We're about due, so if you'll get into your Sidcot we'll go upstairs. That's my Breguet on the end."

Captain Rochfort nodded approvingly. These Yankees wasted no time. They were eager to fight; they did not know the war weariness that had the others.

"Never mind going with the flight, Corporal," Rochfort said. "Drake will have to get his air eyes, so just make a swing to the Vesle and Landre-St. George."

Drake nodded and went out the door to the tar paper and wood hutment where the pilots lived. Bourke watched him, remarking to himself the huge six feet of boned body.

"Looks like a good man, Captain," he said, and then, carelessly; "Know much about him?"

Rochfort shrugged. "He apparently did not like *chasse* work because he graduated high in aerobatics, but insisted on observer work. He had evidently heard about us because he requested assignment to this squadron."

Bourke's eyes narrowed. "Did he now?" He forced a smile. "Quite a

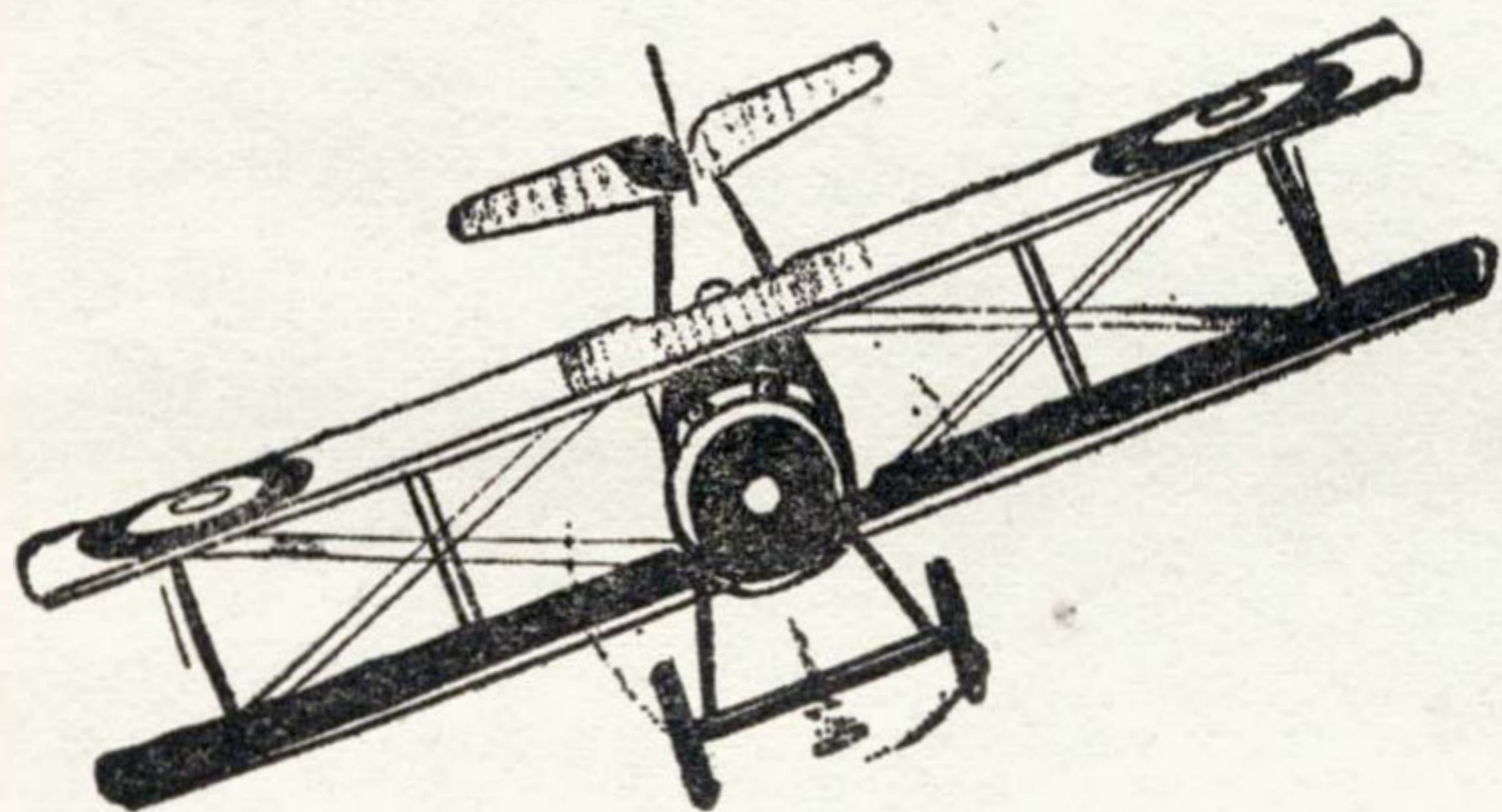
compliment. Now, Captain, I'll be off."

Bourke was thoughtful as he climbed into his Sidcot, heavy boots and fastened his helmet. Pshaw! Was he always to be tormented by suspicion every time an American was assigned to the squadron? Yet, no question of it, Drake's actions were suspicious. Why had the man especially requested this squadron, and taken the dangerous second seat position when he had the makings of a good *chasse* pilot.

Still thoughtful Bourke went out to the Breguet and looked at the CC gear.

"She throws at once now, Corporal," said the greaseball. "Everything else is perfect. She gives all her revs."

The mechanic spun the prop, which caught on the first twist and Bourke idled the crate. Drake ar-



rived and swung agilely into the rear cockpit. He examined the Lewis gun, swung the *tourelle* up and down, then nodded.

"We won't need harness," Bourke said. "Tap my shoulders whichever way you want to go. I can see you in this rear-view mirror. Be careful about watching the sky. Hold your thumb up to look into the sun—Von Gorz' tripehounds love to sit up there and drop on stray two-seaters. Study the ground from your map so you become accustomed to how it looks from all angles. When we're handling a shoot you have to spot pretty close. Okay?"

"Okay," said Drake. His eyes minutely studied the back of Bourke's

body. Drake seemed somewhat puzzled, uncertain.

Bourke poured the gun to the motor, blasted out of line, goosed around and went down the field all out.

He kept the nose down to the last line, then zoomed up the sky, hooked a right wing to the air with a climbing turn and headed north, climbing all the way. Now that he was at five thousand and still climbing his doubts left him. He forgot everything in being a trained bit of fighting mechanism.

Occasionally, in the rear-view mirror, he caught sight of Drake. The man's face was expressionless. A cirrous cloud straggled across the sky, and Bourke droned at half throttle below it, spotted instantly by German AA that strung a series of black puffballs across the sky. Bourke pretended to dive, drove up through the smoke and grinned when the next bursts were way below. It always amused him to make Archie waste shells. He figured every time the batteries sounded off, it cost German taxpayers a half million marks.

HE turned, winged along the edge of No Man's Land that Drake might see the desolation, the zig-zag trenches and the bright flashes of cannon fire. Suddenly Bourke gave a start.

Three white shell bursts made cotton puffballs to his right. He flung back his head. Just in time. Tearing down out of the sky came four Fokker D-7s that would have surprised him but for the alert Allied AA gunners below who had fired the warning. He threw over the stick, side-slipped away from the lead smoke tracer. He flung the plane around to give Drake a chance to put the Lewis in action.

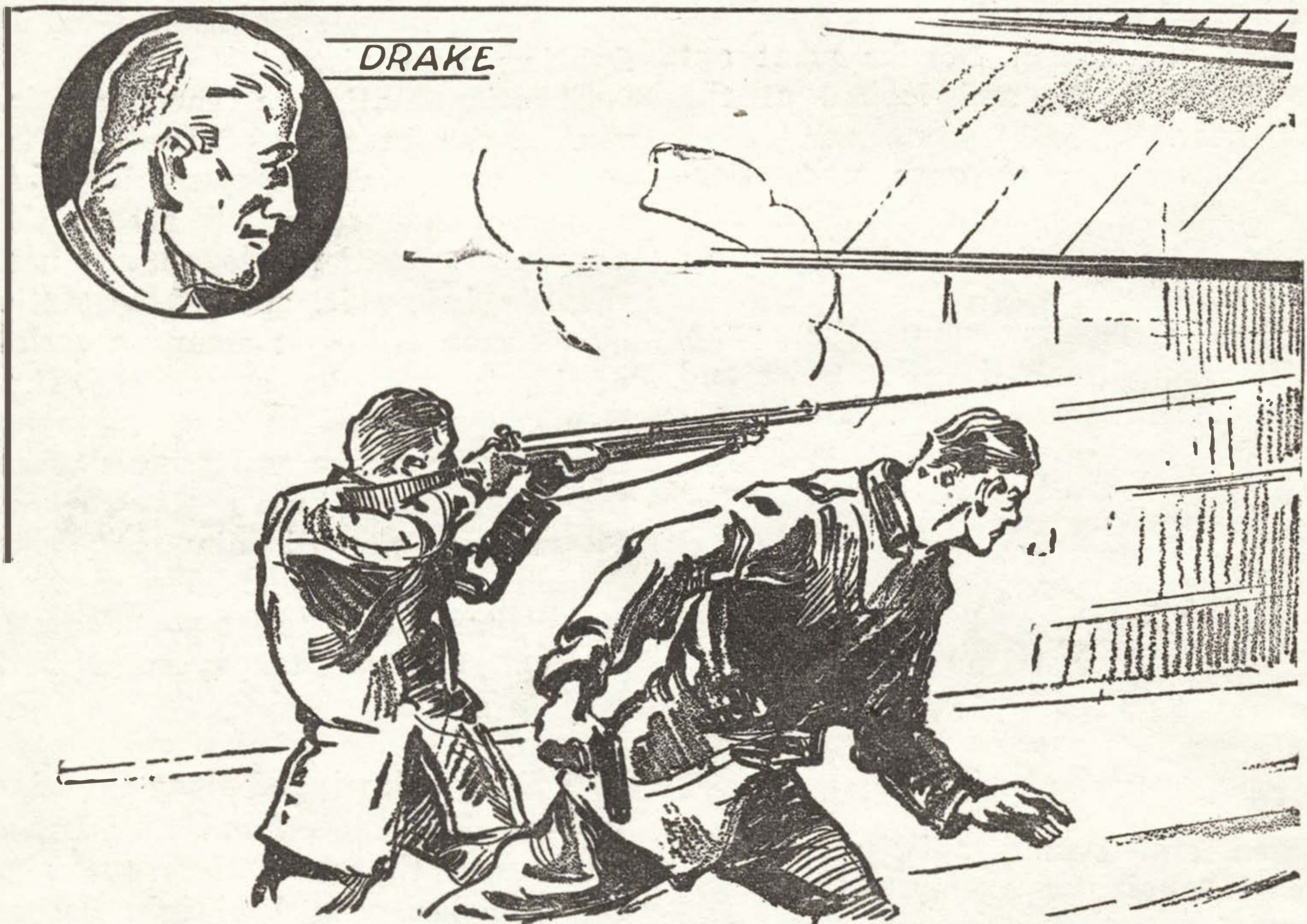
There was no time to run. They had to fight it out, with not another

Allied crate within helping distance.

Had the four Fokkers gone after him hot tongs he would have been forced or shot down. But a singular incident happened. One of the Fokkers, a silver and gold-checked biplane tore in slightly below and behind for the kill burst. The other three Fokkers lined up, one on each side of the Breguet, enduring Drake's hot, accurate fire to keep the two-seater boxed.

smoke tracer. But the distance was a hundred yards. A few tracer slugs whanged past Drake's head and crashed into the isinglass windshield.

This wouldn't do and Bourke knew it. He suddenly horsed up the sky in a fast zoom. Over on her back in the beginning of a loop, he half rolled, came out facing astern and before the box could close again he nosed down in a tight turn and



Bourke instantly understood, and his lip curled.

"Some German princeling out to get himself a reputation as an ace," he roared. "Let 'em have it, Drake!"

Drake did, and one Fokker suddenly fell off in a bad slip, twisted once wildly so that a wing fell loose. The ship went full out down the sky, falling apart as it went. Instantly, like a well drilled automaton, the other Fokker slid in to keep the box.

Behind Bourke the German gold Fokker was storming the sky with

caught the German princeling's tail.

His twin Vickers cut in when he pressed the Bowden stick trigger. Bourke didn't expect an immediate hit. His first burst was to line up his sights, adjust for a kill. But the Fokker, instead of fading off in a fast sideslip out of range, made a pivot turn to come back head-on for an attack.

"Sucker!" muttered Bourke grimly.

He let the Vickers storm at will squarely into a ship turned broadside to him in a bank so that he could shoot square into the center

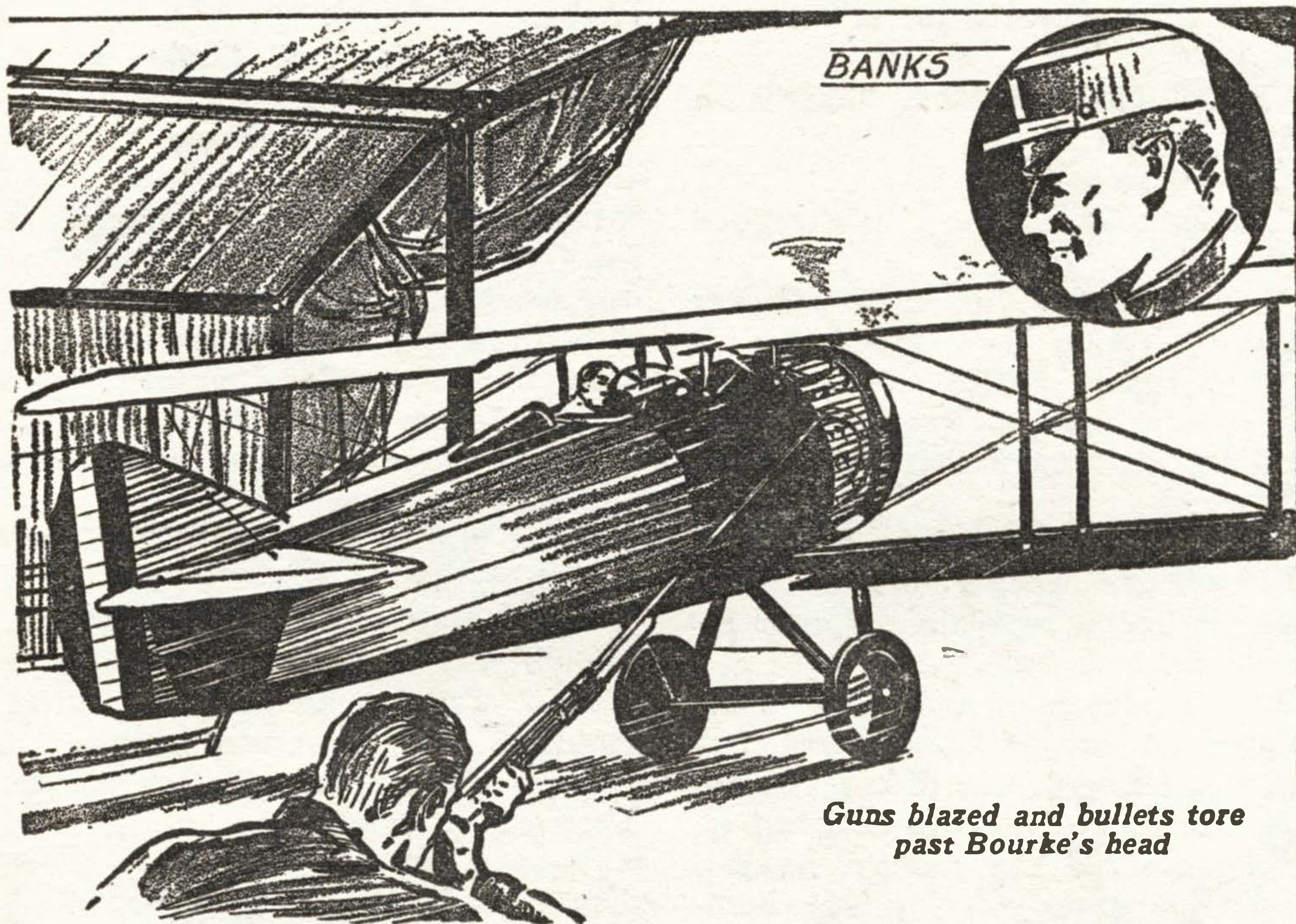
with no deflection. As plainly as he could see the phosphorous tracer he saw the German pilot take a fistful of slugs into his chest.

The man clawed at himself. His face became a painting of agony.

Bourke stared at his German victim in utter amazement. The man lived; every lineament expressed it as the Fokker, by a trick of the set stick went around in a slow bank. Bourke could see the German's

its extra long top wing wavered at the strain. But somehow, either by inherent stability or as the last frenzied act of the tortured pilot it leveled off above the Vesle and coasted into some wheat fields where it up-ended.

Strangely, too, the two Fokkers that had been boxing Bourke's two-seater failed to continue the combat. Instead, they dived screaming down after the shot-down Fokker



mouth stretched in screams that must have been of intolerable agony. A bloody froth blew off them where the Boche bit himself.

But what aroused Bourke's utter dumbfoundment was that smoke was issuing from the chest and stomach of the German! As if the man were literally on fire!

Bourke banked sharply to get a closer look. The next instant the Fokker's precarious balance failed. With a lunging swoop it nosed over in a power dive and went howling down the sky. It fell into a spin and

and landed neatly enough in the fields alongside it. Bourke, his fighting blood up, tore down after them and three times he contour-chased across the field, his Vickers blazing on the down dive, and Drake's deadly Lewis guns *pop-popping* as he zoomed and curved beyond.

Then the gas gauge told the necessity of starting home from ten miles inside Hunland, and Bourke, still curious about the strange sight he had witnessed, nosed for home. The pilot climbed to a hundred and stayed there.

CHAPTER II

Trapped

T was still on Bourke's mind as he fish-tailed into the field, side-slipped a little more and set down three-point.

Again, as he unbuckled his belt, he became aware of Drake's queer stare.

"Did you see the smoke coming out of that kraut's insides?" Bourke asked.

"Yeah." Drake nodded. "Maybe he caught on fire."

"What from?"

"Phosphorus tracer," shrugged Drake.

Bourke shook his head. Tracer slugs didn't do that. He made his combat report which was verified by a telephone message from the anti-aircraft battery that had warned him.

"*Magnifique*," beamed Rochford. "A *croix de guerre* with a palm without doubt, *mon ami*. France rewards its soldiers."

Bourke shrugged and went to his cubicle. A bit of bronze and two garlic-smelling kisses didn't interest him. He fought because he liked to. As he entered the cubicle he saw Drake, apparently tying his boot-lace on Bourke's trunk locker. Instantly suspicion surged high in Bourke's heart. He knew the man had been searching his, Bourke's, effects.

Antagonism, cold and ruthless, gripped him.

"Find what you wanted?" he asked.

Drake's eyes seemed innocent. "What do you mean?"

Bourke hesitated. How could he challenge this man without revealing his own secret?

"I mean," he evaded, "did you locate things around this dump?"

"Sure," said Drake easily. He sat down on a bunk, took out a beautifully polished gold and silver cigarette case, extracted a cigarette, and held it out to Bourke.

"Smoke?" he asked.

Bourke looked at the cigarette case. He knew now, beyond all doubt. That case was a dead giveaway.

Slowly his mouth twisted into a mirthless smile. "No, thanks," he said. "Nice case. It must come in handy."

"Handy?" repeated Drake, apparently puzzled.

"Yes." Bourke sat down, too, but alertly, every nerve aquiver. "For instance, if you were pursuing a fugitive from justice and you were not exactly sure of his appearance you could get his fingerprints on a case like that, develop them and compare them with a set you'd carry—in your blouse pocket, as a guess—and be positive."

Drake smiled blandly. "What nonsense! What do you think I am?"

"A detective," rejoined Bourke smoothly. "A private one on a guess. Trying to collect thirty thousand dollars reward money."

There was a space of utter silence. Through it struck the storm of a wide-open motor, a few brief shots, then the howl of a low-zooming ship. As the excitement was not followed up neither of the two men turned, or went to the door. Finally Drake let go his breath.

"You're crazy," he said finally.

Little by little Bourke had twisted himself, got set. Now, with a speed hard to follow with the eye, he plunged across the distance between him and Drake. With a jiu-jitsu stranglehold on Drake's tunic, he whirled and threw the big man before he could defend himself. Holding him thus Bourke, a wolfish smile on his face, reached into the man's blouse pocket, drew out a paper.

Then he stripped the tunic upward to reveal Drake's belt. He unlatched it, drew it with a snaky hiss of sound and lunged back.

Drake was livid. He bounded off the floor as if he had springs. "Why, you—" he began.

"Cut the acting," said Bourke contemptuously. "Here's the fingerprints, and the description." He gestured toward the paper. "And here is your badge. Most private detectives make the mistake of fastening them to the back of their belts."

He examined it, smiled grimly. "So your name is really Drake," he mused. "Paul Drake of the Acme Detective Agency." He stared at Drake, his grey eyes thoughtful.

"I imagine," he went on after a time, "that you've even got extradition papers. And possibly an arrangement with the French Ministry of War to take me back."

Drake was a man who had icy control of his emotions. His pretense of anger faded; and his eyes became cool, hard and calculating.

"Why, yes," he said softly. "I've done all of that. Are you ready to go with me?"

Darcy Bourke stood very still. His eyes stared at Drake, went through him, to see in his mind's eye the fatal consequences of this discovery of himself by a ruthless detective. He was looking back through four years to the time when he had been Michael Rourke, vice-president and treasurer of the Hibernian Trust Company, the private bank founded by his hard-bitten and honest father. To the time when his brother, Terence, was president and chief executive of the same bank. How long ago that seemed!

Yet how well he remembered the morning when Terence, ashen-faced, trembling with emotion, had come into his office and sobbed out that story.

"Mike, I've juggled the books of

the Hibernian and lost half a million dollars. The bank examiners will be here tonight and we're insolvent. They'll close the bank and send me to prison."

It hadn't made too much sense to Rourke even then. Truth to tell, he had paid little attention to the bank. He had been big game hunting in Africa, playing polo in England, fishing off Galapagos, content to draw his income and leave the details to Terence. And a mess Terence had made of them.

MIKE ROURKE loved his brother. Between them was a deep-abiding affection, closer than man friendship, deeper than love of a man for a woman. So great, indeed, had been this affection that Rourke had been able to stand by and see Terence win the only girl that Rourke had ever loved. Pretty Noreen McLain. Rourke had loved her so much that to see her with Terry was a pain. Yet he had forced himself to go to the altar with Terry, be his best friend, his best man, give the bride away, and say in a steady voice, "May you both be happy!"

He was recalling now that as he had sat in his seldom used office it had not been of his broken, shrinking brother he had been thinking, but of Noreen, of the little boy born a year previous. Noreen, still feeble and not at all well.

As he had looked down at his sobbing brother, he saw Noreen crushed by this disgrace, possibly made fatally ill by the shock. He saw, too, the youngster, the son, McLain Rourke, growing up to know his father was an embezzler and a convict, a criminal.

And thinking of them, the solution had seemed simple. What had he, Mike Rourke, to live for? The girl he had wanted belonged to some one else. He was bored by sport not meant for business, a youth laz-

ing away his life. He had little enough to give to Noreen and the youngster, and to his brother, Terry, but what it was he had offered gladly.

"Keep your mouth shut," he had said to his brother. "I'll fix the books tonight. I'll leave a note. Don't try to find me. Let the cops do that. Faith, it'll be interesting to be the hunted once, instead of the hunter."

He had vanished that night. Strange places in the world saw him— Bubbling Well Road in Shanghai; Raffles Hotel in Singapore; and then one day, in 1914, while on the beach in Marseilles he had found a congenial drinking soul in an ex-corporal in the Foreign Legion. Oran, Sidi-bel-Abbes, then the first battle of the Marne, and finally the specially formed air squadron.

He had known that thirty thousand dollars reward had been offered for his capture. But his trail had seemed dim, indeed, and he'd worried little save when an American was close.

But here, indeed, was a Yank close, a detective, a man who had patiently unwound the skeins of his flight and had traced him.

If he permitted Drake to take him back, he knew infallibly that Terry would confess rather than let him, Mike, go to prison. So Noreen, still fragile, and the child of hers, would suffer all from which he had hoped to protect them.

He knew, looking at Drake's keen, grim face, that Drake must never be permitted to take him back. Drake must never get those fingerprints. If necessary Drake must die. That could be arranged, too.

"No," Bourke said, alluding back to Drake's question, "I'm not going back. I'm not the man you seek."

"Then why not let me take the fingerprints and prove it?" Drake asked.

"Because I might be a man wanted for something else—murder, say."

Drake studied him for a time. "No," he said, "you're Rourke. I don't need your fingerprints now." He went to the door. "I'm going to ask the American ambassador to demand your surrender of the French government. Now that America is in the war the French will be glad to do anything to please their new Allies."

Bourke knew this to be true. With sinking heart he saw Drake go out of the door, and his hands ached to close around the detective's gullet. Indeed, he took a step after Drake. But he stopped short and his hands, unclenched.

Across the tarmac waddled fat Captain Rochfort. And beside him, looking important indeed, with his little gold stars on the cuff, and his gold leaf on his kepi came General Henri Catelnau, a high member of the French board of strategy. In their very walk, in their grimly set faces Bourke saw plenty of trouble.

He drew back into the cubicle. And Drake, his way barred, had to do the same.

"Attention!" sang out Rochfort, his face purple. "Spices of camels, what have you done?"

CHAPTER III

Condemned to Death



BOURKE (to continue with his alias) drew back into the room. Somehow he sensed that here might be a situation that would aid his other problem—his determination to save his brother. "Done?" he repeated cautiously to Captain Rochfort's angry question. "Nothing that I know of, Captain."

"By God's beard, you lie in your throat!" Captain Rochfort bawled. "You two shot down His Highness,

Prince Eitel Otto of Bavaria, not three hours ago."

"That," said Bourke drily, "was Prince Eitel's hard luck. He was looking for it."

"Bah!" growled Rochfort, "about shooting him down I care not a fig—not that, do you hear?" He snapped a pudgy finger. "Men must die if they go to wars. It is the disgrace, the horrible disgrace that you have brought on the French government."

"What do you mean?" demanded Bourke.

Rochfort growled in his throat. Suddenly he stiffened, and his face, red with all the gallons of red wine that had poured past his gullet, grew grim, ruthless.

"Do you know of the Hague Treaty?" he barked.

"You mean the rules of civilized warfare?" Bourke smiled, amused.

"Exactly. Subscribed to by all the Powers to make war less horrible than it is. One of those rules, amended in Nineteen-sixteen, declares that no Power shall use explosive or incendiary bullets on a human being."

"Ah," murmured Bourke. "I begin to see."

"Not yet, my friend. You do not see enough. You know that the Germans shoot, out-of-hand, all pilots caught with incendiary bullets in their cartridge belts. We do the same. We have adhered to no use of *incendiarues* except in the case of balloon strafing, and men strafing balloons may not join in other battles. That you know."

"Yes," said Bourke, "but—"

"Wait, *salopard!* Today on a mere reconnaissance you shot down His Highness, Prince Eitel. You used incendiary bullets. The man burned within, died a most horrible, agonizing death. We have the word straight from his *Staffel* commander, Count Von Spee. It is demanded that we punish you as their men are punished, that unless this is done

the Hague conventions will be outlawed, and they will use incendiary bullets on us."

Bourke nodded. He understood the seriousness of the occasion. The Germans through their high-powered radio station at Nauen would scream to the world that the Allies were barbarians, burning men to death with incendiary bullets. By retaliation they would subject Allied pilots to similar horrible deaths unless punishment were taken.

General Catelnau who hitherto had remained silent said gruffly: "He must be punished."

"What sort of punishment, *mon Général?*" Bourke said.

"Ten years in prison," rejoined the general.

Drake who had been listening intently spoke up quickly. "*Mon Général*, I have a solution of this case which will help us all and relieve you—"

"Stop!" cried Bourke.

HE SAW his peril. If Drake could show that he, Bourke, was a fugitive from justice, an escaped American criminal he had come to apprehend, the French would eagerly surrender him, announce to the world that the incendiary bullets were used by a dangerous criminal who had been repudiated and who was by now already on his way to a twenty-year sentence in an American prison.

At all costs Bourke must prevent that.

"Stop?" cried the general indignantly. "My man, to whom are you speaking? And by the way, which of you two did fire those bullets?"

"I," said Bourke instantly. "And it was not my mistake." He pretended to grow furious. "My damned mechanic left them in from my last balloon strafe. What do you two damned fools mean by coming around here and threatening me with prison?"

Rochfort gasped and turned apoplectic. No enlisted man should talk so to officers. General Catelnau was aghast.

He stepped forward. "Species of dung!" he yelled. "Do you know to whom you're talking?"

"Yes," rapped Bourke. "A couple of damned high-class butchers looking for someone to make a goat out of. To hell with you both! I won't go to prison."

"Ah," screamed General Catelnau, "but you will, you damnable—" He stepped forward, riding crop upraised. That was exactly what Bourke was looking for. He grinned inwardly as, with his face screwed into apparent rage, he swung from the hip and felt his knuckles grind into the jaw whiskers of General Catelnau.

The general went backward, lit on his buttocks and rolled, moaning with pain. Rochfort was thunderstruck.

"By God's teeth!" he yelled. "You struck General Catelnau."

"Yes," said Bourke. "Not a bad hook, eh, Drake?"

DRAKE saw the ruse. Striking a superior officer, especially a board of strategy officer, was a deadly insult that could be wiped out only in blood.

"Clever, Bourke," he said in English, "but it won't save you."

Rochfort was screaming for the guard. They came on the run, a hedge of needle bayonets that pointed at Bourke's stomach. Bourke made no resistance. His face was expressionless. General Catelnau, holding his jaw, got his feet. His eyes were murderous.

"Throw me this scum into the cell!" he said. "We will satisfy the Germans. We will show them how we punish users of incendiary bullets. We will shoot this swine as soon as a *conseil de guerre* can sit and adjudge him guilty."

When a general orders affairs they move swiftly. Despite Drake's pleas, Bourke was roughly seized, his hands bound behind him, his feet handcuffed. He was hurried to the *maire* prison in Chalons-sur-Marne.

Within twenty-four hours a *conseil de guerre* consisting of three colonels, two majors and a captain sat in the old *maire* and listened to the evidence. That is to say, a few men got up and recited, among them Rochfort, but the court-martial did not listen; they had been told what to do and as soon as Bourke's advocate said, "No rebuttal, Your Honors," they retired five minutes, returned, and the chief of the court-martial, Colonel de Rouen said: "We find the prisoner guilty and according to the tenth article of war he shall be taken thither, put to death by musketry within twenty-four hours, and the announcement duly published in France and a report sent to Count Von Spee of the Fourteenth German Escadrille."

With no further word Bourke was hurried back to his dark cell, only this time the buttons were taken from his tunic and two guards watched him constantly to see that he did not commit suicide by strangulation.

Bourke sat down on the wooden bunk, perhaps for the first time keenly aware that he was going to die. Events had been hurried so swiftly that realization did not come until he sat here on his last night of life. Reflecting, he knew he was not afraid to die. He had faced sudden death in the blue skies too long to worry about it now. The definite abandonment of hope chilled him for a space, but then he thought that, after all, death was merely a long sleep, no more to be feared than lying down at night for peace and repose.

It was, doubtless, a disgraceful way to die, tied to a stake, facing a *peleton* of French *poilus* who would

tear him to pieces with bullets. But what mattered how you died? He had chosen this way as the only method of protecting his brother's honor and Noreen's life, to say nothing of young McLain Rourke. It was just as good as having a fistful of slugs from twin Spandau guns rip through his entrails in high combat.

He had written Terence a brief while ago, telling him he had a cushy job in the French back areas, not even near the Front and was perfectly safe. Terence would believe that and keep quiet. And Bourke would not write to him now for fear Terry might confess to protect his brother's dead name.

SO Bourke composed his soul, borrowed cigarettes from his guards, and hummed snatches from *Cyrano de Bergerac*, his favorite opera.

Drake, the detective, came at eleven o'clock. His face was grim and drawn. He was only permitted to speak through the bars and not raise his hands.

"Rourke, you're a fool!" he muttered. "You can go back and stand trial, take your twenty years and be reasonably certain of getting out at the end of eight."

Rourke smiled. "I'm not the man you're looking for. My name's Bourke. Not Rourke."

His smile was natural and Drake regarded it blankly. "My God, you're a cool one," he said. "Aren't you afraid?"

"Afraid of what?"

"Death."

"Are you afraid of death?"

Drake bit at his lip. "I don't know, guy, I don't know. Maybe not. But—"

"You hate to see thirty thousand bucks rot in a quick-lime grave, eh?" Bourke smiled.

Drake cursed suddenly, savagely. "I've followed you for four years," he muttered. "Every move. Some-

times months behind you, sometimes only days. I enlisted in the Legion to get at you, make sure. I've verified everything but your fingerprints. I get you, and by God, you deliberately get yourself killed to lick me."

"So what?" Bourke asked quietly.

"So this. If I can save your life, will you surrender and go back?"

Bourke smiled. "Don't be a fool, man. We could have had that answer a long time ago."

"You mean, rather than take a rap for embezzlement, you'll be shot like a dog?"

"Not like a dog, Drake," Bourke said softly. "They won't have to blindfold me."

Drake shrugged helplessly, but in his hard eyes the light of admiration gleamed despite himself.

"I think you're crazy, but you've got nerve," he admitted. "Damn me if I don't wish I could shake your hand."

Bourke smiled. "You're okay, Drake. You play the game according to your lights and I play it my way. We just differ, that's all." He yawned. "I'm getting sleepy. Good night."

Drake stood there for a space licking his lips. It was as if he saw thirty thousand dollars just beyond the tips of his fingers and no matter how he stretched he could not reach and grasp the money. With an inarticulate sound in his throat he turned and walked swiftly away. Bourke heard the heavy steel door clang behind him.

Bourke smiled quietly, borrowed a cigarette from the guard, and lay quietly on his cot waiting for the dawn.

He must, after all, have slept with the calmness of a man without nerves and without dread, for the whine of a key in a lock wakened him, and a guard motioned briskly.

"It is time for you to go, *mon vieux*," the guard said.

Bourke had no watch; and this deep cell did not yield a view of the outside. But he knew it must be dawn. They would make him ready.

"Okay," he said, and extended his hands which were thoroughly bound. His feet were left unshackled, but the guards formed, two in front, two behind, and their feet struck as one as they marched Bourke upward. Bourke had the odd thought that he wished they were marching to music. Crazy idea!

CHAPTER IV

Night Journey



IN the cobbles outside the *maire* door a Renault limousine purred gently. Two more guards were there.

"*Bien!*" one of them said. "Here is your receipt, Corporal. We're off."

"*Bon voyage,*" said Bourke's guard. He looked queerly at Bourke as if he were examining a man already dead.

Not ungently Bourke was thrust inside the limousine; the curtains were drawn and the car jolted over the cobbles. Bourke decided he had ten minutes or so to prepare himself for the end.

Quietly, yet with the supreme steel nerve that had made him a deadly flyer he set each nerve, made his mind placid. He did not think of his brother, nor of pretty Noreen. To see her exquisite face now in this blackness would have been to have undergone a torture beyond endurance. He shut her from his mind; he thought only that with his death (the loss of a useless life after all) Terence and Noreen and little Mac would go on, and in little Mac the blood of the Rourke would live.

Suddenly Bourke gave a start,

came out of his tranquillity! The car had been moving at high speed for half an hour! And a moment later, when the driver was forced to halt by a military policeman, Bourke distinctly heard the deep thunder of hot guns. The Front!

Almost immediately the car resumed its forward progress. At high speed. The whine of the motor, the jolting over patched, shell-torn roads told of sixty or better. And the ride continued at this high speed!

The guards had spoken no word. Bourke turned to them now.

"Do they have to go to the Front to hold an execution?" he growled.

"Quiet, *mon vieux,*" said the guard, not unsympathetically. "We are not permitted to tell you anything, though God knows, we know nothing."

"But why prolong the suspense?" cried Bourke angrily. "To die is not hard; but waiting for it is intolerable."

"Ah, yes, I know," said the guard. "I can tell you nothing. And yet"—he looked at his companion, then at Bourke—"and yet, *mon cher,* I tell you this: it would have been better for you to have been taken to Vincennes and shot at the stake. You would have been lucky then. As it is"—he shrugged—"some poor devils have no luck at all."

Bourke listened in amazement. Not to be shot as the court martial had ordered, but sent out here toward the Front to a fate that this poor devil of a *poilu* thought unlucky. What did this mean? What were they going to do with him?

He became aware of light streaming through the edges of the down-pulled curtains. Daylight was here. The roar of guns had not grown any louder.

"What is this thing they plan against me?" flared Bourke. "By God, a man can be asked to die, but torture—"

"Hush, *mon vieux*," cut in the *poilu*. "You will know soon enough and if I told you it would not help your fate. God grant you a quick death."

Every nerve flamed in Bourke. Resigned before, he had not sought a means of escape because escape would only ruin the three people he loved. But now his eyes settled on the automatic holstered at the one *poilu*. That, a quick movement that jammed the muzzle in the mouth—

The limousine stopped with a scream of brakes.

Bourke raised his head. In his nostrils was the familiar smell of burning castor oil, the lubricant used solely in airplane motors. In his ears was the drone of warming motors. What now?

THE guard who had been in front with the chauffeur unlocked the limousine's door and flung it open. The pale yellow rays of a dawning sun showed on a somewhat battered farmhouse, a long expanse of green grass, furrowed here and there by wheel marks; and beyond this were two canvas hangars, gayly camouflaged, the sides flapping in the brisk morning breeze. On the dead-line in front of them, four jet-black Spad *chasse* planes with white and red trimmings on the sides of their fuselages, were warming up. Greaseballs crawled over them, making last minute adjustments.

To the left Bourke saw this side of the farmhouse, a row of tar-and-wood, and galvanized iron shacks, the usual abode for pilots on front-line duty.

Still Bourke did not know what was intended. Did they wish to turn him over to the Germans to be shot? Was he to be landed beyond the barbed wire?

As he was helped out of the car the door to one of the shacks flew open. Out of it stormed two men. One held a knife upraised, glittering

in the sun. The man had a full, black beard and wild, terrible eyes. The other held the broken top of a whiskey bottle and with the jagged ends he was trying to cut the bearded man's throat. The man with the jagged bottle had no face except holes for his eyes. The rest was a burned-over mass of flesh with two holes for a nose, and no lips at all—which made his teeth offer a permanent skeleton-smile to the world.

They locked with grunts and curses and fell to the ground, wrestling and striving to kill. Murder was to be done before Bourke's eyes. The three *poliu* guards did not make a move.

"For God's sake," Bourke cried, "are you going to—"

He broke off sharply. From the direction of the farmhouse a burly man, six feet tall, and weighing at least two hundred pounds, with a face burned saddle-color by many suns, strode unhurriedly toward the two antagonists. Though the knife and the glass glittered he did not increase his pace. He reached the two.

His great arms extended downward, seized each man (and they were almost as big as he), jerked them upright and took away knife and glass which he threw back toward the shack. Then he suddenly punched each one a terrific blow to the jaw, knocked their heads together and hurled them toward the shack.

"Some day"—surprisingly he spoke in English—"I'll let you two cut-throats see which can kill the other. But today there are Germans to attend to, so keep your lunch hooks off'n each other or I'll make you wish you had."

The two antagonists picked themselves up. Meekly they entered the shack, and emerged a moment or so later wearing Sidcots, helmets and goggles. Almost arm and arm they walked toward the waiting line of black Spads.

Bourke took a big breath and expelled it.

"What the hell?" he said softly.

The huge man who wore a jet-black uniform with scarlet piping turned leisurely to face toward Bourke. This officer—for he had three gold pips on his sleeves—also was a pilot. He wore white wings on his left breast. Two wings and between them a scarlet skull with white teeth and white holes for eyes. In all his experience Bourke had never seen a uniform like that.

One of Bourke's guards jabbed him. "*En avant,*" came the order.

Bourke was marched until he stood within two feet of this officer.

"Prisoner from Chalons, *mon Capitain,*" the *poilu* corporal said. "Please give us our receipt; we are due back at once."

He extended a paper which the captain took. Bourke examined the face beneath the smart black kepi. It was round like a moon and the blue eyes sat deep beneath black brows. It was a hard face, but there was a hint of justice and even temperment in the mouth. Bourke thought of it as the face of a soldier—of a soldier of fortune—of a soldier who fought because he loved it.

THE blue eyes lifted from the paper, surveyed Bourke. Keen interest lay in them.

"So you are Bourke," the captain muttered. "Well, well, by God's teeth, I think we'll get along." Swiftly he scrawled his signature to the paper. "Untie him," he ordered, and when this had been done, he said: "My name's Banks—Dugger Banks. Come along to the worry room, and we'll talk."

Banks' walk, like his face, betrayed the professional soldier, erect, striding steps, chin out as a man who faces the world with few worries. In the operations office which occupied one corner of the farmhouse he sat down in a renaissance

chair behind a field desk, fished for a bottle of cognac.

"Drink?" he asked.

"Never before breakfast," said Bourke. He was beginning to like this Banks, but he wondered what fate lay in wait for him.

"Good rule," said Banks. "Damned bad habit, drinking before five o'clock. My life is made up of bad habits."

He pulled the cork, drank a swig from the bottle, and wiped his lips. He found cigarettes and gave one to Bourke.

"We need pursuit pilots," he said. "The casualties here are a hundred percent per month. And you ought to give a good accounting of yourself."

Bourke inhaled, blew a cone of smoke at the ceiling.

"Two days ago," he said, "a court martial sentenced me to be shot this morning at dawn. I was led out, supposedly to the execution grounds. I wind up here. Do you mind telling me what it is all about?"

"Not at all," assented Banks, a twinkle in his eyes. "You're already dead. You were executed at dawn." He jerked a thumb southwest. "The announcement is already in the newspapers. A special message has been dropped on *Jagdstaffel* Twelve's tarmac."

"How interesting," murmured Bourke. "You're the keeper of the corpses?"

Banks nodded approval. Beyond doubt this strapping youth had the coolness and nerve to take startling statements in his stride.

"I'm the keeper of the corpses," asserted Banks. "Well, now that you're here and will never leave alive you've a right to know, so here's the truth."

He reached for the cognac bottle, changed his mind and leaned back.

"To train fighting pilots cost the French government about ten thousand dollars American money. The

French government is frugal; they figure a pilot ought to earn that sum by killing off lots of Jerries. For the French government to shoot you means they've lost that amount of money. Yet pilots are human and get into trouble and have to be shot. The question was what to do about it?"

HE paused to light a cigarette. Then: "The Allied governments were afflicted with the same problem. Finally a member of the Allied Supreme War Council, Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, solved it. It was his idea to make outcast pilots die killing the enemy. Men condemned to death, having no hope left, will fight like mad—only they had to have an object in dying this way instead of in dying at the stake. Do you follow me?"

"Quite," said Bourke, his face intent.

"So a squadron was formed to be composed of all the pilots of the Allied air forces who had been condemned to death by court martial for sundry offenses. These men were posted as dead, and sent to this squadron. There was one reward held out to them—doesn't apply in your case, worse luck. This reward was tremendous."

Bourke wondered what it was.

"Men condemned to death, to be shot, think more about the disgrace of dying that way than of death itself. A little experience with war makes Death lose his black mask. But condemned pilots had relatives, friends who would feel the stigma. So the order was issued that all pilots on the condemned squadron who died bravely fighting the enemy should have the court martial record destroyed. They would be again listed as killed in action, the first report being made an error, and their next of kin would be sent the *Médaille Militaire* or the *Légion d'Honneur*. In this way a con-

demned man could in this condemned squadron regain the status of a gallant hero dying for his country. Regain his lost honor."

"Very neat," said Bourke. "Easy on everybody except the guy who has to die."

Dugger Banks grinned. "Somebody has to do the dying or there wouldn't be any war. This squadron of mine is used on the wildest, most forlorn hope missions possible. We drop spies, we raid back areas; we ground strafe at fifty feet; dog-fight in the air and never break off until ammunition or gasoline are gone. We get about fifty men a month. We lose about fifty men a month. The average life of our pilots is two weeks, and they're all experienced men, many of them aces."

He paused, stared across his cigarette.

"Maybe," he said softly, "that's why they call us the Squadron of the Dead."

Bourke's mouth flattened at the grim words. "No man has the chance to escape the death to which he was sentenced, then?"

"Not a chance," nodded Banks. "If he refuses to fly and fight, he is taken back and shot as the original court martial sentence requires. If he keeps on flying he gets a slug in that lets the life out. If he tries to desert to the Germans—" Banks shrugged. "The Germans don't like this Black Squadron of the Dead. We raise hell with their aces. A doomed man fights better than a man with hope, and we have been cleaning up their best killers."

He paused. "So the Germans have declared us outlaws, belonging to no army—which we don't—and putting a price on our heads. If one of us can be captured by the Germans we are to be publicly executed in Berlin, and the pilot who captures us gets a hundred thousand marks cold cash in gold and the *pour le mérite*."

Bourke whistled softly.

"If," Banks went on, "I should ever be captured, the Germans would pay two hundred thousand marks, and probably make the guy that captured me a field marshal."

"So," murmured Bourke, "if your engine poops over Bochelard and you can't get away, you carry a pistol."

"It saves time and trouble," said Banks. "Germans can be awfully tough."

Bourke stood quiet for a space. He knew now why the *poilu* guard had pitied him. A death ordained and administered is done with. But here, in this Squadron of the Dead, Bourke would go on from day to day, expecting death, knowing he would get it, but never when. His nerves would gradually crack under the strain. Each day would be like climbing a ladder that had a broken rung. One morning, torn with suspense, worn out, nerve-exhausted, he would meet that missing rung, some German bullet that would give him peace. But in the meantime, the torture of daily living would be maddening.

He understood, then, in that brief flash, the actions of the two men fighting like maniacs. But all this he kept from Banks; his face showed no change of expression.

"A lot of them weep and curse and howl at first," Banks said.

"I suppose so," said Bourke, "but it doesn't do any good. When do I fly?"

Banks grinned. "By God, you've got what it takes. Go back and see Mercier and he'll issue you a uniform and—"

The door to the operations office opened. A lieutenant in a jet-black uniform entered.

"Another prisoner, Captain Banks," he said, and stepped aside to let a new man enter. Bourke turned slowly around.

He looked at the newcomer. His eyes blazed; his mouth set wolfishly. His fists doubled.

"I suppose I've got you to thank for getting me sent here, Drake," he growled.

The detective stood quietly, hands opened at his side.

"Certainly," he assented. "I can't let thirty thousand dollars die. You will confess—or I'll get your fingerprints and the embassy will do the rest."

CHAPTER V

Hellcats and Devils!



THAT night Bourke met other members of the Squadron of Death at dinner. It was the strangest ceremony he had ever attended. Percy Shelley St. John did the introducing, and of all the strange black birds that flew under the skull and coffin, St. John was the queerest. He had a broken neck.

Bourke had the story of St. John from Banks himself over side-car cocktails. Banks had taken a fancy to Bourke and told him what he knew.

"St. John was an ace with the Seventy-ninth British Pursuit, with forty-eight Huns to his credit, son of a gentleman, fairly wealthy, and madly in love with a girl. He came home on leave last year and the girl was with another officer—Peterborough, I think the name was. Peterborough was a rotter, and St. John warned the girl. She didn't like that. Then St. John warned Peterborough and Peterborough hit him with a champagne bottle. St. John choked him to death with his two hands—and with six men trying to pull him off."

Banks shrugged. "You know British law about murder. There's scarcely a thing called justifiable homicide. So despite influence St. John was found guilty, sentenced to be hanged. They hung him."

"The way they shot me?" asked Bourke.

"No, they hung him—Brixton Prison," said Banks. "The *padre* muttered prayers, the hangman put on his mask, they put the rope around St. John's neck and they sprung the trap. He dropped—and the rope broke. The drop also broke St. John's neck. But he lived."

"It has been done," said Bourke.

"The home office commuted the sentence then. How could you put a man through that ordeal again? But instead of life imprisonment his friends got him sent here. He's a madman, I think, but he flies like hell's own imp."

So, at the head of the dinner table sat St. John, second in command under Banks. Against the background of the dining room he was weird. It seemed, Bourke learned, that Squadron of Death pilots had a good luck charm, in common. It hung on a black and scarlet cord on the wall of the mess hall. To the cord, each time the pilot scored a victory, a small ivory skull was hung. When that pilot himself was killed—as eventually happened—a real human skull was hung on the wall, and the cord with its smaller skulls of victory hung from the grinning jaws.

The mess room walls were draped in black velvet and against this the skulls seemed phosphorescent. And Bourke, hard as he was, scarcely repressed a shudder as he saw the rows and rows of skulls, all of men who had died in high combat.

St. John himself looked like a death's head. So thin that his yellowish skin was pulled over his bones like a parchment glove, he stood six feet tall. A steel collar supported his broken neck. This flared at the top like morning glory petals, coming up under his ears to hold his head almost rigid. Out of this cloth-covered steel frame his head rose like the heart of a rose

surrounded by red petals. His eyes were hard, wild and merciless.

"Gentlemen—if there are any here," he said, "we have to welcome to this hell's toaster new victims. Let us do it properly. Take your glasses, one and all."

Bourke listened in amazement, fascinated by the reckless, despairing face of the speaker.

"Mr. Bourke and Mr. Drake," St. John said. "I shall only present those of us in your flight, as the rest will be dead before you come to know them. And I shall start with Otto von Krieger. Formerly of Richtofen's *Jagdstaffel*, Otto had the misfortune to kill in a duel a Saxon princeling of whom the Kaiser was very fond. They were going to shoot him. Now he shoots them—and a damned good job he makes of it. Gentlemen, meet *Graf von Krieger*."

A bullet-headed blond youth with sad blue eyes, rose, bowed stiffly from the hips, continental fashion.

"*Prosit!*" he muttered, and drank deeply from his glass.

"AND," said St. John, "Raoul Lachette. Lachette is an artist, friends. He can pick your pocket with fingers as delicate as the touch of the wind on your cheek. He only failed once, and had to knife the victim to shut his mouth. They scarcely proved murder on him, which is why he is here. Lachette, take a bow."

A grinning gargoyle of a Frenchman, small, with a humped back, a face so ugly it was fascinating and long slender fingers, stood up, bowing right and left. He raised his glass.

"*A la vôtre,*" he laughed.

"Lachette has been here a month—and still lives," said St. John. "He is also an artist with machine-guns. Tell him to shoot a flea through the head and he will ask which eye you wish the bullet to penetrate."

Bourke turned and found Drake's

gaze on him. Bourke turned his away.

"One more, and then we can eat," said St. John. "Poshkoff, first name Igor. Stand up, Poshkoff, and let them see what a man looks like."

A Russian stood up, seven feet tall nearly. Bourke recognized him as the black-bearded man who had been trying to kill the other earlier in the day.

"Poshkoff hated a colonel of Imperial Dragoons," St. John said, "and got him by the feet. Poshkoff got both his feet on one of the colonel's ankles. Poshkoff's two hands gripped the other ankle. It is of record that the colonel was torn into two parts like a piece of rotten silk. Poshkoff is quite insane, so if he attacks you first, kill him. A man looks most peculiar torn into two parts. But Poshkoff enjoys performing the feat."

"*Da-da!*" the Russian laughed stupidly.

"You see, it speaks—almost human," said St. John. He bowed to Bourke and Drake. "Gentlemen, may you shoot straight and die without pain."

Bourke wiped the perspiration from his forehead. By Drake's look Bourke knew he must reply. He stood up. He grinned.

"It should be a pleasure to die in such company."

THE sentence was received with roars of approval. Glasses banged the table; wine was poured; a hot binge started almost at once. By nine o'clock every one was roaring drunk. The Russian, Poshkoff, tried to kill Czadek, the Pole who had gone after him with a knife in the morning. St. John insulted the Portuguese, Garcia, and they borrowed bayonets from the guard and fought until Banks tore them apart.

Bourke kept sober. So did Drake. Perhaps, because Banks did not understand, he had placed them to-

gether as roommates. Hence, they went home together.

"You must like thirty grand a lot to risk this to collect it," Bourke said.

"Thirty thousand is a lot of money," Drake replied. "But chiefly I never like to leave a case unsolved. I'm stubborn that way. I want to land you in an American jail just for the satisfaction of seeing you there."

"Fair enough," said Bourke. "So I'll be fair. If there is any chance of you doing it I'll kill you."

Drake stared at him queerly. "Hell, I think you would, and that's what I can't understand. You're keeping something back, but I'll find it out. I hate mysteries."

Bourke made his first patrol the next morning at ten. It was an important patrol, and Dugger Banks took care to explain to them why it was important.

"The High Command has got hold of a new camera," he said. "A filter camera that cuts through haze and cuts through camouflage. This is the first demonstration to reveal hidden enemy positions. The Germans have had wind of it, and attempts will be made to shoot down these Breguets, one or more, behind the German lines so they can see what makes this camera so good. You are top protection. Your orders are not to let a Kraut crate through even if you have to hit him head-on. All those Breguets must come home. That's why you're being sent."

St. John nodded, then turned to the pilots. "Formation take-off, hold it until I signal the break-up. Drake, you stay behind as rescue man, and keep above the main formation. That's all."

Bourke went to his blunt-winged Spad. Painted shining black with skull and coffin in white, and red trimmings on tail, it had a red skull in a white circle underneath the wings instead of the usual Allied

concentric circles of red, white and blue.

The minute he got the nose into the wind and the tail up, he knew he was riding a whirlwind. These Spads were the best he had ever flown. He zoomed four hundred feet in a climbing turn, following the streamers of St. John's tail, and they went up to eighteen thousand feet in sixteen minutes. The controls were slightly mushy here, but the twin-banked Hisso pulled her heart out.

They met the Breguets over St. Mihiel, dodged a few black AA shells, and went twelve miles into Hunland.

Here they met the Fokkers. Pepper grains against a cobalt sky that grew with amazing speed to be small dragons winging down, deliberately offering combat.

BOURKE had heard the Germans on that front under command of Udet, were bold. He had heard that the German High Command had offered a big reward for the pilot who brought down a Breguet with the new camera. He knew it was true now, for the Germans, usually cautious, came steadily, twenty of them, boring into the feared black Spads, hoping that in the confusion and fight one of the Fokkers might get through.

In that instant Bourke forgot the queer squardon, the deadly presence of Detective Drake. He was a fighting machine, and when St. John wing-waggled for an attacking zoom his hands were ready.

The horizon left his wing edge. The Hisso bore down with a howl of human grunting. The Spad went up just as the Fokkers, brightly checkered, came plunging down.

Then it was kill or be killed. No dive and run stuff. No surprise out of the sun. Below four Breguets circled, photographing the German secondary defense. Up here, like fluttering hawks the Fokkers and

Spads whirled and zoomed, banked and dived, climbing to dive on a tail, spiraling to get better position so that the whole dog-fight looked like a gigantic Ferris wheel of planes circling across the sky.

The risk of head-on collision grew enormously as Spad winged after Fokker's tail, and Fokker came screaming down with smoke tracer burning across the sky. One sped by just off Bourke's bow. An up-zooming Fokker hit nose-on with a black Spad. They melted gently together, caught fire and fell with apparent slowness. Bourke saw the German pilot's face, a kid fearing the doom that awaited him. He was screaming with the pain of his burns, mad with agony. He jumped.

His body beat the two planes down by a minute.

A Fokker, taking advantage of the confusion, dived right through the mob with guns hot, and kept on going to the Breguets six thousand feet below. The Fokker dived slowly because the Germans, experienced with the tripes whose wings fell off in power dives, were not yet sure of the D-7.

Bourke went helling after him, standing on his rudder bar, goggle wiper stiff as concrete streaming behind, spitting straight down on the carpet three miles below. He caught the German at twelve thousand feet.

At the first burst of golden tracer fire, the German pulled up, faded to the side in a fast side-slip. But Bourke was side-slipping, too. The glitter of kill was in his eyes. His fingers pressed the Bowden stick tricks. The CC interrupter sent the slugs spraying like the first gust of a hurricane.

The German felt himself lost. His body pivoted in the seat as if he wanted to take the bullets in the chest instead of in the back. He kept on side-slipping, falling. Over his tail assembly the spatter of Bourke's bullets flew like lightning.

The German's face spouted blood. The Fokker shuddered, turned over on its back, and twisting, spinning, shot downward, making two double rolls as the dead German's body fell against the controls.

The next instant Bourke knew he had left himself open. His instrument board splattered to the smash of smoke tracer. He threw the stick for a side-slip, twisted to look over his tail assembly. Behind him two thin wings held smoking Spandau guns that glittered, red-lipped. On his tail. He banked, but the slugs splintered an inter-wing strut. He rolled and the bullets ricocheted off the cocking handles of his guns.

TRAPPED!

And worse! As he turned to see how close the German had come he saw another diving comet going past him. A Fokker had forced its way through to the Breguets.

Bourke dare not turn and dive. This German on his back was clever, brave and a deadly shot. The crash pad stuffing flew back. Bourke's coat was grazed. His wiping rag was shot away.

He remembered the orders. Collide if necessary but don't let them through. He horsed back on the stick and the Spad screamed up the air in the beginning of a loop. It got over on its back. He half rolled, heading back the way he had come. The German was coming at him with frightful speed.

Bourke held his course, eyes wide open. Guns throwing six hundred slugs a minute. The German fired, too. The tracer fire made an X between them as they came head on at a combined speed of four miles a minute. Bourke's mouth was set in a tight grin.

Good-by to all this. To hell with Drake and everything!

Yards separated them now. Suddenly the German's plane disintegrated before Bourke's eyes. Wings

fell off. The motor caught fire. The plane fell almost as if a gigantic hand had reached up and jerked it.

Behind the German was a black Spad that zoomed with a scream of sound as Bourke held its course. Skull and coffin and a D. That would be Drake, curse him! Saving Bourke's life for what?

Bourke had no time to curse. A Fokker had gone through. Down toward the Breguet another Fokker was winging and behind it streamed two black Spads. Bourke saw then that the Breguets had turned for home. The fight had insensibly followed them. The ruins of St. Mihiel lay behind and Stenay and Troyon lay below. They were over Allied trenches.

What exactly followed Bourke never really knew. The Breguets, holding their formation, steamed for home, and around them, striking frantically, came three Fokkers. Bourke was after one, cursing some black Spad that kept interfering with a free shot.

Then suddenly one of the Breguets tilted in a long slanting dive toward the earth. It waggled a dud engine as it fell, revealing its helplessness. One of the Fokkers had shoved a slug into the motor.

Bourke swept around in a wide turn to get over it, protect its tail and follow it down. The Fokkers went mad, darting around the sky, striking furiously. The Spads fought as if possessed. Each moment of battle brought the planes closer to the wheat fields of the east bank of the Meuse.

The ground had not been widely fought over here since 1914. And Bourke suddenly saw the Breguet set down dead-stick, and the two men leap out with drawn guns to release the camera and burn the ship. Both of them fell dead as a diving Fokker sprayed them with machine-gun fire.

Then a black Spad went crumpling

down to up-end. Another Spad landed swiftly to protect the camera. A Fokker started a fast dive to kill them. Bourke hurled his Spad at the man, his guns hammering with a frightful howl. What happened afterward he did not know. His motor suddenly stopped. Smoke came out, and then a bright glare of flame.

Bullets drummed around him. He side-slipped into the field. But he had to hit hard. The wheels banged on the ground, the landing gear went off with a crash. The Spad slid on its belly for twenty yards, then up-ended. A piece of strut smashed against Bourke's head. That was the last he knew.

CHAPTER VI

Spy?



APTAIN DUGGER BANKS came into the mess hall and called:

"Attention!"

His face was grim and pale; his eyes brightened by a blaze of fury. St. John who had been attaching a skull to the wall for Lupescu, the Rumanian who had collided with a Fokker, turned. Bourke, his head bandaged, rose. So did Drake and the others. They had never seen Dugger Banks so filled with icy rage.

"There's a spy among us," said Banks grimly. "A dirty, lousy swine who has sold out to the Germans."

"That's a lie," said St. John, "and if I had a gun I'd put a bullet through your filthy head. We may be outlaws, but we are not swine."

"Shut up!" said Banks. "One of you in this room stole that new filter camera from the Breguet. Let that man surrender the camera now, and he shall be permitted to fly without ammunition over the German lines and be shot down like a man. If he fails I personally shall

shoot the damned rat as soon as I identify him."

"Now, wait a minute," Bourke said. "I was in that ruckus, and I saw the camera lying beside the observer of the Breguet just after a German machine-gunned them. It was okay then."

"Yes," said St. John, "and what motive would a man have for stealing that camera?"

Dugger Banks' lips curled. "What motive? Do you take me for a fool, St. John? Even an outlaw Squadron of the Dead pilot could get a pardon and swell treatment from the Germans if he flew over with that camera. That camera is the price of life and liberty to one of you, and may mean the loss of the war to us. I mean to have it—here—tonight."

Garcia who hated von Krieger, turned angrily. "*Si, senor*, we have a dirty Boche spy among us. Von Krieger! What honors and pardons await him—"

"*Gott!*" yelled the German, "I'll have your—"

"Silence!" roared Banks. "That camera could have been obtained by only four men. St. John, you're one, so are you, Bourke! Von Krieger was also down on the ground fighting the Germans when they landed to seize it. Lachette came down, too. And it was Poshkoff who reported it was missing when a French general told him to get it. Poshkoff was watched by the French general, so he's out. But the rest of you—one of you—got it. And I want it now!"

Bourke felt Drake's eyes turn on him. "I thought that that head-wound didn't amount to much," sneered the detective. "What did you do, fake insensibility so as to get the camera and a free pardon in Germany where I couldn't follow you?"

Bourke swung. A crushing right hook caught the detective on the

left cheek-bone. Again Drake did that rubber ball bounce and came charging in, driving a punch before him. Bourke partly dodged, but the impact knocked him against the table. Before the detective could follow up, Dugger Banks stormed down on them.

"Stop it!" yelled the squadron leader. "Striking a blow does not clear you of the charge, Bourke. Drake, I'll talk to you later. Now, dammit, silence!"

There was silence. He went on in a more reasonable tone.

"I am going to count five. If in that time the man who stole that camera advances and tells where it is my offer holds good. After that, God help the guilty man."

He began to count slowly. "One—Two—Three—Four—"

HE paused, waited. Not a man in the room moved. Only the wind swayed the grinning skulls of those long dead as if those who had died now laughed at the predicament of the living.

"Five," said Banks. "The offer is withdrawn. Until further orders those I have named as under suspicion will not fly. That camera will not get to Germany."

He swung on his heel and went out.

Bourke had been watching him. But now turning, he saw Drake carefully picking up a glass from which Bourke had been drinking. Drake was using a handkerchief. With a sudden movement Bourke snatched it, smashed it on the floor and ground his heel on the fragments.

"Don't do that again!" he warned. "If I told these men here you were a detective they'd tear you to bits. Poshkoff would, anyway."

Drake smiled. "You'll forget some time."

At that instant Dugger Banks shoved his head through the door. "I've made a new decision," he said.

"The guilty man cannot get off the tarmac for the next forty-eight hours. At the end of that time I'm sending *all* suspects up in planes without ammunition."

For a second utter speechless amazement gripped them. This was sending every suspect to certain death. Then, St. John cursed.

"Would you send three innocent men to a guilty death just to get the real culprit?" he yelled.

Banks smiled grimly. "Your lives are forfeit anyway. What the hell difference does it make when you die? But the way you die is important to you. This will be without honor. So maybe with that hanging over you, you will seek out the guilty spy and turn him in."

His head vanished; the door banged shut.

Bourke, sick of the sight of the detective, turned on his heel and also went out. He got a highball at the bar and sat down to drink it. Moodily, cursing the situation in his heart, he picked up a week-old copy of the Paris edition of the *New York Herald*. The paper came because it carried casualty lists.

But his mind was not on casualties. He read the reports of phony Allied victories, the drunken activities of a rich young American, and then his eyes strayed to the "agony column," as the list of personal notices was called.

Scanning it, he suddenly set down his drink with a bang. He stiffened in the chair. His eye had caught his own name. The notice said:

MICHAEL ROURKE. Noreen and I are in Geneva, Switzerland, trying to find trace of you. I believe you are dead but Noreen says no and this notice is being inserted for that reason. If you see it come to us in Geneva. Otherwise I shall give myself up, for I will not have your dead name blackened. We will wait a week.

Bourke read the notice three times, threw aside the paper, stunned. A

week! The week would be up tomorrow night. And Geneva was in Switzerland, neutral territory he could not get to, even if he had permission to leave the tarmac.

Bourke's face was pale as ashes. Had he made his sacrifice in vain? Was all the effort he had made to protect Noreen and little Mac to be wasted because of his brother's damn fool altruism?

Bourke knew himself to be doomed. With his eyes wide open he had placed himself in this position. If Terence confessed it would do Bourke no good. Nothing could save him and so, somehow, he must prevent Terence from doing this thing. Everything else must be forgotten to that end.

On the bookshelf he found a large-scale map of eastern France. With compass and ruler he measured off distances. His eyes thinned; his brain worked swiftly.

It was exactly sixty-one miles beyond the Vosges to the Swiss frontier!

He could fly it in forty-five minutes at the most. He must do it, must see Terence, lie to him, send him away, and in some way avoid the rigid Swiss law of internment. His breath caught in his throat at that thought. Why did he have to come back? But his head shook; that was a problem for later. Now he must obtain a plane, make his escape. He stood up. His wrist-watch pointed to forty-five minutes after midnight.

He possessed himself of his money, donned a black leather flying coat. As he stood there extinguishing a cigarette Detective Drake came in. Drake's eyes widened in surprise.

"Going anywhere?" he asked.

Bourke knew then that Drake would have to be disposed of.

"I'm going to take a Chinese singing lesson," he rejoined and strode out.

CHAPTER VII

Hangar Two



HANGAR TWO'S flaps were pinned back to permit a current of air to dispel gas fumes and to enable the greaseballs to run the stub-winged Spads to the dead-line at dawn. Directly before the opening, St. John's Spad, the leader's streamers affixed to the tail, stood waiting the dawn patrol. It had had a little motor trouble and mechanics had been working on it until close to midnight.

Bourke knew, crouching there in the darkness, that the twin-banked Hisso would still be fairly warm. Warm enough at any rate, not to poop on a fast take-off. From where he stood Bourke could see the sentry patrolling, light points on the bayonet on his shoulder. Bourke didn't want to hurt him, but— He shrugged. Maybe the man would have sense.

He edged a little closer to the hangar, figuring if the Hisso would catch on the first spin of the prop. It had to.

Bourke looked cautiously back. Just in time to see the silhouette of a head ducking into the shadow of some brush. Drake! It couldn't be anyone else. Bourke's teeth clicked. Deliberately he turned and stalked the spot in the brush where Drake had vanished. Drake, from slight sounds, was stalking the hangar. Bourke smiled grimly, planted himself in the brush past which Drake must come.

He had not long to wait. Against the lighter darkness of the sky, touched with pink to the north from gun flashes, he saw a body loom. It went past with scarcely a sound. So close that Bourke could almost touch the cloth of the uniform.

Bourke's coiled muscles tensed. His hands raised. Silently as a tiger

he leaped out of his concealment. His flying body clambered Drake's back. His fingers closed on the detective's throat like steel clamps. His backward pulling weight threw them both to ground. That was all the sound there was.

Drake's heels beat a feeble tattoo against the sod. His fingers scratched as he frantically sought to break Bourke's terrible grip. But each movement lessened by seconds until finally the detective's great body went limp. Bourke released his hold. His handkerchief was crammed into Drake's mouth, his belt and Drake's belt served to bind the detective's hands and feet.

SWEAT spurting from his effort, Bourke rose and waited patiently until his breathing came back to normal. Drake did not move. He was no longer a menace to Bourke's plans.

Bourke retraced his steps laughing silently to himself. He bore no animosity to Drake. In a way, he admired the man's stubborn courage that risked all for a fortune. As Bourke rounded the edge of the hangar to dart within, his heart suddenly leaped into his throat.

"So it was you after all!" a voice said.

He turned, one hundred and eighty pounds of fighting man, and leaped savagely at the speaker. But the man, still in a whisper, said:

"Do not touch me. I mean you no harm."

"Von Krieger," whispered Bourke, but none the less he held the German outlaw to him in a grip that could become murderous when he chose. "What are you doing here?"

Had the German, after all, stolen the precious camera and was now attempting to fly to Germany and pardon? The German's next words disabused this theory.

"I knew," the man whispered, "that whoever had stolen the camera

must try to fly tonight. I came to kill the thief, take the camera myself and fly to my people."

Bourke said nothing.

"Now, I find I cannot do it," von Krieger went on. "I find, God help me, that the Fatherland comes first. I am a broken man. I have shed German blood; I have betrayed my country. For me to steal the camera from you would be to make a noise, summon the guards and thus prevent my people from having its use. I cannot be a traitor again."

"So what?"

"I am here to help you get away—even if I must die to help you. This is my last gift to my country."

The German was shaking with emotion; keyed to a pitch where his life meant nothing to him. The desire to disabuse the German, to tell him the truth, seized Bourke, but passed at once. A solution of his own problem presented itself. The German could spin the prop, save the precious seconds needed to reach the cockpit and open the motor. If not that, then the German could make a diversion to attract the sentry and yield time.

"I'm taking Spad ST," he said.

"Gut! I will help. Turn the air-screw. And when you get to Germany you will tell them, will you not, that Otto von Krieger was faithful after his fashion? That he loved the Fatherland?"

"Yes," muttered Bourke, hating himself for tricking this boy's *fine* sense.

"If you can, go to my mother in Munich, and tell her I was driven to what I did. That I—I—tell her that I was a true German."

Bourke's lips tightened. His hand for some reason patted the young German's shoulder.

"If we're going to do this it must be quick," he evaded.

"Yes," whispered Von Krieger.

They started toward Hangar Two. But hardly had they neared its flap-

ping canvas sides than they shrank back, stood frozen. Into Bourke's ear thrummed harsh words of military command. He heard the solid thump of feet in rhythm, the clang and metallic clatter of military accoutrements.

Against the lighter sky he saw five men debouch and station themselves around Hangar Two. Five more went to Hangar One. Bourke knew then that Dugger Banks' clever mind had seen this possibility and was forestalling it. Against six men what could he and Von Krieger do?

Bourke waited. New sentries, alert, patrolled near them. Time passed; an hour, two, and then three! The sentries were not so alert; and there were sounds from across the field that indicated new sentries were coming for relief.

Bourke gripped Von Krieger's shoulder. "Go into the bushes, make sounds to attract them."

The German returned the pressure. "You can start the machine alone?"

"Yes," said Bourke.

The German faded into the night. Instantly Bourke stole into the hangar and worked to the cockpit. His groping fingers found the choke and jerked it. The switch! Could the now cold motor catch on the spin? It must—it must!

Suddenly, from the direction of the bushes on the right came yells, a scream for help.

"Post Two!" roared the sentries.

They rushed in the direction of the sound. Bourke leaped to the propeller resting crosswise. He anchored his right foot, lifted his left and pushed it forward in the air. He hung to the prop blade with two hands, gave a terrific downward jerk and his backward thrown left leg jerked him away from the propeller in case the motor caught and the suction of air tried to pull him into the deadly blade. The motor gave a cough, the prop spun back. Bourke cursed.

Men were running across the field. He leaped at the prop again and spun with all his might. The Hissobarked, caught, and the rumble of it rose to kill the other sounds of the night. Around the wing raced Bourke. As he did so, in the light of the exhaust flames he saw a face.

Lachette, the Paris pickpocket.

The man's eyes were deadly, his ugly face twisted into a grin of fury. He held a knife and he charged at Bourke with the blade upraised.

GUARDS were yelling, returning now they realized the trick. A second was a century in time. Bourke cursed, dived under the down-thrust blade and his right fist hooked to Lachette's jaw with a force that nearly tore the Paris thief's head off. There was a sickening crack, and Lachette flew backward across the floor and lit in a crumpled heap.

Bourke never stopped. His onward propulsion took him to the stirrup. A flying leap landed him in the cockpit. His feet banged off a box of greaseball tools on the floor of the cockpit, and then found the rudder bar.

His hand sought the throttle. Flashlights blazed outside. A rifle roared, but the slug did not come near. With men almost within hand's reach Bourke fed the gas slowly so as not to choke the engine. Gradually the noise of the Hissob was a continual exploding scream, and she moved straight ahead. Men shrank from the be-heading peril of the propeller, grabbed at the wing tips, but could not stop that powerful motor any more than an ant could stop a motor car.

Guns blazed and the bullets tore past Bourke's head. But with increasing speed the Spad whirled out into the pre-dawn. Bourke turned her with a kick of the rudder. Three men were hanging to the tail, while four more blazed with deadly accuracy. Bullets whanged past Bourke's

head, bounced bluely off the cocking handles of the Vickers.

Bourke eased the stick forward and the tail came up. The men fell off; a bullet whanged through his coat. Now the field sped blackly beneath the Spad's wheels. The loom of black trees grew dangerously close. The motor wasn't giving all her revs. She wasn't taking off with lightning speed. It seemed to Bourke that last second that he horsed the Spad with his own strength into the sky, and over the perilous trees. He leveled off to stop a stall, and contour-chased while the motor warmed, leaping over houses and church spires. Then gradually he gained altitude and headed for the dangerous, forest-covered Vosges mountains.

Every man's hand was against him now. He was an outlaw even from outlaws. He could not come back to the Squadron of the Dead and his life was forfeit to anyone. Yet he climbed steadily to fourteen thousand feet and soared to meet the coming of the dawn.

CHAPTER VIII

Geneva



At nine o'clock on a lovely dewy morning a man dressed in the humble clothing of a hard-working Swiss peasant walked slowly along the Rue du Cinq Mars in Geneva and finally halted before the *pension* of the Trois Rois. Bourke looked at the facade, knowing that his brother Terence, Noreen, and little Mac were inside.

A stifled feeling of nostalgia was in his heart. His throat was choked, and for a space his eyes were too misty to see clearly. Hard-boiled he might be, but here were the three people he loved best on earth.

And he had come to them. Eighteen hours of hell since he had left

the tarmac of the Squadron of the Dead amidst a fusillade of rifle fire. Eighteen hours that had seen him encounter and shoot down a German Pfalz scout. Eighteen hours that had seen him land in a cleared Swiss wheat field; that had seen him barter for clothing, camouflage his plane with branches torn from trees and hay stolen from a barn. Eighteen hours of skulking and dodging Swiss guards. But he had come, come to save Terence from doing an insane thing.

His hand tightened on the square, paper-wrapped parcel to which he had clung. To keep his mind from those within he thought again of this package. What an amazing discovery that had been! Lying on the floor of the cockpit had been, not a greaseball's box of tools, but the stolen special filter camera.

The stolen camera!

Of all the mockery! By taking the plane he had condemned himself a thief. Of course, Lachette had stolen it, placed it in the cockpit, intending himself to steal the plane and fly to Germany for reprieve and pardon. And now it belonged to Bourke and what could he do with it?

He shrugged. The thing to do now was to see Terry, Noreen and little Mac.

He went in and inquired of a sniffing *concierge* as to the suite number. Overcoming the *concierge's* suspicions he went on and up the dark staircase and finally, with trembling hand and fast-beating heart, he knocked sharply upon the door.

A lovely voice, one that sent a pang through him, spoke and then the door was opened. There stood Noreen, pale and perhaps too slender from illness, but in Bourke's eyes the most beautiful girl who had ever lived.

Her dark eyes stared, then joy filled them, her lovely mouth smiled.

"Mike!" she cried. "Mike! Thank God!"

She came into his arms and he held her there, unable to see, and dizzy with the perfume of her hair. And then when he could see again there stood little Mac, regarding him gravely from blue eyes. And behind him the thin, worn, prematurely grey brother. Terry.

Somehow he came into the room, and the babble started, and Bourke knew the joy of realizing that he was not an outcast. Here were people who loved him, wanted him, felt joy in his presence. Questions ripped at him and he lied where he had to, and told the truth where he could. They got the impression that he was in the French Foreign Legion, had leave and had stolen into Switzerland. He explained the disguise by saying that the Swiss would intern him and he did not want that.

Finally quiet came and he sat with little Mac on his knee, a fierce, savage pride in the youth and his future blotting out all the memories of the past.

He turned to Terry, a sudden anger darkening his eyes.

"So you were going to hurt this boy by doing a fool thing," he said harshly.

"You don't understand, Mike," Terry said quietly.

"Don't understand what?" Bourke scowled a warning; he did not want Noreen to know too much.

But she said: "Don't scowl, Mike. Terry has told me everything—what a wonderful thing you have done."

"Wonderful nothing," growled Bourke. "Why the devil did you tell, Terry?"

"Because I had to," replied his brother simply. "You see, Mike, the war boom in America enabled me to make a new fortune out of the small capital you and I had left. You've no idea how prices went up. I made three million dollars last year."

Bourke stared, amazed. He had almost forgotten what could be done in America with a little money in boom times.

"I refunded every penny that was lost through the bank," Terry went on. "With interest compounded. I took the matter up with the governor, with the bank examiners, with the depositors who had been repaid. The embezzling charges made against you have been nolle-prossed. The indictments dismissed."

Bourke listened in silence. It was as if a Damoclean sword, suspended by a hair over his head, had finally been removed.

"After that was done and I knew you were in France somewhere fighting, I had to tell Noreen the truth. It was the only decent thing I could do after being rat enough to let you take the blame for my own weakness." Terry shrugged. "We had not heard from you. The battle accounts spoke of terrific casualties. I was afraid you were dead. People—friends and enemies alike—knew through newspaper publicity that you were charged with embezzlement, charged with being a criminal."

HIS brother started a protest; Terry threw back his head, his chin out-thrust.

"I would not have those people believe that of you, Mike. Not for anything."

"I told everybody," Noreen cried fiercely, "that it was a bookkeeper's mistake."

"Uncle Mike, will you take me for a ride in an airplane?" little Mac asked.

Bourke patted the youth's sunny head. His mind was in a whirl of confusion. Terry cleared it the next minute.

"So now, Mike, you can get your discharge from the Foreign Legion and come home. We need you there in the new bank. And soon, I tell

you, America will be in this war and you can fight for your own country."

Go home! It dawned on Bourke then that he could not! The blow he had struck, the things he had done to save Terry had committed him as an outlaw beyond reprieve. The French would claim him from America if what Terry said about the United States getting into the war was true. The English would surrender him; indeed, so might the Swiss if they caught him. The Germans believed him dead for using incendiary bullets and would assuredly kill him if they knew he was a Squadron of the Dead member. Unless—unless—

He looked down at the camera!

A camera that tore through camouflage, revealed trenches for guns to shell, men for bombs to kill. Betrayed weaknesses for attack. For that camera the Germans would give much. Pardon and permission to live in peace.

He did not think about that idea long. He could not do such a thing and he knew it. He believed the Germans wrong in this war; believed they should be defeated and militarism doomed. He had fought so long with the Allies that to betray this camera would be traitorous. Bourke had not that treachery in him.

There was one thing he could do—take his crate, fly back, surrender the camera and take his chances.

Slowly, softly, caressing the sunny head of young Mac as he spoke, he explained to them why he could not go home. An oath of service in the Legion was binding. To betray it was dishonorable. He had enlisted to fight and fight he must. As he spoke little Mac's eyes widened.

"Golly, Uncle Mike, you're a great soldier," he exploded. "I'd like to be a soldier like that when I grow up."

Noreen stared at him, smiling through misted eyes.

"Yes, Mike," she said softly, "you've got to go back. No man who has done what you have done for me and mine could steal away. But you'll live to come back to us. I know."

Terry seized Bourke's hand, wrung it. "God," he half whispered, "if I was half the man you are, Mike, this never would have happened."

"Shut up," growled Bourke and turned toward the door.

They were there to bid him good-by, to promise him they would take an early ship for America and wait for him. He promised in turn to write, to assume his own name. He promised to transfer to the Americans if the United States came into the war. Somehow he bade them good-by, and then fled to the street below.

HE stood for a moment, striving to regain his self-control. Then he turned just as a man walked up to him.

"You should never leave a copy of the New York *Herald* around, folded to the personal column," said Drake. "It was a dead giveaway."

A nervous tremor swept Bourke's powerful frame.

"How did you get here," he snarled.

The detective shrugged. "I'm out to get you, Bourke. I have the United States Embassy and the French *minister de la guerre* working with me. I'm going to get you. In fact," he added, pointedly, "I have got you."

Bourke stood motionless. His mind flashed to the interview above. Had Terry lied? Of course he had. He might have paid back the money, doubtless had, but the charges had not been dismissed or Drake would not be here with the connivance of American and French authorities. Noreen and Terry had told him that to get him out of danger.

At all costs he must keep Drake

from getting track of Terry, Noreen and little Mac.

"Yes, Drake," he said quietly, "you've got me. So what?"

"Who did you come here to see?" asked the detective.

"The German minister to arrange about selling this camera to Germany and being permitted to live there," said Bourke.

He gestured to the package in his hand.

Drake stared at him with pinpoint eyes. The detective's grim mouth was flat, his whole expression most peculiar.

"I see," he rejoined quietly. "If that's the case then let's go. I'm taking you to Paris on the next train."

Bourke submitted quietly, and Drake merely said:

"I'm not putting handcuffs on you, but I have a gun so don't start anything."

Bourke made no reply; his brain was working swiftly. The railroad crossing the frontier passed within ten miles of where he had landed his plane. That would be his chance. As they entered a first class compartment of the Paris-Dijon Express he said carelessly:

"You didn't come by train or you could not have come here this quickly."

"No," Drake assented, "I flew a Spad. It's—" He broke off. "What the hell do you care how I came here?"

"I don't. I was merely curious."

Drake smiled queerly. They sat down and presently the conductor blew on his cow's horn whistle, the engine tooted shrilly, and the train glided out of the station. Bourke remained buried in his thoughts. An idea was growing in his mind, a single wild chance to solve this problem, a chance to settle with Drake once and for all, a chance to at least return to the Squadron of the Dead.

It all depended on how much Drake knew.

CHAPTER IX

France Again



WITH a turtle's pace time passed, the sun climbed, slid over the zenith and drooped toward night. The majestic Alps with their snow caps fell farther back, the lower Vosges came closer. The train guard passed through, warning passengers to be prepared for the customs and military examinations at the frontier.

A familiar village flashed by, a road guard standing by the lowered fender, munching bread and sausages. Not eight miles west Bourke's plane was hidden, ready, waiting. The train slowed down. Covertly Bourke glanced at Drake. The man seemed almost in a doze.

Bourke's muscles tensed. He weighed the chance. The compartment door was locked from the outside, but the window was down so he could reach the lock. The train was passing through a small woods where the trees came down to the right-of-way.

Bourke got his feet under him. In a flash his fist hurled forward. Drake jerked up, his hand streaking for his gun. But his chin came right into the path of the punch. The knuckles smashed home with a thud that echoed bonily. Drake's eyes snapped in their sockets; his mouth gaped and he pitched sideward.

Bourke, however, never saw the result of the blow. He had jumped to his feet, his fingers found the outside lock, and the compartment door broke open at the wind pull. Gathering his muscles Bourke leaped straight out. He went tumbling down the road-bed, curling his body around the camera so that it would not be

broken by the fall. He rolled with the rise, going over and over.

Skinned and bruised he came to his feet and without looking backward ran into the woods. He ran until his breath whistled dryly through his lips and fell down, exhausted, beneath laurel bushes.

A great peace held him as he lay there. Drake didn't know about his brother, nor Noreen nor Mac. Never would know about them, so that threat was ended for good. No matter what happened to him, Bourke, they were saved. And lying there Bourke knew that before all else he was going to fly back to Souilly and to the Squadron of the Dead and give them their camera.

Presently he rose and doggedly began a mile-eating stride to the spot where his Spad was hidden. There was, thank God, enough gas to reach Souilly.

IT took all night to make the nine miles. There were Swiss chalets to avoid, roads to dodge, rocky hills and thick woods to go through. There were times when he lay motionless, frozen, for an hour. Times when he was so thirsty he licked the dew from the leaves. But an hour before dawn he saw the cleared fields, the pile of camouflage. With anxious heart he pulled aside hay tufts and branches.

The Spad was intact!

Laboriously he wound the prop, drawing gas into the cylinder heads. Twice he leaped at the prop that spun on contact but bounced back. He felt so tired he poised for a minute before leaping again.

As he did so a man loomed through the lightening dawn. Bourke grabbed a piece of wood and braced himself, but it was only a Swiss peasant.

"I'm a French aviator," Bourke said harshly. "I was forced down. I am going away. I will do you no

harm, but you must not stop me."

"*Entendu!*" shrugged the peasant. "I heard the noise. That is two of you who have been forced down. The other is taking off a mile away."

"What?" cried Bourke.

The man spoke but Bourke did not hear him. He knew. Of course, Drake had taken the bird's line flight to Swiss territory. He would come into this section as surely as a straight line joins another at an angle. Bourke's jaws clicked. He motioned the peasant back, leaped at the propeller.

This time the mixture exploded, the prop dissolved into a whirl of light, and the spatter of exhaust explosions echoed over the country side. As Bourke sat in the cockpit permitting the Hiss to warm he heard a louder drone. Swooping low through the now bright sky came a black plane with a white skull underneath. Drake! He swooped so low he barely cleared Bourke's top wing with his landing gear. It was plain warning that Drake had caught the trail, intended to follow him.

Bourke cursed in his throat. "If you follow me," he yelled, "by hell, I'll shoot you down."

He gassed the motor, blasted the tail around, got into the wind. Drake's Spad was over a nearby farmhouse, turning. Bourke ignored it, poured the gun to the crate and the Spad began thrashing at increasing speed through the wheat. Bourke lifted her in a climbing turn and headed south by west. A spattering of rifle bullets from the Swiss guard at the frontier post glittered around him.

He ignored that. But he couldn't ignore the fact that Drake, like a Nemesis, was following straight behind him. Bourke angled to pass over German territory this side of Pont à Mousson. Drake pursued.

With a slight tail wind it seemed to Bourke he reached the country

south of the immediate front in twenty minutes. Here he must turn in to Souilly. Behind him Drake stuck grimly.

Bourke's teeth clicked. His fingers tightened on the joy-stick.

"He's asking for it," he muttered. "It's his life or mine."

He suddenly jerked the Spad into an upward zoom, went over on his back, did a half roll and came speeding back toward Drake at two miles a minute. He knew he must kill Drake. Doing so he could return with the camera, make his peace with Banks and enjoy the haven of the Squadron of the Dead so long as he could keep alive. But with Drake after him, there would be no peace.

HE nosed the Spad down, fired a warning burst from the Vickers and circled to get on Drake's tail. The detective was surprised, or else he was awkward. In side-slipping to avoid exposing the tail position he lost control, almost went into a spin. In righting the Spad he lost a few seconds. And they were enough.

Shooting down the sky like a rocket, pulling in tightly, Bourke found Drake's tail forty yards or so ahead and squarely in Bourke's ring-sights. Going the same way at

the same speed, it was a stationary shot at a large target only forty yards away with machine-guns capable of firing six hundred shots a minute. Bourke held Drake's life in his two hands to do with as he liked.

Bourke's eyes thinned, his head ducked a little as the Spad nose came up until he could see in the ring-sights the leather back and muffler of the man-hunter. A sure shot that couldn't miss. Bourke's fingers tightened on the Bowden stick trigger.

Drake ducked and dodged, and Bourke's ship followed as if tied to it. Drake apparently knew he could not throw off this pursuer, for suddenly he leveled off in straight flying, twisted in his seat and stared back across his tail surfaces at Bourke.

"Take it," Bourke said savagely.

Again he willed his fingers to jerk the stick trips. They would not. His knuckles were white, his breath coming in hoarse sobs, every atom of his brain willing these twin blue, deadly guns to hurl their slivers of cupro-nickel steel into this detective and erase him forever. Wildly he yelled at himself that it was no worse killing Drake than a German. Indeed,

[Turn Page]

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it was better, for the German had never harmed him in any way, and Drake was trying to ruin him and all his people.

But try as he would he could not fire. It was one thing, he learned then, to shoot a fellow man in heat of combat for a spiritual thing called patriotism; and it was quite another to shoot a helpless man in the back because he happened to be a detective doing his duty.

Bourke made a supreme effort. He looked through the cross hairs at Drake's calm face, willed the man dead and pulled the trigger. But as he did so something beyond himself also forced him to lift the nose of the plane. The spatter of tracer fire shot high and wide over the Spad ahead.

Bourke knew then that, come what might, he could not murder Drake. A great sob tore his throat and with a wild twist of the stick he hurled the Spad in a double roll, prepared to streak away south.

He flipped out of the roll and turned. A gust of tracer fire streamed past his head. Behind him he heard a deadly *pop-pop-pop* above the drone of motors. And looking to the right he saw Drake trapped in a box between three Fokkers with a fourth hurtling down behind him, pouring into the detective a deadly hail of smoke tracer.

Bourke's touch to stick and rudder were purely instinctive, throwing the Spad into a side-slip, going ahead and sideward at the same time, which made him a tough target and faded the Spad away from the smoke tracer. He glanced back and saw a Fokker side-slipping to get back on the target.

He realized that the Fokker flight, seeing two black Spads apparently fighting, had sneaked up to do a little killing of their own. The Fokker pilot behind Bourke was either inexperienced or over-confident. The pilot

side-slipped so far he hung on the verge of a spin. In rectifying control he lost altitude. Bourke whipped in a tight turn, one wing anchored, and came in for an angle shot. His guns roared a brief burst. Thirty shots that raked the Fokker from prop to tail assembly. The Fokker fell at once into a violent spin that threw off the two top wings. Bourke turned away without a second look and saw that one of the four Fokkers piling on Drake had detached itself to give him battle.

THE Fokker was making a wide circle to pounce. For a second Bourke had time to think. He had time to watch the fate of Detective Drake, desperately trying to escape from the box the Germans had locked him in. The detective was doomed. Bourke's experience told him that. His first sensation was one of relief. Drake would die but he, Bourke, would not have the man's death on his soul. A German's bullet would solve the difficulty as neatly as if Bourke himself had let fly the burst.

It was queer how the brain worked in such a crisis. Bourke's one eye watched the maneuvering Fokker, but his mind was occupied chiefly with what he knew of Drake. He had no hatred for the man. After all Drake had played according to his own lights. He had done nothing tricky; he had used his wits and played on the square. Bourke could have liked him.

Indeed, he had known times when, had the situation been different, he could have made a friend of Drake. The man had courage, decency and he was a square-shooter.

It was tough that such a man had to die. But he had asked for it, risking his life this way for a miserable thirty thousand dollars.

Watching the black Spad Bourke became aware that Drake was a remarkable flyer. Had it not been for

a surprise, the man would not be so boxed, and he was flying with almost superhuman skill now to avoid the deadly bursts that the Fokker on his tail poured into him. Suddenly Bourke sat erect. "My God!" he muttered.

It came upon him with the force of a blow that Drake had not flown this skillfully when Bourke was on his tail. Had he done so he could have got away from Bourke. It was as if the detective had deliberately tested Bourke to see if the man would murder.

Bourke cursed between clenched teeth. Ignoring the cautiously circling Fokker he nosed his Spad down, knocked the throttle wide open. With a wild banshee howl the Spad fell down the sky like a comet. Straight at the box Bourke hurled his crate.

He knew, in his heart, that he must save Drake. If he stood by when a movement on his part, a courageous attack could save the detective, then Drake's life would be on his soul as much as if he himself had fired the slugs.

Like a fragment of a hurricane Bourke's black Spad tore at the Fokker on the right. Perhaps Drake saw him come, perhaps he was only resorting to a last minute effort to break the box. In any case, as Bourke poured a stream of slugs into the right-hand Fokker, Drake banked sharply and when the Fokker side-slipped and shrank from Bourke's deadly slugs Drake tore through the hole thus made, zoomed with a terrific screech of power, and with a wing-over that was amazing to behold flopped down on the Fokker that had been riding his tail.

For an instant the sky offered the spectacle of two wildly checkered Fokkers fleeing down the air with two black Spads in swift pursuit. Then Bourke had his man in the ring-sights. He eased his trips and

the blue Vickers bolted to the cowl in front of him chattered and shook, threw back a haze of black, while a spray of golden tracer burned across the air and tore into the Fokker.

The plane shuddered, staggered up in an attempt to roll, plummeted downward. A wild switch that tossed the pilot like a stone from a catapult followed, and both fell down the sky too swiftly for the eye to follow.

But one man shot down was not enough. Unknown to Bourke while he was firing, two *staffels* of Pfalz scouts, attracted by the fight, rocketed down from above. Even the dreaded insignia of the Squadron of the Dead was not fearsome when only two planes were to be fought.

CHAPTER X

Death to the Loser



ARCY BOURKE could have fled, then. As the sky rained Pfalzes he was zooming and his Spad went streaking upward through their masses and rode on top. And the Pfalz had not been built that could catch a Spad on a straightaway race. But Drake was below, with them all fluttering around, getting in their own way and thus delaying the fatal burst by their own numbers. Bourke smiled queerly. Why not? He was washed up, through—with no chance. Why not tear into this pack of swine and go down with an escort of Jerry pilots to hell?

His wrist twitched the stick; the Spad howled down and into the mass. He rode Drake's tail and broke a box. A Pfalz felt the whicker of his steel. The pilot screamed in fear and went down the sky to hedge-hop home and live to fight another day. A Pfalz rode Bourke's tail. Drake zoomed up from underneath and the

pilot leaped from a crate that exploded as he jumped.

It was magnificent; two men against the world, but it wasn't war, and it couldn't last. Bourke and Drake flew with the skill of the damned. Their guns, hot to boiling, found the target often enough to shoot down three Pfalz and send two others spinning, sick of the fight, and aware of the Squadron of the Dead's reputation.

But it couldn't last. First Drake, screaming up the sky with his deadly guns shooting the spine out of a Jerry pilot, ran into a cross-fire that tore his ship from nose to tail assembly.

The black Spad faltered, made a quick barrel roll, didn't come out, and spun down. Pilot hit.

Bourke gravely waved his hand. "Swell stuff, guy," he muttered. "I'll get that swine."

He made a pivot turn that made his wings quiver at the pins, tore into the Pfalz that had made the sharklike attack. Bourke's bullets drummed off the man's chest until the fellow's lungs lay in bloody rags on the instrument board. He did this deliberately, then when the smoke tracer whickered past his head, he knew he'd left his tail wide open.

Like pieces of mechanism two Pfalz closed in on either side. Behind him pounded a third. The slugs flew straight. Brace wires parted with explosions of sound. Struts splintered until wings sagged at the pins. Bourke kept pounding with his hot guns at the decoy Pfalz ahead until the hammers rose and fell emptily and no more bullets rose on the web belts. A second later the cocking handles went to hell before a smash of slugs.

His shoulder was ripped by bullets, his legs jumped as other bullets penetrated his thighs. He had heard of planes being shot out from under pilots but he had never experienced

it before. He knew why. A man had the experience only once.

Then a torrent of smoke tracer tore through the cowling of the motor. Rocker arms, bits of spark plugs, a coil, wiring, parts of a cylinder head flew. Swiftly he reached for the switch. It was not necessary; bullets had finished that Hisso. The propeller splintered into a hundred pieces.

"This," he told himself, "is the finish."

IT was not bad now that it was on him. But as he nosed over instinctively to keep the controls sensitive he remembered the camera in the bottom of the crate. Germans always investigated shot-down planes for new devices. If they found the camera—

He looked through his center section, and there was the dun-colored carpet three thousand feet below. His eyes swung in a circle even as he side-slipped the plane deliberately hoping to crash into the Pfalz trap. The Pfalz faded and so did the hammering gunfire from behind. For the moment there was the utter silence of nothingness in his plane, and he could hear the drone of his enemies circling to shoot again.

But he saw the outlines of Vigneulles. If he could glide three miles, and he ought to with this altitude, he could crash in No Man's Land or on his own side of the lines. But they might get another shot at him then. It was better to nose down and hit as hard as he could. That would smash the camera.

He smiled grimly. His fingers thrust out the stick. The whine of wire and strut and drumming bullet-torn linen became a roar. Down the Spad streaked, and behind came the Pfalz.

Now, with his own motor dead he heard the *pop-pop-pop* of gunfire. The fool, with a helpless victim, was

shooting from a hundred yards. The German was closing the gap now, falling in a power dive.

Bourke braced himself, held the stick out until the Spad dropped straight down. But the Pfalz was on him.

Rac-rac-rac-rac-rac-rac!

Bourke quivered, his hands flung up, and he slumped down in the seat. Blood drooled from his helmet onto his face. The Pfalz pilot saw it, watched the Spad weave drunkenly, side-slip, ease out of the dive to fall like a rotting leaf. He chalked victory for himself, yelled and waved salute to the dead pilot of the black Spad. But the pilot of the black Spad could not see this gallant salute.

* * * * *

Always a black Spad flown by a grinning skeleton pursued Bourke. No matter how he turned; twisted; climbed, dived, on the ground, in the air. When he ate, slept, when he ran across the countryside in the dark with his heart pounding and his breath whistling the skeleton came after him, reaping at him with a great scythe.

"He can't get me!" he screamed.

"No, no," a gentle voice whispered, "he can't get you. Quiet—rest—you're going to get well."

"Yes," Bourke said, "I'm going to get well. But take the damned skeleton away. Away, I tell you!"

"Yes, he's gone now. Rest."

This went on, it seemed, for centuries, aeons, until one morning Bourke opened his eyes and saw the sunshine streaming through the window. He saw a nurse with a red cross on her crisp white cap, smiling at him happily.

"You had a bad time," she said, "but you made it. I knew you would. I prayed for you."

Listlessly, scarcely aware that he heard, Bourke learned that ribs had punctured his lungs and pleura, that

his legs had been broken, an arm cracked, and that he lived because he had a tough body, and the chief surgeon had bet a thousand francs he could do the impossible and pull him through.

"You're tough," the nurse said. "Anybody else would have given up. You wanted to live."

Bourke started up, sank back.

"Did I?" he wondered. "Now why, do you suppose?"

"Some girl, I guess." The nurse smiled roguishly.

NOW that his brain had cleared and he was on the mend Bourke convalesced rapidly. He was getting well; he knew it; and he wondered why. As he grew stronger his problems assailed him.

Particularly when he saw two French sentries standing guard before his door. Particularly when the nurse said:

"You Squadron of the Dead pilots are romantic. We never had one in before."

Bourke smiled grimly. Romantic, hell! And then, when he was able to sit up and walk a little bit, Captain Dugger Banks came. Banks with a small chew of snuff tucked under his lip, and a hard-boiled face that indicated nothing.

"They're going to shoot you," he said quietly. "Funny how people do things. If that damned doctor hadn't wanted to win a bet you'd have died and everything would have been jake. As it is they get you well to tie you to a stake. I think the world is nutty sometimes."

Bourke agreed wearily. "What are they shooting me for this time?" he asked.

"For stealing the camera, of course," said Banks. "We found it intact in your plane. According to observers you nosed straight down, then a Pfalz gave you the works. But you must have recovered con-

sciousness somehow, for you glided across the line and piled up neatly in a shell-hole this side of our barbed wire."

Bourke blinked. That must have been subconscious work, because he remembered nothing after deciding to hit straight and hard. Funny how a man's will to live gets the best of him, he reflected.

"I didn't steal that camera," he said evenly. "Lachette did. He put it in the plane before I stole the plane."

"Lachette's dead," shrugged Banks. "It's easy enough to accuse a dead man. But you stole a plane, you took off, you had the camera—and you were found with it. The *conseil de guerre* would have you shot on half that evidence."

"I have no doubt," Bourke rejoined. "But for your information I flew to Switzerland on personal business, and if Drake were alive he could prove that."

"Drake is dead, and anyway he hated you, and he'd never back your story," said Banks. "So get ready—the guard will be after you tonight."

"No, it won't," spoke a new voice.

Bourke jerked upright from the pillow and stared. Dugger Banks coughed over his snuff and turned with a whirl. A very pale Paul Drake had silently entered and stood there, staring at them.

"Huh, you!" grunted Banks. "It's easy to see that the tough don't die."

"Well, they can come damned near," said Drake, advancing into the room. "I stood inside the Pearly Gates twice, according to Base Hospital Six."

He advanced directly to the bed, stood there, frowning down at Bourke.

"They're going to shoot Bourke tomorrow," Banks said.

Again slowly Drake shook his head. "No, the *conseil de guerre* has rescinded its decision."

"A *conseil de guerre* never changes its mind—even if it had one to change," said Banks.

"This one did." Drake sat slowly on the edge of the hospital bed. "You fool!" he said to Bourke, "why didn't you tell me you had flown to Switzerland to see your brother and his family?"

"I didn't," lied Bourke blandly. "Where did you get that crazy notion?"

"Because the personal in the *Herald* indicated it, and I was thrown off the right track by the damned camera. It was not until you had a chance to shoot me and didn't, and then helped me put up one whale of a fight against the Pfalzes that I knew the truth." He paused. "The truth!" he roared almost in anger. "What a sap you made out of me as a detective! Making me believe you were a crook. A crook would have knifed me, shot me down, or left me to the Jerries to shoot. So I knew then that you couldn't have committed the crime. That left nobody else but your brother. You were taking the rap for him."

"You're lying," yelled Bourke.

PAUL DRAKE grinned. "All right, I'm lying—and I'll keep on lying." He turned to Dugger Banks. "Lachette stole that camera. He confessed to me as he was dying. Bourke flew it to Switzerland. He could have turned it over to the Germans there. He could have murdered me, shot me down, and have flown into Germany and been received with open arms. Instead he saved my life and he flew back to take his medicine. What do you do with saps like that?"

Banks grinned. He held out his hand. "We like 'em a lot," he said simply.

Drake turned back to Bourke. "Your brother paid back the money. I didn't know at the time. So there

are no charges. It wouldn't make any difference if there were. I'd have helped you lick the rap."

He paused, then took out a bit of paper which he pressed into Bourke's hands.

"In view of your heroic conduct in preventing the camera from falling into German hands," he said, "you get a pardon from the Squadron of the Dead. In view of the confession of the greaseball who loaded your guns with incendiaries, you are pardoned that offense. You can go back to the Foreign Legion Squadron, or you can form part of the new American Air Force. We're in this scrap since the seventh of last month. Which do you choose?"

Bourke fingered the pardon, his eyes smarting, his hands suddenly trembling and his breath choking in his throat. Like a man reprieved on the scaffold he saw before him life beckoning with its myriad wonders. He saw the goodness of life, the joy of it, the feel of being free, again the captain of his soul.

Again he could serve with honor, take his own name and be proud to

use it. For a moment or so he could not speak and Dugger Banks and Paul Drake turned away their glances that they might not see a man's soul so nakedly exposed in his wet eyes.

Finally Bourke gulped, grinned. "You ask me which I choose, the Foreign Legion Squadron or the American Air Force. Which do you choose?"

Drake suddenly laughed aloud. "You always do what I expect, Mike," he said softly. "All right, guy, I'm going into the Ninety-second American Pursuit."

"Then that's where I'm going," said Bourke.

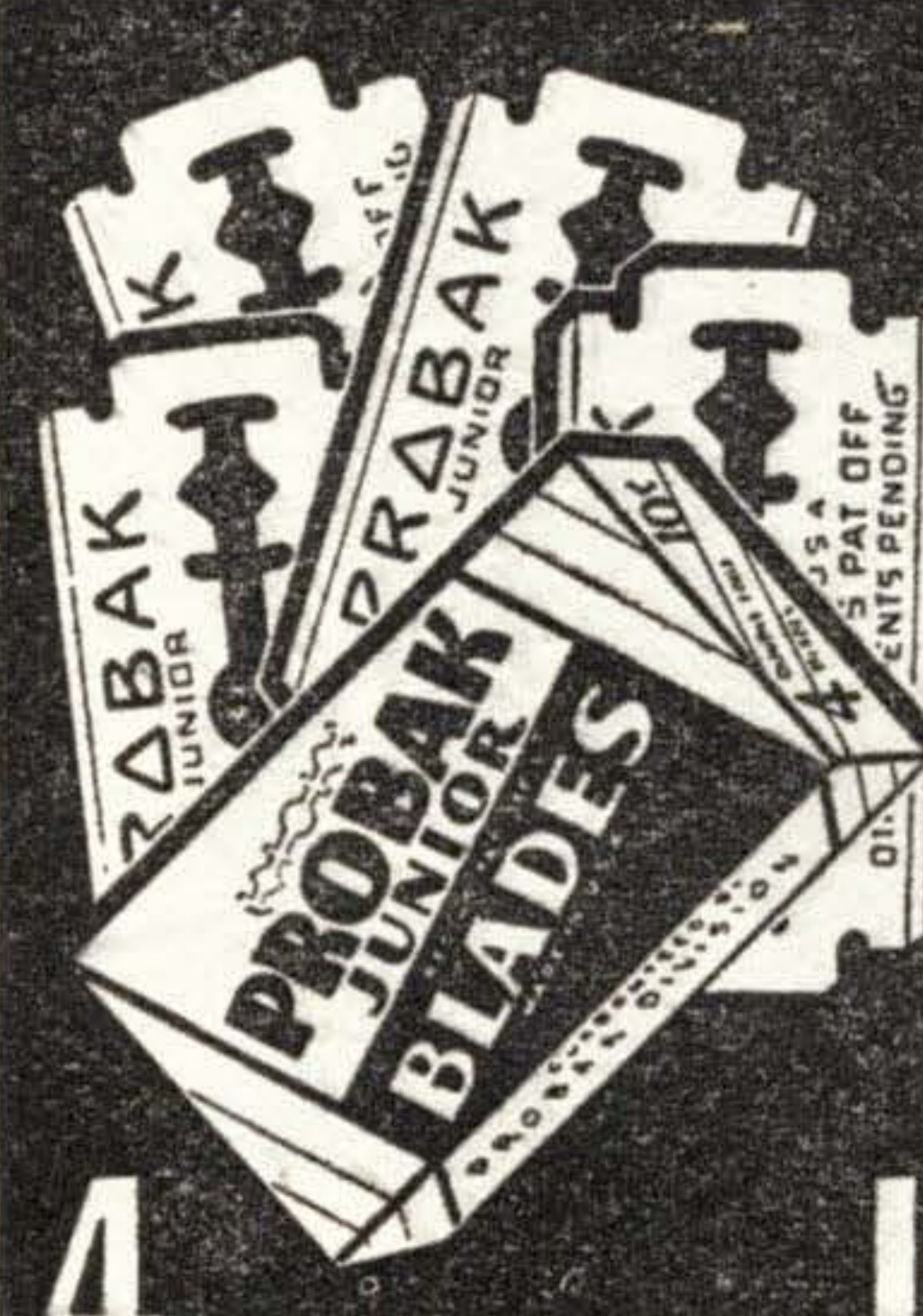
His hand came up from the coverlet, was swallowed by Drake's hand.

Dugger Banks coughed, blew his nose.


"You couple of damned sentimentalists," he muttered, "I'm going back to the Squadron of the Dead. The guys there are tough."

He rose, nodded to St. John in the doorway, and drove back to the Coffin and Skull Squadron. After all there was a war that needed working at.

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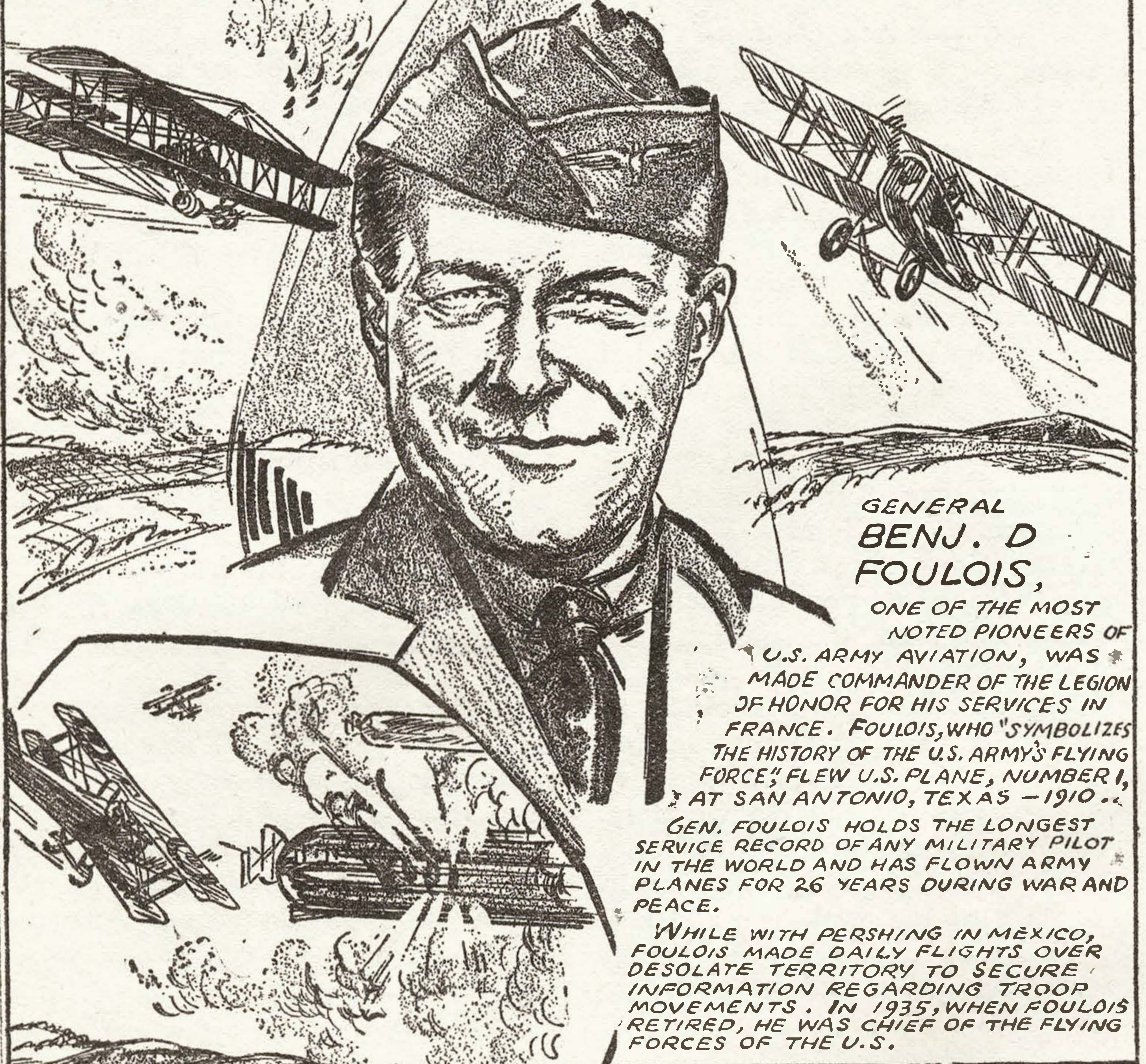
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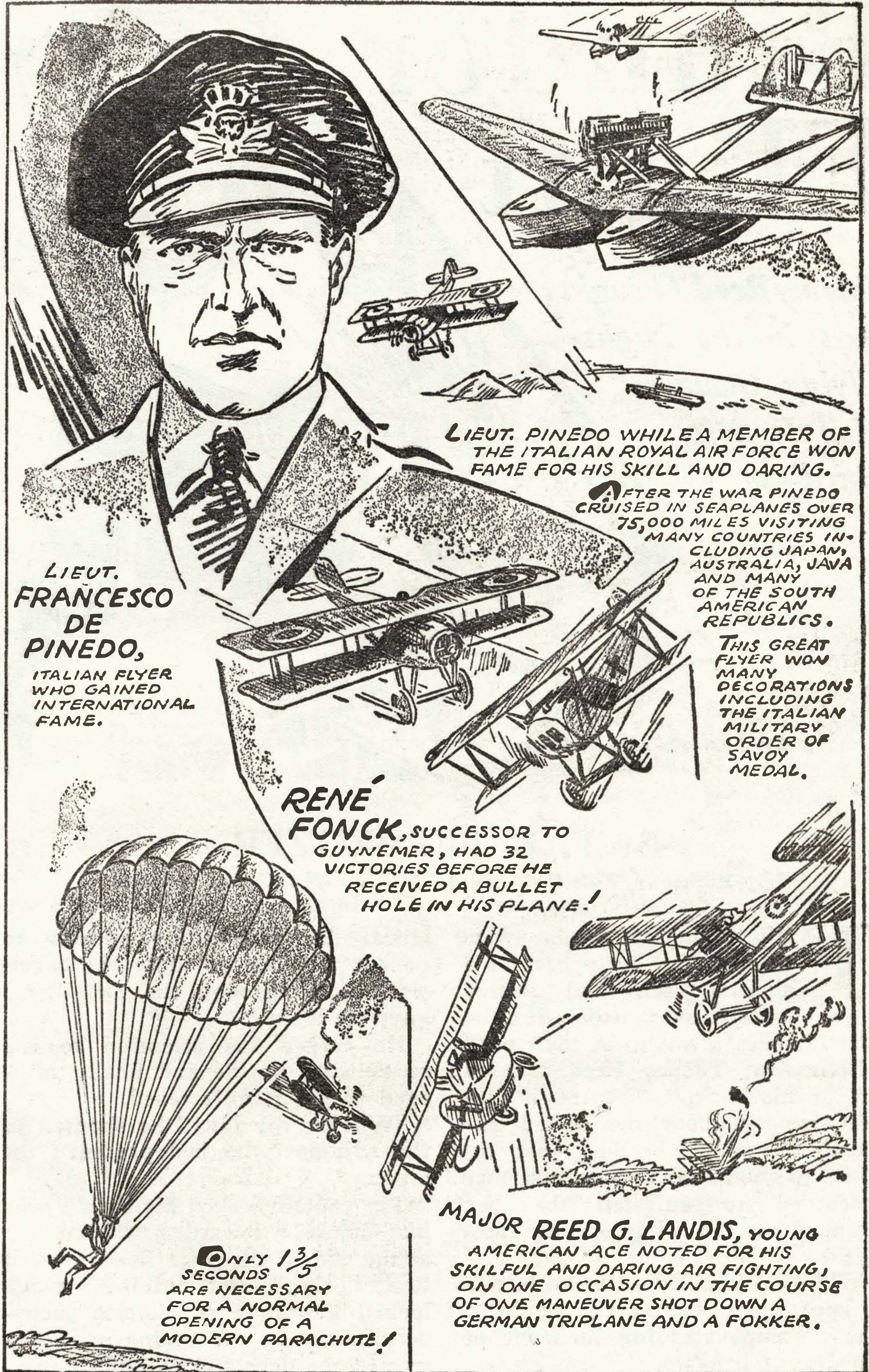
CAPTAIN W. LEEFE-ROBINSON,

COURAGEOUS R.F.C. FLYER,
BROUGHT DOWN THE FIRST
ZEPPELIN OVER ENGLAND.

BROTHER ACES OF GERMANY,

BARON MANFRED VON RICHTHOFEN, THE RED KNIGHT, AND LOTHAR VON RICHTHOFEN, WHO MADE AIR HISTORY DURING THE WAR. MANFRED, GERMANY'S ACE OF ACES, ACCOUNTED FOR 80 ALLIED PLANES AND WHILE COMMANDER OF JAGDSTAFFEL 2, HE PERFORMED THE INCREDIBLE FEAT OF DOWNING AN ENEMY PLANE DAILY FOR A PERIOD OF 30 DAYS. LOTHAR SCORED 40 AIR VICTORIES.





LIEUT. FRANCESCO DE PINEDO,
ITALIAN FLYER WHO GAINED INTERNATIONAL FAME.

LIEUT. PINEDO WHILE A MEMBER OF THE ITALIAN ROYAL AIR FORCE WON FAME FOR HIS SKILL AND DARING.

AFTER THE WAR PINEDO CRUISED IN SEAPLANES OVER 75,000 MILES VISITING MANY COUNTRIES INCLUDING JAPAN, AUSTRALIA, JAVA AND MANY OF THE SOUTH AMERICAN REPUBLICS.

THIS GREAT FLYER WON MANY DECORATIONS INCLUDING THE ITALIAN MILITARY ORDER OF SAVOY MEDAL.

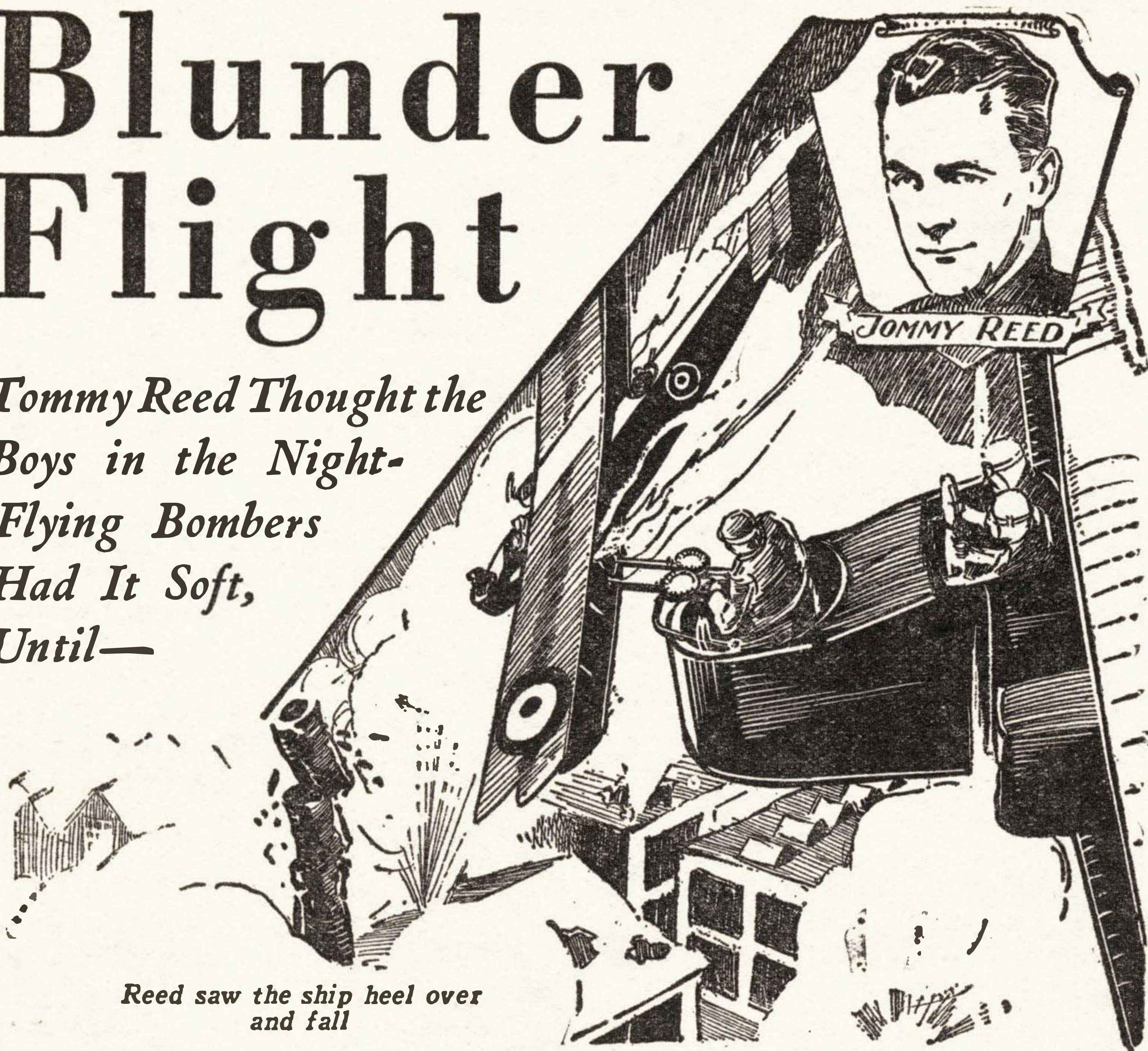
RENÉ FONCK, SUCCESSOR TO GUYNEMER, HAD 32 VICTORIES BEFORE HE RECEIVED A BULLET HOLE IN HIS PLANE!

ONLY $1\frac{3}{5}$ SECONDS ARE NECESSARY FOR A NORMAL OPENING OF A MODERN PARACHUTE!

MAJOR REED G. LANDIS, YOUNG AMERICAN ACE NOTED FOR HIS SKILFUL AND DARING AIR FIGHTING, ON ONE OCCASION IN THE COURSE OF ONE MANEUVER SHOT DOWN A GERMAN TRIPLANE AND A FOKKER.

Blunder Flight

Tommy Reed Thought the Boys in the Night-Flying Bombers Had It Soft, Until—



Reed saw the ship heel over and fall

By F. E. RECHNITZER

Author of "Fate Fades An Ace," "The Flying Coffin," etc.

THE flight of Spads swept through the dusty bars of a slanting sun and settled down on the tarmac, which for the next few weeks was to be their nest.

Lieutenant Tommy Reed crawled out of his cockpit, shouted a flip-pant remark about the rutted air-drome on which he had just set down, to one of his companions, then proceeded to unfasten the bag strapped on the wing by the fuselage.

While he fumbled with the buckle he kept looking across the field at a row of ships standing in front of the distant hangars.

"Handleys," he muttered. "Lucky

stiffs! Imagine having nothing to do but tool one of those big excursion boats through the air. Some guys are lucky."

He turned his attention to the recalcitrant buckle and finally managed to get it unfastened.

"Where's my hut?" he shouted to the adjutant who had preceded the flight.

The captain jerked his thumb over his shoulder toward a Nissen hut at the end of the line. Reed hurried toward the queer building which looked like some prehistoric pachyderm mired in the oozing mud. He opened the door and without bothering to examine his new quarters,

tossed the bag in and heard it clump to the uneven boards.

"One hut's like the next," he growled as he pulled the door to. "Be at home in one of these tin things no matter where I found it."

Then without a word to his companions, some of whom were already engaged in tacking pictures from the French and British weeklies to the walls, he walked past the clustered huts, skirted the hangars and struck out in the direction of the Handley-Pages across the field.

As he approached the giant ships his eyes took in every detail, the long wings high above the big wheels, with their ailerons moving gently in the breeze. He stood at the leading edge of the nearest ship and looked up at the powerful Rolls-Royce motors nestled in their web of spars.

"Some crates!" he mused. "Evidently belong to the I.A.F. Didn't know there were any Limey squadrons down here. Thought us Yanks were taking care of the air in this sector."

AS he walked around the wing, and studied the long tapered fuselage with its queer tail assembly, his eye fell on a solitary figure sitting against a heap of sandbags, reading.

"Well, I'll be damned," Reed muttered. "Wondered what had happened to Elsie."

He hurried toward the figure and slapped the fellow on the back.

"L—c. Haynes!" he cried. "Imagine finding you here!"

Now there was a pretty good reason for Reed's slight pause between the two letters. He knew better than to string the L and C together. Once when he was in the same training flight with the man who sat staring up at him, Reed had made a terrible mistake. He had heard the other cadets run the two initials together

so they sounded like Elsie. He hadn't noticed that they had always done it behind Haynes' back. One day as he met Haynes entering the mess for the midday meal, Reed had called out:

"Elsie!" That was as far as he got. The next minute he was sitting on the hard clay of the parade ground, rubbing his jaw and looking up at the little fellow whose name was down on the squadron roster as L. C. Haynes.

And what made Reed remember that fatal error more than ever was the fact that he had had to live on bread and milk and a little soup for the next few days while the soreness went out of his teeth. A few days later Haynes had moved on to an advanced training squadron and eventually had beaten Reed across the Atlantic.

Haynes was on his feet now.

"I'm awfully glad to see you, Tommy," he smiled. "Never did have an opportunity to apologize for smacking you that day." That was typical of the soft-spoken Haynes. Crack a man on the jaw and then apologize to the victim.

Reed laughed, touched the side of his face with his stubby fingers and shuddered as he recalled that just a few seconds ago he had almost made the same blunder.

"What are you doing here?" he asked to change the subject.

L.C. motioned toward the Handley-Page at the end of the line. "Flying that," he said and laid his book on the top bag of sand.

Reed grinned. "You always were a lucky stiff, Haynes. You went around in your own quiet way, reading books, minding your own business, but all the time you were using your old bean."

"Meaning what?" asked Haynes.

"You know," Reed rattled on. "Those three undercarriages. Wish I'd had the sense not to act so smart

with those old Canucks. Look what it got me to have my log book free of crashes. Look what it got you for buckling a wheel one time, tearing off an undercarriage strut another time, and then completing your list by slicing your wheels and struts off an' landing that old Jenny on her belly. Wise baby, you were. Why didn't you tip a bird off?"

HAYNES shook his head. "I don't understand, Tommy. You don't for a moment think I busted those ships up on purpose, do you?"

Reed grinned. "Wise guy!"

"But I—"

"Yeah, I know, accident," Reed broke in, grinning. "Wish I'd used some brains. I thought a cadet went through his course and then when he got overseas they asked him what kinda ships he'd like to fly best. That's where I was dumb. Haynes, I pretty near had a hemorrhage when they told me I was going on Spads."

"And what kind of ship did you want to fly?" L.C. asked in his well modulated voice.

"Bombers," exclaimed Reed. "The bigger the better. Big easy going jobs that fly themselves. Something you can sit back in and enjoy yourself without having to jockey a stick every damned minute you're in the air."

"But—" Haynes tried to break in again.

"I know what you're gonna say," Reed said hurriedly. "You're gonna tell me that it takes you a long time to get where you're going and a longer time to get back in a bomber. But don't forget you're sitting there in comfort. Guys to watch your tail for you, another sitting up in the nose to spray a Hun, if one ever does find you. Why you don't even have to bother kicking on rudder. That forward gunner can swing his guns to follow a target."

Haynes held up his hand as if to interrupt Reed but dropped it.

"Look at us Spad pilots," Reed went on. "All alone in our crates. Have to watch the whole sky. If a Hun gets on our tail we have to shake him off ourselves; no gunner sitting in back of us to belt hell out of him. No, sir! An' if a Fokker gets in front of us we have to keep kicking rudder if we want our tracer to get anywhere near him. I tell you, Haynes, I made an awful blunder when I didn't manage to have a couple of minor crack-ups, just enough so they wouldn't sign me up as qualified for pursuit jobs. You birds flyin' these big crates have the life of Riley. Only danger is the matter of a forced landing, trying to get into a small field with your flying cathedral."

"But, Tommy, we—" Haynes shrugged his shoulders and gave it up as Reed broke in again, with another wide grin crossing his freckled face.

"I know," he said. "You're gonna tell me that you go over the lines. Sure you do. Nobody says you don't. But how do you go over? At night. In the dark when they can't see you. You sneak over, flying high, wide an' handsome and then hustle back home with nothing to do until the next time they want some dizzy dump bombed."

Haynes picked up his book, glanced at Reed with a queer smile. "Go on," he said slowly. "Tell me about the dangers of being a Spad pilot. I suppose you're going to spring the sad story of the pursuit pilots who have to get up early an' do a dawn patrol, working up an appetite for breakfast by drilling holes in a couple of Huns an' watching them go down, frying like chunks of greasy bacon. And then how you have to battle your way home, patch up your ships and then start out to knock off a few more, battling all

over the skies all day long while the bomber pilots sit at home quaking in their boots waiting for the kind sheltering shadows to hide them from the evil eyes of the blood-thirsty Huns."

"So you know you're lucky," growled Reed. "You realize how lucky you are not to have to fly over those hellish lines in daylight and have every Hun pilot in creation try to add you to his bag— An' besides the public doesn't expect so much from you guys."

"Public?" Haynes asked.

"Yeah, how many times have you ever seen the name of a bombing pilot in the papers? You birds don't have to go out and die for dear old Rutgers as they say back home."

Reed scowled and kicked at the cinders. "Makes me sore every time I think of how dumb I was. I could have been flying bombers if I'd worked it like you did. But no, I had to be smart, stunt those old Jennies all over Canada, land them like a bat outa hell, an' what do I get? A Spad pilot, that's what I am."

Haynes' mouth snapped open, but a call from the Operations office cut off his words. He listened as the stentorian voice of the adjutant rang out across the tarmac and then turned to Reed.

"You'd really like to fly in one of these crates, I take it?" he said quietly.

"Hell, yes!" grinned Reed. "Like to get up in the air once in a crate I didn't have to be strapped into. Be able to stretch my legs and take a little walk through that long fuselage. Sit there staring straight ahead dreaming without having to worry about whether a Hun was sitting in the sun, waiting for a chance to come down on my tail. Or do Fokkers come out of the moon at you?" he taunted.

"C.O. wants me now," smiled

Haynes. "I'll be seeing you around here for a while, I suppose—that is if you live through one of those hazardous dawn patrols. I'll wake up tomorrow morning at dawn and think about you Reed. Yes, sir, as the first rosy streaks come peaking through my window I'll be feeling sorry for you, Reed. Poor you, up there all by yourself, worrying about how you can manage to get a couple of more Huns so you can stick out your chest and call yourself an ace. You know we're not troubled much with that ace business in a bombing outfit."

Reed watched L.C. Haynes hurry toward the Operations office. When he was sure that he was out of ear-shot he said:

"Elsie, you are a lucky stiff an' don't know it. Or maybe you don't like to be told that you've got a soft snap. Bet you don't even know the difference between a Fokker and a Pfalz."

THE officers of the Spad outfit were settling down to an evening of cards when a British orderly appeared in the door.

"H'im a lookin' for Lieutenant Reed," he said as he stood gazing around the mess of the Yankee outfit.

Somebody pointed to Reed who was sitting in a far corner. He glanced up as the Britisher snapped to attention in front of him and handed him a note.

"From Lieutenant Hell C. Haynes, sir," the orderly said.

Reed grinned, took the note, and opened it. His smile widened as he read:

Dear Reed:

If I recall our conversation of this afternoon correctly, you said that you would like to take a flight in one of our flying cathedrals, as you call them. This is to inform you that I am going over on a little jaunt this evening. If you would care to accompany me, be over here at eleven-

thirty. Meet me by the end ship; the one I pointed out this afternoon.

L. C. Haynes.

P. S. Bring your flying togs.

Reed looked up. His grin broadened into a big smile.

"Tell Lieutenant Hell C. Haynes, that Lieutenant Tommy Reed accepts his kind invitation with a great deal of pleasure."

The orderly saluted and turned away.

"Just a moment," called Reed, "Tell the Lieutenant that I will bring a pack of cards along and perhaps a little picnic lunch."

The orderly saluted again.

Reed glanced at his wrist watch, grinned widely. "Eight-thirty," he murmured. "Got three hours yet. If I don't finish this book by then I'll take it along and finish it under the dash lights."

AT eleven-twenty Reed went to his hut, picked up his fur-lined coveralls, slipped his helmet on and hurried across the field where tiny lights seemed to be playing leap frog under the giant Handleys.

"Bring the cards?" asked Haynes with a grin as he met Reed by the side of the quivering ship.

Reed looked up at the blue tipped flames coming from the exhaust stacks of the throbbing Rolls-Royces. "Where're we heading for?" he asked.

Haynes jerked his thumb over his shoulder toward the east, then turned to take an envelope from the adjutant. Reed noticed that Haynes kept him in the shadows while the captain was near.

"Not supposed to take any outsider up with me," he grinned. "But my forward gunner just came back from the village and was he blotto. You're going in his place; I know you can handle a Lewis if necessary. Don't forget—if anybody should speak to you before we get off,

you're Sergeant Lewis. The rest of the crew know about it. Better get inside; we're buzzing off in a few moments."

"But where to?" demanded Reed. "Don't you fellows know where you're heading or do you just hop off and hope you spot a target for your eggs?"

Haynes smiled. "I hope we find a target tonight," he said. Then he pushed Reed into the quivering fuselage of the big ship. "See you in a second," he called. "Go up front."

Reed walked up the narrow catwalk and found the control cockpit of the giant night-flying bomber.

"What a life," he murmured as he settled down in the seat without being cramped on either side by longerons. "All the room in the world. No stinking blast from a motor almost resting on your knees. And all the world stretched out in front of you without facing the slipstream of a whirring prop. Nice, I'd call it."

Presently L.C. appeared through the narrow door leading to the fuselage. Without a word he dropped into the pilot's seat, buzzed the thundering Rolls-Royces a few moments, then waved his arm over the side.

"Bring that picnic lunch?" he cried, easing the throttles forward on the quadrant. And when Reed shook his head, he continued: "Knew you wouldn't, so I brought one. Just a couple of sandwiches and a bottle of brandy in case we get hungry before we get back."

"Where in hell are we going?" shouted Reed.

Haynes shrugged his shoulders. "Don't worry, we'll be back before dawn. Don't forget I promised to worry about you as the rosy pink of a new day came through the window of my hut. I'll have my batman bring me a cup of tea an' I'll drink a toast to your good health while I lie in bed, comfortable an' warm, while you're up there, cold, shiver-

ing, trying to get yourself a couple of Huns so you can be tagged as one of our intrepid aces."

"Stow it," growled Reed, as the Handley wobbled across the tarmac and lifted slowly into the air. "What I'd like to know is *where are we goin'?*"

Haynes kept on grinning as he settled his attention on lifting the Handley over the trees at the edge of the field. Behind him two other ships jumped into the night, and he swept into a wide circle waiting for them to catch up and get into position. Then he turned and headed East.

AS the line of wavering star shells arced out of the trenches far below them, marking the boundaries of blood-soaked No Man's Land, L.C. reached into the pocket of his flying suit and took out the sealed envelope which the adjutant had given him before the take-off. Holding the wheel steady with a crooked elbow he broke the seal and took out a slip of paper. For a moment he scrutinized the message, and a frown began to pucker the skin at the edge of his helmet.

"There's your answer," he shouted as he handed the slip to Reed. "Sealed orders."

Reed clutched the fluttering strip of paper and leaned toward the light on the dash. His eyes popped open in surprise and consternation as he read the typed lines.

To Lieutenant L. C. Haynes.
Independent Air Force.

You are to proceed to Mannheim. Your objective will be the Chemical Works and the loaded barges along the Rhine. These *must* be destroyed at *all* costs. Bombs are to be dropped from a low altitude to assure their striking and setting fire to factories. Course, on reaching German border, to be set at pilot's own discretion. Duplicates of this order go to pilots of planes L-6457 and L-6431.

(Signed) Col. H. L. Hastings,
Wing Com. 8th Wing. A.I.F.

Reed's lips puckered into an inaudible whistle as he handed the slip back to L.C. "Not kidding me, are you Haynes?" he shouted, all the laughter gone from his voice now.

Haynes shook his head, grinning widely.

"But, L-C," shouted Reed, "Mannheim is a hundred kilometers the other side of the German border."

"I know," answered Haynes. "I've been there before."

Reed sat back, and stared into the star-studded skies. Then he turned to L.C. "You mean that a long distance raid like this is nothing out of the ordinary?"

"That's it," replied Haynes. "We just sit back in our flying cathedrals, toddle over into Germany a couple of hundred miles, drop a load of eggs and then hustle home to bed."

Reed watched a searchlight spring into life and sweep across the skies, trying to pick up the still-climbing Handley. With a touch on the wheel L.C. sent the lumbering crate off on another tack and the light finally gave it up and sputtered into darkness.

Reed found himself trying to watch every twinkling star in the heavens, wondering whether it really was a constellation or the flickering flare of a thousand exhaust stacks.

Suddenly a startled gasp escaped his throat. His body jerked against the back of the seat. He felt as if a load of slugs had crashed through the fabric of the Handley, but when he looked down he saw that it was only L.C.'s hand touching his knee.

"Better get up forward," Haynes shouted. "Apt to be a Fokker nosing in on this show any minute now. Get your guns loaded and keep your eyes peeled."

Reed slipped from his seat and crawled through the narrow tunnel leading to the forward cockpit. For the moment his apprehension was gone as he slipped a double drum on

his twin Lewis guns, swung the mounting a few times, then slumped down on the little folding stool to wait.

And Reed did a lot of thinking as the big Handley lumbered through the night toward Mannheim. Searchlights kept leaping out of the black well of night. Archie batteries began to throw stinking clusters of crashing shells in the path of the big bomber. And for the first time in his career over the lines Reed began to fear those sparkling jewels thrown heavenward by the long-snouted guns hidden in the shadows. This business of sliding through the starry heavens toward an objective far behind the enemy border wasn't all that he had thought it to be.

He crouched low to keep out of the biting stream of wind pouring into the forward cockpit. When he turned and glanced back, it seemed miles to the spot where he could see the dashlights glinting on L.C.'s goggles.

The thin ribbon of the Glan River twinkled far down there in the velvety darkness. The lights of Kaiserslautern blinked off and gave way to more of the hunting rays of light flung upward from mobile searchlight batteries. More anti-aircraft shells vied with the brilliant stars. Once or twice they crackled close, stripping the curtain of night with golden spangles. One shrieking shell tossed a whirring fragment right through the lower wing, missed an engine strut by inches and continued its paean of hate far up in the black vault of the heavens.

Tommy Reed watched the fabric flapping around the jagged hole for a moment and then turned his eyes upward to survey the skies.

"What a blunder I made," he murmured to himself as he pulled himself erect and faced the roar of the wind, with one hand resting on the spade-grip of his Lewis guns. "What

a sap I was to think this job was a cinch. It gets you down, just sitting here in the dark waiting for something to happen, staring into the black all around you, thinking every twinkling star is a Hun exhaust."

Suddenly he heard something thudding against the protruding nose of the Handley. It seemed to be coming from a spot between L.C. and himself.

His mouth seemed to be full of shredded cotton as he whirled. The motors were dying; their steady roar was fading somewhere behind them. Then he saw the fist of L.C. pounding on the cowling. It pointed.

"Now what?" snapped Reed as he grabbed for his guns and swung around to stare ahead, sweeping the skies with anxious eyes for lurking black-crossed crates. But he could see nothing. Then the pounding sounded again. Tommy kept his hold on the guns and turned to L.C.

"The Rhine!" L.C. was shouting as he pointed dead ahead. "Soon be there."

THE motors broke out again, drowning out all sound save the whine of the wind through the flying wires.

Tommy Reed brushed his arm across his forehead and looked toward the sinister shadows of the east. There he saw a ribbon of gleaming white, cutting the shadows, running north and south as far as the eye could see. He took a deep breath.

He tried to whistle but his lips seemed dry. He bit them to hold them still.

The Rhine grew broader. The black blotch of Ludwigshafen passed under the bobbing trucks of the Handley. The sky suddenly became alive with long slithering arms of silver, which crossed and criss-crossed in their search for the foe coming out of the west.

And through the arching lights Reed caught a glimpse of another river joining the long tortuous course of the Rhine. "The Neckar," he muttered. "We're there. If I remember my maps, Mannheim is at the junction of the Rhine and the Neckar. All hell's gonna be popping in a few minutes. An' to think that I could be back there in my own little hut, sound asleep, instead of standing here watching for a Hun to spear me with a bunch of hot slugs. Boy, I shot off the old trap once too often today!"

The anti-aircraft batteries began to growl far below. Reed could see their lightninglike jabs against the curtain of black shielding the earth. He found himself drawing his head low on his shoulder to get it below the edge of the cowling, unmindful of the fact that one single sliver of hurtling steel would cut fabric and longerons like a knife going through a hot potato.

Now the gleaming ribbon of the Rhine was directly underneath, reflecting the long sweeping arms of the searchlights in its twisting depths. On the further shore was a big black shadow, sprawled out against the earth, and Reed knew that they had reached their objective, or almost reached it.

SWEEPING in on all sides, funneling down toward the big Handley, were long lines of sparkling fire. Tracer!

Reed yanked his guns around, bringing them to bear on a fleeting shadow which seemed to be floating dead ahead. He saw his tracer skitter through the dark, and then the shadow was gone like a wraith in a storm. And it was storming—a steady stream of blistering lead poured across the Handley. The thunder of guns dimmed the steady beat of the Rolls-Royces. The patter of slugs eating their way through

fabric sent a chill through Reed's body.

"At all costs," he murmured, recalling the underlined words in the sealed orders for the raid. "At all costs."

But despite the trepidation gripping his heart, Reed stood up and faced the storm, answering the challenge of Spandaus on all sides, aiming at flickering exhaust stacks curling through the air in front of him. Behind him, along the quivering fuselage, he could here the rattle of the Lewis guns from the rear cockpit.

And in between, L.C. sat still staring straight ahead, his gloved hand resting on the throttle knobs.

As the leading edge of the lower wing cut into the sparkling shadows on the far bank of the Rhine, the nose of the Handley went down. The Fokkers, tearing madly through the heavens, lost sight of the big ship for the moment as the exhaust stacks of the Handley began to cool.

Down and down the giant bomber wended its way through the invisible path in the shadows. Lower and lower it drifted, slipping by skillful turns from light to light, slipping away into the shadows again before the anti-aircraft rangers could hold her in their sights.

Reed stood braced in the slanting cockpit. Forgotten now was the fear which had torn at his heart. His eyes burned with the excitement of battle as he turned loose another withering cluster of fire at a shadow coming up at them from below. He saw his tracer belt right into the coffin nose, saw the ship heel over and fall through the blinding rays of a wavering beam.

"Got that one," he snarled, then turned and glanced back toward the seemingly imperturbable L.C. "Talk about chittlin's, that boy's got 'em!"

A blazing streak of fire passed between Reed and Haynes. Reed

ducked and came up with his guns blazing. A shower of sparks trailed through the air and he knew that his aim had been good. A grin crossed his face as he recalled L.C.'s ragging him about getting a couple more Huns in order to be called an Ace. Then he swung his guns around to drive off a vicious charge from in front and above.

When he took his eyes from the shadows above for a moment and glanced over the side his heart clicked against his ribs. He was looking right down into the faintly smoking mouths of the chimneys of the sprawling chemical works along the banks of the Rhine. And stretching off to the East he could see the regularity of the streets sweeping back from the dike protecting the city.

"And are we low!" he murmured. "A little more and we'll be perching right on top one of those chimneys like a stork. His nibs, the wing commander, couldn't kick about that. Good Lord, what's that?"

HIS face was ashen as he lifted it toward the heavens. A little to the left, a ghastly torch was lighting the skies. It flared up, shedding its eerie gleam out over the city of Mannheim. One of the Handley's had got it. He felt sick as he watched the giant ship, a mass of ruddy flames, curve through the sky like a comet and fall some distance off on the cool suburbs, throwing a golden fountain of sparks upward to mark the spot of its final landing.

Reed felt the ship lift under his feet as it banked over the factories. Machine-gun slugs, one pounders, and flaming onions made the air around the Handley a man-made hell. From somewhere above, Reed could hear the angry chatter of Lewis guns snarling back at Spandaus as the Huns tried to keep the other Handley from reaching the objective.

Then the ship really lifted. To Reed it felt as if some Gargantuan fist had grabbed at the big biplane, yanking it skyward. The earth seemed to blossom with great angry blotches of red as the bombs from the Handley racks cut through the serrated roof of the chemical factories below.

"A direct hit," yelled Reed as he swung his guns to plaster the air around a diving Fokker. "But I missed *my* target."

The Handley quivered again as another load of eggs slid from the racks and went screaming toward the earth. This time they caught a long snakey line of barges which a snorting tug was trying to haul away from the threatened docks. They let go with an ear-splitting roar. The air mushroomed around the Handley and drove it still higher on wings which groaned under the impact. Again, L.C. lifted his hand. Again a trio of bombs slid from the dark belly of the big plane and bored their way into the darkened factory.

Flames were now towering to the heavens, turning black night into eerie, golden day. Tiny dark figures dashed madly about the now brightly lighted alleys between the doomed building. Searchlight after searchlight was extinguished by the mounting flames.

But still L.C. held his ship over the spot, raising and lowering his arm like the leader of an orchestra. And the tune pounded out by his instruments rose to a crescendo, with a chorus from hell adding to the tumult.

Reed fired blindly now. Ships were pouring in on them out of the rising columns of flame and smoke. He caught a glimpse of the other Handley going down. Its flight was erratic, but it continued on its course and soon was drifting over the flaming area below. And Reed, by the light of the burning buildings could

see the props were stopped. He held his breath and watched. The flames licked upward, sometimes they seemed to catch at the riddled fabric.

Then the ship seemed to take a new lease on life. The bombs were rattling from the racks, lightening the crate for a moment, increasing its gliding angle just enough for it to float over the gleaming Rhine which had turned from silver to red gold. It hit with a splash, turned over and began to sink. Tiny dots thrashed the water around the battered ship.

"At all costs!" Reed muttered. "At all costs! Rotten words. I never want to see them again."

SOMEBODY slapped him on the shoulder. He swung around. There was nobody there. His shoulder felt heavy and when he glanced down at his flying suit he saw a red stain spreading over the weatherbeaten fabric.

"Drilled me," he muttered. Then over his top wing he saw a Fokker curling around for another dive. He felt as if a hot poker were being run through his flesh as he swung his mounting around and grabbed for the triggers.

His guns jumped, but he leaned against them and held them steady.

He stood up finally and stared at a line of fire dancing on the cowling. He swung savagely to answer the

challenge. His glassy eyes peered at the sights faintly visible along the barrels which seemed miles long. His finger pressed the triggers. The guns answered and sent stabs of lightning through his body, but he saw a ball of orange grow before his eyes. "Somebody else made a blunder," he laughed, swinging his guns to bear on another dodging shadow. Then the target was gone.

Reed stood up, tore his helmet from his sweating head and tossed it over the side, goggles and all. The icy blast revived him just in time to allow him to nail another Fokker coming up at them from an angle. He felt the ship rock as L.C. banked to allow him an easy shot. Then he looked toward the pilot and grinned.

"Wipe your mouth, Elsie," he shouted.

But L.C. continued to tool the ship away from the holocaust despite the fact that a trickle of blood joined chin and mouth.

Fokkers continued to come out of the shadows as the Handley crept home. Reed emptied drum after drum at the fleeting shadows and then threw the drums at the whirling props with a curse on his blood-flecked lips. "Damn the cost!" he shouted crazily as he watched the containers float off alongside the Handley.

The rest was a hazy nightmare to Reed. He remembered firing until

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College Humor

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CENTS

THE BEST COMEDY IN AMERICA.

FICTION • SATIRE • CARTOONS

ON SALE EVERYWHERE!

his ammunition was gone. He remembered one of the motors cutting out, but he did not know that it was because he had slashed a prop to splinters with a blindly fired burst. There were times when he amused himself by watching the fluttering rags of fabric along the fuselage of the battered Handley.

But he did not remember shouting to L.C., continually commanding him to wipe his mouth. He didn't remember slumping to his knees, slipping on the bloody floorboards of the forward cockpit. He didn't remember kneeling there and staring back at L.C., who looked straight ahead, watching for the mounting flares of No Man's Land.

NOR did he remember the splintering crash of wood; the grind of metal; the shriek of trapped men, and then the awful silence as the Handley wiped off its giant undercarriage in a yawning shell hole behind the American lines. Nor did he recall babbling about costs and blunders while doughboys lifted him gently from the twisted wreckage of the big bomber.

Tommy Reed did not open his eyes until the first pink streaks of dawn were filtering through the windows of the base hospital. He blinked and stared at something towering in front of him, and by the dim light he finally made it out to be his leg which seemed to be trying to touch the ceiling under the support of a maze of wires and pulleys.

He tried to turn, but something was packed around his right shoulder, something that seemed to press right through the hot flesh. Then he noticed that his arm could not be moved. It seemed to be imprisoned in a mass of white. He felt better when he discovered that he could wiggle his fingers.

Then from somewhere out of the shadows a voice was calling.

"Tommy," it came from what seemed an awful distance. "Tommy, are you all right?"

Reed turned. He blinked his eyes, stared. "L—C, are you all right?" he called finally.

L.C. grinned despite the bandage around his chin. He motioned with a bandaged arm toward the deepening pink of the dawn. "I said I'd be worryin' about you at dawn, Tommy. Remember?" He stirred under the white sheets. "An' believe me, I've been worryin'. Let you in for an awful load of grief, didn't I?"

"Forget it," Reed grinned, then winced as a twinge went through his shoulder. "It was my blunder."

L.C. started to say something, but the nurse came in and stuck a thermometer in his mouth. He watched her treat Tommy to a dose of the glass and waited. When she was gone he looked over at Reed.

"You're a stout fella, Tommy," he said slowly. "We could use more like you in the Independent Air Force. Maybe I could wangle you a transfer to the night bombers. How about it?"

Tommy Reed jerked his head around regardless of how much it hurt his shoulder. "I made one blunder, L—C," he said, making sure to space the initials. "But I'm not making it again."

"What do you mean?" asked Reed. "You said you always wanted to fly a big job."

"That was my blunder," snorted Reed. "I'm sticking to Spads. When I get in a jam I don't want to be bothered yanking one of those big Handleys around with me. I want something that can step. No, sir, Elsie, one blunder is enough!"

And neither of them seemed to notice the fact that Reed ran the L.C. together, making Elsie out of it. They just lay there, grinning at one another—a friendly, understanding grin.

Mountain Lion Attacks Camp

Flashlight is Mightier than the Gun, says Arizona Woman



"I wakened to the ominous snarling wolf-growl of Fritz, our German police dog," writes Mrs. Corinne Jennings of San Carlos, Arizona.

"As I lay there in our tent, too petrified with terror to make a move, something brushed against the canvas wall beside me. Then I screamed and the thing made off with Fritz after it.

"My husband and I leapt from our cots and joined the chase. There wasn't a gun in camp at that time, so Buck took the flashlight.

"Following Fritz's howls of rage to a tall pine, the flashlight pointed out a huge mountain lion snarling down from the upper branches. He stopped as the light struck him and cowered in fear, finally making a desperate leap for the ground and crashing off through the underbrush like a young elephant.

"I for one was mighty thankful we had used the power of those fresh DATED 'Eveready' batteries on our visitor, in-

stead of powder and shot. While a dead mountain lion is harmless, a wounded one is murderous company.

"Out here in the wilderness batteries that 'always work' are mighty important, so you can be sure we get 'Eveready' batteries and look for that DATE-LINE.

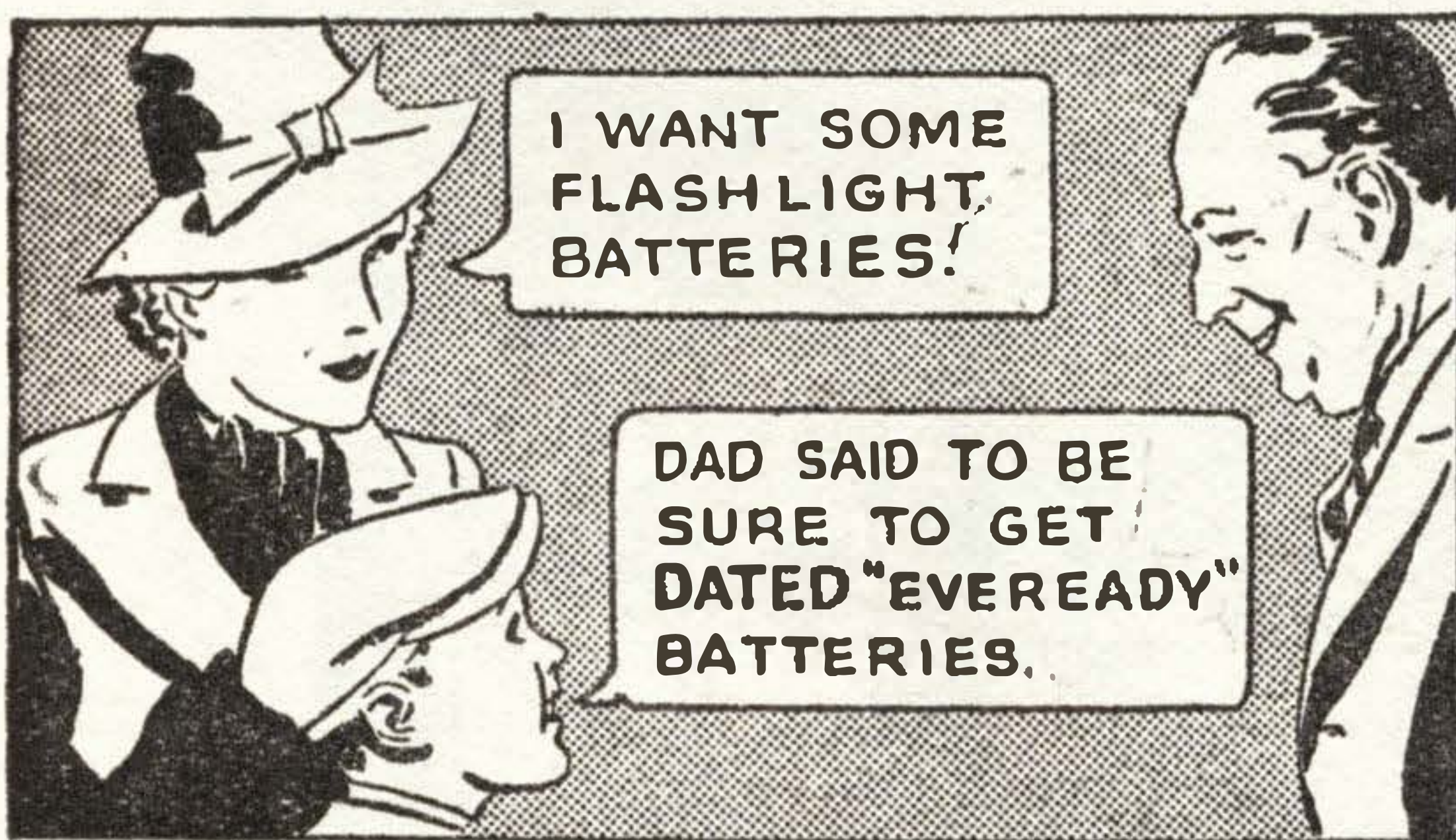
(Signed) Mrs. Corinne Jennings



"EVEREADY" BATTERIES ARE FRESH BATTERIES

The Date-Line Guarantees Freshness

NATIONAL CARBON CO., Inc.
30 East 42nd St., New York, N. Y.



BORN *to* FLY

Deacon Smith Follows a Ghostly Shadow Through Fog-Laden Skies While Death and Disaster Ride Hard on His Trail!

A Complete Novelette

By **GEORGE BRUCE**

Author of "Sky Bondage," "The Trail of Glory," etc.

CHAPTER I

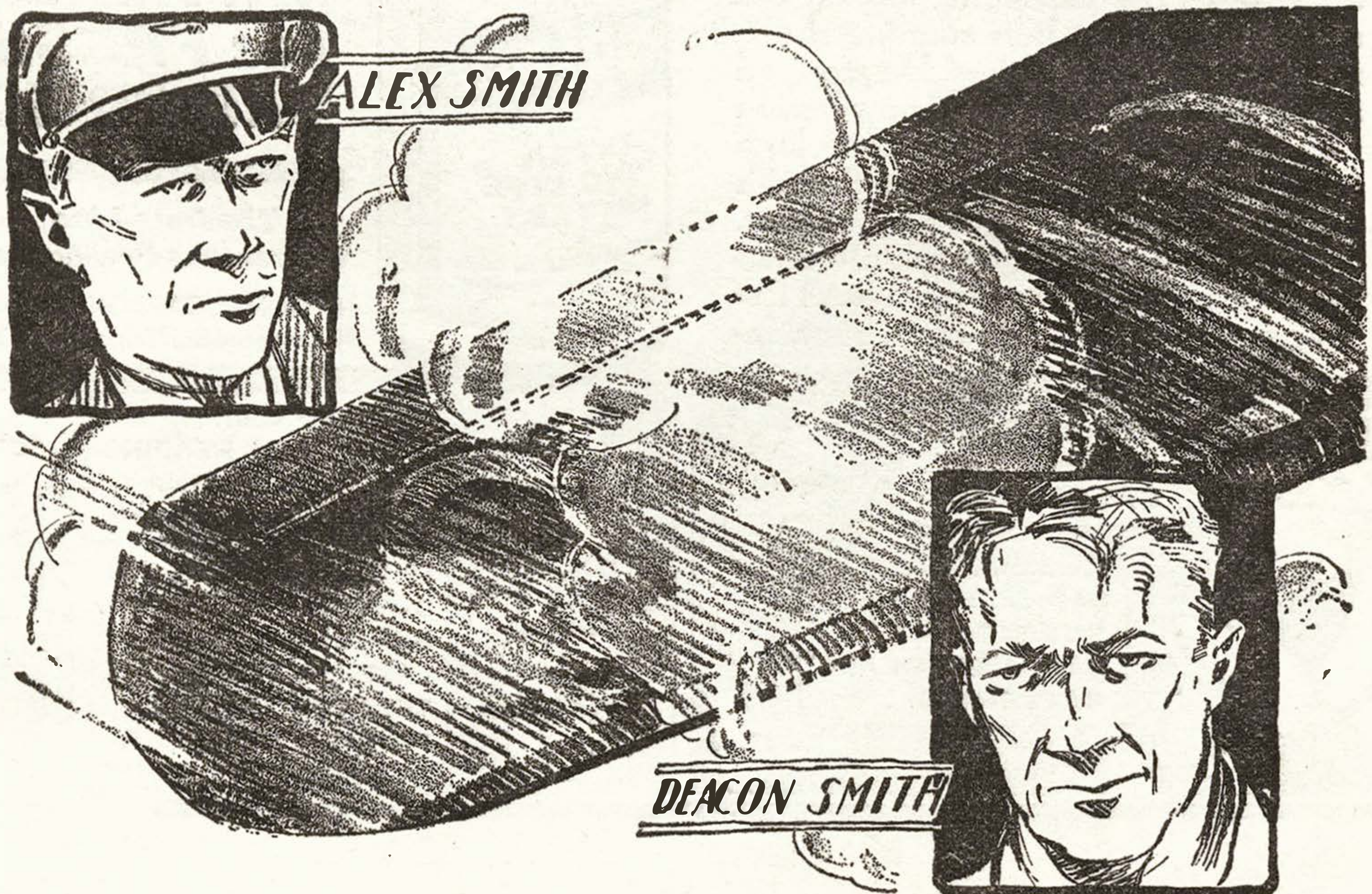
1917

EVEN after he had identified the fitting shadows on the northern horizon as Pfalz fighters, Deacon Smith continued to fly along in a queer sort of lethargy. This morning the fiercely combatant spirit was gone out of him. This morning he could see nothing but the blue sky overhead, with little fleecy clouds floating at the twenty

thousand foot level. He could feel nothing but the cleanness of the air about him, pushed into his face by the force of the whirling prop in front of his Nieuport.

He sat there in that tiny cockpit, his eyes watching the unrolling universe under his wings.

The droning roar of the Clerget in front of his face was far distant that morning. The little whining of the struts and wires was remote, existed only as muted symphonic





He hung on grimly near the right wheel

music, an accompaniment to the things he thought and felt.

There were lines in Deacon Smith's face. Lines, graven there through the years. Lines graven by the burning of three thousand air hours, of anxiety and pain and daring. Lines about the corners of his mouth, and at the corners of his eyes, as if from constant peering and from constantly gritting his teeth.

It was not until one looked at Deacon Smith's eyes that one real-

ized that he was young, and that the lines were the lines of synthetic age. For the grey-blue eyes behind the French goggles were young.

He was tall; his shoulders came over the sides of the cockpit and he sat with a habitual hunch over the controls, his knees drawn up almost to his chest. And he handled the Nieuport, even unconsciously, with an expertness and an ease which made him a part of the ship.

The Pfalz fighters grew wings and

fuselages. They grew into an echelon. The distant droning of the B.M.W.s in the light blue noses drifted down through space, sounded like a flight of angry hornets over the droning of the Clerget.

And Deacon Smith looked at them, almost absently. His hands were still lax on the stick and he made no move toward the cocking handles of his twin machine-guns. His mind was not completely on the approaching enemy.

THAT morning a motorcycle rider, grinning, had dismounted in front of the Operations office of the 7th Squadron. His face was plastered with mud, and his legs were stiff from riding. He dug into the saddle bags flung over the rear of his mount, came up with an official telegram form, handed it to the Deacon.

"Hi, ya, Pop?" the rider had saluted, still grinning and completely unimpressed with the fact that, officially, Deacon Smith was Major Alexander Smith, U.S.A. and in command of the 7th Squadron. To the A.E.F. Major Smith was "Deacon" Smith. He had never been anything else; he never would be anything else.

Smith's eyes had narrowed for one instant as he looked at the form in the rider's hand. His hands shook a little as he ripped open the envelope. Then the tense expression on his long, cavernous face eased, and a grin played about the corners of his mouth.

The official message blank read:

PADUCAH KENTUCKY VIA CO COMMUNICATIONS WASH DC VIA OFFICIAL CHANNELS TO COAEF FRANCE TO MAJOR ALEXANDER SMITH CO7PS AS AEF MESSAGE BEGINS ALEXANDER SMITH JUNIOR BORN SEVEN ACK EMMA MAY FIVE HERE STOP MOTHER AND CHILD IN PERFECT CONDITION STOP BOTH SEND LOVE STOP HE HAS BLUE EYES COMMA NO

HAIR AND LONG LEGS STOP WITH TEETH WOULD LOOK LIKE FATHER STOP MESSAGE ENDS
COMMU WASH DC
810A

Several curious pilots gathered about the rider and the major. They glanced at the Deacon's face.

"Promoted to Major General?"

"Are we transferred to Paris?"

"War over?"

And the Deacon, a foolish look on his face, his eyes glistening and looking over a very far horizon, stood mute, the message blank in his hands.

"Ain't you guys ever been nowhere?" asked the motorcycle cowboy. "The Deacon is a father. Don't nobody recognize that foolish look?"

"A what?" exploded a voice.

"A father!" said another voice reverently.

"Hell, I didn't even know the Deacon was married."

"That makes the major a free spender. It's all on him. Cripes! What a hell of a war! We rate free cigars and there isn't a hunk of manila rope this side of Paris."

"But there's a couple of bottles of that Hennessy still left for a rainy day."

THE Deacon was caught up in the middle of a churning mass of legs and pummeling hands and arms and borne in triumph toward the mess shack, the motorcycle rider bringing up the rear of the pack.

And all the while, in all the bedlam and shouting and yelling, the Deacon had sat there, that queer, far-away look in his eyes, that soft smile around the corners of his mouth, his strong, awkward, long-fingered hands holding the telegram between his knees.

Later he had gone out to fly. He was that kind of a commander. He flew his turn on the board. Perhaps that was why he would never be

anything but the "Deacon" to the A.E.F.

Sitting there, alone, in the element he loved, with the earth eight thousand feet down, watching the enemy Pfalz flight approach, the Deacon, a queer hunger burning in his belly, was dreaming of the past. Once again he was pacing a deck and looking toward the western horizon for the sight of land—the land he had left four years before, and to which he was returning. For the United States had declared itself to be at war, at last, with an enemy the Deacon had been fighting for three years.

They had been sending the Deacon back to tell his own countrymen something about that enemy; to make speeches, to act as a consultant. The Deacon was going back to America with a row of ribbons on his chest and dressed in the uniform of a French Major of Aviation.

It was like stepping ashore in a fairyland that arrival in New York. He had almost forgotten what New York was like, what it looked like. He felt like a visitor from another planet, after months of billets at the front in France under the constant sound of the low thunder of rumbling, angry guns, forever restless, forever spitting flaming venom at blank horizons. Different from the pulverized, fire-eaten, concussion-devastated villages of France.

He was a little frightened of New York. But he made the speeches anyway.

And then he met Muriel.

He was remembering Muriel's face as he had seen it for the first time, when the leader of the Pfalz echelon turned over on his back and came screaming down to the attack. He was remembering how blue were her eyes and how soft her hand, as he pulled back on the cocking handles and mechanically pumped pressure behind the c.c. gear and glanced at

the pressure gauge on the instrument board.

A RATTLESNAKE struck. The sound of the dry rasping rattles gathered about the speeding Nieuport. Deacon Smith knew that sound too well—the Jerry leader smacking a burst at point blank range from a pair of Spandaus.

Standing on his head, going into a roll, the Deacon remembered something that had always seemed lost in a haze. He and Muriel, walking hand in hand, saying things to each other. Deacon Smith suddenly realizing that he would never be lonely again, that she belonged to him for always.

Above the Deacon, ship after ship in the enemy echelon went over on its back, came down, screaming angrily. And the space about the Nieuport was stiff and jagged with wave after wave of flying steel. Twisting, skidding, zooming, his wide shoulders hunched far forward in the seat, he heard the clatter and chattering of his own Vickers answering, felt the brushing of the wings of the Angel of Death as he whipped close to enemy wings and tail sections.

The metal in front of his face was hot. The Clerget was throwing a spray of castor oil, stinking, scalding, in his face. The stuff ran over his goggles, made vision a saffron hued monstrosity.

His thoughts clung tenaciously to the past.

Three months? It had seemed like three minutes or three eternities, those three months that had been filled with her, impregnated with the essence of her. And then came the message:

WAR DEPT OFFICIAL CO SC AS
WASH DC TO MAJOR ALEXANDER
SMITH PADUCAH KY MESSAGE
BEGINS TRANSFER OF SUBJECT
OFFICER TO SC AS USA COMPLETE
STOP THIS TELEGRAPHIC ORDER

ASSIGNS SUBJECT OFFICER COMMAND SEVENTH PURSUIT SQUADRON SC AS AEF FORMING TOURS FRANCE STOP SUBJECT OFFICER WILL REPORT TO CO PORT OF EMBARKATION FOR FORMAL ORDERS AND WILL PROCEED TO COMMAND AT EARLIEST PRACTICABLE MOMENT STOP THIS MESSAGE TO BE CONSIDERED AUTHORITY FOR FURNISHING OF NECESSARY TRANSPORTATION AND SUBSISTENCE TO SUBJECT OFFICER STOP THIS TRAVEL NECESSARY IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE STOP MESSAGE ENDS.

It was a strange sort of good-by. The visitor from another planet going back to his world. Muriel, standing there looking up at him, a little smile on her mouth, her eyes glowing, her hand resting on his arm.

Then she was standing on a dock, waving her hand, and he was pressing against the rail of a boat, looking at her face, wondering why he couldn't breathe.

A black shadow cut in under him, coming up fast under his tail. There was the stuttering rip of Spandaus again, the splintering of wood and linen along the fuselage of the Nieuport—gouged streaks in the silver grey of the gallant little ship. Gallant little ship, spinning crazily in the vortex formed of eleven Pfalz fighters. The Pfalzes, like blue sharks in the maelstrom, avid, hungry, fierce with the desire to tear this silver thing to bits—to rend it, devour it.

AND Deacon Smith, cool, unhurried, riding his Nieuport, his long thumb flicking against the trips, driving deadly short bursts at those ravaging shapes which were rocketing about him.

France again, and men in khaki uniform thronging the docks and the roads and the sidewalks and the buildings, and the mud and squalor of Tours. Bewildered, anxious-eyed young men with brand new wings,

looking dubiously at airplanes such as they had never seen before.

And Deacon Smith walking into their midst, talking to them, grinning at them, refusing to be hurried or stampeded by the frothing excitement on the field. Listening, with the rest of them, to the excited tales of an onrushing enemy crushing out every vestige of opposition along a fifty mile front, thundering toward Paris and victory.

Those young men had looked at him with distressed eyes. And the Deacon said: "Look, youngsters, our job is to learn how to fly these Nieuports. Stopping that enemy on the ground is someone else's job right now. Don't worry, those fellows up there will take care of the job they have to do until they're relieved. That job will be our worry when it becomes our job. Until then, we'll just think of learning to fly and forget Hindenberg's line. Hell, it's just another sign of spring, like the first robin, that push. Let's start herding Nieuports around. There'll be plenty of the Boche left for you guys when we get up there."

Then the 7th, a finished unit, taking wing, right off the field, flying to its base, relieving a French outfit that was hardly more than a flying flock of splinters and patches.

The 7th, digging in. The 7th being given a tough first assignment merely because the Deacon had worked a miracle with his youngsters and had transformed them into a veteran organization before they had ever learned to know the sound of a machine-gun burst through a wing, or to pick out an enemy motor by sound.

Up there at the front, Muriel became like the remembered dream of a mortal who has dared, even in a dream, to lift his eyes to one of God's creatures, an angel. She was a shining light. She was an ideal. She was a dream. There were times

when the Deacon wondered if she really had existed.

The Pfalzes were trying to box him now. There was a hot flying pilot riding the top wing of the Nieuport, almost rolling wheels on the wing surfacing. There was another Pfalz under him, holding him from diving out of a line of fire. There were little, fast flying fighters right and left, edging in toward the Nieuport, ready to enfilade.

The Deacon grinned. He had been boxed before. A deadly little maneuver, the box, when one side had ships to throw away.

THE Nieuport veered to the right suddenly, charged headlong at the ship flying wing-to-wing with it. The Pfalz skidded to give the Nieuport room, to escape collision. The fighter on the left flicked inward with a rush, fired a burst at pointblank range. The burst snapped through the center section of the Nieuport but the Deacon didn't hear it. He was pushing the Clerget up against the belly of the Pfalz on his right.

He waited, his eyes narrowed, his mouth grinning. He caught the wing hinge pin of the Pfalz's left wing on the cross hairs of his sight. His thumb jammed down on the trips. The fragile Nieuport bucked with the recoil of the twin Vickers; wicked spouts of orange-green flame spat from the gun muzzles.

There was a black, gaping hole on the surfacing of the Pfalz. Something sawed desperately to be free. Then something broke into splinters and the whole left wing of the fighter ripped itself away from the fuselage. It hung for a moment, ghastly wreckage, restrained by the wires. Then the fitting wrenched loose, the severed wing blew crazily away, and the Pfalz was spinning grotesquely, over and over, the pilot tossing around in the seat, clinging to the crash pads with his hands.

After a moment a tiny squirt of fire came from the bottom of the Pfalz's tanks. It licked voraciously at the doped linen, ran upward toward the face of the pilot.

Deacon Smith grinned a little. A voice in his chest, a happy voice was saying, over and over: "Gee! Imagine—a kid, my kid, with blue eyes. And me flying around like this and I've never even seen it!"

The Jerry leader swarmed in under Deacon Smith's tail. His Pfalz nosed upward with a rush. A burst combed the belly of the Nieuport. A searing shock ran up Deacon Smith's leg, through his belly, into his brain. Then the pain went away and the leg was numb.

His hand batted down on the controls of the Nieuport. His eyes fixed themselves on the outline of that Jerry leader. He forgot the remaining Pfalzes swarming about him. He deliberately reached down, pumped up the pressure in the tanks and hit the c.c. pump a few licks to be sure it was charged. His hand reached up, pulled the throttle to be sure it was open all the way, then he kicked hard on the rudder to the right and threw the stick to the left and forward.

The wires of the Nieuport screamed with the pressure of the slip. It went down two hundred feet, danced out from under the Pfalzes. Deacon whipped the controls over until he was turning in a dizzy right vertical, plummeted out of it into a headlong dive which bowed the wings of the Nieuport.

THEN the black crosses on the blue wings of the Pfalz leader came into his sights. He jumped on them, overhauled them with one leap, came up behind them, so loose that it seemed he would cut the empenage off the Pfalz with the spinning blades of his own prop.

Twenty feet behind the Pfalz he

eased the Nieuport's nose up a little. His thumb jammed down on the trips.

The Jerry leader, startled, jerked his head around, caught a glimpse of the lone ship on his tail with the red-white-and-blue cocardes. He died in the middle of slamming his controls to the right. The wave of steel from those Vickers' muzzles snapped and crackled into the tiny cockpit of his ship. His body jerked and leaped convulsively while the Deacon held his thumb on the trips.

When the rivet-hammer banging of the Vickers stopped, the Jerry leader's head fell forward on the crash pad, as if suddenly weary, and the Pfalz, sensing its freedom, flew drunkenly for an instant, then put its nose down, and still under full throttle, rocketed for the earth, six thousand feet below. The streamer on its struts stood out like multi-colored iron as it fell.

Three thousand feet down it broke asunder with crazy uncontrolled speed as it nosed upward, driven by some crazy impulse of the free controls. It fell in bits, drifting down through the sky, the fuselage and the motor going like a torpedo driven by incredible force.

Like a silver bullet the Nieuport hurled itself into the midst of the other Pfalzes. It drove, seemed bent on suicide. The enemy pilots spread out, gave way before its rush. The clattering of the machine-guns in the Nieuport sounded over the intermingled scream of all the motors.

Then the silver bullet ripped out of the center of the Pfalz pack, diving earthward in a long slant, with Major Smith grinning a little and looking back at the fuming enemy.

He kept the Clerget boiling until he was clear of any threat of pursuit.

"Can't take chances," he told himself seriously, "not now—with the little fella at home. Scare the

Heinies a little, make 'em think I'm going to raise hell, then get out. I ain't selfish anyway."

He completely forgot about the wounded leg until he fell on his face after he landed and tried to climb out of the cockpit. He looked at the crusted blood on his riding pants, and watched as the boot was cut away from the leg.

They took him to the base hospital. He never knew that the surgeons shook their heads over that leg, pursed lips, and glanced at each other. He never knew that a very young surgeon had cried bitterly to his more experienced colleagues: "You guys gimme a pain. Every time a man comes in here with something like this you shake your domes and get out the saws. Listen, Deacon Smith walked into this war on two legs and did a whale of a job of work! We're not going to reward him by sending him out of the damn war on one leg. I think that leg can be saved and I'm going to have a crack at it!"

So he had a crack at it—and saved it.

THE Deacon was on his back, fighting that leg, when he got the letter from Muriel. He read it, over and over:

Darling:

I know I shouldn't worry you, because you have so much more to think about than any one person in the world. But the doctors say that I am going away—for a long, long time—and I just couldn't go without saying good-by to you—somehow.

I'm looking at your son and seeing you, and I'm so happy, because I can give him to you, and so proud because he is so much like you. Take good care of him, darling, and someday when the two of you are together, up there, in the far places into which a little mother could never penetrate, maybe he'll tell you all the things I've whispered to him since we were together. Remember, he was born with his head in the clouds—the clouds of our own dreams. His feet are not fitted to the contours of the earth. He was born to fly.

Good-by, for now. When you hear
wings in the night, or about you when you
fly—it will be me—flying beside you,
Always,

Muriel.

When daylight came—daylight of the morning after that letter arrived—a nurse looked anxiously at the Deacon's face, felt the wetness of his pillow, felt his forehead, looked at his eyes, shook her head.

For Major Smith had no temperature. And the wetness was not the wetness of pain-sweat.

CHAPTER II

1937



DEACON SMITH sat in an easy chair in the living room of the little house he called home—a little house within sight of the Washington Airport. There was a radio on the table in

front of him and the illuminated dial glowed with a greenish, subdued phosphorescent color in the near-darkness of the room. The dial was set for short wave. Over the pointer was the word AIRCRAFT.

The flickering of the fire in the open fireplace threw weird shadows over the walls, touched the trophies which had fallen to Major Alexander Smith—the rudder of a Pfalz fighter with number and Maltese Cross still intact, the tachometer of an early day Taube, the splintered propeller of an Aviatik, the number of a Gotha bomber, the helmet of the leader of a famous enemy flying circus—dozens of trophies, hung about the walls, resting on tables. Pictures of queer looking planes and queerer looking pilots.

There was more grey in Deacon Smith's hair. There was one wedge-shaped patch of snow white running back from his right temple, the point of the wedge at the hair line, the

base of the wedge at the crown of his skull. Startling contrast in that black head—black, excepting for a sprinkling of grey.

There were more lines in the Deacon's face, graven more deeply, and the flesh was tougher and even more sun and wind burned. But the grey-blue eyes still peered out from under the black bushy brows with a fierce, alert eagerness, and there was the suggestion of seething physical activity in the lean, steel sinewed body.

Now and then Major Smith got up from his chair—got up with an effort, for he had to sit with his right leg thrust out stiffly in front of him. When he walked he swung the leg like a club because the knee was stiff. It had been stiff for twenty years, but it did little to hamper his movements. When the Deacon got up from his chair, he paced the floor, scowled, looked out the window, growled in his throat.

And when he growled he glared at Stumpy Tomkins, and Stumpy, his face gnarled and drawn up like a gargoyle, his eyes narrow slits as if from too much peering into the light of the sun, sat hunched up in his chair, his feet tucked under his hams, like a little Buddha, and grinned.

A constant stream of static poured out of the loud speaker of the radio. It was like a rough file being pulled across thin metal. It tortured nerves to listen to the monotonous scratching and screeching. Now and then a voice, almost lost in the static, came out of the speaker—distorted, distant, the voice of a detached spirit communicating with the earth.

"Trip Nine calling Newark. Trip Nine calling Newark."

A second detached voice: "Go ahead Nine."

"Camden—two thousand—instruments—temperature sixteen—wind northeast—ice."

"Okay Nine."

"Newark weather, please."

"Reporting Newark weather: ceiling two hundred feet, visibility on the ground half a mile, temperature fourteen, wind on the ground north-east, twenty-five miles; five hundred feet, northeast, twenty-five miles; thousand feet, northeast, twenty-five miles; two thousand, northeast, thirty-five miles."

A silence with the crackling static raging, then: "Add Newark weather—snow beginning to fall."

"Isn't that lovely?"

"Ducky—and how are your folks?"

"Nine off."

"Newark off."

DEACON SMITH, turning away from the radio, growling in his throat. "A couple of comedians! Gagging about zero-zero, ice on the wings, snow, and a few minor things like that with a dozen or so passengers sitting behind him looking out at nothing. Those guys have a fine sense of humor!"

"Flying is different nowadays, Skipper," Stumpy Tomkins' voice, a hoarse whisper, came out of the center of his round, seamed face, his little eyes grinning. "Those transport cowboys don't worry about the weather. They fly right through it or around it — they'd rather go through it, breaks up the monotony."

"They can have it—"

"They've got it," Stumpy broke in.

More pacing up and down the room, that stiff leg thumping on the floor.

"You remind me of a guy about to become a father," grinned Stumpy. "Hell, Skipper, you're as nervous as a cat. Relax! Relax! That kid will come booming through with that sardine can and lay it down out there without even a bump. He's got what it takes."

"It's a hell of a night for any-

body to move over to the left hand seat," growled the Deacon. "It's a hell of a night for anybody to be running passengers between Newark and Washington. A kid, hardly dry behind the ears yet, flying a hundred thousand dollars worth of airplane in this kind of weather!"

Stumpy's grin grew from ear to ear. It split the center of his gargoye mug, threatened to swallow the lobes of his ears.

"How old was you when they first started shoveling you out of the bamboo poles and haywire on them Wright boxkites you barged around in?" There was malice in his voice.

"What the hell has that got to do with it?" demanded the Deacon. "In those days a guy had to go in for it young. It was a young man's game."

"It's the same game today, only they start younger," jibed Stumpy. "Younger and with a lot more safety gadgets."

The Deacon stood at the window and looked out over the expanse of the Washington Airport. The yellow glow of the lights was being snuffed out by swirling eddies of thick fog. The wind, howling, swept under the eaves of the little house, screeched like rioting banshees, ripped the fog to shreds.

Now and then an automobile headlamp probed cautiously along the road—two eyes, without body, coming out of nowhere, going into nothing—lights on the highway which cut through the end of the flying field.

Boundary markers were dim, indistinct smears in the white sea of blindness. The red lamps on the radio antenna, the top of the control tower, and the bridge across the Potomac were throttled, dying of suffocation.

And the roaring of the static continued mercilessly out of the radio speaker.

Deacon Smith lowered his body slowly down into the overstuffed depths of his chair and scowled at the leaping flame in the fireplace. There was a mirror over the fireplace. It slanted downward, reflected his image in the aura of the soft light of the dancing flame.

The Deacon drew a breath and looked at his own picture from under lowered lids. He felt suddenly old. Maybe it was because of the little pulsing pain in that game leg. Maybe it was because of the splash of silver in his hair or the seamed face. Maybe it was because he felt a sudden sense of isolation, of detachment from everything which had meant life to him.

Sitting here in a chair, with a radio and a fireplace. And up north there, eighty minutes away by air, his kid was getting ready to maul a big Douglas transport through weather that would have scared hell out of his old man the best day his old man ever flew.

His kid!

The words bobbed and bounced over and over inside the Deacon's head. Why, it was impossible! That little tow-headed monkey—the little monkey who was just beginning to talk when Deacon Smith limped down the gangway from France. Where were the days and the months and the years? His kid flying transport in a blue uniform with silver wings and his cap cocked over on one side of his head, his grey-blue eyes snapping under his black brows—like his old man's eyes.

Why, only yesterday that same kid had been sitting on the floor chanting: "two times three is six, two times four is eight, two times five is ten."

The Deacon swallowed, looked suddenly at Stumpy Tomkins. Stumpy was getting old, too. There was silver in that closely clipped thatch of bristly black hair atop his

billiard ball dome. There were lines in his face the Deacon hadn't noticed before. Getting a little belly too, and it looked funny with those gorillalike shoulders and those ham-like hands. Back in the old days Stumpy could take a horseshoe in his two hands and twist it in knots without even grunting.

The Deacon closed his eyes, and the firelight on his closed lids seemed to light a screen. After a while there were pictures flitting across the screen. A flying field in France, and a group of reckless young devils in silly clothes lounging around all over the place, drinking, battling, dying. Faces fading out, other faces entering. Each face a story—a little history, over a day, a month, a year—then gone into the darkness behind the screen.

A hospital. Long rows of white beds. White faces with fever ridden eyes. And suddenly, a leaping wave of excitement running through the wards. Orderlies racing around, yelling, pounding each other on the back, acting like lunatics.

"Armistice!" That was the word! "*Finis la guerre!*"

MAJOR ALEXANDER SMITH, lying there when the bedlam had subsided, staring up at the ceiling, trying to patch a life together, trying to find a new beginning, a starting point for a man who knew but one thing—how to fly and how to fight.

Feeling that sense of isolation and utter detachment he felt tonight. Out of it—done.

And then, Stumpy Tomkins, his overseas cap gripped nervously in his hands, walking into the ward on tiptoes, looking so silly about it that the Deacon had roared with laughter.

But there was no laughter in Stumpy's eyes that day. Stumpy and the Deacon had been together—how many years? God! It seemed like

a lifetime. Stumpy, the best damned motor mechanic in the A.E.F.

Stumpy, sitting on the edge of a chair, looking at the Deacon's face, shadows in his eyes, sickness written on his face.

Stumpy saying miserably: "Well, it's over. What are we going to do now, Skipper?"

"Do? Why, you cluck, you're going home to your family, with your bonus and your discharge and your medals. You'll be a hero."

"I ain't got no family, I ain't got no medals, and with *my* luck I ain't goin' to get no bonus. It's a lousy shame. Just when a man gets set and feels himself at home and gets things squared away so some flying can be done, they call the damned war off. It's a rotten frame-up, that's what it is!"

A long silence. The two of them, staring at each other. No need to say anything.

"What you going to do, Skipper?" Stumpy asked finally.

"Me? Why, I got to go home and go to work. I've got a kid to send to school."

"Work at what?" said Stumpy.

Sure, work at what? Hours in the darkness the Deacon had been trying to find an answer to that question. Work at what? With a game leg and a couple of medals that wouldn't add up to an order of ham and eggs—work at what?

"Why, just work," the Deacon said vaguely.

"Look, let's stop kiddin' ourselves," growled Stumpy. "Guys like you an' me don't fit into no civilian jobs. We got to find us another war, or somethin'. You don't know nothin' but flying, and I don't know nothin' except what makes airplane motors tick. You got to go on flying whether you want to or not, and I got to go on taking the bellyaches out of no-good motors. That means that we got to go to work together. I kind

of come over here, today, to ask if I couldn't go on kind of being your motor mech."

HIS eyes looked anxiously at the Deacon's face, like the eyes of a Saint Bernard watching his master pack up to go away, wondering whether the master was taking the Saint Bernard.

The Deacon's hand went out and rested for a moment on the horny hand of Stumpy Tomkins.

"I'm glad you asked, Stumpy," he said. "I'd feel kind of lost if you weren't out there swingin' the prop through for me. Sure, we'll keep the team intact!"

"Gee, Skipper, that's—that's great!" choked Stumpy. Then he got up and fled the hospital.

Flickering film running over the screen of the Deacon's closed eyes. Flying fields in the U.S. Billboards screaming sensations in red and black and green lettering. Lithographs of airplanes stunting. Words: "Deacon Smith's World Famous Flying Circus!" Gaping crowds gathered in ten thousand cow pastures, watching incredible things taking place in the air, over, under and on top of J-1 Standards as a gang of ex-war pilots flew the crates.

The transformation of Stumpy Tomkins from motor mechanic to wing walker. "Stumpy Tomkins, World's Most Sensational Aerobat! World's Greatest Aerial Daredevil! See him in the Standing Loop and the Breakway!"

Every city in the United States with more than ten thousand people saw Deacon Smith's circus perform. Hundreds of towns with less.

And in the summer months, an eager-eyed boy traveled with the circus, living with the pilots and performers, coming into his heritage. A little boy named Alex Smith, Junior. A serious-eyed kid, standing as straight as a vertical fin, his fingers

itching with the desire to grab a stick, and fly a plane.

Deacon Smith smiled now as he recalled the first time he had taken Alex, Junior, for a ride. His own kid, strapped in the front seat, smiling at him, not even nervous! The kid's face as he looked down at the earth, while the Deacon, the controls idle in his hand, but flying as he had never handled a ship before, watched him anxiously.

Cutting the motor to a whisper, leaning forward, yelling as he shook the controls: "Want 'em?"

And that kid, grabbing the stick and reaching for the rudder bar, hardly able to touch it with his tip toes.

Nine years old, and hanging onto the controls, keeping that jalope headed straight, even if she did skid a little.

Summers and winters, north and south, east and west, the red airplanes flying, carrying passengers, stunting. Cow pastures and more cow pastures. And every summer, that kid, a few inches taller, a few pounds heavier, trooping with the circus.

AND then, the kid was thirteen, and with a pillow under his rump to keep his head over the edge of the cockpit, his long legs on the rudder bar, his old man teaching him to fly. Teaching him to reach the upper spaces where the high gods walked, where the clouds rolled and where the wind was clean.

Hours—the most precious hours in the life of Deacon Smith. Sitting there, feeling and watching *his* kid flying. Sitting there while Alex, Junior, swooped down for landing after landing. In the early mornings before the circus got going for the day, with the sun rising in the east and bathing the world in a red glow of glory, and with the wind hushed and stilled. And in the evenings, in

the cool of the day, when the wind slumbered again, and when the sun sank behind the western horizon. That one Hiss in the J-1 blaring away, and the kid taking his hours, around and around the field, shooting landings with an unerring sense of speed and distance.

Static came pouring out of that damned loud speaker on the table, jerking Deacon Smith back to the present. Phantom voices speaking now and then—voices all mixed up with the voices and pictures in the Deacon's head.

"Trip Ten calling Newark. Trip Ten calling Newark."

"Go ahead Ten."

"Two thousand. Rahway—everything okay — instruments — temperature sixteen, wind northeast."

"Okay, Ten."

"Washington weather, please."

"Newark giving Washington weather to Trip Ten. Ceiling three hundred—visibility on ground one mile—wind northeast changing to east in gusts—five hundred—northeast, twenty miles—one thousand, northeast, thirty miles—two thousand, northeast, thirty miles—Washington reports west portion of field wet with some mud—more later—okay?"

"That's what you think."

"Newark off."

"Ten off."

Deacon Smith gripped the arms of his chair, listening to his kid's voice coming through that static. His kid flying Trip Ten, Newark to Washington in zero-zero. Barging along in white blindness at two-fifty and better an hour, seeing nothing going away, seeing nothing flying, seeing nothing landing—and kidding about it!

The Deacon's eyes went to a picture on the wall of a young sprig in uniform. An Air Service uniform with wings on the breast. A young kid, his kid, a pilot in the United

States Army—Randolph Field—and an officer.

Another picture beside it—a different uniform. Co-pilot Smith, Airline pilot, hat cocked on the side of his head—still a young sprig.

A little smile moved the corners of the Deacon's mouth, a proud little smile, as he heard again the operations manager of the line, saying: "You don't have to worry about that boy, Major.

"He's certainly one of the best pilots we ever had the good fortune to get hold of. He'll be on the left hand side in no time. Never makes a false move. Flies like a man with twenty thousand hours. The kind of a pilot we like—the kind we have to have in this business."

AND all the time, Deacon Smith remembering a serious-faced kid of eleven talking to his father. The father, standing there, a telegram in his hand; a telegram that meant disaster to the most famous flying organization in the history of aviation.

Major Alex Smith,
Smith Flying Circus,
Teterboro Airport,
New Jersey.

Upon the receipt of this communication you will suspend all circus flying and passenger carrying pending an inspection of planes and personnel by Department of Commerce inspectors. Your pilots are notified that they will have to take the regular examination to qualify as transport pilots. Effective this date the rules and regulations governing flying are in effect and will be enforced to the fullest extent. It is expected that an Inspector will arrive at Teterboro within the next ten days.

The death-knell of Deacon Smith's circus. Deacon Smith, standing there, angry. His pilots being ordered to take examinations. Men with five and six thousand hours in the skies of a dozen nations — graduates of dog-fights and cow pastures—to be rated as fit to fly!

And that eleven-year-old kid, looking up at his father, saying:

"You see, Dad, the day of the flying circus is over. The day of the barnstormer is over. We got to get aviation on a business basis—like the railroads. People get scared when they see pilots like ours stunting all over the place. A good pilot this day don't turn a hundred loops to show he's good. He flies from New York to Saint Louis, in any kind of weather, with the mail and passengers, and stays on his course."

The Deacon staring down at his kid, a kind of slow death in his eyes. His kid trying to show him that he was through! Trying to let him down easy!

And then, a downy-cheeked boy flyer coming from Washington to give Major Alexander Smith his examination.

"What's an isotherm?"

"What's an isobar?"

"How many points of north are there?"

"Explain the difference between meteorology and navigation."

"Name the five most important instruments used in navigation."

The pilots of the circus, bending over examination papers, their faces screwed up, chewing on pens—looking silly.

What the hell was an isobar? And who cared? And what did it have to do with herding a jalope cross country?

Finally, the down-cheeked little whippersnapper, with a sigh, certified Major Deacon Smith as fit to fly—on his record as a pilot, not because of his success with the examination. The Deacon flopped the examination badly. So did every pilot of the circus.

Men who had flown through the same skies with Richthofen and Immelman and Nungesser and Fonck, licked by a lot of silly questions on a paper!

The red ships of the circus were broken up, tossed out as unfit to fly by the Department inspectors; ships and motors that had carried thousands of people into the sky for the first time, called unfit junk.

The Deacon standing there watching the bonfire—those red ships burning—trying to understand that it was all over.

“You see, Dad, the day of the flying circus is over—” The eleven-year-old voice continued to ring in his ears.

“Trip Ten calling Newark.”

The voice in the static broke out again and Deacon Smith’s hands gripped the chair arms.

“Trip Ten calling Newark.”

“Newark answering Ten. Go ahead.”

“How’s Camden?”

A sudden pain stabbed in the middle of Deacon Smith’s stomach as that terse question crackled through the static. Something in that voice—something—

Newark answering through the scratch and grate of the static. “Wait a second.”

“Make it snappy!”

“S’matter?”

“How’s Camden—never mind the conversation.”

“Closed in—orders are, nothing doing.”

“Anything open between here and Washington?”

“No.”

“That’s swell.”

Voices, wraith-like voices, born in space, talking in space.

“S’matter?” Sudden anxiety in Newark’s voice.

“Ice. Don’t seem to be able to break it up. Forms too fast and too thick. Instruments acting funny. I want a bearing and an altitude check—in a hurry.”

“Okay. What do you think you’re on?”

“Washington beam. Haven’t lost

it, but it’s acting funny—as if it may go out any second.”

“Sit tight.”

“I’m sitting.”

A cocky young transport pilot’s voice in the Deacon’s ears. “Hell, Dad, flying today is nothing more than being a glorified chauffeur. A guy sits back in the seat and listens to his beam and it brings him right home—on the nose. Don’t have to dive down and look at the signs on the railroad stations any more, like you used to do. If we get in doubt we can always get a bearing.”

A little film of sweat formed on the palms of the Deacon’s hands. Stumpy’s eyes watched him very anxiously.

The stiff leg straightened and the Deacon got up and paced the floor.

The static-framed Newark’s voice blared forth again.

“Newark to Ten.”

“Okay Newark—go ahead.”

The Deacon’s head snapped up. Was that voice fainter—farther away—fading?

“I’ll give you a check.”

“I don’t get you—sound faint.”

And then Newark’s voice calling over and over: “Newark, calling Trip Ten. Newark, calling Trip Ten. Newark—calling Trip Ten. Smith—*why don’t you answer*—can you hear me? Newark, calling Trip Ten—”

Over and over—and no answer from Trip Ten.

The Deacon, standing still, his hands clenched together, his face set like a mask, waiting for Trip Ten to answer through the static.

Stumpy Tomkins’ voice wheezed: “Gee, he cut out—his radio must have gone out on him.”

The two of them jumped. The voice in the loudspeaker said, hurriedly:

“Ten to Newark. Something wrong with radio—beam fading. Can’t hear you—working with it. If it cuts out I’m going to try to make Washing-

ton—blind. Have 'em watch for me when I come in. Think I've got a course—"

The voice was gone, dying off into static. Then the monotonous, desperate voice, over and over: "Newark, calling Ten. Newark, calling Ten."

CHAPTER III

Grey Death



STUMPY watched the Deacon's face with anxious eyes. A face that was grey granite. His body seemed suddenly sinew-lean, electric. His voice was like a spark gap.

"Let's go!" he said.

Stumpy got up from his chair. His face mirrored his anxiety, his hopelessness, but he followed the Deacon without a word.

They walked out into the soupy air, across the road, toward the airport. All the way the Deacon was muttering to himself, "Flying is different, is it? Flying today is just like being a glorified chauffeur, is it? Fella just sits in an armchair and reads his instruments. Not like the old days?"

Talking and growling in his throat, with the fog sweeping around his tall body. His head, uncovered, catching little water crystals which sparkled in the suffused lights of the field.

They entered the glow of light outside the radio room of the Administration Building. Men inside that room were leaning over a table. The operator's mouth was moving, the words inaudible through the thick windows. But the half-crouching postures of the men in the room, listening, waiting, exhibiting the strain, told a story.

The wind and wet swept into the room as the Deacon stepped inside. He stood there, looking at them, at

their faces. They stared back at him, over shoulders. Only the operator did not turn. He kept up the monotonous chant.

"Washington—calling Trip Ten. Washington, calling Trip Ten. Hey Smitty—answer—"

And out of a loudspeaker mounted on a cabinet came another voice: "Newark, calling Trip Ten—Newark, calling trip Ten—"

And the grating static.

The Deacon's face was calm and his voice was conversational.

"He doesn't answer, eh?"

The radio operator turned his head. "Oh, hello, Major. No. Must be generator trouble—something carried away."

"Ice maybe," suggested the major. "He reported ice, and the de-icer not working so good, just before he cut off."

They stared at him. Ice was an ugly word. Just about the ugliest in flying transport conversation.

The electric clock on the wall moved silently, the second hand flitting rapidly around the dial. The operator's voice took up the chant again. Nerves began to itch. Bodies began to tense. Eyes began to glare a little and to turn bloodshot.

Each of them with his own vision of that big Douglas, up there somewhere, lost in the white blindness; twelve passengers sitting in luxuriously upholstered seats, and two pilots enclosed in the cockpit, watching instruments. Blind, blind as hell, in the sweep of the wind, the swirling thick fog. Dumb, too, because some little gadget refused to function.

Ice thickening on the wings, causing them to sag, causing the twin motors to sob, causing the big ship to become loggy, to settle. Anxious eyes, reading figures on dials, watching the altimeter, watching the artificial horizon, not knowing what was below.

And the boy in the left hand seat—Deacon Smith's boy—flying his first trip as pilot!

Then a voice on the field, yelling. The radio operator cutting out Newark, cutting out the roar of the static, as from up in that mist, came the droning roar of a plane's motors.

"There he is! There he is! Listen!" A voice shrieked from the field.

In the control tower the operator looked at the lights and cursed. He could only see a dozen of his own lights, through the fog, on the ground. What could Trip Ten see if he dared to come down that low?

The moaning drone sounded over the field, rose in volume.

"Jeez! He's flying 'em wide open! He must be heavy as hell, and burning up if he made it all the way down that way."

But the Deacon was thinking: "My kid—right on the nose—ice and all—blind—right on the nose to destination!"

Somebody spilled a drum of gasoline on the field, touched it off. Flame leapt up fifty feet. But it was as a burning match in the soup-like fog.

And suddenly, Major Alex Smith, of the 7th Pursuit Squadron, and of the flying circus, had a grip on Stumpy Tomkins' arm and was dragging him through the fog, running like a crazy man, that game leg dragging at him—across the field, toward the civilian hangar.

Shouting over his shoulder as he ran: "We got to do something. We can't let him hang up there with his wings full of ice. He might go away, try for some other field, and he won't make it because he can't navigate without a known point of departure. Come on, kid. Who says the flying circus is dead!"

The hangar mouth was black. The lights burned yellow within the cavernous depths. There was a sleek

black, two-seater standing like a falcon in the middle of the floor—the one thing that Major Alex Smith loved in all the world except his kid and Stumpy. A black, piratelike airplane, streamlined and panting for speed.

HE practically threw Stumpy Tomkins into the back seat. He eased into the front cockpit, turned on the gas, yanked on the starter. There came a grind and screech, and then a coughing grunt from the motor and a wisp of blue-white smoke. Flame from an exhaust stack, and then the rhythm of the motor hitting. And the blast of the slipstream as the Deacon ruddered the ship out of the door, onto the field, headed it into the wind.

No waiting for the engine to warm. He lifted the ship off the ground, up and up, and his eyes were fixed in front of him and on the altimeter.

And all the time he was thinking, with a grim little grin: "So, circus days are over, are they?"

Hell, what was a little mist like this to an old hand who had chased Gothas all over the Front on nights like this, sneaking up on them, watching for the little exhaust lights of their motors? What was a little aerial hide-and-peek to a guy who had flown far over the lines on nights like this to drop a secret agent inside enemy territory. And going back on nights like this to find the same field, and to pick the agent up again?

Duck soup! That's what it was, duck soup. And that young transport mug up there, *his kid*, had thought his old man was through. Well, he'd show the young squirt!

Up and up. Thousand foot level, that's where he'd be—above everything, but still able to find a light if he could see a hole in the fog. The kid had brains and *sabe*. He knew his way around—but he depended

too much on those damned instruments. Only way down in a fog was to barge down, if you knew where you were.

Suddenly the major was sitting rigid in the seat, looking over the right side of the cockpit. There was a little red light, and a little green light speeding through space. Lights attached to a grey ghost—a grey ghost flitting through fog.

The Deacon's grin grew tighter and his eyes younger. He poured the throttle to that powerful motor, began overhauling the red light. Nice things, red lights, in fogs. A guy could see 'em.

He leaned forward in the cockpit and expertly balanced a note pad on his knees. Hell, he'd taken artillery observations with Archie bursts showering around, written messages, under worse conditions. He passed the note back to Stumpy.

"You always had the idea that you could fly one of these things as good as anybody in the world. You aren't bad. I want you to roll the wheels of this crate right in the middle of that transport. I'm going to drop off, and lead 'em in. Keep your eye on that red light, watch where it goes—and follow me in."

He looked over his shoulder. Stumpy's eyes were round. His face was a little grey. But he nodded his head.

One thing about Stumpy—he knew how to obey orders.

The red light on the wing of the transport grew brighter and bigger. The transport was banking, almost continuously.

Duck soup! The little black ship snaked up and up, came in over the transport's tail. Deacon Smith fooled with the throttle until he had the speeds synchronized. There were sheets of ice on the metal wings of that transport. It would be slippery going. A nice little test for a plane-changer—for a stunt man. But hell,

he had seen worse days when the show had to go on.

He eased down and down, until the wheels of the little black ship were hanging over the great wing of the Douglas.

Then he shook the controls. He felt Stumpy taking them over.

He kicked off his shoes, slid over the side of the front cockpit, shinned down the landing gear struts, came to the right wheel, hung on grimly. He could see Stumpy's head thrust over the side of the cockpit, rigid, Stumpy's eyes like stars in the white darkness.

The wheel came down and down, feet, inches, almost touched the great expanse of metal that was the transport plane.

Then the Deacon dropped. He fell three feet through the night, landed on the wing of the transport, clawed with his hands, spread-eagled his arms, fought to grab the smooth surface with his feet, slid a little, grabbed an antenna mast. Then, steadied, he began to work his way forward to the cockpit roof.

His hands were half frozen and bleeding after the first few seconds. The wind tore at him. But that crazy grin stayed on his mouth.

CHAPTER IV

Blind Flying



INSIDE the cabin of the transport two men jerked heads up from watching instruments. There was a pounding on the roof above them—on the trap door in the roof. They looked up at the ghost face visible through the trap door. A ghost hand beckoned to them to open the door.

Pilot Alex Smith, Junior, swallowed hard, looked startled. Then he was out of his seat, clawing at the pin which held the trap door closed.

The lid went up. There was a little wait, then a pair of long legs, shoeless, dangled down into the cockpit. After awhile a body with hands clinging to the sides of the trap door, followed. Then Major Alexander Smith dropped onto the floor of the cockpit and said: "Better close the roof. It's blowing like hell out there."

Pilot Smith said: "My God! I thought I was crazy—seeing things from the fog—Dad!"

"Yeah, Dad. Remember—the guy who don't fit in with present day flying. The guy who washed out with the flying circuses. Move over son. We got to get this flying barn-door down on the ground. It's full of ice."

"But—"

"Stumpy and me. We heard you fooling around up here. Knew you needed location and *seat feel*, and a few old-fashioned things to get down. What the hell are all these gadgets—never mind. Hold your hats."

The Douglas nosed down. The two pilots were silent, braced as if for disaster, faces sucked in. But the Deacon, sitting in a strange cockpit, in front of strange controls, grinned gleefully as he banked to the left, and let the big ship settle.

Down and down through the white blindness—down and down, while nerve tension in that cockpit went up and up. The wind whistled over the ice-covered wings. And the Deacon, with one hand on the throttle and the other on the controls, peering straight ahead, felt his way down.

Suddenly his head jerked up and his arms straightened. He came straight back on the control column, batted down the right wings.

There was a gentle little bump, followed by a rolling. Then the Douglas stopped. Three little red lights showed through the muck

ahead, and blurred blobs of figures showed through the fog. Dead ahead the very dim radiance of a gasoline bonfire glowed.

THE Deacon opened the throttle again, moved the big ship to the left.

"Got to move away and let Stumpy in—he's following us down, by the red wing light."

A black shadow slit the fog, flattened, bounced, came to a stop behind them.

"Okay youngster," grinned the Deacon. "You can have your seat back, now. Your old man will retire to the Home for Washed Up Pilots again. It was a nice piece of business, hitting Washington on the nose without a beam and without radio. Come on, snap out of it! Get in here. Do your job. Hell, anybody looking at your mug right now might get the idea that you weren't born to fly!"

And Alex Smith, Transport Pilot, crawled back into the seat, his hands shaking a little, and rolled the Douglas to the unloading station.

Inside the cockpit, the Deacon looked down the long aisle as the passengers got off. Each of them stopped, shook hands with Transport Pilot Smith and his Co-Pilot. Each of them said something nice.

One of them said, after a glance forward at the Deacon: "Goodness, it must have been a bad night! We had three pilots. I thought we only carried two?" But she was a lovely young thing—beautiful and not so dumb. And the Deacon's kid had a silly, guilty look on his pan as he handed her down the steps and glanced at his father's face.

Later, the gang from the airport beat the breath out of Transport Pilot Smith in congratulation.

One of them yelled: "Hey, your old man was looking for you just before you came in. He was worried

silly. We kept telling him everything was okay. We didn't want him to worry. He beat it. Went home I guess. Sure was stewing, though. None of us wanted to tell him how bad it was. Boy, you had us on the edge of the galloping jitters. Nobody knows yet how you made it down."

The Deacon waited until the gang walked away from the ship, disappeared inside the office, abandoning the Douglas to the hostlers. Then he stepped aground, and slunk away.

His stocking feet were sopping wet and his hands were bleeding, but he was grinning to himself.

"Wait until the cub checks in for breakfast," he kept saying over and over. "So—the old days are dead and flying is a business, like running trains—and there ain't no place for circus stuff. Boy! Will I lay it to that cocky young ape!"

He chuckled to himself, his eyes glowing in the night. "But the young idiot was as cool as ice up there with that big barndoor. It just goes to show you—a pilot is born, not made, and those gadgets just ruin a good guy. There's too many—can't keep your mind on flying, while you try to watch all those things."

Stumpy Tomkins, grinning, came

out of the mist, walking out of the hangar mouth.

"Hey, Skipper!" he said with an exultant note in his voice. "We did it! Will we give it to that kid when he comes!"

The skipper growled: "You open your trap to that boy, and, by God, I'll— Listen, he did all right didn't he? You don't expect him to know as much as we do, do you? Not a word, see. He might lose his confidence."

"Sure! Sure!" soothed Stumpy. "But it was a hell of a stunt."

"If the Department ever finds out about it we'll be grounded for life," gloomed the major. "They'll be sending another one of those Randolph Field gazelles down here to ask us questions—and we'd have to lie."

"Yeah, it's getting so a guy has to take a post-graduate course in plain and fancy lying before he can hold a pilot's ticket."

"You don't understand!" reproved the Major sternly. "There ain't no place for our kind of pilot any more, Stumpy. Flying is a business—like running trains."

Stumpy Tomkins glanced out of the corner of his eye and swallowed a grin.

"Oh, yes, sir! Sure," he said gravely. "Yeah, man."

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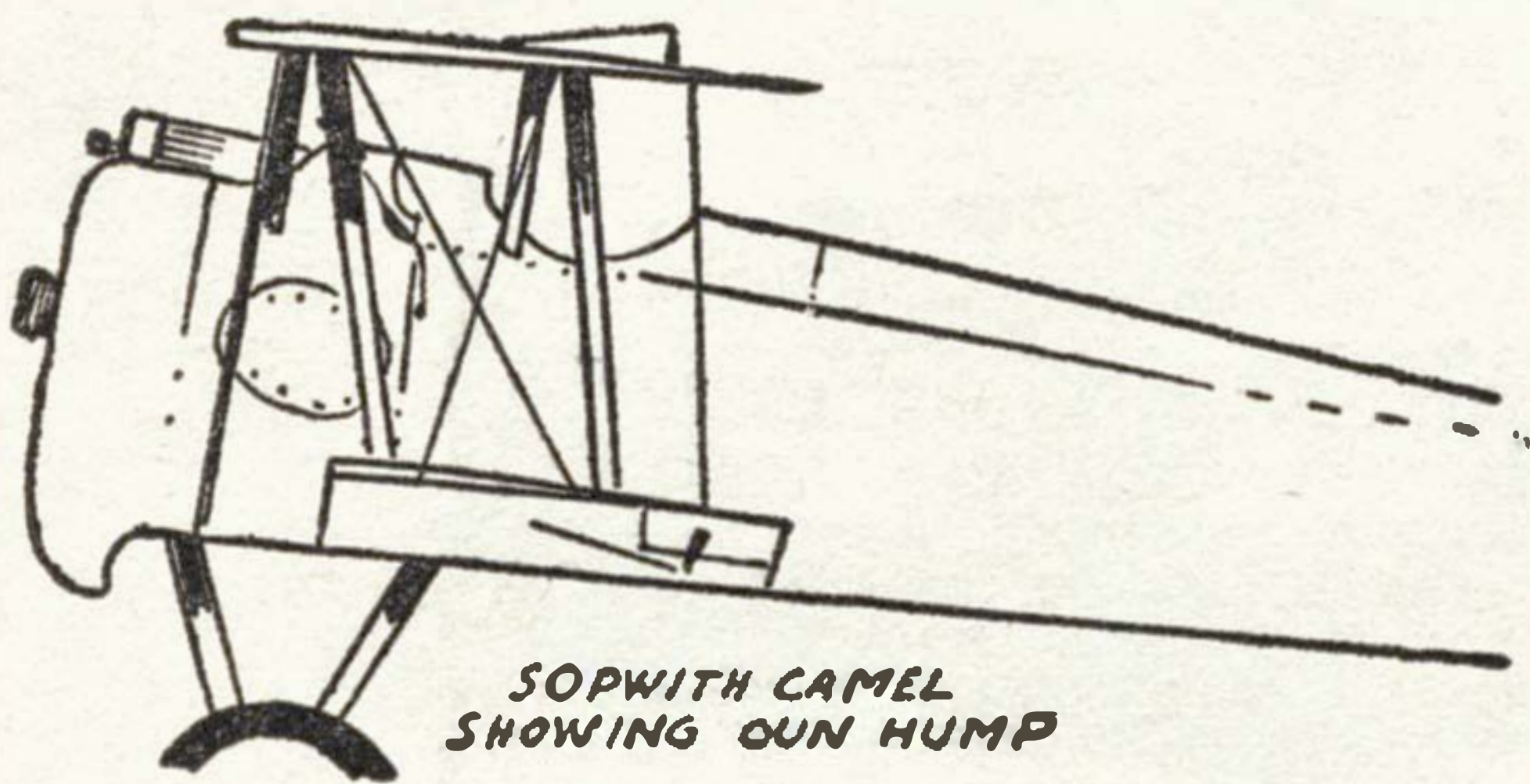
By EUGENE M. FRANDZEN

THE Sopwith "Camel" was a name to be proud of back in 1917. This "Camel" of the air did not do without a drink nor was it slow and ungainly like its earthly namesake but it was tricky and uncomfortable to fly. It was similar to its predecessor, the Sop "Pup," which was an airman's delight to fly. The Camel's superiority as a fighting craft was due to those modifications which transformed it into a devilish steed in the hands of its masters.

It could climb a thousand feet a minute and speed through the air in pursuit of an enemy ship until Camel squadrons were both feared by the enemy and envied by the other Allied squadrons equipped with inferior craft.

Whenever possible Allied nations got hold of Camels and bolstered up their own side with this popular fighting ship. Americans who flew them are still talking of their little temperamental job which gave them heart failure on landings and take-offs but got them out of some mighty tight situations, which other ships of the time could not have accomplished. The 130 h.p. Clerget motor was extensively used to power the Camel.

Later most Camels were equipped with



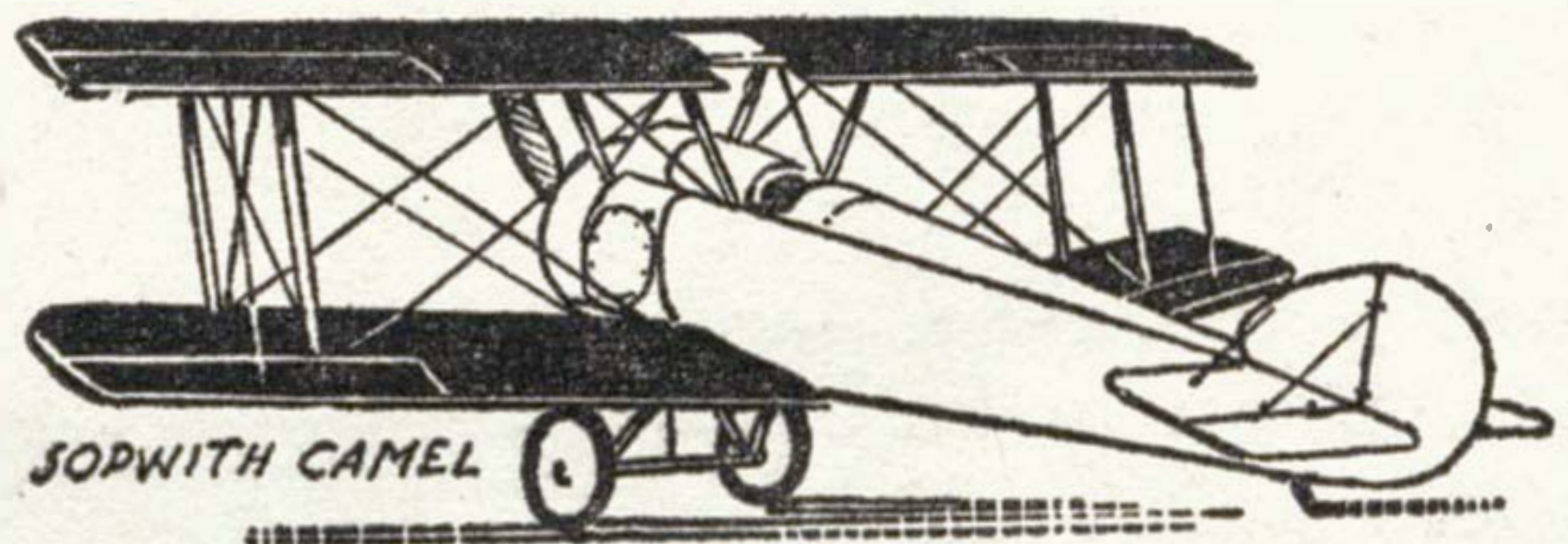
Bentley motors which gave them added pep and brought the Camel out of oblivion very much into the limelight for a glorious new era of fighting life. There was hardly a British ace who did not sometime in his career as a flyer sit in the compact cockpit of a Sop Camel and feel the exultation which comes from flying a hair-trigger ship.

Richthofen's Defeat

Germany's ace of aces, Richthofen, got in front of a Camel on April 21, 1918. That Camel was piloted by a young Canadian in the R.F.C. named Roy Brown. Capt. Brown's Camel seemed to be a live thing as it screamed down on the tail of the

Baron's ship which was racing after one of Brown's comrades. The Vickers guns leaped and bucked in the Camel's hump.

The sturdy ship seemed to hold its breath helping its pilot's aim. The Fokker triplane ahead staggered. Richthofen, mortally wounded, slumped in his pit. It was the end for him, and he, like so many other Germans, ended the war with a wraith-like flitting flying thing of wood and fabric



with spitting guns forward blasting death to all who dared challenge its rule.

Although the Camel on the cover is not fighting another ship, it is fighting its most important battle of the war. The complete plans for a major offensive of the Allies disappeared suddenly from close-guarded headquarters offices. A half hour after they were missed intelligence officers were on the track. They traced them to a nearby hangar. They saw a plane sweeping into the skies. One of the intelligence men, a flyer, leaped into a Camel whose motor was ticking over. The enemy spy was almost out of sight, but in a slower ship.

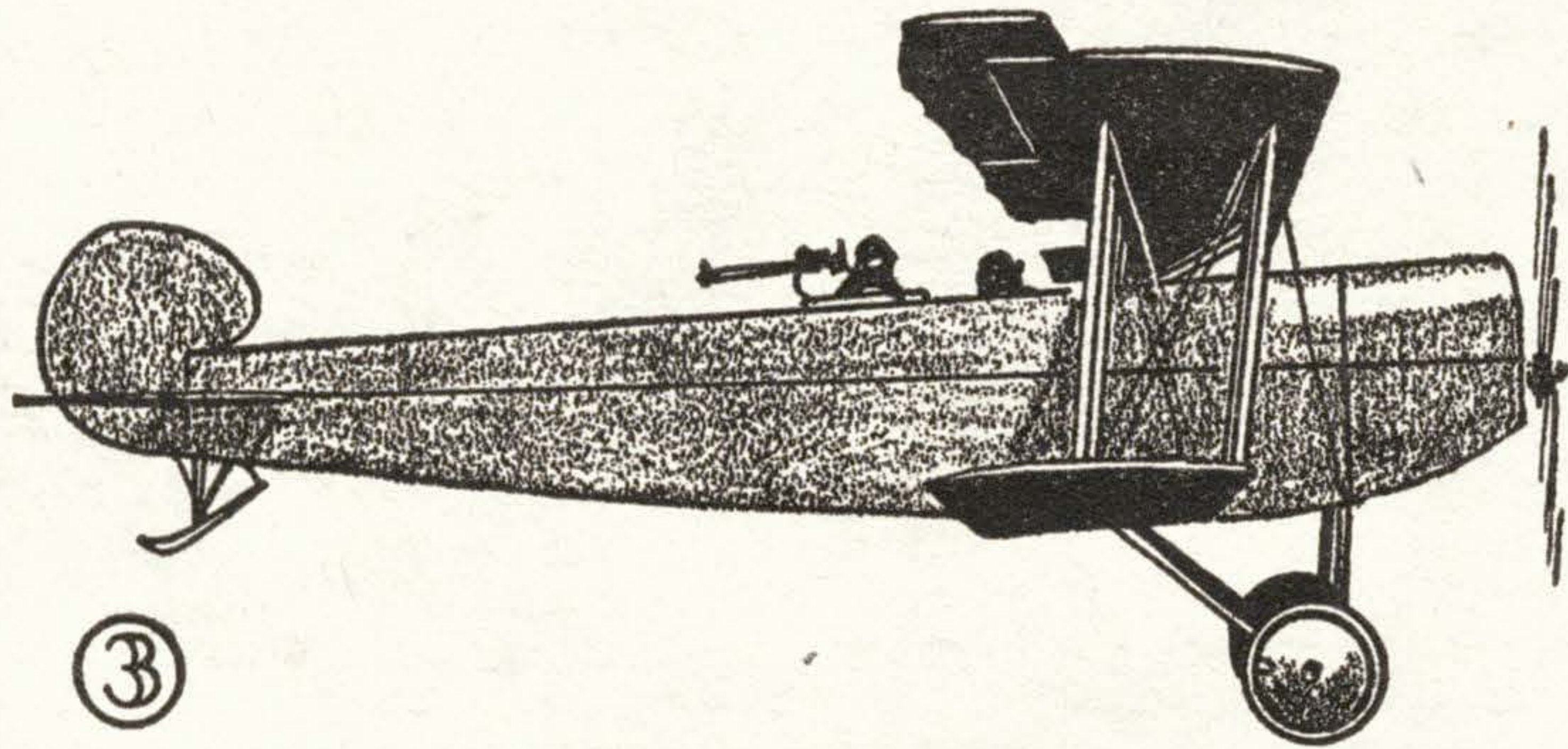
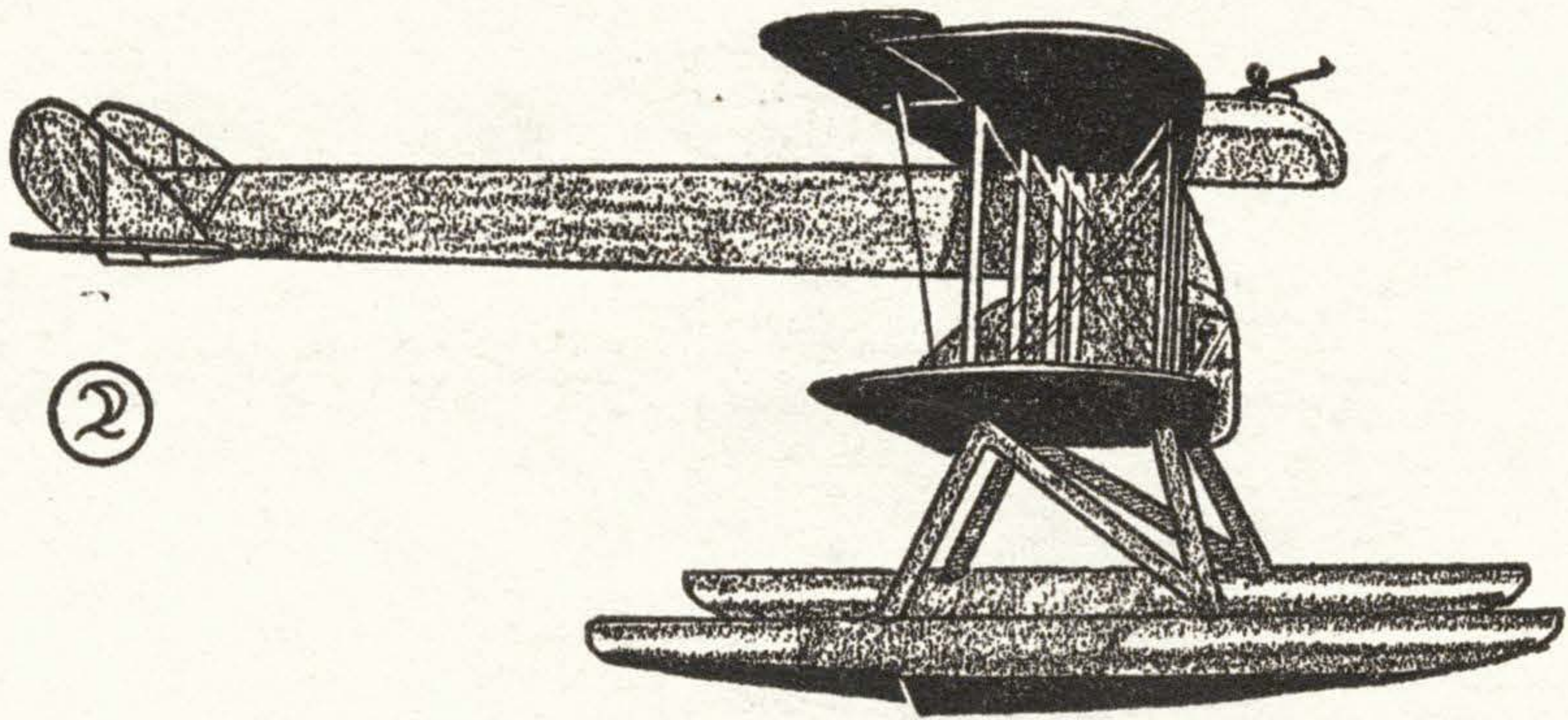
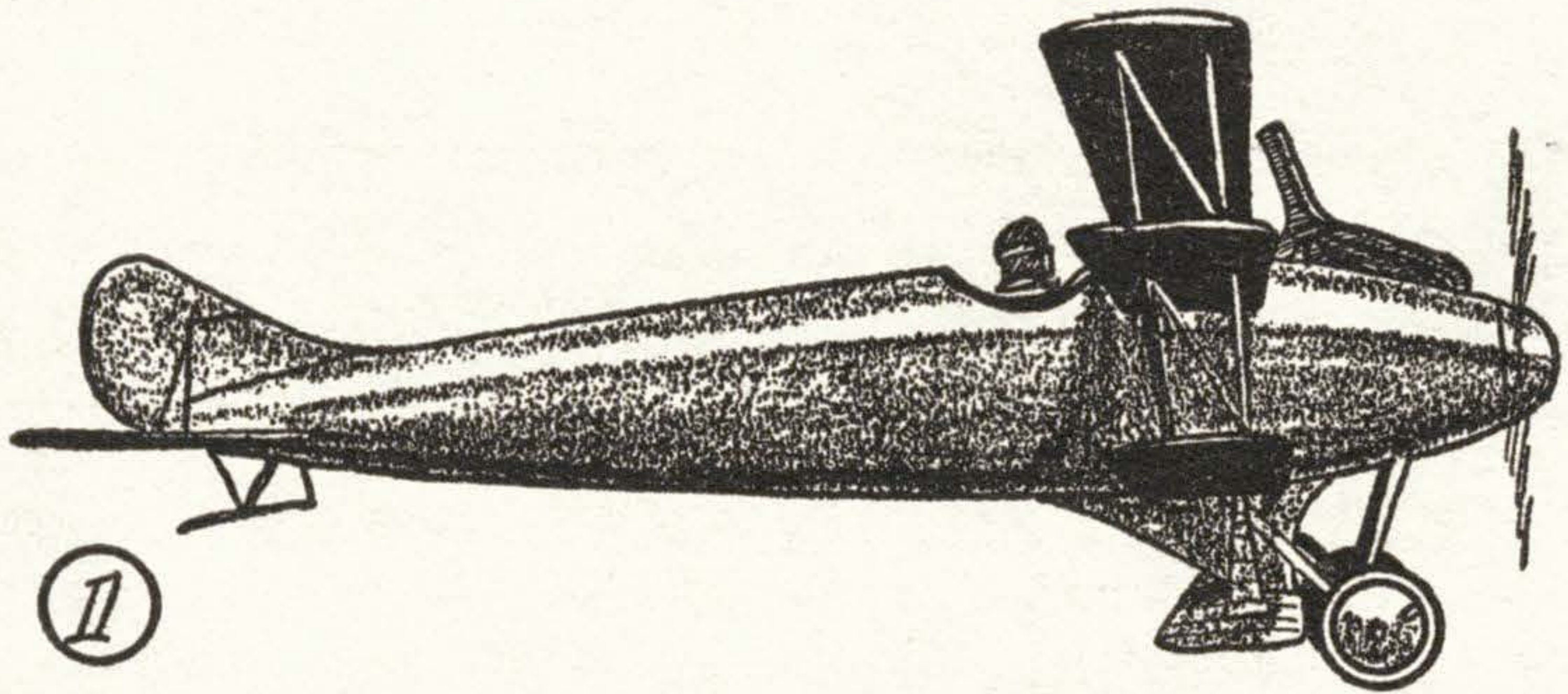
Blazing Battle

The Camel gained, it overtook the spy. Guns blazed. Down slithered the front ship to crash near a road in German territory. The pilot crawled out, hailed a driver of a captured British motorcycle and gave the side car's passenger the valuable papers. As the spy crumpled to the ground the motorcycle roared toward German headquarters. Down screamed the Camel. Its pilot disregarded the peppering from the motorcycle passenger's rifle fire.

When the little Camel was about to hit the ground machine, its Vickers guns opened up. A deadly blast of bullets raked both Germans. A slug tore into the overheated motorcycle engine. A roaring explosion enveloped the whole ground machine. The stolen papers in the passenger's dead hand flared up and curled into blackened bits that fluttered and faded into dust. The Camel wheeled, streaked toward home. Another job well done!

SIX MORE PLANES

Test Your Air Knowledge by Seeing Whether



Above are pictures of six planes used in World War combat. Here are their names—but in the wrong order, with the letters scrambled:

1. CHUDT REKOKF

4. GLONA DRAPNEALQUA

2. A. TOUSC V. GINTHIFG S.

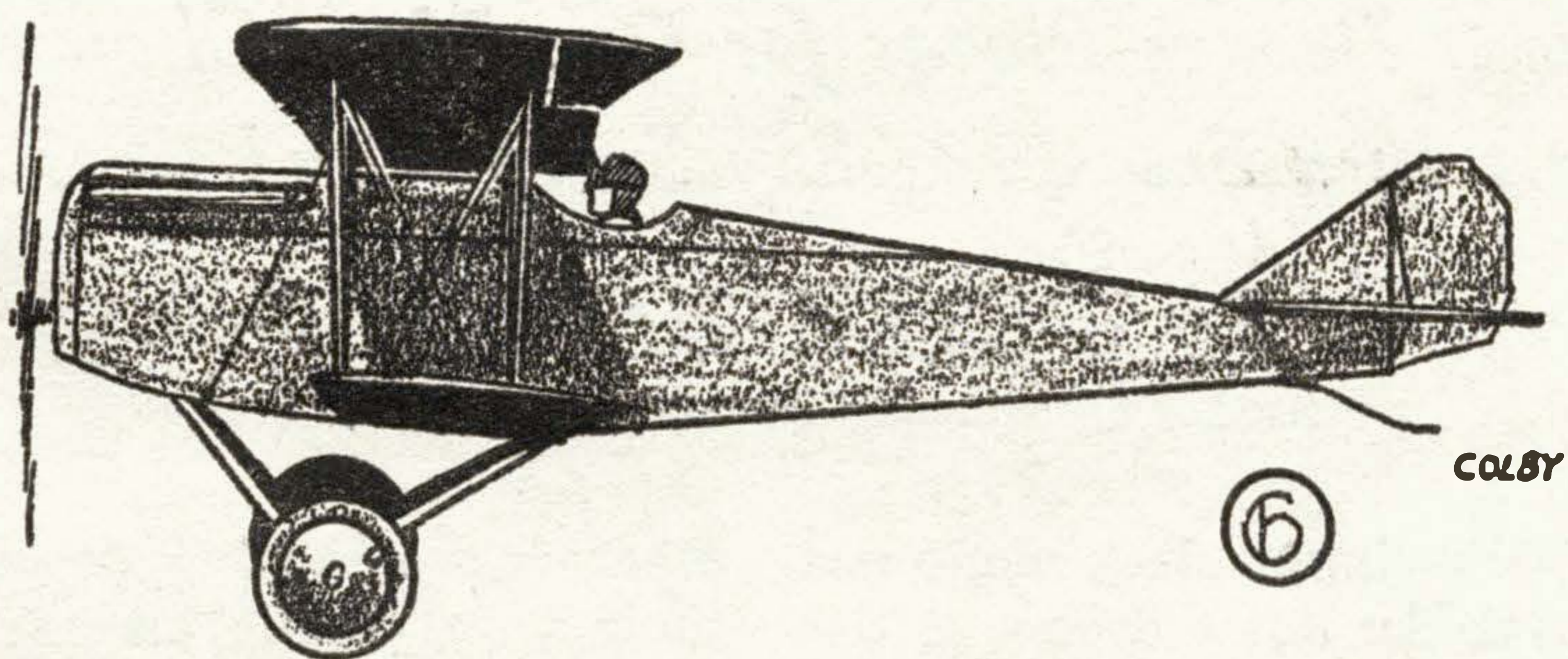
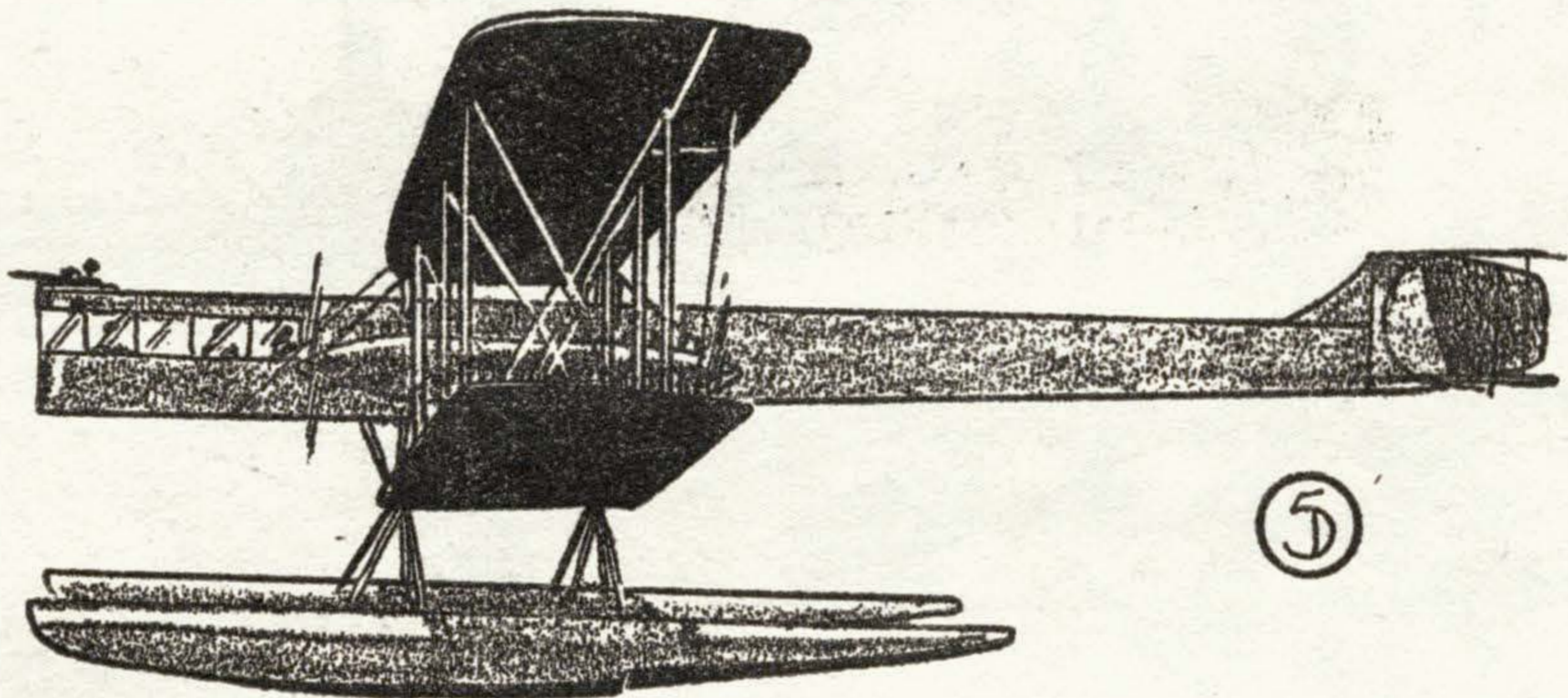
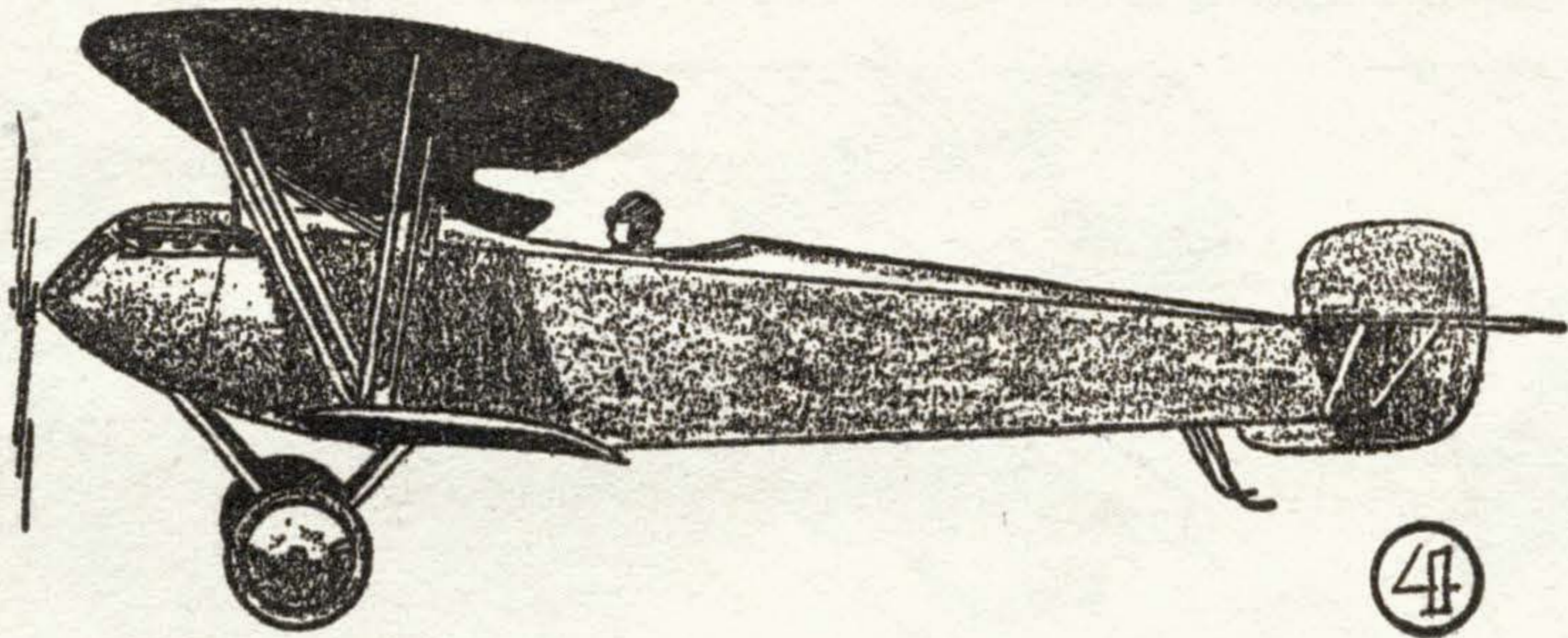
5. NILPEEZP ANTGI EASPANEL

3. PROTUNIE

6. SINUSUR DROPNEALYH

TO UNSCRAMBLE!

You Can Identify These Famous War Crates



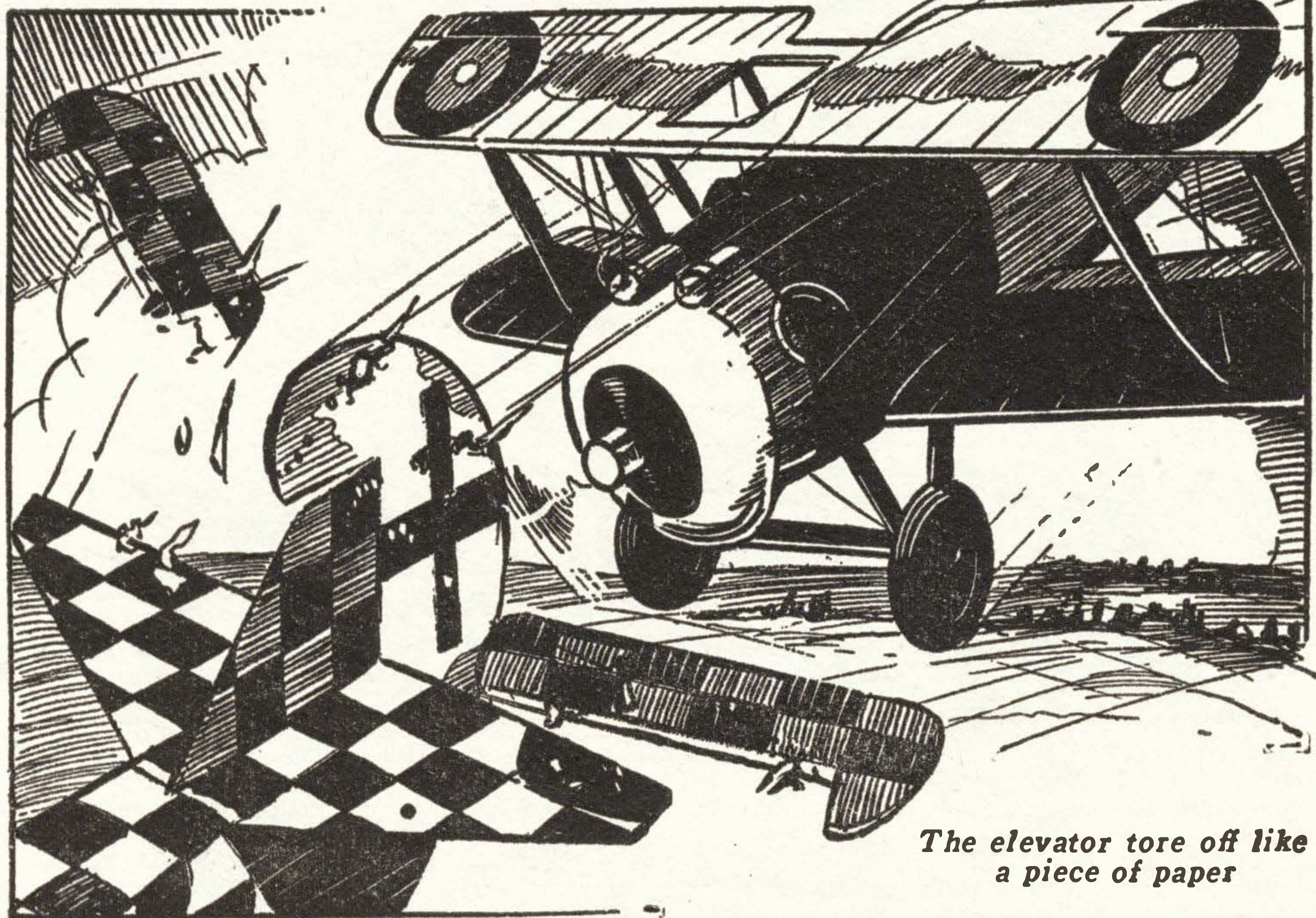
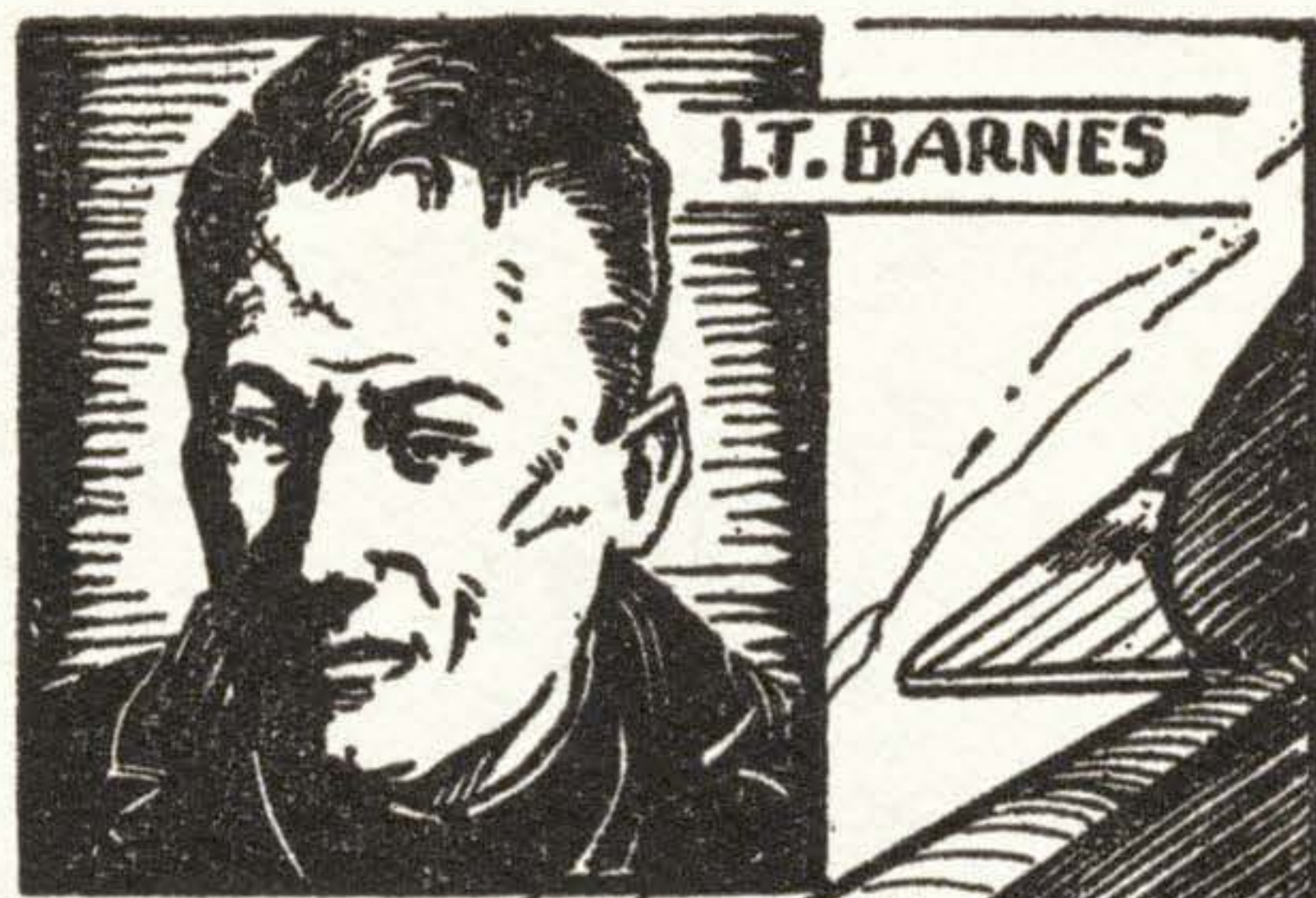
Examine closely the crates pictured above.

Then: First unscramble the names of the planes—second, list the planes in the proper order.

Write your list below before referring to the answer on page 127.

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| 1. | 4. |
| 2. | 5. |
| 3. | 6. |

Traitor Patrol



The elevator tore off like a piece of paper

Lieutenant Barnes Pleads for One More Chance to Take Part in a Smashing Sky Scrap—and Gets It!

By **PETER BARRETT**

Author of "Flaming Dawn," "Aces Wild," etc.

NIGHT hung dark and wet over the home drome of the Twenty-fifth Pursuits. Inside the mess lounge, however, there was plenty of light, plenty of rough-house, and plenty of the stuff that makes war-worn pilots forget about Fokkers and flame-spitting Spandau guns.

In one corner four or five were shooting craps for post-dated checks. In another corner, half a dozen

others were bearing down hard with their vocal cords on the latest flying ditties.

In the cleared space in the middle of the room the rest were playing scrub football, using the C. O.'s hat for the ball.

Suddenly the door swung open wide, and a tall, lean-limbed youth strode inside. Rain dripped from the sodden cap on his head, ran down his face, trickled off onto the

torn and tattered trench coat draped about his body.

Major Lampson saw him first and cut short barking signals for the next play that was expected to take the "ball" past the piano for another touchdown. Then one by one the others noticed the newcomer. As though a door had been slammed shut, the riotous sounds of singing, laughter and shouting were cut off short, and absolute silence engulfed the entire room.

Standing motionless, the strange pilot peered from face to face, and presently focused his eyes on the C. O.

"You are Major Lampson? The name's Barnes. First Lieutenant."

THE C.O. nodded, didn't speak for the moment. He, like every other pilot in the room, was held transfixed by the stranger's face. It was almost hideous to behold. Long reddish scars marked the cheeks and forehead. The nose was slightly twisted in a way that gave the impression of the eyes having been drawn closer together. And the mouth was set in a twist that could be taken for either a smile or a sneer.

"Yes," Lampson finally said. Then as though to himself, "Didn't expect you, Barnes. We haven't put in any requests for replacements."

The rain-soaked pilot hesitated, and once again stared from face to face. Then he visibly drew back his shoulders and put his chin out.

"There's talk of an armistice," he said slowly. "I've heard rumors that it's expected most any day now. I—well, I'd like to tell you my story, and ask a favor—a big one."

The C. O. arched an eyebrow.

"Go on, Barnes," he said. "What's the story you want to tell us?"

"I'll make it short," the newcomer said. "Nine months ago I was set to go to the Front. I'd just about finished my aerial gunnery training at

Turnberry, in Scotland. I was to make just one more target practice flight. I crashed, bad. Got burned some."

The pilot paused and put one hand to his face.

"I was in a London hospital until last month when I was discharged, okay for service," he said. Then as bitterness crept into his voice, "But the medical board turned me down cold. I was listed to be shipped back to the States.

"Seven months of training, eight months in the hospital, and then be shipped back home as useless. It was too much to take. I pulled what strings I could and applied for transfer to a ground job here in France. I got it. Paper work at the receiving depot at Boulogne. Then I heard the armistice rumors."

The youth paused again. It was almost as though he were afraid to go on.

"I joined up to fly at the Front!" he said with sudden viciousness. "A bad luck crash ruined everything. Just a couple of trips over was all that I wanted. All I *do* want. I—well, a friend of mine, Chuck Harrison, used to be with this outfit. He often wrote to tell me what a swell bunch you were.

"Well, I bummed my way down from Boulogne tonight. The war will be over in a couple of days, and— Oh, hell, you get the idea. Let me fly just a couple of patrols with you, and then I'll beat it back to Boulogne and face the music without saying a word. It'll mean more to me than any of you could ever realize."

Barnes finished with a shrug and stared straight at Lampson. The C. O. returned the stare unwinking. He remembered Chuck Harrison well. He'd never forget him. When Harrison went west, Twenty-five lost one of the swellest men in shoe leather.

Harrison was Barnes' friend, then Barnes must be tops, too. But it

was not that, nor was it the very unusual request, that caused Lampson to stare hard at the lean youth. The pilot's face, despite its disfiguration, seemed vaguely familiar. Lampson could almost swear that he'd seen Barnes before. In fact, had known him intimately.

"You were in England until a month ago?" he suddenly asked. "I'd almost bet that I've met you before."

The other's lips twitched to a grin.

"If you were in St. Luke's Hospital, or at Turnberry, sir, maybe you did," he said. "But I don't remember meeting you. Of course, I expect you'll want me to make a test hop tomorrow to show you I can handle a ship. That is, if—"

The rest trailed off into silence. Lampson lowered his gaze to the floor, scowled at it. He thought he knew how Barnes felt. Once he, himself, had come close to losing the chance of flying at the Front. The war was just about over. Germany was licked. To let Barnes have just one crack might mean everything to him in the years to come. Besides, he'd said that Chuck Harrison was his friend.

IN impulse, the C.O. lifted his head, half turned and glanced at the rest of Twenty-five grouped about him. Big "Red" Dawson, "A" Flight skipper, nodded as the C. O. caught his eye.

"I say, yes," he grunted. "What the hell's the difference for a couple of days or so?"

The mumbled murmur of agreement ran from lip to lip. Lampson hesitated, then suddenly made up his mind. He turned to Barnes.

"All right," he said gruffly. "Show us you can handle a ship tomorrow, and we'll let you make a couple of patrols. Right now, though, have a drink. You look as though you could stand one."

The entire squadron was assembled

on the tarmac at dawn when Barnes took a replacement Camel up for his test hop. It lasted about ten minutes, but even as the plane's wheels cleared the ground, Lampson knew beyond all doubt that Barnes was a natural pilot. From then on until the youth landed, it was simply a matter of his every maneuver confirming the C. O.'s certain belief.

However, as Lampson congratulated the youth, and told him to get his guns and tanks loaded for the early dawn show, he experienced a strange reluctance to say the words. Why, he had not the faintest idea. It most certainly wasn't fear of what Barnes might do.

Rather it was a sense of fear that something might happen to the pilot before he could settle definitely in his own mind whether he had met Barnes before. That tantalizing thought, obviously ridiculous on the face of things, had bothered him all night long, and robbed him of a lot of good sleep. Nevertheless, he gave his consent, and stuck to his word.

And so, some three-quarters of an hour after Barnes landed from his test hop, Lampson rammed his throttle open and led a six-plane flight up into the air and around toward the German lines. Flying easily he watched Barnes flying Number Two on his right.

At the start the youth was a trifle "ragged," but as the German lines drew closer and closer, Barnes settled down to the task and flew perfect formation. Once they were on the enemy side, Archie gunners went to work. But if their spewing black blotches appearing in the air bothered Barnes any, he didn't show it in his flying. Lampson unconsciously nodded his approval.

"He's okay," he murmured. "Just like those cockeyed medical boards to keep a lad like him off active service. Done it to more than one, too, I'll bet."

As the Archie gunners gave up

hope and quit, Lampson veered left and led the flight northward along the parallel lines of battle. There wasn't much battle, however. It was more of a mob foot race. The Germans running hell-for-leather eastward, deserting lorries, ammo dumps, field guns, and so forth. And the Allied troops hot-footing it after them, kicking up dust with bullets and shells at their heels.

And then suddenly Lampson saw the flight of Fokkers. He saw them because he had expected to see them. They were some of Baron von Meuller's brood that had been opposite Twenty-five for the last few months. A tough crowd in days gone by, but with an armistice in the offing they had become decidedly more cautious than tough. They flew patrols as usual but they wouldn't scrap unless forced to.

WHEN Lampson saw them they were about a mile off to his right, and three or four thousand feet higher. He knew that if he headed straight toward them they'd turn tail and light out for home. They'd done just that many, many times in the last few weeks. So many, in fact, the Twenty-five's pilots ached to catch them off guard just once more before the armistice rang down the curtain on hostilities.

Peering at them intently, Lampson saw the blue and white checkered plane that von Meuller always flew. He drew his lips back in a grin of satisfaction. The sky was full of clouds. In short, it was a perfect setup to bluff von Meuller and his crowd, trap them, and knock off a few planes as a parting salute to the Imperial German Air Service.

Realization and action became one for Lampson. Shoving his Very pistol over the side, he arced a green "retreat" signal across the sky, banked around and led his flight at top speed toward the south. Just as he raced past the fleecy edges of

a cloud layer, he glanced back over his shoulder and chuckled. The Fokkers were still prop-clawing forward as before.

After fifteen minutes of circling through the clouds, Lampson finally cut out into open air and went thundering westward. Dead ahead, and on the same level, the Fokkers were starting to coast slowly around for the return trip back home. In nothing flat, every man of them realized the trick played on them. A red flare curved out from the cockpit of the blue and white checkered ship. Instantly the Fokkers pulled in close to one another and began a wild power dive back toward German territory.

"Not this time!" Lampson grated, and poked his own nose down.

Bracing his body against the dive, he slid his thumbs up to the trigger trips, and held them ready for instant use once the Fokkers got within range. And then suddenly there was the flash of wings off to his right.

In the next split-second he saw Barnes go tearing down past him with the speed of lightning gone haywire. Lampson cursed and steepened his dive for speed to catch up.

"Wait, you fathead!" he shouted. "We'll all be able to get in on this. They're not getting away!"

The roar of his own engine, of course, drowned out his words. But Barnes went on streaking down anyway. So suddenly had he "jumped" the flight that he was within range split seconds before anybody else. Diving straight at the blue and white Fokker, he closed up the gap of air space separating them at terrific speed.

Yet not a single bullet zipped out from his guns. The Fokker pilots knowing full well that they were trapped, had tossed aside their original ideas of escaping eastward. They pulled out of their dive and

plowed forward at the attacking Yanks, all guns blazing.

Hanging right in close behind Barnes, Lampson could see the showers of tracers ripping through the newcomer's wings. But they seemed not to bother Barnes in the least. He thundered down through them as though they didn't exist. Then, when he was practically on top of the blue and white plane, he steepened his dive even more, and let fly with both guns. Lampson cursed disgustedly as he saw Barnes' bursts tear through the tail section of the Fokker.

"Too anxious, the fool!" he snapped. "Over-dived his man and missed the cockpit by a mile. Here, Barnes, this is how it's—"

A yelp of alarm cut off the rest. An all black Fokker flying close to von Meuller had suddenly cut over at Barnes. Spandau guns spewed jetting flames and Barnes' plane staggered drunkenly for a second. Then in a flash it pivoted on wing-tip and darted straight at the all black Fokker. The German tried to swing up, over and down for an easy kill.

HE might as well have tried to loop the moon. Barnes checked him cold, slammed in and raked the Fokker from prop to tail skid with both guns. No plane flying could have weathered that storm of hissing lead. And the all black Fokker was no exception. It changed from jet black to a ball of red fire, and went hurtling earthward.

What Barnes did next, Lampson did not see. He was too busy with his own troubles. Wasting precious seconds watching Barnes, he had allowed two Fokkers to close in, one from either side. Spandau guns were practically spitting in his face. Banging stick and rudder, he whirled out toward clear air just in the nick of time. As it was, an unseen finger plucked at the top of

his helmet and tore a strip of leather off for a souvenir.

But that was all it did, luckily. In the next second he had faked a dive, doubled back, and was pumping made-in-America slugs at one of the Fokkers. He caught the gas tank cold, and score "Two" was chalked up for Twenty-five.

Wheeling to tackle the other one, Lampson took a split-second out for a quick look-see at the fight in general. Twenty-five was piling in hammer and tongs, as though each pilot believed that this would be his last go at von Meuller's brood. And they were doing a swell job. Fokkers were scattered all over the sky.

Off to the left, Barnes was hurtling down once more on the blue and white plane. In some way he had been able to cut it out of the general mixup. However, as Lampson stared that way, he cursed softly.

Once again Barnes was over-diving his man. His tracers were missing the cockpit entirely and slapping down through the tail sections. If Barnes would only steepen his dive a shade, hold his ship steady, he'd be able to nail von Meuller cold.

Evidently, though, the youth hated air scrapping "seasoning." In fact, a moment later there was definite proof of that fact. Von Meuller, racing through the showers of slugs about the tail, slammed over in a wing screaming split-arc and cut hell-for-leather into the shelter of a billowy cloud bank before Barnes could pull out of his dive and swing around. And as though von Meuller's disappearance had been an unspoken signal to the others, every Fokker still flying doubled back and tore for the clouds.

One minute later only "A" Flight, intact, was to be seen in the air. Waiting just long enough for them to drop into formation position, Lampson banked west and flew back to Twenty-five's drome, a queer glint

in his eyes, and a puzzled frown creasing his brows. When the flight had landed, he climbed to the ground and walked over to Barnes.

"Were you ever at the Front, and sent back because you couldn't air scrap?" he asked sharply.

The youth blinked and shook his head instantly.

"Word of honor, no, sir," he said. "Why?"

LAMPSON shrugged.

"Because you fly like a fool, and shoot like a greenhorn," he said. "That was Baron von Mueller, himself, in that ship. You had two sweet cracks at him, and missed both. You over-dived him. If you meet him again, remember that."

The other's twisted lips smiled.

"Yes, sir," he said eagerly. "And I was going to ask you, sir, 'B' Flight goes out in an hour. May I go along? I mean, I'd like to get in as many times as—"

He hesitated, stumbled over his words. Once again the sense of reluctance came to Lampson. Yet something forced him to nod.

"Okay," he said. "But remember what I said about over-diving. And another thing—wait until the flight leader starts the attack. However, I doubt if you'll get any more action. That's the first we've had in weeks."

With a nod the C.O. started to turn away, stopped and turned back.

"I didn't say anything about the plane you got, Barnes, for a reason," he grunted. "It's because you didn't get it—officially. I'm giving you this chance, because—well because you were Chuck Harrison's friend. I may want to stay in the service after the war. But if it got around that I loaned an unknown a ship it—"

"I understand, perfectly, sir," Barnes broke in quietly. "It's not credit I'm after. And thanks, sir."

Two hours later, as he sat in the squadron office doing routine paper

work, Lampson thought of that single statement, "It's not credit I'm after," and cursed softly. Had there been some other meaning behind those words? Or had— He cut off the thought as the door opened and Dawson shouldered inside. The big redhead's face was grim, and there was a brooding, puzzled look in his eyes.

"Maybe I'm nuts, Major," he growled, and hooked a leg over the corner of the desk, "but this Barnes guy. He's no fledgling. When he met von Mueller he handled his ship like a veteran. As well as any of us did."

"He over-dived him twice, and missed," Lampson replied. "That's not good handling of a ship!"

Dawson tugged at his lip with a thumb and forefinger.

"'Tis if you mean it that way," he said slowly. "And I think he did. He wasn't trying to flame von Mueller. But here's the point. I've been thinking I've seen him before. Knew damn well I had. Before he got his face busted up. It came to me a few minutes ago. Sounds dizzy, but I'll bet my last franc it's he!"

"Who?" Lampson asked sharply.

Big Red Dawson drew in his breath slowly.

"He's Frank Bradford."

Lampson stiffened in his seat. He gripped the edge of the desk with steel fingers, as past events came rushing back to him. Nine months ago there had been a Frank Bradford in Twenty-five. A queer, silent sort of lad. No one knew much about him. He wasn't a perfect pilot, yet, at the same time, he was not bad.

That is, until a certain dawn patrol in early March. Bradford had led the patrol. Only three out of seven men had returned. The story made every man's blood boil with white rage. Bradford had not followed the usual course. He led the

flight farther to the south, and straight into a Fokker trap.

When last seen, Bradford had been flying hell-for-leather toward a pilot named Priester, who didn't have a Fokker within a quarter of a mile of him. Bradford, Priester and two others had not returned. And one week later, German bombing raids had been made on Allied dromes and dumps, which had never been attacked before; their existence was believed to be a secret.

In other words, after that dawn patrol, the German high command had mysteriously become acquainted with a lot of valuable information.

To cap it all, a check back over Bradford's service record ended abruptly with his arrival at flight training school in the States. Strangely enough, there had been no record of his civilian life. Perhaps that had been a mistake by the recruiting office. Or perhaps it had been a clever bit of espionage work.

FRANK BRADFORD! The name cut through Lampson's brain. Instinctively he glanced through the window at the tarmac. "B" Flight had been in the air for almost half an hour. And Barnes had gone along with them. Slowly the C. O. turned his head and stared at Dawson.

"You're right, Dawson!" he said in a tight voice. "I wondered, too. Even with those scars there was something familiar. By God, he's that Frank Bradford. But—"

Lampson stopped, scowled darkly and shook his head.

"But what the hell's the idea?" he muttered. "Why should he come back? He knows it's a firing squad for him if he's caught. And, dammit, those scars are real. And—and he did get one Fokker. I saw it!"

"Yeah," Dawson nodded. "But we both saw him *miss von Mueller*, twice. The louse was baiting some kind of a trap, if you ask me. And—"

"'B' Flight!" the C. O. exploded, and leaped from his chair. "He asked if he could go with 'B' Flight. Damn him—"

Lampson didn't finish. Grabbing his helmet and goggles, he bounded out of the squadron office, and over to the tarmac, roaring for greaseballs to swing his prop. Once he was in the pit and the prop was turning over, he taxied out into the wind without waiting for the engine to warm up. Face granite hard, eyes cold as ice, he took off, nursed the engine gingerly and swung around toward the sector which "B" Flight was to patrol.

Hunched forward over the stick, staring ahead, he searched blue sky and white clouds for the first sign of "B" Flight. Seconds dragged by, each one seemingly a minute in length. As he ripped across No Man's Land, German Archie gunners blackened the air about him but he didn't give them so much as a single glance. He kept his eyes riveted on the sky and clouds.

And then, suddenly, without the slightest warning, he skirted a cloud bank and came upon "B" Flight mixing it up with ten or a dozen Fokkers from von Mueller's *Staffel*. The instant he saw them, he spotted Barnes' plane well off to one side of the general scrap. And for the third time that day he saw the newcomer thundering down in a power dive straight at von Mueller's blue and white Fokker.

A curse on his lips, Lampson smashed stick and rudder, and went whipping around and over toward Barnes' diving Camel. If Barnes over-dived this time, let von Mueller get away again—

He suddenly stifled the thought, and grunted aloud in puzzled amazement. Barnes had once again missed von Mueller's cockpit, but his withering blast of bullets had taken a certain toll in the tail of the German's plane. In short, they

had evidently parted a control wire, and the German was helpless to do anything but glide gingerly earthward.

Hardly realizing what he was doing, Lampson went rocketing downward, and lined the Fokker up in his sights. *If* von Meuller was faking, it wasn't going to do him any good. One German squadron commander was slated to go out of the war and the world for keeps. But, even as Lampson started to jab his trigger trips forward, Barnes' plane suddenly cut over and streaked right across the C. O.'s sight. And as it did, the man raised his free hand and waved a curt "Keep off" signal.

Impulsively, Lampson cut his fire and nosed up slightly. By now, von Meuller's Fokker was close to a level patch of ground about a quarter of a mile in back of the American second line. It was then that Lampson realized that Barnes had prevented the German from reaching the safety of his own lines. Right now the lean pilot was riding von Meuller's tail every inch of the way down. However, there was no need of watching for any tricks which the German might try.

WHEN the Fokker was about fifty feet up, the bullet-riddled tail section refused to stand the strain any longer. Like a piece of paper caught by the wind the left elevator tore off and went flip-flopping away.

Instantly the Fokker flat spun crazily, then fell over on wingtip and knifed straight to the ground. A shower of mud and dirt volcanoed upward when it hit. Like so much matchwood, the plane broke apart and went slithering forward in a heap.

Impulsively, Lampson reached out and hauled back his throttle as he saw Barnes glide down to land close to the wreck. Seconds later he set his own plane down, and leaped from the cockpit, and ran over to Barnes,

who was pulling a limp figure out of the Fokker wreckage.

"Bradford!"

Lampson spoke the word quietly, yet clearly. And as he did he rested his hand on his holstered automatic. The lean pilot, bent over with his back to Lampson, slowly went rigid. Dropping the unconscious German, face on the ground, he straightened and turned around.

"I was afraid you, or one of the others, might recognize me too soon," he said evenly. "Well, you're right. I'm Frank Bradford. I can admit it, now."

The C.O. stared at him, grunted, and let his hand drop from his automatic. He nodded at the wrecked Fokker.

"Conscience bothered you, and you wanted to make up for what you did?" he grated. "It doesn't, Bradford! I don't know why I don't shoot you down for the dog that you were. That trap you led them into. Priester, Baker, Harding didn't return. Nor you, either. And one week later the Germans bombed hell out of places we thought they didn't know about. They didn't until you—"

"Hold it!" Bradford's words were like pistol shots. "They didn't *until Priester told them*. Priester was a spy who got into our squadron. The night before that last patrol he told me of a new dump down Clearmont way. Said he'd seen it on the late patrol he made with "C" Flight.

"I led the flight down there to check. Priester hadn't been with us long, and I thought I'd better check before I made any report to you. Well, it was a trap. We ran smack into a skyful of Fokkers. They jumped us, but I saw them let Priester slide right through.

"I went after him—wondering. I found out. He opened fire on me. Four Fokkers joined him. I went down and crashed. The ship caught fire. Some German soldiers pulled me clear. I was in a German base hos-

pital for six months. Then a prison camp. Priester came to see me. He wore his German uniform then."

The youth paused and raised a hand to his disfigured face. White hate glowed in his eyes.

"I was in bad shape in that prison camp," he continued. "They decided to make me one of a batch of hospital cases to be exchanged. The exchange was made through the French lines, yesterday. Once I was inside the French lines I slipped through and made my way to Twenty-five.

"I told you that cock-and-bull story because I knew what the squadron thought. Priester had told me that he'd played his cards so well that I would look like the guilty one, not he. He thought that he might come back some time. So I told you what I did, last night. Prayed that you wouldn't recognize me."

"A nice story, Bradford," Lampson grunted as the other paused. "Only Priester isn't around to *prove it!* And—"

"*That's the point!*" Bradford snapped.

Stepping to one side he pushed the German pilot over with his foot,

reached down and whipped off the helmet and goggles. Lampson took one look and gasped through his teeth.

"My God!" he choked. "Priester—von Meuller!"

"Right!" Bradford nodded. "That's another thing he boasted about when he came to see me. That he had a *Staffel* command, and was opposite Twenty-five. *That's* why I came back. And *that's* why you thought I was over-diving. I wanted to force him down. I wanted to get him *all in one piece!*"

Lampson was still staring at the man in the German uniform who had once been a fledgling in Twenty-five Squadron.

"Huh?" he echoed thickly. "Wanted him in one piece?"

"Hell, yes!" Bradford snapped. "If I'd flamed him down and he'd burned to a crisp you'd never have been able to recognize him."

The C.O. straightened up, reached out and grasped the youth's hands. Words stuck in his throat, but his eyes and the tightness of his grip told Frank Bradford what was in his heart.

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Learn to Fly

A Complete Course in Flying

By LIEUT. JAY D. BLAUFOX

THE HIGHER ALTITUDES

WELL, Boys and Girls,—I hope the flat turns you tried since our last gabfest haven't made you too dizzy, and that you're in the pink for a trip to the astral region.

I think it's about time I told you something about the higher altitudes—that is, the great open space between 8,000 and 15,000 feet. In civilian flying there'll be very little need to fly higher than that.

Rarified Air

Now, the most important thing for you to know, if you don't already know it, is that the higher up you go the more rarified the air becomes. That is, it becomes thinner, and contains less oxygen. There isn't anything dangerous about flying at that height—during the war many of the pilots who flew over the lines, maintained patrols—solitary patrols—at higher altitudes, some at 20,000, others up to 25,000, yes,



and without oxygen tanks too. Guynemer used to stay up there, so did Fonck and Nungesser.

There were quite a few flights up there too—of course, they didn't last long, and the flights were not of long duration for a healthy pilot couldn't stay up there for any great length of time. It was difficult for him to breathe.

The First Climb

The first climb to ten thousand will take a little courage on your part—and a lot of patience. In making the first climb,

I'd do it gradually; take your altitudes in small doses and get used to the newer heights rather than go all the way up at once. Of course, there are some of you who are more intrepid than the others—or think you are—and you'll ignore this suggestion and go right upstairs. But that's all right. Go to it!

When you have stayed up there awhile, and you're ready to come down, do so equally as slowly to gradually accustom yourself to the lower altitudes—and the changes in air pressure. In the higher altitudes and thinner air, you have to breathe deeper—but you do that without thinking about it.

Don't Become Scared!

You may find that your ears bother you a bit—you may get a sort of blocking sensation. If you do, just swallow hard. That will help equalize the pressure inside the head with that outside of it. It's nothing to get scared about. The feeling is slightly uncomfortable, but only for a moment until you correct it—then forget about it. The flight-surgeon will tell you the best way to clear the air passages properly is to hold your nose, keep your mouth closed, then swallow. (See Fig. 1.)

You may have this experience going up, but it is likely that you will notice it more coming down.

Before you try to land your ship, it's a good idea to make a couple of rounds of the field before you come in. This is to help you adjust your eyes to the lower altitudes. The appearance of the ground looks a lot different from the higher places than it does when you are close to it.

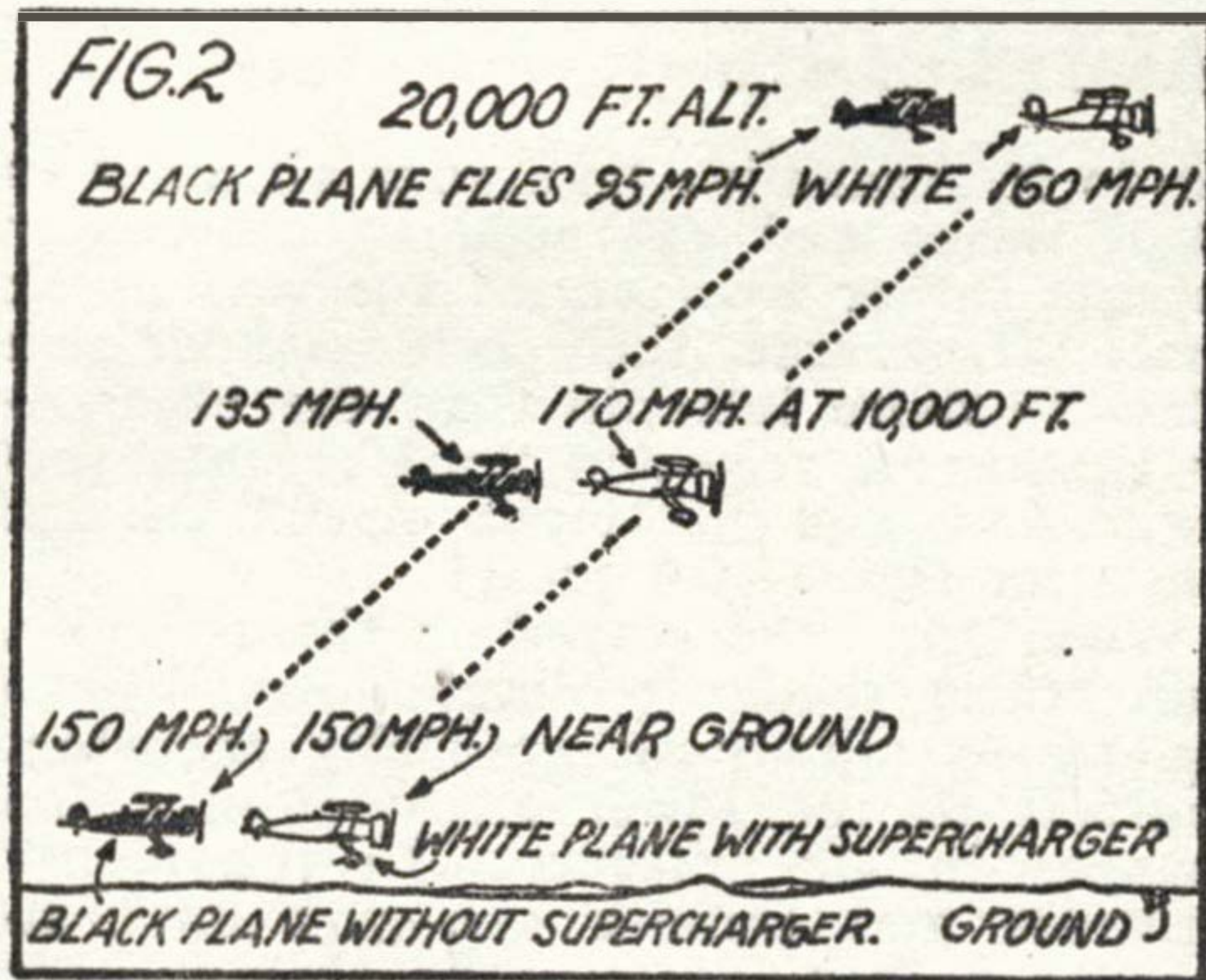
That young lady over there—you had your hand up while I was talking and I couldn't respond to you. Did you want to ask me a question? It's a foolish question and you've changed your mind about asking it? Well, that's a woman's prerogative, but perhaps the question isn't foolish. What did you want to know?

Not So Foolish

If it is difficult for the pilot to breathe at the very high altitudes, wouldn't it be difficult for the engine too? And you call

that a foolish question, do you? I think it shows a keenness of thought, of perception, and you should be commended for the question. You're quite right. The engine does have as much trouble, and perhaps more than the pilot.

When God made man, he saw that he was good, and that he could adapt himself quickly to almost any new condition. When man made the engine, in the beginning he overlooked many things. Experience



taught him that at the higher altitudes the gas mixture has to be adjusted. I seem to recall mentioning something about that in the lessons on engines. Didn't I tell you that at the higher altitudes the mixture had to be made leaner? I think I did. I also mentioned the fact that when you return to the lower altitudes the mixture had to be readjusted to richer gas content.

Decrease in Power

Another thing at the higher spaces there is a noticeable decrease in power, flying speed is lessened unless the engine is equipped with a supercharger. I told you all about that in a previous lesson—that is, gave you the mechanical details of it, but here are a few facts I didn't mention before.

Supercharging

Supercharging an engine is a system of pumping air into the manifold of the carburetor, of a density equal to that of the lower altitudes, and therefore the mixture adjustment at the higher altitudes is not necessary. If the supercharger were not included, you would have to make the adjustments by the medium of the adjustment screw you'd find on the instrument board. At six or seven thousand feet you'd have to start leaning out the mixture on the climb. On your way down again, you'd readjust the screw until the mixture was made richer.

With the supercharger unit in the engine, the power plant will work almost as well at the higher altitudes as it does nearer the earth.

Loss of Speed

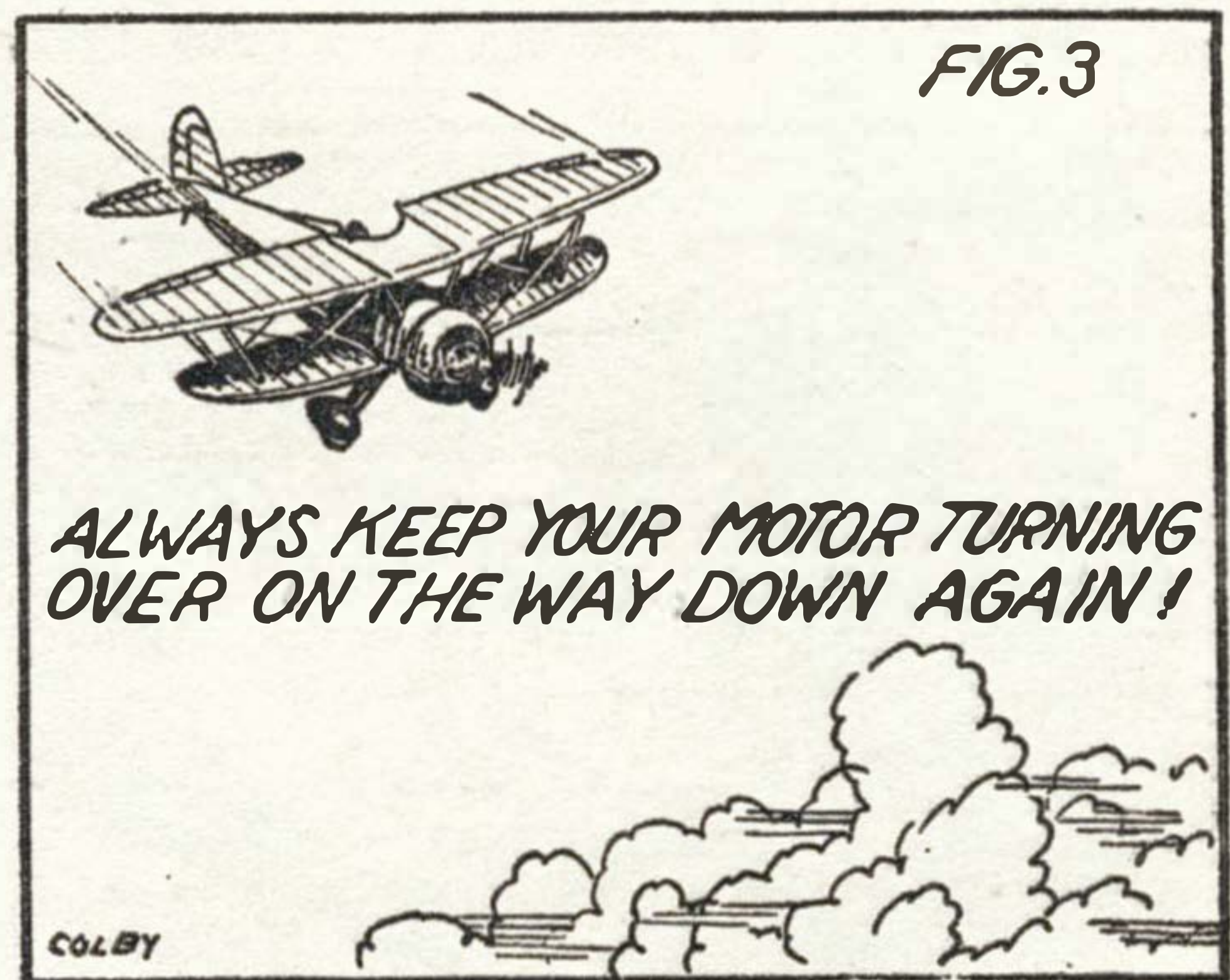
Let me illustrate that. If a plane without this supercharging unit flies near the ground at a normal speed of 150 miles per hour, at 10,000 feet its speed will be reduced to approximately 135 miles an hour. At 20,000 feet its speed would be still lower or around 92 to 96 miles an hour.

The higher the altitude, and the more rarified the atmosphere, the greater the loss in horsepower, and subsequently loss of speed. (See Fig. 2.)

However, a supercharged plane flying normally at 150 miles an hour near the ground does not lose speed nor horsepower with altitude but rather gains it at a specified altitude for which it is designed to work best, say 10,000 feet, where the speed is increased about 20 miles an hour.

Of course, when it takes to greater altitudes, it will lose some of the speed it has gained. I think designers estimate the loss to be about ten miles an hour between 10,000 and 20,000 feet and beyond that four miles an hour for each additional 1,000 feet it rises.

A supercharged plane, you see, will, flying normally at sea level at 150 miles an hour, do approximately 170 miles an hour at 10,000 feet. At 20,000 feet it will be reduced to 160 miles an hour. At 30,000 feet it will still have superspeed, however, in the thinner atmosphere and its speed will still be approximately 120 miles per



hour. So you see, supercharging a plane is a good thing for it when it has to fly at high altitudes. Most of the Air Transports carry superchargers—in fact, I should have said all of them do.

Later on, in the talk on Instruments, I'll tell you how to use your Tachometer to help you adjust the carburetor mixture for the higher altitudes.

Getting Back to Earth

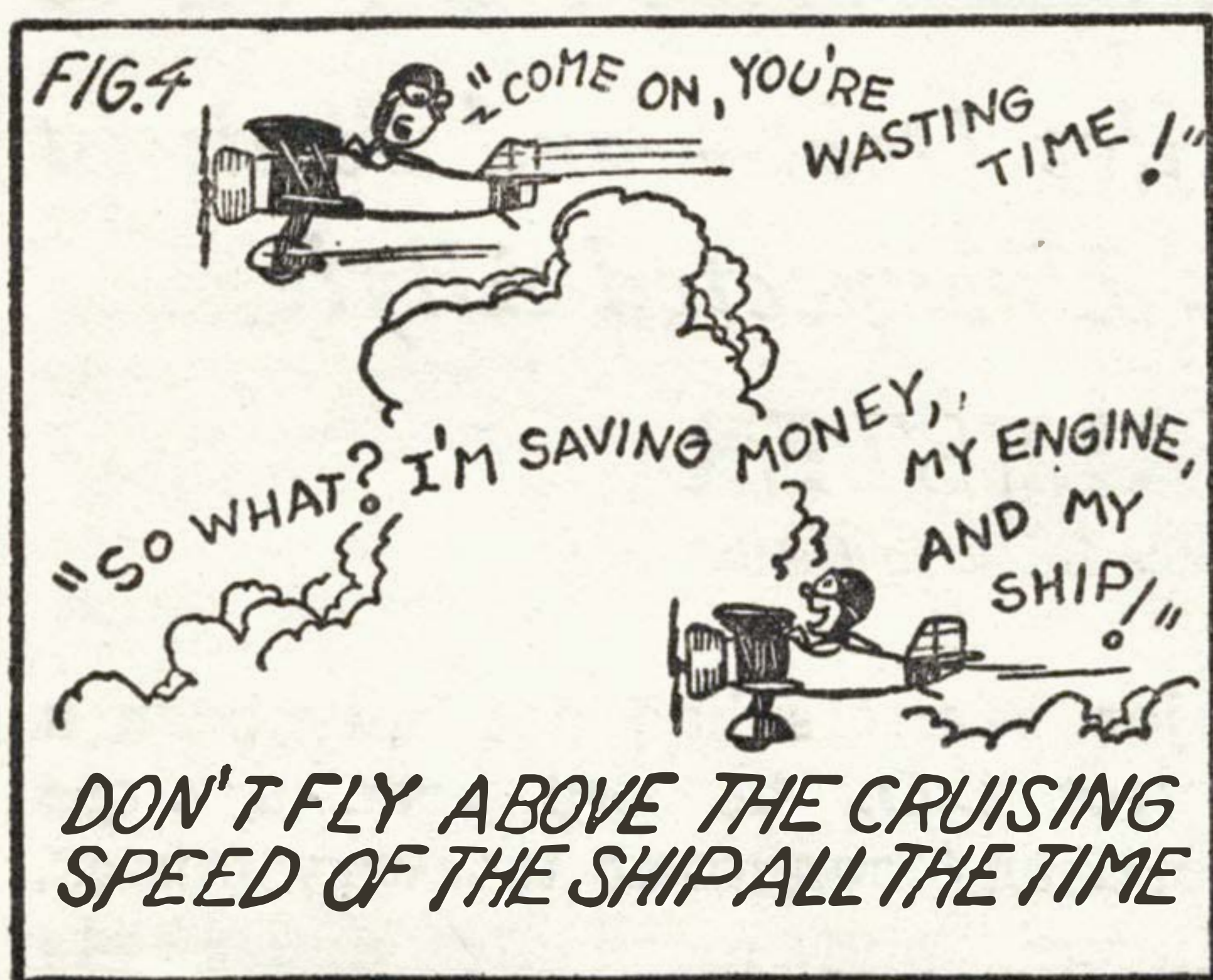
Now for a few pointers on what to do in getting back to earth from a great height. First, and one of the most important, don't cut the motor completely down when making a long glide back. Always keep it running just above idling. If you stop the engine, particularly at the higher

altitudes, and in cold weather, by the time you reach the place where you'll want to gun it on again, you'll find that it is quite cold and won't turn over. A bad thing at any time, so don't ever switch it completely off. Keep it running. (See Fig. 3.)

If you're in a great hurry to get to any place, keep at the low altitudes within reason of safety, of course—not too low where the country you're flying over is hilly or mountainous. Always remember never to fly lower than the Rules of the Air permit, but just high enough so you won't have to change the mixture. Anything between 2,000 to 5,000 is okay.

Raising the Ante

Another thing, don't fly above the rated cruising speed of the ship. Now why do I say that? Anybody? Where are the hands? Isn't there anyone who knows why a pilot should not fly faster than the nor-



mal cruising speed of the ship? Don't tell me my monologue lulled the whole class to sleep. Swell! There's a birdman in the corner—what's the answer, Buzzard—I'll give you three guesses.

You only need one—good! Let's have it! If you fly at a faster rate of speed than

the normal cruising speed of the ship you raise the ante of the trip! By that I take it you mean that the cost of the trip will be greater. So it will. But how? In the gas consumed per mile. That's right.

Speed Costs Like Blazes

You see—if you fly at full throttle all the time, you're going to get additional speed, that's true, but you're going to use a lot more gas to gain that speed. Speed costs like blazes. (See Fig. 4.)

What was that, Miss? Why not go to higher altitudes where you don't need such a rich mixture? Well, your thought is all right but you seem to have forgotten what I told you a few minutes ago. You say you won't use so much gas—but why have you forgotten what I told you about loss of power and subsequent loss of speed at the higher altitudes?—That's what happens you know—particularly if you haven't a supercharger in the engine.

No! It's more economical to stay at the lower altitudes. Read the book of instructions that comes with each airplane—and stick to the rules included in it and you'll get the best out of your ship at the least possible cost.

No Guesswork!

Designers are not clucks! They know what the ship or engine can stand—they know how more efficiently both will work at what altitudes or under what conditions—they try to leave as little as possible to guesswork.

Now go thou and do likewise!

And the next time we meet, I'll tell you about flying in storms, clouds, fogs and some such stuff and business.

So keep your chins in flying position—don't stick them out too far—and see what you can do at the higher altitudes until I see your smiling faces in the next issue of SKY FIGHTERS.

Balmy days!

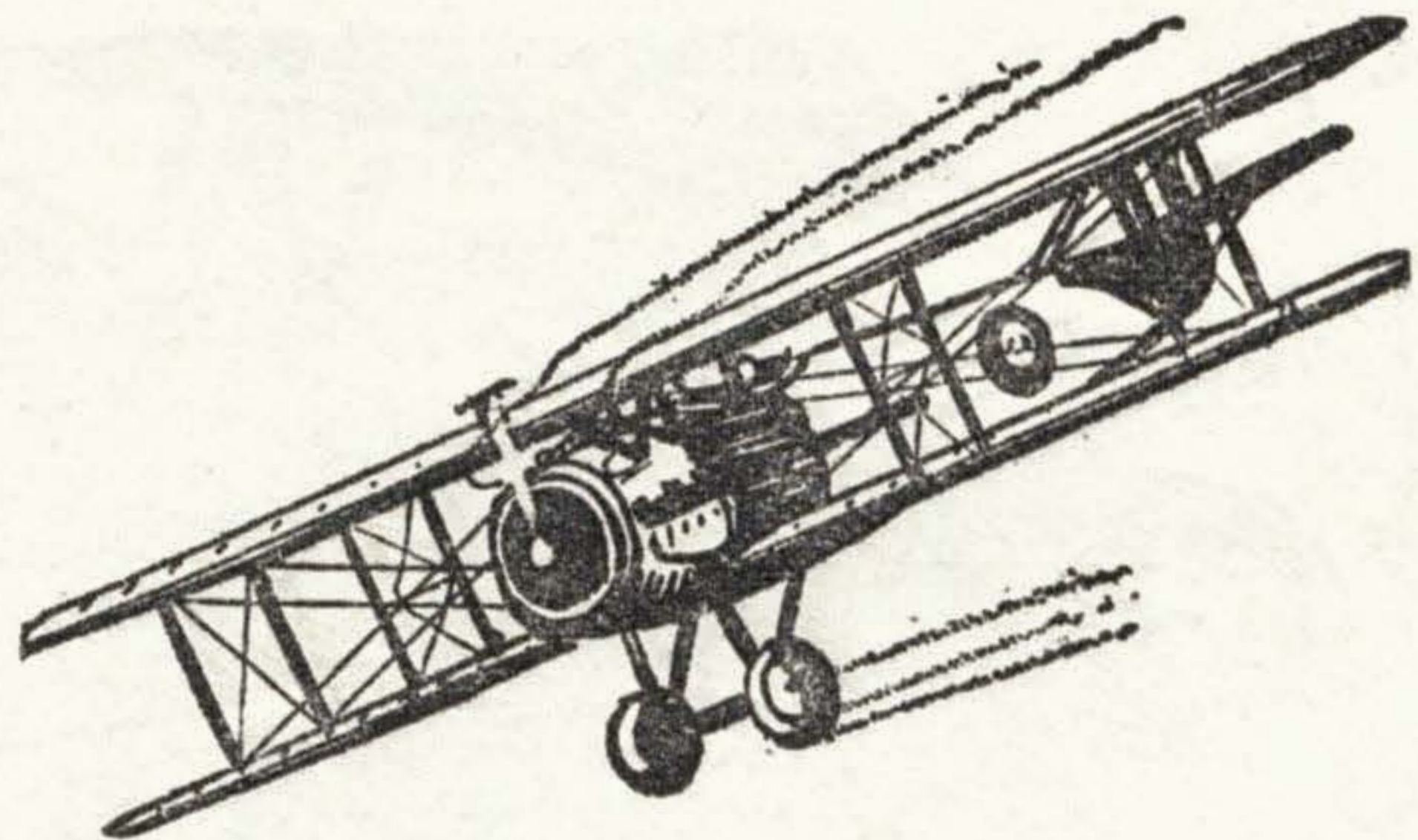
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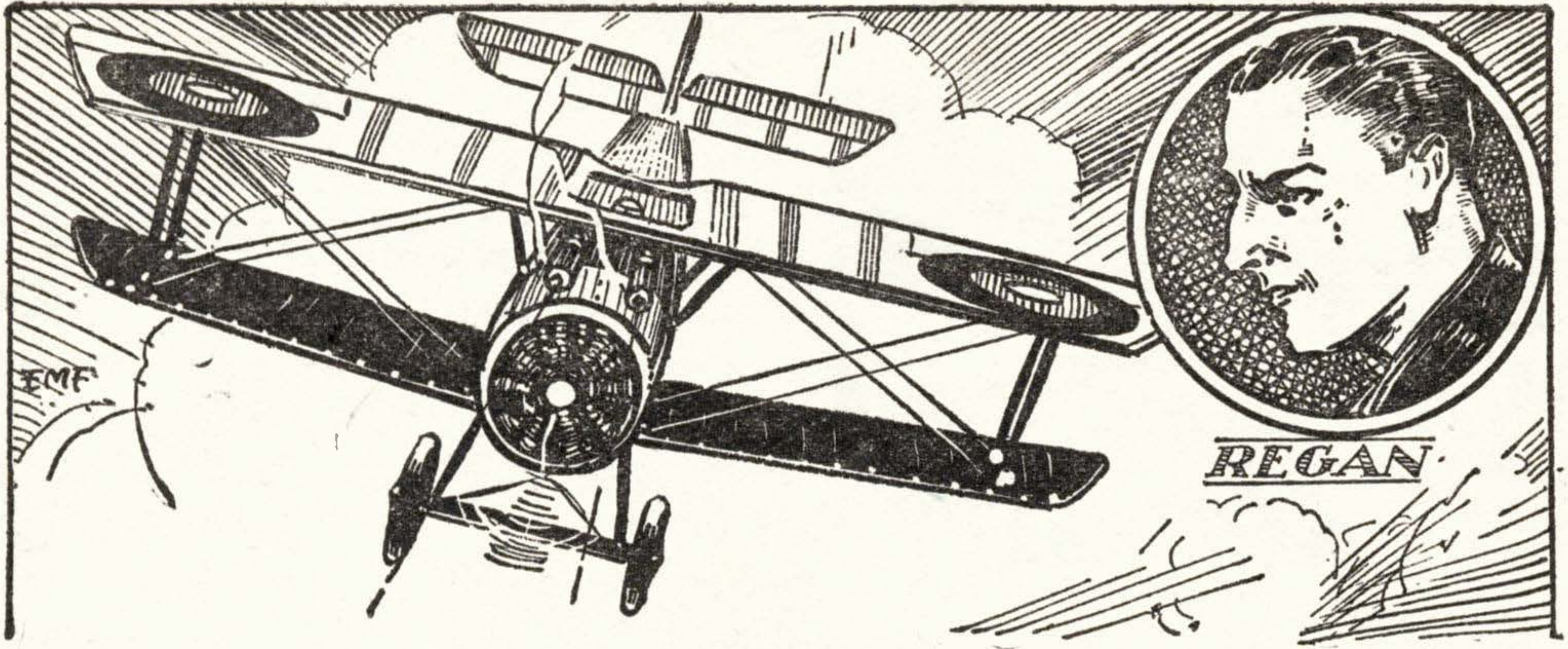
The Lone Eagle

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WINGS OVER HELL By **LIEUT. SCOTT MORGAN**

In the Next Issue of SKY FIGHTERS



ACE KILLER

Rex Regan Zooms to Pay a Bullet Debt—and Finds in the Flame-Swept Skies an Unexpected Ally!

By **BRUCE McALESTER**

Author of "Blood of the Eagle," "Aces Back to Back," etc.

SULLEN gloom hung so heavy in the mess of the 98th Yank Pursuits you could have cut it with a knife. The reason was death; the death of the squadron's C.O., Major Walters, who had been shot down the day before by one Baron von Schultz, Germany's leading ace on that section of the Front.

To each of the veteran sky eagles of the 98th it was a personal loss.

Major Walters had not only been a perfect C.O., he had been a close friend and confidant to every officer, non-com, and mechanic under his command.

Slumped down in the depths of a binge-battered easy chair, Rex Regan, senior pilot of the outfit, stared flint-eyed at the half-finished cognac in his huge paw. Presently he stirred himself and glanced at Buck Dutton,



The Fokker suddenly exploded and went slithering down

"A" Flight leader, seated a few feet from him.

"When did the colonel say our new C.O. would arrive, Buck?" he grunted.

The other shook his head.

"He didn't!" he growled. "For the ten millionth time, that phone call I took was from the colonel saying that some damn fledgling was on his way up from pilots' pool. Forget what he said the kid's name was."

Regan grunted again, took a sip of his drink.

"That's right, you did tell me," he murmured. "A fledgling, huh? Hell of a fine time to send a fledgling to this outfit! Me, I can't be bothered breaking in greenhorns. Soon as its light, I'm going out looking for that bum, von Schultz. And I'm going to keep looking until I find the rat. God—when I think of yesterday! The major trying to clear his jammed guns, and that louse drilling him all the way to the ground!"

"Yeah!" echoed Buck Dutton savagely. "And us too far away to give him any help! I wish to hell it had been me that had gone down on that balloon, instead of him!"

SILENCE settled over the room. As a matter of fact it was not broken for almost three-quarters of an hour. It was the rattle of the door latch that did it. Every eye turned that way, saw a thin, slightly squint-eyed second lieutenant in ill-fitting uniform step inside and gaze rather bewilderedly about.

"Shut the door!" Regan barked at him. "Want to freeze us out? Who the devil are you?"

The thin officer swallowed hard, and seemed to squint all the more as he fixed his eyes on Rex.

"Sorry, sir," he said, and pushed the door shut. "I'm Second Lieutenant Becker. This is Eighty-nine Squadron?"

"Becker!" Buck Dutton suddenly exclaimed. "That's the name, Rex!

He's the fledgling the colonel spoke about."

Regan took time out to survey the newcomer from head to toe. He wasn't particularly pleased with what he saw. But then, he wasn't pleased with anything at the moment. He half waved his hand toward the zinc bar.

"Welcome to Eighty-nine, Becker," he grunted. "Pour yourself a drink. I suppose you know you're joining this outfit at a pretty lousy time? We lost our C.O. yesterday."

The fledgling didn't answer immediately. He looked from pilot to pilot as though mentally sizing up his new war comrades. Eventually he nodded.

"Yes, sir, I heard about it. I'd like to say, I'm sorry. I only hope I'll be able to play a small part in avenging the loss. Major Walters was a fine man. I'd met him."

"The best!" Regan snapped. "But just forget that helping to avenge stuff, Becker. We don't need your help. Besides, you're going to cool your heels here at the field until the rest of us have taken care of that job."

A stubborn glint crept into the squinting eyes.

"That may take time, Captain," the newcomer said. "And— Well, after all, I was assigned here to do my share. The sooner I start doing it the sooner I'll be repaying what the Government spent for my flight training. If you understand what I mean, sir?"

"I do!" Regan said gruffly. "But you're still grounded until I say different. Ordinarily, Becker, I'd break you in on patrol work right off the bat, but— Well, you'll have to wait. We'll have enough trouble doing our immediate job without a greenhorn getting in our way. Now just take it easy and go have that drink I offered you."

The fledgling made as though he was going to speak, but changed his

mind. Instead, he glanced out the mess window toward where the coming day was just a faint grey line low down on the eastern horizon, and then went over to the bar and poured cognac into a glass right up to the brim. He downed it all in two gulps.

Rex, watching him, grunted. That was the telltale sign of a fledgling desperately trying to adjust himself to the realization that he was now in the front row of the war, and not safe and secure in flight training school.

"Here's hoping he doesn't pay back the Government with *our* cognac," Rex heard Buck Dutton murmur under his breath. "It takes practise to down a slug that size, and keep it on your stomach. If he does, maybe I'll begin to like the guy."

Any comment on the subject by Rex Regan was stopped short as the faint throbbing drone of a Mercedes engine suddenly came to every ear. As one man the entire squadron were on their feet and pounding out through the mess door onto the tarmac. High up and toward the east a faint blur was streaking down. Even as Regan's eyes picked it out against the shadowy dawn clouds, the blur dropped another five hundred feet.

A few of the pilots raced toward their planes, bawling for mechanics to swing the props. The ground pit gunners were already at their stations swinging their defense weapons around to train them on the diving blur.

Regan, however, did not move a step once he reached the tarmac. One good look told him that the diving plane was not coming down to strafe the field. A moment later he saw the outline of the Fokker. And a moment after that he saw the white skull and crossbones painted on both sides of the jet black fuselage.

"Von Schultz!" he growled. "Coming over to rub it in. God, if I was only in the air now!"

He remained right where he was, though. The Fokker's speed could take it to Paris before Regan could warm up his Camel and get off. And then the reason for the visit was made plain. A Very flare arced out from the diving plane. In the whitish glow every man on the field saw the colored message streamer whipping earthward. At practically the same instant the Fokker hauled out of its dive and went zooming high into the heavens.

Rex won the race to the message dropper by a good ten yards. Feverishly he tore open the pocket flap and pulled out the folded sheet inside. With a start he saw that it was addressed to him. In a single motion he smoothed out the paper and read the message:

To Captain Regan:

I shall be glad to meet you at eight thousand feet over Issy at six-thirty sharp.
von Schultz.

"What the hell?" Dutton exclaimed over Regan's shoulder. "Did you send him a challenge, Rex?"

"No," Regan shook his head. "I guess the louse wanted to beat me to it. He got the major, and now he thinks he'll get the next in command. The hell he will! Sergeant Paxton! Get my ship set. I'm taking off in half an hour!"

LESS than twenty minutes later Regan waved the chocks away and taxied his plane out onto the dawn-lighted field. Swinging into the wind he gave his Camel full gun and took off. Holding the nose up he went clear to eight thousand feet, leveled off and glanced at the watch on the instrument dial. The hands showed exactly fifteen minutes past six. Throttling slightly, he banked around and flew dead-on toward the shell-shattered village of

Issy some few miles behind the German lines.

The sun was now well up over the eastern horizon, but a thick ground mist, and cloud scud, made it appear little more than a huge ball tinted a dull crimson. As a result, however, its dull glow cast millions of ever-changing shadows about the heavens. Hunched forward over the stick, Regan stared hard at the shadows to make sure that one of them wasn't the sudden flash of Fokker wings.

Von Schultz had stated the location of the meeting place, but that was no assurance that the German ace would be there. A tricky, ruthless foe he would, if he could, sneak up on his victim and make the kill without showing himself. Knowing the man's air fighting tactics, Regan kept his eyes peeled for a surprise attack every inch of the way to Issy.

SUDDENLY, when he was a good two miles or so from the town he whirled in the seat and stared hard off his left wings. Sun-tinted cloud scud greeted him, but he automatically reached up his free hand toward the loading handles of his guns.

"Saw the disc of a spinning prop, or I'm a liar!" he grated.

A moment later and his eyes confirmed his words. A full half mile off his wings the blurred outline of a plane streaked out of one strip of cloud scud and went darting from view into another. What really brought the frown to Rex's brows was the fact that the plane was heading due east, toward the northern tip of Issy. Only a flash glance had been his, and during that time he had been unable to make out the type of plane.

Deepening his scowl he unconsciously bunched his free fist.

"If that's you horning in, Buck Dutton!" he growled, "you can just split-arc about and get to hell home!

I was closest to the major, so I rate first crack. Besides, the louse sent that challenge to me!"

And at that very moment it happened!

The yammer of Spandau guns chattered through the dawn air. Even as Rex whirled in the seat to the right, unseen steel fingers poked a row of holes in his lower right wing tip. Not even taking time to glance up he slammed the stick over, jumped down on right rudder hard, and thundered into a tight power spin. At the end of three turns he pulled the ship out in a wing-screaming zoom.

Then, and then only, he stared upward. A jet black comet was racing down on top of him. A jet black comet with a white skull and crossbones on each side of the fuselage. And the snout of the comet was spitting twin streams of jetting flame.

Flattening out of the zoom he skidded into the clear, cursed savagely that he'd wasted precious seconds trying to spot the strange ship off his left wings, when all the time von Schultz was sneaking up on him from the right and above.

Fighting the controls he cut back in a dime turn, got the jet black Fokker in his sights for a moment, and jabbed both trigger trips forward. The two Vickers cowed into the nose answered his touch instantly. But by that time von Schultz had wheeled to the right and Rex's bullets tore harmlessly past the German's tail.

Belting stick and rudder Regan followed the Fokker around, and had the grim satisfaction of seeing his tracers bounce off the Mercedes' cowling. But only for a second. A flashing half roll brought the German down and under the Yank ship. Up came the nose, and as Rex went skidding wildly out into the clear, a white-hot spear of flame sliced up his left thigh.

"One for you, louse!" he gritted

through clenched teeth. "Now, it's my turn!"

As the words left his lips he flung the ship into a wild chandelle that made every wire and strut tremble from the excess strain. However, the wings stayed on, and he went thundering straight down at the German plane. Von Schultz tried desperately to kick his Fokker out from under. Rex laughed harshly and jabbed both trigger trips.

That's all he did, however. The laughter died on his lips. Rather it changed to a snarl of rage as he banged his free fist on the cocked loading handles of his guns. It was useless. It was as though twice in a row the gods of fortune were riding a killer's wings. Both of Regan's guns remained silent, hopelessly jammed. And von Schultz, sensing the truth in a flash, came sweeping up and around for the kill.

"You damn well won't!"

Regan howled the words at the top of his voice, and threw his Camel into a vicious power spin. If he could only hold off the German long enough he might be able to whip out of the spin at low altitude and go hedge-hopping hell for leather back to his own field. The war would still be going on tomorrow. And for a pilot with jammed guns—tomorrow was another day.

If the spin could spoil von Schultz' aim! The thought raced through Regan's brain as he whipped downward. His heart stood still, and the back of his neck tingled. Any second and hot lead might bite into him.

"Twice in a row!" he grated. "Just the way the major—"

A SNARL of guns choked off the rest. He stiffened, and hauled the ship out of the spin in a frantic effort to ruin the German's aim. But as he went zooming up he suddenly realized that the German wasn't aiming at him. In fact, von Schultz

wasn't aiming his guns at anybody. The man was concentrating every ounce of his ability on a desperate, frantic effort to get out from under a Yank Camel that was covering him with hissing Vickers bursts like a tent. Pop-eyed, Regan stared at the Camel and saw that it bore no markings at all. There wasn't even a squadron marking on the fuselage. But without question the pilot at the stick was an air scrapper of long experience. Von Schultz tried every trick in the bag, and some that he must have thought up on the spur of the moment. But the mysterious Camel pilot was his complete master in everything.

Finally, as a last resort, the German flung his ship into a furious power dive toward the ground. Instantly the Camel pilot seemed to go to work in earnest. He tore down after the German, fired a long burst, cut his fire for a moment, and then fired again. Across the air space Regan could see the tracers tear through the German's left wings, then through the right wings, and then into the turtleback of the fuselage. "Bracketing him!" he muttered aloud. "Giving the louse a taste of slow death. He'll— That's it!"

It was. A long burst plowed into the cockpit of the diving Fokker. As though an invisible giant had smashed down his steel fist, the Fokker somersaulted through the air, suddenly exploded, and went slithering down the last five hundred feet in a shower of smoking embers.

"God, what a kill!"

Regan choked out the words, and went slanting down toward the other Camel that was now hauling out of its dive. Before he could get down to its level the other plane cut away from him and went racing southwest across the Yank lines. He swung in behind, grimly determined eventually to learn the identity of the ace killer. Seconds later a gasp of surprise burst from his lips. The

other plane was heading straight for 89's field. Twenty minutes later it landed, he right after it. Taxiing up to the line he legged out and tore over to the other plane. The thin, squint-eyed Second Lieutenant Becker climbed from the pit, turned and regarded him gravely.

"You need a damn sight better gunnery officer in this squadron, Captain," the man said. "Your ammo seems to be pretty rotten."

Regan gulped, advanced on the man. "Say, what the—"

The other's smile cut him off.

"It was the best way to work it, Captain," Becker said. "You were Major Walters' closest friend, so you rated first chance at von Schultz. I wanted to be around for the second crack—that *I* rated. So when I flew down here this morning I dropped a challenge from you on his field. Then I came on and landed about

half a mile from here. I walked the rest of the way. You see, as the new C.O., I knew that you lads would resent my horning in on the von Schultz mess. But as a fledgling, you wouldn't pay any attention to me. So I arranged with the colonel to hold off Becker's arrival for a day or so. It worked out as I had hoped. You had your chance, I had mine—and von Schultz is dead."

Regan stared at him.

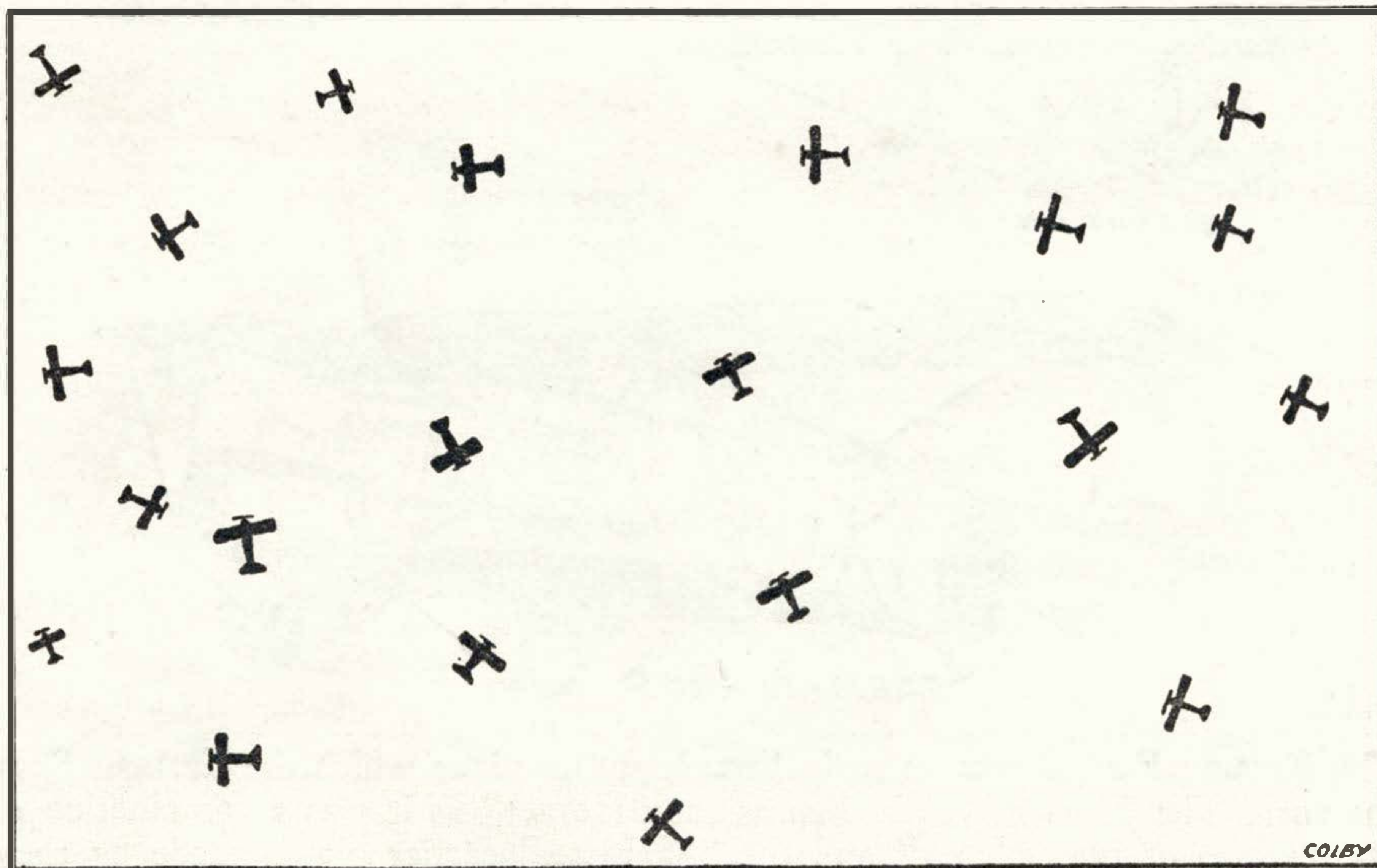
"Then you aren't—" he began.

"Becker?" the other echoed. "No. I'm Frank Walters. Your C.O. was my older brother. Now do you understand?"

Regan nodded slowly.

"Yes," he said. "And thanks for doing it your way. I— Well, I think that's the way the major would have wanted it, too. His brother? Hell, no wonder you didn't blink when you downed that straight cognac!"

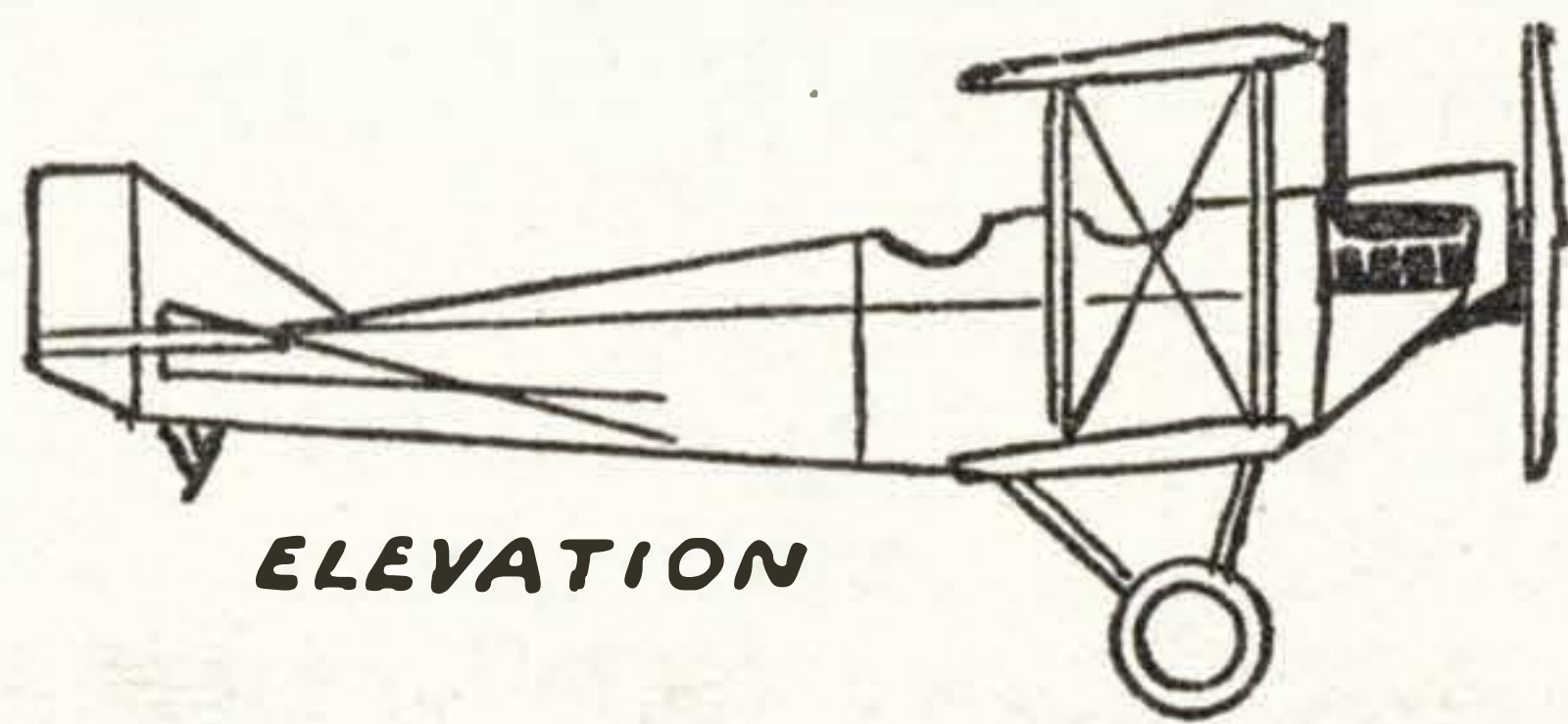
ACK EMMA'S BRAIN-TEASER



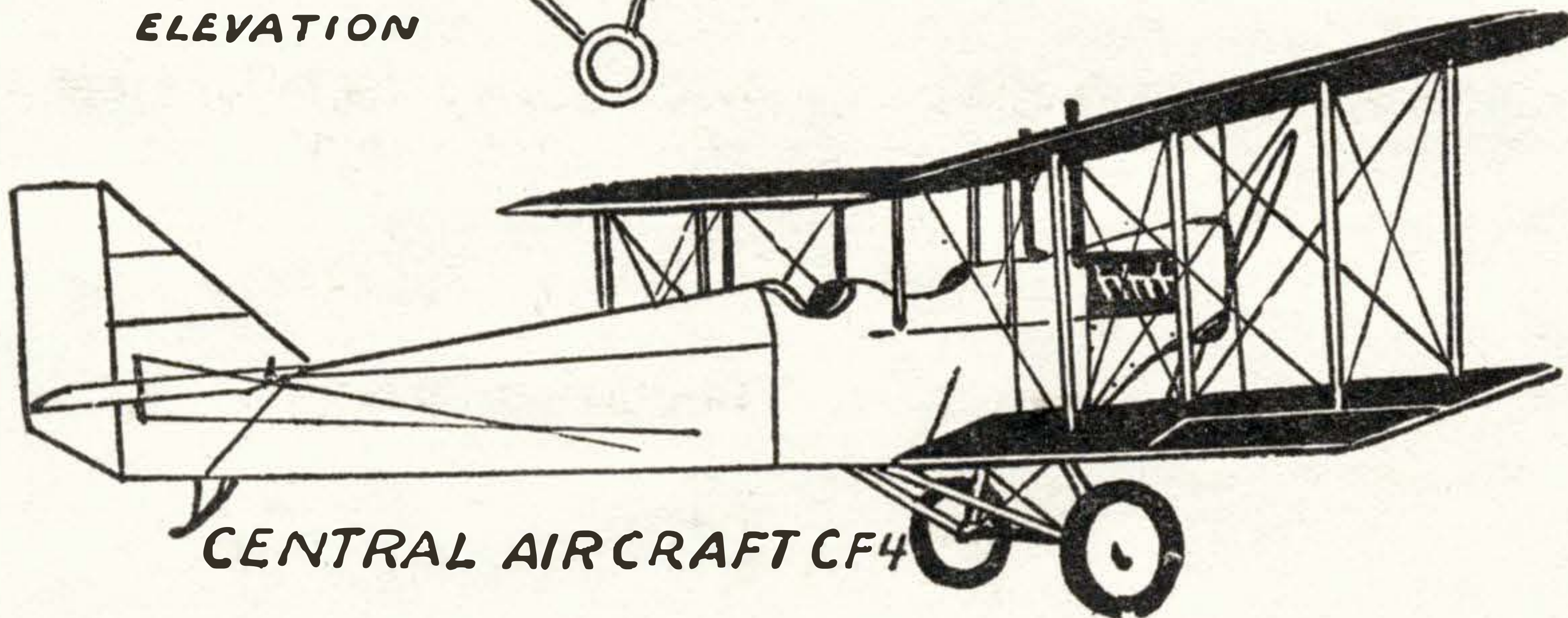
HERE ARE twenty-one planes. By drawing three straight lines from one side of the blackboard to the other, all crossing at the same point somewhere within the boundaries of the sketch, you can divide this drawing into six areas. Of course, you say, but wait—the hard part of this is to get one ship in one area, two in another, three in another, four in another, five in another, and in the last area six. Get your pencils and rulers and try it. The three lines may cross the sketch anywhere you like but must all cross at the same point somewhere in the sketch, dividing the ships. If you can't find how it's done look on page 127 for the solution. Happy landings!

LIBRARY OF

GREAT BRITAIN



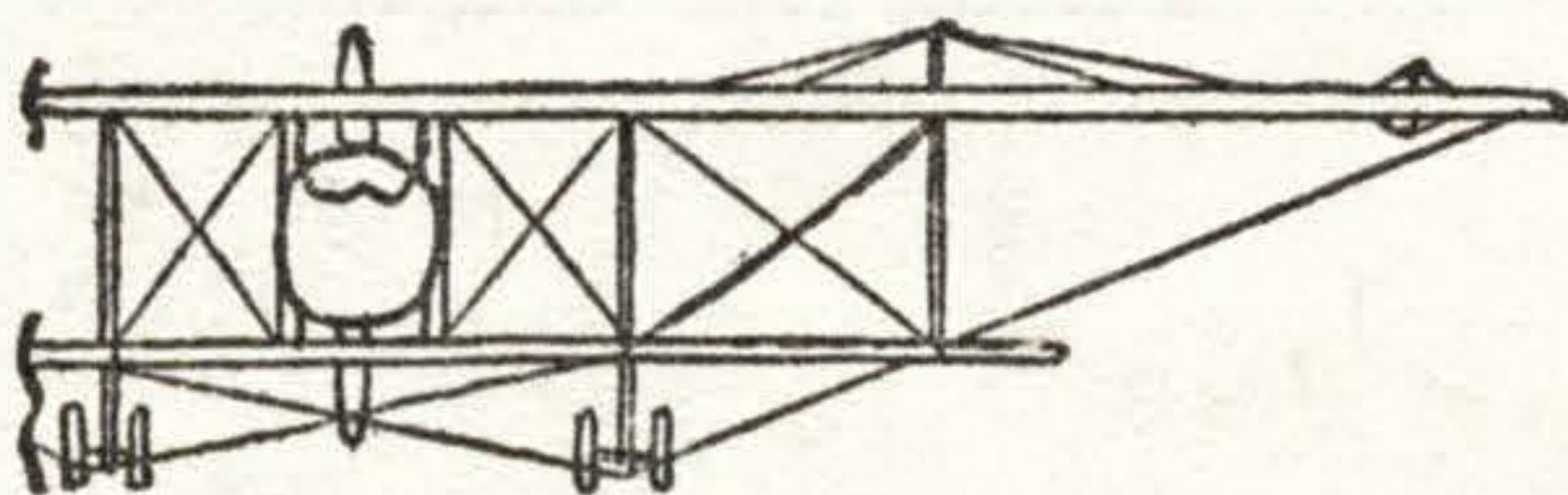
ELEVATION



CENTRAL AIRCRAFT CF4

The Central Aircraft C F 4 was a British two-seater which was built with the idea of producing a satisfactory training craft whose upkeep was low. This important factor was developed through interchangeable parts being used. The C F 4 had a low landing speed of 28 m.p.h. but it could make 70 m.p.h. low down speed. Dual controls were fitted. The engine was a Renault of 70 h.p. It was a large ship with a double bay of struts and a short pair connecting the fuselage and top wing on either side. Dimensions: Span, about 34 ft.; length, 24 $\frac{3}{4}$ ft.

FRANCE



ELEVATION

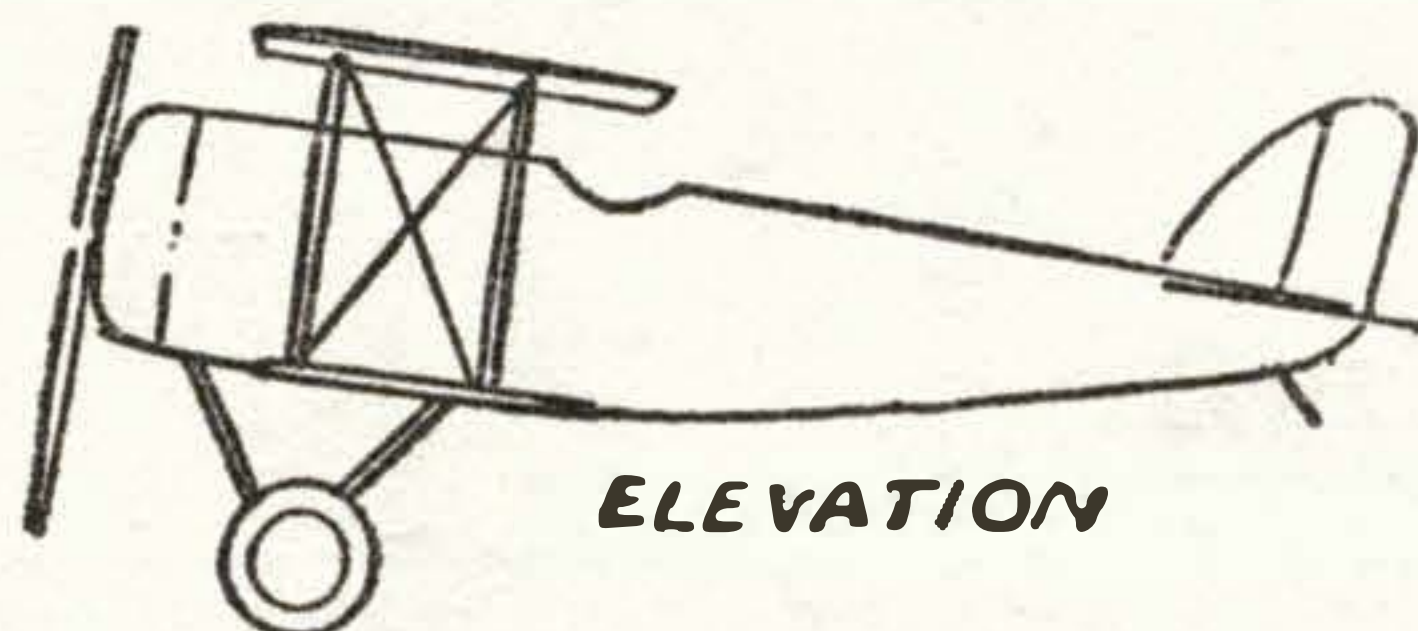


FARMAN F40P

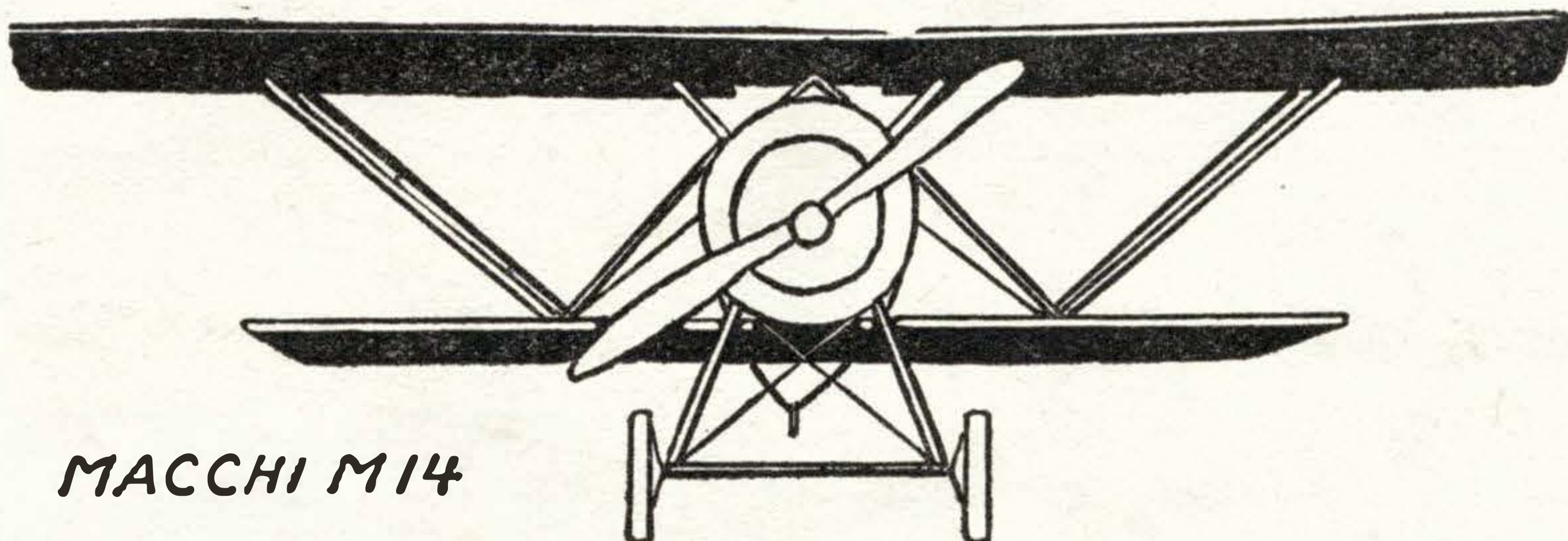
The Farman F 40 P was an early French pusher plane which the Farman Bros. put out. The F 40 P was known as the "Horace" as it was a combination of the features of the "Henry" and the "Maurice," earlier planes made by these famous brother designers. The Lorraine-Dietrich engine was mounted on the back of the small nacelle between the tail booms. The pilot and observer sat well forward of the leading edge of the wings. The undercarriage had short skids between the wheels. Dimensions: Span, 58 ft.; length approx. 29 ft.; height 12 ft.

WAR PLANES

ITALY



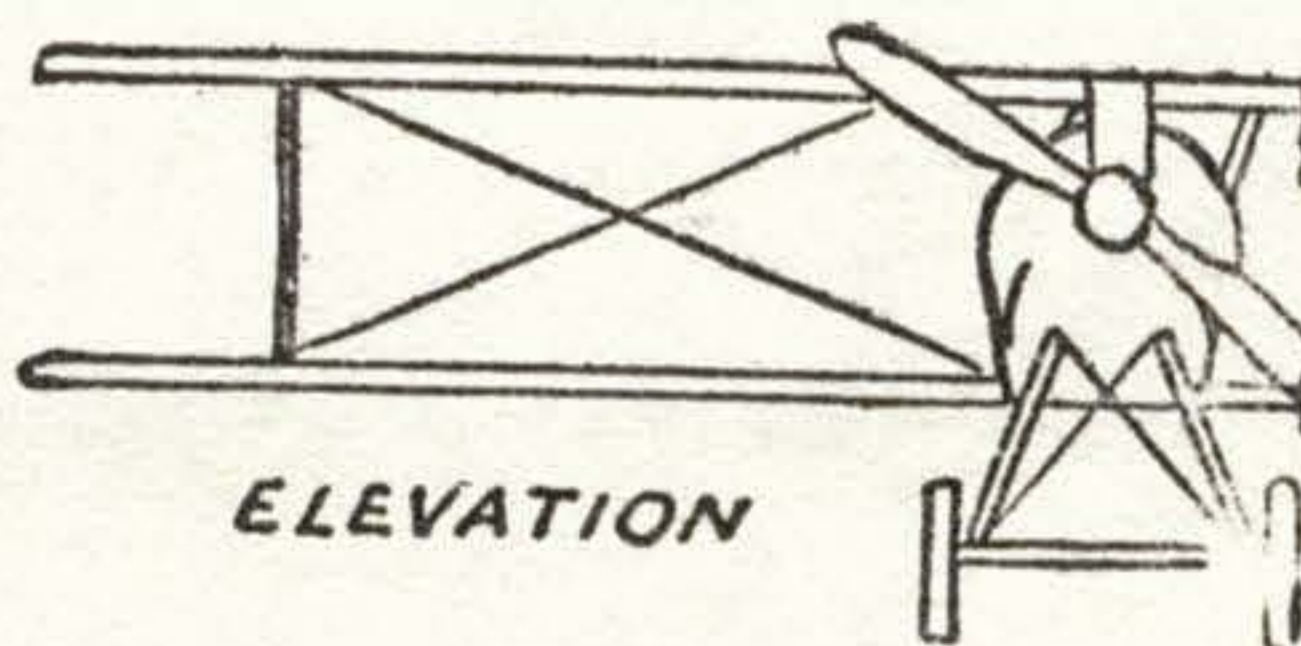
ELEVATION



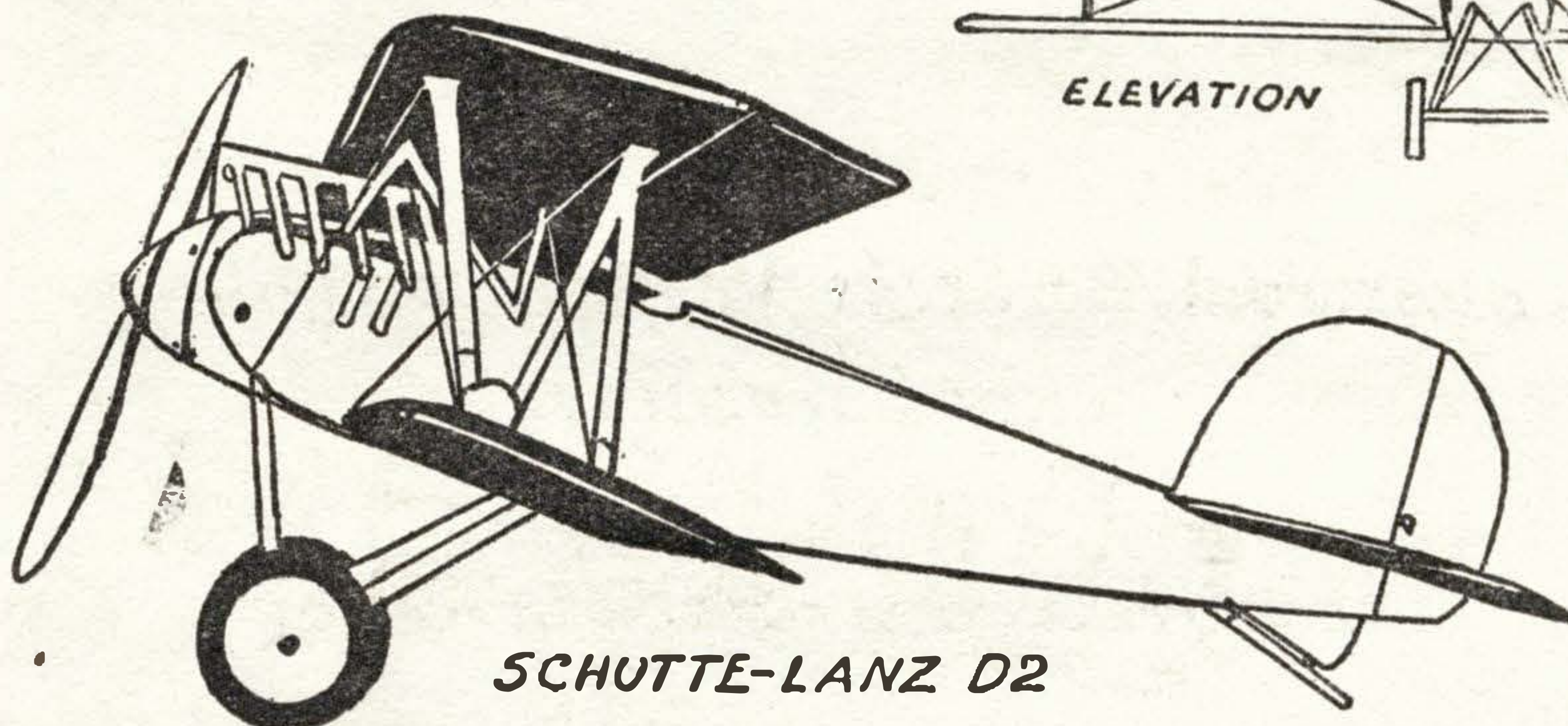
MACCHI M14

The Macchi M14 was a single-seater fighter made by the Italian coach building firm, Societa Anonima Nieuport-Macchi. Many of their designs were for all kinds of water craft but the M14 was a land hunter. It made 113 m.p.h. with its 110 h.p. Le Rhone motor. The bottom wing was much shorter than the top one. They were joined by a very unorthodox type of interplane bracing. Instead of being perpendicular they formed a series of triangles when viewed from the front. No bracing wires were necessary. Dimensions: Span, 26 ft.; length, 18 ft.

GERMANY



ELEVATION



SCHUTTE-LANZ D2

The Schutte-Lanz D2 was a little known German single-seater biplane. The company was a famous airship building concern but they also produced quite a few models of airplanes. Their early pusher types were not very successful but that didn't keep them from trying even a triplane as well as twin engined jobs. Their 1917 and 1918 fighters were better designed. The D2 had sturdy N struts and a trim appearance. The Mercedes of 160 h.p. was housed in a box-like structure in the cigar shaped fuselage nose. The visibility of the pilot left by this protruding addition was poor forward.

HELLION'S WINGS



*Like a comet he dropped on top
of von Weinfred*

*Chattering Vickers Are Not Swift Enough for a Pilot of
Mystery Who Seeks Vengeance Against
Hun Treachery!*

By ROBERT SIDNEY BOWEN

Author of "Commander Satan," "The Miracle Ace," etc.

TEETH clenched, both hands gripping the stick, Major Hartney, C.O. of the 37th Pursuits, slammed the Bentley-powered Camel over on wingtip, then hauled it back and tried desperately to zoom up out of the showers of hissing Spandau slugs that were slithering in at him from all directions.

Beads of cold sweat oozed out on his forehead, and trickled down under the fur pieces of his goggles to fog up the lenses. Cursing, he tore them from his helmeted head and flung them over the side just as a well aimed burst from the nearest of the five Fokkers riddled his windshield with holes.

"Close!" he gritted through his

teeth. "Next time it isn't even going to be that. You're a blasted fool, Hartney. A fathead for not keeping your eyes open."

The words spoken in raging anger were truth, nevertheless. Just two hours ago he had taken up a replacement plane for a final check test before he gave the greaseballs orders to paint his personal markings on the fuselage. So intent had he been on determining the exact aeronautical abilities of the plane he had not noticed the five Fokkers sneaking over onto the Yank side of the lines, until it was too late to do anything but scrap for his life.

He had been doing just that for some fifteen minutes. But each passing minute had increasingly brought home the fact that, barring a miracle of miracles, his number was up. The five Fokker pilots were members of the famous, or infamous, von Weinfred *Staffel* that had been in front of Thirty-seven for the last two weeks.

THE German ace was not in the air, but that was small consolation to Hartney. Von Weinfred's five hell-hounds were making it tough enough. In fact, they were making it decidedly too tough.

Little by little they were "ringing" him in. Blocking every attempt by him to cut out into the clear. Almost any second, now, the lead ship would slice in close—and that would be that.

"Not until it happens!" he roared, and slammed around in a dime turn that brought him nose on to a jet-black plane. "You, Fritz, are going down with me!"

Jabbing both trigger trips forward, his heart leaped with savage exultation as he saw his tracers bouncing off the cowled nose of the German ship. In the next split second, as both guns went silent, his heart slid up into his throat and stuck there.

Having no original intention of scrapping, he had not filled his ammo belts to the hilt. As a result neither gun had a single shot left. A groan burst from his lips, and he flung his plane downward in a wing-screaming power dive.

"This is it!" he shouted, and impulsively steeled his body against the shock of hot slugs ripping into it.

Strangely enough, though, no bullets came his way. Twisting in the seat he stared upward, stared some more as the scene unfolded above him. A crazy man had seemingly dropped down out of nowhere and was tearing into the five Fokkers with the unleashed fury of Hell, itself. The plane was of American design. As a matter of fact it was another Camel. But from whirling prop to tailskid there wasn't a single identification mark. There was not even a plane serial number.

Pop-eyed with amazement Hartney stared at the helmeted figure in the pit. From the distance he looked lean and tall, and that was all. Rather, that was all the Yank C.O. noted of physical features for the moment. The flying of the plane riveted his attention.

It was the type of flying seldom seen in France. Blind, reckless flying, yet executed with a certain skill that was almost unbelievable. In as many moments the unknown pilot trapped two of the Fokkers, one right after the other, and sent them both hurtling earthward just a couple of balls of flame.

The three remaining Germans tried to shy off, to cut down and nail Hartney while there was still a chance. But the unknown pilot was too quick for them. Like a flash of so much light he cut right across in front of them as they came down, forced them to veer off to the side, and then went straight down in a power dive himself.

Just what happened in the next

few seconds Hartney was not quite sure, it all happened so fast. He saw the unmarked plane racing down on top of him, and then he saw it cut out to the side and do a tight half loop up over onto its back.

In that position it floated back over him, floated back so close that he instinctively let out a yell of alarm and started to whip down into a dive. But he didn't. At that moment something thumped down into the pit of his plane. Something that a split second before had been held in the downward stretched hand of the pilot hanging above him.

Lowering his eyes he saw what had been dropped, and exclaimed aloud. It was a loaded belt of Vickers bullets. Not only was the unknown a life-saver, he was also a mind reader. Grabbing up the belt Hartney rammed it in place in the feed block of his right gun, jerked back the loading handle three times, and then hauled his plane around and up.

Unfortunately, though, the party was all over. That is, the three remaining Fokker pilots had decided that they'd seen enough of a hellion on wings for one day. As Hartney zoomed upward he saw the three Fokkers highballing toward the clouds. And right behind them, one gun still blazing, was the unknown pilot in the unmarked Camel.

By the time Hartney had gained sufficient altitude the three Fokkers and the other Camel were lost in the clouds. For the next twenty minutes he floated about searching for a glimpse of them, but he saw nothing. Then with a puzzled shake of his head he banked southwest and headed for the home drome of Thirty-seven.

"Maybe I was just dreaming, or seeing things," he muttered. "But anyhow, I sure would like to meet that fighting fool some day so that I could thank him. I certainly owe him my hide, and then some."

In keeping with the cockeyed events of the day his wish was granted no less than forty minutes after he landed at his home field. Going direct to the squadron office to make out his patrol report, and tend to some routine work, he was still there when the field orderly knocked on the door and pushed his way in.

"A Lieutenant Jones to see you, sir."

"Jones?" Hartney echoed, screwing up his brows in thought. "Are we expecting replacements, Corporal?"

"No sir. But I don't think this officer is a replacement, sir. I mean, the wings of his plane are full of holes."

"Show him in," Hartney grunted.

A moment later five feet eleven inches of wiry-built pilot came inside, clicked his heels and saluted. Hartney took a look at the lean face, tanned to leather by wind and sun, and sat up straight.

"Say!" he said abruptly. "Did you attack five Fokkers about an hour ago?"

THIN lips parted in a smile to show firm, even, white teeth.

"So you were the pilot they'd caught cold?" he echoed. Then with a chuckle: "That makes it better than I had hoped. I was afraid it was just one of your greenhorns."

"What makes what better?" Hartney demanded.

The smile faded from the other's face. His eyes bored steadily into Hartney's.

"You might say," he murmured, "you sort of owe me a favor for saving your life. They were coming pretty close to you, you know."

"Don't worry, I do, plenty," Hartney nodded instantly. "And I want to thank you right now for showing up. By the way, what's your squadron? I didn't see any markings on your plane."

"There aren't any," the pilot called Jones replied. "As for my squadron, that's why I'm here. How about letting me fly for Thirty-seven for a week or so, and no questions asked?"

Hartney reached for a cigarette, tapped it on the desk top and peered at the stranger.

"Maybe I'm just dumb," he said, "but I don't get it. What do you mean, no questions asked?"

"Reasons that I'll explain before I leave, but not now," Jones answered evenly. "I'm not asking for a ship. Got one. I'm not asking for anything except the chance to fly with your outfit for a few days."

Hartney was still stubborn.

"Why?" he demanded.

"If I don't tell you," the other replied, "it will probably save us both a lot of trouble. I admit that's a hell of a way to put things, Major. But I'm just asking you to let me, as a favor. Maybe I'm a louse for saying it, but you do owe me something. Right?"

HARTNEY tossed the unlighted cigarette onto the desk, nodded.

"I certainly do," he said. "And although I may be all kinds of a fool for leaving myself wide open for a lot of trouble, damned if I'm not going to take a chance. For all I know you may be Pershing with whiskers. But we can use some one who flies as you do, any day in the week. But, remember, before you leave, Jones, I want the whole story. After all I am C.O. of the outfit."

The other's eyes hardened. He nodded slowly.

"You'll get it," he said, then as an afterthought, "if I'm still around and in condition to give it to you. But thanks for being a white man, anyway."

Late that night Hartney was still wondering just why he had taken Jones at his word and given him permission to fly with the squadron.

It was the one and only cockeyed decision he had made during fourteen months as C.O. of Thirty-seven.

"You're crazy as a coot!" he said to the reflection in his metal shaving mirror. "You should go to medical H.Q. and get your head examined. How do you know he's not a spy? How do you know he's not wanted for something? How do you know he's not just another guy in trouble who's trying to lose his identity? Hell, what do you know? Nothing!"

Those and other thoughts formed the foundation of a sleepless night for Hartney. A dozen times he was tempted to climb from his bunk, haul Jones from the bunk given him in "A" Flight hutment, and demand just what was what. Yet each time he checked the desire, and fell back on the pillow cursing and muttering.

"But I'll keep my eye on him, anyway," he mumbled before a fitful sleep pinned him down for an hour. "Just so long as he does his job. But just let him pull one dizzy move—Nuts!"

When dawn came, however, and the pilots turned out to get their ships set for the early show there was nothing about Jones' movements to cause the slightest uneasiness on Hartney's part. The lean pilot went about the job of testing his ship and checking the guns as though he had been a member of Thirty-seven for months instead of hours.

Watching him, though appearing not to do so, the C.O. made up his mind to one thing. Jones had been in the war a long time, and knew the flying end from A to Z. In the making ready of his plane there were a dozen and one little things the man did that proved conclusively he was a fire-tried veteran. Nor was Hartney the only one who noticed. Bayles, "A" Flight leader, noticed plenty, too.

"You said he was a flight training instructor coming out to the Front

on his first assignment?" he echoed to Hartney, a shrewd look in his eyes. "That guy has seen plenty action, if you ask me. Look at the way he checks those guns."

Rather than risk looking ridiculous, Hartney, by arrangement with Jones, had passed the lean pilot off to the others in the squadron as a flight training instructor. Five seconds of Jones' flying would belie any statement that he was a greenhorn. But Bayles had formed his own opinions. And so, Hartney noticed, had a few of the veteran pilots, too. He shrugged and tried to pass lightly over the "A" Flight leader's remark.

"That's what his papers said," he grunted. "What difference does it make, so long as he does his job? I want to see him in action, myself. That's the real test."

"Yeah," Bayles rumbled in his throat, moving away toward his own plane. "And I'd make the guess that guy will come out of it with flying colors. I know 'em when I see 'em."

HARTNEY let it go at that, concentrated on the finishing touches of warming up his Bentley. Fifteen minutes later he led the seven plane formation out into position on the muddy field, then waved a hand in signal and went roaring off. Circling slowly up to five thousand above the field, he throttled just long enough for the others to get set and then headed into the morning sun that was just beginning to shove its dazzling brilliance up over the eastern lip of the world.

For a full hour and a half the patrol wasted just so much gasoline and oil. A ground mist prevented their noting any items of interest about the German lines that could be reported to H.Q. And as for the sky there just wasn't anything to see but blue and white. It was as though the entire Imperial German Air Service had decided that on this particu-

lar morning they would all sleep late.

Hartney had given the patrol up as a bad job and was headed back over the American side of the lines when it happened. Mushing through a lazily drifting section of cloud bank he suddenly came out into open air to meet nine German Fokkers heading east. One swift glance at the lead ship and Hartney knew that von Weinfred was leading some of his pilots on an early morning look-see.

Just why they hadn't spotted them before Hartney didn't bother to try and figure out. The point was that there was von Weinfred, and some of his brood. And when you met von Weinfred you were in for a scrap. He was, at least, that much of an unusual German pilot—always ready for a scrap whether the odds were in his favor or otherwise.

No sooner had Hartney spotted the oncoming planes than twin streams of jetting flame zipped out from von Weinfred's guns. Hartney smiled grimly, whipped a red "attack" Very light over the side, and shoved both thumbs up to the trigger trips.

"Suits us!" he shouted into the roar of his engine. "At 'em, gang!"

The pilots from Thirty-seven needed no repeating of the order. Guns blazing, they swung into line formation and went to work. Seconds later all sense of formation was lost. Both Yanks and Germans were twisting, turning, and split arcing all over the dawn sky, each singling out his man and going to it hammer and tongs.

Blasting away at a Fokker cutting in at him, Hartney heeled over on wing just in time to spoil the aim of a second German whirling straight down in a vicious power dive. The maneuver brought him out so that he was broadside to von Weinfred's plane. Heart looping over he risked the next second in a desperate effort

to bore in close to the German leader and then let him have it.

However, no sooner had he jabbed the trigger trips forward than he jerked his thumbs away and cursed. Wings flashed down in front of his guns. They were the wings of a Yank Camel. And in the split second allowed, Hartney saw the half crouched, lean figure of Jones in the cockpit.

"You blind fool!" he thundered. "Look where you're going! I might have shot you right out of the air! I—"

Hartney didn't finish the last. Another Thirty-seven pilot had gone boring in at the slightly floundering von Weinfred but, intended or otherwise, Jones had once again gone blundering through the air between the German plane and the bullet-spitting Yank guns. And at the end of the next ten seconds the same thing happened for the third time. Hartney's lips clicked together and an agate glint seeped into his eyes.

"Jones is protecting von Weinfred!" he grated. "He's not letting any of us get a crack at him. Why, that—"

THE last was cut short by a burst of Spandau slugs that tore through Hartney's top center section and went twanging off his engine cowling. Heart in his throat he put everything he had into a flash half roll and managed to go corkscrewing away from certain death. It carried him clear out to the rim of the scrap, and as he started to bank back in again he noted that Bayles had dropped down on von Weinfred's tail and was giving the German a whole lot more than just a little to think about.

And then for the fourth time Jones came piling down to gum up the works and undoubtedly save von Weinfred's life. Just in the nick of time Bayles cut his fire and turned

off. Not caring to stretch his luck too far, the German turned tail and went speeding eastward hell-for-leather. And tearing after him, with both guns silent, however, went the newcomer Jones. In almost no time they were a good three-quarters of a mile away, zigzagging this way and that through some patches of scud cloud. And as though the other German pilots had received a silent signal, they dropped out of the fight and went highballing off in the wake of their leader, leaving Thirty-seven in complete possession of that section of sky.

Cold rage swept over Hartney. Cold rage at Jones, and at himself. For a full minute he peered, agate-eyed, toward the layer of cloud scud into which von Weinfred and Jones had disappeared. Then with a soft curse he signaled to the rest of the flight, and led the way back home. As soon as they had landed the members of the flight gathered around, puzzled anger in their eyes. Bayles acted as spokesman.

"You saw what he did, sir," he gritted. "A flight training instructor! He's a rat, if you ask me. He did damn near everything to save von Weinfred except shoot us down."

"Right!" somebody else chimed in. "And chasing after that Hun was just a stall. He won't be back, don't worry. Hell, wish I'd given him both guns when he cut in front of me that time."

"Me, too!" a third pilot spoke up. "I had von Weinfred cold."

Hartney stared hard at the ground while his brain traveled in a series of whirlwind circles. He was just as sore as any of the others. After smacking down two Fokkers yesterday, Jones' actions today just didn't make sense.

Or did they? As he asked himself the question Hartney suddenly remembered that Jones had had plenty

of opportunity to drill von Weinfred himself, if that was his reason for spoiling the chances of Bayles and the others. But he hadn't fired a shot. He had deliberately saved the German's life and practically herded him away from the scrap.

"Good Lord! Hey, look!"

The exclamation was unnecessary. Everyone on the tarmac had turned at the sound of the engine. And every eye saw Jones stick his plane down out of the sky to the east and glide down to an easy landing in the center of the field. Not moving, they all silently watched him taxi up to the line and leg out. It was then Bayles swore under his breath and got in motion. He ran over to where Jones was easing his long frame from the pit to the ground. Grabbing the newcomer by the shoulder he swung him sharply around.

"All right, let's have it!" he said. "I suppose you're going to say you didn't know you were purposely saving his life? Didn't realize that you cut down in front of my guns, huh?"

Jones slowly pulled his arm free, twisted his lips into a half smile.

"Guess you called the turn that time, Bayles," he said quietly. "Reckon I was a bit over anxious. Incidentally, thanks for checking your fire. You could have clipped me neatly."

Crimson stained the "A" Flight leader's face. He stepped close to Jones and stuck out his jaw.

"Next time I will!" he snapped. "Meantime you're not fooling me any. You've seen plenty of war service. I'm wondering about the uniform you used to wear. Was it German field grey, huh? You saved that bird's life four times, and then went tagging after—"

Bayles didn't finish. Jones' fist sliced upward and cut the sentence in two. It caught Bayles flush on the jaw, turned him clean around twice, and dropped him in a heap on

the tarmac. For a second Jones glared down at him. Then a groan slipped from his lips. He bent over, quickly picked up the unconscious Bayles and carried him into the mess while everyone else stood gaping popeyed.

Hartney collected himself first, let out a roar and went charging into the mess himself. He found Jones washing cognac down Bayles' mouth and mumbling apologies.

"Sorry, old man, I shouldn't have done that," he was saying. "I lost my head. Sorry as hell, no fooling."

Bayles, still far from himself, hardly heard. He seemed content to relax and gulp the cognac poured past his lips. Hartney, however, was far from a state of relaxation. He pulled Jones away and jerked his head toward the door.

"Out, and over to the squadron office!" he ordered. "All bets are off until after we've had another talk. Go on, get going."

JONES hesitated, took a look at Bayles, shrugged and moved out the door. Hartney stayed right at his heels and followed him over to the office. Once they were both inside he confronted the lean pilot. "I don't act the sucker twice in the same day, Jones," he said. "Why I agreed to that cockeyed arrangement last night, I'll never be able to figure out. But it's all off now. I want the whole story, all of it. Then I'll decide what to do. Well, start talking."

Jones opened his mouth, closed it again. A tight sigh took the place of words for a moment. Then he smiled grimly.

"Bayles' question to the contrary, sir," he said, "I assure you that I am not, and never was, a German pilot. What happened today, was something that couldn't be helped, under the circumstances. You

wouldn't believe me if I explained. So I'm just asking you to let me play it my way."

Hartney snorted wrathfully.

"Rubbish! It's still off. What's the big idea, anyway? You might as well talk, Jones. Or is Jones your name? What's up? Is von Weinfred an old enemy of yours and you're trying to get him for yourself? If that's so, okay with me. But why the hell didn't you get him when you had the chance today?"

Jones stared at his fingers.

"Believe it or not, sir," he said quietly, "but today was my first meeting with von Weinfred. As for not getting him, well—well, I don't want to shoot him down. Nor do I want anybody else to. I have my reasons. Good ones in case you're wondering."

Hartney half rose from his seat.

"I am!" he snapped. "And what's more, I want to know those reasons."

"Sorry, sir," Jones shook his head. "I can only ask you to have faith in me. I can't take a chance on the truth until my job is done, if it ever is done."

HARTNEY stood, balled a fist and pressed it hard against the desk-top. "And I'm not taking chances either!" he clipped. "Right now you are under arrest until Intelligence finds out what's what. I was crazy once, but I'm not getting that way again. Meanwhile I'll have a look at the engine number on your plane. Maybe we can check something that way."

Jones' eyes hardened.

"I'll save you the trouble," he said. "I stole it from the Vendom Replacement Depot yesterday. But you're not going to—"

The man stopped. Impulsively both of them went over to the window as there came the sound of an over-revving Mercedes Fokker thundering down in a long dive out of the east.

Hartney spotted it first, spat a curse. "Von Weinfred's ship! Diving on us."

He half spun and poked a stiff forefinger against Jones' chest.

"Stay right here!" he ordered. "Stick one foot out of here and I'll have you slapped into the guard-house!"

With a nod for emphasis he ran over to the door and barged outside. The plane was now less than a couple of thousand feet up, and piling down with the fury of all hell let loose. Ground pit gunners had raced to their stations and were waiting for the plane to streak down into range.

In that, however, they were disappointed. The German plane flattened out at a thousand feet, shot straight across the field, and then went careening upward. Behind it a colored message streamer was whipped out straight for a moment in the prop-wash, and then it started flip-flopping to earth.

It struck on the far side of the field. A greaseball ran over, scooped it up and came running back. Hartney took it, unbuttoned the flap and pulled out the envelope inside. In a bold hand was scrawled the name, "Lieutenant Prescott." Hartney repeated the name aloud, scowled.

"Must have the wrong field," he grunted. "We'll see what's inside."

Pilots and mechanics alike gathered close and peered at the single sheet as Hartney smoothed it out. They all read together.

My dear Lieutenant Prescott:

Your note seems almost unbelievable. Had I not had a good look at your face when you followed me back to my field just now I would be inclined to doubt the truth. You see I always believed that you committed suicide when they caught you. But that was possibly for the sake of the American press.

Meet you again? With pleasure. It will almost seem like old times—that is, almost.

Cordially,

von Weinfred.

"What the hell?" growled Hartney as he read the letter for the third time. "This doesn't make sense. It— Wait! Hold everything!"

The C.O. pointed an excited finger at Bayles.

"You've been in France as long as I have," he said. "You should remember. What was the name of that bird, the Yank Intelligence man, who was mixed up in that French scandal just about the time the first contingent of the A.E.F. landed? You know who I mean?"

Bayles wrinkled his face in thought.

"Yeah," he grunted. "But damned if I can think of the name. There were two of them, weren't there? And they were caught selling information to the Germans?"

"Right!" Hartney nodded. "Caught cold dickering with some Hun spy in Paris. One guy committed suicide in his cell. And the other guy escaped. Went back to Germany. Wait. One bird's name was Caldwell. Captain Caldwell. What his German name was, I don't know. I—"

He stopped short as Bayles suddenly started violently and snatched the note from his hand.

"Hey, Major, this is it! Sure! Prescott. Lieutenant Prescott. I remember now reading his name in General Orders. Say— You don't suppose—"

Bayles didn't finish. He didn't have to. Hartney turned slowly and stared across the field toward the squadron office where he had left Jones.

"Sergeant," he said out the corner of his mouth to the nearest non-com, "have your gun ready and follow me."

Not only the sergeant but everyone else followed the C.O. across the field. When they reached the door Hartney waved them back, nodded to the non-com and stepped inside. An empty office greeted him. Jones was nowhere to be seen. The window at

the rear was open. Hartney didn't have to guess even once. Spinning, he leaped outside.

"Every man draw his gun!" he barked. "Spread out in line. He's flown the coop. We're going to find him. Bayles, get Wing on the wire. Give them a complete description, and have the alarm broadcast clear to the lines. A Hun try and make a sucker out of me, will he? I'll show—"

The roar of an engine drowned out the rest. Hartney pivoted toward the tarmac, bit off a curse. A plane at the far end of the line was streaking out onto the field. Crouching forward over the stick was the lean, bare-headed figure of Jones. Even as Hartney started running the plane cleared and went arcing up into the air.

It was three long minutes before the C.O. could get a plane off the ground. By then Jones' ship was little more than a tiny dot far to the northeast. Face granite, free fist jammed hard against the wide-open throttle, Hartney cursed his plane onward and upward. Not an inch did he cut down the other's lead. But at least he was able to keep the plane in view.

FOR twenty minutes Jones flew a crow-line course toward the northeast. As he reached the lines he swerved sharply to the east.

"Headed for von Weinfred's field!" Hartney grated, and banked his own plane in an effort to gain distance by "cutting the corner."

A moment later, though, he swung sharply to the northeast again. Jones had changed his course, and seemingly changed it for a good reason. The reason was a lone Fokker thundering westward from the German side of the lines. A shaft of sunlight bouncing off its glossy surface brought out the markings in bold relief. It was von Weinfred.

Like two streaks of ripping lightning the planes tore for each other, neither pilot firing a shot. And then when it seemed that they would both crash in midair, Jones' plane suddenly zoomed straight toward the sky, twisted over on its back, and fluttered down like a leaf.

"What kind of fighting is that? Or are they just greeting each other?"

Hartney bellowed the words aloud, made no effort to answer them. The two planes had skidded clear and were now circling back in again. Suddenly Spandau guns chattered, and twin ribbons of jetting flame spewed out from von Weinfred's plane. Jones, however, did not return the fire. Instead he bored straight in again as though he was going to run the German down. Then in the last split second he rolled his plane outward and upward, held it on its back.

"Just what he did to me!" Hartney shouted. "Rolled on top of me, and dropped that ammo belt. My God—he's diving out of his plane!"

IT was true. His plane on its back, directly over the Fokker, Jones had dived headlong from the pit. Like a comet he dropped the eight or ten feet, and then crashed down on top of von Weinfred.

For the next couple of seconds there was a tangle of kicking feet and threshing arms in the cockpit of the Fokker. Then Jones' body straightened up, and his legs straddled the fuselage just back of the pit. Hartney could see that he had one arm crooked about the German's neck, and was gun-whipping the man's face with the automatic he held in the other hand.

Instantly the Fokker was banked west. Its nose dipped, its prop ceased turning over so fast, and it went gliding down toward a field a good two miles behind the American lines. Hartney, brain whizzing in dizzy

circles, followed down as fast as he could. The Fokker had already landed, and Jones had dragged von Weinfred from the pit down onto the ground. The German was on his knees, arms thrown up to his face in a desperate effort to protect himself from the gun Jones kept rasping down his face and neck.

"Almost two years, you louse!" Hartney heard Jones choke out as he ran up. "Two years, but I would have waited two thousand. Here it is, von Weinfred. Sign it, or by God I'll beat you to a pulp. Sign it!"

"Here, what—"

Jones whirled, his gun trained dead on Hartney. There was stark murder in his agate eyes.

"Stand back!" he clipped harshly. "This is my job, and I'm not finished yet. Stand back, I warn you!"

The pilot turned back and drew fresh blood from von Weinfred's cheek with the automatic's muzzle.

"There's the paper, and there's the pen. Sign it, damn your soul. Sign it!"

The gun muzzle sliced down again, and the cringing German wilted completely.

"Gott, don't!" he screamed. "*Ja, ja*, I sign it. Look, I will sign it. *Gott im Himmel*, no more, I beg of you! I sign it."

Hardly able to hold himself up, the German clutched the pen on the ground, bent over a single sheet of creased paper and scrawled his name. Then with a gurgling groan he fell over on his face. Jones picked up the paper, stared at it blankly for a moment, and then with the gun dangling from limp fingers he leaned back against the fuselage of the Fokker.

All right, Major," he muttered very thickly. "Do your stuff. I realize you can't pull a gun on your superior officer in this man's army. So go ahead. It's perfectly okay, now."

(Continued on page 118)

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28x4.50-21	2.40	32x4	2.95	34x5	4.25	32x6	4.75
28x4.75-19	2.45	33x4	2.95	32x6	7.95	32x8	9.95
28x4.75-20	2.50	34x4	3.25	36x6	9.95	34x8	11.45
28x5.00-19	2.55	32x4 1/2	3.35	38x6	10.95	36x8	13.25
28x5.00-20	2.55		1.15	40x8	13.25		4.15
28x5.25-17	2.90		1.15				
28x5.25-18	2.90		1.15				
28x5.25-19	2.95		1.15				
28x5.35-20	3.15		1.15				
31x5.25-21	3.25		1.15				
28x5.50-17	3.35		1.15				
28x5.50-18	3.35		1.15				
28x5.50-19	3.35		1.15				
30x6.00-17	3.40		1.15				
30x6.00-18	3.40		1.15				
31x6.00-19	3.40		1.15				
32x6.00-20	3.45		1.25				
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(Continued from page 117)

To confirm his words Jones tossed his gun to the ground at Hartney's feet. The C.O. didn't even look at it. He stepped close and peered hard into Jones' slightly wind-glazed eyes.

"Which one are you?" he asked sharply. "Prescott or Caldwell?"

The lean pilot's eyes widened.

"How did you find out?" he asked slowly. Then: "But of course von Weinfred must have mentioned names in that note he dropped. You see, that's why I tagged him this morning. To drop a note on his field. But I signed it Prescott. I figured that would make him more curious, and he'd meet me as I challenged him."

"Then you're Caldwell," Hartney said harshly. "The one who skipped back to the Hun lines?"

"Only to hunt for von Weinfred," the other said evenly. "That's something the French never let get in the papers. That von Weinfred was a member of their secret service. That is how he doublecrossed Prescott and me. We were the goats. We couldn't prove our innocence. When an Intelligence man gets in a jam he's stuck. That's part of the code. The disgrace to Prescott's family was too much for him to stand. He was sick, anyway. He took the only way out. I swore I'd get von Weinfred some day, and force a confession from him with my own hands. Not for me—I've been an orphan since birth. It was for Prescott, for his family. He was my friend. That was the least I could do for him."

The man paused. Hartney scowled, flashed him an annoyed look.

"Why the devil didn't you tell me who you were?" he snapped. "Why all that damn secrecy that made things worse?"

Caldwell smiled grimly.

"With the names Prescott and Caldwell marked with disgrace from

(Concluded on page 120)



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MAIL BUDDIES

Here are some more members of AIR-MEN OF AMERICA—all air fans. From month to month we'll list others. The figures in the parentheses are the ages of the members.

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 Joe Gerard (48), 539 Sta. F., R. I., Milwaukee, Wis.
 Marjorie Travis (11), 317 S. F. St., Morton, Kansas.
 Comrad Day (16), 716 W. 32nd St., Cleveland, Tenn.
 Louis Sterner, Jr., 14 Hall Avenue, Greenfield, Mass.
 Leroy Eason (11), 1170 Sherman Ave., N. Y. C.
 Dennie Yocum (13), 2008 Clayton Ave., Middletown, O.
 Robert Smigel (15), Box 108, Greenwood Lake, N. Y.
 Irving Goldstein (17), 165 Hillside Ave., Newark, N. J.
 W. Kauderer (16), 555 Grand St., New York, N. Y.
 Edward Pegis (16), 615 Third Ave., New York, N. Y.
 Dick Buckius (13), 231 W. Chestnut St., Lancaster, Pa.
 Arthur Williams (26), 31-65—29th St., Astoria, L. I.
 Franklin B. Morgan (18), 1175 Princess Ave., London, Ontario.
 Charles Shaver, Jr. (14), 10603 Ave. J., Chicago, Ill.
 Frank Gareis (13), 6444 Aurelia, Pittsburgh, Pa.
 Willie Fung (12), 130 Trenton Pl., San Francisco, Cal.
 William Boone (12), c/o Baxters, Deluz, California.
 Chester Jones (13), Louise St., Magna, Utah.
 Wm. Adams (17), 7505 Dorchester, Chicago, Ill.
 Bill Stuehrmann (15), 348 W. Lime Ave., Monrovia, Calif.
 Jack Brown (11), Monitore, Colorado.
 Deen Fletcher (11), 306 W. Exchange St., Akron, O.
 Samuel Fauver (15), 21 Mary Ave., Dayton, Ohio.
 William Pleier (14), 2019 E. Silver St., Philadelphia, Penna.
 Rudolph Juge (11), 1810 St. Anthony St., New Orleans, La.
 Kenneth Hamilton (13), 1115 Rebecca St., N. Brad-dock, Pa.
 Charles Kline (15), 44 Steven's Ave., Jersey, New Jersey.
 Ralph H. Volz (14), 2615 So. Compton, St. Louis, Mo.
 William Blaser (13), 1228 52nd St., Brooklyn, N. Y. C.
 Lloyd Lawrence (15), 2020 N. W. 20th St., Miami, Fla.
 Gayle Hammond (16), 2627 N. Willis Blvd., Portland, Oregon.
 Douglas Hayden (14), 407½ Atkins Ave., Neptune, N. J.
 Jimmie Martin (13), 701 West Hall St., Oberlin, Mass.
 Louis Zinser (19), 4536 a Virginia, St. Louis, Mo.
 Philip Myers (16), 33 Trase Loc., Chisholm, Minn.
 Harry Jackson (13), 4121 Middlesex Dr., San Diego, Calif.
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 Kenneth Schmidt (16), 1650 S. Harding Avenue, Chicago, Ill.
 Jean Curdes (13), 715 Monroe St., Napoleon, Ohio.
 George Paul (17), 23 La Grange St., Rarita, N. J.
 Ferris French, Jr. (14), 146 Jefferson St., Kaufman, Texas.
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 Wallace Barnes (17), 529 Prince St., Florence, S. C.
 Franklyn Slatcher (16), Water St., Ludlow, Mass.
 Mickey Raskin (11), 320 Fairmouth Ave., Jersey City, N. J.
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HELLION'S WINGS

(Concluded from page 118)

one end of France to the other?" he said. "Branded as traitors? You, nor anybody else, would have believed me. That's why I had to play it alone. That's why, when I failed to find von Weinfred in Germany I had to come back, change my identity, and get into the Yank air service. That much I did learn in Germany. That he'd been transferred to flying. Five days ago, while on leave, I heard that he was in front of you. I had a week's leave left. I was going to spend it hunting him. I would have done it alone, only I had the lucky break of bumping into you, of saving your life. I took the chance of you granting me a favor in return."

"But that scrap today—"

"The only thing I could do," Caldwell cut in. "With von Weinfred dead I could gain nothing. Alive—Well, you saw what happened. Here's the truth, over his signature. Prescott's family will get this. After the war is over perhaps the whole world will know. That's for his mother and dad to decide."

"And you?" Hartney asked softly. The lean pilot stared at the sky.

"Caldwell will probably never return from Germany," he said slowly. "And Jones will return to his squadron from leave. Before he goes, though, he makes you a present of a rat. If there's any credit, see that Thirty-seven gets it. I've got something a damn sight better than credit. So long, and thanks—for everything."

With a nod Caldwell turned on his heel and walked across the field toward the road. Hartney opened his mouth to speak, but closed it quickly with a shake of his head. Stiffening slightly he raised a hand to his goggles in salute.

"So long, white guy," he murmured.

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Have magazines, books of all kinds, 22½ inch scale plans for Ryan St., football cover, punching bag cover, boxing gloves, skates, soft ball and "Irwin" moving picture machine with nine films. Want stamps, coins, postcards, aviation magazines or books. W. E. Fouts, 3534 Strong St., Fort Worth, Texas.

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Have turn buckle from war time Spad, wing fabric of German Fokker, and M. G. shell made into souvenir. Will swap for what have you. Ralph Christensen, 1101 Iowa Ave., Butte, Montana.

Willing to swap books, magazines, swimming tubes, games, footballs, baseball gloves, for a midget radio in pretty good condition or typewriter of any make. Harold Zeigfinger, 1407 Sheridan Ave., Bronx, New York.

Have foreign stamps, U. S. stamps, match booklets, formulas, pictures of all kinds. Want precancels or what have you. Homer E. Holmes, 173 E. St. Charles Road, Elmhurst, Illinois.

I have set of four boxing gloves, monopoly game, marble game all in good condition. Will exchange for midget airplane gas motor. Barrett Cosby, 612 N. La Jolla, Los Angeles, Calif.

Have a two months old guitar played but a few times in A-1 condition. Want camera or wrist watch in exchange. E. Wollenhaup, R. 1, Mukwonago, Wis.

Have anco speedex, F 4.5 lense. Used five rolls film, perfect shape, carrying case. Trade for best offer mint U. S. stamps, or? C. Hollmann, Washington, Mo.

Attention: Stamp and coin collectors! I have heaps of old and modern stamps and coins. I will be willing to trade my duplicates for radio parts or first edition books, etc. Henry Otis, Box 38, Logtown, Miss.

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(More "Swaps" on page 127)

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FELLOWS, the National Aircraft Show in New York was the biggest, best and brightest ever held! It was the spot that aviation luminaries automatically headed for—and I bet every one of you who was in New York during the festivities dropped in to see the show, or else is sorry now!

Anyway, I bumped into many old-timers and newtimers, and we sure



had some gab-fests. First off, I nearly collided with Kenneth Brown Collings.

“My neck’s all stretched out of shape,” confided Ken, “there are so many interesting things on all sides to look at!”

Evidently others agreed with him—for I never saw such a big crowd of air-minded people all in one place! And they were craning their necks in every direction, and clamoring to have their questions answered by the presiding experts. When I left Ken, he was surrounded by a dozen youngsters who fired tough ones at him: but Ken knew all the answers, so it was okay for me to wander off.

Casey Jones' Flight

It was sure a thrill to see Casey Jones again—and hear him tell about the flight he took over Newark Bay in a little amphibian built by the boys in his school.

This plane is no amateur job, but a swell crate. It’s powered with a Ter-

raplane engine with belt drive to the propeller.

That world-famous designer, Major Alexander P. de Seversky, was among those present, describing to us the fine points of his new single-seater pursuit. This, one of the fastest planes in use, hung in flying position in the main hall—but the armament and other military details were hidden, as they are still being kept secret. However, it’s a dandy.

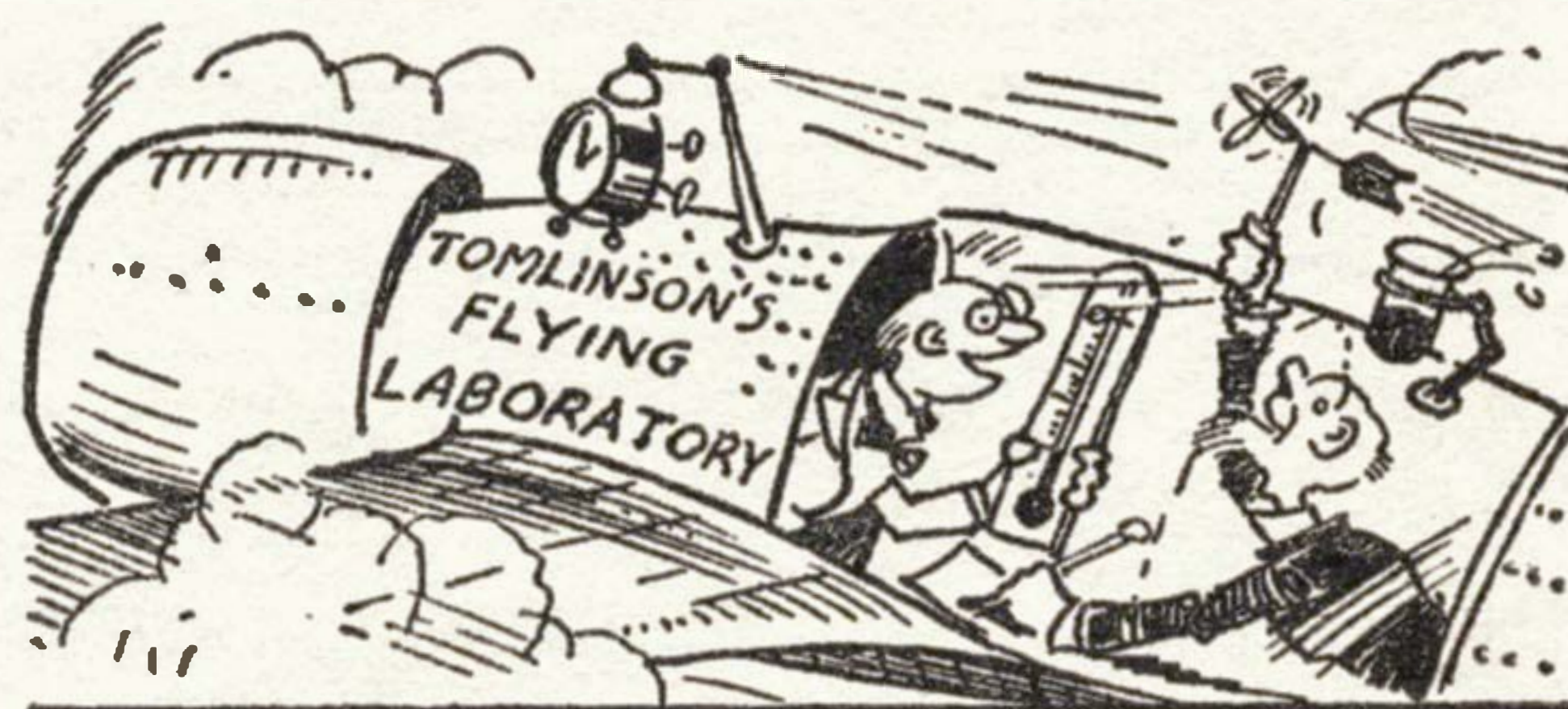
Over-Weather Flying

There was special excitement in the vicinity of the TWA “over-weather laboratory,” the silvery Northrop Gamma, a craft in which D. W. Tomlinson has spent plenty of time above 30,000 feet.

The plane is powered by a 1,000 horsepower Wright Cyclone engine, which has a new type of turbo-supercharger, perfected for the army by Dr. Sanford A. Moss of San Francisco, enabling it to “breathe” normally in the rarified atmosphere and deliver full power.

High Altitude Conditions

D. W. Tomlinson gave an interest-



ing account of his experience in high altitudes. He said he had found winds up to 150 miles per hour in velocity above 30,000 feet. Cloud layers 22,000 feet thick were common.

“Last Sunday,” he declared, “I couldn’t get above the clouds at the

ceiling of the plane, which is 36,000 feet, and I flew blind for seven and a half hours."

Future Prospects

In order to be sure of remaining above clouds, Mr. Tomlinson said, it would be necessary to fly at 40,000 feet, in sealed cabins. However, above 25,000 feet the type of cloud encountered is a thin haze, and there are no "bumps" worthy of the name.

Flight with passengers at such altitudes will not come for at least five years, Mr. Tomlinson pointed out. Experiments are to continue.

Full radio equipment now in use, with directional loop antenna fully shielded against rain or snow static, make flying at such high altitudes entirely practicable.

Other Thrills

It was certainly thrilling to see the new Cyclone rated at 1,220 horsepower for take-off. Also, a double row Wasp engine of fourteen cylinders, rated at 1,050 horsepower. And it was amazing to contrast the new Wright 1,000 horsepower motors with the first aircraft radial of thirty horsepower, designed by Charles L. Lawrence, which was one of the most interesting exhibits.

Crowds gathered around a speedy four-place French plane, the Simoun, with a 220 horsepower Renault engine—sister ship of the one Marye Bastie flew in her epoch-making hop across the South Atlantic. It's fitted with the newest French variable pitch propeller, the Ratier. Michael Detroyat, famous French racer and acrobatic flyer, was on hand to answer questions about the Simoun.

Testing Airplanes

E. P. Warner, former Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Aeronautics, has issued an interesting statement regarding the testing of airplanes. Hitherto, test pilots have been relied on to test new aircraft, but Mr. Warner looks forward to tests that do not involve the uncertain human factor.

The airplane has the same road to
(Continued on page 124)



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Present Position.....

Address.....

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135

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—From Preface to 6th Edition

HYGEIA (published by the American Medical Association) says: "Excellent... 135 photographs... show clearly the action."



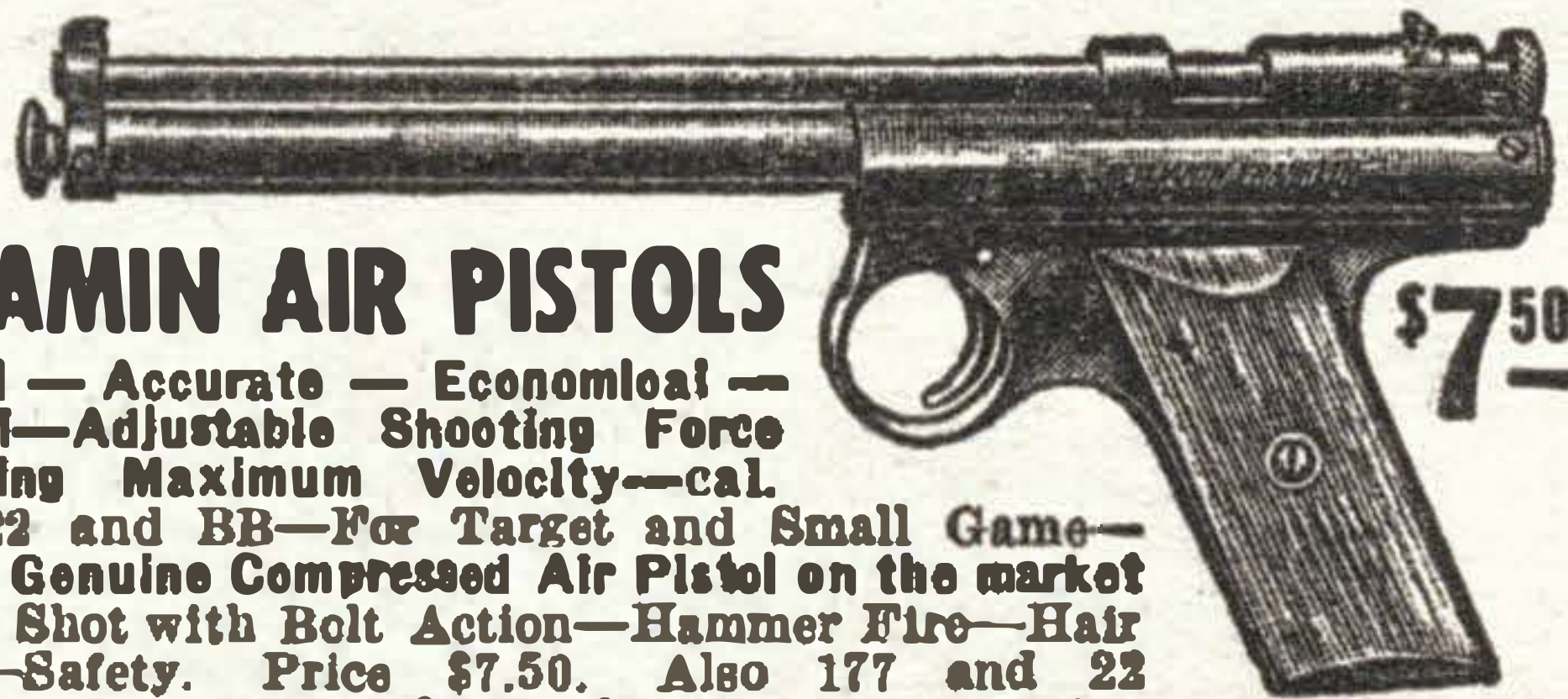
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BEAUTIFUL CLEAR TONE
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All one unit—just like the big sets, but weighs only 6 oz. Fits pocket easily. Take it with you. Nothing to adjust. No batteries, tubes, or electric socket connections required. Tuning knob is the only moving part.

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SEND NO MONEY! Its enjoyable radio entertainment should delight you! Combines performance and economy. Get yours today. Pay postman on arrival only \$2.99 and postage or send \$2.99 (we pay postage).

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Excerpts From Satisfied Users

Received radio and it works fine . . .

. . . Am well pleased with it in every respect. I recommend the Little Giant to any prospective purchaser who wishes just such a little radio for personal use. Cost nothing to operate.

. . . Have tried it and it works splendid.

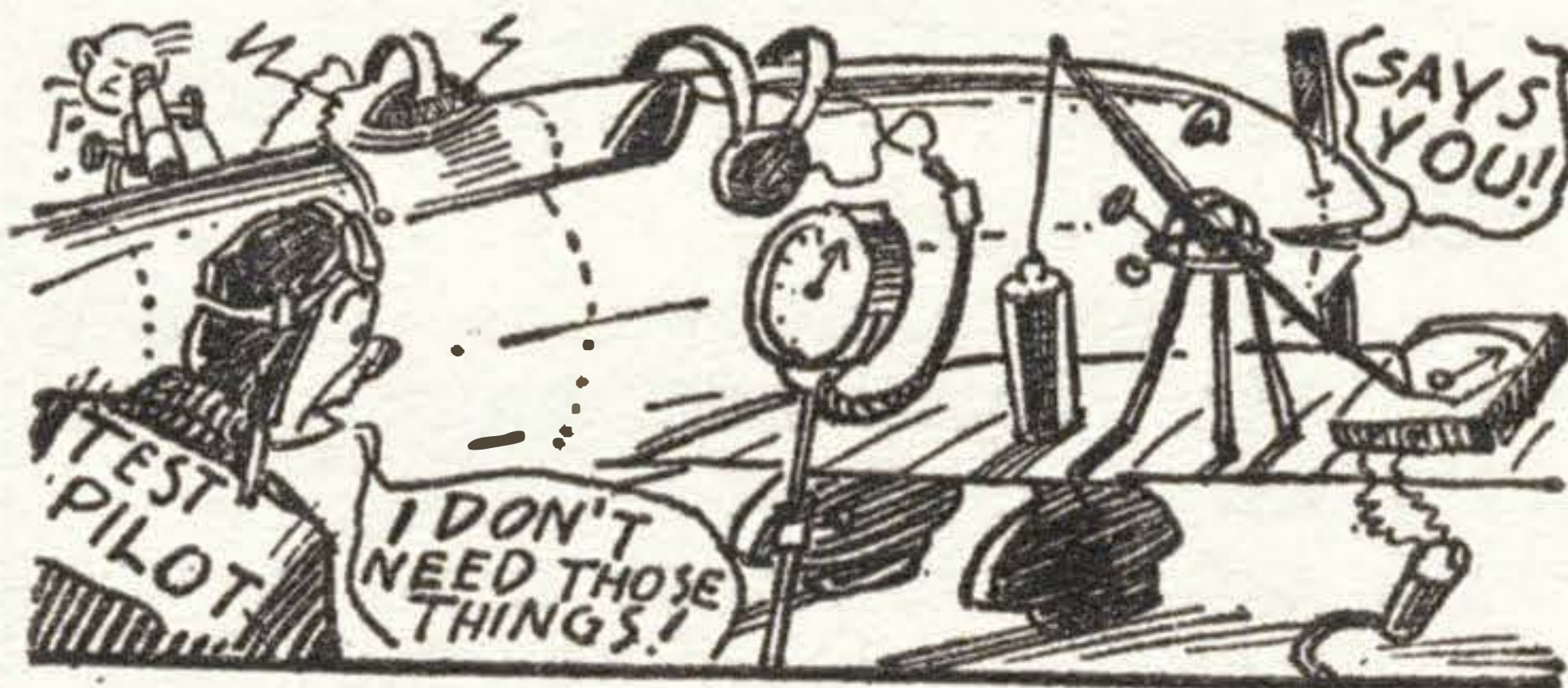
Received Midgot Radio—I am pleased. Kindly mail two more . . .

(Letters on File).

(Continued from page 123)

travel as the automobile, Mr. Warner declared. Up until a decade ago, the test driver's verdict on an automobile was supreme. Now only the unchallenged testimony of recording instruments is accepted.

These are the things that must be measured about a plane—static stability, dynamic stability, maximum control-action available by making



maximum use of the controls, and the lightness of the control forces by which given action can be obtained.

"Nothing is really understood," said Mr. Warner, "until it can be measured exactly."

Instruments must be developed capable of taking these exact measurements. About 80% of the required instrumentation, however, is ready and waiting, while the rest is in process of development.

Do Your Part!

Do your part in the advancement of aviation! There are many ways in which you can promote air progress—and here's one of them:

If you haven't already done so, join *Airmen of America*, our world-wide organization for air fans who are aware of aeronautical problems. There is a coupon for your convenience on page 125. There are no dues and no fees. All we ask is your interest in aviation.

As a member, you're entitled to obtain, **FREE OF CHARGE**, twelve crackerjack portraits of World War aces.

Just send us three name-strips from three front covers of **SKY FIGHTERS**, from consecutive issues not more than a year old. Enclose six cents in stamps for mailing. Or send two name-strips and ten cents in stamps—or just one name-strip from

The New

COLLEGE HUMOR

15c Everywhere

the cover of this issue and fifteen cents in stamps will do the trick if you're in a hurry.

Letters from Readers

Fans, your letters are swell. Keep them coming. Remember to give me your opinions of the novels and stories in SKY FIGHTERS—also any suggestions you have—and your viewpoint on America's aviation problems.

We're taking off with a note from Clarence Laidlow, Jr., Medford, Mass.:

Clear the field for one of your future aces! I am reading your magazine and boy, it has the stuff! How about some more stories by Lieut. Jay D. Blaufox, Kenneth L. Sinclair, Harold F. Cruickshank, George Bruce and Robert Sidney Bowen? They're honeys.

I'm going to start a club of a group of
(Continued on page 126)

**NATIONAL COMMANDER,
THE AIRMEN OF AMERICA,
22 WEST 48th STREET, N. Y. C.**

Please enroll me as a member of THE AIRMEN OF AMERICA. I am sincerely interested in aviation and will do my part to further its advancement. I am a regular reader of SKY FIGHTERS.

Name

Address

CityState.....Age...

Do you want to be listed as a Mail Buddy?

.....

IMPORTANT: Enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope if you want a membership identification card.

FREE OFFER: To obtain a genuine leather AVIATOR'S combination membership card case and loose-leaf memo-book—tear off the name SKY FIGHTERS from the covers of three consecutive issues, starting with this one. Mail these to the above address with six cents in stamps, also enclosing a stamped self-addressed envelope. Or send the name-strip from the cover of this issue only and twelve cents in stamps, plus a stamped self-addressed envelope.

If already a member check here
4-37

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Sirs: Rush to me without charge (1) 32-page book with list of U. S. Government jobs obtainable. (2) Tell me immediately how to get one of these jobs.
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Your Kidneys contain 9 million tiny tubes, or filters which may be endangered by neglect or drastic, irritating drugs. Be careful. If functional Kidney or Bladder disorders make you suffer from Getting Up Nights, Nervousness, Loss of Pep, Leg Pains, Rheumatic Pains, Dizziness, Circles Under Eyes, Neuralgia, Acidity, Burning, Smarting or Itching, don't take chances. Get the doctor's guaranteed prescription Cystex, the most modern advanced treatment for these troubles. \$10,000.00 deposited with Bank of America, Los Angeles, California, guarantees that Cystex must bring new vitality in 48 hours and make you feel years younger in one week or money back on return of empty package. Telephone your druggist for guaranteed Cystex (Sias-TEX) today.

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Many people with defective hearing and Head Noises enjoy Conversation, Movies, Church and Radio, because they use Leonard Invisible Ear Drums which resemble Tiny Megaphones fitting in the Ear entirely out of sight. No wires, batteries or head piece. They are inexpensive. Write for booklet and sworn statement of



the inventor who himself has been benefited by the use of the drums.
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is not a skin disease, says Dr. Hoermann, well-known Milwaukee Eczema specialist. If you have Eczema, sometimes called salt rheum, weeping eczema, milk crust, scald head, moist tetter, write for book of little-known facts FREE. Also learn about Dr. Hoermann's simple home treatment which has produced amazing results in his private practice. Dr. Rud. Hoermann, Inc., Suite 351, 2200 N. Third St., Milwaukee, Wis.

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When the genito-urinary passages become irritated, don't use cheap drastic medicines. Tell your druggist you want genuine Santal Midy Capsules. Used by millions. They contain true East Indian santalwood oil.



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WE BUY ALL RARE
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(Continued from page 125)

Airmen of America—and so I guess you'll have to have some more membership cards ready soon for my pals!

Now comes John Quicker, 434 West 49th St., New York:

I have been reading SKY FIGHTERS for the past three years—and think it rings the bell in air fiction. I just finished reading HELLCAT'S BROOD and it was swell. I enjoy these features a lot: Library of War Planes, Tarmac Talk and The Question Corner.

I have albums of plane pictures from the Wright Brothers' first model, the Kitty Hawk—and others such as Stinson Destroyer, Lincoln Standard, Ireland, Curtiss, Kingbird, etc.

I'd like pictures of World War planes on the cover that are not obscured by action or hidden by figures of people. What do other readers think?

Reuben Stewart flies in with this from Water Street, St. George's, Bermuda:

I made up my mind that in this year, 1937, I am going to take a greater interest in aviation than I did in the past, and I've started by taking a home study course from an Airplane and Flying School.

I know that aviation is advancing rapidly all over the U. S. A., even here in little Bermuda. Just recently one of the flying boats of Imperial Airways arrived in dismantled form to begin the New York to Bermuda route and will be ready to fly in another three weeks.

SKY FIGHTERS is getting better and better, and all I say is keep up the good work. Well, here's where I take off, hoping that 1937 will live up to its promise as a bigger and better year for aviation.

Bob Burengard, 726 East Main St., Caledonia, Minn., writes:

I read SKY FIGHTERS and THE LONE EAGLE regularly and wish to become a member of Airmen of America. I think it is a fine club. I also enjoy your stories and I think it would be a good idea to put World War model planes in the magazines. My hobby is building solid models.

Carl B. Shapiro, Jr., 6200 Franklin Ave., Hollywood, Calif., is short and to the point in his letter:

I think your magazine is great and I especially liked HELLCAT'S BROOD. I'm all for more Navy stories—and I'd like our organization to have a special insignia of rank.

(Concluded on page 128)

Smarter

COLLEGE HUMOR

15c Everywhere

MORE "SWAPS"

(See Page 121)

Hi, fellow, I have plenty model airplane plans, books on airplanes, and flying, kits and supplies, movie projector and films, and a load of other articles to trade for U. S. and foreign stamps, first day covers, small airplane motors, used airplane parts or any other useful article. Drop me a card. Billy Shimonkevitz, 654 Boulevard Ave., Dickson City, Pa.

Have ukelele, fife and bugle, two good baseball bats, infielders' gloves and tennis racquet. Want electric or short wave radio and radio magazine. D. Lisaius, 20 Westerman Ave., Seymour, Conn.

Send me any war time decoration and I will send you practically any model plane you want. Mention model wanted when sending medal. Frank Castro, 1317 Wayburn, Detroit, Mich.

Trade my stamps, coins, radio atlas of world, radio log, weekly reader, October 10, 1930-May 13, 1932, etc., for your swap. List to: R. C. Hutto, Jr., Box 513, Cedar Grove Sta., Shreveport, La.

Will swap 100 different cigarette cards, for 100 commemorative or Newfoundland stamps. Must be in good condition. Write C. Rilott, 23 Grosvenor Ave., Grosvenor St., Hull, England.

Let's swap! Have large, black, brand new Eastman Kodak Camera—No. 2A, a Blue Jacket's manual containing 810 pages, and old stamps and coins. Will swap for small radio, short wave set or pair of field binoculars. Albert Caltune, 5121 Walnut St., West Philadelphia, Pa.

Have portable typewriter that writes scrip and several other types of print. Also have microscope and radios. Want midget gas motor or lathe. John Ewald, 430 West 39th St., San Pedro, Calif.

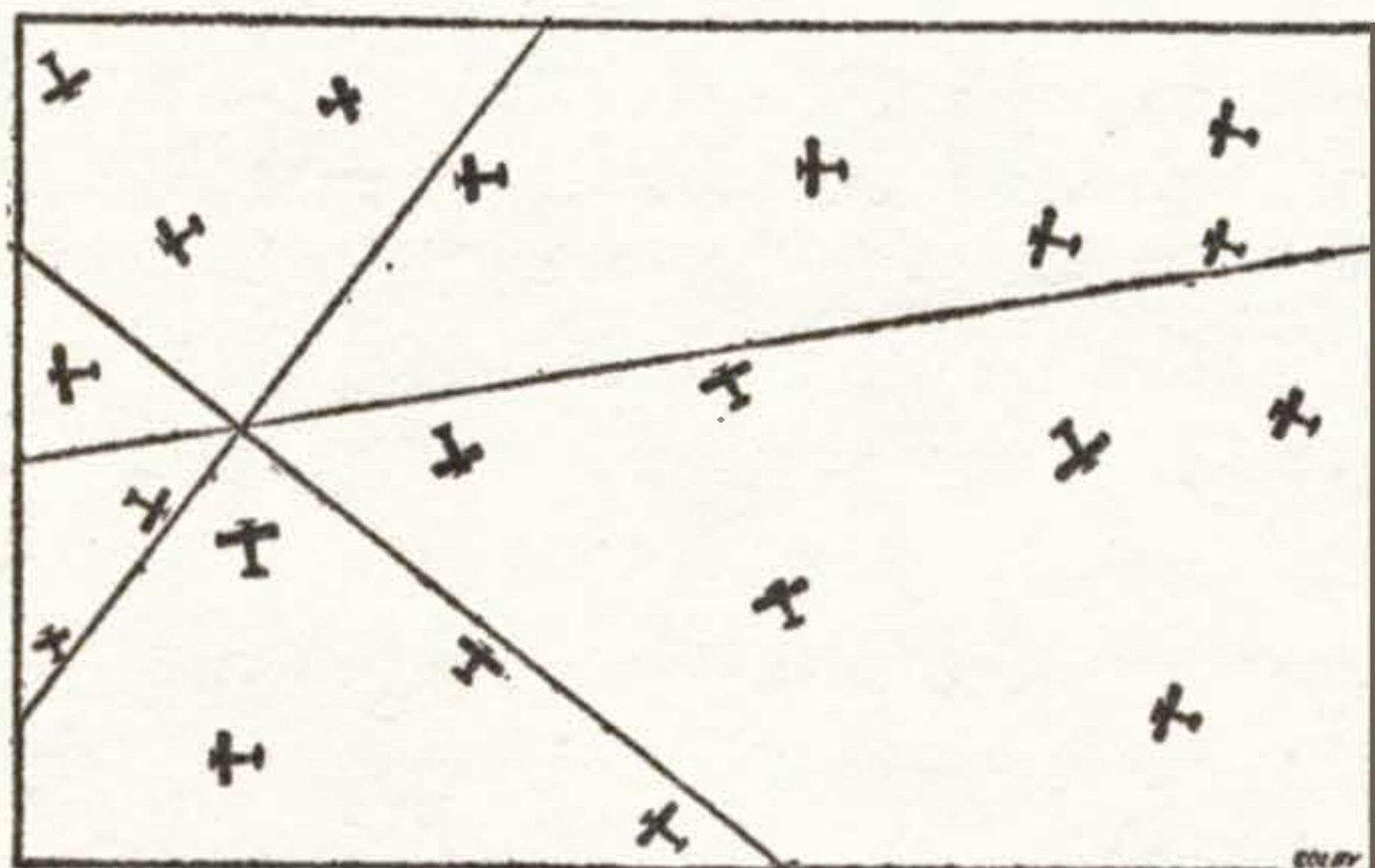
Have plaubell makinette, 127 camera, 1-2.7 lenses, trade for engagement ring worth \$50. Robert Waring, Co. 19, U. S. N. T. S., Great Lakes, Illinois.

Have motor-driven movie projector, with eight long films, Popeye, Charlie Chaplin, etc. Will swap for 26- or 28-inch bike. Wm. Lynch, 10—O Street, S. Boston, Mass.

I will be willing to exchange stamps with anyone in any part of the world. Just write to: Thosis Solomonides, Larnaca City, Island of United Kingdom, Cyprus.

Have good adventure books, foreign stamps to swap for good U. S. commemoratives and Indian head pennies. Send for list. H. E. Kinkead, Jr., 413 A. W. 2nd Ave., Amarillo, Texas.

ANSWER TO PUZZLE ON PAGE 105




CORRECT ANSWERS TO "SCRAMBLED SHIPS"

(See Pages 86-87)

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Naglo Quadraplane | 5. Zeppelin Giant Sea- |
| 2. Ursinus Hydroplane | plane |
| 3. Dutch Fokker | 6. S.V.A. Fighting |
| 4. Nieuport | Scout |

SENSATIONAL

LOLA A. SHARP, INDIANA NURSE NOW SAYS:



Drinking 1 Glass of
Orange Juice
Mixed with 1 Tablespoon of
BONKORA
2 times a day and eating
her fill of the delicious
foods as shown in the
Bonkora package made her
LOSE 108 LBS.
UGLY FAT

She lost 6 in. off waist,
4 in. off hips and 6 in. off
bust. She lost avoidable
reducible overweight and
regularized elimination.

SEND FOR FREE SAMPLE
and copy of Lola Sharp's letter.
Address Bon Kora, 544 S. Wells
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Relieve Pain In Few Minutes

To relieve the torturing pain of Neuritis, Rheumatism, Neuralgia, Lumbago in few minutes, get **NURITO**, the Doctor's formula. No opiates, no narcotics. Does the work quickly—must relieve worst pain to your satisfaction in few minutes—or money back at Druggist's. Don't suffer. Get trustworthy **NURITO** on this guarantee. Don't wait.

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Marvelous Fun at Parties
Imitate the big radio stars and crooners. Do a "Ben Bernie" or "Rudy Vallee." No end of pleasure for grown-up or kiddies. Excellent training in elocution. "Amateur Hour" practice or broadcast announcing. Special cut-out button allows you to switch from home broadcasting to regular radio reception in an instant. Can not injure your radio in any way.

SEND NO MONEY
5 Days' Trial at Our Risk! Merely mail the coupon. On delivery pay postman \$1 plus few cents postage. If not delighted return it in 5 days and your \$1 refunded at once.



THE WALCO MIKE
In handsome black metal. Long cord. Less than **ONLY \$1** a minute to attach to any radio without tools. Fully guaranteed.

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49 East 21st St., New York, N. Y.

Send Walco Mike with complete instructions. Will pay postman \$1, plus few cents postage. If not delighted, will return in 5 days for \$1 refund.

Check here if **ENCLOSING \$1**—thus saving postage charge. Same refund guarantee applies.

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Address

Check here if you prefer chromium plated De Luxe model. Price \$1.39.

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of These

Gov't Jobs



Men—Women
Start \$1,260 to
\$2,100 a year!
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Do YOU Want?

No special education or experience usually required. Steady work. Short hours. Vacations. PENSIONS! Age 18—50. Extra Social Security Jobs expected soon. Send coupon for FREE book. Tells how you can pass Civil Service Examination. Arthur R. Patterson, Former Gov't Exam. Principal, PATTERSON SCHOOL, 1035 Case Building, Rochester, N. Y. Send FREE book, "How to Secure a Government Position."

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If you are denied the blessing of a baby all your own and yearn for a baby's arms and a baby's smile do not give up hope. Just write in confidence to Mrs. Mildred Owens, Dept. X, 532 Hanan Bldg., Kansas City, Mo., and she will tell you about a simple home method that helped her after being denied 15 yrs. Many others say this had helped bless their lives. Write now and try for this wonderful happiness.

PROSTATE Gland Weakness

Nervous Debility, Frequent Night Rising, Leg Pains, Lame Back, Lumbago, Sexual Weakness, Kidney and Bladder Trouble, Chronic Constipation, Despondency, Restlessness at Night are only some of the ailments, differing in individuals, that can often be ascribed to a lesion of the Prostate Gland.

THOUSANDS AFFLICTED

Thousands of men, in every community suffer from these ailments, weaknesses and other physical shortcomings without knowing that very frequently they are caused by prostatic failure.

MANY DOCTORS ENDORSE MASSAGE

Massaging for the alleviation of Prostate Trouble is as old as time, and some of the most outstanding authorities in the medical profession recommend massage as a safe effective treatment. (See Reference Book of the Medical Sciences, Vol. VII, 3rd Edition.)

USE "PROSAGER"

—a new invention which enables any man to massage his Prostate Gland in the privacy of his home.

It often brings relief with the first treatment and must help or it costs you nothing. No Drugs or Electricity.

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Each month we receive scores of unsolicited letters of gratitude and appreciation from users of the Prosager—having thousands of users we no doubt can refer Prostate Sufferers to someone in their own home town who are enthusiastic in their praise of the remarkable benefits received.

FREE BOOKLET EXPLAINS TRIAL OFFER

A one cent post card with your name and address plainly written is all that is necessary, address card to

MIDWEST PRODUCTS CO.
B-2817, Kalamazoo, Mich



DR. W. D. SMITH
INVENTOR

TARMAC TALK

(Concluded from page 126)

Mortimer Cohen, 46 West 83rd St., New York, says:

Your magazine is swell. However, I do think you ought to season it with a few more modern tales. After all, the World War's over long ago.

Let's have a few stories about Spain, China, Japan, Ethiopia, the battles in the Chaco Forest between Bolivia and Paraguay.

And remember—sky fighters are not only those who fight other men, but also those who fight the elements.

We've heard a lot pro and con regarding that subject—but most of the readers are still in favor of the war-air stories. We have been using an occasional modern story, however.

Harry Nieman, 2235 McClellan St., Philadelphia, writes that LEARN TO FLY is his favorite feature.

Dennie Yocum, 2008 Claxton Ave., Middletown, O., writes that he recommends the idea, mentioned by several other readers, of putting the flying lessons in book or pamphlet form.

Another swell GEORGE BRUCE novel will appear in the next issue of SKY FIGHTERS. It's called NORTH SEA NIGHTMARE—and it gives you the Navy lads in action, in a drama-packed narrative of flaming skies that will make your heart do a Vrille in excitement. GEORGE BRUCE at his best—and a "different" type of story you're sure to like!

Also—John Masters, the Lone Eagle, is one of the most popular characters of today, and we're bringing him to you in the next issue! One of his exploits is told in WINGS OVER HELL, a novelette by Lieut. Scott Morgan in the next issue. If you're a Masters fan—you'll thrill to this yarn! If you're not acquainted with this great sky fighter, here's your chance to meet him.

So long, buddies! And keep your weather eye peeled for that gala July issue. On sale at all stands the second week of May!

—EDDIE McCRAE.

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EARN THIS BIKE

Name _____

Address _____

Your Age _____

City _____ State _____



Q. What is wing warping?
John Watkins, Lancaster, Pa.

A. Wing controls which were used before the adoption of ailerons.

Q. Who was the first American pilot to be downed? Before whom did he fall?
Alfred R. Sandos, Montreal, Can.

A. Victor Chapman. The German ace who downed him was Boelke.

Q. Was Fokker interested financially in any war planes that did not bear his name?
J. S. Bright, Mexico City, D. F.

A. Yes. The Junkers.

Q. What does R. E. stand for?
Mary Field, Kansas City, Mo.

A. Royal Experimental.

Q. May a girl of 15 join AIRMEN OF AMERICA?
June Mattieu, Chicago.

A. Certainly. There are no age limitations to membership, and both young men and women are welcome.

Q. What country made the first navel air raid of the great war? What did they raid?
Harry Soule Payne, New York.

A. Great Britain. They raided Cuxhaven, Germany's famous Naval base.

Q. Is Colonel Lindbergh a member of the Caterpillar Club?
J. K. M., Scranton, Pa.

A. Yes.

READ
THE LONE EAGLE
Our Companion War-Air Magazine

Newly Discovered Hormone Helps Men Past 40

It's a hormone used by many doctors here and abroad to strengthen impaired vigor caused by weakened glands. This hormone, together with other beneficial ingredients, is obtained in Zo-ak Tablets (Blue Box for Men—Orange Box for Women) at all good druggists. Try them uninterruptedly for one month. If you do not feel vastly improved your druggist gives you your money back. Don't accept a cheaper substitute. Zo-ak contains the genuine gland-stimulating hormone. No harmful drugs. Booklet by registered physician free. Zo-ak Co., 59 W. 15th St., N. Y.

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Anyone suffering from Fistula, Piles or any Rectal trouble is urged to write for our FREE Book, describing the McCleary Treatment for these treacherous rectal troubles. The McCleary Treatment has been successful in thousands of cases. Let us send you our reference list of former patients living in every State in the Union. The McCleary Clinic, 597 Elms Blvd., Excelsior Springs, Mo.

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Until You Try This Wonderful Treatment for pile suffering. If you have piles in any form write for a FREE sample of Page's Pile Tablets and you will bless the day that you read this. Write today. E. R. Page Co., 421-B10 Page Bldg., Marshall, Mich.

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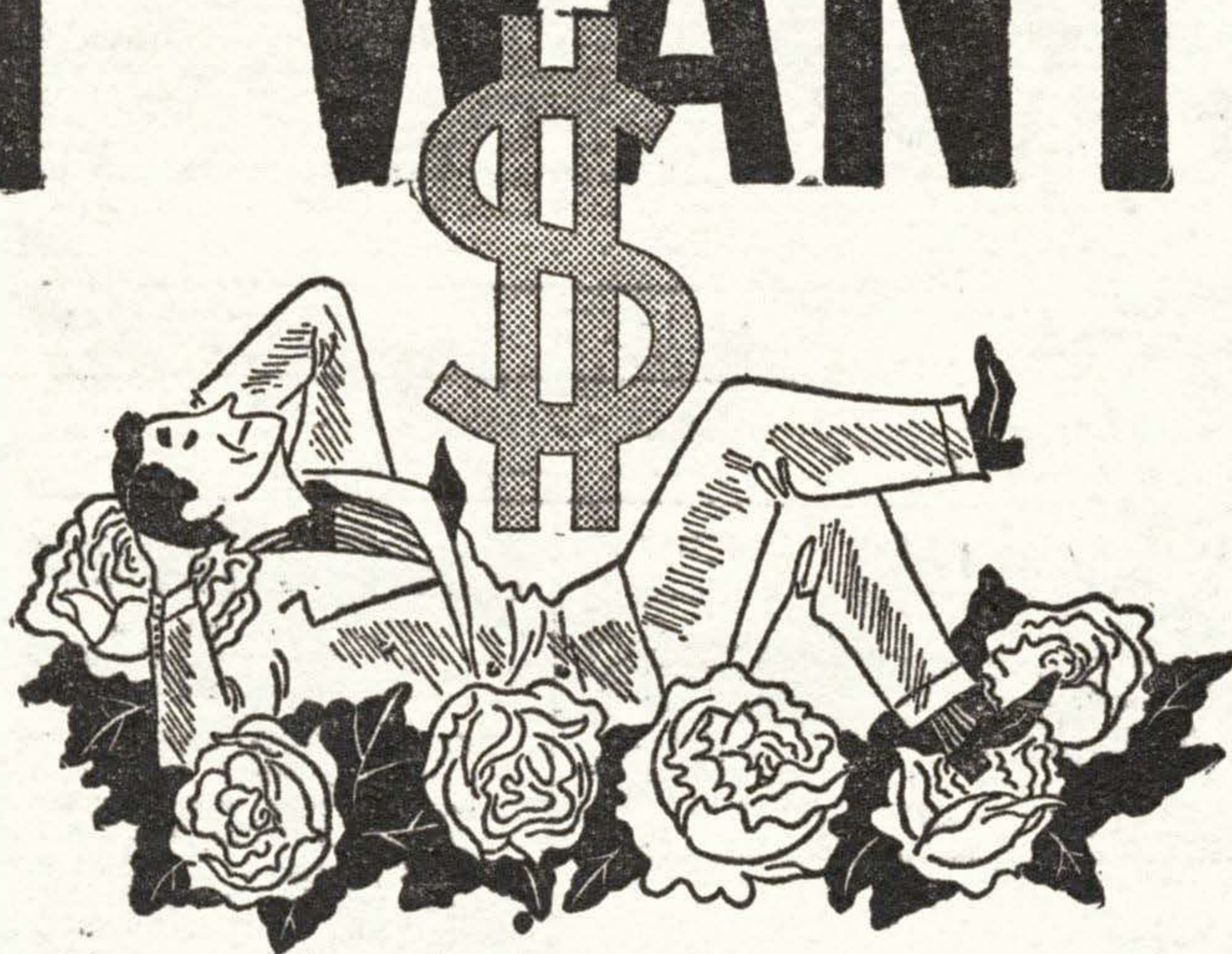
For Immediate Consideration : : : : Send poems to Columbian Music Publishers, Dept. 30, Toronto, Can.

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I will send any sufferer a \$1.25 bottle of Lane's Treatment by mail on FREE TRIAL. If it satisfies send me \$1.25. If not your report cancels charge. Address D. J. LANE, 269 Lane Building, St. Marys, KANSAS.

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MEN CONTENT WITH THEIR PRESENT INCOMES

If you're satisfied with what you're making—If you're content to just hold onto your present job—If you see no advantage in modernizing your training—Then—This coupon doesn't interest you! • BUT—If

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INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

BOX 3968-J SCRANTON, PENNA.



Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your booklet, "Who Wins and Why," and full particulars about the subject *before* which I have marked X:



- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architect | <input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Plumbing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architectural Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> Boilermaker | <input type="checkbox"/> Heating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building Estimating | <input type="checkbox"/> Telegraph Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Air Conditioning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor and Builder | <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Steam Fitting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Ventilation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> Steam Engineer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Management of Inventions | <input type="checkbox"/> Machinist | <input type="checkbox"/> Steam Electric Engineer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Patternmaker | <input type="checkbox"/> Marine Engineer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Lighting | <input type="checkbox"/> Diesel Engines | <input type="checkbox"/> R. R. Locomotives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Welding, Electric and Gas | <input type="checkbox"/> Aviation Engines | <input type="checkbox"/> R. R. Section Foreman |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Shop Blueprints | <input type="checkbox"/> Automobile Mechanics | <input type="checkbox"/> Air Brakes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heat Treatment of Metals | <input type="checkbox"/> Refrigeration | <input type="checkbox"/> R. R. Signalmen |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Highway Engineering |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Engineering |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Bridge Engineer |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Bridge and Building Foreman |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacy |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Coal Mining |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Mine Foreman |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Fire Boilers |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Navigation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Cotton Manufacturing |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Woolen Manufacturing |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Fruit Growing |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Poultry Farming |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade School Subjects |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> High School Subjects |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> College Preparatory |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Illustrating |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Cartooning |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Lettering Show Cards |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Signs |
| BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeping | <input type="checkbox"/> Service Station Salesmanship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Secretarial Work | <input type="checkbox"/> First Year College Subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Correspondence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accountancy | <input type="checkbox"/> French | <input type="checkbox"/> Stenography and Typing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cost Accountant | <input type="checkbox"/> Salesmanship | <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> C. P. Accountant | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising | <input type="checkbox"/> Mail Carrier |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Mail Clerk |
| DOMESTIC SCIENCE COURSES | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Home Dressmaking | <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced Dressmaking | <input type="checkbox"/> Millinery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Dressmaking and Designing | | <input type="checkbox"/> Tea Room and Cafeteria Management, Catering |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Foods and Cookery |

Name..... Age..... Address.....

City..... State..... Present Position.....

If you reside in Canada, send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

TALK-SING-PLAY thru your own radio

BROADCAST your voice in programs coming through your radio set-- make announcements from any part of house-- inject wise cracks, words and musical tricks. **WORLD MIKE** made especially for home use, attached in a lift-off. Not a toy. Also out on own programs at home, parties, etc. Barrels of fun! Easy to use. **Price 25c.**

RADIO MIKE Large, substantial, all metal mike. Well for practicing radio singing, talking, amateur programs, etc. Reproduces the voice perfectly in loud, clear tone without any distortion. Regular table model that can be held in hand. Guaranteed to work on any set. **Easily removed.** **Price 75c.** **PLICE ADAPTER.** Get police calls on any radio. **75c.** **NOISE & AERIAL ELIMINATOR** 50c each.

Say Fellows! Build This Swell ELECTRIC TRAIN

A complete **ELECTRIC TRAIN KIT** for only **35c**. Of course the **GOLDEN FLYER** isn't a \$20.00 train, but just listen to what you get for your money: all the parts for a fast, peppy motor-- complete base, wheels, wire, etc.-- beautiful 5 color lithographed body-- dummy lights, etc. And as for building it, why some kids say they have twice as much fun building it as running it-- it's so simple! This neat and flashy kit ready to assemble only **35c ppd.**

THRIFT VAULT 50c

A 3 dial safe lock and Vault Bank. Just dial the three numbers and open the vault. It is like any safe. Big and roomy-- it measures about 4x3 in. Swell to keep your money, jewelry, etc. in. Constructed of heavy metal with red and black trimmings. Full instructions with each bank. **VAULT BANK** only **50c** postpaid. **THRIFT VAULT** similar in appearance to the above only made of welded steel and slightly larger. Packed in a box, with complete directions for opening. **Price, ppd. \$1.25**

CRYSTAL RADIO 25c

This is a radio in-itself. It is possible to get reception with it alone within 25 miles of a station for up to 100 miles under good conditions. All you need is an aerial and ear phone. Completely assembled and wired with super-sensitive crystal, stand, base, crystal set, antenna, cats whisker, etc. Reception guaranteed. **25c**

WONDERFUL X-RAY 10c

GREAT CURIOSITY! With it you can apparently see the bones in the finger's lead in a pencil, even the flesh seems transparent. Always ready for use. Only **10c** ppd.

WHOOPEE CUSHION

Whoopee Cushion is made of rubber in flat like balloon, and then placed on a chair, couch, seat, etc. When the victim unsuspectingly sits upon the cushion, it gives forth a sound that can be better imagined than described. **Price 25c**

LOOK WONDERFUL INSTRUMENT

35c Nine separate articles in one. Odd, curious and interesting. Lots of pleasure as well as very useful. Double microscope for examining the wonders of nature. Opera glass. Stereoscope. Burning Lens. Reading Glass. Telescope for examining eye, ear, nose and throat. Worth its cost to locate one painful cinder in the eye. Folds flat and fits the pocket. Something great-- you need one. **Price 35c.**

FRENCH PHOTO RING 25c

A handsome ring, finished in imitation platinum, and set with a large imitation diamond. In the center of the ring is a small microscopic picture almost invisible to the naked eye, yet magnified to an almost incredible degree. Pictures of bathing girl beauties, French actresses, views of France, Panama Canal, others show the Lord's Prayer, every word legible. Only **25c ppd.**

SILENT DEFENDER

Used by police officers, detectives, sheriffs and night watchmen as a means of protection. Very effective. Easily fits the hand. Useful in an emergency. Aluminum, **Wt. 2 oz.** Pocket size. **25c, 2 for 45c.**

STAGE MONEY

With a bunch of these bills, it is easy for a person of limited means to appear as a wealthy party by flashing a roll of these bills at the proper time and peeling off a genuine bill or two from the outside of the roll. The effect created will be found to be all that can be desired. **Prices: 40 bills 20c, 120 for 50c, or 350 per thousand postpaid.**

DANCING SKELETON

A jointed figure of a skeleton **14 in.** in height, will dance to music and perform various gyrations and movements while the operator may be some distance from it. It will lie down, stand up, dance, etc. We send full and complete instructions. **Price 10 cents, 3 for 25 cents postpaid.**

BOYS! BOYS! BOYS! THROW YOUR VOICE

Into a trunk, under the bed or anywhere. Lots of fun fooling teacher, policeman or friends. The **VENTRILO** a little instrument, fits into the mouth of a child, used with above for Bird Calls, etc. Anyone can use it. Never fails. A **64 page course on Ventriloquism** together with the Ventrilo. All for only **10 cents** postpaid.

Hands Up! Pistol Cigarette Case

It looks like a deadly weapon, but it is merely a novel Cigarette Case. Better than the real thing in many an awkward emergency. Great fun sticking up your friends. They squirm and protest. Pull the trigger and the slide flies open, disclosing cigarettes. **price 25c**

ELECTRITE PENCIL

Electrite Pencil writes in gold, silver, red, yellow, purple, green, blue, etc. on leather, wood, paper, bakelite, cellophane, silk, rubber, etc., etc. Put your name, monogram or initials in gold or any other color on your car, wallet, golf clubs, fountain pen, stationery, etc. Print and decorate anything. Live-wire boys and girls can earn extra cash easily by doing this for other people. Every time you print a name or monogram on an article you can easily get 25c for it, yet it costs almost nothing except few seconds time! Easy to use. Just plug in the electric light socket and the pencil is ready to write. **ELECTRITE PENCIL**, complete with supplies for writing 6 colors. Only **\$1.00**

CCC RING

Everyone wants to wear this big ring with the red, blue and gold emblem surrounded by the American Eagle! Handsome, silver polished. **Price only 25c** Sterling Silver Ring, only **\$1.00.**

U.S. NAVY RING

Similar to the CCC ring, only with Navy emblem, **25c**. **USN** in bold relief with anchor. **Silver appearance, 25c. Sterling Silver, \$1.00.** **14 kt Gold with Sterling Emblem, an effective contrast, \$1.75**

U.S. ARMY RING

Similar to CCC ring, only with Army emblem. **A large, oval size ring. Silver appearance, 25c. Sterling Silver, \$1.00.** **14 kt Gold with Sterling Emblem, an effective contrast, \$1.75**

AVIATION RING

Similar to CCC ring, with Aviation Emblem. **A smart, snappy ring that you will be proud to wear. 14 kt Gold with Sterling Emblem, an effective contrast, \$1.75.**

Open Any Lock

Did you ever lose or forget your keys? Probably many times. Don't worry any more about lost keys (for any keys, for that matter), as these master keys will open almost any ordinary lock. Five different keys for various types of locks. Will save their cost if you only use them once, but you'll probably find them so handy that you'll always carry them. **5 MASTER KEYS price 25c**

Surprise Soap

Looks like an ordinary bar of soap, only it dyes the face and hands. A real starter that will make the barber go easy on the next bar of soap. **Can be used many times. Price 15c postpaid.**

Serpent's EGGS

Light each of the "eggs" with a match and they grow into snakes several feet long. While burning they twist and squirm in a lifelike manner. **Box of 12 only 10c postpaid.**

MAGIC FLUTE

New patented musical instrument. Wonderful invention: nothing like it. You can be a real musician and play all the latest popular songs, ragtime, old time ballads, jazz, blues, dance music, fine for piano accompaniment. There is no fumbling, and once you have mastered it you can play all kinds of music with facility and ease. **Sure to please. 10c, 3 for 25c.**

FUN LICENSES 10c

Large size, nicely printed with seal, suitable for framing. Hand one of these to your friend and he will never forget you! Your choice: **Liar's License; Bootleggers Certificate; Marriage Certificate (it looks real); Lia's & Grafters Certificate; Gossamer's Certificate; Gossamer's License; Bull Throaters Certificate; Marriage Certificate; One Armed Drivers & Neckers Certificate; Kibitzers Certificate.** Only **10c** each, **3 for 25c.**

OUR LATEST CATALOGUE

Send 10c for our **NEW CATALOG** or **25c for the DELUXE EDITION** with permanent cloth binding. Bigger and better than ever. New items - different items - things that you never thought existed - articles you always wanted but never knew where to get. Nearly 600 pages of magic tricks, latest novelties, joke goods, useful time savers, unusual books, sporting goods, puzzles, games, etc., etc. **Stamps Accepted.**

BLANK CARTRIDGE PISTOL REVOLVER STYLE 50c 1 00

Two new models now out, at 50c and \$1.00. Well made and effective. Patterned after latest type of Revolver. Appearance alone will scare a burglar. Takes 22 Cal. Blank Cartridges obtainable everywhere. Great protection against burglars, tramps, dogs. Have it lying around without the danger attached to other revolvers. Fine for 4th of July, New Year's, stage work, starting pistol, etc. Two sizes: Medium size 50c. Large size \$1.00. Blank cartridges 50c per 100. Hoister (cowboy type) 50c. Shipped by Express only, not prepaid.

Hi-Powered Air Pistols

A powerful high grade Air Pistol shaped like an Automatic, pocket size, fires B.B. shot obtains anywhere very powerful yet perfectly safe for boys to handle. Two styles: **Single Shot Pistol or Repeater. The Repeater fires 100 shots in one loading. The Single Shot shoots Air Rifle Darts and B.B. Shot.** Well made and durable: all metal parts nickel plated; natural grain wood stocks. Front and rear sights. Better than an air rifle. Shipped by express. Not prepaid. **Single Shot Pistol \$2.50; 100 Shot Pistol \$5.00.**

PEA-MATIC REPEATER-12 SHOT

Here it is, boys! It shoots 12 to 6 ordinary size pellets without reloading. Just load the gun with peas, pull the trigger and keep on firing until the barrel is empty. Then reload and fire again. It is absolutely harmless and safe. They sell like hot cakes, so get one now. Ten times better than the old fashioned bean blower. Shoots far and accurate. Complete with target. **ONLY 25c. Hoister with belt for Peamatic only 25c.** **600 p. catalog 10c.**

HOW TO BUILD A MIDGET RACER

Complete blueprints for 3 different racers. The one illustrated can be built for a few dollars. All about racer parts, gears, transmissions, dirt track racers, track regulations, blueprints, plans, how to add a motor to your bike at little cost, increasing speed, etc., etc. Cramped and jammed full of information. Over 75 illustrations, plans & blueprints. **COMPLETE BOOK, only 25c.**

BIG ENTERTAINER

226 Jokes & Riddles, 25 Tricks, 10 Parlor Games, 73 Toasts, 13 Stories, 105 Money-making Secrets, 22 Monologues, 21 Puzzles, Recitations, Funny Readings, 11 Parlor Pastimes, 13 Flirtations, 110 Names & their Meanings, 10 Picture Puzzles, 37 Amusing Experiments, Deaf and Dumb Alphabet, Shadowgraphy, Fortune Teller, Fortunes with Cards, Crystal, Tea Cup, etc. Hypnotism, Ventriloquism, Cut-outs for Checkers, Chess, Dominoes, Fox and Geese, 9 Men Morris, Spanish Prison Puzzle, Anagrams, 25 Card Tricks, Crystal Gazing and 10 other things for only **15 cents** postpaid.

Good Luck Ring

Very striking, quaint and uncommon. Oxidized gunmetal finish; skill and crossbones design; two brilliant flashing imitation rubies or emeralds sparkle out of the eyes. Said to bring good luck to the wearer. **Only 25c.**

LEARN TO HYPNOTIZE

See how easily you can master the secrets of hypnosis and strange power. Sway others at will. Influence the thoughts of others, control their desires; and be the master of every situation. Make others love you, strengthen your will power, banish fear and worry. Improve your memory, overcome bad habits, etc. **Price 25c**

CHAMELEON 25c

WATCH IT CHANGE COLOR Get one of these most wonderful of all creatures. Watch it change color. Study its habits. Wear one on the lapel of your coat as a curiosity. Shoots out its tongue to catch flies and insects for food. No trouble to keep. Can go for months without food. About 4 in. long. Shipped to any address in USA by mail. We guarantee safe arrival and live delivery. **Only 25c.**

HOW TO LOVE 10c

Every normal being is susceptible to love's tender passion. When love comes the lovers realize how inadequate is the language of their command to express the depths of their consuming passion that is gnawing at their hearts. It is to soothe the soul of the love-lorn that this work has been compiled. All about LOVE! **PRICE 10c POSTPAID.**

FIELD GLASSES 25c

WOW! What a bargain! Real genuine Field Glasses with six power magnification. Center piece quick, one finger focusing. Permits full, unhampered, two eyed vision that gives remarkable scope and clarity. Swell for nature study, hiking, sports, and a million other things. Complete with cord, packed in box. **Only 25c.**

HOW TO TAP DANCE TO

Why envy the easy rhythm and fascinating grace of **Step'n Fetchit, Fred Astaire** etc. You can dance in **ONLY 8 HOURS** by a new, simplified course by Prof. Wilson. No special ability needed. Be smart! Everybody's tapping. The whole town is tapping. Beat out a tune with your feet. Hostesses love it. Friends adore it. Best of all dancing is not only invigorating and entertaining but is also a health-giving exercise for making the limbs supple and giving a "springy" feeling of fitness to the whole body. Promotes slimmer nature's way, without pills, drugs or dieting. Readers say: "wonderful benefit. Thank you for adding tap dancing to my accomplishments." **PRICE 25 CENTS POSTPAID.**

Learn DANCING

LATEST STEPS. So popular. Good dancers are always admired -- always popular guests. Partners welcome them eagerly. The newest, smartest steps without a teacher. Don't make excuses when the music starts. Get lots of fun from parties and dances. If you want to become a perfect dancer, learn to dance at home this new, easy way. **BOOK TELLS:** How to develop poise and control, improve your dance steps, art of holding, how to walk to music, how to lead, latest Fox Trot steps, Natural and Reverse Turns, the Reverse Wave, the Quickstep, the Swing to music, Waltz, Backward Changes, the Continental, the famous K is a dance, the Manhattan, the College Rhumba, the Carlo, Charleston, and many others. **Art of Dancing. Price 25 Cents Postpaid.**

JU-JITSU DON'T BE BULLIED

The Japanese art of self-defense. New methods of attack and defense are given, illustrated so that you cannot fail to understand them. Deals fully with trips, throws, wrist locks, body holds, defense against revolvers, stranglers, armblocks, scissors, splits, headlock, holding a man down, double knee throw, stick attack, defense against knife, one hand throat grip, defense against two assailants, stomach throw, secret thumb knockout, nerve pinch, and numerous others. Learn to protect yourself under all circumstances with nature's weapons. Fear no man, guns or knives! "Secrets of Ju Jitsu" **Only 30c.**

FORTUNE TELLING Tomorrow?

What will it bring for you? What will happen? Let Madam Leonard's Fortune Telling Cards predict the future! Just get a deck and friends for miles around will want to get in on the fun. At parties, gatherings, evenings, etc., everyone will want you to tell their fortunes. When things start to slow up and the guests start to sit down and mumble about the weather, pull a pack of fortune telling cards and tell them to sit up! It interests and fascinates them. Yet there is nothing difficult to telling the fortunes--every card is plainly marked with its meaning and the connection between the cards becomes at once apparent. Complete directions with each deck. **Price, 35c per deck.** **Deluxe deck with 33 ivory finished cards. 75c, postpaid.**

Pocket Telescope

Eagle-Eye Vision Six Power 25c Big 3 draw, 6 power telescope for only 25c! Swell for outdoors, nature study, sports, looking at the moon. Converted into Solar telescope by using smoked glass so you can see sun spots, etc. **5 1/2 long.** **Price 25c.**

STEAM ENGINE

World's biggest value in mechanical toys. A great big steam engine, 7 in. high by 2 1/2 in. diameter. Watch the flywheel spinning around and hear the engine puffing when you get the steam up. Light up, fill the boiler with water, and in a few minutes it is blazing along at top speed! Runs for hours on one filling and will run small toys off the fly wheel. Foolproof, harmless, fully tested and guaranteed to run. Engine is beautifully lithographed in several colors. New model which runs on alcohol or canned heat. **35c.** **Electric model, 45c, postpaid.**

LUMINOUS PAINT

LUMINOUS PAINT, when applied to an object, emits rays of white light, rendering it visible in the dark. The darker the night the brighter it shines. Simple to use--you can do it! Apply some to the dial of your watch so you can tell time at night. Paint push buttons, switches, anything, everything with it. **Small bottle 25c, Medium Size 50c, Large Size \$1.00, postpaid.**

SEX INDICATOR 10c

In Europe this Indicator is used to tell the sex of eggs, dogs, handwriting, etc., etc. We have tried it many times, and although we don't see how it's done, yet we have never seen it fail. Over a man's hand or handwriting, etc. it swings in a straight line. Over a lady's hand, in a circle. **Try it yourself. PRICE 10c**



You need this throat protection too!

... That only a light smoke offers

The stars of radio have to protect their throats—naturally. But keep in mind that your throat is just as important to you...be sure you have a light smoke. You can be sure Luckies are a

light smoke because the exclusive process, "It's Toasted", expels certain natural impurities harsh to the delicate tissues of your throat. So follow the stars to a clear throat! Choose Luckies.



a light smoke

**OF RICH, RIPE-BODIED
TOBACCO—"IT'S TOASTED"**