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APR  
PUBLISHED WEEKLY  
BATTLE  
BIRDS



Fredrick  
W. Weller

The DARE-DEVIL PATROL

By STEUART M. MERY



The SIXGUN BUZZARD

A "SMOKE WADE" THRILLER

By ROBERT J. H.



# Health! Strength! Muscles!

## Complete Home Gym in One Outfit..

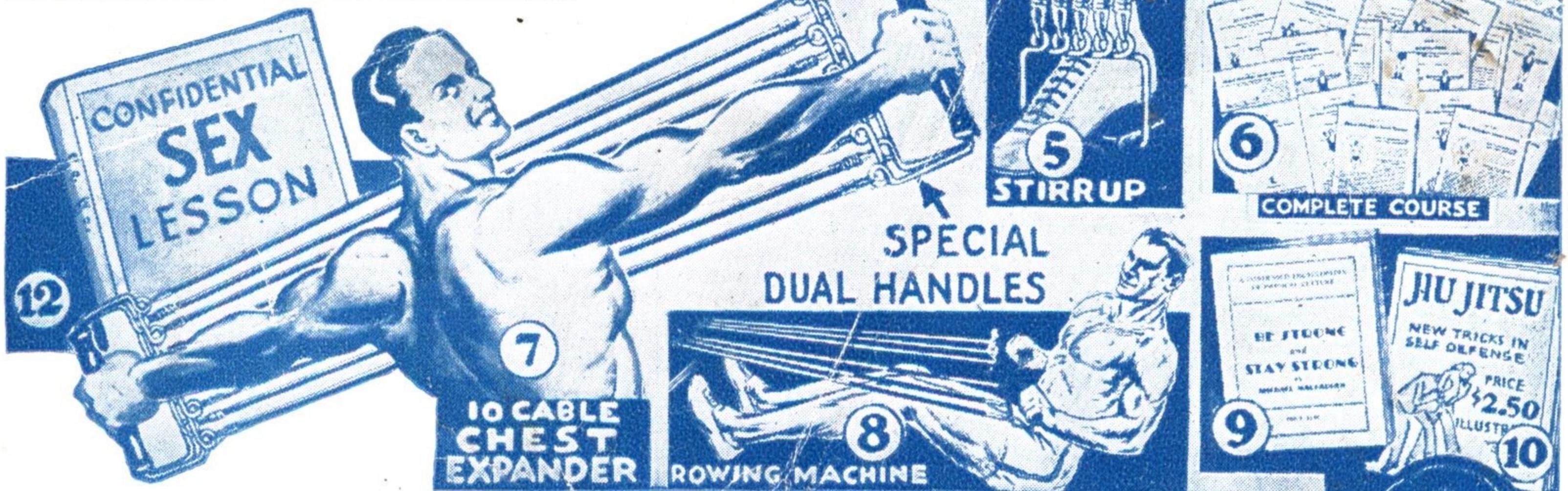
### HERE'S WHAT YOU GET

- 1—Complete set of Wall-Exerciser-Attachments—a wonderful muscle-builder for arms, back, chest and stomach.
- 2—Adjustable Head Gear for developing powerful neck muscles—and
- 3—Adjustable Foot Gear for building muscular legs.
- 4—Two High-Tension Scissor Grips for strengthening hands, wrists and fore-arms.
- 5—Foot stirrup, patented, non-slip; great for developing legs, thighs and stomach muscles.
- 6—Twelve Weeks' scientific Muscle-Building Course, a complete and progressive system of home training that will rebuild your body from head to foot.
- 7—Ten-Cable Progressive Chest Expander (300 lbs. resistance). A few minutes a day with this will give you a mighty chest, powerful arms and legs.
- 8—Complete Rowing Machine Attachments, giving you all the wonderful body-building benefits of rowing.
- 9—Encyclopedia of Health and Strength, a big book full of vital facts about your body and its development.
- 10—Book on Jiu Jitsu, the famous art that makes you master of any man you meet.
- 11—Professional Skip Rope, develops speed and wind.
- 12—Special Confidential Lesson for MEN, tells you frankly and clearly the things you ought to know.

ALL FOR  
**\$4.95**  
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ADVANCE

Man—look at these pictures! Here's everything you need to develop EVERY muscle in your body—all in one great 12-in-1 Outfit. Just spend a few minutes a day with the Snappy Wall Exerciser, the big Chest Expander, the zippy Rowing Machine and the other great muscle builders included—and **WATCH THOSE MUSCLES GROW!**

Read the list. See what you get. The whole works for less than a five-dollar bill—with a complete Course of Instructions, two great books and a special, private Lesson on Sex, thrown in for good measure. Rush coupon below for this great bargain!



Michael McFadden, Dept. DG-4,  
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Dear Mike: Shoot me the works C. O. D. I'll pay \$4.95 plus actual postage. My money back if I am not satisfied and return outfit immediately. (NOTE: If you prefer, enclose \$4.98 and I pay postage. Same Money Back Guarantee.)

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Town..... State.....

Outside U. S. A. Send Cash With Order

**RUSH**  
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No money needed. Just write name and address in coupon **AT ONCE**. Pay Postman only \$4.95 plus actual postage on delivery. (Or send \$4.95 and I pay postage.) Simply return outfit immediately if not wanted. Money-back guarantee. Rush coupon. This offer may never be repeated.

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Into a trunk, under the bed or anywhere. Lots of fun fooling teacher, policeman or friends.

## THE VENTRILO

A little instrument, fits in the mouth out of sight, with above for Bird Calls, etc. Never fails. A 16-page course on Ventriloquism, the Ventrilo and novelty catalog. All for 10c.

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159 Jokes and Riddles. 34 Magic Tricks. 54 Parlor Games. 73 Toasts. 15 Tricks with Cards. 50 Money-making Secrets. 10 Funny Readings. 3 Monologues. 21 Puzzles and Problems. 5 Comic Recitations. Cut-outs for Characters and Chorus. Dominos. Spanish Picture Puzzle. Game of Anagrams, etc. All for 15c postpaid.

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Any one can make these miniature roosters. The game is played on a table. The roosters are made of wood and are painted to look like real roosters. The game is played with real feathers. The game is played with real feathers. The game is played with real feathers.

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A small Bible, 100 pages, 10c. The Bible is small and easy to carry. It is made of wood and painted to look like real gold. The Bible is small and easy to carry. It is made of wood and painted to look like real gold.

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10c. The eggs are made of wood and painted to look like real snakes. The eggs are made of wood and painted to look like real snakes. The eggs are made of wood and painted to look like real snakes.

## STAGE MONEY

10c. The money is made of wood and painted to look like real money. The money is made of wood and painted to look like real money. The money is made of wood and painted to look like real money.

## TELL YOUR OWN FORTUNE

10c. The fortune teller is made of wood and painted to look like real fortune teller. The fortune teller is made of wood and painted to look like real fortune teller. The fortune teller is made of wood and painted to look like real fortune teller.

## DRUM BOOKS

10c. The drum books are made of wood and painted to look like real drum books. The drum books are made of wood and painted to look like real drum books. The drum books are made of wood and painted to look like real drum books.

## FORTUNE TELLING BY CARDS

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# BLANK CARTRIDGE PISTOL



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## LOOK 35c LOOK WONDERFUL INSTRUMENT

Created this year. Also portable and easy to use. It is a wonderful instrument for examining the wonders of nature. It is a wonderful instrument for examining the wonders of nature. It is a wonderful instrument for examining the wonders of nature.

## MICROPHONE TRANSMITTER BUTTON

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## THE BUDDY PHONE



10c. The buddy phone is made of wood and painted to look like real buddy phone. The buddy phone is made of wood and painted to look like real buddy phone. The buddy phone is made of wood and painted to look like real buddy phone.

## WONDERFUL X-RAY TUBE

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## Explosing Matches

10c. The exploding matches are made of wood and painted to look like real exploding matches. The exploding matches are made of wood and painted to look like real exploding matches. The exploding matches are made of wood and painted to look like real exploding matches.

## ITCHING Powder

10c. The itching powder is made of wood and painted to look like real itching powder. The itching powder is made of wood and painted to look like real itching powder. The itching powder is made of wood and painted to look like real itching powder.

## ANARCHIST BOMBS

10c. The anarchist bombs are made of wood and painted to look like real anarchist bombs. The anarchist bombs are made of wood and painted to look like real anarchist bombs. The anarchist bombs are made of wood and painted to look like real anarchist bombs.

## SNEEZING POWDER

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## MICROSCOPE and FLOSCOP

10c. The microscope and floscope are made of wood and painted to look like real microscope and floscope. The microscope and floscope are made of wood and painted to look like real microscope and floscope. The microscope and floscope are made of wood and painted to look like real microscope and floscope.

## REpeating and Single Shot Air Pistols

10c. The repeating and single shot air pistols are made of wood and painted to look like real repeating and single shot air pistols. The repeating and single shot air pistols are made of wood and painted to look like real repeating and single shot air pistols. The repeating and single shot air pistols are made of wood and painted to look like real repeating and single shot air pistols.

## COMICAL MOTTO RINGS

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## MAGIC MADE EASY

10c. The magic made easy is made of wood and painted to look like real magic made easy. The magic made easy is made of wood and painted to look like real magic made easy. The magic made easy is made of wood and painted to look like real magic made easy.

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# MAKE YOUR OWN RADIO RECEIVING SET



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Created this year. Also portable and easy to use. It is a wonderful instrument for examining the wonders of nature. It is a wonderful instrument for examining the wonders of nature. It is a wonderful instrument for examining the wonders of nature.

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JOHNSON SMITH & CO. DEPT. 927 Racine, Wis.



All  
stories  
new

# BATTLE BIRDS

All  
stories  
complete

Vol. 2

Contents for April, 1933

No. 1

## SMASHING SKY NOVELETTE

*Crash hell's ceiling with*

- THE DARE-DEVIL PATROL**.....Steuart M. Emery 8  
A dead man's message sends two fighting Yanks on a blood mission in treachery skies.

## EXCITING SHORT STORIES

*Ride the wings of*

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Smoke Wade defies an armada of devil wings to save his squadron from a flaming doom.

*Morgan and Pell join*

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*Comb blood skies for*

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Open your ear flaps for the club chatter, buzzards—and meet some of the gang!

*Win a prize with*

- DIZZY WINGS**.....Contest Pilot 118  
Find all the mistakes in this story of a crazy Zeppelin ride—and win one of ten prizes.

*Build a model*

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Full detail plans of this famous German bombing crate, prepared by an expert artist.

*Now go to*

- THE BULL FLIGHT CLUB**.....Eugene A. Clancy 121  
Where the readers gather every month to tell each other and the editor to go to hell.

**COVER—R.E-8 attacking two L.V.G's (Luft Verkehrs Gesellschaft)..Frederick Blakeslee**

Read May BATTLE BIRDS

On all newsstands April 10th

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# 10,643 MEN HAVE TAKEN MY COURSE

★ This is the Actual Record  
as of December 31, 1932

**YES SIR!** More than 10,000 men have taken my course in Physical Instruction... think of it... 10,000 men who have gained big developed muscles, broad chests and strong legs by spending just a few minutes each day following my instructions. It makes me feel mighty proud to think that I am responsible for the physical fitness of this vast army!

Many of these men were sickly boys when they first came to me... too weak to raise their fists... **TODAY** they take their place with the many thousands who have doubled their strength and are proud of their prowess! Many of my pupils have won fame as Strength Athletes... winning great honors at the Olympic games.

**WHAT ABOUT YOU?...** Do YOU know the courage, strength and health that comes with physical development? I am sure you too would like to add 2 inches to each of your biceps... 3 inches to your chest... and have big muscular arms, a broad powerful back and legs that will be columns of power for speed and endurance. Give me 15 minutes a day and I will do just that. I will give you a be-man's physique that men will respect and women admire!

Read my guarantee that is unqualifiedly given to every pupil who enrolls —  
"I WILL GUARANTEE TO ADD AT LEAST ...

**3 INCHES TO YOUR CHEST** | **2 INCHES TO YOUR BICEPS**

or it won't cost you one penny!" Signed: **GEORGE F. JOWETT**

And you are to be the sole judge—can anything be fairer than that? All I want to do is to get you started on my secret method of muscle building! But... once you've started, it's easy, for when you see your muscles growing bigger and stronger everyday... when you feel yourself getting more "pep" everyday... when you get up in the morning feeling like a million dollars you'll thank me for all I have done for you!

Don't wait any longer, get going **NOW**... Try one of my test courses first... it will give you the big **URGE**—

Send for "**MOULDING A MIGHTY ARM**" a Complete Course for 25c

It will be a revelation to you. You can't make a mistake. The guaranty of the strongest armed man in the world stands behind this course. I give you all the secrets of strength illustrated and explained as you like them. You, too, can get an unbreakable grip of steel and a Herculean arm. Try any one of my test courses at 25c. Or, try all six of them for only \$1.00.

NERVES OF STEEL  
MUSCLES AS IRON



I WILL INCLUDE A FREE COPY OF "Nerves of Steel, Muscles as Iron". It describes my rise from a puny boy to be one of the world's strongest athletes. It explains all of my secret methods of development... It is bristled with pictures of famous strong men. It will re-awaken within you that desire for a strong powerful body, and it will show you how easy it is for you to be as strong as I am.

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George F. Jowett: Your proposition looks good to me. Send, by return mail, prepaid, the courses checked below for which I am enclosing \$\_\_\_\_\_

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Moulding a Mighty Arm, 25c             | <input type="checkbox"/> Moulding a Mighty Chest, 25c |
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**4 INCHES OF MUSCLE**  
**PUT ON YOUR ARMS!**  
or we will refund your money!

### The German Iron Shoe Muscle Builder . . .

is accepted as the greatest exerciser made to build giantlike arms, wide powerful shoulders, brawny back and tremendous chest. John Filepou added 5 inches to his arms, E. Peters 1 inch on each bicep the first week!

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### SPECIAL FREE OFFER

The Iron Man's Famous 60-day Illustrated Picture course of exercise instruction, and the Strength Resistor is included **FREE!** The greatest body building offer ever presented. Follow the choice of champions and get that grip of steel. Ring in now on our special offer for the lowest priced and biggest result getting exerciser under the sun. Send for free illustrated information. No obligation.

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Gentlemen: Without obligation and without cost, send particulars about your Iron Shoe Strength Builder and Special Offer.

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## THIN? WEAK? NERVOUS?

### Make This Test

To Increase  
Strength Amazingly!

### FREE of COST

Unless Strength  
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Here is a quick test for vital strength and endurance, regardless of sex or age:—See how long you can hold your arms out today. Unless you can easily hold them straight out for at least 15 minutes you need iron in your blood very badly. Now, after taking only one bottle of Dr. Jayne's Tonic Pills, make this test again!

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This potent tonic is guaranteed by every druggist. Red blood is renewed in 8 weeks. Makes new blood richer in iron! Strengthens tired nerves and weak organs! Get rid of weakness, headaches, nervousness, underweight and the many other troubles due to weak, thin, watery blood. Ask your druggist or send direct.

**FREE!**  
Of Cost!  
If not pleased!

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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#### LOWEST PRICES ON EARTH

**\$1.90**

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12 MONTHS WITH GUARANTEE GOOD WITH NEW TIRE

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TIRE GAUGE

by the thousands on the U.S.A. roads for the LONG, HARD SERVICE, under severest road conditions of our standard brand tires reconstructed by the ORIGINAL REPAIR YOUR PROCESS. Ours 17 YEARS IN BUSINESS makes it possible to offer tires at LOWEST PRICES in history with 12 month guarantee.

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28x4.40-22	1.10	28x4.40-22	1.00
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28x4.40-69	1.10	28x4.40-69	1.00
28x4.40-70	1.10	28x4.40-70	1.00
28x4.40-71	1.10	28x4.40-71	1.00
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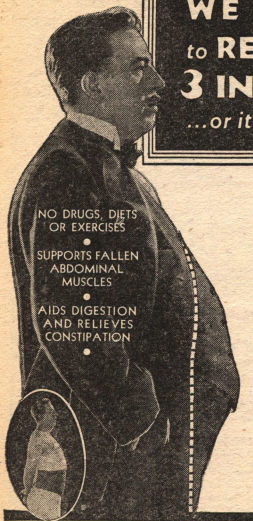
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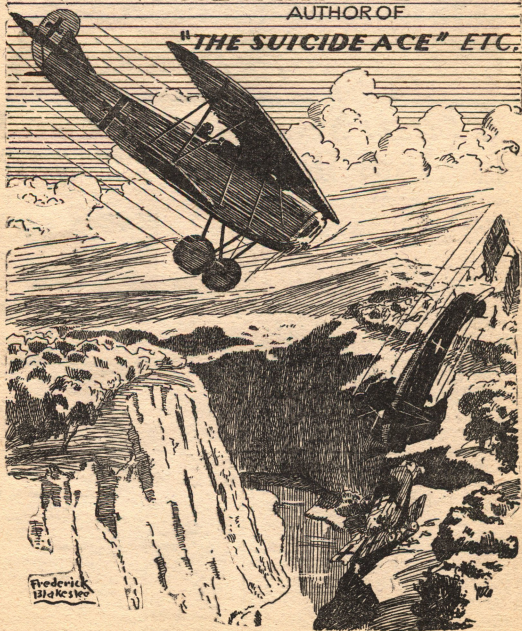


# The Dare-devil Patrol

STEUART M. EMERY

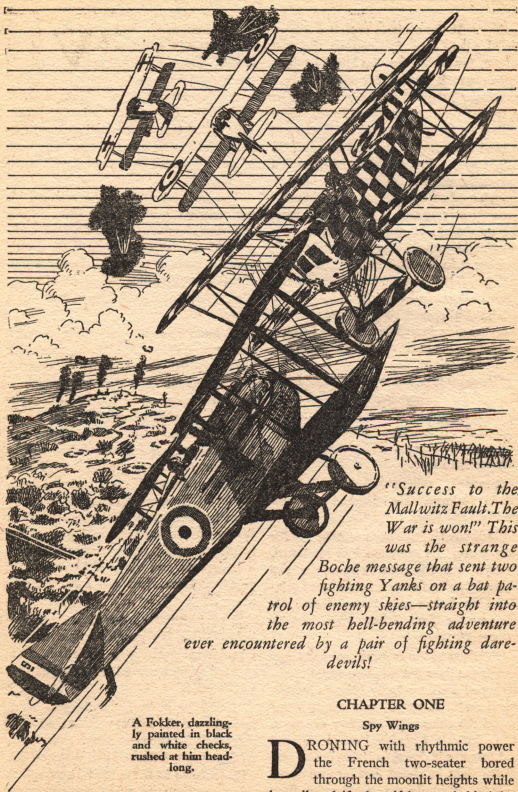
AUTHOR OF

*"THE SUICIDE ACE" ETC.*



Frederick  
Blakeslee





A Fokker, dazzlingly painted in black and white checks, rushed at him headlong.

"Success to the Mallwitz Fault. The War is won!" This was the strange Boche message that sent two fighting Yanks on a bat patrol of enemy skies—straight into the most hell-bending adventure ever encountered by a pair of fighting dare-devils!

## CHAPTER ONE

### Spy Wings

**D**RONING with rhythmic power the French two-seater bored through the moonlit heights while the miles drifted swiftly out behind its



rudder. At the controls crouched a lean-faced pilot, eyes fastened to the east where, far ahead, the dim blur of mountains showed. In the rear cockpit rode a passenger in the rough, clumsy garb of a typical peasant. A thick beard, tinged with gray, hung down over his blouse and behind his goggles gleamed inordinately bright eyes. Now and then he drummed nervously on the rim of the nest as though anxious that the plane should make even greater speed. From below, lancing up thousands of feet, the beam of a searchlight caught the two-seater full, limning it in a yellow flare.

"*Ach, Gott!*" gasped the passenger and huddled down in his narrow pit.

The ship soared serenely on, ignoring the flare that brought out the red-white-and-blue Allied *coarde* on the undersurface of its wings.

"Have no fear, Doctor Mallwitz," came the pilot's voice, hard and efficient, through the set of phones. "That is only one of the defenses near Belfort. They will never suspect us. In a matter of minutes we shall land."

A savage, exultant smile crossed Mallwitz's features. He clenched and unclenched his fists.

"It is what I have been waiting for for long years," he muttered into his beard. "*Teufel*, but it is good to be on the way to the *Vaterland* after an eternity of prison! How I shall make the *verdammte* Allies pay for that! I have them beneath my heel!"

Oblivious to the mutterings of his passenger the flyer put on more speed, thundering at a wild velocity beneath the silvered arch. A round, pale moon illuminated the skies with startling clearness. The pilot raised his hand above his head and brought it down, pointing below and to the right in signal that he was about to land. Abruptly the motor went silent and the ship commenced its long glide.

For minutes it slid gradually earthward, a silent ghost in the sheen of the moon. Then its undercarriage wheels touched turf, the plane bumped and rolled smoothly across the level of a meadow. It came to rest close to a thick belt of forest. Miles away over the flatland gleamed tiny lights, indicating some village. The hush of peace brooded over the tranquil countryside.

The pilot leaped out and scanned his surroundings with a keen glance while Mallwitz clambered from the rear cockpit and stood erect. Beneath the flyer's coverall, open at the neck, showed a uniform of horizon blue. He pointed to the black blotch of a path only a few yards away.

"I have brought you safely to your rendezvous, doctor. Follow yonder track for a hundred yards and you will come to a small wood-cutter's cottage which is Station 3 on this secret route into Germany." He glanced at the watch on his wrist. "In another hour one of the best flyers in the Imperial Air Force will be here for you, coming out of the *Vaterland*. You are now in Alsace, on the very border of Switzerland, in a sector where there has been no real war for years. It is one of our best channels for passing information and agents across the lines. I have done my duty. I have brought you here from Paris and I must return at once."

Doctor Mallwitz towered in the moonlight. With his goggles off a craggy, deep-bitten face was revealed. His gnarled hand went out and gripped that of the pilot.

"Good-by, junker," he rasped. "You have done well. I shall wait in the woodman's hut for the next relay. *Acht!*" His roving finger indicated the huge outline of mountains to the east and swerved to other, smaller ranges in the north, seven or eight miles distant. "Yonder indeed



are the Alps and there are the hills of Germany, the *Vaterland*! It is good to see them again. Go, junker!"

The pilot turned and stepped lightly back into the cockpit of the two-seater, the engine of which still was turning over. With a rush the plane went down the meadow, lifted and arrowed back through the heights in the direction of Paris. Already Mallwitz had faced around and the shadows of the forest engulfed him. He walked steadily, lumberingly, through the moonlit gloom.

Soon the outline of a rough hut appeared and he pressed forward. The door creaked open and he stepped inside, closing it and drawing the heavy blankets that served as curtains over the windows. Striking a match he lit the crude lamp on the table, sat down and pulled a mass of blank paper and pencils from his pocket. His eyes flared with concentration and his bushy brows drew together.

"At last!" he grated.

With incredible rapidity the pencil began to travel across the top sheet. It was as though superhuman powers of energy, long pent-up, had been released. Fire sprang into Mallwitz's eyes and his mouth contorted with eagerness. Strange noises issued from his throat as line after line came into being.

"Four years, four years in a prison camp without daring to set down a word of my discovery," he muttered raggedly. "Every word I want to write, every figure I want to put down is etched indelibly in my memory. No, no, they did not ruin the mind of Doctor Mallwitz in their ghastly routine! Now I am free and in a little over an hour I shall be back in Germany. What I shall tell the High Command! Who would have thought that not their brains, but that of a geologist would win the war in its crisis hour!"

Faster and faster the pencil streaked across the paper while time passed and

not a sound broke the stillness of the woods. The light of inspiration blazed even more brightly in Mallwitz's rough-hewn features. Now and then he tugged at his brush of beard but he never paused for an instant in his writing.

"All here in my memory," he rumbled. "It does not fail me."

A NIGHT breeze arose, ruffling the tops of the trees and soughing through the branches. A stray night bird gave a plaintive cry and went winging out over the meadow. High up in the silvered heavens a larger bird flew, sliding noiselessly down toward the flatland. But it was a man-made bird and not a creation of nature. On black-crossed pinions the ship drifted for earth and a keen, cruel-lipped face looked out from its cockpit, measuring the distance with the eye of a born airman.

In a gradual pique the plane passed over the carpet of the forest, side-slipped and made a perfect three-point landing close to the path. The pilot jumped out, darted for the entrance to the track and went rapidly up it. A moment or so later Mallwitz glanced up, his gaze for the first time leaving his papers.

"Gott!" he grated and crunched the documents in his huge hand. "Who are you?" Immediately he relaxed, laughing with a rumble. "Ach, I was so busy I had forgotten! You are the flyer sent to carry me into Germany. Your name?"

"Major Conrad von Pangler," rasped the flyer.

He swept off his flying helmet. A thin, beaky nose jutted out from his face and his mouth was a thin gash. He exuded an aura of ruthless cruelty.

"I do not yet know who you are. They only informed me at Spa that I must not fail to bring you over the lines and to the council of generals. They told me that it



is one of the most important missions of my career."

"It is!" cried the doctor. "I am Mallwitz, the famous geologist, captured in France in August 1914. For weeks before war was declared I had been pursuing my scientific research, alone in this cursed country. And what I discovered, Major von Pangler! I made every effort to get through to the German lines, but the French stopped me, destroying my precious instruments and interned me in one of their prison camps as an alien. For four years I have languished there, nursing my knowledge. There are ways of learning how the war is going even behind barbed wire. A month ago I knew that the time had come to use my discovery to win victory for the *Vaterland*. The lines have settled down in exactly the right place. There was a plan on for an escape party and I told an officer of engineers on it an outline of my secret. He must have gotten through to Spa."

"He did," said von Pangler curtly. "Your own escape was arranged for instantly. The High Command wants you badly."

"Their arrangements have been flawless so far," growled Doctor Mallwitz. "Never mind how I was gotten out of that prison camp in the south of France and smuggled to a secret nest in Paris. Now I am here and we start for Germany at once. Tell me, who holds the line from St. Jean le Grand to the Meureux Gorge?"

"The cursed Americans!" flared von Pangler. "In greater numbers they pour into France each month. They must be smashed or Germany is done!"

"They will be smashed!"

Mallwitz's voice sounded like thunder in the tiny wood-cutter's hut. He stood erect, tall, stoop-shouldered with a look of might about him.

"If they are on the Front I mentioned

they are doomed, every one of them! Our good German infantry will roll over their positions in a flood that will not stop until it reaches Paris. I—I, Mallwitz will open a fifty-mile gap in those Yankees' line. I hate them too! Their foolish scientific journals have mocked at me! Now I shall have my revenge on their *verdammte* race and win the war at the same time!"

"Do you mean it?" ejaculated von Pangler with fierce hope shining in his face. "They are devils, those Yankees, in the air as well as on the ground. It is my one ambition to sweep them from the sky! There are sixty Allied planes to my credit already, but only three Americans. You see in me, doctor, the leading ace of Germany."

An unholy pride seemed swelling in von Pangler. Arrogant, merciless, efficient he looked the typical fighting Prussian, born to slaughter. Mallwitz bowed his tall, ungainly frame.

"We shall work well together, major, I am certain. I shall need an air guard for my tremendous plan and I will demand of Spa that you lead it. The officer of engineers in the prison camp told me of a new mining machinery—the Antzig bore, which tunnels at terrific speed. Is it a fact?"

"Yes," replied von Pangler. "I have heard of it. Do you intend to make a tunnel or a mine? Both have been tried to pierce the lines and have failed."

"No, my friend, neither tunnel nor mine!" croaked Mallwitz. "I add science to the flaws of nature, that is all! Listen to me!"

For minutes words tumbled from his bearded lips in a stream. He struck the paper that he held in triumphant emphasis.

"Here is the rough draft of the project which I have held in my brain so long."



Von Pangler went rigid while exultation flamed from his eyes.

"Gott, Doctor Mallwitz!" he said hoarsely. "The High Command will go mad with joy when you meet them! It is no wonder that they selected me to carry you across the lines. You hold the fortunes of the war in your hand. The A. E. F. is doomed! The way to Paris will be open! Nothing, nothing stands now in the way of the *Vaterland's* success! Come, let us be going. In an hour you will stand face to face with the generals of Spa."

Mallwitz bent forward and extinguished the lamp. They stepped out onto the path and moved hurriedly along it. Von Pangler strode with his shoulders back and a tremendous confidence in his bearing.

"He has solved the secret of how to break the deadlock of the trenches!" he murmured. "What a man! What a scientist!"

THE gloom of the woods lifted and they emerged on the meadow. Only a short distance away loomed the outlines of von Pangler's two-seater. Mallwitz climbed into the rear cockpit while the Boche ace set the gear and stepped to the blade. He swung; the engine coughed and went mute.

Again and again he spun the propeller and soon the deep-throated rhythmic roar of the motor broke out. Von Pangler put one foot in the stirrup and poised, looking suddenly out across the meadow. A dim line of figures raced over the ground while from the bordering road racketed the sound of madly-driven cars.

"*En avant, camarades!*" rang the shout. "There is the ship! Fire!"

A fierce curse crackled from von Pangler's lips as he hurled himself in behind the controls.

"Spotted by the French in that village

as I landed," he snarled. "Now for battle!"

Rifles spat flame and a swarm of bullets whipped over the two-seater.

"Down, doctor!" shouted the Boche ace. "Take cover in the cockpit! Your life is too valuable to be risked. Leave me to deal with these damnable French!"

Nearer plunged the running figures in *poilu* uniform and the storm of slugs grew heavier. Von Pangler wrenched the throttle open and the ship quivered, rushed forward, to come around in a terrific ground loop.

Three automobiles packed with men were rolling from the road over the flatland. Light machine guns jutted from their front seats. Clattering they burst into action and their torrent of metal slashed the turf under the wheels of the streaking plane. Von Pangler leaned forward and the blast of his Spandaus smashed squarely into the charging infantry. Screams rose and men fell to the ground, torn by the savage bursts.

The cars arrowed down, closing in on the racing two-seater. The plane rushed forward at tremendous speed and von Pangler's quick-firers erupted again. The nearest car veered off to the side with its interior a shambles and turned over. The wheels of the ship jumped from the earth and the two-seater shot upward in a wild zoom. From the meadow rocket after rocket soared into the air and burst in showers of crimson stars.

"What fools of infantrymen! Thought they could stop us!" grated von Pangler into the phones. "I carry the victory of the *Vaterland* on my wings tonight."

"They must not capture me!" came Mallwitz's rumbling voice. "I have on my person for the first time a written outline of the plan that means everything to Germany. In the name of the *Lieber Gott*, von Pangler, get us through!" Mallwitz ran his hand over the fabric of the



ship and his fingers trembled as they touched a pattern of bullet holes. "*Himmel*, but that was close!" he gasped.

He leaned over the cockpit rim and stared down at the silvered surface of the earth. Still the rockets rose, but the meadow itself had faded into nothingness. Von Pangler was taking the ship up for tremendous altitude. *Blam!* In smoke and flame high explosive crashed off the wing of the crate. Von Pangler's face went tense and with a shove on the rudder he flung the ship far to the side.

*Blam!* A second anti-aircraft shell blasted only yards off the other flank. A rush of light sped upward from the dim earth and caught the two-seater in its circle. The searchlight brought into startling clearness the figures of the two Boches huddled in the cockpits. Mallwitz was beating frenziedly on the rim of his seat. His beard sprayed out in the wind and his eyes glared ferociously.

"On, von Pangler, on!" he shouted chokingly. "The generals at Spa! They wait for me!"

"I'll take you there!" snarled von Pangler. Stark purpose hardened his features. "One more shot from those cannons and we're out of range!"

With a terrific roar the last shell exploded almost under the belly of the fleeing plane. The two-seater jumped violently, horribly, for fifty feet and turned over on its back. Screaming, Mallwitz clutched his cockpit rim while the safety belt that lashed him in creaked and sagged under the strain of his body. It held and the plane slowly righted itself as von Pangler wrestled frenziedly at the controls. Once more it rode even, streaking madly for the mountains of Germany. Up, up it climbed until it soared beneath the ceiling of clouds.

"There!" screamed Mallwitz.

Von Pangler glanced back to see him pointing. The shapes of seven Spads,

summoned by the rockets, slid for the two-seater.

"*Gott*, they have both of us!"

"No!" snarled von Pangler. "Even now we are in German air. And I am the greatest ace in the *Vaterland*. Watch me, Mallwitz, watch me! All hell cannot check us!"

He gave the plane full gun and at a hundred miles an hour stormed for the barrier of Spads that blocked his path.

"Do they suspect what I carry with me?" he snarled. Murder glared in his tightly-drawn face. "No, they cannot. Pilots of France, meet von Pangler and your doom!"

In raving bursts his Spandaus clamored as he hurled the two-seater head on for the Spads.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Devil's Patrol

LIEUTENANT "Link" Gregory whirled his Spad and tore upward, waving wildly to the rest of A Flight to follow him. Five thousand feet below lay the battered ruins of a village with the zigzag line of the trenches running out of it and disappearing to the east. His gaze traveling upward from the wrecked hamlet had caught the glint of sunshine on wings. Seven blunt-nosed Fokkers were pouncing on A Flight from the clouds. He leaned forward in the cockpit, his young, tanned face alert with the thrill of battle.

"It happens every time we scout over St. Jean le Grand," he muttered. "For a week now it's been nothing but one scrap after another." A reckless smile edged his lips. "Do these damn Boches think they can chase us out of the air?"

Close behind him in the fighting V that scaled upward rode Dan Lawrence, his best pal in the 52nd pursuit. Dan raised his hand in a gesture of casual defiance



to the oncoming Boches and settled back in his seat, eyes glinting. He was a teammate who never pulled out of a scrap, no matter what the odds. Gregory tingled with the knowledge that behind him roared four keen combat pilots. They were going up to meet veteran Boches. It would be man to man. Vickers against Spandau. Already the first long bursts of the Germans were smoking across the sky.

"Close with them!" snarled Gregory. "No ranging shots for us!"

The next instant the arch seemed to burst into a blaze of smoke and flame. Pitching, banking, rolling, the twelve ships locked in the dance of death that flung them here and there, shooting savagely. Gregory drove straight at the nearest Fokker, veered aside and took the cockpit full with a withering blast. The Boche went limp over the controls and his black-crossed crate slid downward for the ruins of St. Jean.

Lashing around Gregory flung his Spad at the next opponent. Off to the flank Lawrence was tangled fiercely with a darting German, trading tracer in volley after volley. Lead slashed into the fabric of Gregory's plane and a pattern of holes crept lethally close in one wing. A second Boche had plunged in and he was battling two of them at pointblank range.

"Damn the odds!" he grated and rolled frantically out of the scissors fire that pierced his rocketing Spad.

"Ah!"

For a brief second he caught a helmeted head in his ring-sight and pounded at it with his guns. It vanished abruptly and the Fokker, scudding on, slowly fell over on its side and went down.

A hoarse shout rang from Gregory. Alongside the dropping German crate tumbled a Spad with flame billowing from it. One of A flight had gone in the first

minute of combat and as yet he could not tell who it was.

Tracer streamed through space in raging cyclones as the planes rushed madly for each other. They were tearing, slamming savagely with their guns. Thunderous din rode the skies above St. Jean le Grand. Gregory hurtled downward in a fierce power dive that brought him out on the tail of a Boche who was flinging hot metal into the rear of a Spad. He blew it yards away with hammering blasts and whipped around. From the heights scaled a Fokker with Lawrence in relentless pursuit. Even as he watched, Dan lanced home the final burst and the Boche went plummeting down in a hopeless spin.

"That's the stuff!" he shouted. "Give it to 'em, boys!"

The frenzy of battle rioted in his veins. He was flying and fighting in a crimson haze, paying back the Boches for the damage they had done to the outfit in the last few blazing days. Suddenly his vision cleared and he circled easily in a sky that had gone suddenly silent. Far to the north two Fokkers streaked, growing smaller each instant. The dogfight was over and five of the seven Boche planes were splinters and ashes on the ground. Then he blinked. High above the retreating Boches hovered a plane, hugely checked in black and white. It turned and seemed to race ahead of them into the north. A strange excitement pulsed in his fibres.

"There's only one German who flies a plane like that and he's the greatest of them all," he exclaimed. "But he's never showed up on an American front yet. I must be seeing things."

He raised his hand in signal and Lawrence came sliding upward to fall in behind him. Two other Spads caught his gesture and cut through the air to join the formation. At a steady pace Gregory took the flight back over the line of the



Front, climbing to get out of range of any fire from the ground. He breathed in long gulps, the strain of battle removed. Once more A formation had proved itself a fighting flight.

"It was Allsop who fell," he murmured, scanning the ships that trailed him. "A good man too. There'll be a toast to him in the mess shack tonight and after that—"

He sent the Spad roaring along. There was no telling who might be the next one to go when every day saw bitter struggle in the air. The nose of his Spad tilted downward and the ground in the rear area of the Front came clearly into view. Here and there along the edges of woods there was a stir of movement that to the trained flyer signified the presence of troops.

"Whole divisions of Yanks in this sector," Gregory murmured. "Pretty nearly all the A. E. F. must be holding the line."

**T**HE Front lay fifteen miles behind and on the white ribbons of roads strings of camions moved. In the shelter of a red-roofed village he glimpsed the shapely, slender barrels of 75s. He took his crate up another thousand feet and saw in the distance the familiar field of the 55th.

"We've something to report to the Old Man," he rapped. "This is one day when we had it on the Boches plenty. A few shots of cognac and a little rest will go well."

His eyes narrowed as the Spad bored on and he pointed it downward for a landing on the tarmac. Out of headquarters' shack a stocky figure was running, waving its arms in a commanding gesture. Even at that distance he could recognize Captain Weldon, the adjutant.

"He's signaling us to taxi up to him, when we land," murmured Gregory. "That's odd! Why in blazes can't he wait for us to report in the usual way? This

is the first time he's ever come chasing out on the field to greet a flight when it hit the drome."

The wheels of the Spad struck the turf and Gregory sent it rolling for the waiting adjutant. Captain Weldon stood in obvious excitement, his face gleaming with eagerness. One by one the other ships landed and came to rest close to their leader's crate. Gregory swung easily out of the cockpit and stretched his cramped muscles. Weldon hurried forward and took him by the arm.

"This way, Lieutenant Gregory," he barked. "You too, Lieutenant Lawrence. Hurry it up, there isn't a moment to waste. You're wanted in headquarters on damned important business."

"We're with you," said Gregory curtly.

With long strides he covered the ground and passed in through the open door. He and Lawrence stiffened in salute to Major Shelburne, the capable, two-fisted C. O. of the 55th. The major was just hanging up the telephone. He whirled in his seat at a rickety table and fastened a purposeful gaze on the pair of flyers.

"You two are the first in from the morning's scout," he rapped. "The rest of the squadron is still out on combat patrols. You're both aces and the men I want for a special job. Brigade called up fifteen minutes ago and asked for a pair of pilots—our best. I've just stopped talking with General Carver. I sent the adjutant out to bring you here when I heard your ships coming in. Now!"

He drew a long cigar from the breast pocket of his tunic, lighted it and clamped it firmly between his teeth. Gregory and Lawrence stood in silence, waiting. The C. O. was a leader who never failed to come to the point at once.

"Some hours ago a pair of Yank planes on a reconnaissance sighted a Fokker coming from the eastern frontier, apparently



out of Switzerland, which is only a hundred miles from here. Our Intelligence has known for a long time that the Boches have a secret air base in Switzerland from which they dispatch ships with information. So far we have been unable to prevent that leak. Our scout planes gave chase to the Fokker for a long distance, trying to knock it down, but it was too fast for them. They did succeed, however, in driving it into lower levels and it passed over the Meureux Gorge on the edge of the American sector hardly two hundred feet up. A Yank battalion in the trenches at the gorge knocked it down with a rifle volley. Are you following me?"

"Yes, sir," flashed Gregory. Only too well he knew the deadly effect of concentrated rifle fire on a low-flying plane. It was one of the things that pilots feared most.

"The Boche flyer probably didn't know that the trenches were held in force. At all events he was brought down and his plane crashed in the very bottom of the gorge where it still lies with his body in it. Half an hour after it fell—" the C. O.'s jaw tightened—"the Boches made their first attempt to salvage it under cover of an artillery barrage. They sent two full companies of infantry down the walls of the gorge and the Yanks shot them to pieces. Four times since then the Germans have launched attacks in an effort to get to that wrecked ship and all of them have failed. The Yanks tried it once but we lost a hell of a lot of men and gave it up. It is impossible to reach that Fokker on foot down the cliffs. But it has to be done. From the violence and promptitude of the Boches' efforts it is clear that they have received orders from higher up to salvage the ship at all costs. In other words the pilot must have on his body something of vital importance to the High Command. As I said, he appears to

have come out of Switzerland, which is a nest of German spies."

"I see, sir," put in Gregory, as the major paused. "Papers or information of some kind."

"Exactly. The infantry reported it to their division commander who got on the wire to Chaumont. G. H. Q. got in touch with our brigade as the nearest to the scene and General Carver has called me. The Yank flyers who shot down the Fokker reported it and went out on another patrol. They did their part of the job and the rest is up to us. Chaumont wants a flyer to get that Fokker in the gorge and search the body of the pilot."

MAJOR Shelburne studied the pilots in front of him with lowered brows. When he went on it was in a deep, grave voice.

"You will face terrible risks, gentlemen, there is no doubt about that. You will have to run the gauntlet of the Boche fire from the trenches while our artillery and infantry cover you to the best of their ability. Not only that, but the Meureux Gorge is narrow. Flying through its treacherous air pockets will constitute a deadly danger in itself. The stream that usually flows through it is dried up in the summer and its bed is filled with rocks. How you will land is a problem. But land you must and search the Boche pilot's body. I am sending both of you. If one fails the other must try it. If you both fail—" his tones grew even more serious—"the 55th will keep on trying as long as a flyer remains. This is an emergency order from G. H. Q., gentlemen!"

"We shan't fail, sir." Gregory's fists clenched instinctively. He sent a glance at Lawrence, who answered with a reckless grin. "I claim the right to go first, major, as the leader of A Flight."

"I think you should," returned Shel-



burne. His strong features lighted. "By God, I was sure I could count on you! The 55th never turns down a mission no matter what the chances of washing out may be. You'll go through hell and as likely as not neither of you will come back. But this is war. Here's the map for guidance to the Meureux Gorge. It's at the extreme east of the American sector a good fifty miles from this field. You'll have to determine your plan when you get above it. In the meantime I'll get the doughboys' commanding general on the phone and tell him you're coming. You'll get all the support the infantry can give you. Anything to say before you start? You had a fight on your last patrol?"

"Yes, sir," said Gregory briefly. "All-sop went down. We knocked out five of seven Boches that we tangled with over St. Jean le Grand at the western end of the Front. And I think I saw a black-and-white checked Fokker hanging under the ceiling a long distance away. You know who flies that color ship, sir."

"Von Pangler, the most famous ace in Germany!" rapped the C. O. His eyes flared with interest, then clouded. "No, that couldn't be possible, Gregory. Von Pangler, according to the last reports, has been taken from France and sent to one of the Eastern fronts. Nothing has been seen of him since he blew his way through seven French Spads near the Alsace frontier two months ago. He was carrying some spy or agent he picked up back of the lines. He shot down four of the seven Frenchmen that tried to block his way and got through. He's a devil in the air, that von Pangler, but he's out of our calculations. You saw the plane at a distance, you say? The air plays some odd tricks with the eyes. You've made a natural mistake, that's all, looking at some camouflaged ship."

"I suppose so," Gregory shrugged his

shoulders casually and dismissed the thought. "I'd recognize von Pangler from his pictures if I saw him, but this bird was miles away. Ready, Dan?"

Lawrence nodded instantly. Gregory pulled his flying helmet down over his forehead.

"We'll be moving on, major."

"Good!" The C. O. reached out a firm hand. "Happy landings, men. Everything depends on you. Get down to the bottom of the gorge and do your job."

Gregory faced around and strode out of the door into the sunshine of the tarmac. Two brand-new Spads, fuelled and gunned, stood on the deadline. While Major Shelburne had been issuing his instructions the adjutant had been busy, replacing their battle-scarred crates with the best in the hangars. Gregory strode easily for the nearest bus and put his foot in the stirrup.

"We've pulled plenty of stuff together, Dan," he said quietly. "This looks like the biggest job they've ever handed us. Teamwork is what will count."

"I'll be riding next to you," grinned Lawrence. "If you think you're going down into that gorge alone, you're cuckoo. I'm going with you."

Gregory lifted himself over the rim of the cockpit and fingered at the gear. A moment later there was the roar of a motor running full blast and the Spad swept off down the field. It lifted and with exhaust pipes belching sparks shot up for altitude. Lawrence's crate thundered to the rear, keeping an equal speed. High in the blue Gregory levelled off and swung his ship for the east. He bent forward and scanned the map that was pinned to the dashboard.

"Meureux Gorge," he repeated. "I haven't been that far east in the sector yet. A little speed and we'll be there in no time. Just a fast scout from the ceiling and then I'm going down!"



## CHAPTER THREE

## Ace Trap

THE miles shot out behind Gregory's rudder while he kept a wary eye on the skies. The arch shone blue and empty and he breathed more freely. The Front ran in a fairly straight line for forty miles, bending back in a curve not far from the mountains that sheltered the gorge. The bulk of the wooded range showed up in the distance and he sent the Spad down for a thousand feet.

His hand stole into the flap of the cockpit as he roared along and brought out the high-powered binoculars that rested there. Almost at once, it seemed, he was streaking over the back of the mountains and coming around in an easy arc with his motor throttled down. He tensed, staring at the scene below him.

"There's a small war on down there!" he exclaimed. "It's the first time in weeks that there's been any real fighting in the mountains."

Distinctly he made out the deep, narrow cleft between rocky walls that was the Meureux Gorge. The cliffs ran precipitously upward with trenches and outposts cut along their wooded tops. Smoke and flame rolled from the Yank lines and from the German positions opposite. Tiny figures in field-gray clambered desperately back to the security of their trenches, some of them falling and plunging down the side of the gorge. The Germans, in still another attempt to reach the bottom of the cleft, had been repulsed.

"Those Boches sure mean business," he told himself. "They're delivering one attack after another."

He swerved the Spad and began to go down, aiming for the far end of the gorge. With glinting eyes he measured the distance while his heart pounded. The mountains sloped gradually upward from the gorge, providing thick cover in their

woods for any number of Germans.

"It'll have to be a pancake landing," he told himself grimly. "There's no level space to come down on. And how in hell will I get out of the gorge afterwards?"

He shoved on the power and tore for the lower levels in a terrific power dive. Closer and closer came the forested sides of the mountains and he glimpsed the blotches of faces upturned in the Yank trenches. His gaze turned dead ahead, traveled from the gorge for a second to the middle air. The next instant he whirled his crate upward and charged. Four Fokkers were storming straight for him, breaking out of a clear sky. In a deadly rush they tore on and hot metal spurted from their Spandaus. Thundering, Lawrence's Spad jumped alongside him and together they rushed to meet the attack.

Gregory jammed on his stick triggers as he hurled his plane to the side and slammed a fierce burst at the nearest Boche. From the mountain crests machine-gun fire sliced upward in torrents. Yanks and Germans alike down there were mixing in the fray. The Boche pilot screamed and his Fokker turned over. With a rending sound the wing came off and the crate went plunging for the tops of the trees.

"Air guard!" snarled Gregory. "They've turned out to stop any plane getting into the gorge. That, or else they're making the same try as we are."

Split-airing wildly Lawrence flung his bus around and his volley thudded into the fuselage of a second Boche. The German reeled in his seat and fell to the side, hanging half out of his cockpit. With struts and wires screaming the Fokker went out of view, hopelessly doomed.

"That's the stuff, Dan!" yelled Gregory hoarsely. "Smash the other two and clear the way to the gorge!"

Plunged into the full fury of battle the



four ships darted and zigzagged above the maw of the cleft. Gregory leaned forward, grip ready on his stick triggers and gaze roving wildly to locate his next enemy. Then he stiffened and a cry of amazement burst from him. Staring between the muzzles of a pair of Spandaus was a cruel face with a beak nose and a slit of a mouth that he recognized.

"Von Pangler, the ace!" he grated. "I was right, after all!"

A Fokker, dazzlingly painted in black and white checks, rushed at him headlong. It was the same ship he had spotted miles away after A flight's combat.

"He's rushed here from his drome to hold the sky! He isn't in the East any more!"

A mad thrill coursed through him as he realized that he was up against the master fighter of the Imperial Air Force. If von Pangler thought he could make him turn aside from the bursts of his scudding Fokker he was wrong. Gregory's face went hard as stone and he jammed on his own throttle, tearing at terrific velocity for the great German ace.

In fierce rage his Vickers clamored and their twin streams of smoky tracer crossed the gunfire of the Boche ace. Lead whipped past his cheeks but he held on. In the last split second von Pangler jerked his black and white crate upward and roared over Gregory's top wing. His zoom took him a thousand feet up into the heights. Past the Spad tumbled the fragments of a Fokker, blown to pieces in the air, and Lawrence waved his hand in triumph from fifty yards away.

"Got him!" he signaled.

"Good scout!" shrieked Gregory.

Below him the air lay empty and the gorge was even nearer. From von Pangler's ship soared a rocket, bursting into crimson stars, and far in the distance Gregory glimpsed a cluster of wings. Von Pangler was calling for reinforce-

ments and he would hold off, no doubt, until they arrived.

"Now's my chance!" breathed Gregory and sent his Spad streaking for the cleft.

THE wooded slopes of the hills leaped up to meet him and sheets of rifle fire crackled from amid the trees. Through a hail of lead he rushed along. Down, down he dropped and the precipitous walls of the gorge closed around him.

Desperately Gregory concentrated on the job in hand, that of flying through the cleft without crashing into destruction. His breath came in gulps and his cheek muscles went taut with the terrific strain. Black stone hemmed him in and even yet he could hardly realize that there was room to pass. He did not look up. He had no hope of seeing the Boches who, from above, were pouring their fire straight down on him.

Sticklike objects whirled through the gulf and exploded in blasts behind his rudder. Mausers and bombs alike were coming at him. His gaze was fastened dead ahead while he flew through a storm of death. Every fibre in him tightened as the bend rushed to meet him. He was up against the greatest flying feat of his career. To round that bend with his wing almost scraping the wall would take every iota of air skill he possessed.

"By God, I'll do it!" he snarled. "The Fokker I'm after is behind that angle!"

His teeth closed on his lower lip in an agony of suspense as the roaring Spad whirled closer to the rock on his left. The tip of the wing seemed almost to touch the cruel stone. And then, quivering and thundering, the crate swept around the turn and leveled off. Three hundred yards away amid a pile of broken rocks lay the wreck of the ship he sought.

In an instant Gregory's gaze took in the terrain. Patches of sand mixed with small stones and rough boulders filled the bot-



tom of the gulf. There was no visible landing place anywhere. His eyes gleamed and his hands went surely to the gear. The motor went mute.

"Stall and crash!" he breathed.

He was almost on top of the ruined Fokker. With a sinister crack his right wing started to go, its fabric a sieve of bullet holes. Amazed he glanced about his ship. Lead had slashed it cruelly, tearing the fuselage almost to pieces.

The next instant the Spad stalled, dropped, and landed with a tremendous crash that drove the breath from his body. He was sitting in what remained of the cockpit while bullets from above ploughed the sand. Then he was up, flinging himself out of the crate and plunging for the rocks that held the Boche ship.

He staggered in among them and huddled down under the scant protection of the Fokker's debris. Tangled almost inextricably in it lay the body of the pilot. A wave of rifle fire poured from the Yank trenches and a rocket soared. In another moment the first shell from the American batteries, miles in the rear, screeched over the mountain and landed on the upper slopes on the other side of the gorge. Machine guns raved in mounting tumult and Springfields crackled, sweeping the Boche trenches with a flail of steel. The support that had been promised Gregory was in full blast.

"But it won't stop the Boche fire," he muttered. "They're slamming at me from lookout posts all along the line. Where is Dan?"

Anxiously he strained his gaze into the sky south of the gorge. No planes showed there but the thunder of racing motors dinned nearer and nearer. Banking superbly around the bend came a Spad, driven at top speed.

"Good God!" he exclaimed. "There he is and von Pangler is on his tail!"

Oblivious to the Boche ace whose lead

pounded into his camel-back Dan raised a hand in signal and the next instant flung his Spad into a shivering stall. Von Pangler shot over him just in time to avoid a collision and went scaling upward between the walls. Lawrence's Spad fell, its motor cut off, and its undercarriage wheels split into kindling on the hard, dry bed of the cleft. The belly of the plane burst and its wings tore off.

"He's pancaked to help me!" exclaimed Gregory. "We'll get away with it now!"

LAWRENCE pried himself from the smashed Spad and wrestled with one of the machine guns mounted on it. The weapon came away, a belt of ammo dangling from the breech. He pointed excitedly to the northern end of the gorge. Swooping, one after the other, four Fokkers stormed between the narrow walls. In another instant they would be on Gregory. Flame jetted from the nose of the first Boche and spurts of sand leaped up around him.

"Von Pangler ordered them down!" he snarled. "They've got us trapped!"

He flung himself flat on the ground as the cyclone of slugs pounded into the wreck of the Fokker. The clatter of Vickers erupted and the Boche, shooting past not fifty feet over Gregory's head veered suddenly and crashed full tilt into the wall, dissolving in ruin.

"Go ahead, Link!" screamed Dan. "I'll cover you!"

The second Fokker tried to zoom out of the burst that lanced from Lawrence's quick-firer, wavered and went out of control. It banked crazily around the bend and vanished. A dull crash told what had happened to it. Blasts of hot metal ripped from the last two Fokkers as they scudded in and then zoomed, hanging their crates on their propellers. They had refused to attempt the bend and were thundering almost straight up between the bend for the open sky.



A hundred Springfields smashed in a single aimed volley as the Boche ships burst out of the cleft and the rearmost one lurched. Tatters of cloth streamed from its wings and fuselage where the storm of bullets had struck. The Fokker poised for an instant in its upward flight, then began to slip slowly backward.

Spinning over and over, with the wind screaming through broken wires, it plunged for the gorge and struck fifty yards away. Gregory rose and tore with all his strength at the ruins of the crate next to him. The debris of the cockpit came away and he got his arms around the body of the Boche pilot and pulled it out onto the sand. A bomb crashed against the wall behind him and blazed into flame. Another explosion tore the gorge bed between him and Lawrence. He worked on, unheeding, his fingers exploring the German's person.

"Got it!" he panted.

His hand came away from the pilot's tunic, exposed by the open coverall, with a thin, oilskin packet. He thrust it into the breast of his own kit and raced for the wreck of his Spad. Once more thunder filled the gorge. Von Pangler's black and white Fokker was charging down, followed by the last ship of the reinforcement flight. They had swept over the mountain and were roaring along the gorge from its northern entrance.

Wrenching with all his strength Gregory got a gun off its mounting and crouched down behind it. Bombs still crashed and lead flew in the bottom of the cleft. It was incredible but both he and Dan were still alive amid an inferno of grenade bursts and rifle fire. The doughboys' volleys blazed on high overhead and the artillery's shells exploded in shattering scores on the Boche crest.

Over the muzzle of his weapon he saw the rushing shape of von Pangler's crate, skinning not thirty feet away.

Gregory jammed on his trigger as the

black and white Fokker's Spandaus belched streaming slugs. He felt the cloth of his coverall rip at the shoulder and lead kicked up the sand all around him. The Fokker that charged on him seemed as big as a house. The seconds that he lived through were eternities of peril. Then von Pangler thundered over him in a din of power and his m.g. took the Boche that followed.

Lawrence's Vickers stuttered and their bursts caught the pilot full. His ship heeled over and splintered in ruin on the rock. Shouting, Gregory whirled his gun around and tried for a final burst at von Pangler. The black and white crate was rushing for the bend and its engine was coughing in broken roars.

"Whacked his motor!" bit out Gregory. "He'll never make the turn!"

Even as he spoke von Pangler swept around the bend, reeling raggedly; an instant later a shattering crash reverberated in the gorge.

"He hit the wall! He's fini like that other one!"

Lawrence darted up, carrying his Vickers. Together they crouched among a mass of rocks off which lead splashed and ricocheted.

"I've got the dope off the pilot," said Gregory grimly. "But I don't see what good that's going to do us. We can't get out of here and it's only a matter of time before a bullet or a bomb does us in. Duck, Dan, for Lord's sake, duck!"

Spinning down through the air directly toward them came a dark object. There was no escaping it. It would land within a couple of feet. Gregory gasped in panic. In the next second they would both be blown into eternity. His eyes closed instinctively as he hugged the ground. There was a thud and, amazed, he opened his eyes.

"It's a rock!" breathed Lawrence raggedly. "Thrown from the Yank trenches. There's a paper tied to it!"



GREGORY crawled forward and got his hand on the stone. With a quick tug he broke the string that fastened a crumpled sheet of paper to the missile. He unfolded it and huddled low against the rocks. A furious buzzing of bullets swept around him while he read.

"Crevasse seventy-five yards to north of you. Make for it. We will lower ropes and cover you."

Lawrence was peering excitedly over his shoulder.

"Good for the doughboys," he exclaimed. "We have a chance now!"

"Up and run for it!" rapped Gregory.

A curtain of fire and slashing lead bridged the gulf from the trenches. Rising into a crescendo of din the artillery salvos smashed on the slopes of the German trenches. But still bullets whipped past the running flyers and bombs bounced off the rock wall or exploded in air.

"Another twenty-five yards and we'll be done for!" Gregory panted.

He swept abruptly to the left and leaped into the narrow crevice that ran all the way up the cliff. One side of it jutted out, forming cover from the lashing fire of the Germans. He glanced upward and saw both rims of the gorge erupting flame. Then his gaze traveled to the heavy pair of ropes that dropped snakelike down the crevice.

Far overhead he glimpsed Yank faces peering down over the edge, and arms waved in encouragement. Then the ropes hit the ground and he fastened one of them securely around his waist and gripped it. Lawrence had the other lashed about his middle.

"Haul away!" he signaled.

There was a jerk and he was swinging in the air, fending himself from the crevice wall with hands and feet. Yard by yard they were being hauled upward while lead sliced close to them as now and then they came into view of the

Germans in spots where the protecting wall fell away.

"There's nothing we can do," Gregory told himself grimly. "We'll just have to take it and pray!"

With all his power he fought to keep his body from being crushed against the rock as he swung to and fro. Then there was a lurch and hands reached over the edge of the crevice and gripped him. He was dragged into the sunlight and hauled over the parapet of a trench. A broad-shouldered major faced him.

"Well, buzzards," he smiled. "I'm glad you got here. There seems to have been a private war fought over you two. How about a shot of cognac as a change from doses of lead?"

Gregory took the extended flask, a wry grin on his face. The liquor sent a grateful fire through his aching limbs.

"Thanks," he got out. "For this and everything else. Can we get transportation to Brigade?"

"Waiting for you," came back the major. "It's on the other side of the mountain. You did some damn fine stuff down there, buzzards. I see you got von Pangler himself. Nothing moved in his crate after it smashed. Take the rest of the cognac. You've earned it."

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Dead Man's Secret

GREGORY turned in the rear pit of the two-seater that arrowed through the heights and sent a last glance backward. Already the mountains, through which Meureux Gorge ran, were a green blur in the distance. Under guides he and Lawrence had made a record trip through the communication trenches to the Division P. C., where he had connected with Brigade on the phone. General Carver himself had hurried to the wire. His conversation had been briefness itself.



"You say you got something off that flyer, lieutenant? Excellent! Both your planes crashed? I'll send a pair of two-seaters immediately."

Within twenty minutes the ships had slid down out of the sky to land on a smooth meadow at the foot of the range where Gregory and Lawrence waited. Now they were being whirled at top speed through the arch to Brigade. It was Carver's way of doing things.

"I wonder what's in this thing," mused Gregory, touching the thin bulge of the oilskin packet in his coverall. "It's cost the lives of Lord knows how many men to recover it. And we got von Pangler into the bargain. That ought to mean Paris leave for two weeks at least and *beaucoup* binge!"

A recollection of brilliantly-lit, revealing cafés came to mind and he grinned joyously. Riding as passenger in the other two-seater that scudded alongside Dan Lawrence grinned back at him. They had just been through another perilous venture together, shoulder to shoulder. The miles shot out behind the streaking ships and the chateau of Brigade appeared, a gray splotch on the tranquil countryside.

"The Old Man wants you in hell's own hurry," announced the pilot casually through the phones. "Here's where I pretty near land you on the front veranda."

The ships swept downward in a fast glide and the facade of the chateau bulked up. The headquarters pilot was a man of his word. In a wild rush he landed and taxied recklessly for the terrace.

"Hop out, peelot," he smiled. "I thought for a minute this crate might end up bang in the middle of the drawing room."

"Lieutenants Gregory and Lawrence!" A staff captain ran down the steps. "Follow me, please, at once. No don't stop for anything!"

Gregory flung down the cigarette he

had instinctively pulled out and marched beside the aide with long strides. A hall, a corridor, a closed door that flew open instantly and then he faced the soldierly figure of General Carver. Seated beside him, at a big table, was Colonel Gregg, the Intelligence Officer for Brigade. The general's square powerful face gleamed with interest. He stretched out his hand at once.

"The packet, Lieutenant Gregory!"

He almost snatched it away and tore at its oilskin covering. A single sheet of paper appeared. It was typewritten.

"Listen to this," rapped Brigadier General Carver.

Bavaria  
Moat House  
France

C, L and D divisions already in Paris. We await Racetrack, prepared. Success to the Mallwitz Fault. The war is won.

ZZZ

The brigadier's face went dark with disappointment and frustration.

"God!" he rasped. "No wonder it's in clear. The thing is gibberish! But we know it contains a vital message."

Colonel Gregg leaned forward and picked up the paper.

"Not entirely such gibberish," he said. "I know practically every German code and address. It's vital all right, general. 'Bavaria' is the secret name for General von der Halz, the biggest battle director of Germany. C, L and D division are bodies of Boche spies working behind the lines. ZZZ is the signature of the German Embassy in Berne. But what the Racetrack and the Mallwitz Fault are, the Lord only knows." He tapped the sheet, his features suddenly grave. "This means some tremendous menace, make no mistake about it. It fits in perfectly with Chaumont's dope that something is coming in this sector. What it will be, nobody knows. It may be a feint or it may be the real thing. At all events prac-



tically every available division in the A.E.F. will be on the St. Jean le Grand-Meureux Gorge line by dawn. They've been moving in for days."

"I am aware of that," Brigadier General Carver tugged at his close-clipped mustache. "There has been terrific air resistance by the Boches over this Front for weeks."

He paused and Gregory spoke a brief sentence.

"We met von Pangler, today, sir. We got him in the gorge."

"Von Pangler!" The Intelligence Officer sat bolt upright. "Good God, that means everything! There never has been a gigantic drive by the Boches in which von Pangler hasn't taken the air with his famous staffel to keep our observers from spotting the preparations. Chaumont must be told of this at once, general."

"You say you downed von Pangler, the deadliest of all the Boche aces?" barked the brigadier. "Ask for anything you want, lieutenants, and you shall have it. The man is worth an army corps to Germany."

"But the biggest threat remains," said Colonel Gregg. His face had gone lined and worried. Once more he was studying the typed paper. "The Moat House," he murmured. "That must be where von der Halz is located. It's obviously a brand-new address with no code name for it yet. By God!" his fist crashed on the table and his features lighted. "I remember now. It's a centuries-old chateau some twenty miles behind the lines from St. Jean le Grand."

**T**HE racket of airplane motors, driven at racing speed, drifted into the room. Every face turned toward the windows. Plainly visible three Spads were coming for the chateau with open throttles.

The door opened several moments later and the aide stepped in hurriedly. Behind

him pressed three pilots, tearing off their helmets and revealing flushed faces.

"Lieutenants Brady, Marchmont and Forman of the 67th pursuit, sir," announced the aide curtly. "They have real news."

A dishevelled pilot stepped forward.

"I'm Brady, flight leader, sir," he shot out. "We flew right here from a patrol over the Boche lines east of St. Jean. The whole countryside is stiff with German divisions moving up!"

"What?" burst out the brigadier.

"We saw them with our own eyes, sir," went on Brady. His lips worked even more feverishly. With an effort he mastered his emotion and got his voice under control. "We went out for a reconnaissance an hour ago ready to fight as usual. But there wasn't a Fokker in the sky." A look of bewilderment appeared on his face. "We got ten miles clear back into Germany, sir, and went down to two thousand feet. The roads are black with enemy infantry and guns for as far as you can see. They're moving up a whole army by broad daylight. It means hell for the Yanks!"

"It does!" rasped General Carver. "But we'll hold. 'We'll hold the line till Gehenna freezes! It's just what has been expected, some terrible attack in this sector. Now we know at last that it's about to break. They must have been mad to withdraw their staffels from the air and let our scouts through. Perhaps there may have been a mistake in their squadron orders. Those things do happen."

Abruptly the telephone jangled and Colonel Gregg reached for it.

Sometime later General Carver put down the instrument.

"Your news fits in with something Chaumont heard from a secret agent only a half an hour ago," he said gravely. "Every Yank division in this sector goes into the trenches immediately. The front



line and the supports will be jammed with infantry, the very best we've got. Chaumont scents something more than an ordinary drive in this business. The reference to the Racetrack and the Mallwitz Fault has G. H. Q. very nervous. The orders are to reconnoiter over the Moat House before dawn and also to send a bat patrol into the back area to see what goes on tonight. Frankly, gentlemen, we're sitting on top of a volcano in this sector. If the Boches ever get through, the road to Paris is open." His face cleared. "We've got some of the most strongly fortified trenches on the whole Front. With Yanks to hold them, those damn Boches will be stopped. But we've got to make every effort to find out what's going on. I'll send—"

Gregory caught the reckless answering look in Lawrence's eyes and stepped forward.

"The general said that Lieutenant Lawrence and myself could ask for anything we wanted," he spoke in casual tone. "We'll do the job, sir."

"Let us go!" demanded Brady anxiously. "We brought back the first news of the German movements, sir."

A chorus of assent rose from his fellow pilots. The brigadier glanced from Gregory to Brady in obvious puzzlement. Once more the old situation had developed to a surplus of volunteers. Gregory smiled, a thin, humorous smile that turned up the corners of his mouth. His hand drew a battered, greasy franc from his pocket and tossed it in the air. He caught it as it came down and extended his closed fist toward Brady.

"Call it!" he suggested.

"Tails!" shot out Brady instantly.

Slowly Gregory unclosed his fingers, baring the silver piece on his palm.

"Heads it is," said Brady. "You win, you lucky stiff!"

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Behind the Lines*

GREGORY arrowed at fifteen hundred feet over the silver ribbon of a road that was blurred with the dark columns of the Yanks. Ever since darkness had fallen the A. E. F. had been moving up from woods and villages to jam the Front lines. He lifted his Spad in a steep zoom and thrust on more power, glancing behind. Dan Lawrence rode close to his tail, the exhaust pipes of his crate spitting sparks. Only a few miles away lay the trenches and beyond them the German menace that might strike at any time.

"Half the battle is in knowing when they'll hit," Gregory told himself. "I don't suppose it'll be for days yet. And the Yanks will be waiting for them, hundreds of thousands strong from St. Jean le Grand to Meureux Gorge!"

The line of the Front fell behind and Gregory raised his hand in the moonlight. He was streaking down for a scout of the rear area. Into his mind flashed a brief recollection of a black and white Fokker plunging to its destruction around a rocky wall. Then he whirled his diving Spad with a shout of alarm. Smoky streams of tracer riddled his fuselage and smashed into the dash board. Limned between the muzzles of Spandaus that flamed squarely on his tail was a bestially savage face that he knew.

"Good God! It's a ghost! It's von Pangler!"

In the clear sheen of the moon, with the crimson blasts of guns on either side of it, the face of the great Boche ace glared horribly at him. The lust for slaughter looked out of the gleaming eyes and the jaw was set in stony fury. It was no phantom tracer that poured into Gregory's Spad but real lead. He felt a sting, as a slug seared his shoulder.



"Dan!" he shrieked. "Dan! Look out!"

His hand flashed to the flap of the cockpit and wrenched out a rocket pistol. The warning flare swished out and burst in a string of stars. The Spad, rolled, zig-zagged, split-aired desperately under his mauling of the controls. Nowhere in the air was there any sign of Lawrence. He had vanished. Instead swift, winged shapes, with black crosses on them, filled the moonlit spaces. It was von Pangler's staffel, back at the Front.

A lump came into his throat and he choked. Lawrence was gone. The Fokker's plunge had nailed him unaware. From below, from above, from the flanks and rear a cyclone of slugs hammered his wavering crate. His Spad was being literally shot to ribbons in the air.

Frenziedly he side-slipped and went down for five hundred feet before he wrenched the bus out of its fall. Off to the left and beneath him he glimpsed a battered craft, drifting raggedly for the dark map of the earth. The Allied cocarde shone on its top wing.

"It's Dan!" he panted. "Shot to pieces and trying for a landing with his engine gone! Coming, Dan!"

Once more von Pangler's tracer pounded into his crate and he reeled away, shoving on full gun. If he turned to fight the Boche ace it would mean the end of Dan. Three Fokkers were riding close to his crippled Spad, flailing it with lead. Screaming insanely Gregory jammed on full throttle and tore for the trio. Out from his Spad's nose crackled a burst of lead and took the nearest Boche full in the cockpit. Then his blasts veered and went slicing into the second Fokker.

The Boche jumped his crate sharply to the side and splintering crash sounded in the night as his wing locked into the struts of the other German. In a hopeless tangle they tumbled for the earth and destruction. Down still farther slip-

ped Lawrence's Spad with Dan wrestling frantically at the controls. Lead ripped through Gregory's loose coverall at the shoulder and he swept a horrified glance to the rear. Von Pangler still crowded his tail, remorselessly giving him the crimson rage of his Spandaus.

Both guns blazed metal at the Boche. Von Pangler leaped out of the way and shook a gauntleted fist, his lean face ablaze with exultant wrath. Cracking, one of Gregory's struts went, then another. His whole Spad was dropping in ruin. Gasping he pulled it around and felt a blast of tracer tear through it a foot from him. The blur of the earth loomed below. Lawrence was hardly a hundred feet above it, falling in a hopeless plunge.

"I'm done too," snarled Gregory. "We'll go together!"

Mechanically he cut the throttle and yanked back on the stick, trying to keep the crate's nose up. The maw of an open trench gaped beneath him. With a crash Lawrence's Spad plunged into it and dissolved in debris. Then with a jolt that drove the breath from his body Gregory's crate hit in the cutting and the wings snapped off. The body of the ship crashed to the bottom of the trench and stopped.

He tore off his safety belt and rolled from the wreck. Torn fabric and splintered struts littered the trench a few yards away and a battered figure crawled from the heap.

"Link!" came Dan's voice.

"Coming!" got out Gregory. Close at hand he sighted the dark opening of a communication trench. "In there, Dan, quick! They're still shooting at us!"

FIFTY feet overhead von Pangler swept by, his black and white Fokker belching flame. Down from the heights at the trench ploughed the fire of twenty more Boches. Desperately Gregory tore



his lighter from his pocket, snicked it and a tiny tongue of fire appeared. He held it to the fabric of his shattered plane and watched it catch. Then he jumped away and wriggled on his stomach for the communication trench. In it crouched Lawrence.

"Well, we're here," said Dan coolly. "We got this far, anyhow."

"Right," grated Gregory. "And we're going a damn sight farther. Keep out of sight, old scout. We want to make those Boches think we're fini. Von Pangler is up there, alive and shooting!"

"The blasted devil!" rasped Lawrence. "He got out of that gorge just the way we did. All the luck isn't with the Yanks."

Gregory leaned around the corner of the communication cut. The Spandaus of the Germans had gone mute. In the silvered arch he made out a veritable cloud of ships. As far as his gaze ranged they hovered, dark specks in the moonlight.

"At least three staffels are up there," he told himself.

Flames leaped among the debris of the Spad he had fired and bits of blazing cloth, spreading onto the wreck of Lawrence's crate turned it also into a pry. The light shone upward from the bottom of the trench, illuminating the sky. Through its glow drifted a black and white Fokker, soaring lazily. It went past and scaled for altitude to the north.

"I bluffed 'em" bit out Gregory. "That was von Pangler having a last look-see to be sure we're dead. Come on, Dan, we're heading north after him. The woods are just yonder. We can't stay here."

They scrambled rapidly along the trench, turning traverses and darting around zigzag corners. A quarter of a mile distant loomed the dark blur of a forest.

"This is queer," panted Gregory as they halted for a moment to catch their breath.

"Here we are in the supports about three miles or so back of the lines and there isn't a blasted Boche in them! What's become of the army that Brady saw moving up? Chaumont said a tremendous drive was coming here. There isn't a sign of it, except von Pangler and his gang."

He shrugged his shoulders, oddly uneasy, and went on at a run. His automatic jutted out ahead of him and his nerves were tense. The first challenge from a Boche meant battle to the death.

Still they went on while the trench in the cover of trees straightened out. They had proceeded for hundreds of yards when Gregory paused and gripped Dan by the arm.

"Listen," he whispered.

From the distance, drifting through the forest, came the steady, heavy tramp of marching men. A huge body of troops was on the move somewhere.

"Hurry it up," he bit out. "We want to see what's going on."

Together they increased their pace and pushed along the deserted cutting. Presently they stared through a thick screen of bushes at a road that ran due north, along which, in an orderly column, marched an endless mass of Boche infantry.

"It's a whole division on the road," exclaimed Lawrence.

"Yes!" breathed Gregory. His breath came in short, excited gasps. "But look where they're going! They're not headed for the trenches. They're retreating! There aren't any troops coming up to take their places."

Cautiously Gregory wormed his way through the bushes until he lay on a low bank, overlooking the road. The thicket screened him while he could see to perfection. Silently the host of helmeted, armed Boches went by with their officers striding at the head of each company.



For minutes they passed with the only sound the heavy tread of their boots and the clanking of equipment. Gregory crawled back into the woods and bent close to Dan.

"We'd better trail them for a while," he suggested. "I don't get this withdrawal at all. Something is up, I feel sure."

"I'm with you," husked Lawrence.

THEY moved farther back into the woods and commenced to parallel the march of the troops. The forest thinned beside the road and they moved rapidly among the trees. The river of infantry still flowed on, silent and filled with a terrific latent power. The trees grew even more sparse and Gregory turned stealthily for the road. They were on its edge, crouched behind tree trunks when a sudden glow struck them in their faces.

"Down," gasped Gregory and flung himself to the earth. "Down, Dan. It's a big car right on top of us!"

Humming at high speed a great black closed motor was tearing along the side of the column, pointed for the Front. Two motorcycle men arrowed before it and the moving infantry crowded together to give them space on the road.

With a scream of its brakes the sedan stopped on the very edge of the woods, separated from the Yanks by a narrow ditch. Gregory's fingers tightened on his pal's arm as he gazed at the two powerful and sinister figures that sat on the cushions in the rear. Their figures were clearly illuminated by the overhead light.

"Here we are, Dr. Mallwitz," rumbled the heavy, white-moustached general, whose tunic breast blazed with decorations. Startlingly light, merciless eyes glinted in his weatherbeaten face. "The orders are being carried out flawlessly. By midnight there will not be a single German left in the trenches. They will all be back in the positions to which I

have ordered them. You wished to inspect the withdrawal in person. Now you see it."

"I thank you, General von der Halz," rasped Mallwitz, his craggy face shining with suppressed excitement. He leaned out of the window of the motor and waved his arms in an ungainly gesture. "Have no fear, troops of the *Vaterland*!" he croaked horribly. "You retreat only to advance again in the dawn. There will be no Yankee living to face you. They will all be dead. *Nach Paris!*"

"*Nach Paris!*" growled the endless column like one man.

"It is well that they should have an inkling of what is ahead of them," grated Mallwitz, sinking back on the cushions. "Von der Halz, my friend, you and I have accomplished wonders in the Moat House in a few short months. The Antzig bore—"

The general was gazing with keen scrutiny at the passing troops. The pride of the born militarist smouldered in his eyes.

"How well they march," he muttered. "What perfect discipline! The best shock troops in Germany. And we have a hundred thousand of them within a few miles of here and another hundred thousand within easy marching distance. The dawn will truly see the end of the cursed A. E. F."

"You are a great scientist, doctor," he continued. "It is the Mallwitz Fault that will win the war in Germany's crisis. We have the trained troops and the reserves for only one more mighty drive."

"We shall destroy the American army and sweep across their lines without a single casualty," rasped Mallwitz. "It will be the most colossal stroke in the history of warfare."

He raised his head in an attitude of listening. The drone of airplane engines was coming closer and closer. Three ships



were drifting down over the woods toward the level plain that ran alongside the forest.

"That should be von Pangler arriving to report," said von der Halz gruffly. "He is a splendid soldier, always on time. He was to be here at this hour."

Down from the moonlit arch slid the black and white Fokker, circling over the flatland. Behind it scaled two more planes. Von Pangler's ship landed perfectly a hundred yards from the point where the road debouched from the woods and a lithe figure climbed out of it and strode for the motor. The other two Fokkers taxied close in by the rim of the forest and their pilots got out. The flashes showed where they waited, lighting cigarettes. Von Pangler was walking easily over the meadow. He drew up beside the car and made a stiff salute to the general.

"Ah, von Pangler! All goes well in the air?"

"All goes well, general," rapped the Boche ace. "A pair of *verdammte* Americans came over in Spads and were instantly knocked down and burned up. Not a wing can get through our cordon in the skies. I gave you that promise and now I offer you its fulfillment. The Yankees can see nothing of our preparations tonight."

"They saw a good deal this afternoon," rumbled the general. "They saw just what we wanted them to see."

"And now we hold them off with a wall of wings and Spandaus," grated von Pangler. "It is death to any of them to cross the lines. I have two hundred planes between St. Jean le Grand and the Meureux Gorge."

"Excellent," croaked Mallwitz. "Always you have aided me to perfection, von Pangler, ever since you brought me out of France. And now—"

"I have one more duty to perform as

you may recall," cut in von Pangler. "I am going to reconnoiter over the American lines to see if, as we hoped, they are sending all their reserves into the trenches. Undoubtedly they will, but we must make sure. If they do, there will be no one left to offer resistance to our infantry when the drive is launched."

He motioned toward the dim outlines of the planes that had landed with him and which were parked at a respectful distance at the edge of the woods.

"You may have need of air couriers, general. I have brought two flyers down with me whom I shall turn over to you. No, I do not know who they are. They belong to one of the staffels that came up today to work under my lead. I signaled to them at random in the air."

"Send them to me," bit out von der Halz. "They will be useful. I shall have errands. Farewell, Major von Pangler. I shall see you at the Moat House."

GREGORY slipped back into the woods, his brain racing. In front of him there had been briefly sketched a terrific menace to the A. E. F. Its doom was sealed, according to the conversation he had heard. The intercepted message from the German Embassy at Berne had carried dynamite. It was no wonder that the Germans had sacrificed a host of lives to try to destroy it. But what was the colossal plan of Mallwitz and von der Halz?

"We're still in the dark," he panted. "The Moat House is the core of the secret. And we're going into the Moat House. See those pilots?" He pointed to the flyers, who were hastening toward von Pangler's black and white Fokker. The Boche ace already sat in its cockpit. "Nobody knows who they are. Nobody will know who we are in their kit and in their Fokkers." He lifted his Colt as though it were a club and swished it down. "Get



me, Dan? And then we report to General von der Halz as his couriers."

"I've got you," came back Dan grimly.

"Make for their Fokkers and wait for them there," counselled Gregory.

They turned and ran swiftly through the trees. Out on the flatland one of the pilots jumped to von Pangler's propeller and whirled it. There came a roar as the motor caught and von Pangler bent forward in the cockpit. Slowly the craft began to roll along the smooth turf, increased its power and lifted into the air.

The two pilots were walking steadily along in the shadows of the trees heading for their ships and approaching nearer to the crouching Yanks with every stride. Stealthily Gregory stepped from behind his tree and waited. Lawrence moved to his side. They held their automatics firmly gripped. The flyers were almost on top of them when Gregory spoke.

"Now!"

Like a panther he leaped for his man, fairly flinging himself through the air. The heavy Colt poised in his right hand.

"Gott!" snarled the German and his hand came up, leveling a Luger. Then the heavy barrel of the Colt took him in the side of the head with a thud.

"Yank—" burst the broken shout from the second Boche. The scream of alarm died in his throat. Gregory's clutch had him by the windpipe just as Dan's pistol barrel crashed on his jaw. Gurgling, the German dropped.

"Quick!" panted Gregory. "Into the woods with them! They'll be out for hours!"

They hauled the limp bodies into the gloom of the forest and stripped them with swift hands.

"Their coveralls and helmets are about our size," said Gregory. "The luck's with us, Dan. A little old-fashioned bluff is next. Let's go!"

Stepping out into the moonlight he led

the way straight for the motor that held General von der Halz and Doctor Mallwitz. The light still glowed in it, illuminating the ruthless faces of the pair. Gregory fought down a shiver and stiffened as he had seen von Pangler do in front of the window.

"Lieutenants Hoffer and Radwig reporting as couriers, *Excellens*," he said in flawless German. "Major von Pangler has just sent us."

"Good!" snapped von der Halz. He hardly even looked at them. "Follow this car to the Moat House where I shall have important missions for you. Driver, back where we came from."

He settled himself on the seat and drew his cloak around him, oblivious to the flyers. Armed Boches kept on marching past in the column that seemed without an end. The chauffeur of the car meshed the gears and the motorcycle escort flung their machines into puffing, snorting life. Gregory breathed a gasp of relief, saluted, and pivoted around.

"Put it over," he whispered. "Beat it for the planes."

## CHAPTER SIX

### Moat House

THE two Yanks raced along the meadow, bathed in the cold weird sheen of the moon, and drew up at the Fokkers. It took only an instant to set the cockpit gear and then they were gripping the blades of the propellers and swinging them. Almost at once the motor of Gregory's Fokker roared and he leaped for the pit. A frown of concentration ruttled his forehead. He shifted in his seat and gazed at the starlit heights to the south. Yonder, miles away, lay Brigade and in between stood the line of Yank divisions, waiting for the steel tide to flow down upon them.

"Something terrible is coming," he mut-



tered. "Should we try to get through to Brigade and tell them that the Boches have been pulled back for some trick? In these Fokkers we might make it." His jaw tightened and a look of purpose flared suddenly in his eyes. "No, by God! We don't know what it is yet or when it will strike. The brigadier sent us over to cover the rear area and reconnoiter the Moat House. We've shot and bluffed our way this far. We'll shoot and bluff our way for the rest of the route. The answer to the mystery is in the Moat House and we've got a trail in. *Allez!*"

His hand shot to the throttle and opened it. He felt the Fokker quiver under him and leap forward, tail-skid scoring the dirt. Gaining speed with every turn of the wheels he streaked along the flatland and pulled back on the stick. The plane rose swiftly and he pointed it for the road on a gradual zoom, peering down over the rim of the cockpit.

The staff motor already had been turned around and was rolling powerfully over the highway. He raised his hand in signal to Lawrence and swung the Fokker around. The car increased its velocity until it tore furiously along the ribbon of road. The two Fokkers fell in five hundred feet above it at an equal speed and rushed through the silvered sky.

"Going into we don't know what," Gregory told himself tensely. "This is the biggest chance I ever took in this man's war. But it's worth it."

Stray sentences of von der Halz and Mallwitz burned in his memory. They seemed triumphant, utterly assured that the destruction of the A. E. F. and the winning of the war was at hand. But they were withdrawing their shock troops from the trenches, leaving them bare. They were hoping that the Yanks would bring all their reserves into the line opposite them.

"It makes no sense to me," he mur-

mured in puzzlement. "I'd better stop thinking about the blasted thing. This is a time for action and not theories."

The car beneath bored on, eating up the miles. It swept to the crest of a barren hill and, looking down, Gregory started. The whole northern slope seemed to have been cut away. Its cliff shone whitely in the moonlight. Then it was left behind and they travelled swiftly over more flatland. Presently a dim blur appeared in the distance and took on the aspect of woods. The motor was heading for another forest. It vanished among the gloom of the trees and Gregory throttled down, blindly following. He gasped in amazement.

The car shot out of the trees into a tremendous open space and its siren hooted a warning. Floodlights flashed on, baring a huge arched gateway of stone from which a gigantic drawbridge was clanking down. More torches wavered up through the moonlight and picked out the shapes of the slowly-moving Fokkers.

In an instant a great yellow square appeared and he found himself staring into a courtyard bounded by high walls with the bulk of a vast stone building rearing up and filling the far side. Square towers projected from its corners and the sheen of water, flowing murkily surrounded it.

"The Moat House," he breathed. "Gosh, what a whale of a place! Fifty crates could land in that court." He saw them now, the ranks of ships drawn up on the flagging. There must be twenty of them. The general's motor arrowed across the drawbridge and crossed the court.

"Here's where we go down," grated Gregory and put his Fokker into a spiral.

It dropped easily, under perfect control, and passed over the girdling wall where gunners sat at Maxim posts. With a bump it landed and came to rest on the lighted flagging. A second or so later Lawrence's ship rolled up alongside him.



Gregory sat quietly in his cockpit. An immaculately-dressed captain was hurrying toward him, coming from the entrance to the castle-like building.

"You are the flyers attached to General von der Halz as couriers?"

"We are, *Kapitan*," instantly answered Gregory.

"The general wants you with him," commanded the aide. "Come!"

He spun on his heel as Gregory and Lawrence climbed out of their crates and started for the building. Abruptly the floodlights went off and only the cold illumination of the moon drifted into the courtyard. Dan pressed close to Gregory.

"Keep your gat in your pocket and your hand on it," whispered Gregory. "If we have to do any shooting, no misses."

"Right," replied Lawrence.

THE aide led them rapidly to a big arch and through it. Gregory felt as though he had stepped into the dank interior of a prison. Stone walls that were feet thick hemmed him in and everywhere sounded the stir and bustle of armed men. The Moat House teemed with Germans. They were advancing along a passage in which lights burned dimly. The captain pressed on, climbing a winding set of stairs, and conducting them along corridor after corridor. He turned his head to look at them.

"The castle is a perfect maze," he said nonchalantly. "An admirable fortress for our purpose. It is filled with secret passages. Only the heaviest kind of artillery could ever have an effect on its walls. Those old Frenchmen built well—for us Germans!" He vented a satirical laugh and drew aside heavy portieres that hung across a door. "The flyers, General von der Halz!"

Gregory stepped through the curtains and halted in his tracks. With an effort he kept his face from showing his aston-

ishment and concern. Down the center of a tremendous, tapestry-hung chamber stretched a table. Every chair at it was filled by high-ranking officers of the German Army. Generals of division and brigade, colonels and lieutenant colonels, liaison and Intelligence officers sat there and on every face was written a ruthless triumph. One and all mirrored the expression of General von der Halz and Doctor Mallwitz who sat in adjoining chairs at the head of the table.

"Stand by the door, pilots!" rumbled von der Halz. "I shall summon you when I need you! And now, gentlemen—" his voice rang to the lofty ceiling—"I and the *Vaterland's* most-gifted scientist, Doctor Mallwitz, have summoned you here for the last council of war before the drive that will make Germany the master of the world!"

"*Hoch!*" roared the shout from more than a score of throats.

Eyes flamed and lips parted, baring white teeth. Champagne glasses lifted and were downed. It was as though Gregory looked upon some satanic revel. Mallwitz raised his hand in rough gesture and the noise ceased. He was getting to his feet, his head hunched between his shoulders and his granite-like jaw out-thrust. In one hand he clutched a fistful of papers.

"You all know the parts you are to play in this gigantic stroke, gentlemen. Everything has been timed to the minute. When the red searchlight flares from the courtyard of the Moat House, visible for miles, your troops will rush at top speed for the defenseless Front. They will pour through it in the triumph march on Paris with no Americans to oppose them. Speed is essential. Plunge past the ruins of the lines and on to the capital."

"On to Paris!" burst the roar from the assembled officers.

"We shall be in touch with you from



the Moat House by planes signaling from the air. No telephones or couriers could be sure of reaching you once the flood of our troops is set in motion. I myself have seen the movement of withdrawal successfully in motion and General von der Halz and I shall take you to inspect the last minute preparations at the Racetrack before the searchlight is set off. Here is the entire plan down to the last detail." He slammed his mass of papers on the table. "You all have it written in your minds. Now, drawn up to the very hour, it goes to Spa!"

Another fierce mutter of exultation ran around the table. Gregory was quivering all over with agitation. There, only yards from him, lay the answer to the entire secret. His clutch tightened on the butt of the automatic in his pocket. He and Lawrence could never dare to charge a roomful of Boches in their own fortress. Abruptly he stiffened, while a wild hope surged in him. Mallwitz had picked up a heavy manila envelope and was cramming the papers into it. Swiftly he fastened the flap.

"The seals!" he roared.

Someone thrust forward wax, matches and the lighted end of a candle. Mallwitz thrust the wax in the flame, rubbed its melting substance on the envelope back and brought down a brass stamp that an officer held out to him. He scribbled a line on the outside of the envelope.

"Courier!" he croaked.

Gregory stepped out, every fibre tense.

"Be off with this to Spa! Guard it as you would your life. Take your companion as escort!"

The precious envelope was stretched out to Gregory. His hand closed on it. He could not believe it yet. In his clasp he held the secret.

"I go, *Excellent*," he snapped. His voice sounded strangely in his own ears.

"Give them the official despatch wallet

and the couriers' insignia so they will be instantly passed through to the High Command at Spa," ordered von der Halz to the aide. "Start, gentlemen!"

GREGORY waited for no further words. The immaculately-groomed aide was marching ahead of them through the corridors. Tensely he followed him, shoving the envelope into the breast of his coverall. He had time only for a brief whisper to Lawrence.

"By God, it's the break! A clear sky to Brigade."

All his senses were alert. They were on their way safely out of the Moat House and a few moments more would see them in ships tearing for the Yank lines with the information that would save the A. E. F. A full description of the new German menace lay in the thick packet that he could feel pressing against him. They passed through the arch into the courtyard and the captain raised his voice in command.

"Turn on the lights and clear the bridge. Couriers for Spa!"

Instantly the whole court burst into a blaze of light. They walked across it toward the rank of parked ships.

"Warm up a two-seater!" barked the aide and mechanics came running over the flags.

They wheeled a crate out of the line and busied themselves about it. Gregory found himself trembling in every limb with suppressed anxiety. The captain had left them for a small building nearby and for the instant they were alone.

"It's too good to be true," he whispered. "Dan, we've got the blasted Boches stopped."

Out of the silvered dark, that hung above the courtyard, slipped a black and white shape. It came into the glare of the torches in a beautiful, tight spiral and winged to a landing not far off. On roll-



ing wheels it taxied toward the two-seater and stopped.

"Get into the crate!" husked Gregory. "It's von Pangler back from his scout!"

The great German ace pried himself out of his ship and stood erect on the flagging. Gregory and Lawrence swung into the cockpits of the two-seater at the same instant and crouched in their nests, helmets still on and goggles masking their faces. The captain was approaching from the building. He paused in front of von Pangler.

"So you are back, major," he said. "The general will be pleased to see you."

"I know that he will," rasped von Pangler. "I have been over the Yankee lines. Their entire strength will be in the trenches and reserve dugouts in a few hours. And then—" he thrust his hand out, the thumb pointing down—"finis!"

"Good," declared the aide. He swung a large leather wallet in his hand and glanced about. "I am despatching two of your flyers to Spa. After that, will you join me in a glass? It should go well on your busy night."

"I thank you, *kapitan*," said von Pangler.

He moved to the aide's side and they came to the wing of the two-seater. Gregory's hand went instinctively to the throttle. A mechanic spun the propeller and jumped away while the ship throbbed with power. He looked across the lighted court to the open entrance gate. The drawbridge leading to the plain was down, and beyond it lay the level surface of the road. He saw now how the ships took off from the court.

"Through the gate and over the bridge, using the road for a runway," he murmured. "Damn clever." He kept his face averted from the pair at the wing while his heart pounded.

"Here is the official despatch wallet," said the captain brusquely. "Give me

the envelope to put in it. It must travel locked up."

Gregory fumbled in his coverall and passed over the envelope, still keeping his head down but watching warily. The aide thrust the documents away, a key clicked and slipped the wallet into the pit.

"Now to give you the couriers' insignia," he said. "It goes on your helmet. This way." He leaned forward, reaching up to fasten a tiny silver pair of wings on Gregory's helmet. There was no way out. Gregory drew in a breath and raised his head. He felt the pin being made secure in the leather. "Your companion can fix his own," announced the aide. "Off with you!"

"Gott!" rang a furious scream. "Those are none of my flyers! They are the damned Americans who brought me down in Meureux Gorge. Shoot them!"

From his belt von Pangler ripped a Luger and its shot exploded in Gregory's face, tearing through the flap of his helmet. Lawrence's pistol crashed from the rear cockpit and a piece of cloth slashed off von Pangler's coveralls. In a wild lunge the two-seater shot forward as Gregory gave it the power. The aide dropped flat beneath its wing. Von Pangler already was yards away, pumping the magazine of his Luger at the speeding Yanks.

"Guns at the gate!" shrieked the Boche ace. "Turn loose! Lift the bridge!"

**S**LUGS pounded the fuselage behind Gregory and a bullet snapped past his head. His gaze roved frenziedly on all sides, sweeping the court. From where he was he would have to whirl the ship in a ground loop to bring it head on for the gate. A mass of soldiers came racing for him from the big door of the castle. He jammed on his stick triggers and they wilted before the torrent of his lead. Dan



bent behind the gun in the rear and his railing fire swept across the flagging.

"Bring her round, Link!" he screamed. "Blow our way through!"

Von Pangler sped for one of the parked ships and his hand reached into the cockpit flap. It emerged clutching a rocket pistol and a crimson stream of stars soared up above the court. Maxims burst into clamor and a hail of slugs whipped over the wing of the racing two-seater. Roaring, it came around in its loop, straightened out, and tore for the open gate. A living barrier of Boches stood in the way, flame springing from the Mausers at their shoulders. With a savage curse Gregory gave them the full force of his Spandaus, slashing a gap in them yards wide. At top speed he was tearing for the gate and the bridge.

He had a last glimpse of von Pangler seizing a rifle from the nearest soldier and firing. From the top of the gate, from the walls, a cyclone of Maxim fire slashed down on the scudding target. Lead tore through the wings and fuselage and ricocheted off the flagging of the court. Then a gasp of horror broke from Gregory. The gateway was open, but the drawbridge beyond it was rising. Slowly, creakingly, the ponderous span of wood came up on its chains. Behind him Lawrence's gun still spat flame, covering their trail and scything their pursuers with hot metal.

"God!" gasped Gregory. "Can we make it? Have I got enough speed on to lift? If I haven't—"

He had a vision of the crate shooting off the end of the rising drawbridge and crashing in ruins on the hard ground beyond the moat. The great gate arched overhead and the thunder of the ship intensified to a deafening roar as it rocketed under the stone arch. It seemed to leap into the air, pointing upward. The planks of the drawbridge took its spinning

wheels. Yards away where the bridge ended there was nothing but empty space.

With his jaw set and the blood thudding in his temples Gregory pulled back on the stick. The two-seater jumped out into the air beyond the draw. It hovered, shook and scaled upward in a mighty zoom. The cold sweat stood out on Gregory's forehead.

"Good scout!" howled Lawrence. "We gave 'em something to remember us by! Home with the dope, by gosh!" His voice altered to a hoarse shout of warning. "Look out, Link! The Fokkers! Coming down dead ahead of us!"

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Hell's Tower

IN a fighting V, five winged shapes skimmed through the moonlight, their noses jetting red. The first hail of tracer riddled Gregory's top wing as he swerved desperately and rolled out of the path of his attackers.

"Von Pangler brought a flight back with him," he panted. "He signalled to them with that rocket from the court."

Gone was his vision of a clear trip back to Brigade through the clouds. Bitter battle to the death was upon him. The Fokkers whirled at frightful speed and cut him off. Spandaus flamed and bit in ruthless rage. He was being driven back, back over the walls of the Moat House, barred from the skies to the south by swathes of lead.

His own guns raved. A Fokker reeled away and plunged, tail over nose, in a slow tumble for the lighted courtyard below. It struck on the flagging and a geyser of flame rushed up. In a glance Gregory saw that the drawbridge was down and half a dozen ships were rushing over the level for the take-off. Thundering through the gate itself went the black-and-white Fokker of von Pangler. It



swept over the bridge, raced along the hard road and lifted.

Rage and despair swept Gregory. He was dodging, darting, trying with all his skill to break through the circle of Fokkers that hemmed him in and crowded him back. More planes were shooting across the courtyard and over the bridge to lift into the air. Something crashed off Gregory's wing and tore a huge tatter from its tip.

"God!" he gasped. "They're turning loose with anti-aircraft cannon."

The sky became a chaos of rushing wings and belching Spandaus. Dimly he realized that he was being driven down, ever down, toward the top of the castle. His guns screeched in a rage of lead and another Fokker went plunging to strike with a frightful crash on the ground. From only yards away a machine gun, mounted on the wall, hurled its blast at him and a strut cracked menacingly.

He veered the crate almost off the wall and Lawrence's quick-firer spoke. The crew at the castle gun slumped over their weapon. Von Pangler swept past on the flank and volleyed a blast that took off part of the rudder. He zoomed upwards hundreds of feet and poised for his dive. Beneath him Gregory felt his whole ship shudder. It would last for only a minute or so longer.

Lashed by bullets from all directions he pulled the stick straight back and roared upward. He was conscious that he passed the flat top of one of the towers and then in a maelstrom of din and flame von Pangler pounced for him. A blizzard of slugs whipped past Gregory's head.

He hurled a burst at von Pangler's rushing Fokker and held his course. Abruptly his guns went mute; he hammered frenziedly at a jammed breech.

He wrenched the stick against his chest and the two-seater in a last burst of power swept straight up. Von Pangler

wrenched his crate madly aside. There was a splintering crash and Gregory's power went off. Fabric fell across his ship and blinded him. Broken ailerons projected through torn cloth. Below him von Pangler whirled for the ground.

"Got him!" he screamed hoarsely. "But he got us!"

The two-seater was slipping backward, falling through the air. A terrific crash came and flung him reeling against the side of the cockpit. The crate no longer tumbled through the air. It had hit something solid.

"Out of it!" yelled Lawrence. "Jump, Link! We've crashed on the tower roof!"

**D**AZEDLY Gregory wormed his way out of the pit and fell on his hands and knees on solid stone. The ship hung, precariously balanced on the coping of the low wall. By a miracle they had fallen only ten or fifteen yards before they struck. He raced to the side of the tower and peered down while Lawrence wrestled at the back of the ship. The wreck of a black and white Fokker was sinking in the waters of the moat and a dark figure swam away from it with powerful strokes.

"Von Pangler!" he cursed. "He got away, too!" He whirled and started for the ruined two-seater. "The wallet!" he panted. "Got to get that out!"

Swooping, a pair of Boches dove for him from above and their gunfire lashed the stone at his feet. He flung himself face down a few yards from the ship that poised on the tower wall. Somehow he would have to live through that storm of steel and make his way to the crate.

"I'll get those papers of Mallwitz's," he grated. "I'll see what's in them before they wash us out!"

*Blam!* The explosion of the anti-aircraft shell knocked out a segment of the low wall. *Blam! Blam! Blam!* As fast as its crew could fire the cannon was



hurling shells. The wrecked two-seater tottered on its support. It seemed to dissolve before Gregory's strained gaze. It rose a foot from the wall and settled back, struck by shell after shell.

*Blam!* The two-seater slid slowly from the stone and dropped out of sight. From below came a splash and then a brief silence. Gregory groaned in utter despair. The Boches had blow the crate off the top of the tower with a few well-aimed shots.

"The wallet's gone," he murmured. "Now we'll never know what was in it. Damn those Boches! They're too good for us!"

Again the hell of Spandau fire stormed along the square expanse of stone and he flung himself desperately aside. A low cry came from Lawrence.

"Over here, Link, at the double! There's a trap to the story below!"

Dan was bending down lifting up a square door in the corner. On the roof beside him lay a bulky object.

"I got the M. G. out of the rear cockpit while I had the chance. We'll do some damage yet before they drill us!"

"Good scout!" cried Gregory.

The flare of battle frenzy rose once more in him. The open trap revealed spiral stone steps, leading down. Slugs whipped over them in a hellish stream as they leaped into the aperture and brought the door down. They could hear the din of the Fokkers sounding faint and far away while metal thudded on the closed trap. Stumbling, they went down the stairs and halted in the chamber below.

The moonlight sifted through windows cut in walls that were many feet thick. Gregory strode to an opening and stared into the courtyard far below. General von der Halz and Doctor Mallwitz stood in the middle of it shouting furiously. The

square was filled with pilots, soldiers and machine gunners. A small army had gathered down there.

"We're in for a siege," bit out Gregory. "We'll make it last as long as possible. We needn't fool ourselves, Dan. This is our last stand."

A vicious blast of bullets whipped against the stone next the window. The machine guns on the walls already were hurling volleys at the tower. A crowd of Germans raced across the court and plunged into the base of the tower. General von der Halz shouted and the big staff motor, parked on the flagging, rolled off and vanished through a low entrance.

"Give me that m. g.," snarled Gregory. "The flyers have signaled where we are. The Boches have started the attack already."

Coming through the gateway arch he had discerned a dripping figure in flyer's kit. Von Pangler had swum the moat and was re-entering the place. He shoved the barrel of the Spandau out of the window opening and let go a burst. The slugs smashed into the stone close to von Pangler, who raced across the court, signaling wildly to von der Halz and Mallwitz. The three of them disappeared into the building.

"Missed him!" rasped Gregory. "That's probably the last chance he'll give us for a shot."

Shouts and the rush of heavy feet sounded from below. Gregory slipped from the window and faced an open arch that gave onto a narrow landing from which winding stairs led downward.

"Not even a door here," he said. "Well, we haven't ammo enough to deal with more than a few charges. Let's go!"

They flattened themselves on the landing with the Spandau pointing down the steps. Almost before Gregory realized it a storming mass of figures swept around the corner, a few yards beneath, and



hurled themselves upward. The Spandau jumped and raved, spitting flame into bodies at pointblank range. Steel thrust upward and rifles clattered on the stone as Boches fell.

It was desperate, quick work. The fumes of gunfire hung heavy in the cramped space and the gloom was lit by the jets of flame from the quick-firer. Yells and screams resounded and the mob of Germans reeled back around the corner. A hoarse voice was heard, choking with wrath.

"Charge them again, soldiers! The swine almost captured my great plan!" It was Mallwitz, urging on the attack from safe shelter. "Kill the Yankees!"

Volleys still slashed at the windows in the room they had left and the planes roared on overhead. Gregory wiped the sweat from his forehead.

"The luck's turned against us, Dan," he said. "A bomb or so on the roof would cook us completely."

He glanced around. Lawrence had crept back into the room they had left and was calling in a low excited voice.

"A lot of boxes in here against the wall, Link." Wood ripped, splintering, and he paused. "No wonder the Fokkers aren't dropping eggs. These crates are full of explosives! The tower's a storehouse for munitions."

"Bombs?" demanded Gregory eagerly. "Bring 'em here, Dan. We can hold these stairs with grenades till hell freezes. Quick!"

**A**NOTHER rush of Boches thundered up the steps and around the bend; the Spandau ploughed its lead into the middle of the attackers. Smoke and flame filled the landing. Panting, Gregory shot on, waiting for Lawrence to leap to his side and hurl a rain of grenades. No bomb crashed. No flame of explosive rose. almost on the muzzle of his red-hot Span-

dau the charge broke and the survivors tumbled back. He hurled a scattering of shots after the screaming Boches and then an empty click sounded.

"No bombs," said Dan. He was back beside Gregory, clutching a handful of fuses. "Only big stuff. Dynamite in chunks so large we can't throw it."

"And no ammo," snarled Gregory. "The last shell's gone. Grab a handful of Lugers off those Boches on the stairs."

Lawrence darted down and back while Gregory stood upright over the useless machine gun. He was thinking faster than he had ever thought before.

"Drag some of those boxes out," he said grimly. "We'll blow this place to hell."

They darted into the tower room and wrestled at a crate from which Dan had stripped the cover. Gregory's foot slipped and he went sideways gasping vainly at the smooth, thick wall for support. His hand struck a projection and his whole weight came down on it. Then he stumbled to his feet, amazed. Something had moved under his pressure.

"Look!" panted Lawrence. "The wall's opening! We've hit one of those secret passages the aide mentioned!"

A section of the stone was swinging slowly back and a blast of cold air came from the aperture. The first of a series of steps showed in the gloom. Gregory's hand shot into his pocket and gripped his lighter.

"It's a way out for us," he said hoarsely. "What a chance! Get that box out onto the landing and as many more as we can carry." Viciously a spatter of lead came through one of the window slits and Gregory halted, trembling in every limb. If a bullet struck the dynamite they were carrying—

"Damn close!" he ejaculated and they went on.



Box after box was rushed to the landing with Fokkers thundering outside and charging straight for the tower walls. Only yards away they whirled and zoomed, their wings almost brushing the stone. Gregory seized a fuse and attached it to a stick of explosive.

"It's a long one," he panted. "Run like blazes for that secret passage, Dan, when I light it. I thought at first we'd go up with the tower, but we won't. Beat it!"

The lighter touched the fuse and sparks spat out. Stumbling they headed for the opening in the wall, passed through and Gregory's groping hand found a lever on the inside. The stone door closed and they were going down a steep stairs inside the wall. The flame of the lighter gave a dim illumination.

"Hurry!" urged Gregory. "We don't know when that stuff is going off above."

Down they went, steadying themselves with their hands against the stone. The stairs seemed endless and the strain was almost more than Gregory could bear.

He was flung against the wall and slithered along it for half a dozen steps. His whole body shook. A deafening explosion had sounded in the distance.

"It went off! I hope it blew the top of the tower to Kingdom Come. They'll think we went up with it. Dan, we still have a chance!"

"And a blasted good one with these irons in our hands." Lawrence passed a pair of the Lugers he had scooped from the stairs to Gregory. "There are crates in the court."

"Steady," warned Gregory. He stopped in a narrow space, confronting a solid wall. He played the flame of the lighter here and there. "We've reached the end of the passage. Lord knows where it will come out." He caught sight of the lever set in the wall and doused the light. "Keep me covered while I swing this door open."

His hand clutched the gear and pressed

down on it with infinite caution. Inch by inch the door moved back until he could peer through the crevice. Dan crouched behind him, looking over his shoulder. They gazed into a wide, low room with electric lights set in its stone ceiling. The big staff motor of General von der Halz bulked in the center. A dozen other cars stood near it and more than a score of motorcycles were ranged along the walls. Drums of gasoline, spare tires and other motor equipment were scattered about.

"It's the Moat House garage," breathed Gregory. "Quiet, Dan. There are a lot of Boches in it."

Mechanics and chauffeurs moved here and there cleaning off the motors and tinkering with their engines. The place had a busy air, teeming with life.

"My brigadier general should call me soon," muttered one of the drivers. "He has been here in council long enough."

A WIDE door at the far end of the room was flung open and von der Halz's dapper aide strode through. Every worker sprang to attention.

"The driver for the general's car!" he ordered harshly. "Bring it into the courtyard at once. Motorcycle guard!"

A sergeant in field-gray appeared instantly in the door to an adjoining chamber.

"Kapitan?"

"Mount your men at once and fall in as escort to the staff motor. The general and Doctor Mallwitz are leaving at once on a tour of inspection!"

"Ja, Kapitan!" A respectful look slid over the noncom's face. "The Yankees, Kapitan? They have been done for above?"

"The *verdammt* swine blew up the top of the tower and themselves along it with it," rapped the aide callously.

He made for the entrance and disappeared. The sergeant roared an order and



almost a score of men piled out from the guard room and rushed for the walls where heavy, leather jackets hung. They slipped them on and rolled out the motor-cycles, rifles slung over their shoulders. Already the staff car driver was in the seat and the motor started for the wide door. Snorting and roaring the cycles followed it. Three more aides darted into the garage, raising their voices in preem-tory orders.

"General Scholling's car!"

"The motor for General von Blumer!"

"Car for General Trumpmann!"

They sprang into the sedans, which tore for the entrance under the guidance of the chauffeurs. The cellar rang with racket and confusion.

"Come along!" rapped Gregory and slipped into the room. "There goes the cavalcade that Mallwitz talked about taking to the Racetrack. Into those cyclists' jackets and after them. We'll lose ourselves in the crowd that's going. It's the safest place to be."

Dan's eyes were glinting with excitement as he stepped after him. Gregory scooped up a bunch of waste that lay on the floor, rubbed his hands in its grease and swept them over the lower part of his face and cheeks. His features became unrecognizable. He tossed the cotton to Lawrence who did the same. Then they began to walk slowly toward the wall where the clothes hung. His nerves tingled with desperate resolve. He and Lawrence were taking a chance in a thousand.

They passed the chauffeurs and mechanics who never even glanced at them. The garage had become a chaos of noise and hurry. Quietly Gregory donned a heavy jacket and private's cap. He pulled his goggles over his eyes and turned up the collar of his kit. The Lugers went into his pockets and he slung a Mauser from a rack over his shoulder.

"*Vorwaerts*," he smiled recklessly to Lawrence, who was similarly garbed.

They flung themselves onto the motor-cycle seats, switched on the power and careered for the entrance without a single shout of alarm.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### The Racetrack

HE BENT over the handlebars as the machine struck a smooth, gradual ramp and the next moment he shot out into the courtyard. Von der Halz's car headed a line of four motors. The cycle escort was forming in pairs on its flanks.

The cars rolled forward. He thrust on more speed, shot past the mass of cycles and swung in beside von der Halz's car.

He and Lawrence rode side by side with von der Halz. Mallwitz and another general only yards away from them in the sedan. In the dusk and with his face goggled and smeared he felt safe.

At high speed the cavalcade rushed for the archway, crossed the bridge and arrowed along the level road. Gregory glimpsed stones and debris of all sorts littering the court in a final glance. Half the tower had crashed onto the flagging and the casualties must have been tremendous.

The three ruthless faces in the sedan seemed those of a trio of graven idols. An infinite menace brooded in the glinting eyes of Doctor Mallwitz, the fanatical look of a scientist who is about to see the dream of a lifetime fulfilled. His mouth twisted horribly as he turned to talk to the general. Once or twice Gregory heard him screaming in triumph. Ahead reached the road, silvered by the ghostly sheen of the moonlight. The miles were passing and far in the distance lights broke out and drifted downward.

"Very flares," he told himself. "The Yanks are looking over No-Man's-Land."



But they won't see a single Boche. They've all been drawn back for Mallwitz's devilish plan."

On roared the cavalcade and the cliff that Gregory had seen on the reverse side of the barren hill appeared before them. Von der Halz's motor veered from the main road and took a smooth track that led straight for the base of the cliff. Gregory threw his motorcycle into still more power. The staff car had increased its speed and the siren began to howl on a low, warning note.

Suddenly the whole face of the cliff seemed to part and the motor rushed for it. Gregory saw a huge tunnel that had been hidden by curtains of camouflage. Already the car was in it and he was speeding alongside.

The tunnel curved gradually, its walls and level floor brilliantly illuminated by electric light. Soldiers with insignia of engineers stood here and there along its walls, saluting stiffly. At fifty miles an hour, with its siren shrieking loudly, the motor tore along in the bowels of the earth. The tunnel sloped and levelled off, still curving. It looked like a gigantic illuminated tube. A fragment of Mallwitz's talk drifted to Gregory as he drew closer to the running board on his racing cycle.

"The Racetrack, general! Is it not a marvelous piece of engineering?"

To Gregory it seemed that he was travelling on a tremendous oval. The tunnel ran exactly like the racetrack that Mallwitz spoke of and his fibres tensed as he realized that he was getting closer every second to the meaning of the secret.

"There we are, general!" roared Mallwitz with working features.

The motor tore through the remaining distance and braked to a halt. Gregory shut off his own power and stopped. Mallwitz was climbing out of the staff car and beckoning to the generals. They

gathered around him in a group, every face alight.

"You are now standing in the center of what we call the Racetrack," he rumbled. "This curving tunnel emerges, at its other end, a quarter of a mile from the entrance we came in by. It was dug by the new mining machine, the Antzig bore, in record time. Look yonder at the wall!"

He pointed to the sheer stone and Gregory repressed a start of amazement. Projecting from the rock was a gigantic circular mass of metal. It was the end of a colossal tube driven into the stone.

"YOU see the closed breach of the hugest cannon ever built in a war," croaked Mallwitz. "It is short, constructed of the heaviest steel and loaded with a terrific new explosive. The chain hanging down from it is the lanyard which sets off the fuse. This mammoth cannon does not fire a shell, it explodes a blast of incredible force. And that blast, gentlemen, will travel the length of the Mallwitz Fault, from St. Jean le Grand to within a few miles of the Meureux Gorge where it ends. We are now under the Yankee lines near St. Jean. This entire front is held by the Americans and every man on it will be destroyed at dawn."

Gregory tingled with anticipation. His fists were clenched under the strain.

"What is the Mallwitz Fault, gentlemen?" The doctor spoke like a scientist delivering a lecture to an eager classroom. "It is a geological flaw in the strata of rock underlying this Front. In all the history of France, the country has never known an earthquake, but it will have one now. The blast of that immense cannon, traveling through the flawed strata will produce exactly the results of a quake. The earth will tremble and collapse on the surface, the trenches will fall in, the dug-outs and the reserve line will crash. In short, every Yankee above us—hundreds



of thousands of them—will be buried alive. As a geologist I can predict absolutely the result of a blast in the Mallwitz Fault. For miles around, the countryside will be devastated. And over that devastation, over the ruined trenches that will be the tombs of the American army, our troops withdrawn now to a safe distance, will pour in the last great march on Paris."

A single shout of exultation burst from the group of generals. They swept their spiked helmets from their heads and swung them aloft.

"*Der Tag!*" they shouted hoarsely. "Victory for the *Vaterland!*"

"The earthquake I produce will mean that without a doubt," exulted Mallwitz. Fanatical fire glowed in his eyes and he clutched at his thick, gray-tinged beard with quivering fingers. "Our masses of troops, traveling at the double as soon as the red searchlight goes on, will be in the destroyed Yankee trenches in an hour. For four years I have been in an Allied prison camp, treasuring my discovery. It was I, on a private geological tour, who found that fault just as war was declared. Now it means victory to us."

"You are certain that the Antzig bore had done its work properly?" asked one of the generals. "We are really under the Yankee front, If we are not—"

Mallwitz whirled and pointed to a small shaft that ran upward at a steep angle not far away.

"We have taken no chances!" he cried. "Not only were the measurements made with the most meticulous care, but that shaft was driven to the surface and opened at night. It comes out directly behind the American front-line trench. We closed it with a cover of boards and earth immediately. General, there is no mistake!"

Mallwitz's features gleamed with the ruthlessness of a fiend. He glanced back down the tunnel. The steady roar of en-

gines was approaching, growing louder each second. Around the curve rolled the black and white Fokker of von Pangler with three more crates taxiing easily after it. The ship stopped in the center of the great circular space and the Boche ace climbed out.

"A plane goes anywhere that a motor can," he observed coolly. "That is, if one is an expert pilot. I could fly through this whole tunnel easily enough. Ah, doctor, you see I am still following you as an air guard. I have a dozen ships outside. All is prepared for the giant blast?"

"Everything," answered Mallwitz. "I myself shall fire it at dawn, pulling the lanyard and leaping into a motor here. In five minutes it will go off, but by then I shall be far away in perfect safety. The fuse is set to allow plenty of time. Keep your protective staffs at an altitude and well in front of the American lines when the quake occurs. They still guard the Front, I trust."

"They have been guarding it since before nightfall," replied von Pangler. "Not a Yankee ship has appeared since we brought down those two flyers. Curse them! They did well to blow themselves up in the tower. That anti-aircraft cannon destroyed the copy of the plan for Spa, in the plane they crashed in, in record time. The ship came down a wreck, as you know."

He stalked over to the great cannon set in the stone and struck it with his hand.

"Success, Doctor Mallwitz! Nothing can balk the great plan now! In the dawn I and my staffs will be flying miles ahead of the infantry, strafing the pitiful remnants of the A. E. F. that have not been put into the line. The roads and communication trenches were filled with Yankees on the way to the Front, when I made my scout. Our trick of allowing their air patrol to see our vast reserves



has worked." He flung the remark casually to the generals. "Their best troops are all above us by now."

Mallwitz grumbled in his beard and muttered something to General von der Halz. The general raised his head.

"Quite right, doctor. I have ordered the engineering troops to withdraw from this tunnel before the quake is set off. All is now prepared. Gentlemen, the time has come for you to rejoin your divisions. Remember the red searchlight that turns your troops loose. Huge numbers of busses are ready to carry fully half of them up close to the lines while the rest will come on at top speed afoot. You have the single command: Sweep over the American lines and on to Paris!"

"Our line officers have been given no objectives as yet. Only the order to charge at the signal," put in a hard-faced general. "Is that wise?"

"We have not dared to let them know what is to happen," boomed von der Halz. "In an army of the size we have massed, there is bound to be a leak. No, let the troops drive on, once they have started and advance resistlessly. We do not want them to be checked for at least twenty miles."

HE MADE a motion with his hand and the group of generals climbed into their cars. Von Pangler and his flyers walked over to their Fokkers and spun the propellers. Von der Halz, Mallwitz and their companion sat once more in the staff motor.

Gregory took a step that brought him next to Lawrence. His eyes gleamed excitedly behind his goggles.

"There isn't a Boche left between us and the Front," he whispered tensely. "When we get outside I'll fake a bum engine and fall out of the parade. You fall out with me. Then we'll race like hell for the lines.

We've got the full dope on the Mallwitz Fault now. God, it means the end of the A. E. F. if we can't warn them!"

"One of us ought to get through," came back Dan. A grin cut his oil-smeared face. "We've got a break at last, Link."

"Form escort!" shouted the sergeant of the cycle guard.

Gregory flung his leg across his machine and settled in the seat. He was hardly a yard from the big sedan. Mallwitz leaned out of it.

"Soldier!" he grated. "Bring me a light for my cigar."

A black weed projected from his mouth. Von der Halz and his fellow generals were lifting other cigars. Gregory slipped from his machine, fumbled for his lighter and flickered the flame, holding it up deferentially. Mallwitz drew in his breath and the end of the weed glowed. His gaze dropped from the lighter to Gregory's wrist. His hamlike hand closed on it with a grip of steel.

"Gott! An American wrist watch!" he screamed. "The Yankees are here again!"

Desperately Gregory flung himself back, but Mallwitz's clutch could not be broken. His hand, clamped behind the watch that had betrayed Gregory, held fast.

"Kill them!" rose the scream from von Pangler in his cockpit to the rear.

"Beat it, Dan!" shouted Gregory hoarsely as he struggled in vain against the doctor's grip. "Get away and through the lines!"

A pistol shot crashed in instant answer and the glass window beside Mallwitz shattered into splinters. With a yell of fear the doctor huddled back and Gregory's wrist tore loose. With a bound he flung himself into the saddle of his machine and thrust on the power. Leaping, the cycle shot off for the nearest curve. Lawrence roared next to him, still gripping a smoking automatic.



"Too bad I didn't get the old buzzard!" he shouted. "I thought he had you for keeps, Link!"

Shouts and shots reverberated from the rear. Engineer soldiers leaped at them from the walls and were left behind. They saw a Boche jumping for a telephone on the side of the tunnel.

"They'll bar the passage in no time!" snarled Gregory. "Blow our way through!" He wrenched the last iota of speed out of his flying single and careered around the curve. A wild hope surged in his heart. There was a fighting chance, after all, that they would get through to the Front. His right hand flashed into his coverall and came out clutching the butt of a Luger. He bent low over the handle-bars and hurled his cycle at the line of field gray that sprang up suddenly in their path.

"Give it to them!" he shrieked.

Mausers rose to field-gray shoulders as the Boche engineers flung a hail of lead at the storming machines. Again and again the Luger jumped in Gregory's hand and Lawrence's gun flashed flame alongside. The center of the German rank blew apart with men collapsing on the floor and the thundering motorcycles plunged into the gap. Then they were through and rushing with wild velocity out of sight along the tremendous curved tunnel. Suddenly a terrific racket burst out behind them. Gregory cast a fleeting glance to the rear and his spine went cold.

Streaking madly over the stone, rising and falling as its undercarriage wheels bumped, came the black and white Fokker of von Pangler. Its wings were clear of the wall by yards. Never had he seen such a masterly exhibition of flying. Even as he shuddered, the landing gear of the ship left the stone and it was tearing down on top of them, not six feet up.

"Dodge!" screamed Gregory. "Dodge, Dan! Get to the wall!"

HE VEERED his cycle in the last fraction of a second. He saw von Pangler's savage face glaring back of his guns and then the Spandaus belched fire. A torrent of metal slashed the floor of the tunnel a yard away. Von Pangler could not turn to strike at them. He thundered on with the noise of his motor deafening Gregory's ears and disappeared at the bend. "The whole tunnel is one big curve!" yelled Gregory. "He's had his chance at us! He can't come back!"

"The others!" screamed Dan. "Here they come!"

One after the other the three planes that had come in with von Pangler were following on his track. They lifted from the stone floor and flung their vicious bursts at the cycles that hugged the wall, storming on. Over Gregory's head their wings shot and the undercarriages almost brushed his motorcycle. Livid flame seemed to fill the tunnel. And they were gone, out of sight far ahead of him. He heard the mad howling of a siren and cursed savagely under his breath. The automobiles carrying the generals were on their track and, with their tremendous power, might overhaul them at any moment.

Three motorcycles tore around the bend, trying fiercely to overtake them. The rest of the escort roared on their trail. Gregory flung a shot backward and the sergeant on the leading single rolled from the saddle. His plunging, driverless machine skidded into the wall, rose upright and fell in front of the others. The Boche riders crashed into the obstacle and pitched helplessly to the stone.

"That'll take care of them!" shouted Gregory. The wrecked singles lay across the tunnel. "The cars will have to slow up!"

"We're clear!" shrieked Lawrence.

Gregory looked ahead and his heart leaped. Hardly fifty yards away lay the



entrance to the tunnel. The camouflage curtains were swaying slowly across the opening, drawn by the hands of scores of men. He shot and shot again, pumping bullets into the Boches. There was a rush of cool night air on his face and he yelled in triumph. In the second before the curtains closed they had darted between the folds and were out in the moonlight.

"This way!" he screamed and veered his machine abruptly to the left.

They shot off the dirt track and tore over the smooth plain, heading for the main road that ran for the Front. Shots whistled after them from the tunnel opening and went wild. Their pursuers would have to slow up until the curtains were opened again.

"We've distanced the Boches!" he cried. "It'll be clear running once we're on the road. Step on the gas, Dan!"

The single seemed to leap under him. He took it rushing over the grass and it bounded onto the hard surface of the highway leading to the unguarded lines.

"We win!" he howled.

Lawrence streaked alongside him on the road a few yards away. From above their heads thundered the terrific racket of planes. Gregory cast a glance upward where shadows raced and panic swept him. Von Pangler scudded above and flight after flight of Fokkers were scaling down to the attack. The Boche ace had flown the tunnel and waited outside for them. Something small and dark dropped from the underfuselage of the ship. It burst in a blaze of orange flame behind the speeding cycles.

"Bomb!" gasped Gregory. "He's laying eggs on us!"

His straining gaze went to the Front where only a few miles away the Very flares of the Yanks glowed above No-Man's-Land. Could he, dared he, hope to make them? An appalling tumult of

Spandaus fire crackled from the skies. Slugs whipped into the surface of the highway.

"They've got us!" groaned Gregory in cold despair. "We haven't a chance in hell!"

Von Pangler's plane shot over them again and a geyser of flame leaped between the racing motorcycles.

## CHAPTER NINE

### The Crimson Death

GREGORY opened his eyes in a world of blackness. His whole frame ached and the slight stirring that he made sent pangs of agony through him. He could see nothing.

"God!" he groaned and put his hand to his eyes. "I'm blind. Either that or I'm dead."

"Not washed out yet, Link," came a familiar voice through the gloom. "But we're both in hell's own jam. Wait a minute till I get the candle lit. Those damn Boches only left us about an inch and I've been saving it till you came to."

A match scratched and the flame of a candle-stump lighted the stone walls and ceiling of a small cellar.

"That bomb von Pangler dropped blew us both clean off our cycles," went on Lawrence. He rubbed a tremendous bruise on his forehead. "It flattened me and you've been out ever since. They jammed us in a car and brought us back here and slung us in this cell. Take it easy, buddy, and get your strength back."

Gingerly Gregory felt himself all over and stood up. His head still reeled from the force of the explosion that had flung him from his machine, but it was clearing. "We're blasted lucky to be here at all," he bit out. "But our being alive won't do any good." He clutched Dan by the arm and his voice broke hoarsely. "Good



God, the A. E. F. is fini! Dan, Dan, we've got to get out of here somehow!"

His voice had raised unconsciously. The butt of a rifle crashed on the thick door that loomed across the cell and a harsh command came.

"Silence in there, you cursed Yankees. Keep quiet unless you want a bayonet through your ribs."

"Six guards out there," whispered Lawrence. "Yes, I guess we're done, Link."

Gregory went to the wall and leaned against it, his brain racing. The flaming events of the last few hours traveled through his mind with kaleidoscopic chaos. He raised his head and stared at Dan. His teeth were clenched.

"They'll have to kill us both to stop us from trying," he muttered. "How long have I been unconscious?"

"Over an hour," said Lawrence soberly. "I didn't get any idea what they mean to do with us, except that we won't live very long with those devils Mallwitz and von Pangler as our captors. They're a pair of inhuman fiends."

Gregory sent a glance at the watch on his wrist. It was still going.

"Only a few hours to dawn," he murmured bitterly. "That's the usual hour for the firing squad. And it's the hour too when the earthquake will hit the Front along the Mallwitz Fault. Is there anything that science can't do in this war?"

Clanging, the door opened and a blaze of light shot into the cell. Lithe and alert in his flying kit, von Pangler stood there with a background of armed men.

"I thought you would recover," he snarled at Gregory. "It will not be long, however, that you will retain your health. Come with me, *verdammte swine*."

Gregory staggered and put one hand against the wall for support. Slowly he slid to his knees in an attitude of utter weakness. His head sagged on his chest

and he moaned. Through narrowed eyes he watched von Pangler's face. It became wolfishly exultant.

"As badly shaken up as all that by my little bomb, *hein?* Good! You fool, did you think you could get away from me? You brought me down in Meureux Gorge, but I had brains enough to lie, unhurt, in the wreck of my plane until the Yankees turned their attention elsewhere. Then I got out and escaped along the cliff to my own lines, and returned here where I have other ships like my old one. Was it you two who fell in our trenches to-night? I thought so."

His lips parted baring his teeth in a ghastly smile.

"Maybe you have nine lives, like a cat, but they end very soon. You have done a great deal of damage, salvaging the Berne despatch from the dead courier and worming your way into this castle and into the Racetrack. The knowledge you gained will never reach the A. E. F." Gregory made as though to stagger to his feet and collapsed. "Pick him up between you and carry him along," ordered von Pangler to the guard.

Hands lifted Gregory and brought him upright. He reeled along in the center of the escort. For the fraction of a second he caught Lawrence's eye and saw understanding in it. With the Boches considering him in a state of collapse, he might still have a trick to play.

"If we get a break," he told himself. "And if we don't get one we'll make one."

They were traversing corridors and going up stairs. Von Pangler stalked ahead with a swagger, head up and shoulders back. He seemed the personification of cruel junkerism, a cold, hard-fighting machine. He flung open a door and signalled to the guards to march the Yanks in. Gregory stumbled across the threshold and found himself in a wide



chamber. Its open windows gave out onto the courtyard, from which rose the sound of bustle.

"Stand them yonder," ordered von Pangler, motioning toward the window niches.

Gregory tottered over the floor, supported by two brawny Boches. He glanced down into the court, a full story below. A pair of ships were parked under the windows and a truck was just rolling onto the flagging. Across the bridge on the flatland he made out von Pangler's black and white Fokker. He had evidently made no effort to land in the court while it was covered with wreckage.

"You are looking at our searchlight truck?" mocked the Boche ace. "It will flash the signal to the troops when we are ready, have no fear." A diabolical smile edged his lips. "If you are thinking of jumping out that window we will not stop you. It will mean a broken leg or a broken neck."

Gregory nodded dismally, but he kept his head down lest sudden excitement should show in his face. He shot a whisper out of the corner of his mouth to Lawrence placed beside him. The guards had released him and he stood upright, still wavering.

"Watch me, Dan. I've got a hunch!"

A DOOR at the far end of the room opened and Doctor Mallwitz, General von der Halz and a group of pilots entered. Mallwitz's eyes were blood-shot. He stalked up to the two Americans and shook his fist in their faces, insane with rage.

"You abominable madmen!" he shrieked. "You may have solved my secret, but it will cost you your lives! In one hour exactly the red searchlight will flood the skies and at that same instant I shall fire the blast in the Racetrack that will loose the earthquake and destroy

the A. E. F. What have you gained by your meddling and your posturing in German uniforms? Knowledge that costs you your lives. You see the walls of this room? They are of solid stone. No better execution chamber could be found. With my own hands I shall shoot you down! Give me that automatic rifle!"

Someone thrust it into his fingers and he brandished it above his head.

"Swine!" he shouted hoarsely and jammed its butt into Gregory's ribs. "Ha, ha, you quail and give back! Feel it again!"

Once more the butt swung forward aimed for Gregory's breast. With his eyes half closed he seemed to sag. Then like lightning, as the butt struck him, he seized it with both hands and yanked. For a brief second he wrestled with all his strength and the gun came away from Mallwitz's clutch. Its barrel swung sideways in a savage swipe and the doctor went screaming to the floor. A rush of pilots stormed forward. The rifle came to Gregory's hip and his eyes flamed as it crashed into action.

"The window, Dan! Jump! Onto the top of one of those ships below! It'll break the fall!"

The automatic rifle leaped in his grip, pounding out a deadly blast before which the Boches sprang back and scattered, screaming curses. Half a dozen of them writhed on the floor, covering Mallwitz's body with their own. The rifles of the guard cracked and Gregory lashed them into bloody heaps with his fire. He heard a shout from Lawrence and a tearing thud from the court beneath.

"Come on, Link! I landed O. K.!"

He wheeled and raced for the window, hurled himself across its sill. With the weapon held above his head he jumped straight for the top wing of the ship that bulked beneath him on the stones. There was a dizzying rush through air and he



struck, spreadeagled on the fabric. It gave and his body plunged through, hit the lower wing and tore through that. He was lying on the flagging, bruised a little, but unhurt. The fabric of the wings had taken up the shock. He scrambled to his feet, scanning the scene with a swift glance. Madness rioted in his veins.

"To the truck!" he screamed. "Switch the lights on, Dan!"

He pivoted around and sent his fire plunging into a group of Boches that raced at him from the corner. They howled and fled. Then he was running for the searchlight truck. Already Dan had covered the short distance to it and was wrestling with the machinery. Crimson as blood and fiercely clear, a gigantic lance of light shot up into the paling skies. It would be visible for ten miles.

"The signal!" roared the voice of von der Halz from above. "*Gott*, they have given the signal, an hour too soon! The troops will start the drive this instant!"

"You're damn well right they will!" shouted Gregory. "But they'll land in hell, not Paris! Come on, Dan!"

Straight for dense crowds of Boches blocking the way to the gate they charged with the automatic rifle carving a path in blasting lead. Before the fury of their attack the Germans melted away. A machine-gun crew, under the arch, went down before the rifle fire and they darted through the shadows of the gate and across the planking. There were planes in the court, but it would be impossible to make a take-off amid the litter of stones and debris that still remained from the wrecked tower. Minutes ago, when the desperate plan had been born in his brain, Gregory had marked down the black and white Fokker of von Pangler beyond the moat.

"Start it!" he panted to Dan, pointing to the ship hardly fifty yards away. "Get her going and hop aboard the wing!"

He knelt down as Lawrence sped on and aimed a deadly volley through the arch. Soldiers pouring in a crowd over the bridge yelled in fear and their wave rolled backward. Toppling figures went off the span and splashed into the water. The moat filled with swimming and sinking forms.

Gregory fired on, scathing the gate with metal, while still the Germans came plunging out of the court. He could hear the voices of Mallwitz and von Pangler cursing and urging them on.

"They won't show themselves," he said grimly. "Their hides are too precious."

Abruptly the red spears of light from the truck in the court went off. A fierce gleam of inspiration shone in Gregory's eyes. He fired steadily, savagely, into the oncoming assault and it dissolved.

"It won't do them any good to turn the light off now," he gloated. "The whole damn German army is racing for the Front at the double. They'll never be able to stop them before they reach the lines. And when they do—"

"Beat it, Link!" Dan was shouting. The powerful roar of the plane's motor filled the air. "I've got her all set."

GREGORY rose and rushed for the ship. He thrust his foot in the stirrup, passing the automatic rifle to Lawrence who crouched on the wing beside the cockpit rim. Then he was at the controls, fingering the throttle.

"Just one crack!" muttered Dan and swung the barrel of the weapon of the gate which still erupted Boches.

A long rattling blast smashed into the mass of field-gray and the Fokker leaped forward and rolled over the turf. The Boches parted before the fire from the plane, revealing the nose of a big black motor that was rushing from the gate. Light machine guns jutted from its front



seat and their bursts whipped over the scudding ship.

"Mallwitz and his gang!" snarled Lawrence. "Hot on the trail!"

Gregory pulled back on the stick and the plane left the ground and came around in a fast climbing bank. Its nose pointed into the south.

"We're going to the Racetrack!" shouted Gregory to Lawrence, who lay flat now on the wing, holding the rifle under him.

With the last iota of power turned on, the plane tore through moonlit space. It would be minutes only before the camouflaged cliff face came into sight. Gregory tingled all over. In a moment of mad inspiration his plan had been born and he was carrying it out. Speed, nerve and luck might bring the desperate scheme to success. Ahead of him he saw the steep cliff and cut his pace a trifle. His gaze traveled over the cockpit and his face lighted. A score, at least, of hand grenades hung in canvas belts beneath the rim. It was bombs like these that von Pangler had flung at them.

"Carried to throw at the Yanks when the drive starts," he told himself grimly. "They're going to be damn useful." Bending forward he headed the ship straight for the curtained cliff. "It's von Pangler's Fokker," he breathed. "One of the reserve ships he kept. They'll recognize it below. Ah!" The curtains swept aside and he clenched his teeth, steeling his nerves for the hazardous feat. "We're going in!" he shouted to Lawrence. "The way von Pangler did. If he could do it we can!"

Definitely he slid the ship down in a long zoom and sent it for the maw of the tunnel. Nearer and nearer drew the entrance while he held his breath, concentrated on the job. Then the walls swept past him and the undercarriage wheels touched. He was speeding along the floor

of the curving Racetrack and his grip was on his stick triggers.

Soldiers stood all along the walls, staring at the taxiing plane that had invaded the bowels of the earth. It went by them so fast, roaring along the lighted passage, that there was no chance for recognition.

"Faster!" screamed Dan.

He drew the automatic rifle out from under him and held it in a position of readiness.

"Faster, Link!"

On thundered the rolling Fokker, whisking past groups of armed engineers. Gregory tensed. An officer darted suddenly from an alcove where a phone stood on a table and flung himself into the path of the ship.

"Escaped Yankees!" he howled and his Luger spat fire. The alarm had come through at last over the wire from the Moat House. "Stop them!"

## CHAPTER TEN

### Two-Ace Squadron

THE walls of the tunnel flashed flame as the Boches turned their Mausers on the Fokker. Once, twice, Gregory jammed on his triggers and cut a crimson path through the passage. Sweat poured from his forehead and his hands went clammy. From the wing Lawrence's bursts of lead erupted. Around the steadily curving tunnel tore the Fokker at a terrific pace. Would it never end, Gregory asked himself? Would they never reach the open circular space and the cannon set in the Mallwitz Fault?

Every second was precious. He hurtled around another section of the curve and gasped in panic. Before him lay the wide expanse of the main chamber and he could see the breech of the gigantic cannon set in the flawed rock. But a dense throng of Boches surrounded it,



the engineers waiting for Mallwitz's arrival.

"We're charging 'em!" He snarled. "Dan, this cockpit is full of bombs. Sling on a belt!"

No pair of Spandaus, backed by an automatic rifle could deal with that crowd. He could only bring his guns to bear in a single blast or so. Quickly he cut the throttle and rolled at half speed down on the Boches. Jets of fire sprang from the mass of field-gray. They too had the alarm and were ranged in front of the cannon to protect it at all hazards. Gregory went straight for them, jaw set and eyes blazing. He meant to go out fighting if he could not blast his way through. His guns screeched a stream of slugs that mowed down a dozen Boches and then he ground-looped abruptly, coming flank on to the enemy force. Out from the wing, one after another, soared the grenades that Lawrence had grabbed. The plane stopped and Gregory leaped out, slinging a belt of bombs about his waist.

"Pull and throw!" he muttered hoarsely. "Pull and throw!"

Missile after missile hurtled through the air and crashed among the shooting Germans. In awful panic they split apart as the explosive struck among them. Bodies were blown aside and Mausers hit the floor. Screaming, the remnants of the German mass ran over the floor in all directions and disappeared in the tunnels. Gregory stood gasping and then his finger pointed to a narrow opening nearby.

"That's the shaft they dug to the surface to see if the blast was properly set," he said raggedly. "It comes out right behind our lines. Remember? Up it, Dan, and bomb it clear! It's our one chance to warn the A. E. F."

Through all the haze of peril he had kept the vision clear of a way to reach the Yankee Front from underground. Lawrence gave a shout and they raced

for the opening. Gregory snatched the automatic rifle from the wing of the Fokker as they passed. At the base of the shaft he swung around.

"Go up it, Dan!" he ordered curtly. "Warn the Yanks. Make 'em withdraw from the Front, as fast as they can haul out. Tell 'em the German army's on the way and what they're sitting on top of." He flung a glance at his watch. "The Boches will be swarming over the Front in not much more than a half an hour. By that time the Yanks can be safely out of the quake belt. They can get a couple of miles away if they doubletime."

Dan paused, halfway into the shaft.

"How about you?" he demanded.

"I stay here," flashed Gregory. "I've got an automatic rifle, bombs and a plane. I'm going to hold this place until I figure the German army has reached our empty trenches above and then let loose the earthquake in the Mallwitz Fault. Do you see, Dan? The Yanks'll be gone and we'll wreck the whole damn Boche army in Mallwitz's trap. Get going!"

"I'm damned if I want to leave you," bit out Dan.

"Get going!" snapped Gregory. "We can't argue over this. The A. E. F. has got to be warned to clear out. Jump!"

"O. K.," came back Dan and vanished in the shaft.

In the face of the danger looming for the Yank divisions all personal preferences were thrust aside. Gregory crouched at the bottom of the shaft, trembling in every fibre. What if the covering at the top, laid by the Germans, was too thick to be cleared? If Dan failed to get through it would mean the end of the A. E. F. From above crashed an explosion. He lived through an eternity while loose earth poured down the shaft and settled around his feet.

"Dan!" he called in an agony of fear. "Dan!"



There was no answer. From the far end of the tunnel debouched a running line of Boches. He lifted the automatic rifle and with one volley blew them back around the curve.

"All clear," came Dan's voice, muffled and from a distance. "I'm out, Link. Right back of our trenches."

**T**HERE came a sudden roar and earth, rocks and debris slid down the shaft and poured out behind Gregory. The miniature avalanche almost blocked the shaft. Lawrence's bomb had broken its walls and they had collapsed just as he had won through. No way out remained now, from the vast circular chamber, except by the tunnel exits at its ends.

"I'm trapped!" gasped Gregory.

He ran swiftly across the stone to the Fokker that stood near the cannon and swung its tail swiftly around so that it faced the farthest tunnel. Both its Spandaus pointed into the entrance.

"There can't be many Boches in that passage," he reasoned, "or they'd have showed up long before this. Mallwitz must have ordered them to withdraw earlier. If they do come—well, I've got to be ready to shoot both ways at once."

He darted away and came back, hauling a pair of empty ammunition boxes that lay nearby. In an instant he had propped up the tail of the ship so that its guns focussed squarely on the entrance. The breech of the cannon bulked nearby.

"Let them come," he said tersely.

They came in a rushing tide that swept out of the near tunnel and charged for him with bayonets glinting. He lay flat beside the Fokker and for blazing minutes pumped lead into the storm of attackers. Again they reeled back out of sight. Yells rang in his rear and he leaped to his feet to see twenty or thirty engineers pouring out of the other passage. With a bound he was in the stirrup of the

Fokker, reaching into the cockpit and jamming on the stick triggers.

A torrent of metal ripped from the aimed Spandaus and struck the Boche crowd full. The propeller still whirled, left idling, and the din of motor and machine guns rose to the roof. The Boches, almost to a man, pitched onto the floor in limp heaps.

"That'll hold 'em a while," he snarled and whirled.

Out onto the floor of the vast circular room rolled a Fokker with both its quick-firers flaming. A second taxiing plane followed it. Von Pangler appeared behind them at the controls of a third craft. Wildly Gregory jumped up, dropping the automatic rifle and plunging his hands into the bomb belt that still hung on him. Other belts stripped from the cockpit, lay to hand on the stone. He tore out a grenade, pulled the pin and threw while a whipping volley of slugs rushed over his head from the oncoming planes.

A geyser of flame roared up under the nose of the nearest ship and it dissolved in fragments. Burning oil from its gas tank spread across the stone in a river of fire. The next plane swerved to dodge the flame and Gregory bent down and snatched up the rifle as it presented its flank. The first blast of bullets took the cockpit full and the pilot slumped over the controls. In his last motion he switched off the power and the Fokker rolled to a stop out of range of the licking fire. Roaring, von Pangler's plane left the stone and went up, almost grazing the roof with its top wing.

It tilted and flung a plunging fire at Gregory from point blank range. He dropped and brought the automatic to his shoulder, firing lying down. He saw his bullets hit the tail assembly of the Fokker and rip harmlessly through it. Von Pangler scudded on so close to the far wall that he could not turn. He dipped



the nose of his ship, hit the flooring with both wheels and tail skid and rolled with beautiful expertness into the other tunnel. In an instant he was out of sight around the bend.

"But he'll come back," grated Gregory. "He'll make the circuit and fly in through the way he entered. He sure turned his flyers out fast on my trail."

The mad shrieking of sirens resounded in the cavernous chamber. They were far off, but rushing nearer every second.

"That's Mallwitz and his carload of Boches!" exclaimed Gregory. "He must have packed half a dozen cars with soldiers, by the racket."

His eyes lit up as they fell on the stalled Fokker, with the dead pilot in its seat. The entrance to the room was clearing. Engineers pressed themselves against the walls. That meant the on-rushing cars had a clear track. Gregory tore frantically for the plane and wrenched it around, pointing its propeller for the entrance to the chamber. He sprang to the blade. The warm engine roared at once. He jumped aside as the ship began to move, snatched a blazing piece of wreckage from the pool of fire that licked up close by and flung it into the cockpit.

The flames caught in a second, fanned by the rush of the plane. Reeling and wobbling the blazing ship rushed across the floor just as the first motor, filled with Boches, reached the entrance. Like a torch flung into the attack, the fiery crate rolled over the flooring, with no hand at its controls, and crashed at an angle into the motor. The wing sideswiped the front seat and knocked the driver flat. Blazing fabric flung aloft covered the tonneau. Shrieks and screams rang out. Machine guns hurled a last vain burst at Gregory from the car and then it skidded frightfully, hit the wall and overturned. It lay in a barrier that blocked half the tunnel.

"Mallwitz will have his troubles getting past that!" shouted Gregory.

He drew his hand back and sent a pair of bombs winging for the wreckage. They exploded amid the ruins and the fire redoubled in intensity. Both motor and ship were going up in searing flame. He saw a second car brake to a halt behind the wreckage. Mallwitz leaned out of its rear, screaming curses.

"Forward! It is only one *verdammt* Yankee!"

Desperately Gregory worked the automatic rifle, sending its streams down the tunnel. Shots whistled over him from the rear and he cast a despairing glance behind. More Boches were plunging out of the other passage, the one in which von Pangler had vanished. From the side of the chamber came a muffled explosion. Dirt began to heave out of the blocked shaft leading to the surface.

"Good God, what's that?" he ejaculated. A wave of despair flooded him. "Something's gone wrong up above!"

Once more he scrambled for the stick triggers in the parked Fokker's pit and let loose the fury of the Spandaus. They scythed the main mass of the attackers, but others came on, spreading out along the sides in bunches. He shifted the rifle clutched to his hip and blasted away. Only an empty clicking sounded.

"The ammo's gone!" he gasped.

HE FLUNG a look toward the other passage. Mallwitz and his men had left their blocked car and were rushing forward on foot. With mighty, reverberating thunder von Pangler's Fokker came streaking above them, rushing out of the tunnel. He had circled the cliff, plunged into the passage and was once more storming to the attack.

"Yankee, you die!" howled Mallwitz.

"Like hell!" shouted reckless tones.

A cyclone of bombs blasted among the



racing Boches. Dan Lawrence stood by the entrance to the surface shaft, covered with dirt and panting.

"I blew my way up once, Link!" he screamed. "I blew my way down too through all that earth."

Behind him a hole gaped in the mound of dirt and rocks that had slid down the shaft.

"God!" breathed Gregory. "What nerve to come back to me here!"

Lawrence whirled and sent his grenades crashing in among the Germans who rushed from the other direction. Red ruin strewn the floor of the chamber. Mallwitz shrieked orders, his thick beard spreading wide and his craggy features aflame with passion.

"On, soldiers! Get them, von Pangler!"

The Boche ace slammed a burst at Gregory and banked, one wing hardly off the stone. In mad frenzy, he came around and his blast passed within a yard of Gregory's head.

Gregory bent down and lifted a belt of bombs from the floor. Out from his hand sped a grenade, hurled with desperate accuracy. It spun through the air straight for von Pangler's whirling crate and abruptly it vanished. Von Pangler's mouth opened in a scream of horror and he bent down to the floor of the cockpit, fumbling. But his hand never touched the bomb that landed full in his nest. There was a ghastly blaze of flame and von Pangler vanished in its crimson core.

"The Yanks are clear!" shouted Lawrence. The crash of his grenades rocked the chamber. The Boches were falling back. "Fire the blast and run! The German first wave isn't three hundred yards away! There are hundreds of thousands of 'em above us!"

"Take the crate!" shouted Gregory. "Knock away those boxes and get in the cockpit. Wait for me!"

At top speed he dashed across the few yards of space that separated him from the flawed wall where Mallwitz's cannon was set. The lanyard hung down within reach. He seized it and pulled.

"Gott!" howled Mallwitz. He was running forward, his face horribly pale. "Out! Out of this cavern everybody!"

Gregory raced for the plane. It stood now on its wheels and tailskid with engine roaring. Dan crouched at the controls. All over the great circular space the Boches were tearing for the exits, stricken with panic at Mallwitz's outbreak of horror. Gregory swung himself onto the wing and knelt next to the cockpit rim.

"Go!" he yelled.

The Fokker lurched forward and rolled across the stone toward the far tunnel where the way lay clear. It went slowly at first, increasing its speed. Then it bumped ominously.

"What's wrong?" muttered Lawrence.

Gregory wrenched around and stared at the rear. Mallwitz clung to the fuselage, screaming.

"Wait, Yankees, wait for me! *Gott in himmel*, do not leave me to perish! Save me! I am your prisoner!"

Faster and faster went the plane as Lawrence opened the throttle. Mallwitz's agonized screams rose even above the racket of the engine. Cold sweat bedewed his forehead as he was dragged along, his feet touching the floor.

"Take me with you, Yankees!"

Gregory said nothing. The grip of Mallwitz was slipping fast. The plane shot into the tunnel and one of the doctor's hands lost its clutch and grabbed frenziedly at air. Then his other hand let go and he fell to the floor.

"He'll get what he planned for the Yanks," murmured Gregory, flattening out on the wing. "It was coming to him."

The Fokker burst into the gray light



of dawn and zoomed upward for altitude. Below for miles a field-gray horde poured over the Yank trenches, plunging into dugouts and rush on into the reserve lines. Whole corps of Boches on the fifty-mile Front poured into the American positions. Suddenly a long shiver ran through the earth. The trenches vanished. The field-gray horde was swallowed up as though it were a mass of ants. Wide cracks appeared on the ground and a cloud of dust ran as far as the eye could see.

"The end!" said Gregory soberly. "That does for the power of the German army. Its last strength is destroyed, buried in the trenches and dugouts we held. And Mallwitz has gone with them." The

whole hill from which they had emerged had disappeared. "He's down there under tons of rock and dirt. Good God, Dan, look!"

His voice rose to a pitch of wild triumph as he pointed beyond the ruins of the Yank lines. Miles away, coming on with the glint of steel shining from its racing columns, was a vast moving host in O. D.

"It's the Yanks! The Yanks counter-attacking from the positions they withdrew to! There's hardly a vestige left of the German army to oppose them. The whole A. E. F. is on the move! Don't you see, Dan? They'll go through for forty, fifty, seventy miles without a stop! It's the drive that will win the war!"

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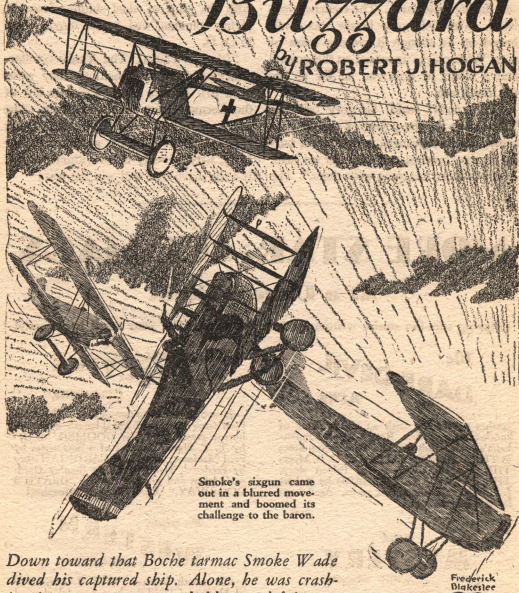
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A Smoke Wade Story

# The Sixgun -- Buzzard

by ROBERT J. HOGAN



Smoke's sixgun came out in a blurred movement and boomed its challenge to the baron.

*Down toward that Boche tarmac Smoke Wade dived his captured ship. Alone, he was crashing into an enemy stronghold, was defying an armada of devil wings in a crazy, fighting scheme to save his squadron from a flaming doom.*



THE leathery face of Smoke Wade, lanky Arizona-bronzed cowboy skipper of the 66th pursuit, was eagerly alert as he squinted down through the first dull rays of a new day at the tiny patch that marked the German drome north of his own field at Ramou.

He shivered a bit with the cold. Twenty thousand feet was about as high as his pinto Spad could climb. Twenty thousand feet was bitter cold, even on that balmy spring morning.

The words of his C. O., old Colonel McGill, still rang in his ears.

"We've got to stop this devilish bombing of Yank flying fields," he had said not an hour before. "Night before last they blew field, men and ships to hell at Colom. Last night it was Lareau. And I just got a call that they've blasted the field at Serafon nearly off the map. It seems every enemy pursuit plane has concentrated at the enemy field north of us. We've got a spy over there right now trying to devise some way to stop them. We can't seem to succeed in blowing up their field. We might have two nights ago, but we've lost too many planes. They've got hundreds of Fokkers concentrated at their drome. They fly night and day to protect this gigantic bomber they've built for the purpose. If we only knew what point they'd head for next, we might concentrate on the points with all the air forces we have and drive them off. That's what the spy hopes to find out before he gets back. If he does come back. I'm praying, Smoke, that you can do something."

That was the assignment. Tough spot. Expecting, praying that Smoke Wade could do what squadrons of Yanks hadn't been able to do. Asking again that he do the impossible. Depending upon him.

Smoke cocked over on one ear and squinted narrowly through the gray mists of dawn.

"Humph!" he grunted. "Cain't see much from way up here. Cain't see much but thet flock of Fokkers comin' up to meet us, Jake."

That to his pinto Spad he had named and painted for his favorite cow pony back in Arizona.

He raised a pair of powerful binoculars to his eyes and stared through them. A long moment he searched the tiny spot of flat earth below—the enemy drome. He shook his head. Deliberately, he slipped the glasses back in their case on the side of the cockpit and pushed on the stick.

"Reckon ain't nothin' to do, Jake, old boy, but romp down through thet hell of devils and take a real close look," he drawled.

His voice was as calm as though he were proposing a headlong gallop over the Arizona plains on his pinto pony to work up an appetite for breakfast.

The pinto Spad screamed as it shot down. Fokkers, at least two dozen, flipped their tails with an air of glee and shot up to meet their prey. No Allied ship could plunge into that snarling mass of enemy ships and survive. None, that is, but the pinto Spad under the skillful hand of Smoke Wade.

Down, down, until it seemed the wings would shear from the straining fuselage. Fokkers warming their Spandaus. Smoke's Vickers snorting in return to blast the frost out of their muzzles.

Nearer and nearer until the spitting guns were almost within range of each other as they warmed. Then Smoke Wade pulled one of his many tricks.

His hand and feet moved quickly. Controls surfaces flipped. The pinto Spad seemed suddenly seized by a convulsion. It leaped, turned over, dove and began to spin horizontally.

Round and round it whirled in a blood-hurling series of barrel-rolls that snapped



his head every time the Spad flipped on another revolution.

Spandau steel fluffed about him in a yellow haze of tracer smoke. Steel slashed at the pinto-colored wings of his Spad. Smoke grinned, closed his eyes for the brief space of two seconds to keep from getting dizzy and opened them again as he snapped the controls back into neutral.

With a groan, the pinto Spad steadied, wavered, and began to plunge. Smoke twisted round in his seat and stared up. The Fokkers were behind him.

Down, down, straight for that enemy field of hell. Other Fokkers were hurling into the air. Many others were on the line warming.

Smoke's keen eyes were taking in everything. Long lines of double rows of hangars ranged the length of the enemy drome. He didn't have time to count them at the moment. Perhaps twenty, thirty, maybe more. They were all large. Large enough to house that giant bomber.

Regardless of the tight spot that Smoke was in, he began thinking, planning, out loud.

"Now I might bomb thet hangar with the big bomber in it, was I to know which one of them shacks it's in. Might get you through, Jake, loaded with a couple or three bombs, but thet probably won't happen more'n once maybe. They's twenty or thirty hangars down there. Bomber might be in any of 'em. Doors all closed. And look at them machine guns goin' inter action right now while I'm comin'. Ever see such a heavy-armed drome, Jake? No. Neither did I, boy. And you know, Jake, I ain't one to send other birds to do the work thet I don't think I can get away with myself. Nope, I sure ain't."

HE WAS almost flat on the ground at the eastern end of the field. Fokkers snarled about him as he yanked back on the stick to keep from crashing into the

ground. Smoke's hand and feet were busier than they had ever been as he worked the controls. The pinto Spad leaped and bucked and did everything that a loony plane in the hands of a crazy pilot should do.

It never once followed a course that any normal human would expect it to follow. It leaped and plunged and swerved down the field like a bucking bronco, while every kind of gun from along the edge of the field rained lead at him and Fokkers snarled at his tail, trying to get in the fatal burst that would put feathers on their iron crosses.

And Smoke still drawled his thoughts aloud as he thundered across the tarmac, taking in everything about the hangars.

"Sure's a tough puzzle. Was hopin' I could get a squirt of the hangar the big devil was in and come back with a bomb or two fer sort of a callin' card to leave. But, damn, every one of them doors to the hangars is closed—"

He sat up with a start. The pinto Spad slammed down out of a wildly bucking leap to throw the gunners at the sideline off their aim.

"Hey, what the hell?"

He stared through narrowed eyes. Fokkers warmed the length of the field. But his staring eyes were focused on one Fokker out of the lot and the figure that was almost reaching it.

The figure was small, a light, wiry man who ran with astonishing speed for a human. Behind him plunged German soldiers, officers and men. They were shooting at the figure.

Instantly, the pinto Spad came over in a tight vertical. Smoke's guns belched flame and white ribbons of smoke. Germans kicked, leaped, sprawled before his sudden attack. The lone man who was running for that idling Fokker stumbled too, but not from any slugs from Smoke's guns. He sprawled and struggled to his feet again.



Smoke could not explain instantly just what he was doing or why. He had simply seen a German officer rush out toward an idling plane. He had seen other Germans race after him, shooting at him—trying to stop his flight. For the moment that seemed enough without stopping to figure the thing out.

Smoke kicked the pinto Spad over viciously and hurled back. Other Germans were running toward the figure that was struggling to climb into the cockpit with one leg dragging.

Smoke groaned as he saw the horrible struggle the man was having. He cheered wildly as he saw the man slip into the cockpit the next second and push the gun open.

The Fokker shot down the field in a crazy, zigzag course. Gunners from the side of the field turned their attention to the Fokker that was taking the air and seemed to forget Smoke for the moment.

Smoke kicked over and slammed down on other Fokkers that took the air after that fleeing man in that lone Fokker. Instantly, now, Smoke knew why he had done this thing. His subconscious mind had directed him before his actual thoughts. It had been those words of Colonel McGill nestled in the back of his head.

"We've got a spy over there right now."

That was the answer. Another life at stake now. Smoke was not alone. He had someone else to protect. The spy, the Yank Intelligence man who had gone over had information. Damned important information. He was escaping in a Fokker to get the news back before any more life would be lost to the Allies.

Vickers snorted now. Smoke gave no more thought to the examination of the field. No doubt everything he wanted to know was in the brain of that crazily flying figure in the Fokker.

He gasped as he caught a glimpse of the Fokker out of the corner of his eye. The ship was slithering and skidding and slipping as it turned for the Yank lines. Fokkers stormed down at it from above.

Madly, Smoke slashed out with his guns. The pinto Spad never flew a straight course. It was constantly in tight turns and gyrations behind that Fokker that was roaring for the Allied lines.

No more than half a dozen shots snorted from his Vickers guns at one time. One—two Fokkers flipped, burst into flame and slammed down the short hundred feet or so to the ground.

"Great jumpin' horn toads!" he said. "It don't look like that bird ever flew before. It's thet or else he's hurt so bad he can't keep his crate on an even keel. He's slippin' and skiddin' on turns like a greaseball. Why, he—hey, what the hell!"

Smoke slammed down, half rolled and pressed his trigger button with a curse. Two Fokkers had cut in from below, zoomed up from beside a row of poplars along which they'd been roaring and had caught the lone Fokker in their cross-fire.

Flame and steel and tracer smoke belched from Smoke's guns in a steady stream. His nose whipped about like the slashing snout of a rat terrier.

One of the Fokkers leaped and keeled over on one wing. The other dove for hell in a hurry. Smoke hunched forward and kicked to the side. Fokkers everywhere, but now it seemed those which had dogged them so far were becoming wary of the deadly fire of Smoke Wade's rattling Vickers.

He saw the startled glance backward from the man in the Fokker. His face was ghastly. Blood oozed from the open mouth, trickled down his chin and over the front of his German uniform. He motioned weakly with one hand. The move was feeble. Smoke couldn't make



it out. He lunged closer and stared through slitted eyes.

Again that motion. The man was pointing back. Back toward the German drome. Smoke nodded. His brain was spinning. The fellow seemed nearly gone. Any excess movement might finish him. Probably he was trying to tell of the bomber back at the field.

**T**HE very heavens seemed to be in sudden cloudburst with pelting steel Spandau slugs. Smoke whirled in his cockpit and shot a fearful glance above his tail. Another pack of Fokkers was snarling down upon him. A crimson Fokker was leading. The Baron von Stolz was coming in to finish his arch enemy.

"You had to come in just now, damn yuh!" Smoke snarled.

And it was then that Smoke Wade seemed to go crazy. The pinto Spad leaped and looped and rolled and zoomed. Fokkers crossed his sights instantaneously. Vickers snorted. Fokkers plunged.

He whirled in a tight vertical as he saw the baron roll and pour down over him rattling steel. Defiantly, Smoke stuck the nose of his pinto Spad almost straight up. He held down the trigger button and again his guns roared, glowing cherry red now.

A short burst. A sickening thuck and the right gun stuck. Half a dozen shots later, the left gun jammed from excess firing.

Teeth clenched. His right hand shot to the big sixgun far down at his side. It came out in a blurred movement and boomed its challenge to the baron.

So close now that Smoke could see the grin of triumph on the fiendish face of von Stolz. Game sportsman, the baron. Coming in to the kill now with both Smoke's guns hopelessly out of order.

Smoke hesitated, crouched beside the padded edge of his cockpit and tensed.

Another Fokker flashed past in a screaming dive for the fleeing pilot in the lone Fokker ahead. Smoke's gun boomed. This time he took calm aim. A half snarl, half grin flashed across his face as he saw the pilot's head snap over like a bobbing cork and slump from sight as his Fokker plunged down.

"Wisht thet had been von Stolz," Smoke said. "'Stead he's hidin' behind thet Mercedes engine of his and—"

He stopped and squinted.

Another plan flashed in his brain. He remembered the location of the magneto on the Mercedes. Carefully he aimed where it should be and pulled as the baron's first burst of Spandau steel came with yellow tracers at close range.

That was like the baron. He was calm, cold, deliberate when he felt that his prey was cornered and helpless. But this time he had waited too long. Had wanted to be too sure.

Something happened to the Mercedes at that instant. The flow of steel that drummed on Smoke's right wing ceased abruptly. The prop stopped on the crimson Fokker's ugly snout. The baron's ship slammed over in a desperate, diving vertical and tore down for a forced landing within his own lines.

Fokkers wavered in their attacks as they saw their leader hurling down in defeat. Even with their opponent's guns jammed they hesitated to take further chances with that sure-death sixgun.

They were close to their own lines, hurling flat over the blasted earth. German soldiers in trenches glanced up startled, took instant aim and then were out of range by the time the lone Fokker and the pinto Spad were being gaped at by Yank doughboys from their trenches.

Smoke was anxiously watching the Fokker ahead. Yankee anti-aircraft batteries blasted into action as Fokkers slammed over at a respectful distance



from that deadly sixgun to take pot shots at long range. The Fokkers turned back, and the two crates, the wobbly-flown Fokker and the expertly handled pinto Spad, roared toward the field at Ramou.

Over the boundary of the field. Then down for a landing. Smoke landed by second nature, eyes almost constantly on the Fokker as it fluttered down. The thing leaped, bounded high in the air, settled, went up on its nose and stopped there.

Smoke was out of his cockpit in a wild leap before his pinto Spad had stopped its roll. He ran headlong to the Fokker that stood on its nose. Frantically, he tugged at the form in the cockpit.

The man was gasping. Blood spurted from his mouth and nostrils at each breath. He shook his head weakly.

"Let—me—die here. Don't move me—for God's sake. Listen!"

Smoke's hold let up. The head of the man rolled back on his chest. Smoke shook him a little, struggled to revive him if for only a few seconds.

Slowly the head moved. The eyes opened. The lips moved.

"Bomber. Tonight. Either here—"

A convulsive cough. The figure relapsed and the eyes blurred.

"Either here or—"

"Or where?" Smoke found himself almost screaming. "Here or where? For God's sake, man, can't you finish?"

The only answer he got was a slight trembling of the lips. Then the eyes took on a horrible glassy look and the figure slumped deeper into the seat. Dead.

Men were running across the field. There was the sputter of a motorcycle and the squeal of brakes. Colonel McGill's excited voice.

"What's up, Smoke?"

But not waiting for an immediate answer, the colonel pushed by Smoke and stared at the ghastly face in the Fokker cockpit.

"Why—why, it's G-8," he said. He turned round quickly and faced Smoke. "That was G-8, the spy who was sent over to find out what he could about this bomber. Did he—did he say anything before he—"

Smoke nodded.

"Yep. Said bomber was comin' either here or—"

"Or where?" cut in McGill. "Where else?"

Smoke shrugged.

"He died before he could get it out, colonel. Wasn't sure which place. Looks like Jerry ain't made up their minds yet or somethin'."

Colonel McGill seemed to let down. He shook his head as he stared again at the figure in the cockpit. He gave orders for taking the body from the cockpit, then turned away.

"It's almost as bad as no information at all," he said as Smoke accompanied him to his side car. "There's only four fields on this part of the Front that haven't been blown to hell. Four out of nine. We know now that maybe the enemy is going to strike here tonight. We knew that before. Here or—" He broke off in a soft, almost powerful curse and fell silent as he got into his side car.

SMOKE ate breakfast in a daze. He too was baffled. There were hardly enough planes at the fields to combat the great concentration of the enemy, if they did know just where that bomber would strike. They didn't even know that. It began to look like the end of the Yank air force for months.

Smoke shuddered at the thought, pushed back a messed-up plate of ham and eggs and got up. As he stepped out of the mess shack, he lighted a cigarette. Four puffs and he flung it away. Even that didn't taste good.

Pilots were coming across the tarmac



to meet him. Quinn and Brant and Snell, leaders of his three flights of the 66th.

Brant, senior flight commander, spoke.

"Smoke, the whole crowd's of one mind," he announced abruptly. "We're going over tonight and bomb hell out of that German drome."

"Huh?" Smoke's eyes narrowed. He forced a grin that didn't make sense with his inward torment. "I'll say you're sure aimin' to commit suicide plenty. Why, you wouldn't have no more chance with our few ships than a Eskimo in hell on a summer day. Listen, I been over there. They got hundreds of ships and that ain't all. Besides havin' about every pursuit crate there from every part of the Front, they got archies and machine guns set up on the ground as thick as matches packed in a box. And don't think because I got back thet it's a cinch. I was just lucky. Damn lucky." He shook his head. "Nope. Reckon, men, we'll just have to figure out some other way, sure nuff."

Smoke heard a voice from the pilots.

"Might as well die over there as stay here like a trapped rat."

The voice was bitter—and tremulous with nervous tension too.

Smoke, cornered, forced a broader grin.

"Now, don't you birds be worryin' none. It's a long time before tonight." He winked at the flight leaders. "I got somethin' up my sleeve, but I ain't tellin'—not just yet, I reckon."

He swung on his heel and strode toward headquarters office, but half turned as he heard running feet behind him. It was Brant trotting up, following, walking beside him. Brant, senior flight leader.

"Smoke," he said, "I couldn't tell you back there before the boys. This thing is getting serious. Tonight again we'll take all the ships out of the hangars as we have the last few nights to guard against our turn being next for being bombed. The boys are a mess of nerves. I'm pretty well shot myself. It isn't that anyone is

so scared to die. It's this damnable suspense of not knowing whether it's tonight that we die or tomorrow night. I'm afraid the boys will try to sneak out planes some time tonight and go over, even against orders. I've heard rumors."

Smoke Wade had a gigantic struggle to remain calm and appear sure then. He walked several paces further before he spoke. Then he began with a chuckling laugh that came with a slightly hollow sound.

"Brant," he said. He slowed then and placed a big, bony hand on the senior flight leader's shoulder. "You know Smoke Wade ain't one to fail the gang. Back a spell I told the crowd I had somethin' up my sleeve. Thet still goes. I cain't tell yuh what because I got to keep it a secret for now, but it's goin' to solve this whole mess. Better take the boys down to town and buy 'em a drink. Here—" he pulled a wad of franc notes from his pocket and pushed them into Brant's hand. "Take 'em down and tell 'em Smoke's buyin' the drinks in celebration of what's comin'."

Smoke turned, left Brant standing, staring at the franc notes in his hand, and strode on toward Colonel McGill's office. The old colonel's door was open when he entered the outer office. His voice boomed a bid to come in at once and Smoke obeyed. He tried to hold the grin he had cracked there for Brant and the others. His face muscles were beginning to weaken, to ache with the lie that he forced them to portray.

For a long time, the keen eyes of Colonel McGill swept Smoke's face with searching glances. Neither spoke until the colonel shook his head sadly and smiled slightly himself.

"Smoke," he said, "I've known you for a long time. I'm becoming able to tell, I believe, when you're bluffing and when you're not. That grin you've got on your



face this morning isn't the real McCoy, man." A short pause. Smoke fumbled for words; then McGill went on. "You've seen Brant and Quinn and Snell? You know how the boys all feel about this?"

It seemed Smoke's face would crack wide open in his next move. He actually forced a chuckle; but it went sort of sour at the last end.

"Reckon I have," he nodded. "I gave Brant a flock of franc notes and told him to take the gang down and tighten 'em up. I also told 'em somethin' else. I'm tellin' you, too, colonel. I got a trick up my sleeve that's goin' to solve this whole thing if it works."

"And if it doesn't?" the colonel asked. Smoke gulped.

"It'll work all right," he tried to assure.

The colonel got to his feet and paced to the window. He stared out for some time without speaking; then he returned and his face was very grave as he confronted Smoke across the desk top.

"Smoke," he said gravely, "I told you back at the field beside that Fokker that we're going to put up a fight tonight. The pilots of the 66th are right, I'm afraid. They might as well die trying to end this horror for Yank fields as to be bombed helplessly from the air. I'm going to give orders for them to take the air. I think their idea is the only one that will help. I'm sending them over to the enemy field after dark to bomb those hangars."

The forced grin fled from Smoke's face. His words came fast. He was pleading, praying with the colonel for the lives of his boys. He told him of the many hangars at the enemy drome across the line. He painted word pictures of the arming of the drome. Of the hundreds of enemy pursuits to protect this new giant bomber the Germans had built to wipe out Yank airdromes. But when Colonel McGill stubbornly shook his head at the end, Smoke was at the end of his rope.

"Listen, colonel," he pleaded. His eyes were moist. "Think of these boys of mine. You're sendin' 'em to a sure hell death. Won't be one of 'em come back. They ain't got a chance. I was lucky, damned lucky, colonel. But if you're set on sendin' 'em to hell, give me until midnight to see what I can do. Thet ain't askin' much. The bomber and her brood don't come over until well past midnight account of the moon goin' down 'bout then. Reckon if I don't have somethin' in a real solution by midnight you'll have a right to send the boys over then. Thet ain't askin' much."

The old colonel hesitated. The pause ended with a short nod of his grayed head.

"That's a bargain, Smoke. I'll wait until midnight—if I can hold the men. But I want to know your plan."

Smoke nodded.

"Ain't much," he confessed. "It sure looks like you and the rest of the boys has got me up a stump. Reckon I can't bluff yuh no longer. So I'm takin' the steer by the horns, sort of like bulldoggin' him. I'm goin' over in thet Fokker what the spy come back in. I'm goin' over and find out which hangar this bomber's housed inter; then I'm goin' to blow hell out of it—from the ground."

Colonel McGill's slitted eyes opened wide in astonishment and admiration. He held out his hand to Smoke, and Smoke took it in his firm grip.

"But yuh mustn't tell the rest of the crew what I'm doin'."

"No," McGill half choked. "Not until afterward, anyway. And I want to say, Smoke, you're the guttiest man I know. Good luck to you, son, but don't take too many chances. We need you here."

SMOKE spent the daylight hours preparing. He ordered another prop placed on the Fokker that G-8 had returned in. He had mechanics checking



everything about the enemy ship. And the rest of the time he worked on a high explosive bomb, housed in an officer's hand bag, such as German officers used to carry small overnight clothing. The bomb was equipped with a time fuse that could be set to go off in five minutes.

Two hours after darkness fell over the war-torn world, Colonel McGill came to see him off. They clasped hands again.

"Good luck, Smoke, and God bless you," he said.

"Thanks, colonel," Smoke answered.

His great flying suit hid his Yank uniform. As he climbed into the cockpit of the captured Fokker, he looked for all the world like a big German pilot with goggles half hiding his face.

Straight for the enemy drome Smoke flew. As he came within two miles of the field, taking care to approach from the north after making a large circle over German territory, German planes swarmed down near him. Searchlights, dozens of them, slashed upward, making the heavens like day. He saw a flight of nine Fokkers storm close. Saw the leader wave a salute and answered with his gloved hand raised.

A single turn of the field and he cut the engine and pointed the nose down. He was welcome. Not a shot was fired.

"Reckon they think I'm just another crate and pilot comin' in to join 'em from another field up north, maybe, or maybe a Fokker comin' back home after patrol."

Mechanics came running out to meet him. An officer rattled some guttural in German that Smoke didn't get. Smoke gave a short nod and growled as good a "Ja" as he could.

In his hand he clutched his leather traveling case with the high explosive inside.

He walked with an air of importance, heading straight down the tarmac for the point where headquarters should be, as

though he knew from past experience where he was going.

The officer who had spoken to him hesitated for only an instant at his answer, then shouted an order to the mechanics about the returned Fokker.

When Smoke had walked at least a half mile down the tarmac and was sure that he hadn't been followed, he turned abruptly toward a hangar and strode through the gap between it and the next.

The bomb, encased in the leather bag, was still held tightly clutched in his powerful hand. His eyes swept the darkness about him. Darkness, dispensed now and then by the reflection of landing lights from before the front row of hangars as Fokkers took the air or landed.

For some time he strolled about, making sure he wasn't being watched. Then he tried the door of the hangar nearest him. It was a great metal shack. It creaked and moved slightly as he tugged at the door. The door was solid.

Quickly he tried another hangar. It, too, was locked. Another and another. Every one locked. No one seemed to be guarding them. With a sinking feeling, Smoke moved on down the line, trying the doors of hangar after hangar. Every one locked.

He heard shouts and yelling from a smaller building behind the hangars. Curiosity drew him toward the place. A crowd seemed to be singing now. Some German drinking song with plenty of *hochs* in it.

Smoke crept cautiously to a back window. Like all the rest, it, too, was shaded from the light within, but he managed to find a crack in the shade.

German flying officers were there. Officers laughing as they swayed to the rhythm of the song.

He cast a furtive glance about him and stared through the crack again as the song died. A big German in the uniform



of an *oberleutnant* stood up and gutturally some announcement. There was much applause and shouting; then a lithe figure leaped to the top of the table.

He also was a German pilot. He seemed about to put on an act of some kind. The fellow moved suddenly with lightning speed. He began to spin backward in a series of rapid hand springs, holding his position on the table easily.

From there he went into other tricks of the stage. Walking on his hands and other forms of acrobatics. And then he went into a demonstration that gave Smoke Wade the first brilliant idea he had had since the coming of the demon bomber.

Smoke watched with eyes popping from his head. The plan was swiftly taking shape. If it would only work! It must work. He took one more good look at the figure on the table to be sure he would know him later. Then he strode down the wide road between the back hangars.

There was no use, he knew, in wasting more time searching for the bomber's hangar. But he had another scheme now.

"Let's see," he mumbled. "Five minutes. Walk a half mile in that time, I reckon." He gauged the distance, laid his bomb at the corner of one of the hangars and set off the time fuse. Five minutes to get back.

SMOKE hurried away toward the officers' mess again. His big sixgun came out as he took up his position just at the side of the entrance to the mess.

*Blam!* The earth trembled under his feet as the bomb exploded. A gigantic flash showed everything plainly for a second and then the light dulled again. But only for an instant, for searchlights flashed on all about the place.

Men ran from every corner of the field toward the point at which the blast had occurred. Pilots began pouring from the mess, brushing past Smoke, standing

in the shadow of the open door, without noticing him.

Smoke was tensed there. His hand clutched his sixgun barrel. Desperate plan. One chance in a million that it would work. But the only thing left.

His hand was half raised as he scrutinized the pilots diving through the door. Then the fellow came. The fellow who had been putting on the show for the others on the table.

Smoke's left hand shot out, snatched at the back of his uniform, drew him swiftly into the shadow.

*Plunk!* He tried to time the fall of the sixgun butt on that close-cropped head perfectly. The body slumped with a slight gurgle. Another pilot whirled and squinted at Smoke and the limp figure. 'Caught! The other pilot leaped, slumped and sprawled to the ground as Smoke's gun butt slammed down again.

A gigantic heave and the first pilot's body flipped to Smoke's shoulder. Out across the lighted tarmac Smoke raced, with yelling pilots after him. With the pilots came German guards with aimed guns that they did not dare fire for fear of killing their own pilot who was lying limp on the broad shoulder of Smoke Wade.

Before him was the line of Fokkers, some warming, others with mechanics working on them. Others alone. Smoke dashed for the nearest idling Fokker. He heard the ping of steel as it slashed on the ground about his legs below the limp body that hung quite far down his back. He leaped for the Fokker. A big mechanic sprang from the other side. Smoke felt his powerful hands about his throat as he reached the cockpit of the Fokker with his burden still on his shoulder.

*Blam!* The sixgun barked and the mechanic slumped. A blast of the Mercedes and the Fokker darted out in a hell of flying steel.



Down from above stormed other Fokkers. Smoke cursed as his flying style was cramped by the still limp figure on his lap. The two filled the cockpit to overflowing. He found it difficult to throw the ship into a snap roll with cramped controls.

Archie began grunting up now as he climbed. The enemy no longer seemed fearful of hitting one of their own. They were going to stop him at all costs. As he kicked straight and broke into a crazy, zigzag course, the sixgun boomed again and again. One Fokker went down with the engine dead. Another flipped and skidded, the pilot's head lolling at the side.

Down he raved, flat on the dark earth, out of the lights now. Hurling desperately for the field again. Death drummed on his wings, on the turtle back behind his head. Fokkers were shooting wild, making a hell of tracer smoke about him.

Lines, front lines, hurling beneath. Then Yank lines and over his own country, with blessed darkness hiding his movements.

The Fokkers had turned back. Five, ten minutes and then he was slithering into his own field at Ramou. Slithering down in the darkness as greaseballs hesitated to light flares at the sound of the enemy motor.

Another fear smote him as he climbed from the cockpit, carrying the limp form. The slim German flying officer hadn't moved, had shown no sign of life. What if he were dead now? Suppose the whole thing was in vain?

Pilots, tense, asked questions, gathered about him. Smoke picked Brant, Quinn and Snell and gave an order.

"We're goin' to McGill's office. You three come on."

Still the German pilot hadn't moved. Smoke's heart began to sink. They barged into Colonel McGill's office. The colonel

turned from pacing the floor and stared.

"Thank the Lord you're back, Smoke. What in blazes you got there?"

Smoke laid the limp form in a big chair.

"Listen, all of you," he said. "I've got a plan. This here German pilot is a—"

He bit off the last word before it was uttered. The eyelids of the German had fluttered. He was alive, coming back to consciousness. Smoke knelt beside him. Gently he slapped the German's face to help bring him back. The eyes opened now. They looked wildly about the room. The German sat up and rubbed his head.

"*Ach. Was ist?*" Then, in English: "I am a prisoner, is it not so?"

Smoke nodded. He turned to his three flight commanders and McGill.

"Keep your ears and eyes open from now on. I'm goin' to make this hombre talk. He's one of the pilots from the drome where they got that devilish bomber. We're goin' to find out where the bombin's goin' to take place tonight. Just you all hold him here a couple of minutes while I get a rope."

**P**UZZLED stares followed Smoke out of the office. They greeted him as he came in two minutes later with a good length of rope. The German pilot looked up with a sneer.

"You will never get information from me, *mein Herr*," he snapped. "Even if I knew I would not tell you."

Smoke grinned now.

"Maybe," he said.

The rope leaped out skillfully along the floor. He was tying knots. His hand shot out and caught one hand of the German's. What followed happened so quickly that the colonel and Brant and Snell and Quinn hardly had time to follow Smoke's movements. What they saw now was the struggling German tightly hog tied.



He was lying on the floor on his stomach. The rope was looped about his shoulders, under his armpits and from there to his knees. Smoke held an end of the rope which, when he drew it tighter, pulled the German's legs around backward in a horribly twisted manner.

The German glared up from his contorted position. Hate was in his eyes. His tightly clenched teeth choked back any sign of pain. His voice came steel-hard.

"So this is the way you get information from enemy, eh? By torture. You are brave men, *Ja!* Brave like white mice."

The rope came tighter. The legs were drawn up so that the feet were almost on a level with the back of his neck. A growl of rage from Colonel McGill as he leaped forward and laid a heavy hand on Smoke's arm.

"What the devil is the meaning of this?" he flamed. "Have you gone crazy, Smoke? I never dreamed you'd resort to getting news like this. This is war, but it isn't going to be fought in any cowardly fashion like this."

For answer, Smoke gave a vicious jerk on the rope. His other arm pushed the colonel gently back toward his desk. The three flight leaders came barging up, crimson with astonishment and rage, demanding to know what the hell.

Smoke whirled on them. The rope got another jerk. And Smoke's heart leaped as he heard the German cry out.

"Go on, damn yuh!" Smoke spat at him. "This bomber's goin' to raid either this field tonight or the one at La Farr. Which is it goin' to be?"

The German cried out again.

"Never will I tell. Tear me limb from limb, but you will not—"

His words ended in a scream of pain as Smoke jerked the rope tighter. The German was tied up in a knot by now. Tied in a knot and rolled up in a con-

torted ball of flesh and bone. A position that no normal human could stand.

Colonel McGill spat an oath and rushed in with the other three close behind him. Smoke whirled. His sixgun was out and covering them. They stopped short and stared in amazement. Smoke Wade seemed to have gone mad.

Smoke's face was purple now. His eyes were mere slits, and he was trembling with rage. The hand that held the rope jerked again and the German screamed.

"Go on, tell which it is," Smoke belted. "Tell me if its goin' to be Ramou or La Farr tonight. Tell me or I'll break every bone in your back!"

The German screamed again.

"Yes, yes. I tell. *Gott in Himmel*. The pain. I can not stand it. Let up. I tell. It is La Farr field we bomb tonight. I am sure."

In a flash the rope slipped from the German's body after a series of quick throws by the expert hand of Smoke. Smoke whirled to the three flight leaders.

"Now get out, you three, white-livered, doubting fools and take this German with yuh to the guard house. Wait for orders. They'll be comin' plenty fast soon's I finish with Colonel McGill."

They left. Smoke spun to the old colonel, but he never got the first word out of his mouth.

"You devil! You fiend!" bellowed McGill. "You've gone crazy, but you got the news. I'm ordering every plane left in this sector to the field at La Farr. I'll attend to you later."

Colonel McGill reached for the phone. Smoke leaped forward. The phone shot from his hand. It crashed to the floor. The colonel's foot slipped and he toppled over backward as he lost his balance and hurtled over his desk chair in spite of Smoke's effort to catch him. There he lay still where his head had struck the



floor.

Smoke gasped. His face went white for an instant.

"Lord," he moaned, "if you'd only give me a chance to talk. To tell yuh what I know and how I know that this here bomber's goin' to hit fer Ramou, right here; stead of La Farr what I guessed at. It's too late now. Gee, you wouldn't die on me, colonel. I got to do somethin'."

The colonel's limp form came from the floor in Smoke's strong arms. Down the tarmac he ran with his burden, shouting orders to mechanics as he went.

"Get out thet one D. H. we got at the field. Warm her up."

Already he was lifting the unconscious colonel into the rear cockpit as mechanics trundled the heavy machine outside.

"Gee, colonel, yuh cain't die. Why, I wouldn't have yuh die, special thinkin' what yuh think of me. Yuh been 'bout as close to a real father to me as I ever knew."

He tied the colonel into the rear seat. The head hung limp against the side of the cockpit. Smoke bellowed for Brant. His senior flight leader answered, but with an ugly glare.

"Listen. McGill's hurt. Knocked his head. Got to get him to a hospital quick. Ain't none here since they moved it back account of this expected bombin' raid. Take him clear to Paris. Best hospital there."

Brant nodded, still glaring his feelings of hate for the commander who had stooped so low as to extract information by torture. He was climbing into the front cockpit. Smoke raced down the tarmac, yelling orders as the D. H. roared out across the field.

"Every ship in the air. Follow thet D. H. as convoy. Don't let it out of your sight. Important mission. Snap into it pronto."

Pilots obeyed willingly. Anything for

something to do. Every ship on the field roared out and took the air. Every ship but Smoke Wade's pinto Spad.

Smoke shouted for the officers in charge of ground men. Snapped his orders.

"Every man off this field at once. Go to town. Take thet German out the guard house with yuh. Any place yuh want, but get the hell off the field. Orders!"

**M**EN running, pouring out of the gate.

Smoke watched them go with a worried look. He alone stayed on the doomed field. When the last man had left the field, he sauntered to the armoring hangar, brought bombs and placed them under the wings of his pinto Spad. Then, a few minutes later, the pinto Spad roared into the air.

Steadily, Smoke climbed into the sky. His keen eyes stared down from fifteen thousand feet. He cut the Hisso as he circled high above his own deserted field and listened.

The dull throb of motors came to him minutes later. He strained his eyes to see through the darkness. A slow grin spread across his tight-lipped face again. His guess had been right. The bomber was coming. Coming with its hundreds of enemy planes. It was on its way to blast the field of the 66th off the map tonight.

A flare burst out below. Another and another. The whole earth north of Ramou was bathed in the wierd flare lights as they settled. He made out the bomber among a hundred or more Fokkers. It was nearly twice as large as a Gotha. It was slow and lumbered as it went along. A giant fortress of the air that could do little to protect itself.

His glasses came out. He could see that the bomber carried only two pilots. No other crew. Probably using all weight-carrying capacity for bombs.

"Humph! Wouldn't be a chance of a



ship or a dozen ships gettin' thet bomber through thet convoy, but we'll try another trick."

His hand caught the bomb toggles on his own ship. He pulled as he flew parallel, high above the bomber, and could see his first bomb hurl down in the light of the flares, directly behind the bomber.

An instant's pause and he pulled again and again. He had the line of flight of the bomber now. He saw the next bomb hurl through the tail section of the bomber, but it didn't burst. The next crashed through, directly in front of the center section of the giant wings. There was a brilliant burst and the bomber disappeared as fragments of spare parts showered down.

Fokkers close by shattered and fell. Others hesitated for a moment, then turned and raced for home. And Smoke Wade circled down to the field with but one worry in his mind—and that the welfare of Colonel McGill.

He didn't have long to wait for news from the colonel. A roar out of the south came to him as he landed the pinto Spad. Ships romped down on the field. Colonel McGill, a bit groggy but more angry than ever, glared at Smoke as he came to help him down.

"Why, you—you—"

"Just a minute, colonel," Smoke cut in. "We had a lot of trouble a spell ago when yuh wouldn't give me a chance to explain. Reckon it's all over now. Bomber won't be layin' eggs no more, not thet one."

Colonel McGill stared.

"What the devil do you mean?"

"I mean thet bomber what's been causin' all the fuss, it's a heap of junk; most of it's over in the woods on the other side of the field."

"But—but—" McGill was sputtering.

"Yeah, I know, colonel. But wait till I get through. Yuh see, I was plumb stumped most of the way. Went to blow

the thing up in her own hangar, but they was all locked and I couldn't find the right one. Then I sneaked a look into the officer's mess over at their field and I got a idea. So I grabs me a certain German what was puttin' on a show, brings him back and put him through a third degree, sort of, like you seen. He said the bomber was goin' to blow up La Farr field tonight, so I reckoned, knowin' what I did about him, thet it was blowin' up Ramou or tryin' to, special after what the spy said. Ramou or—Remember? I got everybody off the field, sent you to a hospital to get your head fixed and the rest of the boys to convoy you, and they went right willin', thinkin' they was goin' out to fight. Then I just went up and dropped a bomb on the bomber in their own flares and blowed it to hell before it dropped the first bomb. Reckon thet's all they is to it, colonel, but I'm a heap pleased you're back able to talk again."

Colonel McGill's face twitched sadness and admiration.

"But, Smoke, all this doesn't make up for your torturing of that German to get news from him. You know that's against all rules of modern warfare."

Smoke cut in with a chuckle.

"Oh, thet?" he said. "Well, the truth is, I didn't hurt the cuss one bit. He didn't know what I'd seen him do back at his officer's mess. I seen him do the same trick without ropes I done to him with ropes, just to entertain the boys."

"What?" demanded McGill. "You mean he tied himself up with his feet around the back of his neck without—"

He cracked a smile then as Smoke grinned broader.

"Reckon so," he chirped. "Thet's why I picked him, but I didn't get no chance to explain thet to yuh without his knowin'. Yes, sir. Reckon thet hombre's about the slickest contortionist I ever did see, colonel."



# *The* Fightin' Irish

by GEORGE FIELDING ELIOT

AUTHOR OF

"ORDERS TO DIE" ETC.



The Green Staffel came down  
on those shamrock planes with  
murder in their hearts.

*When a pair of Missou  
sky mules like Morgan  
and Pell help an Irish-  
man celebrate St. Pat-  
rick's day, all hell is apt  
to burst loose in Heinie  
air—and it did!*



TWO Bristols, cocky-looking little ships with a "chip-on-the-shoulder" air about them, cruised high above the German lines in the chilly March sunshine.

Well below and behind them two French Salmsons were busy taking pictures of the German defenses; last minute pictures they were, to get a final check on new German arrangements before the big push which the French infantry were putting on in the morning. The Bristols were supposed to prevent interference with this French picture-taking, especially from a squadron of green-painted Albatris which was perniciously active in that sector.

These "Green Boches," as everyone called them, had an especial dislike for the Yank squadron from which the two Bristols came, because that outfit had been responsible for the death of their late commander, that dashing Prussian ace, von Rathausen. If they had but known, the pilots of the two Bristols, Jack Morgan and Jim Pell, were even then showing a slight tendency to sag to the left because of the blossoming out of the ribbon of the D. S. C. just above their left-hand patch pockets—for the killing of the said von Rathausen. However, the German airmen didn't know; and they had, that afternoon, but a single ship in the air, the pilot of which, seeing four enemies approaching, had dropped to hedge-hoppin' level and streaked for home.

Morgan had one good chance to dive on this Albatros and wipe him out, but Morgan unfortunately did not see the German plane in time, largely because the green wings did not show up clearly against the pine woods which covered much of the terrain below. When Morgan did spot the green Albatros, it was too late; especially as Morgan's rear-seat passenger was none other than his

squadron commander, Major Hardy, come to have a look over the ground for himself so that he could direct his squadron's co-operation with the morrow's drive most efficiently.

Hardy was not the man to tolerate any deviation from orders, and under the circumstances Morgan recognized the futility of claiming that the green ship had attacked him first.

It made Morgan sore. He had the advantage of height, and he'd have certainly nailed that Albatros.

Sneaking along with their green wings over a blankety-blanked forest! Morgan gritted his teeth, and waved a contemptuous hand to Pell, his lanky Missourian pal, who had also seen the escape of the German.

He was hardly fair to the Green Squadron, whose pilots could certainly never be accused of ducking a fight if they had anything like an even break in numbers. No one could blame a single Albatros for declining to mix it with two Bristols backed up by a couple of Salmsons. But Morgan was not in a mood for being fair. He'd been cheated of a fight and an almost certain victory, and over a Green Boche, too. He was annoyed, and showed it by putting the major through a few stunts on the way home that were decidedly upsetting to that officer's middle-aged stomach.

"Bumpy air we had coming back, sir. Full of pockets," said Morgan as he respectfully helped the major to alight on the home tarmac. His round face actually glowed with considerate distress for the poor major. "Hope you weren't too much shaken up, sir."

"Bah!" said the major. "See that you're on the job tomorrow, Morgan. No excuses. No fighting unless it's brought to you. This'll be a big, important operation, and you and Pell will be up there to protect the contact and observation planes



from those Green Boches. Report to the operations officer for your detailed orders, study the map, and keep sober. Understand?"

"Of course, sir!" said Morgan, his blue eyes ashine with an emotion which any skipper but Major Hardy, who had known him long, would have assumed was an eager desire to please.

"God help you if you fall down, Morgan. You'll take one of the new gunners with you—O'Toole's his name. I'll detail a gunner for Pell later."

"Very good, sir."

The major hesitated, looked at Morgan as though about to say something more, contented himself with another "Bah!" and strode away, grumbling. Pell came down and landed.

"Did you see that green so-and-so run for home?" demanded Morgan as the tall Ozarkian detached himself joint by joint from his cockpit.

"Sho' did," grunted Pell.

"Let's take my ship and go back and see if we can find him," suggested Morgan. "You gas her up while I get a special patrol slip from the O. O."

"Right good idea," agreed Pell.

They went back over the lines, accordingly, but no green Albatros was to be seen. After cruising around for half an hour or so, Morgan realized that the shadows were lengthening and he was not likely to have any luck that day.

But he could not go without expressing his fermenting opinion of that woods-hopping German pilot. Accordingly, he wrote a little note.

"That green paint is a great help to you Jerries when you want to hide. Why don't you put it on in spots, so we can see you when you're over the woods? You put me in mind of a bunch of flying chameleons. Come on and fight and stop hiding in the bushes. Yours for less green paint,

"Morgan, 1st Lieutenant,  
59th pursuit sqdn., U. S. A."

He carefully addressed this note to the commanding officer of the von Rathausen squadron, sealed it in a regulation message canister, and dropped it fairly in the middle of a wide highway much used by the Germans. Then he went home, still disgusted.

He reported his ill luck at the operations office. The major was there, and Morgan amused himself by telling the operations officer in a loud voice all about his note to the Jerries, which he knew the major would consider "highly irregular," not to say "unheard of." Having thus thoroughly annoyed the skipper, Morgan wandered off to look at the operations map for the following day and to examine his orders.

How was he to know that that note had been picked up by a German infantry officer who did not like the air service, and who had conveyed it to its destination in person, broadcasting its contents en route, so that when it reached the C. O. of the Green Boches, half a German army corps was already laughing? How was he to even guess that at the moment of its delivery the Green Squadron was entertaining the pilots of a less distinguished squadron (which had not yet earned the right to special paint jobs) at mess, and that the infantry officer, with a dead pan but inward joy, had read the message aloud—to the politely suppressed delight of the aforesaid guests?

How could Morgan even begin to imagine the all-consuming rage which these circumstances had engendered in the hearts of the Green Boches, and especially in that of their commander, Captain Grulich, a gentleman whose Prussian pride entirely usurped the place where he should have carried his sense of humor?

MORGAN looked at the operations map with disdain, at his orders with distaste. There was not much chance for



Boche-hunting under orders like those.

"Pooh!" said Morgan, and was about to add other remarks of a more forceful nature, when—

"*Boom!*" An explosion outside shook the office and flung glass from broken windows all over the floor.

"*Wham!*" Another followed. The roar of swooping motors sounded through the echoes of the crash.

"*Cramnggg!*" The wicked clatter of shattered metal—that one had got a hangar.

The door of the office was crammed with pilots trying to get out to their ships.

"Air raid!" yelled the major. "Everybody outside and get your ships off the ground!"

"*Pow!*" Part of the office roof fell in. The major cursed as splinters found tender parts of his anatomy.

Morgan by this time had fought his way out of the door and was running down the line, shouting for Pell.

"Right this way, Jack!" came Pell's voice in answer.

The evening sky seemed full of circling, diving, swooping ships—ships whose wings gleamed green in the last rays of the dying sun. The Green Boches were having their revenge for Morgan's insult.

"*Bam!*" The blast of that one sent Morgan staggering.

Fragments whistled past his head. The tarmac was hazy with the fumes of German high explosive. The machine-shop was burning, a great torch in the gathering shadows. The armory was a wreck, its galvanized iron sides collapsed like a tin can that has been smacked with a spade.

Out of this heap of debris, Pell was just crawling, blackened, bleeding, but very much alive and carrying in his arms a furry something that squeaked and wriggled.

Morgan's heart, which had almost stopped beating, resumed its normal functions again.

"Thank God you got him in time, Jim," he said as Pell set the cub-bear, Theodore, the squadron mascot and pet, on the ground.

"*Ker-blam!*" One end of a hangar fell in as a bomb burst right in front of the great doors. Morgan was on his knees, feeling Theodore all over to make sure the little bear wasn't hurt. Hangars could be rebuilt, but there was only one Theodore.

"He's all right, I guess," Morgan admitted. "That was great work, Jim."

"Fust thing I thought of," said Pell, smiling proudly. "I knowed the armorer sargunt had him, an' I run right fer him."

The roar of the motors receded. The Green Boches had made adequate reply to Morgan's little note, and were going home.

"Get up, you!" It was the major's voice. "You, Morgan, I mean!"

The major was shaking a fist at Morgan—a most undignified procedure, since with the other hand he was engaged in picking splinters out of the seat of his pants.

"You'll drop notes to the Germans, will you! Morgan, you'll do twenty years in Leavenworth for this! Communicating with the enemy, by God! Must be fifty men killed with all those bombs! A murderer, that's what you are!"

Morgan turned cold all over.

"And absent from your post while under fire, rescuing that blankety-blank bear!" the major went on. "You *would* think of that bear first of all! You'll have plenty of time to think of him where you're going, Morgan. And as for you, Pell—"

"Beg pardon, sir!" It was the squadron adjutant, slightly apologetic.

"Well? Well?"



"Casualty report, sir. Three pilots slightly wounded by bomb fragments. Sergeant Perry had his leg broken when a hangar door fell on him. One hangar totally wrecked, one partially, machine-shop and armory napoo. Office building damaged to some extent. Four planes wiped out. That's all, sir."

"All? All? By God, it's enough!" howled the major. "My squadron crippled on the very eve of a big offensive! And all on account of Mister Morgan, here, and his blasted note writing! Who do you think you are, Morgan, the State Department? Now listen to me. I'm not putting you in arrest to await trial by general court martial, only because no one was killed through your conduct, and because with four ships smashed and three pilots on the sick-list, I'll need everybody on the job tomorrow. I'm giving you one last chance, Morgan. You'd better distinguish yourself by some outstanding performance of duty in the morning, or you'd better not come back from up Front! I'm going to prepare a full set of charges and specifications against you, Morgan, and hold 'em in my desk until tomorrow. You had better do something to make me want to tear 'em up. You'll find it no easy job, Morgan!"

"I'll try, sir," muttered Morgan, feeling anything but proud of himself. "I'll do my best."

The major stamped away to see about repairing the damage done by the bombs.

"Goshamighty!" said Pell. "Dunno's I ever saw the old' turkey so riled up!"

"I'm in bad this time, Jim," Morgan said soberly. "Communicating with the enemy's a serious charge. Wish I'd never written that confounded note."

"Aw, cheer up," said Pell, patting Morgan on the shoulder. "The major'll cool off by mornin'. C'mon, let's leave Theodore with the cook and go get us a li'l shot o' cognac."

It seemed the moment's cheerful thought.

FROM Fifi's estaminet, as Morgan and Pell approached it some twenty minutes later, came sound of wassail—together with cries of rage and pain.

"What the hell?" queried Morgan, his ears detecting a familiar ring to those cries. The two entered.

There were a number of Yanks present, most of whom were engaged in cheering on a struggle of some sort which was taking place in the smoke-filled back end of the bar.

"Gorblimy!" howled a voice, "hif yer'll set me on me feet once, I'll bryke yer bloody 'ead for yer!"

"'Tis 'Hurroo fer Saint Patrick' ye'll cry, ye durrthy little Sassenach, afore I'll set ye down!" retorted another voice. "Take that, and bad cess to the likes of ye!" *Smack!*

Shoving through the crowd, Morgan and Pell found themselves at the ring-side.

A burly young man in the uniform of an air service second-lieutenant stood before the bar, against the end of which he had lifted a small man in British khaki who wriggled and kicked violently without in the least disturbing the huge hamlike fist which had gathered up the slack of his tunic in front and was holding him thus helpless, his feet six inches off the floor. The wizened face of the small man was contorted with fury, and he was spitting Whitechapel epithets at his captor venomously but with complete futility.

The sturdy airman who held him lifted his left hand again.

"Holler, ye Sassenach!" he advised. "Holler 'God bless the Holy Saint Patrick,' or I smack yez another!"

"Let that man alone!" snapped Morgan.

He had recognized the British soldier



as one Gunner Herbert Hawkins, Royal Field Artillery, a personal friend of his whom he was not going to see abused by any shavetail.

The shavetail in question turned upon Morgan a belligerent countenance which bore every evidence of having first looked upon the sun within spitting distance of the famed Lakes of Killarney.

"And who might you be, that's so free wid yer instructions—" he began, then on the next syllable his jaw clicked shut as a large and very hard fist collided with it.

Morgan was the closest, but Pell had taken advantage of his longer reach. Gently pushing his smaller friend aside, the big Ozarkian stepped in, followed through with a straight left to the snuzzle that sent the Irishman staggering against the farther wall. As the astonished Mick bounced back, Pell slammed over a right cross that set the stars of glory spinning within that Irish head.

Gunner 'Awkins, picking himself out a large sawdust-filled cuspidor where he had fallen when the Irishman let go of him, whooped his deliverer on.

"Give it to 'im, Mister Pell!" he shrieked. "Kick 'im in the guts fer me!"

The Irishman bored in gamely, but he was not in Pell's class and the next wallop stretched him blinking on the floor.

With a shriek of triumph Gunner 'Awkins leaped for the prostrate form with the laudable intention of "givin' 'im the leather;" but was jerked back by the properly indignant Morgan.

"Now see here, Hawkins," said Morgan, "we spend altogether too much time getting you out of trouble. What'd you do to this officer? What was he hitting you for?"

"Fer nothin' at all sir," whined Hawkins, writhing within Morgan's grip on his collar. "I was standin' at the bar 'avin' me little nip, w'en some blighter

remarks as 'ow tomorrer's Synt Patrick's D'y. 'W'y, so it is," said I, "'an' t'ell with 'im," said I, 'fer a stinkin' Irish blighter.' Meanin' no 'arm, Mister Morgan, but 'avin' in mind an Irish driver of me battery wot's known to the 'ole Royal Regiment of hartillery as Stink-foot Mike 'cos 'e never washes 'is feet but once a year, on this 'ere synte Synt Patrick's D'y. An' gorblymy, as I'm standin' there thinkin' as 'ow the hatmosphere in the battery billets ort ter be a bit sweeter in th' mornin', this 'ere leftenant hup an' grabs me. 'Oller 'uray fer Synt Patrick, ye insultin' Sass-sass-somethin'," said he, an' smacks me jaw. An' keeps on doin' it, the blank-blankety-blank—"

Here Mr. Hawkins relapsed into the expressive, but unprintable vernacular of the purlieus of Limehouse.

The blankety-blank sat up, rubbing his head.

"Where's the man who hit me?" he demanded loudly. "'Tis a drink I'd be buyin' him, for he's a broth of a boy to lick Pat O'Toole."

Pell promptly stuck out a hand to help the fallen rise. The idea appealed to him as most appropriate.

"Your name O'Toole?" chipped in Morgan. "You're one of that new lot of gunners we just got from Issoudun, hey?"

"Yer right, my friend," said O'Toole.

"Well, I'm your pilot," grinned Morgan, "my name's Morgan, and when you get through buying Pell that drink, I'll buy you one to celebrate our meeting. We're gonna have fun tomorrow, O'Toole."

"Gorblymy!" said Gunner 'Awkins, fearing that in this sudden outburst of air service hospitality he might be overlooked. "I'd could do with a nip meself."

"Arrah!" cried O'Toole. "'Tis the Sassenach agin'!"



He made a grab for Hawkins which Morgan deflected.

"Wait," said he. "What's that you call him?"

"Sassenach!" yelled O'Toole. "'Tis the likes of him that's brought ould Ireland all her woes! 'Tis the dirty oppressor of the poor he is, the proud minion of a bloody-minded King! Down wid the Sassenachs! Ireland forever!"

It was plain, as Lieutenant O'Toole danced about, that he had already been celebrating the approach of Saint Patrick's Day.

"Sassenach—huh," said Morgan. "He means Saxon, I guess. The Irish used to call the English that."

"Yore off the track there, Jack," Pell put in. "The Saxons ain't English. The Saxons is Boches—we got a lot of 'em up in front of our sector. I seed it on the battle-map only this evenin'."

"Saxons! Dirty Sass — Saxons!" howled O'Toole. "Drink wid me to Old Ireland's vichtry over all the tribe! Here, Fifi! Cognac for my friends!"

He pulled out a large roll of franc notes.

"Urray fer Saint Patrick!" cried Hawkins promptly.

"That's the boy!" approved O'Toole, slapping the little fellow on the back. "Here's the cognac, gentlemen! Bad cess to the Saxons!"

Fifi's thin walls trembled with the answering shout.

Then began what Morgan was wont to describe as a fine, large evening.

O'Toole's hospitality was unlimited and brooked no interference. He was determined that Saint Patrick's Day was going to be ushered in with fitting ceremony, and by the time he had run through his first roll of francs, Morgan, Pell and Hawkins were as enthusiastic as O'Toole himself on the subject of the good old saint.

Bitterly, also, did they denounce the "Sassenachs" or "Saxons," Hawkins being especially virulent in his remarks and apparently in no way connecting these villains with his native England. O'Toole produced more francs.

MIDNIGHT came and passed. Saint Patrick's Day was here. That it was also the day of the great attack, Morgan had not quite forgotten. But he remembered this important fact only in the form of a mental note that he had something to do, come morning. Something in which the Green Boches, the major and a lot of unmitigated scoundrels known as Saxons were all mixed up, the general idea being to strafe the Saxons with a view to pleasing the major—or was it Saint Patrick?

Morgan wasn't sure. However, he somehow kept track of the merry passage of time, despite the potency of Fifi's cognac and the bellowed chorusses of O'Toole and Hawkins, to whom Pell was trying to teach the unexpurgated edition of "The Ol' Gray Mare (hic) Sh' Ain't Wosse Usha Be"—a tune to which O'Toole sang wild Gaelic words of his own, breathing fierce invective against the poor old Saxons.

"C'mon, gang," said Morgan thickly. "Gotta go places 'n' raise hell with the Sassons."

"Hurroo!" shouted O'Toole. "We'll free old Ireland on Saint Patrick's own day, praise be!"

"Ireland for—hic—ever!" chanted Hawkins.

They went forth to free Erin from the oppressor. On to the drome Morgan led them; and in the bustle and confusion of this all-important morning, nobody, least of all the major, noticed the condition of two of the squadron's best pilots.

Into the operations office they went.

Pell's long finger pointed at the "enemy



order-of-battle" map which hung on one wall.

"Shee?" he inquired, finger wobbling at one particular sector of the German line—that over which, presently, they would be flying.

Upon that sector, in large red letters, was printed—

"99TH (SAXON) ARMY CORPS"

"Shee?" said Pell again. "There they are—Saxshons."

"Death to the bloody Sassenachs," muttered O'Toole.

Morgan's active mind, however, gave sudden birth to a new idea.

"How'll they know we've come to free Ireland?" he demanded. "Gotta have shamrocks. Saint Patrick's Day. Gotta have shamrocks."

At that moment he caught sight of the squadron supply-sergeant passing the door.

"Here, sergeant!"

"Yessir!" The sergeant came in.

Now it was one of Morgan's accomplishments that he could, no matter how plastered, always counterfeit complete sobriety for a moment or two in case of need. His words were crisp and direct.

"Have you any green paint, sergeant?"

"Lots of it, sir, for the hangars and camouflage work."

"Get a gallon can, ready mixed, and bring it to Number Four Hangar, with a couple of large brushes. Right away."

"Very good, sir." The sergeant saluted snappily and went out.

"Shamrocks," chuckled Morgan. "C'mon, gang."

It was still dark on the tarmac. The line in front of the hangars was a roaring, flame-spitting place as plane after plane rolled out, engines started and then cut down to warming-up speed. The major, hurrying past, caught sight of Morgan busy about his plane, Pell at the

next ship also busy, and asked no questions.

It was not light enough for him to see that they were painting.

Nor *what* they were painting—

Shamrocks? Well, if those great blotches of green paint on the top and bottom wings could be called shamrocks, the science of botany would be in dire need of revision. However, the results seemed to please Morgan and Pell, as well as O'Toole and Hawkins, all of whom felt that the entirely pro-Irish character of their expedition would now be apparent to every trembling Saxon.

"They're hangin' men an' women for the wearin' of the green," sang O'Toole as he watched the emerald color being laid on by Morgan's lavish brush.

"They are, are they?" cried Pell, indignantly, overhearing. "We'll fix 'em for that too! Gosh, they're worse'n revenooers!"

Now the painting was done; or rather, the paint can was empty.

Morgan motioned O'Toole into the rear seat of his Bristol. An eager young lieutenant came up to report to Pell as gunner, but Pell had already decided that 'Erbert 'Awkins could not be left behind, so he told the eager young man to go find an entirely mythical Sergeant Cranberry and to ask that worthy for ten pounds of Sassenachs. The eager young man departed and was still in search for Cranberry when the last plane took off.

Both Morgan and Pell could fly anything with wings, drunk or sober, and perhaps a little better when drunk. The small matter of protecting the contact and spotting planes in Sector G had of course rather slipped their minds, they being intent upon dealing with the Saxons who occupied the trenches of that sector. Ireland, they had resolved, must know now no more the oppressor's heel.



In the back seats, O'Toole and Hawkins cast loose the twin Lewis guns, swung them through various arcs of fire and made ready to do their part.

The trenches came in sight. Both pilots had with great care marked the Saxon sector on their roller maps and on the airplane photographs which were furnished them as additional guides. The German front lines were hidden now beneath the smoke and flame of the barrage. But that would not last long.

Overhead—the ships were flying side by side and very low—howled the shells of the French heavy artillery, reinforced by British guns, battering away at the German rear positions. Beneath that canopy of steel, like flying demons, half hidden by the barrage-smoke that still clung close to the ground and the swirling morning mist, the two ships flew onward.

On the ground things were not going very well.

The French infantry, advancing behind its barrage, found the Saxons holding on grimly, well entrenched and with many more machine guns than had been expected. The leading French ranks were swept away; company commanders, spitting furious curses, flung forward their supporting platoons, and all along the line Very stars shot up, calling for more artillery fire, more supports.

The Saxons, seeing the first rush of the foe thus stopped, cheered hoarsely.

Then, from above, destruction fell upon them. Along two of their trenches swept a storm of fiery bullets. They saw green wings dimly through the smoke and mist, saw dark objects falling, were torn and blasted by the detonation of a score of small bombs. Then, as those green wings pulled up into the shrouding vapor again, the rear guns ripped and tore at the horrified Saxons with another blast of tracers.

"TREASON!" yelled an excitable young Saxon officer. "We are betrayed! The accursed Prussians have turned upon us!"

For, accustomed to seeing green ships flying overhead daily, they of course associated the glimpse of green they had noted with the von Rathausen squadron.

Now there is no love lost between the stiff Prussian junker and the easy-going, good-natured Saxon.

The young officer's cry was taken up by a hundred voices, and spread like wild-fire along the Saxon trenches. Some called out that the revolution had broken out in Germany and the Prussians were revenging themselves on the Saxons. Others swung up the muzzles of high-angle machine guns and prepared to show the treacherous Prussians what Saxony thought of them.

About this time, Pell and Morgan, climbing above the smoke, were congratulating themselves on a neat piece of work.

O'Toole and Hawkins, through the voice tubes, told their pilots that Ireland would certainly be grateful.

"And begorry, here come some more o' the boys to help us, on this grand Saint Patrick's Day in the mornin'." chortled O'Toole.

But Morgan was not so drunk as to suppose that the flight of green ships which suddenly swooped down upon him from the lightening sky had come to aid Erin in her hour of need.

These were the real Green Boches; and they came with murder in their hearts, for they had seen the green splotches on the wings of the two Bristols, which, we must note, in no way obscured or disguised the tri-colored cocardes—and they thought that this was another Yankee insult, referring to the suggestions contained in Morgan's note about putting green paint on in spots.

They had come to attack the French



contact and spotting planes, in the hope of disorganizing the attack; they remained to dive furiously, guns blazing, on these insulting Yankee *schweinhunden*.

The aforesaid contact and spotting pilots, several of whom were nearby, felt their hearts come up out of their stomachs as they saw the green onset thus diverted. They had been wondering where their escort was.

There were a couple of minutes of mad tumbling, the air criss-crossed with tracers and the murk probably much increased by the volume of complicated German swear words. Then, at opposite sides of the mêlée, Morgan and Pell pulled clear of it and dived into the smoke below.

They meant only to use the smoke to break off an unfavorable fight, to rise again, gain altitude if possible, and fall upon the enemy from above under better conditions. But the Green Boches did not stop to try to figure out their enemy's possible intentions. They wanted blood.

They dived right down through the thickest layer of smoke—and were received with such a blast of machine-gun fire from the furious Saxons on the ground that four of them crashed in flames in as many minutes.

The other three immediately let go all their bombs, supposing of course that the Saxon position had been taken by the French, and swept up and down the trenches ground-strafting busily with machine guns. In the midst of this confusion, the French supports came up and the whole French line hurtled forward, wave after wave, drove out the remnants of the utterly demoralized Saxons and made themselves masters of the position.

The three surviving Green Boches, almost out of ammunition, decided to go home and report the Saxon debacle. Two of them did, flying beneath the smoke. The other rose above it just as Morgan was circling in search of his enemies, and

Morgan sent one fine long burst of tracers right through Captain Grulich's cockpit—and body.

Pell came roaring up through the smoke, wings rocking with glee as he saw Grulich go into his last spin. The French reserves were leap-frogging over their front line and going on to the assault of the German support line, also held by Saxons, to whom the fleeing survivors of the forward companies had already imparted such dreadful tidings that they broke and fled as the poilus charged over the shell-torn ground.

(Thus is explained the burning animosity which for months afterward existed between the officers and men of the 99th Saxon Corps and those of the Imperial Air Service; a condition of affairs which occasioned so many duels that the High Command had to order the 99th corps to the Italian front where most of the flying was done by Austrians. Little did the Saxons guess that they had suffered, by proxy, for the wrongs of poor Ireland—that "most distressful country!")

Morgan and Pell flew around, very much pleased with themselves and not at all realizing what had happened, until, gas running low, they decided to call it a day and go home.

Meanwhile some of the observation ships had come in, and their crews had reported what they *thought* they had seen in the dim dawn light and the whirling smoke. They had credited Morgan and Pell with having destroyed no less than five Green Boches: Grulich, whom Morgan was entitled to credit for, and the four ships which had fallen victims to the Saxon machine guns!

Furthermore, the French general had sent in fulsome congratulations and thanks for the timely and repeated intervention of the American planes, whose ground-strafting had, he said, enabled his



assaulting infantry to carry the German position when it seemed that they were hopelessly held up.

In consequence the reception of Morgan and Pell on their home tarmac was impressive. On one side the major divided his remarks between a string of apologies and mention of the Legion of Honor, the *Medaille Militaire*, and other honors promised by the grateful French to the brave American flyers. On the other side, a dozen of their comrades cheered, yelled, and capered in delight—for the French were going to decorate the squadron as well and every man jack in it would now have the right to wear the fourragere.

Morgan and Pell didn't know what it was all about, but they had just sense enough to keep their mouths shut, accept the good things that came their way

with becoming modesty, and get into the comparative safety of their quarters as quickly as possible, taking O'Toole and Hawkins along.

"It's the Order of the Shamrock we should have for what we did to those Saxons," Morgan said. "I don't get all this other stuff. But what the hell! Medals are medals. Jim, you got a drop of that Missouri white mule of yours under the bunk?"

Jim had.

"Then," said Morgan, "let's be drinking our eye-opener, on Saint Patrick's day in the morning."

"*Erin go bragh!*" cried O'Toole.

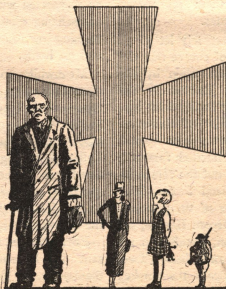
"Dahn wif the Saxophones!" muttered Gunner 'Awkins.

Pell said nothing. He brought out the bottle instead.

THE accompanying drawing shows the proportion of men, women, children and soldiers killed in Zeppelin (not airplane) raids on England. From January 19, 1915 to April 13, 1918, Zeppelins crossed the Channel no less than 50 times and bombed all parts of eastern England. We hear only of the raids on London, but in reality London suffered but a small portion of the total raids. A tabulation of results is interesting; according to the best available estimate, the figures were as follows:

In the fifty raids 217 men, 171 women and 110 children were killed; a total of 498. It is a strange fact that only 58 soldiers were among the casualties.

Now we come to the airplane raid casualties. From Dec. 24, 1914, to June 17, 1918, there were 57 raids on England. In these raids 1,117 men, women and children were killed—and only 296 soldiers. Of the injured 2,886 were civilians and 521 soldiers. For all raids the total killed and injured was 4,820.



A STRANGE FACT



# The Red Eagle Flies Again The Gray Phantom

by HAROLD F. CRUICKSHANK

*Bodies shattered, minds dazed—one by one those Yanks who had found the Phantom's lair were returned to their comrades. Who was this masked sky fiend? What was the secret of his hidden torture drome? Grimly the Red Eagle vowed to find out in a searing death campaign.*

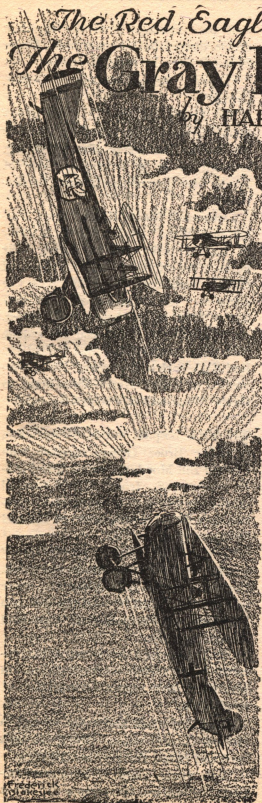
**Twin Vickers  
spewed red flame as  
the Gray Phantom  
snarled up.**

**A** SNARL cracked open the taut lips of the Red Eagle, that famous Yank ace, as he threw his Spad down in power. The Brood of the Red Eagle were up to their necks in the vortex of hell; but it suited them so to be. In the hottest of sky mills, this gang of hellions were in their element.

"Ya-ah, you rotten skunk," bellowed the eagle chief, kicking his bugling Spad slightly left. "Roll her, Sam. Roll her, an' then spin her outa my way."

Although the Red Eagle had bellowed into empty space and his words were drowned by the roar of wind, prop and motor, it seemed as if Sam Martin had instinctively caught the message. He rolled right, just as a pair of savage Spandaus spewed red lead.

Ted Blair breathed easily—a deep, long-drawn sigh. His deputy had snatched himself from a sure-fire death. The Boche leader who had been attacking





Sam, though he could see the latter's guns were jammed, was now directly in the path of the Red Eagle.

Ted's right hand stroked the trips. But he hadn't released five rounds before a sudden jar blasted the side of his ship, abaft the cockpit. Without bothering to turn, he pulled back in a mad zoom. A Pfalz roared on by, hurrying to the rescue of the Boche leader.

A grin slit Blair's mouth as he cautiously looped. That second Pfalz pilot had sealed his own certain doom.

Again the Red Eagle Spad was in that terrible dive, firing at the newcomers now.

Below, the German leader shot an anxious glance back over his shoulder. He gasped, then thundered a guttural oath. Like someone mad, he backsticked.

*Prr-r-rpp—rat-tat-tat!* A horrible burst of twenty rounds plastered the second Pfalz. A burst of flame coughed up. Again the Jerry leader gasped. He had backsticked into the start of an Immelman. Actually, he had backsticked right into the boiling pot of hell; for as he commenced to spiral, a flaming mass met him and enshrouded him in a red-black mantle of death. He had run dead into the flame-wracked mass of his fellow pilot's ship.

Ted Blair tipped his Spad's nose in salute to the second Pfalz, whose pilot had so gallantly gone down in an attempt to rescue that high-ranking Prussian ace who hugged the fringes of cloud banks, while the lesser members of his staffel did the bulk of the fighting.

"H'mm—" Ted wiped his face free from sweat and oil, then hurled his bus up at the mill again. Sam Martin had pulled his guns clear and together they rode the sky trail again.

Suddenly Ted banked off right. A lone Spad was cutting toward him from the west, her pilot signaling as he came.

The Red Eagle blinked. Here was a

"cut out" message from the squadron drome, direct from his commander, Major Bruce Grove. In code, it read—

"Urgent. Return—at—once. Urgent. Grove."

Ted fired a red flare in signal of acknowledgement, then ripped up to collect his Brood. The enemy pilots remaining, hemmed in by a screaming circle of Spads, were glad of this imposed "armistice."

Lieutenants Monty Rider, "Spud" Fallon, and "Babe" Deakin, let out a volley of healthy oaths, then thumbing their noses at the retreating Boches, they dived down to meet their chief. In a flash, the anger they felt at cutting out when they had a fight in the bag was forgotten. Each member of the Brood knew quite well that something big was pulling the Red Eagle back to the drome. Blood commenced to tingle. Nerve fibres began to throb. What was this something new!

IN THE hospital hut at 44 squadron, Major Bruce Grove, together with Captain Bill Mond, the surgeon, and Major Sanderson, from Wing, watched closely the effect of a hypodermic injection on a pitiful looking piece of wrecked humanity lying on a cot.

"D'you think you've got it, doc?" queried Grove, his face drawn and ashen. For what seemed a long moment, there was no reply. Then Mond shot a glance to his watch and frowned, shaking his head in negative reply.

"No! I've done everything I can, locally. Watch. He's coming out, but I'm afraid he'll never regain a normal state of mind again."

Something moist and misty seemed to blot out Grove's vision. He set his teeth hard and hissed sharply through them.

"This is the work of someone inhuman," he snarled, pounding a fist into a small instrument table.



The Wing adjutant turned, a thin, meaning smile on his face.

"All the more incentive for running down this devil," he snapped. "You have a job on your hands."

These last words came in a slow, meaning tone of voice. Grove started. He got the poignancy of their meaning all right. Headquarters could not forget that Grove was under their heel. Acting in the spirit of a true white man, Bruce had fastened a stigma to his good name—something that his superiors were slow to rub out. Whenever possible, Wing put 44 squadron to the supreme test. They were riding Grove hard. And, in spite of his fortitude, had it not been for Ten Blair, the Red Eagle, the major might have crumpled.

This poor, wasted shape on the cot had, earlier in the afternoon, come swaying down in the harness of a chute, tossed out from the rear cockpit of a German two-seater. For some time, American Intelligence had been on the track of a lost American flight—a flight of Spad pilots which had disappeared from the sky. No confirmation of their death had come from Germany; neither had the German authorities sent word of their capture.

Once, a wasted human shape, similar to the one now moaning on the cot, had staggered into the Russian lines—an imbecile. But, there was nothing about the man to suggest that he was a former sky man, let alone an American. His speech was just jumbled jargon. He had died shortly after. But on his left forearm and right temple were two distinct scars—in the form of a brand.

This poor fellow at 44 squadron bore the same marks.

Grove had communicated with Wing and Intelligence at once. The two cases were very similar—the work of one diabolic force. Intelligence had gone to work immediately and, through the process of

elimination had discovered the only possible spot on the western front, from which this devil force could operate. It was a nice piece of quick work on the part of Intelligence. But there remained it's proving. Grove's Wing had been assigned the task of scouting out this lair of the devil. And Sanderson, who had always ridden Grove, had seen that 44 squadron was assigned the hellish job.

Grove was shaken. Not that he feared anything. But he realized that one of these times, should he fail, the command of 44 squadron would be taken from him. Hell! He was ready to do anything, to hold command of the boys he admired as much as life itself.

A sudden stir on the part of the surgeon brought the other officers close to the cot again. The slender twitching shape there was recovering from the effects of Mond's test drug.

"Dan—D—n—M'mmmmm—" came from the drooling lips.

But Mond fastened on the first, almost intelligible word, "Dan." Was it possible that something had worked on the youngster's subconscious? Had his fogged, spoiled brain actually retrieved the name of some pal, something that might be a clue?

The sudden roar of five Hissos brought the lean body up with a start.

"D-D-an—" again came from his lips. His eyes, glazed, and narrowed, started upward.

Bill Mond swung on the other officers. "Get me transportation service at once," he snapped. "I want this lad running as quick as God will allow, over to St. Bartholomew's, England. I'll put a wire through to Sir Denvers Roland. There's a spark left in this chap's brain. I think Roland could do something. Did you see him react to the roar of the Spads? Quick, Sanderson!"

The flight of the Red Eagle thundered



in, to land sweetly on the tarmac. In less than a full minute, Ted Blair was seated at the hospital cot, staring into the bewildered face before him.

"Think hard, Ted," the surgeon said. "You're more widely acquainted on this Front than most of us. Was there ever a flight leader, squadron commander, or any flying man in your acquaintance by the name of Dan."

"Dan!" The Red Eagle screwed up his lips. "Know plenty of Dans, doc. Dan—Say, could it be Don?"

A low cry escaped the youngster on the cot.

"D-a-n" he called again, followed by a painful, hysterical chuckle.

"Ted, shout that name again," hissed the surgeon."

"Don! Don Squires was skipper of A Flight with the old 120th— Say, doc. It must be Don he's trying to say. By God! Squires, an old pal of mine, was—he was in the lead of that flight which vanished. Holy old mackerel! This lad was one of his flight. What d'you want, major?" he snapped at Grove.

"Some advice as to how to handle this damnable assignment, Ted," returned Grove. "I sent for you, because Wing has put the locating of the lair of devil responsible for this lad's condition up to me, to us."

Ted sprang to his feet and his scarred face distorted as though in pain.

"You've got a line on location?"

"Some, Ted, but only a possibility. Here—" Grove began to trace an outspread map. "Follow this blue line along the Meuse valley, to the first of the Ardennes. At this spot, the Bois de l'Enfer, Devil's Wood, a rock-bound area screened by firs and elms, our Intelligence has discovered suspicious movement. This is the only spot at which it is considered this mystery devil could operate. He is not only a devil below, but a terrible sky

fighter. It is believed that he is the Gray Phantom, of which you've heard the French speak—a Prussian who was once captured by the French but who escaped very cleverly. He is elusive, clever, and this—Ted, I'm afraid this is going to be some assignment, if you accept."

"Aw, shucks, major," grinned the Red Eagle. "All assignments are the devil. They all head down to one possible end, if you want to look at it that way. Death is only a unit after all. We'll take it. Leave at about a full hour before dawn tomorrow."

IN A clearing, in the dense forest of the Bois de l'Enfer, a thin, shrunk form of a man sat hunched on a boulder, watching three tall flying men in conference at the wing-tips of a plane whose fabric bore the Maltese crosses of the German air force.

Today, Don Squires—or what was left of this once noted American ace—was, in mind, Don Squires, or nearly so. Weeks of captivity at the hidden drome of the Gray Phantom, the outlaw who chose the Devil's Woods as his hideout; weeks of treatment at the clever surgical hands of the Phantom, had played havoc with the Yank's mind. His gutty young flight and himself, had been trapped and taken prisoner by one of the most ruthless of all battle skymen—the Gray Phantom.

Once a crack German ace, this outlaw killer had come under suspicion by his commanders. Cheating death in the form of a firing squad for alleged connection with the French forces, he had escaped. His blood was warm still for the Fatherland. But he worked and killed in his own way—a mysterious plunderer, a man of intelligence, who more than once had sat in at mess with a number of admiring French pilots. Unknown to American and British headquarters, or any Allied pilot, the Phantom had laughed with them,



drank with them, only to steal unsuspected from their midst, back to his forest drome, back to his two henchmen, whose nationality and sympathies were not questioned.

The Phantom, once a clever surgeon, had treated the minds of each of Don Squires' A Flight. Two of them he had shot down to earth, as imbeciles. A third had died. But one other, besides Don himself, remained at the Devil's Woods drome, here to do the bidding of this abnormal monster, who plundered, solo, in his mystery plane.

Don Squires gasped. Escape from this natural fortress seemed utterly impossible. Following one gutty attempt, the Yank leader had received a flogging that had permanently deformed him. His former tall, handsome frame was now stooped like that of an old sourdough who had been the buffer of terrific blizzard winds for years.

Captain Squires snarled bitterly as he watched the Phantom take off. Good God! Someone else—some Yank or Frenchman, or some Britisher would pay the price before dusk. The Maltese crosses which graced the wings of the devil ship would give place to the red white and blue co-cards of the Allies. Shortly after dusk, the Phantom would return, his square cockpit loaded with fuel cans or provisions.

Don Squires had ridden that cockpit. He felt, intuitively, though his mind was actually a blank on it, that he had operated those two captured Lewis guns on their Scarff mounting. He had often wished that the Phantom had finished him off, instead of toying with his brain as he did. Today Squires was nearly normal. Tomorrow or the next day, he would be a weak, whimpering half-imbecile.

But Squires refused to give up hope. He was born of that tough western American pioneer stock; and on days when he was left to his own idle thoughts,

as today, his wracked being struggled to conjure up visions of escape.

CAPTAIN TED BLAIR had gotten his famous Brood up into the sky long before dawn had fully broken. He pushed forward, as far forward as it was possible to obtain a landing on French occupied land; and there, after making the most amazing of landings, had cached a supply of gasoline. He realized that even with his specially rigged auxiliary tanks, he couldn't expect to scout the area of the Gray Phantom's drome successfully.

Now, as three o'clock in the afternoon rolled round, he was striking north-east, along the right bank of the Meuse. At his back, taking off from the forward cache some ten minutes after their skipper, came the Brood, as keenly alert for their venturesome quest as their skipper.

Ted Blair gambolled with striking archie fire, much as an eagle might gambol in a lazy afternoon sky of blue and sunlight.

It seemed that he was going to be permitted to reach his objective unmolested by any form of enemy plane. It was true that this particular Front had no stragetic use for many German planes. At the same time, it was not often that the Red Eagle ran so much sky trail without a sight of enemy craft.

Now he thundered up into a patch of white drift cloud. He kicked his Spad about, searching the upper altitudes, more for the sake of his buddies than for his own sake. He wanted to leave a clear trail for his young eagles to follow. Suddenly his slitted eyes dilated. An odd-shaped plane, a gray ship, was banking off down through the cloud mass at its most easterly point. Then Ted spotted the sinister Maltese crosses on her wings.

The Red Eagle quickly dipped down, his hand ready on the stick. He was through



the clouds. He banked right and left, to get a clear field of vision over the rim of the pit. Then his brows jerked up. There were two French reconnaissance plants droning along far below. Above them, a mile to eastward, roared the gray ship Blair had seen. But the Yank skipper gasped. It was an Allied ship now! He could clearly see the red, white and blue cocardes on her upper spread.

"Must have been seen' things before," he mused, preparing to roar up and get on his tack again.

His plan was changed, however, and he shot down the nose of his Spad. What he thought to be a French plane dipping down to salute a couple of comrade ships was, actually, the dreaded Gray Phantom going down to kill.

Spandaus flamed with a wicked spurt of fire as the two unsuspecting French pilots zoomed to salute the gray ship. One of the heavy two-seaters staggered, as though it had run smack into some cliff-side. Ted Blair gasped as he saw the ship hurl herself over into the vertical, and then into the spin.

Like a flash, this gray devil looped, and struck at the second ship. Machine guns from the French ship blasted a hot fire, but the Boche was a master.

It was now that the Red Eagle put his Spad into one of those dives, the very mention of which made many a strong pilot's stomach heave. Wind bugled through the rigging. She was standing almost on her nose, Ted's touch on the stick alone averting a complete roll into the outside loop.

A sharp hiss escaped the Yank skipper's set mouth as he watched the second of the French ships burst out into flame. The mystery killer had struck, and now a terribly distorted, lean face leered up at Ted Blair. With a flirt of his tail, the Gray Phantom went spinning toward the craggy hills of the nearer Ardennes.

Amazed, the Red Eagle followed. But like a hunted bird sheering the rims of precipitous canyon walls, the Phantom was soon lost to sight. Blair acted quickly. He had spotted the precise area at which the gray ship was last seen. Now he throttled down, and put his Spad at a small plateau.

Cautiously he circled. Slowly he began to ess down on a clearing at the top of the cliffs. His heart was pounding murderously hard at his ribs. Was it possible that he had actually struck the lair of the devil! Each second he expected to see that inviting green sward burst open, and a score of hidden devils pop out in the form of guns. Down—down.

Ted was within thirty meters of the tabletop, when the mad chatter of Spandaus crashed in the sky at his back. He felt a sudden hammering at his skull. Frantically he fought to retain his wits. Through a maze of fog, the black fog of unconsciousness, he struggled to effect even a pancake landing. His tires struck into the cushion of grass, and the Spad bounced high. A bullet had seared the Red Eagle slightly above the right ear.

Ted Blair's consciousness was gone. As the Spad pounded down to a dead stop, he slumped out.

WHEN Blair next opened his eyes, it was to stare owlishly into the small, narrowed eyes of a half-imbecile, a bent, thin, emaciated shape which had brought in a mug of coffee.

"He—he—ho—ho!" Maniacal laughter rang in the Red Eagle's swimming ear-drums.

He started to an elbow, then shrank back. Another equally shrunken, half-starved looking creature was standing in the entrance to a rock dugout.

"Back, Frank!" The newcomer advanced, looking furtively over his shoulder. He seized the half-crazy man by the



arm, and led him out. Then he moved in close, a bearded face peering down into Ted Blair's amazed orbs.

"That man was once as sound as you," he said. "Tomorrow, I may be just like him. Why did you have to get trapped? You're in the hands of a devil. I—oh, my head!"

Ted Blair sprang to his feet. For a brief moment he staggered on uncertain legs. Then the terrible weakness left him. Though his head still pounded hard, his mentality and wits were clear now. He took the arm of the man before him and stared closely into the thin, drawn face. But, there was nothing to remind him of anybody he had ever known in that shrunken face.

"Tell me," he snapped. "Do you remember your name? Who are you. Are you Amer—"

The man fastened a sharp gaze on Blair, then his lips parted in a smile, as if he had just retrieved a mind that was wandering.

"Me! I'm—Squires was my name, Don—"

"Don! I'm Ted Blair, of 44. Quick, brother. Give me the low-down on this place. My flight will be scouting topside. They're to get my signal."

"Blair! Ted—the Red Eagle. Good God, and I didn't recognize you. It's been hell here. You'll get the same treatment. The Phantom is a devil, and he has a couple of thugs working with him. Right now, they're off someplace. They brought you in from the Phantom's secondary emergency field, wherever that is. Listen! Tomorrow I expect I shall be under the influence of the Phantom's drug again. Then, my mind must be gone. There are blanks in my life that I can't fill in. There is no escape for you here."

"Listen, Squires," cut in the Red Eagle. "There's always a chance while there's life. If I am trapped and held, I want you

to evade this devil long enough to get a signal message to my Brood. I have a lamp under my right arm. Under the left is an emergency gun. By the way, we received another of your flight at our drome, yesterday. Poor devil was in a bad shape, but he gave us the only clue we've ever had. He kept calling Dan. I went through all my friends and acquaintances in the war zone, and decided that he must mean Don Squires. He—"

"You say you saw him—Tom Fawcett! Thank God! Listen! Here's the devil ship coming in. I must go. Watch for me and—don't attempt to fight with the Phantom. He won't kill you but—you'll wish he would, if you—you— So long for now!"

Don Squires shuffled off like some rheumatic old man, and Ted Blair's teeth snapped shut with an audible click. By the seven Spads of Hades! He was in a jam, and the only way out was through the channels of quick thinking. He had found the lair of the devil, all right; but the devil had the upper hand.

With a shrug, Ted strode toward the dugout entrance. He wanted fresh air. But a towering shape, dressed in tight-fitting gray costume met him. Blair found himself looking up at a narrow face partially concealed by a gray mask. When he lowered his gaze, he stared into the cold black hollow of a Luger muzzle.

"So, I have been more fortunate than at first I imagined," came in a smooth, only slightly-accented English voice. "It never occurred to me, when I knocked you down that I had cut down the greatest of all Allied pilots. You are to share my palatial mountain quarters. As soon as I have rested, and made my plans, I shall send for you, *schwein!*"

As the Phantom uttered that last word, his mouth distorted cruelly, and his voice took on the tone of a file sawing through an iron bar.



"Reckon I'll be here when you want me," returned the Eagle skipper. "But if, as you have suggested, I am the greatest of all Allied pilots, just think what'll be done to you, if you start any of your damnable surgical work on me!"

"Ach! And who's to know, *kerl!*" hissed through the cruel, thin lips of the Phantom. "You are entirely in my power. You will please not move from this dug-out. Meals will be served by one of your fellow countrymen—who is just slightly off balance. You shall receive the same food as I—until I place you on a diet."

Ted Blair's lips compressed. But though he would have relished a quick draw of his derringer, a sharp glance to both left and right warned him that this would have been fatal. The two mystery henchmen of the Gray Phantom were edging in close—two giants whose faces also were masked and whose hands clutched ugly, thick automatics.

At the approach of his helpers, the Phantom stuffed his Luger back into its holster, and with an ugly grin moved off. Blair shrugged and turned to re-enter the dugout. His right hand slipped up toward the holster beneath his left armpit. A low cry escaped him. The gun was gone.

A sudden chuckle at his back caused him to turn. One of the Phantom's men was toying with his little derringer. With a scowl of rage, the man presently tossed it from him, and Blair caught the tinkle of metal striking rock deep down below the cliffside.

The Red Eagle's breath came in sharp hisses now. This stealing of his derringer had carried away what seemed his only hope—the hope he held for the destruction of the Phantom, and the rescue of Don Squires and the other member of Don's flight.

Dusk was beginning to drape the crags. Blair slumped to a seat; and his head

throbbed and pounded the while, beneath its blood-matted bandage.

SAM MARTIN, the Red Eagle's deputy, had seen the killing of the French pilots from a distance. It instantly occurred to him that his chief had gotten into a jam. Although his orders were to follow, by map, to the location of the lair of the devil, that strong feeling which each member of the Brood felt for the other, urged him to land in the ragged valley below, followed by his three buddies.

It was with difficulty that the Brood were able to take off. They had first to clear a runway along a treacherous rim-rock promontory, in the lower valley. It was as he climbed his bucking Spad over the heights of a cliff that Martin caught his first glimpse of the Gray Phantom. At first, he thought the plane scudding to the north-east might have been Blair's Spad, but this hope was instantly smashed as he glimpsed the black crosses on her wings. The Phantom skidded down, to be lost to sight beyond a heavy fringe of woods.

For more than half an hour, in the quickly gathering dusk, the Brood hunted in vain for signs of their chief. Fuel began to run low, and in the interests of his pals, Sam signaled them to return to the forward cache. With a glance at his gas gauge, the deputy decided to keep on.

In and out of the rocky canyons he flew, flirting with death as at times he was forced to zoom and twist out of the reach of those jagged rocks and stunted trees.

A sudden flash of light struck across Martin's vision. This was no flash of gun. It had seemed just as if some doorway, in that dense forest below, had opened, permitting a beam of light to strike upward through a port in the forest.

The Hisso coughed. Sam quickly turned the feed line from the last of his auxiliary



tanks into the main feed. He snapped out an oath. There was no further time for scouting. Dusk was nearly in its last stages now. This was a terrible country to be caught in without gas. But before he banked around, Sam gunned further over the forest. It was then that he emitted a sharp cry of exultation. Below, in a spacious clearing, two men were leading the dark shape of a plane to cover. By the great gods of war! Sam had discovered the lair of the devil—the home of the Gray Phantom outlaw.

It was the best move Martin had ever made, when he turned abruptly about, instead of trying to dive in on that forest drome.

A host of harassing thoughts stormed at Sam's mind as he rode with the wind back to the emergency drome.

The other three members of the Brood had made safe landings.

"What luck, Sam?" bellowed Babe Deakin, the good-natured heavyweight of the Brood.

"I spotted the drome of the Phantom, gang. But nary a sign of Ted. We've got to be on the job before dawn. I'm making a solo up there soon after midnight. I'm going hunting for a signal lamp in action. If Ted's in that devil's hands—"

Sam broke off short and shuddered. Babe clamped a heavy hand on his shoulder.

"Cheer up, brother. No use losin' hope. Remember, Ted's no ordinary man. He's the Red Eagle. If that Phantom's got him, it's just too bad; but it might be too damned bad for the Phantom."

SAVE for the dull glow, flickering and pale, of a sickly candle, Ted Blair's dugout was dark. A chill damp wind blasted in through a rock fissure. Through the open entrance he caught the reflection of flashes in the sky—the flashes of

French heavy gunfire. Grim shadow shapes danced in the weird fantasy about the rocky edges and canyon walls.

Suddenly a piercing shriek rent the air. The Red Eagle shuddered.

"Poor devil," he breathed. "That swine is up to his dirty work."

A soft footfall behind him caused him to wheel smartly. Don Squire—a trembling, bent shape—shuffled up and placed a thin hand on Ted's arm.

"You heard, Blair! The Phantom is wild tonight. There is no reason w-why he should attack poor Frank tonight."

Ted shot a glance down at the radium dial of his wrist watch.

"Eleven-fifty-five," he jerked. "You must get back to cover. Here, take this lamp. It has a powerful lens and battery. Try to get into a tree, brother. At the faintest sign of a motor's roar, of a plane of any kind, start my code."

Slowly, Ted gave the code of the Brood to the trembling form at his side.

"I've got it, Ted," stuttered Squires. "First a series of dots—Listen! Footsteps. Someone is coming."

Don Squires was gone.

Ted Blair steeled himself. In the next few seconds that he was alone, a host of thoughts milled in his mind. Would one, or both the Phantom's henchmen come for him?

"So!" The thick voice at his back was in German. Only one of the helpers had come. Ted's every fibre stiffened.

"His Excellency has sent for you. Come," drawled the voice again. "But first put out your hands. Behind your back, *schwein*."

Ted was slow in moving. He wanted this man in closer before he made a move.

"*Kerl!* You heard me," bellowed the big Boche. "Move!"

Ted felt the grip of a set of iron fingers on his shoulder. It was his cue. Like a flash of unchained lightning he spun, and



as he came round he struck up with a hook that packed solid dynamite in the doubled fist. The Phantom's aide rocked back, snarling. Ted Blair's knuckles smarted, but he followed up his attack. His right foot shot out, and just by a hair he connected with the other's wrist, as a Luger streaked to view.

The man roared in pain, and made a lunge at his falling pistol. But this was a foolish move. Ted Blair drove hard with a left which came from down around his boot tops. The blow jarred his own frame. There was a cracking of some bone in the big man's face.

Two hundred and twenty pounds of human frame crumpled like a sack of crushed corn.

Blair got panting to his feet. Someone was calling; footsteps sounded, hurrying along to the dugout. Like a flash, the Red Eagle had picked up the fallen man's Luger and slipped out of the dugout.

But the footsteps had ceased to pound. There was no further sound for some time, save the scufflings of small creatures of the forest. Suddenly, to the Red Eagles' ears, came that unmistakable drone, the approaching roar of a Hiss. He cocked up his head and turned.

"A plane," he hissed, in a half-whisper. "God! I should have hung on to my lamp. Don Squires isn't wholly dependable in his present state. If he bungles, we're sunk."

*Soowish—Crack!* The Red Eagle's words were snapped off short, as the barrel of a Luger swished through space at his back, to sock hard into the back of his skull. He dropped like a log, to fall deeper and deeper into the claiming maw of unconsciousness.

It was the will of fate, for at this very moment, Sam Martin had circled his scout Spad over the tree tops. A light was flashing up at him. Six tiny dots in a series—then six more. God in heaven!

Was that Ted Blair signaling! . . . There came the code call letters of the Brood. "R.E.—R.—E.—R.—E.—"

"H'MMM. . . . It it rather fortunate for you that you received that blow on the head, *mein* Red Eagle," came in a smooth tone of voice to Ted Blair's clearing hearing. He looked up with a start into the masked face of the Phantom.

"It might have been better not to have gotten such a weak blow, Phantom," Ted snarled. "I got one of your henchmen, and might have gotten the other. Dawn's breaking, feller. You'd better get on with the show. Do you realize that my hands aren't tied, nor my feet?"

"Ha—ha! You are most amusing, Red Eagle. I have even enjoyed your *verdamm* insults. True, dawn is breaking. It is time to get to work. No, it is not necessary to tie you, for in a minute, at a touch from this small lever, I can flood this chamber with a highly lethal gas. A gas against which I can protect myself in two seconds. I would not attempt anything in the way of escape if I were you. But, don't worry, you shall see your charming Allied lines once more. I intend to take you back. *Ja*, of course. Alphonse," The Phantom turned slightly and called to his helper lurking in the shadows. "The needle, and the iron mask. Quick, *kerl!*"

The Gray Phantom of death turned his head further around, and this move was prompted by the same sound which sent a tingle along Blair's spine. It was the roar of Hissos which took the killer's attention. Up the ragged canyon, a flight of Spads was winging.

With a snarled order at the man called Alphonse, the Phantom streaked for the doorway. Not for anything would he be trapped in his lair. If he must go out, he would go out where he was a match for any sky fighter on the western front—



topside, in his amazingly tricky and fast plane.

Left alone with one guard, Ted Blair hung in a crouch.

Flexing his muscles, working his neck, to see if pain would bother him, and satisfied that he was in fair shape, the Red Eagle poised for the attack. Then with well-timed move, he leaped. Both hands socked down on the gun wrist of the other. The man turned and endeavored to use his tremendous weight, but a savage knee socked him in the grain. Ted wrung the Luger free from the clutching fingers, and swiped the barrel down across the other's temple.

With a grunt of satisfaction, the Yank skipper dashed for the doorway, to run almost directly into the arms of Don Squires.

"Blair! D'you hear them? It's the Spads, your planes. I brought them. He—he—ha—ha—I—"

Blair slapped his old friend smartly across the mouth. Though this seemed a terrible thing to do, it brought Don back to his senses. The strain of his night's work had almost robbed him of his mind.

Now Ted grabbed him by a shoulder.

"Quick, son. You know where they parked my Spad. Lead me to it and spin the prop. Do you know? Don, I must get up before that gray devil can do my gang any injury. Don, do you want to get back to Allied soil?"

"T-Ted—I feel so weak. Wait—"

The man walked away for a pace or so, and Ted Blair flinched as he saw the poor unfortunate struggle to gain mastery of himself. Suddenly Squires wheeled, and in a tone Blair had not yet heard from him, he called him along.

"This way, brother. Thank heaven you had the presence of mind to sock me when you did. All right now, Ted. This way. I saw them wheel your Spad in."

In less than five minutes, Ted had con-

tact. He roared his Hiss wide, warming her swiftly, watching, the while, the sky. And then he glimpsed his four Spads. His heart gave a sharp pluck. A stealthy gray shape had also crossed his line of vision. The Gray Phantom of death was riding down on the Brood.

Ted gasped and jammed home his throttle, eyes still at the sky. Suddenly he caught a signal from Sam Martin's plane. The boys split out. They had seen. The Red Eagle snatched a flare pistol from its socket. A bright red flare sooshed up into the graying sky. It was the signal that the Eagle chief was going to attack.

Don Squires waved an arm. Ted waved back. Chocks were pulled, and the Red Eagle let the Spad have her head. With a cry of sheer exultation, Blair zoomed clear of a fringe of pines. He was free, and up in the open clearway. Now he would take over the fight—a fight against the most terrible enemy he had ever met.

**THE GRAY PHANTOM** had at last lost his identity as such. He was now a snarling jungle beast at bay, but a masterful flyer. As Blair struck up to the mill, the Red Eagle marvelled at the way in which the outlaw German evaded the sharp attacks of the Brood. It seemed that the built-up gray plane had a maze of tricks over and above the usual.

It was now that the masked man of the forest spotted the Eagle chief roaring up to the fight. With a snarl of rage, he hurled his bus out, in a maneuver that resembled for all the world, a swan dive.

"Donner!" The masked sky outlaw hissed the exclamation through set teeth as in an amazing manner, the Red Eagle flipped off the line of fire. Then he watched Blair stick the little Eagle Spad down on her nose.

"Gott in himmel!" he gasped.

He had never before witnessed a dive



so near the vertical. But he set down his own nose. This master flyer below must be snuffed out. And then an escape must be made. The odds were now too definitely against the Phantom. His lair had been broken up. He was marked.

Suddenly the Spad was seen to level. Calmly, precisely, Blair was watching his timing. He shifted a small dash mirror slightly to one side. As he flattened his dive a bit, a burst of lead struck his bus abaft the cockpit. He gasped. One of those bullets had barely nicked his leathers. Then, a wide grin distorted his features. He snarled. This was no grin of good humor, but the grin of a killer.

*Ze-e-oo-o-o!* The Spad's rigging screamed, like a monster eagle would scream in the attack. Back she came, the painted eagles striking with spread talons. Up—Up—Another short burst of Spandau fire raked the eagle ship. Blair lost a strip of skin from his jaw. But he held his throttle in to the last notch and burned air into a tight, amazing Immelman.

And now—the glint of red which

flamed from his eyes when he had the upper hand, flashed through the slitted apertures. Ted Blair, the famous Red Eagle, had fainted against one of the most crafty and cunning flyers in history.

The Red Eagle had gained his point. He had altitude, burning up through hell fire to get it.

The Gray Phantom of the forest zoomed into a plummeting hellcat. Twin Vickers spewed red flame, as the Spandaus snarled. Ted Blair was in his famous death dive. His teeth were bared. Through a red film he saw the hunched frame of the devil who had maimed, tortured; and the Yank showed no mercy.

With a scream of pain, the Phantom slumped and his ship hurtled, a wrecked mass to the rocky crags below.

Many gallant Allied pilots had been avenged. The Red Eagle spat out a fleck of blood and licked his lips. With a signal to his Brood, who sat by, speechless, admiring, he kicked his victorious Spad over, and esed down to rescue two wasted shapes below—Don and his buddy.

## NEXT MONTH

Another fighting, high-flying novelette by STEUART M. EMERY

## THE DEATH DEVILS

*"Your orders," the colonel said, "are to fly into enemy territory tonight—and land. You will circulate on foot as widely as possible—and get back with the most complete information you can gather."*

As Lieutenant Carrick listened, his eyes gleamed and the tingle of adventure coursed through him. This was the sort of job he liked—a chance to tangle with the enemy at long odds in hell skies. He expected this strange spy mission to be bristling with danger—but when he took off from Le Bourget field several hours later, he little dreamed the danger was so near at hand—that before dawn he would have discovered the most amazing War secret Boche land had ever invented—would be pitting his wits and flying skill against Germany's crack squadron—with Paris and the War at stake!

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# The Corpse Flight

BY O.B. MYERS

AUTHOR OF

"HIGH-FLYIN' FOOLS" ETC.



A blunt nose bore down on him, spitting death threads.

*Two flyers had met death trying to learn the secret of that Boche horror trap. Now a green recruit was hurtling his battered Spad down their blood trail, determined to solve the deadly mystery with suicide guns.*

Frederick  
Blanchette



**S**TANDING in the mud, Vic drew the order from his pocket and read it over for the third time, very carefully.

"Victor C. Mandeville, 1st lieutenant, A. S., is herewith assigned to duty with the 5th Aero Squadron, 1st Pursuit Wing, and will report immediately to the commanding officer thereof."

It gave him a thrill of anticipation just to look at the words. He could hardly believe his luck. The 5th—who hadn't heard of them? The greatest collection of aces, the fightingest bunch of fools, in the American air service. What recruit wouldn't be tickled to death to be assigned to the 5th? If only he could make good! He folded the order and replaced it under his coat, swelling with satisfaction.

The mechanic closed the hand-hole plate cowl of the Spad, and spoke to him respectfully.

"She's all set to go, lieutenant."

"Right," said Vic, buttoning his coat. "I'll take off right away, then." And could not help adding proudly, "They'll be expecting me, up at the 5th, I guess."

"The—the 5th? Did you say the 5th, lieutenant?"

"Yes," said Vic.

At something peculiar in the tone he looked closely at this mechanic, for the first time. The man was near middle age, with a lined face and deep, thoughtful eyes; his hands were gnarled and stained, and he walked with a slight limp. Peering at Vic, he shook his head slowly and sadly from side to side.

"Why, what's the matter with that?" asked Vic.

"I thought they were fillin' in the 5th only with veterans from other squadrons. Didn't know they used any green replacements."

"Well, they've assigned me," retorted Vic. "Why?"

The mechanic was deadly serious.

"Because that's sure a tough spot for a rookie, sir—if you'll pardon the expression. They're a great gang of scrappers in the 5th, sure. But they're all old-timers, and ain't got no time to be foolin' around with a beginner. And as for the C. O.—he's a devil. You can see yourself what 'Cold Steele' gave me."

Vic glanced down at the mechanic's injured leg.

"Major Steele gave you that? You mean—you used to be with the 5th?"

"I was a sergeant, chief rigger, when they were up in the Château-Thierry sector. One day I was fillin' his tanks, when he was in a hurry to shove off. I was too slow to suit him, so he climbs up and knocks me off the top wing with his fist. My ankle caught in the flying wire, and snapped off clean. But did he stop? Hell—he was off the ground before they picked me up. When I came out of the hospital, I found myself here at Colombey, reduced to a corporal."

"So he's the kind that uses his fists, is he?"

"Oh, not on the pilots. He's got a different method with them, sir. If he happens to like you, he's a great guy, so they say. But if he don't—especially if he once gets an idea you're yellow—look out. He takes a recruit he don't fancy, and sends him out alone, time after time. Says when he gets three Boches confirmed, he'll know he's good enough to fly with the rest of the crowd. And you can figure how long even a veteran can last, goin' out alone every day. Only one lived through that initiation, while I was with the outfit."

"My God!" said Vic softly. He pulled on his helmet and adjusted his goggle straps. "Well, here goes."

He eased himself into the cockpit of the Spad, and listened long and anxiously to the motor after the grease-ball had started



it. It was not a brand-new ship, but a rebuilt job; the motor was straight out of the factory, but the plane itself had seen service, as was proved by the huge number 33 painted on the side. When the exhausts were purring smoothly he waved his hand; the friendly mechanic yanked the chocks, and gave him a gesture of good luck as he took off.

He let her climb steadily into the northwest, while he followed the landmarks with a keen gaze. His elation at finding himself assigned to the 5th was now tempered with a certain apprehension. To make good, and that from the very start, was no longer merely a hope; it was an absolute necessity. Under no circumstances must he allow the famous 'Cold Steele', leader of the 5th, to get a bad impression of him at the start. Now, what would be the best attitude to exhibit?

Twenty minutes later he was within sight of the drome marked on his map as belonging to the 5th. It was not without difficulty that he found it; although close up behind the lines, it was isolated amid barren hills where no one would look for a flying field. There was but one path by which it could be reached, on the ground, and that, he could see, a corduroy road driven through a belt of forest. He checked his map again to be sure; then slid into a descending spiral.

At a thousand feet he came out; it had suddenly occurred to him that a nervy landing might make a good opening impression. He first looked carefully for other planes in the neighborhood; the air above the drome was empty. The tarmac as well, he noted. Either the 5th was all out on patrol, or else their ships were kept under cover while not being used. Well, perhaps the C. O., the redoubtable "Cold Steele," would be watching.

He jerked the Spad sharply onto its back, and commenced an inverted falling leaf. Down to within a hundred feet of

the ground he fluttered, apparently out of control. Then a swift kick on the rudder, a perfectly timed movement of the stick, and the ship righted itself, flattening out with its under-carriage skimming within inches of the grass. He landed near the far corner, rolled to a stop, and reached for this throttle to taxi in. Only then, with a surge of disgust, did he discover that he had lost his motor.

Hell! He should have remembered to blurt it once or twice, while on his back. Now he had only succeeded in making a fool of himself. He wished fervently that the C. O. had *not* been watching. There was nothing to do but get out, walk to the hangars, and ask for a grease-ball to come swing his prop for him. Dejectedly he slid to the ground, and started across the broad, tire-marked field.

A sense of something strange began to creep over him. No mechanics trotted toward him as he neared the buildings, nor did he see any moving anywhere. No planes stood on the tarmac, and as he came opposite the open doors of the hangar at end of the row he saw that there were none there, either. He hastened his steps; the second hangar was empty, and the third. He had heard of such things as squadron patrols—but every single plane? And then where were the mechanics?

**B**EYOND the third hangar a small shack leaned; it was sheathed with tar-paper, and its door hung crazily ajar. That must be headquarters; he would find someone there to report to. An orderly, at least. He pushed open the door and entered. An eerie, watchful silence greeted him. No voice spoke; yet it was as if the dingy room were filled with the echoes of many voices, but recently departed. He had a crazy notion that someone was hiding behind a door, mocking him.



The place showed plenty of signs of occupation. The floor was strewn with crumpled papers; several crudely constructed tables and chairs stood about; in the corner was heaped a pile of motor parts, fur-lined flying suits, a prop with one tip shattered. At the other end was another door, opening into a smaller room, evidently the C. O.'s private office.

Vic crossed, and peered in cautiously. More papers on the floor, but none on the table; a flying jacket with the elbows worn through, hanging in an empty *armoire*; a faint aroma of cigar smoke. Nothing else.

"What the hell!" he said aloud, and backed out.

Diagonally opposite, where the logging road emerged from the woods surrounding the field, were two other buildings, long and low. He crossed to the first, noting that the mud here was rutted and churned, as by the wheels of many trucks. He thrust the door open and peered in. Pilots' barracks, obviously. Empty, and in considerable confusion. Blankets scattered on the bunks, odds and ends of equipment everywhere; two or three trunks, closed, as if their owners were never coming back. In the corner there was a bar, behind which bottles marched across a shelf. On the bar itself were two glasses, each half full of an amber colored liquid. Vic picked one up, sniffed it. Cognac!

He went outside, muttering to himself. The last building was no doubt the enlisted men's quarters and kitchens; he did not trouble to investigate it. It was undoubtedly empty like the rest. This outfit had pulled out, bag and baggage, that was plain. And pulled out in a hurry, too. No pilot was ever known to go off and leave a half finished drink who wasn't in a hell of a hurry. He returned to the headquarters shack, and rummaged about. Perhaps, expecting him, someone had left

a note, telling him where to come. He could find nothing.

What ought he to do? He had been ordered to report to the commanding officer of the 5th, at this field. Well, here he was; where was the 5th? He had not the slightest idea, nor the foggiest notion of how to find out. He became increasingly uneasy; a vague premonition bothered him. A squadron did not thus desert a field without reasons of paramount importance. He had a feeling that there was something he should do, that some danger threatened him.

A veteran of the Front might have made a guess, but Vic was utterly at sea. He was, he told himself, only the greenest kind of a rookie; how could he be expected to know what to do about this?

He was frowning in the doorway of the tar-paper shack, when a sound came to his ears. He stepped out, and turned to look up. Yes, that was a plane, and it was pointed for this field. Something else, too, he realized at once. Vic had never flown over the Front, but he had seen plenty of ships with missing motors. He knew instantly that this plane was in trouble.

The exhausts were irregular, sputtering and coughing black smoke. Although the nose was up, the ship was not climbing, but settled groggily as it came on. It was very low; for a few moments it seemed impossible for it to escape crashing into the trees. Then it made a last desperate lurch; the landing gear brushed the topmost twigs. At the same moment the motor backfired loudly, twice, and the prop spun backward. It sank heavily into the mud.

It had scarcely bumped to a halt before Vic was running. He saw that it was a two-seater, a Salmson; the observer was clambering up out of the rear cockpit, and shouting at him.

"Lend me a hand, there! He's hit!"



Vic sprang to the stirrup; the pilot in the front seat was retching and coughing blood. Vic loosened the belt, and with the help of the observer lifted the wounded man out and laid him flat on the ground. He stopped coughing at once, but his head rolled speechlessly; he had taken a German bullet straight through the chest.

"Phew!" panted the observer. "Where's Steele?"

"He's not here," said Vic.

Struck with the absence of respect in the other's tone, Vic looked at him closely. He was a short, rather dumpy individual with fluttering hands and a bristling, toothbrush moustache above a small, nervous mouth. Now he lifted his goggles to disclose a pair of keen gray eyes, rimmed by dark circles.

"Not here? Well, wait till I see him. I've got some news that will take his feet out from under him. Had to go out myself, by God, to get it—won't he be wild!" He was unbuttoning his leather jacket. "Well, get someone to carry this fellow inside, why don't you?"

Something in the other's callous manner of referring to the wounded pilot as "this fellow" made Vic angry. That was no way for an observer to speak of the comrade who, dying, had brought him home.

"What's the matter with you," Vic asked. "Got a weak stomach? Come on, take his legs, and shut up."

Vic slipped his hands under the prostrate man's shoulders; the observer, after a moment's hesitation, seized the feet. In silence they staggered across the muddy ground toward the barracks, trying to be as gentle as possible with their groaning burden. Inside, they laid him on the first bunk, and Vic tore open coat and tunic to lay bare the wound. It had stopped bleeding, he saw, and was a neat, round puncture, high enough not to be danger-

ous. The best thing, apparently, was to let the victim lie quiet until a medical man could fix it up properly.

Vic straightened up, to see that the observer had thrown aside his coat. Suddenly Vic froze with dismay. He saw that that short squat man wore on his chest the half-wing of an observer, and on his shoulders the silver eagles of a full colonel! And he, Vic, had just told him to shut up!

"Say, where the hell is everybody around here?"

"I don't think, sir, there's anyone on the field at all."

"Then who the hell are you?"

Vic told him. The colonel grunted, but a look of anxiety came into his eyes. He turned suddenly toward the door.

"Let's find their phone if we can."

**S**TILL wondering what the colonel was going to do about his gross disrespect of a few moments previous, Vic followed. Together they searched the rooms of headquarters. They found the telephone cable easily, but it ended in a pair of dangling wires. The instrument had been torn loose and carried off. The colonel swore in regular army fashion, and looked at Vic with growing consternation.

"By God, this is a queer one for you! I've got news that won't keep, and no way of passing it on. Look here, how far is it to the nearest post, where there might be a phone or an automobile?"

"I wouldn't know, sir. But from the looks of this place from the air, I'd say at least four or five miles. Maybe more."

The colonel groaned.

"Can you beat it?" he demanded wrathfully.

He strode to the door, and peered out. The Salmson stood, lifeless, dripping oil from its shattered crankcase. On the far side of the field was Vic's plane.

"Hell—if I'd only learned to fly a



Spad!" He turned back to Vic, having evidently made a decision. "See here, Lieutenant What's-your-name. I've just made a reconnaissance of my own, and picked up some information that's of the greatest importance. There seems to be no way of reporting it myself; you'll have to fly somewhere, and get word to G. H. Q. No time to be lost, either. Tomorrow morning the American army starts its push to try to pinch off the St. Mihiel salient, and I've just discovered that the Jerries have got one of their tricks all ready and waiting for us. A trick that will turn our drive into a shambles, if our men are not wise to it before they start. Now listen; you know where Souilly is?"

"No, sir, I don't," confessed Vic.

The colonel raised both hands over his head, and cursed violently. Then he seemed to realize that swearing was doing no good, and that furthermore his ignorance of this sector was no fault of Vic's; he stopped abruptly.

"Well, let's see if we can find a map in this mess."

They were both on their knees, searching frantically among the scrambled papers on the floor, when suddenly the colonel paused, crouching. In the heavy silence Vic could hear a distant, throbbing drone, something like a swarm of bees.

"By God, I've got it!" said the colonel in a low, tense whisper. "Now I know why! Steele—his whole outfit—pulled out, you say? Without getting any orders to move? There's only one explanation for that—he must have had a hunch!"

"A hunch?" said Vic blankly. "What do you mean?"

"A hunch he was going to be bombed!" hissed the colonel. "One of Steele's famous hunches. I don't know how he gets them, but he's never wrong! He's uncanny. The Boches—"

The colonel rose suddenly to his feet.

Vic noticed that the droning was growing stronger. The colonel sprang for the door, with Vic at his heels. As they emerged from the shelter of the roof, the sound became loud and plain, coming down from overhead. Both stopped to gaze upward. The sky was mottled with dark-hued wings, advancing in a staggered line from the northeast. Vic did not count them, but they were just low enough for him to make out the Maltese crosses on the wing-tips. The colonel seized his arm.

"Run for your plane!" he cried. "You might make it yet! Come on, fast—I'll be telling you as we run!"

Vic leaped into a run, with the colonel at his side. The latter began pantingly to shout phrases, but Vic's long legs carried him immediately into the lead, and he couldn't understand the words. He slowed down until the shorter man caught up, and heard,

"Get General Mitchell, at Wing! Tell him north of—"

At that instant the first bomb fell! Somewhere behind him the earth was rent in two by a terrific concussion, accompanied by a deafening roar. There was a blast of air which, catching Vic in mid-stride, literally blew him off his feet. He landed on hands and knees and slid into a heap. A hand tugged him to his feet.

"Come on! The trap is in the 2nd corps area, opposite—"

Vic was again on his feet, running, when the second detonation split the air. It was closer than the first, so that he heard the blood-curdling screech of flying fragments past his ears, but this time he kept his balance. He tore ahead at top speed toward the Spad, gritting his teeth with determination to make it. But suddenly he noticed that he no longer heard the colonel's voice. He turned his head without pausing—he was alone.

He stopped, looked back. The colonel was in a heap, some fifty feet back, writh-



ing, struggling to crawl. Vic turned and retraced his steps. A third bomb struck, over by the barracks. The concussion hit him in the face like a blow, and he saw a cloud of timbers and dirt geyser into the air. He dropped quickly to his knees beside the prostrate colonel, who still tried to wriggle forward.

"Colonel! You're hit! Tell me your message—quick!"

The colonel rolled on his side; there was a great hole in his back, just above the shoulder blades, and another in front, where a jagged chunk of steel had torn its way through. From both the life-blood gurgled redly. His face was the color of putty, but his eyes refused to glaze. His lips moved, but no sound came forth.

Another explosion shook the earth, followed closely by two more. A shower of mud and debris descended, and a section of a roof-beam, striking Vic across the small of the back, knocked him flat. For a moment he lay, half stunned, his face in the dirt. The bombs were following each other thick and fast now, with hardly an interval between. Trees crashed, buildings rose bodily, and junks of steel whizzed through the air on all sides. Vic hugged the ground, bit back his overwhelming horror, and tried to think.

He realized that the colonel was wounded, perhaps mortally; also that they were lying fully exposed on flat ground. A bomb landing anywhere within fifty feet would riddle them with its fragments. He must get himself, and the other, into some sort of shelter—but what shelter was there? He raised his head cautiously. Perhaps there were some dug-outs, in under the trees. But he did not know where to look for them, and anyway, the trees were too far. He could never reach them alive, now.

Then he was looking toward the hangars. The canvas sheds themselves were of no protection, but he saw that around

the outer edge of each ran a shallow ditch, dug to carry off the rain. It was barely a foot deep, but it was better than nothing.

**S**EIZING the helpless colonel by one foot, he began to scuttle backward, like a crab. An explosion knocked him flat. He recovered his breath, and his courage, and covered a few more yards. The distance seemed interminable. The colonel was heavy, and awkward as only an unconscious man can be, but grimly Vic refused to leave him. Gritting his teeth, he dragged himself, and his burden, a little nearer.

A frightful detonation drove the breath from his body. He turned, gasping, to see that a bomb had blown the corner off the nearest hangar, completely obliterating all trace of the ditch. In the midst of his despair he remembered something an infantry captain had once told him. "Two never hit in the same spot!"

Half rising, he seized the colonel with both arms, and ran with him as with a baby, never feeling his two hundred pounds. As the next torpedo crashed, he hurled himself bodily into the crater made by the last.

*Crunch!* He slid to the bottom of the smoking hole, with the body of the colonel resting across his shoulders. But for the moment his only conscious thought was of shelter. He pressed his face against the reeking earth, clawed at it with his fingers. The stench of high explosive filled his nostrils, and smarted in his eyes, but he did not mind. Anything to escape that awful hell which roared overhead, those hurtling missiles which could tear a man out of all semblance to a human being.

The earth shook beneath him, the blast of the explosions beat down upon his back. He tried to crawl deeper, and cursed and prayed by turns. His utter helplessness, the impossibility of either



escape or defense, left him nothing but stark, gripping fear. He fought it back, telling himself that men had lived through bomb raids before this.

Even to such man-made hell as this there must come an end. Vaguely Vic realized that he was hearing no more explosions. He shifted and slid sideways, so that he could raise his head. The last German plane, with a final swoop, flew low over the shambles, machine-gunning the roofless barracks. It shot off over the trees, the spatter of its Spandaus melting to silence. A ghastly silence reigned.

Vic raised himself to his knees. He ached in every muscle, as if he had been battered by gigantic fists; his brain was still numb with horror. He gazed about him dazedly, his glance coming finally to rest on the face of the man by his side. The colonel's skin had the look of greasy chalk; a single drop of sweat rolled slowly down his pallid cheek. But life still lingered there; the eye-lids fluttered weakly, then suddenly opened wide.

"Colonel! Are you alive?"

The last flicker of life lighted those stubborn gray eyes. They bored into Vic's, as if determined by the power of their gaze to convey a message. Below the draggled moustache the lips were the color of ashes, but Vic saw them move feebly. He leaned closer, intent on catching the faintest whisper. He must catch it!

"Hiss!" murmured the colonel. "Hiss-s-s—"

"What!" cried Vic, puzzled. "What's that, colonel?"

But it was too late. The colonel's eyes remained open, but now they froze into a sightless stare. His jaw dropped, and his limbs seemed suddenly to become jelly. From a man he had abruptly changed into a pile of clothing, covering a corpse. Vic shook his shoulder, and shouted frantic questions. No use. The colonel was dead.

Wiping the cold sweat from his brow,

Vic staggered out to level ground. Hardly knowing what he did, he reeled toward his Spad. By the time he had covered the intervening yards, his wits were coming back to him, and he gave it a hasty inspection. There were a number of small holes torn in the fabric of wings and fuselage, but the cockpit appeared unhurt, and when he tugged at the prop the motor turned over easily. It had been standing far enough from the center of the attack to escape serious harm. At least it would fly.

But in the very act of reaching for the switches he paused. His duty, plainly, was to carry the colonel's message and warning to those in headquarters at Souilly. But he realized that he had no message to carry, not even a clue. The colonel had discovered some sort of a trap, in the path of the drive which was to start tomorrow morning. But what kind of a trap? And where? He could tell them nothing. The dying man's last gasp, even, meant nothing to him. Hiss! Why in hell should he use his last breath to mention the name of a motor?

Vic saw his map, tucked in its case in the cockpit. He drew it out and unfolded it; perhaps it could give him some clue. The drive, the colonel had said, was to be directed at the St. Mihiel salient. Vic found that easily enough, and let his eye wander over the neighboring territory. None of the names were familiar to him, or carried any meaning.

He cursed his stupidity. Why did he, a green rookie, have to be the one to be faced with this perplexing problem? Now a veteran, who knew the sector from A to Z, might be able to make a guess. But the only veteran he could think of was "Cold Steele," major of the 5th, and he knew nothing even of where to find him.

That light, tan-colored blotch, with contour lines running all around it; that would be a hill. Quite a high one, too.



Mont Sec, it was marked. The lines hugged its southern slope, apparently. To the north of it were the names of several towns. Vic stiffened suddenly, and the hand holding the map shook. One town was spelled *Hisseaux*!

Why, that, when you said it aloud, sounded just like *Hisso*! That must be it. That was what the colonel was trying to tell him; not a make of motor. The Boche trick, whatever it was, was being laid in the neighborhood of *Hisseaux*. Now he had something to report which would really mean something. He thrust the map back into its case, snapped on the switches, and ran round to the prop.

But even as he seized it he noticed that the sun was sinking toward the horizon; it was already nearly six o'clock. It struck him that to take off, land again, find a phone, and reach General Mitchell would take time. More time would be necessary to send out a second reconnaissance over *Hisseaux*; perhaps it could not be done before dark. What then? The drive was starting at dawn; in the morning it would be too late.

He jerked savagely at the prop. For him to report nothing but the name of a town, at this late hour, would be useless. He must report more than that. He must discover what the colonel had seen, and report the exact location and nature of the trap, in order for his information to have any value. He must, between now and twilight, uncover the whole secret, or disaster would result at dawn.

THE motor started with a roar. He sprang for the cockpit, and slapped his belt into place. A blast of the throttle whirled him about; he chose a path between the yawning bomb-craters, and gave her the gun. Nicked in a dozen spots, the vitals of the little Spad were luckily untouched; she took off with a rush and a swoop. He hauled up into the

northeast and tore across the evening sky.

A feeling of terrible helplessness, of insufficiency, gripped him. He was a stranger in a strange land, attempting the impossible. A green recruit, knowing nothing of the Front, unfamiliar with the country over which he flew, ignorant of the meaning of most of the things he saw below him, the difficulties of his purpose seemed insuperable. To a veteran of front-line experience this job would not be so appalling; such a one would know what to look for, and how to recognize it when he saw it. Vic ground his teeth with dogged determination. What he lacked in skill he would have to make up in sheer guts.

He tried to follow a route on his map, but the jumble of towns and roads was meaningless to him. He lost himself, found his way again, then once more was hopelessly at sea. Suddenly he found, ahead, a bulky, rectangular hill rising from the plain. Yes, it was just beyond a river. That must be Mont Sec—and just behind it he would find the village of *Hisseaux*.

He careened over the crest of the small mountain at terrific speed, then flattened out and peered down. The first thing he saw was a series of continuous flashes, jetting from a patch of underbrush. Curious, he stared at them. Then it struck him that he was gazing into the muzzle of a machine gun which was firing at him.

Quickly he looked away. Something coughed sharply, off his left wing-tip. He caught himself just in time, turned his head the other way. The less he thought about what the Boches down there were trying to do to him the better.

He came about in a wide circle. Archie puffs dotted the air all about him now, and flaming onions were coming up in long, fiery strings. Resolutely he concentrated his eyes on the ground. He was



looking for a village; it was on the map as Hisseaux, right here, but he could not find it. He had not learned yet that four years of war reduce a town to a blotch of whitish dust and a scrawled sign by the roadside.

Damn those archies, anyway! When he flew directly through a burst, the smoke got in his nose, and under his goggles, bringing the tears to his eyes. Gasping, he began another circle. He was sure of the spot, but checked it again on his map. Yes, he was just northeast of the hill of Mont Sec, behind it. Here should be the village of Hisseaux.

He peered long and hard. Now he saw a road, coming from the German rear, and saw where, for some distance, it appeared to be paved with stone. Could that be all that was left of the main street of a town? The pavement, and a few piles of debris? It must be. He dropped a little lower, regardless of bullets.

Now he observed that by the side of the road, under a screen of shattered trees and carefully arranged underbrush, there ran the twin rails of a narrow-gauge railroad. He wondered if that could be the colonel's secret. Perhaps no one had ever dropped this low before; from higher altitude it was probably invisible. But just the presence of a railroad didn't mean a trap. He followed it with his eye. It ran straight toward the front, right into the slope of the hill—and then disappeared. He rubbed his eyes, and stared.

Yes, the tracks simply ended—vanished in a clump of bushes, just where a secondary trench system encircled the base of Mont Sec. That was strange. Did a feeder track just end like that—not even a switch or anything? He cursed himself for not knowing more about such things. Damned recruit! He swung the Spad off at an angle, then came back, straight for that point. He'd make sure about that.

A veritable cloud-burst of archie black-

ened the air before him. More than one machine gun was going down there now, and some of them were using tracers. He could see the ashy streaks pouring past his wing-tips, reaching for his tail. But instead of angering him, this pleased him. The Boches didn't want him to inspect that area. Then there must be something there. He banked low over the spot where the tracks ended, and leaned far over his cowl to look.

First he saw that the track didn't end. It crossed the trench system, which here was wide and deep, and plunged straight into a hole in the hillside. A tunnel-mouth, carefully camouflaged with branches, but visible from his low altitude. Then he saw that there were on either side, at some distance along the trench, other openings into the hill, other tunnel-mouths. Four or five of them, all more or less perfectly concealed. He began to think rapidly.

Tunnels leading into the back of Mont Sec? What was in there, then? Where did they go, these tunnels that were capable of holding a whole train? The answer flashed upon him, and he nearly jumped out of the seat. Vic had never studied infantry tactics, but it needed no experienced strategist to grasp this. Mont Sec was in the direct path of the push. From the front line, on the southern slope, the Boches would retire in good order at the first onslaught. They would allow the attackers of the first wave to sweep on over the hill unopposed. Then, through the tunnels which had their outlets on the far side, the Germans would pour out in the rear, cut off the spearhead of the attack, and raise hell generally with the whole scheme.

This, then, was the colonel's discovery. In Vic's mind there was not the least doubt but that he had stumbled on the secret. That it was of vital importance no one needed to tell him. He shouted in triumph, and jerked his Spad into a climb-



ing turn—only to run headlong into a searing stream of steel pouring down from above.

**H**IS instinctive quickness saved him. Instead of ducking, he pulled farther up. A rushing shape shot past his wing, guns still pounding madly. He jerked out of a stall, and started to level out. But more guns were hammering somewhere.

He glanced left; a blunt nose bore down on him, vomiting silver threads. They sliced neatly through his upper wing, then vanished as the attacker swerved to avoid collision. Vic's brief look told him that that was a Fokker, and some inner instinct told him that there were others about. All he knew about combat he had learned at Issoudun; but he refused to be afraid. Altitude, he knew, was the one thing which might save him. Grimly he climbed.

The sky became an inferno of blazing guns and interlacing tracer streaks. Fokkers wheeled and darted on all sides like angry wasps. Vic never found out how many there were; they seemed to surround him like an ever-shifting, impenetrable barrier. Their volleys met him head on, raked him from the side, rained on him from above, and swept him from behind.

With despair he realized that he was gaining no altitude at all. He was, if anything, lower than when first attacked. These Fokkers could out-climb him without half trying. To flee on the level was impossible; he was lower than the crest of Mont Sec, which loomed between him and safety. They were closing in on him.

Their fiery bursts intersected each other at his very elbow. Their raucous Spandaus hammered a death-song into his ears. Their bullets ripped long ribbons from his fuselage, stabbed neat holes in the windshield before his eyes. A tinge

of sudden pain shot down his arm; steel had tasted his blood.

Suddenly something happened. For a moment he did not know what. A change took place in the mad maelstrom which whirled above his head. He peered about him, and still saw Fokkers on all sides. They were still careening crazily about the sky, and firing furiously. But there was some difference—they were not firing at him! Then he saw that there were more planes than before—and at last perceived that some of them were Spads!

Above his head a Fokker, twisting onto its back, dropped abruptly. It caught itself, and leveled out directly before him. His sights ringed its cockpit perfectly, its pilot unaware of his position. Vic stared at it dumbly.

"General Mitchell," he was thinking. "Mont Sec—tunnels—warn the doughboys. Before dawn."

He felt the warm blood trickling down inside his sleeve, from the gash in his shoulder. He hauled the Spad off to the right, and began climbing.

Before he passed Mont Sec there were other Spads on his flanks. The dogfight behind him had broken up, two Fokkers in ashes on the ground and the rest in flight. But of that Vic knew nothing. He was having all he could do to hold his ship level. The left aileron didn't seem to be behaving very well. And he felt dizzy, and terribly tired. He didn't know where to look for a landing place, but these Spads must have a field to go to. He would stick with them.

He peered through misty goggles at the nearest. On its side he saw a winged V, the insignia of the 5th, and a huge number 33. He grinned, and tried to keep from falling asleep. Some of his future comrades from the 5th. Good. Odd that that fellow should have 33—the same number that was already painted on his



own Spad when it was delivered to him at Colombey.

Some time later the other Spads were gone. He jerked himself up, and saw that they were gliding for a drome. He concentrated all his faculties on making that rectangle without a crash.

It struck his wheels with a thump. He rolled to a stop in front of the hangars. They swam before his eyes as he clambered painfully to the ground, muttering to himself. Suddenly someone stood in front of him, addressing him in harsh tones.

"Who the hell are you, flying around in my number 33?"

"General Mitchell," mumbled Vic. "Mont Sec—tunnels—"

"I'm not General Mitchell," boomed the voice. "I'm Major Steele, and I want to know who you are, with my number on your ship!"

Somehow that name was like a dash of cold water in the face. Vic steadied himself, and focussed his eyes, to see a lean, hard-bitten countenance glaring into his.

"V. C. Mandeville, sir. Reporting to the 5th, for duty."

"Oh, so you're the recruit we were looking for!" Cold Steele's voice became colder than before. "A fine show you put up! Go out in a ship with my number 33 on it, and make a fool of yourself. I saw you. A Fokker right in front of you, and you never fired a shot! What the hell were you thinking about just then?"

A surge of weakness swept Vic. He reeled on his feet, and his eyes rolled in their sockets. To the hard-boiled major he was the picture of a man beset by mortal fear.

"Bah! I see. You were thinking about saving your skin. Good. I'll recruit you. There will be an assignment for you in the morning."

"Wait—wait a minute, sir," began Vic weakly. "I have a report. For General

Mitchell—tell him—"

Haltingly he told his story from the beginning. Even to his own ears it sounded incredible, like a manufactured tale. Cold Steele gazed at him scornfully, and laughed without mirth.

"A pack of lies—but they'll do you no good." A Spad was sliding in to land. "Wait a minute; here comes the man I sent over to our old field to meet you."

Vic stood swaying, and held his arm crooked at the elbow so that the blood would not run out his sleeve. The pilot ran up, and at the first words from his lips the major stared again at Vic.

"By God—it's the truth, then? Come inside, Mandeville, while I get Souilly on the phone."

A few minutes later, while the connection was being completed, he turned to the waiting Vic.

"You've saved the drive for us, son—and my reputation to boot. The 5th is charged with getting all the dope in that particular sector. But there's still one thing I don't quite understand. Why in hell, when you had a Boche right straight in front of your sights, didn't you shoot him down?"

Vic steadied himself against the edge of the door.

"In Colombey, sir," he said slowly, "they don't put—ammunition—in the belts."

"What!" said the major, letting the phone slip unheeded from his fingers. "You mean to tell me you, a green recruit, went over Mont Sec under a thousand feet, *with empty belts*? By God," he added respectfully, "you can fly number 33 in my place any time you want to!"

But the last words Vic never heard. The dizziness overcame him at last. With a soft sigh he slumped into a heap on the floor, and a capful of crimson blood ran out of his sleeve, to spread into a smooth puddle.



# HELL'S JOYRIDE

by WILLIAM E. POINDEXTER

AUTHOR OF

"PILOT OF NO-MAN'S LAND" ETC.

*It was fifty years since he had been the crack shot of Lee's regiment. But hell, what is half a century when an old war horse like Colonel Whipple gets the chance to die with his boots on in steel-lashed skies?*

The old colonel's revolver came up in steady, deliberate aim.

Frederick  
Blakeslee



"I'LL have you unduhstand, suh, that I was with General Lee when he—"

Jerry Nelson grinned amiably. "When he surrendered to Grant?" he interposed mildly.

"No, suh!" Colonel Amos Whipple thundered. "No, suh! When he surrendered to circumstances beyond his control, suh!"

There was a sudden blaze of wrath in the colonel's faded blue eyes, and his short, white beard bristled fiercely like the whiskers of an aged but belligerent terrier. He strode back and forth across the mess shack, and even the stiff knee caused by a Yankee bullet at Appomattox, could not lessen his erect military bearing. He walked always as if the music of fifes and the rattle of drums from long past battle fields still sounded in his ears.

He whirled about and shook his cane under the nose of the grinning pilot who sprawled limply in a chair, cigarette smoke drifting idly from his nostrils.

"You call youhselves soldiers," he snorted contemptuously. "I tell you, suh, you don't know what solderin' means. All you young snips think about is women and drinkin', and raisin' Hades in general. You don't know one end of a gun from another. When I was youh age, I was the best shot in the regiment. I could knock the buttons off a Yankee with a pistol at sixty yahds, suh!" He flourished his stick excitedly, as if he were signaling a charge. "By gad, if I only had my old company here, I'd—"

Quite abruptly, the fire died out of his eyes, and he seemed to shrink as he stood there. For he had just remembered that of all that gallant company, he was the only one left, and he was just a broken old man, unfit to fight for his country. He had been traveling in France when the war broke out, and there he had re-

mained despite all efforts to send him home. Like an old war horse, he sniffed battle from afar, and the desire to again smell burned powder was like a raging fever in his veins.

In his efforts to get to the Front, he had made a bigger nuisance of himself than a company of German shock troops. Unable to gain his heart's desire, he had remained as near the lines as possible, which was no nearer than the flying field of the 109th.

He hung about the mess shack like a pathetic ghost of by-gone days, telling interminable tales of those glamorous times with his hero, Lee, to all who would listen. He expressed his whole-souled contempt of men who fought in the sky instead of on the ground as men should fight. Yet in his secret heart he admired the hard-faced young devils of the squadron who grinned and thumbed their noses impiously in the leering face of death. And to strike one last blow for his country, he would even have dared to ride one of those roaring, screaming demons of the sky himself. But that privilege was denied him.

As he stood there now, tears of age and weakness coming into his eyes at the thought of the company he would never lead into battle again, Jerry Nelson glanced at him and looked away in quick sympathy.

"I'll bet you were sure a fire-eater, colonel," he agreed heartily. "But gosh, you've had your share of fighting. Why not forget about it and leave the job to us young fellows? It's our turn now."

The old man nodded heavily.

"But you can't know what it means, suh, to be old and useless when youh country is calling." He straightened suddenly and shook his cane defiantly in the air. "Death!" he cried, his voice cracking a bit, "I'm not afraid of death. But I want to die with my boots on like a Whip-



ple and a soldier should. I want to die for my country, suh—"

He broke off and wheeled about as the door of the mess shack was flung open and a pilot strode into the room. For a moment the newcomer stood there, his face hard and expressionless, his staring eyes seeing nothing. Then he tore off his helmet and goggles and hurled them to the floor. He walked to the table, shouldered the old man heedlessly out of his way, and with a steady hand poured a stiff drink down his throat. When he spoke, his voice was even, emotionless, but bleak death looked out of his eyes.

"They got Bland and Harris," he stated as if he were repeating a bitter lesson which he had learned by heart. "My fault, I guess. The bombing planes we were escorting were knocked down, and we failed in our objective."

"Hell!" Jerry Nelson said. That was all. There was nothing else to say.

CAPTAIN DAN HOLLIS had only been in command of the 109th for two weeks, but during that time bad luck had ridden his tail with disheartening persistence. Today had been the finishing blow. Ordered to destroy the rail-head and ammo depot at Cartigny, without fail, he had blindly escorted the bombing flight into a trap and seen it destroyed together with two of his own pilots. He, himself, had escaped only by a miracle. He could not have foreseen the result, yet he considered himself responsible, and to a man of his type, failure was the cardinal sin.

He brushed a hand across his reddened, aching eyes.

"Well, what's happened can't be helped," he muttered the truism half to himself. "But I've had strict orders from Wing to get that dump today, and no excuses accepted. And there isn't another

bombing outfit in the sector that's available for duty."

He hesitated a moment, then swung about to face Nelson.

"I've had my orders, and I'll carry them out in spite of hell," he said grimly. "I can do this job by myself, but," he grinned mirthlessly, "I won't be alive to brag about it. If I don't come back, you're in command, Jerry, until you hear otherwise from Wing. Get it?"

Jerry Nelson shook his head slowly.

"It wasn't your fault that you failed," he said, "and it's a nutty idea to think you can blow up that dump and rail-head without a bombing party. But you're a stubborn cuss, so it's no use to argue with you. However, I never did crave to command this squadron. Too much grief. I'm going with you."

Dan Hollis shook his head firmly.

"Damned decent of you," he growled, "but this is my party. I've lost enough men for one day. No, Jerry, I go it alone."

Colonel Whipple had been standing by unnoticed, drinking in the words eagerly. Talk of battle caused his eyes to blaze, and his nostrils to dilate. He spoke for the first time.

"It reminds me of the time I was with Lee on a raid into Pennsylvania," he began, his breath coming fast as old memories thronged upon him. "There was a Yankee sniper in a tree a hundred yahds away, holdin' us up. The general turned to me and says, 'Whipple, get me that man!' I took my revolver, suh—"

The old man, engrossed in memories of brave days long past, was jerked rudely back to the present as the captain whirled fiercely upon him. Up to this time Hollis had kept control of himself, but now his nerves snapped.

"Shut up, you old fossil!" he grated savagely. "What in hell do I care about you and Lee? Dammit, you've made a



nuisance of yourself around here long enough with your wild yarns. You couldn't hit a flock of barns, and you know it. You ought to be in an old lady's home knitting socks. Get out, I tell you!"

Hollis paused abruptly as he found his voice breaking, and he turned away, fighting for control. For an instant the old man raised his stick as if he would strike the other, then he turned slowly away and limped out through the door.

So great was the strain upon him that Dan Hollis was totally unaware of his brutality, unaware that his words had struck straight to the heart of the old soldier. He whirled about, forgetting the colonel instantly in the preparations of his desperate mission from which he did not expect to return. His own ship was bullet-riddled and strained by the recent conflict, but a two-seater stood on the line, and he ordered the motor warmed.

Colonel Whipple stood just outside the door, watching the preparations with hopeless, lack-luster eyes. Never before had he realized so keenly that he was old and helpless, and his chin quivered a little beneath his white beard.

"I sure reckon he was right," he muttered to himself. "I'm just an—an old fossil and ought to be in an old lady's home. Couldn't hit a flock of barns, heh? Mebby not, mebby not!"

He looked sadly at his gnarled hands that had once held a revolver with rock-like steadiness. He seemed to age visibly as he stood there, beaten, dejected, but his old eyes automatically watched the mechanics working over the plane. And as he watched, a sudden cunning gleam came into his eyes, the old fighting light, and his shoulders straightened. The ship was a two-seater, and he remembered that Hollis was going out alone—going out to fight gallantly for his country; to die with his boots on as a soldier should.

Trembling with an excitement that he

could not conceal, the old warrior limped casually across the field, and so familiar a figure had he become that the busy mechanics paid him no attention. Watching his chance, he leaned idly against the fuselage of the plane, and when no one was looking, he climbed up with surprising agility, swung his stiff leg over the coaming, and dropped down out of sight.

He was barely in time, for Hollis came trotting across the field, a carefully held package under his arm. Without glancing at the rear cockpit, he stowed the package into the pocket of the front cockpit, straddled in behind the stick and jazzed the throttle. He read his instrument board with practiced eyes, and a moment later took off with no more than a casual wave of his gloved hand to Jerry Nelson who watched him with worried eyes.

DAN HOLLIS climbed his ship in a tight spiral until he was flying close against a dull seven-thousand foot ceiling, the gray of the old plane blending perfectly with the gray of the tumbled clouds. After the disastrous flight of the morning, he knew that it was hopeless to attempt to approach the well-guarded ammo depot from the air. He would be shot down before he came within sight of it. But he had other plans, plans that stood a chance of succeeding, even though they meant his own death.

And as Captain Dan Hollis bent over the stick, his thin, straight lips beneath the goggles curved into a wintry smile, and something very like exultation filled his heart. He would die, yes, but he would not fail. He raised his head and glanced whimsically up at the clouds that obscured the limitless void of the sky. Somewhere off there, he thought, there might be a place where pilots went when they died. If so, he wanted to be able to meet the men whom he had led to death, and tell



them that it was all right, that they hadn't died in vain, after all.

In the rear cockpit, Colonel Whipple crouched down and clung fast with his knotted hands. His heart was trying to climb up his throat and leap out his mouth, but he bit it back. It was excitement and not fear that caused his heart to behave in that extraordinary manner. It was not quite clear to the old warrior why he had come on this desperate flight across the lines, yet somewhere within him was a rising exaltation, a feeling that some high destiny was to be his.

Why, he felt just as he had on that day years ago when he was riding along by General Lee's side. Some strange impulse had caused him to turn in the saddle and look behind him, just in time to see a rifle muzzle thrust from the bushes, pointed straight at Lee's back. His cap and ball revolver had leaped into his hand and roared, and he had seen the rifle jerk spasmodically and slide slowly back into the bushes. The memory of how Lee had turned and laid his hand on the young staff officer's arm, was still warm and glowing in his heart.

And now, the same impulse had caused him to climb into this roaring sky demon. There was a definite reason behind it, and what that reason was, he would know presently. His hand fumbled inside his coat and patted something hard that snuggled against his side.

The ship gave a sudden veering lurch that nearly threw the old man from the cockpit. The steady chant of the Hisso rose to a hammering, driving roar as the pilot fed it the gun, and as the ship dived vertically, the roar seemed to change to a high, piercing scream. It reminded the colonel of nothing less than the prolonged, triumphant scream of an eagle as it pounced upon its prey.

The old soldier did not understand what had happened until a black shadow ca-

reened past, and something tore angrily through the cockpit within inches of his face. Then he knew! It wasn't the first time he had heard bullets whisper of swift and sudden death. Gad, no! He almost forgot that he was a mile above the earth, as he lifted his head and peered eagerly over the coaming.

He was just in time to see a great black ship come thundering down upon them, with grayish streaks darting out from the blunt nose. But before he could be sure what was happening, earth and sky abruptly changed places in a most unorthodox manner, and he clung blindly to keep from being catapulted through the air.

As the earth flipped up until it was above him, he thought he heard a chattering, racketing sound, and when the universe was once more behaving in a normal manner, he looked about for the enemy ship. For a moment, it seemed to have disappeared in thin air, and then he looked below, and caught his breath. The big black plane was going down in erratic whirls and plunges, like a leaf that the autumn winds has shaken from the tree. An instant later smoke chuffed out from the cowlings, and a great black funeral plume rose from the doomed ship as she rode to destruction.

Colonel Whipple loosed his breath in an explosive sigh, and glanced at the pilot. Dan Hollis's head was half turned as he watched the Fokker go down, and noting the thin, pinched-in nose, the grim, half-smiling lips, the old colonel nodded in approval.

"By gad," he muttered to himself, "he would have been a credit to the old company!"

A few minutes later, the captain brought his plane down until he was hedge-hopping over apparently deserted country, striving to come as near the ammo dump as he could without being seen. Far to the right, a road, fortunately va-



cant of traffic, bisected a temporary railway line, along which an ammunition train was slowly moving.

At the sight of it, Hollis scanned the ground hastily for a landing place, cut his ignition and set the big plane down to a neat, dead-stick landing in a field. Hoping desperately that he had not been seen, he leaped out, procured the package from the pocket of the ship and looked it over carefully.

FROM the rear cockpit, Colonel Whipple watched eagerly. He wanted to leap out and share the adventure, but caution held him back. Dan might take him back to the field, and he couldn't let that happen. This was the only chance he would ever have to fight the Yankees again—that is, the Germans—and he wasn't going to miss it. And the exaltation was rising within him more strongly than ever.

He could feel the hot blood of youth flowing back into his ancient veins, as he watched Dan Hollis. He saw the pilot unwrap the package and take out four sticks of dynamite, bound tightly together, and he saw, too, that caps and fuses were already attached. Vaguely now, he understood the captain's purpose, and why he did not expect to come back. Hollis was going to blow up that dump with dynamite, but to do so, he would have to destroy himself with it! The old man nodded his head in approval. That was the sort of death for a soldier to die.

Dan Hollis flung aside his heavy flying jacket, dropped helmet and goggles to the ground. Again his tightly shut mouth was half smiling, just as it had been a few minutes ago when he had shot the German out of the sky. He was going to die hideously, but all men would know that he had obeyed orders, that he had not failed.

With a quick jerk of his shoulders, he whirled about and strode away into the

underbrush. Waiting until he had disappeared from view, Colonel Whipple climbed from the plane and started after him, easily following the course by the sound of Dan's progress through the bushes.

This was better than fighting in the air, he thought exultantly. Why, it was like a scouting expedition inside the Yankee lines. But there was a painful difference. In those days he had glided along as easily as an Indian, but now he stumbled and blundered into trees, and his breath began to come in tearing sobs from his parted lips. A panic rose within him as Hollis drew away from him. He hastened his steps, only to fall with a crash at the edge of a little clearing.

On the other side of the clearing, Dan Hollis whirled tensely, a forty-five automatic in his hand, his finger trembling on the trigger. What he saw caused him to gasp with amazement, then his face reddened with uncontrollable anger. Thrusting the automatic into his pocket, he strode back and jerked the old man to his feet.

"Why you infernal old fool!" he rasped at last, keeping his voice down because he knew that they were not far from the dump and the Germans would have sentries posted. "So you thought you'd take a little joy ride, did you? Thought I didn't have anything to do but play around with a senile old idiot who ought to be back home cutting out paper dolls! By thunder, don't you know this is war?"

Knowing that he was about to die, sick with the fear of failing after all, Dan Hollis who was not normally cruel, lashed out viciously at the old man with every epithet he could lay his vitriolic tongue to. Colonel Whipple drew himself up with a dignity that was natural to him.

"I reckon I do not need a boy to tell me what wah is, suh," he said quietly, his soft Southern accent becoming more pro-



nounced. "When I was with Lee in—"

Dan cut him short with a savage gesture.

"Hell," he snapped. "I wish you were with Lee now! Listen, old-timer, you didn't know it, but you took a one-way trip. You got yourself into this mess, now get out of it the best way you can!"

He whirled angrily on his heel and stalked away. He couldn't be bothered with the old fool, he thought furiously, and then he was more furious because his conscience kept nagging him as he remembered the stricken look in the colonel's eyes. For a moment he hesitated, tempted to take the old man back to the field and start again, but he shook his head grimly. There was no time for that. He had had orders to get that depot today, and he couldn't take chances now. Already the day was waning to its close.

Colonel Whipple was following slowly. For a moment he had forgotten that he was old. He had thought that he was young and strong once more, but the captain's words had caused age to rush upon him again, almost overwhelming him. The exaltation of a few minutes before was cold ashes in his shrunken breast, and his bright star of destiny was dimmed, hidden from sight. He blundered on and on, not knowing where he was going.

It couldn't have been long after when the trees thinned out, and he caught a glimpse of Dan Hollis crouching down on what appeared to be the brink of a low cliff. He hesitated an instant, then with instinctive caution, dropped to his hands and knees and crept forward. Hollis turned at the sound, scowling blackly, but he was palpitating with excitement.

Colonel Whipple wiped his bleary eyes and looked down to see that the railroad tracks ran along the foot of the hill. The ammunition train had stopped almost beneath them and men were unloading high

explosives onto a hastily erected landing stage. Behind the stage were scattered buildings which held hundreds of tons of supplies, ammunition and H. E.

In the excitement of the moment, Dan Hollis forgot his anger. He clutched the old man eagerly by the arm.

"It's a set-up!" he panted. "I thought I'd sneak in, blow the thing up, and myself with it, but that won't be necessary. I can throw the dynamite and blow up that train. If the concussion doesn't set off the dump, those buildings will catch fire anyway, and all the Jerries this side the Rhine can't keep the place from going. Colonel, keep your eyes open if you want to see a first-class imitation of hell!"

The colonel kept his eyes open, but they were wistful eyes because now that he was here on the battle line, so to speak, there was nothing he could do.

THE excitement seemed to ebb out of Hollis, leaving him cool and calculating. Crouching low in the grass on the top of the bluff so that he could not be seen against the sky-line, he examined the sticks of dynamite carefully, seeing that the caps and fuses were properly attached to the deadly stuff. He drew out a match and touched it to the split end of a fuse. Then he stood up, plainly revealed, and deliberately studied the lay of the land, calculating on the best spot to throw the explosive to get best results.

There was a hoarse shout from below as he was seen, and a rifle bullet whined two feet above his head. The fuses sputtered and hissed as they burned down with alarming rapidity. Dan jerked his hand back suddenly and threw the little bundle of death with all his strength. It hurtled out in a high arc, turning slowly over and over, and he watched it with fascinated eyes, unmindful of the bullets that slanted past him.

But as he watched, his face contorted



horribly as if he had received a death wound, and he ground an oath between his teeth. For as the dynamite whirled through the air, the fuses flew loose and dropped harmlessly to the ground! The dynamite struck close by the train in a soft spot and did not explode.

For a moment, Dan stood as if he had been turned to stone, staring down at the dynamite that was as impotent now to blow up the train as so many sticks of wood. He could see it lying there in plain sight, and the Germans had seen it, too. Some of them were running to pick it up, others were starting to climb the bluff.

A rifle bullet raked his side, swinging him half around, but he did not seem to feel the shock. At one side of the dump, a machine gun was going into action.

But all that Captain Hollis could think of was that he had failed. There was no possibility of doing anything about it now. Nor could he make his escape. Two Fokkers were circling low over the depot.

Suddenly he swung his head back and forth, and a strange animal-like sound rose in his bronzed throat. He leaned tensely forward, on the point of hurling himself down the steep bluff in a sliding leap. If he could reach that dynamite before the Germans reached it, he might hurl it against the side of the train with force enough to explode it, and so die as he had originally intended to do.

But at that moment an arm swept across his chest and hurled him back so that he stumbled and fell to his knees. He looked up in furious amazement to see Colonel Amos Whipple standing there, the wind blowing his white hair and beard wildly about his face. And in the colonel's hand was a long-barrelled Colt. It was a six-shot cap and ball revolver, deadly in its accuracy, as shining and well-oiled as it had been fifty years before when the Federals had listened to its spiteful road.

Hollis choked back an oath of rage, and stared up at the old man. For a single instant the colonel stood trembling, then he drew himself erect and his eyes blazed as if he had heard a trumpet sound the attack. No, it wasn't a trumpet he had heard. Back across the years came General Lee's voice, quiet, confident: "Get me that man, Whipple!"

Why, a man couldn't fail with that voice ringing in his ears! He hadn't failed to get the Yankee sniper, and he wouldn't fail now. Only it wasn't a man he was shooting at now. It was that dynamite down by the foot of the hill, the sticks looking no bigger than pencils.

But it wasn't a senile old man who stood there now. It was young Whipple, the crack shot of his regiment, and as the massive old weapon came up, it did not waver.

Slowly, carefully, he squinted along the gleaming barrel, and squeezed the trigger. Dirt flew within an inch of the dynamite. It was a difficult angle, and the wind was blowing hard. A German flung himself forward in an heroic attempt to get the dynamite, and a slug from the Colt caved in the side of his head.

Dan Hollis gasped as he saw what the old man was trying to do. Bullets were raking past Whipple, tugging at his clothes, ripping through his wind-blown white hair. The Maxim down below went into action, the stream of bullets gnawing viciously into the ground at his feet. Dan knew he ought to reach up and drag the old man back to safety, but he could not move.

As Whipple sighted again, a rifle bullet struck him in the shoulder with that peculiar sound made only by lead burying itself in living flesh.

"God!"

The word was jerked out of Hollis as



if he himself had felt the shock in his own chest.

The old man rocked and swayed like a tree that has felt the stroke of an axe, but he did not fail. Again the big revolver came up, steadied for an interminable moment, and belched thunderously. The bullet struck true, the dynamite exploded, and the little ammunition train seemed to leap into a thousand fragments.

Men who had been knocked off their feet, scrambled up and ran about aimlessly. The dump had not exploded, but the wind was sweeping flames back from the burning train and landing stage, and it was only a question of minutes until the whole thing went.

From the colonel's lips there rose a cry such as had never been heard before in all Germany. Shrill and quavering, infinitely wild and triumphant, the Rebel yell echoed from hill to hill.

This was his moment of glory, and he was enjoying it to the full. But a film seemed to be gathering before his eyes, and as he reached up his hand to brush it away, he swayed dizzily. As if coming out of a trance, Hollis leaped up and caught him in his arms. With one exultant glance at the scene below him, he threw the colonel over his shoulder and ran heavily in the direction of the plane.

HE HAD gone less than a hundred yards, when the earth seemed to leap beneath his feet, and a great flame shot skyward. The roaring blast that followed swept him off his feet, and caused the blood to gush from his nose and mouth. There followed lesser explosions, but he was deafened and did not hear them.

Somehow, he scrambled to his feet, caught up the colonel again and struggled back to the plane. The old man seemed to be unconscious now, but his hand was

locked about the butt of the old revolver, and Hollis could not loosen it. Carefully he put the colonel into the rear cockpit, fastened the safety strap, and swung the prop.

But even as the Hiss broke into a stuttering roar, and the big ship trembled forward, the two Fokkers which had been circling the dump came reeling down from the sky, their Spandaus blazing. Hollis straddled hastily into the cockpit and jerked the throttle wide.

He had expected death, and been prepared for it, but now he was fighting desperately for life. Not for his own life, but for the soldier whom he had called a senile old idiot; the man who had saved him from the ignominy of failure. He had to get the old man back!

He took the two-seater off the ground in a twisting zoom, the laboring motor shrilling into a crescendo of sound at the strain. Straight between the two diving Fokkers he went, while their bullets slashed his wings to ribbons.

Before they could pull out of the dive, he had heeled his ship over on one wing, and swept down with Vickers racketing. Nothing could stop him now, he thought. The Fokker tried desperately to get out of the trap of her own making, but Hollis was perched securely on her tail. Waiting for the proper moment, he pressed the Bowden triggers with cold deliberation, certain of the result. The guns blasted forth their message of death, and the Fokker dipped like a wounded bird, striking the earth in a sliding, grinding crash an instant later.

Before the second Fokker could come around, Hollis banked, and he was so low that a wing-tip dragged heavily against the tree tops. He thundered straight at the enemy ship, and was met with a hot stream of bullets that glanced along the cowling, stung his shoulder, and spattered against the breech of his guns.



He stared at them for an instant, saw that the mechanism was hopelessly jammed, and spat an oath. His only hope now was to out-run the Fokker, but even as he turned toward the lines, he knew the two-seater didn't have a chance against the fast German pursuit plane.

He glanced over his shoulder, and the Fokker was so close that he could see the triumphant grin on the goggled face of the pilot. The German bored in, closer and closer, holding his fire until there was no chance of a miss. On the point of zooming in a desperate attempt to get out of direct range, Hollis again glanced over his shoulder and his hands froze.

Behind him, Colonel Whipple was sitting erect in the seat, staring at the Fokker, and the big revolver was still clutched in his hand. The wind was blowing his hair and beard back like a snowy cloud. His face was gray, but there was the blue blaze of battle in his eyes once more.

With sudden resolve, Hollis steadied the big ship with an iron hand to give the old man a chance. He had proved his deadly marksmanship once that day, perhaps fate would be kind and he would do it again. The German was directly behind them and within point-blank range.

Hollis saw the revolver come up in that steady, deliberate aim, but even as it did so, the German pressed the trips of his Spandaus. The guns roared in a prolonged burst, and a steady stream of bullets lanced across the pilot's shoulder, biting deep into the flesh, and ripping at the instrument board until fragments of glass and metal lashed back into his face.

That was the longest, the most horrible moment of Dan Hollis's life, and it tested his nerve to the limit. He knew that if he moved his hand on the stick, it would destroy their one remaining hope of life, but with the hot breath of the bullets stinging him, it was almost impossible

not to duck out of danger. But he didn't. Every instant he expected those bullets to smash into the back of his head and tear the life from his straining body, but he sat tense and rigid as if he had been turned to stone. His face was a yellow, grinning death mask.

And then to his straining ears, above the hellish clamor of Hisso and Mercedes motors, and the spiteful clatter of Spandaus, there came a sound that was ludicrously like the pop of a toy pistol. But the stream of bullets no longer tore agonizingly across his shoulder. Sloughing his head around with a jerk that was nothing but a spasmodic muscular contraction of his neck, he saw the Fokker power-diving to destruction, a dead man slumped over the threshing stick.

Colonel Whipple had sunk down in the cockpit, and Hollis could only see the top of his white head rolling back and forth with the motion of the plane.

A few minutes later when Hollis set his ship down on the home tarmac, he leaped out almost before the plane had stopped rolling, and dragged the colonel from the cockpit. As he knelt there, the colonel opened his eyes and stared up at him mournfully.

"Colonel," Dan said huskily, "can you ever forgive me for what I said awhile ago? Soldier, I'd be tickled plumb to death if I was just half the man you are. You saved me from failure. And boy, that shot at the dynamite—"

The old man raised himself, felt of his shoulder, and drew a breath of relief when he found it was only a flesh wound. Then his face clouded again.

"Yeah, I know, son," he said, "that shootin' was awful."

"Awful!" Hollis stared at him.

"Yeah—terrible. I had to shoot twice to hit that dynamite! Why, when I was with Lee in—"

"Hell!" chuckled Dan Hollis.



# BATTLE BIRDS CLUB



**H**IGH Skies, you high-flying bunch of cloud busters! Scramble right over here by the parachute riggers table where we'll have room to spread around a bit. Just climb out of those jumpers and helmets and we'll get right down to club doings.

First of all, for heavens sake do one thing! When filling out your applications be sure to include the town or city you live in. I've had dozens of you men send in your applications: John Jones, 23 Flopp St., Iowa. Now how in thunder am I to know *where* in Iowa, Flopp Street is? Further on in this club I'll publish the names of some men who forgot to give their addresses; if they will just drop me a line, mark the outside of the envelope, "duplicate" and enclose their name and *complete* address I'll match them up with the application they sent in before. I know it was just a slip and no hard feelings or anything like that. But if you could see the mail bags of applications and the gang working on them you'd realize how every little bit helps.

Someone of you buzzards made a crack about Bob Hogan's yarns being swell. Betcha life they're swell, and why not? Bob knows his air from A to Z and has plenty of experience to draw from. One night a while back at a "Q. B." meeting he had me gnawing on the edge of the table with some of his yarns. One in particular reminded me of a little thrill I had a couple of years ago out at Hadley Field over in N. J. I was flying a "Bird" with a sidekick of mine; the peelot thought I had the stick and I thought Jim had the stick and we sailed around for some time when suddenly yours truly, who was taking pictures, happened to look

at Jim—and he had both hands behind his head and was half asleep! Ahem—well—I stopped taking pictures.

I opened a letter from a buzzard a while ago and he spoke of my "blond girl friend." I want to state right here the "Mrs." is no blond and further more, what she can do with the stick and rudder bar would make some of you chaps give up flying as much too rough a pastime. Humph, says my friend Enid, from McKees Rocks, Penn. I could show her a few new ones. Alright, ladies, alright. I won't start any rows between the female of the species.

Most of you peelots have by now received your cards showing that you're full-fledged members of the Battle Birds Club. If some of you have to wait a while before you get the blue cards don't go out and drop over the side at 2,000. They prob'ly got held up in the jam somewhere. We have had to turn down very few so don't be alarmed at a delay. We have the plans in the works for club pins—and how you buzzards can earn them. When we get them set, we'll spring all the dope and then what a headache you'll have!

A lot of you men have written me letters along with your applications, and mighty interesting ones they are too. You've argued about everything from wing loading, aspect ratio, and wing-tip vortices to anti-pacifist propoganda. Mighty glad to hear from you and all your pet ideas and theories.

Had a long chin with "Jack" O'Meara, the soaring champ this A. M. He's the buzzard, and I mean buzzard, that soared for over seventy-five miles without a motor, among other stunts. He and I used



to fly together out on Long Island, so naturally he sends "High Skies" to all you Battle Birds.

Guess I better do the same thing and then shoo you cloud busters out of here so I can pack that chute I've been meaning to for days. The old adage "Keep your powder dry" might well be the airman's motto and revamped into "Keep your chute dry!" Old man moisture sure takes the life out of a "silk tent;" leaving a rained-on chute around unaired is just as good as turning on the gas.

O. K. gang, here's the list of chaps who forgot to send in their towns.

Norman Wilson, 723 June St., Cal.; Alfred Starzyk, 1529 W. Walton St., Ill.; Thomas Herron, 118-17 Shelton Ave., N.

Y.; Mitchel Levy, 441½ N. Genesee, Cal.; William Avery, 7793 Granger, Mich.; Richard F. Irvin, 231 Main St., Mass.; Robert Ahern, 611 Eggert Rd., N. Y.; John O'Connor, 30-66 37 St., N. Y.; Clarence Strzok, 2061 S. 5th St., Wis.; Tony Eirdosh, 447 Livingston St., N. J.; Raymond Avery, 7793 Granger Mich.; Harvey Davis, Minn.; Wilber Simpson, 80 Burges Ave., R. I.

Until we can get together next month for a chin, just keep your chutes dry and your flying speed plenty. High Skies to you!

*"The Skipper"*

## HONOR ROLL OF NEW MEMBERS

William Olsen, 35 School St., E. Weymouth, Mass.  
Frederick Smith, 1828 W. Pratt St., Baltimore, Md.  
Allen J. Jarvis, 311 Belgrade Ave., Boston, Mass.  
Timothy Sullivan, 305 East 146 St., New York City.  
Rodney Ludwig, 4524 N. Lincoln St., Chicago.  
Eugene Palmer, 838 No. Curson Ave., Hollywood, Cal.  
Elvin Hubbard, 1006 W. 37th St., Los Angeles, Cal.  
Homer E. Dow, 1017 N. 1st Ave., Tucson, Ariz.  
Maurice Hayes, Jr., Route 2, Box 230, Klamath Falls, Oregon.  
David Stevens, 1043 8th St., Monterey, Calif.  
Ted. Coelho, 59 Charles St., Newark, Ohio.  
John McClelland, 1970 W. 28th St., Suite 2, Cleveland, Ohio.  
Bob Burns, 3740 Cerritos Ave., Long Beach, Calif.  
Edward Schroeder, 1811 Sedgwick St., Chicago, Ill.  
Arthur Stensvad, 806 East 6th St., North Platte, Neb.  
Martin Owens, 100 Seward Ave., Detroit, Mich.  
Bill Roesen, 7959 Euclid Ave., Chicago, Ill.  
Thomas H. Mehler, 2538 No. Sacramento Ave., Chicago, Ill.  
Thomas Dionne, 17 Bayonne St., Springfield, Mass.  
Jack Williams, Main Street, Beckley, West Va.  
Ford Waldron, 2803 Center St., Merchardville, N. J.  
Geo. Martinez, R. 2, Box 70, Vacaville, Calif.  
Edward Bigelow, 200-22 Hollis Ave., Hollis, L. I., N. Y.  
Willard Tomb, 716 Station St., Johnson, Penna.  
Kenneth Nelson, 85 Benton St., Hartford, Conn.

Rodney Allen, 4212 Scarritt St., Kansas City, Mo.  
Richard Riegler, 9070 179 Place, Jamaica, N. Y.  
William Karl Kulmann, 451 Wolcott St., Waterbury, Conn.  
Fred Singdale, 322 Ovington Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.  
George Combs, Route 2, Nevada, Mo.  
Norman Rosenzweig, 1733 East 14th St., Brooklyn, N. Y.  
H. G. Vanbuskirk, 815 Indiantrail, Akron, Ohio.  
Clevie O. Laverty, Troy, N. H.  
Milton Philips, 207 W. 140th St., New York City.  
Mark Peddic, 473 Nobic Ave., Bridgeport, Conn.  
Joseph Blazieski, Box 125 Pine Island, N. Y.  
Raymond Sunseri, Box 1, Patton, Penna.  
Herbert Beenau, 477 E. Amherst St., Buffalo, N. Y.  
Lawrence McCarrick, 20 Marion Road, Belmont, Mass.  
Robert D. Adam, 2289 Bellfield Ave., Cleveland Hts., Ohio.  
Robert Snyder, 9917 Benhan Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.  
Miss Geraldine Haley, 317 N. Illinois St., Indianapolis, Ind.  
Albert M. Larson, Jr., 6440 20th Ave., Kenosha, Wis.  
Everett Erlick, Altamont Apts., Highland Ave., Birmingham, Ala.  
E. Q. Hollister, 223 E. Willis St., Prescott, Ariz.  
Tom Boeckman, 1254½ Greene St., Augusta, Georgia.  
William D. Katz, 310 Van Buren St., Brooklyn, N. Y.  
Johnny Files, 1908 Woodrow, Little Rock, Ark.  
John Hendle, 1264 Montrose Ave., Chicago, Ill.  
Clyde Richmond, 2207 45th Ave., San Francisco, Calif.



- Bud Nickerson, 193 Clark St., Portland, Maine.  
 James L. Brownie, Box 33, R. F. D. No. 1, Ellsworth Falls, Maine.  
 Earle P. Tepson, Winterport, Maine.  
 Wallace E. Newell, Box 225, Norridgewock, Maine.  
 Gilbert Faurnier, P. O. Box 447, Mexico, Maine.  
 Rex Parmenter, 342 Concord St., Manchester, N. H.  
 Henry F. Brockway, Chesterfield, N. H.  
 Everette Johnson, 122 Weston St., Manchester, N. H.  
 Leonard Lawlor, Ashland, N. H.  
 Burton G. Cutting, White River Jct., Vermont.  
 Jack Griffin, 1 Palmer Road, Framingham, Mass.  
 Edward F. Morrison, Sherman Heights, North Adams, Mass.  
 Manuel A. DeSa, 1488 Purchase St., New Bedford, Mass.  
 August Abel, Jr., 330 Newton St., S. Hadley Falls, Mass.  
 Arthur J. Basque, 188 Eden Glen, Leominster, Mass.  
 Val Piermerini, 96 Lincoln Terrace, Leominster, Mass.  
 Vergil Ciccolini, 9 Miller St., Leominster, Mass.  
 David Sullivan, 34 Dalton St., Boston, Mass.  
 Gordon M. Byrnes, Federal Hill, Aggwam, Mass.  
 John Manning, 12 Fairland St., Roxbury, Mass.  
 Marshal Turesk, 786 Blue Hill Ave., Dorchester, Mass.  
 Francis LaValle, 49 Exchange St., Waltham, Mass.  
 John Kaczanowicz, Jr., 317 Pleasant St., Northampton, Mass.  
 Arthur A. Anderson, 31 Colonial Ave., Springfield, Mass.  
 Hector Jodoin, 2 Wheatland St., Salem, Mass.  
 James F. Glass, 1034 North Shore Road, Revere, Mass.  
 Clifford Robbins, 8 Center St., Malden, Mass.  
 Walter F. J. Smith, 72 Newberry Ave., Medford, Mass.  
 Louis J. Gordon, 16 Dewey St., Boston, Mass.  
 Frederick G. Leeman, 24 Sagamore St., Revere, Mass.  
 Russell J. Burke, 34 Overbrook Drive, Wellesley, Mass.  
 Harold Pinkney, 40 Harlem St., Dorchester, Mass.  
 Philip I. Rhodes, 169 Hammond St., Waltham, Mass.  
 William Quilty, 26 Alberta St., Springfield, Mass.  
 William Nicoll, 18 Meadow Lane, Pittsfield, Mass.  
 Edward Lepor, 55 Knox St., Lawrence, Mass.  
 James Davis, 1402 Commonwealth Ave., Allston, Mass.  
 John A. Joyce, 30 Jenkins St., South Boston, Mass.  
 Frank Levy, 254 Walnut Ave., Roxbury, Mass.

### Application for Membership in the BATTLE BIRDS CLUB

Battle Birds, 205 East 42nd St., New York City, N. Y.

Name (Print) .....

Address ..... Town.....

State (or country)..... Age.....

Hobbies .....

- (A) I have a pilot's license..... ☐
- (B) I know how to fly a ship..... ☐
- (C) I have been up in a plane..... ☐ (Check by cross  
your class)
- (D) I have never been up in a plane..... ☐
- (E) I am interested in building model planes..... ☐

I would particularly like to read about this phase of aviation in the club pages.....

Respectfully submitted .....

Signature.....

Date.....

(This coupon or a facsimile may be used)



# Dizzy Wings

## Contest Number FIVE

ONCE more we gather around the table and blackboard to try our hands at ye old puzzle yarn. Step right up, you airmen.

As you all know, we run a yarn like the one opposite—or worse, if possible—every month. They're crazy and full of the dizziest mistakes you ever saw. But that's the idea. All you have to do is read the yarn over and study the picture. Make a list of all the mistakes you can find in either the yarn or picture and send us a list. The longer the better. Some errors are easy to find and some are well hidden—but that's up to you to dig out.

Shoot us the lists, with a big five (5) written on the outside of the envelope. Be sure to do that. It will save us time and make certain your letter gets into the right contest bag. Send the lists to Battle Birds Contest, Popular Publications, 205 East 42nd St., New York City. This contest closes when the May number of Battle Birds appears on the stands.

Now then, I expect some of you new men want to know what you're going to get for all this "work." Well, sir, here's what. To the buzzard who sends in the best and longest list of mistakes we're going to shoot the best air trophy ever offered for a contest of this kind! The cut alongside this chatter doesn't do it justice, but take it from all the men who have won it, it's just about the last word in prizes.

To the next six men who almost crash the trophy's drome we'll send off what we call SURprizes—and are they the "prop's-highlight"! They were selected from a long list of prizes as the best yet.

To the next three men that almost grab off one of these Surprizes we'll shoot a subscription to good old Battle Birds.

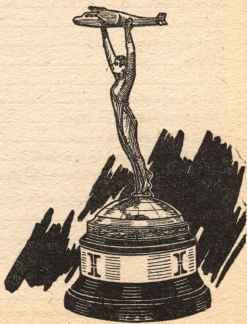
Now then, you hell-divers, step right up and meet the last contest winners.

Here's the buzzard who grabbed off the silver trophy: James I. Smith of 686 Gholson Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio. Congratulations, old man!

The six men who had the good luck to win the Surprizes are: Tom Madix, 5445 S. Albany Ave., Chicago; J. P. Mulready, 258 Dexter St., Providence, R. I.; George Love, 3313 N. St., N. W., Washington, D. C.; Ben Reich, 3249 Evergreen Ave., Chicago; Walter Unruh, 120 E. 1st St., Newton, Kansas; William T. Leyden, 5049 Winthrop Ave., Chicago.

And now let's take a look at the three chaps who won subscriptions to Battle Birds: William Smeekins, 212 E. Milwaukee, Detroit; Lester H. Kanehl, 2817 N. 6th St., Milwaukee, Wis.; Carl Shrader, 27 Burroughs St., Jamaica Plain, Mass.

How would you like to see your name up there on the blackboard as one of the winners? I thought so. Just send in your long lists and we'll see what we can do.



Win this handsome trophy!













Conducted By

EUGENE A. CLANCY

**A**TENTION, you flying smelts! In the first place you can wipe those grins off your faces and stop making fresh remarks about my appearing before tonight's meeting in the costume of a Swiss yodeler. Colonel Houseboat, that distinguished international diplomat who keeps this outfit in touch with the dirty plans of foreign governments, received orders from the State department to make an overnight trip to Geneva in his famous secret plane to stop a serious fist fight that had broken out between members of the Plague of Nations, which, as you know, meets in Geneva—which is in Switzerland.

As I felt the need of some flying air, I went along with him, as did my close friend, Abdul Benny Smid, the former ex-Sultan of Morocco, Clarence Hip Lee, the well-known Chinese diplomat and personal representative of General One Lung Gut. The plane, as usual, was navigated by Isaac O'Connor, the great Swedish ace, and as a courtesy to the Swiss government we all wore Swiss costume. The Swiss janes all fell for this neat yodeler's costume of mine.

As we got back not ten minutes ago, I did not have time to change to American

uniform and suspenders. I just hurried up here as fast as I could, after stopping for several important drinks at Mike's Place—I mean, for several important conferences, and I feel so dizzy from hurrying that if anybody has a little tincture of Alabama corn, or— Thanks, captain. The doctor has warned me never to hurry unless I promise to take a little something every seven minutes afterwards to ward off congestion of the tonsils.

But I was going to tell you about this fist fight. We arrived at the convention hall at a crisis, for these members of the Plague of Nations were sure going it strong! The hall was a wreck. Lord Cussmore of England, was forcing a chair leg down the throat of Count Spazmoni, Tony Mussolini's Italian representative, while three Chinese members were removing the rear molars of Nagasaki Whoopi, special envoy from the Kimono Kids' government. The Irish Free State member, Mulligan Kilkenny, was running around with a Spanish golf club and smashing any head, all and sundry.

I was just in time to rescue three Frogs from two Russian Radishes, who had a pot of boiling oil in an anteroom and were



going to pop the three Frogs into it, Soviet Russia being very partial to boiled frogs' legs. The only person who kept his head was my old friend the Royal Wangoop of Oolong, who sat alone on the Mongolian bench. He is very domestic and doesn't believe in fights. He was dictating to a Swiss stenographer named Hattie. He had promised to write to each of his five hundred wives, and naturally he was thus too busy to join in the fight.

But the fight was soon settled by that master of diplomacy, Colonel Houseboat. He stepped up to the rostrum, stroked his VanDyke, adjusted his glasses, and blew his nose—I mean, blew a little ivory and radium whistle—the rare and historic whistle that was presented to him by the Grand Duke Peeloff, that time in 1877 when the colonel prevented war between the Czar and King Edward VII over a Spanish dancer who was found mysteriously dead of too much tobasco in Piccadilly Circus—I mean, that is, who was given poisoned tobasco sauce in a Piccadilly chop house and a plot suspected by all. Has anybody got a little—Thanks, lieutenant.

But as I was saying, the colonel blew this famous whistle and instantly hundreds of his famous secret police, which he has planted all over the world at a moment's notice, came dashing in through all doors and windows and in two minutes chased every last member of the Plague of Nations out into the street. The Royal Wangoop of Oolong then explained to us that the fight had started over a new treaty they had all signed absolutely abolishing war. Each member signed with his tongue in his cheek, as usual, but all would have been well had not Nagasaki Whoopi suddenly got up and smilingly said: "Peace ver' fine! After we lick dirty Chink and have our canned goods in all Mongolian chain store and lick America, we be first to have no more war! This treaty ver' fine indeed!"

Well, Colonel Houseboat's diplomatic genius finally triumphed. By his orders, his secret police gathered up the wandering members, took away their guns and knives, and made them promise to keep the peace for at least one month more. They sullenly agreed, and were then allowed to reenter the hall and continue their important discussions about the correct method of making banana splits in Utopia.

Speaking of banana splits, the drive for new members is still on. You mugs must keep bringing in to me down at Mike's Place any bozo who looks as if he ain't shy in the mental works and maybe could fly a fighting crate without getting liver complaint on sight of the enemy. And don't forget that important little matter I spoke about—be sure that your candidate has two dollars, or maybe a dime, in his jeans.

Each candidate has to sign and hand me a coupon, but as I told you I'm using these to pay for reconditioning my own famous fighting plane that I flew in the Turkish campaign and which I keep in a secret hangar down in Spanish Honduras so that snoopers can't copy the design. I have a lot of dirty enemies, as all great men do, and these vermicelli claim that I have no such plane, that I never flew at all in the war, and that if I really have such a plane hidden down there it is probably some sort of flying mudscow with paddle wheels and rubber balloons.

It is to refute these cooties that I've started our new prize contest, whereby I'm offering every month five prizes of one dollar each for the five best drawings showing what you think this plane of mine looks like—with me blazing away in it, if you like. I've told you how the very sight of me in it, all blazing and terrible, caused a whole Turkish division to jump into the Bosphorous. Those of you who read Turkish can look up the



wartime files of the Turkish Daily News and read all about my exploits. General Pershing himself said to Marshal Foch that my flying was simply terrific. If you want to send in sketches of what you think Colonel Houseboat looks like, or any of my distinguished friends, these will be considered, too. But don't forget that the Turkish janes considered me very handsome, so be careful not to send in any such insults as that dirty DAREDEVIL ACES gang sends in.

I promised you that the first winners in this contest would be published here this month and I'm sure sore that I have to fall down on you. I'll tell the plain truth. The lousy Brass Hats at G. H. Q. are to blame. You see, I've been quite sick, owing to some enemy putting a bit of tainted garlic in my morning goat's milk last month and I've been a little behind in getting this mag out. The Brass Hats forced me to rush this number into print ahead of time to get even, and they caught me before Colonel Houseboat and the rest of us had selected the winners. Also, the fresh little blonde jane who opens my mail and enters your names in the club membership book has been joy riding with Oppenheim, Eliot and Blakeslee in a new scout plane they ain't paid for yet and she left a whole bunch of your sketches in some joint in Havana, and Colonel Houseboat had to fly down and get them. So you can see what troubles I have around here.

But the winners will positively appear next month, and regularly every month thereafter—and a buck will be sent to each pronto. So don't get sore, you mugs.

Speaking of that cuss Blakeslee, I hope that you are saving his famous cover paintings, now that we are not putting any lettering over them. Those of you who are always asking for pictures don't need anything more or better than the great covers of BATTLE BIRDS and DAREDEVIL ACES. They are accurate, and

should make a swell reference library.

But I guess it's time to hear what some of you half-pints have on your phosphorescent intellects. Says this revolving eel:

66 Davison St.  
Hyde Park, Mass.

Dear Clancy: Say, you stupid Kiwi, don't you know any better than to put your Bull-Flight Coupons in the back of a page containing a model ship? I had to ruin a wonderful model of a S. E. 5A—just for your lousy sake—well list me as one of your victims as I am not responsible for my acts or else I would not write to you. So give my Louisiest regards to Col. Houseboat—Issac Conners—Mike and Abdul Benny Smid, plus C. H. Lee the slant eyed grease ball that don't know a high from a low speed Jet on an D. X. If you have nerve enough just print a reply.

Yours till you try to pull an outside Loop in a Jenny or a Lawson. If you ever saw one of them.  
James F. Glass.

I showed your screed to the lousy Brass Hats, James. I can't have anything interfering with my coupons and I told them so! And here is a real nertz:

492 N. 20th Street,  
Columbus, Ohio.

Dear Ignatz: I do not ask your humblest pardon for sending a replica, facsimile or what have you of the little coupon which I found messed up in a bunch of bull-oncy at the bottom of a page so slap my name down so I can be in on the drinks at Mike's place. So long till the next swill.

Larry McNutt.

Come down to Mike's Place any time, Larry. Be sure to have a couple of bucks on you. And here we have an Oklahoma Whom:

Willetka, Okla.  
Dec. 17, 1932

Hello You with the bald head,

Here's one of your insignificant coupons and I hope you get spotted pants and good razor blade. Our preacher don't cuss so he says you pusillanimous whelp, I don't know what that means but you are one.

Please give us more "Three Mosquitoes."

Yours for larger mags.

Ernest Logan.



Listen, Ernest, I asked Colonel Houseboat what a pusilli—what you said—was, and he just looked at me and shuddered. Here is a smelt who needs cooking:

412 Le Bron Ave., Cloverdale,  
Montgomery, Alabama.

Dear Peelot,

I can't call you the names I would like to as I am only 13 years old, but I mean them just the same. You've got a swell mag, but do me a favor and kick that Brass Hat, Col. Houseboat into a non-stop nosedive. "Suicide Aces" is good, but let's have some more "Three Mosquitoes" stories. I hope this coupon helps the mag.

Your's on A. W. O. L.

Charles Schulwolf.

I showed your letter to the colonel, Charles and he has given his secret police *certain secret orders*. And here is a wart-hog who just signs himself "Mac."

Grafton Ave.  
Newark, N. J.

Hi ya, Bug eye? Here's your crummy ioto. Take it down to Mike's place, and get your self a shot of that African bug juice he keeps. And if you do, I hope you get a case of rotgut. Lissen, after reading about Colonel Houseboats perilous ride on the Royal Wangoop's elephant, I want to ask you question. How do you get down off an elephant?—You're wrong, you sap, you don't get down off an elephant; you get it off birds. Haw Haw Haw.

If you can find the Mongolian Snail that threw the Oopwang's—er I mean the Poog-

naw, or the Goopnag's, oh the heck with it. If you can find the snail that threw that Royal Gink's elephant, take it down to Mike's and get it drunk. It deserves it.

Auf Wiedersehn,

Mac.

I'll bust you in the nose, Mac—and if the Royal Wangoop of Oolong ever hears of your disrespectful remarks, you'll die a most horrible Mongolian death!

Well, I feel a little tight—I mean, that is, I find this Swiss yodeling costume a little tight around the lungs, which causes the tonsils to shrink, so I think we'll close this meeting. Be sure to send in a lot of extra coupons this month as I have to buy my summer suspenders and a new bathing monacle next week. See you next month.

The BULL-FLIGHT CLUB,  
205 East 42nd Street, New York.

April

Sign me up quick! I like these stories best:

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....

Address .....

Name .....

# Men! No Need to Lose Natural Powers After 35!

## Regain Lost Vitality This Easy Way!



For  
Pep  
Vitality  
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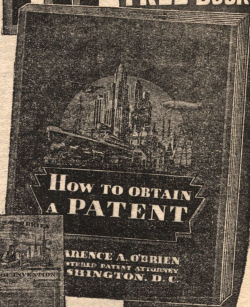
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