

THE BEST IN AIR FICTION

10¢

OCTOBER

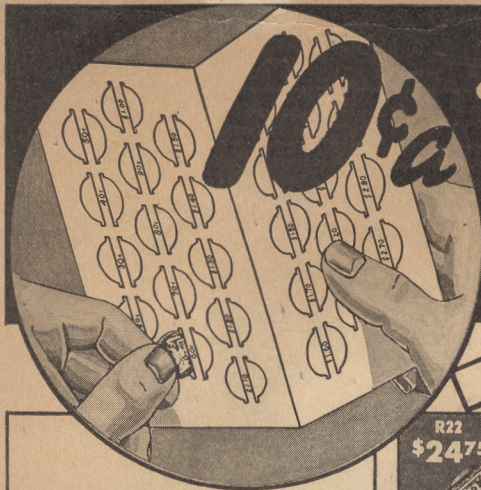
BATTLE BIRDS[®]

WINGS AGAINST
THE WORLD

by DAVID GOODIS
THE AIR NOVEL OF THE YEAR!

I BRING YOU DEATH!
by ORLANDO RIGONI





10¢ a Day buys a Watch

on Our SAVINGS BOOK PLAN

BULOVA

ELGIN

GRUEN

KENT

BENRUS

Yes—only 10¢ a day on my SAVINGS BOOK PLAN will buy your choice of these nationally known watches. It's simple—here's how you go about it...

WHAT YOU DO:

Send coupon below with a dollar bill and a brief note telling me who you are, your occupation, and a few other facts about yourself. Indicate the watch you want on coupon, giving number and price.

WHAT I'LL DO:

I'll open an account for you on my SAVINGS BOOK PLAN, send the watch you want for approval and

10-DAY TRIAL

If satisfied, you pay 10¢ monthly payments. If you are not satisfied after wearing the watch for ten days, send it back and I'll return your dollar on our

MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE

A Savings Book will be sent to you to help you save your dime each day. YOU PAY MONTHLY by money order or check. Try this easy, convenient method that has helped thousands to own fine watches without burden on the pocket book or savings.

Jim Feeney

FREE TO ADULTS

A postcard brings my complete 48-page catalogue and full details on my SAVINGS BOOK PLAN. No obligation.



JIM FEENEY

L. W. Sweet—Dept. 11-K, 1670 Broadway
New York, N. Y.

Enclosed find \$1 deposit. Send me Watch No. _____ Price \$_____. I agree to wear the watch for 10 days. If not satisfied, I'll return it and you will refund my dollar. If I keep it, I'll pay balance in 10 equal monthly payments.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____

R22
\$2475

M17
\$2475

R22 - Ladies' BULOVA; 17 J. 10K yel. gold plate. \$24.75
M17—Man's BULOVA; 15 J. 10K yel. rolled gold plate case; bracelet. \$24.75
\$1 deposit \$2.38 a month

L140
\$3750

S141
\$3750

L140 - Ladies' ELGIN; 17 J. 10K yel. gold filled case. \$37.50
S141 - Man's ELGIN—sturdy 10K yellow gold filled case; 17 jewels. \$37.50
\$1 deposit \$3.65 a month

P145
\$1595

K166
\$1595

P145 - Ladies' tiny KENT. 7 jewels. Guaranteed. \$15.95
K166—Man's KENT. Guaranteed. 10K yellow rolled gold plate case; 7 jewels. \$15.95
\$1 deposit \$1.50 a month

T67
\$2975

O68
\$2975

T67 - Ladies' GRUEN. 15 J. 10K yel. rolled gold plate. \$29.75
O68 - Man's GRUEN Verithin: 15 jewels; 10K yellow rolled gold plate. \$29.75
\$1 deposit \$2.88 a month

K273
\$1975

K273 - Service Watch - new radium dial, easy-to-see. 7 Jewels, sturdy 10K yellow rolled gold plate case. Made especially for Army and Navy men.
\$1 deposit \$1.98 a month

T567
\$1975

O564
\$1975

T567 - BENRUS for Ladies. 7 jewels, 10K gold plate; bracelet. \$19.75
O564—Man's BENRUS: 17 jewels; 10K yellow rolled gold plate; leather strap. \$19.75
\$1 deposit \$1.88 a month

L.W. Sweet

MAIL ORDER DIVISION OF FINLAY STRAUS, Inc.
Dept. 11-K 1670 BROADWAY, NEW YORK



I jumped from \$18 a week to \$50 -- a Free Book started me toward this GOOD PAY IN RADIO

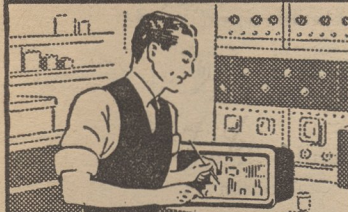
Here's how I did it
by S. J. E.
(NAME AND ADDRESS
SENT UPON REQUEST)



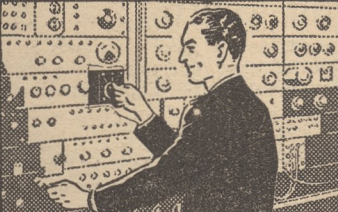
"I had an \$18 a week job in a shoe factory, but desired to make more money and continue my education. I read about Radio opportunities and enrolled with the National Radio Institute."



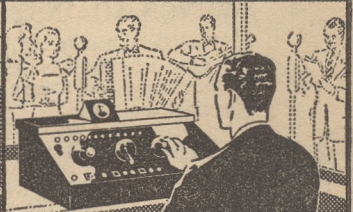
"The instruction I received was so practical I was soon able to earn \$5 to \$10 a week in spare time servicing Radios. This paid for the N.R.I. Course and led to service work paying for my college education."



"Radio servicing permitted me to attend school and work evenings and week-ends. Upon completing the N.R.I. Course I was made Service Manager at \$40 to \$50 a week, more than twice my shoe factory wage."



"Later the N.R.I. Graduate Service Department sent me to Station KWCR as a Radio Operator. Now I am Radio Engineer of Station WSWI and connected with Television Station W9XK."



"The N.R.I. Course took me out of a low-pay shoe factory job and put me into Radio at good pay; enabled me to earn funds for a college education. There's a promising future for thoroughly trained Radio men."



Find out today how I Train You at Home to BE A RADIO TECHNICIAN

J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute
Established 25 Years

Here is a quick way to more pay. Radio offers the chance to make \$5, \$10 a week extra in spare time a few months from now. There is an increasing demand for full time Radio Technicians and Radio Operators, too. Many make \$30, \$40, \$50 a week. On top of record business, the Radio Industry is getting millions and millions of dollars in Defense Orders. Clip the coupon below and mail it. Find out how I train you for these opportunities.

Real Opportunities For Beginners To Learn Then Earn Up to \$50 a Week

Over 800 broadcasting stations in the U. S. employ thousands of Radio Technicians with average pay among the country's best paid industries. Repairing, servicing, selling home and auto Radio receivers (there are over 50,000,000 in use) gives good jobs to thousands. Many other Radio Technicians take advantage of the opportunities to have their own service or retail Radio business. Think

of the many good pay jobs in connection with Aviation, Commercial, Police Radio and Public Address Systems. N. R. I. gives you the required knowledge of Radio for those jobs. N. R. I. trains you to be ready when Television opens new jobs. Yes, Radio Technicians make good money because they use their heads as well as their hands. They must be trained. Many are getting special ratings in the Army and Navy; extra rank and pay,

I'll Show You How To Make Up To \$20 a Week Extra In Spare Time While Learning

Nearly every neighborhood offers opportunities for a good part time Radio Technician to make extra money fixing Radio sets. I give you special training to show you how to start cashing in on these opportunities early. You get Radio parts and instructions for building test equipment, for conducting experiments

that give you valuable practical experience. You also get a modern Professional Radio Servicing Instrument. My fifty-fifty method-half working with Radio parts, half studying my lesson texts-makes learning Radio at home interesting, fascinating, practical.

Find Out How I Train You For Good Pay In Radio

Mail the coupon below. I'll send my 64-page book FREE. It tells about my Course; the types of jobs in the different branches of Radio; shows letters from more than 100 of the men I trained so you can see what they are doing, earning. MAIL THE COUPON in an envelope or paste on a penny postal.

J. E. SMITH, President
Dept. IK59, National Radio Institute
Washington, D. C.

THIS FREE BOOK HAS SHOWN HUNDREDS HOW TO MAKE GOOD MONEY

J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. IK59.
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Mail me FREE without obligation, your 64-page book "Rich Rewards in Radio." (No salesman will call. Write plainly.)

Age.....

Name

Address

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



Extra Pay In Army, Navy, Too



Every man likely to go into military service, every soldier, sailor, marine, should mail the Coupon Now! Learning Radio helps men get extra rank, extra prestige, more interesting duty at pay up to 6 times private's or seaman's base pay. Also prepares for good Radio jobs after service ends. IT'S SMART TO TRAIN FOR RADIO NOW!

10¢

BATTLE BIRDS

Vol. 3

Contents for October, 1941

No. 3



Outstanding War Novels

WINGS AGAINST THE WORLD.....David Goodis 10

Alone in a hostile sky, target for the guns of friends and foes alike, a man outlawed by the bloody fates of war prepared to make his last stand with just one chance and a fighting man's creed—"Eight guns and a pair of wings—against the world!"



I BRING YOU DEATH!.....Orlando Rigoni 34

Bracketed by enemy guns, a warbird without a country seeks to reclaim his wings by fighting the most vital battle of the war—alone!

Battle Novelette

THE OUTCASTS FROM HELL'S CORNER....Curt Benson 67

Two flying hellcats who couldn't take orders, a flight leader who couldn't be trusted with a command. . . . But one fateful night, in a sky of flame, they linked their ill-starred destinies to forge a chain of heroism England can never forget.



Action-Packed Sky Fiction

SALUTE TO THE BRAVE.....Lance Kermit 58

Savagely, into the death that was waiting, a grim-faced flyer took the high road to doom, to give the lie to the verdict of his mates—"Those who go yellow never come back!"



TAKE-OFF TO DOOM.....Ray P. Shotwell 92

Heartsick, bloody was the misfit band, and battered and old were the crates they flew. . . . But there, above the vilest hell-hole in Africa, they held an entire army at bay!



Department for Air Fans

IN THE HANGAR.....With Greaseball Gabby 6

An old grease-monkey chews the fat with a gang of the fans.

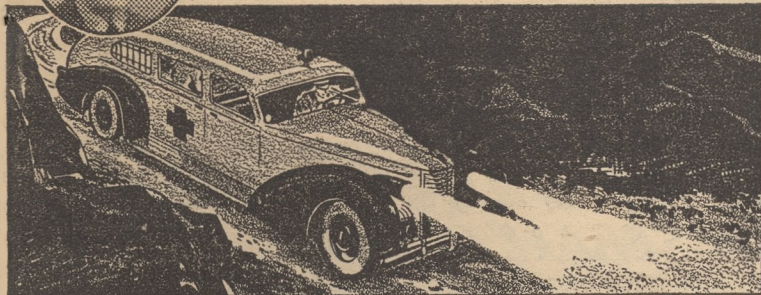
Next Issue on Sale October 17th

ALL STORIES NEW!

"WE RACED DEATH DOWN A MOUNTAIN SIDE!"

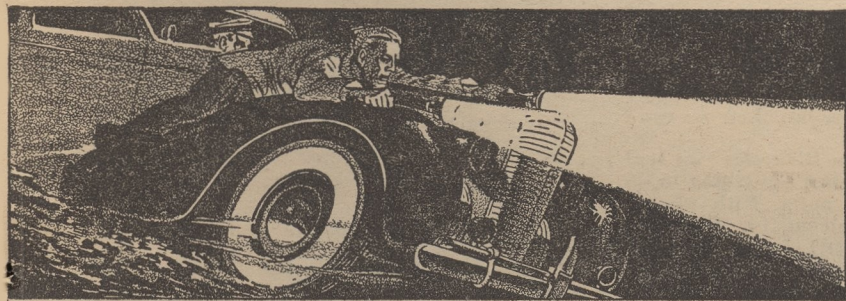


A true experience of male nurse GROVER C. BIRCHFIELD, Los Angeles, Calif.



"WE WERE RUSHING A CARDIAC CASE by ambulance to the hospital one dark night," writes Mr. Birchfield. "We were two thousand feet up on a winding mountain road and six miles from our goal, when all lights blew out.

"THE PATIENT WAS AT DEATH'S DOOR. I gave him a shot of adrenalin, but I knew with horrible certainty that unless he reached the hospital quickly he could not live. Yet we dared not move without lights.



"THEN, I REMEMBERED OUR FLASHLIGHTS! Lying on a front fender, I played their bright beams on the road while the car careened down the mountain. Thanks to dependable 'Eveready' fresh DATED batteries, we won our race against death.

(Signed) *Grover C. Birchfield*

The word "Eveready" is a registered trade-mark of National Carbon Company, Inc.

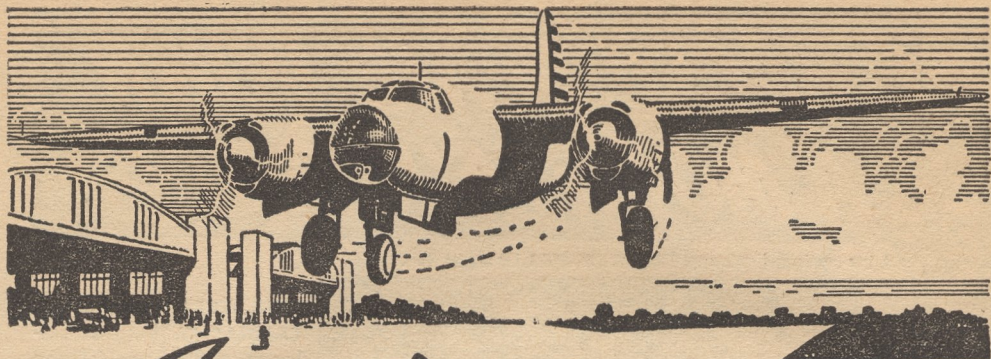


FRESH BATTERIES LAST LONGER... Look for the DATE-LINE

NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY, INC., 30 EAST 42nd STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y.

Unit of Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation





In the Hangar

WITH GREASEBALL GABBY

ANY kiwi can plainly see, from the decorous bit of art just above, this here hangar of ours is no two-bit grease shop. It is an institution of sizable proportions and of widespread insignificance in the aviation industry. Consequently, when some misguided soul casts slurs upon our importance, I rage, I fume, my blood boils—in fact I'm perturbed. Imagine the nerve of this guy, Don Heyden! Here's what he has to say:

Why Fictioneers doesn't kick your mangy little corner into advertising space is beyond me, but then we can't all be smart.

Perhaps the keen Blakeslee you sent me some time ago has something to do with it. (Gabby's note: With what?) As a token of esteem for Blakeslee (Not you, lunkhead) I am enclosing one of my own drawings. Before you throw it in the waste-basket—remember that we can't all be good, and that I meant well.

Someday mebbe I will send you a story to go along with the picture. As you can see, the guy in the office of the Spit is a line shooter showin' off—the kind who has his landing gear halfway retracted before he's six feet off the ground. Now all we need is a fatherly C.O., and a Heine Von with Mickey Mouse painted on the side of his ME, and we got the makin's of a Class B yarn!

As to suggestions—how about a question and answer department? For instance, I bet a lot of Battle Birds fans would like to know what's the reason for that mysterious rear compart-

ment in back of the cockpit proper on a Spitfire. Also—why the unorthodox wind-screen hatch? . . . Just how does a power turret work? . . . And so on.

Well, I must buzz off now, old crumpet. But if you happen to have another Blakeslee hangin' around gathering dust, you might casually slip it off to

Don Heyden.

Okay, Heyden. We'll take your slurs with a shaker of salt and send you that black-and-white because we liked that mighty fine drawing you submitted. We might even have stuck it up at the top of this department, except that Fred Blakeslee had already prepared the nifty job above for us.

Do you fellows detect a draft around here? If you do, it's the Ohio breeze, Howard Cotterman, Jr. The Dayton dust-storm blows in like a lion and out as vociferously.

Dear Blabber Puss,

Hi, ya, squirt. What's what and who's who in that "Greatest of Air Fiction" book, Battle Birds? This is the first time I've written to you, and I hope you like it. I'm going to tell you what I think, anyhow.

First of all, I do like your book and its stories even though there are a lot of American aces in the R.A.F. 'Course, you find that in all the "fic mags." I like

(Continued on page 8)

GIVEN

Nothing to Buy!

GIVEN
NOTHING TO BUY

SEND NO MONEY

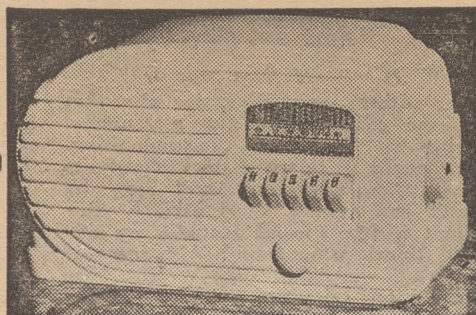
Send Name and Address
Choice of Cash Commission

SEND NO MONEY

Wireless Record Player.
No Radio Connections

Send Name and Address
Choice of Cash Commission
Just Plug In Electric Outlet . . . Thrilling!

SIMPLY GIVE AWAY FREE beautiful Pictures with well known White CLOVERINE Brand SALVE used for chaps and mild burns easily sold to friends and neighbors at 25c a box (with FREE Picture) and remit per catalog. Our 46th yr. Be first. Mail Coupon Now! WILSON CHEM. CO., INC., Dept. 910, TYRONE, Pa.



Famous Belmont 5 tube Superhet 5 station Radio. No outside aerial or ground required. Complete. Simply Give Away FREE beautiful Pictures with well known White CLOVERINE Brand SALVE used for chaps and mild burns easily sold to friends and neighbors at 25c a box (with FREE Picture) and remit per catalog. Our 46th yr. Be first. We are fair and square. Mail Coupon Now! WILSON CHEM. CO., INC., Dept. 911, TYRONE, Pa.

GIVEN

NOTHING TO BUY!



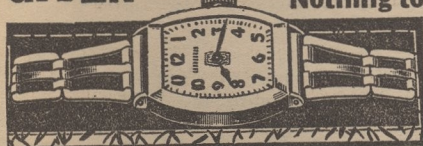
BOYS
FAMOUS IVER JOHNSON 22 CAL. RIFLE

Send No Money—Send Name and Address—Choice of Cash Commission

SIMPLY GIVE AWAY FREE beautiful Pictures with well known White CLOVERINE Brand SALVE used for chaps and mild burns easily sold to friends and neighbors at 25c a box (with FREE Picture) and remit per catalog. Our 46th yr. Be first. Mail Coupon Now! WILSON CHEM. CO., INC., Dept. 912, TYRONE, Pa.

GIVEN

SEND NAME AND ADDRESS
CHOICE OF CASH COMMISSION
Nothing to Buy!



Send No Money

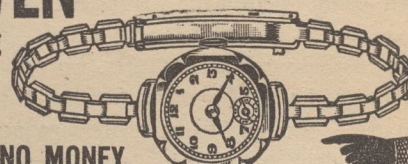
ATTRACTIVE WATCH FOR LADIES, BOYS, GIRLS---

SIMPLY GIVE AWAY FREE beautiful Pictures with well known White CLOVERINE Brand SALVE used for chaps and mild burns easily sold to friends and neighbors at 25c a box (with FREE Picture) and remit per catalog. Our 46th yr. Be first. Mail Coupon Now! WILSON CHEM. CO., INC., Dept. 913, TYRONE, Pa.

GIVEN

SEND NAME AND ADDRESS
CHOICE OF CASH COMMISSION

Nothing to Buy!



SEND NO MONEY

WATCH About Size of a Dime for Ladies, Girls---

SIMPLY GIVE AWAY FREE beautiful Pictures with well known White CLOVERINE Brand SALVE used for chaps and mild burns easily sold to friends and neighbors at 25c a box (with FREE Picture) and remit per catalog. Our 46th yr. Be first. Mail Coupon Now! WILSON CHEM. CO., INC., Dept. 914, TYRONE, Pa.

GIVEN

NOTHING TO BUY!
SEND NO MONEY

Send Name and Address
Choice of Cash Commission

BIG STANDARD SIZE
REGULATION GUITAR



SIMPLY GIVE AWAY FREE beautiful Pictures with well known White CLOVERINE Brand SALVE used for chaps and mild burns easily sold to friends and neighbors at 25c a box (with FREE Picture) and remit per catalog. Our 46th yr. Be first. Mail Coupon Now! WILSON CHEM. CO., INC., Dept. 915, TYRONE, Pa.

Special!

Choice of 25 premiums like telescopes, curtains, pocket watches, cameras, aluminumware for selling only 12 boxes of Salve (with FREE Pictures) and returning only the \$3 collected. W. C. Co., Tyrone, Pa. Mail Coupon!

GIVEN

SEND NAME AND ADDRESS - - CHOICE OF CASH COMMISSION—

Famous Rem-Rand Fall Keyboard Portable Typewriter With Case and Instructions-Mail Coupon!

SIMPLY GIVE AWAY FREE beautiful Pictures with well known White CLOVERINE Brand SALVE used for chaps and mild burns easily sold to friends and neighbors at 25c a box (with FREE Picture) and remit per catalog. Our 46th yr. Be first. Mail Coupon Now! WILSON CHEM. CO., INC., Dept. 916, TYRONE, Pa.

Nothing to Buy! Send No Money



GIVEN

Nothing to Buy!
Send No Money
Send Name and Address
Choice of Cash Commission

Bikes for boys, girls. Fully equipped. Great! SIMPLY GIVE AWAY FREE beautiful Pictures with well known White CLOVERINE Brand SALVE used for chaps and mild burns easily sold to friends and neighbors at 25c a box (with FREE Picture) and remit per catalog. Our 46th yr. Be first. Mail Coupon Now! WILSON CHEM. CO., INC., Dept. 917, TYRONE, Pa.



MAIL COUPON

Wilson Chem. Co., Inc., Tyrone, Pa.
Premium Division, Dept. PP-91, Date.....
Gentlemen: Please send me 12 beautiful art pictures with 12 boxes WHITE CLOVERINE Brand SALVE to sell at 25c a box (giving popular pictures FREE). I will remit within 30 days, select a premium or keep cash commission as per catalog sent with order, postage paid.

NAME

RD or BOX No..... ST.....

TOWN..... STATE.....
Print Your Last Name Only in Spaces Below!

WRITE, or PASTE COUPON ON A POSTAL

(Continued from page 6)

your authors, your Blakeslee pics, that column edited by a guy nick-named Gabby, and, in general, the whole thing. You could write up a story about the cover, though, couldn't you? Say, why don't you start a short serial? How about a few special features on our own American air force? Also some of our chief air fields—like Wright, here at Dayton? I think we'd all enjoy something like that. I like the authenticity of the August cover. If it only had a story. Too bad.

Well, anyhow, I'm glad we're still able to read these kind of things. If you want to print this, I won't kick. I wouldn't kick if you sent me a Blakeslee original either, but you can't expect everything. That's about all for now.

Howard Cotterman, Jr.

Thanks for your suggestions, Howard. We'll think them over. But there's one thing you've got to keep in mind. The more of these special features we put in, the less room we have for fiction. But I suppose if enough of our readers requested more departments and less fiction, we might make a change.

Don Amidei, of Chicago, offers some interesting information.

.... First of all there is not enough of Swat Corvy and his hellions. Then, why must all the Yanks in your stories be of the brooding type? Except for Regan in "Blackout," I think they all are like that. Well, so much for that. And now for a mistake that was in "Blackout." Well, in that story Craigavon has a V.C., which is a Victoria Cross. In the story, you describe it as a piece of gold about the size of a shilling, crudely worked, and engraved with some Latin words. Well, it's not made of gold, but of bronze from a cannon taken from the enemy during the Crimean War. It's also fastened to a blood-red ribbon. Its actual cash value is about 18 cents.

If you'll read "Blackout" again, Don, you'll find that Kenneth Sinclair has not made a mistake. He merely mentioned that Craigavon's father had won the V. C. The medal he described was something entirely different. It was an amulet, a token that

had been handed down through the family for many, many centuries.

Don sent along some further information about the V. C. which should interest the rest of you fellows. The medal is in the form of a Maltese cross, bearing a crown, the British lion, and the words—*for valour*. So far as we know, only five airmen have received the V. C. in this war. Only nineteen flyers were so honored in the last war. The medal is considered the outstanding military decoration, and is worn on the left breast.

From a loyal Battle Birds fan way down in Dallas, Texas, we received a letter chock full of interesting observations. Here's what Richard Papin has to say:

.... Now some people may not agree with me on this next point, but I think the stories would have a lot more class if they were true to life. What I mean is that it doesn't ring true for the hero to always get off alive. "Blackout" is something like what I mean. I think the story has a lot more punch if the hero dies in defense of a noble ideal. Why don't you print a story (continued, if necessary) on life in a squadron of this war or last. I know you have writers who served in squadrons in the last war. They should be able to turn out some mighty interesting stuff. It could be about an average pilot. That type would be a swell change from the usual blood and thunder stuff.

Thanks for the above, as well as your other suggestions, Dick. I'll pass them on to the powers that be. I'm glad you liked "Blackout." I, too thought Sinclair did a good job.

We're a bit crowded for space this issue, and won't be able to reprint several letters that you fellows would like to read. However, we're sending additional Blakeslee to Maurice Flynn of Brighton, Mass. and Joseph Fox of Bronx, N. Y.

Until next time—Keep 'em flying!

Greaseball

IS YOUR Rupture GETTING Worse?

It is terrible to feel that your rupture is constantly getting worse, taking the joy out of life, even making you feel despondent—without your seeming to be able to DO anything about it! And yet, it's so needless! We have information for you that has brought deliverance and joy to thousands of men, women and children, as PROVED by their letters of gratitude—now on file in our office.

STOP IT, STOP IT!

Be Yourself Again!

As sure as you live and breathe, if you have a reducible rupture, you can stop your rupture worries—find yourself alive and energetic and rid of all the old fears that made your existence a bad dream!

THE FAMOUS BROOKS AUTOMATIC AIR-CUSHION APPLIANCE WILL SET YOU FREE

There is nothing experimental about the famous BROOKS Air-Cushion Rupture Appliance. It has been used for years and repeatedly made better and better! What is the Patented Automatic Air-Cushion? It is the part that holds back your rupture—the most important part of any truss. It is a yielding, air-filled rubber chamber that holds with complete security without gouging in. Ill-fitting trusses do gouge in! The BROOKS permits the edges of the rupture opening to remain close together. Thus nature is sometimes able to close the opening, making a truss unnecessary. While we make no promise, the fact is, thousands of former Brooks wearers have reported no further need for a truss.

The very day you put on a BROOKS Patented Air-Cushion, you will feel reborn! That's because the Air-Cushion clings as nothing else can! No more fear of slipping, to let the rupture down. No more dread of strangulation!—and—at last!—complete freedom to indulge in every normal activity! And what a relief to realize that your BROOKS will have no springs, no metal girdle, no agonizing pressure devices, but—instead—will give such bodily comfort that you'll hardly know the truss is there at all. The BROOKS has proved a Godsend to thousands! Why not to YOU?



X Where Is YOUR Rupture?

WRONG

Hard pad gouging in keeps Rupture open and prevents natural healing.

RIGHT

BROOKS Air-Cushion does not spread rupture opening. Gives nature a real opportunity!

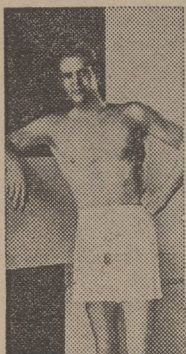
BROOKS APPLIANCE CO.
159 State St., Marshall, Mich.

PROOF!

Proof of the value and outstanding merit of the BROOKS APPLIANCE is clearly shown by the fact that over 9,000 doctors have ordered it for themselves or their patients. One doctor alone has ordered for his patients over 400 Brooks Appliances. Follow your doctor's advice! If he says you have a reducible rupture and advises a proper-fitting support, don't subject yourself to further delay, which may prove dangerous, but send us your name and address immediately.

And a Brooks will be sent on

NO-MONEY-RISK TRIAL!



That's one of the best parts of all. You don't have to risk your money to find out just what joy and happiness a BROOKS CAN BRING YOU! You simply try it, and, if not satisfied, the trial costs you nothing! And anyone can afford a BROOKS. It costs no more than ordinary trusses. Every BROOKS is made to individual requirements, made especially to fit your case. Therefore it is never sold in stores. Guard against imitations. Now then: Don't send a penny right now. But DO SEND THE COUPON AT ONCE. We'll prove every statement in this advertisement, under an iron-clad money back guarantee. DO YOURSELF THE BIGGEST FAVOR IN THE WORLD. MAIL THE COUPON!

FREE BOOK!

No Money! Just send name and address for Free Copy of Book on Rupture, easy self-fitting chart and our no-risk trial order plan with low prices. Get the joy of "Air-Cushion" support at once.

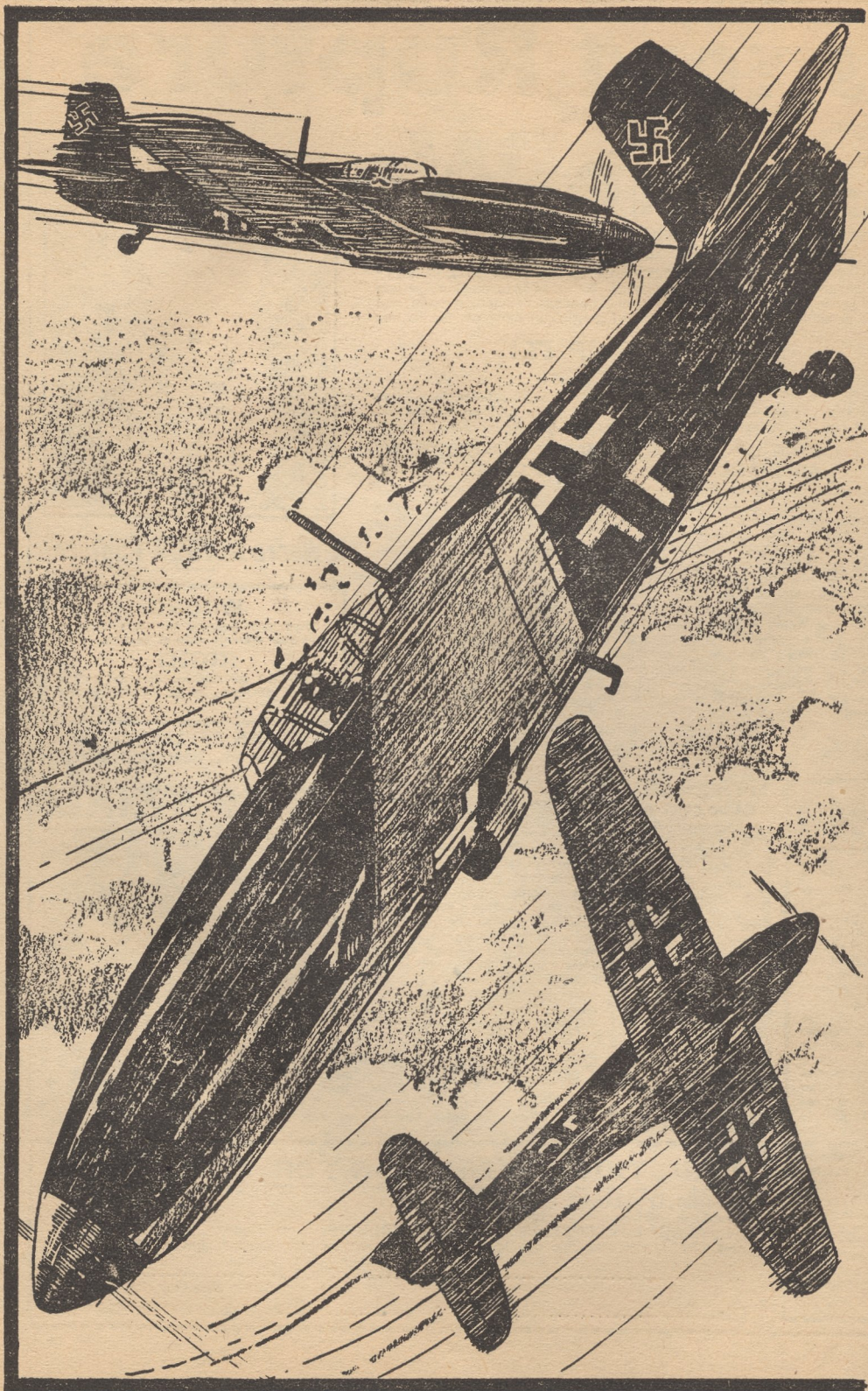


MAIL THIS COUPON NOW FOR TRIAL OFFER

BROOKS APPLIANCE CO., 159 STATE ST.,
Marshall, Michigan.

In PLAIN ENVELOPE, please send your FREE BOOK on Rupture, PROOF of Results, and TRIAL OFFER. No one is to call on me personally about my rupture.

Name..... Street..... State Whether for Man ()
City..... State..... Woman () or Child ()





WINGS AGAINST THE

World

by **DAVID GOODIS**



The glass roof splashed
crazily as the Nazi slumped.

Death stalks the skies with a hungry tread,
and for the men of Britain there is only one
chance—one chance and a fighting man's
creed—"Eight guns and a pair of wings—
against the world!"

CHAPTER ONE

Formula for a Blitzkrieg

IT WAS getting monotonous, Brait figured. When he had hiked up to Canada to join the R. A. F., he had looked ahead to a lot of excitement. Just about that time the Nazis were mopping up in France. The Yank was twenty-seven and single, with no definite responsibilities, and he felt that there were quite a few good reasons why he should hop over to England and do his bit.

He left his job as an airline pilot and went to Canada. From there he was sent

to England. They saw that he was good at his job, and they placed him at the controls of a Sunderland flying boat. He had a few bouts with Stukas while on convoy duty, and then, just when it looked as though things would really start popping, certain changes were made.

Brait was sent up to Scotland, far up north, where business was very slow. He was promoted to flight lieutenant, second in command of a ramshackle outfit known as Fighter 41. This group was placed in the very green fields a few miles inland from Dyce. The pilots were eager, the planes new; the guns were hungry, and everything would have been rosy, except

for the fact that there was nothing to do.

Brait took them out on routine patrols, and they scanned the skies, which were empty. Occasionally they would find a few Heinkels, roaming out from Norway on North Sea scouting jobs. They would attack the Nazi planes, and the Heinkels would very calmly make a fast turn and head back toward a safer area.

Fighter 41 was quite bored with the whole thing, particularly when they read the reports about the real action that was taking place to the south, above the Channel ports, in the Mediterranean, and in Africa.

In the dispersal huts, the flyers sprawled sullenly, waiting for the adjutant to give the important signal, knowing that none would come. The hours would crawl toward night, and another day of nothing would be completed. It was getting so that the men were injected with the dull, drab thickness that seemed to hang over the moors of northern Scotland. Their conversation was limited to brief, muffled phrases. There was no light in their eyes, no smile on their lips.

Things might have been improved somewhat if they had been blessed with a cheery sort of C. O. But Squadron Leader Cardley was anything but cheerful.

He was a tall, lean but hard officer, in his middle forties. His hair was iron-gray, his eyes the same color. There was something very weary about him, something too quiet, too stolid. His voice was always a murmur. His eyes were always dulled. Cardley seemed never to get enthusiastic about anything.

Brait didn't have a grudge against the squadron leader, but he couldn't help but feel that things might be slightly different if there was a new C. O. After all, Cardley seemed to have fallen into a rut. He was content to let things rest as they were, almost too content. Since this was a quiet area, he had leeway to

send out additional patrols, but he never took advantage of that leeway.

It burned Brait up. The Yank had a feeling that additional patrols were needed, not only as a means of keeping the pilots busy and lifting general morale, but also because of increased Nazi air bases on the coast of Norway, three hundred miles away. There was a good deal of talk about an invasion of Scotland. Brait harbored the idea that it was more than just talk. The more he looked at his maps and charts and listings of Nazi military moves, the more he saw the need of additional patrols—particularly at night.

If the Nazis were thinking of pulling a fast one, they wouldn't pave the way in broad daylight. They didn't work that way. They started trouble in the target area, and they weakened that area by sabotage and espionage and effective destruction of civilian and military morale. Then they simply blitzkrieged in and took over. And their most important work was done at night.

Brait had several times suggested to Cardley the advisability of night patrols. The C. O. dismissed the idea with a single muffled sentence, slightly emphasizing the word "impractical." Brait had shrugged. There was nothing else he could do.

But now the monotony was making him anxious again, anxious for the necessity of those night patrols, anxious also for his own state of mind and the morale of the squadron. If something wasn't done and done fast, there was going to be a breakdown, which would be worse than a military defeat.

In his barrack quarters, Brait buttoned his tunic, straightened his tie, and looked in the mirror. He saw a husky chap of medium height, with light brown hair and eyes. There was nothing tough about his appearance. He seemed quiet and calm, but at the same time ready if anything should come his way. He smiled

reassuringly at himself, and nodded slightly, as if he was quite sure of eventual success. Then he hurried out of the room, down the corridor, toward the office of Squadron Leader Cardley.

LEANING over the map, Brait said, "And here, sir, notice the way the coast cuts inward toward Inverness. If the enemy succeeds in taking over that area, they've got a vise hold on all of northern Scotland. Their attack will then proceed southward, instead of westward from the coast."

Cardley followed Brait's finger on the map.

He said, "What has all this got to do with Fighter 41?"

"Well, sir, as a matter of fact it has everything to do with us. We've got the responsibility of watching that coastline to the north. And I'll admit that we've done a thorough job—in the daytime. But what happens at night?"

"Suppose I ask you that?" Cardley said.

"I wouldn't be able to answer, sir," Brait replied. "But I do think that we should initiate some sort of night patrol across that area, and—"

Cardley turned slowly in his chair, and looked up at the flight lieutenant. He said, "You'd better abandon the idea, Brait. You've put it to me before. In fact, you've annoyed me with it a few times. I stated that it was impractical, and I repeat that. I don't mind a bit of originality now and then, but I must insist that you refrain from any wild notions about an invasion of Scotland, and night maneuvers. It's downright absurd, and I've heard enough of it. That's all, Brait."

The American saluted, walked toward the door. He was trying to be angry, but instead he was puzzled. It was the longest speech he had ever heard from the lips of Cardley. And more than that, it was an unsatisfactorily vague speech, with

anything but military basis behind it. Cardley had really not given him a logical argument. It was almost as if the squadron leader was just too lazy to work out plans for additional patrols. And if it was not laziness—what was it?

Brait lit a cigarette and walked toward his quarters. He knew his need of sleep, because he had an early morning patrol. But also, he knew that sleep would not come easily that night.

He was almost at the door of his room when he decided to go out for some air, the cold, salty invigorating wind that swept in from the North Sea. A stroll around the field would do the trick of clearing his mind and making him receptive for sleep. And maybe he would get some new ideas while walking.

He was taking a drag on his cigarette as he started out across the dark field. Then the smoke was choking him as he gasped and stared.

He stood motionless. He was looking at the light that rolled out from the window of the squadron office. In that band of yellow glow a figure moved slowly, warily.

And it was not Cardley. It was someone dressed in black civilian clothes, wearing a black felt hat. That someone had stepped out of the squadron office and was now walking across the field.

Something was definitely wrong with the set-up.

Brait figured on hurrying to the squadron office and telling Cardley about it. But the C. O. had been in the office at the time, and undoubtedly knew what was taking place. Maybe Cardley was hurt. Maybe the man in black was up to no good. There was only one way of making sure—to follow the black figure, to see what his plans were.

The moonlight was very weak, and Brait cursed under his breath as the man in black merged with the darkness. Nevertheless, the Yank kept moving forward,

and less than a minute later, he caught the silhouette that walked toward the edge of the field. There were only a few sentries on duty. Brait knew that there should have been more. It was just another indication of the way things were slowed down at Fighter 41.

Undoubtedly, the man in black would have an easy time dodging the sentries. He would merely wait until the guard in this particular section of the field had completed a turn, and then he would break through the wall of thick foliage that bordered the smooth grass.

Things worked out as Brait figured. Directly in front, about ten yards away, the man in black hunched low, waiting for the sentry to pass. A half-minute went by, and then the man in black was rising, moving toward the foliage. Brait followed, keeping a cautious distance behind. The black figure moved more quickly now, and it was difficult for the American to tail him without making noise, brushing up against leaves and twigs.

But Brait knew that he had to finish what he had started, and as long as he was doing it, he might as well make it a polished job. He forgot the rolling of seconds into minutes as he followed the black figure through the thickly wooded area, through rough, high grass, through waves of hill, and ridges of rock. It was mean country. Brait didn't go for this cross-country stuff.

Then moonlight glanced from a rock, and slanted down to show a narrow road. The black figure moved fast toward the road. Brait nearly fell on his face, stumbling over nasty undergrowth. But his eyes were unblinking, following the man in black.

Down the road he went, for perhaps a hundred yards, where a car was parked, a British car, armored and very compactly built.

The black figure hurried toward the car.

BRAIT faded to the side of the road, moved carefully, slowly. Through the leaves he could see the other figures that waited at the side of the car. As he came closer he saw that they wore British army uniforms. The black figure walked up to them, and the group blended in the blackness.

Very slowly now, Brait made his approach. Four men, including the black figure, were standing in the road near the car. They were speaking in low, guttural tones—in German!

Brait knew enough of the language to get the drift. He was mentally translating the conversation into English, clumsily at first, and then with more smoothness as the seconds passed.

"I have the necessary information." This came from the black figure.

"Including the facts on inner defenses?"

"All necessary facts."

"Do you think we will have any trouble from that group?"

"None at all. Everything will proceed according to plan."

"What about their aviation?"

"It is pitifully inadequate in this area."

"Do you advise sabotage?"

"Not immediately. From the information I have gathered tonight, it is quite apparent that our most reasonable move is to start operations on the coastline that slants inward toward Inverness. Fighter 41 has the responsibility of guarding that area from the air. The patrols, however, are made only in the daytime. It is feasible, therefore, to start scheduled flights of troop transports, to bring infantrymen over in ever-increasing numbers. Working only at night, using British insignia, disguising our soldiers either as British infantrymen or civilians, we ought to have an effective force in this area within a week."

"Very good. If we can sweep across northern Scotland, it will mean the cap-

turing of the important naval and air bases at Invergordon and Scapa Flow. It will mean the virtual crippling of the British northern patrol. And from northern Scotland we will sweep down, as we did in Poland and Norway and Holland. This maneuver might well result in complete victory!"

"*Sieg Heil!*"

"The British Empire will be smashed. All Europe will be ours—soon all the world will be under the domination of our magnificent *Feuhrer!*"

"*Sieg Heil!*"

They were getting into the armored car. The motor was starting up. Brait knew what he had to do. He swept away the thought of risk, and sprinted toward the car as it glided down the road. He kept to one side, looking for a place to grab hold. Then he leaped, and for an instant he dangled in space. But then he had his hands against metal, and his feet were planted securely against the rear bumper, and he was pressed there against the car as it whizzed down the road.

There were sentries along the roads, but they did not challenge the car. And in the darkness they did not see Brait. He did not know whether to be glad or sorry. At times he was tempted to shout at the sentries, to sound an alarm. But to disclose matters now might spoil everything. He knew a lot already, and if he played this through wisely, he would know more. To bring into play a counter-move against the Nazi project, he would have to know a lot more. The only way to do it was to be very patient, to use his head, to be extremely careful.

Despite the fact that the Nazi plan was rather clear to Brait, he was puzzled by one important factor—Cardley. What had happened to Cardley? There must have been some sort of struggle in that office. But Cardley was no weakling, and he must have had time to sound an alarm when the man in black had accosted him.

The desk faced the window and the only entrance to the office. Even if the intruder held a revolver, Cardley still could have pressed the alarm button beneath the desktop. Since there had been no sound of a shot, it meant that Cardley was still conscious when the black figure had walked out of the office. Then why hadn't the squadron leader sounded the alarm at that moment? It certainly did not balance.

BRAIT was frowning as he clung to the back of the car, and he nearly lost his hold as the vehicle made a turn on two wheels, left the main road, and started down a narrow path that sliced through thick woods.

For several minutes the car continued through woodland, and then Brait noticed a shift in the wind. At the same time he was conscious of an increase in the saltiness of the air. He well knew the reason for the change. The car had moved northward, and was now very close to the coastline that zig-zagged westward toward Inverness.

The car was slowing down as it entered a clearing in the woods. The clearing was very wide, and at the far end there was some kind of structure, vague in the darkness. As the car drew closer, Brait defined it as a vast storage building. To one side were a lot of tents, and figures moving back and forth. There was practically no lighting.

And yet a glow came from somewhere, seemed to flow over the place like a bluish blanket. Brait was puzzled about this, until the armored car was only a few feet away from the nearest of the moving figures. Then he understood.

Each of the workers carried a small blue lantern, fastened to his belt. Individually, these lanterns threw almost no light at all. But combined, their glow offered just enough illumination to make labor possible.

Brait frowned as he realized that during the day, this place was probably well camouflaged. At night, however, when the rush work was in progress, the Nazis had to use the blue glow.

The car was moving very slowly now, circling behind the row of tents, toward a low, rectangular building that was probably the headquarters office. Anti-aircraft guns were placed in position for emergency. To the left of the low building there was another stretch of smooth field, and Brait was staring at five planes that were lined up on the flatland—single-seater Heinkel fighters. Their noses were pointed northward.

Instantly Brait realized the use to which these planes would be put. In case of trouble, if the troop transport planes were attacked, the Heinkels would go into action as escort fighters. Now, probably, they were being used to carry the key figures in this plan to and from the Norway bases.

He understood the scheme. He had the location well fixed in his mind. All that remained now was to scoot out of here, back to Fighter 41, and make arrangements for the proper counter-move. He threw a quick glance backward. There was nobody behind him. It should be very simple and easy to slide off the rear of the car, edge back into the woods, and work his way southward again toward Dyce.

He leaped backward, falling against twigs and dry leaves. As he pulled himself up, he heard a guttural challenge from the darkness to his left. He started to his right, and then a figure rose in front of him, rough features outlined in the blue glow. Then there were figures on all sides of him. Directly in front, the car had stopped, and the man in black was stepping out, followed by the other officers. They were running over to see the cause of the disturbance.

Brait was disgusted and angry with

his own carelessness. But more than anything else, he was determined. In this instant of extreme peril, he understood the full importance of the knowledge he carried. He had to work his way out of here. He had to get word to Fighter 41, and that word had to be sent to headquarters.

The Nazis closed in. An officer gave the command to surrender. The ribbons of blue light danced along rifle barrels.

Brait breathed an oath. Then he threw himself to the ground.

Guttural curses roared out toward him, and the Nazis were aiming rifles. Brait heard the crisp command, telling them not to fire, that the stranger must be taken alive. It was a break, and he would have to make the most of it.

He rolled hard to his left, banged against the boots of a Nazi. He pulled himself up as he heard the German grunt. Then he was hefting a shoulder, and the enemy soldier was falling over him. Another Nazi rushed at him from the side, and he brought a hard left in a whizzing line that ended against the German's belly. The fellow wheezed, doubled up, fell forward.

Brait grabbed at the Nazi's rifle. He didn't have time to bring it up, to aim it. Grasping the barrel, he slung the heavy weapon backward. Then, as the Germans rushed at him, he flailed the rifle in a sizzling arc. There was a sickening crunch as the stock smashed against a man's face.

Momentarily, the Nazis hesitated. Brait leaped backward. He saw his opening now. If he could get a lead, dodge into the heavy foliage, he might be able to make good on the getaway. He edged behind a tree.

He didn't know that a few Nazis had worked their way behind him, were coming up toward him now. One of the Germans leaned forward, raised a revolver, butt foremost.

Brait heard twigs snap, and turned fast. Then he heard the thud and saw the

bright lights bouncing before his eyes. After that he didn't know anything.

CHAPTER TWO

Traitor's Agreement

DAYLIGHT seeped in through the space between the door and the floor, and through a crack in the wall. It was a narrow streak of light, but it showed Brait that he was in a small room, almost cell-like in its gray gloominess.

There was a definite pain in Brait's head, a pain which was emphasized by the fact that he was bound hand and foot. His wrists and ankles were numb from the tightness of the hemp. And there was dryness in his mouth, weakness in every limb.

He rolled back and forth a few times, and the exertion helped to bring back a measure of blood circulation. But the pain in his head persisted, and he continued to groan.

Then the door was opening. Brait stopped groaning, and momentarily forgot about the pain in his head. He would have to concentrate on being smart now.

Two men entered the room, one attired in the uniform of a *Luftwaffe* captain, the other wearing a black coat and black felt hat.

The man in black had features that blended well with his costume. His eyes were narrow, pierced with jet. His nose was long, thin, and his lips were somewhat curled.

He looked down at the prisoner, and in precise English said, "You are quite unfortunate, Flight Lieutenant Brait."

"Where'd you get my name?"

"Your identity card gave us all preliminary information."

Brait said, "You use that word 'preliminary' as though you expected to get more."

"To be perfectly frank with you," the

man in black said, "I am quite confident of procuring additional information from you."

"That sounds interesting," Brait said.

A frown crossed the thin features of the man in black. He turned to the *Luftwaffe* officer and whispered something to him. Then he smiled thinly at Brait.

"This meeting need not be unpleasant," he said. "I assure you your position will be one of the utmost comfort and ease—providing, of course, that you co-operate. Now, before we enter into a detailed discussion of this case, introductions seem to be in order."

He presented the *Luftwaffe* officer as Captain Groehm. The German aviator was heavily built, tending to flabbiness. His features, however, were hard, impassive in a brutal way. Brait remembered having heard the name of Groehm mentioned as one of the high-ranking aces of the *Luftwaffe*.

The man in black said, "As for myself, possibly you have heard of me. My name is Wollz."

Brait stiffened inwardly, fought to show calmness on the outside. Of course he had heard of Wollz. Every man in the R. A. F. had heard of the Nazi agent. Wollz was not an officer. He gave no orders; he took none. He worked alone. He had been a notorious criminal before the war. A murderer, leader of a gang of London gem thieves, he well knew the tricks of underground maneuvering. Twice he had been sentenced to hang. Twice he had escaped from Scotland Yard. He had sought refuge in Germany, and then he had seized upon the idea of offering his services to the cause of Naziism. His fee was high, but his talents could well be used by the German espionage system. The Nazis were only too eager to employ him.

His field of concentration was aviation espionage. He glided to and from England, gathering information, sending it to

Luftwaffe headquarters. He found gaps in the air defense of British ports along the Channel, the North Sea. Nazi warplanes bored through those gaps and rained fire and death on the undefended areas. Counter-espionage eventually discovered the identity of Nazidom's most notorious spy. But British agents tried in vain to find Wollz, to capture him.

And now the criminal-spy was engaged in his most deadly task, the paving of the road for the actual invasion of England.

BRAIT gazed up at the jet eyes, at the smile on the thin lips. For a moment the arrogant confidence of Wollz' features was almost unnerving. But then Brait steeled himself—this show had only just started.

He looked up at Wollz very calmly and said, "I've heard about you."

Wollz didn't expect the calmness. He said, "And you are quite aware that I have never failed in anything I have set out to do?"

"There's gotta be a first time," Brait grinned.

Fury glinted in Wollz' eyes, and he clipped, "From the poor taste of your humor, you are obviously a Yankee."

"Obviously," Brait said.

Groehm said, "We will have trouble with this one. These Yankees are hard to deal with."

"You're not kidding, bud," Brait grinned.

Wollz was fast losing his leering urbanity. "Look here, Brait. I don't know your exact reasons for getting tangled up in this war, but I do know that most American volunteers are fighting merely because they want a little excitement. They are not particularly interested in the cause."

"What's the connection?" Brait said, as if he was interested.

"Simply this," Wollz purred, blanket-

ing his impatience as he sensed the effect of his words on the prisoner. "Since you are fighting for no other reason than that you want some action and excitement, you might as well get something out of it."

"Meaning what?"

"Gold," Wollz said.

"Yeah?" Brait murmured, and put something of eagerness in his tone. "How much?"

"Plenty," Wollz said. "I can use you, Brait. I can use not only your information, but also your actual flying services. And I'm prepared to pay you well."

Brait began to feel that Wollz was not so smooth, after all. The Nazi spy had slipped up, saying that he could make good use of the American's aviation services, when he had never seen Brait fly a plane.

"I'm willing to talk business," the American said.

Wollz and Groehm looked at each other. The criminal-spy turned to Brait, smiling. He said, "You show more sense than most Yankees. They are usually a stubborn, untrusting lot. I know that you will not be sorry for what you are about to do."

"I feel the same way," Brait said, grinning inside.

"Very good," Wollz said. "We will get along well."

"When do I start?" Brait said.

"Immediately."

"It's okay with me. But before I begin, I want to know the terms."

"Naturally," Wollz said. "The terms are as follows: You will first provide essential information concerning coastal air defenses in the north of Scotland. Secondly, you will act as my pilot on all trips to and from Norway. Thirdly, you will be my assistant on all espionage projects necessitating entrance into British military areas."

Brait was nodding slowly. Obviously

Wollz still needed quite a bit of information about the aviation set-up in northern Scotland. And as soon as those facts were provided, he would have no further use for Brait. Instead of a pink slip, there would be a single bullet.

"The job itself seems swell," Brait said, eagerly. "What about the dough angle?"

"The what?"

"The dough. The greens. The lettuce. The clams."

"You mean—the money?"

"Yeah, the money," Brait said.

"Five thousand dollars as soon as you provide the information," Wollz said. "And from there on, three thousand dollars per month. How does that sound?"

Brait forced an easy grin to his lips, and exulted. "It's the sweetest sound I've heard in a long time. Gimme a pen and let me sign on the dotted line."

Wollz nodded to Groehm. The *Luftwaffe* captain opened the door and went into the next room. Before the door closed, Brait could hear the sound of airplane motors. Obviously, mechanics were working on the Heinkels. Brait tried not to be too anxious. So far, he was doing very well for himself. One dumb move would botch the entire matter.

"Captain Groehm will bring pen and paper," Wollz said. "Instead of a contract, you will write down the answers to the questions I give you. You will sign your name to the completed paper. And I will place the gold equivalent of five thousand dollars in your hands."

Brait nodded, still grinning.

GROEHM came in with the pen and paper. Wollz reached into a side pocket of the black coat, took out a knife and sliced the bonds away from Brait's ankles. From outside, the roar of the Heinkel motors was louder. Wollz was behind Brait, pushing the blade of the knife into the hemp that was tight across his wrists. Brait grinned good-humoredly

at Groehm. The *Luftwaffe* captain grinned back.

For a few seconds the room was very still, except for the vibration that rolled back from the airplane motors on the field outside. Then the rope fell away from Brait's wrists. The American reached for the pen and paper which Groehm held toward the prisoner.

Brait grabbed—not the pen and paper, but Groehm's wrists. He pulled back hard, bent low, and the big German left the floor and sailed over Brait's shoulders. Then the American heaved hard, and Groehm went into the second phase of his flight. There was a shout of surprise from Wollz, and then the shout was cut short as Groehm's heavy head thudded into Wollz' chest. The two men went backward together, falling over each other.

Before they could disentangle themselves, Brait was out of the room. He slammed the door hard, then grabbed at the key that hung from a wall panel, and quickly locked the door. His eyes circled the room and he saw Groehm's flying jacket, helmet and goggles heaped on a bench near the window.

He snatched the togs, was into the jacket, had the helmet tight on his head, and was pulling the goggles over his eyes as he ran from the headquarters office. He was not quite as tall as Groehm, but he was almost as heavy, and maybe the outfit would do the trick. At any rate, this was no time to try togs on for size.

There were men in civilian clothes working in various parts of the field, but those who concentrated on the Heinkels wore white overalls. Brait was running fast now, knowing that he had to take them completely by surprise, and that he couldn't wait for arguments. It wouldn't be long before the shouts of Wollz and Groehm would bring other Nazis to their aid. Brait headed for the Heinkels.

"Which plane is ready?" he shouted.

Startled, the mechanics turned and stared at him. Instinctively, they pointed to a Heinkel. Two of them were climbing down from the hood, pulling back the cockpit roof.

Brait rushed at the plane. Then, as he was climbing into the cockpit, he heard a mechanic yell, "That is not Captain Groehm!"

The motor whined as Brait poured juice. The mechanics were staring at him, not knowing exactly what to do, lost without the crisp commands of a superior officer. Brait shoved the plane forward, then looked back and had to laugh at their indecision.

Roaring, the plane whizzed across the field. Brait left the field in a fast take-off, worked into a steep climb. The Heinkel responded smoothly to his touch, and he hunched comfortably in the cockpit. He was filled with satisfaction, with a feeling that the toughest part of the job was over. He didn't like the idea of boasting to himself, but he couldn't help but feel a glow of satisfaction in the way he had handled matters. He thought of Wollz and Groehm, and of the carefully laid plans for a blitzkrieg against northern Scotland.

It was just too bad about those precious plans.

He lifted the Heinkel to five thousand feet. He looked down. As soon as he reached a flat field, he'd make a landing. This was anything but healthy flying territory for a single Heinkel.

He was looking carefully, but all he saw were woods and hills. Then he caught a droning sound from behind. He gazed into the rear-view mirror.

Four Heinkels were back there, less than a mile behind him. He could sense the grimness of their chase. He knew that they would keep after him until either his fuel was gone, or some other obstacle presented itself. They were walking up to the higher galleries now, and they were

undoubtedly taking it with throttle wide open. He had been using a lot of speed, but not the full rate, and now he realized that the pursuing planes had a definite momentum advantage.

There was a big possibility that they might reach him on their first dive.

But then he grinned. After all, he had been looking for something like this. He had been bored by the stagnant state of affairs at Fighter 41, hadn't he? He had been starved for trouble, for action. Now he had it, plenty of it, and he was enthused about the matter.

THE Heinkel sizzled as Brait poured on more juice. The four Nazi planes were adding footage to their altitude pile-up, working into attack formation. Brait kept glancing into the mirror, gauging for his defensive move, and at the same time working himself into a state of combat fury. His eyes were cold; his lips were set in a tight hard grin. As he waited for the other Heinkels to negotiate for the first phase, he instinctively checked the speed of his plane. He was very anxious for a fight, and the nearer his pursuers approached, the better he liked it.

When the four Heinkels were less than four hundred yards away, when they had a height lead of approximately five hundred feet, they dived. They rolled down in straight formation, the number one plane piloted by Captain Groehm.

Madsen lead spurted from Groehm's guns. Brait took bullets in his tail assembly and then flipped the Heinkel into a vertical right turn. The four Nazis turned with him, but lost range on the dive. Groehm continued to jockey for a tail attack, and the other three planes took guarding positions in the front and rear, to prevent a try for a dive getaway.

Brait looked the situation over. His altimeter read forty-five hundred feet. He couldn't do much on a dive, but at least he could draw them in by pretending to

play it that way. He feinted his dive, and the planes directly in front of him came down fast. Very quickly Brait pulled out, turned to his left and found Heinkel wing and cockpit in his sights.

His thumb went down on the button in the head of the stick, and Madsen lead screeched out in four red lines. Flame twinkled on the wings of the bullet-punctured Heinkel, and then the glass-covered cockpit roof was splashing crazily. The plane went into a crazy spin.

Groehm and the other two Nazis were spearing in fast as Brait buzzed into another roll-out. He came out of it at three thousand feet. Instead of edging for additional space, he promptly climbed. Groehm and the two other Heinkel pilots were surprised enough to peel off. When they did, Brait lunged upward in sizzling offensive.

Again he worked the Madsens, and the chukking guns made an eerie melody that

blended with the crackling, hissing sound of bullets which struck a gas tank. The ignited Heinkel started to whistle, then plunged toward the earth.

Brait kept going up. Groehm and the other Nazi were very much peeved by this time. But they respected the American's aviation talent, and they well knew the necessity of giving him a lot of room.

At an even four thousand feet, the battle area was stretched to a sphere a half-mile wide. Then it was pulled in as Brait took the initiative. On a head-on basis, he leaped at the two Heinkels. They broke into acute diving turns and stretched the area again. Feinting toward Groehm, the American made a lightning thrust as he pulled his plane in the other direction. His guns sputtered and he headed toward the other Nazis, trying to find motor or cockpit or both.

Groehm saw the plight of the other Heinkel, and knew that he could save his

**Girls rave about the shaves you get
With thrifty, keen-edged Thin Gillette.
This blade skims off the toughest stubble—
Costs ten for four—saves time and trouble!**



Save Extra Money! Get The Big New Economy Package, 12 For 27c

fellow Nazis by making a quick turn and shoving lead in a side-attack. But he also saw the possibility of a fast half-loop, which would result in his maneuvering onto the American's tail. He decided on the latter move.

Red lines of doom spanned sixty feet of sky, and Brait watched his Madsens chop a Nazi to pieces. He was close enough to see the ghastly expression on the face of the dying German. Then the Heinkel fell over on its back and went down.

Eyes cold, a cold grin still drawn across his lips, Brait watched the enemy plane go down. Then, before he could check on the remaining plane, he heard the guns of the fourth Heinkel.

Lead thunked into his fuselage. He hunched low, worked the plane into a roll-out. Still the chukking sound continued, echoed by the thumping of bullets into his ship. He eyed his rear-view mirror and saw that the enemy plane was neatly following his runaway jump. He tried a zig-zag dance that didn't do much good. He was taking a lot of lead. He realized that he was up against a high-grade Nazi flyer. Bullets ripped through the glass cockpit roof, and Brait squirmed uncomfortably. This wasn't at all funny.

Brait started a climb, with the Heinkel behind him flipping lead at his tail. Then abruptly he fell over on his left wing, twisting the maneuver into a wing turn-over. The pursuing plane was foxed into a lunge, and Brait leveled fast, dodging fire and getting completely out of range.

As he did so, the American turned his head, watched the other plane whiz past. He caught a glimpse of the pilot, recognized the heavy features of Captain Groehm. The Nazi's face was contorted in a grimace of rage.

The grin widened on Brait's lips. He knew that he was playing cards with one of the masters of the game, and he couldn't help but feel that he had been doing very

well so far. A few more fast tricks would result in the abrupt termination of Groehm's combat career.

His altimeter read 4,500. It was just about right for the plan he had in mind. He would feint a try for altitude, then leap for Groehm, head-on. He would have to trade lead on the first bounce, but he was confident that he could get in the more effective sock. If he could tag Groehm with a single bullet in the gas tank, or through the cockpit, the deal would be over in that instant.

Brait frowned. Groehm seemed to be covering an extraordinary amount of space. Already he should have turned around, started his attack. Instead, he was proceeding northward, at full speed. He wasn't trying for more altitude—he was running away.

It seemed unbelievable. Groehm had a reputation as a fearless combat flyer, who would take on the very best of R.A.F. aces in single duel. Brait remembered having heard that the Nazi preferred individual battle to group fighting, that the better his opponent, the more he liked it.

Yet now Groehm was running away.

Brait shrugged, and then his frown deepened. He looked in the rear-view mirror, and there he found the answer to Groehm's frantic exit.

Coming on in V formation were five Spitfires.

THIS was no cause for surprise. It was simply the mid-morning patrol of Fighter 41. Normally, Brait would have been leading that patrol. And now they were hawking in at full speed, noses and guns pointed toward him. Groehm had sighted them several seconds ago, was getting away while the getting was good.

Brait knew that he had to make a quick decision. Those five Spitfires were interested only in the fact that they were approaching a plane that carried crosses on its wings and a swastika on the rudder.

Either he had to follow Groehm on the getaway, or he had to let them know somehow of his identity.

He was trying to find a solution, when a flicker of orange wisped out from the engine cowling. It grew larger. It was followed by a rush of smoke that flowed over the cockpit like a plume. Brait cursed, remembering how many times the ship had been struck by Nazis bullets. One of those bullets had started trouble in the engine.

The fire was lengthening now, and Brait felt the heat and the beginnings of terror. He didn't have a chute. He gazed at the oncoming Spitfires. Then he looked in the other direction, at Groehm. The Nazi was at a safe distance now, was weaving slowly, as though he were casually enjoying the trouble that made a web around the American.

Then Brait felt a surge of hope. At least the sight of his doom would prevent Groehm from changing Wollz's plans in northern Scotland. The Nazis would think that the American was dead. They would go ahead with their project, as scheduled.

It meant that if he could only work his way out of this trouble-spot, he would be able to start things moving against Wollz and Groehm.

Sweat rolled down Brait's face, dribbled from his lips. He pushed the Heinkel into a dive, and the onrush of wind momentarily swept the flames away from the cockpit. But the plane was being eaten up by fire as it plummeted down. Its wings were crackling, and behind it a path of smoke trickled and grew to a wide swath.

Brait wasn't looking at the Spitfires now. He was looking at the ground that came up very fast. He glanced up at the Heinkel that was slightly more than a mile away. And he knew somehow that Groehm was watching and smiling, confident that knowledge of the Nazi plans died with the American pilot.

Brait hoped for a safe landing, but it

was going to be a job. The plane was seemingly jumping away from him, as a steed forgets its master in the face of fiery doom. The left wing was just about ready to fall off. The fuselage was hardly more than a frame now.

Then Brait saw the jumble of green, and aimed the plane at some leaves and soft branches. At the same time he was pushing back the cockpit roof. The plane screeched down toward the line of thick bush. At less than a hundred feet Brait started to climb out of the cockpit. He figured on a broken leg and a few cracked ribs, if he was very lucky.

He saw the thick green moving toward him very fast, and he grinned as he threw himself away from a fork of flame, retaining a hold on the side of the cockpit that held least fire.

A wall of wind broke the downward course of the ignited Heinkel, throwing it slightly to the left. Brait took advantage of the lurch and threw himself away from the plane. He went down in a drop of thirty feet and landed in a lot of soft bush.

FOR a minute Brait rested there, dazed. Then very slowly he got up, surprised that he wasn't hurt. He worked his way down through a maze of branches. He heard a crackling sound over to his left, and saw the Heinkel, in the last throes of its flame sickness.

Beyond that, he saw a stretch of field. Two Spitfires had landed there, and the pilots were approaching the wrecked Nazi plane. Brait knew that they hadn't as yet seen him, and for a moment something told him not to make his presence known.

Then he was calling himself a fool for worrying about it. Everything was all right. He was one of these guys. He was part of Fighter 41. He would tell them what had happened, and in a very short while the Nazi base in northern Scotland would be in very sad shape.

He waved to them as he walked toward

them. He recognized the taller flyer, a soft-spoken chap named Wittel. The other man was an easy-going Londoner, Croughton. He shouted a hello.

They heard and saw him at the same instant. Their response was almost convulsive in its quickness. They grabbed at holsters beneath their flying jackets, and leveled revolvers at him. Their faces were like white stone.

Brait grinned. They hadn't recognized him, of course. They had him down as a Nazi pilot.

He came nearer. They ought to savvy by now. But still they pointed the revolvers at him. He had the goggles up on his forehead and there was no good reason why they shouldn't know who he was by this time. Well, at least he could find out what was wrong.

"Eyes going back on you, lads? Don't you recognize your own flight lieutenant?"

"Put your hands up!" Wittel said, and his voice was as hard as the expression on his face.

Brait frowned and said, "I don't get it."

"You will," Croughton said. "If you don't hurry and get your hands up, you'll get it, all right—a slug of lead through your black heart."

Brait put his hands up.

"I'm afraid I don't understand," he said.

"Very poor sham, Brait, very poor," Wittel muttered. "You understand this matter as well as any of us. To save time, to save the expense of a trial and a lot of formalities, I'd suggest that as soon as we arrive home, you confess."

"Confess what?" Brait said, thoroughly angry by now.

Wearily Croughton put in, "Oh, come now, Brait, you're not talking to grammar school beginners. We know a little more than our A B C's."

"I wonder," Brait said. Then his eyes narrowed and he said, "Just exactly how much do you know?"

Wittel and Croughton glanced at each other, and they both nodded, as if agreeing on the feasibility of a full explanation.

Then Croughton said, "In the first place, Squadron Leader Cardley is still in the infirmary, suffering from a rather severe blow on the head. Does that clear up anything?"

"Slightly," Brait said. "Go on."

"In the second place," Croughton continued, "several important papers, including specification lists, charts and diagrams, are missing from Cardley's office."

"What else?" Brait said.

"Thirdly, you were not present this morning at roll-call. When Cardley heard about it, he stated that you had argued with him last night, only a few minutes before he was struck from behind while working in his office. And now we find you flying a Heinkel, and wearing—" He pointed to the helmet and leather jacket—"Nazi flying togs!"

"Is that all?" Brait said.

"I should think it's quite enough," Wittel muttered.

Brait grinned, and said, "You know, I always gave you English guys credit for a lot of common sense. But I'm beginning to wonder. Do you mean to stand there and tell me that you've got me down as a traitor, after seeing what happened just above this spot, at four thousand feet?"

The two Englishmen frowned. Wittel shook his head slowly and said, "I'll admit that it's somewhat of a puzzle. I mean, I did see you tangling with that other Heinkel, and I imagine that his bullets were the reason for your breaking into flames."

"I also saw it," Croughton said, "and I guess the others did, as well. But the facts are still against you, Brait. You'll have a hard time proving your innocence."

"Maybe," Brait murmured. He tightened his lips slightly, and then he said, "Is Cardley's condition serious?"

"Not at all," Wittel replied. "In fact, Brait, I expect that he'll be up and around by this evening. And I have a feeling that he'll be quite eager to discuss this matter with you."

Brait's eyes narrowed, and his voice was low and thoughtful as he said, "No doubt about that."

A few minutes later, Wittel took off, and Brait waited there with Croughton. He tried to pump the other flyer, because he knew that the equation must balance when he faced Cardley. On the face of matters, his story was downright fantastic, and the more he knew about what had happened in his absence from Fighter 41, the better chance he had of putting this thing across.

Croughton, however, had nothing to say beyond a crisp reminder, now and then, telling Brait to keep his hands up.

In a little while, Wittel returned. He was piloting a Defiant. He told Brait to climb into the front cockpit, to handle the controls. He said that he would have his revolver ready in the rear turret. Then the Spitfire and the Defiant took off, heading for Fighter 41.

CHAPTER THREE

Reprieve From Death

BYOND the office windows, a night sky provided a thick black curtain. Inside the office, Squadron Leader Cardley slowly walked to his desk and sat down. Two Intelligence officers were seated at either side of him. Cardley thumbed a button and an orderly entered. Before speaking, the squadron leader gingerly touched the bandage about his head. He closed his eyes for an instant, as if the pain of his injury blended with deep thought in his mind.

Then he said, "I'm ready to see him now."

In a few moments Brait entered, fol-

lowed by the guard, whose right hand was in cautious position near a side holster. Brait was bathed and shaved and wore a cleaned and pressed uniform. He carried himself straight as he walked briskly to the desk and saluted.

Cardley looked to either side at the two Intelligence officers. They were keen-eyed men, and they were watching Flight Lieutenant Brait closely. The American, however, seemed unaware of their presence. His gaze was fastened on the squadron leader.

For several seconds Cardley seemed puzzled as to how to begin the questioning. Then he took a deep breath, touched his bandage again and said, "You are aware, I am sure, of the seriousness of your position, Brait. You will answer all questions briefly, clearly. But before we start this inquiry, you are offered the opportunity of making a complete confession—"

"Confession of what?" Brait said.

"Of your traitorous activities," Cardley replied.

A slight smile came to Brait's lips. His eyes seemed to bore at Cardley as he said, "You ought to know that there is nothing for me to confess."

The squadron leader stiffened. For an instant it seemed as if he would leap from the chair. But then he relaxed.

"Very well," he said. "We will not waste time with a detailed examination. I want you to explain exactly what happened from the time you left this field last night until the moment when you were found by Flying Officers Wittel and Croughton."

Brait felt confident that his story would be believed. It would check in every aspect, for the plain and simple reason that every word of it was true. The Intelligence agents were brilliant in these matters, and at least he was sure of a fair hearing. As far as Cardley was concerned . . .

He looked at Cardley, and then his eyes slanted downward. He was staring at the thing that Cardley's fingers were trying to reach. He saw the object just as the squadron leader's hand closed over it. Within him there was a shock of realization, and he understood everything in that moment.

He looked away quickly. He knew that Cardley was studying him now, trying to discern if Brait had seen the object and recognized it. The American did not seem to be watching closely, but nevertheless he saw Cardley's hand slide back. He saw the careful but casual motion as Cardley edged the object into a desk drawer. He also saw that the Intelligence agents had noticed neither the object nor what Cardley did with it.

BRAIT knew now that he could not state what had happened in the time he had been away from Fighter 41. He could not say a word about the secret base in northern Scotland. His position now was very precarious, dangerous. The smashing of the Nazi invasion plan depended on how he handled the matter from here on.

He would have to gamble. The odds would be stacked high against him, but somehow the personal side didn't mean much. He would have to forget completely about himself and concentrate on the fight that was being put up by a rugged little island called England.

What he needed now, more than anything else, was time. There was only one way to get it.

Cardley leaned forward. There was impatience in his voice as he said, "Well, Brait, let's have it—the entire story."

Brait seemed to lose his calmness. His shoulders drooped, and a worried frown came over his brow. He blinked a few times, and then trembled.

One of the Intelligence agents said, "No hesitation, please."

"I—I was coming from my quarters," Brait began, "and I—I—" He gulped hard, trembled again, and then he blurted, "No! I can't tell you! I can't tell you anything! It's—it's all too much for me!" He sagged, and the guard grabbed him. Then he broke down, and wild, gasping sobs, unaccompanied by tears, came from him.

Cardley and the two agents leaped to their feet, and Brait, still making a lot of noise, closely watched the squadron leader, comparing his expression with that of the Intelligence men.

The agents were startled. Cardley, however, was calmly puzzled.

It checked, then. But despite the fact that the truth was very plain to Brait, he still had the problem of proving it. He was seemingly trying to get a grip on himself as he trembled in the grasp of the heavily-built guard.

Cardley said, "This is obviously an admission of guilt." He turned to the Intelligence agents and murmured, "You agree, gentlemen?"

"Not entirely," one of them said. "Flight Lieutenant Brait has probably been under a severe strain. I recommend that he be given an additional rest period before undergoing any further questioning."

Cardley frowned. "But this is all rather absurd. A man doesn't break down like this when he is innocent."

"That's quite true," the other agent said. "Yet we are not interested in a sobbing, incoherent confession from the lips of a weak and broken man. Right now we are mainly interested in obtaining specific information. We want to know the why and wherefore of Brait's flying that Heinkel this morning. We want to compile our facts and extract the essential knowledge in this matter. Right now Brait is in no condition to help us. I agree on the advisability of a rest period."

Cardley shrugged. He said, in a low

voice, "Since you gentlemen are in official charge of this matter, I'll concede to your wishes. But I must say that I consider it a rum waste of time. There is absolutely no doubt about Brait's guilt."

"I'm innocent—I'm innocent," Brait babbled, and the dry, choking sobs continued to escape from his trembling lips. He was sobbing when the guard led him from the office.

TWO guards were posted outside the small room in the cellar of the barracks. At first they had expected to have quite a bit of trouble with the prisoner, but Flight Lieutenant Brait had calmed down very quickly after being placed in the gray, stuffy little room. Once he asked for a cigarette, and once he asked for a drink of water. Outside of that, he made no requests. He was very quiet.

Hours past midnight, Squadron Leader Cardley came down into the cellar, approached the guards and said, "You men can go off duty for awhile. Take a rest or a drink in the canteen if you want to. You can come back in about three-quarters of an hour."

The guards saluted. As they walked down the corridor, toward the steps, one of them said, "That's what I like about Cardley. He's not too strict, and he appreciates the fact that a man can use a bit of relaxation now and then."

"Yes, Cardley's a good sort."

They went up the stairway together, anticipating the flow of cool ale from tankard to lip.

Far down the corridor, Cardley waited for the guards to reach the top of the stairway. When the sound of their footsteps had receded, the squadron leader quickly took a key from his upper tunic pocket, opened the door, walked into the little room.

A dim orange glow from the lamps in the corridor stitched through the darkness. Cardley slowly closed the door behind him. Then he turned and smiled as he saw Brait, lying inert on the narrow cot.

The thin lips parted, and Cardley's teeth glistened as he moved toward the cot. His right hand edged down slowly toward his revolver holster. It was going to be over very quickly. He wasn't at all sure how much Brait actually knew, but he was definitely convinced that the American was a threat. This was the only way to be positive that the threat would be erased.

Cardley took the revolver from the holster, listening to the heavy, slow rhythm of the breathing that came from the cot.

There would be a very simple explanation afterward. He had merely come down to see if Brait's condition was improved. The man had seemed calm enough at first, but then had leaped at him. In self defense he had been forced to pull



HITS THE SPOT

PEPSI-COLA

REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

BIGGER DRINK • BETTER FLAVOR

Pepsi-Cola is made only by Pepsi-Cola Company, Long Island City, N. Y. Bottled locally by authorized bottlers.

his revolver. He did not want to fire. He did not want to kill Brait. He had simply wanted to subdue the prisoner. And so he had clubbed Brait over the head with the revolver butt. It was very unfortunate that he had struck just a little too hard.

Cardley lifted the revolver, aimed the butt at the back of Brait's head, just above the neckline.

Then the American rolled off the cot.

Cardley breathed a curse, knowing instantly that Brait had been faking sleep. He twisted the revolver, trying to place a forefinger in front of the trigger. But at that moment Brait, on the floor, pounded into him at the knees. He lost his balance, fell backward, and the revolver went out of his hand, fell to the floor.

Both men went for the weapon. Brait was there first. His fingers touched metal, and then Cardley's hard, bony fingers were around his neck, pulling his head back, applying pressure. Brait could not get a hold on the revolver.

He brought back an elbow, and it jabbed into Cardley's abdomen. The pressure on his throat was relaxed for an instant. In that fraction of time Brait used his other elbow, then twisted hard, and fell away from his antagonist.

Cardley was doubled up, wincing from the pain. Brait dived again for the revolver.

Then Cardley's boot kicked out hard, and struck Brait on the side of the jaw. Brait fell back, dazed, as Cardley went for the revolver. Brait dived at him. The glistening blue-black weapon slid away from the men as they rolled across the floor, punching, kicking, hissing curses of hate and desperation. Cardley once again tried for a strangle-hold. Brait rocked him with hammering punches to the jaw. Cardley was forced to let go, and they fell away from each other.

Brait went back to the wall as Cardley reached him with a whizzing, sweeping

left. Blood dribbled from the American's lips. Grinning fiendishly, Cardley moved in for a finishing blow. His right fist was raised, and his left was lowered, to the side. It left him open for a right.

Brait clipped him with the right, and he went back across the room, twisting as he fell. His face slapped down against the floor, smashing his nose and knocking two front teeth out.

But he got up fast.

He rushed at Brait crazily, but the American met him with two short lefts to the side of the head and a chopping right that thudded into Cardley's belly, doubling him up again.

Cardley went down. As he hit the floor he made a frenzied grab, and he managed to reach the gun. He rolled over and he was against the door, pointing the revolver at Brait's heart.

"You know all about Wollz?" Cardley muttered. "You know the plan?"

"From A to Z. And of course I've known for quite a while that you were tied up in it."

"How, may I ask, did you arrive at that conclusion?"

BRAIT looked from the muzzle of the revolver to the grin on Cardley's face. He said, "As soon as I heard that you were in the infirmary, suffering from a blow on the head, I had definite suspicions. You couldn't have been struck from behind, since your desk is so placed that you could see anyone who entered the office. Even if the intruder struck you from in front, you could have raised some sort of cry. So, as far as that bang on the head was concerned, it was a put-up job. It was just a light tap, which raised a bump. You had it bandaged and made a big fuss about it. That took care of your angle about the important papers that were taken from the office."

"Very clever on your part," Cardley muttered. "What else?"

"This evening, as I stood in your office, I noticed an object on the desk. You made a grab for it. You weren't sure whether or not I had seen it before, but you were taking no chances. The object had special interest for me, since I had seen it before. It was one of those little blue lanterns that fasten to the belts of the laborers at the secret base in northern Scotland. Wollz probably gave it to you as a souvenir. As soon as I saw it, I knew beyond a doubt that you were in on the scheme. It's small wonder that you didn't show any enthusiasm for night patrols over northern Scotland."

"You are a very talented observer," Cardley said. "It is a pity that a man of your abilities must die."

"Before you pull that trigger," Brait muttered, "I'd like to know one thing. How is it that you, an Englishman, got tangled up in this matter?"

"It's explained easily enough," Cardley said. "Long ago I used to be a member of Wollz' gang. Then I became interested in flying, and went straight. I joined the R.A.F. many years before the war. Then, when we started this war with Germany, I heard from Wollz again. He made a rather tempting offer."

"So you sold out?"

"Why not?" Cardley said. "Loyalty and patriotism are meaningless things. I've always lived by material standards, and gold is the main basis of my existence. When this war is over, I'll be a very wealthy man."

"I've got my doubts," Brait said. Then he was listening to the sound of footsteps in the corridor. He knew that Cardley heard it at the same time. The traitor's face twisted in alarm.

Brait expected him to pull the trigger in that instant. But instead, Cardley turned his head slightly, and called out, "Who is there?"

For a brief second Brait saw his chance. He shouted, "Look out there!" It was a

meaningless yell, but it pulled Cardley's head farther to the side. Brait leaped. Cardley whirled back, pulled the trigger, and a bullet whizzed an inch from Brait's side. Then he grabbed Cardley's wrist, twisting it hard. Again the revolver fired. A bullet bounced from the floor.

Someone was at the door, opening it, plunging into the small room.

Brait ignored the intruder. Once again he twisted Cardley's wrist, and the revolver slipped out of the traitor's grasp, fell to the floor. Cardley fell back, gasping, cursing.

Then Brait stared at the revolver in the hands of a grim-faced guard.

Cardley seized at the opportunity. He said, "I'm lucky you happened along. He got violent a little while ago. I've been having the very devil of a time with him."

"I'll be able to handle him, sir," the guard said grimly. "I'm usually not on duty at this hour, but I heard the sounds of a tussle as I was walking through the other end of the corridor. You look sort of done in, sir. Maybe you better get patched up."

"Good idea," Cardley said. He hesitated for an instant as he moved toward the door. It was evident that he realized the weakness of his position. As long as Brait was alive, the traitor was in a bad spot.

As he edged through the door, Cardley said to the guard, "Watch him closely. If he makes one false move, shoot him dead."

"You can depend on me, sir."

IT WAS apparent to Brait, who stood there facing the guard. The American knew what Cardley would do now. The traitor would make a frantic flight to the base in northern Scotland.

"Move back against the wall," the guard said.

"If you only knew what you were doing," Brait sighed.

"I know what I'm doing. Get back there. My finger's only too anxious to pull this trigger."

"Cardley's a traitor," Brait said. "Just follow him up that stairway, and watch what he does, and you'll see the proof of what I'm telling you."

The guard laughed harshly. "You needn't try any scheme like that. I'm keeping a close watch here until the regular watch returns."

Brait shrugged. "That seems sort of silly, don't you think? Instead of standing there like a statue, covering me with the revolver, you could merely go out and lock the door and wait in the corridor."

"Maybe that's not a bad idea," the guard said. "Not much of a chance of your breaking the door down."

The guard backed toward the door. Then he turned slightly, his free hand moving toward the door handle.

Brait took the long chance. He swayed forward, as if he was about to fall unconscious. Then, as the guard's vigilance was cut by surprise, the American twisted to the side, leaping forward. The guard was bringing up the revolver, but Brait grabbed his gun arm, pulling it up. As the roar of a bullet resounded in the small room, Brait drew back his right arm. He whizzed it forward, and his heavy fist cracked against the guard's jaw.

The Britisher dropped the revolver and slumped to the floor, unconscious.

Brait reached down, grabbed the revolver, and ran out of the room. He sprinted through the dark corridor, raced up the steps. And as he was making his way toward the door that led to the field, he heard the sound of an engine—a Rolls-Royce.

Cursing, afraid that he was too late, Brait ran toward the door. Just as he reached it, he heard a challenge from behind. The two Intelligence agents had

come out of a side door, were hurrying toward him.

He opened the door, ran out on the field. Yards behind, the Intelligence agents followed. He wasn't worried about them. He was peering through the darkness at the silhouette of a Spitfire that trembled in readiness for a quick take-off.

The exertions that he had gone through were taking a heavy toll of Brait's stamina, but he knew that he had to reach the plane before it left the ground. He had to prevent Cardley from returning to the secret base. The pain, the exhaustion were like a white-hot spear jabbing through his brain, his spine, his legs. He put everything he had into the sprint, and was filled with despair as he saw the Spitfire moving away from him, starting its take-off across the field. It seemed very far away, too far. But maybe there was a chance—if he could cover just a few more yards and leap.

HIS feet left the ground, and he was almost horizontal as he vaulted through the darkness. His arms stretched out in front, and his fingers found the rudder. He pulled himself upward, almost losing his hold as the plane increased its speed. But he dragged himself onto the rear of the fuselage, and then pulled himself forward, straddling the trembling Spitfire.

The Spitfire whizzed into the air, throbbing in a steep climb. Again Brait was nearly thrown off. But his hold was desperate, and he was climbing upward along the plane even as the Spitfire moved up along the invisible hills of the night sky. He was inching himself up to the glass cockpit roof, reaching out, pulling the cover back.

Cardley turned in the cockpit, stared back at him with eyes of fear and hate.

"You might as well make a landing," Brait gritted. "You're through."

"Not quite," Cardley hissed. "This ship does a magnificent loop. I'll show you."

Ice threaded along Brait's spine. If the Spitfire went into a loop, he would be thrown off. The plane was now almost a thousand feet above the ground.

And it was going up into a loop!

Playing chess with Death, Brait reached forward, grabbed Cardley's head, and with all his might pushed forward. There was a thudding sound as the traitor's forehead made contact with the upper rim of the instrument panel. Then Brait thrust his right arm toward the stick, inserting himself half-way into the cockpit as he sought to pull the plane out of its inverted climb.

Slowly the Spitfire straightened its course. Brait was manipulating the ship toward a landing, handicapped by the unconscious Cardley, who was slumped in the cockpit. But the plane circled downward, and Brait took advantage of a searchlight that suddenly slanted up from one of the hangars. The Spitfire negotiated for a landing.

As he brought the plane to a full stop, he saw the field was already crowded with officers and members of the ground crew. They were running toward him, led by the two Intelligence agents.

One of the agents said, "Where's Cardley? Did he—?"

"No, I didn't push him out of the plane," Brait said. "He's in the cockpit, but I don't think he'll have much to say. Am I still under arrest, gentlemen?"

The agents looked at each other, and then the one who had spoken first, said, "I'll admit you've got us puzzled, Brait. But there's no use denying that Cardley's been acting suspiciously. We've been making investigations since he questioned you early this evening, and there are a few factors in his case that look mighty queer—especially this last instance. Maybe you can tell us just why

Cardley ran out on the field, tried to take off in a Spitfire."

"I can tell you plenty," Brait said.

Then, with flyers and mechanics clustered around, he explained the entire situation.

The Intelligence agents looked at each other, and one of them gave a low whistle.

Brait finished up with, "The Nazis, of course, think that I'm dead. Groehm saw me go down in flames. It means that they don't have an inkling of what we know about them. At the same time, however, they're probably waiting for some word from Cardley. When they don't get it, they'll become wary. If we're going to smash their plan, we'd better do it in a hurry."

One of the Intelligence men said, "You're second in command here, Brait, and with Cardley out of the picture, it looks as if you're the one who has the say. How do you feel about the matter?"

"I'm set on a raid," Brait said.

There were murmurs of enthusiasm from the other flyers.

Wittel said, "It seems hard to believe—Fighter 41 is actually going to do some fighting."

Croughton said, "It's like going out in sunlight after a six months' Arctic night."

CHAPTER FOUR

The Devil's Dogfight

WOLLZ and Groehm were in the headquarters office, reviewing the work that had been done thus far, and the plans for the next twenty-four hours.

And then they heard the sound of motors in the air.

They stared at each other, their eyes bulging. Only when they heard the shriek and the clatter and the crash of exploding bombs did they realize what was happening.

"Maybe the English are not so clumsy after all," Groehm muttered, and ran out of the office.

Wollz stood there, silent, stupefied.

Then his eyes narrowed furtively. To him the English were not really a military enemy. In truth, they were the police, and he was a criminal. In a corner of the office, in the lowest drawer of a small cabinet, there was a black leather case. It contained a fortune in gold bars. Wollz had kept it there, ready for an emergency such as this.

From outside came the shattering sound of motors and machine guns and bombs. Already Groehm was making a frantic attempt to get his Heinkel fighters into the air.

Wollz moved toward the cabinet. He opened the drawer. His long fingers snaked in and he took out the black leather case.

MADSEN bullets carved a mean line across the wing of a Spitfire. Flight Lieutenant Brait worked into a vertical left turn and eased away from the guns of the Heinkel behind him. He looked down and saw that already the German camp was a patch of flame. The two Handley Page Hampdens had done a good job.

The battle, however, was far from won. Groehm had managed to get all but three of his fighting planes into the air, and now the sky above the flaming base was filled with whirling, dipping, diving flames. Viciously, like cornered rats, the Heinkels were gaining their combat momentum, spearing into the nine Spitfires that had escorted the two bombers.

Brait watched a plane falling in flames. It was a Heinkel. He smiled. Another plane went into a spin, whistling its own doom. Brait's smile faded. It was Wittel, going down to his last landing. Then another Heinkel was falling, and still

another. Brait smiled again. The momentary advantage of the Nazi air group was being overcome now. The Spitfires were taking the initiative once more.

Brait tangled with three Heinkels that had tried to weave a net of lead around another Spitfire. A three-second burst accounted for the leading German plane, and then, as the other two peeled off, Brait took the one on the left, poured Browning lead into the cockpit. The rescued Spitfire caught the third Heinkel with a short burst to the motor. The Nazi plane flared orange, and plummeted towards the earth.

There was another party over on the right, about five hundred feet above Brait's plane—in four Heinkels and two Spitfires. The American worked his Spitfire into a steep climb, meanwhile taking note of the progress that 41 was making. He saw a Spitfire falling over on its back, flame swirling across its wings. It was followed by a doomed Heinkel. Then another Spitfire was going down, and Brait knew that there was no time for anguish over his lost men.

Brait leveled and raised his speed to more than three hundred miles per hour. He saw now that the Spitfires were nearing the peak of triumph. The Nazi group seemed to realize which way the tide was turning. Two Germans had already taken to parachutes.

It was a gladdening sight for Brait, and a grin of sheer joy came to his lips. But it faded fast.

Bullets were ripping through the cockpit roof. There was a splash of glass before his eyes. Mechanically he worked into a steep bank, falling on his right wing and crawling into a turnover. A glance into the rear-view mirror showed him a Heinkel on his tail.

Brait dived, and the Heinkel followed. Then the American started a loop, broke it abruptly, and baited the Nazi into running past him. He looked at the Heinkel

as it streaked by. In the cockpit he saw the hate-twisted features of Captain Groehm.

The Heinkel made a fast turn.

A cold grin came to his lips as he faced the Nazi. They came at each other, motors screaming, at an even five thousand feet. Brait broke away and dived, then carved into a steep climb. Groehm fainted a wing turnover and threw a three-second burst that missed. Brait's bullets found Heinkel wing on a side lunge. They broke away again.

Then they came together once more, and this time it was Groehm who made the break. He faded to the side and started his dive.

But he didn't start it fast enough. Brait skidded around to the left, half-Immelmanned and leaped onto the Nazi's tail. Brownings chukked for three seconds. Brait saw the Heinkel quiver convulsively. As he came closer, he saw that the pilot was upright, very stiff. Captain Groehm was a corpse.

The Spitfire made a slow turn, came up even with the remainder of Fighter 41. The five planes formed straight formation, and Flight Lieutenant Brait spoke into the radio telephone. His voice was low, but there was something of a vic-

tory shout about it as he said, "Well, lads, that sort of breaks up the monotony."

ON THE day following the complete surrender of the Nazi base in northern Scotland, Squadron Leader Brait accompanied several high-ranking British officers to the charred wreckage of the camp. In the half-destroyed headquarters office, many valuable papers were discovered. And not far away from the office, Brait came upon a corpse attired in black. A bomb fragment had been the cause of death, and the end had come very quickly. But there was terror in the bulging eyes of the dead man, as though he were still trying to get away. His fingers were cold and rigid on the black leather case.

Brait took the case from the fingers of the corpse. He opened it up, looked at the glittering yellow metal inside.

Then, as the other officers came over and began to ask questions, Brait gazed down at the eyes of the corpse and said, "It's just too bad, Wollz. You were pretty much of a louse in your lifetime, but you had a chance to die like a soldier. Instead of picking up a gun, you grabbed a bag of gold. I guess your death isn't much of a loss—even to the Nazis."

QUICK!

SLICK!

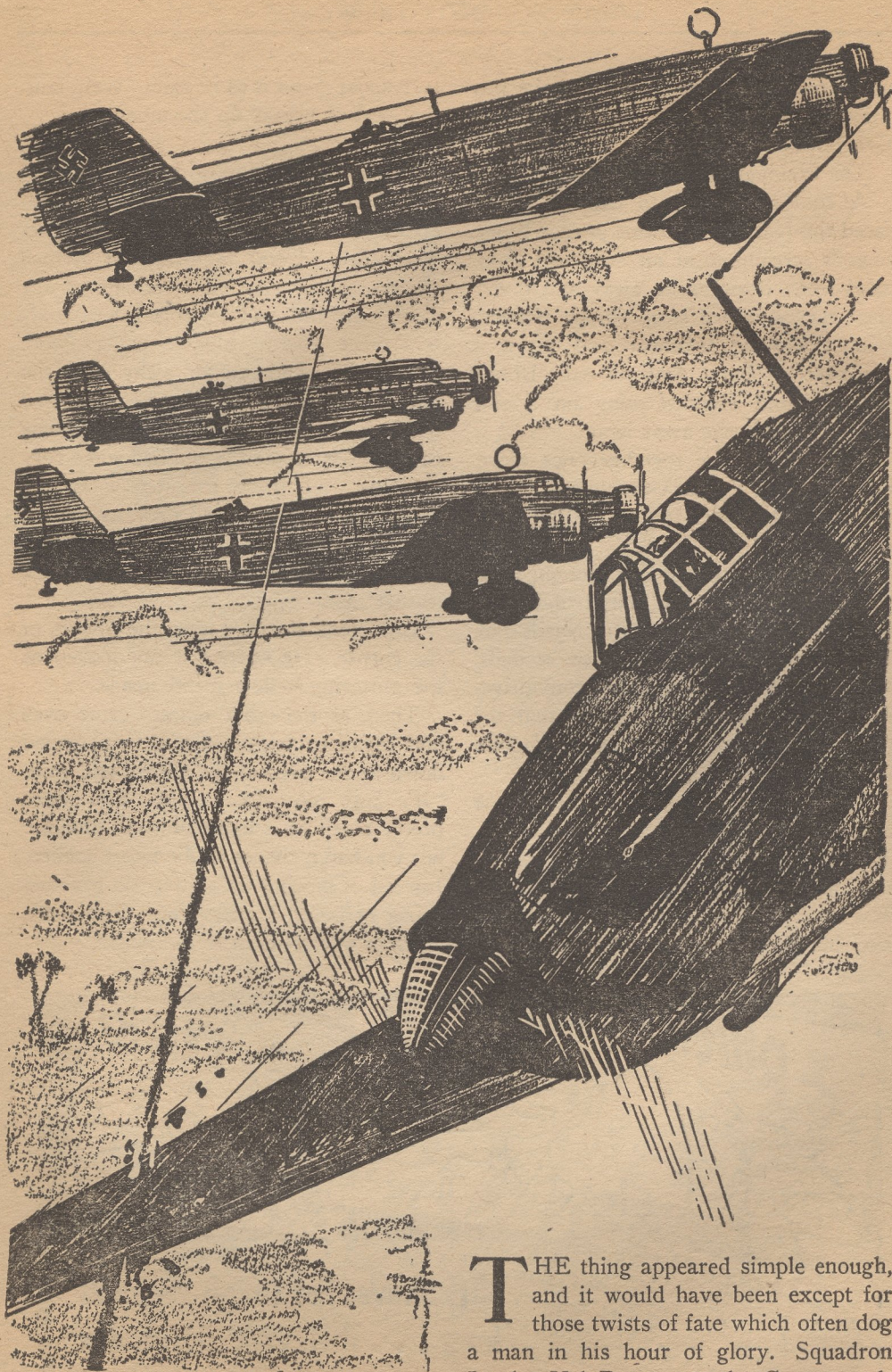
CLICK!

20 PROBAK JUNIOR BLADES

20 FOR 25¢
4 FOR 10¢

RECEPTACLE FOR USED BLADES INSIDE

Slick Shaves For Tough-Bearded Men . . . PROBAK Jr. Blades Twenty For Only A Quarter!



The ship was half turned around by the impact of a 20 mm. shell.

THE thing appeared simple enough, and it would have been except for those twists of fate which often dog a man in his hour of glory. Squadron Leader Val Perry saw the German column like a great, dark serpent five thou-



BRING *you* DEATH!

by ORLANDO RIGONI

High in death-baited skies, bracketed by enemy guns, a warbird without a country sought to reclaim his wings by fighting the most vital battle of the war—alone!

sand feet below him. It was a serpent lost in a vast expanse of Libyan desert, a serpent which had swallowed up the gains the British had made a few weeks before, and now threatened Egypt itself.

Perry saw a chance to blast the serpent before it became too fat with conquest. His cool, calculating mind appraised the situation with swift appreciation. Five miles to the left of the head of the German column lay the Oasis of Ramadi. The column would have to tank up with water before attempting the long

stretch of desert before besieged Tobruk.

An attack upon the oasis might successfully choke the springs through the use of the light demolition bombs the six Hurricanes carried. It would delay the Germans until the English counter-attack could be organized and pushed forward as far as Harouch.

Perry was confident that an attack upon the oasis would prove more devastating than a direct attack upon the tanks and armored cars. Browning slugs couldn't pierce the heavy armor of the tanks, and

the demolition bombs had to make a direct hit upon some vital part of a tank to disable it.

Perry was used to making swift plans, used to giving orders. There was a dead-sureness in the gray eyes that looked out from under his shock of blond hair. He wasn't young, as fighting men go, but he had experience—a short trick in the Manchukuoan War, at which time he had been younger than the age of twenty-two, which he had put upon his papers.

Since that war Perry had flown some of the first night mail ships over the Rocky Mountains. He had piloted an expedition to the head of the Amazon, and had fought against the Italians for a short time during the invasion of Ethiopia. It had been a simple matter for him to join up with the Australian pilots who had become the backbone of the R.A.F. in the Near East.

His experience and judgment had won him a place as squadron leader over the heads of men with longer records of service. He had been promoted ahead of Flying Officer James, for instance, who took the promotion as a personal slight and had never completely forgiven Perry. James was in Perry's flight now as it converged upon the German column.

Perry's voice clipped into the microphone. "Follow me, men. We're going down to five hundred and wreck the oasis!"

James' voice came back to him through the muff phones. There was a slight sneer in the voice.

"Don't be a fool, Perry! The Germans have established an advance base there—" "Afraid of bullets?" Perry snapped back and clicked off the switch.

Perry felt the thrill of battle dance through his blood. He gunned the Rolls, nosed over and hurled the Hurricane for the patch of green that hugged the desert like a scar. A swift attack, a low bit of strafing and a few bombs. . . .

But the thing wasn't to be so simple. The brown surface of the desert surrounding the oasis suddenly seemed to come to life. Four Junkers transport ships rose from the sand like great vampires.

Perry cursed softly. The Junkers were the supply ships, the petrol carriers which supplied the oasis tanks with the vital fluid. It would be easy to knock them down. He wagged his wings in warning and pulled back on the stick.

The Hurricane groaned as it pulled out of the dive. Then Perry's ship was half turned around by the impact of a 20mm. shell near the right wing-tip. He tugged the stick over, stiffened his right leg and jerked the shattered wing up. The Junkers were armed with light cannon!

Perry turned the Hurricane as sharply as he dared. He glared through the sights, caught the square, blunt belly on his wires and squeezed the button. The eight guns snarled out their swift death. The Junkers stopped still, it seemed, as though struck by a stone wall. Then flames flashed from the middle motor and licked back over the windshield in a red banner.

Perry pulled off. His ship was hard to handle. He saw Flying Officer James hurling his Hurricane at another Junkers. James was intent upon his work, eager to equal Perry's sudden victory. James was always trying to show his superiority to Perry. He always called Perry the old man because Perry was thirty and he, James, was twenty-four.

AS JAMES closed upon the Junkers, with 20mm. shells exploding about him, Perry let out a yell of warning. Four Heinkels and five Messerschmitt 110's were lashing down from nowhere. The Germans knew the importance of the Oasis Ramadi and were prepared to defend it against attack.

One of the 110's was roaring up under

James' ship, roaring up in the blind spot, with its four machine guns already snarling their song of death. Perry jerked the Hurricane around. He forgot personal differences. James was a flight mate, and therefore he must be saved.

In order to get into a position to safely fire upon the Messerschmitt 110, Perry had to risk the fire of two of the Heinkels. The Germans' guns raked him for one awful moment. He felt the bullets whine through his pit, felt the bits of plastic glass needle through his heavy flying suit.

As he burst through the storm of cupro, he caught the pilot's compartment of the 110 on his sights. Before he could fire, his Rolls engine jerked, missed, coughed with a sickly gurgle. He fought the throttle and tried to coax the engine into life. At the same time he thumbed the trigger, trying desperately to down the 'Schmitt that had James nailed against the sky.

The left bank of guns failed to fire at all. The right four coughed out a short burst that needled holes through the tail of the 'Schmitt, and then they, too, went dead!

The thing seemed incredible, coming at such a moment. Perry fought the throttle, and he tried to get his guns clear, but it was no go. He cursed and prayed by turns, felt the blood pounding in his head. Through a blur he saw James downing the Junkers, but the Britisher was being shot to pieces by the 110.

Perry made a desperate attempt to ram the German, but it was too far ahead of him, and he was losing altitude already. The Heinkels were closing in to finish Perry off. He managed to get his Rolls hitting on half the cylinders, but to try and face the swift German ships would be suicide.

He did the only thing he could do. He nosed over, and dived for the dust haze near the ground. He eluded the Heinkels and hit out on a bee-line for the home

base near Sidi Barrani. It made him bitter to have to desert his squadron at such a time, but it was better that he reach the home base and report what he knew, than to stay and play martyr when his ship was in no condition to fight.

He kept trying his guns as he limped along. When he was almost back to his base, he noticed that the flurry of shots which had whipped through his cowling, had done more damage than he had realized. One bullet had glanced off the cowling, had bored its way right through the panel.

Perry discovered that the shell had shorted the electric wiring to the gun triggers. He reached under the panel and attached the wire on the proper terminal. The guns responded. Then his engine suddenly roared into life, just as the base came into view.

Perry cursed. He'd look like a heel landing alone with his guns working and his engine roaring full out, while the rest of the flight was back at the oasis battling the Nazis. But there was no help for it. He couldn't go back now, not without refueling. Grimly he shoved the stick away. The Hurricane nosed over for the soft, sandy runway.

Perry fishtailed to break his speed and hit the sand with his stick hard back to avoid a ground-loop. The greasy mechanics and armorers trailed out on the line to greet him, their eyes anxiously scanning the sky for signs of the rest of the flight.

Perry taxied up to the line. Sergeant Branding, chief of the mechanics, sleeved his grease-smudged mouth and gave Perry a quick, questioning look.

"Where are the others, sir?" Branding asked.

Perry rolled out of the pit, hopped to the sand. His chin came up because he realized his words would sound a little funny. "They're back at the Oasis Ramadi, Branding."

"But—but you, sir—why have you—"

"I had trouble with my engine—clogged line, I guess."

"It was hitting all right when you came down, sir," Branding said with a note of suspicion creeping into his deep voice.

"P'raps it was, Sergeant. It came to life when I was almost here. My guns, too, went out on me," Perry said flatly, noticing the hostile stares of the other men.

They didn't believe him. He could see that. Well, to hell with them!

His thoughts were cut short by the rattle of his guns as Branding reached over and thumbed the button on the top of the stick. Perry felt his face flush as the mechanic turned and looked at him with a rather tight expression. He started to explain why his guns had failed, but thought better of it. After all, he didn't have to defend himself to a bunch of mechanics.

The tense scene was cut short by a brusque command coming from the headquarters hut beyond the hangars. Wing Commander Copeland, who was in charge of the drome, stood in the door of the hut, with sweat beading his ample brow. His bare bushy legs looked like stumps, sticking from his shorts, and his square jaw was thrust out belligerently. Copeland was a fighter.

"What are you doing back here alone, Perry? Where's your flight? Come here, man, and report. The Jerries didn't blitz the whole mess, did they?"

Perry turned on his heel and walked up to the office. Not until then did he realize exactly how weak his story sounded. He had run out on a fight; he had left James in a bad spot, with Nazi guns eating his back out. Copeland wouldn't like that. Perry stepped into the small office and faced Copeland's blazing eyes.

"**A**LL right, Perry, don't stand there gaping. Tell me your story. Where are the others? Did you intercept

any Germans?" The wing commander fired his questions impatiently.

"We intercepted a tank column near the Oasis Ramadi. I figured our best bet would be to destroy the oasis if possible, and cut the Germans off from supplies and water. But the Germans had already established a base at the oasis, and we were intercepted by German planes. In the battle my engine went dead, and my guns cut out, and—"

"Your engine was doing nicely when you came down, Perry," the wing commander said suspiciously, his face like stone. "And I rather fancy that it would have been sure death to stand before your guns a moment ago."

Perry stiffened. "You don't believe my story?"

"Should I?"

"The others can vouch for it."

"Good. Here they come now," Copeland said flatly, and rose to go outside and watch the planes land.

Perry followed him, stood staring as only four Hurricanes dropped out of the sky. Who could be missing? James? Perry saw one of the Hurricanes coming down in a sloppy, crosswind landing, as though the pilot was either drunk or blind. Perry caught his breath, brushed past Copeland and ran out upon the field.

"Pull up—give her the gun!" He shouted instructions which were blotted out by the roar of the thousand-horse engines. The wobbly ship didn't pull up. It didn't even flatten off properly. It angled on down with the motor full out, and struck the sand with the wheels still folded up.

One thing cushioned the shock. The dazed pilot, in his confusion, must have fumbled blindly for the controls. Instead of buttoning down the wheels and cutting the engine, he had set the prop blades at neutral. The Hurricane lost speed fast just before she struck on her belly and plowed a furrow in the sand.

The Hurricane twisted around, cracking off the left wing as it ground-looped. There was a smother of smoke, and then flames shot back across the wreck.

Perry was running madly out upon the field. He reached the ship just as the fire mushroomed out. He plowed his way through the smoke, groping for the cockpit. The cover of the greenhouse was already back. His hands caught an arm, and he yanked the pilot bodily from the flaming ship.

Perry staggered from the smoke, lunging the rescued man with him. The rescued man was James! His face was bloody, his right arm limp as blood dripped from the sleeve of his coat. He was still conscious, and now he tried feebly to free himself from Perry's hands.

"Let me go—let me go, damn you! You—you ran out—yellow—let the Jerries pepper us. Holt was killed—"

Perry pleaded through set teeth. "I was forced out of the fight—I swear it!"

James didn't hear this last, for he suddenly passed out. Perry hadn't the heart to face his flight mates. He stumbled away to his own tent. Fate had certainly romped on him with all four feet. He took a big drink of Scotch and tried to rake up enough courage to face the men.

PERRY resolved to form a new flight from members of the other two squadrons stationed at Sidi Barrani, and

return to the oasis to attack the Germans. Fortified with this resolve, he headed for the dispersal hut.

The room was full of men—men drinking morosely the tea which Copeland insisted upon having served every afternoon. James was there, propped in a chair, his head swathed in bandages. Copeland was there too. As Perry entered, the conversation died suddenly. Perry realized that they had been discussing him, and his face flushed.

He wasn't used to being classed as a heel, a coward, or worse. He had been tricked by fate, and he meant to prove to these men that he hadn't purposely deserted them in their fight. Copeland proffered Perry some tea, but Perry shoved the cup aside so rudely that it fell to the floor and shattered. Copeland sprang to his feet, but Perry ignored him.

"I know what you men are thinking," Perry said in short, clipped phrases. "I don't give a damn, see? I'm looking for volunteers to go back with me and blast the Nazi buzzards right into hell. We've got to stop that tank column—"

"Like you did the last time?" Pilot Officer Banks sneered. Banks was a lean, slim man, with deep, haunting eyes and stooped shoulders. "You ran out on us and left James in a trap because you don't fancy him. You ran out, and Holt died!"

Perry felt the room spin about him. Anger frothed in his mind.



Pepsi-Cola is made only by Pepsi-Cola Company, Long Island City, N. Y. Bottled locally by authorized bottlers.

"That's a damnable lie!" he cried.

He leaped forward, shot his fist into Banks' lean jaw. So hard was the blow that Banks was lifted off the floor. He staggered back and crashed into the chair in which James was seated.

James put up his hands, trying to ward off Banks, but it was of no use. The chair was turned over by the impact. James, letting out a gasp of pain, went sprawling across the floor. He didn't get up. He had passed out again, and a fresh rush of blood was seeping through his bandages.

Perry stood trembling. He'd have given ten years of his life to have the scene before him blotted out. But he couldn't call his punch back, he couldn't help James recover from the shock. Men were lifting James up, stretching him out on a cot in a corner of the room.

Wing Commander Copeland seemed to grind out the words he spoke.

"Get hold of yourself, Perry," he said tightly. "You've gone woofy. Perhaps you've had cause—perhaps you've been driving yourself too hard. At your age—"

Perry winced. "What about my age?"

"Oh, you're not old—but you're old as fighting men go. You've passed the stage of the animal desire for conflict. That's an attribute of younger men, men who haven't yet been tempered by experience. You've reached the age of caution—and there isn't time for caution in a dogfight. I'm overlooking what happened today, Perry, but I must take steps to correct the condition."

Copeland's face softened a little when he noticed how Perry was taking it.

"You—you mean I'm too—too old to fight?"

"Not exactly. You're too old for a pursuit ship, but there are other weapons, other means."

"Sure, I could warm a chair, like you do—"

Copeland flushed. He hadn't chosen his position; it had been thrust upon him.

He said patiently, "I'm not asking you to do that, Perry. I'm assigning you to the 84th Bomber Squadron."

"Thanks!"

Perry spat the word out and turned on his heel. He moved out into the dusk, his eyes staring out across the vast expanse of sand. The desert night was already blowing its breath upon the heat-drenched sand. Darkness followed close upon the heels of dusk, and Perry went to his tent to nurse his disappointment.

Too old to fight, at thirty! It was a joke, a laugh! He tried to mellow his dark mood with the whiskey, but it was no go. The hot liquor made him gag, and in desperation he hurled the bottle against the tent pole, drenching his blankets with Scotch.

He had no stomach for mess. He heard the Hurricanes taking off for another go at the Jerry camp at the oasis, and his hands itched for the feel of the stick in a fighter. But he was no longer a fighter—no longer Squadron Leader Perry. He was a turkey destined to lay speckled eggs upon targets too far away to see.

A batman came into the tent with a tray of food. He set it before Perry and poured tea.

"Copeland sent it over, sir. He wants you to report to the bomber hangar at the far end of the field when you've finished."

Perry pecked at the food, but it was no go. He gulped the tea and, dragging on his flying togs, shambled out of the tent looking like a huge bear.

CHAPTER TWO

Black Blood for Nazis

AS HE neared the hangar where the American Hudson bombers were kept, his blood quickened. Some interns were loading a stretcher in the rear door of the bomber. Perry got close enough

to hear James remonstrating with them.

"I can walk in, I'm not that badly off," James insisted, but the medicos just held him down and went about their business with the impersonal efficiency of all medical men.

Copeland loomed around the tail of the bomber, his thick legs now hidden by a long slicker which kept out the chill of night. He caught Perry's arm.

"I want you to fly James to Cairo. You know the route. Hackett will navigate for you, and Pell will handle the rear gun. I must keep the rest of the 84th for a raid on the German column at Ramadi, but I believe you'll feel better operating out of the Cairo drome. There's a chance of getting in on the tail end of the Greek affair. Cheerio."

Perry couldn't refuse to fly James to Cairo. In a way it was his duty, his one chance to make up to James for what he had done to him.

"Is he that bad off?" Perry nodded toward the cabin where James was still reaffirming his ability to take care of himself.

"I'm afraid of a cerebral. We have no facilities for coping with such a condition, but they can take care of him in Cairo."

Perry crawled through the door and hunched his way toward the control bucket of the Lockheed Hudson. The feeling persisted that this was a brush-off—Copeland's nice way for getting rid of him. As he passed James' cot in the bomb bay of the ship, Perry stopped. His hands clenched as he rummaged for words to say. He looked into James' white face.

"I'm sorry no end, old man. I—I had no intention"

It was no good. James' eyes blazed up at him, but James' lips were closed tight against his teeth. Perry turned, flushed to the hair, and slid into the bucket. Hackett stuck his black, curly head up from the navigator's compartment on the

ground floor. He was a heavy-set man with wide, surprised-looking eyes. There was a scar at one corner of his mouth which had been put there by a crack-up in a fighter ship when Hackett's head had gone through the windshield. The crack-up had taken something out of Hackett. He wouldn't touch the controls of a ship, but he'd fly, and he was first class with the radio.

"Ceiling under a thousand and visibility poor along the coast, skipper," Hackett said flatly. "Cairo reports better conditions inland with sharp winds from the northeast."

"Check," Perry said shortly.

He looked back. He could see Pell's bow legs sticking out of the rear blister. Pell was skinny and freckled, with a shock of red hair. He spoke a dreadful brand of Cockney English, and claimed to be valuable to the R.A.F. because he weighed so little for the amount of work he did. What he could do with a Browning gun was good, and with a Vickers K-gun he was better.

Perry barked into the speaker, "Are you all ready, Pell?"

"Roit choo are. But hain't it a rotten night for chasin' about the bloomin' 'eavens, sir?"

Perry grinned in spite of himself. Pell was irrepressible.

Perry revved up the twin motors, waited for the beat to smooth out, and signalled for the take-off. The markers blinked on. He kicked off the brakes, batted the throttles up the slides and felt the sturdy ship lurch from under him.

Darkness shrouded them in a tight embrace. Only the stars were visible. Perry, confident that attack was impossible, flew with his lights on.

His eyes scanned the tachometers, the air-speed, the turn and bank indicator, and something seemed to shrivel within him. Everything seemed so slow, at least in comparison to the fighting ships he

was used to. The air-speed indicator wavered at the 225 mark. The tachs seemed sluggish. The ship seemed to wallow in every pocket. There wasn't the same swift give and take.

Perry sighed. This ship was like him. It was good, it was willing, and it was useful, but it wasn't fit for the swift gaff of close fighting. It had to stand off and toss its boom-apples from a distance.

A message crackled in his earphones, and Perry snapped to attention.

"Hudson 577 enroute Sidi Barrani to Cairo. Urgent!" the voice said, repeating the words three times.

Perry signalled Hackett for a clear mike and cut in. "This is Hudson 577. Perry talking."

"Reroute course to Alexandria. Full speed. Special orders of Fifth Group Captain Pearl. Acknowledge."

"I acknowledge. What about wounded man on board?" Perry asked with a puzzled frown on his high forehead.

"Can handle at naval base here. That is all."

Hackett pulled his body up from under the panel. "What do you make of it, sir?"

"What does anybody make of anything in this war?" Perry demanded gruffly. "It's probably some red tape."

Pell came lurching forward on his bow legs, his bony face screwed up in disgust. "H'I'm blarsted tired o' 'angin' in that saddle when there hain't no Nasty birds to shoot at. 'Oo'l gimme a fag?"

"Listen, pigeon-legs, get back in your coop!" Perry roared. "There'll be no smoking on this ferry."

"Yes, sor. H'I tike hit you don't fawn-y this bloomin' joyride nohow."

Pell shrugged and crawled back up the duckboards.

Hackett ducked back into his hole, and Perry nubbed the throttles wide, giving the Hudson all the engines had. The air-speed edged around to 250.

James' voice came thickly from his cot. "I don't seem to be as important as Copeland made out," he said sarcastically. "I hope to hell we run into a flight of Messies."

"Don't get your hopes too high," Perry growled.

He had edged back toward the coast, and now the clouds and fog seemed to be trying to confuse him. Below him he couldn't see the ground, and above him he couldn't see the sky. He yelled into the I. C. phone:

"What are our bearings, Hackett?"

"Should be over Alexandria. Should I try to contact them?"

"Yes. They probably hear our motors, but are afraid we might be an enemy ship."

Hackett sent out a call. "577 from Sidi Barrani calling Alexandria. Give ceiling and Kollsman reading. Petrol for one hour. Can you hear our motors?"

The answer came back at once. "Visibility two hundred. Don't attempt landing. You are too far east of field. Make turn to north one mile and cut back. We are sending up a Spitfire to lead you in."

Perry caught the message in his head phones and kicked the bar around. He made the turn as ordered and headed back slowly, his eyes glaring at the carpet of fog under him. With only two hundred feet of visibility in the dark, he'd have to hit the field right the first try.

Then, right in front of him, the fog slit open and a Spitfire roared through. The bullet-nosed fighter was coming with the speed of light, heading for the left engine nacelle of the Hudson! Perry tensed, acted automatically. It seemed impossible that a crash could be avoided. Bad luck was dogging him again!

PERRY forgot that he was piloting a bomber. He forgot that a wounded man was on a cot in the bomb bay. He kicked the bar hard and slammed the

wheel around against his left leg. The Hudson groaned up and over. Perry top-ruddered into a vertical, skidded flat and missed the Spitfire by inches. There was a yell and a curse from the cabin behind him. Perry looked back, and his fingers dug into the wheel. The violent maneuver had thrown James from his cot, and he was sprawled on all fours at the side of the empty racks.

"Damn you, Perry, that's the third time you've tried to kill me!" James cried. "I'm too tough for you—I'll live to see your carcass salted down!"

Perry had no time to retort to James' violent outbreak. The Spitfire had circled, come back across the nose of the bomber with its blinker signalling to Perry.

Perry throttled the engines back, nosed into the mist close upon the Spitfire's tail. He had to keep that blinker in sight. He broke through the fog on the west side of the field. He was coming down too fast, heading for the big hangar. He jerked back on the stick, gunned the engines, then nosed over again and settled down in the white path of the floodlights.

Perry slammed open the door, and was puzzled to find a grim company of men awaiting him. Group Captain Spearl was there in person. With him was a high government official, and the head of the British Intelligence in Egypt.

Without inquiring as to James' condition, Spearl caught Perry by the arm and urged him toward an official car.

"This way, Perry. No time to lose. I'm glad it was you we intercepted; you've had some experience in the territory in question."

Perry jerked his arm away.

"Wait a minute, sir," he said, determined to do what he could for James. "I have a wounded man on board."

"I know, old man. I've given orders to the medical officer to have him attended

to. Big things are in the wind today."

Perry stepped into the car, felt vaguely impressed by the distinguished company he was riding with. The car started with a lurch, and Spearl drew the shades. The government official, Sir Arthur Lampson, turned his grave, bearded face toward Perry.

"I've been informed, Perry, that you are familiar with the territory north of the Persian Gulf."

"P'raps," Perry murmured, noncommittally. "I flew from Djibouti up to Syria after fighting in Ethiopia. I've no bosom friends in that God-forsaken country, if that's what you mean."

The Intelligence officer spoke to Sir Arthur in low tones. Lampson answered in a louder voice—"Why not? If we're going to use him, he must know the facts."

"There aren't any facts," the Intelligence officer snapped. "We're working on rumors. If Perry flies al Rashid to Bagdad, his mission must be a secret."

"I agree," Sir Arthur insisted. "But Mister Perry must be given some back-ground upon which to base his actions in case of an emergency. I'll admit that al Rashid's story might be rot, but we can't take a chance."

"What is this?" Perry broke in. "I don't like to be kept in the dark. The way you men talk I feel like a sacrificial lamb about to be slaughtered."

THE car, which had been traversing the concourse around the harbor, now turned through the guarded gates of the king's palace, which was just in front of the seaplane base. Between the seaplane base and the coal docks, British men-of-war rode at anchor.

At the palace the car purred the length of the diagonal drive and stopped at an arched doorway in the left wing. Perry started to dismount from the car, but Spearl leaned over and pushed him back.

"Not yet, Perry. This business can't be transacted in the palace. Palaces have ears. We'll be going out to a destroyer in the harbor."

Sir Arthur and the Intelligence officer, who was known only as "Number Seven," both dismounted and disappeared into the palace. They came back presently, and with them was a rather thin, short man, evidently an Arab, though somewhat smaller than the average Arabian soldier.

The native was flanked by two guards with fixed bayonets.

"Who's the prisoner, sir?" Perry asked Spearl.

"He's not a prisoner—not yet. That's al Rashid—he's either an accomplished liar, or one of England's best friends. You're going to find out which."

"Me?" Perry stiffened in his seat. What sort of intrigue was this? It sounded crazy to him.

Further conversation was prevented by Sir James, Number Seven, and al Rashid entering the automobile, minus the guards.

"There is always danger, gentlemen," al Rashid said in perfect English.

"That's why we're taking you to the destroyer, Rashid. No one can touch you there, and to make doubly sure, we have prepared a disguise," Number Seven said softly.

The car slid out of the palace gate, kept on the road toward the lighthouse at the end of the peninsula. There it turned left and crept out to the end of the long pier. A power boat was waiting there in the shadow of the pier. The party left the car and climbed down into the boat. To Perry's surprise, he found Pell there, complacently smoking a cigarette.

Pell jumped up at sight of Perry. "H'I say, sor—wot's been keepin' ye? Hi was trundled over 'ere from the Arsenal Quay in this water buggy, fer wot Hi don't know."

"Hold your tongue, Pell," Group Captain Spearl snapped.

The men all settled in the circular seat. The water taxi gurgled out its best speed and headed, without lights, toward the blacked out shadow of a British destroyer. There was a brief exchange of signals, and then the party was taken on board. Not until they were clustered in the captain's cabin did the tension relax.

"Is everything ready—the boat searched thoroughly?" Sir Arthur asked the captain of the destroyer.

"Yes, sir. I personally attended to it, sir."

"Very good. Be seated, gentlemen."

Perry found a seat on a desk. Curiosity burned inside of him. It was Number Seven who took up the burden of explanation.

"Gentlemen, you no doubt wonder what all this secrecy is about, why we have brought you here. This thing may be a farce, and it may be one of the most important moments of the war. If rumors are true, this is one time that England might get the jump upon the Nazi vampires who are seeking to suck her blood. Black blood, gentlemen—the black blood that must win this war. I'm speaking of oil, and al Rashid had some interesting things to tell us."

Number Seven bowed to the slight native.

Al Rashid stood up, his head back and his black eyes flashing from under his bushy brows.

"Gentlemen, perhaps you might think me a traitor. I can only justify my actions to my conscience. I give you this information for what it is worth to you. Ali Feidal is planning a coup against the British forces in Iraq. I have learned this from reliable sources. There is yet time to stop him. To move any quantity of English soldiers into Iraq would be the cue for Hitler to attack and protect the country against aggressors. It is the old

pattern. Germany is through with Greece—she didn't want Greece. She wants oil, and Iraq and oil are synonymous. If I am delivered personally to Bagdad, as secretly as possible, I can stop Ali Feidal's coup—with the proper use of British gold. No one else can stop this uprising. Your government has tentatively agreed to my terms. I await only the selection of the man to fly me to Bagdad."

Spearl looked at Perry, and said, "That's where you come in, Perry."

Perry tensed. He half rose to his feet, and said swiftly, "Suppose all this is poppycock—a string of lies to milk gold from the British treasury? I've enlisted to fight a war, not taxi natives around the desert!"

"Enough of that, Perry!" Spearl snapped. "Remember you're a soldier, and you're under orders."

"Yes, sir!" Perry bit out, flushing angrily.

"An' me, 'sor—wot habout me?" Pell inquired.

"You're to remain here on this boat."

"But I'm 'is gunner," the little man protested.

"He won't need a gunner. Perry will avoid conflict, and fly as directly to Bagdad as possible," Sir Arthur cut in. "You were brought over as an afterthought, Pell. You're about the size and build of al Rashid. You will exchange clothing with him, and he will fly with Perry, disguised as you. There is every possibility that an attempt might be made upon his life. He must be kept alive at all hazards."

There was more talk about details. Perry was to return to the flying field with al Rashid, disguised as Pell, at noon the following day. They were to fly south from Alexandria toward Cairo in order to confuse any spies who might suspect the reason for the flight. Then Perry was to turn back across Port Said, angle inland, and then follow the route of the

pipe line toward Kirkuk until it crossed the railroad. He was to follow the railroad toward Bagdad.

PELL retired to a cabin with al Rashid to make a complete exchange of personal equipment. Perry was assigned to other quarters. The night was almost gone, and he was dead tired. He dropped into a deep sleep almost at once, with the strange events of the night stalking nightmarishly through his fatigued brain.

When Perry awoke, late in the morning, he dressed and went in search of Pell.

The officer on deck told him the gunner was still asleep.

Perry wanted to remind Pell to visit James in the hospital and try and make him understand that Perry had done nothing intentionally to hurt him. It bothered Perry to have James believe that he had deliberately tried to kill him.

Perry knocked upon Pell's door, but received no summons. He tried again. When no answer came, he opened the unlocked door. He stepped in, took one look at the couch and saw, not Pell's brilliant pajamas, but Al Rashid's black and red robe. He was about to retire from the room, when he noticed the odd position of the man on the couch.

Clenching his fists, he went over, touched the sleeping man's shoulder. He knew instinctively that something was wrong. He pulled the still form over, and icy chills ran up his back. The man was dead, and he wasn't al Rashid—he was Pell, dressed in the Arab's costume! Pell had already paid with his life for his small part in this strange mystery!

Perry turned, rushed from the room. Trying not to appear too agitated, lest he warn the murderer, who must still be aboard, he went in search of Number Seven and Sir Arthur. He didn't find them. He found the captain in his cabin.

Perry gasped, "Where's Sir Arthur and Number Seven?"

The captain, disturbed by Perry's agitation, rose to his feet. "Neither of them are on board, Mister Perry. It was deemed best that they return to shore before daylight, lest their presence upon this destroyer be suspected. Is anything wrong?"

"Plenty. There's been murder done, sir—in al Rashid's cabin."

"You—you mean al Rashid?" The officer paled.

"No. Sergeant Pell, my gunner—dressed in al Rashid's clothes. I can't find the Arab."

The captain jerked on his cap and started for the door. "It's damned queer. Al Rashid must be still aboard—he must be."

But the Arab was nowhere to be found on the boat. When Perry suggested radioing Sir Arthur, the captain vetoed the idea.

"It's just as I suspected, Perry. Alexandria is full of spies. They would tap our message in a minute. If we flash a signal, one of them will pick it up. If I send a runner, he might be killed. We're in a damned ticklish spot, old man. It won't be safe for you to leave the boat."

"But I must leave. It certainly isn't safe on the boat. Look at Pell, the poor fellow. He was goofy, but harmless. I liked him a lot. Has the doctor reported on the cause of death?"

The captain picked up a phone and called the doctor. When he finished talking, he hung up and turned to Perry.

"Pell was poisoned with a hypo—instant death."

"But how—who did it? Where's Rashid?"

"The devil knows. I don't fancy this, Perry. There must be a spy on board this destroyer. I intend to find out."

"I can't wait, sir," Perry informed him. "I must see Sir Arthur. Pell being killed like this makes this my affair—personally."

"I'll order you a boat, and you can pick your man, Perry, but I must warn you to be careful. Perhaps you have heard too much to please certain parties."

Perry shrugged. "I believe Pell was killed by mistake. He was taken for al Rashid. But where the devil is Rashid?"

"Perhaps he knew of the plot and slipped away," the captain suggested.

Perry made ready to leave the destroyer. The boat was waiting for him, and he chose a stocky Welshman to handle the chugger. Perry crouched in the stern of the boat, his hand upon his revolver, as though expecting the ocean to disgorge the enemy.

Instead of heading for the long pier near the lighthouse, Perry instructed his boatman to steer through the seaplane base and make shore at the dock beyond the main buildings of the king's palace.

A seaplane headed in for a landing as Perry's boat cleared the base. Perry was curious when he saw a small red pennant flutter for a moment from the cabin of the ship and then disappear. Dismissing the incident, he disembarked upon the landing and sent the boatman back to the destroyer.

CHAPTER THREE

Lair of the Vampires

AT FIRST he was at a loss where to go, but decided to begin looking where he was. He tried to get into the palace grounds but he was refused admission. He finally sent in word that he wished to see Sir Arthur upon urgent business, and was informed promptly that Sir Arthur was gravely ill.

Not so good! Perry didn't feel at liberty to divulge what he suspected about the Iraq uprising, so he went in search of Number Seven. At the offices of the British Intelligence, he was informed that

Number Seven had left Alexandria the day before. Perry tensed.

"That can't be true," he said. "He was on a British destroyer last night—he and Sir Arthur and three or four others. A man was murdered upon the destroyer, and Sir Arthur is ill, and—"

"Come in here!" The gray-haired officer jerked his head toward a door that led into a sound-proof chamber. When the door had been locked, he looked closely at Perry. "What do you know about all this?"

Perry told what he knew. "I believe Sir Arthur has been marked for death, too, the same as Pell was," he finished.

The officer nodded. "Sir James was intentionally poisoned, but the doctors have been unable to say how or when the poison was administered. I suggest that you return to the airport and your ship, Perry. Someone might try to destroy your ship. Al Rashid is probably in the bottom of the ocean. If your services are further required, I'll get in touch with you at the field."

Perry nodded and left the office. He stopped to eat in a cafe, and when he reached the airport, it was dusk.

Turning a corner of the hangar, Perry saw his Lockheed Hudson on the line, with the motors ticking over. Spearl had evidently kept it warmed all afternoon for the take-off.

Suddenly a shadow darted out of the grease shed at the side of the hangar. It was a stooped, grimy figure in flying togs—familiar flying togs.

Perry gasped, "Al Rashid!"

The native was dressed in Pell's clothing.

"Quiet! We must depart at once."

"Wait a minute," Perry tensed. "Pell's dead. How did you get off the boat?"

"I know of your friend's death. I am sorry. I too was attacked while aboard the destroyer last night. I couldn't identify my attacker, but I managed to elude him and squirm through a porthole. I swam ashore."

"You killed Pell—poisoned Sir Arthur," Perry charged.

"There is no time for me to deny the charge. A seaplane will take off from the harbor within the hour. Perhaps it is now heading into the wind. We must overtake it—must beat it to Bagdad," Al Rashid said tensely.



I'LL MURDER THE BUM!

When a Fancy Dan gets too old to box his way out of trouble, he can hang up his gloves—or, like Clem Yard, he can stake his future on a fighting man's creed—"It's my dukes against yours the rest of the way—and one of us is goin' to get carried out of this joint!"

Don't miss William R. Cox' unusual tale of the boxer who was denied a crack at the title—until it was held by the kid he had developed!

Also in this Issue:

"The Last Long Yard" by Daniel Winters—about eleven tough guys from a jerkwater college whose brand of rib-smashing football enabled them to hold the mightiest grid-iron machine in the land.

Plus stories by W. H. Temple, David Crewe, and others of your favorite sports authors.

10¢
DIMESPORTS
MAGAZINE

October Issue on Sale Now!

Perry decided to take the chance. Number Seven had vouched for al Rashid. An uprising in Iraq must be prevented at all costs.

Perry climbed into the Lockheed Hudson, pulled on the muff phones and settled in the bucket. He decided to tell no one of this take-off. In fact, even as he studied his instruments he heard a seaplane taking off from the bay!

Perry jammed the throttles up the slots and slipped the brakes. The Hudson rushed down the field, bit up through the light fog and angled up over Lake Maryut. Making a complete half circle, Perry headed the big ship for Cairo.

Al Rashid had ducked down into the navigator's compartment and was operating the receiving equipment with a practiced hand. Perry was beginning to warm up to this job.

Perry flew fifty miles toward Cairo, then turned and headed back across Port Said. Darkness was closing in, only to be dispelled by the rising moon.

Suddenly al Rashid stuck his head up through the well. "I have intercepted a message from a ship just ahead of us, trying to contact Bagdad by code. If you look closely toward the northeast, you can make out the blue smudge of the exhausts. That is the ship we must overtake and destroy."

Perry looked ahead, and he saw the blue smudges. But why should he take al Rashid's word that this was an enemy ship? He gunned the motors, hoping to overtake the lone ship. Suddenly, without warning, the whine of diving ships snarled through the moonlight!

PERRY heard the whine above the roar of his own Cyclone engines. He knew it meant an attack; he could tell, even, that the attacking ships were German Henschel 126's, high-wing monoplanes, with no more speed than the Hudson, but more maneuverable. Perry

groaned. He wasn't equipped to fight two ships. All he could do was make a run for it. He left-ruddered hard, threw the controls over and top-ruddered into a vertical that jerked him out of the death spot.

Perry eluded the first burst of fire, but the two Henschels split up, one attacking from the side and the other from the rear. Perry knew he didn't have a chance without a gunner in the rear blister. He thought of Pell, wished that the little Cockney was here now.

Al Rashid was awkwardly firing the forward guns, but the Henschels were smart enough to avoid a frontal attack. Perry tried desperately to break to the left and dive, but before he could complete the maneuver, a flurry of slugs ripped through his cabin.

Perry cursed. He hadn't time to think of the shattered controls. He horsed the big ship around, knowing that another Henschel was ready to spray hell into her tail. But, as he waited for the strike of death, Perry was astonished to feel the Hudson throb as the machine guns in her rear blister snarled out their fury.

"What the hell!" He twisted his head around and saw a pair of feet hanging from the rear blister. He had supposed that blister was empty.

A shout of triumph went up from the rear gunner. "I got him—I got him!"

Perry twisted the Hudson over a wing. He saw one of the Henschels plummeting toward the earth in flames. The outline of the cabin was plainly visible in the light of the flames. The pilot of the Henschel was trying to bail out. Perry didn't notice this. What caught his eye was the red pennant flying from the antenna mast of the German ship!

The other Henschel was turning and coming at the Hudson with all guns blazing. Perry headed the Hudson straight for the Henschel and held it steady. Then he punched the electric triggers.

The Henschel shot upward, avoiding a collision. Perry looked back, and tensed as he saw a flying boat coming into the battle. It was the boat he was supposed to be chasing.

It had come back to destroy him while it had help.

Perry maneuvered the Hudson around, waited for the Henschel to come back at him. But the Henschel didn't come back at him; it went into a spin. The flying boat, evidently wary of its own safety now that the two fighters were down, banked into a vertical and headed north, with blue fire snorting noisily from its exhausts.

Perry shook the sweat off his brow. The cabin was cold, but he was sweating just the same. Suddenly he felt a hand on his shoulder. He looked back into the face of the man who had fired the rear gun and downed the first German ship. The man was James.

"What the hell, James? You should be in the hospital!" Perry exclaimed.

"And let you grab all the glory, Perry? Not on your life! You've tried your best to kill me, but I don't die easy. I sneaked out of the hospital and hid in this plane. I had intended stealing the ship after dark, and heading back to Sidi Barrani. You spoiled that plan with this flight. But I'm glad I'm here. It will give me a chance to see them kick mud in your face—mud that you won't see, Perry."

"Save your bitterness, James," Perry said softly. "You're heading into more hell than you think."

"I can take more hell than you think," James bit out.

"You're in no condition to be on this flight, James. If what I've heard is true, it's no position for a well man to be in, much less a sick one."

"I'm not sick, Perry. You'll have to think up some better way of getting rid of me," James said coldly.

"Damn you and your crazy notions. I

didn't try to get rid of you. I've been the victim of circumstances. I'm—"

"Crying in your beer, old man?" James sneered.

Perry clamped his lips shut. Al Rashid poked his head up, and cried impatiently, "You must hurry. The flying boat is almost out of sight."

Perry throttled-up and felt the Hudson lunge forward as the Cyclones gobbled up the petrol. He was far above the flying boat, which was visible only through its blue exhaust flame.

Perry smelled hot oil, and he looked at his shattered instruments. The oil pressure pipe was leaking badly where it fastened to the dial. The compass had been smashed, and also the turn and bank. The air speed was evidently choked up, for the dial showed no speed whatever.

Perry yelled to James. "If you can, you'd better stop that oil leakage. We can't afford to be forced down here."

James went to work without protest. He managed to get the leak stopped temporarily, but as he wriggled out from under the panel, he held something in his hand.

"What the deuce is this?" he asked.

Perry looked, and saw that James held a little red pennant. Perry tensed. This was the third time he had seen the pennant, and it was like a warning of danger.

"How did that get there?" he snapped.

"I'm sure I don't know," James retorted.

"Did you see anyone get into the ship before Rashid and I came along?"

"No—the engines were ticking over when I arrived, and the armorer had gone. Once a batman came to the door of the cabin, but on seeing no one aboard, he turned away."

PERRY tried to keep the flying boat in view, but his mind was on other things. He felt, suddenly, that the Hud-

son was doomed. It had been tampered with.

Perry kept nursing the Cyclones along, hoping to overtake the flying boat.

At the same time he turned to James, and said, "I believe this boat has been monkied with, James. I want you to search it thoroughly. Look up in back of the panel. I can't stop to give you time for the search. I must overtake the flying boat."

"Don't be a droop," James said with disgust. "This boat is as good as ever."

"I said I want it searched!" Perry snapped. "I'm still your superior officer, James. I must insist upon obedience."

"Very well, Perry, if it will ease your yellow streak, I'll search," James agreed.

Perry felt an irresistible desire to slug the man.

His eyes flashed back to the flying boat, which had been losing altitude rapidly. Perry nosed the Lockheed over and went roaring down after the mysterious plane.

It was becoming difficult to keep his eyes on the flying boat. It was bellying to the ground, and Perry could see the broad expanse of desert. Shadows lay upon it—shadows cast by the dunes, by the scattered brush.

Rashid stuck his head up again. "We are in the heart of Iraq now. Bagdad is but a hundred miles, perhaps less."

Perry was close to the ground. He couldn't tell how close, for his altimeter had been broken in the gunfire of the Henschel. He saw the flying boat one minute, and the next it disappeared from view.

Perry blinked his eyes.

"Ye gods—do you see the boat, Rashid? I lost sight of it."

"Up! Pull up, Perry!" Al Rashid cried with a note of terror. "Fly up! This is the ruined palace of Ctesiphon!"

Then Perry became conscious of the huge object right before him. At first it looked like a mountain, but he knew

by its shape that it wasn't. He gutted the stick, felt the Hudson sag and groan as he hoiked it for the stars.

James was almost shot out from under the panel by the maneuver. He caught the edge of the panel, hung on, and cried at Perry, "I've found something—it looks bad!"

Perry made a half-turn and levelled off. To his dismay, he saw the red flashes of an anti-aircraft gun firing at them from the ground. The Hudson made a perfect target against the light blue of the moon-washed sky.

The exploding muck from the ack-ack made the bomber buck furiously. Perry tried to grab James and hold him from sliding down the duckboards.

"What have you found?" Perry asked swiftly.

"It looks like—it is! It's a pencil bomb—thermite!"

"For God's sake, get it out of there!"

"I can't! Take it easy. It's fastened to the shaft of the long hand of the clock. A wire is winding about the shaft, fastened to the plunger in the fuse. I must cut the wire—if I jar this thing it might explode."

"Come out! Here, take the controls. I'll handle the bomb. Fly in a long circle and try to avoid the ack-acks," Perry ordered, and slid from the bucket.

Al Rashid was pulling himself from the navigator's compartment. His face was grave.

"I fear," he said, "we have discovered the breeding place of treason. It is there below us."

"It's here, with us, too," Perry said, thinking of the bomb. He had no time to lose.

But the time was already lost. There was an explosion that shook the boat and tore out part of the panel. Then fire, intense, unquenchable fire spewed across the cabin. It was useless to fight the blazing chemicals.

Perry leaped to the controls, yanked James from the bucket and shoved him toward the door.

"Get ready to jump. . . ."

"We're too near the ground—only two hundred feet!"

"All right, I'm going to crash her in—be sure and get clear. Have the door unlatched and the bomb doors down!"

PERRY had lost his direction, and now he centered his mind upon sliding the big ship to earth with as little damage as possible before the heat and fumes would overcome them all. He nosed over sharply, cut the switches and tried to get his wheels out in time. He caught his breath as the huge black shadow slid alongside of him. He was hitting the ground, drifting with the wind. His right wheel caught against a sand bank as the Hudson smacked down. It lunged around, the right wing smashing into the wall of the palace of Ctesiphon. The Hudson jarred to a stop, with a sheet of flame frothing over it.

Perry crawled from the bucket, bellied low to the duckboards and tried to make the rear door. He called for James, but

the smoke choked him so that he could not be heard. He knew he could never make the rear door. The heat was blistering him, scorching him.

Then Perry fell—fell through the open bomb doors in the belly of the ship. James had let them down as ordered. Fighting against unconsciousness, Perry rolled from under the ship, beating the flames off his clothing as he rolled.

Perry got to his knees. He saw a circle of strange men who were fighting the fire with chemicals. He distinctly noticed four German air pilots in the group, and leading the men in battling the flames was Number Seven!

Perry felt suddenly sick. Number Seven wasn't an English Intelligence officer! He was a spy, a German spy!

Perry found himself surrounded by Germans and native Iraq soldiers. Resistance was useless.

"There's a man in that ship—a native by the name of al Rashid," Perry told the two Germans who grasped his arms.

Number Seven came close, his head high and his deep eyes inscrutable. He nodded at the Germans, and spoke in perfect German to them.

SQUADRON OF THE FLYING DEAD



From the flame-swept skies of the Western Front to the trackless jungles of a pagan

land, the sinister master of the flying dead had cast his messengers of doom. And while an army cringes in terror of impending disaster, G-8 and his Battle Aces wing across half the world in a grim race with Death, to solve the most baffling mystery in military history. What strange power is unsealing the graves of dead German airmen and summoning them forth to

crush in their bony hands the allied aces who shot them down? From the personal file of the Master Spy himself we offer the unforgettable story of the Squadron of the Flying Dead.

And in addition, you will find selected short stories of air combat of the First World War in the October issue of



10c

and His
**BATTLE
ACES**

On Sale Now!

"We must have this al Rashid alive!"

Perry jerked up his head and stared at Number Seven. Perry's face was blistered, his hands raw. Pain enveloped him like a sheet of fire but he forgot all this. He felt a burning anger against this spy before him drive every other feeling from his body.

"Damn you for a skunk!" Perry cried.

He tried to tear himself loose from his captors. He got one hand free, lunged forward and swung at Number Seven, but he missed the mark and fell on his face. The darkness seemed to swallow him slowly. He barely heard one of the Germans say, "The Iraqi, *mein Herr*—he is not in the ship."

WHEN Perry's mind cleared, he found himself in a makeshift cell hollowed out of the wall of the strange place in which they had taken him. He was inside the great arch of the ancient ruins of Ctesiphon.

Perry discovered the secret of the disappearing seaplane. It had flown under the arch, and had come to rest upon the concealed hangar under the ancient roof. The seaplane had skidded to a stop upon the loose sand.

This great hall, in which thousands of Persian royalty used to dine nightly, was now a perfect concealment for enemy ships. But Perry's inspection of the hall quickly ended, for seated to the left of his cell was a makeshift court of inquiry. Under the blue light of a shaded lantern, Number Seven was questioning James. James was propped up on a chair, and defiantly refused to answer any questions.

"Where is al Rashid?" Number Seven asked for the tenth time.

"I don't know him," James lied.

"You, like all Englishmen, are a victim of delusions, my friend. At the present moment," Number Seven went on gravely, "the British Colony in Bagdad is practically unprotected. One word will

send the Iraq army against them by land and air. The Iraq government is fed up with British dominance. Their only hope lies in cooperation with Germany."

A slim German officer at the side of the table exclaimed, "*Ja, ja*, we Germans shall be well paid for our help. Iraq has oil—the black blood that feeds the veins of a modern fighting machine. We intend to have this oil. Arrangements have already been made for delivery. You might call it a transfusion—*ja wohl*, that is it—a transfusion at Kasule. Our British friends at Basru will be surprised when their pipe lines run dry."

A fat German got up and said angrily, "You talk too much, *Hauptmann!*"

Perry understood enough of the angry German words which followed to realize that the Germans had secretly built a pipe line in the desert with which to divert the oil from Mosul and Kirkuk from the English pipe lines to Basru. The place of contact was to be at Kasule. The Germans realized that the connection must be made with a small force, otherwise it would attract too much attention.

In order to divert attention from the activities at Kasule, the Germans had prevailed upon the Iraq army to attack the British Colony in Bagdad.

Perry felt his blood boil at this cold-blooded plan of murder. James sat propped in his chair, white as a ghost. Number Seven sat stiff and imposing in the center of the discussion, but said little.

At last he said, "We must find al Rashid."

Hauptmann Drauber shrugged, "He wasn't in the plane, *mein Herr*."

"I believe he was."

"*Himmel Gott*, have you not eyes? He must surely have burned. We attacked the craft as soon as it crashed."

"I must take this Englishman, James, to Bagdad as a decoy," Number Seven said at last.

Perry heard no more at the moment,

for some dirt from the rear of his cell fell upon his feet. He twisted around in the cage-like space in which the ancient kings used to keep their royal prisoners during feasts. He saw one of the large, mud bricks moving inward. A brown hand reached out and touched Perry, beckoned him through the hole where the brick had been.

Perry obeyed, eager to face new dangers rather than remain a helpless prisoner. He slid into a small corridor without a sound. The mud brick was replaced, and Perry looked up in the flare of a match to see al Rashid smiling coldly down at him.

"There are many passages in these walls—passages that few people know of. There is a Stuka bomber ready for take-off at the far end of the palace arch. You must help me escape in that ship."

"Pinch me to prove that I'm awake," Perry said eagerly. "Let's go." Then he halted. "But we have no arms. . . ."

"I have this—I took it with me from the wreck," Rashid said, holding out an automatic.

Perry made a grab for the gun, but the native drew it back.

"I shall keep the gun," Rashid said, and something in his voice puzzled Perry.

Perry didn't stop to argue. He thought only of what he could do once he was in the air with the Stuka. He thought of the British trapped in Bagdad; he thought of the precious oil line which the Germans were determined to control.

Rashid led the way outside through a hole that had been opened by the Hudson. The hole had been caved over by debris, but Rashid had opened it and closed it after him.

"This is how I disappeared from the wreck," Rashid explained as he led the way down the side of the palace wall, keeping low in the shadows.

At the yawning end of the arch, Rashid dropped to his knees. Perry followed

suit, and they crawled across the open space. The Junkers Ju-87 was barely visible against the far wall. A mechanic was just finishing warming the engine. Perry could see the 550-pound bomb on the deflector rack of the ship; he could see the four 110-pound bombs out near the tips of the wings. This ship was loaded to bomb the British at Bagdad!

The mechanic was just stepping off the back of the wing.

"Come on," al Rashid hissed.

They crawled under the Stuka along the wing. Rashid pointed his gun at the German, but Perry caught his arm.

"Not that way!" Perry grunted.

He lunged up; his fist crashed into the German's chin, dropping him cold.

Perry scrambled up into the pilot's pit of the Stuka. Rashid tumbled into the rear compartment and grabbed the movable gun. Perry was unfamiliar with the controls, but he managed to figure them out. He found the throttle in the box at his left and jabbed the ball head up the slot. The Jumo 211 snarled with all the fury of its fifteen hundred horses.

The roar of the engine attracted two German mechanics, who ran over. Rashid killed them with the automatic. Hell broke loose after the snarl of the shots. The palace resounded with shouts. Perry gritted his teeth, batted off the brakes and shot the Stuka for the opening.

The Stuka lunged up; Perry angled it back over the roof of the palace to keep it out of direct line of fire from the ground. He headed into the uprushing dawn.

CHAPTER FOUR

Two Roads to Hell

THE ack-acks banged after them, but that firing soon stopped, as the Germans wished to save the Stuka. A Messerschmitt 110 came roaring up to force them down. How it intended to do this,

Perry never discovered, for as the Messerschmitt angled across his nose, Perry stabbed out a burst from the Stuka's wing guns.

The bullets caught the 'Schmitt in the belly under the left wing, smashed up through the cockpit and killed the pilot. As the plane fell, Perry took advantage of the morning mist, headed the Stuka into the veil of dirty white, and rose with it.

Then he was confronted with a terrible decision. He had to choose between flying to Bagdad and warning the British of the attack, or going to Kasule to try to prevent the Nazis from completing the diversion of the oil from the British pipes.

Once that diversion was made, it might take weeks to destroy it. In the meantime, the British fleet in the Mediterranean would be cut off from supplies of vital oil. The British effort in Egypt and Africa would be hamstrung. It was a handful of lives against the vast program of war.

Perry knew what he had to do. He must prevent the break in the pipe lines. How the Germans had managed to overcome the British patrols guarding the lines, how they had managed to construct their own line, Perry didn't know. He only knew that he had to destroy the work the Nazis had done. He tried to force the bitter thought of the massacre at Bagdad from his mind.

Perry headed for Sasule and gunned the Jumo engine. The next instant he felt something placed menacingly against his neck. He tried to look around, but all he could see was the jeweled clasp of a shiny knife—a knife that was pressed against his throat.

"You will turn about," al Rashid said flatly, "if you desire to live. You must fly to Bagdad."

"Well, I'll be damned!" Perry gasped. "I thought you were for the British?"

"I am for Iraq. You will turn now."

Perry was confused. He realized now that Rashid might have killed Pell—that Rashid had escaped from the destroyer to avoid being questioned too thoroughly. He must have been in with Number Seven, and that was why Number Seven had tried so hard to find Rashid at the palace. . . .

"Of course I'll turn!" Perry cried.

He kicked the bar viciously, yanked the stick against his guts and hurled the Stuka sharply upward. He rolled out, nosed down and then made a complete roll. As he levelled off, he turned. Al Rashid was half unconscious under the gun mount. Blood was trickling from his head where he had struck the machine gun breech.

Perry reached over, grabbed the gun from Rashid's nerveless hand, and smashed it across Rashid's head, stunning him completely.

Then Perry roared on toward Kasule. What he might find there he didn't know.

KASULE came under his wings fast enough. The place looked deserted. Perry could see the faint marks of the British pipe line running from the north and east. At one place there appeared to be a sand dune, but Perry was too familiar with camouflage to be fooled.

He roared over the spot and circled once to make sure. He had only one big bomb, and it must not fail to do the work. He was sacrificing the lives of the women and children at Bagdad in order to prevent the stealing of this oil. If he should fail now, it would be a double failure.

As he completed the second circle, the desert floor seemed to move. Men rose from the sand, signalled to him. Perry frowned, for he didn't know how to answer them. Soon his radio phones began to blat out German. He caught some words.

"Give the signal, *Dunkopf!* Give the signal or we fire!"

The Germans were mistaking him for a German. Perry wondered what signal he could give. Anything he might do would warn the Nazis on the ground. His only chance was to dive for the mound and loose his bomb before they could stop him!

He threw one glance back to see if al Rashid was still unconscious. Then he was roaring down—as only a Stuka could dive!

But the mound wasn't the target that Perry was after. He saw his mistake after he had dived two thousand feet. He saw other things too. He saw Germans appear from the mound as though by magic. Some of them were running toward a scar on the sand near a camouflaged ack-ack gun. That scar was the true place at which the English pipe lines were to be intercepted.

Perry recognized this by the Germans' actions. He screwed the Stuka around, pulled out of the dive and circled for another try. But he had lost his chance. Three Messerschmitt 109's came out of a hidden hangar in the sand.

Perry gritted his teeth and peeled off again. The 109's screamed up to head him off. Madsen slugs and 20mm. stuff bracketed the Stuka. But Perry ignored the attacking planes.

Down he roared—a thousand feet—with the wind howling like a dervish past the shutters. Down—two thousand feet—with his airspeed dial cramming the rivet and his motor shuddering in the cradle. Three thousand feet—five! He saw the blur of the 'Schmitts darting at him. He felt the tear and pound of lead as Rheinmetall slugs ripped through the ship. He held his breath, but the Stuka kept up its mad descent.

The earth was rushing up at him. Perry placed his head against the brace, glued his eyes on the sight. He knew the Messerschmitts were diving after him, trying to knock him down. He heard a new,

strange sound, but he hadn't time to look back.

Now was the moment—now was the time to release his bomb!

The scar on the earth raced toward him. The Germans manning the ack-ack gun dispersed like frightened ducks. *Strike the release—strike the release!* The thought was like a club. Perry acted.

He batted the bomb release. The 550 pounds of death swung out around the disc of the propeller. The Stuka nosed up automatically.

Perry felt the lurch, felt his vitals drain down as the dive was broken. There was a horrible uprush of air followed by the thunderous blast as a gigantic hole was torn into the desert, scattering pipe and valves and pressure gauges all about.

Perry's sight went black as the Stuka zoomed. Then his body overcame the effects of the pull-out. He sucked in air. He heard a Messerschmitt coming up under him. To his amazement, he saw another Messerschmitt lying upon the ground, a smoking ruin. He hadn't downed it. Then he heard that strange sound in back of him once more.

Perry looked around. Al Rashid was firing the movable gun in the rear bucket of the Stuka. He was crippling the second 'Schmitt. His face was a horrible mask with the blood caked upon it; his eyes were twin fires.

He snarled at Perry, "To Bagdad, you fool!"

WITH the heavy bomb gone, the Stuka climbed swiftly. The crippled Messerschmitt turned back. The remaining 109 set out in pursuit of the Stuka, but finally gave up the chase. Perry realized that the Germans wanted to keep at least one active ship to defend the diversion point.

Perry coaxed the last ounce of speed from the Jumo 211. He picked up the Tigris River which wound like a silver

ribbon up the broad plain. He followed it until he could see the three bridges linking the parts of Bagdad together.

The sun was high, and its rays struck back from the dome of the Haider-Khana, which shone like an emerald. He saw the great square in the center of the city, and then he caught sight of the puffs of powder smoke that marked the activity of artillery.

Perry slammed the stick across, and kicked the Stuka toward the British colony on the outskirts of the town.

Rashid leaned over and hissed, "It is too late to save them. Be not a fool. Turn the ship north and east toward Kirkuk. The English have no business in Iraq. If they die, it is no more than their deserts."

"The hell you say!" Perry gritted.

He expected Rashid to attack him again, and he half twisted around as he headed the Ju-87 for the British section.

Rashid didn't attack. Instead, discovering that Perry was determined to try and help the besieged British, Rashid calmly raised his knife to his throat.

"No—not that!" Perry screamed and gutted the stick to throw the native off balance. But the blade flashed a streak of sunlight, and Rashid slumped down, blood spurting from his neck.

Perry cursed. You could never know these natives.

But he had no more time to worry about Rashid. He was nearly over the British colony. He could see the Iraqi-artillery shelling the compound. Fires had started in some of the buildings.

Perry fumbled with the radio in the Junkers.

He switched it to the British wavelength and called incessantly, "All British squadrons in Iraq. British colony at Bagdad being besieged. Heavy loss of life. Must have help."

Perry couldn't kid himself into be-

lieving that his message would be picked up. It was up to him to save this pitiful handful of British from the full force of Iraqi hate.

Perry nosed down. Two Iraqi airplanes tried to intercept him, but his first burst downed one and scared the other off. He followed it and saw it land on a flying field across the river. He bellied low across the field and saw a squadron of Iraqi planes lined up and being prepared for a raid upon the stubborn defenders of the British area.

Perry roared close to the ground and let two of his 110-pounders go. The two bombs wrecked the most of the ships and ruined the runway. Perry zoomed and flew back toward the compound.

As he made a wide sweep to come back, Perry saw a German Henschel land outside the walled enclosure of the British area. Two men were standing off a charge from the cockpit of the ship. Perry recognized the two men, and he nosed the Stuka down for another strafing bee.

As he let go his last burst, Perry was caught in the crossfire from two mounted machine guns which the Iraqi were moving up. He felt the Stuka shudder, turn half over on her side, then right herself. But one wing was pulling off at the butt, near the ventilator. The Jumo engine seemed to explode.

Perry yanked the stick, stalled the Stuka. Then he slipped it and headed for a cleared place in the trees. He crashed in.

PERRY grabbed the automatic and leaped from the pit. Two Iraqis tried to stop him, but he killed them both.

Perry reached the wrecked Henschel. Number Seven was there, his gun hot in his hand and blood soaking the front of his tunic. He was protecting James, though James was conscious and pleading for a chance to fight.

"We've got to get inside the enclosure, old man!" Number Seven cried at Perry.

Perry didn't ask any questions. He picked up James.

They crawled to the compound, and the English let them in, slamming the gates shut. But the gates couldn't keep out the artillery shells that were spreading death and ruin.

Suddenly the artillery stopped. The sound of the guns gave way to the sound of Spitfires and Blenheims.

The battle soon ended. The British air squadrons regained full control of the situation.

A DAY later, back in Alexandria, Number Seven made his report to Sir Arthur. "Rashid was playing both the Germans and the English against each other, hoping to reap benefits for Iraq. The British gold he requested was to be used to buy the allegiance and help of the Afghans against the British. The Iraqi government aided the Germans in their secret plans for diverting the oil because—"

"But—but, you, sir," Perry said tightly. "I was sure you were a German spy!"

Number Seven laughed. "No doubt you had reason to think so. I am many things in many places. Some day you will know my name, and understand. There is a party of politicians in Iraq who are hand-in-glove with the Germans. They identify themselves by a small red pennant. Rashid was against these men, as he was against the British. He worked only for Iraq. He killed Pell, escaped ashore and made up his story of being attacked to throw you off the track. He had hoped to force you to fly him on to Kirkuk."

"And I thought it was a taxi ride!" Perry groaned.

Sir James looked at Perry and smiled. "By the way, Perry, a message arrived for you a while ago. It seems Copeland, at Sidi Barrani, inspected your Hurricane and discovered that your story about a dead engine and crippled guns was true. Copeland is yelling to have you back."

"I'm not sure we can spare him," Number Seven laughed. "He stopped this Iraq uprising almost single-handed."

Perry didn't hear him. His eyes were bright as he contemplated what he might have done had he been the leader of a flight of Spitfires.

WHO ARE "THE HAWKS OF THE DAMNED?"



They're a valiant handful of dauntless men whose souls of steel have been forged in the fires of hell! They've been beaten a thousand times, but they can never be conquered. . . . Hardened killers, every one, they know neither pity nor justice, but are spurred on to their bloody business only by a blind, senseless loyalty to the nations they once served—nations now grovelling beneath the heel of a conqueror. Hunted and at bay, knowing that any moment may be their last, they crouch in the blackness of an alien land and mete out their own brand of fiery vengeance.

Here is the deathless story of Andy Doran of the R.A.F.—who fell prisoner to this legion of the damned—and who earned

himself a share of their flame-swept destiny.

Don't miss Orlando Rigoni's battle novel of the year!

Also in this Issue:

"The One-Way Kid Flies West" by David Goodis, a novel of red wings and black intrigue above the blazing waters of the Arabian Sea; plus stories of both the First and Second World Wars by Lance Kermit, Ray P. Shotwell, and other top-notch authors.

FIGHTING ACES

November Issue On Sale September 10th!

SALUTE to the BRAVE

by LANCE KERMIT



The Fokker seemed to hit an invisible brick wall.

Savagely, into the death that was waiting, a grim-faced flyer took the high road to doom, to give the lie to the fateful verdict of his mates — "Those who go yellow never come back!"

WHEN the door slammed, Kenney did not turn around. He knew what was coming. It didn't make any difference now whether the pay-off came in a hurry or not.

"Well?" Bell said.

The tall, lean Oklahoman's eyes were ordinarily like blue ice, but now they

were blazing. The Croix de Guerre on his chest rose and fell with each angered breath. Before the Lusitania deal, Bell had been in the Escadrille. Now he was one of the top men in the 53rd Squadron, American Air Corps. The 53rd was stationed seven miles southwest of Epernay.

"Well?" Bell said again.

Kenney stood up. He had a lot of cognac in him, but he was steady, and he did not see double. Kenney could hold liquor. And not long ago he had been able to hold the trigger handles of his Vickers guns. But that was all over now. He wasn't going to hold the trigger handles any more.

Kenney was short, sort of heavy. There was something tough about his recklessly combed chestnut hair, his pug nose, his hard jawline. But there was something very mild about his light brown eyes, the set of his lips—something mild and soft—something that Bell couldn't figure out.

Before Bell happened along, Kenney had the best record in the 53rd—a matter of forty or so Boche. Bell upped that by about seven planes, but that hadn't bothered Kenney. He'd liked Bell from the beginning. They got along fine. They shared quarters. They took leaves together. They leaped into combat together. They saved each other a few times. They were buddies.

But it didn't seem that way now.

"How about minding your own business?" Kenney said.

"I reckon this is my business," Bell drawled.

"Don't give me any big-brother talk," Kenney said.

He sat down again. His back was to Bell. Very slowly he was lowering his head into cupped hands. He ran fingers through his hair.

Bell let the quiet sink in, and then he said, "Look, bud, I don't intend to give you big-brother talk. But neither do I

intend to let you make a damn fool of yourself and walk into a court-martial, and that's just what will happen the next time you get a little too much cognac in you, and start popping off in the canteen about how you're sick and tired of the war and the killin' and the bullets and such, and how you're going to walk out on it all. That talk don't go. If the C.O. happened to be around at the time, you'd be in a cell. I hope you realize that."

"I realize a lot of things," Kenney said.

"Yeah, maybe you do," Bell came back. "But it's not good to do too much realizin'—leastaways, not when you got a war on your hands."

"It won't be on my hands much longer."

Bell frowned, and his blue eyes were cold. He put big hands on Kenney's shoulders, swung him around.

"Now lemme get this straight," he said. "You mean to tell me that you're really figurin' on deserting?"

"Not exactly," Kenney said. His voice was very low.

"All right, then. Let's hear your plans."

"I'm asking for a transfer," Kenney said.

"A transfer? To what?"

"To a desk job."

Bell's eyes were widening. He stepped away from Kenney. He shook his head slowly. "No—no, bud. I can't believe it. I can't believe that you'd do a thing like that."

Kenney said, "Whether you believe it or not, it's what I'm doing." He stared at his boots for a few moments, and then, almost as if he was talking to himself, he added, "I can't stand it any more. The killing—the butchery—sending bullets into my fellow human beings—watching them die—watching them go down in flames! I've known all along that it's been murder, but I tried to make myself

think that it was justified. Now I know differently. I'm getting out of it. I'm getting away from the blood and the bullets and the fire. I'm getting away from it—before it drives me crazy!"

He was standing now, and there was a wild light in his eyes. But it didn't last long. When it faded away, his eyes were mild again—almost gentle.

"I can't understand it," Bell said. "Something must have happened to bring about this change all of a sudden."

"It hasn't come all of a sudden," Kenney said. "It's been working on me for a long time. I haven't been able to sleep nights. I've been looking up at a black ceiling and I've been seeing the faces of the men I've killed. Somehow I've been able to see them, not as Boche, not as enemies, but as plain, ordinary human beings, breathing, eating, laughing, crying, getting drunk the same as we do. I can even see them in their own homes, with their families. I can see them with their girls, or in a beer garden. And then it switches, sort of, and I can see my bullets pouring into them. Well, that's finished. That won't happen again. I'm applying for a transfer. I'm getting myself put behind a desk."

BELL said nothing. He knew what Kenney was going through. It was something that happened to every fighting man, at some stage in his military career. It was a pang of conscience, a spell of weakness that broke through the cold practicality of the grim business. Bell had seen it happen to the best. Once it had started to work on him, and he had used a lot of alcohol to bring himself out of it. He knew, however, that alcohol would be worse than useless on Kenney. Something more drastic would have to be done.

"I think I know what's really wrong," Bell said.

"I told you what's wrong."

"No, you didn't tell me the truth." They were facing each other now, and Bell slowly took a step forward and added in a cold murmur, "You've turned yellow."

Kenney acted mechanically. He went forward, and his right whizzed out, caught Bell on the side of the jaw. Bell wanted that. He didn't mind the punch. This was what would snap Kenney out of it, and it was the best thing that could happen. It was up to him to straighten things out for Kenney. After all, they were buddies.

He went back against the wall, bounced away, with his fists up.

Kenney was saying, "I don't want to fight you, Bell. I—"

"I reckon that's just too bad about you," Bell drawled, and he jabbed with the left.

Blood came from Kenney's nose. The mildness that had been in his eyes was gone now. His jawline was hard, and he rushed once more. Bell grinned and stopped him with a jab to the mouth. A short right to the ribs, another jab, and Kenney went back. He tripped over the edge of the rug, landed heavily on his back.

Bell laughed at him.

An oath burst from Kenney's lips. He was up again, throwing lefts and rights with speed and force, but missing most of the punches. But the few that landed did a lot of harm. Bell suddenly realized he was taking a beating. He had a swollen left eye, and his lower lip was in bad shape.

He threw up a guard, and Kenney got past it. Another right to the jaw, and a left to the bad lip, and then a right to the jaw once more—and Bell went down.

Kenney was heaving. His fists were bloody. His mouth was tight.

He said, "Maybe that settles the yellow issue."

"Not quite, bud," Bell said.

"All right, get up again," Kenney hissed.

Bell got up, very slowly. But he knew that he had to get the better of this matter. It was the only thing to do. He had to get the better of the fight. He had to make Kenney believe that he really was yellow, make him want to climb out of the rut. It was going to be a pretty tough job, because Kenney was fast and his fists were hard. But it would have to be done. Kenney was his buddy.

A right to the jaw met Bell as he came up. He went down, but he came up again. This time he grabbed a chair. It would be dirty, but it was necessary. The end would justify the means. He slung the chair. Kenney ducked, and the chair whizzed across the room and went through the window.

The crash was echoed by the sound of a knob turning, a door opening.

Major Metcalf stood there. He was unlike most C.O.'s. He was a quiet, reserved type who never gave pep talks and never exploded. But he knew war and he knew planes and he was one of the big reasons for the 53rd's high record.

He stood there, looking at Kenney's bloody fists, torn tunic and swollen jaw. He looked at Bell's ripped collar, his bad eye, bloody nose and puffed lip.

He said, "Arguing, gentlemen?"

"Sorry, sir," Bell mumbled.

"We'll have explanations later," Metcalf said. "And we'll pay for the chair and the window out of your next envelope. But that's unimportant right now. There's need for two planes up near Epernay. Combined scouting and fighting. The Boche are giving our engineers a bit of trouble up there. You'll look into the matter."

He didn't wait for a reply. He turned and walked out of the room.

Bell shrugged and grabbed for his helmet and flying jacket. Kenney stood there, stunned. He hadn't expected anything

like this. He had planned to speak to the C. O. this very afternoon. He had thought that the morning patrol was his last job for the 53rd.

Bell was at the door. There was a queer smile on his face.

He said, "Coming?"

Kenney's eyes were blank.

He said, "I can't—I—"

"That's right. Stand there. The C.O.'s out on the tarmac, waiting to give us the detailed info, and the ground boys are already working on our Spads, and you're standing there, saying that you can't. You're gonna make a big hit with Metcalf, I reckon."

"But—don't you see?" Kenney pleaded. "I—I'm—"

"Sure," Bell said, with a sneer. "I savvy. Just like I said—you're yellow!"

Then he was out of the room. Kenney heard his laugh, snaking back from the corridor.

For a few moments Kenney remained motionless.

Then he gritted, "All right, Bell. If you think I'm yellow, I'll prove differently. But that won't change my mind about a desk job. As long as this is to be my last tangle with Boche, I'll make it good. But after this job, I'm done—I'm done!"

He grabbed his helmet, his suede jacket. For an instant he hesitated, as if the thought of killing another human being was unbearable to him. Then he shook the thought away and ran out of the room.

LESS than a mile north of Epernay, the Germans had broken through. It was a sort of counter-attack, but it was being carried out on a cautious basis. Instead of wide-spread fighting, the Germans were pounding away with artillery, feinting with infantry so as to provoke skirmishes at strategic points, and generally bother the American engineers

who were trying to stabilize the positions won in the last attack.

The Germans had broken through the advance lines, sending the Yanks back to their secondary trench positions. The engineers had gone out to work on the wires, the trenches, the suicide-gun emplacements, and Fritz was annoying them to beat the band.

To make matters worse, Boche planes were hovering over the area, scouting the work that was being done in the reserve lines, and then coming down to strafe and bomb the troops who were being brought up to the new positions.

It was a mixed-up situation, with the battle field chopped and hammered and stretched into a muddy, bloody jig-saw puzzle. No Man's Land was a haze, with the distance between the two lines narrowing at points to less than fifty yards. There was a lot of hand-to-hand fighting, a lot of close machine-gun work. But the nastiest angle was that of the Boche planes.

There were seven of them. A few of them were charting, making photographs. The others were feasting on American infantrymen.

A mile away, Bell was kicking his Spad into almost full throttle, and climbing hard. He wanted to work into a dive position at about 7,500 feet. The Boche were operating anywhere from 2,500 to strafe altitude, as low as 50 feet.

The Spad wiggled, and Bell looked over to his right to see if Kenney was catching on.

Kenney didn't see him. Kenney didn't want to see him. Kenney was looking straight ahead. He was about seventy feet away. Bell could see the statuelike stiffness of his head. He even imagined he could see the hard, bitter line of Kenney's lips.

"All right, pal, if that's the way you feel about it," Bell muttered. Then he grinned, and his voice settled into a

soft, Oklahoma drawl. "I reckon I snapped him out of it, all right. That's what really counts."

Then he was climbing. He looked back. Whether or not Kenney was against him personally, there was no arguing the fact that they would have to work together on the job. And it was happening that way. Kenney was following him up, staying close behind him.

But Kenney had his own plans. He wasn't going to let Bell start the ball rolling. He would take care of that himself. He would show Bell whether or not he was yellow.

He was forgetting all about his hatred of war and blood and death. He was forgetting all about his softness and sentimentality in regard for the Boche. He was a warrior now, and there was no mildness in his eyes, no gentleness on his lips. He was leaning forward, hunching in the narrow cockpit and grabbing the trigger handles of his Vickers guns. Then he was edging out, passing Bell and taking the lead position.

He didn't even signal for the dive, so anxious was he. He was lunging to the attack before Bell knew what was happening.

An oath spurted from the Oklahoman's lips.

He muttered, "Now whaddya call that? He's not even givin' me a signal, lettin' me stay up here like a danged racehorse left at the post. Wal, we'll soon fix that!"

He pointed down, throttled hard. The Spad screeched.

Kenney was already working his guns, aiming for a climbing Fokker. The German saw him when he reached 4,000. The Fokker banked hard and went into a run-away dive. Kenney kept after the Boche. Two more Germans had sighted the Spad and were coming after it. Kenney saw them, but didn't pay much attention. He had already singled out his

first target, and he wasn't leaving it until that Fokker was punched full of Vickers lead.

The guns splattered, and he watched his tracers splatter against the checkerboard nose of the Boche plane. He saw the Fokker hit an invisible brick wall, and crumble up. Then it was flaming. The fire came out of the exhausts, creased the sides of the fuselage, danced back toward the cockpit.

Kenney winced. He seemed to be transported into the cockpit of the ignited plane. He seemed to feel the terror and the pain that was now searing the German pilot. Somehow he wanted to hurry toward that plane, make some crazy attempt to save the Boche.

But the Fokker was going down, singing its death song and fading into an eerie succession of rolls and loops and finally working into a spin. Behind it was a trail of smoke and flame.

Kenney looked away. He could feel the guilt working within him now, dominating his senses, telling him that he was a murderer, a butcher. War or no war, he had killed a man. He had taken a life. It had happened before. It had happened many times—too many times. He didn't want to kill. He had not been made for this sort of thing. He had been forced into it. But now he was getting out.

He forgot the battle that swirled about him. He forgot the Epernay scouting job. He juiced into a screeching dive, pulled out at 600 feet, then headed toward home. A Fokker was crowding him from the right, trying to get on his tail. He danced into a hard left turn, squeezed into a half-loop and eluded the Fokker. He didn't pay any more attention to the German. All he wanted to do was to get away from this ghastly arena where only one law existed—kill or be killed. He didn't want to kill. He certainly didn't want to be killed. He wanted to go home, to the 53rd. He wanted

to get his feet on solid ground. He wanted to throw cognac down his throat. He wanted to be alone.

He didn't realize it, but as he placed the Spad on a bee-line for home, he was sobbing like a child.

THE Spad kicked dust as it skidded across the tarmac. Mechanics were running toward it. Major Metcalf, brow furrowed as he noticed only one plane returning, walked quickly from the squadron office.

Kenney climbed slowly from the cockpit. He saw the hangar and the hutments. He saw the mechanics. He saw Metcalf. But somehow he couldn't feel that he was actually home. It seemed that home was another place. It seemed that he was moving in a queer dream.

A mechanic was saying, "You must have walked into trouble, Lieutenant. This crate's carryin' plenty of lead."

Kenney scarcely heard him.

And then Metcalf was walking up, frowning, saying, "You've got a report?" "Huh?"

The frown deepened. Metcalf came closer. He said, "What's the matter, Kenney—you wounded?"

"Not wounded, sir."

"Then what's wrong?"

"Nothing, sir. Nothing's wrong. Everything's hunky-dory, see? Everything's swell."

"Kenney—you're drunk!"

"Oh no, I'm not drunk. You know me better than that, sir. You know I can hold my liquor with the best of them."

"Then you're sick. You've—" He snapped his fingers and nodded. This sort of thing happened to a lot of pilots. It was a form of temporary derangement, a sort of hysteria brought on by heated cloud combat. The terrific strain of sky acrobatics, coupled with the web of bullets, the noise, the fire, the death up there, was at times extreme enough to

tip the scales of mental balance. Metcalf knew what had to be done. He beckoned to a few mechanics.

Kenney saw that, backed away. "Now look, sir—I'm all right—I tell you I'm perfectly all right!"

To the mechanics, Metcalf said, "Don't be too rough on him. Just lead him over to the infirmary. The sooner he snaps out of it, the sooner I'll get a coherent report from him. I want to find out what's happened to Bell. I want to find out what's going on in that Epernay sector."

Kenney said, "You wanna find out about Bell, sir? Why, sure—I'll tell you all about Bell. Good ol' Bell. He's havin' lunch with the Kaiser. Sure—there's a beer garden in Epernay—and Bell an' the Kaiser are raisin' their steins now. I can see 'em!"

Metcalf nodded to the mechanics, and said, "All right—grab him—gently, now. Don't fight with him."

The mechanics moved toward Kenney. He continued to back away. His voice was high-pitched and trembling now. He said, "Get away from me! Don't try any funny stuff. I don't wanna fight you guys. I'm not mad at you. I don't wanna hurt you. I don't wanna hurt anybody—not even Fritz. You hear that, Metcalf? I don't even wanna hurt Fritz. I'm through with that noise. I'm through with fighting and killing. I hate it! I can't stand it! I can't stand this war any more!"

The mechanics moved toward him, and he kept backing away, and then he tripped over a tuft of loose grass. The mechanics rushed him then, and grabbed him.

Then he was screaming—like a maniac. And he was fighting with his feet and his fists and his teeth. He butted someone in the belly. He kicked someone full in the face. He was up now, and throwing a left hook, not knowing or caring who he was hitting. Someone tried to grab

him from the side, and he whirled and planted a fist in the someone's face. The someone was Major Metcalf.

That braced Kenney. He stepped back. He stared at the four men on the ground. Two were unconscious. One was holding his belly and moaning. The fourth was very slowly trying to get to his feet. The fourth was Major Metcalf.

Kenney's head was clear now, and it was as if he had emerged from a thick mist. He didn't know what had been the matter with him, but he did know that he had struck his C.O. and that he was in for a lot of trouble. He knew something else. It was dim now, and he couldn't fully comprehend it, but it was hammering away at him. It was telling him to climb back into his Spad. It was telling him to get back into the clouds.

The motor was still humming, and it was like a magnet pulling him.

Kenney leaped for the cockpit, and just as he did so, he heard Metcalf, cursing, coming for him.

"I'll see you later, Major!" Kenney said, and then he was racing the Spad across the tarmac, sensing an exultant throb as he took it off the ground. He climbed quickly, turned toward the front, and made the Spad leap. Its nose was pointed to the Epernay sector.

KENNEY was thinking of Bell. He had left Bell out there, alone, fighting six Boche. Bell was dead now. He knew it. He had left Bell to die. The Spad was a good plane, and Bell was a top-ranking ace. But six Fokkers were just a bit too much. The Boche had killed him. Bell, his buddy, was scorched and black and motionless in a smoking wreckage somewhere near Epernay—and he had helped send him there.

"You were right, buddy," he muttered. "You said I was yellow. You were damn right. I thought it was high ideals. I thought it was brotherly love and all

that mush. But it wasn't that. There's no place for that sort of thing in a war. War is a rotten job, but it's a job that's gotta be done. A guy can't let himself go soft. He can't let himself turn yellow. He's gotta be hard. He's gotta be a killer. I guess you taught me that, Bell. Maybe I'm a little late, but anyway, I'm gonna get that Epernay job done if it's the last thing I do!"

The Spad jumped. It jumped up to 9,000 feet, and its throttle was wide open. Kenney was hunched low in the cockpit, and his fingers were impatient against the trigger handles of the Vickers guns. Then, against the egg-shell blue, he saw the planes zooming.

"That's it, Fritz," he gritted. "Have your fun now. You won't be having it for long."

The Spad streaked ahead. It went up another 500 feet, and then it seemed to slide over the top of an icy hill. And it went down, with Kenney's eyes very narrow, his teeth gleaming white as his fingers closed on the trigger handles.

They were four Boche down there. It meant that Bell had accounted for two before the others had tagged him. Ken-

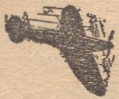
ney was promising Bell that the four Boche were going to pay all expenses—and also act as funeral escort.

They saw him now, and were leaping away from his charge. He caught a Fokker's tail in his sights, flipped a burst, came in close and flipped another burst. The Fokker wrapped itself in a sheet of flame.

Kenney grinned. "That looks good—now."

He banked hard, looking for another transaction. The three Fokkers were together on the left, and then they were peeling off, spreading in a plume formation, widening the plume, trying to draw him into a trap. He juiced the Spad, and once more his fingers gripped the trigger handles.

At 4,500 feet, the Fokkers closed in on him. He heard bullets punching through his wings. He heard the slugs pounding away at the cockpit. Something thunked against the thick celluloid windscreen. Then something was hot and painful in his left shoulder. But his hands were on the trigger handles, and bullets were pouring from his guns. He was taking a lot, but he was giving just



THE DEVIL'S ROLL CALL

Jerry Morse had blazed a glory trail across a dozen far-flung skies—yet he wasn't wanted in the R. A. F. ... But those who live by gunfire die by gunfire, and a fighting man can always find one last bloody battle, before the Devil Calls the Roll!

You can't afford to miss Daniel Winters' latest novel of battle skies—about the one man who pitted himself against the unbeatable network of Nazi espionage—and emerged the victor!

Also in this issue:

"Fight for Your Supper," by Robert Sidney Bowen, which is the strange tale of the flyer who was the toast of a crack German squadron—but who carried another uniform in his heart; "Bombers for Britain," a novel about the war's unsung heroes, by Orlando Rigoni; plus a host of stirring air fiction by your favorite authors.

DARE-DEVIL ACES

September Issue On Sale Now!

as much, even more. He saw a Fokker falling away on his right, and then he was in a barrel-roll, turning hard on the head of a needle, coming back and diving toward the cockpit of the Boche. The German plane was faltering, and then it was driving, spinning toward doom.

Kenney veered to the left, dealing lead to the two remaining Boche that rushed him now. He saw one of them breaking out in flames. The other was zooming hard. Kenney went up after him, trying to find his underside.

But the Spad had been badly hit. It couldn't handle smoothly. And a lot of blood was pouring from Kenney's shoulder. He was grinding his teeth, mouthing a string of oaths against the agony and the weakness that kept him from getting close to the remaining Fokker.

"I'll get him, Bell—I'll keep my promise!"

It didn't seem that he would be able to do that. The Fokker apparently realized the crippled condition of the American. It was going into a screeching Immelman, coming down to take the offensive.

Kenney swerved to the right, as if he were trying to run away. Then he came back in again, moving head-on toward the German plane. It was a race now, a race to see whose bullets would hit home first. Kenney could hardly see. The weakness was placing a thick curtain in front of his eyes. But he was working the Vickers guns, and somehow he could hear the thumping sound of bullets striking plane. Then the curtain seemed to break away, and he saw the Fokker somersaulting beneath him, followed by a thick line of smoke.

He grinned again and aimed his Spad for home. But he knew that he wouldn't be able to make it. The shoulder was very bad. He was very weak. He could feel himself going out. When he was a mile or so inside the American lines, he

nosed down and tried to hold on. He saw that he wouldn't be able to last long enough for the landing.

He shook his head slowly, hopelessly, and then he went out. He didn't even hear the crash.

KENNEY had been in the hospital six days. This was the first day he was allowed to see anyone. He had a broken left arm and a broken right ankle and a bad shoulder and a couple of cracked ribs and a few nasty burns. But the doc made a statement to the effect that this Kenney individual was one of the toughest he had seen in a long while. He predicted that the guy would be flying again within a few weeks.

The nurse said, "You have a visitor. Shall I send him in?"

Kenney shrugged. "Okay. I guess it's Major Metcalf. I'll have to face him sooner or later."

The nurse went out.

And then Bell walked in.

Kenney couldn't say anything. His eyes were bulging, and sweat beaded his forehead as Bell walked over to the cot, smiling.

A little later Bell was saying, "They got me, sure enough, but I was lucky to crash inside of our lines. I was waiting for the first-aid guys to pick me up when I saw you come back. You know, it's a funny thing, but somehow I had a feeling that you were going to come back."

"Well, sure," Kenney said, putting toughness in his voice. "You didn't think I was gonna run out on the job, did you? I just needed to—well, I—I just needed to pull myself together."

Bell nodded. "I reckon that's all you needed, bud," he said.

And then they looked at each other, unsmiling. They didn't say anything, because nothing needed to be said. They were warriors, and they understood each other.

The Outcasts From HELL'S CORNER

by CURT BENSON



A hot hammer suddenly lashed his arm.

Two flying hellcats who couldn't take orders, a flight leader who couldn't be trusted with a command—together they roared into flame-swept skies to prove the worth of their wings!

CHAPTER ONE

Suicide Patrol

DEXTER FARRAGUT shouldered his tall, perfectly-tailored frame through the crowd that kept unflinching vigil around the bulletin board outside R. A. F. headquarters in London. The crowd seemed strangely astir this morning.

Farragut halted on the steps of the building, and then, on sudden inspiration, he turned and made his way to the bulletin board. There would be posted the terse official R.A.F. communiques of the day's combats.

Here and there in the crowd people noticed him, nudged their neighbors and stood back in awe. Farragut was aware

of all this, yet seemingly took no notice. Indeed, he wore his renown as casually as he carried his pigskin gloves, with the indifference to public acclaim that is the hallmark of all men to whom leadership has been a heritage.

A faint shadow of concern flickered across Farragut's handsome face as he gazed over the half-dozen people reading the latest bulletins. There it was, the last communique posted—the report of his own patrol:

A complete patrol of twelve Messerschmitt fighter-bombers was destroyed over mid-Channel early today. The German air fleet was attacked by a flight of seven Spitfires. Six of our own ships were lost. Flight Leader Dexter Farragut, who downed four of the enemy, was the only man to return. Today's victories raised Lord Farragut's record to 52. Those men lost were:—

The shadow vanished from Farragut's face, obeying the command of an indomitable will. That was all there was to the matter—the cold, precise words of the communique. They summed up the military aspect of the combat and that was all that mattered. The ten minutes of compounded hell that had outraged the morning sky, the mad whirl of gyrating planes and tracer streaks, the devil's orchestration of roaring motors and racketing guns and the screams of the dying—all these were of no importance. They had no place in the record; they were even to be cast out from the memory. . . .

Memories were bad. Memories had names, faces; memories smiled at you, laughed with you, haunted you. The hospitals of Canada were crowded with men who were physically well, but who would never fly again—men with memories. But a warbird had to be able to brush memories aside as brusquely as a war office communique.

Dexter Farragut turned again to enter the building, but he suddenly stood quite still. He gazed into the face of a young

girl about sixteen. It was a face he had known before—and yet it was different than it had ever been before. It was a face more like a mask. The tiny eyes were red, but dried, as though tears would never run there again. The face was devoid of all emotion, as though that too had been sapped out with the tears of grief.

Farragut had met the girl three weeks before. She was the sister of young Dencombe, who had been alive this morning. Three weeks ago her face had been wreathed in smiles and the freshness of youth.

The girl spoke to him, and her voice was like her face—empty. There was neither grief nor hate in it—it was just a voice—low but clear.

"You must be frightfully proud, Lord Farragut," she monotoned. "Proud of the men whom you've led to death—men like—Bobby." Her voice cracked a little, but she went on in the same dull tone. "Bobby always said you were a man he would follow to the gates of hell. Well, your Lordship, he did. You must be very proud."

She turned with a sob and was swallowed up by the crowd. For just a second a frown rested on Farragut's face. In the next instant it was gone. His shoulders went back an inch and his chin went up as he strode into the building.

He had thought of young Dencombe, but erased the thought. Memories were for lesser men, but not such as he. It was with no sense of pride that Dexter Farragut recognized himself as an unusual person. He merely accepted it as an incontrovertible fact. For one cannot judge by ordinary standards a man who, at twenty-one, has been amateur boxing champion of England, author of a best-selling novel at twenty-three, who, at twenty-five, has taken his ancestral seat in the House of Lords, at twenty-seven resigned his membership in Parliament to

enlist in the R.A.F., and who, at twenty-eight, was the leading ace on the Channel front.

A SMALL reception room adjoined the office of Vice Air Marshal Gatewood. The moment Farragut entered the room, he sensed that something unusual was up. He strode to the desk, threw a casual glance at the adjutant, gazed loftily about the room, and said, "Flight Leader Farragut to see the vice-marshal."

The man at the desk said, "If you'll have a seat, sir, the vice-marshal will see you in your turn."

Farragut could feel the flush which raced from his neck to the roots of his hair. He was not accustomed to cooling his heels—even in the office of the vice-air marshal.

His voice, however, lost none of its composure. "Perhaps you didn't get the name—Farragut—Dexter Wadsworth Lord Farragut. Please tell the vice-marshal I'm here."

The adjutant nodded. "Yes, sir, I know. If you'll be seated, the vice-marshal will get to you soon."

Dexter Farragut was not accustomed to being balked—especially by adjutants. His steel gray eyes riveted the man to his chair. He repeated, "I told you to announce me."

There was something in his voice, in his eyes—a bearing of authority that was not to be denied. The adjutant shrugged and flicked a switch, and spoke into the inter-office phone.

A moment later the speaker on his desk crackled in reply. "I told you to have him wait until I'm ready."

The adjutant looked at Farragut, and raised his hands in an eloquent gesture.

Farragut's face turned a deeper shade of red. He spun around and stalked to the bench on which a half-dozen others were waiting.

As he took a seat, the flyer next to

him snickered, "I guess the old goat told you where to get off."

Farragut ignored the remark with practiced disdain. He was wondering what the devil could be wrong. The summons he had received this morning, to report to Gatewood, had been no different than those he'd received a score of times before. He and the vice-marshal were personal friends. On his previous visits, the adjutant had always announced him, and if Gatewood was busy at the moment, he would wait in the vice-marshal's private anteroom until the immediate business was finished. But this waiting in line—

The man at his side spoke up again. "So you're Dex Farragut. I've heard about you—been wanting to meet you."

Farragut's eyes blazed as he turned. No one ever called him Dex. He studied his neighbor with silent contempt. The fellow was young—not more than twenty-one, with an unruly thatch of red hair and a face masked in freckles.

The redhead said, "I'm quite an ace too, you know. Name's Roy Garth—Roy Garth from Canada. Guess you heard of me."

Farragut wasn't wasting words. He said, "No," and turned away.

The man at his side was silent for a moment. Then he said, "All you damned Englishmen are the same. So wrapped up in yourselves you don't know anyone else is in the war."

Farragut had handled men of this sort before. He turned and glared at the redhead—many men had been chilled to silence by that frigid glare.

But it seemed to have no effect on Roy Garth. He went on, "I've got twenty-one planes to my record—and I've only been in this war about one-third the time you have. You think you're hot stuff, but actually my record is better than yours. I've figured it all out in ratios. For the number of flying hours I've

put in, I've got more Jerries than anyone else in the R. A. F. You come second. You didn't know that, did you?"

Farragut's disgust turned to loathing. He knew the only thing to do was ignore the bounder, but instead he found himself saying, "I don't give a damn whether you've got five planes or five hundred. I don't give a damn who's the leading ace in the R. A. F., and I don't like cheap little glory hounds, and I wish you'd shut up."

The Canadian was taken aback with the fury of his outburst.

Then he said, "So the truth gets under your skin, eh? I figured you wouldn't like to know you're just runner-up. Give me time, and I'll have more total victories than you as well."

Farragut raged in silence. There was more dignity in that than in quibbling with the redhead. After that Garth was silent too.

EVENTUALLY the Canadian was summoned into the inner sanctum. Farragut took his place at the head of the line. Five minutes later Garth came back. He strode swiftly to the outer door, looking neither to left nor right. Farragut chuckled silently. It must have been quite a dressing down to put those unexploded charges of fury in the Canadian's face. As he slammed the outer door, Farragut heard him say, "Damned fat-heads!"

At a nod from the adjutant, Farragut entered Gatewood's office. The vice air marshal was a smallish man, about forty-five, with a dark moustache, and a red-leather face that carried the stain of the sun of six continents.

Farragut draped a leg over a corner of the desk and nodded to the door the Canadian had just left. He said, "There's one man who doesn't love you, old chap."

The vice-marshal grunted. "Damned nuisance, that. This is the fourth time

I've had him here. I just grounded him for a month."

Farragut whistled. "What's he done?"

Gatewood shrugged. "Oh, he's just another glory grabber—but the worst of the lot. He'll do anything to get a confirmation. Doesn't give a hoot about orders, thinks his record makes him a privileged character. This morning he nabbed a plane right from the sights of his flight leader. Almost wrecked two of our ships doing it. I had to teach him that that sort of stuff doesn't go. I doubt if this will cure him, but it may make him a little more careful. Personally, I'd like to break him out of the service, but he's too good a man."

Then he glanced at Farragut, and cleared his throat. He turned his head away and said, "Farragut, please stand properly at attention when addressing a superior officer."

Amazement perched on Farragut's face. "Huh? What say?"

"On your feet!" Gatewood repeated.

Slowly Farragut got to his feet. "What the devil's up, old chap? Since when have we two stood on military formality?"

Gatewood said calmly, "You're my friend, Dexter. But what I have to say will be easier said on a strictly impersonal, military basis—as your superior officer."

Farragut slowly came to attention, concern and bewilderment mixed on his face. "What seems to be the trouble, sir?"

The older man asked, "Why do you think you're here, Farragut?"

"I'm not sure. My flight was wiped out this morning. I thought it might be about a new command."

The other shook his head. "There isn't going to be any new command."

For a moment the flight leader was puzzled. Then he said eagerly, "Special mission?"

Again Gatewood shook his head. "No special mission."

"But what—?"

The vice-marshal said, "Oh, the devil! Here, read it for yourself."

Farragut held out his hand for a sheet of paper. It was from the air ministry, marked—*Confidential Memorandum*.

He read it through once quickly. Then, as though he couldn't believe it, his eyes flashed back over it, lingered in bewilderment over certain lines—

"... therefore would advise that he be relieved of his command as soon as possible ... forgetful of his responsibility, has led his men to wholesale slaughter. ... a capable flyer, but no sense of leadership. ..."

Farragut reared back as though from a slap in the face. The phrases were swimming before his eyes—*forgetful of responsibility ... no sense of leadership*.

Gatewood was saying, "Doesn't mean a damn thing, of course ... no disgrace, mind you ... be keeping the same rank of course ... merely a change of function ... more fighting, less executive duties. ... Dare say you'd prefer that, what? ... Every man to the job he can do best, you know."

Farragut's astonishment gave way then to anger—no violent outburst, just quiet, slow-burning rage that cloaked his words with fire.

"I suppose there's some explanation. What is it?"

Gatewood shifted his chair uncomfortably.

He cleared his throat and said, "Well, frankly, Dexter, it's the record of your flight. It—"

"The record of my flight!" Farragut pointed to a chart on the wall. "Look at that record. In the last three months my command has had more victories than any other flight in Britain."

The vice-marshal nodded. "But suppose we look at another chart."

He pointed to one headed—*Planes Lost in Combat*. Farragut stared at it amazed. In the last three months there was one

line of the bar graph that extended twice the length of any other.

Gatewood was saying, "You see, old man, you're really too good to be a flight leader. Your men can't possibly keep up with you—and, well, you seem to expect too much of them. You lose more men in a week than most flights in a month. And then this morning's fiasco—a whole flight wiped out! And that's happened to you before."

Farragut came out of his chair. "But damn it, man, look at the odds we faced. A dozen planes—and we got every last one of them!"

"Yes, and lost six of our own. The ministry realizes your combat record, but feels it's not worth the sacrifice. There's been a growing sentiment against you in the R. A. F., Dexter. Do you know what they call your flight? The suicide patrol!"

Farragut opened his mouth, but there were no words to say.

"No man who has flown under you has lived more than four weeks," Gatewood said tensely.

Farragut dropped weakly back into his chair. Suicide patrol! Hell, he wasn't to blame if Fighter Command made him nursemaid to flock after flock of fledglings. If those men didn't learn by fighting, they'd never learn. ... But then he realized that not all those men had been fledglings. Many had been experienced combat pilots.

Gatewood was saying, "Don't take it too hard, old chap. No disgrace, no demotion. Everyone will know you're too good a fighting man to be wasted leading a flight. You'll fly with your old outfit, but someone else will be at point, that's all."

Gatewood was a decent chap, just a little thick. He was thinking of Farragut's name in the Force—the flight leader with no flight to lead, the man who couldn't be trusted with a command. But

to Dexter Farragut this was a blow that a man like Gatewood could never understand. This hit Farragut where it hurt most—at his pride, his self-assurance. Leadership had always been the heritage of the Farraguts. Since the days of the Norman conquest, they had been leading Britain's armies to battle. The family tree was studded with the names of statesmen, generals, admirals and colonial governors. Farraguts had been born to be leaders; it was in the blood. Dexter glanced again at the note on the desk, and the words seemed to leap out and lash across his face—*forgetful of responsibility . . . no sense of leadership. . .*

He stood up, saluted, and left the office without a word.

CHAPTER TWO

Trouble Shooters

FARRAGUT was halfway back to his home drome when his muff phones came to life. They crackled excitedly, "Calling the Spitfire flying above this field. . . . Calling Spitfire flying above this field."

Farragut peered down at the airdrome right beneath him. He saw figures running about, saw a lone Hurricane taking off from a corner of the tarmac.

He snapped on his mike. "I've got you. Come in."

The phones buzzed, "This is Squadron Leader Barnaby. These instructions are irregular, but very important. Do you see that Hurricane that just took off? Stop him! Shoot him down if necessary, but stop him!"

Farragut protested, "But that's a British ship!"

"I know it's a British ship—but that man's a spy, a traitor, a deserter. You've got to stop him. Every other ship on the field is out. Don't let him get away!"

Farragut glanced at the Hurricane. It

was almost out of view already. He flicked a look at his petrol gauge—just about enough to get across the Channel and back. It would be a tight squeeze, but—

He shrugged and muttered, "But orders are orders."

The Spitfire banked toward the Channel, leveled, and then seemed to leap forward in pursuit of the Hurricane.

It was slow work gaining on that fleeing ship. A Spitfire has only a slight speed advantage, and the Hurricane had a lead of several miles.

Aided by a slight advantage in height, Farragut slowly closed the distance between the two planes. The gap was only a mile and a quarter when they hit the Channel, heading south. It was reduced to a quarter of a mile when the French coast passed below.

Farragut spoke into the mike. "Better come back with me, fellow. I shouldn't like to blast a British plane."

There was no answer from the Hurricane.

Farragut tried again. "If you don't turn back in thirty seconds, I'll open fire."

The voice that came back to him was low and deadly, with the unmistakable accents of a Yank. "Look, Limey, this is none of your business. I'm just fed up with the brass and braid of the R. A. F., and I'm leaving, like I came—uninvited. I'm not goin' over to the Nasties; I'm headed for North Africa. I don't want to hurt you, but if you try to stop me, I'll rivet my initials in your thick English skull. So keep your nose clean and run home to mama."

Farragut's fingers raced for the gun button, and his lips formed an angered reply.

But before he could utter a sound, the voice in his phone spoke again. "If you're gonna shoot, Limey, you'd better shoot fast—before Jerry beats you to it."

Farragut noticed, for the first time, the five ME 109's cutting across the Hurricane's line of flight.

He said, "Better turn back, Yank. We might be able to outrun them."

"Not on your life, sonny boy. You just park yourself on a cloud and watch someone else do your dirty work. And after those buzzards polish me off you can run home and tell Blow-hard Barnaby about it. He'll probably recommend you for a DFC."

In the next instant the Hurricane was knifing into the German formation, splitting it wide open.

Farragut nodded in approval at the headlong attack of the wild-flying Yank. The man was a fighter, no doubt about it—and he handled the plane like a live thing, darting and twisting through the German formation with reckless abandon.

Farragut tramped on the rudder, re-

versed controls, and slipped off a wing to go diving down into the melee.

Two planes were angling in on the Hurricane, one from either side, when Farragut decided to cut in on the deal. The plane on the left had already launched its tracer stream into the British ship when the diving Spitfire roared out its death song. Farragut pressed his gun button, and watched Browning fire converge in the center of the German cockpit. It was a neat job, he noted, just as he liked it—clean-cut, without a bullet going to waste.

He heard the Yank cry out, "Nice going, sonny boy. 'At's giving 'em the old one-two."

Farragut turned from his own victim, to see a crimson torch whistling its own dirge as it plummeted downward. The Yank had nailed a victim of his own.

Farragut uttered a grunt of satisfaction. Only three against two now.



DO YOU KNOW A SOLDIER? HERE'S HOW TO MAKE HIM HAPPY!



A subscription to BATTLE BIRDS Magazine is the ideal gift for a son, sweetheart or friend in the service of his country—because it's reading he'll enjoy, it's easy to send, and it costs so little. Take advantage today of this special offer available only for gift subscriptions for men serving in the armed forces of the United States. Twelve issues for only one dollar! Just fill out the coupon below, and send it, with your money, to Subscription Dep't., BATTLE BIRDS Magazine, 210 East 43 Street, N. Y. C.

Name

Address

Donor

Address

☐ Check here if gift card is to be sent. BATTLE BIRDS, 210 E. 43rd St., N. Y. C.

He saw the Hurricane square off with a 109, and then blazing hell struck him from behind. He threw a hurried glance behind at the two vengeful ships converging on his tail.

Pulling back on the stick, he went roaring upward. He saw the 'Schmitts head up after him. He stalled, then slapped the stick to the left in a split-S. The plane whipped around like a jackknife, and Farragut was thrown against the cockpit rim. And in the next instant he was plunging downward, straight for the two flame-snorting ships beneath him. He could feel the Rheinmettal slugs tapping into his wingtips, but he held his fire. And then he was thumbing the guns, and watching eight Browning streams come together at the prop hub of a 109, until the entire engine was flying apart. The other ME pulled away in terror, and Farragut plunged on downward.

He eased the stick backward, felt the wings bite into the rushing air, and pulled out of the dive. At that moment he knew he had been tricked. A hail of steel that carved away at his tail told him so. The 109 that had turned aside had not fled in terror, but had whipped around to come plunging down on his tail. And now hot metal was blasting through Farragut's empennage, carving into it, carving it clean away from the rest of the plane.

HE TORE open the cockpit roof, and the air lashed in and whipped his face. The uncontrollable ship was spinning wildly, and earth and sky were a tumbling, twisting, dull gray vision. He felt the centrifugal force trying to whip him from the ship. He clutched at his safety belt, crouching his legs for the spring. He wondered vaguely if he'd able to clear that madly spinning tail end. And then he was letting go of the belt, and his legs were snapping straight,

and he was being hurled out into the madly spinning sky, then plunging head-over-heels in a bottomless void. He pulled the rip-cord. Nothing happened. Then suddenly a great hand struck him, whipped him around, and there was the world, rightside-up again. He was floating downward in the gathering dusk, and he could barely discern the narrow strip of white beach bounded by the black of the Channel on one side and the black of a forest on the other.

He looked upward, around the edges of the silk that billowed above him. He could see the Hurricane, coming onto the tail of its foe. He wondered where the plane that had downed him had gone—and suddenly he knew. It came knifing in from behind and above him, and the overwhelming blast of its motor filled him with a sudden dread. He twisted his head, and even before he heard the sound of guns, the glowing red holes in the German wings told him the Nazi was going to gun him there in his chute. And then a hot knife slashed his thigh, a hammer of flame smashed against his skull, and, for a second, night had descended.

When he snapped out of it, the touch of fear had left him, and in its place were seething anger and contempt. Anger for what the German had attempted, contempt for his failure to do the job properly.

Then he saw the Nazi bank, turn, and come climbing up to complete the murder. In futile despair, he clutched for his pistol, drawing it with difficulty from the clumsy flying suit. Again those murderous eyes winked. He started working the trigger, but the gun was suddenly snapped from his hand by something slashing against his arm. Then, from above, there came a great roar and a racketing of gunfire. Farragut saw tracer lines speed past him, from a source above his chute, and stab deep into the guts

of the climbing 'Schmitt. The Nazi went over on its back, seemed to stand still in the sky, then nosed down to start screwing its way out of the heavens.

The Hurricane flashed into Farragut's view. And then it was whipping off to the east, the last Nazi buzzing on its tail. Farragut realized that the Yank had deliberately given the German this chance, by coming down to save him.

But he had no need to worry about the man in the Hurricane. Half a mile away he saw the British ship nose up, over and down. Lines of tracers lanced from its wings, and the 109 ran right into those fatal lines, became a lashing ball of fire blazing a smoky trail that ended in the distant waters of the Channel.

Farragut saw the Hurricane wheeling around, and said, "You're my kind of fighting chap, old man. Happy landings wherever it is your going."

He began to feel faint. He knew the scalp wound was merely a crease, but he could feel the fringes of oblivion's dark veil edging in on his brain. He looked downward and saw the earth lunging hungrily at him. He was vaguely conscious of his feeble fingers manipulating the strings, spilling his chute, guiding himself away from the clawing branches of the trees that fringed the beach. His feet touched the ground; his legs buckled, and he was dimly aware of the silken folds of his chute drifting down upon him.

He didn't see the Hurricane land. He didn't even know it had turned from its last victim to circle protectingly over the descending chute. He only dimly remembered opening his eyes to see a big, square-jawed face and a pair of huge shoulders above him. The Hurricane nestled on the thin strip of beach, with water lapping whisperingly around one of the wheels, and branches scraping the opposite wing. He wondered how it had

gotten there. Then he was bouncing around unevenly, and he knew the square-jawed man was carrying him. Once more he slipped off into the black.

It was the rush of cool wind in his face that revived him again. For just a moment he was aware of the prop-wash that lashed his face. He tried to move, but couldn't. He suddenly realized that he was lashed to the wing of the Hurricane. He looked at the water beneath the wheel, at the fringe of trees inches from the wingtip. He seemed to sense the crackle of rifle fire around him, and he knew they'd never be able to take off. And then the pain was growing faint, and the darkness engulfed him.

In what seemed like a second, he was coming out of it again. He was still strapped to the wing, but now there were people around. Hands were working at the chute shrouds that bound him.

He thought, *So it's going to be a prison camp for the duration.* But then he heard sounds, friendly sounds—English words. Could they be back in England now?

There were faces about him—and one was that of the broad-shouldered man. A precise voice was saying, "All right, O'Rourke, you're under arrest." Farragut wondered who O'Rourke was until he saw other faces that were dragging the square-jawed one away. Farragut put out a hand to stop them, but everything was going black again.

THE first thing Farragut did, after they let him out of the hospital two days later, was to visit R. A. F. headquarters.

Concern was alive on Gatewood's face as he greeted him. "It's good to see you around, old man. You aren't rushing things are you? Sure you're in tip-top shape?"

Farragut nodded. "I'm as good as new. But what's this I hear about the chap who brought me out of that mess—

O'Rourke? That man should be behind a set of guns, not a row of bars. What's he done?"

"What's he done?" cried Gatewood. "What hasn't he done! A bad actor, Dexter—very bad. Gotten himself into more trouble than any whole battle squadron in the country. A heavy drinker, you know, and when liquored, he's downright vicious. He's a killer—in the air and out. He's got thirty-seven planes to his credit, and he's licked every squadron he's ever been assigned to with his fists. Discipline is a word he doesn't understand, and he thinks orders are to be followed only at his convenience."

Farragut was taken aback.

"That's too bad," he murmured thoughtfully. "Somehow I had the idea he was a pretty decent sort of a chap." Then he went on. "What are you going to do with him? His talent in the air shouldn't be allowed to waste."

Gatewood shook his head. "We've tolerated him all this while for just that reason; he was too good a man to lose. But we can't put up with him any longer. There's not a squadron he'll fly with. Always breaking away from formation to go off on sorties of his own. He goes A.W.O.L. when he pleases, and punctuates every binge with his fists. He's known to every M.P. in London, and he's seen the inside of a dozen local jails."

Farragut smiled. "What's he done this time?"

Gatewood said loftily, "Oh, just dislocated a squadron leader's jaw."

"Whose?"

"Barnaby—Fourth Bomber."

"That pompous old windbag!"

"We had assigned him to bomber duty as a punishment. He took his resentment out on poor old Barnaby."

Farragut was puzzled. "But that still doesn't seem like sufficient reason for his desertion."

"Well, there was a little more to it

than that," Gatewood said. "You see, we had decided that we'd had about enough of him and were going to ship him back to the States. He didn't come to us through ordinary enlistment. He had fought with the Poles, and came over with some of their units." The vice-marshal added, somewhat abashed, "He's a fugitive of some sort, you know. We suspected that all along, but—well, he was a valuable man, and we didn't go out of our way to investigate. At any rate, when he was informed that he was going to be shipped off to the States, he went into a veritable frenzy. He knocked out two of his guards, stole a plane, and was off. The next thing we knew of him was when he came back with you draped across his wing."

Farragut was thoughtful for a moment. Then he said eagerly, "Listen, old chap, I've got a great idea. Just hear me out before you pass judgment. I want permission to form a flight of my own—a three-man flight that will be the deadliest unit in Britain. Think of it—three men, all aces, specifically trained in fighting against overwhelming odds—men who can ordinarily outfly three times their number, knit into a well-oiled team, a smooth-fighting machine. An emergency trio that can be called upon for any job, anywhere in the Empire. More or less a squadron of trouble shooters."

Gatewood shook his head. "No, Dexter, I'm afraid not. We've had our experience with all-ace squadrons. They never work out. Besides, such a concentration weakens the strength of other units. We need every first-class fighter we've got to serve as a nucleus about which we can build new flights."

"You won't have to draft any men from other units," Farragut went on. "You can draw from the scrap-heap. Take your outcasts and whip them into something useful. O'Rourke, this fellow Garth, and myself. The three of us are

in the same boat—misfits. Give us a chance to shape up some decent sort of a destiny together.”

Gatewood protested, “Come now, you can’t class yourself with those men. They’re—”

“So far as I’m concerned,” Farragut cut in, “we’re in the same boat. A couple of hellcats who can’t be led—and a flight leader who can’t be trusted with a command. We should do very well. They call my flights the suicide patrol. Well, perhaps I’ve found a couple of eagles who can keep up with me.”

Gatewood was silent for several moments. Then he said quietly, “You may have something there, old man. O’Rourke’s been court-martialed, you know, and I’ll have to speak to the prime minister to get him pardoned—but I think I can swing it. But you’re going to have your hands full with those men. No one else has been able to handle them.”

Farragut said, “I’ll do the job.”

Gatewood regarded him thoughtfully, and said, “Damned if I don’t think you will.”

A light came into Farragut’s eyes, and he seemed to be looking at something far away.

Very softly he said, “Farragut, Garth and O’Rourke—remember those names. Some day those will be names to reckon with.”

A BEEFY guard preceded Farragut down the corridor to O’Rourke’s cell. The guard fumbled with the keys, and the flight leader heard the Yank say, “What the hell do you want, Fatso?”

The guard swung open the door. “You’ve got a visitor.”

O’Rourke growled, “If it’s that mealy-mouthed Barnaby, better keep him away, because I’ll toss him out on his ear.”

Farragut smiled in the shadow. “What’s wrong with Barnaby?”

“Nothin’s wrong with him—not a thing that a bullet in the brain won’t cure.”

O’Rourke got to his feet as Farragut stepped into the cell. The American was a giant. He seemed to fill his narrow quarters. His eyes were on a level with Farragut’s own. But where the Englishman appeared slender, the Yank’s great breadth of chest and shoulder made him appear almost squat.

Farragut gazed steadily into the other’s eyes. “I’m Dexter Farragut.”

If the name made any impression on the Yank, he failed to show it.

Farragut spoke again. “I want to thank you for getting me back out of that mess the other day.”

O’Rourke turned away and sat down on the iron cot. “All right, so you thanked me. Anything else you’ve got to say?”

Farragut shifted uneasily. This was going to be harder than he had thought.

He said, “Do you know what they plan to do to you?”

The Yank looked up. “Beat it, will you, sonny boy? Just looking at you makes me want to kick myself for being such a damn chump. There I was, with nothing but blue sky between me and freedom, and I decide to play nursemaid to a headline hero. So here I am back in the jug. Why I did it, I’ll never know.”

Farragut said, “I suppose you know they’ll ship you back to the States.”

The American shook his head. “Not if I get another chance to bust out of here, they won’t.”

The Britisher said, “I can get you out of here right now, if you’ll agree to certain conditions.”

O’Rourke snorted. “Don’t make me laugh. You’d have to see Churchill himself to get me out of this mess.”

“That’s right. That’s whom I did see.”

“And even then you’d—” O’Rourke suddenly stopped. He gazed at Farragut suspiciously. “Are you kiddin’?”

“Not at all.”

The Yank gazed at him with new respect, but he was still skeptical. "What's the catch, brother?"

"No catch at all. You simply fly under my command."

"Simple as that, huh?"

"Simple as that."

The Yank seemed to be amused. "I—I suppose you know my record."

"I do."

"And you think you can handle me?"

"I think so."

O'Rourke chuckled. "You poor simp. What's to keep me from running out on you the first time I get in the air?"

Farragut smiled thinly. "I'm not worried. You won't."

O'Rourke snorted again. "Okay, kid-do, you've hired yourself a hand."

Farragut's head shook back and forth. "Not quite. There are other conditions."

The Yank said wearily, "Let's have them."

"First," Farragut said softly, "I want to know just what they want you for back in the States."

The American flared. He sprang to his feet and said, "That's none of your damn business, noseey."

Farragut flushed, but his voice remained calm. "I assure you I don't want to pry, O'Rourke, but don't forget that I'll be responsible for your every action."

O'Rourke gazed at him levelly. Perhaps he was convinced by the other's sincerity, for the fire had gone out of him.

He said, "Look, I swear to you that my personal affairs could not be of any possible concern to the R. A. F. What's waiting for me back in the States won't make me any less of a fighter here. But it's my business, and that's the way it'll stay. If you don't like it, pick up your marbles and we won't play any more."

Farragut studied him for a moment, then shrugged. "All right, O'Rourke. But there's one other point."

"Yeah?"

"You've got to agree to comply with strictest military discipline. You'll obey my every command implicitly—and you'll address me with proper respect."

"Nuts to you," O'Rourke snapped. "I'm not playing stooge to anyone. And I'll be damned if I'll kow-tow to your brass buttons."

Farragut shrugged and got to his feet. "Have it your own way, O'Rourke, but you'd better make up your mind soon. Your boat sails for the United States tomorrow."

Farragut stood at the cell door and whistled. The guard came on the double.

The door was half open when O'Rourke called, "Wait a minute."

Farragut turned and looked at him.

The Yank muttered, "You win, Limey. You play the music; I'll dance."

Farragut smiled, but his voice snapped like a whip. "Suppose you say that again—properly this time!"

Even in the dim light, he could see the flush of rage on the American's face. O'Rourke's lips were tight as he said, "All right, I agree to your terms."

Farragut raised an eyebrow.

O'Rourke added, "Sir."

Farragut said, "You'll obey orders implicitly?"

"Yes—sir."

"You'll continue to address me with respect?"

"Yes—sir."

Farragut's lips twisted slightly. "You'd like to put a knife in my back now, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, sir!"

CHAPTER THREE

Dynamite on Wings

THE sun was an orange disc on the Atlantic horizon when the three Spitfires thundered in low from the English Channel.

Dexter Farragut, in the lead plane, glanced anxiously into the rear-view mirror at the other two ships. He could guess the thoughts of the pilots from the way they handled their ships. They were sullen, looking for trouble. Farragut wondered if his job might not be more difficult than he expected, but he chased that thought from his mind. This was his big opportunity; this was his chance for a come-back. He'd show those men in the air ministry whether or not he had a sense of leadership. A Farragut not being trusted with a command! Indeed! They'd sing a different tune when this trio went into action. He'd whip the two most ungovernable men in the R. A. F. into disciplined fighters. Then let them pass judgment on his leadership!

Emergency Trio Number One—that was their official designation—was returning from their first patrol. Farragut was disappointed that it had been an inactive one. He knew that it would take at least one baptism of fire before the group could be welded into a unified fighting unit. There was nothing like a common struggle against great odds to create an *esprit de corps*. But today Jerry had taken a holiday. There hadn't been a single raider over the entire southern coast.

Idly, Farragut wondered whether trouble would break before that initial combat. He knew that matters would soon come to a head. O'Rourke had been relatively docile so far. The big fellow obeyed every order, and punctuated every sentence with "sir," but Farragut could read in his eyes the storm of anger, ready at any moment to break the dam of his restraint and crash through in a raging frenzy. Farragut admitted he had possibly been a bit too demanding in his treatment of the Yank, but the fellow had to be disciplined, for the sake of the whole outfit's morale.

And in the third plane—there was another problem. Garth had at first welcomed his assignment to the Trio, as it would enable him to get back into the air. But the youngster seemed to resent the idea of flying with two men whose records eclipsed his own. Back in his own squadron, he had been top man. He didn't like the idea of flying in the shadow of two greater lights. Another difficulty with Garth was that he didn't know when to keep his mouth closed. In the past days he had almost provoked O'Rourke to a fight more than once.

The three planes made a wide circle above the drome to swing into the wind. A suddenly revved up motor on his right brought Farragut's attention to the Spitfire coming alongside, and then passing him as it nosed down toward the field.

He snapped on his mike and said, "O'Rourke! Get back where you belong. We'll land in formation." His voice had been low, but menacing.

He saw the Yank's ship hesitate as O'Rourke struggled with a decision. He knew the big fellow resented the implied threat in his voice rather than the command itself. He waited for the Spitfire to fall back in place. It didn't. Instead, it continued to fly just ahead and to the side of him. Farragut wondered if this would be the breaking point. He tensed. He wasn't quite sure how to handle the big fellow if he rebelled.

Then he heard O'Rourke's voice—low, like distant thunder. "Yes—sir." That last word was still coming out with a struggle.

Then the Yank dropped back into formation.

BACK at the field, Farragut faced his two hellions. "Too bad Jerry was scarce this trip. We'll have better luck next time. We'll go after him, not wait

until he comes to us. We'll take off some time after dark. I'll let you know."

Roy Garth said, "That's just fine. I hope we run into plenty of trouble. I always was best at night fighting."

O'Rourke looked at the Canadian as one looks at a boastful child. His mouth opened in a derisive but soundless laugh, as though the subject of his scorn were worth no more.

Garth's fists knotted at his side. He took a step toward O'Rourke, and for a moment Farragut thought he would swing. It would have been too bad if he had, for though the redhead packed a lithe, muscular six feet, he looked frail and puny against the bulk of the powerful Yank.

Perhaps Garth realized this. He didn't swing, but he said, "Who the devil do you think you're laughing at, you ape? Wipe that smile off your face."

The mirth on O'Rourke's face vanished, and a fierce rage came over him. One hamlike hand lashed out and wrapped itself around the front of Garth's tunic. The big fellow pulled the young Canadian to him.

But Garth was not fazed. He drew back his fist.

What might have happened had that blow been thrown, Farragut did not wait to see. He caught the kid's arm and held it. Then, at a command, O'Rourke loosened his hold on Garth's coat.

The Yank muttered, "You don't know how lucky you are, kid. Button your lip. Next time things may be different."

The Canadian phrased a retort, but Farragut spoke first. "I don't want to see any more of that. If you two can't get along, stay out of each other's way. But be ready to fly when I give the order."

FARRAGUT had dinner served in his quarters and busied himself during the early evening in the operations office,

preparing details for that night's flight. Instead of waiting for the Germans to come over and carve a piece out of England, the trio was going to try to intercept Nazi bombing flights before they even hit the Channel. With this in mind, he made a careful check of Nazi invasion bases, and the most probable lines of flight the raiders might take.

It was after nine when his data was complete and his plan of action formulated. He strode over to the mess bar for a drink.

Farragut entered the bar just in time to see what happened, but not in time to avert it. There was a sudden hush in the room. All eyes were focussed on the two men alone at the end of the bar.

O'Rourke, his voice thick with a blanket of alcohol, was saying, "Mebbe I didn't hear right, flea-bite. What was it you said? Better think of your health before you repeat."

Garth's hands were white as they gripped the bar—and his face was almost the shade of his hair. "You don't scare me, big shot. I told you to put that drink down. You've got a patrol tonight and you're too drunk to make it. Maybe you're looking for an excuse to get out of this flight. Maybe you're afraid that—"

That's as far as he got. O'Rourke had been struggling to contain himself. The color mounted on his face, and his hand went up slightly, tossing the contents of his glass into Garth's face. The kid's response was immediate—a stinging slap across the face. O'Rourke's body twisted from the waist. His left fist hooked against the kid's jaw, and the Canadian crashed against a table three feet away. Table, bottles and Garth—all went down. But the kid was up immediately, a bottle in his hand. He lunged for O'Rourke, but the big man moved with deceptive speed. A powerful hand seized the kid's arm and twisted. The bottle went flying off in one direction, and the kid was

jerked from his feet in another, ending up sprawled at O'Rourke's feet, his wrist still clamped in that bear-trap grip.

Farragut had almost reached the struggling pair, but before he could, Garth was coming off the floor and being lifted over the head of the huge American—and then he was flying across the room and crashing down on the hastily erected boards that served as the bar.

Two M.P.'s appeared and tried to imprison O'Rourke's arms, but in another moment they were hurled to the floor. Before they could rise, Farragut was on the scene. The sight of him seemed to sober the American. The wild anger was gone now, and in its place was a cold fury—the bitter resentment for what he knew was about to come. It was the resentment of any man of strength who finds he must knuckle under to a force he has never had a chance to fight.

Farragut's voice cracked, "Attention!"

The flyers who filled the room gaped as the wildman of a moment ago came to rigid attention.

Farragut said, "Go to your room. Stay there until I send for you!"

O'Rourke's face turned from red to white. His facial muscles contorted. Then he spun on his heel and strode out.

The two M.P.'s started to protest. Farragut told them curtly to forget the entire matter. Somehow, they took his order without question.

It was eleven o'clock, a half-hour before the time Farragut had planned for the wake-off, when he decided to check up on his men. He found Garth in his room. Aside from a bruised face, the Canadian seemed none the worse for his skirmish. He was pacing his room like an angered tiger. Farragut told him to get ready, then strode down the hall to O'Rourke's quarters.

He knocked on the door. No answer. He touched the knob and peered into the darkened room. He snapped on the light

—and saw the American was not there!

Farragut mouthed an oath. Had the Yank bolted again, or had he—?

The flight leader rushed down to the bar—and found what he had feared. O'Rourke was back in his old spot, leaning against the bar. The rest of the men had withdrawn in a discreet circle about him.

One glance told Farragut that O'Rourke was already far over his capacity. It was evident in the befogged eyes, in the snarling, upturned lips, in the liquor that sloshed onto the bar as the unsteady glass made its trip to the loose-hanging mouth.

Again the crowd hushed, sensing the impending drama, as Farragut approached the drunken flyer. It wasn't until the Englishman was right before him, that O'Rourke knew he was there.

Farragut didn't say a word. He just watched the play of emotions on the other's face. First there was a flicker of pleasure—as though the Yank had just been wishing—"Oh, if I had that Limey here now!" Immediately that pleasure departed before a look of soul-burning hatred.

O'Rourke's hand wound tightly around the thick glass. His knuckles whitened under the pressure, and the whole room jerked erect with the sound of the crushing of the glass. Little drops of red trickled down the heel of O'Rourke's hand.

He opened his blood-smeared hand, and said to Farragut, "Here's what I want to do to you, Limey. And that's what I'm going to do. You with your brass and your braid—with your damn superiority, with your haughty stare, as though you were born to have everyone jump at your command. And you had me jumpin' too, didn't you? That gave you a lot of satisfaction, didn't it? Hard-boiled Charley O'Rourke, the toughest baby in the R. A. F., who wouldn't take

orders from anyone—and you had him jumpin' through your hoop. Well, it's you whose gonna do the jumpin' from now on, Limey. And here's where you begin!"

O'Rourke took an unsteady step away from the bar. His body swayed a bit, then steadied. One big fist went back, and then it lashed forward, straight for Farragut's jaw. But it never landed. The Englishman, a tight little smile on his lips, let the blow ride over his shoulder. Almost casually, he brought his right fist up from the waist, flush on the American's unprotected jaw.

The huge bulk of the Yank went rigid—started to teeter, then to slump.

Farragut stooped quickly, placed a shoulder in the pit of O'Rourke's stomach, and the Yank's torso flopped limply across the flight leader's back. With a hoist of his arm, the Englishman straightened, and with his huge burden over his shoulder, left the room.

It was ten minutes later that O'Rourke came out of it. Farragut was holding him under a cold shower with one hand, cuffing his face with the other.

O'Rourke came around with a snarl. He slapped Farragut's hands away and stepped out of the shower. He dried and hurried into his clothes without saying a word. He seemed to know exactly what had happened. Once he whispered, "Enjoy your triumph while you've got it, Farragut, 'cause I'm gonna shove it all down your throat very soon."

EMERGENCY Trio Number One took off from the darkened field promptly at eleven-thirty—three men who were entrusting their lives in each other's hands, and the only thing they had in common was their hatred—for the foe, and for each other.

Cruising high in the moonlit sky, they sighted the enemy fifty miles off the south coast. It was a complete Nazi

bombing fleet, riding on top of a layer of fleecy clouds, about 5,000 feet below the Trio. Five Dornier bombers, and double that number of fighter-escort planes. The fighters were ME 109's.

Farragut flicked on his speaker. "All right, you wildcats. Perhaps this will cool you off. Do for those big babies, and the lads over London will have that much easier a time. You two crash through and get those bombers. They're the ones that have to be stopped. I'll try to keep as many of the Smitties as possible busy and give you a chance to work. Stay up here until I open up on them. Then go for the bombers."

While the others circled above, Farragut went down on a steep angle to meet the Nazi flight almost head-on. The fighters were flying slightly ahead, and 2,000 feet above the bombers.

In the light of the moon they saw him coming. The red tongues of flame that lashed from their wings said they were eager to greet him. At half-speed, Farragut came at them.

The German flight leader, over-anxious for an easy kill, had neglected to order them to break formation. As the first Rheinmettal slugs nibbling on his wings told him the Germans had found the range, Farragut rammed the throttle all the way home and seemed to leap at the Nazis with doubled speed. Half a dozen ships were firing now. But, bewildered by the lone ship that suddenly seemed to leap at their wall of spraying steel, the Nazis had barely time to adjust their aim when the British ship was upon them, hosing eight streams of lead into their midst. If the German commander had failed to break up his formation, Farragut did it for him, knifing through the entire Nazi flight.

He pulled the stick back, went up, almost into a stall, then fell off in a Split-S to come racing back at the German flight. Their wings were flashing now in wild

disorder. One ship was a blob of flame, heading for the Channel. That, Farragut knew, was the errant flight leader. The Britisher's first burst had nailed him.

The leaderless Germans turned to swarm at him, but their hastily re-formed ranks were split asunder by two power-diving Spitfires that roared down upon them with guns blazing. For a brief moment they were there, wingtip to wingtip, and then they had passed beneath the combat zone. Farragut grimly noted that they had accounted for two of the 'Schmitts in their headlong flight. But he cursed them, nevertheless.

"Damn fools! They'll need every blessed bullet for those babies below."

And then he was winging around in a steep bank, dodging the twin thrust of a pair of enemy planes. One advantage of fighting against odds like this, he thought—you didn't have to search for a target. No matter what way he turned, there was Boche in his sights. He caught a flashing swastika, and fired his guns. The swastika on the rudder stayed there, and he knew he had overshot. He leaned more heavily on the stick and tried again. This time the entire tail assembly suddenly seemed to vanish into the night. The ship nosed down and was lost from sight.

Farragut wheeled for further battle, and found his ship being riveted by the combined fire of three enemy planes. The Spitfire seemed to be going to pieces around him. With a prayer, he pulled back on the stick. He was amazed that the ship could still go into a loop.

He was out of the loop in an instant and gunning straight for an oncoming plane. He was absorbing plenty of lead, but he saw his own tracer lines going home. And as the two death-spitting ships raced toward each other, he wondered how the race would end.

Then he let out a cry of rage. From below the onrushing 'Schmitt poured

eight streams of Browning death—bullet lines that knifed into the seat of the German plane and shattered the pilot and everything else in the pit.

Farragut wheeled away from the dead man's plane, and roared into the mike, "What the blazes are you doing up here, Garth? I told you to attend to those bombers!"

The Canadian's voice was a derisive laugh. "And let you alone up here with all the easy pickings? Not on your life! You can try to crack those big babies, if you want to, but I'll stay up here. At least when you sock these babies, they go down."

FARRAGUT swore silently in futile rage. Then he was slamming the stick forward and racing downward. The only reason he had taken on the 'Schmitts was because he had figured it for the hardest job. If the kid wanted it, let him choke on it, but those bombers had to be stopped.

A thousand feet below he could see the dancing shadows of the lumbering Dorniers, with O'Rourke's Spitfire darting from one to another like a hornet, and tracer lines snaking out into the night. Even as he looked, one of those shadows turned into a ball of fire that suddenly twisted downward through the night.

Farragut picked his target and thundered into the battle. His mark happened to be the rear turret of a Dornier, whose Knott-Bremse guns were sending twin lines of death into the wings of Charley O'Rourke.

Farragut silenced those guns with a single burst. That made it an easy dish. The Dornier carried double dynamite in the rear turret, but once it was put out of commission, the big plane was helpless against attack from the rear. Farragut screamed around in a vertical and came roaring back onto the defense-

less tail. He parked just above the empennage, and thumbed the guns. Gently he rocked the stick, and the nose of the plane bobbed up and down, a double sweep of lethal steel raking the big plane. For a second it continued, unswerving, on its course. Then gradually it nosed down, finally whipping into a spin.

Farragut turned. He saw O'Rourke racing head-on toward a German bomber, saw the British ship absorb lead, and then saw the entire wing of the Dornier sheared off by a scythe of tracers.

The Messerschmitts were cutting in on the fight now. They had finally recovered sufficiently from the surprise attack to take stock of the situation, to realize that they had been ambushed, not by one of the dreaded British night fighter squadrons, but by three lone Spitfires.

Farragut twisted out of a wall of singing steel and looked for Garth. He saw the Canadian playing tag with two Nazi fighters. They had him on the run, flanking him on either side. He was going through a mad series of maneuvers, but though he was eluding the hungry tracer lines, he could not shake off the German planes. Farragut knew they had him. The Germans were obviously old hands, and sooner or later the darting Spitfire would cross one of those deadly sights.

Farragut skated around on a wing and hurtled toward the three planes. He could see that the Nazis had finally cornered Garth. Already tracer lines were knifing at his wingtips.

Farragut's finger raced to the button, but he didn't have a shot. There was only one thing else to do. He rammed the throttle all the way up the slot and went diving into the line of fire converging on the other British plane. He was through in a second, but the transit through that stream of racing cupro had its effect. He could feel his plane falter, sag to one side. He moved the stick, but there was no reaction. He threw a

frantic look at his wing. Half the tip had been carved away. The aileron was hanging by a single wire whipping back in the slip stream.

His eyes darted to the rear-view mirror. The two Germans, having had one cold-meat shot stolen from them, had shifted their attention to the intruder. They were off to the side now, angling in on his tail. Farragut looked for Garth, and a wrathful curse stuck in his throat. Garth was winging toward the north, his guns carving into another 'Schmitt. He had left Farragut to the two sky-wolves while he flew off to get himself an easy victory.

The Germans had found the range now. Farragut was nursing the stick to keep that crippled wing level. He tried to bank around to the left, but succeeded only in skidding. He tried to adjust, but he wasn't fast enough. His nose swung around offering the 'Schmitts a broadside target. And those boys weren't missing out on any opportunities this day.

A storm of steel smashed into his crippled ship, and he could feel it fall apart around him. He marvelled that he himself had not been hit. The plane was whipping about dizzily now, in the slow, early stages of a spin. Farragut desperately tugged on the stick, and he found it just a lifeless piece of wood, completely severed from the controls. There wasn't a chance for him.

Frantically he tore open his cockpit roof. He had to get out before the tightening coils of the death spin would make escape impossible. The rushing night air tore at his emerging body, and then he was whirling off into nothingness. And as he gently floated down in the night, he silently cursed Roy Garth. . . . But then a thought struck him, and he laughed mirthlessly—two parachute escapes within a week—that was another record for the great Lord Farragut. What a laugh!

CHAPTER FOUR

Hell's Island

LIKE a dark, compact gem in a setting of dancing whitecaps, the island of Guernsey nestled, barren and deserted, in the darkness of the night. Once the jewel of the British Isles, the small patch of lands, some ten miles square, was now completely abandoned, its wealth wasting away. It had been more than a year since the indolent, limitless herds of prime cattle had pastured on her rich, green meadows. On the peaceful little island had been bred the finest dairy herds in the world, herds that supplied half the United Kingdom—but that had been before the war. Like other islands of the Empire lying close to the shores of France, Guernsey had been depopulated after the French collapse.

It was toward the welcoming bosom of the lonely isle of Guernsey that Dexter Farragut drifted in the night.

High in an empty sky, Charley O'Rourke rubbed the coarse sleeve of his flying jacket across a sweaty brow and scanned the silent night. To the north the remnants of the German flight were winging their way to whatever was their objective. O'Rourke made no attempt to go after them. With only one of the five bombers left, and only half the original number of 'Schmitts, the German bomber flight had lost much of its sting.

"Run, you lousy mutts," he swore happily, "with your tails between your legs. That's what you get when you mess with Emergency Trio Number One!"

As if his own words had reminded him, O'Rourke cast his eyes about for his two companions. In the moonlight, he could vaguely make out the circle of white silk drifting slowly down to land. Circling the chute, like a protecting eagle, was Garth's Spit.

O'Rourke turned on his inter-plane

phone. "I caught that cute little act of yours, you cheap little glory hound. If anything happens to pretty boy, I'll twist that dirty little neck of yours until—"

The voice that interrupted him surprised him. "I didn't mean it. Honest, I didn't know they'd nail him." The kid actually sounded concerned.

The American cruised about, waiting for Garth to land and pick up Farragut. The kid was headed for a rolling meadow, and suddenly he did something that brought Charley O'Rourke erect in his seat. The kid seemed to gun his ship, and his eight Browning guns spurted fire into the ground ahead of him. Then, in the next instant, machine-gun fire danced from the thicket adjoining the field. There was a sudden explosion and a burst of flame, as the gas tank of the Spit exploded. Then there was nothing but silence and blackness, and the whitecaps ringing the island in silver.

O'Rourke nosed his ship down, but a sudden inspiration made him haul the stick back and seek greater altitude. Something was going on down there that he didn't understand, but he knew it boded no good—and to roar boldly down on that peaceful looking isle, as Garth had done, would be inviting suicide.

He turned north and gunned his motor. Let them, whoever they were, think he was heading home.

Two minutes and twelve miles later, he went into a steep climb to get maximum altitude. Then he whipped around in a wind-screaming turn, gave his throttle one powerful burst, and cut his motor. On silent wings, he glided back.

He came in low, so as not to be seen. He carefully avoided the inviting open meadows, and set his ship down precariously on a narrow strip of beach.

TEN minutes later Charley O'Rourke was peering through the blinds that covered the open French window to a

room in the largest house on the island of Guernsey.

Seated on a chair facing him, arms bound behind his back, was Dexter Farragut. Next to him, with arms and legs strapped to a heavy armchair, was Roy Garth, his clothes half burned, and his face black and red with smoke and raw flesh.

O'Rourke noticed, in one corner of the room, something that looked like a large radio sending apparatus.

In a fireplace on the other side was a roaring blaze.

A third man, who bulked large in a German uniform, was confronting the two prisoners.

O'Rourke looked at the German, blinked his eyes and looked again. What the hell! In his hand the man held a fire tong; the tip of it was a glowing red.

The man was slowly advancing toward Roy Garth. O'Rourke shook his head, wondering if this were some weird nightmare.

Then he heard the German's voice. It was low, barely audible, but edged with steel.

The German said, "Do not think, Englishman, that I will enjoy this. I am no butcher, no cruel torturer. But, unfortunately, there is information I must know, and I must know it immediately. I can't waste time toying with you, or trying some more subtle means of extracting this information."

Garth said, "Nuts to you."

The German shrugged, and looked at his watch. "We have a few minutes yet," he said. "This, as you may have guessed, is a German aerial dispatching station. For more than a month we have been established here, transmitting by radio the course of British flights that pass above, and directing the timing of German raids over England. You know, it was very nice of you British to move out, and let us take over this island—without leav-

ing so much as a watchman to inform the R. A. F. of our presence."

He was interrupted by a sound that made everyone in the room listen attentively. Planes were roaring overhead—a fleet of British ships, but flying very high.

"That," said the German, "is your Fourth Bomber Fleet, headed for extinction. The R. A. F. thinks it is on a secret flight to bomb certain battleships in the harbor at Brest. The R. A. F. is right about the battleships, but those planes will never reach their destination. You see, we knew about this little party almost as soon as it was planned. Those planes will meet with a reception committee about three times their number long before they get to Brest. We are very clever, aren't we?"

The two prisoners made no reply, and the German went on. "But we have business of another nature to discuss. Last night a German flight attempted to blast the powder works at Winchester. Since the munitions works are cleverly camouflaged, it was necessary to work blindly. Unfortunately, the sections of the city bombed last night were not the right ones. Therefore, we'll have to continue this hit-or-miss procedure until the entire city is devastated—or until the powder works are destroyed. Frankly, I have no objection to the complete destruction of Winchester. All England will be razed to the ground before long, but it is a shame to waste good German bombs discovering our target. You, however, will make such waste unnecessary, by telling me exactly where the munition works may be found."

Garth squirmed uneasily in his chair. His eyes stared in horror at the glowing poker, glued on it with a queer fascination. O'Rourke, even across the room, could see the beads of sweat break out on the Canadian's brow, and then trickle down, streaking snakelike lines the

length of the kid's soot-covered face.

"You can go to hell!" Garth choked, and his voice was unnaturally high.

Garth had his head back against the back of his chair. He seemed to be trying to force it back farther, away from the steadily approaching brand.

He opened his mouth, but only a scratching sound came from his fear-choked throat. Then he managed, "You're mad—stark, raving mad!"

"Not mad," said the German, in that low, acid-coated voice. "Just practical. I need information quickly, and I will get it quickly. You may be possessed of enough fool courage to keep your lips sealed once, but after a little persuasion—" He motioned to the white-hot tong—"you will readily talk." He paused. "Well, what do you say?"

O'Rourke watched the drama unfolding before him with a tight little smile on his lips. "Okay, loud-mouth," he breathed. "Let's see what's behind your chatter."

Garth's eyes were feverish now. Panic flared in them. He squirmed, then shouted, "I still say go to hell!"

Charley O'Rourke slowly let his breath out between tight teeth.

"Sonny boy," he murmured, "maybe you got a little bit of something worthwhile in you after all."

He put a hand on the blind, and poised for his attack. Then he relaxed, and smiled. "But maybe I'll let you sweat a little more first. It'll do you good."

The German had taken another step toward Garth and raised the brand.

"You know, my friend," he said, "I fear this will hurt you more than it will me." The muscles of his arm tightened, and an expectant scream left Roy Garth's throat.

Charley O'Rourke threw aside the blind and cried, "Wait for me, girls!"

The German spun around. He stared in amazement at the giant form in a British uniform charging at him like an

enraged bull. He took a step backward and raised the poker in his hand. It came crashing down against the face of the charging Yank, and then two hundred and forty pounds of bone and muscle slammed him to the floor.

The side of O'Rourke's face was a bloody mess, and he was insane with the sudden pain of it. His huge hands grasped the head of the man beneath him, almost crushing it. He raised his hands two inches, then cracked the German's skull against the hard floor, and the crumpeling of bone suddenly sounded very loud.

Garth's cry of, "Look out, Charley!" brought O'Rourke's head around, and for the first time he saw the two other Germans who had been in a far corner of the room, out of his line of vision. The amazement that had paralyzed them at the instant of the Yank's entrance was now giving way to fear. Each held a pistol in his hand. One of the guns barked even as Garth had shouted his warning. Something tugged at O'Rourke's sleeve. And then, before another shot could be fired, a figure was dashing across the room. Dexter Farragut, arms still tied behind his back, had leaped out of his chair, was hurling himself into the face of the German guns. Another shot rang out, and Farragut's shoulder was buried deep in the midriff of the foremost Nazi, and then the Briton and both Nazis were in a mad scramble on the floor.

One of the guns went spinning across the room. The other, still clutched in the hand of one of the Germans, was raised to deliver a crushing blow to Farragut's skull. But the blow never descended.

His huge bulk flashing across the room with amazing speed, Charley O'Rourke wrapped a large hand around the wrist that held the gun. The gun went spinning away, and the German was jerked off the floor. A right hook that smashed his jawbone sent him back to the floor, an inert bundle of flesh.

O'Rourke spun around, to see Farragut lying flat on his back, arms still bound, with his legs firmly wrapped around the waist of the third German. The Nazi was struggling futilely against the ever-tightening scissors. His face was a deep purple. His nails clawed at Farragut's boots. There was a sudden snapping sound as a rib cracked, and then the German lay still.

CHARLEY O'ROURKE winced as he sleeved the blood from his cheek, and he said, "Ain't we got fun!"

He looked at Farragut speculatively, and drawled. "You know, I bet you're not such a bad guy, Limey. All you need to be a regular guy, is a poke in the jaw."

Farragut got to his feet with a snarl. He turned his back and extended his bound hands.

"Quick," he breathed. "Get these off!"

O'Rourke took a knife and slashed the ropes.

He turned and walked over to where Roy Garth sat, still white-faced.

He cut the bonds and muttered, "You're okay, kid."

Dexter Farragut called, "Come on, you chaps. Break it up! We've got to warn that bomber fleet."

O'Rourke said, "How about the radio?"

"No go. Just examined it. Special fixed-wave-length transmitter. *Luftwaffe* headquarters are probably the only ones who can pick it up."

O'Rourke snapped his fingers. "My plane! Might overtake them before they fly into the trap."

Farragut nodded. "That's the idea. Come on!"

O'Rourke led them out to the beach.

Garth looked at the narrow, sand runway, and said, "That was some landing job you did, Charley. I'd never have been able to make it."

Farragut said, "Wheel this ship around so I can take off."

O'Rourke looked at him. "So you can take off? Whose ship is this, anyway? If anyone flies it, it will be me."

Farragut just glared at him, and said, "You have your orders."

The big American opened his mouth in rage, then grinned hugely, as though with sudden inspiration.

He said, "So the little Fuehrer's still giving orders, is he? Okay, hot stuff, it's your funeral."

A minute later they had the plane headed for a take-off.

Farragut placed a foot on the wing and a hand on the pit, ready to mount.

O'Rourke put a hand on his shoulder, and said, "Just a minute, Dexter, old boy. You're forgetting something."

Farragut spun around. "What?"

Charley O'Rourke stroked a big fist across his chin. "You're forgetting the reason why I came down here tonight to pull you boys out of the fire."

Farragut shook him off. "That's fine, O'Rourke. I'm very grateful. When we get back I'll see that you're decorated for this. I'll see that you're given—"

Charley O'Rourke said. "No, Dexter. I don't want to be given anything. All I've wanted for the last few days is to give you something." His hand clamped on Farragut's flying jacket, pulling the flight leader down from the wing.

Farragut said, "If that's how you want it—"

It was a smashing blow that he sent to O'Rourke's jaw. But the big Yank wasn't befogged by alcohol this time. He moved his head just slightly, and the blow whistled past his ear. He hooked an explosive left into Farragut's stomach, and followed it up with a crashing right hook to the jaw.

He was in the Spitfire, gunning the motor, even before Farragut had completely crumpled to the ground.

He shouted to Garth, "On the other side of the island you'll find a couple of

Hurricanes. I saw them when I came in—probably used for scouting over England. You can use them to get home. I'll see you there—maybe."

He roared out across the beach.

FORTY miles away from Brest, O'Rourke came abreast of the bombing fleet—seven Lockheed Hudsons, with twice that number Spitfire escort planes.

O'Rourke snapped on his inter-plane radio for the first time. It had been senseless to use it before because of the limited range.

He called, "Barnaby! You're heading into a trap. They got half the *Luftwaffe* waiting for you over Brest. Turn back. You won't have a chance!"

The bellowing voice of Barnaby rang in his ears. "Who the devil are you and what are you talking about?"

"Look," said Charley, with growing impatience, "this is O'Rourke. I just found out that you're heading into a trap. They know all about this flight, and—"

Barnaby's splenetic voice sputtered in his ears. "O'Rourke! Drunk again! You've got your nerve, you bounder. Really, this is carrying things too far. Report back to your base, and stay there until I can return to prefer charges against you."

"Look, you fathead. It's not your skin that I'm trying to save, but those poor guys you're leading into a death-trap. I swear to you, it's an ambush. You won't be able to drop a bomb on Brest. Not a ship will get back safely."

Barnaby's voice showed not the slightest belief. "You heard my orders, O'Rourke. Leave this formation and head back for England or, so help me, I'll have you hanged!"

A tight little grin played on Charley O'Rourke's lips. He muttered, "Not where I'm headed, you won't. Not you—nor anybody else." He raced ahead of the flight.

FIVE minutes and twenty-five miles later, O'Rourke tilted his ship and looked down on the Nazi sky horde prowling the heavens a good 5,000 feet below him. Against the dark background of the earth, they were invisible at this distance, even in the bright moonlight. But his trained eyes couldn't miss the prop sheen, despite black prop paint, nor the tell-tale blue of the exhaust flames, flames concealed from below, but not from above.

O'Rourke didn't waste any time. The fleet could not be more than two minutes behind him. Unless the lid came off soon, it would be too late. He nosed the ship into a power dive and held his breath.

It takes less than fifteen seconds for a Spitfire to dive one mile. Charley O'Rourke clenched his jaws and watched as the distant specks rushed into bold prominence. He could judge their number now—fifty, easy. His right hand was firm on the stick, the thumb poised above the button. In his left hand was a parachute flare—But he wasn't ready for that yet.

A quarter of a mile above the lead formation, O'Rourke pressed his guns. He knew his aim was true even before the slugs went home, but that wasn't important. The damage he could do to this armada would be negligible, but he had to let them know they were being attacked—attacked by many planes.

Recklessly he hurled himself into the first formation, and he was through it in an instant. Madly, in the space of half a minute, he raced through flight upon flight of German planes. His guns were talking, stabbing blindly now, and the German pilots were thumbing their own guns to clear them, searching the skies for attacking enemy squadrons splitting madly as the flame-snorting Spitfire flashed through their midst.

Then a flare went off, bathing the sky for a mile around in glaring light that only seemed to emphasize the chaos of

madly whirling planes. The searchlight batteries on the ground, planted there especially with instructions to wait until the enemy had been ambushed, sent two score of silver beams slashing across the sky.

Charley O'Rourke high-tailed away from an enemy lunge, carved off an enemy empenage with a tracer knife, and looked to the north. There was a wall of blazing white light beyond which he couldn't see, but he knew what was out there. He knew that the bomber fleet, out there in the darkness, was having a beautiful, long-distance picture of this little bit of blazing hell, and was banking around and heading back home to England, leaving Charley O'Rourke with half a hundred Nasties on his hands.

"And that's the way I wanted it," he said softly. "Fifty to one. I couldn't ask for better odds. If I gotta go—I couldn't think of a better way."

German vengeance and German temper were two terrible things when aroused. Now they were blazing, venting their fury on Charley O'Rourke.

They were roaring at him, dozens at a time. The night was alive with the hungry eyes of glowing gun muzzles. As he hurled and twisted blindly about the sky, he wondered how long he could keep it up. He was making use of every defensive trick, every skill he ever knew, and the very mob of enemy planes was his great ally. They were constantly interfering with each other. Distant stabs of fire told him that in the shadowy half-light, they were even mistaking their own planes for him.

A gas tank explosion to the east confirmed this suspicion, for Charley O'Rourke knew that he didn't shoot down that ship. Charley O'Rourke knew that although he was sitting behind a beautiful set of eight deadly guns, those guns had been empty and useless for more than a minute.

He didn't know why he kept at it, dodging, twisting, eluding. He would never get away. And, after all, this was what he had wanted. This was what he had fled America for, why he had fought for Poland and joined the R. A. F. But even as he was thinking this, he was hurling his ship for a patch of black that might be an avenue to escape. But a give-away white flare was suddenly filling that alleyway to freedom, and a dozen planes were converging on him. He saw two sideswipe each other and fall out of the sky, and then he could feel his ship throb and shudder as pellets of steel poured into it.

Miraculously, the ship survived the first two seconds of that concentrated fire—and then the bullet-rain on his ship suddenly ceased. He saw the Messerschmitt at his side suddenly fall apart, and then the swarming planes around him were diverging madly in a dozen different directions, tearing out of the target-line of two fire-spitting British Hurricanes.

O'Rourke had thought his radio gone, but now his muff-phones came to life.

He heard the voice of Roy Garth saying, "So you thought you'd hog all the glory for yourself, did you? Well, we're cutting ourselves in on anything you get." There was a reckless laugh in his voice that brought a smile to Charley O'Rourke's tight lips.

He watched one of the Hurricanes carve a wing off a 'Schmitt, and bury its fangs in the motor of another. The second Hurricane also made a quick tally.

He heard Garth cry, "Did you see that? How's that for a neat job?"

"Nothing to it," O'Rourke answered. "Easier than shooting fish in a barrel of ice. With this mob, how can you miss?"

He went into a loop to avoid a Nazi lunge, and suddenly felt gay and crazy-drunk. He thought for a moment that the three of them might be able to fight their way out of this mess, but then he called himself a damn fool.

He snap-rolled away from another enemy plane, and said, "What the hell did you damn fools have to barge in here for? I was having a swell time—me and half the *Luftwaffe*."

He saw Farragut hurl his ship into an Immelman to escape the concerted rush of three Germans, and he heard the flight leader say, "I've got to look after you, Charley, old chap. If anything happened to you—why, think of my reputation!"

O'Rourke thought, *What the hell! I was right. A knock on the noggin fixed this guy okay.*

He said, "Hey, Dex, how the heck did you recover so quick? When I konk a guy, he usually don't wake up until spring planting."

Farragut said, "You picked the wrong spot. Never hit a Farragut on the head—that's solid ivory."

THEY went to work with a purpose then. It was impossible, they all knew, and yet they flew like few men had flown before, applying every skill they possessed—not as individuals, but as a team. This wasn't combat flying—this was purely defensive flying. Walled in by a sheet of living, blazing steel, hopelessly outnumbered, they started struggling back to Britain. O'Rourke, helpless without his guns, maneuvered like a madman, evading those hungry bullet lines. Direct flight was cut off—and with each wild maneuver that he made, he was flanked by Garth and Farragut, like a pair of eagles protecting a fledgling. They looped and spun and whirled in the mad sky, following him, circling him, absorbing punishment, and saving their own precious bullets for short, deadly bursts—protecting O'Rourke, and covering each other.

How long it lasted—the ceaseless turmoil to evade, for another second, their inevitable, bullet-shattered fate—O'Rourke had no idea. He only knew he had become numb with the ceaseless effort of it. He

thought how simple it would be just to finish it all, to have done with the eternal twisting, the unrelaxed vigilance, making two eyes do the work of a hundred, the ceaseless tension.

Then suddenly he found himself looking down, and seeing the light of the moon reflected on a white, billowy carpet. And he said a silent prayer for the blessed morning mist rising from its cradle in the Channel.

Just before the mist enshrouded their diving planes, O'Rourke threw a glance upward. The German planes were turning back, exhausted by their long, fruitless pursuit.

He started to speak. He knew he was babbling in his relief, but he didn't care.

"You two guys are wonderful. We three guys are wonderful. Oh, Lord, it's good to smell fog."

And in his own pit, Dexter Farragut breathed the fog in deep. He knew how the others felt. He saw dimly below him the massing bulk of the chalk cliffs. England! It was good to come home, when you've thought you'd never come home again.

As the three battle-shredded planes glided to a landing, all the fatigue and weariness seemed to fade away. Dex Farragut smiled. Here was one flight he was bringing home intact. And he knew that after tonight, nothing could destroy it. The fires of hell they had passed through had welded them into a close-packed, hard-hitting team of sky killers.

He thought of Garth and O'Rourke—and of how one good night's scrapping alongside of a chap can alter your opinion of him—and even change your own character.

He murmured, "Farragut, Garth and O'Rourke. Three outcasts—but put them together, and you've got something for armies to conjure with—the best bloody gang of sky-fighters in the whole damned war!"

TAKE-OFF *to* DOOM

by *RAY P. SHOTWELL*



Slicing across the sky, the bullets knifed into the open cockpit of the Romeo.

Heartsick, bloody was the misfit band, and battered and old were the crates they flew, but the battle cry in their hearts was as new, as brave as time itself—"We'll hold this corner of hell against the world!"

IT WAS mean country, the Uganda territory of Tanganyika—almost all jungle. And the triangle of flatland twenty-odd miles from Lake Rudolf was the worst section of that entire area. It was that little piece of hell that Fighter 27 of the South African Air Force called home.

Squadron Leader Bardney speculatively scanned the sky, and murmured, "We're in for trouble. They're due to come over very soon."

"Will we wait for them?" Ritchell asked.

Ritchell was tall, and his tan was accentuated by very blond hair and moustache. He was a good aviator but a not very capable flight lieutenant—not experienced enough, Bardney had surmised. Ritchell was twenty-seven and carried a Cambridge degree and all that, but this kind of country demanded some-

thing more than brains and strength. This area was only a few degrees above the Equator.

Bardney was used to it. He was a year over thirty, and it was his ninth summer in the S. A. A. F.

Ritchell was saying, "Those Italians on the other side of Lake Rudolf seem to know just how important our position is. Their Intelligence must have ferreted out matters to the nth degree."

"Possibly," Bardney said.

He lit a cigarette and looked at the hot skies.

"If the Italians make a bombing raid, and blast us out of here," Ritchell went on, "they'll be able to bore an opening into Tanganyika. Our troops are weakly scattered down here, and the Fascists will bloody well take advantage of it."

"Yes, it's too bad," Bardney said, taking a slow drag at the cigarette and tilting his sun helmet slightly.

"The way I see it," the flight leader continued, "is that we shouldn't wait for the Italians to come over. We ought to make a dawn visit with the Westland Lysanders and bomb them to bits—show them that we know all about their bright ideas, and that we're just a bit better than they are."

"We're not, though," Bardney said.

Ritchell's eyebrows went up.

"How's that?" he said, as if he hadn't quite heard.

"We're not better than the Italians," Bardney said calmly. "As a matter of fact, we're rather shabby compared to them. Our planes are not only outmoded, but are in bad shape. All the decent ships and fighter pilots are working in more active areas."

"This will be an active area jolly well soon," Ritchell muttered.

Bardney ignored that, and went on. "The Italians have more men down here, and more planes, and they've managed to stabilize that base in Southern Ethiopia

to the extent where it's almost impossible for our infantry to make an attack. Consequently they've got a superior position, and they're going to make the most of it."

"And what will we do?"

Bardney shrugged. "We'll wait for them. There's nothing else we can do."

Ritchell's lips tightened, and his face darkened as he looked full at Bardney.

"I'm not so sure of that," he said.

"You're sort of stubborn, aren't you?" Bardney said.

"Not exactly stubborn—just sensible."

They looked at each other, and they were silent. But in Ritchell's eyes there was challenge, and Bardney understood it. He had a feeling that future trouble was not going to be limited to dealings with the Italians. Vaguely he wished that the air ministry would keep lads like Ritchell behind desks, or on unimportant scouting missions in the north.

HE WALKED away from Ritchell, went into his hut for the daily noon nap of a single hour. He was thinking about chances of bombing the Italians.

But to do that would be to invite disaster. The Italians' anti-aircraft technique and equipment had improved greatly since the start of the African campaign. They would be only too eager to give proof of their now proficiency. Also, they would be very enthusiastic about showing off their new planes, the improved-model gull-wing Romeo fighters.

But if the impending clash could be stalled off for a day or so longer, there was very good chance that the air ministry would keep its promise to Fighter 27 and send down the new jobs that had just been received from the United States and Canada. There were the Republic two-seater dive-bombers and single-seater American Car and Foundry fighters.

The new dive-bombers and fighting ships had been promised over two weeks ago. But the usual postponements, quick

changes and cancellations had delayed delivery. Bardney prayed that those new planes would come up soon. Fighter 27 would never be able to put up much of a show with the planes now on hand, which consisted of exhausted Westland Lysander two-seaters, and old style Curtiss single-seaters.

After about twenty minutes, he was beginning to lapse into sleep. Then he heard voices from outside the window. One was Ritchell's. The other belonged to Flying Officer Lennings.

Lennings was saying, "I didn't know it was that bad."

"It's even worse," Ritchell muttered. "I tell you, we're in a veritable death spot."

"No way out?"

"Sure, but Bardney won't take it. I told him that we ought to bomb the Italian drome. He refused. He said that we should wait. You know as well as I that waiting is suicide. If they come over here—if they really start blasting into us, we're done."

"It seems that way," Lennings said.

Then another voice joined in the conversation. It was Huldey, a fairly good flyer, but not much on combat. A fourth voice, then a fifth chimed in. The group seemed unaware that it was gathered outside the squadron leader's hut. Bardney figured there must be about eleven or twelve out there now. He tightened his lips, listening to Ritchell.

"I tell you, it's downright ridiculous! Anyone who knows the slightest military strategy will tell you that the best defense is an effective offense."

Someone said, "Yes, but Bardney's waiting for the new planes—"

"New planes, my hat!" Ritchell exclaimed. "We'll never get the new planes. Every decent ship is being pushed into service over the Channel and in Iraq and Libya. While we're waiting for the new planes, the Fascists are going to come

over here and rip us into little pieces—that is, unless we rip them first."

Lennings said, "That seems reasonable."

Huldey said, "I guess you've hit on it, Ritchell."

"Now, if Bardney can only be reasoned with. . . ."

"How do we go about suggesting it to him?"

"Very simple," Ritchell said. "One of you lads can bring the subject up at mess. Then we all join in. We all agree. Bardney'll be left alone. He'll have to see it our way, and—"

The rest of the sentence became a wire that twisted around his teeth, rolled back down his throat. He was staring at the doorway of the hut. Everyone stared.

BARDNEY stood there. He didn't call for attention. He wasn't rigid. His feet were set apart, and his shoulders were slightly hunched.

He said, "You won't have to talk about it at mess, gentlemen. We might as well have the showdown here and now and get to the bottom of this back-biting."

Ritchell, very stiff, and with lip trembling, stepped forward and said, "Sir, if you mean to insinuate—"

"You'll be quiet, Ritchell. And you'll go to your hutment—now!"

The tall blond officer took a deep breath. His fists were clenched. He gasped, "I have a right to—"

"I gave an order, Ritchell!" Bardney snapped.

The flight lieutenant saluted, walked stiffly toward his hutment.

For several seconds there was thick quiet. Bardney studied his men. He knew that he would have to be extremely careful now. He thought of the heat, the insects, the sticky atmosphere that weaved across this area. If it was any place but Equatorial Africa, he would not have to be delicate about matters. But now the situa-

tion called for finesse. He couldn't allow a single man to snap; it would be contagious. He could visualize the destruction of Fighter 27—then, the breakthrough. . . . Italian planes paving a path into Tanganyika. . . . The terrific blow to British morale. . . . Italian troops marching down through the Uganda country.

He found it hard to believe that all this was on his shoulders, that the entire military situation depended on his handling of a group of nervous, excited young Englishmen. It was almost funny. Then again, it wasn't funny at all.

He said, soothingly, "There's really nothing to worry about, gentlemen. The new planes will be here within forty-eight hours, and from that point on we'll take full domination of this matter."

He was calling himself a liar as he said that, but it had to be done. He was digging for the next sentence, when he heard the drone of motors.

Everyone else heard it at the same time.

It came from the east, high in the sky. It was getting lower.

The Fascists were using seven Breda "65" pursuit bombers, and about double that number Romeo RO-41 fighter.

The Englishmen stared, paralyzed, it seemed, by the sight of the oncoming enemy.

Lennings was the first to break.

He shrieked, "We don't have a chance! They've got us sighted and sure as we're standing here they're going to make a bloody mess of us. We don't have time to hit back at them! We've got to get away—run away!"

"Steady," Bardney said.

He was trying to figure out battle plans. He wouldn't have time to argue with Lennings.

The excited flyer gasped, "Steady? Who can be steady at a time like this? I tell you I won't permit myself to be smashed by bombs. I'm getting away—now!"

He started for the green thickness that walled the tarmac. Bardney leaped after him. Lennings stumbled, fell. As he was getting up, Bardney grabbed at his shoulder, swung him around. A fist cracked against the point of Lennings' jaw. The flying officer hit the ground hard, and then was still, eyes closed.

Bardney turned, faced the others, and said, "The next man who tries that sort of thing will get a bullet instead of a fist." He raised his voice. "Ground crew! Get every available plane started! We've got just enough time for a fast take-off!"

MECANICS who had come out on the field at the sound of enemy motors, now sprang to follow Bardney's orders. Westland Lysander two-seaters and Curtiss fighting planes were wheeled out to take-off stance.

Bardney looked up. The Italian planes were very close. And it would not be long before the first attack dive would be started. He glanced about him, saw the pilots running to and from their hutments, pulling at jackets, tugging at helmets.

Then he caught sight of Ritchell. The flight lieutenant had come out of his hutment, but was making no move toward a plane. It was more than fear that kept him rooted to the ground. There was a kind of arrogance in his stance, and his features expressed a challenge. He was returning Bardney's stare.

The squadron leader said, "Get to your plane."

"What about yourself?" Ritchell said.

"Never mind about me. I'll take off when I see that everyone else is in full flight formation."

"I don't believe you," Ritchell said. "You'll stay here, on the ground. You'll sneak away into the jungle, where the bombs won't touch you. I bloody well understand your game, Bardney, and I'll be hanged if I'm going to sacrifice myself, while you take the yellow way out—"

Bardney couldn't stand that. His fists were rock, and he was moving toward Ritchell. Then the whine and clatter of motors seemed to instill a cold calmness within him, and he knew that duty was pulling him back. He dragged his eyes away from Ritchell's sneering features, and he ran toward his own Curtiss.

The plane throbbed hungrily.

A mechanic, grease-faced, said, "She's all ready, sir."

He handed Bardney a helmet and yellow suede jacket. The squadron leader, pulling on togs, saw the other flyers already in their cockpits, waiting for the take-off signal. He looked up and watched the Italian formation tighten. He waved his arm.

Westland Lysanders and Curtiss low-wing fighters rumbled along the ground. Bardney stood at the side of his plane and watched them take off.

The Italians were screaming into the first attack dive, but the squadron leader could see that the British planes had sufficient time to get away from the enemy lunge. Already the Curtiss ships were wheeling into defensive ballet at a few hundred feet, covering the slower Westland Lysanders. The Romeo fighters came down in spear formation, and Bardney could see the red lines of tracer bullets moving toward the silver-blue of British wings.

For a moment he was afraid that the English line would break, that the jangled nerves of the men in Fighter 27 would crack under the flame and lead that poured down from Italian guns.

But somehow the defensive line was holding. The Curtiss ships retained their formation, moved up in face of the fire and doom. At close range they poured their own lead in underside bursts. A Romeo fighter fell on its side, flaming. A Curtiss raced in, delivered the kill burst, then was attacked from the side, and unleashed its own plume of flame.

At low altitude the Italian and British planes roared and buzzed and whirled dizzily through a bullet-filled sky. Bardney saw a Breda bomber falling in flames, and then another Curtiss was going down. But more significant than the sight of casualties was the realization that Fighter 27 was returning blow for blow. It was impossible for the Bredas to jockey into bombing position. The big Italian ships were having a tough time with screeching Curtiss fighters that peppered them from all sides.

Bardney was suddenly proud of his men, and at the same time he wanted to get up there and pitch in with them. He climbed into the Curtiss, and just as he did, he remembered the stern military responsibilities of a commanding officer. The old, romantic picture of a commander leading his men into battle was part of a far gone, less practical day. It sounded well, of course, and it was courageous and all that, but a dead commander was certainly of no use to his men or to his cause. Bardney knew that since he was first in command of this outfit, and since the emergency situation was by no means erased as yet, he had no business up there.

Then his eyes semi-circled the field, and he saw Ritchell again. The flight lieutenant was still standing in front of the hutment. There was a leer on Ritchell's lips, and his entire demeanor was one of mocking challenge.

Rage sparked within Bardney. He gunned the Curtiss, hunched low as he sent it rocking across the field.

BARDNEY concentrated on a quick climb into the center of combat. Before he reached a thousand feet, he saw a Curtiss plunging down, spinning, somersaulting. The cockpit roof was pulled back, and the figure of the pilot was slumped, an arm dangling over the side.

Guns were clacking on the left, and Bardney saw that the Romeo that had

spurred bullets into the doomed Englishman was now making a tight turn, edging in for a second kill. The Piaggio radial engine was screeching as the Italian plane whizzed in for a side attack.

Bardney started a climb, then fell off for a few hundred feet. He danced on his right wing, and climbed again. The Romeo was bewildered, and hesitated before resuming the offensive.

Taking advantage of the delay, Bardney throttled hard. He feinted, as if to try for a frontal attack, and the Romeo was sucked in. The Italian flyer made a get-away turn. Instantly Bardney hefted his ship in a banking climb and brought his Brownings to bear on the tail of the enemy plane. He worked a short burst and saw bullets tearing through the rudder, dotting up along the fuselage. The Italian, desperate, started a zig-zag path, and Bardney smiled tightly as he gave another push to the gun button.

Bullets sliced across sky, crackled into the open cockpit of the Romeo. The Italian pilot leaped up, threw his hands outward, and fell across the windscreen. The gull-wing fighting plane turned slowly on its side, then went into a spin. The belt pulled back the lifeless flyer as the plummeting plane inverted itself.

Bardney peered at battle-filled sky. All around him the dogfight raged furiously. It seemed to him that there were very few English planes in the clouds now. He saw a lot of Romeo, a lot of Breda. He saw very little Curtiss, almost nothing of Westland Lysander.

But he was encouraged by the fact that the Bredas had not yet started bombing. That meant that there were still enough English planes in the air to prevent the Italians from carrying out their mission.

Behind and above him, three Curtiss ships, and two Westland Lysanders were all tangled up with five Romeos and two Bredas. It was a close-knit fight, a madhouse in the sky. As Bardney made a fast

turn, pointed upward toward the scramble of wings and screaming propellers and *chukking* guns, he saw a Romeo turning over backward, falling in flames. A Curtiss dittoed that a few seconds afterward.

Then Bardney was roaring in, pitching Browning lead. He worked toward a Romeo, offered a second of fire, and saw his bullets split through the circular engine cowl. The Romeo stumbled, and then the orange fork came out of the engine, moved toward the cockpit. The pilot climbed out fast and jumped away from the flaming plane. His chute opened up, and he was floating toward the ground. Then he drifted into the path of bullets from another Romeo. The Italian plane was diving onto a Lysander. Before the pilot could check the flow of lead, bullets sliced through the bulb of silk. The parachute writhed and folded and took fire. The doomed chutist let out a scream that pierced the wracking of motors, the clatter of guns, and started a dive that would end three thousand feet below.

BARDNEY did not wait to see any more. There was another Italian plane in his sights now, and his guns still held bullets. He leaped onto the back of a Romeo, thumbed the black button. The Italian plane lurched sickeningly as its vitals were punctured by slugs of fire. Then it was flaming, falling. Bardney pulled away, set himself for another attack. He could see a Curtiss going down and a Westland Lysander in flames. For an instant he felt sick, but he made himself forget about that. Nothing he could do about it, anyway.

But he could throw lead into Italian planes—particularly that Breda in front of him. It was trying to fade from the center of combat, trying to maneuver toward the triangle of pale green that was the drome of Fighter 27. If it could place itself over that area, it would be able to



When the Itch of
ECZEMA
Drives You Mad
DO THIS . . .

Use Poslam, as thousands do, it's a concentrated ointment that starts to work right away, no long waiting for results. Apply soothing Poslam Ointment to ease the burning torments of eczema—the price is small—the relief is great! All druggists.

FREE: Generous sample—write name and address to: Poslam, Dept: E-10, 254 W. 54th St., N. Y. C.

POSLAM A TESTED OINTMENT



\$5, \$10, \$15
**FOR ONE
DRAWING**

Be an ARTIST!

—Train at Home in Your Spare Time
The fascinating field of Art offers commercial opportunities to men and women. **COMMERCIAL ART, CARTOONING, ILLUSTRATING** all in one complete course. Learn to draw step-by-step. Trained Artists are capable of earning \$30, \$50, \$75 a week. Write for illustrated **FREE BOOK**. "Art for Pleasure and Profit—". No obligation. **TWO ART OUTFITS FURNISHED.** State age. **WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF ART, Studio 9910T 1115 — 15th St., N. W. WASHINGTON, D. C.**

FREE BOOK

gives details



MAKE MONEY

WITH NASH CUSTOM TAILORED CLOTHES

Be your own Sales Manager, take orders; earn money with this famous make of clothes. High quality men's tailoring at popular prices.

WRITE! Write in today. Territories open.

THE A. NASH COMPANY

1914 ELM STREET • CINCINNATI, OHIO

WELDING ACETYLENE & ELECTRIC

HUNDREDS OF JOBS

WAITING for welders, machinists, and tool and die makers—in shipyards, aircraft and tank industries. Big U. S. Defense Program needs skilled men. Get practical shop training at Michigan's Oldest and Largest Trade School. 17th year. Day and night classes. Many students pay expenses by working part time. Unlimited training period at no extra charge.

Wolverine School of Trades, 1414 W. Fort, Detroit, Mich.

FREE CIRCULAR

ANY PHOTO ENLARGED

Size 8 x 10 inches or smaller if desired. Same price for full length or bust form, groups, landscapes, pet animals, etc., or enlargements of any part of group picture. Safe return of original photo guaranteed.

47¢
3 for \$1.00



SEND NO MONEY Just mail photo or snapshot (any size) and within a week you will receive your beautiful enlargement, guaranteed fadeless. Pay postman 47¢ plus postage—or send 49¢ with order and we pay postage. Big 16x20-inch enlargement sent C. O. D. 78¢ plus postage or send 80¢ and we pay postage. Take advantage of this amazing offer now. Send your photos today. Specify size wanted.

STANDARD ART STUDIOS, 113 S. Jefferson St., Dept. 581-M, Chicago

BATTLE BIRDS

drop a few heavy bombs onto the hangars.

He started a turn, away from the bomber. He knew that the gunner in the rear turret was watching him, and he wanted the Italian to think that he was looking for other victims. Even as he faked the turn-away, he knew that he would have to be very fast on the come-back. The 14-cylinder Breda could do a neat 300 miles per hour, and it was a terror on the dive. Nothing clumsy about that ship, and he would have no little trouble with the Italian in the rear turret.

Banking steeply, Bardney watched the Breda approach its target. Then he looped on the inside, drawing it out wide, screaming and breaking away from the top rim of the loop when he was directly over the enemy bomber. The Curtiss was none too graceful on the jump, and Bardney was forced to throttle with caution.

He came down on the Breda, and he was pitching fire and grinning as the bullet lines splashed into the bomber. He was trying to hit the front cockpit. The dots of fire were getting nearer the glass roof. He knew that the rear gunner was twisting the three muzzles toward him, but caution was no part of his scheme now. He found the roof of the front cockpit, and he could see the pilot, falling away from the controls, writhing.

The Breda bumped into an invisible wall and turned crazily. The big bomber rolled slowly on its side. Just before it went into its plunge earthward, the rear gunner, in a final fighting gesture, pumped a vicious burst upward.

Bullets thunked through the motor of the Curtiss. A sliver of flaming lead jabbed through the fuel tank.

Quickly Bardney pulled out of the dive. He knew that the plane was hit—hit bad. He was not at all surprised at the ribbons of flame that walked out toward the wing, and he took the subsequent death whistle

(Continued on page 100)

LISTEN YOUNG MEN

INDUSTRY NEEDS YOUNG MEN BETWEEN 17 AND 35 WHO HAVE SPECIALIZED TRAINING. They are needed now. They will be needed more than ever in the months ahead. Many fellows are going to grab the first job they can get, whether it offers them a future won't make much difference. They don't realize a "mere job" today may be no job a year from now. THE THINKING FELLOW IS GOING TO PREPARE, NOT ONLY FOR A GOOD JOB NOW, BUT ONE THAT WILL BRING HIM A FUTURE. IF YOU ARE ONE OF THESE FELLOWS I OFFER YOU AN—

Amazingly Easy Way to get into ELECTRICITY

I'll Finance Your Training

Electricity is a fast growing field. Tens of thousands of fellows are making \$35.00-\$40.00-\$50.00 a week and more every week. But to qualify for one of these jobs you must be trained to hold it. Here at Coyne we will train you by the famous Coyne "Learn-by-Doing" method—90 days shop training. You can get my training first—THEN PAY FOR IT IN EASY MONTHLY PAYMENTS AFTER YOU GRADUATE UNDER MY "PAY AFTER GRADUATION" PLAN.

Learn Without Books in 90 DAYS

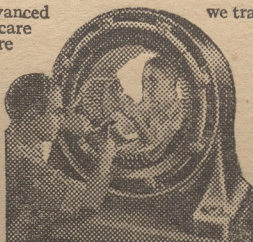
Lack of experience—age, or advanced education bars no one. I don't care if you don't know an armature from an air brake—I don't expect you to! It makes no difference! Don't let lack of money stop you. Most of the men at Coyne have no more money than you have. That's why I have worked out my astonishing offers.

Earn While Learning

If you need part-time work to help pay your living expenses I'll help you get it. Then, in 12 brief weeks, in the great roaring shops of Coyne, I train you as you never dreamed you could be trained...on one of the greatest outlays of electrical apparatus ever assembled...real dynamos, engines, power plants, autos, switchboards, transmitting stations...everything from doorbells to farm power and lighting...full-sized...in full operation every day!

No Books—No Classes

No dull books, no baffling charts, no classes, you get individual training...all real actual work...building real batteries...winding real armatures, operating real motors, dynamos and generators, wiring houses, etc., etc. That's a glimpse of how



PREPARE FOR JOBS LIKE THESE

Our Employment Bureau for graduates gives FREE lifetime employment service.

Armature Winder
Sub-Station Operator
Auto & Aviation Ignition
Maintenance Electrician
Service Station Owner
Air Conditioning
Electric Refrigeration
Radio Servicing
and many others

we train you for a good job.

EMPLOYMENT HELP after Graduation

To get a good job today you've got to be trained. Industry demands men who have specialized training. These men will be the ones who are the big-pay men of the future. After graduation my Employment Department gives you Lifetime Employment Service. J. O. Whitmeyer says: "After I graduated, the School Employment Service furnished me with a list of several positions...I secured a position with an Electrical Construction Company paying me 3 to 4 times more a week than I was getting before I entered Coyne and today I am still climbing to higher pay."

Get the Facts

Coyne is your one great chance to get into electricity. Every obstacle is removed. This school is 40 years old—Coyne training is tested and proven. You can get training first—then pay for it in easy monthly payments after you graduate. You can find out everything absolutely free. Simply mail the coupon and let me send you the big, free Coyne book...facts...jobs...salaries...opportunities. This does not obligate you. So act at once. Just mail coupon.

Get this FREE Book



THE HOME OF COYNE



This is our fireproof, modern home, wherein is installed thousands of dollars' worth of the newest and most modern Electrical equipment of all kinds. Every comfort and convenience has been arranged to make you happy and contented during your training.

H. C. LEWIS, Pres.
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL, DEPT. 71-76
500 S. Paulina Street, Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mr. Lewis:

I'm really in earnest. I do want to get ahead. Send me your big free catalog with full particulars about Coyne training and your plans to help a fellow, who hasn't a lot of money, to get ahead.

Name.....

Address.....

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

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
H. C. Lewis, Pres., Dept. 71-76

500 S. Paulina St. Founded 1899 CHICAGO, ILL.

INDIGESTION

may excite the Heart

Gas trapped in the stomach or gullet may act like a hair-trigger on the heart. The heart is not hurt but it skips and races like mad. At the first sign of distress smart men and women depend on Bell-ans Tablets to set gas free. If the FIRST DOSE doesn't prove Bell-ans better, return bottle to us and receive DOUBLE Money Back. 25c everywhere.

EASY WAY....

Tints Hair JET BLACK

This remarkable CAKE discovery, TINTZ Jet Black Shampoo, washes out dirt, loose dandruff, grease, grime and safely gives hair a real smooth JET BLACK TINT that fairly glows with life and lustre. Don't put up with faded dull, burnt, off color hair a minute longer. TINTZ Jet Black Cake works gradual... each shampoo leaves your hair blacker, lovelier, softer, easier to manage. No dyed look. Won't hurt permanents. Full cake 50c (3 for \$1). TINTZ comes in Jet Black, light, medium and dark Brown, Titian, and Blonde. Order today! State shade wanted.

SEND NO MONEY Just pay postman plus postage on our positive assurance of satisfaction in 7 days or your money back. (We Pay Postage if remittance comes with order.) Don't wait—Write today to TINTZ COMPANY, Dept. 975, 207 N. MICHIGAN, CHICAGO. CANADIAN OFFICE: Dept. 975, 22 COLLEGE STREET, TORONTO.



AGENTS
SELL

NYLON 1/2 PRICE AND GIVE SILK HOSE IN Combination Order

WEAR HOSE WE FURNISH

Sell Nylon Hose, give Silk Hose half price in combination order. Women crazy over Nylon. Agents cleaning up with sensational half price combination order. Supply silk hose replacement guaranteed 4 to 8 months, depending on quantity. Guaranteed by Good Housekeeping as advertised therein. New cars given producers. Look at these exceptional earnings. Omaha West, \$39.10 first week; Emma Wall, \$47.87 first week. Burgess, Torrington, Wyo., made \$15 in a day; received new car. Rush name and hose size; free confidential facts. WILKNIT HOSIERY CO., Midway, 15-810, Greenfield, Ohio

LEARN

Piano, Violin, Cornet, Trumpet, Mandolin, Guitar, Banjo, Organ, Accordion, Saxophone, Clarinet. SIMPLIFIED HOME STUDY METHOD—conservatory grade. Successfully tried courses for beginners. ATTRACTIVELY PRICED—convenient payment plan. Free catalog. If juvenile, parent's signature must accompany inquiry.

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC

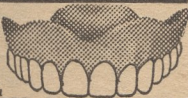
Dept. 149-N, 1525 East 53rd St., Chicago, Ill.

FALSE TEETH

LOW AS \$6.85 90 DAYS' TRIAL TEST THEM EXAMINE THEM

We make FALSE TEETH for you by mail from your own impression. You have satisfaction of MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE. Customers in United States and Canada report satisfaction but you be your own judge.

SEND NO MONEY WRITE TODAY for FREE BOOKLET and MATERIAL CLEVELAND DENTAL SUPPLY COMPANY Dept. 48-P1, East St. Louis, Illinois



GLASSES as LOW as \$1.95 PAIR



16 DAYS TRIAL

Choice of the LATEST STYLES—remarkably LOW PRICES. SATISFACTION GUARANTEED or your money back. If you are not satisfied—they will not cost you a cent.

SEND NO MONEY Write for FREE catalog today showing all of our many styles and LOW prices!

ADVANCE SPECTACLE CO.

537 S. Dearborn St., Dept. PP-10, Chicago, Ill.

BROKEN GLASSES REPAIRED AT LOW COST!

BATTLE BIRDS

(Continued from page 98)

for granted. The thick path of smoke that came from the exhausts was drawn toward him by a cross-wind, and for a few seconds he coughed.

The plane was burning fast, and altitude was disappearing quickly. A parachute would come in quite handy at a time like this, but it was silly to think of the parachute, which was now draped over a chair in a hutment very far below.

Bardney felt the burning pain, as fire trickled along the floor of the cockpit. He didn't want to scream. It was a rather nasty way to make an exit, and the least he could do was to refrain from screaming. His greatest regret was that Fighter 27 was going to lose its squadron leader. Blasted shame about those poor lads. The Italians were really going to work on them now. And with all the trouble up north, it was a foregone conclusion that no help would arrive. Maybe Ritchell had been right after all. But no, it was absurd to think along that course. Ritchell was a leech and a coward, a disgrace to 27 and to Britain. A downright shame that he was alive when so many decent lads of 27 were dying in the sky.

Bardney couldn't help it. Flame and smoke walled up before him, and an animal scream split through his lips.

Then he sensed that the plane was very near the ground, and he had an impulse to drink a lot of very cold water. That was all he wanted now—a lot of water.

That was the last thing he knew before the crash.

BARDNEY was badly shaken up, with superficial burns all over his body, and a mean gash across his forehead—but nothing very serious. The medical officer told him to stay in bed for a day or so, but he told the M. O. not to talk like a fool. He took a stiff shot of brandy,

(Continued on page 102)

Speed Your Way to Success by ^{specialized} Home Study

So you dropped out of school too soon? Well, *cheer up!* Ask any representative group of Executives, Engineers or Educators and most of them will tell you: "You CAN make good through specialized home study... IF you will make the effort and *STICK to your course.*" In fact, you'll find that a number of important men in nearly every locality are former home study students themselves. They KNOW and have PROVED that home study pays.

In 40 years, home study has become an integral part of "the American way" . . . a nationwide educational system especially geared to the needs of wage earners. Today, there are far more home study schools than you perhaps realize—and you may place confidence in the courses of the American School, established over 40 years ago to bring you the advantages of advanced education.

Courses complete in themselves and include basic subjects essential to proper understanding of more advanced portions.



Catalogs and bulletins sent FREE.

COMMERCE and Industry are tough taskmasters today—but they are *just*. The penalties of failure may be heavy—but the rewards of success are rich. If you persist in doing work that *anyone* else can do—if you carelessly leave yourself open to competition with Machinery that sooner or later may do all the "unthinking" jobs . . . the repetitive tasks—you are slated for final disappointment and bitterness.

To win out, today, you must THINK. You must think ON the job and AWAY from it and, *most important*, you must think AHEAD of it. And that takes study.

Join this "Promotion Parade" of Progress-Minded Men and Women

Of the approximately 2,000,000 men and women enrolled for further education in universities, colleges, institutes of technology and home study institutions, about 37½%—or 750,000—have chosen *home study* as most practical for their purposes. They want to win Success. *You do, too!* They have FAITH in themselves. Do you believe in *yourself*? They have investigated *home study*—decided that it offers them their way "out and up" . . . out of the low pay, periodically unemployed rank and file . . . up into well paid positions where they enjoy prosperity, security and respect.

Get the facts, *yourself*. On coupon, check the line of work that MOST interests you . . . mail it PROMPTLY for information and complete details of this offer. NO OBLIGATION. Address your inquiry, TODAY, to

AMERICAN SCHOOL

Dept. G749, Drexel at 58th, Chicago



Tuition fees moderate and fair.

Instruction material and methods simplify and speed up learning.

This seal protects you!

-----Mark, Clip and Mail This Coupon Now-----

AMERICAN SCHOOL, Dept. G749, Drexel at 58th, Chicago
Without obligation, Please send FREE and postpaid, bulletin and details of the Subjects checked.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Air Conditioning | <input type="checkbox"/> Retail Merchandising | <input type="checkbox"/> Drafting and Design |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elec. & Gas Refrigeration | <input type="checkbox"/> Cost Accounting | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio and Television |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture and Building | <input type="checkbox"/> Practical Bookkeeping | <input type="checkbox"/> High School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plumbing and Steam Fitting | <input type="checkbox"/> Economics of Direct Selling | <input type="checkbox"/> Home Economics Courses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Automotive Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Private Secretary | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Law |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aviation Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Diesel Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Liberal Arts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aviation Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying & Topographical Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Engineering |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Pattern Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Shop Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accounting and C.P.A. | <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Tool Making |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Salesmanship | | <input type="checkbox"/> Better Foremanship |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Engine and Boiler Work |

Name.....Occupation.....
Address.....Age.....
City.....State.....

Thousands Have Made Good through HOME STUDY

Help Kidneys

If you suffer from Backache, Getting Up Nights, Nervousness, Leg Pains, Swollen Ankles and feel worn out, due to non-organic and non-systemic Kidney and Bladder troubles, you should try Cystex which is giving joyous help to thousands. Printed guarantee. Money back unless completely satisfactory. Ask your druggist for Cystex today. Only 35c.

BATTLE BIRDS

(Continued from page 100)

got out of bed and into uniform, and walked out onto the field.

The medical officer shrugged. He could not help but admire Squadron Leader Bardney. At the same time he felt a wave of pity for the commanding officer, and for all the chaps in the 27th, even for himself. Because the Italians had inflicted severe losses earlier in the day, and they would come again very soon, and they would keep on coming until every plane and every man in 27 was destroyed. The English group had managed to drive off the Bredas and Romeos, but had suffered terribly in doing so, and the Fascist flyers were now well convinced of the Britishers' weakness.

Outside, Bardney told an orderly to fetch his sun helmet, then changed his mind. It wouldn't fit over the bandage around his forehead. He told the orderly to summon the flyers from their hutments.

They came slowly, wearily, and stood before him. He looked at them, and then looked beyond them, at the wreckage of planes on the field, entwined in the trees beyond the field. He looked at the bandages on heads, arms, legs. He waited for the other flyers to come, for less than half were here now.

"What's the matter?" he said, and his voice sounded queer. "Why aren't the others coming?"

Lennings answered him. Lennings was sweating, breathing hard, and his eyes were glazed as he said, "They can't come. Isn't it a pity? They're all dead. Don't they have a bloody crust, though—walking out on us at a time like this? Going A. W. O. L. They deserve to be court-martialed."

Lennings started to laugh. The laugh ended in a wild, hysterical cry, and he had to be grabbed by other flyers, and half dragged to the infirmary.

(Continued on page 104)

20 TIMES EASIER FOREIGN TUNING!
with **SUPER BAND SPREAD CHASSIS**



9-BANDS {ON 6 DIAL SCALES}

REPLACE YOUR OLD CHASSIS WITH THIS NEW 1942 MIDWEST

30 DAYS TRIAL E-Z TERMS

FACTORY TO-YOU SAVES YOU UP TO 50%

UP TO **\$50.00 TRADE-IN**
WRITE for big FREE catalog. New 1942 models include Radio, Radio-Phonos, Home Recorders. Sensationally low factory-to-you prices: \$9.95 to \$199.50... up to 16 tubes. (User-Agents Wanted).

\$19.95 with SPEAKER, TUBES, PUSH-BUTTON TUNING, MAGNA TENNA LOOP AERIAL, READY TO PLAY
COMPLETE

MIDWEST RADIO CORPORATION
DEPT. 98-B CINCINNATI, OHIO

Send for my 50c Course on how to develop

STRONG ARMS

and **BROAD SHOULDERS**

Now only 25c coin or 30c U. S. Stamps.

Contains 20 pages of illustrations showing and fully describing exercises that will quickly develop and make you gain strength in your Shoulders, Arms, Wrists, Hands and Fingers.

This is really a valuable course of exercises, without apparatus.

ONLY **25c**

ANTHONY BARKER

(doing business at this address for over 20 years.)

1235—6th Ave., (Office PP), N. Y. City

RUPTURED?

Get Relief This Proven Way

Why try to worry along with trusses that gouge your flesh—press heavily on hips and spine—enlarge opening—fail to hold rupture? You need the Cluthe. No leg-straps or cutting belts. Automatic adjustable pad holds at real opening—follows every body movement with instant increased support in case of strain. Cannot slip whether at work or play. Light. Waterproof. Can be worn in bath. Send for amazing FREE book, "Advice To Ruptured" and details of liberal truthful 60-day trial offer. Also endorsements from grateful users in your neighborhood. Write: **CLUTHE SONS, Dept. 15, Bloomfield, New Jersey.**

Muddy Skin HOMELY SURFACE Blemishes PIMPLES Blackheads Blotches

To the thousands of folks suffering from surface pimples, acne, muddy complexion, skin eruptions, etc., we will send FREE booklet of a simple method of treating the skin. A noted dermatologist's private method. No harmful medicine, skin peel, diet, etc. Something different. Send to **Dr. W. D. Tracy Co., 1637 D4, New Haven, Conn.**

MAKE MORE MONEY

Taking Orders For The **NIMROD** Line

Earn more every day in the year representing old established firm with a complete line of fast selling necessities: Shirts, Ties, Underwear, Hosiery, Pajamas, Raincoats, Sweaters, Leather Jackets, Campus Coats, Pants, Belts, Breeches, Shoes, Uniforms, etc. Every item guaranteed. Experience unnecessary. Write quick for **FREE SALES EQUIPMENT**



NIMROD COMPANY
4922-BM Lincoln Ave., Chicago, Ill.

We Want YOU to Accept
This FIRST Volume

FREE!

**CLAIM Your FIRST VOLUME By
Simply SENDING US your NAME**

Read this offer carefully. It is the opportunity of a lifetime to own the big set of the STANDARD AMERICAN ENCYCLOPEDIA virtually as a gift! And you do not have to buy these amazing books from a description or from a picture. We want you to actually see for yourself what a sensational value they represent. So—send us your name and we will forward FREE of charge the first volume as a gift to you. Only when you have fully examined it . . . only when you feel that this book can be of vital help to you in your work—in your home . . . only then, decide whether you want the remaining 19 volumes. And here's the most amazing part of this offer. While the present supply lasts, you can purchase the regular edition of this beautiful Encyclopedia for only 49c and the deluxe edition for as little as 69c each, (plus a few cents postage). No home—no office—no school should be without one of these remarkable Encyclopedias. As you thumb thru it, you will find page after page of fascinating, informative, essential facts that will help you and your children every single day of your life. No wonder they've been called "A college education in themselves."

**HERE ARE FACTS
ABOUT EVERYTHING
UNDER THE SUN**

A lifetime of interesting reading — beautifully bound and printed on fine paper. And now you may own this vast mine of information. Let us send you the first volume FREE, without any obligation on your part, and see for yourself what an amazing offer this is. Act today!

SPECIAL GIFT COUPON

Dept. 23

National Committee for Education
147 W. 22nd Street, New York, N. Y.

Send me FREE the first volume of your Encyclopedia and hold the other 19 volumes for me, to be sent according to the terms of your offer, ONLY IF I WISH THEM SENT. With my first FREE book, I am to get full details of how I may receive FREE my University Classics gift bonus. It is understood, the special prices on the other 19 volumes of the Encyclopedia will be only 49c each for the regular and 69c for the deluxe (plus a few cents mailing charges).

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY _____

STATE _____

Check Binding You Prefer

☐

REGULAR

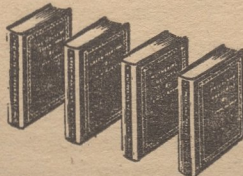
☐

DELUXE

The mailing charge is the same for either edition.

**AN AMAZING
GIFT BONUS**

You Must Act at Once!



**CHOICE OF THESE 4
GREAT CLASSICS
FREE!**

- Wuthering Heights
- Pride and Prejudice
- Green Mansions
- House of Seven Gables

With your first gift volume of the STANDARD AMERICAN ENCYCLOPEDIA, you will receive complete details of how you may obtain, for a limited time only, absolutely FREE, your choice of any of the 4 outstanding books illustrated. Don't delay! Write for your FREE first volume and get details of how you may own the University Classics FREE besides the famous STANDARD AMERICAN ENCYCLOPEDIA.

**A SENSATIONAL OFFER FOR
READERS OF THIS MAGAZINE**

20 VOLUMES

COPYRIGHT 1941
BY THE
NATIONAL
COMMITTEE FOR
EDUCATION

Full
Library
Size



**Superb Deluxe Edition
If You Want the Best!**

Your free book may be had in the beautiful, maroon, simulated leather, lifetime binding, printed on fine opaque paper from new-type. Costs but a few cents more per volume but costs nothing extra to get your FREE book in this deluxe edition.

**Essential FOR YOUR HOME!
FOR OFFICE! FOR SCHOOL!**

- 4,500,000 WORDS
- 50,000 VITAL SUBJECTS
- 4,500 ILLUSTRATIONS
- 5776 PAGES
- 1940 REVISED EDITION
- 16 FULL COLOR PAGES AND MAPS

HOW TO GET YOUR FREE BOOK!

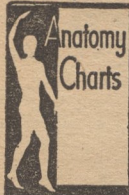
Simply fill in the coupon below and mail it direct to the National Committee for Education, 147 West 22nd Street, New York City. Check whether you want the regular or deluxe (Life Time Binding) edition. Enclose 10c to cover the cost of packing and handling plus a 3c stamp for mailing. Your book will be sent to you immediately and upon your request, one or more volumes will be sent you each week until your set is completed!

Learn this Profitable Profession



in 90 Days at Home

Hundreds of men and women of all ages 18-50 make \$10.00 to \$20.00 in a single day giving scientific Swedish Massage and Hydro-Therapy treatments. There is a big demand from Hospitals, Sanitariums, Clubs, Doctors and private patients as well as opportunities for establishing your own office. Learn this interesting money-making profession in your own home by mail through our home study course. Same instructors as in our NATIONALLY KNOWN resident school. A diploma is awarded upon completion of the course. Course can be completed in 3 to 4 months. High School training is not necessary. Many earn big money while learning.



Anatomy Charts & Booklet FREE

Enroll now and we will include uniform coat, medical dictionary, patented reducing roller and Hydro-Therapy supplies without extra cost. The reducing course alone may be worth many times the modest tuition fee. Send coupon now for Anatomy Charts and booklet containing photographs and letters from successful graduates. These will all be sent postpaid—FREE.

THE College of Swedish Massage
(Successor to National College of Massage)
Dept. 795—30 E. Adams St., Chicago.

You may send me FREE and postpaid, Anatomy Charts, booklet containing photographs and letters from graduates, and complete details of your offer.

Name
Address
City State

ARMY - NAVY BARGAINS

Haversacks	\$0.75	Cart. Belt	\$0.60
Small Cart. Box.....	.25	C. W. Trench Tool...	.75
Sun Helmet75	Rope Lariat75

Springfield Rifle 45/70 C/F \$4.25

75th Anniversary Catalog 1865-1940, 308 pages, over 2,000 illustrations of pistols, rifles, daggers, medals, saddles, etc., mailed for 50 cents. 1941 circular for 3c stamp.

FRANCIS BANNERMAN SONS, 501 Broadway, New York

HAND COLORED in Oil PHOTO ENLARGEMENT

Beautifully mounted in 7 x 9 white frame mat. Made from any photograph, snapshot or negative. Original returned. Send 25c and stamp—no other charges.

COLORGRAPH, Dept. LM-17,
17 N. LeClaire, Chicago

25c
PLUS 3c
STAMP
for Mailing

High School Course at Home Many Finish in 2 Years

Go as rapidly as your time and abilities permit. Course equivalent to resident school work—prepares for college entrance exams. Standard H.S. texts supplied. Diploma. Credit for H. S. subjects already completed. Single subjects if desired. High school education is very important for advancement in business and industry and socially. Don't be handicapped all your life. Be a High School graduate. Start your training now. Free Bulletin on request. No obligation.

American School, Dpt. H749, Drexel at 58th, Chicago

Asthma Sufferers

Don't rely on smokes, sprays and injections if you suffer from terrible recurring, choking, gasping, wheezing spells of Asthma. Thousands of sufferers have found that the first dose of Mendaco usually palliates Asthma spasms and loosens thick strangling mucus, thus promoting freer breathing and more restful sleep. Get Mendaco in tasteless tablets from druggists, only 60c (guarantee). Money back unless fully satisfied.

BATTLE BIRDS

(Continued from page 102)

Bardney tried to keep his hand from shaking as he reached for cigarettes. When the flyers were lined up again, he told them to relax. He glanced over to the side, where the ground crew was busy with bullet-bored planes. Quickly he looked away. The sight of guns and planes was sickening to him just now.

He said, "Well, gentlemen, at least we've still got our hangar and our field and enough planes to continue the argument."

He tried to grin. He didn't do very well.

Then he saw Ritchell, walking slowly, nonchalantly across the field. The flight lieutenant looked very neat, very clean. He was shaved and wore a new sun helmet. His meticulous appearance was emphasized when he walked up alongside the sweaty, greasy, blood-stained and bandaged men who had fought in the skies a few hours ago. Ritchell wore the leering, challenging smile.

Bardney said, "Good afternoon, Ritchell. I hope you enjoyed your nap."

It sort of got across. The men laughed. Ritchell didn't; the smile faded.

That was what Bardney wanted. He wanted the men to laugh, and he wanted Ritchell to scowl.

The flight lieutenant snapped, "I didn't take a nap."

Bardney smiled at the men, and they grinned back.

The squadron leader said, "Very well, Ritchell, I apologize. You took a bath, and then a shave. Am I correct in surmising that?"

Ritchell's scowl deepened. He tried to say something clever, but couldn't find the words.

He mumbled, "Well—rather."

"Of course," Bardney said, still smiling amiably. "You look quite—pretty. Going to a garden party?"

Ritchell blurted, "I don't have to take that kind of talk!"

Bardney's tones were mockingly apologetic. He knew that he was giving Ritchell the worst kind of military insult, but he realized at the same time that this was the most effective means of bolstering morale. Ritchell would suffer by it, but if it would keep laughter on the lips of the men in Fighter 27, it was worth an even greater price than that.

The squadron leader said, "Really now, Ritchell, I meant no offense. But you do look rather impressive, all clean and neat, and with your uniform newly pressed. I must say that you do know how to dress. That's quite important, you know, especially in times of emergency. One of the essential requirements for a capable officer. Things like that win battles."

Ritchell hadn't expected this kind of talk from Bardney. He had looked for a violent, blistering string of oaths, with Bardney calling him a thousand different kinds of coward for not taking part in the dogfight. He would have been able to cope with that sort of thing. In front of all the men he would have returned Bardney's insults. He had planned to place full blame for the aerial defeat on the shoulders of the squadron leader. And he would have gone further than that. He would have proved that Bardney was not capable of handling the situation. Bardney might have broken down. Bardney might have given him command of the squadron. And that would be an opportunity for Ritchell to show his hand against the Italians on the other side of Lake Rudolf.

But it certainly was not working out that way. Bardney said, "I've always insisted that appearance is of primary consideration, gentlemen. Flight Lieutenant Ritchell is a perfect example of a smartly attired officer. Especially at a time like this does a man like Ritchell show his

Not Expensive to Learn SCIENTIFIC CRIME DETECTION

*The Steady Pay Profession
Good Times—or Bad*

"I will teach you Finger Print Identification—Firearms Identification—Police Photography—and Secret Service!" That's what I told the men who now handle the good jobs listed in the column at the right. Give me a chance and I'll train YOU to fill an important position in the fascinating field of scientific crime detection.



**I TRAINED
THE MEN
WHO THEN
GOT THESE
BIG JOBS**

**Learn
FINGER PRINTING
*
FIREARMS
IDENTIFICATION
*
POLICE
PHOTOGRAPHY
*
SECRET SERVICE
METHODS**

Here are a few of the 750 bureaus headed by our students and graduates.

STATE BUREAU OF DELAWARE OF
STATE BUREAU OF FLORIDA OF
STATE BUREAU OF MAINE OF
STATE BUREAU OF MICHIGAN OF
STATE BUREAU OF NEW MEXICO OF
STATE BUREAU OF RHODE ISLAND OF
STATE BUREAU OF SOUTH CAROLINA OF
STATE BUREAU OF TEXAS OF
STATE BUREAU OF UTAH OF
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA
CONCORD, N. H.
ALBANY, N. Y.
TRENTON, N. J.
CANTON, OHIO
TULSA, OKLA.
MOBILE, ALA.
PHOENIX, ARIZ.
LOS ANGELES, CALIF.
SEATTLE, WASH.

GET IN NOW!

But don't be misled. Scientific crime detection is not simple. It's a science—a real science, which requires very special training. I teach you this science so that you should be competent to do the work of a thoroughly trained employee in a bureau of identification, for the rest of your life. I give you something nobody can ever take from you.

LOOK AT THE RECORD!

43% of ALL Identification Bureaus in the United States are headed by our students and graduates. They have regular jobs—salaries—often collect reward money—and many of these men knew absolutely nothing about this work before they began their training with me.

FREE BLUE BOOK OF CRIME

This book is full of exciting information on scientific crime detection. It will show YOU how YOU, at a cost so low you shouldn't even think of it, can get started without delay. Don't wait. Clip coupon . . . send it NOW!

INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE

1920 Sunnyside Ave.

Dept. 7387

Chicago, Ill.

INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE

1920 Sunnyside Ave., Dept. 7387, Chicago

Gentlemen: Without any obligation on my part, send me the "Blue Book of Crime," and complete list of 750 bureaus employing your graduates, together with your low prices and Easy Terms Offer. (Literature will be sent ONLY to persons stating their age.)

Name.....

Address.....

Age.....

DOWN GO TIRE PRICES

On GOODYEAR
FIRESTONE-GOODRICH
and Other Standard Makes

Only our 25 years' experience, big buying power and volume production make it possible to offer these amazing tire values. Think of it: Standard Brand reconditioned tires, serviceably repaired by experts with high-grade materials at a fraction of original cost. Order now. Enjoy the tremendous savings our cut prices make possible.

\$1.85
28-4.75-19



BALLOON TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
28x4.40-21	\$1.85	\$0.85
28x4.50-20	1.95	.85
30x4.50-21	1.95	.85
28x4.75-19	1.85	.90
28x4.75-20	1.10	.90
28x5.00-19	2.25	1.05
30x5.00-20	2.40	1.05
32x5.15-17	2.45	1.15
28x5.25-18	2.45	1.15
28x5.25-19	2.45	1.15
30x5.25-20	2.50	1.15
31x5.25-21	2.60	1.15
32x5.25-22	2.75	1.15
34x5.50-17	2.75	1.15
28x5.50-18	2.75	1.15
28x5.50-19	2.75	1.15
30x5.50-19	2.85	1.15
32x5.50-20	2.95	1.25
33x5.50-21	3.10	1.25
32x5.50-20	3.20	1.35

TRUCK TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
6.00-20	\$3.10	\$1.55
6.50-20	3.35	1.95
7.00-20	4.60	2.95
7.50-20	5.15	3.75
8.25-20	6.75	4.95

HEAVY DUTY

Size	Tires	Tubes
8.25-20	\$5.50	\$1.95
8.25-20	5.95	2.75
8.25-20	8.95	3.25
8.25-20	8.95	3.25
8.25-20	9.65	3.95
40x8	11.60	4.15

EVERY TIRE

GUARANTEED

Our Guarantee

Send agree to

replace at 1/2 price

tires failing to give

full months' service.

Replacements f. o. b. Chicago.

Don't Delay—

Order Today

SEND ONLY \$1.00 DEPOSIT on each tire ordered. (\$3.00 on each Truck Tire.) We ship balance C. O. D. Deduct 5 per cent if cash is sent in full with order. To fill order promptly we may substitute brands if necessary. ALL TUBES BRAND NEW—GUARANTEED—

PERRY-FIELD TIRE & RUBBER CO.
1720 So. Michigan Ave., Dept. 4871-A, Chicago

TYPEWRITER 1/2 Price

Easy Terms
Only 10c a Day
Have over 1/4 on all standard office models. Also portables at reduced prices.

SEND NO MONEY
All late models completely refinished like brand new. FULLY GUARANTEED.
Free literature shows actual machines in full colors. Lowest prices. Send at once.
Free course in typing included.



International Typewriter Exch., 231 W. Monroe St., Dept. 1039, Chicago

GENUINE INDIAN MADE SILVER RINGS with PETRIFIED WOOD SETTINGS

Ladies \$3.00 Mens \$3.00

Money refunded if unsatisfactory.

Send ring size.

INDIAN TRADING POST

2203 E. Monroe Phoenix, Arizona

BECOME AN EXPERT ACCOUNTANT

Executive Accountants and C.P.A.'s earn \$2,000 to \$10,000 a year. Thousands of firms need them. About 20,000 Certified Public Accountants in the U.S. We train you thoroughly at home in spare time for C.P.A. examinations or executive accounting positions. Previous experience unnecessary. Personal training under supervision of staff of C.P.A.'s, including members of the American Institute of Accountants. Write for free book, "Accountancy, the Profession That Pays." LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 10334-H, Chicago

A Correspondence Institution

\$7.95

60 DAYS TRIAL

FALSE TEETH

AS LOW AS \$7.95

Per Plate. Dental plates are made in our own laboratory from your personal impression. WORKMANSHIP and Material GUARANTEED or PURCHASE PRICE REFUNDED. We take this risk on our 60-Day Trial offer. Do Not Send Any Money Mail post card for FREE material and catalog of our LOW PRICES. DON'T PUT IT OFF—Write us today!

BRIGHTON-THOMAS DENTAL LABORATORY
DEPT. 806 6217 S. HALSTED STREET, CHICAGO, ILL.

value to the squadron. By the way, Ritchell, what kind of talcum powder do you use?"

The rest of the flyers roared.

Ritchell trembled, clenched and unclenched his fists. But then, as he looked about him, at the field that was littered with the wreckage of the dogfight, at the battered planes and bandaged men, he couldn't blame his mates for being down on him.

Yet he knew that he was no coward, nor a smooth-tongued dandy. It had not been fear that kept him on the ground during the dogfight. It had been merely to show his contempt for Bardney.

And that, blended with the heat, with the throbbing, mystic spell of sun-blistered Africa, had resulted in this—being looked at as a typical military-school fop trying to act like an officer. Not many hours before he had commanded the respect of these men. They had agreed with his line of reasoning. They had looked up to him. . . . Now they laughed at him.

He managed to turn slowly, erect. He walked back to his hutment.

Behind him he could hear the laughter of the other pilots. And the one who laughed loudest was Squadron Leader Bardney.

Ritchell's eyes continued to widen, and as he opened the door of his hutment, there was a grin on his lips.

And Ritchell was whispering, "I'll have the last laugh—"

AS HE walked out of the radio room, and slammed the door hard, Barney cursed. To the north there was a big battle, and people were too busy to waste much thought or wordage on Squadron 27.

One ironic message had told him to "hold out."

Despite his impatience and anger, he had to grin at the phrase.

But how long could he hold out? The squadron personnel had been reduced by more than half, and very soon the Italians would come again.

He walked toward his hutment. As he passed the hangar, he saw several flyers clustered about the lead-chopped nose of a Curtiss.

He grinned at them, and said, "Did you lads hear about Ritchell? He just wired his tailor in London. He wants a new morning outfit."

They laughed.

That was it—keep them laughing, joke about Ritchell, joke about anything. But just manage to keep them laughing, get their minds away from the heat and the ghastly waiting—waiting for the sound of Fascist motors and Fascist guns—and the terrible clatter and black splash of Fascist bombs.

He went into his hutment, lit a cigarette and then flipped it away.

He dropped to the cot. His head was throbbing. He closed his eyes and fell asleep.

A roaring motor dragged him back to consciousness. He sat up, and the grayness of sky told him that several hours had passed. The thunder of a single engine jabbed again at his senses, and he leaped from the cot, ran out of the hutment.

A crowd of flyers and mechanics were on the field. They were running toward a Curtiss that was rumbling along the grass. The pursuit ship was making a fast take-off, indifferent to the shouts of surprise and alarm that came from the men behind it.

Bardney shouted hoarsely, "What's going on here? Who's in that plane?"

A flyer nearby said excitedly, "It's Ritchell. He came out of his hutment a little while ago, and we noticed him working on the plane. He had the motor going, and we thought he was tinkering with it.

To People who want to write *but can't get started*

Do you have that constant urge to write but the fear that a beginner hasn't a chance? Then listen to what Fulton Oursler, editor of *Liberty*, has to say on the subject:

"There is more room for newcomers in the writing field today—and especially in *Liberty Magazine*—than ever before. Some of the greatest of writing men and women have passed from the scene in recent years. Who will take their places? Who will be the new Robert W. Chambers, Edgar Wallace, Rudyard Kipling, and many others whose work we have published? It is also true that more people are trying to write than ever before, but talent is still rare and the writer still must learn his craft, as few of the newcomers nowadays seem willing to do. Fame, riches and the happiness of achievement await the new men and women of power."



"The introduction you gave me to your editor-friend, resulting in my present assignment to do a 40,000 word 'complete novel' for him monthly, is deeply appreciated especially since I finished my N. I. A. course some time ago and consequently have no call on your service. Here is very concrete evidence that interest in your students continues indefinitely. To date, now, I have sold 95 stories and novellettes to 20 national magazines."—Darrell Jordan, P. O. Box 277, Friendship, N. Y.

Writing Aptitude Test — FREE!

THE Newspaper Institute of America offers a free Writing Aptitude Test. Its object is to discover new recruits for the army of men and women who add to their income by fiction and article writing. The Writing Aptitude Test is a simple but expert analysis of your latent ability, your powers of imagination, logic, etc. Not all applicants pass this test. Those who do are qualified to take the famous N. I. A. course based on the practical training given by big metropolitan dailies.

This is the New York Copy Desk Method which teaches you to write by writing! You develop your individual style instead of trying to copy that of others. You "cover" actual assignments such as metropolitan reporters get. Although you work at home, on your own time, you are constantly guided by experienced writers. It is really fascinating work. Each week you see new progress. In a matter of months you can acquire the coveted "professional" touch. Then you're ready for market with greatly improved chances of making sales.

Mail the Coupon Now

But the first step is to take the Writing Aptitude Test. It requires but a few minutes and costs nothing. So mail the coupon now. Make the first move towards the most enjoyable and profitable occupation — writing for publication! Newspaper Institute of America, One Park Avenue, New York. (Founded 1925)

NOTICE—

Men of Draft Age
No need to
hesitate to test
your writing ability,
even though
you are of con-
scription age. N.
I. A. agrees to
refund in full the
tuition of anyone
accepted as a
student who is
subsequently
called for mili-
tary service. Special
terms and
privileges for
men in U. S.
Armed Forces.

Free

Newspaper Institute of America
One Park Avenue, New York

Send me, without cost or obligation, your
Writing Aptitude Test and further information

about writing for profit.

Miss }
Mrs. }
Mr. }

Address

All correspondence confidential. No salesman will call on you. 64S961

MIND POWER

A FREE BOOK

Develop your personal, creative power! Awaken the silent, sleeping forces in your own consciousness. Become Master of your own life. Push aside all obstacles with a new energy you have overlooked. The Rosicrucians know how, and will help you apply the greatest of all powers in man's control. Create health and abundance for yourself. Write for Free book, "The Secret Heritage." It tells how you may receive these teachings for study and use. It means the dawn of a new day for you. Address: Scribe D.Q.F.

The Rosicrucians

SAN JOSE

—AMORC—

CALIFORNIA

"The Rosicrucians are NOT a religious organization"

TRAIN FOR Radio in 8 WEEKS

I WILL FINANCE YOUR TRAINING

Prepare for opportunities in Radio by 8 weeks of practical shop work in the great Coyne Radio Shops, on real RADIO equipment. You don't need advanced education or experience. Free Employment Service for life. Many earn while learning. Mail coupon today for free book which tells you how hundreds have become successful Radio Men after taking our training.

H. C. LEWIS, Pres., RADIO DIV., Coyne Electrical School
500 S. Paulina St., Dept. 71-5H Chicago, Illinois
Send Free Radio Book and facts. Tell me about your "Pay-Tuition-After-Graduation" Plan.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____

SELL TIES—OVER 100% PROFIT

\$1 STARTS YOU IN BUSINESS

Silk Lined Ties, Sample Tie 15c. Doz. \$3.50

Slyde-On Ties, Sample Tie 25c. Doz. \$2.40

Hand-Made Ties, Sample Tie 35c. Doz. \$3.90

25% deposit, balance C.O.D. Write for FREE wholesale catalog.

PHILIP'S NECKWEAR, 20 West 22nd St., Dept. M-46 New York

ASTHMA

W. K. STERLINE, 610 Ohio Ave., Sidney, OHIO

Treatment mailed on FREE TRIAL. If satisfied, send \$1; if not, it's Free. Write for treatment today.

SEND NO MONEY!—Save Money!



TRANSPARENT
60 Days' Trial

ROOFLESS

PARTIAL

We make FALSE TEETH for you by MAIL from your own mouth-impression. Money-

FREE Back Guarantee of Satisfaction.

Free Impression material, directions, catalog.

U.S. Dental Co., Dept. A-87, Chicago, Ill.

Professional Model

\$6.85
to \$35

FREE SAMPLES OF REMARKABLE TREATMENT FOR

Stomach Pains

DUE TO GASTRIC HYPERACIDITY

H. H. Bromley, of Shelburne, Vt., writes: "I suffered for years with acid stomach trouble. My doctors told me I had acid stomach ulcers and would have to diet the rest of my life. Before taking your treatment I had lost a lot of weight and could eat nothing but soft foods and milk. After taking Von's Tablets I felt perfectly well, ate almost anything and gained back the weight I had lost." If you suffer from indigestion, gastritis, heartburn, bloating or any other stomach trouble due to gastric hyper-acidity, you, too, should try Von's for prompt relief. Send for FREE Samples of this remarkable treatment and details of trial offer with money back guarantee. Instructive Booklet is included. Write:

PHILADELPHIA VON CO.

Fox Building, Philadelphia, Pa.

Dept. 45-J

BATTLE BIRDS

Then, before any of us could realize his intentions, he climbed in and—"

Bardney clipped, "Running out on us, is that it?"

His eyes narrowed as he looked upward into the grayness. He expected to see the Curtiss make an acute turn southward.

But as he watched the course of the fleeing Curtiss, Bardney frowned. The plane was not turning southward. It was turning toward the north—toward Lake Rudolf!

"So he's stooping that low," Bardney muttered. "He's going over to the Italians. He'll surrender himself to them. And if he'll go that far, he'll go further. He'll tell them things that will help them out in Tanganyika. He knows plenty, and he'll tell them and—No! He won't get away with it! I won't let him get away with it!"

Bardney's hand was hard on the shoulder of a mechanic. The squadron leader clipped an order. Other flyers turned, clustered around Bardney.

One of them said, "Are we in on this, sir?"

"Absolutely not!" Bardney said. "I'm going alone. I'm going to try and catch up with him, shoot him down. I won't need any help, you can bank on that. He'll never live to tell a word to the Italians."

A Curtiss was being warmed up, and belts of bullets were injected into the throats of Browning guns. Bardney leaned against a trembling wing and watched the plane that was speeding eastward.

He climbed into the cockpit.

One of the flyers cupped hands to mouth and yelled, "Maybe it's not as bad as you think, sir! Maybe Ritchell's off to see his tailor!"

Bardney shouted back, "Possibly—and maybe the tailor happens to be an Italian!"

HE URGED the Curtiss across grass and blasted it into a sizzling climb, working for speed rather than altitude. He made good progress at first, but at slightly above a thousand feet he ran into trouble with cross winds. Far ahead, he could see the fleeing plane.

Impatience and rage tightened Bardney's lips. Then his eyes passed across the instrument panel, and he looked at his mileage dial, then at his wrist watch. He was surprised to find that twenty minutes had passed since the beginning of the chase. Gazing down, he saw the northern tip of Lake Rudolf fading away beneath his right wing.

Then, as he looked up again, he uttered a cry.

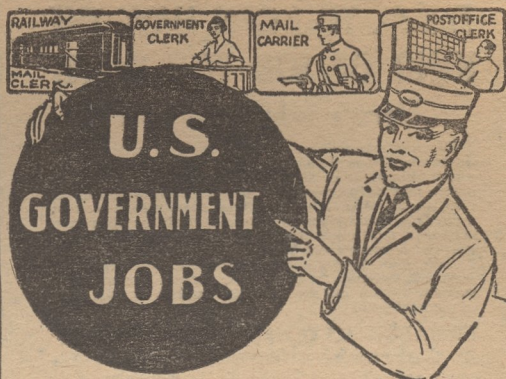
He knew that he should not have been surprised. It was perfectly reasonable that the Italians should, at this time, be winging on their second raid against the English drome. They were flying in close formation, using eleven Romeos and five Breda bombers. There was something extremely self-assured about the flight alignment of the Italian ships.

But now something was happening to the Italian group. It was being forced to break formation. Romeos were swirling out in what seemed to be frantic attempts at a getaway from some awful force of destruction. One of the Italian planes was releasing a banner of flame, plunging toward the earth!

And following the burning plane was a silver-blue symbol of doom—a Curtiss.

Bardney speared his plane into a shuddering climb, meanwhile watching the jumble of ships. Ritchell was flying like a lunatic, diving through a gauntlet of Fascist fire, pulling out and coming up and throwing his own bullets with deadly effect. Another of the Italian planes was going down.

Bardney went up to 7,500 feet. The nucleus of battle was somewhere around



START
\$1260 to \$2100 YEAR

Many appointments
being made.
Men-Women.
Prepare at once.
32 Page
Civil Service
Book Free.
Mail Coupon
Today—
SURE

Franklin Institute
Dept. B175
Rochester, N. Y.

Gentlemen: Rush to me
FREE of charge, list of
U. S. Government big pay
jobs. Send me FREE 32-page
book describing salaries, vaca-
tions, hours and work. Tell me
how to qualify for one of these
jobs.

COUPON



Name.....

Address.....



A KEY TO SHOP PRACTICE
For Every Machinist, Tool-
maker, Machine Operator,
Draftsman, Metal Worker,
Mechanic or Student. Covers
Shop Practice in All Branches.

A READY REFERENCE
Tells How to Operate and Set
Up Lathes, Screw and Milling
Machines, Shapers, Drill
Presses and All Machine Tools.

5 PRACTICAL BOOKS IN ONE!
60 FULLY ILLUSTRATED CHAPTERS
Covering: 1—Modern Machine
Shop Practice. 2—Blue Print
Reading and How to Draw. 3—
Calculations & Mathematics
for Machinists. 4—Shop Phys-
ics. 5—How to Use Slide Rule.

Get This Information for Yourself.
Mail Coupon Today. No Obligation
Unless Satisfied. ASK TO SEE IT.

THEO. AUDEL & CO., 49 WEST 23rd STREET, NEW YORK
Mail AUDEL'S MACHINISTS & TOOLMAKERS HANDY BOOK. Price \$4 on 7
Days Free Trial. If O. K. I will remit \$1 in 7 days and \$1 monthly until \$4 is paid.
Otherwise I will return it.

Name.....
Address.....
Occupation.....
Reference.....

PER

Today. YOU CAN HAVE THE KIND OF JOB YOU WANT

Here's why and how!

Millions of men going to work in new and expanded industries: millions of men going into military service. That means hundreds of thousands of preferred jobs will be open—jobs as foremen, supervisors, accountants, production men, traffic men, executives, sales managers, cost men, department managers, etc. Some will be filled from the ranks; most must be filled by new men who get ready quickly. If you prepare quickly, that is your opportunity. LaSalle spare time training fits exactly. It is condensed, practical, moderate in cost. If you are in earnest about success, ask for our free 48-page booklet on the field of your interest.

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY
A Correspondence Institution
Dept. 10334-R CHICAGO, ILL.

AN INVULNERABLE DEFENSE



can be achieved only through cultivation of the mind. Defend spiritual and ethical values, and become invincible, under the banner of righteousness, now being unfurled by a New Race and Order. Send for our latest 60 page, illustrated brochure, LEMURIA THE INCOMPARABLE. It reveals who you are, why you are here, your past history and your future inheritance. TWO DIMITES covers the cost of mailing. Act today. You incur no obligation of any kind.

LEMURIAN FELLOWSHIP DEPT. 53, 928 N. PLANKINTON
AVE., MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

AMAZING GROFLEX SHOES! NEED NO BREAKING IN

EARN BIG COMMISSIONS AND
YOUR OWN SHOES AS BONUS
Steady income showing complete shoe line
for men, women, children. Over 200 styles
include famous Cushion shoe; amazing GRO-
FLEX shoes that need no breaking in; popular
new MILITARY styles; HITE-BUILDERS
that make men big sales; dozens of other fast
selling features. Big cash commissions, liberal
bonus. Amazing values, fully guaranteed.
No experience needed. Samples without cost.
Write TODAY for full information, money-making
plan and FREE selling kit. TANNERS
SHOE COMPANY, 501 Boston, Mass.



**WRITE FOR
FREE OUTFIT**

SILK DRESSES

Coats \$1.00; Shoes 50c; Hats 40c.
Many other low-priced BARGAINS.
FREE CATALOG. Send name on
postcard. No obligation. Write today.

CROWN CO.

164 Monroe St. Dept. P.P. New York City



RUPTURED Throw Away! FREE - See this Amazing New Discovery

Why suffer with rupture? You need never wear
your truss again! You will be amazed at the wonderful
successful results. See how this discovery works. FREE.
Positively costs you nothing. No obligation. Just fill in and

MAIL COUPON TODAY!

PNEUMATIC INSTITUTE CO., 103 Park Ave., Dept. P3, N.Y.
Send me free under plain seal and wrapper: "Amazing New Discovery."
This places me under no obligation to buy.

Name.....

Address.....

P3

Learn to MOUNT BIRDS



Tan SKINS, make up FURS

Be a Taxidermist. Double your hunting fun. We
teach you at Home. Mount Birds, Animals, Fish,
Heads, common specimens. Fun and profits. Decorate
home and den. MAKE MONEY. Mount game, tax for
others. Big profits in spare time. **WRITE TODAY.**

100 game pictures in **FREE BOOK**
Hunters, get your copy. It's
Now Free. Send post card. State your AGE.

NORTHWESTERN SCHOOL OF TAXIDERMY
Dept. 3367 Omaha, Nebraska

FREE BOOK

6,000. The squadron leader saw Ritchell working out of a death-spot, flipping over on a right wing to take the offensive against three Fascist planes. Within five seconds, one of the Romeos was flaming.

"Nicely done, Ritchell," Bardney muttered. "Now, lad—just hold 'em for a few seconds more while I—"

He twisted the Curtiss over on the left wing, straightened it into dive position, and then went down. He was watching Italian wing and fuselage grow larger as he screamed in power dive. Then he had a line on the back of a Breda, and beyond that there was a Romeo, then another Breda.

Browning guns pumped lead, and Bardney saw flame spurt from the Breda. Then he was going after the Romeo. He couldn't waste a single burst, he knew, and every bullet had to hit and count. He saw the pilot crumble in the cockpit of the Romeo.

But almost instantly he was surrounded by enemy planes. And there with him, in the center of the net, was Ritchell. The position lasted for less than two seconds, but in that time the two Englishmen saw each other, waved at each other, and grinned.

Then Ritchell was trying to break through. Romeos speared at him. Bardney didn't have time to see the result of that maneuver. He was too busy flipping away from the guns firing at him from above and below and all sides.

Bardney took a quick count. He saw seven Romeos and three Bredas. He also saw Ritchell. The flight lieutenant was working a head-on burst that chopped into a Piaggio engine and brought a splash of flame.

Bardney traded bursts with a Romeo and the rear gunner of a Breda. He sent bullets stabbing through the skull of a Fascist pilot. The rear gunner, however,

poured bullets through his wings, forcing him to roll out.

As he straightened from the roll-out, he saw Ritchell, going down in a spin.

Bardney's lips were set in a tight line. Even as he knew that Ritchell was doomed, he felt a closeness to the flight lieutenant. He was forgetting what Ritchell had set out to do, and all he knew was that the tall blond fellow had put up a magnificent show.

"Cheerio, lad," he muttered. "I'll try to finish it for you."

HE CAME up, guns working, and attacked a Breda from beneath. The bomber banked hard. Bardney stayed with it, and found its fuel tank on the second try. The Breda went down, burning, and then Bardney had to ride through an aisle of fire, bordered by the raging guns of Fascist planes.

America Needs AUTO MECHANICS

Based on
Official
FACTORY
Books
Covering
ALL Cars
1935-1941
inclusive



The fast moving pace of the National Defense Program has created a shortage of trained Auto Mechanics. Uncle Sam's Army and Navy needs more mechanics than ever before. Now is the time to extend your knowledge of mechanics and prepare yourself! Regardless of the car you want to repair, MoToR's new Shop Manual will show you the factory-correct way to do the job! Gives official manufacturers' data needed by every mechanic for overhauling or adjusting every American automobile made since 1934. Used daily by thousands of repair shops, students and schools. Mail coupon.

PRICE
ONLY **\$3**

Your Money Back
if not
Satisfied

**567 BIG 8 1/4 x 11 PAGES—850
PHOTOS, DRAWINGS, CHARTS, TABLES
— Give Nearly 200,000 Vital Facts on:**

Engine overhaul — Electric system — Fuel system
Cooling system — Clutch — Transmission — Universals
— Rear end — Wheels — Brakes — Front end — Shock
absorbers — Steering — Ignition — Lubrication —
Generators — Carburetors — Oil filters and hundreds
of other detailed instructions that describe the exact
how-to-do-it of such repairs.

Published by MoToR, 572 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y.
The Leading Automotive Business Magazine

SEND NO MONEY!

MoToR, Book Department, Room 701, 572 Madison Ave., New York

Please RUSH me a copy of MoToR's 1941 Factory Shop Manual. I will pay postman \$3 plus a few cents delivery charge; but it is understood that if book does not satisfy me I may return it within 7 days (and in its original condition) and have the \$3 purchase price refunded immediately. (Foreign Price \$4. cash; see C. O. D. to Canada.)

NAME AGE
ADDRESS
CITY
OCCUPATION

How 50c a Month Pays YOU UP TO \$75⁰⁰ a Month — When You Need It Most!

Pays UP TO \$2000⁰⁰ for Accidental Death!



**I'M GETTING
\$75⁰⁰ A MONTH**

**America's Greatest
Insurance Value!**

Here is positively America's greatest protection value — the policy that fills a long-felt want for the millions who need "the greatest amount of protection at lowest cost." You simply can't afford to be without this amazing 50c-a-month Sickness and Accident policy. Sickness and accident may strike today—tomorrow—or next week, who knows? That's when you'll need this generous policy to help pay doctor and hospital bills—that's when you'll need money to keep yourself and family going all the weeks, maybe months, that you're unable to work. Think of it! Only 50c a month pays you up to \$75.00 a month when you're laid up by accident. Your family gets up to \$2,000.00 in case of accidental death, and many other liberal benefits.

PAYS BENEFITS FROM VERY FIRST DAY OF DISABILITY

This policy covers and pays graded benefits for all sicknesses common to both men and women, whether house confined or not, and all accidents, both big and small, that happen every day in every way. Benefits payable from FIRST DAY of disability, as provided. It does not skip the first 7 or 14 days as many policies do. It also pays generous benefits for loss of limbs or sight—PROTECTION for YOUR LOVED ONES in case of accidental death—and many other liberal benefits as you will see when you examine your policy. Write today TOMORROW MAY BE TOO LATE!

EXAMINE THIS POLICY FREE

Sterling Insurance Company
6641 Jackson-Franklin Bldg., Chicago, Ill.
Please mail me at once for FREE INSPECTION your New 50c a Month Sickness and Accident Policy. I am not obligated. No agent will call.

Name.....
Street.....
Address.....
City.....State.....
Name of Beneficiary.....

FOR ONLY 50c A MONTH YOU GET UP TO

\$75.00

Monthly for Accident Disability.

\$50.00

Monthly for Sickness Disability

\$2,000.00

for Loss of Limbs or Sight.

\$2,000.00

for Accidental Death.

STERLING INSURANCE COMPANY

Classified Advertising

Educational

Correspondence courses and educational books, slightly used. Sold. Rented. Exchanged. All subjects. Satisfaction guaranteed. Cash paid for used courses. Complete details and bargain catalog FREE. Write NELSON COMPANY, 500 Sherman, Dept. K-218, Chicago.

Female Help Wanted

FEW OPENINGS for married women. Earn to \$28 weekly in dignified work without experience, investment or training. No canvassing. Give age, dress size. Fashion Frocks, Desk 24029, Cincinnati, O.

Inventions Wanted

CASH FOR INVENTIONS, patented, unpatented. Mr. Ball, H-9441 Pleasant, Chicago.

Nurses Training Schools

MAKE UP TO \$25 — \$35 WEEK as a trained practical nurse! Learn quickly at home. Booklet Free. Chicago School of Nursing, Dept. D-9, Chicago.

Old Money Wanted

WILL PAY \$15.00 EACH FOR CERTAIN LINCOLN PENNIES! Indianheads \$200.00; Dimes \$1,000.00. Catalogue 10c. Federal Coin Exchange, (FP) Columbus, Ohio.

Patents

INVENTORS — Protect your idea. Secure "Patent Guide"—Free. Write CLARENCE A. O'BRIEN, Registered Patent Attorney, 1K26 Adams Building, Washington, D. C.

Personal

OLD DENTAL PLATES remade with transparent life-like plastic. Free booklet. BEAUTI-PINK CO., Dept. 19, Union City, N. J.

Photo Finishing

8 ENLARGEMENTS and film developed, 116 size or smaller, 25c coin; enlarged prints 3c each; special offer; enclose advertisement and negative for hand-colored enlargement free with order 25c or more. ENLARGE PHOTO, Box 791, Dept. PPM, Boston, Mass.

AT LAST, all your pictures Hand Colored. Roll developed, 8 Hand Colored prints, only 25c. Hand Colored reprints 3c. Amazingly Beautiful. National Photo Art, Dept. 132, Janesville, Wis.

ROLLS DEVELOPED — 25c coin. Two 5 x 7 Double Weight Professional Enlargements, 8 Gloss Deckle Edge Prints. CLUB PHOTO SERVICE, Dept. 16, La Crosse, Wis.

ROLLS DEVELOPED—16 Artistic Permanent prints only 25c. Reprints 2c. Superior developing and printing. MID-WEST PHOTO SERVICE, Dept. 5132, Janesville, Wis.

Poems—Songwriters

WANTED—Poems for musical setting. Submit for consideration. Phonograph transcriptions made. Rhyming Pamphlet FREE. Keenan's Studio, PP, Box 2140, Bridgeport, Conn.

POEMS WANTED!—for musical setting. Submit for free examination. Recordings made. VANDERBILT STUDIOS, Box 112, Coney Island, New York.

SONG POEMS WANTED. Free examination. Send poems. McNeil, Master of Music, 510-A South Alexandria, Los Angeles, Calif.

WANTED—Poems for musical setting. Your opportunity. Prompt Placement. Master Melody Makers, 6411 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, Calif.

SONGWRITERS—Send Poems for FREE EXAMINATION. Recordings made. Cinema Song Company, Box 2828, D2, Hollywood, California.

BATTLE BIRDS

Bardney started another offensive. He slanted in and sent a burst of bullets into the cockpit of a Romeo.

Then he was watching something else!

Seventeen planes were coming out of skies from the north—the Republic two-seaters, the A.C.F. fighters.

The other Fascist ships were running as fast as they could, but the oncoming Republics and A.C.F. fighters were slightly faster.

Bardney helped out on the kill, following a Romeo that was faking a death-spin. He made it genuine, pumping lead into the Italian when the Romeo tried the pull-out.

Only a few hundred feet from the ground, Bardney looked down and saw that the Romeo had crashed near the wreckage of the Curtiss.

The squadron leader found a clearing, and came down in a fast landing. He leaped out of the cockpit and ran toward the wrecked Curtiss. He worked gently at the straps that fastened the blood-covered, silent figure to an inverted cockpit.

Slowly Bardney eased Ritchell to the ground. The flight lieutenant opened his eyes and smiled through blood and pain.

"So they got you, too?" he whispered.

"Not quite, old chap," Bardney said.

"The new planes arrived, after all, and if you'll look up you'll see them heading back toward 27. It looks as if the Italians

Classified Advertising

(Continued)

SONGWRITERS — Send poems for offer and FREE Rhyming Dictionary. RICHARD BROTHERS, 30 Woods Building, Chicago.

Songwriters, Interesting Proposition. Write PARAMOUNT SONG-RECORDING STUDIO, L-62, Box 190, Hollywood, Calif.

SONGWRITERS—Write for free booklet, Profit Sharing Plan. Allied Songs, 7608 Reading, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Tattooing Supplies

START profitable Tattooing and Removing Business. Free instructions, Write "TATTOO," 651 South State, Chicago.

won't get to Tanganyika for a long time."

"That's ripping — perfectly ripping," Ritchell said weakly. He groaned a few times, and then said, "I'm not surprised that you chased after me, sir. I suppose you thought I was going to sell out, or something on that order. But you've got to believe me now. All I wanted to do was to wage my own fight against the Italians. I thought that maybe I could reach their drome; perhaps work some effective sabotage—"

He groaned again, and blood rushed from his lips, and then he died.

Bardney looked at the sweat, the grease and blood that covered Ritchell's face.

Then very softly the squadron leader said, "You don't look very neat now, Ritchell, but you do look very much like part of Fighter 27, and from that smile on your lips, I'd say you were damned happy about it."



MACHINE SHOP MEN

Learn to set up and run ANY kind of machine; MAKE MORE MONEY NOW by learning quickly HOW TO DO THINGS which usually take years of study and practice. The demand for SKILLED men is ALREADY ahead of the supply, then what WILL IT BE a month or two from now?

Needed NOW!

Bigger Pay Don't miss this chance to qualify for promotion, don't miss this Big Opportunity which is yours almost for the asking. Eight Big Books chockful of important mechanical facts told simply and clearly. Over 3000 pages, nearly 3000 illustrations cover every subject fully, including Tool Making, Pattern Making, Foundry Work, Mechanical Drawing, Forging, Machine Shop Practice and Management, and hundreds of other subjects.

8 Big Books (Up-to-Date Edition) Sent FREE

to you for examination. With them we send a Big Binder of nearly 800 pages with 267 original shop tickets with 1200 illustrations. These show, step by step, how to set up almost any kind of job and are in addition to the 8 books. Decide in your own home or place of business whether or not you want to keep them, check up on any facts you want to. Note their great MONEY MAKING value, then, if you want them, pay on the easiest kind of payments. Send NOW and we will include a year's consulting service without extra charge. American Technical Society, Publishers—Home Study Courses.

American Technical Society, Dept. 5731, Drexel at 58th St., Chicago. You may send me the 8 big NEW books and binder of shop tickets for free examination. I will pay the delivery charges only, unless I decide to keep them in which case I will send \$4.00 in ten days and \$3.00 per month until the total price of only \$34.80 is paid. If I return them in 10 days I will owe you nothing. Because I send now you agree to give me a certificate entitling me to consulting privileges with your experts for one year.

Name

Address Please attach a letter stating age, occupation, employer's name and address and that of at least one business man as reference.

FOOT ITCH Athlete's Foot

Here's How to Treat It

According to the Government Health Bulletin No. E-28, at least 50% of the adult population of the United States are being attacked by the disease known as Athlete's Foot.

Usually the disease starts between the toes. Little watery blisters form and the skin cracks and peels. After awhile the itching becomes intense and you feel as though you would like to scratch off all the skin.

DON'T PAY TILL RELIEVED

Itching Often Relieved Quickly

As soon as you apply H. F. you may find that the itching is quickly relieved. You should paint the infected part with H. F. night and morning until your feet are better. Usually this takes from three to ten days, although in severe cases it may take longer or in mild cases less time.

H. F. should leave the skin soft and smooth. You may marvel at the quick way it brings you relief.

Beware of It Spreading

Often the disease travels all over the bottom of the feet. The soles of your feet become red and swollen. The skin also cracks and peels, and the itching becomes worse and worse.

Get relief from this disease as quickly as possible, because it is very contagious and it may go to your hands or even to the under arm or crotch of the legs.

Why Take Chances

The germ that causes the disease is known as Tinea Trichophyton. It buries itself deep in the tissues of the skin and is very hard to kill. A test made shows it takes 15 minutes of boiling to kill the germ, so you can see why the ordinary remedies are unsuccessful.

H. F. was developed solely for the purpose of relieving Athlete's Foot. It is a liquid that penetrates and dries quickly. You just paint the affected parts. It peels off the tissue of the skin where the germ breeds.

H. F. Sent on Free Trial

Sign and mail the coupon and a bottle of H. F. will be mailed you immediately. Don't send any money and don't pay the postman any money, don't pay anything any time unless H. F. is helping you. If it does help you we know that you will be glad to send us \$1.00 for the product at the end of ten days. That's how much faith we have in H. F. Read, sign and mail the coupon today.

GORE PRODUCTS, INC. P.O.P.
815 Perdido St., New Orleans, La.

Please send me immediately a bottle of H. F. for foot trouble as described above. I agree to use it according to directions. If at the end of 10 days my feet are getting better I will send you \$1.00. If I am not entirely satisfied I will return the unused portion of the bottle to you within 15 days from the time I receive it.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY.....STATE.....



HEALTHY

FEET

HEALTHY

FEET

HEALTHY

FEET

There's more than one kind of *SLACKER!*

The man who evades his duty to his country is called a "slacker." It's a harsh word.

What about the man who evades his duty to himself, and to his family — by failing to prepare for success in his line of work? What about the man who allows his family to struggle along on a small income, when by a little time and effort he could achieve promotion and increase his earnings? Isn't that man a "slacker" too?

In any case, it's a fact that today 100,000 ambitious American men are studying I. C. S. Courses in 400 business and technical subjects — getting ready for the *bigger jobs*, the *fatter pay-checks*. Any I. C. S. representative will gladly help you arrange your own "preparedness program" — this coupon, mailed today, will bring you complete information.



INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

CELEBRATE 50 YEARS OF SERVICE TO AMBITIOUS AMERICANS

1891★1941

BOX 3280-H, SCRANTON, PENNA.



Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your booklet, "Who Wins and Why," and full particulars about the course *before* which I have marked X:



TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Air Brake | <input type="checkbox"/> Contracting and Building | <input type="checkbox"/> Marine Engines | <input type="checkbox"/> R. R. Signalman | <input type="checkbox"/> Refrigeration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Air Conditioning | <input type="checkbox"/> Cotton Manufacturing | <input type="checkbox"/> Diesel Engines | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Sanitary Engineering | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Airplane Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Work | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architectural Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Lighting | <input type="checkbox"/> Foundry Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Mine Foreman | <input type="checkbox"/> Ship Drafting | <input type="checkbox"/> Shop Practice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Heating | <input type="checkbox"/> Heat Treatment of Metals | <input type="checkbox"/> Navigation | <input type="checkbox"/> Steam Electric | <input type="checkbox"/> Steam Engines |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Auto Engine Tune-up | <input type="checkbox"/> Highway Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> House Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Patternmaking | <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Drafting | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Auto Technician | <input type="checkbox"/> Locomotive Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Machinist | <input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacy | <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineering | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aviation | <input type="checkbox"/> Management of Inventions | <input type="checkbox"/> Mfg. of Pulp and Paper | <input type="checkbox"/> Plumbing | <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aviation Mechanic | | | <input type="checkbox"/> Poultry Farming | <input type="checkbox"/> Telegraph Engineering | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boilermaking | | | <input type="checkbox"/> Practical Telephony | <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Work | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bridge Engineering | | | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Works Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Textile Designing | <input type="checkbox"/> Toolmaking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry | | | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio, General | <input type="checkbox"/> Welding, Electric and Gas | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Engineering | | | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio Operating | <input type="checkbox"/> Woolen Manufacturing | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coal Mining | | | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio Servicing | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete Engineering | | | <input type="checkbox"/> R. R. Section Foreman | | |

BUSINESS COURSES

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|---------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accounting | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising | <input type="checkbox"/> College Preparatory | <input type="checkbox"/> Foremanship | <input type="checkbox"/> French | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Postal Clerk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeping | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial | <input type="checkbox"/> Cost Accounting | <input type="checkbox"/> Good English | | <input type="checkbox"/> Salesmanship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Correspondence | <input type="checkbox"/> C. P. Accounting | <input type="checkbox"/> First Year College | <input type="checkbox"/> High School | | <input type="checkbox"/> Secretarial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management | | | <input type="checkbox"/> Illustrating | | <input type="checkbox"/> Showcard and Sign Lettering |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cartooning | <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Service | | <input type="checkbox"/> Managing Men at Work | | <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Management |

HOME ECONOMICS COURSES

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced Dressmaking | <input type="checkbox"/> Home Dressmaking | <input type="checkbox"/> Tea Room and Cafeteria Management, Catering |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foods and Cookery | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Dressmaking and Designing | |

Name.....Age.....Address.....

City.....State.....Present Position.....

Canadian residents send coupon to International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada
British residents send coupon to I. C. S., 71 Kingsway, London, W. O. 2, England

15 Minutes a Day!

Give me just this
and I'll prove I can make you
A NEW MAN!

I'M "trading-in" old bodies for new! I'm taking men who know that the condition of their arms, shoulders, chests and legs—their strength, "wind," and endurance—is not 100%. And I'm making NEW MEN of them. *Right now* I'm even training hundreds of soldiers and sailors who KNOW they've got to get into shape FAST!

How do YOU measure up for the defense of your country? Have YOU the strong shoulders and back that can haul for miles Uncle Sam's standard *61 pounds* of Army man's equipment? Or if home defense presses you into service, have you the he-man strength and tireless energy that double-shifts of working and watching may call for?

Now as Never Before You Need a Body That's Ready for ANY Job in National Emergency!

Are you ALL MAN—tough-muscled, on your toes every minute, with all the up-and-at-'em that can lick your weight in wildcats? Or do you want the help I can give you—the help that has already worked such wonders for other fellows, everywhere?

All the world knows I was ONCE a skinny, 97-lb. weakling. And NOW it knows I won the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." Against all comers! How did I do it? How do I work miracles in the bodies of other men in such quick time? The answer is "Dynamic Tension!"

In just 15 minutes a day, right in the privacy of your own home, I'm ready to prove that "Dynamic Tension" can lay a new outfit of solid muscle over every inch of your body. Let me put new, smashing power into your arms and shoulders—give you an armor-shield of stomach muscle that laughs at punches—strengthen your legs into real columns of surging stamina. If lack of exercise or wrong living has weakened you *inside*, I'll get after that condition, too, and show you how it feels to LIVE!

FREE This Famous Book that Tells You How to Get a Body that Men Respect and Women Admire

Almost two million men have sent for and read my book, "Everlasting Health and Strength." It tells you exactly what "Dynamic Tension" can do. And it's packed with pictures that SHOW you what it does. RESULTS it has produced for other men. RESULTS I want to prove it can get for YOU! If you are satisfied to take a back seat and be pushed around by other fellows week-in, week-out, you don't want this book. But if you want to learn how you can actually become a NEW MAN, right in the privacy of your own home and in only 15 minutes a day, then man!—get this coupon into the mail to me as fast as your legs can get to the letterbox! CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 83K, 115 East 23rd St., New York City.

Charles Atlas

—actual photo of the man who holds the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

**Charles Atlas
America's Greatest
"Builder of Men"**

Among all the physical instructors and "conditioners of men" ONLY ONE NAME STANDS OUT—Charles Atlas!

THAT is the name immediately thought of by men who WANT to attain a physique that will withstand hardship and strain, ready for any possible emergency, personal or national.

In every part of the country Charles Atlas is recognized as "America's Greatest Builder of Men." Almost two million men have written to him. Thousands upon thousands have put their physical development into his capable hands!

And now that the call is for men capable of helping America meet and conquer any national emergency, many thousands of others, even those already in their country's Army and Navy are calling upon Charles Atlas to build the kind of men America vitally needs!

**MAIL THIS
COUPON NOW!**

**CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 83K
115 East 23rd St., New York City**

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

Name..... (Please print or write plainly)

Address.....

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

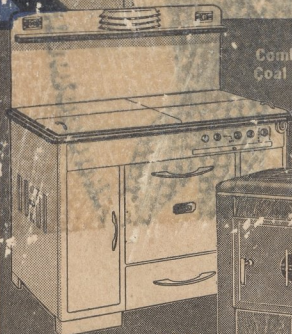


**"YOU CAN SAVE
\$18 to \$35.. on your New
KALAMAZOO STOVE
—I DID!"**

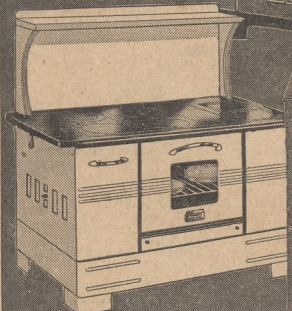
GAS RANGES



Combination Gas,
Coal or Oil Ranges

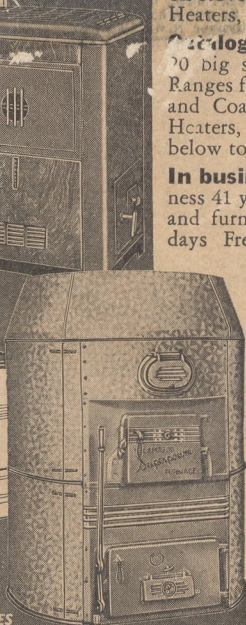


COAL
AND
WOOD
HEATERS



COAL AND WOOD RANGES

FURNACES



Fresh from the press—this new 1942 KALAMAZOO CATALOG—FREE to you. Mail coupon today!

See newest streamlined styles—see amazing new features—see how easy to own a new range—as little as \$5 down on stoves. Choose from 106 styles and sizes of Ranges, Heaters, Furnaces. Many illustrated in full color.

Catalog full of new ideas—More bargains than in 70 big stores—Gas Ranges, Combination Dual-Oven Ranges for Gas and Coal, for Gas and Oil, for Electricity and Coal; Coal and Wood Ranges, Oil Ranges, Oil Heaters, Coal and Wood Heaters, Furnaces. Mail Coupon below today for Factory Prices.

In business 41 years—Kalamazoo has been in business 41 years. We sell millions of dollars worth of stoves and furnaces every year. 1,700,000 Satisfied Users. 30 days Free Trial. Factory Guarantee. Factory Prices. 24 hour shipments. Send for this big FREE CATALOG. Save money. Mail Coupon today!

All Kalamazoo Gas Ranges and Combination Ranges approved by American Gas Association for NATURAL, MANUFACTURED or BOTTLED GAS.

Now over 250 Kalamazoo Stores in 15 States. Ask us for address of nearest store.

All you do is
mail coupon
for **FREE**
CATALOG!

30 DAYS
FREE TRIAL

EASY
TERMS

106
STYLES &
SIZES

24 hr.
SHIPMENT

Kalamazoo Stove & Furnace Co., Manufacturers
502 Rochester Ave., Kalamazoo, Michigan

Dear Sirs: Send FREE FACTORY CATALOG. Check articles in which you are interested:

- ☐ Combination Gas, Coal and Wood or Oil Ranges
- ☐ Combination Coal and Electric Ranges
- ☐ Coal and Wood Ranges
- ☐ Gas Ranges
- ☐ Oil Ranges
- ☐ Coal & Wood Heaters
- ☐ Oil Heaters
- ☐ Furnaces

Name.....

Address.....

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

**"A Kalamazoo
Trade Mark
Registered Direct to You"**