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the Men With Wings

A THRILLING
PUBLICATION

RAF ACES

SPRING
ISSUE

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A Novelet of the
Royal Canadians
By **ROBERT
SIDNEY
BOWEN**

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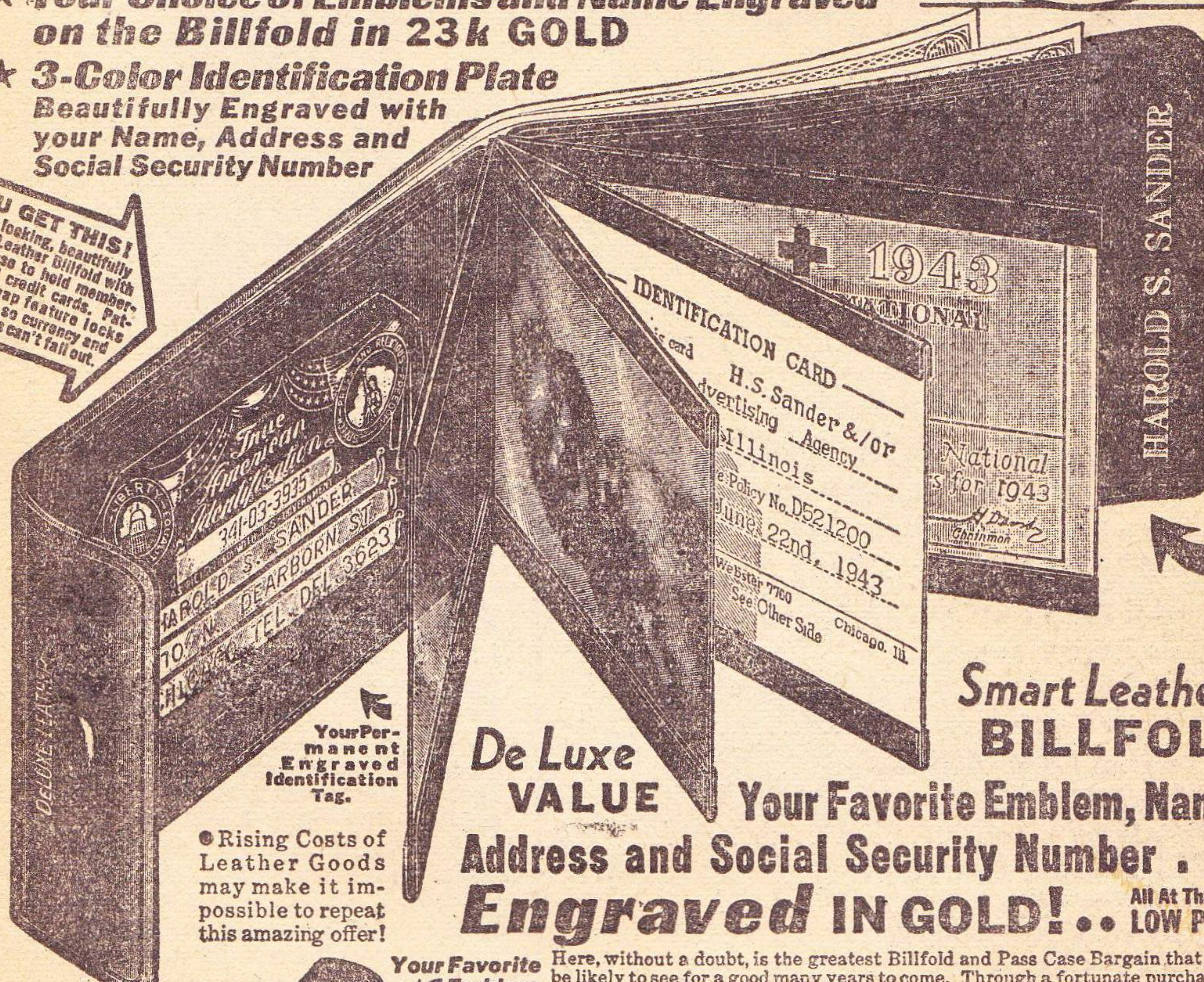
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RAF ACES

VOL. 4, NO. 2

SPRING ISSUE

● **Featured Air Action Novelet**

A KISS FOR KISKA
By **ROBERT SIDNEY BOWEN**

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CO-OPERATION SPELLS VICTORY

*A Message to the Readers
of R. A. F. ACES*



By

**AIR VICE MARSHAL
W. F. MacNEECE FOSTER**
Acting Head of the R. A. F.
Delegation in Washington

A FEW months ago, the USAAF and the RAF held different views as to the best method for bombing Germany. The USAAF felt that maximum results would be obtained by precision daylight bombing, the RAF that great results were being achieved by night bombing.

A striking change has come over the viewpoints of both services. The USAAF have become increasingly impressed by the possibility of accurate night bombing, while the RAF have been correspondingly impressed by the development of day bombing.

The raid on Schweinfurt, to take a single example, shows that day bombers are capable of accurate bombing of a highly fortified area and, in the process, of taking a heavy toll of enemy fighters.

This development is a matter of rejoicing for loyal comrades-in-arms, and we do right to feel grateful to the gallant young pilots and air-crews in all our services, USAAF, RAF and RCAF alike.

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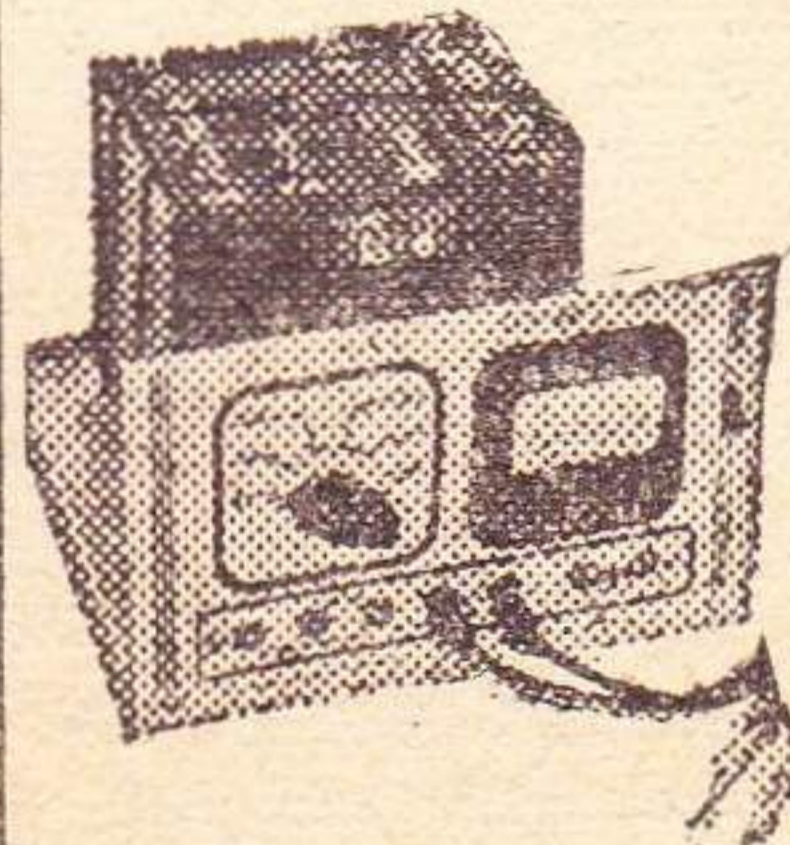
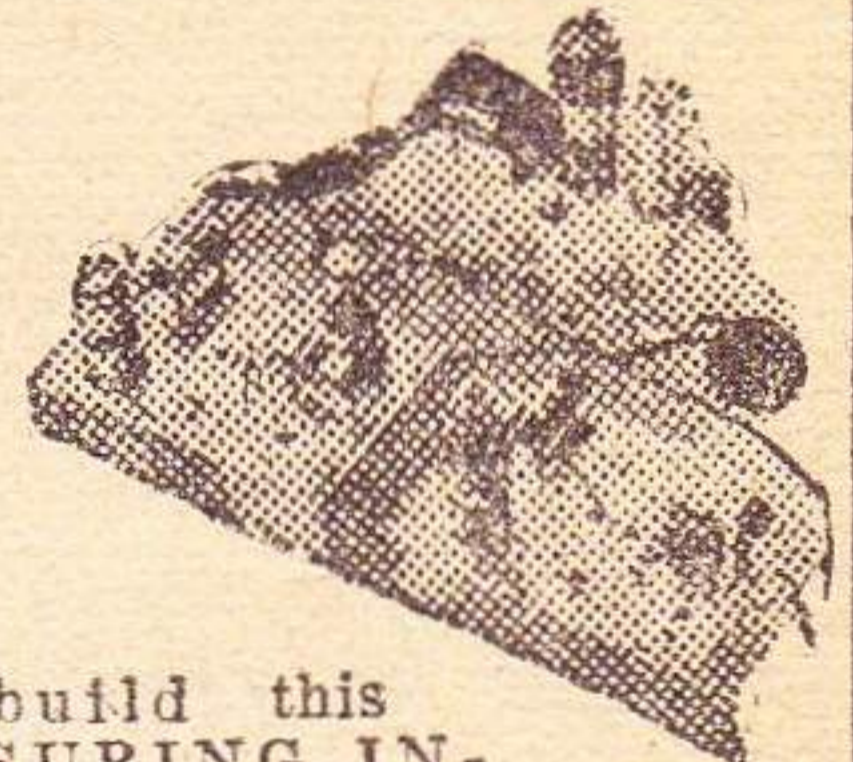


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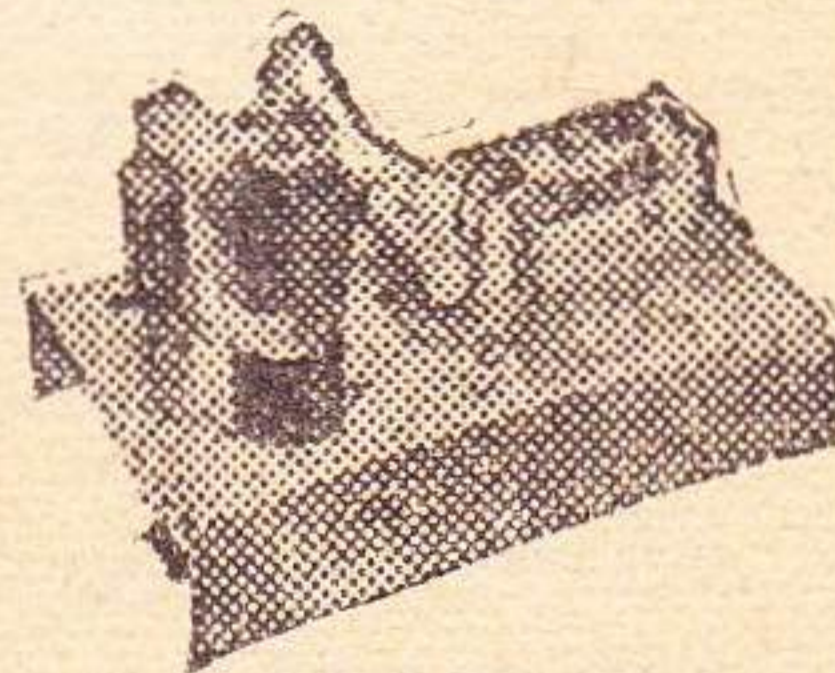
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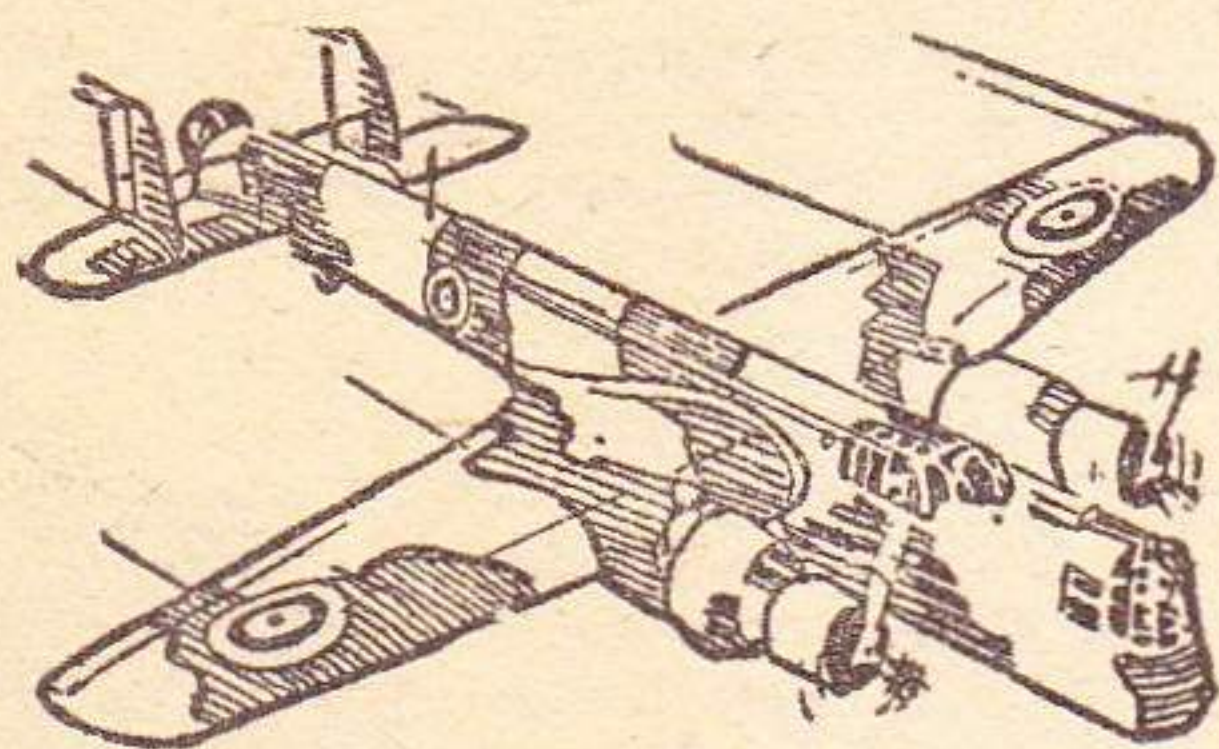
THE RAIDS ON BERLIN

By Wing Commander L. V. FRASER
of the R. A. F.

*Disruption of Much of the Nazi War Effort Resulted
from the Smashing Super-Raids Made by the RAF!*

THE major attacks on Berlin by the R.A.F. heavy bombers constitute one of the bitterest pills Germany has had to swallow since the beginning of the war.

Pilots returning from a recent raid on the Nazi capital said that while passing over Hanover they saw a blinding explosion back in the Berlin area they had just left. The amount of smoke pouring from the city into the sky over Berlin was tremendous, and is sign enough of the hold the fires took, and of the damage done. On the next night, the



R.A.F. pilots were assisted in their work by the light of the fires started on the second night.

Only operational pilots know the difficulty that attacks on Berlin present. The city lies 550 to 600 miles from British bomber bases, so that the aircraft have to fight their way through anti-aircraft and fighter defenses all the way from the coast to the target and back.

Losses Light

In view of the hazards of such a journey, losses were remarkably light. There have been many previous attacks on Berlin, but not until late last year was it possible to launch them on this major scale. Only twice before the end of 1942 was Berlin raided in more than a 100-ton sense.

In 1943, until the November raids, there were eight attacks on a major scale. Then, when it appeared that November was going to be a light raiding month, the R.A.F. produced its onslaught, with the result that Berlin now leads the cities in Germany bombed in 1943 and 1944 with 25,000 tons dropped on it. Next come Hamburg with more than 10,000 tons last year—Essen and Hanover with more than 8,000 tons—Cologne with just under 8,000 tons—and Mannheim and Ludwigshafen with more than 7,000.

Although Berlin has received 15,000 tons more than devastated Hamburg, it cannot, of course, be claimed in any way that it is in the same position as Hamburg, which is a very much smaller city. The German capital

is a vast target, with a population of nearly 4,500,000 people, and it stretches 34 miles from east to west. Such a target could absorb many times the tonnage of Hamburg without being struck out of the war.

Berlin Vital Target

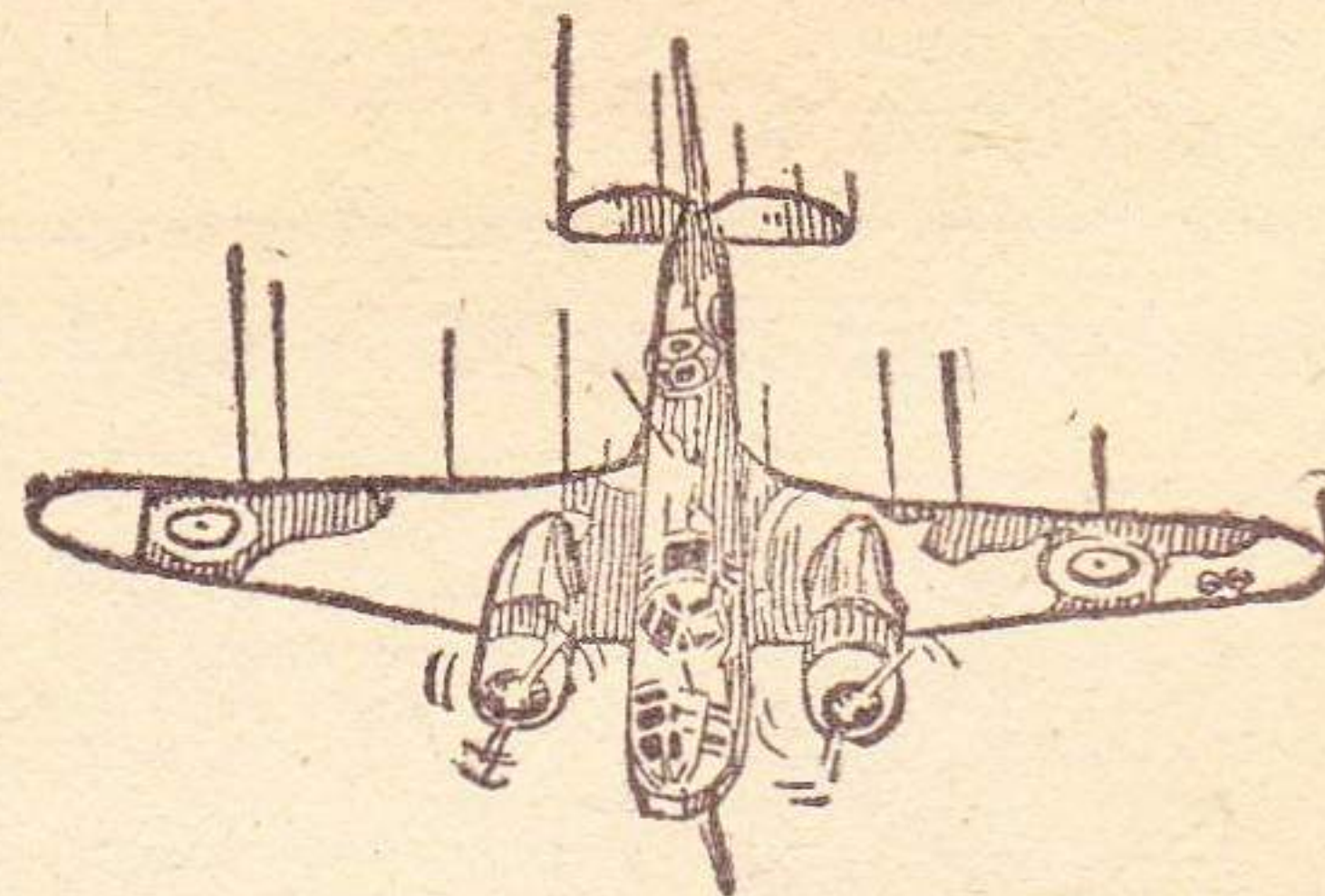
The importance of Berlin to the German war machine is very great, for 10 per cent of Germany's industrial workers are employed in the city, which is not only the leading railway center of the Reich—with 12 main lines running through it—but also Europe's principal center of air transport. Whereas the Ruhr is the center of Germany's basic industries, Berlin is its greatest manufacturing and processing center.

It contains, apart from a great military concentration, scientific research stations, woolen, furniture and metal manufacturing centers, railway repair works, factories for the manufacture of electrical equipment, general engineering works and aircraft component factories.

A list of some of the factories with major lay-outs in Berlin is a sufficient indication of the capital's industrial importance.

Among them are A.E.G. Siemens, Daimler-Benz, B.M.W.-Dornier, Heinkel, Focke-Wulf and Henschel.

It is also the administrative capital of the Reich and the heart of its economic life. It contains nearly 200 major factories, with hundreds of smaller ones—many more than any other German town. A considerable number of war industries have their headquarters in the center of the city and their factories in the surrounding suburbs.



But these are attacks whose importance cannot be assessed in terms of bomb damage alone. Apart altogether from the blow to German morale as a whole, and the shock particularly to the industrial workers' morale, the dislocation of the industrial system of Germany cannot be underestimated.

(Concluded on page 8)

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THE RAIDS ON BERLIN

(Concluded from page 6)

The German railway system, faced with evacuation problems that have tested it to the fullest, now receives new heavy burdens. The network of railways splaying out to every corner of the Reich was hard put to it to cope with the traffic to the Russian and Mediterranean fronts alone, without new demands and handicaps.

The same strain has been taken to a large extent by road transport, and strict regulations have been introduced recently to prevent the over-loading of commercial trucks with a view to saving tires. The tire shortage caused by the naval blockade of Germany is already acute.

Traffic conditions generally are appalling. In Berlin, in the last few days, they must have been chaotic. There is no transport for removals from bombed to evacuation areas, for most of the removal firms have work in hand for months ahead.

Refugees often have to abandon their furniture, and many workers reach their dispersed factories with little more than the clothes they stand in. Black market liquor and cigarets have, in many instances, taken the place of money.

There is no doubt that, as a result of the Berlin attack, war production in Germany has at least for a time been substantially reduced. Equally important are the heavy blows that have been dealt at the prestige of the defender of the capital and at industrial morale.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

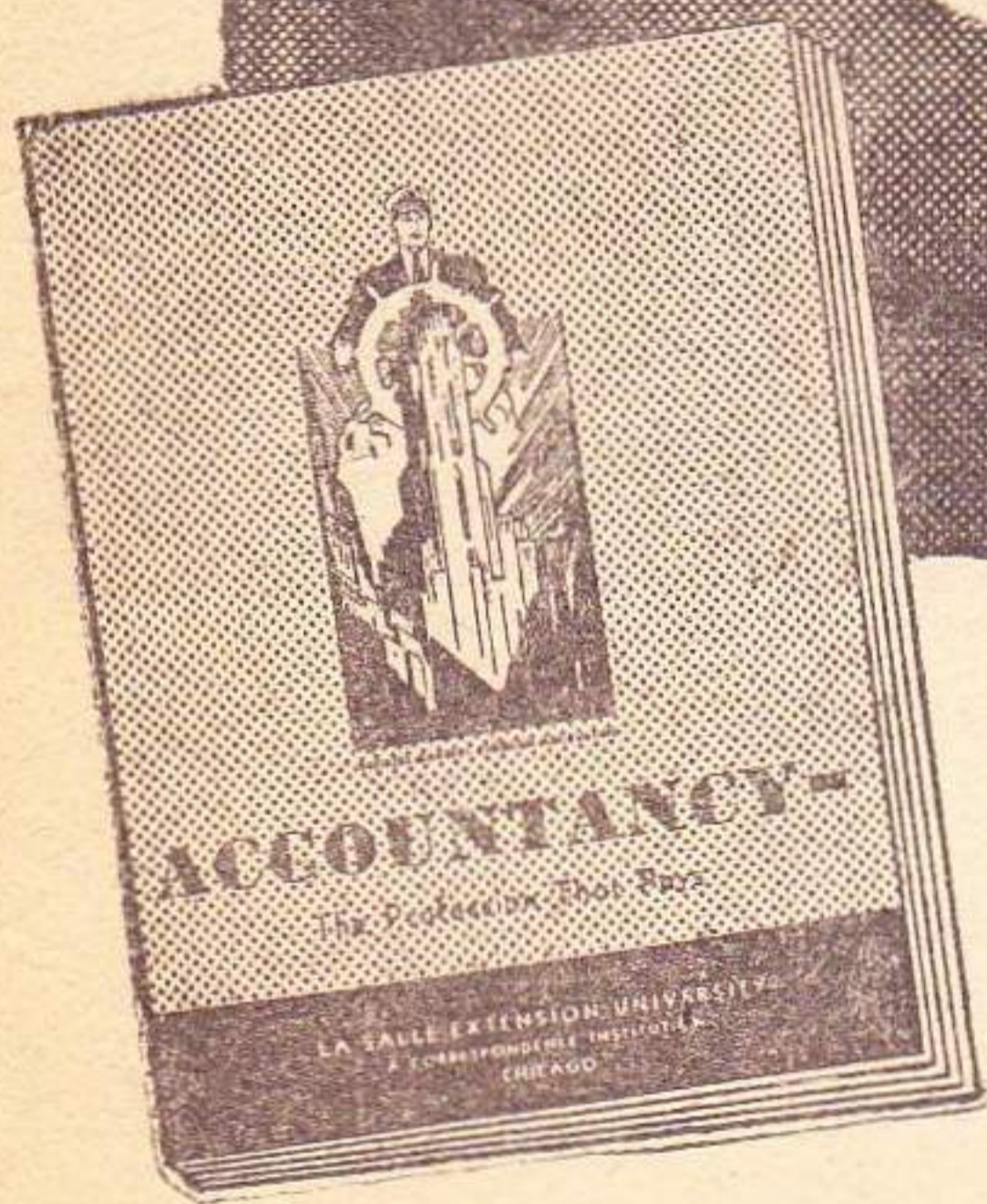
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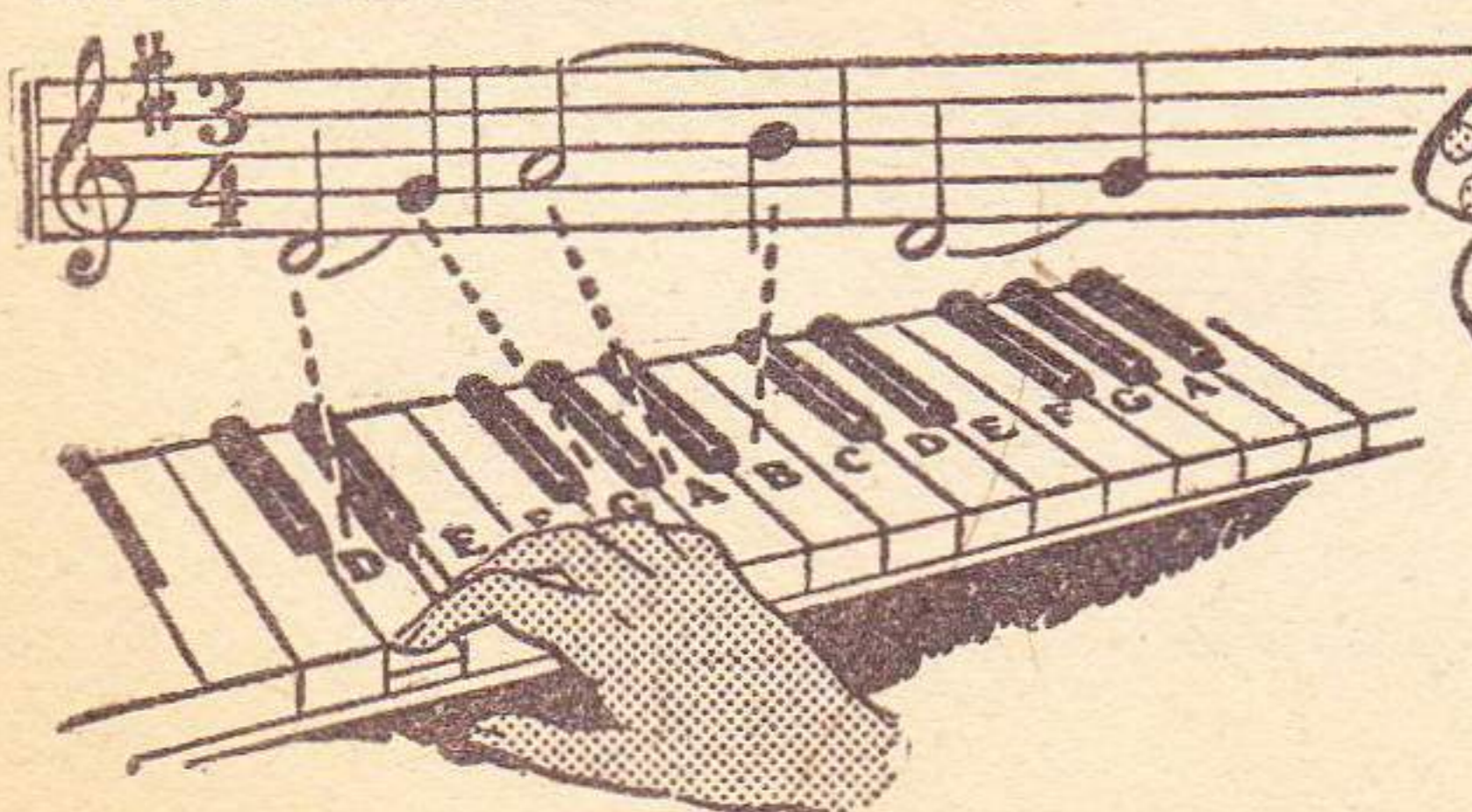
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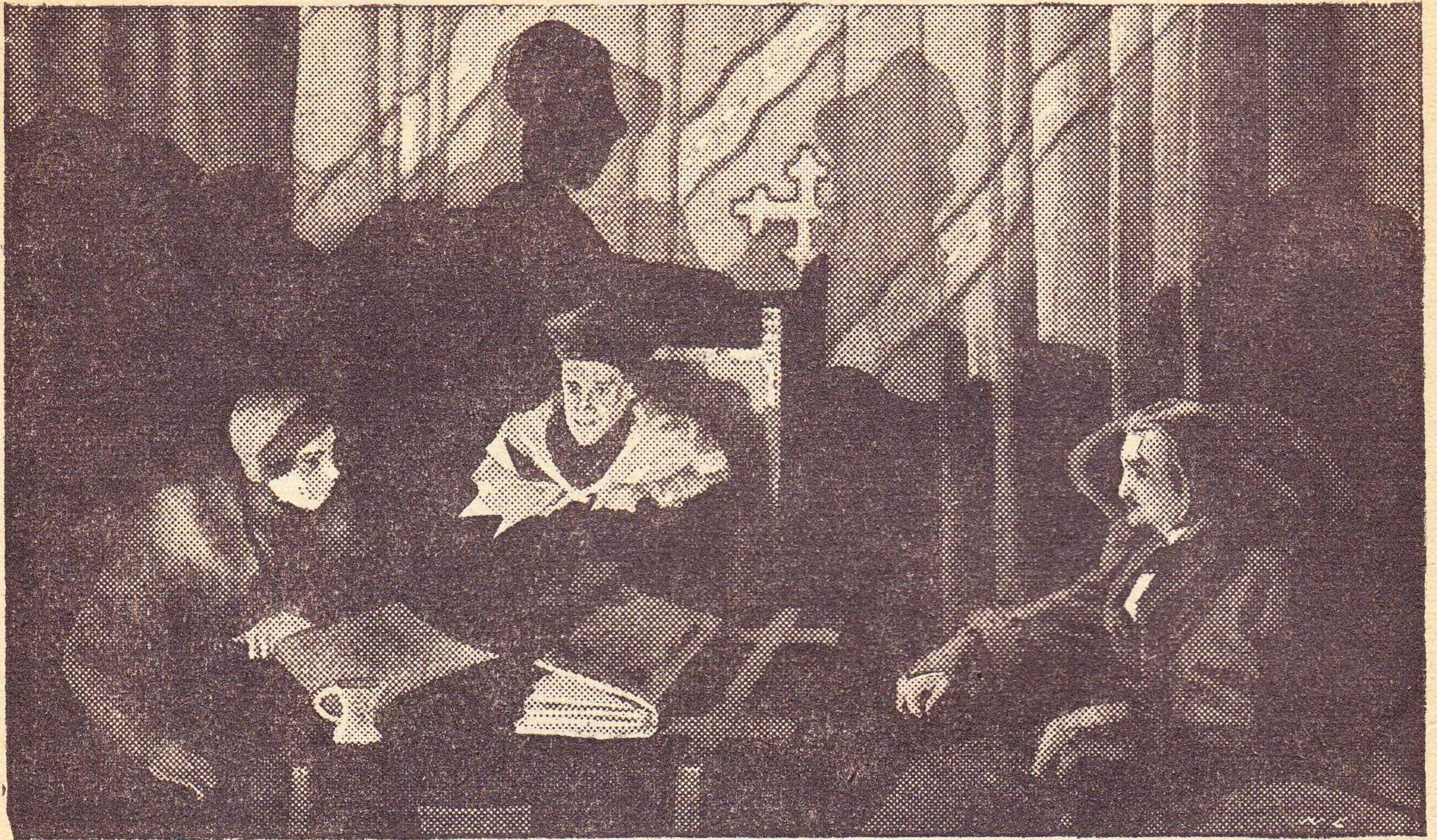
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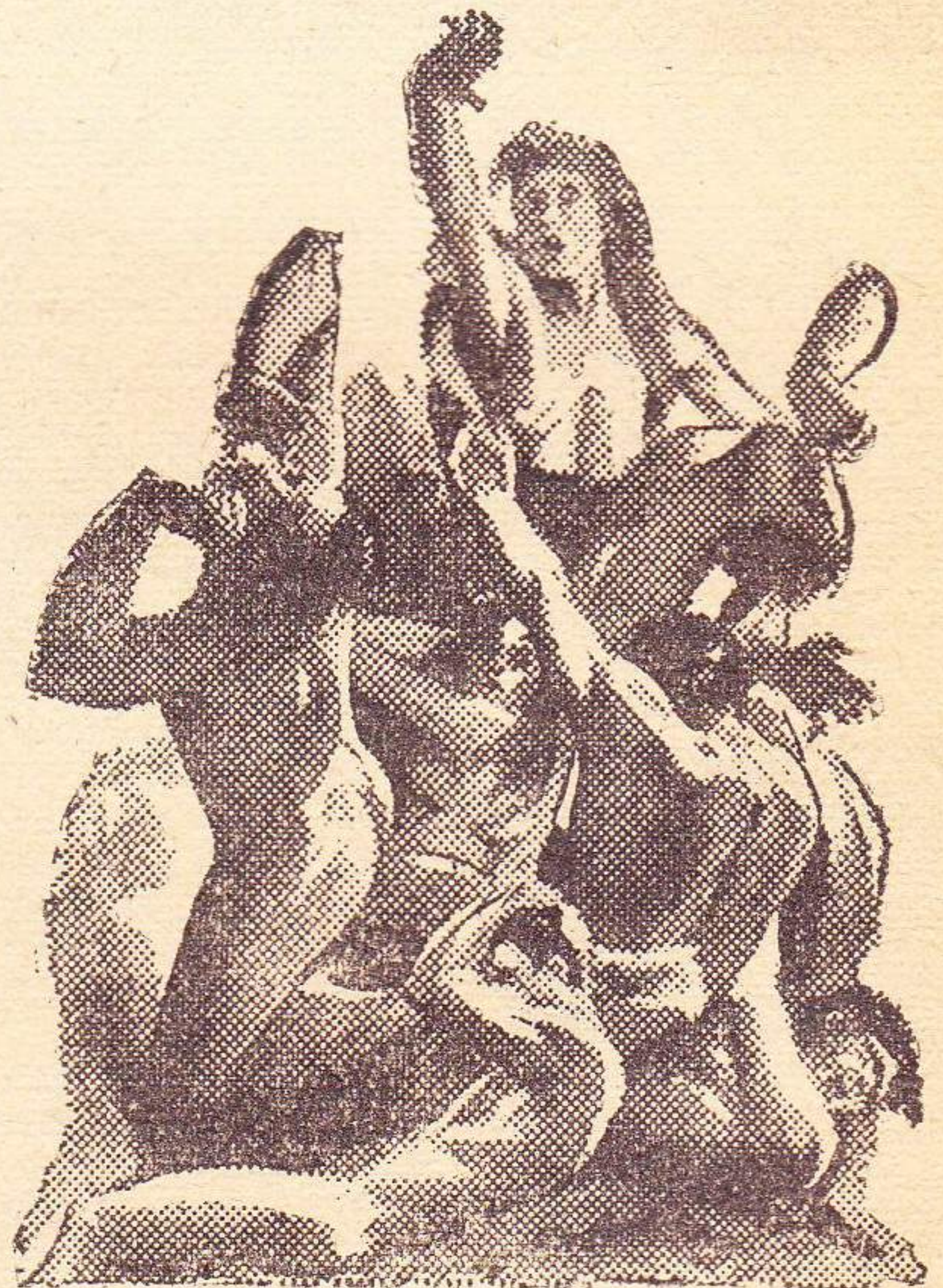
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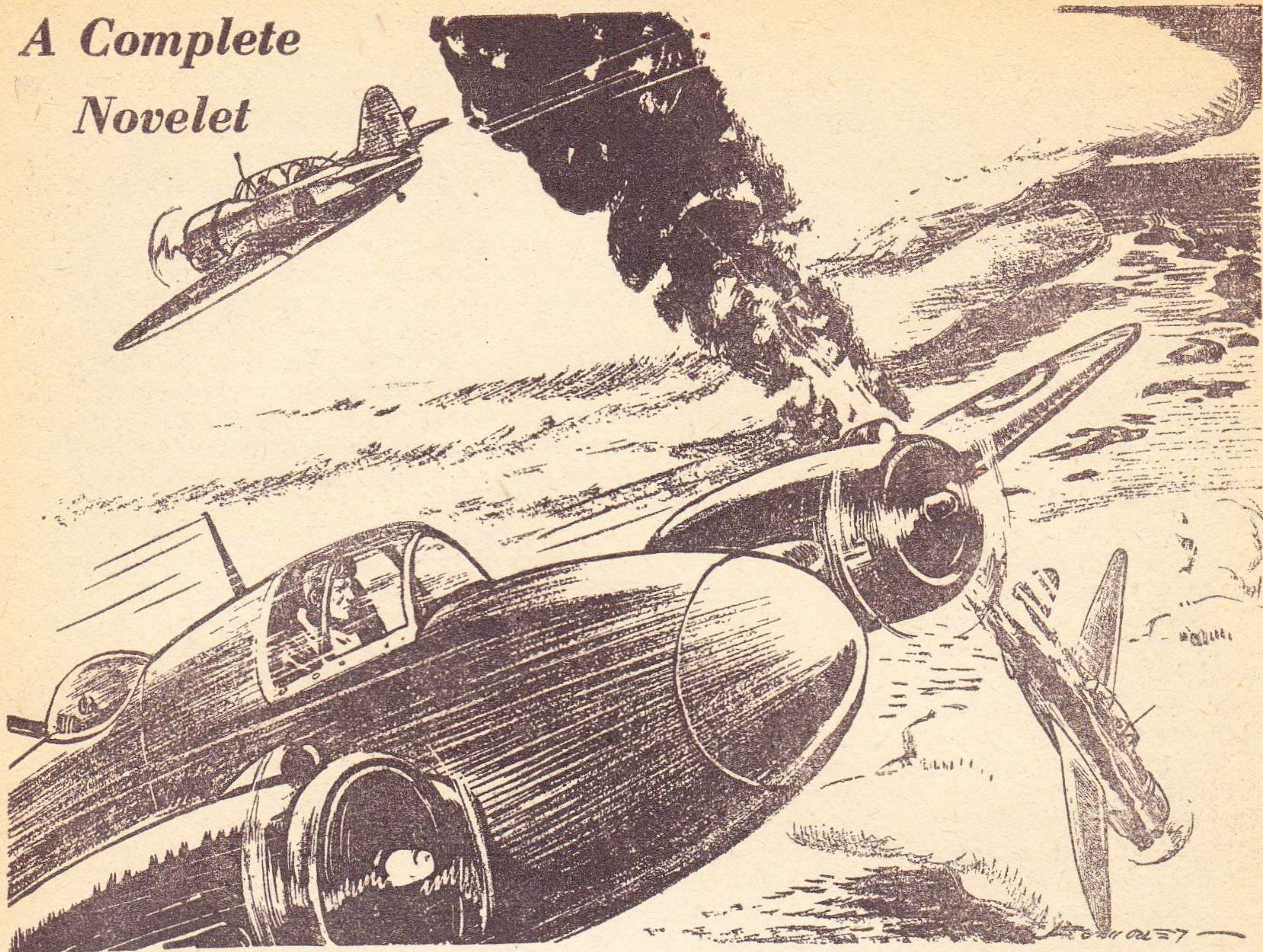
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As Moran pressed the trigger, the Jap traced a path downward, gushing smoke

A KISS FOR KISKA

By ROBERT SIDNEY BOWEN

Action is What Those Wild Canadians, Mickey Moran and Pete Swithins, Craved—but They Got More Than They Expected When They Found Themselves in Lone Combat Against a Jap Task Force!

CHAPTER I

Scouting Mission

SIGHING heavily, "Mickey" Moran, senior Flight Lieutenant of 42 Squadron, Coastal Command, Royal Canadian Air Force, took a sip of his beer and shook his head.

"I must, I must!" he grunted. "I just can't stand it, that's all."

His drinking mate, and also gunner-observer, Flying Officer "Pete" Swithins, gave him a searching look and made sounds into his beer glass.

"So I notice," he murmured. "But, what is it you can't stand?"

"This fast and furious pace of war," Moran replied with a wave of his hand. "It's killing me. I can't sleep nights for the thrills and

the excitement. I'm going to put in for a transfer to some nice quiet theater of war."

Swithins snorted. Mickey Moran had turned brooding eyes toward the mess lounge window. Now he was looking out across the Coastal Command field at Dutch Harbor.

"Just name one spot, I dare you!" he groaned. "One spot deader than this one. I know you're fed up with it, too, Pete. If I never see another drop of the smoking Pacific it will still be much too soon. Jap subs, or maybe Jap patrol planes, they told us. Nuts! The only Japs we'll ever spot on this coastal patrol trick will be pictures in a spotter's guide, or something. But, seriously speaking, Pete, do you think its any use to go to the Old Man, huh?"

"And get tossed out on our ears?" Swithins interrupted. "Not a chance, sweetheart. No transfer to England, or elsewhere, for us.

Here we are and here we stay. The Home Front, you know. And did I ever tell you what you could do with the Home Front? It's a great idea."

"No use—they'd only give us something just as bad," Moran cut in. "Besides, we must away, brave airmen. The vast reaches of the North Pacific are waiting for us. Who knows? We might even sight a Jap fishing boat."

"What's a Jap fishing boat?" Swithins put his beer glass back on the bar. "But, okay, let's go. The sooner we get back the sooner it will be over."

THE pair went outside and started over toward the line of Canadian-made Bristol "Beaufighters," converted over for long range coastal patrol. Almost at once they bumped into a field orderly who informed them that Squadron Leader Heatherton wanted to see them in the Office before they took off. They changed direction, and went to the Office. The O.C. waved them to chairs.

"Keep your eyes open this trip," he said. "It's reported that there is a Jap troop transport and carrier task force some place within a day's steaming of Kiska. Since our squadron has been attached to the American forces here at Dutch Harbor, I know you boys have been having a dull time of it. But it's possible that the Japs might be pulling something very fancy, such as passing by to the south of the Aleutians and curving back up to reach them from the east. Maybe taking a smack at Dutch Harbor en route. All I know is that American Navy Command has asked us to maintain a special look-out for such things."

"Well, we'll look," Moran grunted. Then with a grimace, "As we always do!"

The O.C. smiled wryly.

"Yes, I understand," he said. "This is certainly a ten-cent brand of war. But, it's the job they gave us. I have a hunch we really are working up to some action. No, never mind the questions. I can't tell you a thing, yet. That's all. Nice flying."

"Thanks, sir," Moran said with all the enthusiasm of a man being passed the salt. "We'll skin our eyes extra this trick."

After an exchange of salutes the Beaufighter team went out to the line. Their ship had been all warmed up. They wiggled into their 'chutes and Mae Wests, and climbed aboard. Mickey Moran settled himself at the controls in the nose. And Pete Swithins went to his gun station half way aft to the tail. Moran gave him a moment or two to get settled, and then plugged in the inter-com.

"You still want to come along, little man?" he murmured into the flap-mike, as a test check.

"Don't dare fly off in the nose without me," came the answer clear and loud. "The Old

Man's line of soft soap sounded thrilling. It got me all eager,"

Moran grinned, eased open the 1400 h.p. Bristol "Hercules" engines and sent the Beaufighter trundling out onto the field, got the "green light" from the control tower. A few seconds later he had the Beaufighter streaking toward the far end of the field. Still with plenty of room to spare he lifted it clear and nosed up toward the cloud banks. When he had reached five thousand, he switched over to ground control, and received his okay. Swinging due west, he gave her engines cruising throttle, and headed out over the seemingly limitless expanse of the North Pacific.

Two hours later the seemingly limitless expanse of the North Pacific was still under the wings. And that was all. Just long rolling swells of sky blue water, and a vast canopy of cloud-flecked sky. For two long hours not so much as the sudden appearance of a lonely seagull had served to break the monotony.

"Three o'clock and all's well!" he mouthed into his inter-com. "The wind's southeast, and blows like—er—southeast!"

"Spies did it, that's what," Pete Swithins growled back. "There were thousands of Jap ships and planes here. But when they heard the Old Man had a hunch, they all ducked. Hey! Hold everything!"

Swithin's exclamation brought Moran up straight. "What's cooking?" he barked into the inter-com. "You wouldn't really be seeing something?"

"Not sure," came the clipped answer. "Bearing three o'clock, Mickey. Just under that dark hunk of cloud. I saw something flash, like sun on the wings. Let's take a closer look."

MORAN kicked the Beaufighter around and blasted at full throttles toward the cloud. And he was hunched forward over the controls focusing his eyes hard. But for several seconds he saw nothing. Just as he was about to make suitable comment over the inter-com he, too, caught an unmistakable flash of wings. Then he had a quick glimpse of a plane cutting up into the cloud. The furtive celerity of the maneuver started his heart to pounding. Certainly this was a patrol novelty of first magnitude.

"Did yuh see him, Pete?" he shouted into the inter-com. "And did yuh notice the way he pulled into that cloud? He's a Jap snoop-er as sure as little apples!"

"Relax, pal," the gunner-observer shouted back. "Those things don't happen to us."

"There—a Em-Kay Mark Two," Moran cut in wildly. "It's a Jap, Pete. Now there's two of 'em. Get set with your guns, guy. The war has come to us at last!"

As Moran shouted the words the sharp, clear silhouettes of two Jap Mitsubishi



Moran's prayer was answered when the Vindicator cleared the deck

"Karigane" two-place, long range fighters appeared. Obviously they had sighted the coastal Beaufighter and had come blasting down out of the cloud.

But not to give battle. That soon became apparent. The two Jap planes swerved sharply toward the west and went streaking along at full throttle. As they did so Moran kicked left rudder to "cut the corner" and gain on them. They were well out into the open now, not over three miles away. He could even catch the dim outline of the rising sun insignia on the fuselage sides.

"Come on, kid, boot life into this thing," Swithins' excited voice clattered in his ear phones. "You were dead right, and the drinks are on me. After we each nail one. Mitsubishi Twos mean they're carrier based. Chalk one up for the Old Man's hunch."

Moran didn't bother to answer. He was far too busy getting every last ounce of power possible out of his thundering twin Hercules. And at the same time he switched on his radio, raised Dutch Harbor, and barked out his report. What was said in reply he didn't hear. For at that instant the two Jap pilots realized they weren't able to run away from the Beaufighter. So as one plane, both whirled and came streaking down. They had the advantage of superior altitude. And it seemed to Moran that hardly had they cut around and down before their leading edges started spewing out streams of fire, and there was the yammer of machine gun fire, and the deeper note of air cannon fire, above the roar of the Beaufighter's engines.

"Go on, waste ammo, chumps," Moran howled, lightly resting a thumb on the electrically controlled trigger button of his forward guns. "We can wait. We've had plenty of that kind of experience."

However, the wait wasn't long. No "sky-hooks" were holding those Kariganes back, and they were both coming down full out. It seemed to Moran that he had hardly got those words off his lips than the tell-tale wavy grey lines of tracer bullets were hip-pity-hopping past his left wing tips.

He gulped impulsively, swerved a hair or two to the right, and pulled up at a steeper angle. The maneuver brought the nearest Mitsubishi dead into his Aldis sight. He pressed his trigger button home.

CHAPTER II

Desperate Chances

A SAVAGE recoil of guns and air cannon made the Beaufighter shake and tremble. But Moran held her steady as a rock, and gave that nearest Mitsubishi a full two second burst. For that length of time the Jap

pilot seemed to simply catch the bullets and air cannon slugs in his mouth and spit them out. At least he came right on piling downward dead true in Moran's line of fire.

"Hey, what's keeping that guy up, anyway?"

The words burst automatically from Moran's lips. And then he got the answer. It was that nothing was keeping the Karigane up, now. Its dive had dropped down to the vertical, and black smoke was pouring back from its engine. A fraction of a second later blood red flame laced the black smoke. Then the whole business traced a path down toward the rolling sky blue swells of the North Pacific.

"My turn, my turn!" Pete Swithins' voice screamed in the inter-com. "That other guy is clearing out. Mickey! Pull over and give me a crack."

The gunner-observer emphasized his words by a furious blast of fire from his turret guns. But it did no more good than to crease the sky with tracer smoke. The second Jap pilot must have had a premonition of ill-luck. At any rate he had swung violently up out of his dive, and was roaring away toward the west.

Moran slapped off the top of his climb and cut around too late. In practically nothing flat the Jap was showing a clean pair of heels to the Beaufighter.

"My pal!" Swithins snorted disgustedly in the inter-com. "He grabs himself a Jap and lets me go whistle. We should have got them both, Mickey. Maybe we still can. Gimme some speed!"

But Moran was busy now, talking with Canadian Control, at Dutch Harbor. The new orders he received jolted the happiness of first plane victory right out of him.

"Orders received okay," he spoke into his flap-mike. "Will maintain reports if possible. Eagles to Control, over."

"Control to Eagle," came the voice in his ear phones. "Loud and clear. Carry on. Hold contact. Good luck. Control off."

Moran licked his lips and swallowed hard, before switching back to Swithins.

"Check your Mae West again, Pete," he said into the inter-com. "You're going to need it in just about an hour. Orders, little man."

"Huh? Says which?"

"We are to trail that MK, and keep it in sight." Moran tried to make his voice casual. "It is carrier based, of course, and is heading back. When we sight the carrier, we give Dutch Harbor a report before we sit down."

"Suffering tripe!" Swithins gasped. "Sit down? Don't they love us any more at Dutch Harbor? How far do they think we can swim?"

"A Sunderland will come looking for us, they say," Moran told him. "Just pray that fog doesn't settle. Also, stick your head up in that turret and help me trail that MK. He

may be closer to his carrier than we think."

"Yeah!" Swithins' tone was sarcastic. "What if we bump into one of that carrier's patrols?"

"Well, you signed up to shoot down enemy planes, didn't you?" Moran snapped back, and let it go at that.

Exactly one hour and fifteen minutes later the two Canadian airmen still had the Jap MK-II in sight. They had been unable to gain much, and it looked as if they could chase the Mitsubishi half way around the world without getting within gun range. However, things were not standing still. Definitely not!

A GLANCE at the fuel gauge showed Moran that the needle was jammed hard against the zero peg. From now on it appeared the two Bristols would have to run on their reputations. Added to that unhappy fact was the item of North Pacific weather. Very little blue sky was to be seen now. Clouds had covered the ocean, to the north a towering fog bank was resting on the horizon, as if waiting for the right moment to roll down and blot out everything.

The most distressing development of all was the lack of Jap surface war ships. Not one tell-tale ribbon of stack smoke was streaking the sky far, far ahead. And that could only mean that the MK-II had been fitted with special fuel tanks to increase its range of flight well beyond the usual. This furnished the heart chilling thought that Moran and Swithins would soon plop down into the water without having accomplished any useful purpose.

In other words, this mad venture had become a vain sacrifice. It could well mean a watery grave for two Canadians. A thousand times Moran was tempted to suggest to Control that they turn back. But he shook his head savagely and killed the urge. Base sending them on this suicide mission must mean that it was well worth the sacrifice. Squadron Leader Heatherton was a white man. He wouldn't even send his mother-in-law on a Pacific chase like this unless it was absolutely necessary. Besides, a Sunderland flying boat was on its way to pick them up and the Beaufighter was fitted with a rubber life raft. But the fog might last for days and that's what worried Moran.

"End of the line. And it's been such a pleasant ride."

Swithins' voice in the inter-com phones snapped Moran out of his reverie and brought him the realization the two Bristol engines had lapped up the last drops of high test. They were through for all time to come.

"It's been a wonderful experience," he grunted back, and eased the Beaufighter down into a gentle glide toward the rolling ocean swells. "See anything?"

"Only one Em-Kay Two going over the hill fast," Swithins said. "If you mean, do I see a Jap carrier task force, the answer is, no. I wonder what the Old Man had against us? I hope that Sunderland pilot has good eyesight."

"Save it!" Moran snapped. "Don't bother me while I make my last contact with Control."

He raised Dutch Harbor a moment later. He reported their exact position, and the position and course of the Jap long-range fighter-scouting craft now just a dot on the eastern horizon. He received the assurance that a Sunderland was on its way.

But none of it boosted Moran's spirits. A funny feeling was gripping the pit of his stomach. Cold chills were rippling up his back. At that moment he had a strange idea he and Swithins had seen their last R.C.A.F. Sunderland flying boat.

"Get the raft ready to dump, and then hang on, Pete," he called out. The ocean was coming up fast now. "At least those swells aren't too high."

"Which makes everything just dandy," Swithins snorted. "Why, oh why, did the Air Force ever have such an appeal to me? Show me what a sweet pilot you are, Mickey, old pal. Make this one good."

The crash landing in the water really was good. The fact that Swithins didn't hang on tight enough and whacked his head and that Moran's safety belt almost cut him in two was incidental. The instinct of self-preservation helped them in getting the life raft overboard into the water where it automatically inflated itself. They tossed essential articles into it before they climbed aboard.

AND so, three minutes after the plane touched the Pacific they were paddling away. The Beaufighter had its nose under and its tail pointing toward the sky. When they were well clear they stopped paddling and gazed, sad-eyed, at the sinking plane. Neither made any comment. To real airmen the loss of a plane was deeply significant. It held a meaning that no pilot has yet been able satisfactorily to put into words. You just have to be an airman, and lose your plane, to understand.

Eventually, the Beaufighter gave a lurch and plunged out of sight forever. Only a tiny frothy swirl remained. With its swift disappearance, Pete Swithins fished out a pack of cigarettes and offered it to Moran.

"Have a smoke," he said. He dug out his lighter. "I wonder how long before that Sunderland gets here? What would you guess, Mickey? One hour, two hours, or what?"

"Or what," Moran answered and sucked smoke into his lungs. "It's up to the Sunderland. If she gets here before that fog banking

up to the north, we'll probably be kidding each other about this tomorrow. But, if she doesn't, we'll play blind man's buff."

"Yeah, exactly!" Swithins murmured. He made a face. "For you, it won't be so bad. You did get a plane. But, me? I didn't get a thing. I feel like complaining to the newspapers about the scandalous waste of Canadian pilots."

"Do me a favor, Pete," Moran said with a grin. "Would you mind jumping overboard? These emergency rations are barely enough for one person."

"For that crack I'll stay here," Swithins retorted. "Just a pal! It'll be a pleasure to see you go hungry. First you cheat me out of a Jap. Then you try to dump me into the drink. What's the matter? That Sunderland couldn't be here by now, could it?"

Moran had suddenly straightened up and was holding both hands, binocular style, to his eyes.

"It's not a Sunderland," he said. Besides, it's coming from the wrong direction. But, it's a flying boat—a big baby. Can you see it?"

Swithins swiveled around and stared hard in the direction of Moran's pointing hand. He took a good ten-second look, and then made noises in his throat.

"No, it's not a Sunderland," he said with an effort. "Don't look, Mickey. Make it go away. That's the original snooper. "It's a four-engined Kawanishi flying boat. A Jap copy of the French job on the Dakar-Brazil run."

"Yeah, thanks for instructing me," the pilot said sarcastically. The flying boat was taking on a definite outline. "You're right, though. That's a Kawanishi, sure enough. Out looking for the Yank Navy units. Hey, he sees us. Yep, he's cutting his engines. The slant-eyed this and that is nosing down."

Moran didn't say any more. As his eyes met Swithins' he knew the gunner-observer was thinking the same thing. When the Jap had finished looking, the chances were that aerial machine guns would yammer, and things would be tough indeed for a certain pair of Canadians. Japs like cruel slaughter.

"Me for diving overboard!" Swithins said. He got up on one knee. "That tramp isn't going to pick me off like a clay pigeon. Gosh, I wish we had something to throw back at him."

"Stick around," Moran answered. "He hasn't started shooting yet. Besides, diving over won't help any. He'll get you just the same. But, suit yourself, kid. Me, I won't give the rat any satisfaction. He'll never see me trying to duck."

"I'm a fool to let you talk me into it," Swithins groaned and settled back in the life raft. "Look, he's swinging around into the wind to land."

Moran nodded. The Kawanishi was set-

ting down on the long rolling swells. The props were just ticking over enough to prevent a stall. A moment or two later the giant craft bumped the water and sent spray flying. It touched the surface about two hundred yards away, turned and came plowing over toward them.

"Do you think they want to make sure, Mickey?" Swithins said in a tight voice. "I mean about the machine gun stuff? I don't feel a bit like laughing."

"Does this strike you as comical?" Moran answered. "Maybe you know what we can do about it?"

As he spoke he took his gaze off the Jap craft, turned around, stared anxiously eastward. But he had little hope of seeing the Sunderland. Only layers of cloud and streaks of blue sky met his gaze. There wasn't so much as a dot in sight!

CHAPTER III

Japanese Brutes

WHEN he turned around again the Kawanishi was barely moving forward. Next the starboard engines blasted out harshly for a moment. The flying boat swung around broadside not over twenty yards away. Its hull door had been opened and a pint sized Jap stood in the opening. He made violent motion with one arm and a coil of thin line came sailing through the air. It fell true, right smack across the life raft. Both Moran and Swithins grabbed at it instinctively. Then the Jap commenced to pull them toward the hull nose.

No command had been shouted at them but none was necessary. The hull ports were all open, and in five of them were Japs clutching short barreled machine guns.

"This doesn't make sense, Pete," said Moran. "Why land that big job to pick us up? But, play it for all it's worth. It might be a break."

Swithins nodded and studied the face of the stocky-legged Jap who was hauling them alongside. He didn't like what he saw. He liked it less when the Jap caught his eye and showed a mouthful of crooked buck teeth in a smirking grin.

As the life raft bumped against the hull a second Jap appeared in the doorway. He was an officer and carried an automatic which he pointed threateningly at the two Canadians.

"Come in!" he said crisply.

Moran and Swithins obeyed. After Swithins had entered the hull, he was promptly and most expertly frisked by the Jap officer. When the Jap found no hidden knife or gun he seemed disappointed. He gave Swithins a shove that sent him crashing heavily

against a bulkhead support. Caution was the watch word, however. So Swithins swallowed his seething rage and watched the Jap officer frisk Moran. Perhaps Moran was on the alert, but at any rate when he received his violent shove he caught himself quickly and didn't collide with anything.

The light in the hull compartment wasn't good. But it was good enough for the two of them to see the glitter in the Jap officer's eyes, and every little gesture he made with the long barreled automatic.

"Go!" he hissed and pointed at a narrow companionway leading aft. "Go, walk, now!"

Again Moran and Swithins obeyed. With Moran in the lead they started along the companionway with the Jap bringing up close behind. Suddenly the air was filled with gosh awful noises. It was a second or two before the Canadians realized that the Jap officer was screaming out something in his native tongue. Also they soon guessed what it was all about. There came the mighty thunder of the four engines, and the huge flying boat started to move.

Soon the Jap officer halted his prisoners in the companionway and kicked open a small door.

"Enter, now!" he piped, and rapped Moran on the arm with his automatic.

The Canadian pilot hesitated momentarily, but managed to smother his anger. He went through the door and into a pitch dark compartment. Maybe he didn't move fast enough. He heard the thud of a blow behind, heard Swithins curse sharply, and the gunner-observer came piling in on top of him. The compartment door was slammed with a resounding clang and a key grated in the lock.

"You okay, Pete?" Moran asked and groped for his pal in the darkness.

"I'm okay, but plenty sore," Swithins answered. "Gosh, do I hope I get just one smack at that filthy baboon some day. He darn near split my konk open. Lucky I've got an iron dome. You doing all right, Mickey?"

"Fair, considering," Moran said as he sat down on a bare floor that was now jouncing with take-off movements. "Looks like they've omitted chairs. Back against the wall. It isn't too tough."

SWITHINS shifted over beside Moran, with his back against the hull wall. They felt the huge craft shake the North Pacific from its hull and go climbing up into the sky. Then Moran voiced the question uppermost in both minds.

"Now, what gives, I wonder?"

"Don't ask," Swithins answered. "This day gets more cock-eyed with every passing minute. Maybe they didn't want to leave a couple of dead bodies behind. They're trying to keep their presence a secret. Remember how they hauled our life raft aboard?"

"Yeah, perhaps that's it," Moran said and scowled hard in the darkness.

"I'm just wondering," Swithins said after a long pause. "This tub showed up awful soon. Yep, they seemed to know just where and what to look for. I was wondering if we saw things, but didn't see them."

"That makes swell sense!" Moran snapped. "Spit it out. Make it plainer, Pete."

"We've heard rumors of a mysterious unit of the Jap fleet prowling in these waters," Swithins replied. "I'd say that we're now about seven hundred miles south of Dutch Harbor. We circled plenty far out over the North Pacific, Mickey, so maybe they think we spotted their transport and carrier force, and had a good break in nailing us before we reported it to Dutch Harbor."

"Well, that sounds plausible," Moran agreed. "And they wouldn't machine-gun us because the Sunderland was due any moment. That would have given the whole show away."

"Skip it," Swithins growled and shuddered. "Shut up, Mickey. Maybe these walls have ears."

"Okay, I'm dumb," Moran muttered. "Only I don't like things I can't figure out."

That ended the conversation. For just how long the silence lasted neither of them knew. It was too dark to get a look at their wrist watches, and the rich smell of gas and oil fumes in the darkness curbed all desire to strike a light.

However, Moran guessed it was about an hour when the droning thunder of the four engines abated, and the change of flight motion told him that the huge Kawanishi was nosing downward.

"Okay, Mickey," Swithins murmured. "Now something else is going to happen. And it's certain to be something we won't like. Do you suppose those stories about Jap prisoners are true? Gosh I wish I had a gun."

"Shut up!" Moran snarled. "Let's wait and see."

If Swithins had any further comment to make, he kept it to himself. A minute later the flying boat touched water with a crashing thump that almost shook their back teeth loose. By the time the stars and comets had faded out from in front of their eyes, the Kawanishi had completed its landing run and was riding gently on the water.

"Where did that guy learn to fly?" Swithins gulped when he got his breath back. "Out of a book? I wonder if he stove in the hull?"

Before Moran could answer, the compartment door was wrenched open and the brilliant beam of a flashlight hit them in the eyes.

"Go out," a familiar Jap voice barked at them.

Rising to their feet, they crossed the room and once more emerged into the narrow companionway.

"Go there!" they were ordered. Each was shoved roughly forward toward the bow.

They were herded back toward the door by which they had entered the boat. And as their eyes focused to the change of light they saw that the door was open again. What they saw through the opening was something breath taking. Not seventy yards away loomed the tall battle-gray-painted side of a Jap aircraft carrier that towered above them high into the overcast. But they didn't have time for more than a quick look. Even as they tilted their heads to glance upward they each received a kick and a shove that sent them sprawling. They popped out through the hull door opening and fell head-long into a small launch alongside.

BY LUCK they received only a severe shaking up. It didn't wear off until after the launch had skipped across the water and the two Canadians found themselves on the flight deck of the carrier, surrounded by a group of grinning, smirking Slant-Eyes.

A glimpse of something odd, however, caused Mickey Moran to ignore the group of Japs about him and stare past them toward the aircraft grouped at the stern. Drawn up for instant take-off position were four Yank Navy Vought-Sikorsky "Vindicator" dive bombers! And all four of them were "loaded for bear."

At first look Moran thought his eyes were playing him tricks. A second look confirmed the dumbfounding truth. It also gave him a good hunch as to how the Yank planes came to be there. There were patches on the wings and fuselages, and the landing gear of two of them plainly showed marks of repair. It was easy to guess the Japs had salvaged those four Vindicators from crash or forced landings in the water, and had patched them up into flying shape again.

But, why? Moran didn't know the correct answer to that. Yet what he guessed sent cold shivers dancing over his skin.

Further speculation was cut short by sing-song Jap lingo. A couple of armed guards took Moran and Swithins forward along the flight deck which was of typical Jap construction, having no stacks or superstructure above its level. They were hustled down a companion ladder amidships and then along a companionway traversing the breadth of the ship. Half way along they were halted before a door and a Jap officer accompanying them, knocked on the panels. A "squeal" from within answered and the two Canadians were shoved into the quarters of the monkey-faced commander of the carrier. Three of his officers were with him, and he swung around in his chair and spoke to the two prisoners in clear understandable English.

"Sit down, gentlemen, please," said the Jap commander with a wave of his hand. "Cigarettes?"

Concealing their astonishment, Moran and Swithins each took one, and even let the monkey-faced commander hold the match. This done, the Jap snubbed out the match, folded his hands across his fat middle and stared at them.

"You are surprised not to be dead?" he inquired.

Moran shrugged and blew smoke toward the cabin ceiling. He was wondering if these simians were armed.

"Not particularly," Swithins told the Jap. "Killing or getting killed is a soldier's business. Does it matter if we die now, or later, when our friends sink this carrier?"

Moran saw the Jap start and a slight flicker pass over the passive oriental face. That was the tip-off to him. Swithins' aimless talk had scored. It seemed to confirm what the Japs had evidently feared. All four of them were now focussing intent stares on Swithins. Finally the senior officer spoke again.

"You expect to be sunk aboard this carrier?" he demanded with a faint smile that was a waste of effort.

"That's right!" Moran spoke up quickly and waved a hand. "What do you think we were flying around for? Our health? Its going to be tough on us, but at least we did our part. You're pegged, Admiral. Your whole task force is pegged."

YET even as he spoke Moran had little real hope of deceiving them. Killers and cruel brutes though the Japs are, they can hardly be called dumb. They don't bluff very easily. Moran was just trying to make the most of a slender opportunity. Which failed as he knew it would. The Jap commander gave him a pitying look, and a queer little bobbing shake of his head.

"Quite the other way!" he snapped at the Canadian. "It is the Americans who are what you say, pegged. We know where they are. And you will tell us their strength. The battle will not be today. We must make use of the coming night. Tomorrow we will give Kiska a Japanese kiss! You will tell us when your second aircraft carrier is to rejoin the first. There were two yesterday, but there is but one today. You knew, of course, where it went before leaving your own flight deck. The answer, please."

For a moment Mickey Moran was speechless. Like a bolt from the blue the meaning of this weird business flashed in his mind. The Japs believed that Swithins and he were from an American aircraft carrier. A Yank carrier that was part of a task force searching the North Pacific for this Jap vessel. The Mikado's carrier planned to raid Kiska!

Mickey Moran knew he had solved the Jap's secret. All the other bits of the puzzle dropped into place, and the whole picture became crystal clear. To begin with those two MK-Elevens had obviously been out

scouting for the American fleet. When one of them had been shot down, the surviving Jap plane had cut for his own carrier, and no doubt he had radioed ahead. Then the Kawanishi snoopers had found the two Canadians afloat on a life raft and had mistaken them for Yankee pilots. The Japs were worried about a missing American carrier, and wanted information. Well these monkey-faced rats had another trick coming.

"Only two carriers in our force?" Moran grinned in a pleased fashion. "Okay, keep it that way, and everything will be fine. But to answer your question, the second carrier will rejoin the first six weeks from next Tuesday."

As Moran barked out the words he half expected to see the Jap explode with rage. But the fat, slant-eyed man merely stared at Moran. Finally he spoke, slowly hissing out the words.

"To speak to a Japanese gentleman as you address me, is stupid," he said. "At all times I have been polite to you. We Japanese know just how to correct your manners. We will make you tell us the truth, too. You will find it very painful. You will regret your insults."

CHAPTER IV

Flaming Battle

QUICKLY the Jap bobbed his round close-shaven head to emphasize his threat. Then he spat out a stream of orders in his native tongue. The guards grabbed Moran and Swithins and pushed them around toward the door. For one mad instant Moran was almost overpowered by the urge to blurt out that they weren't from any Yank Navy aircraft carrier, and didn't know a thing. But his pride and a tough fighting instinct smothered the impulse. He knew enough about Japs to realize it would not change their treatment of Swithins or himself.

And so he clamped his lips tight as his guard booted him through the cabin door. Sharp nailed fingers caught him by the back of the neck, and a gun was jabbed viciously against his back bone. It was an effort not to cry out with pain as he was forced down the outside passage amid a rain of blows.

After a dozen steps, he was kicked along an intersecting corridor. Through blurred eyes he noticed a wide opening at the far end. It was one of the craft's deck hangars. He could see parts of planes and Jap mechanics moving about. At this moment something else happened.

From everywhere came a rising crescendo of hideous sound that almost snapped his eardrums. The ship rocked with the thunder

of anti-aircraft fire. Only then did Mickey Moran realize that the hideous sound deafening his ears was the carrier's inter-ship alarm signal. And he took over from there.

It probably helped some that the Jap guard was just as stunned by the clamor as he was. At any rate the sharp nailed steel fingers released Moran's neck. Moran no longer felt the pressure of a gun barrel against his back bone. Like a flash Moran swung around and ripped one clenched fist to the guard's neck and one booted foot to the Jap's middle. Mickey Moran was not fighting according to the rules, but that didn't worry him. Neither did rules seem to trouble Pete Swithins who also had gone into action. Anyway, they made a sweet team in a brawl, and in less time than it takes to tell about it two Japanese brutes had joined their ancestors.

"Nice, if my guy was only that Kawanishi rat," Swithins muttered, as he straightened up. "Now, what?"

Moran grabbed Swithins by the arm and started running along the passage toward the deck hangar. But he stopped just before he reached the end. Pulling Swithins close and put his lips right to the gunner-observer's ears.

"The Japs guessed wrong, looks like!" he shouted above the tumult of anti-aircraft fire. "My guess is the Yanks had them spotted all along. Do we stay here and take whatever the Yanks dish out or do we make for the flight deck, and one of those Vindicators?"

"The flight deck," Swithins shouted back. "Here! take this."

As Swithins spoke he shoved one of the Jap guard's guns into Moran's hand. The Canadian pilot took it, grinned, and blew Swithins a kiss.

"Nice to have had you along," he shouted. "Let's go while the going's good."

Luck was with them. It was evident what was happening up above had been the last thing the Japs expected. The sound of their ship's alarm, and the rapidity of their own anti-aircraft fire showed their alarm and excitement. Their screams of rage cut through the thunder of the guns. And they were running in all directions, bumping into each other, and going sprawling.

AS MORGAN and Swithins came charging into the deck hangar it added to the confusion. Both Canadians used their guns with deadly accuracy, and when they reached a companionway, leading top-side, no less than five Japs were out of the war for keeps. And those left alive were doing their best to claw their way down through the steel deck.

Moran or Swithins did not pause. They both went up the companionway in record time. Here they found another scene of confusion. The thunderous roar of pounding guns, diving planes, revving Jap engines, and the mightier crash of exploding bombs

almost stunned them.

In one sweeping glance Mickey Moran saw black bursts of flak shells speckling the heavens. Shafts of gray blue light were cutting downward. But those shafts of grey blue light were U. S. Navy dive bombers, and although the flak fire was intended to form a curtain of steel in the sky, those Navy dive bombers were slashing down through it like knives through soft butter.

Then, with Pete Swithins beside him, Mickey Moran raced toward the Jap salvaged Vought-Sikorsky Vindicator some sixty yards down the deck. But even as they leaped toward it a Jap carrier fighter came streaking toward them in a take-off. They both had to dive wildly aside to keep from being slashed to ribbons by the whirling prop of that charging plane.

Their unexpected appearance drove the Jap pilot haywire for a second. The plane swerved sharply, careened and scraped its left wingtip on the deck. And in that same instant, it spilled over the rim of the flight deck, and stuck there hanging by its tail. Then came a sheet of flame and a blasting roar that shook the whole carrier.

Mick Moran stumbled to his feet and amid the cloud of black smoke, grabbed Swithins and hauled him erect.

"Speed, Pete," he yelled. "Come on, and keep low. I don't think they've guessed our plan."

Moran whipped up his gun. A Jap officer came rushing at them through the smoke. A hip shot from Mickey Moran's gun dumped him like a clay pigeon, and the two Canadians again scurried forward along the flight deck. Guns popped, flak guns roared, and exploding bombs thundered on both sides of the carrier. But Mickey Moran and Pete Swithins paid no attention. Suddenly they were ducking under a salvaged Vindicator's wings. Together they cleared the wheels and scrambled up into the twin pit.

With no time to stop, look, or listen, Moran stepped on the starter and heeled the throttle forward the instant the motor roared. As the plane started forward something hot skipped across his forehead and an invisible hand seemed to pull a curtain over his eyes.

Faintly he heard his own choking cry of pain, but he didn't stop feeding gas to the engine. Some instinct kept his hand pressed hard against the throttle, and instinct alone guided the Vindicator for him as it picked up speed and went racing forward through swirling smoke and flame.

Then, suddenly, that invisible hand lifted the curtain from Moran's eyes, just a little. Enough to see the yawning, smoking bomb hole in the deck, dead ahead. He hauled the Vindicator's stick all the way back and sobbed out a frantic prayer. The prayer was answered. The wheels cleared the flight deck

no more than six inches from disaster, and the Yank dive bomber went lurching and staggering upward into the air. As soon as possible Moran leveled off the climb, nosing down a hair to gain every fraction of precious speed.

A BLASTING roar under the right wing almost knocked the dive-bomber upside down. But, somehow, the aircraft righted and held its altitude, and it streaked past off the bow of the carrier into spray filled air.

After he was clear, and the curtain of darkness lifted even more from Moran's eyes, and he twisted around in the seat to look back. Pete Swithins was doing the same thing. What they saw gave them both the same idea. Save for that single bomb hole in the flight deck the Jap carrier wasn't in serious trouble. The attacking Yank Navy dive bombers had done their best but the furious protective fire thrown up by the carrier and her escort ships had caused a lot of Yank bombs to miss. Also, the carrier had managed to launch some of her fighters and they were going at the Yank attackers with suicidal ferocity. In short, the Jap carrier was holding her own. Also as time went on her chances of losing herself in the fog now rolling down fast from the north were getting better.

"Up to us, Pete," Moran bellowed above the Vindicator's roar. "Okay by you? It isn't going to be nice."

"Did I say no?" the gunner-observer bawled back. "Always acting as if I'm holding back. I don't see how I stand you. Come on—let's lay some eggs on that carrier, like we promised that slant-eyed stuffed shirt we would when we were chewing the rag with him."

Mickey Moran nodded and swung the Vindicator back toward the carrier. Then it seemed as though every Jap gunner aboard the carrier guessed what those two mad flying Canadians had in mind. The sky about the speeding Vindicator flashed with exploding blossoms of red flame. A roar of sound blasted the air. To Mickey Moran it was like flying straight through a volcano eruption. But he pointed that Vindicator at a spot dead center in the carrier's deck and kept going. When the spot slid out of view under the nose he did two things at the same time. He punched the button that released his eggs, and hauled back on the stick with every ounce of his strength.

What followed then happened so fast Moran's whirling brain was unable to absorb little more than the beginning of it. He heard a thunderous crash that seemed to cave in his body and burst every blood vessel. Then mighty force jerked him high up in the heavens and hurled him downward. After that there was nothing but silence and darkness.

Next came faint white light and strange sounds. Those sounds were all jumbled up and didn't make sense. He found himself staring at an expanse of white. Then he became aware someone was calling his name. He turned his head and saw Pete Swithins slightly bandaged, propped up and grinning at him from an adjoining hospital bed.

"How's tricks, hero?" Swithins said. "You dropped off to sleep on me the last time you woke up."

"Last time?" Moran echoed in a voice so weak it surprised him. "Where are we, and why? I can't seem to remember things."

"The Dutch Harbor Base Hospital, of course," Swithins replied, with a searching look. "You mean you don't remember waking up this morning when the Medico was here, and chewing over things with me, huh?"

"No," Moran replied. His bandaged head had commenced to hurt. "What things? Did we crash on patrol?"

THE bombardier stared at his friend. "Yeah, in a way," Swithins said. "We pancaked right after the explosion. Our own eggs almost tore us apart. If they hadn't been set for delayed action, and hadn't gone down into that carrier's innards, we sure wouldn't be here. But, you did a sweet bit of something getting that blast-crippled Vindicator down onto the water, Mickey. And—what's the matter?"

"I catch on now," Moran blurted out. "We'd swiped a plane from the Japs and dumped our eggs. I wonder if we sank her?"

"No, but we fixed her so the Yank Navy pilots sank her when their second attack wave came over. And, what do you know, Mickey! We're heroes, they say. We found

that Jap carrier force for the Yanks."

"Quit kidding," Moran scoffed.

"It's a fact," Swithins cut in. "That Yank force was tuned in on us while we were keeping contact with Dutch Harbor. They cut around to the west and caught the Japs going the wrong way. It was their first wave coming over while we were aboard. You and I left her a dead duck for the second wave. Three Jap transports were plenty damaged, too. They escaped in the fog. But it seems they had to call off their plan to recapture Kiska and Attu."

"But us!" Moran said with an effort. Sleep was tugging at his eyelids. "How did we get here?"

"Courtesy of the U. S. Navy, you might say," Swithins said. "Their dive bomber boys saw what we did, and figured we couldn't be Japs. Anyway, one of their seaplanes picked us up. I don't remember much. I was having trouble holding you on the wing. You were out cold, pal. As ice! Anyway, they took us back to their carrier. I came to long enough to spit out a word or two, and being nice guys, they flew us direct to here. Why, the Old Man was in yesterday, Mickey. And know something, kid? He says—"

Swithins stopped short. From Moran's cot came a peaceful, gentle snoring.

"What a guy!" Swithins growled and snuggled down more under the covers. "Can't even keep awake long enough to hear the best part of all. So, nuts to him, the hound. He can just wait for the Old Man to tell him, himself, that the whole Squadron is going to England. The lazy punk! All he does is sleep."

A minute later both Canadian heroes were snoring.

Coming Next Issue

BOMBER'S BOOMERANG, a Novelet of the Australian Air Force by
LAURENCE DONOVAN—DEAD ENGINE JOHNNY, a Novelet of
the R. A. F. by ROBERT SIDNEY BOWEN—and Others!

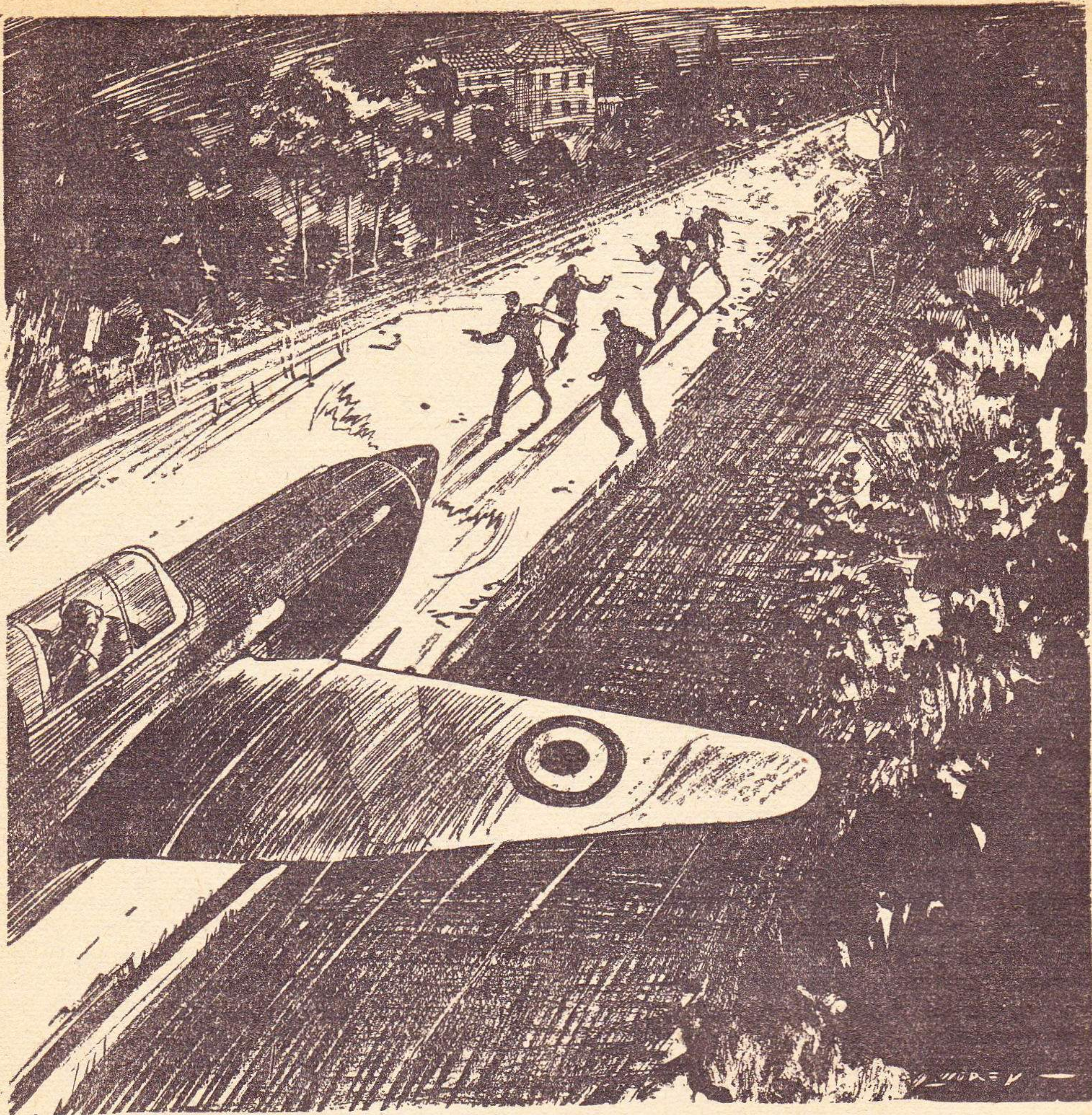
SIGHT TESTER
THIRST BESTER

Guess which line is the longer—
but don't bet on it



ANSWER:
no fooling—measure them
Both are the same—





He taxied across the field straight toward the onrushing men.

PANCAKE EXPERT

By LAURENCE VICTOR

Jay Allen, British War Ace, Always Had Trouble Landing a Plane, Until He Had to Land on a Bean—a Nazi Bean!

DOWN below, two strings of lights flickered like ghosts as the Hurricane lowered for a landing. Jay Allen, British lieutenant, tensed and grimly set his jaws. He was always like that when it came time to land.

In the air, Jay Allen could outfly almost anything with wings, but when it came to putting his ship down, some quirk made the simple job as difficult as building the Pyramids. If it hadn't

been for his flying ability and his score of victories, he might have been permanently grounded.

"Control calling Number Three Blue. Come in, Number Three Blue."

Allen switched over his radio.

"Number Three Blue receiving you. Coming in."

He heard an audible groan and then some muffled words which got through nevertheless:

"It's Jay Allen coming in for a landing. Notify the crash wagon and the ambulance to stand by. Clear field of every plane, every man. Why don't they give him a seaplane so he can have the whole bloody ocean to land on?"

Jay Allen winced. That was only a mild statement of his reputation as a landing expert.

He zoomed over the field, came back, and started to nose down for the landing. There were several small valleys dug in the field from other landings he'd made. The C. O. in charge of keeping the field level said Allen was worse than a stick of Hun bombs.

He let the flaps undercarriage down, felt the plane slow a little and braced himself, wondering if he'd nose over or merely rip off a wing.

The radio buzzed and this time the announcer's voice was very crisp.

"Operations calling Number Three Blue. This is Operations."

Jay wondered what that meant. Operations usually signaled when they were to go into battle and where. It had little to do with landing. Control took care of that. He called back that he received well and clear.

REMAIN air-borne. Orbit until you receive further instructions. Bandits approaching."

Jay hoped his sigh of relief couldn't be heard over the radio. He'd have stayed up here forever if some magic formula could keep filling his gas tank.

He knew also, that should Operations ever find out how much he dreaded to make a landing, they'd retire him to some school for training gunnery experts. And he didn't like that idea. Jay Allen would rather fight than eat, for he had seen Coventry and London. . . .

He circled the field and noticed the lights had winked out. Then came the message he was waiting for.

"Number Three Blue, Vector two, one, five. Angels twelve."

Jay set the gyro compass at 215 and climbed to 12,000 feet. He flew a straight course and in a short time he realized the sky was full of planes. Spitfires and Hurricanes all. They streaked toward the Channel.

Five minutes later, Operations informed them that the enemy craft were coming in at ten thousand feet and ap-

parently heading for a certain city. The squadrons banked and raced in that direction.

It was dusk, but Jay saw them coming, a strong force, apparently bent on inflicting a vengeance raid for the mauling Berlin had taken the night before.

"Tallyhooooo!" the C. O.'s voice came over.

Jay flipped her into a power dive, set his gunsights and warmed his machine-guns. The arrival of this force of fighter craft seemed to be unexpected by the Heinies. Their escorting ships rose to meet the attack, but Jay dived between them without drawing any fire.

He got the top of one bomber in his sights, paid no attention to the fusillade of steel that came up to meet him. His finger touched the gun button and he gave the Krauts some steel himself.

The aft blister seemed to disintegrate. So did the tail assembly and the big enemy plane began to spin. Jay broke off. That was number one, but he was far from satisfied.

Then a Heinkel dived at him. This was Allen's special joy. In something less than ten seconds, the amazed Heinkel pilot discovered that the man he chased was, in turn, chasing him. They streaked out over the Channel and the Heinie had one thought in mind. To reach his base before that crazy British pilot got him.

Jay shoved the auxiliary throttle, boosting the engines to their maximum power. He fired an experimental burst which fell short. But he cursed and prayed he could close up by at least three hundred feet.

The Hurricane seemed to join in that battle with a will. Its engine hummed smoothly. Jay watched the plane grow larger in his sights. Then the German pilot lost his head and dived. Jay went down after him with full throttle. There was considerable danger of blacking out if the dive lasted too long. He opened his mouth wide and yelled.

Then the Heinie leveled off and Jay's guns let go. They caught the plane at its tail, swept forward and like a sewing machine, stitched the enemy ship through the middle. It burst into flame for a second and then exploded. No chute went wafting down. Jay didn't expect to see one.

He came back to ten thousand feet,

circled and saw that the air was practically clear of enemy ships. There were a few burning pyres on the ground, flaming evidence of British marksmanship and flying.

His fuel low and ammunition almost gone, Jay headed once more for his base. He would have to make the landing this time and once more he braced for the ordeal. But now, to his horror, the area was covered with fog.

He came in very low. Even with flaps and gear down he knew he was going too fast so he gunned her and made a gradual climb. Something whisked past his limited vision. That would be the control tower. He broke out into a cold sweat.

HE CONTACTED Control and got his orders. By instrument, he knew he was nearing the field again. A tree-top slid past. He came down very fast then, felt the wheels touch the ground.

Now he began easing up on the brakes, but suddenly, he jammed them on full and the plane almost dove headlong into the ground. By some stroke of good luck it stopped ten feet from Operations Building, now faintly visible through the fog.

Jay crawled out of the plane. His knees were so weak that he had to grab at a wing to save himself from falling. A pitched battle gave him no sensation like this—only landings. He could hear sirens now. The crash cars were out. Someone saw him and in a moment he was surrounded by anxious-eyed mechanics.

A tall man moved through the crowd, obviously worried. He glanced at the plane, at Jay, and then seemed to relax.

"Lieutenant," he said, "you will come with me."

One of his ground crew sidled up and spoke out of the corner of his mouth.

"Bad, sir. One of the big ones is here on business and I heard 'em talking about you. Brace up. Maybe you'll get out of it."

Jay saluted smartly, fell into step with the officer and marched to Headquarters.

An officer with the insignia of a Lieutenant General was seated behind a desk. Beside him sat a gray-haired man who wore some kind of a foreign decora-

tion in the lapel of his civilian coat. Jay snapped to attention.

"So this is our pancake expert," the General smiled slightly. "We expected you to crash again, Lieutenant. At ease."

"Thank you, sir," Jay answered. "I really thought I'd crash myself, sir."

"The man is honest," the general chuckled. "Good. Now, Lieutenant, I came here to look for a man who can put his plane down in one of the smallest flying fields in the world. In fact, it isn't even a field, but a small pasture lot. I heard about you. I know you have a bad habit of using about one twentieth of any normal field for sitting down, and I think you're the man for the job."

"Yes, sir," Jay said and wondered what was coming next. At any rate, he wasn't going to be grounded.

"This is Major Toutain of the French Army," the general went on, introducing the man beside him. "He is an expert on colonial affairs and although he is supposed to be under house arrest at his home in France, he managed to reach us. How he did it will remain secret for the present."

"How do you do, sir." Jay saluted the Frenchman who gravely returned the introduction.

"Major Toutain must be brought back to France at once. He outwitted the Nazis quite easily by calling in his family physician who ordered him to bed with the instructions that he was not to be disturbed for any reason whatsoever. The Nazi guards outside his house now, are content that he is still in a sick bed. Do you follow me, Lieutenant?"

"Yes, sir," Jay answered promptly.

"Good," the general continued. "Now we intended to drop Major Toutain by chute, but we find that's impossible. The major is really a sick man and those starvation rations he has been allowed have made him pretty weak. Our doctors say a parachute jump at his age and in his condition would be highly dangerous.

"We have decided that he must get there by plane and that you are the one to do it. The plane would have to land in a very limited space. . . . Of course, you may refuse this assignment."

"I'll take it, sir," Jay said.

The general nodded. "I have ordered your plane refueled and rearmed. It is ready now and you will take off in ten minutes. Good luck, my boy."

JAY shook hands with him, saluted, and then stepped aside respectfully for the major to pass through the door. Walking together to the plane, Major Toutain gave him further information.

"The Nazis believe I am still in the house," he said, "therefore I must return without their knowing I have been gone. One of my servants will meet us at the field. I will dress as a farm hand, be driven right past the noses of the Gestapo agents on guard and go into the fields. From there, I can reach my home very easily."

"I'll get you there, sir," Jay said. "It will be a tight squeeze in this plane, but we can't take a larger one if what the General said about that field is the truth."

Major Toutain nodded somberly. "It will look no bigger than a postage stamp when you prepare to land, *mon ami*. But you can do it. I trust my life to you."

Jay thought of what the field would look like, of his responsibility, and he began to perspire with nervous anxiety.

Colonel Kennerly, the C.O., waited beside Jay's plane.

"You're a good man, Lieutenant," he said to Jay as Major Toutain prepared to climb in. "One of the very best. That is, in the air. Your landings are atrocious and how you haven't broken your neck before now, I can't understand. You always manage to come through unscathed, though I can't say as much for some of our equipment."

"Remember this: if you crack up on French soil, you'll be made a prisoner if you are lucky. A firing squad if they find out about this."

"I'll be back," Jay answered. "Thank you for the opportunity, sir."

"Fine." The colonel proffered his hand. "I'll stay awake until you return. You might bring me back a bottle of brandy if you can find one. I understand the major had a fine wine cellar once."

Jay grinned and piled into his plane. With a nod to the colonel he slid the cowlings shut, then revved her and streaked across the field. He made one orbit, got a vector from Operations, and roared away toward his destination.

He and the major talked over the intercoms. The major was more worried about his family than himself.

"If I am caught, those dirty Boche

will execute every member of my family. This is a risky business, but it had to be done, Lieutenant. Many French officers live only for the day when they can assist our allies in driving the Boche from France. To say nothing of arranging matters so Monsieur Laval will be swung from a lamp post in the shadows of the Eiffel Tower."

"I'd like to be there," Jay grinned. "The day is coming too, sir. Faster than you think. We have the Americans fighting like wildcats beside us. Their equipment is superb. You should see what their Flying Fortresses can do!"

"I have seen," the major smiled. "There is a factory half a mile from where I live. That is, there was. A formation of Fortresses wiped it out one evening and never wasted a bomb."

Jay was flying at maximum altitude, intending to come in with a long glide so the sound of his motors wouldn't be picked up. He shuddered at the thought of that miniature pasture. It would probably be the worst landing he ever made.

"You will see the wink of a flashlight," the major told him, "in a certain signal which I will recognize. My man will be there waiting. You must land directly north of where you see the light."

Jay groaned. Only a flashlight—and he couldn't even make a three point with a host of spotlights.

His instruments showed it was time to go down. It was funny, he thought, how close the Germans were to England and how they didn't dare try a crossing. And that thought made him feel a little better.

THE ship whisked through space. Eyes on his instruments, Jay warned the major to watch for the signal. It came. He glided straight toward it. His knuckles were white as he gripped the stick.

"Just like an amateur," he thought. He wondered why he'd never frozen the controls during the landings. "Too scared to do that, I guess."

Then turf whizzed under his nose. He gulped, switched on the ignition. He rose to circle once and come down very fast. In the inky darkness, he didn't know what to expect. All he could do was put her down and hope and pray. He did. . . .

The plane gave a crazy lurch, scraped a wing tip but stopped without further damage. The major climbed out, shook hands with Jay and warned him to leave at once.

A car with dimmed-out lights came through a fringe of brush not more than eight feet from the nose of the plane. Jay's knees shook. He'd almost overshoot it that time, all right!

The Frenchman ran for the car and Jay sighed. All he had to do now was get into the air, cross the Channel, and make another of his hair-raising landings. At least the major was safe.

Suddenly he heard a sharp cry. Almost instantly, powerful searchlights were trained on the plane. In the glare of the lights he saw the major held firmly by a man who wore an old cap and a worn coat over his snappy Gestapo officer's uniform. More Gestapo men were heading for Jay and the plane. Their revolvers were out, ready to shoot.

The plane's prop was ticking over smoothly. Now it roared into life. Jay turned the plane so sharply that it made him dizzy. He taxied across the field, straight toward the onrushing men. They stopped short, aimed, and began firing.

Jay pressed the firing button and a curtain of steel rained far above the Huns' heads. Then he pretended he was coming in for a landing and jammed on the brakes. The nose of the plane jerked down and the stream of bullets sliced into those Gestapo men like a scythe.

The two who escaped being shot threw away their guns and began running. Allen taxied after them. The starboard wing of his plane knocked one of them to the ground and he got the other with his pistol.

Turning the plane sharply again, he noticed the car roaring across the field. In half a minute Allen was air-borne. At a low altitude, he saw the car silhouetted against a white cement road. He strafed the road directly in front of the car, banked crazily and dangerously, and came back.

The car had its lights on now and was zigzagging madly. Then it straightened out, rolled a few more yards and came to a stop. A flashlight blinked and Jay smiled. Major Toutain had obviously taken advantage of the Gestapo officer's

preoccupation with trying to avoid the deadly fire from the British plane, and had either killed the man or knocked him out.

The car made a slow turn and headed back toward the field. It was clear that the major wanted Jay to sit down again. He shuddered. Another landing on that tiny field would just about ruin him even if he didn't crash. But it had to be done.

He knew what Major Toutain wanted. The Gestapo were aware of his absence and his family was threatened. Toutain needed help. And he was entitled to it, Jay thought, because he'd risked his own neck to assist the Allied forces.

Then Jay found himself taxiing across the tiny field. He kicked the starboard rudder and gave her the gun. At the same time, he squeezed the brake handle tight. With the starboard rudder locked, no brake on the port wheel, the plane jolted around in a sharp turn. The prop threw up grass and dirt, but that was all.

Jay could see enough to realize he'd made a perfect landing and this time not by sheer luck or accident. He'd done it deliberately.

HIS legs were shaking as usual when he climbed out. Major Toutain pulled alongside in the car. Slumped beside him was the Gestapo officer, his head blood-smearred.

"I hit him when you started firing," the major explained. "Before that, he told me everything. He is the colonel in charge of Gestapo agents in this vicinity. He seeks a promotion and needed something like my escape to give it to him . . . so he said nothing about it to anyone. The men he brought with him are all dead. Now, only he knows I have been away."

Jay got into the car.

"What about that friend of yours who was supposed to meet you?" he asked. "He must have talked."

"No—he was just foolish. He wrote down the location of the field, the time of my arrival and the signal he was to give. He was arrested for something and the colonel found those papers. Now I must get back and quickly. All this shooting will draw the Boche here like flies."

"Where is your home?" Jay asked.

"One mile up the road. But it is heavily guarded. Only farm hands are allowed to enter. It is almost dawn now, the time when most of them appear."

Jay took the Nazi colonel's civilian clothes and put them on. Then he peeled off the colonel's uniform jacket, found his hat in the back seat and gave them to Major Toutain. Two minutes later the car rolled up the highway and it looked as though a Gestapo colonel was bringing another worker to toil in the fields for the greater glory of the *Herrenvolke*. Major Toutain had assured him this was often done.

Allen held his breath as they made the turn toward the gates of Toutain's estate. Two uniformed men turned flashlights on the car and then jumped to attention. The gate was opened almost immediately and Allen breathed a sigh of relief. He'd been prepared to shoot it out, distract the attention of the guards, and hope that Major Toutain could reach his house. Thank God it wasn't necessary to do that.

The major stopped the car well behind the house. He pointed to a barn.

"From there, a short tunnel leads to the wine cellar of my home. I will go at once. My thanks for a brave deed, Lieutenant. When this war is over and the Boche driven out, you must come here for a holiday. I assure you, all that France has, will be laid at your feet."

"Whew," Jay gasped, "I almost forgot something! The C.O. asked me to bring back a bottle of brandy. Said you had some."

"*Mais oui*. You will wait beside the barn. In a moment I shall return. But *mon ami*, how do you hope to get out of here? There are many guards."

"Take off that uniform," Jay said. "I'll get away, don't worry. But hurry with the brandy. If these devils find my plane, I'll really be tied up."

When the car drove away, it was the colonel who sat behind the wheel with his hands on it. Close beside him was Jay, gripping two short lengths of rope which were tied to the wheel. He jammed himself against the colonel to hold him upright and manipulated the car by means of those ropes. His feet, of course, controlled the pedals.

He braked a bit as they neared the gate. This time the two guards stepped closer. As Jay had expected, they were

fussier when someone left the estate.

The beam of light was planted fully on the colonel's face. Jay reached up and touched the horn impatiently. Instantly the gates were opened and he rolled through although he had a bad moment when he almost stalled the car in his excitement. The moment the estate was out of sight, he dragged the colonel from behind the wheel and gave the car a full gun.

There were patrols out, searching for the source of those shots and the sound of the airplane engine. Motorcycles whizzed past and armored cars loaded with troops, lumbered along.

JAY shot past them all, the horn demanding right of way and getting it. One thing about these Huns, they were so afraid of their superior officers that they promptly moved aside when anything that looked like an official car went by. At that, Jay realized, there were no cars in all France except official ones and that meant German.

He made a sharp turn and the headlights of a motorcycle illuminated the car as he swept into the field. He brought up with a jerk beside the still intact Hurricane.

It was the work of three or four minutes to wedge the colonel inside, but in that space of time the motorcycle trooper rolled across the field to investigate. He saw the plane, throttled fast and made a quick turn. Before he could get away, Jay shot him off the machine.

That did it, of course. Jay raced back to the car, shoved the bottle of brandy under one arm and beat a hasty retreat toward the plane. By the time the armored cars and motorcycles were roaring toward him, he had the plane taxiing across the field. His guns blasted, much too high, but the sound of thousands of bullets overhead made the Nazis throw themselves flat.

Jay nosed up, missed the line of trees by inches and kept on seeking altitude. They'd have every available craft out after him in a matter of moments.

By flying as fast as the Hurricane could travel and maintaining great altitude, he swept over the Channel unharmed and then asked for landing orders. They came, with the usual groans and moans and warnings.

Flying low now, he blinked amber

lights beneath the plane in a code signal of the day. Ground lights were flashed on.

He came in for a long, even landing. His wheels barely bumped and he rolled smoothly along the runway.

The array of fire trucks, ambulances and crash wagons didn't come roaring behind him as they usually did. Colonel Kennerly came running toward the plane.

Jay climbed out, grinning happily. He saluted.

"Thank you, sir, for helping me get a chance to prove myself. I was always scared of what would happen to me when I landed, but I always flew alone. With Major Toutain in the plane with me I knew someone else was also in danger and . . . I learned how to make a perfect three point, sir, and on the smallest field you ever saw."

"The major is safe?"

"Yes, sir. We had a little run-in with some Gestapo men, but we got away with it all right and I think the Huns will have a tough time explaining what

happened. I . . . brought you back a present, sir."

"Ah!" Colonel Kennerly's eyes lighted up. "Brandy. I haven't tasted old French brandy in years."

"Yes, sir," Jay said very gently. He climbed into the plane again and handed down half of a smashed bottle.

"I—got it all right, sir," Jay explained. "But on the way back, I suddenly needed a weapon and the bottle was the nearest thing handy. I hope . . . this will make up for it, sir."

Jay reached into the plane and dragged out the Gestapo colonel, soaked in brandy as he was.

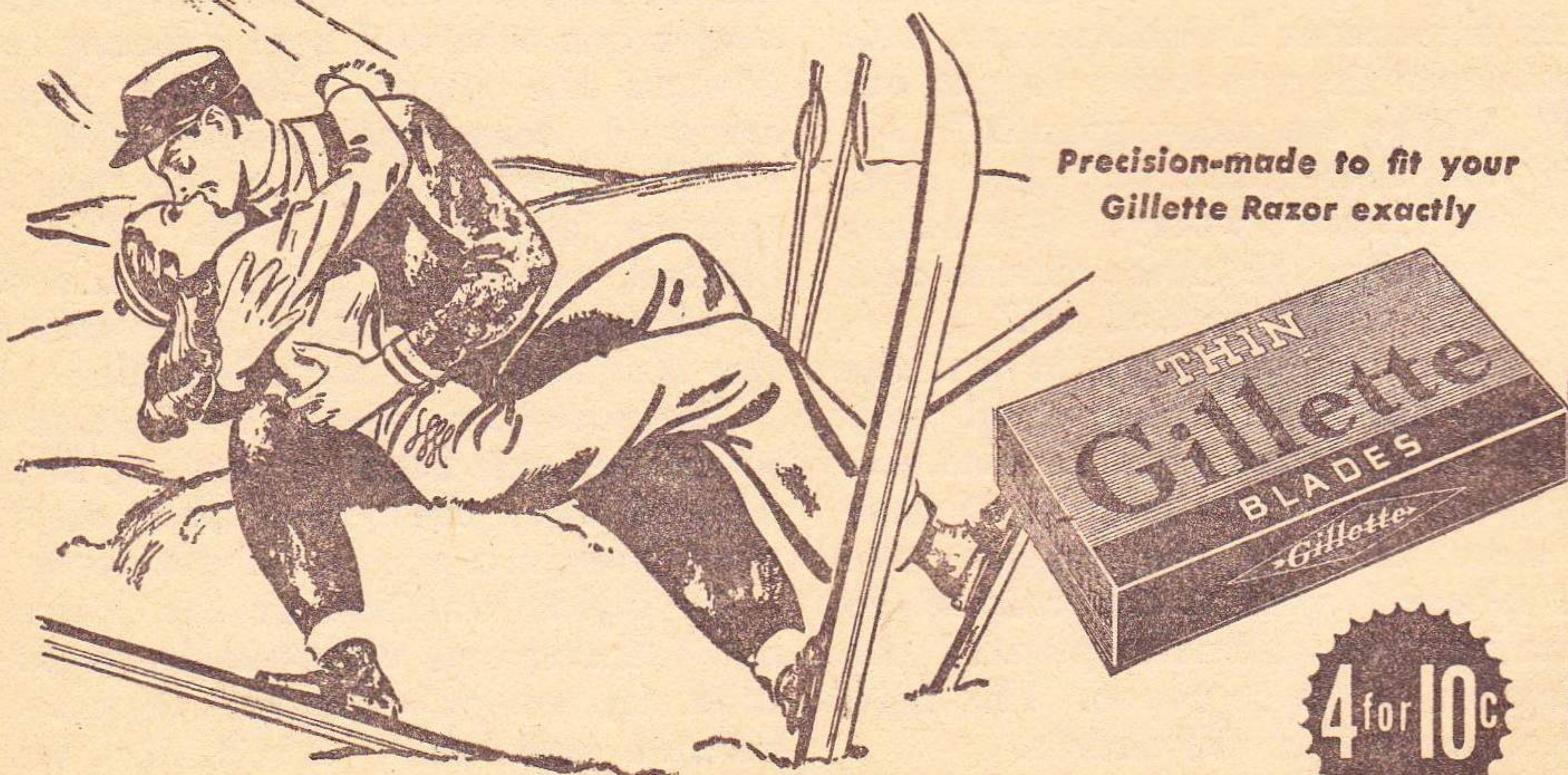
"He is the only man who knew that Major Toutain came here," Jay explained. "I didn't want to just kill him, sir, so I brought him back. But on the way, he woke up and got argumentative so . . ."

"Well," laughed Colonel Kennerly, "a Hun soaked in brandy! My brandy! Now what are we going to do with him?"

Jay gulped. "We might light him up, sir, like a plum pudding."

Next Issue: DEAD ENGINE JOHNNY, Novelet by Robert Sidney Bowen

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THE R.A.F. IN ACTION!

TRUE STORIES OF THE MEN WITH WINGS

HERE are more stories of the brave exploits of British pilots everywhere that redound to the glory of the R.A.F. and offer a glimpse of the heroism that can never die! The publication of previous stories in this series as an exclusive feature of R.A.F. ACES has won nation-wide commendation. Hundreds of readers are enthusiastic about these terse straight-from-the-shoulder accounts of feats performed in the service of democracy. These are true tales and they are told with no empty literary flourishes. They present, we think, an inspiring picture of our Allies in the struggle against Axis tyranny.

"B FOR BEER" GETS HOME THE HARD WAY

"B FOR BEER," big R.A.F. Lancaster bomber, got home from her last raid all right—but nobody quite knows how.

When "B for Beer" landed in England, after raiding the German city of Kassel, flames were blazing in her fuselage—where 500 bullets had exploded—and three members of the crew were unconscious. In addition her skipper had had to bring her home without compass, radio, hydraulic and intercommunication system, or an adequate oxygen supply.

Three German fighters attacked "B for Beer" right over the target.

"We had just dropped our bombs," said Flying Officer K. R. Ames, the skipper, "when rear gunner R. S. Parle, reported enemy aircraft attacking from astern. A burst of cannon shell ripped through the fuselage, shattering the instrument board and windscreen in front of me."

Flight Engineer Sergeant V. R. Biggerstaff, who had been standing beside Ames at that moment, added:

"My oxygen mask and ear-phones were shot from my face, and something hit me on the side of the head. I felt a bit screwy, but sucked my oxygen tube all the way home, happy to be alive."

"I took evasive action," continued Ames. "Then I saw the fighter blow up and fall into bits in the air."

"I got that devil, skipper," said Parle—but at the same moment, the mid-upper gun-

ner, Sergeant R. M. S. Brown, exclaimed, 'I'm hit, skipper. Enemy aircraft attacking on the starboard beam.'

"Those were the inter-comm's last words—it was silence for the rest of the flight."

Shells from the German fighter went through Parle's gun turret into the fuselage. Then an incendiary shell hit the ship. When the plane ran into a cloud Parle and radioman Flight Sergeant H. Glasby began fighting the flames.

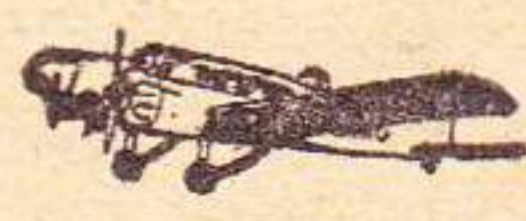
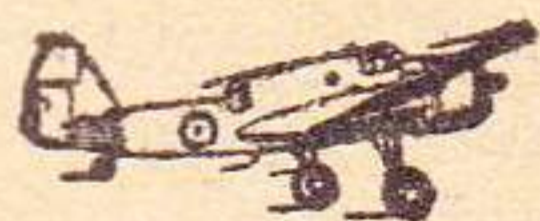
"I got down and fetched the extinguisher," Glasby said, "while ammunition was exploding around my head. I put out that lot of flames by beating at them with my gloves and stamping on them. We found out afterwards that five hundred of our bullets had exploded."

Flying Officer A. J. Wright, the navigator, then lost consciousness, as the enemy fire had damaged the oxygen supply. Sergeant T. H. Savage took over until he, too, collapsed from lack of oxygen. Brown, the wounded gunner, also passed out.

But by this time, Ames was shaking off the attackers.

"I went into a steep, driving turn," he said, "without compass, airspeed indicator or engine gauges. I managed to get her level and on her course again and, steering by the stars, we reached England. Visibility was bad, and I landed at the first airfield I saw.

"We had about enough gas left to fill a cigarette lighter."



HALIFAX BOMBER SETS NEW PRODUCTION RECORD

A SPEEDIER production system in the Handley-Page aircraft company is today turning out Britain's versatile, 25-ton Halifax bomber in seven days instead of the twelve previously necessary. The present bomber is a strengthened and improved version of the Halifax—product of 15,000 drawings—which first rolled off the assembly line during the days of England's 1940 blitz.

Sir Frederick Handley-Page, head of the firm which makes the Halifax, recently paid tribute to the thousands of unskilled men and

women—clerks, typists, shop assistants—who were called upon to work long hours during the height of the blitz and whose devotion made possible the R.A.F. offensive.

"There was insufficient skilled labor available," said Handley-Page, "so, unless the whole bomber offensive scheme were to collapse, we had to recruit and teach these people. They were grim times, and the future was in the recruits' hands."

"That future," he concluded, "is here today."

PILOT RESCUED FROM UNDER NOSES OF ENEMY

HOW an Australian front gunner in an air-sea rescue Walrus of the R.A.F. helped in snatching a ditched pilot from the North Sea under the noses of the enemy, is related in a despatch to the Minister for Air, Mr. Drakeford, received from Overseas Headquarters of the R.A.A.F.

The member of the R.A.A.F. in question is Pilot Officer Felix Edward Wilson, 30, of Howlong via Albury (N.S.W.), who is one of a number of R.A.A.F. men in the squadron. Wilson has assisted in the rescue of 15 men from the sea.

"I can't believe it, it is too good to be true," the rescued pilot kept saying as he was flown back to safety.

A Canadian squadron leader was forced to bail out over the Somme Estuary, near Cayeux. Guided by the Canadian's Number Two flare, the Walrus came down on the sea

in the last light of the evening and found the Canadian paddling his dinghy furiously, but worried because the sea was carrying him rapidly towards the enemy shore.

Next day, Wilson helped to rescue five Americans whose Fortress was hit by flak crossing the French coast, and who were obliged to ditch it near the English coast. The Walrus completed the quickest rescue of the war. It was airborne before the Fortress came down into the sea and was alongside the Americans in 25 minutes.

"The Americans offered us the world," said Wilson, "but we compromised on some American cigarettes."

The third rescue occurred when Wilson was flying with Squadron Leader Grace, of Adelaide. Helped by two Spitfires, they located four men in two dinghies and returned them to England.



THE R.A.F.'s "WATER-MAILMAN"

ALONG 350 miles of narrow waterways which twist through tiger-infested jungles, a 120-foot motor launch chugs twice a month with supplies and mail for airmen stationed in the Bengal Sunderbunds—8,000 miles of delta through which flow the myriad mouths of the Ganges.

Skippering the launch is an R.A.F. corporal who has travelled more than 12,000 miles on his job as "water-mailman." He also delivers rations, gasoline, clothing and equipment, and has had to produce anything from a live goat to a radio aerial from his aptly named "floating emporium."

He, his crew of 19 Indian engineers, and a special pilot who navigates dangerous channels, receive a tremendous ovation at each station they visit. Often they are the only contact with the outside world for the men at the lonely outposts.

The corporal combines big-game hunting with his hazardous work and confessed that he would like to get a crocodile.

"My bag at the moment only amounts to two deer," he said ruefully. "I'm preserving the skins and antlers to take home, but I'm determined to get something really big before then."



R.A.A.F. VETERANS NOW IN FOURTH CAMPAIGN CARRIED OUT 38 SORTIES OVER ITALY IN ONE WEEK

VETERANS of the North African and Sicilian campaigns, nine R.A.A.F. air crews serving with a R.A.F. light bomber squadron of a tactical bomber force took part in 38 sorties over Italy in one week.

The Squadron was one of the first to be equipped with American aircraft for close support work, and has been constantly in action in the Western Desert, Tunisian and Sicilian campaigns since May, 1942.

It now operates over Italy in actions directed against enemy concentrations, mar-

shalling yards and other military targets in the "toe" of Italy.

Its most successful effort in the "softening" process was against a centre of enemy activity at the township of Sinopoly, bombing road junctions and western approaches.

Clouds obscured the target, but the airmen dived through and located it. Photographs later disclosed that the northern half of the area had been well covered by bombs, which had scored three direct hits on cross roads.



NEW NIGHT-FIGHTER ACE

BITAIN'S new night-fighter ace is John R. D. Braham, a 23-year-old R.A.F. Wing Commander who has shot down 19 German planes. Braham, one of the youngest of

his rank in the Fighter Command, holds the Distinguished Service Order and Bar and the Distinguished Flying Cross with two Bars.

Braham bagged Nazi number 19—the plane which upped his mark over the previous high of 18 set by Wing Commander John “Cats-eye” Cunningham—when he was returning from a recent intruder patrol. Encountering a Messerschmitt 110 at 18,000 feet, he got on his tail and shot him down in flames into the Zuyder Zee.

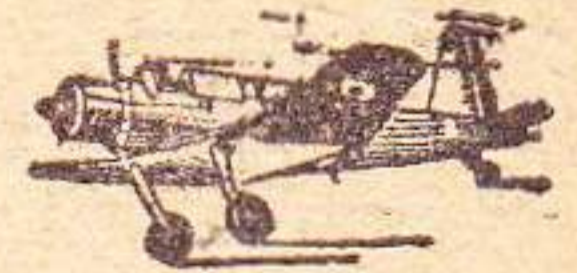
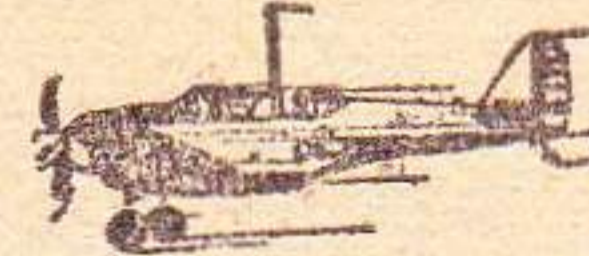
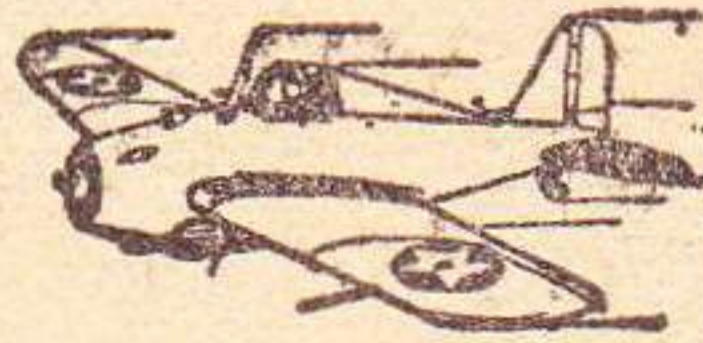
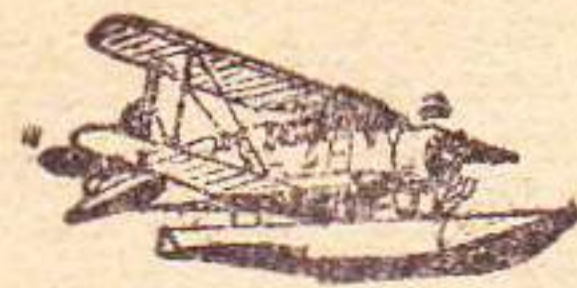
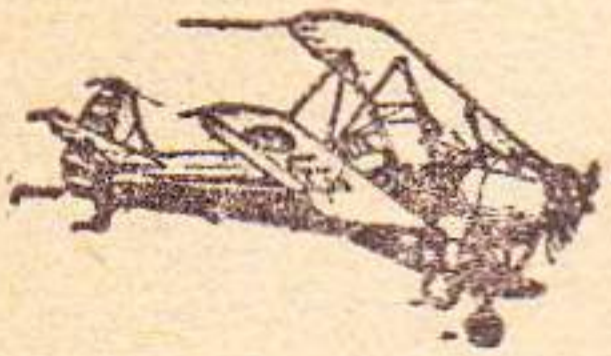
Described by the Air Ministry as a “brilliant leader whose exceptional skill, gallantry and unswerving devotion to duty has been reflected in the fine fighting qualities of his squadron,” Braham enlisted in the R.A.F. before the war.

He fought in many major engagements all

through the blitz, shooting down two Nazi planes over Coventry.

He was on leave in Canterbury when that city was raided, and—getting permission from the commanding officer there—he borrowed a Beaufighter and blew up a fleeing Dornier. Besides his victories over enemy aircraft, Braham has successfully attacked light naval craft and submarines.

His father, who was a Captain Pilot in the Royal Flying Corps in the last war, described young Braham as six feet tall, and very “determined looking.” The new ace is deeply religious, a lover of Greek history, a splendid boxer and a good rugby player.



SUNDERLAND FIGHTS SEVEN ENEMY AIRCRAFT

SPLENDID teamwork by four members of a Sunderland flying boat of R.A.A.F. No. 10 squadron, in an hour's combat with seven enemy aircraft over the Bay of Biscay has earned four of them gallantry decorations.

This was announced today by the Minister for Air, Mr. Drakeford who said the awards were as follows—

Flying Officer Basil Alfred Williams, of Mitcham (S.A.)—the pilot—D.F.C.; Flying Officer Reginald William Stuart Gross, of North Brighton (S.A.), and Hepburn Springs (Vic.)—the navigator—D.F.C.; Acting Sergeant William Cheseldon Henson Moser, of Coonamble (N.S.W.), the armourer-air gunner—D.F.M.; Acting Sergeant Rhys Frederick Owen, of Saratoga, via Woy Woy (N.S.W.), the flight engineer—D.F.M.

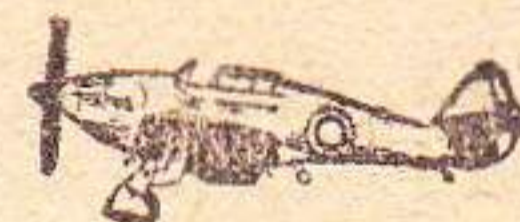
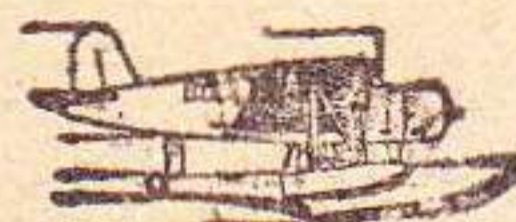
In August this year, Mr. Drakeford said, the Sunderland was attacked by seven enemy aircraft while on patrol over the Bay of Biscay. In the hour's battle Williams fought

with great skill and determination. The aircraft was repeatedly hit, and when the intercom system was put out of action, Gross, though wounded, did everything he could to keep the captain informed of the enemy's tactics.

The starboard main petrol tank was pierced and Moser crawled into the mainplane, and attempted to stop the loss of fuel. He afterwards manned the galley gun, relieving Owen who had fought with great resolution and had remained at his post, although wounded in the knee by cannon fire, and assisted in frustrating many attacks.

Williams succeeded in flying the damaged Sunderland back to base, being greatly assisted by Gross, whose navigating under these difficult circumstances was of a high order.

In the face of trying circumstances, these members of the crew displayed great courage, skill, and determination.



R.A.F. RESCUE SERVICE

SCALING rocky crags hidden in swirling mists or lashed by winter gales, to rescue airmen who have crashed on Britain's mountain heights, is the task of the R.A.F. Mountain Rescue Service. One unit, operating in North Wales, has already—with only one fatality—saved the men of 11 air crews.

Each unit of the rescue service has a powerful self-heated ambulance and a jeep. The men drive as far as they can into the mountains—until even a jeep can go no farther—and then continue on foot. They are equipped with ropes, axes and “walkie-talkies”—like those used by the American army—which keep them in constant contact with searching planes and with their base.

When the rescuers find the wounded men, they administer first aid and then begin the long trek back to the ambulance. Often the injured have to be lashed on stretchers and

hauled up or lowered down perpendicular cliffs. Sometimes airplanes crash in remote gullies, isolated by treacherous “scree,” slopes covered with pebbles where one false step may start a landslide.

A typical rescue was from a wrecked plane on a mountainside in North Wales. The pilot whose jaw was broken, came to beside the unconscious forms of his four crew-mates. Despite his injuries, and in a howling snow-storm, he crawled for 17 hours until he reached a roadside telephone 10 miles away.

He just managed to gasp out his whereabouts before again losing consciousness. The Rescue Service immediately rushed out, reached the pilot and ascertained the location of the plane. Then they continued their dangerous and icy way up the mountainside, arriving at the plane in time to save the lives of three of the crew.

FIGHTER TECHNIQUE IMPROVING

THE combat tactics of the R.A.F. and R.A.A.F. fighter pilots have undergone sweeping changes since the earlier days of the war, completely superseding the old strategy of dogfighting based on the principle of "every man for himself."

This was stated to-day by Flight Sergeant Vincent Madigan, 28-year-old Spitfire fighter pilot of Melbourne, who has returned to Australia after serving with a R.A.F. Spitfire squadron operating from the south coast of England on sweeps, fighter patrols, shipping and weather reconnaissance.

Squadrons must maintain battle formation rigidly unless instructed by their leaders to act independently, said Flight Sergeant Madigan.

Describing a raid on an important target in France in which Allied fighters had escorted a very large formation of Flying Fortresses, Flight Sergeant Madigan said that many hundreds of aircraft had been en-

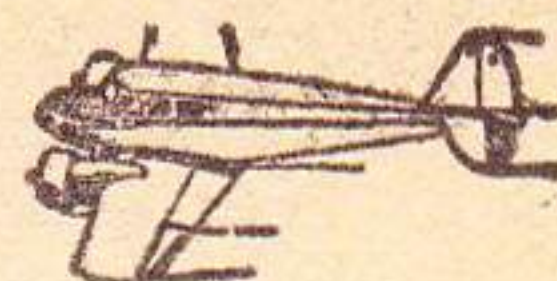
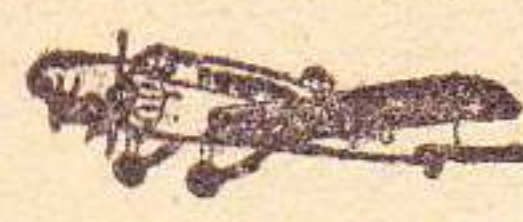
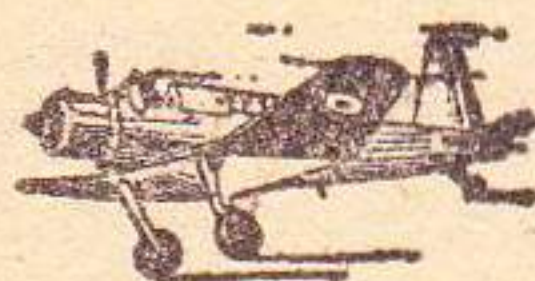
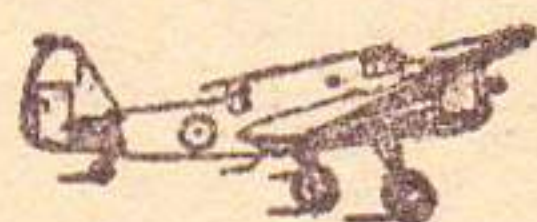
gaged in the operation.

"It was an unforgettable spectacle to see so many aircraft maneuvering at the same time," said Madigan.

"We acted as rear escort for the bombers and flew about twenty thousand feet. We waited over the coast of France while they went in and bombed their target, and on their return we escorted them back to their base." On that occasion Madigan claimed one enemy aircraft probably destroyed and two damaged.

"The German anti-aircraft fire on the coast of France is particularly accurate," said Madigan, "but the Spitfire boys sail in just the same."

Spitfires, fitted with extra fuel tanks and stripped of their armament to increase their range and speed, had been on reconnaissance over Berlin on several occasions and had secured some valuable photographic information.



"HUMAN LADDER" GETS D.S.O.

AN R.A.F. officer who, though wounded himself, served as a human ladder to rescue two injured companions from the half submerged fuselage of their bomber, has just been awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his gallantry.

He is Flying Officer David Malcolm Johnstone. With Flight Sergeant Ronald Foss, Sergeant Maurice Dilks and the rest of his bomber crew, he was on submarine patrol over the Atlantic when his plane was intercepted by four Junkers Ju-88s.

One of the first bursts from the enemy planes killed the captain, and Second Pilot Foss took over the controls. Despite violent evasive action, the plane was badly damaged and several members of the crew were wounded. Finally four bursts from the Nazis' guns set the bomber afire.

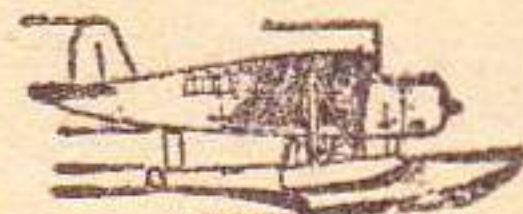
It plunged towards the sea, streaming flames, with Foss and Johnstone fighting to

keep it on an even keel. Striking the water with a crash so great that one wing was wrenched off, the plane settled rapidly in the waves.

Johnstone, in agony from his injuries, nevertheless remained in an almost totally submerged plane and—one by one—heaved his companions to his shoulders, to his head and out through a hole in the fabric. Foss had the dinghy ready and heaved the men into it as they appeared. Johnstone was the last man aboard.

That was not the end of the adventure, for the men were far from land. For nine days they drifted, but Johnstone, Dilks and Foss never lost courage and kept up the spirits of their companions until all were rescued.

Before the war, the 33-year-old Johnstone was a scientist. He was commissioned in the R.A.F. Volunteer Reserve in 1940. Foss and Dilks are only 21.



SACRIFICED DINGHY TO RESCUE PILOT

FLYING Officer G. R. Houston of Geraldton (W.A.) and Pilot Officer L. C. Engberg of Melbourne (Vic.), members of a R.A.A.F. Mosquito Squadron in the United Kingdom, recently rescued an English Spitfire pilot from the sea after jettisoning the door of their aircraft and sacrificing their own dinghy at great potential risk to themselves.

They dropped it so accurately that it fell into the sea a few yards from the Spitfire pilot, who was himself without a dinghy and in a very distressed condition after baling out from his aircraft.

Their gallant action has brought a tribute from the English airman in a letter which is one of the most treasured possessions of the Mosquito squadron.

"Thank you both for saving my life," he writes. "My one wish is to thank you in person, but until then accept sincerest thanks from my wife and myself.

"I had barely sufficient strength to inflate and get into the dinghy," he adds. "Perhaps you wondered why I did not wave. In jettisoning the hood of my Spitfire, I was struck across the eye, receiving slight concussion, and I had just enough sense to bale out.

"Splinters cut my own dinghy in two and just missed shearing my parachute shrouds. In the heavy swell I shipped a lot of sea water and was half unconscious. But for the accuracy with which you dropped your dinghy I would have been surely frozen ten minutes later."

THE R.A.F. WING'S DESERT CHURCH

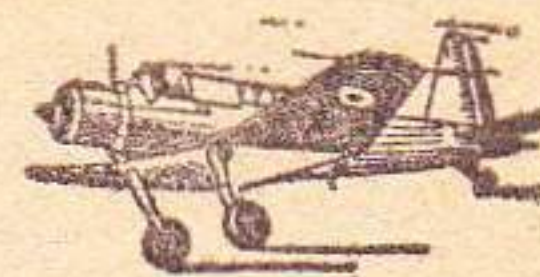
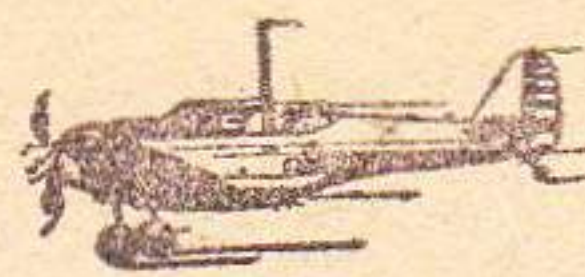
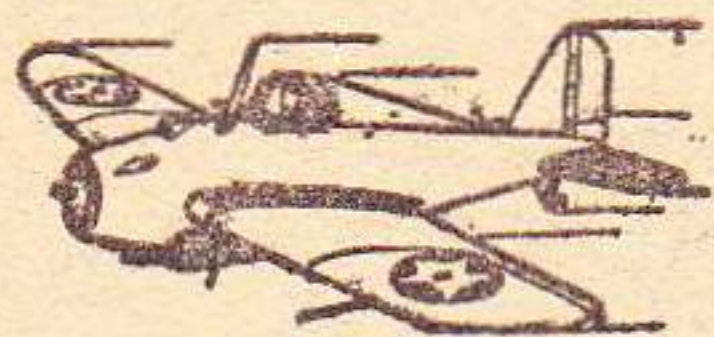
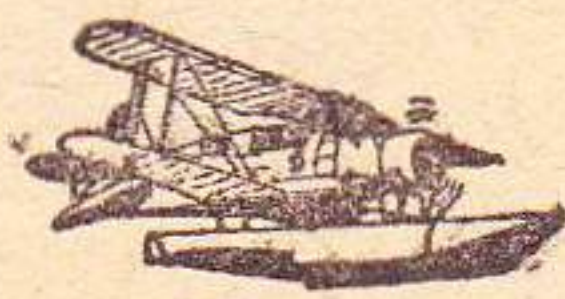
USING wood from wrecked enemy planes for the Communion rail, the men of an R.A.F. Wellington night bomber wing in North Africa recently built their own "parish church" in the desert.

The church consists of two tents fronted by an ancient Arab archway, and topped by a wooden cross. Shell cases serve as altar vases, bomb containers as seats and old flare boxes as choir stalls. The sandy floor was lowered two feet to provide sufficient head-

room. Steps were then cut, and large strips of canvas stretched over the dunes for a carpet.

An organ, bought with money subscribed by the fliers, makes the chapel complete. In addition to regular Sunday services, there are daily services and Bible classes. The church is also used for classical concerts.

All squadrons—and men of all denominations—took part in the work, each unit volunteering to construct a particular section.



FLYING DENTISTS REACH ISOLATED UNITS

TOOTHACHE need hold no terrors for R.A.A.F. and W.A.A.F. personnel, no matter how isolated their units.

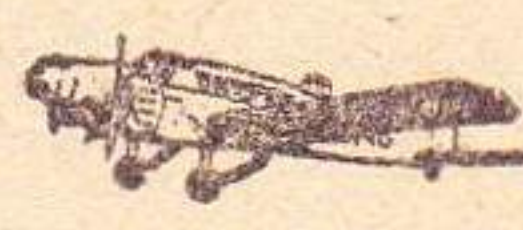
In an air ambulance, distinguishable by the Red Cross sign and the emblem of the ambulance unit—two bees carrying a stretcher—dental equipment weighing half a ton is now sent to all units in turn, remaining for perhaps a week for small units and even months for those with larger numbers. Even the most northern battle areas are visited regularly.

Until recently, the transport was done by train, boat, truck or by any other available means in the area. A dental staff of three goes with this mobile unit—a dental officer, dental mechanic and orderly. One such team

of interstate experts consists of Flight Lieutenant R. Porter of Kingswood, South Australia, Sergeant J. H. Wilson, New Farm, Brisbane, and A.C.1. D. Edwards of Sunbury, Victoria.

The chair, spittoon and all surgical and laboratory equipment must be packed in three boxes. Each box must hold exactly the same number of articles each time, and the aircraft must always be loaded in an identical manner to allow for correct weight distribution.

With this modern professional equipment, the dental unit travels many thousands of miles annually and fills many thousands of teeth in its travels, contributing as few other units do to the health and happiness of thousands of Air Force personnel.



PUT A PIECE OF CAKE UNDER YOUR PARACHUTE

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Kidneys Must Remove Excess Acids

Help 15 Miles of Kidney Tubes Flush Out Poisonous Waste

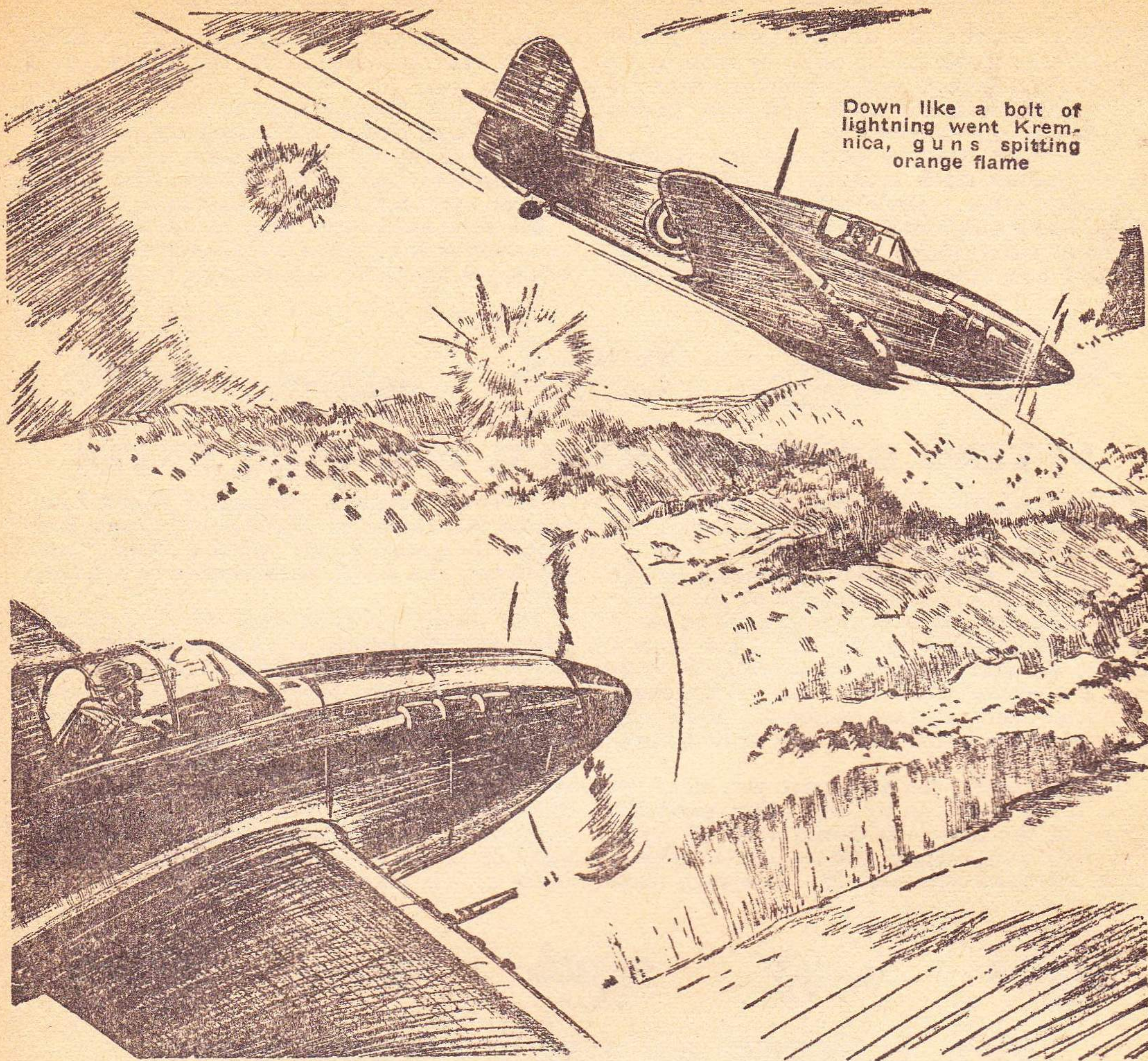
If you have an excess of acids in your blood, your 15 miles of kidney tubes may be overworked. These tiny filters and tubes are working day and night to help Nature rid your system of excess acids and poisonous waste.

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(Adv.)



Down like a bolt of lightning went Kremnica, guns spitting orange flame

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CHAPTER I

Doomed Czech

STAFFORD paused at the door of the Station Office, swallowed hard and scowled at the knob. It wasn't often that the Old Man summoned anyone to his Office. And when he did it was because something important was up, or else some one was due for a dressing down. That explained the puzzled scowl on the good looking face of the senior Flight Lieutenant of the 25th Hurricanes, R.A.F. Fighter Command. He felt almost certain that nothing of importance was in the wind.

CZECH AND

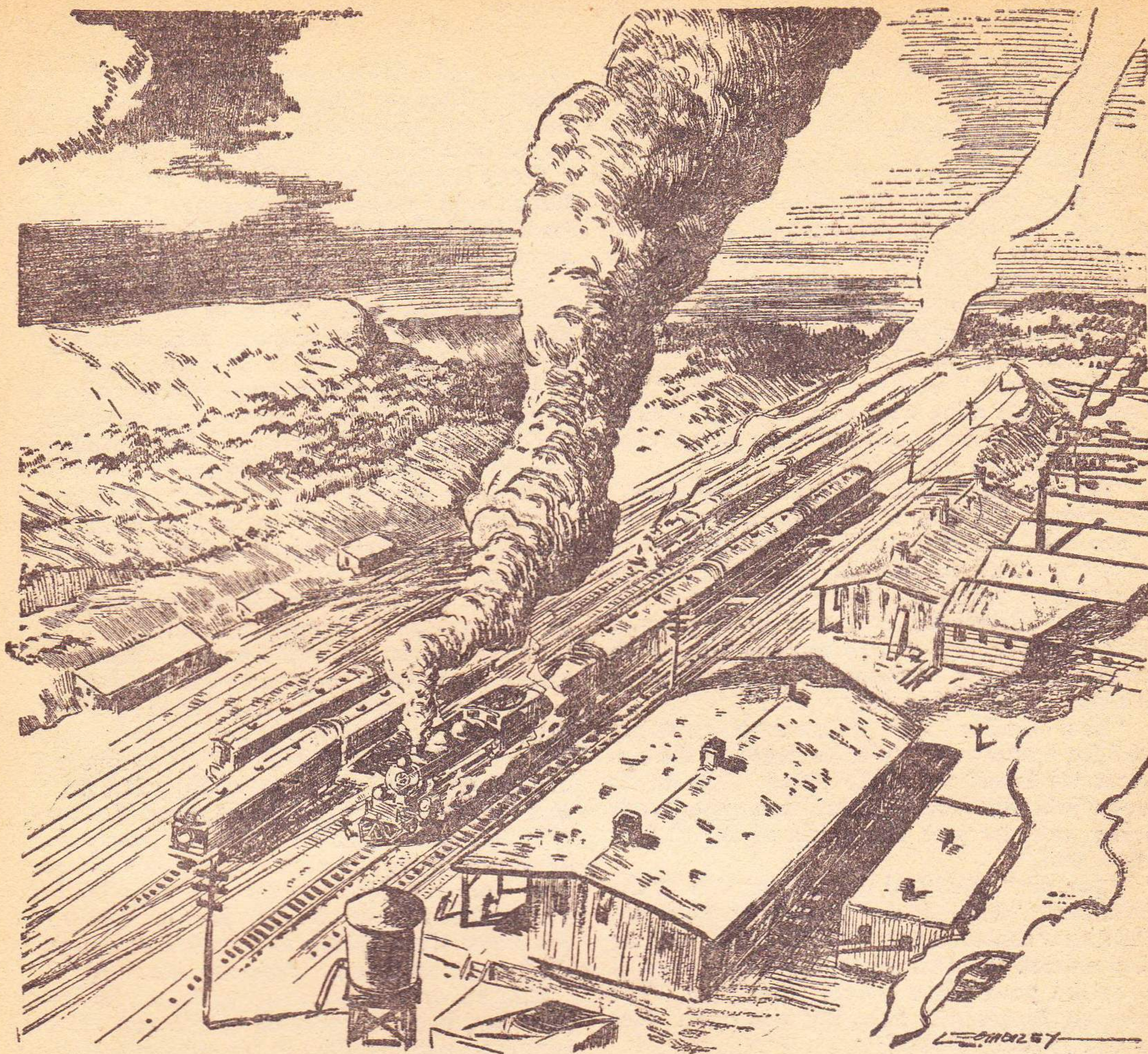
For days, now, the Squadron had been doing low level train and freight yard sweeps over France, and he had spotted no sign of undue Jerry preparations. And he couldn't be due for a dressing down either. He hadn't neglected to button his tunic at evening mess nor had he been on leave for weeks. So it couldn't be any London escapade catching up with him.

"Well, I'll never find out this way," he grunted aloud. "I might as well go on in."

He did that. A quick glance at Squadron Leader Markham's face added to his mystification.

There was no light of battle in the O.C.'s eyes. Nor was there the old red flag

RECKLESS PILOT KREMKNICA CHERISHES A DREAD



DOUBLE CZECH

By **STUART CAMPBELL**

glint when you've got it coming to you. He was wearing his normal expression, touched up with a pleasant smile.

"Oh yes, Stafford," the O.C. grunted and nodded at a chair. "Sit down, old chap."

The Flight Lieutenant sat down. Squadron Leader Markham swung around to face him. "We have a replacement joining us shortly, Stafford," he said. "You are to take him into your Flight. See that he gets to know the business, and all that sort of thing."

"Yes, of course, sir," Stafford replied. Then with a faint frown, "But, why a replacement for us, sir? We're full strength, you know. Or, aren't we?"

"Quite," the senior officer nodded. "And

nobody's leaving the Station either. This new chap's a Czechoslovakian."

The squadron Leader consulted a paper on his desk.

"Name's Kremnica," he said. "Pilot Officer Kremnica. As you know we have some Czechs in the Air Force. Lads who got across before the Jerries caught up with them. So Air Ministry has allowed those who qualify to put in for the squadron they prefer. Well, this Kremnica appears to want to serve with us."

"Smart lad to know which is the best Hurricane squadron in the Service, I'd say," Stafford replied with a grin. "But it will be a bit awkward. None of us speaks Czech. Does

SECRET WHICH SPURS HIM TO HEIGHTS OF DARING!

this chap speak English?"

"Probably, or we'd be informed," the O.C. grunted. "I'm putting him in your Flight for a reason, Stafford."

"Yes?" the pilot murmured.

"Your steadying influence." The O.C. smiled. "These Frenchies, and Poles, and Czechs, who have come over and joined us, have nothing left but a desire to kill Jerries. They've long ago lost all desire to live. They feel it's simply a matter of killing as many Jerries as they can."

"That's true," Stafford said soberly. "We had a Polish pilot with us last year. Pukka pilot. But he went out on every patrol with the idea it was his last."

"And he made his last patrol too soon," Squadron Leader Markham said grimly. "Too bad. Much better if he'd thought more about winning the war and less of personal revenge. Can hardly blame the poor devils, though. After the hell they suffered, and saw others suffer, there's nothing left which means anything to them. But the point is, it's bad for us. You follow me?"

"Yes," Stafford said. "One man shows are bad for teamwork." "Not to mention the aircraft we lose," the O.C. added. "So that's your job, Stafford. Take him under your wing until he gets the spirit of the R.A.F. You see?"

"Yes, sir." Stafford was gazing out of the window. "And, I see something else, sir. Our new replacement, I think. He's getting down from the Station tender, now. Yes, it must be your Pilot Officer Kremnica. The Station Sergeant is bringing him over. Not a bad looking bloke."

Squadron Leader Markham leaned forward over the desk, craned his neck a bit, and took a look for himself. The tall, dark-haired, and slightly swarthy-skinned man wore the uniform of an R.A.F. pilot officer. As he came closer the name, Czechoslovakia, sewed to the top of each tunic sleeve, could be seen. Yet, as Markham and Stafford watched him approaching with the Station Sergeant they were both struck by a certain oddness in his appearance. They looked at each other and frowned. "Notice something about that chap, sir?" Stafford murmured.

"Yes, quite so," the Squadron Leader echoed.

The Station Sergeant and the new pilot came in and saluted smartly.

"Pilot Officer Kr-Krem-Kremnica, sir," the Sergeant said, stumbling a bit over the name. "Reporting from Number Three Central Training."

SMARTLY the non-com saluted again and withdrew. Markham smiled at the tall Czech and extended his hand.

"Jolly nice to have you with us, Pilot Officer Kremnica," he said, and felt his hand being swallowed in a huge fist the size of a

cricket pad. "Welcome, and all that sort of thing. This is Flight Lieutenant Stafford who'll take you under his charge. You'll be in the best of care, I fancy."

"It is the happiest day of my life, sir," the Czech said in excellent English. Giving his hand to Stafford, he added, "It is an honor to meet one of England's greatest airmen."

"You've got the wrong man, old fellow," Stafford answered. "Nice of you just the same. Fancy you're anxious to have your go at them, what?"

The casual question caused the smile to freeze on the Czech's face. And a terrible look peered out of his eyes. Both Stafford and Markham saw it and groaned inwardly. It was the familiar look of a doomed man consumed by a desire to hurl himself into the inevitable death his hated enemies have waiting for him. But the next instant the look was gone. The smiling lips ceased to be stiff and taut. Kremnica relaxed.

"Yes, very much, sir," he said. "And that time cannot come any too soon for me."

"Well, you won't have to wait long," Markham spoke up quickly. "I see by your training reports you've had more than your share of time on Hurricanes. Splendid! No doubt this afternoon Flight Lieutenant Stafford will take you along on a routine sweep and let you look around a bit. Get settled in your new quarters, first, though. Flying Officer Peffers has charge of that. He's probably in the mess. Come along and we'll look him up. I'll buy you a drink. You, too, Stafford."

Fifteen or twenty minutes later the new pilot had been introduced to the rest of the squadron and installed in his hutment. Markham and Stafford walked back to the Station Office.

"Bit of a job I've given you, I guess, Stafford," Markham said with a faint frown. "One of the rabid chaps, I'm afraid. Keep an eye on him for awhile. One thing. He may be a loyal Czech, but he's R.A.F., now. And he's got to do things our way. That doesn't include throwing his life to the Jerries. You see what I mean?"

"Quite," Stafford replied. "But I fancy he'll play the game. I've figured out what puzzled us, too."

"You mean about his looks?"

"Yes," the flight lieutenant replied. "Down at the mess I suddenly realized that he actually looks old enough to be my father. What age did his papers give, by the way?"

"Nineteen," the O.C. replied. "Yes, you've hit it, Stafford. That's what's odd about him. Looks twice his age. But, there's war for you. Well, anyway, take the bloke along with you this afternoon, and see how he behaves. Have to do it sooner or later."

"Very well," Stafford said with a sigh. "I'll be glad when it's over. Rather face scads of MEs than take a new bloke out on his first. Terrible on the nerves, you know."

"Well, that's your penance for being Senior Flight, old chap," the O.C. said with a laugh, and left it like that.

An hour or so after noon mess Stafford gathered his four pilots of Green Flight together and gave them brief instructions for the routine sweep.

"A short one this," he said. "The rail yards at Desvres, just outside Boulogne. All of you, save Kremnica, have been there before. We'll charge the beggars three times. In line astern as we always do. And keep low, of course. Flack can't bother us then, and there shouldn't be much ground machine gun fire. Pick locomotives for your targets. And watch closely. Should one of them explode when you're right over it, you'll be in no end of a mess. Right you are, then. Three cracks and then back home. Oh yes. There'll be some Spits about, in case the ME lads get annoyed with us. So just follow me on home and leave them to the Spits. I guess that's all. Let's get on with it, what?"

With a nod, and a little gesture of his hand, Stafford started to turn toward his plane but stopped short as he caught the look on Kremnica's face. The Czech pilot looked as though he'd just heard the news of the death of his best friend, or else that he had a terrible case of cramps. His eyes were hard and a little moisty, and the lines in his slightly pale face were stiff and taut. But the most noticeable thing about him were his huge hands.

"Try and relax a bit, Kremnica," Stafford said gently. "Bloody war can't be won in a day, you know. And all good things come to him who waits, what?"

"Yes, sir," the Czech replied with a strained smile. "I'm all right, sir. But, it's been a long time, you see?"

"Oh, quite," Stafford grunted, although puzzled. "Anyway, let's be off. Stick close, and watch sharp for signals. Right-o."

CHAPTER II

Flinching Pilot

EIGHT minutes later the five low level Hurricanes went sweeping up off the field and headed eastward toward England's coast and the Channel. Shortly after he was airborne Stafford radio checked with Control, learned that he was coming through all right, and relaxed in the seat. He looked in his rear view mirror at the four other ships behind. What he saw pleased him. Particularly Kremnica's plane. The big Czech was obviously very much of a pilot, and able to fly patrol formation with the best of them.

"So far, so good," Stafford murmured. "If he does well in a show, he'll be no end of a help to the Squadron. Poor devil! Must be pretty awful to be flying only part way back to one's homeland. Well, a fellow can't have it all his way, I fancy."

With that little bit off his chest Stafford shrugged the rest of his thoughts aside and watched the coast of Occupied France come sweeping along toward his leading edges. In almost no time the land of France was directly under him, and he was cutting southward of Boulogne to escape the concentration of flak guns there. True, some ground fire did come rippling upward from spots here and there, but the Hurry-Boxes were traveling so fast, and were so low down that the German ground gunners might just as well have wasted their bullets on five streaks of grey light going by.

Southward for perhaps two minutes and then Stafford cut sharply eastward. Dead ahead he could see the Desvres railroad yards that were well marked by a thin flat cloud of engine smoke, just above. One look brought a happy smile. The yard was chock full of freight cars and whatnot. In fact, he had never seen so many engines parked together in one spot.

"Must be central repairs for the entire area," he grunted. "Just like the Jerry to think we wouldn't be over for a spell, after blasting it so much this last week. Well, Jerry, I fancy this is one on you!"

With a nod, and a grunt for emphasis, he barked the "alert" into his flap mike, and then sent his Hurricane rocketing down toward the nearest of the stack smoking engines. It was a big fellow, and it lined up in his sights the size of a balloon. Its crew saw or heard him coming. They executed some fancy acrobatics as they leaped out and flung themselves under some neighboring freight cars for protection. A couple of them didn't make it, though. Stafford was already punching out air cannon shells and slapping them straight into the gleaming boiler. The two Germans went over like winged ducks. Then a fountain of steam spouted up from the engine. It was followed by a mighty cloud of smoke. A roar of sound was carried to Stafford, above the thunder of his own engine, as he power zoomed up for altitude.

At the peak of his climb he had only to snap a single glance back down to see that there was one more engine that would never do the Nazis in France any good. It was just a mess of junk with pieces still dropping down out of the sky. The flames had spread quickly. Loaded freight cars on both adjoining tracks were gushing forth fire. As a matter of fact, there were three engines out of the war for keeps. Two other Hurricane pilots had also shot true and straight. And in an abstract sort of way he wondered

if one of them had been Kremnica drawing first blood in his personal war against the Nazis.

But, almost as he wondered about that he spotted the Czech's plane. It was well over to his right, and as Stafford glanced down below it he saw no telltale signs of smoke or flame. Kremnica had obviously scored a blank on his first try.

"Better luck the second go, old thing," Stafford grunted. "You can't always expect to win."

He cut the rest off short. He sat up stiff and straight. The nose of Kremnica's plane suddenly dropped and the Hurricane started down, almost at vertical. And as Stafford spotted the target the Czech had picked, the flight leader sat up even straighter. Kremnica had certainly picked a "gold braid" target for destruction. Right under his diving plane was a six-car train. And engine to match too. It had all the earmarks of being something special for German Staff. True it was painted a dull green-brown from end to end, but there was a lot of fancy brass work on the engine. It had been polished up so that it gleamed like gold in the sun. It was sitting right smack in the middle of the yards but the track ahead was clear.

Almost at once smoke erupted from the engine's stack. The Staff train started moving forward, and fast. Also a surprising amount of ground fire broke out and went zipping and darting up toward the diving Czech.

Kremnica was coming down like a runaway comet. But he wasn't shooting a single one of his guns. It was almost as though he had forgotten having them along, and was simply concentrating on diving his plane straight down into that smoke puffing engine. Cold fear and anger swirled through Stafford. The words he barked into his flap mike were crisp with apprehension.

"Shoot, you bloody fool!" he cried. "Give the blighter your guns!"

Maybe the Czech heard the orders. Maybe he didn't. At any rate he never fired a single shot. He just went sweeping down toward the moving Staff train. And then, when he was less than a hundred feet over it he pulled out of his dive, and went streaking along the full length of the train. And zoomed on upward toward the sky when he had passed over the engine.

Utterly dumbfounded, Stafford could do nothing but gape at the zooming Czech for the next few seconds. Then with a bellow of rage, he dropped his Hurricane's nose and went wing slanting down, personally to take care of unfinished business.

But, it so happened that it was then that a lot of things interfered. For one thing the entire freight yards blazed with savage ground fire. Also, Messerschmitts arrived. They seemed to come out of nowhere. Some

of them had broke through the protection of Spitfires above, and swept down to engage the low flying Hurricanes. And a most unfortunate incident occurred.

Just as Stafford was lining up his sights on that nice brass decorated Staff engine, Kremnica cut down off his zoom, and intentionally, or otherwise, got his own plane square in the Flight Leader's way. Stafford had to check his fire and pull up quickly. Otherwise he might have boiled smack into one of his own patrol planes.

The culminating development topped off everything. It caused Stafford's anger to hit an all-time high. As he whipped off the peak of his escape zoom and glared down, he saw Kremnica go scooting close by the engine again. Something white, like a roll of paper, popped out of his cockpit and went tumbling, end over end, downward.

At that moment, the snarl and pounding of Messerschmitt machine gun and aerial cannon fire whammed against Stafford's ears. He was forced to act quickly and violently to save his own skin. By the time he had shaken off the pesky Messerschmitt he wasn't quite sure whether or not he actually had seen anything fall out of Kremnica's plane.

But, he twice had seen the Czech pass up shooting at the engine. That fact kept his anger at the boiling point. He twisted and turned away from a second ME, and then went slam-banging in at a third German plane, kiting toward him. And maybe his anger helped his aim. At any rate he caught the German aircraft fair and square, and it came apart in midair, in a shower of small pieces.

He didn't have the chance to make it two for the afternoon. By then the Spitfires had dropped down low, and the Messerschmitts weren't having any part of them. As one plane they went scooting off for other parts with the Spits snapping and cracking at their heels. Stafford didn't join the party. One swift sweeping glance told him they still were all in the air and the fight had drifted far from the rail yards. Since ammunition and gas were low, he gave the signal to get on back home.

"Not good, and not too bad, either," he grunted as he stared at the few small fires still burning in the rail yards. "But, that blasted Czech! Why the devil didn't he shoot and what did he toss out of his plane?"

The last question caused all kinds of crazy thoughts to start skipping through his head. In war anything can have a sinister meaning. "Oh blast it!" he raged at himself. "Don't go getting balmy."

With that he grimly dismissed the problem and led his patrol back across the Channel to a safe landing at the home field. Upon getting out of the Hurricane, he started toward Kremnica's aircraft, but on second thought changed his mind. Better to report

the results of the show to Operations, and then have a talk with the Czech later. After all perhaps Kremnica's guns had jammed. Perhaps the man had had a bad case of first patrol flight. And that thing dropping out of his cockpit might have been just a trick of the sun in his eye. Anyway, better to report to Operations first.

So instead of speaking to Kremnica, Stafford led his flight over to Operations. There he reported the show in full, and then stepped back while each pilot added his bit. It was discovered they had scored four direct hits on engines. At least two whole trains had been put out of commission. However, none of the four hits had been scored by Kremnica. And when the Czech was reporting he had wasted his bullets, Stafford felt it was terrible effort for Kremnica to talk. What's more, the Czech looked as though he had seen a ghost, and kept chewing at his lower lip. A haunted look glowed in his eyes. And when the Operations and Intelligence officers dismissed them, Kremnica fairly bolted out of the place.

He got away so fast Stafford had no chance to stop him. Thus the Flight Leader was forced to follow the Czech to his hutment.

When Stafford pushed in through the door the new pilot was in the act of dropping down on his hands and knees by his bunk. However, the noise of Stafford's entrance brought him up on his feet like a flash. Terror glazed his eyes. Then he regained control of himself, and forced his lips into a smile.

"You—you wanted to see me, sir?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing important," Stafford said casually. "I just thought you acted as though there were something wrong, Kremnica. Didn't get wounded, did you?"

"Wounded?" The Czech pilot shook his head sadly. "But, no. I am ashamed of myself, sir. I was not very good, eh?"

"Lots of chaps mangle their first show," Stafford said. He gave the man a keen stare. "What happened? Did your guns jam? Why didn't you riddle that spiffy engine?"

"An accident, sir," Kremnica replied a trifle too quickly. "Something went wrong with my guns for an instant. I am sorry. I promise to do much better next time."

"Of course," Stafford murmured. "By the way, what fell out of your cockpit, after that second dive? I was just coming down above where I saw it drop."

Perhaps the Czech was only tired. Or perhaps the last question embarrassed him. But it threw him off balance for a moment. Anyway, he had to brace the backs of his knees against the edge of his bunk before he could straighten up.

"I am doubly ashamed about that, sir," he said. "A sudden up-draft in the cockpit blew my flight map from beneath the clip and

out of the hatch. I had no chance to grab it. Fortunately, though, it was still unmarked and will be of no use to any German who finds it."

A few other questions popped into Stafford's brain. But he filed them away for another time. Bursting with rage and disgust, he abruptly terminated the conversation. Grunting something about "better luck next time," he went outside and headed for the mess lounge. He was firmly convinced Kremnica had lied to him. In other words, he felt positive the Czech deliberately had refrained from shooting up that Staff train engine, and that it had been no flight map that had fallen from his cockpit.

At the door of the mess lounge Stafford paused and scowled. Then turned around, swearing softly under his breath.

"A rotten business," he grumbled. "Should be able to accept his word, but blast it, I've got to know for sure. A strange blighter, that one. Wish he'd never come here."

Feeling like a low snooper, Stafford went over to where his Flight's planes along the south side of the field. With an odd pounding in his chest he climbed up on the stub step of Kremnica's Hurricane and stuck his head inside the pit. What he saw at once caused a dull flush to spread over his face. Kremnica's flight map was right there in the cockpit clip! Just to make sure, he took it out and had a look. And the look told him beyond all doubt that it was the same map that he, himself, had issued to Kremnica that morning. Then he checked the Hurricane's and found that no more than a couple of one-second bursts had been fired from any of them.

"So, the beggar's a liar!" he muttered and stepped down onto the ground. "What a bloody mess!"

CHAPTER III

Runaway Hurricane

FLIGHT Leader Stafford gulped hard as he had a sudden thought. He tried to laugh it off, but the laugh just wouldn't come. Some of the cold fury returned. He stood still, trying to make up his mind what to do about it.

"This is something for the Old Man, I fancy," he said slowly. "Quite out of my line. Blast it! I'm only a Flight Lieutenant. What an annoyance!" So with a shrug he turned and went over to the Station Office. Squadron Leader Markham nodded as he entered.

"Good show, Stafford," the O.C. said pleasantly. "Four engines isn't bad. I say! Some-

thing on your mind? Sit down. Cigarette?"

Stafford sat down, and absently accepted the cigarette. "Perhaps I've gone a bit potty, sir," he said slowly. The Flight Lieutenant hesitated, took a deep breath, and then related the Desvres show in detail. He could feel himself flushing as he neared the end. "Sounds a bit queer, sir," he finally ended up. "It's not very loyal to one's allies, sir, but, after all, this war is rather mixed up. I was wondering if this Kremnica is really the type of Czech we want with us."

"There might be something in what you fear," Squadron Leader Markham said. "It wouldn't be the first time a refugee has turned out to be a chunk of Nazi vermin. What puzzles me is his not faking an attempt to riddle that Nazi Staff train. I've heard tell of Nazi spies even shooting down Jerry planes, to lull suspicion. You think he deliberately got in between you and that engine?"

Stafford shrugged.

"Blessed if I know," he grunted. "It could have been deliberate. But, it also is possible he didn't see me coming down."

"Well, lying about his flight map going over the side is definitely something," Markham said with a heavy sigh. "And you finding him on hands and knees by his bunk sounds suspicious. Too bad he heard you enter. You couldn't see what he was up to?"

"No, sir," Stafford murmured. "But, perhaps, he was only getting ready to say his prayers. Confound it! Why does he bring us puzzles? We're busy enough with the Jerries."

Markham nodded absently, but it was plain that he was listening with only half an ear. He sat staring off into space with the look of a man who has just bitten into a sour pickle. And then presently the expression changed. He had reached a decision.

"Well, I guess we'd better look into the business," he said. "I'll send the Orderly saying I want to see him here. You stay and act as though you'd just popped in to wait for me. Keep him here. Meanwhile I'll go to his hutment and have a look about. Being on his hands and knees, maybe the chap has something hidden under his mattress. See you shortly."

With a grunt the Squadron Leader reached for his service cap and went outside. Stafford lighted another cigarette, blew out the match, slumped in his chair, and scowled. He was both angry and annoyed. Angry, if Kremnica was a Nazi agent and annoyed, if Kremnica was all right, after all, and he, Stafford, was making a blasted mountain out of a mole hill.

Thinking of first one side of the strange business, and then of the other, he sat frowning at the opposite wall for a full twenty minutes. At the end of that time Squadron Leader Markham came charging into the

Station Office with blood in his eye. He had a roll of papers in his hand. The indignation in the O.C.'s eyes increased as he snapped a glance about the room and saw that Stafford was alone.

"Didn't the beggar come in here?" he demanded.

"Not yet," Stafford answered as he eyed the roll of papers in the O.C.'s hand. "Found something?"

"Yes," Markham said. He tossed the papers on the desk. "Stuck under his bunk mattress. Drawings of some sort. Didn't bother to look at them closely. Decided it was better for Kremnica to explain. But, you say he hasn't shown up? I saw the Orderly speak to him."

"Kremnica never came here," Stafford said, as a little tingle of excitement rippled through his chest. "Drawings, sir? Mind if I look?"

"Of course, go ahead," the O.C. replied, and spread out the papers himself. "Something mechanical. Appeared that way to me. Now, let's have a better look. My word! What the devil do you say to that, Stafford?"

The Flight Lieutenant had already studied the drawings done in light pencil. He was shaking his head slowly from side to side, while a look of consternation and bewilderment spread over his face.

"Amazing!" he muttered absently. "Doesn't make sense at all. Not to me. Drawings of a railroad engine, by heavens! Isn't that what you make of them, sir?"

"That's right," the Squadron Leader agreed. He stared down at the drawings. "A railway engine. Not one of British, though. Hasn't the same lines but rather nice streamlining. Now, what would he be doing with these drawings hidden under his mattress?"

"Why the devil did he make them in the first place?" Stafford countered. "Or did he make them?" Could it be a copy of these I saw him toss from his aircraft? Has this any connection with why he didn't shoot up that Nazi Staff train?"

The O.C. didn't open his mouth to answer for a moment or two. He just stood half bent over the desk, staring down at the drawings of a railroad engine. Slowly he wagged his head from side to side. And when he did open his mouth to speak he promptly snapped it shut.

For at that exact moment the explosion of a revving Merlin engine hit the air outside. Both Markham and Stafford automatically turned toward the office window. They both saw a Hurricane rip out from its dispersal point on the south side of the field, and go tearing away in a whirlwind take-off.

"What the devil?" Markham was the first to find his voice. "It's that Czech! Kremnica!"

Stafford didn't waste time or breath to

make any comment. Things had suddenly reached a climax. He was fed up with guess work. Only in Kremnica could he find the correct answers, whatever they might be. And right now the Czech was getting altitude between his Hurricane and the ground. That was enough for Stafford. So he instantly galvanized himself into action. He turned around and reached the door in two leaps.

He went through it on the third leap, and then pounded ground over to where his own plane was parked. He heard Markham racing along at his heels, but he didn't bother to pause.

He reached his plane, vaulted into the pit, and rammed in the starter plug. An ever-present mechanic sprang into action, too. On the first turn-over the Merlin caught and roared up in sound. The mechanic jerked the starter dolly away, and Stafford kicked off the wheel brakes and gave the Merlin the gun.

Less than a minute later he was well in the air and kiting full out after a dot in the sky to the east.

The dot remained just a dot as Stafford roared out over the choppy waters of the Channel. And it was still that way when he reached the French coast and went tearing inland. Then the dot increased in size. It did so because Kremnica had started down in a long dive at throttle, and Stafford still flying full out was able to cut down the air space between them.

Just to gain a little extra speed the Flight Lieutenant dipped his own nose a hair. And it was then he got a clear look at Kremnica's "diving point." He caught his breath. The Czech was tearing straight down on the Desvre railroad yards. But, the Nazis were not to be caught napping by this one man show, and a whole lot of dangerous stuff was filling the air about Kremnica's diving plane.

"The bloody fool!" Stafford bellowed into the thunder of his Merlin. "What the devil's he up to? Asking to get killed, or what? He's crazy. Well, I'll be hanged!"

The last burst from his lips because the Czech had suddenly swerved his dive to the right.

Now he piled down on the Nazi Staff train, with its ornately dressed up engine, that was still there in the middle of the yard.

As Stafford stared down at it he half expected to see scads of Nazi high rankers pop out of the train and go racing for cover elsewhere. However, not a single grey-green clad figure came out of any of the cars, or the fancy engine. Just the same, though, there were Nazis down there close to the train because a terrific blast of ground fire broke out.

Stafford caught his breath. He fully expected to see the Czech's Hurricane burst into flames in the next second!

CHAPTER IV

Flaming Vengeance

BY a miracle, though, that little item didn't come to pass. Maybe the aim of the Nazis was terrible, or maybe the hand of Lady Luck was guiding the Hurricane. At any rate the Czech kept right on going down. And when it seemed that he was going to plow nose first straight into that shiny brass festooned engine, the Czech opened up with all his guns. He plastered the engine from cab to stack.

"Nice shooting, old chap!" Stafford shouted impulsively. "Perfect bullseye!"

Only, it wasn't. True the fancy brass decorated engine had been struck in many places, but not in any vulnerable place. And as the Czech pilot went prop-clawing upward with furious ground fire completely ringing him the Nazi Staff train engine refused to explode in a roar of sound, and smoke, and flame.

"Too bad, Kremnica!" Stafford yelled. He kicked right rudder slightly. "But, I'll get the blighter for you."

Help, however, was obviously not a part of the Czech's plans. Perhaps he saw Stafford diving down. Perhaps he saw Squadron Leader Markham roaring up in his Hurricane, or maybe he didn't see either of them. Anyway, he cracked his Hurricane off the top of its zoom, and whipped over. Down through the withering blast of ground fire he went once more, like a comet bent for destruction. So sudden, and so savage was the maneuver that Stafford was forced to pull sharply off to the side. If he hadn't the Czech's diving plane would have cut him squarely in two.

Down like a bolt of lightning out of the blue went Kremnica, his guns spitting streaks of orange flame. And once again he acted as though he was going to jam his spinning prop right down the smoke stack. But once more he pulled up and out in the nick of time. And not one second too soon.

As a matter of fact, his climbing plane was suddenly hidden from view in a great cloud of steam. Smoke, laced with licking tongues of flame and snapping sparks gushed upward toward the heavens. Impulsively Stafford choked out a curse, and cut around sharply. It was a race to get clear of the stuff spewing out toward him.

Luckily he managed to dodge that blotch of fire and searing steam. When he was able to zoom and steal a quick glance backward a half prayer and half cry of dumbfounded amazement burst from his lips. By all the rules of that kind of aerial warfare Krem-

nica's plane should be a shower of junk slithering outward in all directions. But, it wasn't.

The plane was still in one piece, and, what's more, it was climbing up and around toward the west at full throttle. Back down in the rail yard a smoking ball of flame marked all that was left of the brass trimmed Staff locomotive. And the flames were racing back over the coaches and spreading to the cars on the other tracks.

At once Stafford went after plenty of altitude. Soon he caught sight of Markham's plane close by, off his right wing. Only then did Stafford realize that he hadn't fired a single shot during the whole business. Nor had Markham, either, apparently. There were other engines down there in the yards, but they had both been so wrapped up in Kremnica's efforts they had ignored other possibilities.

And now it was too late to give those targets any attention. And for a good reason, which was not because of furious ground fire, still blasting upward. It was because Kremnica was heading back toward England at full throttle. Heading back to England after destroying an engine he had neglected to touch, a couple of hours ago.

"The Czech's balmy, perhaps," Stafford told himself moving closer to Markham's Hurricane.

The O.C. met his gaze and seemed to read his thoughts, because Markham hunched one shoulder in a gesture of bewilderment, and gave a little jerky shake of his head. Then Stafford turned front and concentrated on keeping Kremnica's plane in sight. Markham did the same, and both he and Stafford landed some eight or nine seconds after the Czech. They taxied to the south side of the field as fast as they could, and then leaped from their pits and raced over to Kremnica. The Czech turned. As they hurried up, a look of half joy and half sadness spread over his swarthy face. He even licked his lips, and backed up a few steps when they reached him.

"I understand your anger, sir," he blurted out at Markham. "I am ashamed. I had no right to fly without permission. After the kindness of your Royal Air Force, it was inexcusable. But, I had to, sir. I was a mad man—a fool who did not stop to think. I had to destroy that engine. To let them keep it would have driven me completely insane. For Karel, I had to destroy it. For him, I was compelled!"

"Yes?" Squadron Leader Markham said dryly. "But, perhaps you'd better tell us what the devil you're talking about. Who is Karel? Why did you ignore that train the first time? And what about the drawings of an engine I found in your bunk? Kremnica, you'd better tell us all of it. Quick, man!"

The Czech licked his lips, started to gesture with his hands but gave it up.

"It must seem madness to you, but I beg you to understand," he said. He stared past Markham with a bright hurt look in his eyes. "It was so long ago. Before England went to war with the Nazis. They marched into my country, and—and took everything. I was then head designer of the Skoda Locomotive Works. My brother, Karel, was with me. But, airplanes, not locomotives, were his love. Yes, we both flew—were pilots. But, he loved the air more than I. Locomotives! To design the very best in the world—that was my dream!"

The Czech paused and made a little brushing motion of one hand, as though he were driving aside countless unimportant thoughts that crowded into his brain.

"But, that was so long ago," he continued in a bitter voice. "My best design had just reached the rails. A special engine for President Benes' own private train. But—the Nazis took it away. There was nothing any of us could do. The Nazis took everything. My engine? I never saw it again, until this morning."

THE Czech took a deep breath staring at Stafford with haunted eyes. "Please understand, if you can," he went on in a faltering voice. "It was only an engine, yes. But, it was everything to me—my life's work. Just knowing it was in Nazi hands paralyzed every muscle in my body and crowded my brain with terrible memories. Karel had been shot down by the Messerschmitts while flying for Russia, where he had escaped. When I refused to design things for the Nazis, they put me in a concentration camp and tortured me. Then I learned of Karel's death. I vowed to get to England and avenge him. I used my own name but his papers, because I am not young as he was . . . but over thirty. You British might not have accepted me, if you had known my true age.

"Anyway, I chose this Squadron because of your work. You destroyed Nazi engines and trains. That was the best way to pay back for what they had done to me. But. . . But THERE was my own engine. The one stolen from me. I could not think, much less act. I could only look down at it, and feel my own heart bleed. And then it was too late to do anything. The patrol was over. The Messerschmitts had arrived, and there was no time to go back and destroy what my own brain had created."

Kremnica paused again.

"But, it was too much to bear," he said slowly. "To know that that engine was there, being used by the cursed Nazis. Perhaps it might be gone before the next raid we made. Perhaps—well, perhaps you would laugh at me if I begged you to make another

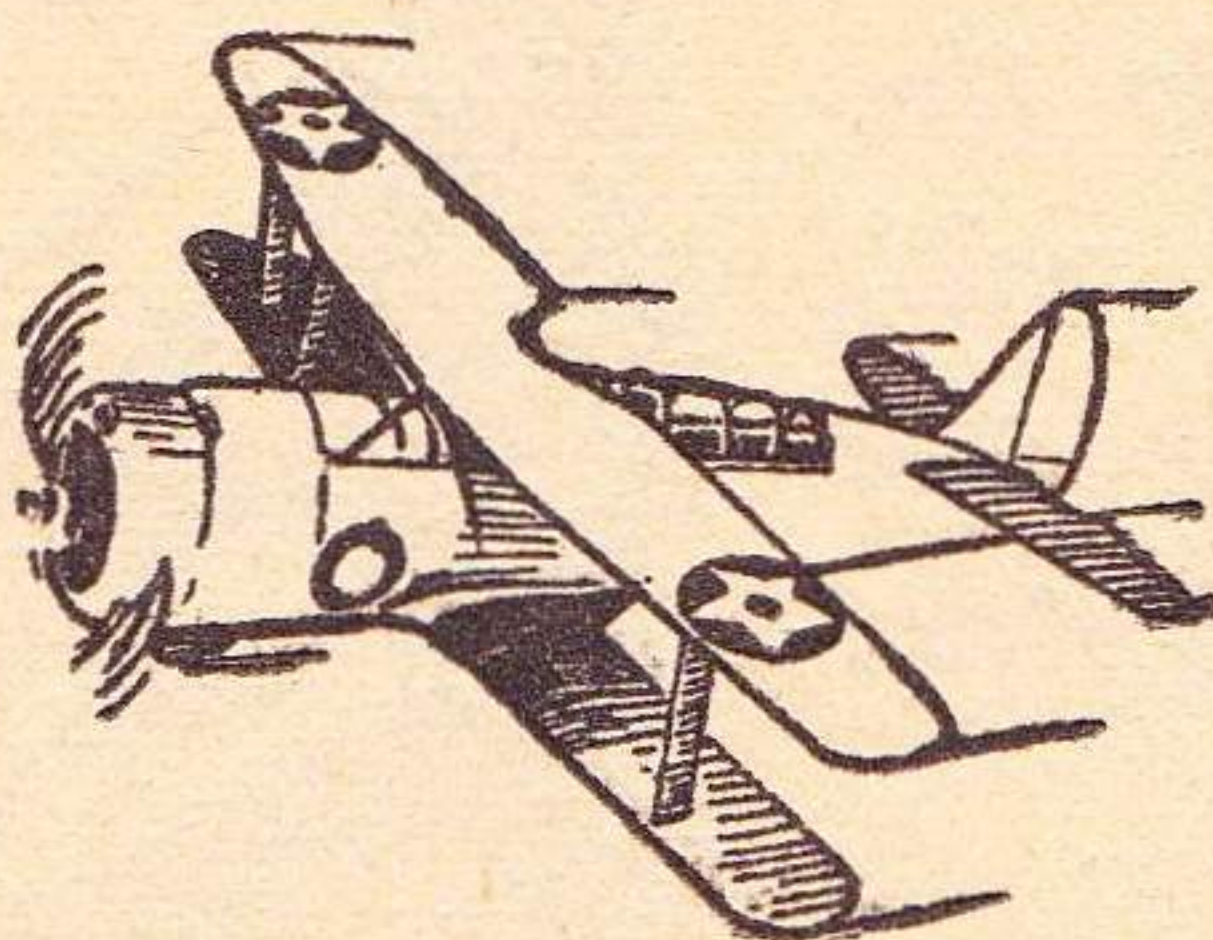
raid so that I could destroy that engine, myself. So there was but one thing to do and I must do it. I did not dare risk your saying no to my request. I had to kill that lovely thing. Then the Nazis wouldn't have it to use. But there is no need to tell you more."

"Oh, yes, there is," Squadron Leader Markham answered. "What did fall out of your plane? We know it wasn't your flight map." A red flush crept up the Czech's neck and mantled his face.

"On my honor as a Czechoslovak I did not realize it was in my pocket," he said. "It was a rough drawing of part of a new locomotive I have been designing in my spare time. The up draft caught it and blew it out of the pit. I didn't not dare confess

the truth when you discovered it, Flight Lieutenant Stafford. So I hurried to my hutment to hide my other drawings. I was foolish to do that, but I am not British and my head was filled with mad thoughts. You found the drawings, eh? Well, I have told you the truth. I must accept my punishment. I have no excuses. Only apologies." The Czech made a resigned gesture with his hands. Markham stared at him silently for a long moment. Then he sighed.

"I think an invitation to the mess lounge for the three of us is in order right now," he said. "But for heavens sake, Kremnica, remember to leave all your private papers behind in the future. THAT I will not stand for twice!"



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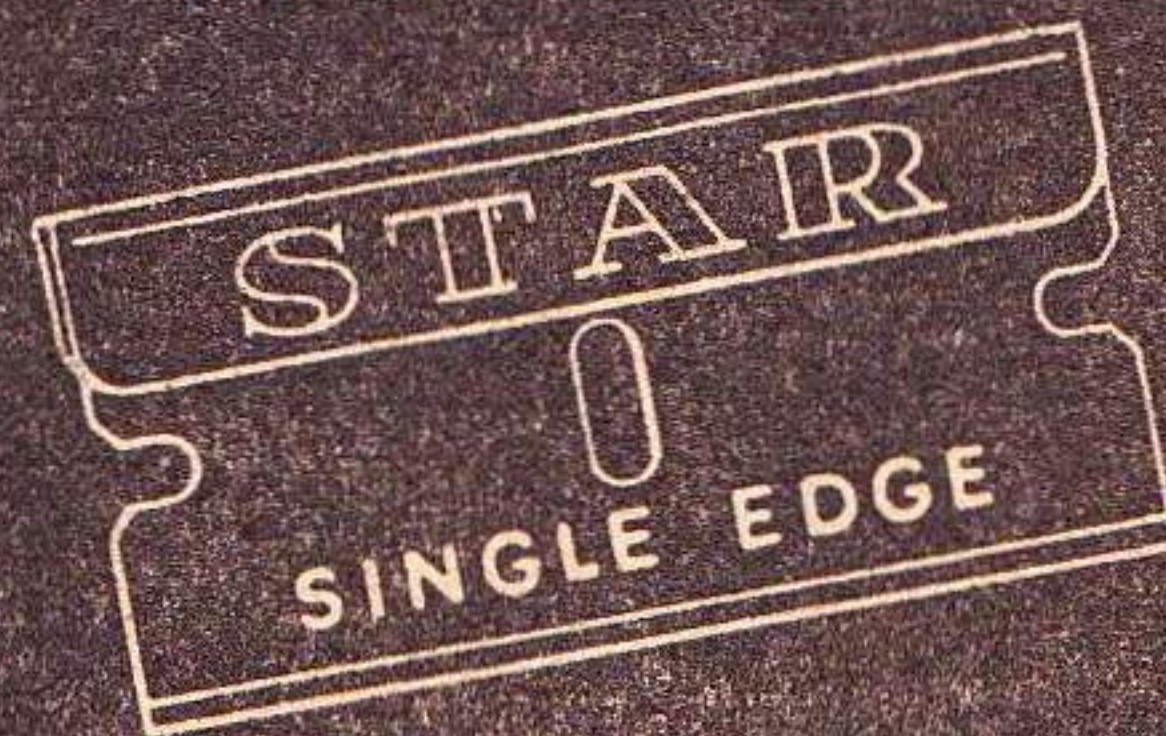
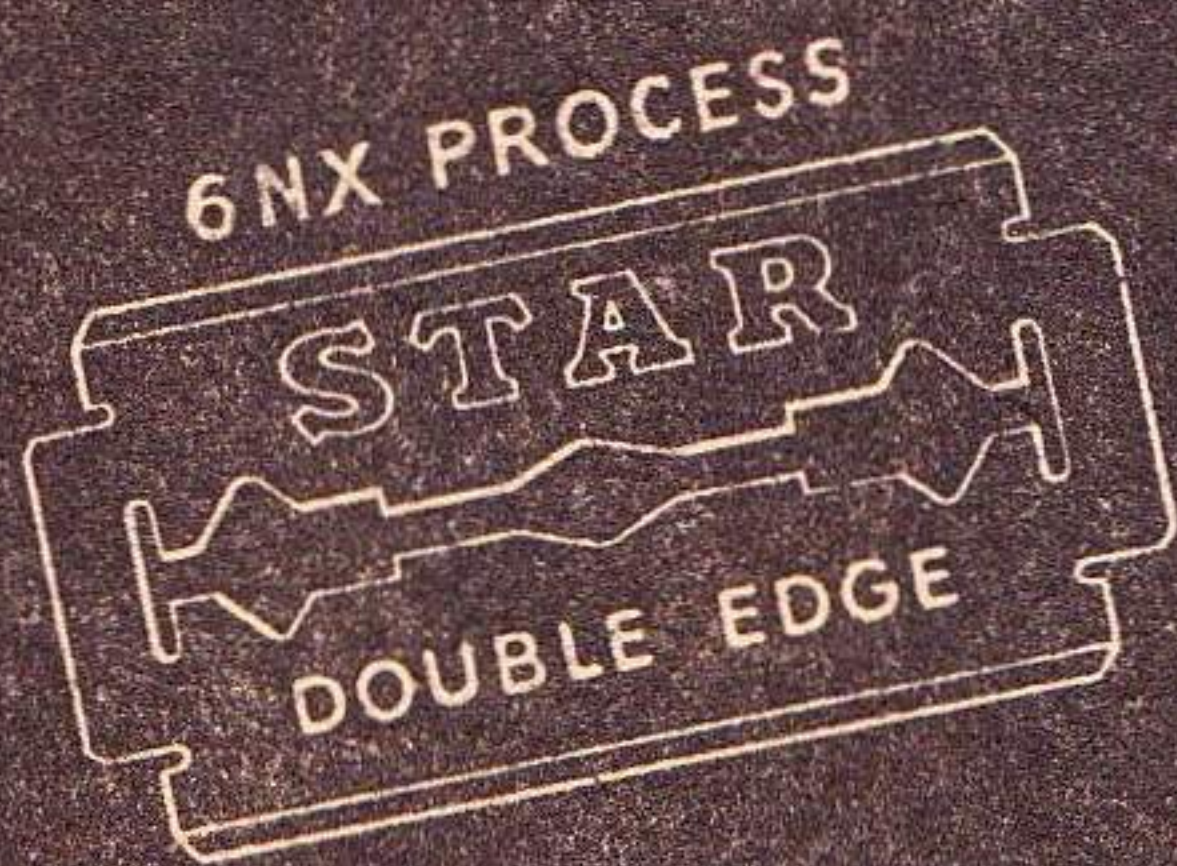
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ACES HAVE TO BE LUCKY

By
Lt. SCOTT MORGAN

Chuck Bevan Finds a Session with Screaming Shells in the Air a Cinch Compared with His Chance of Meeting the Air Vice-Marshal's Daughter!

"CHUCK" BEVAN shoved open his greenhouse, stuck his head out, and stared down at the slate-gray waters of the English Channel. When the Harwich shoreline slid by under his wings, he pulled in his head, fed a bit more hop to his Hurricane's Merlin, and banked out of the five-plane formation toward the north.

He had traveled northward for less than two hundred yards when the voice of Acting Squadron Leader Farnsworth crackled in his helmet phones.

"No you don't, Bevan! Back in formation, my lad. The patrol's not washed out yet. Must make the report to Operations, you know. Come along."

Bevan made a face, swore softly under his breath, and glanced hopefully toward the north. No soap! Not a sign of a Nazi plane. Only blue English sky, and a patch of clouds here and there.

"Thought I saw something up by those clouds," he mumbled into his flap-mike. "Maybe I'd better go take a look."



Bevan jazed at her and then zoomed up out of his dive

"Maybe you'd better not!" was the curt reply over the ether waves. "Come along, Bevan. That's an order!"

The Yank-born R.A.F. ace swore softly once more, then obediently banked around and slipped back into formation. Ten minutes later the five planes of the Twenty-sixth R.A.F. Fighter Squadron dropped down on their home field, and taxied up to the waiting arms of the mechanics.

It took another ten minutes to report to Operations, and the ever-present Intelligence officer, that not a single thing of interest had happened during the look-see patrol to the Occupied France side of the English Channel.

Then the members of the patrol headed for the mess.

That is, three of them did. Farnsworth took hold of Bevan's arm and let the others get on out of earshot.

"That fair lady is going to get you into trouble, Yank," the acting O.C. said quietly. "I mean it. She's got you dancing around like grease on a hot stove. You'll pull up your socks, my lad, if you know what's good for you. After all, we're trying to win a war."

Bevan stared innocently at his superior officer, who was all of six months his senior in age.

"Come again?" he echoed. "I don't get you."

Farnsworth tried to look stern, but gave it up with a sigh.

"You know bloody well what I mean!" he growled. "Up Lowestoft way there's a base hospital. In that hospital is a wonderful nurse, according to you. She has red hair and blue eyes, but you're not sure. You haven't got that close yet. She waves to you every time you go by."

"You've even doped up signals. There are two big elms on the south grounds. A plane going between them tells her it's you. She comes to a window and hangs out a bit of sheeting, or something. That tells you it's her."

You stunt for the fair lady to show what a pukka pilot you are, then you fly off. Fine—but enough is enough. It's bound to get you in trouble sooner or later."

BEVAN'S jaw was sagging, and his eyes were stuck out like marbles on sticks. It was a couple of seconds before he could find his tongue.

"Sweet tripe!" he eventually blurted. "Where'd you learn all that?"

Farnsworth grinned faintly and tapped Bevan on the chest.

"From you," he said. "The squadron binge the other night. You had five or six hundred too many. You insisted on telling me about your love-life while I was putting you to bed. Get onto yourself, old thing! The first time you ever set eyes on her was only a week ago. She happened to be hanging out the window as you went by, low down. You put on a wonderful show for her, so you told me. A wonder you didn't break your blasted neck."

"She's worth it!" Bevan breathed and a far-away light stole into his eyes. "Even at the distance she's the most wonderful thing I ever saw. I've got to meet her somehow. She's got me, no kidding!"

"Rot!" Farnsworth snorted, and tapped Bevan's chest again. "Why, you don't even know her name. For all you know she may be married, and have five sons in the army. Come off it, Yank! You're heading straight for trouble. I don't want to see that. You're too good a pilot to get messed up over some girl you've never met. You were starting to sneak up there just now. Well, cut it! And I'm only telling you this for your own good."

"Okay," Bevan said with a grin. "I'll do it the honorable way. How about two days' leave? I'll go calling on foot."

"I couldn't grant two hours' leave

even to myself!" Farnsworth snapped. "You know that. What with the *Luftwaffe* liable to start things all over again any day now, we're all on twenty-four-hour duty. My advice to you is, wait till the war's over. By then maybe you'll have the V.C. to lay at her feet. Any girl would go for a V.C.—married or single."

"I should wait until I have a beard way down to here!" the Yank growled. "Come on, be a good guy. Six hours, then. I could make it to there and back in one of the squadron cars."

"The answer is still no," Farnsworth said. "Not that I wouldn't like to, Yank. But it's no go. If something should pop while you were away I'd have a fine time explaining to Adastral House that you were out calling on a lady. And here's a thought. Stay away for her sake. Some Intelligence or Home Guard bloke might see that bit of sheet she hangs out the window, and run her in for a spy."

"Nuts!" Bevans snorted.

"Have it your way," Farnsworth said, with a shrug. "But, I'd take my advice if I were you. And just to check that thought I see forming in your head, a forced landing is definitely out, my lad. I'll ground you for a week if you so much as dare pull that old one on me. Now, let's go have an odd spot, eh?"

"If you'll make yours poison!" Bevan growled, and dropped into step.

A SHORT time after lunch the love-bug got to biting Chuck Bevan too hard for him to resist. He went to his hutment to collect his helmet and goggles, and then over to the tarmac line. He made a show of fussing over his engine for a while, then nodded to the mechanics and legged into the pit.

"Noticed a skip this morning," he said by way of explanation. "Maybe it was ice, but I want to make sure. Won't be up more than twenty minutes, or so."

He wasn't sure, but he thought he saw one of the mechanics grin knowingly as he backed clear of the wingtip. Bevan scowled and wondered if Farnsworth was the only one he had sounded off to during that binge the other night. He resolved to stick to beer in the future, and opened the Merlin's gate wide.

As the Hurricane leaped forward he caught movement out the corner of his eye. A quick look showed Farnsworth dashing out of the squadron office. Bevan turned his gaze quickly front, snapped off the radio switch, and let the Hurricane keep on going. In nothing flat he was off and prop-whining up toward the bright blue sky.

He thundered on up until fifteen thousand feet of air were under his wings. Then he kicked the Hurry-box around for a few minutes, just in case glasses were on him from below.

Bit by bit, though, he worked his way northeastward toward Lowestoft. Eventually he was able to pick up the small town on the edge of where England dropped off into the North Sea. And a couple of moments later he spotted the former estate of Lord and Lady Whozit that had been turned into a base hospital for the duration.

The mere sight of the huge main building, that looked like a gigantic reddish-brown Lorraine Cross from the air, set his heart to pumping, and the blood to surging through his veins. He automatically hauled back the throttle and dropped the Hurricane's nose.

"Farnsworth's a good guy, but nuts to his advice!" he grunted as the Hurricane slid earthward. "She's worth the wrath of any Brass Hat. But, boy, if I could just get to meet her! Just five minutes to get the answers to some questions. I . . . Hiya, Sweetheart? Yup! It's me!"

The last burst from his lips as a bit of white started fluttering from a win-

dow on the south side. He instantly stuck the nose down to a steeper angle and thundered toward two giant elms set about fifty yards apart on the south grounds. The Merlin made a racket like the roof falling in, and the Hurricane's wings screamed high C as it went tearing down.

Heads appeared in other windows, but Bevan didn't so much as give them a single glance. He kept his gaze fixed on the particular window on the south side. On the one that framed a glorious mass of golden-red hair, which in turn framed a face with an obvious peaches and cream complexion.

He gazed at it and was a happy guy as he eased out of his dive and went ripping squarely between the two elms with no more than six feet of air between the Hurricane's belly and the ground. He grinned broadly and started to lift his free hand and wave at that lovely face in the window. Only, he didn't quite make it. He didn't because at that moment a car came streaking around the corner of the building.

In one split-second cold Bevan got a flash of Staff pennants on the fenders, a flash of a uniformed driver, and the flash of a Brass Hat in the rear seat. An R.A.F. Brass Hat at that. At least he thought so. But he didn't have time to make sure. It so happened that he was rocketing toward that Staff car at close to four hundred per hour, and it was rocketing toward him at perhaps a tenth of that speed. He had only time to blink, haul savagely on the stick, and gasp a quick prayer.

THE few split seconds that followed were the agony of an eternity to Bevan. He knew that he had missed the corner of the building, knew that he was streaking up toward the blue, but that was all he knew. He didn't dare look down at the ground. Cold fear froze his muscles and refused to permit him to move.

He was at least a good five thousand feet in the air before he could shake himself out of his paralytic trance, and summon up enough courage to stick an eye over the edge of the cockpit rim.

He stared downward, and his heart remained as cold as ice. A Staff car was between the two giant elms, only it wasn't right side up on its four wheels. It was over on its side, and even from five thousand feet Bevan could tell that the left wheel and left fender were scheduled for immediate delivery to the junk-yard.

There was one item, though, that melted a little of the ice that incased his heart. Two figures were close to the overturned car, but both were standing on their feet. But one of them, and he didn't need even one guess, was staring up at him through binoculars.

The melted ice froze about his heart again, and he desperately held his Hurricane in its climb so that he presented only a tail-on view to the eyes behind those binoculars. And he kept on going until that part of England was just a greenish brown blur, and a tiny pain in his chest made him reach for the oxygen tube.

He took a couple of draws, then leveled off and banked toward the west and the other side of England. Half an hour later he completed his circular course and approached the field of Twenty-six from the southeast. He landed, taxied up to the line, and legged out.

For a moment he stood there as though waiting to hear some kind of an explosion. Then he realized that the mechanics were staring at him questioningly.

"It's okay," he grunted with a nod at the engine. "Must have been ice. Take over."

Shedding his flying gear and leaving it on the wing ready for the next patrol, he started over toward the mess. He only got half-way there when the squadron office door popped

open, and Farnsworth came out on the run.

"Just a minute, my lad!" the acting O.C. barked and came running over. "Didn't you hear me? And what was the idea of not answering my radio calling you down?"

"I didn't have it on," Bevan said quickly. "I was up on a test hop. Had a skip this morning. Why? Did you want me for something special?"

Farnsworth gave him a searching stare and made noises in his throat.

"At it again, eh?" he muttered. "No, never mind, Yank. I'm not asking any questions. I gave you the warning. It'll be your funeral if anything ever happens. A skip, my hat! But, never mind. I tried to call you back because I'd received word from Adastral House. We're due for one of those blasted Brass Hat inspections. Air Vice-Marshal Collington will drop by some time today. So, dust yourself up to look pretty, Bevan, and stay on the field. We're all grounded until after the inspection, unless there's a scramble alert."

Though a great wave of relief swept through Bevan, he groaned aloud at the thought of the inspection to come.

"Couldn't we fake an alert?" he asked hopefully. "A Brass Hat inspection's worse than a Jerry strafing. Why not—"

"Can't be done!" Farnsworth snapped. "Got the order direct from Adastral House. So this Collington bloke must be important. You get busy, and clean up—from your *test flight!*"

FARNSWORTH burned Bevan with a significant look, then turned abruptly on his heel and walked back to the squadron office. The Yank grinned, uncrossed his fingers, and continued on toward the mess with a thankful heart. For a couple of moments he had lived in cold dread that Farnsworth had received a phone call from a certain Brass Hat who had been dumped out

of his car up Lowestoft way. None had been received evidently, so that proved that his Hurricane's squadron markings and personal number had not been spotted by those eyes behind those binoculars.

"Nice going, Lady Luck!" he whispered softly. "Guess I'll have to watch it more after this. But, boy, if I could only wangle some way to meet her!"

A couple of hours later Air Vice-Marshal Collington arrived by car. But it wasn't a Staff car, it was a Red Cross car. And the instant Bevan saw it brake to a stop in front of the squadron office a tiny shiver rippled across the back of his neck, and his heart went into its icing-up act again.

The visitor was a true Brass Hat from away back. He wore R.A.F. wings over a flock of decoration ribbons that weren't all campaign stuff, but that was the only human thing about him. He had a face that could cut stone, and a pair of eyes that could see right through a ten-foot wall. Added to that, he was obviously madder than a wet hen. He answered Farnsworth's greeting with a grunt, and continued to grunt as the squadron leader escorted him about the hutments, mess, and hangars.

Bevan trailed along with the others, but he felt as though he were walking on eggs and would break through any second. There was no way to be sure, but that didn't make any difference. He felt in his bones that the Red Cross car had come from the base hospital up at Lowestoft.

Of course, that meant only one thing. And when the visitor reached the line of planes, and a glitter came into his eyes, Bevan had a sudden desire to start running, and to keep on running.

There was absolutely nothing wrong with the line of Hurricanes, but if there had been—say, a speck of dust on a wing—Air Vice-Marshal Collington would most certainly have spotted it. He raked each plane from

prop spinner to rudder post with a questioning glare that seemed to indicate he expected the craft to rear up on its tail wheel and talk to him.

He looked them over from one end to the other, and from wingtip to wingtip. He even stepped back a few paces to get a broadside look at them. And when he had finished with the last plane a look of angry disappointment had come into his eyes.

Then he suddenly whirled on Farnsworth.

"Have any of your aircraft been up today, Squadron Leader?" he snapped.

"Why, yes, sir," Farnsworth replied as a tiny white spot appeared in each cheek. "We made a five-plane look-see patrol to the other side of the Channel this morning. Why, sir?"

"I don't mean as long ago as that," the Air Vice-Marshal said. "I mean around noon. Three hours or so ago. Where's the squadron logbook? Let me have a look at it."

Farnsworth frowned, then sent one of the pilots over to the office for the log. Cold chills swirled through Bevan, and he prayed fervently for the *Luftwaffe* to come over on a raid. Any kind of a raid—it didn't matter.

The *Luftwaffe* stayed wherever it was, though, and the pilot came loping back with the logbook. The Air Vice-Marshal took it, and buried his nose in its pages. Suddenly he grunted and glared at Farnsworth.

"A test flight here," he said and tapped the page with a finger. "Plane Number Nine. Who was the pilot? Is he here?"

Farnsworth squinted at the log and the red started to creep slowly up his neck. Bevan wasn't looking, but he could feel the squadron leader's eyes on him.

"That's Flying Officer Bevan, sir," he heard Farnsworth say. "Is there anything wrong, sir?"

BEVAN wasn't sure, but he suddenly had the feeling that Farnsworth's question had been asked in a

hopeful tone of voice. Then he looked up and found Air Vice-Marshal Collington's gimlet eyes fixed on him. He beat the senior officer to the punch and spoke first.

"Yes, I made a test hop, sir," he said quickly. "I'd developed an engine skip on the patrol. Wanted to find out if it was ice, or not. I flew down toward London and back, but everything was all right, so I didn't stay up long."

"Down toward London, eh?" the Air Vice-Marshal snapped. "Didn't go north, by any chance? You didn't go up Lowestoft way?"

"Up Lowestoft way, sir?" Bevan echoed and gave the senior officer a bewildered look. "Should I have gone up that way, sir? Is there some new ruling about not flying over the London area? I was up pretty high, trying to pick up a bit of ice, but the flak guns didn't open fire, sir. At least, not to my knowledge."

"I'm not talking about flak guns in the London area!" the Air Vice-Marshal snapped. Then after another study of the log, "Well, Bevan was your only pilot aloft, so I guess he's not my man, if he was down over the London area. I must be getting along. My compliments on your station, Farnsworth. You're doing a good job."

"Thank you, sir," the squadron leader replied. Then quickly, "What about Lowestoft, sir? Something happened up there?"

The visiting Air Vice-Marshal suddenly looked too mad to speak for a moment.

"There certainly did!" he finally rapped out. "I was just arriving there by car when some bloody fool pilot in a Hurricane, I thought it was, dived down and came close to creating wholesale murder. The blasted beggar missed two elms by inches, missed my car by less, and just managed to miss the corner of the base hospital there. It unnerved my driver and he ran into

a tree and turned us over.

"Fortunately neither of us was hurt, but it wasn't that blasted beggar's fault we weren't. Give a year's pay to get my hands on the blighter. I'd break him to bits. Thought it might have been one of your pilots, but of course it wasn't. Well, I must be going, Farnsworth. Keep up the good work. Good day, gentlemen. Thumbs up!"

Everybody stood at attention while the visitor took his departure in the Red Cross car. When the car started kicking up dust on the road leading away from the station the pilots broke ranks and headed for the mess.

Bevan took five steps and then halted abruptly. Steel fingers had curled about his right arm. They swung him around to stare into Farnsworth's face. The squadron leader's face was carved granite with two small bolts of lightning for eyes.

"I hate a liar, Bevan!" the tightly drawn lips spat out. "I hate a liar worse than I do a Jerry. Of all the low—"

"Hold it, sir!" Bevan grated back at him. "Did you hear me *deny* that I'd been up Lowestoft way? You did not! I didn't tell him yes, or no. I simply said I was down London way. And I was—for part of the time."

Farnsworth glared and licked his lips. Then some of the anger, just a little, left his eyes.

"Sorry," he said. "I owe you an apology for calling you a liar. Actually you neither admitted or denied it, that's true. But all in all, it was the same thing. Blast you, Bevan! But for the luckiest moment of your life you might now be facing a firing squad or—or worse. By the gods, if it wouldn't look bad for the whole squadron I'd chase after Collington and tell him the truth. You fool, Bevan! After I'd warned you, too! After I'd warned you something was bound to happen. After . . . What in heaven's name possessed you to

dive on his car?"

"I didn't," Bevan replied. "I didn't even see it until I was pulling out. It came scooting around the corner of the building. But I'm plenty sorry, honest. I was a dope, a sap. From here on I'll watch my step. That's a promise, so help me!"

FARNSWORTH made noises in his throat and looked for a moment as if he were going to bring one all the way up from the floor. He actually clenched his fist, but he forced himself to relax before he did anything with it.

"Never mind your promises!" he finally growled. "I'm giving you an order, Bevan. One I really mean! As long as you are in Twenty-six the Lowestoft area is out of bounds for you. Regardless, understand? I don't care if you even see Hitler landing there by parachute! You stay away. Stay *well* away, as long as you're in my command. Is that clear?"

Bevan looked at him and knew the words were no idle talk. Farnsworth was his friend and his squadron leader, but right now he was strictly the latter. Friendship was on the shelf for the moment. The man could well be the Chief Air-Marshal giving the order. Farnsworth had said it, and he *meant* it!

"Okay," Bevan finally said. "The order is perfectly clear, sir."

"Good!" Farnsworth said, with a curt nod. "And don't so much as hope for your confounded lucky streak helping you if you ever break it. If you even go near that base hospital in one of my planes I'll haul you up on the carpet and drum you out of the squadron, so help me! Now, buzz out of my sight before I change my mind and do it now!"

Bevan did something he hadn't done for months. He clicked his heels and saluted smartly. Nobody was kidding, now.

For ten solid days, which was some

kind of a record, Chuck Bevan stuck right to his knitting, and hardly did more than glance toward the north when he was in the air. Two things forced him to do only that. One was the ever-present realization that Farnsworth still meant what he had said. And the other was the sudden increase of R.A.F. activity on the Occupied France side of the Channel.

To put it in a few words, Bevan didn't have the time to consider any love-making patrols. Every one was eastward across the Channel, and then westward toward home, dog-tired, and with the Hurricane full of bullet holes.

On the eleventh day came the order from Adastral House to ease off the pace. Orders for Twenty-six to take it easy for a few days, and overhaul the planes and such. They had been pretty well shot up. In fact, a couple of them were practically flying on reputation alone.

One of them was Bevan's plane. And so on the twelfth day Farnsworth ordered him to fly it to the factory on the west side of England, and collect a brand new Hurricane and bring it back to the squadron. Ordinarily, of course, ferry pilots would do that job. But Farnsworth was a wise squadron leader, even if he was young. He knew that the trip and a day at the Hurricane plant would do wonders for Bevan who had knocked off no less than six Jerry planes in the last ten days. It would take off the strain of the constant grind, at any rate.

Anyway, Bevan packed his toothbrush and razor kit on the morning of the twelfth day and took his bullet-battered Hurricane into the air for the last time, and headed westward toward the factory. The instant he was aloft the surge to bolt north toward the Lowestoft base hospital hit him like ten tons of bricks. He battled with it for a few minutes, almost gave in, but finally managed to pull his socks up, and kept going westward.

The flight to the factory was uneventful. The visit was interesting, though, and the high point was the binge he took part in staged by a bomber command squadron stationed close to the factory. In fact, he spent the night there after making arrangements to pick up the new Hurricane first thing next morning.

SO it happened that he was having breakfast with the bomber pilots and their crews when the "blow" fell. The blow was the lead story of the teletype dispatches tacked up on the bulletin board. The first time he read it nothing clicked. But when he read it the second time steel-fingered hands seemed to cut right through inside his chest and squeeze every drop of blood from his heart.

The story was of a night *Luftwaffe* raid on the Lowestoft area. There was considerable damage done to some so-called military objectives in the area, but one sentence stood out before Bevan's bulging eyes as though it were written in words of fire. The single sentence read:

Two bombs struck No. 10 Base Hospital, and some casualties are reported.

It seemed a year to Bevan before he could tear his eyes off the bulletin board. And it seemed five years before he could leave the bomber command squadron and get over to the factory and pick up his new Hurricane.

Everything was set, guns, ammo, and such.

But the squadron markings had yet to be painted on the ship. He wouldn't wait to have that done, though. He had died too many deaths already since reading of the bomb raid. He told them at the factory that he would take care of the markings at the squadron, and leaped into the pit and tore off and up into the air.

The instant he was clear he hauled

the Hurricane around to the northeast and fed the Merlin every ounce of hop it would take. And the thumping of his heart kept time with the Merlin's revs. Gone from his brain was any memory of Farnsworth's warning. It wouldn't have made any difference even if he had remembered it. He would still have headed northeastward toward the Lowestoft area.

His heart thumped wildly, but it was no more than a thumping chunk of ice in his chest. His mouth and lips were dry with fear, and sickening dread had turned his face and hands clammy cold.

That he had gone haywire over a girl he had never even met, and knew absolutely nothing about, didn't even once occur to him. It was one of those things. It was as though he had known her and been nuts about her for years and years. If the Jerry bombers had—

He cut off the rest savagely, not daring to finish it, and jammed his free hand hard against the already wide-open throttle as though in so doing he might force extra revs out of the thundering Merlin in the nose. Seconds that were years long dragged by, and minutes that were as individual eternities finally passed on into the history of time.

And then suddenly the Lowestoft area, and the slate-blue reaches of the North Sea beyond, came rushing up over the eastern lip of the horizon.

In a dull sort of way he was conscious of patches of smoldering flame and smoke down on the ground, but he didn't give any of them a second look. His eyes sought the base hospital building, found it, and remained riveted upon it. His heart stood still for a brief instant, and then he saw where the two bombs had struck. They had hit a corner of the north wing and reduced it to a pile of crumbled masonry.

"If only she was in the south wing, or in a shelter!" he whispered hoarse-

ly, and slanted the Hurricane down.

He headed down toward the two giant elms, but kept his eyes glued on the windows facing south. And it was not until he had ripped between the two elms and was starting to zoom upward when he saw it. A hand stuck a pillow case, or something, out of one of the southern windows and waved it frantically.

AS Bevan zoomed up past it and out of sight the clamped air in his lungs exploded up his throat to form a half-shout and half-sob of joyous relief. The gods had been kind. The Jerry bombs had not touched the lovely unknown lady with the gorgeous golden-red hair.

"Praise Allah!" Bevan choked out as he prop screamed skyward. "Praise Allah for—"

He never finished the last, for at that moment there came to his ears the savage yammer of aerial machine-gun fire, and the slightly deeper note of aerial cannon. The sound came from behind and above him, and for one crazy instant he expected to feel the biting sting of bullets ripping into his flesh.

None came, however. And in the next instant he had kicked the Hurricane off its rocketing zoom, and was slicing around and raking the English sky with his eyes.

He spotted them almost instantly. Two Messerschmitt One-tens. They were a good three thousand feet above him, but coming downward like the hammers of Hades. However, they were not blasting away at him. Their guns were pumping death and destruction at a small Miles Trainer plane about half a mile south of Bevan's position.

One sweeping look and he got the picture. The two German craft had come over to observe and take pictures of last night's raid. By accident they had stumbled on some poor devil aloft in a Miles Trainer and

were now piling down to churn him into mincemeat with their deadly fire.

One sweeping look, but even as Bevan took that look he was wing-screaming into furious action. In that short period of time he had snapped off the guard of his trigger button, twisted the red ring to "Fire," and had hauled up his nose toward the nearest of the two diving Messerschmitts.

"Drop that fledgling, you two rats!" he bellowed and pressed the trigger button. "Drop it, and mix with somebody who knows what it's all about!"

The nearest German pilot of course didn't hear his voice, but it was obvious that he did hear Bevan's snarling guns, for he instantly pulled out of his dive and started to swing around toward the Yank's Hurricane. But that's all he did, however. He just started to.

By that time Bevan had rocketed in close and the concentrated fire of his guns virtually cut the German two-seater in half. The craft zoomed up by the nose, hung in mid-air for a brief instant, then fell over slowly on one wing, burst into flame, and began falling apart as it slithered earthward.

Bevan didn't wait to watch the pieces strike the ground. The other Messerschmitt was almost right on top of the Miles Trainer that was diving like a terrified sparrow for a quick landing. Even as Bevan sliced around in a half-turn he saw the Messerschmitt's tracers cutting through the training planes wingtips. Another couple of seconds and the German would catch the slower plane in a cold-meat burst.

Another two seconds—but two seconds can be two lifetimes to a man in the pit of a Hurricane. And Chuck Bevan made full use of them.

Body hunched forward, and face granite-hard and set, he slammed his Hurricane straight at the Messerschmitt, and mentally thumbed his nose at the withering fire the Jerry's

rear gunner poured at him. He felt his ship rock and quiver as made-in-Germany bullets slashed into it, but he didn't swerve an inch to the left or right. He slammed on in and then let go with his own guns at a distance from which even a blind man couldn't miss.

Too late the German let go of his cold-meat kill and started to bank away. Bevan's bullets chopped into the Messerschmitt from nose to tail wheel, and no man-made airplane built could stand up under that devastating fire.

THE Messerschmitt was no exception to prove the rule. It practically blew up a split second before Bevan would have rammed his Hurricane straight into it. As it was the Yank zoomed up through a sheet of red flame as he got out of the way.

At the top of his zoom he leveled off, throttled, and glanced downward. He grinned and felt good at what he saw. Two patches of roaring flame on the ground close to the hospital represented all that was left of two Messerschmitts. And between them, actually landing on a level strip of the hospital grounds was the Miles Trainer. He watched it settle, roll to a stop, and the helmeted figure climb out, and wave a hand at him.

"That's okay, pal!" he grunted and banked the Hurricane to the south. "I'd like to land and have you buy me that drink, but I've got to be the unknown hero this time. Yeah, and nuts! I've even got to pass up credit for getting those two Jerries. That is, unless I want Farnsworth to cut my heart out and toss me into the clink—or worse!"

Half an hour later he landed on Twenty-six field fifty per cent happy, and fifty per cent sad. He was happy that his gorgeous unknown love had been untouched by *Luftwaffe* bombs. And he was happy that she had been able to see him pay off with a couple

of Messerschmitts for those two bombs that hit the hospital. But he was sad that he wouldn't be able to get credit for those two Messerschmitts. And he was sad that he was not even one step nearer to meeting the lovely lady.

And then suddenly he realized that Farnsworth was standing right in front of him.

There was a stunned look on the O.C.'s face and he was pointing at Bevan's new Hurricane.

"What happened?" Farnsworth was asking. "How did you happen to get this brand new bus all shot up?"

Bevan gulped, stared at the bullet-holes in the wing and fuselage for the first time, and longed for the ground beneath his feet to open up and swallow him. He realized in a flash that it was no use to lie, and he wouldn't anyway.

True, Farnsworth might swallow any cock and bull story he gave him. But only until the squadron leader read of the air fight up Lowestoft way that was sure to be mentioned in the evening dispatches.

HE looked at his O. C. and tried to grin, but he couldn't make it.

"Well, my luck's run out, like you said it might," he groaned.

Then taking the bull by the horns he reported the whole thing just as it had happened. Farnsworth listened in cold silence right to the end. Then his eyes flashed and he opened his mouth to speak. But before he could get the first word out a squadron orderly dashed up and said that he was wanted on the phone, and that it was important.

Taking Bevan by the arm, Farnsworth led him silently over to the squadron office, shoved him into a chair for safe keeping, and took the call. The Yank didn't watch him, or even listen. He simply sat put

and stared unhappily down at the floor.

Then suddenly Farnsworth slammed the receiver back on the hook, swore softly, and turned to Bevan.

"BY ALL the gods, it isn't fair!" he grated. "It isn't fair for one blasted beggar to have *all* the luck!"

"Luck?" Bevan echoed feebly and look at him.

"Lord, yes!" Farnsworth cried, his face red as he stabbed a finger at the phone. "Blasted luck, and miracles! That was Air Vice-Marshal Collington. *He* was in that Miles Trainer. He was heading for that base hospital to see his daughter, who's a nurse there, when those two bandits jumped him. He wants you to come up there at once."

"Me?" Bevan gulped. "But, how in thunder—"

"That's the miracle part," Farnsworth said, and grinned slowly. "It turns out that his daughter is your mysterious lady fair. Your plane had no markings but she was able to tell him that the pilot must have come from Twenty-six. She explained about the signal you used by flying between those elms. Anyway, he wants you, of course, up there in a hurry. Wants to thank you, no doubt. Pin a medal on you probably, confound you!"

"But, holy smoke!" Bevan gasped. "Then he'll guess about the Hurry-box that tipped over his car!"

"Probably will," Farnsworth grunted. "But he seemed very happy on the phone. And you did save his life, you know. But what if he does put you in front of a firing squad? With your luck there probably won't be any bullets in the guns. Get out of here, before I convince myself that this really *is* just a mad dream!"

And Chuck Bevan was gone before the echo.

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The TIME to STRIKE HARD

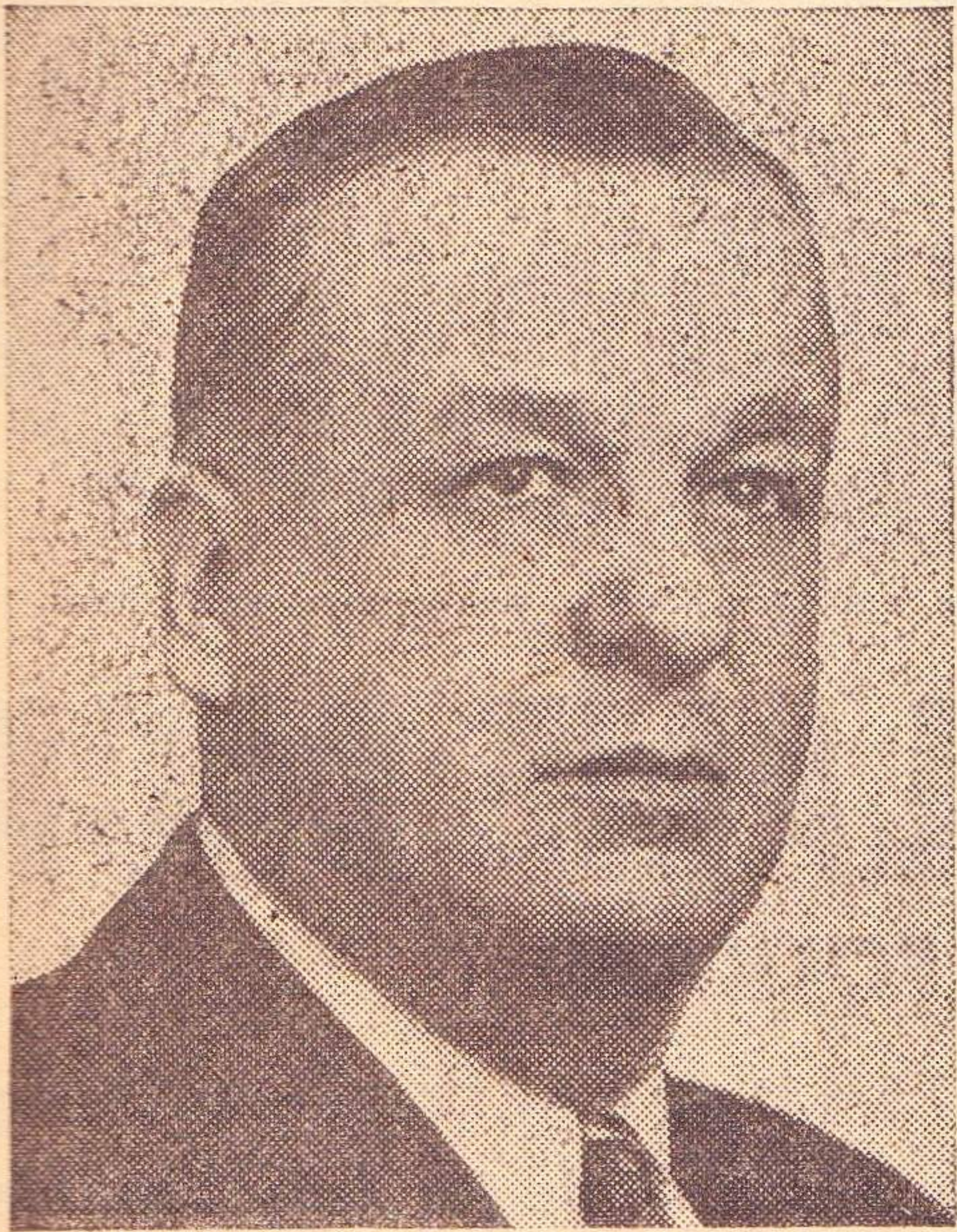
By

MAJOR GEORGE FIELDING ELIOT

One of America's Most Famous Military Commentators

THE most critical period of the war is now beginning as Allied troops begin the actual invasion of the continent in Europe.

As this invasion proceeds, it will call for a constant flow of weapons and supplies, of planes and shipping, far exceeding anything that we have so far been required to dispatch overseas. It will develop into the greatest overseas operation ever undertaken by the armed forces of the United States. It can end only with the complete overthrow of Germany



MAJOR GEORGE FIELDING ELIOT

and that overthrow will be accomplished only when German fighting power has been beaten to earth and completely shattered.

The quicker we accomplish this result, the quicker we shall be able to turn our attention to the smashing of Japan. Every day saved means the saving of American lives in a double sense—for it means not only the shortening of the period during which those lives must be sacrificed in Europe, but it also eases by that much our problems in the Pacific, which must still be dealt with.

There is further to be noted the fact that the air war in Europe is coming to its ex-

pected crisis as the German fighter defenses begin to increase against our bombing attacks. This is the result of the Germans having switched their aircraft production almost entirely to fighters. We must not only keep up the scale of our attacks on German industrial and communications centers but we must also find the means to break up their aircraft industry and keep them from further increasing their fighter output.

This is the moment—the moment when the air war hangs in the balance and when our troops and those of our Allies are struggling ashore on the European continent, while the enemy knows not where to turn to get sufficient forces to oppose us and at the same time to meet the onset of the indomitable Russians—this is the moment to strike harder and ever harder blows, to see to it that the Germans have not a moment's breathing space.

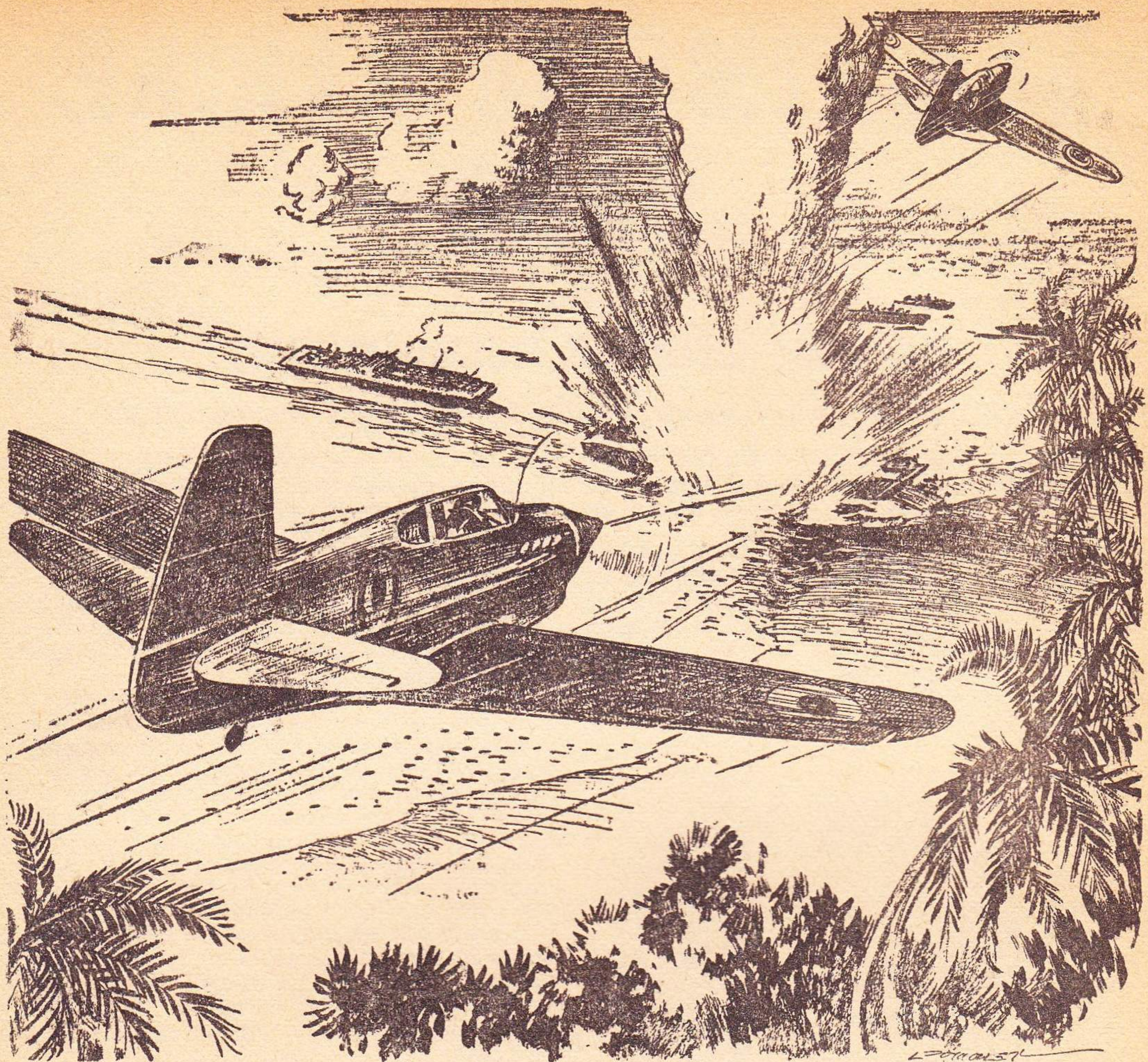
This is the moment for the application of force in its most terrible and violent forms, without stint and without respite, until at last the enemy is compelled to yield because he no longer possesses the means to resist.

Any slackness, any complacency, any hesitation, any comfortable indulgence of the feeling that the war is as good as won is in such an hour an advantage offered gratuitously to the enemy. That is the spirit in which we all must now turn with redoubled energy to the performance of our share of the war effort of the United States.

All of us can do something, whether on the actual firing line or in our essential tasks back here on the home front, which is the source and foundation of all our battle efforts. In addition to doing them a little better today than we did yesterday, we can all contribute to the financial support of our government in the discharge of its heavy responsibilities.

The success of the War Loan is a vital ingredient of victory. Coming at such a crisis in the war, it is even more vital than ordinarily might be the case. All over the world the forces of the United Nations are on the offensive.

The dawn of victory is already beginning to lighten the darkness into which the world was plunged by the evil men who now stand at bay snarling defiance at those who bring them a reckoning long overdue. Let us get on with this job and get through with it, that we may begin to lay the foundations for that just and lasting peace which all free men and women everywhere are resolved must follow victory.



Zero saw the squadron leader gun the landing barges, and then his own weapons were in action

WINGS FOR A LAME DUCK

By CHRISTIAN FOLKARD

When Southwest Pacific Islands Are Threatened by the Japs, Squadron Leader Ace Watson Doesn't Have Much Time for Girl Trouble!

THE pilot of the Hudson revved down his engines, then stopped them. "They're signalling no take off," he said.

An aircraftman, sweat streaming, ran down the metal strip patterning the mud. Somebody inside opened the door and he called through.

"All personnel leave cancelled." He looked especially at Flight-Lieutenant John Anson and added, "The squadron-leader's looking for you."

The five passengers looked at each other.

"Well," thought John Anson. "A bright

harbinger of happiness! Just when everything's set for a nice holiday on the mainland."

"What is it? More Jap ships sighted?" he asked the sweating aircraftman.

"I guess so. That's what I hear."

Zero Anson started the trek back to quarters, this time not caring whether he got his polished shoes muddy or not. Inside the hot-box of his tent, he threw the leather bag on the canvas stretcher and cursed the war, New Guinea and a Hudson that should have taken off an hour before. It was probably another false alarm. And even if there was a bit of

excitement, it wouldn't make up for the missed trip to Australia.

He pulled some papers from his pocket and tossed them on the deal table—a letter he was going to mail for Ace, his Movement Order and the telegram he was sending to Pat. Shoulders hunched, face gloomy, he scanned the writing.

SICK OF SOLO STOP HOW ABOUT DUAL FLIGHT STOP BE LANDING SOON FOR ANSWER LOVE ZERO.

A bit heavy, he thought, a little corny. But it was not easy, sending a proposal of marriage over a public wire. Well, it would just have to wait, that was all.

He strolled through the hot morning to the squadron-leader's operations tent, but the flight-sergeant shook his head.

"He went around to see you. Must have passed each other. No, he went through the grove. Tough luck, being called back."

"Heck," said Zero. "I could almost feel the iced beer going down my throat. That's the second time I've missed out by a whisker. You'd better tell Adams to look over the old crate. Looks as though I may be needing it."

Zero strolled again over the netting strip, past the squadron of Warhawks crouched ready for their pilots. He sought no beauty from the regimented coconut palms from which the airfield had been carved, nor from the steep, jungle-clad hills slipping from their blue ridges to the white-fringed bay. He only felt hot and disappointed.

A passing group of young RAAF personnel called out to him.

"How did you find the girls in Sydney? They must miss us!" Then, seriously, "Looks as if the Nips may have a crack at Lanasea."

Lanasea, eh? That was up the coast a bit. He'd often flown over it. Quite a good harbor. Once there, the Japs might be in a position to make a thrust overland towards Moresby.

ZERO peered up at the burning sky. A flight of Kitties was on patrol. When he looked down, Squadron-Leader Ace Watson was coming towards him.

"Hello, Ace. Sorry you missed me at the tent. But this is a nice thing to do to a pal! And me almost kissing Australia's sunny shores. Blast the Nips!"

But the tall man with the fair hair and clipped moustache did not make the breezy reply he expected. He looked tired and rather grim and didn't bother to smile.

"We-ell," said Zero, brightly. "What's up? Your grandfather lose his glasses?"

"No," said Ace, shortly. "Sorry your leave was canceled. Couldn't be helped. A A reccé showed quite a fleet off Lanasea. We may be needed. The boys from Moresby are escorting the bombers, but if troops land we'll be on the job."

"Uh-huh. Then can I have my break?"

Ace didn't reply. They walked back together—Zero jaunty, the blue hat angled on his head, his lips pursed in a half-whistle. He was his usual self again—gay, youthful, eager and competent. Only the purposeful eyes belied his twenty-four years.

"I wouldn't have the heart to tell you what you called me back from," he said. "There I was, all worked up and ready for romance."

"Don't talk like an adolescent!" Ace snapped.

"Huh?"

"Oh, all right—all RIGHT."

Zero stared at the taller man and closed one eye.

"Going troppo?"

"No!"

"Well, well. Malaria got you? Or is it just a touch of Guinea goofiness?"

"For God's sake! I quit kindergarten years ago."

"Now," said Zero, exasperatingly calm. "You should read the telegram, I was to have sent from Townsville."

"I couldn't help reading it," Ace snapped back. "I saw you still had my letter, and the other hit me in the face. You should have buried it—deep!"

"Aha," chanted Zero. "Aha! That telegram meant—"

Watson swung around, his face thrust forward angrily.

"You still talk like a cracked record! I hate to tell you there's a war on. Get your men to stand by for dawn. We may be needed."

Then he walked quickly off. Zero pulled his cap off and scratched his head thoughtfully. Never before had Ace been like this, snapping like a barracuda. Maybe the responsibility of the squadron was at last getting him down—or New Guinea—or both.

He'd lost a few good men. Maybe that was another reason. Zero shook his head and strolled off. He kept thinking that Pat would have received that telegram in a few hours if it hadn't been for the dirty Japs and their dreams of conquest.

Squadron-Leader Ace Watson had his own thoughts much clearer. He pulled the letter from his pocket, looked at his own address and pushed it back. The last lines kept repeating themselves.

I can't tell you anything definite yet. I don't even know myself. I just want time to think because there is someone else I know so well. . . .

And then to see that blasted telegram of Zero's, that child-like essay in cliché.

The sergeant handed over a sheaf of sitreps. Heavy rain and low clouds north-east of Lanasea limiting reconnaissance. Two Jap cruisers, two destroyers and three trans-

ports sighted through a cloudbreak. The Flying Fortresses had gone out, but been unable to sight. Beaufort torpedo-bombers were on the job, land forces ordered to stand by for an expected attack.

He'd known Zero Anson for years. He hadn't mentioned Pat's name, and Pat had kept quiet, too, except for that noncommittal letter. Zero must have met her on that last trip to Sydney, which was fine consolation. The phone buzzed.

"Right. I've told them to stand by for dawn. Yes, it looks pretty lousy. Okay." It was the wing-commander.

Ace studied the map. Lanasea was only thirty minutes' flying time down the coast, over mountains 12,000 feet high in places. The harbor was long and narrow, with the land defenses at its apex. The Japs could land on either shore and work through the coconut plantations between the mountains and the water. They had the weather with them.

OVER in the mess, a native hut of betel-palm stems and kunai grass thatching, Zero was grouching about his halted leave.

"What's wrong with Ace? He bit large lumps out of me today," he asked the intelligence officer.

"Nought, so far as I know. He seemed in good spirits this morning. And nothing puts him in a better mood than the promise of a good fight."

Zero shrugged.

"Well, a man can certainly change himself a heckuva lot in a few minutes. I felt as though he'd discovered I'd pinched his best girl."

Outside, under a sun that made metal too hot to hold, bare-chested airmen were tossing quoits over a rope net. Banter jerked along and somebody in a strident voice was singing.

"Once a jolly swagman camped by a bill-abong, u-u-under the sh-shade of a coolibah tree!"

Others, in shorts and long flyingboots, lounged in chairs and read and tried hard to hear neither the singing nor the the decadent phonograph. Month-old papers and magazines and a Mother Beeton's Cookery Book someone had scrounged from a bombed home in Moresby littered the crazy cane furniture.

"Ah, Zero, my hero!" called a lanky flying-officer. "'Young Australian ace downs seven Japs.' DFC and bar-bar-bar!"

Zero tipped his chair up.

The Japanese landed during the night, sneaking ashore in barges under cover of rainstorms and darkness. In the morning, they started their advance up the eastern coast of the bay. There was brief contact.

Zero was roused at four o'clock. He rubbed his eyes, staggered a little and got dressed in a few minutes. It was still dark. The

tropic dawn rose late, and the air was still clammy with the night's humidity. He was the first to meet Ace Watson at Operations.

Watson greeted him brusquely.

"This looks like a strafing job only, but the Japs may send in fighters. Our job is to protect the ground troops as much as possible, kill the enemy and destroy his stores."

He spoke in the clipped voice of authority.

"It's going to be a test of endurance, more than anything else. It may last for days. A lot of us won't be able to stand the strain. Do you think you can stand it?"

"Yes, sir," said Zero. "I'll be right. It's because I ate me spinach and always drank me milk. If you can stand it, I can."

He stared at a tiny gold locket between Ace's twin identification discs. What the deuce was that?

"Good." The squadron-leader smiled slightly. "Some of us aren't coming through. Maybe not because of the enemy, but because of ourselves. You know what I mean?"

"Yes." Zero knew. A man could fly his machine so long and no longer, fly it until weariness became as great a danger as the Japanese fighters. Weariness slowed the mind and hand, turned previous split-second reaction into laboring indecision. It caused hitherto infallible judgment to blur and sudden blackouts that claimed many a pilot in his prime.

"I know what it's like," Watson said. "You'll find enough Japs here for a cherry-blossom ceremony. I'll lead you to them."

"Oh," said Zero. He tried hard to conceal the disappointment in his voice but saw Watson smile hard. "I—I thought you'd be staying here."

"Not me. I'll be along where the whips are cracking." Watson stared hard at Zero. He looked young. Anderson, Withers and the new reinforcements, Angus and Hands, wouldn't be able to stand up to the hours of flying ahead. Zero might, if he didn't let enthusiasm outweigh the need for physical conservation.

Already, some of the Warhawks were warming up, their exhausts stabbing the dimness of the slow dawn. The staff officer waved good luck, and the air was filled with a chatter and a roar.

Watson looked purposeful enough, striding to his machine. He was hard. He'd been made tough by flying in the Middle East, over London with the Spitfires. He had more hours to his credit than any two men in the squadron. He had resistance, the resistance to fatigue of a marathon runner, the quick reactions of a star tennis player.

Nobody ever accused Watson of showing emotion. His private life was unknown. He talked neither of his plans for the future nor of his past existence. Everything seemed to center around his job.

THE flight took off, officially, at 0530 hours and rose to 8,000 feet to clear the mountains and gain height in case of enemy opposition. The squadron flew in pairs, with Watson and Anson out in front. The air up here was sharp, and the sun stoked its furnace over the eastern ranges.

A few minutes later, Zero was staring down on the elongated waters of Lanasea Bay and shapes on the shore which he recognised as Jap landing barges. The earphones crackled, and Watson's clear voice sounded.

"Hallo, hallo! Follow me in. Attack!"

Zero put himself on Ace's tail, and the barges and the sand and the water and the tangled green came at him like a slamming door. He could see the spurts from the squadron-leader's gun, pointed at the barges, and then his own were in action.

He saw jets of sand spurting up, then saw shadows move and run. Golly, he thought, Japs lying in the sand! He hadn't seen them before. A barge, hit by Ace in the first few shots, burst into flame and rolling black smoke.

He put his plane up, excitement in his heart. One after another, the planes came in, and there were more barges burning, one of them shooting tiny spurts of flame.

The earphones burst into action again.

"Hello, Red! Hello, Red! Red! Red! Over to you!"

It was Ground Control calling. Watson switched to transmitter.

"Okay, Silver! Over!"

"Yellowbellies in strip of land north from first barge. Strafe treetops for snipers." Then a laconic, "Thanks, pal. You're doing fine."

It was on again. Down, engines roaring, body tensed for support, red flames from the guns in the few seconds the green of the trees came in the sights. Zero peered behind. Ace had hit another petrol dump, judging by the cloud of black smoke waddling skywards. He had all the luck.

Four more times they made the strafing runs, and then the radio gave new orders.

"Select individual targets and continue strafing." Then, "Anson! Anson! Over!"

"Hello, Ace," Zero said. "What's in the oven?"

"You stick with me. Stick with me. Over!"

"Okay. She's right," said Zero. He thought, "So we're going to make a double of it. Well, what he can stand, I guess I bloody well can. Ahead, MacDuff!"

Watson picked an area just in from two landing barges. The Japs would not have had time to carry their stores far inland. He put the nose of the plane down, coolly watched the speedometer show three-fifty, four-hundred, picked a spot about fifty yards from the edge of the sand and poured in cannon and point fives.

He just missed the explosion that followed,

but Zero, behind him, flew straight into it. The blast first tossed his nose in the air and then the tail, so that one moment he was pointing to the sky and he next to the trees. The plane was like riding a wild horse that pigrooted and bucked and rolled over in the one motion.

One wing went down, seemed to tip the trees, was up again, and then the other wing was doing the same. Somehow, he kept the nose up, but every control had to be fought with mind and body. Then, with a zip, she was skimming the treetops and beginning to rise easily into the air.

ZERO felt the cold sweat pouring from his face, and the breath he had held for an eternity broke in a muffled gasp. He looked back on a black hole in the sea of green. Languidly through it began to pour flame and smoke.

The phones crackled, and Watson's cool, easy voice came again.

"Looked like a pretty fair ammo dump. You don't want to fly into those things. How you feeling? Over."

"I'm all right," Zero managed to say. "Carry on." But he felt that nothing was left to his stomach. To fly straight into an explosion like that! His lips were bleeding, and his eyes seemed half-pulled from their sockets.

They strafed the position again, and then Ace started out for home. Zero looked at his gas. Only another hour's flying—ammunition must have almost gone, too. What a morning!

He landed on the metal strip on one wheel, leveled out as the groundsmen pursed silent whistles. Watson was already on the ground, yelling at the intelligence officer.

"Get me the latest dope on the Jap ground positions! Get them quick! What is this—a circus?"

A warrant officer ran up.

"Withers crashed, sir," he said. "Hit the treetops."

Watson's appearance did not change.

"Bad luck," was all he said. He called to Zero. "You'd better have some coffee, but make sure you get plenty of fuel and ammo. We'll be off again in a few minutes."

The WO tugged at Zero's sleeve.

"How did Red get his?"

"Red? Lord, is he gone? I didn't see—Gee, that's tough."

When he got to the mess, Ace was swallowing coffee and talking to the wing-commander.

"It's going to be a dawn to dusk job if we're going to show what air support means. You're going to lose some more men. They won't be able to stand it. I'll ground some and keep the good ones."

"You'd better look after yourself, too," the senior officer said. "You're not so young

as the others, and you jolly well know it."

Watson shook his head impatiently. He swung on Zero.

"Any shrap from that dump-bust?"

"Doesn't seem so. I took a peek, and the sergeant's doing the same."

He just had time to swallow his coffee. Then they were back in the cockpits again, overlooking the controls while belts of ammunition were still being fed into the wings. Other units of the squadron had come back, were being similarly serviced.

Four more times that day, Zero went out and returned, and each time he found his movements more leaden, his brain more tired. But Ace Watson showed only eyes a little harder.

THAT night, the Japanese landed more men. Zero lay on his bunk under the stifling mosquito net, every muscle aching, his nerves so atingle that the sleep he had fondly promised himself would not come.

God, what a day! From that dawn take-off, until it was almost too dark to fly—his guns alone had fired ten thousand rounds, and, while he was asleep, they would put in new ones for tomorrow—new guns for tomorrow.

Two of the pilots collapsed when they landed finally, and one cracked up against the coconut palms. Watson was driving them hard. But he knew his men. He'd told French and Joe Dykes to stay on the ground. Obviously, they were breaking under the strain. Zero wondered if he, too, was cracking up.

If Ace Watson could stand it, he could—but that man was tough. Then there was Pat, like the last time he had seen her coming up the garden to meet him in the moonlight—in white. The smell of frangipani had been heavy in the garden, and what could you do but stand there and wonder if it were true?

He could not remember what she said, only how her voice sounded. And only the night before had they met. It wasn't until he wrote her from New Guinea that the memories of three nights became permanent.

Over in the squadron-leader's tent, Ace Watson studied the new situation map. The Japs, though checked, were still in force on the eastern end of the bay. Snipers were bad and delaying Australian counter-attacks.

They tied themselves in the treetops, using light Brens or rifles. That was the squadron's job tomorrow—to make the trees unsafe for Nippon, strafe his lines of communication, attack his stores and troops.

The yellow light from the kerosene lamp spilled on the opened letter. The envelope's shadow isolated all but the last five lines. They read—

I've been thinking so carefully over it

all and I don't want to be dishonest with you. If he'll ask me, I'll say yes. If he doesn't, well. . . .

Ace Watson turned down the lamp and crawled under the mosquito net. He thought that Zero's wire was the telegram she was waiting for, that it didn't go. Then he fell asleep. Easy sleep had been part of his training. It was a necessary part of the job.

The dawn saw them off again. Watson barely spoke to Zero.

"Same as yesterday. Stick with me." But he saw that Zero looked tired. He was a much older man than he had been yesterday.

All that day, the depleted squadron's men, weary in mind and tired in body, came and went. Two of them crashed in the trees, but the others kept on. Up and down the fringe of forest they flew, guns lopping the trees—hour after hour. Stores the Japs had landed during the night went up. And the cool, easy voice of Ace Watson kept calling them on.

The Army command was sending encouraging points. Opposition from snipers had lessened. Prisoners reported they were short of food. The loss of the oil had bogged the tanks. Ammunition was being rationed. The sitrep added—"Never have Australian ground troops had such consistent and efficient close air support."

Zero was making back to the base when the Japanese fighters came on him. It was the first time they had appeared. He heard Watson call a warning.

"Tallyho! On your tail!"

He pulled his plane straight up in the air, and it hung on the prop. The attacking Jap shot underneath him. But he knew that the old maneuver, though effective, had been done much more slowly than usual. His reaction had not been so quick, and he felt puzzled.

THE Jap came out of his dive and started to climb, too. Zero got him in his sights. He pressed the button, watched for the stream of bullets to mark the enemy. It was a wonderful target, the sort of target he dreamed about. But the Jap continued to climb. He'd missed.

"Gee!" Zero swore to himself. Suddenly, the controls felt heavy in his hands. None of the old zest for a fight was there. He felt tired, tired as an old, old man. He peered around. The machine that had attacked him was rising again for height.

Two others were riding Ace, but suddenly the Australian shot down and up and one of the Japs seemed to halt in mid-air. It wagged its wings crazily, and smoke came from the engine.

"Good," shouted Zero. "Good! Oh, you beaut!"

The other Warhawks had come into the

fight. Zero felt an almost overpowering desire to be back at the base, safe on the ground or sleeping.

Vaguely, he recalled that the only time he had felt like this was after a hard football game for which he had not trained thoroughly.

He'd felt the same sickness of heart, nausea in the pit of the stomach and a feeling of ennui. Twelve hours flying yesterday, six already today and more to come.

Then he started cursing Watson. Watson was trying to wear him down, destroy his manhood. This time, he wouldn't get back. He felt afraid, and the sweat on his body grew cold. Pat wouldn't see him—not Pat in the moonlight and the frangipani and a voice like honey.

The phone shouted.

"Zero! Look out! Tail! Tail!"

He tried to do something, to bring into operation one of the dozen tricks he had learned to avoid a tail attack, but the bullets cut into the Warhawk's tail, and the machine waddled. The Jap zoomed above him, still firing.

Zero felt frozen to the seat. The sweat was ice in his eyes, and the instrument panel dimmed and waned. The plane was dropping into a sea of green jungle, the green mountains, the green soil, the green sky.

"Jump!" yelled the voice. "Jump!"

He forced his way from the seat, fell as the plane was looping and unconsciously pulled the ripcord until he was floating on a cloud.

"The tramp will try to get me now," he prayed. "He'll try and get me. You watch."

And then the green swallowed him. He did not realize then that his left calf was holed.

WHEN Ace Watson landed, he reported Zero's position to the wing-commander.

"Anson was flying like a lame duck," he said. "He put up a rotten show. He just gave himself to the Jap. He must have been too tired to know what he was doing. Just couldn't take it."

"Ask New Guinea force to send out a search party," he barked to the intelligence officer. "Here's the position. Find out how long it'll take to get there. Get a reccé right over the spot. I saw his chute stick in a tree."

Then he drank some more coffee and was off again.

Of the campaign, Heyman Andrews wrote later—

The Lanasea victory was due almost exclusively to Watson's squadron. For eleven hours each on the first two days, for six on the third and three on the fourth, they poured hundreds of thousands of rounds into Japanese troops, stores and equipment.

Men, bearded and haggard, staggered from

their machines, literally asleep on their feet. They talked in meaningless phrases, walked as if in a dream, were completely exhausted. How they kept going and won a major air victory against the Japanese is a tribute to their great hearts.

Ace Watson was lying flat on his bed, lids closed over burning eyes, breathing deeply, when the flight-sergeant entered the tent.

"New Guinea Force estimates it'll take five days for the search party to contact Anson—if he's still there."

"'Five days,'" repeated Watson, wearily. "Heck!"

"There's no known track. They've got to hack their way through the bush."

"All right. We can't do any more than we're doing."

Then came Tony Aldridge, the Hudson pilot. He flopped on a native-made chair, quizzed Watson.

"You certainly look all in, boy. You look like I feel after a three-day jag. But you all did a great job. How d'you feel?"

Watson tried to sit up, winced with the effort.

"I guess I'm all right. Bit stiff, that's all."

"Like fun," said Aldridge. "Three months in Australia for you, my lad." He squinted at his feet. "Look," he said, "I wanted to talk about Zero. He hasn't picked up that stuff I dropped yesterday. The chute was still in the kunai patch."

"Maybe he's trying to return overland," the sergeant said.

"Zero's too old a hand for that. He'll stick. He knows he was seen going down and that his chute's still up the tree."

"All right," said the sergeant. "I think that, too. Then it just means he can't walk to the stuff you dropped."

"Come on," Aldridge said. "We'll leave Ace to sleep for a few decades. I'll slip up again in the morning and take another reccé. Oh, I guess he'll come through, all right." He and the sergeant walked out.

For a long time, Ace lay still on the bed, methodically testing every controllable muscle for its individual ache. Worst of all was the steady throbbing in his brain. The RAAF doctor wanted him in hospital or on a good spell at home.

"Good God, man. You overdid it—and damned if I know how you kept it up at all. First man out, last man in—that's some record. But human nerves can take only so much, my boy."

As soon as he felt strong enough, in a day or two, he could go to the mainland—Rachmaninoff on a piano by the open window and a magpie strutting up and down in time. Zero's missing, Pat. He was shot down because he just wasn't good enough. He couldn't do the things I did. He cracked up.

All right, I knew about you and him, and I

wore him down until he was a lame duck for the Jap. But I stayed and fought till the last. Zero didn't. So I'm here, and he's somewhere in the jungle and that silly wire didn't go. It didn't go because I challenged him to a duel, only he didn't know it was a challenge—a joust.

"When knights and squires come riding
down,
The cobbles of some steep old town.
And ladies, from beneath the eaves,
Flutter their bravest handkerchiefs."

And Pat would just look at him—look at him. Watson jerked himself on to his elbow. He wasn't talking aloud, was he? Oh, it was only the doctor.

"I'll be all right to fly tomorrow, Jim?"

"Like heck. You've burned yourself up for a time. The boiler wants cleaning out and restoking."

"The boys did a good job, didn't they? So did Zero."

"Sure. Zero was great. They'll find him."

"Stop talking to me like a child," Ace said.

"I'm all right, I tell you."

"Sure. Go to sleep, old man."

THEN he was alone. In an hour, it would be dark. Zero must be badly hurt, otherwise he could have picked up the material Aldridge dropped. He couldn't see Pat if Zero died. Just because she would look at him—that was all.

Ace eased himself from the stretcher, straightened himself and peered in the small shaving mirror. He looked ten years older, unshaven, haggard, bloodless. He groped for the first-aid kit, four emergency rations and a water-bottle.

Nobody saw him go to the plane and, when it was roaring down the runway, the wing-commander shouted aloud.

"That's Watson! He's gone crazy. He must be mad, flying in that condition!"

Ace worked the controls automatically. He climbed to seven thousand feet, and the cooler air whipped some life into his blood. The jagged hills below rolled away in great, green folds, the only life a few pairs of white parrots. Somewhere around here, Zero had gone down. He circled, came lower, and there was the white patch of the parachute in the treetop.

He climbed again in a wide circle, estimated his line of fall and baled out. All the way down, until he landed in the open patch of kunai, he kept his hand on the locket around his neck. Smoke from the wrecked plane crawled lazily in the still sky. Like a rising cloud.

It would be dark in half an hour. He stood up, unfastened the harness, and looked around. Then he heard a call. It made him whip around, and he made towards it. Zero

was propped against a tree, his leg in a strange position.

"Ace! God, it's Ace!" the voice croaked.

He drank deeply from the waterbottle.

"God!" he said. "What a trouble I've been. That Jap made mincemeat of me. I heard your plane, but couldn't see it."

"Where did he get you?"

"Here," said Zero. "In the leg. I couldn't move. I tried a couple of times, but I must have fainted." He winced as the leg was straightened. "I made a fine mess of things, didn't I? You showed me up like a baby."

"No," said Watson. "No, I didn't do that."

He stared at Zero. The face was grey now, deeply lined with pain and exposure. The eyes had sunk back, and he thought they must look like two old, old men quavering with memories. But he had to work fast.

It was a bad wound. He cut away the cloth, laid out bandages and sulphanilimide.

"The natives and stretchers should be here in a day or so," he said. "We'll be okey."

"There's a creek down there," Zero said.

"You can get some water. Listen. You can hear it." Suddenly, he looked hard at Ace. "You didn't crash your plane, did you? You didn't do that? I could have waited. That'll mean a—a—"

"Okay," Watson said. "A court martial. What the heck?"

Then he picked up the canteen and moved towards the sound of the running water. Zero stared after him, wondering. He shook his head and saw something bright on the ground. It was a small, square locket.

He reached painfully for it, turned it around and pressed the catch lightly. The two halves sprang apart and, like a man praying, he whispered—"Pat."

Ace, water bottle in hand, broke the bushes. He saw Zero there, staring at something gold. His hand flew to his chest and down again. Zero, more clumsy, tried to hide it as Ace walked back.

He could only watch the head as the older man washed out the wound and poured in the powder. It was stinging like blazes. He felt for the locket.

"This is yours," he said.

"No," said Ace, not looking up. "It came for you. I thought you'd like to get it here. Maybe that's one reason I came."

Something became clear in Zero's mind.

"Thanks. Thanks, Ace," he said.

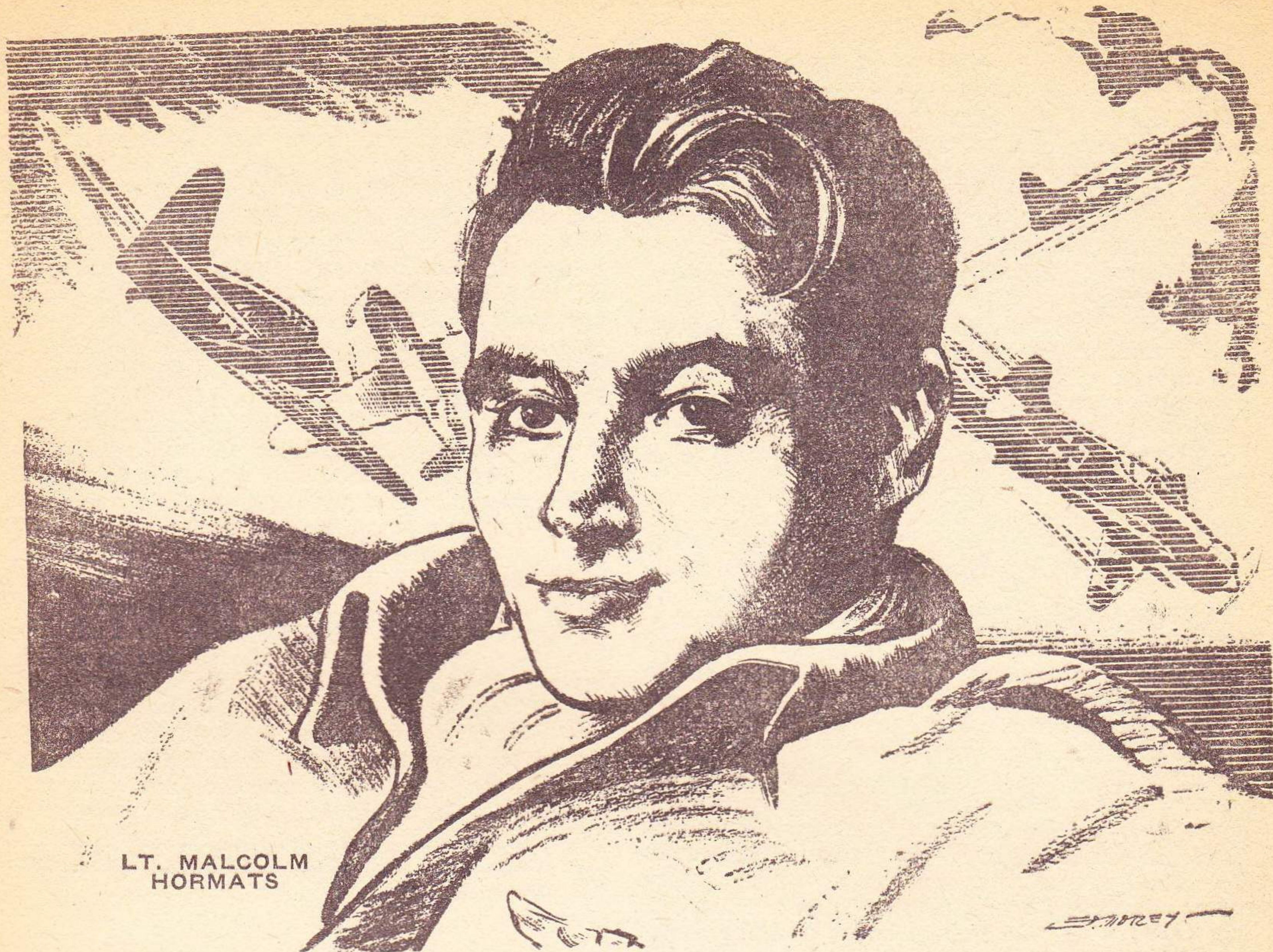
"That's all right."

Watson was still working efficiently.

"I've got some brandy here. We'll drink a toast."

"Sure," said Zero. "We'll drink a toast."

Then everything inside him—the physical strain and the wound, the awful loneliness of his stay in the jungle, his fear of losing Pat and his shame at putting up such a poor show—welled up. He sat still, and the tears poured down.



LT. MALCOLM
HORMATS

A FIGHTER PILOT REPORTS

By **LIEUTENANT MALCOLM HORMATS**

as told to **HARRY DAVIS**

A True Story of Exciting Combat in the Blue!

EARLY in February, 1943, we were moved up to a field near Gafsa, about sixty miles south of Tunisia. We stayed there for two weeks, until the American withdrawal. Some of my toughest fighting came during this period. The field itself was filthy with mud. It rained hour after hour. When we withdrew from Gafsa we went back to a drome about twenty miles away from Kasserine Pass. We flew on four or five mis-

sions a day during this time, protecting the troops from dive bombers in the Kasserine Pass engagement. We really cut down the Stukas during this period.

After the Germans were forced back again, we moved up to the Gafsa field once more. We went in with the ground forces and took over our old quarters, which were now in a shambles. We lived in holes in the ground and there weren't enough blankets to go around. We were bombed and strafed night and day. The Hun had his eye on that drome.

*Lt. Hormats, a resident of Troy, New York, enlisted in the RCAF in 1941, following his rejection by the U. S. Army Air Force because of a minor eye ailment. Lt. Hormats' first combat mission was in the Dieppe Raid in which, as a fighter pilot, he helped provide air cover for Commando troops. In October, 1942, he was transferred to the American air corps and since then has fought in eighty missions in the North African, Sicilian and Italian campaigns. He holds the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal, ten Oak Leaf Clusters and the RCAF's Distinguished Flying Medallion.

Has Close Call

I had a close call during this time. We had been on a sweep over Kasserine Pass. We saw some flak but it was a dry run. There were twelve of us fighters out that day. We were stooging along on our way back from the Pass when two Focke-Wulfs suddenly dived out of the sun. One of them came down on my tail. I was flying "Blue Four"—rear position. He took a quick squirt at me and pulled up without doing any damage.

The second one tore in right behind him and gave me a whale of a good burst. I could hear the shells exploding all around me, sounding like somebody was banging on a tin pan right in my ear. The controls suddenly loosened up and then a voice in my earphones shouted, "Break." I yanked the works into my stomach and hit the throttle. I made a tight turn and the Focke-Wulf went straight up. I shot back into formation. My ship seemed to be falling to pieces under my hands. Everything was loose and the motor chugged. One of the boys came over and examined me carefully. He checked in on the radio.

"Cobra Blue Four," he said. "You're a mess, kid. We'll stick with you."

Plane Is a Wreck

My engine was rattling and the rudder was flapping back and forth. Later I found out just what a close call I had had. The Jerry had used both armor-piercing and high explosive fire on me. He gave me a squirt of his h.e. first. One shell had gone directly through the rudder. If it hadn't exploded immediately afterwards—and it wouldn't have if it had been armor-piercing—it would have hit me directly in the back of the neck. One shell ripped through the propeller. Another one tore 2 spark plugs out of the motor. My right wing was full of holes and the flaps wouldn't work. My right tire also had been shot off.

I limped home, came in over the drome, and climbed. I tried out my wheels. I had to decide whether to make a fast landing on one wheel, fast because my flaps were gone, or whether to come down on my belly. I called the ground control.

"Hello, Fire Fly. Cobra Blue calling. Clear for emergency pancake."

Makes Risky Landing

I was at about six thousand feet. I was still pretty cool. I glanced about and saw that a couple of the boys had stayed up to cover my landing just in case Jerry showed up again. I came down on the left side of the field so that I wouldn't mess up the main runways. I came in on my left wheel at 110 miles an hour and kept her there. The ship would slope to the right and I would slam on the brakes to straighten her up. With both the rudder and the flippers gone, this was all I could do. I kept the stick pulled into my stomach so that she wouldn't nose over. It seemed that I skimmed along on that left wheel for years. Finally I got her slowed down and she looped to the right. She came to a stop in a cloud of dust. I hopped out and looked her over. When I saw what I had been flying, I almost fainted. The Engineering Officer came out and stood beside me. He insisted that I hadn't flown it in but that the plane had been shot up on the ground.

"It can't be," he said firmly. "No plane in that condition could fly."

Realizes His Escape

I was both scared and mad. I felt like you do after you have had an automobile accident. When you get back in the car after a close squeeze and put your foot on the clutch, you notice that your leg is trembling. That's the way it was with me. In a way it was my own fault. I'd made the mistake of which many new fighter pilots are guilty. They usually don't make it but once. The mistake was that I'd relaxed in the air for a minute. I should have seen the Focke-Wulfs coming but I didn't.

It was at this time that I began to load myself up with good-luck charms. Most of the fighter pilots did. I wore a Holy Medal, a Mezuzah, and a piece of wood. I decided that if it was good luck to touch wood after you say anything boastfully, I might as well have the wood touching me all the time. After this the boys called me "The Ghost."

My room-mate, Lieutenant Todd Huntington, who had also flown with me in the RCAF, kidded me a lot that night, telling me I should have stayed in Troy and been a printer's devil in my father's shop, rather than try to be a fighter pilot. But the next morning he, too, got into a terrific jam. He was bounced half a dozen times and when he came down his plane was in ribbons, almost as bad as mine had been. One burst had blown his coop-top off.

Goes on Another Sweep

That same afternoon at two o'clock I went out on another sweep. I was still plenty sore. Our mission was to intercept any Jerries we caught bombing our ground troops. We had just come through some heavy flak at Kasserine Pass and were stooging along at twelve thousand feet. The Squadron Commander gave a warning over the radio.

"The Hun is in the sun," he said. I glanced up and there were six Focke-Wulfs and Messerschmitts. They were sitting up there in a break in the clouds.

The Jerries peeled off and started to bounce us. Everybody started squirting. I pulled straight up and started firing at three hundred yards. Cannon and machine guns. I had a Messerschmitt in my sights and I poured everything I had into him. I saw one of my shells burst in his cockpit. He shuddered and rolled over and started down.

I had pulled up so high and sharp that I lost my air speed and just before I rolled on to my back to pick up speed again, my motor coughed out a huge black cloud of smoke. The other boys in the squadron saw it and I heard a voice on the radio yell.

"There goes Mal!" it said.

Sees Jerry Crash

I peeled away and down below me I could see the Messerschmitt pouring out black smoke as it dived toward the ground. I rejoined the squadron and had just taken up my position when two more Germans came down out of the sun. We broke off to fight and they pulled up again. The ground forces-

on both sides had been watching the dog-fight, we learned later. We shot down three German planes in all. The ranking ace in our squadron, Jerry Collingsworth, of Texas, got his first victory on that flight. Later he was to fly on one hundred combat missions and bring down 6 planes.

This sort of thing went on day after day during the latter half of the North African campaign. During our second stay at the Gafsa Field the weather was so tough that we were grounded a lot. We were on a high plateau. There were no trees and the wind was always blowing. It was a bare, wet country. We slept in our clothes and didn't eat much. We never shaved or washed up. We didn't have much water and had to limit ourselves to one canteen a day.

Had Good Times, Too

We had a lot of fun, though, sitting around the operating room, which was a dugout built in the side of a hill. To keep from going nuts we would sit around all day and sing songs, making up some of them. One thing that we enjoyed doing was listening to the German radio. The swing was good and the propaganda was funny. Our favorite was "Sally of the Axis."

"Hello, boys," she would come on and say in a sweet voice. Then she would tell us how nice everything was in Germany and how well we would be treated if we just deserted and came over. After this she would go into a harangue about the Jews.

Her favorite one was that while the Aryans were out fighting and dying on the fields, the Jews at home were taking out our girl friends. The boys would look around at me.

"Hormats, are you taking out our girl friends tonight?" they would ask me. Sally would go on. "Look around you, boys. Do you see any Jews? Of course not. Jews never fight." And the boys would look around and see me and half a dozen other Jewish men in the outfit and we would have a peach of a laugh about that.

Push Gathers Momentum

The African push was advancing slowly and we advanced with it, covering troop movements at El Guettar and at other battle points. We also covered the fighting at Mareth, drawing enemy planes from Montgomery so he could move up. Little by little we seemed to be developing air superiority.

I went on a mission April 4th that got me the Distinguished Flying Cross. It was nothing special but a ranking officer happened to be looking. We were escorting bombers on their run over La Fouconnerie. As they went in on the bombing run, forty German fighters tore into them. We broke up into half a dozen dogfights and three Messerschmitts bounced me. I shot at two of them and the other one drifted off. I turned to catch up with the bombers who were now right over the target. Just as I got to them, twelve more Jerries dived into us.

Mixes in Hot Fight

By this time I was weaving over the tail of the bomber formation. All the other fighters were busy some place else. When I saw the twelve Jerries coming down I broke and started firing. I made it as hot for them as I could and we fell back. I was firing and diving all over the sky. A plane would come through my sights and I would give him a spurt. By this time the bombers had dropped their eggs and were turning back. The twelve German fighters and I still fought it out. My motor began to act up and I turned on my back and ducked away from them. A little later, I joined the bombers again and followed them in. The motor in one of the bombers had been shot up, but that was the only damage.

Most people have the mistaken idea that a fighter pilot's job is to shoot down enemy fighter planes. His real job is to keep bombers from being shot up. The Germans will sacrifice a couple of fighters any time to bounce a bomber. When you are out on a run, they will do everything they can to tempt you to break protective formation and peel off to take a crack at an easy mark. If you are dumb enough to do this, other German fighters hanging around up there in the sun will dive into the hole in the formation and riddle the bomber. Our group escorted at least two thousand bombers on two hundred missions and we only lost three bombers. We were mighty proud of that record.

Ahead of Schedule

We were briefed on May 5 and told the final assault was to be made on Tunis and Bizerte. We were informed that we had just three days to neutralize enemy air opposition. We did it in a day and a half. On the 6th we went out on our first big offensive battle.

We took off early in the morning, heading for Tunis, hunting trouble. There was a low ceiling and we flew along under it. We were just coming in over the city when two Messerschmitts came down out of the clouds and attacked our right flight. I broke across our middle flight and dived into them. They promptly pulled up into cloud cover. I turned to rejoin the formation and as I did so, a Focke-Wulf shot out of a cloud right in front of me.

Sees Enemy Pilot

I was sitting right behind him. I could see the pilot's features. He needed a shave. I put a long burst into his tail and saw a red glow behind his cockpit. I had hit his oxygen bottle. He knocked off his canopy, ready to bail out. As I bore down on him, he went over the side and fell eight thousand feet without opening his chute. His plane crashed in the harbor. That was the first plane shot down that day. In all, our group took care of eleven. We didn't suffer a loss.

We went on two more missions that day. In the afternoon, we were sweeping over

Tunis again, flying in closed formation with twelve planes. My group of six was flying above and to the rear of the rest of the squadron. Four German fighters jumped out of a cloud hole and hit the lower group. Two planes in my group peeled off to attack while the rest of us stayed up to cover.

Streak Up Sky

A second later, sixteen planes came in on top of us from another hole. We began to streak up the sky. It was a hot squabble. I was literally running around in circles. We were mixing in so tight that half the time we were under fire from our own fighters, as the Germans were from theirs. My section, made up of two planes, broke and drifted off. Eight Messerschmitts followed us down, pecking at us. We held our fire, trying to save our ammunition until we really needed it. One by one the Germans ran out of lead and dropped back.

Finally, there was only one still after us. It came in at seven o'clock high, peeled underneath and came up sharp, intending to squirt and get away. We saw him coming. We held our fire and watched. Just before he got into range, I called a break and we shot off at right angles. The other plane with me rolled onto his back and fired.

Flak Is Heavy

By this time we were over Hill 609 and the flak began to come up, a black ring of it circling us like bars. I called the number two plane back so that he wouldn't dive after the Jerry—who was going down crippled—and get blown to pieces in the flak. I was climbing out of the stuff myself now. I glanced down and saw the Messerschmitt crash. By this time we were miles away from our own squadron. I checked in on the radio and the squadron commander, Capt. Mercer P. Davis of Virginia, told me to go on home. That was our last big dogfight until we hit Pantelleria.

In the Pantelleria battles we went out time after time in bomber and fighter sweeps. Our group would sit up there in the sky and watch the bombers come over hour by hour, roaring over in massive formations. The sky was black with them. I never expect to see anything like it again.

On the day of the invasion itself, we went out to cover the convoys. There were eighteen of us that day, twelve of us under the clouds, six on top. I was in the lower group. Forty German fighters bounced us on that sweep. They tore down through the clouds just as the group above radioed down, "Here they come, boys."

Drive Off Germans

These planes were German fighter bombers. They had already been over the convoy but the flak was so hot they had been driven off and had to drop their bombs in the sea. I saw two of them hustling along right below me and I rolled off and went down after them, hitting my emergency throttle for a long dive. At the same mo-

ment, two other fighters in my squadron shot down through the clouds and converged on the Germans. I pulled out and let them make the kill. Meanwhile, I spotted two more German fighters skimming along just above the surface of the water, thousands of feet below. I was flying with Lieutenant Norman Tucker.

"Hello Tuck," I radioed. "Two at one o'clock low. Let's go."

We streaked down, came into range and began to strafe. I don't think we hit them, but they were flying so low that one of them, seeing us on his tail, made a wrong move and plunged into the sea. In a few seconds the remaining German did exactly the same thing. It was one of those flukes that sometimes happen in air warfare.

Dogfight Goes On

Meanwhile, the dogfight was still going on up above. Tuck and I began to climb back into it. Eight German planes had already been shot down, as had a couple of ours. We mixed it up for a while more, but what sticks in my mind is the casual, leisurely way fighters who had bailed out drifted down through that hot dogfight, hanging there calmly with all perdition breaking loose all around them.

After Pantelleria, we went to Malta and prepared for the Sicilian campaign. We were just getting into it when I got sick. That was on July 25th. I contracted pneumonia. On the day Palermo fell I was in a hospital. I got back to my squadron the day before the invasion of Italy started.

By this time the Luftwaffe was on the run. We covered ground troop operations at Salerno and Naples. We didn't have much trouble. It was at this time that I went out on a mission as a spare pilot, which means that I was along just in case one of the other boys was shot down.

Everything went along without mishap and I broke away from the squadron and headed for home. I was getting pretty low on gas anyway. I was halfway back to the field when I saw a lone two-engine plane. I thought it was an American Boston. Then I decided I'd better get a closer look to make sure. I discovered it was a Junkers 88.

Both Sides Surprised

I don't know who was more surprised, the German or myself. He wasn't looking for trouble and neither was I, but I was in a war so I closed in and opened the guns. The Junkers went down in flames.

We moved up to Salerno after that. We were on patrol day after day at this time, keeping the air clear of German planes. The artillery on both sides was banging away constantly and shells arched over our field day and night. Then the ground troops pressed on toward Naples and we went out to cover them. On the very day that Naples fell, I was grounded. I had been on eighty odd missions. At first I was shocked that they had grounded me, but then they told me I was going home and everything was okay. I was pretty tired, anyway.

MEN BEHIND THE PLANES

AMAZING STORIES OF BRITISH GENIUS

JAPS SOON TO MEET AIR MARSHAL GARROD'S PRIZE PUPILS

TWENTY-NINE years ago, when World War One was in its second year, Lieutenant Alfred Guy Roland Garrod was one of many young soldiers who transferred from the infantry to the fledgling Royal Flying Corps. A classical student at Oxford prior to 1914, Garrod had, in seven months' fighting, won the Military Cross and a mention in dispatches.

As a flyer, he first qualified as an observer, served three months in France in that capacity before returning to England to learn to fly himself. Back at the front, he was wounded, gained two more mentions in dispatches and was awarded the D.F.C.

A native Londoner, Garrod did not return to the classics after the Armistice. Obtaining a permanent commission in the RAF, he attended the Naval Staff College, the School of Army Coöperation and then became an instructor at the RAF Staff College.

He saw considerable active duty in Irak, where, as a Wing Commander in 1932, he won the Order of the British Empire for his work in settling native troubles. Returning to England, he held numerous appointments at the Air Ministry, winding up as Deputy Director General of Equipment.

His exceptional ability as a teacher of young flyers caused him to be appointed the first Air Member for Training on the Air Council. When the Defence Cadet Corps was reorganized to form the Air Training Corps, Garrod was responsible for much of the new administration as well as many of the new methods of training, drawing for these on his own extensive experience.

When the disasters of 1940 forced the British to create the Commonwealth Air Training Plan, centering in Canada, it was Garrod who organized the entire complex process.

In April of last year, he left the Plan functioning on all cylinders, saying in his farewell address, "There is still much to be done,



Air Marshal Garrod

and I send my cordial good wishes for continued success in the future."

His present job, and one from which he is already beginning to get results, is that of Deputy Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, RAF, India. Thus the Nazis alone will not feel the effects of the expertness of the young men for whose training he has been responsible. The Japs are beginning to get their lumps now.

PORTAL—THE MAN WHO RUNS THE RAF

THE man who has done the most to bring home to Germany the true meaning of their own invention, total warfare, is Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Frederick Algernon Portal, fifty-year-old Chief of Air Staff of the RAF. This slight, hawk-nosed, retiring airman has been responsible for every phase of the RAF devastation of the sinews of Hitler's war effort and the titanic air blows struck at her railroads, factories, dams and cities.

It is Portal who decides what types of tar-

gets shall be bombed, what types of British targets shall be defended. It is Portal who decides on the allocation of planes between the British Isles, the Mediterranean, the Far East and Russia.

In his position of Chief of Air Staff, his only superiors are the Churchill cabinet and the Committee of Imperial Defence, of which he himself is a member. He dines with Churchill once or twice a week and spends more weekends with the Prime Minister than any other man in the Services.

This is Portal's second World War. On the day that England declared war in 1914, Portal, a graduate of Winchester and Oxford, then studying for the bar, was told he would have to take six months' training before he could serve in his brother's regiment. So he enlisted as a motorcycle dispatch rider, was given a corporal's stripes and, eight days later, was in France.

He was mentioned for gallantry in Sir John French's first communique at Mons, was once blown through a doorway by a shell which killed his five companions, had a collision with Sir Douglas Haig, the British commander-in-chief, on a muddy French road. In the summer of 1915, he joined the Royal Flying Corps, predecessor of the RAF, as an observer.

There wasn't room for both Portal and a machine-gun in his observer's post, so he took along a rifle on his first flights, pot-shooting the great German ace, Immelmann, among others. A year later, he became a pilot, and, in 1917, as leader of 16 Squadron, he engaged five German planes single-handed, shooting down three of them in ten minutes of frantic dog-fighting.

After the war, he received the permanent rank of major—he had been a colonel in 1918—and, in 1920, became chief flying instructor at Crandall, the newly founded British West Point of the air. Two years later, he attended the first course given at the just-created RAF Staff College, was pronounced the most brilliant pupil of his class.

Portal was the youngest man ever to have been entrusted with the Aden Command, which controls the entrance to the Red Sea and thus is a vital link in the chain of defenses guarding the Suez Canal. At Aden, he learned a lot about Arab psychology, sailing and photography. He introduced tuna and swordfish fishing to the garrison in return.

In 1935, Portal was transferred to India for a short time, then returned to London to teach air strategy at the Imperial Defence College. Later, he was appointed Director of Organization at the Air Ministry, was promoted first to Air Vice Marshal, then to Air Marshal in charge of the Bomber Command, in

which post he was serving in 1939, when war again broke out.

Portal has never been to Germany, knows none of the top Luftwaffe men. He is the antithesis of blustering, bragging Hermann Goering, his opposite number in the Nazi hierarchy. Rather than shouting commands at his subordinates, he usually prefaces an order with a polite, "Do you think you can do this for me?"

He has, however, one thing in common with Goering. Both men have long been ardent falconers. At sixteen, Portal was writing



Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles F. A. Portal

learned articles for British sporting magazines on the subject of this 4,000-year-old sport.

He was married in 1919 to Joan Margaret Welby, daughter of a baronet. He is supposed to have taken her up in a plane and refused to land until she agreed to marry him. They have two daughters, Rosemary, 19, and Mavis, 16. Portal was knighted in 1940.

BRITAIN'S FERRY COMMANDER IS SEA-TRAINED



Air Chief Marshal Sir F. W. Bowhill

THE sea's loss is the air's gain in the case of Air Chief Marshal Sir Frederick William Bowhill, chief of the recently formed Air Transport Command, successor to the famed Ferry Command, which Bowhill also commanded from its start in 1941. Bowhill was 16 years in the Mercantile Service before changing his element, trained to handle square-rigged ships.

Sir Frederick is a Scot, 62 years of age, whose vigorous personality attests his long acquaintance with seafaring life. Wearing the only pair of eyebrows comparable to those of former Vice President John Nance Garner, he is known as "Ginger" to his friends and underlings.

He was educated at the Blackheath School and the training ship *Worcester*. At the age of 19, he was third mate of the square rigger *Almora*.

Bowhill still takes great pride in the fact that he is one of the few living sailors

who holds a certificate as an "Extra Master square rigged."

He switched from sea to air in 1913 when, as a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, flying drew his interest. He soon obtained a Royal Aero Club certificate—his number is 397—and was one of Britain's early aviators. When World War One broke out, he was gazetted Flight Commander, Royal Naval Air Service in command of H.M.S. *Empress*. Seaplanes under his command took part in the raid on Cuxhaven on Christmas Day, 1914.

In 1916, after a spell at the Admiralty and in Mesopotamia, where he served with distinction, the air arms of the land and sea services were joined, and Sir Frederick was appointed to the command of Number 62 Wing, in the Aegean Sea. This command helped General Smuts drive the Germans from Tanganyika. Bowhill won the D.S.O. with bar, the C.M.G. and seven mentions in dispatches.

In 1919, he was a Wing Commander. Afterward, he was Chief Staff Officer of an expedition in Somaliland against the "Mad Mullah." Later service took him to Egypt and Irak, and in 1929 he was made Director of Organization at the Air Ministry.

Two years thereafter, he became Air Officer Commanding, Fighting Area. In 1933, he was appointed Air Member for Personnel and, in 1937, was given leadership of the Coastal Command. He organized the Ferry Command in 1941 and is in full charge of its fabulous growth into the present Air Transport Command.

He probably could not tell you how many times he has flown the Atlantic in the last three years. His job makes an international air commuter out of him. His personality is lusty, and his hobby is, of all things, collecting pewter. He is also a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. All in all, Sir Frederick is a good man to have on our side.

PIG-STICKING CHAMPION HEADS NEW RAF ARMY COOPERATION COMMAND

AIR Marshal Arthur Sheridan Barratt, commanding the newly created RAF tactical air arm, otherwise known as the Army Coöperation Command, is looking forward to getting in a few licks at the Nazis when invasion day arrives. For Barratt is



Air Marshal Arthur S. Barratt

not only a fine competitive athlete who likes to give as good as he takes, but he commanded the ill-fated RAF in France in 1940, when its pilots fought bravely but vainly against the Luftwaffe hordes.

Barratt, who is 53 years old, is still in fine physical trim, excels in tennis, cricket, foot-

ball and dry fly fishing. He is a fine marksman and so expert with his dukes, that it is generally felt he could have been close to a champion in the professional prize ring.

In the hunting field, he has ridden to hounds repeatedly and well and has won steeplechases and point-to-point races. When he was in India, he earned a great reputation at polo, pig-sticking and tent pegging.

"I know no one," said famed Billy Bishop, his fellow Air Marshal and close friend, "possessing such perfect coördination of mind and muscle. Nothing that Barratt really wants is beyond him."

A confirmed movie goer, Barratt is a believer in the use of films for training purposes. Born in Peshawar in 1891, he attended Woolwich Artillery College and entered the Royal Field Artillery as a gunnery officer in 1910. Just before World War One broke out, he sought for and obtained a transfer to the Royal Flying Corps. He served until the Armistice, mostly as an observer spotting the effects of artillery fire.

In 1919, he resigned his regular army commission and was given a permanent commission as Squadron Leader with the RAF. Since then, he has served on the Air Staff at Shanghai, knows as much about the Japanese air forces as any British flying leader.

He was the obvious man for his present job of command of the tactical units whose work proved so deadly against the enemy in Tunisia and Sicily. As one who has roughed it and braved death in the suicide machines of the last war, he has the complete confidence of his men.

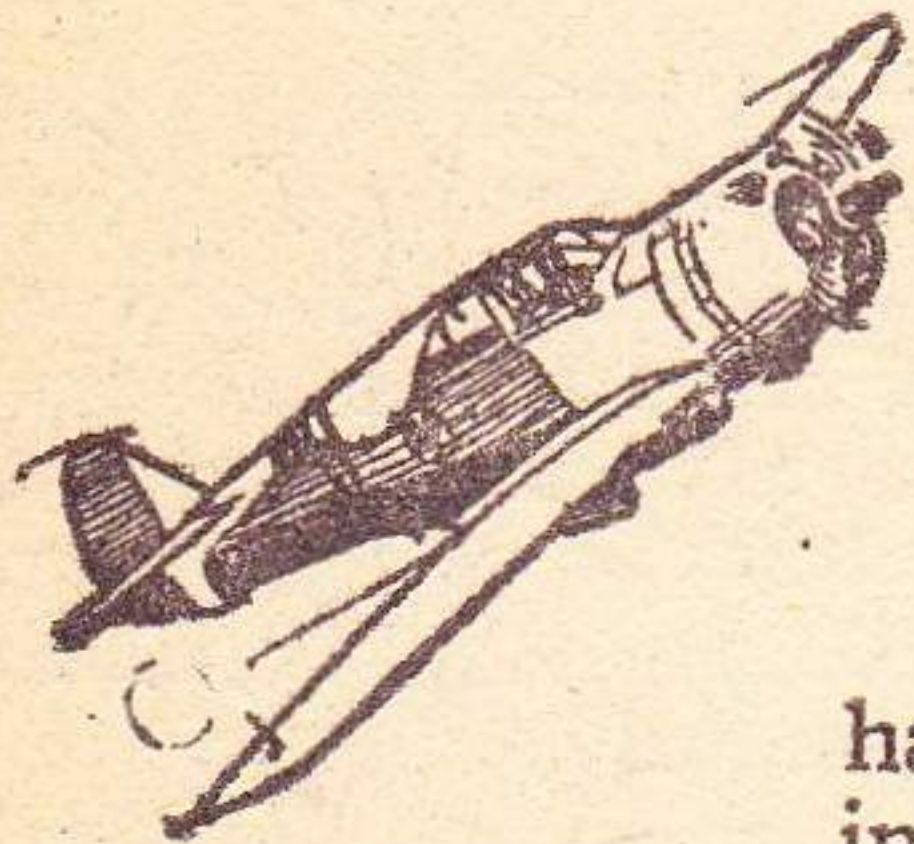
And, since he had to take a pasting in France through no fault of his own four years ago, he intends to get his own back at the Nazis' expense.

More Stories of **MEN BEHIND THE PLANES** Next Issue!

DATE TO KILL

By HAL WHITE

Pilot Hammond Wanted to Beat Bombardier Carson's Ears Down, But the Berlin Raids Got in the Way!



WEDGE
HAM-
MOND

—big and broad—
and Lance Car-
son, slim and tall
and lightning fast,

had a date to beat the living daylight out of each other. This little affair would be held when the item of bombing Berlin had been properly carried out.

The feud between the two men was nearly as old as they were. They had been beating each other up, and loving it, ever since short-pants days. Yeah, the feud was old, but the pretty partridge who took dictation in the S. L.'s office at the field was new, and richly endowed with curves in the right places.

In such a situation, each of the partners could always think up new and deadly insults to hurl at the other, and there would have been fists flying before this, had it not been for that matter of bombing Berlin.

So here they were, high above the German capital, and the Huns were tossing up everything but the kitchen stove. That muck was meeting and passing a lot of stuff going down, and altogether it was quite a large night for some hundreds of Lancaster bombers of the R. A. F. and some millions of Berliners who were beginning to have a slight suspicion that Adolf had lied when he said German cities would never be bombed.

Carson's sarcastic drawl came over the headphones:

"Bombardier to Pilot Officer Hammond. Sir, we are about to engage the enemy. Sorry to trouble you, but could you give your attention briefly to the business of piloting? In short, a spot of cooperation."

"Should I hold you on my lap, McCarthy?"

"Wooden that be sweet? No, but if you give me just a hair of left rudder now—hold it—right a touch—easy. As she rides!"

Nothing more for a moment, then the sudden lift of the ship and Carson's voice:

"Bombs away—sir."

That "sir" was gratuitous insult, for Carson managed to put into the three-letter word a bitter scorn that made Hammond bristle.

The Lancaster roared on, one of hundreds in a sky filled with wild noise. She lifted again, this time with the jarring crump of flak below and to the right. Some of her numerous crew men probed the moonlighted,

flame-fiery night for enemy aircraft. The others stared down to where the Lancaster's contribution of block busters was churning up added chaos and destruction under the swirling red smoke pall below.

The headphones came alive with sharp, curt orders, station to station or plane to plane. Men moved quickly and surely in the cavernous interior. A gunner barked:

"Bandits at nine o'clock, high, skipper."

"Get the so-and-so's."

The swivel turret guns in a topside blister went into action and were joined by a side turret. The ship shivered with recoil, rang with sound. Acrid smoke drifted, and men coughed. The enemy ships sheered off, one of them afire.

The Lancaster was swinging now, turning homeward but still in the flak area. A concentrated cone of searchlights caught her, held her in a revealing glare and the ground guns hailed hot steel at the wide wings.

"Mr. Hammond enjoys the spotlight." Carson again. "Really a fine, upstanding figure of a man. Too bad I've got to whittle him down to boy's size."

Blam! Crash! Spang! A blinding blob of shell flame on the left sent jagged fragments howling, tearing into the Lancaster. The ship reeled far over, straightened, then rolled the other way as a second shell burst on her right.

"Blimey!" The voice was harsh, disgusted. "The blighters nicked me, not 'arf."

"Take it easy, gunner. Steady—This'll hurt a bit." They were out of the searchlight cone now and a hooded flash in the dark interior centered on an iodine swab blending with the red on a wounded arm.

"Sparks copped one fair, sir," said another quiet voice in the intercom. "He's dead, sir."

"Carry on." Hammond spoke through clenched teeth. The ship was hit and staggering, losing altitude. Briggs, the co-pilot, eyed the instrument board grimly. Tension gripped the ship.

Nobody spoke until they were over the Channel. Then Carson came in again.

"Bombardier to Pilot Officer. Reminding you we have a date. How would you like your ears served—sir—with catsup or Worcestershire?"

Hammond blurped a derisive raspberry in reply and the tension blessedly relaxed. When the British headlands showed beneath them, they had less than a thousand feet un-

der their wings, and dropping lower in spite of all Hammond could do.

With land under them, the pilot spoke suddenly: "Merry old England, lads. Get out and walk, and make it fast!"

"Get out and walk, the man says. Well, now!"

"You, Carson! Stow the back talk. Bail out—the gang of you!"

One at a time they went, the white discs of the chutes blooming wide in the moonlight, far below. Hammond's headphones brought a last voice:

"So long, hero. Jump now and I'll fix you up with a nice crash landing tomorrow—on the back of your neck. Cheerio, all that rot."

Hammond hauled off the headset, drew hard knuckles across faintly grinning lips. He thought he knew where he was now, and with no one's neck but his own at stake, he could have a try at landing some hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of ship.

HE HELD his breath when he touched the landing gear button, sighed with relief when the mechanism worked smoothly and the wheels came down. He nosed her down.

And then, out of nowhere, from above and behind, came the enemy ship. Slugs rang on the Lancaster, came through and rattled around inside like peas in a can. Hammond looked ruefully at the rigging of his chute harness, cut clean by flying steel. So this was the end.

The sudden fierce staccato of guns on his own ship jerked his hair straight up with astonishment. The enemy pilot must have been even more surprised, but not for longer than it took him to die.

Hammond glanced back, could see nothing of the mystery gunner, and gave his attention again to the business of landing. He spotted a field. There might be rocks, or ditches, hidden in the grass, but he had to risk that. He put her down. She bounced, rolled fast, stopped on the very edge of an abandoned cellar.

The pilot leaned back and stared straight ahead. When Carson sat down in the copilot's seat beside him, he said, without surprise: "You had orders to bail out."

"The blazes with that." Carson was digging for cigarettes.

Hammond spread his hands and shrugged. "In the Army, like in love, the guy makes his own orders." And then, with a sudden bull roar and a slam of a big fist on the control wheel: "You can't do such things. You—"

"Cigarette—pal?"

Hammond took one, stuck it in his mouth and it wiggled in his lips as he spoke again:

"You coulda been killed."

"You would have been. And I have a date to do that agreeable job myself, tomorrow. Light—sir?"



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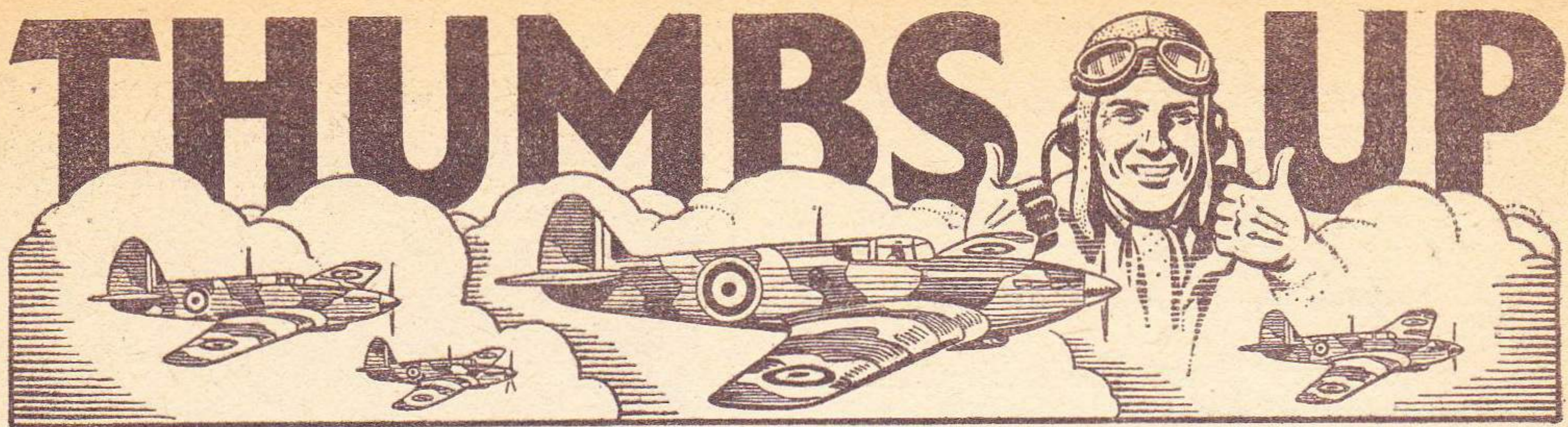
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WE ARE a bit late of course, but even with the war still on with the ruddy Narzies, we have to think of our own post-war world. We have been dabbling in a little business deal with our old hutmate of the last war, Alf Nettlebottom.

Of course you blokes know that the fabric tail-control surfaces of some of our bombers are still doped up. You will recall what happened to the empennage of the bomber B-for-Bertie when it was forced down in a meadow near Bareleigh-On-Tyme after a raid on Berlin. Three cows nibbled at the tail surfaces



because there was some kind of fodder in the dope they liked no end.

Alf was just over at Adastral House demonstrating a new dope that will nauseate the cows, and we do not mind telling you that we invested fifty pounds in the compote.

Something Went Wrong

Something went wrong though. All the mice in the place swarmed into the room and all over the higher brackets and attacked the sample Alf was smearing on a big piece of plyboard. A bloke with a lot of braid up assured Alf that English meadows were filled with more field mice than cows and had Alf ejected as if the veteran of World War I had only been a blinking fishmonger.

Alf was sipping beer in a pub when I caught up with him, but he wasn't a bit discouraged, that chap.

"I got an even better idea than the one I had first, old pal," he said to us. "Remember the pied-piper of Hamelin? I will git the contract to git all the rats an' mice out of London. If you could lend-lease me another ten quid—"

We left Alf. He wasn't pied, he was pie-eyed. They do not appreciate Alf, though. He is always trying to do something for his country. He could do a lot for it if he would leave it for duration. They even threatened to lock Alf up. Imagine it, what?

A Bee-17?

This really happened. While getting a bomber loaded for a hop to Berlin, the crew heard an ominous buzzing sound and three of them immediately yelled for somebody to check the fuses of the big block busters.

A groundman noticed something peculiar near a flak hole in the tail. Little bees were landing there and taking off and the groundman called for volunteers to go in there and look for the hidden drome. Chaps that had been over on a dozen missions quailed at the suggestion. They would fight Messups and Focke-Wulfs but the devil with bees.

Somebody thought of the vicar over in the village who knew more about bees than Audubon did about birds.

The vicar came over to the station, went into the bomber and coaxed the queen bee out. He walked over to the village again with three formations of honey collectors buzzing on behind. The Air Ministry no doubt wish the vicar could put the same kind of whammy on the Luftwaffe.

Third Degree, R.A.F.

The D.A.'s of the hoosegows all over America should sit in on a briefing of returning British bomber crews if they think they have a bad time of it getting the pluguglies to spill the jolly old beans.

Intelligence officers sometimes have to work three hours on the pilots and gunners before they can get them to admit the extent of the disturbance of the peace over Germany. The R.A.F. chaps are more scared of being accused of "shooting a line" than they are of riding hell for breakfast through Nazi flak.

After a raid on Nuremberg, which required



the long pull of seven hours, the crew of one Lancaster admitted they saw a Messup or two but "nothing much happened."

When a Nazi pilot comes close to hitting a fishing smack with a small bomb he imme-



diately rushes back to Fats Goering and announces the Ark Royal has been sunk again. It's the Goebbels influence.

If Joe and Adolph could win battles with their big mouths, there would be a rathskeller in the basement of Selfridge's big London store right now.

The Parson's Sign

After this war, there will be very few members of the R.A.F. not attending their places of worship. They have found out what it means to be so close to God.

There is a navigator on a Yank B-24 who studied for the ministry before the war. Sure, they call him "The Parson." On the flap of his tent, the Parson has a sign. It says:

"When you're in trouble, ask the Lord for help. He's very generous with it. While you're not in trouble, cultivate His acquaintance. And when He does something for you, don't forget to be grateful. He appreciates that."

Our Mailbag

We must bang off and take care of the stuff that came in the post. Since the chaps in the Navy, bless 'em, have found out how to smear Hitler's subs, our mail bags are not covered with starfish, electric eels, kelp and other marine life.

Bring the bag here, Rabbitnose, and at the same time confess you drew the picture of the monkey sitting in the photo of that S.E. 5 we became famous in in 1917. What? There isn't a bloomin' mark on it? I say now, we forgot to put our glasses on. It was the goggles we wore then an' the muffler that makes our chin stick out like that. But wipe the grins off your silly mugs and look lively or a lot of you will not get to go to Lady Godyver's lawn party a fortnight hence. And Mrs. Miniver going to be there too.

Rabbitnose, hand us the first letter, that's a nice fellow. Richard Herman, 348 Atlantic Ave., York, Pennsylvania, U.S.A., writes:

This is my first letter to your mag and a good one it is, the mag I mean. I like articles such as "The R.A.F. in Action." The combat report of a R.C.A.F. Fighter Squad was very interesting. The same goes for the rest of those true stories of the
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Channel Sweeps. More of 'em! Well, so much for the compliments.

I have a complaint against your mag for printing letters like that from a guy named Fred Walker from Detroit. His list of bombers and their armament was okay until he got up to the Fort and Liberator. What's the fellow trying to do, break down the U. S. morale with those figures? The B-17 has a total of twelve 50-caliber guns. Two in the tail, 1 in each waist position, 2 in ball turret, 2 in top power turret and 4 in the nose. The B-24 has about twelve 50-caliber guns, 2 in the tail, 2 in the top turret, 2 in the belly turret, 2 in the nose, 2 at each waist gun position.

He acts as if he's more interested in England's bombers and other aircraft than ours. Well I better stop as this is getting sort of long.

Nice bit of stuff, Dicky. We print letters from characters like Fred Walker just to show we are honest. We go along with a free press if it kills us or costs us our sinecure here. Hasn't the B-24 13 guns, Dick? Latest reports issued by the War Dept. make that statement. Check them over.

Lewis LaPlante, 10 Maple Ave., Farley, Mass., tells this to our Intelligence Officers:

I have just completed giving R.A.F. ACES the once over and I thought it was quite interesting. I believe the most interesting story was "Suicide Target." I have no complaint about the other novels.

Why do you print letters like Fred Walker's? I believe it is a waste of space. I would like to read one or two World War number one stories by Robert Sidney Bowen. I think he is the best writer you have got. But this is one man's opinion!

Keep up the good stories and I'll keep buying R.A.F. ACES.

Yours until Hitler is six feet under ground!

Bowen will love you. We admit it is a matter of opinion. R. Sidney was a great pilot in the last guerre for the R.F.C. and three years later piloted a racing car through the streets of Hartford, Conn. It was the Penrod MK1 and was pulled by three horses. It had a remote control thirty calibre gun, but Sid always tried to hush it up by saying it was only the exhaust.

He handed out free cigars and he is blamed for starting a runt named Joe Archibald out on the vile weed. When Bowen comes in from his hermitage out in Connecticut we'll tell him what you said.

Alex Quintavalle, 2274 West I Street, Brooklyn, N. Y., dropped this one overside as he passed overhead. Alex is a man of letters as he particularly enjoys our column. It is quite encouraging to know some of our correspondents went to school. If Alf Nettlebottom matriculated it was through Old Bailey. If you blokes look that up, you will find it was a Limey reform school. But let's have Alex's reaction to R.A.F. ACES.

Since I am a new reader of your swell magazine, I want you to know it ranks A1 on my reading list. I have taken special interest in your column "Thumbs Up."

Tophole, old boy. We will go on to this communication from Nevin Yates, Rural Route 2, Gallatin, Missouri. Yates prates:

I like your magazine very much. This is my first issue. The stories that I liked best were "Malta Courage" and "Blitz Crushers."

I do not know so much about airplanes and I would like to know what U.S.A.A.F. and W.D.D.D.F. mean. I would like to have some pen pals who would tell me something about airplanes. I am 10 years old and I think it would be a good idea to print R.A.F. ACES once a month.

The pictures on the front cover are very good but they would be much better if you left out a lot

of printing. How about some stories on the British plane, De Havilland Mosquito Bomber, and also the Fairey Fulmar? I like your stories about the Supermarine Spitfire.

A nice bit of penmanship for such a young sprout, Nevin. Those initialed organizations you ask about. They have recently been changed. Both mean the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, Yank and British. The R.A.F. calls those dolls the WASPS, now, we believe. These ladies ferry crates from one place to another, avoiding combat zones as much as possible.

Into someone's life some rain must fall and an unbelievably odd chap contaminates the King's postal service with this scurrilous sample of how not to win wars. Herbert Klaes, 13 Robert Ave., Port Chester, N. Y., hurls this home-made Molotov cocktail. Carps this Klaes person:

Dear Rattlehead: I have been reading R.A.F. ACES ever since it first hit the stands and only yesterday did I read my first THUMBS UP. And only because I am confined to my bed by an accident at the warplant, time being the most thing I can spare. Now I know why my favorite stationery and cigar store was forced to close its doors and why the proprietor had to leave town.

So you and a Conan Doyle character named Nettlebottom won the last war! And you make fun of Joe Goebbels who compared to you is the soul of honor, truth, and understatement. You never saw an S.E. 5 outside of a museum and you know it and if you were ever in France, I discovered radium in my backyard.

Why the English allow you to write about them is more than I can understand. When I went on my honeymoon at Niagara Falls, I told my wife I didn't think I'd ever live to see or hear of a bigger drip, but you never know, do you, Sarge? Your stories are all right in your magazine and I never miss your true stories of the English pilots. They are great, so I know you are not allowed to choose the fiction and articles.

I happen to know a cousin of Billy Bishop's who knows the history of every pilot in the R.F.C. from 1915-1918 and I am writing to him. This will give you a chance to escape by way of the Mex border or commit hara-kiri, American style. I'll be glad to send you the gun. I bet you don't know air foil from tin foil and you think torque means what the bomber crews say through the intercom. Enough of you.

There, you see what jealousy does? We are no end positive that the letter was written by a chap who was turned down for the important job we now hold in the war. We have our operatives working and will soon uncover the real identity of this fellow. Our record is always open for public consumption at all precinct stations throughout—that is, fighter and bomber stations. We admit fighting under an assumed name in the last go as we were considered a military secret—but why should we apologize to such a disgruntled patronage seeker. What's next, Rabbitnose?

Here is a very nice script from Ira W. Hanson, 1 Thompson Lane, Rae Town, Kingston P.O., Jamaica, B.W.I. This satisfied customer from the tropics cements pleasant relations with this department, to wit:

I have just read your latest issue. I admired it very much, especially the epics of the dauntless heroes who have attacked the enemy unflinchingly.

I enjoyed the adventurous tales of the R.A.F. men, and quite appreciate the British American cooperation where air warfare is concerned.

On the whole I suggest that you make up your book with more facts and less fiction as I observe that the facts are more thrilling than fictitious tales, in fact they appeal to me more than the fiction. I

[Turn page]

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myself am interested in flying, as I have volunteered with the local Air Training Corps. Congratulations to R.A.F. ACES, and I am looking forward to better improvements in the publication of your magazine. I have not seen much of it in Jamaica and I am at your service to cooperate to the fullest extent in the circulation of your magazine. Cheerio and thumbs up!

Thanks awfully, Ira. We were down your way once on a junket and missed getting a machete for a souvenir by a whisker. Seems the native really needed the bunch of bananas we—if it had not been we were jolly well spiffed with tequila, we would never have made that eleven-foot fence. Could you possibly find an opening there for Alf Nettlebottom? Write very soon and let Scotland Yard and this department know.

J. Allan Redmond, 131—8th Avenue, St. Eustache, Sur Le Lac, Quebec, is the next guest to be briefed. Redmond writes:

I just wanted to tell you that I think the magazine you call R.A.F. ACES is super. I liked "Commando Wings" in your last issue. "Stuka Stinger" was also a top hole story.

My only complaint is that this mag isn't published often enough. At the rate I read them, I could devour maybe seventy-five mags in a year.

J. Allan is more than satisfied with us and wants R.A.F. ACES put out six times every month. How is the pulp wood holding out up in Canada, old chap? Can you get about eighty acres of timber wholesale? Comes in with flaps and wheels down, Bob Longwith, 1210 South 17th St., New Castle, Indiana. Bob is a charter member of the Read R.A.F. ACES Club. We want quiet here!

I think R.A.F. ACES is a swell magazine and I have been reading it ever since it first came out.

Why don't you have a few stories of the fighter squadrons which fought so gallantly with the British 8th Army at El Alamein? I like to read stories of Desert Warfare and you have only had a few stories of this type. Have Robert Sidney Bowen or Arch Whitehouse or somebody write a swell story of this type. Also for a change, how about a fighter and bomber sweep over Norway? The German Luftwaffe is still based in Norway you know.

We will get hold of some of our writers and make them go to work for you, Bob. Arch Whitehouse is now in London trying to get some of the war right out of the old cauldron, but we have six scribblers winning the war right now in the bistro across the street.

Bill Hallwell drops in to take exception to that letter written by one Fred Walker. Bill pastes war savings stamps in his book at 146 Lily St., Paterson, N. J.

I think your mag is swell and those that criticize your column "Thumbs Up" are out of their heads.

If you want to keep us happy send some more stories of "Yanks" in the "R.A.F."

I believe in credit where credit is due, but if that so-called INTELLIGENT reader Fred Walker would look up the armament of our 2 heavy bombers, the B-17 and the B-24 I think his apology would be in order in the next issue. His info on the British



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bombers is correct, but he fails to note that the guns on B-24s are 50 cal. not 30 cal. Here is the real dope on the B-17. 2—303 cal. and 2—50 cal. in the nose, 2—50 on top turret, 1—50 on top of wings to be operated by radio operator, 1—50 cal. on each side mid-way between wing and tail, 2—50 cal. in tail and 2—50 cal. in the ball turret under the belly.

A total of 13 guns, not 8!

See what I mean, Fred?

Our bombers also have self-sealing gas tanks. Well, I guess that's all for now, except keep up the good work on your swell magazine.

What do you say to that, Fred? You have to keep watching every day for changes on our planes. We would like to ask our customers to send us in their specifications of a B-25. If two of them check, we'll be more surprised than Musso when he found himself put out with the cat on the back doorstep of Italy. You Yanks ought to know that Billy Mitchell, so set us absolutely straight. We've seen them with no waist guns and waist guns, with a belly turret and no belly turret. They had tail stingers on them once—but send in your versions and let's straighten out this kite.

An epistle carrying both pats on the back and pokes in the nose comes from a female air enthusiast and once Rabbitnose stops sniffing at the scented envelope we will tell you what's in it. Give it here, droop!

Miss Ivy White, Anderson, Indiana, pens this delicate billet-doux. Ivy says for publication:

Dear Sergeant Pilot: I happened to pick up a copy of R.A.F. ACES my brother's pal left on our doorstep. Once in awhile I like to read flying stories so I started in on your magazine. I liked the fact stories better than the fiction yarns but I guess that's because I hate too much blood and thunder in stories. BUT—Why do you have to fill one magazine full of nothing but stories about English Pilots when all of us over here never get enough reading about our own brave boys?

Don't think that I am anti-British because I'm not. Most of my people came from England. I was just wondering about it, that's all. I enjoyed your department very much. Were you really in the last war and why do they call you a pilot in this one? You must be too old for combat. My brother would be all burned up if he saw this letter. I hear him coming up the steps so I've got to stop right here. Lots of luck to all your mags.

M-m-m, the gals can sure ask you the hard ones. We thought that it would be a good idea to give over all the space in one magazine for the R.A.F. because it was a way we could show our appreciation of what those lads did to the Nazis until we could get our brass knuckles on, Ivy.

We are very modest about our service in the last war and will not even be coaxed into shooting a line, as you said yourself you did not like blood and thunder. We bet we'd like your brother, Ivy. Tell the little commando to write, huh?

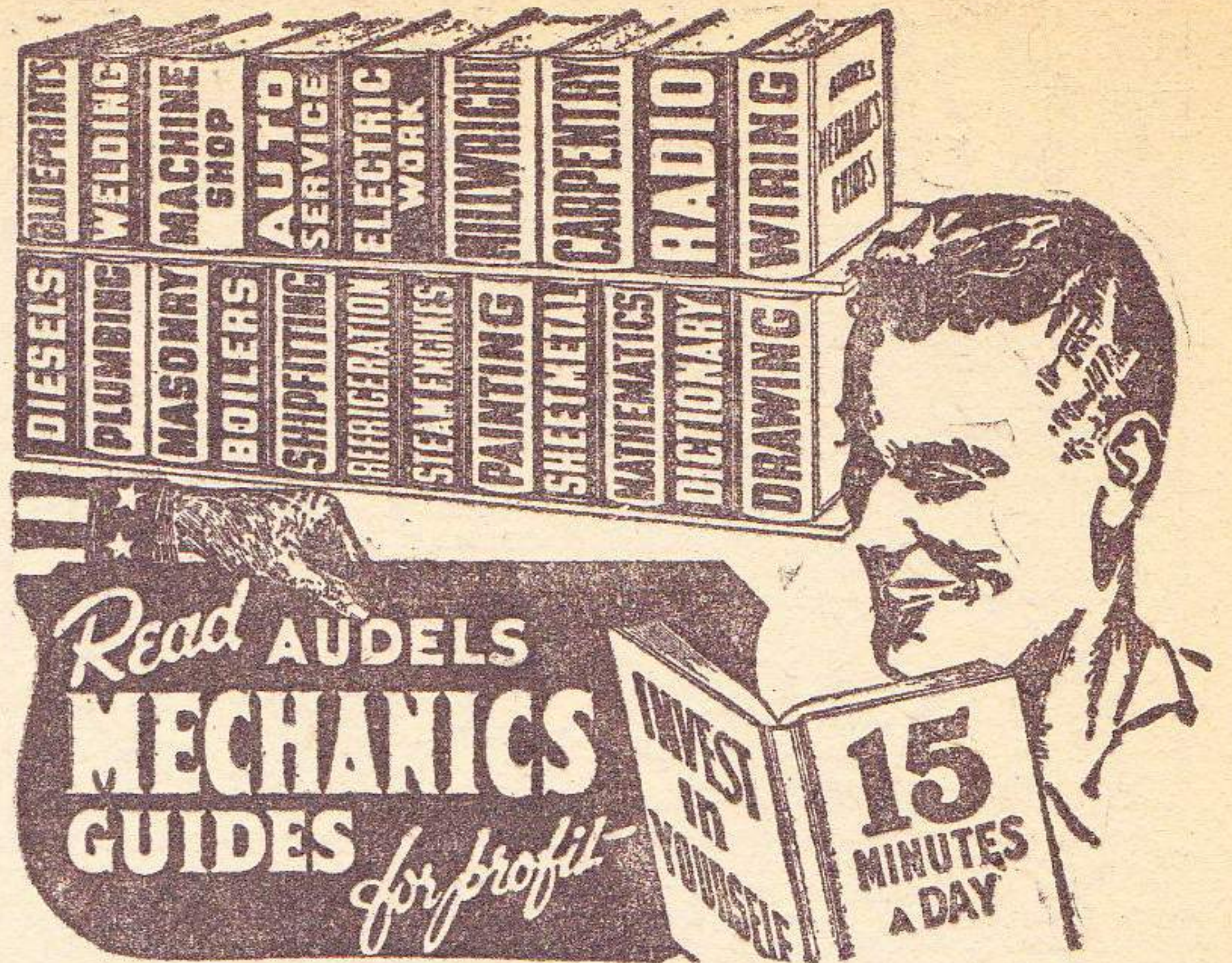
Cecil Edward Davis Jr., Montell, Texas, is only 12 years old but he crashes this department with this one:

[Turn page]

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I wish you could publish R.A.F. ACES every month. I am only 12 years old, but I have been reading the mag for a long time. I liked "Jerry Pilot" and "Rodney Jumps the Gun" very much. I have read Thumbs Up and agree with Phil E. Krimmer. I wish you would show a good picture of a Focke-Wulf 190!

We've got a longhaired artist sketching out a picture of Fatso Goering's favorite kite right now, Cecil. It is a good idea to get a good picture of one of the yellow noses as there won't be any left in a few more months. What do you think, lad?

Comes a series of short squirts from a peashooter named Jefferson Somerville, Sanford, Maine, R.R. 1. He should bring up the tail of this mail plane. Get a load of this adde-pate!

Dear Sarge: Lay that trumpet down, Gabe! We mean the ear trumpet as we bet you are that old. I bet you was with Wellington at Waterloo and was gold brickin'. About your mag now. It is not so bad even if I don't go for stories of the great heroes of the British Empire. Let us have American heroes. Look at all the extra swell stories we would have about great aces like Foss and Scott if you did not waste space on our British cousins.

I liked that story "Suicide Target" a lot though. Maybe because I made believe you was the target, Sarge. The stuff you throw—ha, ha!

B-17s and B-24s have got it all over Lancasters and Halifaxes and you know it! Wanna fight?

All right, Jeffry, old boy, be hard to cooperate with in these times that try the souls of men! The big British bombers have been doing a job on Adolph's cities, don't you think? Our barristers are just dying to take somebody into court, old boy, for personal slander charges. If we had more time we would tell you all about our war record.

All of you non-combatants remember to turn in all your old dime store jewelry to the authorities as an R.A.F. or Yank flyer can sometimes swap a Woolworth brooch for bed and board at a native village in New Guinea.

There are people even now deploring the horrible destruction of German cities, pointing out that defenseless women and children of the Reich did not ask for the war. Let them remember the words of Adolph Hitler when the London blitz was at its height. In so many words, the rug chawer roared: "Neither the wails of women nor the screams of children will prevent us from reaching our ultimate objective!" Make them remember those words!

Adolph is a paradox. Der Fuehrer denies God but appeals to the stars for guidance. Doesn't Hitler realize that God made the stars? Be that as it may, it seems that Adolph has been getting a bum steer from the stars and it is about time he got an inkling as to the reason for it.

The year 1944 should spell the doom of Nazi Germany. With the military and naval power of three great nations directed solely at Japan, we cannot see any reason for Hirohito to be around in the latter part of 1945. But all this will not be accomplished with mirrors or by reading tea leaves.

There is a bitter struggle ahead. More blood and sweat and tears, so pull up your bootstraps, dig down into your pocket, stick your chin out even more and stop complaining about the bus service or the stuff you get to eat in the beaneries. You could be a Nazi or a Jap in Berlin or Tokyo. See how much worse off you could be?

—THE SERGEANT PILOT.

OUR NEXT ISSUE

NOW for our next issue. "Bomber's Boomerang," a fine novelet of the Royal Australian Air Force, by Laurence Donovan, is first off the runway. Fighting in the southwest Pacific is all too frequently a confused affair, as any of the lads from down under can tell you.

When you have a hurricane whirling its force into the already involved doings of an Australian auxiliary plane carrier, a mob of murderous Nips, a Chinese girl spy who has located their secret base, and a young Australian flyer who is convinced he is living under an unlucky star, confusion turns to drama of the first order.

It took a lot of good luck to convince Pilot Officer Burke, RAAF, that in his case the luck of the Irish had not been viciously reversed. But finally it worked. How it worked and what happened when the gloomy young flyer regained his nerve provide the spine-tingling plot of Donovan's fine tale.

But not all the heroes are unlucky in this action-packed issue. Besides "Bomber's Boomerang," many other stories are rolling out to the line. The fiction is up to par throughout, and the articles include the regular features about the "RAF in Action" and the "Men Behind the Planes." Our next issue offers one of the best dime's worth on the newsstands today. Be on hand to enjoy it.

While waiting for that grand issue, why not look up our companion magazines—AIR WAR, SKY FIGHTERS and ARMY NAVY FLYING STORIES—they're all swell.

Keep writing the magazine, friends. Please address all your letters and postcards to The Editor, RAF ACES, 10 East 40th Street, New York 16, N. Y.

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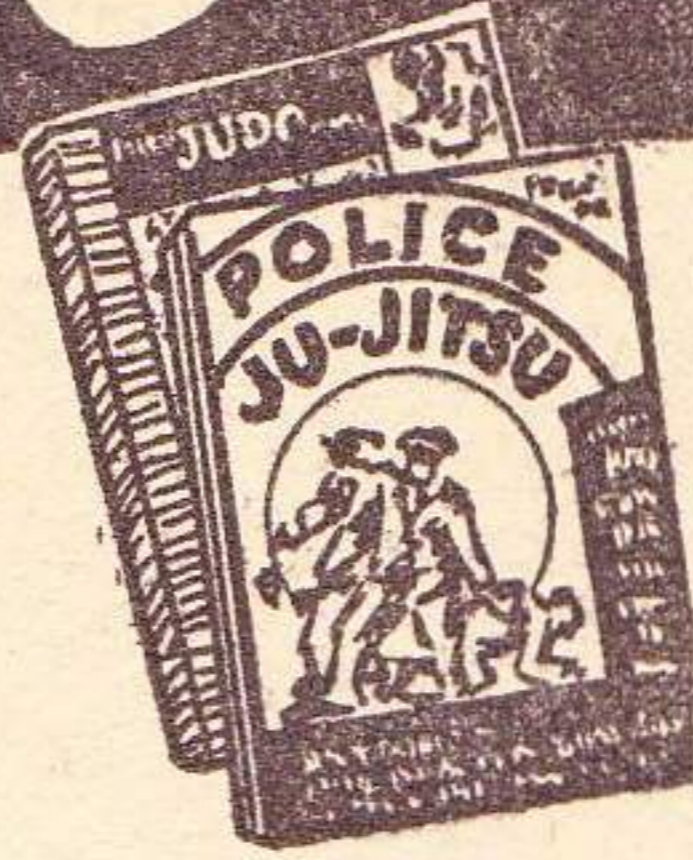
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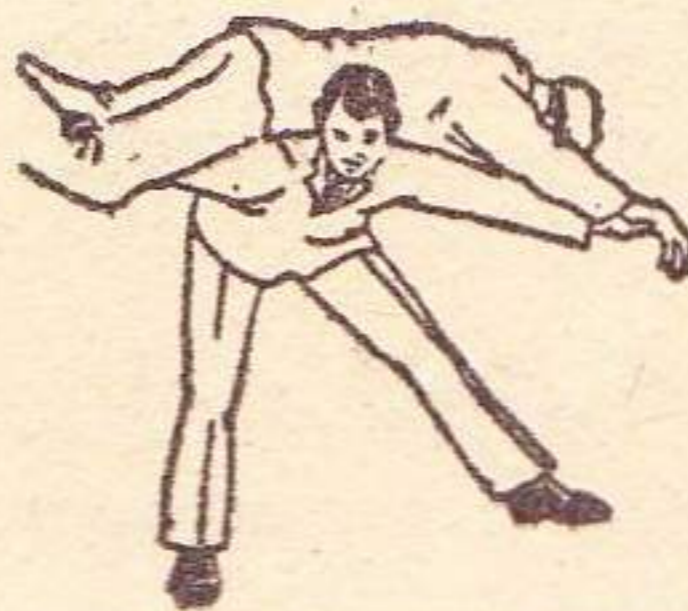
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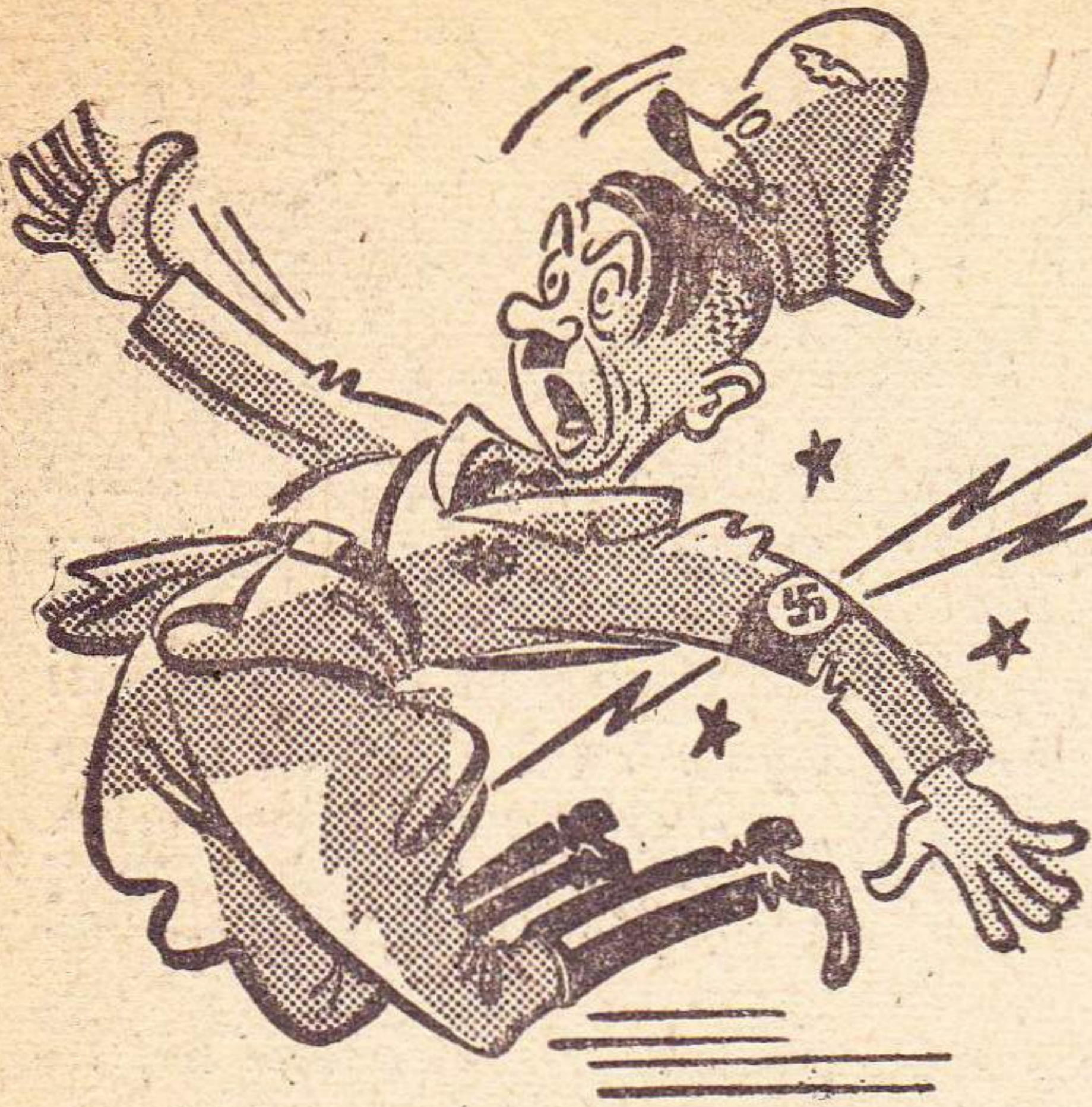
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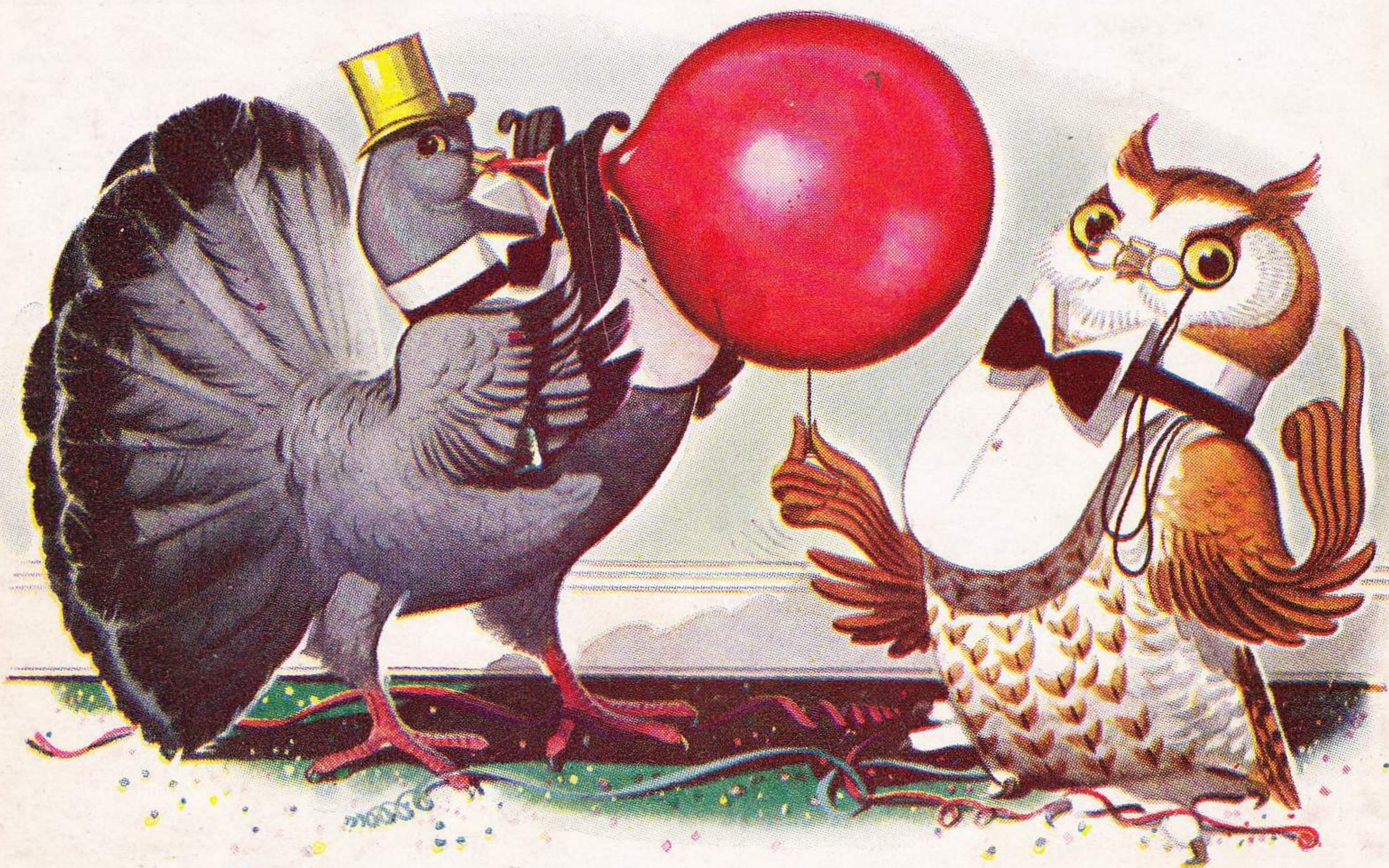
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