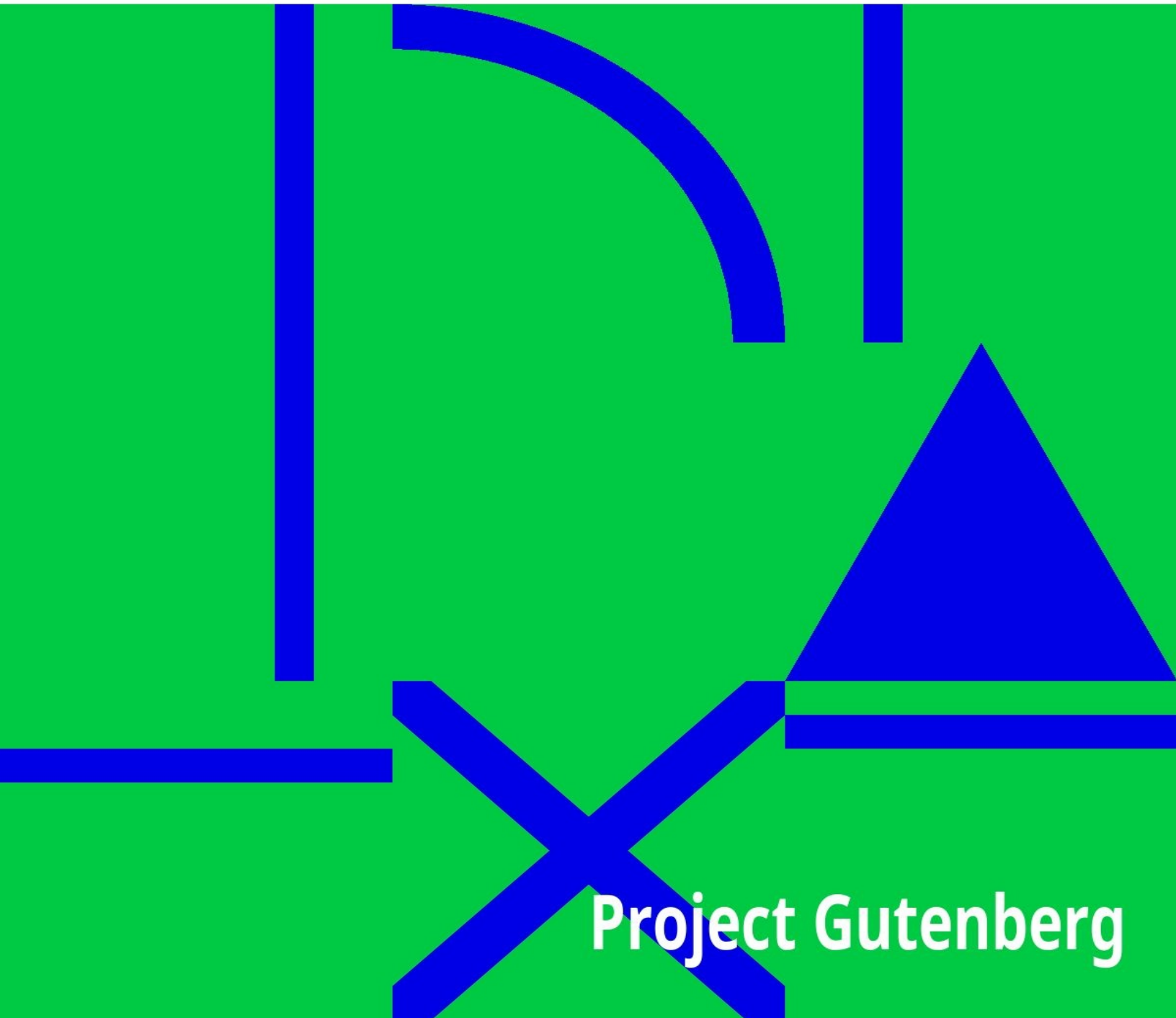
High Adventure

A Narrative of Air Fighting in France

James Norman Hall



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High Adventure

A Narrative of Air Fighting in France

By

JAMES NORMAN HALL

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TO
SERGENT-PILOTE DOUGLAS MACMONAGLE
KILLED IN COMBAT NEAR VERDUN
SEPTEMBER 25, 1917

The Author

THE AUTHOR

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HIGH ADVENTURE

I

THE FRANCO-AMERICAN CORPS

It was on a cool, starlit evening, early in September, 1916, that I first met Drew of Massachusetts, and actually began my adventures as a prospective member of the Escadrille Américaine. We had sailed from New York by the same boat, had made our applications for enlistment in the Foreign Legion on the same day, without being aware of each other's existence; and in Paris, while waiting for our papers, we had gone, every evening, for dinner, to the same large and gloomy-looking restaurant in the neighborhood of the Seine.

As for the restaurant, we frequented it, not assuredly because of the quality of the food. We might have dined better and more cheaply elsewhere. But there was an air of vanished splendor, of faded magnificence, about the place which, in the capital of a warring nation, appealed to both of us. Every evening the tables were laid with spotless linen and shining silver. The wineglasses caught the light from the tarnished chandeliers in little points of color. At the dinner-hour, a half-dozen ancient serving-men silently took their places about the room. There was not a sound to be heard except the occasional far-off honk of a motor or the subdued clatter of dishes from the kitchens. The serving-men, even the tables and the empty chairs, seemed to be listening, to be waiting for the guests who never came. Rarely were there more than a dozen diners-out during the course of an evening. There was something mysterious in these elaborate preparations, and something rather fine about them as well; but one thought, not without a touch of sadness, of the old days when there had been laughter and lights and music, sparkling wines and brilliant talk, and how those merrymakers had gone, many of them, long ago to the wars.

As it happened on this evening, Drew and I were sitting at adjoining tables. Our common citizenship was our introduction, and after five minutes of talk, we learned of our common purpose in coming to France. I suppose that we must have eaten after making this latter discovery. I vaguely remember seeing our old waiter hobbling down a long vista of empty tables on his way to and from the kitchens. But if we thought of our food at all, it must have been in a purely mechanical way.

Drew can talk—by Jove, how the man can talk!—and he has the faculty of throwing the glamour of romance over the most commonplace adventures. Indeed, the difficulty which I am going to have in writing this narrative is largely due to this romantic influence of his. I might have succeeded in writing a plain tale, for I have kept my diary faithfully, from day to day, and can set down our adventures, such as they are, pretty much as they occurred. But Drew has bewitched me. He does not realize it, but he is a weaver of spells, and I am so enmeshed in his moonshine that I doubt if I shall be able to write of our experiences as they must appear to those of our comrades in the Franco-American Corps who remember them only through the medium of the revealing light of day.

Not one of these men, I am sure, would confess to so strange an immediate cause for joining the aviation service, as that related to me by Drew, as we sat over our coffee and cigarettes, on the evening of our first meeting. He had come to France, he said, with the intention of joining the *Légion Étrangère* as an infantryman. But he changed his mind, a few days after his arrival in Paris, upon meeting Jackson of the American Aviation Squadron, who was on leave after a service of six months at the front. It was all because of the manner in which Jackson looked at a Turkish rug. He told him of his adventures in the most matter-of-fact way. No heroics, nothing of that sort. He had not a glimmer of imagination, he said. But he had a way of looking at the floor which was "irresistible," which "fascinated him with the sense of height." He saw towns, villages, networks of trenches, columns of toy troops moving up ribbons of road —all in the patterns of a Turkish rug. And the next day, he was at the headquarters of the Franco-American Corps, in the Champs Élysées, making application for membership.

It is strange that we should both have come to France with so little of accurate knowledge of the corps, of the possibilities for enlistment, and of the nature of the requirements for the service. Our knowledge of it, up to the time of sailing, had been confined to a few brief references in the press. It was perhaps necessary that its existence should not be officially recognized in America, or its furtherance encouraged. But it seemed to us at that time, that there must have been actual discouragement on the part of the Government at Washington. However that may be, we wondered if others had followed clues so vague or a call so dimly heard.

This led to a discussion of our individual aptitudes for the service, and we made many comforting discoveries about each other. It is permissible to reveal

them now, for the particular encouragement of others who, like ourselves at that time, may be conscious of deficiencies, and who may think that they have none of the qualities essential to the successful aviator. Drew had never been farther from the ground than the top of the Woolworth building. I had once taken a trip in a captive balloon. Drew knew nothing of motors, and had no more knowledge of mechanics than would enable him to wind a watch without breaking the mainspring. My ignorance in this respect was a fair match for his.

We were further handicapped for the French service by our lack of the language. Indeed, this seemed to be the most serious obstacle in the way to success. With a good general knowledge of the language it seemed probable that we might be able to overcome our other deficiencies. Without it, we could see no way to mastering the mechanical knowledge which we supposed must be required as a foundation for the training of a military pilot. In this connection, it may be well to say that we have both been handicapped from the beginning. We have had to learn, through actual experience in the air, and at risk to life and limb, what many of our comrades, both French and American, knew before they had ever climbed into an aeroplane. But it is equally true that scores of men become very excellent pilots with little or no knowledge of the mechanics of the business.

In so far as Drew and I were concerned, these were matters for the future. It was enough for us at the moment that our applications had been approved, our papers signed, and that to-morrow we were leaving for the *École d'Aviation Militaire* to begin our training. And so, after a long evening of pleasant talk and pleasanter anticipation of coming events, we left our restaurant and walked together through the silent streets to the Place de la Concorde. The great windy square was almost deserted. The monuments to the lost provinces bulked large in the dim lamplight. Two disabled soldiers hobbled across the bridge and disappeared in the deep shade of the avenue. Their service had been rendered, their sacrifices made, months ago. They could look about them now with a peculiar sense of isolation, and with, perhaps, a feeling of the futility of the effort they had made. Our adventures were all before us. Our hearts were light and our hopes high. As we stood by the obelisk, talking over plans for the morrow, we heard, high overhead, the faint hum of motors, and saw two lights, one green, one red, moving rapidly across the sky. A moment later the long, slender finger of a searchlight probed among little heaps of cloud, then, sweeping in a wide arc, revealed in striking outline the shape of a huge biplane circling over the sleeping city. It was one of the night guard of Paris.

On the following morning, we were at the Gare des Invalides with our luggage, a long half-hour before train-time. The luggage was absurdly bulky. Drew had two enormous suitcases and a bag, and I a steamer trunk and a family-size portmanteau. We looked so much the typical American tourists that we felt ashamed of ourselves, not because of our nationality, but because we revealed so plainly, to all the world military, our non-military antecedents. We bore the hallmark of fifty years of neutral aloofness, of fifty years of indifference to the business of national defense. What makes the situation amusing as a retrospect is the fact that we were traveling on third-class military passes, as befitted our rank as *élève-pilotes* and soldiers of the *deuxième classe*.

To our great discomfiture, a couple of *poilus* volunteered their services in putting our belongings aboard the train. Then we crowded into a third-class carriage filled with soldiers—*permissionnaires*, *blessés*, *réformés*, men from all corners of France and her colonies. Their uniforms were faded and weather-stained with long service. The stocks of their rifles were worn smooth and bright with constant usage, and their packs fairly stowed themselves upon their backs.

Drew and I felt uncomfortable in our smart civilian clothing. We looked too soft, too clean, too spick-and-span. We did not feel that we belonged there. But in a whispered conversation we comforted ourselves with the assurance that if ever America took her rightful stand with the Allies, in six months after the event, hundreds of thousands of American boys would be lugging packs and rifles with the same familiarity of use as these French *poilus*. They would become equally good soldiers, and soon would have the same community of experience, of dangers and hardships shared in common, which make men comrades and brothers in fact as well as in theory.

By the time we had reached our destination we had persuaded ourselves into a much more comfortable frame of mind. There we piled into a cab, and soon we were rattling over the cobblestones, down a long, sunlit avenue in the direction of B——. It was late of a mild afternoon when we reached the summit of a high plateau and saw before us the barracks and hangars of the *École d'Aviation*. There was not a breath of air stirring. The sun was just sinking behind a bank of crimson cloud. The earth was already in shadow, but high overhead the light was caught and reflected from the wings of scores of *avions* which shone like polished bronze and silver. We saw the long lines of Blériot monoplanes, like huge dragon-flies, and as pretty a sight in the air as heart could wish. Farther to the left, we recognized Farman biplanes, floating battleships in comparison with the Blériots, and twin-motor Caudrons, much more graceful and alert of

movement.

But, most wonderful of all to us then, we saw a strange, new *avion*,—a biplane, small, trim, with a body like a fish. To see it in flight was to be convinced for all time that man has mastered the air, and has outdone the birds in their own element. Never was swallow more consciously joyous in swift flight, never eagle so bold to take the heights or so quick to reach them. Drew and I gazed in silent wonder, our bodies jammed tightly into the cab-window, and our heads craned upward. We did not come back to earth until our ancient, earth-creeping conveyance brought up with a jerk, and we found ourselves in front of a gate marked “École d'Aviation Militaire de B——.”

After we had paid the cabman, we stood in the road, with our mountain of luggage heaped about us, waiting for something to happen. A moment later a window in the administration building was thrown open and we were greeted with a loud and not over-musical chorus of

> “Oh, say, can you see by the dawn's early light—”

It all came from one throat, belonging to a chap in leathers, who came down the drive to give us welcome.

“Spotted you *toute suite*” he said. “You can tell Americans at six hundred yards by their hats. How's things in the States? Do you think we're coming in?”

We gave him the latest budget of home news, whereupon he offered to take us over to the barracks. When he saw our luggage he grinned.

“Some equipment, believe me! *Attendez un peu* while I commandeer a battalion of Annamites to help us carry it, and we'll be on our way.”

The Annamites, from Indo-China, who are quartered at the camp for guard and fatigue duty, came back with him about twenty strong, and we started in a long procession to the barracks. Later, we took a vindictive pleasure in witnessing the beluggaged arrival of other Americans, for in nine cases out of ten they came as absurdly over-equipped as did we.

Our barracks, one of many built on the same pattern, was a long, low wooden building, weather-stained without and whitewashed within. It had accommodation for about forty beds. One end of the room was very manifestly American. There was a phonograph on the table, baseball equipment piled in one corner, and the walls were covered with cartoons and pictures clipped from

American periodicals. The other end was as evidently French, in the frugality and the neatness of its furnishings. The American end of the room looked more homelike, but the French end more military. Near the center, where the two nations joined, there was a very harmonious blending of these characteristics.

Drew and I were delighted with all this. We were glad that we were not to live in an exclusively American barracks, for we wanted to learn French; but more than this, we wanted to live with Frenchmen on terms of barrack-room familiarity.

By the time we had given in our papers at the captain's office and had passed the hasty preliminary examination of the medical officer, it was quite dark. Flying for the day was over, and lights gleamed cheerily from the barrack-room windows. As we came down the principal street of the camp, we heard the strains of “Waiting for the Robert E. Lee,” to a gramophone accompaniment, issuing from the *chambre des Américains*.

> “See them shuffle along,
> Oh, ma honey babe,
> Hear that music and song.”

It gave us the home feeling at once. Frenchmen and Americans were singing together, the Frenchmen in very quaint English, but hitting off the syncopated time as though they had been born and brought up to it as we Americans have.

Over in one corner, a very informal class in French-English pronunciation was at work. Apparently, this was tongue-twisters' night. “*Heureux*” was the challenge from the French side, and “*Hooroo*” the nearest approach to a pronunciation on the part of the Americans, with many more or less remote variations on this theme. An American, realizing how difficult it is for a Frenchman to get his tongue between his teeth, counter-challenged with “Father, you are withered with age.” The result, as might have been expected, was a series of hissing sounds of *z*, whereupon there was an answering howl of derision from all the Americans. Up and down the length of the room there were little groups of two and three, chatting together in combinations of Franco-American which must have caused all deceased professors of modern languages to spin like midges in their graves. And throughout all this before-supper merriment, one could catch the feeling of good-comradeship which, so far as my experience goes, is always prevalent whenever Frenchmen and Americans are gathered together.

At the *ordinaire*, at supper-time, we saw all of the *élève-pilotes* of the school,

with the exception of the non-commissioned officers, who have their own mess. To Drew and me, but newly come from remote America, it was a most interesting gathering. There were about one hundred and twenty-five in all, including eighteen Americans. The large majority of the Frenchmen had already been at the front in other branches of army service. There were artillerymen, infantrymen, marines,—in training for the naval air-service,—cavalrymen, all wearing the uniforms of the arm to which they originally belonged. No one was dressed in a uniform which distinguished him as an aviator; and upon making inquiry, I found that there is no official dress for this branch of the service. During his period of training in aviation, and even after receiving his military brevet, a pilot continues to wear the dress of his former service, plus the wings on the collar, and the star-and-wings insignia on his right breast. This custom does not make for the fine uniform appearance of the men of the British Royal Flying Corps, but it gives a picturesqueness of effect which is, perhaps, ample recompense. As for the Americans, they follow individual tastes, as we learned later. Some of them, with an eye to color, salute the sun in the red trousers and black tunic of the artilleryman. Others choose more sober shades, various French blues, with the thin orange aviation stripe running down the seams of the trousers. All this in reference to the dress uniform. At the camp most of the men wear leathers, or a combination of leathers and the gray-blue uniform of the French *poilu*, which is issued to all Americans at the time of their enlistment.

We had a very excellent supper of soup, followed by a savory roast of meat, with mashed potatoes and lentils. Afterward, cheese and beer. I was slightly discomfited physically on learning that the beef was horse-meat, but Drew convinced me that it was absurd to let old scruples militate against a healthy appetite. In 1870 the citizens of France ate *ragoût de chat* with relish. Furthermore, the roast was of so delicious a flavor and so closely resembled the finest cuts of beef, that it was easy to persuade one's self that it was beef, after all.

After the meal, to our great surprise, every one cleaned his dishes with huge pieces of bread. Such waste seemed criminal in a country beleaguered by submarines, in its third year of war, and largely dependent for its food-supply on the farm labor of women and children. We should not have been surprised if it had been only the Americans who indulged in this wasteful dish-cleansing process; but the Frenchmen did it, too. When I remarked upon this to one of my American comrades, a Frenchman, sitting opposite, said:—

“Pardon, monsieur, but I must tell you what we Frenchmen are. We are very

economical when it is for ourselves, for our own families and purses, that we are saving. But when it is the Government which pays the bill, we do not care. We do not have to pay directly and so we waste, we throw away. We are so careful at home, all of our lives, that this is a little pleasure for us."

I have had this same observation made to me by so many Frenchmen since that time, that I believe there must be a good deal of truth in it.

After supper, all of the Americans adjourned for coffee to Ciret's, a little café in the village which nestles among the hills not far from the camp. The café itself was like any one of thousands of French provincial restaurants. There was a great dingy common room, with a sanded brick floor, and faded streamers of tricolor paper festooned in curious patterns from the smoky ceiling. The kitchen was clean, and filled with the appetizing odor of good cooking. Beyond it was another, inner room, "*toujours réservée à mes Américains*," as M. Ciret, the fat, genial *patron* continually asserted. Here we gathered around a large circular table, pipes and cigarettes were lighted, and, while the others talked, Drew and I listened and gathered impressions.

For a time the conversation did not become general, and we gathered up odds and ends of it from all sides. Then it turned to the reasons which had prompted various members of the group to come to France, the topic, above all others, which Drew and I most wanted to hear discussed. It seemed to me, as I listened, that we Americans closely resemble the British in our sensitive fear of any display of fine personal feeling. We will never learn to examine our emotions with anything but suspicion. If we are prompted to a course of action by generous impulses, we are anxious that others shall not be let into the secret. And so it was that of all the reasons given for offering their services to France, the first and most important was the last to be acknowledged, and even then it was admitted by some with a reluctance nearly akin to shame. There was no man there who was not ready and willing to give his life, if necessary, for the Allied cause, because he believed in it; but the admission could hardly have been dragged from him by wild horses.

But the adventure of the life, the peculiar fascination of it—that was a thing which might be discussed without reserve, and the men talked of it with a willingness which was most gratifying to Drew and me, curious as we were about the life we were entering. They were all in the flush of their first enthusiasms. They were daily enlarging their conceptions of distance and height and speed. They talked a new language and were developing a new cast of mind.

They were like children who had grown up over night, whose horizons had been immeasurably broadened in the twinkling of an eye. They were still keenly conscious of the change which was upon them, for they were but fledgling aviators. They were just finding their wings. But as I listened, I thought of the time which must come soon, when the air, as the sea, will be filled with stately ships, and how the air-service will develop its own peculiar type of men, and build up about them its own laws and its own traditions.

As we walked back through the straggling village street to the camp, I tried to convey to Drew something of the new vision which had come to me during the evening. I was aglow with enthusiasm and hoped to strike an answering spark from him. But all that I was thinking and feeling then he had thought and felt long before. I am sure that he had already experienced, in imagination, every thrill, every keen joy, and every sudden sickening fear which the life might have in store for him. For this reason I forgave him for his rather bored manner of answering to my mood, and the more willingly because he was full of talk about a strange illusion which he had had at the restaurant. During a moment of silence, he had heard a clatter of hoof-beats in the village street. (I had heard them too. Some one rode by furiously.) Well, Drew said that he almost jumped from his seat, expecting M. Ciret to throw open the door and shout, “The British are coming!” He actually believed for a second or two that it was the year 1775, and that he was sitting in one of the old roadside inns of Massachusetts. The illusion was perfect, he said.

Now, why—etc., etc. At another time I should have been much interested; but in the presence of new and splendid realities I could not summon any enthusiasm for illusions. Nevertheless, I should have had to listen to him indefinitely, had it not been for an event which cut short all conversation and ended our first day at the *École d'Aviation* in a truly spectacular manner.

Suddenly we heard the roar of motors just over the barracks, and, at the same time, the siren sounded the alarm in a series of prolonged, wailing shrieks. Some belated pilot was still in the air. We rushed out to the field just as the flares were being lighted and placed on the ground in the shape of an immense T, with the cross-bar facing in the direction from which the wind was coming. By this time the hum of motors was heard at a great distance, but gradually it increased in volume and soon the light of the flares revealed the machine circling rapidly over the *piste*. I was so much absorbed in watching it manœuvre for a landing that I did not see the crowd scattering to safe distances. I heard many voices shouting frantic warnings, and so ran for it, but, in my excitement, directly

within the line of descent of the machine. I heard the wind screaming through the wires, a terrifying sound to the novice, and glancing hurriedly over my shoulder, I saw what appeared to be a monster of gigantic proportions, almost upon me. It passed within three metres of my head and landed just beyond.

When at last I got to sleep, after a day filled with interesting incidents, Paul Revere pursued me relentlessly through the mazes of a weird and horrible dream. I was on foot, and shod with lead-soled boots. He was in a huge, twin-motor Caudron and flying at a terrific pace, only a few metres from the ground. I can see him now, as he leaned far out over the hood of his machine, an aviator's helmet set atilt over his powdered wig, and his eyes glowing like coals through his goggles. He was waving two lighted torches and shouting, “The British are coming! The British are coming!” in a voice strangely like Drew's.

II

PENGUINS

HAVING simple civilian notions as to the amount of time necessary for dressing, Drew and I rose with the sound of the bugle on the following morning. We had promised each other that we would begin our new life in true soldier style, and so we reluctantly hurried to the wash-house, where we shaved in cold water, washed after a fashion, and then hurried back to the unheated barrack-room. We felt refreshed, morally and physically, but our heroic example seemed to make no impression upon our fellow aviators, whether French or American. Indeed, not one of them stirred until ten minutes before time for the morning *appel*, when, there was a sudden upheaval of blankets down the entire length of the room. It was as though the patients in a hospital ward had been inoculated with some wonderful, instantaneous-health-giving virus. Men were jumping into boots and trousers at the same time, and running to and from the wash-house, buttoning their shirts and drying their faces as they ran. It must have taken months of experiment to perfect the system whereby every one remained in bed until the last possible moment. They professed to be very proud of it, but it was clear that they felt more at ease when Drew and I, after a week of heroic, early-morning resolves, abandoned our daily test of courage. We are all Doctor Johnsons at heart.

It was a crisp, calm morning—an excellent day for flying. Already the mechanicians were bringing out the machines and lining them up in front of the hangars, in preparation for the morning work, which began immediately after *appel*. Drew and I had received notice that we were to begin our training at once. Solicitous fellow countrymen had warned us to take with us all our flying clothes. We were by no means to forget our goggles, and the fur-lined boots which are worn over ordinary boots as a protection against the cold. Innocently, we obeyed all instructions to the letter. The absurdity of our appearance will be appreciated only by air-men. Novices begin their training, at a Blériot monoplane school, in Penguins—low-powered machines with clipped wings, which are not capable of leaving the ground. We were dressed as we would have no occasion to be dressed until we should be making sustained flights at high altitudes. Every one, Frenchmen and Americans alike, had a good laugh at our

expense, but it was one in which we joined right willingly; and one kind-hearted *adjudant-moniteur*, in order to remove what discomfiture we may have felt, told us, through an interpreter, that he was sure we would become good air-men. The *très bon pilote* could be distinguished, in embryo, by the way he wore his goggles.

The beginners' class did not start work with the others, owing to the fact that the Penguins, driven by unaccustomed hands, covered a vast amount of ground in their rolling sorties back and forth across the field. Therefore Drew and I had leisure to watch the others, and to see in operation the entire scheme by means of which France trains her combat pilots for the front. Exclusive of the Penguin, there were seven classes, graded according to their degree of advancement. These, in their order, were the rolling class (a second-stage Penguin class, in which one still kept on the ground, but in machines of higher speed); the first flying class—short hops across the field at an altitude of two or three metres; the second flying class, where one learned to mount to from thirty to fifty metres, and to make landings without the use of the motor; *tour de piste* (A)—flights about the aerodrome in a forty-five horse-power Blériot; *tour de piste* (B)—similar flights in a fifty horse-power machine; the spiral class, and the brevet class.

Our reception committee of the day before volunteered his services as guide, and took us from one class to another, making comments upon the nature of the work of each in a bewildering combination of English and Americanized French. I understood but little of his explanation, although later I was able to appreciate his French translation of some of our breezy Americanisms. But explanation was, for the most part, unnecessary. We could see for ourselves how the prospective pilot advanced from one class to another, becoming accustomed to machines of higher and higher power, “growing his wings” very gradually, until at last he reached the spiral class, where he learned to make landings at a given spot and without the use of his motor, from an altitude of from eight hundred to one thousand metres, losing height in volplanes and serpentines. The final tests for the military brevet were two cross-country flights of from two hundred to three hundred kilometres, with landings during each flight, at three points, two short voyages of sixty kilometres each, and an hour flight at a minimum altitude of two thousand metres.

With all the activities of the school taking place at once, we were as excited as two boys seeing their first three-ring circus. We scarcely knew which way to turn in our anxiety to miss nothing. But my chief concern, in anticipation, had been

this: how were English-speaking *élèves-pilotes* to overcome the linguistic handicap? My uneasiness was set at rest on this first morning, when I saw how neatly most of the difficulties were overcome. Many of the Americans had no knowledge of French other than that which they had acquired since entering the French service, and this, as I have already hinted, had no great utilitarian value. An interpreter had been provided for them through the generosity and kindness of the Franco-American Committee in Paris; but it was impossible for him to be everywhere at once, and much was left to their own quickness of understanding and to the ingenuity of the *moniteurs*. The latter, being French, were eloquent with their gestures. With the additional aid of a few English phrases which they had acquired from the Americans, and the simplest kind of French, they had little difficulty in making their instructions clear. Both of us felt much encouraged as we listened, for we could understand them very well.

As for the business of flying, as we watched it from below, it seemed the safest and simplest thing in the world. The machines left the ground so easily, and mounted and descended with such sureness of movement, that I was impatient to begin my training. I believed that I could fly at once, after a few minutes of preliminary instruction, without first going through with all the tedious rolling along the ground in low-powered machines. But before the morning's work was finished, I revised my opinion. Accidents began to happen, the first one when one of the “old family cuckoos,” as the rolling machines were disdainfully called, showed a sudden burst of old-time speed and left the ground in an alarming manner.

It was evident that the man who was driving it, taken completely by surprise, had lost his head, and was working the controls erratically. First he swooped upward, then dived, tipping dangerously on one wing. In this sudden emergency he had quite forgotten his newly acquired knowledge. I wondered what I would do in such a strait, when one must think with the quickness and sureness of instinct. My heart was in my mouth, for I felt certain that the man would be killed. As for the others who were watching, no one appeared to be excited. A *moniteur* near me said, “Oh, là là! Il est perdu!” in a mild voice. The whole affair happened so quickly that I was not able to think myself into a similar situation before the end had come. At the last, the machine made a quick swoop downward, from a height of about fifty metres, then careened upward, tipped again, and diving sidewise, struck the ground with a sickening rending crash, the motor going at full speed. For a moment it stood, tail in air; then slowly the balance was lost, and it fell, bottom up, and lay silent.

An enterprising moving-picture company would have given a great deal of money to film that accident. It would have provided a splendid dramatic climax to a war drama of high adventure. Civilian audiences would have watched in breathless, awe-struck silence; but at a military school of aviation it was a different matter. “Oh, là là! Il est perdu!” adequately gauges the degree of emotional interest taken in the incident. At the time I was surprised at this apparent callousness, but I understood it better when I had seen scores of such accidents occur, and had watched the pilots, as in this case, crawl out from the wreckage, and walk sheepishly, and a little shaken, back to their classes. Although the machines were usually badly wrecked, the pilots were rarely severely hurt. The landing chassis of a Blériot is so strong that it will break the force of a very heavy fall, and the motor, being in front, strikes the ground first instead of pinning the pilot beneath it.

To anticipate a little, in more than four months of training at the Blériot school there was not a single fatality, although as many as eleven machines were wrecked in the course of one working day, and rarely less than two or three. There were so many accidents as to convince me that Blériot training for novices is a mistake from the economic point of view. The up-keep expense is vastly greater than in double-command biplane schools, where the student pilot not only learns to fly in a much more stable machine, but makes all his early flights in company with a *moniteur* who has his own set of controls and may immediately correct any mistakes in handling. But France is not guided by questions of expense in her training of *pilotes de chasse*, and opinion appears to be that single-command monoplane training is to be preferred for the airman who is to be a combat pilot. Certain it is that men have greater confidence in themselves when they learn to fly alone from the beginning; and the Blériot, which requires the most delicate and sensitive handling, offers excellent preliminary schooling for the Nieuport and Spad, the fast and high-powered biplanes which are the *avions de chasse* above the French lines.

A spice of interest was added to the morning's thrills when an American, not to be outdone by his French compatriot, wrecked a machine so completely that it seemed incredible that he could have escaped without serious injury. But he did, and then we witnessed the amusing spectacle of an American, who had no French at all, explaining through the interpreter just how the accident had happened. I saw his *moniteur*, who knew no English, grin in a relieved kind of way when the American crawled out from under the wreckage. The reception committee whispered to me, “This is Pourquoi, the best bawler-out we've got.

'Pourquoi?' is always his first broadside. Then he wades in and you can hear him from one end of the field to the other. *Attendez!* this is going to be rich!”

Both of them started talking at once, the *moniteur* in French and the American in English. Then they turned to the interpreter, and any one witnessing the conversation from a distance would have thought that he was the culprit. The American had left the ground with the wind behind him, a serious fault in an airman, and he knew it very well.

“Look here, Pete,” he said; “tell him I know it was my fault. Tell him I took a Steve Brody. I wanted to see if the old cuckoo had any pep in 'er. When I—”

“Pourquoi? Nom de Dieu! Qu'est-ce que je vous ai dit? Jamais faire comme ça! Jamais monter avec le vent en arrière! Jamais! Jamais!”

The others listened in hilarious silence while the interpreter turned first to one and then to the other. “Tell him I took a Steve Brody.” I wondered if he translated that literally. Steve took a chance, but it is hardly to be expected that a Frenchman would know of that daring gentleman's history. In this connection, I remember a little talk on caution which was given to us, later, by an English-speaking *moniteur*. It was after rather a serious accident, for which the spirit of Steve Brody was again responsible.

“You Americans,” he said, “when you go to the front you will get the Boche; but let me tell you, they will kill many of you. Not one or two; very many.”

Accidents delayed the work of flying scarcely at all. As soon as a machine was wrecked, Annamites appeared on the spot to clear away the débris and take it to the repair-shops, where the usable portions were quickly sorted out. We followed one of these processions in, and spent an hour watching the work of this other department of aviation upon which our own was so entirely dependent. Here machines were being built as well as repaired. The air vibrated with the hum of machinery, with the clang of hammers upon anvils and the roar of motors in process of being tested.

There was a small army of women doing work of many kinds. They were quite apt at it, particularly in the department where the fine strong linen cloth which covers the wings was being sewn together and stretched over the framework. There were great husky peasant-women doing the hardest kind of manual labor. In these latter days of the great world-war, women are doing everything, surely, with the one exception of fighting. It is not a pleasant thing to

see them, however strong they may be, doing the rough, coarse work of men, bearing great burdens on their backs as though they were oxen. There must be many now whose muscles are as hard and whose hands as horny as those of a stevedore. Several months after this time, when we were transferred to another school of aviation, one of the largest in Europe, we saw women employed on a much larger scale. They lived in barracks which were no better than our own,—not so good, in fact,—and roughed it like common soldiers.

Toward evening the wind freshened and flying was brought to a halt. Then the Penguins were brought from their hangars, and Drew and I, properly dressed this time, and accompanied by some of the Americans, went out to the field for our first sortie. As is usual on such occasions, there was no dearth of advice. Every graduate of the Penguin class had a method of his own for keeping that unmanageable bird traveling in a direct line, and every one was only too willing to give us the benefit of his experience. Finally, out of the welter of suggestions, one or two points became clear: it was important that one should give the machine full gas, and get the tail off the ground. Then, by skillful handling of the rudder, it might be kept traveling in the same general direction. But if, as usually happened, it showed willful tendencies, and started to turn within its own length, it was necessary to cut the contact, to prevent it from whirling so rapidly as to overturn.

Never have I seen a stranger sight than that of a swarm of Penguins at work. They looked like a brood of prehistoric birds of enormous size, with wings too short for flight. Most unwieldy birds they were, driven by, or more accurately, driving beginners in the art of flying; but they ran along the ground at an amazing speed, zigzagged this way and that, and whirled about as if trying to catch their own tails. As we stood watching them, an accident occurred which would have been laughable had we not been too nervous to enjoy it. In a distant part of the field two machines were rushing wildly about. There were acres of room in which they might pass, but after a moment of uncertainty, they rushed headlong for each other as though driven by the hand of fate, and met head-on, with a great rending of propellers. The onlookers along the side of the field howled and pounded each other in an ecstasy of delight, but Drew and I walked apart for a hasty consultation, for it was our turn next. We kept rehearsing the points which we were to remember in driving a Penguin: full gas and tail up at once. Through the interpreter, our *moniteur* explained very carefully what we were to do, and mounted the step, to show us, in turn, the proper handling of the gas *manet* and of the *coupe-contact* button. Then he stepped down and shouted,

“Allez! en route!” with a smile meant to be reassuring.

I buckled myself in, fastened my helmet, and nodded to my mechanic.

“Coupe, plein gaz,” he said.

“Coupe, plein gaz,” I repeated.

He gave the propeller a few spins to suck in the mixture.

“Contact, reduisez.”

“Contact, reduisez.”

Again he spun the propeller, and the motor took. I pulled back my *manet*, full gas, and off I went at what seemed to me then breakneck speed. Remembering instructions, I pushed forward on the lever which governs the elevating planes, and up went my tail so quickly and at such an angle that almost instinctively I cut off my contact. Down dropped my tail again, and I whirled round in a circle —my first *cheval de bois*, as this absurd-looking manœuvre is called. I had forgotten that I had a rudder. I was like a man learning to swim, and could not yet coördinate the movements of my hands and feet. My bird was purring gently, with the propeller turning slowly. It seemed thoroughly domesticated, but I knew that I had but to pull back on that *manet* to transform it into a rampant bird of prey. Before starting again I looked about me, and there was Drew racing all over the field. Suddenly he started in my direction as if the whole force of his will was turned to the business of running me down. Luckily he shut off his motor, and by the grace of the law of inertia came to a halt when he was within a dozen paces of me.

We turned our machines tail to tail and started off in opposite directions, but in a moment I was following hard after him. Almost it seemed that those evil birds had wills of their own. Drew's turned as though it were angry at the indignity of being pursued. We missed each other, but it was a near thing, and, not being able to think fast enough, I stalled my motor, and had to await helplessly the assistance of a mechanic. Far away, at our starting-point, I could see the Americans waving their arms and embracing each other in huge delight, and then I realized why they had all been so eager to come with us to the field. They had been through all this. Now they were having their innings. I could hear them shouting, although their voices sounded very thin and faint. “Why don't you come back?” they yelled. “This way! Here we are! Here's your class!” They

were having the time of their vindictive lives, and knew very well that we would go back if we could.

Finally we began to get the hang of it, and we did go back, although by circuitous routes. But we got there, and the *moniteur* explained again what we were to do. We were to anticipate the turn of the machine with the rudder, just as in sailing a boat. Then we understood the difficulty. In my next sortie, I fixed my eye upon the flag at the opposite side of the field, and reached it without a single *cheval de bois*. I could have kissed the Annamite who was stationed there to turn the machines which rarely came. I had mastered the Penguin! I had forced my will upon it, compelled it to do my bidding! Back across the field I went, keeping a direct course, and thinking how they were all watching, the *moniteur*, doubtless, making approving comments. I reduced the gas at the proper time, and taxied triumphantly up to the starting-point.

But no one had seen my splendid sortie. Now that I had arrived, no one paid the least attention to me. All eyes were turned upward, and following them with my own, I saw an airplane outlined against a heaped-up pile of snow-white cloud. It was moving at tremendous speed, when suddenly it darted straight upward, wavered for a second or two, turned slowly on one wing and fell, nose-down, turning round and round as it fell, like a scrap of paper. It was the *vrille*, the prettiest piece of aerial acrobatics that one could wish to see. It was a wonderful, an incredible sight. Only seven years ago Blériot crossed the English Channel, and a year earlier the world was astonished at the exploits of the Wright brothers, who were making flights, straight-line flights, of from fifteen to twenty minutes' duration!

Some one was counting the turns of the *vrille*. Six, seven, eight; then the airman came out of it on an even keel, and, nosing down to gather speed, looped twice in quick succession. Afterward he did the *retournement*, turning completely over in the air and going back in the opposite direction; then spiraled down and passed over our heads at about fifty metres, landing at the opposite side of the field so beautifully that it was impossible to know when the machine touched the ground. The airman taxied back to the hangars and stopped just in front of us, while we gathered round to hear the latest news from the front.

For he had left the front, this birdman, only an hour before! I was incredulous at first, for I still thought of distances in the old way. But I was soon convinced. Mounted on the hood was the competent-looking Vickers machine gun, with a long belt of cartridges in place, and on the side of the *fuselage* were painted the

insignia of an escadrille.

The pilot was recognized as soon as he removed his helmet and goggles. He had been a *moniteur* at the school in former days, and was well known to some of the older Americans. He greeted us all very cordially, in excellent English, and told us how, on the strength of a hard morning's work over the lines, he had asked his captain for an afternoon off that he might visit his old friends at B ——.

As soon as he had climbed down, those of us who had never before seen this latest type of French *avion de chasse*, crowded round, examining and admiring with feelings of awe and reverence. It was a marvelous piece of aero-craftsmanship, the result of more than two years of accumulating experience in military aviation. It was hard to think of it as an inanimate thing, once having seen it in the air. It seemed living, intelligent, almost human. I could readily understand how it is that airmen become attached to their machines and speak of their fine points, their little peculiarities of individuality, with a kind of loving interest, as one might speak of a fine-spirited horse.

While the mechanicians were grooming this one, and replenishing the fuel-tanks, Drew and I examined it line by line, talking in low tones which seemed fitting in so splendid a presence. We climbed the step and looked down into the compact little car, where the pilot sat in a luxuriously upholstered seat. There were his compass, his *altimétre*, his revolution-counter, his map in its roller case, with a course pricked out on it in a red line. Attached to the machine gun, there was an ingenious contrivance by means of which he fired it while still keeping a steady hand on his controls. The gun itself was fired directly through the propeller by means of a device which timed the shots. The necessity for accuracy in this timing device is clear, when one remembers that the propeller turns over at a normal rate of between fifteen hundred and nineteen hundred revolutions per minute.

It was with a chastened spirit that I looked from this splendid fighting 'plane, back to my little three-cylinder Penguin, with its absurd clipped wings and its impudent tail. A moment ago it had seemed a thing of speed, and the mastery of it a glorious achievement. I told Drew what my feeling was as I came racing back to the starting-point, and how brief my moment of triumph had been. He answered me at first in grunts and nods, so that I knew he was not listening. Presently he began to talk about romance again, the “romance of high adventure,” as he called it. “All this”—moving his arm in a wide gesture—was

but an evidence of man's unconquerable craving for romance. War itself was a manifestation of it, gave it scope, relieved the pent-up longings for it which could not find sufficient outlet in times of peace. Romance would always be one of the minor, and sometimes one of the major causes for war, indirectly of course, but none the less really; for the craving for it was one reason why millions of men so readily accepted war at the hands of the little groups of diplomats who ruled their destinies.

Half an hour later, as we stood watching the little biplane again climbing into the evening sky, I understood, in a way, what he was driving at, and with what keen anticipation he was looking forward to the time when we too would know all that there was to know of the joy of flight. Higher and higher it mounted, now and then catching the sun on its silver wings in a flash of light, growing smaller and smaller, until it vanished in a golden haze, far to the north. It was then four o'clock. In an hour's time the pilot would be circling down over his aerodrome on the Champagne front.

III

BY THE ROUTE OF THE AIR

THE winter of 1916-17 was the most prolonged and bitter that France has known in many years. It was a trying period to the little group of Americans assembled at the École Militaire d'Aviation, eager as they were to complete their training, and to be ready, when spring should come, to share in the great offensive, which they knew would then take place on the Western front. Aviation is a waiting game at the best of seasons. In winter it is a series of seemingly endless delays. Day after day, the plain on the high plateau overlooking the old city of V—— was storm-swept, a forlorn and desolate place as we looked at it from our windows, watching the flocks of crows as they beat up against the wind, or as they turned, and were swept with it, over our barracks, crying and calling derisively to us as they passed.

“Birdmen do you call yourselves?” they seemed to say. “Then come on up; the weather's fine!”

Well they knew that we were impostors, fair-weather fliers, who dared not accept their challenge.

It is strange how vague and shadowy my remembrance is of those long weeks of inactivity, when we were dependent for employment and amusement on our own devices. To me there was a quality of unreality about our life at B——. Our environment was, no doubt, partly responsible for this feeling. Although we were not far distant from Paris,—less than an hour by train,—the country round about our camp seemed to be quite cut off from the rest of the world. With the exception of our Sunday afternoons of leave, when we joined the *boulevardiers* in town, we lived a life as remote and cloistered as that of some brotherhood of monks in an inaccessible monastery. That is how it appeared to me, although here again I am in danger of making it seem that my own impressions were those of all the others. This of course was not true. The spirit of the place appealed to us, individually, in widely different ways, and upon some, perhaps, it had no effect at all.

Sometimes we spent our winter afternoons of enforced leisure in long walks

through country roads which lay empty to the eye for miles. They gave one a sense of loneliness which colored thought, not in any sentimental way, but in a manner very natural and real. The war was always in the background of one's musings, and while we were far removed from actual contact with it, every depopulated country village brought to mind the sacrifice which France has made for the cause of all freedom-loving nations. Every roadside café, long barren of its old patronage, was an evidence of the completeness of the sacrifice. Americans, for the most part, are of an unconquerably healthy cast of mind; but there were few of us who could frequent these places light-heartedly.

Paris was our emotional storehouse, to use Kipling's term, during the time we were at B——. We spent our Sunday afternoons there, mingling with the crowds on the boulevards, or, in pleasant weather, sitting outside the cafés, watching the soldiers of the world go by. The streets were filled with *permissionnaires* from all parts of the Western front, and there were many of those despised of all the rest, the *embusqués*, as they are called, who hold the comfortable billets in safe places well back of the lines. It was very easy to distinguish them from the men newly arrived from the trenches, in whose eyes one saw the look of wonder, almost of unbelief, that there was still a goodly world to be enjoyed. It was often beyond the pathetic to see them trying to satisfy their need for all the wholesome things of life in a brief seven days of leave; to see the family parties at the modest restaurants on the side streets, making merry in a kind of forced way, as if every one were thinking of the brevity of the time for such enjoyment.

Scarcely a week went by without bringing one or two additional recruits to the Franco-American Corps. We wondered why they came so slowly. There must have been thousands of Americans who would have been, not only willing, but glad to join us; and yet the opportunities for doing so had been made widely known. For those who did come this was the legitimate by-product of glorious adventure and a training in aviation not to be surpassed in Europe. This was to be had by any healthy young American, almost for the asking; but our numbers increased very gradually, from fifteen to twenty-five, until by the spring of 1917 there were fifty of us at the various aviation schools of France. Territorially we represented at least a dozen states, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. There were rich men's sons and poor men's sons among our number; the sons of very old families, and those who neither knew nor cared what their antecedents were.

The same was true of our French comrades, for membership in the French air service is not based upon wealth or family position or political influence. The policy of the Government is as broad and democratic as may be. Men are chosen

because of an aptitude that promises well, or as a reward for distinguished service at the front. A few of the French *élèves-pilotes* had been officers, but most of them N.C.O.'s and private soldiers in infantry or artillery regiments. This very wide latitude in choice at first seemed “laxitude” to some of us Americans. But evidently, experience in training war pilots, and the practical results obtained by these men at the front, have been proof enough to the French authorities of the folly of setting rigid standards, making hard-and-fast rules to be met by prospective aviators. As our own experience increased, we saw the wisdom of a policy which is more concerned with a man's courage, his self-reliance, and his powers of initiative, than with his ability to work out theoretical problems in aerodynamics.

There are many French pilots with excellent records of achievement in war-flying who have but a sketchy knowledge of motor and aircraft construction. Some are college-bred men, but many more have only a common-school education. It is not at all strange that this should be the case, for one may have had no technical training worth mentioning; one may have only a casual speaking acquaintance with motors, and a very imperfect idea of why and how one is able to defy the law of gravity, and yet prove his worth as a pilot in what is, after all, the best possible way—by his record at the front.

A judicious amount of theoretical instruction is, of course, not wanting in the aviation schools of France; but its importance is not exaggerated. We Americans, with our imperfect knowledge of the language, lost the greater part of this. The handicap was not a serious one, and I think I may truthfully say that we kept pace with our French comrades. The most important thing was to gain actual flying experience, and as much of it as possible. Only in this way can one acquire a sensitive ear for motors, and an accurate sense of flying speed: the feel of one's machine in the air. These are of the greatest importance. Once the pilot has developed this airman's sixth sense, he need not, and never does, worry about the scantiness of his knowledge of the theory of flight.

Sometimes the winds would die away and the thick clouds lift, and we would go joyously to work on a morning of crisp, bright winter weather. Then we had moments of glorious revenge upon the crows. They would watch us from afar, holding noisy indignation meetings in a row of weather-beaten trees at the far side of the field. And when some inexperienced pilot lost control of his machine and came crashing to earth, they would take the air in a body, circling over the wreckage, cawing and jeering with the most evident delight. “The Oriental Wrecking Company,” as the Annamites were called, were on the scene almost as

quickly as our enemies the crows. They were a familiar sight on every working day, chattering together in their high-pitched gutturals, as they hauled away the wrecked machines. They appeared to side with the birds, and must have thought us the most absurd of men, making wings for ourselves, and always coming to grief when we tried to use them.

We made progress regardless of all this skepticism. It was necessarily slow, for beginners at a single-command monoplane school are permitted to fly only under the most favorable weather conditions. Even then, old Mother Earth, who is not kindly disposed toward those of her children who leave her so jauntily, would clutch us back to her bosom, whenever we gave her the slightest opportunity, with an embrace that was anything but tender. We were inclined to think rather highly of our own courage in defying her; and sometimes our vanity was increased by our *moniteurs*. After an exciting misadventure they often gave expression to their relief at finding an amateur pilot still whole, by praising his "presence of mind" in too generous French fashion.

We should not have been so proud, I think, of our own little exploits, had we remembered those of the pioneers in aviation, so many of whom lost their lives in experiment with the first crude types of the heavier-than-air machines. They were pioneers in the fine and splendid meaning of the word—men to be compared in spirit with the old fifteenth-century navigators. We were but followers, adventuring, in comparative safety, along a well-defined trail.

This, at any rate, was Drew's opinion. He would never allow me the pleasure of indulging in any flights of fancy over these trivial adventures of ours. He would never let me set them off against "the heroic background" of Paris. As for Paris, we saw nothing of war there, he would say, except the lighter side, the homecoming, leave-enjoying side. We needed to know more of the horror and the tragedy of it. We needed to keep that close and intimate to us as a right perspective for our future adventures. He believed it to be our duty as aviators to anticipate every kind of experience which we might have to meet at the front. His imagination was abnormally vivid. Once he discussed the possibility of "falling in flames," which is so often the end of an airman's career. I shall never again be able to take the same whole-hearted delight in flying that I did before he was so horribly eloquent upon the subject. He often speculated upon one's emotions in falling in a machine damaged beyond the possibility of control.

"Now try to imagine it," he would say: "your gasoline tanks have been punctured and half of your *fuselage* has been shot away. You believe that there is

not the slightest chance for you to save your life. What are you going to do—lose your head and give up the game? No, you've got to attempt the impossible”; and so on, and so forth.

I would accuse him of being morbid. Furthermore, I saw no reason why we should plan for terrible emergencies which might never arrive. His answer was that we were military pilots in training for combat machines. We had no right to ignore the grimness of the business ahead of us. If we did, so much the worse for us when we should go to the front. But beyond this practical interest, he had a great curiosity about the nature of fear, and a great dread of it, too. He was afraid that in some last adventure, in which death came slowly enough for him to recognize it, he might die like a terror-stricken animal, and not bravely, as a man should.

We did not often discuss these gruesome possibilities, although this was not Drew's fault. I would not listen to him; and so he would be silent about them until convinced that the furtherance of our careers as airmen demanded additional unpleasant imaginings. There was something of the Hindoo fanatic in him; or perhaps it was the outcropping of the stern spirit of his New England forbears. But when he talked of the pleasant side of the adventures before us, it was more than compensation for all the rest. Then he would make me restless and impatient, for I did not have his faculty of enjoyment in anticipation. The early period of training, when we were flying only a few metres above the ground, seemed endless.

At last came the event which really marked the beginning of our careers as airmen: the first *tour de piste*, the first flight round the aerodrome. We had talked of this for weeks, but when at last the day for it came, our enthusiasm had waned. We were eager to try our wings and yet afraid to make the start.

This first *tour de piste* was always the occasion for a gathering of the Americans, and there was the usual assembly present. The beginners were there to shiver in anticipation of their own forthcoming trials, and the more advanced pilots, who had already taken the leap, to offer gratuitous advice.

“Now don't try to pull any big league stuff. Not too much rudder on the turns. Remember how that Frenchman piled up on the Farman hangars when he tried to bank the corners.”

“You'll find it pretty rotten when you go over the woods. The air currents there are something scandalous!”

“Believe me, it's a lot worse over the fort. Rough? Oh, là là!”

“And that's where you have to cut your motor and dive, if you're going to make a landing without hanging up in the telephone wires.”

“When you do come down, don't be afraid to stick her nose forward. Scare the life out of you, that drop will, but you may as well get used to it in the beginning.”

“But wait till we see them redress! Where's the Oriental Wrecking Gang?”

“Don't let that worry you, Drew: pan-caking isn't too bad. Not in a Blériot. Just like falling through a shingle roof. Can't hurt yourself much.”

“If you do spill, make it a good one. There hasn't been a decent smash-up to-day.”

These were the usual comforting assurances. They did not frighten us much, although there was just enough truth in the warnings to make us uneasy. We took our hazing as well as we could inwardly, and of course with imperturbable calm outwardly; but, to make a confession, I was somewhat reluctant to hear the businesslike “Allez! en route!” of our *moniteur*.

When it came, I taxied across to the other side of the field, turned into the wind, and came racing back, full motor. It seemed a thing of tremendous power, that little forty-five-horsepower Anzani. The roar of it struck awe into my soul, and I gripped the controls in no very professional manner. Then, when I had gathered full ground speed, I eased her off gently, and up we went, over the class and the assembled visitors, above the hangars, the lake, the forest, until, at the halfway point, my altimetre registered three hundred and fifty metres. Out of the corner of my eye I saw all the beautiful countryside spread out beneath me, but I was too busily occupied to take in the prospect. I was watching my wings, nervously, in order to anticipate and counteract the slightest pitch of the machine. But nothing happened, and I soon realized that this first grand tour was not going to be nearly so bad as we had been led to believe. I began to enjoy it. I even looked down over the side of the *fuselage*, although it was a very hasty glance.

All the time I was thinking of the rapidly approaching moment when I should have to come down. I knew well enough how the descent was to be made. It was very simple. I had only to shut off my motor, push forward with my “broom-stick,”—the control connected with the elevating planes,—and then wait and redress gradually, beginning at from six to eight metres from the ground. The descent would be exciting, a little more rapid than Shooting the Chutes. Only one could not safely hold on to the sides of the car and await the splash. That sort of thing had sometimes been done in aeroplanes, by over-excited pilots. The results were disastrous, without exception.

The moment for the decision came. I was above the fort, otherwise I should not have known when to dive. At first the sensation was, I imagine, exactly that of falling, feet foremost; but after pulling back slightly on the controls, I felt the machine answer to them, and the uncomfortable feeling passed. I brought up on the ground in the usual bumpy manner of the beginner. Nothing gave way, however, so this did not spoil the fine rapture of a rare moment. It was shared—at least it was pleasant to think so—by my old Annamite friend of the Penguin experience, who stood by his flag nodding his head at me. He said, “Beaucoup

bon," showing his polished black teeth in an approving grin. I forgot for the moment that "beaucoup bon" was his enigmatical comment upon all occasions, and that he would have grinned just as broadly had he been dragging me out from a mass of wreckage.

Drew came in a few moments later, making an almost perfect landing. In the evening we walked to a neighboring village, where we had a wonderful dinner to celebrate the end of our apprenticeship. It was a curious feast. We had little to say to one another, or, better, we were both afraid to talk. We were under an enchantment which words would have broken. After a silent meal, we walked all the way home without speaking.

We started off together on our triangles. That was in April, just passed, so that I have now brought this casual diary almost up to date. We were then at the great school of aviation at A—— in central France, where, for the first time, we were associated with men in training for every branch of aviation service, and became familiar with other types of French machines. But the brevet tests, which every pilot must pass before he becomes a military aviator, were the same in every department of the school. The triangles were two cross-country flights of two hundred kilometres each, three landings to be made *en route*, and each flight to be completed within forty-eight hours. In addition, there were two short voyages of sixty kilometres each—these preceded the triangular tests—and an hour of flight at a minimum altitude of sixty-five hundred feet.

The short voyages gave us a delightful foretaste of what was to come. We did them both one afternoon, and were at the hangars at five o'clock on the following morning, ready to make an early start. A fresh wind was blowing from the northeast, but the brevet *moniteur*, who went up for a short flight to try the air, came back with the information that it was quite calm at twenty-five hundred feet. We might start, he said, as soon as we liked.

Drew, in his joy, embraced the old woman who kept a coffee-stall at the hangars, while I danced a one-step with a mechanician. Neither of them was surprised at this procedure. They were accustomed to such emotional outbursts on the part of aviators who, by the very nature of their calling, were always in the depths of despair or on the farthest jutting peak of some mountain of delight. Our departure had been delayed, day after day, for more than a week, because of the weather. We were so eager to start that we would willingly have gone off in a blizzard.

During the week of waiting we had studied our map until we knew the location of every important road and railroad, every forest, river, canal, and creek within a radius of one hundred kilometres. We studied it at close range, on a table, and then on the floor, with the compass-points properly orientated, so that we might see all the important landmarks with the birdman's eye. We knew our course so well, that there seemed no possibility of our losing direction.

Our military papers had been given us several days before. Among these was an official-looking document to be presented to the mayor of any town or village near which we might be compelled to land. It contained an extract from the law concerning aviators, and the duty toward them of the civilian and military authorities. In another was an itemized list of the amounts which might be exacted by farmers for damage to growing crops: so much for an *atterrissage* in a field of sugar-beets, so much for wheat, etc. Besides these, we had a book of detailed instructions as to our duty in case of emergencies of every conceivable kind—among others, the course of action to be followed if we should be compelled to land in an enemy country. At first sight this seemed an unnecessary precaution; but we remembered the experience of one of our French comrades at B——, who started confidently off on his first cross-country flight. He lost his way and did not realize how far astray he had gone until he found himself under fire from German anti-aircraft batteries on the Belgian front.

The most interesting paper of all was our *Ordre de Service*, the text of which was as follows:

It is commanded that the bearer of this Order report himself at the cities of C—— and R——, by the route of the air, flying an avion Caudron, and leaving the École Militaire d'Aviation at A—— on the 21st of April, 1917, without passenger on board.

Signed, Le Capitaine B——
Commandant de l'École.

We read this with feelings which must have been nearly akin to those of Columbus on a memorable day in 1492 when he received his clearance papers from Cadiz. “By the route of the air!” How the imagination lingered over that phrase! We had the better of Columbus there, although we had to admit that there was more glamour in the hazard of his adventure and the uncertainty of his destination.

Drew was ready first. I helped him into his fur-lined combination and strapped him to his seat. A moment later he was off. I watched him as he gathered height over the aerodrome. Then, finding that his motor was running satisfactorily, he

struck out in an easterly direction, his machine growing smaller and smaller until it vanished in the early morning haze. I followed immediately afterward, and had a busy ten minutes, being buffeted this way and that, until, as the brevet *moniteur* had foretold, I reached quiet air at twenty-five hundred feet.

This was my first experience in passing from one air current to another. It was a unique one, for I was still a little incredulous. I had not entirely lost my old boyhood belief that the wind went all the way up.

I passed over the old cathedral town of B—— at fifteen hundred metres. Many a pleasant afternoon had we spent there, walking through its narrow, crooked streets, or lounging on the banks of the canal. The cathedral too was a favorite haunt. I loved the fine spaciousness of it. Looking down on it now, it seemed no larger than a toy cathedral in a toy town, such as one sees in the shops of Paris. The streets were empty, for it was not yet seven o'clock. Strips of shadow crossed them where taller roofs cut off the sunshine. A toy train, which I could have put nicely into my fountain-pen case, was pulling into a station no larger than a wren's house. The Greeks called their gods “derisive.” No doubt they realized how small they looked to them, and how insignificant this little world of affairs must have appeared from high Olympus.

There was a road, a fine straight thoroughfare converging from the left. It led almost due southwest. This was my route to C——. I followed it, climbing steadily until I was at two thousand metres. I had never flown so high before. “Over a mile!” I thought. It seemed a tremendous altitude. I could see scores of villages and fine old châteaux, and great stretches of forest, and miles upon miles of open country in checkered patterns, just beginning to show the first fresh green of the early spring crops. It looked like a world planned and laid out by the best of Santa Clauses for the eternal delight of all good children. And for untold generations only the birds have had the privilege of seeing and enjoying it from the wing. Small wonder that they sing. As for non-musical birds—well, they all sing after a fashion, and there is no doubt that crows, at least, are extremely jealous of their prerogative of flight.

My biplane was flying itself. I had nothing to do other than to give occasional attention to the revolution counter, altimetre, and speed-dial. The motor was running with perfect regularity. The propeller was turning over at twelve hundred revolutions per minute without the slightest fluctuation. Flying is the simplest thing in the world, I thought. Why doesn't every one travel by route of the air? If people knew the joy of it, the exhilaration of it, aviation schools would

be overwhelmed with applicants. Biplanes of the Farman and Voisin type would make excellent family cars, quite safe for women to drive. Mothers, busy with household affairs, could tell their children to “run out and fly” a Caudron such as I was driving, and feel not the slightest anxiety about them. I remembered an imaginative drawing I had once seen of aerial activity in 1950. Even house pets were granted the privilege of traveling by the air route. The artist was not far wrong except in his date. He should have put it at 1925. On a fine April morning there seemed no limit to the realization of such interesting possibilities.

I had no more than started on my southwest course, as it seemed to me, when I saw the spires and the red-roofed houses of C——, and, a kilometre or so from the outskirts, the barracks and hangars of the aviation school where I was to make the first landing. I reduced the gas, and, with the motor purring gently, began a long, gradual descent. It was interesting to watch the change in the appearance of the country beneath me as I lost height. Checkerboard patterns of brown and green grew larger and larger. Shining threads of silver became rivers and canals, tiny green shrubs became trees, individual aspects of houses emerged. Soon I could see people going about the streets and laundry-maids hanging out the family washing in the back gardens. I even came low enough to witness a minor household tragedy—a mother vigorously spanking a small boy. Hearing the whir of my motor, she stopped in the midst of the process, whereupon the youngster very naturally took advantage of his opportunity to cut and run for it. Drew doubted my veracity when I told him about this. He called me an aerial eavesdropper and said that I ought to be ashamed to go buzzing over towns at such low altitudes, frightening housemaids, disorganizing domestic penal institutions, and generally disturbing the privacy of respectable French citizens. But I was unrepentant, for I knew that one small boy in France was thinking of me with joy. To have escaped maternal justice with the assistance of an aviator would be an event of glorious memory to him. How vastly more worth while such a method of escape, and how jubilant Tom Sawyer would have been over such an opportunity when his horrified warning, “Look behind you, aunt!” had lost efficacy.

Drew had been waiting a quarter of an hour, and came rushing out to meet me as I taxied across the field. We shook hands as though we had not seen each other for years. We could not have been more surprised and delighted if we had met on another planet after long and hopeless wanderings in space.

While I superintended the replenishing of my fuel and oil tanks he walked excitedly up and down in front of the hangars. He was an odd-looking sight in

his flying clothes, with a pair of Meyrowitz goggles set back on his head, like another set of eyes, gazing at the sky with an air of wide astonishment. He paid no attention to my critical comments, but started thinking aloud as soon as I rejoined him.

“It was lonely! Yes, by Jove! that was it. A glorious thing, one's isolation up there; but it was too profound to be pleasant. A relief to get down again, to hear people talk, to feel the solid earth under one's feet. How did it impress you?”

This was like Drew. I felt ashamed of the lightness of my own thoughts, but I had to tell him of my speculations upon after-the-war developments in aviation: nurses flying Voisins, with the cars filled with babies; old men having after-dinner naps in twenty-three-metre Nieuports, fitted, for safety, with Sperry gyroscopes; family parties taking comfortable outings in gigantic biplanes of the R-6 type; mothers, as of old, gazing apprehensively at speed-dials, cautioning fathers about “driving too fast,” and all of the rest.

Drew looked at me reprovingly, to be sure, but he felt the need, just as I did, of an outlet to his feelings, and so he turned to this kind of comic relief with the most delightful reluctance. He quickly lost his reserve, and in the imaginative spree which followed we went far beyond the last outposts of absurdity. We laughed over our own wit until our faces were tired. However, I will not be explicit about our folly. It might not be so amusing from a critical point of view.

After our papers have been viséed at the office of the commandant, we hurried back to our machines, eager to be away again. We were to make our second landing at R——. It was about seventy kilometres distant and almost due north. The mere name of the town was an invitation. Somewhere, in one of the novels of William J. Locke, may be found this bit of dialogue:—

“But, master,” said I, “there is, after all, color in words. Don't you remember how delighted you were with the name of a little town we passed through on the way to Orleans? R——? You were haunted by it and said it was like the purple note of an organ.”

We were haunted by it, too, for we were going to that very town. We would see it long before our arrival—a cluster of quaint old houses lying in the midst of pleasant fields, with roads curving toward it from the north and south, as though they were glad to pass through so delightful a place. Drew was for taking a leisurely route to the eastward, so that we might look at some villages which lay some distance off our course. I wanted to fly by compass in a direct line, without

following my map very closely. We had planned to fly together, and were the more eager to do this because of an argument we had had about the relative speed of our machines. He was certain that his was the faster. I knew that, with mine, I could fly circles around him. As we were not able to agree on the course, we decided to postpone the race until we started on the homeward journey. Therefore, after we had passed over the town, he waved his hand, bent off to the northeast, and was soon out of sight.

I kept straight on, climbing steadily, until I was again at five thousand feet. As before, my motor was running perfectly and I had plenty of leisure to enjoy the always new sensation of flight and to watch the wide expanse of magnificent country as it moved slowly past. I let my mind lie fallow, and every now and then I would find it hauling out fragments of old memories which I had forgotten that I possessed.

I recalled, for the first time in many years, my earliest interpretations of the meanings of all the phenomena of the heavens. Two old janitor saints had charge of the floor of the skies. One of them was a jolly old man who liked boys, and always kept the sky swept clean and blue. The other took a sour delight in shirking his duties, so that it might rain and spoil all our fun. Perhaps it was Drew's sense of loneliness and helplessness so far from earth, which made me think of winds and clouds in friendly human terms. However that may be, these reveries, hardly worthy of a military airman, were abruptly broken into.

All at once, I realized that, while my biplane was headed due north, I was drifting north and west. This seemed strange. I puzzled over it for some time, and then, brilliantly, in the manner of the novice, deduced the reason: wind. I was being blown off my course, all the while comfortably certain that I was flying in a direct line toward R——. Our *moniteurs* had often cautioned us against being comfortably certain about anything while in the air. It was our duty to be uncomfortably alert. Wind! I wonder how many times we had been told to keep it in mind at all times, whether on the ground or in the air? And here was I forgetting the existence of wind on the very first occasion. The speed of my machine and the current of air from the propeller had deceived me into thinking that I was driving dead into whatever breeze there was at that altitude. I discovered that it was blowing out of the east, therefore I headed a quarter into it, to overcome the drift, and looked for landmarks.

I had not long to search. Wisps of mist obstructed the view, and within ten minutes a bank of solid cloud cut it off completely. I had only a vague notion of

my location with reference to my course, but I could not persuade myself to come down just then. To be flying in the full splendor of bright April sunshine, knowing that all the earth was in shadow, gave me a feeling of exhilaration. For there is no sensation like that of flight, no isolation so complete as that of the airman who has above him only the blue sky, and below, a level floor of pure white cloud, stretching in an unbroken expanse toward every horizon. And so I kept my machine headed northeast, that I might regain the ground lost before I discovered the drift northwest. I had made a rough calculation of the time required to cover the seventy kilometres to R—— at the speed at which I was traveling. The rest I left to Chance, the godfather of all adventurers.

He took the initiative, as he so frequently does with aviators who, in moments of calm weather, are inclined to forget that they are still children of earth. The floor of dazzling white cloud was broken and tumbled into heaped-up masses which came drifting by at various altitudes. They were scattered at first and offered splendid opportunities for aerial steeplechasing. Then, almost before I was aware of it, they surrounded me on all sides. For a few minutes I avoided them by flying in curves and circles in rapidly vanishing pools of blue sky. I feared to take my first plunge into a cloud, for I knew, by report, what an alarming experience it is to the new pilot.

The wind was no longer blowing steadily out of the east. It came in gusts from all points of the compass. I made a hasty revision of my opinion as to the calm and tranquil joys of aviation, thinking what fools men are who willingly leave the good green earth and trust themselves to all the winds of heaven in a frail box of cloth-covered sticks.

The last clear space grew smaller and smaller. I searched for an outlet, but the clouds closed in and in a moment I was hopelessly lost in a blanket of cold drenching mist.

I could hardly see the outlines of my machine and had no idea of my position with reference to the earth. In the excitement of this new adventure I forgot the speed-dial, and it was not until I heard the air screaming through the wires that I remembered it. The indicator had leaped up fifty kilometres an hour above safety speed, and I realized that I must be traveling earthward at a terrific pace. The manner of the descent became clear at the same moment. As I rolled out of the cloud-bank, I saw the earth jauntily tilted up on one rim, looking like a gigantic enlargement of a page out of Peter Newell's “Slant Book.” I expected to see dogs and dishpans, baby carriages and ash-barrels roll out of every house in France,

and go clattering off into space.

IV

AT G. D. E.

SOMEWHERE to the north of Paris, in the *zone des armées*, there is a village, known to all aviators in the French service as G. D. E. It is the village through which pilots who have completed their training at the aviation schools pass on their way to the front; and it is here that I again take up this journal of aerial adventure.

We are in lodgings, Drew and I, at the Hôtel de la Bonne Rencontre, which belies its name in the most villainous fashion. An inn at Rochester in the days of Henry the Fourth must have been a fair match for it, and yet there is something to commend it other than its convenience to the flying field. Since the early days of the Escadrille Lafayette, many Americans have lodged here while awaiting their orders for active service. As I write, J. B. is asleep in a bed which has done service for a long line of them. It is for this reason that he chose it, in preference to one in a much better state of repair which he might have had. And he has made plans for its purchase after the war. Madame Rodel is to keep careful record of all its American occupants, just as she has done in the past. She is pledged not to repair it beyond the bare necessity which its uses as a bed may require, an injunction which it was hardly necessary to lay upon her, judging by the other furniture in our apartment. Drew is not sentimental, but he sometimes carries sentiment to extremities which appear to me absurd.

When I attempt to define, even to myself, the charm of our adventures thus far, I find it impossible. How, then, make it real to others? To tell of aerial adventure one needs a new language, or, at least, a parcel of new adjectives, sparkling with bright and vivid meaning, as crisp and fresh as just-minted bank-notes. They should have no taint of flatness or insipidity. They should show not the faintest trace of wear. With them, one might hope, now and then, to startle the imagination, to set it running in channels which are strange and delightful to it. For there is something new under the sun: aerial adventure; and the most lively and unjaded fancy may, at first, need direction toward the realization of this fact. Soon it will have a literature of its own, of prose and poetry, of fiction, biography, memoirs, of history which will read like the romance it really is. The

essayists will turn to it with joy. And the poets will discover new aspects of beauty which have been hidden from them through the ages; and as men's experience “in the wide fields of air” increases, epic material which will tax their most splendid powers.

This brings me sadly back to my own purpose, which is, despite many wistful longings of a more ambitious nature, to write a plain tale of the adventures of two members—prospective up to this point—of the Escadrille Lafayette. To go back to some of those earlier ones, when we were making our first cross-country flights, I remember them now with a delight which, at the time, was not unmixed with other emotions. Indeed, an aviator, and a fledgling aviator in particular, often runs the whole gamut of human feeling during a single flight. I did in the course of half an hour, reaching the high C of acute panic as I came tumbling out of the first cloud of my aerial experience. Fortunately, in the air the sense of equilibrium usually compels one to do the right thing, and so, after some desperate handling of my “broom-stick,” as the control is called which governs ailerons and elevating planes, I soon had the horizons nicely adjusted again. What a relief it was! I shut down my motor and commenced a more gradual descent, for I was lost, of course, and it seemed wiser to land and make inquiries than to go cruising over half of France looking for one among hundreds of picturesque old towns. There were at least a dozen within view. Some of them were at least a three hours' walk distant from each other. But in the air! I was free to go whither I would, and swiftly.

After leisurely deliberation I selected one surrounded by wide fields which appeared to be as level as a floor. But as I descended the landscape widened, billowing into hills and folding into valleys. By sheer good luck, nothing more, I made a landing without accident. My Caudron barely missed colliding with a hedge of fruit trees, rolled down a long incline, and stopped not ten feet short of a small stream. The experience taught me the folly of choosing landing-ground from high altitudes. I needn't have landed, of course, but I was then so much an amateur that the buffeting of cross-currents of air near the ground awed me into it, come what might. The village was out of sight over the crest of the hill. However, thinking that some one must have seen me, I decided to await developments where I was.

Very soon I heard a shrill, jubilant shout. A boy of eight or ten years was running along the ridge as fast as he could go. Outlined against the sky, he reminded me of silhouettes I had seen in Paris shops, of children dancing, the very embodiment of joy in movement. He turned and waved to some one behind,

whom I could not see, then came on again, stopping a short distance away, and looking at me with an air of awe, which, having been a small boy myself, I was able to understand and appreciate. I said, “Bonjour, mon petit,” as cordially as I could, but he just stood there and gazed without saying a word. Then the others began to appear: scores of children, and old men as well, and women of all ages, some with babies in their arms, and young girls. The whole village came, I am sure. I was mightily impressed by the haleness of the old men and women, which one rarely sees in America. Some of them were evidently well over seventy, and yet, with one or two exceptions, they had sound limbs, clear eyes, and healthy complexions. As for the young girls, many of them were exceptionally pretty; and the children were sturdy youngsters, not the wan, thin-legged little creatures one sees in Paris. In fact, all of these people appeared to belong to a different race from that of the Parisians, to come from finer, more vigorous stock.

They were very curious, but equally courteous, and stood in a large circle around my machine, waiting for me to make my wishes known. For several minutes I pretended to be busy attending to dials and valves inside the car. While trying to screw my courage up to the point of making a verbless explanation of my difficulty, some one pushed through the crowd, and to my great relief began speaking to me. It was Monsieur the Mayor. As best I could, I explained that I had lost my way and had found it necessary to come down for the purpose of making inquiries. I knew that it was awful French, but hoped that it would be intelligible, in part at least. However, the Mayor understood not a word, and I knew by the curious expression in his eyes that he must be wondering from what weird province I hailed. After a moment's thought he said, “Vous êtes Anglais, monsieur?” with a smile of very real pleasure. I said, “Non, monsieur, Américain.”

That magic word! What potency it has in France, the more so at that time, perhaps, for America had placed herself definitely upon the side of the Allies only a short time before. I enjoyed that moment. I might have had the village for the asking. I willingly accepted the rôle of ambassador of the American people. Had it not been for the language barrier, I think I would have made a speech, for I felt the generous spirit of Uncle Sam prompting me to give those fathers and mothers, whose husbands and sons were at the front, the promise of our unqualified support. I wanted to tell them that we were with them now, not only in sympathy, but with all our resources in men and guns and ships and aircraft. I wanted to convince them of our new understanding of the significance of the war. Alas! this was impossible. Instead I gave each one of an army of small boys

the privilege of sitting in the pilot's seat, and showed them how to manage the controls.

The astonishing thing to me was, that while this village was not twenty kilometres off the much-frequented air route between C—— and R——, mine was the first aeroplane which most of them had seen. During long months at various aviation schools pilots grow accustomed to thinking that aircraft are as familiar a sight to others as to them. But here was a village, not far distant from several aviation schools, where an aviator was looked upon with wonder. To have an American aviator drop down upon them was an event even in the history of that ancient village. To have been that aviator,—well, it was an unforgettable experience, coming as it did so opportunely with America's entry into the war. I shall always have it in the background of memory, and one day it will be among the pleasantest of many pleasant tales which I shall have in store for my grandchildren.

However, it is not their potentialities as memories which endear these adventures now, but rather it is because they are in such contrast to any that we had known before. We are always comparing this new life with the old, so different in every respect as to seem a separate existence, almost a previous incarnation.

Having been set right about my course, I pushed my biplane to more level ground, with the willing help of all the boys, started my motor, and was away again. Their shrill cheers reached me even above the roar of the motor. As a lad in a small, Middle-Western town, I have known the rapture of holding to a balloon guy-rope at a county fair, until “the world's most famous aeronaut” shouted, “Let 'er go, boys!” and swung off into space. I kept his memory green until I had passed the first age of hero worship. I know that every youngster in a small village in central France will so keep mine. Such fame is the only kind worth having.

A flight of fifteen minutes brought me within sight of the large white circle which marks the landing-field at R——. J. B. had not yet arrived. This was a great disappointment, for we had planned a race home. I was anxious about him, too, knowing that the godfather of all adventurers can be very stern at times, particularly with his aerial godchildren. I waited for an hour and then decided to go on alone. The weather having cleared, the opportunity was too favorable to be lost. The cloud formations were the most remarkable that I had ever seen. I flew around and over and under them, watching at close hand the play of light and

shade over their great, billowing folds. Sometimes I skirted them so closely that the current of air from my propeller raveled out fragments of shining vapor, which streamed into the clear spaces like wisps of filmy silk. I knew that I ought to be savoring this experience, but for some reason I couldn't. One usually pays for a fine mood by a sudden and unaccountable change of feeling which shades off into a kind of dull, colorless depression.

I passed a twin-motor Caudron going in the opposite direction. It was fantastically painted, the wings a bright yellow and the circular hoods, over the two motors, a fiery red. As it approached, it looked like some prehistoric bird with great ravenous eyes. The thing startled me, not so much because of its weird appearance as by the mere fact of its being there. Strangely enough, for a moment it seemed impossible that I should meet another *avion*. Despite a long apprenticeship in aviation, in these days when one's mind has only begun to grasp the fact that the mastery of the air has been accomplished, the sudden presentation of a bit of evidence sometimes shocks it into a moment of amazement bordering upon incredulity.

As I watched the big biplane pass, I was conscious of a feeling of loneliness. I remembered what J. B. had said that morning. There *was* something unpleasant in the isolation; it made us look longingly down to earth, wondering whether we shall ever feel really at home in the air. I, too, longed for the sound of human voices, and all that I heard was the roar of the motor and the swish of the wind through wires and struts, sounds which have no human quality in them, and are no more companionable than the lapping of the waves to a man adrift on a raft in mid-ocean. Underlying this feeling, and no doubt in part responsible for it, was the knowledge of the fallibility of that seemingly perfect mechanism which rode so steadily through the air; of the quick response that ingenious arrangement of inanimate matter would make to an eternal and inexorable law if a few frail wires should part; of the equally quick, but less phlegmatic response of another fallible mechanism, capable of registering horror, capable—it is said—of passing its past life in review in the space of a few seconds, and then—capable of becoming equally inanimate matter.

Luckily nothing of this sort happened, and the feeling of loneliness passed the moment I came in sight of the long rows of barracks, the hangars and machine shops of the aviation school. My joy when I saw them can only be appreciated in full by fellow aviators who remember the end of their own first long flight. I had been away for years. I would not have been surprised to find great changes. If the brevet monitor had come hobbling out to meet me holding an ear trumpet in

his withered hand, the sight would have been quite in keeping with my own sense of the lapse of time. However, he approached with his ancient springy, businesslike step, as I climbed down from my machine. I swallowed to clear the passage to my ears, and heard him say, “Alors ça va?” in a most disappointingly perfunctory tone of voice.

I nodded.

“Where's your biograph?”

My biograph! It is the altitude-registering instrument which also marks, on a cross-lined chart, the time consumed on each lap of an aerial voyage. My card should have shown four neat outlines in ink, something like this—

one for each stage of my journey, including the forced landing when I had lost my way. But having started the mechanism going upon leaving A——, I had then forgotten all about it, so that it had gone on running while my machine was on the ground as well as during the time it was in the air. The result was a sketch of a magnificent mountain range which might have been drawn by the futurist son, aged five, of a futurist artist. Silently I handed over the instrument. The monitor looked at it, and then at me without comment. But there is an international language of facial expression, and his said, unmistakably, “You poor, simple prune! You choice sample of mouldy American cheese!”

J. B. didn't return until the following afternoon. After leaving me over C——, he had blown out two spark-plugs. For a while he limped along on six cylinders, and then landed in a field three kilometres from the nearest town. His French, which is worse, if that is possible, than mine, aroused the suspicions of a patriot farmer, who collared him as a possible German spy. Under a bodyguard of two peasants, armed with hoes, he was marched to a neighboring château. And then, I should have thought, he would have had another historical illusion,—this time with a French Revolutionary setting. He says not, however. All his faculties were concentrated in enjoying this unusual adventure; and he was wondering what the outcome of it would be. At the château he met a fine old gentleman who spoke English with that nicety of utterance which only a cultivated Frenchman can achieve. He had no difficulty in clearing himself. Then he had dinner in a hall hung with armor and hunting trophies, was shown to a chamber half as large as the lounge at the Harvard Club, and slept in a bed which he got into by means of a ladder of carved oak. This is a mere outline. Out of regard for J. B.'s opinions about the sanctities of his own personal adventures, I refrain from giving further

details.

These were the usual experiences which every American pilot has had while on his brevet flights. As I write I think of scores of others, for they were of almost daily occurrence.

Jackson landed—unintentionally, of course—in a town square and was banqueted by the Mayor, although he had nearly run him down a few hours earlier, and had ruined forever his reputation as a man of dignified bearing. But the Mayor was not alone in his forced display of unseemly haste. Many other townspeople, long past the nimbleness of youth, rushed for shelter; and pride goeth before a collision with a wayward aeroplane. Jackson said the sky rained hats, market baskets, and wooden shoes for five minutes after his Blériot had come to rest on the steps of the *bureau de poste*. And no one was hurt.

Murphy's defective motor provided him with the names and addresses of every possible and impossible *marraine* in the town of Y——, near which he was compelled to land. While waiting for the arrival of his mechanician with a new supply of spark-plugs, he left his monoplane in a field close by. A path to the place was worn by the feet of the young women of the town, whose dearest wish appeared to be to have an aviator as a *filleul*. They covered the wings of his *avion* with messages in pencil. The least pointed of these hints were, “Écrivez le plus tôt possible”; and, “Je voudrais bien un filleul américain, très gentil, comme vous.”

Matthews' biplane crashed through the roof of a camp bakery. If he had practiced this unusual *atterrissage* a thousand times he could not have done it so neatly as at the first attempt. He followed the motor through to the kitchen and finally hung suspended a few feet from the ceiling. The army bread-bakers stared up at him with faces as white as fear and flour could make them. The commandant of the camp rushed in. He asked, “What have you done with the corpse?” The bread-bakers pointed to Matthews, who apologized for his bad choice of landing-ground. He was hardly scratched.

Mac lost his way in the clouds and landed near a small village for gasoline and information. The information he had easily, but gasoline was scarce. After laborious search through several neighboring villages he found a supply and had it carried to the field where his machine was waiting. Some farmer lads agreed to hold on to the tail while Mac started the engine. At the first roar of the rotary motor they all let loose. The Blériot pushed Mac contemptuously aside, lifted its

tail and rushed away. He followed it over a level tract of country miles in extent, and found it at last in a ditch, nose down, tail in air, like a duck hunting bugs in the mud. This story loses nine tenths of its interest for want of Mac's pungent method of telling it.

One of the *bona-fide* godchildren of Chance was Millard. The circumstances leading to his engagement in the French service as a member of the Franco-American Corps proves this. Millard was a real human being,—he had no grammar, no polish, no razor, safety or otherwise, but likewise no pretense, no "swank." He was *persona non grata* to a few, but the great majority liked him very much, although they wondered how in the name of all that is curious he had ever decided to join the French air service. Once he told us his history at great length. He had been a scout in the Philippine service of the American army. He had been a roustabout on cattle boats. He had boiled his coffee down by the stockyards in every sizable town on every transcontinental railroad in America. In the spring of 1916 he had employment with a roofing company which had contracted for a job in Richmond, Virginia, I think it was. But Richmond went "dry" in the State elections; the roofing job fell through, owing, so Millard insisted, to the natural and inevitable depression which follows a dry election. Having lost his prospective employment as a roofer, what more natural than that he should turn to this other high calling?

He was game. He tried hard and at last reached his brevet tests. Three times he started off on triangles. No one expected to see him return, but he surprised them every time. He could never find the towns where he was supposed to land, so he would keep on going till his gas gave out. Then his machine would come down of itself, and Millard would crawl out from under the wreckage and come back by train.

"I don't know," he would say doubtfully, rubbing his eight-days' growth of beard; "I'm seeing a lot of France, but this coming-down business ain't what it's cracked up to be. I can swing in on the rods of a box car with the train going hell bent for election, but I guess I'm too old to learn to fly."

The War Office came to this opinion after Millard had smashed three machines in three tries. Wherever he may be now, I am sure that Chance is still ruling his destiny, and I hope, with all my heart, benevolently.

Our final triangle was completed uneventfully. J. B.'s motor behaved splendidly; I remembered my biograph at every stage of the journey, and we

were at home again within three hours. We did our altitude tests and were then no longer *élèves-pilotes*, but *pilotes aviateurs*. By reason of this distinction we passed from the rank of soldier of the second class to that of corporal. At the tailor's shop the wings and star insignia were sewn upon our collars and our corporal's stripes upon our sleeves. For we were proud, as every aviator is proud, who reaches the end of his apprenticeship and enters into the dignity of a brevetted military pilot.

Six months have passed since I made the last entry in my journal. J. B. was asleep in his historic bed, and I was sitting at a rickety table writing by candle-light, stopping now and then to listen to the mutter of guns on the Aisne front. It was only at night that we could hear them, and then not often, the very ghost of sound, as faint as the beating of the pulses in one's ears. That was a May evening, and this, one late in November. I arrived at the Gare du Nord only a few hours ago. Never before have I come to Paris with a finer sense of the joy of living. I walked down the rue Lafayette, through the rue de Provence, the rue du Havre, to a little hotel in the vicinity of the Gare Saint-Lazare. Under ordinary circumstances none of these streets, nor the people in them, would have appeared particularly interesting. But on this occasion—it was the finest walk of my life. I saw everything with the eyes of the *permissionnaire*, and sniffed the odors of roasting chestnuts, of restaurants, of shops, of people, never so keenly aware of their numberless variety.

After dinner I walked out on the boulevards from the Madeleine to the Place de la République, through the maze of narrow streets to the river, and over the Pont Neuf to Notre Dame. I was surprised that the spell which Hugo gives it should have lost none of its old potency for me after coming direct from the realities of modern warfare. If he were writing this journal, what a story it would be!

It will be necessary to pass rapidly over the period between the day when we received our *brevets militaires* and that upon which we started for the front. The event which bulked largest to us was, of course, the departure on active service. Preceding it, and next in importance, was the last phase of our training and the culmination of it all, at the School of Acrobacy. Preliminary to our work there, we had a six weeks' course of instruction, first on the twin-motor Caudron and then on various types of the Nieuport biplane. We thought the Caudron a magnificent machine. We liked the steady throb of its powerful motors, the

enormous spread of its wings, the slow, ponderous way it had of answering to the controls. It was our business to take officer observers for long trips about the country while they made photographs, spotted dummy batteries, and perfected themselves in the wireless code. At that time the Caudron had almost passed its period of usefulness at the front, and there was a prospect of our being transferred to the yet larger and more powerful Letord, a three-passenger biplane carrying two machine gunners besides the pilot, and from three to five machine guns. This appealed to us mightily. J. B. was always talking of the time when he would command not only a machine, but also a “gang of men.” However, being Americans, and recruited for a particular combat corps which flies only single-seater *avions de chasse*, we eventually followed the usual course of training for such pilots. We passed in turn to the Nieuport biplane, which compares in speed and grace with these larger craft as the flight of a swallow with the movements of a great lazy buzzard. And now the Nieuport has been surpassed, and almost entirely supplanted, by the Spad of 140, 180, 200, and 230 horse-power, and we have transferred our allegiance to each in turn, marveling at the genius of the French in motor and aircraft construction.

At last we were ready for acrobacy. I will not give an account of the trials by means of which one's ability as a combat pilot is most severely tested. This belongs among the pages of a textbook rather than in those of a journal of this kind. But to us who were to undergo the ordeal,—for it is an ordeal for the untried pilot,—our typewritten notes on acrobacy read like the pages of a fascinating romance. A year or two ago these aerial maneuvers would have been thought impossible. Now we were all to do them as a matter of routine training.

The worst of it was, that our civilian pursuits offered no criterion upon which to base forecasts of our ability as acrobats. There was J. B., for example. He knew a mixed metaphor when he saw one, for he had had wide experience with them as an English instructor at a New England “prep” school. But he had never done a barrel turn, or anything resembling it. How was he to know what his reaction would be to this bewildering maneuver, a series of rapid, horizontal, corkscrew turns? And to what use could I put my hazy knowledge of Massachusetts statutes dealing with neglect and non-support of family, in that exciting moment when, for the first time, I should be whirling earthward in a spinning nose-dive? Accidents and fatalities were most frequent at the school of acrobacy, for the reason that one could not know, beforehand, whether he would be able to keep his head, with the earth gone mad, spinning like a top, standing on one rim, turning upside down.

In the end we all mastered it after a fashion, for the tests are by no means so difficult of accomplishment as they appear to be. Up to this time, November 28, 1917, there has been but one American killed at it in French schools. We were not all good acrobats. One must have a knack for it which many of us will never be able to acquire. The French have it in larger proportion than do we Americans. I can think of no sight more pleasing than that of a Spad in the air, under the control of a skillful French pilot. Swallows perch in envious silence on the chimney pots, and the crows caw in sullen despair from the hedgerows.

At G. D. E., while awaiting our call to the front, we perfected ourselves in these maneuvers, and practiced them in combat and group flying. There, the restraints of the schools were removed, for we were supposed to be accomplished pilots. We flew when and in what manner we liked. Sometimes we went out in large formations, for a long flight; sometimes, in groups of two or three, we made sham attacks on villages, or trains, or motor convoys on the roads. It was forbidden to fly over Paris, and for this reason we took all the more delight in doing it. J. B. and I saw it in all its moods: in the haze of early morning, at midday when the air had been washed clean by spring rains, in the soft light of afternoon,—domes, theaters, temples, spires, streets, parks, the river, bridges, all of it spread out in magnificent panorama. We would circle over Montmartre, Neuilly, the Bois, Saint-Cloud, the Latin Quarter, and then full speed homeward, listening anxiously to the sound of our motors until we spiraled safely down over our aerodrome. Our monitor never asked questions. He is one of many Frenchmen whom we shall always remember with gratitude.

We learned the songs of all motors, the peculiarities and uses of all types of French *avions*, pushers and tractors, single motor and bimotor, monoplace, biplace, and triplace, monoplane and biplane. And we mingled with the pilots of all these many kinds of aircraft. They were arriving and departing by every train, for G. D. E. is the dépôt for old pilots from the front, transferring from one branch of aviation to another, as well as for new ones fresh from the schools. In our talks with them, we became convinced that the air service is forming its traditions and developing a new type of mind. It even has an odor, as peculiar to itself as the smell of the sea to a ship. There are those who say that it is only a compound of burnt castor oil and gasoline. One might, with no more truth, call the odor of a ship a mixture of tar and stale cooking. But let it pass. It will be all things to all men; I can sense it as I write, for it gets into one's clothing, one's hair, one's very blood.

We were as happy during those days at G. D. E. as any one has the right to be.

Our whole duty was to fly, and never was the voice of Duty heard more gladly. It was hard to keep in mind the stern purpose behind this seeming indulgence. At times I remembered Drew's warning that we were military pilots and had no right to forget the seriousness of the work before us. But he himself often forgot it for days together. War on the earth may be reasonable and natural, but in the air it seems the most senseless folly. How is an airman, who has just learned a new meaning for the joy of life, to reconcile himself to the insane business of killing a fellow aviator who may have just learned it too? This was a question which we sometimes put to ourselves in purely Arcadian moments. We answered it, of course.

I was sitting at our two-legged table, writing up my *carnet de vol*. Suzanne, the maid of all work at the Bonne Rencontre, was sweeping a passageway along the center of the room, telling me, as she worked, about her family. She was ticking off the names of her brothers and sisters, when Drew put his head through the doorway.

“Il y a Pierre,” said Suzanne.

“We're posted,” said J. B.

“Et Hélène,” she continued.

I shall never know the names of the others.

V

OUR FIRST PATROL

WE got down from the train late in the afternoon at a village which reminded us, at first glance, of a boom town in the Far West. Crude shelters of corrugated iron and rough pine boards faced each other down the length of one long street. They looked sadly out of place in that landscape. They did not have the cheery, buoyant ugliness of pioneer homes in an unsettled country, for behind them were the ruins of the old village, fragments of blackened wall, stone chimneys filled with accumulations of rubbish, garden-plots choked with weeds, reminding us that here was no outpost of a new civilization, but the desolation of an old one, fallen upon evil days.

A large crowd of *permissionnaires* had left the train with us. We were not at ease among these men, many of them well along in middle life, bent and streaming with perspiration under their heavy packs. We were much better able than most of them to carry our belongings, to endure the fatigue of a long night march to billets or trenches; and we were waiting for the motor in which we should ride comfortably to our aerodrome. There we should sleep in beds, well housed from the weather, and far out of the range of shell fire.

“It isn't fair,” said J. B. “It is going to war *de luxe*. These old poilus ought to be the aviators. But, hang it all! Of course, they couldn't be. Aviation is a young man's business. It has to be that way. And you can't have aerodromes along the front-line trenches.”

Nevertheless, it did seem very unfair, and we were uncomfortable among all those infantrymen. The feeling increased when attention was called to our branch of the service by the distant booming of anti-aircraft guns. There were shouts in the street, “A Boche!” We hurried to the door of the café where we had been hiding. Officers were ordering the crowds off the street. “Hurry along there! Under cover! Oh, I know that you're brave enough, mon enfant. It isn't that. He's not to see all these soldiers here. That's the reason. Allez! Vite!”

Soldiers were going into dugouts and cellars among the ruined houses. Some of them, seeing us at the door of the café, made pointed remarks as they passed,

grumbling loudly at the laxity of the air service.

“It's up there you ought to be, mon vieux, not here,” one of them said, pointing to the white *éclatements*.

“You see that?” said another. “He's a Boche, not French, I can tell you that. Where are your comrades?”

There was much good-natured chaffing as well, but through it all I could detect a note of resentment. I sympathized with their point of view then as I do now, although I know that there is no ground for the complaint of laxity. Here is a German over French territory. Where are the French aviators? Soldiers forget that aerial frontiers must be guarded in two dimensions, and that it is always possible for an airman to penetrate far into enemy country. They do not see their own pilots on their long raids into German territory. Furthermore, while the outward journey is often accomplished easily enough, the return home is a different matter. Telephones are busy from the moment the lines are crossed, and a hostile patrol, to say nothing of a lone *avion*, will be fortunate if it returns safely.

But infantrymen are to be forgiven readily for their outbursts against the aviation service. They have far more than their share of danger and death while in the trenches. To have their brief periods of rest behind the lines broken into by enemy aircraft—who would blame them for complaining? And they are often generous enough with their praise.

On this occasion there was no bombing. The German remained at a great height and quickly turned northward again.

Dunham and Miller came to meet us. We had all four been in the schools together, they preceding us on active service only a couple of months. Seeing them after this lapse of time, I was conscious of a change. They were keen about life at the front, but they talked of their experiences in a way which gave one a feeling of tension, a tautness of muscles, a kind of ache in the throat. It set me to thinking of a conversation I had had with an old French pilot, several months before. It came apropos of nothing. Perhaps he thought that I was sizing him up, wondering how he could be content with an instructor's job while the war is in progress. He said: “I've had five hundred hours over the lines. You don't know what that means, not yet. I'm no good any more. It's strain. Let me give you some advice. Save your nervous energy. You will need all you have and more. Above everything else, don't think at the front. The best pilot is the best

machine.”

Dunham was talking about patrols.

“Two a day of two hours each. Occasionally you will have six hours' flying, but almost never more than that.”

“What about voluntary patrols?” Drew asked. “I don't suppose there is any objection, is there?”

Miller pounded Dunham on the back, singing, “*Hi-doo-dedoo-dum-di*. What did I tell you! Do I win?” Then he explained. “We asked the same question when we came out, and every other new pilot before us. This voluntary patrol business is a kind of standing joke. You think, now, that four hours a day over the lines is a light programme. For the first month or so you will go out on your own between times. After that, no. Of course, when they call for a voluntary patrol for some necessary piece of work, you will volunteer out of a sense of duty. As I say, you may do as much flying as you like. But wait. After a month, or we'll give you six weeks, that will be no more than you have to do.”

We were not at all convinced.

“What do you do with the rest of your time?”

“Sleep,” said Dunham. “Read a good deal. Play some poker or bridge. Walk. But sleep is the chief amusement. Eight hours used to be enough for me. Now I can do with ten or twelve.”

Drew said: “That's all rot. You fellows are having it too soft. They ought to put you on the school régime again.”

“Let 'em talk, Dunham. They know. J. B. says it's laziness. Let it go at that. Well, take it from me, it's contagious. You'll soon be victims.”

I dropped out of the conversation in order to look around me. Drew did all of the questioning, and thanks to his interest, I got many hints about our work which came back opportunely, afterward.

“Think down to the gunners. That will help a lot. It's a game after that: your skill against theirs. I couldn't do it at first, and shell fire seemed absolutely damnable.”

“And you want to remember that a chasse machine is almost never brought

down by anti-aircraft fire. You are too fast for them. You can fool 'em in a thousand ways.”

“I had been flying for two weeks before I saw a Boche. They are not scarce on this sector, don't worry. I simply couldn't see them. The others would have scraps. I spent most of my time trying to keep track of them.”

“Take my tip, J. B., don't be too anxious to mix it with the first German you see, because very likely he will be a Frenchman, and if he isn't, if he is a good Hun pilot, you'll simply be meat for him—at first, I mean.”

“They say that all the Boche aviators on this front have had several months' experience in Russia or the Balkans. They train them there before they send them to the Western Front.”

“Your best chance of being brought down will come in the first two weeks.”

“That's comforting.”

“No, sans blague. Honestly, you'll be almost helpless. You don't see anything, and you don't know what it is that you do see. Here's an example. On one of my first sorties I happened to look over my shoulder and I saw five or six Germans in the most beautiful alignment. And they were all slanting up to dive on me. I was scared out of my life: went down full motor, then cut and fell into a vrille. Came out of that and had another look. There they were in the same position, only farther away. I didn't tumble even then, except farther down. Next time I looked, the five Boches, or six, whichever it was, had all been raveled out by the wind. Éclats d'obus.”

“You may have heard about Franklin's Boche. He got it during his first combat. He didn't know that there was a German in the sky, until he saw the tracer bullets. Then the machine passed him about thirty metres away. And he kept going down: may have had motor trouble. Franklin said that he had never had such a shock in his life. He dived after him, spraying all space with his Vickers, and he got him!”

“That all depends on the man. In chasse, unless you are sent out on a definite mission, protecting photographic machines or avions de bombardement, you are absolutely on your own. Your job is to patrol the lines. If a man is built that way, he can loaf on the job. He need never have a fight. At two hundred kilometres an hour, it won't take him very long to get out of danger. He stays out his two hours

and comes in with some framed-up tale to account for his disappearance: 'Got lost. Went off by himself into Germany. Had motor trouble; gun jammed, and went back to arm it.' He may even spray a few bullets toward Germany and call it a combat. Oh, he can find plenty of excuses, and he can get away with them."

"That's spreading it, Dunham. What about Huston? is he getting away with it?"

"Now, don't let's get personal. Very likely Huston can't help it. Anyway, it is a matter of temperament mostly."

"Temperament, hell! There's Van, for example. I happen to know that he has to take himself by his bootlaces every time he crosses into Germany. But he sticks it. He has never played a yellow trick. I hand it to him for pluck above every other man in the squadron."

"What about Talbott and Barry?"

"Lord! They haven't any nerves. It's no job for them to do their work well."

This conversation continued during the rest of the journey. The life of a military pilot offers exceptional opportunities for research in the matter of personal bravery. Dunham and Miller agreed that it is a varying quality. Sometimes one is really without fear; at others only a sense of shame prevents one from making a very sad display.

"Huston is no worse than some of the rest of us, only he hasn't a sense of shame."

"Well, he has the courage to be a coward, and that is more than you have, son, or I either."

Our fellow pilots of the Lafayette Corps were lounging outside the barracks on our arrival. They gave us a welcome which did much to remove our feelings of strangeness; but we knew that they were only mildly interested in the news from the schools and were glad when they let us drop into the background of conversation. By a happy chance mention was made of a recent newspaper article of some of the exploits of the *Escadrille*, written evidently by a very imaginative journalist; and from this the talk passed to the reputation of the Squadron in America, and the almost fabulous deeds credited to it by some newspaper correspondents. One pilot said that he had kept record of the number of German machines actually reported as having been brought down by

members of the Corps. I don't remember the number he gave, but it was an astonishing total. The daily average was so high, that, granting it to be correct, America might safely have abandoned her far-reaching aerial programme. Long before her first pursuit squadron could be ready for service, the last of the imperial German air-fleet would, to quote from the article, have “crashed in smouldering ruin on the war-devastated plains of northern France.”

In this connection I can't forbear quoting from another, one of the brightest pages in the journalistic history of the legendary Escadrille Lafayette. It is an account of a sortie said to have taken place on the receipt of news of America's declaration of war.

“Uncle Sam is with us, boys! Come on! Let's get those fellows!” These were the stirring words of Captain Georges Thénault, the valiant leader of the Escadrille Lafayette, upon the morning when news was received that the United States of America had declared war upon the rulers of Potsdam. For the first time in history, the Stars and Stripes of Old Glory were flung to the breeze over the camp, in France, of American fighting men. Inspired by the sight, and spurred to instant action by the ringing call of their French captain, this band of aviators from the U.S.A. sprang into their trim little biplanes. There was a deafening roar of motors, and soon the last airman had disappeared in the smoky haze which hung over the distant battle-lines.

We cannot follow them on that journey. We cannot see them as they mount higher and higher into the morning sky, on their way to meet their prey. But we may await their return. We may watch them as they descend to their flying-field, dropping down to earth, one by one. We may learn, then, of their adventures on that flight of death: how, far back of the German lines, they encountered a formidable battle-squadron of the enemy, vastly superior to their own in numbers. Heedless of the risk they swooped down upon their foe. Lieutenant A—— was attacked by four enemy planes at the same time. One he sent hurtling to the ground fifteen thousand feet below. He caused a second to retire disabled. Sergeant B—— accounted for another in a running fight which lasted for more than a quarter of an hour. Adjutant C——, although his biplane was riddled with bullets, succeeded, by a clever ruse, in decoying two pursuers, bent on his destruction, to the vicinity of a cloud where several of his comrades were lying in wait for further victims. A moment later both Germans were seen to fall earthward, spinning like leaves in that last terrible dive of death. “These boys are Yankee aviators. They form the vanguard of America's aerial forces. We need thousands of others just like them,” etc.

Stories of this kind have, without doubt, a certain imaginative appeal. J. B. and I had often read them, never wholly credulous, of course, but with feelings of uneasiness. Discounting them by more than half, we still had serious doubts of our ability to measure up to the standard set by our fellow Americans who had preceded us on active service. We were in part reassured during our first afternoon at the front. If these men were the demons on wings of the newspapers, they took great pains to give us a different impression.

Many of the questions which had long been accumulating in our minds got themselves answered during the next few days, while we were waiting for machines. We knew, in a general way, what the nature of our work would be. We knew that the Escadrille Lafayette was one of four pursuit squadrons occupying hangars on the same field, and that, together, these formed what is called a *groupe de combat*, with a definite sector of front to cover. We had been told that combat pilots are “the police of the air,” whose duty it is to patrol the lines, harass the enemy, attacking whenever possible, thus giving protection to their own *corps-d'armée* aircraft—which are only incidentally fighting machines—in their work of reconnaissance, photography, artillery direction, and the like. But we did not know how this general theory of combat is given practical application. When I think of the depths of our ignorance, to be filled in, day by day, with a little additional experience; of our self-confidence, despite warnings;

of our willingness to leave so much for our “godfather” Chance to decide, it is with feelings nearly akin to awe. We awaited our first patrol almost ready to believe that it would be our first victorious combat. We had no realization of the conditions under which aerial battles are fought. Given good-will, average ability, and the opportunity, we believed that the results must be decisive, one way or the other.

Much of our enforced leisure was spent at the bureau of the group, where the pilots gathered after each sortie to make out their reports. There we heard accounts of exciting combats, of victories and narrow escapes, which sounded like impossible fictions. A few of them may have been, but not many. They were told simply, briefly, as a part of the day's work, by men who no longer thought of their adventures as being either very remarkable or very interesting. What, I thought, will seem interesting or remarkable to them after the war, after such a life as this? Once an American gave me a hint: “I'm going to apply for a job as attendant in a natural-history museum.”

Only a few minutes before, these men had been taking part in aerial battles, attacking infantry in trenches, or enemy transport on roads fifteen or twenty kilometres away. And while they were talking of these things the drone of motors overhead announced the departure of other patrols to battle-lines which were only five minutes distant by the route of the air. For when weather permitted there was an interlapping series of patrols flying over the sector from daylight till dark. The number of these, and the number of *avions* in each patrol, varied as circumstances demanded.

On one wall of the bureau hung a large-scale map of the sector, which we examined square by square with that delight which only the study of maps can give. Trench-systems, both French and German, were outlined upon it in minute detail. It contained other features of a very interesting nature. On another wall there was a yet larger map, made of aeroplane photographs taken at a uniform altitude and so pieced together that the whole was a complete picture of our sector of front. We spent hours over this one. Every trench, every shell hole, every splintered tree or fragment of farmhouse wall stood out clearly. We could identify machine-gun posts and battery positions. We could see at a glance the result of months of fighting; how terribly men had suffered under a rain of high explosives at this point, how lightly they had escaped at another; and so we could follow, with a certain degree of accuracy, what must have been the infantry actions at various parts of the line.

The history of these trench campaigns will have a forbidding interest to the student of the future; for, as he reads of the battles on the Aisne, the Somme, of Verdun and Flanders, he will have spread out before him photographs of the battlefields themselves, just as they were at different phases of the struggle. With a series of these pictorial records, men will be able to find the trenches from which their fathers or grandfathers scrambled with their regiments to the attack, the wire entanglements which held up the advance at one point, the shell holes where they lay under machine-gun fire. And often they will see the men themselves as they advanced through the barrage fire, the sun glinting on their helmets. It will be a fascinating study, in a ghastly way; and while such records exist, the outward meanings, at least, of modern warfare will not be forgotten.

Tiffin, the messroom steward, was standing by my cot with a lighted candle in his hand. The furrows in his kindly old face were outlined in shadow. His bald head gleamed like the bottom of a yellow bowl. He said, “Beau temps, monsieur,” put the candle on my table, and went out, closing the door softly. I looked at the window square, which was covered with oiled cloth for want of glass. It was a black patch showing not a glimmer of light.

The other pilots were gathering in the messroom, where a fire was going. Some one started the phonograph. Fritz Kreisler was playing the “Chansons sans Paroles.” This was followed by a song, “Oh, movin' man, don't take ma baby grand.” It was a strange combination, and to hear them, at that hour of the morning, before going out for a first sortie over the lines, gave me a “mixed-up” feeling, which it was impossible to analyze.

Two patrols were to leave the field at the same time, one to cover the sector at an altitude of from two thousand to three thousand metres, the other, thirty-five hundred to five thousand metres. J. B. and I were on high patrol. Owing to our inexperience, it was to be a purely defensive one between our observation balloons and the lines. We had still many questions to ask, but having been so persistently inquisitive for three days running, we thought it best to wait for Talbott, who was leading our patrol, to volunteer his instructions.

He went to the door to look at the weather. There were clouds at about three thousand metres, but the stars were shining through gaps in them. On the horizon, in the direction of the lines, there was a broad belt of blue sky. The wind was blowing into Germany. He came back yawning. “We'll go up—ho, hum!”—tremendous yawn—“through a hole before we reach the river. It's going to be

clear presently, so the higher we go the better."

The others yawned sympathetically.

"I don't feel very pugnastic this morning."

"It's a crime to send men out at this time of day—night, rather."

More yawns of assent, of protest. J. B. and I were the only ones fully awake. We had finished our chocolate and were watching the clock uneasily, afraid that we should be late getting started. Ten minutes before patrol time we went out to the field. The canvas hangars billowed and flapped, and the wooden supports creaked with the quiet sound made by ships at sea. And there was almost the peace of the sea there, intensified, if anything, by the distant rumble of heavy cannonading.

Our Spad biplanes were drawn up in two long rows, outside the hangars. They were in exact alignment, wing to wing. Some of them were clean and new, others discolored with smoke and oil; among these latter were the ones which J. B. and I were to fly. Being new pilots we were given used machines to begin with, and ours had already seen much service. *Fuselage* and wings had many patches over the scars of old battles, but new motors had been installed, the bodies overhauled, and they were ready for further adventures.

It mattered little to us that they were old. They were to carry us out to our first air battles; they were the first *avions* which we could call our own, and we loved them in an almost personal way. Each machine had an Indian head, the symbol of the Lafayette Corps, painted on the sides of the *fuselage*. In addition, it bore the personal mark of its pilot,—a triangle, a diamond, a straight band, or an initial,—painted large so that it could be easily seen and recognized in the air.

The mechanicians were getting the motors *en route*, arming the machine guns, and giving a final polish to the glass of the wind-shields. In a moment every machine was turning over *ralenti*, with the purring sound of powerful engines which gives a voice to one's feeling of excitement just before patrol time. There was no more yawning, no languid movement.

Rodman was buttoning himself into a combination suit which appeared to add another six inches to his six feet two. Barry, who was leading the low patrol, wore a woolen helmet which left only his eyes uncovered. I had not before noticed how they blazed and snapped. All his energy seemed to be concentrated

in them. Porter wore a leather face-mask, with a lozenge-shaped breathing-hole, and slanted openings covered with yellow glass for eyes. He was the most fiendish-looking demon of them all. I was glad to turn from him to the Duke, who wore a *passe-montagne* of white silk which fitted him like a bonnet. As he sat in his machine, adjusting his goggles, he might have passed for a dear old lady preparing to read a chapter from the Book of Daniel. The fur of Dunham's helmet had frayed out, so that it fitted around the sides of his face and under the chin like a beard, the kind worn by old-fashioned sailors.

The strain of waiting patiently for the start was trying. The sudden transformation of a group of typical-looking Americans into monsters and devotional old ladies gave a moment of diversion which helped to relieve it.

I heard Talbott shouting his parting instructions and remembered that I did not know the rendezvous. I was already strapped in my machine and was about to loosen the fastenings, when he came over and climbed on the step of the car.

“Rendezvous two thousand over field!” he yelled.

I nodded.

“Know me—Big T—wings—fuselage. I'll—turning right. You and others left. When—see me start—lines, fall in behind—left. Remember stick close—patrol. If—get lost, better—home. Compass southwest. Look carefully—landmarks going out. Got—straight?”

I nodded again to show that I understood. Machines of both patrols were rolling across the field, a mechanician running along beside each one. I joined the long line, and taxied over to the starting-point, where the captain was superintending the send-off, and turned into the wind in my turn. As though conscious of his critical eye, my old veteran Spad lifted its tail and gathered flying speed with all the vigor of its youth, and we were soon high above the hangars, climbing to the rendezvous.

When we had all assembled, Talbott headed northeast, the rest of us falling into our places behind him. Then I found that, despite the new motor, my machine was not a rapid climber. Talbott noticed this and kept me well in the group, he and the others losing height in *renversements* and *retournements*, diving under me and climbing up again. It was fascinating to watch them doing stunts, to observe the constant changing of positions. Sometimes we seemed, all of us, to be hanging motionless, then rising and falling like small boats riding a

heavy swell. Another glance would show one of them suspended bottom up, falling sidewise, tipped vertically on a wing, standing on its tail, as though being blown about by the wind, out of all control. It is only in the air, when moving with them, that one can really appreciate the variety and grace of movement of a flock of high-powered *avions de chasse*.

I was close to Talbott as we reached the cloud-bank. I saw him in dim silhouette as the mist, sunlight-filtered, closed around us. Emerging into the clear, fine air above it, we might have been looking at early morning from the casement

> "opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faëry lands forlorn."

The sun was just rising, and the floor of cloud glowed with delicate shades of rose and amethyst and gold. I saw the others rising through it at widely scattered points. It was a glorious sight.

Then, forming up and turning northward again, just as we passed over the receding edge of the cloud-bank, I saw the lines. It was still dusk on the ground and my first view was that of thousands of winking lights, the flashes of guns and of bursting shells. At that time the Germans were making trials of the French positions along the Chemin des Dames, and the artillery fire was unusually heavy.

The lights soon faded and the long, winding battle-front emerged from the shadow, a broad strip of desert land through a fair, green country. We turned westward along the sector, several kilometres within the French lines, for J. B. and I were to have a general view of it all before we crossed to the other side. The fort of Malmaison was a minute square, not as large as a postage-stamp. With thumb and forefinger I could have spanned the distance between Soissons and Laon. Clouds of smoke were rising from Allemant to Craonne, and these were constantly added to by infinitesimal puffs in black and white. I knew that shells of enormous calibre were wrecking trenches, blasting out huge craters; and yet not a sound, not the faintest reverberation of a gun. Here was a sight almost to make one laugh at man's idea of the importance of his pygmy wars.

But the Olympian mood is a fleeting one. I think of Paradis rising on one elbow out of the slime where he and his comrades were lying, waving his hand toward the wide, unspeakable landscape.

"What are we, we chaps? And what's all this here? Nothing at all. All we can

see is only a speck. When one speaks of the whole war, it's as if you said nothing at all—the words are strangled. We're here, and we look at it like blind men.”

To look down from a height of more than two miles, on an endless panorama of suffering and horror, is to have the sense of one's littleness even more painfully quickened. The best that the airman can do is to repeat, “We're here, and we look at it like blind men.”

We passed on to the point where the line bends northward, then turned back. I tried to concentrate my attention on the work of identifying landmarks. It was useless. One might as well attempt to study Latin grammar at his first visit to the Grand Cañon. My thoughts went wool-gathering. Looking up suddenly, I found that I was alone.

To the new pilot the sudden appearance or disappearance of other *avions* is a weird thing. He turns his head for a moment. When he looks again, his patrol has vanished. Combats are matters of a few seconds' duration, rarely of more than two or three minutes. The opportunity for attack comes almost with the swiftness of thought and has passed as quickly. Looking behind me, I was in time to see one machine tip and dive. Then it, too, vanished as though it had melted into the air. Shutting my motor, I started down, swiftly, I thought; but I had not yet learned to fall vertically, and the others—I can say almost with truth—were miles below me. I passed long streamers of white smoke, crossing and recrossing in the air. I knew the meaning of these, machine-gun tracer bullets. The delicately penciled lines had not yet frayed out in the wind. I went on down in a steep spiral, guiding myself by them, and seeing nothing. At the point where they ended, I redressed and put on my motor. My altimeter registered two thousand metres. By a curious chance, while searching the empty sky, I saw a live shell passing through the air. It was just at the second when it reached the top of its trajectory and started to fall. “Lord!” I thought, “I have seen a shell, and yet I can't find my patrol!”

While coming down I had given no attention to my direction. I had lost twenty-five hundred metres in height. The trenches were now plainly visible, and the brown strip of sterile country where they lay was vastly broader. Several times I felt the concussion of shell explosions, my machine being lifted and then dropped gently with an uneasy motion. Constantly searching the air, I gave no thought to my position with reference to the lines, nor to the possibility of anti-aircraft fire. Talbott had said: “Never fly in a straight line for more than fifteen seconds. Keep changing your direction constantly, but be careful not to fly in a

regularly irregular fashion. The German gunners may let you alone at first, hoping that you will become careless, or they may be plotting out your style of flight. Then they make their calculations and they let you have it. If you have been careless, they'll put 'em so close, there'll be no question about the kind of a scare you will have."

There wasn't in my case. I was looking for my patrol to the exclusion of thought of anything else. The first shell burst so close that I lost control of my machine for a moment. Three others followed, two in front, and one behind, which I believed had wrecked my tail. They burst with a terrific rending sound in clouds of coal-black smoke. A few days before I had been watching without emotion the bombardment of a German plane. I had seen it twisting and turning through the *éclatements*, and had heard the shells popping faintly, with a sound like the bursting of seed-pods in the sun.

My feeling was not that of fear, exactly. It was more like despair. Every airman must have known it at one time or another, a sudden overwhelming realization of the pitilessness of the forces which men let loose in war. In that moment one doesn't remember that men have loosed them. He is alone, and he sees the face of an utterly evil thing. Miller's advice was, "Think down to the gunners"; but this is impossible at first. Once a French captain told me that he talked to the shells. "I say, 'Bonjour, mon vieux! Tiens! Comment ça va, toi! Ah, non! je suis pressé!' or something like that. It amuses one."

This need of some means of humanizing shell fire is common. Aviators know little of modern warfare as it touches the infantryman; but in one respect, at least, they are less fortunate. They miss the human companionship which helps a little to mask its ugliness.

However, it is seldom that one is quite alone, without the sight of friendly planes near at hand, and there is a language of signs which, in a way, fills this need. One may "waggle his flippers," or "flap his wings," to use the common expressions, and thus communicate with his comrades. Unfortunately for my ease of mind, there were no comrades present with whom I could have conversed in this way. Miller was within five hundred metres and saw me all the time, although I didn't know this until later.

Talbott's instructions were, "If you get lost, go home"—somewhat ambiguous. I knew that my course to the aerodrome was southwest. At any rate, by flying in that direction I was certain to land in France. But with German gunners so keen

on the baptism-of-fire business, I had been turning in every direction, and the floating disk of my compass was revolving first to the right, then to the left. In order to let it settle, I should have to fly straight for some fixed point for at least half a minute. Under the circumstances I was not willing to do this. A compass which would point north immediately and always would be a heaven-sent blessing to the inexperienced pilot during his first few weeks at the front. Mine was saying North—northwest—west—southwest—south—southeast—east—and after a moment of hesitation reading off the points in the reverse order. The wind was blowing into Germany, and unconsciously, in trying to find a way out of the *éclatements*, I was getting farther and farther away from home and coming within range of additional batteries of hostile anti-aircraft guns.

I might have landed at Karlsruhe or Cologne, had it not been for Miller. My love for concentric circles of red, white, and blue dates from the moment when I saw the French *cocarde* on his Spad.

“And if I had been a Hun!” he said, when we landed at the aerodrome. “Oh, man! you were fruit salad! Fruit salad, I tell you! I could have speared you with my eyes shut.”

I resented the implication of defenselessness. I said that I was keeping my eyes open, and if he had been a Hun, the fruit salad might not have been so palatable as it looked.

“Tell me this: Did you see me?”

I thought for a moment, and then said, “Yes.”

“When?”

“When you passed over my head.”

“And twenty seconds before that you would have been a sieve, if either of us had been a Boche.”

I yielded the point to save further argument.

He had come swooping down fairly suddenly. When I saw him making his way so saucily among the *éclatements* I felt my confidence returning in increasing waves. I began to use my head, and found that it was possible to make the German gunners guess badly. There was no menace in the sound of shells barking at a distance, and we were soon clear of all of them.

J. B. took me aside the moment I landed. He had one of his fur boots in his hand and was wearing the other. He had also lighted the cork end of his cigarette. To one acquainted with his magisterial orderliness of mind and habit, these signs were eloquent.

“Now, keep this quiet!” he said. “I don't want the others to know it, but I've just had the adventure of my life. I attacked a German. Great Scott! what an opportunity! and I bungled it through being too eager!”

“When was this?”

“Just after the others dove. You remember—”

I told him, briefly, of my experience, adding, “And I didn't know there was a German in sight until I saw the smoke of the tracer bullets.”

“Neither did I, only I didn't see even the smoke.”

This cheered me immensely. “What! you didn't—”

“No. I saw nothing but sky where the others had disappeared. I was looking for them when I saw the German. He was about four hundred metres below me. He couldn't have seen me, I think, because he kept straight on. I dove, but didn't open fire until I could have a nearer view of his black crosses. I wanted to be sure. I had no idea that I was going so much faster. The first thing I knew I was right on him. Had to pull back on my stick to keep from crashing into him. Up I went and fell into a nose-dive. When I came out of it there was no sign of the German, and I hadn't fired a shot!”

“Did you come home alone?”

“No; I had the luck to meet the others just afterward. Now, not a word of this to any one!”

But there was no need for secrecy. The near combat had been seen by both Talbott and Porter. At luncheon we both came in for our share of ragging.

“You should have seen them following us down!” said Porter; “like two old rheumatics going into the subway. We saw them both when we were taking height again. The scrap was all over hours before, and they were still a thousand metres away.”

“You want to dive vertically. Needn't worry about your old 'bus. She'll stand

it.”

“Well, the Lord has certainly protected the innocent to-day!”

“One of them was wandering off into Germany. Bill had to waggle Miller to page him.”

“And there was Drew, going down on that biplane we were chasing. I've been trying to think of one wrong thing he might have done which he didn't do. First he dove with the sun in his face, when he might have had it at his back. Then he came all the way in full view, instead of getting under his tail. Good thing the mitrailleur was firing at us. After that, when he had the chance of a lifetime, he fell into a vrille and scared the life out of the rest of us. I thought the gunner had turned on him. And while we were following him down to see where he was going to splash, the Boche got away.”

All this happened months ago, but every trifling incident connected with our first patrol is still fresh in mind. And twenty years from now, if I chance to hear the “Chansons sans Paroles,” or if I hum to myself a few bars of a ballad, then sure to be long forgotten by the world at large, “Oh, movin' man, don't take ma baby grand!” I shall have only to close my eyes, and wait passively. First Tiffin will come with the lighted candle: “Beau temps, monsieur.” I shall hear Talbott shouting, “Rendezvous two thousand over field. If—get lost—better—home.” J. B. will rush up smoking the cork end of a cigarette. “I've just had the adventure of my life!” And Miller, sitting on an essence-case, will have lost none of his old conviction. “Oh, man! you were fruit salad! Fruit salad, I tell you! I could have speared you with my eyes shut!”

And in those days, happily still far off, there will be many another old gray-beard with such memories; unless they are all to wear out their days uselessly regretting that they are no longer young, there must be clubs where they may exchange reminiscences. These need not be pretentious affairs. Let there be a strong odor of burnt castor oil and gasoline as you enter the door; a wide view from the verandas of earth and sky; maps on the walls; and on the roof a canvas “pantaloon-leg” to catch the wind. Nothing else matters very much. There they will be as happy as any old airman can expect to be, arguing about the winds and disputing one another's judgment about the height of the clouds.

If you say to one of them, “Tell us something about the Great War,” as likely

as not he will tell you a pleasant story enough. And the pity of it will be that, hearing the tale, a young man will long for another war. Then you must say to him, “But what about the shell fire? Tell us something of machines falling in flames.” Then, if he is an honest old airman whose memory is still unimpaired, the young one who has been listening will have sober second thoughts.

VI

A BALLOON ATTACK

“I'M looking for two balloonatics,” said Talbott, as he came into the messroom; “and I think I've found them.”

Percy, Talbott's orderly, Tiffin the steward, Drew, and I were the only occupants of the room. Percy is an old *légionnaire*, crippled with rheumatism. His active service days are over. Tiffin's working hours are filled with numberless duties. He makes the beds, and serves food from three to five times daily to members of the Escadrille Lafayette. These two being eliminated, the identity of the balloonatics was plain.

“The orders have just come,” Talbott added, “and I decided that the first men I met after leaving the bureau would be balloonatics. Virtue has gone into both of you. Now, if you can make fire come out of a Boche sausage, you will have done all that is required. Listen. This is interesting. The orders are in French, but I will translate as I read:—

On the umteenth day of June, the escadrilles of Groupe de Combat Blank [that's ours] will cooperate in an attack on the German observation balloons along the sector extending from X to Y. The patrols to be furnished are: (1) two patrols of protection, of five *avions* each, by the escadrilles Spa. 87 and Spa. 12; (2) four patrols of attack, of three *avions* each, by the escadrilles Spa. 124 [that's us], Spa. 93, Spa. 10, and Spa. 12.

The attack will be organized as follows: on the day set, weather permitting, the two patrols of protection will leave the field at 10.30 A.M. The patrol of Spa. 87 will rendezvous over the village of N——. The patrol of protection of Spa. 12 will rendezvous over the village of C——. At 10.45, precisely, they will start for the lines, crossing at an altitude of thirty-five hundred metres. The patrol furnished by Spa. 87 will guard the sector from X to T, between the town of O—— and the two enemy balloons on that sector. The patrol furnished by Spa. 12 will guard the sector from T to Y, between the railway line and the two enemy balloons on that sector. Immediately after the attack has been made, these formations will return to the aerodrome.

At 10.40 A.M. the four patrols of attack will leave the field, and will rendezvous as follows. [Here followed the directions.] At 10.55, precisely, they will start for the lines, crossing at an approximate altitude of sixteen hundred metres, each patrol making in a direct line for the balloon assigned to it. Numbers 1 and 2 of each of these patrols will carry rockets. Number 3 will fly immediately above them, offering further protection in case of attack by enemy aircraft. Number 1 of each patrol will first attack the balloon. If he fails, number 2 will attack. If number 1 is successful, number 2 will then attack the observers in their parachutes. If number 1 fails, and number 2 is successful, number 3 will attack the observers. The patrol will then proceed to the aerodrome by the shortest route.

Squadron commanders will make a return before noon to-day, of the names of pilots designated by them for their respective patrols.

In case of unfavorable weather, squadron commanders will be informed of the date to which the attack has been postponed.

Pilots designated as numbers 1 and 2 of the patrols of attack will be relieved from the usual patrol duty from this date. They will employ their time at rocket shooting. A target will be in place on the east side of the field from 1.30 P.M. to-day.

“Are there any remarks?” said Talbott, as if he had been reading the minutes at a debating-club meeting.

“Yes,” said J. B. “When is the umteenth of June?”

“Ah, mon vieux! that's the question. The commandant knows, and he isn't telling. Any other little thing?”

I suggested that we would like to know which of us was to be number 1.

“That's right. Drew, how would you like to be the first rocketeer?”

“I've no objection,” said J. B., grinning as if the frenzy of balloonaticking had already got into his blood.

“Right! that's settled. I'll see your mechanicians about fitting your machines for rockets. You can begin practice this afternoon.”

Percy had been listening with interest to the conversation.

“You got some nice job, you boys. But if you bring him down, there will be a lot of chuckling in the trenches. You won't hear it, but they will all be saying, 'Bravo! Épatant!' I've been there. I've seen it and I know. Does 'em all good to see a sausage brought down. 'There's another one of their eyes knocked out,' they say.”

“Percy is right,” said J. B. as we were walking down the road. “Destroying a balloon is not a great achievement in itself. Of course, it's so much equipment gone, so much expense added to the German war-budget. That is something. But the effect on the infantrymen is the important thing. Boche soldiers, thousands of them, will see one of their balloons coming down in flame. They will be saying, 'Where are our airmen?' like those old poilus we met at the station when we first came out. It's bound to influence morale. Now let's see. The balloon, we will say, is at sixteen hundred metres. At that height it can be seen by men on the ground within a radius of—” and so forth and so on.

We figured it out approximately, estimating the numbers of soldiers, of all branches of service, who would witness the sight. Multiplying this number by four, our conclusion was that, as a result of the expedition, the length of the war and its outcome might very possibly be affected. At any rate, there would be such an ebbing of German morale, and such a flooding of French, that the way would be opened to a decisive victory on that front.

But supposing we should miss our sausage? J. B. grew thoughtful.

“Have another look at the orders. I don't remember what the instructions were in case we both fail.”

I read, “If number 1 fails and number 2 is successful, number 3 will attack the observers. The patrol will then proceed to the aerodrome by the shortest route.”

This was plain enough. Allowance could be made for one failure, but two—the possibility had not even been considered.

“By the shortest route.” There was a piece of sly humor for you. It may have been unconscious, but we preferred to believe that the commandant had chuckled as he dictated it. A sort of afterthought, as much as to say to his pilots, “Well, you young bucks, you would-be airmen: thought it would be all sport, eh? You might have known. It's your own fault. Now go out and attack those balloons. It's possible that you may have a scrap or two on your hands while you are at it. Oh, yes, by the way, coming home, you'll be down pretty low. Every Boche machine in the air will have you at a disadvantage. Better return by the shortest route.”

One feature of the programme did not appeal to us greatly, and this was the attack to be made on the observers when they had jumped with their parachutes. It seemed as near the border line between legitimate warfare and cold-blooded murder as anything could well be.

“You are armed with a machine-gun. He may have an automatic pistol. It will require from five to ten minutes for him to reach the ground after he has jumped. You can come down on him like a stone. Well, it's your job, thank the Lord! not mine,” said Drew.

It was my job, but I insisted that he would be an accomplice. In destroying the balloon, he would force me to attack the observers. When I asked Talbott if this feature of the attack could be eliminated he said:—

“Certainly. I have instructions from the commandant touching on this point. In case any pilot objects to attacking the observers with machine-gun fire, he is to strew their parachutes with autumn leaves and such field-flowers as the season affords. Now, listen! What difference, ethically, is there, between attacking one observation officer in a parachute, and dropping a ton of bombs on a train-load of soldiers? And to kill the observers is really more important than to destroy the balloon. If you are going to be a military pilot, for the love of Pete and Alf be one!”

He was right, of course, but that didn't make the prospect any the more pleasant.

The large map at the bureau now had greater interest for us than ever. The German balloons along the sector were marked in pictorially, with an ink line, representing the cable, running from the basket of each one down to the exact spot on the map from which they were launched. Under one of these, “Spa. 124” was printed, neatly, in red ink. It was the farthest distant from our lines of the four to be attacked, and about ten kilometres within German-held territory. The cable ran to the outskirts of a village situated on a railroad and a small stream. The location of enemy aviation fields was also shown pictorially, each one represented by a minute sketch, very carefully made, of an Albatross biplane. We noticed that there were several aerodromes not far distant from our balloon.

After a survey of the map, the commandant's afterthought, “by the shortest route,” was not so needless as it appeared at first. The German positions were in a salient, a large corner, the line turning almost at right angles. We could cross them from the south, attack our balloon, and then, if we wished, return to French territory on the west side of the salient.

“We may miss some heavy shelling. If we double on our tracks going home, they will be expecting us, of course; whereas, if we go out on the west side, we will pass over batteries which didn't see us come in. If there should happen to be an east wind, there will be another reason in favor of the plan. The commandant is a shrewd soldier. It may have been his way of saying that the longest way round is the shortest way home.”

Our Spads were ready after luncheon. A large square of tin had been fastened over the fabric of each lower wing, under the rocket fittings, to prevent danger of fire from sparks. Racks for six rockets, three on a side, had been fastened to the struts. The rockets were tipped with sharp steel points to insure their pricking the

silk balloon envelope. The batteries for igniting them were connected with a button inside the car, within easy reach of the pilot. Lieutenant Verdane, our French second-in-command, was to supervise our practice on the field. We were glad of this. If we failed to “spear our sausage,” it would not be through lack of efficient instruction. He explained to Drew how the thing was to be done. He was to come on the balloon into the wind, and preferably not more than four hundred metres above it. He was to let it pass from view under the wing; then, when he judged that he was directly over it, to reduce his motor and dive vertically, placing the bag within the line of his two circular sights, holding it there until the bag just filled the circle. At that second he would be about 250 metres distant from it, and it was then that the rockets should be fired.

The instructions were simple enough, but in practicing on the target we found that they were not so easy to carry out. It was hard to judge accurately the moment for diving. Sometimes we overshot the target, but more often we were short of it. Owing to the angle at which the rockets were mounted on the struts, it was very important that the dive should be vertical.

One morning, the attack could have been made with every chance of success. Drew and I left the aerodrome a few minutes before sunrise for a trial flight, that we might give our motors a thorough testing. We climbed through a heavy mist which lay along the ground like water, filling every fold and hollow, flowing up the hillsides, submerging everything but the crests of the highest hills. The tops of the twin spires of S—— cathedral were all that could be seen of the town. Beyond, the long chain of heights where the first-line trenches were rose just clear of the mist, which glowed blood-red as the sun came up.

The balloons were already up, hanging above the dense cloud of vapor, elongated planets drifting in space. The observers were directing the fire of their batteries to those positions which stood revealed. Shells were also exploding on lower ground, for we saw the mist billow upward time after time with the force of mighty concussions, and slowly settle again. It was an awe-inspiring sight. We might have been watching the last battle of the last war that could ever be, with the world still fighting on, bitterly, blindly, gradually sinking from sight in a sea of blood. I have never seen anything to equal that spectacle of an artillery battle in the mists.

Conditions were ideal for the attack. We could have gone to the objective, fired our rockets, and made our return, without once having been seen from the ground. It was an opportunity made in heaven, an Allied heaven. “But the

infantry would not have seen it," said J. B.; which was true. Not that we cared to do the thing in a spectacular fashion. We were thinking of that decisive effect upon morale.

Two hours later we were pitching pennies in one of the hangars, when Talbott came across the field, followed solemnly by Whiskey and Soda, the lion mascots of the Escadrille Lafayette.

"What's the date, anybody know?" he asked, very casually.

J. B. is an agile-minded youth.

"It isn't the umteenth by any chance?"

"Right the first time." He looked at his watch. "It is now ten past ten. You have half an hour. Better get your rockets attached. How are your motors—all right?"

This was one way of breaking the news, and the best one, I think. If we had been told the night before, we should have slept badly.

The two patrols of protection left the field exactly on schedule time. At 10.35, Irving, Drew, and I were strapped in our machines, waiting, with our motors turning *ralenti*, for Talbott's signal to start.

He was romping with Whiskey. "Atta boy, Whiskey! Eat 'em up! Atta ole lion!"

As a squadron leader Talbott has many virtues, but the most important of them all is his casualness. And he is so sincere and natural in it. He has no conception of the dramatic possibilities of a situation—something to be profoundly thankful for in the commander of an *escadrille de chasse*. Situations are dramatic enough, tense enough, without one's taking thought of the fact. He might have stood there, watch in hand, counting off the seconds. He might have said, "Remember, we're all counting on you. Don't let us down. You've got to get that balloon!" Instead of that, he glanced at his watch as if he had just remembered us.

"All right; run along, you sausage-spearers. We're having lunch at twelve. That will give you time to wash up after you get back."

Miller, of course, had to have a parting shot. He had been in hiding somewhere until the last moment. Then he came rushing up with a toothbrush

and a safety-razor case. He stood waving them as I taxied around into the wind. His purpose was to remind me of the possibility of landing with a *panne de moteur* in Germany, and the need I would then have of my toilet articles.

At 10.54, J. B. came slanting down over me, then pulled up in *ligne de vol*, and went straight for the lines. I fell in behind him at about one hundred metres distance. Irving was two hundred metres higher. Before we left the field he said: “You are not to think about Germans. That's my job. I'll warn you if I see that we are going to be attacked. Go straight for the balloon. If you don't see me come down and signal, you will know that there is no danger.”

The French artillery were giving splendid coöperation. I saw clusters of shell-explosions on the ground. The gunners were carrying out their part of the programme, which was to register on enemy anti-aircraft batteries as we passed over them. They must have made good practice. Anti-aircraft fire was feeble, and, such of it as there was, very wild.

We came within view of the railway line which runs from the German lines to a large town, their most important distributing center on the sector. Following it along with my eyes to the halfway point, I saw the red roofs of the village which we had so often looked at from a distance. Our balloon was in its usual place. It looked like a yellow plum, and no larger than one; but ripe, ready to be plucked.

A burst of flame far to the left attracted my attention, and almost at the same moment, one to the right. Ribbons of fire flapped upward in clouds of black oily smoke. Drew signaled with his joy-stick, and I knew what he meant: “Hooray! two down! It's our turn next!” But we were still three or four minutes away. That was unfortunate, for a balloon can be drawn down with amazing speed.

A rocket sailed into the air and burst in a point of greenish white light, dazzling in its brilliancy, even in the full light of day. Immediately after this two white objects, so small as to be hardly visible, floated earthward: the parachutes of the observers. They had jumped. The balloon disappeared from view behind Drew's machine. It was being drawn down, of course, as fast as the motor could wind up the cable. It was an exciting moment for us. We were coming on at two hundred kilometres an hour, racing against time and very little time at that. “Sheridan, only five miles away,” could not have been more eager for his journey's end. Our throttles were wide open, the engines developing their highest capacity for power.

I swerved out to one side for another glimpse of the target: it was almost on

the ground, and directly under us. Drew made a steep virage and dived. I started after him in a tight spiral, to look for the observers; but they had both disappeared. The balloon was swaying from side to side under the tension of the cable. It was hard to keep it in view. I lost it under my wing. Tipping up on the other side, I saw Drew release his rockets. They spurted out in long wavering lines of smoke. He missed. The balloon lay close to the ground, looking larger, riper than ever. The sight of its smooth, sleek surface was the most tantalizing of invitations. Letting it pass under me again, I waited for a second or two, then shut down the motor, and pushed forward on the control-stick until I was falling vertically. Standing upright on the rudder-bar, I felt the tugging of the shoulder-straps. Getting the bag well within the sights, I held it there until it just filled the circle. Then I pushed the button.

Although it was only eight o'clock, both Drew and I were in bed; for we were both very tired, it was a chilly evening, and we had no fire. An oil lamp was on the table between the two cots. Drew was sitting propped up, his fur coat rolled into a bundle for a back-rest. He had a sweater, tied by the sleeves, around his shoulders. His hands were clasped around his blanketed knees, and his breath, rising in a cloud of luminous steam,—

> “Like pious incense from a censer old,
> Seemed taking flight for heaven without a death.”

And yet, “pious” is hardly the word. J. B. was swearing, drawing from a choice reserve of picturesque epithets which I did not know that he possessed. I regret the necessity of omitting some of them.

“I don't see how I could have missed it! Why, I didn't turn to look for at least thirty seconds. I was that sure that I had brought it down. Then I banked and nearly fell out of my seat when I saw it there. I redressed at four hundred metres. I couldn't have been more than one hundred metres away when I fired the rockets.”

“What did you do then?”

“Circled around, waiting for you. I had the balloon in sight all the while you were diving. It was a great sight to watch from below, particularly when you let go your rockets. I'll never forget it, never. But, Lord! Without the climax! Artistically, it was an awful fizzle.”

There was no denying this. A balloon bonfire was the only possible conclusion to the adventure, and we both failed at lighting it. I, too, redressed when very close to the bag, and made a steep bank in order to escape the burst of flame from the ignited gas. The rockets leaped out, with a fine, blood-stirring roar. The mere sound ought to have been enough to make any balloon collapse. But when I turned, there it was, intact, a super-Brobdingnagian pumpkin, seen at close view, and still ripe, still ready for plucking. If I live to one hundred years, I shall never have a greater surprise or a more bitter disappointment.

There was no leisure for brooding over it then. My altimeter registered only two hundred and fifty metres, and the French lines were far distant. If the motor failed I should have to land in German territory. Any fate but that. Nevertheless, I felt in the pocket of my combination, to be sure that my box of matches was safely in place. We were cautioned always to carry them where they could be quickly got at in case of a forced landing in enemy country. An airman must destroy his machine in such an event. But my Spad did not mean to end its career so ingloriously. The motor ran beautifully, hitting on every cylinder. We climbed from two hundred and fifty metres to three hundred and fifty, four hundred and fifty, and on steadily upward. In the vicinity of the balloon, machine-gun fire from the ground had been fairly heavy; but I was soon out of range, and saw the tracer bullets, like swarms of blue bubbles, curving

downward again at the end of their trajectory.

No machines, either French or German, were in sight. Irving had disappeared some time before we reached the balloon. I had not seen Drew from the moment when he fired his rockets. He waited until he made sure that I was following, then started for the west side of the salient. I did not see him, because of my interest in those clouds of blue bubbles which were rising with anything but bubble-like tranquillity. When I was clear of them, I set my course westward and parallel with the enemy lines to the south.

I had never flown so low, so far in German territory. The temptation to forget precaution and to make a leisurely survey of the ground beneath was hard to resist. It was not wholly resisted, in fact. Anti-aircraft fire was again feeble and badly ranged. The shells burst far behind and above, for I was much too low to offer an easy target. This gave me a dangerous sense of safety, and so I tipped up on one side, then on the other, examining the roads, searching the ruins of villages, the trenches, the shell-marked ground. I saw no living thing; brute or human; nothing but endless, inconceivable desolation.

The foolishness of that close scrutiny alone, without the protection of other *avions*, I realize now much better than I did then. Unless flying at six thousand metres or above,—when he is comparatively safe from attack,—a pilot may never relax his vigilance for thirty seconds together. He must look behind him, below, above, constantly. All aviators learn this eventually, but in the case of many new pilots the knowledge comes too late to be of service. I thought this was to be my experience, when, looking up, I saw five combat machines bearing down upon me. Had they been enemy planes my chances would have been very small, for they were close at hand before I saw them. The old French aviator, worn out by his five hundred hours of flight over the trenches, said, “Save your nervous energy.” I exhausted a three-months reserve in as many seconds. The suspense, luckily, was hardly longer than that. It passed when the patrol leader, followed by the others, pulled up in *ligne de vol*, about one hundred metres above me, showing their French *cocardes*. It was the group of protection of Spa. 87. At the time I saw Drew, a quarter of a mile away. As he turned, the sunlight glinted along his rocket-tubes.

A crowded hour of glorious life it seems now, although I was not of this opinion at the time. In reality, we were absent barely forty minutes. Climbing out of my machine at the aerodrome, I looked at my watch. A quarter to twelve. Laignier, the sergeant mechanician, was sitting in a sunny corner of the hangar,

reading the “Matin,” just as I had left him.

Lieutenant Talbott's only comment was: “Don't let it worry you. Better luck next time. The group bagged two out of four, and Irving knocked down a Boche who was trying to get at you. That isn't bad for half an hour's work.”

But the decisive effect on morale which was to result from our wholesale destruction of balloons was diminished by half. We had forced ours down, but it bobbed up again very soon afterward. The one-o'clock patrol saw it, higher, Miller said, than it had ever been. It was Miller, by the way, who looked in on us at nine o'clock the same evening. The lamp was out.

“Asleep?”

Neither of us was, but we didn't answer. He closed the door, then reopened it.

“It's laziness, that's what it is. They ought to put you on school régime again.”

He had one more afterthought. Looking in a third time, he said,—

“How about it, you little old human dynamos; are you getting rusty?”

VII

BROUGHT DOWN

THE preceding chapters of this journal have been written to little purpose if it has not been made clear that Drew and I, like most pilots during the first weeks of service at the front, were worth little to the Allied cause. We were warned often enough that the road to efficiency in military aviation is a long and dangerous one. We were given much excellent advice by aviators who knew what they were talking about. Much of this we solicited, in fact, and then proceeded to disregard it item by item. Eager to get results, we plunged into our work with the valor of ignorance, the result being that Drew was shot down in one of his first encounters, escaping with his life by one of those more than miracles for which there is no explanation. That I did not fare as badly or worse is due solely to the indulgence of that godfather of ours, already mentioned, who watched over my first flights while in a mood beneficently pro-Ally.

Drew's adventure followed soon after our first patrol, when he had the near combat with the two-seater. Luckily, on that occasion, both the German pilot and his machine-gunner were taken completely off their guard. Not only did he attack with the sun squarely in his face, but he went down in a long, gradual dive, in full view of the gunner, who could not have asked for a better target. But the man was asleep, and this gave J. B. a dangerous contempt for all gunners of enemy nationality.

Lieutenant Talbott cautioned him. “You have been lucky, but don't get it into your head that this sort of thing happens often. Now, I'm going to give you a standing order. You are not to attack again, neither of you are to think of attacking, during your first month here. As likely as not it would be your luck the next time to meet an old pilot. If you did, I wouldn't give much for your chances. He would outmaneuver you in a minute. You will go out on patrol with the others, of course; it's the only way to learn to fight. But if you get lost, go back to our balloons and stay there until it is time to go home.”

Neither of us obeyed this order, and, as it happened, Drew was the one to suffer. A group of American officers visited the squadron one afternoon. In courtesy to our guests, it was decided to send out all the pilots for an additional

patrol, to show them how the thing was done. Twelve machines were in readiness for the sortie, which was set for seven o'clock, the last one of the day. We were to meet at three thousand metres, and then to divide forces, one patrol to cover the east half of the sector and one the west.

We got away beautifully, with the exception of Drew, who had motor-trouble and was five minutes late in starting. With his permission I insert here his own account of the adventure—a letter written while he was in hospital.

No doubt you are wondering what happened, listening, meanwhile, to many I-told-you-so explanations from the others. This will be hard on you, but bear up, son. It might not be a bad plan to listen, with the understanding as well as with the ear, to some expert advice on how to bag the Hun. To quote the prophetic Miller, “I'm telling you this for your own good.”

I gave my name and the number of the escadrille to the medical officer at the *poste de secours*. He said he would 'phone the captain at once, so that you must know before this, that I have been amazingly lucky. I fell the greater part of two miles—count 'em, two!—before I actually regained control, only to lose it again. I fainted while still several hundred feet from the ground; but more of this later. Couldn't sleep last night. Had a fever and my brain went on a spree, taking advantage of my helplessness. I just lay in bed and watched it function. Besides, there was a great artillery racket all night long. It appeared to be coming from our sector, so you must have heard it as well. This hospital is not very far back and we get the full orchestral effect of heavy firing. The result is that I am dead tired to-day. I believe I can sleep for a week.

They have given me a bed in the officers' ward—me, a corporal. It is because I am an American, of course. Wish there was some way of showing one's appreciation for so much kindness. My neighbor on the left is a *chasseur* captain. A hand-grenade exploded in his face. He will go through life horribly disfigured. An old padre, with two machine-gun bullets in his hip, is on the other side. He is very patient, but sometimes the pain is a little too much for him. To a Frenchman, “Oh, là, là!” is an expression for every conceivable kind of emotion. In the future it will mean unbearable physical pain to me. Our orderlies are two *poilus*, long past military age. They are as gentle and thoughtful as the nurses themselves. One of them brought me lemonade all night long. Worth while getting wounded just to have something taste so good.

I meant to finish this letter a week ago, but haven't felt up to it. Quite perky this morning, so I'll go on with the tale of my “heroic combat.” Only, first, tell me how that absurd account of it got into the “Herald”? I hope Talbott knows that I was not foolish enough to attack six Germans single-handed. If he doesn't, please enlighten him. His opinion of my common sense must be low enough, as it is.

We were to meet over S—— at three thousand metres, you remember, and to cover the sector at five thousand until dusk. I was late in getting away, and by the time I reached the rendezvous you had all gone. There wasn't a chasse machine in sight. I ought to have gone back to the balloons as Talbott advised, but thought it would be easy to pick you up later, so went on alone after I had got some height. Crossed the lines at thirty-five hundred metres, and finally got up to four thousand, which was the best I could do with my rebuilt engine. The Huns started shelling, but there were only a few of them that barked. I went down the lines for a quarter of an hour, meeting two Sopwiths and a Letord, but no Spads. You were almost certain to be higher than I, but my old packet was doing its best at four thousand, and getting overheated with the exertion. Had to throttle down and *pique* several times to cool off.

Then I saw you—at least I thought it was you—about four kilometres inside the German lines. I counted six machines, well grouped, one a good deal higher than the others and one several hundred metres below them. The pilot on top was doing beautiful *renversements* and an occasional barrel-turn, in Barry's manner. I was so certain it was our patrol that I started over at once, to join you. It was getting dusk and I lost sight of

the machine lowest down for a few seconds. Without my knowing it, he was approaching at exactly my altitude. You know how difficult it is to see a machine in that position. Suddenly he loomed up in front of me like an express train, as you have seen them approach from the depths of a moving-picture screen, only ten times faster; and he was firing as he came. I realized my awful mistake, of course. His tracer bullets were going by on the left side, but he corrected his aim, and my motor seemed to be eating them up. I banked to the right, and was about to cut my motor and dive, when I felt a smashing blow in the left shoulder. A sickening sensation and a very peculiar one, not at all what I thought it might feel like to be hit with a bullet. I believed that it came from the German in front of me. But it couldn't have, for he was still approaching when I was hit, and I have learned here that the bullet entered from behind.

This is the history of less than a minute I'm giving you. It seemed much longer than that, but I don't suppose it was. I tried to shut down the motor, but couldn't manage it because my left arm was gone. I really believed that it had been blown off into space until I glanced down and saw that it was still there. But for any service it was to me, I might just as well have lost it. There was a vacant period of ten or fifteen seconds which I can't fill in. After that I knew that I was falling, with my motor going full speed. It was a helpless realization. My brain refused to act. I could do nothing. Finally, I did have one clear thought, “Am I on fire?” This cut right through the fog, brought me up broad awake. I was falling almost vertically, in a sort of half *vrille*. No machine but a Spad could have stood the strain. The Huns were following me and were not far away, judging by the sound of their guns. I fully expected to feel another bullet or two boring its way through. One did cut the skin of my right leg, although I didn't know this until I reached the hospital. Perhaps it was well that I did fall out of control, for the firing soon stopped, the Germans thinking, and with reason, that they had bagged me. Some proud Boche airman is wearing an iron cross on my account. Perhaps the whole crew of dare-devils has been decorated. However, no unseemly sarcasm. We would pounce on a lonely Hun just as quickly. There is no chivalry in war in these modern days.

I pulled out of the spin, got the broom-stick between my knees, reached over, and shut down the motor with my right hand. The propeller stopped dead. I didn't much care, being very drowsy and tired. The worst of it was that I couldn't get my breath. I was gasping as though I had been hit in the pit of the stomach. Then I lost control again and started falling. It was awful! I was almost ready to give up. I believe that I said, out loud, “I'm going to be killed. This is my last sortie.” At any rate, I thought it. Made one last effort and came out in *ligne de vol*, as nearly as I could judge, about one hundred and fifty metres from the ground. It was an ugly-looking place for landing, trenches and shell-holes everywhere. I was wondering in a vague way whether they were French or German, when I fell into the most restful sleep I've ever had in my life.

I have no recollection of the crash, not the slightest. I might have fallen as gently as a leaf. That is one thing to be thankful for among a good many others. When I came to, it was at once, completely. I knew that I was on a stretcher and remembered immediately exactly what had happened. My heart was going pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat, and I could hardly breathe, but I had no sensation of pain except in my chest. This made me think that I had broken every bone in my body. I tried moving first one leg, then the other, then my arms, my head, my body. No trouble at all, except with my left arm and side.

I accepted the miracle without attempting to explain it, for I had something more important to wonder about: who had the handles of my stretcher? The first thing I did was to open my eyes, but I was bleeding from a scratch on the forehead and saw only a red blur. I wiped them dry with my sleeve and looked again. The broad back in front of me was covered with mud. Impossible to distinguish the color of the tunic. But the shrapnel helmet above it was—French! I was in French hands. If ever I live long enough in one place, so that I may gather a few possessions and make a home for myself, on one wall of my living-room I will have a bust-length portrait, rear view, of a French *brancardier*, mud-covered back and battered tin hat.

Do you remember our walk with Ménault in the rain, and the *déjeuner* at the restaurant where they made such wonderful omelettes? I am sure that you will recall the occasion, although you may have forgotten the conversation. I have not forgotten one remark of Ménault's apropos of talk about risks. If a man were willing, he said, to stake everything for it, he would accumulate an experience of fifteen or twenty minutes which would compensate him, a thousand times over, for all the hazard. “And if you live to be old,” he said

quaintly, “you can never be bored with life. You will have something, always, very pleasant to think about.” I mention this in connection with my discovery that I was not in German hands. I have had five minutes of perfect happiness without any background—no thought of yesterday or to-morrow—to spoil it.

I said, “Bonjour, messieurs,” in a gurgling voice. The man in front turned his head sidewise and said,—

“Tiens! Ça va, monsieur l'aviateur?”

The other one said, “Ah, mon vieux!” You know the inflection they give this expression, particularly when it means, “This is something wonderful!” He added that they had seen the combat and my fall, and little expected to find the pilot living, to say nothing of speaking. I hoped that they would go on talking, but I was being carried along a trench; they had to lift me shoulder-high at every turn, and needed all their energy. The Germans were shelling the lines. Several fell fairly close, and they brought me down a long flight of wooden steps into a dugout to wait until the worst of it should be over. While waiting, they told me that I had fallen just within the first-line trenches, at a spot where a slight rise in ground hid me from sight of the enemy. Otherwise, they might have had a bad time rescuing me. My Spad was completely wrecked. It fell squarely into a trench, the wings breaking the force of the fall. Before reaching the ground, I turned, they said, and was making straight for Germany. Fifty metres higher, and I would have come down in No Man's Land.

For a long time we listened in silence to the subdued *crr-ump*, *crr-ump*, of the shells. Sometimes showers of earth pattered down the stairway, and we would hear the high-pitched, droning *V-z-z-z* of pieces of shell-casing as they whizzed over the opening. One of them would say, “Not far, that one”; or, “He's looking for some one, that fellow,” in a voice without a hint of emotion. Then, long silences and other deep, earth-shaking rumbles.

They asked me, several times, if I was suffering, and offered to go on to the *poste de secours* if I wanted them to. It was not heavy bombardment, but it would be safer to wait for a little while. I told them that I was ready to go on at any time, but not to hurry on my account; I was quite comfortable.

The light glimmering down the stairway faded out and we were in complete darkness. My brain was amazingly clear. It registered every trifling impression. I wish it might always be so intensely awake and active. There seemed to be four of us in the dugout; the two *brancardiers*, and this second self of mine, as curious as an eavesdropper at a keyhole, listening intently to everything, and then turning to whisper to me. The *brancardiers* repeated the same comments after every explosion. I thought: “They have been saying this to each other for over three years. It has become automatic. They will never be able to stop.” I was feverish, perhaps. If it was fever, it burned away any illusions I may have had of modern warfare from the infantryman's viewpoint. I know that there is no glamour in it for them; that it has long since become a deadly monotony, an endless repetition of the same kinds of horror and suffering, a boredom more terrible than death itself, which is repeating itself in the same ways, day after day and month after month. It isn't often that an aviator has the chance I've had. It would be a good thing if they were to send us into the trenches for twenty-four hours, every few months. It would make us keener fighters, more eager to do our utmost to bring the war to an end for the sake of those *poilus*.

The dressing-station was in a very deep dugout, lighted by candles. At a table in the center of the room the medical officer was working over a man with a terribly crushed leg. Several others were sitting or lying along the wall, awaiting their turn. They watched every movement he made in an apprehensive, animal way, and so did I. They put me on the table next, although it was not my turn. I protested, but the doctor paid no attention. “Aviateur américain,” again. It's a pity that Frenchmen can't treat us Americans as though we belong here.

As soon as the doctor had finished with me, my stretcher was fastened to a two-wheeled carrier and we started down a cobbled road to the ambulance station. I was light-headed and don't remember much of that part of the journey. Had to take refuge in another dugout when the Huns dropped a shell on an ammunition-dump in a village through which we were to pass. There was a deafening banging and booming for a long

time, and when we did go through the town it was on the run. The whole place was in flames and small-arms ammunition still exploding. I remember seeing a long column of soldiers going at the double in the opposite direction, and they were in full marching order.

Well, this is the end of the tale; all of it, at any rate, in which you would be interested. It was one o'clock in the morning before I got between cool, clean sheets, and I was wounded about a quarter past eight. I have been tired ever since.

There is another aviator here, a Frenchman, who broke his jaw and both legs in a fall while returning from a night bombardment. His bed is across the aisle from mine; he has a formidable-looking apparatus fastened on his head and under his chin, to hold his jaw firm until the bones knit. He is forbidden to talk, but breaks the rule whenever the nurse leaves the ward. He speaks a little English and has told me a delightful story about the origin of aerial combat. A French pilot, a friend of his, he says, attached to a certain army group during August and September, 1914, often met a German aviator during his reconnaissance patrols. In those Arcadian days, fighting in the air was a development for the future, and these two pilots exchanged greetings, not cordially, perhaps, but courteously: a wave of the hand, as much as to say, “We are enemies, but we need not forget the civilities.” Then they both went about their work of spotting batteries, watching for movements of troops, etc. One morning the German failed to return the salute. The Frenchman thought little of this, and greeted him in the customary manner at their next meeting. To his surprise, the Boche shook his fist at him in the most blustering and caddish way. There was no mistaking the insult. They had passed not fifty metres from each other, and the Frenchman distinctly saw the closed fist. He was saddened by the incident, for he had hoped that some of the ancient courtesies of war would survive in the aerial branch of the service, at least. It angered him too; therefore, on his next reconnaissance, he ignored the German. Evidently the Boche air-squadrons were being Prussianized. The enemy pilot approached very closely and threw a missile at him. He could not be sure what it was, as the object went wide of the mark; but he was so incensed that he made a *virage*, and drawing a small flask from his pocket, hurled it at his boorish antagonist. The flask contained some excellent port, he said, but he was repaid for the loss in seeing it crash on the exhaust-pipe of the enemy machine.

This marked the end of courtesy and the beginning of active hostilities in the air. They were soon shooting at each other with rifles, automatic pistols, and at last with machine guns. Later developments we know about. The night bombarder has been telling me this yarn in serial form. When the nurse is present, he illustrates the last chapter by means of gestures. I am ready to believe everything but the incident about the port. That doesn't sound plausible. A Frenchman would have thrown his watch before making such a sacrifice!

VIII

ONE HUNDRED HOURS

A LITTLE more than a year after our first meeting in the Paris restaurant which has so many pleasant memories for us, Drew completed his first one hundred hours of flight over the lines, an event in the life of an airman which calls for a celebration of some sort. Therefore, having been granted leave for the afternoon, the two of us came into the old French town of Bar-le-Duc, by the toy train which wanders down from the Verdun sector. We had dinner in one of those homelike little places where the food is served by the proprietor himself. On this occasion it was served hurriedly, and the bill presented promptly at eight o'clock. Our host was very sorry, but “les sales Boches, vous savez, messieurs?” They had come the night before: a dozen houses destroyed, women and children killed and maimed. With a full moon to guide them, they would be sure to return to-night. “Ah, cette guerre! Quand sera-t-elle finie?” He offered us a refuge until our train should leave. Usually, he said, he played solitaire while waiting for the Germans, but with houses tumbling about one's ears, he much preferred company. “And my wife and I are old people. She is very deaf, heureusement. She hears nothing.”

J. B. declined the invitation. “A brave way that would be to finish our evening!” he said as we walked down the silent street. “I wanted to say, 'Monsieur, I have just finished my first one hundred hours of flight at the front.' But he wouldn't have known what that means.”

I said, “No, he wouldn't have known.” Then we had no further talk for about two hours. A few soldiers, late arrivals, were prowling about in the shadow of the houses, searching for food and a warm kitchen where they might eat it. Some insistent ones pounded on the door of a restaurant far in the distance.

“Dites donc, patron! Nous avons faim, nom de Dieu! Est-ce-que tout le monde est mort ici?”

> “Only a host of phantom listeners,
> That dwelt in the lone house then,
> Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight
> To that voice from the world of men.”

It was that kind of silence, profound, tense, ghostlike. We walked through street after street, from one end of the town to the other, and saw only one light, a faint glimmer which came from a slit of a cellar window almost on the level of the pavement. We were curious, no doubt. At any rate, we looked in. A woman was sitting on a cot bed with her arms around two little children. They were snuggled up against her and both fast asleep; but she was sitting very erect, in a strained, listening attitude, staring straight before her. Since that night we have believed, both of us, that if wars can be won only by haphazard night bombardments of towns where there are women and children, then they had far better be lost.

But I am writing a journal of high adventure of a cleaner kind, in which all the resources in skill and cleverness of one set of men are pitted against those of another set. We have no bomb-dropping to do, and there are but few women and children living in the territory over which we fly. One hundred hours is not a great while as time is measured on the ground, but in terms of combat patrols, the one hundredth part of it has held more of an adventure in the true meaning of the word than we have had during the whole of our lives previously.

At first we were far too busy learning the rudiments of combat to keep an accurate record of flying time. We thought our aeroplane clocks convenient pieces of equipment rather than necessary ones. I remember coming down from my first air battle and the breathless account I gave of it at the bureau, breathless and vague. Lieutenant Talbott listened quietly, making out the *compte rendu* as I talked. When I had finished, he emphasized the haziness of my answers to his questions by quoting them: “Region: 'You know, that big wood!' Time: 'This morning, of course!' Rounds fired: 'Oh, a lot!'” etc.

Not until we had been flying for a month or more did we learn how to make the right use of our clocks and of our eyes while in the air. We listened with amazement to after-patrol talk at the mess. We learned more of what actually happened on our sorties, after they were over than while they were in progress. All of the older pilots missed seeing nothing which there was to see. They reported the numbers of the enemy planes encountered, the types, where seen and when. They spotted batteries, trains in stations back of the enemy lines, gave the hour precisely, reported any activity on the roads. In moments of exasperation Drew would say, “I think they are stringing us! This is all a put-up job!” Certainly this did appear to be the case at first. For we were air-blind. We saw little of the activity all around us, and details on the ground had no significance. How were we to take thought of time and place and altitude, note

the peculiarities of enemy machines, count their numbers, and store all this information away in memory at the moment of combat? This was a great problem.

“What I need,” J. B. used to say, “is a traveling private secretary. I'll do the fighting and he can keep the diary.”

I needed one, too, a man air-wise and battle-wise, who could calmly take note of my clock, altimeter, temperature and pressure dials, identify exactly the locality on my map, count the numbers of the enemy, estimate their approximate altitude,—all this when the air was criss-crossed with streamers of smoke from machine-gun tracer bullets, and opposing aircraft were maneuvering for position, diving and firing at each other, spiraling, nose-spinning, wing-slipping, climbing, in a confusing intermingling of tricolor cocards and black crosses.

We made gradual progress, the result being that our patrols became a hundred-fold more fascinating, sometimes, in fact, too much so. It was important that we should be able to read the ground, but more important still to remember that what was happening there was only of secondary concern to us. Often we became absorbed in watching what was taking place below us, to the exclusion of any thought of aerial activity, our chances for attack or of being attacked. The view, from the air, of a heavy bombardment, or of an infantry attack under cover of barrage fires, is a truly terrible spectacle, and in the air one has a feeling of detachment which is not easily overcome.

Yet it must be overcome, as I have said, and cannot say too many times for the benefit of any young airman who may read this journal. During an offensive the air swarms with planes. They are at all altitudes, from the lowest artillery *réglage* machines at a few hundreds of metres, to the highest *avions de chasse* at six thousand meters and above. *Réglage*, photographic, and reconnaissance planes have their particular work to do. They defend themselves as best they can, but almost never attack. Combat *avions*, on the other hand; are always looking for victims. They are the ones chiefly dangerous to the unwary pursuit pilot.

Drew's first official victory came as the result of a one-sided battle with an Albatross single-seater, whose pilot evidently did not know there was an enemy within miles of him. No more did J. B. for that matter. “It was pure accident,” he told me afterward. He had gone from Rheims to the Argonne forest without meeting a single German. “And I didn't want to meet one; for it was Thanksgiving Day. It has associations for me, you know. I'm a New Englander.”

It is not possible to convince him that it has any real significance for men who were not born on the North Atlantic seaboard. Well, all the way he had been humming

> “Over the river and through the wood
> To grandfather's house we go,”

to himself. It is easy to understand why he didn't want to meet a German. He must have been in a curiously mixed frame of mind. He covered the sector again and passed over Rheims, going northeast. Then he saw the Albatross; “and if you had been standing on one of the towers of the cathedral you would have seen a very unequal battle.” The German was about two kilometres inside his own lines, and at least a thousand metres below. Drew had every advantage.

“He didn't see me until I opened fire, and then, as it happened, it was too late. My gun didn't jam!”

The German started falling out of control, Drew following him down until he lost sight of him in making a *virage*.

I leaned against the canvas wall of a hangar, registering incredulity. Three times out of seven, to make a conservative estimate, we fight inconclusive battles because of faulty machine guns or defective ammunition. The ammunition, most of it that is bad, comes from America.

While Drew was giving me the details, an orderly from the bureau brought word that an enemy machine had just been reported shot down on our sector. It was Drew's Albatross, but he nearly lost official credit for having destroyed it, because he did not know exactly the hour when the combat occurred. His watch was broken and he had neglected asking for another before starting. He judged the time of the attack, approximately, as two-thirty, and the infantry observers, reporting the result, gave it as twenty minutes to three. The region in both cases coincided exactly, however, and, fortunately, Drew's was the only combat which had taken place in that vicinity during the afternoon.

For an hour after his return he was very happy. He had won his first victory, always the hardest to gain, and had been complimented by the commandant, by Lieutenant Nungesser, the *Roi des Aces*, and by other French and American pilots. There is no petty jealousy among airmen, and in our group the *esprit de corps* is unusually fine. Rivalry is keen, but each squadron takes almost as much pride in the work of the other squadrons as it does in its own.

The details of the result were horrible. The Albatross broke up two thousand metres from the ground, one wing falling within the French lines. Drew knew what it meant to be wounded and falling out of control. But his Spad held together. He had a chance for his life. Supposing the German to have been merely wounded—An airman's joy in victory is a short-lived one.

Nevertheless, a curious change takes place in his attitude toward his work, as the months pass. I can best describe it in terms of Drew's experience and my own. We came to the front feeling deeply sorry for ourselves, and for all airmen of whatever nationality, whose lives were to be snuffed out in their promising beginnings. I used to play “The Minstrel Boy to the War Has Gone” on a tin flute, and Drew wrote poetry. While we were waiting for our first machine, he composed “The Airman's Rendezvous,” written in the manner of Alan Seeger's poem.

> “And I in the wide fields of air
> Must keep with him my rendezvous.
> It may be I shall meet him there
> When clouds, like sheep, move slowly through
> The pathless meadows of the sky
> And their cool shadows go beneath,—
> I have a rendezvous with Death
> Some summer noon of white and blue.”

There is more of it, in the same manner, all of which he read me in a husky voice. I, too, was ready to weep at our untimely fate. The strange thing is that his prophecy came so very near being true. He had the first draft of the poem in his breast-pocket when wounded, and has kept the gory relic to remind him—not that he needs reminding—of the airy manner in which he canceled what ought to have been a *bona-fide* appointment.

I do not mean to reflect in any way upon Alan Seeger's beautiful poem. Who can doubt that it is a sincere, as well as a perfect, expression of a mood common to all young soldiers? Drew was just as sincere in writing his verses, and I put all the feeling I could into my tin-whistle interpretation of “The Minstrel Boy.” What I want to make clear is, that a soldier's moods of self-pity are fleeting ones, and if he lives, he outgrows them.

Imagination is an especial curse to an airman, particularly if it takes a gloomy or morbid turn. We used to write “To whom it may concern” letters before going out on patrol, in which we left directions for the notification of our relatives and the disposal of our personal effects in case of death. Then we would climb into

our machines thinking, “This may be our last sortie. We may be dead in an hour, in half an hour, in twenty minutes.” We planned splendidly spectacular ways in which we were to be brought down, always omitting one, however, the most horrible as well as the most common,—in flames. Thank Fortune, we have outgrown this second and belated period of adolescence and can now take a healthy interest in our work.

Now, an inevitable part of the daily routine is to be shelled, persistently, methodically, and often accurately shelled. Our interest in this may, I suppose, be called healthy, inasmuch as it would be decidedly unhealthy to become indifferent to the activities of the German anti-aircraft gunners. It would be far-fetched to say that any airman ever looks forward zestfully to the business of being shot at with one hundred and fives; and seventy-fives, if they are well placed, are unpleasant enough. After one hundred hours of it, we have learned to assume that attitude of contemptuous toleration which is the manner common to all *pilotes de chasse*. We know that the chances of a direct hit are almost negligible, and that we have all the blue dome of the heavens in which to maneuver.

Furthermore, we have learned many little tricks by means of which we can keep the gunners guessing. By way of illustration, we are patrolling, let us say, at thirty-five hundred metres, crossing and recrossing the lines, following the patrol leader, who has his motor throttled down so that we may keep well in formation. The guns may be silent for the moment, but we know well enough what the gunners are doing. We know exactly where some of the batteries are, and the approximate location of all of them along the sector; and we know, from earlier experience, when we come within range of each individual battery. Presently one of them begins firing in bursts of four shells. If their first estimate of our range has been an accurate one, if they place them uncomfortably close, so that we can hear, all too well, above the roar of our motors, the rending *Gr-r-rOW*, *Gr-r-rOW*, of the shells as they explode, we sail calmly—to all outward appearances—on, maneuvering very little. The gunners, seeing that we are not disturbed, will alter their ranges, four times out of five, which is exactly what we want them to do.

The next bursts will be hundreds of metres below or above us, whereupon we show signs of great uneasiness, and the gunners, thinking they have our altitude, begin to fire like demons. We employ our well-earned immunity in preparing for the next series of batteries, or in thinking of the cost to Germany, at one hundred francs a shot, of all this futile shelling. Drew, in particular, loves this cost-

accounting business, and I must admit that much pleasure may be had in it, after patrol. They rarely fire less than fifty shells at us during a two-hour patrol. Making a low general average, the number is nearer one hundred and fifty. On our present front, where aerial activity is fairly brisk and the sector is a large one, three or four hundred shells are wasted upon us often before we have been out an hour.

We have memories of all the good batteries from Flanders to the Vosges Mountains. Battery after battery, we make their acquaintance along the entire sector, wherever we go. Many of them, of course, are mobile, so that we never lose the sport of searching for them. Only a few days ago we located one of this kind which came into action in the open by the side of a road. First we saw the flashes and then the shell-bursts in the same cadence. We tipped up and fired at him in bursts of twenty to thirty rounds, which is the only way airmen have of passing the time of day with their friends, the enemy anti-aircraft gunners, who ignore the art of *camouflage*.

But we can converse with them, after a fashion, even though we do not know their exact position. It will be long before this chapter of my journal is in print. Having given no indication of the date of writing, I may say, without indiscretion, that we are again on the Champagne front. We have a wholesome respect for one battery here, a respect it has justly earned by shooting which is really remarkable. We talk of this battery, which is east of Rheims and not far distant from Nogent l'Abbesse, and take professional pride in keeping its gunners in ignorance of their fine marksmanship. We signal them their bad shots—which are better than the good ones of most of the batteries on the sector—by doing stunts, a barrel turn, a loop, two or three turns of a *vrille*.

As for their good shots, they are often so very good that we are forced into acrobacy of a wholly individual kind. Our *avions* have received many scars from their shells. Between forty-five hundred and five thousand metres, their bursts have been so close under us that we have been lifted by the concussions and set down violently again at the bottom of the vacuum; and this on a clear day when a *chasse* machine is almost invisible at that height, and despite its speed of two hundred kilometres an hour. On a gray day, when we are flying between twenty-five hundred and three thousand metres beneath a film of cloud, they repay the honor we do them by our acrobatic turns. They bracket us, put barrages between us and our own lines, give us more trouble than all the other batteries on the sector combined.

For this reason it is all the more humiliating to be forced to land with motor trouble, just at the moment when they are paying off some old scores. This happened to Drew while I have been writing up my journal. Coming out of a tonneau in answer to three *coups* from the battery, his propeller stopped dead. By planing flatly (the wind was dead ahead, and the area back of the first lines there is a wide one, crossed by many intersecting lines of trenches) he got well over them and chose a field as level as a billiard table for landing-ground. In the very center of it, however, there was one post, a small worm-eaten thing, of the color of the dead grass around it. He hit it, just as he was setting his Spad on the ground, the only post in a field acres wide, and it tore a piece of fabric from one of his lower wings. No doubt the crack battery has been given credit for disabling an enemy plane. The honor, such as it is, belongs to our aerial godfather, among whose lesser vices may be included that of practical joking.

The remnants of the post were immediately confiscated for firewood by some *poilus* who were living in a dugout near by.

IX

“LONELY AS A CLOUD”

THE French attack which has been in preparation for the past month is to begin at dawn to-morrow. It has been hard, waiting, but it must have been a great deal worse for the infantrymen who are billeted in all of the surrounding villages. They are moving up to-night to the first lines, for these are the shock troops who are to lead the attack. They are chiefly regiments of Chasseurs—small men in stature, but clean, hard, well-knit—splendid types. They talk of the attack confidently. It is an inspiration to listen to them. Hundreds of them have visited our aerodrome during the past week, mainly, I think, for a glimpse of Whiskey and Soda, our lions, who are known to French soldiers from one end of the line to the other. Whiskey is almost full-grown, and Soda about the size of a wild cat. They have the freedom of the camp and run about everywhere.

The guns are thundering at a terrific rate, the concussions shaking our barracks and rattling the dishes on the table. In the messroom the gramophone is playing, “I'm going 'way back home and have a wonderful time.” Music at the front is sometimes a doubtful blessing.

We are keyed up, some of us, rather nervous in anticipation of to-morrow. Porter is trying to give Irving a light from his own cigarette. Irving, who doesn't know the meaning of nerves, asks him who in hell he is waving at. Poor old Porter! His usefulness as a combat pilot has long past, but he hangs on, doing the best he can. He should have been sent to the rear months ago.

The first phase of the battle is over. The French have taken eleven thousand prisoners, and have driven the enemy from all the hills down to the low ground along the canal. For the most part, we have been too high above them to see the infantry actions; but knowing the plans and the objectives beforehand, we have been able to follow, quite closely, the progress of the battle.

It opened on a wet morning with the clouds very low. We were to have gone on patrol immediately the attack commenced, but this was impossible. About nine o'clock the rain stopped, and Rodman and Davis were sent out to learn weather conditions over the lines. They came back with the report that flying

was possible at two hundred metres. This was too low an altitude to serve any useful purpose, and the commandant gave us orders to stand by.

About noon the clouds began to break up, and both high and low patrols prepared to leave the ground. Drew, Dunham, and I were on high patrol, with Lieutenant Barry leading. Our orders were to go up through the clouds, using them as cover for making surprise attacks upon enemy *réglage* machines. We were also to attack any enemy formations sighted within three kilometres of their old first lines. The clouds soon disappeared and so we climbed to forty-five hundred metres and lay in wait for combat patrols.

Barry sighted one and signaled. Before I had placed it, he dived, almost full motor, I believe, for he dropped like a stone. We went down on his tail and saw him attack the topmost of three Albatross single-seaters. The other two dived at once, far into their own lines. Dunham, Drew, and I took long shots at them, but they were far outside effective range. The topmost German made a feeble effort to maneuver for position. Barry made a *renversement* with the utmost nicety of judgment and came out of it about thirty metres behind and above the Albatross. He fired about twenty shots, when the German began falling out of control, spinning round and round, then diving straight, then past the vertical, so that we could see the silver under-surface of his wings and tail, spinning again until we lost sight of him.[1]

[1] This combat was seen from the ground, and Barry's victory was confirmed before we returned to the field.

Lieutenant Talbott joined us as we were taking our height again. He took command of the patrol and Barry went off hunting by himself, as he likes best to do. There were planes everywhere, of both nationalities. Mounting to four thousand metres within our own lines, we crossed over again, and at that moment I saw a Letord, a three-passenger *réglage* machine, burst into flames and fall. There was no time either to watch or to think of this horrible sight. We encountered a patrol of five Albatross planes almost on our level. Talbott dived at once. I was behind him and picked a German who was spiraling either upward or downward, for a few seconds I was not sure which. It was upward. He was climbing to offer combat. This was disconcerting. It always is to a green pilot. If your foe is running, you may be sure he is at least as badly rattled as you are. If he is a single-seater and climbing, you may be equally certain that he is not a novice, and that he has plenty of sand. Otherwise he would not accept battle at a disadvantage in the hope of having his inning next.

I was foolish enough to begin firing while still about three hundred metres distant. My opponent ungraciously offered the poorest kind of a target, getting out of the range of my sights by some very skillful maneuvering. I didn't want him to think that he had an inexperienced pilot to deal with. Therefore, judging my distance very carefully, I did a *renversement* in the Lieutenant Barry fashion. But it was not so well done. Instead of coming out of it above and behind the German, when I pulled up in *ligne de vol* I was under him!

I don't know exactly what happened then, but the next moment I was falling in a *vrille* (spinning nose dive) and heard the well-known crackling sound of machine-gun fire. I kept on falling in a *vrille*, thinking this would give the German the poorest possible target.[2]

[2] A mistake which many new pilots make. In a *vrille*, the machine spins pretty nearly on its own axis, and although it is turning, a skillful pilot above it can keep it fairly well within the line of his sights.

Pulling up in *ligne de vol* I looked over my shoulder again. The German had lost sight of me for a moment in the swiftness of his dive, but evidently he saw me just before I pulled out of the *vrille*. He was turning up for another shot, in exactly the same position in which I had last seen him. And he was very close, not more than fifty metres distant.

I believed, of course, that I was lost; and why that German didn't bag me

remains a mystery. Heaven knows I gave him opportunity enough! In the end, by the merciful intervention of Chance, our godfather, I escaped. I have said that the sky had cleared. But there was one strand of cloud left, not very broad, not very long; but a refuge,—oh! what a welcome refuge! It was right in my path and I tumbled into it, literally, head over heels. I came skidding out, but pulled up, put on my motor, and climbed back at once; and I kept turning round and round in it for several minutes. If the German had waited, he must have seen me raveling it out like a cat tangled in a ball of cotton. I thought that he was waiting. I even expected him to come nosing into it, in search of me. In that case there would have been a glorious smash, for there wasn't room for two of us. I almost hoped that he would try this. If I couldn't bag a German with my gun, the next best thing was to run into him and so be gathered to my fathers while he was being gathered to his. There was no crash, and taking sudden resolution, I dived vertically out of the cloud, head over shoulder, expecting to see my relentless foe. He was nowhere in sight.

In that wild tumble, and while chasing my tail in the cloud, I lost my bearings. The compass, which was mounted on a swinging holder, had been tilted upside down. It stuck in that position. I could not get it loose. I had fallen to six hundred metres, so that I could not get a large view of the landscape. Under the continuous bombardment the air was filled with smoke, and through it nothing looked familiar. I knew the direction of our lines by the position of the sun, but I was in a suspicious mood. My motor, which I had praised to the heavens to the other pilots, had let me down at a critical moment. The sun might be ready to play some fantastic trick. I had to steer by it, although I was uneasy until I came within sight of our observation balloons. I identified them as French by sailing close to one of them so that I could see the tricolor pennant floating out from a cord on the bag.

Then, being safe, I put my old Spad through every antic we two had ever done together. The observers in the balloons must have thought me crazy, a pilot running amuck from aerial shell shock. I had discovered a new meaning for that “grand and glorious feeling” which is so often the subject of Briggs's cartoons.

Looking at my watch I received the same old start of surprise upon learning how much of wisdom one may accumulate in a half-hour of aerial adventure. I had still an hour and a half to get through with before I could go home with a clear conscience. Therefore, taking height again, I went cautiously, gingerly, watchfully, toward the lines.

X

“MAIS OUI, MON VIEUX!”

THE “grand and glorious feeling” is one of the finest compensations for this uncertain life in the air. One has it every time he turns from the lines toward—home! It comes in richer glow, if hazardous work has been done, after moments of strain, uncertainty, when the result of a combat sways back and forth; and it gushes up like a fountain, when, after making a forced landing in what appears to be enemy territory, you find yourself among friends.

Late this afternoon we started, four of us, with Davis as leader, to make the usual two-hour sortie over the lines. No Germans were sighted, and after an uneventful half-hour, Davis, who is always springing these surprises, decided to stalk them in their lairs. The clouds were at the right altitude for this, and there were gaps in them over which we could hover, examining roads, railroads, villages, cantonments. The danger of attack was negligible. We could easily escape any large hostile patrol by dodging into the clouds. But the wind was unfavorable for such a reconnaissance. It was blowing into Germany. We would have it dead against us on the journey home.

We played about for a half-hour, blown by a strong wind farther into Germany than we knew. We walked down the main street of a village where we saw a large crowd of German soldiers, spraying bullets among them, then climbed into the clouds before a shot could be fired at us. Later we nearly attacked a hospital, mistaking it for an aviation field. It was housed in *bessonneau* hangars, and had none of the marks of a hospital excepting a large red cross in the middle of the field. Fortunately we saw this before any of us had fired, and passed on over it at a low altitude to attack a train. There is a good deal of excitement in an expedition of this kind, and soldiers themselves say that surprise sorties from the air have a demoralizing effect upon troops. But as a form of sport, there is little to be said for it. It is too unfair. For this reason, among others, I was glad when Davis turned homeward.

While coming back I climbed to five thousand metres, far above the others, and lagged a long way behind them. This was a direct violation of patrol discipline, and the result was, that while cruising leisurely along, with motor

throttled down, watching the swift changes of light over a wide expanse of cloud, I lost sight of the group. Then came the inevitable feeling of loneliness, and the swift realization that it was growing late and that I was still far within enemy country.

I held a southerly course, estimating, as I flew, the velocity of the wind which had carried us into Germany, and judging from this estimate the length of time I should need to reach our lines. When satisfied that I had gone far enough, I started down. Below the clouds it was almost night, so dark that I could not be sure of my location. In the distance I saw a large building, brilliantly lighted. This was evidence enough that I was a good way from the lines. Unshielded windows were never to be seen near the front. I spiraled slowly down over this building, examining, as well as I could, the ground behind it, and decided to risk a landing. A blind chance and blind luck attended it. In broad day, Drew hit the only post in a field five hundred metres wide. At night, a very dark night, I missed colliding with an enormous factory chimney (a matter of inches), glided over a line of telegraph wires, passed at a few metres' height over a field littered with huge piles of sugar beets, and settled, *comme une fleur*, in a little cleared space which I could never have judged accurately had I known what I was doing.

Shadowy figures came running toward me. Forgetting, in the joy of so fortunate a landing, my anxiety of a moment before, I shouted out, “Bonsoir, messieurs!” Then I heard some one say, “Ich glaube—” losing the rest of it in the sound of tramping feet and an undercurrent of low, guttural murmurs. In a moment my Spad was surrounded by a widening circle of round hats, German infantrymen's hats.

Here was the ignoble end to my career as an airman. I was a prisoner, a prisoner because of my own folly, because I had dallied along like a silly girl, to “look at the pretty clouds.” I saw in front of me a long captivity embittered by this thought. Not only this: my Spad was intact. The German authorities would examine it, use it. Some German pilot might fly with it over the lines, attack other French machines with my gun, my ammunition!

Not if I could help it! They stood there, those soldiers, gaping, muttering among themselves, waiting, I thought, for an officer to tell them what to do. I took off my leather gloves, then my silk ones under them, and these I washed about in the oil under my feet. Then, as quietly as possible, I reached for my box of matches.

“Qu'est-ce-que vous faites là? Allez! Vite!”

A tramping of feet again, and a sea of round hats bobbing up and down and vanishing in the gloom. Then I heard a cheery “Ça va, monsieur? Pas de mal?” By way of answer I lighted a match and held it out, torch fashion. The light glistened on a round, red face and a long French bayonet. Finally I said, “Vous êtes Français, monsieur?” in a weak, watery voice.

“Mais oui, mon vieux! Mais oui!” this rather testily. He didn't understand at first that I thought myself in Germany. “Do I look like a Boche?”

Then I explained, and I have never heard a Frenchman laugh more heartily. Then he explained and I laughed, not so heartily, a great deal more foolishly.

I may not give my location precisely. But I shall be disclosing no military secrets in saying that I am not in Germany. I am not even in the French war-zone. I am closer to Paris than I am to the enemy first-line trenches. In a little while the sergeant with the round red face and the long French bayonet, whose guest I am for the night, will join me here. If he were an American, to the manner born and bred, and if he knew the cartoons of that man Briggs, he might greet me in this fashion:—

“When you have been on patrol a long way behind the enemy lines, shooting up towns and camps and railway trains like a pack of aerial cowboys; when, on your way home, you have deliberately disobeyed orders and loafed a long way behind the other members of your group in order to watch the pretty sunset, and, as a punishment for this æsthetic indulgence, have been overtaken by darkness and compelled to land in strange country, only to have your machine immediately surrounded by German soldiers; then, having taken the desperate resolve that they shall not have possession of your old battle-scarred *avion* as well as of your person, when you are about to touch a match to it, if the light glistens on a long French bayonet and you learn that the German soldiers have been prisoners since the battle of the Somme, and have just finished their day's work at harvesting beets to be used in making sugar for French *poilus*—Oh, BOY! Ain't it a GRAND AND GLORYUS FEELING?”

To which I would reply in his own memorable words,—

“Mais oui, mon vieux! Mais OUI!”

XI

THE CAMOUFLAGED COWS

NANCY, a moonlight night, and “les sales Boches encore.” I have been out on the balcony of this old hotel, a famous tourist resort before the war, watching the bombardment and listening to the deep throb of the motors of German Gothas. They have dropped their bombs without doing any serious damage. Therefore, I may return in peace to my huge bare room, to write, while it is still fresh in mind, “The Adventure of the Camouflaged Cows.”

For the past ten days I have been attached—it is only a temporary transfer—to a French *escadrille* of which Manning, an American, is a member. The *escadrille* had just been sent to a quiet part of the front for two weeks' *repos*, but the day after my arrival orders came to fly to Belfort, for special duty.

Belfort! On the other side of the Vosges Mountains, with the Rhine Valley, the Alps, within view, within easy flying distance! And for special duty. It is a vague order which may mean anything. We discussed its probable meaning for us, while we were pricking out our course on our maps.

“Protection of bombardment *avions*” was André's guess. “Night combat” was Raynaud's. Every one laughed at this last hazard. “You see?” he said, appealing to me, the newcomer. “They think I am big fool. But wait.” Then, breaking into French, in order to express himself more fluently: “It is coming soon, *chasse de nuit*. It is not at all impossible. One can see at night, a moonlight night, very clearly from the air. They are black shadows, the other *avions* which you pass, but often, when the moonlight strikes their wings, they flash like silver. We must have searchlights, of course; then, when one sees those shadows, those great black Gothas, *vite! la lumière!* Pop-pop-pop-pop-pop! C'est fini!”

The discussion of the possibility or impossibility of night combat continued warmly. The majority of opinion was unfavorable to it: a useless waste of gasoline; the results would not pay for the wear and tear upon valuable fighting planes. Raynaud was not to be persuaded. “Wait and see,” he said. There was a reminiscent thrill in his voice, for he is an old night bombarding pilot. He remembered with longing, I think, his romantic night voyages, the moonlight

falling softly on the roofs of towns, the rivers like ribbons of silver, the forests patches of black shadow. “Really, it is an adventure, a night bombardment.”

“But how about your objectives?” I asked. “At night you can never be sure of hitting them, and, well, you know what happens in French towns.”

“It is why I asked for my transfer to *chasse*,” he told me afterward. “But the Germans, the blond beasts! Do they care? Nancy, Belfort, Châlons, Epernay, Rheims, Soissons, Paris,—all our beautiful towns! I am a fool! We must pay them back, the Huns! Let the innocent suffer with the guilty!”

He became a combat pilot because he had not the courage of his conviction.

We started in flights of five machines, following the Marne and the Marne Canal to Bar-le-Duc, then across country to Toul, where we landed to fill our fuel tanks. Having bestowed many favors upon me for a remarkably long period, our aerial godfather decided that I had been taking my good fortune too much for granted. Therefore, he broke my tail skid for me as I was making what I thought a beautiful *atterrissage*. It was late in the afternoon, so the others went on without me, the captain giving orders that I should join them, weather permitting, the next day.

“Follow the Moselle until you lose it in the mountains. Then pick up the road which leads over the Ballon d'Alsace. You can't miss it.”

I did, nevertheless, and as always, when lost, through my own fault. I followed the Moselle easily enough until it disappeared in small branching streams in the heart of the mountains. Then, being certain of my direction, I followed an irregular course, looking down from a great height upon scores of little mountain villages, untouched by war. After weeks of flying over the desolation of more northerly sectors of the front, this little indulgence seemed to me quite a legitimate one.

But my Spad (I was always flying tired old *avions* in those days, the discards of older pilots) began to show signs of fatigue. The pressure went down. Neither motor nor hand pump would function, the engine began to gasp, and, although I instantly switched on to my reserve tank, it expired with shuddering coughs. The propeller, after making a few spins in the reverse direction, stopped dead.

I had been in a most comfortable frame of mind all the way, for a long cross-country aerial journey, well behind the zone of fire, is a welcome relaxation after

combat patrols. It is odd how quickly one's attitude toward rugged, beautiful country changes, when one is faced with the necessity of finding landing-ground there. The steep ravines yawn like mouths. The peaks of the mountains are teeth —ragged, sinister-looking teeth. Being at five thousand metres I had ample time in which to make a choice—ample time, too, for wondering if, by a miscalculation, I had crossed the trench lines, which in that region are hardly visible from the air.

I searched anxiously for a wide valley where it would be possible to land in safety. While still three thousand metres from the ground I found one. Not only a field. There were *bessonneau* hangars on it. An aerodrome! A moment of joy, —“but German, perhaps!”—followed by another of anxiety. It was quickly relieved by the sight of a French reconnaissance plane spiraling down for a landing. I landed, too, and found that I was only a ten-minutes' flight from my destination.

With other work to do, I did not finish the story of my adventure with the camouflaged cows, and I am wondering now why I thought it such a corking one. The cows had something to do with it. We were returning from Belfort to Verdun when I met them. Our special duty had been to furnish aerial protection to the King of Italy, who was visiting the French lines in the Vosges. This done we started northward again. Over the highest of the mountains my motor pump failed as before. I got well past the mountains before the essence in my reserve tank gave out. Then I planed as flatly as possible, searching for another aviation field. There were none to be found in this region, rough, hilly country, much of it covered with forests. I chose a miniature sugar-loaf mountain for landing-ground. It appeared to be free from obstacles, and the summit, which was pasture and ploughed land, seemed wide enough to settle on.

I got the direction of the wind from the smoke blowing from the chimneys of a near-by village, and turned into it. As I approached, the hill loomed more and more steeply in front of me. I had to pull up at a climbing angle to keep from nosing into the side of it. About this time I saw the cows, dozens of them, grazing over the whole place. Their natural *camouflage* of browns and whites and reds prevented my seeing them earlier. Making spectacular *virages*, I missed collisions by the length of a match-stick. At the summit of the hill, my wheels touched ground for the first time, and I bounded on, going through a three-strand wire fence and taking off a post without any appreciable decrease in speed.

Passing between two large apple trees, I took limbs from each of them, losing my wings in doing so. My landing chassis was intact and my Spad went on down the reverse slope—

> "Like an embodied joy, whose race is just begun."

After crashing through a thicket of brush and small trees, I came to rest, both in body and in mind, against a stone wall. There was nothing left of my machine but the seat. Unscathed, I looked back along the wreckage-strewn path, like a man who has been riding a whirlwind in a wicker chair.

Now, I have never yet made a forced landing in strange country without having the mayor of the nearest village appear on the scene very soon afterward. I am beginning to believe that the mayors of all French towns sit on the roofs of their houses, field-glasses in hand, searching the sky for wayward aviators, and when they see one landing, they rush to the spot on foot, on horseback, in old-fashioned family phaetons, by means of whatever conveyance most likely to increase expedition their municipality affords.

The mayor of V.-sur-I. came on foot, for he had not far to go. Indeed, had there been one more cow browsing between the apple trees, I should have made a last *virage* to the left, in which case I should have piled up against a summer pavilion in the mayor's garden. Like all French mayors of my experience, he was a courteous, big-hearted gentleman.

After getting his breath,—he was a fleshy man, and had run all the way from his house,—he said, "Now, my boy, what can I do for you?"

First he placed a guard around the wreckage of my machine; then we had tea in the summer pavilion, where I explained the reason for my sudden visit. While I was telling him the story, I noticed that every window of the house, which stood at one end of the garden, was crowded with children's heads. War orphans, I guessed. Either that or the children of a large family of sons at the front. He was the kind of man who would take them all into his own home.

Having frightened his cows,—they must have given cottage cheese for a week afterward,—destroyed his fences, broken his apple trees, accepted his hospitality, I had the amazing nerve to borrow money from him. I had no choice in the matter, for I was a long way from Verdun, with only eighty centimes in my pocket. Had there been time I would have walked rather than ask him for the loan. He granted it gladly, and insisted upon giving me double the amount which

I required.

I promised to go back some day for a visit. First I will do acrobacy over the church steeple, and then, if the cows are not in the pasture, I am going to land, *comme une fleur*, as we airmen say, on that hill.

XII

CAFARD

IT is mid-January, snowing, blowing, the thermometer below zero. We have done no flying for five days. We have read our most recent magazines from cover to cover, including the advertisements, many of which we find more interesting, better written, than the stories. We have played our latest phonograph record for the five hundred and ninety-eighth time. Now we are hugging our one stove, which is no larger than a length of good American stove-pipe, in the absurd hope of getting a fleeting promise of heat.

Boredom, insufferable boredom. There is no American expression—there will be soon, no doubt—for this disease which claims so many victims from the Channel coast to the borders of Switzerland. The British have it without giving it a name. They say “Fed up and far from home.” The more inventive French call it “Cafard.”

Our outlook upon life is warped, or, to use a more seasonable expression, frozen. We are not ourselves. We make sarcastic remarks about one another. We hold up for ridicule individual peculiarities of individuality. Some one, tiring of this form of indoor sports, starts the phonograph again.

Wind, wind, wind (the crank)
Kr-r-r-r-r-r-r (the needle on the disk)
La-dee-dum, dee-doodle, di-dee-day (the orchestral introduction)

Sometimes when I feel sad
And things look blue,
I wish the boy I had
Was one like you—

“For the love of Pete! Shut off that damn silly thing!”

“I admire your taste, Irving!”

“Can it!”

“Well, what will you have, then?”

“Play that Russian thing, the 'Danse des Buffons.'”

“Don't play anything.”

“Lord! I wish some one would send us some new records.”

“Yes, instead of knitted wristers—what?”

“And mufflers.”

“Talking about wristers, how many pair do you think I've received? Eight!”

“You try to head 'em off. Doesn't do any good. They keep coming just the same.”

“It's because they are easy to make. Working wristers and mufflers is a method of dodging the knitting draft.”

“Well, now, I call that gratitude! You don't deserve to have any friends.”

“Isn't it the truth? Have you ever known of a soldier or an aviator who wore wristers?”

“I give mine to my mechanician. He sends them home, and his wife unravels the yarn and makes sweaters for the youngsters.”

“Think of the waste energy. Harness up the wrist-power and you could keep three aircraft factories going day and night.”

“Oh, well, if it amuses the women, what's the difference?”

“That's not the way to look at it. They ought to be doing something useful.”

“Plenty of them are; don't forget that, old son.”

“Anybody got anything to read?”

“Now, if they would send us more books—”

“And magazines—”

“Two weeks ago, Blake, you were wishing they wouldn't send so many.”

“What of it? We were having fine weather then.”

“There ought to be some system about sending parcels to the front.”

“The Germans have it, they say. Soldier wants a book, on engineering, for

example, or a history, or an anthology of recent poetry. Gets it at once through Government channels."

"Say what you like about the Boches, they don't know the meaning of waste energy."

"But you can't have method and efficiency in a democracy."

"There you go! Same old fallacy!"

"No fallacy about it! Efficiency and personal freedom don't go together. They never have and they never will."

"And what does our personal freedom amount to? When you get down to brass tacks, personal freedom is a mighty poor name for it, speaking for four fifths of the population."

"Germany doesn't want it, our brand, and we can't force it on her."

"And without it, she has a mighty good chance of winning this war—"

When the talk begins with the uselessness of wristers, shifts from that to democratic inefficiency, and from that to the probability of *Deutschland über Alles*, you may be certain of the diagnosis. The disease is *cafard*.

The sound of a motor-car approaching. Dunham rushes to the window and then swears, remembering our greased-cloth window panes.

"Go and see who it is, Tiffin, will you? Hope it's the mail orderly."

Tiffin goes on outpost and reports three civilians approaching.

"Now, who can they be, I wonder?"

"Newspaper men probably."

"Good Lord! I hope not."

"Another American mission."

"That's my guess, too."

Rodman is right. It is another American mission coming to "study conditions" at the front.

“But unofficially, gentlemen, quite unofficially,” says Mr. A., its head, a tall, melancholy-looking man, with a deep, bell-like voice. Mr. B., the second member of the mission, is in direct contrast, a birdlike little man, who twitters about the room, from group to group.

“Oh! If you boys only knew how *splendid* you are! How much we in America —You are our *first* representatives at the front, you know. You are the vanguard of the *millions* who—” etc.

Miller looks at me solemnly. His eyes are saying, “How long, O Lord, how long!”

Mr. C., the third member, is a silent man. He has keen, deep-set eyes. “There,” we say, “is the brain of the mission.”

Tea is served very informally. Mr. A. is restless. He has something on his mind. Presently he turns to Lieutenant Talbott.

“May I say a few words to your squadron?”

“Certainly,” says Talbott, glancing at us uneasily.

Mr. A. rises, steps behind his chair, clears his throat, and looks down the table where ten pilots,—the others are taking a constitutional in the country,—caught in négligée attire by the unexpected visitors, are sitting in attitudes of polite attention.

“My friends—” the deep, bell-like voice. In fancy, I hear a great shifting of chairs, and following the melancholy eyes with my own, over the heads of my ten fellow pilots, beyond the limits of our poor little messroom, I see a long vista of polished shirt fronts, a diminishing track of snowy linen, shimmering wineglasses, shining silver.

“My friends, believe me when I say that this occasion is one of the proudest and happiest of my life. I am standing within sound of the guns which for three —long—years have been battering at the bulwarks of civilization. I hear them, as I utter these words, and I look into the faces of a little group of Americans who, day after day, and week after week” (increasing emphasis) “have been facing those guns for the honor and glory of democratic institutions” (rising inflection).

“We in America have heard them, faintly, perhaps, yet unmistakably, and now

I come to tell you, in the words of that glorious old war song, 'We are coming, Father Woodrow, ONE HUN-DRED MIL-LION strong!'"

We listen through to the end, and Lieutenant Talbott, in his official capacity, begins to applaud. The rest of us join in timidly, self-consciously. I am surprised to find how awkwardly we do it. We have almost forgotten how to clap our hands! My sense of the spirit of place changes suddenly. I am in America. I am my old self there, with different thoughts, different emotions. I see everything from my old point of view. I am like a man who has forgotten his identity. I do not recover my old, or, better, my new one, until our guests have gone.

FROM A LETTER RECEIVED IN BOSTON, OCTOBER 1, 1918

OFFIZIERS-KRIEGSGEFANGENEN LAGER,
KARLSRUHE, BADEN, DEUTSCHLAND
July 27, 1918

I've been wondering about the ultimate fate of my poor old "High Adventure" story, whether it was published without those long promised concluding chapters which I really should have sent on had I not had the misfortune to be taken prisoner. I hope the book has been published, incomplete as it is. Not that I am particularly proud of it as a piece of literature!

I told you briefly, on my card, how I happened to be taken prisoner. We were a patrol of three and attacked a German formation at some distance behind their lines. I was diving vertically on an Albatross when my upper right plane gave way under the strain. Fortunately, the structure of the wing did not break. It was only the fabric covering it, which ripped off in great strips. I immediately turned toward our lines and should have reached them, I believe, even in my crippled condition; but by that time I was very low and under a heavy fire from the ground. A German anti-air craft battery made a direct hit on my motor. It was a terrific smash and almost knocked the motor out of the frame. My machine went down in a spin and I had another of those moments of intense fear common to the experience of aviators. Well, by Jove! I hardly know how I managed it, but I kept from crashing nose down. I struck the ground at an angle of about 30 degrees, the motor, which was just hanging on, spilled out, and I went skidding along, with the fuselage of the machine, the landing chassis having been snapped

off as though the braces were so many toothpicks. One of my ankles was broken and the other one sprained, and my poor old nose received and withstood a severe contact with my wind-shield. I've been in hospital ever since until a week ago, when I was sent to this temporary camp to await assignment to a permanent one. I now hobble about fairly well with the help of a stick, although I am to be a lame duck for several months to come, I believe.

Needless to say, the lot of a prisoner of war is not a happy one. The hardest part of it is, of course, the loss of personal liberty. Oh! I shall know how to appreciate that when I have it again. But we are well treated here. Our quarters are comfortable and pleasant, and the food as good as we have any right to expect. My own experience as a prisoner of war and that of all the Frenchmen and Englishmen here with whom I have talked, leads me to believe that some of those tales of escaped or exchanged prisoners must have been highly imaginative. Not that we are enjoying all the comforts of home. On the contrary, a fifteen-cent lunch at a Child's restaurant would seem a feast to me, and a piece of milk chocolate—are there such luxuries as chocolate in the world? But for prisoners, I for one, up to this point, have no complaint to make with respect to our treatment. We have a splendid little library here which British and French officers who have preceded us have collected. I didn't realize, until I saw it, how book-hungry I was. Now I'm cramming history, biography, essays, novels. I know that I'm not reading with any judgment but I'll soon settle down to a more profitable enjoyment of my leisure. Yesterday and to-day I've been reading “The Spoils of Poynton,” by Henry James. It is absurd to try cramming these. I've been longing for this opportunity to read Henry James, knowing that he was Joseph Conrad's master. “The Spoils of Poynton” has given me a foretaste of the pleasure I'm to have. A prisoner of war has his compensations. Here I've come out of the turmoil of a life of the most intense nervous excitement, a life lived day to day with no thought of to-morrow, into this other life of unlimited bookish leisure.

We are like monks in a convent. We're almost entirely out of touch with the outside world. We hear rumors of what is taking place at the front, and now and then get a budget of stale news from newly arrived prisoners. But for all this we are so completely out of it all that it seems as though the war must have come to an end. Until now this cloistered life has been very pleasant. I've had time to think and to make plans for a future which, comparatively speaking, seems assured. One has periods of restlessness, of course. When these come I console myself as best I may. Even for prisoners of war there are possibilities for quite

interesting adventure, adventure in companionship. Thrown into such intimate relationships as we are here, and under these peculiar circumstances, we make rather surprising discoveries about ourselves and about each other. There are obvious superficial effects which I can trace back to causes quite easily. But there are others which have me guessing. By Jove! this is an interesting place! Conrad would find material here which would set him to work at once. I can imagine how he would revel in it.

Well, I'm getting to be a very wise man. I'm deeply learned in many kinds, or, better, phases, of human psychology and I'm increasing my fund of knowledge every day. Therefore, I've decided that, when the war is over, I'll be no more a wanderer. I'll settle down in Boston for nine months out of the year and create deathless literature. And for vacations, I've already planned the first one, which is to be a three months' jaunt by aeroplane up and down the United States east and west, north and south. You will see the possibilities of adventure in a trip of this sort. By limiting myself somewhat as to itinerary I can do the thing. I've found just the man here to share the journey with, an American in the British Air Force. He is enthusiastic about the plan. If only I can keep him from getting married for a year or so after getting home!

I had a very interesting experience, immediately after being taken prisoner on May 7th. I was taken by some German aviators to their aerodrome and had lunch with them before I was sent on to the hospital. Some of them spoke English and some of them French, so that there was no difficulty in conversing. I was suffering a good deal from my twisted ankles and had to be guarded in my remarks because of the danger of disclosing military information; but they were a fine lot of fellows. They respected my reticence, and did all they could to make me comfortable. It was with pilots from this squadron that we had been fighting only an hour or so before. One of their number had been killed in the combat by one of the boys who was flying with me. I sat beside the fellow whom I was attacking when my wing broke. I was right “on his tail,” as we airmen say, when the accident occurred, and had just opened fire. Talking over the combat with him in their pleasant quarters, I was heartily glad that my affair ended as it did. I asked them to tell me frankly if they did not feel rather bitterly toward me as one of an enemy patrol which had shot down a comrade of theirs. They seemed to be surprised that I had any suspicions on this score. We had “a fair fight in an open field.” Why should there be any bitterness about the result. One of them said to me, “Hauptmann, you'll find that we Germans are enemies of a country in war, but never of the individual.” My experience thus far leads me to believe that this

is true. There have been a few exceptions, but they were uneducated common soldiers. Bitterness toward America there certainly is everywhere, and an intense hatred of President Wilson quite equal in degree and kind to the hatred in America of the emperor....

NORMAN HALL.

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