

# THE RED BATTLE FLYER



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Captain Manfred Freiherr  
von Richthofen

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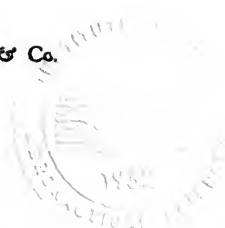
BY

Captain Manfred Freiherr  
von Richthofen

Translated by J. Ellis Barker, with a preface and  
notes by C. G. Grey, editor of "The Aeroplane"

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## PREFACE

**S**OME time ago a Naval Officer who was engaged on particularly hazardous duty was discussing calmly the chances that he and his like had of surviving the war, assuming that it continued for several more years and that his particular branch of it increased its intensity. He wound up his remarks by saying, "The chief reason why I particularly want to survive the finish is that I'm so keen on comparing notes with our opposite members in the German Navy."

That is the answer to those who ask, as an important official gentleman asked recently, why this English translation of Rittmeister von Richthofen's book should be published. It gives our flying people an opportunity of comparing notes with one of Germany's star-turn fighting pilots, just as that excellent book by "Contact" gives the Germans the chance of gathering the atmosphere of

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the Royal Flying Corps as it was in 1916 and 1917.

“The Red Battle-Flyer” has evidently been carefully censored by the German authorities. Also it has possibly been touched up here and there for propagandist purposes. Consequently, although the narrative as it stands is extraordinarily interesting, the book as a whole is still more interesting on account of what one reads between the lines, and of what one can deduce from the general outlook of the writer. There is, perhaps, little to learn of immediate topical interest, but there is much that explains things which were rather difficult to understand in the past, and the understanding of such points gives one a line of reasoning which should be useful to our active-service aviators in the future.

When one makes due allowance for the propagandist nature of the book, which gives one the general impression of the writing of a gentleman prepared for publication by a hack journalist, one forms a distinctly favorable mental picture of the young Ritt-

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meister Baron von Richthofen. Our old friend Froissart is credited with the statement that in his age of chivalry it was always "impossible to inculcate into the German knights the true spirit of knightliness." Which seems to indicate that the practical German mind of those days could not understand the whimsicalities of the Latin ideas of chivalry, which—for example—bade a knight against whose shield an opponent "brake his spear" haul off out of the fight till the lance-less enemy unsheathed his sword and "drave into the combat" again. Probably the Hun of those days proceeded to stick his opponent in the midriff—wherever it may be—and so finished the fight.

In the same true spirit of knightliness an Englishman knocks a man down and then stands back so that he can get up and have another chance, whereas a more practical person would take excellent care that his opponent never got up till he had acknowledged himself beaten. It is all a matter of the point of view, and largely no doubt a matter of education. However, making due

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allowance for the point of view, one finds surprisingly little Hunnishness in von Richthofen's manners or methods as set forth in print.

It is one of the accepted facts of the war that the German aviators have displayed greater chivalry than any other branch of the German services. It was a common occurrence for their pilots to fly over our lines in the course of their business, and, by way of variety from that business, to drop packets containing letters from captured British aviators, or the personal belongings of the dead. One gathers that these acts of courtesy have become less frequent of late, owing to the intensification of aerial warfare, but it seems that captured and killed aviators still receive the full courtesies of war from the German aviators, whatever may be the fate of prisoners in other hands afterwards.

It is not surprising therefore to find that, taking him all round, Rittmeister von Richthofen conveys to one the general impression that, *mutatis mutandis*, he is very like an

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English public school boy of good family. His egotism, as one finds it in the book, is the egotism of a young man who is frankly pleased with himself, but is more elated by his good luck than by his cleverness.

Taking him by and large, one rather likes von Richthofen, and one fancies that most of the R.F.C. people who have fought him would be quite pleased after the war to sit at table with him and compare notes over the cigarettes and liquors, as my Naval friend wants to do with his pre-war friends of the German Navy. And there are unhappily not too many of our present enemies of whom one would like to express such an opinion.

When one comes to read into the book one begins to find many interesting things about the German Army, and the war in general, as well as about the German Feldfliegertruppen—or Flying Service. The German is not really a skilful censor. Just as certain portraits painted by an artist at Ruhleben conveyed by the expression of the faces a good deal that Germany would like

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hidden, so von Richthofen's book, though carefully censored, lets out quite a good deal of information.

The first thing that strikes one is that Germany's standing army at the beginning of the war was nothing like so perfect a fighting machine as we in this country believed. Although, like all the people with any sense in this country, the German Army knew that a war was coming, the officers and men seem to have set about their work in a singularly amateurish way, judging by the short section of the book devoted to the opening of the war on the Russian Front. And one is pleased to find that von Richthofen has the grace to laugh at himself and his brother-officers for their mistakes.

In some ways the soldiers of all nations resemble one another strongly. For instance, one finds in this book the same contempt for what the Germans picturesquely call a "base-hog," as the French have for the "embusqué" and as the British front-line officer has for the young and able-bodied officer who is "Something on the



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Staff." This obnoxious breed is the same in all armies, and must be clearly distinguished from the carefully trained and expensively educated General Staff Officer, who is very much of a specialist and is the very brain of the Army.

When we come to the purely aviatic portion of the book one finds more of the real von Richthofen and less of the cavalry officer. His honesty about his utter mental confusion the first time he went into the air recalls General Brancker's famous remark in his lecture to the Aeronautical Society when he said that no one ever sees anything at all during his first hour in the air owing to the hopeless confusion in his mind caused by the novel aspect of everything. Von Richthofen's description of his experience is about the best thing that has been written on the subject.

An interesting bit of information is disclosed in his description of his flight in a "Grossflugzeug," on September 1st, 1915. At that period little was known about twin-engined aeroplanes. The Germans were

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known to have tried them, but they were not a success. The only example known to our people—though probably there were actually several different machines—was commonly known in the R.F.C. as “Wong-wong,” on account of the curious noise made by the engines or air-screws when they got “out of phase”—as an electrician might call it. This noise is now quite familiar to the inhabitants of Southeastern England as the characteristic note of the Gotha bombers.

Von Richthofen’s good judgment of fighting values, though he was then only an observer, and a novice at that, is shown by his disapproval of the twin-engined aeroplane as a fighting machine. It is also of interest to learn that at that period the Germans had tried an auto-lock device to hold the rudder of a twin-engined machine over to one side so that it would fly straight if one engine went out of action, an ingenious idea even if foredoomed to failure.

It is encouraging to find that though these twin-engined machines were in opera-

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tion in September, 1915, the first bombing squadron so composed only came into action against defenceless Bucharest a year later. This shows that actually we in this country are not so very much slower in producing our new ideas, for our big Handley Page twin-engined biplanes first flew towards the end of 1915, and we began to use them regularly early in 1917—only a little more than a year later.

The similarity of aviators in all countries is shown by von Richthofen's frank confession of blue funk when he made his first flight alone. That first solo is always the most anxious time in a pilot's career. Another touch of that nature which makes all aviators akin is seen in his accounts of how he and other pupils under instruction used to fly off on cross-country training trips and suffer from opportune forced landings in the parks of their friends or in likely-looking estates. One imagined that this manifestation of "wongling" was an essentially English trick, and would not have been tolerated for a moment under the iron discipline of

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the German Army. In the early days of the R.F.C. this looking for opulent hosts used to be known sarcastically as "hunting for Jew-palaces."

The state of affairs on the Russian front is well shown in the brief reference in the book. "Flying in the East is absolutely a holiday," says the writer, who adds that there was no danger on the Russian front, except the danger of being massacred by the Russians if brought down by engine failure. From which one understands that the Russians did not approve of making prisoners of enemy aviators. Their "Archies" were apparently good, but too few to be useful, and their aviators practically did not exist. Which is rather what one ventured to surmise in print at the time, despite the magniloquent Russian communiqués. When one thinks of all the good British and French aeroplanes and engines which were sent to Russia one regrets the waste of material.

On the subject of air fighting, von Richthofen is always worth studying carefully. None will dispute his wisdom in laying stress

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on the importance of calmness in an air fight. We have lost many good fighting pilots through their getting excited and dashing headlong into an unequal combat. He, or his editor, has been sufficiently skilful not to give away his pet method of attack. However, one gathers that he depended largely on his first rush for his results, rather than on a prolonged series of manoeuvres.

His dictum that "in air fighting results depend on ability and not on trickery," rather bears out this impression. Nevertheless he occasionally tells of a lengthy tussle with a particularly skilful enemy.

Such a story relates how that very gallant gentleman, Major Lanoe Hawker, one of the best loved and admired of the R.F.C.'s many gallant fighting leaders, fell. It would seem that Major Hawker's machine was out-classed rather than that he was beaten by superior skill. One is glad to find that von Richthofen pays a tribute to the bravery and ability of his enemy, and it is perhaps some slight consolation to those of us who knew

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Lanoe Hawker to think that he fell a victim to the Germans' best man and not to a chance shot from an unworthy foe.

It is rather curious that some time after emphasizing the fact that trickery does not pay in air fighting, von Richtofen should show how trickery does pay by describing his young brother Lothar's trick of pretending to be shot and letting his machine fall apparently out of control, so as to break off a fight with opponents who were above his weight. One is inclined to wonder how many optimistic young air-fighters have reported enemy machines as "driven down out of control," when in reality the wily Hun has only been getting out of the way of harm. The older hands in these days are not easily caught by such a trick, and the High Command refuses to count any victims so claimed unless the performance is verified by independent witnesses either on the ground or aloft.

Another point of interest in von Richtofen's fighting methods is that he states, that as a rule, he opens fire at 50 yards. Dis-

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tances are hard to judge in the air. The pilot is more likely to underestimate them than otherwise, just as one does in judging distances at sea. But von Richthofen is probably as good a judge as any, and in this he seems to be stating a plain fact. In these days 50 yards is fairly long range. Some of our own crack fighters prefer 50 feet, if they can get into their favorite positions. Anyhow he shows the unwisdom of opening fire at 1,000 yards, as some inexperienced and excited machine-gunners are rather apt to do.

Von Richthofen's chaser squadron—or Jagdstaffel, as the Germans call these formations—was the first to be known as a "circus." The famous Boelcke squadron, although a fairly mobile body, the members of which co-operated closely on occasion, never developed formation fighting to the extent that von Richthofen did.

His men, although, as the book shows, they went out periodically on lone-hand ventures, generally flew in a body, numbering anywhere from half a dozen to fifteen or

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so. Their leader chose to paint his little Albatros a brilliant pillar-box red. The others painted their machines according to their fancy. Some had yellow noses, blue bodies and green wings. Some were pale blue underneath and black on top. Some were painted in streaks, some with spots. In fact, they rang the changes on the whole of the paint-box.

They flew wonderfully, being all picked men, and in a fight they performed in a manner which would have seemed impossible to the most expert aerial acrobats.

Also, the squadron was moved from place to place as a self-contained unit, so that it appeared wherever the fighting was thickest, or wherever British or French reconnaissance machines were busiest. It would be operating at Verdun one week. The next week it would be north of Arras. A few days later it would be down on the Somme. But as a rule it specialized on the British front. Wherever it pitched its tents it did its regular squadron performance, and followed it later in the day with lone-hand



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raids, or "strafing" flight by two or three machines at a time.

When one considers the harlequin coloring of the machines, their acrobatic flying and their "two shows a day" performances from their one-week pitches, it follows logically that the humorists of the R.F.C. simply had to call the squadron "von Richthofen's Traveling Circus."

Since then the word has acquired a meaning of its own among flying men. It connotes practically any special formation organized for the purpose of hunting enemy aviators, and consisting of picked men under a specially skilful leader. It need not necessarily be more mobile than any other squadron, and it need not indulge in freak colorings, though in the nature of its work, its flying must be acrobatic. The British "circuses" are in these days superior to the German circuses, because our machines are now at least as good as those of the Germans, and so our men, who have always been of higher average quality than the German aviators, have a fair chance of proving their

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Of those of von Richthofen's circus mentioned in the book, Schäfer was the first to be killed. Before the war he lived in London, to learn English, working in an office in the city, when so inclined, but mostly spending his time on the river, or in sport. Those who knew him say that he was a pleasant lad and a good sportsman.

Voss was the next to go, after what has been described by those who were in it as one of the most gallant fights of the war. On a Fokker triplane with a French le Rhone engine—evidently an experimental machine built for quick manoeuvring—he fought single-handed a patrol of six of our people, when he could have broken off the fight and have got away by abandoning an inferior companion. He was a brave man and a most brilliant pilot. His flying and shooting in his last fight are said to have been marvelously clever. None admire his bravery more than those who fought him.

Others of the "circus" have fallen since then, and the present "Richthofen Jagdstaffel" is probably constituted very differ-

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ently from that band of high-spirited desperadoes which was evolved from the original Boelcke squadron, and helped to build up the fame of von Richthofen. There is none of the old R.F.C. who would not cheerfully kill what is left of the "circus," and there is probably none who would not gladly shake hands with the survivors after peace is declared. They are worthy enemies and brave men.

This little book gives one a useful insight into the enemy's methods, and more than a little respect for at any rate some of those whom we are at present endeavoring to kill.

C. G. GREY,

EDITOR, *The Aeroplane.*



## I

### *My Family.*

**T**HE members of my family—that of Richthofen—have taken no very great part in wars until now. The Richthofens have always lived in the country; indeed, there has scarcely been one of them without a landed estate, and the few who did not live in the country have, as a rule, entered the State service. My grandfather and all my ancestors before him had estates about Breslau and Striegau. Only in the generation of my grandfather it happened that the first Richthofen, his cousin, became a General.

My mother belongs to the family Von Schickfuss und Neudorf. Their character resembles that of the Richthofen people. There were a few soldiers in that family.

All the rest were agrarians. The brother of my great-grandfather Shickfuss fell in 1806. During the Revolution of 1848 one of the finest castles of a Schickfuss was burnt down. The Schickfuss have, as a rule, only become Captains of the Reserve.

In the family Schickfuss and in the family Falckenhausen—my grandmother's maiden name was Falckenhausen—there were two principal hobbies: horse riding and game shooting. My mother's brother, Alexander Schickfuss, has done a great deal of game shooting in Africa, Ceylon, Norway and Hungary.

My father is practically the first member of our branch of the family to become a professional soldier. At an early age he entered the Corps of Cadets and later joined the 12th Regiment of Uhlans. He was the most conscientious soldier imaginable. He began to suffer from difficulty of hearing and had to resign. He got ear trouble because he saved one of his men from drowning and though he was wet through and through he insisted upon con-

tinuing his duties as if nothing had happened, wet as he was, without taking notice of the rigor of the weather. The present generation of the Richthofens contains, of course, many more soldiers. In war every able-bodied Richthofen is, of course, on active service. In the very beginning of the present war I lost six cousins, and all were in the cavalry.

I was named after my uncle Manfred, who in peace time, was adjutant to His Majesty and Commander of the Corps of the Guards. During the war he has been Commander of a Corps of Cavalry.

My father was in the 1st Regiment of Cuirassiers in Breslau when I was born on the 2nd of May, 1892. We then lived at Kleinburg. I received tuition privately until my ninth year. Then I went for a year to school in Schweidnitz and then I became Cadet in Wahlstatt. The people of Schweidnitz considered me as one of themselves. Having been prepared for a military career as a Cadet, I entered the 1st Regiment of Uhlans.

My own adventures and experiences will be found in this book.

My brother, Lothar, is the other flying-man Richthofen. He wears the *Ordre pour le Mérite*. My youngest brother is still in the Corps of Cadets and he is waiting anxiously until he is old enough to go on active service. My sister, like all the ladies of our family, is occupied in nursing the wounded.

*My Life as a Cadet*

**A**S a little boy of eleven I entered the Cadet Corps. I was not particularly eager to become a Cadet, but my father wished it. So my wishes were not consulted.

I found it difficult to bear the strict discipline and to keep order. I did not care very much for the instruction I received. I never was good at learning things. I did just enough work to pass. In my opinion it would have been wrong to do more than was just sufficient, so I worked as little as possible. The consequence was that my teachers did not think overmuch of me. On the



other hand, I was very fond of sport. Particularly I liked gymnastics, football, and other outdoor amusements. I could do all kinds of tricks on the horizontal bar. For this I received various prizes from the Commander.

I had a tremendous liking for all risky foolery. For instance, one fine day, with my friend Frankenberg, I climbed the famous steeple of Wahlstatt by means of the lightning conductor and tied my handkerchief to the top. I remember exactly how difficult it was to negotiate the gutters. Ten years later, when I visited my little brother at Wahlstatt, I saw my handkerchief still tied up high in the air.

My friend Frankenberg was the first victim of the war as far as I know.

I liked very much better the Institution of Lichterfelde. I did not feel so isolated from the world and began to live a little more like a human being.

My happiest reminiscences of Lichterfelde are those of the great sports when my opponent was Prince Frederick Charles. The

Prince gained many first prizes against me both in running and football, as I had not trained my body as perfectly as he had done.

*I Enter the Army. (Easter, 1911)*

OF course, I was very impatient to get into the Army. Immediately after passing my examination I came forward and was placed in the 1st Regiment of Uhlans, "Emperor Alexander III." I had selected that regiment. It was garrisoned in my beloved Silesia and I had some acquaintances and relations there, who advised me to join it.

I had a colossal liking for the service with my regiment. It is the finest thing for a young soldier to be a cavalry man.

I can say only little about the time which I passed at the War Academy. My experience there reminds me too much of the Corps of Cadets and consequently my reminiscences are not over agreeable.

I remember that once one of my teachers bought a very fat mare, an amiable animal, whose only fault was that she was rather old. She was supposed to be fifteen years

old. She had rather stout legs, but she jumped splendidly. I rode her frequently, and her name was Biffy.

About a year later, when I joined the regiment, my Captain, von Tr——, who was very fond of sport, told me that he had bought a funny little mare, a fat beast, who jumped very nicely. We all were very interested to make the acquaintance of the fat jumping horse who bore the strange name Biffy. I had quite forgotten the old mare of my teacher at the War Academy. One fine morning, the animal arrived and I was astonished to find that the ancient Biffy was now standing as an eight-year-old in the Captain's stable. In the meantime, she had changed her master repeatedly, and had much risen in value. My teacher had bought her for \$375., as a fifteen-year-old, and von Tr—— had bought her a year later, as an eight-year-old, for \$850. She won no more prizes for jumping, in spite of her renewed youth, but she changed her master once more and was killed in action in the beginning of the war.

*I Become an Officer. (Autumn, 1912)*

**A**T last I was given the epaulettes. It was a glorious feeling, the finest I have ever experienced when people called me Lieutenant.

My father bought me a beautiful mare called Santuzza. It was a marvelous animal, as hard as nails. She kept her place in the procession like a lamb. In course of time I discovered that she possessed a great talent for jumping and I made up my mind to train her. She jumped incredible heights.

In this enterprise I got much sympathy and co-operation from my comrade von Wedel who won many a prize with his charger, Fandango.

We two trained our horses for a jumping competition and a steeplechase in Breslau. Fandango did gloriously. Santuzza also did well by taking a great deal of trouble. I hoped to achieve something with her. On the day before she was to be put on the train I wished once more to jump all the obstacles in our training ground. In doing

so we slipped. Santuzza hurt her shoulder and I broke my collar-bone.

I expected that my dear fat mare, Santuzza, would also be a quick runner and was extremely surprised when she was beaten by Wedel's thoroughbred.

Another time I had the good fortune to ride a very fine horse at a Sports Meeting at Breslau. My horse did extremely well and I had hopes of succeeding. After a run of about half the course I approached the last obstacle. At a long distance I saw that the obstacle in front was bound to be something extraordinary because a great crowd was watching near it. I said to myself: "Keep your spirits up. You are sure to get into trouble." I approached the obstacle, going full speed. The people about waved to me and shouted that I should not go so fast, but I neither heard nor saw. My horse jumped over and on the other side there was a steep slope with the river Weistritz in front. Before I could say *knife* the horse, having jumped, fell with a gigantic leap into the river and horse and rider disappeared.

Of course, I was thrown over the head of the animal. Felix got out of the river on the one side and I on the other. When I came back, the weighing people were surprised that I had put on ten pounds instead of losing two pounds as usual. Happily no one noticed that I was wet through and through.

I had also a very good charger. The unfortunate beast had learned to do everything — running, steeplechasing, jumping, army service. There was nothing that the poor beast had not learned. Its name was Blume and I had some pleasant successes with him. The last prize I got riding that horse was when I rode for the Kaiser Prize in 1913. I was the only one who got over the whole course without a single slip. In doing so I had an experience which cannot easily be repeated. In galloping over a piece of heath land, I suddenly stood on my head. The horse had stepped into a rabbit hole and in my fall I broke my collar-bone. Notwithstanding the breakage I rode another forty miles without making a mistake and arrived keeping good time.

## II

### *The Outbreak of War*

ALL the papers contained nothing but fantastic stories about the war. However, for several months we had been accustomed to war talk. We had so often packed our service trunks that the whole thing had become tedious. No one believed any longer that there would be war. We, who were close to the frontier, who were "the eyes of the Army," to use the words of my Commander, believed least that there would be war.

On the day before military preparations began we were sitting with the people of the detached squadron at a distance of ten kilometres from the frontier, in the officers' club. We were eating oysters, drinking champagne and gambling a little. We were

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very merry. No one thought of war.

It is true that, some days before, Wedel's mother had startled us a little. She had arrived from Pomerania in order to see her son before the beginning of the war. As she found us in the pleasantest mood and as she ascertained that we did not think of war, she felt morally compelled to invite us to a very decent luncheon.

We were extremely gay and noisy when suddenly the door opened. It disclosed Count Kospoth, the Administrator of Ols. He looked like a ghost.

We greeted our old friend with a loud Hoorah! He explained to us the reason of his arrival. He had come personally to the frontier in order to convince himself whether the rumors of an impending world-war were true. He assumed, quite correctly, that the best information could be obtained at the frontier. He was not a little surprised when he saw our peaceful assembly. We learned from him that all the bridges in Silesia were being patrolled by the military and that steps were being taken to fortify various positions.



We convinced him quickly that the possibility of war was absolutely nil and continued our festivity.

On the next day we were ordered to take the field.

*We Cross the Frontier*

**T**O us cavalry men on the frontier the word "war" had nothing unfamiliar. Everyone of us knew to the smallest detail what to do and what to leave undone. At the same time, nobody had a very clear idea, what the first thing would be. Every soldier was delighted to be able to show his capacity and his personal value.

We young cavalry Lieutenants had the most interesting task. We were to study the ground, to work towards the rear of the enemy, and to destroy important objects. All these tasks require real men.

Having in my pocket my directions and having convinced myself of their importance, through hard study during at least a year, I rode at the head of a file of soldiers for the first time against the enemy at twelve o'clock midnight.

A river marks the frontier and I expected to be fired upon on reaching it. To my astonishment I could pass over the bridge without an incident. On the next morning, without having had any adventures, we reached the church tower of the village of Kieltze, which was well known to us through our frontier rides.

Everything had happened without seeing anything of the enemy or rather without being seen by him. The question now was what should I do in order not to be noticed by the villagers? My first idea was to lock up the "pope"\*. We fetched him from his house, to his great surprise. I locked him up among the bells in the church tower, took away the ladder and left him sitting up above. I assured him that he would be executed if the population should show any hostile inclinations. A sentinel placed on the tower observed the neighborhood.

I had to send reports every day by dispatch-riders. Very soon my small troop was converted entirely into dispatch-riders

\*Russian priest.

and dissolved, so that I had at last, as the only one remaining, to bring in my own report.

Up to the fifth night everything had been quiet. During that night the sentinel came suddenly rushing to the church tower near which the horses had been put. He called out, "The Cossacks are there!" The night was as dark as pitch. It rained a little. No stars were visible. One couldn't see a yard ahead.

As a precaution we had previously breached the wall around the churchyard. Through the breach we took the horses into the open. The darkness was so great that we were in perfect security after having advanced fifty yards. I myself went with the sentinel, carbine in hand, to the place where he pretended he had seen Cossacks.

Gliding along the churchyard wall I came to the street. When I got there I experienced a queer feeling, for the street swarmed with Cossacks. I looked over the wall, behind which the rascals had put the horses. Most of them had lanterns, and they acted

very uncautiously and were very loud. I estimated that there were from twenty to thirty of them. One had left his horse and gone to the Pope whom I had let off the day before.

Immediately it flashed through my brain: "Of course we are betrayed!" Therefore, we had to be doubly careful. I could not risk a fight because I could not dispose of more than two carbines. Therefore, I resolved to play at robber and police.

After having rested a few hours, our visitors rode away again.

On the next day I thought it wise to change our quarters. On the seventh day I was again back in my garrison and everyone stared at me as if I were a ghost. The staring was not due to my unshaved face, but because there had been a rumor that Wedel and I had fallen at Kalisch. The place where it had occurred, the time and all the circumstances of my death had been reported with such a wealth of detail that the report had spread throughout Silesia. My mother had already received visits of condolence. The only thing that had been

omitted was an announcement of my death in the newspaper.

An amusing incident happened about the same time. A veterinary surgeon had been ordered to take ten Uhlans and to requisition horses on a farm. The farm was situated about two miles from the road. He came back full of excitement and reported to us:

“I was riding over a stubble field, the field where the scarecrows are, when I suddenly saw hostile infantry at a distance. Without a moment’s hesitation I drew my sword and ordered the Uhlans to attack them with their lances. The men were delighted and at the fastest gallop they rushed across the field. When we came near the enemy I discovered that the hostile infantry consisted of some deer which were grazing in a nearby meadow. At that distance I had mistaken them for soldiers, owing to my shortsightedness.”

For a long time that dear gentleman had to suffer the pleasantries of the rest of us because of his bold attack.

*To France*

**WE** were ordered to take the train in my garrison town. No one had any idea in what direction we were to go.

There were many rumors but most of the talk was very wild. However, in this present case, we had the right idea: westward.

A second-class compartment had been given to four of us. We had to take in provisions for a long railway journey. Liquid refreshments, of course, were not lacking. However, already on the first day we discovered that a second-class compartment is altogether too narrow for four war-like youths. Therefore, we resolved to distribute ourselves. I arranged part of a luggage car and converted it into a bed-drawing room, to my great advantage. I had light, air, and plenty of space. I procured straw at one of the stations and put a tent cloth on top of it. In my improvised sleeping-car I slept as well as I did in my four-poster in Ostrowo. We traveled night and day, first through Silesia, and then through Saxony, going westward all the

time. Apparently we were going in the direction of Metz. Even the train conductor did not know where he was going to. At every station, even at stations where we did not stop, there were huge crowds of men and women who bombarded us with cheers and flowers. The German nation had been seized by a wild war enthusiasm. That was evident. The Uhlans were particularly admired. The men in the train who had passed through the station before us had probably reported that we had met the enemy, and we had been at war only for a week. Besides, my regiment had been mentioned in the first official communique. The 1st Regiment of Uhlans and the 155th Regiment of Infantry had taken Kalisch. We were therefore celebrated as heroes and naturally felt like heroes. Wedel had found a Cossack sword which he showed to admiring girls. He made a great impression with it. Of course we asserted that blood was sticking to it and we invented hair-raising tales about this peaceful sword of a police officer. We were very wild and merry until we were

disembarked from the train at Busendorf, near Diedenhofen.

A short time before the train arrived we were held up in a long tunnel. It is uncomfortable enough to stop in a tunnel in peace time, but to stop suddenly in war is still more uncomfortable. Some excited, high-spirited fellow wanted to play a joke and fired a shot. Before long there was general firing in the tunnel. It was surprising that no one was hurt. It has never been found out how the general shooting was brought about.

At Busendorf we had to get out of the train. The heat was so great that our horses almost collapsed. On the following day we marched unceasingly northward in the direction of Luxemburg. In the meantime, I had discovered that my brother had ridden in the same direction with a cavalry division a week before. I discovered his spoor once more, but I didn't see him until a year later.

Arrived in Luxemburg no one knew what were our relations with the people of that little State. When I saw a Luxemburg



prisoner, he told me that he would complain about me to the German Emperor if I did not set him free immediately. I thought there was reason in what he said. So I let him go. We passed through the town of Luxemburg and through Esch and we approached the first fortified towns of Belgium.

While advancing our infantry, and indeed, our whole division, manoeuvred exactly as in peace time. All were extremely excited. It was a good thing that we had to act exactly as we had done at manoeuvres, otherwise we should certainly have done some wild things. To the right and to the left of us, before and behind us, on every road, marched troops belonging to different army corps. One had the feeling that everything was in a great disorder. Suddenly, this unspeakable cuddle-muddle was dissolved and became a most wonderfully arranged evolution.

I was entirely ignorant about the activities of our flying men, and I got tremendously excited whenever I saw an aviator.

Of course I had not the slightest idea whether it was a German airman, or an enemy. I had at that time not even the knowledge that the German machines were marked with crosses and the enemy machines with circles. The consequence was that every aeroplane we saw was fired upon. Our old pilots are still telling of their painful feelings while being shot at by friend and enemy with perfect impartiality.

We marched and marched, sending patrols far ahead, until we arrived at Arlon. I had an uneasy feeling when crossing, for a second time, an enemy frontier. Obscure reports of francs-tireurs, had already come to my ears.

I had been ordered to work in connection with my cavalry division, acting as a connecting link. On that day I had ridden no less than sixty-six miles\* with my men. Not a horse failed us. That was a splendid achievement. At Arlon I climbed the steeple in accordance with the tactical principles

\*This seems to be a translator's mistake for kilometres, which would mean a little over 40 miles—in itself a sufficiently fine performance.

which we had been taught in peace time. Of course, I saw nothing, for the wicked enemy was still far away.

At that time we were very harmless. For instance, I had my men outside the town and had ridden alone on bicycle right through the town to the church tower and ascended it. When I came down again I was surrounded by a crowd of angry young men who made hostile eyes and who talked threateningly in undertones. My bicycle had, of course, been punctured and I had to go on foot for half an hour. This incident amused me. I should have been delighted had it come to a fight. I felt absolutely sure of myself with a pistol in my hand.

Later on I heard that several days previously, the inhabitants had behaved very seditiously towards our cavalry, and later on towards our hospitals. It had therefore been found necessary to place quite a number of these gentlemen against the wall.

In the afternoon I reached the station to which I had been ordered, and learned that

close to Arlon my only cousin Richthofen had been killed three days before. During the rest of the day I stayed with the Cavalry Division. During the night a causeless alarm took place, and late at night I reached my own regiment.

That was a beautiful time. We cavalry men who had already been in touch with the enemy and had seen something of war, were envied by the men of the other armies. For me it was the most beautiful time during the whole of the war. I would much like to pass again through the beginning of the war.

*I Hear the Whistling of the First  
Bullets. (21-22nd August, 1915)*

**I** had been ordered to find out the strength of the enemy occupying the large forest near Virton. I started with fifteen Uhlans and said to myself: "To-day I shall have the first fight with the enemy." But my task was not easy. In so big a forest there may be lots of things hidden which one can not see.

I went to the top of a little hill. A few hundred paces in front of me was a huge forest extending over many thousands of acres. It was a beautiful August morning. The forest seemed so peaceful and still that I almost forgot all my war-like ideas.

We approached the margin of the forest. As we could not discover anything suspicious with our field glasses we had to go near and find out whether we should be fired upon. The men in front were swallowed up by a forest lane. I followed and at my side was one of my best Uhlans. At the entrance to the forest was a lonely forester's cottage. We rode past it.

The soil indicated that a short time previously considerable numbers of hostile cavalry must have passed. I stopped my men, encouraged them by addressing a few words to them, and felt sure that I could absolutely rely upon everyone of my soldiers. Of course no one thought of anything except of attacking the enemy. It lies in the instinct of every German to rush at the enemy wherever he meets him, par-

ticularly if he meets hostile cavalry. In my mind's eye I saw myself at the head of my little troop sabering a hostile squadron, and was quite intoxicated with joyful expectation. The eyes of my Uhlans sparkled. Thus we followed the spoor at a rapid trot. After a sharp ride of an hour through the most beautiful mountaine dale the wood became thinner. We approached the exit. I felt convinced that there we should meet the enemy. Therefore, caution! To the right of our narrow path was a steep rocky wall many yards high. To the left, was a narrow rivulet and at the further side a meadow, fifty yards wide, surrounded by barbed wire. Suddenly, the trace of horses' hooves disappeared over a bridge into the bushes. My leading men stopped because the exit from the forest was blocked by a barricade.

Immediately I recognized that I had fallen into a trap. I saw a movement among the bushes behind the meadow at my left and noticed dismounted hostile cavalry. I estimated that there were fully one hundred rifles. In that direction nothing could be

done. My path right ahead was cut by the barricade. To the right were steep rocks. To the left the barbed wire surrounded the meadow and prevented me attacking as I had intended. Nothing was to be done except to go back. I knew that my dear Uhlans would be willing to do everything except to run away from the enemy. That spoilt our fun, for a second later we heard the first shot which was followed by very intensive rifle fire from the wood. The distance was from fifty to one hundred yards. I had told my men that they should join me immediately when they saw me lifting up my hand. I felt sure we had to go back. So I lifted my arm and beckoned my men to follow. Possibly, they misunderstood my gesture. The cavalrymen who were following me believed me in danger, and they came rushing along at a great speed to help me to get away. As we were on a narrow forest path one can imagine the confusion which followed. There was a panic because the noise of every shot was increased tenfold by the narrowness of the path. The horses of the two men ahead rushed away in

hollow way. The last I saw of them was as they leaped the barricade. I never heard anything of them again. They were no doubt made prisoners. I myself turned my horse and gave him the spurs, probably for the first time during his life. I had the greatest difficulty to make the Uhlans who rushed towards me understand that they should not advance any further, that we were to turn round and get away. My orderly rode at my side. Suddenly his horse was hit and fell. I jumped over them and horses were rolling all around me. In short it was a wild disorder. The last I saw of my servant, he was lying under his horse, apparently not wounded, but pinned down by the weight of the animal. The enemy had beautifully surprised us. He had probably observed us from the very beginning and had intended to trap us and to catch us unawares as is the character of the French.

I was delighted when, two days later, I saw my servant standing before me. He wore only one boot for he had left the other one under the body of his horse. He told



me how he had escaped. At least two squadrons of French cuirassiers had issued from the forest in order to plunder the fallen horses and the brave Uhlans. Not being wounded, he had jumped up, climbed the rocks and had fallen down exhausted among the bushes. About two hours later, when the enemy had again hidden himself, he had continued his flight. So he had joined me after some days, but he could tell me little about the fate of his comrades who had been left behind.

*A Ride With Loen*

THE battle of Virton was proceeding. My comrade Loen and I had once more to ascertain what had become of the enemy. We rode after the enemy during the whole of the day, reached him at last and were able to write a very decent report. In the evening, the great question was: Shall we go on riding, throughout the night in order to join our troops, or shall we economize our strength and take a rest so that we shall be fresh the next day? The splendid thing

about cavalrymen on patrol is that they are given complete liberty of action.

We resolved to pass the night near the enemy and to ride on the next morning. According to our strategical notions, the enemy was retiring and we were following him. Consequently, we could pass the night with fair security.

Not far from the enemy there was a wonderful monastery with large stables. So both Loen and I had quarters for ourselves and our men. Of course, in the evening, when we entered our new domicile, the enemy was so near that he could have shot us through the windows.

The monks were extremely amiable. They gave us as much to eat and to drink as we cared to have and we had a very good time. The saddles were taken off the horses and they were very happy when for the first time in three days and three nights, a dead weight of nearly three hundred pounds was taken from their backs. We settled down as if we were on manoeuvres and as if we were in the house of a delightful host and friend.

At the same time, it should be observed that three days later, we hanged several of our hosts to the lanterns because they could not overcome their desire to take a hand in the war. But that evening they were really extremely amiable. We got into our night-shirts, jumped into bed, posted a sentinel, and let the Lord look after us.

In the middle of the night somebody suddenly flung open the door and shouted: "Sir, the French are there!" I was too sleepy and too heavy to be able to reply. Loen, who was similarly incapacitated, gave the most intelligent answer: "How many are they?" The soldier stammered, full of excitement: "We have shot dead two, but we cannot say how many there are for it is pitch dark." I heard Loen reply, in a sleepy tone: "All right. When more arrive call me again." Half a minute later both of us were snoring again.

The sun was already high in the heavens when we woke up from a refreshing sleep the next morning. We took an ample breakfast and then continued our journey.

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## THE RED BATTLE-FLYER

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As a matter of fact, the French had passed by our castle during the night and our sentinels had fired on them. As it was a very dark night nothing further followed.

Soon we passed through a pretty valley. We rode over the old battlefield of our Division and discovered, to our surprise, that it was peopled not with German soldiers, but with French Red Cross men. Here and there were French soldiers. They looked as surprised at seeing us as we did at seeing them. Nobody thought of shooting. We cleared out as rapidly as possible and gradually it dawned upon us that our troops, instead of advancing, had retired. Fortunately, the enemy had retired at the same time in the opposite direction. Otherwise I should now be somewhere in captivity.

We passed through the village of Robelmont where, on the previous day, we had seen our Infantry in occupation. We encountered one of the inhabitants and asked him what had become of our soldiers. He looked very happy and assured me that the Germans had departed.

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## THE RED BATTLE-FLYER

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Late in the afternoon I reached my regiment and was quite satisfied with the course of events during the last twenty-four hours.

### III

#### *Boredom Before Verdun*

I AM a restless spirit. Consequently my activity in front of Verdun can only be described as boresome. At the beginning I was in the trenches at a spot where nothing happened. Then I became a dispatch-bearer and hoped to have some adventures. But there I was mistaken. The fighting men immediately degraded me and considered me a Base-hog. I was not really at the Base but I was not allowed to advance further than within 1500 yards behind the front trenches. There, below the ground, I had a bomb-proof, heated habitation. Now and then I had to go to the front trenches. That meant great physical exertion, for one had to trudge uphill and downhill, criss-cross, through an unending number of

trenches and mire-holes until at last one arrived at a place where men were firing. After having paid a short visit to the fighting men, my position seemed to me a very stupid one.

At that time the digging business was beginning. It had not yet become clear to us what it means to dig approaches and endless trenches. Of course, we knew the names of the various ditches and holes through the lessons which we had received at the War Academy. However, the digging was considered to be the business of the military engineers. Other troops were supposed not to take a hand in it. Here, near Combres, everyone was digging industriously. Every soldier had a spade and a pick and took all imaginable trouble in order to get as deeply into the ground as possible. It was very strange that in many places the French were only five yards ahead of us. One could hear them speak and see them smoke cigarettes and now and then they threw us a piece of paper. We conversed with them, but nevertheless, we tried to

annoy them in every possible way, especially with hand grenades.

Five hundreds yards in front of us and five hundred yards behind the trenches the dense forest of the Côte Lorraine had been cut down by the vast number of shells and bullets which were fired unceasingly. It seemed unbelievable that in front men could live. Nevertheless, the men in the front trenches were not in as bad a position as the men at the Base.

After a morning visit to the front trenches, which usually took place at the earliest hours of the day, the more tedious business began. I had to attend to the telephone.

On days when I was off duty I indulged in my favorite pastime, game shooting. The forest of La Chaussee gave me ample opportunities. When going for a ride I had noticed that there were wild pigs about and I tried to find out where I could shoot them at night. Beautiful nights, with a full moon and snow, came to my aid. With the assistance of my servant I built a shelter seat



in a tree, at a spot where the pigs passed, and waited there at night. Thus I passed many a night sitting on the branch of a tree and on the next morning found that I had become an icicle. However, I got my reward. There was a sow which was particularly interesting. Every night she swam across the lake, broke into a potato field, always at the same spot, and then she swam back again. Of course I very much wished to improve my acquaintance with the animal. So I took a seat on the other shore of the lake. In accordance with our previous arrangement, Auntie Pig appeared at midnight for her supper. I shot her while she was still swimming and she would have been drowned had I not succeeded at the last moment in seizing her by the leg.

At another time, I was riding with my servant along a narrow path. Suddenly I saw several wild pigs crossing it. Immediately I jumped from the horse, grasped my servant's carbine and rushed several hundred yards ahead. At the end of the procession

came a mighty boar. I had never yet seen such a beast and was surprised at its gigantic size. Now it ornaments my room and reminds me of my encounter.

In this manner I passed several months when, one fine day, our division became busy. We intended a small attack. I was delighted, for now at last I should be able to do something as a connecting link! But there came another disappointment! I was given quite a different job and now I had enough of it. I sent a letter to my Commanding General and evil tongues report that I told him: "My dear Excellency! I have not gone to war in order to collect cheese and eggs, but for another purpose." At first, the people above wanted to snarl at me. But then they fulfilled my wish. Thus I joined the Flying Service at the end of May, 1915. My greatest wish was fulfilled.

## IV

### *In the Air*

**T**HE next morning at seven o'clock I was to fly for the first time as an observer!—I was naturally very excited, for I had no idea what it would be like. Everyone whom I had asked about his feelings told me a different tale. The night before, I went to bed earlier than usual in order to be thoroughly refreshed the next morning. We drove over to the flying ground, and I got into a flying machine for the first time. The draught from the propeller was a beastly nuisance. I found it quite impossible to make myself understood by the pilot. Everything was carried away by the wind. If I took up a piece of paper it disappeared. My safety helmet slid off. My muffler dropped off. My jacket was not sufficiently buttoned. In

short, I felt very uncomfortable. Before I knew what was happening, the pilot went ahead at full speed and the machine started rolling. We went faster and faster. I clutched the sides of the car. Suddenly, the shaking was over, the machine was in the air and the earth dropped away from under me.

I had been told the name of the place to which we were to fly. I was to direct my pilot. At first we flew right ahead, then my pilot turned to the right, then to the left, but I had lost all sense of direction above our own aerodrome. I had not the slightest notion where I was! I began very cautiously to look over the side at the country. The men looked ridiculously small. The houses seemed to come out of a child's toy box. Everything seemed pretty. Cologne was in the background. The cathedral looked like a a little toy. It was a glorious feeling to be so high above the earth, to be master of the air. I didn't care a bit where I was and I felt extremely sad when my pilot thought it was time to go down again.

I should have liked best to start immediately on another flight. I have never had any trouble in the air such as vertigo. The celebrated American swings are to me disgusting. One does not feel secure in them, but in a flying machine one possesses a feeling of complete security. One sits in an aeroplane as in an easy chair. Vertigo is impossible. No man exists who has been turned giddy by flying. At the same time, flying affects one's nerves. When one races full speed through the air, and particularly when one goes down again, when the aeroplane suddenly dips, when the engine stops running, and when the tremendous noise is followed by an equally tremendous silence, then I would frantically clutch the sides and think that I was sure to fall to the ground. However, everything happened in such a matter-of-fact and natural way, and the landing, when we again touched terra firma was so simple, that I could not have such a feeling as fear. I was full of enthusiasm and should have liked to remain in an aeroplane all day long. I counted the hours to

the time when we should start out again.

*As an Observer with Mackensen*

ON the 10th of June, 1915, I came to Grossenhain. Thence I was to be sent to the front. I was anxious to go forward as quickly as possible. I feared that I might come too late, that the world-war might be over. I should have had to spend three months to become a pilot. By the time the three months had gone by, peace might have been concluded. Therefore, it never occurred to me to become a pilot. I imagined that, owing to my training as a cavalryman, I might do well as an observer. I was very happy when, after a fortnight's flying experience, I was sent out, especially as I was sent to the only spot where there was still a chance of a war, of movement. I was sent to Russia.

Mackensen was advancing gloriously. He had broken through the Russian position at Gorlice and I joined his army when we were taking Rawa Ruska. I spent a day at the aviation base and then I was sent to the

celebrated 69th Squadron. Being quite a beginner I felt very foolish. My pilot was a big gun, First Lieutenant Zeumer. He is now a cripple. Of the other men of the Section, I am the only survivor.

Now came my most beautiful time. Life in the Flying Corps is very much like life in the cavalry. Every day, morning and afternoon, I had to fly and to reconnoiter, and I have brought back valuable information many a time.

*With Holck in Russia. (Summer, 1915)*

**D**URING June, July and August, 1915, I remained with the Flying Squadron which participated in Mackensen's advance from Gorlice to Brest-Litovsk. I had joined it as quite a juvenile observer and had not the slightest idea of anything.

As a cavalryman my business had consisted in reconnoitering. So the Aeroplane Service as an observer was in my line and it amused me vastly to take part in the gigantic reconnoitering flights which we undertook nearly every day.

For an observer it is important to find a pilot with a strong character. One fine day we were told, "Count Holck will join us." Immediately I thought, "That is the man I want."

Holck made his appearance, not as one would imagine, in a 60 h. p. Mercedes or in a first-class sleeping car. He came on foot. After traveling by railway for days and days he had arrived in the vicinity of Jaroslav. Here he got out of the train for there was once more an unending stoppage. He told his servant to travel on with the luggage while he would go on foot. He marched along and after an hour's walking looked back, but the train did not follow him. So he walked and walked and walked without being overtaken by the train until, after a thirty-mile walk, he arrived in Rawa Ruska, his objective. Twenty-four hours later his orderly appeared with the luggage. His thirty-mile walk proved no difficulty to that sportsman. His body was so well trained that he did not feel the tramp he had undertaken.



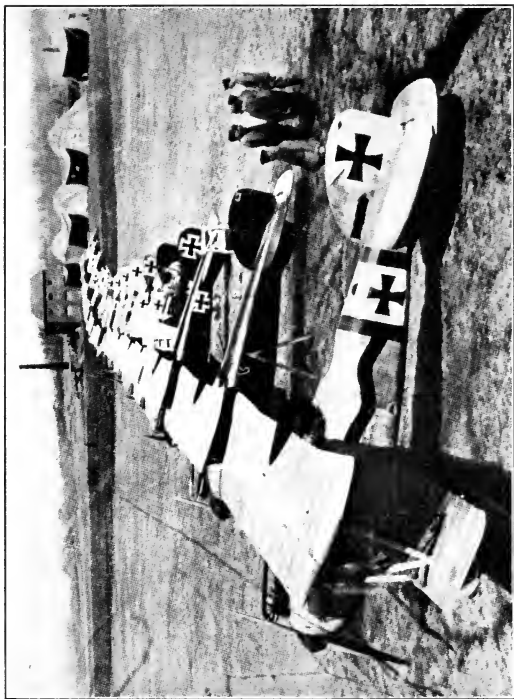
Count Holck was not only a sportsman on land. Flying also was to him a sport which gave him the greatest pleasure. He was a pilot of rare talent and particularity, and that is, after all, the principal thing. He towered head and shoulders above the enemy.

We went on many a beautiful reconnoitering flight—I do not know how far—into Russia. Although Holck was so young I had never a feeling of insecurity with him. On the contrary he was always a support to me in critical moments. When I looked around and saw his determined face I had always twice as much courage as I had had before.

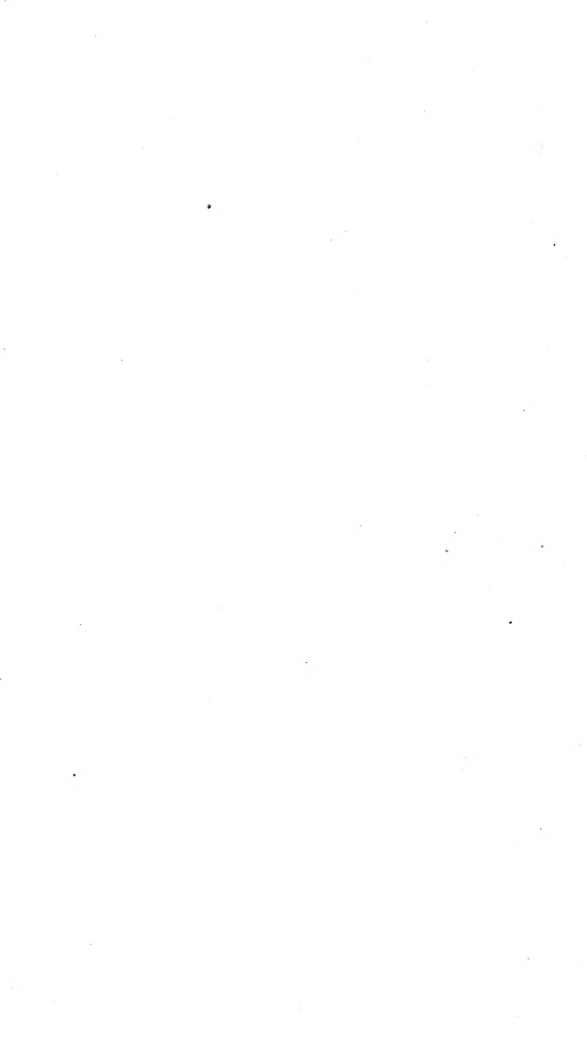
My last flight with him nearly led to trouble. We had not had definite orders to fly. The glorious thing in the flying service is that one feels that one is a perfectly free man and one's own master as soon as one is up in the air.

We had to change our flying base and we were not quite certain in which meadow we were to land. In order not to expose our machine to too much risk in landing we flew

in the direction of Brest-Litovsk. The Russians were retiring everywhere. The whole countryside was burning. It was a terribly beautiful picture. We intended to ascertain the direction of the enemy columns, and in doing so flew over the burning town of Wicznice. A gigantic smoke cloud, which went up to about 6,000 feet, prevented us continuing our flight because we flew at an altitude of only 4,500 feet in order to see better. For a moment Holck reflected. I asked him what he intended to do and advised him to fly around the smoke cloud which would have involved a round-about way of five minutes. Holck did not intend to do this. On the contrary. The greater the danger was the more the thing attracted him. Therefore straight through! I enjoyed it, too, to be together with such a daring fellow. Our venturesomeness nearly cost us dear. As soon as the tail-end of the machine had disappeared in the smoke the aeroplane began to reel. I could not see a thing for the smoke made my eyes water. The air was much warmer and beneath me I saw nothing



THE FAMOUS RICHTHOFEN "CIRCUS"



but a huge sea of fire. Suddenly the machine lost its balance and fell, turning round and round. I managed to grasp a stay and hung on to it. Otherwise I should have been thrown out of the machine. The first thing I did was to look at Holck and immediately I regained my courage for his face showed an iron confidence. The only thought which I had was: "It is stupid, after all, to die so unnecessarily a hero's death."

Later on, I asked Holck what had been his thoughts at the moment. He told me he had never experienced so unpleasant a feeling.

We fell down to an altitude of 1500 feet above the burning town. Either through the skill of my pilot or by a Higher Will, perhaps by both, we suddenly dropped out of the smoke cloud. Our good Albatros found itself again and once more flew straight ahead as if nothing had happened.

We had now had enough of it and instead of going to a new base intended to return to our old quarter as quickly as possible. After all, we were still above the Russians

and only at an altitude of 1500 feet. Five minutes later I heard Holck, behind me, exclaiming: "The motor is giving out."

I must add that Holck had not as much knowledge of motors as he had of horse-flesh and I had not the slightest idea of mechanics. The only thing which I knew was that we should have to land among the Russians if the motor went on strike. So one peril had followed the other.

I convinced myself that the Russians beneath us were still marching with energy. I could see them quite clearly from our low altitude. Besides it was not necessary to look, for the Russians shot at us with machine-guns with the utmost diligence. The firing sounded like chestnuts roasting near a fire.

Presently the motor stopped running altogether, for it had been hit. So we went lower and lower. We just managed to glide over a forest and landed at last in an abandoned artillery position which, the evening before, had still been occupied by Russians, as I had reported.

I told Holck my impressions. We jumped out of our box and tried to rush into the forest nearby, where we might have defended ourselves. I had with me a pistol and six cartridges. Holck had nothing.

When we had reached the wood we stopped and I saw with my glasses that a soldier was running towards our aeroplane. I was horrified to see that he wore not a spiked helmet but a cap. So I felt sure that it was a Russian. When the man came nearer Holck shouted with joy, for he was a Grenadier of the Prussian Guards.

Our troops had once more stormed the position at the break of day and had broken through into the enemy batteries.

On that occasion Holck lost his little favorite, his doggie. He took the little animal with him in every flight. The dog would lie always quietly on Holck's fur in the fuselage. He was still with us when we were in the forest. Soon after, when we had talked with the Guardsman, German troops passed us. They were the staffs of the Guards and Prince Eitel Friedrich with his Adjutants

and his Orderly Officers. The Prince supplied us with horses so that we two cavalrymen were sitting once more on oat-driven motors. Unfortunately doggie was lost while we were riding. Probably he followed other troops by mistake.

Later in the evening we arrived in our old flying base on a cart. The machine was smashed.

*Russia—Ostend (From the Two-Seater to the Twin-Engined Fighter)*

**T**HE German enterprise in Russia came gradually to a stop and suddenly I was transferred to a large battle-plane at Ostend on the twenty-first of August, 1915. There I met an old acquaintance, friend Zeumer. Besides I was attracted by the tempting name "Large Battle-plane."\*

I had a very good time during this part of my service. I saw little of the war but my experiences were invaluable to me, for I

\*The Grossflugzeug, or "G" class of German aeroplane, later given up as a flying machine owing to its slow speed and clumsiness in manoeuvre and used in its later developments for night-bombing only.



passed my apprenticeship as a battle-flier. We flew a great deal, we had rarely a fight in the air and we had no successes. We had siezed a hotel on the Ostend shore, and there we bathed every afternoon. Unfortunately the only frequenters of the watering-place were soldiers. Wrapped up in our many-colored bathing gowns we sat on the terraces of Ostend and drank our coffee in the afternoon.

One fine day we were sitting as usual on the shore drinking coffee. Suddenly we heard bugles. We were told that an English squadron was approaching. Of course we did not allow ourselves to be alarmed and to be disturbed, but continued drinking our coffee. Suddenly somebody called out: "There they are!" Indeed we could see on the horizon, though not very distinctly, some smoking funnels and later on could make out ships. Immediately we fetched our telescopes and observed them. There was indeed quite an imposing number of vessels. It was not quite clear to us what they intended to do, but soon we were to know

better. We went up to the roof whence we could see more. Suddenly we heard a whistling in the air; then there came a big bang and a shell hit that part of the beach where a little before we had been bathing. I have never rushed as rapidly into the hero's cellar as I did at that moment. The English squadron shot perhaps three or four times at us and then it began bombarding the harbor and railway station. Of course they hit nothing but they gave a terrible fright to the Belgians. One shell fell right in the beautiful Palace Hotel on the shore. That was the only damage that was done. Happily they destroyed only English capital, for it belonged to Englishmen.

In the evening we flew again with energy. On one of our flights we had gone very far across the sea with our battle-plane. It had two motors and we were experimenting with a new steering gear which, we were told, would enable us to fly in a straight line with only a single motor working.\* When we

\*This apparently refers to an auto-lock arrangement on the rudder-bar to save the pilot from having the rudder against the engine all the time.

were fairly far out I saw beneath us, not on the water but below the surface, a ship. It is a funny thing. If the sea is quiet, one can look down from above to the bottom of the sea. Of course it is not possible where the sea is twenty-five miles deep but one can see clearly through several hundred yards of water. I had not made a mistake in believing that the ship was traveling not on the surface but below the surface. Yet it seemed at first that it was traveling above water. I drew Zeumer's attention to my discovery and we went lower in order to see more clearly. I am too little of a naval expert to say what it was but it was clear to me that it was bound to be a submarine. But of what nationality? That is a difficult question which in my opinion can be solved only by a naval expert, and not always by him. One can scarcely distinguish colors under water and there is no flag. Besides a submarine does not carry such things. We had with us a couple of bombs and I debated with myself whether I should throw them or not. The submarine had not seen us for

it was partly submerged. We might have flown above it without danger and we might have waited until it found it necessary to come to the surface for air. Then we could have dropped our eggs. Herein lies, no doubt, a very critical point for our sister arm.

When we had fooled around the apparition beneath us for quite a while I suddenly noticed that the water was gradually disappearing from our cooling apparatus. I did not like that and I drew my colleague's attention to the fact. He pulled a long face and hastened to get home. However, we were approximately twelve miles from the shore and they had to be flown over. The motor began running more slowly and I was quietly preparing myself for a sudden cold immersion. But lo! and behold! we got through! Our giant apple-barge\* barged along with a single motor and the new steering apparatus and we reached the shore and managed to land

\*A literal translation of the German slang, analagous more or less to the British term box-kite.

in the harbor without any special difficulty.

It is a good thing to be lucky. Had we not tried the new steering apparatus on that day there would not have been any hope for us. We should certainly have been drowned.

*A Drop of Blood for the Fatherland*

**I** HAVE never been really wounded. At the critical moment I have probably bent my head or pulled in my chest. Often I have been surprised that they did not hit me. Once a bullet went through both my furlined boots. Another time a bullet went through my muffler. Another time one went along my arm through the fur and the leather jacket; but I have never been touched.

One fine day we started with our large battle-plane in order to delight the English with our bombs. We reached our object. The first bomb fell. It is very interesting to ascertain the effect of a bomb. At least one always likes to see it exploding. Unfortunately my large battle-plane, which was

well qualified for carrying bombs, had a stupid peculiarity which prevented me from seeing the effect of a bomb-throw, for immediately after the throw the machine came between my eye and the object and covered it completely with its planes. This always made me wild because one does not like to be deprived of one's amusement. If you hear a bang down below and see the delightful grayish-whitish cloud of the explosion in the neighborhood of the object aimed at, you are always very pleased. Therefore I waved to friend Zeumer that he should bend a little to the side. While waving to him I forgot that the infamous object on which I was traveling, my apple-barge, had two propellers which turned to the right and left of my observer-seat.\* I meant to show him where approximately the bomb had hit and bang! my finger was caught! I was somewhat surprised when I discovered that my

\*From this disposition of the air-screws, and from the date of the occurrence, one assumes that this was one of the very earliest twin-engined Gothas, of the type which the R. F. C. nicknamed "Wong-wong," because of the curious noise made by the engines or air-screws when they ran out of step.

little finger had been damaged. Zeumer did not notice anything.

Having been hit on the hand I did not care to throw any more bombs. I quickly got rid of the lot and we hurried home. My love for the large battle-plane, which after all had not been very great, suffered seriously in consequence of my experience. I had to sit quiet for seven days and was debarred from flying. Only my beauty was slightly damaged, but after all, I can say with pride that I also have been wounded in the war.

*My First Fight in the  
Air. (1st Sept., 1915)*

**Z**EUMER and I were very anxious to have a fight in the air. Of course we flew our large battle-plane. The title of our barge alone gave us so much courage that we thought it impossible for any opponent to escape us.

We flew every day from five to six hours without ever seeing an Englishman. I became quite discouraged, but one fine morning we again went out to hunt. Suddenly

I discovered a Farman aeroplane which was reconnoitering without taking notice of us. My heart beat furiously when Zeumer flew towards it. I was curious to see what was going to happen. I had never witnessed a fight in the air and had about as vague an idea of it as it was possible to have.

Before I knew what was happening both the Englishman and I rushed by one another. I had fired four shots at most while the Englishman was suddenly in our rear firing into us like anything. I must say I never had any sense of danger because I had no idea how the final result of such a fight would come about. We turned and turned around one another until at last, to our great surprise the Englishman turned away from us and flew off. I was greatly disappointed and so was my pilot.

Both of us were in very bad spirits when we reached home. He reproached me for having shot badly and I reproached him for not having enabled me to shoot well. In short our aeroplanic relations, which previously had been faultless, suffered severely.



We looked at our machine and discovered that it had received quite a respectable number of hits.

On the same day we went on the chase for a second time but again we had no success. I felt very sad. I had imagined that things would be very different in a battle squadron. I had always believed that one shot would cause the enemy to fall, but soon I became convinced that a flying machine can stand a great deal of punishment. Finally I felt assured that I should never bring down a hostile aeroplane, however much shooting I did.

We did not lack courage. Zeumer was a wonderful flier and I was quite a good shot. We stood before a riddle. We were not the only ones to be puzzled. Many are nowadays in the same position in which we were then. After all the flying business must really be thoroughly understood.

*In the Champagne Battle*

OUR pleasant days at Ostend were soon past, for the Champagne battle began and we flew to the front in order to take

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## THE RED BATTLE-FLYER

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part in it in our large battle-plane. Soon we discovered that our packing-case\* was a capacious aeroplane but that it could never be turned into a good battle-plane.

I flew once with Osteroth who had a smaller flier than the apple-barge. About three miles behind the front we encountered a Farman two-seater. He allowed us to approach him and for the first time in my life I saw an aerial opponent from quite close by. Osteroth flew with great skill side by side with the enemy so that I could easily fire at him. Our opponent probably did not notice us, for only when I had trouble with my gun did he begin to shoot at us. When I had exhausted my supply of one hundred bullets I thought I could not trust my eyes when I suddenly noticed that my opponent was going down in curious spirals. I followed him with my eyes and tapped Osteroth's head to draw his attention. Our opponent fell and fell and dropped at last into

\*Still another example of slang, indicative of the clumsiness of the Grossflugzeug in the air.

a large crater. There he was, his machine standing on its head, the tail pointing towards the sky. According to the map he had fallen three miles behind the front. We had therefore brought him down on enemy ground.\* Otherwise I should have one more victory to my credit. I was very proud of my success. After all, the chief thing is to bring a fellow down. It does not matter at all whether one is credited for it or not.

*How I Met Boelcke*

**F**RRIEND Zeumer got a Fokker Mono-plane. Therefore I had to sail through the world alone. The Champagne battle was raging. The French flying men were coming to the fore. We were to be combined in a battle squadron and took train on the first of October, 1915.

In the dining car, at the table next to me, was sitting a young and insignificant-looking lieutenant. There was no reason to take any note of him except for the fact that

\*It was also the British custom to ignore—as part of the score—all machines brought down in enemy territory. Later it became permissible to count such victims if their destruction was verified by independent witnesses.

he was the only man who had succeeded in shooting down a hostile flying man not once but four times. His name had been mentioned in the dispatches. I thought a great deal of him because of his experience. Although I had taken the greatest trouble, I had not brought an enemy down up to that time. At least I had not been credited with a success.

I would have liked so much to find out how Lieutenant Boelcke managed his business. So I asked him: "Tell me, how do you manage it?" He seemed very amused and laughed, although I had asked him quite seriously. Then he replied: "Well it is quite simple. I fly close to my man, aim well and then of course he falls down." I shook my head and told him that I did the same thing but my opponents unfortunately did not come down. The difference between him and I was that he flew a Fokker and I a large battle-plane.

I took great trouble to get more closely acquainted with that nice modest fellow whom I badly wanted to teach me his busi-

ness. We often played cards together, went for walks and I asked him questions. At last I formed a resolution that I also would learn to fly a Fokker. Perhaps then my chances would improve.

My whole aim and ambition became now concentrated upon learning how to manipulate the sticks myself. Hitherto I had been nothing but an observer. Happily I soon found an opportunity to learn piloting on an old machine in the Champagne. I threw myself into the work with body and soul and after twenty-five training flights I stood before the examination in flying alone.

## V

### *My First Solo-Flight. (10th October, 1915)*

**T**HERE are some moments in one's life which tickle one's nerves particularly and the first solo-flight is among them.

One fine evening my teacher, Zeumer, told me: "Now go and fly by yourself." I must say I felt like replying "I am afraid." But this is a word which should never be used by a man who defends his country. Therefore, whether I liked it or not, I had to make the best of it and get into my machine.

Zeumer explained to me once more every movement in theory. I scarcely listened to his explanations for I was firmly convinced that I should forget half of what he was telling me.

I started the machine. The aeroplane went at the prescribed speed and I could not

help noticing that I was actually flying. After all I did not feel timorous but rather elated. I did not care for anything. I should not have been frightened no matter what happened. With contempt of death I made a large curve to the left, stopped the machine near a tree, exactly where I had been ordered to, and looked forward to see what would happen. Now came the most difficult thing, the landing. I remembered exactly what movements I had to make. I acted mechanically and the machine moved quite differently from what I had expected. I lost my balance, made some wrong movements, stood on my head and I succeeded in converting my aeroplane into a battered school 'bus. I was very sad, looked at the damage which I had done to the machine, which after all was not very great, and had to suffer from other people's jokes.

Two days later I went with passion at the flying and suddenly I could handle the apparatus.

A fortnight later I had to take my first examination. Herr von T—— was my

examiner. I described the figure eight several times, exactly as I had been told to do, landed several times with success, in accordance with orders received and felt very proud of my achievements. However, to my great surprise I was told that I had not passed. There was nothing to be done but to try once more to pass the initial examination.

*My Training Time at Döberitz*

**I**N order to pass my examinations I had to go to Berlin. I made use of the opportunity to go to Berlin as observer in a giant plane.\* I was ordered to go by aeroplane to Döberitz near Berlin on the fifteenth of November, 1915. In the beginning I took a great interest in the giant-plane. But funnily enough the gigantic machine made it clear to me that only the smallest aeroplane would be of any use for me in battle. A big aerial barge is too clumsy for fighting. Agility is needed and, after all, fighting is my business.

\*Possibly a very early example of the Riesenflugzeug type, which is the next biggest thing to the Grossflugzeug type, which includes the Gothas, A. E. G.'s, Friedrichshafens, and other of the twin-engined types.



The difference between a large battle-plane and a giant-plane is that a giant-plane is considerably larger than a large battle-plane and that it is more suitable for use as a bomb-carrier than as a fighter.

I went through my examinations in Döberitz together with a dear fellow, First Lieutenant von Lyncker. We got on very well with one another, had the same inclinations and the same ideas as to our future activity. Our aim was to fly Fokkers and to be included in a battle squadron on the Western front. A year later we succeeded in working together for a short time. A deadly bullet hit my dear friend when bringing down his third aeroplane.

We passed many merry hours in Döberitz. One of the things which we had to do was to land in strange quarters. I used the opportunity to combine the necessary with the agreeable. My favorable landing place outside of our aerodrome was the Buchow Estate where I was well known. I was there invited to shoot wild pigs. The matter could be combined only with difficulty with

the service, for on fine evenings I wished both to fly and to shoot pigs. So I arranged for a place of landing in the neighborhood of Buchow whence I could easily reach my friends.

I took with me a second pilot, who served as an observer, and sent him back in the evening. During the night I shot pigs and on the next morning was fetched by my pilot.

If I had not been fetched with the aeroplane I should have been in a hole for I should have had to march on foot a distance of about six miles. So I required a man who would fetch me in any weather. It is not easy to find a man who will fetch you under any circumstances.

Once, when I had passed the night trying to shoot pigs, a tremendous snowfall set in. One could not see fifty yards ahead. My pilot was to fetch me at eight sharp. I hoped that for once he would not come. But suddenly I heard a humming noise—one could not see a thing—and five minutes later my beloved bird was squatting before me on

the ground. Unfortunately some of his bones had got bent.

*I Become a Pilot*

ON Christmas Day, 1915, I passed my third examination. In connection with it I flew to Schwerin, where the Fokker works are situated, and had a look at them. As observer I took with me my mechanic, and from Schwerin I flew with him to Breslau, from Breslau to Schweidnitz, from thence to Luben and then returned to Berlin. During my tour I landed in lots of different places in between, visiting relatives and friends. Being a trained observer, I did not find it difficult to find my way.

In March, 1916, I joined the Second Battle Squadron before Verdun and learned air-fighting as a pilot. I learned how to handle a fighting aeroplane. I flew then a two-seater.

In the official communique of the twenty-sixth of April, 1916, I am referred to for the first time, although my name is not mentioned. Only my deeds appear in it. I had

had built into my machine a machine gun, which I had arranged very much in the way in which it is done in the Nieuport machines.\* I was very proud of my idea. People laughed at the way I had fitted it up because the whole thing looked very primitive. Of course I swore by my new arrangement and very soon I had an opportunity of ascertaining its practical value.

I encountered a hostile Nieuport machine which was apparently guided by a man who also was a beginner, for he acted extremely foolishly. When I flew towards him he ran away. Apparently he had trouble with his gun. I had no idea of fighting him but thought: "What will happen if I now start shooting?" I flew after him, approached him as closely as possible and then began firing a short series of well-aimed shots with my machine gun. The Nieuport reared up in the air and turned over and over.

\*It is not clear whether this refers to a gun pointing upwards, as guns at that time were commonly fitted on the upper plane of the Nieuport, or whether the gun fired through the air-screw. Probably the latter fitting is meant. Later on one reads that he was then flying an Albatros, so it may have been a top gun.

At first both my observer and I believed that this was one of the numerous tricks which French fliers habitually indulge in. However, his tricks did not cease. Turning over and over, the machine went lower and lower. At last my observer patted me on the head and called out to me: "I congratulate you. He is falling." As a matter of fact he fell into a forest behind Fort Douaumont and disappeared among the trees. It became clear to me that I had shot him down, but on the other side of the Front. I flew home and reported merely: "I had an aerial fight and have shot down a Nieuport." The next day I read of my action in the official communiqué. Of course I was very proud of my success, but that Nieuport does not figure among the fifty-two aeroplanes which I have brought down.\*

The communiqué of the 26th of April stated: "Two hostile flying machines have been shot down by aerial fighting above Fleury, south and west of Douaumont."

\*Note.—This book was written after Captain von Richthofen had brought down fifty-two aeroplanes. At the time of his death he was officially credited with eighty victories.

*Holck's Death. (30th of April, 1916)*

**A**S a young pilot I once flew over Fort Douaumont at a moment when it was exposed to a violent drum-fire. I noticed that a German Fokker was attacking three Caudron machines. It was my misfortune that a strong west wind was blowing. That was not favorable to me. The Fokker was driven over the town of Verdun in the course of the fight. I drew the attention of my observer to the struggle. He thought that the German fighting man must be a very smart fellow. We wondered whether it could be Boelcke and intended to inquire when we came down. Suddenly, I saw to my horror that the German machine, which previously had attacked, had fallen back upon the defensive. The strength of the French fighting men had been increased to at least ten and their combined assaults forced the German machine to go lower and lower.

I could not fly to the German's aid. I was too far away from the battle. Besides, my heavy machine could not overcome the

strong wind against me. The Fokker fought with despair. His opponents had rushed him down to an altitude of only about eighteen hundred feet. Suddenly, he was once more attacked by his opponents and he disappeared, plunging into a small cloud. I breathed more easily, for in my opinion the cloud had saved him.

When I arrived at the aerodrome, I reported what I had seen and was told that the Fokker man was Count Holck, my old comrade in the Eastern Theater of war.

Count Holck had dropped straight down, shot through the head. His death deeply affected me for he was my model. I tried to imitate his energy and he was a man among men also as a character.

## VI

### *I Fly In a Thunderstorm*

OUR activity before Verdun was disturbed in the summer of 1916 by frequent thunderstorms. Nothing is more disagreeable for flying men than to have to go through a thunderstorm. In the Battle of the Somme a whole English flying squadron came down behind our lines and became prisoners of war because they had been surprised by a thunderstorm.\*

I had never yet made an attempt to get through thunder clouds but I could not suppress my desire to make the experiment. During the whole day thunder was in the

\*Probably this means a patrol of one or two flights—of four machines each. One does not recall a whole squadron disappearing at once, though one or two squadrons had their whole personnel renewed one or two at a time in the course of a month or so.



air. From my base at Mont I had flown over to the fortress of Metz, nearby, in order to look after various things. During my return journey I had an adventure.

I was at the aerodrome of Metz and intended to return to my own quarters. When I pulled my machine out of the hangar the first signs of an approaching thunderstorm became noticeable. Clouds which looked like a gigantic pitch-black wall approached from the north. Old experienced pilots urged me not to fly. However, I had promised to return and I should have considered myself a coward if I had failed to come back because of a silly thunderstorm. Therefore I meant to try.

When I started the rain began falling. I had to throw away my goggles, otherwise I should not have seen anything. The trouble was that I had to travel over the mountains of the Moselle where the thunderstorm was just raging. I said to myself that probably I should be lucky and get through and rapidly approached the black cloud which reached down to the earth. I

flew at the lowest possible altitude. I was compelled absolutely to leap over houses and trees with my machine. Very soon I knew no longer where I was. The gale seized my machine as if it were a piece of paper and drove it along. My heart sank within me. I could not land among the hills. I was compelled to go on.

I was surrounded by an inky blackness. Beneath me the trees bent down in the gale. Suddenly I saw right in front of me a wooded height. I could not avoid it. My Albatros managed to take it. I was able to fly only in a straight line. Therefore I had to take every obstacle that I encountered. My flight became a jumping competition purely and simply. I had to jump over trees, villages, spires and steeples, for I had to keep within a few yards of the ground, otherwise I should have seen nothing at all. The lightning was playing around me. At that time I did not yet know that lightning cannot touch flying machines. I felt certain of my death for it seemed to me inevitable that the gale would throw me at any

moment into a village or a forest. Had the motor stopped working I should have been done for.

Suddenly I saw that on the horizon the darkness had become less thick. Over there the thunderstorm had passed. I would be saved if I were able to get so far. Concentrating all my energy I steered towards the light.

Suddenly I got out of the thunder-cloud. The rain was still falling in torrents. Still, I felt saved.

In pouring rain I landed at my aerodrome. Everyone was waiting for me, for Metz had reported my start and had told them that I had been swallowed up by a thunder cloud.

I shall never again fly through a thunderstorm unless the Fatherland should demand this.

Now, when I look back, I realize that it was all very beautiful. Notwithstanding the danger during my flight, I experienced glorious moments which I would not care to have missed.

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### *My First Time In a Fokker*

FROM the beginning of my career as a pilot I had only a single ambition, the ambition to fly in a single-seater battle-plane. After worrying my commander for a long time I at last obtained permission to mount a Fokker. The revolving motor was a novelty to me. Besides, it was a strange feeling to be quite alone during the flight.

The Fokker belonged jointly to a friend of mine who has died long ago and to myself. I flew in the morning and he in the afternoon. Both he and I were afraid that the other fellow would smash the box. On the second day we flew towards the enemy. When I flew in the morning no Frenchman was to be seen. In the afternoon it was his turn. He started but did not return. There was no news from him.

Late in the evening the infantry reported an aerial battle between a Nieuport and a German Fokker, in the course of which the German machine had apparently landed at the Mort Homme. Evidently the occupant was friend Reimann for all the other flying

men had returned. We regretted the fate of our brave comrade. Suddenly, in the middle of the night, we heard over the telephone that a German flying officer had made an unexpected appearance in the front trenches at the Mort Homme. It appeared that this was Reimann. His motor had been smashed by a shot. He had been forced to land. As he was not able to reach our own lines he had come to the ground in No Man's Land. He had rapidly set fire to the machine and had then quickly hidden himself in a mine crater. During the night he had slunk into our trenches. Thus ended our joint enterprise with a Fokker.

A few days later I was given another Fokker. This time I felt under a moral obligation to attend to its destruction myself. I was flying for the third time. When starting, the motor suddenly stopped working. I had to land right away in a field and in a moment the beautiful machine was converted into a mass of scrap metal. It was a miracle that I was not hurt.

## VII

### *Bombing In Russia*

**I**N June we were suddenly ordered to entrain. No one knew where we were going, but we had an idea and we were not over much surprised when our Commander told us that we were going to Russia. We had traveled through the whole of Germany with our perambulating hotel which consisted of dining and sleeping cars, and arrived at last at Kovel. There we remained in our railway cars. There are many advantages in dwelling in a train. One is always ready to travel on and need not change one's quarters.\*

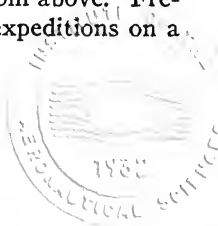
In the heat of the Russian summer a sleeping car is the most horrible instrument of martyrdom imaginable. Therefore, I agreed with some friends of mine, Gerstenberg and

\*This is the first reference to the regular "Traveling Circus" idea, in which the whole squadron works as a self-contained unit, with a special train to move its material, stores, spares, and mechanics, from place to place, and also provides living accommodations for the pilots.

Scheele, to take quarters in the forest near by. We erected a tent and lived like gypsies. We had a lovely time.

In Russia our battle squadron did a great deal of bomb throwing. Our occupation consisted of annoying the Russians. We dropped our eggs on their finest railway establishments. One day our whole squadron went out to bomb a very important railway station. The place was called Manjewicze and was situated about twenty miles behind the Front. That was not very far. The Russians had planned an attack and the station was absolutely crammed with colossal trains. Trains stood close to one another. Miles of rails were covered with them. One could easily see that from above. There was an object for bombing that was worth while.

One can become enthusiastic over anything. For a time I was delighted with bomb throwing. It gave me a tremendous pleasure to bomb those fellows from above. Frequently I took part in two expeditions on a single day.



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On the day mentioned our object was Manjewicze. Everything was ready. The aeroplanes were ready to start. Every pilot tried his motor, for it is a painful thing to be forced to land against one's will on the wrong side of the Front line, especially in Russia. The Russians hated the flyers. If they caught a flying man they would certainly kill him. That is the only risk one ran in Russia for the Russians had no aviators, or practically none. If a Russian flying man turned up he was sure to have bad luck and would be shot down. The anti-aircraft guns used by Russia were sometimes quite good, but they were too few in number. Compared with flying in the West, flying in the East is absolutely a holiday.

The aeroplanes rolled heavily to the starting point. They carried bombs to the very limit of their capacity. Sometimes I dragged three hundred pounds of bombs with a normal C-machine.\* Besides, I had with me a very heavy observer who apparently had

\*The German C-type machines are the two-seater reconnaissance types. The D-type are the single-seater fighters or "chaser" machines. The G-type are the big three-seater bombers.



not suffered in any way from the food scarcity.\* I had also with me a couple of machine guns. I was never able to make proper use of them in Russia. It is a pity that my collection of trophies contains not a single Russian.

Flying with a heavy machine which is carrying a great dead weight is no fun, especially during the mid-day summer heat in Russia. The barges sway in a very disagreeable manner. Of course, heavily laden though they are, they do not fall down. The 150 h. p. motors prevent it.\*\* At the same time it is no pleasant sensation to carry such a large quantity of explosives and benzine.

At last we get into a quiet atmosphere. Now comes the enjoyment of bombing. It is splendid to be able to fly in a straight line

\*It is interesting to find a German joking about food scarcity in 1916, exactly as people in England joke about it in 1918. One is able thus to form some idea of the comparative states of the two countries, and to judge how Germany would have fared if the British blockage had been rigidly enforced at the beginning of the war.

\*\*It was 150 horsepower in 1916. By the beginning of 1918 all modern German C-type machines had 260 h.p., and by April, 1918, German biplanes with 500 h.p. in one engine were beginning to appear. In consequence the extreme height (or "ceiling") of a C-type machine had risen from 12,000 feet to 20,000 feet.

and to have a definite object and definite orders. After having thrown one's bombs one has the feeling that he has achieved something, while frequently, after searching for an enemy to give battle to, one comes home with a sense of failure at not having brought a hostile machine to the ground. Then a man is apt to say to himself, "You have acted stupidly."

It gave me a good deal of pleasure to throw bombs. After a while my observer learned how to fly perpendicularly over the objects to be bombed and to make use of the right moment for laying his egg with the assistance of his aiming telescope.

The run to Manjewicze is very pleasant and I have made it repeatedly. We passed over gigantic forests which were probably inhabited by elks and lynxes. But the villages looked miserable. The only substantial village in the whole neighborhood was Manjewicze. It was surrounded by innumerable tents, and countless barracks had been run up near the railway station. We could not make out the Red Cross.

Another flying squadron had visited the place before us. That could be told by the smoking houses and barracks. They had not done badly. The exit of the station had obviously been blocked by a lucky hit. The engine was still steaming. The engine driver had probably dived into a shelter. On the other side of the station an engine was just coming out. Of course I felt tempted to hit it. We flew towards the engine and dropped a bomb a few hundred yards in front of it. We had the desired result. The engine stopped. We turned and continued throwing bomb after bomb on the station, carefully taking aim through our aiming telescope. We had plenty of time for nobody interfered with us. It is true that an enemy aerodrome was in the neighborhood but there was no trace of hostile pilots. A few anti-aircraft guns were busy, but they shot not in our direction but in another one. We reserved a bomb hoping to make particularly good use of it on our way home.

Suddenly we noticed an enemy flying ma-

chine starting from its hangar. The question was whether it would attack us. I did not believe in an attack. It was more likely that the flying man was seeking security in the air, for when bombing machines are about, the air is the safest place.

We went home by roundabout ways and looked for camps. It was particularly amusing to pepper the gentlemen down below with machine guns. Half savage tribes from Asia are even more startled when fired at from above than are cultured Englishmen. It is particularly interesting to shoot at hostile cavalry. An aerial attack upsets them completely. Suddenly the lot of them rush away in all directions of the compass. I should not like to be the Commander of a Squadron of Cossacks which has been fired at with machine guns from aeroplanes.\*

\*Attacks on troops on roads by low-flying aeroplanes were not regularly organized acts of war in those days, though such attacks had been made by R. N. A. S. pilots in Belgium in 1914. It is curious that despite the observed effects of the R. N. A. S. attacks, and the experiences of such men as von Richthofen, neither the British nor the German aeronautical authorities ever took the trouble to devote attention to this new method of war. The racial similarity of the two belligerents is marked in this as in other matters.

By and by we could recognize the German lines. We had to dispose of our last bomb and we resolved to make a present of it to a Russian observation balloon, to the only observation balloon they possessed. We could quite comfortably descend to within a few hundred yards of the ground in order to attack it. At first the Russians began to haul it in very rapidly. When the bomb had been dropped the hauling stopped. I did not believe that I had hit it. I rather imagined that the Russians had left their chief in the air and had run away. At last we reached our front and our trenches and were surprised to find when we got home that we had been shot at from below. At least one of the planes had a hole in it.

Another time and in the same neighborhood we were ordered to meet an attack of the Russians who intended to cross the river Stokhod. We came to the danger spot laden with bombs and carrying a large number of cartridges for our machine guns. On arrival at the Stokhod, we were surprised to see that hostile cavalry was already crossing.

They were passing over a single bridge. Immediately it was clear to us that one might do a tremendous lot of harm to the enemy by hitting the bridge.

Dense masses of men were crossing. We went as low as possible and could clearly see the hostile cavalry crossing by way of the bridge with great rapidity. The first bomb fell near the bridge. The second and third followed immediately. They created a tremendous disorder. The bridge had not been hit. Nevertheless traffic across it had completely ceased. Men and animals were rushing away in all directions. We had thrown only three bombs but the success had been excellent. Besides, a whole squadron of aeroplanes was following us. Lastly, we could do other things. My observer fired energetically into the crowd down below with his machine gun and we enjoyed it tremendously. Of course, I cannot say what real success we had. The Russians have not told us. Still I imagined that I alone had caused the Russian attack to fail. Perhaps

the official account of the Russian War Office will give me details after the war.

*At Last!*

THE August sun was almost unbearably hot on the sandy flying ground at Kovel. While we were chatting among ourselves one of my comrades said: "To-day the great Boelcke arrives on a visit to us, or rather to his brother!" In the evening the great man came to hand. He was vastly admired by all and he told us many interesting things about his journey to Turkey. He was just returning from Turkey and was on the way to Headquarters. He imagined that he would go to the Somme to continue his work. He was to organize a fighting squadron. He was empowered to select from the flying corps those men who seemed to him particularly qualified for his purpose.

I did not dare to ask him to be taken on. I did not feel bored by the fighting in Russia. On the contrary, we made extensive and interesting flights. We bombed the Russians at their stations. Still, the idea of fighting

again on the Western Front attracted me. There is nothing finer for a young cavalry officer than the chase of the air.

The next morning Boelcke was to leave us. Quite early somebody knocked at my door and before me stood the great man with the *Ordre pour le Mérite*. I knew him, as I have previously mentioned, but still I had never imagined that he came to look me up in order to ask me to become his pupil. I almost fell upon his neck when he inquired whether I cared to go with him to the Somme.

Three days later I sat in the railway train and traveled through the whole of Germany straight away to the new field of my activity. At last my greatest wish was fulfilled. From now onwards began the finest time of my life.

At that time I did not dare to hope that I should be as successful as I have been. When I left my quarters in the East a good friend of mine called out after me: "See that you do not come back without the *Ordre pour le Mérite*."



## VIII

### *My First English Victim.* *(17th September, 1915)\**

**W**E were all at the butts trying our machine guns. On the previous day we had received our new aeroplanes and the next morning Boelcke was to fly with us. We were all beginners. None of us had had a success so far. Consequently everything that Boelcke told us was to us gospel truth. Every day, during the last few days, he had, as he said, shot one or two Englishmen for breakfast.

The next morning, the seventeenth of September, was a gloriously fine day. It was therefore only to be expected that the English would be very active. Before we

\*This locates almost exactly the date of the formation of the first Boelcke Circus.

started Boelcke repeated to us his instructions and for the first time we flew as a squadron commanded by the great man whom we followed blindly.

We had just arrived at the Front when we recognized a hostile flying squadron that was proceeding in the direction of Cambrai. Boelcke was of course the first to see it, for he saw a great deal more than ordinary mortals. Soon we understood the position and everyone of us strove to follow Boelcke closely. It was clear to all of us that we should pass our first examination under the eyes of our beloved leader.

Slowly we approached the hostile squadron. It could not escape us. We had intercepted it, for we were between the Front and our opponents. If they wished to go back they had to pass us. We counted the hostile machines. They were seven in number. We were only five. All the Englishmen flew large bomb-carrying two-seaters. In a few seconds the dance would begin.

Boelcke had come very near the first English machine but he did not yet shoot. I

followed. Close to me were my comrades. The Englishman nearest to me was traveling in a large boat painted with dark colors. I did not reflect very long but took my aim and shot. He also fired and so did I, and both of us missed our aim. A struggle began and the great point for me was to get to the rear of the fellow because I could only shoot forward with my gun. He was differently placed for his machine gun was movable. It could fire in all directions.

Apparently he was no beginner, for he knew exactly that his last hour had arrived at the moment when I got at the back of him. At that time I had not yet the conviction "He must fall!" which I have now on such occasions, but on the contrary, I was curious to see whether he would fall. There is a great difference between the two feelings. When one has shot down one's first, second or third opponent, then one begins to find out how the trick is done.

My Englishman twisted and turned, going criss-cross. I did not think for a moment that the hostile squadron contained other

Englishmen who conceivably might come to the aid of their comrade. I was animated by a single thought: "The man in front of me must come down, whatever happens." At last a favorable moment arrived. My opponent had apparently lost sight of me. Instead of twisting and turning he flew straight along. In a fraction of a second I was at his back with my excellent machine. I give a short series of shots with my machine gun. I had gone so close that I was afraid I might dash into the Englishman. Suddenly, I nearly yelled with joy for the propeller of the enemy machine had stopped turning. I had shot his engine to pieces; the enemy was compelled to land, for it was impossible for him to reach his own lines. The English machine was curiously swinging to and fro. Probably something had happened to the pilot. The observer was no longer visible. His machine gun was apparently deserted. Obviously I had hit the observer and he had fallen from his seat.

The Englishman landed close to the flying ground of one of our squadrons. I was so

excited that I landed also and my eagerness was so great that I nearly smashed up my machine. The English flying machine and my own stood close together. I rushed to the English machine and saw that a lot of soldiers were running towards my enemy. When I arrived I discovered that my assumption had been correct. I had shot the engine to pieces and both the pilot and observer were severely wounded. The observer died at once and the pilot while being transported to the nearest dressing station. I honored the fallen enemy by placing a stone on his beautiful grave.

When I came home Boelcke and my other comrades were already at breakfast. They were surprised that I had not turned up. I reported proudly that I had shot down an Englishman. All were full of joy for I was not the only victor. As usual, Boelcke had shot down an opponent for breakfast and everyone of the other men also had downed an enemy for the first time.

I would mention that since that time no English squadron ventured as far as Cam-

brai as long as Boelcke's squadron was there.\*

*The Battle of the Somme*

**D**URING my whole life I have not found a happier hunting ground than in the course of the Somme Battle. In the morning, as soon as I had got up, the first Englishmen arrived, and the last did not disappear until long after sunset. Boelcke once said that this was the El Dorado of the flying men.

There was a time when, within two months, Boelcke's bag of machines increased from twenty to forty. We beginners had not at that time the experience of our master and we were quite satisfied when we did not get a hiding. It was an exciting period. Every time we went up we had a fight. Frequently we fought really big battles in the air. There were sometimes

\*Cambrai at that time was a long way behind the front, and Bapaume was a more important mark for the British squadrons. So it may not have been worth while for squadrons to go so far afield as Cambrai. Single machines on long reconnaissance visited Cambrai regularly.

from forty to sixty English machines, but unfortunately the Germans were often in the minority. With them quality was more important than quantity.

Still the Englishman is a smart fellow. That we must allow. Sometimes the English came down to a very low altitude and visited Boelcke in his quarters, upon which they threw their bombs. They absolutely challenged us to battle and never refused fighting.

We had a delightful time with our chasing squadron. The spirit of our leader animated all his pupils. We trusted him blindly. There was no possibility that one of us would be left behind. Such a thought was incomprehensible to us. Animated by that spirit we gaily diminished the number of our enemies.

On the day when Boelcke fell the squadron had brought down forty opponents. By now the number has been increased by more than a hundred. Boelcke's spirit lives still among his capable successors.

*Boelcke's Death. (28th October, 1916)*

ONE day we were flying, once more guided by Boelcke against the enemy. We always had a wonderful feeling of security when he was with us. After all he was the one and only. The weather was very gusty and there were many clouds. There were no aeroplanes about except fighting ones.

From a long distance we saw two impertinent Englishmen in the air who actually seemed to enjoy the terrible weather. We were six and they were two. If they had been twenty and if Boelcke had given us the signal to attack we should not have been at all surprised.

The struggle began in the usual way. Boelcke tackled the one and I the other. I had to let go because one of the German machines got in my way. I looked around and noticed Boelcke settling his victim about two hundred yards away from me.

It was the usual thing. Boelcke would shoot down his opponent and I had to look



on. Close to Boelcke flew a good friend of his. It was an interesting struggle. Both men were shooting. It was probable that the Englishman would fall at any moment. Suddenly I noticed an unnatural movement of the two German flying machines. Immediately I thought: Collision. I had not yet seen a collision in the air. I had imagined that it would look quite different. In reality, what happened was not a collision. The two machines merely touched one another. However, if two machines go at the tremendous pace of flying machines, the slightest contact has the effect of a violent concussion.

Boelcke drew away from his victim and descended in large curves. He did not seem to be falling, but when I saw him descending below me I noticed that part of his planes had broken off. I could not see what happened afterwards, but in the clouds he lost an entire plane. Now his machine was no longer steerable. It fell accompanied all the time by Boelcke's faithful friend.

When we reached home we found the report "Boelcke is dead!" had already arrived. We could scarcely realize it.

The greatest pain was, of course, felt by the man who had the misfortune to be involved in the accident.

It is a strange thing that everybody who met Boelcke imagined that he alone was his true friend. I have made the acquaintance of about forty men, each of whom imagined that he alone was Boelcke's intimate. Each imagined that he had the monopoly of Boelcke's affections. Men whose names were unknown to Boelcke believed that he was particularly fond of them. This is a curious phenomenon which I have never noticed in anyone else. Boelcke had not a personal enemy. He was equally polite to everybody, making no differences.

The only one who was perhaps more intimate with him than the others was the very man who had the misfortune to be in the accident which caused his death.

Nothing happens without God's will. That is the only consolation which any of us

can put to our souls during this war.

*My Eighth Victim*

**I**N Boelcke's time eight was quite a respectable number. Those who hear nowadays of the colossal bags made by certain aviators must feel convinced that it has become easier to shoot down a machine. I can assure those who hold that opinion that the flying business is becoming more difficult from month to month and even from week to week. Of course, with the increasing number of aeroplanes one gains increased opportunities for shooting down one's enemies, but at the same time, the possibility of being shot down one's self increases. The armament of our enemies is steadily improving and their number is increasing.\* When Immelmann shot down his first victim he had the good fortune to find an opponent who carried not even a machine gun. Such little innocents one finds nowadays only at the training ground for beginners.

\*This testimony to the improvement in the aerial equipment of the British Army is well worthy of note.

On the ninth of November, 1916, I flew towards the enemy with my little comrade Immelmann,\* who then was eighteen years old. We both were in Boelcke's squadron of chasing aeroplanes. We had previously met one another and had got on very well. Comradeship is a most important thing. We went to work. I had already bagged seven enemies and Immelmann five. At that time this was quite a lot.

Soon after our arrival at the front we saw a squadron of bombing aeroplanes. They were coming along with impertinent assurance. They arrived in enormous numbers as was usual during the Somme Battle. I think there were about forty or fifty machines approaching. I cannot give the exact number. They had selected an object for their bombs not far from our aerodrome. I reached them when they had almost attained their objective. I approached the last machine. My first few shots incapacitated the hostile machine gunner. Possibly they had

\*This is evidently a junior Immelmann of Boelcke's squadron, and not the famous Immelmann, who was already dead before the Boelcke squadron came into existence.

tickled the pilot, too. At any rate he resolved to land with his bombs. I fired a few more shots to accelerate his progress downwards. He fell close to our flying ground at Lagnicourt.

While I was fighting my opponent, Immelmann had tackled another Englishman and had brought him down in the same locality. Both of us flew quickly home in order to have a look at the machines we had downed. We jumped into a motor car, drove in the direction where our victims lay and had to run along a distance through the fields. It was very hot, therefore I unbuttoned all my garments even the collar and the shirt. I took off my jacket, left my cap in the car but took with me a big stick. My boots were miry up to the knees. I looked like a tramp. I arrived in the vicinity of my victim. In the meantime, a lot of people had of course gathered around.

At one spot there was a group of officers. I approached them, greeted them, and asked the first one whom I met whether he could tell me anything about the aspect of the

aerial battle. It is always interesting to find out how a fight in the air looks to the people down below. I was told that the English machines had thrown bombs and that the aeroplane that had come down was still carrying its bombs.

The officer who gave me this information took my arm, went with me to the other officers, asked my name and introduced me to them. I did not like it, for my attire was rather disarranged. On the other hand, all the officers looked as spic and span as on parade. I was introduced to a personage who impressed me rather strangely. I noticed a General's trousers, an Order at the neck, an unusually youthful face and undefinable epaulettes. In short, the personage seemed extraordinary to me. During our conversation I buttoned my shirt and collar and adopted a somewhat military attitude.

I had no idea who the officer was. I took my leave and went home again. In the evening the telephone rang and I was told that the undefinable somebody with whom I had

been talking had been His Royal Highness, the Grand-Duke of Saxe-Coburg Gotha.

I was ordered to go to him. It was known that the English had intended to throw bombs on his headquarters. Apparently I had helped to keep the aggressors away from him. Therefore I was given the Saxe-Coburg Gotha medal for bravery.

I always enjoy this adventure when I look at the medal.

*Major Hawker*

**I** WAS extremely proud when, one fine day, I was informed that the airman whom I had brought down on the twenty-third of November, 1916, was the English Immelmann.

In view of the character of our fight it was clear to me that I had been tackling a flying champion.

One day I was blithely flying to give chase when I noticed three Englishmen who also had apparently gone a-hunting. I noticed that they were ogling me and as I felt much inclination to have a fight I did not want to disappoint them.

I was flying at a lower altitude. Consequently I had to wait until one of my English friends tried to drop on me. After a short while one of the three came sailing along and attempted to tackle me in the rear. After firing five shots he had to stop for I had swerved in a sharp curve.

The Englishman tried to catch me up in the rear while I tried to get behind him. So we circled round and round like madmen after one another at an altitude of about 10,000 feet.

First we circled twenty times to the left, and then thirty times to the right. Each tried to get behind and above the other.

Soon I discovered that I was not meeting a beginner. He had not the slightest intention of breaking off the fight. He was traveling in a machine which turned beautifully.\* However, my own was better at rising than his, and I succeeded at last in getting above and beyond my English waltzing partner.

When we had got down to about 6,000

\*Major Hawker was flying a de Havilland II with a 100 h.p. Monosoupape Gnome engine, a species of "box-kite" single-seater biplane, albeit very fast and handy.



feet without having achieved anything in particular, my opponent ought to have discovered that it was time for him to take his leave. The wind was favorable to me for it drove us more and more towards the German position. At last we were above Baupaume, about half a mile behind the German front. The impertinent fellow was full of cheek and when we had got down to about 3,000 feet he merrily waved to me as if he would say, "Well, how do you do?"

The circles which we made around one another were so narrow that their diameter was probably no more than 250 or 300 feet. I had time to take a good look at my opponent. I looked down into his carriage and could see every movement of his head. If he had not had his cap on I would have noticed what kind of a face he was making.

My Englishman was a good sportsman, but by and by the thing became a little too hot for him. He had to decide whether he would land on German ground or whether he would fly back to the English lines. Of course he tried the latter, after having en-

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## THE RED BATTLE-FLYER

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deavored in vain to escape me by loopings and such like tricks. At that time his first bullets were flying around me, for hitherto neither of us had been able to do any shooting.

When he had come down to about three hundred feet he tried to escape by flying in a zig-zag course during which, as is well known, it is difficult for an observer to shoot. That was my most favorable moment. I followed him at an altitude of from two hundred and fifty feet to one hundred and fifty feet, firing all the time. The Englishman could not help falling. But the jamming of my gun nearly robbed me of my success.

My opponent fell, shot through the head, one hundred and fifty feet behind our line. His machine gun was dug out of the ground and it ornaments the entrance of my dwelling.\*

\*One gathers that this account is substantially correct. The other two British machines who were with Major Hawker became involved with von Richthofen's four followers and with five other German chasers which came into the fight from a higher altitude. These two, after a busy time, fought their way out, while Major Hawker was fighting von Richthofen. The only flaw in the story is that in fact one of the upper German machines dived onto Major Hawker, who, apparently, in avoiding it, came into action with von Richthofen.

## IX

### *I Get the Ordre Pour le Merite*

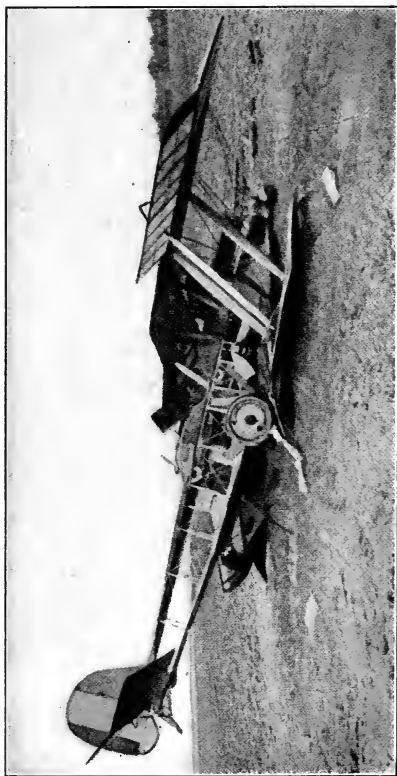
I HAD brought down my sixteenth victim, and I had come to the head of the list of all the flying chasers. I had obtained the aim which I had set myself. In the previous year my friend Lynker, with whom I was training, had asked me: "What is your object? What will you obtain by flying?" I replied, jokingly, "I would like to be the first of the chasers. That must be very fine." That I should succeed in this I did not believe myself. Other people also did not expect my success. Boelcke is supposed to have said, not to me personally—I have only heard the report—when asked: "Which of the fellows is likely to become a good chaser?"—"That is the man!" pointing his finger in my direction.

Boelcke and Immelman were given the *Ordre pour le Mérite* when they had brought down their eighth aeroplane. I had downed twice that number. The question was, what would happen to me? I was very curious. It was rumored that I was to be given command of a chasing squadron.

One fine day a telegram arrived, which stated: "Lieutenant von Richthofen is appointed Commander of the Eleventh Chasing Squadron."

I must say I was annoyed. I had learnt to work so well with my comrades of Boelcke's Squadron and now I had to begin all over again working hand in hand with different people. It was a beastly nuisance. Besides I should have preferred the *Ordre pour le Mérite*.

Two days later, when we were sitting sociably together, we men of Boelcke's Squadron, celebrating my departure, a telegram from Headquarters arrived. It stated that His Majesty had graciously condescended to give me the *Ordre pour le Mérite*. Of course my joy was tremendous.



THE FORTIETH RICHTHOFEN VICTIM



I had never imagined that it would be so delightful to command a chasing squadron. Even in my dreams I had not imagined that there would ever be a Richthofen's squadron of aeroplanes.

*Le Petit Rouge*

**I**T occurred to me to have my packing case painted all over in staring red. The result was that everyone got to know my red bird. My opponents also seemed to have heard of the color transformation.

During a fight on quite a different section of the Front I had the good fortune to shoot into a Vickers' two-seater which peacefully photographed the German artillery position. My friend, the photographer, had not the time to defend himself. He had to make haste to get down upon firm ground for his machine began to give suspicious indications of fire. When we airmen notice that phenomenon in an enemy plane, we say: "He stinks!" As it turned out it was really so. When the machine was coming to earth it burst into flames.

I felt some human pity for my opponent and had resolved not to cause him to fall down but merely to compel him to land. I did so particularly because I had the impression that my opponent was wounded for he did not fire a single shot.

When I had got down to an altitude of about fifteen hundred feet engine trouble compelled me to land without making any curves. The result was very comical. My enemy with his burning machine landed smoothly while I, his victor, came down next to him in the barbed wire of our trenches and my machine overturned.\*

The two Englishmen who were not a little surprised at my collapse, greeted me like sportsmen. As mentioned before, they had not fired a shot and they could not understand why I had landed so clumsily. They were the first two Englishmen whom I had brought down alive. Consequently, it gave me particular pleasure to talk to them. I asked them whether they had previously

\*This incident confirms the impression that the small Albatros biplanes are difficult to land except in a properly prepared aerodrome.



seen my machine in the air, and one of them replied, "Oh, yes. I know your machine very well. We call it 'Le Petit Rouge'."

*English and French Flying.* (February, 1917)

**I** WAS trying to compete with Boelcke's squadron. Every evening we compared our bags. However, Boelcke's pupils are smart rascals. I cannot get ahead of them. The utmost one can do is to draw level with them. The Boelcke section has an advantage over my squadron of one hundred aeroplanes downed. I must not allow them to retain it. Everything depends on whether we have for opponents those French tricksters or those daring rascals, the English. I prefer the English. Frequently their daring can only be described as stupidity. In their eyes it may be pluck and daring.

The great thing in air fighting is that the decisive factor does not lie in trick flying but solely in the personal ability and energy of the aviator. A flying man may be able

to loop and do all the stunts imaginable and yet he may not succeed in shooting down a single enemy. In my opinion the aggressive spirit is everything and that spirit is very strong in us Germans. Hence we shall always retain the domination of the air.\*

The French have a different character. They like to put traps and to attack their opponents unawares. That cannot easily be done in the air. Only a beginner can be caught and one cannot set traps because an aeroplane cannot hide itself. The invisible aeroplane has not yet been discovered. Sometimes, however, the Gaelic blood asserts itself. The Frenchmen will then attack. But the French attacking spirit is like bottled lemonade. It lacks tenacity.

The Englishmen, on the other hand, one notices that they are of Germanic blood. Sportsmen easily take to flying, and Englishmen see in flying nothing but a sport. They

\*Except when faced by pilots in approximately equal numbers and equally mounted. It is interesting here to recall the dictum of General von Hoppner, the chief of the German Flying Service, who said that the English are dangerous opponents and show by their fighting spirit that they are of Germanic race. It will be noticed that von Richthofen repeats the sentiment later on.

take a perfect delight in looping the loop, flying on their back, and indulging in other stunts for the benefit of our soldiers in the trenches. All these tricks may impress people who attend a Sports Meeting, but the public at the battle-front is not as appreciative of these things. It demands higher qualifications than trick flying. Therefore, the blood of English pilots will have to flow in streams.

*I Am Shot Down.*  
(Middle of March, 1917)

**I** HAVE had an experience which might perhaps be described as being shot down. At the same time, I call shot down only when one falls down. To-day I got into trouble but I escaped with a whole skin.

I was flying with the squadron and noticed an opponent who also was flying in a squadron. It happened above the German artillery position in the neighborhood of Lens. I had to fly quite a distance to get there. It tickles one's nerves to fly towards the enemy, especially when one can see him from a long distance and when several minutes must

elapse before one can start fighting. I imagine that at such a moment my face turns a little pale, but unfortunately I have never had a mirror with me. I like that feeling for it is a wonderful nerve stimulant. One observes the enemy from afar. One has recognized that his squadron is really an enemy formation. One counts the number of the hostile machines and considers whether the conditions are favorable or unfavorable. A factor of enormous importance is whether the wind forces me away from or towards our Front. For instance, I once shot down an Englishman. I fired the fatal shot above the English position. However, the wind was so strong that his machine came down close to the German captive balloons.

We Germans had five machines. Our opponents were three times as numerous. The English flew about like midges. It is not easy to disperse a swarm of machines which fly together in good order. It is impossible for a single machine to do it. It is extremely difficult for several aeroplanes, particularly if the difference in number is as great as it

was in this case. However, one feels such a superiority over the enemy that one does not doubt of success for a moment.

The aggressive spirit, the offensive, is the chief thing everywhere in war, and the air is no exception. However, the enemy had the same idea. I noticed that at once. As soon as they observed us they turned round and attacked us. Now we five had to look sharp. If one of them should fall there might be a lot of trouble for all of us. We went closer together and allowed the foreign gentlemen to approach us.

I watched whether one of the fellows would hurriedly take leave of his colleagues. There! One of them is stupid enough to depart alone. I can reach him and I say to myself, "That man is lost." Shouting aloud, I am after him. I have come up to him or at least am getting very near him. He starts shooting prematurely, which shows that he is nervous. So I say to myself, "Go on shooting. You won't hit me." He shot with a kind of ammunition which ignites. So I could see his shots passing me. I felt as if

I were sitting in front of a gigantic watering pot. The sensation was not pleasant. Still, the English usually shoot with their beastly stuff, and so we must try and get accustomed to it.\* One can get accustomed to anything. At the moment I think I laughed aloud. But soon I got a lesson. When I had approached the Englishman quite closely, when I had come to a distance of about three hundred feet, I got ready for firing, aimed and gave a few trial shots. The machine guns were in order. The decision would be there before long. In my mind's eye I saw my enemy dropping.

My former excitement was gone. In such a position one thinks quite calmly and collectedly and weighs the probabilities of hitting and of being hit. Altogether the fight itself is the least exciting part of the business as a rule. He who gets excited in

\*The reference is to what are called "tracer" bullets. The hind end of the bullet contains a phosphorous mixture which leaves a trail of smoke and so indicates to the gunner where his bullets are going. If such a bullet penetrates a petrol tank or passes through escaping petrol—due to a perforated tank or a cut petrol-pipe—it sets the petrol on fire, but the prime reason is to trace the course of the shot. The Germans use similar bullets as largely as do the Allies.

fighting is sure to make mistakes. He will never get his enemy down. Besides calmness is, after all, a matter of habit. At any rate in this case I did not make a mistake. I approached my man up to fifty yards. Then I fired some well aimed shots and thought that I was bound to be successful. That was my idea. But suddenly I heard a tremendous bang, when I had scarcely fired ten cartridges. Presently again something hit my machine. It became clear to me that I had been hit or rather my machine. At the same time I noticed a fearful benzine stench and I observed that the motor was running slack. The Englishman noticed it, too, for he started shooting with redoubled energy, while I had to stop it.

I went right down. Instinctively I switched off the engine and indeed it was high time to do this. When a pilot's benzine tank has been perforated, and when the infernal liquid is squirting around his legs, the danger of fire is very great. In front is an explosion engine of more than 150 h. p. which is red hot. If a single drop of benzine should

fall on it the whole machine would be in flames.\*

I left in the air a thin white cloud. I knew its meaning from my enemies. Its appearance is the first sign of a coming explosion. I was at an altitude of nine thousand feet and had to travel a long distance to get down. By the kindness of Providence my engine stopped running. I have no idea with what rapidity I went downward. At any rate the speed was so great that I could not put my head out of the machine without being pressed back by the rush of air.

Soon I lost sight of my enemy. I had only time to see what my four comrades were doing while I was dropping to the ground. They were still fighting. Their machine-guns and those of their opponents could be heard. Suddenly I notice a rocket. Is it a signal of the enemy? No, it cannot be. The light is too great for a rocket. Evi-

\*This is a mistaken idea, common to many pilots who are not motor engineers. Fire in such cases is caused by petrol or petrol vapor being set alight by a spark from the magneto, which because the air-screw is still revolving continues to generate sparks internally even when switched off. A mere red-hot pipe in an engine would not cause petrol fire.



dently a machine is on fire. What machine? The burning machine looks exactly as if it were one of our own. No! Praise the Lord, it is one of the enemy's! Who can have shot him down? Immediately afterwards a second machine drops out and falls perpendicularly to the ground, turning, turning, turning exactly as I did, but suddenly it recovers its balance. It flies straight towards me. It also is an Albatros. No doubt it had the same experience as I had.

I had fallen to an altitude of perhaps one thousand feet and had to look out for a landing. Now such a sudden landing usually leads to breakages and as these are occasionally serious it was time to look out. I found a meadow. It was not very large but it just sufficed if I used due caution. Besides it was favorably situated on the high road near Hénin-Liétard. There I meant to land.

Everything went as desired and my first thought was, "What has become of the other fellow?" He landed a few kilometers from the spot where I had come to the ground.

I had ample time to inspect the damage. My machine had been hit a number of times. The shot which caused me to give up the fight had gone through both benzine tanks. I had not a drop of benzine left and the engine itself had also been damaged by shots. It was a pity for it had worked so well.

I let my legs dangle out of the machine and probably made a very silly face. In a moment I was surrounded by a large crowd of soldiers. Then came an officer. He was quite out of breath. He was terribly excited! No doubt something fearful had happened to him. He rushed towards me, gasped for air and asked: "I hope that nothing has happened to you. I have followed the whole affair and am terribly excited! Good Lord, it looked awful!" I assured him that I felt quite well, jumped down from the side of my machine and introduced myself to him. Of course he did not understand a particle of my name. However, he invited me to go in his motor car to Hénin-Liétard where he was quartered. He was an Engineer Officer.

We were sitting in the motor and were commencing our ride. My host was still extraordinarily excited. Suddenly he jumped up and asked: "Good Lord, but where is your chauffeur?" At first I did not quite understand what he meant. Probably I looked puzzled. Then it dawned upon me that he thought that I was the observer of a two-seater and that he asked after the fate of my pilot. I pulled myself together and said in the dryest tones: "I always drive myself." Of course the word "drive" is absolutely taboo among the flying men.

An aviator does not drive, he flies. In the eyes of the kind gentleman I had obviously lost caste when he discovered that I "drove" my own aeroplane. The conversation began to slacken.

We arrived in his quarters. I was still dressed in my dirty and oily leather jacket and had round my neck a thick wrap. On our journey he had of course asked me a tremendous number of questions. Altogether he was far more excited than I was.

When we got to his diggings he forced

me to lie down on the sofa, or at least he tried to force me because, he argued, I was bound to be terribly done up through my fight. I assured him that this was not my first aerial battle but he did not, apparently, give me much credence. Probably I did not look very martial.

After we had been talking for some time he asked me of course the celebrated question: "Have you ever brought down a machine?" As I said before he had probably not understood my name. So I answered nonchalantly: "Oh, yes! I have done so now and then." He replied: "Indeed! Perhaps you have shot down two?" I answered: "No. Not two but twenty-four." He smiled, repeated his question and gave me to understand that, when he was speaking about shooting down an aeroplane, he meant not shooting *at* an aeroplane but shooting *into* an aeroplane in such a manner that it would fall to the ground and remain there. I immediately assured him that I entirely shared his conception of the meaning of the words "shooting down."

Now I had completely lost caste with him. He was convinced that I was a fearful liar. He left me sitting where I was and told me that a meal would be served in an hour. If I liked I could join in. I accepted his invitation and slept soundly for an hour. Then we went to the Officers' Club. Arrived at the club I was glad to find that I was wearing the *Ordre pour le Mérite*.

Unfortunately I had no uniform jacket underneath my greasy leather coat but only a waistcoat. I apologized for being so badly dressed. Suddenly my good chief discovered on me the *Ordre pour le Mérite*. He was speechless with surprise and assured me that he did not know my name. I gave him my name once more. Now it seemed to dawn upon him that he had heard my name before. He feasted me with oysters and champagne and I did gloriously until at last my orderly arrived and fetched me with my car. I learned from him that comrade Lubbert had once more justified his nickname. He was generally called "the bullet-catcher" for his machine suffered badly in every fight. Once

it was hit sixty-four times. Yet he had not been wounded. This time he had received a glancing shot on the chest and he was by this time in hospital. I flew his machine to port. Unfortunately this excellent officer, who promised to become another Boelcke, died a few weeks later—a hero's death for the Fatherland.

In the evening I could assure my kind host of Hénin-Liétard that I had increased my "bag" to twenty-five.

## X

### *A Flying-Man's Adventure.* *(End of March, 1917)*

THE name "Siegfried position" is probably known to every young man in Germany. During the time when we withdrew towards the Siegfried line the activity in the air was of course very great. We allowed our enemies to occupy the territory which we had evacuated but we did not allow them to occupy the air as well. The chaser squadron which Boelcke had trained looked after the English flying men. The English had hitherto fought a war of position in the air and they ventured to abandon it for a war of movement only with the utmost caution.

That was the time when Prince Frederick Charles gave his life for the Fatherland.

In the course of a hunting expedition of

the Boelcke Chaser Squadron, Lieutenant Voss\* had defeated an Englishman in an aerial duel. He was forced to go down to the ground and landed in neutral territory between the lines, in No Man's Land. In this particular case we had abandoned a stretch of territory but the enemy had not yet occupied it. Only English and German patrols were about in the unoccupied zone. The English flying machine was standing between the two lines. Our good Englishman probably believed that the ground was already in English possession and he was justified in thinking so.

Lieutenant Voss was of a different opinion. Without a moment's hesitation he landed close to his victim. With great rapidity he transferred the Englishman's ma-

\*Voss was afterwards shot in a fight by the late Lieut. Rhys-Davids, D. C. O., M. C. In this fight, which is said to have been one of the most gallant actions in the war, Voss was flying a Fokker triplane with a French le Rhone engine, taken out of a captured machine. He was attacked by six British S. E.'s, all faster than he was. His solitary companion, on an Albatros, was shot down at the first onset, but Voss, instead of getting away, as he could have done, stayed and fought the crowd. His manœuvring and shooting are said to have been wonderful. Every British machine was hit, but none was brought down, and Voss himself finally fell to a direct attack by Rhys-Davids.



chine-guns and other useful things to his own aeroplane, took a match and in a few minutes the English machine stood in flames. Then he waved smilingly from his victorious aeroplane to the English who were rushing along from all sides and was off.

*My First Double Event*

THE second of April, 1917, was a very warm day for my Squadron. From my quarters I could clearly hear the drum-fire of the guns which was again particularly violent.

I was still in bed when my orderly rushed into the room and exclaimed: "Sir, the English are here!" Sleepy as I was, I looked out of the window and, really, there were my dear friends circling over the flying ground. I jumped out of my bed and into my clothes in a jiffy. My Red Bird had been pulled out and was ready for starting. My mechanics knew that I should probably not allow such a favorable moment to go by unutilized. Everything was ready. I snatched up my furs and then went off.

I was the last to start. My comrades were much nearer to the enemy. I feared that my prey would escape me, that I should have to look on from a distance while the others were fighting. Suddenly one of the impertinent fellows tried to drop down upon me. I allowed him to come near and then we started a merry quadrille. Sometimes my opponent flew on his back and sometimes he did other tricks. He had a double-seated chaser. I was his master and very soon I recognized that he could not escape me.

During an interval in the fighting I convinced myself that we were alone. It followed that the victory would accrue to him who was calmest, who shot best and who had the clearest brain in a moment of danger. After a short time I got him beneath me without seriously hurting him with my gun. We were at least two kilometers from the front. I thought he intended to land but there I had made a mistake. Suddenly, when he was only a few yards above the ground, he once more went off on a straight course. He tried to escape me. That was

too bad. I attacked him again and I went so low that I feared I should touch the roofs of the houses of the village beneath me. The Englishman defended himself up to the last moment. At the very end I felt that my engine had been hit. Still I did not let go. He had to fall. He rushed at full speed right into a block of houses.

There was little left to be done. This was once more a case of splendid daring. He defended himself to the last. However, in my opinion he showed more foolhardiness than courage. This was one of the cases where one must differentiate between energy and idiocy. He had to come down in any case but he paid for his stupidity with his life.

I was delighted with the performance of my red machine during its morning work and returned to our quarters. My comrades were still in the air and they were very surprised, when, as we met at breakfast, I told them that I had scored my thirty-second machine.

A very young Lieutenant had "bagged" his first aeroplane. We were all very merry

and prepared everything for further battles.

I then went and groomed myself. I had not had time to do it previously. I was visited by a dear friend, Lieutenant Voss of Boelcke's Squadron. We chatted. Voss had downed on the previous day his twenty-third machine. He was next to me on the list and is at present my most redoubtable competitor.

When he started to fly home I offered to accompany him part of the way. We went on a roundabout way over the Fronts. The weather had turned so bad that we could not hope to find any more game.

Beneath us there were dense clouds. Voss did not know the country and he began to feel uncomfortable. When we passed above Arras I met my brother who also is in my squadron and who had lost his way. He joined us. Of course he recognized me at once by the color of my machine.

Suddenly we saw a squadron approaching from the other side. Immediately the thought occurred to me: "Now comes number thirty-three." Although there were nine

Englishmen and although they were on their own territory they preferred to avoid battle. I thought that perhaps it would be better for me to re-paint my machine. Nevertheless we caught them up. The important thing in aeroplanes is that they are speedy.

I was nearest to the enemy and attacked the man to the rear. To my greatest delight I noticed that he accepted battle and my pleasure was increased when I discovered that his comrades deserted him. So I had once more a single fight.

It was a fight similar to the one which I had had in the morning. My opponent did not make matters easy for me. He knew the fighting business and it was particularly awkward for me that he was a good shot. To my great regret that was quite clear to me.

A favorable wind came to my aid. It drove both of us into the German lines.\* My oppo-

\*It is well to note how often von Richthofen refers to the wind being in his favor. A west wind means that while the machines are fighting they are driven steadily over the German lines. Then, if the British machine happens to be inferior in speed or manoeuvrability to the German, and is forced down low, the pilot has the choice only of fighting to a finish and being killed, or of landing

ment discovered that the matter was not so simple as he had imagined. So he plunged and disappeared in a cloud. He had nearly saved himself.

I plunged after him and dropped out of the cloud and, as luck would have it, found myself close behind him. I fired and he fired without any tangible result. At last I hit him. I noticed a ribbon of white benzine vapor. He had to land for his engine had come to a stop.

He was a stubborn fellow. He was bound to recognize that he had lost the game. If he continued shooting I could kill him, for meanwhile we had dropped to an altitude of about nine hundred feet. However, the Englishman defended himself exactly as did his countryman in the morning. He fought until he landed. When he had come to the

and being made prisoner. The prevalence of west winds has, for this reason, cost the R. F. C. a very great number of casualties in killed and missing, who, if the fight had occurred over territory held by the British, would merely have landed till the attacking machine had taken itself off. For similar reasons, the fact that the R. F. C. has always been on the offensive, and so has always been flying over the German lines has caused many casualties. Under all the circumstances it is surprising that the R. F. C. casualties have not been a great deal heavier.

ground I flew over him at an altitude of about thirty feet in order to ascertain whether I had killed him or not. What did the rascal do? He took his machine-gun and shot holes into my machine.

Afterwards Voss told me if that had happened to him he would have shot the airman on the ground. As a matter of fact I ought to have done so for he had not surrendered. He was one of the few fortunate fellows who escaped with their lives.

I felt very merry, flew home and celebrated my thirty-third aeroplane.

## XI

### *My Record-Day*

**T**HE weather was glorious. We were ready for starting. I had as a visitor a gentleman who had never seen a fight in the air or anything resembling it and he had just assured me that it would tremendously interest him to witness an aerial battle.

We climbed into our machines and laughed heartily at our visitor's eagerness. Friend Schäfer\* thought that we might give him some fun. We placed him before a telescope and off we went.

The day began well. We had scarcely flown to an altitude of six thousand feet when an English squadron of five machines was seen coming our way. We attacked them by a rush as if we were cavalry and

\*Schafer was also shot by Lieut. Rhys-Davids, R. F. C., later in 1917.



the hostile squadron lay destroyed on the ground. None of our men was even wounded. Of our enemies three had plunged to the ground and two had come down in flames.

The good fellow down below was not a little surprised. He had imagined that the affair would look quite different, that it would be far more dramatic. He thought the whole encounter had looked quite harmless until suddenly some machines came falling down looking like rockets. I have gradually become accustomed to seeing machines falling down, but I must say it impressed me very deeply when I saw the first Englishman fall and I have often seen the event again in my dreams.

As the day had begun so propitiously we sat down and had a decent breakfast. All of us were as hungry as wolves. In the meantime our machines were again made ready for starting. Fresh cartridges were got and then we went off again.

In the evening we could send off the proud report: "Six German machines have de-

stroyed thirteen hostile aeroplanes.”\*

Boelcke's Squadron had only once been able to make a similar report. At that time we had shot down eight machines. To-day one of us had brought low four of his opponents. The hero was a Lieutenant Wolff, a delicate-looking little fellow in whom nobody could have suspected a redoubtable hero. My brother had destroyed two, Schäfer two, Festner two and I three.

We went to bed in the evening tremendously proud but also terribly tired. On the following day we read with noisy approval about our deeds of the previous day in the official communiqué. On the next day we downed eight hostile machines.

A very amusing thing occurred. One of the Englishmen whom we had shot down and whom we had made a prisoner was talking with us. Of course he inquired after the Red Aeroplane. It is not unknown even

\*It is possible that the figures are correct. Early in 1917, before the advent of the British fighters and de Havillands in quantities, the R. F. C. was having a very bad time. On April 7, for example, it was reported in the G. H. Q. Communiqué that twenty-eight English machines were missing.

among the troops in the trenches and is called by them "le diable rouge." In the Squadron to which he belonged there was a rumor that the Red Machine was occupied by a girl, by a kind of Jeanne d'Arc. He was intensely surprised when I assured him that the supposed girl was standing in front of him. He did not intend to make a joke. He was actually convinced that only a girl could sit in the extravagantly painted machine.

*"Moritz"*

**T**HE most beautiful being in all creation is the genuine Danish hound, my little lap-dog, my Moritz. I bought him in Ostend from a brave Belgian for five marks. His mother was a beautiful animal and one of his fathers also was pure-bred. I am convinced of that. I could select one of the litter and I chose the prettiest. Zeumer took another puppy and called it Max.

Max came to a sudden end. He was run over by a motor car. Moritz flourished exceedingly. He slept with me in my bed and

received a most excellent education. He never left me while I was in Ostend and obtained my entire affection. Month by month Moritz grew, and gradually my tender little lap-dog became a colossal, big beast.

Once I even took him with me. He was my first observer. He behaved very sensibly. He seemed much interested in everything and looked at the world from above. Only my mechanics were dissatisfied when they had to clean the machine. Afterwards Moritz was very merry.

Moritz is more than a year old and he is still as child-like as if he were still in his teens. He is very fond of playing billiards. In doing this he has destroyed many billiard balls and particularly many a billiard cloth. He has a great passion for the chase. My mechanics are highly satisfied with his sporting inclinations for he has caught for them many a nice hare. I do not much approve of his hunting proclivities. Consequently he gets a whacking if I catch him at it.

He has a silly peculiarity. He likes to

accompany the flying machines at the start. Frequently the normal death of a flying-man's dog is death from the propeller. One day he rushed in front of a flying-machine which had been started. The aeroplane caught him up and a beautiful propeller was smashed to bits. Moritz howled terribly and a measure which I had hitherto omitted was taken. I had always refused to have his ears cut. One of his ears was cut off by the propeller. A long ear and a short ear do not go well together.

Moritz has taken a very sensible view of the world-war and of our enemies. When in the summer of 1916 he saw for the first time Russian natives—the train had stopped and Moritz was being taken for a walk—he chased the Russian crowd with loud barking. He has no great opinion of Frenchmen although he is, after all, a Belgian. Once, when I had settled in new quarters, I ordered the people to clean the house. When I came back in the evening nothing had been done. I got angry and asked the Frenchman to come and see me. When he opened the

door Moritz greeted him rather brusquely. Immediately I understood why no cleaning had been done.

*The English Attack Our Aerodrome*

NIGHTS in which the full moon is shining are most suitable for night flying.

During the full moon nights of the month of April our English friends were particularly industrious. This was during the Battle of Arras. Probably they had found out that we had comfortably installed ourselves on a beautiful large flying ground at Douai.

One night when we were in the Officers' Mess the telephone started ringing and we were told: "The English are coming." There was a great hullabaloo. We had bomb-proof shelters. They had been got ready by our excellent Simon. Simon is our architect, surveyor and builder.

We dived down into shelter and we heard actually, at first a very gentle humming and then the noise of engines. The searchlights

had apparently got notice at the same time as we, for they started getting ready.

The nearest enemy was still too far away to be attacked. We were colossally merry. The only thing we feared was that the English would not succeed in finding our aerodrome. To find some fixed spot at night is by no means easy. It was particularly difficult to find us because our aerodrome was not situated on an important highway or near water or a railway, by which one can be guided during one's flight at night.\* The Englishmen were apparently flying at a great altitude. At first they circled around our entire establishment. We began to think that they had given up and were looking for another objective. Suddenly we noticed that the nearest one had switched off his engine. So he was coming lower. Wolff said: "Now the matter is becoming serious."

We had two carbines and began shooting at the Englishman. We could not see him.

\*This might be a useful hint to some people who like to build repair depots, or big bombing aerodromes, right alongside the sea a few miles behind the firing line, so that they may be easily located after the shortest possible flight by the most inexperienced bombing pilot.

Still the noise of our shooting was a sedative to our nerves.

Suddenly he was taken up by the searchlights. There was shouting all over the flying ground. Our friend was sitting in a prehistoric packing case.\* We could clearly recognize the type. He was half a mile away from us and was flying straight towards us.

He went lower and lower. At last he had come down to an altitude of about three hundred feet. Then he started his engine again and came straight towards the spot where we were standing.

Wolff thought that he took an interest in the other side of our establishment and before long the first bomb fell and it was followed by a number of other missiles.

Our friend amused us with very pretty fireworks. They could have frightened only a coward. Broadly speaking, I find that bomb-throwing at night has only a moral effect. Those who are easily frightened are

\*One assumes that the reference is to the ancient F. E. 2b. "pusher" biplane, which, though produced in 1915, was still used for night bombing up till well on in 1918.



strongly affected when bombs fall at night. The others don't care.

We were much amused at the Englishman's performance and thought the English would come quite often on a visit. The flying piano dropped its bombs at last from an altitude of one hundred and fifty feet. That was rather impertinent for in a moonlit night I think I can hit a wild pig at one hundred and fifty feet with a rifle. Why then should I not succeed in hitting the Englishman? It would have been a novelty to down an English airman from the ground.

From above I had already had the honor of downing a number of Englishmen, but I had never tried to tackle an aviator from below.

When the Englishman had gone we went back to mess and discussed among ourselves how we should receive the English should they pay us another visit on the following night. In the course of the next day our orderlies and other fellows were made to work with great energy. They had to ram into the ground piles which were to be used

as a foundation for machine guns during the coming night.

We went to the butts and tried the English machine guns which we had taken from the enemy, arranged the sights for night shooting and were very curious as to what was going to happen. I will not betray the number of our machine guns. Anyhow, they were to be sufficient for the purpose. Everyone of my officers was armed with one.

We were again sitting at mess. Of course we were discussing the problem of night fliers. Suddenly an orderly rushed in shouting: "They are there! They are there!" and disappeared in the next bomb-proof in his scanty attire. We all rushed to our machine guns. Some of the men who were known to be good shots, had also been given a machine gun. All the rest were provided with carbines. The whole squadron was armed to the teeth to give a warm reception to our kindly visitors.

The first Englishman arrived, exactly as on the previous evening, at a very great altitude. He went then down to one hundred

and fifty feet and to our greatest joy began making for the place where our barracks were. He got into the glare of the search-light.

When he was only three hundred yards away someone fired the first shot and all the rest of us joined in. A rush of cavalry or of storming troops could not have been met more efficiently than the attack of that single impertinent individual flying at one hundred and fifty feet.

Quick firing from many guns received him. Of course he could not hear the noise of the machine guns. The roar of his motor prevented that. However, he must have seen the flashes of our guns. Therefore I thought it tremendously plucky that our man did not swerve, but continued going straight ahead in accordance with his plan.\*

At the moment he was perpendicularly above us we jumped quickly into our bomb

\*This description is typical of what these extraordinary night-flying pilots do with their ancient "flying pianos" night after night, when the weather is reasonable. Von Richthofen's generous admiration is thoroughly well deserved.

proof. It would have been too silly for flying men to die by a rotten bomb.

As soon as he had passed over our heads we rushed out again and fired after him with our machine guns and rifles.

Friend Schäfer asserted that he had hit the man. Schäfer is quite a good shot. Still, in this case I did not believe him. Besides, everyone of us had as good a chance at making a hit as he had.

We had achieved something, for the enemy had dropped his bombs rather aimlessly owing to our shooting. One of them, it is true, had exploded only a few yards from the "petit rouge," but had not hurt him.

During the night the fun recommenced several times. I was already in bed, fast asleep, when I heard in a dream anti-aircraft firing. I woke up and discovered that the dream was reality. One of the Englishmen flew at so low an altitude over my habitation that in my fright I pulled the blanket over my head. The next moment I heard an incredible bang just outside my window. The

panes had fallen a victim to the bomb. I rushed out of my room in my shirt in order to fire a few shots after him. They were firing from everywhere. Unfortunately, I had overslept my opportunity.

The next morning we were extremely surprised and delighted to discover that we had shot down from the ground no fewer than three Englishmen. They had landed not far from our aerodrome and had been made prisoners.

As a rule we had hit the engines and had forced the airmen to come down on our side of the Front. After all, Schäfer was possibly right in his assertion. At any rate, we were very well satisfied with our success. The English were distinctly less satisfied for they preferred avoiding our base. It was a pity that they gave us a wide berth, for they gave us lots of fun. Let us hope that they come back to us next month.

## XII

### *Schafer Lands Between the Lines*

**W**E went on a shooting expedition on the twentieth of April. We came home very late and lost Schäfer on the way.

Of course everyone hoped that he would come to hand before dark. It struck nine, it struck ten, but no Schäfer was visible. His benzine could not last so long. Consequently, he had landed somewhere, for no one was willing to admit that he had been shot down. No one dared to mention the possibility. Still, everyone was afraid for him.

The ubiquitous telephone was set in motion in order to find out whether a flying man had come down anywhere. Nobody could give us information. No Division and no Brigade had seen anything of him. We

felt very uncomfortable. At last we went to bed. All of us were perfectly convinced that he would turn up in the end.

At two o'clock, after midnight, I was suddenly awakened. The telephone orderly, beaming with pleasure, reported to me: "Schäfer is in the Village of Y. and would like to be fetched home."

The next morning when we were sitting at breakfast the door opened and my dear pilot stood before me. His clothes were as filthy as those of an infantryman who has fought at Arras for a fortnight. He was greeted with a general Hurrah! Schäfer was tremendously happy and elated and tremendously excited about his adventure. When he had finished his breakfast he told us the following tale:

"I was flying along the front intending to return home. Suddenly I noticed far below me something that looked like an infantry flier. I attacked him, shot him down, and meant to fly back. However, the English in the trenches did not mean me to get away and started peppering me like anything. My

salvation lay in the rapidity of my machine, for those rascals, of course, would forget that they had to aim far in front of me if they wished to hit me.

"I was at an altitude of perhaps six hundred feet. Suddenly, I heard a smash and my engine stopped running. There was nothing to do but to land. I asked myself whether I should be able to get away from the English position. It seemed very questionable. The English noticed my predicament and started shooting like mad.

"As my engine was no longer running I could hear every single shot. The position became awkward. I came down and landed. Before my machine had come to a standstill they squirted upon me heaps of bullets from machine guns in the hedge of the village of Monchy near Arras. My machine became splashed with bullets.

"I jumped out of it and down into the first shell hole. Squatting there I reflected and tried to realize exactly where I was. Gradually it became clear to me that I had landed outside the English lines, but curs-



edly near them. Happily it was rather late in the evening and that was my salvation.

“Before long the first shell came along. Of course they were gas shells and I had no mask with me. My eyes started watering like anything. Before darkness set in the English ascertained the distance of the spot where I had landed with machine guns. Part of them aimed at my machine and part at my shell crater. The bullets constantly hit its rim.

“In order to quiet my nerves I lit a cigarette. Then I took off my heavy fur coat and prepared everything for a leap and a run. Every minute seemed to me an hour.

“Gradually it became dark, but only very gradually. Around me I heard partridges giving a concert. As an experienced shot I recognized from their voices that they felt quite happy and contented, that there was no danger of my being surprised in my hiding place.

“At last it became quite dark. Suddenly and quite close to me a couple of partridges flew up. A second couple followed. It was

obvious that danger was approaching. No doubt a patrol was on the way to wish me a happy evening.

"I had no time to lose. Now or never. First I crept very cautiously on my chest from shell hole to shell hole. After creeping industriously for about an hour and a half I noticed I was nearing humans. Were they English or were they Germans? They came nearer and I could almost have fallen round their necks, when I discovered our own musketeers. They were a German patrol who were nosing about in No Man's Land.

"One of the men conducted me to the Commander of his Company. I was told that in the evening I had landed about fifty yards in front of the enemy lines and that our infantry had given me up for lost. I had a good supper and then I started on my way home. Behind me there was far more shooting than in front of me. Every path, every trench, every bush, every hollow, was under enemy fire. The English attacked on the next morning, and consequently, they had to begin their artillery preparation the

evening before. So I had chosen an unfavorable day for my enterprise. I reached the first telephone only at two o'clock in the morning when I 'phoned to the Squadron."

We were all very happy to have our Schäfer again with us. He went to bed. Any other man would have taken a rest from flying for twenty-four hours. But on the afternoon of this very day friend Schäfer attacked a low flying B. E. above Monchy.

*The Anti-Richthofen Squadron*

THE English had hit upon a splendid joke. They intended to catch me or to bring me down. For that purpose they had actually organized a special squadron which flew about in that part which we frequented as a rule. We discovered its particular aim by the fact that its aggressive activity was principally directed against our red machines.

I would say that all the machines of the squadron had been painted red because our English friends had by-and-by perceived that I was sitting in a blood-red band-box. Sud-

denly there were quite a lot of red machines and the English opened their eyes wide when one fine day they saw a dozen red barges steaming along instead of a single one. Our new trick did not prevent them from making an attempt at attacking us. I preferred their new tactics. It is better that one's customers come to one's shop than to have to look for them abroad.

We flew to the front hoping to find our enemy. After about twenty minutes the first arrived and attacked us. That had not happened to us for a long time. The English had abandoned their celebrated offensive tactics to some extent. They had found them somewhat too expensive.

Our aggressors were three Spad one-seater machines. Their occupants thought themselves very superior to us because of the excellence of their apparatus. Wolff, my brother and I, were flying together. We were three against three. That was as it ought to be.

Immediately at the beginning of the encounter the aggressive became a defensive.

Our superiority became clear. I tackled my opponent and could see how my brother and Wolff handled each his own enemy. The usual waltzing began. We were circling around one another. A favorable wind came to our aid. It drove us, fighting, away from the front in the direction of Germany.

My man was the first who fell down. I suppose I had smashed up his engine. At any rate, he made up his mind to land. I no longer gave pardon to him. Therefore, I attacked him a second time and the consequence was that his whole machine went to pieces. His planes dropped off like pieces of paper and the body of the machine fell like a stone, burning fiercely. It dropped into a morass. It was impossible to dig it out and I have never discovered the name of my opponent. He had disappeared. Only the end of the tail was visible and marked the place where he had dug his own grave.

Simultaneously with me, Wolff and my brother had attacked their opponents and had forced them to land not far from my victim.

We were very happy and flew home and hoped that the anti-Richthofen Squadron would often return to the fray.\*

*We Are Visited By My Father*

**M**Y father had announced that he would visit his two sons on the twenty-ninth of April. My father is commander of a little town in the vicinity of Lille. Therefore he does not live very far away from us. I have occasionally seen him on my flights.

He intended to arrive by train at nine o'clock. At half past nine he came to our aerodrome. We just happened to have returned from an expedition. My brother was the first to climb out of his machine, and he greeted the old gentleman with the words: "Good day, Father. I have just shot down an Englishman." Immediately after, I also climbed out of my machine and greeted him "Good day, Father, I have just shot down an Englishman." The old gentleman felt very happy and he was delighted.

\*One can find no trace of any deliberate attempt to organize an anti-Richthofen Circus in the R. F. C., and therefore one assumes that these were merely three gallant lads on new type Spads who went out deliberately on their own account to look for trouble, and found more than they expected.

That was obvious. He is not one of those fathers who are afraid for their sons. I think he would like best to get into a machine himself and help us shoot. We breakfasted with him and then we went flying again.

In the meantime, an aerial fight took place above our aerodrome. My father looked on and was greatly interested. We did not take a hand in the fight for we were standing on the ground and looked on ourselves.

An English squadron had broken through and was being attacked above our aerodrome by some of our own reconnoitering aeroplanes. Suddenly one of the machines started turning over and over. Then it recovered itself and came gliding down normally. We saw, with regret this time, that it was a German machine.

The Englishman flew on. The German aeroplane had apparently been damaged. It was quite correctly handled. It came down and tried to land on our flying ground. The room was rather narrow for the large ma-

chine. Besides, the ground was unfamiliar to the pilot. Hence, the landing was not quite smooth. We ran towards the aeroplane and discovered with regret that one of the occupants of the machine, the machine gunner, had been killed. The spectacle was new to my father. It made him serious.

The day promised to be a favorable one for us. The weather was wonderfully clear. The anti-aircraft guns were constantly audible. Obviously, there was much aircraft about.

Towards mid-day we flew once more. This time, I was again lucky and shot down my second Englishman of the day. The Governor recovered his good spirits.

After the mid-day dinner I slept a little. I was again quite fresh. Wolff had fought the enemy in the meantime with his group of machines and had himself bagged an enemy. Schäfer also had eaten one. In the afternoon my brother and I accompanied by Schäfer, Festner and Allmenröder flew twice more.



The first afternoon flight was a failure. The second was all the better. Soon after we had come to the front a hostile squadron met us. Unfortunately they occupied a higher altitude so we could not do anything. We tried to climb to their level but did not succeed. We had to let them go.\*

We flew along the front. My brother was next to me, in front of the others. Suddenly I noticed two hostile artillery fliers approaching our front in the most impertinent and provocative manner. I waved to my brother and he understood my meaning. We flew side by side increasing our speed. Each of us felt certain that he was superior to the enemy. It was a great thing that we could absolutely rely on one another and that was the principal thing. One has to know one's flying partner.

My brother was the first to approach his enemy. He attacked the first and I took care of the second. At the last moment I quickly looked round in order to feel sure that there was no third aeroplane about. We were

\*This appears to be the first admission that the newer British machines could out-climb the famous Albatros chasers.

alone and could see eye to eye. Soon I had got on the favorable side of my opponent. A short spell of quick firing and the enemy machine went to pieces. I never had a more rapid success.

While I was still looking where my enemy's fragments were falling, I noticed my brother. He was scarcely five hundred yards away from me and was still fighting his opponent.

I had time to study the struggle and must say that I myself could not have done any better than he did. He had rushed his man and both were turning around one another. Suddenly, the enemy machine reared. That is a certain indication of a hit. Probably the pilot was shot in the head. The machine fell and the planes of the enemy apparatus went to pieces. They fell quite close to my victim. I flew towards my brother and we congratulated one another by waving. We were highly satisfied with our performance and flew off. It is a splendid thing when one can fly together with one's brother and do so well.

In the meantime, the other fellows of the squadron had drawn near and were watching the spectacle of the fight of the two brothers. Of course they could not help us, for only one man can shoot down an opponent. If one airman has tackled his enemy the others cannot assist. They can only look on and protect his back. Otherwise, he might be attacked in the rear.

We flew on and went to a higher altitude, for there was apparently a meeting somewhere in the air for the members of the Anti-Richthofen Club. They could recognize us from far away. In the powerful sunlight, the beautiful red color of our machines could be seen at a long distance.

We closed our ranks for we knew that our English friends pursued the same business as we. Unfortunately, they were again too high. So we had to wait for their attack. The celebrated triplanes and Spads were perfectly new machines. However, the quality of the box matters little. Success depends upon the man who sits in it. The English airmen played a cautious game but would

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## THE RED BATTLE-FLYER

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not bite. We offered to fight them, either on one side of the front or on the other. But they said: No, thank you. What is the good of bringing out a squadron against us and then turning tail?\*

At last, one of the men plucked up courage and dropped down upon our rear machine. Naturally battle was accepted although our position was unfavorable. If you wish to do business you must, after all, adapt yourself to the desires of your customers. Therefore we all turned round. The Englishman noticed what was going on and got away. The battle had begun.

Another Englishman tried a similar trick on me and I greeted him at once with quick fire from my two machine guns. He tried to escape me by dropping down. That was fatal to him. When he got beneath me I remained on top of him. Everything in the air that is beneath me, especially if it is a one-seater, a chaser, is lost, for it cannot shoot to the rear.

\*The probability is that the British machines being high up, and watching the sky all round, did not notice the little red machines against the dark ground below them for some time.

My opponent had a very good and very fast machine. However, he did not succeed in reaching the English lines. I began to fire at him when we were above Lens. I started shooting when I was much too far away. That was merely a trick of mine. I did not mean so much to hit him as to frighten him, and I succeeded in catching him. He began flying curves and this enabled me to draw near. I tried the same manoeuver a second and a third time. Everytime my foolish friend started making his curves I gradually edged quite close to him.

I approached him almost to touching distance. I aimed very carefully. I waited a moment and when I was at most at a distance of fifty yards from him I started with both the machine guns at the same time. I heard a slight hissing noise, a certain sign that the benzine tanks had been hit. Then I saw a bright flame and my lord disappeared below.

This was the fourth victim of the day. My brother had bagged two. Apparently,

we had invited our father to a treat. His joy was wonderful.

I had invited several gentlemen for the evening. Among these was my dear Wedel who happened to be in the neighborhood. We had a great treat. The two brothers had bagged six Englishmen in a single day. That is a whole flying squadron.\*

I believe the English cease to feel any sympathy for us.\*\*

*I Fly Home*

**I** HAD shot down fifty aeroplanes. That was a good number but I would have preferred fifty-two. So I went up one day and had another two, although it was against orders.

As a matter of fact I had been allowed to bag only forty-one. Anyone will be able to guess why the number was fixed at forty-

\*A whole squadron is eighteen machines, divided into three "flights" of six machines each. The word squadron does not, apparently, translate exactly into German.

\*\*Nevertheless, some months after this, a young British pilot was being entertained one evening by his squadron in celebration of his having been awarded the D. S. O., and when called upon for a speech proposed the health of von Richthofen. And the squadron duly honored the toast.

one. Just for that reason I wanted to avoid that figure. I am not out for breaking records. Besides, generally speaking, we of the Flying Corps do not think of records at all. We merely think of our duty. Boelcke might have shot down a hundred aeroplanes but for his accident, and many others of our dear dead comrades might have vastly increased their bag but for their sudden death. Still, it is some fun to have downed half a hundred aeroplanes. After all, I had succeeded in obtaining permission to bring down fifty machines before going on leave.

I hope that I may live to celebrate a second lot of fifty.

In the evening of that particular day the telephone bell was ringing. Headquarters wished to speak to me. It seemed to me the height of fun to be connected with the holy of holies.

Over the wire they gave me the cheerful news that His Majesty had expressed the wish to make my personal acquaintance and had fixed the date for me. I had to make an appearance on the second of May. The

notification reached me on the thirtieth of April at nine o'clock in the evening. I should not have been able to fulfil the wish of our All-Highest War-Lord by taking the train. I therefore thought I would travel by air, especially as that mode of locomotion is far pleasanter. I started the next morning, not in my single-seater "le petit rouge" but in a big fat double-seater.

I took a seat at the rear, not at the sticks. The man who had to do the flying was Lieut. Kreffft, one of the officers of my squadron. He was just going on furlough to recover his strength, so that it suited him admirably to act as my pilot. He reached home more quickly traveling by air and he preferred the trip by aeroplane.

I started on the journey rather hastily. The only luggage which I took with me was my tooth-brush. Therefore, I had to dress for the journey in the clothes in which I was to appear at Headquarters. Now, a soldier does not carry with him many beautiful uniforms when he goes to war and the scarcity of nice clothes is particularly great in



the case of such a poor front hog as myself.

My brother undertook the command of the aeroplane squadron in my absence. I took leave with a few words for I hoped soon to recommence my work among those dear fellows.

The flight went via Namur, Liège, Aix la Chapelle and Cologne. It was lovely for once to sail through the air without any thoughts of war. The weather was wonderful. We had rarely had such a perfect time. Probably the men at the front would be extremely busy.

Soon our own captive balloons were lost to sight. The thunder of the Battle of Arras was only heard in the distance. Beneath us all was peace. We saw steamers on the rivers and fast trains on the railways. We easily overtook everything below. The wind was in our favor. The earth seemed as flat as a threshing floor. The beautiful mountains of the Meuse were not recognizable as mountains. One could not even trace them by their shadows, for the sun was right

above us. We only knew that they were there and with a little imagination we could hide ourselves in the cool glades of that delightful country.

It had become late. Clouds were gathering below and hid from us the earth. We flew on, taking our direction by means of the sun and the compass. The vicinity of Holland was disagreeable to us. We decided to go lower in order to find out where we were. We went beneath the cloud and discovered that we were above Namur.

We then went on to Aix la Chapelle. We left that town to our left and about mid-day we reached Cologne. We both were in high spirits. We had before us a long leave of absence. The weather was beautiful. We had succeeded in all our undertakings. We had reached Cologne. We could be certain to get to Headquarters in time, whatever might happen.

Our coming had been announced in Cologne by telegram. People were looking out for us. On the previous day the newspapers had reported my fifty-second aerial victory.

One can imagine what kind of a reception they had prepared for us.

Having been flying for three hours I had a slight headache. Therefore, I thought I would take forty winks, before going to Headquarters. From Cologne we flew along the Rhine for some distance. I knew the country well. I had often journeyed that way by steamer, by motor car, and by railway, and now I was traveling by aeroplane. It is difficult to say which of these is the most pleasant form of locomotion. Of course, one can see the details of the landscape better from the steamer. However, the commanding view one gets from an aeroplane has also its attractions. The Rhine is a very beautiful river, from above as well as from any other viewpoint.

We flew rather low in order not to lose the sensation that we were traveling among mountains, for after all the most beautiful part of the Rhine are the tree clad hills and castles. Of course we could not make out individual houses. It is a pity that one cannot fly slowly and quickly. If it had been

possible I would have flown quite slowly.

The beautiful views which we saw vanished only too quickly. Nevertheless, when one flies high in the air one never has the sensation that one is proceeding at a fast pace. If you are sitting in a motor car or in a fast train you have the impression of tremendous speed. On the other hand, you seem to be advancing slowly when you fly in an aeroplane at a considerable speed. You notice the celerity of your progress only when you have not looked out of your machine for four or five minutes and then try to find out where you are. Then the aspect of the country appears suddenly completely changed. The terrain which you passed over a little while ago looks quite different under a different angle, and you do not recognize the scenery you have passed. Herein lies the reason that an airman can easily lose his way if he forgets for a moment to examine the territory.

In the afternoon we arrived at Headquarters and were cordially received by some comrades with whom I was acquainted and

who worked at the holiest of holies. I absolutely pitied those poor ink-spillers. They get only half the fun in war.

First of all I went to the General commanding the Air Forces.

On the next morning came the great moment when I was to meet Hindenburg and Ludendorf. I had to wait for quite a while.

I should find it difficult to describe my encounter with these Generals. I saw Hindenburg first and then Ludendorf.

It is a weird feeling to be in the room where the fate of the world is decided. I was quite glad when I was again outside the holiest of holies and when I had been commanded to lunch with His Majesty. The day was the day of my birth and somebody had apparently told His Majesty. He congratulated me in the first place on my success, and in the second, on my twenty-fifth birthday. At the same time he handed me a small birthday present.

Formerly I would never have believed it possible that on my twenty-fifth birthday I would be sitting at the right of General

Field Marshal von Hindenburg and that I would be mentioned by him in a speech.

On the day following I was to take mid-day dinner with Her Majesty. And so I went to Homburg. Her Majesty also gave me a birthday present and I had the great pleasure to show her how to start an aeroplane. In the evening I was again invited by General Field Marshal von Hindenburg. The day following I flew to Freiburg to do some shooting. At Freiburg I made use of the flying machine which was going to Berlin by air. In Nuremberg I replenished my tanks with benzine. A thunderstorm was coming on. I was in a great hurry to get to Berlin. Various more or less interesting things awaited me there. So I flew on, the thunderstorm notwithstanding. I enjoyed the clouds and the beastly weather. The rain fell in streams. Sometimes it hailed. Afterwards the propeller had the most extraordinary aspect. The hail stones had damaged it considerably. The blades looked like saws.

Unfortunately I enjoyed the bad weather

so much that I quite forgot to look about me. When I remembered that one has to look out it was too late. I had no longer any idea where I was. That was a nice position to be in! I had lost my way in my own country! My people at home would laugh when they knew it! However, there it was and couldn't be helped. I had no idea where I was. Owing to a powerful wind I had been driven out of my course and off my map. Guided by sun and compass I tried to get the direction of Berlin.

Towns, villages, hills and forests were slipping away below me. I did not recognize a thing. I tried in vain to compare the picture beneath with my map. Everything was different. I found it impossible to recognize the country. Later on I discovered the impossibility of finding my way for I was flying about sixty miles outside my map.

After having flown for a couple of hours my guide and I resolved to land somewhere in the open. That is always unpleasant. One cannot tell how the surface of the ground is in reality. If one of the wheels

gets into a hole one's box is converted into matchwood.

We tried to read the name written upon a station, but of course that was impossible, it was too small. So we had to land. We did it with a heavy heart for nothing else could be done. We looked for a meadow which appeared suitable from above and tried our luck. Close inspection unfortunately showed that the meadow was not as pleasant as it seemed. The fact was obviously proved by the slightly bent frame of our machine. We had made ourselves gloriously ridiculous. We had first lost our way and then smashed the machine. So we had to continue our journey with the commonplace conveyance, by railway train. Slowly but surely, we reached Berlin. We had landed in the neighborhood of Leipzig. If we had not landed so stupidly, we would certainly have reached Berlin. But sometimes you make a mistake whatever you do.

Some days later I arrived in Schweidnitz, my own town. Although I got there at seven o'clock in the morning, there was a large





LIEUT. SCHAFER SPEAKING WITH ANOTHER  
MEMBER OF THE SQUADRON



CAPTAIN RICHTIOFEN WITH HIS MASCOT  
DOG "MORITZ"



crowd at the station. I was very cordially received. In the afternoon various demonstrations took place to honor me, among others, one of the local Boy Scouts.

It became clear to me that the people at home took a vivid interest in their fighting soldiers after all.

## XIII

### *My Brother*

I HAD not yet passed eight days of my leave when I received the telegram: "Lothar is wounded but not mortally." That was all. Inquiries showed that he had been very rash. He flew against the enemy, together with Allmenröder. Beneath him and a good distance on the other side of the front, he saw in the air a lonely Englishman crawling about. He was one of those hostile infantry fliers who make themselves particularly disagreeable to our troops. We molest them a great deal. Whether they really achieve anything in crawling along the ground is very problematical.\*

My brother was at an altitude of about six thousand feet, while the Englishman

\*Probably the fighting to the east of Amiens in March and April, 1918, has demonstrated to the German Army at large that quite a great deal is achieved by this "crawling along the ground." The use of aeroplanes against infantry and cavalry has been developed very greatly since von Richthofen wrote his notes in 1917.

was at about three thousand feet. He quietly approached the Englishman, prepared to plunge and in a few seconds was upon him. The Englishman thought he would avoid a duel and he disappeared likewise by a plunge. My brother, without hesitation, plunged after. He didn't care at all whether he was on one side of the front or the other. He was animated by a single thought: I must down that fellow. That is, of course, the correct way of managing things. Now and then I myself have acted that way. However, if my brother does not have at least one success on every flight he gets tired of the whole thing.

Only a little above the ground my brother obtained a favorable position towards the English flier and could shoot into his shop windows. The Englishman fell. There was nothing more to be done.

After such a struggle, especially at a low altitude, in the course of which one has so often been twisting and turning, and circling to the right and to the left, the average mortal has no longer the slightest notion of his

position. On that day it happened that the air was somewhat misty. The weather was particularly unfavorable. My brother quickly took his bearings and discovered only then that he was a long distance behind the front. He was behind the ridge of Vimy. The top of that hill is about three hundred feet higher than the country around. My brother, so the observers on the ground reported, had disappeared behind the Vimy height.

It is not a particularly pleasant feeling to fly home over enemy country. One is shot at and cannot shoot back. It is true, however, that a hit is rare. My brother approached the line. At a low altitude one can hear every shot that is fired, and firing sounds then very much like the noise made by chestnuts which are being roasted. Suddenly, he felt that he had been hit. That was queer to him.

My brother is one of those men who cannot see their own blood. If somebody else was bleeding it would not impress him very greatly, but the sight of his own blood up-

sets him. He felt his blood running down his right leg in a warm stream. At the same time, he noticed a pain in his hip. Below the shooting continued. It followed that he was still over hostile ground.

At last the firing gradually ceased. He had crossed the front. Now he must be nimble for his strength was rapidly ebbing away. He saw a wood and next to the wood a meadow. Straight for the meadow he flew and mechanically, almost unconsciously, he switched off the engine. At the same moment he lost consciousness.

My brother was in a single-seater. No one could help him. It is a miracle that he came to the ground, for no flying machine lands or starts automatically. There is a rumor that they have at Cologne an old Taube which will start by itself as soon as the pilot takes his seat, which makes the regulation curve and which lands again after exactly five minutes.\* Many men pretend to have seen that miraculous machine. I have not seen it. But still I am convinced that the

\*Curiously enough there is a very similar legend concerning an aged school machine at one of the British flying schools.

tale is true. Now, my brother was not in such a miraculous automatic machine. Nevertheless he had not hurt himself in landing. He recovered consciousness only in hospital, and was sent to Douai.

It is a curious feeling to see one's brother fighting with an Englishman. Once I saw that Lothar, who was lagging behind the squadron, was being attacked by an English aviator. It would have been easy for him to avoid battle. He need only plunge. But he would not do that. That would not even occur to him. He does not know how to run away. Happily I had observed what was going on and was looking for my chance.

I noticed that the Englishman went for my brother and shot at him. My brother tried to reach the Englishman's altitude disregarding the shots. Suddenly his machine turned a somersault and plunged perpendicularly, turning round and round. It was not an intended plunge, but a regular fall. That is not a nice thing to look at, especially if the falling airman is one's own brother. Gradually I had to accustom myself to that



sight for it was one of my brother's tricks. As soon as he felt sure that the Englishman was his superior he acted as if he had been shot.

The Englishman rushed after him. My brother recovered his balance and in a moment had got above his enemy. The hostile aeroplane could not equally quickly get ready for what was to come. My brother caught it at a favorable angle and a few seconds after it went down in flames. When a machine is burning all is lost for it falls to the ground burning.

Once I was on the ground next to a benzine tank. It contained one hundred litres of benzine which exploded and burnt. The heat was so great that I could not bear to be within ten yards of it. One can therefore imagine what it means if a tank containing a large quantity of this devilish liquid explodes a few inches in front of one while the blast from the propeller blows the flame into one's face. I believe a man must lose consciousness at the very first moment.

Sometimes miracles do happen. For in-

stance, I once saw an English aeroplane falling down in flames. The flames burst out only at an altitude of fifteen hundred feet. The whole machine was burning. When we had flown home we were told that one of the occupants of the machine had jumped from an altitude of one hundred and fifty feet. It was the observer. One hundred and fifty feet is the height of a good sized steeple. Supposing somebody should jump from its top to the ground, what would be his condition? Most men would break their bones in jumping from a first floor window. At any rate, this good fellow jumped from a burning machine at an altitude of one hundred and fifty feet, from a machine which had been burning for over a minute, and nothing happened to him except a simple fracture of the leg. Soon after his adventure he made a statement from which it appears that his nerve had not suffered.\*

Another time, I shot down an Englishman.

\*On two or three occasions pilots have gallantly stuck to their controls and have managed to land safely in blazing machines from fully 1,000 feet. There is a general opinion that it is possible to fit a parachute so that in the event of an aeroplane catching fire the pilot and passenger can quit it at once and descend safely.

The pilot had been fatally wounded in the head. The machine fell perpendicularly to earth from an altitude of nine thousand feet. Some time later I came gliding down and saw on the ground nothing but a heap of twisted debris. To my surprise I was told that the observer had only damaged his skull and that his condition was not dangerous. Some people have luck indeed.

Once upon a time, Boelcke shot down a Nieuport machine. I was present. The aeroplane fell like a stone. When we inspected it we found that it had been driven up to the middle into the loamy soil. The occupant had been shot in the abdomen and had lost consciousness and had wrenched his arm out of its socket on striking the ground. He did not die of his fall.

On the other hand, it has happened that a good friend of mine in landing had a slight accident. One of the wheels of his machine got into a rabbit hole. The aeroplane was traveling at no speed and quite slowly went on its head. It seemed to reflect whether it should fall to the one side or to the other,

turned over and the poor fellow's back was broken.

My brother Lothar is Lieutenant in the 4th Dragoons. Before the war he was at the War Academy. He was made an officer at the outbreak and began the war as a cavalry man exactly as I did. I know nothing about his actions for he never speaks of himself. However, I have been told the following story:

In the winter of 1914 Lothar's regiment was on the Warthe. The Russians were on the other side of the river. Nobody knew whether they intended to stay there or to go back. The water was frozen partly along the shore. So it was difficult to ride through the river. There were, of course, no bridges, for the Russians had destroyed them. So my brother swam across, ascertained the position of the Russians and swam back again. He did that during a severe Russian winter when the thermometer was very low. After a few minutes his clothes were frozen solid. Yet he asserted that he had felt quite warm

notwithstanding. He kept on his horse all day long until he got to his quarters in the evening, yet he did not catch a chill.

In winter, 1915, he followed my urgent advice and went into the flying service. He also became an observer and became a pilot only a year later. Acting as an observer is certainly not a bad training, particularly for a chasing airman. In March, 1917, he passed his third examination and came at once to my squadron.

When he arrived he was a very young and innocent pilot who never thought of looping and such like tricks. He was quite satisfied if he succeeded in starting his machine and in landing successfully. A fortnight later I took him with me against the enemy for the first time. I asked him to fly close behind me in order that he might see exactly how the fighting was done.

After the third flight with him I suddenly noticed he parted company with me. He rushed at an Englishman and killed him. My heart leapt with joy when I saw it. The event proved once more that there is no art

in shooting down an aeroplane. The thing is done by the personality or by the fighting determination of the airman.\* I am not a Pegoud and I do not wish to be a Pegoud. I am only a soldier who does his duty.

Four weeks later my brother had shot down a total of twenty Englishmen. His record as a flier is probably unique. It has probably not happened in any other case that a pilot, a fortnight after his third examination, has shot down his first enemy and that he has shot down twenty during the first four weeks of his fighting life.

My brother's twenty-second opponent was the celebrated Captain Ball. He was by far the best English flier. Major Hawker, who in his time was as renowned as Captain Ball, I had pressed to my bosom some months previously. It was a particular pleasure to me that it fell to my brother to settle England's second flying champion.

Captain Ball flew a triplane and encoun-

\*This may be the propagandist editor at work, or it may be a deliberate attempt to mislead, because, as a matter of fact, a man cannot survive long as a fighting pilot unless he is a perfect master of his machine.

tered my brother flying by himself at the Front. Each tried to catch the other. Neither gave his opponent a chance. Every encounter was a short one. They were constantly dashing at one another. Neither succeeded in getting behind the other. Suddenly both resolved to fire a few well aimed shots during the few moments of the encounter. Both rushed at one another, and fired. Both had before them their engine. The probability of a hit was very small for their speed was twice as great as normally. It was improbable that either should succeed. My brother, who was a little lower, had pulled his machine around too hard and the result was that it overturned. For a moment his aeroplane became unsteerable. But presently he recovered control and found out that his opponent had smashed both his benzine tanks. Therefore, he had to stop the engine and land quickly. Otherwise, his machine might burst into flames.

His next idea was: What has become of my opponent? At the moment when his machine turned its somersault he had seen that

the enemy's machine was rearing up in the air and had also turned a somersault. He therefore could not be very far. His whole thought was: Is he above me or beneath me? He was not above but he saw the triplane falling down in a series of somersaults. It fell, fell, fell until it came to the ground where it was smashed to pieces. This happened on German territory. Both opponents had hit one another with their machine guns. My brother's machine had had both benzine tanks smashed and at the same moment Captain Ball had been shot through the head. He carried with him some photographs and cuttings from the newspapers of his town where he had been greatly feted. In Boelcke's time Captain Ball destroyed thirty-six German machines. He, too, had found his master. Was it by chance that a prominent man such as he also should die an ordinary soldier's death?\*

\*There is some curious error here, for Captain Ball was not flying a triplane at the time of his death. It seems probable that someone else shot Captain Ball on the same day, and that, as the younger von Richthofen was disabled, and so could not go and identify the wreckage of Captain Ball's machine, the credit was given to von Richthofen in default of anyone else making a claim.



Captain Ball was certainly the commander of the Anti-Richthofen Squadron. I believe that the Englishmen will now give up their attempt to catch me. I should regret it, for in that case, I should miss many opportunities to make myself beloved by them.

Had my brother not been wounded on the fifth of May he would probably on my return from furlough, also have been given a leave of absence with fifty-two hostile machines to his credit.

My father discriminates between a sportsman and a butcher. The latter shoots for fun. When I have shot down an Englishman my hunting passion is satisfied for a quarter of an hour. Therefore I do not succeed in shooting two Englishmen in succession. If one of them comes down I have the feeling of complete satisfaction. Only much, much later I have overcome my instinct and have become a butcher.

My brother is differently constituted. I had an opportunity of observing him when he was shooting down his fourth and fifth opponents. We were attacking in a squad-

ron. I started the dance. I had settled my opponent very quickly. When I looked around I noticed my brother rushing after an English machine which was bursting into flames, and exploded. Next to it was another Englishman. My brother, though following number one, immediately directed his machine gun against number two, although his first opponent was still in the air and had not yet fallen. His second victim also fell after a short struggle.

When we met at home he asked me proudly, "How many have you shot down?" I said quite modestly, "One." He turned his back upon me and said, "I did two." Thereupon I sent him forward to make inquiries. He was to find out the names of his victims, etc. He returned late in the afternoon having been able to find only a single Englishman.

He had looked carelessly, as is usual amongst such butchers. Only on the following day I received a report as to the place where the second had come down.

We all had seen his fall.

*I Shoot a Bison*

WHEN visiting Headquarters I met the Prince von Pless. He permitted me to shoot a bison on his estate. The bison has died out. On the whole earth there are only two spots where bisons may be found. These are the Pless Estate and in the Bialowicz estate of the ex-Czar. The Bialowicz forest has, of course, suffered terribly through the war. Many a magnificent bison which ought to have been shot either by the Czar or by some other monarch has been eaten by German musketeers.

Through the kindness of the Prince I was permitted to shoot so rare an animal. In a few decades none will be left.

I arrived at Pless on the afternoon of the twenty-sixth of May and had to start immediately from the station if I wished to kill a bull the same evening. We drove along the celebrated road, through the giant preserve of the Prince, which has been frequented by many crowned heads. After about an hour, we got out and had to walk

half an hour to come to the shooting place. The drivers had already been placed in position. The signal was given to them and they began the drive.

I stood at an elevated spot which had been occupied, according to the head forester, by His Majesty, who from thence had shot many a bison. We waited some considerable time. Suddenly I saw among the timber a gigantic black monster, rolling along. It came straight in my direction. I noticed it before the head forester had. I got ready for firing and must say that I felt somewhat feverish.

It was a mighty bull. When he was at a distance of two hundred yards there was still some hope for him. I thought it was too far for a shot. Of course I could have hit the monster because it was impossible to miss such a huge beast. However, it would have been unpleasant to search for him. Besides it would have been ridiculous had I missed him, so I thought I would wait until he came nearer.

Probably he noticed the drivers for he

suddenly turned and came rushing towards me at a sharp angle and at a speed which seemed to me incredible. It was a bad position for a shot, and in a moment he disappeared behind a group of stout trees.

I heard him snorting and stamping. I lost sight of him. I have no idea whether he smelt me or not. At any rate, he had disappeared. I caught another glimpse of him at a long distance and he was gone.

I do not know whether it was the unaccustomed aspect of the animal or whether something else affected me. At any rate, at the moment when the bull came near I had the same feeling, the same feverishness which seizes me when I am sitting in my aeroplane and notice an Englishman at so great a distance that I have to fly perhaps five minutes in order to get near him. The only difference is that the Englishman defends himself. Possibly, different feelings would have moved me had I been standing on level ground and not on an elevated position.

Before long, a second bison came near.

He was also a huge fellow. He made it easier for me to fire my shot. At a distance of eighty yards I fired at him but I had missed my opportunity to shoot him in the shoulder. A month before, Hindenburg had told me when talking of bison: "You must take a lot of cartridges with you. I have spent on such a fellow half a dozen for he does not die easily. His heart lies so deep that one misses it as a rule." That was really so. Although I knew exactly where the bison's heart was I had missed it. I fired a second shot and a third. Hit for the third time the bull stopped perhaps fifty yards from me.

Five minutes later the beast was dead. The shooting was finished. All three bullets had hit him close above the heart.

We drove now, past the beautiful hunting box of the Prince through the forest, in which the guests of Prince Pless shoot every year, deer, and other animals. Then we looked at the interior of the house in Promnitz. It is situated on a peninsula. It commands beautiful views and for three

miles around there is no human being. One has no longer the feeling that one is in a preserve of the ordinary kind when one visits the estate of Prince Pless, for the preserve extends to a million acres. It contains glorious stags which have never been seen by man. No forester knows them. Occasionally they are shot. One can tramp about for weeks without seeing a bison. During certain times of the year it is impossible to find one. They like quietude and they can hide themselves in the gigantic forests and tangled woods. We saw many beautiful deer.

After about two hours we arrived at Pless, just before it became dark.

*Infantry Fliers, Artillery Fliers  
and Reconnoitring Machines*

**H**AD I not become a professional chaser I should have turned an infantry flier. After all, it must be a very satisfactory feeling to be able to aid those troops whose work is hardest. The infantry flier can do a great deal to assist the man on foot.

For that reason his is a very grateful task.\*

In the course of the Battle of Arras I observed many of these splendid fellows. They flew in any weather and at any time at a low altitude over the enemy and tried to act as connecting links with our hard-pressed troops. I can understand that one can fight with enthusiasm when one is given such a task. I dare say many an airman has shouted Hurrah! when, after an assault he saw the hostile masses stream back or when our smart infantry leaped from the trenches and fought the aggressors eye to eye. Many a time, after a chasing expedition, I have fired my remaining cartridges into the enemy trenches. Although I may have done little practical good, such firing affects the enemy's morale.

I have also been an artillery flier. In my time it was a novelty to regulate the firing of one's own artillery by wireless telegraphy. To do this well an airman requires special talent. I could not do the work for long.

\*This was evidently written some time after von Richthofen's previous disparaging note on Infantry Contact fliers.



I prefer fighting. Very likely, artillery officers make the best artillery fliers. At least, they have the necessary knowledge of the arm which they serve.

I have done a lot of reconnoitering by aeroplane, particularly in Russia during the war of movement. Then I acted once more as a cavalryman. The only difference was that I rode a Pegasus made of steel. My days spent with friend Holck among the Russians were among the finest in my life.

In the Western theater the eye of the reconnaissance flier sees things which are very different from those to which the cavalrymen get accustomed. Villages and towns, railways and roads seem lifeless and dead. Yet there is a colossal traffic going on all the time, but it is hidden from the flying men with great skill. Only a wonderfully trained practised and observant eye can see anything definite when one is traveling at a great height and at a terrific speed. I have excellent eyes but it seems doubtful to me whether there is anyone who can see anything definite when he looks down upon a

road from an altitude of fifteen thousand feet. As the eye is an imperfect object for observation one replaces it by the photographic apparatus. Everything that seems important to one must be photographed. Besides, one must photograph those things which one is told to photograph. If one comes home and if the plates have gone wrong, the whole flight has been for nothing.

It often happens to flying men who do reconnoitering that they get involved in a fight. However, their task is more important than fighting. Frequently a photographic plate is more valuable than the shooting down of a squadron. Hence the flying photographer should, as a rule, not take a hand in fighting.

Nowadays it is a difficult task to reconnoiter efficiently in the West.\*

*The German Flying Machines*

**I**N the course of the War the German flying machines have experienced great changes. That is probably generally known.

\*This is really a high testimony to the effective work of the R. F. C.

There is a colossal difference between a giant plane and a chaser plane.

The chaser plane is small, fast, quick at turning. It carries nothing apart from the pilot except machine guns and cartridges.

The giant plane is a colossus. Its only duty is to carry as much weight as possible and it is able to do this owing to the huge surface of its planes. It is worth while to look at the gigantic English plane which landed smoothly on the German side of the front.\*\* The giant plane can carry an unbelievable weight. It will easily fly away dragging from three to five tons. Its benzine tanks look as large as railroad cars. In going about in such a colossus one has no longer the sensation that one is flying. One is driving. In going about in a giant plane the direction depends no longer on one's instinct but on the technical instruments which one carries.

A giant plane has a huge number of horse powers. I do not know exactly how many, but they are many thousand. The greater

\*\*A Handley Page which landed near Laon early in 1917.

the horse power is, the better. It seems not impossible that the day may come when a whole division will be transported in such a thing. In its body one can go for a walk. In one of its corners there is an indescribable something. It contains an apparatus for wireless telephony by means of which one can converse with the people down below. In another corner are hanging the most attractive liver sausages which one can imagine. They are the famous bombs which cause such a fright to the good people down below. At every corner is a gun. The whole thing is a flying fortress, and the planes with their stays and supports look like arcades. I have never been able to feel enthusiasm for these giant barges. I find them horrible, unsportsmanlike, boring and clumsy. I rather like a machine of the type of "le petit rouge."

If one is in a small chaser-plane it is quite immaterial whether one flies on one's back, whether one flies up or down, stands on one's head, etc. One can play any tricks one likes, for in such a machine one can fly like

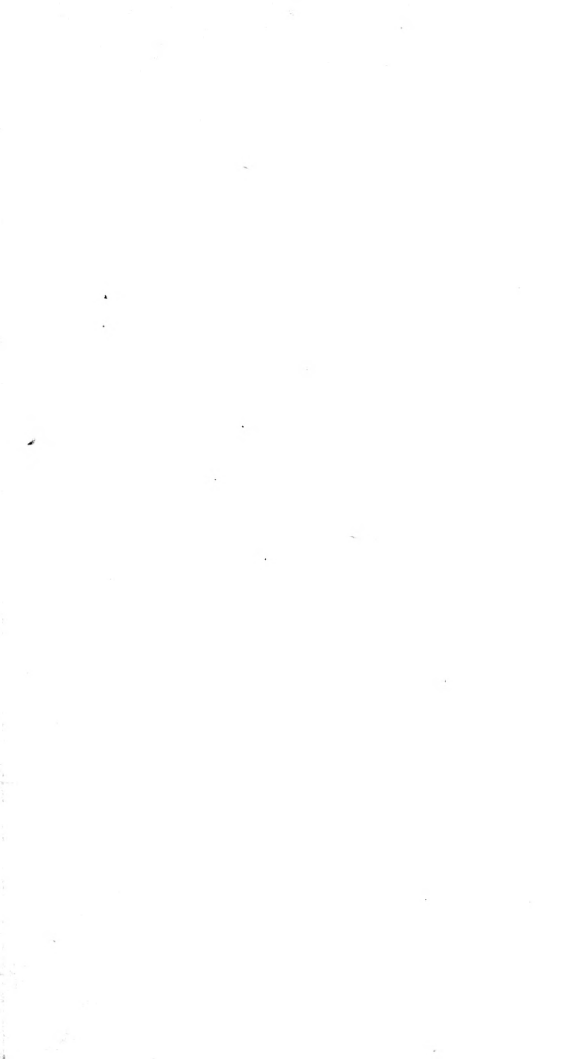
a bird. The only difference is that one does not fly with wings, as does the bird albatross. The thing is, after all, merely a flying engine. I think things will come to this, that we shall be able to buy a flying suit for half-a-crown. One gets into it. On the one end there is a little engine, and a little propeller. You stick your arms into planes and your legs into the tail. Then you will do a few leaps in order to start and away you will go up into the air like a bird.

My dear reader, I hear you laughing at my story. But we do not know yet whether our children will laugh at it. Everyone would have laughed fifty years ago if somebody had spoken about flying above Berlin. I remember the sensation which was caused, when, in 1910, Zeppelin came for the first time to Berlin. Now no Berlin street man looks up into the air when an airship is coming along.

Besides giant planes and little chaser-planes, there are innumerable other types of flying machines and they are of all sizes. Inventiveness has not yet come to an end.

Who can tell what machine we shall employ a year hence in order to perforate the atmosphere?

THE END







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