

sell the same quantity of paper to-day as yesterday.

Here is the other extreme: having acquired influence, it would be a question simply of turning that influence into cash; of selling it to whoever can use it: liquor-sellers, shady financiers, as well as honest workmen and shopkeepers. The distinction between the pages would be a matter of indifference: the fourth, and even the first, to save appearances, would belong as of right to the highest bidder, even if he were a German.

We can say, therefore, without exaggeration, that, in a democratic state, the fate of the nation is in the hands of the newspapers. Under many circumstances they are needed to sustain the moral courage of the people; and, under other circumstances, to prepare

men's minds for the great reorganizations which are necessary, for example, on the morrow of a war like that in which we are now engaged.

We live, in very truth, under a régime of public opinion which makes it impossible to carry through any reform without the approval of a majority; and how are the people to be stirred to action unless the newspapers devote themselves to the task; unless they are guided by a fervent and unselfish desire?

Immense power — immense duty! And so the press must take account of its mission, and determine, above all things, not to allow itself to be enslaved by any combination whatsoever, to the profit of one knows not what organization which may have designs against the country.

## HIGH ADVENTURE

### VI. THE BALLOONATICS

BY JAMES NORMAN HALL

#### I. A BALLOON ATTACK

'I'M looking for two balloonatics,' said Talbott, as he came into the mess-room, 'and I think I've found them.'

Percy, Talbott's orderly, Tiffin the steward, Drew, and I were the only occupants of the room. Percy is an old *légionnaire*, crippled by rheumatism. His active service days are over. Tiffin's working hours are filled with numberless duties. He makes the beds, and serves food from three to five times a

day to members of the Escadrille Lafayette. These two being eliminated, the identity of the balloonatics was plain.

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

"On the umteenth day of June, the escadrilles of Groupe de Combat Blank" — that's ours — "will coöperate in an attack on the German observation balloons along the sector extending from X to Y. The patrols to be furnished are, 1. Two patrols of protection, of five avions each, by the escadrilles Spa. 87 and Spa. 12. 2. Four patrols of attack, of three avions each, by the escadrilles Spa. 124," — that's us, — "Spa. 93, Spa. 10, and Spa. 12.

"The attack will be organized as follows: on the day set, weather permitting, the two patrols of protection will leave the field at ten-thirty A.M. The patrol of Spa. 87 will rendezvous over the village of N—. The patrol of protection of Spa. 12 will rendezvous over the village of C—. At ten-forty-five, precisely, they will start for the lines, crossing at an altitude of 3500 metres. The patrol furnished by Spa. 87 will guard the sector from X to T, between the town of O— and the two enemy balloons on that sector. The patrol furnished by Spa. 12 will guard the sector from T to Y, between the railway line and the two enemy balloons on that sector. Immediately after the attack has been made, these formations will return to the aerodrome.

"At ten-forty A.M. the four patrols of attack will leave the field, and will rendezvous as follows." — Here followed the directions. "At ten fifty-five precisely, they will start for the lines, crossing at an approximate altitude of 1600 metres, each patrol making in a direct line for the balloon assigned to it. Numbers 1 and 2 of each of these patrols will carry rockets. Number 3 will fly immediately above them, offering further protection in case of attack by enemy aircraft. Number 1 of each patrol will first attack the balloon. If he fails, number 2 will attack. If number 1 is successful, number 2 will

then attack the observers in their parachutes. If number 1 fails, and number 2 is successful, number 3 will attack the observers. The patrol will then proceed to the aerodrome by the shortest route.

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

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

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

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

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

'Ah, *mon vieux*! that's the question. The commandant knows, and he is n't telling. Any other little thing?'

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

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

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

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

Percy had been listening with interest to the conversation.

'You got some nice job, you boys. But if you bring him down, there will be a lot of chuckling in the trenches. You won't hear it, but they will all be saying, "Bravo! *Épatant*!" I've been there. I've seen it and I know. Does 'em all good to see a sausage brought

down. "There's another one of their eyes knocked out," they say.'

'Percy is right,' said J. B. as we were walking down the road. 'Destroying a balloon is not a great achievement in itself. Of course, it's so much equipment gone, so much expense added to the German war-budget. That is something. But the effect on the infantrymen is the important thing. Boche soldiers, thousands of them, will see one of their balloons coming down in flame. They will be saying, "Where are our airmen?" like those old poilus we met at the station when we first came out. It's bound to influence morale. Now let's see. The balloon, we will say, is at 1600 metres. At that height it can be seen by men on the ground within a radius of —' and so forth and so on.

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

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

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

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

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

'By the shortest route.' There was a piece of sly humor for you. It may have been unconscious, but we pre-

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

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

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

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

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

the balloon. If you are going to be a military pilot, for the love of Pete and Alf, be one!'

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

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

Our Spads were ready after luncheon. A large square of tin had been fastened over the fabric of each lower wing, under the rocket fittings, to prevent danger of fire from sparks. Racks for six rockets, three on a side, had been fastened to the struts. The rockets were tipped with sharp steel points to insure their pricking the silk balloon envelope. The batteries for igniting them were connected with a button inside the car, within easy reach of the pilot. Lieutenant Verdane, our French second-in-command, was to supervise our practice on the field. We were glad of this. If we failed to 'spear our sausage,' it would not be through lack of efficient instruction. He explained to Drew how the thing was to be done. He was to come on the balloon into the wind, and preferably not more than four hundred metres above it. He was to let it pass

from view under the wing; then, when he judged that he was directly over it, to reduce his motor and dive vertically, placing the bag within the line of his two circular sights, holding it there until the bag just filled the circle. At that second he would be about 250 metres distant from it, and it was then that the rockets should be fired.

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

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

The balloons were already up, hanging above the dense cloud of vapor, elongated planets drifting in space. The observers were directing the fire of their batteries to those positions which stood revealed. Shells were also exploding on lower ground, for we saw the mist billow upward time after time with the force of mighty concussions, and slowly settle again. It was an awe-inspiring sight. We might have been watching the last battle of the last war that could ever be, with the world still fighting on,

bitterly, blindly — gradually sinking from sight in a sea of blood. I have never seen anything to equal that spectacle of an artillery battle in the mists.

Conditions were ideal for the attack. We could have gone to the objective, fired our rockets, and made our return, without once having been seen from the ground. It was an opportunity made in heaven, an Allied heaven. 'But the infantry would not have seen it,' said J. B.; which was true. Not that we cared to do the thing in a spectacular fashion. We were thinking of that decisive effect upon morale.

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

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

J. B. is an agile-minded youth.

'It does n't happen to be the umteenth by any chance?'

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

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

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

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

As a squadron leader Talbott has many virtues, but the most important of them all is his casualness. And he is so sincere and natural in it. He has no conception of the dramatic possibilities of a situation — something to be pro-

foundly thankful for in the commander of an *escadrille de chasse*. Situations are dramatic enough, tense enough, without one's taking thought of the fact. He might have stood there, watch in hand, counting off the seconds. He might have said, 'Remember, we're all counting on you. Don't let us down. You've got to get that balloon!' Instead of that, he glanced at his watch as if he had just remembered us.

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

Miller, of course, had to have a parting shot. He had been in hiding somewhere until the last moment. Then he came rushing up with a tooth-brush and safety-razor case. He stood waving them as I taxied around into the wind. His purpose was to remind me of the possibility of landing with a *panne de moteur* in Germany, and the need I would then have of my toilet articles.

At ten-fifty-four J. B. came slanting down over me, then pulled up in *ligne de vol*, and went straight for the lines. I fell in behind him at about 100 metres distance. Irving was 200 metres higher. Before we left the field he said, 'You are not to think about Germans. That's my job. I'll warn you if I see that we are going to be attacked. Go straight for the balloon. If you don't see me come down and signal, you will know that there is no danger.'

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

We came within view of the railway



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

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

A rocket sailed into the air and burst in a point of greenish white light, dazzling in its brilliancy, even in the full light of day. Immediately after this, two white objects, so small as to be hardly visible, floated earthward: the parachutes of the observers. They had jumped. The balloon disappeared from view behind Drew's machine. It was being drawn down, of course, as fast as the motor could wind up the cable. It was an exciting moment for us. We were coming on at 200 kilometres an hour, racing against time, and very little time at that. 'Sheridan, only five miles away,' could not have been more eager for his journey's end. Our throttles were wide open, the engines developing their highest capacity for power.

I swerved out to one side for another glimpse of the target: it was almost on the ground, and directly under us. Drew made a steep *virage* and dove. I started after him in a tight spiral, to look for the observers; but they had both disappeared. The balloon was swaying from side to side under the tension of the cable. It was hard to

keep it in view. I lost it under my wing. Tipping up on the other side, I saw Drew release his rockets. They spurted out in long wavering lines of smoke. He missed. The balloon lay close to the ground, looking larger, riper than ever. The sight of its smooth, sleek surface was the most tantalizing of invitations. Letting it pass under me again, I waited for a second or two, then shut down the motor, pushed forward on the control-stick until I was falling vertically. Standing upright on the rudder-bar, I felt the tugging of the shoulder-straps. Getting the bag well within the sights, I held it there until it just filled the circle. Then I pushed the button.

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

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

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

'I don't see how I could have missed it! Why, I did n't turn to look for at least thirty seconds. I was that sure that I had brought it down. Then I banked and nearly fell out of my seat when I saw it there. I redressed at 400 metres. I could n't have been more than 100 metres away when I fired the rockets.'

'What did you do then?'

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

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

There was no leisure for brooding over it then. My altimeter registered only 250 metres, and the French lines were far distant. If the motor failed I should have to land in German territory. Any fate but that. Nevertheless I felt in the pocket of my combination, to be sure that my box of matches was safely in place. We were cautioned always to carry them where they could be quickly got at in case of a forced landing in enemy country. An airman must destroy his machine in such an event.

But my Spad did not mean to end its career so ingloriously. The motor ran beautifully, hitting on every cylinder. We climbed from 250 metres to 350, 450, and on steadily upward. In the vicinity of the balloon, machine-gun fire from the ground had been fairly heavy; but I was soon out of range, and saw the tracer bullets, like swarms

of blue bubbles, curving downward again at the end of their trajectory.

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

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

The foolishness of that close scrutiny alone, without the protection of other avions, I realize now much better than I did then. Unless flying at 6000 metres or above, when he is comparatively safe from attack, a pilot may never relax his vigilance for thirty seconds together. He must look behind him, below, above, constantly. All aviators learn this eventually, but in the case of many new pilots the knowledge comes too late to be of service.

I thought this was to be my experience, when, looking up, I saw five combat machines bearing down upon me. Had they been enemy planes my

chances would have been very small, for they were close at hand before I saw them. The old French aviator, worn out by his 500 hours of flight over the trenches, said, 'Save your nervous energy.' I exhausted a three-months reserve in as many seconds. The suspense, luckily, was hardly longer than that. It passed when the patrol leader, followed by the others, pulled up in *ligne de vol*, about one hundred metres above me, showing their French *cocardes*. It was the group of protection of Spa. 87. At the time I saw Drew, a quarter of a mile away. As he turned, the sunlight glinted along his rocket-tubes.

A crowded hour of glorious life it seems now, although I was not of this opinion at the time. In reality, we were absent barely forty minutes. Climbing out of my machine at the aerodrome, I looked at my watch. Twenty-five minutes to twelve. Laignier, the sergeant mechanic, was sitting in a sunny corner of the hangar, reading the *Matin*, just as I had left him.

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

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

'Asleep?'

We were not, but we did n't answer. He closed the door, then re-opened it.

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

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

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

## II. BROUGHT DOWN

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

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

Lieutenant Talbott cautioned him. 'You have been lucky, but don't get it into your head that this sort of thing happens often. Now I'm going to give



you a standing order. You are not to attack again, neither of you is to think of attacking, during your first month here. As likely as not it would be your luck the next time to meet an old pilot. If you did, I would n't give much for your chances. He would out-manceuvre you in a minute. You will go out on patrol with the others, of course: it's the only way to learn to fight. But if you get lost, go back to our balloons and stay there until it is time to go home.'

Neither of us obeyed this order, and, as it happened, Drew was the one to suffer. A group of American officers visited the squadron one afternoon. In courtesy to our guests, it was decided to send out all the pilots for an additional patrol, to show them how the thing was done. Twelve machines were in readiness for the sortie, which was set for seven o'clock, the last one of the day. We were to meet at 3000 metres, and then to divide forces, one patrol to cover the east half of the sector and one the west.

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

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

'I gave my name and the number of the escadrille to the medical officer at the *poste de secours*. He said he would 'phone the captain at once, so that you must know before this that I have been

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

'They have given me a bed in the officers' ward — me, a corporal. It is because I am an American, of course. Wish there was some way of showing one's appreciation for so much kindness. My neighbor on the left is a chasseur captain. A hand-grenade exploded in his face. He will go through life horribly disfigured. An old padre, with two machine-gun bullets in his hip, is on the other side. He is very patient, but sometimes the pain is a little too much for him. To a Frenchman, "Oh, là, là!" is an expression for every conceivable kind of emotion. In the future it will mean unbearable physical pain to me.

'Our orderlies are two poilus, long past military age. They are as gentle and thoughtful as the nurses themselves. One of them brought me lemonade all night long. Worth while getting wounded just to have something taste so good.

'I meant to finish this letter a week ago but have n't felt up to it. Quite perky this morning, so I'll go on with the tale of my "heroic combat." Only, first, tell me how that absurd account of it got into the *Herald*. I hope Tal-

bott knows that I was not foolish enough to attack six Germans single-handed. If he does n't, please enlighten him. His opinion of my common sense must be low enough as it is.

'We were to meet over S—— at 3000 metres, you remember, and to cover the sector at 5000 until dusk. I was late in getting away, and by the time I reached the rendezvous you had all gone. There was n't a *chasse* machine in sight. I ought to have gone back to the balloons as Talbott advised, but thought it would be easy to pick you up later, so went on alone after I had got some height. Crossed the lines at 3500 metres, and finally got up to 4000, which was the best I could do with my rebuilt engine. The Huns started shelling, but there were only a few of them that barked. I went down the lines for a quarter of an hour, meeting two Sepwits and a Letord, but no Spads. You were almost certain to be higher than I, but my old packet was doing its best at 4000, and getting overheated with the exertion. Had to throttle down and *pique* several times to cool off.

'Then I saw you — at least I thought it was you — about four kilometres inside the German lines. I counted six machines, well grouped, one a good deal higher than the others and one several hundred metres below them. The pilot on top was doing beautiful *renversements* and an occasional barrel-turn, in Barry's manner. I was so certain it was our patrol that I started over at once, to join you. It was getting dusk and I lost sight of the machine lowest down for a few seconds. Without my knowing it, he was approaching at exactly my altitude. You know how difficult it is to see a machine in that position. Suddenly he loomed up in front of me like an express train, as you have seen them approach from the depths of a moving-picture screen, only ten times faster; and he was firing

as he came. I realized my awful mistake, of course. His tracer bullets were going by on the left side, but he corrected his aim, and my motor seemed to be eating them up. I banked to the right, and was about to cut my motor and dive, when I felt a smashing blow in the left shoulder. A sickening sensation and a very peculiar one, not at all what I thought it might feel like to be hit with a bullet. I believed that it came from the German in front of me. But it could-n't have, for he was still approaching when I was hit, and I find that the bullet entered from behind.

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

account. Perhaps the whole crew of dare-devils has been decorated. However, no unseemly sarcasm. We would pounce on a lonely Hun just as quickly. There is no chivalry in war in these modern days.

'I pulled out of the spin, got the broomstick between my knees, reached over, and shut down the motor with my right hand. The propeller stopped dead. I did n't much care, being very drowsy and tired. The worst of it was that I could n't get my breath. I was gasping as though I had been hit in the pit of the stomach. Then I lost control again and started falling. It was awful! I was almost ready to give up. I believe that I said, out loud, "I'm going to be killed. This is my last sortie." At any rate, I thought it. Made one last effort and came out in *ligne de vol*, as nearly as I could judge, about 150 metres from the ground. It was an ugly-looking place for landing—trenches and shell-holes everywhere. I was wondering in a vague way, whether they were French or German, when I fell into the most restful sleep I ever had in my life.

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

'I accepted the miracle without attempting to explain it, for I had something more important to wonder about: who had the handles of my stretcher?

The first thing I did was to open my eyes, but I was bleeding from a scratch on the forehead and saw only a red blur. I wiped them dry with my sleeve and looked again. The broad back in front of me was covered with mud. Impossible to distinguish the color of the tunic. But the shrapnel helmet above it was—French! I was in French hands. If ever I live long enough in one place, so that I can gather a few possessions and make a home for myself, on one wall of my living-room I will have a bust-length portrait, rear view, of a French *brancardier*, mud-covered back and battered tin hat.

'Do you remember our walk with Ménault in the rain, and the *déjeuner* at the restaurant where they made such wonderful omelettes? I am sure that you will recall the occasion, although you may have forgotten the conversation. I have not forgotten one remark of Ménault's apropos of talk about risks. If a man were willing, he said, to stake everything for it, he would accumulate an experience of fifteen or twenty minutes which would compensate him, a thousand times over, for all the hazard. "And if you live to be old," he said quaintly, "you can never be bored with life. You will have something, always, very pleasant to think about." I mention this in connection with my discovery that I was not in German hands. I have had five minutes of perfect happiness without any background—no thought of yesterday or to-morrow—to spoil it.

'I said, "Bonjour, messieurs," in a gurgling voice.

'The man in front turned his head sidewise and said, "Tiens! Ça va, monsieur l'aviateur?"

'The other one said, "Ah, mon vieux!" You know the inflection they give this expression, particularly, when it means, "This is something wonderful!" He added that they had seen the

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

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

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

'The light glimmering down the stairway faded out and we were in complete darkness. My brain was amazingly clear. It registered every trifling impression. I wish it might always be

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

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

'As soon as the doctor had finished with me, my stretcher was fastened to a two-wheeled carrier and we started

down a cobbled road to the ambulance station. I was light-headed and don't remember very much of that part of the journey. Had to take refuge in another dugout when the Huns dropped a shell on an ammunition-dump in a village through which we were to pass. There was a deafening banging and booming for a long time, and when we did go through the town it was on the run. The whole place was in flames and small-arms ammunition still exploding. I remember seeing a long column of soldiers going at the double in the opposite direction, and they were in full marching order.

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

'There is another aviator here, a Frenchman, who broke his jaw and both legs in a fall while returning from a night bombardment. His bed is just across the aisle from mine; he has a formidable-looking apparatus fastened on his head and under his chin, to hold his jaw firm until the bones knit. He is forbidden to talk, but breaks the rule whenever the nurse leaves the ward. He speaks a little English and has told me a delightful story about the origin of aerial combat. A French pilot, a friend of his, he says, attached to a certain army group during August and September, 1914, often met a German aviator during his reconnaissance patrols. In those Arcadian days, fighting in the air was a development for the future, and these two pilots exchanged greetings, not cordially, perhaps, but courteously — a wave of the hand, as much as to say, "We are enemies but we need not forget the civilities." Then

they both went about their work of spotting batteries, watching for movements of troops, etc.

'One morning the German failed to return the salute. The other thought little of this, and greeted him in the customary manner at their next meeting. To his surprise, the Boche shook his fist at him in the most blustering and caddish way. There was no mistaking the insult. They had passed less than fifty metres apart, and the Frenchman distinctly saw the closed fist. He was saddened by the incident, for he had hoped that some of the ancient courtesies of war would survive in the aerial branch of the service, at least. It angered him too; therefore, on his next reconnaissance, he ignored the German. Evidently the Boche air-squadrons were being Prussianized. The enemy pilot approached very closely and threw a missile at him. He could not be sure what it was, as the object went wide of the mark; but he was so incensed that he made a *virage*, and drawing a small flask from his pocket, hurled it at his boorish antagonist. The flask contained some excellent port, he said, but he was repaid for the loss in seeing it crash on the exhaust-pipe of the enemy machine.

'This marked the end of courtesy and the beginning of active hostilities in the air. They were soon shooting at each other with rifles, automatic pistols, and, at last, with machine-guns. Later developments we know about.

'The night bombardier has been telling me this yarn in serial form. When the nurse is present, he illustrates the last chapter by means of gestures. I am ready to believe everything except the incident about the port. That does not sound plausible. A Frenchman would have thrown his watch before making such a sacrifice.'

(To be continued)



## M. CLEMENCEAU AND HIS PROBLEMS

BY CHARLES DAWBARN

### I

FOR the first time in his long life, M. Clemenceau has tasted the sweets as well as realized the dangers of an overwhelming popularity. It is an amazing experience for a man approaching four-score years, to have reached the pinnacle of fame and the height of usefulness to his country. That he has done so in the face of colossal difficulties, when the country was the prey of scandals of a particularly distressing sort, is no less testimony to his courage than to his vitality. Both qualities are conspicuous, and both are typically French. There have been Frenchmen before of surpassing vigor at his age — indeed, French energy and mental mobility seem to conserve men as well as to wear them out; there have been men like Hugo and Henri Rochefort, Rodin, and even Alexandre Ribot, one of the war premiers of France; but M. Clemenceau excels them all in the vigor and force of his bearing, in his vehemence and mastery of men expressed in flashing eye, sonorous voice, emphatic gesture.

What is the secret of his youth? The sobriety of his habits, his Spartan way of life, is partly responsible; but the fresh and eager interest of his mind is more powerful still. He has the precious faculty of Sarah Bernhardt and Napoleon of sleeping at any instant. The fatigue of any journey is relieved by this recreative power, and even a short motor-ride affords a few moments of complete repose, a truce in his vast

activities. Even when the Allied conferences are being held at Versailles, he sleeps a while after lunch. And from his siesta he arises a new man.

Nothing must interfere with his rest — not even the remorseless round of a newspaper. Even in conducting his *L'Homme Libre* (of limited though influential circulation), he has adhered to his rule of early to bed and early to rise. His practice as a journalist was to complete his day's article before seven A.M. Then would come his walk along the quays, or else in the neighborhood of the Tour Eiffel, where he lives; and, after that, he received callers — a friendly and intimate ceremony, which lasted well into the morning. Naturally, to accommodate himself to such unusual hours for literary composition, his bedtime was advanced; and even as head of the government he has generally retired by eight o'clock, after a frugal supper of a glass of milk.

I have been present at several of his early morning receptions. He talks with freedom and vivacity and an inexhaustible good humor. But he is very definite. Though a philosopher, he lets no subtleties appear in his manner of judging persons and events. They are thus and so, or they are not. There is no shadow-land of half-negations, no apologetic apprehension of overstating the case. Every word expresses the firm conviction of the soul. That is why he is so much admired and believed in in this land of *nuances*, — of intellectual tints and delicate reasonings. When tête-a-tête with you, he