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# **The Aeroplane Boys on the Wing Aeroplane Chums in the Tropics**

John Luther Langworthy

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# **THE AEROPLANE BOYS ON THE WING**

or,

Aeroplane Chums in the Tropics

**BY**

**JOHN LUTHER LANGWORTHY**

1912

The further trials and triumphs of the venturesome aeroplane lads are set forth in a particularly thrilling manner in the third volume of this series, now on sale everywhere, and which is entitled, "The Bird Boys Among the Clouds; or, Young Aviators in a Wreck."



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# THE AEROPLANE BOYS ON THE WING

or, Aeroplane Chums in The Tropics

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## CHAPTER I.

### ON THE WAY BACK FROM THE GAME.

"But the Bird boys won the prize of a silver cup!"

"What if they did? It was by a hair's breadth, Mr. Smarty!"

"And their monoplane was proven to be faster than the big bi-plane you built, Puss Carberry!"

"Oh! was it? Don't you be too sure of that, Larry!"

"Didn't it land on the summit of Old Thunder Top ahead of you and Sandy, in the race that afternoon? Tell me that!" and Larry Geohagan bristled up to the recognized bully of Bloomsbury, while a dozen fellows clustered around on the deck of the big power boat, listening eagerly to this war of words.

They were on their way home from a very exciting game of baseball that had been played at Cranford, across the lake. And after ten innings of hot work the nine from Bloomsbury had won. But not until they had changed pitchers, upon tying the score in the ninth, after coming up from behind.

Puss and Larry both wore the uniform of the home players, and there were others on the boat who also belonged to the team. In fact, the staunch vessel had been placed at the disposal of the baseball club for this day, by Commodore Elliott, the rich owner.

Larry had never been one of the adherents whom Puss could call upon to back him up when he tried conclusions with a hostile faction; in fact, Larry had always been an admirer of Frank Bird, who was recognized as the most persistent rival the bully had ever encountered in his whole career since coming to Bloomsbury.

Puss allowed a contemptuous expression to take possession of his face, and even shrugged his broad shoulders, after a nasty fashion he had, that often angered the one he was arguing with more than words could have done.

"Aw! rats!" he said, in a disagreeable, rasping voice. "Everybody knows that I'd won that same race only for trouble with my engine. Frank was lucky, just like he generally is when he goes in for anything. Look at him today, being called in to pitch in the tenth! We had 'em badly rattled, and they were on the toboggan sure. Yet Frank, the great hero, gets credit for winning that game. Didn't the Bloomsbury crowd cheer him to the echo, though, and want to ride him on their shoulders? Wow! it makes me sick, to see such toadyism!"

"What's all this big noise about, fellows? Didn't I hear my name mentioned?" asked a tall lad with a frank face and clear brown eyes, as he pushed forward.

It was Frank Bird himself, who had been talking with his cousin Andy, and several other fellows, in the bow of the launch, and by accident heard the voices that were raised in dispute.

Percy Carberry, known among his comrades simply as "Puss," did not flinch when he found himself face to face with the boy he detested so thoroughly. They had never as yet actually come to blows; but Puss believed that his muscular powers were far superior to those of his more slender rival, and just now he was in a particularly bitter frame of mind.

"Oh! so you're there, are you?" he sneered "I was just telling your good friend Larry here that I considered you a greatly overrated substitute pitcher; and that luck had as much to do with our winning that game today as anything you did."

Frank Bird laughed in his face.

"Sure," he declared, cheerily. "I was a mighty small factor in the victory, for I only played in one short inning. If I'd faced those hard hitters of Cranford nine times I reckon it'd be hard to tell what they'd have done to my poor inshoots and curves."

"But you held them in that inning, Frank, you know you did!" cried Larry.

"Mere accident, my boy. Happened to be the weak end of their batting list!" observed Frank, as if determined to agree with his enemy, and thus spike his guns.

"Is that so?" demanded "Elephant" Small, who did not happen to be on the nine, because of his customary slow ways. "Perhaps you'll be saying that dandy two-bagger you whanged out, that brought in the winning run, was also an accident?"

"Well, I must have just shut my eyes, and struck. I seem to remember hearing a sound like a shot, and then they all yelled to me to run; so I did, going on to second in time to see Peterkin gallop home," and Frank looked as sober as a judge as he said this. The others saw the joke, however, and, led by Larry, burst out into a laugh that made Puss and his loyal backers scowl.

"If that bingle was an accident, don't we wish we had a few more players who could shut their eyes and meet Frazer's terrible speed balls and curves in the same way!" one fellow exclaimed.

"So say we all of us!" another cried.

Puss realized that the majority on board the *Siren* were against him. But he was not given to taking water; even his enemies, and he had many in Bloomsbury, could hardly say that Puss was lacking in a certain kind of grit; while stubbornness he possessed in abundance.

So he just shut his white teeth hard together, and looked scowlingly around the bunch of fellows. And many of them felt a little chill when those cold gray eyes rested upon them; for they knew of old what happened when Puss Carberry made up his mind to mark a boy for future attention.

Frank still stood there by the side of the boat, smiling. Perhaps his very apparent unconcern served to make the other still more angry. There had been bad blood between these two lads for a long time, and more than once it threatened an eruption, which somehow or other had up to now been stayed.

Although some weeks had passed since the much-talked-of race between the rival aeroplanes, piloted by these two boys, in which Frank took his little craft up to the lofty summit of Old Thunder Top

ahead of Puss in his biplane, as narrated in the first volume of this series, entitled "The Bird Boys; or, The Young Sky Pilot's First Air Voyage," the latter had never ceased to feel ugly over his defeat.

As usual he had what he considered a good excuse for his arriving second; but few persons ever knew how Puss and his helper Sandy had tried to injure Frank's airship when it was directly beneath them, by deliberately dropping a sand bag, taken along, singularly enough, as "ballast," but with this very idea in view.

"Seems to me you've gotten the big head ever since you happened to drop on that rocky plateau on top of the mountain just three little seconds ahead of me, Frank Bird!" he said, with a steely glitter in his eyes that those who knew him best understood to mean coming trouble.

"Oh! I hope not, Puss," replied the other, with a smile. "I give you my word my hat fits me just as comfortably as ever. It was a close race, and the one who got there first hadn't much to crow about, for a fact. We happened to be lucky not to have any trouble with our new little Kinkaaid engine, that was all."

"Huh!" grunted his cousin Andy, shaking his head, and scowling at Puss in turn. "But we had plenty of other sorts of trouble, all the same, sand bags full of it, in fact. They just rained down on us; but then Frank knows how to check up his engine suddenly, and the storm passed by without any hurt!"

Some of the fellows, who happened to know what this sly reference on the part of the hotheaded Andy meant, began to chuckle. Of course such a thing would only serve to make Puss more angry. He chose to believe that they were all only trying to bait him.

Frank in particular came in for his dark looks. And Larry, who had once run in the same company as Puss, so that he knew his whims better than many others, took occasion to give Frank Bird a sly nudge in the side, as he whispered:

"Look out for him, Frank; he's getting near the danger point, sure!"

But Frank did not have to be warned. He had grown tired of warding off this ever threatening danger of a broil with Puss Car-

berry. Like his cousin Andy, the other had no father; and his wealthy mother had long since given up in despair the idea of controlling the headstrong lad. So that Puss had his way, whenever he wanted to do anything out of the ordinary.

Because Mrs. Carberry was one of his father's patients, and Dr. Bird esteemed her very highly, Frank had postponed the reckoning just as long as he could endure the insults of the bully. But he believed the last ditch had been reached, and was determined to no longer raise a hand to avert the threatening storm.

Puss had turned when Andy spoke, to flash a look in his direction. But it had no effect upon the other, who could be as reckless at times as the next one. Indeed, Frank often had to curb the impatience and daring of his chum.

"Oh! that's what sticks in your craw, does it, Andy Bird?" demanded Puss. "Just because Sandy happened to drop that ballast, thinking we might make better time if we lightened ship, you choose to make all sorts of nasty insinuations about us wanting to knock you out! Shows where your mind is. Another fellow wouldn't ever let such a fool notion get a grip on him. And you'd better put a reef in that tongue of yours, my boy, unless you want to have it get you into trouble."

Andy flared up at once, and would have replied; but Frank calmly stepped in between the two, as though he claimed first right.

"Neither of us have charged you with intentionally trying to disable our aeroplane by dropping that sand bag, Puss," he remarked quietly. "All we say is that it was a queer coincidence you wanted to get rid of your ballast just when we were walking up on you hand over fist, and about to pass under you, to take the lead. That's all!"

Again there was a low laugh from among the boys who stood around listening. To them it was a rich treat to see the recognized bully of Bloomsbury baited to his very face in this characteristic way; and they were enjoying it hugely.

"Well, let me tell you it ain't all, not by a jugful!" exclaimed Puss, his face taking on a purple hue, as it always did when he became enraged. "Both of you fellows have got to stop speaking about that sand bag dropping, or there's going to be a licking in store for you."

See?" and he thrust his face close to that of Frank as he said this. Larry Geohegan fairly held his breath. "Now it's coming; don't I know the signs?" he whispered to the boy next him.

Frank continued to stand there, close to the side of the speeding launch. They were about half way across the deep lake at the time. Evening was coming on, for the sun had just reached the distant rugged horizon in the west.

"Do you refer to me when you say that, Puss?" he asked, with that same queer little smile on his face—a look that mystified the other, who could not understand what it meant.

"Yes, both you and that loud-mouthed cousin of yours. Just because luck favored you, and you won that blooming race by a head, you think I can't manage an aeroplane as well as you. Huh! perhaps you don't know that I'm going to take my machine with me when I go down to the cocoa plantation we own along the Amazon, and use it exploring where a white man has seldom been seen. You can just stay here and grow up with the country, while I'm doing great stunts. But as long as I stay here I'm going to stop this talk about trickery and low-down dodges. You're responsible for most of it, Frank Bird. I warn you what's coming to you." "Perhaps," said Frank, pleasantly, "you would be kind enough to tell me also when this awful punishment is going to fall on my poor devoted neck?"

"Any time, hang you! Right now, if you say another word!" roared Puss, doubling up his fists, and making ready for one of his well known and feared bull rushes, that had brought him a speedy victory many a time.

"So? That's comforting; and with all these good fellows around to see how you wipe up the deck with me. Suppose you begin the swabbing act, Puss!" and Frank pretended to throw himself in a position of defense.

The other gave utterance to a hoarse cry of rage, and lowering his head after the manner of a bull, jumped forward. But the agile Frank simply stepped aside; and unable to check himself in time, Puss Carberry shot over the side of the power boat, disappearing in the clear waters of Sunrise Lake with a great splash.

"Oh!" shouted his crony, Sandy Hollingshead, standing there as if petrified; "and Puss can't swim a single stroke, either!"



## CHAPTER II.

### FRANK'S WAY.

"My goodness, what a splash!"

"Served him right, that's what!"

"He's gone under, fellows! Dove just like a big frog!"

"Stop the boat! He'll drown!"

Half a dozen were shouting in unison, as the boys crowded to the side over which the bully had pitched when Frank avoided his forward rush.

But Frank heard only that startled exclamation from Sandy Hollingshead:

"Puss can't swim a single stroke, either!"

With Frank Bird to think was to act. The two things were almost synonymous in his mind. Forgotten was the fact that the imperiled lad had been endeavoring to strike him in the face at the time of his submersion in the waters of Sunrise Lake.

Not a single word did he utter, but throwing off his coat, he made a leap over the side of the boat, already slowing up as the power was cut off.

"Frank's gone back after him!" cried one.

"And he'll get him, too," another hastened to say; for they understood that when the leader of the team known as the "Bird boys" attempted anything he usually got there, as some of them said "with both feet."

Meanwhile Frank was swimming with all his might toward the spot in the foamy wake of the boat, where he knew the unfortunate Puss must be battling for his life.

It seems strange that occasionally a boy may be found who has never taken the trouble to learn how to swim. In the country this is

a rare occurrence; which would make the neglect of such an athletic fellow as Puss seem more remarkable.

He was threshing about in the deep water like a cat that has fallen overboard; and managing to keep partly afloat after a fashion; though it would have been all over with him long ere the power boat could be turned around and arrive at the spot where he struggled, gasping for breath, and sucking in much water.

Frank was wise enough to understand that it is always desirable to approach a drowning person from the rear, so that a grip may be taken before the would-be rescuer's presence is discovered. Once let those frenzied fingers clutch hold of him, and the chances of a double tragedy would be good.

So Frank was keenly on the watch as he swam toward the splashing and gurgling that announced Puss Carberry's fight for his life.

He could see him by now, and never would Frank be apt to forget the look of absolute terror he discovered upon the agonized face of the bully. Puss had detected the presence of some one near by, and was trying to shout, as well as stretch his appealing hands out, though not with much success.

He actually went under while Frank looked; and the heart of the would-be rescuer almost stood still with a terrible fear that that was the end.

But he kept on, and in another moment a head once more bobbed up, with Puss threshing the water frantically. Once he had gone down. According to what most people said, he would possibly vanish twice more, and after that never rise again.

If anything was to be done, there was no time for delay. Frank was within ten feet of the struggling figure when it came up. He immediately dove, and managed to rise to the surface behind Puss. Then, just as the other was floundering beneath the surface of the agitated water again, Frank caught hold of his sweater close to his neck, and held on with might and main.

He had a serious job of it, for the half-drowned lad made a desperate attempt to turn around, doubtless with the intention of throwing his arms around his rescuer. This was just what Frank was