

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott  
Turgenev Wallage Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel  
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen  
Weber Freiligrath Frey  
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel  
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas  
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach  
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil  
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London  
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer  
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup  
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff  
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt  
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier  
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder  
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer Bebel Proust  
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke George  
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot  
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy  
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius  
Chamberlain Schiller Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates  
Brentano Strachwitz Claudius Schilling Kralik Schiller Iffland Sokrates  
Katharina II. von Rußland Bellamy Gerstäcker Raabe Gibbon Tschchow  
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius  
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke  
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil  
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus  
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus  
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke  
Nestroy Marie de France  
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht Ringelnatz  
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz  
von Ossietzky May vom Stein Lawrence Irving  
Petalozzi Platon Pückler Michelangelo Knigge Kock Kafka  
Sachs Poe Liebermann Kock Korolenko  
de Sade Praetorius Mistral Zetkin



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# **Night Bombing with the Bedouins**

Robert Henry Reece

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## DEDICATION

*In a spirit of the deepest reverence I dedicate this unworthy effort to the memory of a true sportsman, a loyal friend, and a gallant officer who was killed in action while serving his Country as a Pilot in the American Air Service,*

### LIEUTENANT SAMUEL PIERCE MANDELL

*America has given of the finest of her Youth to uphold the Cause of Right, but she has given no one of more splendid promise than he, whose service was an example of devotion to duty, of readiness for action, and of undaunted courage.*

*His life was an inspiration to the living "to carry on" and finish the great struggle for which he died, that he and those like him may not have died in vain.*



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# NIGHT BOMBING WITH THE "BEDOUINS"

## CHAPTER I

### PER ARDUA AD ASTRA

In prehistoric times the first man to make for himself a stone hatchet probably became the greatest warrior of his particular region. He may not have been as strong physically as his neighbor, but with the aid of so marvellous an invention as a stone hatchet he undoubtedly conquered his enemies and became a great prehistoric potentate, until some other great man made a larger and stronger hatchet; so down to the present invention has followed invention and improvement has been added to improvement to such an extent that it is difficult to imagine what new weapon of [Pg 2] destruction man can develop in the future.

What would the past generation have said of a man who had prophesied great armies fighting in the air? Even in the early months of the war there were but few who realized what an important part of the war was to be carried on in the newly conquered element. When the infantry saw an occasional box-kite-looking machine drifting slowly over the lines, struggling to keep itself aloft, how many, I wonder, foresaw that in a few months these machines would be swooping down on them like swallows, raking them with machine guns by day and bombing them by night? How many artillery officers laughed at the suggestion that a day was coming when thousands of great guns would be directed from the air? Yet in a few short months two great blind fighting giants, their arms stretching from the Belgian coast [Pg 3] to the Swiss border, learned to see each other; and their eyes were in the air.

The first aeroplanes to cross the lines carried no armament; they were for reconnaissance work only; they would fly a few miles back

of the enemy lines, have a good look around, and then come back and report what they had seen. Often British and German machines would pass quite close to each other. Flying was considered sufficiently dangerous, not to add a further danger to it by attacking enemy machines.

The Germans, however, because they greatly outnumbered the British in the air, had more eyes to see with; something had to be done; so rifles were carried by the British and a finer sport than shooting ducks came into vogue. This quickly led to the carrying of machine guns. Ingenuity in devising sights to compensate for the speed of our own machines and to gauge a proper deflection according to [Pg 4] the speed and angle of approach of the enemy machine, soon decreased the advantage the enemy aviators had through superior numbers.

For example, if our machine was flying at the rate of one hundred miles per hour and the enemy's machine was travelling past us in the opposite direction at an equal rate, our fore-sight nullified our motion and enabled us to shoot as if from a stationary base, while our back-sight helped us to gauge that imaginary point at which to shoot where our bullets and the enemy machine would meet. In other words, we shot at an enemy machine although we ourselves were travelling rapidly, exactly as a sportsman shoots at a bird on the wing.

Then a new aeroplane was developed, the single-seater tractor, with a Vickers gun, synchronized to shoot through the rapidly revolving propeller so as to avoid the blades. These machines were used to [Pg 5] patrol the lines and keep enemy machines from crossing, or to accompany a reconnaissance machine as protector; for they were very much faster, easier to manoeuvre, and altogether very much more efficient fighters. At first they operated singly, but it was soon discovered that two of these scout machines operating together invariably obtained better success than when operating alone. This led to formation flying, and up to the cessation of hostilities these formations grew in size and varied in shape.

The reconnaissance work was soon divided into classes: long and short reconnaissance and photographic reconnaissance. The long reconnaissance dealt with enemy movements far behind the lines;

the short reconnaissance with enemy activities near the front. The photographic reconnaissance consisted of taking aerial photographs of everything of military importance within flying [Pg 6] radius. These photographs pieced together showed the enemy defences along the entire British front and their changes from day to day.

Wireless apparatus was soon attached to aeroplanes, and this enabled an aviator to communicate with people on the ground many miles away; and so what was called artillery observation was developed. Roughly speaking, this is the direction of the fire of our batteries against enemy targets; but, just as specialization came in reconnaissance and fighting, so now machines specialized in artillery observation. To-day the efficiency of the artillery depends largely upon its direction from the air. For instance, when a battery takes over a new area the gunners may be called upon to fire at certain targets, such as cross-roads or houses used as infantry headquarters or ammunition and stores dumps, at a moment's notice. Consequently, if these [Pg 7] targets are registered by aeroplane, all the gunners have to do when called upon to open fire is to refer to their registration book which will give them the necessary angles to use on their sights, then, by allowing for the temperature of the day and the direction and velocity of the wind, their shooting is certain to be far more accurate than it would be if the target had not been previously registered. The registration of targets to-day without the use of aeroplanes is very often impossible.

The registration of targets from the air, however, is not the most important part of this work. For instance, a machine will be flying over enemy territory; the observer will see the flash of an enemy gun and will pin-point its position on his map, which is marked off into large and small lettered and numbered squares. This operation enables him to send by wireless what is known as a zone [Pg 8] call, giving the exact location of the enemy battery to all of our batteries within range. The enemy battery then has to move suddenly, if it is ever to move at all.

Barrages can also be controlled very efficiently from the air, so, considering the comparatively short time that aeroplanes have been used in this work and the wonderful results that have been ob-

tained, it does not take much imagination to see the necessity for all future artillery officers to be trained as aviators.

In the earlier stages of the war it was very difficult for Headquarters to keep in close touch with the infantry during a "push"; consequently, considerable loss of life might result from one portion of the line advancing out of contact with another. Probably the eagerness of raw troops to keep on advancing regardless of their objective has led to a considerable and unnecessary loss of life. The aero [Pg 9] plane can be used in these situations to great advantage, and after the development of what is known as "contact patrol" the aeroplane became the connecting link between Headquarters and the infantry.

It was not until 1916 that the full powers of the aeroplane as an offensive weapon began to be realized. Bombing was done, but it was of a desultory nature, and although the number of machines engaged in this work steadily increased, and the work itself became more and more diversified and specialized, it was not until 1918 that the possibilities of the aeroplane as a purely offensive weapon were appreciated.

An aeroplane can operate far back of the enemy lines, both in the day and at night; enemy troops in transport can be bombed: railway stations, sidings, etc., damaged; transports of all kinds delayed; and ammunition dumps, when [Pg 10] located, can be blown up. In fact, military targets of all sorts can be attacked from the air that cannot be reached in any other way. The very foundation of a nation's strength in war, its industry, can be attacked from the air and, if attacked on a large enough scale, can be destroyed. For instance, eighty per cent of the German steel industry was within bombing range of the Allies. The Westphalian group of high-grade steel industries centred at Essen is about two hundred miles from Nancy. If this group had been bombed on a large scale the source of supply of German guns and munitions could have been destroyed; for a blast furnace destroyed cannot be replaced within nine months, and the destruction of the central electrical plant of a steel factory would place the entire factory out of operation for at least six months. The hundreds of bombing machines which the English aeroplane fac [Pg 11] tories were turning out at the time hostilities ceased, and the

thousands of men being trained for bombing, make one wonder what would have happened to the German industries if the war had continued through the spring of 1919.

Besides these hundreds of aeroplanes under construction and the thousands of men in training, the Royal Air Force had in operation, November 11, 1918, over twenty thousand aeroplanes, over thirty thousand aviators, and over two hundred thousand mechanics and other personnel. [Pg 12]



## CHAPTER II

### THE "BEDOUIN" SQUADRON

The "Bedouin" Squadron, so called because as a unit it was constantly moved from place to place, and because its members as individuals were wanderers at heart, was formed in September, 1917, equipped with the large Handley-Page bombing planes, and sent to the Nancy front to carry out pioneer work in long-distance bombing. The "Bedouins," as the officers of this squadron were called, first saw the light of day in England, Scotland, Ireland, America, India, Canada, South Africa, and Australia. Before becoming aviators many of them had fought in the infantry on the western front, in Gallipoli, and in Egypt; some as officers, some as privates, but for no general reason, unless the law of [Pg 13] nature which prevents squirrels from remaining on the ground also applies to men, they one by one in divers ways drifted into the Flying Corps, and flew different types of machines on different fronts until brought together and formed, "willy-nilly," into the Bedouin Squadron.

### I

There was "Jimmie," whose insides had been shot away in Gallipoli. He was the envy of the officers' mess, because his newly acquired digestive apparatus, composed principally of silver tubes, could assimilate more wine without producing ill results than any other five members of the mess. Jimmie was not a flying officer; by all the laws of nature he should have been a corpse, but he had a heart which disregarded an intestine designed by a surgeon who must have been a plumber in some previous incarnation, and this great heart carried him [Pg 14] through four years of war, and made of him an energizing force to all who came in contact with him. It was not until after the cessation of hostilities that the soul of this hero was liberated from the poor maimed body with its mechanical digestive system.

Jimmie was the First Lieutenant of the Station; it was his job to see to the discipline of the two hundred and fifty mechanics, riggers, carpenters, armorers, drivers, and officers' stewards. He did this in such a way as to make all the men love him except the few, very

few, who were surly slackers, and these feared him worse than death itself. Jimmie was always just, but he demanded results. To those who shirked he was a just judge and an unsympathetic jury; so, under Jimmie, slackers soon became demons for work, and later on learned like the others to love him. To those who produced results, he was a father.



JIMMIE WALKS UP AND DOWN THE TRENCH

[Pg 15]

I remember that shortly after the squadron took up its residence on the Nancy front, the Huns came over and bombed us severely; many of the mechanics were fresh from the factories in England and were quite unaccustomed to seeing the damage that one hundred pounds of high explosive can do to the delicate anatomy of the human being; panic seized them; but a greater fear possessed them when Jimmie's orders burst upon them like the rat-tat-tat of a machine gun; they marched as if on parade into the trenches, recently dug behind the hangars; then Jimmie, smoking an occasional cigarette, strolled up and down in front during the three hours' bombardment.

So the men soon learned, under Jimmie, the value of discipline; it meant their safety when under fire, and it meant freedom from military punishments. They were quick to grasp the fact [Pg 16] that any negligence on their part might mean death to the aviator who

flew in the neglected aeroplane. Flagrant neglect they soon learned might cause other deaths than those suffered by the unfortunate aviators.

## II

There was Sammie, a prototype of the caricatured Englishman in our comic papers. Every American theatre-goer has seen Sammie exaggerated on the music-hall stage.

Sammie was a small boy with an eyebrow on his upper lip and an apparently permanent window over his right eye. Before joining the Flying Corps he had served seventeen months in the trenches as a private; finally, driven mad with filth, rats, and other vermin, he captured an enemy machine-gun emplacement single-handed, and was given a commission. Shortly afterwards he joined the [Pg 17] Flying Corps, probably because he could not keep his new uniform clean while in the trenches.

Sammie was always immaculate, and as a uniform gives one very little opportunity to express one's individuality in dress, Sammie carried his handkerchief up his sleeve. Even Generals envied Sammie's field boots and every one who met him wanted to know the name of his tailor.

In peace-time Sammie would have looked like a toy Pom with a ribbon around its neck; but a more imperturbable man in the face of danger never lived.

"My word" was the expression used by Sammie to denote every degree of human emotion. If it was Sammie's lot to draw the occasional egg served in the Bedouin mess, his only remark when it hopped out of reach would be, "My word." [Pg 18]

I remember one night when both of our machines were out of action, Sammie and I, who slept in the same hut, went to bed at the early hour of twelve o'clock; at about one in the morning the Huns dropped their first bomb very close to us; a picture of Sammie's mother was on a stand beside the head of his cot; a fragment of the bomb came through the wall of the hut and shattered this picture; I landed, as far as I know involuntarily, in the middle of the floor with a lighted torch in my hand; Sammie saw the shattered remains

of his mother's picture; "My word, mother will be pleased," he said, turned over and was sound asleep instantly. I know Sammie slept because he never remarked on my taking a short cut to the trenches through the window.

Another time when a Hun bomb dropped in the officers' trench and failed to explode, Sammie, who was but two feet away, tried to lift it, failed, and then [Pg 19] lay full length upon it, believing it to be of the "delay action" variety; when our Major, a bomb expert, appeared on the scene a few moments later and laughingly declared the bomb a "dud," Sammie's embarrassment expressed itself in "My word." If the detonating apparatus of this bomb had been all that the Huns intended it to be, Sammie would have returned to minute specks of dust and his name would have been added to the long list of dead heroes; but since the bomb was a "dud," Sammie was made the butt of his friends' wit.

Sammie was always philosophical. He was once ordered to take a new machine on a very long raid. We had all examined this new aeroplane and declared it a "dud"; so we cheered Sammie up as well as we could by drinking his health and inquiring into his taste in flowers. Undismayed, Sammie took the machine off the ground, with the wheel held into his [Pg 20] stomach; the rigging of the machine was such that it would fly on an even plane longitudinally if the wheel was kept back as far as possible. By all the laws of aeronautics this aeroplane should have crashed before leaving the ground, but it did not. Sammie climbed it to five hundred feet in an hour and a half. As Sammie now had seven and one half hours petrol left and was still four hours away from his objective, it would have been quite justifiable for him to return without going any farther; in fact, it was the only reasonable thing for him to do; but Sammie always trusted to luck rather than reason, and his luck did not fail him. One engine "conked" and he was forced to turn back. He fired his forced landing signal when approaching the aerodrome, but the aerodrome was being bombed by the Huns in a very thorough manner and Sammie had to land in complete darkness, the inevitable result be [Pg 21] ing a crash. Sammie extricated himself from the wreckage, found that both of his companions were dead, rescued one of the machine guns from its damaged mounting, together with several drums of ammunition and practised his