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Turgenev Wallace 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
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Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
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Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
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Brentano Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Raabe Gibbon Tschchow
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius
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Air Service Boys over the Atlantic

Charles Amory Beach

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CHAPTER I

OUT FOR BUSINESS

"Look! What does that mean, Tom?"

"It means that fellow wants to ruin the Yankee plane, and perhaps finish the flier who went down with it to the ground."

"Not if we can prevent it, I say. Take a nosedive, Tom, and leave it to me to manage the gun!"

"He isn't alone, Jack, for I saw a second skulker in the brush, I'm sure."

"We've got to drive those jackals away, no matter at what risk. Go to it, Tom, old scout!"

The big battle-plane, soaring fully two thousand feet above the earth, suddenly turned almost upside-down, so that its nose pointed at an angle close to forty-five degrees. Like a hawk plunging after its prey it sped through space, the two occupants held in their places by safety belts.

As they thus rushed downward the earth seemed as if rising to meet them. Just at the right second Tom Raymond, by a skillful flirt of his hand, brought the Yankee fighting aircraft back to an even keel, with a beautiful gliding movement.

Immediately the steady throb of the reliable motor took up its refrain, while the buzz of the spinning propellers announced that the plane was once more being shot through space by artificial means.

The two occupants were Tom Raymond and Jack Parmly, firm friends and chums who had been like David and Jonathan in their long association. It was Tom who acted as pilot on the present occa-

sion, while Jack took the equally important position of observer and gunner.

Both were young Americans with a natural gift in the line of aviation. They had won their spurs while serving under French leadership as members of the famous Lafayette Escadrille. The adventures they encountered at that time are related in the first book of this series, entitled: "Air Service Boys Flying For France."

After America entered the war, like all other adventurous young Yankee fliers, the two Air Service Boys offered their services to their own country and joined one of the new squadrons then being formed.

Here the two youths won fresh laurels, and both were well on the way to be recognized "aces" by the time Pershing's army succeeded in fighting its way through the nests of machine-gun traps that infested the great Argonne Forest.

It was in the autumn of the victory year, 1918, and the German armies were being pushed back all along the line from Switzerland to the sea. Under the skillful direction of Marshal Foch, the Allies had been dealing telling and rapid blows, now here, now there.

To-day it was the British that struck; the day afterward the French advanced their front; and next came the turn of the Americans under Pershing. Everywhere the discouraged and almost desperate Huns were being forced in retreat, continually drawing closer to the border.

Already the sanguine young soldiers from overseas were talking of spending the winter on the Rhine. Some even went so far as to predict that their next Christmas dinner would be eaten in Berlin. It was no idle boast, for they believed it might be so, because victory was in the very air.

So great was the distress of the Hun forces that it was believed Marshal

Foch had laid a vast trap and was using the fresh and enthusiastic Yankees to drive a dividing wedge between Ludendorff's two armies, when a colossal surrender must inevitably follow.

The whole world now knows that this complete break-up of the Teutons was avoided solely by their demand for an armistice, with an agreement on terms that were virtually a surrender—absolute in connection with their navy.

Tom and Jack had displayed considerable ability in carrying out their work, and could no longer be regarded as novices. Each of them had for some time been anticipating promotion, and hoped to return home with the rank of lieutenant at least.

They had been entrusted with a number of especially dangerous missions, and had met with considerable success in putting these through. Like most other ambitious young fliers, they hoped soon to merit the title of "ace," when they could point to at least six proven victories over rival pilots, with that number of planes sent down in combat.

On the present occasion they had sallied out "looking for trouble," as Jack put it; which, in so many words, meant daring any Hun flier to meet them and engage in a duel among the clouds.

Other planes they could see cruising toward the northwest, and also flying in an easterly direction; but as a rule these bore signs of being Allies' machines, and in all probability had Yankee pilots manning them.

Apparently the Hun airmen were otherwise employed. They seemed to prefer venturing out after nightfall, gathering in force, and often taking a strange satisfaction in bombing some Red Cross hospital, where frequently their own wounded were being treated alongside the American doughboys.

During the weeks that the Americans were battling in the great Argonne Forest the two Air Service Boys had contributed to the best of their ability to each daily drive. Again and again had they taken part in such dangerous work as fell to the portion of the aviators. Their activities at that time are set down in the fifth volume of this series, entitled: "Air Service Boys Flying For Victory."

Frequently they had found themselves in serious trouble, and their escapes were both numerous and thrilling. Through it all they had been highly favored, since neither of them had thus far met

with a serious accident. Numbers of their comrades had been registered as "missing," or were known to have been shot down and lost.

It was no unusual thing a few days after a flier had gone out and failed to return at evening, for a Hun pilot to sail over and drop a note telling that he had fallen in combat, and was buried at a certain place with his grave so marked that it could be easily found.

There seemed to be a vein of old-time chivalry among the German airmen even up to the very last, such as had not marked any other branch of their fighting forces, certainly not the navy. And the Americans made it a point to return this courtesy whenever an opportunity arose.

Tom was proud of his ability to execute that difficult feat known as a "nose-dive." More than once it had extricated him from a "pocket" into which he found himself placed by circumstances, with three or more enemy planes circling around and bombarding him from their active guns.

At such times the only hope of the attacked pilot lay in his ability to drop down as if his machine had received a fatal blow and when once far below the danger point again to recover an even keel.

Jack never doubted what the result would be, having the utmost confidence in his comrade. The wind rushed past his ears as they pitched downward; and just when objects on the ground loomed up suggestively there was the expected sudden shift of the lever, a consequent change in the pointing of the plane's nose, and then they found themselves on the new level, with the motor again humming merrily.

Jack was on the alert and quickly discovered the object that just then enlisted their whole attention. As he had suspected when using the glasses from the higher level, it was a Yankee bomber that lay partly hidden among the bushes where it had fallen. He could easily see the Indian head marking the broken wing.

The pilot was sitting near by as though unable to make a run for it, although Jack imagined he must suspect the approach of danger, for he gripped something that glinted in the sunlight in his right hand. It was, of course, an automatic pistol.

Looking hastily around Jack glimpsed the creeping figures of the two Germans who, having seen the fall of the Yankee plane, must have come out from some place of concealment and were bent on finishing the pilot, or at least taking him prisoner. They had almost reached a point where it would have been possible for them to open fire on the wounded American.

Jack looked in vain for any second figure near the fallen plane. If the pilot had had an observer with him, which was most likely, considering the fact that he had been using a bombing machine, the latter must have been dispatched for relief some time before.

"There they are, Tom!" burst from the one who crouched close to the machine gun, and pointing as he spoke. "Swoop down and let me give them a volley!"

The Huns evidently realized what was coming, and feared that their intended victim might after all escape their hands. Even as Jack spoke there came a shot from below, and a bullet went screaming past close to the ears of the Air Service Boys. It was followed by a second and a third in quick succession.

What the marksmen hoped to do was either to kill the pilot or else to strike some vulnerable part of the engine, thus disabling it and wrecking the plane. Those were chances which had to be taken continually; but as a rule the rapidity of flight rendered them almost negligible.

Jack waited no longer. The two men were about to fling themselves behind friendly trees, and but a small chance remained that he might catch them before they were able to shield themselves by these close-by trunks.

Jack, in his most energetic fashion, commenced to spray the vicinity with a shower of leaden missiles. The chatter of the machine gun drowned any cries from the two men below. The Yankee plane swooped past the spot where the injured pilot still sat at bay, ready to sell his life dearly if the worst came.

CHAPTER II

THE RESCUE

The rat-tat-tat of gunfire suddenly ceased. Jack could no longer cover the spot where the two Huns were hiding behind the tree-trunks, and consequently it would be a sheer waste of ammunition to continue firing.

But already Tom had commenced to circle, and soon they would be swooping down upon the scene from another direction. Jack kept on the alert, so as to note quickly any possible movement of the enemy.

Again he poured a hot fire on the place where he knew the Germans were cowering, tearing up the ground with a storm of bullets as though it had been freshly harrowed. But the sturdy trees baffled him once more.

"Nothing doing, Tom!" he called out, vexed. "We've got to drop down and go it on foot if we want to save that pilot!"

"I see a good landing place!" announced the other almost instantly.

"Great luck! get busy then!"

The ground chanced to be unusually smooth, and the plane, after bumping along for a short distance, came to a stand. Meanwhile, both young fliers had succeeded in releasing themselves from their safety belts.

Together they jumped to the ground and started on a run toward the spot where those crouching figures had last been seen. Of course, the Huns must already know of their landing and would be ready to defend themselves, if not to attack; but, nothing daunted by this possibility, the pair pushed ahead through bushes and past trees.

"Better separate, and attack 'em from two different angles, hadn't we, Tom?" panted Jack presently, as a shot was heard and something clipped a twig from a bush within a foot of his hand.

"Take the left, and I'll look after the right!" snapped out Tom.

Both were armed with automatic pistols, for airmen can never tell when their lives may depend upon their ability to defend themselves, and so seldom make a flight without some such weapon in their possession.

"They're on the run!" cried Jack, in a tone of disgust; for he had really hoped to have a further brush with the skulking enemy.

He sent several shots in their direction whenever he caught glimpses of the bounding figures, but without much hope of striking either of them. Still, they had undoubtedly accomplished the business in hand, which was to save the Yankee pilot.

"He's over this way, Jack," observed Tom, moving to the right still further, after being joined by his comrade. "I can see the opening where he must have struck. The Hun flier didn't bother to follow him down and find out if he'd made a count. He may have been here for some time."

"I see him now," continued Jack eagerly. "And it strikes me there's something familiar about his looks. Yes, we've met that pilot before, Tom. It's Lieutenant Colin Beverly, one of the cleverest Yankee aces of the newer squad."

The aviator had already discovered the Air Service Boys' presence. Doubtless all that had occurred had been noted by him as he sat, waiting for anything that might happen; and the swoop of the American plane, as well as Jack's firing, had of course told him help was near.

"He's waving his hand to us," continued Jack, answering in kind.

"Keep your gun ready for business," warned the other, inclined to be more cautious. "There may be other Huns prowling around, because we're not far from their lines, you understand."

A minute afterwards they reached the pilot of the wrecked bomber.

"Hello, fellows!" was his familiar greeting, as he thrust a hand out toward them. "Glad to see you, all right. They were after me, just as I suspected. My observer was wounded in the arm, but went for help. As for me, save for a few scratches, I made the fall in great luck. But I'm still crippled from that other accident. Just got out of hospital a week ago. They tried to keep me from going up, but I'd have died only for the permission."

Colin Beverly they knew to be one of the liveliest fliers then serving in the American ranks. He had gained a name for daring second to none. Early in his service he had won a reputation, and was already a double ace; which meant that he was officially credited with at least twelve victories over enemy fliers.

Tom and Jack had met him a number of times previously, and there had always been a strong attraction between the three. Lieutenant Beverly was one of fortune's favorites in so far as worldly riches went, since he had a million at least to his credit, it was said.

He had enlisted as soon as the United States entered the war, and had chosen aviation as his branch of the service, since it offered his venture-venturesome, almost reckless, spirit a chance for action. He had had numerous escapes so narrow that his friends began to believe some magical charm must protect him.

As he had mentioned when speaking to them on their arrival, his closest call had sent him to the hospital with a fractured bone in his left leg; and even when discharged as cured he really should not have returned to the harness; only, those in authority found it difficult to keep such an energetic soul in check.

"Those chaps will come back with more of their kind, I reckon," Tom remarked. "They've made up their minds to get you, Lieutenant, and when a Hun is bent on a thing he keeps on trying. We can take you along with us."

"I hate to desert the bus," complained the other, giving his wrecked plane a wry look. "But then what's the use of sticking it out? Chances are we'll be through the mess before they ever get it in fighting trim again. Yes, I'll go along, boys, if you'll lend me a shoulder. Gave that game leg another little knock in falling; but then, I might have broken my neck, so I'm thankful."

"The Beverly luck again!" chuckled Jack, at which the intrepid flier nodded with kindling eyes.

"Getting to believe I can carry anything through I care to tackle, for a fact, fellows," he remarked, with the same amazing confidence that had taken him along so many times in a whirlwind of success.

They ranged alongside, and he leaned on Tom's arm as he limped off, giving no further heed to the mass of damaged engine, crumpled wood, bent steel guys, and torn canvas that had once been a powerful bombing plane.

Jack kept in readiness to meet any attack that might spring up, though they had reason to believe the Huns had temporarily withdrawn from the field of action.

"Your friend Harry Leroy dropped in to see me while I was laid up, Raymond," remarked the lieutenant, with a broad grin, as he saw how his words caused the color to flash into the bronzed cheeks of the other.

"Haven't seen Harry for some time," Tom replied, his eyes twinkling with pleasure; "but I heard of you through his sister. Nellie said you were the hardest patient she'd ever tackled, because you kept fretting to get out and be at work again."

"Yes, Miss Leroy was my nurse for a week, and I think I improved more under her care than at any other time. She's a fine girl, Raymond."

"Sure thing, Lieutenant. I ought to know," came the unabashed answer. "I've known Nellie for some time, and that was always my opinion. We're good friends all right."

"H'm! I guess you must be," chuckled the other. "I wish you could have seen her look when I mentioned that I knew you well, and liked you in the bargain. I kept talking Tom Raymond a full streak just to watch the blushes play over her face and the light shine in her eyes. Raymond, you're a lucky dog."

"Here's our plane, and we'll soon be able to get going with such a smooth bit of ground ahead," Tom hastened to remark, though it was easy to see that what the other said had thrilled him.

"All aboard!" sang out Jack, after a last quick look around. "No Huns in sight, as far as I can see."

The ascent was easily made, for, as Tom had said, they were favored with an unusually level stretch of ground beyond, over which the plane rolled decently until the pilot switched his lever and they started to soar. From some place close by an unseen enemy commenced to fire again, but without success.

Once fully on their way, the danger faded out of sight. Again they were spinning through space, with the earth fading below them.

"Back home, Tom?" called out Jack, and the pilot nodded an affirmative.

Swiftly they sped, and presently were dropping back to earth at the spot whence their outgoing flight had started. Here there were evidences of bustle, with planes coming and going all the while. Couriers could be seen on horses or motorcycles speeding away with important news to be sent from the nearest field telephone station in touch with division headquarters.

The landing was made without incident, though curious glances were cast in their direction. Many knew that Tom and his chum had made their ascent without a third passenger, and the presence of Lieutenant Beverly announced that some sort of tragedy of the air had occurred.

A number of other pilots swooped down upon them to learn the particulars.

As usual they were inclined to be jocular, and greeted the limping Beverly with a volley of questions, as well as remarks concerning that

"luck" of which he had talked.

"They can't get you, no matter how they try, Beverly," one called out.

"Another machine to the scrap-heap!" laughingly observed the most celebrated of Yankee aces, slapping Colin on the shoulder. "Makes an even dozen for you I understand. Planes may come and planes may go but you go on forever. Well, long may you wave, old

chap! Here's wishing you luck. So the boys picked you up, did they? Nice work, all right."

"Just in time, too," confessed Beverly, "because there were some Huns on the way to finish me that had to be chased off."

Tom had been noticing something which he thought a bit strange. It was a way Lieutenant Beverly had of looking at him curiously, as if deciding something in his mind which had suddenly gripped him.

"Is there anything else we can do for you, Lieutenant?" he finally asked, when they had left the bevy of pilots and mechanics behind and were heading toward their quarters; for Tom wished to see the other comfortable before he and Jack ascended once more.

"I don't believe there is—at present," the other slowly replied. "But this accidental meeting may develop into something worth while; that is, if you chaps would care to join me in a sensational flight."

At hearing these words Jack began to show a sudden interest.

"If you know anything about us, Lieutenant!" he exclaimed eagerly, "you ought to understand that we've always been willing to tackle any job coming our way."

"This one," continued the other gravely, "promises to be an unusually dangerous enterprise that if successful, will be sure to win the crew of the big bombing plane tremendous honors and perhaps rapid advancement."

"You're only exciting us more and more by saying that," said Tom. "Suppose you explain what it is, and then we could decide whether we'd want to join you or not."

"My sentiments exactly," added Jack.

Lieutenant Beverly looked from one face to the other. He seemed to be mentally weighing the chances of his ever being able to run across two more promising candidates for the honor of sharing his secret than the pair of ambitious lads then in touch with him. As though his decision was taken he suddenly exclaimed:

"It's a go, then! I'll let you into my little secret, which so far hasn't been shared by a single living man. Then later on you can decide if you care to accept the risk for the sake of the glory success would bring, as well as striking a blow for the flag we all love!"

