

The Supremacy of the Air

TELEGRAMS,
AEROPLANE, SALISBURY.
TELEPHONE
NETHERRAVON 12.



ROYAL FLYING CORPS,
NETHERRAVON,
WILTS.

The enclosed article was written specially for The Western Home Monthly by my nephew, Mr W. E. G. Murray, McGill Rhodes Scholar, Oxford, England. On the outbreak of the war Mr Murray, who was then a member of The King Edward Horse, was injured while on active service on the western front and invalided home. After recovery he joined the Highland Light Infantry and is now an aviation scout for this famous regiment. This letter may interest your readers.—Hugh Mackay, M.D., Winnipeg.]

Six months of the world war have firmly established the value of aircraft, not as a superfluous auxiliary but as an indispensable factor in any of the vast undertakings which constitute a so-called battle. It was not until the British Expeditionary Force had suffered considerably from the activities of German aeroplanes that it was induced to attempt seriously extensive operations in the new element. As a result of this determination, the balance has swung round until to-day the British Armies have secured a great moral superiority.

German aeroplanes were solely for the purpose of reconnaissance and artillery observation. Their pilots and observers were expressly forbidden to encounter hostile aircraft except where literally inevitable. From the beginning the Germans have handled their air fleet on the policy of conservation, trusting almost entirely to anti-aircraft artillery to conduct an offensive against enemy aeroplanes. Taking advantage of the situation thus created, the British aeroplanes adopted a policy of daring, and offered fight on any and every occasion. Failing to realise the moral side of the situation, the German authorities refused to alter their policy, and would not hear of aggressive tactics on the part of their machines.

The climax was reached about the beginning of the New Year. By that time, owing to the vigilance of the British machines, German aeroplanes were very rarely seen to ascend in the day time. They began to come out at night; but of course this was of no use for a hundred obvious reasons. One cannot reconnoitre in the dark, and the odds are 20-1 that one will not make a safe landing. Hence during January there was the remarkable situation of complete air supremacy for the British machines. The unfortunate effect of the successful aircraft activity of the enemy in the early stages of the war was now reversed, and there is a great deal more in this than might be gathered at first glance. Not only were the Germans cut off from a most valuable source of information, but their troops could not avoid an appreciable depression as a result therefrom. It is one of the experiences of this war that the moral of front line troops depends principally upon the activity of supporting artillery and friendly aircraft. Infantry will advance under a terrific fire and will hold on to the end if it thinks its own artillery and aeroplanes are doing better work than those of the enemy.

One of the lessons of the great retreat from Mons, was that constant worry by hostile aircraft was most demoralizing. After a hard day's march, when infantry is about to enjoy some well earned rest, the buzzing of a hostile aeroplane and the bursting of a few bombs is a serious matter from more points of view than from the actual material damage done. But, on the other hand, when a force is about to launch an offensive or a counter-attack, there are few things more encouraging than the sight of a number of friendly aeroplanes circling over the enemy's lines, signalling the effect of artillery fire, and blowing up the enemy's ammunition columns.

It is no exaggeration to state that it is just such a situation as the latter which exists at present at the front. So complete has been the triumph of the Royal

Flying Corps that it has ventured further afield and afforded valuable assistance to the French air service. The enemy seems to be about to change his air tactics, realizing at last that the supremacy of the air is a matter of cardinal importance and, indeed, of vital bearing on the future course of the world war. Nor is it by means of his Zeppelins or airships that he proposes to challenge our air supremacy. Even the Prussian now admits the complete myth of his Zeppelins. Only two are now on the western front and these are under such close observation that they dare not move from their powerfully armoured and guarded sheds. No, it is with armoured aeroplanes that the enemy propose to win back their air prestige. It is known that a huge fleet of these is now being constructed and that already about 250 machines are in readiness for their pilots and observers. They will have machine guns and powerful carbines and will be almost entirely devoted to air fighting. They will be a very important factor in the strategy of the hyper-offensive which the Germans are to launch on the western front about the end of March.

Hence, when the world war passes into its next phase, war in the air will become a terrible reality. No longer will it be a case of isolated combats; but there will develop squadron-encounters and a whole new branch of air manoeuvre and air tactics. The British Government is awake to all the possibilities of the situation and has acted with all the energy and effectiveness of the "K manner." Let it suffice to say, that steps are being taken to meet the new departure in enemy policy. The conflict will be deadly—the issue clear-cut—and on its outcome will depend much of the later strategy of the campaign. If the enemy overcomes his present inferiority by a gigantic effort, he will go a long way towards relaxing the iron grip of his present containment. If he loses, then he is out of the air for the rest of the war, and his capitulation will be appreciably nearer. As the war develops aircraft will be an increasingly dominating factor. Artillery becomes 500% more efficient under its direction. Intelligence is more reliable and more easily secured. Surprise on the part of the side that is "out" of the air becomes quite impossible. Those who are interested in the considerations of tactics and strategy will do well to follow the great battles of the air that are at hand. So far the Royal Flying Corps has as complete a mastery of its element as the Royal Navy has of the sea; nor will this mastery be easily won.

Lieut. W. E. G. Murray.

The Safest Rule

It is tempting to indulge ourselves in doing as we please,
In letting others do the work, and sitting at our ease,
To dream that fate will let us off from effort and from strife,
To take and keep, with selfish soul, all we can get in life,
To owe for every blessing, and never pay a pin—
But there's bound to be a reckoning when the bills come in.

The only safety for us lies in paying as we go,
'Tis a rule without exception, for God's world is ordered so,
We must meet each obligation, of no matter what amount,
We must give and strive and labor hard to clear up our account,
But it's worth the work it costs us, in the honest peace we win,
With no trembling for the moment when the bills come in!



Don't Be Without Cowan's

COWAN'S PERFECTION COCOA

Children particularly love the delicious flavor of Cowan's Perfection Cocoa, and its healthful purity and nourishing food-value make it the very best possible drink for them. For their lunch or at tea-time it is the very best thing to give them.



Quarter-pound
Half-pound &
one-pound tins

288

Undisputed Leadership

Made in Canada

Kellogg's CORN FLAKES

The Sweet Heart of the Corn