

A BOMBING EXPEDITION

By **Sous-Lieutenant Raoul Lufbery**

The "Ace" Aviator of the Lafayette Escadrille.

In January, 1916, I was pilot of a 140-h. p. Voisin aeroplane, which formed a part of the bombing escadrille No. 102.

One fine day, at about 1 p.m., we received orders to hold ourselves in readiness to depart on a bombing expedition. As is usual under the circumstances, our objective was not indicated. But judging by the amount of gasoline we were told to carry, and the direction of the wind, we concluded it was to be the Metz-Sablons station. Every available aeroplane was to participate in the raid. In all there were about forty machines, half of which belonged to my group, the balance to Group 101, under the command of the intrepid Commandant Roisin.

At the extreme end of the field the machines were drawn up in line, facing the wind. The mechanics gave a last look at their motors, the gunners tested their guns and laid in their stock of bombs. There were bombs of ten kilos each which, we were told, wrought as much havoc as the ordinary 155's. I took six; some of my comrades took eight, others nine, or even ten, the number varying according to the capacity of one's machine.

Waiting, In Readiness

We were all ready. We awaited our final orders. At length these came. Cards were distributed among us, indicating our itinerary. We regulated our watches according to that of our chief. Fifty minutes after the departure of the first aeroplane we were all to meet over Saint Nicholas du Port, at a maximum altitude of 2,000 meters. Then, according to the signals of our commandant, we were to go over the lines or return to the aviation camp. Defective grouping or bad weather might compel us to do the latter.

The throb of a motor sounded

Arsene Moreau

Dealer in

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at the left end of the line. An aeroplane rose, circled around for a few seconds, then climbed into the air. This was followed by a second, then a third. I was number seven. My turn was near. I turned to Sergeant Allard, my observer, and inquired if he was ready. On his reply in the affirmative I opened up my motor, circled around like my comrades, then began my ascent.

Signal to Depart

Before we started, Allard had told me that he would try to rest as I mounted, claiming that he would thus be better able to study the map on the other side of the lines. I saw no objection to his doing this as he could not help me to rise. As I mounted I turned several times to look at him. His eyes were closed. Was he really asleep, I wondered. Anyway, he did right to rest, for shortly he would need all his energy and sangfroid.

At 2.20 p.m. I was at my rendezvous with the majority of my comrades. Suddenly, from the signal aeroplane, distinguishable by the red pennons flying from its plane, I saw several rockets shoot out as a sign for us to depart.

Fired Upon By Shrapnel

As we passed the lines, the swifter machines executed several spirals in order to give the slower aeroplanes time to come up. When our group was complete, we continued to advance, here and there greeted by shrapnel. No one was affected by the fire. It was a matter of luck. For a shell fragment to be dangerous it must hit the pilot or a vital part of the machine. One or even several bullets through the canvas of the planes is of no importance.

I gazed at the landscape as it unfolded itself beneath me. To the right was the Seille River, barely recognizable at this time of the year. With its curves swollen by the rains, it looked like one long link of swamps. To the left lay the Moselle, with its canal, forming two narrow silvery lines, one of which extended to the north, where it lost itself in a veil of mist. That which, at a distance, I had taken for a dense fog, I found was the smoke from the factory chimneys of Metz.

Over Metz

As I drew nearer, I could distinguish, through the smoke, groups of houses, churches, long buildings covered with red tiles, probably

barracks, encircled by small, green, geometrically formed squares. These were the famous forts.

A few minutes later I found myself over the spacious station of Metz. This was our objective. The machine in front of me executed a semicircle in order to give the slower aeroplanes time to come up. Handicapped by my 140-h. p. I took no part in this maneuver, but flew straight to the point, where I was the first to arrive.

Our coming must have been announced, as several enemy machines came from every direction to meet us. One of them advanced toward me. Quickly, I turned my head to see if my observer was on his guard. His machine gun was pointed at the enemy, his finger on the trigger. At a distance of one hundred and fifty meters, the enemy machine made a brick movement to get beyond our range, turning to enable its gunner to fire at us. But this maneuver was useless, for the greater number of the biplane machines have two guns, one stationary, which fires from the front, the other mounted on a turret in the rear.

(Concluded next week)

Where They Stall the Asses May Be

The recent advent of a number of budding Haigs and Joffres in our midst is giving rise to numerous decidedly delicate situations. Indeed, the Officers' class, individually and collectively, might well take to heart, stick in the crowns of their respective caps, or take other suitable steps to remember, the tragic words "Méfiez-vous." "Taisez-vous." Les Oreilles ennemies vous écoutent."

Shudderingly do we picture the diabolical glee that would stir the black soul of Hindenburg could he have heard the following interchange of confidences that recently took place in the Officer's Mess.

Lieut. X— (who has already developed a decidedly abnormal and altogether creditable thirst for military lore, and who has been listening intently to a learned dissertation on the mysteries of mounting the guard:—

"Yes, yes; I understand all that, but where do they keep the horses before they are mounted?"

Bully for you N.C.O.'s, you came across fine didn't you? I.D.T.

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