

NEW BRITISH DESTROYER AEROPLANE IS DEADLY

Small, Quick-Climbing Machines, "The Fastest Thing in the World," Make Zeppelin Raids a Dangerous Pastime for the Enemy Now.

When the weather cleared yesterday evening, the enemy's aircraft, which displayed unwonted enterprise, were engaged in large numbers with most satisfactory results. Fighting was continuous until dusk, and at least four hostile machines were destroyed and many others driven down damaged and apparently out of control. Others were pursued to their aerodrome. We suffered no casualties.—Sir Douglas Haig's Report.

A new type of aeroplane now used by the British at the front has already accounted for twenty-seven Fokkers.—Lord Montagu.

By C. G. Grey, Editor of "The Aeroplane."

Lord Montagu's statement that one type of British aeroplane has recently destroyed 27 Fokkers in France, and General Haig's despatch chronicling the destruction of a number of German machines in the last few days without casualties to the Flying Corps, prove publicly the vast improvements which are taking place in the equipment of our aviators on active service.

There is no denying, even by the Germans, that the Royal Flying Corps has now definitely obtained the mastery of the enemy on the west front. An officer of my acquaintance who recently returned from France told me only a few days ago that although on the German side of the line the enemy's aircraft are more numerous than our own, and although their machines are of undeniably good quality, they can never be induced to put up a fight against the R. F. C. on anything like equal terms. The R. F. C. pilots cheerfully take on practically any odds, and we have already heard officially of one British officer taking down eleven German machines.

No Risks For Fun.

This cheerful state of affairs is due primarily to the high quality of the British pilots. This is nothing new, because even in the earliest days of the war any R. F. C. officer was prepared to attack German aviators in superior numbers or even on superior machines.

The quality of the British pilot arises from the very simple fact that of sportsmen, whereas the Germans have never shown any aptitude for sport of any kind which involved personal risk. It is not that the Germans are cowards, for any British pilot who has fought them bears witness to their staying power. It is just that the German has never been able to see the sense in taking risks for fun. Here and there an Immelman arises, but the average German is not of the Immelman class by a long way.

Even in the early days of flying the German excelled in long-distance flying and in feats of endurance, and not in the more sporting forms of fancy flying. It is natural therefore that as soon as the Flying Corps found itself equipped with the small, high-speed, fast-climbing, easily maneuvered types of aeroplanes now used as "destroyers" the British pilots should begin to give a good account of themselves.

These small fighting machines are a distinctly British product, first introduced by the Sopwith firm a year or so before the war, and from that first experiment they have been developed and fitted with more and more powerful engines, till today the British scout biplane is the fastest thing in the world except a projectile from a gun. It is worth noting that the fastest and most successful of these machines have been designed by men who are, or have been, themselves first class flyers, which only shows the wisdom of depending on the man who knows from his own experience, and of not relying too much on pure theory.

The German Fokker monoplane was a clumsy attempt to produce a fast

ALLIES' AIR SERVICE HAS DOMINANT SUPERIORITY

Germans Do Not Lack Courage, but are Less Daring than the French—Mastery Means that Casualties in Offensive Army are Reduced to a Minimum.

(By G. H. Perris.)

Half the art of this strange new form of warfare is to see without being seen. Much of it, of course, cannot be concealed. Both sides know well the lines of the other's front trenches. The chief supply roads, the old railways, the villages where battalions may be sheltered, and the headquarters of regiments, divisions of army corps may be housed, are exactly indicated on the large scale maps, and are, therefore, pretty constantly shelled. And an enemy who has been beaten back for five miles has the consolation of knowing still more exactly the best hiding-places in the ground he has lost, so that no ravine is narrow enough or deep enough for the woodland camp it contains to be quite safe, no wood dense enough to remain unsuspected.

Observation posts are unceasingly engaged in spotting the emplacements of the enemy's field batteries. No ingenuity of concealment can long cheat these watchers, whose maps, destroyer, and its success, to some limited extent, late in 1915, was due partly to a few picked German pilots and partly to the fact that the British destroyers had not then been produced in quantities.

The French on the other hand, with their usual acuteness, have been highly successful in producing small fast machines, and, of course, they have always been ahead of this country in the matter of engines. Consequently many of the R. F. C. successes have been achieved on French machines which we have been able to obtain, thanks to the loyalty of our allies. The natural result of combining the high quality of the British pilots with the fastest and handiest machines in the world is that the German aviators simply have not a chance when it comes to fighting in anything like equal numbers.

showing every gun they have found marked with a dot or number and their movements from day to day, are one of the wonders of the war.

German Pilots Mastered.

Perhaps the clearest and most important advantage the Allies have had in the Somme offensive is the dominant superiority of their air service. It was an essential part of the plan of the French General Staff that this advantage should be gained at the outset; for an enemy driven out of the sky is half blinded. When the big guns commenced their destructive cannonade in the German trenches, therefore, squadrons of aeroplanes were sent forward to bring down or drive back the enemy aviators and to destroy the "sausage" observation balloons. Both sorts of raid were carried out with the utmost daring and success.

Before the infantry advance began the familiar "darachen" had been either destroyed or hurriedly hauled down and the once formidable German pilots dared not show their noses over the French lines. In five days on the British and French fronts fifteen captive balloons were destroyed. Meanwhile, our other squadrons were ceaselessly engaged in their several tasks of bombardment or observation over the enemy's positions.

At an Aviation Park.

That such an important advantage should be seized is comprehensible. It is more difficult to understand how it has been maintained. I do not think our men would suggest that the Germans lack courage, though they are less daring than the French. Many of the best German aviators have been killed, others no doubt are kept on the Russian front, for the war of movement requires air scouts more urgently than the slow warfare of the West. Whatever the explanation may be, the fact is beyond doubt. At one point on the Somme plateau I counted twenty-three French "sausage" balloons, and only two that could be German, of which one was doubtful. French aeroplanes of all types came and went on their patrol duties with the freedom of pigeons over a farmyard, but if there was any combat in the air it did not take place over the French lines.

I visited one of their many aviation parks, and was deeply impressed by the immense progress that has been made during the war on every side of this enterprise under the stimulus of military necessity and individual skill and pluck. The technique of different types of plane and of their engines and machine-guns is beyond me. But the handsome, radiant face of the captain who explained to us some of the mysteries of his squadrons of "Baby Nieuports" spoke volumes. It was a picture of keen intelligence and physical fitness. As we stood by Guymer swept down from the clouds to our feet as easily as a Great Northern driver brings his engine into King's Cross or the middy his steam launch up to the landing at Cowes. He looked sorrowful, for it is bitterly cold at a height of two miles when you are running at a hundred miles an hour. But there is something of nervous strength in the almost girlish figure. A swift certitude of eye and hand that you would feel to be exceptional even if you knew nothing of his record. Aviation is essentially a young man's service.

The technique is no harder than that of the artillery, perhaps not so hard; but the highest intensity and most perfect balance of a youthful physique are more necessary than in any other arm. It is the light cavalry of modern warfare, and along with a chivalry all its own it is developing a whole series of special functions.

There are the individual scouts whose business it is to serve the field or heavy batteries, watching every shot and correcting the range by wireless or various kinds of signals. Other observers have the more general task of photographing the enemy's lines, so that the whereabouts of a new trench fieldwork or railway, new concentration of troops or guns, may be immediately known. Then there are what the French call "avions de chasse" and cannon-planes, who must seek out and attack enemy aeroplanes and balloons and forbid access to our own lines. Finally there are the squadrons of bombardment, whose raids into German territory have become more and more frequent and extensive of late.

Enemy Guns Handicapped.

The importance of the mastery the French have obtained in every one of these functions is evident. It means that the offensive army now twice as much as the defensive that the cost in life and limb inevitable to an attack upon modern fieldworks were reduced to a minimum, and that the whole depth of the French front was, and is, comparatively immune from effective bombardment. There is, perhaps, clearer index of the changing fortunes of the war.

Some able French writers have been warning their countrymen during the last few days that the Germans are bound soon to attempt a counter-offensive in the West even if it prove as costly as the ill-starred adventure against Verdun. With three-fifths of

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The German armies nalled down before our trenches, we must at least expect powerful local attacks. But, setting aside the root question of an exhausted reserves, I do not see how they can attempt anything like a large offensive without first winning back at least an equality in the air service. And of that there is no present prospect, at least in Picardy and Santerre.

A HOMESICK HERO.

Letters received from the boys at the front show that one of the complaints from which they suffer most frequently is homesickness, or, to put it in ordinary old-fashioned language, homesickness. Although they are glad to get papers, letters and books from home they often complain whimsically that these reminders of home invariably make them homesick. But books, papers and letters are not the only things that serve to remind them of the homeland and to stir their emotions. One of the many employees of the Canadian Ford Company recently wrote to a friend telling of how he had been wounded at the front. He said that he had managed to escape homesickness until he was carried to the ambulance that was to take him to the hospital at the rear. As he was being placed in it he saw that it was a Ford and instantly his mind went back to the happy days he had spent in the Canadian Ford works on the bank of the Detroit River. Homesickness swept over him like a flood, and according to his own account, his condition must have been about as pitiful as that of Private Ortheris in Kipling's story, "The Madness of Private Ortheris." Ortheris raved to be back on London Bridge and our homesick Canadian hero raved to get back to the Detroit River and to his friends in the Canadian Ford works. Here is a subject that some Canadian Kipling might work up into a little masterpiece.

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Harry—I wouldn't if I could get two pieces instead of one.

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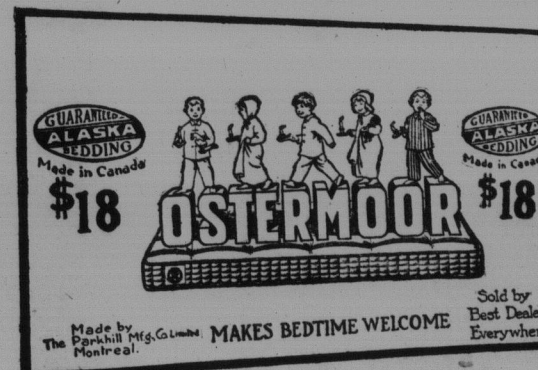
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