

Aircraft in the Great War

rifle, but failed to score a definite result ; whereupon the German, replying with his pistol, was lucky enough to place a shot in the petrol-tank of the monoplane, which caused it to abandon its pursuit and plane to the ground.

Many stories are available, most of them dramatic, as to the success that attends the use of machine-guns in an aerial duel. Quite a number bear features that are in common. One fight, however, which took place during the warfare of the Aisne, is worth describing. A Taube, scouting above the French troops, was met by one of the powerful French biplanes such as we have described. The German turned without offering to fight, and made off in the direction whence he had come. The French pilot went after him, his passenger using his machine-gun. But the monoplane was dead ahead and offered a difficult mark ; so none of the bullets took effect. Whereupon the French pilot, creeping a little nearer, dived suddenly. This carried him below the German and slightly to one side of him ; and the passenger in the French machine, firing upward at the bow of the monoplane, punctured the radiator of its water-cooled motor and forced the pilot to descend. The German pilot prolonged his glide, and landed at a point between the French and German lines. Then he, and the officer who had been flying with him as a passenger, sprang from their seats and made a rush to reach their own trenches. Unluckily for them, there was a body of French