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made cat's-meat of himself in the process. Meanwhile, the enemy was rapidly advancing, when at the sixth shot the 'plane went up in a cloud of splinters, scrap-iron and petrol. Just then No. 2 alighted alongside him, picked him up and flew off amid a shower of bullets and a perfect babel of unintelligible, and probably disgraceful language. It was No. 2 who got the V.C., and rightly so, because he ran a few separate and unpleasant risks. If he made a false landing, he might be made prisoner; if he deliberately smashed up his machine, he might have been shot; and to take a passenger on a single-seater was at least a dangerous proceeding. And, beyond all, he had a shrewd suspicion that he would make himself the set-piece of a 'Broek's-benefit' if No. 1's machine went up when he was just over it."

One of the heroes of the War was Lieutenant Harold Rosher, who died in an aeroplane smash at the age of twenty-two. In a vivid letter to his father, he described his experiences in one of the historic raids on Zeebrugge. His account of the event shows that the airman's life may any day provide the most wonderful of all adventures. The letter was written from Dover in 1915; it is well worth quoting in full, but a summary must suffice here.

"At 5.30 we were all up. I was one of the first off (in the dark). The weather was misty and cloudy, and very cold. Off Nieuport I was five miles out to sea, and four hundred feet up. Before I came abreast of it I saw flashes along the coast. A few seconds later, bang! bang! and the shrapnel burst a good deal short of me, but direction and height perfect. I turned out to sea and put another two miles between me and the coast. By now a regular cannonade was going on. All along the coast the guns were firing, nasty vicious flashes, and then a puff of smoke as the shrapnel burst. I steered a zig-zag course, and made steadily out to sea, climbing hard. The clouds now became very troublesome. Ostend was simply a mass of guns. After flying for three-quarters of an hour, I reached Zeebrugge. I had to come down to 5,500 feet because of the clouds. I streaked in through them, loosed my bombs, and then made off. I was hopelessly lost; I got clear, however, at 4,000 feet, heading straight out to sea and side-slipping, the earth appearing all sideways on. I then headed straight home and got back after one-and-a-half hours in the air."

In the Admiralty's official account of that raid, it is mentioned that "bombs were dropped on German mine-sweeping vessels at Zeebrugge, but the damage done is unknown." Nothing more!

These enterprises are not always successful, but they nearly always serve as material for alluring narratives. Here is the story, from the same pen, but much abbreviated, of a lively exploit that had an "unsatisfactory ending". Harold Rosher writes:

"Dinner was spoilt through a message from the Commander, which contained instructions for me to drop bombs on an airship shed at Gontrode, near Ghent. The moon rose soon after midnight, and at 1.30 a.m. I started off. When I arrived at the place there was a thick ground mist, and dawn was just breaking. I could not see the sheds at all, but two search-lights were going hard. I half circled round, when lo! and behold! I sighted a Zeppelin coming home over Zeebrugge. I turned off due east to avoid being seen, intending to wait until he came down and then catch him sitting. But my luck was out. One of the search-lights picked me up, and anti-aircraft guns immediately opened fire on me. Then a curious thing happened. The Zeppelin sighted me (I think the searchlights were signalling) and came for me. This was the tables turned with a vengeance, and the very last thing I ever dreamt of. It was a regular nightmare. I was only 6,000 feet up, and the Zepp., which was very fast, must have been 10,000. Without being able to get above it, I was, of course, helpless and entirely at the mercy of his maxim guns. I don't think I have been so disconcerted for a long time. We had "some" race! He tried to cut me off from Holland, but I got across his bows. He was a huge big thing, most imposing, and turned rapidly with the greatest of ease. I hung around, north of Ghent, climbing hard, and reached 8,500 feet, but the Zepp. wasn't having any. He wasn't coming down while I was there, and I, on the other hand, couldn't get up to him, as he had risen to some fabulous height. So, after a bit, I pushed off home, feeling very disconcerted at such an unsatisfactory ending. What else could I do? I wasn't going back, on the chance of spotting the sheds, with anti-aircraft guns waiting for me below and a Zepp. ready to pounce on me from above. I disposed of my bombs in the sea, and got back after three hours in the air; eventually got to bed at something after 6 a.m.

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