

"ARCHIBALD" A VERY BUSY FIELD PIECE

Britain's Anti-Aircraft Gun and Its Activities In Chasing Off the Prying German Birdmen

British Headquarters, France, July 20.—(Correspondence)—A crack and a whizz through the air! No sound is more familiar at the front where the artillery is never silent—the sound of a shell breaking from a gun muzzle and its shrill flight toward the enemy's line to pay the Germans back for some shell they have sent.

Only this whizz did not pass out over the landscape in a long parabola or toward the German lines. It went right up into the heavens at about the angle of a skyrocket—for it was Archibald who was on the job.

So high was it that it seemed almost stationary. But it was going somewhere between fifty and ninety miles an hour. It seemed to have all the heavens to itself, and to the British it was a sinister prying eye. It wanted to see if they were building any new trenches, if they were moving bodies of troops or of transport in some new direction and where their batteries were in hiding. That aviator three miles above the earth had many waiting guns at his command. A few signals from his wireless and they would let loose on the target he indicated.

Aeroplanes Always Thrill. Other features of life at the front may grow commonplace but never the work of the planes—these wings of the army's intelligence. In the hide and seek digging and dodging and countering of siege warfare the sight of a plane under shell fire never loses its thrill.

If the planes might fly as low as they pleased they might know all that was going on over the lines. They must keep up so high that through the aviator's glasses a man on the road is the size of a pin-head. To descend low is as certain death as to put your head over a parapet of a trench when the enemy's trench is only a hundred yards away. There are dead lines in the air no less than on the earth.

Archibald, the anti-air craft gun, sets the dead line. He watches over it as a cat watches a mouse. The trick of sneaking up under the cover of a non-day cloud and all the other man-bird tricks he knows. A couple of seconds after that

crack a tiny puff of smoke breaks about a hundred yards behind the Taube. A soft thistle blow against the blue it seems at that altitude; but it wouldn't if it were about your ears. Then it would sound like a bit of dynamite on an anvil struck by a hammer and you would hear the whizz of scores of bullets and fragments about your ears.

The smoking brass shell case is out of Archibald's steel throat and another shell case with its charge slipped in its place and started on its way before the first puff breaks. The aviator knows what is coming. He knows that one means many once he is in range.

"Archibald" A Fighter.

Archibald rushes the fighting; it is the business of the Taube to sidestep. The aviator can not hit back except through its allies, the German batteries, on the earth. They would take care of Archibald if they knew where he was but all that the aviator can see is mottled landscape. From his side Archibald flies no goal flags. He is one of the ten thousand tiny objects under the aviator's eye. Archibald's propensities are entirely peripatetic. He is the vagabond of the army lines. Locate him—and he is gone. His home is where night finds him and the day's duties take him. He is the only gun which keeps regular hours like a Christian gentleman. All the others—great and small, raucous voiced and shrill voiced—fire at any hour night or day. Aeroplanes do not go up at night; and no aeroplanes are up Archibald has no interest in the war. But he is on the alert at the first flush of dawn on the lookout for game with the avidity of a pointer dog; for the aviators are also up early.

Why he was named Archibald nobody knows, but if there were ten thousand anti-war craft guns in the British army everyone would be known as an Archibald. When the British Expeditionary Force went to France it had none. All the British could do was to bang away at Taubes with thousands of rounds of rifle bullets which might fall in their own lines and with the field guns.

It was pie in those days for the Taubes. It was easy to keep out of

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the range of both rifles and guns and observe well. If the Germans did not know the progress of the British retreat from on high it was their own fault. Now the business of firing at Taubes is left entirely to Archibald. When you see how hard it is for Archibald after all his practice to get a Taube you understand how foolish it was for the field guns to try to get one.

Has His Private Car.

Archibald who is quite the swiftest thing in the army, has his own private car built especially for him. While the cavalry horses back of the lines grow sleek from inaction the aeroplanes have taken their place. All the romance and risk of scouting are theirs. They get most of the fun there is in this kind of warfare. If a British aviator gets a day's leave he does not take a train or steamer. He rises from the aviation grounds about half past four and is at home in England for dinner and returns after lunch the next day. All the action the cavalry see is when they go into the trenches as infantry.

Such of the cavalry's former part as the planes do not play, Archibald plays. He keeps off the enemy's scouts. Do you see teamwork, spirit of corps and smartness in this theater of France where all the old glimmer of war is lacking. You will find it in the attendants of Archibald. They have pride, clan, alertness, pepper and all the other appetizers and condiments. They are as neat as a private yacht's crew and as lively as an infield of a major league team. The Archibaldians are naturally bound to think rather well of themselves.

Watch them there, every man knowing his part, as they send their shells after the Taube! There isn't enough waste motion among the lot to tip over the range-finder on the telescope or the score board or any of the other paraphernalia assisting the man who is looking through the sight in knowing where to aim next

as a screw answers softly to his touch.

Is the sport of war dead? Not for Archibald. Here you see your target which is so rare these days when British infantrymen have stormed and taken trenches without ever seeing a German—and the target is a bird, a man-bird. Puffs of smoke with bursting hearts of death are clustered around the Taube. They hang where they broke in the still air. One follows another in quick succession—for more than one Archibald is firing—before your entranced eye.

The Wary Birdmen.

You are staring like the crowd of a country fair at a parachute act. For the next puff may get him. Who knows this better than the aviator? He is likely an old hand at the game or, if he isn't, he has all the experience of other veterans to go by. His sense is the same as that of the escaped prisoner who runs from the fire of a guard in a zig-zag course and more than that, if a puff comes near on the right he turns on the left; if one comes near on the left he turns on the right; if one comes under he rises, over, he dips. This means that the next shell fired at the same point will be wide of the target.

Looking through the sight it seems easy to hit a plane. But here's the difficulty. It takes two seconds, say, for the shell to travel to the range of the plane. The gunner must wait for its burst before he can spot his shot. Ninety miles an hour is a mile and a half a minute. Divide that by forty and you have about a hundred yards the plane has traveled from the time the shell left the gun muzzle till it bursts. It becomes a matter of discounting the aviator's speed and guessing from experience which way he will turn next.

That ought to have got him—the burst was right under him. No! He rises. Surely that one got him anyway. The puff is right in front of the Taube partly hiding it from view. You see the plane tremble as if struck by a violent gust of wind.

"Close" Only Perhaps

"Close!" Within thirty of forty yards the telescope says. But at that range the naked eye is easily deceived about distances. Probably some of the bullets have cut his plane. But you must hit the man or machine in a vital spot in order to bring down your bird. A British aviator the other day had a piece of shrapnel jacket hit his coat, its force spent, and rolled into his lap. The explosion must be very close to count. It is amazing how much shell fire an aeroplane can stand. Aviators are accustomed to the whizz of shell fragments and bullets and to have their planes punctured and ripped. Though their engines are put out of commission, and frequently though wounded, they are able to volplane back to the cover of their own lines.

To make a proper story we ought to have brought down this particular bird. But it had the luck which most planes, British or German, have in escaping anti-air craft gun-fire. It had begun edging away after the first shot and soon was out of range.

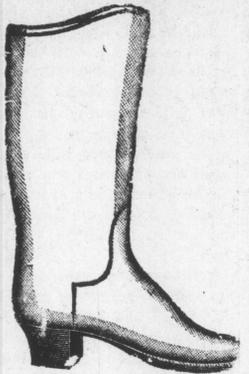
Archibald had served the purpose of his existence. He had sent the prying aerial eye home.

A fight between planes in the air, very rarely happens except in the imagination. Planes do not go up to fight other planes but for observation. Their business is to see and learn and bring home their news.

The other day in the communicating trench between the frontal and support trenches British shells were screaming over head into the German trenches and German shells were screaming over head into the British trenches. It was a pretty lively half an hour. Four or five thousand feet up were two British planes with a swarm of puffs from German shells around them. Two or three thousand feet higher was a German plane. They maintained their relative altitudes and kept on with their work each spotting the bursts of the shells fired by its side and correcting the gunners aim by wireless.

A poor captive Tommy named Bethune writes: "The Germans my temper don't swethune. It makes me see red When they give me 'war-bread'—It's the worst stuff that I've ever ethune."

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The Parrot's Interruption

A minister at a recent conference here told of an adventure with a parrot in the house of a lady who had invited the minister to visit her family as their guest. The minister, of course, led the usual household prayers, but in their course a parrot in the room became monotonously voluble. The hostess, much mortified, apologized for the bad behavior of her pet, but the minister assured her he had been so absorbed in the devotions that he had not noticed the bird at all.

But subsequently he was informed that the perturbation of the lady had been caused not so much by the parrot's talking as by the fact that he had been ejaculating all through the prayer, "Hot air! Hot air!"

Man, Poor Man.

"Do animals possess the sentiment of affection?" asked the teacher. "Yes, ma'am, almost always." "Correct," said the teacher. Turning to young Harold: "And now tell me what animal has the greatest natural fondness for man?" With but a slight pause the little fellow answered: "Woman."

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