

The HOUR by the CLOCK

WHEN Editor Thom of the Rondeau Gazette, some-

where in Alberta, got a postcard from his fellow-townsmen Capt. Clock, C.E.F., in Cologne saying: "I am O. K., and so are all the people here in hospital. Arm doing nicely. Expect to like Germany"—he knew it was camouflage. The words were crudely placed to suggest to his suspicious eye the vague outline of a biplane of which the signature was the propeller. No two letters were the same size or weight. They varied in alignment. Capitals jostled oddly with lower case. Commas and full stops at odd heights still further suggested that Captain Clock had tried to write the card with his broken arm.

But Thom could decipher Clock's camouflage. The idea had been mutually worked out in Thom's office before Clock went overseas. By the aid of a power-glass and a good deal of soft whistling, syllable by syllable, Thom extracted the puzzle, laid the words each in a score of ways like a man playing solitaire, and by two a.m. he had it triumphantly decoded to read:

"We are all schwein to the Huns. I have a hunch I shall never get out of here. But I want what I call my ideas about the Hun and the war to get out. Do what you like with them."

"Same old outlaw as ever," sighed the editor, winding his watch. "The Huns better watch that boy."

CLOCK was an engineer by profession, but went with the artillery. Having vowed that he would rather be left to die on the field than be taken prisoner, he had got what he expected. In the Cologne Hospital he studied German, took potato soup, rye bread and acorn coffee, with uncomplaining regularity, and kept the rules. He was in a new world. The country he was in stimulated him even more than France had done. The cocksure violence of the officers and surgeons sometimes amused him. Every one of them seemed to carry about the idea of Vorwärts mit Gott and Hoch der Kaiser! Between these two ideas none of them ever seemed to think it was a matter for suspicion when Clock wrote to his friend, editor of the Rondeau Gazette, such complimentary epistles about the Germans, except Hanslick, a big Prussian officer who made Clock his particular bete noir.

"Why do you write so slow?" asked this senior Boche in fair English. "So jagged and all? Tell me."

This was in the midst of Clock's writing. The Captain came to attention.

"Guess he thinks he's psychologizing me," muttered Clock.

"Vy—do you do so?"

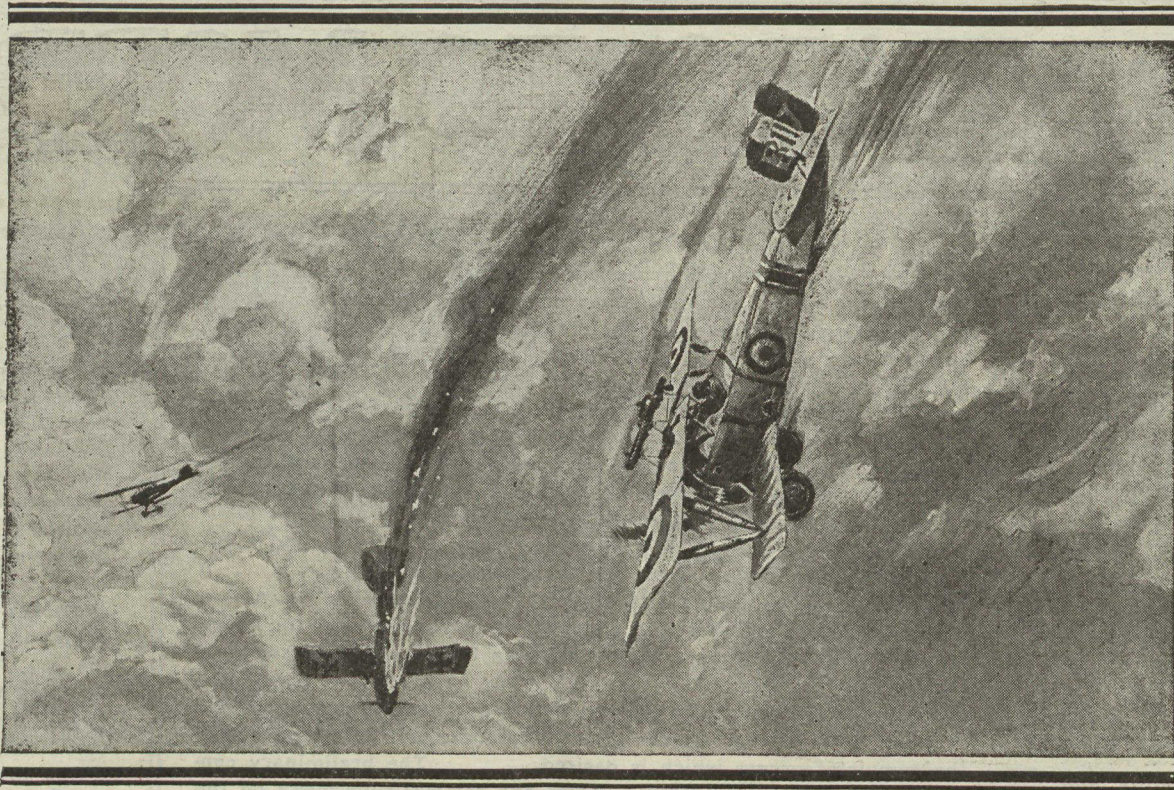
"Me? Oh, I'm left-handed. Left's temporarily defunct. See?"

"Democratic inefficiency!" snorted Hanslick. "I am—ambidextrous."

Clock was enough of a student of human nature, even when a youth at McGill University, to know that good politics is something like good poker. He had knocked about enough in the West to know that what goes on the football campus goes on the ranges; that the honest man

HOW a Camoufleur from Alberta, prisoner in Germany, saw the beginning of the war's end in Berlin

By ROLAND JENNER



Clock often dreamed about things like this, but he never saw this picture because the Illustrated London News never reached him in Germany.

who keeps a high percentage of his ideas to himself till the opportune moment has ten chance to get out of an emergency to one in the case of the man who sputters everything. Personally he had vigor enough, even with one arm lame, to have put big Hanslick the Prussian under the table. But that would have been the same as putting Capt. Clock under the sod—and his hour had not yet struck, so he believed. The big blond beast was uniformly insulting, because he believed the way

cyclone," he wrote. "It doesn't help me and doesn't hurt the Boche. I may as well can it."

Under his narrow-eyed scrutiny—a thousand times a day—the Hun was revealed to Clock bare of all camouflage. He saw into the thing that makes the Prussian. He found how different a Hun is from a Canadian. The big officer Hanslick despised him because he was a free-man. He hoped to see Clock writhe under imprisonment, as a democratic "schwein" from the prairies would be sure to do.

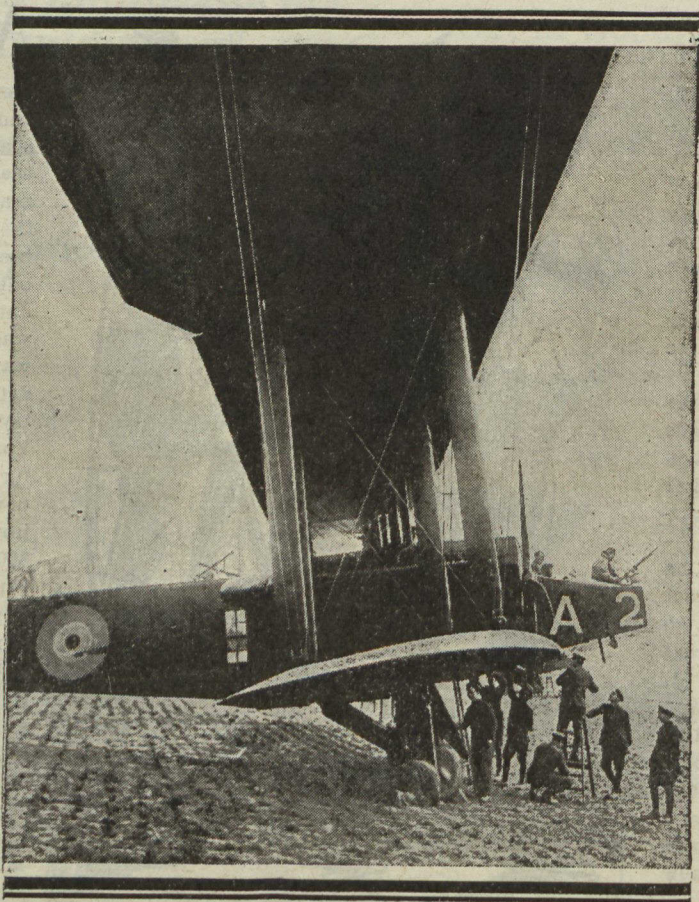
"Ja," said the Boche. "You are one of those bronchos from the foot-hills. You do not like a box-car and a throwing-rope. You galloped into your rotten little army not knowing that you were a broncho roystering into an iron cage with hell fire for breakfast. Eh! Democracy! Oh—kk!"

The Boche spit large and missed Clock's nose by an inch.

Whereupon Clock mentally put himself through the ecstasy of landing the Boche one on the point of the jaw. But he suddenly remembered that he was supposed to be left-handed. Besides which—he had something better to do.

II.

CLOCK kept his eye on Hanslick. He shut out all distractions of anybody else. This one Boche must symbolize all the rest, because he was turned out by the same factory in Berlin. One Boche is like unto another in essence as peas in a pod. And this Boche beast Hanslick was just so many removes from Hindenburg, but the same thing. He was cruel, coarse, sentimental and slobbering. Between the labels Vorwärts mit Gott and Hoch der Kaiser, Hans was a seething mass of undisciplined desires. He was a small volcano with the lid on; a transformer with the power turned on and off at the central station. High voltage passed through him because he was insulated. He was like the peasant girl depicted by Dostoevsky who said, "Everyone loves crime. They love it always, not at some moments. They all declare that they hate evil, but secretly they all love it." Hanslick did not love crime, because crime is determined



Knocking about Germany he saw the wreck of a Handley-Page like this, the great pre-Gotha British machine.

to make a man feel that he is your inferior is to insult him as much as possible. And he often glared at Clock by the minute, slowly caressing a pomaded ornamental moustache.

"The swine!" hissed Clock to himself. "I suppose he thinks this is cat and mouse?"

"You have had the pleasure of meeting me before, Herr Captain," said the senior Boche gutturally.

"Oh, have I? Can't recollect. Where?"

"In Montreal once. In Vancouver twice."

"Oh, what hotel were you waiting in?"

The Boche leaped to a position of call-the-guards.

"What the devil do you mean?"

"Oh, in what rotunda were you picking your teeth?" drawled the westerner. "All Germans look alike to me. I like 'em all. Oh, yes."

Inwardly Clock surmised that Hanslick had been a western spy. He kept the Hun under two spotlights. One was hate; the other pity.

"But my individual hate is only a fly's wing in a