

# The Trans-Atlantic Flight.

## A Summary of the Six Attempts.

(By J. R. SMALLWOOD, of The Evening Telegram Reporterial Staff.)

(Editor's Note.—Mr. Smallwood, in his capacity of reporter and staff correspondent on The Evening Telegram, has had the opportunity of interviewing the pilot of every aeroplane, seaplane and dirigible to arrive in Newfoundland, and is therefore qualified to write a general resume of the transatlantic flight, now an accomplished fact.)

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To give a long and comprehensive account of the various attempts at crossing the broad Atlantic by air that have been made from Newfoundland, I would require three times the space at my disposal, and it is doubtful if I could contain it in that. This will be clearly seen when I mention that since the Transatlantic flight, something like fifty thousand words on the six attempts. It would, therefore, fill about three complete issues of this magazine.

The first to arrive in Newfoundland for the purpose of selecting a suitable site from which the take-off could be made, was Major C. F. Morgan, representing the Martinsyde company to the London Lally Mall's competition. Major Morgan came on the s.s. Corsican, the same time that Lieutenant Ricketts, V.C., arrived. He had contracted Spanish influenza on the voyage across, and entered the Military Hospital upon arrival here. While in the hospital that I interviewed him for the purpose of obtaining the particulars of his firm's story. Up to then he had not had a chance to look for a spot. I suggested St. George's Field and Pleasantville, which he later chose. He remained a couple of weeks and then returned for England to bring back the machine. That was in February. He had scarcely gone when Capt. Morgan, representing the Sopwith Aviation Co.'s entry, accompanied by Capt. D. W. Mason, representing the C.C. Wakefield Co., which gave lubricating oil free to all machines, entered for the Daily Mail competition, arrived in the city. Lieutenant, of the Royal Air Force, came also for the purpose of providing meteorological data for the pilots of the different entries. Capt. Fenn selected Glenavoy Farm, Mt. Pearl, and the Horwood Lumber Co. erected a big shed in which the machine was to be housed when it arrived.

The aeroplane, which came by the s.s. Digby, had to be transferred, over the ice, off Placentia Bay, to the Port, which also took the pilot, Harry Hawker, and the navigator, Lieutenant Commander Mackenzie Grievie. The machine landed the machine and men at Placentia, whence they came to St. John's by train. Hawker and Grievie arrived in the city on a Sunday morning at three o'clock, being met by Capt. Fenn and myself. They were taken to the Cochrane house, which has been the very high temple of the local efforts at accomplishing the Transatlantic flight.

### MOVING THE MACHINE.

On the following Monday, the machine, which came packed in a great, round case, resembling, in shape, a freight car of the Reid Newfoundland Company, was removed from the

station to Mt. Pearl by a team of ten horses, owned by Mr. Charles Lester. The roads were in a bad condition, banks of snow remaining on the ground for some time after. The road was, in places, a foot deep in mud, and the great sloven sank to the hubs of the wheels.

The machine was a biplane, which means, of course, that it had two planes or wings. They were forty-six feet long, while the fuselage or main body measured twenty-five. She was fitted with a Rolls-Royce motor of 275 horse-power, and carried three hundred and fifty gallons of petrol. She was equipped with wireless, transmitting, receiving and directional. The transmitting instrument burned out before leaving, however, and was not carried in the flight. The pilot and navigator sat side by side, instead of tandem, as is usual in such machines. On the top or upper deck of the fuselage was carried a small life-boat, which could be released very quickly. The aviators both wore rubber life-saving suits, which were supposed to keep them afloat, in the eventuality of their being forced to alight, for at least three days. The boat was equipped, before the flight commenced, with necessary signalling apparatus, and food for three days. They also carried compressed food in their clothing. The machine's speed, still air, was 105 miles an hour.

### THE AVIATORS.

Both the aviators are men of long experience and service in matters aeronautical. Harry G. Hawker, born in Australia, came to England in the early days of flying, and learned from Mr. T. O. M. Sopwith, then a certificated pilot, the new science, eventually winning his certificate. When Sopwith went into the aircraft construction business, Hawker joined with him, and became, ultimately, the world's greatest test pilot. This work consisted of testing machines according as they were constructed, and was a very dangerous calling. Hawker was as fearless as he was competent, however, and he broke several British records in flying, among them being the altitude and duration achievements. He competed in The Daily Mail's circuit of Britain competition, getting around as far as Dublin. Here, unfortunately, his foot slipped from the rudder bar, and he was compelled to descend, thereby losing the \$10,000 prize. He was a small man, slightly built, wiry and possessing a splendid stamina. Hawker, who was a life-long abstainer from tobacco and alcohol, was a peculiarly reticent man, rarely opening his mouth, and then only to drop a dry remark. He was a capable man, with an uncanny knowledge of aerodynamics, brave, fearless, and a thoroughly energetic one. It has been observed, however,—and perhaps with some reason,—that his personality was a most unlovable one. He was twenty-eight years of age, and married.

Lieutenant-Commander Mackenzie Grievie, R.N., had a very interesting career in the British Navy, and during the war was in charge of the seaplane carrier Campania. He had not had a great deal of flying experience, nor did he possess a thorough knowledge of wireless work. It was his navigating ability that made him so valuable in the Transatlantic flight. Grievie, who was unmarried, was a tall, spare, broadshouldered Scotchman, with a nature quite the opposite from that of his companion in adventure. Of the two he was the most likeable and the most liked.

### A TIRESOME WAIT.

The Sopwith machine made her first flight this side of the Atlantic, on

April the 10th, having then been in the country for ten days. This was the first aircraft to fly in Newfoundland. It is needless to dilate on the excitement and interest caused by the graceful machine, as she soared over the city. The noise of the motor attracted attention to her, and the unusual sight of the streets of St. John's being black with crowds that gazed skywards was to be seen.

From her trial flight to the beginning of her fatal Transatlantic one followed a long and trying wait of forty-nine days. Meteorological conditions were unfavorable, and the flight was postponed week after week. Very trying days were these to Hawker and Grievie, for the long wait was a thousandfold harder than twice the same period of action. It was the successful arrival of the American seaplane at the Azores that caused them to set out on the non-stop flight, at a time when conditions were even more unfavorable than hitherto.

Meanwhile, the Martinsyde biplane, accompanied by Morgan, her navigator, and P. F. Raynham, the pilot, arrived in St. John's by the s.s. Schem. She berthed at the pier at twelve-thirty in the day and the removal of the plane was begun almost immediately. The Sopwith plane had made her successful trial flight just a day before, and Morgan and Raynham worked like trojans to get their machine transferred to Pleasantville, where a large canvas hangar, brought by them, was to contain the little biplane. The work of construction was rushed and the staff of mechanics, brought from England, drove things ahead, and the trial flight took place seven days after her arrival. Large crowds had congregated at Pleasantville, for news of her intended flight had been fairly well known. As the Sopwith machine had, she circled over the city for exactly half an hour and citizens had an excellent opportunity of viewing the pretty little plane in flight.

### THE RAYMOR.

The Martinsyde machine, named "Raymor"—a contraction of her crew's names, Raynham and Morgan—was smaller than the Sopwith. Her span (of the planes, that is,—) was forty-one feet. The total weight was 5000 pounds, and she was fitted with one Rolls-Royce motor of two hundred and eighty horse-power. She carried 360 gallons of petrol, and was supplied free with lubricating oil by the Wakefield Company, of London. Her crew of two wore the regular R. A. F. flying suits, and there was no feature of special interest at all connected with the machine.

Raynham, like Hawker, was a civilian flier, and had an almost equally long and interesting flying career. This was not his first time to compete with Hawker, and he hoped it would not be his last. Raynham was a tall, slight young man, rather reticent and disinclined to talking about either himself or machine. Morgan was his direct opposite. Open and free in disposition, he would discuss the machine, her chances, and anything connected with it, without the slightest hesitation, and even seemed to like doing so. He was trained in the Royal Naval Air Service. He had an interesting as well as exciting war service, winning the D.S.O., Mons Star, and C. de G. He lost a leg in air fighting, but had the great satisfaction of bringing down four German aeroplanes. Curious to relate, Morgan is a direct descendant of Sir Henry Morgan, the greatest buccaner of all times, and all his ancestors, as far back as he could trace, were nautical men.

Before Raynham and Morgan arrived in Newfoundland with their plane, Hawker and Grievie were inclined to depreciate their (the Martinsyde's) efforts, but after they had arrived this was soon dissipated and the rivals became good friends, visiting each others' ground. Eventually the newest machine was all ready and complete, and all that was wanting was suitable weather. The bad meteorological conditions had reduced the advantage that the Sopwith people had had over the Martinsyde by being on land long before them, and both teams were now on an equality, waiting for the very first chance to get away. Hawker was considerably worried over this fact, as his speed was about five miles an hour less than that of the Raymor, and unless he could get a few hours' start, it would seem as if his chance of winning the prize was not as good as it had at first been. Both

parties watched each other like cats, and not a move of one was lost on the other. To give an example of this watchfulness, I might tell that, while Hawker and Grievie were motoring out in the country one day, they got word that Raynham and Morgan were a start. Return was instantly made, but they were agreeably surprised to find the report to be slightly exaggerated. Their rivals were tuning up their engine, but not preparatory to a flight.

### THE AMERICANS' ARRIVAL.

Now, while both parties were watching and waiting, an event which threw them into consternation occurred—and in a most unexpected quarter. Up to this time none but British aviators had been associated with the flying of the Atlantic and it seemed as if the feat were to be accomplished by an Englishman. Then came the Americans to Trepassey. Here came a new factor into the game, for, as differing from the British attempts, the Yanks were placing their reliance on the seaplane, or flying boat. Seaplanes are very much the same as the land machines, except that the fuselage is so constructed that the machine can float on the water and thereby enable the plane to rise from or alight on water. Although the Americans' attempt was not made for the London Daily Mail prize, they were just as anxious to be the first to accomplish the great flight, and their preparations, begun many months before the actual attempt, were carried out on a magnificent scale, nothing being left to chance, nothing being overlooked. The proverbial American procreancy and thoroughness were here evidenced, and those of us who had the privilege of being at Trepassey and witnessing the events there enacted, did not doubt for a moment that their work was to end in success. The American Navy, Aviation Division, was the backer of the American attempt, and the entire resources of the American Navy were at the disposal of the men who were looking after the project. Up to this moment it had seemed as if the Yanks had been caught napping, but when they did get going they threw themselves into the thing and carried all before them. I speak, write and think enthusiastically of the Americans, for I had the opportunity of being on hand to see how they did things, and have been ever since, if not before, a staunch admirer of our great cousins to the South. No expense was spared, and the attempt, with its necessary phases, cost the American nation nearly two million dollars. They wanted to prove that the crossing of the Atlantic by air was practicable and their attempt was to be no mean stunt, but a scientific experiment. From a practical viewpoint, therefore, the American success in their stop flight was of more value than the non-stop flight of Alcock and Brown.

The first two American seaplanes arrived at Trepassey on Saturday afternoon, May 10th. Leaving Rockaway Beach, N.Y., the three of them, the One, Two and Four, flew toward Halifax, whence they came to Trepassey. The Four, commanded by A. C. Read, did not arrive at Halifax with the other two, being obliged to

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descend and had to be towed into Chatham. She had not arrived at Halifax up to the time the other two left, and the One and Three were at Trepassey five days before she eventually arrived there, on May 15th. After leaving Halifax, she was forced to descend and had to be towed back to have repairs effected. At 7.45 on Friday evening, May 16th, the three seaplanes took off at Trepassey, and set out on the flight to the Azores.

### THE ARRIVAL AT AZORES.

Only the N.C. 4 arrived without mishap. The N.C. One, running into fog, lost her direction and was compelled to descend. It was not until May 19th that she turned up, flying into Ponta Delgado, Azores, under her own power. She was unable to continue the flight and had therefore to be counted out. On May 27th at 6.19 a.m. the Four left Ponta Delgado for Lisbon, Portugal, arriving there at 4.02 p.m. the same day. On May 30th, at 1.20 a.m., she left Lisbon for Plymouth, England, arriving at 9.26 a.m. on May 31st. The total flying time of the N.C. Four, from the time she left Rockaway, N.Y., until she arrived in England, was 59 hours and 56 minutes. The total distance was 3,946 or nearly 4,000 miles—a long journey to be done in 59 hours. The American Navy co-operated with the N.C. fliers, and at intervals was posted along the route from Halifax to Trepassey, from Trepassey to the Azores, from the Azores to Lisbon, and from Lisbon to Plymouth. It was therefore considered that the flying boats would never be more than twenty-five miles from a cruiser and always within sight of at least two. The N.C.'s were giant machines, the wing span being 128 feet; the same as the Handley-Page biplane. Each was fitted with four motors, Liberty make, with two tractor and two pusher propellers. The crew of each consisted of two pilots, two mechanics, a navigator and a wireless expert, six in all. The cruising speed was sixty-five miles an hour. They were very handsome machines to look at, and a visit to and through them, which I had the pleasure of enjoying, was one that would never be forgotten. Commander Read was a tall, spare man, pleasant in demean-

our and easy to talk to. Those who met him were glad that he was the one of the three to accomplish the great flight. Trepassey was a busy spot while the Americans were preparing for their attempt, every cruiser that was posted along the route first coming into the harbor where it received full supplies. The people there, although at first deeply interested in the seaplanes, grew disinterested after a while, and eventually came to the place where they would hardly look out of the window to see them flying.

(To be Continued.)

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