

patrol machine too. Another wonderful and perhaps less foolish feat was done round here a month ago, when one of the little very fast scout machines flew at right angles across a road between the trees lining it, though there was barely room to pass. I saw the latter but not the former feat. Not far from here is the little scout aerodrome, and every afternoon the birds go up for practice, and to play around. Yesterday evening a small flight of 5 machines came home about 9 p.m. from patrolling the front line, and as soon as they came near home, instead of going quietly to bed in the hangars, they broke off from their formation and played for half an hour, side-slipping, back-looping, twirling, diving at infantry on the ground, and doing "stunts" which would thrill an audience if it was an exhibition. And then one by one they came down. It was just like schoolboys drilling, and breaking off to play. I have seen machines not only spiralling downward but horizontally, and even turning horizontally in their own axis "flopping" just like holding a pencil in the middle and twirling it. This last makes you hold your breath—especially when you—as a land lubber—have been for a flight—a plain sailing flight with few turns, and know what it feels like. Truly, airmen are supermen. Lately I have seen machines driven down in flames—it is an awe-inspiring and a terrible thing to see. They were all hunns. The hunn tried every flip and flop he could think of to get out of the nose-pointing enemy who followed his every movement with a like one or took special short cuts to get in the hail of machine gun bullets. You see the scouts carry one or two machine guns fixed on their machines, which must be headed right at an enemy before the guns can fire. And these air machine

guns are "tuned" up to terrible speed—even in some cases to 800 rounds (rate) per minute. By a very ingenious contrivance the bursts of fire are synchronised with the revolutions of the propellor, so a m. g. fires right through the blades without hitting them.

The crops around here are the best since 1914. It is a good thing that every available foot is under cultivation, and that the grain, especially the wheat, is a sight to gladden the hearts of any and all—because bread is at present scarce, and flour is rare. Meat is plentiful and vegetables.

The French have a wonderful country and there is apparently not much about farming that they don't know. On my walk yesterday I saw a wheat field of perhaps 15 acres in which most of the stalks were 6 ft. high and in the high part of the slope near the road it wasn't an inch below 4 ft. with fine large heads now swelling to the harvest. The clover crop is extremely heavy; two crops of alfalfa are taken off per year. No one, to my surprise, keeps bees. I think the knowledge of the soil is in the blood of these people; they are wonderful farmers. It is never failing delight to me to look at the fields; the very wheat is doing its bit for France. There never was such golden barley. The foliage of the oat plants is perhaps too heavy in proportion to the heads.

I have accepted an offer which has been hanging fire for nearly 2 months; namely the position of Brigade gas officer under the newly organized Gas Science. Gas is assuming such proportions in modern battles that it is of

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