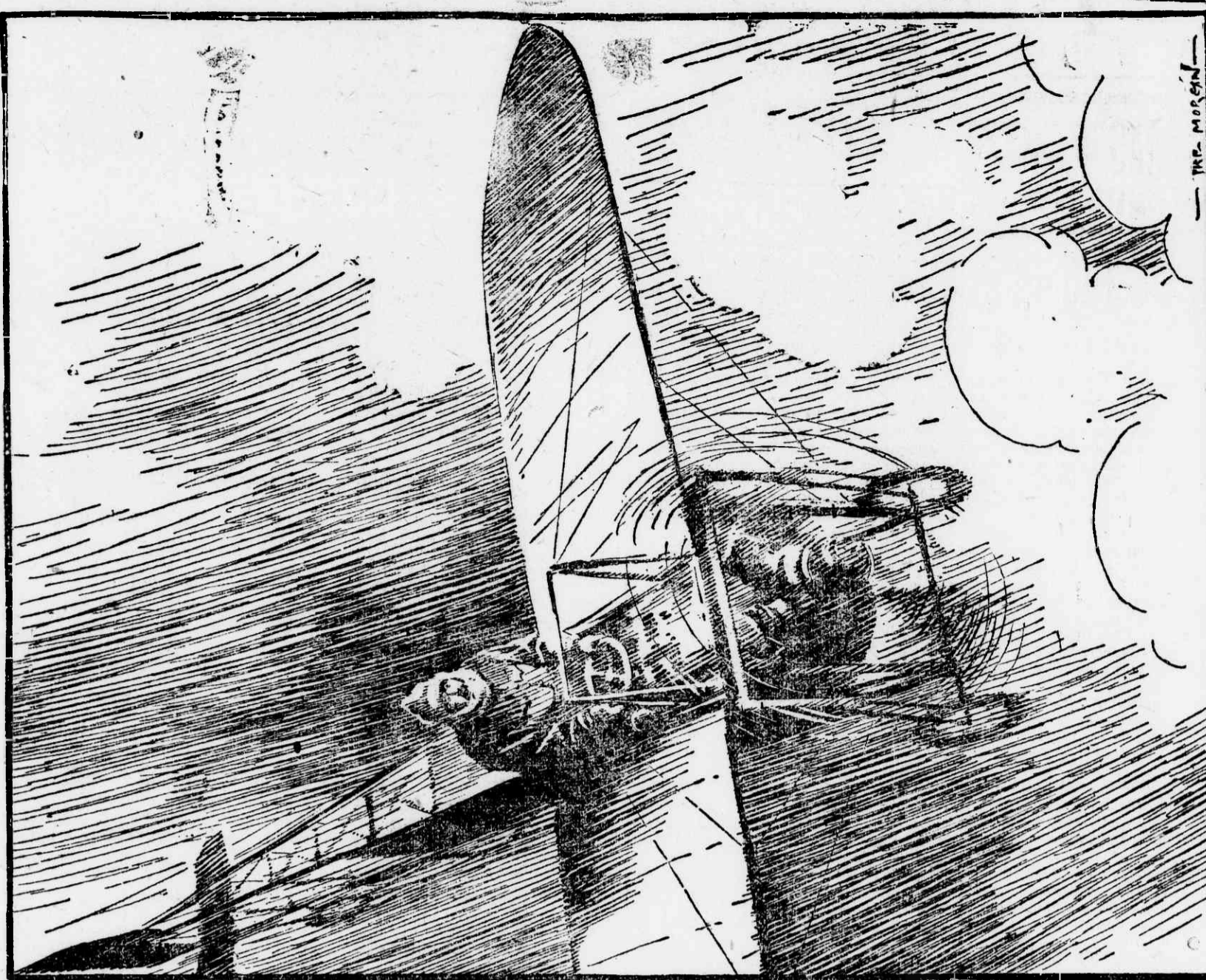




MY AEROPLANE ADVENTURES

BY J. ARMSTRONG DREXEL



touch 10,000. But I venture to say that Legagneux will wait a long time before he attempts this again. One descent from that height is likely to be experience enough to satisfy a man for a long time.

CLIMBING THE AIR STAIRS ABOVE THE CLOUDS.

I should like to have had him with me on my flight from Philadelphia for the altitude record—that fellow who said that it was "getting easier all the time." I venture to say that thereafter, when the papers record another altitude record in a few brief words, he would do as I do—shake his head and draw his breath in through his teeth at the realization of the ages of suffering that the aviator must have undergone during his hour and some minutes of flying.

That man should have seen the beautiful Bieriot as she swept gracefully off the ground with me that day at Point Breeze and as she flew without effort and with scarcely a tremor in the first wide preliminary circles as I mounted the first two thousand feet.

There didn't seem to be a bit of effort to it, I imagine. The machine must have looked like a great gull or a buzzard floating on the breeze, and I suppose I might have been sound asleep in her for all the spectators on the ground could have seen of motion or of effort on my part.

Then came the clouds and I worked my way through them, hoping that they would not be thick enough to last long, for above the clouds in the sunlight are the wickedest gusts, and it means fight—fight—fight all the time.

The hand of the aneroid barometer in front of me kept creeping round and round as I mounted; the first two thousand feet were tolled off quickly and then more and more slowly the indicator went as I entered the thinner strata of the upper air and began to struggle to pass the thousand marks. Three, four, five, six thousand I passed, each one taking an increasing length of time and requiring more of physical effort and mental and nervous strain.

Soon the hand of the aneroid began to caper back and forth: I knew I was mounting steadily, but the little instrument did not show it and finally flopped back near the starting point and stayed there. The aneroid had evidently gone higher than it was ever intended to go and now was completely out of commission.

A barograph—which is a recording barometer, encased in quite a fair sized wooden box with a glass front—had been tied about my neck and hung in front of me. Just far enough down for it to rest easily in my lap as I sat in my seat. I took one hand from the control and turned the face of the barograph up toward me. Through the glass front I could see the purple line that had traced my ascent. It seemed ages since I had started and the terrible cold was beginning to penetrate even the thick, fur-lined clothing that I had had made particularly for this flight. My hands were beginning to get numb and I felt that my ears would burst with the pressure inside my head, or, rather, with the lessening of the pressure outside. My nerves and my muscles, too, began to give warning that they had been pushed almost to the utmost, and I felt that I was near the end of my powers.

But one sight of the barograph made me grit my teeth and shove the nose of the Bieriot a good deal higher than wisdom warranted. Instead of being near the coveted 10,000 mark, I was barely passing the 8,000 line.

No words of mine can express the disappointment and the discouragement of that moment. I was almost "all in," yet I had still the two hardest stages of my journey to cover—the bitter fight of jumping and falling, jumping and falling during the final five hundred feet, and, last, but most awful of all, the horrors of that descent where the chances were one hundred to one against me in my pitifully weakened condition.

LAUGHING AT 10,000 FEET.

There was nothing for it, however, but to continue the flight upward. I set my teeth hard and again pulled the control toward me. There was a rattling sound behind me and I glanced back quickly, fearing that the tail of the Bieriot had come loose. But, before I had time to turn all the way, I mastered myself and forced myself to look straight ahead and not to think of such a possibility as the tail coming off. I knew that to give way to such fears would threaten panic with my overstrung nerves, and panic would be fatal.

So I doggedly fixed my mind upon the magic figures "10,000" and mounted again. Below me there was nothing but space. The filmy clouds formed a haze which completely shut the earth from my view and I seemed like an impudent little fly, buzzing around importantly in the vastness of infinity. The thought struck me as being rather droll, and I laughed aloud.

Then I remembered how a friend of mine had come to me at the hangar before I started and, with a quizzical expression on his face, as though he knew I was not serious, asked:

"Are you really going for altitude today?"

"Yes," I answered. My friend's quizzical look turned, I thought, to a smile of open disbelief as though he and I were sharing a secret from the waiting crowd.

"Do you think you have any chance of making it?" he asked.

"There's always a chance," I replied and jumped into the machine.

Since then I have thought over that short conversation a score of times and I have failed to find in it anything clever, or out of the ordinary, or even in the slightest amusing. Yet away seemingly to accentuate the very vastness and impressiveness only Legagneux and I, of all living men, can appreciate, with the motor buzzing and whirring and humming and spitting, seemingly to accentuate the very vastness of the solitude and make it more awe-inspiring than it is to the flying balloonist—away up there, passing close to the 9,000 foot mark, the two questions and their answers struck me as being the most droll things I had ever heard and I started to laugh and guffaw, loudly, boisterously, coarsely, like a drunken sailor in a low taproom.

The sound of my laughter had something uncanny in it and I suddenly awoke to a realization of the fact that I had been laughing in this way for fully ten minutes and that there was nothing to laugh at after all.

"Crazy," I thought, and as the thought flashed across my mind with all the horrible possibilities of a loss of mentality and mental balance nearly two miles above the earth—with the slightest mis-movement spelling awful death—I pulled myself together again and made a final desperate effort to cross the 10,000 mark.

It was impossible for me to know whether I had succeeded or not. The last few feet were such a bitter struggle up and down, up and down through the thin air, that I could not look at the barograph, and, indeed, could not see the line the one time I

did try for my eyes had become affected by the strain and everything was a blur to me.

Finally, utterly exhausted and numb both in body and mind, I gave up the struggle and turned the nose of the Bieriot toward the earth.

UNCONSCIOUS OF THE DROP TO EARTH.

I have no words to describe that descent. It would sound like the veriest drivel if I should try for only a man trained to repression of superlatives could give an idea of its horrors without making it seem like silly exaggeration.

Every reader has probably gone down fifteen or twenty floors in an express elevator. Do you remember how dizzy and sick at the stomach it made you?

My descent was made at the rate of a vertical mile in about two minutes while I was travelling horizontally at the rate of seventy or seventy-five miles and hour. In other words, my vertical speed downward was about four times as fast as that of the fastest elevator and I had the added strain of the tremendous horizontal momentum.

The effect of this rapid descent is almost paralyzing. Those who have traveled under the new Pennsylvania Railroad tunnels to New York have felt the effect of the pressure of air against the ear-drums. This is about one-tenth of the effect that is made upon the ears when descending in an aeroplane from a great height. In my case, in coming down from 9,897 feet at my tremendous rate of speed, my

ears felt that they would burst and the top of my head felt as though it would fly off at any moment. Added to this came the feeling of nausea, which grew and grew until my head swam and, just for one moment, I am sure, I lost consciousness. This occurred, I should say, at a height of between 7,000 and 8,000 feet.

Again I had to bring all my self control to my rescue, but my nervous energy was ebbing fast and I remember wondering how much longer I should be able to fight back the utter collapse that I knew was coming soon.

You must remember that all this was occurring when I had only an approximate idea of how high above the earth I was and when I had absolutely no idea of my geographical position.

After I had passed through the upper strata of clouds at a height of some 4,000 feet, I had not again seen the earth except for little drifting patches of indistinct drab as I flew over the shifts of vapor, and I did not know whether I was one mile or a hundred from Philadelphia. And now, I was descending so fast and so nearly helpless, both physically and mentally, that I could do nothing except keep the Bieriot on the proper slant to give the best descent with the least possible strain.

Into the clouds again I went, circling now, with some vague idea that I had managed somehow to keep over the Point Breeze field from which I had started. I knew that I should collapse utterly when I landed—supposing, of course, that I did finally land in safety—and I hoped that

would come down among my friends where I could be taken care of and where there would be none of the added strain and anxiety of explaining to strangers and getting into communication with those I had left.

ASTRAY IN SKYWARD.

By my first sight of the earth as I dropped from the lower fringes of the clouds I was doomed to disappointment. Not a single landmark that I had been told to look out for was to be seen. Instead, there were farm land and forest, ploughed fields and orchards and nowhere so much as a smooth meadow fit for me to alight upon without smashing up.

For the third time, I saw Death as it were, sitting grinning on the gasoline tank in front of me. My head swam and again, with that awful feeling of nausea, I seemed to lose consciousness for a fleeting moment, then the sight of a small field brought me back to my senses, and I circled again to come upon it from the best direction.

Fortunately for me, I made a perfect landing. It was, probably, the instinct that comes of long practice that kept me from smashing up on coming to the ground, for I know my brain was no longer working and my muscles were incapable of obeying a mental command.

I must have sat there helplessly in the machine for fully five minutes after I landed. I could not seem to get my brain into working order again and I simply sat there staring vacantly ahead of me and mumbling meaning-

less things to myself until I saw a woman coming toward me. Then I stretched myself, half rose, and sprayed rather than climbed down from my seat to the ground. But then I could not stand without help. When the woman came up, she found me leaning over the fuselage, my face buried in my folded arms and my whole appearance suggesting the man who has been utterly ruined and beaten in a life's ambition instead of a man who had just broken all existing world's records in his favorite branch of sport.

I found that I had landed in a tiny hamlet of not more than two dozen houses. They told me that it was named Orlean and that it was about fourteen miles northwest of my starting point in Philadelphia. Naturally, the news of the strange visitor from the skies spread about the surrounding country like wild fire and the neighborhood began flocking in all sorts of conveyances. But I wanted to get away from the crowd, so, making arrangements with the village constable to guard the Bieriot, I went with the woman who had first discovered me, to her home—the only house in the village that boasted a telephone—and from there I communicated to the officials at the aviation field the news of my landing. That evening they came for me in an automobile.

THE AFTER EFFECT.
For two or three days after that the thought of going again for altitude made the cold chills run up and down my back. My nerve was gone. Then

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National League Schedule 1911

	AT BOSTON	AT BROOKLYN	AT NEW YORK	AT PHILADELPHIA	AT PITTSBURG.	AT CINCINNATI	AT CHICAGO	AT ST. LOUIS	DATES ABROAD.
BOSTON.....	The News	April 20, 21, 22, 24 July 3, 4, 4, 5 Sept. 1, 2 Oct. 6	April 25, 26, 27, 28 July 28, 29, 30 Sept. 1, 2, 4 Oct. 7	April 29 May 1, 2, 3 July 23, 24, 26, 27 Oct. 2, 9, 12	June 14, 15, 16, 17 July 28, 29, 31 Aug. 1 Sept. 20, 21, 22	June 2, 3, 4, 5 Aug. 7, 8, 9 Sept. 27, 28, 30, Oct. 1	June 10, 11, 12, 13 July 24, 25, 26, 27 Sept. 23, 24, 25	June 6, 7, 8, 9 Aug. 2, 3, 5, 6 Sept. 16, 17, 18	14 Saturdays. 6 Sundays. July 4, at Brooklyn. Sept. 4, at New York. Oct. 12, at Phila.
BROOKLYN.....	April 12, 13, 14 May 26, 27, 29 Aug. 11, 12, 12, 14, 15	Costs	April 15, 17, 18, 19 May 30, 30, 31 Sept. 7, 8, 9 Oct. 12	May 4, 5, 6, 8 July 28, 29, 30 Sept. 1 Sept. 11, 12, 13	June 10, 12, 13, 19 July 24, 25, 26, 27 Sept. 23, 25, 26	June 15, 16, 17, 18 July 28, 29, 30, 31 Sept. 20, 21, Oct. 2	June 6, 7, 8, 9 Aug. 2, 3, 5, 6 Sept. 16, 17, 18	June 2, 3, 4, 5 Aug. 7, 8, 9 Sept. 27, 28, 30, Oct. 1	14 Saturdays. 6 Sundays. May 30, at New York. Oct. 12, at New York.
NEW YORK.....	May 4, 5, 6, 8 June 20, 21, 22 Sept. 11, 12, 13, 14	April 29 May 1, 2, 3 June 23, 24, 26, 27 Oct. 4, 5, 9	Only	April 26, 21, 22, 24 July 3, 4, 4, 5 Sept. 1, 2 Oct. 3	June 6, 7, 8, 9 Aug. 2, 3, 4, 5 Sept. 16, 18, Oct. 2	June 10, 11, 12, 13 July 24, 25, 26, 27 Sept. 23, 24, 25	June 2, 3, 4, 5 Aug. 7, 8, 9 Sept. 27, 28, 30, Oct. 1	June 15, 16, 17, 18 July 28, 29, 30, 31 Sept. 20, 21, 22	13 Saturdays. 6 Sundays. July 4, at Phila.
PHILADELPHIA.....	April 15, 17, 18 April 19, 19 May 30, 30, 31 Sept. 7, 8, 9	April 25, 26, 27, 28 June 20, 21, 22 Sept. 4, 4, 5 Oct. 7	April 12, 13, 14 May 26, 27, 29 Aug. 11, 12, 14, 15 Oct. 6	12 Cents	June 2, 3, 5 Aug. 7, 8, 9, 10 Sept. 27, 28, 29, 30	June 6, 7, 8, 9 Aug. 2, 3, 5, 6 Sept. 16, 17, 18	June 15, 16, 17, 18 July 28, 29, 30, 31 Sept. 20, 21, 22	June 10, 11, 12, 13 July 24, 25, 26, 27 Sept. 23, 24, 25	13 Saturdays. 6 Sundays. April 19, at Boston. May 30, at Boston. Sept. 4, at Brooklyn.
PITTSBURG.....	May 13, 15, 16, 17 July 20, 21, 22, 22 Aug. 28, 29, 30	May 23, 24, 25 July 6, 7, 8, 10 Aug. 16, 17, 18, 19	Aug. 24, 25, 26 July 11, 12, 13, 14 May 18, 19, 20, 22	May 9, 10, 11, 12 July 15, 17, 18, 19 Aug. 21, 22, 23	a Week	April 12, 13, 14, 15, 23 May 7, 28 Aug. 11, 12, 13 Sept. 3	April 16, 17, 18, 30 June 29, 30, July 1, 2 Oct. 7, 8, 9	April 24, 25, 26 June 29, 30, July 1, 2 Sept. 7, 8, 9, 10	12 Saturdays. 11 Sundays. Oct. 9, at Chicago.
CINCINNATI.....	May 9, 10, 11, 12 July 6, 7, 8, 10 Aug. 21, 22, 23	May 18, 19, 20, 22 July 20, 21, 22 Aug. 28, 29, 30, 31	May 23, 24, 25 July 15, 17, 18, 19 Aug. 16, 17, 18, 19	May 13, 15, 16, 17 July 11, 12, 13, 14 Aug. 24, 25, 26	April 20, 21, 22 May 26, 27 June 26, 27, 28 Sept. 4, 4, 5	April 24, 25, 26, 27 June 29, 30, July 1 Sept. 2, 11, 12 Oct. 12	May 3, 4, 5, 6 July 2, 4, 4 Sept. 7, 8, 9, 10	April 28, 29, 30, May 1 May 29, 30, 30, 31 June 1 Sept. 14, 15	12 Saturdays. 3 Sundays. May 30, at St. Louis. July 4, at Chicago. Sept. 4, at Pittsburg.
CHICAGO.....	May 23, 24, 25 July 15, 17, 18, 19 Aug. 16, 17, 18, 19	May 13, 15, 16, 17 July 11, 12, 13, 14 Aug. 24, 25, 26	May 9, 10, 11, 12 July 6, 7, 8, 10 Aug. 21, 22, 23	May 18, 19, 20, 22 July 20, 21, 22 Aug. 28, 29, 30, 31	April 28, 29, May 1, 2 May 30, 30, 31 June 23, 24 Sept. 14, 15	April 24, 25, 26, 27 June 29, 30, July 1 Sept. 2, 11, 12 Oct. 12	You Get	April 20, 21, 23 May 27, 28 June 27, 28 Oct. 2, 3, 4	Oct. 12, at Cincinnati. May 30, at Pittsburg. 2 Sundays. 13 Saturdays.
ST. LOUIS.....	May 18, 19, 20, 22 July 11, 12, 13, 14 Aug. 21, 22, 23	May 9, 10, 11, 12 July 15, 17, 18, 19 Aug. 21, 22, 23	May 13, 15, 16, 17 July 20, 21, 22 Aug. 28, 29, 30, 31	May 23, 24, 25 July 6, 7, 8, 10 Aug. 16, 17, 18, 19	May 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 July 4, 4, 5 Aug. 14, Sept. 2 Oct. 12	April 16, 17, 18, 19 July 2, 22, 24, 25 July 23 Oct. 7, 8	April 12, 13, 14, 15 May 7 Aug. 11, 12, 13 Sept. 3, 4, 4	all the	13 Saturdays. 7 Sundays. July 4, at Pittsburg. Sept. 4, at Chicago. Oct. 12, at Pittsburg.
DATES AT HOME.	April 19, with Phila. Saturdays, Sundays, and Holidays. May 30, with Phila. 12 Saturdays.	July 4, with Boston. Sept. 4, with Phila. 12 Saturdays.	13 Saturdays. May 30, with Brooklyn. Sept. 4, with Boston. Oct. 12, with Brooklyn.	July 4, with New York. 13 Saturdays. Oct. 12, with Boston.	14 Saturdays. May 30, with Chicago. July 4, with St. Louis. Sept. 4, with Cincinnati. Oct. 12, with St. Louis.	14 Saturdays. July 4, with Cincinnati. Oct. 12, with Chicago.	13 Saturdays. 17 Sundays. July 4, with Cincinnati. Sept. 4, with St. Louis. Oct. 9, with Pittsburg.	13 Saturdays. May 30, with Cincinnati.	News

Conflicts—Nine at Chicago—April 30, May 7, June 25, July 2, August 13, Sept 3 and 10, Oct. 7 and 8.