

# MY AEROPLANE ADVENTURES

BY J. Armstrong Drexel.

## IV.—Fighting Fear in Cloudland.

Few aviators will admit that they have any fear in flying. Yet I venture to assert that there isn't a man using an aeroplane today who does not feel a certain sensation, either just before he mounts his seat or shortly afterward or many times after he gets well into the air. They will not admit it to any one, because they try not to admit it to themselves; but the fear is there constantly and it often comes to the surface in spite of everything that the aviator can do to repress it or to crowd it out by thinking of something else.

I know men who stoutly declare that they have never yet felt the slightest nervousness when flying, but I am sure in saying that I do not believe them. Not that they deliberately lie to me, but rather, that they lie to themselves and persuade themselves that there is really no reason to deny their fear so far as I can see. We are all of us taking grim, long chances, and we know it. We are going into an element that was never made for us to travel, and we are fighting the stronger forces in Nature—fighting them with a flimsy machine, only half developed, made of materials that are still in the experimental stage, and depending for our support upon a form of power plant that is so little perfect that it is undependable even when handled under the most ideal conditions and attended by experts. Why shouldn't we find ourselves seized by fear sometimes? And why shouldn't we admit it?

The late Ralph Johnstone exhibited a fear that any man I have ever known, yet he admitted to me that he frequently found himself on the verge of panic while performing some of his more dangerous evolutions. He howled like the type of man who kept a tight control of himself and he allowed this feeling the upper hand. He unconsciously illustrated this power of control when shortly before his unfortunate end, he told me one of the plans he had of turning a back somersault in the air.

Johnstone was a perfectly serious man. He admitted that he was afraid of it, but that he was determined he would do it.

Captain Thomas S. Baldwin is probably a seasoned veteran of air perils as alive today. For many years he has been about the world ballooning and parachute jumping and then he took to the aeroplane. No one in watching him would think that he knew the meaning of the word fear. Yet a friend of mine once asked him if he ever felt nervous and he replied:

"I started to death every time I take a jump. Some days my machines shake and shove me on to the machine. Then when I get her started, I am all right and the fear vanishes. But I am a baby until I hear the motor going."

Different forms of fear.

I believe, too, that each one of us has his own peculiar form of fear in flying.

Some men feel their greatest fear in the thought of the engine stopping suddenly and without warning. I have been troubled by this, though I have had it happen to me several times. Each time, however, I managed to get down safely and I have always felt that there was a good chance of the aviator if he keeps his wits and takes as gradual a slant as possible as is needed to give him control of his machine. But from my own days, I have learned to have the back of gliding right and it has never worried me much.

I know several men, though, who have never got over their nervousness at the thought of vomiting, as they have been coming down without power. They know how to do it and do actual perform it successfully when they have found it necessary, but it has been a constant terror for them and it has the slightest sound in the engine that hints of trouble puts them in the same panic that the thought of the fall of my aeroplane puts me when I am out for altitude records.

With such work as altitude flying, which I have made a specialty, there is all too much time for the nerves to get on edge and, unfortunately, the slightest conditions, the more the strain begins to tell on the nerves, and it is only by a sharp pulling together of all the aviator's self-control and will power that he is saved at times from complete and fatal panic.

As a man mounts higher and higher into the air, the familiar objects of earth fade from his sight and he begins to miss them, for they were something that belonged to him and to his world and they kept his mind occupied. Now, however, he becomes overpowered with a sense of being absolutely alone—of being cast adrift and dependent entirely upon his own resources and upon a power plant which he knows may fail him at any moment.

Then up and he climbs and soon he enters the region of the clouds. Here the sense of loneliness becomes intensified with the feeling of the utter emptiness of everything; he sees nothing above him below him, on either side of him. He seems to be whizzing through an immense void with neither wheels nor top nor bottom, and the reality of it all and the immensity of it oppress him and the nerves begin to tremble. These little tremors that tell of approaching fear.

Then above the clouds he bursts, into the glaring brilliant sunlight and the warmth that seems hot after the coolness of the haze, and here again he meets conditions that increase the nerve tremors.

Sudden gusts of wind catch him. They are quick and dangerous just

above the clouds on a sunny day and they give no warning of their approach. It means, every faculty on edge to prepare for all kinds of contingencies and the strain begins to tell. It has not yet, perhaps, grown to the proportions of absolute fear, but one can feel it coming and one knows, too, that the most trifling loss of self control or mental balance will mean the immediate toppling over of the entire nervous structure. So one grits one's teeth and sits tight and looks to the whirling propeller or aneroid barometer or anything to take one's mind off the loneliness and the vastness and his own impudence in coming up so high into a region in which he has no rights.

When Fear Laughs at You.

Up near the top of the climb is where the fear begins to get you. You may have managed to master yourself until then, but the tension has been increasing cumulatively and when the last few mad minutes of plunging and rising, plunging and rising, begin, fear seems to laugh at you for trying to keep it away from you.

Now the nerves are gone. They jump and strain, and you fancy you hear and see things, and then your fears concentrate on a noise behind you and suddenly you realize that you are gone—the tail has come loose! It is rattling on its broken wires now, and at the next plunge it will be wrenched off completely and leave you helpless in the one awful drop down to the earth that is lurking under the clouds thousands of feet below you.

You look around in sudden panic, knowing that it will do no good, yet instinctively searching to see if there is anything you can do. You look long, so you take a quick glance over your shoulder—and find the tail in first-class shape, holding the machine to her work and looking strong enough to balance a machine with two men over size.

Completely reassured, your turn again to your climbing. Your nerves are terribly shaken by this few moments of panic, but you make up your mind that it shall not occur again, and you grit your teeth and shove her nose upward once more.

And then, suddenly, it begins all over again. You hear that horrible rattle in the tail—this time there can be no mistake. The tail come loose and you are about to plunge down to destruction. Again you look around in panic—and again you find all safe and sound.

The effect of such constantly recurring panics can easily be imagined. Only a few minutes of such strain are needed to shatter the strongest nerves and once the nerves are gone, a man imagines all sorts of silly but terribly real things, and the agony becomes intense.

In reality, though it would not seem so from the telling, this and other sorts of fear that come to one while he is aloft are usually so quick that they pass in a flash and the danger is over almost before the aviator can realize it. It keeps him busy; every nerve and every faculty is worked to its utmost to overcome the danger and there is only a lightning-like passing sensation of awful horror. He does not really have time to know how scared he is until he comes down to earth, and then he lives that awful moment a thousand times in his waking and sleeping moments afterward. So it happens that fear most frequently comes to the aviator after he has reached the ground and has time to think of what he has gone through several thousand feet up in the air.

A Flight of Torture.

But once in a while we do get caught under circumstances that make flying a long continued torture, and one of these times that I shall never forget occurred to me during the meet at Lanark, Scotland, a day or two before I made the world's altitude record.

I had started up, without any purpose other than of giving an exhibition flight. As everything was working beautifully and my motor was singing that regular humming song that gives the aviator such a sense of security and power, I rose gradually in big circles and was, as I should say, 2,500 or 3,000 feet high when suddenly I heard above the sound of the engine an unusual and most disagreeable flapping sound at my left.

Glancing along the front of the plane on that side, I was horrified to see that something was loose and was being torn this way and that by the pressure of the air, through which I was going at a rate of about sixty miles an hour. This flapping something vibrated far too fast for me to see what it was, but as I tried to cast about in my mind what the possibilities there was suddenly overwhelmed with the stupefying realization that the only thing it could be was a piece of the fabric with which the framework of the rib was covered and which gives the supporting surface of an aeroplane. To the layman the full import of such a realization cannot be understood in its full force. Briefly, it meant that the cloth which alone held me in the air had begun to rip on that side, and I knew that at the tremendous speed at which I was going it would take only one good grip of the wind under a small opening to tear the entire fabric from front to rear, whip it off the frame and leave me absolutely unsupported on that side, to go crashing below, helpless to avert the disaster and certain of meeting the inevitable end that since has overtaken other aviators from much the same cause.

All this flashed across my mind in an instant, but there came with it the certain instinct not to let panic get the better of me and to keep perfectly calm to the bitter end so as to take advantage of any chances that might offer.

I was too high for a quick descent and my machine's tail was toward the aviation field at the time I made the discovery. There were no good landing places ahead so far as I could see in the hurried glance I took of the earth beneath me, so I made up my mind to



THE AVIATOR'S VIEW OF THE WORLD FROM HIS COCKPIT.

turn about and try to get back to the aviation field.

I came down in as easy curves as I could because I did not want to put any extra strain on the torn fabric, knowing full well that a slight rip of that kind is very easily torn apart. As I came lower and lower, I kept my eye glued on that vibrating piece of cloth, fascinated, held spellbound by the problem of whether it would continue to vibrate without tearing until I got down another one hundred feet or so to comparative safety, or whether it was merely waiting until the last moment to give a final shrieking rip as though in a fiendish desire to tantalize me with false hope as long as possible.

I know that cold sweat stood out all over my body, and it was only by instinct that I worked the controls of my machine, for my entire mind was focussed on that little flapping shred and all my thoughts revolved about that one question of whether it would hold long enough to let me get a little closer and have a chance for safety in the fall if the rip did come.

As I looked back on it, I believe I never even noticed the jolting of the wheels when at last I touched the ground. Dumbly and by instinct again I had shut off the power on landing, bringing the machine to a full stop. I sat in my seat as my mechanics came running up, and with my eyes still glued fascinated to the spot where I had seen the flapping cloth, I waited for them. The shred had dropped forward and underneath the plane, now that the pressure of the wind had ceased, and when one of my men came near I shouted to him to go over there and see what was hanging to the plane. He walked over and looked up and said:

"I do not see anything."

"Isn't there a shred of the cloth hanging there?" I asked.

He ducked under the plane and soon came up holding in his hand a little piece of string four or five inches long.

"It was just a piece of cloth," he said. "I wasn't a bit of string that got caught in a bolt here."

Do not get the idea from what I have said that an aviator is more or less constantly engaged in fighting fear when he is in flight. As a rule, a man in an aeroplane is far too busy to think much of fear, especially when he is taking part in some meet; his mind is too fully occupied to allow room for any sensation except the exhilaration that comes with any form of sharp competition.

In almost all public exhibitions, there is a regular program to be followed out. This requires certain events each day and these events are governed by certain rules. There are pylons, or turning posts, to be rounded, grandstands and enclosures to be avoided, outlines of ships to drop bombs upon, circles and squares to land in for accuracy and all such details that keep a man's mind fully occupied. The earth is near and flashes by at the rate of a mile a minute and, more than likely, there are other machines in the air at the same time and the rules of the "road" must be followed or there will be disqualification, if not total smash up for any sensation except the exhilaration that comes with any form of sharp competition.

the rules to think much about the danger he is in; yet, oddly enough, it is this very competitive form of flying that he is in some peril. In working by himself he is least in danger, yet he is likely to be more in fear, for he has more time to think of his peril and not so much to occupy his mind and so quiet his nerves. Thus it is that in altitude flying, as I have said, there is altogether too much time for silly fears to rise up and torment the lone figure fighting up—up thousands of feet above his fellow creatures—after a bubble that we call a record.

Panic From Nothing To Do.

Before I had gone very far into aeroplaning I had an experience in the air which illustrates the point that the many things a man has to do while flying and think about for safety's sake, as a rule operate to keep his mind away from fear.

I had been well up in my Blériot several times and had felt very little nervousness, when a friend in England invited me to accompany him and a party of guests on a balloon trip. I gladly assented, because I wanted to experience some of the calm joys that I had heard made the use of the aerostat so delightful.

We started on an ideal day. The balloon was inflated, the basket attached, we mounted, balanced and were cast off—all without the slightest hitch. As the ground sank away beneath me, I tried to feel some of the thrills that I had felt in my good Blériot. But they did not come. There was no merry humming of the motor, no stinging rush of the wind, no sense of great power overcoming nature, nothing to do to bring the personal equation into play and to give me the idea that I was doing some of the work and that skill and courage were necessary to success.

I looked over the side of the basket at the little earth away below. I looked at my friends, but they were paying no attention to me. There was not a breath of air, not the slightest hint of motion or power; we were merely drifting and to me, used to the deafening bark of my motor and the shriek of the futile wind, it seemed that we were only hung suspended by a tiny thread and that all of us were on edge, waiting for the thread to snap and the whole outfit to go crashing below to the far distant earth and to destruction.

I could not get out of my mind this sense of suspended fate—of helplessness waiting for something awful to happen. I had never experienced it in my Blériot. There, all was action; muscles, mind, nerves were constantly occupied with the glorious battle, with gravitation, and every moment carried its exhilarating impression of personal triumph and inspiring victory.

So we drifted upward and onward, inert, silent, helpless. I found myself looking at the ropes that suspended the car; they were all too thin and weak, it seemed to me, for the weight of such a party. I glanced up at the toggles where the car ropes joined the concentrating ring; certainly it would take but little to snap off these tooth-pick little pieces of wood. I looked at the concentrating ring itself; it seemed a flimsy affair to hold the lives of so many of us. And then, up to the netting over the bag my eyes wandered;

a meager little knotting-together or rotten looking strings, and of which I thought I could snap with my fingers as a grocery man snaps the twine attached to his wrapped a bundle.

I felt my nerves going fast. I wanted to do something to prevent the impending calamity. It seemed foolhardy to stand there calmly with the air of a cheerful martyr while we waited for the most horrible of deaths. I felt the need of fighting something, of working levers, of directing the thing, or doing something or other that would give me a chance—but we drifted calmly and I heard one of my companions say something about the altogether lovely time we were having at what a perfect and inspiring form of recreation ballooning was. I looked at the others of the party to see if they realized our danger as I did, but to my amazement, I saw that they had opened a hamper and were passing about the sandwiches and champagne.

At first this seemed to me like useless bravado, but a glass of champagne enabled me to pull myself together somewhat and I reasoned that my companions were all veteran balloonists and that, if there were the slightest grounds for fear, they would be doing something to avert calamity instead of calmly preparing and eating luncheon.

This allayed my panic for the moment, but it returned again and again until I was in a cold sweat and my knees and teeth actually trembled. I knew it was silly, yet I could not help it. I was in a complete funk. The awful stillness, the oppressive calm, the sense of nothing to do and nothing to be done—all so different from the inspiring struggle in a fighting aeroplane—increasing my panic every minute and I was never before nor have I ever since been so glad of getting back to Mother Earth as I was when we landed lightly as a feather, deflated and stepped from the basket.

To my companions, it was an altogether delightful trip, without an incident to mar their complete enjoyment and with all conditions ideal; to me it was hours and months of torture for, long after it was over, I found myself waking in the night with that dreadful fear impending and inevitable disaster that, even to this day, has not left me.

But I have determined to conquer this fear. I plan to go into ballooning until I get a pilot's license and, if all goes well, I hope to handle one of the balloons of the Aero Club of Pennsylvania in the next elimination contests for the Gordon Bennett race. I am convinced that, who one becomes used to the sensation it can be the most delightful of sports and I know that it is safer than almost any other form of recreation.

Title of next Sunday's articles: "Bumping the Bumps of the Air."

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Chance to be Fashionable.

Edith—Mercy! Here's a telegram from Jack. He's been hurt in the football game.

Edith—What does he say?

Edith—He says: "Nose broken! How do you prefer it set.—Greek or Roman?"—Boston Transcript.

## The United States Now Owns The Two Great Race Horses

(By JONATHAN WINFIELD)

Washington, March 11.—The United States government now owns two of the most famous race horses in the world—Henry of Navarre, and Octagon. The two kings of the turf are now in France, but will be shortly brought to the United States and turned over to the army establishment.

August Belmont gave the two famous racers, with four other thoroughbreds and free service by their great stallions in Kentucky, as a nucleus for a government breeding bureau for the production of the horses suitable for cavalry mounts.

When his offer was first made there was the question raised as to whether the United States government could accept any present of value, without congressional sanction. The legal officers of the war department, devoted to the breeding of horses in order that the horses could be accepted. Immediately Mr. Belmont was notified to that effect and the treasury department is now paving the way to have the two horses brought from France without the payment of duty.

General H. T. Allen, who is at the head of the cavalry bureau of the army, is enthusiastic over the gift of Mr. Belmont, and the immediate prospects for the establishment of a bureau of breeding, declaring that in this way only will the government be able to solve the remount problem.

"European countries," he said today, "long ago found it necessary to supervise the breeding of horses in order to supply the demand of their armies, and every European country of importance, with the exception of England, has for years been encouraging the breeding of the proper type of army remount. England, one of the most important horse countries in the world, has for many reasons, recently been forced to this step. It is interesting to note that practically the same conditions confront England at the present time, and that almost identical steps are contemplated in the two Anglo-Saxon countries to accomplish the same result—suitable army horses in sufficient number."

Henry of Navarre and Octagon, the two principal horses presented by Mr. Belmont, were among the very best race horses of their years. Henry of Navarre was the same age as Domino and Dobbins, the former one of the most sensational race horses of the American turf, and Henry of Navarre defeated both Domino and Dobbins in one of the most exciting races ever seen in this country. He captured a great many stakes during the three years on the turf, and won close to \$100,000. Among the most important events taken by Henry of Navarre were the Suburban of 1905, in which he defeated the Commodore and Clifford, the First Special at Gravesend, the Dash Stakes, the Dolphin, the Merchants Stakes at Latonia, the Municipal Handicap at Belmont Park, and the Spendthrift Stakes at Sheepshead Bay. When he was retired, Henry of Navarre sired a great number of high class horses, and some of his sons and daughters have won victories on European courses.

Octagon was a high class racer and as a three-year-old took the historic Withers Stakes at Belmont Park, and the Brooklyn Derby. He was an immediate success as a sire, and was soon retired from racing. Among his get was the sensational filly Beldeane, easily the best three-year-old of her sex in 1904, a year that saw such splendid winners as Ort Wells and Stalwart. In 1905 Beldeane won the Suburban Handicap from a high class field.

Rock Sand, two of whose sons Mr. Belmont has also presented to the war department, was purchased by him after the horse had won the English Derby.

Brig. Gen. James B. Aleshire, quartermaster-general of the army, is on record in favor of breeding horses under the supervision of the government, suitable for cavalry purposes. In a hearing before the committee on military affairs of the house of representatives recently, Gen. Aleshire said: "The government should send to those sections of the country in which are found well-bred mares of quality such as is desired in cavalry horses, stallions suitable for breeding superior

cavalry horses, the farmers to be given free service of these stallions, and the government to reserve the option of purchasing the colts when from three to four years old."

The quartermaster general said that the government required approximately 17,500 horses for cavalry purposes, and that there are annually required for remounts ten per cent, of that number, namely, 1,750. He added that the department experiences the greatest difficulty in securing that small number each year.

Gen. M. Rommel, chief of animal husbandry of the bureau of animal industry of the department of agriculture, said that there are in the neighborhood of 23,000,000 horses in the United States, but that it is next to impossible to obtain the number required by the government for cavalry remounts, because that character of horses is rare.

Mr. Rommel, acting in co-operation with the war department, it is understood will take possession of the high-bred stallions given by Mr. Belmont, and will establish a breeding station in the Middle West. Eventually it is the intention to establish four breeding stations.

Unless the United States gives serious consideration to the breeding of cavalry horses, Mr. Rommel declares that in time of war the government would be absolutely without means of obtaining the requisite number of horses. He quoted statistics to show that there were purchased for the federal army in the four years of the civil war, 188,718 horses. There were captured from the enemy 20,388 horses. Leaving out of consideration those captured and not reported, the federal army required 800 horses each day for remounts. During the eight months of the year, 1864, the cavalry of the army of the Potomac was practically supplied with two remounts, nearly 40,000 horses. The supply of fresh horses for the army of General Sheridan during his campaign in the valley of the Shenandoah was at the rate of 150 per day.

During the Russian campaign the French crossed the Niemen in June, 1812, with cavalry, artillery and train horses to the number of 127,121. About 60,000 of these were cavalry horses. On December 13, the remnant of the invading army recrossed the Niemen with 1,000 cavalry horses. In six months the horses had all disappeared.

Maj. Gen. Leonard Wood, chief of staff of the army, in pointing out today that the army is sadly in need of a source of certain supply of cavalry remounts, said that the department is grateful to Mr. Belmont's type to offer good breeding stallions to the government.

Already one man has followed Mr. Belmont's lead. He is Edward Cassatt, the millionaire son of the late president of the Pennsylvania railroad, A. J. Cassatt. Mr. Cassatt, a former officer in the United States cavalry has presented three high class stallions, which have been accepted by Major General Leonard Wood on behalf of the army.

Minus the People.

Some weeks ago two little girls of six and seven years old heard a party of older people discussing skeletons. The six-year-old lass listened intently to the conversation, when the older girl, with an air of superior knowledge, said abruptly:

"You don't know what a skel'ton is, and I do."

"So do I!" sharply replied the younger. "I do know! I know for certain, I do."

"Well, now, what is it?" the elder wanted to know.

"Why, it's bones with the people off, that's what it is!"—Metropolitan.

Getting at the Truth.

"They say," remarked the student, "that truth lies at the bottom of a well."

"I guess that's right," rejoined the old lawyer, "judging by the amount of pumping we have to do in order to get a little of it."—Chalco News.

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