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MARVELOUS EXPLOITS OF THE FIGHTING BIRDMEN

Told in Two Books of Personal Experience and in Two Novels Based on Facts—One of Them Is Literature

"HAVE you seen the 'falling leaf,' doctor?" said Owen as he settled himself in a comfortable chair opposite Doctor McFabre.

"I saw plenty of them last fall," the clergyman replied. "There are no falling leaves now except around the oaks when the new buds push the old leaves off."

Owen smiled tolerantly and lighted one of my cigars.

"I saw the 'falling leaf' the other Sunday when I was out in the park," said he. "It was not from an oak, either. Oaks do not grow so high. It began to fall when it was about a mile above the earth and turned and drifted with the wind until my heart came up into my mouth."

"Oh, you mean Lieutenant Fauchoire and his airplane?" said the doctor. "No, I have not seen him fly. I can't get away on Sunday afternoons."

"If any one had told me a few years ago that a man could do what that Frenchman did and survive I would have laughed at him," Owen went on. "The first airship I saw merely attempted straightaway flying. I thought it was wonderful. But since the war they tell me the airmen are doing stunts which no one dreamed of four years ago. They have discovered that so long as they can keep their machine going they can do almost anything. It is as easy to fly upside down as right side up and sometimes when the man is surrounded by clouds he finds it difficult to decide whether he is right side up or not. One of their favorite tricks when fighting in the sky is to pretend to lose control of their machine and then right themselves suddenly and take their enemy unaware. They are doing things every day which the exhibition fliers before the war seldom attempted."

"You must have been reading some of the airmen's books," said I.

"No. I have only read the newspaper reports."

"Then you ought to read the books," I went on, "for they tell in greater detail what the newspaper accounts have merely suggested. You find them fascinating, if you are at all interested in flying, or if you can be thrilled by daring. I have just been reading four of them, all different. One is a record of personal experiences, another is a general summary of what the airmen have done; the third is a novel written around a series of actual letters from a flier to his wife, and the fourth is in fiction form also, but is founded on the experiences of a young American in the air service. E. M. Roberts, born in Duluth, Minn., wrote the personal experiences in the first. He happened to be in Canada when the war broke out and he enlisted in the army. He understood automobile engines and was put in charge of motortrucks, both while he was in training and when he got to France. He got tired of muddy roads and wanted to fight in the air. After a time he got his transfer to the Royal Flying Corps and served about a year as a gunner in a machine operated by a pilot. Then he became a pilot himself and ran his own machine. He was in the army three years, most of the time in the flying service."

"Three years!" exclaimed Doctor McFabre. "I thought they did not last three months."

"Well, you see one of them survived much longer," I replied. "He was finally so seriously wounded in a fight that he got his discharge and wrote his book. He tells of battles in the clouds three miles above the earth. He describes raids on German airdromes, bombing ammunition dumps, raiding reenforcing columns, photographing the French lines and all the other work of the airman. The first time he went up alone as a pilot he decided to beat the altitude record for his squadron and when he was more than 12,000 feet in the air his engine stopped. He managed to get down safely, but he was imprisoned a month for disobedience to orders. He has written a book full of the spirit of adventure, courageous and cheerful with no maudlin sentimentality and no fine writing. It is a straight story of thrilling interest."

"That is the kind of a book I have been looking for," said Owen.

"The other narrative," I went on, "is written by Edgar Middleton, and it deals with the British flying men. It is an admirable summary of achievement. Mr. Middleton tells the story of one of the men who bombed the Krupp gun factory at Essen as well as the story of many other astonishing exploits. The man who flew to Essen had to make a nonstop run of 600 miles. He was in his machine for six hours. He lost his way in the clouds and had to follow his compass. It was so cold he was almost frozen, but he dropped his bombs and escaped the antiaircraft guns. One chapter is devoted to the German air service. The extent of the British and French service is not told, for that would be giving information to the enemy. We are told that it is not uncommon for the airmen to reach a height of 16,000 feet and that the airships will fall deliberately 1500 or 2000 feet head down, in order to reach an enemy below them. They turn and twist, rise and fall, with the readiness of birds, and even when the pilot is so badly wounded that he faints he has succeeded time after time in getting his craft under control again and landing safely within his lines with the information for which he has been sent or after bringing down one or more enemy airmen. Middleton's book deserves the attention of every one who wants information and entertainment.

"If I were looking for a book about flying to put in the hands of a boy I should give him 'The Adventures of Arnold Adair.' It begins in a boys' school in Switzerland and ends with the meeting between Adair, flying for the Entente Allies, and a young German flying for his own people who had been schoolmates in Switzerland in the far-off days when the world was at peace. The two old-time friends were fighting each other in the air. Adair has his name on his machine and the young German gets close enough to read it and then throws up his hands. The two fall into a lake within the German lines. There is a thrilling escape for Adair, aided by his friend who helps him over into Switzerland in a new airplane. It is a good story, accurate in detail and thrilling in plot."

"I must tell Dagon Rheams about it," said Owen. "He is looking for a book like that."

"You couldn't do better," said I. "And if you are looking for a flying novel for your wife you could not do better than get her 'My Airman Over There.' It is a beautiful and pathetic love story of the bride of an airman who was finally reported among the missing. It is made up of the letters of the husband with the bride's comments and suggested replies. The bride describes her life in England with many delightful touches. There are some little children in it, an old bordener and a postman and the families of the bride and groom. The letters are undoubtedly genuine. The love story woven around them is so real that one gets the impression that it is genuine also. There is an intimacy about it that is most appealing, for it reveals a beautiful union between perfectly mated human beings. The author handles the tragedy at the end with skill and taste. The book is a piece of literature."

GEORGE W. DOUGLAS

A FLYING FIGHTER. An American over the lines in France. By Lieutenant E. M. Roberts, R. F. C. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co. $1.25.

GLORIOUS EXPLOITS OF THE AIR. By Edgar Middleton. New York: D. Appleton & Co. $1.25.

THE ADVENTURES OF ARNOLD ADAIR. American Ace. By Laurence LaTourette Driggs. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. $1.35.

MY AIRMAN OVER THERE. By Ida Wylie. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. $1.35.

LIEUTENANT E. M. ROBERTS
Who spent twenty-two months in the air service and has written a book about his experiences.

Story of Alsace-Lorraine

A firsthand account of the "lost provinces," which have played an important part in the origin and operations of the present war, and which doubtless will play an important part in the final adjustments of peace, is given by Daniel Blumenthal in "Alsace-Lorraine." The author is a former Deputy from Strasbourg to the Reichstag, an ex-Senator from Alsace-Lorraine, and was several times Mayor of the city of Colmar. His interest in the freedom of his native soil caused him to become a fugitive with a death sentence on his head. Mr. Blumenthal gives the historic and ethnic backgrounds of the subject, shows why Alsace and Lorraine should not be Kaiser and Lothringen, describes the tyranny of Prussianism over the provinces wrested by Moltke and Bismarck from stricken France of 1870 and ponderides the redress that victorious arms will bring the fighting France of today. Prof. Dolphin Wilson Robinson, of Columbia, introduces Mr. Blumenthal's text with an illuminating foreword. The book is a study of the relation of the two provinces to France and to Germany and a presentation of the just claims of their peoples.

ALSACE-LORRAINE. By Daniel Blumenthal. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. $2.

Chess for Beginners

"The latest in the series of "Books Worth Having," issued by the Penn Publishing Company, is "Chess," by David A. Mitchell, a handbook for beginners at the enticing game. Mr. Mitchell first describes the board and how it must be laid before beginning to play. He indicates the disposition of the men at the beginning of the game and names and describes the men so simply that one who never handled them will find no difficulty in distinguishing between a bishop and a queen. He gives a diagram showing the notation of the board so that when one finds in a chess problem a direction to move a knight from KKt2 to KB4 one will know just where the man must go. A chapter is devoted to the standard chess openings and in another chapter the moves in a series of brilliant games are indicated and described and there is a series of problems to be solved. It is one of the simplest and best handbooks of the kind on the market.

Winning the Victoria Cross

Deeds of hardihood and bravery are thrillingly described in "Wonderful Stories of Winning the V. C. in the Great War." Rankers and officers figure in these "fact stories" of the western and other fronts where the British are lined up against the Huns. Those who love gallantry and military resourcefulness will find much to admire in these stories, which are told without frills or trimmings, yet all the more impressively for their simplicity. A number of famous illustrators have painted the originals of the threescore full-page plates which illustrate the stories.

WONDERFUL STORIES OF WINNING THE V. C. IN THE GREAT WAR. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. $2.50.

Intrigues of Superspies

Clarence Herbert, not to be mistaken for some to the reviewer, but his next book will be eagerly read as the thrilling story of his first novel, "The Unseen Hand." We assume this is his first, for he has been between covers since the title page credits him with no other publications.

His new book is a success. It is a novel of melodramatic form dealing with the intrigues of superspies and bare flesh with the masterly organization of "Unseen Hand" to circumvent the plans of Wilhelmstrasse. Each episode is virtually an independent short story, clear cut and definite, yet these are so linked through continuity of motive and common characters as to give the effect of a full-length novel.

"The Unseen Hand" is not a book for those who must have ten hours' sleep o' nights. The plots of the episodes are ingenious and the telling plausible. The element of suspense is thoroughly maintained. The author shows a wide familiarity with the military and diplomatic machinery of the great war and with the personages who are involved in it. He is evidently much traveled, too, and is able to create atmospheric environments for the fascinating puzzles of his tales.

THE UNSEEN HAND. By Clarence Herbert. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. $1.50.

Curwood Scores Again

There is no more active worker in the big fiction factory than the author who has to his credit "Kazan," "The Grizzly King," "God's Country and The Woman" and a dozen or more books which treat largely of life in the Canadian wilds. No other writer has more interesting tales to tell of that country than James Oliver Curwood, and while some of them smack of the "movies," the author knows his country well and writes in a way that holds the attention of the reader. His latest novel, "The Courage of Marie Louise," is one of the best he has written, in spite of the lurid, melodramatic action which occurs in the last fifty pages. Barry, the author dog, to which the author has devoted a book, and Tara, a marvelous grizzly bear, figure large in the telling of the story, but the greatest interest centers around the hero from New York and the charming young girl, Marie, and the charming young girl, Marie. It is a book that will hold the attention of the reader from cover to cover, and what more can be said of a seven-day novel?

THE COURAGE OF MARIE LOUISE. By James Oliver Curwood. Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co. $1.50.

Russia as It Is

Without a note of exaggeration, and illustrated the lurid times of horror that befell Russia under its reactionary government, Ruth Pierce, in her book of letters entitled "Trapped in Black Russia," minutely describes the local characteristics of the southeastern district of that vast forest and steppe. She contributes these characteristics in her book with such vividness that one believes that she is actually passing through that dreary region. It may be said that Mrs. Pierce glossed some of the throbbing cards of the nation that other foreign authors and tourists failed to perceive. She brings out openly the treacherous actions of the Government. Particularly she describes the innumerable sufferings that the betrayed Jew in Russia undergoes. She tells how thousands of those exiles are driven on foot at the bayonet point to the white death in Siberia, and how thousands of the men, women and children give out long before they reach their doomed destiny. In reading the book it seems as if it were written by an oppressed Russian journalist, rather than by an American who accidentally was entrapped in its gloomy realms.

TRAPPED IN BLACK RUSSIA. Letters June-November, 1917. By Ruth Pierce. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. $1.25.

A DISGRACE TO CIVILIZATION

The Treatment of Prisoners of War in Germany Intended to Kill Them

It would be difficult to parallel in literature a book like "The Escape of a Princess Pat." It is a record of the experiences of a soldier in a war which in its minutest details differs from every other. Edward Edwards was a corporal in the Canadian regiment named Princess Patricia after the daughter of the Governor General, the Duke of Connaught. It was stationed near Ypres and on May 8, 1915, he was taken prisoner, one of only 6 survivors of the regiment, a battalion of which went into action 850 strong. The next 40 from months were spent in a prison camp at Giessen, and the details of the treatment he received are almost incredible. When the prisoners left the train "the mob surged around, heaping on us insults and blows, particularly the women. With hate in their eyes, they spat on us. These were the acts not only of the rabble, but also of the people of good appearance and address." The constant curse he which they were called was Schweine or pig. Two unsuccessful attempts to escape were punished by solitary confinement in cells, in which "the starvation" was one of the lesser sufferings. Finally their jailers to rid themselves of these captives. Another was the inoculation with the germs of consumption. "We were all ordered to parade for the inoculation. I had myself with a few others and so escaped the operation." In August, 1916, he, with a comrade, succeeded in eluding their guard and the next three weeks were spent in the swamps and morasses which lay between this part of Germany and Holland. They had themselves in these all day, as the night was the only time in which it was safe to go. At one place they found themselves close to a village and they flung themselves into a ditch with a foot or so of water in it and during two hours we lay on our backs in the water with only the smallest portion of our faces projecting from the guard jumped over the ditch less than four yards away. We suffered intensely for although it was late August the water was very cold. Thus food consisted mostly of uncooked vegetables and fruit picked as they went along, with occasional milk. When they reached Holland "a succession of various marine villagers wanted to escort us to the Village. Men, women and children, there were four hundred of them. The men all shook hands and pressed money on us. The women cried and one whitey turned old lady blessed us beds. Some one dragged out a mouthorgan and struck up Tipperary and men, women and children all joined in. It was glorious. We sang loss in English, and they in their tongue." The editor of this narrative, George Pearson, was a corporal of the same regiment, and in the first part describes his own experiences. There are 18 illustrations, including two portraits, which add to the interest of a tragic book.

THE ESCAPE OF A PRINCESS PAT. Being the Full Account of the Capture and Escape of Sergeant Instructor of Corporal Edwards of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and His Final Escape Across Germany into Holland. By George Pearson. New York: George H. Doran Company. $1.40.

A neat pelting has been made of Albert Payson Terhune's book "Superwomen." Perhaps one of the most interesting parts of the book is that devoted to Georges Sand, in whom interest has been revived here through Mrs. Eaton's sprightly interpretation of this author.

Game of Smuggling

Some persons believe it is perfectly proper to mulct a street car or railroad train conductor out of carfares. Others with equally elastic consciences think it justifiable to "work" any corporation. And we all know or have known persons, when travel on the seas was not so hazardous as it is today, who would not hesitate to smuggle things into this country and who would in any means that might suggest itself. One of the most interesting of the volumes of spring fiction is devoted to a sea captain who specialized in a high degree along the line of smuggling. His conscience is easy, his methods are original and whether or not you approve of his methods, which you probably will not, he is a very likable sort of chap.

Captain Gault tells these stories, for there are a dozen of them, in diary form and each one is separate from the following. He opens his sea yarns in a very interesting way and the manner in which he outwits the customs officers, revenue officials and detects men and women who are employed to trap him is exceedingly clever. There is a bit of a mummy case, one of the best of the series, which is as ingeniously done as anything you may have read of the contraband runners. There is another about a cargo of cigars which he manages to land while he fools the customs officials with a free-for-all fight. There are others equally interesting and even if you despise smuggling and smugglers you will read these entertaining tales with a great deal of enjoyment.

CAPTAIN GAULT. By William Hope Hodgson. New York: Robert M. McBride & Co. $1.35.

The Modern Library

One of the most attractive series of reprints of famous books is the Modern Library published by Boni & Liveright of New York. It was started about a year ago with half a dozen titles and has grown in the intervening months till about sixty different books have been issued. They are of a size convenient for putting in the pocket, are bound in limp craft leather and sold at 60 cents each. The publishers are polling the booklovers to discover which volumes are the most popular. The result will be announced in June. They have learned, however, that Samuel Butler's "The Way of All Flesh," and Nietzsche's "Thus Spake Zarathustra," are most in demand and that Kipling's "Soldiers Three" is the least popular. Included in the series are the volumes of Heine's poems, Flaubert's "Madame Bovary," Lord Dunsany's "A Dreamer's Tales," and many other famous modern books.

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By Laurence La Tourette Driggs
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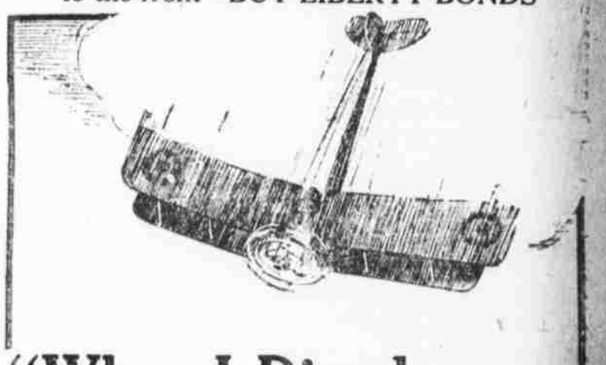

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