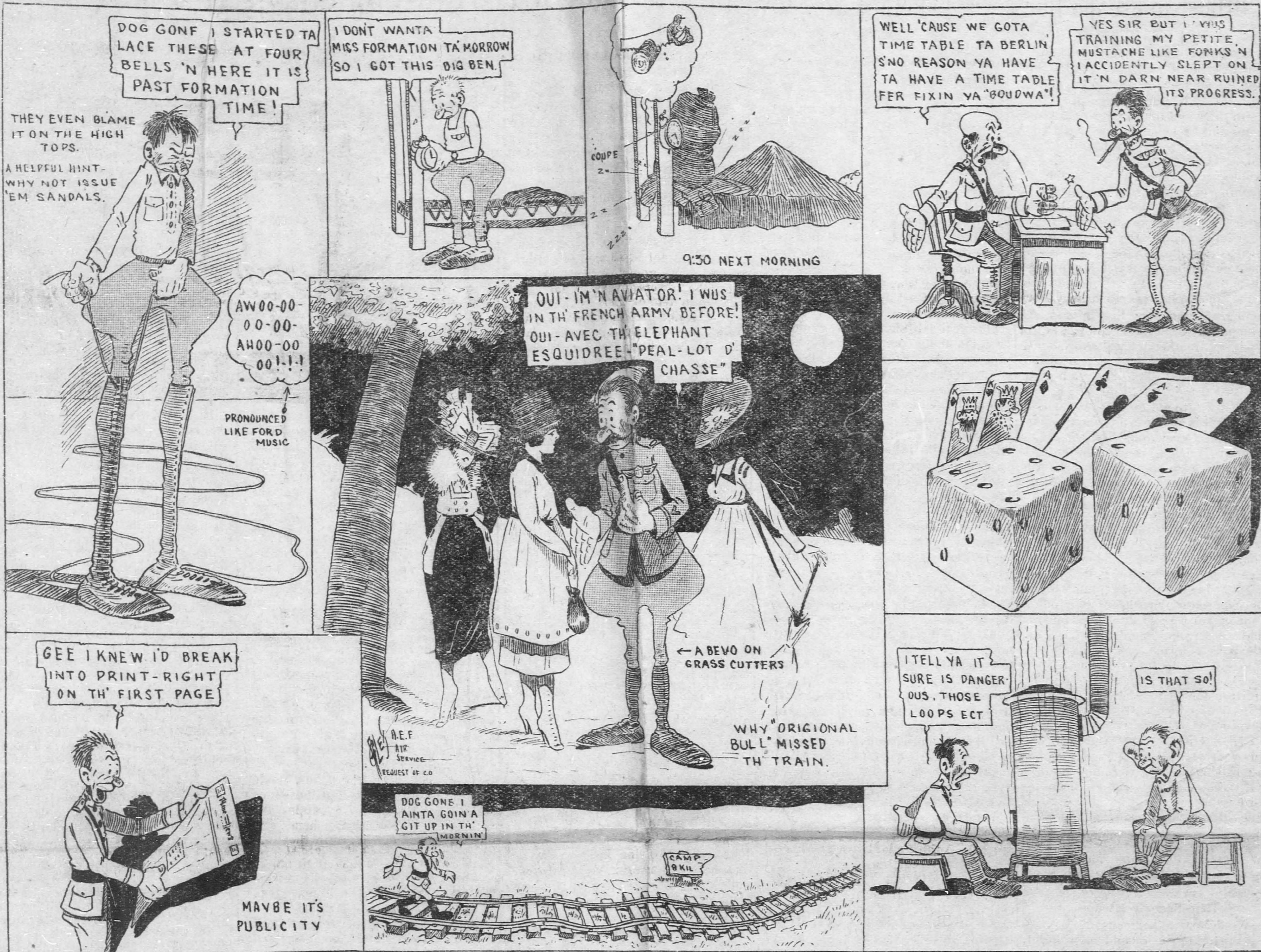


Why Officers Forget to Fly

By "Alex"



WITH OUR PILOTS AT THE FRONT

An order was given for a Petronville de chasse to destroy an enemy observation balloon which had been peering into Allied lines, making note of the activity.

Mounting into the air, the formation lost little time attacking the ball of fabricated gas, first one then the other pouring volley after volley into the bag without apparent effect. Soon the arches were pounding away at the Allied intruders who had prolonged their visit an unusually long time in their effort to carry out orders.

The pilot, being one of the formation, lingered even longer than was necessary, much to the discontent of the Hun who sent up his latest and deadliest protection known as the flaming onion. The onion, which is only of course, a name, consists of a five foot shaft of fire that is shot up to a height parallel with the balloon, and at the end of its course begins to jump around much similar to a snake in the grass used in July 4th celebrations.

It is a comparatively easy matter to avoid a few of these deadly objects, however, the Boche have the facilities for seemingly filling the air all around, and soon the Yank flier found he was literally in a nest of the fire shafts.

Only by performing a series of difficult flying tricks could the flaming onions be avoided and his life saved, and in a few short seconds he had freed himself of this danger, only to find himself confronted by a Boche avion, ready and in waiting with the drop on him. In an instant a volley or more of shots had pierced the fabric of his machine, and again he was forced to resort to every trick within his means to outwit his opponent and maneuver to a position of advantage.

It seemed that shots were coming

from all directions, and in the course of the combat both machines became dangerously near the ground. The Yank flier skimmed over the tree tops which fortunately made him a more difficult target. The Hun was not to be shaken, though, and followed in pursuit inasmuch as the contest was being waged on German soil and all was in his favor.

Suddenly the American machine took a shot skyward that even surprised the pursuing Germans. Riding on the propeller, it turned as quickly downward again and directly at the onrushing foe who was faced with a torrent of made-in-America lead that ripped out the vital parts of the machine, killed the operators, and thus accounted for another of the German air fleet.

American fliers lament the evident fear the Hun has for Yank aviators, which makes it difficult to pick a scrap and thus hasten the destruction of all things German. Allied patrols must necessarily be made over the German lines, usually about five miles back, as the Hun has long since learned "to keep on his own side." And even under these conditions it is seldom the enemy ever attacks unless travelling in superior numbers. As nearly as possible it is certain he is playing a safe and sane game, even against his own orders.

An excellent example of the stick-to-it-iveness of the Yank is seen in the recent safe landing made by a 3rd A. I. C. graduate, who, having attacked a foe superior in numbers, receiving wounds in the head by bullets, three shots in the leg, and both arms pierced, escaped and made his aerodrome before fainting away.

What well represents the spirit and determination of the French farmer peasant, who is ever striving to utilize every inch of soil for the support of the great army in the field, and for his people, is told by a Yank flier whose duty it was to protect an American observation balloon from the attacking enemy.

A sudden and unexpected raid was made on the gas bag by several foe planes flying in formation. Machine gun bullets were flying in deadly volleys all about the surrounding ground, and through it all the farm hands never sought shelter, even for the time being, rather going on quietly in the cultivation of their soil.

The late "Dave" Putman with his customary modesty often relates how he was credited with one Boche which he never "got." The following is related by one of our birdmen who is now here, and who has spent a good many months with the French:

"I was out on this particular patrol when the incident happened. There were three of us out, when we sighted two biplane Huns, Putman took after one and I followed the other. Putman took a crack at his man, and followed him right down to within fifty metres of the ground where he lost him; he then climbed up to our height where we saw four more Boche about fifteen miles back of the German lines. Putman went after them and they landed on their own aerodrome. Returning over the lines he encountered a Boche observation balloon, and after firing only four shots the balloon burst into flames.

"Upon returning to the aerodrome the Frenchmen cheered him wildly, for confirmation of the Boche plane and the balloon victories had already been received, which was a complete surprise to him as he had no balloon gun and incendiary bullets at the time, and he said that as he had only fired four shots, he is sure that the balloon was destroyed by its own shell fire."

Americans are Natural-Born Air Fighters

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

and shooting is 'second nature' that brings confidence allowing maximum time for scanning the sky in search of enemy planes. Excellence in flying and shooting is the result of not only passing training tests but thorough application to the care of planes, their engines and machine guns.

The Offensive Spirit

"A complete understanding of his gun and 'bus' allows that offensive which with all classes of pilots is two-thirds of a victorious battle." To this end Major Bonnell suggests that every pilot avail himself of the opportunity, while in training, of more intelligently knowing his machine by visiting the various aero engine and plane repair shops. This ground study combined with the air experience gives the pilot that mastery which is daily becoming more and more important in air warfare especially in formation flying which is a case of individual and team work confidence. Like one recruit in a squad lessens efficiency so does a straggling pilot endanger the safety of himself and fellow-flyers and play the enemy's game. "Straggling is the cause of a big percentage of casualties. Don't straggle in formation flying or at any other stage of the game whether in the air or on the ground."

Be on the Job

"Promptness goes hand in hand with confidence. Pilots must train themselves into always being ready to leave the ground on the minute. An instance: Scouts will escort the two-seater artillery machines. If either is late at the rendezvous the scout may go off Hun-ing for some likely prey which may be in sight of the artillery machine, having a mission to fulfill promptly, may sacrifice itself. The habit of promptness should be cultivated in training. It not

alone helps the pilot, individually, but allows for training plans to be carried out on schedule and is just as important a part of 'playing the game' as keeping in proper formation.

The Mechanic

"All pilots whether in training or on the Front must consider their mechanics as part of their machine just as the pilot, himself, is a part of his machine. Always make it a point of telling them how the machine is flying. If she is flying beautifully, tell your mechanics. If not, point out the fault and show your interest in the repair or change necessary. They want you to keep your eye on their work. And when they work late it is only natural that it pleases them to know that you appreciate their industry—drop 'round and see how things are coming along. Don't taxi so fast that the men on the wings can't keep the pace.

Visiting Aerodromes

"Always observe flying rules of the fields you visit as well as you do at your home field. Pay respects to Commanding Officer or his aide on arriving and leaving, thanking him or any assistance or courtesies extended."

Sergeant to Major

Major Bonnell, who is now in charge of the Aerial Gunnery Department and Officer in Charge of Field 8, 3rd A. I. C., enlisted in the Canadian Field Artillery in August, 1914, going to France with the first Canadian forces as a sergeant. He was commissioned a Second Lieutenant late in 1915 and transferred to the Royal Flying Corps and flew in the Somme offensive through 1916 as the result of which he was commissioned a Captain and Flight Commander. Then he went to Canada shortly before America declared war where his activities in behalf of aviation brought him the rank of Major and Squadron Commander in the R. F. C. transferring to American Air Service as a Major.

