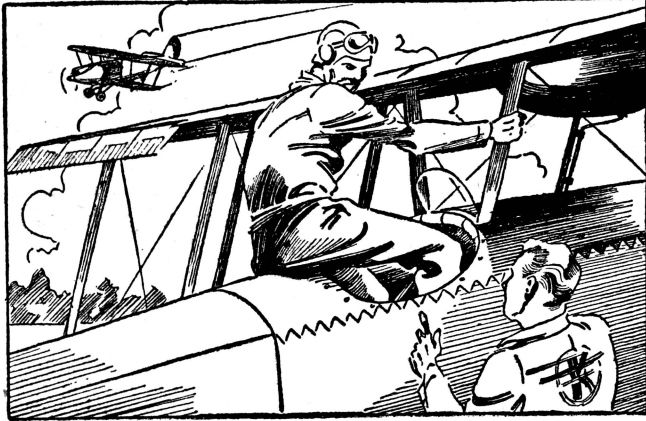


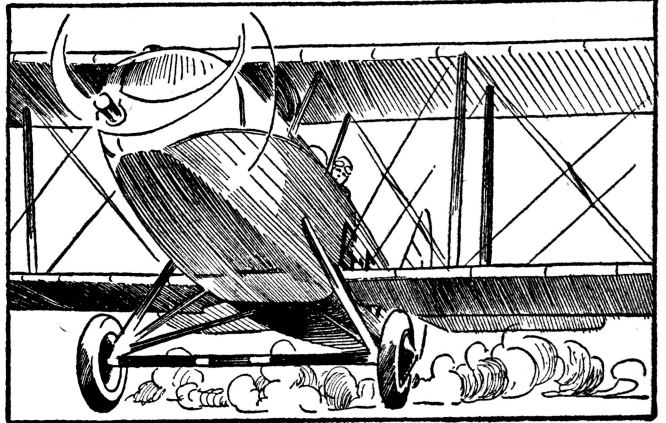
They Had What It Takes

XXIII—BERT HINKLER—THE LIGHT PLANE ACE

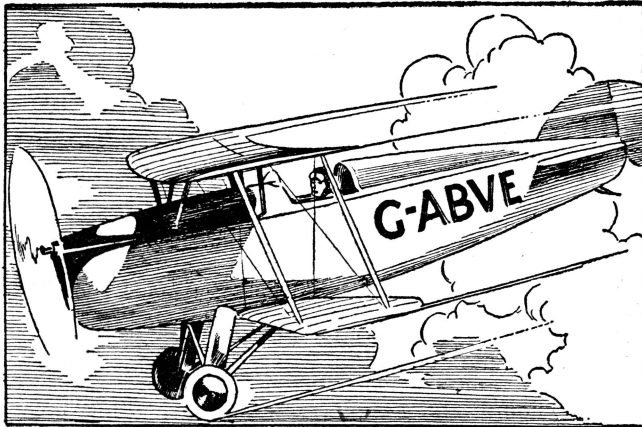
By ALDEN McWILLIAMS



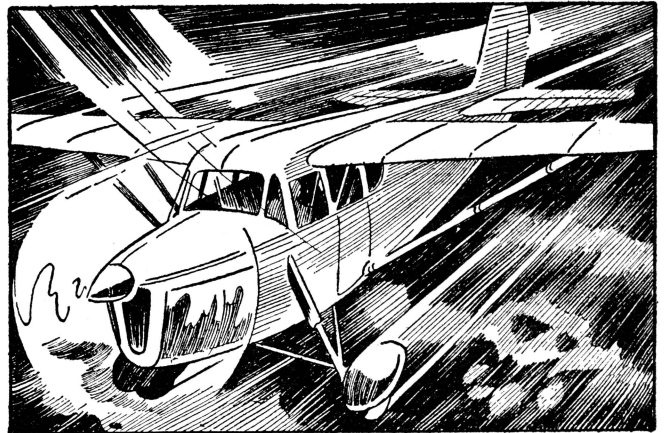
1—Herbert John Louis Hinkler, tagged "Bert" for the sake of simplicity, was born at Bundaberg, Australia, in 1892. He developed an interest in aviation when in his teens, building and flying experimental gliders during 1911 and 1912. But he really did not take up flying seriously until 1920, when he began staging demonstration hops in an Avro "Baby."



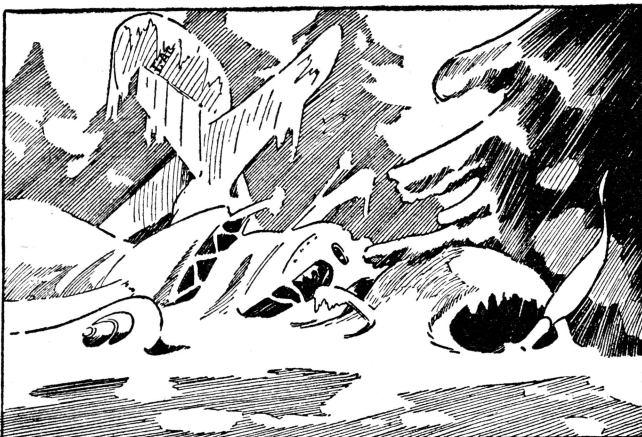
2—Shortly thereafter, he flew his little Avro non-stop from London to Turin, Italy, a distance of 650 miles, in 9½ hours. In those days, needless to say, such a deed in the small-ship category was truly striking. Then for the next seven years, Hinkler was a test pilot for the Avro firm, and during this period he won several prizes in flight competitions.



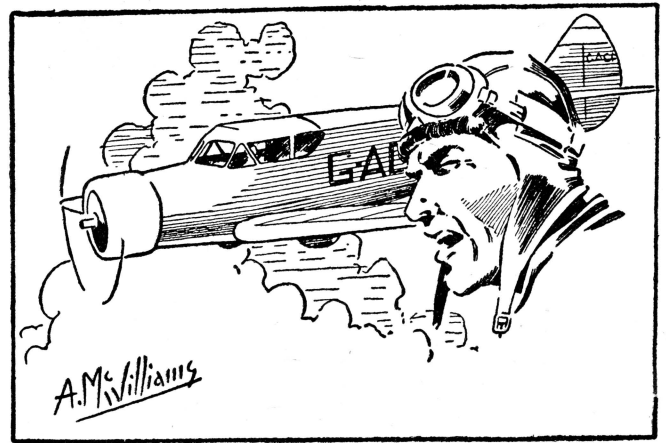
3—The year 1925 saw this expert pilot travel to America as a Schneider Cup team racer. It was in 1928, however, that he turned in his most lauded feat. This was his light plane (Avro "Avian") solo hop from England to Australia which lowered the record from 28 to 15½ days. The Royal Australian Air Force then made Hinkler an honorary Squadron Leader.



4—Once again the Aussie flyer jotted a great flight into his logbook when, in 1931, he flew another small ship—a D.H. "Puss-Moth"—from Brazil to Africa. Part of a round-about New York-to-London trip, this amazing 2,000-mile dash was the first solo crossing of the South Atlantic. And marked by very bad weather, it certainly was extraordinary.



5—Then came tragedy! For in 1933, on a new England-to-Australia record attempt, Bert Hinkler roared into a raging snow storm over the Italian Alps—and vanished! Anxiously, the world awaited news of the famed skyman. But none came—until, full three months later, his body was found in his wrecked plane on a snow-swept mountainside near Arezzo.



6—Little Bert Hinkler—he was but 5-feet tall, though staunchly built like a boxer—was said to have had "a compass in his head." His numerous awards, notably the Segrave Trophy, Oswald Watt Gold Plaque, Britannia Challenge Trophy, and Air Force Cross, evidenced his skill. Indeed, many authorities rank him among the half dozen greatest flyers in history.