



# THE SKY TERRIER

by JOE ARCHIBALD

*What a buddy for a fighting, daredevil pilot! Yet this dog was air-wise, every inch of him—and he proved it through the snarling menace of a thousand flaming Jerry tracers.*

**T**HE HORIZON FLARED crimson as crouching steel monsters spat mouthfuls of flame into the blackness of night. The lines marking the British trenches blazed as countless thousands of shells fell like hail, in front, behind, on every side. A starshell shot up from the German lines and illuminated the war-torn terrain, bursting directly over one of the gaping holes in its pock-marked surface. At the bottom of this crater the light played for a second over a grotesque heap of plaid and khaki that had once been two animated “ladies from hell.” Then the light died out and, as darkness settled again, a part of the heap stirred.

Muggins dug the nails of his fore-paws into a khaki tunic and struggled furiously to get the rest of his body

clear of the weight that held it down. After minutes of twisting and tugging he scrambled out of the mass and lay exhausted, panting, in the mud at the bottom of the shell hole. Following this respite, Muggins crept to the dead Highlanders, sniffed at them for a moment and then began to whine petulantly.

Suddenly the earth seemed to open as a sheet of yellow flame sucked at its vitals. Muggins stopped whining. The shock of the high calibre shell brought him back to stark reality. This was war and well Muggins knew it. He would have to seek a quieter, less dangerous sector. There was no work to do here. His comrades were beyond aid and it was his duty now to get back to his regiment.

Muggins, although having come out of Scotland

with the Eighth Royal Highlanders, was an Irish terrier. But the little plaid collar from which dangled a wee sporran stamped him as a real “lady from hell.” From the very first day that the regiment had set foot on Belgian soil Muggins had tasted the same shell strafing, heard the whine of the same machine gun bullets, and had snapped at the same gray hood-helmeted figures that his comrades had fought hand to hand.

Muggins clambered up the side of the shell pit, peered with gleaming eyes for a minute over its edge, and then, instinctively hugging the ground in the manner learned from his comrades, he started off. On he pressed, first crawling and then scuttling into the darkness, dodging into shell holes as he caught glimpses of the dread gray-green figures that he hated. Then out again to scamper through a sea of bodies.

SILENCE REIGNED in the lamp-lighted messroom of Squadron 20, R.A.F., quartered at St. Marie-Cappel. The windows were curtained tightly to shut in the tiniest telltale ray of light that might seep out from the dingy oil lamps. Twelve men were seated at a long table eating wearily, mechanically.

Fully half of the group showed evidence of recent combat. Every once in a while eyes would lift from the plates before them and glance furtively down or across the table at a vacant chair. The door beyond the head of the table jerked open suddenly and Major Lampry stood on the threshold holding a little bit of white cloth in one hand and a folded paper in the other. Then he walked to the head of the table where Captain Gorman sat and as he laid the bit of paper before that gentleman he spoke briefly.

“Gentlemen, this little parachute was espied falling from a plane that just raced over the drome. A grease-ball brought it to me. It may enlighten you on some things that occurred this afternoon.” He turned on his heel and walked out of the messhall.

Captain Gorman straightened out the folded paper and had given it but a glance when a string of oaths escaped his lips. “The Baron! Always the Baron! Will I never hear the end of that bloody swine?” And still cursing he threw the paper to the centre of the table where eager hands snatched at it.

Lieutenant Johnny Randall’s fist closed on it first and then, following his superior officer’s example, he swore as loud and long as a bandaged jaw would permit before he read it aloud to the rest.

*“Bristol two-seater brought down by myself over Cassel. Ship burst into flames on crashing. Occupants burned.*

—Baron Von Glückner.”

“Drake and Ransom! That makes eight out of the Squadron that have gone west under the fire of that damn devil,” cursed Captain Gorman as he sprang to his feet. “My God, men, are we going to sit like old cronies while he slaughters us single-handed? Oh hell!” and with a perfunctory wave of his hand he slumped down, sending his fingers streaming back through his iron gray hair, his teeth tightly clenched.

No one answered. The messhall became still again save for the little sounds made by men who ate mechanically, their eyes boring into their plates. From outside came the soft drumming of rain and the distant mutter of the big guns.

Suddenly a faint sound came from outside the door. Heads snapped up nervously and turned in the direction of the sound, because it was an unusual one. The scratching noise came again but this time it was accompanied by a new sound—a faint whimper.

Captain Gorman rose quickly and walking softly toward the door, he swung it open. A half-drowned furry thing stood on the sill, blinked bewilderedly for a moment in the glare of the light, and then limped into the room on three good legs with a little cry of thanks. The men sprang out of their chairs and crowded close to the little visitor as Captain Gorman reached down and lifted the drenched Muggins in his arms.

“Well, if it ain’t a dog! Hello! What’s the blinkin’ thing ‘round its neck?” And taking a handkerchief from his pocket he wiped away the mud of No Man’s Land that encrusted the little plaid collar with its sporran, while the wearer licked at Captain Gorman’s nose with delight. Muggins knew that these men were his kind. He’d know them anywhere.

“Muggins is his name, men. It’s on his collar, and he wears the plaid of the Highlanders. Strike me pink if he ain’t adopted us! Come on, get some grub, damn it. Stir your blinkin’ stumps, men! Get some first aid, McNutt. His front paw is cut.” And Captain Gorman strode up and down the floor holding Muggins like he would a baby while fliers ran in every direction for various things essential to the comfort of a war-harassed, weather-beaten Irish terrier.

“We’re keeping him, men,” said Gorman some time later as Muggins, with full belly, his front foot bandaged, lay in the Captain’s lap. “He’ll be the mascot

of this damn tough luck squadron.” And, lifting his half filled glass of cognac, he called for a toast to Muggins, a veteran soldier of the trenches, who had joined the R.A.F. to finish his war in the clouds.

“To the Terriers, and may they sink their teeth soon into the neck of the bloody Baron!” Twelve glasses clicked. That was the only sound. Squadron 20, the ill-fated, were carrying on.

AT DAWN the battle planes of the squadron lined up preparatory to the early patrol, bore the silhouette of Muggins on the fuselages. While Inside in the orderly hut Major Lampry paced the length of the room, his hands clasped behind his back. In one he clutched a message, hot off the wires, brought by a motorcycle despatch rider a few minutes before. Brigade’s orders were pitiless and cold:

*“This office has learned that the German staffel working in your sector are to make an attempt to prevent an advance of British troops now taking place. Squadron 20 is ordered to hold itself ready to keep enemy planes out of the air in the vicinity of Cassel.”*

“Half the number of planes and pilots I need,” muttered the old man bitterly. Not one of his patrol had come back intact as one by one Von Glückner’s staffel took their bloody toll in the skies. The racking strain was ruining the squadron.

The old man had not slept that night and not until he heard the droning of the motors as the dawn patrol took wing did he sink down to his bed, even then not to sleep but to rack his brain for a solution to the problem. Replacements were promised, yes; but why in hell didn’t they come?

And hours later, after Captain Gorman had led his flight into the leaden mists of morning, two trucks loomed out of the fog and lurched to a stop in front of the orderly hut. Fledgling birds climbed down into the mud of sunny France and lined up before the doorway. A flock of Terriers appeared from everywhere, anxious for a sight of new faces, to ask of things back in Blighty. Major Lampry appeared heavy-eyed in the doorway, looked them over for a few seconds, and turning to a flier nearby, instructed him to show the men to the messhall.

“Give ‘em some coffee and I’ll be there after I’ve cleaned up to look ‘em over.”

Later the Terriers followed the old man into the

messhall and, through a haze of tobacco smoke, Major Lampry scrutinized the new arrivals. Clearing his throat, he fairly rumbled out the words, “there’s only two things you’ll have to remember in this suicide outfit. Your duty to fight to the finish, and then,” he added, his face growing very grave, “perhaps a long furlough. I’m not going to tell you not to shoot crap, play poker, or get loaded up with booze. It’s only a waste of breath. You wouldn’t last long in this outfit if you didn’t. That’s all. Carry on.” And out he went without another word.

With the coming of replacements the old man felt some of his load of worries slip from his broad khaki shoulders. The confidence that was plainly written on the anxious faces of the fledglings was contagious and it coursed through his own veins as he walked to the orderly hut to await the return of the patrol.

He even bore no malice toward Brigade with their insane orders. And at noon, just as the little black pinpoints in the sky indicated the return of the early prowling Terriers, a mud-spattered despatch rider came thundering in with the expected order that would put the full strength of Squadron 20 in the air.

THE OLD MAN was at the edge of the tarmac when the Terriers dropped one by one to the field, but it was the Bristol two-seater containing Johnny Randall and Captain Gorman that made his eyes pop out. Over the edge of the rear cockpit a furry head hopped up and yipped happily as the plane came to a stop about a yard from where he stood. And on every fuselage he saw the new insignia of the squadron—the black Splotch that was meant to be a snarling dog.

“What the hell is this, Gorman? A Hying menagerie?” roared Major Lampry. “And hasn’t the Baron got you spotted pretty enough now without slapping more dabs of black paint on the busses? Some more damn superstitious poppycock, eh? Now, look here—”

“Major,” reminded Captain Gorman laughingly as he stepped out of the cockpit, “we’re all back this time, you’ll notice. I want to introduce Muggins who drifted into the drome last night, a casualty from the Highlanders.”

“Yes, damned if you aren’t all here with a whole skin,” agreed the old man gruffly, his eyes still boring into those of Muggins. The dog suddenly scrambled out of the Bristol and limped toward him. As the terrier sniffed affectionately at the Major’s boots, the fliers caught the faintest trace of a twinkle in the

old man's eye. "If he was with the Highlanders and survived, he's a better damned fighter than any of you buzzards," he finished.

"And he's got more brains, too," laughed Johnny Randall. "He's a born airman. Knows every plane in the sky, especially a kraut. Didn't bat an eye when the Jerries pumped lead into us." And Muggins yelped his own story of their brush with the Baron's dreaded staffel so vociferously that Captain Gorman had to shout his own report into the Major's ear—that the Terriers had shot down three of the Fokkers. And among these was Wolfe, the Baron's greatest understudy in the killing of Allied pilots.

"Hot stuff, men, hot stuff! We're getting the odds down, now. Get your tanks filled up again. The whole squadron is ordered up by Brigade. Come on, now, men. Get a stiff drink, too, while you're at it." And as he stooped down to make a playful pass at the little wiry-haired dog biting at his boots he added, "And give Muggins one, too."

But Muggins was not interested in strong drink. He scurried as fast as his three good legs could carry him back to the bullet-shattered Bristol two-seater, climbed on the wing and into the cockpit. A fighting fool was Muggins. The Jerries weren't smart enough to knock him off on the ground and they couldn't do it in the air. As the mechanics worked hurriedly patching up the Bristol he leaped up onto the fuselage and barked incessantly as if giving instructions in the repairing and refueling of his adopted bus.

TWO O'CLOCK. Men moved about like ants. The protesting coughing of a plane, another, and then the mighty droning as the long line of gigantic bees shook with fury. Pilots climbed into pits. The squadron swept across the field with an ear-splitting roar. The planes bore upward, wing tip to wing tip, skimming over the line of poplars at the edge of the field and thundering toward the clouds.

For an hour they swept onward. In the rear cockpit of the Bristol fighter Johnny Randall and Muggins looked over the side of the plane at the mass of wire-tangled mud below that was No Man's Land. The Terriers at ten thousand feet flew on with undiminished speed and soon the terrain beneath lost its war-torn aspect and flashed green with tiny ribbons of white winding in and out. Then one of these tiny ribbons was blotted out by what seemed a huge crawling black worm. The troop movement!

It was Putnam and McNitt, flying high above

the formation, who first sighted the enemy, and Putnam dove down and gave the warning. He went zooming up again as Major Drury swung to battle, the formation following as one ship. Von Glückner and his staffel would see plenty of hell of their own before they'd ever get down within strafing distance of the British troops. Muggins barked furiously in the cockpit of the Bristol as it went racing in full throttle, his hair bristling up straight from his body.

"He smells kraut!" yelled Johnny Randall laughingly through the speaking tube as he touched the grips of the twin Lewis gun mounted in the rear. Then they were in it—a maelstrom of fully thirty ships, milling in frenzied action.

A triplane darted down on the Bristol and Gorman heard a duet behind him, the chattering of Randall's machine gun harmonizing with the barking of Muggins. He zoomed upward, shot a burst from his own Vickers at a Fokker that suddenly appeared in his line of flight. The gun still clattered behind him. Randall and the mascot of the Terriers were taking good care of the tail.

Everything swirled in mad confusion. Gorman only knew that he was occasionally pressing the trigger handle and frantically working the controls to avoid a collision with other ships. Overhead two planes crashed head on with a terrific impact that fairly split the heavens. As they fell twisting earthward, a trail of black smoke behind, a triplane darted down on the Bristol. But Randall's burst tipped it over with a hail of lead.

As the Fokker spun down, the flames licking at the fuselage, Gorman had to work fast to skid out of its path. Drury zoomed overhead, a Jerry directly over the flight leader's plane. Gorman swung his bus about and went to his leader's aid. Randall poured lead into the tail of the triplane from a distance of less than eighty yards. The Fokker's nose tipped and sailed gracefully down but quite out of control. A Spad swooped down and emptied its guns into the falling Fokker, finishing the job that the Bristol had started.

By this time the planes were scattered over considerable territory and dog fights were everywhere. It was impossible to guess the result thus far. Gorman knew that both staffel and squadron had suffered heavily. He had seen two of the fledglings go down. Putnam had rammed a Fokker early in the play and both the Spad and the Jerry plane had shed their wings and shot to the ground like plummets.

Suddenly, Muggins' barking changed to a petulant

whine—and Gorman sensed that something was wrong. He twisted in the cockpit and saw Randall slumped over the Lewis gun, a little trickle of red flowing from a corner of his mouth. Muggins pawed at the stricken fighter, looking up at Gorman questioningly as if imploring him to do something. But then two Jerries crashed down on the Bristol fighter and Muggins ceased his whining. Instead he yelped defiantly from the rear cockpit, his hair bristling. Gorman roared straight at one Fokker, his guns hammering and burned the triplane through and through as two Spads leaped at the tail of the other. Gorman pulled his bus up and over and half rolled. Then he turned to see how Muggins was riding it and he almost grinned as the little head peered at him over the edge of the rear cockpit. Randall had changed his position, whether voluntarily or by the movements of the ship he could not tell.

GORMAN BANKED around and saw McNitt below in a tight spiral after a Jerry who was following a stricken Terrier. He was about to dive to McNitt's assistance but Muggins' sudden yelping told him that a Fokker triplane was on his own tail. Then the chatter of the spandaus as the Jerry opened fire, and Gorman saw holes appear in his wings.

Gorman pulled up and out, banked vertically on his left wing to avoid another squadron ship, and then found himself in another mad circle with the rudder of a triplane directly in front of his prop. Cold meat!

Gorman knew he was yelling as he eased gently back on the stick. His eyes bored straight through the rings of his sights and through these rings he saw the Fokker from fin to pit. The pilot was looking back, a ghastly smile on his face. A Jerry laughing at certain death! Gorman flattened and squeezed the trips. The Fokker zoomed wildly, dove. A hit!

Below Gorman caught sight of one of the fledglings, hard-pressed by three Jerries. He dove straight into the hornets' nest. Two of the Fokkers leaped at his ship. A bullet smashed the air speed indicator and Gorman tasted glass. As he spat blood he sent a burst into a Fokker that cut directly across his path and then kicked and banked the Bristol around at another triplane. But a tracer from McNitt's guns smoked through the Jerry's gas tank. The Fokker spun down flaming like an oil-soaked rag.

Muggins in the rear still clung- to the cowling of the Bristol. Randall had not moved. A new sound told Gorman that all was not well with his bus. The

motor skipped. A Jerry bullet had gone home. His eyes strayed to the oil gauge. The column of the thermometer was crawling to the top of the tube.

"We're out!" he yelled back at nobody in particular and headed for home. He had lost altitude rapidly, the altimeter showing but a thousand feet.

Gorman nursed the throttle the best he could but it was hit the ground for the Bristol. Muggins' yelp brought his bead around. A Fokker triplane following him, but it did not fire. Puzzled, he looked down over the side of the ship. Gray figures were running toward the spot where they knew he had to land—right near the German trenches.

Gorman cursed and his hand strayed to the Vickers. Then he thought of Randall in the rear cockpit. He might still be alive. Gorman's hand dropped back. Better to be taken prisoner than to sacrifice both Randall and himself. And Muggins!

Suddenly the engine quit and Gorman nosed down for a long glide in and headed for an open space, the wind on his tail helping him along. He landed the Bristol dead stick and the riddled craft rolled crazily, pitched forward and buried its prop into the ground. Gorman leaped clear, into the arms of a mass of Germans. Randall's form hung by the gun mounting half out of the Bristol, and Muggins catapulted out to land head in the mud.

A Boche lieutenant, Luger in hand, looked at Gorman with grudging admiration while the infantrymen unstrapped the still form of Randall and bore him to the ground. A few guttural words and they let him lie as he was. Gorman knew that Randall had gone on his long furlough.

A few yards away the mascot of the Terriers struggled in the arms of one of the big gray-clad figures he hated, biting, scratching, and yelping like a mad beast. Succeeding finally in tearing himself loose, Muggins sank his teeth in the hand of his captor.

"Take him back—the general will want to ask him questions," ordered the German officer, pointing toward Gorman. "Too bad he did not die with his comrade! Put a bayonet through the cur. He's gone mad."

AS A GERMAN, gun poised, was about to carry out the order, Gorman struggled to get free, sobbing and cursing as he realized the futility of the effort. He averted his eyes as the sun flashed on the bayonet. Then someone shouted something in German and Gorman looked up in time to see a figure dart in and

push aside the Boche who was about to stick the long blade into the mascot of the Terriers.

“Dumkopf!” shouted the newcomer and whirled on the Jerry officer. Gorman stared. Von Glückner! Gorman looked around and saw a Fokker triplane two hundred yards away. The German Ace, then, had followed him down but for what reason he did not know. The German Ace paused in his haranguing of the shamefaced Boche officer and turned to Gorman, speaking to him in perfect English. “Greetings, Britisher!” he smiled through a smirk. “By all rights you should be west now. Isn’t that what you call it? But I have a reason to let you live a little while longer. I am much amused at your new mascot. My staffel bagged a few of your Terriers, but I am interested in the real one.” He paused and pointed toward Muggins who eyed him with a baleful gleam in his little orbs. “So I am not going to accept you as a prisoner, sir,” he continued. “Only the dog. I would much rather have a dog than a Britisher. Your friend is enough for my seventy-sixth victory. You shall live to go back to your squadron to tell them that they are no longer Terriers, just harmless bull pups.”

Gorman, face livid, stepped toward Von Glückner. “Swine of a pig!” he roared. “You can easily insult me here among the rest of your cutthroats. Better to have had the dog slaughtered than to have it become your property. Damn you, Von Gullet, or whatever your bloody name is!”

The tirade was broken as the German Ace, his ruddy face turning green with rage, struck Gorman across the face with a heavy flying glove. Then he turned to the Boche lieutenant, his teeth bared in a crooked smile. “Shoot him,” he raged, “for resisting arrest.”

“Yes, go ahead and shoot,” spat Captain Gorman, “you damned coward! That’s the way you fight! Ten or fifty against one—you and your blasted seventy-six victories. Let me loose and I’ll fight your whole herd of pigs!” Then shaking with fury he stepped so close to Von Glückner that their noses almost touched. “If you’ve got the guts, kraut, I’ll meet you in a Spad over St. Omer tomorrow morning at ten—if you’ve got the guts! You, the bloody Baron! And bring another Fokker for good measure, you yellow cur! The prize for the dinner will be the mascot of the Terriers. The loser goes to hell!” Von Glückner stared back at Gorman, a fierce light burning in his little steel-blue eyes. “At ten o’clock it is, Englishman. I’ll fly an all-red Fokker over St. Omer. Perhaps by morning your hot cabbage

that you call a head will have cooled. Perhaps you’ll think better of being my seventy-seventh victim. And to show you how sure I am of success, the prize flies in the Fokker with me.” Then the Baron turned his back on Gorman, tore the violently protesting Muggins from the arms of a German soldier, and strode off with him toward the Fokker triplane.

“Damn him, he’s got Muggins,” raged Gorman as the Germans pushed him roughly forward. “The skunk! He knows I won’t shoot at the dog. The brave Baron protecting himself. Brave, hell!”

A FEW HUNDRED yards away the German trenches lay and for miles it seemed Gorman trod through a veritable labyrinth of them, ankle deep in muck, until he was pushed finally into a dugout, to face a battery of curious, interrogating Jerry eyes. The Boche lieutenant spoke to one of the group who in turn addressed Gorman.

“When dusk comes you can find your way to the British lines only five hundred yards away.” Gorman gave a prim nod. The Englishman’s eyes rested on a long necked bottle on a rough table around which the Jerries sprawled.

God, for a drink! His throat was parched so that it was painful to swallow. One of the Jerries noticed the avid gleam in Gorman’s eyes and reached for the bottle.

“*Gesundheit!*” he smiled through a three months’ beard as he extended it toward Gorman.

“*Danke schoen,*” grinned Gorman, as he grasped the bottle eagerly. And never had anything tasted like that wine. To Gorman it was the nectar of the gods. As he placed the bottle back on the table he gave the Jerry an appreciative pat on the shoulder and then looked around for a seat. To his astonishment four German soldiers leaped to their feet and offered him theirs. He smilingly waved them back and hunched down on a haversack against the wall.

After all the Jerries were men just like himself. Strange he had forgotten that fact during his months of hell, leaping at their throats in the air. Damned queer how a man can change. For the next few minutes his heart turned sick against the whole bloody business as he studied the expressions on their faces. That one near the door, now. Take off his coal scuttle and put on a white cap, change his gray uniform to one of white, and he’d be a harmless German baker back in the Savoy. The little Jerry beside him—not more than twenty if he was a day, chewing at a thumb nail

incessantly. And every once in a while, as a high calibre shell exploded somewhere outside, his face would twitch slightly with the concussion. Nerves! Raw nerves!

“Cripes!” muttered Gorman loud enough to make the men around him look up questioningly.

Time passed and reaction set in on Gorman. He could scarcely keep his head up and the faces swam before him in a fog. The haze grew thicker. Gorman slept.

SOME TIME LATER he was roused from his slumber to look up into the eyes of his late friend, the Jerry lieutenant, who made a gesture toward the door. It was time to go. Painfully Gorman rose to his feet and, waving perfunctorily to his hosts, followed the German officer through the door of the dugout. Outside it was quite dark and candles flickered here and there on the sides of the trenches.

A few yards down the trench the officer mounted a firing step and motioned to Gorman to step up beside him. As he was about to do so a star shell burst directly overhead. The German ducked, then straightened up again. He looked at Gorman and pointed toward the British lines.

Without a word the flier crawled over the sandbags and flopped, face down, to taste the mud of No Mud's Land. Then he started crawling toward his lines. Grueling work. He was running the risk of being taken for a snooping Jerry and at any moment a machine gun might bark.

Suddenly flares lighted up the sky and a fury of firing broke out. Gorman caught his breath, moistened his dry lips, and hugged the ground like a leech. For fully five minutes lead swept over his head. At last the firing died and Gorman allowed himself a sigh of relief.

He waited a few minutes before taking up his way again. Then a hail of lead came from in front of him. He swore. His own lines, damn it. What caused it? Had they espied him? Gorman pitched suddenly into a small shell crater and lay still. For hours it seemed, he waited. Then, when everything was quiet, he wormed out of his hole and found himself within a few yards of the British trenches.

“What the hell!” And out of the dark in the direction of the voice a rifle appeared. “Who's that? Speak, damn you, or—”

“Hold it buddy,” whispered Gorman hoarsely. “British officer—Flying Corps.”

A moment later the flier slid over the duckboards into the trench and found a rifle muzzle prodding his midsection, while the Tommy behind it peered closely at the mud-besmeared face before him. A British officer appeared.

“Flier?” he asked sarcastically. “I heard the King had some but never expected to see one. Give me your name, rank and squadron and I'll send a message.”

“Message, hell! I want to get back to Ste. Marie Cappel before morning. Get me out of these ditches. I got a date in the air with the Baron tomorrow. Got to get back.”

“Goofy,” exclaimed the British officer, tapping his head significantly, as the flier started splashing away through the mud.

THE FIRST FAINT rays of dawn found Gorman half staggering down the road that wound past C . . . on the way to the drome. He hardly knew how he had gotten this far. Three miles back a truck had dumped him off as it swung into a divergent road after having carried him from a spot two miles back of the British lines.

Footsore, muscles screaming, eyes red-rimmed above black hollows in his cheeks, Gorman at last staggered into “the drome and half fell in front of the orderly hut. With a cry of surprise Major Lampry started for him.

“Captain Gorman!”

“The same,” the flier smiled weakly as he leaned against the hut. “Thought I'd gone west? Not me. Randall's dead. Plane fell in front of the German trenches. The Baron—got—Muggins. Came down after me. Got a date—with him—at ten this morning. Made it personally. The yellow—” Then he fainted at the feet of the old man.

A few hours later Gorman sat on the edge of his cot, relating the incidents of the day before to a group of snarling, cursing Terriers. He told them of his date with the Baron.

“Hell, man,” snorted McNitt. “You know the old man's orders. No going up on your own looking for stray fights. The squadron caught hell yesterday even though we chased the Jerries out of the sky.”

“Damn orders!” said Gorman. “Can I put my tail between my legs and run out of the scrap with the Baron now? Blast it, men, don't you know they've got Muggins? We'll be the laughing stock of both the German and Allied Air Forces. Orders on no orders I'm going after Von Glückner! Listen, Arnold,” turning to one of the fliers, “go find Sergeant Brean. Tell him I

want a Spad ready for the air at nine-thirty.”

“But, Gorman, you’ll get head over heels in hell for this.”

“I’ve been in hell so much lately,” interrupted the Captain, “that a little more won’t worry me any. Tell the sergeant what I told you, damn it.”

“You’ll stay on the ground, Captain!”

At the booming voice the fliers leaped to their feet. The old man stood in the doorway. “What blinking nonsense is this, Gorman? You going up to fight the Baron? Hell, man, you’re not fit at this minute for target practice in the pits. Anyway you know my orders. Carry them out. My orders to you are to stay on this field.”

“To hell with your orders!” swore Gorman when the old man was out of hearing. “To hell with your orders!” he snapped over and over again. “I’m going up!”

NINE O’CLOCK. In his hut Gorman, alone, paced back, and forth. The rumble of distant guns increased in volume. The shriek of shells grew louder. The front was blazing. But for this Gorman had no mind. He was thinking only of Muggins in the hands of Von Glückner.

“‘My orders to you are to stay on the field’ the old man said. Very well, sir, to hell with your orders. What can you do? If I lick the Baron no court martial this side of hell will convict me. If I lose—. Well,” he smiled a grim smile. “Everything to gain and nothing to lose but my skin.”

He looked out through the open door. Sergeant Brean was in the cockpit of a Spad. To the casual observer there was nothing strange about that. Ships had to be kept in shape. Brean looked in Gorman’s direction, raised an arm slightly, and then climbed out of the Spad and sauntered nonchalantly toward the hangar.

Gorman grabbed his helmet and tore across the drome. “You stay on the ground!” The old man’s orders kept ringing in his ears even as he ran toward the plane. “Very well, sir,” Gorman muttered for the hundredth time. “To the devil with your orders!” In the orderly hut the old man heard a motor sputter, then its roar. He got up from his chair and went to the window just in time to see the Spad drilling straight into the sky. A grim smile played on his face. “Good luck!” he said simply.

Gorman headed straight for the lines, climbed steadily, and passed over them at an altitude of ten

thousand feet. Somewhere in these clouds was Von Glückner, the bloody Baron, and riding with him was Muggins. His hands crept to the trigger handle of the twin Vickers and let go a burnt. He was ready. Below, the cloudbank rolled lazily, but huge maverick chunks of it floated about the sky. From behind any one of these a triplane might catapult any second now.

Gorman felt little chills darting up and down his spine. He was fully aware of the seriousness of the job ahead. The odds were ten to one against him. His muscles were still stiff and sore from the nerve-racking experience of yesterday and his head ached violently from lack of sleep. But all fear left him when he thought of Muggins, mascot of the Terriers, in the hands of the Jerries. A smile twisted his lips as his eyes swept the sky. Then he saw it.

The sun flashed on the wings of a red Fokker off to the left and a little above him. Von Glückner! Gorman pulled back the stick and gained altitude. Then the red ship was charging directly at him. Gorman flew to meet it at the same level and head on. The Fokker and the Spad were about half a mile apart but already the Baron’s spandaus were blazing.

Gorman held his fire, waited until his nose pointed squarely at the Baron’s spinning prop. Now Gorman could see the struts and wires of the red ship. Still he did not fire. Two hundred yards. He tensed in his seat and his hand snapped forward, squeezed the gun trips. The Vickers blazed crimson but he felt a terrific rush of air in his face as the wings of the Fokker brushed past his own in a wild zoom. How in hell had he missed?

There was a crackling in his ears and hot steel snapped past his head. He had to pull up fast and over and then, quarter-rolling and pivoting with nose down, Gorman dove again for the Baron. But the German was off at a fast climbing turn. Gorman pulled up and around and went after him, his hand pressing the trigger, and he knew that the burst went into the red ship. The Baron tipped over in a fast circle.

Gorman strained his eyes for a sight of Muggins, but only the black helmet of the Baron showed above the cockpit of the Fokker. His anxiety for the safety of the Terrier mascot put him off guard for a moment and in the moment the Baron knifed out of the circle and sent a burst into the cockpit of the Spad. A tracer plowed through Gorman’s right arm and the instrument board splintered in front of his face.

Wildly he stunted to get out of the line of fire as Von Glückner’s plane circled for the kill. Gorman, mad

with the fury of the fight, whipped up straight at his tormenter. Orange tongues leaped from the nose of the red plane. The strut on the Spad splintered and a line of perforations appeared as by magic on the wing above his head.

As he swept by Von Glückner waved derisively. Gorman swung his bus about and as he did, he thought he heard Muggins' cry blending with the chatter of the Baron's spandau. But it must have been only his imagination.

GORMAN'S RIGHT ARM was getting numb. His feet felt unsteady on the rudder bar and he knew that he had been hit in at least three places. Desperately he dove quickly and sent a hail of lead from the Vickers as he came at the Fokker broadside. Diving, banking, zooming, the Baron tried to get on the tail of the Spad.

But Gorman was fighting for more than personal glory. "Muggins and the Terriers!" he yelled as his hand froze to the trigger handle. The Baron flashed for a split second in front of his gun sights and Gorman, with a yell, squeezed the trips. Nothing happened. His heart froze within him. Cold, clammy beads of sweat welled on his face. The Vickers had jammed!

Panic-stricken, Gorman pushed the stick forward and went into a long dive. He was at Von Glückner's mercy. Like a clap of doom came the Spandau's roar. Bullets ripped through the Spad, tugged at the cloth of Gorman's flying coat. With teeth clenched and with the back of his head resting on the cockpit Gorman waited for the end. But the Spandau stopped its insane chanting and in its place Gorman heard a yell of rage behind him.

He leveled out, swung the Spad around, and saw the Fokker rocking crazily just above him. The Baron was threshing about in the cockpit, and Gorman saw his right hand jerk up as if he had pulled it out of somewhere with an effort. Then a furry thing leaped into view and fastened gleaming teeth into the collar of the Baron's sweater.

"Muggins!" yelled Gorman and zoomed up into the sky, pounding his fist furiously on the crank handle drum of the Vickers. Out of the corner of one eye he saw the Fokker flying wildly with the Baron tugging frantically at the thing that worried him. Suddenly the Vickers spit fire and with a sky-splitting yell, Gorman pushed the stick forward and dove, even as Von Glückner's fist smashed Muggins back to the fuselage where the dog struggled to gain a foothold.

Then getting his balance he sprang at the Baron

from behind. When Gorman came racing in at the Fokker Muggins was hanging tenaciously to the back of the Baron's sweater collar. The German swung his ship over and around and his guns blazed as he came racing full tilt at Gorman. Hot steel snapped past Gorman's head. Pieces of leather flew into his face as a bullet found a crash pad but Gorman did not fire. Muggins was there! A definite plan took root in his mind even as the Spad full-gunned in. Muggins, if Gorman could help it, would never taste flame, but it meant an almost superhuman flying skill on his part.

Scarcely more than a hundred yards from the onrushing triplane Gorman gritted his teeth and squeezed the gun trips. The Vickers spat flame. The flying wires on the Fokker went lax as a burst from the Spad took out the single strut in the upturned wing. It went into a mass of splinters and the wing folded up. As Gorman desperately pulled up the bus to avoid a collision he caught a fleeting glimpse of Von Glückner making frantic efforts to hold his plane together.

Down, down the German ace nursed the Fokker with Gorman hanging on his tail. The British flier marvelled at the skill of the Baron in holding together the red crate while Muggins still clung to the back of his neck. At five hundred feet Von Glückner was fighting to hold the Fokker in a glide to bring it to a comparatively safe landing; but it was a futile effort.

Gorman knew that to the German ace the earth was coming up too fast. Muggins fell back to the fuselage and fell over the side a few seconds before the Fokker crashed and folded its wings back around the form of Von Glückner. The rending, grinding, snapping crash rang in Gorman's ears as he sent up a silent prayer for Muggins.

Even as Gorman settled the wheels of his Spad down on the soggy turf of the meadow his eyes were losing their light and his right arm hung useless. Breathing was torture. As the fuselage of the Spad slid along the uneven ground the jolting sent hot bayonets of pain through Gorman's tortured body. The ship came to a standstill and he unfastened his belt with one shaking hand and climbed painfully out of the Spad. He took two steps forward toward the wreck of the Fokker a few yards away, then toppled over on his face.

WHEN GORMAN opened his eyes again the first thing he saw was the curl of smoke rising from the wrecked plane. Everything came back to him in a flash. Von Glückner! Muggins! Then he felt a weight at his

shoulder and something cold touched his cheek. Was that something sniffing? Gorman raised himself with a struggle, not daring to credit his senses. It could not be.

But as he strove to attain a sitting position he heard a little cry followed by a furious barking. Gorman yelled for joy. Wildly he looked around and then a soft, furry body hurled itself at him, licked his face, pawed at his helmet. Gorman's good arm encircled the little Terrier and he hugged it to his tunic.

"Damn! Muggins old boy. Great old Muggins. You helped me get the Baron, do you hear? A cross for the mascot of the Terriers!" babbled Gorman as the tears streamed down his face. "You're the best little fighter in the war!" And as he crushed Muggins' head against his cheek he lapsed again into unconsciousness.

Late that evening he regained consciousness. The scent in his nostrils told him that he was in the emergency hospital. He turned his head with difficulty and his eyes strayed around the room to rest at the foot of his bed where a furry ball lay curled up. The little head jerked up and with a whine of happiness Muggins scampered over and perched beside him. Gorman tried to move but a spasm of pain shot through his side but disappeared as he relaxed. He felt terribly weak. A nurse came over to his cot.

"Don't move now," she smiled. "Everything's going to be all right. A bullet lodged in one of your ribs and we had to probe for it. Your arm was nothing. Loss of blood more than anything. Your friends wanted me to call them when you came around. Do you feel able—?" There came an interruption.

Gorman grinned as Muggins leaped up and planted his forepaws on the white apron at the nurse's chest as he frantically tried to show his appreciation of the kindness to his master.

"Tell 'em to come over, nurse," Gorman exclaimed. "I've got a lot to get off my chest."

Major Lampry, Captain Drury, and McNitt appeared in the doorway of the ward. Gorman smiled as the three men gathered around his bed. The old man spoke first and there was a twinkle in his eye.

"You didn't know you became a hero while you were cracked up here, did you, Gorman?"

The tired eyes on the pillow blinked in surprise. "Me? What—?"

"King George wants to pin a medal on your chest—the old D.C.M.," the Major continued. "The frogs want permission to clamp a *Medaille Militaire* or some such thing on your manly bosom, but I still think you're a damned fool. I'm not so sure yet that I won't put you to a court martial."