



THE NIGHT EAGLE

by WILLIAM E. BARRETT

*What meant blind ruin to other men was salvation to Philip Law—
for in the pitiless glare of war-torn skies he alone could wrest the secret from the eyes that could not see.*

IT WAS AT THE ASYLUM FOR THE BLIND that Philip Law first heard of America's Declaration of War. He was seated with twenty others who were listening intently to a man they could not see. "America is going into the war. The President has just signed the paper. You've heard a lot about the war in France. I've told you plenty about it. It is stupid, but serious, and it will last a long, long time. Most Americans who are fit will feel they've got to go."

The little gray-haired man spoke in a nasal, whining voice. It was all parrot talk to him. He had been doing that kind of job for longer than he cared to think about. At times, he made faces, squinted his

eyes, or drew down the corners of his mouth. He had come to hate these unfortunates in front of him. But Disel had the only position he could fill, instructing the blind.

Philip Law listened, conscious of the fitful manner of the little man who spoke. It made no difference to him. Images flashed before his eyes, thoughts of a far-off country where men would fight for the liberation of the world. He wished that he might be there. And so he dreamed as Disel spoke on and on.

When the period was up Philip still sat in his seat. He could always think. It overcame the tragedy of his blindness. In his mind, he could see everything.

A rough hand slapped his shoulder.

"Get out of here, Philip Law. Dreaming! Always dreaming. Get out, I tell you, get out!"

Disel's voice. He knew it was Disel long before he spoke. He knew the touch of his hand. Philip raised himself, felt his desk, and moved out of the room. He didn't have to feel his way about. He knew the way well, every corner and every step of the Pennington Asylum for the Blind. But to-day he hesitated. In his heart there was an anxiety he had never known before. He even forgot Disel's harsh voice, and his cutting way of speaking.

In front of the gray building, Mary Cain waited his coming. She called softly to him as he felt his way through the door.

"John," she said.

"Yes, Mary. It's me."

They walked out into the yard, hand in hand, as they had walked many, many times. They didn't speak until they had found their customary bench.

"Why don't you talk to-day?" she asked.

"I've been thinking. They said that America had declared war to-day. I wish I could go. Mary, I hate being blind. I hate it worse than anything in the world. I can't stand it much longer."

She tried to laugh.

"It's not so bad."

"It's awful!" said Philip.

They grew quiet again. Philip got up and walked down the lane a few paces and back again. He wouldn't talk. He could only think and think.

His hand moved out until it touched hers.

"I can't stand it much longer. I want to do things, now. I want to see things. I want to see you. I'm going back home to-morrow. They're letting me go for a few days."

Mary sighed.

"I don't like the dark any more. I've had enough of it. All my life it's been like this. It's not so bad for you. You can see. You've only come here to learn how to teach the blind. You don't know. Look at me. Look what I am. I'm blind, and I'll stay blind all my life!"

The bell rang, and they got up, walked back silently, hand in hand. Philip Law didn't know that Mary was crying.

AFTER lunch that day a singular thing happened. Doctor Millian, the superintendent of the asylum, made the announcement in regard to the experiments of the noted specialist, Doctor Groose, a German who

had been living in this country a number of years. Doctor Groose was coming the following week to make experiments with the blind. They were to be test cases, for nothing of the kind had been done before. Those in the asylum who were classified as cataract cases might avail themselves of the opportunity of consulting him.

"I don't exactly advise any of you taking advantage of this opportunity. At least, I don't advise the first one. There is a great chance of failure. But if any one of you wishes to make a great sacrifice for humanity, let him do it. But let me warn you. If it fails, you will never see as long as you live upon this earth."

There were three hundred who listened to him that afternoon. After the last words had passed Dr. Millian's lips, there was silence. Not one of the three hundred moved.

Then, in the last row little Philip Law stood up. His face was pale, and the sockets of his eyes were deep set. His shaking right hand passed over the great mass of black hair upon his small head. "I'll do it!" he called out. "I'll do it!"

That evening Philip Law left for home. He went to a little village not far away. One of his four brothers met him at the train. He was a large-boned, ruddy-faced young man. He was twenty, just a year older than Philip.

"How's the kid?" he said. "You look tired and worried. What's the trouble?"

"Nothing, Pete," said Philip.

But on the way home he told Pete about the specialist who was coming to the hospital. And about the operation. Philip might be able to see again!

"If he could only make me see again!"

They drew up at the little house that was occupied by George Law, and four sons, and a cook. It was the house in which Philip had been born. He knew every inch of it. He knew where the chairs were and where his mother had always sat when she was alive. He had loved his mother. After her death, things had been different, and Philip had been sent to the asylum to study. He could learn to read Braille there, just by touching the paper that was filled with little holes which looked as if they had been made by the point of a pin.

At dinner that evening things were quiet. George Law sat at the end of the table, and his five sons sat around him. He was a red-faced man, big and muscular. So were all of his sons except Philip. At times a look of contempt came into the father's face

when he looked at him. He wondered why he ever should have had a puny child who was blind.

"How's things been going? I suppose you can read Braille, now?" he asked Philip.

"I could read it when I was here before. You remember. I told you."

The father's brows knitted. He didn't remember. Yes, maybe he did.

"What else do you do there?" he asked.

"Nothing much. We have lectures. They told us America had declared war. Gee, that's great."

His father glanced up at him. His knife and fork paused in mid-air, and then dropped to the side of his plate. Philip knew somehow he was watching him, looking at him. He felt that he had said something it would have been better for him not to have said. He continued eating in the silence, without daring to say anything more.

After the table had been cleared, Philip heard his father drag back his chair as he always did when he was through. Then he started talking.

"Yes, we're getting into this war. And war is hell. But it's necessary. I was through a war once. I've told you all about it too many times. I was with the English in South Africa. I've seen plenty of men die. I saw a man once with his entrails trailing along after him while he was calling for help. It gets you, a thing like that does. But if you're brave, you can stand it. I stood it, but there were some who couldn't. They were yellow, and they didn't have the guts.

"We were a fine bunch when we started out. The flags were flying and the people were shouting along the streets. But when we got on the boat it was different. The food was bad, and some of them got the scurvy. You could see their faces getting yellow, and a wild look came into their eyes."

GEORGE LAW'S voice got louder as he spoke. His five sons listened. They'd heard most of this before. The bad part had been left out, then. They'd never heard their red-faced father bellow as he did now.

"Before we landed at Capetown we'd thrown thirteen dead over the side of the ship. The outfit was cursed. But it didn't keep us from going on. The jungle fever hit us then. Brackish water was never good for a man. Two days of it and you'd blow up to twice your natural size. Some of us were raving before we hit the bush, and then men died off like fleas.

"For a month we trailed the Dutchmen and the blacks. But the beggars were as easy on their feet as

will-o'-the-wisps. You could hear them; you could see where they'd been; but your eyes never caught a sight of them. We had to see to fight. It made us yellow. Walking around the bush, and never seeing 'em. That was the thing. Along with the bush fever, it was running us mad.

"Night after night, and night after night. Bullets coming out of nowhere, and picking off some of our best men; men the fever couldn't get because they were too strong. Sometimes you wouldn't hear the shots. You'd only see the men dead the next morning when the sun came up. It was the nights that made the men afraid. They could stand the day. White men never could stand fighting in the dark. They are only used to using their eyes, instead of their ears and noses.

"The men even forgot about glory and honor. They hadn't thought it would be that way when they started. If they'd known, most of them wouldn't have gone. They'd been glad if some one like me had told them about it—as I'm telling you. They'd have kept their self-respect anyway. But no one told them, as I'm telling you. No one!"

His face was redder than it had been at first. Little beads of sweat oozed out of his forehead, as he raised his clenched fist and dropped it hard on the table.

"You boys were mumbling about war, yesterday. I think some of you thought of going. Remember the thing I went through. Remember the nights when things come that you can't see. Remember, it's bloody hell!"

His eyes moved slowly from face to face. He wanted them to understand fully the thing they were wishing to do. But there was a smile on his face. He thought they'd laugh at what he had said, just as he had laughed. He thought they had guts. He thought they'd rise up and say, "What difference does that make. England was your country, and you went. But you're in America now. America is our country. We were born here. There isn't anything you can say that will stop us. We are going!" He would have had their hands in his, if they had. He would have been pleased. He would have been happy about the boys he'd raised.

Not one of them moved. Their eyes fastened upon the table. None of them dared look up. Were they yellow? Where were the guts he'd thought they had all the time?

Then little Philip Law raised himself up from the table. His hollow eyes stared out from their deep-set sockets. His thin lips quivered as he spoke.

"I wish to God I had eyes. I'd go. I'd go, by God, if it was the last thing in the world I ever did. What's the

matter with all the rest of you? I'm sorry you're my brothers. You're just a bunch of cowards, the whole gang of you. Can't you see Dad wants you all to go? I haven't got eyes, but I can see that. What's the matter with you all? Why don't you speak?"

He clutched at the side of his chair. And a single hissed word came through his lips, "Yellow!"

And they laughed at him.

PHILIP LAW never waited until Monday to go back to the asylum. He got there on Saturday, the day after he'd left. Mary was almost the first to hear of his coming. She'd bought a book during his absence. It was written in Braille.

"It's for you," she said.

They sat upon their almost private bench, and Philip Law fingered the cover.

"History and Development of Airplanes, by Robert Guery," he read, as his sensitive fingers passed over the white sheet slowly. "How did you know I wanted a book about them? I'm so glad."

"It was the only thing I could find that might have anything to do with the war." She touched his arm, and he felt the reassuring pressure of her frail hand.

They sat there, just the two of them, as his fingers passed over the pages. The darkness came, but still he read on.

Suddenly he stopped.

"What time is it, I wonder?" he asked,

"Long after supper. I heard the bell ring, but you were reading, and you didn't hear. I don't care anything about it. Go on reading. I like to hear you."

Another hour passed.

They heard Disel call. He was looking for them. They heard his footsteps as he moved almost silently through the grounds, mumbling under his breath for having to look for the two who should have been in bed. He was almost upon them before he stopped.

"There you are, you two. I caught you. Trying to hide, were you? You wretched little cuss."

"We weren't trying to hide," said Philip.

"You were," hissed Disel. "And I know what you were doing, you blackguard! But I'll teach you!" He struck Philip with his clenched fist. He struck him time after time. Philip felt the blood flow from his nose and down over his lips and chin. He cowered away. He was terrified. Then a strange courage came. He thought about Mary. Suddenly he leaped forward. He grasped Disel's neck, and the two of them fell upon the earth, rolling over and over.

Mary screamed, and watched them struggling. She could see the little fat Disel choking, gasping for breath.

A light was flashed from the front of the building. Dr. Millian ran down the steps and out into the yard. He found the two gasping and rolling over and over. For a moment he stood watching them.

"Stop it, I tell you! Stop it!" he shouted.

Their grips relaxed. When they got up they were covered with blood and dirt. Disel cringed away, and a ratlike look came into his eyes. He pointed an accusing finger.

"I saw them. There on the bench. The two of them. They're bad!"

He stood blinking his eyes when the only condemnation he knew to say was finished. His loose mouth drew away from his protruding teeth, and he stood panting and pointing his blunt forefinger at Philip Law.

"To your beds, all of you!" Whatever Disel told Dr. Millian, Philip never learned. He was called up the next morning before a tall man with a severe voice.

"Your conduct was inexcusable, Philip Law. You are no longer a very young boy, and should not be treated as such. Hereafter, you'll be forbidden to speak with Mary Cain. She is here to study instruction of the blind. She has more important things to do than spending time, valuable time, with you." The superintendent coughed nervously and continued. "And another thing. I've thought the matter over about Dr. Groose's operation on your eyes. I don't think it's the best thing for you to do."

Philip bent his head. For a fraction of a moment he felt a hatred for every living thing except Mary. He started to leave the room, but at the door he stopped.

"Please," he pleaded suddenly. "Please! Let him try. I know there isn't much chance. But let him try. I don't want to live forever like this. I'll kill myself first. What kind of life is this! Oh, please, please let him try. I want to get into the war. I want to help my country."

The last plea took Dr. Millian by surprise.

"Very well, but it's at your own risk. I warn you."

Philip walked slowly to the door. He felt strangely happy.

CHAPTER II FOR EYES THAT SEE

ON THURSDAY the operation took place. The German Dr. Goose was a thin short man with insane-looking eyes. The whole thing lasted but a short time, but it seemed ages to Philip. He was finally placed alone in a darkened room, and told to wait. Within a few days, the bandages would be removed. Upon that occasion he was informed again of the possible failure of the operation.

"It may fail," said Goose. "And if it doesn't, the good may be only temporary."

Philip didn't speak at once. When he did, it was just, "If it fails, I'll kill myself."

He was asked for the book which Mary had given him, and Goose left.

All of that night his thin fingers passed over the white pages. In the morning when the nurse came, she found him sitting silently in his chair in the center of the barren room.

"How do you feel?" she asked.

"All right."

She left his breakfast there, and said that she'd return later. An hour passed. The door was opened cautiously, and he heard some one come in.

"Mary," he whispered. He knew the tread of her feet.

She came over to him and held his hand.

"If they catch me here, I'll have trouble."

"I'm so glad to see you," he said. "I've almost finished the book. It's slow, reading it this way."

"How are your eyes?"

"I don't know."

She came in often after that, sometimes three times each day.

Early the morning of the sixth day Dr. Goose came back. Neither of them said anything for a long time.

"Remember, it's a chance. I've promised nothing. And I've warned you from the beginning."

"Yes, sir."

The nurse helped take off the bandages. Philip was glad they worked so fast. It kept them from hearing the way his heart beat. Finally Goose went over to the window and put a hole in the shade. It allowed a spot

of light in the darkness. Then he came back and took Philip's head and pointed it toward the hole of light.

"Look that way," he said. "See if you can see anything. It's just a little light. Nothing more."

They all grew silent. Philip's lips were moving. He was saying over a prayer which he had heard many times before. But he didn't see anything. Fifteen minutes passed. The time dragged on and on. Goose started walking back and forth in the room. Finally he stopped and sighed.

"It's no use. It's no use," he said in a whisper. He thought that Philip didn't hear, but he did.

"What did you say, doctor?" he asked.

"Nothing."

Goose motioned to the nurse to leave. They both went to the door. It had been a failure. Twenty minutes had passed. He saw nothing. As the two of them stood at the door, Philip called, "What's the matter, doctor? I still can't see anything. I can't see anything at all!"

Goose stood there for a moment fingering the knob. He didn't have the courage to tell the truth. The nurse looked at him questioningly as he opened the door which led to the hall. A flood of light came in. Philip jumped from his chair and turned. Then something came to him. Something strange flooded his mind. It was a sensation he had never felt before.

He knew, then. It was light.

"I can see!" he shouted. "I can see!"

They closed the door.

"When you opened the door, I saw the light. I felt it."

PHILIP was happy. He was more happy than he had ever been in his life. He could see. But he had to grow accustomed to the light by degrees. Hour after hour he waited for the time to come when he might go outside. He constantly asked for the nurse to send Mary to him. But she never came. Then one day a note came from her. It was written in Braille, that writing for the blind. She had used the typewriter which they had there.

My dear Philip:

I can't come to see you any more. Nobody will let me. I never told you before that Dr. Goose is my guardian. He was the one who sent me here to study the teaching of the blind. I was the one who got him to come here. I knew you'd be the only one who'd take the chance. How glad I am that I did. To think you can see! They've told me that to-morrow you'll be able to go back home to your father and brothers. How happy you should be!

That rotten man Disel is a friend of my guardian. They came from the same town in Germany. He has said bad things about us. I don't know what they are, but they must be bad. I never told you before, but my guardian wants me to marry Disel. I hate him. I'm kept in my room now. I can't go out.

When you get back, write me in care of General Delivery here. Nobody will know.

I think I love you.

Good-by.

There was no signature. There was none needed. The knowledge contained in that letter made a gap in Philip Law's life. He suddenly felt an incredible loneliness. He was alone in the world. To return home filled him with repulsion. He wouldn't return home. The laugh that had fallen upon his ears that last night had relieved him of all thoughts of return. He hated them. He hated them with all the power he had. Something which his father had said that night came to Philip Law's mind.

"White men can't fight in the night." Couldn't fight? Why couldn't men fight at night? Hadn't he, Philip Law, fought for eighteen years, and wasn't he always in a kind of night? He would go to war. Drums sounded in his ears. He heard the music, and thought he saw the soldiers passing along the streets.

When Philip Law left the asylum, only one man saw him to the door. Through Philip's smoked glasses he saw a man even shorter than himself. He was grinning strangely, but in his eyes there was a queer and almost fiendish look. Philip Law never forgot the way Goose looked that morning. But before he left, he grasped the German's hand.

"I'll never forget what you've done for me. Never! I only hope I can do something for you some day."

TWO months from that day the following letter was shipped through the American mails. The stamp had been cancelled in Philadelphia, and it was handed to a nervous blonde girl through the General Delivery window at Pennington, Maryland. She had been there many times. The postman began to know her, but always before there had been the same answer to her question—"No." To-day it was different.

She didn't run to the street before she tore open the letter. Her heart throbbed. Her hand was shaking, and tears of gladness welled up into her eyes, which she wiped away with the finger of her white glove.

My dear Mary:

I can't tell you everything that has happened to me since I've seen you. It would be too long. But I'll tell you most everything.

I didn't go home. I didn't want to. I didn't even write. I got off the train at Philadelphia, and I stayed there. I don't know how I got along, now. It doesn't make any difference. What's more important, I start to the ground school at Ithaca to-morrow. Whether I've been very lucky all of the time, I don't know. I guess I have. My eyes still bother me at times, but I can see pretty well. The only trouble I had passing the examinations was my eye test. But I got by all right. There were so many of them there that afternoon, they never paid much attention to me.

There is one strange thing about my new sight. I can see almost anything at night. It's wonderful. They're as good as a cat's. Maybe it's because I was blind for so long.

You know, Mary, that I've never seen you? I don't know what kind of person to picture you as being. I remember that you told me you were a blonde, and that you were not as tall as I. Send me a picture.

What has happened to your guardian?

Write me as Cadet Philip Law, Cadet Barracks, University of Cornell Ground School, Ithaca, N.Y.

Ever

Philip Law.

Mary Cain ran from the postoffice, and down the street. She was happy, amazingly happy. She didn't know why. She was just happy, and she never questioned the reason.

She soon learned the difficulties of a man wishing to pass through ground school. She gathered from his letters that he was having more than the usual difficulty. But people liked him, somehow. They helped him. He was younger than any one else in the course. She thought of his pale white face, and his strange eyes. She wondered how he looked. His eyes must be growing stronger. He wrote of them less and less.

As for Mary, she wrote little about herself. She seldom spoke of her guardian. Once, she wrote of his going to France. He might work with the hundreds of blind soldiers. But there was something grave about her writing about that.

He is German, and German in every way. Sometimes, I'm afraid of him."

That was all the information she offered. After the ninth week she received a simple wire:

Passed and going to Kelly Field, Number One. San Antonio, Texas.

After that, their letters came and went more regularly. Both of them were living in a dream. When Philip first went solo, he wrote eight closely written

pages telling of the sensations he experienced. A portion of it she read over and over again.

It seems to be a part of my life, now. It's something that you've helped me get. You were the one who made it all possible. I don't know how to thank you enough.

But shortly after that there came a distressing letter. Philip had crashed. It hadn't hurt him, but the plane was a washout. It had happened when he was landing and something had gone wrong with his eyes. He knew where the ground was, but he had depended too much on seeing it. Had he but closed his eyes, it never would have happened.

Mary waited patiently for the letter that came after that. But he wrote no more about his eyes. Yet he was troubled. The very absence of any mention of it was enough to cause her worry. Then, one day, Mary Cain wrote a strange letter to Philip. He opened it as he opened all of her letters, but he read it many, many times.

Dearest Philip:

My guardian is going overseas to take charge of one of the small hospitals there as a specialist. But I'm deathly afraid. His feeling against America is strong, and at times I've heard him say unbearable things to other Germans who come to the house. Oh, I do so wish that I might talk to you about it all. It worries me more than I can possibly tell you.

And yesterday he spoke of my going along with him to France. I know a lot about taking care of the blind and instructing them. If I did go, it would be as a nurse. He said they needed people with as much knowledge of the blind as I have. But I don't want to go. I can't bear the thought of it. I'm beginning to hate him and everything he does. I wonder what I shall do.

Your Mary.

Philip puzzled over the letter a long time. He wondered what it meant. He didn't know how to help her. When he wrote, it was just to say there was little doubt that men were needed on the other side. Why didn't she go?

Her answer was a wire.

I am going to France within three weeks. Love. Mary.

And the next day by some strange coincidence he sent a similar message.

So am I. Love. Philip.

THOSE three weeks were difficult to Philip Law. A fear lingered in his mind, and continued to linger all through each day. At night that fear left him. He grew

more confident, for at night he could see. His eyes were like a cat's. Each little thing that passed along the roadside on the darkest of nights was easily discernible to him. He used to talk about his power to others. And he gave them surprising examples of his ability. It was incredible to them. They looked at him as if he were something strange, a freak.

But one day Philip crashed again. It was on a landing as it had been before. The crash haunted him from the time he got up in the morning until the dusk fell over Kelly Field Number One. And then in that strange, incomprehensible manner, his sight would come. He marveled at it. It was the single thing that gave him the power to carry on.

But even that seemed to lose some of its power. He was losing confidence, and nothing seemed to be big enough to bring it back. It might never have come, but for a singular coincidence one evening.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon that Casey, his instructor, sent Philip and two others of his cadets for their usual cross-country flying trip. The trip included the landing at two villages about twenty miles apart. In all, the circuit was about ninety miles. When the three of them took off, the weather was almost ideal. Over in the north a few dark clouds were banked against the horizon. There was a light wind, and it was a little cold.

Philip had no feeling about the trip. It was part of the routine. Everybody did it as a matter of course, for it was one of the tests.

Philip climbed into his plane, revved up the motor, and made preparations to leave. He was given his last-minute instruction by his smiling instructor, the chocks were pulled, and he floated across the field, following one of the others. The three of them soon formed a wedge, banked toward the first of the two landing fields, thirty miles away.

Halfway there it grew bumpy, and the clouds in the north spread all over the sky. But they went on. The rain came. It beat against the propeller, and skimmed over the wings. It felt like pellets of steel against Philip Law's face.

It grew darker and darker. The motors whined mournfully, fighting against the sudden change. They had difficulty keeping their distance, and there were times when they thought they'd crash into each other.

It was an ordeal. They were soon exhausted, and they began fearing for their lives.

When they landed at last at the first of the two flying fields, they felt that God had taken care of them.

Philip was the last to come down. He floated in with a singular precision, and dropped upon the field like a feather.

Dawson, the leader of the three, stood at the side of a makeshift hangar looking on. He'd had a good fifteen hours in the air, and was considered a promising pilot. This was his first flight in adverse weather. His face was white, and he was crushing his helmet between his hands as Philip came over to him. Dawson's gray eyes blinked, and he brushed his wet hair back with a great lean hand.

"We're lucky as hell," he said. "I didn't think we'd get through. I busted a wheel and Ham nearly turned over. But you made a swell landing. God, you're lucky."

"Lucky?" repeated Philip. He turned to Ham, a squat little fellow with blue eyes. Philip knew he was afraid.

"Yes, lucky. Nobody can fly like that when it's dark as this is," said Dawson.

They had a cigarette apiece, and sat quietly looking at the storm. They thought it would end as suddenly as it had come. It didn't get any worse, but it got darker and darker.

"We'd better phone in to Casey. He'll be worried. They can send a truck, or something. I want to get back. To hell with these ships."

"I'm going back," said Philip quietly.

"You're batty as hell," said Dawson.

Ham was silent. He kept looking at the darkness overhead. He was finished for the day, and he was silent.

"I'm going back," repeated Philip.

"It'll be black as hell before you get there. Who do you think you are, anyway?" Dawson was furious. He threw his cigarette upon the ground and started to walk away.

"And not only that," said Philip, "but I'm going to make the whole trip. I'm going to make the second field before I turn back."

Dawson laughed. It sounded like the laugh Philip had heard at the dinner table with his four brothers and his father. It did something to his insides. He felt as if his entire future depended upon his making that trip.

"You'll see," he said.

PHILIP walked back to his plane. When he got there he called to Ham. He crawled into the wet pit of his plane and called again.

"Please, Ham, turn over the prop!"

Ham ran out in the darkness. For a moment he poised himself at the nose of the plane.

"Suck in!" shouted Philip.

"Suck in," repeated Ham.

"Contact!" said Philip.

The propeller whirled. In a few minutes the motor grew warm. As Philip turned for a position to take off, Dawson came up and held to the side of the plane.

"You'll kill yourself. It's dark. For God's sake, don't take off!"

Philip only smiled.

"Don't worry. When I get back I'll tell Casey the weather was too bad for you to take off." With that he gave gas to his plane.

He was moving across the black ground, and up into a blacker sky. But it didn't seem black to him. He knew well the darkness, for most of his life had been spent where only the dark is found, and it is forever night.

His motor hummed on. The storm, which had long since reached its height, had become only a frightful wind which moaned over the earth. It no longer rained. The stars came out. But it was dark, and not even the Texas norther could give light to that dismal, lonely earth below.

Philip caught sight of his second field, and he drifted downwind until he swept by like a flash over the spot. When he turned back, the wind held him almost still, and he dropped slowly, like a bird, until the wheels touched the ground.

When he was down he let his motor run, and ran into the little shack at the side of the field. There was a book there and he signed his name, and the time. Then he ran back. He had been afraid the plane might have been carried away, but he had taken the precaution of tying the stick back to the seat. That held it to the earth. He took off without turning. His plane raised up quickly. And he sailed on.

It seemed the greatest moment in his life. He was far away from everything. He was by himself, and in that strange loneliness, he became himself.

He remembered the moments he had spent with the book Mary had given him. He remembered his deft touch of its pages, and of reading it half aloud to himself. He had hoped for this moment to come, even then.

And it had come.

Then out through the darkness, he saw the lights of Kelly Field Number One. The straight line of lights could be nothing else. As he neared the field he saw

little spots below, people. There were hundreds of them. The great flares were suddenly lighted, and strong rays shot out into the darkness. Men ran over the field.

Philip wished they had left the field in darkness. The lights blinded him, and he pulled away from them. When he turned for a landing, he pointed the nose of his plane to the far, dark end of the field. He dropped slowly. Closer and closer he came until his wheels struck. A furious light flashed his way. Fear possessed him. Pie bounded high and settled sluggishly. He was down.

Hundreds of men ran over the field. He waited, watching them as they came. He wondered why they ran. It confused him. He wondered if he had done something wrong. He thought of the warning of Dawson about returning. He was tempted to leap from the plane, and run farther away into the darkness where it was friendly.

Some one called. He knew it was Casey, his instructor.

Casey couldn't talk when he got there. His breath would not come. Pie stood at the side of the pit, hanging on to Philip's shoulder, and shaking it in a friendly way. Philip could see the smile on his face.

"The greatest flight that was ever done by a cadet on this field. You're a wonder! You're better than the best of, them. My God, I don't know how you got away with it. And at night! Night! It would have killed anybody else!"

They pulled little Philip Law from the plane and they carried him back. He couldn't speak. He didn't know what to say. And if he had, they didn't give him a chance to say it. The field had gone mad.

Even the Commander of Kelly Field No. 1 was out there that night. He hadn't had such a thrill in ages, that waiting for a man to come—a man who might be dead. He laid his hand upon Philip's shoulder.

"Cadet Law," he said gravely, "you've got the making of one of the best pilots I ever saw. You're going to make history, young man. Come up and have dinner with me to-morrow. I want to talk to a man like you."

But Cadet Law was bewildered. It had been the easiest thing in the world for him. He couldn't smile about it all as he was supposed to do. He could only look strangely through those deep-sunken, black eyes of his, and say, "Thanks."

CHAPTER III THE FLYING FRONT

A WEEK AFTER THAT, Philip made preparations for going overseas. It was not until then that he sent his first word to his father, who hadn't been so bad to him after all. He had sent Philip to the Asylum for the Blind, to be taught to read, and to get an education like other men. It had made possible his getting into the air service. And so, with these thoughts in his head, he sent a night letter to Mr. George Law.

My last night at home was impossible. Could never stand another. Sorry I left without telling any one. You must forgive me. I can't tell you everything that has happened these last seven months, but there are two things that will surprise you. First, I can see now. The operation was a very difficult one, but successful. Second, I joined the air service. Am now a lieutenant, a pilot, and am going overseas shortly. I think I've changed a lot since that last time. I'm ten pounds heavier, and I'm happy.

The clerk who took the message from the hands of Lieutenant Philip Law looked at him. Something strange about this, he thought. But it wasn't his job to think. It was his job to take messages. He stood silently by and waited for a second wire which was sent to a General Delivery address in Maryland.

leave to-morrow. Wish me luck.

Philip.

The clerk took the message. As he turned away, a thought struck him. He smiled slightly as he turned.

"Say, Lieutenant, your name is Philip Law?" he questioned.

Philip nodded.

"I just remember we got a wire for you. We've been holding it here, because we couldn't find out where you were. Things get mixed up nowadays." He fumbled through the files. Suddenly he looked up and passed over a wire.

Dearest, I leave day after to-morrow. Address American Red Cross, Paris. Wish me luck. Mary.

Philip read it twice.

THE next morning the boat sailed. For sixteen days

it wallowed about in a turbulent ocean, along with a convoy of seven—two British men-o'-war, and three steel-clad vessels known as subchasers. Thus they got through safely to Marseilles. Philip spent the night there, along with thirty other pilots. The following morning the thirty were sent to Issoudun. Then came the first active stories of the war. The Front was coming closer all of the time. He wrote letters to Mary Cain in care of the American Red Cross in Paris, but he received no answers. That troubled him.

He became lonely, dreadfully lonely. He shunned companionship. Finally his loneliness became unbearable. He spent more and more time by himself, doing his bit of flying each day, and that was all.

It was one rainy morning while he was at Issoudun, Field No.8, that Philip first encountered Jose Slocum. How they ever became friends neither one ever quite understood until it was all over, and the incomprehensible ropes of friendship were already eternally tied. Jose Slocum was an old pilot. He'd been on the Front from the days when shotguns were carried along as a matter of course. He'd even been so fortunate as to shoot down an unsuspecting German, for which he had received a glittering cross. Possibly it was the cross which had attracted Philip Law to that singular Englishman. Why Slocum never shot down another was covered by one simple statement of his.

"I never saw another one. Bloody good thing for him."

But Slocum had finally gone to two-seaters, and had roamed over half the skies of the world. He'd been to Salonica with the British Expeditionary Forces in the East. He'd flown over the Pyramids in Egypt. He'd been sent far into the south, into the East African trouble. He'd been every place and everything from flying man to secret service agent and back again. And when he was through, they'd sent him to Issoudun. He didn't know why. He'd been an officer too long ever to question.

"Don't ask questions, my boy. It's God and the King who know the answers, but they ain't tellin'."

Slocum was a strange mixture of a Spanish mother and a Scotch father. His first name came from his mother and the last—he never was quite sure where that had come from. To the best of his knowledge, Slocum's father's name was Wallace. And a good name that was, too, for all their talking about it.

And he could drink, Slocum could. He tipped the bottle from the moment he got up in the morning until the time he got to bed at night, which was seldom. He could time drinks exactly, and with a fortitude that was astonishing.

He was always exceedingly happy. His teeth shone most of the time in his bony face. His small eyes were forever sparkling in his thin, yellow-colored face. It was a strange face, enough to frighten any one who never seen it before. Yellow—from gas on the Somme, one night when he was visiting. That gas had taken the best there was in Slocum, but it had left plenty that was worth while. Physically he looked to be a powerful man. But if you looked more closely, you found that he was little more than flesh hung on a gigantic frame.

THE first night Slocum and Philip were together they spent in the mess. Slocum was smiling over his bottle and telling what he knew about himself.

"Yes, sir, they'll be sending me on some of these bright sunshiny days. They'll be putting me over, along with the rest. They call it liaison officer. An' what is that, I ask you. A beggar what's on his own, and doing what he pleases, an' drinking what he wants to drink. That's what they promised me. But it ain't that. They'll be sending me along with one of these bloomin' Yank outfits to teach the buzzards how to hang over the lines. An' along'll come some Heiney an' pop me off."

He fingered his glass with a bony hand, laughed a low laugh, and continued.

"The British, they're done with me. No use for an old soldier. They think I'm done. But I ain't. I've done my work for 'em an' they think I'm through, an' maybe they're shipping me to the Yanks. That's what they are."

For a moment his eyes became hard, ruthless. As if a kind of hate was some place in his soul.

"But listen to me, Law—that's your name, ain't it? Well, listen to me. I'm going before this war is over. I know they'll get me some time. But what difference does it make? The best I got in me is gone. I've put on some corking shows when I was young, some posh ones, I'll tell you. I wasn't always old. I was just a youngster when the lads came tumbling back from Mons. Yes, but I've grown old since then. It's gas. Yes."

He fingered his glass again, poured himself a drink, and coughed. Whatever he was thinking at that moment made him smile, and his eyes blink. Then he started again.

"They think I ain't got much in me. They think I'm through, the blighters. But I ain't through. Not me. I got one good fight left in me some place. One, I tell you, an' when that fight comes off, she's going to be a posh one. She'll be fine, an' she'll be my last."

His voice trailed off into nothing. He stared at the wet table in front of him.

Philip made no effort to question the reason in his statement. He didn't quite understand everything Captain Slocum, M.C., said that night. He knew the gist of it. Slocum was friendless, a kind of lost soul of the British millions, one who had had difficulties with them, and they'd thrown him aside when the chance came. And in retaliation the captain had decided to go in one last glory flight, the nature of which Philip did not know. Philip drew away. With reluctance he pushed himself back over the table as Slocum's face raised up. The expression changed with the movement. It was a face of supreme kindness and sympathy. There was a hurt look in his eyes, as if some one had done him a great injustice. And as he spoke, Philip knew he had met a friend.

"The British blighters!" he said. That was his only comment about the trouble. And then he added one singular thing.. "Yes, my boy, there's one good fight left in me, and when it's done, they'll all know about it. I don't know what it'll be, but it'll be done at night, my boy. At night, because I'm the best night flyer in the service!"

Philip's eyes flashed and a note of almost childish sympathy came into his voice as he said, "You fly at night? You like to fly at night? Do you think it's hard?"

"Hard? The lads think it is. But not for me. It's in my bones, I suppose. I ain't like other fellows. No."

"I fly at night. I'd rather fly at night than anything else. I—"

And that was the beginning of the strange friendship between Slocum, who was trying to drink himself to death because he had memories, and little Philip Law who was getting his first glimpse of a world as it really was.

Slocum had given confidences that night he had offered many, many times before, in fact to every one who'd crossed his path when he was in his cups. But it all had a strange effect upon Philip. He spoke of Mary and Doctor Goose, her guardian. Soon he spoke of his blindness, and the constant terror he had of its return. Last of all he told of his ability to fly at night.

And they became friends.

Whether it was the pressure exerted upon the commander of Issoudun by Slocum, or just a matter of chance, Philip never knew, but toward the end of June '18, the two of them were shipped off together to the Twenty-second Squadron to the right of Charny, back of the Meuse. There was fighting in that district, and plenty of fighting.

There was another man who went along with them. A James Morland, who had been known in

Kansas City as Morland's son, or just "Pinky" Morland. Everybody in Kansas City knew J. P. Morland, and James was his only son. He'd come into money some day, and Pink seldom lost the chance of telling you about it. He was a bit taller than Philip, and his hair was brilliant red, which seemed to shine with all the transient glory of being the son of a millionaire. Philip wasn't sure whether he liked Pink Morland or not. He'd never seen anybody like him, with his, close, thin mouth, and a ready sneer for everything.

PHILIP was looking idly out of the window of the compartment of the car. The countryside of France passed slowly, and the engine ahead puffed and wheezed as it brought the three of them closer and closer to the firing lines. As Philip watched him, Pink looked up, held his gaze for a moment before speaking.

"War? It's a lot of hocus! If you play the game right you get out. I'm getting out. I got into the air service because it's the safest place to be. You get plenty of good food, and drink whenever you want. It's the place where gentlemen are—gentlemen like me. My old man is Morland of Kansas City. You've probably heard of him. Everybody has. Made a million putting pigs into cans. Yeah— 'Pigs in Pink Packages.' He worked like hell before he thought of that slogan; then he made a fortune. Two million at least. But he's getting old now. He won't last much longer. Then I'll enjoy life, believe me. Boy, everything I want, I'll have. That's why I got into the air service. I'm taking care of myself until the thing is over, and I can spend it all. I'd be crazy to go into the trenches and get shot to pieces, wouldn't I?"

Slocum watched from his lowered head. Philip nodded. It seemed the thing to do.

"Lucky fellow," said Slocum. "Lucky you don't have to eat some of your father's 'Pigs in the Pink Packages.' They gave our whole outfit ptomaine poisoning in East Africa. Bally near thought we were going to die, I'll tell you."

Pinky Morland laughed.

"Nothing to laugh about, Morland. I thought I was a goner. Here, have a drink."

They drank from the bottle. They seemed to get more friendly. An hour passed, and Philip heard Slocum tell again about his flying over every part of the flying Front that had been flown over, and his vague suggestion about what the British had done to him. It all finished with the same thing Philip had heard before.

"But I've still got one good fight left in me. I'm going in a bally bit of glittering glory. An' it'll be done at night, Pink—that's the name, isn't it?"

Philip sat silently by, and listened. They were drunk. But they liked it. Philip didn't touch the stuff. He didn't know why he didn't. He envied the two of them who could get so much pleasure out of a bottle, and become so friendly. He felt left out.

When their conversation dragged, they turned to Philip. They questioned him. They seemed interested suddenly.

Slocum said, "Pinky, my boy, there's a man who's got innards. I don't know a man in the war who has overcome as much as he has. At least, I ain't seen 'em. An' I've seen a lot. Africa, the East—every place but Russia."

And so did Philip silently become one of the trio. Three men who had nothing in common. Slocum, who was looking for death; Pinky, who was bound not to die; and little Philip Law, who had lived a life of blindness, and had innards, and a love of his country.

The train came to a sudden stop. A shrill little whistle tooted away as if it were batty as hell. Slocum looked out of the window.

"As I live! We've come to the end of the line. It's Charny. Shake a leg, youngsters. We're on the flying line!"

They walked through the village of Charny, just the three of them. It was a dismal hole. The French villagers on the Front hid what life they had left in them. There were just barren walls and windows on either side of the street. Soldiers of almost every kind passed by. There were two inns, and places where men drank.

They walked on. They accepted salutes, and said nothing. Finally Slocum asked for the headquarters of the Twenty-second, and they went on.

When they got to the office of the Twenty-second, the officer in command wasn't there. An orderly told them to wait.

"Sit down, sir. He'll be coming in," said the orderly.

A CAR drove up shortly. They heard a man get out. They heard him walk up the stairs, and into the room. He passed by. He didn't glance up until he'd seated himself back of the desk.

Suddenly they saw his face.

Philip felt something clutch at his heart. From the right of the major's forehead, and extending down until it terminated at his chin, was a scar. It passed

through a brilliant but irregular spot of purple that almost blotted out a terrible and freakish right eye.

His nose was thin, his hair all but gone. When he spoke, he snapped at the end of each sentence. He also made quick gestures with his right hand, which was slightly deformed, bony and knotted.

His gaze centered on Philip.

"What's your name?" he snapped.

"Lieutenant Philip Law, reporting from Issoudun, sir."

"Hours?"

"Six hours and twenty-three minutes dual, and sixty-seven hours and fifteen minutes solo." It surprised Philip that he had spoken so suddenly, so positively. But he knew his hours, every minute of them. It took the major by surprise. He fell to staring at the floor and rubbed his hands together.

He looked up at Slocum.

"Slocum, sir," said the Scotchman with a faint smile. "Once of the Scotch Guards. About eight hundred hours over the lines, more dual than solo. Sent over to Issoudun for an appointment as liaison officer, along with flying."

"What the hell are you doing here?" demanded the major.

"Orders," said Slocum.

An ironic and terrible grin spread over the major's face.

"Orders," he mumbled. "Orders. Yes, orders." He seemed to soften, then, as if he were remembering some strange and beautiful thing. He was still dreaming when his eyes turned upon Pinky Morland.

"And you?" he asked.

"Lieutenant Morland. I'm one of the Morlands of Kansas City. I guess I've got about a hundred hours in."

"I guess you have, too, lieutenant. I hope so," said the major. He got up from his seat and walked to the window. He didn't move for a long time. When he turned, that same terrible, ironic smile was spread over his discolored face.

"The Twenty-second has had more casualties this month than any squadron on the Front. She's death on wings. Only one bit of advice I'm offering you. Use your eyes. By God, use them. I don't want any blind men. That's all."

THE three knew their introduction to Major Judson was over. They got up from their seats and walked toward the door. In the street the orderly came out after them. He gave them information about

quarters, and about the field. They would report for duty to-morrow.

They stared at the little orderly as he talked on, quickly, nervously, clinging to two letters in his hand. When he finished he looked up with a beaten look at Philip.

"These letters are for you, lieutenant. They came in several days ago. For Lieutenant Philip Law, sir."

Not until they found the flying field, and made arrangements for their quarters did Philip have an opportunity to read his letters. Slocum sat upon a bunk across from him, and from the next room the nasal voice of Pinky Morland filtered through the wall.

"Madam—mo—zell from Ar—men— tiers, par—lay—voo!"

Outside was the garden of a French peasant house, and the smell of cattle. A baby was crying in the room below, and he could hear the shrill reprimand of its mother.

Philip opened the letter.

Dearest:

For God's sake come to me if you can. I've sent twenty letters, and you've answered none. Are you ill?
Headquarters Branch, A.R.C.
Parce-Meuse Sector

Ever, Mary.

Philip glanced up with a frightened look.

"Hell," he muttered under his breath.

Slocum turned to him.

"Well, my boy, what's the trouble?"

"Nothing. Nothing."

Slocum didn't ask any further. He continued his unpacking. Philip felt grateful. With nervous hands he tore open the second letter. It was from his red-faced English father, who had said that white men couldn't fight in the dark.

My dear Son:

Your letter not only shocked me most pleasantly, but filled me with a kind of resentment toward myself, almost a loathing, I might say. That you could be the only one of five sons to enlist will never cease to be a constant source of wonderment to me. To say that I am proud of you seems all too lacking in feeling. But I know no other way to express myself.

My boy, I'm proud of you. It comes from the deepest and most glorious desire that any father can have—a desire to give to his country, or at least the one he has made his home, men to fight for that country's honor. May God bless and protect you in the dark hours to come.

That you are no longer blind is of course a constant pleasure to me. Possibly you have never realized how

strained is the position of a father of a blind son. He feels it deeply, more deeply than it is possible to feel anything. I have spent hours with myself alone, both praying and damning our Eternal Benefactor for the curse he laid upon your head. And now that it is over, I know that my prayers have been answered. There have been times when I would have willingly deprived myself of anything, were I to receive in return the knowledge that your sight had come back. And now that it has come, I pray God that the one who is responsible for the operation will be forever blessed in the eyes of God.

Forgive me, always,

Your Loving Father.

Philip Law had difficulty keeping the tears from his eyes. For the first time in his life he seemed to understand the emotions which sprang truthfully from the heart of his father. It cut him deeply to think he had often wished he'd been born of another parent.

CHAPTER IV SPOT IN THE SUN

FOR A LONG TIME Philip sat there with the two letters in his hands, gazing at the wall. Pinky still sang in the next room. Slocum was taking sly nips from his bottle. Suddenly Philip roused himself.

"Listen, Slocum, do you know where Parce is? Is it in this sector some place?"

"Parce? Do I know where it is? Yes, my boy. I made a beautiful landing there one day. Beautiful—that is, it was as beautiful as a bally pilot can make with one wing."

"How far away is it?" asked Philip.

"Oh, forty kilometers at the most," said Slocum.

Philip sat staring at the wall until it was time to go to mess. Pinky came in and they all went together. The mess was a low, wooden shack about a quarter of a mile from the Field of the Twenty-second. As they entered, they stood before a board where the Orders of the Day were posted.

As they stood there Slocum said suddenly, "The beggars! They got us on patrol to-morrow!"

The next morning was bright. There wasn't a cloud. From the east came intermittent noises. They were from the guns. Only that far-off sound told them that they were near the bloody lines.

Ten Spads were turning over, and the wind was

drifting back into the mouths of the hangars. A plane moved out in front of the rest, bumped slightly until it came to a halt. The head of its pilot turned. From Philip's place, the last on the right, he could see the purple patch upon that grim face. The head turned back. He raised a knotted hand that was covered with a loose-fitting glove. His hand dropped, and his plane shot across the field.

Nine Spads followed.

At three thousand they formed a wedge. Philip was the last on the left. Slocum and Pinky Morland were on the right. He could see them as they moved up and down, gaining height with the rest as they headed toward the lines. Philip knew he wasn't himself. He felt strange. He was nervous.

The flight was at five thousand when Philip caught his first sight of the trenches, crazy-looking lines that ran like the path of a drunken sailor over the barren earth.

At that time, he looked back. Slocum had warned him about his tail. That was where they came from, always down on the tail, and always the last man. The last man was himself, so he kept watching. It was difficult to keep formation and to watch, but he wouldn't be taken by surprise. He must not.

At ten thousand they crossed the lines for the first time. Far away in the east, there were planes, just little black spots that meant nothing to Philip Law. He didn't know they were Huns. From the corner of his eye he saw Slocum waving. He saw him point toward the black specks. He nodded. Those black specks were Huns. They were death.

Philip took a breath. His heart was beating a little faster as he watched the specks get higher and higher above, and then turn in. He could see the space between their wings, and he thought he could see the great Maltese Crosses upon the sides of them.

They were coming. Death was on the loose over No-Man's-Land.

Silently they roared down, and with a precision that identified them as old-timers on the Front. Their movements were quick and definite. Nothing was left to chance. They knew the thing they did, and they did it.

Philip watched them with a strange fascination. He had thought he would be afraid. He wasn't. His mind was clear, and he felt a faint delight at being there. He was doing the thing which had often passed through his dreams at night. Things which he had thought out during his half sleeping moments came to him now.

He climbed, but he watched on either side of him.

A little to the right a plane flashed by. For a brief moment Philip saw the cross upon its side. Instinctively his fingers clutched the Bowdens. His machine guns flared red at the ends. The plane turned away, dropped off upon its side, and whirled downward.

Philip Law had got his first Hun, and he went mad.

He sliced the sky like an insane man, possessed of a single thought. He'd light the whole of the German Air Force, and single handed.

He found himself above everything. Down below he could see the dogfight, the whirling mass of separated things. But they all seemed together. He paused and watched for his chance. A single plane had strayed away from the rest. He measured the German in his sights and dove.

The wind beat against his temples, and against his eyes. His cables whined mournfully. His breath caught, and seemed to stop. Like a flash, he came near, but as he felt the contact of his Bowdens, the German pulled upward.

Philip lost him, and he had lost height. As he swept upward again toward his point of safety, the white tape of tracers passed by. His right strut broke and hung away from its socket like a broken arm. He looked back, but all he could see was the sun, more brilliant than he had ever seen the sun before. It dazzled and glowed like the countenance of a crucible of molten lead. He could see nothing else. Only that ball of fire, which ate into the sensitive retina of his eyes like fire. He could see nothing else. All else had become black. He thought of his blindness. He was frantic. His heart beat maddeningly in his chest. His only protection was to wheel over the sky and hope to God that he crashed into nothing.

It lasted but a moment. Clearness came. But that fatal terror still lingered. He drew away from the rest and waited. The sky became quiet. The Twenty-second reformed. Their noses were pointed for home.

AFTER they landed, they stood by the hangar. They'd lost two men. Two Huns had gone down. The major with the purple patch upon his face looked at his men with a sinister, seeking look.

"Who got them?" he asked. His voice was soft.

"Law. Law got one of the bloody beggars," said Slocum. He was grinning that strange grin of his, but there was something nice about it. He looked as if he felt proud. "The best bit of shooting I've seen since I was at the Dardanelles."

The major turned to Philip, who was looking at the ground.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Your face is white. What's wrong?" Philip didn't answer. Pinky patted him on the back. Phil was a hero to him. Phil had got a Hun the first time over the lines. Everybody felt well toward Philip Law. Not one of them there had gotten a Hun the first time over.

That was all for that day, because it was Sunday. Philip and Slocum and Pinky went back to their farmhouse. Philip didn't speak until they got there, and was seated on a bunk against the wall. Slocum and Pinky pulled out the bottle the first thing, and had a couple of nips. Every once in a while Pinky would look up at Philip with a kind of enraptured look.

"Damned if I wouldn't like to be in your shoes to-day. I never thought I'd like to get a Hun. Here's to you, boy. May you do the best job that ever a man did over the lines."

That was unusual, coming as it did from Pinky, who had a million to look forward to. Slocum eyed him and then turned to Philip.

"What's the matter, my boy?"

"The sun!" said Philip, suddenly. "It nearly got me!"

Slocum knew what that meant. He knew it was hell. With all of his seeming willingness to believe Philip's story as he'd first heard it, it had been difficult. Men lied on the Front. It was just the thing to do, that was all. But Philip hadn't lied. He'd gotten into the air service by the grace of God, and the bloody angels, and that was all.

Slocum got up and went over to his pack. He fumbled around for a moment, and came back with a pair of goggles. They had smoked lenses and silver fittings. He handed them to Philip.

"Here, my boy. I had them made before I left Issoudun. I said to myself, 'I'll give 'em to the lad when he gets his first Hun,' and here they are."

Philip couldn't thank him. The words wouldn't come. Pinky looked on. He knew something was happening, but he didn't know what.

"Thanks. Thanks a lot," drawled Philip.

That night after supper the pilots stayed around the mess. Even the major lingered a little before he left. Philip watched him. He couldn't understand the major. At times he was friendly, but most always his hideous face, with the purple patch, seemed to haunt the place like an evil spirit. Everybody felt it, not only Philip. They were glad when he was gone. They all sighed and felt relieved. They talked about him, then.

"Changed, that man, since he came to the Front," said a blond man with light eyes and a thin nose. "I used to know him when he was in flying school. He was an instructor, then, and a swell guy. The girls went wild about him. Ladies' man, I guess. Just liked 'em. Yeah, he liked 'em, Judson did. Well, he crashed after he got to France. Just the first or second time over, and some Hun came up in back of him. Gave him the works. Judson didn't get hit, but his plane went up in sparks. The crash must have been rotten. That was almost a year ago. Look at him now. He's been worse the last two weeks. Worse than he ever was before. Anyway, it gives me the willies every time I see him."

They changed the subject, and after a while every one went to quarters. Pinky, Slocum, and Philip were together as they went back. They were silent until they got to Philip's room. Pinky took a drink and left. They heard him moving around in the next room.

"I've got to see that girl I told you about, Slocum. She wrote me a funny letter. I got to see her."

"Where is she?" asked Slocum.

"Parce, with the American Red Cross. Taking care of the blind soldiers, I guess."

"You can't go yet. You've got to get leave, somehow."

"Yes," said Philip. "I suppose so. But it'd be a good idea to go there anyway. The doctor who fixed me up is there. Maybe he'd better look at my eyes again. Maybe he can do something."

They went to bed, but Philip Law didn't sleep right away. He kept staring at the black ceiling which didn't seem black to him. He knew every crack in it. It was just a little game, following the little cracks in the dark.

THE next morning, long before the sun came peeping over the Front, the Twenty-second was roving the skies. They went up and down the lines as they had the day before. When they got to ten thousand, they turned into Germany. They saw nothing. There was nothing to see but the little black puffs that were bursting anti-aircraft shells. They landed two hours after they had taken off, only to learn that they'd go up again at ten.

In the mess Philip spoke about his new goggles.

"They're fine, Slocum. My confidence is coming back. I need it."

"That you do, my boy," said Slocum. "Confidence is everything. I did a few bally jobs with the intelligence once. I needed confidence then."

"You seem to have done everything, Slocum," said Pinky. "Makes me feel I should do something."

"Pinky, I've done everything in this man's war. Everything. Some day I'll do something more. Just one thing more."

Slocum spoke often about that big stunt of his, now. It was forever on the end of his tongue. He looked at his watch.

"Five and forty past nine," he said.

Already men were leaving the mess. The three followed.

At ten they took off and sailed eastward toward the Meuse River, where they circled until they got height. At twelve thousand they sighted trouble, a flight of Fokkers playing hide and seek back of the newly formed clouds.

They came from the side. Philip slipped away, and allowed the second of the flock to dive on beneath him. He followed as straight as the flight of an arrow. The strain upon the wings became terrific. The motor wailed until it seemed that it could not stand any more. But the German would change his course.

Once Philip caught a glimpse of his speed indicator. Two hundred and fifty miles an hour. His plane couldn't stand much more. It had dropped three thousand feet already, almost straight down. But the Hun still made no effort to pull out.

Another thousand feet, and Philip saw the wings break from the German's fuselage, and carry on in its course. Its pilot was as good as dead. Relief came to Philip then. He clutched the stick, and tried to draw back. It wouldn't move. There wasn't enough strength in his right arm.

He pulled again, but it was useless. As he bent forward again the violent pressure of the air held his head back. He forced himself against it. Something snapped at his head. His goggles were gone! The wind had torn them from him. He was overpowered by that strange frantic fear again. He was hopeless. Fear ran through his blood. He felt cold, icy cold. He was gone. He was gone.

He made another effort to pull back the stick. He clutched it with both hands. He placed his feet against the tank under the instrument board, and pulled.

The stick moved a little. Slowly, he drew it back. He felt the plane sink in the air as he pulled it around. The sight of the earth never seemed to leave the front of him. He pulled back more.

He saw the horizon for a brief moment. It slipped by and he saw only the sky. How beautiful it looked. Soon the ship would stop of its own accord, slip off on a wing, and then he would have control.

The air was clear when he righted the plane. Beads of perspiration were whipped from his forehead and out into the wash of the propellor. He struck a course for home. In the distance were the planes of the Twenty-second. He followed until they hovered over their home tarmac, and dropped down.

PHILIP was the last to climb from his plane, and walk over to the hangars. Slocum had a smile on his face, and he was puffing a cigarette, the smoke trailing up over his right eye as he spoke. "I knew that was you, you beggar. I thought you were a goner."

They all knew that Philip had followed a Hun whose wings had come off. The Huns had a way of diving like that for safety. It would teach them that a Spad could hang together longer than one of their own.

"I never thought you'd get out of that dive," said Slocum. He took Philip's sleeve, and pulled him around the side of the hangar. Pinky followed them. When they were all together, Slocum said, "What's the matter with you, my boy? You look as if you were bloody well crazy."

"My goggles. The ones you gave me. I lost them in the air." Philip took a deep breath, and closed his eyes. "The air was terrible coming back. It feels as if some one was putting a fist into each of my eyes. Slocum, I could hardly see the ground when I landed." "Good God," said Slocum. There was no more flying for that day. The three spent most of the afternoon in Philip's quarters. They kept the shades down, and only the light of a single candle cast its feeble rays upon them. Philip lay upon his cot, his hand over his eyes, thinking—thinking. Slocum and Pinky were sitting by the table, a bottle between them. They were silent. Pinky spoke less than he had at first. He was a little changed. Philip was getting to like him, even if his father did have a couple of million.

"I say, Pinky," said Slocum. "What's going to happen to those millions of yours when you get knocked off?"

Pinky glanced up with a start.

"I don't know, Slocum."

Philip glanced over at them. They were drunk.

"My boy, you're not going to let it waste away, are you? If you were at all a decent chap, you'd put aside enough for Phil and me to buy a house somewhere in the States. Just some little something to remember good old Pinky."

Pinky jumped up. He was indignant at having it thought he would not make such a provision for his

friends. He seized a pencil upon the table, and the two of them composed Pinky's will.

To Whom it may concern:

Let it be here advised that upon this day of your Lord, August 23rd, that Lieutenant James Morland—better known as just Pinky—of the American Expeditionary Forces in France, did, in the presence of two witnesses, Captain Jose Slocum, step-child of the British forces in France, and Lieutenant Philip Law of the American Air Force, make this statement, having precedence over all preceding wills, written or oral.

I, Pinky Morland, wish it to be understood by my attorneys, Grace and Lawson, 23 Hattan Blvd., Kansas City, Missouri, that howsoever and whensoever I die, the above mentioned witnesses shall be provided each with an estate not to exceed the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars. That upon receipt of this estate it shall be equipped with a wine cellar containing two thousand bottles of French cognac, to be used or consumed in whatever manner the aforesaid men desire.

Also let it be understood that each of the aforesaid estates shall be provided credit account at any of the near-by grocery stores, not to exceed in amount one hundred dollars each month for a period extending to and not terminating till, the first of the month succeeding the death of both parties benefited by this will.

It was not until the third copy that Slocum found the contents of the will to his liking. They got drunker and drunker, and as they got drunker, they wrote and rewrote. At last the finished copy was found to be to the liking of both.

They aroused Philip from his seeming slumber, and the three of them affixed their signatures. When it was done, the will was placed with due solemnity—after a drink—into one of Slocum's bags.

"Just for safe keeping. Just——" He missed his step, then. Pinky tried to catch him, but the two fell to the floor.

THEY were there the next morning. Their snoring awakened Philip. He jumped from his bed. They were to go on patrol that morning. When he pulled back the shade, he found the sky was gray, almost black. It was raining.

At breakfast, Philip asked for leave that day. Major Judson glared at him. "Leave!" he snorted. "No!" Judson was in one of his unfortunate moods. Rainy days always affected Judson that way. He couldn't stand them.

Philip returned to his room and wrote to Mary.

Dear Mary:

I was so glad to get some word from you. I thought you'd never write. I didn't know what had happened. I'm only about twenty miles away from you, and I'll get there as soon as possible. Please be as patient as I am. Remember I've never seen you in my life, and this will be the first time. I may fly over if I get a chance. Is there any field around there that a man might land in? Anything as big as a city block will do. I'd like to come that way.

Ever, Philip.

He stuck the paper in an envelope, addressed it, and started back to the mess. It was still raining. As he walked, his hands passed over his eyes. They didn't trouble him that day. It was half dark. That was the reason.

The next day it rained, and the next. The day after that a letter came from Mary. It was written in a nervous scrawl, as if it were done in a hurry.

Dearest Philip:

I must see you. Yes, there is a landing field near here. I'm sure I've heard planes land there at night. It's just to the east of the hospital. For heaven's sake, come soon.

Philip showed the letter to Slocum, who shook his head.

"I warrant you, there's mischief there," he said.

"How could there be?" demanded Philip.

Slocum shrugged his shoulders.

It rained the next day and the day after that. Most of their time was spent in their quarters. Every day now, Philip went to Major Judson and asked him for leave. It exasperated Judson. His moods had become more and more intolerable. The third time he snarled out his answer.

"You recruits think you can do anything on the firing line. You get two Huns and you think everything is yours. No. I tell you, No. You can't have leave. No!"

And upon that same day Philip got another of those strange letters, just a few words, from Mary. Along with the inactivity and fear, they were getting the best of him, and left him perplexed and wondering. Not until the eighth day did the sun peer down at them from behind a cloud. Philip's eyes squinted. His old enemy. The sun was forever there. It was just waiting for him.

They took off from a sloppy field, two flights of them. Their motors roared with impatience as they neared the lines. All the way over they were conscious of sinister things back of the clouds. They saw nothing. That made it all the worse.

When, at last, a German plane slipped through a cloud bank, only to be swallowed up in another, they felt relief. They had seen the enemy. They had seen him. He was no longer some vague thing that haunted the clouds and shot from the impenetrable mists.

Then they came.

There were thirty of them, and the sky seemed to clear as they came. The sun crept through and seemed to fill everything about with its vicious ray. It played upon the eyes of Philip Law. For a moment he thought he was blind. He dove away and into the rolling bank of clouds, away from the sun.

A German Fokker slipped in after him. Philip turned away, and pulled up for height, playing for time, until he accustomed himself to his element, the half darkness.

They went around and around. Neither gained ground, until suddenly, Philip turned in. For a brief moment he caught the German in his sights. His guns quivered. The white tapes of tracer leaped out into the air. The German sank forward. His plane whirled maddeningly around, and then was lost.

He was gone.

Philip looked around him, and a kind of awe seemed to possess his thoughts. He wondered what had happened to the rest of them, trying to overcome his fear of the sun.

He couldn't stay hidden any longer. He pulled the nose of his plane upward. He was climbing. The mists thinned. He could see shapes to the left. He had never seen so many. He felt confused, and forgot his bearings. His mind was cluttered with a thousand strange things.

CHAPTER V CLOUDED WINGS

THERE WAS A PLANE at the side, one that was waiting. Philip's mind cleared. He saw its helmeted pilot look over his shoulder with a stricken gaze. His two hands went upward. His mouth opened, and he turned forward. But it was too late. He was done for. He fell into a gentle glide, and slipped toward the earth.

Philip followed him down, and as he followed the plane took on a blurred silhouette, a black thing with frayed edges, and that was all. Philip's eyes. A plane

with frayed edges. He tried to pull away. He felt the pressure of the air upon the side of his face. He looked around. The sky was like a whirlwind that had found a mountain of loose papers. Everything was going around and around.

Planes. He knew what they were. But they had lost their well-defined shapes. They all had frayed edges. He thought he was going mad. Something struck his right wing. He could feel the slight jerk of his plane again and again. He was afraid of fire. He didn't know one plane from the other. Some passed terrifyingly near; some flashed by, reflecting the glittering rays of the vicious sun. The clouds!

He felt like calling out to God to show him the way. His heart beat in his empty chest. His hands shook, and the warm sweat cooled and froze upon his forehead.

He thought he had gone mad. He closed his eyes, and kept them closed. He allowed his plane to rove through the sky like a drunken thing. God have mercy upon whatever thing got in his path. But in that moment of darkness, his courage came back. He was in his element again, where the only defense is the ear, the nose, and that phenomenal sixth sense which the blind have. Whether it was God or mind—it was something that kept him righted, and in control of his plane.

The pain was gone when he opened his eyes. His fear had left him. But the fight was all around. A German pulled upward in his path toward a cloud, whirled around and was fighting for position.

At last Philip caught him in his sights. He pressed his Bowdens. His right gun jammed, but the left answered to the controls. There was a glitter of red and yellow at the end of its barrel. The smell of burnt powder slipped past the pit. Strange smell. Nice, but just for a moment.

The German plane caught fire, and the flames shot back fifty feet. It burst with a flash. Philip felt the concussion. The explosion caused his plane to tremble and shake. When he pulled away, he could feel his wings buckle slightly. He didn't know what that was.

He turned and dove for the cloudbank. It was farther away than he thought. His speed was terrific when he reached its first soothing misty surfaces. He became enveloped by its protecting folds. He was safe. It gave him time to think. He had been responsible for the destruction of three planes that morning. It was an exceptional morning's work. For a moment he felt the first flush of pride over his conquests. But

as he thought, utterly alone, up there, with only the white mists on every side of him, he knew that he was finished. He could fight Germans, but he couldn't fight the sun.

Philip Law knew he was beaten.

When at last he did venture from his cloudbank, the sky was clear again. All the wreckage was below, upon the earth, but above it was clear except for the clouds.

He was the last to land. Over at hangar No. 2 the pilots had gathered after the fight. There was a pitifully small group of them. But they seemed happy. They'd gotten through. They watched Philip's plane as it settled upon the sloppy field. They watched the water splash as he taxied in toward the deadline. They were silent as they watched him throw a thin leg over the side of the plane, and drop down.

Slocum and Pinky ran away from the group and grabbed him.

"Cheerio, my lad! I thought the beggars had got you again!" shouted Slocum.

Pinky said nothing, only looked with a half startled expression on his red face. He might have been seeing ghosts.

They pulled Philip along with them. They were happy. Everybody was happy.

"You got one of the beggars, my boy," said Slocum. "I saw his wings drop off. What were you doing, saving shells?"

"I got three," said Philip.

THEY went back to the mess, walked over the sloppy field. The news had gone 'round. Philip Law had got three that morning. He was an ace! He had five. He sat at the window, looking up at the sky. He wouldn't break his silence.

Later Judson came in. He had been at the office all of the time since the flight. He'd gone there first, and had been getting what information he could from the balloons. He went directly to Philip Law when he came in. He seemed a little confused as he stood there. He turned away, glanced around the room, and said in a low, growling voice, "We lost three. But the balloons report six down. Who got them?"

"Lieutenant Law got three!" shouted Slocum. "The best beggar on wings in this man's heaven."

"There are two more to account for. I got one," said Judson.

"I got 'em," said Slocum, as if he felt ashamed.

Philip felt a little tug at his heart. He turned to

Slocum. What a strange, strange man. And the British had made him their stepchild. They'd said he wasn't any good after that shot of gas. They'd said he was a wreck. They didn't want him.

"Good! Good—" The first smile that ever came over Judson's face came then. At least they'd never seen one on it before. He blinked his hideous eyes and paced the floor. Suddenly he stopped still, and turned to Philip Law.

"I want to talk to you alone," he said.

He walked out into a little room at the side of the mess. Philip got up wonderingly, and followed. Judson had already seated himself upon a chair. He was staring at the floor as Philip came in.

JUDSON took a cigarette out of a pack and handed it to Philip. "Here," he said. "Smoke." He offered a light.

"Thanks," said Philip, and he leaned back.

"First of all, my young fellow, I want to congratulate you personally for the work you did this morning. You showed masterful ease at times. Most of the time I could see you. I'm an old-timer on these lines, and I never lose my lead. I do everything with precision, and when I get mine, it'll not be from lack of judgment, but from a miscalculation. You get that?"

"Yes, sir," said Philip.

"Well, as I say, some of your flying had a flash in it that one finds only in very young men. You've got that peculiar flash that might make you one of the greatest flyers on the Front. It's a flash that a man can't acquire. It's in the blood, in the soul. You understand?"

Philip nodded. He had become calm, watching the quick jerky movements of Major Judson's right hand.

"Since I was an instructor in the States, I've felt that I can tell a pilot by looking at him. Just a personal vanity, that's all."

Philip didn't know where Judson was going in this conversation. It seemed after all to mean so little.

"Well, from the first moment I saw you, I was positive you had the makings of a great pilot. From the first I followed you. I watched, saw almost every movement." He got up from his chair, and went to the windows, looked out for a moment, and then turned. His expression had changed. Once again Philip saw that hideous look of cruelty on his face, that purple patch, and the eye that seemed to be popping from his head.

"But there are times when you go crazy. You run over the sky like a madman. It's not safe for you or anybody in it! My God, man, this is a war! You've got to use your head. You can't crash into men of your

own kind. By God, I'll keep you on the ground until you rot before you do. You understand that, don't you? By God, I'll do it if it's the last thing I ever do."

He stopped. His mouth closed. Philip struggled from his chair, and stood watching. The conversation had taken an unexpected twist. It had caught him unawares. He backed away.

"Stand there! Don't sneak away!"

Philip couldn't speak. His mouth opened and closed.

"I'll tell you," he said finally. "You want to know. You asked me, and I'll tell you. I was blind most of my life. Two years ago I couldn't see. There are times I can't now."

He'd told. He was sorry he had. He condemned himself for his stupidity. But it was all over now. He'd told everything.

A STRANGE look came into the face of Major Judson. His hideous ferocity fell away, and in its place an expression almost of torture.

"You can't see, sometimes?" he echoed. "You were blind? Look. This eye. I know how you feel about it. I know people shun me because of it. It's awful to look at. I can't stand it myself. I never look in the glass, because I can't tolerate the thing that stares out at me. You see, that eye is blind. I told you that my knowledge of flying never allowed a mistake in calculation, that something greater must get me. When the Germans get me, it'll be because of that blind spot. It's hell. It's worse than all that turning away from me. Think what it is to be always carrying along with me the thing that will some day be my murderer."

"Now, you know. I never told any one on the field. It's hell, but it hasn't been long that way. It was good once, not very long ago. Just before you came, I could even see a lot then. Now I can't see anything. The specialist killed my sight in that eye. He murdered it as it's going to murder me!"

He fell back in his chair exhausted, haunted by the knowledge of his own death warrant. He looked pitifully up.

"I understand," he said softly, almost in a whisper. "I'm sorry for you. I pity you. I pity myself."

"Where was the specialist?" asked Philip.

"Oh, I didn't mean to blame him for it. He did his best. But his best wasn't good enough."

"Where was the specialist?" asked Philip again.

"At Parce. His name was Goose. He has made the blind see."

Philip felt his own fists tighten. Something was choking his throat. Judson didn't move. His face was white, pitifully white, as if something had killed the best in him.

"That's all, lieutenant. You can go now. I'll see that you get something for your work to-day. It's coming to you. A hundred of them. I'm your friend. I understand. You know that You must know that."

Philip walked out of the room.

After an exceptionally perplexing night. Philip woke from his sleep. Slocum was standing at the window looking out. When he heard the sound of movement that came from Philip's bed, he turned around and smiled.

"Blessed be the rain. For we shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven."

"What's that, Slocum?"

"It's raining cats and dogfights."

"Good," said Philip.

They got dressed. Pinky came in later, and the three of them went to the mess. On the way over Philip asked if they'd like to make a trip to Parce with him.

"That beggar of a major will never let us," said Slocum.

"I'll ask him. He'll let us go, all right."

"Say, boy, you never told us about the time you had with the old duck. We could hear him shouting like mad. What was the trouble yesterday?"

Philip didn't answer. They walked on to the mess. They ate. Afterwards Philip left them. When he came back, he said the major had given his permission for their leave, as long as it rained. They didn't believe him, but they couldn't do other than believe him when, a little later, the orderly came in with their chits for leave. Along with the chits was a little note from Judson, himself.

Lieutenant Law:

See that the boys get back when it looks any thing like a clear day. The car will take you over.

Maj. Judson.

They couldn't get over that, Pinky and Slocum. They tried to pump Philip for the answer to it all. But he said nothing. When the squadron car came, they tumbled in. They were taking their first leave together. It was to last as long as the clouds played over the sky.

"May I never see the sun again," said Slocum. "I'm done with it."

The car moved slowly over the wet and bumpy road. Movement was slow, and it was almost noon

before they got there. They questioned about the hospital that was there and received directions. It wasn't far.

Slocum and Pinky stayed behind at an inn which seemed to attract their fancy. Philip was to go alone.

PHILIP left them at the inn. He gave instructions to the driver. In a few minutes the car pulled up in front of a great gray building at the edge of the town. Philip got out. He could hardly believe that he was there. He couldn't believe that this was the first time he would actually see Mary. He walked toward the door. A feeling of supreme agitation possessed him as he stood in the hall. An air of mystery seemed to shroud the place. The air was suffused with a heavy odor of carbolic and iodoform, pungent and disagreeable. A staircase before him looked musty and rotting. The air was unfresh, and gagging.

An orderly came noiselessly out of a side door. Philip turned to find him standing with drooped shoulders, unshaven and looking over spectacles.

"What do you wish, sir?" asked the orderly.

"I came to see a nurse here. Mary Cain. Would you tell her I'm here?"

The orderly mumbled something and walked away, up the creaking steps, and disappeared. He heard the stairs creak again.

He looked up. For a moment his breath caught in his throat.

Upon the stairway stood a girl. The dull light from a window behind gave a luster to her blond hair which seemed everywhere about her head like a glittering halo. Her eyes were rather large and blue. Her face was pale, dreadfully pale. It made the red of her full mouth look even redder.

Philip had never seen anything more beautiful.

She walked with precision, slowly, watching him as she came. Her thin hand clutched at the banister, as if she feared she might fall. She had on the white dress of a Red Cross nurse.

Philip knew it was she. He couldn't speak. The same fear of words possessed him. He had felt it often, but not as now.

"Mary," he said with effort.

She looked at him strangely. Her head shook as she came forward.

"I am not Mary," she said.

Philip closed his eyes, and opened them. Who was she, then?

"Mary is gone," she said.

"Gone?"

"She is gone," she repeated.

"But I got a letter from her. She said she was here. I got lots of letters. She can't be gone!" said Philip falteringly.

Her hand went to her lips. A single finger was upheld.

"She left a letter," she whispered.

Philip took it from her thin hand.

"Go away," she said. "Read it after you get away."

She turned and walked up the stairs, which creaked ominously as she trod upon them. Philip reeled slightly as he clutched the knob of the door. He stumbled down the steps. It was not until the car was moving over the muddy roads again, and fresh air came through the open window, that he felt himself again. He thought that it was all a dream. He looked down at his hand. Yes, the letter was still there. He tore it open. It had been written hurriedly, as if the discovery of her actions might end harmfully.

I'm going away some place. I can't stay here any longer. I thought you would be coming over. Forgive me for not waiting. I'll write you. God bless you!

As Philip walked into the door of the inn, his right hand still clutched the letter. He must have looked strange as he approached the table, for, when Slocum looked up, he almost fell from his seat.

"My God!" he said. "What's happened to you, my boy?"

"Look," said Philip. "Read that."

He threw the letter down before them. They spread it out on the table. Moments on end they looked at it.

"I said something was wrong there," said Slocum.

The next hour was silent. The letter had killed their pleasure. Slocum and Pinky drank, but it didn't have any effect. The shadow of something dreadful had fallen upon them. Philip smoked one cigarette after another. It didn't relieve him of the fear that filled his soul.

"Maybe it's a joke. I don't understand all of this."

But down in his heart he knew that it wasn't a joke. Jokes of that kind weren't played at times like this. As he thought, there came to his mind the story which Major Judson had told him. Had Judson been deliberately lying to him? No. If ever a man had been serious, he had been serious. It was all too confusing, damnably confusing.

CHAPTER VI WHAT PRICE SIGHT?

OUTSIDE THE NIGHT GREW DARK. The clouds thinned, and at moments a quarter moon showed through. Still they sat silently at the table. They had tried to eat, but they couldn't. They paid the check, and walked out. The streets were dismal and black. Not a single ray of light shone through the closed blinds. They walked on, past the last of the houses, and down the dark road. A quarter mile farther on they passed a temporary encampment of soldiers. There were many of them.

Slocum grabbed Philip's arm suddenly, as they were going by.

"What's that noise?" he asked. "You hear it?"

"Bombers," said Pinky.

They grew silent and tense as the sound grew closer and closer. The bombers came on, until they were almost overhead. The first bomb dropped before they looked for safety. The blinding flash spread over the sky. They ran for safety, away from the soldiers' camp. Farther on they fell into a shell hole, and waited. At times the light was blinding, as white as the sun at high noon. From their partial safety in the hole Philip could hear the groans of the men in the camp they had just left.

One struck near by. The heavens turned white like molten lead. The earth heaved, scattered, and fell, half covering the three in the shell hole.

Philip's hand went to his eyes.

"My eyes!" he screamed. "The light!"

It grew ominously quiet. The destruction was over.

"They're gone," said Pinky.

Philip still had his hand over his eyes.

"My eyes," he repeated. "The light from that shell. It nearly blinded me."

He stumbled along the road, Pinky on one side and Slocum on the other. They tried to console him. But it didn't help. They made arrangements for quarters at the inn, and went to the room, a room with three beds.

All of that night dreadful things passed through Philip's mind. There were moments when he thought he would shoot himself. The pain then would last but a fraction of a moment, and then it would be over. He

grew more and more fearful of the coming sun, and the piercing rays that would come with it. It would eat into his eyes and kill whatever good there was left in them.

Just before morning he fell into a troubled, fitful doze, from which he seemed suddenly awakened. The sun was shining through a crack at the side of the well-drawn shade. Everything else was in semi-darkness. Slocum and Pinky were awake. They were sitting on one of the beds looking at him. When Slocum saw Philip move, he spoke in a low, gentle voice.

"How are you, my boy?"

"Not so good," said Philip. He raised himself and sat up on the side of the bed. "Listen. I can't go on like this any more. I just can't. It'll be suicide if I go up again. I'm going over to talk to the specialist at the hospital where I was yesterday. He was the one who did my first operation. He'll help me again."

Slocum jumped up from his place on the bed.

"For God's sake, don't do that!" he said.

"Why not?" demanded Philip.

"Because there's something bloody well rotten about that fellow, from what you've told me. I feel it in my bones."

But Philip would tolerate no objections. Goose had helped him once, helped him more than any one ever had. He would help him again. He could go over and talk to him, couldn't he? That wouldn't hurt, would it?

"But I tell you, that fellow is bally well queer! I tell you, he is."

PHILIP went just the same. There was nothing else to do. The car splashed through the mud until they got to the large gray building. He got out.

"You'd better go back to the outfit," Philip said.

"Just tell Judson what has happened to me, and that I'm at the hospital here."

Slocum and Pinky were reluctant about leaving. But their orders forced them to return. Slocum slipped his hand into his trouser pocket, and pulled out a little American automatic.

"Here, you beggar. I've kept this with me all of the time. It's my bodyguard. You take it. It's saved me from trouble. It might save you."

Philip refused, but Slocum forced it upon him.

"Take it, I tell you. Take it."

Before they drove off, they promised to come back at the first opportunity. That wouldn't be long. Philip must send word immediately. He could telephone and say that he'd cracked up. Just say that so he could get

the call through. They'd understand and they'd meet him at the inn.

They went on, then, their hands waving from the side of the car like two drunken sailors.

Philip watched until the car turned a corner and was out of sight. Then he turned, walked up the steps, and through the door. He rang repeatedly. Finally, he heard the sound of light footsteps. He knew before she came that it was the nurse he'd seen before. She walked cautiously down. When she was certain who it was she stopped still.

"What is it?" she said softly.

"That voice," thought Philip. "I've heard that voice before." He started to make a strange request, but stopped.

"I want to see Doctor Goose," he said.

"But you can't see him. He's busy."

"I'll wait," said Philip. He found a chair and sat down.

"But he's busy. I tell you he's busy," she said. Her face was troubled. A singular anxiety clouded her eyes, and her lower lip trembled.

"I'll wait," said Philip defiantly.

She went away, back up the creaky steps. Philip wondered. He sat fingering the automatic inside his pocket. It was loaded. He knew that. Slocum had told him so. Minutes passed. The time seemed endless before she returned and said, "He'll see you, sir."

But as they turned to go up the steps, she whispered a warning.

"For God's sake, don't go!"

He stopped suddenly. He looked at her, but she was smiling a sweet, but troubled smile. He could not believe that words of warning had come from her lips. They could not be wrung from her heart that pounded visibly in her chest.

They walked on. Step after step they took up the stairs until they got to the floor above and stopped before a door.

"Go in there," she said.

His hand fumbled at the knob. Before he opened the door he looked up to find a horrified expression on the face of the nurse. She had drawn away, and was holding to the wall, as if that alone was keeping her from falling.

He turned and walked in.

Behind a desk sat Goose. Two fiendish eyes stared out of his wizened head. The powerful lenses in his glasses accentuated their size, made them almost fantastic. His hair was sparse and uncombed. His smile

was forced, and he swallowed often, drawing a fanglike tongue over his thin lips.

"Ah," he said. "I remember you. You see well, now? There, take that chair there. I want to talk to you. You know there is nothing so gratifying in the life of a surgeon as talking to his successful operations."

Philip smiled. All of his fears had been without reason, he thought.

"That operation is what I came to see you about, doctor. My eyes are going to the bad. I can't see, sometimes. The sun affects me, and last night during the bombing, a shell dropped near by. The light flashed, and since then I can hardly see anything."

"You were there! How lucky you came out alive. Tell me, were there many killed? Those men should have known better than to stay there so long. Some one saw them, no doubt. It must have been bad."

"Yes," said Philip. "It was bad. The Germans seemed to know exactly where to drop the bombs. It was terrible. I know something about flying myself. I'm with the Twenty-second over at Charny."

Goose became interested.

"You say you fly?"

"Yes."

Goose got up and walked around the room. His hands folded behind his back. He stood looking out of the window for a moment, and then he came back.

"Your eyes," he said. "Let me have a look at them."

GROOSE turned on a light, and placed an ophthalmoscope over his bony head. He held down the lower lid of Philip's right eye, and then the left. "Ah, just as I expected," he said. "You have come just in time. I can fix you up."

"Thank God!" said Philip with sudden relief.

Goose went to the door, opened it and looked out. His manner changed quickly. He stood playing with his lower lip in deep concentration. He was nervous. A little gurgling laugh came from his throat, and he returned to his seat back of the desk.

"So you fly?" he asked. Philip nodded.

"And you have planes at your disposal?"

"I can get one, I think," said Philip. A calculating expression fell upon the German's face. His fingers fumbled with the inkwell in front of him. He didn't speak immediately, and he glanced aimlessly around the room. Finally he got up and walked to where Philip sat in his chair.

"You listen to me. I am the only man living who can give you the use of your eyes. There is no one else.

I have proved that before. I have been of great service to you. I shall again be of great service to you. The first time, you gave nothing in return for your sight, but you promised. Without me, you would have been forced to spend the rest of your days wandering about in the land of darkness. You would have been blind to all things that were beautiful. You would never have seen the things most precious to your heart. Tell me, is that not true?"

Philip nodded.

"True. That is true," said Goose, nodding his head back and forth. "I have given you sight, the most wonderful gift a man can have, and in return I have demanded nothing. Nothing at all. I demanded nothing, then, because I needed nothing. But now that time has changed. You have come to me at a time when I do need something. You ask that I return your sight, and I say that I shall give it to you. Yes, I shall give it to you, but in return for that gift, I shall demand something in return." His eyes flashed. His hand struck the desk. "I must have something in return. Mind you, it is a simple thing for you to do. It will not take you long, and it is safe."

"What do you want me to do?" asked Philip.

"One flight with your plane," said Goose.

"Where?"

Goose bent over his desk.

"Germany!" he whispered hoarsely.

A feeling of revulsion filled Philip's soul. He struggled to his feet. His hand sought the automatic which Slocum had given him. He jerked it from its cover, and held it against Goose's side.

"I could kill you," said Philip.

"And spend the rest of your life as a blind man," added Goose.

Philip grew limp. He sank back slowly into his chair. The air was suffocating. He stared at the floor. It was going around and around. He didn't know how much time had passed when he looked up at Goose, still staring at him from his fiendish eyes.

"You see," said Goose, "that makes things different. You must be sensible. No one will ever know. No one. I swear to you, it'll never be known by any one but us two. You promised to help me once before."

Time passed again. Philip thought about the light. He thought about Mary. He would venture a question.

"Where in Germany?"

"I shall tell you when the time comes. There will be a man there. You will give him a message. You will go away. That is all."

Philip contemplated the little German. He didn't answer immediately.

"When must I do this?"

"Now."

"But I can't fly now. My eyes are too bad. The operation first. The flight afterward."

"Ah, that will be too late! No. Seven days." Goose looked at the calendar. "Yes, yes. We operate first. In seven days, maybe, you'll be able to fly at night. In the daytime, no. But night, yes. You agree, then? You swear by your honor as an officer that you will perform this task for me?"

Philip struggled to his feet, and held his right arm aloft.

"I swear that in return for the operation, if it goes all right, I'll make one trip into Germany, and that I'll place a message for you into the hands of the man who will be there."

"Good!" cried Goose. "We must start at once. There is no time to lose." He turned to Philip again. "You are a sensible boy. You won't regret it."

"I'm sure I won't," said Philip in a monotone.

THEY made preparations for Philip's second operation. Already he was placed in a single small room with dull walls and shades pulled tightly down. The same nurse was there, looking at him strangely, wonderingly.

It was she who gave Philip the anaesthetic. She leaned close to him, and tilted the bottle. As she leaned, Philip was sure he felt the reassuring pressure of her hand, and in her eyes there was a look that somehow said, "Don't worry. I'll watch for you. I'll see that nothing happens."

The days and nights became as one. Hours passed, but there was always the darkness. There were times when Philip heard strange sounds, far off voices that bore with them implications of another's suffering. Once he plainly heard, "My God! Why did I take the chance!"

It was a cry wrung from the depths of an anguished soul, baffled by some incredible misfortune. Philip wondered what it was, who it was. But the only answer was silence.

At times during the day he heard the voice of his nurse, close by, whispering words of comfort into his ear. It would have been intolerable without her.

Five days passed. Goose stood at his side, breathing heavily, crouching low like the shadow of some aging ghost.

"Two more days, now," he said.

Philip nodded.

"You must make arrangements for the plane," said Goose.

"You must send the message. Take it down on a piece of paper, and then telephone." Goose went out of the room, but came back in a moment. "Well, tell me what to say."

"Call the Twenty-second," explained Philip. "Then ask for Jose Slocum. Tell him I've crashed, and that he must fly over to get me. He knows where."

"Good."

"Do you think the operation will be all right?"

"Yes," said Goose.

The nurse came back later, and spent more time with him. Another day passed. On the night of the sixth, the bandages were removed. It was much as it had been before, only he could see the light immediately, just a little spot in the curtain. Philip repressed his elation. He was sure that his eyes were stronger than ever. He told the nurse after Goose was gone.

"Thank God," he said.

Philip didn't sleep that night. In the morning he dozed for a few hours. The time was approaching when he should repay Goose for the work he had done. When Goose finally came in, Philip told him that he must go to the inn. He must see Slocum, and ask about the plane.

"I'll give you very dark glasses," Goose said. "You can go. But you must not stay long. Remember, I've given you your sight!"

When he went into the inn, Slocum greeted him with open arms. He clung to him as he might cling to the dead who had come back.

"I've been here all night, you beggar! I thought I'd bally well go mad!"

They sat down.

"I can't tell you everything, yet, Slocum. My eyes are all right, now, I guess. Listen, where is the plane?"

"Down the road where the soldiers are," said Slocum. "On the right. You remember a field there? Trees and a bridge."

Philip nodded. He looked around the room cautiously, and then back at Slocum. "Get back to the field somehow. You and Pinky had better fly over again. Leave the plane here, and come in others."

Slocum didn't question. He'd been a soldier too long.

"Be there at eight to-night."

Slocum nodded.

CHAPTER VII DOUBLE-BURNED

AT SIX THAT NIGHT there was a knock upon the door of Philip's little room. It opened slowly, and Goose came in. He was more nervous than usual, and walked back and forth over the floor, making a sucking sound between his teeth.

"I have the letter," he said finally. "You must go within an hour."

He stayed for fifteen minutes. Before he left he gave his instructions.

"You follow the Meuse River fifteen miles. There is a bridge there. You cannot miss it. There are two railroad tracks crossing over it. Above the tracks on the right-hand side, there will be a ray of light shot up into the air. You land by it. The field is good. There will be a man who will come to you. You give him this."

He handed Philip a letter.

"I have given you my word," said Philip. "I shall place it in his hands. Have no fear of that."

The relief was obvious. Goose chuckled. He acted as a child might have acted. He rubbed his hands together and turned to Philip.

"The man will always be there. He is there every night. I have used him before. Many times before."

Philip thought of Mary's reference to the landing of planes at night. Goose had done it before, then. Many times.

The time fled by. Philip got up from his chair.

"It's time," he said.

He left Goose behind, and walked out of the room.

Philip was gone, past the inn, and along the road which led to the place of the bombing raid.

He came upon the trees, and the bridge. To the right was the field. On the other side he could see the dark silhouette of a plane, squat and peaceful in the darkness.

He walked up to it, passed his hand over the surface as he might stroke an animal, something living and breathing. Then he put rocks under the wheels, adjusted the spark and the gas. He turned over the propellor. After the third time it caught. He ran around the wing to make the proper changes in the gas supply.

He stood there on one side watching and waiting, listening to the hum of the motor. Fifteen minutes

passed before he thought it was warm enough. He removed the rocks from under the wheels; went around to the tail and moved it until the nose of the plane was setting into the wind.

He drew back the gas. The plane throbbed and roared as it rolled itself with quickening speed until, with a single swoop, it cleared the trees. There were few clouds in the sky. A slight wind was blowing. A few half dead lights glimmered futilely beneath, growing dimmer still until they were swallowed up in the blue darkness.

Philip swung toward the lines. He could see their crazy turns of the trenches half obscured in the darkness. Then he saw the Meuse, a silver ribbon of water, going no place, coming from nowhere.

He saw the bridge in the distance. The moon glittered on the steel rails worn to a glasslike polish by the passing of trains. At one side he saw a faint light.

He turned the nose of his plane slightly, and glided downward. Slowly he approached the field, lingering over the top of the earth until he sank slowly. His wheels struck with the lightness of a feather. There was scarcely a noise from the contact. The plane stopped rolling. He waited.

FROM the shadows by the trees emerged a man. He was not in uniform. He looked more like a peasant until he got nearer.

"Hello," said Philip.

The man came on. He was massive. His shoulders were broad. There was a cap upon his head. Ten paces from Philip, he stopped, and drew up sharply.

"Do you speak English?" asked Philip.

"Yes," said the man. Philip saw a movement of his hand toward his side.

"I'm all right," said Philip. "I've got a message for you."

The man hesitated.

Philip caught himself wondering how many times that same man had been there. How many times had he received word that had brought destruction to the Allies. Many, many times, perhaps.

"Here," said Philip. His hand stretched out. Between his fingers was the letter. The man cautiously took another step. He seized the letter between his hands.

"From——"

"F-13," said Philip. That was the name to use.

"Ah, you should have said that," said the man. He still had the message. It was in his hands. His fingers were embracing it. Philip had fulfilled his promise. He

had said he would place it in the hands of the man. He had promised no more.

He drew the automatic from his pocket, centered it upon the man.

"Give back the letter, or I'll shoot you," warned Philip.

The man drew away. His hand dropped again.

Philip pressed the trigger. The sound of a single shot broke the quiet. A flame leaped from the gun. Before the man fell forward, Philip was at his side. He pulled the message from the clenched fingers. He ran to his plane. Already there were movements in the shadows. Men were racing forward. Guns flashed, and bullets whined through the night.

Philip leaped into his pit. His left hand jerked back the accelerator, and he soared over the trees into safety.

There were two planes upon the field when he landed, almost silently, in the darkness. As he taxied to the shadows Slocum took hold of his wing, and helped him steer. Pinky was standing at the side when he switched off and climbed to the ground.

It was Philip's first moment of relief. The pressure of his emotion gave way. He breathed freely again. He looked from one to the other, and then he took their arms and walked toward the road.

"Let's get to the inn," said Philip. "I've got plenty to tell you."

Only the barmaid was there, a gawky, buxom girl with straggling black hair. She looked up as they came in, and without asking she brought a bottle of cognac. She had seen Slocum and Pinky before.

She left the room. Slocum placed the candle on the next table, and the three of them leaned together in the shadow of themselves. Philip told the story from the beginning to the end. When he was silent again, Slocum drew back his head and laughed. The barmaid came back. Drunk, she thought, and smiled. But the smile wasn't returned and she disappeared again.

"The message," said Slocum, "where is it? You did what you promised, my boy."

He took it between his hands, tore it open, and surveyed the contents. It was in German. He read slowly, holding the sheet near the light of the candle.

He smiled when he was through.

"He says his mother is very sick, and begs that she be remembered to Rudolph and his wife. The farm is still in good condition. The French are good to them, and there is no need to worry." He dropped the sheet upon the table. They looked at him perplexed and confused.

Slocum spread out the paper and took a drink.

"You might expect that," he said. "There's bloody

well something else on that sheet of paper, my boy. Something else."

THEY grew silent. Every once in a while Slocum picked up the paper and looked at it. He was puzzled. He kept biting the nail of his right thumb, and fingering the sheet with his left.

"There was an old trick," said Slocum. "I remember it."

He took the candle from the next table, and held the paper a full two inches over the flame.

"They used to use lemon juice, once. You can't see it after it's used, but—" Almost immediately words appeared upon the paper, words that changed from a pure white to a lemon yellow. Then slowly to brown.

They watched the effect of heat with fascination.

"He was too sure of himself, that fellow. Too sure of himself," said Slocum.

Again Slocum placed the paper upon the table before him, and slowly read.

Change Zep raid from Paris to 20 miles above Seine and concentration of half million troops—red and green rocket a half kilometer below—nine and half of the hour.

"Change! They're going over Paris! My God!" shouted Slocum.

Pinky got up from his seat and leaned over. Philip bent his head. Both of them stared at the half charred piece of paper.

"Zeps! They haven't used them for years. Not for years. It's a stunt. They were going to Paris." Slocum glanced at his watch. "Three minutes to nine," he said. He got up from the table and looked around the room in a kind of a daze.

Philip took his arm, and jerked him around.

"What are our guns filled with?" he asked.

"Every third incendiary."

Slocum looked at him. He knew what was passing through Philip's mind. The muscles in his face tightened and relaxed.

"By God, my boy. This is our big show. It's night!"

They turned to Pinky. He was still seated.

"You stay here!" shouted Slocum. "This is our big show!"

They ran out the door. They didn't know what manner of thing possessed them. Slocum was shouting between breaths.

"They'll be up to twenty thousand, those beggars. We got to get up!"

They were at the field before they heard some one

shouting out behind them, almost screaming for them to stop.

"Wait for J. P. Morland's son of Kansas City!"

Pinky came up breathlessly. He was swearing and cursing in his simple manner. They had stopped him at the inn. Some one had to pay the bill!

"Don't leave me out of this," he wailed. "What's the idea? Aren't I one of the gang?"

"How are you at night?" asked Slocum.

"Rotten," snapped Pinky.

"Then you stay on the ground. It'll be hell," warned Slocum. He turned to Philip. "We'll land here when it's over. Pinky must wait."

"Good."

For some reason their hands clasped. Neither of them moved. It was the first time either of them had become conscious of the power of a great friendship, a friendship which can only be found where the banners wave, the drums rattle, and men give up their ghosts for an ideal.

"Good luck," said Philip.

"Toodle-doo, my boy," returned Slocum.

They ran to their planes. Pinky turned over one propellor, and then the other.

"All right, my boy!" shouted Slocum.

"All right, Slocum," returned Philip.

They flashed across the field, and circled upward. The village grew small and toylike beneath them. And as Philip looked below, giving blessings to whatever it was that gave night, he saw a strip of red shoot over the field they had just left. It puzzled him at first. And then he knew. J. P. Morland's son from Kansas City was taking to the air after them.

THEY were stretched in a line, the three of them, hovering ten thousand feet above the railroad line that led to the west from Charny. The night was clear, as clear as it ever got to the south of the Western Front. Slocum was on the right, Pinky on the left, and in the center was little Philip Law playing with his motor and giving it the best it had in it.

The night cleared his brain and brought thoughts to his head, thoughts of his red-faced father who had said that white men couldn't fight at night. A thin smile passed over Philip's face.

It grew colder. He rubbed his hands and awakened the sleepy circulation of his arms and legs. The plane held its course easily, as if accustomed to the job it was doing.

Twelve thousand, now. They were still going up. Thirteen thousand. Fourteen.

Still they clung together, scarcely fifty meters between their wing-tips, and a little more than that between the helmeted heads that bent low to avoid the cold that grew colder and colder still. Lights had long since vanished. There was only one glittering thing on the ground, a river.

Climbing became slower. The air grew thin and the breathing more difficult.

It was deathly cold. The muscles in his arms were weary struggling against the handicap. He could hardly move his legs. When he turned his head the frigid air rushed headlong against the side of his face, drawing it taut like the fabric on a wing. It all went endlessly, and the sky stayed clear, and frozen cold.

He turned, drew himself around slowly.

They were coming. There were three of them. They were long in shape; they were black, ominous, gliding over the unsuspecting sky with a seeming knowledge of their own power. They were high. Not far above them, the three circled, hoping and praying they wouldn't be seen.

They were one behind another, moving ghostlike, creeping, it seemed, though they cruised at eighty miles per hour over the fated land below. All lights were out, and that only added to the sinister apprehensions which they might inspire in the hearts of all who saw.

Far down below, some place in that strange, tantalizing darkness beneath, was the earth. Twenty thousand feet below, men moved. Soldiers sang, as time ran on without thought of the horror which was passing over them.

Philip circled. Slocum pulled away. He, too, had seen. Pinky followed from behind. As they came upon the first of the Zeppelins, Philip measured his distance, and dropped. Fire spat from his two guns, flashed through the sky like a flow of molten lead. A trap door opened beneath him. Two figures returned the fire.

Crazy things shot over the sky. The Zeppelins twisted sluggishly. Philip pulled away and swung up. A plane passed him, pulling upward. Slocum. Another pulled to the left, rising like a shot. Pinky. Philip clutched at his Bowdens. The red flared again from the ends of his guns. The cold was forgotten.

He raked the thing from end to end. He couldn't miss. His incendiaries, great balls of fire, sank in, lost in the gas that was sure to burn. A little red-fringed hole started like a pin hole in front of him. It grew like mad.

The Zep twisted, quivered. A flash. It broke and dropped, filling the air with particles of burning fabric and human remains.

The other two were cringing. They were dropping

their fiendish load; below, the earth was churning, blowing itself into the air, puffing and spewing all that it had inside of it.

CHAPTER VIII SKY SHOW

PHILIP WAS DROPPING AGAIN, lining the side of the second giant craft with flame-rimmed bullets. It shot back, exchanging shell for shell. But nothing could stop the fury of the dives of those three.

Flames shot up again. The sky turned to the brightness of day. Philip held up his hand. There came a twisted fear for his sight again. He weaved away, running for the moment.

The sky was no longer cold. It was hot.

When Philip looked again, he saw the second Zeppelin slipping furiously down through the sky like a giant comet.

The darkness came again, and with it the light of the moon. Far out ahead was the last of the Zeps and the two other planes that lingered in the sky.

He thanked God for those two planes.

They were still up, then, still had fight left in them. They bunched, the three of them. They dove together. Their guns played over the silly black thing below. But it wouldn't go down.

Philip swung away and pulled up in a staggering arc. He turned over and measured through his sights again. As he dove, something struck his left arm. His shoulder grew warm. There was no pain. There was blood. It moved slowly over his skin under his jacket, and dropped to the bottom of the plane. He clenched his teeth, took a hurried breath. When he dove again, he held the course of his dive until his wheels skimmed the top of the staggering Zep. His shots filtered through the fabric and filled it with holes like a sieve.

He saw the other two as they dove. He saw them beat at the surface of the Zep with their bullets. Time after time they dove. A wild thought slipped through Philip's mind: so this was that great show that Slocum somehow knew would come! This was the last great show. And this was the thing that would leave Slocum dead.

Again and again they dropped upon the last of the three. It seemed endowed by some diabolic power with eternal life. It would never go down.

Then, somehow, Philip knew that there was only one other plane in the sky. The other had gone. He wondered which it was. He pulled away and looked, but there was no sign of it. It was gone. When he turned back again, it was with doubled fury. He winged with a sudden resentment and hate. His bullets tore into the titanic bag with gnawing fury.

A flame shot up. A flash enveloped everything. His plane wallowed over the sky, dropped with a terrific speed. He struggled with it with his single hand. When he righted her, the last of the Zeps was twisting down from the sky, its life flame shooting out from its middle.

But the sky was clear.

There was not a living, moving thing in the air. It grew cold, bitter cold, and far below were the little glowing things that had once been masters of the sky.

A feeling of hopelessness filled Philip as he dropped into wide circles toward earth. His left arm was hanging uselessly to his left shoulder. He turned his nose toward the field the three of them had left such a short time before. He half hoped the others would be there. But they weren't. He heard a sound.

A PLANE was coming, closer and closer. Its black shape swung over the trees at the end of the field and dropped. He heard the crushing sound of spars and struts. Philip ran toward it. He stopped at its side, and pulled at the pilot who was down. He felt the dampness of blood, and heard the murmur of a voice.

"J. P. Morland's son of Kansas City," it said weakly.

Philip pulled him out, and Pinky staggered and fell.

"They got me, I guess. They got me—"

Philip turned him over.

"That you, Philip? Yes—that's you. Where's Slocum," he asked.

"Not here."

"Not here?" He paused a moment, gasping for breath. "Poor devil. What's that? I hear something—plane."

The third of the three dropped quickly. It stood upright in the center of the field. Its pilot called out hollowly, "You there, my boys?" It was Slocum.

They were together again. The three of them. Philip and Slocum pulled Pinky up, and tried to carry him.

"No. I can walk, I guess."

They went down the road, arm in arm. They never spoke of the fight. They didn't need to. Half way along the road Pinky grew limp.

"Leave me here," he said feebly. "I'll be all right."

Slocum took him on his back, and carried him along, struggling under the weight. Step after step.

Why they went back to the gray-fronted building that night, they never knew. It was a destination. It was said to be a hospital. That was enough. They stood at the door ringing the bell.

It was scarcely ten. When the door opened an attendant drew away in fright. And almost immediately they heard the steps of a girl coming down the stairs.

She looked at the bloody mess of the three. Pinky was still upon Slocum's back. She couldn't speak at first. Then it was a sudden wail.

"Philip!"

They were brought to a room. Pinky was lowered from Slocum's back to a bed. He opened his eyes, and they had a wild look in them.

"Thanks," he said. He paused a moment, looking at them. "They got me," he said. "Listen, Slocum. Remember that will? I meant that. I was drunk, but I meant that. It's your—"

He closed his eyes. J. P. Morland's son of Kansas City was dead. Slocum was bending over him. But Slocum's arms grew faint and he fell. When they pulled him up and took off his coat, there was a hole in his right side.

"Just a blighty," he said.

They put him in another bed. He was smiling that old smile.

"Great lad, Pinky," he said.

Philip felt the pressure of a hand upon his shoulder. The nurse.

"Take off your coat," she directed. But there were tears in her eyes. "You know me, don't you? I'm Mary. He made me do it. He made me write the letter."

"I knew it, Mary. I knew there was some reason. I knew your walk. I——"

The door was thrown back suddenly, and crashed against the wall. Goose stood with his fiendish gaze upon them.

Then he shouted insanely, waving his hands, and moving his mouth like a maniac. Suddenly, he rushed at them.

Philip raised his hand. The automatic which Slocum had given him was used a second time. He fired three times. Goose stood still in his tracks. His eyes rolled, his arms grew limp. Slowly he dropped to the floor. There was no noise when he fell.

"Thank God!" gasped Mary.

"He had it coming to him, my boy," said Slocum weakly.