



WAR EAGLE

by GEORGE BRUCE

*John Wolfe, Crow Indian, Rides a Sky War-Pony and Comes to Grips
With a White-Man's Scourge Over French Battlefields!*

CHAPTER I
A CHIEF IS BORN

JOHN WOLFE SAT CROSS-LEGGED on the ground attempting to coerce his brain with the realization that this was his father dancing in front of him.

High overhead, radiant stars glittered against a background of velvety night sky. The sky was crimsoned with the leaping, twisting light of the ceremonial fire. The earth, outside of the limits illuminated by the blood-red glare was a thing of dense shadows.

Through the shadows danced nightmarish apparitions, bodies naked except for the deerskin loin cloths and the slashes of red and ochre paint on bronze flesh. Glittering eyes looked out through masks painted on faces. Arms and legs moved in a queer, jerky shuffle. Heads turned up to the night sky, and then lowered toward the earth.

Over all was the throbbing rhythm of the war drums. Dull, maddening beat of drums, a beat which had started hours before in slow tempo and had gradually worked up and up in rising crescendo until the thunder rolled up into the depths of the heavens.

About the glare of the fire the men danced, in and out, through the flame, armed and painted after the custom of the tribe.

In front of them all danced John Wolfe's father. An eagle bonnet crowned his head. An eagle bonnet, with proud feathers falling to the earth behind him. His body was naked and painted like the bodies of his Crow, brethren. He carried a coupstick heavy with feathers. In his right hand, in fierce grip, he held the tomahawk of a war chief. His feet thumped on the earth, and the earth seemed to shake. His mouth grunted strange sounds, and his eyes glittered with the battle lust.

In the outer fringe of light, just where the glare of the flame merged with the blackness of night, the squaws sat on the earth and rocked bodies in cadence with the drum beats. They sang the leaping, wild song

of battle. The song which had sent the Crows on a thousand war trails in the centuries which had waxed and waned before this night.

Sitting there, naked like the rest of his kin, his body streaked with paint, John Wolfe was trying to remember that a fire like this had been his beginning; that the skin tepees of his people had housed him; and that his mother had been a squaw such as the women who sang in the semi-darkness. He tried to remember that the beating of a drum had been his first music, and the star strewn sky his first horizon.

HOW long ago? Ages? A dozen life times? The brain refused to believe that one could journey so far from his beginnings within the span of twenty years. One could be transported from one world to another in a single life time, and could return, and gaze upon the blood and bone of his creation in a detached, godlike, almost amused attitude. He could sit cross-legged in front of a war fire, and feel only curiosity, like a man set down in a place of which he has only dreamed, a place peopled with strange beings whose existence had become nothing more than a vague, wraithlike memory.

What eons had passed during those twenty years? The firelight exerted a spell on John Wolfe, conjured up pictures for him, while the squaws crooned, and the drums pounded and the sweat rolled off the bodies of the dancing warriors.

An already old man, his face seamed and marked with the wind and rain and sun of the open places, but his body as straight as a Crow arrow, was standing in front of a smiling white man. Standing, almost as if in the presence of an enemy, his eyes flashing, his head held proudly.

Standing beside him, very small, almost roly-poly, was a boy, dressed richly in tribal dress as would befit the son of a Crow War Chief, yet frightened, silent, with eloquent, questing eyes.

The voice of the old man rumbled out of his chest, a word at a time, and his hands filled in with sign language the words his mouth could not utter. Pointing to the small boy, and saying to the smiling white man:

"This—my son—son of Two-Guns-Mad-Wolf, who is son of Crazy-Thunder-Great-Bear—"

Names, rolling sonorously out of the old man's

mouth. Names bathed in blood and consecrated in the crackling of rifle fire. Names which brought back the creaking axles of covered wagons moving ponderously over open plains, hauled by patient oxen and draught horses. Names which brought early dawns and nights filled with flame and the scream of the Crow war cry. Names which recalled swift riding shadows, and the hiss of arrows, and the scream of the dying, with pinto ponies racing, carrying painted warriors, aflame with victory.

Names—and long columns of cavalry on the march. Names—and rolling masses of flame engulfing frontier settlements, wrested out of a wilderness through agonizing toil, and given back to the wilderness by the fierce, implacable enmity of the Crows.

“Crazy-Thunder-Great-Bear!” Hanging in his lodge, the buckskin vestments of “Yellow Hair” who had died at the Little Big Horn along with all of his men, had died under the flashing ax which had been passed on from father to son during Crow generations.

Names that caused the smiling white man to wince as they rolled out of the mouth of John Wolfe’s father.

“Him—my son—son of chief, who is son of chief, who is son of chief. Him name— ‘Little-Thunder-Crazy-Wolf.’ Tomorrow—some day—him chief of Crows—great warrior—lead his people. But first—him sit at council fire of white man. Him learn white man ways—white medicine. Tomorrow—someday—he come back to his people—now—you take him.”

And a grunt. Never a flicker of an eye in parting. Not a movement of face. This old man, who had one son. His life had been spent on war paths and not in the tepee with his woman. He had taken no woman until he was old, and had had no son until he was old. Standing there, he gave into the keeping of a white man the most precious thing in his life, his son.

And the white man had reached out his hand, and had taken the hand of this son, and had patted his head. The old man had turned abruptly, and had stalked away, to return to the hills.

So John Wolfe had parted from his father and his people. And so “Young-Thunder-Crazy-Wolf” became simple John Wolfe. The name became a white man’s name, as the tribal garb he wore gave way to the attire of a white child. The tepee gave way to a classroom. The trees and the lore of the Crows gave way to school books.

And John Wolfe grew.

Like his fathers, he grew straight and tall, and silent. He grew mighty sinews. His feet spurned the earth,

and his great strength was invincible. He played the games of a white man, and five hundred thousand people in the space of three weeks, had leaped out of seats, and had cheered him with a hysterical, hero-worshipping frenzy—because he had placed a leather oval under his arm, and had raced away from eleven other men. Eleven men named Harvard. And eleven other men named Pennsylvania. And eleven other men named Yale.

And then, suddenly, he was a white man! He thought like a white man, talked like a white man, lived like a white man. The transition had been so swift, so complete, he had not noticed.

HE WAS an engineer. A man who dreamed over a blueprint and watched the dreams materialize into tremendous concrete spans across turbulent waters, or dreams which mocked at a thousand miles of desert with a concrete ribbon stretching from horizon to horizon.

The sun and wind, the stars at night, the eye of a transit peering into a future none could see but himself. And with every day, the deer skin lodges of his people grew more remote—like the vague memory of a childhood dream.

And then, suddenly, there was a war.

A newspaper was thrown off a train into the heart of a desert. The newspaper had a black headline “*WAR DECLARED!*” And then a terse telegram came addressed to Lieutenant John Wolfe,

YOU ARE INSTRUCTED TO REPORT IMMEDIATELY
TO THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS UNITED STATES
ARMY WASHINGTON D C

And John Wolfe, Engineer, became Lieutenant Wolfe, U.S.A.

The Army needed its engineering reserve officer personnel urgently.

There was a place in Texas called Kelly Field. Lieutenant John Wolfe was ordered to that place “to prepare, from an engineering standpoint, this Base for the reception and training of student flyers, Signal Corps, U.S.A.”

At Kelly Field, John Wolfe saw his first airplane in April, 1917. In the middle of March he flew for the first time, solo. A group of instructors stood on the ground as he carried a Canuck around a gentle turn and then landed, touching wheels delicately to earth.

One of them, a hard-boiled civilian shook his head as he spoke to his companions.

"I never thought I'd live to see a *natural* flyer," he growled. "But if that Wolfe ain't a natural flyer, he'll do until men sprout wings of their own. I wish he was in Air Service instead of Engineering, he'd make a great combat pilot!

Two months later Lieutenant Wolfe received a set of orders.

—effective this day, Wolfe, John, Lieutenant, Engineering Corps, is transferred to Signal Corps, Air Service, with the rank of Lieutenant, First (Military Aviator). Upon receipt of these orders, Lieutenant Wolfe is granted ten days leave for the purpose of visiting his home, after which he will report to the Embarkation Officer, Port of Embarkation, for transportation to France. This travel is necessary in the public service.

"—ten days to visit his home—" These deerskin lodges. These trees. The smoke of the cooking fires. The smell of the ponies. The unmoving faces of the women. The straight bodies and copper faces of the men. Their eyes, when they looked at him, examined the materials of his uniform. His home?

He suddenly understood that he had no home. A gulf, vast impossible stretched between John Wolfe and the skin tepees. Just as another gulf, uncrossable, stretched between John Wolfe and the abode of the white man. And for the first time, John Wolfe was aware of his isolation. He was a being apart.

He sat there, cross-legged on the ground, with the drum beat muted by the rush of his visionings, he was suddenly aware of his father's face, close to him, contorted, lined under the paint. Behind him, braves were leaping through the raging fire, sinking tomahawks into the war post.

The beat of the drums had risen to a frantic thunder, the voices of the women were high pitched, shrill, macerating the nerves. The dancing bodies were like demons suddenly possessed of an epilepsy. Little bubbles of froth blew from mouths. Eyes rolled drunkenly in heads.

THEN John Wolfe's father was chanting as he stood above the body of his son. The old voice was fiercely resonant. The old arms were lifted toward the heavens. The feathered coupstick was raised aloft, and with it

the hatchet of Crazy-Thunder-Big-Bear.

"Hai!" chanted John Wolfe's father. "Hai! Look upon the son of chiefs who becomes a warrior—"

In the dim background, the crooning voices of the women answered, an endless litany, rising and falling. "Hai—look upon him—"

"He is strong and the thunder is in his voice and the lightning in his right arm."

"—thunder in his right arm—"

"In him boils the blood of the warrior. In him is the heart of the lion and the strength of the grizzly. Where he walks the earth shakes, and the trees of the woods bend and are silent as he passes."



He was the son of warrior chiefs

John Wolfe looked up at the impassioned face of his father. The gulf grew more impassable. He was thinking of the little children of the white men, playing at Indians—painted like this, and with feathers stuck in their hair.

The smoldering eyes of old Two-Guns-Mad-Wolf leaped with flickering flame. Under the fierce exterior they gleamed with pride. A Crow chief was passing onto his son the fighting leadership of an unconquered people. Passing on to him the symbols of his chieftainship.

“Hai! None has he slain. No coup-stick does he carry. Blood has not wet his hands. Hai! So does he go to battle—that when he returns the women may sing of his deeds and the door of his lodge may be adorned with the scalp locks of his enemies!”

“Hai!—his enemies—” moaned the women.

And then, somehow, John Wolfe was standing, and his father’s hands were removing the war bonnet of a chief from his own head and were holding it over the head of his son. Holding it like a crown. The feathers fell to the ground, and the old man stepped back, faced the four corners of the earth to call the spirits to witness this consecration. Then he lifted his hands to the heavens, and his voice rolled like thunder from his mouth—thundered over the heads of the painted dancers.

“Crows! Look upon your chief!”

The nerve-paralyzing war cry of the Crows screamed deliriously into the blood red of the flame and up to the stars in answer.

And then, old Two-Guns-Crazy-Wolfe slipped the traditional tomahawk of his chieftainship from off his own wrist and invested his son with it, and from about his naked waist he took the ancient knife, and belted it about the strong thighs of his son.

His voice was a command: “Chief of the Crows—go to meet the enemies of your peoples—and return in honor.”

Suddenly it seemed that the ceremonial fire had died to embers. The chill of the night struck among the deerskin lodges. The streaking light of dawn touched the horizon to the East.

And there was another world, and again the transition was so swift John Wolfe was scarcely conscious of the change.

CHAPTER II BUTCHER VON BRUENER

THE STARS WERE THERE. The moon. The smell of the open spaces. The tingle of high altitudes. But the stars were distant. The moon rode behind flying scud. The perfume of the open space was touched with the pungent odor of raw gasoline and hot oil, and of the stench of laboring metal. The wind beat against the body of a fragile, man-made bird. The wood and linen

wings creaked and drummed strangely. The wires, which were the nerves and sinews of the birds, shrilled a constant song.

John Wolfe sat in the cockpit of his Spad, and his eyes looked down upon a world masked by the night. A world riven by torture, drenched in blood, blasted by concussion, seared with flame. A world littered with the dead and dying. A world of burned and blackened ruins, and engulfed in the thunder and lightning of artillery barrages.

Night, at twenty thousand feet over the arena of war. He looked down through the darkness in which men rested so that they might have the strength to go on killing with the coming of another dawn. Night, it was gouted here and there with the dull red of a burning town, which even darkness could not quench.

Night—with John Wolfe patrolling the empty skies, left with his thoughts, with his isolation. A smile touched his mouth. In front of him, in the little rack he had fashioned for it, was the tomahawk of his Crow chieftainship. He hardly knew why it was there, except that other men carried good luck charms—carried silk stockings, ugly little figures, a baby’s shoe—anything. And he had taken for his own good luck charm, a Crow tomahawk.

The other men of the Squadron had laughed and nodded toward John Wolfe.

“Look,” they called to one another, “Wolfe is going to tomahawk his Jerries. He’s going to sneak up behind them and sink that ax into the squareheads. Nothing like being original! No machine-guns for a redskin!”

WOLFE laughed with them as he mounted his tomahawk. Laughed—at the same time understood that the very men who served with him looked at him strangely and were a little aloof. For he was a Crow—and they were white—and the Indian School had not been able to change that one fact.

When he fought the first time, the men of the Squadron shivered a little after he landed. He looked at them quite calmly, and turned away from a bullet-riddled ship to write a combat report. Man after man drifted over to Wolfe’s ship, touched the bullet holes with fingers and glanced after the tall, straight figure of John Wolfe. Most of them had seen that action. That winged eagle which had struck into the center of an enemy reconnaissance patrol! A grey thing which came down with a screaming shriek from out of an empty expanse of blue, and ripped and slashed and tore at a whole flight of D.3 Albatrosses!

Something about that deadly, lone attack impacted against the nerves and imaginations of the men of John Wolfe's Squadron. Impressed them, so that they glanced at him out of the corners of their eyes as he passed, and felt little goose pimples breaking out on their bodies. He was so calm and cold about it all. There was not a quiver in the writing of that combat report:

—at eight zero seven ack emma encountered an enemy reconnaissance patrol which I attacked. The enemy suffered four casualties, the complete nature of which I was unable to ascertain—

But the men of the Squadron had observed the nature of those casualties. Two Albatrosses, whirling earthward, burning. Another with a smoking motor and a shattered aileron, spinning down out of control. The fourth—merely a blurred, terrific explosion in space, and then a scattering fall of splintered longerons and tattered wing surfacing.

No one made an attempt to place John Wolfe in any one Flight for combat purposes. He was permitted to fly his own patrols, and to seek his own information and his own enemy.

Mostly he flew at night. Alone—in keeping with his quiet aloofness.

And like this night, when he flew, he was surrounded by his own thoughts.

His eyes would look at that tomahawk, and the smile would flick across his face. A smile at the thought of bows and arrows and antiquated rifles—which was his father's concept of war. A smile as he wondered what fierce old Two-Guns-Crazy-Wolf, would do or say, in the face of machine-guns, poison gas, seventy-five's, trench mortars, and night bombers.

He wondered what old Crazy-Thunder-Great-Bear, his grandfather, who had wiped out a Squadron of United States Cavalry, and had destroyed Yellow Hair, would do in the face of tanks and liquid fire—whether they would dance to the throb of drums and the chanting of the squaws before they went out to do battle with an enemy who swooped down from the skies to deal death.

He smiled, because he knew his father visioned him as stealing along a war trail, striking down an enemy with the gleaming blade of the battle ax—and then—a quick circular movement of that razor like scalping knife.

He shuddered a little.

With the shudder came a little laugh. John Wolfe—

All American fallback! John Wolfe—Civil Engineer—using an ax on his enemies!

He sat up in the cockpit. Within his body little ripples moved along his nerves. His head turned quickly to scan the black depths of the sky. Vagrant stars peeped through the black, flying masses of wind-torn clouds. His Spad was almost soaring on its own buoyancy. The motor was throttled to bare idling speed. The whispering of wires and struts had the sound of the muted woodwind instruments of a symphony orchestra playing, over and over, a tantalizing phrase.

HE LISTENED. The ripples under his skin increased in pulsation. Then he heard. The muffled beat of motors. The sound seeped out of the darkness. His eyes narrowed. The flanges of his nostrils widened. The muscles of his jaw clamped together. The hand upon the controls was suddenly the hand of the master.

The sound was the beat of enemy motors. The mingled beatings of BWMs, dragging enemy ships through space.

He eased the throttle to the Spad, carried it higher and higher, handling it gently, as if it lived and could feel. The clouds made white shrouds about his head, settled upon his shoulders, and he looked down through the blackness.

Somewhere to the east a surging blob of dull, red flame leaped up from the earth, mushrooming into a white expanse of concussion. It was nothing more than a pinpoint from twenty thousand feet. And then there were other pinpoints of white-hot flame, and the flame rippled over the earth.

Against the background of flame were framed dark-pinioned wings of enemy night bombers, flying a methodical formation over Lisle, a town ten kilos behind the lines. Lisle vomited flame from the agony of its ruptured abdomen.

Directly over Lisle, still four thousand feet above the bombers, John Wolfe pushed the stick against the fire wall, and the Spad stood on its head and went down with an insane dive. The wings shuddered and the longerons groaned. The motor sobbed and fought to tear free from the mounting.

The muzzles of the twin Vickers spat flame as Wolfe warmed them with short bursts fired into space. The pressure of the wind beat against his face and strangled him, snatched the breath out of his mouth and nostrils, mashed his goggles against his cheek

bones. Within his brain there was a surging beat of rising fury. A measured beat, rising in intensity and tempo to match the staccato fury of the motor in front of him.

Then he burst into the center of those twin-motored destroyers. Burst with the fury of an avenging archangel with sword of flame.

The bombers, intent on the kill, had no warning of his coming. The black sky was splashed and split with the frantic, but futile bursts of anti-aircraft fire from the distant earth. The flame and smoke of burning Lisle lifted into space. Burning embers floated on the wind. The nose-searing odor of burning debris filled space. Heat eddies swept up off the earth and caused wings to bob and jerk crazily.

The slicing tracks of light from searchlight batteries added to the wildness of the hell.

The grey Spad nosed hungrily up under the belly of a night bomber. For an instant it was framed in the gun-sight, as the Spad was half rolling on its side like a ravening shark attacking a whale. The Vickers bucked and jumped as Wolfe's thumb pressed against the trips. The raw, burning odor snatched from the muzzles of the machine-guns and forced into Wolfe's nostrils by the slipstream, was like a drug—like a hasheesh.

A little spurt of flame ran along the smooth belly of the bomber where the tracers and slugs from Wolfe's Vickers gutted the big ship.

A machine-gunner, in the nose of the bomber, suddenly turned in his seat, pointed at the Spad with a jerk of his arm, swung his Parabellums around on the rack—and died with hot slugs in his belly before he lined the guns on the Spad.

THE grey streaking ship, its red, white and blue cocardes illumined by the red glare of flame from the earth, pounced upon a second of the black hulks.

Slugs snarled and ripped at the space around John Wolfe's head. Passing, they were like the crackling of whip lashes, or the tearing of heavy linen. The Spad trembled with the impact of gunfire at pointblank range. A dozen machine-gunners in the black hulks were squirting flame and lead at the lone Spad.

The Spad ripped viciously at the belly of the second bomber. The poisonous-looking copper and web belts ran through the breeches of the Vickers. The metal of the gun breeches sizzled and radiated heat. Boiling oil swept back into Wolfe's face, snatched from the exhaust stacks by the raging slipstream. Raw gas blinded him. Splinters flew in his face.

Then the Spad nosed in close, and from a distance of fifty feet, riddled the great target in the sight with a succession of quick bursts.

The nose of the bomber erupted into black smoke and flame. The flame roared into a volcano, swallowed the pilots and the bomber, licked along the fuselage of the craft.

Wolfe, his eyes narrowed and the drum beat in his head rising to a throbbing roar, slashed at his third ship.

In front of him an anti-aircraft shell broke with a vicious blast. The Spad was tossed like a splinter from a volcano, blasted upward a hundred feet, whirled dizzily. Wood crackled and bowed, and John Wolfe fought off unconsciousness as his brain struggled to escape the effect of the terrific concussion.

Flaming fabric and bits of wreckage filtered down through space.

He came out of the blast inverted, blinded, amid an inferno of machine-gun fire from the bombers.

Still inverted he caught the shadow of a banking Gotha, and his thumb stabbed the trips. The Gotha shuddered for an instant, rolled drunkenly in space, spiraled aimlessly with lax controls banging back and forth.

Now there was blood on John Wolfe's face. Why, he did not know. He merely tasted it—and knew it was blood. It cascaded down from under his helmet. After an instant there was a dull, throbbing roar in his head, and waves of blackness marched and countermarched over the crossroads of his brain.

His tongue licked at the blood. The taste spread through his brain like liquid fire, gave battle to the army of darkness.

Then his eyes were looking at a thing of black, striped with gold, crossing in front of his sights. A winged thing, flying slowly, almost majestically through space.

Black and gold! The words rioted through his numbed brain. Black and gold—he should remember—black and gold.

He whirled the Spad off his back, dived to pick up speed, ripped after the black and gold thing which was slipping into the darkness above the red glare. Black and gold! That was the color of Bruener's ship. Bruener the Bomber! Bruener the Butcher! Sigmund von Bruener—*Pour le Merite*—for butchering babies, for flying out of night skies over sleeping towns far removed from the front lines—flying silently, to make the horrors more effective, and then dumping tons

of bombs down upon the sleeping towns. Bringing the war to the old, and the women, and the children. Striking them with the “fear of God.” Bruener, the Boche Scourge!

Bruener, who was shunned by pursuit pilots on his own side. Bruener, who flew a black and gold ship, so that the Butcher might be more easily identified.

THE Spad staggered in the climb. It went up—up. It dogged the black and gold shadow. The Hisso coughed nervously, and the smell of raw gas was increased. The thump and dullness in John Wolfe’s head became a deadly, heavy thing.

Gunfire spat at him out of the blackness. The gunners on that black and gold Gotha were enfiling the Spad as it climbed to attack. The Spad, trembling, swept in under the crackling fury about it, thrust its sharklike body against the belly of Bruener’s ship. The guns vomited orange-green flame. The black and gold bomber twisted and squirmed to escape.

Tracers from the Vickers bounced from the sides of Bruener’s ship. They splattered into phosphorescent blotches, fell away. Tracers didn’t do that. Usually they went through fabric.

Wolfe’s fingers seemed dead on the controls. He squeezed tighter. There were no hands at the ends of his arms, and no feet at the end of his legs.

Then he was aware that the Spad was falling. The motor coughed and spat. The Spad shuddered and whirled dizzily. He was falling, through the night, through the searchlight beams, through the smoke, and gunfire in space. Falling, staring as he fell, his head dead, his arms and legs unmoving.

Falling, a thousand feet. Two thousand feet. Knowing that he was going to die.

Somewhere, a thousand feet above the earth, the Spad came out of the spin through its own inherent stability, and converted the spin into a dive.

Wolfe, fighting, forced the dead weights of his arms and legs to move—an inch at a time. He could see the earth below him, flashing by. It was like flying in a nightmare.

He came home in a nightmare, dived for the field, but those dead arms and legs could not move quickly enough to make a night landing. The Spad struck on its wheels, nosed over with a sickening rending of metal and wood and linen.

Flame leaped from the wreckage. Men of the Squadron raced to the shattered remnant of the Spad, ducked in under the flame, dragged John Wolfe away

from the flame, beat out the fire which was licking daintily at his leather coat.

They stared at the bloody mask which was his face, and at the flame in his eyes. He closed the eyes, and the flame was gone. He struggled to stand.

The Major stood over him. Wolfe’s mouth moved. His voice was ripped from his throat.

“Sorry—sir—to make a verbal report,” he said. “At eleven-twenty-three, while flying night patrol over Lisle, I encountered von Bruener’s night bombers. I attacked. There were four casualties among the bombers—extent unknown. I encountered von Bruener, in person, attacked, hit him with a burst from my Vickers—but—he—got away.”

His voice suddenly trailed away to a whisper. He closed his eyes.

He was not aware that men stood above him, staring at him, and then staring among themselves.

CHAPTER III RED CROSS TARGET

JOHN WOLFE KNEW HIS VISITORS were trying to be cheerful. He also knew they were squirming with the desire to be out of the hospital. None of the three of them could control an involuntary twitching of the muscles, nor a quick shifting of eyes, when a man in a bed within the ward, groaned through tight lips, or stared at the ceiling, eaten by inward pain, with beads of cold sweat running from ashen cheeks. When another man screamed in delirious torture the visitors winced and cringed, as if struck a blow across the teeth. When a broken body, ghastly under its sheeted covering rolled by on a litter, they were suddenly jittering and twitching.

But they attempted to keep up a rough, bantering tone as they talked to him.

He looked at them. They were typical of a million men whose sole business was killing. Who lived to kill. Gaunt-faced, eyes a little bloodshot, bodies jerking with overexcitement and taut nerves, laughs a little too gay, and jangling. Three of a million, from the Squadron, come to visit a fallen comrade.

One said: “Well, now that they’ve combed the bone splinters out of your brains, and did a major overhaul

on your think tank, I suppose you just can't wait to get back to it all."

Another said, with a queer strained grin: "Here y'are, Big Chief Fall-on-his-Dome. We rescued your little keepsakes from what was left of your crate. They didn't burn—"

He stopped queerly and unwrapped a package, held John Wolfe's tomahawk and knife in his hands, dropped them on the bed suddenly as if they burned his hands.

The third said, awkwardly: "Family relics, eh? Lovely little things! Just the right tools to bring to the great war. Must be a great sensation to have something like that sunk in the back of your skull—especially when you don't expect it. And that little knife! Now there's something—a real hair raiser!"

The three roared with sudden, staccato laughter.

Wolfe looked at them and held the tomahawk and the knife in his hands, weighing them, studying them.

One of the three said: "Well, I'm glad this is a nice clean war—you get a quick bullet and it's all over." He looked at the tomahawk, shuddered a little.

Wolfe smiled and shrugged his shoulders. "You're thinking of savages," he said queerly. "Painted creatures, stealing up on a settlement in the night, bodies naked, eyes glittering, and then—a rush, and the smack of hatchet against skull—screams and cries—women and children—flames and smoke—"

Another of them smiled wryly: "Well, something like that. A tomahawk—kinda—gives a guy ideas."

Wolfe looked at the bone handle of the knife, and the fire blackened tomahawk.

"I guess it's all in the point of view," he said strangely. "A savage is a savage, and a white man is a white man—but they kill a lot alike. Women and children, the sick and the aged. They both torture—but a white man's war is much worse. No savage ever knew anything about liquid flame, or poison gas, or machine-guns, or seventy-fives that can kill at five miles—or shrapnel, or high explosives, or tanks—or disease—or killing from the sky. The white man had to think those up."

He stopped, looked at the beds about him. Three beds up the ward a man was gasping his lungs out—lungs rotted by gas. His hands clutched at the spread, his lips were black-blue, his eyes were glazing. His breathing tore his body to shreds.

Wolfe nodded, his eyes were blank. "And—as for torture—" He left the sentence unfinished.

There was an awkward silence. Then he smiled at his visitors.

"And even the savages spared the children—and the aged. They had a code."

"Well," said one of the visitors. "I guess we'd better be going."

"Sure—back to the mines—back to Romance and Knighthood."

"Did they change the oil in your crankcase?"

There was a little pause. Then one of them said—a note of softness in his voice: "They gave you the D.S.C., John. It was published in orders yesterday. Some brass hat will be around here pretty soon to pin the hardware on you. Seems you captured the fancy of the guys at G.H.Q. The Frogs are giving you the Croix. Probably everybody else will give you something to remember 'em by. Make nice ornaments for the tepee, eh?"

They trotted out, glad to be gone. Glad to get away from the smell of flesh putrefying, from the odor of blood and pain and ether and antiseptics.

John Wolfe lay there, his fingers like the fingers of a blind man, running over the rough surfaces of the knife and hatchet, a little smile on his face. A little smile as he thought of the shape of a Distinguished Service Cross, and a Croix de Guerre. White man's scalps! White man's proof of the warrior.

A soft voice spoke to him. "Shall I put them away?"

He lifted his eyes, shook his head, the little smile still on his face. "No—I—think I'd like to keep them." Her hand touched his head, his cheeks, felt for his pulse. She shook her head, as though admonishing a naughty child.

"Too much excitement!" she told him severely. "You shouldn't have visitors—yet."

HE LOOKED at her. He knew she was the most beautiful thing in the world. Cool, soft-voiced, with compassion and understanding in her eyes, her fingers with the caressing touch of velvet. He watched the way all the men in the ward looked after her as she passed; how the wrinkles formed of agony ironed themselves out of faces as she smiled or spoke to a man. To all the men here she was the most beautiful thing in the world.

But to John Wolfe she was even more—she was something he could not have. Something that stood on the other side of the abyss which separates the white from the red. Mixed with the pain in his head, after the first two or three days, was another pain which stabbed at his heart. He loved her. He couldn't help it. The god who made men black or red or white, also made them male and female.

He loved her because the half hundred whimpering children in the other ward became silent when she smiled at them, and petted them. Children, hollow-eyed, salvaged from the fields littered with the bodies of their parents. Starved, broken, forever afraid. Children lashed with shrapnel; with eardrums burst with concussion. Children who cowered into cellars and ditches, while death ravaged the countryside about them. Children gathered together—in a war hospital, where men suffered and died. Because there was no place for them to go—now or ever.

Children with haggard eyes, dazed looking, unable to comprehend that men made war—and killed—everything children loved.

John Wolfe didn't know the name of this girl he loved. The men in the ward called her Miss Janet. But a name isn't much. There is no name for a desert sun, nor for the cool wind of an evening, nor for the ecstasy of water to a man dying of thirst. She was beautiful. And those forever-terrorized children gave her their hands, eagerly—and remembered how to laugh—when she was with them. When she was gone, the terror crept back, and they were silent—huddled.

Children, snatched from the maws of war, finding haven under a great Red Cross painted on the roof of the hospital building. Children, cared for by an angel.

DARKNESS came, and light, in that hospital. Not measuring days, but measuring eternities.

And all the while, in the distance, the guns rumbled, and the earth shivered with shock, and the window panes of the hospital rattled and tinkled—so that men might remember that Death stalked outside those walls, and that War, like a gorged snake, kept swallowing a pock-marked, writhing Earth.

The touch of a cool hand awakened John Wolfe from a restless, feverish sleep. He awoke with a start, and the moment he awoke, he heard the sound. Miss Janet's voice was saying soothingly:

"Better wake up. I'm afraid it's an air raid—over toward Serges."

Her voice was perfectly calm. She smiled clown at him through the milk white, vague illumination in the ward—moonlight—the light of a full moon.

"I'm going to take care of the children," she said. "I don't think there is any danger. After all this is a hospital. It's marked, even on the enemy maps. But the children."

She hurried off. Toward the whimperings and wailings in the other ward.

And John Wolfe lay there, a sudden cold sweat breaking out on his body. He listened to the sinister droning of motors in Gothas, seeping down from the heavens. The rising and falling of sound—the whining ferocity, and it seemed the sound filled all of the space above the earth.

Men in the ward awakened. Eyes popped open. They lay, silent, listening, hardly dariijg to breathe.

And then, in the distance sounded the first dull crash of exploding bombs. And with each crash came the shudderings of a shocked and staggering earth. The beds in the hospitals moved, trembled. Orderlies moved about, quickly, efficiently, faces a little drawn and white. Surgeons appeared, half dressed.

They went about speaking assuring words. "Don't get excited boys—they're after Serges—but we're safe. A hospital is always safe!"

Mixed with the constant whine of enemy motors was the whine of terrified children, muted by the walls between the wards.

The smell of something burning came down on the breeze. And then the whole horizon to the southeast was lit with a red glare. The glare increased in intensity. It ate its way higher and higher toward the dome of the sky. It reflected on the wasted faces of the men in the hospital, as they lay and listened and watched.

And above them, the droning whine was a dull knife sawing at the flesh of the men in the hospital. The sound hung over them. It was directly overhead. Here and there a man, nerves screwed up to the breaking point, sobbed suddenly, aloud, and covered his face with his hands.

Here and there a man cursed out of writhing mouth. And then there was no hospital.

There was a crash, a smear of red flame, the rending of wood, the screams of men, the more terrible screams of children, the voices of orderlies and attendants and surgeons.

And from somewhere, Miss Janet's voice, talking to the children, her voice, motherly, chiding, calm: "Don't be afraid—follow me."

Her voice was blotted out by a second crash.

And then came the crackle and leaping horror of flames.

Somehow John Wolfe found himself on his hands and knees, fighting debris and bodies. Fighting toward the sound of her voice. Fighting—his brain flaming, his body raging. He tore at splintered wood with his hands, trying to get into that other ward.

He found nothing but ghastly wreckage, and

swirling fire which swept swiftly through the flimsy wooden construction of the hospital.

Now he was fighting—with a flaming picture in his mind, of children, tossed upward into blackness, frail bodies ripped and torn—and a quiet voice saying: “Don’t be frightened —follow me.”

JOHN WOLFE crawled on hands and knees, raging within himself, and unknowingly, as men do in times of stress, gripping in his hands, the tomahawk of his fathers, and the scalping knife with its handle worn by the gripping fingers of generations of his own blood. Crawling, inch by inch—until he was clear of the flame and wreckage. Crawling, his eyes smoldering with a hate and a madness. Crawling into the night, his shocked and battered body numb, but with hell raging in his brain.

CHAPTER IV REVENGE OF A RED MAN

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THAT was beyond the limits of human understanding. It was madness—hellish insanity. The bomb-gutted hospital was a charnel house. Men, already suffering shattered bodies, attempted to crawl, to fall, to slither like maddened animals to escape the flame raging through the destroyed wards. Fought—and died —while bombs rained down from the black night.

The whimpering voices of the children were silenced. They would never be afraid again.

Out of the night sky came the constant moaning, droning sound of motors. Searchlights slashed white paths of light into the blackness. Now and then a searchlight touched upon a black-winged shape as it banked slowly in space, and maneuvered over the target. Pursuit ships were up there. Now and then a grey shark ripped through space, and spewed machine-gun fire at the enemy. Anti-aircraft batteries blasted infinity with shocking concussion.

John Wolfe found himself lying on his back, a curtain of flame scorching his brain, his belly retching with sickness, his mind inundated by horror and hate. Lying there, semi-conscious, the heat eddies from the burning hospital singed his flesh, the red glare blinded him, burning embers showered upon him.

The whole countryside was lit up with the burning of the hospital.

His eyes stared up at the heights. His jaws were clamped together, a hell of passionate hatred raced through him.

In the beam of a searchlight he saw that black and gold Gotha of von Bruener. It swung lazily in space, high above the earth. Three or four seconds later, the same earth shuddered and was convulsed with the murderous cargo unloosed from its black belly.

Something like a scream ripped itself from John Wolfe’s throat. He could no longer think. He could only feel. He could only remember. Miss Janet—the children—the wounded and dying—murdered by this black and gold thing overhead. He got to his feet, staggered a few steps, fell heavily.

HE WAS pursuing that black bomber afoot, stumbling after it, driven by his hate and horror. Chasing a bomber that flew at fifteen thousand feet. Chasing it, his eyes flaming, his breath hot and panting out of his chest, his brain dripping with red anger. And that Crow hatchet was gripped in one hand and the Crow knife in the other hand.

A shadow passed over his head. His eyes jerked upward. There was a ship slipping through the darkness. A grey ship marked with a red, white and blue cocarde—a Spad. It wobbled as it flew. Its wings weaved. It made a sudden pounce for the earth, into a clearing illuminated by the red glare of the burning hospital. A white, ghastly face looked over the edge of the Spad’s cockpit. The eyes were made hideous by the glass of goggles. The wheels of the Spad struck the earth, bounced crazily. For a moment the ship nearly somersaulted on its back. Then the tail went down, and it rolled to a halt.

John Wolfe, for some reason, was galloping after it crazily, eyes fixed on the pilot.

His hands gripped the edge of the cockpit. He stared into a white, drawn face. A voice—a very young voice was saying between tortured gasps.

“—sorry—I—got hit. Belly—von Bruener—”

John Wolfe’s hands were snatching the safety belt away from the stomach of the young pilot, lifting the boy out on the ground. After the first contact, Wolfe’s hands were wet and slippery with the boy’s blood. The cockpit was blood soaked. He straightened the pilot’s arms and legs, looked at his face for an instant.

The motor in the Spad ticked over.

Suddenly John Wolfe hurled himself into the cockpit of the Spad, peered between the banks of

the motor, and yanked open the throttle. He blasted the tail of the grey ship high in the air, sent the Spad racing over the rough ground, toward the tall trees at the end of the clearing. After two hundred feet he stalled the Spad into flight, put its nose down until it seemed it would crash into the trees, and then with a wild sweep back on the stick, leaped over the trees, and sent the grey ship climbing dizzily into the night skies.

The bombing raid was drifting toward the northeast. The searchlights made desperate efforts to keep the Gothas in range. The Archie shells exploded with ghastly regularity and futility into empty space. A searchlight was doggedly holding onto a black and gold fuselage, and the Gotha was attempting to maneuver out of the light.

John Wolfe, crouching forward in his cockpit, drove the Spad toward that black and gold thing.

His brain screamed words. So—this was terror! This was war—a white man's war. Killing women and orphaned children was "chivalry." Men like von Bruener got *Pour le Merite* for murder—for torture—torture and murder of the sick and wounded and weak and dying. For killing beautiful things—things like Miss Janet—who lived only to help the maimed and the broken to live!

And these same white men called people like the Crows—savages!

A harsh laugh of contempt broke from John Wolfe's mouth, a terrible laugh, for Indians seldom laugh aloud, and at the moment, John Wolfe was red—blood, body, brain—red to the fibres.

He was hardly aware of the plunging flight of the Spad. And then, he looked down and saw the black and gold Gotha of von Bruener. Machine-gun fire was spitting in his face. Vivid streaks of orange-red flame from Parabellum muzzles jerked up at him as the gunners of the bomber attempted to pick him off.

From somewhere in the misty background of his beginnings, John Wolfe waged the battle after the manner of the Crows. His own Spad could fly ten feet to the Gotha's one. He sat in the seat, threw the Spad over in a tight bank, flew dizzy circles around the bomber. Flew, until at times he passed within scant feet of the nose of the Gotha, and the Gotha's pilot jerked the big bomber crazily to escape collision.

When he went around, and circled behind the tail of the black winged destroyer, the nose of the Spad flicked inward for an instant and the twin Vickers spat lead and flame at the immense target.

IT WAS like a lone horseman on a pony attacking a wagon train. A lone horseman, whose pony makes sport of the slow-plodding burden-horses straining at the traces of the freighters. Until the freighter was in flight, galloping wildly, rumbling its ponderous passage.

And von Bruener's bomber was in flight!

There was the element of terror in the going. First the gunners, with tightly set mouths, attempted to intercept that grey, whirling thing with bursts of gunfire, only to miss it, because it crossed through sights before a finger could squeeze a trigger.

Then, the fear of the unknown seeped into them, and hands jittered a little. Expert hands, accustomed to blindly fitting belts into gun breeches, fumbled and shook. The terror crawled into the souls of the pilots, and they opened throttles wide, and cursed because motors could not turn up more revs.

Von Bruener, through taut mouth, cursed his crews for fools and cowards, at the same time that his own eyes, almost hypnotically watched the dizzy flight of the Spad which attacked him in the manner of a gnat attacking a vulture—a gnat with the poison fangs of a rattlesnake.

Splinters showered about the control cockpit of the bomber. First the ripping staccato of those Vickers in the Spad, then the shower of splinters, and the sound of snarling slugs ricocheting from wood and linen and wire, or passing close to heads.

A gunner sprawled out of the side of the nose cockpit, his face and neck twisting, blood flowing from his mouth, his hands dangling. The nose of the bomber became a blind spot and each time the Spad passed the nose it veered suddenly toward the Gotha and spat fury and death from that angle.

Little by little, the grey wraith was riddling the Gotha.

Von Bruener leaned forward to shriek an order at his pilot. The pilot shuddered once, his eyes flicked open in a wide stare, and von Bruener was looking into a dead face. The pilot slumped down in his belt, his jaw drooped open, his hands fell away from the controls.

Butcher von Bruener, jolting waves of panic in his own soul, snatched for the controls, and drove the Gotha for the earth, diving it crazily, until its wings were creaking and sagging, and the slipstream screamed madly about his ears.

Behind, the grey Spad, flicking space with lithe wings, followed. The deadly short bursts of machine-

gun fire crackled viciously through the rigging of the Gotha.

Nine thousand feet down, von Bruener, seeing the earth—a confused mass of dwarfed and shell blasted trees coming up to meet the Gotha—hailed back on the stick, cut the gun, and pancaked the Gotha into a shell-riddled field. The great wheels struck a shell crater. The giant hulk shivered in the face of its destruction, rolled grotesquely over on its back, smashed itself, and the spurting gasoline from ruptured tanks poured over the white-hot exhaust stacks.

There was a little explosion, and then a great burst of flame.

Out of the flame crawled von Bruener.

At the same instant, the Spad, poising above like an eagle about to make an earth landing, dropping gently to the ground. Out of its cockpit leaped a figure, blood-red in the light of the bonfire. Blood-red, and with glittering eyes. A figure naked but for a scrap of hospital pajamas like a loin cloth. A figure with face painted the hideous black of the Crow war paint—black and blood-red—painted with blood and smoke—blood of children—of wounded men—its own blood.

The figure threw back its head and screamed once toward the heavens, then it leaped forward, bounding from the earth, leaped for von Bruener. In one hand the terrible apparition carried a deadly ax, and in the other a razor-keen, half-round knife.

Von Bruener, his face ashen, his hands shaking, yelped once, then he lifted his Luger and squeezed the trigger. Squeezed it blindly, hysterically.

That terrible figure seemed to leap off the earth, into the muzzle of the Luger. The right arm went up and with it the Crow hatchet, then it swept down, and von Bruener died with a scream still-born in his throat. He fell at the feet of the naked figure.

John Wolfe, that terrible glitter in his eyes, dived into the flame of the Gotha. The knife in his handworked swiftly over the bodies of the gunners and the pilot, before he dragged von Bruener away from the flame.

The blade of the knife was crimson.

His voice screamed into the crackling horror of the flame, the same blood chilling scalp hallo “Yellow Hair” had heard in the moment before his death.

THE leaping light of the ceremonial fire danced and writhed, and illumined the peaks of the

mountains and the tall trees. It touched the painted faces of the dancers, and the faces of the women who sat in the semi-shadows away from the fire. The skin lodges of the Crows stood starkly in the background, and over all, sounded the throbbing beat of the war drums.

John Wolfe’s father—older than he had been, stepped majestically out of the circle of braves, and like a patriarch demanding an accounting of stewardships, stood in front of his son. There was pride in the fierce eyes of the old man. His voice boomed over the suddenly muted beat of the drums.

“What do you bring your people, O Chief of the Crows, that they may know a warrior has returned with the victory over his enemies?”

John Wolfe got slowly to his feet. He was naked but for his loin cloth, and the paint which covered his face and which worked designs upon his chest. He was remembering that this was his father—and that dimly—somewhere in the mists—a civil engineer, a white man—had ceased to be—and that he was Crow—the white man had taught him to be Crow—had snatched from him the veneer of schooling.

There was a scar at the back of his neck, and another over his right cheek, and his body seemed wasted by suffering and agony. The seared marks of burning by fire were on his chest and abdomen.

But he stood proudly, and around his neck, held by a thong, there was a bronze cross with the Eagle of the United States flung proudly on the metal. And on the reverse side were the words: “FOR VALOR.” Hanging on the same thong were other metal crosses with like words.

John Wolfe stood there, the light of the fire on his face. Stood there, knowing that these were his people, and this place was his place. His voice came resonantly from his chest.

HE SNATCHED the thong from about his neck, threw it at the feet of his father.

“I bring these, O Chief,” he said almost contemptuously. “The coups of the white man, given to a warrior to prove his honor—”

The glittering eyes behind the painted masks looked at the crosses with uncomprehending eyes.

John Wolfe’s mouth spoke again, the words crackling like whiplashes, “And these—”

He stooped, snatched up a beaded pouch from the ground,—pawed within with his hands, and flung something else on the ground at his father’s feet.

Something—like a pelt with bristling fur, almost white, closely cropped fur—four of them.

The glittering eyes of the Crows were suddenly aflame. The eyes of John Wolfe's father glowed with inward fire, and his hands touched upon the shoulders of his son, as he turned to face the painted faces. His hands leaped up toward the heavens, as if calling the distant stars to witness.

"Hai!" boomed his voice. "A warrior returns to the lodges of his people—a warrior—"

Suddenly the drums were throbbing madly, and the painted faces were swirling in ecstatic abandon in and out through the flame of the fire.

In the background, the voices of the women, in rising crescendo screamed the echo.

"Hai! A warrior has returned."

John Wolfe sat cross-legged on the earth, and took up his war bonnet, and placed it on his head, and took up the coupstick of his chieftainship and held it in his hands. His face became an inscrutable mask, lit only by the fierce light in the depths of his eyes.

He sat there, and was glad that these were his people.