



# PHANTOM EAGLE

by WILLIAM E. BARRETT

*Hell's hinges sealed the lips of that Unteroffizier in the pilotless Spad. None could tell how that phantom transfer had been made in shell-torn skies, or the meaning of that dying speech, "What a Lauterman starts, a Lauterman finishes"*

**G**ENTLEMEN, I TRUST that you all understand the seriousness of this mission. We are the advance agents of a drive. It is our job to demoralize the enemy along the front line. The barrage follows us in five minutes. The infantry goes into action on the tenth minute of the barrage."

Major Bruce Wheeler paused and his level eyes swept the double line of pilots and observers before him. Tight lips and grimly set jaws showed that the men understood the seriousness of the task without his words driving the point home. There was death for some of them in that task and they knew it. He shook his shoulders to drive off the depression that threatened to engulf him. His voice cracked on with the biting force of a voice trained in the transmitting of grim commands.

"You will let drive at trenches, field kitchens, supply wagons, anything and everything which helps in the

enemy's demoralization. You will give special attention to enemy machine-gun pits where located. A signal to the following ship is in order, where possible, upon locating one of these pits that does not betray its position by counterfire."

The major paused as he detected a muttered comment in the second row. His jaw hardened.

"Did I understand you to make a comment, Lieutenant Lauterman?"

A haggard-faced pilot in the second row rose awkwardly to his feet, lips trembling. "Yes, sir. I said that it was hardly two-seater work, sir. A job for the scouts—"

The major's eyes blasted the insurgent where he stood. "It is not yours to say nor to question, lieutenant. The orders are for this squadron to carry out this particular job of work. Do I understand that you have objections to your assignment?"

The lieutenant wavered, then he gestured wearily.

"No objections, sir. I apologize. Remark ill-timed, sir."

He sat down amid painful silence and, for an uncomfortable ten seconds, the major's hard eyes were on him, then the commander looked at his watch.

"It is nearly time," he said. "You will all set your watches by mine and watch your time. It is a nasty thing to be caught in a barrage tunnel and your work, to be one hundred percent effective, must be timed to dovetail right into the beginning of the barrage, with enough time for you to escape and not enough time for the enemy to regain his poise. That is all."

The meeting broke up and the men of the squadron drifted soberly outside. It was early morning and the enemy positions had been under fire all night. The nerve resistance of men in the front line would not be up to par for the planned attack. The British were done with half-way measures in Flanders. The Ypres Front was going to see a real drive.

Major Wheeler's eyes were still smoldering. He followed the dissolving group to the door. He hailed a tall, rangy chap who was lighting a cigarette.

"I say, Carson. Just a minute, will you. No. Never mind the cigarette. Smoke if you want to."

The man hailed as Carson, checked his hand in the motion of discarding his fag and faced the major with a grin. He had strong features topped by an unruly mop of hair. The one-wing insignia that he wore marked him off as an observer. Major Wheeler drew him to one side.

"About this lad, Lauterman, now," he said grimly. "I didn't like that remark of his. Have you any objection to flying with him?"

Carson's face sobered. "No, sir. He's a cracking good pilot. None better."

"I know that." The major waved irritably. "There's more to war than piloting. I don't like his spirit." Carson frowned at the toe of his boot, then his smile broke through again. "He'll be all right, sir," he said. "He had it a bit easy when he was at home, easier than most; but I don't mind riding with him. He's a stout lad in the air, sir. Really."

The major shook his head doubtfully, then shrugged. "All right, then. Your problem. You're riding with him. Thought I'd give you the option of flying with another pilot if you preferred."

MAJOR WHEELER stalked off and Ted Carson looked after him thoughtfully. Carson had played the game for a squadron mate but he was none too

comfortable about it. He didn't like Dick Lauterman's spirit a bit better than the major did; to have admitted that and to have taken his position in another ship, however, would have been equivalent to the filing of an accusation against the pilot. He shrugged and started out after Dick Lauterman.

He found him standing moodily beside the Sopwith one and a half Strutter which was due to take them into twenty minutes of concentrated hell along the front line. The pilot looked up miserably as his one-winger approached and Carson waded in. In words of short and ugly syllables, he expressed the opinion of a squadron mate ment a man who had objections to the doing of a man's job.

Open mouthed and amazed, the pilot heard him out. When the one-winger had finished, Lauterman was backed against the ship. He raised a hand as thin and well kept as a girl's.

"No, Carson. No. You don't understand. I really didn't object personally. No. I objected for us all. I'll do anything you'll do; anything that any one will do."

For a moment, Carson weighed the man, eyes hostile, body weight balanced forward belligerently; then he stuck out his hand. The grin came back to his lean features.

"Okay, old top," he said. "That's the spirit. And if you start to get the wind up, remember that old Papa Carson is right behind you with a great big gun. Let's go."

Major Wheeler was climbing into the number-one ship. Despite many years seniority over his pilots and the precedent that two-seater C.O.s did not fly, the major led dangerous patrols himself. A shrill whistle sounded down the line and number one wheeled off. The show was on.

One by one the Sops strung out with the 110 Clergets singing a steady song of encouragement to the pilots who crouched at the controls, tense with the knowledge of what was to come.

There was no hard climb for altitude this trip. Altitude played no part in the kind of show that went before a barrage. The Sops would be under five hundred most of the time; skimming the ground, nose down for the pilot to get in a burst; then nose up while the rear gun sprayed the line. Suicide detail.

The skeleton city of Ypres stood off on the left wing-tips; its glassless windows stared like the eyes of the dead. Then they were over the Front, the vast sea of mud through which men wallowed for long dreary years. Vast craters and shell holes broke the swampy

expanse and they could see the figures of men in and around these holes; dug in for the comfort of the scant protection they afforded against the constant firing.

Lines of duckboards laid across the muddy flats showed the difficulty men found in moving around on this Front. Where the duckboards came to a dead end, Major Wheeler dropped the nose of his Sop.

They had crossed at 1500. They dropped down fast now and the ground haze swallowed the leaders from those that followed. It was a comparatively clear day but the ghosts of last night's shells hazed the oozing terrain and the dead smoke of yesterday's battles still lingered.

The trenches swarmed with life as they swept low. Men ducked and scurried for cover; men stood their ground grimly and fired back when the Vickers snarled and airspeeded bullets whanged home. A trench mortar snarled and roared; then there was a whining note and the sharp thudding of machine-gun fire that rose through the rotary song and sounded a different beat to that of the Vickers.

Grim-faced pilots dropped their noses until the props almost beat into the white faces of the men in the coalscuttle helmets; cold hands caressed the gun trips and then the props whipped upward toward the sky and let the rear end of the Sop flight get into action, the one-wingers with the deadly Lewis.

MAJOR WHEELER ran the line and roared around for a second trip. He looked at his watch as he went through once more, through the smoky hell that tested everything of courage and skill in a flying man's repertoire. The schedule had been perfect. They had cleared in time.

He climbed for altitude and two of his ships came up after him. There were three minutes of grace left before the barrage went over. The entire flight would be through by that time. He curved gracefully against the sky and then hell tore loose.

A blazing curtain of steel and flame shut off the view of the ground and his ship was lifted and hurled on its side by the fury of the air disturbance. With difficulty, he righted it and with wide eyes he saw a shell come up to the top of its trajectory and turn lazily over within twenty-five yards of his Sopwith. For a second it hung in space, then it nosed over and roared down to blaze with fury somewhere behind the German lines.

It was an unsettling thing. The major had heard of airmen who had almost run into shells as they lost

momentum at the high point of their flight across the lines. It was the first time that it had happened to him and for the moment it drove all thoughts of the flight from his mind. When he looked back, he saw that he had only the two planes with him. He swore softly.

"Caught in the tunnel," he groaned. "Or worse."

He was thinking about the probable fate of a plane that the barrage caught coming up through the firing zone. He cursed again. "The miserable damn fools," he growled. "That barrage was early, three minutes early. Damn the shivering, triple-plated, callow dunce that gave that signal! Damn him for a miserable foot-slogger of a hair-brained, double-distilled—"

He was still cursing when his wheels hit and he kept on cursing as his eyes searched the sky for two ships that he hardly expected to see. He was joined in this vigil by his one-winger and by the crews of the other two ships. Hushed voices named the men. Crandall and O'Hara and Carson and Lauterman!

Hope had given way to despair when a tiny dot appeared in the sky northward and eastward. Anxious eyes watched the steady flight as the ship dropped down. It came in groggily, bounced a little and rolled to a stop. Ready hands helped the pilot from his cockpit and supported him when he reeled drunkenly. It was Crandall and he hiccupped violently as he urged them to do something about the man in the rear cockpit. There were willing hands to assist there, too, but Tim O'Hara was beyond the help. Machine-gun bullets had done their work and a chunk of shrapnel hurtling through the side had finished the job. O'Hara would fly no more.

With a sob in his voice that was deeper than the nervous hiccupps of shell shock, Crandall got his story out. "We got caught in the tunnel," he said, "with the barrage curving over us and no place to go but straight ahead. We got hell aplenty and I don't know when Tim got it. I couldn't get enough air under my wings but I got to the end of the barrage somehow and came out of the tunnel. I don't know how or where." His voice choked off in the hiccupps and the crash wagon roared up for him. Some one shouted and pointed to the eastern sky. The other Sop was coming in.

Like a shot bird it tumbled end over end, righted itself, dropped into a spin, came out, flew jerkily for a few minutes, skittered over on one wing and leveled into a shaky glide.

THE men on the ground gave the second Sop their tense attention. As one man they crouched and,



with clenched hands, helped to fly it home. With minds and hearts they sent their message of hope and encouragement to the pilot, moving invisible controls as he shuddered on the brink of another spin and sighing with relief as he pulled it up. Then with a swoop the Sop came down in a last despairing rush. Right over the field it pancaked and squashed down in a cloud of dust.

Major Wheeler was beside the plane before the dust had settled. The two occupants were slumped in their respective cockpits and gentle hands lifted them out. The two men who laid the pilot on the ground uttered exclamations of amazement. The major turned and his breath whistled through his teeth.

"What devil's work is this?" he growled. His face shone white as he bent forward.

The man on the ground wore the uniform and stripes of an *Unteroffizier* of a German line regiment. A patent-leather *Pickelhaube* helmet fell back from his broad forehead. His legs sprawled limply, sheathed in soaked and muddy trousers of field gray and tattered canvas leggings. The life was oozing out of him through a shrapnel wound on his chest.

"A Dutchman, sir, and just about done for. Barely breathing, he is." One of the men was rising to his feet after a hasty examination of the German. The major shook himself as though to assure himself that he was awake. He turned to the observer. A kneeling flyer shook his head, doubtfully.

"Carson, sir. He's pretty far gone, but not fatally. He ought to pull through."

"And where in hell is Lauterman?" The major asked the question to the air and the gray sky. No one present knew the answer any more than he knew it himself. He looked again toward the German.

The man was making a desperate effort to rally. His eyes popped open and for a second he held the major's eyes. His lips moved and he seemed to reach outside himself for the strength to speak. The effort was too great and it extinguished the spark. His eyes filmed and he dropped back. For a moment, he kicked his heels convulsively and then the spark went out of him.

Curtis, who had been a medical student, rose from his place beside Carson's unconscious body. He shook his head. "Half a dozen holes in him," he said. "Four bullets and a couple of chunks of shrapnel. I don't see how he could have brought the bus home. He's been unconscious for a long time."

The major snorted. "You don't think this kraut-eating foot-slogger brought it in, do you?" he snapped.

Curtis shook his head.

"I'm not thinking anything about it," he said. "I don't even know how he got in the ship nor how Lauterman got out of it. That German was pretty shot up himself, but he was in the pilot's seat."

"Means nothing." The major was baffled and it brought out the fire-eater in him. "That's a new ship. Controls for the one-winger, too. Carson brought it in but where in hell did he get this Kraut and why did he get him and what happened to that blasted pacifist, Lauterman?"

Nobody answered but the wagon came once more and the two figures were lifted in. The mystery ended there as far as the records of the squadron went and the story is still there, as far as the major and his men knew it. Carson recovered but was able to tell nothing of what happened after strafing the trench. In the squadron's official history it is recorded as one of the most baffling mysteries of the war. Yet, there was a story in that front cockpit that has never been read, a story as strange as the mystery that the major thought that he had found in it. The true story was no mystery.

## CHAPTER II DESTINY'S HOARD

**L**ONG YEARS BEFORE THE WORLD WAR, a man and a woman met in Hamburg, Germany. Theirs was a meeting of chance, yet out of that meeting grew a strange series of events. The long arm of Destiny reached down the years and from the careers of these two people Fate wove an intricate pattern. In 1916 that pattern became the greatest unsolved mystery of the Royal Flying Corps.

There was no vague dream of a flying corps of any kind when Heinrich Lauterman met Mary Strawn-Kittredge in Hamburg. Flying was not a topic of conversation in 1890. Yet, Heinrich had already started to think and plan and work with machines that would leave the ground, heavier-than-air machines which would fly and carry men aloft into a new element.

Heinrich was poor and men scoffed at him. Mary Strawn-Kittredge was wealthy and she did not scoff. Perhaps the fact that she had passed the first flush of youth had something to do with it. At any rate, she

gave Heinrich sympathy and understanding. She was the first who had done so and Heinrich was grateful. Moreover, he saw in her the means of bringing his dream to reality. If he had money!

They were married. With the big dream before him, Heinrich consented willingly to residence in England. If he found his wife less interested in his plans than she had been, he swallowed his disappointment and consoled himself that it would be different when she saw results. He fitted out a laboratory on the Strawn-Kittredge estate and set to work.

He worked hard the first year with little to show for the work. The first flying machine was not a thing to be built in a day; his Madame Lauterman did not understand that. She complained about the mounting costs, the lack of results and the eccentric behavior of her husband. Then Lothar was born.

The boy received his German name of Lothar over the protests of his mother. Heinrich still had some steel in his make-up, and German husbands are masters of their homes. "Lothar Lauterman has a nice sound," said Heinrich. "There is destiny in it. He will be a great scientist."

That name, Lothar, cost Heinrich his dream. Madame Lauterman of the Strawn-Kittredge line never forgave it and the purse strings tightened. She was through, she said, with the foolish outlay of money on a madman's dream. Heinrich could live like a gentleman on her money, but he could not tinker like a mechanic.

By the time his second son arrived, Heinrich was a beaten man. The boy was named "Richard" and there was no protest. The genius of the inventor was being slowly stifled. England was a foreign land to him and an unfriendly one. He was alien and he had no place in the illustrious history of the Strawn-Kittredges, a stern clan that had fought wars and won the kiss of kings before the Lautermans tossed aside the primitive weapons of the barbarian.

He still pattered. With old material that he patched carefully and reworked, he built models and gliders and queer flapping contraptions that never flew. As his boys grew up he discussed these things with them and allowed them to help and gloried in their interest. When their mother was not around he held them on his knee and spun them tall tales of Siegfried who slew a dragon and other stalwart heroes of German folk lore. He told them, too, of Waterloo and of the German legions that arrived on time and saved Wellington's English, of the gallant Blücher who was

Napoleon's nemesis, of Bismarck, the Iron One, and of duels in Heidelberg.

The boys thrilled to these old tales and to the strange army of heroes who walked in the words of a defeated old man. Because they loved the gentle teller, they loved his heroes—and those heroes were as German as the Unter den Linden. Brought up in a familiar and commonplace England, their imaginations were fed on a glorified Germany. They saw England as it was and Germany as a homesick old man imagined it. Then school life swept them into the swift current of youth's realities and there was less time for twilight tales.

HEINRICH pattered on and, occasionally, a little money came his way. He had a different objective now. The Wrights had perfected the machine of his dreams and there were half a dozen British builders of planes that actually flew. Heinrich's newest dream was to outstrip them, to produce a ship which would rise above the crude limitations of wing warping and crank turning and bicycle gearing and chain drives, a smooth effortless thing that would rival the birds. He had it in his mind and he was patiently turning it to reality with his own two hands.

Meanwhile the boys had become "personalities." They were no longer "the boys"; they were individuals. Lothar, tall and quiet and strong and blond, was the stabilizer. His was the ability to move slowly but surely to a goal. Richard was of a different breed. Quick and lithe, shorter than his brother and more fiery, he was not much given to the charting of courses. His was the type that rushed in where angels fear to tread. Sometimes he came out under his own power; more often not.

An incident in point occurred when Richard was fifteen and Lothar seventeen.

They were vacationing along the coast with a group of school fellows, and Richard had drawn the task of courting off the route of their hike an extra four miles to a fishing village for needed supplies. Accompanied by a lad who was a few years younger than himself, he raced across country.

"It's eight miles for us that they do not have to make, Ted," he said, "but we'll have the laugh if we run hard. We'll cut across their path and catch them again at Avickshire. They'll be figuring on waiting for us there and we've got to get there first."

With steel springs in his legs he fast outdistanced his companion. Running easily he came in sight of the

fishing village. A scream stopped him in his tracks. Once. Twice. Three times.

He looked around and saw a miserable hovel to his right. The screams had seemed to come from that point. With a bound he cleared the fence and started for the door. As he did, he heard the moans of a woman and a muffled prayer for mercy. He kicked the door open and plunged in.

A bewhiskered giant wheeled toward him, and Dick saw a woman on the floor in the corner, blood running from a cut on her forehead. A cat-o'-nine-tails in the man's hand explained that, and Dick's jaw set.

"You cowardly slob! You—"

Words failed him and he became suddenly aware of the size and the menace of the man before him. The woman was quiet, her eyes staring in wide-eyed terror. The man spat.

"And who mought ye be, ye young dude, to be a-callin' me nymes in me own 'ouse?"

The man was advancing slowly, his hands clenching and unclenching, muscles rippling on his forearms. He reeked of cheap liquor and the room was vile with the odor of fish; the man's pleasures and his work were revealed in the smells which surrounded him. Dick wet his lips and backed up.

"The lady called for help," he said hesitantly. "You were—"

"What business o' the likes o' ye, me bucko? She's my woman and I'll have the will of her." He spat again and the rage flared up in him. "Gor' blime. A man's own house and—"

He launched himself forward and a heavy left hand cuffed at Dick's chin. The boy ducked and the maneuver seemed to infuriate the fisherman. He came in flailing with both hands and swept the boy before him. A half dozen blows rained into Dick's body and he folded. He was suddenly afraid and he lashed out blindly in an effort to fight through to the door. In this he was assisted.

The fisherman gripped him by the collar and belt and literally heaved him out. Then the man was after him. Left and right smashed to the boy's body and head and Dick went down in a limp heap. With a contemptuous heave, the fisherman picked him from the ground and heaved him over the fence into a ditch by the roadside.

AN HOUR later, a thirteen-year-old boy caught up with the group of hikers. As he gulped for breath, he gasped out the story. Dick had been beaten by a fisherman and he was lying as if dead beside the road.

That was enough for Lothar. Only stopping to get directions from the boy, he raced off across country. His powerful young body was like a well tuned machine and it responded now to his will. Setting a fast pace, he kept to that pace until the fisherman's house hove into view in a hollow ahead; then he sprinted and came down the road like a young whirlwind.

He found his brother by the side of the road. The youngster's face was a bloody mask and his body was a mass of bruises, but he had sustained no serious injuries. He sobbed out his account of the fight and Lothar's lips drew tight. Helping his brother to his feet, he started a slow walk toward the house. Dick held back.

"No, Lothar. No! You can't do anything. Let us get away. I won't go up there again. I can't. It's a job for a man."

"It's my job now." Lothar was as hard as steel. "You wait by the fence."

Striding forward, the older brother opened the door. A man sat drinking at the table and his head came up with an oath as he glimpsed the intruder. Lothar's shoulders hunched.

"Come out here!" he said.

The fisherman came to his feet. He wiped a hand across his mouth and lurched to the door with an oath. "I dan't know yer!" he growled.

Lothar was balancing his weight well forward. "My name is Lauterman," he said slowly. He gestured toward his brother who was leaning apprehensively against the fence. "A Lauterman started something with you this morning. What the Lautermans start, they finish. Always!"

His right hand lashed out with the speed of light and crashed against the fisherman's mouth. With a wild grab for support, the man went down; then he bounded to his feet with a roar and Lothar stepped under his flailing right. Again the boy's hard fist landed and again and again.

Lothar had been the boxing champion of his class and he used all his skill now against this half drunken, unskilled fisherman whose only asset was his tremendous strength. Pitilessly, relentlessly, he cut him down, and when the man at last failed to get up, Lothar turned away. Mopping his bleeding hand, he nodded to his brother.

"We'll get you cleaned up," he said. "You're a sight."

During the long walk back across country, Richard Lauterman was quiet and subdued, his head hanging.

Occasionally he looked at his brother with a touch of awe in his face. Lothar's face was hard and set. Finally the elder brother turned.

"You should have kept out of that," he said.

Dick raised his head. "But he was beating a woman!"

"Did you do her any good?"

"I tried."

"And you think you did the right thing?"

Dick hesitated, then his eyes flamed. "Yes."

Lothar stopped. "Tell me. Did you have a minute while you were fighting with him when you wished you hadn't barged in?"

Dick's head dropped. "Yes, I did," he said. "He was so big."

Lothar smiled. "There's the answer. Never go into something you are going to change your mind about. When you go into something, don't change your mind."

"But the woman?"

"He was right. His woman and his home. You should have told the authorities. You had neither the right nor the power to do anything."

Dick's eyes flamed again. "You didn't go to the authorities. You fought him."

Lothar's arm dropped across his brother's shoulders. "Forget it. I didn't want to fight him and didn't like it. It was just finishing something. He was right, as far as we were concerned and leaving the woman out of it; we were both wrong."

Dick blinked and then shrugged his shoulders. He didn't understand. Nor did he ever understand. He was his mother's son and Lothar was the son of Heinrich. They never did succeed in bridging the gap.

### CHAPTER III VALKYRIE KIN

**E**ARLY IN 1914, Heinrich Lauterman completed an aeroplane that would fly, but he was too old to fly it as it should be flown. Years of laboratory work and of draughting boards and patient hand labor had undermined his none too robust physique. In this crisis he called upon his sons.

Richard thought it was a great lark, an adventure. He was all for trying the new invention at once. Lothar

shook his head. They must first understand it. In spite of his brother's protests and in the face of his father's eagerness, he succeeded in forcing his idea. For two months the brothers spent their week-ends and their holidays with their father and his completed dream. They learned from him the theory of flight and the principle of control; then they attended an air meet at Brooklands and saw machines actually in the air, cruder affairs than the one that their father had built but built on the same principle. At last they were ready.

Lothar, with no more training than this, took the ship into the air one morning in May and circled a broad pasture with it, landing it gently without a jar. Twice more he took it up for longer flights before he would let his brother risk it. By then he had some lessons of experience to impart and some changes to suggest.

At last the impatient Richard had his hour. With eyes shining eagerly, he climbed behind the controls and pointed the nose of the ship into the wind. He took off at a steeper angle than his brother and there was a dash and a confidence to his handling of the ship that there had never been in Lothar's handling of the same ship. He tried gentle dips and zooms; then, becoming bolder, he banked steeply. Dick was having a good time and his flying showed it.

On the ground, old Heinrich was rubbing his hands and beaming. From time to time he would chuckle and make a remark to Lothar. But Lothar stood silent with his hands in his pockets and a frown on his face. He had been up and he knew that Richard did not have enough experience behind him to attempt the things that he was attempting. Then, as abruptly as thunder, it happened.

Richard had swooped close to the ground in one of his banks. The air-cushion support left his wings and he sideslipped. Lothar gave a cry of warning but it was too late. The younger brother gave a wild tug at the controls, half righted the ship and then pancaked into the field, tipping on one wing and wiping out the supporting framework to the accompaniment of a loud roaring crash.

The boy was unconscious in the wreckage when they reached him, a nasty gash on his forehead and one arm limp.

That night there was a stormy scene. Madame Lauterman was in a towering rage. In sharp, bitter phrases she told Heinrich what she thought of his murdering invention and of his scatter-brained idea of sending a mere child up to fly it.



Richard, his head tied up and his arm in a splint, did his best to intervene but he quickly lapsed into silence under his mother's aggrieved stare. Lothar was different. He sat for a while in silence while his father made vain efforts to defend his invention. As he sat there, he weighed these people who comprised his family as he had never weighed them before. He saw the long years of his father's defeat and the unreasoning, ruthless power that his mother wielded. He rose to his feet.

"Men will fly from now on," he said calmly. "It is an accepted thing and Father is ahead of his time. I'm seeing it through with him." He looked at Richard. "The Lautermans started something when they built that ship and undertook to fly it," he said. "The Lautermans finish what they start."

LOTHAR left school for the term next morning and waded in on the task of rebuilding his father's ship. Fired by the first active help and encouragement he had ever received, Heinrich surpassed himself. Out of the wreckage came a ship that was better than the first one—and Lothar flew it.

He flew it daily while Richard recovered and threw himself into other activities. The younger brother was through and he said so in no uncertain terms. He would never fly his father's ship again. He did not believe in it. He liked the sensation of flying but he wanted a ship that had come out of a factory and he wanted instruction from men who really knew what it was all about.

That was the first split and it threw Heinrich and Lothar more closely together. It was the happiest period in old Heinrich's life and he seemed to grow more youthful as the days passed. Then came the shadow of war.

At first there was only a distant rumble and a wisp of cloud against the blue skies of peace. Rumors came from the continent and there was a feeling that France and Germany might go to war. Old Heinrich read the papers avidly and, when they rested, he talked to his son.

In his talk there was the glint of sun on the lances of proud Uhlans, the click of feet and the rattle of drums, the ring of sabers and gleam of bright uniforms.

"France cannot stand against the Fatherland," he would say proudly. "It will be a short war. It will be short even should the big bear of the north come in. Russia! Bah. It is a nation of slaves."

Heinrich gloried in the thought of a war through which Germany would emerge to greater power and majesty. He talked always of France and the crushing she would receive beneath the Imperial heel. Lothar remained silent but his mind was at work.

He knew that his father's mind had been in Germany all through the years; that the man knew as little of England as though he had never seen it. Only the body of Heinrich Lauterman had lived in England. His heart knew nothing of what England was nor of what it stood for.

Lothar knew. He was English. He had been raised in England and taught in English schools. He saw things as an Englishman sees them and he thought as an Englishman. He could not picture a war between Germany and France with England as a neutral. And he knew that England would never cast her lot with Germany.

The thought worried him but he remained silent while the old man talked. He felt very close to his father now, and he could see how little the man had really lived. Heinrich Lauterman had only an airplane and two sons to show for his life. If England should go to war, he would not have the airplane. It would be confiscated. Then he would only have the sons; or would he?

War crashed out of the European sky between two sons. In a mad day Peace died and the grim figure of Mars stepped from the wings. A sword lifted and fell; then there was blood running in a thin stream, a stream that was to become a torrent.

Gray hordes smashed at the frontiers of France and advanced behind a curtain of steel into neutral Belgium. The ink was dried on the declarations of war in the flame of the guns. Germany was at war and not alone with France. She was at war with England and with Russia.

Old Heinrich read the news and his paper fluttered in his nerveless hands. He shook his head in bewilderment and read again and again. "It is not! right," he muttered. "It is not right. England should not fight for France. It is not right. England and Germany are two fine countries. They should not fight. It is France that is the enemy."

He couldn't see nor reason that England might have reasons of her own for fighting. He saw it only as a case of England espousing the cause of France and it threw his mind into turmoil.

RICHARD came back from school on the echo of the news. His face was alight with eagerness.



"We're in it," he shouted, "and won't we make a quick show of it!" Although Lothar did not share his enthusiasm, Richard would not be depressed. "We'll get commissions," he said. "They're calling for civilian officers, and mother's family rates well up in the lists. Uncle Clarence says he'll fix us up. What regiment will we go in, do you suppose?"

Lothar looked out at the red sunset sky that seemed somehow to be prophetic in color this evening. "Father will take it hard," he said, "if both of us go to fight his people."

"Father!" Richard looked blank. "Oh, yes. He's German, of course. I never looked at it that way. He ought to be pretty English now, though."

"He isn't." Lothar shook his head. "That's the hard part." He looked at the sky again. "If I did go," he said, "I'd try to get some flying to do. There will be work for flyers."

"Flying? By George! There's an idea." Richard's eyes gleamed. "There is a flying corps. What a ripping way to fight. I'll call Uncle Clarence."

He was gone and Lothar looked after him enviously. It would be nice, he thought, to have so little sense of responsibility; to be able to do things without being all torn up about other people's feelings. He turned and made his way to his father's workshop. When he came out his face was gray with strain.

That evening saw another family scene. Uncle Clarence was there and he had fixed things. The boys would have billets in the Royal Flying Corps if they could pass the flying instruction and qualify. Richard, because of his youth, might be detained in England quite a while and, if the war ended as quickly as seemed likely, he might not see any action. Still it would be a big chance for the boy.

Madame Lauterman was inclined to tears, but she was from fighting stock and there was pride in her tears. Old Heinrich sat as one who had been struck a heavy blow. For a long while he sat silent, then he came to his feet.

"It must not be," he said huskily. "I forbid it. I have been a good husband, a good father. I have not interfered. But this is wrong. It is an unjust war. England fights for France. My sons"—his voice broke—"will never fight for France. Not with my consent."

There was shocked silence. Uncle Clarence drew himself up stiffly, his face cold and hard. Madame Lauterman brushed away her tears and her lips drew into a straight line.

In short, sharp, ugly words brother and sister tore into Heinrich Lauterman. They tore his country to shreds and literally tramped on his flags and his heroes as they told him what they thought of the war and the duty of "civilized" people. Richard sat silent, his eyes on the carpet. In his face there was agreement, although he did not appear comfortable. Lothar sat straight, his face becoming whiter by the minute.

All eternity was in that argument for Lothar Lauterman. His mind clicked back to the thrilling tales of Siegfried who slew the dragon and of Blücher who was on time at Waterloo. He saw a kindly faced old man telling those forbidden stories of his heroes to two little boys who sat on his knee. He saw the terrible odds, the unfairness of it all. One hesitant, beaten old man who was on alien soil was pitted against two strong-willed people who were aflame with war hatred and who had no regard for the feelings of one who espoused the enemy cause. In a moment, Lothar knew, his uncle Clarence would turn with a dramatic gesture and demand that the boys make a decision. That moment would be the destruction of Heinrich Lauterman. His heart would break then and Lothar could not break it. He leaped to his feet.

"There's been enough of this," he said huskily. "I agree with my father. Let Richard have the flying corps berth. I'm offering my services to Germany."

## CHAPTER IV TIN SOLDIERS

**T**HE SHOCKED SILENCE that met Lothar's declaration was so heavy a thing that it almost weighed him down; then his mother gave a strangled sob and fainted.

Uncle Clarence gave a muffled curse and looked reproachfully at Lothar.

Lothar wasn't looking at them. He was looking at his father who had half risen from his chair, his eyes alight, features working. It was enough. Lothar asked no more.

But it was not easy to leave the British Isles for service in the German army during 1914. Lothar managed it only by going to Ireland in the rough garb of a laborer and joining a group of Die-hards who were crossing the Channel in a fishing boat for the same reason as his own.

Once across he faced the great disillusionment. Imperial Germany was not the Germany of Siegfried nor of his father's fond imaginings; it was a thing of steel, a ruthless war machine into which human material was cut and fitted to pattern. The curt officers in charge of recruiting had no respect for "deserters" from the other side, nor for the sons of Germans who had left Germany.

In response to his request for a trial in the Imperial Air Force, Lothar met with a brusque denial. The air force was not for the sweepings of other lands; it was reserved for men of blood and family, Germans. He was thrown into a regiment of no particular repute as an infantryman; a cannon-fodder regiment that would be used quickly and forgotten. In a coarse uniform that was several sizes too large for his boyish body, he took his place in the ranks with a long farewell to everything.

In this dark hour it was characteristic of him that he gave no thought to deserting nor of going back on a resolution that had been ill-founded. He had started something and he was going to see it through. He knew that he had never enlisted to fight for Germany anyway; he was fighting for his father's dreams. Old Heinrich would never know the war for what it was, nor see the German army in its terrible reality. He would have a picture of his son in the tinsel frame of guns and bugles and glory. Nothing else mattered.

Late in October, Lothar reached the line. In the muddy flats of Ypres he faced the British guns; and he forgot that there were Englishmen across there; lads, perhaps, whom he had gone to school with. He steeled himself to think of them only as men who were trying to kill him with machine guns and bullets and artillery. He fought well.

In fact, Lothar Lauterman fought so well that he captured a machine gun on his first trip over the top, emerging from the incident with two wounds and an iron cross. Six months in hospitals and camps prepared him for further duty and he went back to the soul-destroying mud of Ypres. In another six months he wore the stripes of an *Unteroffizier* of a sadly decimated regiment.

On a gray day with the smell of disaster in the air, Lothar was transferred up the line to fill in with another sadly punished fragment of the regiment while replacements moved into his old section. He had a new man over him, a *Leutnant* by the name of Hartzog, a man who had been a Captain of Hussars and who had been broken in rank and sent to a line regiment as the result of a scandal.

A surly dog of a man, he looked at Lothar out of red-rimmed eyes. A sneer crossed his lips as his eyes rested on the Iron Cross. It represented non-com honor in contrast to the broken bars of disgrace that had been his decoration. It inflamed him and Lothar's slight accent piled fuel on the flame of his resentment.

"You are not German?" It was a challenge. Lothar stood very straight as befitted an humble non-com in the presence of a privileged officer.

"My father was. I was born in England."

"Say 'sir' to me, swine!" The officer roared. Lothar saluted.

"Sir," he said softly. There was a hint of contempt in his voice and lips, the contempt of a man who threw away a British commission to take a dog's kicks from broken Hussars. The officer felt it and his face purpled. With difficulty he restrained himself but he was wise. There was a captain above him who was not letting him forget the fact that he had slipped in rank. The captain might glory in siding with a non-com to humble him if there were any issue raised.

"AN ENGLISHER, eh?" The officer's brutal lips sneered again, hard eyes glinting with malice. "That is just fine. Perfect, I might say." He pretended to fumble around with some papers he carried while he played on the suspense of the man who was at his mercy. "We have need of one who understands English to listen at an advanced post. Your contemptible countrymen are up to something."

He fumbled the paper again. "I will send three loyal Germans with you lest swine choose to herd with swine."

Lothar's face whitened under the insult. He was receiving a death sentence, he knew. Advanced posts during action were always bad. He had expected that eventually but he didn't like to take it in the teeth with an insult making it all the less palatable. He saluted again.

"If the *Leutnant* will look well at the cross I wear, he will not question my loyalty," he said. "The *Leutnant*, I presume, has seen such decorations on the breasts of other soldiers he has commanded."

His eyes were agate hard, his lips smiling. He was talking now as the British officer that he might have been, not as the German non-com that he was. The slur at the lieutenant's lack of decoration hit home. The man snarled like a wolf and his hand dropped to his automatic. He did not draw, however. He had done his worst when he condemned Lothar to an advanced

post. He could do no more. With a guttural oath, he slashed his gloves across the non-com's face.

Lothar took the blow unblinking. His eyes returned the blow. They looked into the ex-captain's soul and blasted what they found with eternal contempt. The officer turned away to avoid them.

Under cover of night, Lothar and his three men crept forward. They stuck to the duckboards as well as they could in the darkness and made their way out from the safety of the trenches to the wide, barren, unprotected sweep of morass that was No-Man's-Land in Flanders. There had been an electric undercurrent all day that whispered of an imminent British drive. There had been nothing tangible; just that feeling that comes to men in the trenches when most of their number are about to die. Now, at night, there was a different note to the music of the guns, a more intimate sound, a menacing, closer roar.

Crawling into the blackness, the four men in German field gray shuddered and hugged the ground. Death was singing a whispering song that they heard all too plainly; then Otto, who was the last of the four, gave a thin scream. The others turned back.

They could not immediately find him and Lothar felt the sweat heavy on his body. That cry might bring fire on them, yet they couldn't go on without finding out what had happened. Gruener gave a grunted exclamation and the three men pressed hard on the duckboards and squinted. A hoarse, choking voice was coming to them now through the fury of the guns.

Otto had gotten off the boards and was being sucked down by the terrible mud.

For twenty minutes they fought a losing battle with the terrific sucking power of the mud and then they went soberly on. There were only three of them now and a red night before them.

Through that night, Lothar fought the grimmest fight he had ever fought, a fight with himself. Before him were the British lines. He had done enough. Even his father should be fully satisfied that he had lived up to the old legends. He could slip over there with his hands up and be gathered in. He need not wait for the machine-gun bullets or the bayonets, nor go back to the insults of overbearing Prussians. A short crawl through the night, a cry of "*Kamerad*" and he would be through. He had never fought for Germany anyway. He was British. He had fought for an ideal, for a principle. And that principle was—"What a Lauterman starts, a Lauterman will finish," he said wearily. "Always."

He stayed there in the mud and waited.

## CHAPTER V GRANDSTANDER!

**R**ICHARD LAUTERMAN DID NOT GO swiftly to the battle line. As his Uncle Clarence predicted, his youth stood in the way of an early term of service. Despite his eagerness, he was kept in England long after he had completed his flying training.

Enthusiastic, adventuresome and with previous knowledge and experience, he had been easy to train. "A born flyer," his instructors labeled him and he gloried in it. No trick was too wild for him to attempt in the air, and his harassed mechanics wished fervently that they'd "ship the ruddy fool to France."

They didn't though. They made an instructor out of him, and he was a bad one. He had no patience with his pupils and no confidence in them. He wanted to be the whole show himself and he generally was. Only the very good learned to fly under his direction; the others got new instructors or were washed out. He didn't care about them. He had no desire to win a reputation as an instructor which would keep him in England.

The Sop one and a half Strutter came out, and there weren't very many ships of that breed available at the training camps. Dick Lauterman decided to test the new ship and see if he could execute his pet grandstand stunt, the stalled landing, in it.

He took off and at five hundred feet, stalled it until the prop all but ceased to revolve; then glided down for a completely stalled landing. Nobody but he would ever have dreamed of such a stunt with a rotary engine, but he had a reputation to maintain.

As he came down, autogyro fashion, the C.O. came out on the field, took a long look and stood with feet apart, head ominously low like a bull on charge. Dick came down gently but miscalculated the ground. With a crash that resounded all over the field, he wiped out the undercarriage and came to rest in a mess of wreckage.

With an impatient oath, he stood up, waved to the mechanics to take the wreckage off the field and ordered a new ship. He never saw the C.O., and the old man stood rooted, his head down, jaw hard.

Again Dick Lauterman went up to five hundred

and again he whipped the nose to the stalling point. Completely stalled, he glided down under perfect control and landed right on the line without even raising a slight cloud of dust. As he swung down from the cockpit, he saw the frowning C.O. He swallowed hard. His advice before taking off had been to the effect that the C.O. was in town.

"Lieutenant Lauterman, you will report in my office immediately."

The C.O. wheeled off and Dick followed him with a slight quiver in his knees. The C.O. was a hard man. In his office he looked the young lieutenant up and down with the chilling stare of one born to be a major.

"Nice flying, lieutenant," he said at length. "A remarkable feat, I might say." As Dick relaxed somewhat, the commander's jaw hardened. "It is a good thing, though, that you called for a second ship. If you had quit after washing out that Sop, I'd have broken you, by God!"

Dick swallowed. He had come very close to quitting after that first failure. Only a stubborn pride had forced him to try again. The major's lips curled in a mirthless smile.

"I am convinced," he said, "that a man who flies as you do is out of place here. You belong in France. There is a new Sop squadron going out. After seeing what you can do with a Strutter, I've decided that you shall go with them."

"But, sir," Dick's heart had dropped after giving a mad jump. "I want to fly pursuit. I have qualified on scouts and—"

"Enough!" There was grim mirth in the major's smile. "I have been convinced of your skill with the Strutter. I have no time to witness your feats on single-seaters. You will prepare your kit and join the squadron day after to-morrow at Dover."

THE major was a hard commander and he had his own way of punishing men. It was thus that Dick Lauterman went to France as pilot in a two-seater squadron, a squadron of Fighter-Reconnaissance ships.

It was a bitter blow, but the thought of France and of actual combat was stimulating.

On his first tour over the lines, Dick flew in the tight formation of the two-seaters and chafed under the restraint of a cautious commander who believed that new men should be broken in gently. Dick did not believe that way. He felt that he had been sent out to fight Germans and he wanted to get on with the winning of the war.

He had been in the air for twenty-five minutes when he saw his first black crosses. They were on a pair of two-seaters that were flying a thousand feet or so beneath him. The leader seemed not to have noticed them and Dick quivered with impatience. He pushed forward out of formation, flew beside the leader and signaled.

The leader, who had seen the Germans before Dick had, and who had also seen other Germans that day which had escaped Dick's eye, shook his head impatiently. He had orders not to engage in fights. This was a "feel" flight.

Dick dropped back but his jaw jutted rebelliously. He looked downward again and the Germans looked slow, cumbersome and very helpless. His teeth clicked and, without consulting his observer, he dropped his nose and left the formation.

The wind in his face and the song of combat on his wires stirred his blood and he quivered with eagerness. He warmed his guns with a burst and the Germans grew bigger in his sights.

He hit them in a blazing fury, firing too soon and at too long a range, but he was invincible in his blind, heedless rush. The clumsy A.E.G. below him reeled from the guns and flipped down out of control so swiftly that Dick was disappointed. It was hardly a combat.

The other ship improved its opportunity to put distance behind it. The pilot knew of those other ships on top and he had no desire to fight. Dick growled in disappointment, flipped his nose up and roared back to his flight.

Back at the drome, the leader was speechless with rage. Instead of the plaudits he expected, Dick received fifty-seven varieties of hell and damnation. The other pilots, too, were unsympathetic. "A grandstander," was their verdict. Dick shrugged it off.

He was grounded for a week, but he told himself that he had the last laugh. He had scored the first victory for the squadron and they could like it or not as they chose. It was written into the records in spite of them. Such was the nature of Richard Lauterman.

But a month of Ypres sector flying took the fine edge off Dick Lauterman's recklessness. The romance went out of fighting when the squadron had its first flaming casualty and the enthusiasm went out of Dick Lauterman when he got his first good spattering of lead. He was not a coward. But he was of the sprint type. He had neither the patience nor the stamina for a long run on anything. When the war no longer amused him, he longed for a new toy.

Only the spirit, the good humor and the



encouragement of Ted Carson, his observer, buoyed him up during the last week of his first month in service. When the man who rode behind his piloting did not complain, it was hard for him to give way.

THEN came the morning when Major Wheeler announced that the squadron would strafe the German front line ahead of the artillery barrage. It seemed the last straw to Dick. He had wanted to fly pursuit and they had sent him out on two-seaters; then they had made him do a pursuit pilot's job in a ship that was not designed for it.

Disgust and rebellion warred with sheer funk within him as he took off over the lines that morning past the ghostly, sightless town of Ypres and the muddy flats where Tommy Atkins would go into action shortly under the blazing barrage.

They were at the end of the duck-board line and Major Wheeler's nose dropped. The Strutters were strung out single file now and Dick was piloting last in the line. He shuddered as he brought his nose up a bit, tilted over and zipped down. The machine guns were starting their damnable stutter down below and there would be a blazing hell waiting for the airmen who dared come down to the ground and fight it out.

He was gripping the controls tightly and the muddy trench line was coming up to him. He could see the barbed wire and the little pools of water and the limp bodies beyond the wire. Then he was looking into white faces along the fire step and little red streaks of flame were leaping up for him. His Vickers bucked and chattered without his being aware that he had pressed the trips. His eyes seemed to be propped wide open. He wanted to close them and couldn't. He was pulling up now and he had a vision of sky while Carson in the rear cockpit blazed into the trench with his Lewis, Down with the nose again. More white faces and leaping streaks of flame. His gun glowed redly and he was zigzagging his line of flight.

"It isn't human," he muttered. "A man can't do this aad live."

He looked back and Carson turned to grin at him and wave an encouraging hand. The fires of courage were banked in Carson's face and he seemed to be having a good time. Dick turned back to the controls and a bullet sang from a strut and tipped the edge of his helmet. He cursed softly and his eyes blazed. That bullet seemed a personal thing, an insult to be avenged. His nose went down again and the Vickers sprayed lead as a garden hose sprays water.

As in a dream, Dick saw the figures crumbling on the firing step. His lips curled from his teeth. They weren't men; they were just enemies without identity. He pulled his nose up to give Carson another shot and waited impatiently for the brief interval before he could swing his own guns into action.

Down the line and up again to the sky in the wake of those other Strutters were four of them ahead of him. Every one had come through. He began to feel better. It was rather thrilling sport at that.

In another wild rush the Strutters came back and Dick's blood leaped now with excitement. This was the last rush through before the barrage fell. His gun was glowing hot and the rotary engine was spraying oil all over him but he whistled down on the demoralized Germans, whipped up, whistled down again. Just a great, wild game of chance and disaster.

He became drunk with it and he remembered his stunt of training days. He could stop a Strutter in the air. He could whip it to a stall position and hold it there. What a great chance that would give the gunner in the rear cockpit. While the pilot held the ship, he could just about clean out a trench.

## CHAPTER VI BARRAGE BOND

**W**ITH A RECKLESS LAUGH on his lips, Dick shoved the stick to a corner of the cockpit, pulled his nose up and held it. He could feel the stutter of the Lewis in back and he half turned. The Lewis stopped in mid beat. With a cold chill of horror, he saw the figure of his observer sagging while bullets whistled perilously close to his own head.

"My God! What have I done?"

He almost lost the stalled ship in his dismay but some monitor within him kept vigilant and he got control in time. The others were out of sight and he opened up along the line without attempting to strafe the trenches further. His brain was numb but through his sick horror came the realization that he had practically killed Ted Carson himself. He had been war drunk and crazy. The stall stunt not only made it possible for a plane to shoot into trenches; it made the rear cockpit a perfect target for the German infantry.

"Why didn't I think of it before? Why didn't—"

The world blew up about him with a shrieking burst of sound. A blazing curtain cut off his view of the sky and the sulphurous fumes of hell assailed his nostrils. For a paralyzing moment, he was incapable of thought and action. In that moment, the Sop flew itself; then a wing dropped and the ship quivered along its entire length.

"The barrage tunnel!" he muttered. "The barrage!"

He had heard of flyers being caught under a barrage, in the deadly tunnel trap of flaming shells that closed the way to the sky. It had always been remote to him; now it was reality. In the wild pandemonium of sound and smoke and terror, the trenches ceased to exist for him. The war itself ceased to exist. His mind beat against a blank wall and he wanted to get away, to quit it all. With a shuddering sigh, he pulled hard on the controls, succeeded in stalling the quivering ship and, like one in a dream, floated it to the earth.

He landed on a high spur of ground that stretched like an island through the mud. As his wheels touched, he dropped over the side and shrank down in the shadow of the wings. He could not have told why he did it since he was as safe in the plane as out of it. It merely helped to have something between him and that curtain of destruction; that flaming line that curved above him and descended into the German lines.

He had forgotten Ted Carson but his stunned senses became aware of others who were crouched out here in this half-way post between time and eternity. Three men were looking at him out of a hole in the ground. As he looked in their direction, they crawled out of the hole and started toward him, the one in the lead walking upright, the others hugging the ground.

His hand dropped to his automatic as he recognized the German field uniform, then he shuddered and let the gun slide back into its holster. The leader of the Germans was carrying his Luger in his hand. A few paces from the plane he paused.

His voice came thinly through the fury of the barrage. "You will please surrender peacefully," he said.

Dick stiffened and shook himself. He felt that this was madness. His mind was gone. The German had spoken in English. And that voice! It couldn't be. He lunged to his feet.

The German *Unteroffizier* stopped in the very action of stepping forward. He seemed to grow taller and he shook his head as a fighter who shakes off a blow. "Richard!" he said. His voice shook and he took

a second to rally himself; he turned to the two men behind him with a guttural command. They dropped on their stomachs with their rifles at ready.

"I told them to watch you for treachery. Don't do anything to let them know."

THE brothers looked at each other a bit wildly, undecided, two chips whirled madly in the fierce torrent of war. Lothar's eyes took in the condition of the ship in one sharp look. He gestured.

"The prop turns. It will fly?"

Richard nodded dumbly, his eyes wide. Lothar made a motion as though to put the Luger away, then thought better of it. His eyes took on that warmth of human sympathy as the horror receded from his mind for the moment.

"You are not hurt?"

Richard shook himself, wet his lips and then gestured vaguely. The words when they came, were a rushing torrent. "No. My body is all right. I'm all torn up inside. I'm through. I don't want any more. I want to get out." He took a step forward. "You'll help me, Lothar. Take me prisoner. I can't fight any more. I can't do that again. I can't—"

Lothar glanced anxiously at his men. He waved the other down. His eyes went to the rear cockpit of the Strutter. "Your gunner? Is he dead?" He asked the question to spar for time, to think through the wild confusion in his mind. Richard stiffened.

"I don't know," he said. "I guess so."

The answer was a shock to the man in German gray and he strode to the side of the plane. His hand groped into the inert flesh in the rear cockpit and he turned, his eyes wide.

"He is alive," he said. "He might have a chance if—"

Dick's mind finished the unspoken line and he backed away. "No. No. He will die," he said. "He'll die anyway. I couldn't take him through. Send us both back. You have hospitals."

Lothar's eyes bored him. Lothar knew what the next few minutes would bring. There would be a British wave in the wake of this barrage that would load those hospitals for weeks. No one would get through with an enemy casualty where that terrible load of shells was falling behind the front line. His jaw tightened.

"You're quitting. You could fight through. You have a ship and you are unwounded. You have a duty. You took that man out. Bring him back!"

Suddenly, Dick laughed wildly, hysterically. "My own brother!" he screamed. "And he is trying to send me out

to be killed. My own brother! I won't go, I tell you." His voice went shrilly up the scale. "I won't go. I won't!"

He was fumbling at his holster and his hand dipped. Lothar hurled himself forward and his hand tightened on his brother's wrist. With a quick snap downward, he tore the gun from Dick's hand and sent the boy rolling on the ground. He motioned to the two men who came to their feet awkwardly.

"Take him back!" he said. "He is an officer observer and must be taken care of. He has information of value. The staff will want to talk to him."

The two soldiers obeyed with alacrity. It was the smile of Fortune which took them out of that advance post before the coming of the Tommies. Lothar did not look at his brother as the two men herded him back at bayonet point along the duck-boards. He knew that the boy had a good chance. That hint about "information of value" would get him back to a point of safety if anything would. He turned to the ship.

"What the Lautermans start, a Lauterman finishes. Always," he said softly. A Lauterman had started out with this gunner in a rear cockpit, a gunner who laid his life in his pilot's hands. It was up to a Lauterman to take him home to whatever chance he might have of life.

For a few seconds he debated the ethics of doing this thing while wearing a German uniform; then he shrugged. His life was spent. That khaki wave that would flow across the muddy flats in a few minutes would inundate him at any rate. He had only a few minutes of life left to give to Germany. Germany could well afford to give those few minutes back to him. At any rate he was taking them.

LOTHAR vaulted to the cockpit and the field to his right became alive with men. The British were coming over. For another second he hesitated. He could give this observer to them. No! He would not be cared for. The infantry would have too many casualties once they hit that line. He roared wide open and kicked the little Strutter down the narrow strip of hard ground.

He had not touched a plane in nearly two years but he had been born to it and the Strutter was one of the most stable and flyable of ships. As he raced down the strip, he thought that he would never get lift under his wings. At the very edge of the muddy morass his nose lifted. He was off.

Through the nightmare of the barrage tunnel, he flew it and when the German line dipped out to a point where he must cross it, he took a baptism of fire that had him yawing in the sky. Then he got hit.

There was very little of Lothar Lauterman left when the little Strutter reeled out of the sky to the landing field of his brother's squadron. Sheer will had taken the man through the last lap of the journey and the lifting of the barrage coincident with the advance of the infantry had let him out of the tunnel. The landing field at St. Marie Cappel housed the three squadrons operating in the sector so he had no chance to go wrong on a blind stab. He took it in.

In the last minute as the fingers of the grim Reaper closed about his throat, he looked into the hard face of Major Wheeler and he knew that he had won through. "What a Lauterman starts, a Lauterman finishes. Always." He tried to say it and the words wouldn't come. He went out on a British drome surrounded by British uniforms and that, perhaps, would have been his identical fate if he had taken the commission that he could have had.

At the close of the war, Richard Lauterman came home from a prison camp in Germany. He is quite a local hero and Madame Lauterman is very proud of him. He has never seen any of his old squadron mates and does not care to, for reasons best known to himself. Nor does he care to think of Carson.

Nor does he ever speak of Lothar. He tells himself that it would do no good. Besides, old Heinrich Lauterman is happy in his memories and he thinks that his son died gloriously for Germany.

It would not do to tell him that his son did nothing of the kind.