

AT TEN THOUSAND FEET

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whirling propellers giving her but little more speed than the other. The Monkey dropped the weighted end of the line at the moment the Condor was directly underneath—but he failed correctly to estimate the wind.

The plast caught the rope and trailed it behind like the tail of a kite. It swung down and rested against the rear of the Condor's right plane; but it was far out of reach of the man on the car, while the L-3, slowly forging ahead, although her motors were throttled down to the limit, threatened to drag the cable into the lower flier's one propeller—and then!

"It'll foul the rope and drag us down, too!" Burroughs' cry was almost inarticulate in its fear; but it was echoed by a burst of admiring profanity from Blake.

"The nerry devil!" the latter shouted, his face pressed against the glass of a port. "He's crawling out on the plane!"

Carney could not watch. He was too busy handling the swoops of the L-3, but a long-drawn breath from Burroughs and an exultant cheer from Blake told him the line had been caught and made fast.

"He's got it!" Blake shouted. "Now ease her into the pull—slow. I'm going to send down another line. That one might break."

As the rope tautened the L-3 wallowed heavily, and Carney signaled for more power. He did not attempt full speed, knowing the cable would snap under the strain, and as it was he had his hands full keeping his craft on an even keel.

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With the drag of the other machine the L-3 seemingly lost her buoyancy and heaved stubbornly with every gust, at times veering badly and rounding back with a shake, like a horse fighting for its head. Carney kept a course straight into the wind, for had the gale once got under an uptilted wing, nothing could have prevented a catastrophe.

For an hour the two aeroplanes drove into the storm. Carney had been fighting to gain the higher levels, and they now were at 10,000 feet, where the wind was less strong and blew steadier. There was now not so much danger of a jerk tearing the two craft apart, for Blake had succeeded in sending down a second line.

This was a feat which at first seemed impossible, the Condor at the end of the 100-foot hawser now riding directly under the L-3. If a rope had been dropped from the upper craft the wind of a certainty

would have carried it into the Condor's one working propeller and all would have been over in a few brief moments.

Blake and the Monkey accomplished it, however. A loop of wire was passed about the cable attached to the Condor and a second one fastened to it. When the Monkey played out the rope it slid to the hands of the man on the Condor's car.

The strain on the upper machine was tremendous. Had the one propeller of the Condor stopped, the end would have come quickly, for the L-3 could not have supported the double weight.

But both were magnificent machines, eighty feet across the wings, and as long; built of steel tubing, with aluminum planes, and fit to battle the Atlantic gale. In the car of the L-3 back of the engine tunnel lay sacks of mail and packages of valuable express; but the Condor's freight was the more precious. A dozen passengers, five of them women, were housed in her narrow cabins.

On top of the Condor's car the man who had made fast the line still lay, clutching a brace, his head ducked to avoid the rush of air. Tied to his wrist was a knife. He was ready to cut the tow-lines should anything go wrong.

On the L-3, Carney, feet in the stirrups of the driver's seat, his back braced firmly, swayed and tugged at the steering post with each dip and swoop of the machine. It was strenuous work.

The gyroscope system came as near to automatic stabilization as man as yet had been able to devise. The wonderful little machine, spinning in its case, ever struggled to maintain an upright position, and when the aeroplane heeled it automatically opened or closed valves that let compressed air into the cylinders, the pistons of which helped control the warping planes.

In a calm, flying at a steady pace, the driver of the aeroplane could have gone to sleep, secure in the knowledge the ever alert gyroscope and the powerful cylinders would keep the craft on an even keel; but in a gale or gusty wind the aviator must watch constantly for a bad slant, an eddy, or an air pocket.

It was at low speed that the monster aeroplanes were the hardest to handle, and Carney, warily warping his planes, was reminded of a day back in his youth, when at a meet at Hempstead Plains he had encountered a storm while flying in a low-powered Wright biplane of the type used in exhibition work along about 1912.

He had fought the gale four hours, heading into it all the time, but was swept tail-first more than twenty miles before he succeeded in making a landing.

Since the L-3 had made fast to the Condor the gale had shown no signs of abating; but the cables still held, and there seemed a fair chance of making land, now about six hours of flying away.

Then disaster, seemingly inevitable, loomed near at hand!

It was a series of violent swoops that taxed to the utmost Carney's strength and skill to overcome. The automatic stabilizer was not working properly, or not at all; and a moment later Evans, the engineer, came from the motor tunnel with the news of what had happened. Wires leading from the gyroscope to the cylinder valves had broken and the apparatus was out of commission.

Burroughs, who had been crouching in sullen fear on a seat in the pilot-house, leaped to his feet with an oath of terror.

"There's no chance now," he shouted.

"It's all over, unless we cut loose."

Carney glared at him as he gripped the steering post. "Not by a damned sight!" he roared. "I rode out blows as bad as this before they ever thought of a stabilizer."

And Blake, "Silent Blake" they called him, usually the most mild-mannered and diffident of men, arose in wrath.

"Cut loose? Hell!" he raged. "Not while the old boat hangs together. Carney and I will drive her through."

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Carney turned to his work, his eyes ever on the fluttering bits of tape on the skids, and set his teeth as he tugged and strained to counteract each lift and roll of the aeroplane. "They'd drive her through," he told himself, but in his heart there was doubt, for without the aid of the stabilizer the task seemed virtually impossible. Blake was drawing on his gloves to relieve Carney at the helm, so neither saw Burroughs sneak from the pilot-house, a desperate gleam in his fear-haunted eyes.

The Monkey saw him, but he was a little too late. Burroughs already was well out on the fuselage, working his way toward the point where the cables were fastened. There was a knife in his teeth; his purpose was evident, and the Monkey swung after him.

It was a dangerous perch—the open framework of an aeroplane in a gale—and Burroughs' face was white as he hitched himself along. Acker moved quickly, and

was within a few feet of the other before he was discovered.

Twisting himself about, the captain snatched the knife from his teeth and slashed at the assistant engineer.

The Monkey recoiled, and into his pale eyes leaped a flame. Then, with his own knife out, he twisted his legs about a rod and leaned forward.

Burroughs met him with a savage thrust, but the youth dodged and came back with a lightning stab that cut through the sleeve of the other's coat. But it missed the flesh, and Burroughs' blade again darted forth, Acker escaping by a fraction of an inch.

The man was the taller and held an advantage in his greater length of arm, but Acker was the quicker. Thrice Burroughs lunged, but each time the youth avoided him and made an ineffectual jab in return. Then Burroughs fairly hurled himself upon the other, his weapon coming down in a swift circle of light.

The point slashed open Acker's blue jumper from collar to waistline, but did no other damage, and the youth struck back with the quickness of a rattlesnake, his blade ripping Burroughs' arm from elbow to wrist.

The knife fell from the wounded man's hand and he clung to a brace, staring stupidly at the rivulets of blood that ran to the tips of his fingers, to be snatched away by the greedy wind.

From the eyes of the Monkey the glare faded and died. He again became a second engineer, interesting only because of his agility. Shutting his own knife, he stretched forth a hand to help Burroughs back to the aeroplane's car.

Their progress was slow. Burroughs was half dead from fear, and his right arm was useless. Acker tugged and hauled patiently, and finally they reached their goal. It was Carney who met them and jerked Burroughs, not over gently, into the car.

"So you would have cut loose and let the Condor drop, you scut!" The words rumbled from deep in the furious aviator's chest as he grabbed Burroughs by the neck and, twisting him about, jammed his face against the glass of a port.

"Look!" he exulted. "Look! Damn you! They've got their other engines going. They're all right. Do you see? They're cutting loose. They don't need us any more. 'Twas up to us, and we did it!"

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ON THE SUNNY SIDE OF LIFE

The Common Kind

A FOND mother was assisting the little boy the other evening in the mastery of his geography lesson, and coming to the description of a desert, which formed part of the lesson to be memorized, she quoted the words of the textbook to the effect that it was "a barren tract."

The little fellow repeated the phrase after her, but his air of mystification showed that he hadn't the slightest idea of the meaning conveyed by the group of words, and the better to reach his understanding she endeavored to simplify the description by defining it as "a place where nothing would grow."

The boy's face brightened with the light of awakened intelligence, and the mother, proud and expectant, put the question:

"Now, Johnny, what is a desert?"

"Pa's bald head."

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Might Cure It

Here is a bit of wit from a member of the Massachusetts Medical Society:

The Doctor—Mrs. Brown has sent for me to attend her boy. I must go at once. His Wife—What is the matter with her boy?

The doctor—I do not know, but Mrs. Brown has a book on what to do before the doctor comes and I must hurry up before she does it.

Deserved Life

A LOT of old-timers of the Army and Navy Club in Washington were swapping stories.

"One Si Hankins," says a retired brigadier general, "decided to enlist. He burned with a desire to serve his country. So he applied at a recruiting office and was duly punched and prodded, trotted up and down, jumped over chairs and tables and so forth."

"Then came the questions. All manner of them were fired at him, and he answered most of them satisfactorily. Then came the stern inquiry:

"Have you ever served a jail sentence?"

"No, sir," stammered Si. "but," he added hastily, "I'd be willing to serve a short time if it's necessary."

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Wanted to Know

Helen was a very inquisitive child, who greatly annoyed her father each evening with endless questions, while he tried to read the newspaper. One evening, among other things, she demanded:

"Papa, what do you do at the office all day?"

Exasperated at her persistence, he answered, briefly: "Oh, nothing!"

Helen was silent a moment, then asked: "But how do you know when you're done?"

Then He Understood Only Doing His Stunt

MANY a sly and crafty foreigner," says a westerner, "has shielded himself from trouble by affecting not to understand the language spoken to him."

A Chinese was brought before a magistrate and fined. The judge had difficulty in making the Oriental understand, for he pretended not to know English.

"Look here, man," he said, disgustedly, "that is \$1. Do you see? Pay it! Otherwise, in jail! Understand?"

The Chinaman signified that he did not understand, and the magistrate repeated his announcement.

"Let me talk with him, your honor," said the portly officer who had arrested the man. "I'll make him understand."

"When the judge had given him leave, the officer approached the Chinaman and shouted in his ear: 'Say, you dish-faces, can't you hear anything? You've got to pay a \$5 fine!'

"You're a liar!" cried the Chinaman, forgetting himself in his rage. "It's only a dollar."

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Usual Way

Lady—I shall be very lonesome, Peggy, if you leave me.

Peggy—Don't worry, ma'am, I'll not leave you until you have a house full of company.

Try This, Sisters

THE newly married girl was attending her first football match. The home team was doing well that day, and all around her was a cheering, waving band of enthusiasts, among them her husband.

For a time she stood his yells of glee and wild hat waving with patience, but finally she asked him, after one fierce shriek of joy, what all the noise was about.

"Oh, he did it! He did it!" gasped the man. "The goalkeeper did it!"

"Did what?" demanded his wife.

"Saved the goal!"

"Well, isn't that what he's there for?" retorted the lady calmly.

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