

A Forced Landing

By Lady Heath

TWENTY-six aeroplanes entered for the International light aeroplane competitions in France last September. Twenty-six little machines of all types and shapes and nationalities.

Some crashed, some got tired, some got lost and only four finished up the 2,000 mile reliability tour of France. My little Avro Avian equipped with a Mark III Cirrus engine, now being made in this country, was one of the fortunate four, but it was only by repeated luck and extraordinary hard work that we persuaded it to get round.

After we had finished with take off, landings, climb, speed, petrol consumption, and all other troubles that make an international competition we were forced to wander around France to show that

carburetor with that on our baggage hack. This was speedily effected at Nantes. There was no time for petrol tests or re-arrangement of jets as a prize was given at Le Havre for the first machine in, so one had to start at the crack of dawn, after working half the night. My mechanic was a wonderful worker.

I put my sand bags in front and on top of them I had one of the keenest and most enthusiastic passengers I have ever had the pleasure of traveling with, Mr. John Webb, one of the foremen of the company which makes the English Cirrus, who had come as my mechanic as every French town was giving the pilots

to me horribly high. We had evidently left the feed far too rich. My indicator needle was dropping with alarming rapidity. I did not worry much as the farther north I went the more beautiful were the forced landing fields that spread out before us. When we got as far on our route as Bourguebus I realized that I would just have too little gasoline left to take me into Le Havre and so I turned to Caen where there is a combination of town, river road and railway and where we hoped to get the best fuel possible.

We just got to the edge of Caen when the petrol supply failed us and we scrambled down into a field by the road leading northwards into the town. Naturally, the excitement was intense, and in five minutes the machine was surrounded by hundreds of small children of all shapes and sizes.

Webb and I shook hands. We always shake hands when anything of interest happens. I don't know why—it brings us back to the normal probably. Then, we proceeded to cajole the most intelligent French child to go to the nearest garage and buy us a lot of "Essence." The "Essence" duly arrived in gallon tins and we filled up, realizing it was very bad motor fuel but it was all we could get. Having done this and cut down our petrol consumption a bit we persuaded some of the local police to keep the children at bay and we took off out of our little field. On we went to our destination with a beautiful guide beneath us, the River Orne and the Deauville coast line. We flew low along the level sands waving as we passed to crowds of bathers and little fishing boats near the shore.

At Trouville, we turned directly North and went out across the estuary of the Seine. The other side was somewhat obscured by mist although it was but 10 short miles. I thought it advisable, having precious Webb on board, to climb high for safety. Thank goodness we did.

When we were five miles out to sea with Trouville's numerous sand castles and bathers behind us with its hundreds of bathers disporting themselves in the surf, and the piers of Le Havre before us beginning to take definite shape, suddenly there was a crash, a bang, and a clatter and instinctively the nose went down and we turned back towards the land. We had luck. The engine died, but occasionally it caught a few revolutions that pulled one nearer to that safe white line of surf on the shore.

The bathers, the sand castles and the striped umbrellas made Trouville beach gaudy and terrifying. In the line of the



our poor little overworked hacks could tour as well as perform.

The next to the last lap of the tour was from Nantes to Le Havre, a distance of about 200 miles. We had to carry our full load on the machines in the shape of sand bags and the pilots on the tour consequently felt rather hot-and-bothered at the thought of piling in their kit as well. A beautiful solution presented itself, and I sent to England for my privately owned Moth to accompany the tour carrying the spares and suit cases of all the competitors with an amateur pilot, a friend of mine, at the joy stick. We called it the "Cheval de bagage."

I had a little carburetor trouble at Bordeaux and so decided to exchange my

In the dim gray dawn two French fishermen came with their nets to investigate the Moth.

so many public receptions that we had no time to work on our own aeroplanes. "Webbie" is not a pilot himself but he knows more about engines than most people I know. I always look on it as a great compliment that he trusts me in races and competition, and all sorts of difficult situations, to keep his skin whole.

We were flying into a strong wind and were making slow time as we passed over the beautiful towns and forests of Mayenne with blue lakes shining between them. Our petrol consumption seemed



surf we had water that was too shallow for the bathers and too wet for sand castles and the Avian sat down in it, the starboard wing missing a little old lady complete with her knitting, by a hairsbreadth. We shook hands again! By a marvelous stroke of luck there appeared on the scene a high official of the French Air Ministry, complete with summer flannels, full of good advice, and he dashed me to a telephone to get in touch with Le Havre while the faithful Webb proceeded to trace the trouble. We found that the terrible motor fuel we had put in had seriously damaged a piston face, and a ring had broken and chewed up everything in the neighborhood.

Soon the baggage Moth appeared in the skies replete with the spares I had telephoned for, but what was our horror and chagrin to see it miss us and sail right over our heads and proceed to look for us miles further down the beach. I wish you could have seen Deauville Beach at that moment. The French high official recruited all his friends and they had gathered an army of small children to flatten out every miniature castle and hollow in one section of the beach, and we marked it out as an improvised aerodrome with towels and newspapers.

Further back was my Avian, under whose wing French hospitality had spread us a luncheon of vin blanc, long French rolls and some sliced ham.

We worked like ants taking everything to pieces. Suddenly the baggage Moth caught sight of us, and glided down to a perfect landing near us on the cleared sand. Webb waved me aside as soon as he got his new pistons and cylinders. It was impossible for two people to stand up on the rickety chair which was our trestle and so I employed myself taking our hosts up for joy rides in the

We filled up with gasoline in the little field. Webb is in the foreground.

"baggage Moth." Even the French high official let his family go up when he saw that it had come down once safely. It made me very happy to find that a rival competitor had taken the Moth as its "driver" could not be found, and, with true sporting spirit flown the spares and some good gasoline over to me.

We worked until the faint stars came out, and a crescent moon rose in the dark blue sky and then we hauled the machines above high water line and fastened them down for the night.

The sun had just come back to the

countryside of France next morning when we tackled the cylinders again and at six o'clock the last nut and bolt was screwed down and the Cirrus was ticking over with her old monotonous regularity.

The tide was out that morning and its path made a wonderful natural flying field.

Very gingerly we ran her up chocked up with gasoline cans and although she was down in revs a little, she was fairly steady. We climbed and circled about the beach for a quarter hour before we ventured across the estuary. The faithful baggage Moth did the tour as reliably as any of the competition machines hovering kindly in the near foreground.

We touched ground at Le Havre at five minutes past eight. The aeroplanes were all ready to leave on the day's lap at eight o'clock and had to check in at the end of the day's journey by four, so that we had a simple matter before us to do the 200 kilometres into Paris where the competition ended.

Never shall I forget that journey. Racing along the valley of the Seine over water and forest trying to make good time, and every moment when a single revolution was lost going through the pangs of another forced landing!

Well, she got to Paris and there we gave the unfortunate little engine a top overhauling, a better one than we had given her overnight on the beach. Without any exaggeration we took a teaspoonful of sand out of the petrol filter and another teaspoonful of aluminum filings out of the oil pump.

A high official of the French Air Ministry came to our rescue in beautiful white flannels.



To our great surprise the final French reaction was one of entire unconcern. One would think that strange damaged aeroplanes floated in out of the sky, to their beaches and among their bathers every day of the week.

That is the right way to treat Aviation. It should be taken as a matter of course.

The most distinct recollection I have, gliding in towards land over that water, with the engine spitting and misfiring and finally stopping, and with a hundred holiday makers before me and the wet wet

water underneath, is the sight of Webb's face in the front cockpit. He had pulled his cap off, and he had his arms up on the decking to protect his face if we hit anything hard, but he had an utterly unmoved expression, a complete poker face, —but— a pure white complexion with a green tinge, and a crop of hair that in spite of the rushing air, was standing up straight and stiff and terrified.

Praises be that his premonitions were for naught.

planes in the air to frolic with. He cast his eye about the sky and terrain for a suitable prey for his pent-up enthusiasm. His attention was finally attracted to a two-mule-powered single-place grass attacker piloted by an Ethiopian field officer, which was flying at a very low altitude and at a very uncertain speed in the vicinity of the 43rd Squadron airdrome. Our brave hero licked his chops and, turning to his mechanic, said: "Watch me down the Quartermaster Air Force." Pushing his throttle forward, he made one of those terrific dives so common to the quick-thinking brigade. The Ethiopian pilot, seeing that he was being attacked from his right flank and being sadly outclassed, took to his parachute. However, one of the mule powers of the motor, seeing that escape was impossible, decided to put up as good a fight as possible. He elevated his tail to an angle of 45 degrees, brought back the bolts of his rear guns, and as the DH got within range let fly, hitting the plane in a vital spot and causing it to careen over on its side and fall to the ground a mass of flames.

"Fortunately, the hero who had risked his life beyond all call of duty, who was so enthralled with the desire to give his Corps the supremacy of the airdrome, and who without thought of personal safety engaged an enemy far superior to himself in equipment, escaped the fray with only bruises and burns, and has now completely recovered and is with us today.

"Lieut. James B. Burwell, it is with the greatest pride that I bestow upon one who is so fearless, so courageous and so self-sacrificing, this little honor, and with the unanimous approval of this body of officers select you as a permanent member of the Dumb-bell Club and custodian of our sacred banner, the Dumb-bell Flag."

A recent memorandum issued by the Chief of the Air Corps, Washington, D. C., outlines the procedure to be followed in the selection of Air Corps officers for assignment to activities or specific duties. As a rule, requests for orders effecting changes of station of Air Corps officers will be submitted to the Adjutant General in advance of the effective date of the orders, as follows:

When being ordered to, or relieved from, Service Schools—6 months.

When proceeding to, or returning from, foreign service—5 months.

When being relieved from, or ordered to, other permanent assignments—3 months.

Exceptions will be made in the case of officers pursuing the pilots' course at the Advanced Flying School, the Balloon and Airship School course and Service School courses of less than 6 month's duration, when orders will be requested not less than 30 days prior to the completion of the courses.



Service Notes

THE current Air Corps News Letter records the election of 2nd Lieut.

J. B. Burwell to membership in one of the most exclusive of Air Corps fraternities—the Dumb-bell Club. Membership in this organization is limited to those who have exhibited exceptional ability to perform unusual feats in aircraft. Previous nominees have been proposed for achievements such as taking off from Kelly Field for Dallas due north in the morning, and landing at dusk 60 miles southeast of Kelly out of gas, falling out of an airplane 1100 feet in the air for no apparent reason, and similar extraordinary deeds. Air Corps officers whose names appear on the banner of the organization are:

Major C. J. Browne (deceased).

1st Lieut. R. L. Maughan.

1st Lieut. Max F. Schneider.

Major R. C. Candee.

Captain John I. Moore.

1st Lieut. Y. A. Pitts.

2nd Lieut. L. S. Jamieson.

1st Lieut. A. Thomas.

1st Lieut. B. B. Cassidy.

2nd Lieut. J. B. Burwell.

Lieut. Burwell is the most recently

elected member of the club, succeeding Lieut. Cassidy as the custodian of the banner, an honor Lieut. Cassidy had held for six months. Lieut. Burwell hit a mule hitched to a grass-cutter on the flying field. The following is the official citation:

"Officers of Kelly Field:

"We meet on this auspicious occasion to do honor to a brother officer, a man who has distinguished himself far above all expectations. We are here today, gentlemen, to bestow upon him the highest honor that Kelly Field can give—an honor next only in importance to the Congressional Medal of Honor and the Distinguished Service Cross. Before making this esteemed award, it will be necessary to review the facts and circumstances that caused the Committee on Awards to bestow this honor.

"On the bright and sunny day of October 23, 1928, in his trusted DH, this intrepid Air Corps officer was cruising about the ozone of Kelly Field when, feeling a little frisky and being a quick-thinking pursuit pilot, he decided to engage in a little combat work. As it was during the noon hour, he could find no