



Turnabout, William Faulkner

Turnabout

THE AMERICAN — THE older one — wore no pink Bedfords. His breeches were of plain whipcord, like the tunic. And the tunic had no long London-cut skirts, so that below the Sam Browne the tail of it stuck straight out like the tunic of a military policeman beneath his holster belt.

And he wore simple puttees and the easy shoes of a man of middle age, instead of Savile Row boots, and the shoes and the puttees did not match in shade, and the ordnance belt did not match either of them, and the pilot's wings on his breast were just wings. But the ribbon beneath them was a good ribbon, and the insigne on his shoulders were the twin bars of a captain.

He was not tall. His face was thin, a little aquiline; the eyes intelligent and a little tired. He was past twenty-five; looking at him, one thought, not Phi Beta Kappa exactly, but Skull and Bones perhaps, or possibly a Rhodes scholarship.

One of the men who faced him probably could not see him at all. He was being held on his feet by an American military policeman. He was quite drunk, and in contrast with the heavy-jawed policeman who held him erect on his long, slim, boneless legs, he looked like a masquerading girl.

He was possibly eighteen, tall, with a pink-and-white face and blue eyes, and a mouth like a girl's mouth. He wore a pea-coat, buttoned awry and stained with recent mud, and upon his blond head, at that unmistakable and rakish swagger which no other people can ever approach or imitate, the cap of a Royal Naval Officer.

"What's this, corporal?" the American captain said. "What's the trouble? He's an Englishman. You'd better let their M. P.'s take care of him."

"I know he is," the policeman said. He spoke heavily, breathing heavily, in the voice of a man under physical strain; for all his girlish delicacy of limb, the English boy was heavier — or more helpless — than he looked. "Stand up!" the policeman said. "They're officers!"

The English boy made an effort then. He pulled himself together, focusing his eyes. He swayed, throwing his arms about the policeman's neck, and with the other hand he saluted, his hand flicking, fingers curled a little, to his right ear, already swaying again and catching himself again. "Cheer-o, sir," he said. "Name's not Beatty, I hope."

"No," the captain said.

"Ah," the English boy said. "Hoped not. My mistake. No offense, what?"

"No offense," the captain said quietly. But he was looking at the policeman. The second American spoke. He was a lieutenant, also a pilot. But he was not twenty-five and he wore the pink breeches, the London boots, and his tunic might have been a British tunic save for the collar.

"It's one of those navy eggs," he said. "They pick them out of the gutters here all night long. You don't come to town often enough."

“Oh,” the captain said. “I’ve heard about them. I remember now.” He also remarked now that, though the street was a busy one — it was just outside a popular café — and there were many passers, soldier, civilian, women, yet none of them so much as paused, as though it were a familiar sight. He was looking at the policeman. “Can’t you take him to his ship?”

“I thought of that before the captain did,” the policeman said. “He says he can’t go aboard his ship after dark because he puts the ship away at sundown.”

“Puts it away?”

“Stand up, sailor!” the policeman said savagely, jerking at his lax burden. “Maybe the captain can make sense out of it. Damned if I can. He says they keep the boat under the wharf. Run it under the wharf at night, and that they can’t get it out again until the tide goes out tomorrow.”

“Under the wharf? A boat? What is this?” He was now speaking to the lieutenant. “Do they operate some kind of aquatic motorcycles?”

“Something like that,” the lieutenant said. “You’ve seen them — the boats. Launches, camouflaged and all. Dashing up and down the harbor. You’ve seen them. They do that all day and sleep in the gutters here all night.”

“Oh,” the captain said. “I thought those boats were ship commanders’ launches. You mean to tell me they use officers just to—”

“I don’t know,” the lieutenant said. “Maybe they use them to fetch hot water from one ship to another. Or buns. Or maybe to go back and forth fast when they forget napkins or something.”

“Nonsense,” the captain said. He looked at the English boy again.

“That’s what they do,” the lieutenant said. “Town’s lousy with them all night long. Gutters full, and their M. P.’s carting them away in batches, like nursemaids in a park. Maybe the French give them the launches to get them out of the gutters during the day.”

“Oh,” the captain said, “I see.” But it was clear that he didn’t see, wasn’t listening, didn’t believe what he did hear. He looked at the English boy. “Well, you can’t leave him here in that shape,” he said.

Again the English boy tried to pull himself together. “Quite all right, ‘sure you,” he said glassily, his voice pleasant, cheerful almost, quite courteous. “Used to it. Confounded rough pavé, though. Should force French do something about it. Visiting lads jolly well deserve decent field to play on, what?”

“And he was jolly well using all of it too,” the policeman said savagely. “He must think he’s a one-man team, maybe.”

At that moment a fifth man came up. He was a British military policeman. “Nah then,” he said. “What’s this? What’s this?” Then he saw the Americans’ shoulder bars. He saluted. At the sound of his voice the English boy turned, swaying, peering.

“Oh, hullo, Albert,” he said.

“Nah then, Mr. Hope,” the British policeman said. He said to the American policeman, over his shoulder: “What is it this time?”

“Likely nothing,” the American said. “The way you guys run a war. But I’m a stranger here. Here. Take him.”

“What is this, corporal?” the captain said. “What was he doing?”

“He won’t call it nothing,” the American policeman said, jerking his head at the British policeman. “He’ll just call it a thrush or a robin or something. I turn into this street about three blocks back a while ago, and I find it blocked with a line of trucks going up from the docks, and the drivers all hollering ahead what the hell the trouble is.

So I come on, and I find it is about three blocks of them, blocking the cross streets too; and I come on to the head of it where the trouble is, and I find about a dozen of the drivers out in front, holding a caucus or something in the middle of the street, and I come up and I say, ‘What’s going on here?’ and they leave me through and I find this egg here laying—”

“Yer talking about one of His Majesty’s officers, my man,” the British policeman said.

“Watch yourself, corporal,” the captain said. “And you found this officer—”

“He had done gone to bed in the middle of the street, with an empty basket for a pillow. Laying there with his hands under his head and his knees crossed, arguing with them about whether he ought to get up and move or not. He said that the trucks could turn back and go around by another street, but that he couldn’t use any other street, because this street was his.”

“His street?”

The English boy had listened, interested, pleasant. “Billet, you see,” he said. “Must have order, even in war emergency. Billet by lot. This street mine; no poaching, eh? Next street Jamie Wutherspoon’s. But trucks can go by that street because Jamie not using it yet. Not in bed yet. Insomnia. Knew so. Told them. Trucks go that way. See now?”

“Was that it, corporal?” the captain said.

“He told you. He wouldn’t get up. He just laid there, arguing with them. He was telling one of them to go somewhere and bring back a copy of their articles of war—”

“King’s Regulations; yes,” the captain said.

“ — and see if the book said whether he had the right of way, or the trucks. And then I got him up, and then the captain come along. And that’s all. And with the captain’s permission I’ll now hand him over to His Majesty’s wet nur—”

“That’ll do, corporal,” the captain said. “You can go. I’ll see to this.” The policeman saluted and went on. The British policeman was now supporting the English boy. “Can’t you take him?” the captain said. “Where are their quarters?”

“I don’t rightly know, sir, if they have quarters or not. We — I usually see them about the pubs until daylight. They don’t seem to use quarters.”

“You mean, they really aren’t off of ships?”

“Well, sir, they might be ships, in a manner of speaking. But a man would have to be a bit sleepier than him to sleep in one of them.”

“I see,” the captain said. He looked at the policeman. “What kind of boats are they?”

This time the policeman’s voice was immediate, final and completely inflectionless. It was like a closed door. “I don’t rightly know, sir.”

“Oh,” the captain said. “Quite. Well, he’s in no shape to stay about pubs until daylight this time.”

“Perhaps I can find him a bit of a pub with a back table, where he can sleep,” the policeman said. But the captain was not listening. He was looking across the street, where the lights of another café fell across the pavement. The English boy yawned terrifically, like a child does, his mouth pink and frankly gaped as a child’s.

The captain turned to the policeman:

“Would you mind stepping across there and asking for Captain Bogard’s driver? I’ll take care of Mr. Hope.”

The policeman departed. The captain now supported the English boy, his hand beneath the other’s arm. Again the boy yawned like a weary child. “Steady,” the captain said. “The car will be here in a minute.”

“Right,” the English boy said through the yawn.

Once in the car, he went to sleep immediately with the peaceful suddenness of babies, sitting between the two Americans. But though the aerodrome was only thirty minutes away, he was awake when they arrived, apparently quite fresh, and asking for whisky.

When they entered the mess he appeared quite sober, only blinking a little in the lighted room, in his raked cap and his awry-buttoned pea-jacket and a soiled silk muffler, embroidered with a club insignia which Bogard recognized to have come from a famous preparatory school, twisted about his throat.

“Ah,” he said, his voice fresh, clear now, not blurred, quite cheerful, quite loud, so that the others in the room turned and looked at him. “Jolly. Whisky, what?” He went straight as a bird dog to the bar in the corner, the lieutenant following. Bogard had turned and gone on to the other end of the room, where five men sat about a card table.

“What’s he admiral of?” one said.

“Of the whole Scotch navy, when I found him,” Bogard said.

Another looked up. “Oh, I thought I’d seen him in town.” He looked at the guest. “Maybe it’s because he was on his feet that I didn’t recognize him when he came in. You usually see them lying down in the gutter.”

“Oh,” the first said. He, too, looked around. “Is he one of those guys?”

“Sure. You’ve seen them. Sitting on the curb, you know, with a couple of limey M. P.’s hauling at their arms.”

“Yes. I’ve seen them,” the other said. They all looked at the English boy. He stood at the bar, talking, his voice loud, cheerful. “They all look like him too,” the speaker said. “About seventeen or eighteen. They run those little boats that are always dashing in and out.”

“Is that what they do?” a third said. “You mean, there’s a male marine auxiliary to the Waacs? Good Lord, I sure made a mistake when I enlisted. But this war never was advertised right.”

“I don’t know,” Bogard said. “I guess they do more than just ride around.”

But they were not listening to him. They were looking at the guest. “They run by clock,” the first said. “You can see the condition of one of them after sunset and almost tell what time it is. But what I don’t see is, how a man that’s in that shape at one o’clock every morning can even see a battleship the next day.”

“Maybe when they have a message to send out to a ship,” another said, “they just make duplicates and line the launches up and point them toward the ship and give each one a duplicate of the message and let them go. And the ones that miss the ship just cruise around the harbor until they hit a dock somewhere.”

“It must be more than that,” Bogard said.

He was about to say something else, but at that moment the guest turned from the bar and approached, carrying a glass. He walked steadily enough, but his color was high and his eyes were bright, and he was talking, loud, cheerful, as he came up.

“I say. Won’t you chaps join—” He ceased. He seemed to remark something; he was looking at their breasts. “Oh, I say. You fly. All of you. Oh, good gad! Find it jolly, eh?”

“Yes,” somebody said. “Jolly.”

“But dangerous, what?”

“A little faster than tennis,” another said. The guest looked at him, bright, affable, intent.

Another said quickly, “Bogard says you command a vessel.”

“Hardly a vessel. Thanks, though. And not command. Ronnie does that. Ranks me a bit. Age.”

“Ronnie?”

“Yes. Nice. Good egg. Old, though. Stickler.”

“Stickler?”

“Frightful. You’d not believe it. Whenever we sight smoke and I have the glass, he sheers away. Keeps the ship hull down all the while. No beaver then. Had me two down a fortnight yesterday.”

The Americans glanced at one another. “No beaver?”

“We play it. With basket masts, you see. See a basket mast. Beaver! One up. The Ergenstrasse doesn’t count any more, though.”

The men about the table looked at one another. Bogard spoke. “I see. When you or Ronnie see a ship with basket masts, you get a beaver on the other. I see. What is the Ergenstrasse?”

“She’s German. Interned. Tramp steamer. Foremast rigged so it looks something like a basket mast. Booms, cables, I dare say. I didn’t think it looked very much like a basket mast, myself. But Ronnie said yes. Called it one day. Then one day they shifted her across the basin and I called her on Ronnie. So we decided to not count her any more. See now, eh?”

“Oh,” the one who had made the tennis remark said, “I see. You and Ronnie run about in the launch, playing beaver. H’m’m. That’s nice. Did you ever pl—”

“Jerry,” Bogard said. The guest had not moved. He looked down at the speaker, still smiling, his eyes quite wide.

The speaker still looked at the guest. “Has yours and Ronnie’s boat got a yellow stern?”

“A yellow stern?” the English boy said. He had quit smiling, but his face was still pleasant.

“I thought that maybe when the boats had two captains, they might paint the sterns yellow or something.”

“Oh,” the guest said. “Burt and Reeves aren’t officers.”

“Burt and Reeves,” the other said, in a musing tone. “So they go, too. Do they play beaver too?”

“Jerry,” Bogard said. The other looked at him. Bogard jerked his head a little. “Come over here.” The other rose. They went aside. “Lay off of him,” Bogard said. “I mean it, now. He’s just a kid. When you were that

age, how much sense did you have? Just about enough to get to chapel on time.”

“My country hadn’t been at war going on four years, though,” Jerry said. “Here we are, spending our money and getting shot at by the clock, and it’s not even our fight, and these limeys that would have been goose-stepping twelve months now if it hadn’t been—”

“Shut it,” Bogard said. “You sound like a Liberty Loan.”

“ — taking it like it was a fair or something. ‘Jolly.’” His voice was now falsetto, lilting. ““But dangerous, what?””

“Sh-h-h-h,” Bogard said.

“I’d like to catch him and his Ronnie out in the harbor, just once. Any harbor. London’s. I wouldn’t want anything but a Jenny, either. Jenny? Hell, I’d take a bicycle and a pair of water wings! I’ll show him some war.”

“Well, you lay off him now. He’ll be gone soon.”

“What are you going to do with him?”

“I’m going to take him along this morning. Let him have Harper’s place out front. He says he can handle a Lewis. Says they have one on the boat. Something he was telling me — about how he once shot out a channel-marker light at seven hundred yards.”

“Well, that’s your business. Maybe he can beat you.”

“Beat me?”

“Playing beaver. And then you can take on Ronnie.”

“I’ll show him some war, anyway,” Bogard said. He looked at the guest. “His people have been in it three years now, and he seems to take it like a sophomore in town for the big game.” He looked at Jerry again. “But you lay off him now.”

As they approached the table, the guest’s voice was loud and cheerful: “. . . if he got the glasses first, he would go in close and look, but when I got them first, he’d sheer off where I couldn’t see anything but the smoke. Frightful stickler. Frightful. But Ergenstrasse not counting any more. And if you make a mistake and call her, you lose two beaver from your score. If Ronnie were only to forget and call her we’d be even.”

III

At two o’clock the English boy was still talking, his voice bright, innocent and cheerful. He was telling them how Switzerland had been spoiled by 1914, and instead of the vacation which his father had promised him for his sixteenth birthday, when that birthday came he and his tutor had had to do with Wales.

But that he and the tutor had got pretty high and that he dared to say — with all due respect to any present who might have had the advantage of Switzerland, of course — that one could see probably as far from Wales as from Switzerland.

“Perspire as much and breathe as hard, anyway,” he added. And about him the Americans sat, a little hard-bitten, a little sober, somewhat older, listening to him with a kind of cold astonishment.

They had been getting up for some time now and going out and returning in flying clothes, carrying helmets and goggles. An orderly entered with a tray of coffee cups, and the guest realized that for some time now he had been hearing engines in the darkness outside.

At last Bogard rose. "Come along," he said. "We'll get your togs." When they emerged from the mess, the sound of the engines was quite loud — an idling thunder. In alignment along the invisible tarmac was a vague rank of short banks of flickering blue-green fire suspended apparently in mid-air. They crossed the aerodrome to Bogard's quarters, where the lieutenant, McGinnis, sat on a cot fastening his flying boots. Bogard reached down a Sidcott suit and threw it across the cot. "Put this on," he said.

"Will I need all this?" the guest said. "Shall we be gone that long?"

"Probably," Bogard said. "Better use it. Cold upstairs."

The guest picked up the suit. "I say," he said. "I say, Ronnie and I have a do ourselves, tomor — today. Do you think Ronnie won't mind if I am a bit late? Might not wait for me."

"We'll be back before teatime," McGinnis said. He seemed quite busy with his boot. "Promise you." The English boy looked at him.

"What time should you be back?" Bogard said.

"Oh, well," the English boy said, "I dare say it will be all right. They let Ronnie say when to go, anyway. He'll wait for me if I should be a bit late."

"He'll wait," Bogard said. "Get your suit on."

“Right,” the other said. They helped him into the suit. “Never been up before,” he said, chattily, pleasantly. “Dare say you can see farther than from mountains, eh?”

“See more, anyway,” McGinnis said. “You’ll like it.”

“Oh, rather. If Ronnie only waits for me. Lark. But dangerous, isn’t it?”

“Go on,” McGinnis said. “You’re kidding me.”

“Shut your trap, Mac,” Bogard said. “Come along. Want some more coffee?” He looked at the guest, but McGinnis answered:

“No. Got something better than coffee. Coffee makes such a confounded stain on the wings.”

“On the wings?” the English boy said. “Why coffee on the wings.”

“Stow it, I said, Mac,” Bogard said. “Come along.”

They recrossed the aerodrome, approaching the muttering banks of flame. When they drew near, the guest began to discern the shape, the outlines, of the Handley-Page. It looked like a Pullman coach run upslanted aground into the skeleton of the first floor of an incomplete skyscraper. The guest looked at it quietly.

“It’s larger than a cruiser,” he said in his bright, interested voice. “I say, you know. This doesn’t fly in one lump. You can’t pull my leg. Seen them before. It comes in two parts: Captain Bogard and me in one; Mac and ‘nother chap in other. What?”

“No,” McGinnis said. Bogard had vanished. “It all goes up in one lump. Big lark, eh? Buzzard, what?”

“Buzzard?” the guest murmured. “Oh, I say. A cruiser. Flying. I say, now.”

“And listen,” McGinnis said. His hand came forth; something cold fumbled against the hand of the English boy — a bottle. “When you feel yourself getting sick, see? Take a pull at it.”

“Oh, shall I get sick?”

“Sure. We all do. Part of flying. This will stop it. But if it doesn’t. See?”

“What? Quite. What?”

“Not overside. Don’t spew it overside.”

“Not overside?”

“It’ll blow back in Bogy’s and my face. Can’t see. Bingo. Finished. See?”

“Oh, quite. What shall I do with it?” Their voices were quiet, brief, grave as conspirators.

“Just duck your head and let her go.”

“Oh, quite.”

Bogard returned. “Show him how to get into the front pit, will you?” he said. McGinnis led the way through the trap. Forward, rising to the slant of the fuselage, the passage narrowed; a man would need to crawl.

“Crawl in there and keep going,” McGinnis said.

“It looks like a dog kennel,” the guest said.

“Doesn’t it, though?” McGinnis agreed cheerfully. “Cut along with you.” Stooping, he could hear the other scuttling forward. “You’ll find a Lewis gun up there, like as not,” he said into the tunnel.

The voice of the guest came back: “Found it.”

“The gunnery sergeant will be along in a minute and show you if it is loaded.”

“It’s loaded,” the guest said; almost on the heels of his words the gun fired, a brief staccato burst. There were shouts, the loudest from the ground beneath the nose of the aeroplane. “It’s quite all right,” the English boy’s voice said. “I pointed it west before I let it off. Nothing back there but Marine office and your brigade headquarters. Ronnie and I always do this before we go anywhere. Sorry if I was too soon. Oh, by the way,” he added, “my name’s Claude. Don’t think I mentioned it.”

On the ground, Bogard and two other officers stood. They had come up running. “Fired it west,” one said. “How in hell does he know which way is west?”

“He’s a sailor,” the other said. “You forgot that.”

“He seems to be a machine gunner too,” Bogard said.

“Let’s hope he doesn’t forget that,” the first said.

Nevertheless, Bogard kept an eye on the silhouetted head rising from the round gunpit in the nose ten feet ahead of him. "He did work that gun, though," he said to McGinnis beside him. "He even put the drum on himself, didn't he?"

"Yes," McGinnis said. "If he just doesn't forget and think that that gun is him and his tutor looking around from a Welsh alp."

"Maybe I should not have brought him," Bogard said. McGinnis didn't answer. Bogard jockeyed the wheel a little. Ahead, in the gunner's pit, the guest's head moved this way and that continuously, looking. "We'll get there and unload and haul air for home," Bogard said. "Maybe in the dark — Confound it, it would be a shame for his country to be in this mess for four years and him not even to see a gun pointed in his direction."

"He'll see one tonight if he don't keep his head in," McGinnis said.

But the boy did not do that. Not even when they had reached the objective and McGinnis had crawled down to the bomb toggles. And even when the searchlights found them and Bogard signaled to the other machines and dived, the two engines snarling full speed into and through the bursting shells, he could see the boy's face in the searchlight's glare, leaned far overside, coming sharply out as a spotlighted face on a stage, with an expression upon it of child-like interest and delight.

"But he's firing that Lewis," Bogard thought. "Straight too"; nosing the machine farther down, watching the pinpoint swing into the sights, his right hand lifted, waiting to drop into McGinnis' sight. He dropped his

hand; above the noise of the engines he seemed to hear the click and whistle of the released bombs as the machine, freed of the weight, shot zooming in a long upward bounce that carried it for an instant out of the light.

Then he was pretty busy for a time, coming into and through the shells again, shooting athwart another beam that caught and held long enough for him to see the English boy leaning far over the side, looking back and down past the right wing, the undercarriage. "Maybe he's read about it somewhere," Bogard thought, turning, looking back to pick up the rest of the flight.

Then it was all over, the darkness cool and empty and peaceful and almost quiet, with only the steady sound of the engines. McGinnis climbed back into the office, and standing up in his seat, he fired the colored pistol this time and stood for a moment longer, looking backward toward where the searchlights still probed and sabered. He sat down again.

"O.K.," he said. "I counted all four of them. Let's haul air." Then he looked forward. "What's become of the King's Own? You didn't hang him onto a bomb release, did you?" Bogard looked. The forward pit was empty. It was in dim silhouette again now, against the stars, but there was nothing there now save the gun. "No," McGinnis said: "there he is. See? Leaning overside. Dammit, I told him not to spew it! There he comes back." The guest's head came into view again. But again it sank out of sight.

"He's coming back," Bogard said. "Stop him. Tell him we're going to have every squadron in the Hun Channel group on top of us in thirty minutes."

McGinnis swung himself down and stooped at the entrance to the passage. "Get back!" he shouted. The other was almost out; they squatted so, face to face like two dogs, shouting at one another above the noise of the still-unthrottled engines on either side of the fabric walls. The English boy's voice was thin and high.

"Bomb!" he shrieked.

"Yes," McGinnis shouted, "they were bombs! We gave them hell! Get back, I tell you! Have every Hun in France on us in ten minutes! Get back to your gun!"

Again the boy's voice came, high, faint above the noise: "Bomb! All right?"

"Yes! Yes! All right. Back to your gun, damn you!"

McGinnis climbed back into the office. "He went back. Want me to take her awhile?"

"All right," Bogard said. He passed McGinnis the wheel. "Ease her back some. I'd just as soon it was daylight when they come down on us."

"Right," McGinnis said. He moved the wheel suddenly. "What's the matter with that right wing?" he said. "Watch it. . . . See? I'm flying on the right aileron and a little rudder. Feel it."

Bogard took the wheel a moment. "I didn't notice that. Wire somewhere, I guess. I didn't think any of those shells were that close. Watch her, though."

"Right," McGinnis said. "And so you are going with him on his boat tomorrow — today."

“Yes. I promised him. Confound it, you can’t hurt a kid, you know.”

“Why don’t you take Collier along, with his mandolin? Then you could sail around and sing.”

“I promised him,” Bogard said. “Get that wing up a little.”

“Right,” McGinnis said.

Thirty minutes later it was beginning to be dawn; the sky was gray. Presently McGinnis said: “Well, here they come. Look at them! They look like mosquitoes in September. I hope he don’t get worked up now and think he’s playing beaver. If he does he’ll just be one down to Ronnie, provided the devil has a beard. . . . Want the wheel?”

V

At eight o’clock the beach, the Channel, was beneath them. Throttled back, the machine drifted down as Bogard ruddered it gently into the Channel wind. His face was strained, a little tired.

McGinnis looked tired, too, and he needed a shave.

“What do you guess he is looking at now?” he said. For again the English boy was leaning over the right side of the cockpit, looking backward and downward past the right wing.

“I don’t know,” Bogard said. “Maybe bullet holes.” He blasted the port engine. “Must have the riggers—”

“He could see some closer than that,” McGinnis said. “I’ll swear I saw tracer going into his back at one time. Or maybe it’s the ocean he’s

looking at. But he must have seen that when he came over from England." Then Bogard leveled off; the nose rose sharply, the sand, the curling tide edge fled alongside.

Yet still the English boy hung far overside, looking backward and downward at something beneath the right wing, his face rapt, with utter and childlike interest.

Until the machine was completely stopped he continued to do so. Then he ducked down, and in the abrupt silence of the engines they could hear him crawling in the passage. He emerged just as the two pilots climbed stiffly down from the office, his face bright, eager; his voice high, excited.

"Oh, I say! Oh, good gad! What a chap. What a judge of distance! If Ronnie could only have seen! Oh, good gad! Or maybe they aren't like ours — don't load themselves as soon as the air strikes them."

The Americans looked at him. "What don't what?" McGinnis said. "The bomb. It was magnificent; I say, I shan't forget it. Oh, I say, you know! It was splendid!"

After a while McGinnis said, "The bomb?" in a fainting voice. Then the two pilots glared at each other; they said in unison: "That right wing!" Then as one they clawed down through the trap and, with the guest at their heels, they ran around the machine and looked beneath the right wing.

The bomb, suspended by its tail, hung straight down like a plumb bob beside the right wheel, its tip just touching the sand. And parallel with

the wheel track was the long delicate line in the sand where its ultimate tip had dragged. Behind them the English boy's voice was high, clear, childlike:

"Frightened, myself. Tried to tell you. But realized you knew your business better than I. Skill. Marvelous. Oh, I say, I shan't forget it."

VI

A Marine with a bayoneted rifle passed Bogard onto the wharf and directed him to the boat. The wharf was empty, and he didn't even see the boat until he approached the edge of the wharf and looked directly down into it and upon the backs of two stooping men in greasy dungarees, who rose and glanced briefly at him and stooped again.

It was about thirty feet long and about three feet wide. It was painted with gray-green camouflage. It was quarter-decked forward, with two blunt, raked exhaust stacks. "Good Lord," Bogard thought, "if all that deck is engine—" Just aft the deck was the control seat; he saw a big wheel, an instrument panel.

Rising to a height of about a foot above the free-board, and running from the stern forward to where the deck began, and continuing on across the after edge of the deck and thence back down the other gunwale to the stern, was a solid screen, also camouflaged, which inclosed the boat save for the width of the stern, which was open. Facing the steersman's seat like an eye was a hole in the screen about eight inches in diameter.

And looking down into the long, narrow, still, vicious shape, he saw a machine gun swiveled at the stern, and he looked at the low screen —

including which the whole vessel did not sit much more than a yard above water level — with its single empty forward-staring eye, and he thought quietly: “It’s steel. It’s made of steel.” And his face was quite sober, quite thoughtful, and he drew his trench coat about him and buttoned it, as though he were getting cold.

He heard steps behind him and turned. But it was only an orderly from the aerodrome, accompanied by the marine with the rifle. The orderly was carrying a largish bundle wrapped in paper.

“From Lieutenant McGinnis to the captain,” the orderly said.

Bogard took the bundle. The orderly and the marine retreated. He opened the bundle. It contained some objects and a scrawled note. The objects were a new yellow silk sofa cushion and a Japanese parasol, obviously borrowed, and a comb and a roll of toilet paper. The note said:

Couldn’t find a camera anywhere and Collier wouldn’t let me have his mandolin. But maybe Ronnie can play on the comb.

MAC.

Bogard looked at the objects. But his face was still quite thoughtful, quite grave. He rewrapped the things and carried the bundle on up the wharf and dropped it quietly into the water.

As he returned toward the invisible boat he saw two men approaching.

He recognized the boy at once — tall, slender, already talking, voluble, his head bent a little toward his shorter companion, who plodded along beside him, hands in pockets, smoking a pipe.

The boy still wore the pea-coat beneath a flapping oilskin, but in place of the rakish and casual cap he now wore an infantryman's soiled Balaclava helmet, with, floating behind him as though upon the sound of his voice, a curtainlike piece of cloth almost as long as a burnous.

"Hullo, there!" he cried, still a hundred yards away.

But it was the second man that Bogard was watching, thinking to himself that he had never in his life seen a more curious figure. There was something stolid about the very shape of his hunched shoulders, his slightly down-looking face. He was a head shorter than the other.

His face was ruddy, too, but its mold was of a profound gravity that was almost dour. It was the face of a man of twenty who has been for a year trying, even while asleep, to look twenty-one.

He wore a high-necked sweater and dungaree slacks; above this a leather jacket; and above this a soiled naval officer's warmer that reached almost to his heels and which had one shoulder strap missing and not one remaining button at all.

On his head was a plaid fore-and-aft deer stalker's cap, tied on by a narrow scarf brought across and down, hiding his ears, and then wrapped once about his throat and knotted with a hangman's noose beneath his left ear.

It was unbelievably soiled, and with his hands elbow-deep in his pockets and his hunched shoulders and his bent head, he looked like someone's grandmother hung, say, for a witch. Clamped upside down between his teeth was a short brier pipe.

“Here he is!” the boy cried. “This is Ronnie. Captain Bogard.”

“How are you?” Bogard said. He extended his hand. The other said no word, but his hand came forth, limp. It was quite cold, but it was hard, calloused. But he said no word; he just glanced briefly at Bogard and then away. But in that instant Bogard caught something in the look, something strange — a flicker; a kind of covert and curious respect, something like a boy of fifteen looking at a circus trapezist.

But he said no word. He ducked on; Bogard watched him drop from sight over the wharf edge as though he had jumped feet first into the sea. He remarked now that the engines in the invisible boat were running.

“We might get aboard too,” the boy said. He started toward the boat, then he stopped. He touched Bogard’s arm. “Yonder!” he hissed. “See?” His voice was thin with excitement.

“What?” Bogard also whispered; automatically he looked backward and upward, after old habit. The other was gripping his arm and pointing across the harbor.

“There! Over there. The Ergenstrasse. They have shifted her again.” Across the harbor lay an ancient, rusting, swaybacked hulk. It was small and nondescript, and, remembering, Bogard saw that the foremast was a strange mess of cables and booms, resembling — allowing for a great deal of license or looseness of imagery — a basket mast. Beside him the boy was almost chortling. “Do you think that Ronnie noticed?” he hissed. “Do you?”

"I don't know," Bogard said.

"Oh, good gad! If he should glance up and call her before he notices, we'll be even. Oh, good gad! But come along." He went on; he was still chortling. "Careful," he said. "Frightful ladder."

He descended first, the two men in the boat rising and saluting. Ronnie had disappeared, save for his backside, which now filled a small hatch leading forward beneath the deck. Bogard descended gingerly.

"Good Lord," he said. "Do you have to climb up and down this every day?"

"Frightful, isn't it?" the other said, in his happy voice. "But you know yourself. Try to run a war with makeshifts, then wonder why it takes so long." The narrow hull slid and surged, even with Bogard's added weight. "Sits right on top, you see," the boy said. "Would float on a lawn, in a heavy dew. Goes right over them like a bit of paper."

"It does?" Bogard said.

"Oh, absolutely. That's why, you see." Bogard didn't see, but he was too busy letting himself gingerly down to a sitting posture. There were no thwarts; no seats save a long, thick, cylindrical ridge which ran along the bottom of the boat from the driver's seat to the stern. Ronnie had backed into sight. He now sat behind the wheel, bent over the instrument panel.

But when he glanced back over his shoulder he did not speak. His face was merely interrogatory. Across his face there was now a long smudge of grease. The boy's face was empty, too, now.

"Right," he said. He looked forward, where one of the seamen had gone. "Ready forward?" he said.

“Aye, sir,” the seaman said.

The other seaman was at the stern line. “Ready aft?”

“Aye, sir.”

“Cast off.” The boat sheered away, purring, a boiling of water under the stern. The boy looked down at Bogard. “Silly business. Do it shipshape, though. Can’t tell when silly fourstriper—” His face changed again, immediate, solicitous. “I say. Will you be warm? I never thought to fetch—”

“I’ll be all right,” Bogard said. But the other was already taking off his oilskin. “No, no,” Bogard said. “I won’t take it.”

“You’ll tell me if you get cold?”

“Yes. Sure.” He was looking down at the cylinder on which he sat. It was a half cylinder — that is, like the hotwater tank to some Gargantuan stove, sliced down the middle and bolted, open side down, to the floor plates. It was twenty feet long and more than two feet thick. Its top rose as high as the gunwales and between it and the hull on either side was just room enough for a man to place his feet to walk.

“That’s Muriel,” the boy said.

“Muriel?”

“Yes. The one before that was Agatha. After my aunt. The first one Ronnie and I had was Alice in Wonderland. Ronnie and I were the White Rabbit. Jolly, eh?”

“Oh, you and Ronnie have had three, have you?”

“Oh, yes,” the boy said. He leaned down. “He didn’t notice,” he whispered. His face was again bright, gleeful. “When we come back,” he said. “You watch.”

“Oh,” Bogard said. “The Ergenstrasse.” He looked astern, and then he thought: “Good Lord! We must be going — traveling.” He looked out now, broadside, and saw the harbor line fleeing past, and he thought to himself that the boat was well-nigh moving at the speed at which the Handley-Page flew, left the ground.

They were beginning to bound now, even in the sheltered water, from one wave crest to the next with a distinct shock. His hand still rested on the cylinder on which he sat. He looked down at it again, following it from where it seemed to emerge beneath Ronnie’s seat, to where it beveled into the stern. “It’s the air in her, I suppose,” he said.

“The what?” the boy said.

“The air. Stored up in her. That makes the boat ride high.”

“Oh, yes. I dare say. Very likely. I hadn’t thought about it.” He came forward, his burnous whipping in the wind, and sat down beside Bogard. Their heads were below the top of the screen.

Astern the harbor fled, diminishing, sinking into the sea.

The boat had begun to lift now, swooping forward and down, shocking almost stationary for a moment, then lifting and swooping again; a gout of spray came aboard over the bows like a flung shovelful of shot. “I wish you’d take this coat,” the boy said.

Bogard didn't answer. He looked around at the bright face. "We're outside, aren't we?" he said quietly.

"Yes. . . . Do take it, won't you?"

"Thanks, no. I'll be all right. We won't be long, anyway, I guess."

"No. We'll turn soon. It won't be so bad then."

"Yes. I'll be all right when we turn." Then they did turn. The motion became easier. That is, the boat didn't bang head-on, shuddering, into the swells. They came up beneath now, and the boat fled with increased speed, with a long, sickening, yawing motion, first to one side and then the other. But it fled on, and Bogard looked astern with that same soberness with which he had first looked down into the boat.

"We're going east now," he said.

"With just a spot of north," the boy said. "Makes her ride a bit better, what?"

"Yes," Bogard said. Astern there was nothing now save empty sea and the delicate needlelike cant of the machine gun against the boiling and slewing wake, and the two seamen crouching quietly in the stern. "Yes. It's easier." Then he said: "How far do we go?"

The boy leaned closer. He moved closer. His voice was happy, confidential, proud, though lowered a little: "It's Ronnie's show. He thought of it. Not that I wouldn't have, in time. Gratitude and all that. But he's the older, you see. Thinks fast. Courtesy, noblesse oblige — all that. Thought of it soon as I told him this morning. I said, 'Oh, I say. I've been there.

I've seen it'; and he said, 'Not flying'; and I said, 'Strewth'; and he said 'How far? No lying now'; and I said, 'Oh, far. Tremendous. Gone all night'; and he said, 'Flying all night. That must have been to Berlin'; and I said, 'I don't know. I dare say'; and he thought.

I could see him thinking. Because he is the older, you see. More experience in courtesy, right thing. And he said, 'Berlin. No fun to that chap, dashing out and back with us.' And he thought and I waited, and I said, 'But we can't take him to Berlin. Too far. Don't know the way, either'; and he said — fast, like a shot — said, 'But there's Kiel'; and I knew—”

“What?” Bogard said. Without moving, his whole body sprang. “Kiel? In this?”

“Absolutely. Ronnie thought of it. Smart, even if he is a stickler. Said at once, 'Zeebrugge no show at all for that chap. Must do best we can for him. Berlin,' Ronnie said. 'My Gad! Berlin.'”

“Listen,” Bogard said. He had turned now, facing the other, his face quite grave. “What is this boat for?”

“For?”

“What does it do?” Then, knowing beforehand the answer to his own question, he said, putting his hand on the cylinder: “What is this in here? A torpedo, isn't it?”

“I thought you knew,” the boy said.

“No,” Bogard said. “I didn’t know.” His voice seemed to reach him from a distance, dry, cricketlike: “How do you fire it?”

“Fire it?”

“How do you get it out of the boat? When that hatch was open a while ago I could see the engines. They were right in front of the end of this tube.”

“Oh,” the boy said. “You pull a gadget there and the torpedo drops out astern. As soon as the screw touches the water it begins to turn, and then the torpedo is ready, loaded. Then all you have to do is turn the boat quickly and the torpedo goes on.”

“You mean—” Bogard said. After a moment his voice obeyed him again. “You mean you aim the torpedo with the boat and release it and it starts moving, and you turn the boat out of the way and the torpedo passes through the same water that the boat just vacated?”

“Knew you’d catch on,” the boy said. “Told Ronnie so. Airman. Tamer than yours, though. But can’t be helped. Best we can do, just on water. But knew you’d catch on.”

“Listen,” Bogard said. His voice sounded to him quite calm. The boat fled on, yawing over the swells. He sat quite motionless. It seemed to him that he could hear himself talking to himself: “Go on. Ask him. Ask him what? Ask him how close to the ship do you have to be before you fire. . . . Listen,” he said, in that calm voice. “Now, you tell Ronnie, you see.

You just tell him — just say—” He could feel his voice rattling off on him again, so he stopped it. He sat quite motionless, waiting for it to come back; the boy leaning now, looking at his face. Again the boy’s voice was solicitous:

“I say. You’re not feeling well. These confounded shallow boats.”

“It’s not that,” Bogard said. “I just — Do your orders say Kiel?”

“Oh, no. They let Ronnie say. Just so we bring the boat back. This is for you. Gratitude. Ronnie’s idea. Tame, after flying. But if you’d rather, eh?”

“Yes, some place closer. You see, I—”

“Quite. I see. No vacations in wartime. I’ll tell Ronnie.” He went forward. Bogard did not move. The boat fled in long, slewing swoops. Bogard looked quietly astern, at the scudding sea, the sky.

“My God!” he thought. “Can you beat it? Can you beat it?”

The boy came back; Bogard turned to him a face the color of dirty paper. “All right now,” the boy said. “Not Kiel. Nearer place, hunting probably just as good. Ronnie says he knows you will understand.” He was tugging at his pocket. He brought out a bottle. “Here. Haven’t forgot last night. Do the same for you. Good for the stomach, eh?”

Bogard drank, gulping — a big one. He extended the bottle, but the boy refused. “Never touch it on duty,” he said. “Not like you chaps. Tame here.”

The boat fled on. The sun was already down the west. But Bogard had lost all count of time, of distance. Ahead he could see white seas

through the round eye opposite Ronnie's face, and Ronnie's hand on the wheel and the granitelike jut of his profiled jaw and the dead upside-down pipe. The boat fled on.

Then the boy leaned and touched his shoulder. He half rose. The boy was pointing. The sun was reddish; against it, outside them and about two miles away, a vessel — a trawler, it looked like — at anchor swung a tall mast.

"Lightship!" the boy shouted. "Theirs." Ahead Bogard could see a low, flat mole — the entrance to a harbor. "Channel!" the boy shouted. He swept his arm in both directions. "Mines!" His voice swept back on the wind. "Place filthy with them. All sides. Beneath us too. Lark, eh?"

VII

Against the mole a fair surf was beating. Running before the seas now, the boat seemed to leap from one roller to the next; in the intervals while the screw was in the air the engine seemed to be trying to tear itself out by the roots. But it did not slow; when it passed the end of the mole the boat seemed to be standing almost erect on its rudder, like a sailfish.

The mole was a mile away. From the end of it little faint lights began to flicker like fireflies. The boy leaned. "Down," he said. "Machine guns. Might stop a stray."

"What do I do?" Bogard shouted. "What can I do?"

"Stout fellow! Give them hell, what? Knew you'd like it!"

Crouching, Bogard looked up at the boy, his face wild. "I can handle the machine gun!"

"No need," the boy shouted back. "Give them first innings. Sporting. Visitors, eh?" He was looking forward. "There she is. See?" They were in the harbor now, the basin opening before them. Anchored in the channel was a big freighter.

Painted midships of the hull was a huge Argentine flag. "Must get back to stations!" the boy shouted down to him. Then at that moment Ronnie spoke for the first time. The boat was hurtling along now in smoother water. Its speed did not slacken and Ronnie did not turn his head when he spoke. He just swung his jutting jaw and the clamped cold pipe a little, and said from the side of his mouth a single word: "Beaver."

The boy, stooped over what he had called his gadget, jerked up, his expression astonished and outraged. Bogard also looked forward and saw Ronnie's arm pointing to starboard. It was a light cruiser at anchor a mile away. She had basket masts, and as he looked a gun flashed from her after turret. "Oh, damn!" the boy cried. "Oh, you putt!

Oh, confound you, Ronnie! Now I'm three down!" But he had already stooped again over his gadget, his face bright and empty and alert again; not sober; just calm, waiting.

Again Bogard looked forward and felt the boat pivot on its rudder and head directly for the freighter at terrific speed, Ronnie now with one hand on the wheel and the other lifted and extended at the height of his head.

But it seemed to Bogard that the hand would never drop. He crouched, not sitting, watching with a kind of quiet horror the painted flag increase like a moving picture of a locomotive taken from between the rails. Again the gun crashed from the cruiser behind them, and the freighter fired point-blank at them from its poop. Bogard heard neither shot.

“Man, man!” he shouted. “For God’s sake!”

Ronnie’s hand dropped. Again the boat spun on its rudder. Bogard saw the bow rise, pivoting; he expected the hull to slam broadside on into the ship. But it didn’t. It shot off on a long tangent. He was waiting for it to make a wide sweep, heading seaward, putting the freighter astern, and he thought of the cruiser again. “Get a broadside, this time, once we clear the freighter,” he thought.

Then he remembered the freighter, the torpedo, and he looked back toward the freighter to watch the torpedo strike, and saw to his horror that the boat was now bearing down on the freighter again, in a skidding turn.

Like a man in a dream, he watched himself rush down upon the ship and shoot past under her counter, still skidding, close enough to see the faces on her decks. “They missed and they are going to run down the torpedo and catch it and shoot it again,” he thought idiotically.

So the boy had to touch his shoulder before he knew he was behind him. The boy’s voice was quite calm: “Under Ronnie’s seat there. A bit of a crank handle. If you’ll just hand it to me—”

He found the crank.

He passed it back; he was thinking dreamily: “Mac would say they had a telephone on board.” But he didn’t look at once to see what the boy was doing with it, for in that still and peaceful horror he was watching Ronnie, the cold pipe rigid in his jaw, hurling the boat at top speed round and round the freighter, so near that he could see the rivets in the plates.

Then he looked aft, his face wild, importunate, and he saw what the boy was doing with the crank. He had fitted it into what was obviously a small windlass low on one flank of the tube near the head. He glanced up and saw Bogard’s face. “Didn’t go that time!” he shouted cheerfully.

“Go?” Bogard shouted. “It didn’t — The torpedo—”

The boy and one of the seamen were quite busy, stooping over the windlass and the tube. “No. Clumsy. Always happening. Should think clever chaps like engineers — Happens, though. Draw her in and try her again.”

“But the nose, the cap!” Bogard shouted. “It’s still in the tube, isn’t it? It’s all right, isn’t it?”

“Absolutely. But it’s working now. Loaded. Screw’s started turning. Get it back and drop it clear. If we should stop or slow up it would overtake us. Drive back into the tube. Bingo! What?”

Bogard was on his feet now, turned, braced to the terrific merry-go-round of the boat. High above them the freighter seemed to be spinning on her heel like a trick picture in the movies. “Let me have that winch!” he cried.

“Steady!” the boy said. “Mustn’t draw her back too fast. Jam her into the head of the tube ourselves. Same bingo! Best let us. Every cobbler to his last, what?”

“Oh, quite,” Bogard said. “Oh, absolutely.” It was like someone else was using his mouth. He leaned, braced, his hands on the cold tube, beside the others. He was hot inside, but his outside was cold.

He could feel all his flesh jerking with cold as he watched the blunt, grained hand of the seaman turning the windlass in short, easy, inch-long arcs, while at the head of the tube the boy bent, tapping the cylinder with a spanner, lightly, his head turned with listening delicate and deliberate as a watchmaker. The boat rushed on in those furious, slewing turns. Bogard saw a long, drooping thread loop down from somebody’s mouth, between his hands, and he found that the thread came from his own mouth.

He didn’t hear the boy speak, nor notice when he stood up. He just felt the boat straighten out, flinging him to his knees beside the tube. The seaman had gone back to the stern and the boy stooped again over his gadget. Bogard knelt now, quite sick.

He did not feel the boat when it swung again, nor hear the gun from the cruiser which had not dared to fire and the freighter which had not been able to fire, firing again. He did not feel anything at all when he saw the huge, painted flag directly ahead and increasing with locomotive speed, and Ronnie’s lifted hand drop. But this time he knew that the torpedo was gone; in pivoting and spinning this time the whole boat seemed to leave the water; he saw the bow of the boat shoot skyward like the nose of a pursuit ship going into a wingover.

Then his outraged stomach denied him. He saw neither the geyser nor heard the detonation as he sprawled over the tube. He felt only a hand grasp him by the slack of his coat, and the voice of one of the seamen: "Steady all, sir. I've got you."

VIII

A voice roused him, a hand. He was half sitting in the narrow starboard runway, half lying across the tube. He had been there for quite a while; quite a while ago he had felt someone spread a garment over him. But he had not raised his head. "I'm all right," he had said. "You keep it."

"Don't need it," the boy said. "Going home now."

"I'm sorry I—" Bogard said.

"Quite. Confounded shallow boats. Turn any stomach until you get used to them. Ronnie and I both, at first. Each time. You wouldn't believe it. Believe human stomach hold so much. Here." It was the bottle. "Good drink. Take enormous one. Good for stomach."

Bogard drank. Soon he did feel better, warmer. When the hand touched him later, he found that he had been asleep.

It was the boy again. The pea-coat was too small for him; shrunken, perhaps. Below the cuffs his long, slender, girl's wrists were blue with cold. Then Bogard realized what the garment was that had been laid over him. But before Bogard could speak, the boy leaned down, whispering; his face was gleeful: "He didn't notice!"

"What?"

“Ergenstrasse! He didn’t notice that they had shifted her. Gad, I’d be just one down, then.” He watched Bogard’s face with bright, eager eyes. “Beaver, you know. I say. Feeling better, eh?”

“Yes,” Bogard said, “I am.”

“He didn’t notice at all. Oh, gad! Oh, Jove!”

Bogard rose and sat on the tube. The entrance to the harbor was just ahead; the boat had slowed a little. It was just dusk. He said quietly: “Does this often happen?” The boy looked at him. Bogard touched the tube. “This. Failing to go out.”

“Oh, yes. Why they put the windlass on them. That was later. Made first boat; whole thing blew up one day. So put on windlass.”

“But it happens sometimes, even now? I mean, sometimes they blow up, even with the windlass?”

“Well, can’t say, of course. Boats go out. Not come back. Possible. Not ever know, of course. Not heard of one captured yet, though. Possible. Not to us, though. Not yet.”

“Yes,” Bogard said. “Yes.” They entered the harbor, the boat moving still fast, but throttled now and smooth, across the dusk-filled basin. Again the boy leaned down, his voice gleeful.

“Not a word, now!” he hissed. “Steady all!” He stood up; he raised his voice: “I say, Ronnie.” Ronnie did not turn his head, but Bogard could tell that he was listening. “That Argentine ship was amusing, eh? In there. How do you suppose it got past us here?”

Might have stopped here as well. French would buy the wheat.” He paused, diabolical — Machiavelli with the face of a strayed angel. “I say. How long has it been since we had a strange ship in here? Been months, eh?” Again he leaned, hissing. “Watch, now!” But Bogard could not see Ronnie’s head move at all. “He’s looking, though!” the boy whispered, breathed. And Ronnie was looking, though his head had not moved at all.

Then there came into view, in silhouette against the dusk-filled sky, the vague, basket-like shape of the interned vessel’s foremast. At once Ronnie’s arm rose, pointing; again he spoke without turning his head, out of the side of his mouth, past the cold, clamped pipe, a single word: “Beaver.”

The boy moved like a released spring, like a heeled dog freed. “Oh, damn you!” he cried. “Oh, you putt! It’s the Ergenstrasse! Oh, confound you! I’m just one down now!” He had stepped in one stride completely over Bogard, and he now leaned down over Ronnie. “What?” The boat was slowing in toward the wharf, the engine idle. “Aren’t I, Ronnie? Just one down now?”

The boat drifted in; the seaman had again crawled forward onto the deck. Ronnie spoke for the third and last time. “Right,” he said.

IX

“I want,” Bogard said, “a case of Scotch. The best we’ve got. And fix it up good. It’s to go to town. And I want a responsible man to deliver it.” The responsible man came. “This is for a child,” Bogard said, indicating the package. “You’ll find him in the Street of the Twelve Hours, somewhere near the Café Twelve Hours.

He'll be in the gutter. You'll know him. A child about six feet long. Any English M. P. will show him to you. If he is asleep, don't wake him. Just sit there and wait until he wakes up. Then give him this. Tell him it is from Captain Bogard."

X

About a month later a copy of the English Gazette which had strayed onto an American aerodrome carried the following item in the casualty lists:

MISSING: Torpedo Boat XOOI. Midshipmen R. Boyce Smith and L. C. W. Hope, R. N. R., Boatswain's Mate Burt and Able Seaman Reeves. Channel Fleet, Light Torpedo Division. Failed to return from coast patrol duty.

Shortly after that the American Air Service headquarters also issued a bulletin:

For extraordinary valor over and beyond the routine of duty, Captain H. S. Bogard, with his crew, composed of Second Lieutenant Darrel McGinnis and Aviation Gunners Watts and Harper, on a daylight raid and without scout protection, destroyed with bombs an ammunition depot several miles behind the enemy's lines. From here, beset by enemy aircraft in superior numbers, these men proceeded with what bombs remained to the enemy's corps headquarters at Blank and partially demolished this château, and then returned safely without loss of a man.

And regarding which exploit, it might have added, had it failed and had Captain Bogard come out of it alive, he would have been immediately and thoroughly court-martialed.

Carrying his remaining two bombs, he had dived the Handley-Page at the château where the generals sat at lunch, until McGinnis, at the toggles below him, began to shout at him, before he ever signaled. He didn't signal until he could discern separately the slate tiles of the roof.

Then his hand dropped and he zoomed, and he held the aeroplane so, in its wild snarl, his lips parted, his breath hissing, thinking: "God! God! If they were all there — all the generals, the admirals, the presidents and the kings — theirs, ours — all of them."

The end