

CHAPTER XVIII

EARLY CIRCUS FIGHTS WITH No. 2 SQUADRON

"CIRCUS" was the name given, jocularly in the beginning, to a specially selected fighting squadron which travelled from one part of the front to another, wherever offensive air strength was required. It was a fleet of air-destroyers, or fast air-cruisers. In the German circuses its pilots were crack airmen drafted from all squadrons; the British circuses were composed rather of crack squadrons, not necessarily of selected airmen, though expert airmen, returned to the front from home instructional courses or from convalescence, were frequently sent to a circus squadron instead of to the squadron to which they had formerly belonged.

The circus system inevitably accompanied the development of various duties of fighting aeroplanes. The early war pilots performed all and any sort of work—one day reconnoitring, another ranging artillery, another photographing, another going out simply on the chance of a fight—all with the same class, or any class, of machine. The airmen of those days were not specialists within their arm. Specialised training was introduced as the air service developed. Machines improved also, and at length were designed for various purposes—some for weight-carrying, some for stability, some for speed, some for rapid climbing and manœuvring. Thus they were classified for special duties, and pilots likewise with them. The temperaments and physical capacities of airmen differ in important respects. The airman with a quick eye at his gun was often less useful as an observer of ground features for reconnaissance. Some men were naturally gifted with the cool head for the instantaneous decision in the fierce racket of a "dog-fight." Therefore, as squadrons, by reason of types of machines allotted to them and the training of their pilots, became marked down as bombing squadrons, artillery co-operation squadrons, photographers, fighting scouts, and so forth, the "circus" also was in due time bound to come. A circus was an offensive formation first and last; it attacked wherever it found the enemy, and moved

constantly about the front. The first circus appeared on the German side.

The name was appropriate, and any derision which may have originally suggested it speedily disappeared. Circus, because it was always travelling about the front; circus, because its star airmen, esteeming themselves the *élite* of the air service (and they were), painted their aeroplanes with all manner of fantastic and brilliant colour-schemes. Richthofen's circus could for long be distinguished on sight by the brilliant red of its machines. Another red Albatros squadron, whose speciality was black tails, was known as "the black-tailed circus." But a whole circus was not necessarily of uniform colour, and some airmen would paint their machines entirely after their own fancy. Boelcke flew a black Fokker with white crosses. Voss flew a "silver-fish." Others were remarkable for patchworks of colour, meant to deceive, like the camouflage-paint of ships at sea.

During April No. 2 Squadron from Bellevue aerodrome, a central position on the British front, began to operate in a British circus with No. 43 and No. 80 British Squadrons. On its southern flank it was occasionally over the French area about Montdidier, both bombing and fighting. Towards Villers-Bretonneux and Montdidier the enemy was still pushing in the first days of April, though gaining little ground; if the concentration of his air scouts in the vicinity meant anything, he attributed some importance to this part of the line. Here, in a dawn patrol on April 2nd, Forrest and Manuel, escorting low-flying machines of their own squadron, attacked a D.F.W. two-seater, shot the observer dead, and then crashed the machine near Démuin. On the afternoon of the same day, while ten machines of No. 2 Squadron were returning from an offensive patrol south of the Somme, they sighted an enemy formation between Amiens and Corbie. Lieutenants A. G. Clark and G. H. Blaxland¹ dived and cut off the rearmost German machine, fired several bursts into it, and saw it go down on fire near Corbie. The squadron was occupied on April 4th and 5th in moving to its new aerodrome, and the only patrol performed on these two

¹ Capt G. H. Blaxland; No. 2 Sqn. (previously Light Horse). Electrical engineering student; of Fremantle, W. Aust.; b. Broken Hill, N.S.W., 10 March, 1896.

days was on the 4th by Lieutenants L. J. Primrose² and G. R. Brettingham-Moore,³ when Primrose caught and destroyed an Albatros scout over Villers-Bretonneux. This was the day of the first attack on that town by the Germans, and of their repulse, after heavy fighting, by the British cavalry and the 9th Australian Infantry Brigade. The weather remained bad, and, while there was important fighting on the ground at Albert and Villers-Bretonneux, there was little opportunity for circus operations in the air. No. 2 Squadron sent out its own small offensive patrols on all possible occasions. Four S.E.5's under Clark destroyed a black German two-seater over La Motte, just east of Amiens, on the afternoon of April 6th. Every patrol which went out on these days lost some of its numbers through forced landings due to mists and storms.

A bright interval occurred on April 21st, an eventful day in the story of air fighting at this time. On that day Richthofen, whose circus had been tempted out over the Somme area by the fair flying-day, was killed over the Australian lines. No. 2 Squadron patrols were engaged elsewhere at the time of Richthofen's last fight, and did not hear of it till it was all over. But No. 3 Squadron played a part in it, although a small one. The honour of shooting down the redoubtable German air-leader was much disputed, but the evidence of the time clearly indicated that it belonged to Australian Lewis gunners on the ground, though a British squadron of Camels has never abandoned its claim to him as its own victim.

The fight began at about 10.40 a.m. Two photographing machines of No. 3 Australian Squadron, flown by Lieutenants S. G. Garrett⁴ and A. V. Barrow⁵ (observer) and T. L. Simpson⁶ and E. C. Banks,⁷ were starting out on reconnaissance of the German lines near Hamel, when at 7,000 feet over that village they saw a flight of enemy triplanes approaching. The weather was hazy and visibility very

² Lieut. L. J. Primrose; No. 2 Sqn. Lecturer in science and mathematics, of Ballarat, Vic; b. Ballarat, 14 May, 1890. Killed in action, 4 June, 1918.

³ Lieut. G. R. Brettingham-Moore; No. 2 Sqn (previously Infantry). Metallurgical chemist; of Hobart, b. St. Servan, France, 27 Jan., 1894.

⁴ Lieut. S. G. Garrett, No. 3 Sqn. Architect; of Box Hill, Melbourne; b. Bendigo, Vic., 30 Sept., 1894.

⁵ Lieut. A. V. Barrow; No. 3 Sqn. (previously Infantry). Salesman; b. Harrogate, Yorks., Eng., 3 July, 1889.

⁶ Lieut. T. L. Simpson, D.F.C.; No. 3 Sqn (previously A.A.M.C.). Electrical engineer, of Hamilton, Vic, b. Hamilton, 19 May, 1895.

⁷ Lieut. E. C. Banks; No. 3 Sqn. (previously Engineers). Surveyor; of Mosman, Sydney; b. Paddington, Sydney, 13 July, 1895.

poor, and the Australian machines were attacked at short warning of the enemy's presence. Four triplanes dived almost at once on Simpson and Banks in the nearer machine. Banks fought them off to the best of his ability, and fired in all 200 rounds; this fire, combined with the pilot's skilful manœuvring of the machine, served its purpose. Simpson eluded the attack in the clouds, and two of the enemy passed on to attack Garrett and Barrow. Barrow met the enemy with equal resolution, and beat them off with several effective bursts of fire. One triplane was plainly hit and began to go down; the other then hauled off. The Germans had sighted a formation of British scouts in the offing and abandoned the attack on the two-seaters. The R.E.8's emerging from the action unpursued, continued their reconnoissance. On returning at the end of it an hour later, and when about to cross the line at 8,000 feet in the same vicinity, Simpson and Banks were again attacked by a large formation of Albatros scouts. The enemy was now savage and out for vengeance, for in the interim Richthofen had been defeated and had gone to his death. Simpson dodged the attackers and dived for the ground, with his observer keeping up a hot fire on the pursuers. At 2,000 feet he escaped from them and reached home safely.

Meanwhile, at about 10.45 a.m., the red circus, having passed the lines after the first escape of the two R.E.8's, immediately encountered a formation of Camels from a British naval air squadron operating as fighting scouts in the Amiens sector. These scouts had witnessed the approach of the enemy, and it was evidently their presence which had saved the Australian photographic machines in the first attack. The two formations flew straight at each other, and in a few seconds the infantry on the great natural grandstand of the Morlancourt Ridge were spectators of a first-class air battle. They could not see the whole fight, for the mist hid much of it. But the extent of the firing told all they could not actually see. Bishop, in his story of his own career, has described vividly the tremendous moments of a willing air-fight. "You fly round and round in cyclonic circles. Here a flash of the Hun machines, then a flash of silver as my squadron-commander would whizz by. All the time I would be in the same mix-up myself, every now and then finding a

red machine in front of me and getting in a round or two of quick shots. There was no need to hesitate about firing when the right colour flitted by your nose. Firing one moment, you would have to concentrate all your mind and muscle the next in doing a quick turn to avoid a collision. Then your gun jams, and you have to zoom up and fuss with it to put it right."⁸

Suddenly the watching gunners of the 53rd Australian Field Artillery Battery, 5th Division, near the crest of the ridge, saw two whirling and twisting forms emerge from the haze where the popping of the machine-guns had been heaviest. Then one machine dived for the ground with the other on its tail. They darted about wildly for a few seconds. Suddenly the pursued aeroplane, evidently in desperate straits, made straight for the crest of the ridge near the battery. The gunners saw that it was a British machine and its pursuer a red triplane. The Lewis gun on the nearer flank of the battery made ready to fire, but at first could not, for the machines were flying so low and close that the fleeing Camel blocked the gunner's sight of the German. The German was firing rapid short bursts at the Camel just beyond his nose, and the hunted British machine was making no attempt to turn and fire. The pilot afterwards explained his hopeless position by saying that he had his guns jammed, had no room to manoeuvre so near to the ridge, and was making a dash for a landing as his only hope.

The machines flew on right overhead, careless of everything else except their own duel, and at this point, at about a hundred yards' range, the artillery Lewis gunners and other machine-guns from Australian camps on or behind the crest opened fire on the German. Splinters of wood were seen to fly off immediately from near his engine. The triplane wobbled, side-banked up, swerved across to the left in a half-circle, obviously crippled, then dived straight into the ground about 400 yards away and was smashed to pieces. The Australians into whose territory it fell discovered from the watch and papers on the dead pilot that he was Richthofen. No. 3 Squadron salvaged his body and the remains of his machine that evening, and buried him a couple of days later. The British Camel Squadron (No. 209) which vanquished the Richthofen circus in this fight stated that there were about fifteen machines engaged on each

⁸ *Winged Warfare*, p. 151.

side, and that four enemy triplanes were driven down without loss to the victors. Captain A. R. Brown⁹ of this squadron claimed to have shot down Richthofen, and undoubtedly he had followed him down for some distance, firing at Richthofen while Richthofen fired at the Camel. It is equally certain that when Richthofen passed over the Australian bivouacs there were only two machines in the picture—the Camel fleeing and Richthofen following and firing. There is abundant evidence that these two machines were the only ones near the scene of the shooting, and this testimony seems decisive.

The experiences of No. 2 Squadron as part of a circus were for a time disappointing. On the circus patrols three formations flew together—one of S.E.5's from No. 2 Squadron at 16,000 feet and two of Camels (Nos. 43 and 80 British Squadrons) at 14,000 and 12,000 feet respectively. The Camels were the more-easily manœuvred machines, the S.E.5's the stronger for long diving and zooming. Constant flying at 16,000 and 17,000 feet, especially when the enemy will not come out to relieve the monotony, is a strain on pilots, for the air is considerably thinner at that height. The strategy of the circus was only too successful; and, as the commander of No. 2 Squadron (Major A. Murray Jones) pointed out, "on the approach of our formation" (the treble-decked circus formation) "the enemy's aircraft, unless surprised, invariably dived east, thus avoiding combat. Whereas this had the desired effect of restricting the work of his air force, it does not do very much towards the primary objective of a scout squadron, that it, the destruction of all enemy machines."

For the first few weeks of the life of the circus its success was judged, in the same report of the No. 2 Squadron commander, to be "not as great in actual results as might have been expected." During this period the front was, from the circus point of view, quiet. The German Air Force was being husbanded for a further offensive, or was engaged on the French front between Noyon and Rheims and eastwards over the Champagne, then the principal region of enemy infantry pressure. "It has been experienced," continues the report, "that on quiet fronts greater numbers of enemy aircraft are destroyed by sending out comparatively smaller formations and thus encouraging the enemy to fight."

⁹ Capt. A. Roy Brown, D.S.C.; 209 Sqn., R.A.F. (previously R.N.A.S.). Student; of Carleton Place, Ontario, Canada; b. Carleton Place, 23 Dec., 1893.

“ There are two methods of working scouts, namely:—

- (a) In large organised formations capable of dealing with similar formations of the enemy; and
- (b) in small patrols of anything up to five machines, whose primary object is to destroy two-seaters, balloons, and small enemy scout patrols which are liable to molest our artillery machines.

“ The advantages of these methods are:—

- (a) Pilots are encouraged to work with one another and to sacrifice individual results for those of the patrols.
- (b) Much more scope is given to the individual pilot, so that he may take advantage of the fleeting chance which often offers itself.

“ The disadvantages are:—

- (a) The initiative of the pilot is apt to be cramped.
- (b) No experience is gained of the organised methods of aerial warfare which become so necessary during offensive operations.

“ It is intended by the foregoing to point out that during this month (May), when no offensive operations were being carried out, better results would most probably have been obtained, both as regards the squadron personnel and as regards the number of enemy aircraft destroyed, by the use of smaller formations.”

The squadron-commander, keen on obtaining the best results, is in these comments recording complaints of a new system which at times fell short of expectations. No. 4 Australian Squadron, not being at this date in a circus, was meeting enemy scouts far more frequently than No. 2. It should here be mentioned, moreover, that No. 4 Squadron was openly trying to beat No. 2 in records of enemy machines destroyed. It had come upon the scene a little later than No. 2 Squadron; the handicap—if it may be so regarded—was itself a challenge; and rivalry was quickly aroused.

Thus eagerly seeking out the enemy, No. 2 Squadron's patrols in the circus fleets roamed the British front from Amiens to Bailleul. In the forenoon of May 3rd Forrest led one formation from his squadron in a circus-cruise northward, and Phillipps another southward. Only the northern

circus met the enemy, who attacked fifteen strong, but after a few shots fled east. In this patrol Lieutenant E. D. Cummings¹⁰ was flying at 10,000 feet near Meteren after the encounter, and was about to dive on a lone German two-seater below him, when he observed a camouflaged white-and-grey triplane on his own level. Flying towards it, he made an Immelmann turn¹¹ and came out in a dive on the triplane, firing a burst from both guns. The triplane went down in a spin, Cummings following and firing at it; at 5,000 feet it turned on its back, and a minute afterwards crashed near Meteren. Meanwhile, just as Cummings had put the finishing burst into his victim, four more triplanes fell on him from above, and their opening fire shot away the Australian's elevator controls, instrument board, and petrol and oil pipes. After a long spin, Cummings just managed to regain control as he neared the ground, but crashed in No-Man's Land near Meteren. Luckily his safety-belt broke, and he was thrown clear of the wreckage into a shell-hole. He was rescued by infantry of the 1st Australian Division, who had watched the fight.

The circus did not meet the enemy again till May 8th, over Armentières, and then the Germans numbered only six triplanes and promptly turned tail. Lieutenant J. A. Adam,¹² leading No. 2's patrol, caught up one triplane and drove it down out of control, but, in the urgency of trying to cut off the other five, could not follow it. Three other patrols out that day found no enemy in the sky. In the following afternoon, after further vain sweeping operations through the morning, the circus attacked fifteen German scouts east of Bapaume; the S.E.5's dived and cut off one Pfalz scout at 14,000 feet, and Adam and Lieutenant F. R. Smith¹³ between them destroyed it. It fell near Marcoing. The enemy was out in strength in the same vicinity that evening; the circus chased eastward a body of twenty enemy scouts, and Forrest drove down out of control a two-seater flying over Ervillers under-

¹⁰ Captain E. D. Cummings, D.F.C., No. 2 Sqn. (previously A.A.S.C.). Student; of Franklin, Tas., b. Braidwood, N.S.W., 13 April, 1896.

¹¹ See introductory chapter, p. xxiii, and Glossary.

¹² Capt. J. A. Adam, R.A.F. (previously Lord Strathcona's Horse, Canadian Exped. Force). Attached No. 2 Sqn., A.F.C., 10 Jan. to 26 July, 1918. Dentist; of Dunedin, N.Z., b. Timaru, N.Z., 8 April, 1888.

¹³ Capt. F. R. Smith, M.C., D.F.C.; No. 2 Sqn. (previously Infantry). Clerk; b. Brisbane, 1896.

neath the protecting scouts. The solitary result of a sweep on May 10th was the stern chase of a formation of four two-seaters on the Somme. Blaxland shot down one, which fell from 13,000 feet to 5,000 feet in a helpless spin and was then lost to sight.

Bad weather prevented flying for four days, and then, on May 15th, the enemy airmen returned to the Somme region in some strength. At noon the circus had a short indecisive skirmish with a German circus formation of nine Pfalz scouts and six triplanes east of Albert, and drove them home; and as many as forty or fifty of the enemy were seen by the evening patrol, but at a distance. A strong dawn patrol of thirteen Australian S.E.5's on May 16 attacked six Pfalz scouts at a great height near Bapaume, and Phillipps destroyed one after chasing it down for 4,000 feet. Again in the next two days small enemy formations were frequently in the air east of Albert, but avoided combat. Major Murray Jones shot down a triplane out of control from 16,000 feet in one of these fleeting engagements in the evening of May 17th. The circus roamed northward again in the evening of May 19th and fired 600 rounds in an indecisive combat with eighteen of the enemy over Armentières. Then for twelve days the weather was so bad that, except for brief intervals, only practice-flying could be done. The circus ranged the Somme area for two hours in the afternoon of May 30th and found six Pfalz scouts at 17,000 feet over Bapaume, of which Lieutenant G. Cox¹⁴ destroyed one in flames.

At the beginning of June the airmen of No. 2 Squadron began to find the circus justified, and to feel rewarded for their four or five weeks of mostly vain sky-sweeping. The German machines had for a time been deliberately kept in leash in preparation for a renewed offensive. The Germans, in fact, always used their air force strictly as a part of their whole war-machine, and though Richthofen's squadron may be regarded as an exception, their airmen were not adventurers of the air so much as an inseparable body of one great organisation. While concentrating troops for an offensive, the enemy left the air to his opponents; then he released his

¹⁴ Lieut. G. Cox; No. 2 Sqn. Cabinet maker; of Melbourne; b. Carlton, Melbourne, 17 July, 1894.

fighting scouts in full force at the calculated moment, much as he released his massed-artillery bombardments and finally his massed infantry. While the British also observed a similar air-strategy on the eve of an offensive, yet they never left the air undisputed to the Germans, even for the shortest season. When a British offensive was preparing, those aeroplane squadrons which were not being nursed for the attack were ordered to chase off at any cost all enemy airmen who appeared over the line. The Germans, on the other hand, when concentrating for a great attack, preferred to rely, for protection against hostile observation from the air, upon anti-aircraft fire, carefully-planned schemes for concealment, and night movements of all troops.

Hence when the Germans on June 6th renewed their grand offensive against the French in the Montdidier-Noyon region, the British airmen recognised the reason for the comparative absence of enemy machines in the sky on the British front during the latter half of May. On the morning of June 1st, six days before the date of the renewed enemy attack, re-awakening air activity was obvious over the Somme. Next day the sky in that quarter was alive with German scouts. The pilots of No. 2 Squadron shot down fifteen of them on those two days alone, and British and French airmen accounted for many others.

On June 1st, an early patrol, a circus formation including eight machines from No. 2 Squadron under Phillipps and W. Q. Adams, found the first signs of new enemy tactics about 8 o'clock, when it encountered six Pfalz scouts over the Somme near Cappy. The German formation was at 16,000 feet—1,500 feet above the top flight of the circus—and promptly attacked. Three Pfalzes dived on the S.E.5's, while the other three stayed up aloft. Adams's flight was higher than the others, and, as the Germans dived past him, Adams followed them and fired a burst of a hundred rounds into one of them at close range. This German slipped sideways, and broke up in the air. The others sheered off. The circus moved on eastward at increased height, and at 9 o'clock the S.E.5's were at 18,500 feet over Pozières. Here they saw below them an enemy formation of three Pfalzes and three triplanes; one Pfalz broke away from that formation and dived down on

the Camels, which were as usual flying below the S.E.5's. Straightway Phillipps and Cummings darted down upon it in pursuit; Cummings followed it down for 7,000 feet, and there fired a final burst, from which the Pfalz crashed.

That evening there was again hot fighting over the German aerodrome at Bray. Twelve machines from No. 2 Squadron were out with the circus, and at 7.30 p.m. met eight Pfalz and triplane scouts five miles east of the line. The Germans turned away for home, but the S.E.5's had the height of them, and either destroyed or shot down out of control five of the eight. Cole¹⁵ and Primrose dived together upon the rearmost German machine. After chasing it down for 1,000 feet Primrose zoomed up at a second Pfalz, fired 200 rounds into it at close range, and saw it fall like a leaf. Cole, who had pursued the first Pfalz, was obliged with his gun jammed to turn away, but the Pfalz was damaged beyond recovery and fell to the ground near Estrées-en-Chaussée. Meanwhile Forrest fastened on to a triplane which had climbed above another S.E.5. Forrest zoomed above this German, fired seventy rounds into him at only thirty-yards' range, and saw the triplane tumble to the ground beside a Red Cross station at Chuignes. Cox, who had dived on a Pfalz, followed it down, shooting into it, to 6,000 feet, and there left it, still falling out of control. Manuel did the like with another, but could not see it in consequence of engine-trouble, which compelled him to break off and return home. The patrol lost Rackett during this fight, shot down in combat and taken prisoner.

Next morning, near Bray, the locality of the action of the previous evening, nine machines from No. 2 Squadron at 14,000 feet met six Pfalz scouts. The enemy turned away, and Manuel, diving on the nearest, sent it down rolling, spinning, and side-slipping, completely out of control. His own machine also fell into a spin during the strain of the dive; then, regaining control at 11,000 feet, Manuel saw another Pfalz on his left front and slightly below. He flew at this machine and engaged it; the enemy fell over on his back and a wing broke off. While Manuel was thus occupied,

¹⁵ Capt. A. T. Cole, M.C., D.F.C., formerly of No. 1 Sqn.

a third Pfalz had been manœuvring to attack him, but Forrest, watching, dived with the enemy, punished him heavily at short range, and watched him fall in a series of stalls and side-slips until he passed beyond sight. The remaining Germans had fled, and the Australians were flying home to breakfast in loose array, when three of them encountered eight Pfalz scouts near Albert on a level. Forrest promptly manœuvred into position and attacked from the sun. He shot down out of control one German, which was firing into Lieutenant C. H. Copp,¹⁶ and W. Q. Adams similarly disposed of another, but the fight was so fierce that neither could watch the fate of these victims. The three, though outnumbered, fought on for a few minutes, until, having drifted over the British lines, the enemy broke off the combat.

After June 2nd No. 2 Squadron and the others of the circus moved to Foquorolles, in the Noyon-Soissons sector, where the threatened German attack on the French left was expected. That attack began on June 6th, but gained little ground, and, after three days of unexciting offensive patrolling, the squadron assisted the French airmen in low-flying counter-attacks against the advancing Germans. This work, here as on the Lys in April, was a repetition in kind of the operations in March, though on smaller scale. It was performed in the usual fashion by a constant sequence of small patrols, and greatly assisted the infantry in checking the enemy. That done, the S.E.5's resumed offensive scouting. In the afternoon of June 11th five machines under Forrest brought six enemy two-seaters to an engagement over Cuvilly. Lieutenant T. J. Hammond¹⁷ destroyed one of them. Soon after dawn next morning Hammond was himself shot down and killed near Noyon in a fight with the circus against eight Pfalz scouts and four Fokker triplanes. Two Pfalzes having dived on a Camel of the second deck of the circus, Manuel, leading the S.E.5's, promptly attacked one and set it on fire. In the general engagement which followed Hammond was killed, but three enemy machines were shot down by the Camels, two of them in flames.

¹⁶ Capt. C. H. Copp; No. 2 Sqn. (previously Infantry). Consulting optician; of Middle Park, Melbourne; b. Middle Park, 29 March, 1893.

¹⁷ Lieut. T. J. Hammond; No. 2 Sqn. (previously Light Horse). Grazier; of Adavale, Q'land; b. Sydney, 1893. Killed in action, 12 June, 1918.

At noon that day (June 12th) followed more heavy air-fighting, remarkable for the success of Phillipps, who led the S.E.5's at top height in the circus. Over Ribecourt, at 13,000 feet, six Fokker triplanes were tempted to attack the lower (Camel) formation. Phillipps dived from the clouds above on the leader of the Fokkers, who appeared not to see him, and fired fifty rounds into the enemy at point-blank range. The Fokker side-slipped, fell over, and crashed near Gury. Phillipps zoomed up into the fight again and attacked another triplane head on; a sustained burst of fire vanquished this German also; it turned over on its back and fell like a stone. Before the circus regained height from this encounter, Phillipps saw two L.V.G. two-seaters a little below him at 6,000 feet. He attacked these, firing into first one and then the other, and the second crashed in the French lines south of Marqu glise. The circus climbed again to resume sweeping the sky, for enemy machines in sight were still numerous. At noon they were chasing some two-seaters, when ten Fokker scouts appeared and dived at the Camels. The S.E.5's immediately flew to the rescue. Phillipps selected the nearest as his opponent, and shot it down into a spin, but being attacked by other Fokkers, could not follow it. The falling Fokker was, however, seen by the Camels to be wrecked on the ground.

The weather was bad for most of the week following, but by June 20th immediate danger in the Montdidier-Noyon area was past, and the circus moved north again to Liettes, south-west of Aire. Shortly afterwards it was broken up, and No. 2 Squadron was transferred from the 9th Brigade, R.A.F., to the 10th Brigade, and was embodied in a new wing (80th Wing) with No. 4 Australian Squadron and two British Squadrons—Nos. 46 (Camels) and 103 (D.H.9's). No. 2 and No. 4 Australian Squadrons thus came together on July 1st, when they took up their quarters in one aerodrome at Reclinghem, on the upper Lys, south-west of Th rouanne.