

CHAPTER XX

EXPLOITS OF No. 4 SQUADRON OVER THE LYS

THE situation created by the holding up before Amiens of the Germans' main drive against the junction of the Allied Armies has already been explained. Beyond question the most fatal dilemma in which the enemy could have placed the British Command in the spring of 1918 was that which alarmed Kitchener in 1914—the alternative of retreating on the Channel ports and separating from the French, or of retreating with the French towards the south and thus abandoning the bases on the northern coast. The seizure of Amiens in 1918 would have meant no less than that to the British. General Birdwood in April, 1918, deemed Villers-Bretonneux the key to Amiens. Yet probably the denial of Villers-Bretonneux did not disturb the Germans more than the failure of their attempt on Arras, for Arras was a chief bastion in the northern line.

Having been thwarted, then, at Arras and Amiens, the enemy, as has been explained, pushed out his flanks on either side—in the north towards Hazebrouck, in the south towards Noyon, Soissons, and the Marne. Apart from the local objectives of these attacks, a strategic aim was possibly to draw away the Allied reserves (said at the time to amount to twenty or twenty-five divisions, including some trained American divisions) in order to weaken the central position. The drive towards the Marne ended in July with a sharp recoil under Foch's counter-attack at Soissons. The drive in the north across the Lys ended at the outskirts of Hazebrouck, leaving the enemy on the flats there in a position which can have been of no great use to him except as a jumping-off place for a renewed attempt. After the Allies' counter-offensive had caused him to retreat from this district, there was discovered ample evidence, in the shape of ammunition-dumps and other preliminaries, to convince the British staff that he had planned to continue his attack.¹ The participation of No. 2 Squadron

¹Ludendorff states in his book, *My War Memories*, quite clearly the German intention. "Again and again," he says, they thought of attacking in Flanders but the English reserves were strong and the problem (during most of the summer) too difficult. They therefore decided to attack first at Rheims in the middle of July, and then "possibly a fortnight later in Flanders." They were going (after the Rheims offensive) "to concentrate artillery, trench-mortars, and flying squadrons on the Flanders Front." The notion of the Flanders offensive was discarded after July 18.

in the attempt in the Montdidier-Noyon area has been described. It remains now to follow the work of No. 4 Squadron in the northern, Flanders, sector. It may be added that the enemy's activity in the air on this front was at the time proof to the British of the seriousness of his intentions.

From its new aerodrome No. 4 Squadron, together with other British squadrons, continued during May the bombing and machine-gunning of the German infantry which was consolidating a line in the Lys flats, around Bailleul and the higher ground towards Mont-des-Cats, around Kemmel Hill, and on the southern part of the old Ypres Salient. The Germans also were never out of the air in this region. Their duty was to register their artillery, to procure intelligence of the arrival of the Allied reserves, and to bomb British supply-dumps and bases between Cassel and the coast; and this demanded fighting squadrons to protect the working formations. The air fighting was consequently heavy and incessant. The Australian airmen early established their superiority, and in the hunt for enemy victims began the renown of crack Australian pilots in the list of British aces.

In bad visibility during the early days of May German artillery machines rarely attempted to work. W. B. Tunbridge's patrol in the afternoon of May 1st drove off a two-seater east of Ypres and another near Locre, and Jeffree, one of a formation under Malley, destroyed a solitary Albatros over Bailleul in the afternoon of May 2nd and another early in the next forenoon. The squadron steadily bombed and machine-gunned the Bailleul-Armentières and Merville-Armentières main roads on those cloudy days. The Bailleul main road was a famous target, for its broad tree-lined space was the main resting-place (as it had been with the British before) for supply-lorry parks, and the fields on either side were mostly too wet for traffic. What our guns could not see on this road, the low-flying airmen could, and they bombed and shot at everything they saw. Another favourite target was the thickly-housed road running parallel behind the enemy's new front from La Bassée northwards to the Hazebrouck railway, especially that section of it around Neuf Berquin and Vieux Berquin. While shooting-up this road in the afternoon of

May 4th, Tunbridge and Lieutenant J. H. Weingarh² each forced down an Albatros out of control; Weingarh watched his opponent to a landing at Vieux Berquin and dropped bombs about it. The Australian patrol, however, paid a penalty here, for in beating off a sudden attack from seven enemy scouts, Lieutenant B. W. Wright,³ a British pilot attached to No. 4 Squadron, was shot down in flames.

During the following days the German scouts came out in greater numbers, mostly flying high. The full force of the squadron was on patrol on May 7th and 8th, and fought several indecisive encounters with German scouts in the low clouds. The latter were mostly well behind the German lines, and were guarding hostile artillery machines. By May 10th the Germans showed signs of annoyance at the constant presence of British airmen over their lines, and that evening five Camels from No. 4 Squadron near Wytschaete were attacked from above by nine Pfalz scouts, of which Malley shot one to pieces in the air.

A great joint bombing attack by No. 4 Australian Squadron and No. 110 (Naval) Squadron, R.A.F., was planned for the evening of May 11th on the ammunition-dumps at Armentières. Malley and Petschler, each leading flights of five, were the escorts. Shortly after 7 o'clock the bombers blew up a big dump and started an extensive fire. As the airmen were about to turn homeward, a cloud of German scouts—about thirty in all—attacked from the east. In Petschler's formation Lieutenant H. G. Watson⁴ destroyed one Pfalz, and Petschler shot down an Albatros out of control, but the flight lost Lieutenant O. C. Barry,⁵ whose machine fell in flames from a fierce duel. Malley's formation also drove down an Albatros. It was the longest air battle Australian airmen had hitherto fought. In the light of the evening sun it was often difficult to tell friend from foe. Inevitably formations were completely

² Lieut. J. H. Weingarh; No. 4 Sqn. Licensed surveyor; of Darling Point, Sydney; b. Marrickville, Sydney, 17 May, 1892. Killed in aeroplane accident, 4 Feb., 1919.

³ Lieut. B. W. Wright, R.A.F. (previously Tank Corps). Bank clerk, of Leverstock Green, Hemel Hempstead, Herts, Eng.; b. Watford, Herts, 24 Sept., 1895. Attached to No. 4 Squadron, A.F.C., 17 April 1918. Killed in action, 4 May 1918.

⁴ Capt. H. G. Watson, D.F.C.; No. 4 Sqn. (previously A.A.S.C.). Dépôt manager; of Sydney; b. Caversham, Dunedin, N.Z., 30 March, 1890.

⁵ Lieut. O. C. Barry; No. 4 Sqn. (previously Machine-Gun Corps). Sugar-cane inspector; of Broadwater and Condong, N.S.W.; b. Harwood Island, Clarence River, N.S.W., 23 June, 1891. Killed in action, 11 May, 1918.

broken up and scattered over a wide area of sky. As eventually the raiders, individually or in little groups, turned homeward, they were dismayed to find everywhere a smother of white fog below them. Setting their course by the sun—still visible above the horizon at their great height—and by the distant fire of the Armentières dumps, they flew west, descending slowly. "We just guessed where home was," said Malley, "and as we finally dived into the cloud we expected to have to penetrate only a film of haze. Instead, we found it was thick fog for a thousand feet through to the ground. As we entered the fog, all machines immediately lost sight of one another. The first sign of ground was a blurred mass only a few feet under the machine—too late for some, unfortunately, to pull out of their dive. It was impossible to select a landing-place, and night was fast coming on. Some did not know whether they were descending to sea or land. The only thing to do was to slow the machine down, shut your eyes, and hope for the best. In my case I hit the top of a tree, somersaulted, and landed upside down, but whole and no bones broken. The machine in the fog and darkness looked a pitiable wreck." The British and Australian airmen ultimately landed all over the country, not one of them at his aerodrome. Of No. 4 Squadron's contingent alone, six machines were damaged beyond repair in the emergency which Malley has vividly described; it was remarkable that only one pilot of the squadron was injured. He was Lieutenant F. W. Webster,⁶ an attached R.A.F. officer, whose foot was broken in a bad spill. No. 110 Squadron's force was less lucky, and lost two pilots killed through bad landings in the same fog.

The Germans had been thwarted for many days in the work of registering their batteries. They now began bringing balloons into action to assist their artillery aeroplanes. Their reconnaissance for artillery work was so persistent that the British Second Army on this front instituted a special air-patrol, the "stand-by patrol," over the region between Ypres and Nieppe Forest. The squadrons in the army wing were detailed in daily turns to stand by for wireless signals, and to be prepared to chase any German machines reported as

⁶ Lieut. F. W. Webster; R.A.F. Attached No. 4 Sqn, 27 April to 12 May, 1918. Student, of Leeds, Eng.; b. North Leeds, 9 Oct., 1899.

working in this sector in co-operation with the German artillery.

This patrol was controlled from R.A.F. brigade headquarters. The sector was divided into three, with a wireless swinging arm (known technically as a "loop antenna")⁷ in the centre of each division. These wireless stations were in direct communication with one another by telephone, and also with R.A.F. brigade headquarters. The sole duty of the stations was to "listen in." "Listening in" meant that the operator sat with his ear-pieces on, picking out the different aerial sounds of wireless sent by the German aeroplanes to the batteries for which they were spotting. Any one of these stations, or perhaps all three, on picking up a wireless call from a German machine would swing the aerial arm round until the sound on the instrument was loudest, when the arm would be pointing in the direction of the enemy machine sending. The wireless operator would then ring up a neighbouring station and obtain the direction of its aerial arm. Thus the triangle would be marked on a map. This operation would take only about five minutes. The stations promptly informed the squadron "standing by" for the day, and two pilots, waiting for the call, would be allowed seven minutes to leave the ground. Flying over the station which had sent the message, they would find there a white arrow on the ground pointing in the direction of the enemy machine heard working. This arrow would, if possible, be marked off by black lines in thousands of feet to indicate the estimated height of the German. The pilots would then proceed to stalk him; their main object was to keep out of sight until they could descend behind him and cut off his retreat. Keeping out of sight was difficult, as the enemy anti-aircraft batteries would warn their machine by firing a smoke-shell as close to it as possible and salvos of shrapnel and high explosive at the attackers. Usually the German artillery machines took the safe course of keeping well over their own side of the line. At the first suspicion of any interference by British aircraft

⁷ Such an aerial arm, or loop antenna, serves the same purpose as the more familiar overhead aerial wires for collecting wireless waves. It consists of a coil of wire wound on a rectangular frame. It has a marked effect in establishing direction, it will pick up only waves originating from a station (e.g., a wireless-fitted aeroplane) whose direction is in the plane of the loop.

they would snap on their wireless to their working batteries to report "hostile chasers." Often the opposing machines would play hide-and-seek with each other about a handy cloud.

The wireless listening-stations generally caught news of the combat thus taking place. Messages such as these—picked up from the enemy ranging machine—were often learned after a pilot's arrival home:—"British chasers approaching, wait five minutes"; "Chasers driven off, go on with shoot"; "Numbers of chasers about, send out protection"; "Attacked by British chasers, wait wait wait ten minutes, am going home pursued by"—message unfinished, clearly showing the plight of the enemy. This work was regarded by the Intelligence Department as some of the most valuable performed by the flying service.

Several times during May 14th No. 4 Squadron, having received signals (intercepted and sent on by wireless) that the Germans were registering guns between Ypres and Bailleul, sent out "stand-by patrols" to attack aeroplanes or balloons engaged in that work. Malley and Lieutenant R. King,⁸ sent out in response to these calls for counter-action, each shot down a two-seater, but were unable to watch the fate of the Germans below the clouds. Lieutenants L. R. Sinclair⁹ and R. G. Smallwood,¹⁰ who engaged another German artillery machine late in the same day, were attacked by three Albatros scouts, which forced Sinclair to land, damaged, south of Zillebeke. He was taken prisoner. Throughout the next day messages reporting similar German activity were constantly received at the Australian aerodrome. Three machines on "stand-by patrol" destroyed in flames one two-seater near Neuf Berquin at 7 a.m., and drove away several others near Bailleul. Half an hour later another small patrol again chased away a two-seater from this vicinity. Simultaneously two strong formations under Cobby and Watson heavily bombed field-batteries in action near Bailleul. Five times more during the day enemy

⁸ Capt. R. King, D.S.O., D.F.C.; No. 4 Sqn. (previously Light Horse). Motor salesman; of Forbes, N.S.W.; b. Bathurst, N.S.W., 13 May, 1894.

⁹ Lieut. L. R. Sinclair, R.A.F. Attached No. 4 Sqn., 17 April to 14 May, 1918. Student; of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, b. Rock Rapids, Iowa, U.S.A., 1 Aug, 1898.

¹⁰ Lieut. R. G. Smallwood; No. 4 Sqn. Mechanical engineer; of Drummoyne, Sydney; b. Ballina, N.S.W., 4 June, 1893.

airmen returned to the Merris-Bailleul area and were driven off. Next morning, May 16th, eleven Camels from No. 4 Squadron put to flight five Albatros scouts near Armentières, and then, coming home, bombed the new La Gorgue aerodrome near Estaires, believed to be a nest of the persistent two-seaters. If it was, the bombing had no effect, for the two-seaters were out constantly all the forenoon, and, as they were strongly escorted, the Australian scouts found difficulty in dispersing them. Again on May 17th Malley with a strong force bombed La Gorgue aerodrome and four balloons were hurriedly pulled down under the attack. No enemy artillery-ranging ensued on that day, though bad visibility was probably one reason for the fact. On May 18th eleven machines repeated the bombing of La Gorgue, while Lieutenants W. S. Martin¹¹ and R. C. Nelson¹² left the formation to attack four triplanes near Bailleul and shot down two of them, one seen to be destroyed. Other strong fighting patrols from No. 4 Squadron scoured the German battery-areas without meeting opposition, and bombed the La Gorgue aerodrome and dumps and gun-positions between Armentières and Estaires. The enemy returned the compliment at night—the big Gotha bombers came with the full moon every month—and for an exciting hour after 10.15 p.m. Major W. A. McCloughry waged a duel with two Gothas in succession in the beams of the searchlights over Clairmarais Wood, but without visible result.¹³ He repeated this performance, also unsuccessfully, on the night of May 30th. The British heavy night-bombing squadrons more than retaliated for the Gotha expeditions, and No. 4 Squadron, like many others, bombed the battle areas continually during the daylight hours. The German infantry and artillery who heard the night-traffic of the bombers overhead, must have listened to their Gothas with mixed feelings, for they knew that the smaller British aeroplanes would visit retaliation upon

¹¹ Lieut. W. S. Martin; No. 4 Sqn. (previously A A S C.). Motor mechanic; of Geelong, Vic; b Geelong, 5 Aug., 1893. Killed in action, 12 June, 1918.

¹² Lieut. R. C. Nelson; No. 4 Sqn. Student; of Jamberoo, N S.W.; b. Jamberoo, 9 June, 1896.

¹³ The squadron reported —“Towards the end of May, and repeatedly in June, enemy night bombing machines persisted in their attempts to bomb the squadron from Clairmarais North aerodrome. So persistent were these bomb raids (sometimes three or four each night) that orders were given for the squadron personnel to leave the aerodrome at night, and sleeping accommodation had to be sought in fields four or five miles distant.”

their heads in daylight. And it came daily with the dawn patrols.

One such patrol, under Cobby, nine strong, ranged the whole area between Kemmel and Merville before breakfast on May 20th, and shot down between them six machines—three Pfalzes and three two-seaters. This experience seemed to damp the enemy's flying spirits for the day. Again next morning Cobby led twelve machines like destroying angels over this region; they bombed and started a fire at La Gorgue, drove two two-seaters to ground, and, after attacking everything to be seen on the roads, fired 1,000 rounds into barges on the Lys near Bac St. Maur. Cobby finally set a German balloon in flames near Neuve Eglise. This was the squadron's first balloon victim. "Balloon-strafig," as it was called, was an attractive but highly dangerous enterprise on either side, more dangerous perhaps for British airmen on account of the superior efficiency of German anti-aircraft batteries. These balloons were the stationary "sausage-balloons," and were used especially to assist artillery observation. As they hung anchored in the air at 3,000 or 4,000 feet, they could be seen for miles. As a target they were in themselves vulnerable enough to the special incendiary bullets¹⁴ used against them, but they were nearly always guarded by a line-patrol of fighting aeroplanes, and were protected by well-placed anti-aircraft artillery and machine-guns. At the first approach of British airmen the German balloons would as a rule be pulled down on their ground-windlasses, while their observers would leave nothing to chance, but would jump out with parachutes. The attacking machine, if it persisted against the balloon, had to run the gauntlet of fierce ground-fire, and often risked a surprise attack from the air as well. A balloon fight, therefore, was at times highly dangerous, and to shoot down a balloon was, as a rule, an achievement no less creditable than spectacular. The attacking airman would sometimes fire a few rounds at the unfortunate observer who had jumped and was swinging and dangling from his parachute *en route* earthwards. The Germans were the first to indulge in this merciless practice; the Royal Air Force paid them back in their own coin. Watson, for instance, in a balloon attack on June 1st

¹⁴ See Appendix No. 9 and Glossary.

with Cobby's patrol, shot through the rope of a descending observer's parachute.

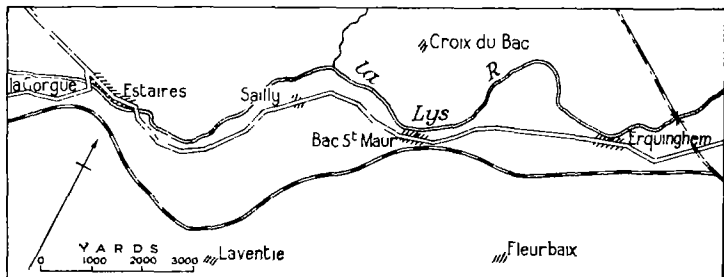
Cobby's balloon success started a new popularity of balloon-hunting in No. 4 Squadron. The dawn patrol under his leadership on May 22nd found three more balloons, but the attack upon them was frustrated; Lieutenant A. D. Pate,¹⁵ however, destroyed a two-seater north of Wyttschaete. On the same day balloons brought two of Malley's noon patrol to grief near Neuf Berquin. Lieutenants Nowland and A. Finnie,¹⁶ two accomplished airmen, dived at one balloon together, collided in the air, and both crashed and were killed. The Australians were not, however, daunted by the dangers of the game; indeed the extra danger urged them on. They got no further chance at balloons till May 30th—the intervening days were mostly days of bad weather, clouds, and rain¹⁷—but on that afternoon sixteen machines, in two flights under Malley and Cobby, swept the region of the Lys above Armentières. After the whole force had bombed the Bac St. Maur dump, it flew on south and westward, and at Estaires the two leaders destroyed a balloon each within five minutes, while two more balloons were hurriedly pulled down. Zooming up again from his burning balloon victim, amid a fury of ground-fire, Cobby met and attacked a protecting Albatros scout and destroyed that too. Watson shot down another, which fell out of control. In this attack the Australians, with premeditated cunning, appeared from the German side of the balloons, and the watching balloon-hands apparently mistook them at first for friendly machines. Two more attempts in the same vicinity next day failed to catch the enemy napping. Then, on June 1st, after eleven Camels had again bombed Bac St. Maur, Cobby and Watson rose high above the Estaires balloon-pitch.

¹⁵ Lieut. A. D. Pate; R.A.F. Attached No. 4 Sqn, 27 April to 1 June, 1918. Student, of Chester, Eng; b. Chester, 6 Oct., 1899.

¹⁶ Lieut. A. Finnie, No. 4 Sqn (previously Engineers). Sheet-metal worker; b. Botany, Sydney, 1893. Killed in action, 22 May, 1918.

¹⁷ Although for a week at this time, with the exception of a few bright intervals, the weather was very unfavourable for flying—so bad that enemy machines rarely appeared in the sky—No. 4 Squadron was daily over the German lines, bombing and machine-gunning the only enemy to be seen, the infantry on the ground. A laconic report of operations on May 25, for instance, reads—"Weather bad. Visibility very bad. Impossible for patrols to get above 700 feet over the line. Twenty-two 20-lb bombs dropped on Bac St. Maur." Next day—"Low clouds and mist. Visibility too bad to observe any ground movement. Twenty-four 20-lb bombs dropped on Estaires." On May 27 and 28, under some temporary improvement in the weather (which brought a few enemy scouts out also) dumps were bombed and set burning at Bac St. Maur and south-east of Armentières. On May 29 No. 4 bombed Bac St. Maur again in the rain.

and at a well-timed moment Cobby dived. One balloon was late in descending; Cobby followed it, firing, and at 2,000 feet it burst into flames. Watson, as has already been related, shot the rope away from the parachute of the observer who had jumped. A few minutes later the formation, flying westward towards St. Venant, sighted an Albatros scout pursuing an evidently unsuspecting Camel. Just as the German was about to drop upon his intended victim, Cobby fired at long range to distract his attention. The Albatros immediately turned for home, and Cobby flew up into the sun. The air being apparently clear, the Albatros turned again towards Merville. Unseen in the sun the Australian pilot renewed his attack, this time at close quarters. The German pilot was evidently badly hit; his machine staggered and turned towards Estaires, Cobby pursuing and firing, then side-slipped, lost its left wings, and crashed.



In the afternoon Malley's formation lost a pilot in circumstances which showed the importance of maintaining formation on an offensive-patrol. At 14,000 feet over Bac St. Maur, Malley noticed, as the formation turned, that Lieutenant A. Rintoul¹⁸ had either strayed from his station or fallen out with temporary engine-trouble. Two Pfalz scouts to the eastward had also noticed it, and were quick to attack him. Malley promptly dived to help him. Rintoul having by this time manoeuvred on to the tail of one Pfalz, Malley went for the other, and destroyed it by shooting off one of its wings in the air. But Rintoul was not seen again, and was later reported a prisoner of war.

¹⁸ Lieut. A. Rintoul; No 4 Sqn. (previously Infantry). Invoice clerk; of Paddington, Sydney; b. Melbourne, 5 July, 1898.

The special objective of the Australian airmen's attacks in this region will be clearly perceived from the map. That objective was the River Lys, the main road, and the railway, which ran almost alongside each other from Merville to Armentières; and the favourite points of attack on this triple line of supply were the dépôts at Bac St. Maur and Estaires. Between Saily and Estaires was a line of German balloons, upon which the enemy depended for much of his artillery observation. After dropping their bombs at Bac St. Maur, the Camels would dash along the Lys on the chance of catching the balloon-line napping, or roam the district for early hostile scouts, or, failing these excitements, would dive down on the forward trenches on the way home and shoot-up the infantry resting after the night's duty and alarms. The faithful repetition of this simple strategy day after day should have notified the Germans that the sound of dull explosions about the lock-gates of Bac St. Maur was a warning to get ready to pull down the balloons at Estaires. Yet they many times failed to work the balloon-windlasses fast enough. These patrols rarely missed some sort of good hunting. The daily average of bombs dropped on the Lys dumps was from forty to fifty. On June 7th Watson set fire to another balloon over Saily. Captain E. J. K. McCloughry,¹⁹ leading a patrol in the forenoon of June 12th over the daily tracks of No. 4's marauding formations, destroyed another Estaires balloon, and Martin just missed setting a second on fire as it was drawn down. The patrol was promptly attacked in turn by nine Albatros and Pfalz scouts. McCloughry turned upon one Pfalz, which was diving at him, fired a burst into the enemy's side at thirty yards' range, and the Pfalz went down out of control. It was seen by anti-aircraft observers to crash. Martin was not so fortunate; a Pfalz shot him down from above, and he fell in No-Man's Land near Meteren, and was killed.

In the evening of June 17th fifteen machines flew out from No. 4's aerodrome. They reached Bac St. Maur a little before sunset and each dropped two 20-lb. bombs on that much-punished little village; they then returned up the Lys

¹⁹ Wing Commander E. J. Kingston-McCloughry, D S O., D.F.C, p s a, No. 4 Sqn. (previously Engineers, afterwards R.A.F.). Student; of North Adelaide, b. Hindmarsh, Adelaide, 10 Sept., 1896.

to Merville, machine-gunning ground targets as they went. Cobby and Watson, flying apart from the others, observed four Pfalz scouts and one Albatros near Laventie on the same level—about 4,000 feet. They flew towards the Germans and by concerted arrangement dived together, Cobby on the right- and Watson on the left-rear machines. Cobby shot the right wings off his victim; Watson set his in flames. Each of them immediately attacked the next two. Watson zoomed up, arrived over the tail of the Pfalz, fired a long burst at close range, and the German dropped and crashed east of Laventie. Cobby chased his second German, which was badly hit, nearly to the ground; the enemy tried to land, but, taking a hedge in a hurry, crashed in the field beyond. Cobby dived three times at the wrecked Pfalz, firing in all 400 rounds at it from close quarters. "I shot the pilot's cockpit and the centre section to pieces," he records; "the pilot did not move after crashing."

Coming from the bombing of Bac St. Maur again next morning, June 18th, E. J. K. McCloughry, with sixteen other machines, shot down out of control a triplane which was attacking an R.E.8. Again in the evening sixteen more machines dropped two bombs each on Bac St. Maur, and while the formation, seeing nothing in the sky, was emptying its machine-guns along the Lys on the return journey, Major F. I. Tanner,²⁰ one of the patrol, found an Albatros low down near Merville and destroyed it. King, with the evening bombing-patrol on June 20th, burned a balloon at Estaires. Cobby and McCloughry, who had returned early from the bombing in consequence of faults in their guns, went out again towards the Nieppe Forest and there found four Pfalz scouts attacking British balloons. Three of them saw the Camels and turned back; the fourth was chased by Cobby, was shot down, and fell into the forest.

Mist, clouds, and rain interrupted air fighting for a few days after June 20th, but the bombing of Bac St. Maur and the machine-gunning of enemy trenches did not cease. During a bombing-patrol in the evening of June 25th, Cobby and Watson destroyed two more enemy machines near Estaires. They dived at three Pfalz scouts at 9,000 feet, and Cobby

²⁰ Major F. I. Tanner; R.A.F. (previously Canadian Exped. Force). Attached to No 4 Sqn., A.F.C., 25 May to July, 1918. Bank manager, of Briercrest, Saskatchewan, Canada, b. Pictou, Nova Scotia, 2 June, 1890.

shot one to pieces in the air. Watson missed his opponent in his first dive, left it, and, continuing his dive, joined Cobby in attacking an A.G.O. two-seater flying at 5,000 feet near Bac St. Maur. The German dodged Cobby, who overshot it, but Watson, keeping behind, fired several heavy bursts at it from underneath, and the two-seater span into the ground near Estaires. Next evening a similar patrol, after the customary visitation of "evening hate"²¹ on Bac St. Maur, which set a large fire going there, flew on over Lille. The Australians found no enemy in the air till, on the return journey, they observed five yellow Pfalz scouts, also flying west, in front of them near Armentières. Cobby, Watson, and King dived together on this formation, and Watson and King set their victims on fire in the air at about 10,000 feet. Cobby then made for two which were trying to escape east, and followed down to 5,000 feet one Pfalz which was dropping completely out of control and emitting much smoke. Beyond that height the mist shut it off from his view.

Although the Germans had not yet finally abandoned their plans for a further offensive in Flanders, the re-appearance at this time of the enemy's reconnaissance machines on the front may have been prompted chiefly by anxiety concerning British intentions. At dawn on June 28th the British 5th Division assaulted the enemy's lines before Nieppe Forest, and drove him out of his positions west of the Vieux Berquin high-road, while simultaneously infantry parties of the 1st Australian Division, to the left of the attack, raided with great audacity in broad daylight and captured almost the entire garrison of the German trenches in front of Merris. Patrols from No. 4 Squadron were out to watch the attack as soon as daylight permitted, and the pilots came back during the morning grinning with delight at the work which they had seen the Australian infantry performing at Merris. A low-flying Albatros two-seater, attacking the British near Vieux Berquin, was shot down by Lieutenant G. S. Jones-Evans²² at 11.30 a.m., after a short fight at 250 feet. Cobby

²¹ The "morning hate" and the "evening hate" were expressions which lived with the British Army as long as trench-warfare lasted. They covered artillery bombardments and aeroplane bombing alike. The British Army in 1915 received the famous *Hymn of Hate* (composed by the German poet Lissauer) as an enormous joke, and them, at any rate, its shaft never pierced.

²² Lieut. G. S. Jones-Evans, D.F.C.; R.A.F. School teacher, of British Columbia; b Waterloo, Lancs., Eng, 2 March 1896. Attached to No 4 Squadron, A.F.C. 1 June to 28 July, 1918. Killed in aeroplane accident, in England 22 Jan. 1937

and King went out in the afternoon to combat other Germans reported to be flying over the same locality. They found about twelve enemy machines in scattered groups in the sky, and flew at once to attack five two-seaters making towards Vieux Berquin. Cobby destroyed one of them, an L.V.G., over Oultersteene, and then zoomed up to engage one of a number of approaching scouts. This machine also went down, burning. The others decamped. Malley, out alone on what was officially designated "practice," bemoaned his lot in arriving just too late to join in this hunting, for he and Cobby were in close rivalry for the record of highest number of enemy aircraft destroyed. Shortly afterwards a larger patrol of Camels, chasing six more German machines away from Merville, was robbed of one intended victim by a British anti-aircraft shell, which blew it to pieces in the air. The mist was heavy over the battle area in the evening, and the line-patrols saw nothing more there, but German two-seaters were active near Wytschaete, farther north, where the visibility was better, and Cobby and King went off at 6 o'clock to that region in answer to wireless calls. As they emerged from a cloud over the Messines Ridge, they dropped upon three two-seaters, one L.V.G. making east and two Halberstadts crossing the ridge towards the lines. King appeared from the cloud in position to shoot straight into the L.V.G.; he promptly seized the opportunity, and the two-seater span away and fell into the ground among the German batteries. Cobby dived below one of the Halberstadts, of which he laconically recorded "speed and armament unknown," zoomed up under its belly, and fired into it at deadly close range, until it fell on its back and crashed on the hill near the ruins of Messines. The same two airmen led a formation of thirteen over this area next evening, swept it far and wide, and dropped 500 lbs. of bombs on Comines, the site of an aerodrome and a big supply-dump.