

CHAPTER XXIV

THE LILLE AIR RAIDS

THE final three months of the war were a period of unceasing Allied offensive. Early in August the full wave of the restored British strength broke first over the enemy's retaining wall on the Somme and then gradually overwhelmed him all along the line. The present story of the Australian Flying Corps has sought to describe the mounting of that wave. Its culmination in the attack on the Somme of August 8th marked the end of all doubt and suspense in the Allied command. Henceforth the order was always for attack, attack, and again attack.

The work of the flying service, ever offensive, immediately expanded into still more audacious designs of aggression. Where British aeroplanes had previously dropped a dozen bombs, they now dropped fifty. They sought out the nerve centres of the German Army, not merely in its forward areas but far behind its front, and that too in great force. Offensive patrols by a squadron gave place to systematic sweeps of the sky by several squadrons combined, and by day and night the enemy on the ground was harassed and discomfited till his morale, under the general strain from all quarters, entirely broke. His airmen appeared in greater and ever greater formations as his defeat became definite and irreparable. The sweeps were the answer, and the Allied airmen vanquished and drove him out of the sky, as the army shattered his infantry-lines on the ground. The two Australian scouting squadrons worked in these sweeps with No. 88 Squadron, R.A.F. (Bristol Fighters). The machines would gain their height of rendezvous over a well-defined landmark (such as the Nieppe Forest), No. 4 Squadron (Camels) usually at 10,000 feet, No. 2 Squadron (S.E.5's) at 14,000, and the Bristol Fighters at 18,000. Sometimes the S.E.5's flew above the Bristols on the top level. Then, with the Camels leading and the other two formations flying above and slightly to the rear and flanks, the whole fleet would penetrate fifteen or twenty miles behind the enemy lines and search the sky from Ypres to Arras. Too often, as with the earlier circus on

the Somme, the enemy gave this force a wide berth and avoided encounter; but at the end, when the German Army was threatened with a mightier Sedan, many German airmen came out to die fighting, and the ordinary familiar "dog-fight" grew to the proportions of a savage air-riot.

Before the beginning of the British offensive, No. 2 and No. 4 Australian Squadrons were already challenging the enemy with heavy combined patrols, which regularly scoured the air over Lille and surrounding aerodromes. These tactics were begun in July, and early in August were a regular custom. For the successful destruction of enemy machines such strong patrols at this stage were over-impressive. The Germans simply decamped on sight. A fleet of twenty-eight Australian machines, which visited Lille in the forenoon of August 1st, saw great numbers of hostile craft, but these promptly fled, and only one was caught and destroyed. This was a Rumpler two-seater going home alone at what it must have deemed the safe height of 19,000 feet. Lieutenants Wellwood, C. R. Ebeling,¹ and V. E. Knight² chased it as it dived away to escape, and after all three had fired bursts at it, Wellwood finally delivered fifty rounds at close range, and the Rumpler crashed south-east of Lille. Patrolling by roving couples or small formations was continued between the excursions of the combined sweeps. Taplin and King, out together on dawn-patrol over Merville on August 3rd, each drove down a two-seater—in Taplin's case after a particularly hot fight with an L.V.G., armoured on its underside and firing explosive bullets. On the evening of August 4th King and Watson destroyed another two-seater over Laventie in a joint attack.

Local bombing likewise continued a regular daily practice. Late in the afternoon of August 6th Cobby and Trescowthick found an ammunition train unloading shells at Vieille Chapelle dump. They dropped four bombs, blew up the dump, hit the train fairly in the centre, and set that also on fire. They then flew low and fired 800 rounds into the dump-workers and train-crew. Going out again in the evening with King,

¹ Lieut. C. R. Ebeling; No. 2 Sqn. Engineer and draughtsman; of Yarraville, Melbourne, b. Spotswood, Melbourne, 10 March, 1893. Died of injuries, 23 Aug., 1918.

² Lieut. V. E. Knight; No. 2 Sqn. (previously A.A.S.C.). Printer, of Westgarth, Melbourne; b. Christchurch, N.Z., 15 May, 1895.

Watson, and Major W. A. McCloughry, Cobby destroyed an L.V.G. two-seater flying low over Bac St. Maur, while the others bombed Lestrem and transport on the Sailly-Estaires road. At dawn next morning both Australian squadrons were out in force. One patrol from No. 4 Squadron bombed the Lys Valley, while another of ten machines, protected by a formation of eleven from No. 2, riding high, flew to south-west of Lille and attacked the important field-railway loop round Sainghin and Marquillies. Of eighteen 25-lb. bombs dropped on the railway and Sainghin station, four were seen to hit the permanent way and the station, while others exploded in and around billets, from which soldiers hastily fled. Eight Fokker biplanes appeared at 6.30 a.m. to counter-attack, but Cole and F. R. Smith, from the watching S.E.5's above, dived down, split up their formation, and shot two down out of control. At noon a combined force of eleven Australian machines again visited this region. While six Camels bombed Don railway station, just south of Sainghin, five S.E.5's swooped upon nine Fokkers (biplanes and triplanes) which came in from the south. The enemy, diving away from the upper attack, found the Camels below, and opened fire on these. The Camels turned to face them, and a general engagement ensued for several minutes at 8,000 feet. Heller and J. C. F. Wilkinson, the first to be attacked, swerved aside and rolled and tumbled around two of the triplanes. Each fired bursts from his machine-guns at the two leading Fokkers, which thereafter stood vertically on their noses and dropped down into the mist. The remaining German machines, probably in fear of the S.E.5's still above, broke away after a few hurried exchanges, and disappeared.

Meanwhile Cobby and Trescowthick had crossed the lines farther north. They descended to attack transport entering Armentières from Lille, and bombed and machine-gunned these vehicles from 200 feet with shattering results. Shortly afterwards, having climbed again through clouds to 2,500 feet, they saw five Pfalz scouts flying north towards them and slightly lower. The Australians attacked the two rear-most machines together; the mist was heavy, and they risked the chance that any other enemy might be hovering above. The two Pfalz victims selected were completely surprised

and received hot bursts of fire from just over their tails. They fell simultaneously in flames. Overhauling the next nearest Pfalz, Trescowthick, slightly ahead of Cobby, delivered the closer attack, shattered the German's right wing, and that machine collapsed in the air. As the two Camels returned to the aerodrome, Taplin, Ramsay, and Baker took off with a heavy load of bombs for Pont-du-Hem on the Estaires-La Bassée road. They dropped their bombs around billets in Pont-du-Hem from 3,500 feet, and at once flew on towards two Albatros scouts observed near Laventie. The Camels had the advantage of height by some 500 feet; they caught up with the enemy, and, while Ramsay remained aloft on guard, Taplin and Baker attacked. Taplin was a skilful pilot and a dead shot. He reserved his fire till he reached almost touching range, and then shot his Albatros into flames with one short burst. Baker's fire severed the left lower wing of the second Albatros, which then folded up in the air. Throughout the evening a succession of small patrols from No. 4 Squadron bombed the Lys villages, and Cobby, on one of these excursions at 5.30 p.m., destroyed a German two-seater in flames over Lestrem.

The news of the Australian victory on the Somme put the squadrons in the highest spirits, and in the days after August 8th no pilot could rest on the aerodrome. The general enthusiasm added sting to the bombing of the Lys villages. The pilots themselves were in a mood to care nothing what risks they took against enemy machines. Thus Taplin, becoming separated from his patrol near La Bassée on August 9th, chased and destroyed a Hannoveranner, and immediately afterwards was attacked by four Fokkers. He dodged them in the clouds, flew on in pursuit of a second Hannoveranner, and shot at it till he ran out of ammunition. Then, incapable of offering or meeting further combat, he turned and flew home from far over the German lines.

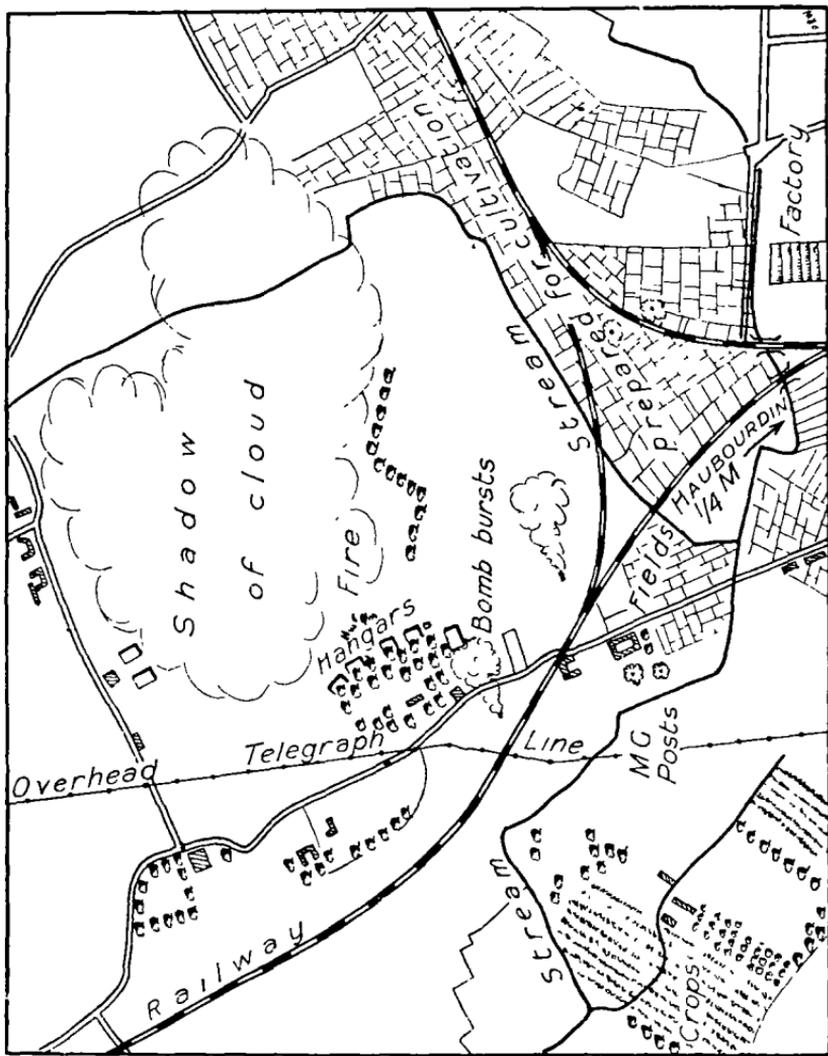
Early on August 10th Cobby, King, and Watson attacked the Lys line of communications. They dropped ten bombs at Lestrem, and then King saw a balloon on the ground near Estaires. He dived from 2,000 down to 500 feet and set it on fire. As he rose again, he perceived an S.E.5 chasing an L.V.G. two-seater away from Merville. The German

was steering a course over Estaires, and, after watching the S.E.5 make two dives at it, King attacked it head-on. The L.V.G. slid away underneath him, but King turned again and fired at 50 feet, whereupon the enemy went down steeply, tried to land, and crashed. The patrol then roamed on towards Don and there at the station found a train; having no bombs left, they sprayed it with machine-gun-fire. An hour later Smallwood, out with Taplin, destroyed a balloon at Sailly. Next day Lieutenant L. Wharton,³ becoming isolated from one of these small patrols, attacked two L.V.G.'s over Armentières, and shot down one completely out of control, but was attacked in turn by six enemy scouts, whose fire perforated his petrol tank. The Australian escaped by diving through the clouds, but was then hit in the head by a piece of anti-aircraft shell, and in landing crashed into some barbed wire near Hazebrouck. He was taken to hospital, but insisted on delivering his report to the squadron-commander *en route*.

After two days' work in co-operation with the Allied advance on the Somme, regular joint offensive-patrols in Flanders were resumed by the Australian squadrons on August 14th and 15th. A combined formation of twelve machines visited the Lys area between 9.30 and 10.30 a.m. on the 14th, and, while the Camels bombed the dumps there, three S.E.5's under Captain E. L. Simonson⁴ engaged over Nieppe (near Armentières) eight Fokkers which were fighting some British Camels. Mills destroyed one Fokker after a hot duel at close range. Combined operations were repeated at 5 p.m. Manuel, escorting a bomb-raid, attacked, with two other S.E.5's, six Fokker biplanes over Lompret (north of the Lomme aerodrome) and shot down one, which crashed near Pérenchies. Another formation at 6 o'clock escorted a flight of D.H.4's sent to bomb Tournai. One German two-seater was seen near Wavrin. It dropped hastily in a spin towards Haubourdin aerodrome as the S.E.5's approached, and then one of its wings suddenly collapsed and it fell like a stone through the remainder of the distance to earth. No shot had been fired at it.

³ Lieut. L. Wharton, M.C.; No 4 Sqn. (previously Infantry). Science master; of Armadale, N.S.W.; b. Parkes, N.S.W., 2 April, 1891.

⁴ Capt E. L. Simonson; No 2 Sqn. (previously Infantry). Engineering student; of Melbourne; b. Brighton, Melbourne, 23 Jan., 1894.



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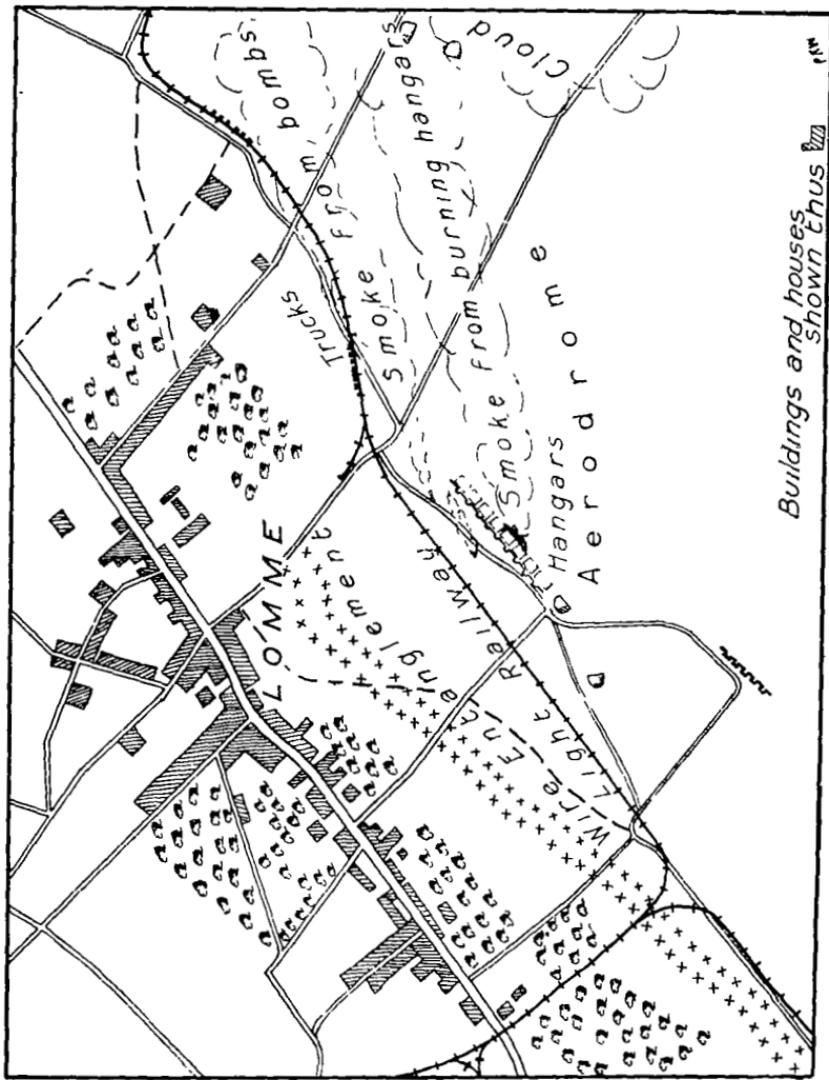
THE OPENING OF THE BOMB-RAID BY NOS. 2 AND 4 SQUADRONS, A.F.C., ON HAUBOURDIN
AERODROME, LILLE, 10TH AUGUST 1918

*British Air Force Photograph taken by No 88 Sqr
Just II at Museum Collection No 1380*



THE BOMB-RAID BY NOS 2 AND 4 SQUADRONS, A F C., ON LOMME AERODROME, LILLE,
17TH AUGUST, 1918

*British Air Force Photograph, taken by No 88 Sqn
Aust H at Museum Collection No J300*



Buildings and houses shown thus

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On August 15th the weather was adverse to flying, with gusty westerly winds. The early morning bombing-patrol (five machines) from No. 4 Squadron met with bad luck over the Lys. Lieutenants S. Howard⁵ and E. A. Cato⁶ bombed Estaires, also a train at Armentières, drove away four L.V.G. two-seaters at Estaires, and then descended to attack an anti-aircraft battery at that place. At this juncture a bullet fired from the ground wounded Howard in the foot and another broke his control-stick. He regained control of his machine after some trouble, and landed at Hermaville, near Arras. Meanwhile Lieutenants Smallwood, M. H. Eddie,⁷ and Edols bombed the Bac St. Maur dump and another anti-aircraft battery. Smallwood, too, came to grief. He was hit in the back by a piece of anti-aircraft shell, and turned away towards home, but became weak from his wound and crashed at Serny, near Aire. Cato, Eddie, and Edols also landed at the same place, and later flew home. The bad luck which seems to follow some men had not yet finished with the other members of this patrol; a few days later both Cato and Edols had narrow escapes in the same neighbourhood. Edols, on patrol on August 25th, was badly wounded in the right hand by a splinter of shell, and in landing he crashed on the Aire-La Bassée canal near Locon. Cato's mishap was more serious. While returning from a patrol in the afternoon of August 22nd in company with Lieutenant S. P. Keay,⁸ a new pilot, the two collided over Aire. Keay's machine lost its tail, and the pilot fell from 3,000 feet and was fatally injured. The aileron of Cato's left wing was torn almost completely away, and his machine also fell. Cato shut off his engine to try to regain control, but without avail. The last desperate resource was to turn his engine on and try to get out of the spin in that manner. This partly succeeded, and after desperate efforts with joy-stick and rudder-bar he arrived low over Serny aerodrome. The next difficulty was to land. If he switched off his engine, he would spin again. To land

⁵ Lieut. S. Howard; No. 4 Sqn Student; b. Ballarat, Vic., 1898

⁶ Lieut. E. A. Cato; No. 4 Sqn. (previously Light Horse). Merchant, of Toorak, Melbourne; b. Malvern, Melbourne, 19 May, 1889.

⁷ Lieut. M. H. Eddie; No. 4 Sqn (previously A.A.M.C.). Clerk; of Launceston, Tas; b. Launceston, 1 July, 1893. Killed in action, 5 Sept., 1918.

⁸ Lieut. S. P. Keay; No. 4 Sqn. (previously Infantry). Clerk; of Melbourne; b. Williamstown, Melbourne, 7 June, 1895. Died as result of aeroplane accident, 22 Aug., 1918.

with his engine on meant doing so at highly dangerous speed. There was, however, no third course; and with his speed indicator showing 120 miles an hour he essayed to land. A crash was inevitable, and the machine was smashed to pieces as soon as it hit the ground. Cato escaped with bruises and a bad shaking.

The 80th Wing, to which both Australian scouting squadrons belonged, was now preparing a strong air attack on the railway communications and the aerodromes around Lille. The chief of these aerodromes were at Lomme and Haubourdin, the latter being also an important railway centre for the supply traffic on the whole Lys front. The main objectives of the attacks, however, were the aerodromes, for to destroy these ground-nests was the proper corollary to sweeping the sky of operating hostile aircraft. Though the sweeps were temporarily successful in clearing the sky, they failed to put the enemy airmen out of action. The tactics of the further scheme were simple: the wing was to take the air in full force, scare all German machines to the ground, and then go down after them and bomb them in their hangars.

All through the war Lille itself had been deliberately spared from bombardment by British artillery or aerial attack. This was owing mainly to French representations; the French were anxious that Lille should not be damaged; moreover in the earlier years of the war a tacit understanding seemed to be in vogue between British and Germans that Armentières (then on the British side of the line) should be spared so long as Lille was not shelled. This accounted for the comparative immunity from destruction (before 1918) of the Lys Valley above Armentières. The front here was regarded by each side as the nursery, or breaking-in ground, for new troops. Here newly-formed divisions, British and German alike, were sent to become accustomed gradually to trench warfare. Hither, too, divisions badly in need of rest were transferred for the recuperation of shattered nerves. Lille became the home of many German generals, and was never disturbed. When in 1917, before the Third Battle of Ypres, the Germans for the first time heavily shelled Armentières, Lille still went free, though Lomme and Haubourdin, western

suburbs of the city, suffered from retaliatory shelling.⁹ In 1918, the German northern offensive overran Armentières and the surrounding district, and put Lille almost out of reach of the British guns, but British airmen, in deference to French feeling, still forbore to drop bombs on the city. Under the 80th Wing's scheme of attack on the aerodromes at Lomme and Haubourdin, two great raids on those places took place on August 16th and 17th.

The first raid was against Haubourdin shortly after noon on the 16th. Sixty-five machines were concerned—every available aeroplane from No. 88 Squadron, R.A.F. (Bristol Fighters), No. 92 Squadron (S.E.5's), No. 2 Australian Squadron (S.E.5's), and No. 4 Australian Squadron (Sopwith Camels). This impressive fleet, loaded up with incendiary and explosive bombs and all the machine-gun ammunition it could carry, gained its positions of height over Reclinghem aerodrome at 12.30 p.m.—the Bristol Fighters at 13,000 feet, the British S.E.5's at 11,000, the Australian S.E.5's at 9,000, and the Camels at 7,000. Murray Jones led No. 2 Squadron's formation of nineteen and Cobby an equal number from No. 4 Squadron, with which also flew the wing-commander, Lieutenant-Colonel L. A. Strange.¹⁰ The force flew straight for La Bassée, keeping appointed heights and order in wide-sweeping arcs. Over La Bassée each formation dipped to lose height. The plan was then for the two lower layers of the air-fleet to attack Haubourdin aerodrome in turn, while the Bristol Fighters and British S.E.5's ensured protection from possible attack. Thus, while the Camels dived first, No. 2 Squadron's formation, immediately above, flew in wide left-hand circuits, awaiting its turn.

Cobby led the attack at the head of his own flight. As the first six machines swooped down on the westernmost hangars of the aerodrome, one panic-stricken Fokker biplane, caught in the air under the descending avalanche, flew for the

⁹ This shelling was due to other considerations also. The British Command wished, by artillery bombardment on a long front, to lead the enemy to believe that the opening attack in the Third Battle of Ypres would extend as far south as Armentières.

¹⁰ Lt.-Col. L. A. Strange, D.S.O., M.C., D.F.C.; R.A.F. Aviator; of Blandford, Dorset, Eng.; b. Tarrant, Keynstone, Eng., 27 July, 1891. (Formerly a pilot, as lieutenant, with No 5 Sqn., R.F.C., when it went to France with the first British Expeditionary Force in August, 1914.)

ground and crashed into a tree near Wavrin. Cobby at 200 feet let fall two 25-lb. bombs at the outermost hangars and hit them fair; they did not catch fire, but the next two, on which his following bombs fell, were set ablaze. He then at 100 feet shot into flames a machine stationary on the ground. Dashing on, he turned his guns upon further hangars and a party of mechanics; then left those targets to overtake a party of 200 men running along the road from the aerodrome towards the hospital. Cobby fired 400 rounds—some from only fifty feet up—into this party, and numbers of them dropped. King followed his leader. His first three bombs fell as one into the nearest of the untouched hangars; from twenty feet up he fired 100 rounds into another large hangar plainly enclosing four or five machines, dropped his last bomb on the same target, and saw the hangar catch fire. The next thing in view was a two-horsed waggon on the road; King shot one horse, the vehicle capsized in a ditch, and two men fell out of it. Then he flew round the aerodrome, whipping bursts of fire into huts, billets, the aerodrome searchlight plant, anything that came into his line of sight. Lieutenants D. C. Carter,¹¹ Edols, Eddie, and Trescowthick pursued him close in a riot of destruction, and Edols with a 40-lb. phosphorus bomb set the mechanics' quarters on fire. Major W. A. McCloughry dived next, set burning a hangar and a machine on the ground outside it, and then engaged a party of mechanics running across the aerodrome. Both McCloughry and Colonel Strange (who followed him) fired heavily into a train on the line north of the aerodrome. Watson's flight, attacking next in succession, bombed a large group of officers' quarters and workshops in a wood beside some hangars. The western end of the aerodrome was now a mass of smoke and fire, and all its occupants were running wildly for the shelter of the railway embankment. Watson stampeded horse-transport from a dump. Baker chased a staff car on the road, till it ran up a bank and capsized; "No one," he reported, "left the car." Heller's flight followed Watson's and further fanned the flames; his machines also hotly attacked several

¹¹ Lieut. D. C. Carter; No 4 Sqn. (previously Artillery) Clerk; of Prahran, Melbourne, b. Melbourne, 13 Nov., 1894. Killed in action, 5 Sept., 1918.

machine-gun defence posts. With the last man of Heller's flight No. 4 Squadron had completed its effort.

No. 2 Squadron followed promptly. Murray Jones attacked first, fired a few bursts of machine-gun fire into the burning western group of hangars as he passed them, and dropped two bombs on the southern group. Dense black smoke rose up promptly and obscured them. Cole, leading his flight, pursued the same track—bombs on the southern group, machine-gun raking of the eastern. German mechanics had evidently rushed some machines out of the burning western group, for most of the pilots in Cole's flight saw damaged machines lying in front of these hangars, and ripped bursts of bullets into them in passing over to bomb the southern group. Cummings led the next six machines; all bombed the southern hangars, and some the smoking western ones as well. Follett, in this flight, following Cummings, was about to dive at the aerodrome when he noticed an Albatros two-seater in the air flying south-west at 2,500 feet. Whence this lone German appeared was never established; if from the wrecked aerodrome, he did not escape his fate, for Follett shot seventy rounds into him from behind and he crashed. The wreck which Cole's and Cummings's men had made of the southern group was completed by Manuel's flight, which dropped the last relay of bombs into a welter of smoke and flames. The German loss during this raid in machines alone was enormous. British estimates put the figure at thirty-seven aeroplanes destroyed.¹² That evening strong enemy aircraft formations appeared like angry ants from disturbed nests, and at 6.30 a small combined offensive-patrol from the Australian squadrons sighted twenty-eight Fokkers in two fleets cruising between La Bassée and Bailleul.

The 80th Wing carried out an identical attack next morning, August 17th, on Lomme aerodrome, about two miles north of that at Haubourdin. The strength of this raid was sixty, of which ground-attacking machines numbered thirty-

¹² It is to the raids from Lomme and Haubourdin that the following comment in the German Major Neumann's *The German Air Force in the Great War* appears to refer. "During July, 1918, large squadrons of seventy or eighty (British) machines would appear, and while two-thirds of their number remained at various heights to act as escort, the remainder would systematically attack our aerodromes one by one. Thus, for example, in the neighbourhood of Lille and Cortoyle, in the course of two days they succeeded in completely destroying three formations of fighting machines by bombs and machine-gun fire."

one—fourteen from No. 2 Squadron and seventeen from No. 4. The machines took up position over Reclinghem as before, and lost height over La Bassée. During the previous day's raid the S.E.5's, in the second attacking wave, found a difficulty in aiming their bombs, owing to the blurring of the targets by the smoke from the preceding attack. For the Lomme operation it was therefore arranged that each squadron should attend to precisely-defined objectives; and accordingly, when the Camels dived at a line of hangars on the north of the aerodrome, the S.E.5's dived simultaneously at a second line on the east. The hangars and workshops on both lines were badly damaged; most of them were hit direct and set on fire. The wind especially favoured the fire started on the north, carrying the flames from the westernmost shed along to the others. The German anti-aircraft machine-gunners stuck gamely to their work, despite furious attack from the raiders, and their fire hit Lieutenant E. P. E. McCleery's¹³ machine in the Camel formation. It crashed heavily on the aerodrome floor, and McCleery was killed. Photographs disclosed that heavy damage was done to hangars and workshops during this raid, and prisoners subsequently taken stated that seventeen Fokker biplanes were destroyed in the wreckage.

At Reclinghem detailed instructions for all ranks were prepared against a return bomb-attack, but none followed. In the old days, or even a few months earlier, such a direct blow at their air force would have provoked the enemy to at least some effort in retaliation. But the Germans probably had their hands too full; their whole line was in danger farther south, and the northern flank was soon to be drawn into a general retreat.

Two days of quiet followed the Lomme attack, and then on August 19th the Australian scout-squadrons resumed their combined patrols. About 9 a.m. that day eight Camels, led by Baker and Heller, and eight S.E.5's under Cole and Manuel, set out to visit the old Lys haunts. The S.E.5's, riding high up, saw several formations of Fokkers, biplanes and triplanes, in the sky between Laventie and Haubourdin.

¹³ Lieut. E. P. E. McCleery; No. 4 Sqn. Coachbuilder and engineer; of Berrima district, N.S.W.; b Moss Vale, N.S.W., 1893. Killed in action, 17 Aug., 1918.

At 17,000 feet Cole and Wellwood, separated from their comrades, first sighted seven of the biplanes over Haubourdin, and dived to attack them. Cole shot down one out of control, and drove away another which was "sitting on the tail" of Wellwood's machine. Then the fight opened out over the sky. Cole followed one biplane from Lille south-eastward towards Douai, and dived several thousand feet after it, firing steadily. He had just fired a final burst which sent this Fokker down completely out of control, when, at 4,000 feet, he was attacked by five triplanes. This formation had been sighted by Manuel's flight from near Laventie, and was, when first observed, being engaged by several Bristol Fighters and S.E.5's and driven down towards Douai. Thus the triplanes, spinning away from a higher attack, found Cole below them. Cole was relieved from an awkward predicament only by the fact that the Bristols followed the Germans down.

For several days bad weather prevented useful flying. No. 4 Squadron's patrols continued harassing bomb attacks on Bac St. Maur and Estaires, and Baker on a solitary patrol in hazy weather on August 24th destroyed a balloon. The enemy as a rule either kept very high or did not appear in the sky at all. Following Baker's exploit on August 24th, King went out alone as far as Don railway station, bombed it, machine-gunned a train, and returned among the low clouds—all without seeing any enemy. Later the same morning (August 25th) Cole and Wellwood, patrolling east of Lens, drove down a Rumpler near Seclin, and then pursued a solitary D.F.W. from Givenchy (north of Arras) to Epinoy, outside Cambrai, where they finally destroyed it. The absence of hostile aircraft over the northern front was due to their withdrawing to the south, where the Allied offensive was steadily involving a wider front and was now threatening the region of Bapaume. No. 2 Squadron sought the Germans south of the Scarpe, and there two flights under Lieutenant E. E. Davies¹⁴ and Manuel found them on August 27th. At 11 o'clock that morning Manuel's formation at 17,000 feet

¹⁴ Capt. E. E. Davies, D.F.C.; No. 2 Sqn (previously Light Horse). Barrister and solicitor; of Swan Hill, Vic.; b. Kerang, Vic., 16 March, 1890.

engaged twenty-eight Fokker and Pfalz scouts over Sains-les-Marquion, west of Cambrai. The fight was notable for the gallant performance of Cox, who singled out one Fokker, shot it into flames, and was then attacked by five other enemy scouts. By clever manoeuvring he shot down out of control two of these in succession. Davies' patrol then appeared on the edge of the fight, and at 13,000 feet attacked four of the Fokkers. One of them was shot down by Davies and fell at Lécluse, in the Scarpe marshes south of Douai. The enemy thereafter abandoned the combat and retired.

At dawn on August 30th, King, Baker, and Ramsay found three D.F.W's together east of Laventie and destroyed two of them. Otherwise for days in succession every Australian patrol reported no German machines seen anywhere north of the Scarpe. The rare appearance of a few two-seaters only emphasised the fact that the enemy had left the air in this region. The Germans now lacked sufficient air force to meet the Allies on all fronts; and the signs were that the raids upon Lomme and Haubourdin, as well as other events, were compelling them to move their aerodromes to the eastward of Lille. His banishment from the air on the northern front was not the least serious of blows which the enemy suffered at this critical time.