

A PARIS contemporary gives an interesting interview with Lieut.-Col. Piccio, of the Italian aviation service, in the course of which the following interesting notes on Gabriele d'Annunzio occur:—

"I knew him well. He was an admirable man, and might be said to have been the soul of our war. In the dark hours of the Piave, our Verdun, at the moment when Italy was living through the most tragic hours, d'Annunzio went to the trenches and exhorted our men. He spoke to them of the greatness of Italy, of the sacred mission incumbent on them. He spoke of the provinces awaiting deliverance—in a word he electrified the men. And he produced the miracle of an army suddenly enthusiastic once more, reborn to hope, revived by the words of one man, the immortal and divine germs of victory.

"Yes, I admire d'Annunzio profoundly. I love in him the poet, the soldier, the man of action, and the born leader of men. I salute in him the leader of our aerial army, of our landmen, of our sailors."

In response to a query as to whether the great Italian was actually a pilot, as has been stated. Lieut.-Col. Piccio said:—

"D'Annunzio was an observer. One of his sons, a talented engineer, took his ticket, and was thought very highly of by Caproni. D'Annunzio is a knight of the air, he could have bombarded Vienna, but he preferred to make the magnificent gesture of exposing his precious life throwing to the famished Austrians proclamations preaching wisdom, and exhorting them to demand peace, that they might live. He has always held his life cheaply, and sought danger—his innumerable nocturnal journeys over land and sea are so many proofs of his intrepidity."

In the course of a recent trial in France of an automatic stabiliser, the pilot, Moreau, folded his arms, allowing the machine to land itself. This invention is being developed with a view to its ultimate employment in commercial aviation.

*A propos* a paragraph on page 1229 of "FLIGHT" for October 31 last, we have until now overlooked a letter from Mr. S. F. Edge in which he asked a rather pertinent question concerning the airmen's work in harassing the German retreat over the Vesle. To refresh the reader's memory, our paragraph read:

"The order went forth that the bridge by which the Huns were crossing must be destroyed 'at all costs.' Up went a British pilot, but when he got into bombing position he was shot down. Another followed, only to share the fate of the first. Machine after machine went up, but one after another came crashing to the ground. The Huns had posted two 12-inch howitzers, the shells from which converged to a point immediately above the bridge, and no pilot flying low enough to make sure of his mark could

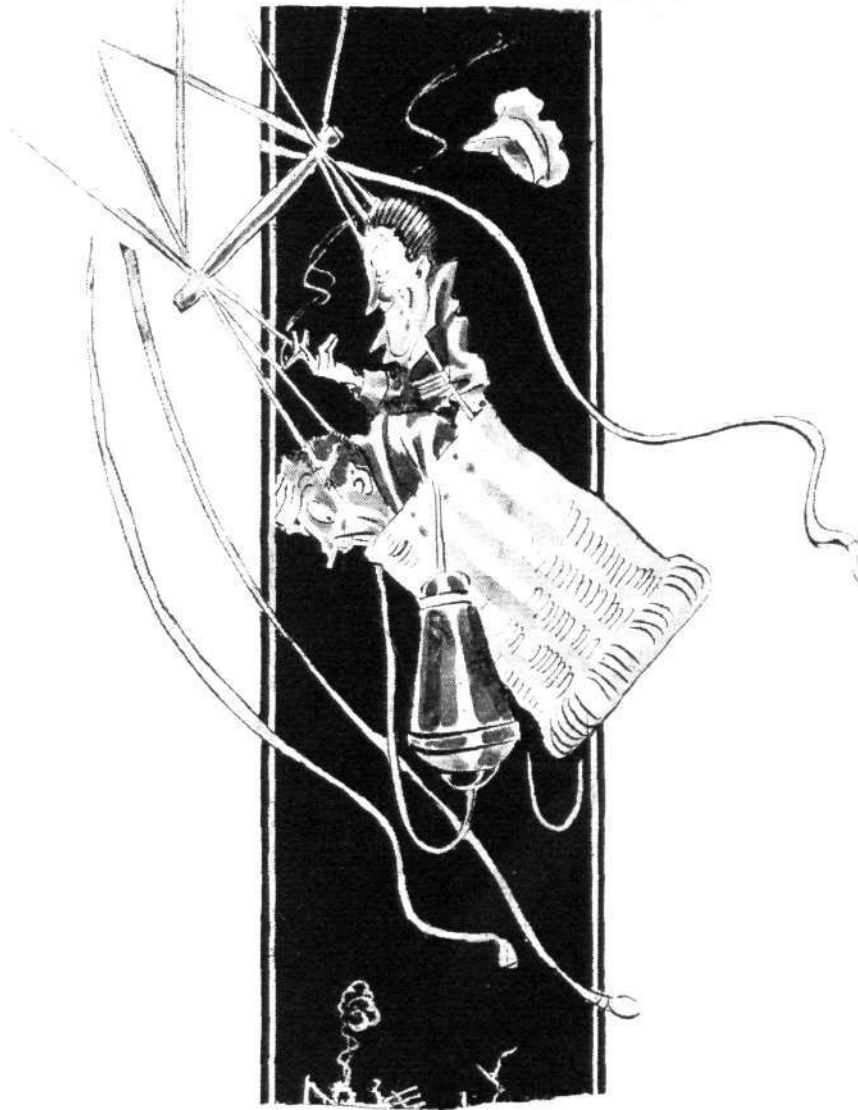
escape the area of tremendous concussion caused by the explosions. Still, the attack on the bridge was maintained with out a falter, a pile of crashed machines meanwhile accumulating on the river banks, until at length the bombs found their mark and the deed was done. But at what a cost! Incredible though it may appear, more than 30 machines had been brought down by the howitzers before the bridge was destroyed." What Mr. Edge wanted to know was why our commanders did not send over our 'planes three or four in a flight, in quick succession, so that at least one of them would arrive in between the howitzers' explosions?

Mr. Edge says: "I can appreciate that it is much easier to see a course of action, sitting on the stoop of my house, with the South Downs smiling at me, than in the middle of the noise, excitement and danger of actual fighting; but there would seem to be good reason for supposing that three or four overlapping flights of four machines would have done the work just as surely as a slow, deliberate, one-by-one series of 30. There is no gainsaying the splendid devotion to duty which you mention, but how tragic it is that such pluck, such nerve, and so much material should have been thrown away! I suppose it is all a part of inevitable war-wastage—but that is merely another evidence of the idiocy of war altogether.

"Now that the fighting is over, the belligerents have to sit down around a table and say 'Well, how are we going to arrange it all? Who is to have what?'—something which might just as well have been talked out in July, 1914. That we could sit down, or lie down, and take a licking, I do not suggest for a moment. What hurts me is that 2,000 years' civilisation should find us reduced to hiding in holes and throwing stones one at another, like a lot of cave-men, instead of bringing to bear on any quarrels a collective intelligence, expressed by three or four able representatives

of each of the nations concerned. That one princeling's assassination, regrettable as it must be considered, was a poor excuse for letting slip the dogs of war, and so allowing ten million lives to be wasted before the world had sobered sufficiently to say 'Now we have made enough mess; how shall we clear it up?' That is what we are saying, now, reduced to simple terms, and that is what the belligerents will *always* have to say, after wars even more devastating than this. If, as students of history and social economy tell me, war is inevitable, will always be, is there any purpose or sense in doing anything but reverting to cave-men ideas and modes of living?"

**In a Kite Balloon.**



Ground lubber (up for the first time on "joy-ride"): "A-and if the Boche fires you, y-you jump out. I-I'd s-s-sooner b-b-burn."

In the course of an interview recently, M. Saulnier gave it as his opinion that the transit of the Atlantic was impossible so long as petrol was the propelling medium, owing to the factor of weight. He went so far as to say that the flight was utterly impracticable until a lighter spirit could be found.