



ed to pick up a patient.



The Dragonfly, one of the few still in service, is seen over bush near Coen.

## L B U M

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numerous occasions been forced to resort to glider technique and go cruising round the lower ridges looking for a thermal.

After crossing the coastal range the terrain gradually flattens out into the great outback cattle country. In places one can fly over a hundred miles, without seeing the slightest vestige of habitation. As can well be imagined, airstrips are few and far between, and a forced landing in these parts is to be avoided. In this inland country the great problem is not so much a matter of getting down without serious injury, as of surviving until assistance arrives. Under this tropical sun a man without water can perish almost in a matter of hours.

Apart from hunger and thirst, other hazards that must be faced by the grounded airman are attacks by dingoes (wild dogs), wild pigs, crocodiles and snakes; North Queensland is the home of the deadly taipan, whose bite means certain death. At certain times of the year one of the greatest menaces is the mosquito which can literally kill anyone stranded in the bush with no form of protection. It is a wise pilot who always carries a mosquito net in his survival kit.

To navigate in this area one needs a very strongly developed sense of direction, a lot of patience, and considerable faith in the

accuracy of one's compass. The sense of direction because the terrain is utterly featureless; the patience because check points are fifty miles or more apart; and faith in the compass because, after hours of waiting for one's objective to show up, it is very easy to hypnotize oneself into believing that the aircraft is miles off track, and the temptation to change course one way or the other can be almost irresistible.

The bush pilot's navigation must, of necessity, be very accurate, because his destination is usually a solitary homestead, more often than not well concealed by timber. It is quite possible, if a few miles off track, to fly right past without seeing a trace of habitation. A pilot unable to find his objective is really in trouble. There is no alternative for him to go to, and he is probably getting short of fuel. The result is usually a forced landing with more or less disastrous results. To be a bush pilot and remain a healthy one, the first rule is: don't get lost.

The types of aircraft which may be operated successfully during the whole year must necessarily be fairly light. There are two reasons for this: firstly, because ninety-nine per cent of the airstrips are cut out of the timber and are merely graded earth. In the wet season the ground becomes soft and boggy, and will stand



A stretcher case goes aboard the Dragon at Georgetown. On the right is Mr. Joe Lee, secretary of the Georgetown hospital board.