The Bree Press Short Storu

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LOCKED WINGS

JOHN SCOTT DOUGLAS

ship directly above the other. Bad luck dicate he should attempt a landing on then threw a monkey wrench into the was it poor flying? No one

hit an air pocket and drop, while Ring Secley's rickety old "bua" it looked from the ground.

throat, and my heart stood still as I saw those two ships coming together. Bland's ship coming down in a steep bank, his landing gear appearing to claw at the wing of Ring's battered "cruto" like the talons of a striking eagle. I knew what was going to happen even before I heard the sickening crunch of shattered strats and braces, the sharp tearing of fabric. he fish-talled again. My stomach constricted painfully as I saw the upper wing collapse, flapping

loosely in the breeze. wing of Ring's biplane would give way next, due to the strain of the ship's motive power, and there would not be he hit the ground.

I was mistaken. The next thing to happen was of quite a different nature the left as the aeroplanes parted, wrenched free of its connections on the right side. Would be ever bring his "bus" out of that side slip as he approached earth?. I rubbed a shaking hand over my old, damp forchead, unable to tear my eyes away, but anxious not to see the

crash I expected to take place. Fifteen hundred feet, a thousand feet, and then somehow my numb brain told me that the motor was throbbing again. wings creaking and groaning at sha:p "pull-out." In my mind's eye I saw Bland Hobart fighting the controls. his thin, finely-chiselled face, white and twitching, his long, tapering fingers glued to the control stick. Game? could not have said just how game thought he was at that moment if I had tried! My throat was too dry! A scant hundred feet above the Alaska Airways Company hangars Bland finally got complete control of his ship, pulling out of

He did not even know his landing gear was torn off. He did not know that if he tried to land he was very likely to end his life in a mass of flaming wreck-

Leaping out of the aeroplane I had been "revving up." I shouted hoarsely at two gaping "greaseballs" to find a wheel, Perhaps we might even yet warn him of his danger. I then turned my eyes upward to see if Ring Seeley's lower wing

had given away. Nerve? Here it was again! evidently reasoned that his lower wing was not going to remain long intact. Instead of coming down in a slow glide, he was tearing down toward the field in

a power dive! Cold fingers of approbension pressed against my heart. With the terrific strain on that one wing of the biplane when he pulled out of the dive to cut momentum, there could be but one result! Disaster! I walted for that sharp upward twist of the aeroplane's blunt nose, waited with cold, clammy hands twitching, The nose came up a little-a very little, but there was nothing you could call a real "pull-out," no perceptible slackening of speed.

Ring thought too clearly for that! He rushed past me like a hurricane, landing at twice the regular landing speed. When his aeroplane came to rest at the very end of the long tarmac, I knew he had been right. No other landing would have saved his life.

Once more my eyes were drawn forcibly upward. That which I saw caused little ley shivers to course up and down my spiney Blauff was gliding down for a landing!

Desperately I looked for the "greaseballs." They were running toward midcentre of the field, one of them carrying a wheel and the other dragging a strip of canvas. "Spread the canvas!" shouted. "There's no time to lose!"

The man with the canvas swiftly obeyed, while the other man began to wave the wheel over it. The wheel, suspended over the white canvas, would be visible from the air. Would Bland interpret its meaning. His aeroplane continued to glide down. Suddenly, when the sagging landing gear was about to bite into the tarmac, the engine roared on and the crate buzzed over our heads us . bland zoomed.

Several thousand feet above the uirdrome he levelled out; then he hovered over the field, banking aimlessly, undoubtedly undecided. "He's clever!" I muttered to the two mechanics. "Perhaps we can give him a little more informution."

The three of us carried the canvas

HOSE two "crates" were flying aeroplane was still snorting and coughalong as nicely as you please, ing. Standing on the left side and waystrata formation, you know, one ing the wheel, we gestured wildly to inthat side. Not that we really believed he could do it! Bland Hobart's book knowledge of aviation was profound; bub

Secley was He evidently grasped our meaning quickly, or thought he did, for he cut that probably could not have happened his "gun" again, gliding down sharply toward you. Charley and Joe will bear unless and of the pilots jerked his con- to effect a landing before he lost his trols, but I am just telling you the way courage. It takes courage to make a land-Something seemed to tighten in my of landing a whole man are about one it, there's an unconscious tendency to

> rish-tailed to cut momentum. When the there's no stationary object to guide by. aeroplane began to stall, having over- Nelther of the two recent antagonists caked. The sight of the nose pointing broke the silence. "I guess Jim's right, downward gave me slight heart, but be- Ring. I'm sorry I lost my temper." fore he could gain much momentum.

"Crack-up!" one of the "greaschalls" formed with dry lips.

'My body felt paralyzed! I even forgot figured he had delayed too long. The ever, before Ring was "riding" Bland that I had been tuning up a ship on the aeroplane seemed to freeze in space, again. tarmac-when the accident had occurred. When it finally came out of the stall, My brain, however, had never been more it was in a sharp right bank. I knew active. I was already anticipating the Bland was holding his stick to the right, over the ragged range of mountains eas: next steps in the tragedy. The lower kicking right rudder bar. Before the of Juneau. Ring and Bland came out aeroplane could side slip twenty feet, it of the hangars to watch it. seemed to freeze in space again, counteracted by left rudder and the hearing of in a crazy fort of way, righted itself as even time to get a "chute" open before his control stick to the left. It slid though by some last, despairing effect speed as it neared earth.

Bland's landing gear suddenly swung to side where the landing gear was still bent acroplane, the subducd beliew of intact. Swinging crazily, it circled left the motor rising to a shrill wall, and then twisted over on the left wing clutched Ring by the arm, my hand I looked for an explosion, but Bland had trembling, "He's-he's going to crack wisely shut off his motor.

> Relieved of the suspense of the last "Perhaps not," said Ring in an awd few moments, the "greaseballs" began voice. "Look, he's pulling out!" to cheer themselves hoarse as a thin, white-faced youth climbed shakily out the "crate" had dived too far. Onof the aeroplane. Suddenly our con- wing buckled from the sharp "pull-out," gratulations on his clever landing were flying off into space. The doomed ship silenced by the appearance of a big, continued in a wild series of gyrations. rough-hown youth whose gray eyes were Fifteen hundred feet above earth somenarrowed and hard. "Do you think you thing white detached itself from the own the whole sky?" stormed Ring, "You plunging aeroplane—a parachute. It have to come down a hundred feet to diffted away from the aeroplane, opening

I as Bland turned on Ring with blazing end of the white carnation, struck earth, eyes. "Come down to hit you! You and was dragged lifty feet before the

zoomed into my landing gear!"

Bland and Ring had started the train- trunk, ing course at our field at the same time, i 'We rushed up, expecting almost any-Ring had proved a "natural," setting his thing. A youth was lying beside the his dive and zooming up into the blue pilot's license three months earlier. Bland frayed and torn linen, a white-faced was still training, having no natural youth with blood dried on one cheek, bent for flying, and Ring had been in- Where had he come from? . How had ne structing him when the accident oc-|been injured? Had he retained his grasp

lar, he was wont to remark dryly that himself from the doomed aeroplane he would have done better if he only had which was even now a blazing wreck a better education. Bad blood had ex- on the tarmac?

Ring had lashed at a raw spot once a very little of the mystery surrounding too often. With a sob of fury, Bland him. flew at him, fists clenched. Ring was | We learned that he and his father bigger, heavier than Bland, but he was had been injured in the premature extaken off his guard. Bland's first blow plosion of dynamite in a mine they were

By this time the "greaseballs" and I must have been some left in the tank

do to hold the two infuriated youths. They glared at each other with burning eyes. "If you weren't so pig-headed," breathed Bland huskily, "you'd realize an education's the greatest advantage a fellow can have. Nothing to be ashamed

"Yeah!" snapped Ring. "I notice it helps a fellow pick up things quickly. I was only two years older than either of the two young men, but I felt it was my duty to give them a bit of father! The superintendent was not on the field. "Listen, you two babbis!" growled. L"Why won't you ever grow up? Youre both wrong-just as you're good fiver, not a school-marm!" both wrong about the accident."

Ring glared at me from the place where he stood with both arms pinioned by the "greaseballs." Hobart's aeroplane he was not a natural flyer the way Ring mean by saying we're both wrong about

the accident?" "Just what I sald, Ring. You zoomed me out in that! When two drivers of swiftly moving vehicles watch the other ing like that when you know the chances vehicle, instead of moving away from drive toward the other. The best pilots A hundred feet above the field, he 'crack up' in formation flying because come all forward momentum, he pan- spoke for several moments; then Bland

Ring's taut face relaxed. "That goes double," said Ring, extending his hand. They both grinned as they shook hands, and I thought the quarrel had Bland tried to pancake again, but I been patched up. It was not long, how-

Suddenly it twisted over on one wing.

slowly over on the left wing, gaining of its pilot, and then the nose dipped It went into a spin. The "bus" struck heavily on its left | . Down-down-down came that earth-

The nose did start to come up, but

with a report like an explosion of dynaills finely-chizelled face was working | mite. A limp figure dangled from the linen of the parachute caught on a true

on consciousness long enough to reach Bland had a university degree; Ring the airdrome, only to lose it before the had only finished high school. When could land? Had he gained conscious-Ring accomplished something spectacu- ness for an instant, long enough to free

isted between the two for many months. We could not answer those questions Ring remarked tauntingly, "If I only stranger was raving in delirium by the had more education, perhaps I could see time we had taken him to the Juneau why your dropping a hundred feet into hospital in a car. From anatches of my wing was my fault! How about it?" sense in his jumble of words, we learned

ent him reeling, the second, catching prospecting in the interior. We learned im off balance, knocked him in the dirt. from one sentence that he had but ten then he picked himself up, his mouth gallons of petrol to make the trip to us hard and white, his fists big, tight Juneau. He judged this was insufficient but he was evidently wrong, for there

or the acroplane would not have burned the way it did. Purther than that, we discovered from his rambling converation that his father was badly injured "His father must need immediate tention!" said Ring. "I'll take a doctor,

and find him." "How?" demanded Bland, with a sligh lift of his eyebrows. "You can scot the wilderness east of here for weeks and not cover all of it within flight range." . Ring snorted. "I guess I can find what Im looking for all right!"

"You and your education!" said Ring

despairingly. "What we need here is a

Ring went up that very afternoon with doctor and a supply of gasoline. He returned at nightfall, slightly disconsolate, but certain he could succeed the next day.

Bland, meanwhile, had been working swiftly on topographical charts, which he covered with countless figures. Late that night he set a small square on the copographical man, and told Ring he would find the prospector's claim somewhere within that six-mile square, Iting only laughed at him.

'The next day, however, after Ring had flown from dawn to noon, still without result, he grudgingly conceded that there could not be any harm in flying according to the chart, although he did not anticipate any result. The stranger was still unconscious.

I felt queer stirrings of hone when Ring took off with the doctor about one o'clock. That hope changed to ferr when he falled to return after more than

Three hours passed, four hours, and then we heard the buzzing of an aeroplane. Everyone on the field was neryous except Bland. He looked very confident. "Ring could have brought that injured man here this morning as well as this afternoon," he said bitterly.

"But we don't know Ring has found him!"I protested. Bland was right. When the aeroplane landed. Ring and the doctor lifted out a

big man, swathed in bandages. Ring was strangely quiet and humble as he approached Bland Hobart. "I'm a pig-headed idiot!" he said, savagely. "I should have listened to you, but I didn't:

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MILL

STREET

understand how you could reach any vision." A wistful amile quirked Ring's results without anything to work on." "But I did have something to work on, Ring!" exclaimed Bland. "I could esti- I helped you out that way you could mate that the lad had used approximately eight gallons of gas. Two must have

burned. Eight gallons of gas will carry a certain type of plane at top speed for roughly so many miles. Then I drew a circle on my topographical map that friends. number of miles about Juneau. I could automatically climinate all areas in that circle west of the Narrows because he flew from the northeast. There were two "Let me do some calculating from the points on my circle which offered possibilities of landing. One was northeast of here, the other, southeast. Judying that the lad had flown as straight a turn of mind which makes them act course as possible, I guessed that the heartily to work upon plans and proposipoint on the circle northeast of here; a tions which have been originated in opsort of plateau region, was the spot I position to their judgment; who are not

> Mingled admiration and incredulity those objections come to be borne out were written in Ring slow smile. "Say, by the result. In acting with such that's murvellous! I guess education's persons you are at your case. You valuable anywhere, but it looks to me counsel sincerely and boldly and not with as if I'll never be a big man in aviation a trimorous regard to your own part in until I give it a chance to widen my the matter,

improve your flying. Do you suppose if help me get started on my education

Bland's answer was an infectious smile. When the two shook hands this time. I

CHIVALRY OF POWER

nature which is content to take defeat with good humor, and of that practical wanted. I drew a six-mile square about anxious to shift responsibility upon that point to allow for possible miscal- others; and who do not allude to their former objections with triumph, 'when

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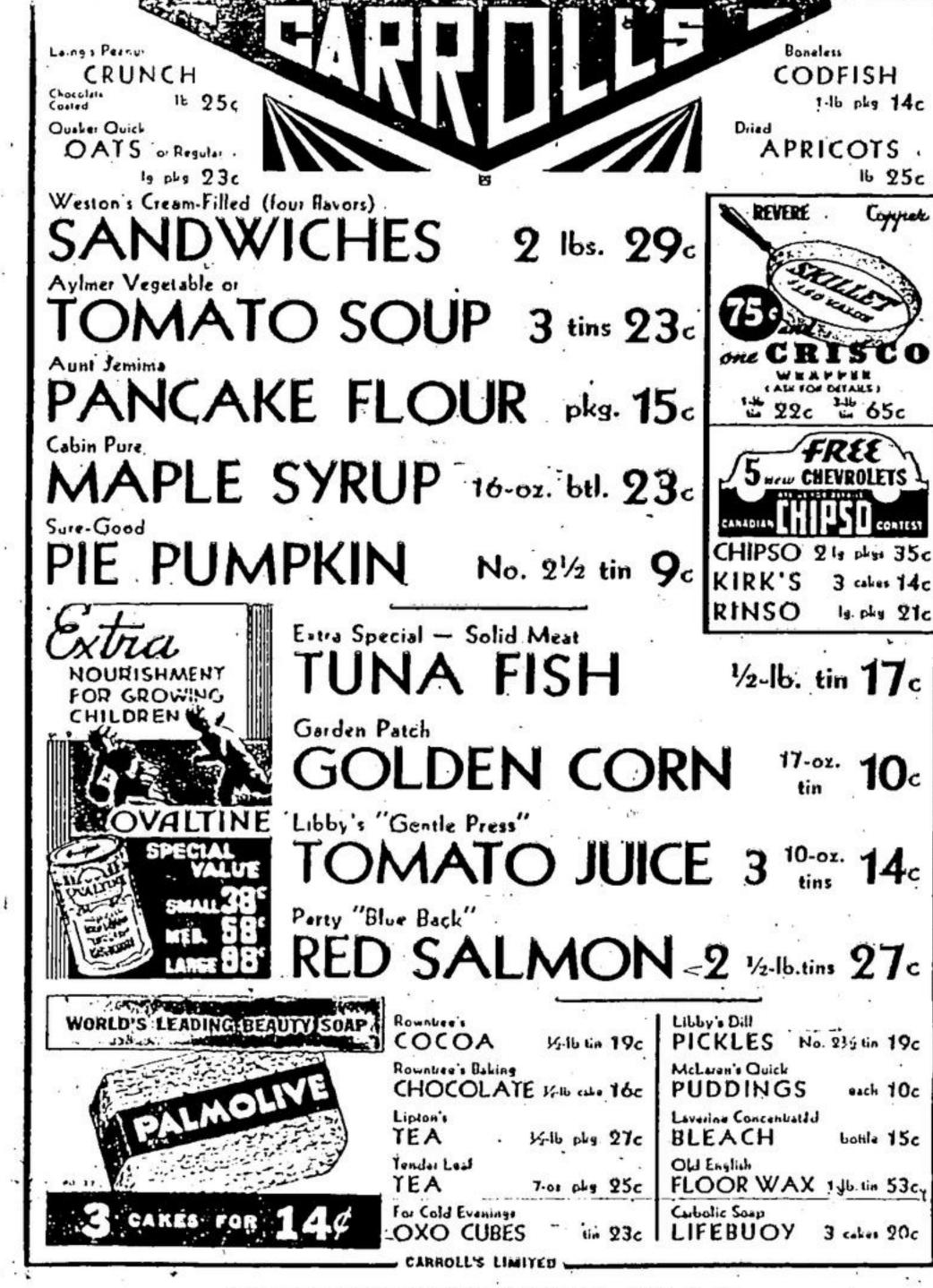
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