

In the Twilight of the Turkish Empire

The Amazing Experiences of a British Captured Officer

By CAPTAIN ALAN BOTT, M.C., R.A.F., Author of "CAVALRY OF THE CLOUDS"

Copyright, 1919, by the McClure Newspaper Syndicate.

In the early part of 1918 Captain Alan Bott joined the aviation service of General Allenby's army in Palestine. In March, 1918, Captain Bott's machine was brought down in flames near Nazareth and he was wounded. He was captured by the Turks. His story begins at this point, and it goes on to tell of his amazing experiences during his imprisonment in Turkey.

1.--A Prisoner in Palestine

BRITISH AIRMAN ESCAPES IN CONSTANTINOPLE.

Flying with General Allenby's army in Palestine was splendid sport. All through the campaign in the Holy Land the German aviators showed far less courage than those on the western front, so that we had an almost complete mastery of the air and chased on my machines as we pleased.

During the spring and summer months, when everybody gasped in the broiling heat, the aviator was fortunate indeed, because he could often leave the sun-scoured ground for the cold regions above. A flight was like a cold plunge after a Turkish bath. Even at eight thousand feet the atmosphere was warm enough for me to fly capless, goggles and in my shirt sleeves. Most days we longed for German machines to appear and give us an excuse for taking to the air.

At a height of a few hundred feet I brought the bus into a normal glide and sought a landing place, only to find that I was over rocky and desolate hill country. I picked out a small patch of level ground fringed by a few stunted trees. It was not nearly long enough for landing an aeroplane, but it was certainly better than the jagged slopes that were the only alternative.

Next we travelled to Asia Minor and, in utter despair, we found ourselves dumped in a desolate village to be punished because some of us had wanted to escape. In a little mud room in a mud hut we lived for seven days—eight British officers (two badly wounded) and two smelly Turkish guards. For food we were each allowed to buy one loaf of bread and two eggs per day. Finally we reached Afion-Karaisarai, where was the largest prisoner's camp in Turkey.

An Australian captain named White had agreed to escape with me. His plan for going to the same hospital was to put several hot poultices on his ankle until it was badly marked, and then to suggest that the said ankle was tubercular. This bluff also succeeded.

At the bottom of the railway slope I slipped and fell. A guard jumped on top of me, so that I fell once again. I looked up and saw White racing down a winding street and pushing the Turks out of his way, pursued by two soldiers. He rounded a corner, and seeing an open doorway, dodged into it; while the guards, thinking he had gone on, ran past the doorway and into the next street. Fortunately for him, the inmates of the house were Greek and friendly to the Allies. A Greek woman hid him for three hours, and from her he bought a fez and overcoat. During the afternoon he left the house effectively disguised as a Turk and reached the hiding place that had been found for us.

random and saw the open door of a little cafe. Inside was a Greek waitress, who smiled. I slipped into the cafe, placed myself in a corner, and speaking hurriedly, in French, asked the waitress to stand in front of me. Being told by her a few minutes later that the field was clear, I dodged out again, and without showing any undue haste that would attract attention, walked up the steps leading from the ferry stage to the bridge. To my great relief I was not followed, and I disappeared into the city.

I started up from Jaffa. Late in the afternoon of April 24, 1918, I left the aerodrome at Jaffa in search for two German aeroplanes that were approaching the sea-coast. An anti-aircraft battery said I climbed to eight thousand feet in my little Niouport scout, and by steering toward the white puffs that marked the shells fired by our AA guns I soon caught sight of the two black-crossed craft.

I flattened out and pancaked on to the rear end of this patch of ground, ran right across it, swerved aside to avoid a tree, and crashed into a huge rock. Of what happened immediately afterward all I can remember is a jarring shock, an uncontrollable plunge forward, another shock, and the beginning of what would have been a colossal headache if unconsciousness had not brought relief.

Of the days that followed I have vivid recollections of some highly-colored episodes. There was a dreadful night-ride through the hills to German headquarters, with a non-commissioned officer, flourishing a revolver behind me, and an Arab guide halting my mule for the slippery rocks, while every joint tortured my injured thigh. There was a wretched period in the Austrian hospital at Tul-Kozan, where I endured, beside my physical pain, that agony of mind which comes to nearly all newly captured prisoners. There was a hopeless attempt to escape from this hospital by climbing over the wall from the yard at night time, with the idea of walking fifteen miles to the sea and then swimming southward past the trenches, where I should have hit the coast. The attempt failed, because my leg would not allow me to walk more than three hundred yards. I returned to the hospital and tried to steal an opium pipe, but was caught at the door by an orderly.

Escape from Afion-Karaisarai seemed impossible, for it was one hundred and fifty miles from the coast and, apart from the difficulties of disguise and language, the whole of the interior of Asia Minor was infested, during the last two years of the war, by thousands of brigands—starving, in rags, utterly ruthless, utterly merciless, and ready to kill a stranger as soon as look at him. My only chance was to be sent to Constantinople, where I hoped to find friends. How to manage this was a difficult problem, as my injuries had healed and there was nothing to justify an application for medical treatment in the capital.

At the bottom of the railway slope I slipped and fell. A guard jumped on top of me, so that I fell once again. I looked up and saw White racing down a winding street and pushing the Turks out of his way, pursued by two soldiers. He rounded a corner, and seeing an open doorway, dodged into it; while the guards, thinking he had gone on, ran past the doorway and into the next street. Fortunately for him, the inmates of the house were Greek and friendly to the Allies. A Greek woman hid him for three hours, and from her he bought a fez and overcoat. During the afternoon he left the house effectively disguised as a Turk and reached the hiding place that had been found for us.

What a Bribe Does in Turkey. Meanwhile I was taken to the nearest police station. All Turks can be bribed, and knowing this, I offered the two soldiers with me fifty dollars if they would say that I personally had not tried to escape, but that I had been present when my companion jumped from the train. They accepted the bribe with joy. The police searched me thoroughly, but my bank notes, safely sewn in my braces and suspenders, were not found, and I had no other incriminating evidence about me.

Being the only man in the bazaar wearing a European hat, I attracted a certain amount of attention. A Turkish gendarme approached and demanded to see my vesika (the Turkish passport with which everybody had to be furnished). Naturally, I had no vesika, but before escaping I had thought of such a predicament, and had signed a civilian photograph of myself—"Fritz Richter, Oberleutnant, in her Pilgertruppen" (First Lieutenant in the German Flying Corps). I now produced this, and explained in fluent German and broken Turkish that I was a German officer wearing a mull, and that I would get the policeman into serious trouble for daring to stop a German trouble. He took the photo, looked at it dubiously, and finally handed it to the still-keeper, who appeared to be able to read German. The signature, containing the stall-keeper's name, was written on the back of the photo, and the policeman returned the photograph, saluted, apologized for having questioned a German officer and went away. So did I.

My Petrol Tank Takes Fire. I was around and determined to make a desperate attempt to reach the line before the gasoline gave out altogether. Then, leaning out from the cockpit and looking underneath the machine, I saw to my horror that the lower part of the fuselage was smouldering and that a little flame was licking its way backward, towards the tail.

When I began to regain my senses I found that it was moonlight. The compass bearings remained, and I felt an intense pain in my right thigh. The engine and the body of the machine were on top of me, so that I could move no part of my body but my head, neck and one arm.

Punishment in a Jail at Nazareth. Following this misfortune I was sent to Nazareth in an open railway truck, with a group of jeering Turkish soldiers. As punishment I was put into Nazareth criminal jail, to be kept with a particularly dirty Arab prisoner. The floor was filthy and verminous and, without the least exaggeration, thousands of

drunk will argue that as Sunday is primarily a day of rest, his condition was very much one of rest. If he was picked up by the roadside, and besides a drunk may not be breaking his Sabbath any more than the man who goes on a pleasure trip in his motor boat or car.

According to the regulations of the Utilities Commission, householders must not use their garden hose for watering purposes after 8 p.m. As daylight saving is not recognized by Parliament, standard time applies, and mowing may con-

time until 9 p.m. unless the Commission changes its regulation. That North Bay had got a stiff term in penitentiary for common theft, but infesting the province to day are profiteer robbers far worse than he—men who rob the people six days a week and sing psalms in their pews on the Sabbath. Of the two types give us the North Bay lad.

trates that so many juries to-day deal leniently with accused men and give them the benefit of every doubt. In one court last week three criminal cases were bowled out and there will be more and more leniency while the law concerns itself with only certain kinds of culprits and fails to get after the bigger fellows who are robbing both the people and the state.

The Man on Watch. Everything in Kingston is high-temperature, cheese and Harry Newman's civic bonds. Some thas to Kingston, ya.

In Toronto the authorities have permitted the selling of ice cream on Sunday. Not to be outdone, the Wolfe Island cheese factories start to make cheese on the Sabbath.

The job of the professional soldier is not enviable if he is liable to be kept standing at attention in dress parade at the laying of a corner stone in the boiling sun until he faints.

The kids of Kingston have it in for the Governor-General. His Excellency stayed two days here and did not proclaim a holiday for the youngsters at school. He goes to Gananoque where the kids turn out and cheer him, and forthwith he orders the schools closed in honor of his visit.

People in police court should not declare that it is worse to be drunk on a Sunday than on a Monday. The

For every 100 vacant situations for females in Switzerland, there are 86.7 applicants.

THE TOWN WATCHMAN.