

Floating Bombs! England's New Threat to Air Raiders

By WAYNE THOMIS

THE THREAT of unrestricted bombing in England has brought development of a number of weapons designed to fight raiding bombing planes. One of the latest of these to be considered by the air ministry, according to reports, is the sky mine, an aerial counterpart of the sea mine laid to protect shipping and coastlines from enemy vessels.

The sky mine consists of a nine or ten ounce light-gauge rolled steel canister filled with high explosive. This is floated into the air on a six-foot rubber balloon attached by a forty-foot length of fine wire. By regulating the size of the balloon and the amount of gas each one carries these floating mines can be scattered about the sky at varying altitudes between the ground and 35,000 feet.

Total cost of the unit would be about 65 cents, so that enormous quantities of them could be released. Furthermore, they could be released at the rate of about one a minute by one man in any open field.

This floating bomb was invented by Maj. H. J. Muir. It would explode on contact with

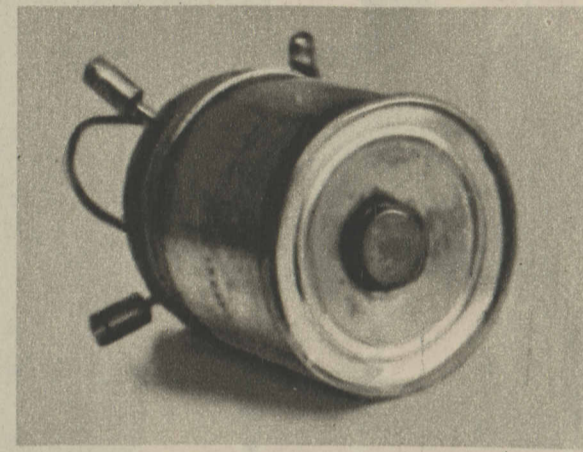
At left: Artist's conception of a raiding plane being caught by one of the floating mines.

a plane and would swing against any machine that hit the balloon or the wire. The explosive in any one bomb would not be enough to destroy a plane, utterly, but it would shatter a wing or fuselage, so that the terrific air pressures generated by high-speed flight would tear the damaged plane to pieces.

The bomb has four firing pins arranged so that one or more of them must strike any object that hits the bomb or the balloon wire in the air. Any one of the pins sets off the detonator that explodes the main charge. Also included in the bomb is a simple timing device that sets off the



Two views of the aerial mine. In picture above the four contacts that set off charge can be seen, also the balloon wire attachment. At left is a view of the bottom, with loading vent.



detonator automatically after a predetermined length of time.

This self-destructing device is needed in order to prevent the skies from becoming crowded with these bombs and preventing friendly aircraft from ramming live bombs.

The bombs would be released so that the wind would carry them toward the enemy. They would be scattered by calculation at all levels in a very few minutes after a raid warning was received.

There are many advantages to this defense. It would not be as costly as maintaining a full-sized balloon barrage around an area like London, but probably would be equally effective. It also would not subject the populace to the dangers of falling shell fragments—a very real danger when anti-aircraft guns would be firing at bombers maneuvering over a city.

The bombs are so constructed that their fragments are harmlessly small.

Mine fields of this kind would be laid in all kinds of weather and would protect cities even when interceptor pursuit planes would be unable to operate. Tests of these bombs already are being made by English air authorities, and the sky mine may become the ideal reply to sky raiders.



● This is the sixth and final installment from the book "Cantigny, a Corner of the War," by Captain Everts, 18th infantry, 1st division, A. E. F., and reprinted by courtesy of the author and Charles Scribner's Sons, the publishers.

By Capt. Jeremiah M. Everts
(Copyright: 1918: By Captain Everts.)

[Note.—The 20th corps of the French army was known as the Iron corps. At the beginning of the war it was commanded by General Foch. It was the spearhead of the attack of the 10th French army on July 18, 1918. The divisions assigned to the 20th corps in the Soissons offensive were the 1st Moroccan division (of which the Foreign Legion was one regiment), the 58th French infantry division, the 69th French infantry division, the 1st U. S. division, and the 2d U. S. division. Of these divisions there were three in line—the 1st division on the left, the Moroccan in the center, and the 2d on the right. As a matter of interest, the 18th infantry advanced farther than any unit on its right or left.]

THE SKY was very beautiful with the first streaks of light as the company came to a halt on the plateau above the little town of Cœuvres. We had marched all night in a single file twenty-seven kilometers on a road filled with tanks, artillery, and ammunition. The single file of infantry weaved its way in and out. Most of the night had been very dark, with practically no bombing of the road so far as we were concerned. It had rained hard during part of the march, and once, I remember, a flash of lightning lit up a long vista at the end of which stood a beautiful chateau—I think the Chateau Compiègne. Later on it had cleared off, and now the dawn gave every promise of a great day.

When we halted there was light enough to disclose the most dramatic picture that I ever hope to see. Cœuvres consisted of two streets built on our side of a little, narrow valley. One street ran along fairly level near the bottom of the hill. The other came almost straight up the steep side of the valley, and both were bounded by stone walls. The valley was 150 or 200 yards wide, with a nice brook flowing through it. To the north, on our side of the valley, there were two fairly regular steps on the hillside. On each step and on the plateau above was a row of artillery as far as one could see. The guns were almost wheel to wheel. Both streets of the little town were filled with 155 howitzers. They were French. It was grand and very comforting to see so much artillery. Across the brook under the shelter of the farther side of the valley was a row of tanks. Behind and among the tanks were infantry. The division had been assigned to the Iron corps of the French army. The attack was to start at 4:35.

We move down the hill and halt at the intersection of the

Cantigny—A Corner of the War

streets. I halt at the northwest corner. Standing above me on the stone wall is a French artillery officer—a captain. He is young and extraordinarily handsome. He evidently commands all the 155 howitzers in the town. He must be a great officer, I thought, to be a captain in the Iron corps. He holds a watch in his left hand and in his right a small French flag.

He calls out 4:32 as we halt. I look up at him. His face is absorbing. His blue eyes are cold and determined, but his lips are parted in a semi-smile. He must be greatly excited, but he controls himself well. He calls out 4:32 and 30 seconds, and so on each half minute. I watch him, fascinated, scarcely breathing. At 4:34 he raises his right arm and calls off the seconds. I look around. The eyes of every artilleryman are watching their flag, their faces eager and expectant. At 4:34 and 30 seconds there is the great boom of the warning gun from the rear.

There are ten more seconds—now there are five—he is calling out, "Six—sept—huit—neuf—dix!" and he drops the tricolor. The ground shakes under the concussion of 2,000 guns. His eyes glisten and he smiles. Something great has really happened. The Iron corps of the French army has commenced the battle of Soissons. It is the beginning of the end of the war!

II.

DIVISION RESERVE

It was the fourth morning of the battle of Soissons. What was left of E company, plus a few stragglers, composed the division reserve. We were in a



(U. S. Army Corps Signal photo.)
18th infantry regiment, 1st division, holed in on Hill 240 near Exermont, Ardennes, France, Oct. 11, 1918.

defiled position a little in front and to the right of the 2d brigade. Twice within the last hour an attack by that brigade had failed. I was watching them reform for another attack. Things were a mess. The 1st brigade, on our right, had attacked successfully several hours before and had reached its objective about a mile and a half away. Unless the 2d brigade took Bery-le-Sec the flank of the corps might be turned.

The major and the adjutant called me. We were going to move. The new position was quite far in advance of the 2d brigade. It could be reached by following the contour of the land around a hill or by going across the top of the hill. It was shorter to go across the top. Against our better judgment we

chose the shorter route. The major led the column. I followed at about six paces. Next in line came a battalion runner, then the adjutant, then another battalion runner. At the top of the hill there was the droning roar of a very large shell falling from a great height. The blast hit my back before I could duck and blew me on top of the major. We went down together. The shell had landed at the adjutant's feet. Neither he nor the two runners had anything more to worry about.

The new position was in some woods on a steep side hill facing toward Germany. The major sat down with his hands locked around his knees. He was looking down the hill. I was lying flat on my belly about six feet from him, my head almost on

a level with his feet. Lieutenant McTague, the only other officer in E company, was about the same distance away on the other side of me. He also was flat on his belly. The machine gun captain was lying in a similar position directly above me, his feet two yards or so from my head. When I say we were flat I mean that our arms were stretched full length above our heads, our heads were turned and pressed against the ground, and our helmets rested on the sides of our heads.

I was looking at the major out of my left eye. He was about all in. He had been very fond of the adjutant. He saw me looking at him. "Go to sleep, Everts; I'll wake you up." In a second I was asleep.

So it does hurt to be dead!

And like the devil! What a terrific noise it makes! You must be dead, though, because everything is dark! My God, how that noise hurts! O, you're crazy! You're not dead! Can't you feel something wet and warm on your face? You couldn't feel if you were dead! Come on, get up!

I looked up and felt the left side of my face. It was wet with blood. (My ear drum had been demolished.) I was shaking very hard all over. McTague was just getting on his feet, blood dripping from his left ear. The machine gun captain had been picked up off the ground and wrapped belly first around a tree forty feet up the hill. No one in the world ever had his wind knocked out any harder. Except for that he was uninjured. I got to my feet. Where the major had been sitting was a form, without head and shoulders, sitting just as I had last seen him, with hands still locked around his knees. About five feet in front of the form, its nearest edge about four feet from where I had been lying, was the shallow hole caused by a shell with an instantaneous fuse.

For God's sake, who has command? Have I? O, my head! Quick! Order every one to go up to the very edge of the hill! Quit shaking, Everts! Where are the orders? But the major had a dispatch case and a message book! O, where is it? Come on and get the hell out! He's dead, and he's lucky. Duck, Everts, you fool! I told you to

get the hell out and join them on the edge of the hill! Quit shaking and go!

Two minutes later the major appeared. He had gone to see to the burial of the adjutant's remains. While I was asleep the last battalion runner had sat down in the same spot the major had left.

III. LEAVING

We were in line near Pont-à-Mousson. I had command of the company and was also acting as adjutant of the battalion. I lived at the battalion P. C. [post of command] with Major Hunt. There were, I think, four officers left in the battalion. There were only ninety men left in the company in spite of replacements. It was the latter part of August.

The arsenic in my stomach was bad. Three weeks later I weighed 115 pounds, which is not much when one is six feet tall. One morning the major asked if I would like to go back and teach tactics or teach in France. I said he would think I was crazy, but that I would rather stay with the company. The major grunted. He said I was too sick, that I coughed all night.

The battalion went out. I was to stay two days with the major of the relieving battalion. He was expected about 9 o'clock in the morning. I went up the path through the woods to the road he would be coming on. I walked away from the junction about forty or fifty feet and lay down in the gutter on the side toward Germany. Well, it looked as if the next two days would be the last. It was silly to feel lost. It was more silly to feel as if I were deserting the company.

I could see the lorry bringing the major coming up the road. The road ran through big woods. When the lorry came within about sixty yards from where I was I stood up and signaled the driver to stop. Then I lay down again in the gutter. A volley of Austrian 90s landed on the road at the junction of the path leading to the battalion P. C. The major had never been in the line before. He asked me how I knew those shells were going to land. I said I didn't know it, that I just thought they might. It certainly would have been a swell ending to have killed a new major and myself in a quiet sector like Pont-à-Mousson.

In two days I went out. I was to leave that night with several other old officers of the regiment. It was getting dark. The company lined up, walked past, and shook hands. It seemed as if we had lived together forever. I was terribly glad that it was dark.

(THE END.)

Voice of the Movie Fan

Letters published in this department should be written on one side of the paper. If you wish a personal reply please inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Dear Mae Tinée: As a Northwestern university graduate two years back, and as one who has written scathing editorials on the subject of sororities and fraternities, I feel somewhat qualified to comment on the film "Sorority House," which you recently reviewed.

It is the frequent and inevitable accusation that sororities and fraternities are little more than glorified dating bureaus and that they create distinctions of wealth and social snobbery in general.

There is no doubt that many young men and women, unable to afford membership, keenly resent the social barriers set up against them by those more fortunate. Man is a gregarious creature, given to congenial relationship with his fellows, and he naturally dislikes not being a part of the crowd.

But as for social snobbery, I do not feel the blame rests with the sororities and fraternities. It is true, at Northwestern, as at any other great college, that a few immature boys and girls feel themselves of great significance because of their mem-

bership in a fraternity or sorority, and attempt to lord it over nonmembers. But that is a flaw of character inherent in the individual rather than in the organization of the sorority or fraternity. In later life those who look for jobs find that a sorority or fraternity social rating is of little value; it is merit that matters. And merit can be found in members of sororities and fraternities just as much as in nonmembers.

The exhibitionist and the snob are not limited to university social life. For that reason, while "Sorority House" shows the stereotyped figures of selfish and snobbish girls, it should not be taken as an indictment of the entire organization. Sincerely,
PAUL HUGO LITTLE (Summer '37).

Editor's note: Thanks for your interesting letter!

Dear Miss Tinée: I have been waiting very patiently for so long that now I am starting to give up hope of ever seeing Allan Jones in a picture again. Such a

fine actor and singer cannot be cast into the rubbish pile and forgotten. If only for his wonderful acting, he should be starred again in a great picture like "Firefly" (which was one of the best movies I have ever seen, because of his acting and singing ability).

He's got such life in him, and he doesn't have to speak to say what he thinks—he says it with his facial expressions. Why don't the Hollywood producers wake up and see what they're losing? Truly,
CELIA.

Editor's note: I reckon you'll be seeing Allan Jones again one of these days. In the meantime, keep a-hoping!

Dear Miss Tinée: Would you be kind enough to let me know how old Al Jolson is? What legitimate shows has he played in? Sincerely yours,
F. M. THOMAS.

Editor's note: Al Jolson was born May 26, 1886. Has appeared on the stage in "Bombo," "Big Boy," and "Wonder Bar."