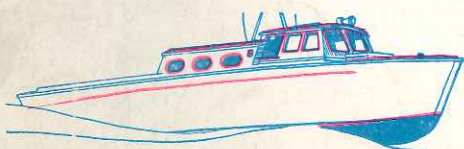
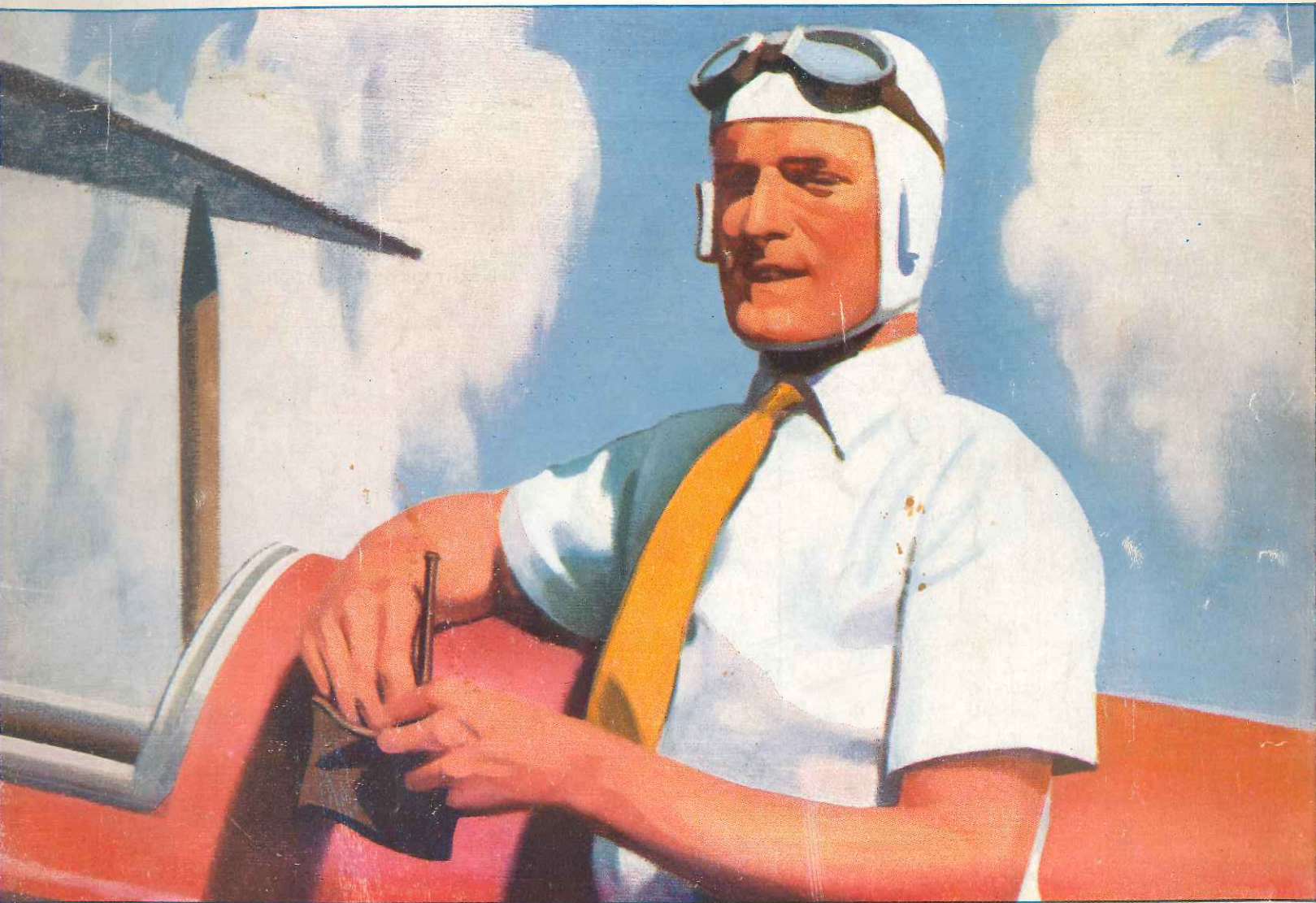


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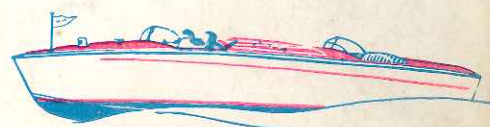
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MATHY OF THE ZEPPELINS

By
**ALFRED
CELLIER**

ON March 7th, 1915, there was commissioned in the Imperial German Naval Airship Service a new Zeppelin, the L-9. Her first commanding officer was Kapitänleutnant Heinrich Mathy, who, before the War Gods laid down their swords, was destined not only to die a flaming death, but to be the best known of those Zeppelin commanders who rode dark skies at night. Though he brought death and injuries to his victims, he was to be honoured by his enemies when he passed into the beyond.

It was this same Heinrich Mathy who, before commanding a Zeppelin, trod the quarterdeck of a torpedo-boat of the mighty German fleet. His years of experience navigating at sea and with his rank placed him in the lead of the majority of future raids over the British Islands.

Having entered the German Navy in 1900, Mathy had twice before been assigned to airship service for Zeppelin training before the outbreak of the World War. When Europe thundered and trembled to the heavy guns,

Mathy was ready for his new venture. Before he died, he was a recipient of the *Pour le Merite*, the highest decoration which could be bestowed by his country.

Late in the afternoon of April 14th, 1915, while on patrol with his first command, the L-9, out over the

fast darkening waters of the North Sea, Mathy reported by wireless that his reconnaissance was finished. No ships had been sighted and a full load of bombs remained on board. The wireless soon flashed back a message from Straszer, chief of the naval airship service. It read, "to raid at your discretion, the British coast." Mathy was elated, for there had been but only one such previous attack.

Nightfall came and out of the gloom and fog the steady drone of motors, bearing a warning like the beat of tom-toms in the jungle, sounded to those in a little town on the Tyne. Here the first bombs were released, and the scattering of rifle fire from the small garrison proving ineffective, Mathy continued on.

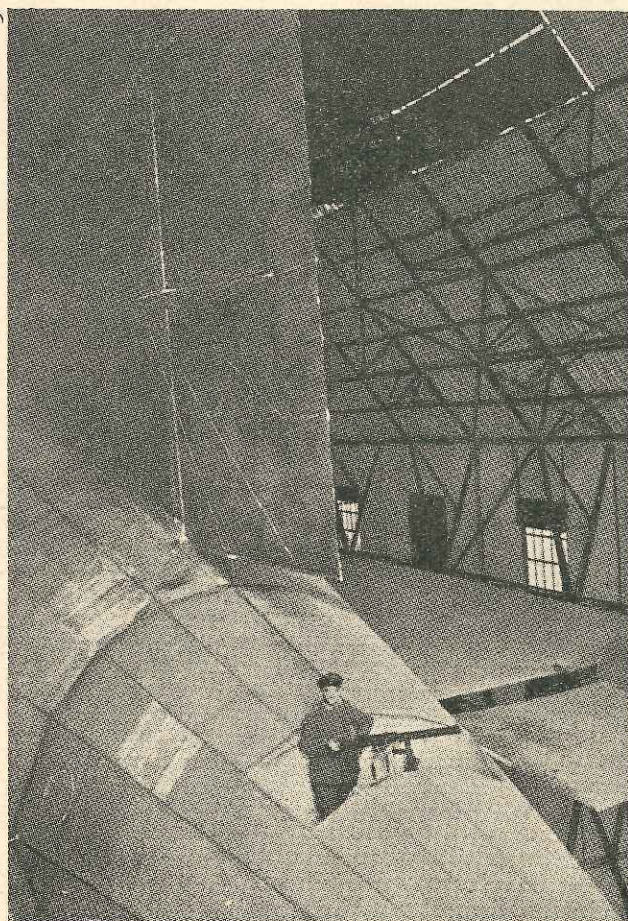
By this time all lights had been put out, as the warning sounded over England, and many of Mathy's bombs landed in the open fields of the countryside. But over Wallsend nine bombs were dropped, slightly injuring a woman and a girl. The L-9 poked her nose through the gloomy night and headed for Marsden, where she let go her remaining bombs before pushing out to sea and back to her shed at Hage, in the northern part of Germany.

Short months passed, and it was in June before Mathy received orders to prepare the L-9 for another attack. This time he was to go in company with two other Zeppelins, and London was to be the objective. On June 6th, the squadron met at sea. Early evening found them separated and Mathy was over the London docks. Fog enveloped the city, but through the open patches Mathy saw only one battery firing up at him. The defences had not been fully established, and the few defence aeroplanes were not what they later turned out to be.

Guttural commands rang out through the ship, and her whole frame quivered as the bombs went soaring down. Fifty-two bombs in all were released, and forty houses and buildings crumbled and caught fire, while twenty-four people lay dead and forty others injured. There was no military value in that, yet it caused more



Heinrich Mathy.



An unusual photograph of a Zeppelin, showing the rear gunner's cockpit, with spandau in position.

than was to be expected. The public clamoured for protection. Rioting broke out, and many a supposed German was mobbed on the street and his place of business wrecked before order was resumed. It resulted, as did the rest of the raids, in keeping a large number of squadrons and anti-aircraft troops for the defence of English cities to combat future attacks.

Not until August 9th did Mathy get his chance to raid again, although other Zeppelins had crossed many times since. On this occasion, Strasser himself led the group of five Zeppelins. Mathy was, however, not destined to have an active part in the operations, for engine trouble compelled him to turn about for home before he even sighted the English coast. A week later, Mathy, with his new command, the L-13, once again was forced to return to his base with engine trouble.

On September 9th, restless from inactivity, Mathy in his L-13, leading two other airships, bore down on the darkening coast. A cruiser squadron opened fire, while the Zeppelins sailed serenely overhead, climbing for altitude. The L-13 was now alone over London, and Mathy passed the command to release the bombs. The first salvo landed in open fields, but the remaining ones caused the death of twenty-two persons and eighty-seven others were injured, while a path of wreckage and fire lay across the outskirts of the city. It was during this raid that a six hundred and sixty pound bomb was released for the first time. With it was dropped a scraped ham-bone with a note which read, "A memento from starved-out Germany. What shall I, poor devil, do?" Defence guns crackled in the dark night, and Mathy climbed for altitude before starting homeward again.

Four days later, Mathy and his L-13 were flying in very bad weather. The dash-dot of the wireless told that the other accompanying Zeppelins, which were now well out to sea, were going to put back. Mathy looked grave, but he had missed too many of the raids so far. The L-13 continued on, buffing up and down as the helmsman sought to steady her.

It was nearing midnight now as an anti-aircraft gun spoke from the defences of Felixstowe. Mathy continued on, while down below a mobile anti-aircraft unit was unlimbering guns and searchlights. Soon there was a screech and a bang, and the L-13 trembled from stem to stern. She was hit, and all bombs were ordered to be immediately released. No time to think of raiding now. The main thing was to get the L-13 safely home. Out over the North Sea everything movable, including petrol, oil, water, machine-gun ammunition and food, was thrown overboard. Nervous tension was relaxed when the home sheds were sighted, but the L-13 was not in condition to be properly handled and was further damaged in getting down.

A month passed before Mathy and his L-13 went out again. This time five Zeppelins made up the raiding squadron, which separated over England. Above

Hampton twelve high explosive bombs were released, damaging residences and other small places. At Woolwich, where a naval barracks and arsenal were located, thirty-three more bombs were dropped, and thirteen of the military personnel were wounded. Mathy in this attack had been confused by the fog and had believed that he was attacking the wharves and docks at London, and so reported on his return.

Nearly four months passed before Mathy was ordered to rendezvous again. This time with nine Zeppelins, the squadron being led by Strasser. Before reaching the English coast the airships divided, Strasser leading one group over Northern England, while Mathy, in his L-13, was at the head of the second group, with orders to raid Southern England. After reaching his destination, Mathy was on his own again, as no endeavour was made to keep the airships together. In fact, each commander was allotted designated targets, but weather conditions often made it impossible to locate them. Mathy now dropped flares to seek his whereabouts and found himself over Stoke. Bombs were released and the

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The remains of the L-31 at Potters Bar after Tempest had finished with it.



MATHY OF THE ZEPPELINS

(Continued from page 371)

L-13 passed over. In a short while a large blast factory, apparently unaware of the approaching Zeppelin, loomed before the L-13. Hurriedly the remaining sixty-four bombs were let go and went screaming down, but in the haste all missed that large plant, although they did considerable other damage. The L-13 now turned homewards.

March 3rd brought Mathy's second raid for the new year. It was originally intended as a reconnaissance to locate the British Grand Fleet, whose location was unknown to the Germans, and to bomb their naval bases. Two Zeppelins and the L-13 made up the scouting force. Rain and snow, with a gathering storm, bore down on the airships. The bombs were released indiscriminately to lighten the ships, as the gathering snow on their tops would have forced them down. Finding it almost impossible to proceed against the wind, Mathy was further handicapped by the anti-aircraft fire. Eventually, after what must have seemed an age, they were again out over the sea and homeward bound, the storm persisting up to their arrival.

Another month quickly passed, and the L-13 with four other airships were again over England. Mathy had received orders to destroy the ammunition works at Stowmarket and was finding difficulty in locating them, though he was over the town. Shortly after spotting them and losing considerable altitude in doing so, the L-13 was hit by an anti-aircraft shell, causing half the gas to escape from one cell. Mathy immediately wirelessly his plight to the airship sheds at Hage, but they were helpless to assist him. Nevertheless, luck still seemed to cling with Mathy and they safely returned to their home base.

April 2nd, the L-13 ready again, Mathy joined the Zeppelin squadron for a raid on the naval base at Rosyth, but while out at sea motor trouble developed and the L-13 limped home. Three days later, while out with the squadron on another mission, similar engine trouble was had, and Mathy once more was forced to watch the others continue as he swung his ship about.

Mathy was now in line for one of the new Super Zeppelins, and was ordered to command the L-31, which was commissioned on July 17th. Two weeks later Mathy, with his new flagship, led a squadron of ten Zeppelins toward England. Bad weather set in, and two of the airships were compelled to return. The whole attack was shortly abandoned in view of the increasing bad weather, and although several towns were bombed, no material damage was done; most of Mathy's bombs fell into the sea.

Not again until August 24th did Mathy take the L-31 out. In the meantime two airships had come to grief through the rapidly increasing defences. This time, Mathy joined up under Strasser again and twelve Zeppelins formed the raiding group. Mathy continued alone for London after reaching the coastline, and at Millwall released his first bombs, attacking Greenwich, Blackheath and Eltham, as he came over them. More blood was shed as nine civilians were killed and forty injured as they sought to escape the rain of bombs, and there was the resultant damage of property. Defence pilots pushed up their aeroplanes into the fog, but were not successful in locating the raiders.

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AVIATION BOOKSHELF

(Continued from page 400)

dramatic style all the time, it would have been much better. As it is, it is unconvincing, which is a pity, for the airman no doubt saw all the things he describes. So many of these war books stall because the author will write in the light of what he knows now, instead of curbing himself to what he knew then.

In any case, both the flying and prison stories have been told so many times, and so much better, that there seems to be no real excuse for this latest effort. The title is the only original thing about it, and that slightly exaggerates the context.—W. E. J.

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It seems rather early to introduce this subject, but this notice is issued for the benefit of overseas readers, who, in the past, have complained that our announcement has been made too late for them to participate.

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