

GREATEST OF AIR RACES FROM PEKIN TO PARIS

Aviators Getting Ready for a Spectacular Flight of 8,000 Miles Across Asia and Europe—Obstacles to Be Overcome and Dangers to Be Encountered in Regions Far From Civilization

MOST spectacular of all air races is that planned for next September. It will be the longest of all contests between airships, the most dangerous, the most impressive. Just consider the fact that it is to begin in Pekin and to end in Paris, that it is to cross regions entirely unexplored a few years ago and still little known to-day.

The course is 8,000 miles long. Starting from Pekin, the aviators will cross China, Siberia, Europe. They will fly over territory inhabited by people who have never heard of a flying machine and to whom a white man is a curiosity. The obstacles are so great that the first impulse is to say that it is impossible. But so daring and so wonderful are the achievements of the aviators that it is not prudent to pronounce any feat of flying impossible.

Both in distance and in the obstacles to be surmounted the project of the Pekin to Paris race is a great advance over all the contests that have taken place so far. It is being organized by a Paris newspaper, *Le Matin*. The prospect is that the race will have the largest number of entries of any of the great contests.

The greatest difficulties involved in this race do not come entirely from the long distance to be covered. One of them is that the suitable landing places along the route are few and far between. Then while it may be possible to establish supply depots along the Trans-Siberian Railroad, it is yet to be seen whether physical and atmospheric conditions are suitable for flying along that special route.

The aviators who took part in the Paris-Madrid, the Paris-Rome and the European and British circuits last year found that it is by no means easy to follow railroads. The best time to fly is in the early morning from 4 o'clock to 9 o'clock. Then the air is calm and the atmosphere even. Later the sun heats the soil and creates hot air columns which, rising, bring about what is known as Swiss cheese conditions. That is, the aviator encounters patches of air of different densities, which increases the difficulties of flying. But in the early mornings mist and fog often screen the railroad and one can fly only by compass.

Notwithstanding the many difficulties of the Pekin-Paris course the contestants will not be lacking. There are 1,000 licensed aviators in France at present and while the great majority will find it beyond their means to defray the expenses of the contest, there are at least one dozen constructors and 100 aviators who can afford to take part in the race and will do so for the prestige it will give. While there are enthusiasts who believe that the flight can be accomplished, there are others who are of the opinion that the obstacles are too great to be overcome. Some who are familiar with the conditions think that the ignorance and superstitions of the population of parts of China would materially add to

The itinerary included the German territory. Prince Borghese in an Italian car was the winner in the contest, which at the time was regarded as one of the most sensational races ever attempted. It is now planned to have the air route patrolled by automobiles, with gasoline stations along the route to provide supplies both for the cars and the aeroplanes.

The magnitude of the undertaking has aroused the keenest interest among those interested in flying in this country and it is probable that some American aviator may be among the entrants, as there are a number who drive French machines.

In discussing the race Henry Woodhouse, associate editor of the *Bulletin* of the Aero Club of America, said: "The Pekin-Paris aeroplane race is a stupendous undertaking. This is the last word of the national movement to make France the absolute leader of aviation. It was organized to a great extent to outdistance Germany, whose plans include fourteen big events to be held this summer. That explains why

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Charles Tannes Weyman, Winner of Gordon Bennett Cup.



Maurice Tabuteau who flew for two hours at a speed of 75 miles an hour.



Some of the probable starters in the Pekin-Paris flight.

when he attempted the flight, had a buffer of mattresses set up at the edge of the landing place on the Puy de Dome, so that the machine would not run off. On this trip Renaux took along a companion.

Capt. Thomas S. Baldwin, the first aviator to give exhibitions in the Orient, is of the opinion that any airman who takes part in the race will find plenty of obstacles to be overcome. He says the hostile attitude of the inhabitants in parts of China would imperil the life of any flyer who landed among them. He also thinks the atmospheric and geographical conditions will present obstacles not encountered in other big events. Although Capt. Baldwin has made flights at most of the treaty ports in China he would not venture into the interior territory.

On his first trip to the Orient about two years ago he took along Bud Mars and Tod Shriver. Both Capt. Baldwin and Shriver were presented with medals in the various countries. In China Capt. Baldwin said at first the natives regarded his machine as some sort of toy and thought that by winding it up it would fly. The Chinese were greatly astonished when they saw the captain mount his "toy" and drift away into the air.

No less striking were his experiences in the Philippines, where the natives swarmed about him and regarded his machine with wonder and superstition. They were not sure whether it was a dream or an invention of the devil. Would he go up in it? they wanted to know. He assured them he would.

"Me go if you go," said a chief named Cabagan.

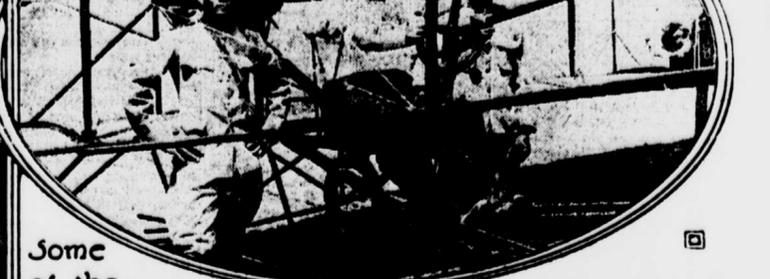
He took his seat beside the captain and never turned a hair when he was carried up 2,000 feet into space. For his further amusement figure eight, wavy planes and spirals were performed, but the chief sat like a statue, showing no fear or emotion.

Fatalities in Conquests. Although Capt. Baldwin says the Pekin-Paris flight looks like a hard proposition, he thinks in view of the fact that so much has been accomplished by aviators that it is not wise to say that the thing cannot be done. As an illustration he cited the transcontinental flight from New York to San Francisco, which was looked upon as an impossible feat by the most experienced aviators in this country.

Then along came Calbraith Rodgers, an inexperienced airman, to prove that it could be done.

"It takes these young daredevils," said the Captain, "to do big things. They are not fully conscious of the danger and they are spurred on by youthful enthusiasm to attempt feats that a more logical man would not undertake."

These long distances flying races have not been accomplished without accidents, but strange as it may seem the proportion of mishaps is not as great as in ordinary events. The Paris-Madrid race on its first day was marked by a tragedy, the



Captain Thomas S. Baldwin at Manila.

unfortunate aviator, withdrew from the contest.

The start of the European circuit, which occurred about a month later, was marred by three fatalities, two of the aviators being burned to death in their machines. There were 52 airmen in this contest. The crowd of spectators was so large that its control was beyond the combined efforts of the troops and the police.

The German circuit, which was held almost simultaneously, started with 11 airmen, a actually finishing. The three winners, Koenig, Wolmuller and Buchner, each carried a passenger throughout the race, the distance of which was 1,100 miles. The last of the long distance contests of 1911 was the British circuit, which was considered by experts as the most successful. A radical departure was that the contestants were not allowed to change machine or motor during the race.

In discussing these events a writer recently said a map of Europe traced with lines for all the aeroplane circuits and races that have taken place would look like a spider web and France would look like a fine screen. "And that is why Europe is so much ahead of Americans in aviation," he added.

But this country has awakened and planned a big circuit of 1,810 miles to be started from Chicago next September. It is international in character, and it is probable that some of the crack fliers from the other side may be induced to come over and try for the prize money, there being \$25,000 for the first winner. This first step is significant, and it may not be long before America too can boast of a cross-continent aerial map.

NEW YORK PEARL DIVERS. "Hullo, Mike, working?" was the salutation addressed by one seely looking individual to another of about the same pattern who was seated on a bench in Union Square.

"Nothin' doin'," was the answer, followed by a long recital of unfortunate experiences.

"No more pearl diving for me," was the first speaker's comment and his appearance so belied such an occupation that the curiosity of the third man on the bench was aroused.

The man addressed as Mike soon shuffled wearily away, and under cover of a request for a light the third man moved up into his vacant seat and found it easy to make the acquaintance of Mike's friend.

"No," said Mike's friend, when disclosure was made as to Mike's profession. "No, Mike don't look much like pearls and the nearest he ever gets to them are the oyster shells that come back on the dishes he handles. He draws half a dollar every night and sends it; then what has he left as the balance of his week's pay, which is usually \$5?"

"I have known one or two men who have held such a job down year in and year out and saved several hundred dollars. One man I worked with in a Bowery restaurant could always change a \$10 bill for the boss. This man, besides his regular wages had the privilege of selling the scraps for dogmeat and in this way made \$3 or \$4 extra every week."

"Yes, I have known all kinds of men



Andre Beaumont, Winner of the British Circuit carried in Triumph.

was always within an earshot. The prize was \$50,000.

Special Danger in China. This is what flying men call air intoxication. Often airmen confess the danger of the game, but say it is like a game of poker—one always clings to the hope of winning.

Renaux, who is known in Europe as one of the most intrepid fliers because of his flight from Paris to the top of the Puy de Dome, undoubtedly will carry a passenger in the Pekin-Paris race, as he has done on other occasions. Now that the latest fliers are equipped with speaking tubes a passenger would greatly relieve the loneliness of such a flight.

The achievement of Renaux is regarded as one of the most remarkable on record because of the scant landing space available. Other aviators had attempted the feat, but had met with failure. Morane,

the perils of the undertaking. They think that if by mischance an aviator should drop into a village or town in certain parts of the empire he would not have much show of getting away with his life.

In planning the race French patriotism and French military sentiment have not been overlooked; in fact the international character of the contest has been somewhat sacrificed to meet the demands of French patriotism. Pilots of all nations can compete, but only French built machines built by a French concern may be entered. It is also stipulated, evidently to prevent foreign firms from opening up shops in France, that concerns building airships for the race must have been established prior to January 1st.

On the itinerary Germany has been carefully avoided. Two reasons are given for this. One is that the Wright patents are still in litigation in Germany and the other is that Germany has planned fourteen aerial events to be held during the summer, which brings in the element of rivalry.

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Daring Fliers in Plenty. Mr. Woodhouse is confident that the number of entries will be large and that every big French manufacturer will busy himself in building an adequate machine for the event.

"Blériot, whose pilots won first place in eight big races," he said, "including the Paris-Rome and the European and British circuits, told me during his recent visit here that he would enter several machines, and he seemed to consider it the best kind of investment."

"There are a number of constructors in France to-day who are sorry that they did not take part in the circuits last year. At the time it seemed purely a gamble, and it was to this extent, that as there were only one or two prizes only one or two could win and the rest had to bear the expenses without any returns. But when the year closed and Blériot, Morane-Borel, Deperdussin and a few others sold machines on the strength of good showings made in the circuits, these other fellows began to regret their lack of foresight."

"Most of these airmen have means of their own or can find rich men to back them to the extent of \$10,000, the minimum sum required to cover the cost of taking part in the contest."

cross. Unfortunately most of the aviators are brave and object that to win without peril is to triumph without glory. That spirit has cost many lives and has created a public sentiment against aviation."

It goes without saying that Vedrines will head the list unless he is elected Deputy. He was the first entrant. As soon as he heard of the contest he called up the organizers and very earnestly announced that he was going to win the race. The organizers told him that they had no doubt about it and would be glad to hand him the first prize on his arrival at Paris, meantime they thought it might be a good idea for him to enter his name. He had overlooked the formality of entering.

His eagerness to be ready for this race is in part responsible for his recent accident, it having spurred him into using more powerful motors without proper training. But he is well again, and far from being cured of his mania for speed he is again after the makers of the Deperdussin monoplane, trying to get them to cut down wing surface and add motor power, so that he can beat his 104 miles an hour record.

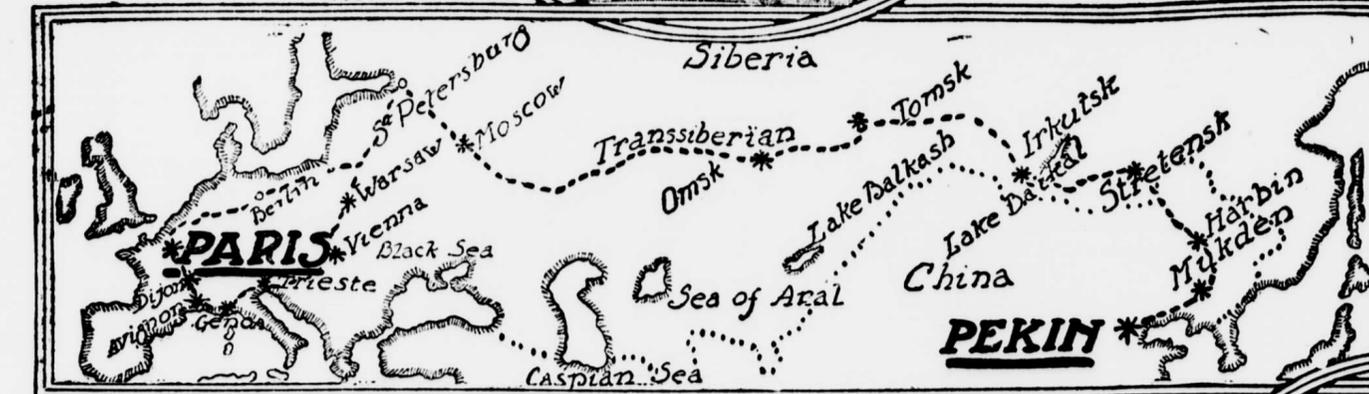
Race Fever in the Air. Beaumont, the winner of the Paris-Rome race and the European and British circuits, will no doubt compete against Vedrines. Mr. Blériot said he could not ask him to pilot a Blériot monoplane, because Beaumont's fame has raised his rates beyond the reach of even Blériot. Mr. Blériot doubted whether Beaumont would consider an offer of 100,000 francs for the engagement.

alighted to see to it, but the ground did not seem to be suitable for the purpose. Besides, Garros was about half a mile in front of me flying as fast as he could. Behind me five rhinoceroses threatened to overtake me.

"I was overcome by that all compelling feeling which might be called the race fever and might be described as a special state of mind in which cares, fears and physical pain vanish and make room for a mad desire to fly faster and still faster. Sometimes the race fever getting the better of us leads to victory, at other times it is the cause of our failure, because it overrules our judgment and makes us lose our presence of mind."

"It was in those conditions that I reached Melin, flying at a height of 1,600 feet. Here occurred a fresh misadventure and another of my cylinders became useless. This time I was compelled to alight almost at once. I had hardly time to choose a field which looked to me as if it had been cleared of its harvest. On landing I discovered my mistake too late—it was a lucerne field and the plants were so high and so strong that they reached up to the chassis and might have caused me to capsize."

The competition of Vedrines and Beaumont in the flight around Great Britain furnished one of the most thrilling spectacles in the history of the sport. Beaumont had the advantage by reason of his military training. He reads his maps better; when they failed he knew how to use the compass; and when he came to the ground he could speak English. He said in describing his experiences in the race from Carlisle to Manchester: "My engine was wrong from the start. It would not pull; yet always I had to be mounting and mounting to clear the blue hills I could see in advance. 'But she must pull,' I said. 'There is Vedrines.' So we kept on. The mountains came. I was not fifty feet over their top. I thought I should touch them. I looked for a place to drop; but there was no place. Below me in the hills were great deeps. In one I came across an air pocket. Down



Route of the Pekin-Paris aeroplane flight. Controls marked thus *

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