

# THE OPEN LETTER SECTION

## FLYING IN THE PAST

By WALTER J. HELD

Although it has only been within the last decade that the subject of aeronautics has advanced so wonderfully, the subject, so tradition asserts, extends as far back as 2,000 years B. C. One Wang Tu, a Chinese mandarin, was the first to sacrifice himself to the problem of flying. Then there is left in stone a partial account of experiments by Man-U, an Assyrian priest, who attempted to fly from the temple of Baal.

The first fatality of the kind in our era seems to have been during the reign of Nero, when Execetes, a Roman, tried to fly.

Next, Dantes, during the dark ages, at Perouse, fell, breaking his leg, while trying to navigate with a pair of wings. About 1510, the prior of Tongland, before the court of Stirling, donned wings of feathers and leaped from a tower into a "myddling." Allard was crippled by a fall while trying to fly before Louis the Grand in Paris in 1660.

It was not until 1783 that the balloon was invented. Blanchard and later Rittenhouse and Hopkins made several successful flights (jumps, rather) around this time. In 1786 Pilatre de Rozier and M. Romaine set out from Boulogne in a car supported by fire and hydrogen balloons. In a quarter of an hour, at a height of 3,000 feet, the apparatus took fire, and scattered fragments and the bodies of the aeronauts were found some time later. In 1808 M. Moisant was killed at Liste. Four years later Bittorff, at Mannheim, met with death when his balloon caught fire, as did Count Francois Zambecari, at Boulogne. Mme. Sophie Blanchard, widow of the French aeronaut, was next to sacrifice her life, at Paris, in

### Pussy's Advice

There was once a wise old pussy cat,  
I heard the other day,  
Who had four little pussy cats,  
All very fond of play.

They capered and they scampered,  
And they ran about so fast,  
You'd sometimes think a railroad train  
Was surely dashing past.

And they played and they played,  
And they winked their silly eyes,  
Till the old cat was afraid  
That they never would be wise.

"Come here, you naughty kits," she  
said,  
And learn to hunt for mice;  
Just stop your pranks and listen  
While I give you good advice."

Then on her nose she placed her specs,  
And on her head her cap,  
And sat down with the naughtiest  
Of the kittens in her lap.

"Now, first of all, I tell you what  
I've never known to fail,  
Matty, drop your paws, and Spot,  
Stop biting Tabby's tail!"

Thus scolding one and slapping one,  
And boxing every ear,  
She got them all set down at last  
With folded paws to hear.

Then, lifting up her left fore-paw,  
And pointing here and there,  
She told them how and what and all  
About it with great care.

At last, when she had given  
All the counsel she could think,  
She added: "And be very careful  
What you eat and drink."

Dear Editor: I found this interesting poem in an old book, and will you kindly print it? Tell Alonzo that I wish him a happy and joyous voyage.  
From a Junior, AILEEN SMITH.

### Treason

By MAURICE GRAMONT

Patty was a soldier,  
And many a fight fought he,  
Patty was bolder  
Than any one could be.

But for the simple reason  
That Pat was tried for treason,  
He up and quit the British ranks  
And threw his luck in with the  
Yanks.

### A Little Girl's Responsibilities

By ROBERT GILBERT WELSH

The season worries Polly Smith,  
She can not take her ease,  
For she is deeply burdened with  
Re-spon-si-bil-i-ties.

Two robins have begun their nest  
Above the big front door,  
And near the window facing west  
Poor Polly found two more.

Some swallows in the chimney flue  
Are keeping house this spring,  
And in her favorite maples, too,  
The orioles build and sing.

So Polly has to watch and care  
And cry out "Shoo!" and "Scat!"  
That's why she has an anxious air,  
You see, she has a cat!

1819. Lieutenant Harris of the British navy, in May, 1824, died from an attempt at attaching balloons to warships.

In 1836 John Wise, greatest of all American balloonists, experimented with a balloon wrought of silk, with which he later also met death. A year later Robert Cocking, at London, tested his new parachute, which was made of Irish linen, having a circumference of 107 feet, and which was fastened to a big balloon. In 1873, at Jonia, Mich., Horace Mountain was killed when his balloon "Xerxes" exploded. J. Croce-Spinelli and Spivel, French savants, were frozen to death while attempting to break the record of altitude in 1875 at Paris. One hundred thousand dollars was spent by Maxim on two heavier than air machines. The machines were both failures. Lilienthal of Germany, after 25 years of experimenting on a double decked aeroplane with which several successful flights were made, was killed. Next, Langley brought forth the steam aerodrome, which also proved a failure. Zeppelin, in a craft 443 feet long, made an excellent flight in August, 1908. Orville Wright, with Lieutenant Selfridge, after a flight in a heavier than air machine, was thrown to the ground, killing Selfridge. Lefevre's and Ferber's wonderful experiments and flights bring us to date.

The success of a flying machine depends largely upon the power plant and propeller. Even more so on the propeller. Propellers for air voyaging vessels must conform to a set of conditions which are, generally speaking, new, because of the laws of the air, which laws held no great significance for us until we took to aerial navigation.

Almost all aeroplane propellers are made of wood, which is preferred to steel, on account of the fact that a steel blade is liable to snap suddenly and without warning under the influence of changes of temperature or violent shocks. A wooden blade is less liable to break and gives warning of impending fractures by bending and splitting. Wooden propellers are also much lighter than steel propellers.

## SHORT BARKS FROM ALONZO

When I couldn't sleep, my mother used to tell me I had a guilty conscience. I wonder what's the matter with the ocean?

Friendships, on an ocean liner, spring up like mushrooms overnight. And once in a while you run across a toadstool.

Unusual names are great inventions. They do more to bolster the human's self-respect than anything else. Take a man with a name like Niwinispezik, and he's all in a class by himself. He figures that he's the only Niwinispezik in existence, and takes courage accordingly. In fact, he's downright proud of himself. Whereas, were he named Jones, he'd meet so many Joneses that he'd have a hard time identifying himself. And that is wilting, to say the least.

"Alonzo," said the Pup, "what is a bore?"

"A bore," said I, "is a dog who insists on barking of things you know nothing about."

"Alonzo," once again queried the Pup, "what is mental arithmetic?"

"Mental arithmetic," I answered, "is a form of torture invented by a man whose brain was creased in figures."

Traveling is a form of lunacy. The slower you go, the wilder you get.

## WORDS OF THANKS

Dear Editor: Thank you ever and ever so much for the paint box. I have just received it. It is the first prize I have ever won. I never even dreamed that it would be so nice and never thought I would get anything. Yours truly,  
San Mateo, INA COOK,

Editor Junior Call—Dear Sir: I have received the watch awarded to me and I am much pleased with it. I have tried several times to win and I am glad I kept trying. Yours truly,  
Los Gatos, HARRY B. HAMBLY JR.

Dear Editor: I am very much pleased with the paints you so kindly sent me. Yours truly,  
Oakland, RUTH GRAY,

Dear Sir: The box of paints came to hand this morning. Yours truly,  
San Jose, H. WUHRMANN.

Editor of Junior Call—Dear Sir: I received the watch which you sent me as a prize. I thank you very much for it. It is so much nicer than I ever dreamed it would be. Yours truly,  
Alameda, LAWRENCE STEVENS,

Dear Editor: Thank you so much for the box of paints you sent me. It gives

In Europe there is an expression which has been in use for several hundred years—"the balance of power." What is it? Generally speaking, it is the equilibrium maintained between the countries of Europe, in which each nation acts as a check upon the power of the other. The balance of power has been a potent factor in European politics and diplomacy for many years. Only twice has it been disturbed to an alarming degree. First, when Frederick the Great fought the rest of continental Europe for the possession of Silesia, his stolen province; and second, when Napoleon plunged Europe into the chaos of the Napoleonic wars. In both instances the equilibrium of the nations was upset, and more especially in the second, when Napoleon ruled continental Europe.

The balance of power is the result of a combination of causes; each nation's desire for physical supremacy, the large standing armies which are a menace to peace; the continual struggle for naval predominance, and the universal jealousy existing among the countries of Europe. Each of these has resulted in a condition of affairs detrimental to European peace policies and the security of each nation. It is a disturbing element in the arguments of those who believe in the fulfillment of the idealistic dream—universal peace. European countries are suspicious of one another and, as a result, maintain large armies and navies for "protective" purposes.

Great Britain, France, Germany and Russia are the important factors in the maintenance of the balance of power, by virtue of their physical superiority over the other nations. And the first three, in their turn, have been essential in preventing and curtailing Russia's desire for supreme power. The march of the Slavic empire towards European predominance has been successfully checked through the combined influence of Great Britain, France and Germany.

The Turkish invasion of Europe has

been stopped and forced back into Asia, mainly through these same nations. They, too, have had a deciding influence in settling the eternal Balkan question, being several times instrumental in avoiding European wars over the Balkan states. Thus in some instances has the balance of power proved its efficiency in preventing the absolute power of any nation; the dread existence of absolutism and despotic rule has been avoided. Today it is the chief factor in the preservation of peace in Europe.

Do not think, however, that the balance of power is entirely a factor for good results; it has its defective points also. It is responsible for the large standing armies that burden the countries of continental Europe. Large standing armies and navies result in overtaxation and are mainly accountable for the social, economic conditions at present existing in Europe. The vast amount of money expended on the armies and navies could be used to better advantage in ameliorating the social as well as economic conditions in Europe.

In comparing the good and bad points of the balance of power it will be seen that it is, in the main, injurious to Europe. It is true that it preserves peace, but it is a peace preserved by force of arms, as costly as war. The balance of power is an important factor in European diplomacy; it is strong enough to sway the nations of Europe and check their ambitious desires, and although it preserves peace it is an armed peace, which is slowly tending to a great European war in the future, equaling the Napoleonic wars.

### Cats Without Tails

Seven miles from the mainland on which the village of Beach Haven, N. J., stands is a narrow strip of land which is called Long beach.

On it there is the only tribe of tailless cats in this country. Early in the last century a large English ship was wrecked on that part of the Jersey coast. The sailors were saved, and so were a lot of cats on board. They came from the Isle of Man, in the Irish sea, and belonged to a curious breed found only on that island, known as Manx cats and born without tails.

At first the animals were quite tame and frequented the vicinity of the lighthouse, where they nightly held open air concerts that were not musical enough to merit the appreciation of the light keepers, and ultimately resulted in their being driven away. Then they took to the woods and managed to subsist during the first winter on birds, thousands of which lived in the swamps. The cats increased rapidly and in a few years numbers of them could be found almost anywhere in Barnegat woods.

Their outdoor life made them savage, and the breed seems to have increased in both size and courage, for eventually they became so fierce that they would stand and show fight toward any one who invaded their homes.

They are curious looking creatures. The front legs being shorter than their hind legs causes them to make big jumps as they go about, yet it is said they can easily outrun an ordinary dog.

The cats make good fishers, and when fish are plentiful they go along the beach, and as the breakers run up on the shore, carrying with them small butterfish, mullets and silver bait, they jump into the shallow water and with their sharp claws pin a fish to the sand, and the outgoing wave leaves their prey exposed. Then, before another breaker can roll in, they catch the fish and take it up on the dry beach and devour it.

At times dozens of these strange looking cats can be seen on the beach making meals off the surf clams that are cast up by the tide.

For the last 20 or 30 years Long beach has been a famous summer resort. Many of the cats have been killed by tourists or frightened back into the swamps. Occasionally some more humane visitor endeavors to tame one of the animals. It is hard work, but when the effort is successful there is no more domestic or affectionate pet than a Manx cat.

### An Observing Cat

A Philadelphia newspaper is responsible for this story about a cat. This particular feline belonged to a dentist and seemed to take a delight in watching the doctor operate on his patients. One day it was noticed that pussy refused to eat and that she frequently yowled in apparent distress, but no one knew what was the matter. The next morning, after a patient had left the chair, pussy jumped into the place he had occupied and gave a pitiful yowl. Struck with an idea, the dentist carefully examined the cat's mouth and found a swollen gum and an ulcerated tooth. He promptly extracted the incisor, and pussy immediately began to purr in a very contented manner. It may have been only a coincidence, but it really looked as if the cat knew where to go for relief.