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FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

Contents for April-May, 1931

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The Phantom Flight

By ARLTON EADIE

The surgeon's hand shook, with disastrous results—a vivid and pathetic tale about a fatal airplane flight

IT WAS on the Folkestone-Dover road, a few miles beyond the ancient cathedral city of Canterbury, that I first met the man who called himself John Delaney. The encounter was of his own seeking, for, as I trudged wearily along, my head bent against the chill wind that was sweeping in from the sea, I entirely failed to notice his crouching figure amid the bracken of the little wayside thicket, until his shrill whistle caused me to glance round.

"The phantom plane had made its last flight, and living and dead were one."

For a few moments I stood hesitating whether to turn back or go on. I was not yet sufficiently hardened to the wandering vagabond life into which Fate had thrust me to relish the companionship of one of the more experienced members of the tramping fraternity; and such I naturally assumed the man to be. Yet, as I stood regarding him, I was gradually conscious of a subtle difference between him and the homeless outcasts whom I had hitherto met. It was certainly not his clothes which gave me that impression, for they were even more ragged than my own; moreover, his face was unwashed, his hair long and unkempt, while a beard of several weeks' growth covered his chin. But there was a look of refinement about his features which the overlying grime failed entirely to conceal, and

when he spoke his voice was that of an educated man.

"Whither away so fast, brother?" he cried, lifting his battered hat with the travesty of a ceremonious bow. "Are you hastening to the bedside of a rich uncle with a reminder of the fat legacy he has promised you? Or is it the less ambitious hope of securing accommodation in the nearest casual ward that quickens your footsteps?"

High-flown and bantering though the greeting seemed, it was uttered with an air of such infectious, daredevil gayety that I found myself smiling in response.

"With regard to the first part of your kind inquiry," I said, adopting his own tone, "I'm sorry to say that all my rich relations are at the moment such distant ones as to be far below the financial horizon. And up to now I've been able to get along without seeking the hospitality of a casual ward. I prefer to trust to luck for my board and lodging."

"In that case your supper is likely to be light, and your bedroom devilishly well-ventilated!" laughed the man. "Still, I'm prepared to agree with you—up to a point. Sleeping with the grass for a mattress and the stars for your nightlights is no bad thing when the weather is as hot as it has been lately. But how about when it pours with rain—as it's likely to tonight if this wind holds?"

I glanced at the lowering sky, and felt less assured.

"One can find some sort of shelter, somewhere," I said rather dubiously.

He shook his head slowly.

"Speaking from painful experience, I can assure you that sometimes one can't!" he said grimly. "Farmers don't look kindly on tramps, and they have a nasty habit of leaving their watch-dogs roaming loose at night. However, as it happens, I know of a splendid place where we can spend the night—all the comforts of a home without any of the expense or responsibility. It's only a couple of miles or so from here—I was only waiting till it got dark to take possession. Be my guest for tonight—there's plenty of room to spare!"

The prospect of having my night's shelter thus provided for gave me no little satisfaction; yet there was something in the manner of the unknown tramp that made me vaguely uneasy.

"What is this place you speak of?" I asked suddenly.

He rose to his feet and swept his hand toward the darkening countryside that lay seaward.

"The deserted aerodrome on the chalk downs overlooking the sea," he said, with a strange laugh. "I'll show you the way. Come!"

I made no move to follow him, but stood pondering over his words. Something within my brain, a mere vague instinct of coming disaster, urged me to decline his offer and to shift for myself. But even as I opened my lips to refuse, a sudden spatter of raindrops came on the dying wind. Most certainly the night would be both wet and cold.

"All right," I said briefly, as, falling into step with my unknown guide, I suffered him to lead me into the gathering dusk.

TEN minutes' sharp walking brought us to a tiny village, a mere sprinkling of cottages—mostly belonging to poultry farms—with a square-towered church on one side of the road and a small ale-house on the other. At the door of this latter my companion came to an unexpected halt.

"I'm good for a couple of pints," he said, jingling some coins in his trousers pocket. "Let's drink to our better ac-

quaintance; that is"—he added as I demurred—"if you're not too proud."

Embarrassed as I was by the offer, I could not help admiring the clever manner in which he made a refusal almost impossible.

"Since you put it that way," I returned with a shrug, "I shall be happy to join you. It's certainly good of you to ask me."

"Not at all," he laughed, pushing open the door of the public bar. "Are we not *Arcades ambo*—fellow-travelers in Arcady—brethren of the broad highway?"

There were two groups of men—farm laborers, apparently, by their clothes—in the little low-pitched room as we entered; some gathered round the counter, the rest interested in a dartboard at the farther end. Many curious glances were cast in our direction as we took our seats on an old-fashioned oak settle and proceeded to consume our modest refreshment. It was clear that they recognized us for the homeless tramps we were, and the opportunity for the display of a little rustic wit was too good to be missed.

"I've often wunnered wot becum o' the two old scarecrows as used to be in Three-acre Field," said one joker, with a wink and a grin. "But I knaws naw!"

There was a series of loud guffaws at this exquisite sally, and when they had subsided another spoke:

"Better lock the doors o' yer roosts to-night, mates, or mebbe we'll find the scarecrows 'ave skeered away a few o' our chickens!"

My companion must have seen the look which mounted to my face, for he plucked my sleeve as I was about to rise.

"Sit down and take no notice," he whispered. "We should stand no chance in a rough-and-tumble scrap. Best say nothing."

That his advice was sensible was proved a few seconds later, for the men at the bar soon forgot our presence and resumed a discussion which, it would seem, our entrance had interrupted.

"I says it afore and I'll say it agin—those fools up at Eastley dunno wot they're talking about," said a man with a very red face. "I says 'taint nat'ral for such a place to be harnted."

"Why not?" asked one of his companions.

The red-faced man took a long draft from his pewter pot and shook his head wisely.

" 'Taint nat'ral, nohow," he declared with even greater vigor than before. "I can un'erstand ghosts and such-like a-harnting graveyards, or ruinated castles, or a 'ouse where a murder had been done years and years agone. But when folks tell o' harntings going on in a nearly brand-new place like that theer hairydrome—well, I don't believe a word o' it, and that's flat!"

I had been listening to the talk in a desultory manner, but as he uttered the word "hairydrome" I was conscious of a suddenly stimulated interest. Was it possible that the fool was alluding to the deserted aerodrome where we purposed to spend the night?

"Anyway, there be plenty o' folk up at Eastley as have seed it," declared the man they called Garge.

"Seed wot?" demanded the skeptic with the red face.

"Seed the whole place lit up like a theayter in the dead o' night, with lights in every window——"

"Lights?" interrupted the other in a tone of withering contempt. "Wot siggerfies a few lights? You said place were harnted, and now you says 'lights'. Lights baint ghosts, nohow."

"Who said they were?" retorted his friend.

"Any fool could make lights; mebbe it weer a tramp or two as got into the old place for a doss. I see wot is it, Garge," he went on, regarding the other with drunken gravity as he slowly shook his head. "You've been the victim o' wot they calls a hallucillumination. You seed somebody a-lighting of his pipe, and you thought it weer a ghost. Lights ain't ghosts, nohow."

"I never said as how *I* saw it——" began the indignant Garge.

"Lights ain't ghosts, nohow, and all the argyment in the world won't make 'em so."

"Look 'ere——"

"Lights ain't ghosts——"

"You dunno wot you're talking about," said Garge, triumphantly clinching the argument. "You be drunk."

"Me?" shouted the red-faced man in a tone of indignant repudiation. "Just coom outside, and I'll show 'ee if I be drunk! It's you as be drunk, Garge Withers, with yer lights and ghosts. For two pins I'd knock yer silly 'ead off!"

At this point the red-faced man made a sudden dash toward the rash critic of his sobriety and hit him accurately on the nose. The next instant the little room was filled with struggling men. We did not wait to see the result of this novel trial by battle of the material against the supernatural, but quietly finished our drinks and came away. The last thing I heard as we passed through the village was the voice of the red-faced man triumphantly raised above the uproar as he proclaimed to the world at large:

"Lights baint ghosts, nohow!"

INSTEAD of continuing on the main road, my companion struck off into a steep and narrow lane running by the side of the church. For the greater part of a mile the lane led steadily uphill, turning and twisting after the manner of its kind, and when we gained the brow of the chalk ridge the full force of the rain-laden wind met us with all its fury. Here, for the first time, I caught sight of the steadily winking light which marked the entrance to Folkestone Harbor; to the west shone the more distant gleam from Dover.

As we paused to regain our breath after the stiff climb, my companion spoke for the first time since quitting the inn.

"Queer yarn that fellow has got hold of," he commented thoughtfully.

"You mean about the haunted aerodrome?"

He nodded and turned to resume his journey.

"Strangely enough, I've heard some rumors before about the same thing," he told me as we tramped along the muddy road. "Of course there's no truth in the tale, but it's curious how these things start."

This gave me an opportunity of putting into words the thought that had been simmering in my brain for the past hour.

"Is this reputedly haunted aerodrome the place where you intend to spend the night?"

"Yes." He peered through the darkness into my face as he added with a laugh, "Why, you're not scared, are you?"

"Of course not," I hastened to say. "Still, I should be glad to have some idea where we're bound for."

"There is not far to go now; if it wasn't so dark we could see the place from here."

"Is it a derelict Air Force depot?" I asked curiously.

"No. It was built by a private aviation company which came into existence since the war. The promoters hoped to do great things, and when the company was formed any amount of influential people put their money into it. At first everything went well; they had the finest and

most up-to-date machines; they secured the first air-mail contract to the Continent that was ever granted to a private company; in short, it seemed as if the speculators who had come in on the ground floor were well on the way to making their fortunes. Then came a streak of the vilest bad luck. Three bad crashes followed each other in the course of as many weeks. There was no question of foul play, or anything like that; it was just bad luck, and nothing else. One machine struck a tree in the fog; another came down in the Channel; the third crashed in flames within a few miles of the spot where we stand—and there was a heavy death-roll on each occasion—the last was the worst, for not a soul was saved. It was that disaster that broke the company for good."

As he spoke the words, something in his tone arrested my attention. There was a note of bitterness which seemed strange in one recounting the tale of an accident in which he had no particular concern.

"You appear to know this company very well," I remarked on a sudden impulse.

He uttered a short bark of a laugh.

"Yes, I know it!" Then he added, in a voice so low and indistinct that he might have been muttering to himself: "My God! I guess I know it all right!"

For a long time after that we strode on in silence. Although my curiosity had been provoked by his words, there was something about the man which made me refrain from questioning him. I found myself wondering if he had been ruined by putting his money into the unlucky aviation company; or if he were the pilot who was in charge when one of the disasters occurred. But presently the object of my speculations brought them to an end by referring to the matter of his own accord.

"It was only by the merest fluke that I was not on board the Paris air-mail when it came down in flames that night."

"Is that so?" I cried in surprize. "Then you were indeed fortunate."

"Fortunate?" He repeated the word in a voice that made me stare. "Fortunate, you say? Well, as to that, you shall judge for yourself. . . ."

He began to speak in a dull, listless voice as we battled our way across the dark wind-swept moor. And this is the story he told:

"HAVING regard for the position in which you now see me, it may require some little effort for you to believe me when I say that two years after the war came to an end I was looked upon as one of the most brilliant surgeons in London. I was still young, it is true, but in those days one gained a lot of experience in a short space of time. When I resigned my commission and took over my father's extensive West End practise, I came straight from a sphere of action where lightning diagnosis and the fearless adoption of novel methods were matters of daily—occasionally hourly—necessity. For, needless to say, there is no time for leisurely consultations in a first-dressing-station when a big push is on.

"Plodding practitioners looked upon me with envy, and with good reason. Whilst still far short of middle age, I had reached a position which many a man has striven for in vain for a whole lifetime. I was famous, honored, with far more money than I needed, and to crown all I had won the love of the most adorable girl in all the world. The day that I married Irene I felt that the cup of my happiness was filled to the brim. True—it was! But it was soon to be dashed from my lips, before I could quaff a single drop of its satisfying draft.

"Considering my position, the wedding was a fairly quiet affair. We had arranged to spend a few days of our honeymoon in Paris, on the way to our real destination, which was Switzerland, and it was more for the novelty of the experience than for any desire to save time that Irene begged me to cross to the French capital by air. At first I was reluctant to agree. Of late Dame Fortune had been so lavish with her gifts to me that I had a vague and—as it seemed to me at the time—a foolishly unreasonable dread that the smiles of the fickle goddess would give place to frowns. Still it was the very first thing that Irene had asked of me, and she seemed so disappointed and hurt at my refusal that at last I gave way. After the usual reception, we slipped away and drove down through Kent by car, timing our arrival at the aerodrome a few minutes before the Paris mail was due to take off.

"I shall always treasure the memory of that drive down; it was our first journey together as man and wife—and it was destined to be our last! The purple-gray dusk of evening merged into night as we sped along the quiet roads, through busy towns and past sleepy villages where the cheery beams of lamplight shone beneath the thatched eaves; through somber woods and bush-grown lanes, across open moors lying stark and bare beneath the jeweled immensity of the night. . . .

"Well, we got to the aerodrome in good time. The great triple-engined plane had already been taken out of its hangar, and stood, ready to start, on the stretch of level ground. Some of the passengers had taken their seats in the brilliantly illuminated saloon; others were chatting gayly to friends who had come down to see them off. The pilot, a weird figure in his leather flying-suit and goggles, was standing by the mechanic as he tested one of the engines, and at intervals the intermittent roar of its tractor filled the air.

"I assisted Irene into the cabin, and was about to enter myself, when I felt a touch on my arm. Turning, I saw one of the officials of the aerodrome.

" 'Excuse me, sir,' he said. 'Are you Dr. John Delaney?' I admitted my identity, and the man went on: 'This telegram arrived for you a few minutes ago.'

"I took the orange envelope indifferently and tore it open. Doubtless, thought I, it was yet another message of congratulation and well-wishing, similar to the dozens I had already received during the day. But as I cast my eye on the flimsy sheet inside I saw that this was a message of a totally different kind.

"My feelings must have reflected themselves on my face, for Irene hurried to my side.

" 'What is it, John?' she asked anxiously. 'Not bad news, I hope?'

"I reassured her with a laugh.

" 'Oh, it's nothing very terrible,' I said lightly, 'but, at the same time, it is news which is not likely to cause rejoicing to a newly married man.' I drew her a little aside and hurriedly explained the situation.

"The telegram had been sent by Sir Charles Anstruther, the well-known surgeon, who had kindly consented to act as my *locum tenens* during my absence from England. One of my patients, a prominent public man whose name is—or was at that time—almost a household word, was lying in a critical condition. He was suffering from an obscure organic disease of which I had made an exhaustive study, and on which I was an acknowledged authority. An immediate operation was vitally necessary—an operation which I alone could perform with any chance of its proving successful. He

hated to recall me from my honeymoon, but felt it his duty to place the facts before me. Time was precious; would I wire an immediate reply?

"Irene was regarding me wistfully when I reached the end of my hurried explanation.

" 'Is it absolutely necessary that you go back?' she asked.

" 'It is a matter of life and death,' I told her gently.

" 'Then you must not let our great happiness keep you from your duty,' she said firmly. 'We will return to London together.'

"But this I would not hear of. Why should she forego the trip that she had looked forward to so eagerly, and remain alone during the night while I was away at the hospital? I would follow her the next morning—by special plane if necessary—and then we could carry out our plans as arranged. In the end my arguments prevailed, and she returned to her seat. Almost immediately the huge air-liner took off, and rose with a magnificent sweep in the direction of the Channel. Then, without even waiting till it had disappeared out of sight, I entered my waiting car and ordered the amazed chauffeur to return to town as quickly as possible.

"SLIGHTLY over an hour later we entered the suburbs of London, where I stopped the car at a telephone call-box and rang up Sir Charles, asking him, in turn, to apprise two eminent surgeons, whom I named, to meet me at the hospital, so that there might be no delay. When I reached my house in Harley Street he was awaiting my arrival and came forward eagerly to greet me.

" 'You have come, then?' he cried, with more surprize than I felt was called for. 'It will be a terrible ordeal for you, Delaney. Who would have anticipated such a terrible tragedy!'

"I stared at him, uncomprehending.

" 'Why, is the patient worse?' I asked.

" 'The patient?' he repeated. Suddenly his face changed. 'Is it possible that you have not heard?'

" 'Heard what?' I demanded roughly. 'What has happened to make you look at me like that?'

"By way of answer he picked up a late edition of an evening paper which lay upon the table and pointed to a small paragraph in the Stop-press News. It told, with a brevity that was almost brutal, that the air-liner in which my wife had traveled had crashed in flames within a few minutes of leaving the ground, and that every one of the passengers and crew had perished!

"I dropped the paper with a smothered groan. My mind, in those first stunning seconds, seemed benumbed—incapable of action. I could not speak—could not even arrange my thoughts coherently. Moving like a man in a dream, I crossed to the sideboard, filled a glass from the decanter standing upon it, and tossed it off as though it had been so much water. As the fiery spirit coursed through my veins, grief gave place to a burning wave of anger against the fate which had snatched my loved one from me. I burst into a torrent of words, wild, half-intelligible ravings which made Sir Charles stare and shake his head.

" 'Calm yourself, calm yourself,' he said soothingly. 'I can quite understand your feelings. Go to your room and lie down while I mix you a composing draft.'

"His words and manner pulled me up short. With a tremendous effort of will I managed to control my voice.

" 'I am quite all right,' I told him.

'Come, they will be waiting for us at the hospital.'

" 'You're surely not going to perform that operation—now—after what has occurred?' he cried, staring at me harder than ever.

" 'Why not?' I answered, with forced coolness. 'That is what I returned for.'

"Still he hesitated. 'You are quite sure that you feel equal to the strain? Hadn't you better take a little rest before——'

"I cut short his remonstrances by moving to the door, and he followed me, shaking his gray head and feebly protesting. Arrived at the hospital, we found everything in readiness, and a few minutes served for me to wash, don my white overalls, gauze mask, and rubber gloves. I nodded to the sister, the patient was wheeled in, the anesthetic administered, and the operation commenced.

"Never had I felt cooler, more confident, more certain of a successful outcome. A curious sense of aloofness and detachment pervaded me. I could almost persuade myself that I was watching someone else perform the operation; that the hands which were making the preliminary incisions with deft, practised skill had no connection with my own busy brain, filled as it was with the vision of Irene's parting smile. Instinctively, almost I may say unconsciously, yet with no hesitation and no mistake, I went on with my work; yet all the while I felt that I was but witnessing something with which I had no particular concern.

"Afterward the surgeons present bore witness that they had never seen a more masterly demonstration of surgical skill. They watched me, fascinated, entranced, as the operation swiftly drew toward its close. It was almost over—another few seconds and I would have relinquished my post to the dressers—when of a sudden a thick mist appeared to intervene between my eyes and the brilliantly lit operating-table. I hesitated—fumbled—then did a thing which no sane surgeon would have done.

"I heard the horrified exclamations from my colleagues and saw Sir Charles snatch up a swab and dart forward, while another hastily called for the oxygen cylinder in a vain effort to revive the patient. My mind reeled as I shrank back, gazing with distended eyes at the ruin I had wrought. Like a spoken accusation the full heinousness of my conduct came to me—*I had undertaken a major operation whilst my mind was befuddled with brandy!* Within two minutes the man on the operating-table was dead.

"There was no open scandal; my colleagues, remembering the nerve-racking trial I had undergone, gave me every consideration. My action was ascribed to a sudden mental breakdown—something that could not have been avoided. But all the same, from that moment my professional career was at an end. I was a marked man—a ruined man. Gradually I sank lower and lower, until, friendless and almost penniless, I reached the stage where you see me now."

The voice died away and for a space the only sounds were our muffled footsteps and the mournful soughing of the night wind. I murmured a few words of condolence, but what are mere words, however heartfelt, in the face of a tragedy such as I had just heard? It was mainly with the object of diverting his thoughts into another channel that I asked:

"How long is it since the events you have just related took place?"

"They happened on the thirteenth of September, 1920."

"That will make it just nine years ago," I said, adding suddenly, "and almost to the very minute, too!"

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"What do you mean?" he asked with a puzzled frown.

"Tonight is the thirteenth of September."

He stopped dead in his stride as though he had been shot.

"By heaven, you're right!" he muttered hoarsely. "Strange that I should have forgotten that date of all others!"

A FEW minutes after we had resumed our tramp we came into sight of a long range of white stone buildings which glimmered wanly in the faint starlight, against their background of rolling downs. Here Delaney quitted the road and struck off across the grass, making for a structure whose general outline bore a vague resemblance to a grandstand on a race-course.

Even in the faint light I could see that the whole aerodrome had an air of dilapidation and neglect. The paint was peeling from the woodwork of the great doors of the hangars as they hung askew on their rusted hinges; some of the windows of the waiting-room were boarded up; others, with broken panes and shattered frames, allowed the wind to sweep unchecked through the bare, dismantled rooms within. We made our entry through an open door, and the sounds of our footsteps echoed hollowly on the uncarpeted boards.

Dog-tired by my long tramp, I wasted but little time in an examination of my somewhat eery sleeping-quarters. Pausing only to collect in the least drafty corner some pieces of tattered canvas that were lying about, I threw myself down on them and in a few minutes was sound asleep.

I can not say whether I slept a minute, or an hour, or several hours; all I know is that I was awakened by a hand gripping my shoulder, and sat up, wondering and still half dazed.

"What's the matter?" I demanded of Delaney, who was bending over me. He silenced me with a warning gesture.

"Hush!" he said in a fierce whisper. "Listen!"

In a moment I was on my feet, fully awake now. Outside, in place of the former silence and darkness, were the glare of many lights, the sounds of voices, the noise of busy movements. I gained the window at a bound and stared forth, incredulous, aghast. Every window of the spacious building opposite blazed with lights; a little group of people, clad in overcoats and wraps, were standing on a kind of veranda before the waiting-room, watching a giant biplane being hauled out of the hangar by a squad of overalled mechanics. Officials in uniform hurried to and fro; porters were busy unloading mail-bags and luggage from a covered lorry which seemed to have just driven up. The derelict aerodrome had awakened to life!

Scarcely had I taken in the first general impression of the scene before my attention was attracted by a young, slender girl standing a little apart from the other passengers. She was pacing restlessly to and fro, her eyes glancing from side to side as she scanned each batch of new arrivals as though in search of a familiar face among them. She seemed indifferent to the other passengers; even when they had taken their seats in the plane she remained below, looking about her with ever-increasing anxiety. At last she turned her face in our direction, and simultaneously a great cry burst from the lips of John Delaney.

"Merciful God! it's Irene!" he shouted excitedly. "It's Irene—my wife—and she's waiting for me!"

Before I could realize the full mean-

ing of his words he had dashed across the room, out of the door, and was speeding across the grass toward the waiting plane. Scarcely heeding what I did, I followed him more slowly.

I saw him run toward the girl and fold her in his arms; then, hand in hand, the two moved to the steps which led up to the cabin of the air-liner.

"You have come at last, Jack!" I heard her say as I hurried up. "You have come to me, and I am glad. I have been waiting for you so long . . . so long, darling. But I knew that you would be waiting here for me sooner or later, to come with me on the journey we planned so long, long ago."

Delaney made no answer, but his eyes were fixed on the beautiful face of the girl in a wide-eyed, hypnotized stare. Like a man who walks in his sleep, he began to mount the steps. With a warning cry I lurched forward and grasped his arm.

"What are you about to do?" I whispered urgently. "Are you mad?"

He turned on me with a snarl of fury:

"Hands off!" he cried roughly. "Can't you see the plane is ready to start, and that my bride is waiting? Hands off, I say!"

He tried to break my grip, but the desperation of terror gave me strength to hold him fast.

"You fool!" I cried. "Can't you realize that the thing you are about to enter is a phantom plane, manned by a ghostly crew, and carrying the shades of the men and women who perished when the Paris air-mail crashed in flames? Can't you see that you are being lured to your death? Turn back before it is too late!"

My frenzied appeal seemed to pierce his clouded brain. He passed his hand dazedly across his forehead and half turned away. At the sight, a low wail broke from the girl.

"Will you desert me yet again, Jack? I have waited so patiently for you, and I want you so, so much! Come with me, my love, for I want you so very much in my loneliness. Come with me! . . . Come!"

For a moment she stood, her slender figure framed in the cabin door, a wistful smile upon her lips, her two hands held down to him in tender appeal. With the strength of a madman, Delaney threw off my detaining grasp. When I again essayed to seize him he struck me full in the face, sending me prone upon the ground.

"I am coming, Irene—my own!" I heard him cry, as I lay half stunned. "I am here—here by your side! Kiss me, my lost bride whom I have found again. Come what may, I am yours this night and for ever!"

I heard the slamming of the cabin door, the thunder of the mighty engines, the drone of the propellers. I felt the rush of the backward wash of wind as the outspread wings passed over me, and pressed my body against the ground to avoid being struck; nor did I venture to raise my head until the noise had died away in the distance.

When at length I rose unsteadily to my feet and looked around, the great aerodrome was silent, ruinous and deserted, as I had first beheld it.

But seaward, high up in the southern sky, a tiny fiery star had burst forth and was swerving downward, leaving behind it a trail of blazing wreckage, as it plunged to its last resting-place beneath the waters of the distant Channel.

The Phantom Plane had made its last flight, and the living and the dead were one.