

ON A BOMBING RAID

Story By Marlborough
Airman

FLYING OVER GERMANY

A fine picture of what happens when a British bomber goes on a raid into enemy territory is presented by Sergeant C. B. G. Knight, now with the New Zealand Bomber Squadron in Britain. Sergeant Knight, a wireless operator, left Picton in 1939 for England, where he was to join the flight of Wellington bombers which were to have been flown out to New Zealand. Sergeant Knight was the first non-commissioned officer-airman from New Zealand to receive an award in this war; it was the D.F.M.

In a letter he has just written home, Sergeant Knight describes a bombing trip thus:—

"First of all, in the morning, all the ground staff check the machines in every respect, and after everyone has finished and signed up on the appropriate form, the machine is ready for 'N.F.T.' (night flying tests). To do this the whole crew go aboard and we take the air, where we spend half an hour or so checking everything in actual flight. The pilot checks the flying of the aircraft, engines, and instruments. The wireless operator checks his wireless equipment, aeriels, direction finding loop, and his guns, while the other gunners test their guns.

"Bombing-Up."

"When everyone is satisfied we land the ground staff, of which there are a crew for each machine, pounce upon it. It is refuelled, and checked again by them. Then the bomb people appear, and 'bomb up.' That is, putting in the bombs that we are carrying that night. In the meantime we have gone to lunch. At a certain time in the afternoon we arrive for 'briefing.' This is where we are told the target we have to bomb, what wireless facilities are available, and what sort of opposition there might be.

"The navigator then gets his maps,

and plots off the courses to be flown. The captain checks up on certain things, and the wireless operator gets all the necessary codes and papers he must take.

"After this is all finished, we away to a good hot tea. Then the time approaches for the take-off. We get our flying kit on, and are driven out to the machine.

"Everyone is smoking a last fag, and there is much laughing and joking. When we get into the machine it is dusk, the engines are roaring, warming up, and in we all pile. There is no fuss or bother. We are signalled out, and taxi off to the taking-off point. Another exchange of signals, requesting permission to take off, and obtaining it, the engines burst into a roar, and we are racing away across the aerodrome. Then up, up, up, and we are away.

Course Is Set.

"The navigator speaks to the pilot on the 'intercomm' (that is telephonic inter-communication throughout the aircraft), and says: 'Set course — so many degrees —'

"The pilot repeats the course, then when he is on the course says: 'Pilot calling navigator —. Set course — so and so —. Air speed — so and so.' The navigator okays the message and we all settle down to the trip. As we cross the coast on the way out we check our course, and make any alteration necessary—our drift, and so on. If the night is cloudy and we cannot see the ground we can check operation by wireless as necessary.

"As we get into enemy territory the searchlights begin springing up and there is occasional firing. Ahead we may see someone caught in the searchlights and 'getting a packet' (being heavily fired at). We make a slight detour round that spot. Then it might be our turn to 'get a packet.' The pilot throws the kite round, ducks and dives, and we are out of that.

"And so it goes on till we are near the actual target. If we are above cloud, the position is carefully checked, and then down, down we go through it and spread out below us is the vicinity of our target. Shells are bursting all round us now, some pretty close, but no one bothers very much, except to say: 'Hell, that was close.'

"Now the bomb-aimer is directing the

pilot: 'Left, left, right, right, steady, steady,' then, 'Bombs gone.' There is a shout from the rear gunner: 'Got it,' and as we sweep round in a circle we see flames, and explosions beneath us right smack on the target. It's a great feeling, and after having a good look, we set course for home. We don't stay here too long, because the barrage is pretty heavy now. As we turn away we see another of our machines is there doing just the same as we did.

"We pass through various A.A. fire and searchlights on the way home, but nobody worries very much—we're too pleased with ourselves. Suddenly the rear gunner speaks—'Fighters'—just the one word, but it is enough. Into my turret, and all inside lights are put out as we watch the fighter. He hasn't seen us, but if he gets much closer he will. We draw a bead on him and wait. No use firing at him if he doesn't see us, because there are probably more about and we will only give our position away. Suddenly he sees us—circles out of range—then in he comes. We have our sights on him but wait. When he is just starting to fire we press the triggers and give him a good burst. Suddenly he sheers away and we see flames licking round his engine.

Fighter Shot Down.

"He goes down in a long dive like a flaming torch, and that is that. There don't seem to be any more about, so after a while I go back to my wireless as the navigator wants some assistance. (It doesn't always happen that way.)

"The navigator wants some bearings now, so I go to my radio and get them, and he can then fix our position. So we go on till at last we are over the North Sea—then over England. Then I get into touch by radio with our home station and, if necessary, bringing us home by direction finding. We land and pile out, everyone grabbing a fag. A truck is waiting and in we go for a cup of hot tea. (I forgot to mention that we carry coffee and have that for the homeward run.)

"Then we tell our tale to the intelligence officer, giving him all the details. Then away to breakfast, then to bed—and another raid is over."

ANZACS' RUSE

Supplies From The Enemy

The ingenuity of New Zealand soldiers when fighting in Greece is shown in the following extract from a letter from Private R. H. Davis, son-in-law of Mr. A. W. Trass, Feilding:—

"One of the humorous parts of the campaign was seen when a batch of our chaps armed themselves with Tommy guns and Luger revolvers. They were in a detached position and had run out of ammunition. One had a bright idea and spread a Nazi flag out on the ground. It might seem a funny thing to do, but it had the desired result. A German supply plane saw the flag, the airmen thought the New Zealanders were some of their own men, and dropped a heap of supplies, which included good food, cigarettes, and plenty of ammunition, the last-mentioned being used to good effect against themselves."

The writer also refers to the Maoris' bayonet charges against Tommy guns and in superior numbers. Mention is made of the use by the Germans of sirens. "These make a noise like a screaming bomb and are very hard on one's nerves. The idea is that when an unseen man or group of men hear these bombs screaming down on them the strain on their nerves is likely to make them crack up and run for it."

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