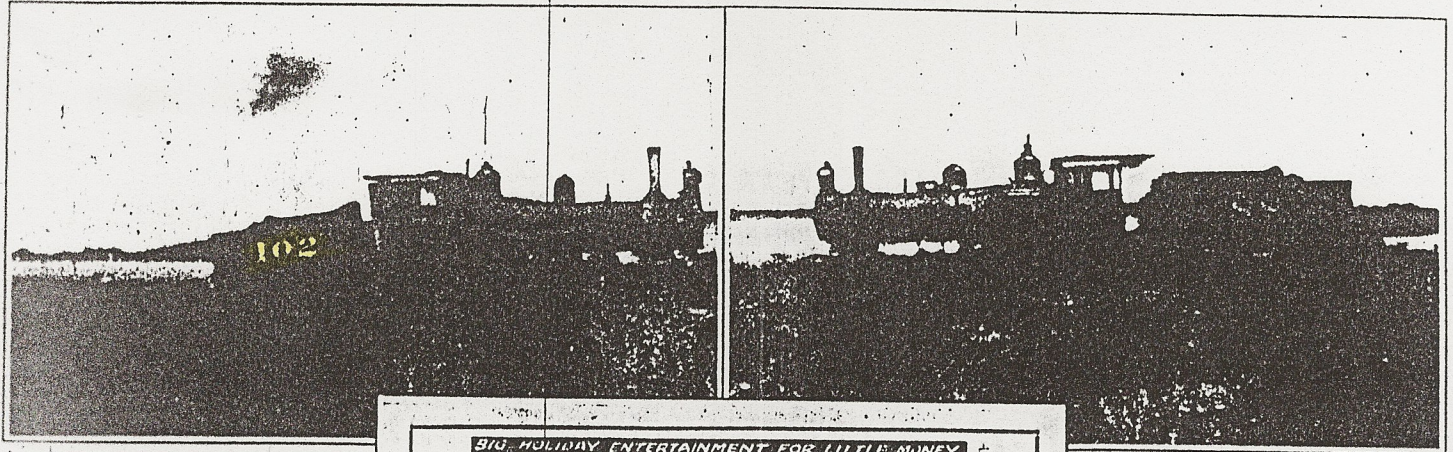


ACCELERATING SENTIMENT

A Modern Barnum—By William Hickman Pickens



SIG. HOLIDAY ENTERTAINMENT FOR LITTLE MONEY

KANSAS CITY SPEEDWAY

ADMISSION **50¢** KIDDIES **25¢**

July 4

Gates Open 7 A.M. Train Wreck 4 P.M.

TRAIN WRECK HEAD-ON COLLISION

BRING THE WHOLE FAMILY - - BAND MUSIC

BARBECUE - PICNIC

FREE - PARKING FOR 40,000 AUTOS - FREE

CARNIVAL OF SPORTS DAYLIGHT FIREWORKS

THE saddest words of tongue or pen are oral. They are not contained in the eulogies delivered when a nation crumbles and falls, neither are they to be discovered in the lachrymose squawk of the dying gladiator. Though these words seem sad enough in McGuffey's Third Reader, they are screaming subtitles compared with the ones which have dripped from my gloomy lips at various times when the time was ripe and the setting was appropriate. In order to squeeze the full essence of sorrow from the dictionary of suffering you require the proper environment and circumstances.

First, you must have an expectant mob of 30,000 spectators who have gathered within the gates of an outdoor hippodrome to gaze with strained optics upon the marvels promised them by Will H. Pickens. Lured by the flamboyant twenty-four-sheets, these 30,000 people have paid from fifty cents to two dollars each for the privilege of seeing the collapsible airplane collapse or the folding automobile fold. They wait for the advent of the mechanical monsters which will cause chills to run up their hopeful spines. When a yokel pays two dollars to pipe a mechanical monster you have to do more than chill his shoulder blades with fear. He wants a fright that will freeze his hat.

The reason he spent the two dollars is because he has implicit faith in the pretty pictures painted on circus billboards. Once inside the grounds, his mental attitude does not whittle a whit. He wants to see everything you have advertised, and you had better produce, or else amuse yourself by glancing over the humorous passages in your last will and testament. Multiply that one spectator by 30,000 and you have the words and music for a tense situation. They have paid to be thrilled, and gosh, how they dread it.

The Fastest in the World

EVERYTHING runs off smoothly until the big event of the afternoon. The racing camel beats the trotting ostrich by a foot and several tropical odors. The Arabian acrobats twist and bend themselves in sinewy pretzels all over the lots and the mob applauds politely. The clown policeman on stilts walks over the heads of the pretty girls. Aunt Mathilda and Uncle Jasper, the two elderly rube comics who make annual pilgrimages over the big-fair circuits, go through their thunderous dialogue with parasol and ear trumpet. Their act winds up with Mathilda catching the errant Jasper talking with a painted Jezebel, who is also an actor in the skit. The laughter is loud, but not enthusiastic, for the mob is saving its steam for the blow-off.

The turkey legs, as the running horses of the fair circuits are known to outdoor showmen, complete their final heat

and the crowd starts to jimmer up. The big event is next and the daring aviator is about to flash his mechanical monster before the amazed populace. The propeller is twirled and the big plane hops across the infield and takes off, flying in low circles around the track. There is another pulse quickening as a ponderous racing monster glides from the cover of the stands and roars around the same track. It is the famous Blitzen-Benzine Red Devil, the fastest automobile in the world—that afternoon. My cars were always the fastest in the world—that afternoon.

The two metal demons buzz and grumble around the egg-shaped arena and the crowd watches them with an interest that is sincere but not vital. The roaring from the exhausts is the loudest that money can buy, for noise is the main dish in a ballyhoo, both before and during the performance. A pretty brown-haired girl runs from under the grand stand directly in the path of the speeding automobile. The 30,000 fans cheer wildly as she blows kisses to them with both hands. The cheers increase as the automobile stops and she climbs in beside the driver. Off they go. The plane swoops down after them and another burst of cheering breaks loose as the mob spots a new development. The pilot of the airplane has dropped a rope ladder from the fuselage of the machine and it dangles to and fro as the plane swings after the hustling motor car. This is the big event of the day. The little brown-haired girl in the automobile is to perform a stunt that will make Daniel's trip into the lion's den look almost effeminate by comparison.

When the airplane and the automobile have synchronized their speed, the airplane will dip until the ladder is within reach of the brown-haired girl's grasp. She will then clutch the lower rung, and pulling herself out of the automobile, will climb the ladder slowly—not too fast, for

she must swing to and fro on the rope ladder as the plane bears her triumphantly past the grand stand several times as the male spectators gasp and the women faint. She is swinging dizzily on her precarious pendulum, holding on with one hand and blowing kisses with the other. Then the plane whips up into the clouds as she finishes her climb and disappears safely within the fuselage.

The Audience Sends Regrets

THE brown-haired girl blows kisses to the audience because that is the etiquette of the show game. Lady trapeze performers and all professional women athletes twiddle their toes and blow kisses to the spectators. But I have given you a condensed version of the brown-haired girl's stunting, for she did not catch the ladder on the first attempt. Another item in the strict etiquette of ballyhooing is that no trick shall be successful on the initial attempt. The first and the second endeavors must be flops, as they say in showdom. These two attempts are build-ups for the third and successful one.

But this afternoon something happened. The first two tries have been successful failures and the brown-haired girl blows kisses to all within a radius of fifty miles. The plane swings up and out and skitters around to get another fair shot when Will H. Pickens hears the motor miss. The flyer is so low that he has to make an emergency landing outside the park. The brown-haired girl is still speeding around the track in the auto. The crowd thinks this is part of the show and waits for the plane to come back. So does Will H. Pickens. After a delay of about five minutes, the crowd begins to get restless and curls up on the edges like gummed labels. Meanwhile the brown-haired miss is still scooting around blowing kisses, but they seem to have lost their sting. Mr. Pickens runs hurriedly out of the park to consult his aviator and discovers that he has cracked up his propeller and undergear in landing. This takes another five minutes and the mob is simmering sulkily like boiling glucose. There isn't a chance of getting the plane fixed that afternoon. So Will H. Pickens has more perspiration on his brow than he can handle. He strolls sadly back to the arena, picks up an emergency megaphone, fills his frightened lungs with air and broadcasts the saddest words of tongue or radio:

"The management regrets to announce —"

Which is all that is necessary. This mournful ballyhoo is an apology of 700 words which I know by heart. I have tried to make it in full detail on a hundred different occasions. But I never get any further than:

"The management regrets to announce —"

Bang! First come the heavy seat pads which we have been foolish enough to rent to the mob at ten cents a cushion. Then come all the movable sections of the grand

land. After that, the seats are ripped up and come raining out into the field. This beautiful shower of gifts looks like a combined celebration of wooden, leather and glass wedding anniversaries, for the deluge of presents is spangled with empty pop bottles and drinking glasses. The crowd is keenly aware of the meaning of:

"The management regrets to announce ———"
 They also are cognizant of the fact that Will H. Pickens is the management, and although the band strikes up The Star-Spangled Banner, it does no good. It does not bring the crowd to its feet, for the mob is already on its feet — chasing the management which regretted to announce.

Fortunately for Mr. Pickens, the brown-haired girl is still whirling around the track blowing kisses to a rioting crowd. As the car comes by, Mr. Pickens swings on the running board and blows a mental kiss to everybody. There is no more scooting around the track, for the automobile is headed straight for a weak spot in the fence and, making its own exit, disappears across country. The crowd checks its impetus, reverses its line of march and heads for the box office to get its money back.

Here is another pointer for young promoters. The box office contains very little monny, if any. It is impossible to refund money to 30,000 indignant patrons. The promoter has already given each customer a rain check with his or her ticket. This stub entitles the holder to another performance in case there is anything radically wrong with the one he is supposed to see. He can also have the choice of exchanging the stub for his money the next day at a downtown office. But you cannot do business in No Man's Land when the shells are screaming overhead and the mob is bursting underfoot. So a promoter carries along a man who is known as the milker.

Sidetracking Trouble on a Board Track

WHEN the ticket sale starts at the box office, the milker makes half-hour trips to the ticket sellers and collects all the cash in his milk pail. He deposits this rich cream in the safe inside the office, which is usually in an obscure spot under the grand stand. It is not actually a secret rendezvous, although there are no green arrows pointing toward it. The crowd has already seen half a performance. Therefore there is rarely any money refunded. The show is usually given a week later in the same spot and the same spectators show up again equipped with their rain checks.

On a second performance like this, there is no etiquette. The girl in the automobile grabs the ladder the first time around and climbs rapidly into the airplane. She never wastes any more kisses on that crowd.

You can never realize what it means to have loved and lost until you have been a management which regretted to announce. Even the brass band fails at this crucial moment, and brass bands have quelled more riots than the police and state militia combined. In an ordinary turmoil or minor brawl, the promoter signals the band leader and he crashes into The Star-Spangled Banner. This

time has excellent soothing qualities in Maine, Michigan and North Dakota. When south of Mason and Dixon's Line, the bedtime blare is Dixie.

According to Bobby Burns, the mice often nibble at the best laid plans of promoters and men. The promoter spends his money building up his star as a feature attraction, wastes his time, labor and more money steaming up the bullyhoo, and then sees an accident or unforeseen circumstance deprive him of anywhere from \$5000 for a single show to \$100,000 for a nationally arranged tour. The preliminary expenses for lithographs, the salaries of advance men, the rent for billboard space and advance deposits for leases of race tracks and fair grounds in fifty cities — all are swept overboard without a chance for his white alley. His marbles are gone, with no comeback.

Quick thinking will often sidetrack disaster, but it is liable to get back on the main track again. Just a few years ago I was running a circuit of automobile races through the Middle West. I picked up a Chicago paper and read that an auto speedway in Kansas City had been sold by the sheriff. Now K. C. had always been soft pickings for my auto-race promotions in the early days, when Barney Oldfield held all world records for crashing through fences and turning turtle on oiled turns. I rattled down to K. C. and looked over the plant. It was a pine-board track and the pine weevils had been holding an Old Home Week on it for at least fifty weeks.

The track was so rotted on the surface that you couldn't get traction on it unless you wore snowshoes. However, it could be repaired at reasonable cost and I visualized a Fourth

of July race, even though it would require plenty of smoking up to overcome the failure of the home-town promoters. Three or four other interests were after the same track, for it was looked on as quite a plum in the outdoor-promotion racket. The present owner was willing to lease the outfit for \$3000 for one performance on the Fourth. The money must be planked down on the line, and it was quite a lump when you figure that one show meant a gamble against the weather. But the lease also gave me the option on all the other racing dates of the year and would freeze alien promoters out of K. C. So after a long-distance talk with my bank, which seemed to grow more distant with every syllable, I decided to gamble.

I took another turn around the track the next day and it made me wish I had my \$3000 back. Walking down the

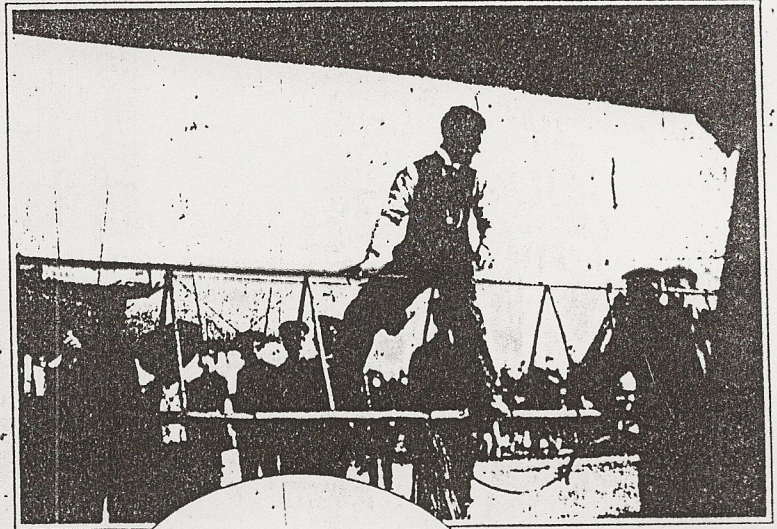
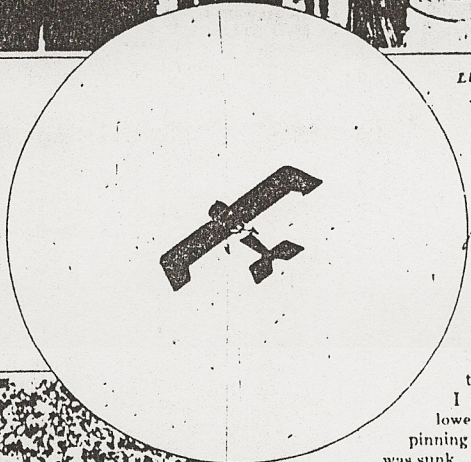


PHOTO FROM KEYSTONE VIEW CO.
 Lincoln Beachey in His Dirigible Balloon. In Circle—Flying a Taube Airplane Over the Panama-Pacific Exposition



homestretch, my foot went through the boards. It looked as if somebody had selected that spot to drill a wildcat oil well. But the upper turn was worse. There were so many holes in this section of the track that I expected prairie dogs to pop out and laugh at me. I never bothered to look at the lower turn. The heavy underpinning timbers were just as bad. I was sunk.

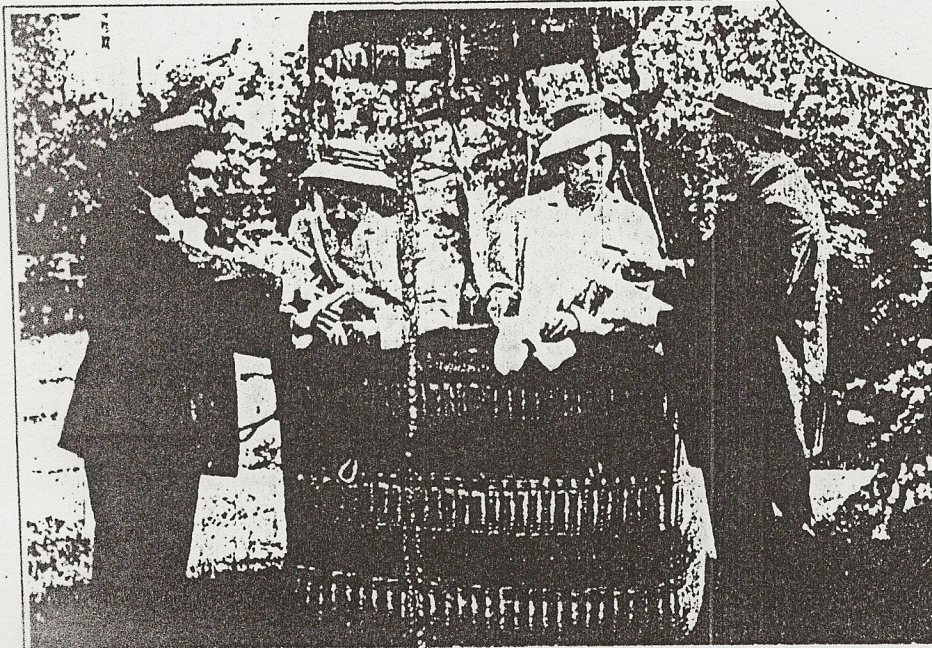
That perforated scrubbing board had been massaged by its last racing car. The track was a wreck and so was Will H. Pickens — which gave me the idea I needed. What K. C. really required for a big jolly Fourth of July celebration was a wreck — a head-on collision between two giant locomotives. I had seen my first one about twenty years ago at Brighton Beach, New York. I had never put on one of these wrecks, but I had often looked at them with envious eyes, for they were surefire and drew big crowds. K. C. was a great railroad center and thousands of its citizens were in railroad service.

Come One, Come All, at a Dollar a Head

IN CONNECTION with the wreck I steamed up a big barbecue and picnic for the heroes of real wrecks, who would bring their families along and enjoy the sight of a head-on collision without danger to themselves. The people who had never been in genuine smash-ups would be anxious to view one. Before the star performance there would be a field day of sports — baseball, tug of war, potato races and all other athletic forms of encouraging sun-strokes. Admission was to be a dollar to one and to all.

The engines used in these artificial wrecks for exhibition purposes and the movies are not the majestic sort you gaze at with admiration when you detrain from the Century in Chicago or the Sunshine Special in Dallas. Those good engines are required in the railroad business. The brand

(Continued on Page 184)



Elsie Janis and Her Mother About to go Aloft in a Captive Balloon; Will H. Pickens on the Right

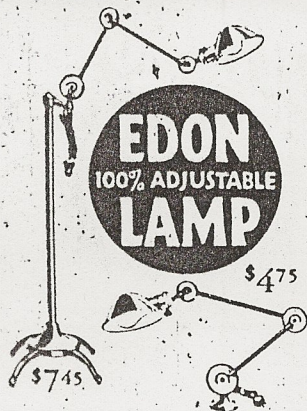


There is no need to hunt further—this new ship model speaker combines all the latest developments in radio acoustics. Due to the super-powered armature type unit, it reproduces voices and music in full, clear, natural tones. Add beauty of appearance—a real full-rigged ship model, finished in OLD IVORY—and you have the ideal cone speaker—quality plus beauty. A demonstration is all that is necessary—ask your dealer.

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ACCELERATING SENTIMENT

(Continued from Page 29)

the railroads sell to promoters represents the asthmatic wheezers which can no longer pull their own weight and are so old and delicate that they must use a beauty parlor for a roundhouse. It is dangerous to fire these old boilers, because they are liable to blow up in the engineers' laps.

I went shopping for the engines in Topeka and picked out two docile old birds which had long gray beards where their cowcatchers should have been. The foreman of the roundhouse wept bitterly over the sale, as those engines had been with him so long that they were like kinfolk. They cost me \$2000 apiece on the hoof and I ran them into K. C. over the Sante Fe and Missouri Pacific. The older engine of the two had often seen, Jesse James, and the younger was no springer, either. I was now in the bag for \$7000 and there was no turning back.

Then the ballyhoo began. Twenty-four-sheets in spasmodic colors soon depicted the educational advantages of a train wreck from every fence and wall in Missouri and Kansas. Three miniature locomotives were built up on the framework of slivers, each one run by a man in regulation engineer's uniform who introduced himself to pedestrians by saying, "I'm Casey Jones, the brave engineer; in a hundred wrecks and never lost a button."

I offered \$1000 in gold for the best article written around the writer's personal experience in a wreck and the greatest act of personal bravery witnessed therein. Another \$1000 in gold was to go to the engineer of the locomotive who stuck to his post the longest, for each one of the old locos was to start with a man at the throttle and they would stick in the cabs until the moment preceding the crash.

The amount and color of the purse is another pointer for embryo promoters. Never offer less than \$1000 for any prize or ballyhoo, and always offer it in yellow gleaming gold. In addition to the prize, each engineer was to get \$100 for his services. They were good men who pulled throttles for rival roads and each had his following. The result was daily arguments between their adherents over the comparative gameness and sticking ability of the two favorites.

Cautious Valor

The next step was to build a track inside the grounds. I was forced to hire 150 laborers at fifty cents an hour. These birds claimed they were working ten hours a day and managed to lay the track in three days under the lash of Will H. Pickens' sneering comments. I was the surveyor who laid out the right of way, with the result that the track looked as if it had contracted colic. The engineers later claimed that the track was so wavy they got seasick. The track was a spur running from the main line into the speedway and across the infield, three-quarters of a mile in length and built at a cost of some \$2000.

We backed Engine 88 into the grounds and parked her up against the far end. Then Engine 102 was trundled carefully in and bedded down for the night at the other terminus of the Pickens Short Line. No promoter could ask for a prettier day than that Fourth of July. The crowd started jamming the turnstiles at nine in the morning. The big barbecue was served at noon, and various sports occupied the day up to four o'clock, which was the time set for the spectacular crash of the giant dreadnoughts of the rail. Steam was up in the two old relics by three o'clock and the crowd forgot everything else in anticipation of this nerve-curdling event.

These exhibition crashes are made all the better as spectacles by dosing the engines with dynamite as invalids are charged with quinine. An expert is imported for this purpose and he supplies the real punch. Barrels of gasoline and kerosene are poured over the engines. The sticks of

dynamite are planted all over the rusty iron horses, connected up with wires and electrically operated caps. In order to insure the chances of everything going right, an extra stick of dynamite is fastened to the nose of each engine. Some weak-hearted promoters use only fifty sticks of explosive, but I was liberal and told my dynamite expert to quadruple the dose. A few minutes before the engines started, this expert came to me and implored me to get the crowd back, as the force of the explosive would probably blow Kansas City loose from its municipal charter.

Promptly at four o'clock an aerial bomb was shot into the sky and exploded with a reverberation that shook the state and curdled all the milk in Missouri dairy farms. This was the signal for the engineers to step on it. Each engineer jerked his throttle wide and opened the whistle of his engine as a shrieking warning of the catastrophe about to happen. All the spectators were shivering in the stands as the engines gathered speed. The boys at the throttles must have had the wrong idea about the nature of the prize and thought that the grand went to the first fellow to jump. They leaped together. It was a dead heat.

The Management Regrets

The riderless steeds continued, but not in exactly the same manner pictured on the screaming twenty-four-sheets. They seemed to wander aimlessly in an attempt to follow the meanderings of the Pickens Short Line. The smoke was pouring from their stacks, their ears were laid back flat, and their driving rods were snapping back and forth like elbows in a crowded street car. But somehow they didn't seem to cook up much momentum. I wasn't worried about that, as I knew the dynamite would more than atone for the lack of impact. When the engines were ten feet apart I put my fingers in my ears, for I knew what was coming.

They crashed! It was a soundless greeting, like the meeting of twin souls crossing the Styx. Instead of cotton in my ears, what I really required was an ear trumpet. Those two trains kissed without a sound, like maiden aunts. Then they ran backward a few feet and sat on their haunches like a couple of Airedales.

There was no noise except the gentle whisper of escaping steam. It seemed that those two patriarchal curios were hissing each other. The tender of 88 jumped the track, but that was the extent of the catastrophe. Old 102 was as good as new. The crowd started a community chorus of cat-calls and derisive buzzers. Three special cameramen who had come on from Hollywood in the hope of getting a sensational picture of a wreck to be used as the climax of a six-reel thriller quit grinding in disgust. Then they got a happy thought and turned their cameras on me, for by this time the crowd was moving out in my direction.

They were disappointed on this wreck picture, also, for I started to go away from there. I scooted under the grand stand and met the dynamite expert, who seemed to be training for the Olympic Marathon team. We chatted pleasantly on the run. I learned that he had forgotten to connect the juice with the caps, but that it would surely explode the next time I tried it. I suggested that we go back the next day and give it a fair trial, one train to be engineered by the dynamite expert and the other to be chauffeured by Will H. Pickens, neither man to jump until after the explosion.

I ran him into Kansas City, but couldn't catch him. It was an even contest, for the crowd couldn't catch me. There were only two casualties listed. One engineer had sprained his ankle and my professional pride was shattered into bits. This was one time I didn't have to make a regrettable announcement.

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LOOK OUT! Serious automobile and many other kinds of accidents happen every minute. Few escape them—suppose you meet with an accident tonight... would your income continue? Pneumonia, appendicitis and many other ills in the policy, which are prevalent now, can cause serious financial loss to you—before you know. Don't wait for misfortune to overtake you.

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At no cost to me, send details of the
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AGENTS WANTED FOR LOCAL TERRITORY

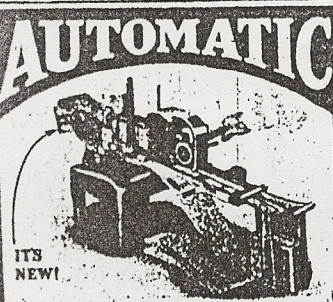
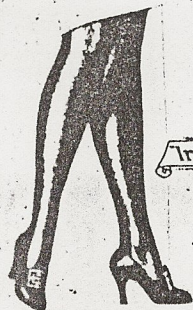
It's hard to go wrong!

TODAY you can get a flawless, fadeless, full-fashioned Iron Clad hose—pure sheer silk to the hem—powerfully reinforced with mercerized foot and garter top—in the season's latest lovely shades—with an Iron Clad guarantee on every pair—for only \$1.50!

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ITS NEW!
NO more slow hand-feeding of envelopes into an addressing machine. One by one!—Get a demonstration of this wonderful new popular-priced addresser.—It automatically feeds envelopes into itself as fast as you can turn the crank.

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Just clip and mail me to The Curtis Publishing Company, 116 Independence Square, Philadelphia, Penna., with your name and address, and I will tell you how you can help yourself to big start-time profits, as lots of other Curtis subscribers representative are doing.

Another promotion which was a success from the financial end, but from an artistic standpoint must be written in red ink on debit side of the ledger, was the Milwaukee Greater Aviation Meet, starting on Decoration Day, 1912, and lasting three days. The first day was to be good, the second day better, but the third and last day was to be the greatest gathering of aviators ever seen under one sky. For that purpose I had collected the Curtiss-Wright aviators, numbering eighteen in all—more aviators than had ever been crowded into any previous exhibitions. The great Sure-shot Kearney and Farnum Fish, the first aerial mail carrier, were among them. Among the remainder were several students with new-mown diplomas from the Pickens School of Overhead Disaster.

There was a big crowd the first day and they got a run for their money, for seven of my roughriding pilots smashed up their machines on cow barns and telegraph poles. Nobody was killed, but the accidents created a sensation. Managers of big Midwestern fairs wired me for first call on my remaining aviators and notified me they were coming to Milwaukee to sign contracts. They wouldn't arrive before the third and last day, which would be a red-letter date for gate receipts.

I started the second day with only eleven flyers, but the immense audience didn't mind, as they were lured in by the charitable hope of piping a crash. They got their wish, but my lads overdid it somewhat, as ten of them flattened their planes out in landing or trying to get up. There was every kind of flying accident that the heart could crave. And to put a bonnet on the climax, the crowd was treated to the sight of two airplanes smashing into each other while attempting to land.

The crowd was delighted, but Will H. Pickens was in the bag again. The third day of the meet was about to dawn and he was reduced to one aviator and one plane. The horde of fair managers who would arrive for the final day would see only seventeen wrecked planes and the expected crowd of 25,000 would see nothing, as my lone surviving aviator got cold feet from flying too close to an ice factory and resigned. It was a tough spot, as the reputation of the House of Pickens was at stake.

Sufferings From Sudden Ideas

The only aviation that Milwaukee would see on June 1, 1912, would be the near-by Wisconsin kids flying kites. The thing that worried me most was the loss of reputation which would result when the Midwestern fair managers got to town and found that I had nobody to fly. I went down to the taproom of the famous old Plankinton Hotel to figure out the answer in a manner made historic by more illustrious Southerners than myself. Along about the fourth or fifth tap I heard a newsboy shouting an extra in the street. I bought a paper to get a line on the scandal and found that Wilbur Wright had just died.

Twenty minutes later the same paper got out another extra stating that, out of deference to the memory of the father of aviation, there would be no flying in Milwaukee the next day. My respectful attitude was commended by all and I was able to sell contracts to the Midwestern fair officials when they arrived. They understood—or thought they did—why I had canceled the meet, and I convinced them of my flyers' ability by taking them around town and showing them the pretty pictures on the twenty-four-sheets.

It was a narrow squeak, but an outdoor promoter must do some quick thinking. Now quick thoughts are not necessarily correct. I had suffered from some sudden ideas the year before, when I went after the Hearst prize of \$50,000 offered for the first airplane to fly across the country before November 10, 1911. That was too much money for Will H. Pickens to overlook and I went after it, lock, stock and barrel. I figured that the most reliable overland flyer in those baby days of aviation was

Phil Parmelee, the crack flyer of the Wright Brothers' company. I entered into a contract with the Wrights on August 25, 1911, whereby I purchased two Wright pusher biplanes and secured the services of Parmelee. Then I began to ballyhoo Parmelee for the flight.

In the meantime Cal Rodgers, cousin of the late Commander John Rodgers, U. S. N., had started in a Wright pusher and had suffered several smash-ups, but might make the coast eventually if the Wright factory didn't run out of spare parts. Rodgers' flight was exceedingly grammatical, being punctuated at frequent intervals by accidental commas, unfortunate parentheses and inevitable question marks. He was in the repair shops on an average of three days out of four. While Rodgers was making this turtle tour westward there came some sensational news from Boston. Earl Ovington, who had learned to fly a Bleriot monoplane at Pau, France, had won the Boston Globe prize of \$10,000 for a 150-mile cross-country race, starting from the Squantum Field, near Boston, then to Nashua, on to Worcester, to Providence and back to Squantum. He wired me, telling me that he was the man to win the transcontinental flight and that his Bleriot was far superior in speed to the Wright pusher.

By-Products of Flying

That's where my quick thinking went wrong. I switched from Parmelee to Ovington overnight and the switch plunged Will H. Pickens into plenty of grief. The flight would cost about \$30,000 to finance, and I enlisted the support of Mr. McCornick, a New York banker, interested in aviation.

I chartered a train on the New York Central, consisting of three baggage cars, a hotel car and a sleeper. This train was to follow Ovington westward with two extra monoplanes stowed away in the baggage cars. The third baggage coach carried spare parts and a machine shop. The tops of the coaches were painted black with white stripes, enabling Ovington to pick the special out while he was flying at a high altitude. This special was not made up by the New York Central until I had planked \$7500 down on the line. It was parked on the tracks alongside the Hudson River. Newspapermen, mechanics, chefs, waiters and surgeons were living on this train, the engineer had steam up ready to pull out at the signal and everything was ready—but Ovington.

Ovington ran into some obstacle every day. It wasn't his fault, as he was anxious to get off. But every day was getting closer to the zero hour for competitors hoping to grasp the \$50,000 prize, the conditions clearly stating that the start must take place before October 10, 1911. After starting, the flyer had thirty days to complete his journey, otherwise his effort was invalid.

The Bleriot was a fast machine, once it got off the ground. The delay grew exasperating, for there was big dough in sight. The Hearst prize of \$50,000 was the least part of the profit. This may sound confusing to the reader who knows nothing of the by-products of promotion. By the word "by-products" I mean the money derived from hook-ups with companies supplying equipment. There were also other sources of income not generally known to the public.

The biggest money involved was that gained by the aviator's appearance in exhibitions after the successful flight. Then we got \$20,000 from a big shoe manufacturer. Ovington was to deliver a pair of their shoes in every town he struck on the way. He used a certain brand of gasoline which meant a bonus for his backers. His oil, his wearing apparel and even his goggles were highly subsidized. He got \$1000 for carrying a certain fountain pen. I cannot remember all the by-products, but there was \$250,000 involved. Chambers of commerce in cities along the route agreed to pay from \$200 to \$1000 to Ovington in return for making their towns a port of call.

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In addition, Postmaster General Hitchcock appointed Ovington the first transcontinental mail aviator and authorized the plane to be designated United States Mail Airplane Number 1. If Ovington completed his flight he would be the Lindbergh of the year 1911. But he didn't finish. He never even started. Accidents kept popping up until the final day arrived. He must qualify on October tenth or quit. He got off the ground late in the afternoon amid great cheering from crowds on Nassau Boulevard Field on Long Island. He circled the field for about three minutes and then straightened out, toward the setting sun.

Ovington made only one record in this flight. He set before the setting sun. His monoplane fluttered like a scorched moth, shook its wings wearily and decided to prove that Newton's law of gravitation was more influential than Will H. Pickens' idea of quick dough. The plane jabbed its beak into a well-kept lawn in Garden City. I rushed over in the same speedy roadster which was to have carried me to the waiting special on the New York Central tracks. One look told me that Ovington was out of the race. It was too late to assemble another plane, the time limit was almost up, and \$250,000 profit was shot to pieces.

Cal Rodgers finally completed his flight, but not within the thirty-day limit. He didn't get the prize, but had the consolation of being the first man to fly across the continent. He crashed a few weeks later at Long Beach, California, and was killed.

Occasionally the wheel stops on a winning number and the promoter cashes in on a mistake. I contracted with a St. Paul newspaper to furnish aviator Laddie Laird to perform a unique stunt in broadcasting the news of the Hughes-Wilson election in November, 1916, before radio was in general use. Laird was to go aloft at ten in the evening, fire an aerial bomb to attract the attention of the populace and then ignite colored magnesium flares, red signifying that Wilson was elected and green conveying the news that Hughes was successful.

A Lucky Accident

This was an innovation and I went to St. Paul to supervise it. The sum involved was \$3500 for the single flight. I was on the roof of the newspaper building with the publisher on election eve. A blinding snow-storm came up. It looked as if Laird would be unable to fly; therefore no chance of collecting the money. While I was on the roof the news came in that Hughes was elected. This information was flashed to Laird at the flying field. I also heard the news from a reporter who had climbed to the roof to consult his employer. We were about to descend, as there didn't seem a chance of Laird flying in the blizzard, when the boom of an aerial bomb caused us to jerk our heads upward. The intrepid Laird was flying somewhere overhead. When we heard the explosion, the publisher and myself shook hands in the dark and waited for Laird to break out the green flare in honor of Hughes.

The only color illuminating St. Paul that evening was red. The mechanics had made a mistake and attached the wrong color magnesium flares to the plane. The publisher was panic-stricken, as Laird's error would make him the laughingstock of the town. I realized that Laird had blown the \$3500, and escaped from the building before the indignant publisher could take a punch at me.

The next day was different. They added up the election totals with another lead pencil and discovered that Mr. Wilson was the proper President. Red was the right color and the mechanics had made the correct mistake. Laird and I went into the publisher's office with our chests stuck out like bay windows to collect the money. We collected.

The huge aerial preparedness spectacle which was to feature Lincoln Beachey had not quite reached concrete form when

Beachey plunged into San Francisco Bay in March, 1916. I didn't drop this scheme. Instead, I looked for another flyer to carry on the work. This man would have to be ballyhooed to the public as a superairman, as good as Beachey, a stunt flyer, courageous, but with judgment. In other words, I was selling recklessness, but I wasn't buying it. It would cost me \$50,000 to build up this man, before I turned a cog in the wheel of profit. I found the man in De Lloyd Thompson, a young chap from Washington, Pennsylvania, one of America's pioneer flyers.

The War College had just installed a powerful searchlight to light up the night and protect the capital against enemy raiders. Thompson approached the officials with the idea of testing the new beacon. He was to fly over Washington at night and the War College was to endeavor to spear him with its blinding beam. This would be a good test of the light, and Thompson suggested that if the light didn't locate him, then he would simplify matters. They could hold the beam steady and he would fly through it, making everything serene and official. The offer was accepted and the date set. I placed a photographer on the roof of the Munsey Building with a camera trained on the Washington Monument.

A Sharpshooting Bomber

The War College's new all-seeing eye stabbed the heavens in a vain effort to pick out Thompson's plane, which was playing hide and seek far up in the clouds, with no intention of getting tagged. He was waiting for the theater crowds to come out on the streets. Just as they emerged, a welcome buzzing told me that Thompson was skimming down over the city. He dropped an aerial bomb that shook those happy theater crowds loose from their enjoyment. It was an echo-cracking blast which rattled all the loose teeth in the District of Columbia and caused the equestrian statues to rear up on their hind legs.

Thompson let another aerial shell loose, then another and another. The panic was on. Nobody knew what it was. The bombs kept on bursting every few seconds for fifteen minutes. It was the loudest racket ever heard over any unsuspecting town.

Only the War College knew that the noise was an airplane laying eggs in the sky, until Thompson cut on his white magnesium flares directly over the Washington Monument. With the magnesium flares trailing him like blazing ostrich feathers, he looped a series of fantastic convolutions in the sky, spun a web of sparks around the monument and ricocheted through the clouds like a crazy comet trying to escape from its own red-hot tail. Then he blacked out just as suddenly.

He left a bewildered District of Columbia in his wake. The city was shaken to its hubs, not knowing why, how or what it was all about. On Saturday evening, April 15, 1916, an American city was first raided by a bomb-carrying airplane.

When early risers went to their doors to collect the milk the next morning they found one of the bombs on their doorsteps. Venomous black fuses protruded from these bombs, which were paper bags stuffed with excelsior. On each bomb was printed:

THIS "BOMB" IS HARMLESS
SUPPOSE IT HAD CONTAINED NITROGLYCERIN
AND WAS HURLED BY THE ENEMY INSTEAD
OF BY
DE LLOYD THOMPSON
WHO FLIES THE AMERICAN FLAG
WAKE UP AND PREPARE!

It was the general impression that Thompson, by careful sharpshooting, had managed to drop these excelsior missiles on every doorstep. Instead, they had been placed there by Will H. Pickens, who canvassed Washington that night in a fast motor car. They were dropped on the front lawns of the consulates and tossed over porch railings in the exclusive residential

(Continued on Page 190)

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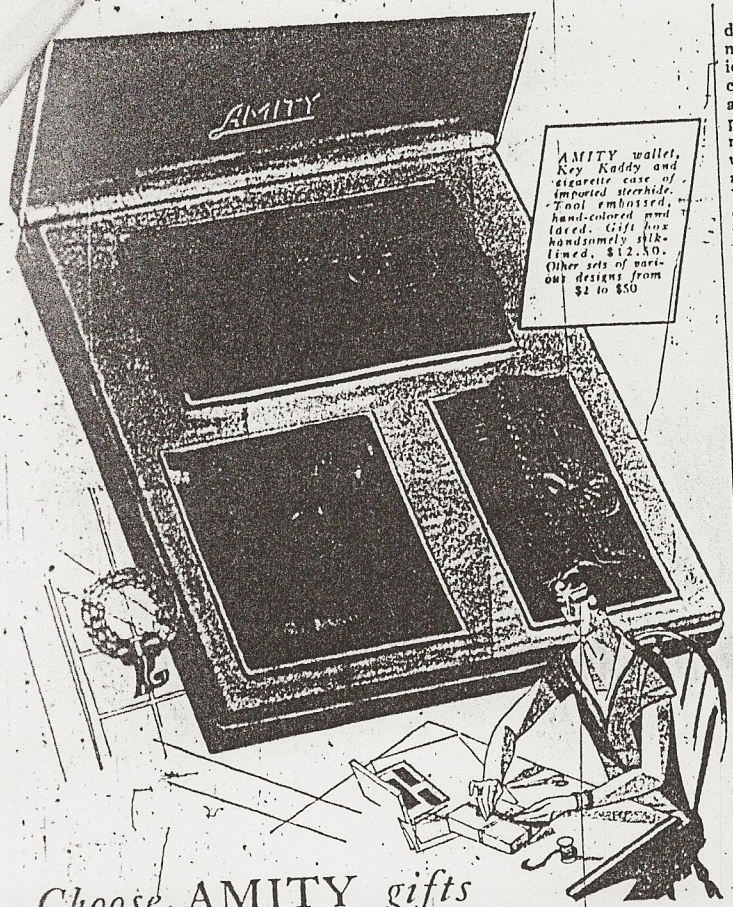
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(Continued from Page 186)

district. Washington was rather dizzy the next morning, but had a comprehensive idea of what a hostile aviator could do to a city during the night. It delighted Army and Navy officials, who were plugging for preparedness, and happened at the right moment. The Army gave Thompson the use of the Governor's Island flying field as a base for a night-bombing raid over New York. It was a front-page story all over the country and editorial writers added red and white pencils to their blue ones. It was a big boost for preparedness and Thompson's name became a household word. We raided New York and Chicago in quick succession and rolled back East with enthusiasm, gathering compound interest by the minute.

The time had arrived for Will H. Pickens to cash in on the publicity. The ballyhoo was over and profits depended on quick actions. The nut, which is outdoor showmen's patois for overhead expense, was terrific. I had arranged to show the preparedness spectacle from coast to coast, a corps of press agents were working in twenty different cities, crews were hanging up twenty-four-sheets on every flat space where paste would stick, and the initial expenses had swelled to more than \$50,000. The first show was planned to take place at the mammoth Sheepshead Bay (Speedway on May 5, 1916, only three weeks after the Washington raid. We figured to play to 100,000 spectators at each performance, for patriotism was hotter than iron on the anvil. Two days before the grand opening I was awaiting the arrival of Thompson from Mineola, Long Island. Picking up a New York paper I read of the crash of an aviator by the name of Blakely, whom I knew slightly. He didn't interest me, for my life was bound up in Thompson. Then I read

that Blakely's passenger also had been seriously injured. The passenger was De Lloyd Thompson.

I went to the hospital to see him and found that he had just gone up to oblige a friend. His ankle was crushed, his arm was broken, he was internally injured, but he wasn't half so badly hurt as my feelings. The Sheepshead Bay carnival was postponed indefinitely, for Thompson was in the hospital for months. All of which proves that you shouldn't count your eggs until your omelet is scorched.

A joy ride in a pal's plane had flattened the greatest and most successful ballyhoo ever staged in the world. In my judgment there never was a publicity stunt in the annals of science and sheer impudence like De Lloyd Thompson's raid on Washington.

The carrying power of that raid is illustrated by the fact that the preparedness spectacle didn't get into swing until four months later. Then Thompson staged the first one in Boston and we swung a successful trip through the West. My bungled-up star was on crutches for a year, but flying inside of four months.

His injuries kept him out of the war. He did his share by teaching others to fly, and it was in De Lloyd's plane that Eddie Rickenbacker, the future American ace, had his first flight.

The reverses I have spoken about in this article indicate there is no such thing as winning without losing. The promoter who gambles for big dough must be ready to shake off his bad breaks and start all over again.

Everybody must take the good with the bad. My advice is not to mix them.

Editor's Note—This is the fourth of a series of articles by Mr. Pickens. The fifth will appear in the issue of December 24th.

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

(More Than Two Million Seven Hundred and Fifty Thousand Weekly)

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