

"MEN WITH WINGS"

(Continued from previous page.)

wife, after he had embraced and kissed her, "I'm going to fly."

Martha Ranson was speechless at the words of her husband; but the little girl wasn't.

"You're really going to...?" she asked, her eyes round with interest.

"Yes, Peggy, my sweet," he told her. "Your daddy's going to build an aeroplane."

Unmindful of his wife's silent misgivings, Ranson took his daughter in his arms, kissed her, put her down on her feet again.

"Come, darling," he said to her, "we've got to go to work."

"That'll be fine," Peggy agreed. "Daddy, the kite's almost finished. Pat and Scotty are coming over to finish it to-morrow and—"

"Don't you have to go back to the paper to-day, Nick?" Martha Ranson asked.

Ranson, who had started for the door, stopped, faced her uneasily.

"No," he confessed. "I quit."

"Oh," said Martha, flatly.

Airily, Ranson blew her a kiss, turned to his daughter.

"There'll be plenty of room to work out in the shed," he told the little girl, still failing to notice that his wife's smile had been wiped from her face by a troubled expression. "We won't bother Pat and Scotty and their kite."

In the days which followed, Ranson made good his promise to build a plane. First he built models, then the fuselage and wings. Finally, he installed his motor. As the ship drew near to completion, he found that he was behind the schedule of Pat and Scotty, who had built larger and larger kites and were now experimenting with one they said would carry a man.

Peggy split her loyalty between her father and the two boys. Scott Barnes, the tow-head, was ten years old, nephew of Jenkins. Pat Falconer, dark-haired and immaculate, the same age, was the son of the banker, richest and most influential man in Underwood. Ranson noted that while Scott and Peggy toiled, Pat acted as official observer and supervisor.

"Oh, boy!" Pat exclaimed just before the kite was to be test-flown. "Think of the kite up about three hundred feet with me in it."

"Why don't you do some work, instead of sitting around talking so big?" Scott demanded.

Peggy fished some glue from her father's workbench, brought it to Scott, who worked importantly on the kite.

"You always look so nice," Peggy said to Pat. "I'll bet you have a clean shirt every day. And you never do anything to get them dirty."

Ranson and Scott discussed the kite and the aeroplane, Scott saying he was sure the kite would carry a man, and Ranson vowing to beat the record set by the Wright brothers. Peggy agreed with both. Her father told her, with a smile: "And you're the first aerial tom-boy this town ever had."

Scott put the finishing touches on the kite. Scott and Pat both told Peggy to stay behind as they got it out of the shed, started up the avenue. She dropped behind, but still trailed, watched them as they reached an open field, spat on a chip to see who would be first to fly in the kite. She heard Pat's exclamation of joy as he won the first chance.

Scott tried to get the kite off the ground with Pat in it by running, but failed. Then he spotted Peggy trying to hide behind a bush and summoned her. He pointed her out to Pat.

"You've got to help us!" Scott and Pat called.

Pat got back into the kite. Peggy and Scott ran with the rope, but still the kite wouldn't leave the ground. Both rested. Scott finally said it was his turn to try, so

Pat and the now exhausted Peggy tried to get him into the air. They, too, failed. Finally, the boys withdrew and held a whispered conference.

"Peggy, it's your turn," Scott announced, finally.

"I wouldn't want to go a long ways up," said Peggy, suddenly reticent. "In fact—I've got to get home early."

Unmindful of her mild protests, the boys got her into the kite. They ran with the rope. Almost immediately the kite started to rise. It climbed higher and higher.

"How does it feel up there?" Pat yelled.

"Just—just lovely!" There was terror in Peggy's weak voice.

A moment later the wind began to die. The kite started downward rapidly. Panic seized the boys. They ran wildly over the open field. The kite rose for a little while. Exhausted, the boys stopped. They heard Peggy's terrified chant:

"Run! Run! Run! Run!"
But they were spent. The kite

the shed, clad only in her night-gown. She found her father smeared with grease, working under a lantern, which clearly showed the outlines of the nearly completed aeroplane. She walked close to his side.

"About the kite flying—you weren't mad at me, were you, daddy?" she asked.

He turned from his work, saw the barefooted child, laid aside his tools. He saw a pleading look in her eyes, his face lighted in a smile of understanding and devotion. He held out his arms to her.

"Of course not, darling," he said.

She went to him and he took her in his arms. He sat down on a box, holding her on his lap. Then he kissed her.

"I feel better, now," she said.

"Peggy, you're the only little girl we've got," Ranson said, softly. "If something happened to you—"

"I didn't want to go up very high," she protested. "I told 'em I had to get home early."

"You don't want me to be grey-haired, do you?" he asked.

"Oh, no—never!"

"Maybe I never will be—if I don't have to worry about you flying in kites," he promised.

"I won't ever again," she agreed. She looked up at him.

"You'd better not fly, either. You're the only daddy we've got."

OUR NEW SERIAL

—And The Man Who Wrote It

CONTINUING its policy of giving readers serial stories of exceptional quality, the "Record" has secured the rights to the serialisation of "Men With Wings," the story of the Paramount Technicolor film of the same name, starring Fred MacMurray, Ray Milland and Louise Campbell. The first instalment is published today. "Men With Wings" is the dramatised story of aviation from its daring beginnings to the present day. It has thrills in it, this story!—crashing planes, battles in the sky, death-defying tests by flying fools, parachute jumps and transatlantic flights! And more than that—through it sweeps the living, human story of two boys and a girl whose romance is the romance of aviation itself.

William Augustus ("Wild Bill") Wellman, who directed the forthcoming picture, and also wrote this story, is a man who knows what he is writing about. A Lafayette Flying Corps pilot during the war, he launched aviation as a major cinema subject with "Wings" in 1927.

After the war he went to Hollywood, persuaded Douglas Fairbanks to give him a job acting in "The Knickerbocker Buckaroo." After William Wellman took one good look at himself on the screen he decided he was no actor, and became a messenger boy for Samuel Goldwyn. When General Pershing was being shown around the lot one day he spied Wellman, whom he had known when Wellman was famed for his trick of flying low over German towns and firing his machine gun at church bells. Said Pershing: "Why, Bill, you old son of a gun, how are you?" Next day Wellman was made an assistant director.

wavered for a moment, then plunged toward the ground. There was a sickening thud.

CHAPTER II.

THE crash of the kite resulted in a black eye and bruises for Peggy Ranson. There were other developments. Martha Ranson made telephone calls to the homes of Pat Falconer and Scott Barnes and had very serious charges to make. It looked for a time as if the happy triumvirate of two little boys and a little girl was a thing of the past. But very soon they were back playing together again.

One of the things which militated against any lasting break among the trio was Nick Ranson's flying machine. They were all tremendously interested in that. As final preparations to fly were made by Ranson, they again occupied the shed, watched wide-eyed, tried to help Peggy's father. To the three children, he was a god. To some of the residents of Underwood he was over-enthusiastic about flight. To the majority he was a little bit crazy. Everyone was sure he would come to no good end with his new-fangled contraption.

Peggy had very little chance to see her father alone.

One night, after Martha Ranson had put her to bed, she got up, sneaked downstairs and out into

Ranson cleared his throat.

"I'm—well, you see—I'm different," he tried to explain. "This is an aeroplane, not a flimsy kite. And I'm a lot older than you. When you grow up, you can fly, too."

"With you?"
"I hope so," he said. He lifted her from his lap, put her on her feet, handed her the candle. "I think you'd better be getting back to bed, Miss Ranson."

Peggy dutifully turned up her face to be kissed.

"Good night, daddy," she said.

"Good night, darling," he answered.

He grinned at her and winked as she walked toward the door. She winked back, continued on her way. Ranson called after her suddenly:

"Hey—Peggy!"

She faced him again.

"Yes, daddy?" she asked.

"How did it feel when you were up there in the air?" he demanded.

That question, long propounded in his brain, always with him, was answered not by Peggy that night, but by a rickety aeroplane with a coughing two-cylindered motor shortly thereafter. With Peggy, Scott Barnes and Pat Falconer he had his brain-child trucked to the top of a cliff where he had installed a monorail for launching it.

Early one morning, without even notifying Pat and Scott, he took Martha and Peggy to the cliff. He started the motor while they looked on solemnly. Martha's face was stiff with fright. As the motor pounded and vibrated in its mount, Ranson grinned at her.

"You'd better smile," he said, "or I'll start getting scared myself."

Martha Ranson forced a smile. "That's better," Ranson told her. He bent down, kissed Peggy.

"Goodbye, darling," he said. "I'll send you a Christmas present from Holland."

"Goodbye, daddy," she replied.

Ranson got into the metal seat on the wing. He opened the throttle to test the motor and the dim grew terrific. Then, with a parting smile, he reached for the wire holding the ship and jerked it loose.

The plane raced down the monorail, shot off the edge of the cliff and out into the still morning air. It continued outward for about a hundred feet, wavered, then started downward nose first toward the base of the jutting rock. The wires screamed, the motor went even faster. Then, above all this came the single, heart-rending cry of Martha Ranson.

The ship crashed. Instantly flames leaped from the wreckage.

Martha and Peggy scrambled down the narrow path that led to the bottom of the cliff. Martha, leading the way, saw her husband stir, break free of the wreckage, stagger away from the flames, an arm over his face to shield it from the fierce heat. Then he tumbled forward and lay still on the ground. Martha ran to his side, bent over him, turned him over, cradled his head in her arms. His face was blacked by the smoke of the fire.

Tearless with fright and horror, Peggy leaned over both.

"Nick, oh—Nick, darling!"
Martha sobbed.

Ranson opened his eyes, turned his head slowly, looking first at Martha and then at Peggy. On his face was a look of abstraction.

"Tell them," he muttered, "when they crash—to turn off—the ignition—"

Then his head fell back. Realisation smote Peggy that her father was dead, and she began to cry softly. After a while, the woman and the girl sensed someone beside them, and turned. There stood Scott and Pat, tears running down their cheeks.

All during the long hours of vigil and travail, Pat and Scott stayed close to Martha Ranson and Peggy, trying to help, to ease the over-powering sorrow that the woman and the little girl felt. It was during this time, and the funeral, and the empty days thereafter that gradually among the three children grew a deep and sincere devotion. The children themselves didn't realise it, and yet it was there.

One night, after Ranson had been buried and Underwood had recovered from the first numbing shock of his dramatic passing, Peggy went alone to the shed where "Ranson's folly," as the ship had been known, had come to life. She sat in the darkness, staring at the moonlight which splashed in through a window. Tears coursed down her cheeks.

Then came the sound of soft footfalls. Peggy started, looked up from the box on which she was sitting, her chin cupped in her hands. She saw Pat and Scott in the doorway, awkward and hesitant as they gazed at her.

"We—didn't mean to bother you," Scott faltered.

"We really didn't," said Pat.

Peggy said nothing. Pat added: "It doesn't seem right without him here—explaining things."

Still, Peggy couldn't bring herself to speak.

"Peggy," said Scott.

"Yes?" she asked.

He indicated the workbench on which there were several small aeroplanes.

"Do you think he'd mind if we

each took one of those models—to remember him by?"

Peggy considered the matter for a moment.

"No," she said, thoughtfully.

Scott and Pat walked to the bench. Each picked up a model. Scott took a third. They walked back to the sorrowing girl.

Scott put one of the planes in Peggy's lap.

"This one's yours," he said. "It's the best one."

For a moment he hesitated, then bent over and quickly kissed her. He straightened up, looked defiantly at Pat. Pat swallowed hard, leaned forward, and also kissed her. Then, without another word, they turned and tiptoed from the shed into the moonlight.

Peggy wonderingly looked after them, watched them go silently away.

(To be continued.)

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