

Are Aeroplane Parachutes Practical?

By W. EDOUARD HAEUSSLER

THE writer, who has been following aviation for the past few years, and who has had experience in actual flying, having owned an aeroplane, became interested in an editorial debate on the subject of "Airplane Parachutes," appearing in the *New York Times*, wherein Mr. Adrian Van Muffling, by profession a Chief Aero Engine Instructor at a New York Aeroplane School, gives utterance to such speeches as: "If an airplane comes down 'out of control' it is the duty as well as the natural tendency of the pilot to 'stick it out' and to do his uttermost to regain equilibrium. If he happens to be high enough the chances are in favor of his doing so before connection with the ground is made. By the time he realizes that it is too late for him to right his machine before crashing it will be too late for the parachute to open, provided he could possibly manage to jump clear of it into space."

Wherein he shows that his estimation of the value of an aviator, the cost of whose training aggregates some \$10,000, is less than the value of the machine in which he is flying and further that if the machine comes down out of control it is the duty of the pilot to come down with it, and calmly "stick it out".

Were I to be granted the opportunity of seeing Mr. Muffling in a flying machine that was equipt with a "parachute," despite his weak reasons why this is impossible, I am most positive that he would use the parachute in the case of an accident and would not adhere to the duty of "sticking it out." The balance of his text explains in a large volume of words the idea that it is impossible to get out of the pilot's seat and fall clear of the dropping plane, by the use of a parachute.

The diagram shown in the semi-circular illustration below will give the reader a clear idea of the various positions in which the machine may fall while out of control, and that in these positions the parachute will operate with sufficient certainty that a great percentage of the fatalities up to date could have been prevented.

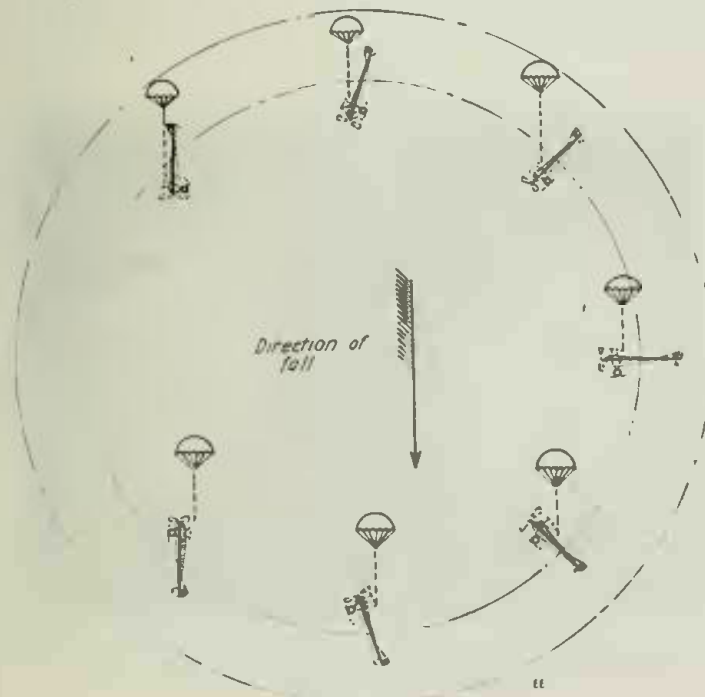


Diagram showing relative positions of the falling plane in which parachute is available for use.

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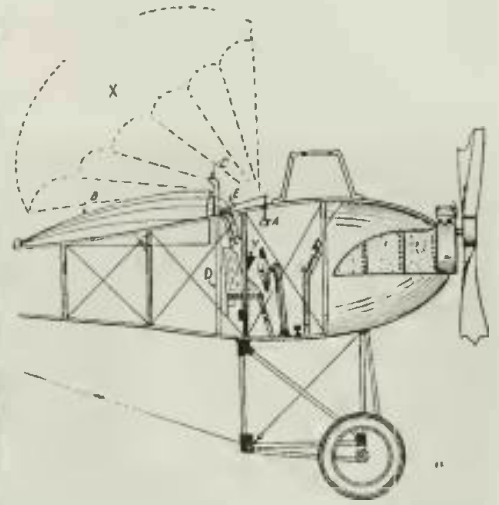
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It may also be of interest to make reference here to a parachute being used successfully in Rheims on October 16th, 1913, by a young French airman, Louis Renault Piercez. He was the designer of the

parachute device shown in our illustration and he attached his invention to a Nieuport monoplane. On the day that he made his test flight, he sat in the observer's seat and had the parachute strap to his shoulder belt. Another aviator piloted the machine. The weather was squally and he was warned not to make the trip; he, however, started, heedless of the admonition and when about 2,000 feet in the air and making a turn, a sudden heavy gust of wind struck his right plane and crumpled it! His life was saved by his parachute device, while the pilot "stuck it out" and was killed!

Louis Piercez was killed in 1914 in an automobile accident, and his device has not been exploited any further, except by the Huns. The action of

the device is simple and easy to understand. The lever marked A, is pulled when it is desired to release the parachute B, which is placed on the upper side of the fuselage.



Side Elevation, Wings Detached, of the Nieuport Monoplane, Used by Louis Piercez, with His Device Attached Wherein A is the Emergency lever, B the Collapsed Parachute, C the Wind Board, D the Guide Rail for Wind Board, E Bolt Liberating C, and X Position of the Parachute When Partially Inflated by the Forced Air Current Due to the Falling of the Plane Thru the Air.

The pulling of the lever causes air curtain C, to slide down or up, according to the position of the machine. It is spring loaded and is forced down with a snap. The forward or downward motion of the plane causes a rush of air which fills the parachute and lifts the pilot free of the machine; the machine dropping from under him. It therefore becomes apparent that he has not so difficult a task to become free from the machine as Mr. Muffling would have it. The *Times* editors, who are very keen on correcting letters from the readers that may in any way be misunderstood, make comment on Mr. Muffling's letter, under the heading of "His answer hardly convincing"—wherein one of the paragraphs is directly to the point and fully coincides with the writer's ideas on the subject. This editorial paragraph in part read:—"that if this device were always at the aviator's command some of the fatalities that now occur could be prevented, or that to have the lives of even a few of these enormously valuable men would be worth while. Still less did the expert's argument meet the fact that, according to a report of trustworthy origin, a German aviator was seen, this week, to extricate himself and a parachute from an airplane that was falling in flames." And that an aviator "is not a man who can be replaced by the first man on whom the Government is willing to make another like expenditure. He is literally 'a rare bird' and to lose him unnecessarily is worse than unwise." Therefore one may readily see that even the daily press is not falling in line and "gobbling up" mere mention of a certain thing being impossible, and letting it go at that. We are now living in an era where impossible and can not should be stricken from our vocabulary. This is the age of wonders and when an idea does not work against the principles of Nature, it is possible. At least let us try it out thoroly.