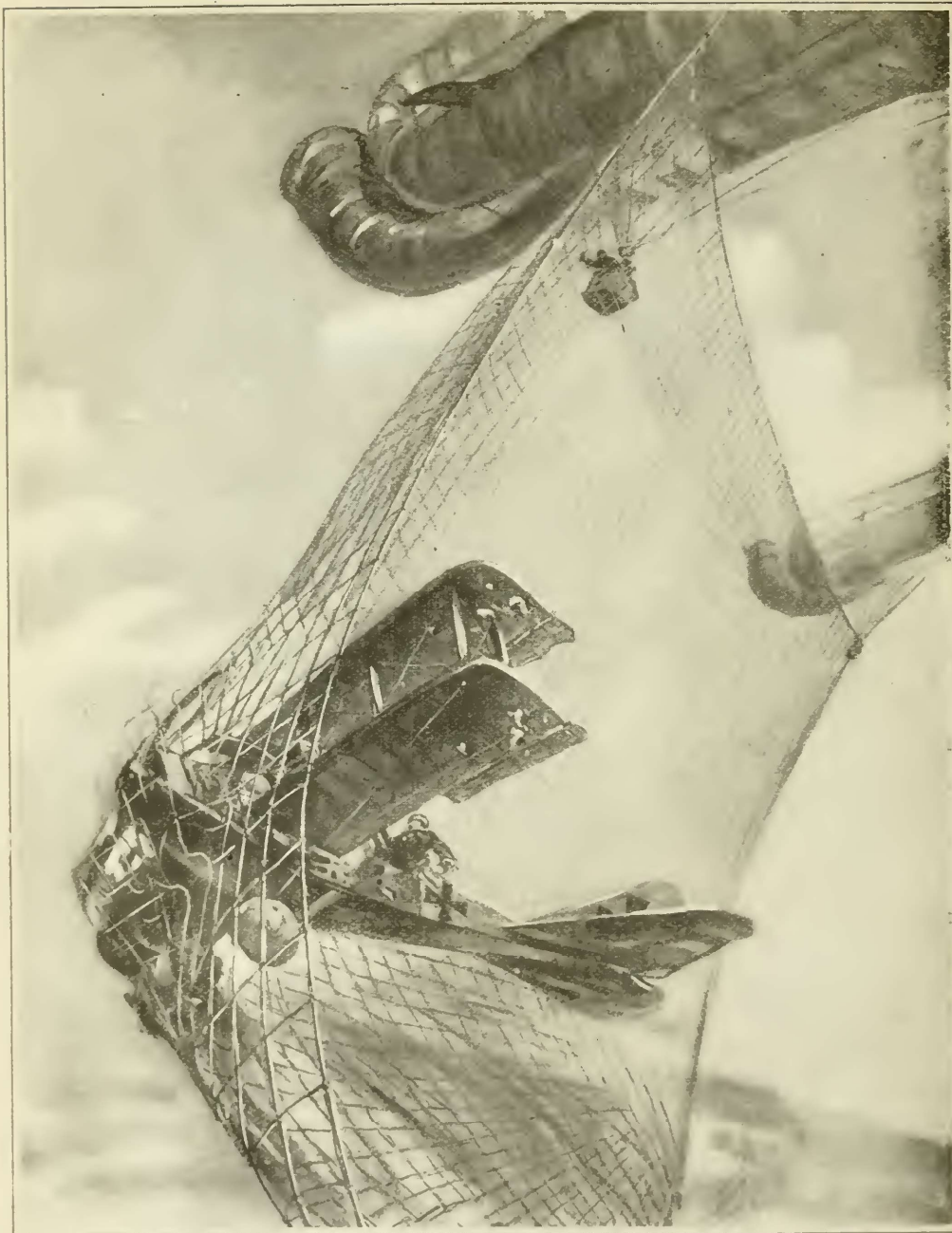


## Netted!



Mr. F. J. Lane, an Englishman, in a letter to the Editor of the *Popular Science Monthly*, proposes the use of nets for trapping raiding enemy airplanes. This could be carried out at night. The nets are to be made of piano wire, and are to be suspended from balloons. The space below would be barred by anti-aircraft guns. The enemy pilot is to be forced into them by pursuing airplanes through open lanes which he will consider avenues of escape. Then a net will loom up before him. It is too late to turn. He must face death either by crashing into the great net or by a hail of machine-gun bullets from his pursuers.

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## Fishing Airplanes from the Sky in Nets

An ingenious plan for catching enemy  
airplane pilots in nets of piano wire

By Carl Dientsbach

FOR many years the scientists of European and American weather bureaus have explored the atmosphere kites from which thermometers, barometers, recorders and wind-measurers are suspended. These instruments are like pens in the hands of the air; for the air writes down how hot and cold it is, how much it weighs, how fast it is moving, and how wet it is. The kites are flown from thin but very strong piano wire. Whole batteries of kites are sent aloft and kept there for days at a time.

These piano wires were considered so dangerous to aerial traffic before the war that in the weather news published by the German Government for the benefit of aviators, the approximate location of the kites, which naturally changes with the wind, was never omitted.

If a few piano wires can be so dangerous in peace, what might not happen if a more elaborate wire system were deliberately resorted to in time of war for the purpose of netting high-powered flying machines? That is the idea of an Englishman, Mr. F. J. Lane, who wishes us to place it before the readers of the POPULAR SCIENCE MONTHLY. The present writer proposed the same system before the war.

His aerial entanglement is to be supported in feeble winds preferably by captive balloons or by kites. It is obvious that the system would hardly succeed in broad daylight, but it would be unquestionably efficacious at night, provided the enemy could not see the upper-

most of the kites or balloons which support the netting. The wires would be provided with barbs, and their effect would be disastrous if they should ever be caught in a revolving propeller.

To cover great spaces the meshing of the net would be very coarse, measuring perhaps fifteen feet to the side. Indeed, the coarser the mesh the more likely is the plan to succeed, for the more difficult will it be to detect the piano wire.

The great vertical space to be enclosed is undoubtedly the chief difficulty encountered, even though we may consider the lower altitudes amply barred by anti-aircraft guns. An airplane has an up and down movement of miles; a submarine of only two hundred or three hundred feet. The success of the net depends clearly on driving the enemy pilot by gunfire or fighting craft into seemingly open lanes so ingeniously laid out that he never suspects the fate which is likely to befall him and regards the avenue as a means of escape.

Those who are familiar with the history of the airplane will remember the experiments made by Sir Hiram Maxim with his enormous, daringly conceived flying machine. During the course of these experiments a wire stay broke. In doing so it sheared off the propeller blades as if they were cardboard. Had the machine been actually flying in the air, it is easy to imagine what would have happened. And so with the enemy airplane that plunges into the net that Mr. Lane proposes. Any enemy pilot would crash to a ghastly death.