

Firing Two Guns at Once

An ingenious method of firing both overhead and straight ahead in British fighting airplanes

AS readers of the POPULAR SCIENCE MONTHLY know, the machine-gun of a fighting airplane is fixed in position. It fires through the propeller, the gun and the propeller being so synchronized that the bullets will not hit the blades. In some Nieuport airplanes as many as five machine-guns can be fired simultaneously, three of the guns being mounted on the top plane, and two in the usual position to fire through the propeller. All of these five guns are Vickers-Maxims and fire straight ahead. The entire machine must be turned to aim them.

It is conceivable that a situation might arise when the pilot of the fighting plane must be prepared to meet not only an adversary who is swooping down on him from overhead but also another adversary in front of him. In such a situation his fixed machine-guns will aid him little, especially against the man above him. In one of the latest British one-man fighting machines, therefore, two machine-guns are so arranged that the pilot fires both of them at once and yet one of them enables him to fire overhead. One of the machine-guns is a Vickers-Maxim which is fixed and which fires through the propeller in the usual way; the other is a Lewis which is attached to

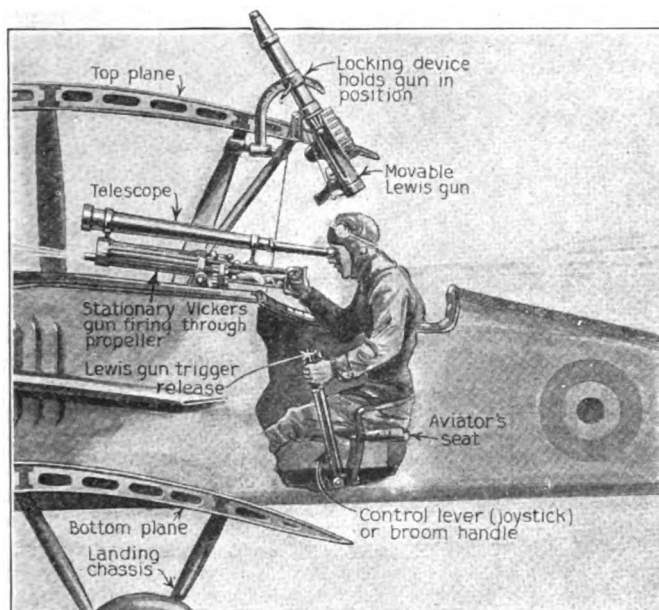
the upper plane and which is fired from the control lever or "joy stick," as it is called. The Lewis gun has a locking device operated from the butt by pushing a button, so that the gun can be locked in

any position on its swivel.

Suppose the pilot is attacked by two enemy planes. He has only to lock the Lewis so that it fires straight overhead and to turn his plane toward one of the oncoming foes. With his right hand on the Vickers' trigger, he can open fire as soon as the range is ripe. His

left hand is on the control lever with which he governs his airplane and also fires his Lewis. The Vickers starts its sharp crackle as he gets a bead on his enemy. Above him appears another enemy machine. A quick glance upwards, then a sharp pressure with the thumb of the left hand on the gun trigger release attached to the control lever. Rat-tat-tat-tat! and the man who has been hovering over him like a hawk receives a stream of bullets.

Throughout the entire fight, the pilot is able to keep his left hand on the airplane control lever. When he changes drums on the Lewis, he uses his right hand. These cartridge drums are so made that they can be renewed without any difficulty in a few seconds.



It is a busy time for the aviator when he has to fire at one enemy in front and another above him at the same time