

Up in the Air

by Baulah Earle

SEVENTH INSTALLMENT

Monty Wallace has just arrived in California, having broken the East-West cross country airplane record. Natalie Wade, mistaken by him for a newspaper reporter, writes the exclusive account of Monty's arrival, and succeeds in securing a trial job with a paper in exchange for the story. Natalie becomes attached to Monty.

Altho she discovers Monty's love for her is not sincere, Natalie admits that she loves him. She is assigned by her paper to report Monty's activities for publication. Jimmy Hale, the newspaper's photographer, becomes Natalie's co-worker. Natalie interviews Jabe Marion, a wealthy airplane builder, who decides to build a record-breaking round the world plane for Monty. Marion's daughter, Sunny, exquisitely beautiful, is attracted to Monty.

Natalie discovers that Sunny is jealous of her friendship with Monty, and that she is trying to prevent them from being alone. After driving to a mountain resort with Sunny and Jimmy, Monty again declares his love for Natalie.

Sunny attempts to drive Natalie from Monty's attention by climbing a high wall. She almost loses her balance and is pulled back by Monty. Jimmy later asks Natalie to consider his love for her if she refuses Monty.

Natalie induces Monty to set out with her in an airplane search for two missing aviators. At dusk Monty lands the plane in the open country, where he and Natalie must pass the night. Resuming the search in the morning, they finally locate the fliers. Natalie wires the story to her paper. That night at dinner, Marion announces a non-stop round the world flight, with Monty piloting the new plane, "Sunny Marion."

The day before the flight, Monty once more declares his love to Natalie. In spite of adverse weather reports, Monty takes off. Natalie returns by plane to California, where she hears that Monty has reached Moscow, and is continuing on to Siberia.

Quickly, in the staccato manner of the veteran reporter, Natalie poured out the story of Monty's victory over the elements. It was his triumph—her's. And even as the last words of her story sung over the wire, Jimmy Hale and Sunny came in.

Sunny was her old self again. Composed, her most charming manner seeking to conceal the defeat that Natalie knew must be hers. Jimmy was jubilant.

"Get out the Welcome Mat," Jimmy shouted gleefully. "This calls for a party. And when the Hale tribe says party, it means a real blowout—a whoopjamboreeh!" Sunny acceded with an alacrity that seemed almost genuine.

"Of course," she agreed, with gusto. "And what better place for a welcome party to Monty Wallace than Nat's apartment?"

Natalie sensed a thrust in these apparently innocent words. But not betraying that she too, knew Sunny's position with Monty, she took up the challenge.

"You two run along," replied Natalie. "I'll meet you after I get the rest of this story and check on Monty's arrival."

Jimmy and Sunny departed, while Natalie resumed her place beside the telephone. The bell jangled with an insistent clangor.

"Yes," answered Natalie. "Oh, it's you, Mack. Yes—I'm here at the airport. No news after the last flash—what? You have a bulletin from the News Bureau? What is it—quick!"

From his desk in the city room, Mack Hanlon scanned the strand of yellow tape trailing thru his fingers. In its brief message was spelled the news they had been waiting for these long, long days and nights. He read:

"Mont Wallace proceeding down coast, reports all is well. Air escort picks up plane near Portland. Wallace scheduled to land 7:45 a. m. Good flying weather ahead."

Mack detected a stifled cry of relief from the receiver near his ear. "Thanks," Mack, came Natalie's grateful voice over the wire. "Shall I write a follow-up for the early edition?"

"We'll handle that," laughed the genial editor. "You start catching up on some sleep or you won't be able to see your hero if he lands in broad daylight!"

It took Natalie no time to be home. Somehow it seemed ages since her eyes had glimpsed these familiar things before. As she opened the door, a shout greeted her. Jimmy and Sunny, true to their promise, had already begun preparations for the "welcome party."

"Hi, Nat," greeted Jimmy, poking his head from the kitchen. Sunny's face wore a smile; only her eyes remained coldly serious.

"Don't mind us!" she laughed. "But you can't blame a couple of people who haven't really celebrated since last New Year's Eve," she added, with a knowing glance. Then as quickly she turned to Jimmy.

"Haden't we better give this hard-working newspaper woman a chance to get a much-needed beauty nap?" Jimmy ignored Sunny's obvious barb.

"Of course," exclaimed Jimmy. "Let's go before the neighbors suspect the celebration has started already!"

Jimmy and Sunny left Natalie again alone with her thoughts—her hopes. But the demands of sleep were stronger than even her anticipation of the morning's events. She slept soundly. Before she knew it, her brief interval of rest was broken by the sounding of the door-buzzer. Hastily drawing on her robe, Natalie admitted Jimmy and Sunny.

"Time to get out to the airport," warned Jimmy.

"Toot-toot, all aboard!" chimed in Sunny, merrily.

"I'll slip into something in a jiffy—sit down while I wake up under a shower," said Natalie, glancing at the clock.

"I'll make some coffee," volunteered Sunny, catching Jimmy by the arm. "Come on, you!"

Soon Natalie again appeared, this time clad in a simple sports outfit. Her face shone radiantly only to be outdone by the brightness of her eyes. This was her day of days. The aroma of steaming coffee drew her to the kitchen.

"That coffee smells too good—you can't keep me away by hiding it out here," she said, but scarcely had she spoken than her eyes fastened on the scene before her. Sunny and Jimmy were clasped in each other's arms. Their lips had met. They stood in a little world of their own. Only after a moment did Jimmy become aware of Natalie's presence. His start brought Sunny back to reality.

"Hello, Nat," said Jimmy. Then turning to Sunny with a moaning glance. "I guess we might as well tell her."

"Why not?" agreed Sunny. "What better time than now?"

"Sunny and I are to be married," was Jimmy's simple statement.

"Why, Sunny-Jimmy—!" exclaimed Natalie. "I'm so glad—I'm so happy—but this is so sudden." "We've got only fifteen minutes to get to the airport," Jimmy warned.

His words galvanized the three into action. They forgot personal matters—bent on giving Monty the greeting and unselfish praise he deserved.

Gulping their coffee, the three ran out to the car and speeded toward the landing field. The hour was still early. The headlights cast billows of light against the rising morning mist. A faint glow in the east gave promise of a clear day, the fingers of the sun reaching halfway above the horizon.

With the coming of dawn, they knew that Monty could not be far away. Lookouts were posted on the wind-sock tower but Mack Hanlon telephoned from the office half an hour before he was sighted to say that the fleet of planes had turned South just beyond Los Angeles and that Monty was flying with them.

Natalie's heart thumped madly as she stood beside Jimmy and Sunny searching the sky for the plane. Glory was in the morning and glory seemed to fill her whole being at the thought that there was nothing but an ordinary small light to keep her from Monty's arms.

Before any of the others, she saw the ship. It was a tiny, black speck in the sky and below it roared twenty or more ships flying in formation or looping and cavorting in glee at the success of the world flight.

She saw when the black plane set its nose flatly toward the earth. She saw that the landing would be in the teeth of the west wind unless Monty dropped in cross-wind as he sometimes did.

She stood there in the crowd, Natalie Wade, no longer just a girl down on her luck but known from coast to coast as a news writer and waiting for the kiss of the greatest flier since Lindbergh.

Already she had written the draft of her story on the completion of the flight. There would be only the lead to add and Mack Hanlon would take care of that.

The black plane plunged out of the sky. Suddenly its wheels spun on the ground with the tail skid dragging dust from the hard earth. Cheer on cheer rose for the flight had been completed. The crowd rushed forward. But the black plane taxied straight on. Natalie was flying across the space between.

Monty dropped to the ground and clasped Natalie in his arms. A breathless moment, then throwing his helmeted head back, Monty laughed his old-time, care-free laugh.

"How are you, girl," he greeted, still looping his strong arm around Natalie's shoulders. "I've come all around the world, thinking of this moment all the way!"

"And I've been thinking too," joined Natalie, "and hoping that you'd come to me just as you are—this minute."

"Hey, Mont!" broke in a voice. The two lovers suddenly realized they were the target for hundreds of eyes. After all, this was the triumphant ending of a world flight. The airport was jammed with an admiring throng. Natalie turned her gaze quickly to Monty, and with a fluttering smile to cover her embarrassment bade Monty receive the plaudits due him.

"I'll only take a minute, dear," assured Monty, giving Natalie an affectionate pat on the shoulder. He turned to face a battery of news cameras and reporters, pencils poised, eager to catch a first-hand account from the hero of the hour.

Monty, inured to interviews, spoke briefly, answered routine questions rapidly. In a few moments he was back at Natalie's side. A throng of news-hawks followed, unwilling to leave their prey. Monty turned angrily.

"Can't you fellows leave us alone!" he roared. "Can't you see I want a little privacy? You've got my story—beat it and run!"

"Careful, dear," cautioned Natalie. "They're only trying to do their job. Remember, the papers can make you—and they can break you, too."

"All right," said Monty reluctantly. "But why can't they leave a fellow alone—especially at a time like this! I want to be with you," he added, smiling into Natalie's upturned face. They kissed.

"Where's Sunny?" queried Monty suddenly. The jarring notes made Natalie wince.

"They came to the field with me," explained Natalie, "now that you mention it, it does seem strange they haven't been on hand."

A quick glance around the thronged circle of onlookers failed to reveal the two familiar figures.

"I can't believe that they'd stay away at a time like this!" insisted Natalie.

"Let's get out of here anyhow," Monty said, catching her arm in his. The crowd followed the two as they slowly pushed toward where Jimmy's car had been parked when Natalie, Sunny and Jimmy had arrived at the airport. When they came to the spot the car was gone.

"The mystery deepens," exclaimed Natalie with a little laugh.

"Looks like we'll have to walk," Monty added with mock seriousness. "I just came off a round-the-world flight, but I haven't cab fare in my pocket. Cracked my last quarter for cigarettes in Vladivostok!"

Natalie's thoughts were not of a comic turn, but the incongruity of Monty's remarks about her. She joined him in laughter while nervously aware of the press of onlookers around them. At last a squad of small boys broke thru the straining police cordon.

"Sign my autograph, mister," shouted all four in unison. Four books were thrust into Monty's hand. Three pens dangled in front of him. More people broke thru, more books, more pens. In an instant, Monty and Natalie were being literally torn to pieces by insistent admirers and autograph seekers. It seemed like a free-for-all fight. Natalie and Monty stood back to back, trying desperately to hold the pushing crowd. Suddenly Monty's coat was literally ripped off his back, his belt went next. Natalie's jaunty sport jacket was being torn to ribbons. Souvenir hunters clawed the air, each pair of hands strove to grasp a memento of the world flight in the shape of a fragment of clothing torn from the two victims.

At last, Monty could hold back no longer. His shirt in shreds he knew that only a few seconds more elapsed between now and complete nudity for both himself and the girl. Natalie struggled to preserve her modesty by clasping the remaining ribbons of her dress close to her bosom. Monty struck out savagely with both fists. The startled crowd recoiled. Then a hoarse voice in the foreground could be heard above the din of scuffling humanity.

"Who does he think he is? Sock him, somebody!"

A second voice: "Yeah—punch him in the nose."

A third: "High hattan! the home folks, eh?—lemme at him!"

The shouts became a menacing chorus. Monty half-turned to Natalie.

"Looks like we're in for something! Hold on—I'll do my best till the police get thru the mob. Stay close to the ground."

Fists failed the girl. Monty's burly arms worked like pistons and at each stroke could be heard the sickening sound of flesh thudding against flesh. A clanging of bells and the shriek of sirens announced the coming of the police. Monty pursued his task grimly. Fighting furiously, he knew he couldn't last forever against a score of antagonists.

"Get down—get down!" he kept shouting to Natalie. Suddenly the mob seemed to melt away. A confused blur shimmered before Monty's eyes. He staggered, turned to find Natalie. His last vision was her prostrate form huddled beneath him on the ground.

Monty opened his eyes to look into the kindly face of a huge Irish policeman.

"Sure and ye'll be after goin' out to clean up what's left of 'er bunch!" were the policeman's hearty words as Monty strove to clear his aching brain.

"Where's Natalie?" he demanded, sitting upright.

"Now, there, lay back and take it easy!" commanded the policeman. "The lady is restin' comfortably."

Another voice broke in: "How is he?—did he get hurt very badly?"

"Oh, good morning, Mister Mayor!" exclaimed the policeman, jumping to his feet. "Thank you, and he's not much the worse for wear; your Honor."

"That's fine—and the young lady, how is she?" asked the Mayor.

"Beggan' your pardon, your Honor, she's feeling pretty good, but her clothes ain't what you'd call er—er, adequate, sir," the policeman replied, blushing.

"Get a couple of blankets for her, then, and have the boys escort them both to my car. I'll drive them home—that is, if they can travel."

The Mayor turned to the chief of police at his elbow.

"Do you think they can travel in my car, or shall we call an ambulance?"

The giant of a man flinched nervously.

"Why, of course, of course they'll travel—of course," stammered the chief, adding, "Shall I get an ambulance?"

"Never mind," grunted the mayor. "I don't suppose you have one anyhow. If you'd been watching your job this wouldn't have happened!"

"Oh, yes sir—I mean no sir—I mean—" stammered the chief.

"Shut up and get busy," was the mayor's angry retort. "I'll see you about this in the morning."

He turned to a group of policemen.

"Come, boys—follow me." He led them to Natalie's side.

"Allow me to introduce myself, Miss Wade. I am Mayor O'Sloan. I've come to offer my car to take you to your home, together with Mr. Wallace, of course!"

"Oh, thank you!" acknowledged Natalie, smiling faintly. "But how is Monty?" was her anxious inquiry.

"Mr. Wallace is slightly—only slightly the worse for wear," the Mayor beamed with admiration. "He put up a splendid fight! The police had to give first aid to over twenty of the mob! And outside of a few bruises, Wallace is as good as ever, but a little tired."

Monty appeared in the doorway, supported by two burly men in uniform.

"Hello, Nat!" he called out cheerily. "The war is over and we're going home!"

"Indeed you are," put in the Mayor, "right in my car and with a police escort in true conqueror style!"

Quickly Monty and Natalie were made comfortable in the roomy back seat of a huge limousine. A chorus of sirens smote the air. The car glided off amid a cavalcade of motorcycles and accompanying cars.

The procession quickly gathered speed along the highway. Monty laughed. Natalie's heart beat faster. The Mayor, sitting between, maintained a discreet silence until the car slowed to a stop in front of Natalie's apartment.

"A note from Mack Hanlon tells me the private celebration begins here," announced the Mayor, with a twinkle. "But don't take too long—we are all dining together at the Traveler's Club tonight—I'll send my car at seven."

A moment later the arms of two policemen had borne Natalie to her door. Monty had followed under his own power. Before he could press the buzzer, the door was opened from within.

"Surprise!" chorused the voices of Jimmy Hale and Sunny Marion. Their eyes stared at uniformed men, the tattered clothes of Monty and Natalie. Sunny rushed forward.

"What's happened?" she demanded.

"Yes, what's the matter?" exclaimed Jimmy.

"It's all right," assured Monty, catching Natalie in his arms.

"Just a little accident at the airport."

He turned to the policemen.

"Thanks, boys," he said—but even as he said it, his escorts had left.

"Let me help," insisted Jimmy, catching Natalie from the other side. Sunny was equally concerned. Only when both the girl and the flier were seated comfortably did Sunny venture to ask what had happened.

In a few words, Monty recounted the experiences of the earlier morning. When he had finished, Jimmy leaped to his feet.

"Didn't I tell you?" he shouted at Sunny. "We should have stayed

instead of trying to pull a surprise by being here first when they arrived." Then turning to Natalie, he added:

"I'm sorry, Nat. We thought it would be a good trick to pull each other out there in the field and still be able to surprise you here."

"Forget it," Monty protested. "Nothing serious has happened. We should a few overly-insistent autograph hunters spoil our party."

"Looks as tho you fell into the hands of your irate creditors," teased Sunny, as they all laughed.

"Creditors or no creditors, I owe myself a little repairing," were Natalie's words as she rose from her chair.

"Of course," Sunny exclaimed. "How stupid of us to keep you waiting here. Jimmy—take care of Monty while I help Nat."

Meanwhile Jimmy had fixed a drink for Monty and himself.

"Here's our first toast to the returning hero," Jimmy laughed, proffering the glass.

"I'd hate to go thru a day like this for every drink," replied Monty chuckling grimly. "I'll confess it looked pretty bad for a while—and the worst of it is I went out in the end."

"What did you expect?" asked Jimmy. "You can't fight an army single-handed. And looking at your face. I don't think they caught you very often off your guard."

"They tell me I put about twenty of them away," was Monty's dry observation, sipping his drink.

"What, only twenty?" asked Jimmy in mock surprise. But as he spoke Sunny returned to the room.

"Have one?" offered Jimmy, rising to fill another glass.

"Keep sitting," said Sunny. "I'll fix it."

"It was a close shave for Natalie," remarked Sunny, pressing the siphon into her glass. "Three more grabs and that gang would have had more than their money's worth."

The Sunny's casual conversation was obviously designed to ease the tension of the situation, her own strain was apparent.

Monty had been engaged to Sunny, tho by now both Jimmy and Natalie knew that the flier had discovered his promise made under the pressure of Sunny's scheming. That Sunny was now prepared to give up Monty could not be doubted. Had she not openly avowed her love for Jimmy, at least her matrimonial intentions?

But Monty had not yet been told of this later development. As far as he knew, Sunny could claim that he fulfilled his promise of marriage, even tho they had privately agreed that the successful accomplishment of his round-the-world flight would free him from her. Would Sunny live up to her word now? Or would she resort to trickery again and demand marriage?

These were the thoughts racing thru Monty's mind as Sunny seated herself opposite. Natalie had withdrawn. Only the three were together, Monty, Sunny and Jimmy. Sunny spoke first.

(CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)

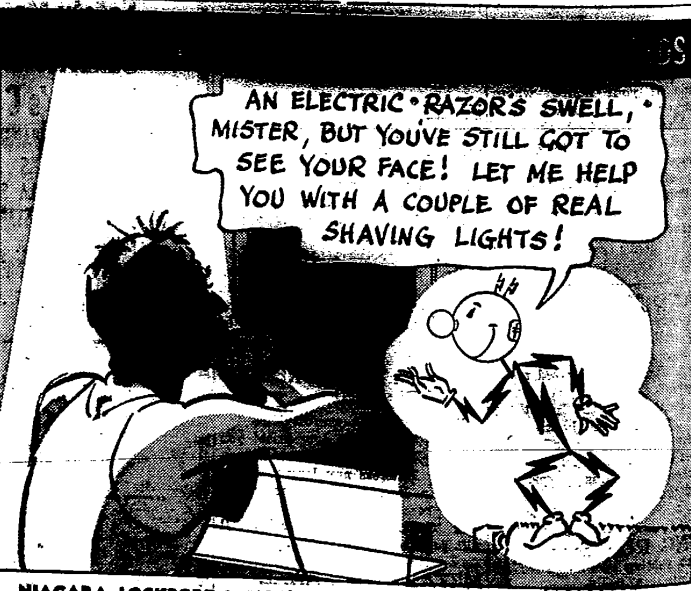


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South Hill

(Mrs. Earl Schoonover, Report)

Aug. 15.—Mrs. Anthony D. Schoonover called on Mrs. Alice H. Schoonover after noon.

Miss Charlotte Corryell spent the day until Wednesday with her mother, Mrs. Earl Schoonover.

The Moore reunion was held at the home of Mrs. Charles Moore, 1500 S. 1st St., with a picnic dinner in the rear woods.

Mr. and Mrs. Earl Schoonover and Howard Barney spent Sunday at Mansfield with Mr. and Mrs. Earl Braisted.

Miss Rose Schoonover returned home with her parents and Mr. Lewis Schoonover, passing a week with her cousin, Dorothy Schoonover.

Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Schoonover and son Gerald spent Saturday at the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. Schoonover of East Troupsburg.

Miss Gertrude Schoonover spent Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. J. Schoonover and family of Independence.

Edward Mings, Monday evening, Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Schoonover, Leon, Rose and Carl Schoonover of Austinburg, Pa., spent the day with their brother, Glenn Schoonover and family. Robert returned the week.

Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Schoonover and son Gerald and Roswell Green of East Valley enjoyed a picnic and wicker roast at Port Jervis, Friday evening.

Independence

(Mrs. Floyd Clarke, Report)

Mrs. Common of Colorado Springs called on Linford Potter's mother, the week.

Mr. and Mrs. Wallace Clarke returned Saturday from Syracuse and a week with their parents, Mr. and Mrs. S. W. Clarke.

Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Spicer and Mrs. Paul J. Jr., were guests Saturday evening of Mr. and Mrs. C. Spicer in Whitesboro.

Miss Ruth Hallock of Whitesboro accompanied Edward Crandall on the week-end.

Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Spicer called on Alfred Wednesday.

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Vincent called on his mother, Mrs. Vincent in Wellsville.

Mrs. Maude Clarke is caring for Belle Brundage in a nursing home where she has been treated.

Director S. W. Clarke and Mrs. R. E. Spicer were guests Saturday evening at a meeting at Longfellow.

Mrs. Minnie Wilson and her son Jason Hawks spent Sunday at Conesus Lake, Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Spicer and Director S. W. Clarke were guests Thursday in the Dairymen's League.

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Vincent, Jr., were in Hornesville Saturday.

Mrs. Mable Howe of Hornesville, spent Sunday with her mother, Mrs. Carl Clarke.

Messrs. Stephen Clark, Potter, John Illig, Harley Clark, D. Clarke, Paul Regan and Clarke attended the Farmington tour in Steuben county Sunday.

Mrs. John Illig and her son, Charles Dreher of Hornesville, spent a week at City, Pa.

Carl Tassell passed Sunday with his mother, Mrs. T. Tassell, Port Jervis, Pa.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert and Ann of Belmont were guests Sunday at Floyd Clarke's.