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To Tokyo on Buttermilk

By G. Bernard Shaw

The following article was specially written for the R.A.F. Journal by Mr. G. Bernard Shaw. We make only one protest. Mr. Shaw says that "the R.A.F. teaches its novices everything except how to feed." The Catering Branch of the Air Ministry has preached the virtues of sane feeding ever since the war began. It rests with the members of the Service to take advantage of this.

I am not a sky pilot; and at my present age (86) am not likely to qualify for that accomplishment. But, as the R.A.F. carefully teaches its novices everything except how to feed themselves, and most aces devoutly believe that a heavy job needs a heavy meal, it may surprise them to learn that it is more than 60 years since I last ate flesh, fish or fowl. I have given up eating eggs, though I eat butter and drink buttermilk sometimes when I can get them. I am a six footer, and am told that my weight should be at least twelve stone ten. As a matter of unromantic fact it is nine stone, and stood at ten stone eight during the most active part of my life. Yet I find myself working as hard as ever, a bit deafish and dotty, as becomes my second childhood, but still in fairly good form as author, playwright, biologist, philosopher and political pilot, not to mention journalism as a side line.

You will say, perhaps, that if ever a man needed a plentiful and stimulating diet I am that man. But on such gluttony I should

have gone stale or died years ago. Dickens, who ate and drank generously, died before he was 60. So did Shakespeare. I have lived longer than they did by about 30 years, and written my most famous books and plays during those 30 years.

Or perhaps you will say that inkslinging is not work, and that a raid on Danzig and back would show me up. Well, I grant you I am no athlete; and I am certainly, like most literary geniuses, a born coward; but it is a hard fact that an emergency rush of literary work can tear a man's nerves to rags, and that my remedy for this was to get on a motor bicycle and blind round the crooked lanes of Hertfordshire for an hour or so, at the end of which I was again as steady as a rock. And for 30 years I spent my holidays driving my car all over these islands and beyond them as far as western Europe and North Africa, when flying was easier and in peace time less dangerous. In the last century, when the push bike was a new invention; I had plenty of opportunities

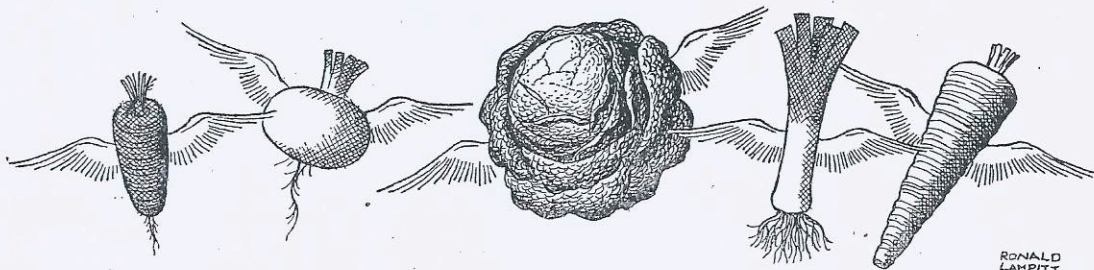
of learning how to feed myself on a long day's ride.

Consequently it may interest you to know that if I were sent off to bomb, say Tokyo, I should take with me a packet of thinnish slices of brown bread—not dirty bread made of shopsweepings but real stoneground bread—with a layer of red currant jam between each pair of slices. I should eat one of these sandwiches every two or three hours. For drink I should take a flask of buttermilk. I should know that though flak is dangerous, a square meal would be certain death; for within 15 minutes after it I should fall

asleep over my controls and nose dive to destruction.

That is what will happen to you if you eat a between-rib beefsteak and drink a bottle of Guinness on a serious job.

I should have mentioned that I have never smoked, never drunk intoxicants, and never shaved. That is a better record than even that of the famous centenarian who was asked to what he attributed his longevity. He replied, "I attribute it to the fact that I never drank, never smoked, nor ever had any relations with women until I was 14 years of age."



R.A.F. QUIZ 11

(Answers on Page 35)

1. If the pilot of an aircraft feels his engine losing power and spluttering, should he (a) look for a field in which to force land, (b) switch on reserve tanks and check switches?
2. An aircraft is returning to base after a long trip. The home aerodrome is situated in hilly country and the weather conditions are very unsettled and there is a strong wind on the port beam. Are there any special precautions to be taken, and if so, what are they?
3. When approaching to land on a windy day, presuming the approach has been perfectly judged, does the angle of descent remain constant up to the moment of flattening out?
4. After flying at 10/20,000 feet over your aerodrome for some time, should you (a) land immediately you have descended or (b) circuit the aerodrome a few times before landing?
5. In an approach with engine and without engine, is the minimum safe speed (a) different or (b) the same, in both cases?
6. If when flying an aircraft fitted with a C.S. propeller under economical cruising conditions, weak mixture, you want to increase power, in which order should you operate the following controls, throttle, mixture and pitch?