

Dave Dashaway and his Hydroplane

Roy Rockwood

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DAVE DASHAWAY AND HIS HYDROPLANE

Or Daring Adventures Over The Great Lakes

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By Roy Rockwood

CHAPTER I

THE YOUNG AVIATOR

"Telegram, sir."

"Who for?"

"Dave Dashaway."

"I'll take it."

The messenger boy who had just entered the hangar of the great prize monoplane of the aero meet at Columbus, stared wonderingly about him while the man in charge of the place receipted for the telegram.

The lad had never been in so queer a place before. He was a lively, active city boy, but the closest he had ever seen an airship was a distance away and five hundred feet up in the air. Now, with big wonder eyes he stared at the strange appearing machine. His fingers moved restlessly, like a street-urchin surveying an automobile and longing to blow its horn.

The man in charge of the place attracted his attention, too. He had only one arm and limped when he walked. His face was scarred and he looked like a war veteran. The only battles this old warrior had been in, however, were fights with the elements. He was a famous "wind wagon" man who had sustained a terrible fall in an endurance race. It had crippled him for life. Now he followed the various professional meets for a living, and also ran an aviation school for amateurs. His name was John Grimshaw.

The messenger boy took a last look about the place and left. The old man put on a cap, went to the door and rather gruesomely faced the elements.

"A cold drizzling rain and gusty weather generally," he said to himself in a grumbling tone. "I'll face it any time for Dashaway, though. The telegram may be important."

The big aero field looked lonely and gloomy as the man crossed it. Lights showed here and there in the various buildings scattered about the enclosure. The ground was wet and soft. The rain came in chilling dashes. Old Grimshaw breasted the storm, and after half a mile's walk came to a hangar a good deal like the one he had left. There was a light inside.

"Hello, there!" he sang out in his big foghorn voice, thrusting the door open with his foot and getting under the shelter, and shaking the rain from his head and shoulders.

Two boys were the occupants of the place. They had a lamp on the table, upon which was outspread pictures and plans of airships. The

older of the two got up from his chair with a pleasant smiling face.

"Why, it's Mr. Grimshaw!" he exclaimed.

"That's who it is," joined in the other boy cheerily. "Say, you're welcome, too. We were looking over some sketches of new machines, and you can tell us lots about them, you know."

"Got to get back to my own quarters," declared Grimshaw. "Some other time about those pictures. Boy brought a telegram to Mr. King's hangar. It's for you, Dashaway."

"For me?" inquired the lad who had first addressed the visitor.

"Yes. Here it is. Mr. King's away, but if you need me for anything let me know."

"I'm always needing you," replied Dave Dashaway. "I don't know what we'd do without you."

The young aviator--for such he was in fact and reality--took the proffered envelope. He tore open its end and read the enclosure rapidly.

"Why," he said, "this is strange."

"Any answer? Need me?" asked Grimshaw, moving towards the door.

"No, thank you," replied Dave in a vague, bothered way that made his companion and chum, Hiram Dobbs, study his face with some perplexity.

"I'd better get back home, then," said the old man. "Fine weather for hydroplanes this, eh?"

Both Dave and Hiram proceeded to the door with the grim old fellow who had so kindly taught them all they knew about aeronautics. When their visitor had departed, Dave went back to the table. He sat down and perused the telegram once more. Then he sat looking fixedly at it, as if he was studying some hard problem. Hiram stood it as long as he could. Then he burst out impetuously:

"What is it, Dave?"

"I'm trying to find out," was the abstracted reply.

"Who is it from?"

"The Interstate Aeroplane Co."

That name meant a good deal to Hiram Dobbs, and a great deal more to Dave Dashaway. It marked the starting point in the aviation career of the latter, and that in its turn had meant a first step up the ladder for his faithful comrade, Hiram.

In the first volume of this series, entitled:

"Dave Dashaway, the Young Aviator; Or, In the Clouds for Fame and Fortune," the career of Dave Dashaway has been told. The father of

the young airman had been a noted balloonist, and when he died a mean old skinflint named Silas Warner had been appointed Dave's guardian. Warner had acted the tyrant and hard taskmaster for the youth. A natural love for aeronautics had been born in Dave. He had made an airship model which his guardian had maliciously destroyed. Warner had also appropriated a package dropped accidentally by a famous aviator, named Robert King, from a monoplane.

Dave had found this package, containing money, a watch and a medal greatly prized by Mr. King. Dave resolved that this property should be restored to the airman. He got hold of the lost articles, which his guardian had secreted, and ran away from home.

After various adventures, during which he was robbed of the airman's property, Dave managed to reach the aero meet at Fairfield. He found Robert King and described to him the boy thief. The airman took a fancy to Dave from the nerve and ability he showed in experimenting with a parachute garment, and hired him.

About the same time Hiram Dobbs came along, ambitious to change his farm life for an aviation career, and secured work helping about the grounds. Mr. King sent Dave to Grimshaw for training. The Interstate Aeroplane Co. wanted to exhibit its Baby Racer, a novel biplane. Dave made a successful demonstration, and won the admiration and good will of the company.

In a few weeks time Dave scored a big success and won several trophies. His final exploit was taking the place of an aviator who had fainted away in his monoplane, and winning the race for Mr. King's machine. Dave was now the proud possessor of a pilot's license, and had fairly entered the professional field.

The thief who had stolen Mr. King's property from Dave, a graceless youth named Gregg, was found, and the property recovered. He had also got hold of some papers that belonged to Dave's father. Gregg through these had obtained a trace of a Mr. Dale, a great friend of the dead balloonist. He had made Mr. Dale believe he was the real Dave Dashaway, until he was unmasked.

Another bad boy Dave had run across was named Jerry Dawson. From the start in his career as an airman this youth had been an enemy. Dave had succeeded him in the employ of Mr. King, Jerry having been discharged in disgrace. Jerry tried to "get even," as he called it, by trying to wreck Mr. King's monoplane, the Aegis. He also betrayed Dave's whereabouts to his guardian. Because Dave was right and Jerry wrong, there plots rebounded on the schemer and did Dave no harm.

Jerry and his father were exposed. They still followed the various meets, however, just as Mr. King and Dave and Hiram did, but they were shunned by all reputable airmen.

After leaving the aero meet at Dayton the proud possessor of a trophy as winner of a one hundred mile dash, Dave now found himself and his friends on the aero, grounds at Columbus. This was a summer resort located on Lake Michigan. A two weeks' programme had been arranged, in which Dave was to give exhibitions for his employers of their new model hydroplane.

Hiram was practicing for a flight in the Baby Racer. The two friends that rainy summer evening were interested in plans for the coming meet and aviation business generally. The arrival of the telegram once more introduces the reader to Dave Dashaway, now popularly known as the young aviator.

The telegram which Grimshaw had brought to Dave was dated at the headquarters of the Interstate Aeroplane Co., some three hundred miles distant. It was addressed to Dave in care of Mr. King, and it was signed by the manager of the company. It read as follows:

"Our sales agent, Timmins, reported from your quarters at Columbus three days ago. Was due at Kewaukee this morning on big contract with County Fair Amusement Co. Wired Northern Hotel there, where we had forwarded all the contracts and papers, and he is not there. Find him at any expense, and get him to Kewaukee before to-morrow morning, or the Star Aero Co. will get the order. Fear some trick. This means ten thousand dollars to us."

Dave read and reread this message, weighing every word in his mind as he did so. Hiram sat watching him in a fever of suspense and anxiety. Finally he exclaimed:

"See here, Dave Dashaway, is that Greek you can't make out, or have you gone to sleep?"

"I was only trying to figure out this telegram," replied Dave thoughtfully. "Here, read it for yourself, and see what you make of it."

The young aviator passed the yellow sheet over to his curious friend. The latter scanned it rapidly. Then, with startling suddenness, his face twitching with excitement, he jumped to his feet.

"What do I make of it?" shouted Hiram. "Just what the telegram says--a trick! It's come all over me in a flash. Why, Dick, I know all about it."

CHAPTER II

The "BABY RACER"

"You know all about it?" repeated Dave Dashaway, looking up in great surprise.

"That's what I do," declared Hiram positively.

"What do you mean?"

"I'll explain."

"I wish you would."

"I'm a blockhead, that's just what I am!" cried Hiram. "I don't know what possessed me that I didn't tell you all about it before."

"See here, Hiram," broke in Dave, "What are you talking about?"

"Why, about Mr. Timmins. You know he here night before last and left us then?"

"Yes, Hiram, to go to Kewaukee."

"Well, he just didn't go to Kewaukee at all."

"That's no news, for this telegram shows that couldn't have done so."

"You see, when Mr. Timmins got telling us about the big sale he was going to make at Kewaukee," continued Hiram, "and how the Star Aero people were bidders for the same contract, you warned him against the Dawsons, and the people they are working for!"

"I know I did. That was because the Dawsons are stunting for the Star people."

"Exactly. Then when I caught Jerry Dawson and Brooks, that precious chum of his, sneaking around the Aegis hangar, I made up my mind that they were up to no good. I know what they were snooping around for, now."

"What was it?"

"To pick up what information they could about Mr. Timmins' plans, so, when Mr. Timmins went away, I was awful glad. I felt pleased, for Mr. King told as you know that he was a free and easy fellow, friendly to everybody, and sometimes drank more than he ought to."

"Yes, I know that, Hiram."

"Well, last night I went to town to get some supplies for Mr. Grimshaw. There's a tavern at the cross roads, and some men were in there. I saw them through an open window. There were six of them. Brooks was there, and Jerry and his father, and three more of the crowd. They were playing cards and making a great deal of noise. Just as I looked in some one pulled down the shade. I caught a sight of the other man, though. Right off, even at the distance I was, it struck me he looked like Mr. Timmins. Then I remembered that Mr. Timmins had certainly gone to Kewaukee the night before, so I put it off my mind. Now, I see the whole trick."

"What is that?"

"The crowd kept Mr. Timmins here, delaying and entertaining him. Maybe later some of them led him still further away from Columbus. Their man is probably on the spot at Kewaukee now, ready to get that big contract for show biplanes."

Dave had been anxiously walking up and down the floor while Hiram was talking. Now he took his cap off a peg and picked up an umbrella.

"You wait here till I come back, Hiram," he said.

"Where are you going, Dave?"

"Down to the Aegis hangar. This telegram disturbs me very much. I have no idea where Mr. Timmins can be, and something must certainly be done about this contract."

"That's so, Dave," agreed Hiram. "It isn't exactly our business, but it would be a big feather in your cap to help out the people who are hiring you."

"That's what I want to do, if I can," replied Dave, as he left the place.

The youth went straight to the Aegis hangar, where he found Grimshaw tinkering over a broken airplane wing. Mr. King had a desk in one corner of what he called his office room.

Dave was free to use this at all times. He opened it now, and for ten minutes was busy with some railroad time tables he found there. Then he consulted an aero guide map.

Grimshaw watched him from under his shaggy eyebrows, but said nothing until Dave got up from the desk, buttoned his coat and prepared to face the storm again.

"What's the trouble, Dashaway?" he asked.

"Why, Mr. Grimshaw?" inquired Dave, wishing to evade direct questioning.

"You seem bothered about something, I see."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I am," confessed Dave.

"What is it?"

"I'm trying to find a way to get to Kewaukee," explained Dave. "Something has come up that makes me think I ought to be there in the interests of my employers early to-morrow morning. I am figuring out how I can make it."

"See here, Dashaway," spoke the old airman in a grim, impressive way, "don't you do anything reckless."

"I won't," answered Dave. "You know you once said I was all business. Well, I'll always try to do my duty without any unnecessary risks."

Dave laughed carelessly and got away from the hangar. A daring idea had come into his mind. Perhaps Grimshaw suspected it, and Dave was afraid he might. The lad knew that the eccentric old fellow liked him, and would try to dissuade him from any exploit of unusual peril.

"I'll do it, I'll have to do it or let the company lose out," breathed Dave, as once outside he broke into a run across the aviation field.

Dave found Hiram winding the alarm clock as he re-entered the half shed, half canvas house where the Baby Racer was stored. Although they got their meals at Mr. King's headquarters, the boys had two light cots and slept near to the machine which Dave had been exhibiting.

Dave glanced at the clock, and Hiram noticing the look, said:

"Eleven thirty, Dave. I've set the alarm clock for five thirty. You know that new hydroplane will probably come in on an early freight. What's the programme?"

"Well, Hiram," responded Dave, throwing off his coat and hat, "I'm going to dress up for a ride."

"Eh?" ejaculated Hiram, staring hard at the set resolute face of his comrade.

"Yes, I've got to get to Kewaukee."

"Oh, you mean going by train?"

"No. Last one left an hour ago. Next one nine o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Automobile, then?"

"On the country mud roads we've been having for the last week?"

"That's so. Then--"

"It's the airship route or nothing, Hiram," said Dave. "I'm going in the biplane."

"The Baby Racer?"

"Yes."

"On such a night as this! Why, Dave," began Hiram, almost in alarm.

"Don't say a word," interrupted Dave with a preemptory wave of his hand. "I've made up my mind, and that ends it."

"It usually does," said Hiram. "If you're bound to do it, though, Dave--"

"I certainly am."

"Ask Mr. Grimshaw's advice, first."

"Not for worlds."

"Why not?"

"I think he would try to stop me. See here, Hiram, I've thought it all over. I know it's a hard, rough night, but I also know what the Baby Racer can do."

"It's a pretty bad night to do any fooling in the air," remarked Hiram.

"There won't be much fooling about it, Hiram. I know the chances and, I shan't look for any fun. It is a bad night, I know, but the wind is right, and I can head straight into it in reaching Kewaukee."

"How far away is Kewaukee, Dave?"

"Ninety-five miles."

Dave, while he talked, had been putting on his regular aviator's suit. As he finished up with a helmet, he noticed Hiram changing his coat for a sweater.

"What are you up to, Hiram," he inquired quickly.

"Getting ready, of course."

"Getting ready for what?"

"The trip to Kewaukee."

"Oh, you think you're going?"

"If you are," retorted Hiram, "I know I am. Now, see here, Dave," continued Hiram, waving a silencing finger as Dave was about to speak, "I know I'm not an aviator like you, and never will be. All the same, I am some good in an airship, if it's only to act as ballast. The other day when I was up with you in the Racer, you said I shifted the elevator just in time to save a smash up. In a storm like the one to-night, you my need me worse than ever. Anyhow, Dave Dashaway, I won't let you go alone."

The young airman looked at his loyal, earnest friend with pleasure and pride. Hiram was only a crude country boy. He had, however, shown diamond in the rough, and Dave appreciated the fact.

Hiram had made several ground runs in an aeroplane. He had gone up in the Baby Racer twice with Dave, and had proven himself a model passenger. As he had just hinted, too, he had been familiar enough with the mechanism of the biplane to operate some of its auxiliary machinery so as to avert an accident.

"You are the best company in the world, Hiram," said Dave, "but I wouldn't feel right in letting you take the risk of a hazardous run."

"Dave, I won't let you go alone," persisted Hiram.

Dave said nothing in reply. He went outside, and Hiram followed him. They unlocked the door of the shed adjoining where the Baby Racer was housed, and lit two lanterns.

"Get a couple of the nearest field men, Hiram," directed Dave, "and I will have everything in order by the time you get back."

There was not much for Dave to do. Only the noon of that day they

had got the little biplane ready for a cross country spurt. Then the rain came on, and they decided to defer the dash till the weather was more propitious. Dave was looking over the machinery, when a gruff hail startled him.

"Hello!" challenged old Grimshaw, appearing at the open doorway of the hangar. "What you up to, Dashaway?"

Dave flushed guiltily. He was dreadfully embarrassed to be "caught in the act" as it were, by his great friend, the old airman.

"Why--you see, Mr. Grimshaw--" stammered Dave.

"Yes, of course I see," retorted the old man firmly. "You're going to start out a night like this."

"I've got to, Mr. Grimshaw," declared Dave desperately.

"Business, eh?"

"Of the most important kind."

"What is it?"

It was in order for Dave to explain details, and did so briefly.

"H'm," commented Grimshaw, when his pupil concluded his explanation. "And so you thought you'd steal away without letting me know it?"

"Oh, now, Mr. Grimshaw!" Dave hastened to say-- "that was not the spirit of the thing at all."

"Go ahead, Dashaway."

"Well, then, I think so very much of you I didn't want it to worry you."

"Roll her out," was all that Grimshaw would say, placing his one hand on the tail of the biplane. "Hold on for a minute. Gasoline supply?"

"Twenty-five gallons."

"That will do. Lubricating oil--all right. Now then, lad, hit that head wind every time, and you'll make it, sure."

CHAPTER III

A WILD NIGHT RIDE

"Go!"

It was less than half an hour after the appearance of Grimshaw on the scene that the Baby Racer was all ready for its stormy night's

flight.

The old aviator had fussed and poked about the dainty little biplane, as if it was some valued friend he was sending out into the world to try its fortune. Every once in a while he had growled out some brief advice to Dave in his characteristic way.

Then he directed and helped, while two field men started the machine on its forward run.

"Look out for telegraph poles, and watch your fuel tank," was Grimshaw's final injunction.

Dave knew the Baby Racer just as an engineer understands his locomotive. Daylight or dirk, once aloft the young aviator did not doubt his own powers. The moment the Racer left the ground, however, with a switch of her flapping tail, Dave knew that he was to have no easy fair-weather cruise.

"Slow it is," the watchful, excited Hiram heard him say, working the wheel as cautiously as an automobilist rounding a sharp curve.

Dave saw that everything depended on getting a start and reaching a higher level. He kept the angle of ascent small, for the maximum power of the engine could not be reached in a moment. The starting speed naturally let down with the machine ascending an inclined plane.

"It's slow enough, that's sure," remarked Hiram. "It's the wind, isn't it, Dave?"

"We don't want to slide back in the air or be blown over backwards," replied Dave, eye, ear, and nerve on the keenest alert.

The wind resistance caused a growing speed reduction. The sensitiveness of the elevating rudder warned Dave that he must maintain a perfect balance until they could strike a steady path of flight. Hiram's rapt gaze followed every skillful maneuver of the master hand at that wheel.

"Good for you!" he chirped, as Dave worked the ailerons to counteract the leaning of the machine. A swing of the rudder had caused the biplane to bank, but quick as a flash Dave righted it by getting the warping control on the opposite tack, avoiding a bad spill.

The machine was tail heavy as Dave directed a forward plunge, coasting slightly. He had, however, pretty good control of the center of gravity.

It was now only a question of fighting the stiff breeze that prevailed, and keeping an even balance.

Hiram's eyes sparkled as the Racer volplaned, caught the head wind at just the right angle, and struck a course due northwest like a sail boat under perfect control.

The engine was near the operator's seat, and on the post just under the wheel were the spark and throttle levers on the fuselage beam.

The steering wheel was a solid piece of wood about eight inches in diameter with two holes cut into it to fit the hands.

The passenger's seat now occupied by Hiram was in the center line of the machine, so that, filled or vacant, the lateral balance was not affected.

Hiram knew all about the monoplane dummy or the aerocycle with treadle power for practice work which he had operated under old Grimshaw's direction. As to the practical running of a biplane aloft, however, that was something for him to learn. He was keenly alive to every maneuver that Dave executed, and he stored in his mind every new point he noticed as the Racer seemed fairly started on its way.

"Keep me posted, Da

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