

**THE BIRD BOYS'  
AEROPLANE WONDER**

Or

*Young Aviators On a Cattle Ranch*

By

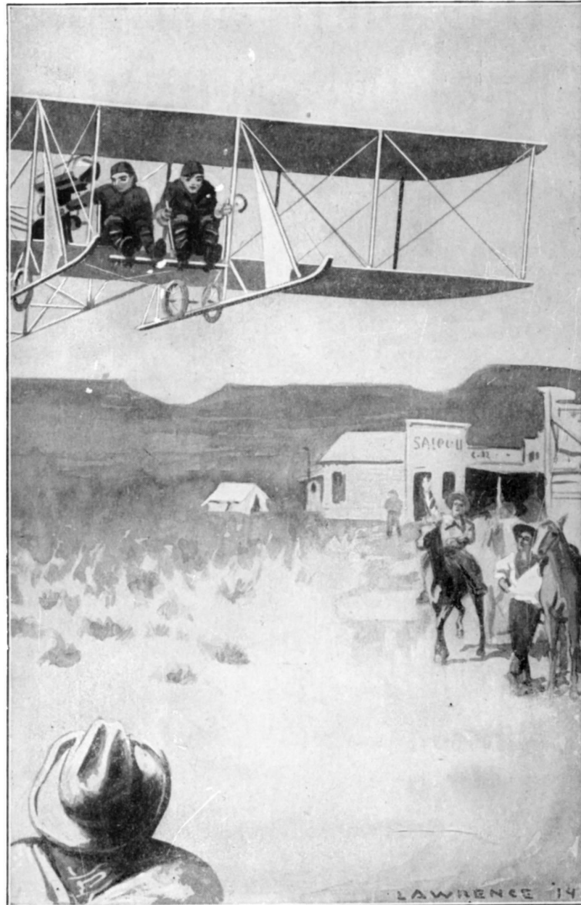
JOHN LUTHER LANGWORHTY

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## The Bird Boys' Aeroplane Wonder



Judge of Their Astonishment and Wild Delight When They Saw the  
Aeroplane Leave the Earth.

**The Bird Boys' Aeroplane Wonder  
Or, Young Aviators On a Cattle  
Ranch**

## CHAPTER I—UNDER THE SPREADING BEECH

“Was there ever such great luck, fellows?”

“Whew! for one, I feel like giving a vote of thanks to the striking masons, who loafed pretty much all summer, and held the repair work on the Bloomsbury High building up till now.”

“Them’s my sentiments, Elephant!”

“And they say now the work can’t be finished and school taken up till December! What d’ye think of that, Frank, and you, Larry?”

“Glory to goodness! two extra months’ vacation, and right through October too, when the chestnuts are ripe, and walnuts are dropping! What bully days we’ve got ahead of us, boys!”

“And November, too, mind you,” went on the little “runt” who had been called “Elephant” in a joke by his chums and could not shake off the name, “the month when the frisky cottontail is also ripe. Say, Frank, won’t you have a ge-lorious time trying out that new Marlin pump-gun you got for your last birthday?”

The third member of the group sitting under the beech tree had as yet not spoken, since his two companions started to give expression to their extravagant delight over the wonderful news brought by Fenimore Cooper Small, the aforesaid “Elephant,” whose father happened to be the head Selectman of the town, and could fetch the decision of the Board of School

Trustees home before the rest of the worthy citizens had been put wise to the facts.

“Well,” said Frank Bird, with one of his rare smiles that always made him friends wherever he went, “I had a pretty good idea it would end that way, when I heard how the trustees failed to find any building in town that would answer to house the high school pupils. Yes, I’m glad for some things, and sorry for others. But it’ll give the Bird boys a chance to do a little more flying before winter sets in and stops all that fun.”

Frank and his cousin Andy had become quite famous throughout the region around Bloomsbury, a town in Central New York, on account of the wonderful success they had made of aviation.

Indeed, some of the doings of the Bird Boys, as they were called, had even found their way into the columns of the big metropolitan papers, and among professional birdmen they were looked upon as most promising “comers.”

Back of Frank’s house—where he lived with his father, Professor Bird, once a noted balloonist and scientist, together with an old gentleman who had served as guardian to Frank when his father was believed to have perished on one of his long flights while exploring parts of the Panama Isthmus—in a field some distance in the rear of his house there had been built a fine workshop, where the two boys spent most of their time when not in the air.

Already they had invented quite a few ingenious contrivances which gave promise that some day their names would figure

along with those that have made aviation in heavier-than-air machines what it is today—those of the Wright brothers.

Close to this workshop was the great “hangar” in which they kept their aeroplane when it was not in use; and since enemies had frequently tried to injure their property these buildings were not only securely locked but as a rule watched of nights.

To tell even a small portion of the doings of these bold cousins when navigating the air would consume too much space and time; and the reader who has been unfortunate enough not to have enjoyed their perusal is referred back to the previous volumes in this Series, where they will be found recorded at length, and the story told in an entertaining manner.

The third member of the little group taking it easy under the wide spreading beech tree, with its thick branches, was one Larry Geohegan, a firm friend of the Bird boys; whose only fault was the envy he often felt because he could never accompany either of his flying chums aloft, being afflicted with a weakness that made him dizzy whenever he looked down from any height.

Elephant had met the other two quite by accident on the road, and stopped to communicate the grand news, which he had heard his father tell at the breakfast table.

Apparently the other two lads were going fishing, for they had poles and bait cans lying on the ground. There was a beautiful lake named Sunrise, upon which the town lay; and a mile away a stream ran into this which could always be depended upon to furnish a splendid string of bass, chubs, sunfish and horned



pouts or catfish, when the wind was favorable, as happened on this lovely morning. "What were you waiting here for under this tree; did you expect Andy to show up?" asked Elephant after he had declared his intention of joining the fishing party, and cutting a pole when he got on the grounds.

"Just what we did," replied Frank. "He spent last night out at Spencer's, because as you all know, the old gentleman is especially fond of Andy, and every once in so often begs him to come out and cheer him up."

"Yes, and they do say he means to leave all he's got to Andy, in trust of his father, Doctor Bird," declared Larry, that little streak of envy again making itself evident in his voice; for it did seem to him that things were always coming to his chums and passing him by.

"Oh! that's silly talk," laughed Frank, "I wouldn't pay any attention to it, if I were you, Larry. I'm sure Andy never gives such a thing a thought. He's only too glad to oblige the poor old man who's so crippled with rheumatism that he can hardly hobble around. And you know that years and years ago he used to be a noted traveler, and a lecturer as well. Why, fellows, there hasn't hardly been a country on the face of the earth that Mr. Spencer hasn't visited, and explored. I could sit for hours and just hear him tell about what he's seen and gone through with. I try to go out with Andy every chance I get; but last night I was too busy with a knotty problem I had to solve."

"I just bet you it was about some new contraption you're making up to surprise the flying people. Already you've done a heap along that line, Frank; and they do say that the time is

sure to come when you'll give the Wrights, and all that bunch, a rude jolt, by inventing something that they've all been trying hard to discover, but nixey, nothing doing up to date; because the time ain't ripe, and the Bird boys haven't had a fair chance to show what they can do."

Frank only laughed when Elephant applied this thick coat of flattery. He was accustomed to hearing this sort of talk from that quarter; because the Small boy had always been one of his greatest admirers from the time when he and Andy were struggling with their first rude pattern of an aeroplane, in which they had installed some sort of cranky engine, and actually taken short flights, without getting their necks or legs broken.

"But you must have agreed to meet Andy here then, didn't you?" Elephant went on to remark, stretching his neck to glance along the road as he spoke.

"That was the agreement when he went off on his wheel yesterday afternoon," replied Frank Bird. "If the morning looked fishy, Larry and myself were to wait here under the old beech at eight o'clock until he came along. You see, I've got a pole for him; and we dug lots of worms. Larry even went out last night with a lantern, and picked up a can of big fat night-walkers that look like young snakes. I dropped in at Andy's house on the way here, and told them he wouldn't be back till evening, if the fish took good, and the bathing turned out fine. We've also got plenty of grub along; yes, enough for you, too, Elephant."

“Hoop-la! you make me feel happy when you say that, Frank; because I was born with an appetite, you must know; and when I can’t get my grub at least three times per diem I’m apt to complain,” and the Small boy grinned good-naturedly as he made this remark.

“I say, Frank, have you and Andy invested that reward money the bank insisted on you accepting when you captured the two hobo yeggmen who broke into their safe; and also stole Percy Carberry’s biplane to make their get-away in?” asked Larry, who, it might as well be confessed right here, had a pretty average streak of curiosity in his make-up, and was forever wanting to know this, that, and the other thing.

“Oh!” answered the other carelessly, “we’ve still got that in bank, and may put it into another machine later on; or else invest in some parts we want to work with, Andy having a new idea this time that looks worth while experimenting with.”

“You sure are the luckiest pair I ever ran up against, and that’s a fact!” declared Larry.

“We think so ourselves,” Frank admitted. “There’s one thing certain, and that is we don’t deserve all the great times we’ve been having this year and more.”

“Don’t you believe it!” exclaimed Elephant. “It ain’t luck so much as being everlastingly at it, and minding how you do things. You deserve all you’ve got, Frank; and lots of people say so besides me.”

“Here comes Andy,” remarked Larry, anxious to turn the conversation just then, for he was really somewhat ashamed of

his weakness, "I saw him flash past that open place up the road, and spinning along like fun."

"Yes, you're right there, Larry," added Frank, "and here he is." A boy mounted on a fine bicycle came whirling along the road, and speedily drew up at the beech with the dense foliage, which later on would yield a harvest of the small but sweet nuts boys love so well when it is a "fat" season.

Andy Bird was not quite as tall as his cousin, though well built and rather stocky at that. There was more or less resemblance between them, although their temperaments differed in many ways, Andy being more inclined to impulsiveness than the cooler and far-seeing Frank. But they were exceedingly fond of each other, and had been inseparable for years.

Andy threw himself from his saddle, and lowering his wheel to the ground after the usual boyish way, dropped down beside the others.

"Whew! I hit it up at a lively clip all the way down!" he remarked. "You see, it's awful hard to break away from Mr. Spencer, and he kept me up to the last minute. I knew you said eight o'clock, Frank, and I didn't want to keep you waiting. Glad you turned up, Elephant; we tried to get you on the phone yesterday afternoon; but they said you'd gone off, and nobody knew where. Going with us, ain't you?"

"Make your mind easy on that, Andy," replied the diminutive Elephant, glibly. "I never could hold out when there was any fishing going on. I just revel in pulling out the gamey bass, the festive catfish, and the acrobatic eel; while as for perch and

pickerel and sunfish, why, I delight to see them wriggling on the hook, ready to take their places in the pan. See you've got a fryingpan along, Larry; and that means we'll have fish for dinner today—after we grab 'em out of the water."

"But Andy, think of the bully good news Elephant's gone and brought with him," Larry went on to say, jubilantly, "the trustees have finally decided that, as the big repairs on the high school building have been started, and can't possibly be done till early winter, why, because there's no place in town that could be used just now, vacation has got to be lengthened until about the first of December."

Andy Bird looked delighted, as what boy would not. Immediately his eyes traveled in the direction of his cousin, and there was exchanged between them a significant series of nods and winks, that possibly meant their thoughts were along the same lines; and that now they would have the time to go with certain work that had been taking their attention of late. "By the way," said Frank, "I stopped at your house on the way out, Andy, to tell your father that you would go fishing with us, and not to expect you till night. And he gave me a letter for you that he said had come in the early morning mail. From the postmark I see it's from your uncle Jethro, away down on that Arizona ranch you were telling me about. Here it is, and a fine fat one too."

Andy hastily opened the letter, and was heard to give vent to a low cry that seemed to spell both astonishment and delight.

"What's this mean?" exclaimed Frank, stooping to pick up a paper that had fallen to the ground, "why, as sure as you live,

it's a check made out to you, Andy, and signed by the old bachelor uncle, your mother's brother. Hold your breath, fellows, while I whisper what the amount is he takes pleasure in sending to his beloved nephew—four figures in it, as sure as you live—a clean thousand dollars!"

Larry gave a groan and threw up his hands while his eyes rolled.

"Of all the lucky fellows, you Bird boys do certain sure take the cake!" he cried.

## CHAPTER II—GLORIOUS NEWS

“Ain’t you going to read it out, Andy?” asked Elephant, anxiously.

“Wait till he gets through, can’t you?” asked Larry, although he was fairly trembling with eagerness to hear what the sending of that glorious check could mean; when he looked at the small bit of paper Frank was holding he almost held his breath with awe, for to tell the truth Larry had never seen a check a quarter as large as that in all his life.

Andy could not say a word when he finished reading. He seemed to be fairly overpowered with emotion, and holding the letter out to Frank, motioned that he should accommodate the other two.

And so Frank started in. The letter was written in a cramped hand, as if uncle Jethro Witherspoon had rather lost the knack of using a pen; but then Frank could wade through it, even if he did hesitate here and there.

It started in after this fashion:

“My Dear Nephew, Andrew Bird:—I’ve been hearing a whole lot about the way you and your cousin Frank are coming along with that airship business, and your mother has got me worked up to pretty nigh fever pitch about your precious doing. Now here I am, an old and cranky bachelor, with a big and successful cattle ranch on my hands,

and no chick or child to cheer me up. I want you two boys to pay me a long visit, and bring that wonder of an aeroplane along with you. I sounded your mother some time back, without her letting you know, and she was agreeable, if only it could be arranged without interfering with your school duties. And here today your good dad, the doctor, has wired me that he believes there is going to be an extension of the vacation period for another two months.

“Seems like things might be working to please a lonely old man out this way. Now here’s a little check to cover expenses. If you need any more draw on me to any amount. What’s money for anyway but to give pleasure to somebody? Pack up that flying machine of yours, and either tuck it under your arm or else ship it by the fastest express you can get to receive it, regardless of cost.

“I’m not going to take no for an answer. I want you and that smart cousin Frank down here to show some of my cow-punchers what’s doing in the line of this flying business. But most of all I want to see you. I’ve got your pictures before me as I write, and I’m counting the days until you arrive, bag and baggage. Wire me on receipt of this all about your plans and when you can start. If you say you can’t come, I’m going up after you. I’m used to having my own way, the boys down here will tell you. With lots of love, believe me,



“Your affectionate uncle,  
“JETHRO WITHERSPOON.”

When Frank finished reading this remarkable letter, Larry gasped for breath; while little Elephant stood on his hands and cracked his heels together.

“That sure takes the cake, Andy, Frank!” he declared, when he had once more resumed his customary position, with his head higher than his heels. “And my stars! what a ge-lorious time you two will have of it, away down in that desert corner of Arizona! Cowboys—bucking bronchos—whirling ropes—branding cattle—the merry round-up—the camp-outs on the plains, and all them stunts. Oh! what wouldn’t I give to be going along with you, fellers?”

“It’s always better to be born lucky than rich; I’ve said that before, and I’m ready to stick by it!” stoutly asserted Larry. “Frank, can we go, do you think?” asked Andy, almost in a whisper, as though he had hardly as yet recovered his breath, taken away at the wonderful news contained in that letter which his cousin had brought him.

“We’ll think it over and see,” replied the other, always avoiding the rush tactics that Andy frequently displayed, and which made him a valued member of the Bloomsbury High football eleven. “But I rather guess it could be arranged, if my father is willing.”

“Huh! no danger of him saying no,” grunted Larry. “He ought to know that you two boys can take care of yourselves anywhere on the face of the earth. After you went down to Colombia in

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