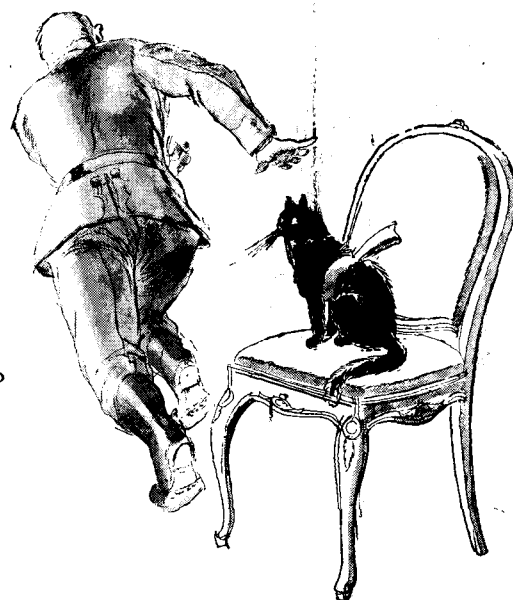


ID. 6, KANSAS



LYLE JUSTIS - 1930



"For God's sake," screamed the Englishman hysterically, "keep that cat away from me!" "Mein Gott!" shouted the colonel, overturning the table

The Great Whiskerino

FARNBOROUGH, Hants, is on Salisbury Plain, a scant half hour's flight from the ancient altars of Stonehenge, which mark the exact astrological center of cosmos. Successively, in the course of some thousands of years, Salisbury Plain has served as a place for whiskered druids to celebrate their mystic rites, as a camping ground for fog-chilled Roman legionaries whose ghosts still inhabit it, and as an airdrome for bored young gentlemen who would much rather be in London.

It was at Farnborough that Captain Geoffrey de Havilland flew and smashed the first of that long and honored line of airplanes to bear his initials, DH. There, in 1911, the Royal Aircraft Factory reared its ugly head. The war had been booming along for three years before The Great Whiskerino was even thought of, but precisely eight weeks and three days after the thought, why, there was The Great Whiskerino.

History, you see, is always in the making on Salisbury Plain. . . .

Some of Whiskerino's brothers were Maltese, and some of his sisters were striped. Some of the former were tortoise shell and some of the latter were white. But though sweet and patient old Martha, the Royal Aircraft Factory's senior cat, loved them all with maternal impartiality, she knew from the first that Whiskerino was a Cat of Destiny. He was coal black, and had about him something . . . well, something that made you think of the mysterious rocks of Stonehenge when they cast long shadows in the moonlight, and of the awesome wraiths of mist which rise out

The heroic adventures of a small but very potent black cat who seriously disturbed the serenity of the well-known Western Front

By Guy Gilpatric

of Salisbury Plain and stalk across it on silent nights when there is neither moon to make them visible, nor wind to make them move. It was the strange something that you sense in all black cats, but in Whiskerino it was disturbingly intensified.

And his eyes. Such eyes! . . .

While the rest of them scampered and frisked on the pile of rejected SE5 wing coverings in the corner of Number Seven fabric room, Whiskerino would sit aloof in rapt meditation of knowledge denied the comprehension of mortal cats and men. And if perchance a venturesome brother or sister sidled toward him in skittish invitation to play, he would swipe out once and accurately with whichever paw was handiest and continue his cogitations while the wounded one ran mewling to its mother for solace. Yes, plainly—and the news spread—Whiskerino was a wizard, an adept, a seer.

Lady Diana Manners, from the BE2C fuselage department, came over to see



Illustrated by Lyle Justis

The sentry hoisted him in a hamlike hand, and strode toward a side door

him, as did Colonel Tousey, boss cat of the motor factory. Bolo Pascha, mascot of the factory test pilots, trotted from the experimental hangars two miles down the Farnborough Road, bringing with him a mole which he had bagged on the way. And all of them, as they sat in a semicircle around this strange black kitten, mur-raowingly agreed that here, beyond all doubt, was one of their tribe to rank with the cats of Bubastis of ancient Egypt, with the one-eyed familiar of the demonic Doctor Dee, and with the feline natives of New Eng-

land who, according to report, rode broomsticks astern of aviating witches.

Whiskerino, thus made aware that his superior powers were apparent to cats, did not learn of their effect upon humans until he was some seven weeks old. Then, early one morning when Martha was off ratting, he strolled out of Number Seven fabric room and down the long factory corridor. All was silent. The work day had not yet begun. Whiskerino had all the world to himself, and to a very tiny kitten it seemed a very big world indeed.

At the end of the corridor was a great open door which gave onto a yard, and with tail hoisted like a grenadier's plume he stepped jauntily through it. As he did so there came a terrifying hiss-s-s, a thunderous stamping, which caused him to crouch, turn, and flee. From a striped sentry box beside the gate emerged an elderly, beet-nosed Territorial who was shaking his fist, "Blarst your black 'ide," he blustered, "w'y did you 'ave to walk across my post, you and your blinkin' black bad luck?"

WHISKERINO paused in the corridor, half-minded to put a curse on the fellow—not just a jinx, but something really worth while, with pestilence, starvation, and boiling oil in it. He was just trying to think up a good sinister formula when a bugle sounded, and with rhythmic clump of hobnails a column of uniformed mechanics hove into view headed for the very door within which he was standing his ground.

"Alt!" cried the sentry to the sergeant who led the column. "'Old 'ard, Sergeant, look what's ahead of you!"

The sergeant looked, spied Whiskerino and stopped dead in his tracks. "Sec-shun . . . 'alt!" he ordered. Then, turning upon the sentry: "Well, my man," he roared, "wot in 'ell did you permit it for? You're 'ere to guard this h'en-trance, ayn't you? That means to keep things out, don't it? And that means to keep out black cats and bad luck, which is the syme things, ayn't they?"

"Yuss," agreed the sentry, "but I didn't let 'im in, I didn't. 'E was in, 'e was."

"Well, then, chivvy 'im out, why don't you? Do you want 'im to walk across the path of this 'ere detachment and give a 'undred men 'ard luck, to s'y nothink of every ruddy airplane bein' built in this 'ere shed?"

The sentry—belted, bandoliered, and



with bayonet fixed—reluctantly advanced down the hall, emitting loud *shushes* and stamping his feet.

Whiskerino, who, it must be remembered, was very young and out in the world for the first time, forgot for the nonce his magic powers and departed in scurrying panic. So great was his fear that he ran right past the entrance to Number Seven fabric room and came to bay in the corner of the assembling department. Here he prepared to sell his life dearly. But even as he spat anathemas and unsheathed his little claws the sentry stooped down, hoisted him helpless in a hamlike hand, and strode toward a side door which opened on the Farnborough Road.

"There, you narsty little jinx!" he said, tossing Whiskerino clear to the center of the highway. "Tyke your bad luck with you and—*hup!* . . . Oh, I arks your pardon, sir!" For the kitten had landed perilously in the path of a bicycle ridden by a young gentleman with a Royal Flying Corps glengarry cocked over his right eyebrow and an oil-smudged blue-and-white ribbon beneath his pilot's wings.

The young gentleman swerved his bicycle, saving Whiskerino's life, and sprawled beside him on the road. The sentry dropped his rifle and ran to the rescue.

"Stand at attention, you!" snapped the fallen one, sitting in the dust and prodding experimentally at his left collarbone. Then, hoisting the kitten into his lap: "Not hurt are you, Whiskerino, old fellow?—I've got the name straight, haven't I? Ah, of course—with those whiskers what else could it be?"

Quite unceremoniously he tweaked Whiskerino's notable mustaches, and then tucked him into a capacious tunic pocket with only his head protruding. Somehow, Whiskerino felt angry at himself for liking it.

"And now," said the young gentleman ominously, rising to his feet, dusting off his breeches, and turning upon the sentry, "I've a good mind to crime you, my man, for cruelty to animals and—er—whatever they call making officers fall off bikes. Why the deuce were you chucking this kitten about?"

"Sergeant's orders, sir. 'E's 'ard luck, sir. 'E crossed my path, 'e did; then 'e crossed the sergeant's, and now 'e's crossed yours. It's meant 'ard luck to all of us, you can see for yourself, sir. If you'll permit a word of advice, Captain. . . ."

"I won't; but I'll give you some!" snapped the young gentleman. "Never

abuse another black cat while I'm about, or you'll have some *pukka* hard luck. Why, you silly superstitious ass, don't you know that black cats are good luck—the best jolly luck in the world?" He retrieved the bicycle, swung himself and Whiskerino aboard, and pedaled down the highway toward the hangars.

"I say," came a voice from the factory window, "do you know 'oo that young gempman was?"

"No, and I'd 'ardly care to," sulked the sentry, starting back to his post.

"Well, p'raps you'll chynge your mind when you 'ear it was Captain Ruthven, V. C.!"

"What, Captain Ruthven, 'oo's shot down seventy 'Uns? That kid? Well," and a look of sorrow came over his walrus face as he gazed down the road, "if I'd only known, I'd 'ave killed that cat, I would, as my juty to King and Country. And instead of that, I threw black death across a 'ero's path!"

FIVE hours later Whiskerino was in France, having made the trip in a pocket of Captain Ruthven's leather flying coat. He hadn't cared for flying at first, but after a bit he concluded that the airplane was a new kind of witch's broom, and that he and the captain were on an astral journey, so he went to sleep. Suddenly the roar of the engine gave place to a bubbling whir, and his head became filled with the banshee screech of wind through wires. There was the gentlest of bumps as wheels and tail-skid grounded together. Then Captain Ruthven, sliding himself up in the cockpit so he could see over the nose, taxied toward an irregular line of Bes-soneau hangars which stood beside a long white road with tall feathery trees bordering it. Mechanics ran out and seized the wing tips, and a group of grinning officers strolled out too.

"There," said Captain Ruthven as he cut the motor. "Come up, Whisk—we're home!" And very gently he hoisted the kitten out of his pocket, set him on his shoulder, and slid over the combing to the ground. Then:

"Hello, warriors—how's everybody and what's new? How are you, Sanderson?"

"Fit, Skipper. The war's been a dreadful bore without you. So this is the new Hush-Hush plane we're going to win the war with! Any good?"

"Not worth a damn. But the poor dears at Farnborough have spent seventy thousand pounds experimenting with it, and I've got to give 'em a report. —Yes, thank you, Sergeant, I'm quite

fit. Roll it inside, won't you, and put a guard over it—he needn't bother to stay awake, of course. Come on, Whiskerino—I'm for tea."

"Whiskerino?" exclaimed Cosgrove of B Flight, spying the kitten. "Oh, my word, are you mad, Skipper? Chuck the beast off your shoulder!"

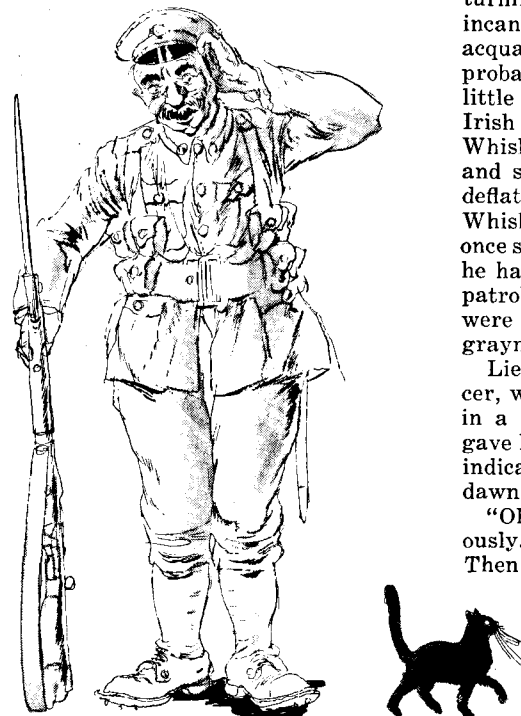
"Yes, by all means, Skipper!" urged Sanderson. "Black cats are rotten luck—oh, rotten."

"Tosh!" said Captain Ruthven, leading the way toward the mess. "You chaps'd better get used to Whisk, because I've appointed him Squadron Mascot to succeed all kewpies, rabbit's feet and billikens that may be serving at present."

"But really, Skipper—here, Steward, let me have the check, it's seven whiskies and soda—all through history, black cats have been fatal. Why . . ."

"I give you The Great Whiskerino!" interrupted Captain Ruthven, raising his glass. "And, Steward—bring a saucer of milk for the new Squadron Mascot. I'll lay odds that in a week he'll solo on liver."

Thus, with due dignity and in the face of great opposition, Whiskerino took up his duties as mascot of No. 9 Squadron, R. F. C. While he was conscious of a deep obligation to Captain Ruthven, and a consequent responsibility for his well-being, he strove none the less impartially to bring good luck to the entire squadron; yea, even unto the skeptical young gentlemen who hated him, avoided him, scatted him, and who pinned their faith on silly four-leaf clovers, pairs of even sillier worsted puppets named Nanette and Rin-tin-tin, and the number thirteen. Conscientiously he gave up a good portion of his days and practically all of his nights to casting spells for the protection of each pilot, and for the



"Blarst your black 'ide," he blustered, "w'y did you 'ave to walk across *my* post?"

luck of the organization as a whole.

Due to the exigencies of life at the front, the work was difficult—even trying. The stores of the squadron included little of the equipment essential to the duties of a wizard; in fact, there wasn't even catnip. And besides, the proximity of the guns had frightened away such elves, gnomes and fairies as ordinarily would have come to his assistance; and so he was forced to shoulder the burden alone.

That squadron casualties were remarkably few may have been due to his efficiency as a mascot, or to the fact that the sector was quiet. But, he might in

all fairness have asked you, what made the sector quiet?

Still, nobody but Ruthven gave him credit. As he grew older and bigger and handsomer and wiser, he became ever so much more effective, and he knew it. He worked out some formulae based upon the teachings of Merlin, Cagliostro and Paracelsus which were practically infallible.

THERE came a week when the squadron bagged eleven Huns, and while Captain Ruthven was vociferously grateful for the three which fell to the Vickers gun of his Hush-Hush, the other young gentlemen either took the glory solely unto themselves, or shared it with certain silver charms they wore on their identification disks, or with Teddy bears, rag dolls and similar false gods which cluttered up the cockpits of their fighting planes.

Ah, well! Through all history the way of the wizard has been hard. . . .

There came a time in the war when the Hun saw fit to broadcast the justness of his cause and the futility of the Allies', by means of propaganda. It was the sort of drivel periodically dished out by both sides, beginning "Soldiers, lay down your arms! Our quarrel is not with you, but with the governments which exploit you"; and so on, in the usual grandiloquent vein. Countless reams of this propaganda were sent across the lines on little yellow balloons, which were eagerly sought by the Allied forces and chased for miles whenever they hove into sight. Of course no one bothered to read the propaganda, but the balloons were fashioned of excellent silk which one could have made up into elegant pajamas for fifteen francs, in any of the villages behind the lines.

Now it chanced that one morning just before the dawn, as Whiskerino was returning from a night spent in howling incantations at the moon, he made the acquaintance of a leprechaun. It is probable that this leprechaun, wizened little elf, was deserting from one of the Irish regiments; in any event, he led Whiskerino around behind the hangars and showed him a propaganda balloon, deflated and limp, drooping from a bush. Whiskerino, scenting malign magic, at once set about overcoming it. By the time he had finished, the busses of the dawn patrol were warming up, and the pilots were lighting cigarettes in the murky grayness.

Lieutenant Cosgrove, the liaison officer, was preparing to go up to Division in a side-car when he saw that which gave him pause. He glanced at the wind indicator, stirring soggly in the pre-dawn breeze. Yes, it was from the west!

"Oh, my aunt!" he exclaimed rapturously. "Watch me, chaps, watch me!" Then walking toward the mascot, "Here, kitty, kitty, kitty!" he coaxed. "Was it a wuzzy, wuzzy old Whiskerino, wuzzums?"—and very gingerly he took the cat in his arms, wrapped him in the balloon, and clambered into the side-car.

"Carry on," he ordered, "and not a word about this to the O. C., mind! Just stop at

the first observation balloon we come to—we'll borrow a bit of hydrogen gas and give our precious Whiskerino a joy ride over to Germany. Jolly stunt, what?"

It was noon before Captain Ruthven began to feel disturbed. He had missed Whiskerino at breakfast, and even though he had hammered on his porridge dish with his spoon—a summons which should have brought the mascot trotting from the uttermost reaches of the airdrome—there was no response.

"Oh, he's just off rattling, Skipper—he'll turn up for lunch," Sanderson reassured him, casting a furtive wink at



"You're 'ere to guard this h'entrance, ayn't you? That means to keep things out, don't it? And that means to keep out black cats and bad luck"

the rest of the crowd. But lunch time came, and still no Whiskerino.

"Damned queer!" growled Ruthven. "He's never washed out like this before. He's not in any of the hangars, either. I hope he turns up before the two-o'clock picnic." And for the remainder of the meal he dabbled with his food in frowning silence.

The two-o'clock patrol was ready to go—busses on the line, motors ticking over, impatient pilots goggled and safety-belted. But Ruthven's Hush-Hush, with his patrol leader's streamer flapping from its rudder, was attended only by the mechanics. At length Ruthven appeared—walking slowly, peering from side to side, and pausing occasionally to call, "Here, Whisk-Whisk-Whisk!" At length he dashed down his cigarette, climbed into his machine, waved away the chocks, and jammed open the throttle. With an ear-splitting roar the Hush-Hush cocked up its tail, charged savagely across the grass, and leaped into a breathlessly steep *chandelle*. One by one the others joined it in the air and headed for the lines.

"WHY, 'e was as pale as death!" said a mechanic, gathering up chocks and priming-can and starting for the hangar. "My Gawd, Alf, you don't

s'pose that damned cat really *was* lucky?"

"I don't know," said Alf gloomily. "Orl I 'opes is that nothink 'appens to the skipper!"

As a matter of fact, things across the lines were even quieter than usual. Ruthven led his patrol up and down, back and forth, for the better part of two hours. Once he headed for a Han-over two-seater which was engaged in regulating a .77 battery, but the Hun fled when the formation was still miles away. Even Archie was quiet. . . .

Everything was strange, today. It was funny what could have happened to Whiskerino. Ruthven told himself that he really wasn't superstitious—well, that is, not very. . . . Of course the rest of the crowd thought he was; but that was only because all of them were. Right now probably, they were thinking he had his wind up about losing his luck. He scowled back at the wedge of busses which bobbed and see-sawed in the nothingness behind him, and sneered. He'd show 'em!

Wobbling his wings for attention, he signaled the wash-out and as the formation headed for home, he turned back alone into Hunland.

Between two clouds was a space like a broad avenue, and Ruthven flew into it.

The sun was shining on the great white walls, and the sensation was like flying down the Champs Elysées.

Ruthven knew it was a dangerous place. Well, he wished those chaps could see him in it! All this talk of luck. . . .

A dozen streaks of lightning ripped through the cowl. He wheeled the Hush-Hush with the stick yanked back to his belly. The engine tore itself half out of the bearers and stopped dead. The Hun was diving out of the cloud to the right, his twin Spandau guns spitting gobs of white-hot hate. It was a black Fokker with a red nose—redoubtable charger of Rittmeister Wolff, the gifted Prussian ace. Ruthven shuddered, swung the half-stalled Hush-Hush around so he'd get the bullets in the front, and closed his eyes.

HE WAITED for the final burst; waited . . . waited. He hoped he'd get it in the head, and die before he went down in flames. Well, if he caught fire first, he'd jump. He fumbled with his belt. He felt the Hush-Hush sliding off on a wing, whipping down into a screaming, slashing spin. Instinct forced him to open his eyes and straighten her out. Then, fearfully, he turned and looked behind him. Far in the distance, the red-nosed Fokker was slanting down in

a bee line for home, motor full on! "Well, I'll be damned!" exclaimed Captain Ruthven. "He acts as though he'd seen a ghost!"

He was down to eight thousand now, and he grimly set about stretching his glide to get him across the lines. But—again that rotten luck!—today, for the first time in weeks, the wind was from the west, and against him.

Well, he reflected, things weren't so bad at that. Better to live on acorn soup in a German prison camp than to have had Wolff ride him down!

He pancaked into a field beside a troop-filled road, ripped open the dumping-panel of the tank, stood off and fired a Very flare into the escaping petrol. By the time the Huns reached him he had kicked off his flying suit and was sprawled comfortably on the grass.

A corporal's guard escorted him respectfully to the road, where they commandeered a truck. After a twenty-minute drive they entered the park of a château which he had often seen from the air, and which was evidently a divisional headquarters. There he was received by a smiling infantry captain who ushered him into an office, offered him cigarettes, and made sounds which he evidently thought were English.

(Continued on page 64)

Oats Iron Horse

Trying to make one trunk railroad grow where eighty branches grew before is today's hardest problem for our big cab and caboose men. Mr. Flynn has made a thorough study of consolidation, and tells you here, in a nice way, just what it's all about

IF YOU like a fight, take a peek at the scrap that is now going on to force the sixteen hundred railroads of the United States into about twenty separate systems. It is called railroad consolidation—which is really spoiling a good show with a terrible name.

If you like a Chinese puzzle you can get that too. Just take the fifty volumes that represent the hearings of the Interstate Commerce Commission on the subject for the last nine years and try to understand them. Fortunately, you don't need to suffer all that in order to know what railroad consolidation is all about. It is really possible to see it in its general outlines, and when you do that you see a big five-ring circus with a first-class fight going on in each ring.

It's a fight for traffic. The Iron Horse is a hungry animal. Traffic is its oats. This is a fight for more oats for the steaming steed.

The best fight is in the East, where Daniel Willard of the Baltimore and Ohio, the young Van Sweringens of the Nickel Plate, and old Leonor F. Loree, the grizzled war horse of the Delaware and Hudson, are trying to build new trunk line systems, to give battle to the powerful Pennsylvania and the equally powerful New York Central.

Down in Baltimore is a tall, erect, benevolent-looking gentleman who has been known as the big chief of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad since 1910. His white hair and gold-rimmed spectacles give him a scholarly air. This is Daniel Willard, the man who took the Baltimore and Ohio twenty years ago, when it was emerging from the shadow of the Pennsylvania, and built it into a strong and powerful competitor of that system.

Willard left Massachusetts Agricultural College when he was eighteen, and joined the old Connecticut and Passumpsic Railroad as a fireman. He has moved up through all the grades—locomotive engineer, division superintendent, general superintendent, general manager, vice president and president.

Willard was one of the first rail executives to approve when Congress ordered the Interstate Commerce Commission to prepare a plan for consolidat-

ing the railroads. This whole business of consolidation had come to an abrupt stop around 1902 when Roosevelt pounced on Hill and Harriman in their famous Northern Securities Company and drove that concern out of business. Up to then the history of all our roads was a story of countless consolidations.

I once heard the late Alfred H. Smith, then president of the New York Central, say that the Central represented the consolidation, over a period of seventy years, of six hundred railroads. At the present time it is still a vast aggregation of some one hundred corporations all operated through stock ownership or under lease by the New York Central Company.

Trying to Save the Small Roads

After the Supreme Court dissolved the Hill-Harriman combine there were no more consolidations. After the war, however, when the time came to hand the roads back to their private owners, consolidation got a new impetus.

It all started with an Iowa lawyer

who was a United States senator, Albert B. Cummins, who had done some railroading in his early days, and thus always took a lead in railroad legislation. Senator Cummins declared that if the roads were brought together into a score of systems, from three hundred to five hundred million dollars a year could be saved in operating economies.

But his chief reason for advocating consolidation was a totally different one. There were then, and still are for that matter, some sixty thousand miles of railroad owned by small companies which are being starved to death. They serve communities which do not furnish very much traffic and they cannot exist on the rates which are made for the roads as a whole. Cummins declared their only hope was to be taken over by the strong roads.

When the railroads were turned back to their owners by the government under the Esch-Cummins law in 1920, that statute directed the Interstate Commerce Commission to prepare a plan under which all the roads would be merged into a limited number of strong, balanced systems. The Commission there-

upon named a Harvard professor, William Z. Ripley, to prepare a tentative plan, something that everybody—rail men and reformers and financiers and the Commission—could use as a basis for discussing the final plan.

And so the professor sat down at a big table, with a couple of thousand railroad schedules, his maps, and his financial statements; and amused himself for about a year with the fascinating job of rearranging all the 268,000 miles of railroad into systems after his heart's desire. He made twenty-one systems. The Commission cut his plans to nineteen systems and published them. And that was the beginning of the row.

Willard said he thought the Commission's plan was pretty good "in a general way." And well he might, for it gave him a starting point for creating a new and powerful trunk line which would challenge the Central and the Penn.

Enter the Van Sweringens

Of course the Pennsylvania was against all this. So was the New York Central. They were big enough, and in virtual control of the richest railroad territory of the world. It is not in human nature to expect men to help build up rivals for themselves.

Countless millions of words flowed into the ears of the Commission about this. But they can be boiled down to these simple facts: First, that these two great roads were not in sympathy with the plan at all; and, second, that the Penn did not want Willard to have the Wabash or the Lehigh, and the New York Central didn't want him to have the Central of New Jersey.

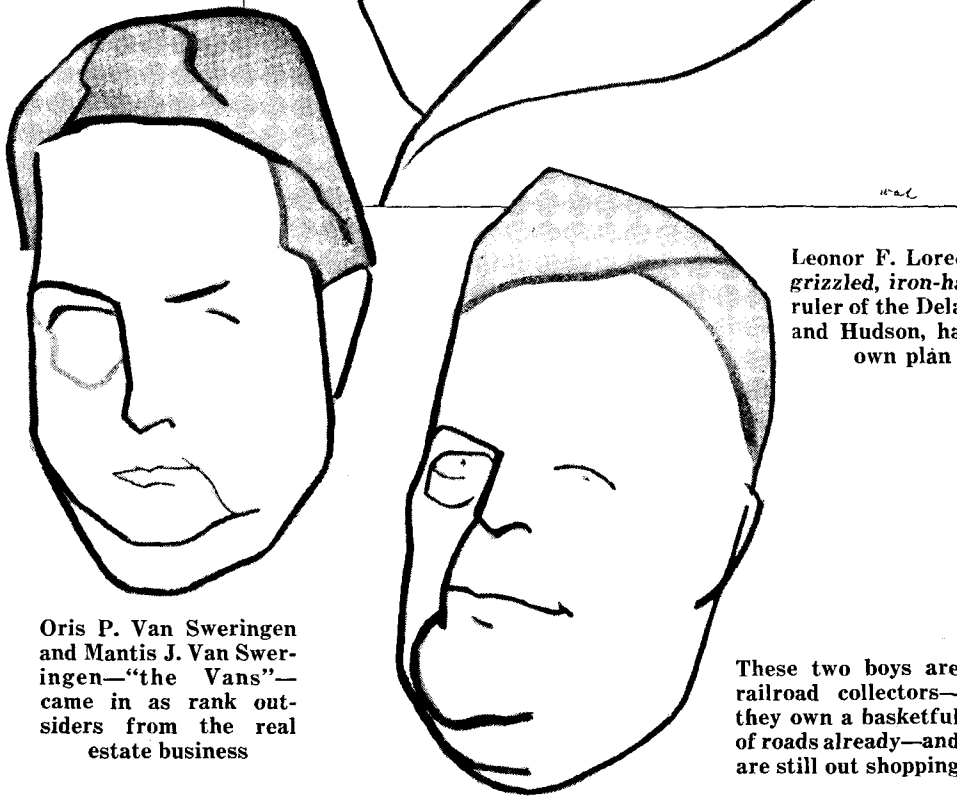
Then two other claimants appeared on the scene. The Van Sweringen brothers, dapper, boyish-looking promoters of Cleveland, and Leonor F. Loree, grizzled, domineering, iron-handed ruler of the Delaware and Hudson, demanded attention.

The Van Sweringens came as rank outsiders from the real estate business. Loree was a veteran railroader, a survival and a type from the days of Harriman and Hill.

Back in 1916 "the Vans" built a trolley line to their lots. The line needed a downtown terminal near Cleveland's Public Square, and the property they selected as a site was controlled by the Nickel Plate road, then owned by the Central. The Van Sweringens tried to interest the Nickel Plate in a plan to build a joint trolley and railroad terminal, but without success. But the New York Central, knowing that the Interstate Commerce Commission was about to order it to get rid of the Nickel Plate road, was looking for a buyer. The Van Sweringens settled their problem, therefore, by buying the Nickel Plate.

They did it on the installment plan, making a down payment of two million dollars and another \$6,500,000 in notes every little while. John J. Bernet, a vice president of the New York Central, was made president of the Nickel Plate. Bernet is a young chap as railroad presidents go—just sixty-two years old, but a railroader of the old school.

In no time the Nickel Plate was doing a thriving business. Then the Van Sweringens bought from the receivers another batch of roads—the Clover Leaf system, consisting of four excellent small carriers, and the Lake Erie and Western. They next got, in order, the Chesapeake and Ohio and its subsidiary,



Leonor F. Loree, the grizzled, iron-handed ruler of the Delaware and Hudson, has his own plan

Oris P. Van Sweringen and Mantis J. Van Sweringen—"the Vans"—came in as rank outsiders from the real estate business

These two boys are railroad collectors—they own a basketful of roads already—and are still out shopping