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The Messenger in a bog at Baleine for a million. Think of all that black water! Think how cold it is!' And I had thought of both. I had thought of both for a while, and then there had been other things to think about. I had moved to Elstree, half-hour's flight from the Percival Aircraft Works at Gravesend, and almost daily for three months now I had flown down to the factory in a hired plane and watched the Vega Gull they were making for me. I had watched her birth and watched her growth. I had watched her wings take shape, and seen wood and fabric moulded to her ribs to form her long, sleek belly, and I had seen her engine cradled into her frame, and made fast. The Gull had a turquoise-blue body and silver wings. Edgar Percival had made her with care, with skill, and with worry • the care of a veteran flyer, the skill of a master designer, and the worry of a friend. Actually the plane was a standard sport model with a range of only six hundred and sixty miles. But she had a special undercarriage built to carry the weight of her extra oil and petrol tanks. The tanks were fixed into the wings, into the centre section, and into the cabin itself. In the cabin they formed a wall around my seat, and each tank had a petcock of its own. The petcocks were important. 'If you open one,' said Percival, 'without shutting the other first, you may get an airlock. You know the tanks in the cabin have no gauges, so it may be best to let one run completely dry before opening the next. Your motor might go dead in the interval--but she'll start again. She's a De Havilland Gipsy • and Gipsys never stop.' I had talked to Tom. We had spent hours going over the Atlantic chart, and I had realized that the tinker of Molo, now one of England's great pilots, had traded his dreams and had got in return a better thing. Tom had grown older too; he had jettisoned a deadweight of irrelevant hopes and wonders, and had left himself a realistic code that had no room for temporizing or easy sentiment. 'I'm glad you're going to do it. Beryl. It won't be simple. If you can get off the ground in the first place, with such an immense load of fuel, you'll be alone in that plane about a night and a day--mostly night. Doing it east to west, the wind's against you. In September, so is the weather. You won't have a radio. If you misjudge your course only a few degrees, you'll end up in Labrador or in the sea • so don't misjudge anything.' Tom could still grin. He had grinned; he had said: 'Anyway, it ought to amuse you to think that your financial backer lives on a farm called "Place of the Castle Inn" • Old Fashioned Hospitality; makes The Castle Inn the Traveller's Choice" - OVERLOOKING SYDNEY HARBOUR 400 KINGS ROAD, SYDNEY 564-4567 105 BEAUTIFUL ROOMS-ALL NEWLY DECORATED NEW TELEPHONE SYSTEM * AIR CONDITIONED * COLOR CABLE 116 EXTRA LONG BEDS * 60 DRIVE-UP ROOMS SIR ARTHUR'S FULLY LICENSED DINING ROOM Castle Gate Lounge >< Knightly Entertainment