

his hands at flying. He followed the arrow-mark and reached the house which looked like a barn. It was, in fact, a barn. The barn and the adjoining land had been taken on rent by two young ex-Royal Air-Force officers to start a flying school. They also, like Keane, had been demobbed after the war. They had a single-engine plane which they had assembled themselves. Keane was one of their first students.

Keane not only learnt how to fly a single-engine-plane but also how to assemble various parts of it and make one. He pursued it as a hobby. Luckily he got the job of a tea-plantation manager in Assam with good pay. He could now indulge in his new hobby fully. He purchased the engine and the material for the frame and with the help of the local motor-mechanic, the carpenter and the blacksmith built the plane which brought him to Netarhat. It had cost him only nine thousand rupees, less than the cost of a new car.

He also told us about the basics of aviation. His knowledge in this field was rather limited. I am sure Sattoo could have briefed us in far greater details the theories about flying than Perry Keane or even his ex-R.A.F. instructors. However one remark of his has etched itself in my memory.

“Boys, flying has a great limitation”, he had remarked with a smile, “You cannot fly all the time. Even the birds cannot do it. You have to come to the ground some-time or the other.

“Remember it always, whatever goes up has to come down whether voluntarily or otherwise”, he had concluded. How true!!!

The second day the duo took off. They circled overhead and waved to us drawing lusty cheers. It seemed as if a prima donna was taking curtain calls.

Had the Air Force started a recruitment drive at Netarhat on that day all of us would have enlisted.

