

# French Aviators Make Unique Death Compact For Country's Sake

Formed a Club the Members of Which Have Sworn to Sacrifice Life Itself in Fighting the Battles of Their Beloved France in the Air

**ROLAND GARROS WAS ONE WHO KEPT OATH TO LETTER**

By Making a Death Charge on a German Zeppelin Balloon in His Aeroplane—American Aviator Tells of the Club and its Heroic Members

SINCE the beginning of the war Garros, the French aviator, deliberately sacrificed his life to destroy the German Zeppelins. One of these was shot to the ground by the guns of the Belgian forts, which he sought to destroy, the others were annihilated by Frenchmen in a way that has led the world to wonder at the reckless carelessness of the perpetrators. It wonders whether Roland

wrongs, the rest of the world is wondering whether it shall believe or discredit reports that these aviators are members of one of the most remarkable death pacts in history.

**Suicide Club**  
This organization, a veritable suicide club is one of the strangest groups of men ever bound together by oath. It is made up of French army officers, who, realizing the terrible peril to their nation, that the even perfect Zeppelin is becoming a decided to adopt the only way they see to avert this menace to their country. These mighty Zeppelins, capable of dropping from an enormous height bombs large enough to destroy a whole city, or compel the surrender of forts or sink warships, must be destroyed, and these men have made a covenant to give their own lives whenever that might become ne-



necessary in order to bring them to the earth.

**Roland Garros**  
Roland Garros, the first member to die by the covenant, was flying at Belmont Park, New York, three or four years ago, and even at that time let words slip by his almost morose lips that hinted at the existence of the aviator's death pact. Captain Horace B. Wild, an American army aviator, who was quite intimate with the late French martyr, relates some of his experiences with Garros as follows:

"It was during the international aviation meet at Belmont Park, in 1910, that I first became intimately acquainted with Garros," said Captain Wild. "We were thrown together a great deal, and I soon grew to have a great respect for this unusual character, frail of body and nervous in temperament, but with a heart of iron and an intense earnestness that could not fail to impress anybody thrown into his company. He was so serious as to appear almost morose—to suggest that he might be worrying about some-

bodily ailment or threatened personal calamity. Often he stood apart from the rest of us as if wrapped in deep study, trying to decide a way out of some grave situation. In the light of what I afterwards learned I can now readily account for those moods in the man, who even then, particularly had offered himself up as a sacrifice on the altar of his country.

**Hinted At It**  
"It was one night when a group of us sat chatting on the hotel verandah that Garros first dropped a remark which directly hinted at the existence of the group of patriots to which I have alluded. In the party was Israel Ludlow, whose machine had fallen a few days before. He was on crutches, paralyzed from the hips down, and remarked mournfully, that had he followed his wife's pleas and remained out of the flying game, he might now be a well man. Others commented upon the unhappiness that our calling imposed upon our wives, and then someone asked Garros if he was glad he did not have a wife to worry about him.

"I shall never marry," he said gravely. "I have a service to perform for my country, and when I die there shall be no widow to mourn over me."

**For Country's Sake**  
"In subsequent conversations with various people, Garros and others have told of the service they consider

they owe their country. It was their intention when occasion arose to combat the menace of the German dirigible by the simple expedient of committing deliberate suicide in a single plunge from the clouds. They thought that it was worth the sacrifice, and this is the argument they used to make others think so too.

"A Zeppelin machine costs a million francs and require four months to construct. It has on board from ten to twenty men whom it has cost the German Government thousands of dollars to train at great risk, over a long period of time, for these Zeppelin pilots cannot become efficient in the scientific manoeuvring of these machines until after years of continuous practice. In estimating what one of these machines will be able to do in time of war, bear in mind its cost—millions of francs that the German Government has spent in building the craft, the expenses of each individual connected with it, the time it will take to duplicate it, and the cost. In juxtaposition to this consider one of us. An individual man, just one soul, with the aid of one little aeroplane costing only 25,000 francs, and readily constructed, can if necessary drop right down on one of these German war dogs and totally destroy it, machine and man, wipe it out of existence utterly. Is it not worth the sacrifice of a single life? Are we doing anything more than our duty when we pledge ourselves to live up to this agreement?"

**Descent On It**  
On account of the fact that dirigibles carry rapid-firing guns which can be aimed with deadly accuracy it is impossible for a monoplane to approach them from any side. But a dirigible cannot go higher than about 5000 feet, and this is where the monoplane, able to ascend to almost any height, is able to make the fatal plunge. The dirigibles have the further advantage of using silencers on their engines, and of being able to remain stationary in the air, neither of which is at present possible for the aeroplane, altho silencers are being tested for their use. The little war bird then has but one avenue of approach, that from directly above. This expanse of sky above the dirigible is always concealed from the crew as the great belly of the ship floating above cuts off their view.

Waiting their chance then, these members of this death pact figure they can from a height of ten, maybe fifteen thousand feet, drop down in the unsuspecting monsters beneath them who are themselves waiting to deal death in turn to others beneath them. It will be a certain death to the brave pilot of the tiny monoplane but they have figured the sides and they are an equation.

Who said that the spectacular in war had vanished. One of these giant Zeppelins is floating silently, unconscious of danger, thousands of feet in the air, and away above it after having ascended to an attitude several thousand feet higher than the dirigible, is the little monoplane manoeuvring to get a place directly above its victim. Once securing this position, which shuts him off from the observation of those in the dirigible the pilot cuts off his ignition, points the nose of the machine directly at the backbone of the great and valuable engine of war below him and in a spectacular shot from the skies plunges down and rends to atoms the huge craft in its path.

Germany has thirty-three of these dirigibles. France has 3000 aeroplanes with almost as many brave aviators. It is easy to see that if the objects of this death pact are attained the balance of power in the end will rest with the country upon whose altar brave armies have already sacrificed their lives.

## SHIPPING

The Kyle is now on dock, being painted.

Schr. Spinaway has cleared from St. Jacques with 2860 qtls. fish for Gibraltar.

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