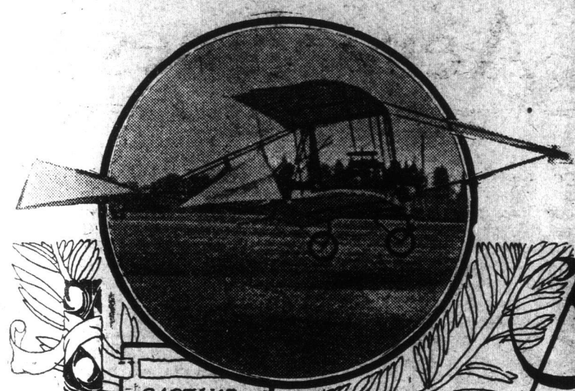
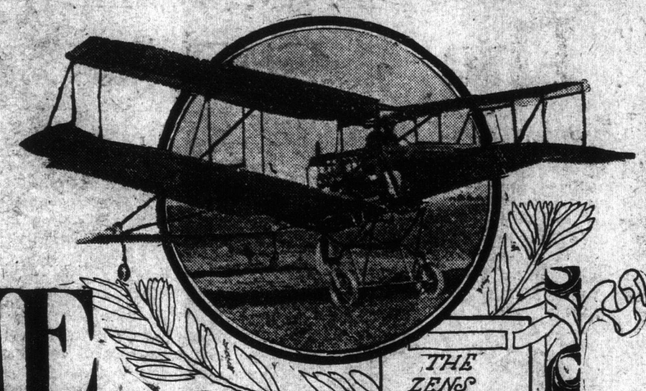
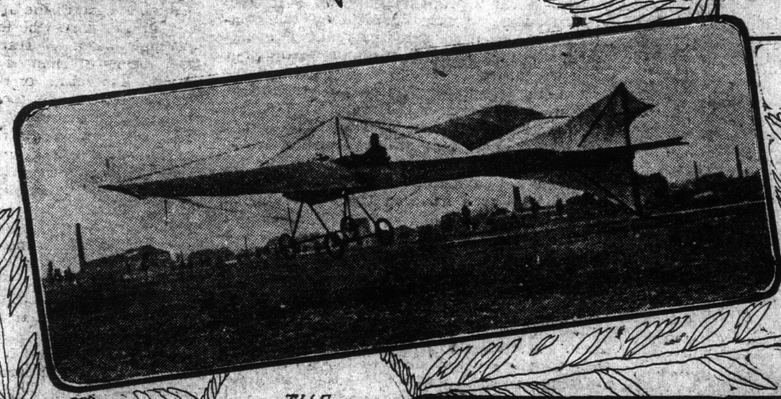
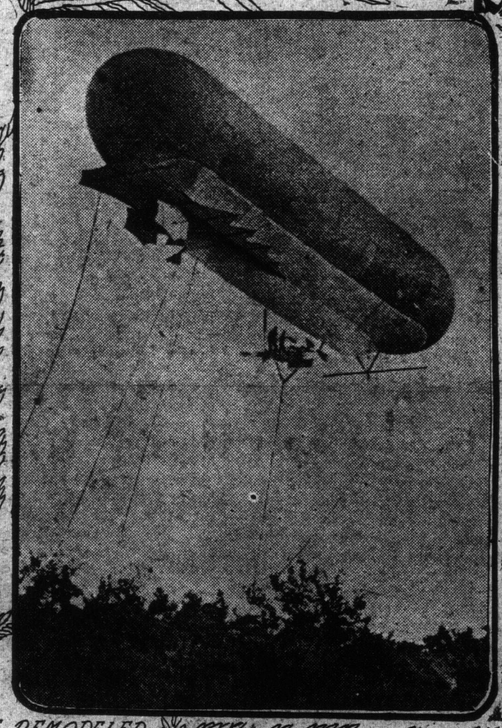
SUCCESS of the AEROPLANE









SPECIAL correspondents of the London Times telegraphed that paper as follows:

"Mr. Wilbur Wright has made a remarkable flight this evening, lasting 1 minute 45 seconds, over a course of about 2,500 feet. He will resume his experiments on Monday. The average height maintained during today's flight was 30 feet."

The news of this remarkable achievement, which took place in the presence of some of the leading members of the Aero Club, well known aviators like M. Bleriot, and aeronauts like M. Archdeacon, MM. Paul and Edmond Zens, and M. Peyrey, has been received with enthusiasm in the French Press. Such secrecy had been maintained with regard to the Wright aeroplane that a large number of Frenchmen were sceptical even as to Mr. Wright's seriousness. All accounts, however, published in this morning's papers from the correspondents on the spot attest the complete triumph of the American inventor. All present affirm that, after yesterday's experiments, there can be no doubt that the Wrights possess a machine capable of remaining an hour in the air and almost as managable as if it were a small toy held in the hand.

It was at half-past six that the flight took place. At the very first bound, obeying the handling of its pilot, the aeroplane rose "stable, harmonious, and superb," and, rising to some 30 feet or 40 feet twice without a hitch, glided round the Hippodrome, finally alighting gently, with the ease and grace of a wood-pigeon, to use the words of one of the correspondents, some 50 feet from its point of departure. "Thereupon the enthusiasm was indescribable. The Frenchmen and the Americans present received Mr. Wright, who had just won for his brother and himself the title of the real creator of aeroplanes, with the most extraordinary enthusiasm."

The Figaro, commenting upon this triumph, remarks that it is a great event, and continues:

"It is not the first time that a man has risen from the earth in a machine heavier than the air, but yesterday's experiment re-establishes the historical truth and repairs an injustice. Hitherto the honor of the first flight had been attributed to Santos Dumont, whose merits still remain what they always have been. That attempt took place on September 10, 1906, on the lawn of Bagatelle in Paris. Now, the first flights of the Wright brothers took place in 1901. They were renewed and perfected in the four succeeding years, and, although guaranteed by a witness whose competency ought to have been sufficient authority for the statement, namely, Mr. Chanute, the Chicago professor, who is an expert in aviation, nothing but incredulity reigned in Europe, and even in America. The Messrs. Wright were called humbugs and regarded as "bluffers," the more so as they followed up their experiments with negotiations for the sale at high prices in the old and new world of the patents for their machine. In 1905 pourparlers were begun by France for the purchase of the Wright aeroplane. They resulted, in 1906, in an option to MM. Fordyce, Henri Letellier, and Desouches, who suddenly felt doubts and ceded their option to the American Government. Thereupon the French Government intervened and, on the urgent advice of Captain Ferber, decided to act. M. Etienne, then Minister of War sent a mission to the United States. He offered the Wright Brothers 600,000 francs, (£24,000) for their invention on condition that they should previously execute a flight of 50 kilometres at an altitude of 300 metres.

"This condition put an end to the negotiations. But in April, 1908, M. Lazure Wieller, the well known manufacturer, entered into pourparlers with the Wright Brothers and signed a contract with them, according to which he became for 500,000f. (£20,000) the proprietor of their aeroplane if, before the end of 1908, their machine, with two persons on board, accomplished a flight of 50 kilometres. Yesterday's trial showed that the Wright aeroplane will fulfill the stipulated conditions. The machine covered only 2,000 metres at the rate of 68 kilometres an hour, but it had on board, in accordance with the contract, not only Mr. Wilbur Wright, but a burden representative of the second passenger in the form of a heavy sack."

All accounts agree that the most admirable characteristic of yesterday's flight was the steady mastery displayed by Mr. Wright over his machine. It is recalled that he and his brother are the sole constructors of this admirable apparatus, including the motor. Mr. Wright himself declared that he was not entirely satisfied with the first exhibition of his machine. "When in the air," he declared to a representative of the New York Herald, "I made no fewer than ten mistakes, due to the fact that I had been lying off so long, but I corrected them all rapidly, so I do not suppose that any one watching really knew that I made mistakes at all. I was much pleased with the way in which my first trial in France was received."

M. Bleriot, one of the best known French experts, said to the same correspondent: "I consider that, for us in France and everywhere a new era in mechanical flight has begun. I am not sufficiently calm after the event thoroughly to express my opinion. My view can be best conveyed in the words—It is marvellous."

Other experts were equally enthusiastic. Even the system of starting from rails instead of from wheels is regarded as superior now that Mr. Wright's success has given the French experts an object-lesson. Two Russian officers who were present were also greatly impressed by what they had seen.

Mr. Wilbur Wright told a representative of the Matin, after his flight of yesterday, in which he traveled three times round the Hunandieres race course, that he could have continued to fly if he had wished, but he judged it useless to do so. His idea was simply to make sure that the levers and steering gear were in proper working order. "I am now sure," said Mr. Wright, "that my aeroplane is good. I was a little bothered by the complete absence of wind, but I will make a further attempt on Monday, and I hope shortly to remain an hour in the air and to pay a visit to the people of Le Mans."

M. Bleriot, in reply to the Matin's representative, said: "This machine at present shows its superiority over our aeroplanes, but have patience! In a little while Mr. Wright will be equalled and even surpassed. Aviation is going to make such progress as cannot be imagined."

Mr. Wilbur Wright made three trials with his aeroplane on August 10. The first failed; the second lasted 42 seconds; and the third 1 minute 41 seconds.

Mr. Wilber Wright renewed his interrupted aeroplane trial again in the evening. The first attempt was made at 6.30 in the presence of a large crowd of spectators. The attempt failed owing to a mistake in handling the machine. The mechanic whose business it was to keep the aeroplane on the starting rails probably did not release it quickly enough, and the right wing struck the ground as the machine left the rails. The aeroplane flew for five or six yards and then stopped in an extremely inclined position. Having brought it back to the starting point, Mr. Wright made a second attempt. Reaching a height of ten metres, he flew for 200 metres and turned. At this point, owing to the faulty working of the motor, he had to stop.

At the third attempt, when darkness had already fallen, Mr. Wright reached a height of 15 metres, and, amid the cheers of the few spectators who remained on the ground, described a figure of eight twice in the air, and then returned to the shed.

The telegrams from the special correspondents of the Paris papers at Le Mans, where Mr. Wilber Wright was expected to make a flight of an hour today, attested the enthusiasm and impatience with which the public as well as the experts were awaiting the results of his efforts. All day long Mr. Wright has been worried by the presence of photographers, and a very lively incident is reported to have occurred between him and a captain, who, having taken several photographs, was obliged to surrender his apparatus to the American aviator. These incidents would appear to have greatly annoyed Mr. Wright, who announced at 2 o'clock that he would not resume his experiments until very late in the afternoon, towards 5 or 6 o'clock. The correspondents occupied the interval by talking to some of the experts present. The Temps gives tonight the following as the opinion of M. Bollee:

"I consider that the Wright apparatus is the most perfect that we have yet seen. You know what a triumph he had yesterday. The aeroplane that he used was the one with which he made his experiments in America. His self-assurance and the precision with which he managed his machine were a great surprise to all of us. Take notice that with the system of starting which he employs he has either got to fly immediately or fall to the ground—a form of anxiety unknown to our French aviators. I regard Mr. Wright as a real genius, but he is, perhaps wrong in wanting to do everything by himself."

M. Boulle mentioned various technical points as regards the construction of the machine which would be understood by engineers, but which cannot interest the public.

Another correspondent reports a remark of Mr. Wright himself that he greatly admired the result achieved by Mr. Farman and M. Delagrange, considering the unsatisfactory measures at their disposal for keeping their balance. "My aeroplane," he added, "is more complete than theirs; my perfected devices completely solve the problem of aviation."

In explanation of the meticulous way in which he does everything by himself, it may be said that, as he himself has said, he and his brother Orville lived for many months in North Carolina, far from any human habitation, where they inevitably got the habit of counting only on themselves.

It is reported that Mr. Wright has received notice that a delegation of German officers will visit the hippodrome of Hunaudieres to witness his flights.

A slight accident to Mr. Wilbur Wright's aeroplane on August 13 interrupted his experiments for the rest of the week. He took a magnificent flight of about ten kilometres in the morning in 8 minutes 13 seconds at a height of about 60 feet, making the circuit of the race-course seven times, and coming down with his habitual facility. A few minutes later he decided to make another trial. On his second round, after being in the air a little more than two minutes, at a height of about 60 feet, he decided to come down and descended to within 30 feet of the ground. In seeking to avoid landing in a ditch he tried to swerve his machine to the left, but made a false movement with one of the levers, so that instead of turning in the desired direction he went to the right forcing the whole aeroplane into an oblique position, which drove one of the wings violently against the ground, breaking its frame. Mr. Wright then got down and reassured with a smile the person who had rushed to help him. It was found that the damage consisted in a rent in the cloth of the left wing and the cracking of the frame. The motor, the rudders, and the propellers were uninjured. Mr. Wright took his machine back to the shed for repairs. It will be necessary to make an entirely new wooden framework for the broken wing, an operation which will take several days.

The Flights Described

M. Francois Peyrey, who is an expert in aerial navigation in France, and who had the good fortune to witness the first flights of Mr. Wilbur Wright at the Hunaudieres race course, near Le Mans, has given me the following authoritative statement of the result of those experiments.

"These experiments were really remarkable. They proved over and over again that Wilbur and Orville Wright have long mastered the art of artificial flight. They are the public justification of the performances which the American aviators announced in 1904 and 1905, and they give them, conclusively, the first place in the history of flying machines, that rightly belongs to them. It was at nightfall on August 8 that I saw Wilbur Wright make his first flight. He had made no flights for some months, and yet his first experiment began with the most delicate of all manoeuvres in aviation—namely, circling. He rose forthwith to a height of about 30 feet, and the spectacle was marvelous and delightful. We beheld the great white bird soar above the race course, pass over and beyond the trees from its shed to the winning-post of the course. We were able to follow easily each movement of the pilot, note his extraordinary proficiency in the flying business, perceive the curious warping of the wings in the process of circling and the shifting position of the rudders. When after 1 minute 45 seconds of flight Wright again touched the ground, descending with extraordinary buoyancy and precision, while cheers arose from the crowd in the tribune, I saw the man who is said to be unemotional turn pale. He had long suffered in silence; he was conscious that the world no longer doubted his achievements. On the following days Wilbur Wright continued his exercises in order to fulfill the conditions imposed upon him by the Weiller syndicate. As is well known this group intends to purchase the right of constructing and selling the Wright type of aeroplane in France and the French colonies for the sum of 500,000f. (£20,000.) By this contract, Wilbur Wright must take two flights, each of them over a course of more than 50 kilometres in an average breeze and at a few days interval. The aeroplane must carry two persons and enough fuel for a journey of 200 kilometres. In order to attain this result Wright declares that he must be allowed to go into methodical training. The machine which he used in America with his brother had four levers controlling the various steering and balancing arrangements. In France Wilbur Wright has had to alter this system, and his present aeroplane has only two levers. He must thus acquire the habit of fresh instinctive movements. He is daily making progress in this respect. On August 10 he succeeded in describing a figure 8 in the air in 1 minute 45 seconds. On the 11th he went three times round the race-course in 3 minutes 43 seconds, and on the 12th six times round in 6 minutes 56 seconds.

"The Wright aeroplane is what is called a biplane, the surfaces of which are parallelled, exactly one above the other and slightly concave on the lower surface. They are made of cloth stretched on a framework of spruce. They are 12½ metres long and two metres wide, giving a total area of 50 square metres. The distance between the planes is 1.80 metre. In front is a horizontal biplane rudder for regulating the height of flight, at the back a vertical bi-plane rudder for steering. The total length of the machine is ten metres. Between the planes is a four-cylinder, water-cooled, 25 h.p. motor, designed by the brothers Wright. On its right is a radiator with flat copper tubes on its left side the pilot and passenger. The motor drives two wooden propellers, 2.80 metres in diameter, by means of crossed chains. The propellers revolve in opposite directions and are geared down in the ratio of 33 to 9. The total weight of the aeroplane with one man on board is 450 kilogrammes. The motor in working order weighs 90 kilogrammes.

"The method of operation seems very simple. The most interesting feature consists in the 'working' of the extreme under part of the wings, whereby the flight of a bird is imitated and perfect lateral stability is secured. The rudder which regulates the horizontal balance has to be used almost continually, but, as in the case of a bicyclist, the movements necessary to maintain equilibrium probably soon become instinctive.

"In order to make a flight a wooden rail about 72 feet long was laid on the ground. The aeroplane rests upon wooden 'skates,' and has two rollers in front. On the rail runs a little car upon which the aeroplane rests and the rollers on the rail. When the screws begin to revolve the bird flies rapidly along the rail and at its extremity rises into the air by the help of the horizontal rudder. When there is a wind the rail alone is sufficient. In calm weather the aeroplane is launched as by a catapult; by means of a weight of 700 kilogrammes, which falls from the top of a pillar 18 feet high and pulls upon ropes passing through pulleys.

"Mr. Wright has realized the most delicate problem of aviation—namely, the question of balance. To behold this flying machine turn sharp round at the edge of the wood at a height of 60 feet, and continue on its course, is an enchanting spectacle. The wind does not seem to trouble him, Wright having flown in fairly stiff breezes. In a word, the Wright brothers are the first men who have succeeded in imitating birds. To deny it would be childish."