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JOHNSTON DESCRIBES HIS MEETING WITH LUFBERY, THE NOTED "ACE"

By LIEUT. ARCHIBALD JOHNSTON.

On my second day of leave I went into the Chatham, the Paris meeting place of Americans. There was only one man at the bar, a short, heavy-set, square-jawed chap. He was covered from neck to knees in the heavy fur coat issued to aviators, but the wings on his collar showed him to be a pilot.

He was speaking perfect French to the man behind the bar. To my surprise, he turned to me and said in English with a faint Latin accent:

"You are an American, aren't you?" I admitted it.

"My name is Lufbery," he said simply.

Lufbery!—he had been the idol, the pattern after which we all expected to try to model ourselves. We had heard of him from every side.

He was just as simple and free from self-consciousness as the stories of him indicated. Modest to a fault, he covered the decorations which had rewarded his valor with his heavy coat, rather than be looked at. For at that time he had already won the three honors France gives to her heroes. He had the War Cross, with many citations; the Legion of Honor, and the Military Medal.

Everybody knows, I fancy, the record of Raoul Lufbery. He has done everything a real man can do, and been almost everywhere one can go.

Somewhere in Europe he met Marc Pourpre, the famous Russian aviator, before the war. They became friends, and Lufbery became Pourpre's mechanic.

Then the war came. Pourpre enlisted in the aviation. Lufbery followed him to the front to look after his machine, enlisting as a second-class soldier mechanic. And then Pourpre died for France and his country, in Lorraine, after many combats.

Lufbery immediately demanded to be sent to a school to learn to fly. He was accepted as a student pilot. His way in the schools was not easy. His career was not brilliant. He barely got through, and was assigned to a bombing plane. But his desire to avenge his "patron" carried him through. After some months in a bombing squadron, he was sent back to a reserve camp to learn to fly a fighting plane. Then he joined the Lafayette Escadrille, and went on, methodically learning the things he had to know.

He succeeded to such effect that he had, at the time I met him, seven enemy planes to his credit. He now has seventeen.

I asked him all the questions a young pilot can ask an experienced one. He answered them all in his modest, straightforward way.

When I left him, he said: "Write to me when you are ready for the front, and I'll see you don't have to wait."