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Lufbery Cut Leave to Fly to His Death

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Lufbery Cut Leave to Fly to His Death

Continued From First Page

In writing a record of his life since he became an aviator for some little time previous to his death.

Lufbery never missed an opportunity to knock down an enemy machine, frequently taking desperate chances to add to his victories. It was only yesterday that he remarked jokingly: "You fellows can't get all the easy pickings. I heard how you were knocking them down and decided to hurry back and get some myself. Let 'em all come, the more the merrier."

The air service has lost more than a crack aviator in Lufbery. It has lost a first class instructor of young airmen just coming to the front, who looked to him for pointers on the little tricks of the trade which in the pinch may mean life or death to an aviator.

Though the combat in which Lufbery lost his life was with one of the most powerful of Germany's fighting planes, it is believed that his failure to score his usual victory was due to the jamming of his machine gun.

He was seen to draw off from his antagonist as if trying to get something about his machine in fighting trim again, and it was during this period that he lost the advantage in position that led to his defeat.

A bullet from the German machine punctured his gasoline tank and soon his machine was in flames. He jumped when some 800 yards from the earth.

The German machine which brought Lufbery down, which was armed with two machine guns, with an operator for each piece, apparently escaped, though it was later attacked by anti-aircraft guns.

Lufbery's only wound, aside from those received when he crashed to earth, was a bullet hole through the thumb. Apparently the same bullet punctured one of the gasoline tanks of his machine.

The German machine was under heavy anti-aircraft fire several times, both before and after the air fight, and one explosion of a shell upset the enemy's plane, but it managed to straighten out.

It was about 10 o'clock this morning when a German triplane suddenly descended from the clouds, apparently because of engine trouble, until it was only some 1500 metres over the city of Toul. The American fliers were on the alert, and some of them headed for the fighting line to await the enemy on his return.

Lufbery and the pilot of another machine made after the German, who quickly ran away from the direction of the line, the two American machines following him. Eight miles away from the enemy's line Lufbery was seen to attack from under the tail, but then he drew off as if his machine gun had jammed. Two minutes later he attacked again from the same position and almost immediately his machine burst into flames.

The Americans on the ground and hundreds of French men and women going to church along the country roads were horror stricken as they saw the airplane, like a ball of fire, plunging earthward. Suddenly they saw the form of a man leap from the machine.

Lufbery's body fell into a little flowering garden, while his airplane, still burning, dropped to the ground 400 yards away. By the time the first Americans had reached the spot the body of the famous flyer had been taken to the little city hall. There is was covered with the French Tri-Color and great piles of roses and wild flowers.

LUFBERY'S CAREER A STORY OF ROMANCE

The life of Major Lufbery was a most remarkable one because of the adventurous, nomadic, restless, chivalrous spirit it brought out in bold relief. He had probably visited more "odd corners" of the globe and seen more peoples of the earth than any

man of his years. Since the early days of his boyhood his career had been continuously one of excitement and adventure.

Major Lufbery, who was 34 years old at the time of his recent tragic death, was born in a town in the Cevennes Mountain range of France. His father was Edward Lufbery, a New Yorker of New England antecedents. His mother was a French woman. The father had met and married the mother during a stay in France as the representative of an American business house.

The boy grew up in a village under the shade of the rugged Cevennes Mountains. He attended school as whim and humor directed and gained but little "book knowledge." The boy had imbibed the indomitable spirit of his mountainous surroundings and at the age of 12 years he determined to leave home and "see the world."

He obtained his first employment in a chocolate factory, and then worked in a macaroni plant. The lust for adventure directed him to Paris. Later from Marseilles he set sail for northern Africa and passed some time in Algeria, Tunis and Egypt. He fell ill in Algiers and was confined in a hospital, where he became an orderly and remained for a year. He went from north Africa to Constantinople, where he worked for several weeks in a restaurant. He visited Rumania and then Germany, where he worked for a brief time in a brewery, and then shipped to South America under contract to a German steamship company.

Lufbery's plan was to visit the principal city or cities in a country, and if he found the place interesting to remain there until he had viewed all its interesting features.

In 1907, at the age of 23 years, Lufbery worked his way from South America to Connecticut, where at the town of Wallingford he sought the members of his father's family. His mother had died some years before. Lufbery's father was not at home, having returned to France on business. He found a younger brother in Wallingford and with him attended an evening school, trying to learn English, of which he spoke but little. He secured a job in a factory in Wallingford, and for two years worked on silver trimmings for coffins.

Enlisted in U. S. Army

He left in 1909 for Cuba and began his second trip around the world. At New Orleans his plans were changed

so that he enlisted in the United States regulars. He served 18 months in the Philippines. When his enlistment ended he went to Japan, China, India and later went to Constantinople, where he worked as a waiter in a restaurant.

In a few months, his spirit of unrest directed him to Cochinchina, where at Saigon, he met Marc Pourpe, a young French aviator, who was giving flying exhibitions in Asia. Pourpe was in need of a mechanic. Lufbery had never seen an airplane, but he applied for the position and secured it.

This was the beginning of a firm friendship between the two men. The French aviator and his American assistant gave flying exhibitions all over the French provinces in Indo-China. Lufbery received his first lessons in aviation from Pourpe, who was later to be killed after establishing an enviable record as a French aviator on the western front.

Lufbery wished personally to avenge his best friend, who after deeds of the greatest valor, had been shot down by the Hun airmen on Dec. 2, 1914. Lufbery asked to be trained as an airplane pilot. Early in the summer of 1916, Lufbery went to the front as a member of the American escadrille.

Lufbery with James R. McConnell, a former Chicago boy, on July 30 jointly attacked a German airplane and shot it down west of Etain, in the Verdun sector. The following day Lufbery destroyed another enemy machine, and on Aug. 4, he brought down another, this victim falling near Verdun.

Lufbery was soon decorated with the military medal and the French war cross, and was cited for bravery.

Lufbery continued his good work. Almost daily throughout the summer of 1916, he had one or more combats, often returning to his home park with his machine full of bullet holes, and more than once with his clothing cut by German fire.

During the historic bombardment of the Mauser factories on Oct. 12, 1916, Lufbery shot down a three-manned aviatik, which was counted his fifth official victory, and gained him the honor of the French official communique.

It was in this raid that Norman Prince of Boston and Pride's crossing was mortally injured. The escadrille then moved up to the Somme battlefield, and on Nov. 9 and 10 Lufbery triumphed over two German airmen, but

the two Hun airplanes fell too far within the enemy's lines to be placed to the credit of Lufbery.

In a combat with a German fier on Dec. 27, 1916, Lufbery almost lost his life, four bullets striking his plane very near to his body. He brought down his opponent, making it his sixth recorded German machine.

In the war activities of 1917, Lufbery was equally successful. In a recent despatch he was mentioned as having brought down 13 German airplanes. He is known to have participated in more than 50 aerial battles, and doubtless had brought down more than a score of opponents not credited officially. He easily led all the American fliers.

Lufbery won the cross of the Legion of Honor, the gold medal of the Aero Club of France, the British military medal, the war medal of the Aero Club of America and had several times been cited in French army orders. In referring to his medals he once remarked: "I am looking like a Christmas tree, medals all over my chest."

When the American air service in France began to be of moment, Lufbery was commissioned a major in the American army. Late in January last he was inducted into the United States service with that rank.

Wallingford Flags at Half Mast for Lufbery

WALLINGFORD, Conn., May 20.—The family of Major Raoul Lufbery, the American aviator whose death has been announced, today received from him some effects which gave them the impression that he intended to come here on a visit. An hour later a report came of the death of Major Lufbery, but there has been no official notification.

John E. Martin, warden of the borough, this noon ordered that flags in Wallingford be displayed at half staff for three days. He also requested that the clergymen meet to decide on a date for holding a memorial service. In behalf of the borough, Warden Martin issued a card extending sympathy to the family.

Major Lufbery leaves his father, Edward, and a sister, in Yalesville, a brother employed here, a sister in Pennsylvania and three sisters in Boston.

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