Wright Flyer

A Report Of Late Tests

Is Given by Messrs Wright, Inventors of the Machine.

Interesting Description of the Trials Made at Kitty Hawk.

It had not been our intention to make any detailed public statement concerning the private trails of our power "Flyer" on the 17th of December last; but since the contents of a private telegram, announcing to our folks at home the success of our trials, was dishonestly communicated to newspaper men at the Norfolk office, and led to the imposition upon the public by persons who never saw the "Flyer" or its flights, of a fictitious story incorrect in almost every detail; and since this story, together with several pretended interviews or statements, which were fakes pure and simple, have been very widely disseminated, we feel impelled to make some corrections. The real facts were as follows:

On the morning of December 17, between the hours of 10:30 o'clock and noon, four flights were made, two by Orville Wright and two by Wilbur Wright. The starts were all made from a point on the level and about 200 feet west of our camp, which is located a quarter of a mile north of the Kill Devil sand hill, in Dare county, North Carolina. The wind at the time of the flights had a velocity of 27 miles an hour at 10 o'clock, and 24 miles an hour at noon, as recorded by the anemometer at the Kitty Hawk weather bureau station. This anemometer is 30 feet from the ground. Our own measurements, made with a hand anemometer at a height of four feet from the ground, showed a velocity of about 22 miles when the first flight was made, and 20½ miles at the time of the last one. The flights were directly against the wind. Each time the machine started from the level ground by its own power alone with no assistance from gravity, or any other sources whatever. After a run of about 40 feet along a mono-rail track, which held the machine eight inches from the ground, it rose from the track and under the direction of the operator climbed upward on an inclined course till a height of eight or ten feet from the ground was reached, after which the course was kept as near horizontal as the wind gusts and the limited skill of the operator would permit. Into the teeth of a December gale the "Flyer" made its way forward with a speed of ten miles an hour over the ground and 30 to 35 miles an hour through the air. It had previously been decided that for reasons of personal safety these first trials should be made as close to the ground as possible. The height chosen was scarcely sufficient for maneuvering in so gusty a wind and with no previous acquaintance with the conduct of the machine and its controlling mechanisms. Consequently the first flight was short. The succeeding flights rapidly increased in length and at the fourth trial a flight of 59 seconds was made, in which time the machine flew a little more than a half mile through the air, and a distance of 852 feet over the ground. The landing was due to a slight error of judgment on the part of the operator. After passing over a little hummock of sand, in attempting to bring the machine down to the desired height, the operator turned the rudder too far, and the machine turned downward more quickly than had been expected. The reverse movement of the rudder was a fraction of a second too late to prevent the machine from touching the ground and thus ending the flight. The whole occurrence occupied little, if any more, than one second of time.

Only those who are acquainted with practical aeronautics can appreciate the difficulties of attempting the first trials of a flying machine in a 25 mile gale. As winter was already well set in, we should have postponed our trials to a more favorable season, but for the fact that we were determined, before returning home, to know whether the machine possessed sufficient power to fly, sufficient strength to withstand the shock of landings, and sufficient capacity of control to make flight safe in boisterous winds, as well as in calm air. When these points had been definitely established, we at once packed our goods and returned home, knowing that the age of the flying machine had come at last.

From the beginning we have employed entirely new principles of control; and as all the experiments have been conducted at our own expense, without assistance from any individual or institution, we do not feel ready at present to give out any pictures or detailed description of the machine.