

Pioneer Aviators.

We make history rapidly in these days, not merely political, but mechanical, scientific history. To find the actual beginnings of practicable aeroplaning it is not necessary to go back far into the files of the daily prints. It is interesting today, in view of the record-breaking flight of Walter Brookins from Chicago to Springfield, a distance of 185 miles, in seven hours and ten minutes, with only two stops, his actual time in the air being five hours and forty-one minutes, to note the news dispatch which described the first successful flight of a heavier-than-air machine, which at the same time brings back to mind the name of an aviator who has been virtually forgotten by the world in the rapid rush of developments. This dispatch was printed less than four years ago. It is to be found in The Star of November 12, 1906, under the head "Santos really flew! Most important of his aeroplane trials." The dispatch is dated Paris, November 12, and is as follows:

"M. Santos-Dumont made another series of experiments with his perfected aeroplane in the Bois de Boulogne this morning. In the forenoon he made two flights of between five and six seconds, covering between fifty and sixty meters each time. In the afternoon M. Santos-Dumont met with better success, and was only prevented by the immense crowds which surged on the field from accomplishing a sensational flight. He skimmed along at a height of fifteen feet and at a speed of thirty miles an hour for a distance of 315 meters, when fear that his whirling propeller would strike the cheering people forced him to descend. The right wing of his machine was slightly damaged. MM. Deutsch and Archdeacon and other aeronauts were witnesses of the feat, and the most enthusiastic were certain that the aeroplane would soon fly for miles. The next trial will take place at Longchamps race course, from which the crowd can be excluded."

Prior to Santos-Dumont's experiments

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with a small wheeled plane Prof. Langley had been experimenting down the Potomac with a machine that was popularly styled the "Buzzard," which came to grief on its second flight owing to the inadequacy of the launching apparatus. That machine is now in the Smithsonian Institution, and it is believed by practical aviators that it would fly today and that it would have flown during the original experiments had a proper starting device been employed. In the interest of history this machine should be given a test in capable hands. If Prof Langley, whose researches in aviation are now recognized as of the greatest value to those who have since succeeded in solving the problem of flight by a heavier-than-air machine, did in truth produce a device capable of sustained flight that fact should be demonstrated.

All of the airplane inventors acknowledge their debt of obligation not only to Langley, who did not live to see the first practicable flights which were conducted by the Wright brothers, but to Otto Lillenthal, who lost his life in an effort to acquire the secret of successful gliding. Lillenthal must be rated as the pioneer man-bird, for, though he confined himself to short soaring flights from elevations, he demonstrated certain principles of air sustentation which are vitally important in the management of the airplane of today.