

**LANCING FLYING FATALITY.**

Distressing Occurrence.

Sad End of a Young Canadian Officer.

Interesting Evidence at the Inquest.

THE risks which attend the training of Officers and men for the work of the Royal Flying Corps was illustrated in a tragic manner on Thursday afternoon, when Lieutenant W. F. Sharpe, a promising young Officer who came over to this country with the first Canadian Contingent, was accidentally killed whilst making a flight from the Shoreham Aerodrome up the Adur Valley.

Lieutenant Sharpe only came to Shoreham from the Canadians' Camp on Salisbury Plain on the previous day, and this was

**His First Flight Unaccompanied**

on the particular type of machine which he was using at the time of the accident; but he is understood to have flown for the past eighteen months in Canada, where he also acted as Instructor; and Captain Ross Hume, his Commanding Officer, told the Jury which was summoned to investigate the circumstances on the following day that he considered the deceased thoroughly capable in every way of having the sole charge of a machine.

As a fact, the suggestion put forward at the Inquest was that the accident was due to over-confidence in the first place. In other words, Lieutenant Sharpe was said to have been taking liberties with a machine to which he was comparatively a stranger, and when the result was a sideslip, which developed into what is known as a nose dive, he probably lost his head.

**Evidence at the Inquest.**

The Inquest, which was conducted by the Coroner for West Sussex (Mr. F. W. Butler), took place on Friday afternoon at the Steyning Union Infirmary on the Upper Shoreham-road, a portion of which is now at the disposal of the Authorities as a Military Hospital; and the evidence was to the following effect.

Captain ALEXANDER ROSS HUME, of the Royal Flying Corps, deposed that he was at present stationed at Shoreham, where he had command of the flying. The deceased came from Ottawa, and belonged to the First Battalion of the Canadian Contingent on Salisbury Plain (Bastard Camp). Witness did not know his exact age, but he should say he was about twenty-eight. On the previous day deceased went up alone in a Maurice-Farman biplane, having previously been up with witness.

ceased went up alone in a Maurice-Farman biplane, having previously been up with witness. When he went up with witness he had full control of the machine, and he also landed the machine himself. He seemed to

**Thoroughly Understand the Machine.**

and witness considered he was quite capable of handling it, or he would never have allowed him to go up alone. After he had been up with witness, witness told him he could go up alone, and that he could do one or two landings if he liked. Witness watched him do two circuits of the Aerodrome, and he was flying very well indeed. A few minutes later he had his attention turned to something else, and the next thing he heard was someone calling out: "There's Sharpe down in that field!" Witness "There's Sharpe down in that field!" Witness did not actually see the accident, but he was told that the deceased had been doing a very sharp turn at a steep bank, and was climbing at the same time, with the result that the machine sideslipped, and made a nose dive. A Maurice machine was a rather difficult one to take out of a nose dive, but the deceased had

**No Much Room**

that he ought to have been able to do it. Witness believed that the deceased knew how to do this, and the only reason he could suggest why he did not do so was that he must have lost his head. Witness thought the accident was due to over-confidence probably, in the first instance. Deceased seemed to think he could do what he liked with the machine, and witness thought he might therefore have been taking liberties with it. He had told witness that he had been flying for a year and a half, but he had not flown on this particular type of machine before he came to Shoreham. It was a very easy machine to fly. The engines were in absolutely perfect order. The machine was a dual control one, but when he went up with the deceased, just previous to the accident, the latter had entire control, and witness did not have to interfere at all.

**A Thousand Feet High**

Lieutenant JOHN OLLIS MULLINS, of the Sixth Middlesex Regiment, a probationer in the Royal Flying Corps, at present stationed at Shoreham, deposed that he was watching the deceased flying, and saw him fall. He was flying about a thousand feet up, nearly over Lancing College, when he seemed to take a turn at a very steep bank, and side-slipped down, falling the whole distance and hitting the ground with the wing of the machine.

Sergeant GEORGE JAMES LANGFIELD, of the Royal Flying Corps, stated that he also was at the Aerodrome about half past two o'clock on the previous afternoon, and that he witnessed the accident. He had just started another machine off, and had watched this go round the Aerodrome, when he turned to look at the machine deceased was flying. He was then flying

**Round by the College.**

and appeared to be about a thousand feet up. He made a sharp turn at a steep bank, and at the same time tried to climb, with the result that the machine side-slipped, and turned into a nose dive, hitting the ground nose first. Witness had inspected the machine before Captain Ross Hume and the deceased went up in it, and everything was in a good order.

To the Foreman: The reason the deceased side-slipped, in witness's opinion, was that he was banking, and tried to climb at the same time, with the result that he would be losing the power of his engine.

P.O. PATEMAN, who is stationed at Lancing, deposed that he was on duty on the Upper Shoreham-road, in the parish of Lancing, when he saw the deceased flying over near the College. Suddenly the machine

**Seemed to Make a Sudden Dive**

down to the ground, landing in a field behind the Sussex Pad Inn. Witness at once ran to the spot, and rendered what assistance he could. The machine had to be lifted up from off the deceased's body, and witness then pulled him out. He appeared to be dead.

Lieutenant EDWARD ARCHIBALD WALKER, of the Royal Army Medical Corps, stationed at Southwick, stated that he saw the body of the deceased at the Infirmary about a quarter-past three. In addition to other injuries there was a fracture of the neck, which would have caused instantaneous death.

Replying to a question by one of the Jury, Lieutenant WALKER said he should think it quite possible that the deceased had become unconscious before reaching the ground, falling from such a height.

**A Hundred Miles an Hour!**

Captain ROSS HUME, however, explained that an aeroplane did not drop nearly so fast as a dead weight would. A machine would not fall at more than a hundred miles an hour, and witness had often come down as fast as that without losing consciousness.

P.O. PATEMAN mentioned that when the deceased was pulled out from under the wrecked machine his clothes were saturated with petrol; and

Captain ROSS HUME explained that that was due to the tank breaking, adding that the most extraordinary thing was that the machine did not catch fire.

The CORONER having briefly summed up, the Jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death," in accordance with the evidence.