

## OBITUARY

### WILLIAM TREGARTHEN DOUGLASS

IT is with deep regret that we chronicle the death of this very eminent engineer. Mr. Douglass, who was drowned through the upsetting of a small sailing yacht off Start Point in August last, was born on March 23rd, 1857, and was educated at Dulwich and King's College. His first work in connection with lighthouses, with which his name will always be associated, was during the erection of the present Eddystone lighthouse when he acted as assistant engineer to his father. From that time onwards he was occupied in many engineering works of a permanent nature. He designed and constructed nearly forty lighthouses in different parts of the world, and carried out harbour works and sea defence works at numerous places in Scotland and around the English coast.

His interest in aeronautics was evidenced by his membership of the Aeronautical Society, while during the remodelling, in 1911, of the Society's constitution he rendered invariable assistance on the Committee which was chosen for that purpose.

To his fine talents and business capabilities was added a warm-hearted, even impulsive, nature, and his many friends in the engineering and aeronautical worlds will unite in mourning both for a brilliant career so tragically cut short and for the charming, kindly and inspiring personality of the man we knew and admired.

The Council of the Aeronautical Society, at a meeting on August 13th, passed the following resolution :—

" The Council of the Aeronautical Society of Great Britain has heard with great regret of the death of its late distinguished member, William Tregarthen Douglass, who rendered invaluable assistance in 1911, at a critical period in the history of the Society, and desires to extend the deepest sympathy to his family in their sad bereavement."

### SAMUEL FRANKLIN CODY

FEW indeed are the men whose loss could inflict so bitter a blow upon aeronautics as that of S. F. Cody, who summed up in his unique personality almost the entire history and development of aviation in this country. But the effect of his loss will be felt beyond the narrow confines of these shores, for his achievements were of international repute and aroused a world-wide echo.

On the morning of August 7th he fell with his passenger, Mr. W. H. B. Evans, from a height of some 200 feet with his biplane at South Farnborough. Both were killed on the spot. Subsequent inquiry points to the failure of the structure of his machine in the air. At that let the matter rest.

Samuel Franklin Cody was born in Texas in 1861. At an early age he came over to England with his wife and family and toured the country with a "Wild West" show. The living was a precarious one, though ever after Cody looked back with affectionate regret upon those early strenuous days of toil and failure, that left their ineradicable mark upon the man, moulding his boisterous and picturesque personality.

It would be useless to inquire the origin of his life-long interest in kites ; no doubt it was one of those freaks of nature that lead to epoch-making results, a trend of his subconscious mind. Suffice it to say that he resolved to exploit the kite as much for the purpose of his own advancement as for the ultimate future which he saw dimly looming ahead. He built a team of kites, attached them to a rowing-boat, and by their unaided means sought to cross the Channel. Nearly he succeeded, yet even his comparative failure proved the turning-point in his career, since it led to his discovery by Colonel Templer, then director of the Balloon Factory. Before long he was definitely appointed

kite instructor to the Army and evolved his famous teams of man-lifting kites in which he proved himself the greatest expert the world has ever known. Certainly, he equipped the British Army with the only successful kiting outfit now in existence or, since now the aeroplane has so restricted the field of the kite, ever likely to be.

He was next engaged on the mechanical part of the *Nulli Secundus*, for which, and for the engine in particular, he was largely responsible. This old "Antoinette" he subsequently built into his first biplane, and right loyally it served him for years. But then, although the "Antoinette" was a fine engine, Cody was ever able to obtain more from an engine than most others, for he was a natural motor mechanic of exceptional ability.

From the kite to the aeroplane the transition was inevitable. While at the Balloon Factory he built his first biplane, but before it ever flew, he had severed his connection with the Government institution chiefly by reason of incompatibility of temperament, though his contention of unfair treatment received official endorsement to the tune of £5,000 awarded him subsequently by arbitration. He went on alone, relying entirely on his own resources, after this, unabashed, trusting confidently to his own bright particular star. Never was confidence better justified. He made his first short flight in the summer of 1908, one of the first two accomplished in this country. In May of the following year he began to achieve distances in excess of a mile, real flights these. In August, 1909, it was decided to present him with the Silver Medal of the Aeronautical Society of Great Britain "in recognition of his services to aeronautics" (see *AERONAUTICAL JOURNAL*, October, 1909). The actual presentation took place on Friday, December 10th\*, 1909, at the Royal Society of Arts. The proceedings are reported in the *Journal* for January, 1910, and members should turn up this record, if only for the delightfully characteristic speech Cody made in acknowledging the medal. On September 8th, 1909, Cody flew for a period just exceeding one hour and thereafter entered upon his great aviation career. Let the bare facts relate his record. On December 31st, 1910, he won the first Michelin prize with a flight of 185 miles. On October 29th, 1911, he won the second of these prizes by flying 261J miles. Just previously, on September 11th, he had already won the other Michelin prize by accomplishing 125 miles across country in three hours seven minutes. On the same machine he completed the Circuit of Britain, and with another of similar type carried off the first prizes in the International and British classes of the Military Aeroplane Competition last year. For this feat he was awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Aero Club.

In June of the present year he was elected an Associate Fellow of the Society, an honour to which his past work fully entitled him, and which he would have done even more to justify had he been able to carry out the great schemes he was devising at the time of his death.

At a meeting of the Council of the Society, held on 13th August, 1913, the following resolution was passed, and was afterwards communicated to Mrs. Cody:—

"The Council of the Aeronautical Society of Great Britain deeply deplores the loss of Samuel Franklin Cody, an Associate Fellow of the Society and its Silver Medallist in 1909, whose devoted energy and genius have contributed so much towards the advancement of aeronautics, and desires to extend to his family the deepest sympathy in their great bereavement."

Of the man himself little more need be said, for his achievements form his most enduring title to fame. Everything connected with him was made on a large scale. On the whole, taking the good with the bad and allowing for all his failings, one may safely set him down as one of the few great men who have made history in aviation.

j. H. L.