

OBITUARY.

WILFRID DE FONVIELLE.

Wilfrid de Fonvielle died on the 29th of April, at Paris, aged 88 years. He was one of the fast dwindling band of early aeronautical pioneers, who have had the felicity of seeing their aspirations of so many years take concrete form and commence to become part of the every day life of the world.

The part which he played in the long campaign of argument and experiment that was to vindicate the claims of those who claimed flight to be possible was characteristically energetic, and his output of articles and books was tremendous. A life so full of incident cannot be adequately summed up in a few words. Deported at the time of the Coup d'Etat of 1852 to Algeria, for his Republican sympathies, he afterwards went to London and studied at the Royal Institution. Afterwards returning to France he occupied himself with electricity for some years. In the war of 1870-71 his aeronautical studies stood France in good stead. In company with Mons. Tissandier he offered at the outset to accompany the army of the Rhine with captive balloons. It is said that this offer was not even acknowledged by the Powers that were, but it was not long before the beleaguering of Paris by the victorious Germans made the balloon the only means of communication with the outside world. A balloon service was formed by Mons. de Fonvielle and others. He escaped from Paris in a balloon at 10 a.m. on the 24th November, 1870, and 4½ hours later landed at Louvain in Belgium. The balloon service which he helped to found was most successful, as is well known, and it is small wonder that with such an example always in his mind Mons. de Fonvielle remained an enthusiastic partisan of the "lighter-than-air" to the day of his death.

He was one of the moving spirits of La Société Française de Navigation Aérienne, of which he was an ex-President, and a Membre d'honneur of the Aéro Club de France. He was also an enthusiastic member of the Société Astronomique de France.

In 1901 Mons. de Fonvielle came to London at the invitation of the Aeronautical Society to deliver a lecture on "Aeronautics in France," and it is interesting to remember in passing that at that time "L'Entente Cordiale" had not yet come into being; in fact, owing to the Boer War the relations between the two countries were not of the pleasantest. However, science knows no frontiers and the visit was most successful, as may be seen by referring to the report in the AERONAUTICAL JOURNAL, July, 1901. Mons. de Fonvielle was made an Honorary Member of the Society, thus signalling the friendly relations between the French and English societies that have always existed.

At the Council Meeting of the 10th June, 1914, the following resolution was passed:—

"That the Council of the Aeronautical Society of Great Britain has learnt with great regret of the death of Mons. Wilfrid de Fonvielle, an Honorary Member of the Society since 1901, and begs to tender to his family and to his colleagues of the Société Française de Navigation Aérienne and l'Aéro Club de France, sincerest sympathy in their great loss."

GUSTAV HAMEL.

BORN JUNE 25, 1889. LOST AT SEA, MAY 23, 1914.

By general consent, the loss of Gustav Hamel is the biggest personal loss British aviation has sustained. The Admiralty signalled this in a very uncommon