

# THE VINDICATION OF THE LIGHT PLANE

(Abschrift „Flight“ 13.Mai 1926)

## A German Two-Seater Crosses the Alps in Mid-Winter

WHAT is surely one of the most remarkable performances of its kind in the history of aviation came to a successful conclusion on March 16 last, when two German aviators returned to their starting point at Sindelfingen, after having covered a distance of approximately 1,500 miles, including flights over some of the highest points in the Tauern mountains. The flight was undertaken in order to demonstrate that the light aeroplane is not a " fair-weather " machine, but is capable of rendering useful service under conditions which would be extremely trying to high-powered aeroplanes. The aviators who accomplished the flight were Herr Guritzer, chief pilot of the Daimler works at Sindelfingen, and Dr.-Ing. vonLangsdorff, who was navigator, passenger, engineer, photographer—otherwise the unfortunate " victim "—throughout the trip. The machine used was the little low-wing monoplane L.20. of which two took part in the Rundflug last year, and which is equipped with a Mercedes engine of 19 (*nineteen*) h.p. only. In view of the fact that mountains of more than 12,000 ft. in height were flown over with this low engine power (the Daimler engine, which is a two-cylinder air-cooled, has a bore of 75 mm. and a stroke of 100 mm., giving a capacity of 885 c.c), the flight being made during February and March, 1926, it can surely be claimed that the light 'plane (using the term in the sense in which it was originally intended to be used) has proved itself a serious proposition.

Dr. von Langsdorff has been kind enough to send for publication in FLIGHT some of the photographs taken by him during the flight, and these, reproduced herewith, give a very good idea of the extremely difficult nature of the country over which a large proportion of the trip was made. To get a proper perspective of the flight it should be pointed out that of ground organisation there was practically none. That is to say, no arrangements had been made for petrol " dumps " anywhere along the route. Use was, of course, made of existing aerodrome and refuelling facilities where possible, but in the main the two venturesome aviators relied upon their own resources in finding landing fields sufficiently close to towns to enable petrol supplies to be brought out to them. Engine spares other than such few as were carried on board the machine, were not provided for, and it says something for the 19-h.p. Mercedes engine that no serious trouble was experienced in spite of the heavy power loading.

The Daimler L.20  
on which the  
flight over the  
Alps was accom-  
plished. The  
engine is a Mer-  
cedes-Daimler  
of 19 h.p. only.

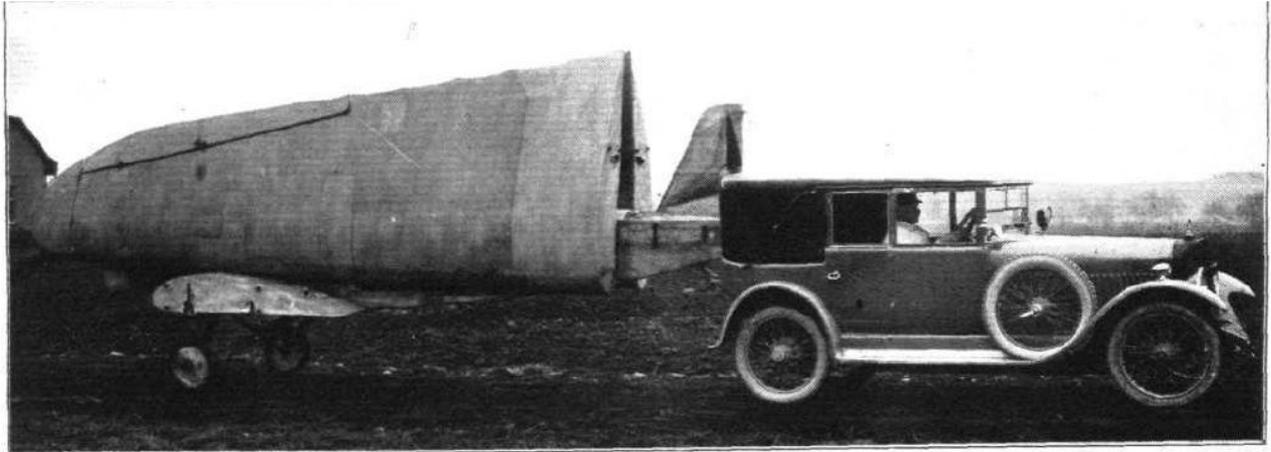


It had originally been intended to make the flight in the opposite direction to that actually taken, *i.e.*, starting from the Sindelfingen works of the Daimler Company to fly to Vienna and Budapest, returning to the starting point via the Alps. Dense ground fog, however, made a flight in an easterly direction almost impossible, and so it was decided to " do " the Alps on the outward journey, if possible, and the return flight via Vienna and Budapest.

After leaving Münsingen, the two aviators had to fly at an altitude of about 9,200 ft. to Augsburg, on account of ground fog. Their carefully-prepared maps were lost overboard, and for the rest of the trip they relied mainly upon cyclists' maps. In spite of this, however, Dr. von Langsdorff says there was relatively little difficulty as regards navigation, although visibility was very poor almost throughout. The flight from Augsburg to Schleissheim (north of Munich) was carried out in pouring rain, and from Munich to Salzburg heavy showers were encountered. Several attempts were made to penetrate eastwards towards Vienna, but thick fog each time compelled a return. It was then that the decision was made to head south towards the Alps. At Bad Reichenhall a landing was made in the fog. Later, although many of the valleys were shrouded in fog, a course was set for the

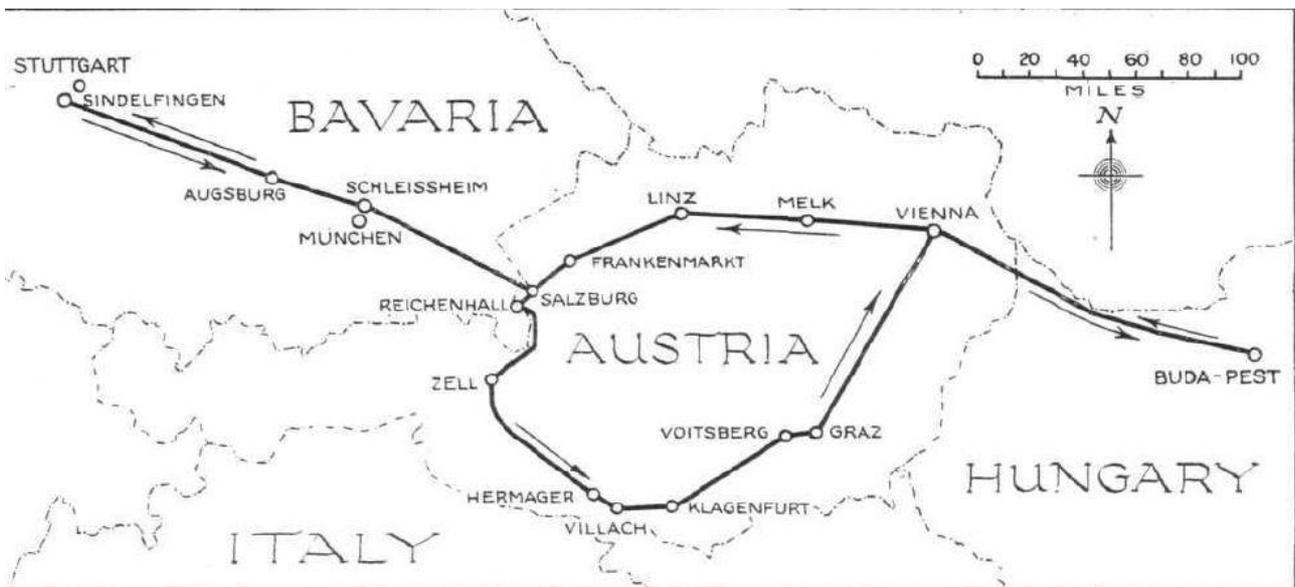
# THE VINDICATION OF THE LIGHT PLANE

(Abschrift „Flight“ 13.Mai 1926)



**TRANSPORT BY ROAD :** This photograph shows how the Daimler L.20 is towed by a motor car, the wings being dismantled and hung on the sides of the fuselage.

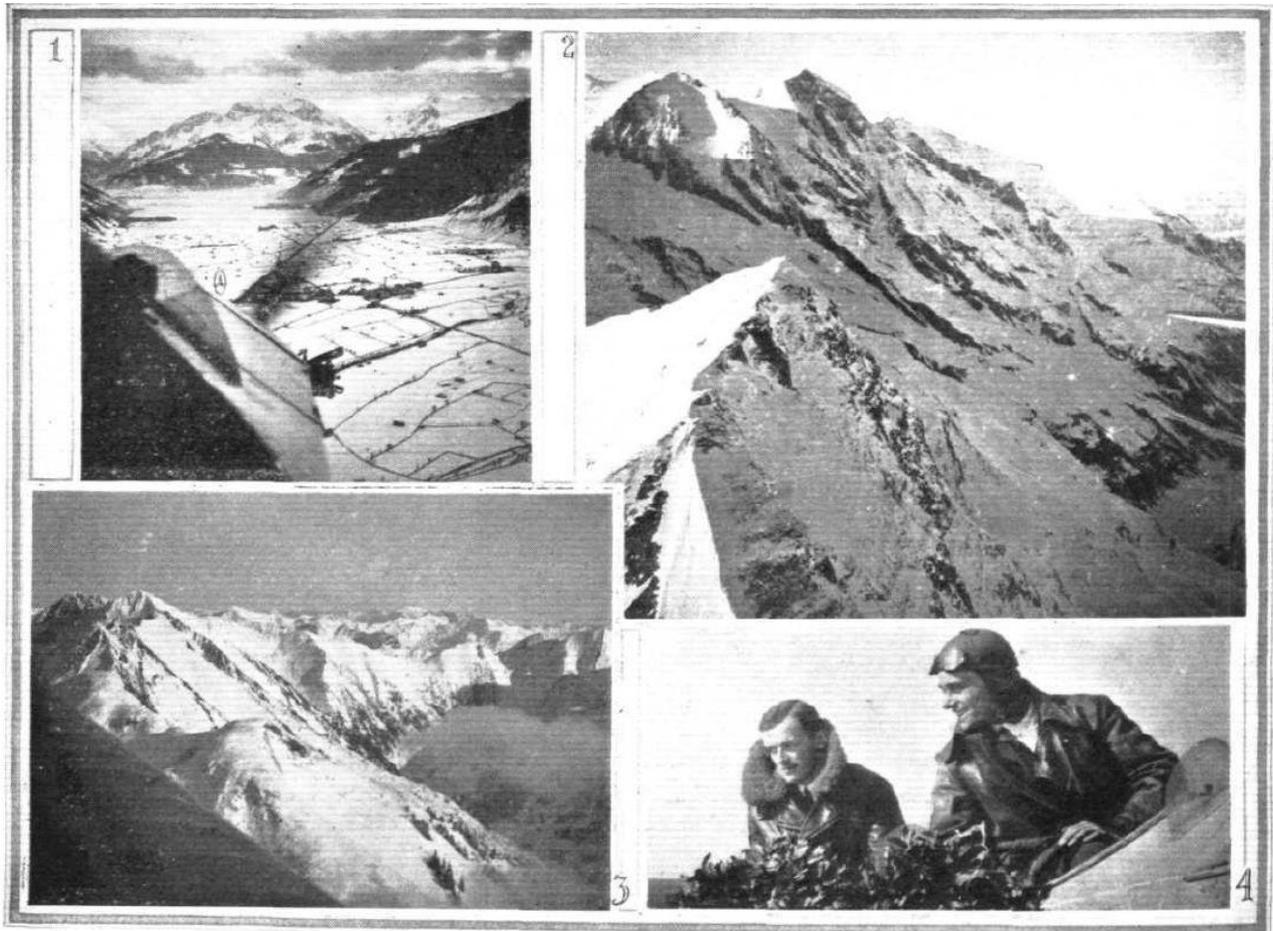
there was relatively little difficulty as regards navigation, although visibility was very poor almost throughout. The flight from Augsburg to Schleissheim (north of Munich) was carried out in pouring rain, and from Munich to Salzburg heavv showers were encountered. Several attempts were made" to penetrate eastwards towards Vienna, but thick fog each time compelled a return. It was then that the decision was made to head south towards the Alps. At Bad Reichenhall a landing was made in the fog. Later, although many of the valleys were shrouded in fog, a course was set for the Zeller See, and on the way, against a strong head wind, the machine flew over Hohen Goll, Kallersberg, Hagengebirge, Steinemes Meer, bergossene Alpe and Hochkonig (the latter 9,630 ft. high). Arrived at Zeller See, a landing was made in a meadow at Thumersbach, as it was not known whether or not the ice on the lake was strong enough to carry the machine. Here it may be mentioned that the divided undercarriage of the L.20 proved its worth, as the landing was made in snow a foot deep, and it was considered that a machine with axle running across would have nosed over. Impossible weather compelled a wait of several days at Zeller See. and in the meantime thaw set in, and the ice on the lake became too thin to carry the machine. Ultimately a start was made from a small meadow, across which a strip had been cleared. To get sufficient run it was necessary to take off across wind, but finally this was successfully



**OVER THE ALPS IN A 19 H.P. TWO-SEATER :** Sketch map of the route followed.

# THE VINDICATION OF THE LIGHT PLANE

(Abschrift „Flight“ 13.Mai 1926)



OVER THE ALPS IN A 19 H.P. TWO-SEATER : These photographs give an excellent idea of the difficult country over which the little Daimler L.20 had to fly. In 1, the machine is seen approaching the Zeller See. 2 shows, on the left the Hohe Docke and, in the back-ground, the Glocknerin. The tip of the tail plane may just be seen on the right of the picture. The Hohe Tauern mountain chain is seen in 3, while 4 shows the two aviators, Dr. von Langsdorff (left) and Herr Guritzer the pilot, on their return to Sindelfingen.



ON THE ZELLER SEE : After a successful landing on the ice.

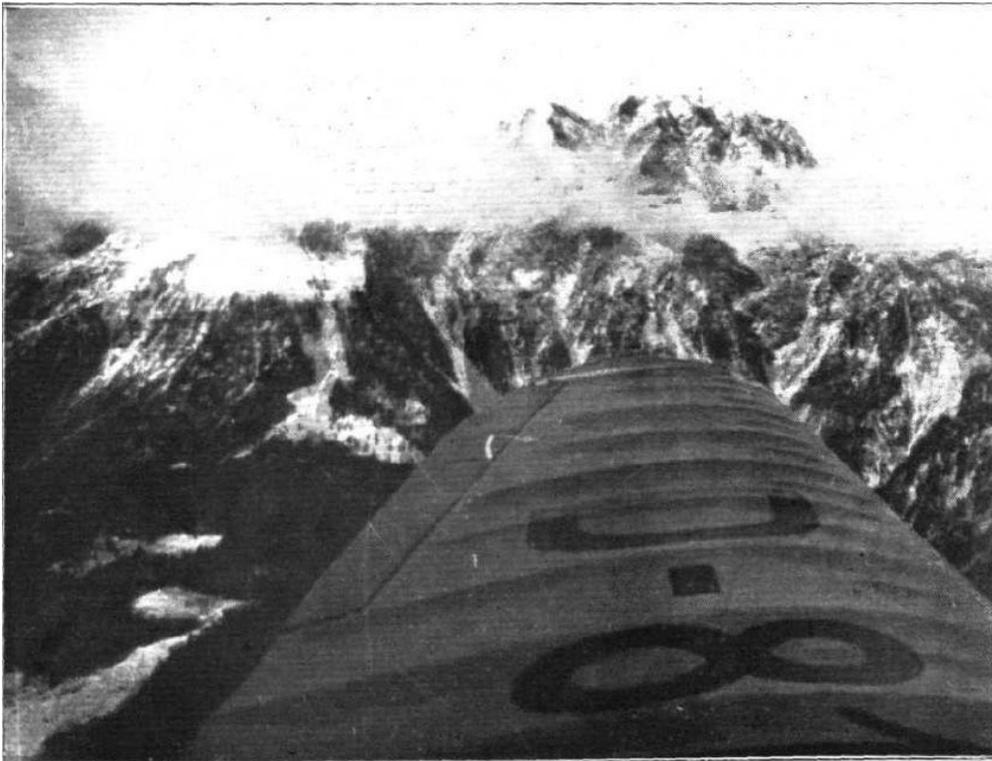
# THE VINDICATION OF THE LIGHT PLANE

(Abschrift „Flight“ 13.Mai 1926)

accomplished. Dr. von Langsdorff is of the opinion that no large aeroplane could have got off, with the possible exception of a high-powered single-seater fighter, and such a machine would never have been able to land in this meadow. Heading for the Hohe Tauern mountain range an altitude of 9,200 ft. was reached, and the Glocknerin (11,250 ft.) and Hohe Docke were flown over. A strong headwind was encountered, and " bumps " were plentiful. However, the Gross-Glockner Massiv (12,450 ft.) was reached and the ridge of the Hohe Tauern crossed safely. Much of the way it was necessary to fly above the fog and cloud layers. Flying along the Hohe Tauern range, a forced landing was effected at Hermagor to repair a high-tension lead to one of the sparking plugs, and the journey was then resumed, Villach being reached at dusk and a landing made in a field. The next " lap " was to Klagenfurt, along the Worther See. At Klagenfurt a proper aerodrome and shed accommodation were available. From Klagenfurt to Gratz was a most unpleasant trip, as the clouds hung low and it was necessary to fly over them and, at times, between cloud layers. Finally the visibility became so bad that it was necessary to descend at Voitsberg (situated in a valley in Styria), flying from there to the Talerhof aerodrome, near Gratz, a few feet above the ground.

The flight from Gratz to Vienna and thence to Budapest and back to Vienna was made in very bad visibility, with occasional rainstorms and, mainly, against strong winds. The return trip from Vienna to Linz, via Melk, was carried out in snowstorms. After leaving Linz the weather gradually got worse, and it became necessary to fly lower and lower in order not to lose sight of the ground altogether. Finally a landing had to be made on a field covered in snow near Frankenmarkt (on the river Traun). Later the weather gradually got better, so that the flight to Munich, via Salzburg, was made under fairly pleasant conditions. At Munich, however, the weather again became bad so that there was considerable delay before the last part of the return journey, to Sindelfingen, could be commenced.

At last it was accomplished in rain and head winds, and Sindelfingen was reached on March 16, 1926, the little machine having by this time covered a distance estimated at approximately 1,500 miles, in the middle of winter.



Not very inviting in case of forced landings. Looking out over the port wing at the Hohe Tauern mountains.