

MICHAEL OLIVER
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When I was ten,
I manned a slender Nieuport
In the dazzling sunlight,
Duelling each day
With German aces in their Fokker triplanes,
Flying high in my imagination.

C. Fred Cawley,
An insurance salesman,
Who had really been there
And had flown with honour,
Both with comrades and with enemies,
Lent me a book about those fighter pilots.

Reading it,
I favoured Albert Ball,
Who did not wear a cap,
Would not stay on the ground,
And, ever reckless, shot down scores of planes
Before he crashed and died when he was twenty.