



## **An Aviator's Wife (1920)**

*Adelaide Alexander Ovington*

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Adelaide Alexander Ovington was the wife of famous aviator Earle Lewis Ovington (1879 – 1936) Her husband was an American aeronautical engineer, aviator and inventor, and served as a lab assistant to Thomas Edison. Her husband piloted the first official airmail flight in the United States in a Blériot XI on September 23, 1911.

Adelaide writes:

"This book may read like fiction, but it is not. The first five months of my married life were spent among the hangars of New York, Chicago, Boston, and Columbus. I recorded events as they happened, before my impressions had time to cool. Then I put the manuscript away and became interested in babies.

"Now that aviation is coming into its own, and the children are big enough to go to school, I have brought the manuscript from its hiding place and put it in shape for publication.

It is true that men are flying higher and farther and faster than when Ovie flew his ticklish monoplane. But this is largely because the engines are more reliable and the airplanes more stable. They are designed with some thought for the safety of the aviator. Nowadays, they duplicate all important control wires so that if one breaks the other may be relied upon. And the wires themselves, instead of being solid, are cables. In the early days of exhibition flying—the period covered by this book—a single wire no larger than the lead in a pencil was used to operate the elevator and rudder. Its breaking meant certain death.

"The modern biplane is so stable that the hands may be removed from the controls for minutes at a time. In fact, with some of the battleplanes used in the Great War, the aviator locked his controlling levers so as to have his hands free to operate the machine gun. With the exhibition monoplanes, such as the Bleriot, a constant and precise movement of the control levers was necessary to keep the horizon where it belonged. And the aviator paid with his life for a single mistake.

"In the old days, the exhibition flyer who went "upstairs" always knew that he would come down again—somehow. His shortest flight was full of thrills. The aviator's wife, even though she stayed on earth, got nearly as many thrills as her husband, and no two of them were quite alike."

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Originally published in 1920; reformatted for the Kindle; may contain an occasional imperfection; original spellings have been kept in place.

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