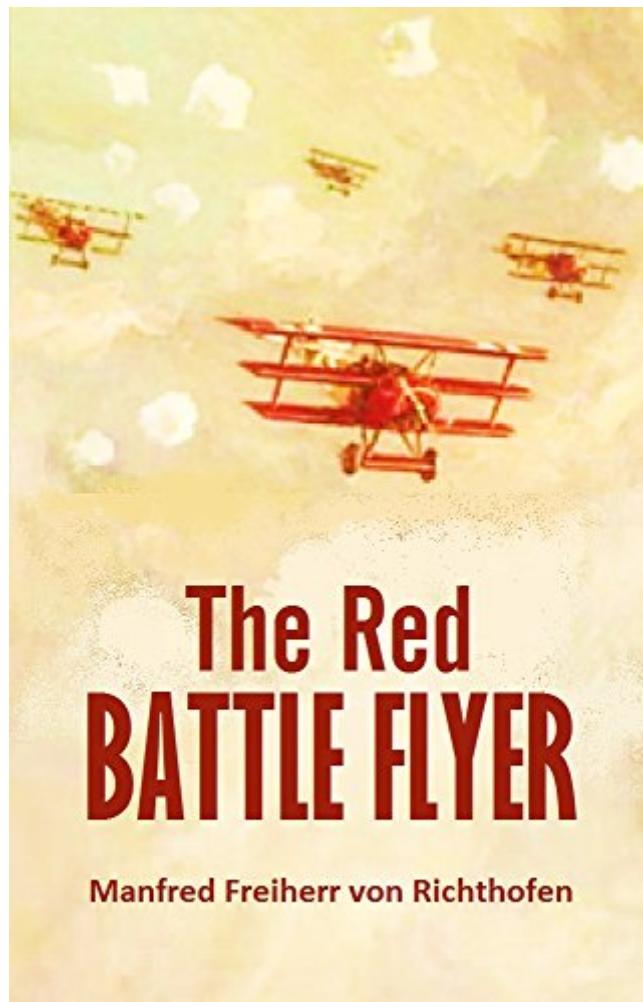


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The Red Battle Flyer (Illustrated)



Synopsis

Manfred Albrecht Freiherr von Richthofen (1892 – 1918), also widely known as the Red Baron, was a German fighter pilot with the Imperial German Army Air Service (Luftstreitkräfte) during the First World War. He is considered the ace-of-aces of the war, being officially credited with 80 air combat victories. At last we have what American airmen have long desired, a story of a German aviator's exploits told in his own words. This is the narrative of Captain Baron von Richthofen, who was killed in action in 1918 after having brought down eighty enemy airplanes. This book tells how Richthofen's "Flying Circus," famous in the history of the war, was formed and something of its adventures. It is believed that "The Red Battle Flyer" has value as well as interest to our own flyers because of the insight that it gives into the enemy airman's psychology. One forms a distinctly favorable mental picture of the young Rittmeister Baron von Richthofen. Our old friend Froissart is credited with the statement that in his age of chivalry it was always impossible to inculcate into the German knights the true spirit of knightliness." Which seems to indicate that the practical German mind of those days could not understand the whimsicalities of the Latin ideas of chivalry, which - for example - bade a knight against whose shield an opponent "brake his spear" haul off out of the fight till the lance-less enemy unsheathed his sword and "dove into the combat" again. Probably the Hun of those days proceeded to stick his opponent in the midriff-wherever it may be-and so finished the fight. In the same true spirit of knightliness an Englishman knocks a man down and then stands back so that he can get up and have another chance, whereas a more practical person would take excellent care that his opponent never got up till he had acknowledged himself beaten. It is all a matter of the point of view, and largely no doubt a matter of education. However, making due allowance for the point of view, one finds surprisingly little Hunnishness in von Richthofen's manners or methods as set forth in print. It is one of the accepted facts of the war that the German aviators have displayed greater chivalry than any other branch of the German services. It was a common occurrence for their pilots to fly over our lines in the course of their business, and, by way of variety from that business, to drop packets containing letters from captured British aviators, or the personal belongings of the dead. One gathers that these acts of courtesy have become less frequent of late, owing to the intensification of aerial warfare, but it seems that captured and killed aviators still receive the full courtesies of war from the German aviators, whatever may be the fate of prisoners in other hands afterwards. It is not surprising therefore to find that, taking him all round, Rittmeister von Richthofen conveys to one the general impression that, mutatis mutandis, he is very like an English public school boy of good family. His egotism, as one finds it in the book, is the egotism of a young man who is frankly pleased with himself, but is more elated by his good luck

than by his cleverness. Taking him by and large, one rather likes von Richthofen and one fancies that most of the R.F.C. people who have fought him would be quite pleased after the war to sit at table with him and compare notes over the cigarettes and liquors. And there are unhappily not too many of our present enemies of whom one would like to express such an opinion.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a fascinating look into the mind of a combat warrior 100 years ago. I believe his thinking, at least at the beginning, is more representative of military thought in the 19th century than as it developed in the 20th century. After being exposed to modern military concepts and weapons, I was quite surprised at what I found in this book. This is a must read for anyone who has any interest in military history or military psychology.

I liked the feel of being in his moment, a glimpse of his character. I wonder if he would have survived what would have become of his life after the war.

This is the best edition of this book that I have found. It has a lot of nice photos. Its written by the Red Baron, honestly; how bad can it be? It's a great read.

A very interesting read. Personally I should have gone one of the cheaper versions of this book - it is a very basic scan and print job and is missing a few minute sections (a word here or there, somehow?) Recommended reading but get one of the cheaper copies.

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