Charles Renard Biography

Charles Renard

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Biography

Charles Renard was one of the pioneers of air travel, using his mathematical and engineering expertise to create functional designs for a glider and a dirigible.

Very little is known about Renard's personal life. He was born in France in 1847 and studied mathematics and engineering at a French university. His interest and talent in the field of aerodynamics were widely known, as he succeeded in designing and flying a pilotless, 10-winged, heavier-than-air machine in 1871.

In 1884, Renard was a captain in the French Army stationed at the Aerostation Militaire in Chalais-Meudon. He and another captain, Arthur Krebs, came up with engineering plans for a dirigible they dubbed *La France.* By definition, a dirigible is an aircraft that can be steered in any direction regardless of wind and can return to its point of departure under its own power. Working with this definition, Renard and Krebs prepared to see if they had created the first true dirigible.

On August 9, 1884, *La France* took its first successful flight. With Renard aboard, the dirigible flew in a circle of about four or five miles, returning to its launch area with no mishaps. Although other people had designed dirigibles, Renard's was the first to meet this prime requirement.

The engineer died in 1905 in France at age 58.