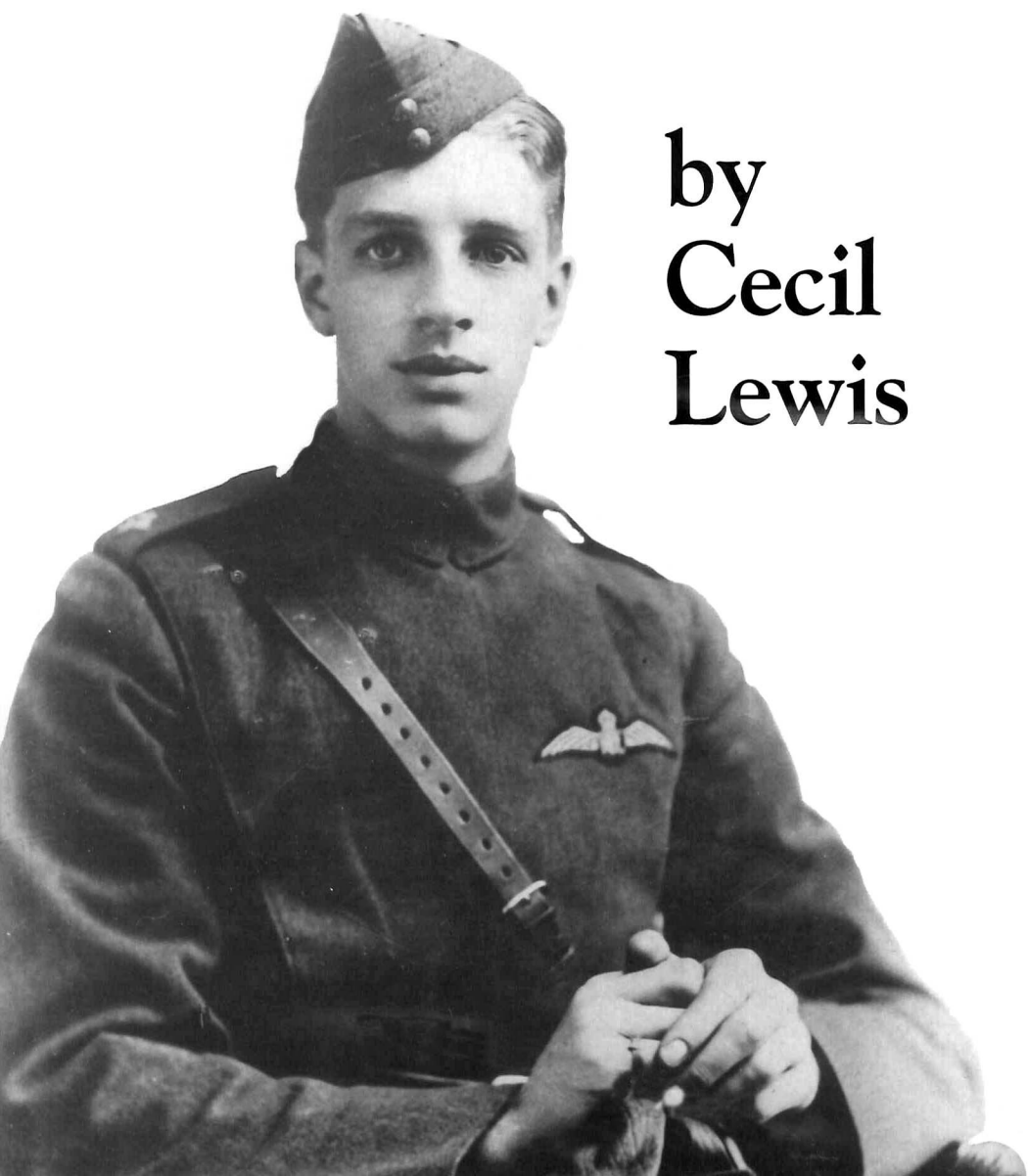


# SAGITTARIUS RISING

---

by  
Cecil  
Lewis





This edition of *Sagittarius Rising* first published 1993  
by Greenhill Books, Lionel Leventhal Limited  
Park House, 1 Russell Gardens, London NW11 9NN

First published 1936  
Second Edition 1966  
Third Edition 1993

Copyright © Cecil Lewis, 1936  
New Foreword © Cecil Lewis, 1993

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may  
be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or  
transmitted in any form or by any means,  
electrical, mechanical or otherwise without first seeking  
the written permission of the Publisher

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*  
Lewis, Cecil  
*Sagittarius Rising*. New ed  
I. Title  
940.44941092

ISBN 1-85367-143-6

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data available*

Publishing History  
*Sagittarius Rising* was first published in 1936  
(Peter Davies) and is reproduced now exactly  
as the original edition, complete and unabridged,  
with a new Foreword by the author.

Printed and bound in Great Britain by  
Bookcraft (Bath) Limited, Midsomer Norton

## FOREWORD

It is more than fifty years since this book first appeared and over seventy since the days it describes lay in the present tense. The young swanker who wrote it all in the exuberance of youth has now dwindled to an old gaffer with white hair. They say that men grow wiser as they grow older, but I think they only get more gaga. However I am not so far gone as to tinker with what I wrote in those glorious years when life stretched before me like a landscape from ten thousand feet and there were no shadows in the day. Certainly I can add nothing to what I said then. A few passages, somewhat naive or foolish, I might have suppressed; but since they are all part of the picture of extreme youth in action, let them stay.

The changes men have seen in this last century are hardly to be believed. It seems we exult in handing over every aspect of our lives to the idols we have created. Computers book in our arrival and programme our departure, pass our news, govern our business and titillate our leisure. Loudspeakers shout a sermon from our pulpits: 'I believe in atomic fission, breaker of heaven and earth'! And as for aircraft, which in my youth trembled like living things, if they trembled today, would be sent back to servicing for overhaul.

We shrug and say: It can't be helped; but what captain of a transport aircraft, hedged in with courses, corridors, controls, does not long to send them all to the devil, vault into the cockpit, flip a switch and take off,

## *Foreword*

bareheaded, into the wind? Perhaps not, perhaps the breed has changed – but I know which I would choose!

When I wrote the last words of this book, the best indeed was over, but there were challenging years ahead. I did not imagine there would be another war for me to fight through or that twenty years later I would rejoin the RAF, become an instructor and teach the next generation the skills that I myself had learned when I was young. I did not think I should fly more accurately and command a skill in aerobatics far exceeding anything I had achieved in youth, or that I should be quite at home in single seater fighters manoeuvring at four times the speed of the Scouts I had flown in 1918 – nor did I dream I should have a son, teach him to fly myself and when all that time was over, as a last flourish, buy my own aeroplane and fly it, not on beams and beacons, but by the seat of my pants, all the way from England to Johannesburg, map reading the six thousand miles of earth beneath me with my own eyes – as I had always done.

It is bound to be a matter of some pride to a man to see his own work, long since completed, still finding a place in a world unborn when it was written and it is an added pleasure if, albeit somewhat fossilized, he is still around to witness the event.

So, let us raise a cheer, not for me, the mere mouthpiece, but for the indomitable Spirit of Man, herald of things to come! What a tale could have been written by that far off pioneer who first saw a tree trunk roll and dreamed a wheel and got some boards and made a cart and harnessed up his mare and cracked his whip and disappeared beyond the hill! Or the first man who hollowed out a boat and raised a sail and saw the blue sea creaming at the bows calling him to distant

## *Foreword*

shores beyond the sky! All that is misty in the distant past. The land and sea are long since mapped and parcelled out. Only the air and all beyond, the greatest mystery of all, was still unmastered and unsung when I was young. Now we have learned to shuffle round about the house and even plan to stay with neighbours in our own backyard. A million starry mansions wink at us as if they knew our hopes and beckon us abroad.

All that I shall not see. But at the start, the little lost beginning, I can say of one small part of it: Here is the witness of my heart and hand and eye of how it was!

CECIL LEWIS

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. TRAINING . . . . .	5
II. THE SOMME . . . . .	34
III. TESTING . . . . .	155
IV. AERIAL FIGHTING . . . . .	163
V. HOME DEFENCE . . . . .	200
VI. OVERSEAS AGAIN . . . . .	243
VII. CIVIL FLYING . . . . .	257
VIII. THE VOYAGE EAST . . . . .	267
IX. TEACHING THE CHINESE TO FLY . . . . .	277



ISBN 1-85367-143-6



9 781853 671432