

Flight

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THE AERO EXHIBITION AT OLYMPIA.

It would not be easy to hit upon a more significant sign of the times than is provided by the arrangements that have been concluded between the Aero Club of the United Kingdom and the Society of Motor Manufacturers in connection with the Exhibition which is to be held at Olympia in the latter part of the month of March. For one thing, the very fact that it is to be known as the Aero Exhibition, instead of the Commercial Vehicle Show, is full of meaning; and, for another thing, the co-operation of the Society with the Aero Club, thus early in the day, is full of happy augury. Briefly stated, commercial vehicles have ceased to be a novelty needing an Exhibition to bring them before the notice of the business men of the country, while *per contra*, the aeroplane and the dirigible have reached the stage at which exhibitions are virtually essential to the hastening forward of the new era which they represent so fully. It does not, of course, necessarily follow, that because the S.M.M.T. are organising this Exhibition under the auspices of the Ae.C.U.K., those two bodies will continue to work hand in glove in self-defence of one another as the sole representatives, respectively, of the aeronautic owners and aeronautic manufacturers throughout the Kingdom. But it is nevertheless highly desirable that the fully accredited institutions which are to assume supreme sway over the aeronautic destinies of the country should be installed on an impregnable foundation as soon as possible; and that the relationships between the national Club, the national trade society, and, for that matter, the national scientific institution also, should be established on well-defined and lasting lines with as little delay as may be. From many points of view, there is nothing more natural than that the S.M.M.T. should assume the same position towards the aeronautic world that it already holds in relationship to the automobile industry. The two spheres of mechanical industry would be closely akin even if they did not happen to overlap anything like as much as seems inevitable; while as regards the benefits that accrue to any new industrial art by having an already-formed and wealthy society behind it, these are sufficiently obvious. Hence, it is good news for both industries that the first really big event connected with the era of practical flight in Great Britain is under the combined ægis of the Aero Club and the Society. That the exhibition itself is to be organised upon an adequate and impressive scale is assured from the fact that the big hall is to be devoted to the purpose. To encourage all who have anything to show of a strictly

aeronautic kind (dirigibles, complete aeroplanes, aero engines, &c.), space is, moreover, offered free of charge on this early occasion, all obstacles on the score of expense being thus removed for those whose resources may need to be nursed in view of the heavy drain that is inseparable from pioneer work of any description. Owing to the large amount of room which aeroplanes or airships require inside a building, the number of stands which can be found, even in such a large hall as that at Olympia, is limited; and consequently, although there are not as yet any very great number of such machines in the world, when all told, the management urge the need for early applications from those who are able to bring themselves into prominence by exhibiting their productions. It is to be hoped that no inventor will hold back in the belief that he possesses anything in the nature of a master-patent, which may be jeopardised, either as regards home rights or future foreign rights, by showing his machines in public. Already it has been proved that there is more than one way in which to achieve mechanical flight; and the past history of the motor car has demonstrated *ad infinitum* that, in huge mechanical developments of this character, monopoly, in any shape or form, is positively detrimental to anyone who wishes to convert into money his abilities as an originator or as a designer. No single individual or firm can hope to perfect an aeroplane off his or its own bat, within the time that is rendered available by the contemporaneous progress of a whole army of competitors; and wise is the aeronautic inventor of to-day who takes heed of the lessons that are to be learnt from the past decade of automobilism. Except in minor details, the possession of patents of a basic kind are apt to be a hindrance to commercial success, rather than an assistance, because even an inferior system, developed simultaneously, and free from all restraint, in hundreds of factories throughout the civilised world, actually stands a far better chance of meeting the public demand than does a more theoretically perfect system which may be cooped up for years in the workshops of the monopoly-holder. This fact has stood out with unmistakable clearness during the whole period of development of the automobile; and there is every reason to suppose that history will repeat itself, in an even emphasised form, during the childhood of the aeronautic industry. Apart from the display of complete machines at the forthcoming Show, it is safe to anticipate a fine array of accessories. In this respect, the field is already much wider than most people imagine; and incidentally it may be remarked that therein lies the nucleus for the British aeronautic industry. At Olympia, that *industry* will become a reality—flight will be more than a fascinating *subject*—to the British people.