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The Old and the New

JANUS, as our readers may remember, was the Roman god from whom the month of January takes its name. He was a god with two faces, an old one looking back on the year that was past and a young one looking forward to the year just begun. Inevitably thoughts of past and future throng to the mind at the beginning of a New Year. "The year is dying in the night; ring out, wild bells, and let it die," wrote Tennyson. *Flight* is by no means inclined to bid such a careless farewell to *Annus Domini* 1934, for, on the whole, it has been a good year for the world of aeronautics. Our readers will forgive us if we retrospect a little.

Both in the sphere of civil flying and in that of the Royal Air Force the past year has seen corners turned. To take the civil side first, the outstanding event was the MacRobertson Race from Mildenhall to Melbourne, and the triumph of the "Comet." We need not recount the facts, for they are fresh in the memory of all our readers, but once again we must pay tribute to the designers of the "Comet," probably the most efficient civil aeroplane ever produced. It was no light task to fulfil the conditions set by the race—a range of 3,000 miles, a cruising speed of over 200 miles an hour, and ability to lift the weight "over the screen" in accordance with I.C.A.N. regulations.

We cannot forget the depression felt in British flying circles when the race conditions were first published, for then we possessed no aeroplane which had a chance of winning. The event seemed a gift for some foreign machine, and a foreign victory would have been a poor celebration of the centenary of Victoria State. Yet we must feel very thankful to Sir Macpherson Robertson, K.B.E., for having made the race an international affair, for by so doing he stimulated our British designers to give of their best. The De Havilland firm took up the challenge, and produced the only machine in the world which could fly non-stop to Baghdad at the requisite speed.

There has followed the decision of the Government to increase the speed and frequency of Imperial Airways' services to India, Australia, and South Africa. The programme has been published only recently, and we need not repeat the details. The greatest novelty in that programme is the intention to send by air all first-class mail matter to the Empire countries on the route, without leaving the onus of choosing the means of conveyance to the writer of the letter. It is hoped, too, that the initial postage shall be the same for all parts of the Empire—a very wise and far-sighted policy. In our delight at this great Empire programme we are inclined to forget that inland air mails are now to be sent by air at the discretion of the Post Office without extra charge. Yet this, too, was a boon for which many have hoped but which few have expected.

Confidence

In the all-important matter of defence, the year has seen the Government decide to increase the Air Force considerably and fairly rapidly. Again, we need not repeat facts which have recently been published, but we must once more register our thankfulness at the decision. Our Air Force, as the Prince of Wales said, makes for confidence, not only in the Empire but in the world. Not least, it makes for confidence in the United Kingdom. There can be no confidence unless our country is as a strong man armed, keeping his house.

Side by side with our satisfaction at the decision to be prepared, we rejoice to think of all the encouragement which both the civil and Air Force programmes will give to our much-enduring aircraft firms. In the recent years of depression it has been melancholy to hear of staffs of skilled draughtsmen and skilled engineers being reduced, possibly some of the men thrown on the dole. There will be much employment in the aircraft and engine factories in 1935 and the following years. At that we may all rejoice.

The designers will have a particularly busy time, for performance of both civil and military aeroplanes must be improved, and ever improved. The machines which