

the personnel of the three Services. A land soldier can be trained to efficiency in days, a seaman in weeks, but an airman in a year. It is very bad economy to entrust machines costing thousands of pounds to inefficient hands. Not only must we, on the outbreak of war, have sufficient pilots to take charge of the enormous number of aircraft that our insular position and our imperial commitments require, but, also, we must have a huge reserve in training. Industry could provide aircraft, as it does motor cars, at thousands a week. The R.A.F. can't turn out efficient pilots at that rate. Casualties will, at the beginning, be very heavy, and nerves will "crack." In connection with a reserve of pilots it seems injudicious to discourage flying by youths. Every child whose parents keep a car and whose legs are long enough to reach the pedals learns to drive, even if it is only out of the garage. Every child whose parents have an airplane and whose legs are long enough to reach the rudder bar learns to fly. Youth learns easily such things as riding, cycling, flying. Facilities at public and

secondary schools are needed, and if competent instructors think a boy, regardless of his age, capable of handling a machine alone, he should be allowed to. Without the Navy our Army is useless, without the airplane our Navy is useless. Without the pilots our airplanes are useless. In war, if it comes, we'll need 100,000 pilots, and Air Force pilots are not made in a week.

A. J. RICHARDSON.

Uttoxeter.

IN BRIEF

Among old-timers in aviation there must be more than one who, in pre-war days, indulged in adventure in another sphere—that of competing in the T.T. motor cycle races in the Isle of Man. A reunion dinner for such competitors, entrants and others who had a close connection with the races is being held in London early next month, and Mr. H. L. Buckley, 87, Victoria Street, London, S.W.1, asks those interested to communicate with him.

AMELIA EARHART'S STORY

"Last Flight," by Amelia Earhart; 9s., George G. Harrap and Co., Ltd., 182, High Holborn, London, W.C.1.

IN this book the late Mrs. Putnam—or, as she preferred to be known, Miss Amelia Earhart—tells the story of the round-the-world flight which ended in tragedy for herself and her navigator, Frank Noonan.

Thus the book almost achieves the impossible state of being a posthumous autobiography. The explanation is that Miss Earhart was under pledge to send home despatches promptly by cable, telephone, or letter from each stopping-place. This she did with typical conscientiousness, with the result that her husband, George Palmer Putnam, was able to weave them into this very readable account, which follows the adventure up to the moment when, on July 2, 1937, she was about to take her Lockheed Electra off from New Guinea to forge the last link in the girdle by returning from the west to Oakland, California, which she had left, flying east, little more than a month before.

With sinister suddenness the account terminates. The Electra, it will be remembered, was headed out over the Pacific for the tiny spot that is Howland Island. It was never sighted or heard again, and the vast search that was subsequently organised, in which the aircraft carrier *Lexington* scoured 100,000 square miles of sea, revived afresh the question: "Is it fair that ocean fliers should put would-be rescuers under a moral obligation to spend time and money and even to endanger their own lives?"

In the first chapters of the book Miss Earhart describes her earliest flying experience, and then the realisation of an ambition when, in 1928, she accompanied Stultz and Gordon on a west to east crossing of the North Atlantic in the Fokker seaplane, *Friendship*. In 1932 she flew the Atlantic solo in her Lockheed Vega.

These and other ocean crossings are described. She was a graphic writer and, though the initiated may notice a certain lack of technical detail, she had a pleasing way of jotting down trifling things which help the reader into the spirit of the time

and place. One of the most telling passages of all is the unadorned transcription from her log of the California-Honolulu flight (this was to have been the first hop in a westerly globe-circling flight, but it ended in a take-off crash in Honolulu; her subsequent and fatal world flight was made in an easterly direction):—

"The ship now flies like an aeroplane with almost 2000 lbs. rt. up.

180 m.p.h. Boy, oh, Boy, I hope the navigators know what they're talking about.

KFI just reported at 12.15 PST weather report from steamer *Monterey*. Also W. T. Miller. Paul called Burbank on 3105.

Noonan asks to hold her steady while he takes string of sights. Pan-Am. in Oa Pan-Am. says to contact Honolulu now 1 a.m.

Harry has just talked with Hon. The moon has sunk into a bed of clouds. We are now using the Sperry to save our eyes, as there is practically no horizon. Just the type of cloud formation and lack of vis. I had last time; only then I had no Sperry little helper.

Clouds are getting fuzzy I think. For a while they were like mere firm white dumplings just under our wings. Then they ran downhill and lay swallowed in the moonlight several thousand feet below. Now they are more formless. However, stars still above.

The navigators are having coffee. I smell it.

The night is clearer now. The clouds are white with dark islands—where the sea shows through.

It is now 4.10 PST. We have been flying over a stretch of open sea, so the sky looks light. Now we reach some clouds with holes in them. Now and then a star seems to rise from one of these holes. Curious illusion."

The major portion of the book—the account of the world flight—lacks such intimate touches as this, but, nevertheless, it does convey vividly the idea of a procession of countries—South America, Africa, India, Java, Australia—expected, sighted, paused in, passed, just as we less adventurous mortals might thread the counties between London and Edinburgh in a Moth on a fine summer's day.

New Zealand Bid Fails

ON Sunday, February 6, at 4.02 a.m., F/O. A. E. Clouston and Mr. Victor Ricketts took-off from Gravesend, bound for New Zealand, in the now famous De Havilland Comet which already has many successes to its several names.

Clouston and Ricketts were hoping to make the round trip of 25,000 miles journey to New Zealand within twelve days.

Late on Sunday night, after a rather puzzling silence, news was received of a first landing at 3 p.m., G.M.T., at Adana, Syria, 120 miles short of Aleppo, the intended first stop. Petrol had run short due to strong head winds, and 2,000 miles had been covered in 11 hours, an average of 182 m.p.h.

Later came news that Adana aerodrome was flooded, and that a take-off was impossible. Some hours afterwards it was announced that the attempt had been abandoned. Further bad luck was experienced on Tuesday, when the Comet, returning, was damaged during a landing in Cyprus with a flat tyre. Clouston and Ricketts are returning by steamer.

Under the name of *Grosvenor House*, the Comet set up the still current England to Australia record of 2 days 23 hours in the hands of Mr. C. W. A. Scott and the late T. Campbell Black. It was then powered by Gipsy Six R engines. Recently rebuilt by Essex Aero, Ltd., for the Damascus Race (for which it was named *The Orphan*) and F/O. Clouston's recent Cape record (*Burberry*), it now has two 205 h.p. Series II Gipsy Sixes and, of course, v.p. airscrews.



Ricketts and Clouston at the start of their ambitious record attempt, doomed to failure by that most aggravating of all obstacles—a flooded aerodrome.