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THE JUBILEE DINNER
R.Ae.S. and R.Ae.C. Celebrate the Wright Anniversary

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EFOR E proposing his toast—"The memory of the
Wright brothers"—at the dinner in celebration of the
50th anniversary of powered, controlled flight, at the Dorchester Hotel, London, on December 17th, Sir William Farren, President of the Royal Aeronautical Society, read this message from Her Majesty the Queen: "I send my sincere thanks to the members and guests of the Royal Aeronautical Society and the Royal Aero Club dining together to celebrate the 50th anniversary of powered, controlled flight this evening for their message of greetings and for their good wishes to me and my husband, which we much appreciate." Fro m Mr. C. J. McCarthy, President of America's Institute of the Aeronautical Sciences, and from the Australian and New Zealand Divisions and the Singapore Branch of the R.Ae.S. came other messages of greeting and good wishes.

Welcoming the guests (who represented a fair proportion of the 890 diners) Sir William asked to be forgiven if he did not mention them by name. There was, however, one exception—"one name above all"—which symbolized what this half-century had been, and it was that of Lord Trenchard. Sir William regretted that the American Ambassador was unable to be present, and took the opoortunity to pay tribute to the achievements of the Americans. "They have been generous in their tributes to our work," he said — adding that what a craftsman valued most was the good opinion of a fellow craftsman.

Of the Wright brothers he remarked that we did not really know what aroused their interest in flying. Most of us, he said, had known a queer feeling which drove us to do something which we had no idea that we should ever do—or even that it would be good for us to try—and he thought that this was what happened to the Wrights. They were certainly not trying to make a fortune quickly; indeed, they were obviously aware that they might lose more than they cou'd afford.
The history of what the Wrights did, Sir William said, was not always easy to follow, because they were men of few words and preferred to walk by themselves: they were like the Cat in Rudyard Kipling's Just-So Stories—but, to borrow a few words from that story, "they made the first flying magic in the world." He concluded: "My own belief is that there was concealed within them the fire that burns in the breasts of all who fly for the love of it, and find in flying something for which there is no para'lel in human experience. They were the first true airmen. Unless they had become airmen, they could not have completed their task, because a great part of their experimental work was done in flight. They were, for many purposes, their own measuring instruments. In the end they became masters of their craft—each a scientist, engineer, airman and artist combined. If my conception of what Orville and Wilbur Wright were is true — and I have little doubt that it is—we should not be surprised that they succeeded. It may be said that they had or needed luck. But what we call 'luck' in such adventures as theirs is the cower to recognize the jade Opportunity as she flits by, to seize her before she vanishes or falls into the arms of others. Vision, insight, patience, judgment, courage—they had them all."

Proposing the toast of "The first generation," The Rt. Hon.
A. T. Lennox-Boyd, Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation,

'"THE opening days of this New Year will see the beginning of
* trials with the first British jet aircraft to be equipped as a tanker for refuelling in flight. A converted English Electric Canberra B.2 (Rolls-Royce Avons), it has been loaned to Flight Refuelling, Ltd., by the Ministry of Supply to enable flight trials to be made with the latest developments in the probe-and-drogue system at high altitudes and high speeds. A Gloster Meteor 8 will initially act as the receiver and the experiments will be the first all-jet operations of their kind in Britain. In America (where the probe-and-drogue system had been tested by the U.S.A.F. and adopted by the U.S. Navy) a Boeing B-47B six-jet bomber has already been tested as a tanker.
The pilot of the Canberra will be Mr. T. C. Marks, D.F.C., chief test pilot of Flight Refuelling, Ltd., who has probably more experience in air refuelling operations than any other pi'ot in the world. The Meteor will be flown by Mr. P. R. Hornidge—the first pilot in the world to fly a receiver aircraft employing the probe-and-drogue technique. In 1948 he remained airborne in a Meteor for 12 hr 3 min with the aid of flight refuelling.

recalled the message from Wilbur Wright reproduced in the December issue of the Journal of the Royal Aeronautical Society (wherein is contained a masterly monograph on The Wright Brothers and the Royal Aeronautical Society, by Capt. Laurence Pritchard, C.B.E., Hon.F.R.Ae.S., Hon.F.I.AS., former Secre-tary of the Society). The message was dated May, 1909, and ran: "More than forty years ago, at a time when flying was litde thought of in the world, some of the citizens of England banded themselves together to form this Society, and through all the years which have followed, during times when any talk about flying was considered ridiculous, and all the people who thought about it were laughed at, this Society met every season to consider the subject of flying, to report the work which its individual members had been doing, to publish these papers which we read, and to spread them throughout the world for the benefit of others."

Individual names mentioned by the Minister during the course
of his speech were those of Sir Alliott Verdon Roe, Claude Grahame-White, Sir Geoffrey de Havilland. Sir Frederick Handley Page, Harold Perrin, Mrs. Hewlett, Sir Thomas Sopwith, Fred Sigrist, the Short brothers, G. Holt Thomas, Lord Trenchard and Sir Sefton Brandcner. Of the Americans he particularly named Cody and Curtiss.
Lord Brabazon of Tara (described by the Minister as "head of all aeronautics in Britain," being President of the Royal Aero Club) then replied. The Club, he said, stood for the human side of flying. Through its portals all the great ones had passed, including the Wrights. He recalled that he knew Wilbur better than Orville, for it was Wilbur who came to Europe in 1908 and Orville who stayed in America. Wilbur he descrlbsd as "curious, gaunt, polite, aloof," ready to talk to genuinely interested people but chilly and off-hand with those who viewed him as a curiosity. Wilbur and his great friend Griffiui Brewer (described by Lord Brabazon as the Wright brothers' Boswell) gready enjoyed each other's company. Their idea of happiness was to be in each other's presence—with neimer speaking a word. Lord Brabazon went on to remark that one could find the equivalent of the Wright brothers in any provincial town.
In the course of his brilliant speech Lord Brabazon recalled how he introduced Wilbur to the great French constructor Voisin. Neither knew the other's language and throughout lunch they just sat and grinned at each other. Suddenly it was learned that the great Lebaudy airship was coming over, and the three ascended to the roof. Lord Brabazon was agog to hear le mot juste from Wilbur, and it came—"How very lucky to have seen that!" He once asked Wilbur if he would design him a machine to do 100 m.p.h. and was to'd that it was quite possible if he would provide the engine. The Wrights had a corner in their hearts for England, where they were treated well over their patents and were regarded as friends and not exhibits.

Lord Brabazon spoke very movingly about the pioneers. The runway of aviation, he said, was paved with the tombstones of those who had fallen by the wayside. Although there had been times when the word "aeroplane" stank in the nostrils of all decent men, the hope of the pioneers that air services would act as a shutde to weave the fabric of better understanding was beginning tc be fulfilled.

The occasion concluded widi the showing of the film The Story
of the Century, reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

Conversion of the Canberra has been carried out at Tarrant Rushton and has merely involved the installation in the bomb bay of the ho~e-drum unit, which controls the flow of fuel and the "spring-blind" action of the hose. Sir Alan Cobham, chairman and managing director of Flight Refuelling, Ltd., states that the work has proved beyond doubt how simply a bomber can be turned into a tanker "widiout fuss or bother." Also, he says, it has disposed of the lingering idea that special aircraft must be built to act as tankers. He adds: "With this new equipment a bomber or transport aircraft, if equipped with the necessary fixed fittings, can be converted into a refuelling tanker in the minimum of time, as 70 per cent of the equipment required is already installed for the purpose of ground refuelling. The remaining 30 per cent can be added simply and quickly as a package unit." Apart from the hose-drum unit, which is connected up to the Canberra's normal existing fuel, hydraulic and electrical system, the only other equipment which it has. been necessary to instal is an operator's panel from which the operation is controlled. Measuring only 7in x 8Jin, this is positioned in the cockpit.

CANBERRA TANKER