

FLIGHT.

44, ST. MARTIN'S LANE, LONDON, W.C.

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NOTICE.—Complaints continue to reach us of the difficulty experienced in obtaining copies of FLIGHT regularly in certain districts. We would therefore point out the desirability of placing a definite order with the local agent to supply a copy EVERY Saturday.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SHOW.

THE exhibition of flying machines that will close at Olympia, Kensington, to-night, has proved a success on more counts than one. Firstly, it has drawn the attention of the public to the subject of flight in a very practical and attractive fashion. The visit of the Prince of Wales during the week was of material aid to the patriotic aim of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders and the Aero Club. Colonel Capper also did all that was in his power to ensure the display being taken notice of by the military authorities, and, by the sending down of a detachment of members of the Balloon Section, the public was given a hint of the fact that at least there are sections of our military organisation that do take a ply in this matter. It was likewise helpful to find Mr. Cody's military kites included in the display, for his severest critics cannot gainsay that in this department of investigation he has arrived at a highly gratifying degree of practical success. In regard to the nature of the exhibits—to which we refer in full elsewhere—it is pleasing to note that both directions of development were represented; while not the least surprising feature of the Show was the keen and intelligent interest displayed in it by many ladies who put the most pertinent questions concerning features of mechanical construction.

The Exhibition is bound to mark a turning point in the history of flight in Britain. For it is without precedent, and it has been possible only through the combined enterprise, patriotism and far-sightedness of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders. If we are to realise precisely what is the value of the service rendered by that body we must turn back the pages of history to over a decade ago and recall the circumstances under which the motoring movement was officially introduced to this country. The result of any such comparison leads directly to one conclusion only, namely, that the flying movement has been launched under vastly more favourable auspices than attended the heralding of the horseless vehicle, which was introduced in the guise of a side show, whereas the most suitable exhibition-building within easy reach

of London was taken for the purpose of the Show now closing, and no pains and expense were spared in drawing the attention of the public to the fact that such a display was open for their inspection. Thus, even as the petrol engine has brought practical power-flight quite quickly within the sphere of modern engineering achievements, so the representative trade body of the motor industry in these islands has introduced designers and builders of flying machines to the notice of the public and the official world, for it must not be overlooked that some of the most representative and influential men of our times have availed themselves of the opportunity for making acquaintance with what manner of contrivances it is possible for men to fly withal. In this connection, perhaps the chief lesson of the Show has been the illustrating of the fact that practical flight can never be confined to any particular system or design exclusively; but that as we progress it will be possible to journey in mid-air by as many varieties of machines as there are vehicles in use for land travel. Therein lies great promise for the healthy future of an incipient industry.

Happily the inaugural luncheon proved to be no merely formal function, for many of the speakers let fall words worthy to be pondered. Thus, Mr. Roger Wallace, speaking as chairman of the Aero Club of the United Kingdom, did well to utter a public warning concerning the undesirability of hampering the new industry by asking the public to subscribe to companies or syndicates promoted with large capitals. The time is not ripe for going to the public on any proposition in regard to flying machines. The proper way to set to work is to organise private syndicates with just sufficient money for the purpose of carrying the essential investigations preliminary to establishing any given system on an indisputably practical basis. When any really successful type of flyer shall have been evolved as the result either of such a procedure or of individual investigation and finance, there will not be wanting those individuals whose co-operation and capital will establish the developed machine on the basis of a manufacturing and commercial enterprise. Past experience of various branches of engineering and scientific industry during the last half century is such as to leave it beyond a matter of doubt that the professional company promoter will not fail to seize on human flight, and to bait the public imagination with his wares. But those who have the true welfare of the movement at heart will do well to be ever on the alert against his machinations, and to spare no pains to defeat the purposes of a class of parasite that may very easily succeed in retarding the normal growth of the movement for very many years, if he is allowed to play anything of a prominent part in it during what may be termed its probationary period.

We must look to the educating of the great British public, however, for the most practical assistance of all; for until it is brought to such a pitch that it begins to make its opinions felt, we can scarcely hope to see the more or less spasmodic efforts of poorly equipped and untrained inventors and investigators superseded by good scientifically directed work such as alone can place flight among the recognised branches of latter-day engineering. That is necessary if Britain is to take the same rank in airmanship as she did in seamanship. And these facts remind us that, in respect of these developments of modern life and activity with which we are alone concerned in these columns, all who have the interests of flight at heart must relax no effort to keep the actuality of it, and the possibility of it, before the notice as well of the Government as of the people.