

MEN AND METHODS AT OLYMPIA.

CONCERNING IMPRESSIONS RECEIVED, CHIEFLY OF A SORT THAT IT WAS NOT INTENDED TO HAVE CONVEYED.

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A WEEK'S study of the first flying machine Show at Olympia has furnished me with some thoughts that call for utterance in the interests of a new science, a budding industry and a movement fraught with mighty possibilities in regard to the future of International armament. As the purpose will be best served by expressing my meaning in the plainest terms, I wish it to be clearly understood that I do not want FLIGHT to be held responsible in any way for the observations I am about to make. Furthermore, as my objective is to criticise systems, not individuals, there is no need for me to mention names or to indicate particular persons; while as a guarantee of my sincerity I put my name to these remarks, that none may say I am ashamed to own to them.

In the first place, taking the Show as a whole, I perceive that young Mr. Mannerless was proportionately more in evidence than he is at motor shows. This class of gentleman receives wages on the understanding that he does his best first to interest the visitors in whatever exhibit he may be connected with, and secondly, to secure orders when possible. He is a curious creature who sets to work to achieve this aim by lolling about in a chair with a cigarette in his mouth and a newspaper in his hands. "Sir" is a word not to be found in his vocabulary. He could not pull his hands out of his pockets, far less stand up when spoken to. He thinks any display of manners is something to be heartily ashamed of, and smokes continually because his ideal of a gentleman is a human stove-pipe. When he wants to be thoroughly obliging in answer to any request to explain the features of his exhibit he does not say, "With pleasure," but "Right you are."

My advice to employers is, that as you have no right to be at an Exhibition if you are not there on business bent, so you should never leave your stand for five minutes together in charge of an unlicked cub of this type. If the noodles lack energy, at least follow the practice that is found to answer so well in the Army, "Be lazy and civil."

My second impression is associated with the fault of even a graver character. "I believe there are far more liars than flyers in this building," said a visitor to me on the second day. And when I recalled the preposterously irresponsible claims that I had heard made on behalf of sundry exhibits, I could not but admit that there was something in the impression; also it seems necessary to some minds to throw mud at somebody in order to make any value attach to the article in which you may be personally interested. Of course, I heard not once but many times that the Wright machine was really no good, but that everything that had been done with it was due to the extraordinary acrobatic talents of the American brothers. The fact that telegrams from abroad on the very day the Show had opened proved that of the first two pupils taken in hand by Wilbur Wright one had become proficient to make a solo trip after 5 hours and 10 minutes' tuition, and the other after $6\frac{1}{2}$ hours' teaching, did not seem to embarrass such critics in the least. Other boldly uttered criticisms are to the effect that whenever there is any wind Mr. Wright cannot fly and that he only goes up at 5 o'clock in the evening when calm prevails. The fact that he only goes up at 5 o'clock

in the evening because he is no longer learning to fly himself and only makes trips when teaching pupils, who naturally require the most variable conditions possible, is a fact as glibly ignored as are the many occasions on which he has gone up in pretty stiff breezes when demonstrating the machine himself. It is not the least unfortunate phase of an incipient industry that in many quarters it seems impossible to have any faith in advancing the claims for one's own products without making disparaging reference to those of other folk. That is a very foolish business policy, because anybody connected with any industry ought to make himself sufficiently familiar with the ins and outs of it to be quite well aware of the futility of pursuing the policy of the grapes are sour. In the case of the flying business, it is assured already that Wright machines will be performing in this country within the next five months, so that, looked at as a mere business proposition, any unjustifiable statements about the capabilities of the American-designed machines can only recoil on the heads of those who utter them, because all business worth establishing has its basis in good repute. If you cause people to lose faith in you, you can try to get their orders in vain. Therefore, never utter a thought that you are not absolutely sure is founded on fact. And do not pander to that school of the Press that knows no better way of dealing with a flying machine show than to announce how many machines are supposed to have been sold in so many hours.

My advice to all who wish to sell aerial conveyances is: "Make up your minds to be flyers, not liars."

I turn now to the class of man who is not so much concerned with the commercial phases of flight as with its purely scientific and engineering aspects. A trade body, the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, has guaranteed expenses to the tune of £5,000, for the sole purpose of enabling inventors and the British public to be brought together. Yet among the unnecessary correspondence that makes my table less tidy than it ought to be, there are many eloquent epistles suggesting that during the past week I should be better employed at many places than wasting my time at Olympia. One such correspondent puts his case with a conciseness that at first sight he conveys the impression of quite brilliant business ability. He says he is not showing for the following reasons: "(1) It is so important to lose as little time as possible; (2) Expense; (3) I do not care to show publicly until my ability is proved." Let me befriend this inventor by showing him at least how to economise his expenditure to at least the extent of a penny stamp for the following reasons: (1) I have seen him spending hours in casual conversation at Olympia; (2) It is true the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders is deserving of severe censure for not having offered a pension of at least 5s. a week for life to everybody who would condescend to let their machines be displayed; at the same time before passing final judgment on them one might recall that paltry sum of £5,000 which they have guaranteed that inventors might be able to exhibit without any charge whatever; and (3) if bashfulness concerning publicity is entertained, why seek it through me, and above all why commit to paper the words that "my system . . . is a great improvement on both Wrights' old and new ideas?" These correspondents represent a type of