

EDITORIAL COMMENT.

**Before
it is
Too Late!**

From different quarters complaints reach us of the potentially dangerous flying that is becoming quite a feature at the great aerodromes. The practices we have in mind are mainly indulged in by a few of the most experienced, though most thoughtless, of the aviators using these grounds. In particular, the habit of flying above the heads of spectators appears to be on the increase and it certainly is one which is strongly to be deprecated. The fact that so far it has not been accountable for accident does not make it as a practice any the less an offence against good judgment, for nothing in the world could militate more against the immediate progress of the movement than a catastrophe which could be laid at the door of thoughtless and recklessness or the desire for doing "stunts."

For the most part, spectators at the aerodromes seem to live in a state of blissful unconsciousness of the danger they incur from this practice of flying across the enclosures, and it is one of those cases in which, while ignorance is certainly bliss, it is far removed from wisdom. For there is always a danger, despite the fact that nothing had happened hitherto. But even supposing we admit that we may possibly be exaggerating a little for the sake of impressing the lesson on those to whom it should appeal, we would put it to them that the practice is not an absolutely safe one and that, we submit, should be enough for the right-thinking pilot who wishes well to the movement with which he is identified.

If a pilot chooses to give circus performances over an open ground for the entertainment of the gallery, and incidentally, for his own glorification, that is to a very great extent his own business. His neck is his own and, within limits, he is at liberty to risk it, but he is most certainly not justified in exposing to the very slightest unnecessary danger those who form his audience. We are not alarmists; flying is safe enough, but like all sports or pursuits calling for the exercise of nice judgment there is an element of risk in it which should impel—especially at this stage—those who practise it to make doubly certain that no one but themselves should suffer from that momentary aberration which comes to the best-balanced minds on occasion. We trust that those whom the cap fits will assent to wearing it with a good grace and will accept our warning in the same kindly spirit in which it is given.



**Aerial
Electioneering.**

It is almost impossible for the public in this country to realise to how enormous an extent aviation has caught on in France. There are straws which show which way the wind blows, but even they do not sufficiently indicate the full strength and direction of the gale. One of these straws—if the parallel is allowable—is the recent experience of Vedrines in his candidature for the French Parliament. Knowing the man himself, we can only describe it as marvellous that he came so nearly to achieving his ambition, which was to sit in the Chamber of Deputies as a "member for the air." That he did come so nearly home can only be ascribed to the intense appeal that aviation makes to the French popular imagination. And when we consider that he was fighting an official candidate, backed by all the influence of political organisations and that even Cabinet Ministers were invoked to take the field against

him, the marvel is an even greater one. Leaving now the purely personal element, Vedrines' campaign is yet another outstanding object-lesson in the progress that aviation has made within a comparatively recent period—almost, we had said, within recent months. Here is a man who has to canvass a widely scattered constituency and to address the electors at remotely situated points, far apart from each other. He ignores altogether the more conventional methods of locomotion, and, under all sorts and conditions of wind and weather, betakes himself to his monoplane and literally descends upon the electors from the skies. And the wonder of it all is that it simply appeals to us as being quite commonplace and a matter of course. It does not excite our imaginations at all, because it is just the sort of thing that we expect of the aeroplane nowadays. The idea that Vedrines should essay to visit any outlying part of the Limoux division and fail to arrive on time does not even enter our minds—rather should we be astonished if he failed in the object of his journey. But it is nevertheless all very wonderful and eloquent of the marvellous progress that has been made towards the goal of the conquest of the air. By the time we find ourselves in the throes of another general election we shall have political agents sending round to the clubs, asking that aeroplanes should be put at the disposal of the candidates for the conveyance of electors to the poll. It may sound a little far-fetched, perhaps even somewhat grotesque, but in the light of past progress he would be a bold man who would pronounce it an impossible proposition.



**Aviation
in the
Naval
Estimates.**

In his speech introducing the Naval Estimates, Mr. Winston Churchill said comparatively little regarding the Admiralty policy towards aviation but what he did say was to the point and, in the main, satisfactory. The Navy has acquired land adjoining the R.Ae.C. Eastchurch aerodrome and buildings and sheds are in course of erection. Already the Navy possesses a certain number of good aviators, and these are to be increased as rapidly as possible during the year, while the First Lord hopes that before the lapse of many months regular flights of aeroplanes will be attached for ordinary service to the various squadrons and commands of the fleet. "I can assure the House," he said, "that the greatest importance is attached by us to a thoroughly good and effective development of this service, and money will not stand in the way of the necessary steps." All of which is good hearing, for it leads necessarily to the conviction that the authorities have at last recognised the pressing importance of this new factor in problems of offence and defence. The principle having been thus granted and established, it only remains now to formulate a definite comparative policy, relative to the constructional plans of our possible rivals and that is the duty of the expert advisers of the Government backed by a strong and united public opinion. The last is a very necessary adjunct to aerial policy and simply because we have expressed ourselves as satisfied in principle with the First Lord's statement, we would not have it thought that we are of opinion that there is no more to be done but sit still and watch things. This is by no means the case and quite as much in the future as in the past it will be necessary to keep a very watchful eye on progress and development abroad.