

reconnaissance ; but General French is very evidently in accord with those who hold that fighting in the air will often be a necessary and important prelude to land battles.

This is something that constructors should keep in the forefront of their minds. It forecasts the coming of much larger and more powerful aeroplanes, and herein England, let us sincerely hope, may play a leading rôle among the nations of the world.

The Million.

During the past week there has hardly been a daily newspaper of importance that has not joined in the cry for a million pounds to be set aside for aeronautics in the ensuing estimates. If ever the voice of the people has spoken a decisive word, it has surely on this occasion been made quite evident that the country at large expects the Government to do its duty in setting about the establishment of England's supremacy in the air.

Not alone among Unionist papers has the demand for immediate aerial development been loud and strong, Liberal organs of the standing of the *Manchester Guardian* have likewise rendered it abundantly clear that the Government will be much at fault if it brooks further delay. For this unanimity of opinion we are devoutly grateful. The nation's position in the air is no more a party question than is the strength of the Navy, and no sort of political prejudice should be allowed to stand in the way of progress.

Equally should the public voice, as spoken in the Press, be concerted in the character of its demand. It is a National matter, this need for aerial expansion, and as such it essentially affords a platform on which Englishmen of every sort of creed and party feeling can take a common stand. In calling upon the great general Press to arouse the nation to a proper sense of its position, as we did in our editorial of three weeks ago, we were careful to avoid detail that could give rise to contentious difference of opinion such as might divert the public mind from the main issue.

It was necessary, nevertheless, to set up something in the nature of a tangible standard by which people might fix ideas, and for that reason we adopted the Million as our war cry instead of some vague platitude implying perfection.

The million was not selected by chance, albeit the presence of six ciphers is obviously a matter of convenience. The last vote was for about one-third of that sum and it is important that we should not in the first flush of national enthusiasm attempt to "bite off more than we can chew." Above everything else, it is important that what we attempt we should do well and that we should not dissipate either our energies or our wealth in the starting of numberless new schemes of advance.

In the Royal Flying Corps, the country already possesses a good "scheme" and on the proper establishment and expansion of that excellent new arm all efforts should for the moment be concentrated. Much must yet be done before the R.F.C. is placed properly on the footing for which it was planned. With its 7 squadrons of 12 aeroplanes each, the R.F.C. represents, like our regular army itself an expeditionary force. More than this is wanted before England's force in the air is made to assume proper proportions, but for the moment let us at least make perfect what we at present possess. If the complete and proper equipment of the R.F.C. with barracks, transport, grounds, sheds and other considerations that involve capital outlay represent an expenditure

of say a quarter of a million, then let us hasten to provide the necessary funds whereby that work may be put in progress and be quickly finished. It will be the most direct route to the future prosperity of the aeroplane industry.

Airships for the Navy.

Another matter that does, however, most certainly call for immediate attention and recognition is that airships must be provided for the Naval wing of the R.F.C.

So long as there was a hopeless shortage of money and no apparent prospect of arousing the interest of either people or Parliament in a way that should lead to the provision of more, we held that it was beneficial to concentrate on the use of aeroplanes and the training of pilots. Such seemed to us to be the most direct means of collecting together a fair number of men for a common purpose—in fine, the best way of creating the nucleus of an aerial force. Moreover, we already possessed a small aeroplane industry, developed by private enterprise, which was in dire need of immediate business and the maintenance of which was then, as it is now, of the greatest importance to the nation.

But, it has been apparent for many years that our forced neglect of airships must eventually jeopardise the very standing of the country were it allowed much longer to continue, and we regard it as a happy augury that the present wave of popular opinion in favour of adequate aerial armament for Britain should have associated itself in a large measure with that type of craft.

Out of the million that we hope to obtain we could wish to see half devoted to the Naval wing. The provision of airships, as compared with the cost of aeroplanes, is an expensive business, and it is not only necessary to provide the airships, but also to build the sheds and to find the ground.

In respect to this latter there is an excellent opportunity for the display of public spirit among municipalities along our East coast. The acquisition by the Navy of suitable sites for dirigible sheds should not be the occasion for individual profit, but for collective generosity. We do not suggest public subscription in the ordinary sense, but communal co-operation and local *esprit de corps*. It is not only a ground large enough to take a dirigible shed that is wanted, but the freedom of the air over some 800 acres in its vicinity that must be ensured for all time. In this latter direction it is that local authorities might do much to facilitate the rapid and effective growth of Britain's aerial fleet.

The time is ripe for someone to come forward. Who will be the first? Before the end of the year we should be able to show some tangible evidence of progress, always assuming that we get not less than the million. Sheds such as might house a couple of the largest Zeppelins not only cost money—perhaps as much as £60,000—but they would hardly be built in less than nine months.

Then the airships themselves; it is high time we commenced to build these in this country, and if the million is forthcoming we sincerely hope to hear that tenders for their construction will be invited. Needless to say, the building of a large dirigible is a vastly more difficult problem than the construction of a modern aeroplane, and its magnitude is one that should interest some of our largest engineering firms. Vickers' and Armstrong's, for instance, naturally occur to the mind as firms already fitted to undertake Government work of this kind, and between them they ought to be able to give