



THE new Thomas military tractor which has been undergoing tests at Ithaca, is, I hear, developing an excellent turn of speed. Not long ago Frank Burnside, one of the Thomas pilots, conducted a series of tests over a measured course of half a mile. The machine covered that distance in  $17\frac{1}{2}$  seconds with the wind, and in  $29\frac{1}{2}$  seconds against it. The average speed of the tests was one mile in 38 seconds. On one occasion a speed of 102 m.p.h. was attained. The test flights were officially observed by Mr. J. J. Frawley, who is a representative of the Aero Club of America, which body has been notified of the performance. It is claimed that the Thomas has broken all American records for speed. The engine with which this machine is fitted is one of the new Thomas aeromotors of 135 h.p. that have done so well in their preliminary trials.

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The recent day-light raids by German seaplanes on places on our coast have again given rise to heated discussions the country over. There can be no doubt about it, the British Public are getting annoyed at these repeated senseless attacks on peaceful coastal towns, and among the questions asked the most frequent are: How is it that these raiders can manage to come right across a large portion of the North Sea without being detected from the many ships we must have ever on the alert in those parts. And if they do come across, why is it that they are able to get as far as the coast, drop their bombs, turn about and make good their escape? To the first question, which is a perfectly natural one, those in authority would probably reply that it is an extremely difficult thing to detect a machine flying at an altitude of from 8,000 to 10,000 ft. And if it is discovered it is next to impossible to determine

whether it be a hostile or one of our own seaplanes. I willingly grant that these difficulties do exist, but at the same time it does seem to me that much might be done by efficient organisation. After all, from what I can gather, it is not such a common occurrence to come across our seaplanes a hundred miles or so out to sea, so that when a machine is sighted it would, I should imagine, be the first thing that came to the mind of the commander of the ship that spotted it to send a wireless message to one of our stations ashore informing those in command there that a machine had been sighted at such and such a point going in such and such a direction. Surely, it would not be beyond even the British power of organisation to have all our air stations connected up by telephone in such a manner that the moment information was received of a machine approaching the coast a number of our own would start from each air station, climbing to the altitude at which the approaching machine might be expected to arrive, and wait there ready for him. If it should by any chance prove to be one of our own, the pilots would be none the worse for their little extra practice, and if, as is more likely, the visitor turns out to be one of the Boches on evil intent, they would be ready for him. The difficulty of distinguishing friend from foe out at sea is, it seems to me, more apparent than real, since, if a machine sighted from a ship is flying at some 7,000 or 8,000 ft. it is reasonably safe to assume that he comes from the other side. Our own machines, when they happen to be any great distance beyond sight of the coast, would, it may be assumed, be on the look out for submarines, and would in that case certainly not be flying at such a great height, but more likely at between 2,000 ft. and 3,000 ft. or less. Besides any commanders of our men-of-war would be, or certainly



THE NEW THOMAS MILITARY TRACTOR BIPLANE, TYPE D2.—Fitted with one of the new 135 h.p. Thomas aeromotors, this machine is said to have attained a speed of 102 m.p.h., which constitutes, it is claimed, an American record.