

It will be as well at this juncture if we refrain from entertaining the belief that the new order of things will immediately produce great results in the way of instant growth of aerial ascendancy, which is to be measured by an overwhelming air offensive. That will come when the time is ripe and when the great aerial fleet promised by America is ready to make its weight felt in the operations which are due to commence with the break-up of winter on the Western front. In any case these things are of gradual growth and not of instant creation. Moreover, there are other considerations of vital weight to be taken into account. While we are doing everything possible to increase our production of aircraft, we cannot lose sight of the fact that the Navy is and will remain our first line of defence, and our only protection against invasion by the enemy. That being so, it follows of necessity that the Navy must have the first call on all our resources, material and manufacturing. Then, the people of these islands must be fed, and to feed them we must maintain our mercantile fleet and strain every nerve and sinew to replace the tonnage sunk by the enemy's submarines. Again, we have to provide for the needs of an army of more rather than less than five millions, of whom the greater proportion are overseas and absorb immense tonnage for supply. As if that were not enough, most of our Allies look to us for essential supplies of munitions, equipment and assistance in their food and supply problems. There is an irreducible minimum in all these things, and if we fall below that minimum we cannot be said to be doing our full share towards winning the war and crushing Prussian despotism. It is when we have passed the minimum of which we have spoken that we are able to visualise our surplus resources—there are no surplus resources as a matter of fact, but we use the term in default of a better—and to allocate them to this or that service of urgency. Admittedly, the provision of a preponderating Air Force is one of those services of urgency, and must come first in the appropriation of the surplus resources to which we have alluded, but in discussing Air Force needs we must beware of the habit of exaggeration which leads even the best-balanced minds to think that nothing else matters but its own immediate interests. We believe that the Air Council is the ideal body for which we have been praying these years past. We also believe in Lord Rothermere as its President, and we whole-heartedly approve his choice of instruments so far as that choice has been made known—but we do not invite disappointment by expecting miracles. We shall need all our patience, all our stoicism, in the critical months that lie before us.



**A
New Year
Scandal.**

We have received from a valued correspondent a letter, written on official paper and signed by a senior officer of the R.F.C., which, were it not for the evidence of our eyes, we might have hesitated to believe could have been written in the closing days of 1917, when we are all begged and implored to do our level best to "get on with the war." The letter relates to a large—a very large—engineering factory in Scotland and reads as follows:—

"Please note that Messrs. . . . works will be closed for the . . . holidays from December 29th, 1917, to January 7th, 1918. Prior to closing the whole of Messrs. . . . stock of aeroplane parts will be cleared out against standing orders so

that no deliveries can be made until the factory reopens. During the above-mentioned time there will be no one in attendance either in the office or in the factory, and no letters or telegrams will be opened until the works start again on the 7th January, hence there will be no possibility of getting any . . . parts during the above-mentioned time."

We regret deeply that this letter was not sent to us until after Christmas, so there was no opportunity of sending it on to the Air Council for action or comment. We do not know who was responsible for the complete closing down of one of the most important factories in the country for the best part of a fortnight, but we should certainly like to know, as we should further like to know what view is taken of it by Lord Rothermere and the Council. Here we are, with the most critical six months of the war before us, when we are being told that we want aircraft and yet more aircraft to make us safe, and the way we set about getting increased production is to close down important factories "for the holidays," not for a mere two or three days, but for nearly two weeks!

There have been strikes and industrial unrest which have militated against production, and we have not hesitated to speak plainly to those who have engineered and taken part in them. We have condemned them in unmeasured terms as being slackers and deliberate traitors to their country—which is the view taken by every decent citizen. And then comes a case like this, in which, apparently with official connivance if not with official approval, we have a virtual strike of a fortnight in a huge factory concerned in aeroplane production—for "the holidays!" Really we are at a loss to find words in which to express our thoughts without going beyond the limits of decent language. The more so do we feel that way because we have some reason to think that not only does the letter we have quoted apply to a single factory, but was of fairly general application over one of the busiest manufacturing districts in the country. When these are our methods, is it any wonder that the war seems interminable?



**Germany
and
Air Raids.**

It is doubtful if we shall ever be able to properly understand the mental attitude of the Hun—supposing we desire to know more about him than we do. Apparently the German authorities are not satisfied with the moral and mental effect on their own people of the policy of aerial frightfulness pursued against England. In fact, it would almost appear that the enthusiasm engendered among the Hun populations by the repeated complete destruction of London is no greater than the adverse moral effect on our own people produced by attack from the air. In a word, the Hun has been so fed with lying stories of destruction and panic caused among the British populace, stories that he now knows to be false, that he has assumed an air of boredom and scepticism which is worrying his governors mightily.

When Zeppelin raids were the fashion, the Wolff Bureau was wont to send out to the German Press long, flamboyant and lying accounts of the doings of the raiders over British towns, together with strict official directions as to the line of comment to be followed. These directions were carefully observed, as we know from the contemporary records of the Hun newspapers, and all Germany was thrown into a very hysteria of delight at the shattering blows dealt to its most hated enemy. But later, when the