

relieved of some of the official meddling which is now retarding progress), we should have produced some aeroplanes really worth while. Our designers are second to none in the world, and if they are inclined to be conservative they are at least thoroughly sound and can be relied upon not to produce "freaks." The Paris Aero Show gave an indication that French constructors generally are, after a period of rather wildly launching out with impossible and often fantastic contraptions, coming down to earth and are beginning to realise that there is no short cut to super-efficiency. That a certain amount of money must have been wasted in teaching that lesson may be granted, but who will doubt that the lesson has been learnt, and that our friends across the Channel are all the better for their experience. The necessary corollary is that France may now be expected to turn out better and better aeroplanes, and what with her vigorous propaganda abroad is becoming, or indeed has become, a very serious competitor in the world's aeroplane market. It is, of course, perfectly true that the rate of exchange has a great deal to do with the preference sometimes shown by foreign purchasers of aircraft and aero engines (for example, we understand that the price of the new 600 h.p. Renault aero engine is only 85,000 francs, or approximately £1,000, which is only about one-third of what a similar engine would cost in this country), but at the same time concerted action by the S.B.A.C., with a certain amount of assistance by the Air Ministry, would undoubtedly do a good deal towards impressing foreign nations with the qualities of British aircraft. The warning is there for all concerned, pointing the moral that unless more energetic measures are taken than have been the rule in the past, Great Britain will soon find herself seriously menaced by French and American (at present the only ones that matter, although others are coming along) competition.

The airship scheme inaugurated during 1924, or at any rate brought to concrete form, is not likely to result in the actual completion of new airships in the coming year, but it is hoped that one or two re-conditioned airships will be flying during 1925 for the purpose of carrying out full-scale tests and for training personnel.

In the sphere of commercial aviation, the year has seen the amalgamation of the four air transport firms into one large company, officially known as Imperial Airways, Ltd., but known colloquially as the Million Pound Monopoly Company, which receives a large subsidy, spread over a period of ten years. So far it cannot be said that the new company has shown any great desire to obtain new and more efficient flying stock, and, on the whole, Imperial Airways have mainly confined their policy to carrying on much in the same way as did the four separate companies. Of the extensions of the various lines, about which a great deal has been written and spoken, there is still no sign, nor do we seem to be much nearer to the really commercial aeroplane. Up to the present,

Imperial Airways have had the very good reply to any criticism that all these developments take time. That will not be disputed, but, so far as we have been able to discover, very little has been done in the materialisation of new machines, although tenders have been asked for and many submitted.

In sporting aviation, the year cannot very well be claimed to have been a satisfactory one as far as Great Britain is concerned; while many new world's records have been established, *not a single one* stands to the credit of British aircraft. In the matter of speed, France has within the last week or so wrested the record from America, and that with a margin which will be extremely hard to beat. Similarly, with the duration record, where France beat with a Farman machine the record held by America, and without refuelling at that. Of the two International events in which Britain was expected to figure, one was cancelled for lack of entries (the Aerial Derby), and in the other (the Schneider Cup seaplane race) one of our entries was not finished in time, while the other came to grief during a trial flight. This incident was all the more regrettable as the machine in question showed a very excellent turn of speed and demonstrated that with more adequate preparation, and with the necessary Government assistance, our firms can produce machines capable of holding their own with those of any other nation. There must be no delay in getting to work on the 1925 Schneider Cup machines, so that they can be thoroughly tested out before the event, and not sent to America as untried experiments. The Americans were thoroughly good sportsmen over the Schneider Cup this year, refraining from claiming a "walk-over" when they could well have done so, and the least we can do is to make sure of sending three really fine machines to America in 1925.

In light 'planes, Great Britain can now justifiably claim to lead the world, and although we have certainly not yet discovered the "ideal" machine, we have got better performance out of our low-powered aeroplanes than has any other nation in the world. The scheme for light aeroplane clubs has been inaugurated, and if all interested work with a will, 1925 should see the class firmly established, the more so as the Royal Aero Club has decided to grant certificates of performance to light aeroplanes, for speed, speed range, and climb. What now chiefly remains to be done is to define clearly what constitutes a light 'plane (for paradoxical as it may seem, in spite of the excellent work that has been done, we have not yet definitely defined the light 'plane) and the sort of performance we want. At present this has not been done, and until it is constructors cannot possibly build machines to meet the requirements.

Briefly summarised, it can, we think, be said that 1924 was devoted chiefly to planning and to original spade work. May this bear fruit in 1925, so that in a year's time FLIGHT may be in a position to record real progress and an aviation community soundly and firmly established.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL

Hearty Good Wishes of the Season to all our readers—reciprocating
the many Greetings received from the four Quarters of the Globe.