AGUST 5, 1926

AN INTERESTING TRIP WITH A “JUPITER” ENGINE

(Continued from page 464.)

Again the route was over mountainous country leading us past Rome towards the South. In the southern end of Italy the mountains were certainly lower than the Alpin regions, but still they were sufficiently uninviting, and one was glad to feel that there was no risk of one having to make a closer acquaintance. By the time Poggia was reached we had struck since leaving France. Gradually, however, the cobble, however, the cobble of the land showed little change, its suitability from an aviation standpoint altered, and by the time we reached Bari, the country was densely cultivated. Mile after mile, with hardly a break, fruit orchards and olive groves appeared to cover the whole of the available ground. The light was failing, so that it became necessary for us to fly quite low and this brought home the appreciation of what a forced landing would mean in this thickly-growing orchard district. It was already dusk when we sighted the two huge airship sheds at Brindisi, and I fired a Very cartridge to get some idea of the wind direction.

The Bristol “Bloodhound” at Athens.

LONDON-CAIRO WITH A “JUPITER”

Ten minutes after landing at Brindisi the machine was in the hangar and it was totally dark. As a matter of fact Brindisi aerodrome is to-day practically unused and no one was quite able to understand why we had been instructed by the Italian Government that we must land there. As a result there are very few conveniences of any kind. The Maresciallo in charge of the aerodrome with his five assistants were exceedingly anxious to help us in any way they could, but what they could do was very little. No lights were available at the aerodrome or at the sheds and it was only after nearly an hour’s search that two small oil lamps were ultimately procured. Even after these had put in an appearance it was not safe to approach with them near to the aeroplane as by feeling in the dark as well as we could I had drained the filters and float chambers of petrol.

So far we had been able to keep to our itinerary and the prospects had seemed bright for our making Cairo within the two days of our leaving Croydon. The engine was running perfectly and the aircraft was in the best possible condition. It was somewhat of a disappointment to us, therefore, to learn that although the petrol for our use was on the aerodrome it could not be had by us until the representative of the petrol company were ready to meet us and showed us the hangar and it was totally dark. As a matter of fact Brindisi aerodrome is to-day practically unused and no one was quite able to understand why we had been instructed by the Italian Government that we must land there. As a result there are very few conveniences of any kind. The Maresciallo in charge of the aerodrome with his five assistants were exceedingly anxious to help us in any way they could, but what they could do was very little. No lights were available at the aerodrome or at the sheds and it was only after nearly an hour’s search that two small oil lamps were ultimately procured. Even after these had put in an appearance it was not safe to approach with them near to the aeroplane as by feeling in the dark as well as we could I had drained the filters and float chambers of petrol.

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When we came to think of the inner man the position was little better. No food was available at the aerodrome but the Maresciallo, with the courtesy which one associates with the old Italian aristocrats, insisted on our accepting the whole of his own provisions. These were not much but we had a boiled egg each for our supper together with wine and bread and a couple of raw eggs for breakfast with wine and bread again to accompany. Even here our Italian friend’s courtesy did not end, for he insisted on giving us his own bed to us, in which Col. Minchin was able to turn in about 0.30 after a very hard day’s flying. It was an hour later when I retired, but I did not appear to have missed very much for both of us were able to get very little sleep owing to the swarms of hungry mosquitoes which appear to infest this part of Italy. Nor was there much time to seek repose, for at 2 o’clock an Italian officer from the hydroplane station put in an appearance and off to the aerodrome I had to go with him. With the aid of the headlamps from two automobiles we were able to get petrol and oil into the machine, and by 4 o’clock once again the Bloodhound was standing in the open ready for a start on the second day’s flight of our trip. Customs were not yet cleared and the Italian officer appeared very doubtful about releasing us. It was 5.15 before we were given our freedom, and immediately we started upon our 100 miles trip across the Adriatic Sea, over Corfu, and across the mountainous country of Greece, arriving at Athens at about 9 o’clock.

Until we arrived near our destination this part of the journey was an exceedingly pleasant one. The engine purred along with an unvarying beat and the miles of sea were eaten up beneath us, whilst the island and coastal scenery was in many ways exceedingly fine. On approaching Athens, however, the air bumps were extremely severe. We were bumped and shaken to such a degree that we were mighty glad to feel our wheels touch the aerodrome.

Officers of the Greek Marine and the representative of the petrol company were ready to meet us and showed us the greatest possible courtesy. The filling up with petrol was at once proceeded with, food was given to us and Col. Minchin was able to snatch half an hour’s rest.

It was about 11 o’clock when we started our engine up and left the Athens aerodrome, passing over the town towards the sea. The monumental ruins of the classic city presented from the air a most impressive spectacle. Down the Gulf of Ægina we swept along and just before 1 o’clock we passed over the mountainous island of Crete. From the air, at any rate, this island had eye-compelling characteristics. Sheer down into the sea the mountains ran with never a break to serve for shore, and stretching up at 8,000 ft. they were capped with snow. Over the sea a slight haze spread and there was no horizon. During the four hours’ crossing of the Mediterranean not a single boat was seen. Two hours passed between the time that we left the island of Crete behind us before the African coast was sighted. About this part of the trip there was something almost eerie. One could feel the air flying past and the whistle of the wind as it passed our wires, but minute after minute one sped on apparently getting no further through the volume of haze which was spread out in front and which in its turn merged unbroken into the troubled sea.

(To be continued.)