not regard the present rarity, danger, and unattractiveness of flying as being due to any defects in the aeroplane or airship itself, that physical science and mechanical invention have failed at no point. We are afraid that this shows that Mr. Wells does not quite appreciate the position. Although fully agreeing with him as to the need for financing air transport on a large scale, we cannot share his view that the slowness of development has been entirely due to insufficient capital. The science and art of flying, and more particularly that side of it dealing with air transport, is still very young. Mr. Wells seems to overlook the fact that it is only some eight years since the first uncertain and groping attempts were made to operate air services over defined routes, and that those attempts were made, necessarily had to be made, with war types of aircraft. There is thus no cause for surprise if we have not yet advanced quite as far as Mr. Wells could have wished. On the subject of financial assistance on a large scale, it was scarcely to be expected that this would be forthcoming until those holding the purse strings could be reasonably sure that aircraft had reached a stage of technical development where such financial support was justified. And until comparatively recently aircraft had not reached such a stage, in spite of the rather touching belief of Mr. Wells in the technical perfection of aircraft.

Mr. Wells, it seems to us, goes right off the rails when he complains that the whole thing is not being tackled on grand international lines, and is very unfortunate in at least one of his comparisons. "It is," he says, "as sensible to hope for an air transport system developed on national lines as it would be to hope for an inter-oceanic railway system through the coalescence of mile and half-mile bits of line built, each at its own sweet will, to its own design and gauge, by every village and township en route." From a man who has written a work which, we believe, has been described as an outline of history, this is surely a rather extraordinary statement to make. Does Mr. Wells claim that as soon as the first locomotive had been produced, and the first crude carriages, all the nations of Europe got together and said that now this new thing must be tackled on international lines? We do not think Mr. Wells will claim any such thing. The railways started very much indeed in the bit-by-bit manner to which Mr. Wells refers so contemptuously, and it was not until much later, until technical development was much more advanced, in fact, that the various lines began to be linked up—even *now* there are still in places blind-alley lines which await their linking up. That must also be the method in world-wide air travel. Until, at any rate, the majority of all the technical problems have been solved, it would be futile to tackle international air transport on the grand scale which Mr. Wells would have us forthwith adopt, and they definitely have not been solved yet, although in this respect the outlook is not as gloomy as that of Mr. Wells on the difficulties of the international arrangements.

It is unfortunate that Mr. Wells should have thought fit, in his article, to mix up air service accidents with the problem of air transport. The two things have nothing to do with one another, or, at any rate, the connection between the two is a very vague one, arising merely from the fact that service machines and civil aeroplanes fly according to the same physical laws. In the operation of the two types there is no similarity at all, and there would be just as much sense in adding casualties in the submarine service, for instance, to those in the mercantile marine. One is justified in expecting greater discrimination in a man of Mr. Wells's calibre.

We trust Mr. Wells will not consider that we have been "defensively rude" in stating our views of the subject, but when a writer, who is apt to be accepted by the general public as an authority on any subject upon which he chooses to write becomes "offensively rude" (we mean it, of course, in the same military sense as that in which Mr. Wells used the expression "defensively rude," and not as a rudeness at which one takes offence), on air transport matters, the "air Press" can scarcely be expected to take it "lying down" simply because it expresses the ex cathedra views of so great a man even as Mr. H. G. Wells.

At Buckingham Palace

H.M. THE KING held an Investiture at Buckingham Palace on February 15, when amongst those invested by the King with the Insignia of the respective divisions of the orders into which they have been admitted, were the following:—

Order of the British Empire.

Military Division.

Officer.—Flight-Lieut. Albert Fletcher, R.A.F. Member.—Flight-Lieut. Robert. Greenlaw, R.A.F.

His Majesty then conferred the following decorations:—

Royal Red Cross.

Member.—Miss Mary Campbell, late Princess Mary's R.A.F. Nursing Service.

Military Cross.

Flight-Lieut. Sturley Simpson, R.A.F.

Distinguished Flying Cross.

Squadron-Leader Robert Saundby, R.A.F., Flight-Lieut. Sydney Pope, R.A.F., and Flight-Lieut. Elmer Roberts, R.A.F.

Air Force Cross.

Flight-Lieut. Matthew Dick, R.A.F.

Amongst those also present were Air-Marshal Sir John Salmond (Principal Air Aide-de-Camp), and Group-Capt. P. F. M. Fellowes, R.A.F.

R.A.F. Air Aide-de-Camp to the King

THE Air Ministry announces the appointment of Group Captain Robert Peel Ross, D.S.O., A.F.C., as an Aide-de-Camp to His Majesty the King (February 1, 1927).

Some Paris-Jask Figures

CERTAIN interesting figures concerning the Breguet machine with 500 h.p. Hispano engine on which Costes and Rignot established a new distance record last year are now available. The weight of the machine "equipped" but without crew and fuel was 1,518 kg. (3,340 lbs.); crew, food and luggage weighed 250 kg. (550 lbs.). When the machine started from Le Bourget it had on board 2,280 litres (502 galls.) of petrol, 820 litres (180 galls.) of petrol-benzol mixture, and 200 litres (44 galls.) of oil. The fuel weight was 2,209 kg. (4,860 lbs.) and the weight of oil 180 kg. (396 lbs.), giving a total loaded weight of 4,157 kg. (9,146 lbs.). As the wing area of this particular machine was 52·75 sq. m. (568 sq. ft.), the wing loading was 16·1 lb./sq. ft. On the basis of the nominal power of the engine the power loading was 18·3 lb./h.p., although probably the actual power loading was rather less, owing to the Hispano developing a maximum of more than 500 h.p.

Aerial Search for Col. Fawcett

IN a recent issue, we referred to the uneasiness caused by the silence of Col. Fawcett who is leading an expedition into the heart of Brazil and the probability of aeroplanes making a search for him. As an attempt on land has failed, this plan may now be carried out.