



Sqdn.-Ldr. E. L. Johnston, A.F.C., O.B.E.; Sir Sefton Brancker, K.C.B., A.F.C.; Lord Thomson of Cardington, C.B.E., D.S.O.; Lt.-Col. V. C. Richmond, O.B.E.
(FLIGHT Photo.)

airship captain more brilliantly than on the trial flight of R 36. Before carrying out her high speed trials he gave the order "Five thousand," and the airship was taken up to that height. Had a similar precaution been taken on the "Roma," there would probably have been one less tragedy on record. During the trial one of the control surfaces, an elevator, I think, on R 36 gave way. But Scott was at a safe height, and he was able, by moving his crew about the hull, to trim her and to bring her safely to earth. He was also an inventor, and not a few patents were taken out in his name. In particular, he designed the head of the mooring tower, a sound and successful piece of engineering work. On Saturday afternoon Scott explained to me that he was not a passenger on either R 100 or on R 101. He was officer in command of the flight, and that was why he was wearing uniform. He decided all such points as when the ship would sail, her course, her speed, her altitude. The captain of the ship commanded the crew, and was responsible for carrying out his (Scott's) orders.

Colmore

Next, I met Wing-Commander Colmore, the D.A.D., another old friend. He was another exceptionally charming personality. I can best describe him by saying that he was the best type of naval officer, and there is no finer type of British gentleman. He loved the sea, and knew that it was the proper element for an airship to have below it. He, too, had put his brains and his life into the cause of airships. The years when nothing was being done must have been very weary to him. One can imagine, too, that the many delays in producing the two airships must have irked an enthusiast. But the policy of making everything as safe as human skill and knowledge could make it was rigidly adhered to. The Directorate of Airship Development, first under Group Captain Fellowes, assisted by and later succeeded by Colmore, deserves the greatest credit for refusing to be hustled one iota by popular outbursts of impatience in some sections of the Press and in Parliament. The completion of the airships, their successful trials, and the triumph of R 100 in crossing the Atlantic, must have caused the greatest joy to Colmore, all the sweeter because of the long delay. Yet he never showed signs of



Major G. H. Scott, C.B.E., A.F.C. (FLIGHT Photo.)

undue elation. He was always imperturbably charming, and always calmly summing up the situation and the improvements still needed. His admission that fabric on rigids needed still further improvement only increased the confidence which he inspired when he said that this or that was quite satisfactory. It will be noticed in the photograph that Wing-Commander Colmore wore mufti for the flight. On the ground the Director was supreme; in the air he was a passenger with no executive responsibilities.

Richmond

It was round the base of the tower that I met other old friends, and notably Lieut.-Col. V. C. Richmond. He, too, was in mufti. Like Scott, he was an Assistant Director, but in the air he, too, did not belong to the executive. I first met Richmond just before the Armistice, when I was employed at the Air Ministry, and he was in charge of the works at the White City where envelopes were made for non-rigid airships. He was an unusual type of man, but a good friend to those who knew him well, especially if they were anxious to grasp the technicalities of airships. I owe a great deal to his readiness to help, and to the lucid manner in which he could explain a technical point to a non-technical mind.

His clarity of expression invariably carried conviction with it. It was always a marvel to me that a man who had spent his early energies on non-rigids could become the chief designer of the most revolutionary rigid airship ever conceived. It is admitted that R 101 turned out heavier than he had at first hoped, and critics made scathing remarks about the provision for 100 passengers. But if Richmond was over-optimistic on that point, it must never be forgotten that he steadfastly kept as his motto "Safety First." His ship was designed primarily to withstand every adverse circumstance which might be met in the air. Whatever may be the findings of the enquiry into the loss of R 101, it can never be denied that this airship embodied many brilliant points of design. It was very recently that one of the experts on board the "Graf Zeppelin" pronounced R 101 "the safest vehicle in the world, in the air, on land, or on the sea." We may yet live to see some of the features of R 101 embodied in other and more fortunate airships. If so, Richmond's work will live after him, and he will not have died in vain.

Squadron Leader Johnston and Lieut. Commander Atherstone, the navigator and the first officer, were round the base of the tower, chatting to friends. Flight-Lieut. Irwin was in the airship, and did not come down to say good-bye to his friends until shortly before the start. I had known Irwin on and off for several years, and he was a man for whom one took an instinctive liking even on short acquaintance. He looked somewhat tired and had doubtless been working very hard. It is very grievous to think that all these good men have gone.

The Start

Sir Sefton Brancker arrived by air at Henlow and drove over from there. Lord Thomson drove up about 6.30 with his valet and luggage, and posed for the photographers. All seemed confident and cheerful, and their happy faces contrasted with the gloomy looks of the spare members of the crew who had not been selected for the voyage. The thought crossed my mind that Sir Samuel Hoare must be feeling envious of Lord Thomson, and be cursing the political change which had deprived him of the chance of making this voyage. By 7 p.m. all had gone