

FLIGHT

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Looking Forward

THE new year is usually regarded as a time for good resolutions, and a cynic has said that of such is composed the road to the nether regions. Doubtless the League of Nations is now engaged in the process of making its resolutions, and we hope for them a more celestial destiny. *Flight* would express hopes rather than resolutions, and the greatest hope is for peace in Africa and in Europe—to say nothing of Eastern Asia. Everyone wishes for an ending of the war in Abyssinia, and not least among those who hope for it are the parents and relations of the Italian soldiers. Britain hates war, even though she be not engaged in it herself. What we Britons want is a period of peace in which we can make progress with the building-up of our Air Force to a level which will make war more unlikely in the future. To have to, so to speak, clear for action at a time when we need all our energies for the complicated business of expanding and organising the expansion is a most undesired complication.

During the past year we have witnessed new squadrons being formed and new stations opened, and the squadrons have had to be moved from one station to another until it has been a difficult task to keep track of them all. During the coming year we hope to see everything arranged and in order, and the new squadrons left free to settle down to learn their duties. Many squadrons, also, will need leisure to get used to flying new types of machines. During the coming year there must be much experiment with those new types. It has yet to be discovered what are the most effective tactics of a heavily armed fighter flying at some 300 m.p.h. when it sights a formation of enemy bombers. It will doubtless be able to bring them to an engagement, but what next? Will it have to throttle down as it manœuvres round them, or will it trust mainly to its weight of fire to settle the matter in a few seconds? These are interesting problems.

There will also be interesting problems for the new, speedy medium bombers to solve, and the solution can only come from repeated practice and study of that practice. Will the high-flying raid or the low-flying raid prove the most effective? In our Air Exercises hitherto the high-flying raid has been favoured, trusting mainly to clouds to defeat the searchlights and the guns. The low-flying raid would seem to throw both guns and searchlights out of action whether there are clouds or not. It is, however, a somewhat risky matter to try out in peace time.

Overseas Needs

In the Overseas Commands there will have to be changes. It depends to a great extent on the result of the present war whether we shall have to introduce the novelty of sending fighter squadrons to any of those Commands. Hitherto there has been no need for fighters anywhere but in A.D.G.B. and in the Fleet Air Arm. Certainly the Overseas Commands ought to have their strength in flying boats increased. At Singapore and at Basra the squadrons now have the Singapore III boat, and the squadron at Malta, which is to be moved elsewhere, has the Scapa, but there ought to be more flying boat squadrons. In the Coastal Area the time-honoured Southampton still persists, and we want to see it make way for, say, the Stranraer. The Saro London seems eminently suitable for Empire work.

The prospects of commercial flying on the Empire routes are distinctly good, though they may not come to fruition in 1936. Still, when sound plans are being worked upon we have no cause to complain. This, too, can be said of the proposed air services across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the inauguration of which promises to erect the greatest milestone in the history of commercial flying. Already the idea has captured the imagination of thousands for whom the science of aeronautics is still a closed book.

As for internal air lines, there still seems to be confusion and an obscure future. That future really de-