



Jemima on the slipway. The stabilisers on the tailplane are to counteract the effect of the forward float area.

SEAPLANING

Floats for the Private Owner

THOUGH this account of a trip along the South-West Coast of England in a privately owned light seaplane is written in jocular style, it contains a lot of practical advice on a subject with which very few private pilots in this country are familiar — the technique of handling marine aircraft. The machine in the article is obviously under-powered for the job, but, as the author explains, this short-coming also has its compensations.

I WON'T bother you with how it all started, but the main theme of the story begins on the hard at Hamble with a small 40 h.p. aeroplane which had just been converted from wheels to floats. Neither of us knew anything about seaplanes. Charles had once done a few hours with an Avian on floats, but that was some time ago. The business was, therefore, more or less new to both of us; in addition, Charles always was rather an optimist, otherwise we should probably never have started on this peculiar form of aviating.

A rough sort of beaching chassis had been fashioned out of an old pair of aeroplane wheels, a steel pipe and some pieces of timber. With *Jemima*, our aforementioned aircraft, resting on this contrivance we began to wheel her into the water. Slipways, I have decided, are very deceptive things—they are definitely not what they appear to be. The tide was high and from the water upwards the slip was dry, knobby concrete upon which even I could stand in perfect safety, but below the waterline it had collected a very slimy form of weed upon which it was almost impossible to remain upright, particularly in any kind of rubber footwear. We were totally ignorant of this, however, and everything was going fine until there was a sudden shout from the man holding the tail of one float.

Slipway It Is

He had slipped and lost his balance. At the same time his opposite number on the other float also slipped, and while these two were trying to save themselves from partial submersion I suddenly found the rope I was holding was pulling me with it at a somewhat dangerous speed towards the water. In the meantime, Charles, with the tail-skid on his shoulder, was yelling blue murder at me for not holding her back. Fortunately, a liner-like launching for *Jemima* was avoided by some onlookers, who, seeing our sudden advance towards the water, ran to the rope and took the strain before she had gathered too much speed.

Charles did the first test flight alone, and *Jemima* behaved herself excellently. The take-off was good and the landing appeared quite straightforward. The next day, however, when we had loaded her up with a paddle, anchor and a few maps, some spare clothing, water boots, a two-gallon petrol tin and a full main tank, we found it was rather a different story.

I am not light (or so I am told on quite reliable authority) and Charles is no streak of skin and bones, and *Jemima* seemed to resent the load we had put aboard her, particularly, I think, my own 180 lb. so far aft of the C.G. Anyway, after two attempts to take off we had to lighten her by removing two gallons of petrol.

One-man seamanship: *Jemima* behaving obediently at the end of her painter.

We also decided to consider this matter of take-off somewhat more thoroughly, and after a little discussion developed a sort of "team work-out," as I believe an American might express it. It went like this: On taxiing out to a suitable point we turned into wind while I, who had now changed over to the front seat, scanned the water ahead for the sight of an approaching gust. On notification of one about 200 yards away Charles would open up and coax her up on to the step as quickly as possible. As soon as she was up on the step I stood up as high as possible above my seat, and on hitting the gust Charles would slightly ease back the stick and at the same time shout "Down!" whereupon I momentarily relieved the aircraft of my 180-odd pounds by dropping to a seated posture.

In theory, provided I did not fall clean through the aeroplane, we should now be in the air, and, by —, we were! Whether it was the gust, my gymnastics or Charles's juggling with the controls, we shall never know, but it did the trick.

Coastal Cruising

From now onwards all seemed plain sailing. *Jemima* was turned on to a westerly course and proceeded to pop-bottle her way down-wind at a mean cruising height of 50-100ft. We were in no hurry; we didn't want to get anywhere in particular immediately; we just wanted to see the yachts, the people on the beaches, and do a little sight-seeing. Our ground speed was between 70-80 m.p.h. with quite a strong tail wind, and, if anything, it was too fast for our purpose. It would have been more pleasant to go slower, and if the infernal noise-box in front hadn't made such a row we should have liked to exchange greetings with some of the yachts over which we passed, and also with the lighthouse-keeper at the Needles.

Needles to Studland Bay, off Poole, was uneventful. We were not brave enough to go straight, so compromised by means of a gentle curve, keeping within a mile or two of the coast. Just off Old Harry, well known to cruising

