

The Haltonian Magazine  
Volume 5 No. 2a  
November Daedalus 1928  
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# THE DAEDALUS

The Magazine of the  
Old Boys' Association,  
Royal Air Force, Halton.

NOVEMBER, 1928

Vol. II

No. 2.



From *Aeronautical Prints and Drawings* by Lieut.-Col. W. Lockwood Marsh; pub. Halton and Truscott Smith.

[By courtesy of the Author and Publishers]

#### DAEDALUS AND ICARUS

An early German woodcut of 1493, depicting the fall of Icarus. Daedalus flew on and reached the mainland.

# Prospects for the Airman in Civil Aviation

By C. G. GREY

*Editor of "The Aeroplane"*

**A**BOUT the only thing that is easier than being a critic is being a prophet. If you prophesy far enough ahead you are dead before anybody can contradict you. If you live and your prophecies come true, you can always say how clever you were. And if they do not come true you can forget about them.

Anyhow, prophesying about the future of the airman in Civil Aviation is dead easy. Flying has now definitely taken its place among the recognised methods of transport. In the twenty years which have passed since flying began, air transport has made more progress, in spite of four years of war, than steamships, railways or motor cars did in the same time from their beginning. And yet we are still only at the beginning of Civil air transport as such.

In the United States there are something like five thousand miles of air lines which are covered daily with greater regularity than that of the American trains. In Australia there are something between two thousand and three thousand miles of air lines which actually have as high a degree of regularity as English railways, and that is the most regular form of transport in the world. Germany is a regular network of air lines. And all other European countries are gradually running more and more air transport.

The British Isles are not suited for regular air line work, but there is far more private flying and air-taxi work in this country than most people imagine, and twelve months hence there will be at least five times as much as there is now.

Within the next few years there will be an immense

development of air transport in Africa, chiefly in those parts which are most suited to a white population. Also there will be very big developments in India.

Now the most essential thing for the success of air transport is a supply of competent mechanics. And practically the only source of supply of such mechanics is the Royal Air Force.

A man who has served as a fitter or a rigger in the R.A.F. gets experience during his period of service of a variety of types of engines and machines, with all their accompanying fittings and gadgets, which no man could get in an aircraft factory, where he is tied down to one particular make of engine or machine. And a man who has had a thorough training in the general theory and practice of aeronautical engineering, such as an apprentice gets at Halton, is very much better equipped to learn the manners and customs of Civil aircraft than is a man who has spent his time on repetition work in a factory.

More than half a man's success as an engineer depends on learning how to learn. And that is where the Halton system of training gives an aircraft engineer such a pull over anybody else.

When the really big boom in air transport arrives in this country and all over the rest of the British Empire, the people who want mechanics, whether to look after their private machines or to look after a fleet of taxis, or for the care and maintenance of air-line machines, will be bound to come to the R.A.F. for their men. And then the organisation which exists at the Air Ministry to find employment for time-expired airmen will be kept pretty busy.

When once a man has got a start in Civil Aviation his prospects depend entirely on himself. Luck plays some part in his future. He may start with a good firm and rise with it to a well-paid responsible position as chief engineer. Or he may start with an ill-fated firm which will go bankrupt after a few months or a few years. But even experience with a bad firm is worth while, because at any rate a man can learn how not to do things. And that is nearly as valuable as learning how to do them.

When any particular trade is booming there is always a chance of getting out of a bad job into a better one. And the prospects and possibilities of air transport are so enormous that a man who is starting at the beginning can afford to make quite a number of false starts before

finding a job in which he is ultimately going to make his fortune.

The high-water mark in any man's career must eventually be decided by his own ability and temperament. He may, as one has said, become chief engineer of a great air line. In that case he must be a first-class business man as well as a good engineer. He may not be a first-class mechanic, but he must know whether a job is being done properly and he must be able to handle men.

On the other hand, there are plenty of men who are Heaven-sent geniuses as mechanics, but who have no ability whatever in controlling other men and can never hope even to be charge hands or foremen. Several of the very finest workmen with their hands and heads whom one has ever met have had such queer temperaments that they could not even work at the same bench as anybody else, and could only make a living by running little shops of their own, in which they could barely make as much as an ordinary workman would draw in daily wages.

On the other hand there are men who are very ordinary mechanics but who have got the knack of getting good work out of other people. Though they may not have the mental capacity for highly responsible positions, they can, at any rate, be sure of very good pay as shop foremen.

Thus one can see that the prospects for Halton-trained mechanics are rather better than they are for people who have been trained in first-class engineering shops or motor shops. For the Halton folk have the very great advantage that they have come in, so to speak, on the ground floor of a new trade which has practically unlimited prospects, and they have had a special training for that trade which gives them an enormous advantage at the start over men who will ultimately try to get into the trade from other branches of engineering.

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## Tenth Royal Air Force Display

The Air Ministry announces that the tenth Royal Air Force Display will be held at Hendon aerodrome on Saturday, 13th July, 1929. This date, which is somewhat later than in previous years, has been decided upon so that visitors can conveniently, if they wish, combine visits to the Display and to the International Aero Exhibition which opens at Olympia on July 16th next.