

## A FLYING OFFICER

ing and has "lost his prop." In other words he has stalled his engine, and has to sit there till a mechanic can run out to start him up again. Needless to say, pupils who do this sort of thing frequently are most unpopular with the mechanics. Swinging a propeller is no easy task, but when it entails a half-mile walk at each end of the job, it is rather worse.

Over by the sheds a number of pupils are waiting their turn to go up. One of them in a machine is nervously running his engine preparatory to going up alone for the first time. His instructor is standing on the side of the machine watching the instruments and shouting directions. The engine is slowed down, and off goes the machine, first slowly over the grass till it reaches the centre of the aerodrome, then with roaring engine, and heading into the wind, it tears off the ground, rises and floats up and up till it becomes a speck five miles away. From this moment until fifteen minutes later when the machine again approaches the sheds, and prepares to land, is a trying time for the instructor, who can do nothing but look on. This pupil makes a fair landing, and proud as punch gets out of his machine and is told that he can "wash out" for the remainder of the evening.

I have been detailed to do a reconnaissance of two roads, each about ten miles long, with a view to their suitability for concealment of infantry from aircraft, facilities for watering horses, condition and traffic. In addition I have been shown two spots on a map and have been told to ascertain what is on the ground at these points.

I get in my machine, put on my leather cap and tie a pencil on the end of a string to my belt. Then I fold my map so that the spot I have to cover is visible, and then secure my map to my left leg above the knee with one of my garters. I do the same with a notebook on my right knee, and after a final polish of my goggles I am ready. The next three minutes is spent in testing the engine. This is found to be O.K. I wave my arm, do up my belt, the chocks are taken away from beneath my wheels, and I slowly taxi out, look round for other machines, then heading to wind I take off.