

Aeroplane v. Airship

miles, one of our aviators delivered an attack on a temporary aircraft shed the Germans had established near Brussels, passing low above it under the shield of darkness, and setting it on fire with incendiary bombs. But with aeroplanes, in the stage they have reached to-day, and with engine failure represented by an ever-present risk, the question must be asked, in organizing a night-flight, whether it is justified. Each time a pilot ascends, when it is dark, he endangers his own life and runs the chance of wrecking his machine ; and neither men nor craft should be risked lightly. If he starts from an aerodrome with which he is familiar, and can return to it again in safety, being guided in his descent by flare-lamps on the ground, then the risk he runs is not so great. The real danger, and one that cannot be guarded against, is that his motor may fail while he is in flight over a tract of country with which he is not familiar, and which he can see only dimly below. In such a predicament, planing down through the darkness and being unable to choose his landing-point, he may strike the roof of a house or a wall, or dash into a hedge, breaking his machine to pieces and perhaps losing his life.

What those who are interested in aviation have hoped to see in this war, and have not yet seen, is a conflict between airships and aeroplanes under conditions which are favourable to the former ; during, that is to say, the hours of darkness. As to the result of a combat in daylight