

HIS IDEALS AND TRAINING

Possibly you will be interested in a meagre description of afternoon flying. We have to be at the sheds at 4.10 p.m. In front of them runs a strip of tarred road surface fifty feet wide. On this the machines stand while waiting to go up; it is called the "Tarmac." We have a roll call at 4.15 p.m., and then sit in the sun on the tarmac with our "funny hat" and goggles. Presently a loud spluttering and then a deep hum from one of the forty machines lined up, is the signal for the commencement of the evening work. One of the instructors is going up to test the air. Up he goes, does a couple of circuits round the aerodrome, lands, and says: "2b pupils can wash out till six o'clock. Avros had better stay." This means that it is too bumpy for B.E. 2b's, but safe for Avros. Being a 2b artist, I go back to the mess or to my tent to read for an hour or so, and by the time I get there a dozen machines are in the air, and the throbbing hum of their engines is pretty loud. By the time I get well into my book the sound is no longer heard, although it is still there. One becomes unconscious of the racket, especially in the early morning, when one is lucky enough not to be on early flying, and can sleep peacefully through a row that would put an army of steel automatic rivetting machines to shame.

I go back to the sheds at six, and the air above the camp is thick with machines. In one place two Camels and a Pup are practicing aerial fighting, and are chasing each other up and down and around with all kinds of weird engine noises. Farther over and very high up five Avros are practising "formation flying"; keeping close together they are following their leader, who has a long streamer flying from his rudder. From the ground they resemble a small flock of birds, and they are so high that their engines cannot be heard above the hum of those below.

Quite near the ground a few pupils are practising landings, under the watchful eyes of their instructors, whose flow of language is surprisingly copious, should the landing prove a specially bad one.

Half a mile away, out in the centre of the aerodrome, a pupil is sitting in his machine. He has been careless in land-