

Aircraft with Machine-Guns

soldiers, lying under cover, nearer than they had imagined. These men opened a sudden fire, and killed both pilot and passenger before they had gone many yards from their machine.

It happens on occasion that two aeroplanes, each armed with machine-guns, and each flying at about the same speed, meet in conflict. In such an event, naturally, victory goes to the craft which is best handled and whose gunner is most accurate in his aim. In future, when fighting aircraft have been evolved of definite types, such equally matched combats will be frequent; while a squadron of hostile craft, meeting another of approximately the same armament and composition, will engage in a combined offensive. Then, owing to the swiftness of the machines, it will be necessary for their Commander to have a rapid means of communication with each of his units engaged. No doubt, by the time we reach such battles as these, a system of wireless telephones will be available. If so, and with these to aid him, the Commander of a squadron, flying high and observing the fortunes of a struggle, could telephone to each machine as he wished, ordering it to advance or retire, as the case might be, or sweep round on one or other of the flanks. Some such method of control appears essential; otherwise an air combat would resolve itself into a series of isolated duels.

The development of air-fighting, as revealed by the war, was practically this: at first, owing to the absence of a fighting machine,