

TRANSATLANTIC AIR SERVICE

People in Europe and America have watched with greatest interest the recent transatlantic flight of the Graf Zeppelin, the largest dirigible to attempt a transoceanic flight. Natural curiosity alone has actuated many to take note of this recent spectacular enterprise; while some have followed every minute detail of the expedition in order to see if airships can be of any use in linking the old World with the New.

It is generally conceded that it is impossible for airplanes to become an important factor in transatlantic air service. Airplanes cannot stand the fierce buffeting of the Atlantic winds. They cannot carry a sufficient number of passengers or enough of mail to make the project a success from an industrial standpoint. So if we expect this proposed service to be a reality we must turn our attention to the greatest of all ships of the air, the dirigible, and study its merits for such a hazardous trip.

It will be interesting to note what progress has been made in dirigible flights across the Atlantic Ocean. Three airships of this kind have attempted oceanic flight, and three have been comparatively successful: R-34, Los Angeles, Graf Zeppelin. The important factor to be considered in these three flights is this; each flight has been more successful than the one immediately preceding it. The Graf Zeppelin made the passage in shorter time, had more reserve fuel left at the completion of the passage, carried more passengers, and was considerably larger than either the R-34 or the Los Angeles.

In England at the present time all great Zeppelin experts are centering their every effort in the building and perfecting of the monster British dirigible, R-100, which they expect, will eclipse all previous dirigible records in the above-mentioned respects.

In order that dirigibles may successfully compete with steamships in transatlantic passenger service, they must offer a number of advantages. At present the only advantage afforded is speed and this must be further increased to offset the extra expense and lack of comfort they provide.

Another difficulty to be encountered, in such an uncertain industrial project as dirigible service, is the obtaining of sufficient capital to carry on the work of construc-

tion. Financiers and investors will consider two main points. Firstly, is there any possibility that airplanes or flying boats through successive development will overshadow dirigibles in Atlantic commercial service? This question can be safely answered in the negative. Secondly, will dirigibles be able to bring in sufficient revenue in the carrying of mails and passengers to justify the expending of large amounts of money?

In order to answer this it would be necessary to make a comparison between the revenue derived from money invested in steamship companies, and the revenue likely to be derived from an equal amount invested in dirigible companies. By getting down to facts, which space does not permit, it could be shown that for equal amounts invested in the respective industries the greater revenue would, in all possibility, be derived from that invested in dirigible companies.

It is therefore to be seen from the few foregoing facts that, after following the usual ups and downs of any great scientific innovation, dirigibles may finally become an important factor in our transportation problem, and even, perhaps, be as useful as steamships, automobiles, or railways.

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