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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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Authority on Meteorology

SAFE FLYING IN FOG

Pilots flying on the London-Continental air routes are enabled to keep to their course in foggy weather by an efficient direction-finding system, in operation on both sides of the Channel. A pilot, during flight, can get his bearing from a single station on the ground, or his absolute position, as determined by cross-bearings, from two or more stations.

Having requested such information by radio, he is instructed to talk by radio-  
phone or transmit by Morse for 30 seconds. The stations listen to his signals and his direction or position, as the case may be, is reported to him. The British stations employed in this service are at Croydon, Lympne and Pulham. When position is desired, the observations of the three stations are collected at Croydon and plotted on a chart, the results being transmitted to the pilot. The whole operation takes only about a minute and the reported location is seldom in error as much as two miles.

Other aids to flying in fog or cloud are now being tested in England and a complete solution of the problem seems to be at hand. There are automatic steering devices that keep the aircraft to its proper course in the air, turn-indicators to

supplement the unreliable compass, and fog-piercing neon lights at landing fields. Lastly, it is proposed to guide the aircraft to a landing field by means of a "leader cable", similar in operation to the one that was installed in New York harbor a few years ago for the benefit of shipping. The cable will be charged with an alternating current. A signal on the pilot's instrument board will show him when he is flying over the cable and parallel to it, and will also indicate his height above the ground.

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