

## Hydro-aeroplaning over Windermere.

BY MISS GERTRUDE BACON.

I understand, and I can readily believe, that the leader, and the majority of the followers of the misguided party who are still endeavouring to drive the Lakes Flying Company off Windermere, know neither the machines, the men, nor the circumstances. Surely this *must* be so, or they would not lend themselves to a movement so absurd, so unjustified, and so abominably unpatriotic. I only wish that to one and all of them could be afforded the opportunity I have just enjoyed.

Mr. Wakefield and Mr. Stanley Adams both met me at Lake Side, and in their neat little motor-launch, the *Sara*, whisked me across the water to "The Hill of Oaks." Here, in two large, substantial hangars are housed two of the four "water-planes" at present on Windermere.

"I don't claim any artistic merits for the sheds," said Mr. Wakefield, "but that is because, so far, I can get no one to design me a picturesque yet suitable building. I hope presently to erect one that shall be worthy of the landscape." The hangars in question are no eyesore—being much less obtrusive than the majority of the boat-sheds which disfigure the far more beautiful portion of the lake at Bowness—and it is hard indeed to understand the local objection to their presence here in a wide and almost deserted stretch of water, quite remote from habitations.

Poised on the sloping rail outside the hangar rested the *Water Hen*, the Lakes Flying Company's own biplane. Light, shapely, and graceful is she, with her bamboo framework, small planes, cross tail and Curtiss-like elevator. Gently she was let down into the water, where she rested on her big hydroplane float. Two cylindrical air-bags, known locally as the "Wakefield sausages," are suspended beneath the lower planes, but are not generally in contact with the water.

I scrambled easily to my perch behind and above the pilot's seat, occupied by Mr. Stanley Adams. The heat (it was a most broiling day) had made the Gnome bad tempered, and only after careful humouring and plentiful "doping" did it condescend to start. But, once off, she settled down to business, and away we went across the lake with a rhythmic purr of parting waters, but no sort of splashing. Then I felt the water-bird give a lifting heave, the purring ceased, the blue waters dropped down beneath, and we were in the air.

Soon we reached the more populated parts of Windermere. We passed right over the Ferry Hotel and its cheering crowd, and then the boat-dotted bay of Bowness. We were some 600 ft. high here, and, looking directly downwards, the bottom

of the lake was distinctly and curiously visible in its shallower parts. The glorious upper reaches of the lake, with its surrounding mountains, opened out in matchless panorama, and the wide, practically empty water stretched for miles and miles ahead. Truly this beats every other flying-ground.

We spied out all the secrets of the lake that afternoon—all the tree-embowered gardens, all the lovers in boats moored in sequestered nooks. They didn't mind a bit; they waved in friendliest greeting, everybody waved—the passengers on the crowded steamers, the bathers in the secluded bays, the garden party guests on the lawns of the big private houses—even (somewhat more sedately) the very high-class motorists at the Nowwood Hotel. The higher we went up the lake the more rapturous became the welcome, for the company, mindful of local protest, fly but very seldom in these more populated waters. But, indeed, one sees that the danger even from a directly falling aeroplane is practically nil—so big is the lake and so really few the boats on its surface, while, with any sort of power of choosing a landing-place no sort of risk can be run. The danger of a skidding car in crowded Grasmere must be infinitely greater.

We treated them to a double circle over Waterhead and Ambleside, then back again down the wooded western bank right to Lakeside, where we waved welcome to a train load of tourists, and eventually returned to Hill of Oaks after a 41-minute flight, and the first passenger flight round the whole 25-mile circuit of the lake.

There are three other water-planes on Windermere—one the fine monoplane of Mr. Gnosspelius, at this moment, poor man, struggling to combine aviation and a bad attack of sciatica; a Roe biplane, and the Admiralty Deperdussin. It was Mr. Wakefield's latest, and perhaps greatest, triumph to have converted this last into a successful hydro-aeroplane. How magnificently she flies! I had full opportunity of seeing next morning, when I spent happy hours in the *Sara* following her course as she darted about, with and without a passenger, over the lake, rising from the water and settling again with the greatest ease. Her evolutions were the delight of the Windermere tourists, who show the keenest interest in the water-planing experiments, while Bowness, Ambleside, and the Lakeside Hotels are unanimous in their satisfaction at an industry that provides such a splendid attraction for their visitors. While as to the national importance of the splendid work being done—but that, in the historic phrase, is another story.