

HYDRO-AEROPLANES ON WINDERMERE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—When Wordsworth wrote his pathetic appeal against the coming of the steam-horse to Birthwaite (Windermere) he called on Orrest-Head, "that beautiful romance of nature," to plead for the ancient peace of the scene he had in mind.

Much has happened since then. Orrest-Head remains, but the surrounding neighbourhood, owing to the steam-horse, has become almost a "residential suburb" of Manchester and Liverpool, and the merchants, unable to find rest in their weary cities, have come for quiet to the shores of what is in part their own Lancashire lake. The rural solitude has lost some charm in consequence, but we are grateful to the country which ministers of its peace and rest to men who sorely need it.

In a real way Windermere is an asset to national health and well-being by reason of this ministry. It may be imagined with what alarm the whole neighbourhood has heard that a resident in Kendal interested in mechanics, who has been experimenting for some time in the making of hydro-aeroplanes at a "hangar" on his own property, three miles south of Bowness, has suddenly determined to turn Bowness itself into a hydro-aeroplane manufacturing centre and aviation school. He has secured from the Rector of Windermere a lease of a portion of the glebe close to the boathouse between Bowness Bay and the Ferry, at a spot where the lake is at its narrowest, to enable him to build two huge hangars 21ft. high, for constructional purposes. There is rumour of these sheds being made the starting point for carrying passengers up and down the lake. It is said that he intends to convey them to Grasmere. I give the report for what it is worth.

Meanwhile the National Trust has been appealed to by residents, who assert that the noise of the machine which he has already constructed is heard as far as Saurey on the one hand and at Heathwaite on the opposite shore. They assert also that apart from the great nuisance of the noise, there will be real danger to the boating and sailing craft which swarm at Bowness in the summer months, and real danger also to affrighted horses as they are conveyed across the Ferry close by. Already it is said that horses have been frightened on roads near that part of the lake. It is not denied that both on leaving the water and alighting a certain amount of petrol, which is inimical to fish life, must be dropped on to the surface of the water.

But after all the main thing complained of is that the value of the shores of Windermere as a resort for rest and peace is seriously imperilled, and that residential property will be thereby deteriorated. I know of one resident already who says that if the factory comes he at any rate shall go.

It is fair to the Rector to say that as soon as he was appealed to he tried to break off negotiations, but the lease had been signed and stamped, contracts had been let, and the lessee held him to his bargain. The urban council have been approached, but they appear to be powerless. The residents are up in arms, and will doubtless bring what pressure may be brought to bear upon the Secretary of State to prohibit the flying of the machines to the danger of the inhabitants and visitors.

It is fair also to the promoter to state that he is willing to promise not to fly over the villages of Bowness and Windermere, and that his airmen will not fly on Sundays.

Those who know the lake will remember how extremely narrow it is at the point where the factory will be placed. Seen from above Low Wood, Windermere at that point looks like a river, and, quite apart from the fact that aviators are agreed that flying in a mountainous country is full of special danger, it would seem that no worse place could have been selected, as far as the safety to other people who use and enjoy the lake goes. Nor could the "hangars" themselves in their ugliness be worse placed for all who go up and down the lake.

I have no wish to be a spoilsport or to hinder science that may help the nation, but surely there are other parts of England better fitted for these experiments, quite apart from the greater question of the necessity and duty of keeping "secure from rash assault" the beautiful parts of England which minister to the well-being and rest of the people. Bowness cannot compete with Blackpool, and was never, I venture to think, intended to do so.

I am willing to run the risk of being accused of selfishness in fighting for the peace of the English Lakes, but in Wordsworth's own words, "If gratitude for what repose and quiet in a district hitherto for the most part not disfigured by human hands has done for me, and hope that others hereafter might be benefited in the same manner and same country be selfishness, then indeed, but not otherwise, I plead guilty to the charge."

I do not appeal only to Orrest-Head to help, I appeal to all lovers of the English Lakes to rise and protest against this new and shortsighted invasion of what remains to us of the tranquillity and charm of Windermere.

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