AERIAL WAR

THE NATIONS PREPARED.

M. GUILLAUX'S VIEWS.

The possibilities of the aeroplane in modern warfare were vividly portrayed by M. Guillaux, the French airman.

"The next war," he said, "will be won by the nation with the most efficient aerial force. France, to-day, is the greatest Power in the air, and if she comes into conflict with any nation whose naval and military forces are not greatly in excess of her own, her aeroplanes will win the day.

France, M. Guillaux added, now possesses between 400 and 500 aeroplanes. These are used for three main purposes, and are classified accordingly.

There are "escadrilles" or monoplanes, which, carrying a pilot only, are capable of ascending rapidly to great heights. These are used for rectifying gun fire, and local scouting purposes. Other monoplanes carry an observer as well as the pilot, and, like all of the larger army aeroplanes, are equipped with wireless telegraphy. With one of these machines it would be possible for two scouts to fly 250 miles to the rear of an enemies' lines, telegraph details of his position, and return without alighting. Such flights are an every-day occurrence in France, M. Guillaux declared, and it is possible to fly for 10 hours at a speed of 90 miles per hour. An enemy's frontiers could be well scoured in that time.

"But the machine to be most feared," he continued, "is the biplane. These machines carry both arms, in the shape of quick-firing guns, and explosives, and their devastating powers have been well proved. No army could withstand for long a guerilla warfare in which its foe was ambushed in the clouds, swooping down on occasion to destroy a bridge or harass a marching company in fortified and apparently safe territory. Clouds and fog are no deterrent to the movements of an aeroplane. It is possible to steer by compass."

M. Guillaux said he had travelled from Paris to Bordeaux without sight of land, and without deviating half a mile from his course.

AIRSHIP V. AEROPLANE.

The airship, considered by some Powers to be the backbone of an aerial fleet, according to M. Guillaux, would stand but little chance in conflict with aeroplanes.

"France has a few 'semi rigid' airships, but," he said, "what use are they when an aeroplane can rise 3000ft above them and drop shells from aerial regions they can never attain. The speed of a modern aeroplane, too, is almost double that of an airship. The airship, certainly, is useful for night scouting. It can carry, maybe, tons of explosives for the wholesale destruction of forts, but without a convoy of aeroplanes to protect it from the attacks of a mosquito fleet, the sphere of the usefulness would be very limited."

"Germany," considered by M. Guillaux, to be the second aerial power, "has," he said, "many airships, but she was now laying great store on heavier-than air machines. Unlike Britain, Russia, and Italy, Germany built her own planes and her own engines. The other European Powers relied almost entirely on French machines and engines, or those built under French license. Russia was the third most powerful nation in the air. She was a firm believer in aeroplanes. One French firm alone had recently sold her 600 engines, to be fitted to monoplanes. England came fourth on the list of aerial Powers, and Italy fifth. America was a long way behind. The machines in the United States were chiefly for exhibition purposes.

THE HYDRO AEROPLANE.

"The hydro aeroplane would also be a big factor in modern warfare," explained M. Guillaux. "These were nothing more or less than big bi-planes, to which floats had been attached. They were, therefore, able to alight upon or fly from the surface of the water. The speed of the hydro-aeroplane was not so great as that of an aeroplane, neither had it such a vast scope; but it had been proved to be a wonderfully effective weapon.

"It is to the hydro-aeroplane," said M. Guillaux, "that Australia must look for the solution of her aerial problem. Aeroplanes are useful, of course, but with her vast sea frontages it is necessary for Australia to employ machines capable of following the movements of an attacking fleet, and, if possible, ascertaining where the enemy intended to make a landing."

The necessity for adequate means of communication between the capitals, and a more pressing need for the protection of the lines of communication, were emphasised by the aviator, who stated that by the simplest means he could destroy bridges on, say, the existing railway between Sydney and Melbourne, even if they were guarded by a battalion, and thus prevent mobilisation or important army move-

by a battalion, and thus prevent mobilisation or important army movements.

A HARD TARGET.

Flying at an elevation of about 3500ft, an aeroplane was a most difficult target, but at that height an aviator could see all he wanted to see and do all he wanted to do without an effort. The French authorities had adopted a light field gun, mounted on a motor car, as the most efficient weapon for repelling aeroplane attacks. But at the best of times the gunners considered the aeroplane a hard target, and the aviator had little to fear. A proectile, too, had to hit a vital spot. It was little use putting a shot through the wing.

Discussing the prospects of aviation in Australia, M. Guillaux stated that he considered the Australian atmosphere to be most suitable for flight. When at a height of over 11,000ft one day and equipped with an oxygen inhaler, he could have easily attained, if not exceeded, the world's altitude of 21,000ft.