

SYDNEY TO MELBOURNE.

PROJECTED AEROPLANE FLIGHT.

Captain Petrie, of the Commonwealth Aviation Corps, M. Marduel, the jovial Frenchman, whose brief pupilage under M. Guillaux has already made him prominent in aviation circles in New South Wales, and two "mechanics," had a trial flight near Richmond yesterday.

It was a trial run preparatory to starting this afternoon on a flight to Melbourne—the second long-distance flight to be attempted in Australia (Guillaux's flight from Melbourne to Sydney was the first), but as much care had to be expended beforehand, as though it were the great flight itself. For half an hour or more the four representatives of the Entente—the two airmen and the two blue-clad assistants—worked busily in and around the deceptively-fimsy-looking machine, tightening screws, making taut an occasional sagging stay, and ensuring the accurate running of every part of the wonderful Gnome engine. It is a Caudron biplane, one of the latest French machines, and cost about £1700 to land in Australia. With an engine of 80 horse power, a speed of about 75 miles an hour can be obtained. On his last trip, indeed, M. Marduel, who has been in charge of the aeroplane prior to its taking over by the Government, flew from Richmond to Centennial Park in 20 minutes.

The plane emerged from the shed, running with cumbrous ease on its newly-inflated tyres. The aviator, his head covered with the familiar leather helmet, like a punching ball in appearance, and with his hands enveloped in huge fur gloves, gave the word to "go." With a roar and a crackle the engine leapt into life, the tractor became merely a bewildering eddy of noise and wind, and the bi-plane, leaving the two assistants, their grasp suddenly relaxed, sprawling on the grass, scurried over the level meadow, and soared easily and swiftly into the air. Rising in great sweeping circles, Captain Petrie attained a height of something like 4000ft. within a few minutes of leaving the ground. He returned to terra firma after a flight of about fifteen minutes over Richmond and Windsor, and expressed himself as well satisfied with the qualities of the machine, and its capacity for the task before it. Weather conditions permitting, he proposes to begin his aerial journey from Richmond to Melbourne this afternoon.