

CINDERELLA TRANSFORMATION . . .

they went on doing so until the time came when the duty of loading ambulance aircraft was taken over by R.A.F. casualty-evacuation personnel. The War Office then quite naturally decided that the fuselage was redundant and requested the Air Ministry to remove it.

There now enters into this story a touch of the macabre, for it is said that the Dakota (still on its wheels) ran away while it was being moved, prior to its complete removal from Mytchett, and ended its run with undercarriage in a tank ditch and nose resting ignominiously on the edge. There it was pathetically visible from the main Southampton-London railway line. Such a story, even if apocryphal—it has not been possible to prove it—adds even more point to this Cinderella's subsequent transformation scene.

In this case (though it might be tactless to carry the pantomime analogy too far) the Good Fairy was Eagle Aircraft Services, Ltd. For when the Air Ministry put up what was left of KN550 for sale by competitive tender, E.A.S. bought it. They then transported this very dilapidated fuselage and centre section by road up to their premises at Ringway Airport, Manchester; and their problem—no easy one, by any stretch of imagination—was then to get a C. of A. and transform what was once a flyable aeroplane into a saleable proposition.

Eagle set about this task with remarkable promptitude, for within about three weeks of getting KN550 to Manchester, they had arranged for its sale to B.O.A.C., on behalf of Aden Airways, as a completed aeroplane with a full 12 months' C. of A. Rebuilding it, however, proved a much more laborious and lengthy task; for, after nearly six years' untended exposure to the wind and weather, much of KN550's fuselage and centre section was unserviceable—and certainly nothing unserviceable escaped the eagle eyes of A.R.B. and B.O.A.C. inspectors keeping a close watch on all the work being done.

There was, inevitably, a tremendous amount of corrosion to be

cleaned up. The fin attachment frames had been broken by incorrect haulage. All the white paint had to be removed. Fortunately, the fuel tanks were serviceable; but the obtaining of spares to replace unserviceable items and new parts to make the aircraft complete presented a big problem to Mr. R. Clacher, who has been in charge of production, and Mr. C. W. Axten, who is responsible for inspection of all work done, in the Eagle hangar at Ringway. They got a port wing from B.E.A., and the starboard one came from S.A.S. at Copenhagen; so G-AOJI—to give this demobilized Dakota her civilian title—will fly over the Arabian deserts in somewhat mongrel fashion. New tyres and engines, of course, had to be obtained; and the fuselage has been given a complete new skin from aft of the wing roots, both above and below. All electrical wiring was renewed and hydraulic, de-icing, fuel and oil supply lines checked, most of them being renewed. The front cockpit equipment was still reasonably complete, but had to be replanned to meet Aden Airways' requirements. All the passenger accommodation has had to be fitted from scratch to B.O.A.C./Aden Airways standards; and understandably the complicated work—virtually a rebuilding—has taken something over twelve months' patient effort to complete. Its achievement is a fine piece of work by Eagle Aircraft Services, Ltd.

Now, however, G-AOJI has been completed and wears her new white and blue colours with Aden Airways' double Speedbird insignia, under which she now starts a life of civilian passenger carrying. Who would have thought, when the aircraft left Canada in 1945, that nearly twelve years later she would find her way out to Southern Arabia in B.O.A.C. service? And how many of her future passengers will realize that the aircraft in whose tastefully appointed cabin they are comfortably sipping their coffee or orange juice above the desert sands was once a neglected and weatherbeaten fuselage used for the ground training of R.A.M.C. personnel near the military town of Aldershot? Perhaps Aden Airways—in view of her unusual history—might call G-AOJI *Cinderella*. Or maybe—like the rest of the Aden fleet—the new aircraft will remain discreetly anonymous. H.W.

SPEEDING U.S.A.F. PRODUCTION

LAST week the U.S. Defense Department announced five guiding factors which, it was hoped, will reduce the overall period between the issue of a requirement for military aircraft and their delivery to user squadrons.

The factors are: better long-range planning for new weapons; energetic tapping of all sources of ideas for new weapons; Service Secretaries and Chiefs of Staff to pay close attention to new weapons earlier in the development cycle to achieve correct priority and financial support; each new programme to be supervised by an experienced military officer who will remain in his post for more than three years; and simplification in contract procedures.

NORTH AMERICAN IN EUROPE

A EUROPEAN office—in Geneva—is to be opened by North American Aviation, Inc., under the charge of Robert J. Clark, who will be stationed at the Hotel du Rhône until permanent offices are ready. Mr. Clark, who joined the company in 1943, has for the past three years been their Washington staff's co-ordinator with the U.S. Navy Bureau of Aeronautics.

HARVARD CONVERSION

A CONVERSION of the ubiquitous North American T-6 or SNJ Harvard, incorporating a tricycle undercarriage and other refinements, is scheduled to fly this month. The new machine, known as the Super-6, is the product of the Erle L. Bacon Corporation of Santa Monica, U.S.A., and is expected to complete C.A.A. flight tests in April.

The conversion has been developed for sale primarily to foreign air forces, several of which are stated to have indicated serious interest in the project. After fifteen years' service, the retirement of the T-6 from the U.S. Services was recently announced.

The principal new features of the Super-6 are the tricycle landing gear, modernized power package with jet stacks and augmentor cooling, one-piece canopy, new lightweight Goodyear wheels, modernized cockpit and instrument panel, reduction of 4ft in span, wingtip fuel pods, and a general "cleaning-up" of the airframe to reduce weight and drag. An increase in cruising speed of 30 m.p.h. and a 20 per cent greater cruising range are estimated. The original main fuel tanks in the centre section have been removed to accommodate the main landing gear, but the total fuel capacity is increased.

BRITAIN FROM THE AIR

UNDER the title *From the Pilot's Seat*, Chapman and Hall published in 1950 a book in which were reproduced over a hundred low-altitude oblique photographs of features of scenic and architectural interest in the British Isles. Finely printed on art paper, the collection was in many ways a remarkable one, with an informative commentary by Mr. Cyril E. Murrell—managing director of Aero Pictorial, Ltd., of Redhill Aerodrome, Surrey, who owns the copyright of the photographs. Some remaining copies of the book were acquired by Aero Pictorial and are being retailed at 12s 6d—half the original published price. Aero Pictorial style themselves "artists in aerial photography," and if the illustrations in this book are typical of their work the claim is not an exaggerated one.

COLOURED DRAWINGS of historic aircraft (measuring 8in x 10in, plus a white border) are now available, price 3s 6d each, from Gordon Storey, 9 Cecil Court, Charing Cross Road, London, W.C.2. The reproduction here is indicative of their style. Already in the series are the Camel, Nieuport 17, Spad, Bristol Fighter, D.H.4, R.E.8, F.E.2B, S.E.5A, Pup, Fokker Triplane, Fokker D.VII and Albatross. In preparation are similar pictures of the Zero, Me 109, Spitfire, Hurricane, Tomahawk, Fw 190, Ju 87 and Me 110.

