

THEY MUST SEE IN THE DARK!

Death stalks the night raiding Luftwaffe through the eyes of our night fighter pilots. How these keen eyes pierce the darkness is the subject of an exclusive visit by our cameramen to an important ophthalmic testing and training centre of the R.A.F. where a series of delicate instruments test the vision of airman candidates. These strong young eyes, perfect in daylight may need certain correction for night work. Here's an interesting method of finding out muscular defect in the eye. Watch the reaction of his left eye as it's uncovered. A slight case of "lazy" eye which can be soon corrected under treatment.

This is a job for an instrument known as the Synoptophore, an apparatus which registers the balance of the eye muscles. Through the vision-tubes the candidate sees pictures which, by delicate adjustment, are fused into a composite structure. Not only does the exercise massage the eye muscles, but it has a direct bearing on the mental picture created in the brain. After a few weeks of this, this man will go forth to his training squadron.

Now we pass to the depth perception apparatus, an ingenious device which enables the co-ordination of sight, thought and touch to be studied. It gauges the efficiency with which his brain has been adjusted and his eyes re-poised. The candidate holds a large wheel which moves a long vertical pin connected with a recording drum. What he has to do is to set the middle pin correctly in relation to its fellows on either side. As you see, the recording drum tells its own story. This test is the most delicate known, for estimating the power of visual judgment.

Now is the ability to see in the night sky estimated in the Royal Air Force? The aircrews are taken in groups of six and are seated round a table on which is placed yet another instrument. Dark goggles are issued and our infernal party prepare to do a little reading in the dark.

Distance from the apparatus is measured with a sort of yard stick. Sometimes a natural desire to make a good score leads an airman to lean forward, so he's harnessed to the back of the chair with a clip fastened to his tunic. They don't want any cribbing in the black-out. And besides, here come their copy books, and they mustn't blot those.

In actual practice the test would be made in complete darkness with the objects to be identified very faintly illuminated from within. What a strange classroom this is at this school for "catseyes".

The examination's over. We have come to know how the R.A.F. Judges the quality of the night eyes of those who patrol the skies when darkness falls. Science make it possible for man to detect the dim outline of his enemy flying through the night. These specialists of the dark realms amid the stars seek out their prey. We unhesitatingly praise the men who fly by night. Do doubt at all - the "eyes" have it.