

Aircraft Types and

DEFIANT II TARGET TUG

TARGET towing has, in the past, been one of a variety of jobs given to obsolescent aircraft.

But aerial combat takes place to-day at such high speeds that it has been necessary to use much faster tugs than hitherto so that pilots can be trained under conditions approximating more closely to those they will experience in actual operations against the enemy. Few of the older types adapted for drogue towing meet present-day requirements except the Hawker Henley (which was originally designed as a fighter but never went into service as such) and the Miles Martinet, which was specially designed for target towing comparatively recently.

To augment the Henleys and Martinets, the Boulton Paul Defiant II has now been modified for drogue towing, and it is the first modern fighter so to be employed. The type, however, is still in service with the R.A.F. as a day and night fighter, and yet another version, with a two-gun turret, functions as a gunnery trainer.

While the main characteristics of the Defiant, particu-

larly its informative triangular fin and rudder, have clearly survived the adaptation, the tug version does present a number of important changes in outline. First and foremost, the once familiar four-gun Boulton Paul turret has disappeared and in its place there is a slightly raised transparent cockpit cover. A winch projects from the starboard side of this cockpit, there is a short arm projecting from the bottom of the fuselage just behind the radiator, and immediately aft of this arm is the long shallow container housing the drogue target itself. This container extends to within a few inches of the tailwheel. The cable from the air-driven winch passes through the arm to the drogue. The small projections seen on the tailplane tips are wires to prevent accidental damage from the cable when the drogue is in tow.

Powered by a 1,260 h.p. Rolls-Royce Merlin XX engine, the top speed of the Defiant with drogue in tow is about 260 m.p.h. at 20,000ft., as compared with 306 m.p.h. at 13,500ft. for the turret fighter version.

