

FIFTEEN THOUSANT ABOVE DIXIE

CARL FISHER'S OWN STORY THRILLING AERIAL RIDE IN GREAT NATIONAL BALLOON

By **CARL G. FISHER,**

Pilot Balloon Indiana in National Championship
Race of Aero Club of America.

AFTER four ascensions abroad and eleven here in Indiana, one of which I made alone at night, I began to think I knew something about exploring the trackless, silent regions above us. When I received my pilot's license from the Aero Club of America I was sure I knew all about it.

Now, after my experience of forty-nine hours in the air, from Hoosierdom to Dixieland, some of which time was spent at an altitude of close to 16,000 feet, and which included a "thriller" that my aid, Capt. G. L. Bumbaugh, had never met with before in his 300 ventures into cloud-land, I am frank to admit that when I started in the big race I did not have a clear and concise idea of real ballooning.

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No sooner had we mounted on the wings of a southeast wind, following close on the trail of A. Holland Forbes and Clifford B. Harmon in their balloon, the New York, than we began the work of examining the conditions of our vessel. It is necessary to inspect all valve ropes, the supply of ballast, and the instruments that tell the story of ascent or descent. I might say here for the benefit of the uninitiated that the key to the gates of the mysteries above is the canvas bag of sand. Sand is to the pilot of the sky what water is to the traveler of a desert.

All was well at the start. We made a gradual ascent of 2,000 feet, all the time keeping our eyes on Forbes, who was rising rapidly and apparently seeking for a high current, which he found at 7,000 feet. We decided that we had better chance it at about 3,000 feet, where we found a wind blowing directly south.

At the height of 4,000 feet the Speedway grounds presented an inspiring sight, as we could see thousands of men and women waving us a last good-by and wishing us good luck. It is a queer sensation that creeps gradually over one's body until you are flooded with a feeling that the earth is fast falling away, while you have become the helpless victim of the invisible element that rules the sky. For miles around the Speedway in every direction we could see the crowds on foot and in automobiles trying to follow us. But we soon left them. For the roads of the sky are not beset with turns and curves, bridges and hills, nor do you meet passersby and have to slow down to let them pass.

Magnificent Scene in Moonlight.

Up to 6:30 o'clock all the entrants in the national race were in sight. We then rose to 8,000 feet in order to keep the University City, which had followed and was gaining,

to see the darkness below, is worth risking or rest my body on the basket at the glory unfolding before me.

We soon sighted the Hudson River and then made our way seek a northwest current. of paper we found such above the earth. We were lighted to find we had caught a swifter breeze. We had stronger, so kept in it for out warning, it seemed to about forty miles from the river, in a northwest wind blowing in any direction.

We hung over one spot descended to 6,000 feet and

