

THESE MEN OF WEALTH FIND THEIR PLEASURE IN THE AIR

A. Holland Forbes, Publisher, Yachtsman and Aeronaut Who Pronounces Aerial Navigation Less Risky Than Automobiling—Clifford B. Harmon, Who Has Made More Than Fifty Ascensions and Declares That While Ballooning All Care Is Forgotten—Arthur T. Atherholt, One of the Best-Known Amateur Balloonists in America—Cortlandt Field Bishop, Most Widely Known of All American Aeronauts—Colgate Hoyt, Charles J. Glidden, A. B. Lambert, Professor A. Lawrence Rotch and the Record Ascensions They Have Made



THE TROPHY FOR WHICH ALL BALLOONIST STRIVE—THE LAUREL CUP

BY HENRY M. ABELY.
Chairman of the Contest Committee, Aeronauts' Club of America.

"BALLOONING is no more dangerous than automobiling; in fact, it is much less risky. It is the greatest sport in the world, and the most healthful.

Holland Forbes, wealthy publisher, yachtsman and aeronaut, moved painfully on the pneumatic cushion that covered his chair as he made this declaration. He had just begun to get about after the terrible fall from the skies which ended his attempt to break all American balloon records, and in which he and his companion, James Carrington Yates, had barely escaped with their lives. Yet Forbes was impatient to go up again, and reiterated his declaration that aeronautics was the king of sports and not at all hazardous.

At the wonderful hold that ballooning has taken upon wealthy men of this country, the rosters of the aero clubs of the country abound with names whose owners have made wealth that runs close to the seven-figure mark, or even above, and one authority's estimate that the money represented by the Aero Club of America alone is near \$100,000,000 is probably not far wrong.

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Forbes' Marvelous Escape.

As has been said, Forbes made his declaration while he was still suffering from the effects of a bad fall. But it was by no means the first time he had been in extreme peril, for his most sensational drop and most marvelous escape occurred two years ago in full sight of thousands of awestruck spectators.

This was in the international distance race for the James Gordon Bennett trophy in October, 1908. The contest that year started from Berlin. Forbes was piloting his big balloon, Conqueror, and the whole affair was under the supervision of the Secretary of the Aero Club of America, as his aide. One by one, eight of the 22 great gas bags rose majestically and sailed away to the northeast. The Conqueror was ninth.

Forbes gave the word and his assistants let go. Straight into the air the big balloon rose until it reached a height of half a mile. Then, still rising to 3000 feet, it drifted slowly over a little suburb called Friedland.

Suddenly there was a thrill of horror among the spectators as a puff of what looked like smoke encircled the Conqueror. The great bag was seen to split open, and the whole apparatus, with its human freight, shot like an immense stone toward the earth over half a mile below. So quickly did it fall that the first gasps were still in the thousands of throats. Then the bag spread out, forming a gigantic parachute, checked the descent just as the two men in the basket seemed to be plunging down among the roofs of the village.

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house, with not a scratch on them and not even the sign of a bruise to carry away as a souvenir of their remarkable escape.

"Dangerous," says Forbes. "Not a bit. You can always parachute your balloon and get let down easy."

Nevertheless, all this was far from the case with Forbes' last accident, which was the culmination of an ascent made last May from Quincy, Ill., with the avowed intention of breaking all balloon records either from duration of flight, altitude or distance covered, or any two or all three of these. And despite the accounts of the accident published at the time, here for the first time is told the real story of the affair. Mr. Forbes was accompanied, James C. Yates, and myself started at half past 6 in the evening. Mr. Forbes told me, "and we rose to about 2000 feet, traveling south-west in a steady wind. All night we drifted back and forth, getting nowhere until nearly 8 o'clock the following morning, when we struck an east-southwesterly wind, and went straight to our landing place. At 11:40 we had reached a height of 15,000 feet and struck a snow storm. An hour later we passed through another balloon, and at 12:30 we were at a height of 10,000 feet. At 1:00 o'clock in the afternoon we made one of the records we were after by reaching an extreme altitude of 20,000 feet. This is 1000 feet higher than any authorized altitude ever made in America. "But by this time our ballast was almost gone, and the gas in the balloon had so contracted by quick descent that the envelope was very flabby. I saw that we must soon come down, so, at a height of about 200 feet we trained along, hoping to land near a railroad that we had seen many miles away. "We went over the country about three miles from Cralhope, Green County, Ky., the most desolate and inaccessible inhabited spot on the whole continent of America. The nearest railroad station to Cralhope is Horse Cave, 21 miles away. "We trailed along the appendix line suddenly, and from a concentrating ring which is just above the basket. There was so little gas in the balloon that the gas in the envelope was so saturated with the weight of the basket, the rip cord, which was tied at the end, was not quite long enough to allow for the escape of the little gas that remained. "We cannot describe the sensation of that 350 foot drop to the ground. We were not high enough to give the balloon time to parachute, and that is why we were hurt. "I have a faint recollection of trying to tilt the basket ready to spring out and bending my knees to meet the shock of landing. Then, subconsciously, I pulled our pneumatic mattress under us—this mattress that I am sitting on now and that was all that saved us. "We were both stunned by the fall for a few moments. Then some men came to us and we were carried on improvised litters into a nearby cabin. We were so badly shaken that we could hardly move, but there was no truth in those stories of aerial fatalities and deaths. "We had fallen into a place locally known as 'Boston's Bottom' and we were carried to the house of a farmer named Bastin. People came from miles around to see us, for none of them had even heard of a balloon before. They were very primitive and most of them were almost every one of them believed at first we were some kind of supernatural beings. We heard of many funny stories to account for our presence in the sky and they all show the superstition of the people. "Just before our fall, while we were trailing 500 feet high, we saw one man fleeing before us in a perfect panic. When he saw that we were overtaking him, he wheeled around and fell to his knees and shouted: 'I've never killed nobody and I've never gambled much, but O, Lord, I've lived a—' of a life! Please forgive me, please forgive me!" "I told Forbes he is the best known of all the American balloonists. With Clifford B. Harmon as his aide, he succeeded in winning the international endurance race from Indianapolis in June, 1908, staying in the air for 36 hours. He and Harmon together owned the balloon New York, in which his record was made. Harmon afterward buying Forbes' share. Forbes now pins his faith to his new balloon Viking.

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Clifford B. Harmon, son-in-law of E. C. Benedict, holds American aerial records, Arthur T. Atherholt, of Philadelphia, whose business connections have made him known to the States, Pennsylvania, will forsake commerce any day to go up in a balloon. Professor A. Lawrence Rotch, the famous meteorologist, who has made the Blue Hill observatory famous, sails the sea of air in balloons both for science's sake and pleasure's sake. The famous record of wealth whose trips in the air by means of the modern dirigible gas bag have been more or less numerous since the present balloon craze began, as mentioned Colgate Hoyt, railroad magnate and corporation director; Hugh T. Willoughby, yachtsman, motorist, athlete, aviator and founder of the Rhode Island Naval Militia; M. Robert Guggenheim, first vice-president of the Seattle Aero Club and director of half a dozen of the mining and smelting corporations which his family controls; C. A. Cooney, the Chicago automobile enthusiast; Augustus Post, of the Aero Club of America, who has devoted most of his time and money to the sport, and young Jay Gould.

Probably every one of these men would insist with Forbes that ballooning is no more dangerous than automobiling, yet if they were to sit down and tell of their aerial experiences, the stories would be found to abound in adventures that would seem anything but safe to the average peaceful citizen.

Forbes' Marvelous Escape.

As has been said, Forbes made his declaration while he was still suffering from the effects of a bad fall. But it was by no means the first time he had been in extreme peril, for his most sensational drop and most marvelous escape occurred two years ago in full sight of thousands of awestruck spectators.

There was a wild rush to the spot from all directions and the news flashed along a score of telegraph and cable lines that the two Americans had met a frightful death in their fall from the sky. But the police found them on the roof of a

house, with not a scratch on them and not even the sign of a bruise to carry away as a souvenir of their remarkable escape.

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