

OVER THE ALPS IN A BALLOON

Thrilling Voyage of Scientists Studying Atmospheric Phenomena.

FOUND WHY THE SKY IS TINTED BLUE

Traveled 142 Miles in 344 Minutes—Dangers Threatened, but Glorious—Valuable Scientific Results of the Expedition.

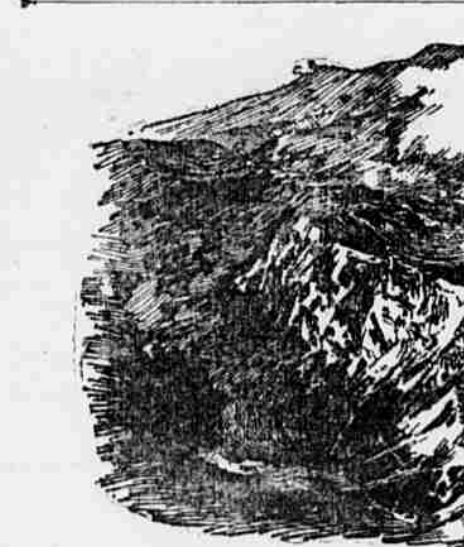
A report has just been made of the most extraordinary balloon voyage on record. It is of the most intense interest to scientists and everyone studying the problem of aerial navigation.

Four men in the balloon Vega crossed the Alps from Sitten, in Switzerland, to Mt. Soule, in France, some distance north of Dijon. The speed was equal to that of the fastest European railway train, and at times exceeded that of the most rapid American express.

The expedition was undertaken for purely scientific purposes. The captain of the balloon was Prof. Ed Spelterini, who has made more than five hundred successful balloon ascensions.

The balloon was built for the purely scientific purpose of the trip. The diameter of the balloon when filled was about sixty feet; its circumference was 190 feet, capacity 9,000 cubic feet.

The ascent. Four men held the ropes of the captive balloon, ready to lose them at the signal. The passengers climbed into the car that swung beneath it and threw out sacks of ballast equal in weight.



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE ALPS AND CLOUDS, TAKEN FROM THE BALLOON.

shouts of thousands of spectators, for scientists had come from all over Europe to see this experiment.

"It was 10:53 a. m. as the Vega rose into the air. At first we ascended at the rate of over a yard a second, but soon commenced to go faster.

"And now we waited with bated breath to learn our fate. Would we be dashed against the mountain by a powerful wind current or—and at 11:41 our doubts were settled as we soared above the highest peak of the mountain (10,916 feet) reaching a height of 13,962 feet above sea level.

"The currents of air in the valley give not the least intimation of the direction or force of the upper currents. Our course, so long as we were in the upper current of air, was astonishingly straight, for we diverged from the direct route in our course hardly half a mile to right or left.

"Do you want to travel all night?" "A glance at my map showed me that we

were moving direct for Paris, if the wind still held, but we were traveling so fast that we should be in Paris before midnight, and on the ocean before daybreak.

"The sun was hidden behind clouds. We were passing through a shower of sand, for the balloon was actually falling faster than the sand we had thrown out.

"The anchor caught, the vents were opened and hardly twenty seconds later the balloon lay half empty on the ground. It was 4:37 p. m.

"The balloon had passed over 142 miles in 344 minutes, or five hours and forty-four minutes. In the upper current it had traveled 118 miles in 285 minutes. This is 40 1/2 feet a second.

"The trip of the Vega over the Alps was the 503rd successful ascension conducted by Captain Spelterini without accident.

"We did not even feel dizzy," says Prof. Helm, "and our trip proved that dizziness is not one of the accompaniments of traveling by balloon, a long mooted question. The most wonderful thing of all to us was the perfect quiet and sacred silence of the heights.

"Until we had ascended to 12,000 feet all



REMARKABLE PICTURE TAKEN FROM A FIXED POINT, SHOWING BALLOON IN FOUR POSITIONS AS IT VANISHED.

balls of cloud (cumuli) some of which extended deeply into the valleys.

"No Birds in High Air.

"Above 16,000 feet the coloring of the balloon and ourselves appeared to change. The sun cast no warm yellow light on us, but a pure white light, white to ghostliness.

"The lakes lying beneath us offered a strong contrast to the yellowish horizon.

"The View from the Balloon. "To describe the view from the balloon is like trying to describe a symphony to a deaf man.

all that I saw it would be my greatest earthly pleasure, but language is all too feeble. The coloring of the clouds, the shadows of the mountains, what words can tell their beauty?"

"The results of this unparalleled flight over the Alps and Jura are of more than passing interest. It has shown that healthy men may ascend to about four miles above sea level and remain at this tremendous height without any serious inconvenience.

"Half a sack of sand overboard or we shall land among the hop-poles—quick!" "And as we floated to the east we reached an open, treeless plateau, with woods behind.

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felt well. At 14,000 feet Dr. Biedermann complained of palpitation of the heart. At 15,000 feet Dr. Maurer complained of severe sticking pains in the back of his head and of nausea.

"At 18,000 feet and 20,000 feet I felt wonderfully well, sitting in one corner of the car on a sack of ballast. Half dreaming I looked out over the shining clouds, or at the yellow horizon, upward at the black sky.

"I did not want any oxygen, I felt no difficulty in breathing, no uneasiness whatever, no 'air-hunger.' But the ability to work was gone, my energy lost. It required a great effort for me to take my note book up and write in it.

"But when we had descended 1,500 or 1,600 feet we were as new born. The effects of the rarified air were felt only while we were in it.

"Strange to say during all our trip none of us felt the least desire for food.

purple to bluish green. What other theory can be suggested? The heavenly blue must belong to the atmosphere as such. Only if the optically pure atmosphere is its bearer can it operate as it does on the landscape, when we observe it?"

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"The phenomena observed were new and interesting. The fact that the earth appears to be bathed in an atmosphere of violet color when seen from the balloon is accounted for by Prof. Helm in this way.

"When we look at a mountain as we stand on the earth it appears to be blue, on account of the thick atmosphere at the earth's surface. But when seen from a balloon the blue atmosphere the spectacles through which we gaze are made paler on account of the rarity of the atmospheric medium.

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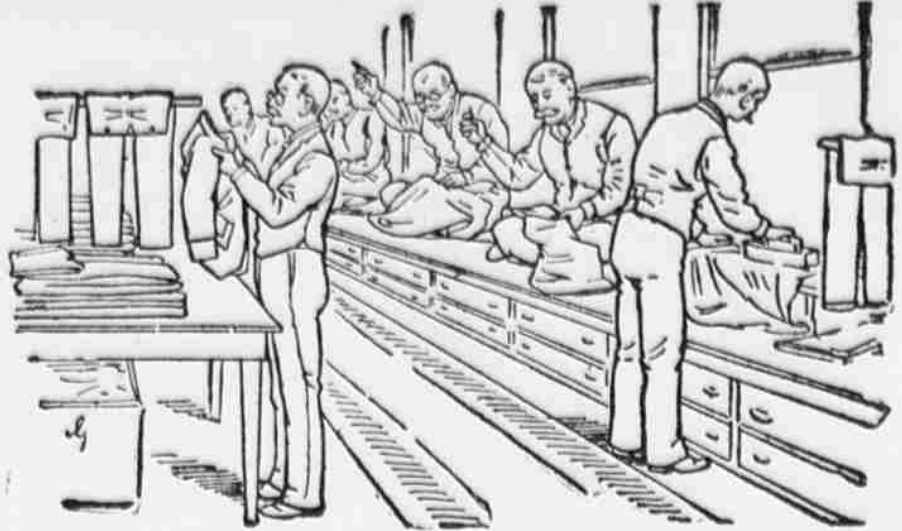
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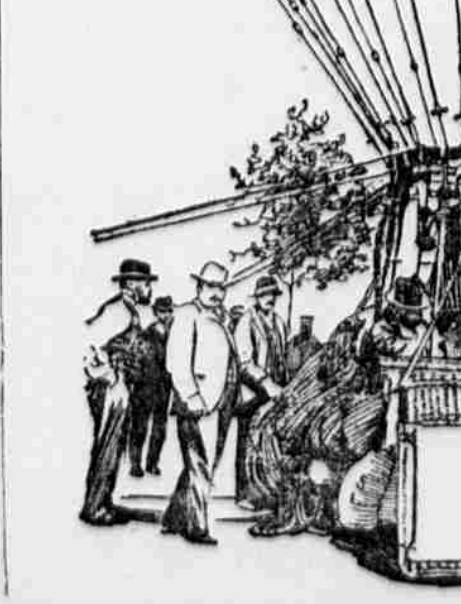
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