



"Walking-out" M. Dollfus's balloon at Cardington. It is of 10,000 cu ft capacity and filled with hydrogen.

## Joys of Ballooning Revived

**A**FTER a period of many years, during which free ballooning was stopped by the Air Ministry, the sport was resumed when six ascents were made from Cardington on October 13th, 14th and 15th. The owner on this occasion was the famous French aeronaut, M. Charles Dollfus, who happened to be visiting this country with two of his balloons, one of which he was using in the making of a film by The Two Cities Film Company of Denham.

Lord Ventry, an old airship man and free-balloon pilot, and now editor of *The Airship*, got into touch with his friend Dollfus as soon as he heard he was in this country, and negotiations with the Air Ministry and other appropriate authorities were commenced with a view to getting the necessary permission for ascents to be made from Cardington. This permission was readily granted, and thanks are also due to the film company for letting the balloons be sent there straight from Denham.

On the evening of October 11th, Lord Ventry and M. Dollfus arrived at Cardington, and were joined by S/L. T. P. York-Moore (retired), who is a free-balloon and airship pilot of the 1914-18 war. Certain restrictions

The first ascent, with M. Dollfus as pilot and G/C. Bradbury as passenger. Sand ballast is being jettisoned to make the balloon rise. For long journeys the ballast would be husbanded.

were imposed, including the stipulation that the balloon flights were to be confined to within a radius of 20 miles from Cardington.

The balloon was already inflated in one of the airship hangars (Cardington, it will be remembered, was formerly an airship station), and instructions were given for the first ascent to be made the next morning, weather permitting. The news aroused great interest in the camp.

At 9.50 a.m. the balloon made its first ascent, with M. Dollfus as pilot and G/C. Bradbury, D.F.C., Station Commandant, as passenger. In subsequent ascents M. Dollfus took up as passengers men from the Kite Balloon Unit. They included S/L. R. Browning, F/S. Bowman, B.E.M., Sgt. Keen, and A/C.1 W. Gamlin.

### Nearly a Goal

In the third ascent Lord Ventry was the pilot, and his passenger was Mr. "Jerry" Long, a technical officer of the Ministry of Supply. (It is of interest to note that both Sgt. Keen and Mr. Long are old airship coxswains and free-balloon pilots of the 1914-18 war.) At the start no little amusement was caused by the basket of the balloon bumping a goal post, the balloon being carried away by an eddy formed behind the airship hangar. Useful experience was gained by the handling party in "walking-out" the balloon on this and other bumpy passages from the hydrogen filling station to the airfield.

The whole visit to Cardington was a complete success, thanks to the willing co-operation of all concerned, from the Air Ministry to the ground party. All who took part have undoubtedly gained a lot of useful knowledge about free ballooning, and those without previous experience were made to realise that there is more in the technique of piloting a balloon than might be expected.

Those of the passengers who had done no free ballooning before were amazed to discover what the "old hands" already knew, that in a balloon floating along in no apparent wind the silence and quiet are such that ground noises can be heard very distinctly: the cackling of a hen, the barking of a dog, or the driver of a motor car changing gears.

It is very much to be hoped that M. Charles Dollfus will bring his balloons over to England again next year. By that time perhaps the Royal Air Force may have a balloon of its own. Who knows?

And here is a suggestion for the Air Ministry to ponder: Why not use balloons in a "Join the R.A.F." recruiting campaign as a novel way of advertising. [Balloons were used for advertising long before there were aeroplanes.—ED.] The results might be interesting. T. P. Y.

