


# SOARING IN NO AN IRIS

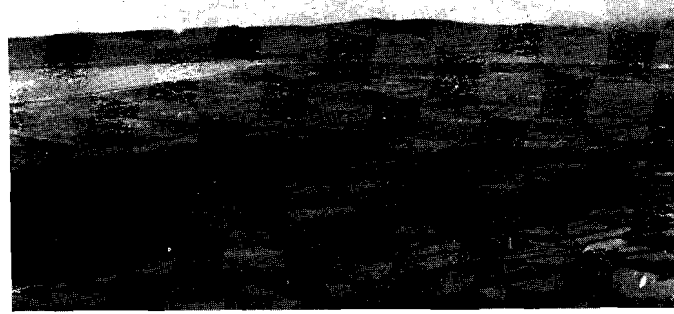
By Will



A 15 m.ph. wind, cloudless sky, cliffs towering from 250 to 600 ft. on our left, Atlantic rollers on our right, and a stretch of broad hard sand for miles ahead. 1000 feet ahead, the towing car is ready, the steel cable taut and, at the wing of my machine, the starter stands, handkerchief in hand.

"Are you ready?" he asks. Through the small ventilation window of the cockpit cover I shout, "O. K." The starter waves his handkerchief and slowly the car takes up the strain and gathers speed. In 30 yards the Kirby Kite is off the ground. Climbing at first slowly, lest the cable should break, and then—stick right back—she climbs at an angle of 45 degrees. At the foot of the cliffs the railway and road running parallel to the beach slips by.

Now, level with the top of the cliff and higher until the cliffs are 100 feet lower than the machine. As the cliffs rise gradually, full height must be taken out of the cable. The machine noses up and down, the limit of the cable is reached, and we are nearly a mile from our starting point. I push the stick gently forward and pull the release. Glancing over the side I see a white flag disappearing inside the car—the signal that the rope has fallen clear. A little left rudder and bank and the ship sails quietly above the cliffs. Up to this point we have



been going due west and now the cliffs leave the beach almost at right angles and continue south inland for three miles to 750 ft. Today the wind is N. W., our best soaring—and, alas, rare—wind. Over the cliffs I follow the contour, rising rapidly all the time until the altimeter reads 2000 ft., and now I pause. Below me to the north is the Atlantic, to the west, six miles of flat country beyond which is Lough Foyle, the inlet where Atlantic liners come to disembark passengers for Derry and where Balbo landed his Italian Air Armada. Beyond the Lough, the Hills of Donegal. This is positively the most beautiful soaring site in the world.

Behind me to the south are rolling moors, and in the distance, east along the coast, I see Portstewart, Portrush, the cliffs of the Giant's Causeway, and, further still, that great headland, Fair Head. All around at distances up to 30 miles are mountain peaks peeping above the horizon. It is truly a sight for the gods.

I retrace my flight along the cliffs and follow the beach back to my starting place to the little hamlet, appropriately called "Downhill," where a little inn is the headquarters of the Ulster Gliding Club. Atop the cliff, now looking very small, is the monument popularly known as the "Bishop," built by the Bishop of Derry, Earl of Bristol, who was a great traveller and for whom the Hotels Bristol are named in so many capitals of Europe. I continue over the seaside village of Castlerock and watch tiny specks which are golfers on a beautiful green course.

But I have wandered away from the "Lift" so fly back to Downhill and along the cliffs which face north for a mile and then 3 miles facing west. My height is again 2000 ft. and now for the joy of the flight, a straight glide across the valley, known as Hell's Hole, to that sheer sided hill, Binevenagh, towering 1200 ft. straight above the valley. As I approach I lose height and then the Kite starts to rise, up-up-up 2500, 2600. What a sight, mile upon mile of rectangular fields, rivers, Lough Foyle, the hills and the sea stretching to the Pole. A steamer, like a tiny toy rounds Inishowen Head, cars crawl like ants along the straight roads below. A bump—Hooray, a thermal! Down