

BUMPER XMAS NUMBER-44 Pages!

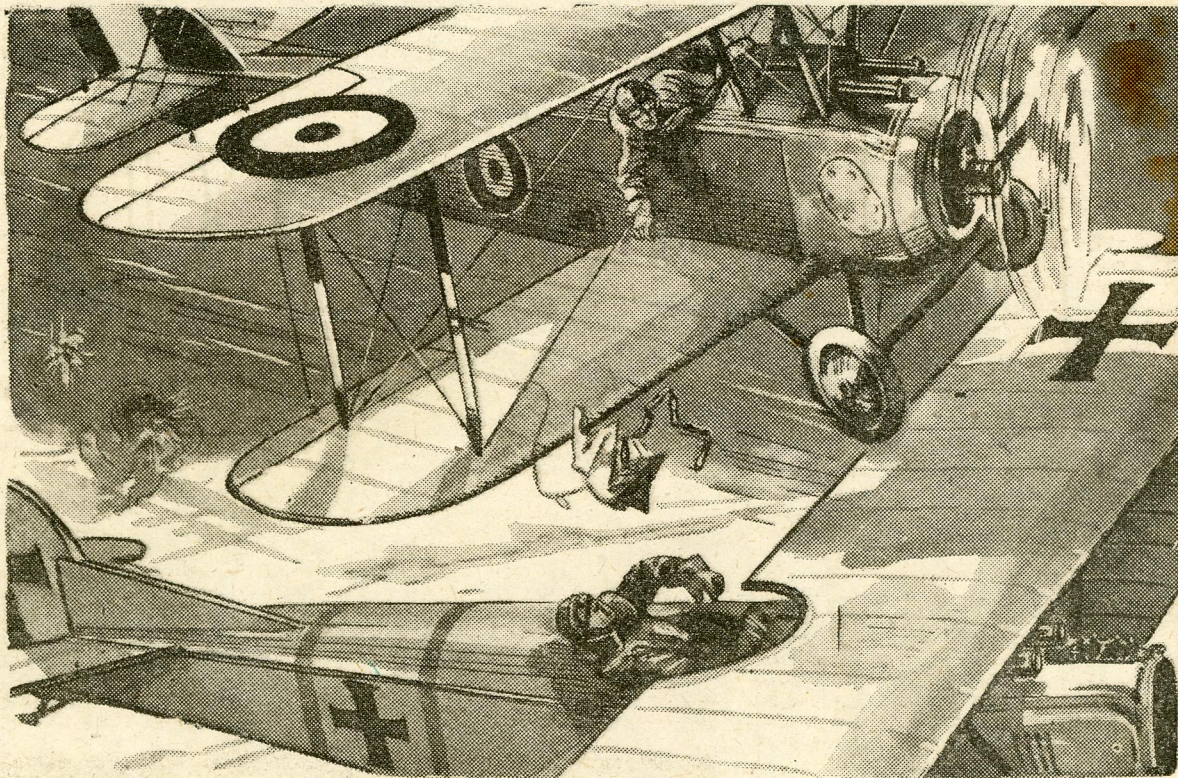
The MODERN BOY

EVERY SATURDAY No 358 VOL 14
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The Christmas Mail!



"Take those with you!" yelled Biggles as, deliberately risking collision, he swept down and hurled his packet at the helmeted head beneath him.

BIGGLES' XMAS-BOX!

Hankering after Peace and Goodwill, CAPTAIN BIGGLESWORTH delivers the enemy a startling Christmas Present! By FLYING-OFFICER W. E. JOHNS

"Don't Forget the Mustard!"

BIGGLES was deep in thought as he picked his way through a thin layer of fine snow towards the officers' mess. Reaching it, he pushed the door open and walked quickly to the large iron stove, around which most of the officers of No. 266 Squadron, Maranique, France, who had finished their breakfasts, had congregated. He called loudly for bacon and egg.

"Happy Christmas, everybody!" he announced.

Algy Lacey looked him up and down curiously.

"Why all the polish?" he inquired.

Biggles glanced down at his unusually clean uniform, and then at Algy.

"Can't a fellow dress respectfully without having attention drawn to it?" he complained.

"When you put on your best tunic there's usually a good reason for it," retorted Algy. "What's the idea?"

"Nothing in particular," replied

Biggles, pulling out a chair and seating himself at the long trestle table.

"I'm not flying to-day, that's all."

"Not flying! Why not?"

"Because it's Christmas," said Biggles, "and I'm a firm believer in the old motto Goodwill Towards Men—and all that sort of thing. I'd hate to be shot up, or down, at this festive season. So I've decided not to shoot anyone else down."

"But this Goodwill Towards Men stuff doesn't include the enemy," declared Mahoney.

"Certainly it does. Even Germans, when we are at war with 'em, are human beings. And Peace on Earth is the programme for to-day."

"What's struck you sentimental all of a sudden?" inquired Mahoney, kicking open the door of the stove and warming his hands at the blaze.

"Nothing," answered Biggles.

"But this fighting at Christmas is all wrong. There ought to be an official truce declared. In fact, we might go further than that, and show a nice

feeling by exchanging greetings with our enemies."

"Greetings?"

"Yes. Christmas cards!"

"Yes, I know," agreed Mahoney enthusiastically. "I've a nice little Christmas card all ready to deliver; it weighs twenty pounds, and was designed by Mr. Cooper. A nice little Cooper bomb!"

"Can't you get your mind off bombs for an hour or two? I'm thinking of a design for a card."

"A German going down in flames, under a Camel plane, and a skull and cross-bones in the corner," suggested Algy brightly.

Biggles eyed him frostily.

"What I had in mind was a Camel and a Fokker flying alongside each other, with bunches of mistletoe on the propeller bosses, and a robin looping round them. Their pilots could be leaning out shaking hands. Hands across the sea—you know the sort of thing."

"What about having some snow on the ground, too?" suggested Algy.

"That's the idea! A snow-covered No-Man's-Land, with the wire sticking up through it."

"You'd have to have a few corpses in it," said Mahoney thoughtfully, "or it would look like a sheep pen or something."

"Corpses, my eye!" growled Biggles. "You can't have corpses on a Christmas card. We could have a Christmas pudding, though, on a broken-down tank. Come on, let's do something about it. Who can draw? Here, Mac, you're handy with a pencil; get busy."

"Any drawing I do to-day will be with tracer bullets," declared MacLaren. "You'll be talking about sending the Germans a Christmas-box next!"

Biggles started.

"By James! I never thought of that!" he exclaimed. "That's a better idea still! The poor blighters are short of grub, by all accounts. Why not send them a packet of sausages—say about ten pounds? They like sausages, I believe."

"Yes; but even a Hun would have to be thundering fond of 'em to say 'Thank you!' for a wad of sausages weighing ten pounds if it fell on the back of his skull from a Camel flying at a thousand feet or so! You can't go slinging sausages about like that! It'd ruin the sausages, anyway."

"You're always ready to pick faults in my ideas!" grumbled Biggles. "I say it would show a nice spirit!"

"So would a few rounds of tracer bullets. Who's going to take this packet over, anyway?"

"I would!" Biggles declared.

"And drop them? They'd bust to smithereens."

"Not necessarily drop 'em. Fly over to a German aerodrome, land, dump 'em over the side, and fly off again."

"You're crazy!"

"Nothing of the sort. The Huns would be tickled to death."

"They might bring us a present in return," suggested Rogers.

"Like they did last Christmas, when they plastered us with bombs!" snorted Mahoney. "We don't want any presents from Huns here."

"All the more reason why we should give them a lesson in human kindness," protested Biggles. "Anyhow, I'm not asking you to take the sausages, am I? Where do you think I could get some?"

"You're not serious?"

"I am. I like the idea. Goodwill—that's the thing. I'm full of goodwill to-day."

"Well, I'd rather be full of good pudding," yawned Mahoney. "Orders aren't out yet, are they?"

"No; the Old Man said stand fast until the weather cleared," replied MacLaren.

Biggles walked across to a window and stared at the leaden sky.

"If we're going to wait for that stuff to clear up, we shall have to wait a long time," he said. "There's more snow up there, or I'm a Dutchman. There's plenty on the aerodrome as it is," he went on, frowning

at the snow-covered landscape. "If it snows any more, we shan't be able to get off, and flying will be hung up until it thaws."

"Well, I'm not going to hang about here all day watching you blokes play bridge."

He moved towards the door.

"Don't forget the mustard with the sausages!" Mahoney called after him.

Hide and Seek in the Clouds!

TWO hours later the mess resounded with the vibrant hum of an aero engine; it rose to a shrill bellow, and then died away suddenly, like a siren that has been cut off.

Mahoney sprang to his feet and ran to a window.

BRFFF, BRFFF, BRFFF! A Camel plane was moving slowly across the snow away from the hangars.

"Great snakes!" cried MacLaren.

"The chump must be off his rocker!"

"Who is it?" asked Rogers.

"Biggles! What other lunatic do you imagine would be flying on a day like this?" Mahoney said witheringly.

"Well, I wish him joy," he concluded, as he returned to his chair by the fire.

"He's off!" observed MacLaren, bending down to see through the window.

"If you mean off his nut, you're right—dead right," answered Mahoney.

He put his hands over his ears as the Camel zoomed low over the mess roof with a deafening roar that diminished swiftly to a low, musical hum.

Biggles, in the cockpit of the Camel, crouched a little lower behind the windscreen to avoid the biting slipstream. On his lap he kept a small package in place with his left hand.

Immediately above him the sky was a solid-looking, dark grey belt of cloud, but farther to the east it faded to a pale, watery, neutral tint, showing that the cloud was not so thick in that direction, and towards it he now steered his course.

As he flew he hummed to himself. The flying provided the soothing antidote that his ragged nerves needed.

"I shan't be likely to meet anyone to-day," he mused, as he eyed the threatening atmospheric conditions with disfavour.

Anti-aircraft gunfire in front of him warned him that he was over the Lines.

A shell burst near his wing-tip, with a flash of crimson flame, and he side-slipped away, peering down to see if he could locate the enemy



With real sympathy in his heart, Biggles watched the enemy pilot make a supreme effort to avoid the trees, catch his wing-tip, and plunge heavily in the snow.

Biggles' Xmas-Box!

battery that was putting in such good shooting.

"If you get any closer you'll be getting your sausages ready fried!" he murmured, as he brought the Camel back on to an even keel, and, pushing the control-stick forward for speed, zoomed upwards towards the clouds.

A wisp of grey vapour clutched at his propeller, and another swirled past his ailerons, and then the snowcloud enfolded him in its clammy heart. The pulsating roar of his engine increased in volume, but it left him unmoved, and with his eyes on his instrument-board he held the machine steady.

The control-stick was going "sloppy" in his hand, showing that the Camel was on the point of stalling as he emerged through the top side of the cloud. But he was by no means clear of it, for towering masses rose up all about him.

At one place, however, a narrow, jagged blue line cut across the grey, and after flying level for a moment or two to regain speed he tilted his nose up towards it.

As he did so, out of the corner of his eye he thought he caught sight of a dark shadow flitting from one cloud to another.

He altered his course instantly, frowning in surprise, eyes glued to the spot where the spectre had vanished. Whether it was friend or

foe he could not say, for the brief glimpse he had had of it did not permit him to see. In fact, as he circled cautiously towards the cloud in which the wraith had disappeared, he began to wonder if he had actually seen anything at all, or if his imagination was playing him tricks.

The cloud was quite a small one, and although he had not taken his eyes from the spot, he had not seen the machine emerge on the other side.

Impelled by some instinct that he did not pause to question, he turned suddenly, and was just in time to see the unmistakable tail-unit of a German Fokker D.VII disappear into the main wall of the cloudbank.

This time there was no mistake. The machine was going away from him, however, so whether the enemy pilot had seen him or not it was impossible to determine.

He continued circling for a minute or two, every nerve taut, his head bobbing continually as he twisted this way and that in order to keep the whole cloudscape under observation. A flurry of fine snow swept past the Camel, stinging the exposed part of his face and making him snort.

"I'm a cuckoo!" he growled. "What sort of a game is this, anyway? Not so much of the hide-and-seek business, old man! Where are you?"

He began to feel uncomfortable, for he did not relish the idea of sitting in the open, an easy mark if

the Hun was indeed stalking him. On the other hand, he hesitated to fly into the cloud for fear of collision if the Hun had not seen him.

He waited for another two minutes, and then could stand it no longer.

"That's quite enough of that!" he thought. And with his eye on his compass he swung back on his original course and headed towards a formation of wind-torn clouds.

He had just reached them, and was about to plunge into them, when a cream-coloured Fokker D.VII shot out, directly in his line of flight.

Biggles shoved the control-stick forward spasmodically, and the Fokker zoomed, the two machines missing each other by a margin of not more than a couple of feet.

"THAT fool is a danger to the whole bloomin' community!" thought Biggles furiously, as he swept round to follow the Hun, who was just disappearing into the upper cloud. But then, remembering his peaceful mission, he turned again and resumed his course.

Almost at once he was startled by the *tacka-tacka-tacka* of a machine-gun, and, turning his head round to ascertain the cause, he saw the Hun shooting at him from a distance of about a quarter of a mile.

His eyes narrowed as he watched his attacker, who was obviously either a new man or a nervous pilot, for his chances of scoring a hit at such a range were remote.

"You'd better push off, my lad, before one of us gets hurt!" Biggles growled.

Tacka-tacka-tacka!
"Oh, all right—have it your own way!" muttered Biggles wrathfully, as he whirled up to accept the attack. But instantly the Fokker swerved into the side of the cloud and was lost to sight.

"Well, if you think I'm going to play hide-and-seek with you in that muck, you're mistaken!" observed Biggles, as he once more turned towards the German aerodrome that had been his original destination, but keeping one eye on the spot where the Hun had disappeared.

He watched it for a minute or two, but the slipstream of his propeller seemed to be freezing the side of his face, so he ducked back into the cockpit with the intention of hurrying from the vicinity.

Tacka-tacka-tacka! The Camel jerked round as if swung on a pivot, and Biggles saw the Fokker about three hundred yards away. He peered forward through his gun-sights, with his hand on the gun-lever.

Tacka-tack— Both his guns ceased firing simultaneously, with the cocking handles slightly raised. Furiously he hammered at them, for the jam, as usual, had occurred at a vital moment: the Hun had been dead in his sights!

His annoyance grew to anger as, in spite of his efforts, the cocking handles refused to budge. He knew that the ammunition was at fault—"bulged" rounds, in all probability

The Christmas Mail!

ONE of the crack trains of the Line, roaring through the night at express speed—as in our vigorous cover-picture—the Christmas Mail is a train that carries no passengers, though it may well have a hundred or more men aboard!

You'll never travel on it—unless you become a Post Office sorter later on! And it carries only picked men, for of all the concentrated jobs of work the travelling Post Office sorter's is getting on for the most exacting.

The mountains of Christmas parcels at the big terminus stations in the cities have been piling higher and higher. You simply can't imagine how they get them away, but in a few hours they're all gone—and a new mountain of them begins to pile up.

MOST of this work is done at night-time, and by parcels trains which make frequent stops, and the job of sorting the parcels exactly isn't done on the train. Some of these parcels trains will travel 500 miles or more before they come to a stop finally, and by that time they will have cleared hundreds of tons of parcels, maybe—only the smallest fraction of the number the Post Office have to handle.

The most famous Mail train in the world must surely be the West Coast Postal of the London, Midland and Scottish, which leaves Euston Station at 8.30 p.m. every night. This is the real Night Mail, composed only of Post Office vans, several of them fitted with the latest type of catching-nets and dropping gear.

At Christmas-time the Mail is made up to as many as fourteen vans with the pick-up and dropping gear.

JUST as soon as the Mail starts, the sorters are at work. A bagful of mail is sorted into pigeon-holes quicker than you could count the letters. The worst handwriting has no terrors for the sorters.

In less than half-an-hour the collecting gear has begun to pick up the leather pouches which postmen have been hooking up on the standards by the side of the line. What's more, similar pouches of sorted letters have been made up by the train men and dropped at the same points into heavy rope nets, to be collected by the same postmen. Some of the Christmas cards and letters you'll get may have been handled in this way by one or other of our crack expressmen.

And this sort of thing is kept up by relays of men for hundreds of miles through the night, so that you can get your letters and parcels bright and early at breakfast-time!

—but the knowledge did not help matters, for the gun refused to respond to the recognised clearance actions that he applied. It was clearly a job for the armourers on the ground.

“Well, I’m Dashed!”

MEANWHILE, the Hun, gaining confidence as the Camel did not return his fire, circled warily nearer, firing from time to time as opportunity occurred.

“And to think I was taking you sausages for tea!” grated Biggles, as he swerved from side to side to throw the enemy gunner off his mark, knowing in his heart that his only course was to accept the inevitable and make his way home through the clouds that offered plenty of cover, yet loath to give his opponent the satisfaction of a moral victory.

“I’ll remember you, my lad!” he declared, as he eyed the Fokker malevolently, and prepared to head for home.

The German pilot seemed to divine his intention and made a sudden dive. One of his bullets actually went through one of the Camel’s wings, and at the same moment Biggles had an idea.

With a grim smile on his face he jerked the Camel’s nose up as if he had been hit; he eased the throttle back, applied bottom rudder, and threw the machine into a spin. For a brief instant he had a glimpse of the elated Fokker pilot following, and then the mist enfolded him.

Would the German pilot come right through after him, to mark the spot where his assumed victim had crashed, or would he not? It was an open question, but one that the next few seconds would answer.

He shot out of the bottom side of the cloud, still spinning, but recovered control instantly and zoomed up again to the lower layers of mist.

Looking down, he noted that he was just over his own side of the Lines, and that the landscape was strangely white, as if it had been snowing hard since he took off.

He had no time to see more, for to his intense satisfaction the Fokker had staggered out of the murk and was gliding down, with the pilot leaning over the side of his machine obviously searching the ground for his victim.

Biggles whipped the Camel round in a flash and roared down on his unsuspecting foe. Three hundred yards only separated them, and the distance rapidly closed between them. Two hundred—one hundred—fifty—and Biggles began to ease the control-stick back.

Deliberately risking collision, he swept down on the straight-winged machine, following the same line of flight; and, as he passed over it, at a distance of not more than twenty feet, he took the control-stick in his left hand and, grasping the packet of sausages in his right, hurled it at the helmeted head.

“Take those with you!” he yelled, and zoomed upwards, carrying with

HERE’S health and joy to each of you,
The best of you,
the rest of you;
Go easy, I beseech of you,
On cakes and stuff at tea.
I mean to eat my fill, of course,
A pound of it, a mound of it;
But after—when I’m ill, of course—
You’ll have the laugh of me!

HERE’S some Christmas Lessons for you. You may do these instead of homework. If your master objects after the holidays, you may mention my name, and it won’t make the slightest difference.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES.—Take a number of village waits, and show what measures are necessary to deal with them.

THE GREATER INTO THE LESS.—Take 3 doz. mince pies, 1 lb. Christmas pudding, 3 helpings turkey, 2 lb. assorted vegs, 6 doz. walnuts, 1½ gals. ginger beer, 8 ozs. almonds, 4 oranges, 2 pkts. stuffed dates, and ½ lb. chocolate creams, and show how this may be stuffed into a cubic innards measuring 9 x 5 x 4.

Divide the answer by two spoonfuls of Black Balsam for Bilious Block-heads.

FIGURES CANNOT LIE!—Take a number of guests after a hefty late dinner and make sure that each of them has a figure like an inflated stratosphere balloon.

Show them to their bed-rooms, and provide them beds measuring 6 feet long by 1 foot 9 inches wide. This will prove that figures cannot lie. (It’s also a jolly good joke.)

I HEAR that the Society for the Prevention of Piffle in Pantomimes is determined to do away with the stale old jokes that blossom, like the rose, once every year. They ask all fellows who go to pantomimes this year to rise in a body and yell out the joke as soon as it appears. Thus:

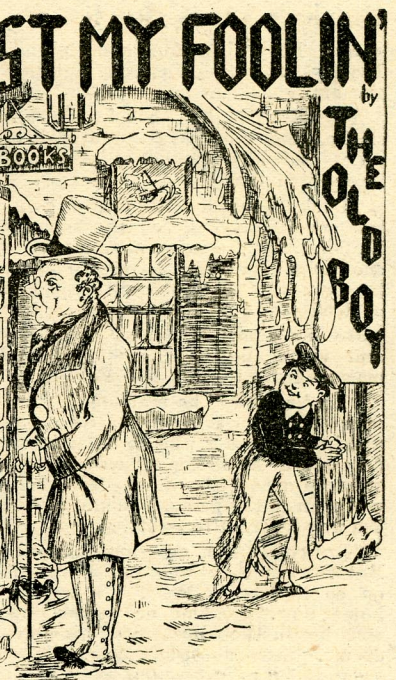
THE Prince (to Cinderella’s ugly sister): “You think you can get that foot into the crystal slipper? Why—?”

The Audience (with one voice): “Why, you couldn’t get it into the Crystal Palace!”

him an impression of a white, startled, upturned face.

Whether or not the package hit the machine he did not know, nor did he particularly care. To tell the truth, he hardly expected to score a hit, and without waiting to see if he had or not, he tore straight on, expecting every minute to hear the Hun’s guns cracking behind him.

Presently, however, as there was no sound of pursuit, he looked round, and jerked up his goggles with an exclamation of surprise. The Hun was going down in the manner of a falling



ANOTHER one on the black list is Sindbad’s annual moan that he had nothing to do but “to look all day long at the sea’s blue surges.” Immediately the comedian starts to speak, all jump in first with:

“I THOUGHT you said you were Sindbad the Sailor, not Sindbad the Tailor.”

If that doesn’t do the job, we shall have to go back to the rack and thumb-screw!

DID you know that I am making and selling Christmas Crackers for a living? You want to buy a box of my special Giant Surprise Crackers! There’s nothing in ’em. That’s the surprise. At least, only a few mottoes, written by me. Here are some:

If you paid two-and-six for me,
You’re swindled out of two-and-three.

Don’t pull these crackers; don’t begin ’em.
’Tain’t worth doing—nothing in ’em.

Send in your orders now, lads. Every order dealt with as fast as I can wrap a bit of paper round nothing at all! Hurrah!

leaf, either out of control or in serious difficulties.

“Well, I’m dashed!” muttered Biggles, in amazement. “I do believe I actually hit the poor swine. Yes, he’s going to hit the deck,” he went on, as the Fokker lurched earthward, with the pilot making desperate efforts to keep his machine right side up.

Biggles cut out his engine and began to spiral down after him.

With real sympathy in his heart he watched the enemy pilot make a supreme effort to avoid some trees,

Biggles' Xmas-Box!

catch his wing-tip, and plunge heavily. A white cloud rose high into the air.

At first Biggles thought it was smoke, and then breathed a sigh of relief as it disappeared quickly, and he realised that it was only snow.

"Lucky blighter!" he mused, as he saw some Tommies running towards the spot. "He must have struck a snowdrift. But fancy having to admit that you were shot down with a packet of dead pig!"

He continued to circle overhead and watch until he saw a figure emerge from the crashed Fokker.

"That's good!" he muttered. "The poor blighter's still alive and kicking. Wonder who he is, and how he came to be flying all on his lonesome on a day like this? Must be a new man to the game, I should think, the way he tried to fight.

"Lucky for him my guns jammed! But for that, he wouldn't have got off so lightly. Well, it's me for home now." And he turned his machine in the direction of his aerodrome.

"Funny," he thought to himself, as he flew on, keeping an alert eye on the skies in case any more enemy planes hove in sight. "I came out on a friendly mission, and it's only by the biggest fluke imaginable that I

haven't lost my life or killed somebody else.

"Seems to me, this peace and goodwill business doesn't extend to the skies. In any case, I'm not trying it any more—it's too dangerous. Trouble is, the other fellow doesn't know you're disposed to be friendly. We're so used to fighting one another that we naturally expect the other fellow to shoot on sight.

"Pity, but there it is. And I suppose it's only natural. After all, if I'd been out on an offensive patrol and spotted a Hun I'd have done just the same as that fellow did—fought, Christmas or no Christmas!"

TEN minutes later he landed at Maranique and walked stiffly towards the mess, where he found the others as he had left them, some still standing round the fire and others playing bridge. A shout went up as he entered the room.

"Well, did you hand the Prussians the polonies?" inquired Mahoney, pausing in the act of playing a card.

Biggles opened the flap of the stove and warmed his hands at the genial glow.

"Yes," he replied, "or rather, I gave them to a poor little stray Hun I met on the way."

Mahoney raised his eyebrows.

"What do you mean?"

"What I say!" was the retort.

"How could you give them to a Hun on the way?"

A far-away look came into Biggles' eyes.

"Well, I didn't exactly give them to him," he admitted. "He was bargaining about trying to be awkward, and my guns jammed. So I——"

"Well?"

"I shot him down with a load of pork!"

Mahoney stared incredulously.

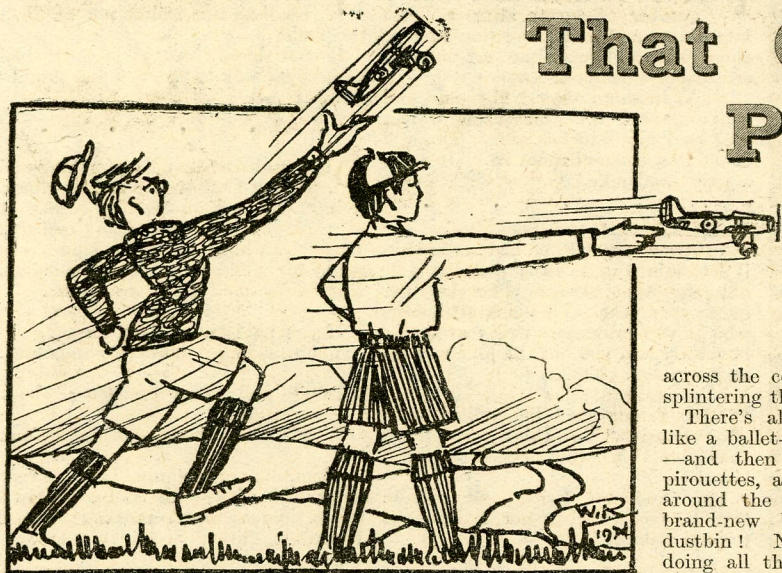
"D'you expect us to believe that you knocked a Hun down with a parcel of sausages?"

"I don't expect you to believe anything; I'm telling you, that's all. I've just ordered a tender so that I can slip over and fetch the poor blighter. I'm going to bring him back here. I was thinking——"

"Yes?"

"Well, if he managed to save the sausages we could give them to him for lunch, just to show there's no ill feeling—only Goodwill!"

Still filled with the jolly Christmas Spirit, Biggles is determined to have a Christmas-tree by hook or by crook. How he enjoys his Christmas Party you will read Next Saturday. . . . A feast of Enjoyment for YOU!!!



That Christmas Plane!

By W. Rigby, MODERN BOY'S Own Model Plane Expert, who will answer, Free of Charge, any Model Plane Queries that any reader cares to send to the Editor. If you can, enclose a stamped addressed envelope for reply by Post

across the common, on their noses, on their backs, or splintering their wing-tips!

There's also the cheery chap who, adopting a pose like a ballet-dancer, tosses his model high into the air—and then looks really pained when it pivots, pirouettes, and *plonks!* Then he'll go home, mope around the house, and eventually tell dad that his brand-new beautiful model is earmarked for the dustbin! Now look at my sketch. One fellow is doing all that he shouldn't, while the other has got his model away nicely and quietly. It's the fellow on the right you want to imitate.

YOU'D hate to have to take your model railway out on to the coal-house roof. And you wouldn't dream of dropping your model speedboat on to the water from a height of a couple of feet.

You'd scarcely get the best results from them, would you? The same applies to model aeroplanes. You'd hardly believe some of the things I've seen fellows do!

There's the type of chap who boasts proudly, "My model will fly in all weathers!" and takes it out when the wind is positively roaring.

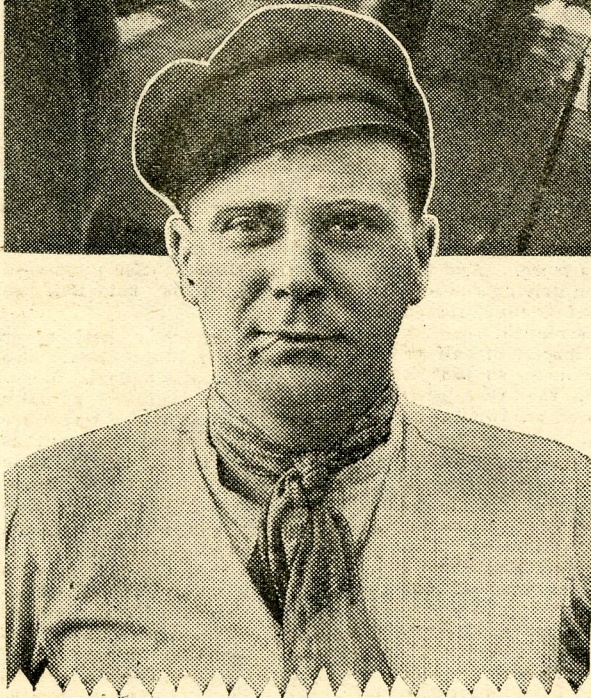
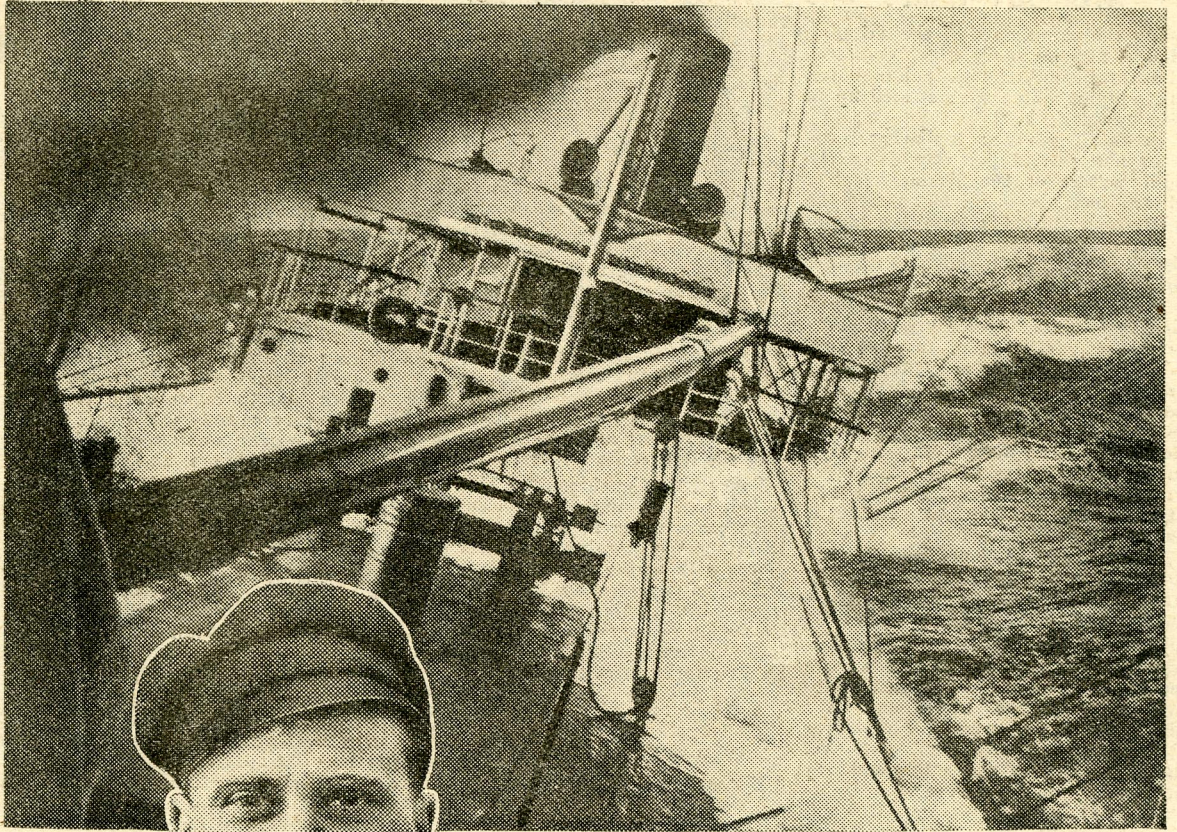
WELL, there are heaps of models that *will* fly in awful weather, but it's risking a lot! Like real machines, they might not come to grief when actually *in* the air. But, oh, when they reach the ground and are tossed helter-skelter

TO make the ideal launch you want to hold the wound propeller in the thumb and finger of your left hand, and the model itself, usually behind the wings, in your right hand. Then, with a steady forward movement, launch your model, keeping it on an even keel—and then let go.

If there is a little steady wind, launch either straight into or across it. If across, see that the wing-tip which drops when the plane starts is *away* from the wind. This sounds a perilous business as the plane tips up and banks steeply, but it nearly always gets away.

Whereas launching straight into wind means a halt and a climb, often with stalling, before the model finally sweeps round on its set course.

TRUE-LIFE STORY of a TERRIFIC CHRISTMAS VOYAGE!



The Ship that Wouldn't Sink!

GERRY BOWMAN, Ordinary Seaman, brought this amazing but PERFECTLY TRUE story to the MODERN BOY office the other day. I give it to you exactly as he told it to me, in his own words.—THE EDITOR

Panting Down the Thames!

IT will be generally accepted that a condemned cell is a pretty grim place. I happen to know one other place which is not a bit less grim.

It is the foredeck of a badly found and badly loaded tramp steamer, leaving harbour in mid-winter, with nothing but a three-thousand-mile wilderness of storm-hounded seas ahead!

And I had the execution-cell-feeling badly as the steamship Diemen cleared the Port of London one windy Christmas, for Newport News in the U.S.A.

Gulls wheeled over the picheads and cried thinly in the cold twilight of that grey evening. Before us the sliding Thames was a dull, slaty

mirror of the tattered sky. Behind us, the Royal Albert Docks were a misty forest of funnels and cranes, with here and there a siren blowing a dismal farewell.

Unwillingly the Diemen turned into the stream, while tug-towlines jarred and strained viciously. Deep down in the belly of the half-empty steel hull, a rhythm began to beat. It was a rhythm which seemed to make up three words and beat them out incessantly, as orders to cast off were tossed down from the bridge. The tuglines dropped splashing into the water.

"Never-get-'ome!" said the rhythm of our wheezy engines. "Never-get-'ome! Never-get-'ome!"

And many a time during the next

twenty-nine days I was fated to believe with cruel certainty that that rhythm was fitted with the right words.

Consider the position briefly. The Diemen was an ungraceful-looking tramp of four thousand tons, which had already seen more than thirty years' knockabout service in every corner of the globe. Whether her hull had ever been properly painted in all that thirty years is a point of idle speculation.

In any case, her lower plates appeared to be held together by a compound of barnacle and weed, with which her economically minded owners could not be expected to interfere.

She was loaded light—the period

The Ship That Wouldn't Sink!

being the worst part of the shipping slump—and her only cargo consisted of several hundred nine-inch cast-iron drain-pipes, which were stowed up in the 'tween deck.

In short, she was top-heavy, even when she panted her way down the level waters of the Thames. Her plimsoll-mark was six feet above the water-line, and her propeller-blades were showing their tips as they threshed muddy foam beneath her rusty counter.

The terrible state of world-depression in ocean commerce was the only reason why that ship, in that condition, had managed to get together a crew of any kind at all. My own position on board was the exalted and respectable one of ordinary seaman, the reason being that I was suffering in the early stages from a distemper known as "hard-upness"—and which attacks me acutely at recurrent periods, even to this day.

The effects of the disease are localised to the trousers-pockets and wallet, which lose weight and show swift signs of advanced anæmia!

Mental depression is one of the first signs of the malady, and it was in mental depression that I turned into my hard bunk that night, and tried not to wonder whether I should ever see England again. At half-past five, in the grey dawn which followed, my depression was not in the least lightened. By that time we were through the estuary, and the boat was already lurching and pitching to the first chops of the English Channel.

The Diemen seemed to start off in an evil mood, her first effort being to cast loose a winch-boom, which jumped from its lashing and succeeded in breaking a man's wrist before it was secured and snugged down. The man went ashore in the pilot-boat, off Dover, and, incidentally, he nearly lost his life by falling between the two craft whilst he was struggling down the jacob's ladder—but even at that he was the luckiest of us all.

Before we had reached Land's End, and were making due north-west into the teeth of a moaning gale, two of the fo'c'sle port-glasses were broken, and my own bunk, including myself, was soaked through.

THE ship, criminally light, was rolling like a crazy thing, and the badly burned cook was trying to hold pots on a galley-stove which was adopting opposite angles of forty-five degrees at intervals of about every half-minute.

From the very first day of that trip, nothing could be left lying about deck, above or below. Everything had to be made fast to the nearest solid object, by the turn of a rope. Food was eaten standing up and balancing; shaving was an impossibility; and washing was a matter of spirited gymnastics in the wake of a swinging pail attached to a beam overhead.

From the very first day, too, the "ditch" was inboard—to use a descriptive nautical phrase.

The Diemen started boring her

blunt nose down into it directly she lurched her awkward way into the heavy Channel swell. With a thunderous crash the green seas came over the fo'c'sle head, and seemed to be trying to hold it down, whilst the stern rose up and the propeller beat madly at the water like a drowning man.

The fo'c'sle itself was a foot deep with a swirling, oily mass, which swept from side to side and never seemed to get much less, even though it was constantly bailed and mopped by the crew.

And on the fourth day, whilst heading for the south of Ireland, there came the first dull chords of what was destined to develop into the most ghastly and infernal music which ever a ship's company can hear.

Through the iron casing of the hold-bulkheads a moving drain-pipe could be heard rolling and clanking its way over the tops of its fellows.

Every time the ship rolled that pipe rolled, too, leaping and jumping like some crazy thing in a steel dungeon. It brought up against the steel side-plates with a ringing crash.

And, although any kind of loose cargo should at once be attended to by the ship's carpenter and his mates, this was immediately made impossible by an alteration in the weather.

Wallowing in Pandemonium!

IT was almost at the same time that that first loose pipe was heard and reported that the wind veered round several points more. And the gale, which had been driving the seas into a mountainous fandango, roared up to full tempest strength.

It rose up in the matter of half an hour. It gained volume, so that it moaned up out of the vast grey southern wilderness on an awe-inspiring, terrifying note.

The blast of its gigantic force took the ship on her port bow with such almighty force that she was listed over—and listed over she stayed, creaking and straining and wallowing in a misery of pandemonium and chaotic discomfort, until that tempest was over.

And it lasted for four solid days. Some small items of a merry mariner's life on the bounding main during that four days' blow may be of interest.

In the first place it was impossible to move across the deck at all, except by going hand over hand along the life-lines which were rigged from fo'c'sle to saloon, and from saloon to steering-house. It was also impossible to make any such trip without having to lie down suddenly and entwine oneself in the life-line with a cocoon-like effect, the while a thunderous tower of water was crashing inboard over the bows, wrenching and tearing at one's body until its power spent itself in a diffusion of spreading cascades over the sides.

A minor note to be remembered is that the temperature was that of the North Atlantic in mid-winter—which is just about above freezing-point. Added to this, there is the fact that the trip aft had to be performed at

least three times a day by the fo'c'sle galley-man, whose duties included fetching all the food and drink for the "crowd." The galley-man also rejoiced in the official title of "Peggy."

I was the Peggy. I have always been lucky!

The official reading of the ship's log during those four days, whilst steering on a direct course towards the United States of America, recorded the exact total of eighteen miles—astern.

OWING to a breakdown in the galley steam apparatus, there was no hot water available during all that time. And owing to the interesting little trips the food-carrier had to make along the open deck, every eatable was clammy-cold, with a hearty salting of sea water. Bread was always a sodden mass; porridge was—well, even now, I would rather not mention that porridge.

I think the only thing that any of us really enjoyed was the large sealed jars of pickles and the cans of condensed milk. These could be kept reasonably intact. But what fare for Christmas—and what a merry Christmas!

Curiously enough, a lightly loaded ship does not behave quite as one would expect during the full height of a howling Atlantic tempest. She is brought head-to-sea by the power of her own engines, and she rolls very little, because there is no cross-swell possible in front of the mighty power of the storm. She pitches—a movement which is not half so sickening.

She pitches endlessly, and never seems to have her blunt bows above water for two minutes on end. Meanwhile, the seas all around actually look flat. The tops of the waves are whipped off and smashed down, as though some vast, invisible knife were sweeping over the ocean.

The terrific pitching of the ship seems to be uncanny; without reason. Everything the slightest bit weak is torn from her decks. The stays shrirk like a badly bowed violin-string, and the inch-thick glass of portholes is smashed in as though it were no stronger than an egg-shell.

But it is after the worst of the blow that the real trouble comes. At the end of that four days, when the wind finally dropped to nothing more than a full gale, the poor old Diemen looked rather as though she had been in a fight and had had the worst of it.

Her funnel was loose, and jerked about on its stays with alarming effect. One winch had gone clean over the side, cutting a furrow across the steel deck, and cleaning out about fourteen feet of rail. Two boats were stove in, and the glass windows of the wheelhouse gave the impression that a riotous mob had attacked them with stones.

Now that it was reasonably safe to go about decks, repairs were started. But soon these had to be abandoned for much more urgent and unpleasant work down below.

Hitherto, there had not been much movement of the cargo, owing to the lack of rolling. But the sea, now released from the terrific tempest pressure, began to rear up mountains high. As a result, it was impossible for the crazy old engines to keep the ship head-on to the towering waves. The Diemen slid away to port and to starboard every time she rode up out of a green abyss and pointed her groaning bows to the black sky.

She rolled. She rolled frantically and fearfully. She put her lee-rails under, and she kept them there in a boil of foam for so long that it never seemed possible that she could rise up. Every movable thing in the length of the ship crashed over in a deafening, smashing discord each time she went down.

And that one rolling drainpipe was joined by thirty or forty more within the first half-hour of her beginning to roll.

I cannot attempt to describe that noise. I can only say that the clatter of falling iron brings my heart into my mouth, even to this day. I can only ask you to imagine yourself down below in a steel fo'c'sle, which is only divided from the 'tween-deck hold by a thin steel partition.

Inside that hold, cast-iron pipes, fifteen feet long, are leaping and rolling and smashing over each other in a mad inferno with every lurching movement of the ship.

As the ship rolls, so the clattering uproar rolls with it—the orchestral effect rising to a shattering crescendo as hundreds of tons of cast-iron bring up against the side with mighty, pile-driving force—a force that seems certain to throw the ship right off its balance and cause it to turn turtle completely. Alternatively, to smash clean through the steel ribs of

the ship and the flimsy quarter-of-an-inch thick plates.

Which was exactly and precisely the danger we were in.

Waiting for the End!

THAT night every single soul in the ship's company was mobilised, with the exception of the quartermaster at the wheel and a couple of engineers. Captain, officers, stewards, firemen off watch—all were handed out storm lanterns and led down into the 'tween-deck hold by the carpenter.

And there the ghastly work of trying to jam that shifting cast-iron cargo was started.

Bags of coal were hauled up from the bunkers and dragged forward. They were dropped down below, and, in back-breaking toil and downright danger, they were carried over that plunging floor of rolling pipes and dropped here and there in an effort to check the movement.

A 'tween-deck hold is not lofty. We worked in a crouching position. We dragged coalbags, holding storm-lanterns hung over the crooks of our elbows.

And each time the ship rolled we had to grab the girders above, and swing up our legs, clinging like monkeys in the clangorous darkness, whilst that sea of sudden death rolled



The ghastly work of trying to jam that ever-shifting cargo was started. Each time the ship rolled we had to grab the girders above and swing up our legs, clinging like monkeys, whilst that inferno of sudden death rolled and leapt its crashing path beneath our worn-out bodies.

and leapt its crashing path beneath our bodies.

There were casualties. The cook's mate went first, and his storm lantern jerked aside like a firefly in the darkness, whilst his yell was drowned in the clanging din. Somehow we got him out, sweating and plunging over the iron pipes, hauling and scrambling out of their way when fresh danger threatened—almost sobbing with the sheer terror of the whole inferno.

The rolling was frantic. With every fresh lurch there was the ghastly feeling that it was going to be the last—and we were trapped like rats in a thunderous coffin of steel.

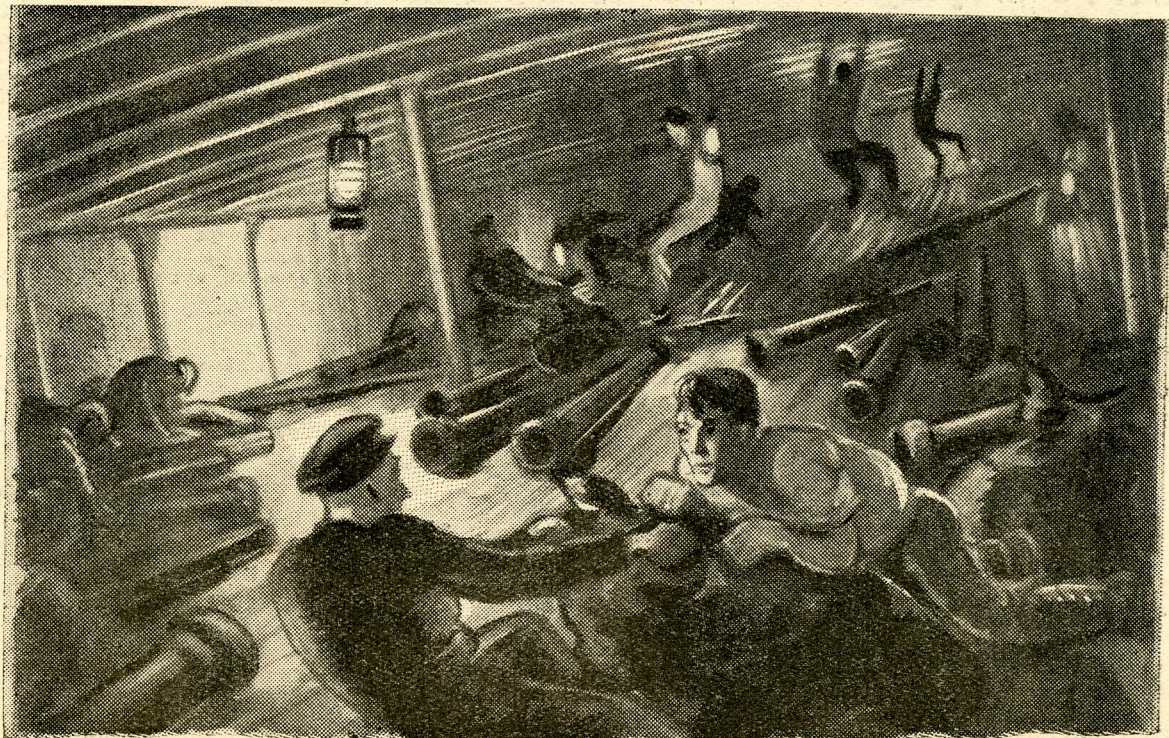
We got the victim out, but not before the bo'sun had smashed an ankle and a steward was groaning over a broken rib. The third mate's left arm was hanging useless—and, as a minor incident, I had lost most of my finger-nails.

After which the attempt was called off as hopeless. And, as the only possible way of stopping the rolling to some extent, it was decided to put the ship about and run with the storm.

AT which point the old Diemen lived up to her name. There was a dull, resounding explosion from the engine-room. And the word was passed forward that the condenser had collapsed.

Which meant that we were absolutely without any kind of power—that we were drifting, broadside-on, to the most mountainous and tossing seas which any of us had ever known.

Had it been possible to do so, the ship would have been abandoned



The Ship That Wouldn't Sink!

then. But there were now not enough boats left to hold all on board. And, in any case, the business of launching them was frankly impossible.

It looked like the end.

I am speaking perfect truth when I say that at that moment I was absolutely and coldly certain that I was going to die by drowning in the next few hours—more than probably in the next few minutes. And I can say that the sensation of hopeless, stark fear is not unlike that of starvation-hunger.

One has the sensation of a lead weight in the pit of one's stomach. One feels weak—the nerves seem to be numbed with a cold listlessness.

It is at times like this that a deep and abiding respect for leadership fills men's hearts. The captain and the officers never lost their hold of the situation for a second. They bawled orders and drove on the miserable crew.

They set about trying to make a sea-anchor. One of the winch booms was unshipped, fitted with a strip of canvas and a drooping bight of spare anchor-chain. A wire hawser was paid out forward and bent on to the whole thing. Then came the effort to raise it up, on another winch-boom, and swing it over to the side.

When it was three feet clear of the deck the winch wheezed—and jammed up solid. And the boom swung

crazily from side to side with the rolling—smashing everything it met—knocking men down like ninepins, and creating even worse havoc than before.

Up in the wireless-room, the operator had been sending out S O S signals ever since the condenser first blew out. But now there came the news that he had missed his footing while rising up half-exhaustedly from his place, and fallen heavily on to the installation, putting it clean out of commission.

It was the last straw. Nothing now could be done. The swinging boom was finally dropped down to the deck by the simple means of sawing through the holding wire hawser. It was dropped overboard and let drift after heartbreaking efforts, so that it might cause no more damage. Then the crew were ordered below to take what shelter they could.

And to wait for the end!

THE Diemen drifted for nearly three weeks. She drifted so far out of her course that she was not found by those ships which had heard her signals. Why she did not turn turtle, no one will ever know. She rolled, until the very idea of standing on anything which kept still for more than five seconds had completely gone from my imagination, and, I suppose, from everybody else's.

Fires had to be damped, because the engines were useless. Fresh water was cut down to a ration of one small mug per man per day. Food was eaten raw, and rum was doled out generously as long as it lasted.

All on board simply waited for death. Never once did the wind drop below gale force, and twice more during that three weeks it rose to tempest strength.

No one knew our position, since there was no method of getting a dead reckoning. Clouds covered the sky, so that a sextant was useless.

We wallowed through that inferno of seas, with distress signals flying by day and flares blazing green at night, starved, racked with thirst, and tortured with the salt-water blisters which began to break out on our lips and hands.

It was at the end of the third week that Providence seemed to take an interest in us again. At about 12 o'clock one night a faint light showed over the southern horizon.

Everyone on board seemed to go half-crazy. Flares were burnt in showers. Men yelled and positively danced as that light showed nearer and nearer. Then a signal-lamp winked out of the darkness.

And, until dawn, the ship which had by chance found us cruised round until the light broke and it was possible to do anything at all.

By dawn the weather was easier, and it was decided that, with spare parts, brought across from that other ship, it would be possible to repair our damaged condenser, so that we could finally make our way into port.

By signals we learnt that our

position was some five hundred miles east of Old Point Comfort Light, at the end of Hampton Roads, in the State of Virginia. Already we had taken three weeks over a journey which should not have occupied more than ten days at the most, and we could hardly believe that we had a chance of life.

A boat was lowered and rowed across, so that the necessary spare parts could be transhipped.

I was one of the crew of that boat, and I never fully realised the size of Atlantic waves until I met them on their own level!

All of us were tired after the double pull, but then we had to tie up alongside our own ship and wait there in case it was necessary to row over again.

And we had to occupy that small tossing boat for seven and a half hours.

At 12 o'clock that night the firemen were down in their places once more, and shortly afterwards there came that sound which we had certainly never expected to hear again.

The "Never-get-'ome!" rhythm re-started. The ship moved.

For my part, I was mighty sorry to hear our old engines start grinding out their endless refrain once again. I had had enough of the old Diemen, and I had been secretly hoping that our engineers would fail to repair her engines, and that we should have to abandon ship and transfer to the one that had come to our aid.

But it was not to be. To the song of "Never-get-'ome," and with our cargo rolling and clashing, we limped off, crawling over the seas, and with the refrain sounding more and more significant with every slow hour that passed.

I never slept a wink that night. Every moment I expected our engines to give way under the strain, leaving us helpless. My nerves were on edge, and I heaved a sigh of thankfulness when dawn broke and we were still limping along.

The daylight steadied me up, but you've no idea how I longed for our terrible voyage to come to an end.

Eight days later the Diemen entered Hampton Roads and limped up to a quay in Newport News at a good, spanking one-and-a-half knots!

When I stepped ashore I felt unreal. The steadiness of that quay positively made me giddy.

For twenty-nine days I had lived, half-submerged, in a reek of salt and the blank fear of death.

My mood, on landing, and the mood of the entire ship's company, was that of almost incredible thankfulness that we had been spared.

And we were united in the firm resolve to make up to the full for the Christmas of which we had been cheated!

Don't miss the next TRUE-LIFE STORY—another breath-snatcher that will set you fellows all agog with white-hot excitement!

Here's Hoping

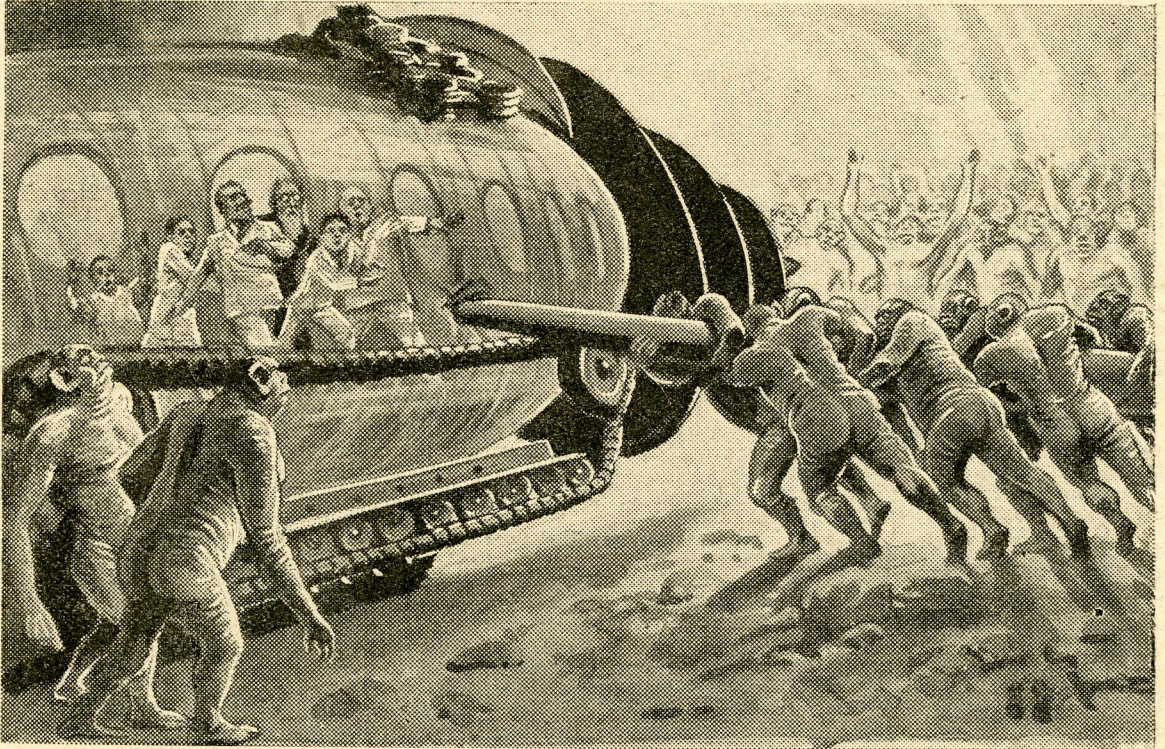
That you get

All You Want

this coming Xmas
and that you . . .

Break All Records

in Fun and Happiness
and Health!



The end of the granite column landed with crashing force against the aquacrawler's transparent side. Dazed and deafened, the comrades stared out in fascinated horror.

In the Cavern of Fear!

With thousands of feet of solid earth, the bed of the ocean, and hundreds of fathoms of sea forming a roof between them and the light of day, Captain Justice & Co. are besieged by eerie Creatures of the Underworld! By MURRAY ROBERTS

"Something Prowling Around!"

IN the very moment that he opened his eyes, sat up, and swung his legs over the side of the bunk, all in one swift movement, Captain Justice knew that something was wrong!

But not so quickly did he recollect just where he was. For little more than a second he was baffled by the strangeness of his immediate surroundings: the narrow cabin, with rounded walls and ceiling, and half a dozen bunks, ranged three on either side, revealed by a dimly glowing light bulb.

Three of the bunks, in addition to Justice's, were occupied—by bald-headed Dr. O'Mally, the captain's second-in-command; Len Connor, the young wireless expert; and red-headed young Midge. They were all asleep.

One member of the party was missing. The bunk recently occupied by Professor Flaznagel was empty; but

the dented pillow was still warm from recent contact with the old scientist's shaggy head.

"The old chap hasn't been gone ten seconds," Justice decided, hastily slipping into his clothes. "Must have been his moving about that woke me up. Wonder what roused him? We haven't been asleep more than a couple of hours."

Justice could hear nothing disturbing, nor sense any cause for alarm. The interior of the motionless aquacrawler was silent, except for the faint rustle of the spinning air fans.

Leaving his companions still asleep, he left the cabin, passed through the dark saloon, and groped his way to the control-room in the bows of the aquacrawler. Here bright lights were burning, and all observation windows were tightly shuttered.

Professor Flaznagel stood in the centre of the floor, his head cocked on one side as he studied a framed square of black glass, in which tiny

specks of light appeared and disappeared like wind-blown sparks.

The professor was short-sighted and absent-minded, but there was nothing wrong with his hearing!

"That you, Justice?" he said, without turning his head. "Come in and shut the door. No need to disturb the others—yet. There's something queer going on outside!"

Outside! Beyond the hull that enclosed them was a region of black mystery—for they were in a vast, dry cavern deep beneath the bed of the Atlantic Ocean!

It was an underworld of vast caverns, bottomless chasms, and craters of fire that had been burning for hundreds of years. It held secrets that no man could ever hope to solve.

Justice and his little band of adventurers, and Ham Chow, their Chinese cook, had had to leave Titanic Tower, their mid-Atlantic headquarters, when it had been invaded by a big gang of escaped convicts—

In the Cavern of Fear!

and Justice & Co. had got away in this queer aquacrawler, hoping to cross the bed of the Atlantic and reach land. Instead, they had burrowed under the sea bed.

The aquacrawler had passed through fire, water, and miles of solid earth and rock, before emerging in this vast underground cavern where Justice had called a halt to snatch a few hours' rest. The aquacrawler manufactured its own air, and was equipped with storage batteries that would keep the powerful electric motors running continually for three months on end. But it was impossible for the comrades to leave it. For there was no breathable air at that depth.

"What's wrong now, professor?" Involuntarily the question escaped Justice's lips as he stepped in the doorway and glanced sharply around the control-room.

The professor, smiling grimly, pointed to the black glass screen.

"You see those lights?" he said. "They are continually winking, and each wink is a warning to the effect that some living body has passed through one of the thousands of invisible, infra-orange rays forming a protective barrier around this craft."

Justice nodded gravely. He knew all about the professor's ingenious invention—a system of invisible light-rays and photo-electric cells that made it impossible for any living being, lurking in outer darkness, to approach within a hundred yards of the aquacrawler without flashing a warning signal to the screen in the control-room and sounding the buzzer that had roused Flaznagel from his sleep.

The myriad tiny lights were continually flashing on and off. The message they conveyed was easily read. Not one, but scores of moving things were crossing and recrossing the mesh of electric rays as they prowled round the strange craft.

The comrades knew that life existed in the black depths of the earth, despite the intense heat and poisonous gasses. Already they had encountered swarms of gigantic beetles, and a giant salamander that had made a ferocious attack on the aquacrawler.

Eerily the lights flickered and flashed. Flaznagel switched on the sensitive sound detectors. The silence was uncanny. There was not the slightest stir or movement.

"Might be a swarm of bats flapping around," suggested Justice, "in and out of the rays."

"Bats wouldn't fly so low," replied the professor. "The rays are no more than four feet from the ground. Anything passing through them must be—Hark! Did you hear that?"

Something had rubbed gently against the outer wall of the craft. The slight, stealthy sound was amplified a hundredfold by the acutely receptive microphones. It was as if groping hands were patting and stroking the smooth, rounded shell.

"Ha, so there you are! I thought you beggars had greased off to snatch

a spot of grub on the quiet. What time's breakfast?"

Midge suddenly appeared in the doorway, yawning, and ruffling his tousled red hair. Behind him came Len Connor, with stout O'Mally looming in the rear.

Len Connor pushed his way to the front, instantly wide awake as he noted the troubled expression on Justice's face, and the professor's hands hovering over the banks of switches.

"I thought I heard one of the alarm-buzzers let rip a little while back," Len said.

"You did," replied the captain. "That's what roused Flaznagel. See those lights flashing? There's something prowling around outside."

"My hat!" exclaimed Midge. "And now there's someone knocking at the door! P'raps it's jolly old Father Christmas!"

Tap, tap, tap! Three distinct raps were delivered against the wall within a few feet of where O'Mally was standing.

"You mention Christmas again—just once—before we get out of here and back into daylight, and, begob, I'll brain ye!" declared Dr. O'Mally murderously.

"We'll soon find out what—or who—it is!" snapped the professor determinedly.

He switched off the sound-detectors, then, with one swift movement, switched on all the lights, and released the Q-ray that made the hull of the aquacrawler transparent.

Justice's Brainwave!

THE spectacle that met their gaze then was like a nightmare.

Scores of eerie, repulsive faces were pressed close against the hull of the aquacrawler, glaring in at them through the transparent sides!

They were human faces, but horrible to look upon. The nostrils were wide and flat, and the bulging eyes covered with a greyish film, like deep-sea fish that had never seen the light of day.

Large leathery ears jutted on either side of a conical hairless skull set deep between broad shoulders on a squat body, with thick stumpy legs and amazingly long arms.

Scores of these denizens of the underworld were packed close around the motionless aquacrawler, flattening their faces against its smooth sides, groping and fumbling with great, muscular hands that seemed capable of crushing an ordinary man's skull.

"Bless my soul!" gasped the professor, the first to find his voice.

"Who would have believed that such creatures could exist? Does it occur to you that they are insensitive to light, and entirely dependent on their senses of touch, sound, and smell?"

"And they appear to be perfectly harmless!" he went on. "They carry no weapons of any kind. Their attitude is one of childish curiosity—"

"Childish curiosity be hanged!" yelled Len Connor, in sudden alarm.

"Look what's happening! Those

beggars aren't such blithering idiots as you seem to think!"

THE crowd had suddenly scattered to right and left, leaving a wide gap in their ranks, through which approached a score or more of their companions, staggering and lurching beneath the weight of some bulky object supported on their broad shoulders.

The thing they carried resembled the trunk of a tree. At closer range Justice could see that it was actually a huge column of basaltic rock, thirty feet in length, tapering to a blunt point, and weighing a ton or more.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Midge, in consternation. "D'you twig their game? They're going to try to crack this old tank wide open—like an egg!"

"You're right, young 'un," agreed Justice grimly. "If they start using that slab of rock as a battering-ram, something's going to give way!"

Tranzelonite, the metal of which the aquacrawler was constructed, was tougher than chilled steel. It could resist intense heat and incredible pressure. But it was doubtful if it could withstand a succession of shattering blows all delivered at one point.

The slightest crack in the aquacrawler's hull would weaken the whole structure, and the lives of its crew would not be worth a snap-of the fingers.

"Hold tight!" roared the professor, and switched on the motors. Nothing happened. The aquacrawler remained stationary. A glance at the dial-board showed him that there was a faulty connection that had short-circuited the power. It would take several valuable minutes to find the break and repair it.

Crash! There was a terrific impact as the end of the granite column landed with crushing force. The aquacrawler heeled to one side, and dropped heavily back on its base.

The hull was still intact, but there was a big bulge, scored with deep scratches, where the battering-ram had left its mark.

Dazed and deafened, they stared in fascinated horror, watching the weird creatures swinging back the huge mass of rock in readiness for another attack.

It was useless turning out the lights. Total darkness was no disadvantage to the sightless creatures. Their highly developed sense of hearing was as good as eyes to them. Their big, projecting ears caught and magnified the slightest sound.

Fearfully, Len Connor waited for the next crash, eyeing the bulging section of wall where it would probably land, breaching the weakened surface, and admitting a wave of poisonous gases that would wipe them out of existence.

Suddenly Captain Justice remembered the powerful electric siren in the roof of the control-room. The weird creatures were insensitive to light, but what about sound? The captain darted across the cabin, clamped his hand down on the siren button, and held it there.

The effect was paralysing.

Justice kept the siren going full blast, throwing up his head with a shout of triumph as he saw the milling horde of creatures scuttling away like leaves before a gale. The first hideous howl of the siren had caused them to forget everything save the extreme urgency of removing themselves as far as possible, and in the quickest time, from the strange monster that had almost shattered their sensitive ear-drums with its fearsome bellow!

In less than five seconds not one was to be seen. All had vanished, swallowed up in the farthest recesses of the black cavern.

Len Connor rubbed his eyes and stared incredulously. The whole incident might have been a dream but for the ugly bulge in the hull, and the huge spur of rock, lying just where it had been dropped alongside the aquacrawler.

Justice switched off the bellowing siren, dashed the perspiration from his forehead, and chuckled grimly.

"I thought that might do the trick!" he said, with a satisfied smile. "I'll bet that old hooter has made 'em as deaf as adders for the next twenty-four hours."

"A brilliant inspiration on your part, Justice!" said the professor. "You averted a grave disaster. I only regret that I had no time to take a photograph of those queer specimens of underworld beings."

"Mebbe they'll send one on if you drop a line and enclose a stamped addressed envelope," suggested Midge. "Great cats, did I hear Ham Chow beating up the jolly old grub gong?"

He was not mistaken. The amazing little Chinese cook had a happy knack of providing meals at a time when they came as a welcome distraction to periods of anxiety and uncertainty.

While they had been facing disaster, Ham Chow had been busy in his tiny kitchen, grilling ham and eggs, buttering toast, and making coffee!

It spoke much for their indifference to danger and the uncertainty of the future that they could eat with any real enjoyment after the harrowing experiences they had undergone, and the threat of even graver perils to come.

The Lake of Quicksilver!

MIDGE sat eating long after the others had finished—until a sudden violent jerk shot his plate into his lap. The aquacrawler was in motion again. Professor Flaznagel had repaired the temporary breakdown, and switched on the motors. Glowing with light, the strange craft glided on its way into the unknown depths.

Justice sauntered forward to the control-room, where the professor was crouched over his levers and switches, peering keenly along the white beams of the powerful searchlights that stabbed the darkness.

Flaznagel pushed his spectacles to the end of his nose, and shot a glance at his companion.

"Between you and me, we're in a tight corner, Justice," he said. "When we started on this venture I never dreamed that we would eventually penetrate under the bed of the ocean. All my science is of no avail now.



The comrades danced madly and Ham Chow stood on his head with joy, as they sighted the familiar shape of the old Flying Cloud floating in the bay. The gigantic airship was battered and smashed—but they were still alive!

If anything is going to pull us through, it'll be sheer luck."

"Oh, well," said the captain, "so long as the aquacrawler holds together and keeps on plodding along I'm not going to start worrying."

Flaznagel bent forward, staring eagerly ahead.

"Water!" he exclaimed excitedly. "There's a sheet of water dead ahead of us!"

"By gosh!" said Connor. "I can see it gleaming in the searchlights. Water—and a lot of it, too. Must be an underground lake, and it cuts right across our path."

Flaznagel frowned and switched the beams of the powerful searchlights to right and left. The gleaming lake seemed illimitable. It stretched indefinitely into the outer darkness, bounded by a sloping shore strewn with rocks and rugged boulders, some as big as the aquacrawler itself.

But it was the water that held Justice's attention. It was as sluggish and stagnant as a pool in a sheltered quarry. Not a ripple disturbed its surface, where the lights were reflected as from a sheet of highly polished silver.

Flaznagel brought the aquacrawler to a standstill within several yards of the brink, and made a prolonged inspection of his various gauges and instruments.

"Nothing like a change of scenery," muttered Midge. "How about going for a stroll and getting a breath of fresh air? There's plenty of gas-masks stowed away in the battery chamber."

The professor laughed shortly. "It is not only a question of poisonous gases," he jerked. "It may interest you to know that the temperature outside is over one hundred and fifty degrees! If you ventured



In the Cavern of Fear!

outside you'd shrivel up like a piece of burned bacon in less than ten seconds."

"If it's as hot as all that why hasn't the blinkin' lake boiled away or dried up?" asked Midge.

"Because of the oil on its surface," answered the old scientist promptly. "I have come to the conclusion that the waters of this lake are covered with a thick film of crude mineral oil, which explains that bright, metallic sheen."

"Oil? I guess you're right, professor," agreed Justice, and turned quickly as Len Connor grabbed him excitedly by the arm. "What's biting you, Len?"

"There's something moving over there," declared Connor, pointing along the beam of one of the searchlights. "Just between those two big boulders!"

"Bedad, 'tis sharp eyes ye've got," muttered O'Mally, whose own vision was remarkably keen. "I can see nothing at all, except rocks and shadows, and— By St. Patrick, ye're right, and I'm wrong! I can see it now. 'Tis one of those big beetles!"

"Beetle, your grandmother's car-trumpet," scoffed Midge. "Get ready to fuddle the old siren, captain. It's some more of those blinkin' elephant-eared thing-a-my-jigs come to pay us a visit."

There were four of the squat, evil-looking creatures. They stepped out of the shadows into the bright path of the searchlight, walking in single file, and heading straight for the boulder-strewn edge of the smooth, sinister lake.

THEY were only fifty yards away. The aquacrawler, with its blazing lights, was in plain view, but the newcomers never once glanced in its direction, or gave any indication that they were aware of its presence.

It seemed strange to Justice that their keenly developed sense of hearing had so far failed to detect the faint drone of motors and the crunch of pebbles as the heavy craft settled lower on its great base.

"The tooting of that siren must have put their ears out of action," he decided.

"The beggars haven't spotted us. They're not coming this way at all," breathed Midge. "If they don't watch their step they'll be walking clean into the blinkin' duck pond."

But the four creatures evidently knew what they were doing, despite their lack of sight and hearing. They moved with deliberation and purpose, their short, thick legs covering the ground at an amazing speed.

Justice and his companions watched them in silence, curious to learn what their object was. They had not long to wait. Within a few yards of the lake's edge the four suddenly halted and grouped themselves round a huge, flat-topped slab of rock that must have weighed a ton.

For a moment their movements were obscured. Suddenly the great boulder

commenced to move. Slowly at first, then with increasing speed, it glided down the slight slope, impelled by the combined strength of the heaving, straining creatures.

Justice could see now that the rock was mounted on wooden rollers, long poles as thick round as a man's thigh. In such a manner had the ancient Greeks, the Aztecs, and the Egyptians transported the enormous blocks of stone with which they had constructed their temples, pyramids, and public buildings.

A final heave sent the slab of rock toppling over the brink. It plumped into the sluggish, silvery water with no more splash than a diving seal would have made.

O'Mally's eyes bulged. Midge uttered a shrill yelp of astonishment. The heavy rock had not sunk! It floated. Buoyant as a cork, it rested on the surface, with no less than a third of its great bulk submerged.

It was incredible—unbelievable. And that was not all. Before the gaping watchers could recover from their amazement, the four creatures had snatched up the wooden rollers, leaped lightly on to the flat surface of the floating boulder and, with the rollers, poled themselves swiftly out on to the lake.

For a while they hung in the white glare of the searchlight, gradually dwindling in size, till the shadows closed around them and they merged into the far darkness and vanished.

"Well, bust a blinkin' frog!" exclaimed Midge blankly. "That just about takes the thumping tea-cake! When it comes to whacking great rocks floating—"

"Nonsense! It was no ordinary rock!" declared the professor. "Probably a huge lump of lava, or pumice stone, as it is commonly called."

"But it looked like solid granite to me," said Len Connor. "And dashed heavy—it was all those chaps could do to shift it."

Justice puffed at his cigar, and stared out across the still, silent expanse of water.

"We don't want to waste time," he said. "The fact that those creatures took to the water suggests that there is no other way of crossing this lake. It is not deep. They used poles instead of oars. Where they went, we can follow."

Flaznagel nodded. The lake was the only available avenue of escape open to them. He started the motors, sending the aquacrawler charging down the slope into the water. There was a sudden feeling of buoyancy. The great craft flung up its nose and seemed to be riding on air. It was only half-submerged, and refused to sink any deeper. The water that hissed past the windows was thick and bright as liquid silver.

"Great cats, we're afloat, same as that blinkin' rock!" exclaimed Midge. "It isn't water at all. And it certainly isn't oil!"

The professor snapped his fingers, and gave a little cry of delight. He had solved the mystery.

"Mercury!" he chuckled. "Quicksilver. The densest fluid known to

science. No wonder we can't sink! A lake of quicksilver! The most amazing discovery we have made as yet!"

"Quicksilver!" echoed Midge. "You mean the stuff that goes up and down in barometers and thermometers when it's going to rain, and all that sort of thing?"

"Exactly!" agreed the professor. His eyes were dancing. Another secret of the strange underworld had been revealed to them!

Running the Gauntlet!

WITH searchlights boring twin tunnels of radiance in the darkness, the aquacrawler glided smoothly ahead, her caterpillar-treads serving the purpose of a giant paddlewheel.

Justice kept a keen look-out. His nerves were tingling. Something seemed to tell him that the next few hours would decide their fate one way or the other.

Frowning walls and a rugged vaulted roof were closing in on them. The area of the lake was not so great as he imagined it to be. In formation it was roughly the shape of a pear, and they were working up from the rounded base to the narrow, tapering stem.

Soon the channel between the cliffs was no more than thirty yards wide. And still it narrowed like the neck of a funnel, into which the glittering quicksilver flowed in a steady, sluggish stream.

Flaznagel reduced speed, and switched the headlights to right and left. They were menaced with a fresh danger, for there now seemed barely room for the aquacrawler to squeeze through between the bulging walls of lava!

"Go ahead. No use turning back," advised Justice. "There's no other route we can take. The passage may widen out again."

He had scarcely spoken when there was a deafening crash, and a tremendous concussion that sent the occupants of the control-room staggering in all directions. The aquacrawler lurched and rolled, its metal hull ringing like a bell from the impact of a smashing blow.

A huge boulder rebounded high in the air from the tough metal and plunged into the flood of mercury, sending a shower of silvery drops spraying in all directions.

Boom! A second rock, twice the size of the first, hurtled down from the upper darkness, missing the craft by a hairbreadth, and shattering to fragments against a projecting spur of lava.

Sprawled on the rocking floor, staring dazedly up through the transparent roof, Midge saw the cavern walls mottled with the shadows of overhanging ledges, and honeycombed with holes in the solid rock.

Weird shapes swarmed like ants on the rugged slopes. Scores of faces, flat-nosed and bat-eared, peered down from the dark heights.

"My hat!" Midge yelled. "They're parked up there as thick as flies. The beggars are bombarding us with rocks!"

As he spoke, another shower of boulders came crashing down. It was almost impossible to miss the huge bulk of the aquacrawler, lurching and grinding along the narrow channel. Missile after missile rebounded from her sides.

Recklessly Justice switched the motors to full speed. To remain where they were meant disaster. Their only hope was to run the gauntlet of the downpour of rocks, blindly following the course of the flowing stream of quicksilver, with no idea where it might lead them.

Crash! There was sudden darkness, save for the glow of a few electric bulbs. A jagged boulder had landed right on the nose of the craft, putting both searchlights right out of action. Rasping and grinding against the bulging walls, the aquacrawler slid round a bend, a final shower of rocks plunging harmlessly into the silver tide behind her.

She forged ahead with incredible speed. The channel had widened again, and there was no further attack. The cliffs that loomed up on either side were as smooth as glass, presenting a surface that only a spider could have traversed.

"Phew!" breathed Midge. "I'll hand it to this old tank. Toughest egg the professor's ever hatched out of his noddle."

But Flaznagel's face was grave as he examined a dent where one of the boulders had landed. The tranzelonite was splintered like bullet-proof glass. And there was a regular jarring thump-thump, warning him that the revolving caterpillar treads had suffered damage that might result in a complete breakdown.

Justice wrestled with the controls. The craft was lopsided. It was difficult to keep a straight course and avoid contact with the rugged walls.

Shaking his head uneasily, the professor fitted a spare searchlight, and switched it on. The beam splashed on black rock and glittering quicksilver that stretched ahead like a bright metal ribbon.

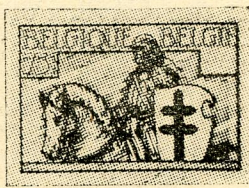
The aquacrawler sped buoyantly along, reeling off mile after mile as it penetrated into the unknown. With startling suddenness the flowing stream of liquid ended, pouring smoothly over the lip of a six-foot crevasse that yawned across their path. Beyond, the tunnel rose in a steep incline.

The gap was no obstacle to the aquacrawler. It swept over it as easily as an army tank crossing a trench, doubling its speed on the firm, dry surface of solid rock.

Up, up, and up. The gradient was almost one in four. They were gaining height each moment. Every thrust of the powerful motors was carrying them nearer to the crust of the earth!

"We have ascended over three thousand feet in the last half-hour," said the professor, turning from his instruments. "Roughly, we are now about two and a half miles underground. It is too much to hope that this tunnel extends right to the surface. There is still the sea above us

Get These for Your Xmas Collection!



By **DOUGLAS ARMSTRONG**, who will answer **FREE** any Stamp Queries which any reader may care to send to the Editor. If you can, enclose a stamped, addressed envelope for reply by Post

ALREADY the annual issues of Christmas charity stamps have begun to appear on the Continent, and by the end of the year the up-to-date stamp collector will have at least half a dozen new series to add to his album. Fortunately they are not very costly and there is the satisfaction of knowing that someone less fortunate has benefited by their sale.

The German charity, or "Nothilfe," stamps for 1934 are nine in number, with a total face-value of 2 marks, of

which 77 pfennige goes to national relief of distress. This year's designs are dedicated to Industry and include pictures of a Merchant, Blacksmith, Mason, Miner, Peasant, Architect, Scientist, Sculptor, and Judge.

AUSTRIA'S latest charity postage stamps will illustrate winter sports for which that country is famous. And Belgium will pursue her national campaign against the ravages of the White Scourge through the medium of a set of stamps sold at a surtax on behalf of the funds of the

Above: The White Knight rides forth against the Dragon Disease, on this Christmas Charity stamp from Belgium.

Right: A Swiss girl from St. Moritz on one of the latest Christmas issues of the child-welfare stamps.



Anti-Tuberculosis Society, symbolised by a Knight on horseback going forth to mortal combat with the Dragon Disease, the two-barred Cross of Lorraine emblazoned on his shield being the device of the world movement for the stamping out of the dread tuberculosis.

There is even a chance that we may have a Father Christmas stamp from America this year if the Postmaster-General of the U.S.A. lives up to the promise he made some months ago, when he said that the sales of his Mother's Day stamp had been so satisfactory that he was considering a special Santa Claus issue for Christmas!

Switzerland's twentieth issue of child-welfare stamps (Pro Juventute) comprises four values, three of them showing Swiss girls wearing the traditional

the dread tuberculosis. There is even a chance that we may have a Father Christmas stamp from America this year if the Postmaster-General of the U.S.A. lives up to the promise he made some months ago, when he said that the sales of his Mother's Day stamp had been so satisfactory that he was considering a special Santa Claus issue for Christmas!

—or there should be, according to all my calculations."

The narrow tunnel wound and twisted, a rugged fissure along which molten lava had once trickled, gradually cooling and hardening like a concrete path. Flaznagel tested the outer temperature. It had dropped to a hundred and ten degrees.

"The air is still not breathable," muttered the professor. "But if the worst came to the worst, we could manage with gas-masks. I don't want to alarm you fellows," he went on, "but there is a leak somewhere, and the vibration of the motors is gradually enlarging it. I am forced to maintain a pressure of air that must eventually empty our supply tanks."

Justice nodded grimly. It was a marvel to him that the aquacrawler had so long survived the tremendous battering it had received.

"A leak!" exclaimed Midge, sniffing uneasily. "How are we going to manage if we suddenly pop out into the ocean? Strikes me someone'll have to do a quick job of plumbing."

Flaznagel shrugged his shoulders. There was no use stressing the danger that threatened them. He knew that the aquacrawler was doomed. It had made its first and last journey under

the sea. The breach in its hull was beyond repair, and it would gradually lengthen and widen. The air-tanks were rapidly becoming exhausted, and he had reason to fear that the caterpillar treads might snap asunder like worn-out bicycle chains.

JUSTICE had his hands clamped on the controls, his eyes glued to the steep, winding trail. They were still ascending, climbing up out of the black depths.

The tunnel was widening. The bleak walls receded, and suddenly opened out into a vast gulf of darkness. The floor no longer rose. It was pitted with holes, seamed with ridges of lava, and strewn with huge lumps of volcanic rock.

The aquacrawler lurched forward, creaking and groaning in every joint. There was a sudden rending crash, a violent shock, and a shrill scream of racing motors. Justice switched off the power. The face he turned towards his friends was white and strained.

"The caterpillar treads have gone west!" he said huskily. "Snapped like string!"

"Crumbs!" exclaimed Midge. "Sort of thing that would happen just

In the Cavern of Fear!

as we were getting along nicely. Where have we landed now?"

Flaznagel operated the searchlight, sweeping the dazzling beam in a complete circle. It revealed towering walls of rock, unbroken save for the mouth of the tunnel from which they had emerged.

They were hemmed in. The broken-down aquacrawler rested in the middle of an immense amphitheatre, a hundred yards in diameter, with rugged walls that sloped upwards like the sides of a huge concrete bowl.

"It seems to me," said the professor, adjusting his spectacles, "that we are at the bottom of an extinct volcano. There is every evidence to that effect. The walls are scarred with fire. The molten lava escaped through that hole in the earth. All that happened thousands of years ago."

"Bedad, never mind what took place thousands of years ago," grumbled O'Mally. "I'd like to know what we're going to do next. Volcano, indeed! A nice place to be spending the rest of our lives in!"

There was a sudden report like the bark of a pistol, and a fierce hiss of escaping air. A jagged crack an inch wide straggled snakishly across the roof of the craft. Len Connor eyed it in alarm. So the hull was more seriously damaged than they had supposed.

There was no confusion or panic. Justice and his companions were well drilled for such an emergency. They knew that, for the time being, the leakage of air was confined to the forepart of the craft. Grabbing their gas-masks, they filed quietly into the main saloon.

Flaznagel turned off the air-valves supplying the control-room, and closed the airtight door. They were safe where they were; but the controls were beyond reach. The aquacrawler was helpless!

A Sight for Sore Eyes!

"It is obvious that this craft is of no further use to us, save as a base and supply depot," said the professor. "I suggest that we don gas-masks, and make a thorough survey of our immediate surroundings!"

"Only thing to be done," agreed Justice. "We may stand a better chance of winning through on foot."

The gas-masks, fitting over head and shoulders like a diver's helmet, were equipped with emergency oxygen-tanks and an electric lamp that would burn continuously for forty-eight hours. Attached was a knapsack, holding pistol, knife, water-bottle, and emergency rations.

"Like a bunch of two-legged tadpoles!" remarked Midge, as he donned his helmet and surveyed his friends. "Blessed if it won't be a treat to stretch our legs! Where's Ham Chow?"

The Chinese cook was on the spot, ready to share any danger that had to be faced. Flaznagel switched off all interior lights, save one that would indicate the aquacrawler's

whereabouts, opened the sliding-door, and stepped out into the darkness. He experienced no discomfort beyond an intense heat that seeped up through the ground beneath him, suggestive of hidden fires burning deep down in the bowels of the earth.

"Don't use your lights yet!" he ordered. They stood grouped together for several minutes, straining their eyes to pierce the surrounding blackness.

Midge glanced upwards. His heart seemed to turn a somersault, and he uttered a shrill yelp of excitement. Thousands of feet above, he could see a faint, luminous circle, like a full moon hanging in a pitch-black sky.

"By thunder! Daylight!" exclaimed Justice. "That must be the mouth of the crater!"

"Exactly," agreed the professor calmly. "Just what I was hoping to see! But it is a long way off—not far short of ten thousand feet, I should imagine!"

Ten thousand feet separating them from the outer world and the blessed light of day that they had never expected to see again!

"A long climb," said the professor. "But we should be able to manage it. It is our only chance of escape, and we are not pressed for time."

"Pressed for time!" echoed Midge. "I don't care if it takes a blinkin' week, so long as we get out of this beastly hole!"

They switched on their lights, illuminating the face of the crater walls as far as the beams would reach. It shelved in a series of ledges, rugged slopes, and natural steps.

"Easy as walking upstairs!" declared Midge. "Be a bit of a grind; but it'll knock pounds of fat off the doctor."

Justice made no comment. He knew they were handicapped by the darkness and their clumsy, cumbersome gas-masks. The slightest slip meant certain death. They might climb thousands of feet without mishap, to find further progress barred by overhanging rock.

But a decision had been made. Flaznagel went back to the aquacrawler and returned with a length of rope, with which the six adventurers were linked securely together.

Justice took the lead, with O'Mally at the tail-end of the line. With a last glance at the abandoned aquacrawler, they commenced the ascent.

At first it was easy going. They mounted from ledge to ledge, climbing the first five hundred feet in less than half an hour. The friendly darkness veiled the dizzy gulf of space below. Their eyes were fixed determinedly on the circle of sky above.

It became a hard fight. Justice had to test every foothold, waiting till his companions joined him on one ledge before he tackled the next. During the next hour they made scarcely any progress. Their boots were ripped to pieces on the razor-edged lava; their hands torn and lacerated.

Several times they halted for a

breather. On the next occasion they snatched half an hour's strength-reviving sleep.

Then on again. The circle of sky gradually widened. There came a time when the professor tested the air, ripped off his gas-mask, and flung it into the depths. The others followed suit. The air was fresh and pure. It revived and invigorated.

Three hours had elapsed. Flaznagel shone a light on his pocket barograph.

"Seven thousand feet," he announced triumphantly. "Over two-thirds of the way!"

It became bitterly cold. Springs of icy water trickled from the rock, soaking them to the skin, and making the narrow ledges as slippery as glass. The remainder of the climb was like an awful dream to Justice. Brain and muscles functioned mechanically.

They ascended from darkness to greyish gloom that gradually brightened to broad daylight. Midge yelled with delight as a shaft of sunshine struck full in his eyes.

The lip of the crater loomed above them like the jagged rim of a gigantic, rusty funnel, thrust spout downwards into the earth. The open sky stretched overhead, blue and cloudless.

The last thousand feet was no more than a gentle slope, strewn with boulders, ashes, and mineral deposits. They scrambled upwards on hands and knees, crested the brink, and collapsed like dead men in a stupor of utter exhaustion and relief.

It was a terrific yell, repeated again and again, that brought Justice to his senses. He sat up, to find Midge standing over him, his clothes in rags, his face black as a sweep's, and a huge grin stretching from ear to ear.

"They're coming—spotted, us right a way!" gabbled the youngster, almost hysterically. "Did ever you know such a stroke of blinkin' luck? There's the old Flying Cloud anchored in the bay with a great hole in her bows and half her keel ripped away. Great cats, I can hardly believe it!"

Justice couldn't believe it at all. Their giant airship, the Flying Cloud, with only Bingley, the chief mechanic, aboard, had been swept away from Titanic Tower in a gale and not been heard of since. That was days ago, before they had plunged to the bottom of the sea in the ill-fated aquacrawler.

"Bedad, 'tis true, Justice—'tis true!" roared O'Mally, standing on the crater edge, waving his hands above his head. "Come and see, man! By the beard of St. Patrick, 'tis a sight for sore eyes. Bingley, ahoy! Hooroo—hooroo!"

Justice looked—and saw! Len Connor and the professor were holding hands and capering like savages, while Ham Chow stood on his head kicking his heels in the air. And where the outer wall of the mountain peak sloped gently down to the blue waters of a land-locked bay was the

(Continued on page 32)



The armed marine on sentry duty came rigidly to the salute at sight of Grey Shadow's naval uniform. His eyes flickered towards the boy, but he saw nothing strange in a diminutive youngster going aboard the U-boat with an officer.

PETER THE WAIF!

GEORGE E. ROCHESTER'S Special Christmas Story of thirteen years old PETER and his chief, Captain Ellis, the famous British Secret Service Agent feared throughout War-time Germany as GREY SHADOW—with a price of 100,000 marks on his head!

Under Sealed Orders!

THROUGHOUT the grey winter afternoon a conference had dragged on at the German Admiralty building in the Wilhelmstrasse, Berlin.

But now it was over, and the high naval officials who had attended had taken their departure. Only Admiral Furzanger remained, for the conference had been held in his room.

For a while he sat writing at his paper-littered desk, then, laying down his pen, he rose wearily to his feet and crossed to the window.

Snow was falling, and, his hands clasped behind his back, the grey-haired admiral stood gazing down with unseeing eyes at the white-mantled street below.

It wanted but three days to Christmas, and still the guns were thundering out there on the Western Front, and still the grey warships of Britain were engaged in their determined blockade of the German coasts.

This would be the fourth Christmas since hostilities had broken out; yet the day of peace and goodwill, which would mark the passing of nearly three and a half years of pitiless slaughter, would bring no respite to the weary and war-worn hosts at death-grips in the mud of France and Flanders.

Christmas, once the time of festivity and good cheer, would bring but a deeper sadness to the stricken homes of Germany, for in addition to the horror of the awful death-roll of the fighting fronts the gaunt spectre

of starvation was already stalking the land.

And unless that spectre was laid, Germany could not carry on. The blockade of her coasts by the British Navy must somehow be broken and food ships allowed to reach German ports.

Turning from the window, Admiral Furzanger slowly retraced his steps to the desk and pressed a bell. In response to the ring the door opened and his private secretary, an elegant and good-looking man in naval uniform, entered the room.

"You rang, sir?" he said. "Yes, Von Erze," nodded the admiral. "I have orders for you. You will leave for Wilhelmshaven tonight with dispatches for Admiral

Peter the Waif!

Zimmermann, chief of the naval depot there. Von Schauer sails under sealed orders!"

"Then it is settled, sir?" cried Von Erze eagerly.

"Yes, it is settled," assented the admiral, seating himself at his desk. "The blockade must be broken at all costs. We are agreed that our High Sea Fleet is practically useless against the speed and gun-range of the British Fleet, and our only hope is a renewed and vigorous U-boat campaign pursued mercilessly and ruthlessly."

"And Von Schauer sails to establish the fuelling base?" said Von Erze.

"Yes, we must have a fuelling base," replied the admiral. "It is impossible for our U-boats to be as effective as is imperative if their cruising range is limited to the amount of fuel they can take aboard at Kiel or Wilhelmshaven. We must have a fuelling base in British waters."

"It is a pity we ever lost that island which the British now call Traitor's Rock," remarked Von Erze.

"Yes, that was disastrous," replied his chief. "Situated in the Scottish Hebrides as it was, the island was ideal for our purpose. We made a mistake, however, in relying on that traitor-scoundrel, Amos Scrobie."

What we should have done was to put two of our own men there who could speak Gaelic and pass themselves off as islanders."

"What happened to that small boy whom Scrobie left on the island when he cleared out, and whom Schweiger brought to Germany?" asked Von Erze curiously.

Admiral Füzanger frowned.

"You mean that little waif of the sea named Peter, who used to help with the fuelling?" he said. "He vanished completely shortly after he arrived in Germany, and our Intelligence Bureau are under the impression that he is the boy who is known to be working with Grey Shadow, the notorious British spy, on whose head our High Command has placed a price of one hundred thousand marks!"

Von Erze laughed.

"But surely that is impossible, sir?" he exclaimed. "From what I was given to understand, the boy was an uneducated little brat who could neither read nor write."

"That is correct," nodded his chief. "Whether or not he is the boy working with Grey Shadow I do not know. Nor does it concern us. It is a matter for the Intelligence Bureau. But to return to the question of this new fuelling base. As you say, Von Schauer sails under sealed orders, and there will be no blundering this time."

"It is going to be a risky job,

though, sir," commented Von Erze uneasily.

"Only until the base is established," replied the admiral. "Once Von Schauer is settled there with the picked men whom we are providing, there will be very little risk. I regard the scheme as one of the most brilliant and ingenious ever planned. It cannot fail, once the base is taken."

He tapped a portfolio on the desk in front of him.

"The approved and detailed plan is here," he said, "including the sealed orders to be handed to Captain von Schauer. A compartment will be reserved for you on the train leaving Berlin for Wilhelmshaven at eight-fifteen to-night."

"You will permit these papers to be neither out of your sight nor out of your possession until you have handed them to Admiral Zimmermann. Do you understand?"

Von Erze clicked his heels and bowed.

"Yes, sir," he replied, "I quite understand!"

"You Have Ten Minutes!"

THE big station clock showed the hour to be seven-thirty that same evening when a small, neatly dressed boy, carrying a suitcase, drifted up towards the barrier of the platform from which the Wilhelmshaven express was due to leave at eight-fifteen.

He did not pass through the barrier, that small boy, but stood watching the bustle about him. For the vast station was thronged with grey-clad soldiers and blue-coated sailors, some arriving on Christmas leave, others returning from leave to spend Christmas either in the trenches or aboard the bottled-up German Fleet lying at Kiel.

With many of those returning to the shambles of the Western Front were weeping women and white-faced little children, and as the small boy watched there was infinite pity in his eyes.

For, young though he was—no more than thirteen years of age—he could appreciate to the full the tragedy of it all, and he knew that many of those little children would never see their fathers again.

Standing some distance from the barrier, deep in conversation, were two greatcoated officers of the German Imperial Navy, their gold-braided epaulets denoting the rank of captain.

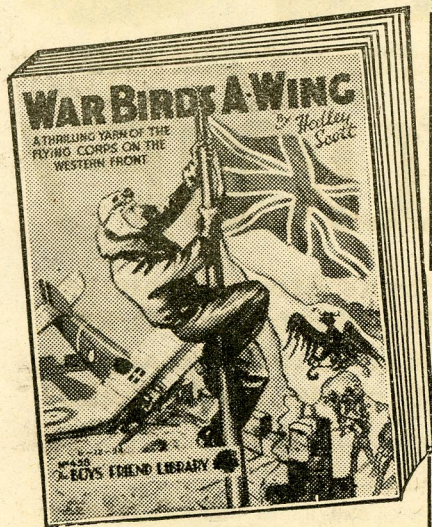
The boy glanced at them, and his gaze passed on, to become suddenly fixed on the slim and elegant Von Erze, who was hurrying towards the barrier, followed by a porter carrying two leather suitcases.

Picking up his own case, the boy moved towards the barrier, taking from his coat pocket his ticket and identification papers.

"Hallo, young chap! Travelling alone?" asked the grey-clad official seated at the table by the barrier, as he accepted the boy's papers.

"Yes, sir. My uncle or my aunt is to meet me at Wilhelmshaven," replied the boy civilly. "I go to spend Christmas with them."

(Continued on page 20)



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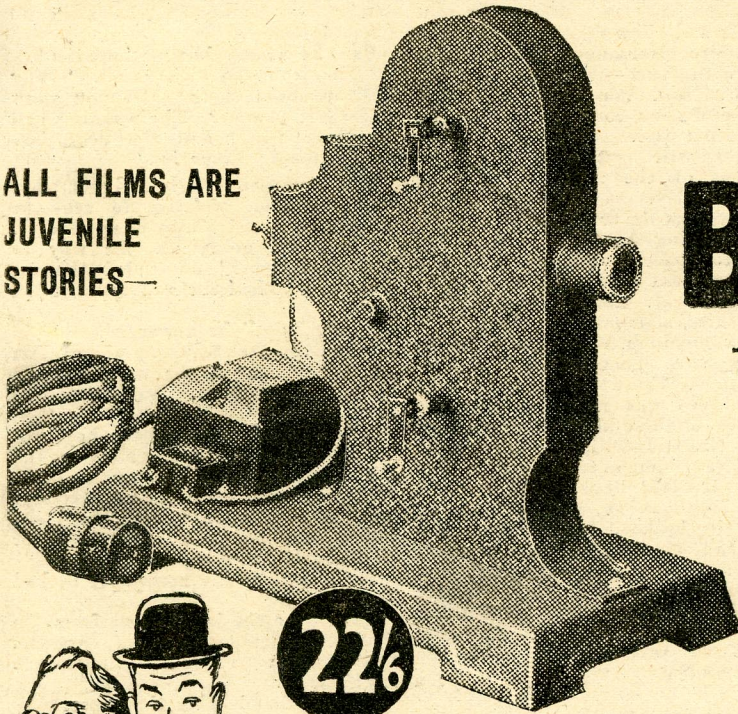
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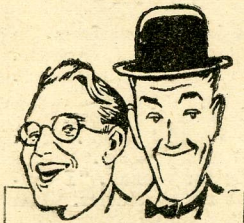
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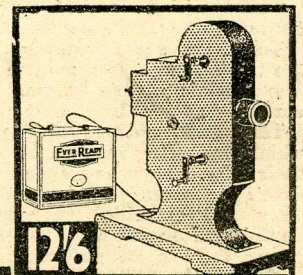
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17'6 • 25'-

MAINS MODELS

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Peter the Waif!

(Continued from page 18)

"Huh!" grunted the other, stamping the papers and handing them back.

"Thank you, sir!" said the boy, politely raising his cap. "A merry Christmas, sir!"

He passed through on to the platform. Von Erze was ahead of him, and the boy watched him halt outside a first-class coach and wait whilst the porter put his cases into a compartment marked "Reserved."

The boy also halted, placing his suitcase carefully on the platform beside a newspaper trolley and fumbling in his pocket for the necessary pfennige with which to purchase a paper.

As he did so the two naval officers whom he had seen deep in conversation outside the barrier came along the platform. Von Erze, having tipped and dismissed his porter, was just stepping into his compartment. In his hand was a black leather portfolio. One of the officers touched him on the arm.

"The Captain von Erze?" he said questioningly.

Von Erze wheeled to find himself staring into a pair of stern blue eyes. "Yes!" he snapped.

"I am Captain Zelten, of the Naval Intelligence Service," said the other grimly. "It is my duty to inform you that you are under arrest. You will accompany us to the Falkenjäger Barracks!"

"Under—under arrest?" stammered Von Erze. "What the dickens are you talking about?"

The eyes of Captain Zelten hardened.

"I trust, Herr Captain," he said icily, "that it is not your intention to create a scene?"

"But—but I don't understand!" stammered Von Erze. "Why am I under arrest? What is the charge?"

"The charge is espionage on behalf of the enemy!" answered the other tersely.

"But the thing is ridiculous!" began Von Erze wildly. "There must be some mistake! You cannot arrest me—"

"Captain von Erze," cut in the other harshly, "do you accompany us to the military barracks of your own free will, or must we remove you there by force?"

Von Erze stared at him. The colour had drained from his face, leaving it deathly in its pallor.

"But my—my luggage?" he stammered.

"That will be seen to!" snapped Captain Zelten. "Come!"

Von Erze went, walking between the two officers like a man in a daze. The officials at the barrier glanced curiously at the three.

They knew nothing of the drama which was being enacted in front of their eyes. They had examined Von Erze's papers and passed him through. They had examined the papers of Captain Zelten and his companion and passed the two officers through.

Now all three were returning. That was what the officials knew, but they

noted the pallor of Von Erze's face, and wondered at it.

Well, it had nothing to do with them. These were strange times, and strange happenings were of daily occurrence.

Von Erze was still carrying his portfolio. Neither Zelten nor his companion made any effort to take it from him.

"You will allow me to ring through to Admiral Furzanger and acquaint him with this—this preposterous charge?" said Von Erze unsteadily, as he and his escort walked through the station exit.

"That will rest with the commandant of the barracks," replied Zelten shortly.

A car with drawn blinds was waiting. Opening the door, Zelten stood aside to usher Von Erze in. The latter entered and sank on to the cushioned seat. Zelten seated himself beside him, slamming the door.

His companion had mounted to the driving-seat. That struck Von Erze as strange. Where was the chauffeur? Still, there was no accounting for the ways of these blundering madmen of the Naval Intelligence Service.

The car commenced to glide forward. He told himself there would be a row about this! Someone would be broken. A terrible mistake had been made, but it would prove a costly one for the fools who had made it— Breaking abruptly in on Von Erze's thoughts, something damp and reeking of powerful anæsthetic was clapped over his mouth and nostrils.

Startled, he struggled desperately. He tried to shout, but his indrawn breath drew the anæsthetic deeper into his lungs. Frantically he fought to keep a grip on his reeling senses, but his world was slipping from him, and he sank into the black depths of unconsciousness.

Whipping Von Erze's hands behind his back, Zelten snapped a pair of handcuffs about his wrists and tied a handkerchief tightly across the man's mouth. That done, he went swiftly through Von Erze's pockets, then picked up the portfolio from where it had fallen to the floor of the car.

"Right-ho, Saunders!" he said softly to the officer who was driving.

The car glided in towards the kerb. Almost before it had come to a halt Zelten was out, slamming the door behind him.

"You have ten minutes!" said Saunders, leaning out of the driving-seat and speaking in German. "Good-bye, and good luck!"

Next moment the car had glided away, and Grey Shadow, alias Captain Zelten, hailed a passing taxi and scrambled into it, Von Erze's portfolio clutched tightly in his hand.

A Crumpled Cigarette Packet!

GREY SHADOW had three minutes to spare as he hurried through the barrier and walked briskly to the compartment which had been reserved for the unfortunate Von Erze.

Farther down the train stood the small boy. He had parked his case

on the rack of a crowded third-class compartment and was standing on the platform, anxiously staring towards the barrier.

"Come in, little one!" said a fat woman from the compartment. "Come in, or the train will go and leave you behind!"

"Yes, lady, I am coming," said the small boy politely, but he made no effort to budge.

The fat woman became impatient.

"Then come on!" she cried. "Why do you stand there? Do you want to be left behind? The warning bell has been rung, and the doors are being closed. Come in!"

The boy came in. He had seen what he had been waiting to see—the boarding of the train by Grey Shadow.

"Are you going all the way to Wilhelmshaven?" demanded the fat woman, who had the seat opposite the lad.

"Yes, lady," he answered.

"And you are travelling alone? You are very young to be travelling all that distance alone. Will anyone be meeting you?"

"Yes, lady," answered the boy, and looked somewhat desperately round the compartment. There was no hope. Every seat was taken. He must endure this fat, talkative woman until she either dropped off to sleep or Wilhelmshaven was reached.

He picked up the newspaper he had bought.

"Read me the latest news from the Front!" ordered the voice opposite. "What does to-night's communique say?"

The boy handed her the paper. "Perhaps you would like to look at it yourself?" he said politely.

"No," said the fat woman, "I cannot read without my spectacles. You read it to me!"

The boy looked at her. Then he unfolded his paper and looked at that. She couldn't read without her spectacles, couldn't she? Well, he couldn't read at all! No, not a word.

"Well, what does it say?" demanded the voice querulously.

"The news is bad," said the boy gravely. "Very bad!"

"What do you mean, very bad?" growled the angry voice of a red-faced man seated next to him.

"We have repulsed an attack on the Amiens sector, haven't we? The enemy's casualties are estimated at fifteen hundred killed and twice that number wounded, aren't they? What d'you mean, the news is bad? I consider the news is good. Very good!"

He snorted and returned to his own paper. The boy laid his paper down. The fat woman eyed him.

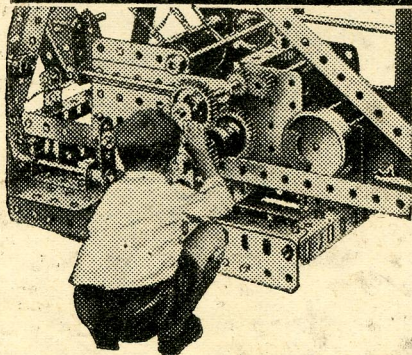
"I suppose you are going to Wilhelmshaven for Christmas?" she said. "With whom are you going to stay? I am going there to stay with my married daughter."

The boy listened. The voice droned on, an unceasing accompaniment to the clicky-click of the pounding wheels as the express drove on through the night towards Wilhelmshaven.

It promised to be a painful journey for the lad. Let us leave him to it

(Continued on page 24)

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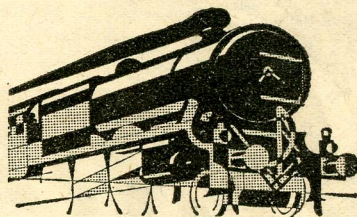
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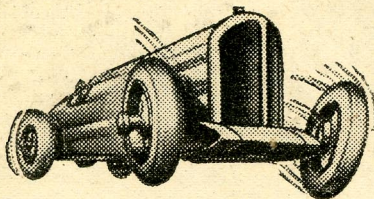
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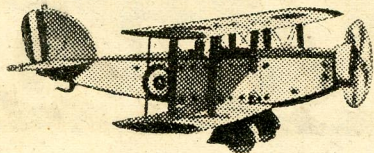
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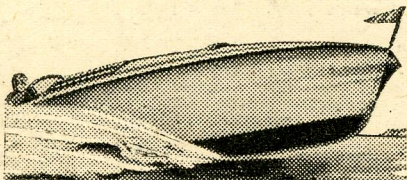
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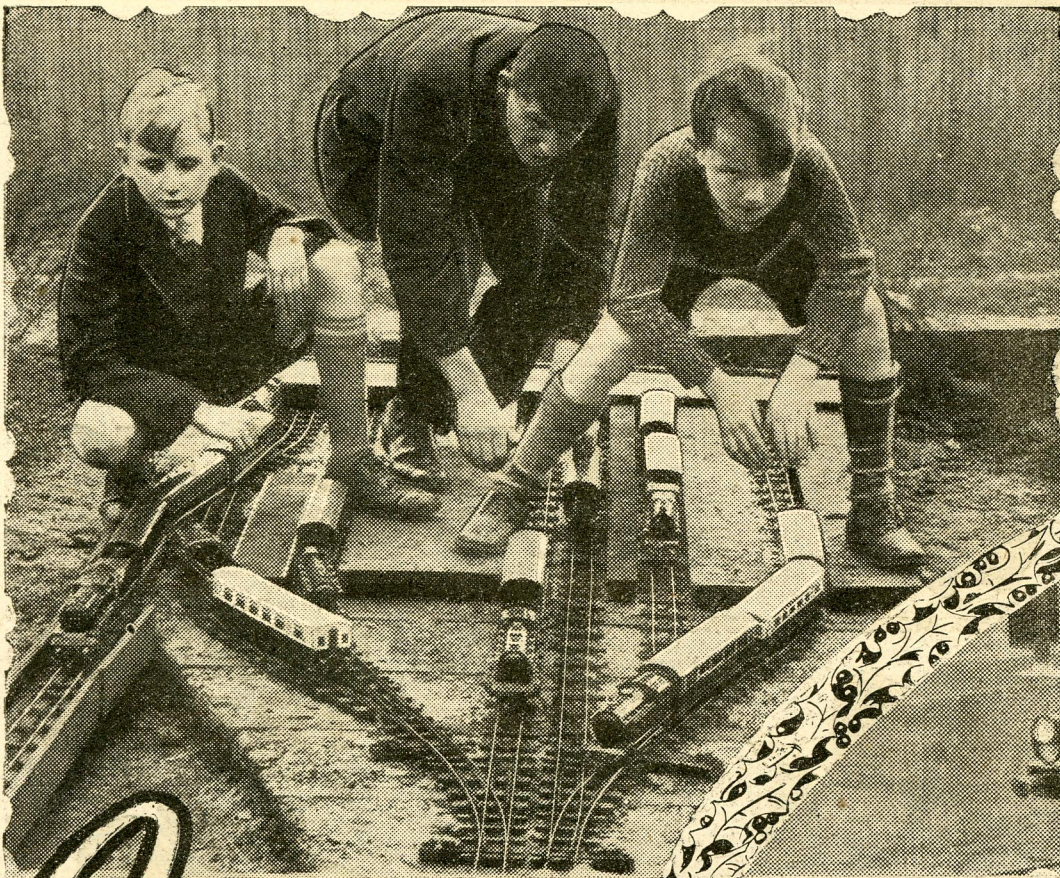
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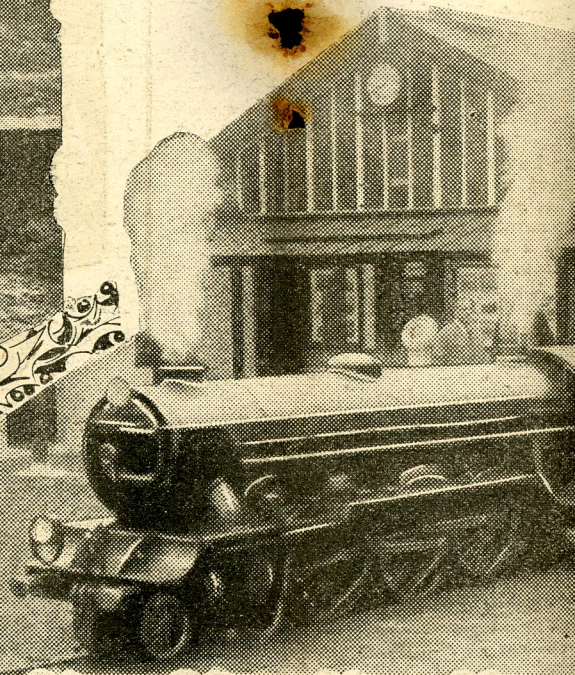
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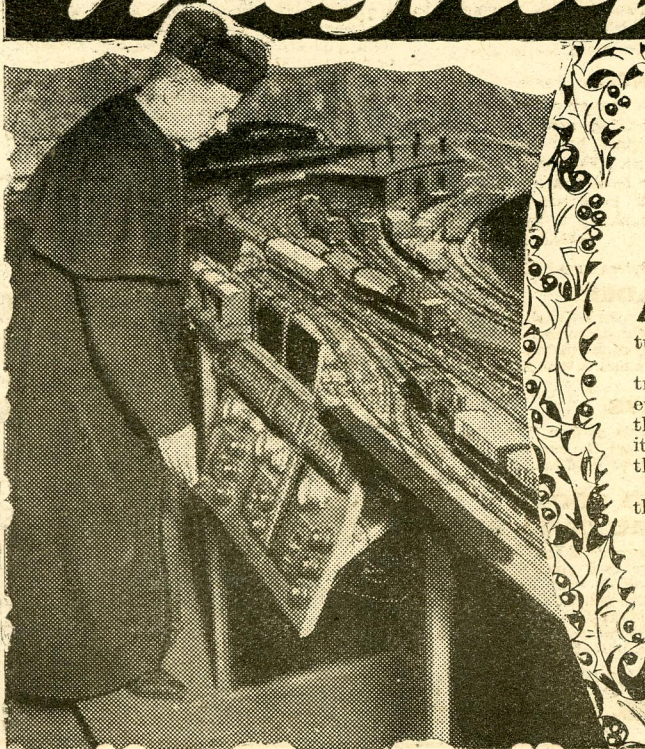
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Mighty Locomotives in Miniature



Top left: The engineers on this outdoor model railway were mainly Boy Scouts. And haven't they made a jolly good job of it!

Above: The famous Green Goddess midget loco of the Romney, Hythe, and Dymchurch Light Railway, Kent. This engine cost £2,500—and the car by its side about £200. Some contrast!

Left: And here's part of the Vicarage and North Scullery Electric Railway—the result of eight years' work. Note the switchboard!

Right: Another magnificent midget—but hard-working—loco on the R.H. and D. Railway, Kent, christened Dr. Syn, after a well-known type of engine on the American railways.

A REAL railway with yards and yards of track, junctions and cross-overs, signals properly arranged, tunnels that are tunnels—and all the rest!

A maze of tracks so that you can keep the train on the move, choosing a different route every time it comes to a junction. Add to this a control station so that you can plan it all out, shifting points and signals all from that station.

Sounds too good to be true, eh? It isn't, though. There are hundreds of fellows who have railways like that. What about you making a start now?

Railways like these aren't got together in a day, of course. For the beauty of model railways as a hobby is that they are never finished, even in a lifetime!

Look at the photo on the left at the bottom. That electric model railway, at St. Mary's Vicarage, in Hoxton, London, is known as the Vicarage and North Scullery Railway, with over

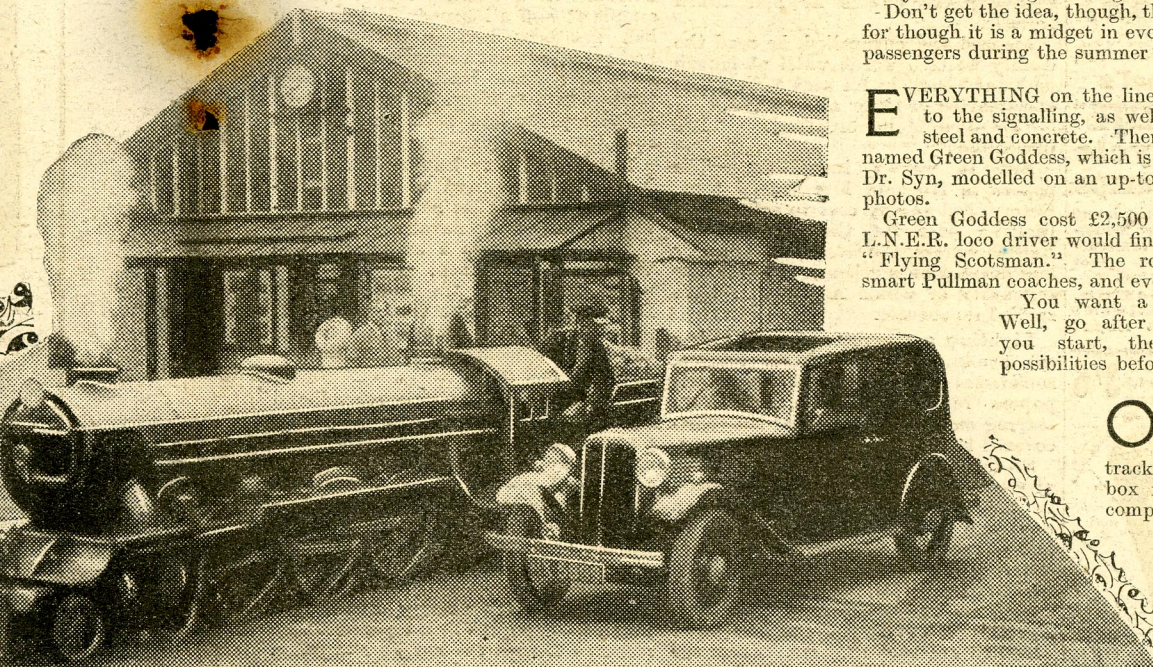
2,000 feet of track and seven stations, with nineteen platforms. Altogether the rolling stock consists of twenty-four locos, seventy-six passenger coaches, and one hundred and twenty goods wagons. They are all electrically worked and controlled, and though the system has taken eight years to get together it isn't finished yet!

With an outdoor model railway you can have real cuttings and embankments, and tunnels where the train really does go underground. You have to lay down a weatherproof track, of course, with rails, but it will be a real track with wooden sleepers, complete with chairs, fish-plates, and all.

THE top left photo shows one end of a model railway like that, laid down in a garden at Bishops Avenue, East Finchley. Lucky fellows! Well, why not start to go after one of your own—and beat 'em at it?

Now, listen to this. All his life, Captain J. E. P. Howey had wanted a real little railway,

Running a Model Railway is a hobby that still defies all competition—because you never grow too old for it, and because you can keep your Railway in Miniature Up-to-Date so that it never loses its Novelty! And you never know what your Model Railway one day MIGHT grow into!



and he was determined to have it. A few years ago the chance came, and he seized it with both hands. A stretch of coast between Hythe and Dymchurch, in Kent, had cried out for a railway, but there wasn't traffic enough to justify an extension of the Southern Railway.

Captain Howey got permission to lay down a miniature line with a gauge of only fifteen inches—about a quarter full size—linking the towns of Hythe, New Romney, and Dymchurch. And now that astonishing little railway has since been extended to Lydd and Dungeness Lighthouse.

Don't get the idea, though, that this is a toy railway. It isn't, for though it is a midget in every respect, it carries thousands of passengers during the summer holiday seasons!

EVERYTHING on the line is a miniature of full-size, even to the signalling, as well as a real girder bridge built of steel and concrete. There's one of the splendid little locos, named Green Goddess, which is a miniature L.N.E.R. Pacific, and Dr. Syn, modelled on an up-to-date Yankee loco, in two of our photos.

Green Goddess cost £2,500 and weighs eight tons, but an L.N.E.R. loco driver would find everything in her cab as in the "Flying Scotsman." The rolling stock includes some very smart Pullman coaches, and even vacuum brakes are fitted.

You want a model railway of your own? Well, go after it! No matter how "small" you start, there are endless and exciting possibilities before you!

ONE fellow we know started his model railway with a little set of locos, carriages, and track bought complete in a cardboard box for a shilling. Now he's got a complete reproduction of a section of the Southern Railway laid out in his cellar, with electrically driven rolling stock and electric signals just like the full-size ones.

And that original shilling model railway is still incorporated in his present lay-out—he's just added to it bit by bit. Perhaps YOU could do the same!

in Miniature!

Above: The famous Green Goddess midget loco of the Romney, Hythe, and Dymchurch Light Railway, Kent. This engine cost £2,500—and the car by its side about £200. Some contrast!

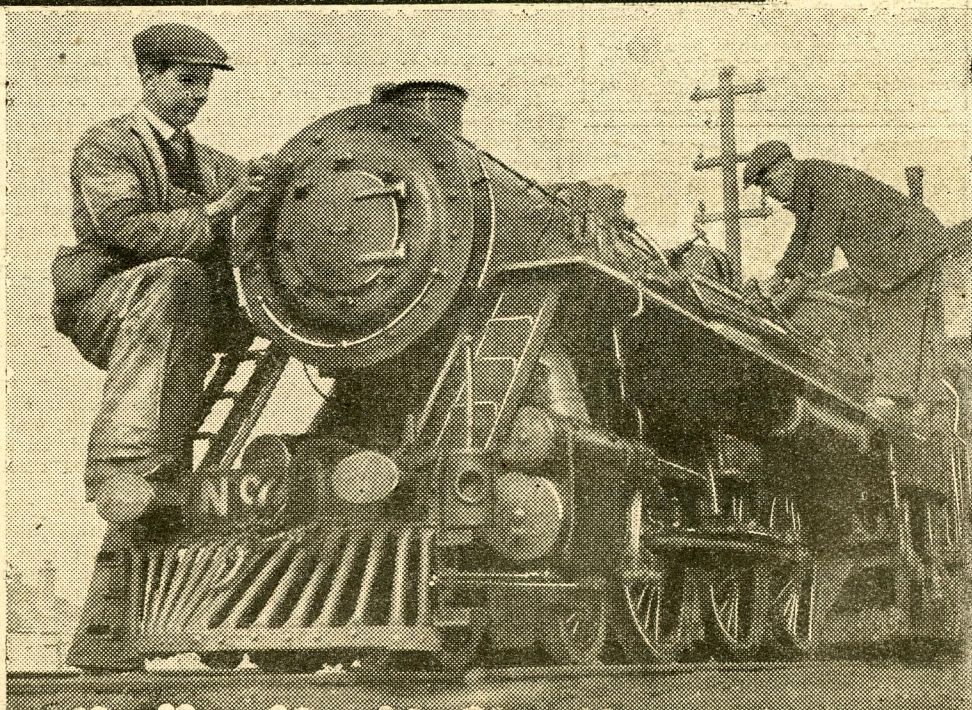
Right: Another magnificent midget—but hard-working—loco on the R.H. and D. Railway, Kent, christened Dr. Syn, after a well-known type of engine on the American railways.

2,000 feet of track and seven stations, with nineteen platforms. Altogether the rolling stock consists of twenty-four locos, seventy-six passenger coaches, and one hundred and twenty goods wagons. They are all electrically worked and controlled, and though the system has taken eight years to get together it isn't finished yet!

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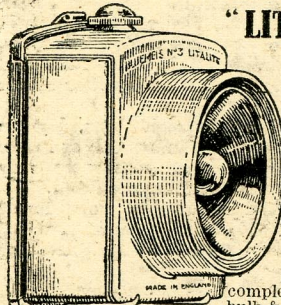


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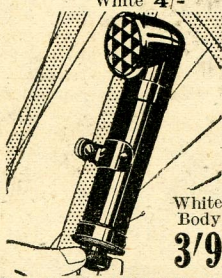


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Peter the Waif!

(Continued from page 20)

for the moment and return to the reserved compartment in which Grey Shadow was seated in the first-class coach.

The portfolio was open on the table in front of him, and Grey Shadow was studying the papers he had taken from it.

Amazed and enthralled, he read the closely written words until at length he leaned back in his seat with a soft exclamation of sheer admiration.

"By Jove!" he breathed. "It's incredible!"

But it wasn't incredible. The papers in front of him proved that. Determined at any cost to establish a fuelling base for their U-boats in British waters, the German Admiralty had decided on a scheme the amazing ingenuity of which might well have spelled its success.

Lighting a cigarette, Grey Shadow sat smoking in thoughtful silence, sometimes staring reflectively at the papers in front of him, sometimes staring out into the night at the snow-covered landscape sliding swiftly past.

So this was what had been discussed at the conference that same afternoon in the Wilhelmstrasse! It was ten days ago that the British Admiralty had warned him in code that a conference was to be held, and had instructed him to discover its purport.

And he had discovered it. The secret lay there in front of him now! It had not been difficult. From the first he had concentrated on Von Erze. For Von Erze was a friend of the Crown Prince. It was that friendship which had obtained for him the post of private secretary to Admiral Furzanger.

And, as private secretary to Furzanger, Von Erze was in the know. More than once, as Grey Shadow well knew, Von Erze had acted as courier between the Wilhelmstrasse and the naval depots of Kiel and Wilhelmshaven.

It was the small boy sitting in the third-class compartment farther along the train who had watched Von Erze leave the Admiralty building that evening.

Ten minutes after arriving at his apartments in the Gartenstrasse, Von Erze had been rung up on the telephone. The quiet and somewhat husky voice speaking over the wire had announced itself as being that of Lieutenant von Halze, of the Berlin Garrison.

Von Halze was one of Von Erze's many pals. The slight huskiness was explained by a recently developed cold. Would Von Erze dine with him?

No, Von Erze couldn't. He was leaving Berlin that night. Where for? He wasn't permitted to say where for. It was secret. No, he couldn't possibly manage a snack with Von Halze before he left. And he really must ring off. He was in a hurry.

Von Erze had rung off, and a few minutes later that same husky voice was speaking over the wire to the passenger office at the West Station. Corroboration was required by the Wilhelmstrasse, said the voice, that a

compartment had been booked for the Herr Captain von Erze on the night train for Wilhelmshaven.

Yes, had answered the harassed official, a compartment had been booked on the eight-fifteen. Yes, it had already been done.

As he sat now in that same compartment, Grey Shadow's firm lips twitched in a fleeting smile. How simple it had all been! If Von Erze had not been leaving Berlin—if he had accepted that invitation to dine—he would have been trapped, then tricked into talking, for certain very definite plans had been laid to that end.

But he had been leaving Berlin and it had not required a super-intelligence to realise that he would be leaving for one of the naval depots.

If he had drawn a blank with the Wilhelmshaven train, Grey Shadow would have tried the Hamburg and Danzig trains. But everything had pointed to Von Erze's destination being Wilhelmshaven, and Wilhelmshaven it had been.

How useful that little secondhand clothing shop was in the Schwartzplatz, reflected Grey Shadow—that dark little shop with its dingy back room and secret cellar where was installed the small and efficient printing press for running off forged papers, and the hidden cupboards full of all manner of clothing and uniforms!

Suddenly Grey Shadow stirred. Replacing the papers in the portfolio, he relocked it with the key he had taken from the pocket of Von Erze. Then, rising, he pulled down the blinds of the compartment, made certain the door which led into the corridor was securely closed, and reseated himself at the table.

Taking from his pocket a paper packet of cigarettes, he emptied it of its contents and pencilled a dozen meaningless words on the packet. That done, he replaced one cigarette only in the packet, put the others in his cigarette case, and returned the packet to his pocket.

A grinding of brakes signalled that the train was running into Ulzen, and when it had slid to a stop alongside the dimly lighted platform the coach steward pulled open the corridor door and, inserting his head into the compartment, said:

"We have a ten minutes' wait here, sir."

"Thank you!" said Grey Shadow, rising. "I will stretch my legs, then!"

Buttoning up the collar of his greatcoat against the bitter chill of the night, and with the portfolio in his hand, he descended to the platform and strolled slowly along the train.

His eye fell on the small boy. That unfortunate youth, in the grip of a fat woman, was being hustled towards the refreshment-room. A snatch of her conversation came to Grey Shadow.

"We may be able to get something—before the War there was always plenty—everything is rationed now—"

(Continued on page 27)

FOR FINEST FLYING PERFORMANCE . . .



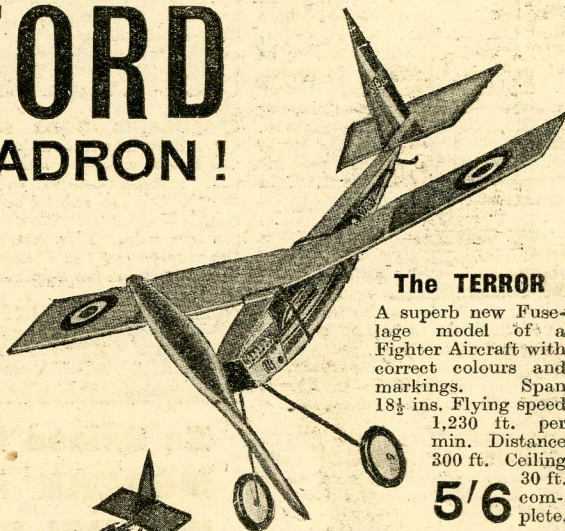
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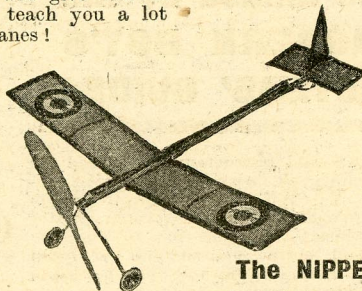
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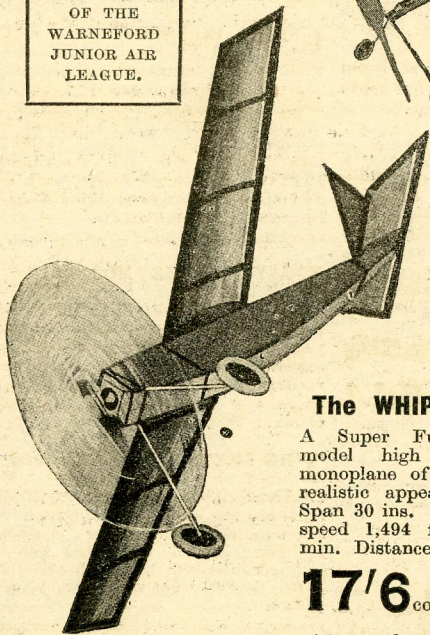
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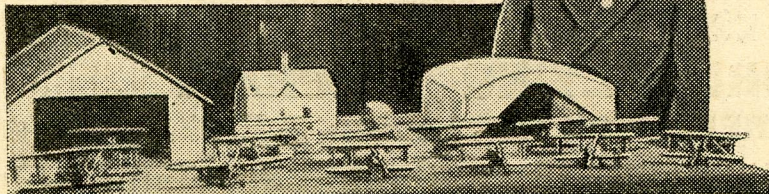
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Peter the Waif!

(Continued from page 24)

but perhaps some acorn coffee or a piece of blood sausage—"

Grey Shadow smiled and strolled on almost to the darkened end of the platform. Turning, he slowly retraced his steps. The small boy had escaped the fat woman, and was standing by a lamp standard.

Casually, as he approached the boy, Grey Shadow took the paper cigarette packet from his pocket. Placing the one cigarette it contained between his lips, he crumpled the packet in his hand and dropped it.

The boy never moved. Grey Shadow passed him without a glance. Drawing his gloves from his pocket, the boy commenced to pull them on, moving forward towards the train. One glove fell. He stooped, picked it up, and with it the crumpled cigarette packet.

"How! Like Billy-ho!"

IT was in the cold, dark hours of early morning that the express clanked into the station at Wilhelmshaven, and slid to a stop with a grinding of brakes and a hissing of escaping steam.

From their compartment descended the fat woman and the boy. She was laden with parcels, the carrying of which was rendering her somewhat breathless.

"I will remain with you until you meet your uncle," she wheezed. "Perhaps he may be acquainted with my son-in-law. Can you see him? Look round well and see if he is here!"

"It is all right, lady!" said the little boy desperately. "He is sure to be here. I will find him—"

"That's what you think!" cut in his self-appointed guardian. "But you do not know. He might not be here, and you could not find your way to his house through the dark streets."

"Oh, there he is!" cried the boy excitedly, pointing to an elderly man, overcoated, and with a trim grey beard. "I must run to him. Good-bye, and thank you very much. A merry Christmas to you and to your married daughter and to your son-in-law!"

He could have named a score more relatives, he thought, as he scuttled towards the bearded man. He had heard all about them all the way from Berlin.

"Well, little Peter!" greeted the bearded man, seizing the boy's thin brown hand in his. "And how are you? Had a good journey?"

"Oh, a dreadful journey, sir!" answered Peter, and as they walked through the dark and narrow streets, deserted save for the naval patrols and pickets, he told his companion about the stout lady.

"And all the time she was talking, sir, I wanted to be quiet and to think," he concluded, "but I didn't get any chance!"

The other laughed in genuine amusement.

"Well, the fact that you're here proves that so far everything has

progressed satisfactorily," he said.

"You have the message for me?"

"Yes, sir; I received it on Ulzen platform," replied Peter.

"Excellent!" chuckled his companion. "And now it's bed for you for a few hours, then you must go to the Blucher Hotel."

It was at that precise moment that Grey Shadow's taxi was depositing him at the Blucher Hotel, an unpretentious but popular resort of naval officers.

Booking a room in the name of Captain Zelten, Grey Shadow turned in at once and was asleep almost as soon as his head had touched the pillow.

He was astir before eight o'clock, and, having breakfasted, made his way to the naval barracks and inquired for Admiral Zimmermann, into whose presence he was shown at once.

"I was expecting the Captain von Erze!" said the admiral, taking the dispatches which Grey Shadow handed him from the portfolio.

"As you will see from that letter, sir," said Grey Shadow, indicating a

sealed envelope, which had certainly not been in the portfolio when Von Erze had received it from Admiral Furzanger, "I have been sent in place of the Captain von Erze!"

The admiral nodded, and, ripping open the envelope, read in Furzanger's scrawling hand:

"This is to introduce Captain Gerhard Zelten, of the Naval Intelligence Service, to whom you will afford every facility for the subsequent delivering to me of a personal report on the matter in hand.

AUGUST FURZANGER."

As a forgery, the letter was perfect. But to Grey Shadow its beauty lay in its delightful ambiguity. For the letter had, perforce, been penned whilst he was completely in the dark as to what was being discussed at the conference in the Wilhelmstrasse, and he flattered himself it was a letter which couldn't fail to cover any contingency.

He determined to make certain.

"I sail with Von Schauer, sir!" he said.

"Then the plan has been adopted?"



"Give me your gun, Von Schauer!" demanded Grey Shadow, grabbing the other's wrist. Von Schauer gaped at him, and at the gleaming bayonets of the British sailors, as though they were ghosts.

Peter the Waif!

said Zimmermann, and turned eagerly to the dispatches. "Yes, I see it has. Excellent. One swift, shrewd blow, Herr Captain, and we have a base which the Englanders will never discover. But the Captain von Schauer is waiting. I will introduce you!"

He pressed a bell, gave a curt order to the secretary who answered the ring, and a few moments later a dark, well-built, and swarthy faced man in the uniform of a German U-boat captain was ushered into the room.

"Well, everything is settled, Von Schauer," said Zimmermann, acknowledging the other's salute. "You sail at three o'clock this afternoon. This is Captain Zelten, of the Naval Intelligence Service, who will accompany you. Captain Zelten, this is Captain von Schauer!"

AN hour later Grey Shadow was back at his hotel. Sitting in the lounge waiting for him was Peter, the small boy of the train.

But this was quite a different Peter. He was now wearing a knickerbocker suit, his hair was fair instead of dark, and was parted down the middle, and he was wearing spectacles.

He looked quite bookish and studious, and at sight of him Grey Shadow could not suppress a grin.

"Why, hallo, Peter!" he exclaimed, striding forward. "So you got here after all?" Then he added for the benefit of anyone listening: "And how is your aunt?"

"She is very well, thank you, uncle," replied Peter, shaking hands.

Together they sat on the settee. "Everything all right?" murmured the man.

"Yes!" breathed the boy. "Your message was transmitted to London by wireless code within half an hour of the train getting in. The acknowledgment came through at once."

"Splendid!" murmured Grey Shadow. His hand closed on the boy's arm. "Peter, if all goes well, we will spend Christmas Day in England. But, oh, what a cunning, cunning scheme it is that these Germans have hatched!"

He jumped to his feet.

"Well, come on, then, nephew!" he exclaimed loudly and heartily. "I am going to give you the Christmas treat I promised you. I am going to show you over a submarine!"

"Oh, are you, really, uncle?" ejaculated the boy, and more than one in the lounge who heard his excited voice smiled at his youthful eagerness.

Off they went, and as they walked through the snow and slush of the streets towards the docks, Grey Shadow spoke swiftly in low and guarded tones.

And more than once as he talked he glanced down at the little figure by his side, and in his eyes was a strange and deep affection.

For on behalf of their country this queerly assorted pair—this man with a price on his head and this homeless little waif of the sea—had faced death together not once but a score of times,

and whilst the boy worshipped the man and would willingly have died for him, the man loved the lad as he would his own son, and he never ceased to marvel at the fearless courage of that brave and resolute young heart.

A strange partnership it was, but one which time and again had reduced the German High Command to impotent frenzy and one which, if all went well, was to bring to naught the most astounding scheme ever hatched by any naval power.

"Now, you quite understand what you are to do, Peter?" asked Grey Shadow, as he and the boy turned on to the submarine pier and met the icy wind which was blowing across the basin.

"Yes, sir, I understand," replied the boy.

Von Schauer's boat, U 127, was lying alongside the pier. The armed marine on sentry duty came rigidly to the salute at sight of Grey Shadow's naval uniform. His eyes flickered towards the boy, but he saw nothing strange in a diminutive youngster going aboard with an officer.

Civilians often visited the ships, either with officer friends or with special permits.

Nimble, Peter followed Grey Shadow down the ladder on to the steel deck, then up into the conning-tower, and down the iron ladder which led into the control-room, with its bewildering array of wheels, gauges, pressure pumps, pipe-lines, and voice tubes.

Von Schauer was aboard, and as he stared at Peter's frail-looking physique and disfiguring spectacles, something akin to contempt crept into his eyes.

"So this is your nephew, is it?" he said to Grey Shadow. "Well, let him have a look round, but he must not touch anything."

Peter turned away. This was not the first time he had been on a U-boat. He had, in fact, been with Captain Walther Schweiger aboard U 20 when, on May 7th, 1915, that German U-boat captain had sent the Lusitania plunging to her doom with the loss of more than eleven hundred souls.

So leaving Grey Shadow talking to Von Schauer, Peter set off on a tour of exploration on his own. He visited the Diesel engine-room, the electric motor-room, the torpedo chambers, and stared at the ballast tanks, the flooding gear, and the compressed-air cylinders.

And an hour later he was missing! "Strange he should have gone off like that!" commented Grey Shadow. "But I do not think he was very interested. Butterflies and entomology are his hobbies."

"You surprise me!" said Von Schauer, and he managed to throw such a sneer into the words that Grey Shadow laughed outright.

"He is a nervous little fellow," said Grey Shadow, "and seeing you and me talking he probably did not like to disturb us. I will have a word with the marine up there!"

He went swiftly up the ladder, to reappear a few moments later.

"Yes, he cleared off about twenty minutes ago," he said. "I hope he finds his way home safely."

Von Schauer refrained from comment. He didn't care whether the puny brat found his way home or not. He simply wasn't interested.

But he was interested, and furiously angry, when some three hours after U 127 had sailed a sailor appeared in the control-room, leading the snivelling Peter by the arm.

"I found him lying under Captain Zelten's bunk!" explained the man stolidly.

"I—I wanted to see what it was like at sea!" blubbered Peter, shrinking away from Von Schauer's purple visage and almost incoherent wrath. "That's—that's why I stowed away!"

"We're too far out in the Jade to signal another boat," raved Von Schauer, "and I haven't time to put back with you, confound you!"

He wheeled on Grey Shadow. "Take him in there!" he choked, indicating the tiny curtained cabin on the starboard side of the ward-room. "Take him in there and flay the life out of him with a rope's end!"

"I shall certainly give him a thrashing!" said Grey Shadow. "That marine must have lied to me!"

"Never mind the marine!" shouted Von Schauer. "You attend to that brat, or I'll do it myself!"

Taking the trembling Peter by the arm, Grey Shadow marched him into the curtained cabin.

"Splendid, lad, splendid!" he breathed. "Now howl like billy-ho, because I'm supposed to be laying into you with a rope's end!"

And the wails which promptly ensued from behind the curtain brought a grin of savage satisfaction to the lips of Von Schauer.

The Lonely Isle!

THROUGHOUT that night and during the ensuing day, U 127 drove steadily south-westwards. At periscope depth she slipped round Cape Wrath and cruised down towards the Scottish Hebrides.

Before darkness closed in across the grey and desolate sea, Von Schauer came to the surface in order to take his bearings, then dived again.

It was nine o'clock by the control-room chronometer when he took the boat once more to the surface. The hatch was thrown back, and Von Schauer, Grey Shadow, and the officer of the watch clambered up into the conning-tower.

"It's snowing!" raved Von Schauer furiously.

Yes, it was snowing heavily. Great white flakes were falling silently down from out of the night in a blinding denseness which blotted out even the near-by conning-tower rail.

"It's seasonable, anyway," observed Grey Shadow. "Don't forget it's Christmas!"

"Seasonable?" snarled Von Schauer. "How the dickens do you think we can locate the confounded place in this?"

Leaning over the rail, he peered

(Continued on page 31)

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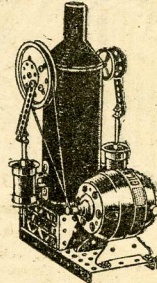
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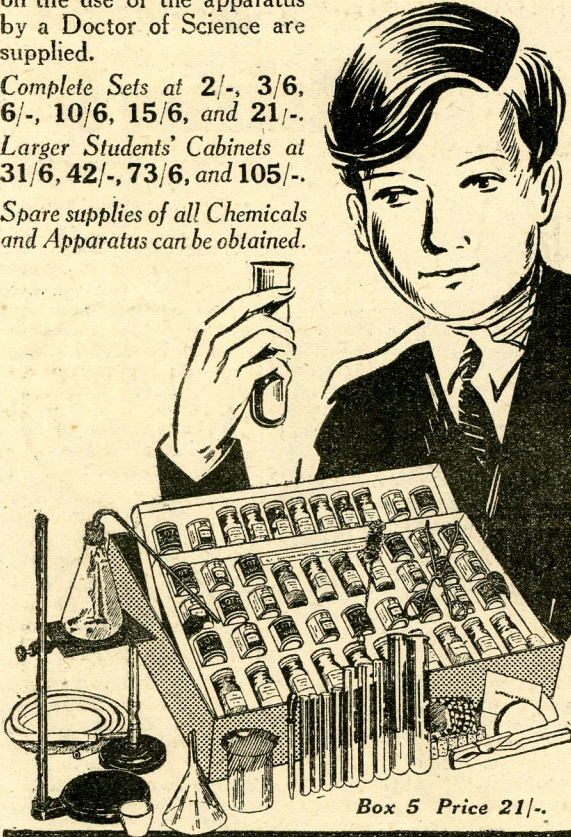
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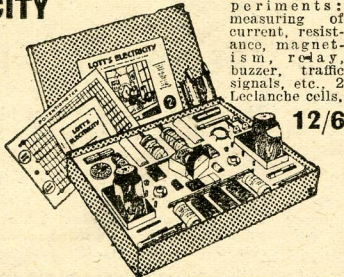
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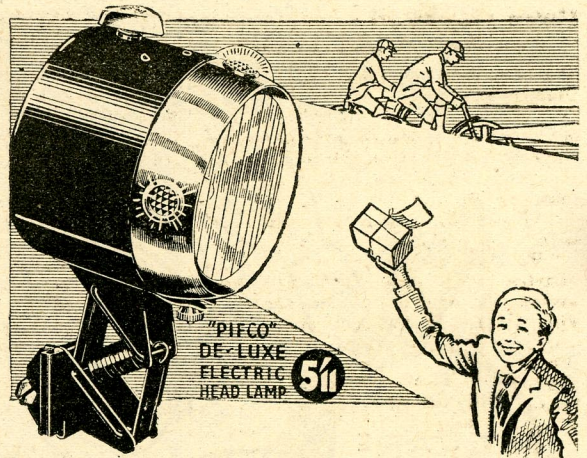
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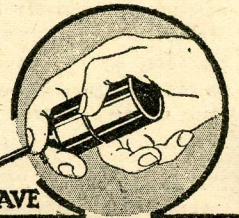
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Peter the Waif!

(Continued from page 28)

into the swirling and impenetrable mass of whiteness.

"This is going to ruin everything!" he raved. "If we're anywhere near the place, we'll be on the rocks before we know where we are. It's worse than fog!"

"Where do you reckon we are?" asked Grey Shadow.

"By dead reckoning we're lying a quarter of a mile to half a mile westwards of the place," answered Von Schauer. "But how the dickens are we to know where we are, in this?"

Abruptly he broke off, his gloved hands gripping the rail.

"Listen!" he rasped.

Grey Shadow and the officer of the watch listened with bated breath. Not a sound disturbed the stillness save the splash and ripple of water against the iron hull. Then, stealing faintly to their ears, from out the night came the sound of bells.

His swarthy face convulsed with triumph, Von Schauer swung on his two companions.

"You hear them?" he cried. "Christmas, you said, Zelten. So they ring their bells. Yes, they would. What a piece of luck!"

He leapt to the voice tube.

"Helm hard to starboard!" he rasped. "Dead slow ahead with electric motors. Landing-party stand by!"

Slowly the iron hull of the U-boat turned in the direction of those faintly pealing bells; slowly it nosed its way towards them through the night and the snow-enshrouded sea.

Plainly now to the ears of the three men in the conning-tower came the pealing of the bells ringing out the glad message of Christmas.

They were ringing from the monastery on Mona Isle, that lonely sea-girt rock of the Outer Hebrides where the monks of St. Benedict dwelt in seclusion far from the haunts of men.

Service was in progress in the brightly illumined chapel, when suddenly above the chanting voices of the monks there came a thunderous beating on the outer door.

Instantly every voice was stilled, and hooded faces turned questioningly towards the curtained entrance of the chapel. The bolts and chains of the outer door rattled as they were drawn back, there came the creak of heavy hinges, then the tread of booted feet approached along the stone corridor which led to the chapel.

Next instant, as the curtain was pulled aside, the questioning look on the hooded faces became one of bewilderment and consternation. For standing there on the threshold was a German officer, a revolver in his hand, whilst behind him were grouped a score of armed German seamen.

The German strode swiftly up the aisle towards where the abbot was standing rigid.

"My father," he said to the abbot—and his harsh voice was curiously

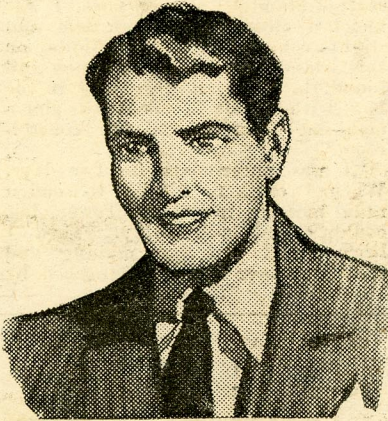
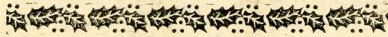
quiet and subdued—"pray accept my apologies for this intrusion. No harm will come to any of you. But it is my duty to inform you that, acting on the orders of the German Admiralty, I am here with my men to occupy this monastery until such time as hostilities between Germany and her enemies shall cease!"

"And what is the object of this occupation?" asked the abbot steadily.

"We require it as a base," answered the German. "That is all I can tell you. It will be impossible for any of you to remain here. You and your monks will be taken to Germany, where a special prison camp is being prepared for you, and you will all be returned here when hostilities have ceased!"

He paused, then added harshly:

"I must warn you, however, that



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any resistance will have fatal consequences. The German Admiralty earnestly hope that a peaceful occupation will be allowed us, and that it will be unnecessary for us to use armed force!"

The threat was unmistakable. But, as he uttered it, the German turned sharply on his heel and glared in dismay towards the curtained entrance of the chapel.

For a sudden harsh command had rung out, and his men were backing into the chapel, and following them came the gleaming bayonets and the rifles of a force of British sailors!

And walking quickly up the aisle towards him came Grey Shadow.

"Give me your gun, Von Schauer!" demanded the latter, holding out his hand.

Von Schauer gaped at him, as though he had been a ghost.

"Hand it over, man!" snapped Grey Shadow, and whipped the automatic from Von Schauer's hand. "Now come on out of here! There's a British cruiser lying offshore waiting to take you and your crew to England!"

"A British cruiser!" gasped Von Schauer, his swarthy face paling. "So we have been betrayed—betrayed by you and that brat!"

"The traitor's reward is death, and may I live to see the day when the Fatherland visits it upon you both!" he hissed, as he turned and was marched out of the monastery.

THE following night Grey Shadow and Peter sat after dinner in the drawing-room of Sir Malcolm Davies of the British Admiralty.

"But it's amazing!" ejaculated Sir Malcolm, when he had heard the full and detailed story. "What was the idea behind it all?"

"One of the cleverest ideas ever conceived for the running of a fueling base!" answered Grey Shadow. "No one ever visited Mona Isle, and the monks never visited the mainland. Their garden, their fishing, and their sheep made them self-supporting. When they had been taken as prisoners to Germany, the picked men whom Von Schauer had brought with him would have taken their places and worn robes and hoods, if necessary. Discovery would have been impossible except by the merest accident!"

"But it's sacrilege!" exclaimed Sir Malcolm.

"No, sir," said Grey Shadow firmly. "I will give the German Admiralty credit for that. The monks were to be properly housed over in Germany, but kept under guard, of course, and the monastery was to be restored to them on the cessation of hostilities in the same condition as it was when taken over. Moreover, they were to be paid an indemnity in the event of Germany being victorious!"

"Well, it was certainly ingenious," agreed Sir Malcolm. "But tell me. This fellow Von Erze whom you get rid of—where did Saunders take him?"

"To the Schwartzplatz, sir," answered Grey Shadow. "He was unconscious when he was carried in, and he'll be unconscious when he is carried out. He'll be found somewhere in the suburbs of Berlin early one morning!"

Which is exactly what happened. And when, later, Von Erze turned up at the Wilhelmstrasse, the infuriated Furzanger tersely informed him that he could pack his bag at once and prepare for active service with the German High Sea Fleet!

Another extra-special Story of Grey Shadow and young Peter Next Saturday! It's a Geo. E. Rochester masterpiece of Secret Service work!!!

In the Cavern of Fear!

(Continued from page 16)

familiar shape of the Flying Cloud floating like a huge silver fish.

On the stretch of beach was a huddle of buildings, surmounted by two gaunt wireless-masts. And charging up the hill came several men, led by Bingley himself, one arm in a sling, a white bandage wrapped around his head.

"By James!" exclaimed Justice, still blinking his eyes in amazement. "Bingley and the Flying Cloud! It's almost too good to be true!"

"A regular knock-out, isn't it?" chuckled Midge. "Hang it all, anybody'd think we'd just been for a ride on an underground train and ordered the car to meet us!"

"We've come jolly well out of this business," he went on. "Here we are, all alive and kicking, and the only casualty is the professor's jolly old tin lobster. Sorry about the old bus, professor!" he added, turning to the old scientist.

Lack of breath had brought the professor's impromptu dance to an end, and he was standing on the crater's edge, peering down at his belovéd airship.

"Don't worry about the loss of the—er—tin lobster, as you call it," he said, turning a smiling face to Midge. "Already plans are taking shape in my head for a new and improved aquacrawler. I shall construct it as soon as possible, and make another

trip into the unknown underworld to conduct a thorough investigation of the many scientific marvels we encountered."

"Another trip?" exclaimed Midge, staring at him in amazement. "Golly, you won't catch me going down there again! I've seen all I want to—and more! I'm sticking on the earth in future!"

"IT'S the most extraordinary coincidence I've ever heard of," said Captain Justice an hour later, as he sat on the veranda of the wireless station on lone Demikos Island. "That we should come up out of the bowels of the earth and find you and the Flying Cloud here on this island is almost beyond belief!"

"Beats cock-fighting!" agreed Bingley, with a vigorous nod of his bandaged head. "I hardly know how I got here myself. When that gale sprang up, and the old Flying Cloud started standing on her nose, I was knocked clean out—broken arm and slight concussion. The fellows on this island woke up one morning and found the old airship floating in the bay, with a hole in her bows, and a man—me—sprawled in the control-room."

"I was unconscious for two days. When I came to I tried to send a radio message to Titanic Tower, but couldn't get any reply. Then I learned that you were missing, and that the tower had been grabbed by

a gang of escaped convicts, who later surrendered to a French warship."

"Surrendered! You mean they've left the Tower?" asked Justice eagerly.

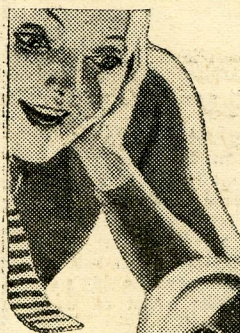
"Cleared out—lock, stock, and barrel!" assured Bingley. "The beggars are on their way to Devil's Island now! The news was broadcast this morning!"

"And what about Grunow, the crooked scientist, and his men, whom the convicts were holding prisoners?" asked Len Connor.

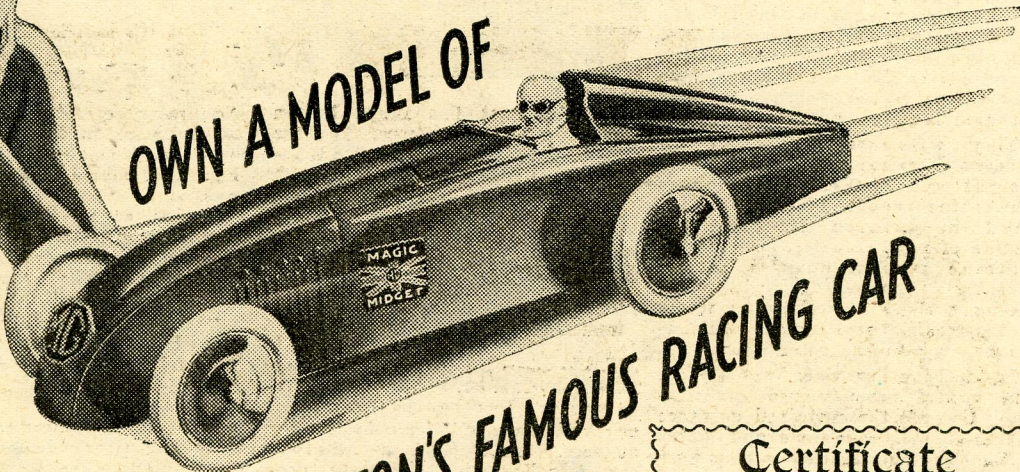
"They've gone, too," replied Bingley. "The French cleared 'em all out! The Flying Cloud's got a broken beak, and she's lost a few tail feathers. But," he added cheerfully, "she can still fly. I'm a bit of a crock myself. But give me half an hour to tune up the motors and recharge the gasbags, and we'll stagger off home!"

He was as good as his word. Thirty-five minutes later the great dirigible soared up from the sparkling waters of Demikos Bay, and turned her battered bows homewards!

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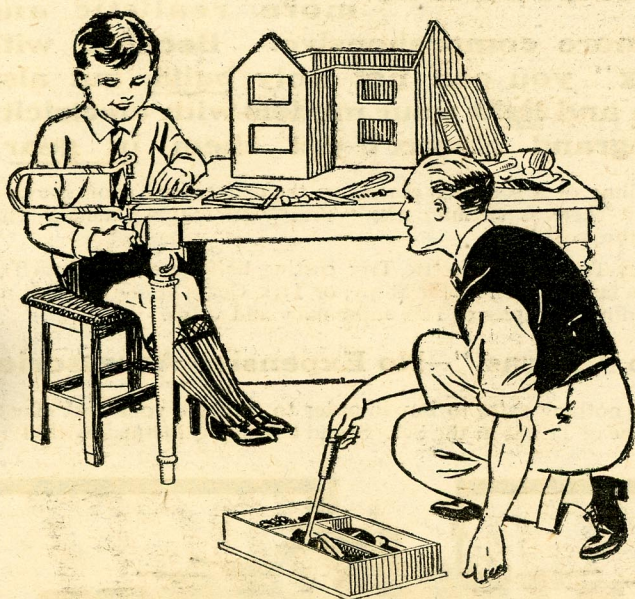
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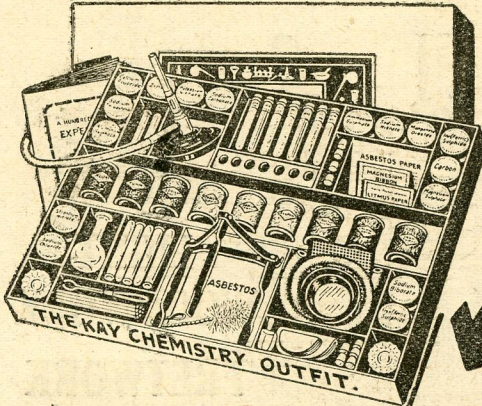
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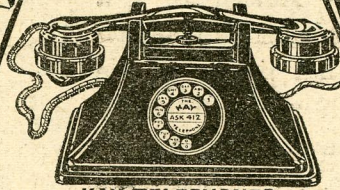
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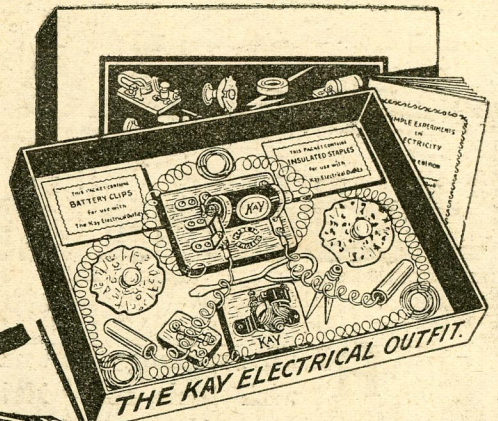


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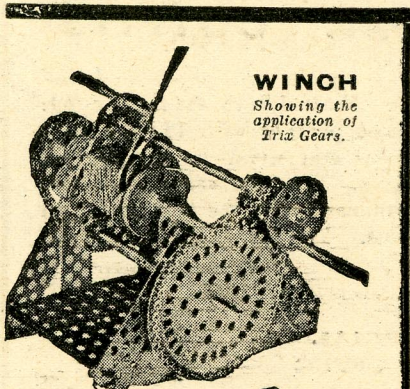


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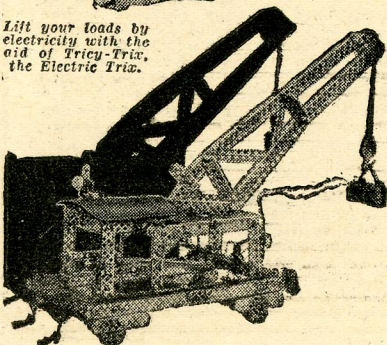
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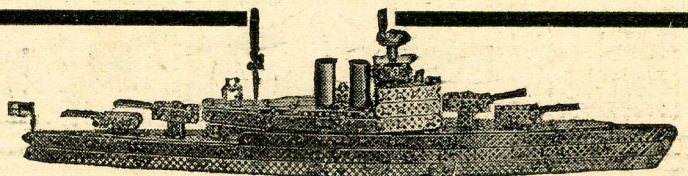
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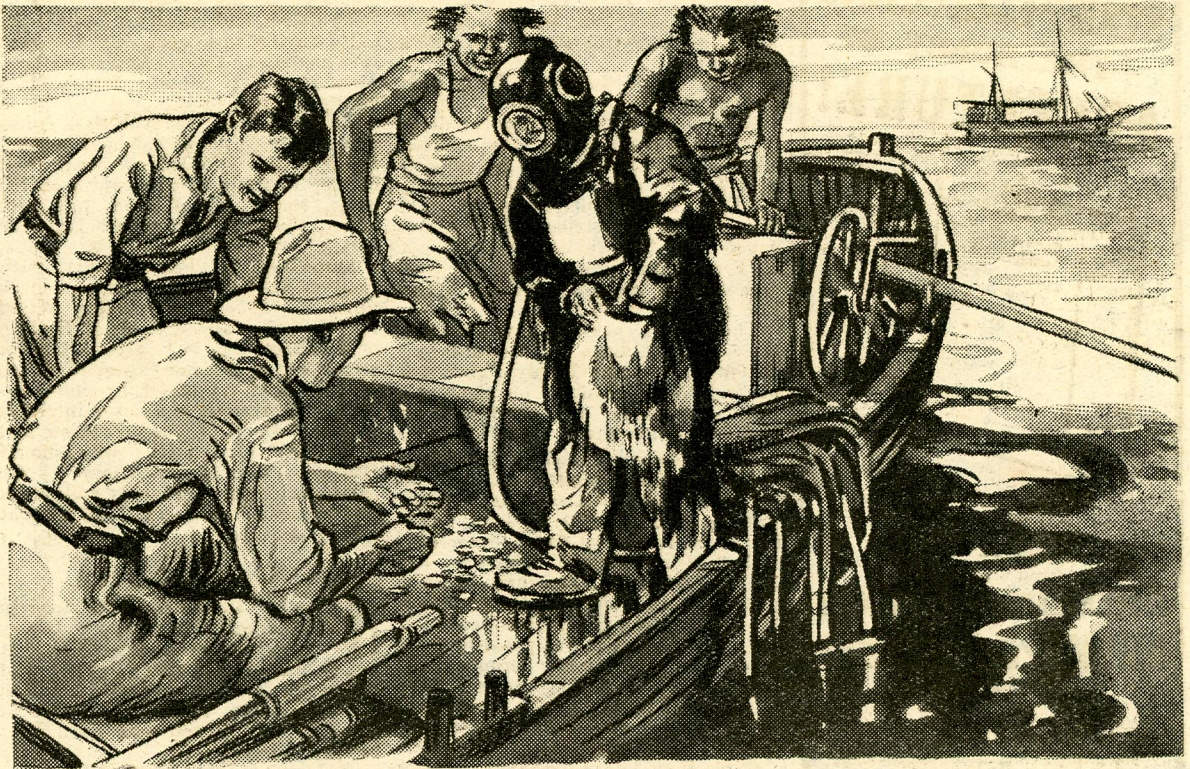
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Excitement mounted to fever pitch as Danny dropped handfuls of golden coins from his sack into the whaleboat.

The COOKY-BOYS HAUL!

Promoted from the pots and pans of the galley to deep-sea diver, Danny the Kanaka rifles Davy Jones' Treasury! By CHARLES HAMILTON

Sunk in the Crackerjack!

LOWER the whaleboat!" Ken King's voice rang cheerily across the deck of the Dawn. The morning sunshine streamed down on the Pacific, and all was activity on King of the Islands' ketch, hove-to between the reef and the cannibal island of Suna-Suna.

Only one face was dark and gloomy. It was that of Dandy Peter Parsons, the sea-lawyer of Lukwe. Scowling like a demon, he watched the lowering of the boat and the Kanaka seamen slinging the diving suit into it.

Danny the cooky-boy came along from his galley, a huge grin on his fat, dusky face. Danny was an important person that morning. He was the only one of the Dawn's crew small enough to cram into the diving outfit, and on him depended whether the gold of the wrecked Crackerjack, sunk on the reef, would be found. And Danny strutted with his importance.

Dandy Peter scowled at him blackly. The fact that the fat little cooky-boy could cram into the outfit

spelt disaster to the plans he had so cunningly laid to cheat Kit Hudson, the mate of the Dawn, who was his partner in the venture to raise the Crackerjack's gold, out of his share of the seven thousand golden sovereigns. As a last resource, he had attempted to destroy the diving suit, and had been clapped in irons by Ken King, the boy skipper and owner of the Dawn.

As the cooky-boy went strutting and grinning past him, the sea-lawyer's savage temper broke out. He could not use his manacled hands, but he could use his feet. He stepped away from the mizzen and shot out a foot. The grin vanished from Danny's fat face, and he uttered a fearful yell as Parsons' foot crashed on his loin-cloth, sending him sprawling along the deck.

"My sainted Sam!" ejaculated King of the Islands, as the spinning cooky-boy crashed into him and nearly knocked him backwards.

"Me solly, sar!" yelled Danny. "No can help, sar!" Feller Parsons

kick this feller Danny, sar, foot belong him, altogether too much, sar!"

Not satisfied with one kick, Peter Parsons was about to follow it up with another, when Kit Hudson grasped him by the collar and swung him back. With a swing of his sinewy arm the mate of the Dawn sent Dandy Peter crashing back against the mizzen, and he collapsed at the foot of the mast. Hudson glared down at him with glinting eyes.

"You scum!" he roared. "You thieving sea-lawyer! Koko!"

"Yes, sar!" The brown boatswain came across the deck.

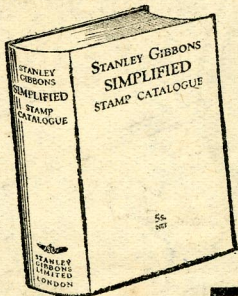
"You give this feller Parsons seven bells along lawyer-cane!"

"Yes, sar!" grinned Koko, and strode away for the lawyer-cane. Dandy Peter struggled to his feet, his eyes burning.

"If you dare—" he panted.

"You swab!" said Hudson savagely. "You're not on your cutter, the Sea-Cat, now; you're on the Dawn, and you'll toe the line on this packet!"

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The Cooky-Boy's Haul!

Koko came back with the lawyer-cane in his brown hand. Dandy Peter, his face pale with rage, yelled to Ken:

"King of the Islands! Keep your nigger off!"

Ken looked at him across the deck. Danny was wriggling and squirming from the savage kick, his fat importance for the moment quite dashed.

"You Lukwe blackguard!" said Ken. "You're getting what you've asked for. You've been warned not to handle my crew as you do your Lukwe boys on the Sea-Cat. Give him a dozen, Koko!"

There was a cackle of laughter from the Hiva-Oa boys as the brawny boatswain grasped Dandy Peter and pitched him face down on the deck. The lawyer-cane rose and fell in Koko's mighty hand.

Twelve times it lashed across the back of Peter Parsons, and his yelling rang across the blue waters, waking echoes in the bush of Suna-Suna, where lurked Chief Komo-omo and his cannibals. Parsons lay squirming when Koko had finished with him, and the shipmates of the Dawn gave him no further heed.

The diving outfit was packed in the whaleboat, and Danny dropped in, Lompo and Lufu taking the oars. The skipper and mate of the Dawn followed the Kanakas over the side, and the boat pushed off.

Koko was left in charge of the ketch, with Tomoo and Kolulo, and the three Kanakas watched as the boat's crew pulled towards the reef.

Dandy Peter dragged himself to his feet, his face white, his eyes burning, and lurched across to the rail, leaning his manacled hands on it, to watch.

It was a calm day; the sky cloudless, the sea almost as smooth as a pond away from the reef. But on the rocks of the long Suna-Suna reef there was an incessant creaming and foaming of surf. Jutting teeth of coral, swirling bursts of foam, were round the whaleboat as it pulled for a rocky islet in the midst of the half-sunken rocks.

Dandy Peter watched it with bitter eyes. All his scheming had come to naught now. Cunningly he had contrived that the diving suit should be too small for any man but himself on board the Sea-Cat, in which he and Hudson had come to Suna-Suna, to cram into. Only he could have gone down in it to seek for the gold of the wrecked brig, and Kit Hudson would have seen little of the seven thousand golden sovereigns sunk in the Crackerjack had matters gone according to plan.

But his crew had fled in the cutter from the cannibals of Suna-Suna, and only the arrival of King of the Islands in the ketch had saved him and Hudson from the cooking-ovens.

Little gratitude was there in the sea-lawyer's heart for that! On the Sea-Cat he would have "got away" with his cunning scheme; on the Dawn there happened to be one of the native crew small enough to get into the diving outfit, and that was the end of Dandy Peter's scheming!

For he knew—what the shipmates

suspected—that the gold still lay where it had sunk in the wreck. He had seen it and handled it when he went down, and came up again with a lie on his lips, declaring the gold was no longer there. And what he—Parsons—had found, Danny was going to find!

He gritted his teeth with helpless rage as he watched the boat pulling through the surf-ridden coral, and coming to a stop in calm water off the little rocky island over the spot where the old Crackerjack lay fifty feet below.

According to his compact with Hudson, they were to share and share alike in the salvage if they found it. He had planned to cheat Hudson of his share; and now, after his black treachery, he did not expect the mate of the Dawn to stand by the compact. He himself had never intended to stand by it, though Hudson had given him good faith; why should Hudson, after his treachery? He raised his manacled hands and shook his clenched fists at the distant salvage-seekers.

"Golden Quids!"

KING OF THE ISLANDS stood in the whaleboat, helping Danny on with the diving suit. It fitted him almost like a glove, and his dusky face grinned, with a gleam of white teeth, from the interior of the helmet. Lompo and Lufu kept the boat steady.

The sea was calm, a fortunate circumstance for the salvage-seekers, for in anything like a blow no craft could have lived near the Suna-Suna reef. Several times Ken's eyes had turned anxiously on the sky. But there was hardly a cloud to be seen, and only a light wind ruffled the surface of the Pacific.

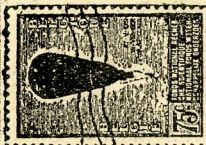
Ken fastened the glass in front of the helmet, and the shipmates helped Danny over the gunwale, the Kanakas throwing their weight on the other side to keep the whaleboat on an even keel.

The rope was paid out, and the diver sank like a stone in the calm, clear water, dragged down by the heavily leaded boots. Kit Hudson leaned over the gunwale, watching him with eager eyes. Gladly the mate of the Dawn would have made the perilous descent himself to the wreck of the old brig; gladly Ken would have made it; but Dandy Peter's treachery made that impossible. They could only hope that the cooky-boy's nerve would be equal to the strain.

And Danny, though not of the stuff of which heroes are made, went about his task coolly enough. Deep waters and gliding sharks had few terrors for a Kanaka. A white man could not help thinking what might happen if there was a twist in the diving suit's air-tube. But the fuzzy head of a Kanaka was not much given to thinking. If Danny was thinking at all, it was chiefly of the gold he was to receive if he discovered the treasure of the sunken brig!

Deeper and deeper the strange-looking figure sank, till the leaded feet rested on the deck of the sunken brig, fifty feet under the boat, and gliding fishes sped away from his heavy tread.

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So clear was the water that Ken and Kit could follow every movement of the diver, though it clouded a little as Danny's tread stirred up silted sand.

Slowly, lumbering along the wreck, Danny moved aft, where the after-deck and companion-hatch had been broken away and it was possible to sink into the interior of the old Crackerjack. And keen, anxious eyes watched him from above as he sank lower and disappeared into clouded water.

The shipmates waited, their hearts beating. Hudson breathed quickly, his cheeks flushed. Almost every shilling he had had gone in fitting out Dandy Peter's cutter for the salvage trip. Was it failure—or had Dandy Peter lied when he came up from the wreck and reported that the gold was gone?

Hudson was certain that he had lied—that he had found the treasure, and kept it a secret, safe in the knowledge that neither of the shipmates could get into the diving suit and that naked diving was impossible. But there was a doubt—a doubt that was to be resolved by the cooky-boy's exploration of the hulk. The seconds seemed long to the mate of the Dawn—the minutes endless.

Ken stood to gain nothing from the venture, but he was keen to see his mate succeed.

Ken touched Hudson's arm and pointed to the ketch, hove to a cable's length off the reef.

"Look!" he said.

Hudson glanced round at the Dawn. Three brown faces looked over the teak rail—Koko's, Kolulo's, Tomoo's. And a white face—white as chalk with angry passion—watched with them. Even at the distance the hate and rage in Dandy Peter's face could be read. The shipmates saw him shake his clenched fists, and Ken smiled.

"Looks as if Dandy Peter thinks we shall have luck!" he remarked.

Hudson laughed. The sea-lawyer's expression was not to be mistaken. He knew that the salvage-seekers were going to have luck! And Hudson, laughing, waved his hand to Dandy Peter. He could imagine the feelings with which the sea-lawyer of Lukwe watched the defeat of all his schemes!

It seemed an endless time to the shipmates before the signal came from below to haul up. But it came at last, and they dragged on the rope.

From the black recesses of the wrecked brig, from the water clouded with stirred sand, festooned with clinging seaweed, the figure of the diver came into view again. Up and up it came, till the gloved hands caught the gunwale of the boat and the glass-fronted helmet looked out of the water.

The shipmates hauled, and Danny put one heavy leg over the side. Hurriedly Ken unscrewed the glass, and the grinning, dusky face of the cooky-boy glimmered at him. Hudson's voice was sharp and tense:

"You feller Danny, you see piecee gold along wreck, eye belong you?"

Danny chuckled.

"Yes, sar! This feller Danny see plenty piecee gold, eye belong him, sar! You look, sar, eye belong you!"

HE groped in the bag slung to his side. His hand came out with something in it that gleamed and glittered in the sunshine. There was a musical clinking as the cooky-boy dropped a handful of gold coins into the whaleboat. Lompo and Lufu gave a cackle of excitement, and Danny grinned from ear to ear with triumph.

"Golden quids!" roared Hudson. He caught up the coins—more than twenty of them—and ran them through his fingers, the bright gold catching the rays of the tropical sun. "Ken! Look—look! The gold of the Crackerjack! Hurrah!"

"Good luck!" said King of the Islands. "Oh, good luck!"

"I knew it!" panted Hudson. "Didn't I tell you at Lalinge, Ken, that the old brig was sticking together on Suna-Suna, with the gold in her as safe as in the Bank of Sydney? Didn't I?"

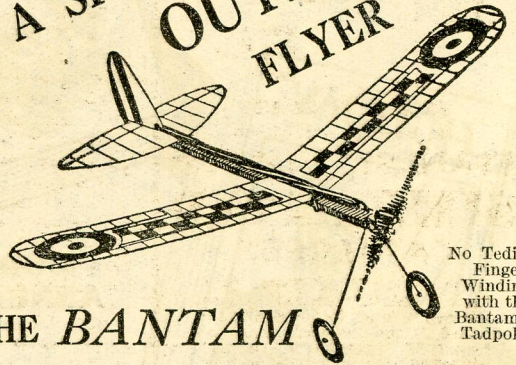
"You did, old chap!" said Ken, with a smile.

"You told me it was a mad venture, and you were right, too!" said Hudson. "If you hadn't come after me, and if I hadn't had big luck, I should have finished

(Continued on next page)

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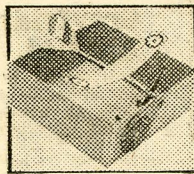
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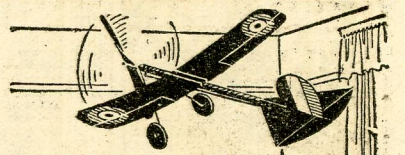
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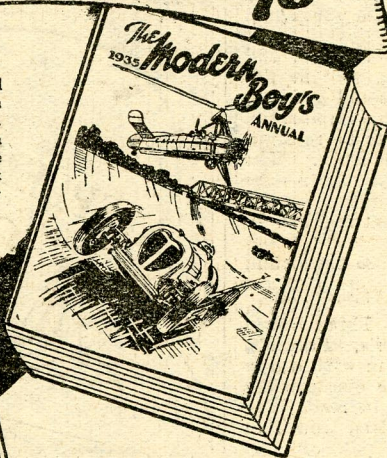
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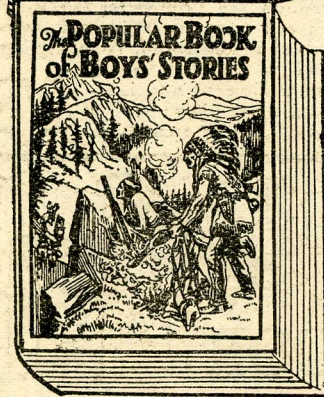


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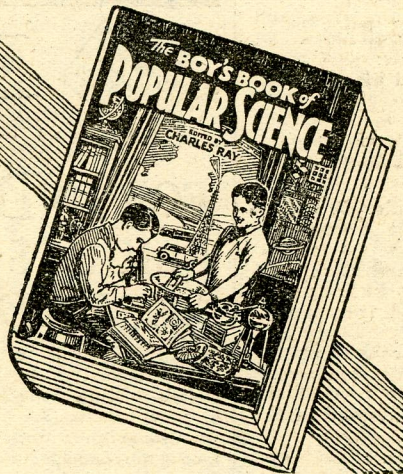


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The Cooky-Boy's Haul!

in the cooking-ovens on Suna-Suna, and the gold would have stayed there till the next hurricane broke up the Crackerjack!

"But it's worked out all right—it's plane sailing now, Ken! The chance in a thousand has come off!"

"My word, too much plenty gold!" gasped Lompo, as Danny produced handful after handful from his bag. Evidently the diver, carefully following Hudson's instructions, had found the strong-box in the captain's cabin in the sunken brig.

At the auction at Lascelles Island, when the wreck had been sold, eight hundred and fifty pounds had seemed a large sum to pay for such a slim chance of fortune. But it seemed a small enough sum now, with seven thousand sovereigns to show for it!

Danny's axe had broken open the treasure-box in deep water, and the bag was full of golden coins. Hudson counted them gleefully. Three hundred sovereigns was the result of the first trip.

"And that scoundrel Peter Parsons came up and told us that the gold was no longer there!" breathed Hudson. "The swab! The scum! The rascally lubber! No wonder he was keen to get away—and to come back later, on his own, and raise the gold, the thieving pirate!"

"Plenty more gold stop, sar!" said Danny, grinning. "Too much feller gold altogether, sar, stop along that brig!"

The glass was screwed on again, and the diver sank once more in the deep waters. This time a sack was lowered on a rope beside him, for the diver to fill. Over the gunwale of the whaleboat the shipmates watched him at work, lumbering about the sunken wreck in the heavy diving suit like some strange creature of the sea amid the seaweed. The signal to haul was again given, and the boat's crew dragged up the sack, heavy with gold.

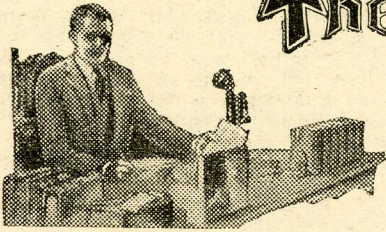
Their eyes danced as they dragged it in, tilted it open, and a cascade of sovereigns shot out in a stream into the boat. Half a hundredweight of the precious metal, all in bright yellow Australian sovereigns, had come up in the sack.

Lompo and Lufu gazed at it in wonder. Never had their eyes beheld such treasure; indeed, they would hardly have believed that there was so much gold in the wide world. From the distant ketch came a shout from Koko and Tomoo and Kolulo; they had caught the gleam of the gold in the sunshine, and knew that the diving was a success. Dandy Peter knew it, too, and he gritted his teeth in helpless rage.

Down went another sack, loaded with ballast of coral—for Danny to tip out the ballast and replace it with golden coins. Again the shipmates hauled in, and the heavy sack came over the side. And then came Danny's signal to haul him up, and he was drawn up to the boat. Ken and Kit helped him in, and the glass was unscrewed. Danny gasped for breath and grinned at them gleefully.

(Continued on page 40)

The Editor Talks



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Fleetway House,
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All letters must bear the full name and address of the writer

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I WISH YOU ALL GOOD HUNTING in the Christmas Presents field! May all those things you've set YOUR heart on be yours to the very last one on Christmas morning—if not before!

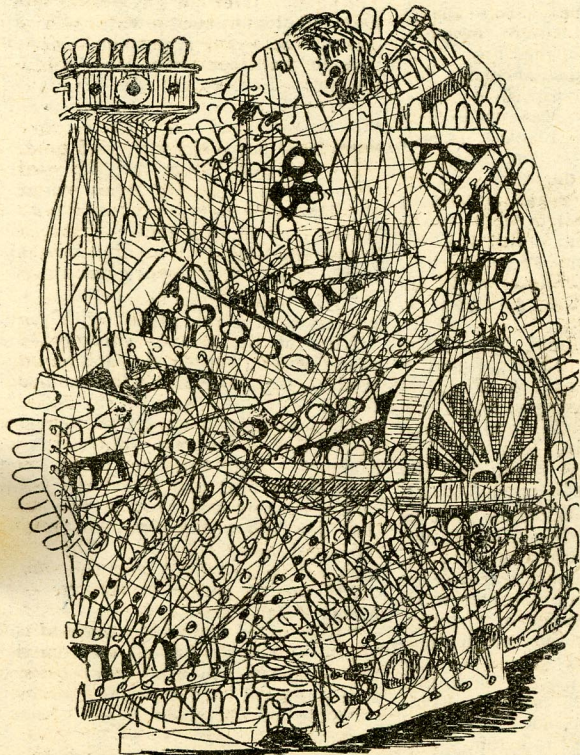
FATHERS, mothers, sisters, brothers, uncles and aunts—they all know how to take a HINT, and if there's anything you want on pages 26 and 38 of this issue, leave your copy of MODERN BOY open where they cannot fail to see it—with the item or items that you are most interested in ringed heavily around with thick pencil!

If THAT doesn't do the trick—well, it won't be MY fault!!!

I'D LIKE TO SHAKE HANDS WITH YOU ALL—so that we could congratulate each other on this Bumper Christmas Number! But we shall have to consider that as done. And—if you who are reading this should chance to be a New Reader let me tell you that the issues of MODERN BOY that are to follow will hold Thrills and Entertainment for you on the same splendidly high level as this particular issue!!!

SO, New Reader, let's get more closely acquainted—through the post.

And, Old Reader, what about dropping me that personal



letter you've been intending to send me for so long past? I won't fail to answer it, believe me!

FOOTBALLERS' MERRY CHRISTMAS!—Have you heard the story of the footballer whose transfer provided his old team-mates with their Christmas dinners?

Norman Mackay, the half-back recently transferred from Plymouth Argyle to Southend United, is the man. At the time I am telling you of, Mackay was a Newport County player, and his club was in a bad way—there was no money in the coffers, players' wages were in arrears, and with Christmas only a few days off it looked big odds against the players having much of a Christmas.

Then along came the manager of Plymouth Argyle, who wanted Mackay for his team—and who paid a nice sum for Mackay's transfer. And so Newport County Club and players had their Merry Christmas, after all!

GRANDFATHER'S WHISKERS!—That's going to be a sort of Password to Merriment this Christmas! The people responsible for this Three-in-One card game call it "A Riot of Fun for Everyone". And they're RIGHT.

I'M mentioning it here because I want YOU to share in the tremendous and rollicking fun of Grandfather's Whiskers—that's the name of this game responsible for hours and hours of thrills and laughter.

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ARE YOU THERE, BILL?—Here's another riotous game that's going to put pep into thousands of Christmas parties, and this one doesn't cost anything at all. You play it with two rolled-up newspapers, two fellows at a time, the rest watching.

Two of you lie flat on your stomachs on the floor, blindfolded, each grasping a rolled-up newspaper. You lie head to head, at such a distance apart that you can both grip each other's left hands—right hands gripping the "clubs."

WE'LL suppose that YOU are going to open the fun. Well, you start by saying, "Are you there, Bill?" and as soon as your opponent answers you lash out with your folded newspaper. Whether you hit him or not depends on his quickness, for the instant he has answered he is free to wriggle as much as he likes—provided he does not release your hand.

This is a picture of a MODERN BOY reader named Adolphus Butterspot, with his home-made portable 1,000 valve wireless set, for which he receives a Prize of 7s. 6d., less 7s. 5d. discount.

Adolphus is standing just behind the second ton of wire on the right. He tells me that he can often hear the North Pole quite clearly on this set. Well done, Adolphus!

AND so most swipes land only on an empty air—but you can get in some real hearty wallops if your hearing is acute and you are quick.

After your first whack, your opponent's turn comes, and he has to say, "Are you there, Bill?" and it's your turn to answer—and dodge his club if you can!

SEE YOU AGAIN NEXT SATURDAY!

The Editor

The Cooky-Boy's Haul!

(Continued from page 38)

"Feller gold go finish!" he announced. "All piecee gold stop along this feller boat, sar!"

Ken helped the cooky-boy off with the diving dress, while Hudson, with dancing eyes, counted the sovereigns, arranging them in little piles of twenty. Pile after pile glimmered in the sunshine. Danny sat down, breathing hard after his long imprisonment in the diving dress, and chuckling with glee at his success. Ken watched his shipmate's occupation with a smiling face. When the piles were completed, Hudson counted them, and they came to three hundred and fifty.

"How's the tally, old man?" asked King of the Islands.

"Right as rain—seven thousand to the last quid!" said Hudson. He swept the piles of sovereigns into the sacks. "Suffering cats! We've picked up more gold than a man could comfortably carry on his back, old bean! Now for the Dawn. The sooner we get away from the Solomon Islands the better I shall be pleased!"

"Washy-washy along ketch, you feller boy!" said King of the Islands. And the whaleboat pulled back to the Dawn.

Fleeing from the Cannibals!

KOMO-OMO, chief of the cannibal blacks of Suna-Suna, stood up, staring across the tall prow of a Solomon Island war-canoë as it slid out of the channels of the mangroves into the sea. Thirty savages were crowded in the chief's canoe; and after it came canoe after canoe, with equal numbers in them, and innumerable paddles flashing.

Komo-omo's eyes were fixed on the ketch, hove-to on the shining waters between the island and the reef, where the whaleboat was swinging up to the davits. And his black eyes gleamed and flashed like the polished coffee-can that hung on his brawny black chest. The white men were still lingering in those dangerous waters!

Komo-omo had had time to gather forces from far and near to avenge his previous defeat by them, and now he was coming to the attack with all the canoes of his tribe and an overwhelming swarm of fighting-men. Countless paddles flashed swiftly as the bunch of war-canoes swept across the half-mile of glistening water that separated them from the white men's ship.

"Plenty feller canoe comey, sar!" said Koko. "Too much feller cannibal stop along that feller canoe, sar!"

King of the Islands glanced at the savage array and smiled. On the deck of the Dawn lay the sacks of gold raised from the wreck of the Crackerjack. Dandy Peter—released from his irons now—was standing by them, regarding them with bitter eyes, and he did not even glance towards the array of the blacks of Suna-Suna. He was thinking of what he had lost by his treachery; and thinking, perhaps, that honesty, after all, might have been the best policy.

"Komo-omo seems to have gathered

all his jolly old family!" remarked Hudson, with a chuckle. "But we've got the wind, and we're finished here. It's the good-bye to the Solomon Islands."

"Ay, ay!" answered Ken. "They've lost no time—but they're too late! Up mainsail!"

Spread out in a half-circle, paddling swiftly, the mass of war-canoes shot across the water. Yells from the Solomon Island savages reached the crew of the Dawn as they shook out sail. The ketch began to move before the wind that came out of the southwest. The shipmates looked back at the savages, with smiles on their faces.

Fast as the blacks paddled, they had no chance of running down the ketch under sail. The Dawn stood to the north, between the island and the long reef, and from some of the canoes arrows whizzed after her. But they fell short, dropping in the sea, and the Hiva-Oa boys waved their dusky hands and made defiant gestures at the blacks toiling in pursuit. "Solomon Island boy plenty big fool along he tinkee catchee us!" chuckled Lompo.

"Altogether too much plenty fool!" laughed Tomoo. "He no—" Suddenly he broke off with a cackle of alarm as the wind died away, spilling out of the Dawn's sails and leaving them flapping idly.

Howling ferociously, the cannibals came on with a rush, their canoes rapidly overhauling the ketch as the Dawn lost way.

"My sainted Sam!" exclaimed Kit. "That's torn it!" And, grabbing up his rifle, he jumped to the stern and commenced to pump bullets at the leading canoe.

Yelling orders to Koko to stand fast at the wheel and the crew to get rifles from the rack at the base of the mast, Ken joined Kit and opened fire.

Kit was making good shooting, but his bullets failed to stop the savages.

Ken knew that it was up to him and Kit to stop the blacks. It was no use depending on the Kanakas. Their shooting was hopeless. They simply pulled trigger and trusted to luck where their bullets went, never stopping to take aim. But the boy trader ordered them to open fire, hoping that their bullets would go near enough to the paddlers to intimidate them.

By some strange fluke, each of the five Hiva-Oa boys' bullets found a mark in the leading canoes. Paddlers went tumbling backwards, and for a moment the canoes faltered. Then they came on again, Ken and Kit pumping bullets into them, and the crew firing wildly in their excitement.

Dandy Peter had taken no part in the affair. It seemed as if he did not care if Ken King's ship was captured. Then he recalled his awful experiences in the canoe-house on Suna-Suna when he had been Komo-omo's prisoner, and, shuddering at the recollection, he got a rifle and joined in the defence. He was a crack shot, and his well-aimed bullets, added to Ken's and Kit's, caused the blacks to spread out and try to circle the ketch.

As they did so the wind came again, and the ketch began to move, gradually gaining speed and leaving the

cannibals behind. With howls of rage, the blacks made a last attempt to overhaul her. But it failed, and the Dawn sped on at ever-increasing speed.

Running before the wind, the ketch sped out into the open Pacific, north of Suna-Suna, with the canoes still in pursuit, the paddles flashing in the sun. Komo-omo brandished a spear in his rage at seeing his enemies escape. North of the reef, the ketch tacked to the east and swept away towards the main group of the Solomons.

And still the obstinate savages, hoping against hope, carried on in chase. It was not till the sun was dipping down to Suna-Suna that they gave it up in despair, and the prows of the war-canoes were turned back towards the cannibal island.

"They'll be watching for us again!" grinned Hudson. "They don't know yet that we've finished with Suna-Suna! By gum, I'm glad to see the last of it! I don't like thinking of the night I spent in Komo-omo's canoe-house, with the cooking-ovens ready in the morning!" He shivered. "It was a mad venture, Ken, as you told me at the start, but it's turned out a winner!"

He glanced at the two sacks of gold which still lay on the deck. From one of them he drew twenty-five sovereigns, and called to Danny. The fat cooky-boy came up grinning to receive the reward for his services in the diving dress. He grinned from ear to ear as he ran the sovereigns through his brown fingers.

"My word, this feller Danny plenty too much rich feller!" chuckled the cooky-boy. "Along we stop along Lalinge, all feller say that feller Danny plenty too much rich, all samee white feller master!" And Danny went singing back to his galley.

THEN the sacks were tied up and carried below to the state-room. Dandy Peter watched the Kanakas carrying them down, a bitter look on his face. He came across the deck to the shipmates, his hands clenched, his eyes glinting.

"Where do I come in on this deal?" he asked, in a voice thick with rage.

King of the Islands shrugged his shoulders and turned his back on him. Hudson regarded him with cool contempt.

"Where do you expect to come in, after the game you played?" he asked. "You thieving scum, you went down first and found the gold, and then reported that it was lost. But for the cooky-boy, you might have got away with it. You're in luck not to be kicked over the side!"

"If you're going to rob me—" hissed Peter Parsons.

"Why not?" smiled the mate of the Dawn. "You fixed it all up from the beginning to rob me—and they say that one good turn deserves another."

"King of the Islands—" began Parsons.

"Leave me out of it," said Ken curtly. "You've told me yourself

(Continued on page 42)

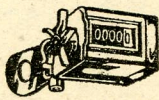
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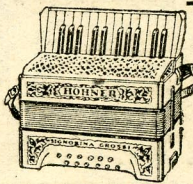
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The Cooky-Boy's Haul!

(Continued from page 40)

that I don't come in on this deal! You're dealing with my mate."

Parsons clenched his hands convulsively.

"So that's your game, Kit Hudson!" he said, in a choking voice.

"Why not?" smiled Hudson. "What game would you be playing in my place, Peter Parsons?"

The sea-lawyer made no reply. He turned away, almost sick with rage. Hudson laughed.

"The way of the jolly old transgressor is hard!" he remarked. "Parsons can chew on that till we raise Santa Cruz. We can kick him off the ketch when we get there."

The thoughts in the sea-lawyer's mind were easy enough to read in his dark and savage face as the ketch made the run eastward. A favourable wind carried her through the Malaita Strait, and she ran down to Santa Cruz.

In the harbour of Santa Cruz the disappointed and enraged sea-lawyer had a gleam of comfort: his cutter, the Sea-Cat, was waiting for him there, with his two Lukwe boys on board. It was only to get rid of him that the Dawn had put in at Santa Cruz before stretching her sails for Lalinge, her home port.

As the ketch came to anchor, Dandy Peter waved his hand to Koo and Toto, staring from his cutter, and they came across for him in a native canoe.

Parsons stood watching them as they came. He had his cutter back—and that, with what he stood up in, was all he had after that wild and perilous venture in the Solomon Islands. He gripped the teak rail so hard that his knuckles showed white.

King of the Islands glanced at his mate. Hudson laughed and spoke a word to Koko, who went down the companion. He returned in a few minutes with a heavy sack on his brawny shoulders.

The canoe slid under the rail of the Dawn, and Toto and Koo stood up and held on for their master to step down. Peter Parsons turned a last, bitter look on the smiling shipmates. His rage was almost too deep for words, and his voice came huskily as he spoke.

"You've done me!" he muttered thickly. "You've done me—"

"You fool and rascal!" interrupted Kit Hudson contemptuously. "I've let you think that your own rotten game was going to be played on you—but you're dealing with a white man, not with a scoundrel like yourself. You scum, your half of the gold is in that sack—every sovereign of it!"

The sea-lawyer started and caught his breath.

"You mean——" he panted. "Pitch it into the canoe, Koko!"

The boatswain dropped the sack containing three thousand five hundred sovereigns over the rail into the canoe.

Dandy Peter stared after it with

unbelieving eyes. Then he looked blankly at Hudson.

King of the Islands burst into a laugh.

"There's your share, you scum!" said Hudson. He made a stride at the sea-lawyer and grasped him in his sinewy hands. "You double-dealing, treacherous swab, there's your whack—every sovereign of it! And now you're going after it!"

He swung the sea-lawyer of Lukwe clear of the deck, and Dandy Peter yelled as he spun in the air.

The next moment he was pitched bodily over the rail, landing with a crash on the sack of gold in the canoe.

The canoe rocked wildly and shipped water. Peter Parsons sat up dizzily, drenched to the skin. Toto and Koo, grinning, pushed off and paddled for the Sea-Cat.

And as the Dawn pulled out to sea again the last the shipmates saw of Dandy Peter he was standing on the deck of his cutter, shaking a clenched and furious fist after them!

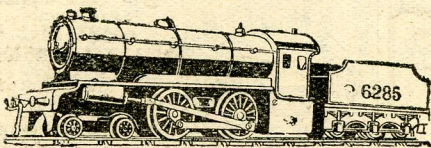
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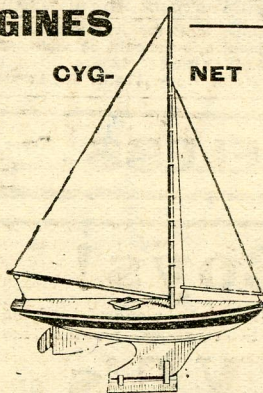


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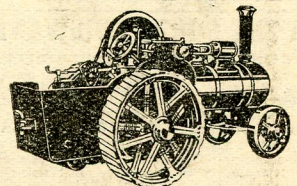
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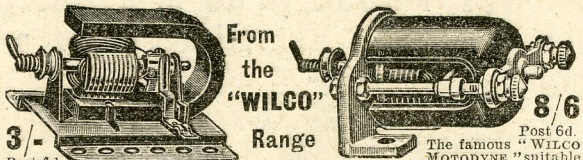
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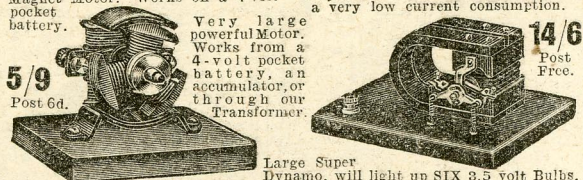


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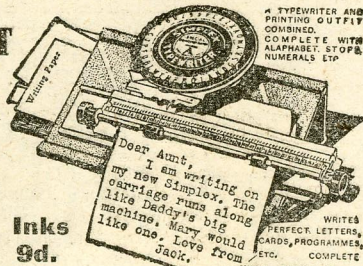
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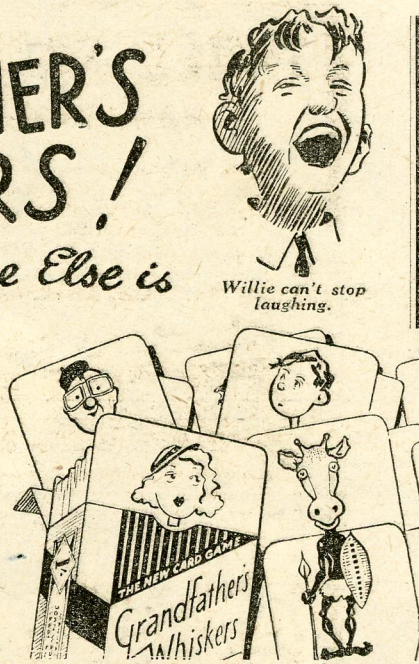
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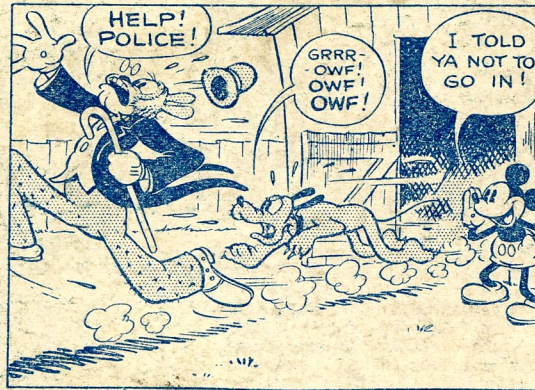
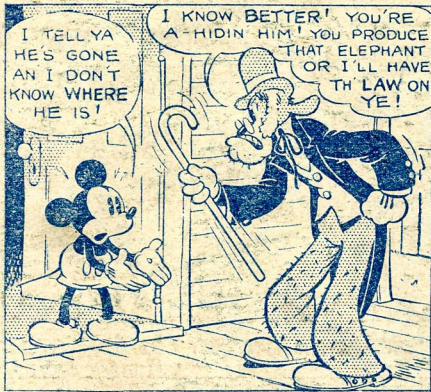
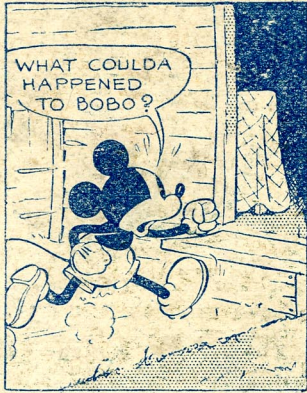
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