Illustrated—December 30, 1939

WEDNESDAY *for* week ending December 30, 1939. No. 44. Vol. 1.

ILLUSTRATED 3d

TOMMIES' CHRISTMAS IN FRANCE - *EXCLUSIVE*

MOTHERS and MOTHERS-TO-BE

Don't miss this superb issue of Britain's Greatest Home Magazine

What's in this brilliant New Year issue?

NEW YEAR FAMILY KNITTING

Full knitting instructions for an enchanting dress for Mother. A smart long-sleeved pullover for HIM. And the thrilling cardigan ribbed for figure flattery is a real joy. For Master Four-year-old there's a sturdy jersey suit and for his sister a pinafore frock to match.

THREE LONG COMPLETE STORIES

Here's grand fiction by your favourite authors—gloriously illustrated—"Soldier's Son" by Dorothy Black; "Storm Warning" by Ware Torrey; and "Happy Birthday to You" by Olive Nevett.

OTHER MOTHERS' PROBLEMS

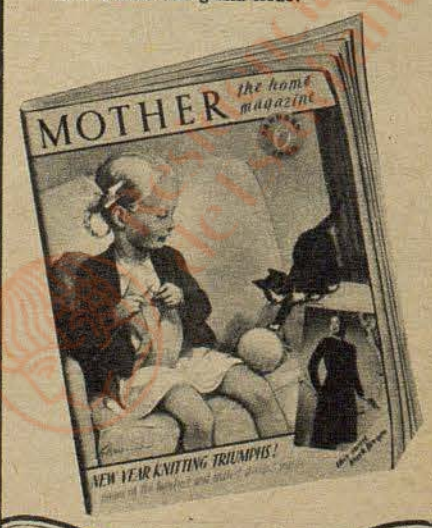
Nurse Crawford will help you, with practical advice, to keep your baby healthy and happy. Read her helpful articles on nervy children and evacuees.

WINTER FASHIONS

There are four delightful outfits which you need this Winter—they are all easy to make. For children you will find pages of sensible clothes which are inexpensive and can be put together in no time.

AND there's the famous "Four o'clock Gossip" feature—how to prepare your children for the "new arrival" and an important article on health for expectant mothers—some enchanting blackout lamp shades to make—Mrs. Brittain gives some wonderful new recipes—there's a bedtime story for the little ones, etc. etc. etc.

DON'T miss this grand issue!



HERE'S THRILLING NEWS!—The wonderful big NEW YEAR issue of "MOTHER"—JUST OUT—sixpence as usual. Its pages are packed with delightful surprises including Health and Beauty secrets . . . Knitting . . . Fashion . . . Home and Cookery hints . . . Advice on child welfare . . . and THREE grand complete stories. Look in the panel on the right, at just a few of the unique features in this lavishly illustrated issue—and then hurry—get your copy at once before they're all sold out! *Go to your newsagent now and ask him for it and at the same time be sure to place a standing order for the regular supply of "MOTHER" every month.*

MOTHER
JUST OUT 6D.

ILLUSTRATED

Dear Ma: We are all set for a first-rate Christmas out here "somewhere in France", so you need not worry about us not enjoying ourselves. Tell Dad the pipe's a real treat.
P.T.O.

Happy Christmas

SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE

SCROOGE himself would not be able to resist letting himself go and entering into the spirit of Christmas were he out in France with the British Expeditionary Force, for the boys are determined to make this Yuletide a really cheery one—and when Tommy makes up his mind to do a thing, not all the Nazi bombasts, *blitzkriegs* and bombers in the world can stop him. And in carrying out their intentions, the men of the B.E.F. have been vigorously aided and abetted by friends, sweethearts and relations on the Home Front.

Parcels of all shapes and sizes have been pouring into the army post offices in their tens of thousands. Razors and raisins, diaries and dates, socks and smokes, and a thousand and one other gifts have been dispatched, delivered and gratefully acknowledged. And now nothing remains for Tommy to do but enjoy himself to the fullest extent permitted by the exigencies of active service. Yes, be he in the front line or in reserve, Tommy certainly is not letting Christmas, 1939, pass unhonoured and unsung.

So now, come with us to that nebulous place "somewhere in France" and look over the shoulder of the young sergeant as he writes his Christmas letter to home. For him and his companions, *Noël* will be anything but a gloomy affair, since a khaki Christmas can be just as cheery as one spent in the "civvies" of peace time. (*Continued overleaf*)

Our field post-office has been snowed under by all the parcels that friends and relatives in Blighty have been sending out to us. And collecting them is a fatigue no one minds.

Some of our mob aren't exactly nuts on letter-writing, but when it comes to putting pencil to paper to say "thank you" it's a different matter. In fact, everybody's doing it now.

And when it comes to handing out those presents from home, the boys aren't backward in coming forward. In fact, as parcel-collectors they make jolly good storm-troopers.

Our billets are knee-deep in brown paper and string, and if the boys eat all their chocolates and cakes in one sitting, I bet the M.O. will have his hands full on Boxing Day morning.

(Continued overleaf)

If we can't get a brush with the enemy, here's a new one for the chin..

..and the only grub problem out here that worries us is what to eat first

"AT CHRISTMAS, PLAY AND MAKE GOOD CHEER"

We're going to hang our washing on the Siegfried Line all right, but as I pen these lines, the boys are busy hanging the streamers on the billet line. You'd hardly know the old place.

(Continued overleaf)

There will be lashings of plum pudding for everyone, but some of our mob won't be able to wait till Christmas dinner before getting stuck into the grub from home

You'll be glad to know the boys in hospital haven't been overlooked—very far from it. And now here's wishing you and Dad as good a time as will be had by—

Your loving Son

In pantomime, journeys always end in lovers' meetings, and so it is in "Cinderella" at the Coliseum. Prince Charming (Patricia Burke) finds his Cinders (Joan Cole) and fits on the slipper which proves once and for all that she is to become the Princess just as soon as the wedding can be arranged. Patricia Burke is the daughter of the famous musical comedy star, Marie Burke

LIFE STORY OF LONDON'S LONE PANTO

LONDON'S West End can boast but one pantomime this year, namely, *Cinderella*, which Francis Laidler is presenting at the Coliseum, to the vast satisfaction of children of all ages. Known as the King of Pantomime, Mr. Laidler has been producing pantomimes all over the kingdom and this is his fourth London pantomime. He is seeing to it that it is as good as a good panto can be.

Long weeks ago, when the summer was at its height, work began on the production, for there is a tremendous amount to be done between the writing of the first rhyming couplet and the time when the call boy chants: "Overture and beginners, please" on Boxing Night.

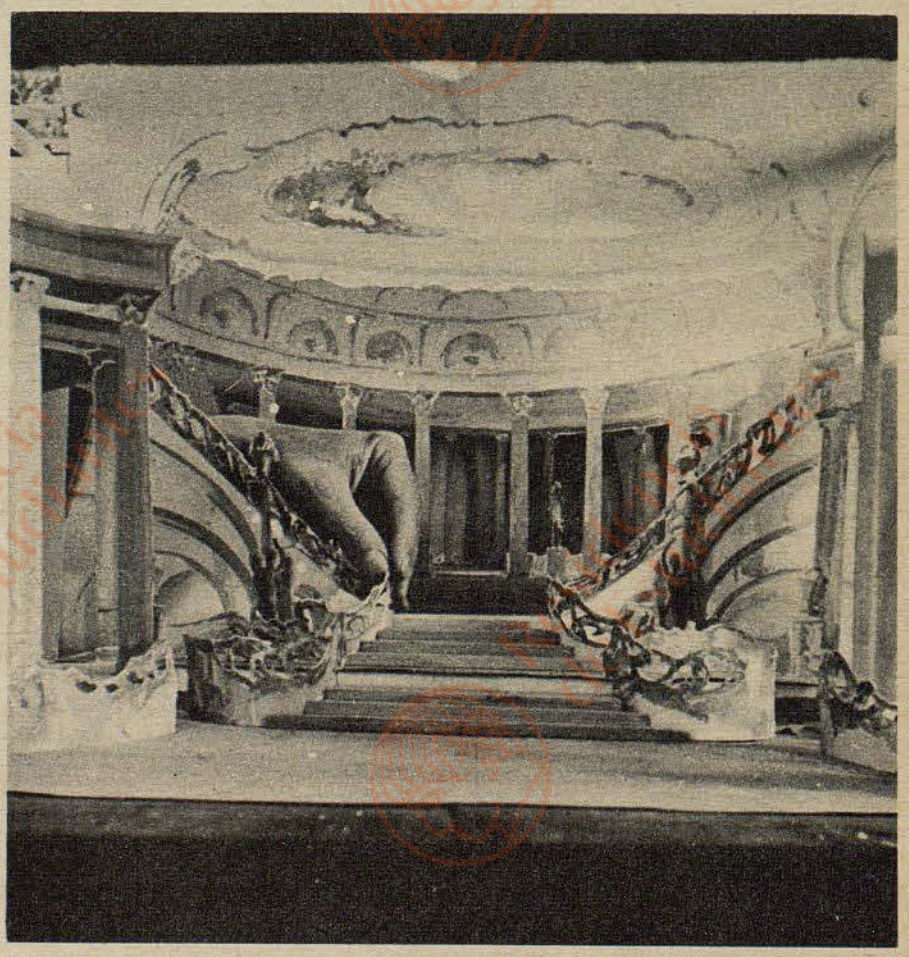
Principals have to be chosen, hundreds of chorus girls given auditions before a final selection is made, conferences held at which scenic designer, costume designer, lighting expert, musical director and producer get down to welding the many different parts into one artistic whole. ILLUSTRATED takes you back-stage to prove that months of hard work, headaches and heartburnings go to the making of that essentially Christmas-time concoction, the pantomime.

(Continued overleaf)

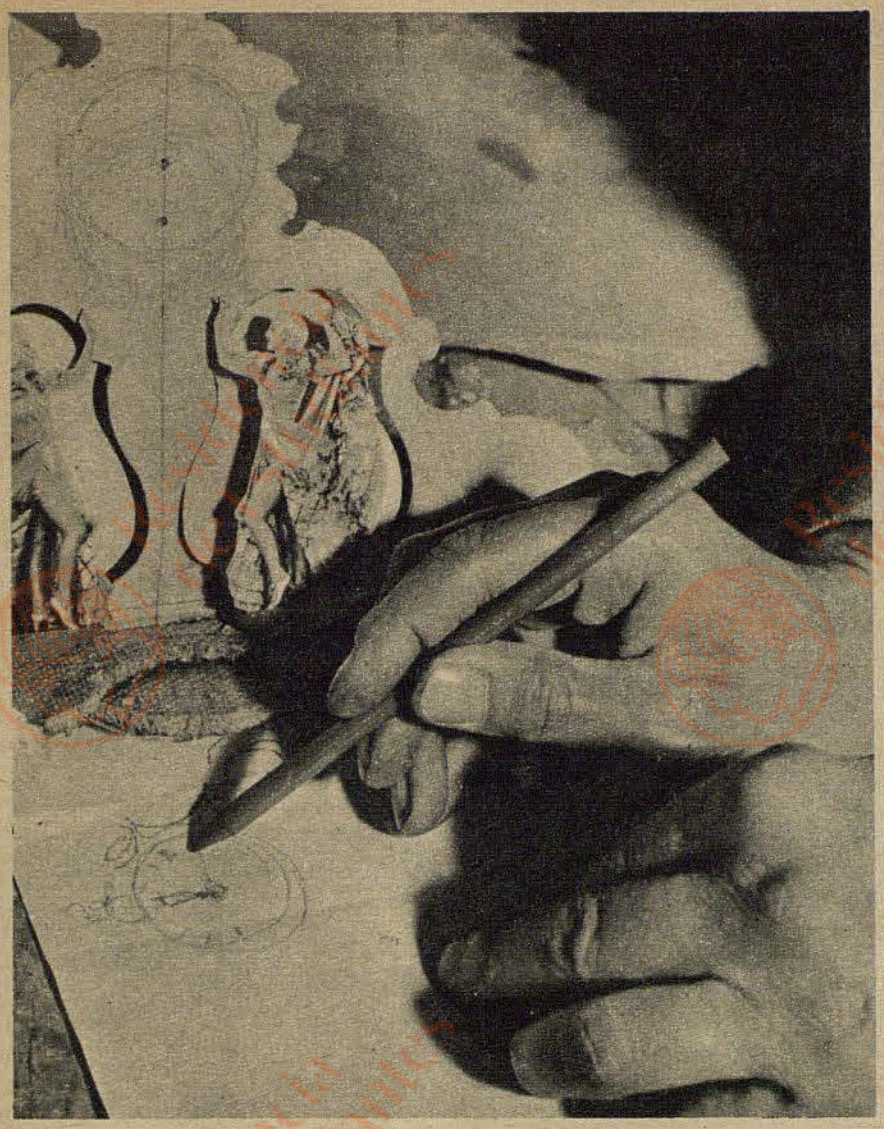
1 *Cinderella may be in rags, but tradition demands that she be elegantly impoverished. And that is why principal girl Joan Cole had many fittings before that tattered dress was finally passed by the producer*

2 *Francis Laidler himself insisted on being the first to fit Cinderella with her silver slipper. And to judge by the expression of Patricia Burke, the principal boy, he made a very graceful job of it when he did so*

3 *Producer Francis Laidler and scenic designer F. C. Lyndhurst in solemn conclave met. They are discussing details of the Lilypool Well scene for which Mr. Lyndhurst had just made the preliminary sketch*

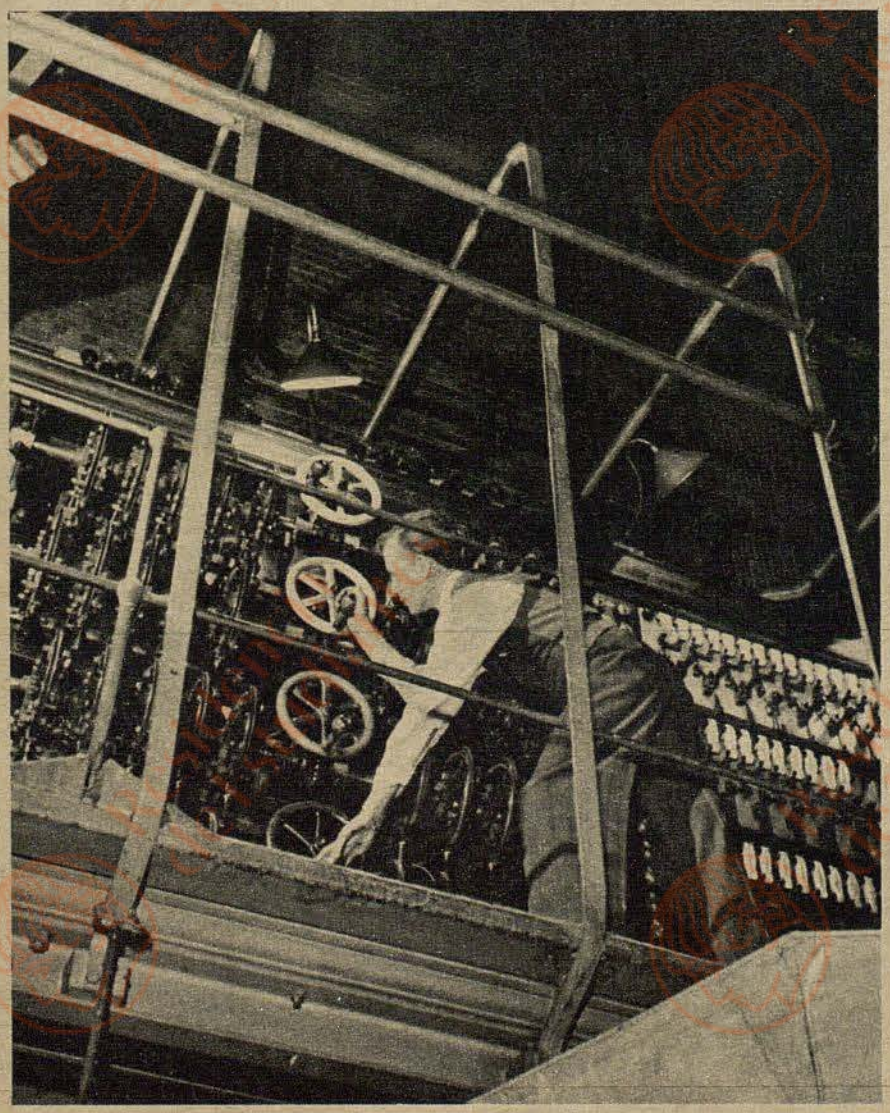


4 *Before the various scenes are built in the studios, they are constructed in miniature. Hence the giant hand carefully moving a section of the elaborate banister. Use of models enables every detail to be adjusted*

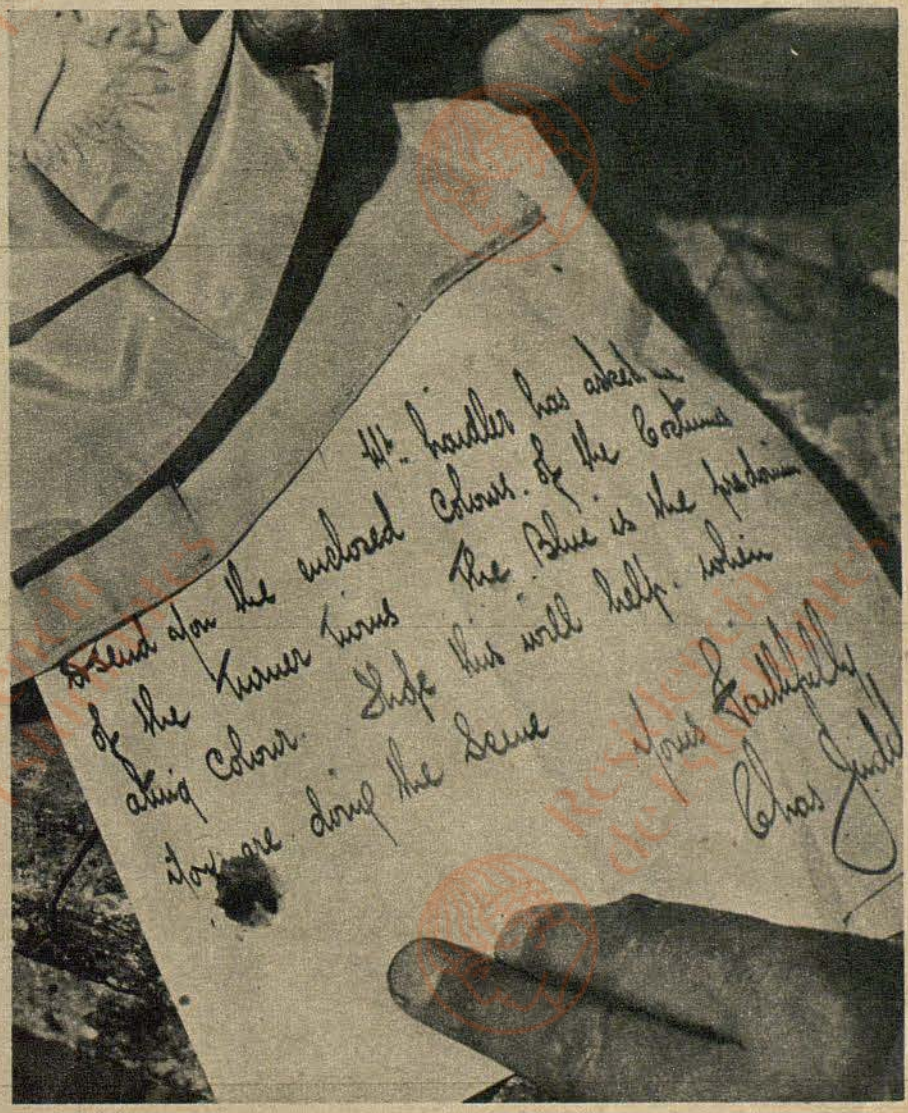


5 *Sketching the clock that figures so importantly in the story of Cinderella. Every detail of decoration and furnishing has to be studied so that the scene will have no jarring note in colour and design*

6 *An artist putting the finishing touches to the hands of the clock. It is a "practical" property as far as the movements of the hands are concerned, youngsters watch with great excitement the witching hour approaching*



7 *High up in the wings, the electrician controls the switches which regulate the lights. Since lighting plays a major part in pantomime, the lighting plot is a complicated one that calls for careful rehearsing*



8 *Close collaboration between the various branches of production are essential. Thus the costume designer keeps in touch with the artist who designs the scenery so that they may avoid any jarring clash of colours*

(Continued overleaf)

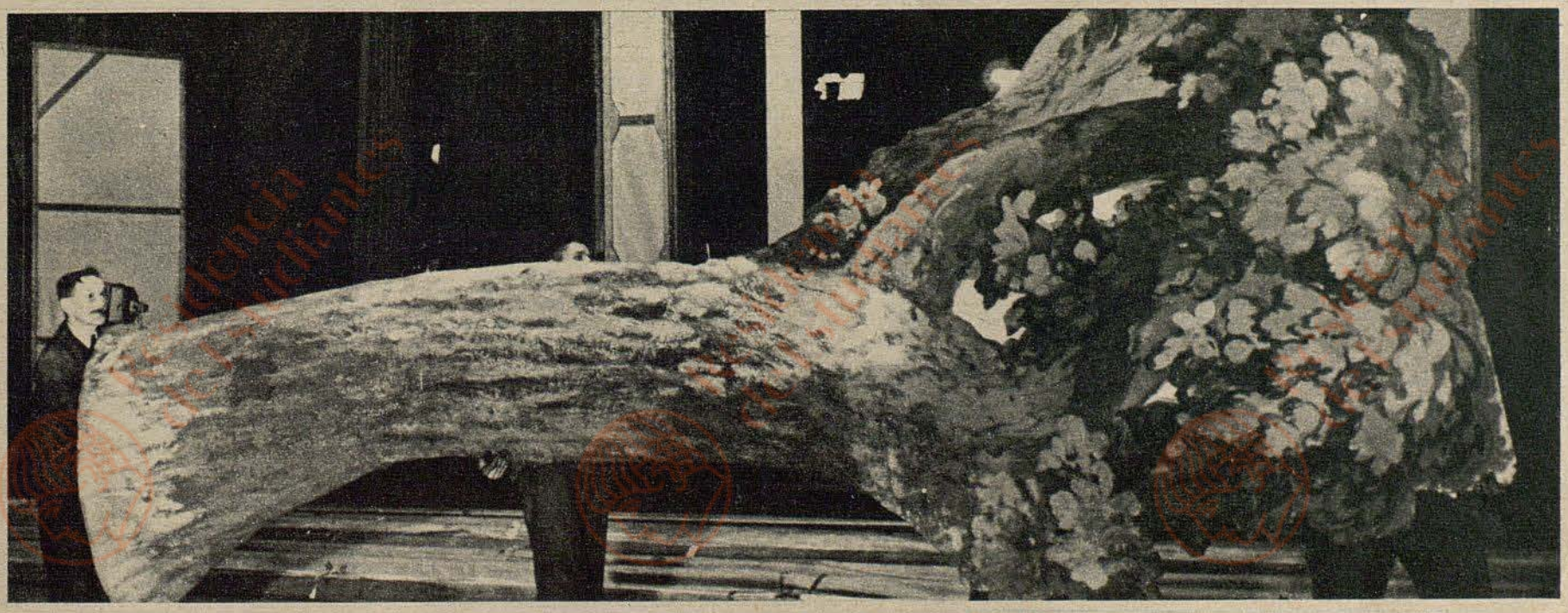
9 *One of the most expensive and tricky jobs of pantomime production is the dressing of the company. Not only do all the principals have several changes of wardrobe, but small part and chorus people have also to be provided with a number of costumes apiece. Mrs. Wood, the wardrobe mistress who carries many of the responsibilities on her shoulders, helps Joan Cole to choose the dress she wears in the ballroom scene*

10 *That marble staircase which so impresses us when we see it in the ballroom is a tribute to the art of the stage carpenter. For it is a wooden and hollow snare, but none the less palatial on that account*

11 *Meet the Ugly Sisters of the pantomime, Doris and Joan Fred-Emney. As far as Cinderella is concerned, they are scarcely sisters to assist'er, but they greatly assist the audience—to laugh*

12 *It's a serious business working out funny "business," and stage manager Cecil Bainbridge (left) brings a solemn air to one of the many conferences as he follows the script with Francis Laidler. At the head of the table sits principal girl Joan Cole, and on either side of her are to be seen those bright comedians Leslie Sarony and Leslie Holmes—the Two Leslies—who play Buttons and the Baron respectively*

13 *Every good pantomime simply must have lots of funny men in the cast, and Mr. Laidler's Coliseum production is rich in comics who do admirable work in keeping the ball of laughter rolling. Above you see a trio of them who are known not inappropriately as the Three Loose Screws, and appear as the sort of broker's men who, unfortunately, are never to be met with except in the happy-go-lucky world ruled over by King Panto.*



14 *One of the greatest mysteries of pantomime production is how the property master succeeds in getting through the run of a production without having a complete nervous breakdown, for the "props" used are many and varied, ranging from rat traps and bass brooms to fairy coaches and outsize pumpkins. Here is one of the trees being carried into position for the forest scene where it manages to look amazingly massive and solid*

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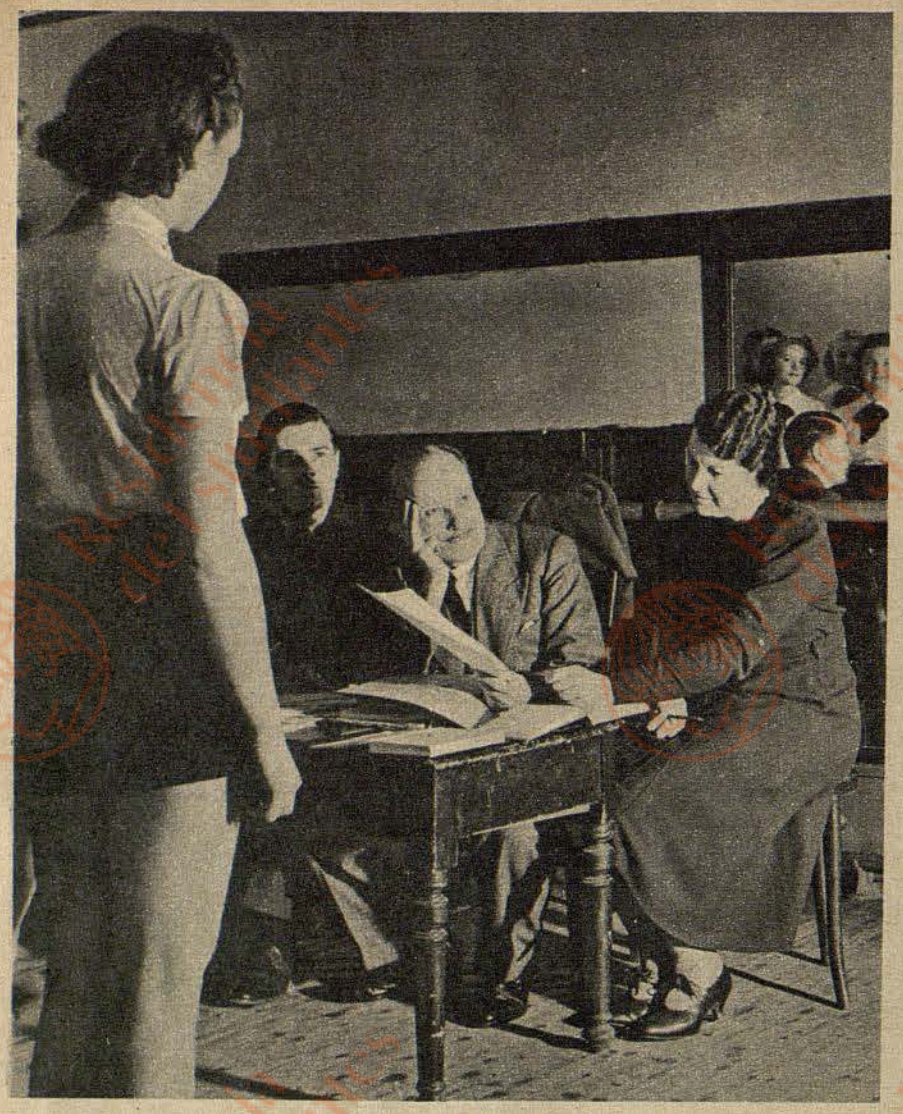


15 *After the long task of choosing the chorus has been finished, the question of dressing them has to be considered. Francis Laidler helps to decide which of them will make the best boys and which the best girls*

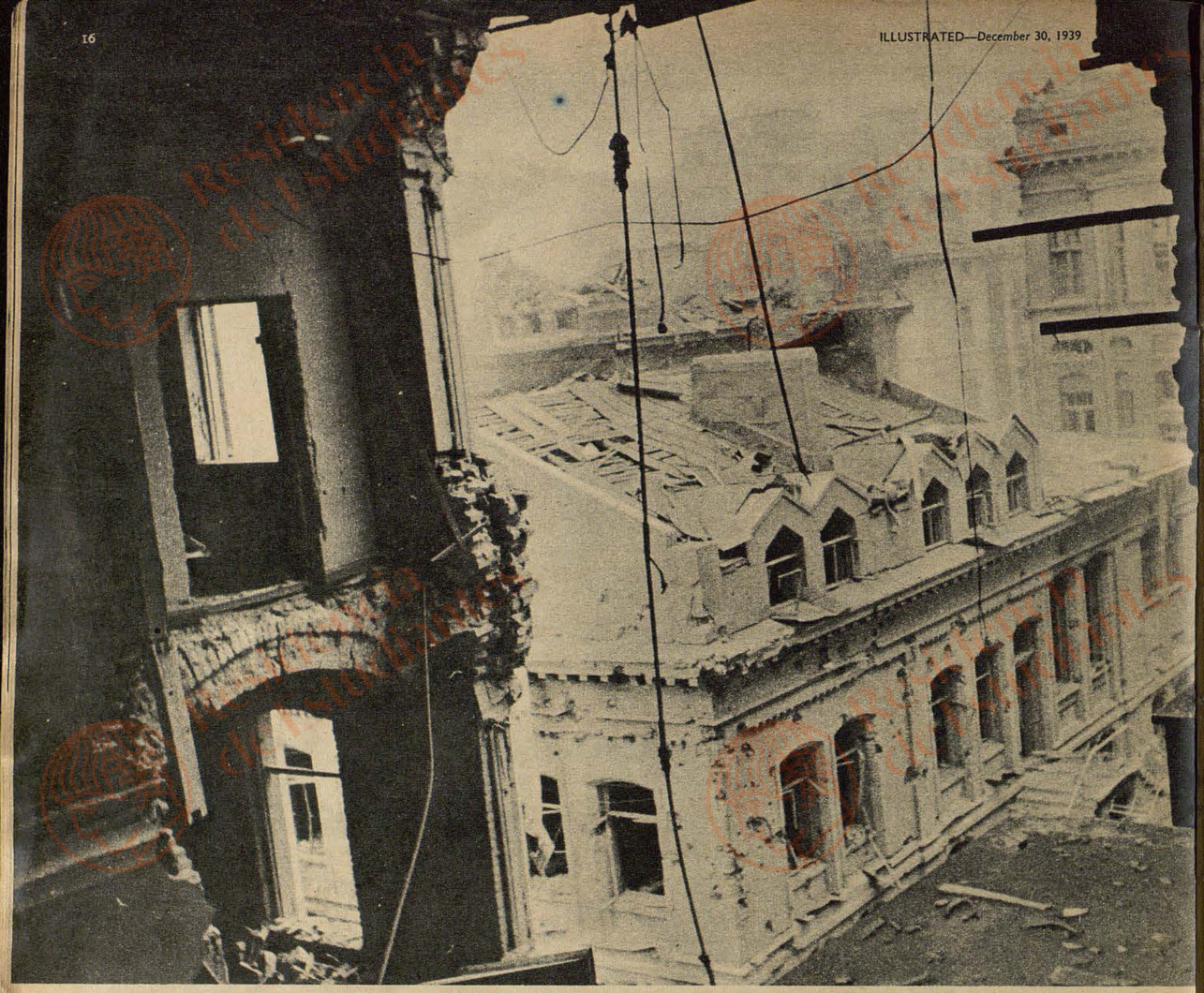
16 *Tiller girls provide many of the dancing acts and here is the producer busy running the tape over some of them. Dresses always must be well fitting, for nothing mars an act more than do slipshod costumes*

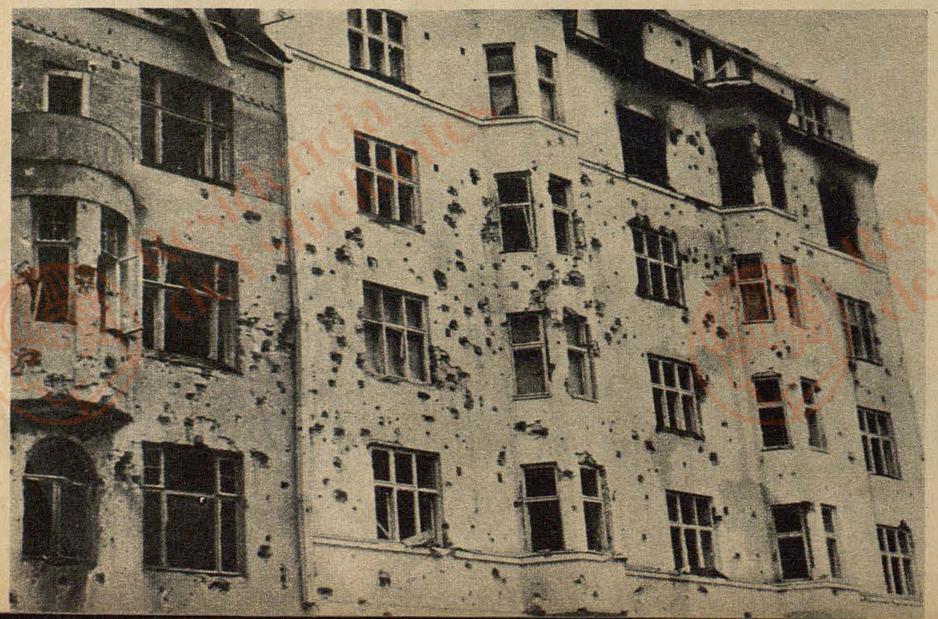
17 *Producers of pantomime must have practical knowledge of all branches of the business. So Francis Laidler does not hesitate to show the girls a little dance routine. And he certainly points a pretty toe*

18 *With a chorus of over fifty to direct, it is essential that the producer should be able to count on good team work. Mr. Laidler runs through the routine with them, stressing his points with a few jokes*

19 *Tiller girls are not only attractive to look at but are also accomplished dancers. Hard work and plenty of it is the secret of their talent, and these sixteen set about practising the splits with a cheeriness that shows they really enjoy doing them—and that speaks volumes for their suppleness! Team work of a really high order is always the hall-mark of the dancers who receive their training at this world-famous school*

20 *Here are some of the chorus rehearsing one of their concerted numbers. Now that the pantomime is in full swing, half of them have been magically transformed into " boys," for one of the traditions of pantomimes is that whenever possible the sexes shall change over—a relic of the old days when the Lord of Misrule reigned from Christmas to Twelfth Night, and everything had to be carried on in a mad, topsy-turvy manner in his honour*





There Were People Inside

. . . A bomb from a Russian plane completely smashed this building, the skeleton of which ILLUSTRATED'S *cameraman used as a vantage point from which to photograph another damaged house. Finnish people who lived in these two buildings were killed instantly*

Twenty Workers Died Here

. . . Ruthlessly bombing Helsinki, the Russians failed to spare the workers they professed to help, and working-class districts suffered most heavily. In this house alone twenty people, mostly women and children, were killed

The Dead Lie Buried . . . *Only a few hours before this picture was taken, a three-floored house stood on this spot. Now this building is a ruined mass of stones, debris and twisted metal, it is the tomb for ten people who lie buried under the ruins. The heavy bomb which struck the house scored a direct hit*

Our Cameramen in Helsinki

WHEN the Russian War seemed imminent, two of ILLUSTRATED's cameramen flew to Finland and were in Helsinki during some of the air raids. One of them is still on the spot; the other flew back to Copenhagen, whence he sent the pictures he and his colleague had taken to ILLUSTRATED.

Russia's aim, she said, was to liberate the workers, to free them from the tyranny of the capitalists. There are some who may think that a worthy aim. On these pages is photographic evidence of the method by which the Russians carried out their aim . . . already some Finnish workers were freed, they lay liberated beneath the wreckage of their own homes after the Red bombers had passed.

This Woman Died . . . *Her husband lying badly injured in the same hospital, her child already dead, this woman died the day after this photograph was taken. So has one family been liberated by the Soviets*

House of Learning . . . *The head master (left) with two of his professors view the ruins of beautiful Helsinki University*

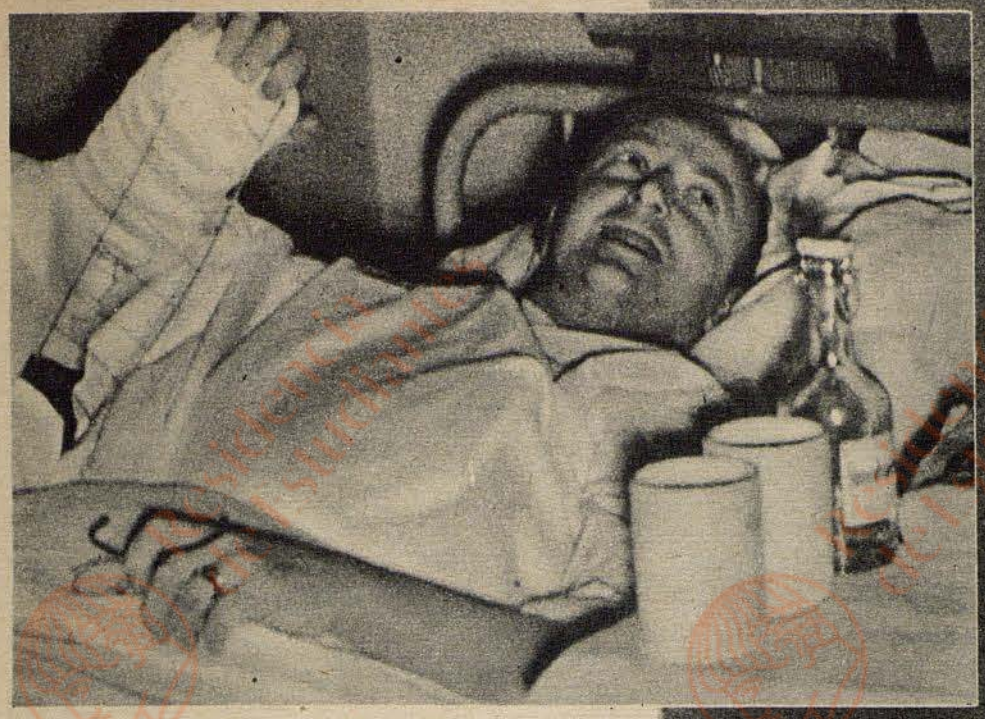
(Continued overleaf)

Search for Safety . . . *This young Finnish workman, with his little child in his arms, is evacuating to a safer zone. He carries only rucksack with clothes for baby*

Fire After Exploding . . . *By the use of brand-bombs, the Russians caused the buildings to catch fire after explosion. Bodies found in debris were so burned as to be unidentifiable*

Result of a Direct Hit . . . *Completely without mercy, the Russians bombed Helsinki, causing such devastation as shown in this photograph of a shattered house*

Where a Teacher Sat . . . *Helsinki University was hit five times by heavy bombs, all of them direct hits. This picture shows a teacher's room after the raid*



Hospital of the Dying . . .

Here, in the town's centre, many of the wounded died soon after entry. On right is Mrs. Tanast-Rancken, doctor in charge of the hospital

(Continued from page 17)

ILLUSTRATED'S cameramen in Helsinki tell tales of horror and tragedy. They tell of the bombing of the houses where the poorer people lived. It was here that most were killed.

Even more dreadful than the bombs were the lumps of granite and stone which sprang back from the ground when a bomb fell, hitting and penetrating the houses and often killing the people sheltering within.

Strangely enough, one of the first to be wounded in Helsinki was a German. He was a teacher in the German school which, together with the German church, were damaged by Russian bombs.

In Esplanadgatan, Helsinki's most fashionable street, not one window remains unbroken. During the first raid, 1,260 people were injured by glass splinters. Like most people, the owners of the shops had left the town, but although their shops were open for any one to loot, no thievery has taken place.

There is perfect self-control among the Finnish people.

On Duty in Helsinki . . . *Finnish soldiers are of fine physique, well equipped, courageous and determined to the last man to defend the rights of their country*

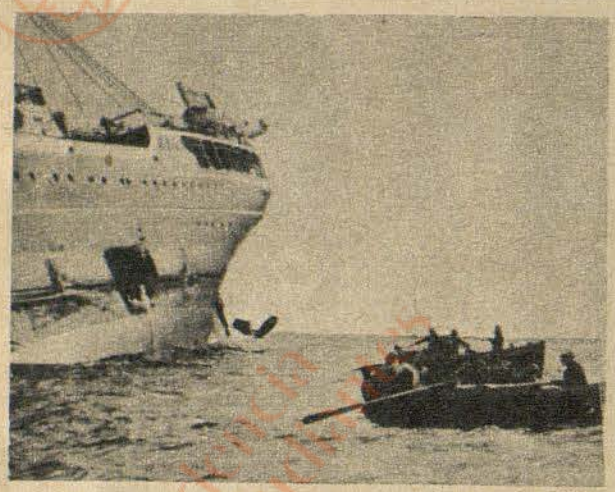
Forced to Evacuate . . . *After the first two air raids, the Finnish Government ordered evacuation of civil population. Women waiting for buses to take them away*

ILLUSTRATED'S MONTHLY DIARY OF THE WAR—

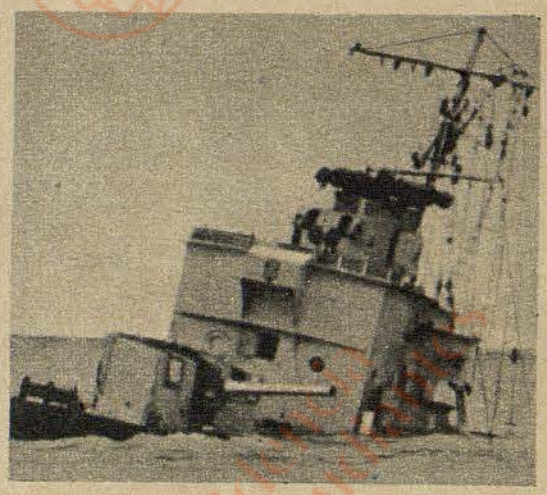
NOV. 17.—Hitler still hesitates ; French cartoon follows generals' and party chiefs' split on future offensive policy. South African aerial patrol searches for Nazi pocket battleship raider

NOV. 18.—General Sikorski, Polish Prime Minister, meets Duke of Kent at Scottish port where he decorated Polish officers. Allied Supreme War Council pools all resources of Britain and France

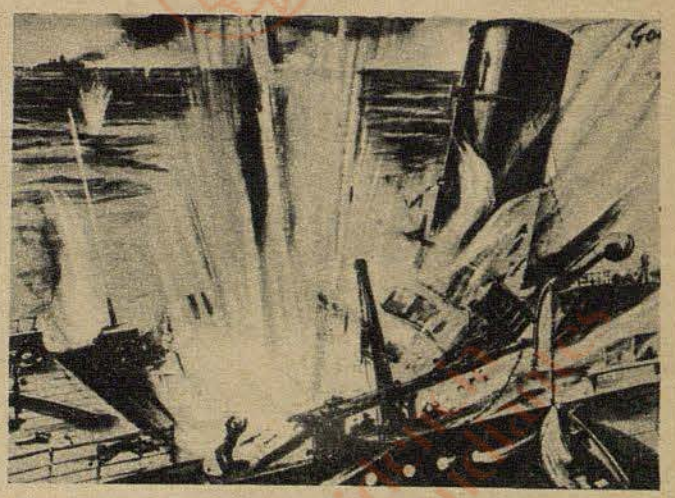
NOV. 18.—Dutch liner "Simon Bolivar" strikes Nazi mine, 140 lives lost, this baby was saved



. . . Japanese liner "Terukumi Maru" sunk by mine off East Coast ; crew and passengers saved by lifeboats. H.M. "Mastiff," a trawler minesweeper sunk



NOV. 22.—British destroyer "Gipsy" mined. Nazi planes raid east coast of England; eight shot down in France



NOV. 23.—"Rawalpindi," British armed merchant cruiser, attacked by pocket battleship. It returns the enemy's fire although at hopeless disadvantage, and is sunk in 40 minutes

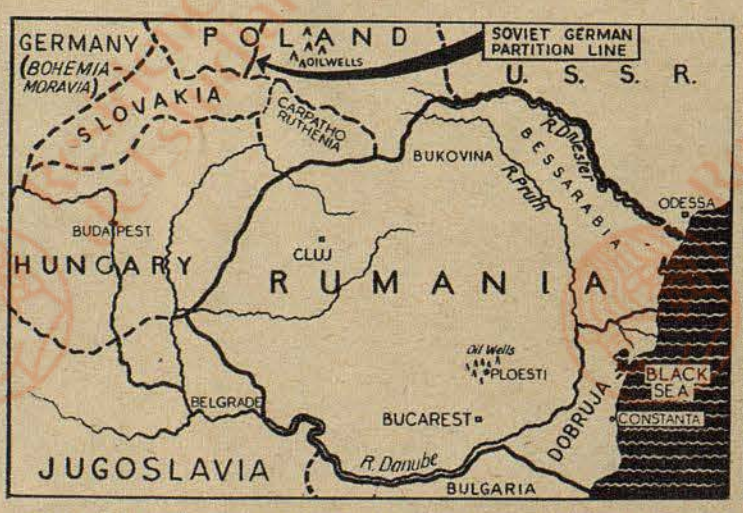
NOV. 28.—W. S. Morrison announces rationing of bacon and butter on January 8.

NOV. 29.—Russia : "Finland's hostile policy compels us to take steps to safeguard our external security . . ."

NOV. 30.—Soviet attacks Finland by land, sea and air. Eighty reported killed in air raids on Helsinki. Strategic islands seized. Cabinet resigns

DEC. 1.—New Government formed in Helsinki under Risto Ryti, Governor of Bank of Finland . . .

DEC. 5.—German plane brought down off East Coast. Halifax denounces "Russia's inexcusable act of aggression." Red planes bomb nickel towns and troops land near Arctic Petsamo

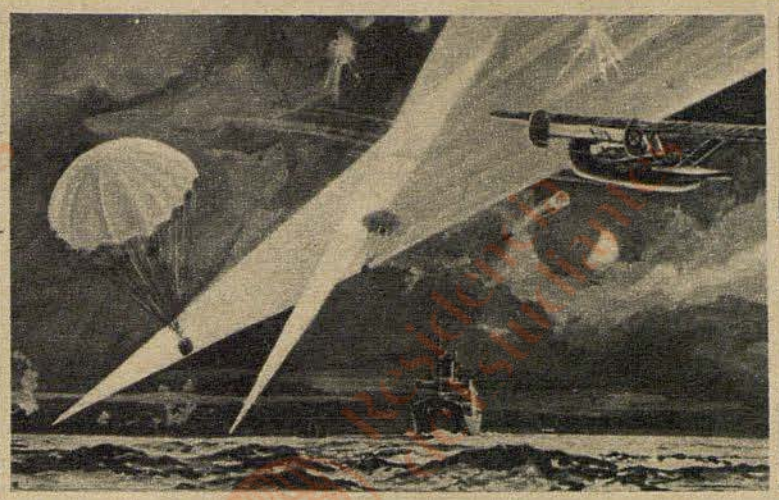


DEC. 6.—Moscow organ declares that Rumania must sign pact of mutual aid with Soviet Union, and Rumanian fears for Bessarabia are intensified. Gestapo rule in Poland carried out by savage terrorism

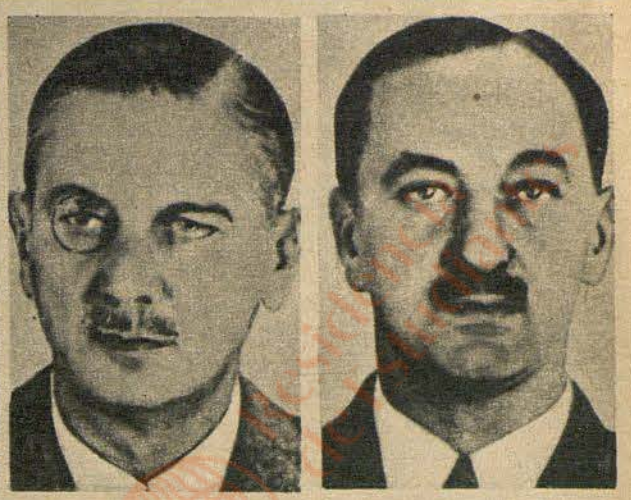
DEC. 7.—Swedish Foreign Minister Sandler hears crowd shout "Give help to Finland"

YOUR PICTURE-RECORD OF NOV.—DEC. EVENTS

NOV. 19.—Regimental cobbler on the Western Front. Five ships sunk by Nazi mines—one British, four neutrals



NOV. 20.—Nazi seaplanes drop magnetic mines by parachute in Thames estuary. South-east England gets first night air raid alarm ; raiders driven off. Rumania refuses to lower oil prices to Germany



NOV. 21.—Himmler announces Gestapo arrest of two Britons, Capt. Best (monocle) and Capt. Stevens, alleges their complicity in Munich bomb explosion. 5 Nazi planes down

NOV. 24.—King Carol of Rumania swears in new cabinet. Cruiser "Belfast" damaged by torpedo

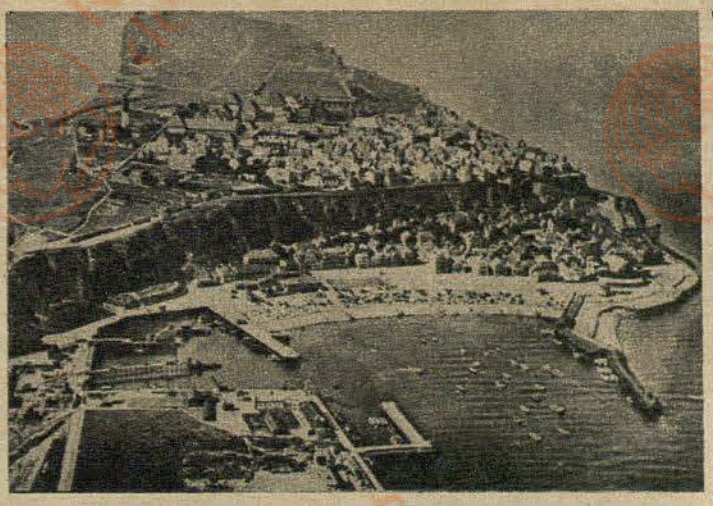
NOV. 25.—Halifax sees envoys of neutrals who protest at Britain's two-way blockade of Germany

NOV. 26.—Polish ship "Pilsudski" sunk ; picture shows survivors who attended funeral of their dead comrades. Russians say four Soviet soldiers killed by Finnish shell fire : sends note to Finland

NOV. 27.—Finland rejects Soviet note but is willing to negotiate a withdrawal from border zone

. . . and Soviet appoints "puppet" Government under Otto Kuusinen in occupied Finland

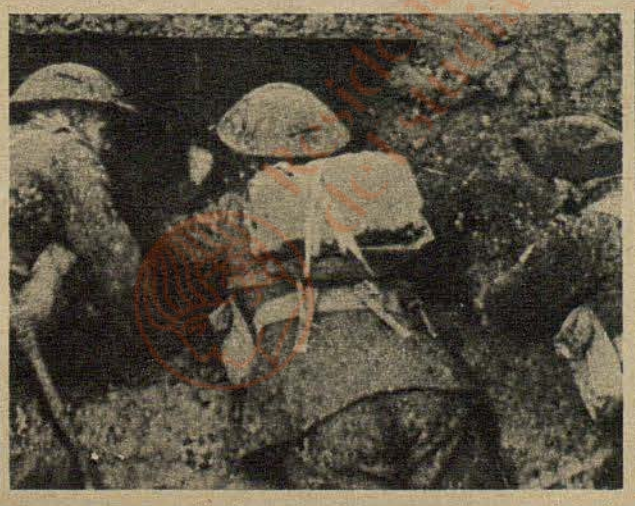
DEC. 2.—Field Marshal Mannerheim, Commander of the Finns, calls on troops to fight to the end



DEC. 3.—Nazi warships raided at Heligoland by R.A.F. : hits registered with heavy bombs. Three U-boats sank. Finns offer stout resistance on all fronts to invading Russians

DEC. 4.—The King goes by destroyer to see troops in France. Blockade of Nazi exports begins

DEC. 9.—Belgian students demonstrate their sympathy for Finnish cause. Finns repulse Soviet attacks in Karelia and drop leaflets on Leningrad



DEC. 10.—British troops take over active sector of the Maginot Line, and infantry for first time is in direct action with the enemy. Finns hold Russians on 200-mile front

DEC. 11.—League of Nations gives Stalin 24 hours in which to reply to its appeal to cease hostilities ; Finland's delegate M. Holsti asks for help against "our giant adversary"

THE OLD—

FOR centuries the cavalry was the greatest quick-striking force of armies. In a day when the internal combustion engine was undreamed of, the cavalry provided the mobility that often turned the tide of battle, and in attack this arm proved invaluable, for not only could it be used to break through infantry in line or in square, but by charging the enemy's guns, it could render his artillery, if not completely useless, at least very ineffective.

Today, siege warfare has rendered the cavalry immobile, for even if a break through heavily fortified lines can be achieved on a big scale, the condition of the terrain renders the use of mounted troops very problematical. Even so, the British cavalry is not a thing of the past for there are still three regiments of regulars and thirteen of yeomanry left in the army. And if ever open warfare develops, they will give a great account of themselves.

...AND THE NEW

No one would suggest that the tanks can hold a candle to the cavalry in matters of glamour and military spectacle, but then, they are concerned solely with hard, practical achievement. "Deeds, not looks," is their watchword. Still, there is no more thrilling sight of its kind than that of these mechanical pachyderms moving into an attack, demolishing or surmounting every obstacle in their path with an effortless ease that is almost terrifying.

Versatility is the keynote of the British tanks, that vary from light machines with a crew of three, to the enormously powerful monsters, heavily armoured and fitted with machine guns and cannon. As the spearhead of modern attack, the tank reigns supreme in speed, manœuvrability and striking force. Not only is it invaluable in attack, but its speed ensures swiftness of advance when a break through has been accomplished.

Two men, Briton and Nazi, face each other

FORBES

In battered felt hat, old pullover, tieless flannel shirt and grimy flannel "bags," bunch of weeds in one hand and sickle in the other, a man "potters about" in his garden during one of his infrequent visits to his home near Surrey's lovely Virginia Water.

He looks round at his apple trees. "Apple trees—ah, yes, that's one thing I *do* know something about," he confides to an unexpected visitor. With a friendly groan and grin, he adds: "I thought I'd dodge every one if I kept out here today."

The scene changes. A squarely built figure slightly above average height, with firm and determined step, paces the deck of his monster flagship "somewhere at sea."

He stops, speaks. Were it you he was addressing you would be powerfully impressed by a strong, almost gruff, slow, deliberate voice. The roll of r's-r's-r's denotes it as belonging to a Scot.

The face is bull-doggish, rugged, weather-tanned. The liberal lips are tightly drawn, the jaw is massive to the point of aggression.

From under heavy brows steely blue eyes, sharply-focused "gunner's eyes," search through you. A monocle dangles from the breast, but it is seldom worn—its presence there at all is an inexplicable idiosyncrasy on one so far removed from "aristocratic" affectation.

The figure moves under the shadow of a giant gun to the deck rail and those penetrating eyes sweep across the horizon of the challenging and decisive North Sea. Calmly, confidently.

Apples and guns.

Between these two extremes of portraiture of this man in private life and official action lies the enigma of a mind that Hitler's Navy Chief Raeder would give anything in the world to unravel.

It is the immensely silent and secretive mind of Admiral Sir Charles Morton Forbes, Commander-in-Chief of Britain's Home Fleet, and, as such, the Jellicoe of 1939.

For while there is no Grand Fleet today (there is, for strategic purposes, also a Mediterranean Fleet and a China Squadron), Forbes's is the main command. It stretches all over Home waters, including the North Sea, and into the U-boat infested Atlantic.

His has been the job of decimating Hitler's marauders and keeping our warship tonnage losses to what they have been—"less than one third of one per cent."

Navy's Best Gardener

He knows no boss but the Board of Admiralty. His fighting orders are supreme. Searches by naval aircraft and the R.A.F. to keep the seas clear are made after frequent consultation with him. At his disposal is every scrap of intelligence that becomes known to the C.-in-C., Air.

Night and day he has before him a very complete picture of the whereabouts of every warship and merchantman on the seas of his command. An hourly picture of enemy movements that give him ample warning of any striking forces approaching these shores, or of any raider slipping away or returning from ocean highways.

The navy considers him the best tactician of the day, as its most outstanding "big ship, big gun" man—though he himself much prefers to be described as "the navy's best gardener."

He hates talking "shop"—certainly outside naval circles. He is as close as an oyster.

"A sailor's job is to *do* his job and keep his mouth shut. What does he want with limelight and popularity?" sums up his attitude to all, high and low, who seek to pierce the sheet armour-plate that makes him the strong, silent man of mystery.

One may hazard a guess that even the Admiralty, in the light of modernized methods of the army and air force to popularize their services, would not be sorry to see a slight unbending of the silent tradition.

Only once in his forty-five years of naval life—he is now fifty-nine—has Forbes ever been reported to have expressed his views publicly on naval matters. Presiding, eighteen months ago, at a debate on the relative merits of speed versus gun-power in warships, he emphasized that "every warship must be a compromise."

That glimpse of his mind revealed him to possess more of the cold, measured balance of a Jellicoe than the impromptu brilliance of a Beatty.

"One day he'll be the greatest, most silent, member of the Silent Service," that revolutionary reorganizer of naval gunnery, "Jackie" Fisher, thirty or more years ago predicted of Forbes, then rapidly qualifying as a gunnery specialist and one of Fisher's "pet" pupils.

Young Forbes, son of a Ceylon tea planter, and with no influence in high places and no experience of "the playing fields of Eton," had entered the navy as a cadet of fourteen, and, trained in sail, became a "real sailor."

Dourness of the Scot evidently didn't dull his brightness, for in passing for lieutenant he gained five "firsts" and a prize of £10.

Somewhere, in the vaults under the Royal Humane Society's receiving station in Hyde Park, is recorded of him that in 1912 (the year he became a commander), C. M. Forbes was, with others, awarded the society's testimonial on vellum for rescuing seven men at sea off Portland.

He will hate to be reminded of it..

There is no touch of the showman anywhere in his make-up. Only once in his lifetime has anything he did ever bordered on the spectacular. That concerned a page in his private life that brought him a father's sorrow.

When rear-admiral in charge of the destroyer flotillas in the Mediterranean, his twenty-one-year-old only daughter of his first marriage, Audrey, was taken ill with pneumonia. She was staying with his second wife and their younger daughter at Malta.

Ideal Man Against Germany

Forbes received the message of the critical illness by radio. He was six hundred miles away. He was also devoted to his daughter. He immediately made a lightning dash for it in a destroyer. Arrived just too late.

It was the second time he had known the sadness of bereavement in his family. His first wife, a Miss Agnes Ewen, daughter of a Potter's Bar J.P., died in 1915 in the thick of the war at about the time her husband was promoted to be Jellicoe's Flag Commander and gunnery staff officer.

His present wife, a charming Swedish lady, who before their marriage in 1921 was Miss Marie Louise Berndtson, of Stockholm, keeps home for him at Cawsand Place, Wentworth, Virginia Water. She is a miracle of devoted, domestic patience. Seldom does she enjoy the companionship of the C.-in-C. with a passion for the simple delights of an English country home, its garden and its apple trees. Not long ago his absence caused him to give up his town house.

Throughout the Abyssinian and Spanish wars he was away for long stretches of months if not years at a time when he commanded the First Battle Squadron of the Mediterranean Fleet, and was the fleet's second in command under the late Admiral Sir Roger Backhouse.

His good lady and his garden have seen little more of him since then. He was already marked down for the exalted position of C.-in-C. of the Fleet which in the event of war with Germany would become predominant and approximate in importance to Jellicoe's Grand Fleet of the last war.

Twice previously Forbes had stepped into Backhouse's shoes. In April, 1938, he succeeded him as supreme commander of the Home Fleet.

It was a great and popular tribute to the boy of scanty education who joined the navy at fourteen, who, being the son of an obscure tea planter, had no influential "uncles" at the Admiralty to push him on, who by dint of his dour Scottish determination had risen to fulfil Fisher's prophecy that one day he would become "the greatest, most silent, member of the Silent Service."

The Man to Do It

It also fulfilled the promise held out for him after Jutland, the greatest naval battle since Trafalgar, when as Jellicoe's Flag Commander and gunnery staff officer, that admiral wrote of him:—

"Forbes plotted the movements of the two fleets with rapidity and accuracy as reports were received. He always afforded me great assistance."

So that is Forbes. "He is the ideal man for a war with Germany," a famous admiral told me.

Scottish caution that makes him measure well his chances, the grim grit of the bulldog breed, the dour silence that speaks in action.

In Churchillian phrase "the struggle at sea—and it has often proved decisive in the end—will be long and unrelenting. But in the end we shall break their hearts."

Forbes, tonnage-saver and U-boat slayer, present last time when the German Fleet sank in Scapa Flow, is the man who will do it.

CASHEL BUTTON

★

At a glass-topped desk in a huge carpeted room of the German Admiralty building on a Berlin canal, sits a slightly-built, grey-haired man, who is responsible for the indiscriminate laying of magnetic mines in British and neutral waters and for the murder on the high seas of innocent merchant seamen and neutral women and children.

He is Admiral Erich Raeder, "First Lord" of the German Fleet, a man whose years to come will be haunted by the dying shrieks of drowning women and children and the phantom forms of frozen seamen, callously set adrift in mid-Atlantic by Nazi U-boat commanders.

To Erich Raeder is laid the charge of torpedoing the *Athenia* in the first days of the Second World War with its massacre of women and children. To his charge is laid the disregard of every international law aimed at humanizing warfare.

He has, in the language of the navy today, turned from naval officer to pirate. He has exchanged the imperial German flag for the skull and crossbones implied in the Nazi swastika.

His clumsy attempts to conceal his guilt by propaganda have earned him the scorn of the Allies and neutrals alike.

It was Admiral Raeder who sent the mysterious message to the United States a few weeks ago, warning them that the U.S. liner *Iroquois* would be sunk "by a repetition of the circumstances in which the *Athenia* was sunk."

In America, such clumsiness had the reception it

across the grey North Sea: Here are their stories

RAEDER

deserved, but the British Admiralty's reply was more to the point. It said:

"The fact that such a suggestion could be made by the German Government enables us once again to realize and measure the criminal mentality of the Nazi party leaders. It is surprising, however, that an officer of the former Imperial German Navy, like Admiral Raeder, should demean his uniform by lending himself to such baseness."

Shortly before the outbreak of this war, Admiral Raeder told a Dutch newspaper correspondent that Germany would not undertake unrestricted submarine warfare.

Germany, he added, would spare neutral trade as much as possible. The laying of minefields would be announced according to the Hague Convention of 1907.

The words were hardly out of his mouth before the torpedoing of merchant ships without warning became a daily occurrence. The magnetic mines which have converted the North Sea into a floating hell for peaceful neutral ships, were laid without warning by aeroplanes and submarines acting on Admiral Raeder's instructions.

World Pirate No. 1

He had not even the courage of his convictions, because it was not until the mines had been proved to be of German origin that Admiral Raeder's press department boastfully confirmed the fact and gloried in the death of hundreds of innocent civilians.

This "World Pirate No. 1" does not convey the impression of a cut-throat. His uniform is immaculate. His hair brushed sleekly back. One almost imagines to discern a sense of humour in his somewhat evasive chin and broad nostrils.

He has all the characteristics of that docile German type which has allowed Hitler to get where he is, and but for the braid on Raeder's uniform, one might pass him in the streets of Berlin without a second glance.

But behind Admiral Raeder's inoffensive appearance is a diabolical hatred of Britain. He has obtained promotion under the Nazis because of this hatred and has kept his job because he has always been willing to acquiesce in and execute the schemes thought out by Hitler's unscrupulous brain and equally unscrupulous advisers.

Where terrorism is concerned, Admiral Raeder is a "yes man," and when even the Germans ask how this by no means brilliant officer has reached his present eminence, the answer is in those two quoted words.

Admiral Raeder's degeneration from honourable naval officer to cynical pirate has been gradual. Had he entered the German Navy after the Great War instead of before it, his career would have been very different.

But Raeder saw the light of this world in the comfortable home of his father, a well-to-do citizen of Wandsbeck, near Hamburg, sixty-three years ago, at a period when the victories gained by the Prussian armies over the French on land were beginning to inspire dreams of even greater victories at sea.

When Raeder, as a boy of eighteen, with the slightest trace of down on his upper lip, entered the military academy at Kiel, Germany was already building her battleships which were to drive the British from the seas, and there was a great shortage of naval officers.

So Raeder got swift promotion, and when the bearded Admiral von Tirpitz visited the Kiel Naval Academy, Raeder was presented to him as a promising officer. Von Tirpitz showed his gratification by putting young Raeder in charge of editing two naval magazines—a training in propaganda which Raeder probably regrets was not more thorough.

Those were the halcyon days for young German naval officers.

Bitter Awakening

Wine flowed freely at social gatherings, at which German naval invincibility was loudly proclaimed. Smart uniforms, pretty women and arrogant boasts were features of German naval life.

When shortly before the Great War, Captain Raeder donned a white uniform and was appointed navigation officer on the yacht *Hohenzollern* of the All Highest, Kaiser Wilhelm, the world was rosy indeed.

The awakening was, by contrast, all the more bitter. War clouds loomed on the horizon. The luxurious *Hohenzollern* went out of commission for social purposes and Raeder found himself appointed chief-of-staff to Vice-Admiral Hipper in the battle cruiser *Seydlitz*.

Hipper and Captain Erich Raeder were men of the same mentality. Like other German naval commanders, they thought that Germany was bound to win the war, and therefore any means were justified to bring it to a speedy and successful conclusion.

December 16, 1914, found thirty-eight years old Captain Raeder standing beside Hipper on the bridge of the *Seydlitz*, noting with satisfaction the havoc wrought by 1,500 heavy calibre shells pumped into the defenceless town of Hartlepool. There were thirty women and fifteen children among the hundred and fifty fatal casualities of that raid, not counting the four hundred injured, and Captain Erich Raeder preened himself smartly on his return as he reported the satisfactory blowing up of the railway station, waterworks and other public buildings.

So successful was the raid, in his opinion, that just over a month later, he again put to sea with Vice-Admiral Hipper. This time he was not so fortunate. Before they could carry out their "cut and run" bombardment, they were sighted by British light cruisers. The German armoured cruiser *Bluecher* was torpedoed. Captain Raeder was thrown flat on his back as a shell from Admiral Beatty's flagship, the *Lion*, killed 168 men in the turret of the *Seydlitz*.

It was all he could do to get the *Seydlitz* back to the protecting minefields and U-boats around Heligoland.

Between frequent visits to Berlin from Kiel, Captain Erich Raeder did a lot of hard thinking about Germany's invincibility in the next few months.

But it was not until the Battle of Jutland that Captain Raeder finally abandoned open combat for the methods of a pirate. In that battle he was on board the *Lutzow*, which was so badly damaged by shells from H.M.S. *Invincible*, that 7,000 tons of water entered her hold and she had to be abandoned.

The sequel of Germany's Jutland defeat was the outbreak of unrestricted U-boat warfare, which culminated in the ignominious surrender of the German High Seas Fleet.

For a time Captain Erich Raeder sought refuge for his vanished dreams in philosophy. Other German officers who survived the collapse found it pleasant to discuss with him the theories of Plato, Socrates and others, but even while he was addressing his fellow officers in the naval station at Kiel, Captain Erich Raeder was filled with desire to be revenged on Britain.

Disregard of the pledged word was one of the first weapons in his armoury. As commander of the cruiser *Koeln* in the early post-war years, he found ample opportunity for building up a secret naval reserve in defiance of the Versailles Treaty, which had been accepted by the German Government.

Out-of-work naval officers, in search of jobs, found Erich Raeder a man who would listen to them. The rich Junker class, with which he had connexions, openly connived at his activities.

When the German Social Democrats decried the building of armoured cruisers, Erich Raeder, now an Admiral, wrote bitter articles in the Press, calling them "traitors" and "scum." He also wrote two books, *Der Krieg zur See*, expressing his unbounded admiration for the piratical exploits of Germany's armed raiders.

His acceptance of piracy as the only successful method of sea warfare for Germany was now complete. He went to Berlin and in the Admiralty Building on the Tirpitz Ufer gloated over the plans for Germany's "pocket battleships," super-raiders able to "run away from anything they didn't want to meet and destroy any ship which caught them."

Not until Herr Hitler came to power, however, could his pirate dreams be realized. Hitler found in Admiral Raeder a man after his own heart, willing to give his word and break it, a believer in the ruthless use of force to crush all opposition, a cynic who believed in the legality of every method which would ensure German domination of the world.

"My Fuehrer," he exclaimed dramatically to Hitler, "You have led us and the German Navy from inglorious darkness to the dawn of a brighter future."

Doomed Admiral

While secretly arming against Britain, he knew the Nazi art of dissimulating his designs by flattering words.

"Wherever we crossed swords with the English Fleet in open battle, we came to know and respect the foe related to us by blood and ideals and through glorious tradition," he declared in June, 1936.

At the same time, his house in Berlin's fashionable Charlottenburg suburb was the rendezvous of German naval officers from Spain, who had been informing themselves of the preparedness of Gibraltar and the state of Britain's Mediterranean forces.

The "glorious" bombardment of innocent Almeria because of an unproven attempt to attack a German warship was the crowning exploit of his peace time career. "Nobody," declared Admiral Raeder sternly, "should believe our weapons are blunt. Germany strikes swiftly and hard."

Hundreds of civilians were killed in the bombardment of Almeria. This insipid-looking Admiral would no doubt have liked to carry it out himself. It was so similar to the Hartlepool bombardment in 1914, except that the bombarding warship had this time no avenging Beatty to fear.

Admiral Raeder must have been still more proud of the sinking of the *Athenia*, however, for after denying that a Nazi U-boat was responsible, he is reported to have decorated the commander of the attacking U-boat with the Iron Cross.

Now Admiral Raeder listens while his Nazi bosses boast that the magnetic mine has made Germany "master of the seas."

But the words ring hollow in his ears. He recalls perhaps a statement he made himself some years ago.

"War against a naval power will be decided at sea. It is the battleship, and the battleship alone which is able to conquer and defend supremacy at sea."

It is precisely in the category of battleships that Germany is hopelessly deficient.

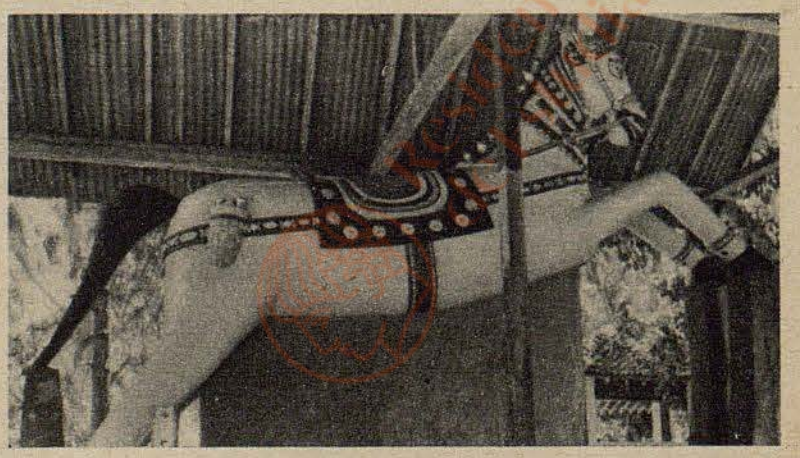
Retribution is on its way. As Mr. Winston Churchill said: "We shall break the Nazis' hearts," and one heart among them will be that of Admiral Erich Raeder, the naval officer who became a pirate.

HARRY GREGSON

Coconuts grow in profusion on the island, and it is a common sight to see native carts creaking down the tree-lined roads, heading for some neighbouring river where they will be taken downstream to Colombo. Then the drivers lead their buffaloes into the water for a well-earned bath

Here is something DIFFERENT

Not one dugout, gas mask, A.R.P. post or auxilliary fire station appears in these pictures. For they were taken in Ceylon, where no such inflictions mar the sunshine and rich beauty of an island paradise



Not a child's toy but an object of veneration. This wooden horse standing at the entrance to a temple commemorates the great journey Buddha made from Nepal to Delhi on a white steed

Glittering head-dresses crown the devil dancers when they perform one of their ceremonial rites in some forest clearing. On chest and back is worn a cloth on which are embroidered bright beads in amazingly intricate patterns, while an ornate belt fastens the full, white skirt that reaches to their bare feet. They present a barbaric picture, but they are anything but fierce and possess a friendly disposition at variance with the wildness of their dancing

Photocrime

by MILESON HORTON

1 "Good morning, sir," said Sergeant Carter to Inspector Hunt. "Nothing's been touched. She scribbled 'Good-bye' on that sheet of paper and drank the poison. Her husband slept at his club in London last night; they'd had a row over his association with a young girl"

2 Harvey was terribly upset. "My God, inspector," he said, brokenly. "This is awful. I only discovered it when I came back this morning. A friend came round last night to discuss a new play we were to produce. As we were rehearsing a scene my wife entered the room"

3 "She wouldn't listen to any explanation," he continued. "She went for Edith and tried to throttle her. I managed to drag her off, and Edith left. After telling my wife I was through with her, I cleared out and went to my club. But I didn't really mean to break with her"

4 Harvey read and signed his statement. Hunt returned to the lounge. There was no sign of disorder. Doctor Scott having examined the body, looked at the clock and declared that Mrs. Harvey had died twelve or thirteen hours previously. Hunt nodded, glanced at the bureau

5 Later Inspector Hunt and Sergeant Carter called at several houses in the road making careful inquiries from the householders. Although a number of the people had passed the Harveys' house during the previous evening nobody seemed to have heard or seen anything suspicious. One witness whom they questioned stated: "I passed Mr. Harvey's house two or three times between eight and eleven o'clock last night, but noticed nothing unusual"

Hunt turned to Carter. "The lounge faces the roadway," he said, slowly. "That woman was murdered!"

+

The clue to Inspector Hunt's deduction was in the lounge. If you can't see it, turn to page 38.

Something about the pose of the man on the floor convinced Jim that he was dead. He said, the words sounding hard in the utter stillness: "Why did you kill him?"

BERMUDA MURDER

A Two-part Thriller

by

MIGNON G. EBERHART

ILLUSTRATED BY SINCLAIR CALOW

THE hotel lay in rambling, irregular levels against a hillside and above a blue lagoon. The Bermuda sun was about to sink, tranquil and rosy after its blazing day, and the Bermuda moon was about to rise, huge and white, and it was the quiet hour between daylight and night.

It was hot, for it was August. Back of the hotel and around the hill behind it wound a narrow, white road along which carriages and bicycles took their patient way to Hamilton or to St. George. The tramway was some miles from the hotel, which increased its inaccessibility and remoteness from all things urban.

It was a substantial, well-built, old hotel, so much remodelled and added on to that its present owner and manager had had some difficulty, at first, finding his own way among its winding corridors and unexpected changes in level.

That was James Fanfare Smith, and he sat, as he always did at sunset, on the strip of lawn above the lagoon, drank barley water, and pretended he did not know that light footsteps, presumably feminine, had crossed the veranda and the strip of lawn and brought up at the white balustrade above the lagoon not far from him.

For Jim was the victim of his own efficiency; after a few years of struggle his hotel had become inordinately successful. It was with some dismay that he found he had got the lion by the tail and couldn't let go.

He became more and more choice about the guests he accepted. He gave them excellent rooms and a gourmet's cuisine and boosted his prices. He could not stop being a gracious and friendly host, and the popularity of his hotel only increased.

He was a tall man, youngish, and, now that he could afford to be, was very lazy. He had dark hair and a brown face which wore, as a rule, an extremely bland and disingenuous expression. He had light, clear blue eyes which were extraordinarily discerning but by habit and nature friendly.

He wore a small, clipped black moustache and affected tropical and informal attire—usually a white linen jacket and, perhaps, a nonchalant bright scarf tucked in the neck of his coat.

He affected this mode because it was cool and comfortable and because in this, as in many other things, he had a shrewd eye for effect. It went with the tropical surroundings—the heat, the planter's punches he always had waiting for arriving guests, the blazing suns and opal seas.

He had not yet heard departing footsteps. He permitted a thin, blue slit to show beneath his heavy upper eyelids.

A girl with smooth dark hair was standing at the balustrade a few feet away, looking out to the purpling sea beyond the lagoon opening. She wore a tailored shirt and shorts, and her bare, lightly tanned legs were slender. The blue slit below Jim's eyelids vanished.

If her legs were good they were no better than hundreds that had marched through his lobby during the past five years. He'd been polite to a great many lady guests in shorts. He had, however, a strong sense of taste and propriety and could be, if it became necessary, a master of gentle renunciation, gently implied.

Twice a week during at least eight months in the year he went conscientiously into Hamilton to wave farewells to departing guests from the balcony of the Twenty-One Club and perhaps, now and then, to ignore at the safe distance from the rails of departing boats sundry handkerchiefs pressed to eyes.

Absently he lifted the barley water to his lips, and the girl must have perceived the slight motion, for she came nearer. He screwed his eyes shut, feeling that this one hour out of the day (when, as a rule, all his guests were dressing for dinner) belonged to him. It made no difference. She said in an extraordinarily lovely voice: "You are Mr. Smith?"

He opened his eyes and got to his feet, and in the instant of rising searched his memory for the names of guests who had arrived that day. There had been two boats, one from England and one from New York, and he had met both, but in the confusion some of the guests had escaped him.

He granted at once that if he had seen this girl before he would have remembered her. It was his habit to remember, but no one could forget this particular face. For it was, James Fanfare Smith was obliged to admit even over his prejudices, lovely.

She had large, deep grey eyes, extraordinarily luminous, and a slender, beautifully planed face and sensitive, crimson lips which, when she smiled as she was now doing, were very sweet and gay. She said again: "You *are* Mr. Smith?"

What was the girl's name? He made a small and almost imperceptible gesture with his left hand, a gesture which a black boy, in beige porter's uniform, standing at the entrance to the hotel some two hundred feet away, nevertheless perceived and understood.

"Won't you join me?" he said to the girl.

"No, thank you. The boy at the desk told me I couldn't have a key."

"A key—oh, you mean a key!" Her sweet mouth and his own failure to select her special card in the index his mind usually carried, disconcerted him a little.

"Yes, a key. To our rooms, you know. I want a key."

"You—but——" The black boy reached his elbow. He said: "Excuse me——" and bent his ear.

Along with other qualities of the Bermuda scene which James Fanfare

(*please turn over*)

Bermuda Murder—continued

Smith had perceived, adopted, and successfully utilized was the grape vine telegraph, which in its accuracy and incredible swiftness is peculiarly Bermuda's own.

He had, so to speak, organized it; the natural aptitude of his staff had been trained and improved upon. He ran his hotel by it, as a matter of fact, for every detail, every small complaint, every idiosyncrasy, every desire, was thus reported to him.

He knew what a guest had for breakfast and he knew it if one quarrelled with his wife. There were a great many other things he knew: if a guest closed his door at midnight and pulled down the shades and sneezed, Jim was quite likely to ask that guest, the next morning, how his cold was.

The black boy murmured. His words were altogether indistinguishable twelve inches away but perfectly clear to Mr. Smith's attentive ear. That, too, had been carefully worked out, and thus were behind-the-scene emergencies as well as relevant and irrelevant news items reported. The black boy said in the habitual mixture of good English and dialect of the Bermuda negro:—

"Wife of Mr. Peter Blake. Rich. Suite 21. Lots of baggage, foreign labels. Honeymoon. Lawyer man Mr. Pusey, friend. Arrive on New York boat to meet Mr. Blake. All come this morning. Orders, boss?"

"Table 3. Tell the head waiter to serve them my own Napoleon brandy after dinner with my compliments. That's all."

His words, too, had been completely unintelligible to the girl (Mrs. Peter Blake, on her honeymoon with her rich husband), who, now, was sitting on the balustrade and had turned a rather chilly and very pretty profile towards him. Her slender figure was silhouette against the blue water of the lagoon. All around them the tropic night was gently, softly, and a little threateningly drawing closer.

The black boy vanished. James Fanfare Smith said, frowning a little: "We don't have keys. We never lock doors. Our boys are honest. There's no crime in Bermuda. The only objects ever —removed—are flashlights. They are irresistible, because of bicycle riding at night.

But anything else—money, jewellery, clothing—is perfectly safe. However, if you really feel you want a key——"

"I do want a key. It isn't a flashlight."

"He said: "Oh, very well. I'll send one up to you at once. Now, won't you have a cocktail——?"

"No, thank you. I'll expect the key." She gave a pleasant but brief little nod and walked away.

It left him feeling a little flat. His advice was not, as a rule, flouted nor his conversation brought coolly to a close. However, the silence her departure left was soothing.

He sat again relaxed, sipping from the tall glass. Behind him in the far-flung wings of the hotel, lights appeared; his guests were changing for dinner. A night bird stirred somewhere and cried eerily. Faint and far away along the road beyond the hotel, a black boy strolled and touched a guitar softly.

James Fanfare Smith closed his eyes and let the deep, mysterious night enfold him.

When he roused and entered the hotel at last, guests had already filled the bar with the flutter of voices and women's gowns, the light clash of glass and ice and the scent of cigarettes and perfumes. Men were immaculate, if informal, in white silk or linen jackets; women showed smooth, brown shoulders and arms above bright chiffons and satins.

He stopped at the desk. One of the two desk clerks (both college boys well content with their summer's jobs) looked up brightly. "Yes, sir?"

"Find a key for Mr. Blake's suite. Send up a skeleton key if you can't find the key that belongs to that number."

"Yes, sir—— Say, Mr. Smith, did you know he's the Peter Blake who invented and manufactures gold-processing equipment and machinery? He won't sell the equipment; leases it. What an income that man must have!"

"Has the fellow in 18 got over his drunk?"

The boy's eyebrows went up. "Nine Tom Collinses went to his room this afternoon. By actual count; it's on the bar list."

"Don't let him come into the dining-room."

"No, sir. But he does carry it well. He's done nothing but order up drinks for the last four days; ever since he arrived, in fact. And I've not seen him drunk. Even his eyes are clear."

"Don't let him bother anybody. By the way, what's his name?"

"James Smith. The same as yours, you know, sir."

"It's not," said James Fanfare Smith, a little haughtily, "an uncommon name. We'd better ship him home. Has he got money?"

"Yes," the the boy, economically; "fifteen hundred or more in the safe."

"Well—we'd better get him out before he sobers up."

"Yes, *sir*."

James Fanfare Smith went to his own rooms. Below and around him the hotel accommodated itself to the night. Out in the gardens tables were laid, and candles in hurricane glasses were lighted upon them. A native orchestra aligned itself under a canopy and began to play a rumba with a soft, insistent beat.

A great, yellow moon outlined palms and hibiscus in deep black and shone goldenly upon the water and upon the garden. The whole was curiously theatrical, as if the stage were set for some mysterious, secret drama. As, indeed, it was, though not even the actors knew it.

Later there was dancing under the rising golden moon. Jim, joining his guests, did not see or think of the Blake party. He danced with a pretty, jewelled English woman. He ordered a special dessert—*crêpes suzette* rolled with a light hand—for a stockbroker from New York. He paused to chat with a rich cattleman from the Argentine and his fat, worldly wife, and to order for them, with his compliments, a light, fragrant claret which bore a label: "Laid down 1842. Bottled 1929 for James Fanfare Smith, Esq."

By one o'clock the hotel was quiet. Night became deeper and the moon passed its height and began to descend, and the shadows of tall cacti here and there about the grounds made sprawled, stark arms across silvery lawn. Crickets droned; now and then a horse trudged monotonously along the road.

By two o'clock the hotel slept, peacefully one would have said. Very quietly, at any rate, with its quota of human passions, human desires, human good and evil, lulled and slumbering.

Suite 21 was quiet, too; it opened upon the long terrace that ran along the second-floor length of the narrow southern wing, and it was the finest suite in the hotel. But in one of its two bedrooms Lana Blake, the girl with smooth, dark hair, lay awake. Oddly, somewhere in the vague and cloudy nimbus of her thoughts hovered the tall figure of James Fanfare Smith . . .

The moon went down at last.

Morning came, bright, tranquil, sunny, and hot, with the water aquamarine. Mr. Smith, refreshed by the night, automatically set about making his guests comfortable and went to pay his respects to Mr. Peter Blake. That was at exactly ten-thirty. Breakfast for two, the elevator boy told him, had gone to Suite 21 some time ago and the trays had come down again.

"Eighteen," continued the black boy audibly (since only his employer was in the elevator), "had black coffee and whisky. Second floor, sir." He opened the elevator door. And opened it upon a very curious scene.

Two corridors branched from the elevator well; one to the left into the main and northern section of the building, and one to the right, which bisected the southern wing. There were two stairways in the main part of the hotel, but none for the south wing; thus, the instant the elevator door was opened Jim had a full and complete view of the south-wing corridor.

And a porter at that very instant plunged from a doorway along it and ran heavily towards the elevator, and beside the elevator stood a buxom coloured maid. She had two stacks of sheets in her arms and she was perfectly rigid with her face ashen, her eyes bulging.

The porter all but fell upon Jim, and gibbered: "Murder! Boss! Murder!"

The corridor behind him was empty; Jim was for ever after sure of that.

The maid screamed and dropped the sheets.

"What do you mean? Stop that noise, you! Now then, what's all this?"

"He shouted 'Murder! Help!' In there——" The black boy's hands were shaking as he gestured down the corridor behind him. The elevator boy gaped over Jim's shoulder. The maid sat down on the floor amid tumbled sheets.

Jim grasped the porter's shoulder. "Not so much noise. Who? Where?" The porter choked. "The room hummed. Then he yelled 'Help—Murder——' I think he'm dead." Under the blazing blue eyes of his employer he achieved an instant lucidity. "The man in 21," he gurgled.

All of them followed Jim down the corridor. He was conscious of their presence behind him as he opened the door of the living-room of Suite 21. "You stay here," he ordered the elevator boy. "Watch the corridor."

He didn't knock, and the room was empty and the door opposite, which led upon the long terrace, was open. The porter gasped: "In there," and Jim ran across the room towards the bedroom which the porter's shaking, purple hand indicated. Ran across and stopped dead in the doorway.

For the porter was right. A man lay face down upon the floor, and there was red all across the back of the dressing gown he wore and upon the floor, and his head was twisted at an odd angle. And the girl—Mrs. Peter Blake—in pyjamas, with her dark hair dishevelled, knelt beside him and held something in her hands and looked up at Jim. She didn't say anything; just looked at him dazedly, and the thing in her white hands was a knife.

The knife was long, slender and oddly domestic in appearance; it was a plain kitchen knife with a wooden handle, and its nine-inch blade was wet. The girl's white hands were stained.

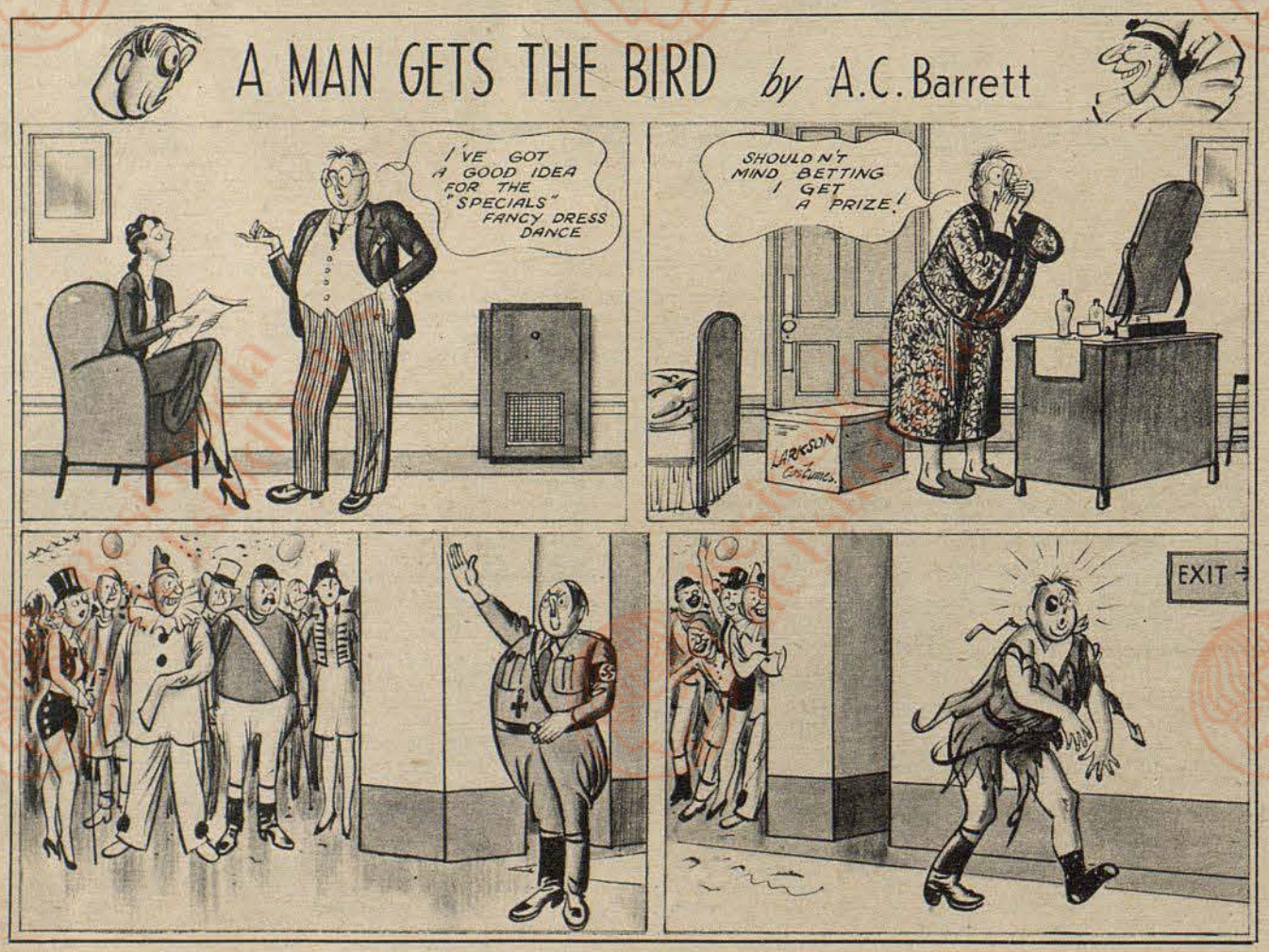
The porter breathed heavily over Jim's shoulder. Something about the pose of the man on the floor convinced Jim that he was dead.

He said, the words sounding harsh in that utter stillness: "Why did you kill him?"

He addressed the girl, Lana Blake. She did not appear to realize it; her face was perfectly white and her dark grey eyes were enormous and without expression.

Jim stepped nearer her, bent and took the knife out of her hands, and laid it on the table. There was a red smear on the sleeve of her lounging pyjamas. He said: "Get up."

She had given up the knife without question, and now, stumbling a little, got



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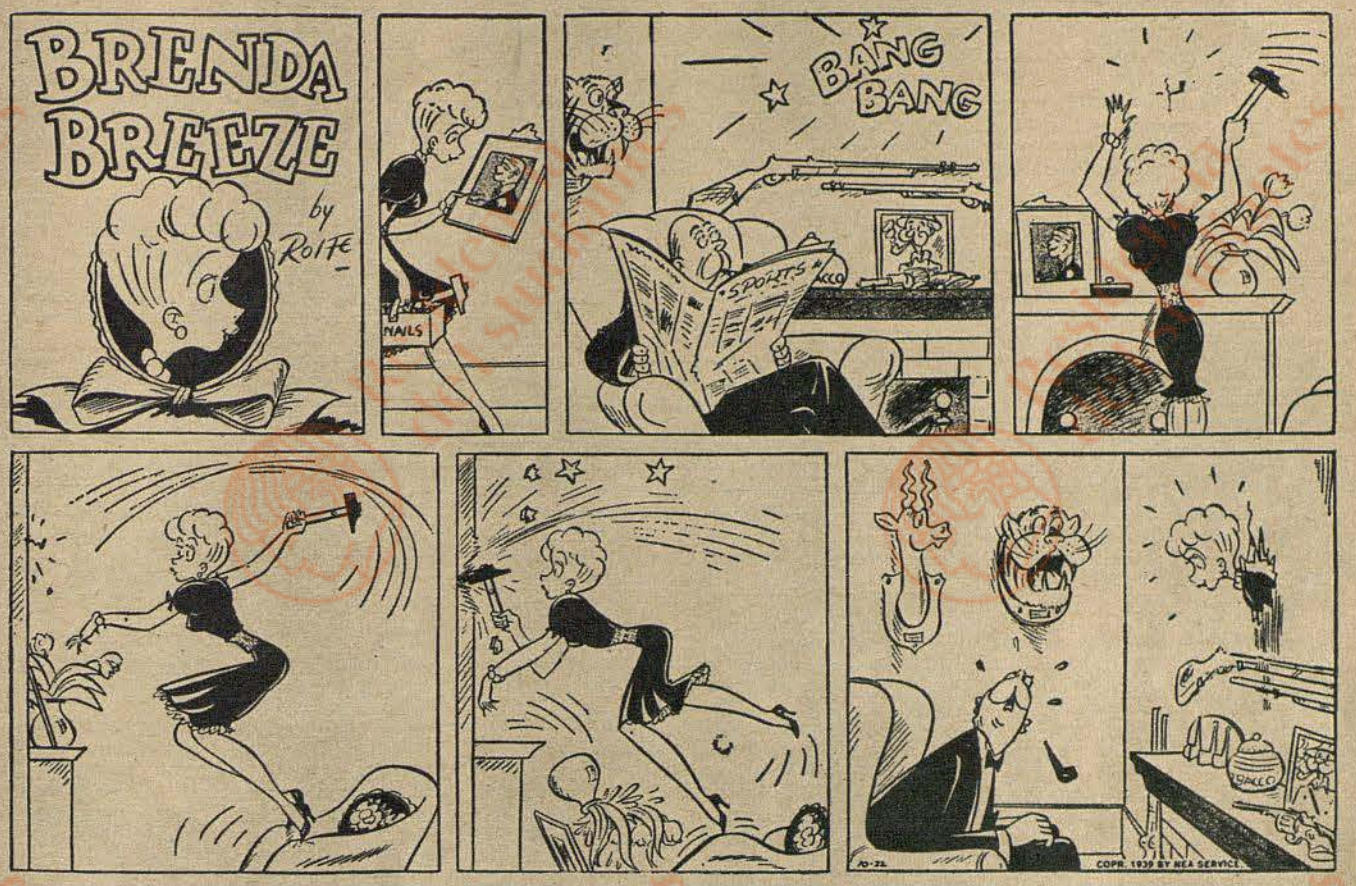


to her feet and stood there looking down. Jim said: "Louise."

The maid, still ashen and open-mouthed, stepped forward.

"Put a sheet over him. No, wait.

The maid waited, arrested in motion; they all waited while Jim, steeling himself to the task, knelt beside the man on the floor. No one had moved. He said: "He's dead. There's not a flicker of a pulse or breath—— All right, Louise."

The maid skirted the body cautiously and took a sheet from the bed nearby and laid it shrinkingly across the murdered man.

Jim looked at the girl. "I've got to call the police, you know."

She still did not speak; did not, indeed, appear to hear him. And he heard himself saying again, still harshly: "Why did you kill him?"

At last she looked up at him. Her eyes had lost their dazed, blank look and were focused upon him. "What—what did you say?"

"I said, why did you kill him?"

"Kill him! Kill *him*? I didn't kill him. I—— "

Jim's face tightened. His eyes were bright and clear and had hard, black pupils. He said: "If you didn't kill him, who did?"

She put out her hands in a helpless gesture. "I don't know! I don't know what could have happened. I—he was just there, you see. When I came in. I don't know—— "

"Madam, you had the knife in your hands when I entered the room."

"But I—why, yes, of course. I—— " She struggled to get the words out. "I had to take it out. He—I didn't think he was dead. Of course, I tried to pull it out and——" She stopped and said: "How could it have happened? He——"

"You claim you didn't kill him, then?"

"But I didn't kill him. I didn't! You are wicked—cruel—you——!"

"Don't scream." He motioned to Luzo, the porter. Together, swiftly they searched the suite. There was no one. It took perhaps sixty seconds to make sure of that. They looked everywhere. The girl was still standing rigid, as if frozen, when he returned to her. "There is no one else in the suite," he said.

"I tell you I didn't—I don't know who—there was nobody—he had no enemies. I had to take the knife—— " She was trembling and incoherent. Her voice all at once became faint. "I couldn't have murdered—— " she whispered, and swayed.

Jim caught her in his arms. She didn't faint, but she was perfectly limp and nerveless against him and startlingly white. He said to Louise: "Help me. Get water. I'll put her on the bed in the other bedroom."

The girl walked, stumbling and supported by his arm, across the living-room and into her own bedroom. He put her on the bed and took the pillow from under her head and put it under her feet. Her eyes were still open and very dark and followed him in an anguish of appeal as he went to the door again.

He said: "Louise will stay with you. I'll call the police."

In the living-room the porter, Luzo, waited, and outside in the hall the elevator boy stood against the door. He stepped quickly aside when Jim opened the door. His eyes were popping with excitement. Jim glanced along the row of closed doors on a line with Suite 21.

"Has any one come into the hall?"

"No, sir."

"All right. Let me know if any one comes out, and stay here and keep your mouth shut if anybody inquires. If anything—frightens you—shout."

"Yes, boss."

In the living-room of 21 again, Jim took the telephone. The desk clerk answered at once, in a polite voice.

"Get the police at Hamilton. Tell them there's been an accident. Don't let any one hear you."

He could hear the boy's excited gasp: "Yes, sir."

"Be quick about it—— Oh, yes. Put Mark on the elevator." He put down the instrument sharply.

"Now then, Luzo, what about it? Quick. Exactly what happened?"

With a sheet properly over the body and the bedroom door closed upon it, the porter was more lucid. Still, it took ten minutes to get the story straight, brief though it was. For Luzo had been in the living-room of the suite when sounds of voices in the next room attracted his attention.

"What were you doing in this room?"

"The umbrella, sir. The one for the terrace. I was going to put it out for the day. I knocked on the door of this room, and as no one answered I knocked again and then entered. It is the only door upon the terrace."

"Was any one in here when you came in?"

"No, sir, and the bedroom doors were closed. So I went quietly across the room and then I heard voices in the bedroom. Loud voices. Quarrelling."

"Who was it?"

"I don't know, boss."

"Did you hear words?"

"No, sir, not until the yelled 'Murder' and 'Help.' No words, just voices and a queer sound, too, sir. The room " —he paused, searched for a word, did not find it, and concluded with an effect of inadequacy—"hummed."

"The room hummed!" Jim frowned. "You said that before. What on earth do you mean?"

The porter made a helpless gesture with his hands. "I don't know, boss, sir. Just a—a humming sound. Like it was hollow."

"But can't you——? " Jim paused. The porter was evidently perplexed and evidently had done his best at what, in all probability, was an unimportant bit of description. "What did you do then?"

"I heard it, boss. I heard a sort of yell—a scream maybe it was, but not very loud. But he screamed 'Help' and 'Murder' and then stopped as if—as if he'd choked or something. It wasn't very loud, any of it. I ran to tell you."

"Why didn't you go into the bedroom?"

Luzo looked frightened. "I—I thought I'd better tell you, sir. The scream sounded—sounded bad, sir. Dreadful. I—— " He stopped and passed his hands across his glistening black forehead. "It sounded like death."

"You didn't see any one go into or come from the bedroom?"

"No, sir. There was only the voices."

"Men's voices?"

"Oh, yes, sir. Men's. Low and deep. And then the room hummed—— "

"Listen. Stop talking about the room humming. Stay with facts. Did you hear a woman's voice in there, too?"

Luzo was uncertain; he said doubtfully he wasn't sure.

"But you are sure you heard men's voices."

"Yes, sir."

"How many?"

"Two, at least."

Jim took a turn up and down the room. The door upon the terrace was open and outside soft morning sunlight made a light pattern on the old stone floor. The woman had killed him, despite her white, stunned look, or the murderer had simply walked out of that door while the porter had run to find help, and vanished.

But it would have been, Jim thought suddenly, a very natural thing to withdraw that knife. It would be your first, instinctive action, if you came upon a scene—a man dying with a knife in his back. If you could summon the courage to do it.

The porter waited. Jim said: "All right. Stand at that door. On the inside of the room. Don't stir from it and don't let anybody come in, and don't tell anybody what has happened."

He went back to the girl's bedroom door, knocked and went in.

The maid was sitting on a chair watching the girl; the maid was the colour of a plum, but her eyes were beginning to show a dark gleam of excitement. The girl lay perfectly inert on the bed, her face as white as the sheet below it, and stared with great, dark eyes at the ceiling. He spoke very clearly and distinctly:—

"Mrs. Blake. Please tell me as clearly as you can just what happened. Take your time and don't be frightened."

"I don't know—who did it. I can't understand. There isn't any one who would want to kill him."

"Tell me—— " He paused and told himself to be patient. By this time the desk clerk had got the police and they were doubtless on their way. The hotel was a good hour from Hamilton but no more. "Well," he addressed the girl. "When did you go into your husband's room?"

It was horror and pain, he decided, that made her eyes so dark.

She flinched a little and said: "Just before you came in. He was there—on the floor. There was blood and I saw the knife and I—I made myself pull it out But it was too late—and then you came in."

"Why did you enter his room?"

"Because I thought I heard him call me. I wasn't sure. I was in this room. The door was closed and the door to his room was closed. But I thought I heard him call and I—I put on these pyjamas and my slippers—— "

"Immediately?"

"Yes, of course. That is, it took a moment or two because I couldn't find my slippers. I had to look around."

"Did you feel his voice was urgent?"

"No. I wasn't sure he had called."

"Had you heard any voices preceding his calling you?"

"No. But there might have been voices. I had just got out of the shower. The sound of the water—— "

Would have drowned the sound of the voices. That and two closed doors. He frowned and glanced at the windows which gave upon the terrace.

"Did any one pass the window?"

"I don't know. I don't think so. I believe I would have noticed it."

"I see." But did he? "Well—— The police are coming." He paused, and then, rather to his own astonishment, heard himself giving orders: "The police are on their way here. When they come they'll question you. All of us. I think it would be better not to bring up the matter of your having—withdrawn the knife. Tell everything but that."

Her eyes seemed to take it in and understand it. He said to the maid: "You heard me, Louise?"

"Yes, sir."

There was gratitude in the girl's eyes. Or did he imagine it? He turned abruptly and left the room.

He would have to wipe the fingerprints—his own and the girl's—off the knife. He would thereby destroy evidence and make himself an accomplice, an accessory after the fact. Well, he was a fool. And it would accomplish nothing; her presence beside the murdered man was almost as damning as the knife in her hands. But not quite. His hotel would be ruined; there existed among travellers a good, old-fashioned prejudice against murder.

Well—he'd better take a look at the terrace. The porter's eyes followed him as he opened the door upon the terrace and went out.

It was a long terrace, running the full length of that particular wing of the second floor. The hotel was built against a hillside and, owing to a resultant irregularity of levels, there were no rooms below that particular portion of the second floor; the terrace itself rose sharply, with a high, stone retaining wall, from the very edge of the lagoon.

One end of it was backed by an angle of the building, the other end rose above

(*please turn over*)

Bermuda Murder—continued

the water, as did the outward side. Thus, the only approach to the terrace (other than through the hotel) would have to be accomplished by scaling the wall from the water and clambering over a high stone balustrade.

There were no footholds anywhere in the retaining wall; a hook and rope would have done the trick, with a boat anchored below, but the whole process in the bright light of that sunny morning would have been clearly visible, not only from overlooking windows and the opposite shore of the lagoon, but from the hotel's bathing beach some three hundred feet to the left.

Jim began to see that there was a certain scarcity of approaches and exits from the terrace room in which the murdered man lay, and consequently a definite isolation of any possible murder suspects.

For, if the only door to the terrace was the door from the living-room of 21, still there were four other bedrooms along the terrace side of that wing, each of them having a window or windows upon the terrace. Reaching the terrace from any of those four bedrooms was only a matter of unhooking a screen and stepping out.

He frowned as he began to consider the implications of that particular situation. The porter had been in the living-room almost certainly when the blow had been struck. Luzo had burst immediately from the door at an instant when Louise and Jim, himself, had commanded a view of the corridor leading to 21, and no one had escaped in that way.

This meant that whoever had killed Peter Blake had had to escape by means of the terrace. Always provided the murderer was not actually Peter Blake's young wife.

He considered the occupants of those four rooms. No. 18, nearest the elevator, was, of course, occupied by the man bearing his own name, James Smith. He had been drinking steadily and prodigiously ever since his arrival, and ought to be in a stupor by this time.

The next room, 19, was occupied. It was a Mr. and Mrs. Fritz von Holzen from New York. They were a vaguely pleasant, middle-aged couple, quiet, placid. There was about them something faintly foreign, an accent perhaps.

Well, then, who was in the next room, 20? Yes, of course, John Tovery, the actor; a handsome fellow in his forties, fresh from a Broadway success which had closed merely for the summer and was to open again in the autumn. He was by way of being a pal of Jim's. They'd had drinks together and had gone sailing.

The next three rooms belonged to the Suite 21, and were a bedroom (in which the murder occurred), a living-room, and the bedroom in which the girl lay and stared with great, dark eyes at the ceiling.

He went on swiftly in his mind to the next and last room along the terrace wing. That was Room 22 and it was occupied—he gave a little start as he remembered—it was occupied by Ernest Pusey, who had come from New York expressly to meet the Blakes and was, as the boy had said, a "lawyer man."

Well, then he was obviously the man to be informed of the murder and to represent Mrs. Blake in all the troublesome details to follow. There was certainly no need for him, Jim, to undertake the unaccustomed and reluctant role of knight-errant. Unless, of course, it was Pusey himself who had murdered his client.

On the face of it, it sounded unreasonable; for, even aside from the probable friendly relations existing between them, murdering your client was in the nature of killing the goose that laid the golden egg. And yet, as decidedly, the lawyer must fall within the range of suspects, because his room lay along the terrace and because, which was as important, he knew Peter Blake.

As important? It was, Jim saw at once, far more important. For in all probability the only people in the hotel who knew Peter Blake were, naturally, his wife and this lawyer who had come to meet him. And total strangers do not as a rule walk up and plunge a knife into you. No, it was clear that this Pusey was not only a suspect; he was, outside the girl, the prime and only suspect. Well, then Jim had better take steps.

The whole point, of course, lay in the fact that no one had escaped by the corridor during that time. From the moment the alarm was given, it had been utterly impossible for any one to have entered the corridor from the wing without being seen. And since then he had had the boy on guard.

That meant that whoever had murdered Peter Blake was almost certainly still bottled up within that wing.

He turned, jerkily and instinctively, to look along the screened, blank windows, and a man was sitting quietly in one of the steamer chairs, watching him. It was Fritz von Holzen, and he held a newspaper in his hands. "Good morning," he said affably.

He was perhaps fifty or fifty-five, plump and slightly bald. His eyes were very sharp behind his glasses. And he commanded a full view of the terrace.

Queer, thought Jim, that I didn't notice his presence when I came out on the terrace. Still, perhaps it wasn't queer; he'd been thinking hard and fast. He had been only vaguely aware of the terrace itself, with its clusters of brightly painted tables and chairs and the gay red-and-white umbrella at the south end. He walked now toward Fritz von Holzen.

"Good morning. I didn't see you when I came out just now," Jim said.

"I beg your pardon," said von Holzen, cupping a hand around one ear. Evidently he was deaf. Jim repeated his remark in a louder voice, and von Holzen replied, "No. You were in what is called a brown study, Mr. Smith."

"Oh, you saw me?"

"Why, certainly. I'm deaf but I'm not blind. I've been sitting here for—oh, since nine-thirty or so."

Nine-thirty. Here, then, was a witness. Jim said tensely, "Has anyone else been on the terrace?"

"No. At least not within the past hour or so. Unless—yes, it seems to me there was a boy with an umbrella. That's all."

"Are you sure of that? Hasn't anyone else come out of that door over there?"

"No one but you, Mr. Smith," said von Holzen cheerily. "I've been sitting here without moving for the last hour and would have seen any one.

"You—I suppose you heard nothing?"

"Heard nothing?" Von Holzen's sharp eyes were now definitely aware of purpose back of this inquiry. "What do you mean—heard nothing? If you mean anything—out of the way or unusual, no, I have not."

"You didn't hear—any one call out—for help?" persisted Jim.

"No. You'd better tell me just what has happened."

"A hotel crisis. You are altogether sure that no one passed you?"

"Well, yes, I'm certain. Who called for help and why?"

It was the girl, then. It had to be the girl who had murdered Blake, for there was no one else. Yet, despite von Holzen's story and its clinching evidence against Lana Blake, he was still loath to believe her guilty.

The main, indeed, the only evidence to the contrary, was Luzo's statement that there had been two voices—loud voices—in Blake's room.

He said, "It's a police affair. I'm afraid my guests are going to be questioned and annoyed. I'm sorry."

"You must mean murder," observed von Holzen coolly. "Who was murdered?"

"The man in there," admitted Jim. "Now, if you'll excuse me——"

He had expected a flood of questions and commotion and was prepared to cut it short. But von Holzen took it without the faintest change of expression. He said, "In that case your hands are full, Mr. Smith. I'm afraid I'm delaying you. If I can be of any assistance——"

"Thank you—I'll try to keep it as long as possible from my guests——" (His guests; there would be trouble there.)

There was courteous understanding in the gesture of a small hand which promised discretion. Jim left von Holzen and went into the living-room of 21.

He entered the bedroom and closed the door behind him and lifted the sheet. There was no more to be seen than he had already seen. A middle-aged man, florid and heavy, with a mouth that suggested temper, violently done to death. He replaced the sheet somewhat hurriedly and turned again to the knife lying on a table near by.

Jim had the usual layman's respect and fear for the evidence of fingerprints. He did not know that police expect to find innocent fingerprints, with, if they are in luck, one guilty one among them. Jim in that instant was convinced that the discovery of the girl's fingerprints on that knife would be proof of her guilt.

He wiped the knife.

Then he put the knife on the table again, shoved his handkerchief back in his pocket, and went swiftly through the living-room into the corridor.

George still remained on guard and no one, he said, had entered the corridor. Jim looked at his watch and started with Room 18.

The man in that room, James Smith, his namesake, did not respond when Jim knocked, and was, when he opened the door at last, to all intents and purposes dead to the world and would not rouse. There were six empty glasses on the table.

In Room 19 Mrs. von Holzen, a stout, placid woman of fifty or so, came promptly and cheerily to the door. Obviously her husband had not yet told her the news, for she was altogether calm, said she had not left her room yet that morning, and thanked him for a hastily concocted inquiry as to the comfort of the room.

John Tovery, the actor, in Room 20 had also been in his room all the morning. Jim's cautious inquiry as to persons on the terrace brought a prompt confirmation of von Holzen's story. For Tovery had been writing letters for the past half hour at a table facing the window and the terrace, and von Holzen had been in full view all the time.

"He's been there the full time. I'm sure I would have known it if he had moved a foot away from the chair. You know how a movement attracts one's eyes. Why?"

"Did you know Peter Blake?"

"Who's Peter Blake?"

Jim murmured and went on, passing Suite 21 again, to Room 22. "My prime suspect," he thought, knocking.

But when the lawyer, Ernest Pusey, came to the door, Jim's heart sank. For Ernest Pusey was a dry, gray, upright man in his middle fifties, and the very personification of a corporation lawyer. Probably, reflected Jim ruefully, he didn't brush his teeth without, first, considering any possible legal consequences of the action.

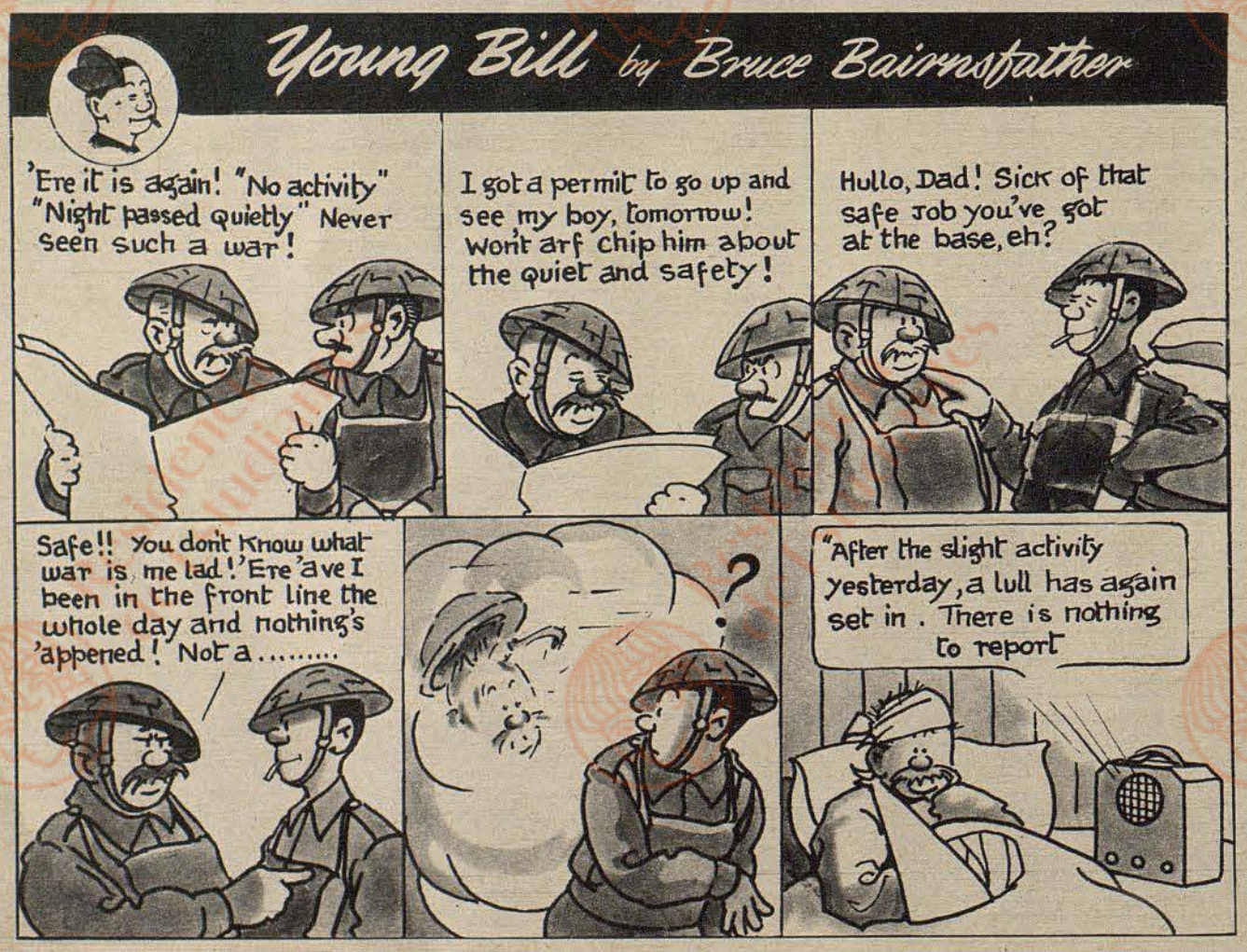
"Mr. Pusey?"

"Yes?"

He wore neat, coffee-coloured trousers and coat, and his shirt, as a slight concession to the heat, was open at the throat. His thin grey hair was brushed neatly back and his nose glasses glittered.

"Mr. Blake is your client?"

"Yes, of course." Pusey's voice was cold.



There was a commotion at the elevator —feet marching towards them and voices.

Jim risked a rebuff. "You've been in your room all the morning?"

Pusey's precise eyebrows lifted. "Yes. Why do you ask?"

"You've—heard nothing—out of the way?"

"See here, what's the meaning of this?"

"Mr. Pusey—do you know of any reason for Peter Blake's——"

"Blake's—what? What do you mean?"

The feet came closer. Jim swallowed hastily and said, "For Peter Blake's murder. Here are the police——"

Ernest Pusey stared at him, rigid and grey and wordless, for the moment it took the police to reach suite 21. Then he said in a harsh, deep voice that sounded rusted, "Murdered! My God!" And thrust Jim out of the way and went to meet the police. Jim followed.

By seven o'clock that night the commotion induced by the arrival of the police and the subsequent investigation had in a measure died down. Somewhat to Jim's surprise his guests did not arise and depart in a body at first word of the murder. Instead, they submitted with the best possible grace to the prolonged inquiry, which embraced a statement from every single one of them. But Jim would have expected a complaint or two, and so far he had none.

None from his guests and none from his staff, who were also questioned.

It had taken time and a steady, patient sifting of facts. But in the end, so far as Jim knew, the police still had only the few initial facts he, the maid and two boys, and Lana Blake herself had been able to give them. Von Holzen's story remained firm (regrettably, Jim felt) and John Tovery gave von Holzen himself a sound alibi.

There was only one item which Jim knew and the police did not know. That was the fact that Lana had had the knife actually in her hands.

Unfortunately the omission did not much lighten the weight of evidence against Lana Blake. Yet, too, it might have proved to be the deciding factor.

The inspector in charge was one, Willaker, a man whom Jim knew and liked. He was extremely thorough, extremely deliberate, and he left no stone unturned. It was he, indeed, who found that the knife had been removed, when or by whom, no one could say, from the hotel kitchen. At night, there was no one, as a rule, in the kitchen. Thus any one in the hotel might have removed the knife.

However, there still were, when all evidence and stories were sifted, only six people, besides the porter himself, who had access to the room in which Peter Blake was murdered. And of those people, in the end, there was only one who they could prove had been in Peter Blake's bedroom, and that was, of course, Lana.

"Von Holzen himself could have murdered Blake," said Inspector Willaker to Jim, "and then walked out on to the terrace and made of himself a witness instead of an obvious culprit. But since they, themselves (von Holzen and his wife, I mean), both say they had never laid eyes on Blake—at least, knowingly—there's the question of motive. John Tovery backs up von Holzen's story anyway. Yes, it all simmers down to the question of escape. If no one left the suite, then the person remaining there must have murdered Blake."

"Mrs. Blake?"

"Yes."

"Somehow—I don't think she did it."

"There's nobody else. Don't let a pretty face carry you away, Jim, my boy."

Jim shook his head impatiently. "Are you—arresting her?"

"Not tonight," said Willaker cautiously. "Not so long as there's the faintest loophole in our case."

"What's the loophole?"

"Your porter's story of the voices. Men's voices, he said. He thinks there were two voices only. But he swears neither of the voices he heard was a woman's voice. If he heard two men talking, then what happened to the other man?"

"Exactly," said Jim with a little too much enthusiasm and relief in his voice.

Willaker looked at him sharply. "I take it you're willing to give us every possible assistance on this case?"

"Why, certainly. The sooner it's over, the better for my hotel."

"Right. I'm leaving a couple of policemen on guard in the suite. By the way, are your boys superstitious?"

"Not inordinately. Why?"

"The boy who heard Blake call for help keeps saying something about the room humming. He implies a kind of death song. Know anything about it?"

Jim searched his knowledge of Bermuda —of the secret order the natives call Gombies, of night ceremonies along deserted coves. "No. He may have heard some coincident sound. A motor boat or a vacuum cleaner——"

"He would have recognized those sounds. This special thing seems to worry him. Well, our investigation may take time. We've had to cable in order to check the stories these people tell of themselves." Willaker sighed. "It's a bad business, but I think it'll be cleared shortly. We have opportunity and motive."

"Motive? I suppose you mean he leaves his widow with plenty of money?"

"Certainly. She——" Willaker looked at his watch and rose. "She was his secretary, you know; he'd only known her six weeks before he married her. His only living relative is a nephew with whom he quarrelled over the marriage. The nephew's name is Sandy Blake. We've cabled him."

"Did she tell you that?"

"No. Pusey—against his will. He's her lawyer and right on the job. She denied knowledge of the quarrel with his nephew. Pusey advised her to say nothing. Oh, that reminds me. Give your bartender orders not to send any more drinks to the fellow in 18. We haven't been able to get a word out of him."

"All right, inspector."

"And you might keep after your kitchen boys a bit about that knife. In case one of them remembers anything. Although, as a matter of fact, there's something phony about that knife. It doesn't seem just right somehow to find it there on the table, wiped free of fingerprints."

"Seems quite natural to me. Fellow sticks another fellow with knife—pulls it out and wipes off his fingerprints, puts it down on the handiest table," Jim said.

Inspector Willaker's intelligent eyes looked a little too intelligent. "Um," he said. "Sound natural to you, does it?" And went away, without, which was the important thing, arresting Lana Blake.

Jim sighed. The lobby and lounge had gradually cleared, for, come what may, life and meals went on and people still dressed for dinner. It was sunset, with the water in the lagoon tranquil again and blue. He went out to his favourite seat above the lagoon and a black boy instantly produced a tall, cold drink and withdrew.

Jim closed his eyes wearily. The affair gave every indication of putting him to very much more energy and effort than he ever willingly expended. He wished for his own sake he could find a quick and easy way out of it. And one, said a small voice within him, that would clear a girl with the loveliest face and sweetest mouth Jim had ever seen. A girl who was frightened and helpless and all too definitely on the spot.

Twenty-four hours ago, Lana Blake had sat there on the balustrade and had looked steadily at him and asked for a key.

He sat up abruptly. She'd asked for a

(*please turn over*)

Bermuda Murder—continued

key, and she'd said, what? Something that, even then, struck him as unusual, for she'd said firmly that "it" wasn't a flashlight. What wasn't a flashlight?

And why had she wanted a key? Did it argue fear? Or merely that she'd wanted to lock the door?

Or—he sank back suddenly. The police would say she'd wanted the key in order to ensure that there would be no interruption during a certain half-hour that morning. And this would argue a cool, devilish premeditation.

But it wasn't premeditation. And the door had not been locked when Luzo entered it that morning. Well, then, why? He half rose, and a voice behind him said, "Mr. Smith."

It was the lawyer, Ernest Pusey. He said, "May I sit down? No, thank you, no cocktail. I—I only wanted to say, Mr. Smith, that I'm sorry I was so obtuse when you came to break the news to me this morning. It was good of you to try to spare me some of the shock, and I appreciate it."

"How is Mrs. Blake?"

"Poor girl. It's a dreadful thing. But if it had to happen I suppose it's lucky I was here to take over. But Peter was my oldest friend—since school days—and my best client. Well, so the world goes. Lana will be well provided for."

"I suppose this makes her an extremely rich woman."

"Well, yes and no. There's a rather odd—still, not at all an unusual—situation involved. Lana is not actually Peter's heir, and yet will certainly inherit a great deal of money. Peter was a very rich man. The income from his leases alone——"

"Leases?"

"You don't know his business? Not leases in the ordinary sense; I referred to leasing of the gold-smelting equipment and machinery which Peter long ago invented and on which he holds patents, and which he also manufactures. If he sold the equipment, you see, he would have money from the outright sale, but that's all. By retaining possession and only leasing equipment and machinery he ensures himself a steady income; in fact, he has almost a monopoly. He has had only a few competitors, and not many of them lasted very long. So long as no similar process is discovered, Peter (and Peter's heirs) will be very rich.

"Well, as I was saying, his heir is his nephew, Sandy. Peter never really expected to marry and was very fond of Sandy always. In fact, the only quarrel I ever knew them to have was about—well, never mind. The fact remains that his will has been unaltered since his marriage. He did, however, write a letter on the day of his wedding, requesting Sandy, if the need arose, to provide generously for Lana. He intended to make a new will as soon as he returned from his honeymoon; in fact, that is the main reason for my meeting him here. Peter cabled, asking me to come."

"That's putting a lot of faith in this man Sandy."

"Peter trusted Sandy. And I'm sure Sandy will be generous with Lana."

"At any rate it removes a motive for your client's having murdered her husband."

"My client? Oh, you mean Lana Blake. Unfortunately, she believed Peter had already changed his will. And when the police questioned her, before I could persuade her not to talk, she admitted it. The letter to Sandy, of which I knew, was a shock to her. I don't mind saying—to you, Mr. Smith, because I believe you are inclined to be friendly——"

"She told you about the knife."

"She——" Pusey glanced quickly around, but they were alone. "Yes, she did. It was very kind of you, Mr. Smith."

"But not much help. You are going to get her out of it, aren't you?"

"I hope so. "She——" He took off his glasses and polished them. "I hope so, I'm sure, Mr. Smith. But I don't mind telling you it's a bad business. However, I'm going to do my very best, I assure you."

Jim rose with the lawyer and they walked together back to the veranda.

That night, too, there were candles on the tables, and a native orchestra playing rumbas and its own version of swing tunes. There were women with soft, brown shoulders and bright gowns and men very festive in white dinner jackets. But there was a subtle difference between that night and the night before.

During the daytime the guests had been good sports. They had talked of the murder with interest and speculation and excitement. It had seemed, however, quite remote, an impersonal thing.

But by night murder became a different thing. It assumed gradually, with the darkness, its own sinister and hideously personal property. Where there is murder there is also a murderer.

Not a nice thought.

It induced an early going to bed and an unprecedented number of requests at the desk for keys.

Jim Fanfare Smith, on his way to the elevator, was accosted by the actor, John Tovery. "Look here, Jim."

"Yes."

"This murder. I—well, gosh, I don't like it, Jim. Do you realize that the police seem to regard me as a suspect, merely because my room has a window on that damn terrace! They won't let me leave. I'm due in New York on Monday of next week. I've got to be there for rehearsals."

"I thought you were going to stay another two weeks."

"Yes, I was. But I just had word from my manager. I've got to go. I can't hang around here until this thing is settled. It may be weeks. Say a good word for me, will you, Jim?"

"Von Holzen wouldn't much like your leaving just now. You are his alibi."

John Tovery ran expressive hands through his fine and beautifully waved dark hair. "If I had known I was going to be anybody's alibi I'd have kept my mouth shut," he said. "Do help me out."

"There's nothing I can do. However, I don't imagine they'll keep you here long."

Out of the corner of his eyes he perceived the chef waiting at the door leading from the main hall into the kitchen passage. The chef was standing perfectly immobile, but his eyes were fixed on Jim, and Jim knew the chef, Jean, wanted to speak to him. He disengaged himself from Tovery. "I'll do my best."

"But you——" Tovery stopped and listened. "Hey, what's that?"

An eerie, rhythmic sound of drums, beating in a curiously quick and stirring tempo, was growing out of the dark night somewhere at a distance. The drum beats thudded in the air like an intangible pulse and grew more distinct rapidly, and all at once you heard, besides, and high above the beat of the drums, shrill, confused whistles and the rattle of horses' hoofs and wheels going at a furious pace.

"What, under heaven——?"

"Gombies. It hasn't rained for a while, and they're praying all over the island for rain. Holding ceremonies.

The drums came quickly nearer. Obviously, the centre of the tumult was rapidly moving past the hotel and along the white, moonlit road beyond. Drums, whistles, shouts, the rattle of the omnibus, the sounds of voices, the thud and patter of feet running after the horse-pulled vehicle.

"Aren't they dangerous?"

"No. It's all right. The police watch them. They hold their ceremonies and then go home."

"Gombies, did you say?"

"So they call themselves. It's some obscure, mysterious relation, I imagine, to the African zombi—that is, the living dead. If you want to see them you'll have to hurry; they'll soon be gone."

The actor hesitated, looked at Jim, and then hurried out on to the veranda.

The chef still waited. Jim approached him.

"Well? Why, Jean, what's wrong?" He saw, on closer view, that the chef was very pale.

Jean whispered. "The knife. Another knife. It's gone. And I saw her in the kitchen passage."

Jim glanced quickly about. No one was within earshot. "What do you mean?"

"Another knife has been taken. I counted this morning when the police inquired. There were eleven altogether. Now there are ten. And I saw her."

"Saw who?"

"The woman. The fat woman with the German name. In the terrace wing——"

"Do you mean Mrs. von Holzen?"

"Yes! Yes, that's the woman. She was hurrying away when I came in the kitchen."

"When?"

"About fifteen minutes ago. I had gone to the kitchen to see that all was closed for the night. After I saw her I looked around my kitchen and I—the knife is gone, sir."

A kind of constricture closed upon Jim's heart. "All right. Thanks, Jean."

The chef gave him an uneasy, irresolute look and scurried quickly out of sight.

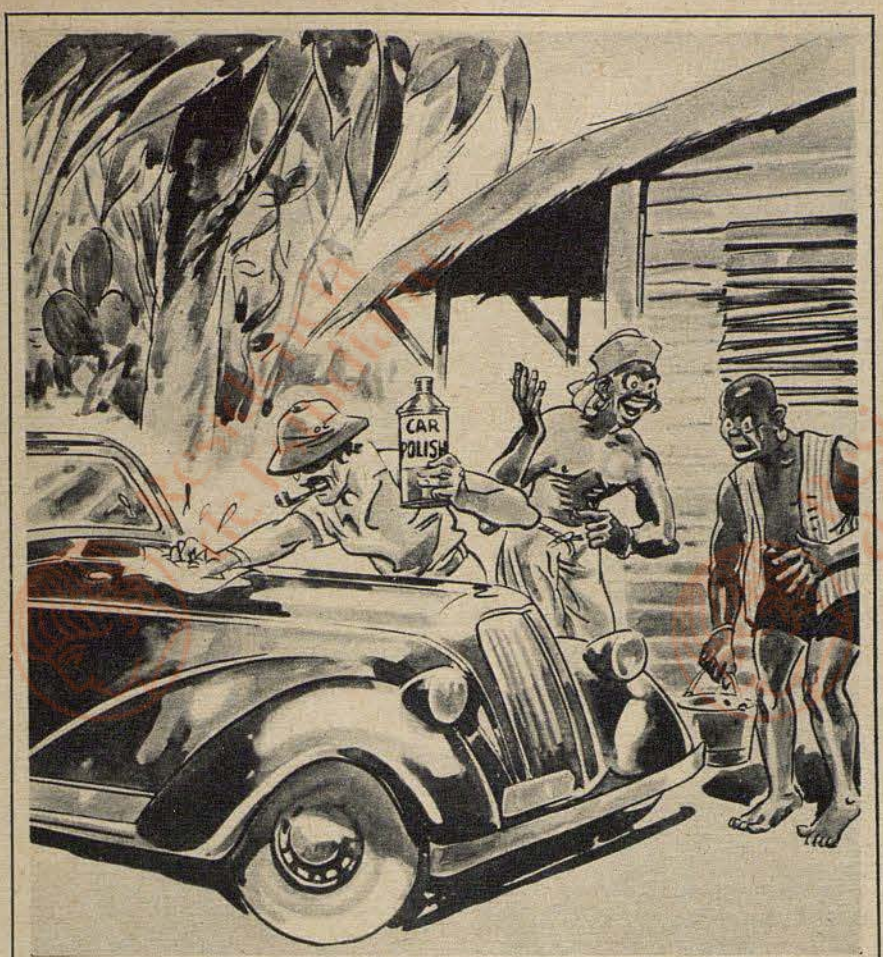
Be Your Own Conjurer

The Sliced Handkerchief

The conjurer asks one of the spectators to lend him a handkerchief. This he takes in his hand, allowing the four points to hang down from his clenched fist. He then appears to pull up the centre of the handkerchief from the top of his grasp and to cut off a piece of the material. He then rolls the handkerchief into a ball in his hand. His next move is to burn the cut-off piece of handkerchief before the eyes of his spectators. Then he takes the ashes in one hand, makes some mysterious passes over them, unfolds the handkerchief and waves it before his audience. It is intact.

The explanation is that the conjurer held a small piece of white material in his palm. It was this that he drew up from his clenched fist and cut. The little bit of white cloth was burnt to ashes, except for a very tiny part of it which the conjurer hid in his hand while unfolding the handkerchief.

The conjurer burns the piece of material he appears to have cut from the centre of the handkerchief



"Boss says it's special magic from England to make it rain"

The clerk at the desk sprang to attention as Jim approached. "Yes, sir."

"Is Louise still with Mrs. Blake?"

"Yes, sir."

Jim hesitated. The police were in the living-room of 21 and a telephone was in 21. The sensible thing, of course, was to tell the police—well, tell them what? That the chef was frightened. That he'd counted kitchen knives and said one was missing. That he'd seen a woman he believed to be Mrs. von Holzen, scurrying away.

He decided not to telephone to them. And the boy at the desk leaned forward.

"Mr. Smith. I heard that the only people in the hotel who were acquainted with the man who was murdered were, of course, his wife and the lawyer, Pusey."

"So I understand. Why?"

"Well, that's wrong, sir. Mr. Blake knew von Holzen."

"*What's that?*"

"I saw them meet. Here in the lobby, right in front of the desk. They spoke——"

"What did they say?"

"Well, not much, I guess. Didn't seem very friendly. Called each other by their first names, though."

"Did you tell the police?"

"No, sir. I didn't think of it until after they had questioned us."

"All right. I'll telephone Willaker."

Jim took the elevator upstairs, walked briskly to the living-room of Suite 21, and knocked.

Two minutes later he was walking a little less briskly towards the elevator again, having been denied an audience with Lana Blake. "Inspector Willaker's orders," said one of the two policemen. "He said only her lawyer could see her."

Jim had to accept it. "I'd better tell you," he said, "that my chef believes there's another knife missing from the kitchen."

The two policemen looked at each other and back at Jim. "Is he sure?"

"So he says."

The policeman acting as spokesman looked a little sceptical. "Well—I don't imagine there'll be any trouble. Not with us here. Maybe that knife's been lost for months. Maybe it isn't lost."

"But——"

"Don't worry, Mr. Smith. I'll tell the inspector about it in the morning."

There was nothing to do but retreat, leaving the two policemen to their interrupted game of cribbage at the little table with its checked cloth.

Jim passed the door to 20, John Tovery's room, and, rather to his surprise, saw a light in the crack of the closed transom. Tovery had come upstairs, then, almost immediately after the Gombies had passed the hotel. The door to 19 was closed too. The picture of Adelaide von Holzen stealing surreptitiously out of the kitchen wing with a knife in her hand was, now that he was removed from the chef's convincing earnestness, patently absurd. He recalled her bland, middle-aged *hausfrau's* face. Yet Blake had known von Holzen.

He passed the door of 18, stopped, and then cautiously opened the door. It was dark inside. There was no movement in the room. His namesake in all probability was sleeping off the effects of four days of uninterrupted bar orders.

Jim listened, and then tiptoed quietly across the room; the screen, which opened on a hinge, was already unhooked; he opened it carefully. The bed was in a mass of shadow in one corner and there was no motion or voice. He closed the screen gently and was on the terrace.

It was yet in deep shadow; later it would be flooded with moonlight. Upon the flat, back floor lay areas of light from the window of Tovery's room, the living-room of 21, and (less well defined, for the shades were drawn) from Pusey's room at the south end of the terrace. By going along the balustrade he skirted the rectangles of light, and a moment later reached the black windows of Lana Blake's room and, mindful of police in the next room, scratched lightly on the screen.

There was a movement in the room. Someone approached the window cautiously and tiptoed away again, and there was a murmured colloquy.

"Mr. Smith——" It was Lana herself. "Louise said it was you."

"Can you come out on the terrace?"

The screen clicked a little and opened. She was a slender, shadowy figure, dressed in something soft and silky.

"This way," he said, and guided her into the area of deep shadow at the end of the terrace. No one was about. He caught himself watching the shadows and was annoyed to discover a small sense of danger tweaking at his nerves.

"No one can hear," he said, "if we talk low."

"You were right about the—the knife," she said. "Thank you. I didn't know how difficult—how horrible it was going to be."

"I'm sorry."

"Louise stayed with me all day—at

(*please turn over*)

Bermuda Murder—continued

your orders, I suppose. It's good of you. Mrs. von Holzen came and asked the police if she could stay with me tonight. They refused, but I thought it was awfully kind."

Mrs. von Holzen! He said, "Look here. Why did you ask me for a key?"

"Peter told me to get one."

"But why did he want a key? You said, 'It isn't a flashlight.'"

She hesitated and then spoke: "Yes, there was a special reason. Peter had some work with him, there is a new process he was perfecting, and he brought all the papers along with him in a brief case."

"Did you get the key?"

"Yes. It's in the door now, I think. Or was. But I had unlocked the door to the living-room this morning in order to let the waiter bring the breakfast trays into the suite."

"Where is the brief case containing the papers?"

"It's in my room. Peter had left it there because he wanted me to copy some notes he had made. I—was his secretary, you know, before he married me." Her voice faltered. "He was so good. So kind. He had a temper, but he always controlled it. He had no enemies. It's so cruel——"

"Don't." She was trembling; he could sense it.

"He was good to me. No one was ever so good to me." She was crying softly.

He put his arms around her lightly and thought she was scarcely aware of it. Presently she stopped crying and wiped her eyes.

"Do you know what this process Blake was perfecting consisted of?" Jim asked.

"Oh, yes. He told me. I was the only person who knew anything of it, I think. Unless he told Sandy."

"Sandy? That's his nephew?"

"Yes."

"You know him, of course."

"No. I've seen him only once. He came into the office once before I was married; I don't think he saw me. He didn't come to our wedding. Peter loved Sandy dearly. He wanted us to be friends."

She didn't know then that Peter had quarrelled with his nephew, or why.

"About the process——"

"Oh, yes. Well, it was nothing Peter could ever use, you see. He was only doing it in order to take out patents himself on it, and thus prevent any one else (who might have the same idea) from using it."

"Why couldn't he use it? Was it something about gold smelting?"

"Yes, of course. He couldn't use it, because it was a new way to refine gold—a chemical process which was very cheap and readily available, and would have put Peter out of business altogether. You see, a long time ago, he invented a gold-smelting process, and then invented and manufactured the machinery for that process, and leases the machinery——"

"Yes, I know. So this new process would have put him out of business."

"Yes, of course. Oh, he could have patented it and sold it for a big sum of money, but the factory and business he had already established would have been a total loss, as well as the income from leasing his machinery. It's—a little ironical, I suppose—to discover such a process, I mean, and then in order to protect yourself be obliged to bottle it up."

"It isn't unusual," said Jim slowly. "It happens fairly frequently with big manufacturing concerns. He thought this new process was cheap and successful!"

"Oh, yes; he knew it was."

"And you—you still have the papers in your room?"

"Yes. Isn't it safe? I mean——" She leaned forward. "Do you think that was a motive for his murder?"

"You say he had no enemies."

"And he had none. But there is no one here who would know——"

"Did he know this von Holzen?"

"I don't know."

"Did Pusey know of this new process?"

"No. He said he'd never heard of it until I told him this morning."

"Did he offer to keep the papers for you?"

"No." Lana sounded very puzzled.

"Look here. Do you want me to put them in the safe?"

"Why—why, yes. If you think——"

"I think it's just as well."

"I'll get the brief case."

She vanished into the rim of shadow and presently was briefly and dimly silhouette against the light from 21.

He wanted to light a cigarette, and stopped in the act, lest the little flame betray his presence on the terrace. The night was no longer clear. Clouds had gradually obscured the moon. He could barely discern along the terrace solid shapes of deeper black that were occasional chairs and tables and the umbrella, closed and thus tall and slender like a man; it ought to have been taken in for the night as usual, he thought absently.

He turned and leaned his elbows upon the balustrade and waited. Lana ought to be returning. The thick, dark night was laden with scent—salt water and flower fragrances mingled. Vague shapes loomed out of the shadows below.

Lana ought to have returned by now.

"The Missis has gone out working, sir, so I've brought my son with me"

Struck by the notion that a very long time had elapsed, he turned abruptly. The area of light from the living-room of the suite still lay flat and empty upon the terrace floor. No one moved. Nothing had changed. Except, the umbrella had moved. Its vague, dark shape was at least three feet nearer the wall of the building than it had been. And it was moving again.

It was moving again, and it wasn't the umbrella, for now he saw that the umbrella's dark silhouette remained stiff and straight beside the balustrade.

And it wasn't Lana.

Instinct alone told him that. The shadow outlined itself for an instant against the path of light fifty feet away. It was a fleeting glimpse; but certain. Someone—a man—was on the terrace and was moving stealthily toward Pusey's window.

Jim started forward and then drew back again. Better watch and make certain. He could always shout and attract the attention of the police in 21.

There was, except for the murmuring water below, utter silence. Then quite suddenly there was the slight scuffle of a footstep, and a shadow outlined itself definitely against Pusey's lighted window. A shadow that hesitated. And then Jim heard a rasp of fingers against the screen. He said, "What are you doing there?"

But he was not prepared for what happened. For the shadow jerked away from the window, was momentarily lost in the darkness all about, and then became solid muscle which hurled itself upon him. He clutched, tried to get a grip, and missed, and a fist shot hard at his chin, and Jim quietly and neatly sat down, bumping his head hard against the balustrade. There was a soft patter of footsteps and then utter silence.

He rubbed his chin and swore under his breath. For his fingers had encountered the smooth, cool leather of a brief case.

And his assailant had gone as unexpectedly and much more swiftly than he had come. But he had given up his attempt to break into Pusey's room. That was certain. Jim got to his feet and ran along the terrace. He passed Lana's darkened window and stopped at the door of 21. To his intense astonishment, the policemen were not there. The table was bare; the cribbage board and cards were strewn on the floor, and the room was bare of human presence.

Lana's window was beside him. He pulled at the screen and it opened. The room was dark, and he stepped over the sill quickly and whispered, "Lana! Lana!"

No one answered.

It was very still and very black. He took a step into the room and another, and trod on something inert and soft.

He stumbled—knelt—groping into the blackness at his feet.

He had an instant of cold panic. And then his hands encountered the crisply starched folds of a maid's uniform. It was Louise. It must be Louise. He spoke to her softly, and she did not answer, but she was breathing.

He turned on the light. By its soft glow he saw that the room had been ransacked and that Lana was not there. Louise lay in a huddle near the window. He bent over her again. He thought she must have been struck.

There was an adjoining bathroom, empty, for the door was open, and a long, narrow clothes closet. Obviously Lana was not in the room, but nevertheless he went to the closet. Rows of gowns hanging like fragile, fragrant ghosts confronted him. He stepped inside in order to thrust aside the soft folds, bent, groping among them, and all at once heard a small, cautious motion behind him in the bedroom, and whirled around, but was too late.

Darkness came upon him and the door was closed and fastened. Probably by a chair under the knob, for when he hurled himself against it it did not budge an inch.

He was capable of sudden, tempestuous rages and one overtook him now. He'd be damned if he'd let any one bottle him up in a closet in his own hotel. He'd be—— A chill, cold little wind seemed to cut through his anger. What was going on out there? He must get out of that closet.

The door was stubborn against his repeated onslaughts, and in the end it was Louise who released him. She looked and probably felt dizzy and was very wild-eyed.

She put her hand to a rapidly swelling temple and asked him as he emerged why he hit her.

"I didn't. What happened? Where's Mrs. Blake?"

Louise moaned and sank into a jabbering heap on the bed. She didn't know. She didn't know anything at all.

He questioned her swiftly. She'd been sitting beside the window waiting for Mrs. Blake to return. Maybe she dozed. The first thing she knew something came out of the dark and struck her, and that was all.

"Where are the police?"

She shook her head. She'd heard them talking over the telephone just before she dozed off. She'd heard a door close somewhere, too.

"What door?"

She didn't know. It might have been the window. And she didn't know who had silently entered the room after Jim and closed the door into the closet and propped a chair under the knob. She didn't know anything except that her head hurt.

"Can you get to your room?"

"Yes, sir."

Jim went with her through the living-room of the suite, still oddly empty of police and watched her wavering progress as far as the elevator. Then he went back to the living-room of 21 and got the desk clerk on the telephone.

"Where are the police?"

"They went out. Had a telephone call from outside——"

"Well, what was it?" demanded Jim impatiently, brushing aside the fiction that the desk clerk who handled the switchboard at night wouldn't know.

"Gombies, sir. It was a bad connexion, but I heard enough. Willaker heard there was going to be some trouble, and sent the two police who were here because they were nearest."

Jim swore. "How long ago?"

"Eleven-forty exactly, sir. It's now twelve forty-one."

"Get Willaker. Tell him—there's trouble here. Have you seen Mrs. Blake?"

"No, sir."

"Never mind. Call Willaker. Tell him I told you to tell him to hurry."

He put down the telephone. Odd that the racket he'd made had not wakened the hotel. But perhaps not so odd, because the suite above was empty and the rooms on the back of the terrace wing were undesirable and hot, and tenanted only when the hotel was full.

He turned, and Ernest Pusey, in a dressing gown, stood on the threshold.

"What is all the noise about? Has anything happened?" His eyes took in the room and he said, "Where are the police?"

"Have you seen Mrs. Blake?"

"Mrs. Blake! Heavens, no! I've been in bed."

"Asleep?" asked Jim, thinking of his lighted window.

"Reading," Pusey replied. "I was just going to sleep when somebody dropped a number of bricks in Lana's room."

NEXT WEEK:

Where is Lana Blake?

The Knight of the PARTY

by HANNEN SWAFFER

I OFTEN wondered what would become of Wilbury Thomson.

Young men rose like rockets in the post-war sky and threw out stars that, because of the darkness, illumined the heavens.

And youth generally gave vent to that long "Ah" that has made firework displays vocal since the beginning. They were the first rockets that generation had seen. Its delight became an ecstasy.

We older ones, having seen other fireworks rise, and fall, went back to our own childhoods for comparison, and found fault.

But youth had no memories with which to form a standard. Its "Ah" was long drawn out and almost reverent.

Besides, they were dull days, anyway, those days of post-war disillusionment. Everything that predated 1914 was wrong, "old fashioned," held up to contempt.

"The future belongs to youth" became a battle cry with which mere children thought they could conquer everything. And to Wilbury Thomson, and a few like him, they turned for leadership.

Meanwhile, we older ones waited for the stars to fade out and the sticks of the rockets to fall.

Some of them did. But, somehow, for a longer time than usual, the firework that was Wilbury Thomson lit the sky.

You may remember *Winkle Tea*, with which Wilbury Thomson made his name. I went along to the first night—and poked fun at its childishness.

"I was sitting on the pin," I wrote.

But, for reasons I could never find, youth hailed it as the birth of wit. *Winkle Tea* clowned about every one who ate winkles and every one who drank tea.

You would have thought, seeing it, that picking winkles was a national crime that should be eradicated, that balancing a tea-cup was an offence against Nature rather than a test only of the law of gravity.

Anyway, every time Wilbury Thomson, as the chief tea drinker, dropped a spoon—for he was his own leading actor—the young men and the young women in the stalls laughed as loudly as if Oscar Wilde had drawled a new epigram.

And when, at the end, Wilbury Thomson threw, with disgust, his tea-cup on the ground and yelled "Damn all tea!" the curtain fell with such applause that the play ran a year.

Then we had *Mothers and Fathers*, also by Wilbury Thomson, and again with Wilbury Thomson as the chief player. Its theme, so far as I could understand it, was that practising adultery was a virtue, but that being an adult was a vice.

In this, the high spot of action was reached when the "hero," while saying to the "heroine," the ultra-romantic line, "I don't know why I love you, but what the hell?" fell over a spittoon and got his nose in it.

While leaving this charade-like nothingness, I heard a young man say, "Compared with 'Hamlet,' this is a big town!"

Well, on a sea of youthful flattery, Wilbury Thomson rose to fame. His plays were followed by his novels and his novels by his films. In the end, he reached Hollywood, even a greater star on the screen than he had been on the stage.

On his return, "society" invited him to dine.

Originally, it took him up, no doubt, to take him down. But that they did not find easy. For Wilbury Thomson had an unending fund of small talk, and he smiled most charmingly, his way into acceptance.

Only we older ones were critical. Some mocked openly. Some patronized and murmured, "It's only a passing craze."

Then, one day—you remember the excitement—we read: "The King has been graciously pleased——" There he was, Sir Wilbury Thomson, the youngest knight since the days when knighthoods were given for prowess in battle and not for success in the greengrocery trade and a payment to party funds, disguised as "public services."

No other name in that honours list was more than glanced at. His—Wilbury Thomson, Esq., "for services to art and literature"—sent a bleat of delight around the suburbs and spread, in the cocktail set, a mixture of envy and joy.

"Wilbury's most des-Irving" was the sort of gag they cracked. "He has climbed higher than the highest Tree," they lisped.

For, in those days, any Theatre Royal back drawing-room was held in higher esteem than any memory of the Lyceum or His Majesty's—and what a screen actor did was held in far higher esteem than the greatest triumphs of Garrick or Kean.

And none were more excited than the faithful flatterers who bathed, or at least, pushed their faces, in the glory that Wilbury Thomson reflected.

All heroes have their worshippers, but none more adulant while they remain heroes—than those who can claim some share in the early days of the heroism.

So Pheeny Wright, who, as a school teacher, had included the child Wilbury in a village play, just before, at the age of ten, he had got a job in a touring pantomime, called up Henry Murchson, who had given Wilbury his first London part.

Each, when alone, would boast, "I made him!" Each, in the other's company, would be more discreet and claim, jointly, "Our Wilbury."

There were the others, too—Hanson Lurin, who had bought Wilbury's first play, Majeston Myers, who, after Wilbury's first failure, had commissioned another comedy when others had been afraid, and Israel Townland, who had arranged his Hollywood contract for him.

Soon they were all on the telephone, a dozen of them, cackling and chippering "Our Wilbury" on the line.

"I always knew," wired Pheeny Wright to Wilbury in a long message of congratulation.

And, in their minds, if not in their words, all of them "always knew."

Meanwhile, there were plans for a big banquet, with a royal duke in the chair, Wilbury as the darling of the feast, of course, and "proceeds for charity," as the excuse for approaching royalty and asking it to preside.

Then, I got a telegram. It asked me to dine with Wilbury at his flat—on the night of the day on which he was due to receive the accolade. I wondered.

I had been among Wilbury's fiercest critics. We had argued and been friendly, quarrelled and made it up again,

Never intimate—"friendly hostility" would perhaps explain it—we saw in each qualities that the other lacked.

Besides, my lampooning of most of Wilbury Thomson's plays had given him advertisement which, if embarrassing to his vanity, had added to his wealth.

I had cost him a lot in worry; I had earned him much more in royalties and at the box office.

Anyway, I accepted. The unusual always intrigues me.

Besides, for all I knew, there would be, in the sort of gathering I anticipated, a good Page One story, with Wilbury's name big in the headlines and mine signing the story, underneath.

And there, when I arrived in the steel-furnished Park Lane flat which had been, for years, the Holy of Holies to adulating youth, was Wilbury, in Court dress and wearing a sword.

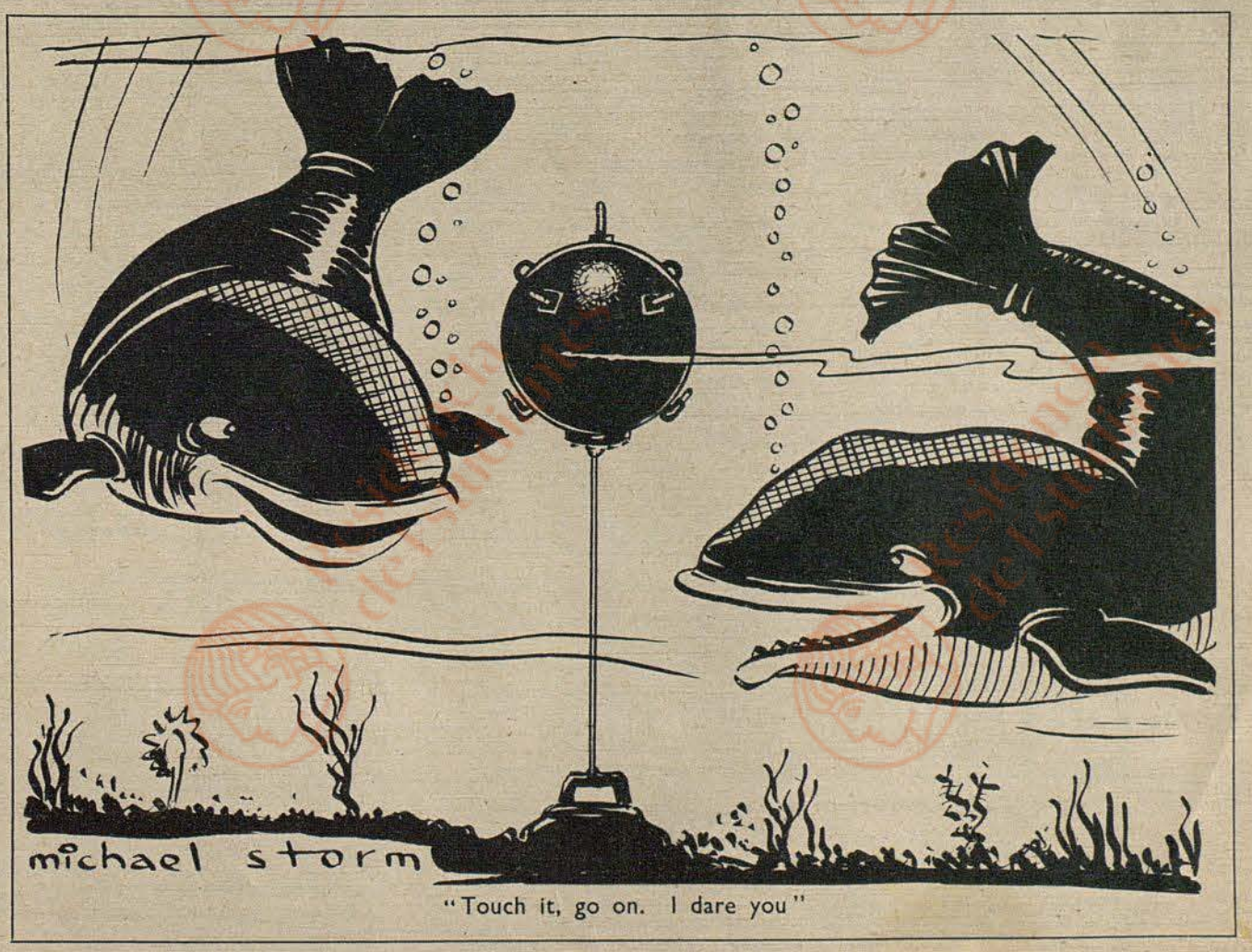
His eyes met mine with a challenge. No, he had not worn it to the palace that day. Indeed, I remembered that, in one of his cup-and-saucer comedies, Wilbury in Court dress, with him falling over his "toasting fork," had been a cause of great excitement. I presumed he had taken it from among the "props."

His look was challenging. "Put this in your damned paper," he seemed to be saying. But there was a smile in his eyes.

Then, looking round, I saw that, apart from myself, the only other guests were the faithful ones, twelve in all.

So it was that after food and wine and

(*please turn over*)



"Touch it, go on. I dare you"

"They bought it under the cash-and-carry clause"

The Knight of the Party—continued

the bright chatter, I said, when called on by the others to express our pleasure in a toast, "It is characteristic of Wilbury that, even now, when he is an early knight, he has not forgotten his early days."

And, remembering bits of articles which, in the old days, I had written, I recalled Wilbury's early stage troubles, and the share that Pheeny Wright had played, and so on, using all the names and recalling all the incidents, and ending in asking him to reply with the words the King had used that morning, "Arise, Sir Wilbury."

When he did rise, to respond, there came the drama. Soon I knew why I was there.

Wilbury, the skilled writer of nothing-nothing comedy, the artful skimmer over banal trifles, had, all his life, dramatized himself.

This time, the mask was off. We saw no longer the gay trifler, the cheery purveyor of "remarks" that passed as epigrams.

"I've asked you all here," he began, "to tell you what I really think of you."

They laughed because they were used to that kind of badinage. They waited for the flattery, their own coin, paid back with interest.

But what they heard was the revelation of many secrets long stored in Wilbury's soul.

He started with how Pheeny Wright, his "benefactor," had been living on him for years, bleeding him. He disclosed to them all, what I knew—that Henry Murchson, who "discovered" him he had always boasted, paid him only £3 a week, in the West End!

As for Hanson Lurin, he still owed him £2,000 which he wouldn't pay back. He told of the money he had "lent" them, mentioning the names and the figures. He told of hard bargains, driven before contracts had been signed.

"Damn you all," he said. "I made myself. I starved and I sweated and I hung round cadging for work, and I fought, myself, every inch of the way. Yes, I've asked you all here tonight just to tell you the blasted truth. I've been your meal ticket for years.

"You didn't believe in me, not one of you. I believed in myself. I got jobs, when I was young, because I was cheap. I had to hawk my plays round to people who wouldn't buy them. And now you can all go to the devil. I never want to see any of your faces again."

It was longer than that. I made some notes, intending to use them next morning, well disguised, of course, for it would all have been highly libellous.

Unfortunately, in scribbling the notes, writing hastily, I could not do what I should have preferred—watch the faces. But now and then, when I did look up, I saw, instead of the smirks and the smiles which had been an accompaniment all through the dinner, horror and loathing, hatred and fear.

Then, embarrassed, we rose from the table, not eyeing each other, for shame of it all.

Suddenly, the lights went out. And, in the darkness, I heard a scream.

There, when the lights went on again, was Sir Wilbury Thomson in his Court dress, his sword mixed up with his legs, lying on his face. He had been stabbed in the back with a table knife, on the handle of which, covering it, was a serviette.

Who had done it? I did not know.

Nor, being an old reporter, did I stop to ask.

Urgent with the news, I rushed to the telephone, to ring up my office, but heard, from another room, a voice calling, on the extension, the police. A servant had seen the body.

When I looked round, I saw all the party, huddled in a corner, gesticulating, talking in haste. Then "We'll all stick to that," I heard.

Then there was a bang on the door and a shout, and the room seemed full of police. Then the detectives came. The door was locked, and questions were hurled at all the dozen guests—"Who did it?"

Any one of them might have wrought, in the heat and fever of it, a sudden vengeance—yes, even little Pheeny Wright who, pale with shame, was trembling with the rest!

I waited, while the police questioned, for the denials.

But—who could believe it?—every one of the guests, one after the other, said "*I* did it." Each of the dozen used, when questioned, the same words, "*I* did it." Time after time I heard them. And, in response to each of the challenges, I heard the reason, the same reason, "Because, suddenly, I hated him."

Well, I thought that I, too, would be sporting, if they were.

So when asked "Why?" I replied, just to be matey, "Because it would make a good story."

As a matter of fact, I missed the story, because, while the other papers were printing the news, I was still shut in Wilbury's flat, still being questioned.

Well, search and cross-examine as they might, the police found out absolutely nothing.

For, covered by a serviette, the knife had on it no fingerprints. The other knives and serviettes were all mixed up on the table; so the absence of any one of them provided no clue.

And so, although there was an inquest, there was not even a police court case. For, as the police said, when they went, "We can't hang the lot of you for using one knife."

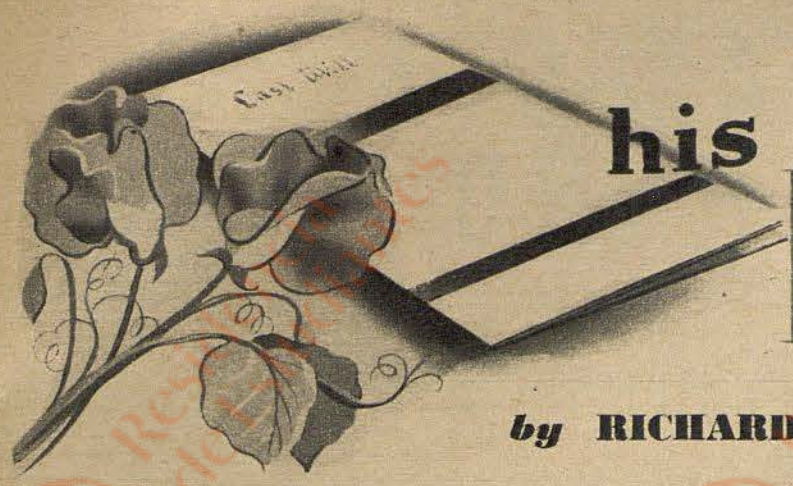
I still wonder which one did it. Some of you may blame me.

PHOTOCRIME SOLUTION (see page 28)

INSPECTOR HUNT had good reason to suspect that the "suicide" had been cleverly staged. Death had occurred between nine and ten p.m. (note clock in picture 4 and police surgeon's statement under). The lounge faced the road, and the table lamp in window was switched on (compare appearance of lamp in picture 1 with that in picture 4). It was wartime (note date on calendar in picture 1), and the blackout prevailed. Yet, as seen in picture 1, the curtains had not been drawn across windows. The man whom Hunt questioned (picture 5) was an air raid warden, and he stated positively that he'd passed the house and had noticed nothing out of the way. Clearly, then, the room was in darkness when the warden passed, and the lamp had been switched on later. Mrs. Harvey couldn't have switched it on as she was already dead, and Harvey was at once indicated.

Solution to last week's Crossword

SHORT SHORT STORY COMPLETE ON THIS PAGE



his brother's KEEPER

by **RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS**

ACROSS a restaurant table, James Ewen was trying to implant some sense in the head of his brother, Fergus. Outside, Chicago traffic growled at them.

"There have been great Scottish gardeners as well as keen Scottish business men," Fergus digressed, mildly.

James ran a despairing hand through his sandy hair. "It's a windfall all right," he said. "A thousand each in Cousin Mary's will and her small cottage! But keep your head. I'm going to buy a Government bond with my thousand and that's what you must do."

Fergus smiled genially. "But Governments are so flighty these days, James."

James frowned. He detested such light talk.

"Here's a thousand dollars flung on to my little desk in the Wheeler-Kimlock Paint Company from the world outside," Fergus went on, serious now. "I'd almost forgotten there was a fragrant, sunlit, blossoming world. I'm eight years older than you, James; eight years longer I've done what I don't like doing, but only for little Jean's sake. I shall let the thousand blow me out of the company; out of Chicago, James."

His eyes became thoughtful. "Did you ever see a golden-yellow sweet pea? Do you think I could develop one?"

"Sweet peas!" James Ewen snorted. "Sweet peas!" Blood darkened his face. "You're daft! To leave just when old Wheeler's been edged out by the pressure of—ah—progressive young men! You must not go! Consider your motherless daughter—your responsibility to her. The company's going ahead now! We'll enlarge the plant. A man who'll stay will find himself a success."

Fergus loosed a grin at his solemn adviser. "You'll be general manager within five years," he predicted.

"It'll take something to stop me," James asserted, curtly. "And I'll look out for Jean and you, Fergus—if you'll be sensible."

"You'll look out for me, anyway, James," Fergus said, confidently. "And Jeanie thereby."

The grim purpose that animated James Ewen during business hours showed then as he eyed his elder brother.

"That I will not," he snapped. "You have the same education, the same good Scots blood in you. You'll take care of yourself, my boy—or rot. I'm carrying no extra weight this race."

Wrathfully he struck the table.

Fergus sat still, astonished by the sudden storm he had aroused.

"I did not mean it that way, James," he said, gently. "I think I am bright enough to look out——"

"Well, I mean it every way, Fergus Ewen! You're bright, brighter than I, so others would have it! Then match your brightness against my grit, my boy! I look out for you? Never!"

Something of James's heat entered Fergus, but he spoke quietly.

"You'll look out for me, James——" he began again.

His brother, with an angry growl, got up, paid his bill and left the restaurant.

Before Fergus left Chicago for Aunt Mary's cottage in a small town in southern Ohio, the breach between the two brothers was mended—on top. James firmly demanded a rent of nine dollars a month for his half of the little house. He went back to the office grimmer and more purposeful than ever.

Years slipped by, and more years. Fergus was now a completely happy man. He made a little money with his plant breeding; Jean worked with him, and it was a rich life they shared.

James got his rent money every month, and occasionally a scrawled, cheerful letter which set him muttering with vexation. His replies to Fergus were models of concise business English. But letters did not bridge the gap, nor did James, in his pride and preoccupation, ever meditate a trip to southern Ohio.

The day came when Fergus, in the greenhouse, lifted his head to hear with a queer mixture of pain and joy that gay, helpful Jean was to leave him. A young man of the neighbourhood had masterfully broken in upon her concern with her father and his modest triumphs.

The news of Jean's approaching marriage brought quick response from James, that tower of efficiency. Under James's able direction the little paint plant had grown bewilderingly large and complex. James was president now, and the sole fly in his turpentine-scented ointment was the fact that he lacked those few shares of stock necessary to control a majority vote.

In strict justice to himself, James had pointed out all this to Fergus in his letters. And it was not without satisfaction that he decided to go down to Jean's wedding.

Though James greeted his brother cordially, Fergus felt keen grey eyes probing him—examining his face, thin but less lined than that of James, his baggy tweed suit, his well-worn shoes.

He noted the gleam of self-righteousness that quickly came and as quickly went from James's flinty eyes. He caught the undertone of mockery in James's heavy voice when he finally spoke:—

"Made any money at this posy-planting job?"

"It isn't the sort of work that makes large sums," Fergus admitted.

"Humph!" James disposed of such nonsense. "How about this young man whom Jeannie's marrying? Can he take care of her? Or is he a posy-planter, too?"

Fergus smiled. "Brother," he said, "as I told you years ago, you will look out for us all."

The blood rushed to James's face.

"What do you mean?" he barked. "I've given you no money these fifteen years and do not intend to now."

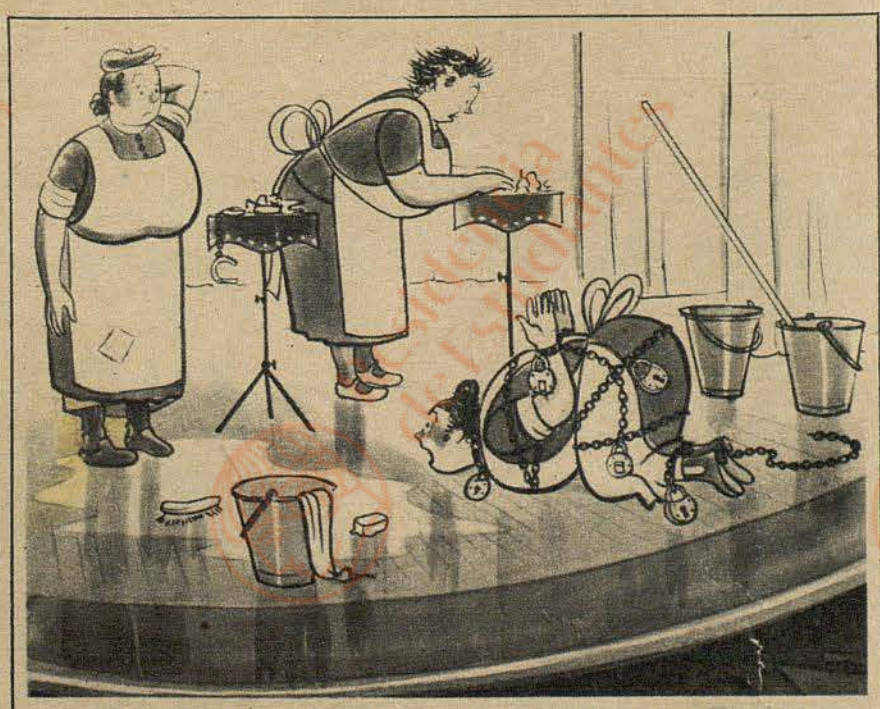
Still Fergus smiled. "Brother," he said, "do you remember the thousand dollars Cousin Mary left each of us? You convinced me that I should invest it wisely. But I didn't buy a Government bond. I had more faith in you, James, than I had in any Government.

"That day, before I left Chicago, I bought all the stock in your company I could get on margin with my thousand. The stock was poorly regarded, but I knew you would slave to make it valuable. So I left it with orders to reinvest all dividends.

"And the harder you worked, the more I got. The bank tells me I'm quite a wealthy man now. You've taken care of us very nicely."

James's ruddy face had turned grey. "You mean you're—you're that anonymous stockholder who has been holding out?" he gulped at last.

Fergus nodded, and for a moment his eyes drank triumph. Then the old kindness returned to his face. "And now, brother," he said, gently, "if you really want to head the table when the board of directors meets, it can be arranged."



"Keep looking, Aggie. There must be a key somewhere"

AMOS TAKES A HAND

by GILBERT HORSLER

AMOS BENN had always taken it for granted that some day Lucelle, the firm's exceedingly pretty designer, and his son and junior partner, Phillip, would make a match of it. He knew his son's feelings that way and thought he could guess those of Lucelle so far as it is possible for any mere male to hazard where the fair sex is concerned.

It came, therefore, as something in the nature of a shock, when, opening his office door suddenly, he saw the back of a tall man in the uniform of the air force.

There was nothing unusual in this except perhaps the place; neither was there anything unusual in a soldier's neck adornment of two slender, very shapely, white arms. Airmen of all ranks have a weakness for this type of decoration. What brought a quick pang to the heart of Benn was that those arms indubitably belonged to Lucelle.

Then, at the sound of the opening door, the soldier did a quick rightabout, and the relieving of one shock was replaced by another, albeit of a more pleasant nature, for the grinning features under the rakish cap were after all those of Phillip himself.

"Well, I'm da—ashed," ejaculated Amos. "I thought for a moment that Lucelle had double-crossed you for a soldier."

"So I 'ave, Mistair Benn. Philleep ze civilian is no mor'. Don' you zink he make a loffly soldier?" Shamelessly she leaned a dark head on Phillip's shoulder.

"Passable," grunted Benn, although his eye glinted with pride as he surveyed the erect figure of his offspring, then, a sense of the indignity that had been put upon him rising to the surface—"Why the deuce wasn't I told—and your mother. We knew that you were trying to get in, of course, but, hang it, you might have let us know that everything was O.K."

"Thought I'd give you all a shock," laughed Phillip. "I tried it on Lucelle first and it worked beautifully. Shocked her straight into my arms as a matter of fact."

"Well, it won't shock me into 'em although it might your mother," growled the manufacturer. "Which reminds me. You'd better get along, the pair of you, and give her both sets of good news. It'll be about the first time we've seen eye to eye since we've been married."

"That's what we were going to do," said Phillip. "The only thing that's worrying me is what the firm is going to do for a traveller, now I shall be away."

"There *are* other travellers in the world. I knew quite a few before you were born," grinned Amos, sarcastically.

"Yes, but not as good as me—eh, Lucelle?" came the lofty reply.

"Better run along and leave that to me," said Benn. "Neither of you is in a mood to talk business seriously. I'll see about a traveller. Away you go."

Laughingly he shoo-ed them both from the office.

Despite the lightness of his tone, the situation was not so easy as he had pretended to the young lovers. More than most trades, salesmanship in the hat industry is a matter of personal contact. "Must be well known to buyers" is the inevitable foundation of every advertisement for travellers, for millinery wholesalers are a conservative crowd, and the first essential of a youngster, new to the game, is that his grandfather, or at least his father, should have been in the habit of calling on the same house. If the buyer, almost always an elderly man, happens to be acquainted with a couple of uncles and half a dozen assorted cousins—so much the better.

This position made the acquisition of a new traveller a task of difficulty and discrimination even in normal times. In these days when the majority of the youngsters were either in the Services or expecting so to be, that same task bordered on the impossible.

The only solution, decided Benn, was either to do the travelling himself, or coax away one of the older men from a rival firm. The first idea he dismissed on the thought. London he might have managed, but he was getting too old for the discomforts of the northern and Scottish trips, quite apart from the fact that the business needed him on the spot more now than it had ever done.

His doctor, and unpleasantly frequent recurring bouts of gout had decreed against pre-lunch alcoholic refreshment, but with the combination of his business troubles, Phillip's sudden surprise and the acquisition of a delightful, prospective daughter-in-law, Amos decided that this was one of the exceptions that bound the rule.

The club bar was busy with the lively chatter of a crowd of amateur prime ministers; army, navy and air force chiefs all winning the war in their own way and Amos was passing through a group of friendly nods when one of the loudest talkers, detaching himself without apology from his cronies, took the manufacturer familiarly by the arm.

"Just the man I wanted to see," said Mark Coulson, affably. "In fact I was coming along to see you as soon as I had swallowed my beer. Now what are you going to have?"

Although not enamoured of the man who had accosted him, it was impossible to refuse the invitation without deliberate insult. Obviously Amos had not entered the club at that hour for the purpose of asking the time.

"Mine's Scotch," he admitted, finding himself a seat at an adjacent table.

"And now," continued Coulson, as he placed the glass on the table and took an opposite seat, "I've got some good news for you. Very good news."

"I'm pleased to hear it," grunted Amos in a relieved tone; actually he had expected the request of a loan with the proffered drink as a preliminary bait. "What is the news. The German Army surrendered?"

"No, this is business." The speaker dismissed the war as a thing of lesser importance. "You are in need of a first-class traveller?"

Amos raised his eyebrows in surprise. "How did you know?" he queried.

"When I see Phillip Benn swaggering through the main street in air force blue with a pretty girl on his arm, it only needs the addition of two to two to make the four that Benn & Son have suddenly become short of a traveller."

"Umph! I see," ejaculated the manufacturer. "Of course, any fool could have made that deduction."

Coulson, whose hide would have made that of an elephant look thin, ignored the sarcasm.

"And I know exactly where to find the very man you need. A man known to every buyer in England and, what is more, one of, if not the best salesman in the trade." The speaker flashed a cheap ring as he spread his hands in emphatic gesticulation.

Benn looked interested.

"Who and where is this paragon?" he asked with some eagerness.

"Why, *me*, of course. Didn't you know that I was temporarily out of collar?"

"Oh-h!" Benn's face fell in disappointment. That Coulson was known to the buyers and that he was, in his way, a good salesman, was incontrovertible, but there were other aspects, including the melancholy fate of the last two manufacturing firms who had been honoured by his services. The manufacturer shook a negative head.

"I remember you travelled for Shepherd & Co. for a matter of three years, and I also remember what happened to them," he grunted.

Mark Coulson spread his hands even more widely. "Could I help it that old man Shepherd went and loaded himself with a thousand dozen dud hoods when I had him snowed under with orders?" he expostulated.

"Then there was your last firm, Bardens. They went up in the air through cancellations in just the same way," grumbled Amos. "No, Mark, I'll admit you get orders. Your trouble is that you get the wrong kind of orders."

"Barden was a silly fool who was frightened to take a gamble," defended Coulson. "In any case I had to build their connexions the best way I could, yours is already there. So long as I call on only your regulars I can't be wrong. Take Doyle for instance—me and him's like brothers. Why he almost cried the last time he refused some of Barden's rotten styles. Said it broke his heart to turn me down and why didn't I get a job with an established maker who could give me the right ranges to carry."

A picture of the case-hardened Doyle either crying or breaking his heart over the turning down of any traveller who existed did not register at all with the manufacturer. On the other hand, there was some reason in what Coulson was saying. Both his previous employers had been notoriously shoddy makers—also Benn's position was by way of being desperate.

"If I do give you a trial—what salary and commission would you expect?" he queried.

His prospective employee named a figure that sent the elder man's eyebrows up.

"I don't know who it was who told you that Benn & Son was a philanthropic association, but believe me they were pulling your leg—" he began heatedly, when:

"You mustn't forget that there is a war on," interrupted Coulson. "Things are rising—even beer's gone up——"

"Most of the beer that comes near you goes down," growled Benn, caustically. "Anyway it would take half a dozen wars to get me to pay you that wage—and then I shouldn't."

The mooted arrangement was developing an acrimonious tinge and threatened to collapse before it had well commenced, before both sides finally agreed on a compromise which if not truly amicable, at least left each with the partial honours of war.

Even then it was in a far from satisfied mood that Benn trudged gloomily back to his showroom. Deserted now it seemed without the effervescent spirits of the junior partner, and the laughing *joie de vivre* of Lucelle.

The latter, he knew, would be loyally back in harness as soon as her brief engagement celebration was ended, but with a sigh, Amos wondered how long it would be before he was again criticizing his son's careless habit of slinging expensive, exclusive models into his travelling carton.

Tossing his hat on to a desk, the manufacturer stuck an unlighted cigar between his lips, as from the richly-adorned counters he began to carefully choose a range of models that he thought most suitable for his new traveller's first tilt

"I'm in the building trade"

at the wholesale buying fraternity.

Whatever Coulson's faults he knew his trade from A to Z, and Benn, although not so susceptible to soft soap as most men, could not help feeling gratified by his new traveller's enthusiastic reception of the range that had been chosen for him.

"If I don't sell this stuff I'll eat 'em," he declared, as he held a saucy, French military model of Lucelle's creation appreciatively aloft.

"That'll be O.K. with me," declared Amos. "So long as you sell to the right people. I don't want any of your buy today, cancel tomorrow and pay never, clients——"

"Don't you worry about that, old fellow," grinned Mark, with distasteful familiarity, as he stuffed his travelling expenses carelessly in his pocket. "You'll be hearing from me," he grinned again as the showroom door swung closed.

In his last optimistic statement Mark Coulson was wrong. Amos Benn did not hear from his new traveller. At least, not in the way that his type of business man expected to hear. With most men on the road it is customary to drop a line every night—at the worst every other night—with a statement of orders and a report of general progress. Hints as to the probable trend of fashion according to the diagnosis of the different buyers—etc.

Phillip, despite his apparent happy-go-lucky ways, had always been extremely meticulous in this respect, often, as far as the "hints" were concerned, to the loudly-voiced indignation of his sire.

From Mark Coulson, however, came not so much as a post-card over a long and weary week of expectation and, for orders, not even a twelfth of a dozen. Then, on the following Tuesday, came a brief wire from Liverpool—a city by the way, that was not supposed to be on the agenda of this trip. The wire read:—

"Trade rotten. Am trying some pals in Scotland. Send ten pounds expenses to cover trip. M. C."

When Amos had got his breath, and his vocabulary, into normal working order, he first lit a cigar, and then, his nerves somewhat soothed, sat down to do a bit of hard thinking.

His first reaction, on receipt of the telegram, had been to send a reply ordering his new employee to catch the first train home—*for good*. On second thoughts he came to the conclusion that this might be too harsh a judgment. In any case it was throwing away for good the money that the journey had already cost.

He knew that times were difficult and, also, that whatever his many faults, Coulson was no mug on the road. After all, as Coulson was already half way to Scotland and seemed to have prospects of his own in view, a pound or so more or less was neither here nor there.

For all that it was with a heavy, doubting heart that he wired away the money, together with an express letter breathing fire and brimstone plus a demand for more detailed news, in every line.

Benn's aggravation of spirit was not eased by a few things kind rivals had been at pains to tell him about his absent traveller. Leatherbottom, the keenest and most disliked of these, pompously patronizing as always, declared his surprise at Benn's choice.

"Y' know, Amos, I think you must be losing your judgment. You don't know how lucky you've been to have a good, trustworthy boy like young Phil on the road for you."

"Hang it all," ~~grunted Benn~~, "the worst the man can do is *not* sell, and he seems to be doing that very well."

"Then your luck is still holding," asserted Leatherbottom. "The trouble starts when he does sell."

"So—I have a traveller who brings me luck when he doesn't sell. Meanwhile, what happens to my business?" snapped Benn.

"That's *your* insomnia," grinned Leatherbottom.

One way and another it was not a very cheerful manufacturer who met—greeted would be altogether the wrong word—the traveller on his belated return.

Although full of excuses and apologies, Coulson did not seem at all cast down.

"Simply a bad patch. Every one strikes them at times, and you don't need telling the state of trade these days," he declared. "For all that, I would certainly have gambled on getting at least some results, especially over the border. I have a few pals there who have never failed me before. Never mind, better luck next time. Anyhow I've sowed the seed," he concluded, airily.

"What the blazes d'ye think I am, a market gardener?" exploded the overwrought Benn. "And as for next time, I'm not so sure there is going to be any next time. Remember you are only on a month's trial, and a fortnight of that has gone already."

"Don't worry, old feller—a couple of days in the city and I'll have you snowed under. You'll be going on your bended knees thanking heaven that I did not get any orders on the northern trip, you'll be so busy."

"We'll wait and see," growled Benn. "And meanwhile don't call me old fellow. My name's *Mister* Benn to you, as long as you are on this firm, which won't be *so* long if things don't improve."

Coulson's promised snow storm turned out to be as much of a heat wave as had been his northern trip so far as orders were concerned and, by the end of the week, his total sales were nil.

He had plenty of excuses, of course. In these and promises for the future he excelled, but no firm can run for long on these non-producing commodities and, by the end of the third week, Amos decided to cut his losses out of hand.

~~The traveller took his dismissal philo~~sophically. His attitude inferring that the loss was Benn's more than his own.

"I'm surprised, *Mister* Benn, that you have not shown more patience," he said. "A man of your experience should be aware that it takes even an expert salesman like myself some little while to fit in with a fresh concern. The buyers have to be humoured to the new situation."

"On the contrary, it's my bank balance that needs the humouring," countered Amos. "And that hasn't got any more patience left."

Benn realized that he had made a fool of himself, but how deep had been the folly he did not learn until the following Wednesday.

The mid-week day was earmarked for the almost invariable visit of Doyle, buyer to Lion Ticket and easily Benn's largest and most profitable customer.

The buyer candidly admitted that he was only down on a "look-see" as trade was so very bad he did not intend to order a thing. Considering that this had been his opening gambit as long as Benn had known him, the manufacturer did not take much notice of the threat, but this proved to be one of the occasions on which the buyer really meant what he said.

"It's no use, Amos. I don't want a thing—not a hat. Matter of fact I scandalously overbought in town last Monday."

Amos looked puzzled; Coulson had told him that Doyle had "got the bar up," salesman's slang for refusing to look.

"But-t I thought you were not looking on Monday?" he said.

"I rather wish I hadn't now," sighed Doyle. "But whoever told you that I wasn't was wrong. By the way, when are you going to get a new traveller? I realize that Phillip's loss is a severe one and that he will be difficult to replace—but a firm like Benn's must have a man on the road. You missed quite a parcel of jam last week, as a matter of fact."

At the words, Benn's puzzlement turned to an inward, seething rage. He thought he saw it all now. No wonder he had been warned against Mark Coulson. The dirty twister had just stuck his expenses in his pocket and then gone out on a jag, leaving Benn to not only ~~foot the bill but suffer a bad loss of trade~~ into the bargain.

"Actually, I did have a traveller, but he seems to have been a bit of a washout, it was he who told me that you were not looking. Evidently he did not call."

"Evidently not. I am quite confident that your business card was not sent in to me. Who was the fellow by the way? Anybody I know?"

"He *said* he knew you well. Mark Coulson is the name. Used to be with Bardens, and before them Shepherds."

It was now Doyle's turn to look surprised.

"Why, of course, I know the fellow well, although I can't say I like him overmuch. Still one can't let personal likes interfere with business—but he doesn't travel for you. He travels for Hanwell's. I bought a big parcel off him only last Monday. What is more it was the double of that military cap you have been showing me. The confounded thing is getting copied all over the place."

For the first time in his life Amos wished that he had been of the opposite sex and therefore enjoyed the excuse of a really high-powered hysterical outburst.

With a tremendous effort he conquered the desire to blurt out the whole story to the buyer, but that could do no good now, beyond making him look openly the fool he inwardly felt himself to be.

"Been a general mix-up all round, I am afraid," he said. "Anyhow, Coulson is not with me just now. I think I'll take the road myself for a week or two, until the right man turns up."

Politely he ushered his visitor to the doors, then, alone in his showroom he vented his feelings in language that he would have been the first to reprimand in another. On a sudden thought he went to the telephone and rang up his bitterest rival, Leatherbottom. Sometimes even enemies can be useful.

"What's that," answered Leatherbottom, testily. "Of course, I know Hanwell's. He hasn't been started long. His wife is a sister-in-law to your late man, Coulson. I hear Mark has gone over there now."

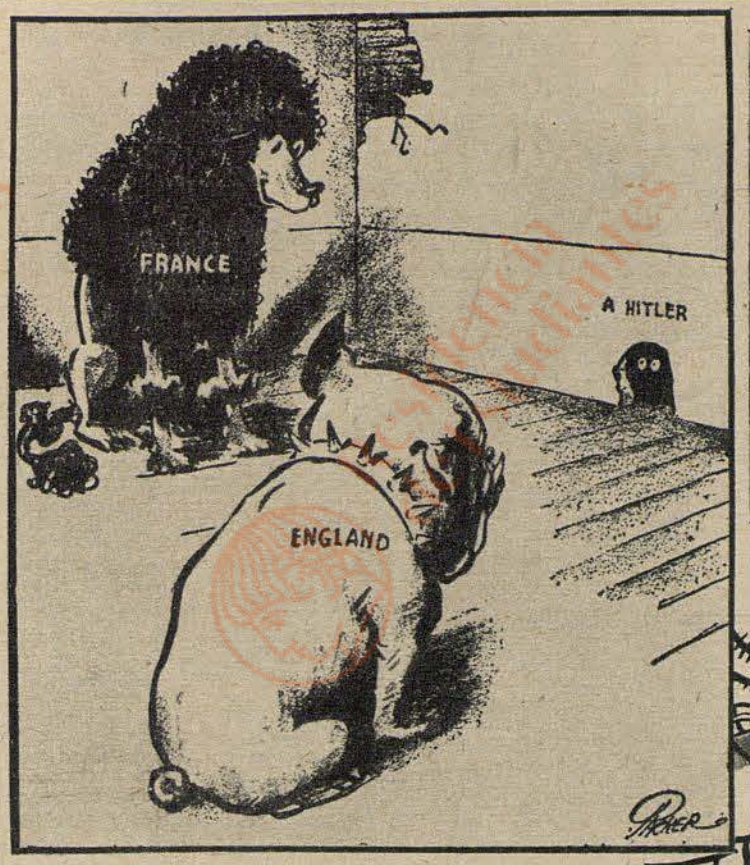
Breathing a final malediction, Amos replaced the instrument. The thought that made him the most savage was his ~~own helplessness~~. ~~Whatever the legal~~ position Benn was of far too stiff-necked a pride to risk making himself the laughing stock of a town where his acumen had reached the dignity of a byword.

Wearily the manufacturer looked up at the opening of his office door. It was Lucelle. In her hands she held a crumpled letter. The rosy tinge on her cheeks proclaimed the author beyond question.

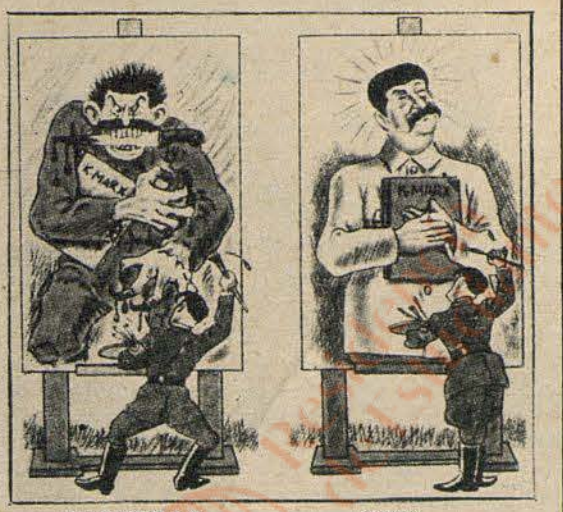
"Such a loffley lettair from Philleep," she smiled. "He says to tell you zat he is going on fine an' will be writing shortly an' zat he is learning to drop bombs—dummy ones."

"Tell him that dummy ones are no good to me," growled Benn. "What I want is a *real* one. What's more, I can tell him exactly where to drop it."

WAR WIT from France and America

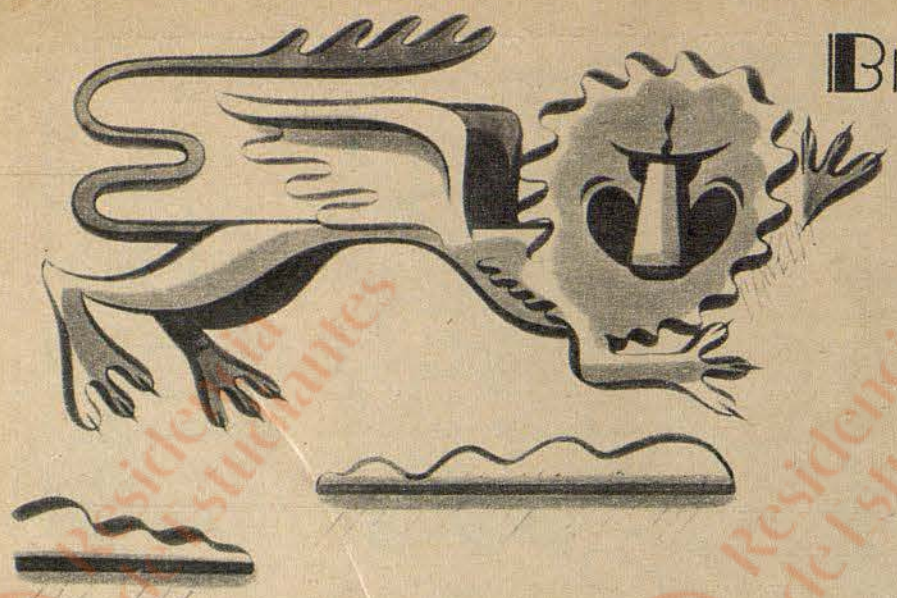


"The Waiting Game"
—New York Daily Mirror



FORMERLY NOW
"Stalin Painted by Hitler"
—Marianne, Paris

"No, it's not a practical joke. He was captured by the patrol you sent out to reconnoitre the Siegfried Line."
—Le Dimanche Illustre, Paris



BETWEEN OURSELVES

Send us your own war story or comments on current affairs in not more than 150 words. Half a guinea will be paid for each letter or post card used

A NICE point in patriotic respectfulness has arisen owing to the release of the Air Force propaganda film, *The Lion Has Wings*. During the course of the picture there is a sequence in which two young women, listening to the Prime Minister's speech being broadcast on the day war was declared, hear the National Anthem being played on its conclusion.

With hesitation and self-consciousness they both rise to their feet and stand at attention. And in the cinema where I saw this picture, the audience did exactly the same, struggling to their feet "by numbers" as it were.

Although no one could claim to be more loyal to the throne than I am, I do maintain that this gesture was out of place, for the playing of "God Save the King" was incidental to the story and not something apart as it is when it is played at the end of a public performance.

Logically speaking, if we stand up when the National Anthem is played in a film, we should raise our hats on looking at a picture of members of the Royal Family and jump to attention when reading a reference to them in a newspaper or magazine. And such a course of action would naturally defeat its own ends.

As a race we are very self-conscious over such matters, and I am sure it would be a great relief if some definite ruling were obtained from the Lord Chamberlain's department and then communicated to the general public. When to stand, and when not to do so, is a very knotty point in these days of long films and news reels that introduce the National Anthem on many occasions.—*MISS P. CARR, LONDON, S.W.*

Shot, Sir!

The billiards professional had just joined up in a rifle battalion, and at his first shoot on the range he registered four straight "bulls." A bit staggered, his officer demanded: "How the blazes did you manage to score those bulls? The range is six hundred yards, and your sights are set to three hundred yards."

"Well, sir," replied the billiards star, "you see that little rock away over there on the right, halfway to the target? I'm cannoning 'em off that, sir."—*A. CRABB, BRISTOL, 1.*

Christmas Tale

Christmas Day, not in the workhouse but in a lighthouse, was once my unexpected experience. With eleven others I was partly carried, partly dragged from a ship's open boat after escaping from a vessel that had met its doom on the rocky coast of Finland.

We were helped into the lighthouse and "thawed" by being placed round the stove that stood in the centre of the room. The keeper and his daughter waited on us, and although none of us knew a word of their language nor they of ours, we all got on splendidly, for the question of food was the only one that concerned us.

That just enough food for the two occupants was all that was on hand was evident, but the keeper and his daughter fed us nobly. We all received a portion of roast reindeer—it tastes something like roast beef—a potato, a chunk of dark-coloured bread and, to end with, a dish of pudding. We almost licked the plates, but, unlike Oliver Twist, refrained from asking for more.

Then we danced and made merry with a concertina for music, were given cake and coffee and then went to roost. The next day we boarded a vessel for home; and thus passed the strangest Christmas Day I have ever known.—*MRS. A. SPENSER, PEVERELL, PLYMOUTH.*

Whither Away?

On a recent evening during the black-out a passenger boarded one of a number of buses waiting at the terminus, and when the conductor and driver arrived a few moments later and the journey

began he found that he was the only passenger.

After the bus had gone a few hundred yards, the conductor came to take the passenger's fare, and the latter held out his coppers and stated his destination.

"You're on the wrong bus," the conductor said, shaking his head.

"Nothing of the sort!" protested the passenger. "I travel over this route every day."

"And I still say you're on the wrong bus!" retorted the conductor. "We do *not* go to the place you want."

"Well, your destination board says you go there!" the passenger insisted.

The conductor blanched. "Good heavens!" he exclaimed. "Then we must be on the wrong bus!"

And, as a matter of fact, they were!—*R. THORNTON, LEEDS, 8.*

Hint for War House

Why does the army use such high-powered staff cars which have a heavy petrol consumption? Is it essential to use twenty-two and thirty-horse-power cars when small, economically run cars would suffice? Perhaps the "eights" and "tens" have not sufficient room, but surely our British "fourteens" have. When one sees these petrol eaters on the road, those six gallons a month we are allowed don't seem so much!"—*STUDENT, EDINBURGH.*

Fishy Business

Here in Brightlingsea we have a glut of sprats. Fisherman are lucky to get a shilling a bushel for their catch, and are even selling the "left-overs" for sixpence a bushel to be used as manure. Yet the town shops are charging fivepence or sixpence a pound for them.

It doesn't seem fair that men should risk their lives to provide manure for farmers, especially when, at this time of the year sprats are very oily, and cook in their own fat. In fact, wherever there is a shoal, the oil can be seen on top of the water.

What a pity we do not make greater use of this little fish, for it is a fine food. Admittedly some sprats go to canneries in England, but only a very small proportion of those caught. We prefer to import "sardines."—*A. C. PORTER, BRIGHTLINGSEA.*

Modest Estimate!

An English employer of labour once told me that he would rather have a Welshman at his side in times of emergency and dire necessity than a workman of any other race because he possessed, he said, "that little bit of reserve" which is so essential in times of crisis.

The large increase in the Welsh coal output, my informant told me, is due not so much to the extra labour employed but to the increase in the average output per man . . . that "little bit of reserve" being brought into play in the time of national emergency. No other industry since the war, asserted my informant, can show such a happy state of affairs.—*ELIAS EVANS, RHONDDA.*

Lesser Evil

Britain's decision to seize German exports seems to have met with particularly strong criticism from both Belgium and Holland. That a British victory may mean loss of trade to these two countries during the war is unfortunate, but surely a Nazi victory would be a disaster.

It would not be a matter of trade lost for the duration, but of freedom and fatherland lost for perhaps centuries.—*J. R. EVANS.*

How Like a Man!

When I visited a music hall the other night I was sorry to find that no fewer than three comedians cracked would-be humorous gags directed to the activities of the vast unofficial army of women who are knitting comforts for the troops. So may I take this opportunity of registering a strong protest at such bad taste?

Not only are the fair women of Britain doing excellent work in making scarves, socks, Balaclava helmets, and so on, but this habit of knitting should be encouraged by every possible means, for it confers an inestimable boon on all women. It gives them something to think about when they are talking!—*M. L. GREENE, LONDON, W.1.*

Simple Solution

During the last war, when I was a member of the R.A.S.C., volunteers were very rare when there was any road repairing to be done. One day, the road near a certain village was in a bad state and urgently required mending before the nightly stream of service lorries passed over it.

Therefore, the officer in charge of our group had us all lined up and told all those who wanted leave into the village

that evening to take one pace forward. Naturally, every man did so.

"Right," said the officer. "But you must mend the road before you go." And mend it we did.

A fortnight later, the road on the other side of the village also needed repairing, and once again we were paraded and invited to take a pace forward if we wanted leave in the village. But this time we were not to be caught so easily. Not a man moved.

Our officer grinned cheerfully. "Well," said he, "if you are going to remain here, you might as well have something to do, so you can jolly well mend that road!"—*L. WEBSTER, DARLASTON.*

* * *

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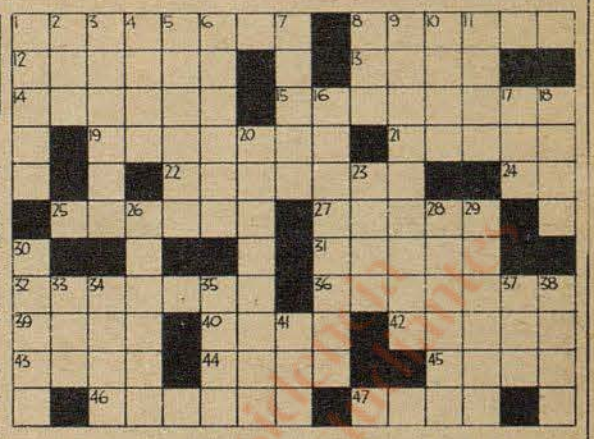

You should get this right now.

CLUES ACROSS

1. Cart a cat to a watery descent.
8. Their middle is, naturally, in the middle of dumpling.
12. He's a speaker, or a bit of a Tory.
13. Pleasant sort of depression, as a rule.
14. Dedicate one's efforts etc.—not Sambo's election ticket.
15. Places out of contact.
19. Come from the man at ease.
21. Place inside a photo, for instance.
22. May be turned to salt net but should be turned to account.
24. Take half a glance.
25. Partly dressed, at least, for your interest!
27. Men or their four-footed friends.
31. As is the Thames to Teddington.
32. He was a happier traveller when frontiers were not closed.
36. Let some, in edible form, be put down here.
39. Latin year.
40. Sound of engine running sweetly.
42. Strips the rind off backwards—for a rest.
43. This carnation gives one new life.
44. Does become poetic.
45. Always less than at no time.
46. Sampled.
47. Are you still putting '39?

CLUES DOWN

1. For conduct or communications.
2. Nest about it would be closest.
3. A big barrel upside down is part of this pub.
4. You couldn't really see it in black cat omen.
5. Axis may be required to.
6. Scenes of combat.
7. Sounds like — and describes—literary tripe.
8. This fuss sounds like a big dinner or party etc.
9. To keep enemy out (i.e., sad pals will suffice).
10. Fifty in the vessel for a scheme.
11. Allow.
16. These legislators have their duty list upside down.
17. Fishy part of bagpipe music.
18. Cease and desist.
20. Height.
23. A shipshape shingle?
26. Two Shakespearian gentlemen were of this town.
28. All in a wager—not for a song, but a dance.
29. To hide the arm or the laugh.
30. Sailor in a steamship in the sky.
33. Of course this isn't the number you always think of.
34. Something singular about opportunity.
35. Sounds an unhealthy bit of Chicago to be on.
37. Hill that starts the clubman's daily round.
38. Lively.
41. Colourful version of 18 down?

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Printed in Great Britain by Odhams (Watford) Ltd., Watford, and published weekly by Odhams Press Ltd., Long Acre, London, W.C.2. Registered at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper, and re-entered as second class matter May 2, 1939, at the New York Post Office. Postage: Inland and Abroad 2d. per copy; Canada 1½d. per copy. Agents for the Dominions: For Australia and New Zealand, Gordon & Gotch, Ltd.; for South Africa, Central News Agency, Ltd., for Canada, Imperial News, Ltd., also Canadian Wholesale Newsdealers' Association, Ltd.

L.S.80 A190