

The Children's Newspaper, March 28, 1942

Sad News From Down Below

It is sad to know that over one-third of the coal mined in this country is still hauled by ponies at or near the coal face. In all, some 32,000 ponies and horses are today employed in this way, and the mechanical conveyor is coming far too slowly.

North Staffordshire has 91 per cent and Notts 82 per cent of the total output carried by mechanical conveyors, and only 1300 ponies are still used by them; these counties stand at the head of the list of reformed collieries. Durham is at the bottom, presenting a very different picture, for in this county 10,174 ponies are employed and only a quarter of its annual output of 31,414,000 tons was in 1938 hauled by

machinery. South Wales is the next blackest area, with 7400 ponies.

Since the year 1929 the average annual increase in the use of mechanical conveyors has been just over 4 per cent, the years 1937 and 1938 showing only 3 per cent. Surely, with the rapid growth of the Grid, electricity could be employed to a greater extent today with more efficiency in this arduous work. Its more rapid adoption or, as an alternative that of compressed air, would not only release our ponies for more pleasant work above ground, but should do something to reduce the man and boy power engaged in looking after these animals down below.

STORY

We like the story of the restaurant in a small Canadian town which had so many souvenir hunters among its customers that this notice was added to the menu:

Our spoons are not medicine; they must not be taken after meals.

A WILD RUBBER?

In the search for wild rubber there may be good reason to thank Professor Harper Goodspeed, who suggests exploiting the rabbit-brush rubber.

The rabbit-brush grows knee-high and taller all the way from south California to the Rockies on waste and desert lands. It is a shrub with a flower like golden rod, and solid bits and shreds of rubber grow in its tissues. Harvested and processed, at a cost of about two shillings a pound, it might produce anything up to about 25,000 tons of solid rubber a year; worth having in these times.

Guayule rubber, already well known is harvested similarly.

A BRAVE CORNISH LAD

A brave Cornish lad, Edwin Glenville Matthews of Penzance, has just been presented with a Certificate of Merit by the RSPCA for his bravery in rescuing a dog from a well.

The dog was heard whining down below, and Edwin volunteered to descend by the rope used for drawing water. The rope looked as if it might break under any great strain, and Edwin was warned of the risk.

But nothing would daunt him, and, tying the rope round his body, he was lowered 30 feet to the water. There he found the poor creature clinging to a ledge and whining piteously. He grasped the dog under one arm and, holding on to the rope with the other, was hauled back to the surface without mishap.

This Kind World

WE have been considering of late the good news that artists are finding a demand for their pictures of the ruins of London, and have been writing, also, of the fine spirit of the Dutch. In this story both these things meet.

Like many other artists in these dark days, a friend of ours had fallen upon very hard times, with mortgages closing in on him, and an utter lack of that public appreciation which in the past had made his name so popular.

But the other day a Dutch citizen came to his studio who turned out to be a fairy prince.

Exiled in London, he had not forgotten his love of beauty, and on seeing the artist's pictures he commissioned four new ones, gave the artist 20 Five Pound Notes on account, and in a day or two returned with the balance in Ten Pound Notes. Nor was that all, for very soon the good fairy prince came back and bought eight pictures hanging in the studio, which enabled the artist to ring up more than one debtor to say that a nice cheque was on the way, and led him to write to tell us that "it was all so wonderful that I can scarcely sleep for the thrill of it all."

A LOST STAR TURNS UP

A lost star has been found. It is the fiery new star which blazed up in the heavens before the eyes of the great Kepler, the Father of Modern Astronomy, more than 300 years ago.

It came to him like a reward to salute his solution of the movement of the planets, and it was in itself what the astronomers call a super nova, like the Star of Bethlehem, and only the third of the kind to appear in the Milky Way in 900 years. Then, as happens to these apparitions, it faded and disappeared. Now it has been found on a photograph, and identified in its place, invisible to all but the bigger telescopes.

The New Church Windows

ONE of the most brutish things Hitler has done is to shatter the glass in hundreds of churches.

All of us long for the day when the war is over and the menace of bombing and the fear of invasion are forgotten; but when that day comes what kind of new windows shall we see then, we wonder.

A hint comes from East London, for St Augustine's church at Haggerston now has a window with a portrait of an air raid warden. It is a notable piece of pioneering. We see a little girl who has groped her way in the blackout to the vicar's door. She stands on tiptoe to ring the bell. Her gas-mask is slung over her

shoulder, and close by stands the warden whose torch helps the child to find the bell. The warden is shown wearing his helmet and gas-mask. To the right of the group is a wall of sandbags, a cat crouching in the shadows.

This is a beginning. Our churches have long preserved windows showing the life and thought of men and women in past centuries; and it seems proper that whatever new glass finds its way into our churches now should in some measure portray something of the agony and splendour, the suffering and gallantry, of these momentous years. It should certainly have the saints of old, but should not omit the heroes of today.

JACK-IN-THE-BOX NUMBER 61

Element 61, believed to be the only one not found in Nature, has popped up again, only to disappear immediately like a Jack-in-the-Box.

It has its number in the Table of the Elements, and was given a name Illinium by one of its convinced discoverers. But nobody has been able to hold it down. The latest explorers revealed it by very delicate tests, but it made the briefest appearance, showing by its radioactivity that 61 was there, and then vanished by disintegration—not without reason—to its hiding-place in the so-called "rare earths"

FRIEND OF THE NAVY

DEAR EDITOR.—This is a true story. My Daddy wrote to the Radio Times about the brave men of the Merchant Navy. Miss —, who saw the letter, sent Daddy ten shillings each month so that he could buy books for the sailors. Last week her father wrote to say that the girl had died. She had lain in bed four years, yet her thoughts were for others all the time. Among her possessions was £3 15s for the Merchant Navy.

SHELLA ROSS, Edinburgh

ENEMIES OF THE FOOD SUPPLY

As to the report that sparrows, starlings, rooks, and gulls are on sale for human food, Mr. Crosthwaite, of the Scottish Society for the Protection of Wild Birds, writes that there is in existence the Wild Bird Protection Act of 1880, which forbids members of the public from killing certain wild birds from March 1 to August 1.

The sparrow, starling, rook, and gull in particular are useful to the farmer, and it is surely contrary to the urgent national interest in food production to kill and eat birds which, by destroying noxious insects and weed seeds, are helping the farmer to produce more food.



Air-Minded Girls

Members of Redhill Women's Junior Air Corps studying a map. The corps has 270 members, and the training includes map-reading, first aid, Morse, knowledge of car mechanism, and physical exercises

THE BATTLE FRONTS

How strange are the battlefields of this war!

We have got used to our men fighting in desert sands, in choking jungles, and in the Russian snows. Since Japan struck her first blow at us, we have fought in hot congested streets, among strange houses, docks, and warehouses—a confused sort of fighting that seems hard for us to sort out and understand.

We have even got used to the idea that we may be fighting on our own beaches, in our green fields, and among our own streets and homes, while fighting in the air seems as natural today to the Englishman as fighting on the sea has always been.

Now, as the war spreads over the Pacific Islands, we prepare to fight where fortresses are perched on volcanoes, and in battlefields among cinchona trees, tea bushes, coffee and coconut trees, and in the green rice fields which are for hundreds of millions the security against famine.

TWO AS ONE

An Australian nurse in an AIF hospital in the Middle East sends us this little note.

There are hard cases in this hospital. Two very nice lads have recently each had an eye removed, and during convalescence were allowed to visit the pictures. The native attendant at the door had to be content with one entrance fee for the pair, as they pointed out that they could each see only half as much as those with two eyes!

The New Windjammers

A SUNDERLAND flying-boat fought her way through a violent storm, but used all her petrol in doing so, and had to come down on the sea.

The crew did not intend to stay put and wait for help, so they fixed a dinghy oar to the mast of their machine and rigged up the canvas awning of a cockpit to act as a sail. The optimistic airmen then informed their base by radio that they were sailing home at a speed of one knot, and expected to arrive

three days hence. However, another Sunderland took them some petrol in tins, and they were able to fly home.

A few days before this incident a British destroyer had her engines put out of action when she was caught in a heavy gale 150 miles from port. Rather than ask assistance from another ship, the captain hoisted one sail from his whaleboat and another saved from the lifeboat of a merchant ship. He then sailed his destroyer 150 miles back to port.

AFTERNOONS OUT IN TOTAL WAR

A CN housewife had her first afternoon for many months free from household and voluntary public duties.

Walking through a big store in London's West End, she saw a long queue of well-dressed women, and her curiosity was roused. Investigation showed that face powders and other cosmetics were being sold, and the first customer seen to be served made purchases amounting to £2, the next spent £1 10s, and the third £1.

That was enough for our housewife, who, for several days, had been dealing with other queues—selling to them Savings Certificates and Bonds in a local effort to provide another warship for the Navy!

TWO MEN ON A RAFT

Life on a raft after being torpedoed has in general been hopeless and miserable in the extreme. A ship's officer, however, has been giving his mind to the urgent question of designing a raft, and when two seamen found themselves adrift on it they were able to live in moderate comfort and step ashore after thirty days in good bodily condition.

SAVING OUR ELMS

Something has to be done, and something is being done, about the Dutch elm disease which threatened the elms of our countryside some years ago, and then transferred itself still more destructively to the elms of the American Atlantic coast states.

The earliest sign of it is the wilting of the leaves, which has now been traced to a living poison, spreading out from the microscopic fungus which attacks the tree, and may be conveyed by insects. It is a fungus of the kind that attacks tomato plants, and it is believed it may be counteracted by two well-known chemical acids, one a coal tar product. The application of these may save destroying affected elms.