I DO THINK IT'S TOO BAD!

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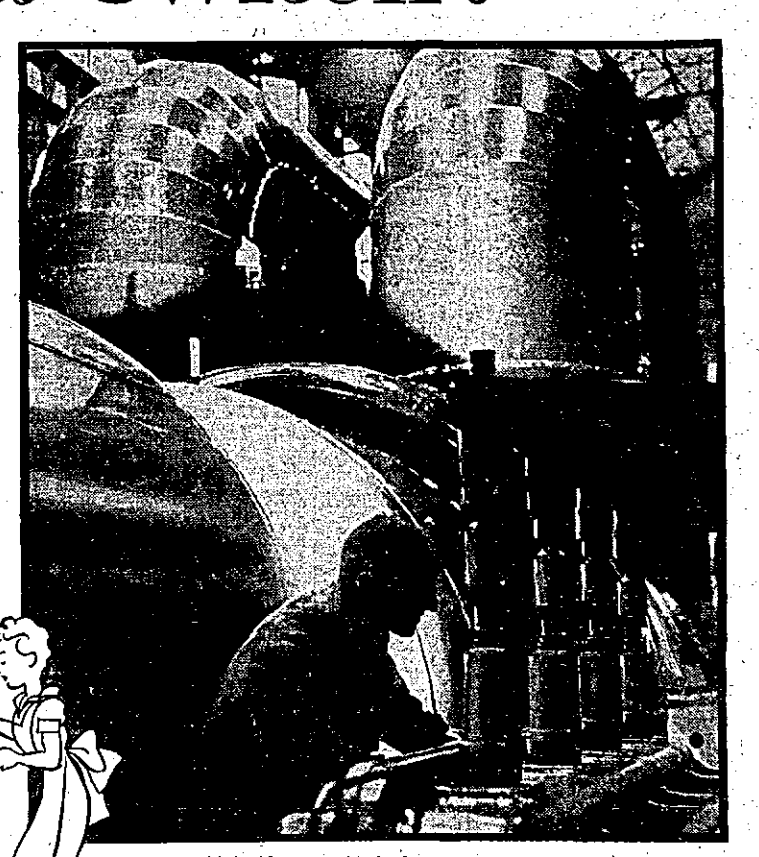
Are you at the mercy of a switch?

by **LORD CLONMORE**



Even the simplest meal in a modern home is dependent on the intricate work of men miles away.

WHEN I was in Ireland the other day we made an expedition up to the mountains, and stopped for luncheon in a beautiful valley.

After luncheon my companions, who were tiresomely energetic, insisted on climbing to the top of one of the hills, but as fat men panting up a steep slope are both uncomfortable and undignified, I decided to stay near the car and the provisions.

Farm that has survived

AFTER I had been left in peace, I noticed that on the other side of the stream there was a little farm; a poor enough place, surrounded by a few trees and some unfertile land, but attractive at the same time. Judging from the size of the trees, which were planted in a square round the house, the farm must have been there for many years.

It had no doubt withstood many bad times, the rebellions of 1798 and 1916, the cruel landlordism of the 18th century and the potato famine of the 19th. It would probably live through even worse crises, but as I thought of this I began to wonder how much of Europe would also survive.

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Now, I hate warmongers; there are too many about nowadays, threatening us with a fresh cavalry charge by the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Wherever one goes, one always seems to be meeting somebody like Goldsmith's Mr Croaker, who found it a "perfect satisfaction to be miserable with his friends."

On the other hand, nobody with any sense can be breezily optimistic at the moment.

Disturbing prophecy

NOBODY has very pleasant memories of the last war, and if the politicians of Europe are foolish and base enough to bring about another, it is likely to be considerably worse.

Indeed, as Mr Bernard Shaw has so wisely pointed out, another European war is likely to be of such frightfulness that we are the more likely to be spared one for that very reason.

I have recently read a short story by Mr Evelyn Waugh, in which an inhabitant of 20th century London is bewitched by a dealer in black magic, and finds himself in London 500 years ahead.

It is not the London which you might expect, with television in every room and airplanes on every roof, but a wilderness, inhabited by a handful of barbarians. One is given to understand that the London which we know has been destroyed in some war.

Well, if such an insane thing should happen as another conflagration in Europe, Mr Waugh's prophecy is likely to become true. And this brings me back to that farm in the Irish mountains.

Whether Ireland gets let in for a war or not, that little farm is likely to go on much the same as before, even though a son or two of the house should be killed. Life there is much as it has always been.

They still draw their water from the little river which runs near the house, they live almost entirely on their own produce, and depend on peat for their fuel. The farm is lit in the evenings by a couple of paraffin lamps, and if paraffin were unobtainable some kind of crude light could be devised.

There are still many farms like this all over the British Isles, which are not likely to be hit by enemy bombs. A war might make life in them more primitive, and deprive them of small luxuries, but it is unlikely that there would be any more serious results.

Unfortunately, most people do not live in small farms nowadays; the vast majority of the inhabitants of these islands live in large towns.

In the event of a big air raid over this country a good proportion of the population would probably be blown to pieces, others might perish in fires and under falling buildings, and others die in various forms of torment due to poison gas.

Desperate situation

THE survivors, however, would also find themselves in a desperate situation. Apart from the general horror, they would find themselves in a world which was dislocated to an extent they would not have believed possible.

People are never tired of telling us how grateful we should be to physical science.

Just think of the life of the average town-dweller. When he gets up, if it is at all dark, he dresses by electric light; he washes in water which comes through a tap, though he would be hard set to tell you how it reached the tap. The soap he uses has been manufactured somewhere, but unless he is a soapmaker he could not tell you much more about it than that.

His breakfast is cooked on an electric or gas cooker; and he knows that the electricity or gas comes from a power station somewhere or other. The food is brought by modern transport services to the shops where his wife buys it.

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Having eaten his breakfast he leaves for work, travelling by electric train. He is carried from the street to his office by electric lift, and at six in the evening the procedure is reversed, ending with his going to sleep in sheets which have been washed by a mechanical laundry.

This is all very progressive and labour-saving, but—and a very big but—we are now alarmingly dependent on the great machine of civilisation.

Imagine this picture

IF a horse on a farm were to be so foolish as to eat a spanner it would die, but the farm would only be a few pounds the worse. On the other hand, if in some modern factory a careless workman were to drop a spanner into a vital part of the machinery, the work of the whole factory might be brought to a standstill.

An air raid on London today would be diabolically efficient, and far more effective than anything in the last war. A big spanner would be dropped into the machinery of our civilisation. Just try to imagine it, however terrible the picture. There are not only the dead, the wounded, and the dying, but there are also the survivors, huddled together in the big cities.

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In all probability their water supplies, their lighting, their food supplies, and their transport are completely dislocated, some of them damaged beyond hope of repair.

In consequence, they are faced with starvation, almost pitch darkness after sunset (for there would not be enough oil lamps and candles to go round!), economic chaos and disease through bad sanitation.

A pretty prospect, and if you are imaginative you can work out all kinds of minor details for your edification.

Crazy spirit

I AM sorry to be a Mr Croaker, but I think most sensible people will agree that what I am saying is not an old wives' tale, but an unpleasant truth.

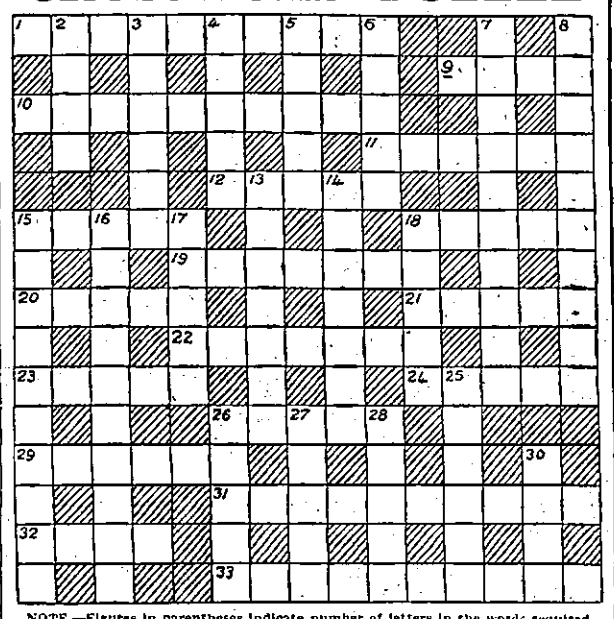
On the other hand, this need not take place. Blindness, sentimentality and neglect of the facts went near to landing us in a war earlier this year. Let us take a lesson from that and not sail near the wind again.

We realise what untold horrors could be brought on this country; we also know that there is a crazy spirit wandering through Europe at this moment, which mercifully has few clients in these islands.

Now, no good purpose can conceivably be served by poking our noses where they are not wanted, so for heaven's sake let us keep out of the mess, and make up our minds to stick to this resolution before it is too late.

A shrewd wit said in a letter to the papers recently, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be stoned from both sides." This is not so cynical as it sounds.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



NOTE.—Figures in parentheses indicate number of letters in the words required.

Across.

1. Make a song about a club, and you are sure to be speaking incoherently (10).
9. One of the earliest mariners turns into an open space (4).
10. What a watch contains and gives in season (10).
11. If Llandudno fails to give us tone, we can get it here before leaving London (6)
12. Fortification (5).
15. In money terms may be worth ten shillings, but you can buy a really good one for a penny (5)
18. Fish (5)
19. Charms, but not all yours (7).
20. Froggy's last word? (3).
21. G.B.S. monopolises most of this ladylike comfort (5)
22. Appropriate complaint for the keyhole listener (7)
23. This northern town is surely in the forefront (5)
24. Not ours, but in the Irish Free State (5).
26. Forward ones may be unreserved (5).
29. Lend a hand! (6)
31. A great pianist of the past (10).
32. Proverbially brave (4).
33. Strained relations put an end to this claim (10).

Down.

2. There are two varieties of it for the shepherd's mouth (4).
3. Play fast and loose (6).
4. "It is a nipping and an—air" ("Hamlet") (5).
5. The epic of epics (5).
6. "My salad days, When I was—in judgment" ("Antony and Cleopatra") (5)
7. Tiger dance (anagram) (10).
8. It's pure luck to roll back with the minister (10)
13. Expatiate (7)
14. Fruit (7)
15. More than usually in an odd way (10).
16. Occupation that may be a mere pretence (10)
17. Enfilades roués (5).
18. Changing 26 Across.
25. Break in a series like a nut is when demolished (6).
26. Held by folks of standing? (5)
27. Here the blame is distributed (5).
28. Folly's antonym in one this (5)
30. Accomplished nothing but built Carthage (4)

The following is the solution of yesterday's puzzle:—

Across.—1. Embroider; 6. Swarm; 9. Gusto; 10. Imaginary; 11. Trivial; 12. Settler; 13. Plaintive; 15. Carol; 17. Wroth; 19. Radically; 21. Raining; 23. Bragged; 25. Eternally; 26. Amour; 27. Sheet; 28. Redressed.

Down.—1. Eight; 2. Bastinado; 3. Oxonian; 4. Drill; 5. Roadstead; 6. Sciatic; 7. Avail; 8. Mayoralty; 13. Powerless; 14. Irregular; 16. Religious; 18. Hair-net; 20. Charade; 22. Irene; 23. Bayed; 24. Dared.

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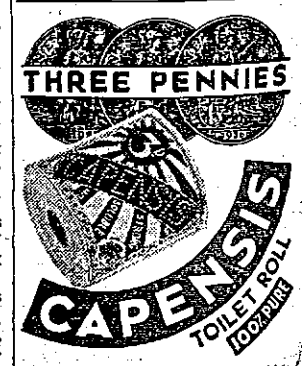

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