

Decoy Targets for Zeppelins

By R. J. Bjerstedt

THERE is no doubt that more powerful guns are now available than those which made so ridiculous a showing during the September and October raids on London, but the problem of adequate range finding is so nearly prohibitive that few who are familiar with it pin much hope to a gun defense.

I am credibly informed, however, that what might be called "diversionary" protective measures have been employed with considerable success. These consist of various ingenious devices calculated to draw the fire of the Zeppelins away from the points where they could do the most harm. So far, these appear to have been employed principally in the important manufacturing districts between London and the North Sea rather than in the immediate environs of the metropolis. The idea is said to have originated in the mind of a Norfolk farmer after a pile of chaff which he had been burning on the night of a raid was made the target of several well-placed Zeppelin bombs.

"The Zepps thought my fire was the blast of the — mills," he told an air service officer. "Why not have some ready to fool 'em the next time they come?"

Since factories and barracks were the main objects of attack, why not provide some that could be found without difficulty and the destruction of which would be of small moment. The first experiment was made by cutting "window-holes" in a row of bill-boards—"hoardings" the English call them—along a railway, and illuminating each orifice with a carbide lamp. When these came in for attention from the raiders, the present plan of using "stage scenery" factories and barracks as Zeppelin decoys was outlined.

These decoys consist simply of sections of imitation walls, pierced with windows, which, by means of guys and props, can be made to represent the side or sky-lighted roofs of a factory or barracks. Where practicable the illumi-

nation is furnished by running a cable from the nearest electric transmission line, and where this is too troublesome or expensive, carbide or kerosene lamps are employed. The sections hook or clamp together and are made small enough to allow of a stack of them being carried on one of the big war motor trucks.

An interesting light is thrown on this phase of protective work by a photograph that was published in England about three months ago, and probably also in the United States. It showed a huge war motor truck, with an enormous tarpaulin-covered load, stalled between the copings of an old stone bridge over which it had endeavored to pass. The caption merely explained that it was "Somewhere in England," and that the load itself was an "official secret." Most of the information which I have set down above came to me as a consequence of this photograph.

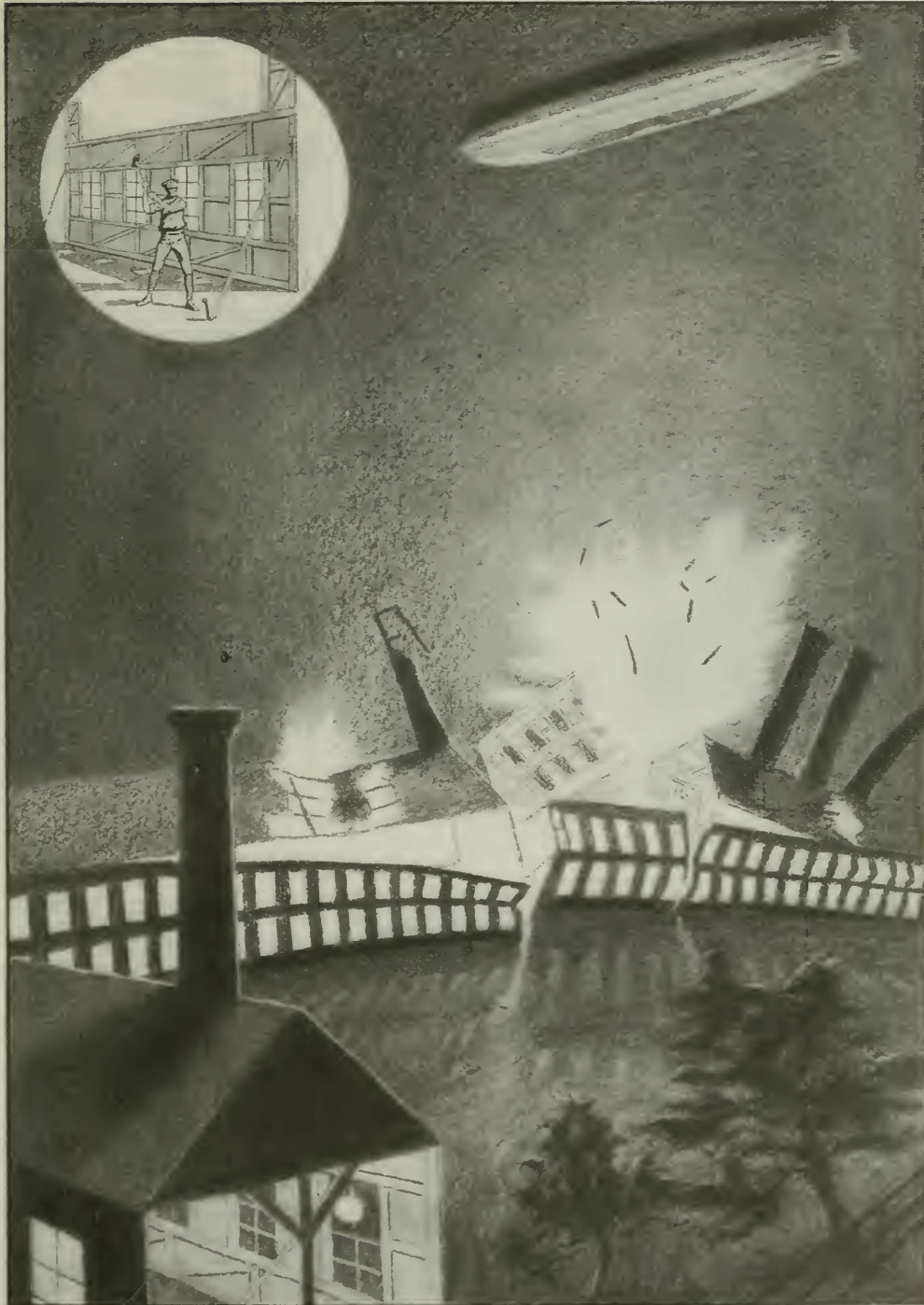
I chanced to be looking over the copy of the *Daily Mirror* on the cover of which the view in question appeared, when a garrulous and slightly inebriated "Tommy" who shared my third class apartment with me asked if I knew what the load was.

"Not beyond the fact that it is an 'official secret,' I replied. "Do you know anything about it?"

"Blime me if I don't," was the answer. "She wuz carryin' stage scen'ry; stage scen'ry fer the Zepps."

The man, it appeared, was a member of the Army Service Corps, and was just returning from the hospital where to use his own words, he had been to "git a hunk o' 'fact'ry'" picked out of him.

His injuries, he said, had been received when a "factory" which he had helped to erect was actually struck and demolished by a Zeppelin bomb. They had just switched the lights on from their dug-out, he said, when the Zeppelin hove in sight and headed up to pass right over the decoy. The "factory" was blown to pieces, but a couple of hours' repair work on the morrow left the shattered sections in as good shape as ever.



Decoys for Zeppelins

In order to deceive bomb-dropping Zeppelins, the English are building "stage" factories (mere painted scenes) which are illuminated at night