

## BOOK OF THE WEEK.

## "THE MAN FROM THE CLOUDS." \*

He was very much from the clouds, for he unwillingly, most unwillingly, descended in a parachute from a towed naval balloon, that had broken its moorings, somewhere about the middle of the North Sea.

"There we were, heading, as far as I could judge, for the stars that twinkle over the German coast."

Not a pleasant experience that, at the end of August, 1914. Rutherford, who was in charge of the balloon, had advised taking to the parachutes earlier than his companion had deemed to be prudent. He went over the side of the basket, and, poor fellow, he found a watery grave.

"If you want to know what loneliness—real, horrifying loneliness—is like, I know no better recipe than drifting through a fog in a balloon, with your only companion gone, and not the faintest belief in your heart that you are within a hundred miles of any inch of square earth."

He describes graphically his own descent. "I only know that when I first became conscious of anything, I was drifting like a snowflake down through the mist, and that I could fill several pages with my thoughts during that drift." Eventually he saw a green space, and "almost before I realised what the greenness meant I was sitting in a field of clover."

Where was that field located that was the question.

"In the gay days when I was attaché at Berlin, I had acquired a fair general acquaintance with Germany, and I instantly put down the place I had landed in as some part of the flat, wind-swept country not far from the North Sea coast.

Naturally our friend Roger Merton immediately started to cover up his traces, by burying the parachute, by discarding his naval cap, and by buttoning his oilskins up to his chin. He congratulated himself on his fluency in the German language. Shortly, he happened on a figure also in oilskins, whom he judged to be a fisherman.

"Good evening," I said genially in my best German. "It's a fine night."

"Good evening," he said, also in German, quite involuntarily, it seemed, for the next moment he spoke again in a very different key and in English.

"Heaven! are you insane?" he said in a low, intense voice, and with a distinct trace of guttural accent. "Don't speak German here! Have you no other language? Don't you speak English?"

Very mystifying this to our friend, who supposed himself on German soil.

"I began to realise more exactly what had happened. The upper current of air had been blowing westwards—not eastwards. The good land under my feet was assuredly not German."

\* By Storer Coulston. Blackwood & Sons, London.

almost certainly it must be a part of my own blessed native island."

Who, then, was the man in oilskins who had bidden him not speak in German, and who completely disappeared when his suspicions were aroused? A German spy! and Roger had actually convinced the man for the moment that he was a confederate. What a bit of luck for a young newly-made lieutenant of the R.N.V.R.

The mystery which surrounds this incident makes a capital basis for a good story well told.

In this small island, with only a handful of people, whose is the house which harbours the spy?

Is it the doctor's, with his eccentric guest, O'Briern by name? Is it his kinsman's, the owner of the island, Mr. Rendall? Is his pretty, up-to-date daughter, with the intelligent eyes, concerned in the plot? Could he be harboured by the farmer Scollay, who answered Roger Merton's questions with Northern terseness? It is not surprising that Roger himself found the tables turned on him, and that the naval authorities were communicated with and that he was duly escorted off the island.

We will not spoil the reader's enjoyment of the tale, if they should have the good fortune to read it, by revealing the secret, which is so carefully concealed until the end of the book.

Read it for yourselves, and don't peep at the last chapter until you reach it legitimately.

H. H.

## COMING EVENTS.

June 24th-27th.—National Council of Women of Great Britain and Ireland. Annual Meeting. De Montfort Hall, Leicester.

June 27th.—Nurses' Registration Bill (Central Committee) Report Stage, House of Commons.

June 30th.—Royal British Nurses' Association, Annual General Meeting, 11, Chandos Street, Cavendish Square, W. 1. 3 p.m.

July 1st to 3rd.—National Conference on Infant Welfare as part of National Baby Week Celebrations. The Kingsway Hall, Kingsway, London, W.C. President, the Right Hon. Christopher Addison, M.P., M.D., President of the Local Government Board. Apply for information to the Secretary, 4 and 5, Tavistock Square, London, W.C.

July 5th.—League of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Nurses' General Meeting, St. Bartholomew's Hospital. 2.30. Social Gathering, Great Hall. 4 p.m.

## OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

## QUESTIONS.

June 14th.—How would you prepare a child for operation, more especially in regard to diet?

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)