

gine in the airship was not only an attempt to still further segregate one part of mankind from another; it was also an insult to the Creator who had given man arms instead of wings for a purpose.

"It's man's business to make the earth worth being born into," was Abner's final comment on this. "Those who go up in the air are the enemies of mankind."

Abner hated no man. But when he found out that Harold proposed to climb into the gasoline-locomotive world by means of any rope hung out by Mr. Hugo of the Crimp Housing Association, his hostility became a silent fury. The day that Harold linked up his fortunes with Hugo, that day he must forever leave any house of which his father was the head. He never said this to the boy. But the boy understood. Abner knew that he had nothing to bequeath to his son except a sound mind in a healthy body, with what education he had been able to afford him from the angle of the Soho Block. He quite believed that

Harold had more brains than himself, plus more daring; that he would eventually succeed where he, Abner, had failed. But he had made up his mind; discussion would merely weaken the case.

But like most other social reformers, Abner had no idea that in 1914 the world would catch on fire and begin to burn up a great part of the things that had made Soho so much a milk cow to the C. H. A.

"I wish I was two years older—me for the M. T. first, and then into the Flying Corps," blabbed Harold to his father after he had begun to realize what tremendous new forces the war was creating.

"My boy, take my advice. If you go to war, and not likely you will, because it'll be all over by the time you're of age, go in as a common soldier. March to the Cock of the North and the British Grenadiers. Don't go as a gas expert."

The boy went into munitions. So did Abner. Vulcan was one of the first converted plants. But secretly the lad plugged at the gasoline idea. The very day he was of age he was off like a shot. To Abner's consternation he enlisted in the Navy.

"War's all a surprise package, dad," he said. "I'll get a few Boches anyhow. Good bye."

## V.

THAT was in the early winter of 1916. That summer began the greater production campaign. Abner and his kind were told that they ought to make their backyards produce.

"Splendid idea," echoed Abner. And he was the first in Soho to go ripping up the floor of his 20 by 36 feet box stall. Two days after he got it dug came a letter from Harold saying that he had got himself transferred to the mechanical section of the R.F.C. Then Abner went tearing at the backyard.

Abner Lee hoped he would get no more letters from his son; and that the war would be done before the lad actually got into the air. What garden he made was a poor affair. But the oil would be

better next year.

When next year came—young Harold was some where in the air, and Abner was making his second garden; told by the newspapers that if he did not produce this time he was a land slacker.

By now he had become a curious mixture of patriot, fatalist, rebel and producer. Harold's letters he carefully filed away against the lad's return. He believed the boy would come back. He worked at

his garden in 1917 as one who had found a new gospel in the soil. As usual, other folks in Soho looked to Abner Lee for the model garden. He had it. Those gardens made a difference to Gable St. It was a joy to stand at a back window and watch the little green-checked rugs inside the ugly fences. The soil was a marvellous thing. This was the first time Abner, the city-man, had ever dug and hoed. The gardens became a dream. He found himself thinking of a vista of reforms. The land—!

## VI.

BUT the world was becoming

big. Many of his older theories were crumbling. Nobody to listen to them now as there used to be. The war had everyman's mind. Between the war and the garden any man he knew seemed to be mentally bigger. Abner studied the economics of war, at home and abroad. He saw that much munitions made many people better off. His own wages as a munitioner were bigger. All Soho got more money. But they spent it. The bars went, and still the money went as fast as it was made. All the houses were full again. War that combed the city of men seemed to cram it with people. Abner had never known such crowds in the town. Rents went up. His own increased. This time the increase was not due to any man's family. Mr. Hugo was prospering. He was a head figure in war work. His name was in the newspapers; chairman at patriotic meetings, organizer of war benevolences, at one time director of recruiting—and now he was honorary colonel with, as Abner saw it, a fair chance of a title.

Abner hated the whole bogus idea for which the man stood. He saw through him. Mr. Hugo would climb on the war to bigger things. The world's ideas of society were becoming topsyturvy. The world was a vast place; at times very small. Three boys from the Soho Block were buried in France.

But lord! how the gardens grew!

Once a large motor car came along Gable, bumping over the cedar blocks. That was Dominion Day in 1917. Soho people, all but the children, were busy in the gardens. Abner was weeding and making trellises for beans up the ugly fences, a model for some of his friends. He could make the fences produce and be beautiful at the same time.

Suddenly one of his elder girls came running excitedly into the garden.

"Father—there's a gentleman in a motor car to see you."

Abner went. The caller was Mr. Hugo.

Twice before that car had been on Gable St.

Each time it came—

Great heavens! It must be so again. Abner met the man like one in a dream. The car was barricaded with a blur of children. The engine still running seemed to be the vibrations of another world. The man's voice sounded as though it was on the other end of a long-distance line.

"Mr. Lee—I have cabled inquiries concerning your son who was missing. I have a cable this morning to say that he is dead."

Suddenly it seemed to Abner Lee that the Soho block was a deserted village. The children came round him, almost in tears; those who had known young Harold the bird-man. They poked into his garden; found him fumbling away at the potato-hills and the trellises when it seemed to him suddenly that potato-bugs were as important as people.

God Almighty! such a thing as life had become! He and his neighbors, four of them bereaved, all working like wops at those desperate little gardens that produced so little. And whenever an airship went moaning over the city, Abner cursed it.

## VII.

FOR the world was changing. Men like Abner by millions were gripped by forces greater than the war; the arousal of humanity which was to make the 20th century belong to the average man because it was to make him big enough to take hold of the world. In this miracle Abner Lee and his Gable St. kind became useful links with the swept-away anachronisms of the past. And the city of Wabigo was one of the places where the new earth making way for the new heaven began to be.

Abner never intended anything so big. The sudden death of his son ripped off the blind bandages. Abner saw light. He saw that he had been a wrong man; that he had no business to oppose the desires of that boy to rise into a bigger life than his own; that in his death Harold had left a great impulse to work upon his father; and that unless he, Abner Lee, should carry on the work begun by his boy he might as well go down like a broken limb.

## VIII.

SUCH man-propelling impulses take years to work out. And so we follow Abner down to the day when he had cut clean away from Gable St. Wabigo knew how. The mechanic from the Soho Block found all his restless studies of progress and poverty climaxed in one idea that was compounded of two things formerly as unlike as any two elements in chemistry, which together produce a reaction.

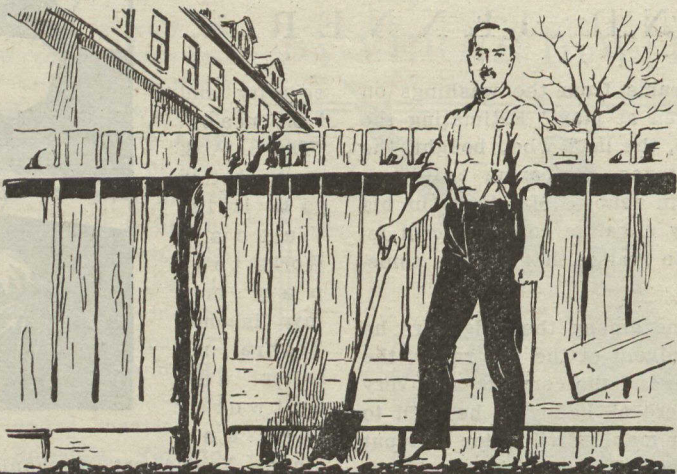
One of these was the backyard garden; the other was the air-ship. Betwixt these two Abner Lee cast off his old grouch-ego and let himself go.

For particulars of this we refer to the columns of the Wabigo Daily Graphic—date not for publication.

## THIS MAN STARTED SOMETHING.

Before the writer could count the aircraft coming and going between the Union Drome at Wabigo and the suburban aero dromes, forty miles north, a vast oriental rug of gardens came up to the jitney like a picture focussing on a camera. These new-type machines, direct-descending on low gear, are an improvement on even the bird. In two minutes here was Abner Lee, chief custos of Aero-Suburban Drome No. 1 in the midst of his great garden fair on the flank of the drome and the hub in a wheel of a thousand acres of such gardens.

Forty miles from the City Hall we were still in the city, or rather in the centre of a great tract of drome-villages, each with its artesian waterworks, individual sewerage and electric lighting. Some time in his socio-economic studies Abner Lee found that the central system of utilities beats itself out somewhere by becoming too costly. Aero-Suburbs are intensified, industrialized farms. His basic idea was that town and country are not two isolated existences as capital and labor used to be; that if a city must contain half a million or more of people who prefer to live close to their jobs, it should give them room without taxing the boots off their feet. The garden-



I'M as stubborn as a Missouri mule, said Abner to himself. I have to be because I'm slow. I come of a slow age. Old nineteenth century. He came just as the kick was going out of the old thing. Well, the world's bigger than both of us. But before he learns to fly, I guess Soho will be reformed—somewhat. No thanks to Mr. Barnabas Smoothmug Hugo.

