

THE EMERGENCY

By A. C. E.

"Business as usual" had begun in the Provincial Bank of Tottenham, as Mr. Chamberlain, the manager, stepped in precisely at ten o'clock. There was an expectant raising of heads of tellers, ledger-keepers, clerks; for the day was the first of April—and had the manager ever been known to miss an opportunity to pull off a practical joke at the expense of some one of his juniors?

With a curt nod at the cages he brisked through to his private office. Turning to close the door, his shrewd eye glimpsed the exchange of sly winks and abortive grins as the staff resettled to its duties. He might fool them by doing nothing.

Mr. Chamberlain flung his Balmacaan into the embrace of an oak chair which stood, open-armed, like a sturdy backstop awaiting the delivery of the sphere. Upon it he deposited bottle-green fedora and chamois gloves. Then he seated himself at his glass-topped desk, brushed aside the ready pile of correspondence and reached for the telephone.

"———"

"H1046."

"———"

"Is that you, Dr. Greene?"

"———"

"Come at once to the Provincial Bank—the paying teller has gone insane!"

Once again did Mr. Chamberlain call for a number, and when he had replaced the ear-piece in its socket and pushed away the instrument, Dr. Greene and Dr. Robinson were on their way to the emergent call.

Drawing the pile of letters before him, he took up the first and began hurriedly glancing over its contents, chuckling to himself, and wondering how the teller would pay out this emergency. In discussing the political situation, the manager had always contended there was no emergency. The teller had always affirmed there was—that Germany was prepared for war—was a menace, in fact, to the British Empire, if not to the whole world. His argument had been that everybody should always be prepared for any and every emergency. Banks should ever be ready for a run. Mr. Chamberlain remembered in the heated argument of the pre-