

But Penney—who had left the high road on purpose—had been over those cross-roads on many previous occasions. Indeed, he knew them as well as any Fen-man, and without slackening speed or faltering, he at last brought the car to a standstill, a few miles beyond the village of Mumby, at a point where three roads met about two miles from the sea.

It was still raining—not quite so heavily as before, but sufficiently to cause Rodwell to discard his fur-lined overcoat for a mackintosh. Then, having placed an electric flash-lamp in his pocket, together with a large, bulky cartridge envelope, a silver flask and a packet of sandwiches, he took a stout stick from the car and, alighting, bade the young man good-night, and set forth into the darkness.

"I wonder whether I'll be in time?" he muttered to himself in German, going forward as he bent against the cold driving rain which swept in from the sea. He usually spoke German to himself when alone. His way, for the first mile, was beside a long, straight "drain," into which, in the darkness, it would have been very easy to slip had he not now and then flashed on his lamp to reveal the path.

Beneath his breath, in German, he cursed the weather, for already the bottoms of his trousers were saturated as he splashed on through the mud, while the rain beat full in his face. Presently he came in sight of a row of cottage-windows at a place called Langham, and then, turning due north into the marshes, he at last, after a further mile, came to the beach whereon the stormy waters of the North Sea were lashing themselves into a white foam discernible in the darkness.

THAT six miles of low-lying coast, stretching from the little village of Chapel St. Leonards north to Sutton-on-Sea, was very sparsely inhabited—a wide expanse of lonely fenland almost without a house.

Upon that deserted, low-lying coast were two coastguard stations, one near Huttoft Bank and the other at

Anderby Creek, and of course—it being war-time—constant vigil was kept at sea both night and day. But as the district was not a vulnerable one in Great Britain's defences, nothing very serious was ever reported from there to the Admiralty.

By day a sleepy plain of brown and green marshes, by night a dark, cavernous wilderness, where the wild sea beat monotonously upon the shingle, it was a truly gloomy, out-of-the-world spot, far removed from the bustle of war's alarm.

Lewin Rodwell, on gaining the beach at the end of a long, straight path, turned without hesitation to the right, and walked to the south of the little creek of Anderby for some distance, until he suddenly ascended a low mound close by the sea, half way between Anderby Creek and Chapel Point, and there before him stood a low-built fisherman's cottage, partly constructed of wood, which by day was seen to be well-tarred and watertight.

Within a few yards of the beach it stood, with two boats drawn up near and a number of nets spread out to dry; the home of honest Tom Small and his son, typical Lincolnshire fishermen, who, father and son, had fished the North Sea for generations.

At the Anchor, in Chapel St. Leonards, old Tom Small was a weekly visitor on Saturday nights, when, in that small, close-smelling bar-parlour, he would hurl the most bitter anathemas at the "All Highest of Germany," and laugh his fleet to scorn; while at Anderby Church each Sunday morning he would appear in his best dark blue trousers, thick blue jacket and peaked cap, a worthy, hard-working British fisherman with wrinkled, weather-beaten face and reddish beard. He was of that hardy type of sea-farer so much admired by the town-dweller when on his summer holiday, a man who, in his youth, had been "cox" of the Sutton lifeboat, and who had stirring stories to tell of wild nights around the Rosse Spit and the Sand Haile, the foundering of tramps with all hands, and the mar-

vellous rescues effected by his splendid crew.

It was this man, heavily-booted and deep-voiced, by whom Lewin Rodwell was confronted when he tapped at the cottage door.

"Come, hurry up! Let me in!" cried Rodwell, impatiently, after the door was slowly unlocked. "I'm soaked! This infernal neighbourhood of yours is absolutely the limit, Small. Phew!" and he threw down his soaked cap and entered the stone-flagged living-room, where Small's son rose respectfully to greet him.

"Where are my other clothes?" he asked, sharply, whereupon the weather-beaten fisherman produced from an old chest in the corner a rough suit of grey tweeds, which Rodwell carried to the inner room on the left and quickly assumed.

"PRETTY nice weather, this!" he shouted cheerily to father and son, while in the act of changing his clothes. "Is all serene? Have you tested lately?"

"Yes, sir," replied the elder man. "I spoke at five o'clock an' told 'em you were coming. So Mr. Stendel is waiting."

"Good!" was Rodwell's reply. "Anybody been looking around?"

"Not a soul to-day, sir. The weather's been bad, an' the only man we've seen is Mr. Bennett, from the coastguard station, on his patrol. He was 'ere last night and had a drop o' whisky with us."

"Good!" laughed Rodwell. "Keep well in with the coastguard. They're a fine body, but only a year or so ago the British Admiralty reduced them. It wasn't their fault."

"We do keep in with 'em," was old Tom Small's reply, as Rodwell re-entered the room in dry clothes. "I generally give 'em a bit o' fish when they wants it, and o' course I'm always on the alert looking out for periscopes that don't appear," and the shrewd old chap gave vent to a deep guttural laugh.

"Well now, Small, let's get to work," Rodwell said, brusquely. "I've got

some important matters on hand. Is all working smoothly?"

"Splendidly, sir," answered the younger man. "Nothing could be better. Signals are perfect to-night."

"Then come along," answered the man who was so universally believed to be a great British patriot; and, turning the handle of the door on the right-hand side of the living-room, he entered a small, close-smelling bedroom, furnished cheaply, as the bedroom of a small, struggling fisherman would be. The Smalls were honest, homely folk, the domestic department being carried on by Tom's younger daughter, Mary, who at the moment happened to be visiting her married sister in Louth.

The son, Ted, having lit a petrol table-lamp—one of those which, filled with spirit, give forth gas from the porous block by which the petrol is absorbed and an intense light in consequence—Lewin Rodwell went to the corner of the room where an old curtain of crimson damask hung before a recess. This he drew aside, when, hanging in the recess, were shown several coats and pairs of trousers—the wardrobe of old Tom Small; while below was a tailor's sewing machine on a treadle stand—a machine protected by the usual wooden cover.

THE latter he lifted; but beneath, instead of a machine for the innocent needle-and-cotton industry, there was revealed a long electrical tapping-key upon an ebonite base, together with several electrical contrivances which, to the uninitiated, would present a mysterious problem.

A small, neatly-constructed Morse printing machine, with its narrow ribbon of green paper passing through beneath a little glass cover protecting the "inker" from the dust; a cylindrical brass relay with its glass cover, and a tangle of rubber-insulated wires had been hidden beneath that square wooden cover, measuring two and a half feet by one.

Behind the sewing-machine stand, and cunningly concealed, there ran a thick cable fully two inches in diameter, which was nothing else but the shore-end of a submarine cable directly connecting the East Coast of England with Wangeroog, the most northerly of the East Frisian Islands, running thence across to Cuxhaven, at the mouth of the Elbe, and on by the land-line, via Hamburg, to Berlin.

The history of that cable was unknown and unsuspected by the British public, who, full of trust of the authorities, never dreamed that there could possibly be any communication from the English shore actually direct into Berlin. Five years before the declaration of war the German Government had approached the General Post Office, offering to lay down a new cable from Wangeroog to Spurn Head, in order to relieve some of the constantly increasing traffic over the existing cables from Lowestoft, Bacton and Mundesley. Long negotiations ensued, with the result that one day the German cable-ship Christoph passed the Chequer shoal and, arriving off the Spurn Lighthouse, put in the shore-end, landed several German engineers to conduct the electrical control-tests between ship and shore, and then sailed away back to Germany, paying out the cable as she went.

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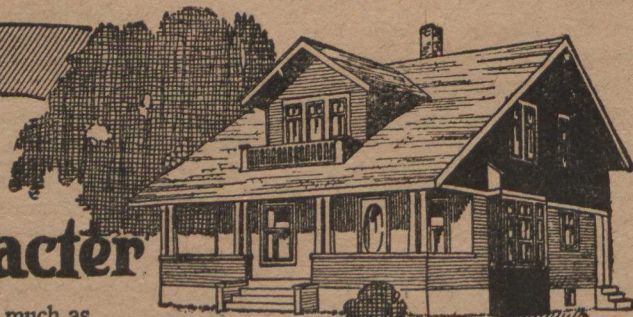
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