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## The Invention of the Stokes Gun.

The Stokes gun, which has proved such a valuable weapon throughout the war, especially during the period of so-called stalemate, was invented by Sir Wilfrid Stokes, K.B.E.

By profession a peaceful gentleman it seems strange that such a deadly weapon should emanate from him, but as he explains, it was the result of a convincing talk he had with a friend of his returned from the front.

This friend in his conversation made the point clear that the war was a battle of wits and that the side which could produce the most effective death-dealing weapons would win.

'I had never tried to invent anything in my life but my friend's words inspired me with ambition,' says Sir Wilfrid, and he set to work on experiments which ultimately resulted in the production of the gun named after him.

One of the war correspondents described the gun as one which 'sends up into the air a flight of bombs which sail down to their objective with deadly accuracy and a terrific explosive effect.'

The first gun, a primitive one, was made at Messrs. Ransomes and

Rapier's factory at Ipswich, England, out of a piece of drawn tube with shells made out of pieces of bar steel. The results of the first experiments far exceeded expectations and much to everyone's surprise the first shot landed very close to a cottage.

Week-ends were devoted to the improvement of the gun in order to develop something acceptable to the authorities. Long and arduous experiments were made, sometimes successful sometimes not, but steady 'plugging' brought about a gun, the equal of which, for its particular purpose has never been found.

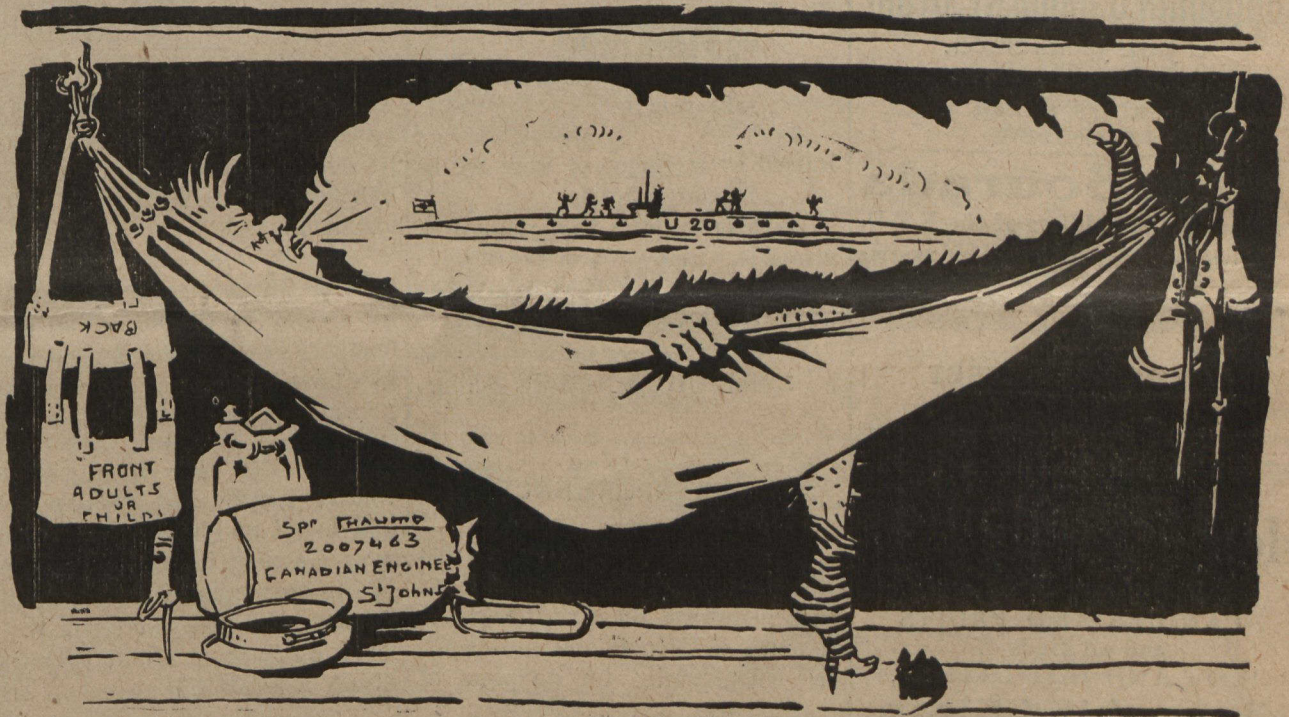
The original idea was that the

propellant should be placed in a central cavity in the base of the shell, and that it should blow out the end of the cartridge past a striker having a pointed end. This however involved periodically clearing the gun so that a square ended striker with a cartridge chamber in the shell was tried with the result that a solid steel shell split open and almost burst the barrel. This taught caution and before further experiments were made certain calculations were made.

Changeable weather increased the difficulty of arriving at a conclusion. Trials made on a fine sunny day with success would

prove failures on chilly days. Such uneven results were discouraging but did no more than delay progress, and finally the gun was ready for service capable of firing forty-three rounds of eleven pound shell per minute, the shell containing nearly three times the amount of explosive as that contained in an eighteen pound artillery shell.

A range of about four hundred and thirty yards was at first considered sufficient but under war conditions it became advisable to increase the range, and this has been done by adding extra charges made up in the form of rings. These nearly double the range though the



Dreamland on a Troopship.

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