Floor Games

by

H. G. Wells

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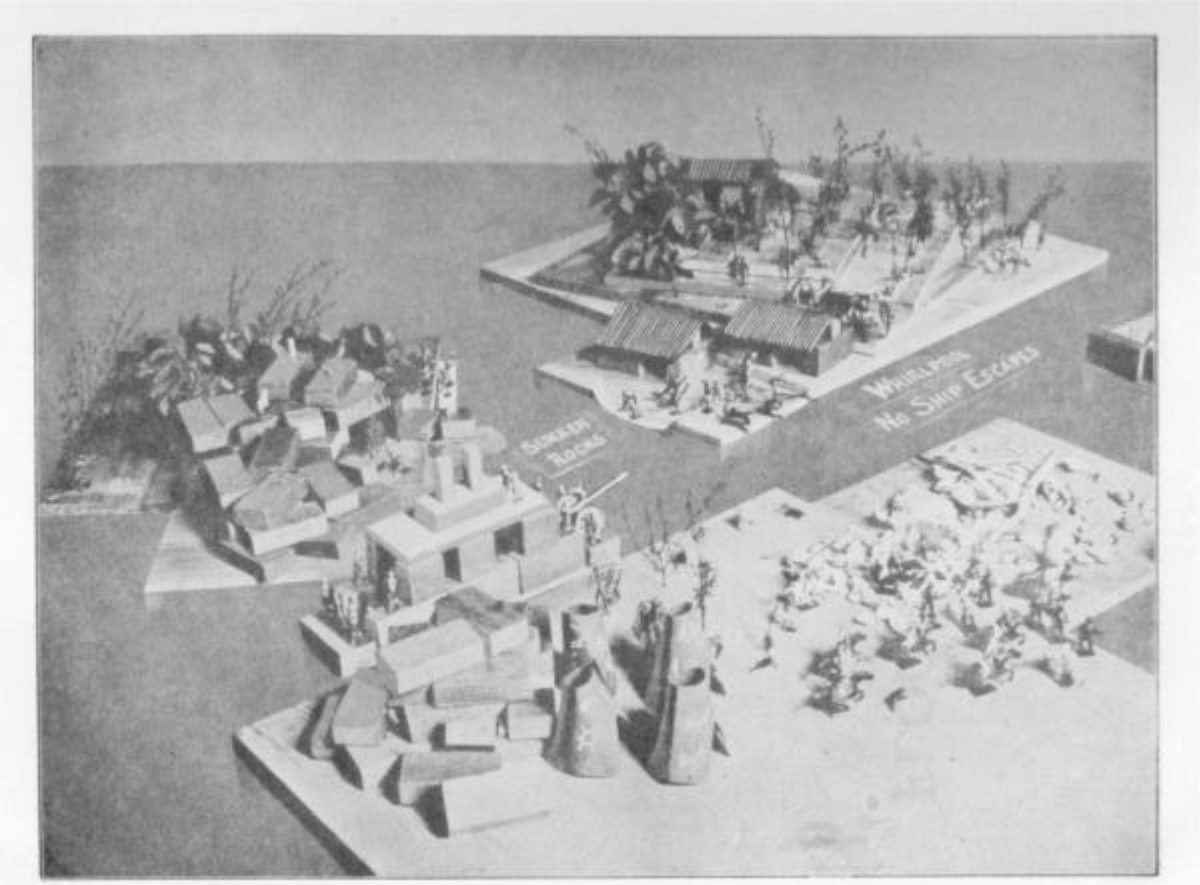

A general view of the Wonderful Islands, showing Captain F. R. W.'s ship at anchor

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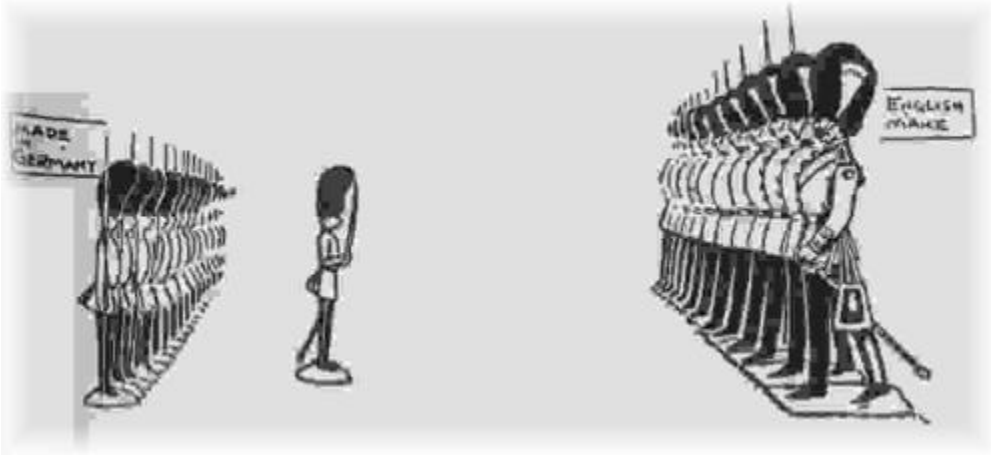
Section I

THE TOYS TO HAVE

The jolliest indoor games for boys and girls demand a floor, and the home that has no floor upon which games may be played falls so far short of happiness. It must be a floor covered with linoleum or cork carpet, so that toy soldiers and such-like will stand up upon it, and of a color and surface that will take and show chalk marks ; the common green-colored cork carpet without a pattern is the best of all. It must be no highway to other rooms, and well lit and airy. Occasionally, alas! it must be scrubbed --- and then a truce to Floor Games. Upon such a floor may be made an infinitude of imaginative games, not only keeping boys and girls happy for days together, but building up a framework of spacious and inspiring ideas in them for after life. The men of to-morrow will gain new strength from nursery floors. I am going to tell of some of these games and what is most needed to play them; I have tried them all and a score of others like them with my sons, and all of the games here illustrated have been set out by us. I am going to tell of them here because I think what we have done will interest other fathers and mothers, and perhaps be of use to them (and to uncles and such-like tributary sub-species of humanity) in buying presents for their own and other people's children.



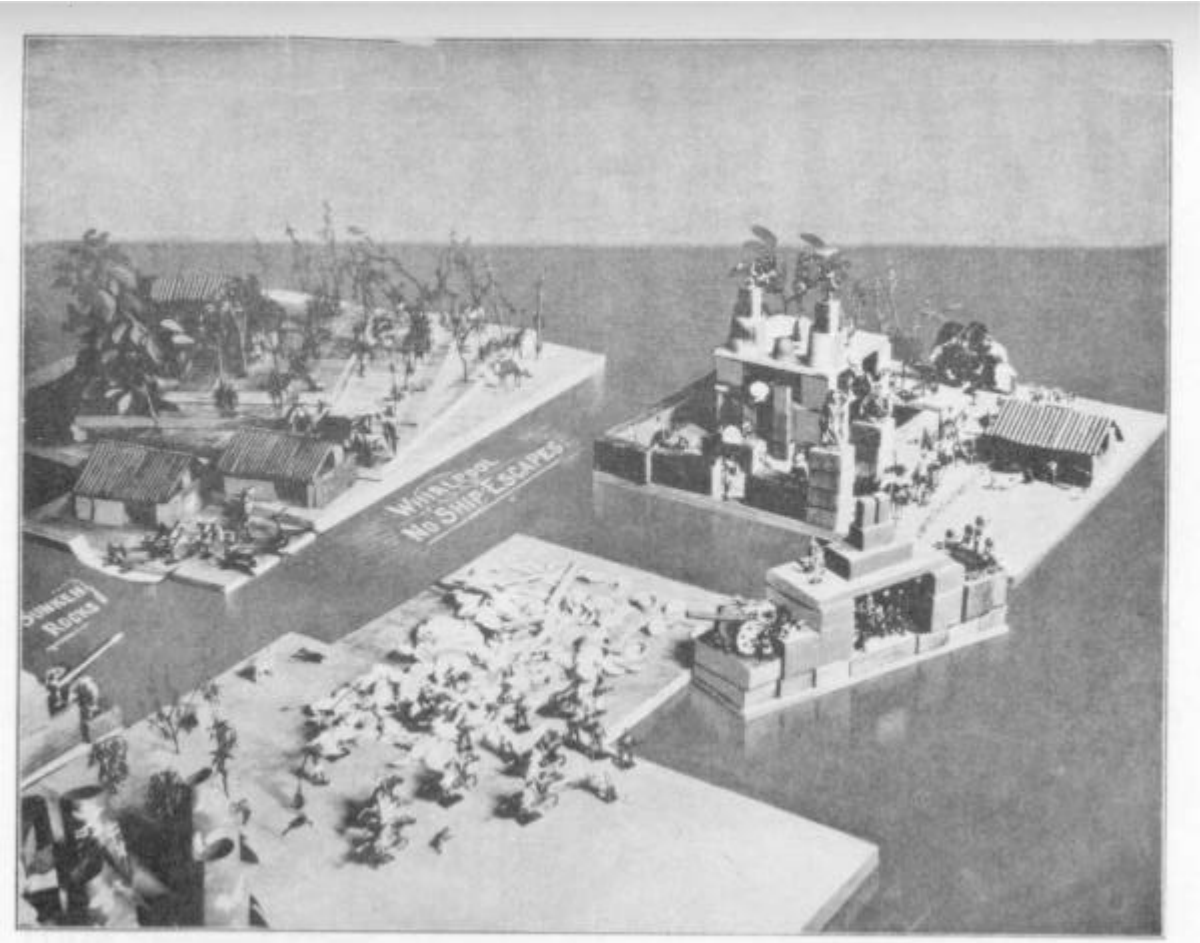
Now, the toys we play with time after time, and in a thousand permutations and combinations, belong to four main groups. We have (1) SOLDIERS, and with these I class sailors, railway porters, civilians, and the lower animals generally, such as I will presently describe in greater detail ; (2) BRICKS; (3) BOARDS and PLANKS; and (4) a lot of CLOCKWORK RAILWAY ROLLING-STOCK AND RAILS. Also there are certain minor objects ---tin ships, Easter eggs, and the like --- of which I shall make incidental mention, that like the

kiwi and the duck-billed platypus refuse to be classified.

These we arrange and rearrange in various ways upon our floor, making a world of them. In doing so we have found out all sorts of pleasant facts, and also many undesirable possibilities ; and very probably our experience will help a reader here and there to the former and save him from the latter. For instance, our planks and boards, and what one can do with them, have been a great discovery. Lots of boys and girls seem to be quite without planks and boards at all, and there is no regular trade in them . The toyshops, we found, did not keep anything of the kind we wanted, and our boards, which we had to get made by a carpenter, are the basis of half the games we play. The planks and boards we have are of various sizes. We began with three of two yards by one; they were made with cross pieces like small doors ; but these we found unnecessarily large, and we would not get them now after our present experience. The best thickness, we think, is an inch for the larger sizes and three-quarters and a half inch for the smaller ; and the best sizes are a yard square, thirty inches square, two feet, and eighteen inches square --- one or two of each, and a greater number of smaller ones, 18 x 9, 9 x 9, and 9 x 4 ½ . With the larger ones we make islands and archipelagos on our floor while the floor is a sea, or we make a large island or a couple on the Venice pattern, or we pile the smaller on the larger to make hills when the floor is a level plain, or they roof in railway stations or serve as bridges, in such manner as I will presently illustrate. And these boards of ours pass into our next most important possession, which is our box of bricks.

(But I was nearly forgetting to tell this, that all the thicker and larger of these boards have holes bored through them. At about every four inches is a hole, a little larger than an ordinary gimlet hole. These holes have their uses, as I will tell later, but now let me get on to the box of bricks.)

This, again, wasn’t a toy-shop acquisition. It came to us by gift from two generous friends, unhappily growing up and very tall at that; and they had it from parents who were one of several families who shared in the benefit of a Good Uncle. I know nothing certainly of this man except that he was a Radford of Plymouth. I have never learned nor cared to learn of his commoner occupations, but certainly he was one of those shining and distinguished uncles that tower up at times above the common levels of humanity. At times, when we consider our derived and undeserved share of his inheritance and count the joys it gives us, we have projected half in jest and half in earnest the putting together of a little exemplary book upon the subject of such exceptional men : *Celebrated Uncles,* it should be called; and it should stir up all who read it to some striving at least towards the glories of the avuncular crown. What this great benefactor did was to engage a deserving unemployed carpenter through an entire winter making big boxes of wooden bricks for the almost innumerable nephews and nieces with which an appreciative circle of brothers and sisters had blessed him. There are whole bricks 4 ½ inches x 2 ¼ x 11/8 ; and there are quarters --- called by those previous owners (who have now ascended to, we hope but scarcely believe, a happier life near the ceiling) "piggys." You note how these sizes fit into the sizes of the boards, and of each size --- we have never counted them, but we must have hundreds. We can pave a dozen square yards of floor with them.



A view showing the Island of the Temple and the invasion of the Indians' territory by Captain G. P. W.

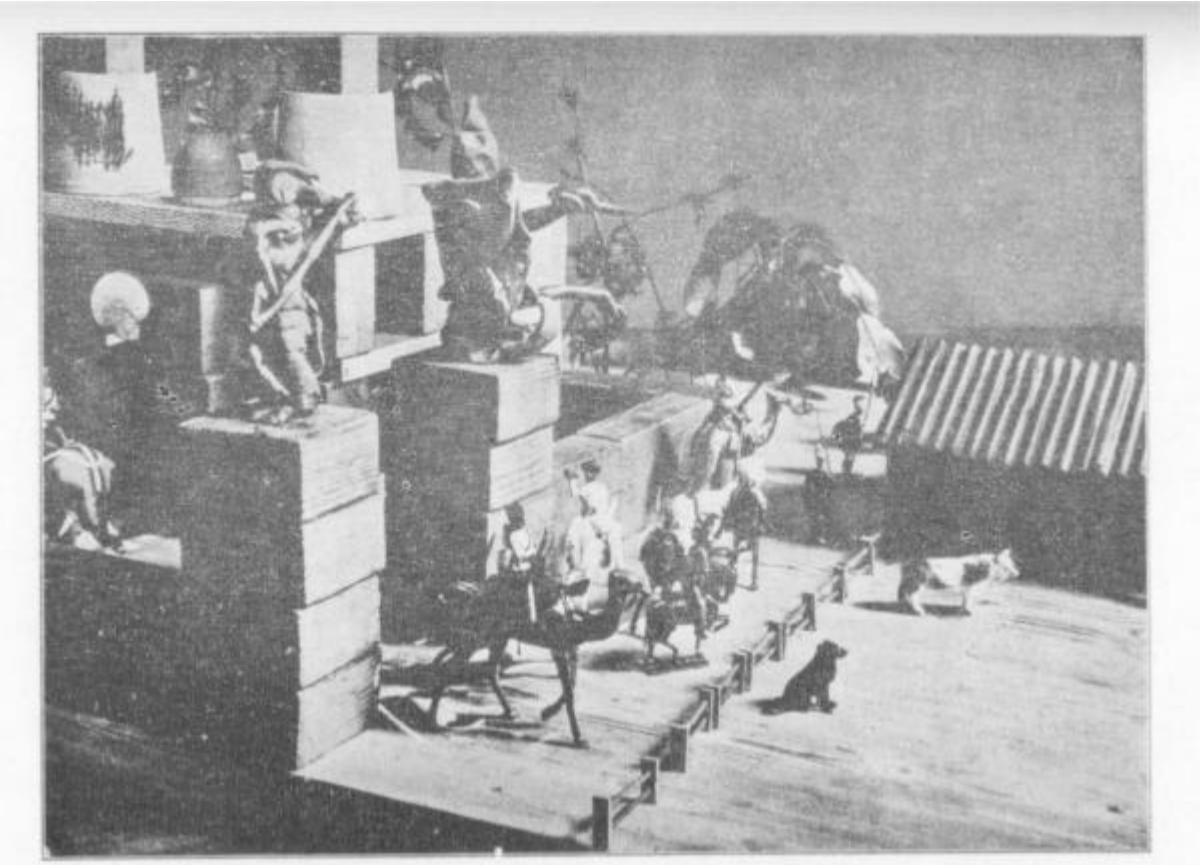
How utterly we despise the silly little bricks of the toyshops! They are too small to make a decent home for even the poorest lead soldiers, even if there were hundreds of them, and there are never enough, never nearly enough; even if you take one at a time and lay it down and say, "This is a house," even then there are not enough. We see rich people, rich people out of motor cars, rich people beyond the dreams of avarice, going into toyshops and buying these skimpy, sickly, ridiculous pseudo-boxes of bricklets, because they do not know what to ask for, and the toyshops are just the merciless mercenary enemies of youth and happiness --- so far, that is, as bricks are concerned. Their unfortunate under-parented offspring mess about with these gifts, and don't make very much of them, and put them away; and you see their consequences in after life in the weakly-conceived villas and silly suburbs that people have built all round big cities. Such poor under-nourished nurseries must needs fall back upon the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and even that is becoming flexible on India paper! But our box of bricks almost satisfies. With our box of bricks we can scheme and build, all three of us, for the best part of the hour, and still have more bricks in the box.

So much now for the bricks. I will tell later how we use cartridge paper and cardboard and other things to help in our and of the decorative make of plasticine. Of course, it goes without saying that we despise those foolish, expensive, made-up wooden and pasteboard castles that are sold in shops --- playing with them is like playing with somebody else's dead game in a state of *rigor mortis*. Let me now say a little about toy soldiers and the world to which they belong. Toy soldiers used to be flat, small creatures in my own boyhood, in comparison with the magnificent beings one can buy to-day. There has been an enormous improvement in our national physique in this respect. Now they stand nearly two inches high and look you broadly in the face, and they have the movable arms and alert intelligence of scientifically exercised men. You get five of them mounted or nine afoot in a box for a small price.

We three like those of British manufacture best; other makes are of incompatible sizes, and we have a rule that saves much trouble, that all red coats belong to G. P. W., and all other colored coats to F. R. W., all gifts, bequests, and accidents notwithstanding. Also we have sailors; but, since there are no red-coated sailors, blue counts as red.

Then we have "beefeaters," (Footnote; The warders in the Tower of London are called " beefeaters " ; the origin of the term is obscure.) Indians, Zulus, for whom there are special rules. We find we can buy lead dogs, cats, lions, tigers, horses, camels, cattle, and elephants of a reasonably corresponding size, and we have also several boxes of railway porters, and some soldiers we bought in Hesse-Darmstadt that we pass off on an unsuspecting home world as policemen. But we want civilians very badly. We found a box of German from an exaggerated curse of militarism, and even the grocer wears epaulettes. This might please Lord Roberts and Mr. Leo Maxse, but it certainly does not please us. I wish, indeed, that we could buy boxes of tradesmen : a blue butcher, a white baker with a loaf of standard bread, a merchant or so; boxes of servants, boxes of street traffic, smart sets, and so forth. We could do with a judge and lawyers, or a box of vestrymen. It is true that we can buy Salvation Army lasses and football players, but we are cold to both of these. We have, of course, boy scouts. With such boxes of civilians we could have much more fun than with the running, marching, swashbuckling soldiery that pervades us. They drive us to reviews; and it is only emperors, kings, and very silly small boys who can take an undying interest in uniforms and reviews.

And lastly, of our railways, let me merely remark here that we have always insisted upon one uniform gauge and everything we buy fits into and develops our existing railway system. Nothing is more indicative of the wambling sort of parent and a coterie of witless, worthless uncles than a heap of railway toys of different gauges and natures in the children's playroom. And so, having told you of the material we have, let me now tell you of one or two games (out of the innumerable many) that we have played. Of course, in this I have to be a little artificial. Actual games of the kind I am illustrating here have been played by us, many and many a time, with joy and happy invention and no thought of publication. They have gone now, those games, into that vaguely luminous and iridescent into which happiness have tried out again points in world of memories all love-engendering must go. But we our best to set them and recall the good them here.



A close view of the Temple, whose portals are guarded by grotesque plasticine monsters

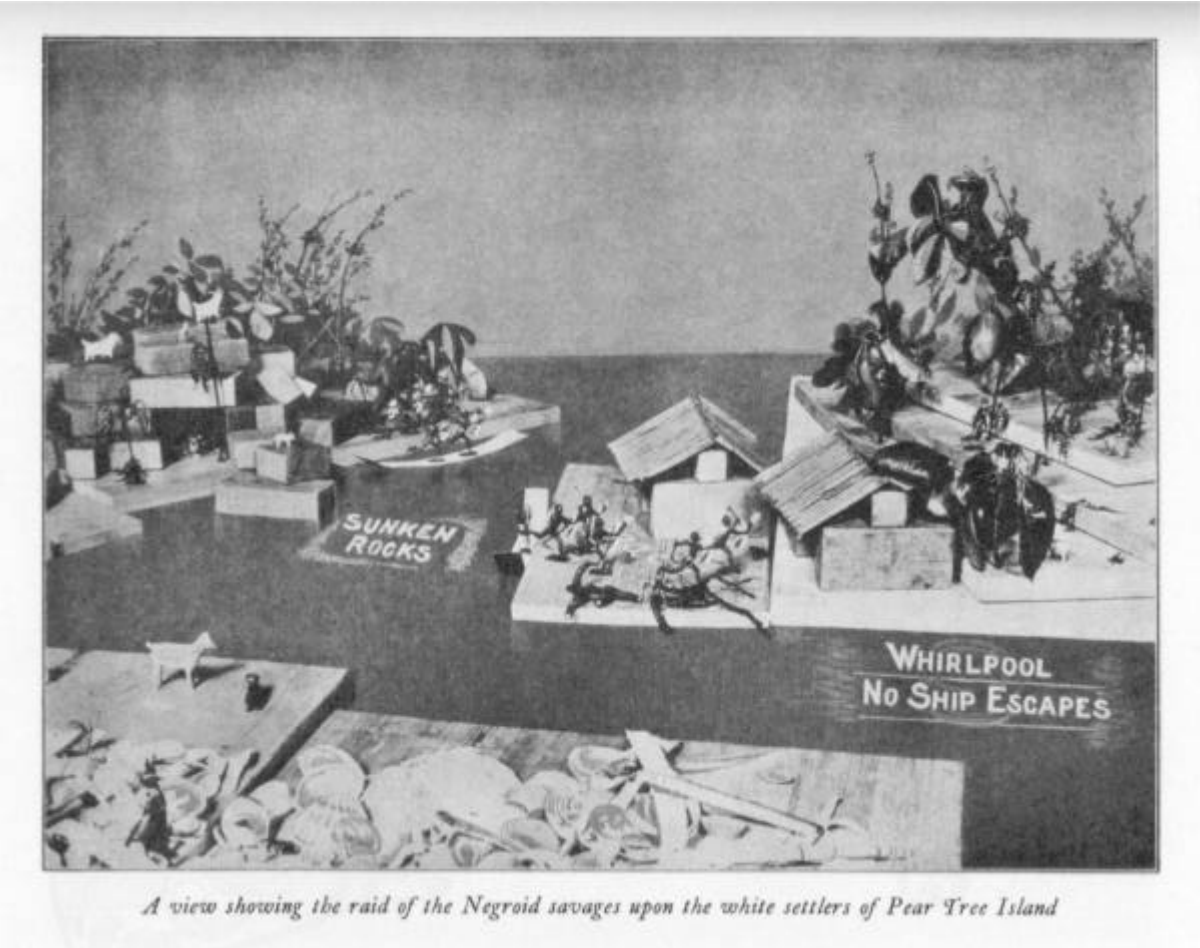
Section II

THE GAME OF THE WONDERFUL ISLANDS

In this game the floor is the sea. Half --- rather the larger half because of some instinctive right of primogeniture --- is assigned to the elder of my two sons (he is, as it were, its Olympian), and the other half goes to his brother. We distribute our boards about the sea in an archipelagic manner. We then dress our islands, objecting strongly to too close a scrutiny of our proceedings until we have done. Here, in the illustration, is such an archipelago ready for its explorers, or rather on the verge of exploration. There are altogether four islands, two to the reader's right and two to the left, and the nearer ones are the more northerly; it is as many as we could get into the camera. The northern island to the right is most advanced in civilization, and is chiefly temple. That temple has a flat roof, diversified by domes made of half Easter eggs and cardboard cones. These are surmounted by decorative work of a flamboyant character in plasticine, designed by G. P. W. An oriental population crowds the courtyard and pours out upon the roadway. Note the grotesque plasticine monsters who guard the portals, also by G. P. W., who had a free hand with the architecture of this remarkable specimen of eastern religiosity. They are nothing, you may be sure, to the gigantic idols inside, out of the reach of the sacrilegious camera. To the right is a tropical thatched hut. The thatched roof is really that nice ribbed paper that comes round bottles --- a priceless boon to these games. All that comes into the house is saved for us. The owner of the hut lounges outside the door. He is a dismounted cavalry-corps man, and he owns one cow. His fence, I may note, belonged to a little wooden farm we bought in Switzerland. Its human inhabitants are scattered; its beasts follow a precarious living as wild guinea-pigs on the islands to the south.

Your attention is particularly directed to the trees about and behind the temple, which thicken to a forest on the further island to the right. These trees we make of twigs taken from trees and bushes in the garden, and stuck into holes in our boards. Formerly we lived in a house with a little wood close by, and our forests were wonderful. Now we are restricted to our garden, and we could get nothing for this set out but jasmine and pear. Both have wilted a little, and are not nearly such spirited trees as you can make out of fir trees, for instance. It is for these woods chiefly that we have our planks perforated with little holes. No tin trees can ever be so plausible and various and jolly as these. With a good garden to draw upon one can make terrific sombre woods, and then lie down and look through them at lonely horsemen or wandering beasts.

That further island on the right is a less settled country than the island of the temple. Camels, you note, run wild there; there is a sort of dwarf elephant, similar to the now extinct kind of which one finds skeletons in Malta, pigs, a red parrot, and other such creatures, of lead and wood. The pear-trees are fine. It is those which have attracted white settlers (I suppose they are), whose thatched huts are to be seen both upon the beach and in-land. By the huts on the beach lie a number of pear-tree logs; but a raid of negroid savages from the to the left is in the only settler is the man in a adjacent island progress, and clearly visible rifleman’s uniform running inland for help. Beyond, peeping out among the trees, are the supports he seeks.



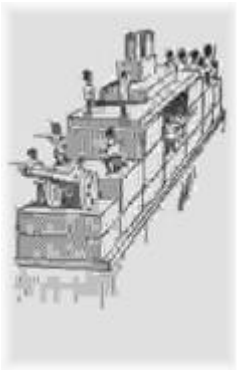
A view showing the raid of the Negroid savages upon the white settlers of Pear Tree Island

These same negroid savages are as bold as they are ferocious. They cross arms of the sea upon their rude canoes, made simply of a strip of cardboard. Their own island, the one to the south-left, is a rocky wilderness containing caves. Their chief food is the wild-goat, but in pursuit of these creatures you will also sometimes find the brown bear, who sits --- he is small but perceptible to the careful student --- in the mouth of his cave. Here, too, you will distinguish small guinea pig-like creatures of wood, in happier days the inhabitants of that Swiss farm. Sunken rocks off this island are indicated by a white foam which takes the form of letters, and you will also note a whirlpool between the two islands to the right.

Finally comes the island nearest to the reader on the left. This also is wild and rocky, inhabited not by negroid blacks, but by Indians, whose tents, made by F. R. W. out of ordinary brown paper and adorned with chalk totems of a rude and characteristic kind, pour forth their fierce and well-armed inhabitants at the intimation of an invader. The rocks on this island, let me remark, have great mineral wealth.

Among them are to be found not only sheets and veins of silver paper, but great nuggets of metal, obtained by the melting down of hopelessly broken soldiers in an iron spoon. Note, too, the peculiar and romantic shell beach of this country. It is an island of exceptional interest to the geologist and scientific explorer. The Indians, you observe, have domesticated one leaden and one wooden cow.

This is how the game would be set out. Then we build ships and explore these islands, but in these pictures the ships are represented as already arriving. The ships are built out of our wooden bricks on flat keels made of two wooden pieces of 9 x 4 ½ ; inches, which are very convenient to push about over the floor. Captain G. P. W. is steaming into the bay between the eastern and western islands. He carries heavy guns, his ship bristles with an extremely aggressive soldiery, who appear to be blazing away for the mere love of the thing. (I suspect him of Imperialist intentions.) Captain F. R. W. is apparently at anchor between his northern and southern islands. His ship is of a slightly more pacific type. I note on his deck a lady and a gentleman (of German origin) with a bag, two of our all too rare civilians. No doubt the bag contains samples and a small conversation dictionary in the negroid dialects. (I think F. R. W. may turn out to be a Liberal.) Perhaps he will sail on and rescue the raided huts, perhaps he will land and build a jetty, and begin mining among the rocks to fill his hold with silver. Perhaps the natives will kill and eat the gentleman with the bag. All that is for Captain F. R. W. to decide.

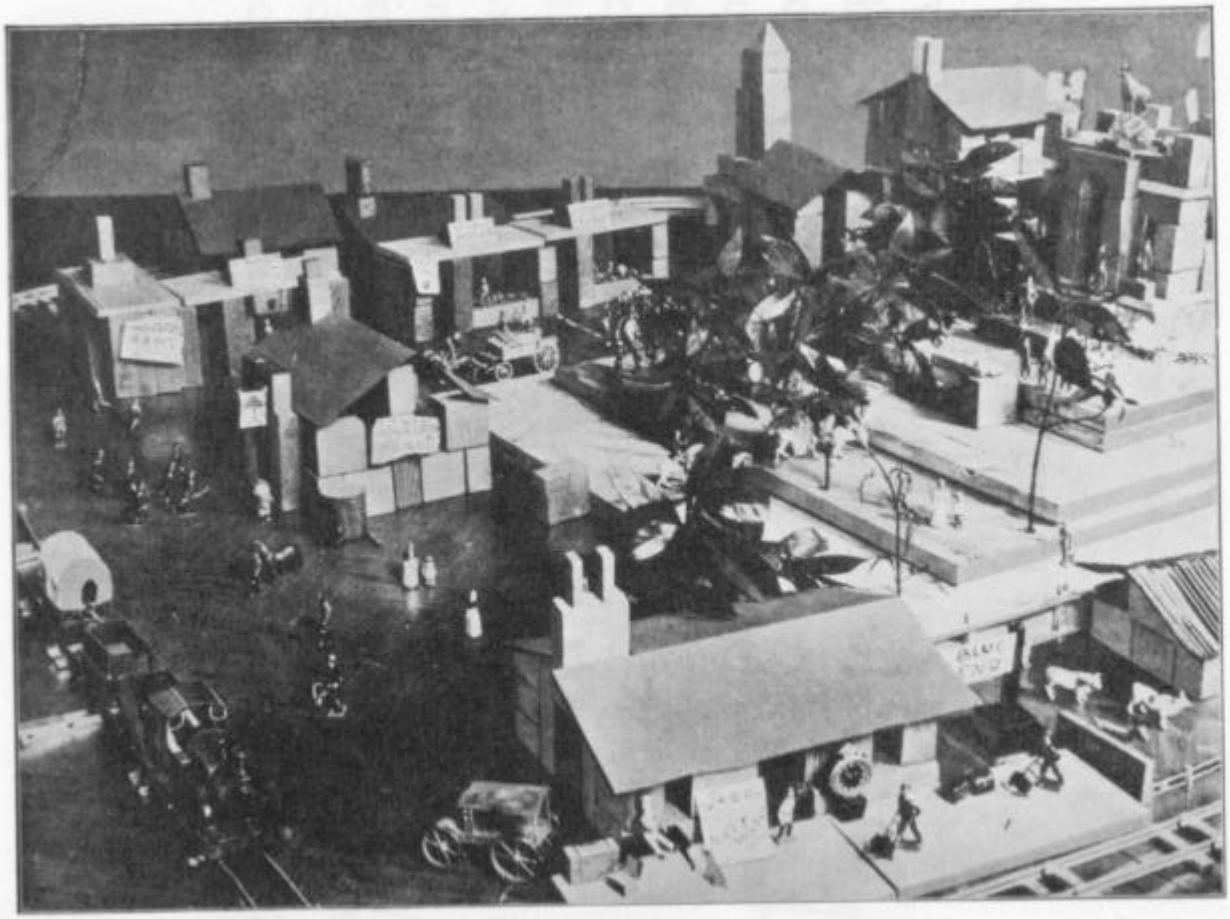


You see how the game goes on. We land and alter things, and build and rearrange, and hoist paper flags on pins, and subjugate populations, and confer all the blessings of civilization upon these lands. We keep them going for days. And at last, as we begin to tire of them, comes the scrubbing brush, and we must burn our trees and dismantle our islands, and put our soldiers in the little nests of drawers, and stand the island boards up against the wall, and put everything away. Then perhaps, after a few days, we begin upon some other such game, just as we feel disposed. But it is never quite the same game, never. Another time it may be wildernesses for example, and the boards are hills, and never a drop of water is to be found except for the lakes and rivers we may mark out in chalk. But after one example others are easy, and next I will tell you of our way of making towns.

Some Suggestions for Toy Makers (*see* page 26).

Section III

OF THE BUILDING OF CITIES

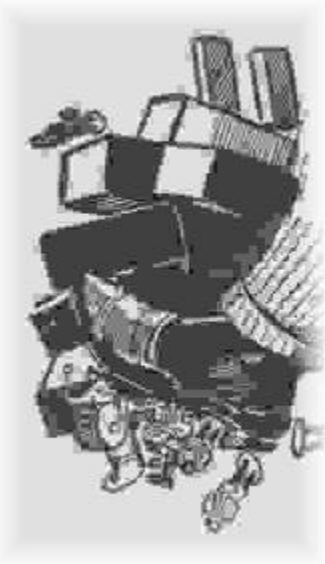


A general view of Chamois City, showing the Cherry Tree Inn and the shopping quarter

WE always build twin cities, like London and Westminster, or Buda-Pesth, because two of us always want, both of them, to be mayors and municipal councils, and it makes for local freedom and happiness to arrange it so; but when steam railways or street railways are involved we have our rails in common, and we have an excellent law that rails must be laid down and switches kept open in such a manner that anyone feeling so disposed may send a through train from their own station back to their own station again without needless negotiation or the personal invasion of anybody else's administrative area. It is an undesirable thing to have other people bulging over one's houses, standing in one's open spaces, and, in extreme cases, knocking down and even treading on one's citizens. It leads at times to explanations that are afterwards regretted.

We always have twin cities, or at the utmost stage of coalescence a city with two wards, Red End and Blue End; we mark the boundaries very carefully, and our citizens have so much local patriotism (Mr. Chesterton will learn with pleasure) that they stray but rarely over that thin little streak of white that bounds their municipal allegiance. Sometimes we have an election for mayor; it is like a census but very abusive, and Red always wins. Only citizens with two legs and at least one arm and capable of standing up may vote, and voters may poll on horseback; boy scouts and women and children do not vote, though there is a vigorous agitation to remove these disabilities. Zulus and foreign-looking persons, such as East Indian cavalry and American Indians, are also disfranchised. So are riderless horses and camels; but the elephant has never attempted to vote on any occasion, and does not seem to desire the privilege. It influences public opinion quite sufficiently as it is by nodding its head.

We have set out and I have photographed one of our cities to illustrate more clearly the amusement of the game. Red End is to the reader's right, and includes most of the hill on which the town stands, a shady zoological garden, the town hall, a railway tunnel through the hill, a museum (away in the extreme right-hand corner), a church, a rifle range, and a shop. Blue End has the railway station, four or five shops, several homes, a hotel, and a farm-house, close to the railway station. The boundary drawn by me as overlord (who also made the hills and tunnels and appointed the trees to grow) runs irregularly between the two shops nearest the cathedral, over the shoulder in front of the town hall, and between the farm and the rifle range.



The nature of the hills I have already explained, and this time we have had no lakes or ornamental water. These are very easily made out of a piece of glass --- the glass lid of a box for example --- laid upon silver paper. Such water becomes very readily populated by those celluloid seals and swans and ducks that are now so common. Paper fish appear below the surface and may be peered at by the curious. But on this occasion we have nothing of the kind, nor have we made use of a green-colored tablecloth we sometimes use to drape our hills. Of course, a large part of the fun of this game lies in the witty incorporation of all sorts of extraneous objects. But the incorporation must be witty, or you may soon convert the whole thing into an incoherent muddle of half-good ideas.

I have taken two photographs, one to the right and one to the left of this agreeable place. I may perhaps adopt a kind of guide-book style in reviewing its principal features : I begin at the railway station. I have made a rather nearer and larger photograph of the railway station, which presents a diversified and entertaining scene to the incoming visitor. Porters (out of a box of porters) career here and there with the trucks and light baggage. Quite a number of our all-too-rare civilians parade the platform: two gentlemen, a lady, and a small but evil-looking child are particularly noticeable; and there is a wooden sailor with jointed legs, in a state of intoxication as reprehensible as it is nowadays happily rare. Two virtuous dogs regard his abandon with quiet scorn. The seat on which he sprawls is a broken piece of some toy whose nature I have long forgotten, the station clock is a similar fragment, and so is the metallic pillar which bears the name of the station. So many toys, we find, only become serviceable with a little smashing. There is an allegory in this --- as Hawthorne used to write in his diary.

(" What is he doing, the great god Pan, Down in the reeds by the river? ")

The fences at the ends of the platforms are pieces of wood belonging to the game of Matador ---that splendid and very educational construction game, hailing, I believe, from Hungary. There is also, I regret to say, a blatant advertisement of Jab's "Hair Color," showing the hair. (In the photograph the hair does not come out very plainly.) This is by G. P. W., who seems marked out by destiny to be the advertisement-writer of the next generation. He spends much of his scanty leisure inventing and drawing advertisements of imaginary commodities. Oblivious to many happy, beautiful, and noble things in life, he goes about studying and imitating the literature of the billboards. He and his brother write newspapers almost entirely devoted to these annoying appeals. You will note, too, the placard at the mouth of the railway tunnel urging the existence of Jinks' Soap upon the passing traveller. The oblong object on the placard represents, no doubt, a cake of this offensive and aggressive commodity. The zoological garden flaunts a placard, "Zoo, two cents pay," and the grocer's picture of a cabbage with "Get Them" is not to be ignored. F. R. W. is more like the London County Council in this respect, and prefers bare walls.

The railway station at Blue End

"Returning from the station," as the guide-books say, and "giving one more glance" at the passengers who are waiting for the privilege of going round the circle in open cars and returning in a prostrated condition to the station again, and "observing" what admirable platforms are made by our 9 by 4 ½ pieces, we pass out to the left into the village street. A motor omnibus (a one-horse hospital cart in less progressive days) stands waiting for passengers; and, on our way to the Cherry Tree Inn, we remark two nurses, one in charge of a child with a plasticine head. The landlord of the inn is a small grotesque figure of plaster ; his sign is fastened on by a pin. No doubt the refreshment supplied here has an enviable reputation, to judge by the alacrity with which a number of riflemen move to-wards the door. The inn, by the by, like the station and some private houses, is roofed with stiff paper.

These stiff-paper roofs are one of our great inventions. We get After the game is over, we put these roofs inside one another and stick them into the bookshelves. The roof one folds and puts away will live to roof another day.

Proceeding on our way past the Cherry Tree, and resisting cosy

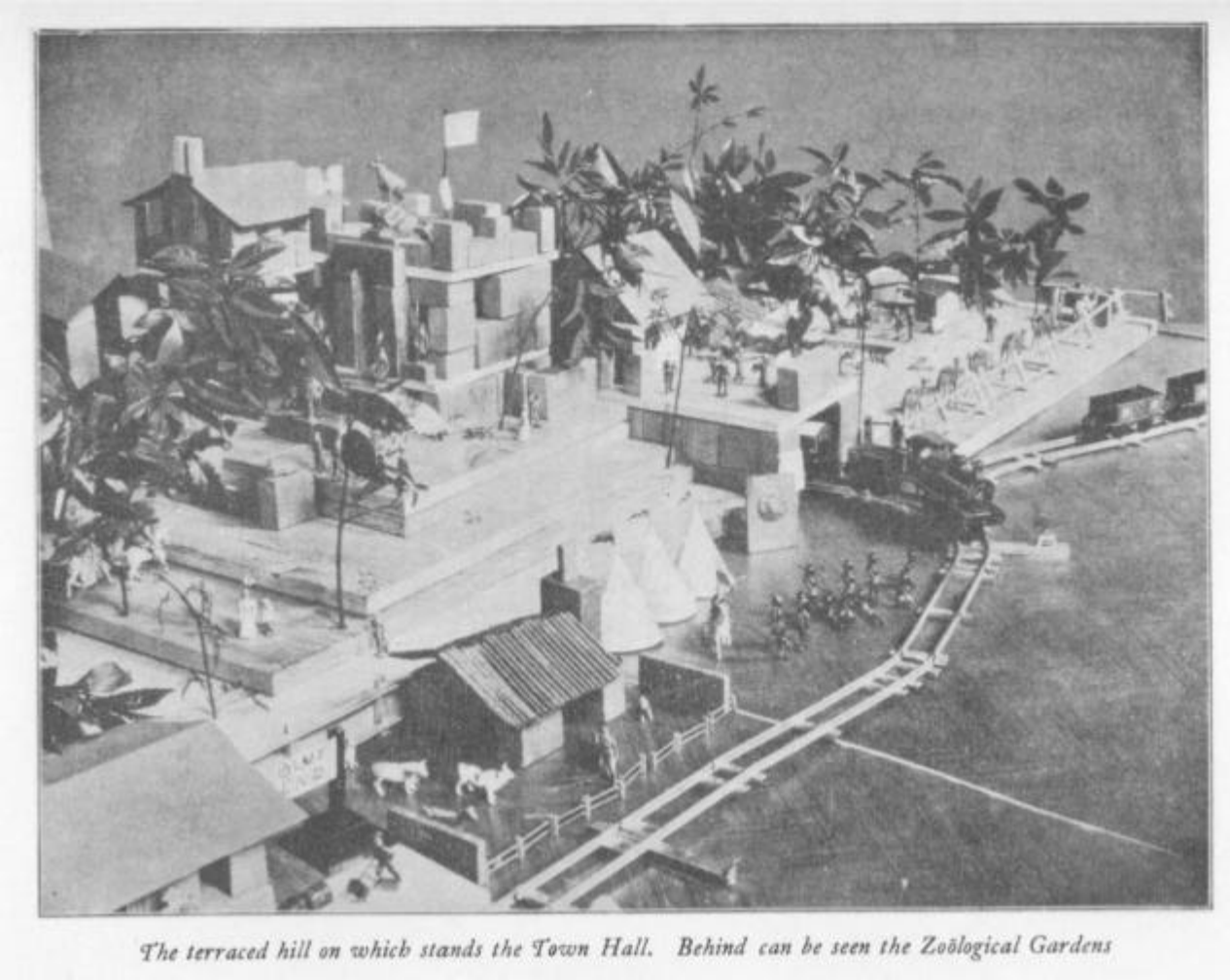
invitation of its portals, we come to the shopping quarter of the town. The stock in windows is made by hand out of plasticine. We note the meat and hams of "Mr. Woddy," the cabbages and carrots of " Tod & Brothers," the general activities of the " Jokil Co." shopmen. It is *de rigueur* with our shop assistants that they should wear white helmets. In the street, boy scouts go to and fro, a wagon clatters by; most of the adult population is about its business, and a red-coated band plays along the roadway. Contrast this animated scene with the mysteries of sea and forest, rock and whirlpool, in our previous game. Further on is the big church or cathedral. It is built in an extremely debased Gothic style; it reminds us most of a church we once surveyed during a brief visit to Rotterdam on our way up the Rhine. A solitary boy scout, mindful of the views of Lord Haldane, enters its high portal. Passing the cathedral, we continue to the museum. This museum is no empty boast; it contains mineral specimens, shells --- such great shells as were found on the beaches of our previous game, --- the Titanic skulls of extinct rabbits and cats, and other such wonders. The slender curious may lie down on the floor and peep in at the windows.

"We now," says the guide-book, "retrace our steps to the shops, and then, turning to the left, ascend under the trees up the terraced hill on which stands the Town Hall. This magnificent building is surmounted by a colossal statue of a chamois, the work of a Wengen artist; it is in two stories, with a battlemented roof, and a crypt (entrance to right of steps) used for the incarceration of offenders. It is occupied by the town guard, who wear ‘beefeater’ costumes of ancient origin."

Note the red parrot perched on the battlements; it lives tame in the zoological gardens, and is of the same species as one we formerly observed in our archipelago. Note, too, the brisk cat-and-dog encounter below. Steps descend in wide flights down the hillside into Blue End. The two couchant lions on either side of the steps are in plasticine, and were executed by that versatile artist, who is also mayor of Red End, G. P. W. He is present. Our photographer has hit upon a happy moment in the history of this town, and a conversation of the two mayors is going on upon the terrace before the palace. F. R. W., mayor of Blue End, stands on the steps in the costume of an admiral; G. P. W. is on horseback (his habits are equestrian) on the terrace. The town guard parades in their honor, and up the hill a number of musicians (a little hidden by trees) ride on gray horses towards them.

Passing in front of the town hall, and turning to the right, we approach the zoological gardens. Here we pass two of our civilians: a gentleman in black, a lady, and a large boy scout, presumably their son. We enter

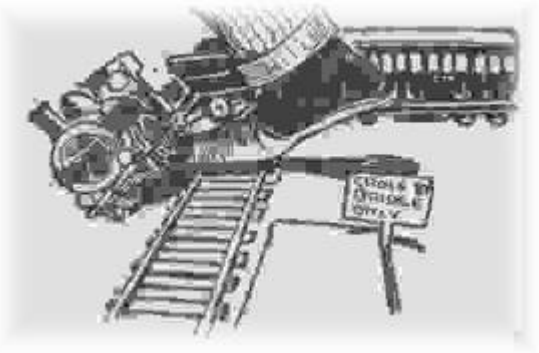
the gardens, which are protected by a bearded janitor, and remark at once a band of three performing dogs, who are, as the guide-book would say, " discoursing sweet music." In neither ward of the city does there seem to be the slightest restraint upon the use of musical instruments. It is no place for neurotic people.



The terraced hill on which stands the Town Hall. Behind can be seen the Zoölogical Gardens

The gardens contain the inevitable elephants, camels (which we breed, and which are therefore in considerable numbers), a sitting bear, brought from last game's caves, goats from the same region, tamed and now running loose in the gardens, dwarf elephants, wooden nondescripts, and other rare creatures. The keepers wear a uniform not unlike that of railway guards and porters. We wander through the gardens, return, descend the hill by the school of musketry, where soldiers are to be seen shooting at the butts, pass through the paddock of the old farm, and so return to the railway station, extremely gratified by all we have seen, and almost equally divided in our minds between the merits and attractiveness of either ward. A clockwork train comes clattering into the station, we take our places, somebody hoots or whistles for the engine (which can't), the signal is knocked

over in the excitement of the moment, the train starts, and we "wave a long, regretful farewell to the salubrious cheerfulness of Chamois City." .



You see now how we set out and the spirit in which we set out our towns. It demands but the slightest exercise of the imagination to devise a hundred additions and variations of the scheme. You can make picture-galleries ---great fun for small boys who can draw; you can make factories; you can plan out flower-gardens --- which appeals very strongly to intelligent little girls; your town hall may become a fortified castle; or you may put the whole town on boards and make a Venice of it, with ships and boats upon its canals, and bridges across them. We used to have some very serviceable ships of cardboard, with flat bottoms ; and then we used to have a harbor, and the ships used to sail away to distant rooms, and even into the garden, and return with the most remarkable cargoes, loads of nasturtium-stem logs, for example. We had sacks then, made of glove-fingers, and several toy cranes. I suppose we could find most of these again if we hunted for them. Once, with this game fresh in our we went to see the docks, which struck us as just our old harbor game magnified.

"I say, Daddy," said one of us in a quiet corner, wistfully, as one who speaks knowingly against the probabilities of the case, and yet with a faint, thin hope, "couldn’t we play just for a little with these sacks . . . until some-body comes ? "

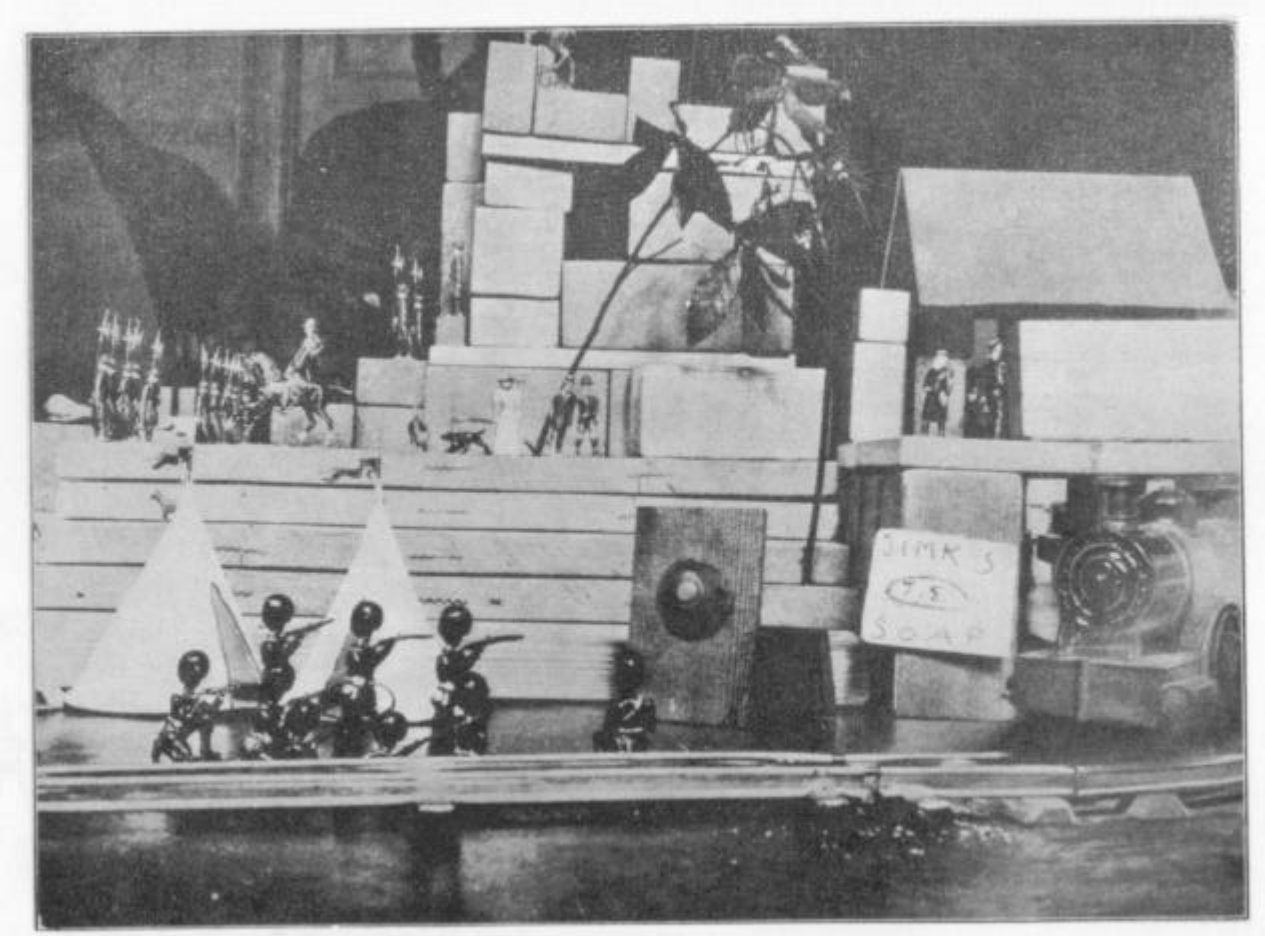
Of course the setting-out of the city is half the game. Then you devise incidents. As I wanted to photograph the particular set-out for the purpose of illustrating this account, I took a larger share in the arrangement than I usually do. It was necessary to get everything into the picture, to ensure a light background that would throw up some of the trees, prevent too much overlapping, and things like that. When the photographing was over, matters became more normal. I left the

schoolroom, and when I returned I found that the group of riflemen which had been converging on the publichouse had been sharply recalled to duty, and were trotting in a disciplined, cheerless way towards the railway station. The elephant had escaped from the zoo into the Blue Ward, and was being marched along by a military patrol. The originally scattered boy scouts were being paraded. G. P. W. had demolished the shop of the Jokil Company, and was building a Red End station near the bend. The stock of the Jokil Company had passed into the hands of the adjacent storekeepers. Then the town hall ceremonies came to an end and the guard marched off. Then G. P. W. demolished the rifle-range, and ran a small branch of the urban railway uphill to the town hall door, and on into the zoological gardens. This was only the beginning of a period of enterprise in transit, a small railway boom. A number of halts of simple construction sprang up. There was much making of railway tickets, of a size that enabled passengers to stick their heads through the middle and wear them as a Mexican does his blanket. Then a battery of artillery turned up in the High Street and there was talk of fortifications. Suppose wild Indians were to turn up across the plains to the left and attack the town! Fate still has toy drawers untouched. . .

So things will go on till putting-away night on Friday. Then we shall pick up the roofs and shove them away among the books, return the clockwork engines very carefully to their boxes, for engines are fragile things, stow the soldiers and civilians and animals in their nests of drawers, burn the trees again --- this time they are sweet-bay ; and all the joys and sorrows and rivalries and successes of Blue End and Red End will pass, and follow Carthage and Nineveh, the empire of Aztec and Roman, the arts of Etruria and the palaces of Crete, and the plannings and contrivings of innumerable myriads of children, into the limbo of games exhausted . . . it may be, leaving some profit, in thoughts widened, in strengthened apprehensions; it may be, leaving nothing but a memory that dies.

Section IV

FUNICULARS, MARBLE TOWERS, CASTLES AND WAR GAMES, BUT VERY LITTLE OF WAR GAMES

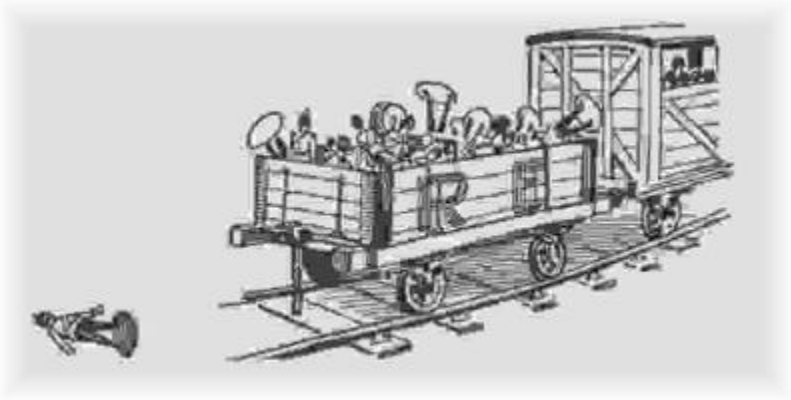


The School of Musketry. On the terrace the town guard parades in honor of the two mayors

I have now given two general types of floor game; but these are only just two samples of delightful and imagination-stirring variations that can be contrived out of the toys I have described. I will now glance rather more shortly at some other very good uses of the floor, the boards, the bricks, the soldiers, and the railway system --- that pentagram for exorcising the evil spirit of dulness from the lives of little boys and girls. And first, there is a kind of lark we call Funiculars. There are times when islands cease somehow to dazzle, and towns and cities are too orderly and uneventful and cramped for us, and we want something --- something to whizz. Then we say: "Let us make a funicular. Let us make a funicular more than we have ever

done. Let us make one to reach up to the table." We dispute whether it isn't a mountain railway we are after. The bare name is refreshing; it takes us back to that unforgettable time when we all went to Wengen, winding in and out and up and up the mountain side --- from slush, to such snow and sunlight as we had never seen before. And we make a mountain railway. So far, we have never got it up to the table, but some day we will, Then we will have a station there on the flat, and another station on the floor, with shunts and sidings to each.

The peculiar joy of the mountain railway is that, if it is properly made, a loaded car --- not a toy engine; it is too rough a game for delicate, respectable engines --- will career from top to bottom of the system, and go this way and that as your cunningly-arranged switches determine ; and afterwards --- and this is a wonderful and distinctive discovery --- you can send it back by 'lectric.



What is a 'lectric ? You may well ask. 'Lectrics were invented almost by accident, by one of us, to whom also the name is due. It came out of an accident to a toy engine ; a toy engine that seemed done for and that was yet full of life.

You know, perhaps, what a toy engine is like. It has the general appearance of a railway engine ; funnels, buffers, cab, and so forth. All these are very elegant things, no doubt; but they do not make for lightness, they do not facilitate hill-climbing. Now, sometimes an engine gets its clockwork out of order, and then it is over and done for; but sometimes it is merely the outer semblance that is injured --- the funnel bent, the body twisted. You remove the things and, behold ! you have bare clockwork on wheels, an apparatus of almost malignant energy, soul without body, a kind of metallic rage. This it was that our junior member instantly knew for a 'lectric, and loved from the

moment of its stripping.

(I have, by the by, known a very serviceable little road ‘lectric made out of a clockwork mouse.)

Well, when we have got chairs and boxes and bricks, and graded our line skilfully and well, easing the descent, and being very careful of the joining at the bends for fear that the descending trucks and cars will jump the rails, we send down first an empty truck, then trucks loaded with bricks and lead soldiers, and then the ‘lectric ; and then afterwards the sturdy ‘lectric shoves up the trucks again to the top, with a kind of savagery of purpose and a whizz that is extremely gratifying to us. We make switches in these lines; we make them have level-crossings, at which collisions are always being just averted; the lines go over and under each other, and in and out of tunnels--

The marble tower, again, is a great building, on which we devise devious slanting ways down which marbles run. I do not know why it is amusing to make a marble run down a long intricate path, and dollop down steps, and come almost but not quite to a stop, and rush out of dark places and across little bridges of card: it is, and we often do it.

Castles are done with bricks and cardboard turrets and a portcullis of card, and drawbridge and moats; they are a mere special sort of city-building, done because we have a box of men in armor. We could reconstruct all sorts of historical periods if the toy soldier makers would provide us with people. But at present, as I have already complained, they make scarcely anything but contemporary fighting men. And of the war game I must either write volumes or nothing. For the present let it be nothing. Some day, perhaps, I will write a great book about the war game and tell of battles and campaigns and strategy and tactics. But this time I set out merely to tell of the ordinary joys of playing with the floor, and to gird

improvingly and usefully at toymakers. So much, I think, I have done. If one parent or one uncle buys the wiselier for me, I shall not altogether have lived in vain.