

IN TOWN  
TO-DAY

# Inventions "Ten Bob" a Time

**MR. THOMAS FIRMSTONE** is, or at least was, a "boffin." His particular line of work is delicate electrical equipment. He is a comparatively young man of 29.

"Those were hectic days when research workers had to find the answer to the many problems put to us by the war ministries," he recalled. "Sometimes we were hard at it night and day to perfect some gadget needed to outwit the latest German weapon."

So far Mr. Firmstone has

not found inventing a profitable business as he had to give each of his brain-children to his firm in exchange for 10s.—in terms of his contract.

He has to his credit a thermostat, a master instrument for ascertaining the working temperature of inaccessible parts of rotating machinery, and an electric theatre organ which converts light into sound.

He also worked on "R.60," a

radar apparatus for the control of light anti-aircraft guns in warships. The war ended just when the equipment was perfected.

Mr. Firmstone, who started his career in the R.A.F. in 1937 and was at one time a technical adviser to Balloon Command, has so far come to the conclusion that "boffins" are not popular in South Africa.

"High qualifications in science and engineering do not seem to count for much in this country," he says, "and only artisan-electricians seem to be in demand."

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**TAKING** the part of the employer in the much-discussed labour-management play, "The Forgotten Factor," which is now touring the Union, is Major Stephen Foot.

"For years I was a foreign manager for an oil company and served in Mexico, Venezuela and the Far East," he said, "so I understand labour problems."

Major Foot, a loosely built man with a clipped military moustache, has crowded many experiences into his life, but by far the most interesting, he says, have been the last 15 years touring Europe for moral rearmament and specialis-

ing on the question of labour relations.

"Unfortunately I was a bit over age for the last war, but in the first show I was among the pioneers of tank warfare," he said. "At Cambrai, where tanks were first used, I was a brigade major."



Major Foot

"Cumbbersome brutes, those first tanks. Slow-moving, with tracks right round the perimeter of their bodies. Mechanically they were often a sore trial to their crews. I've even tried my hand at schoolmastering, teaching mathematics."

"Taken all round, I've seen a great deal of the world. The oil company took me far afield, and when I joined Dr. Frank Buchman, founder of the moral rearmament movement, I started roving again.

"I had my first real taste of settling labour disputes in the general transport strike in 1926, when at Eastbourne I was the mediator between the municipality and the strikers."

F.R.

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