

Marvels in Match-boxes.

By S. L. NEVILLE-DIXON.



THESE pages are an eloquent testimony to the extraordinary skill and ingenuity of artisans and others in the Midland districts. Two or three years ago a particularly enterprising

firm of match-manufacturers, Messrs. S. I. Moreland and Sons, of Gloucester and Birmingham, hit upon the excellent idea of getting up public competitions on entirely original lines. Of course, the firm's primary motive was the sale and general advertisement of their wares; but they also considered how they should best tap the wonderful fund of originality which they knew the average British workman *does* possess, no matter what his traducers say.

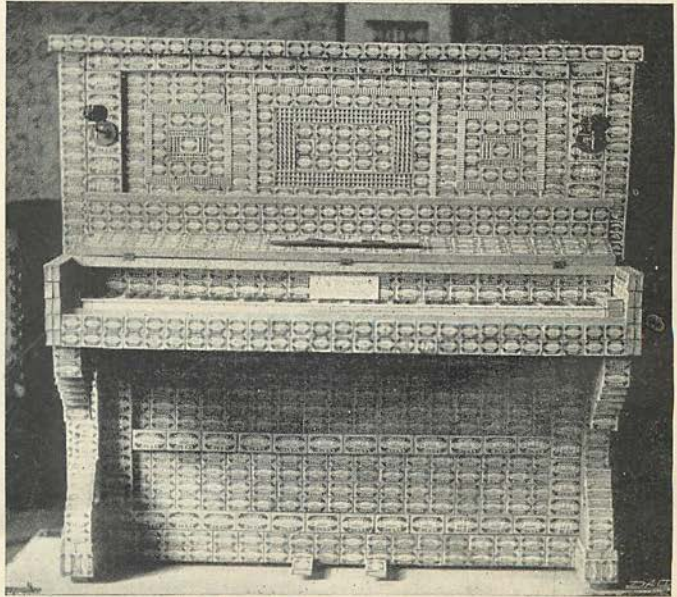
It was at length resolved that the competition should take the form of model-making—"the greatest novelty of any sort that can be made with not less than 1,000 of our match-boxes." The conditions were widely advertised in Birmingham and its environs. Competent judges—architects, chiefly—were appointed. The first prize was £50, the second £25, third £10, and then came three other prizes of £5 each. In subsequent competitions, however, the amounts were slightly varied, but in all cases the prize-money aggregated £100. Models were to be sent carriage paid to Messrs. Moreland and Sons' Birmingham depôt, 155, Great Charles Street, and those winning a prize became the absolute property of the firm. Later on Messrs. Moreland hired a shop in Birmingham for the express purpose of exhibiting to the public the prize-winning models.

In this article, then, will be found a representative collection of photographs of these "marvels in match-boxes." In some cases the model occupied the spare time of

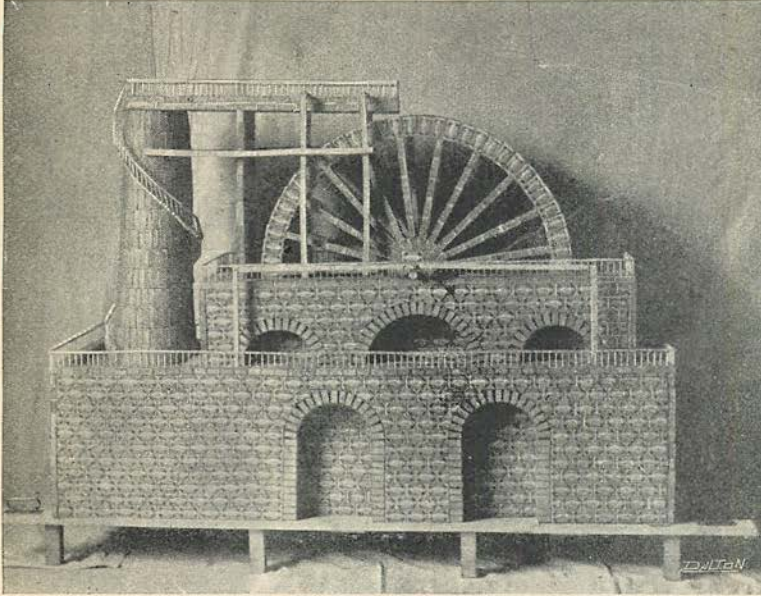
its creator for six months or more; and the effect of the whole was heightened by clock-work arrangements and similar contrivances.

It is to Messrs. Morelands' Birmingham manager, Mr. George Blakely, that we are indebted for most of the photographs.

The wonderful piano seen in the first photograph is actually full size, being 5ft. in height, and constructed entirely of match-boxes, which, according to the rules of the competition, must have contained Messrs. Morelands' wares. The instrument was awarded first prize in the third competition, so that it may be said to have fetched the price of a real cottage piano. The judges were Messrs. Gately and Parsons, well-known architects in Birmingham. The maker of the piano was Mr. G. W. Roberts, of 2 Wenman Street, Birmingham. Mr. Roberts served as tuner for many years with the well-known house of Broadwood, so that a piano suggested itself naturally to him. He tells me that he used upwards of 3,200 ordinary match-boxes, and 576 boxes that had contained small wax-vestas. The only other thing he used was 5lb. of glue.



MODEL OF A FULL-SIZE PIANO.

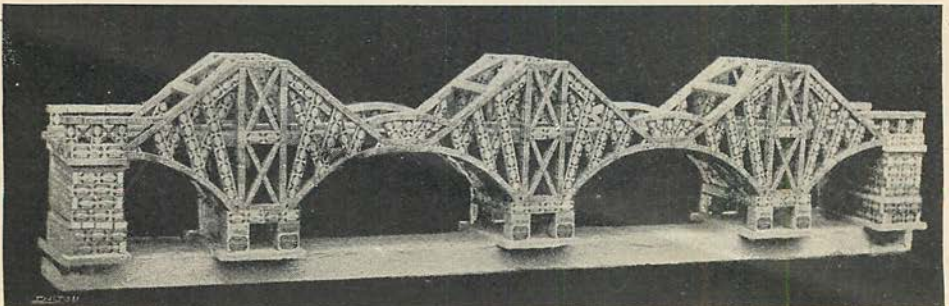


THE LAXEY WHEEL, ISLE OF MAN.

Originality seems to run in the Roberts family, for we next show a marvellous model of the great Laxey Wheel, in the Isle of Man, made by Miss L. W. Roberts, sister to the designer of the piano. "The Laxey Wheel," writes Mr. Roberts, "was 6ft. in length and 4ft. high. It took a little less than six months to make, and used up about 3,000 match-boxes."

In some cases more than one competitor took the same original for his model. For instance, the Laxey Wheel was also adopted by Mr. James Shaw, of 56, Dickinson Street, Nottingham. Mr. Shaw's model, which won the first prize, was no less than 6ft. 7½in. in height, 2ft. in depth, and 8ft. in length. It contained 4,500 boxes, and took five months to complete. The wheel itself was 5ft. 6in. in diameter, and went by clockwork. Another competitor, Mr. Lewis Sheldon, of 49,

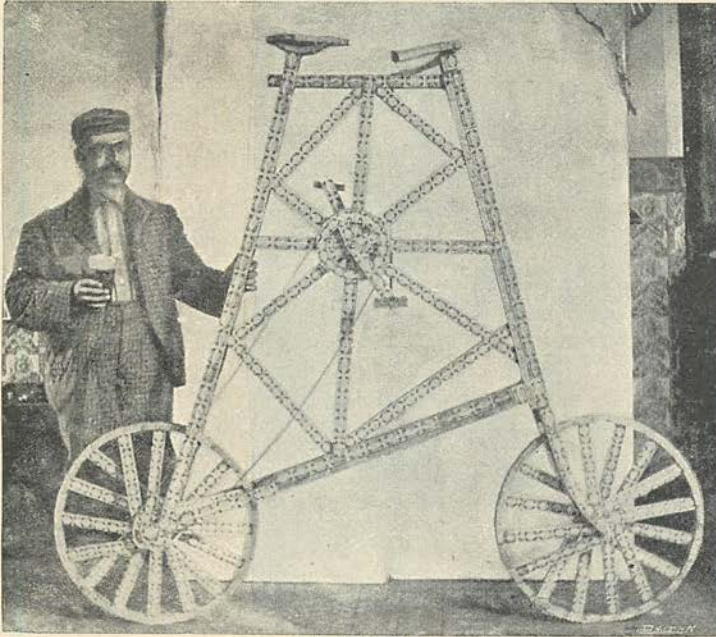
prize in the second competition. It is a very faithful reproduction of the Forth Bridge, and is, of course, made entirely out of matchboxes. The height of the model is 1ft. 10in., the width 12in., and the length no less than 10ft. 6in. The model contained about 3,000 boxes. I may here repeat the statement, that according to the rules governing the competitions models were to contain *at least* 1,000 boxes. "Other than match-boxes," writes Mr. Marshall, "no material whatever is used in the construction of the bridge—not even in the stays. When completed it stood the test of 42lb. weight in the centre of either arch. I never saw the original bridge, but got an idea of it from a lithograph in a railway guide. The model contains 241 stays and twelve principal pillars. Seven rows of match-boxes form the roadway over the bridge, and on this roadway are laid the sleepers and rails."



THE FORTH BRIDGE.

Foundry Road, Winson Green, Birmingham, constructed a double-masted turret ship-of-war, 8ft. 3in. long. The completeness of this model was astonishing; the ship carried fifteen guns (all made out of match-boxes), and there were six life-boats.

The next two models shown are the work of Mr. F. Marshall, of 13, Manor Avenue, Sneinton, Nottingham. The first of Mr. Marshall's models depicted gained the third



THE "EIFFEL BICYCLE."

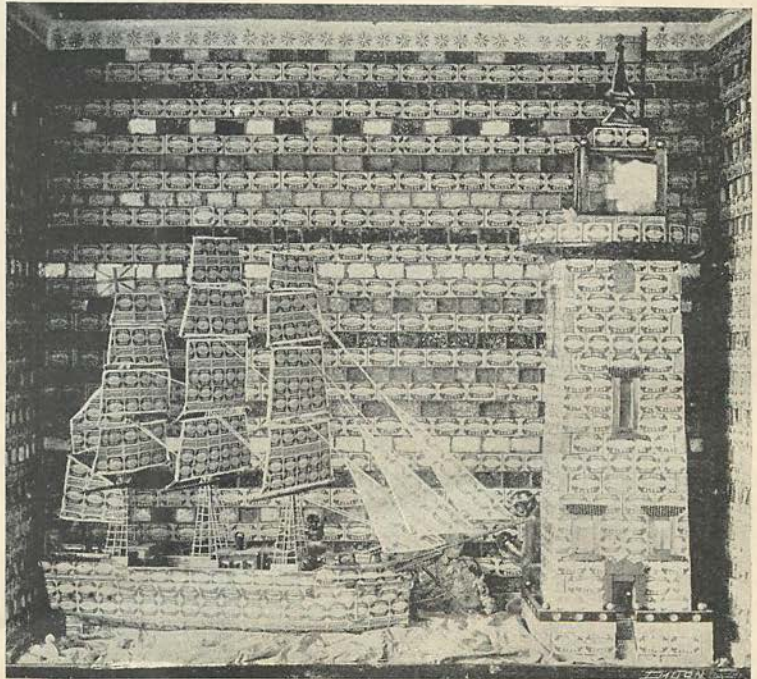
Mr. Marshall's second model is what is known as an Eiffel bicycle. When complete, this model was in full working order. It contains 1,100 match-boxes, and stands a little more than 6ft. in height. The diamond stays are two boxes thick. The driving chain is 9ft. long, and was made from the sides of the match-box-drawers glued on to tape. The wheels are 24in. in diameter. Another model of Mr. Marshall's was a reproduction of the lighthouse near New Brighton. This model was fitted with a revolving lantern, and the whole contained 2,900 match-boxes.

The next model reproduced is a highly elaborate affair, made by Mr. Grubb, of Grendon Terrace, Atherstone. This is supposed to represent Nelson's famous ship *Victory* passing a large lighthouse. As will

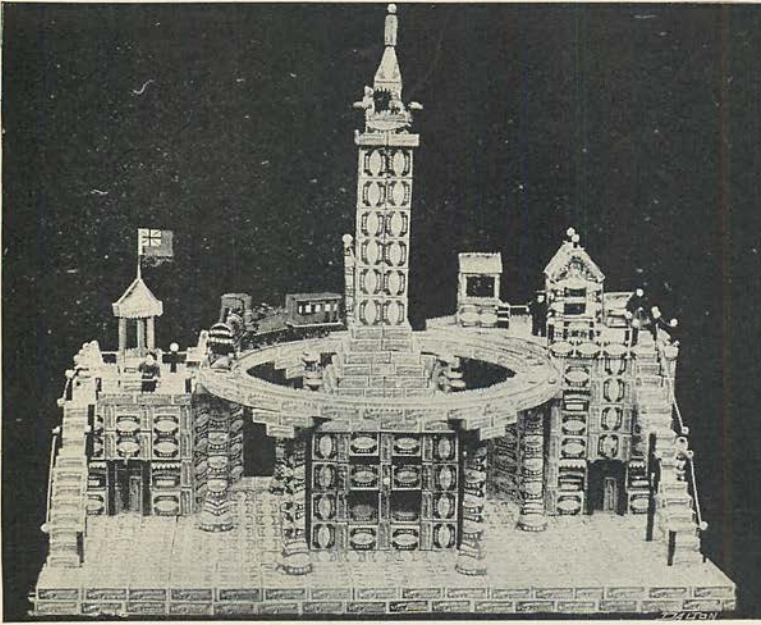
be seen, the ship, the lighthouse, and the entire background, with its wings, are all composed of match-boxes. Working three hours a night, Mr. Grubb finished his model in five months. The ship is 3ft. 6in. long; and the lighthouse, 5ft. 2in. high, and nearly 2ft. square. To build a circular lighthouse, with the awkward material at his disposal, was a little beyond Mr. Grubb. The designer, it should be said, is very well acquainted with nautical matters, having served as steward for some years on board a little vessel of 400 tons. Thus it will be seen that each competitor

prudently followed his own bent.

The next match-box model shown is an even more elaborate and ambitious original design, worked out by Mr. Joseph Bray, of Coleshill Street, Atherstone. Mr. Bray



NELSON'S SHIP "VICTORY" PASSING A LIGHTHOUSE.



TOWER WITH ELEVATED CIRCULAR RAILWAY.

writes as follows: "I am sending you a photograph of my model of a tower with elevated circular railway, made with 1,120 empty match-boxes. This was entered in Messrs. Morelands' competition held last January, and gained the fourth prize of £10. The model was 36in. long, 39in. high, and 24in. wide. The boxes were put together with glue, and the model was very firm and substantial. I worked upon it at night after I had finished my day's work. You will see that even the foundation of the platform is made of match-boxes. The bottom of the tower is supposed to contain shops; and it has four entrances and sixteen windows. The railway track around the tower was laid with rails and sleepers, and a clockwork train was run upon it at intervals. The platform for the station is on the right-hand side of the model, where I also built a booking-office and signal-box with levers. On the left-hand side are a promenade, a bandstand, and a refreshment-room. Railway-station, promenade, etc., were all worked round with brass wire, so as to represent railings, and the whole model had small lamps for electric lights."

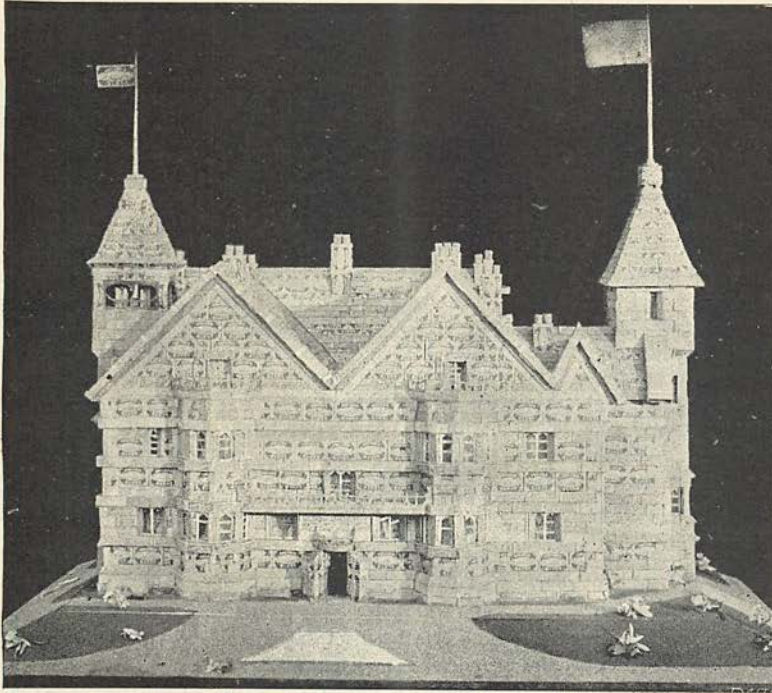
The next match-box model to be shown is one representing the stately old red-brick gateway of St. James's Palace, as viewed from St. James's Street. You will see from the label that it gained the fourth prize of £10. It is the work of Mr. J. H.

Round, of Holly Hall, Dudley.

Mr. Round writes to say that his model contains 2,380 common match-boxes and 620 wax-vesta boxes. He took particular note of the time occupied in its construction—106 hours. From the ground to the top of the flag on the tower measured no less than 6ft. 4in. The clock was a very real one, working twenty-four hours with one winding. The dial was 8in. in diameter. The very dial figures and hands were made of parts of the inevitable match-box. There was a motto surrounded by flowers, "Long live the



THE OLD TOWER OF ST JAMES'S PALACE.



"HOME FOR OLD SOLDIERS AND SAILORS."

Queen." It only remains to be said that both the letters and flowers were made from bits of match-box or the paper covering thereon.

Yet another of these wonderful little models. This design is an ideal one, and is supposed to represent a desirable "Home for Old Soldiers and Sailors." Upwards of 3,000 match-boxes were used in the construction of this model, and it was made in its designer's spare time after he had worked ten hours a day at his own occupation. This model is the work of Mr. Evan H. Jordan, of Oakamoor Mills, near Cheadle, Staffs. Mr. Jordan says, "It took me about a thousand hours; the only things I used were an old razor and a pot of glue."

Another fancy design was sent in by Mr. J. Leavesley, of Nottingham, and it gained the second prize of £20. This was supposed to represent, on a small but perfectly accurate scale, Messrs. Morelands' new premises. The model contained 6,000 empty match-boxes, the sand-papered edges of the boxes themselves forming the stone dressings of the building. Other striking instances of ingenuity were that the front of the boxes went to make the red brick façade; whilst the tiling on the roof was composed of the blue and amber of the insides of the boxes. This model was nearly 6ft. square.

A particularly good and accurate repre-

sentation of the Great Wheel at Earl's Court is next reproduced. This model gained a first prize of £50.

Mr. S. Jennings, of 32, Richmond Street, Walsall, was the designer. The wheel contains 2,110 match-boxes, every one of which had to be cut, carved, and dovetailed into shape. The wheel has twenty-four cars, and each car has eight windows made out of mica. By a clockwork arrangement the wheel will work for fifteen minutes after being wound up. The model is 4ft. high; and Mr.

Jennings tells me that no fewer than 500 of his neighbours came to see it at his house.



THE GREAT WHEEL, EARL'S COURT--FIRST PRIZE, £50.