

NEAL of the NAVY

By William Hamilton Osborne,
AUTHOR OF "RED MOUSE," "RUNNING FIGHT,"
"CATSPAW," "BLUE DUCKLE," ETC.

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FIRST INSTALLMENT

PROLOGUE—THE SURVIVORS

CHAPTER I.

The Red Death.

Capt. John Hardin of the Princess regarded the fast-receding coast line with unusual alarm. He shouted to his mate.

"Welcher," he cried, pointing aft, "look at that. I've never seen old Pelee and that way before."

"Welcher," the mate, a surly, sallow-faced, ill-conditioned fellow in unkempt uniform, followed with his eyes the captain's glance.

"Gee whiz," he said, "me neither."

"Ben," exclaimed the captain, "she's spitting fire. By Godfrey, that means death—death, I tell you, death."

"This was back in 1902. The Princess, Captain Hardin's boat, was a tramp steamer bound to New York from the city of St. Pierre, in the Island of Martinique, with a cargo of cocoa, coffee, sugar cane and cotton, and had been under way probably an hour.

"You're right, captain," he returned. "Pelee means business this trip. Death is right."

A feminine figure emerged from the shadow of the afterhouse and rushed forward toward the bridge. Behind her, following in her wake, raced two sturdy youngsters. One of these youngsters darted past her, swarmed upon the bridge and confronted the captain and his mate.

"What are we going to do, Jack?" cried the captain's young wife; "what are we going to do?"

"Do?" returned the mate, before the captain could reply. "Put on more steam, that's what we'll do. We're well out of that hell-hole yonder. An hour and we'd have been in the thick of it. We've well out of it, I tell you."

"Captain Hardin applied his eye to his telescope once more. The boy upon his shoulder followed suit.

"Welcher," said the captain bravely, "we've got to go back."

CHAPTER II.

The Lost Isle.

On the same day—the day of the red death at Martinique—and but two short hours before the pilot put the helm of the tramp steamer Princess hard aport, three men sat on the veranda of a low-roofed, white-walled bungalow in St. Pierre.

One of these men was Ilington, a young American. He passed around a box of fragrant Martinique cheroots. He folded up some half-dozen sheets of paper he had been examining and returned them to another individual who faced him from across the table.

"Ben," exclaimed the captain, "for a week at least—half a hundred times—I have told you your credentials were satisfactory to me."

Hernandez nodded gravely. He thrust the papers back into a pocket and tapped them significantly.

"None could be better," he exclaimed grandiloquently, "I am Hernandez—that is all sufficient."

Suddenly the American turned and faced the third member of the coterie.

"And what," he exclaimed, "what of Ponto here?"

"This third individual was the strangest creature of them all. He was a Mexican; dark, very dark; low-browed; low-statured—and fat."

Hernandez nodded significantly.

"Ponto, senior," he returned, "is as good as gold. He, too, is brave."

"Will he do as I tell him?" queried the American.

In a flash Ponto's hand darted like a black snake across the table to clutch the packet in its grasp. The American, for all his hugeness, was quite as agile as the fat Ponto. He snatched the packet away just as Ponto's fingers touched it.

Ponto's eyes reddened; his face flushed suddenly. He fingered the hilt of his knife and glanced toward Hernandez.

"I will be careful to take small chance with you, friend Ponto," said Ilington. He waved the packet toward Hernandez. "All in good time, senior," he said.

"The important question," went on Ilington, "is this: Who is in possession of the lost Isle of Cinnabar? It belongs to me. I have the paper title—at any rate I can obtain it, but whom must we eject when we arrive?"

"Leave that to me," said Hernandez. "We shall wipe them off the face of the earth."

A screen door swung open and a native woman gaudily arrayed in green and yellow stripes, her head bound around with a strip of orange-colored linen, slipped through the door leading with her a tiny girl—a child three or four years old.

The child saw Ilington and ran tumultuously toward him, clasping his huge leg with her arms.

"My daughter, gentlemen," said Ilington. "She is all I have. Her mother died when she was born and when I die she will be the heiress to the lost Isle of Cinnabar—perhaps the princess of a principality, who knows."

Manuella, her native nurse, carried her out into the narrow white and winding street, and together they half ran, half toddled down the hill.

Ilington resumed his own chair and once more exhibited the oilskin packet.

"The contents of this packet—possibly—will indicate the whereabouts of the lost Isle of Cinnabar," he said.

"Break the seal, senior," said Hernandez.

Ilington started to obey—but something happened.

With the suddenness of a jaguar fleeing from the hunters, a man—half

Native woman out upon the ladder. "Courage, Manuella," he kept whispering; "encourage, Annette. They've got to help you out."

Captain Hardin leaned over the side. "Let the woman and child come aboard," he shouted; "back there, men back. Welcher, let them come aboard."

"Ah-h-h," cried Ilington in a tone of relief. With a final almost superhuman effort he lifted Manuella to the rail of the Princess, safely aboard. He was about to pass the child to her, but young Neal Hardin was holding out his arms.

"I'm a good catch," said young Neal; "put it there."

Ilington glanced for one instant into the frank face of Neal Hardin and the captain of the ship. He drew a sigh of relief. He nodded swiftly.

"Whatever happens, thank God she is in good hands," he said.

Captain Hardin put his lips to his megaphone.

"Put her about there," he shouted out; "full steam ahead."

Even as he said it there was a fresh shower of huge red clinders; some ash—some in molten state. There was an added cry of agony from shore and sea. Even the refugees aboard the ship cowered under the hail of fire in terror. Suddenly at the captain's side Manuella, the native woman, uttered a gasp. A red-hot cinder of unusual size had smitten her upon the temple as she crouched low over little Annette Ilington. Clutching the captain by the arm she fell prone upon the deck. Young Neal Hardin sprang forward and caught the child before she fell.

Manuella's breath came fast—the thinnest portion of her skull had been pierced by the jagged edges of the cinder. Wild-eyed and frantic, but well realizing that she was upon the point of death, she caught young Neal by the blouse.

warning he slipped aside into a blind alley, and let the crowd slide by like a huge many-colored avalanche. When he joined the crowd again, Hernandez and his Aztec ally were ahead of him and not behind.

"To the sea—to the sea!"—the voice of the multitude raised itself in agony. There was but one cry—"to the sea—let me past—make room for me—to the sea—to the sea!"

At a crazy little wharf Ilington twitched himself and Manuella and the child dived to one side and let the crowd plunge on.

He scanned the surface of the bay, the fringe of shore. The bay was dotted with small boats, laden to the gunwales. The water was alive with swimmers.

Ilington turned suddenly—at his side stood Hernandez. Ilington shook his head.

"There's not a chance," he said. "Send Ilington," said Hernandez, "you are indeed fortunate to have tied yourself to me. Always I have something up my sleeve." He jerked his head. "Follow me," he added.

Ilington, wondering, followed, dragging Manuella with him.

Swiftly the group moved along the water front—they fought their way inch by inch. Suddenly Hernandez darted out upon another wharf.

"Stand in a circle," he commanded, "and when I say the word—quick action, senior."

Then Hernandez stooped quickly and jerked back a trap door that had been fitted into the planking.

"Quick," he whispered, "drop."

He seized Manuella and dropped her through the opening. She screamed—this scream rose to a shriek when she struck the water. But her alarm was unwarranted. There was no danger—she floated waist deep in water. Ponto followed with a leap—he knew his ground. Ilington lowered himself warily, to save Annette from injury; clung for one instant to the edge of the opening with one brawny hand, and then dropped straight as a plummet. Hernandez followed suit, closing the trap door behind him. The closing of this door left them almost in total darkness.

"Senior," whispered Hernandez, "I have a boat. One moment, please."

He groped about and caught a rope tied to a pile. He drew it in, hand over hand.

"In," said Hernandez—"everybody in."

The group obeyed. The boat was small.

"Senior," said Hernandez, "you are large—you are tall. See yonder ray of light—it is an opening, just wide enough to admit of this small craft. Leap out, senior—draw us thither—it is the sole way to the sea."

Ilington dragged the boat through the narrow opening and swung back into his place.

"I'll row," he said.

Suddenly Hernandez pointed toward the north. "Look, senior," he exclaimed, "succor—yonder is salvation."

Ilington followed his glance. His face lighted.

"Salvation is right," he returned in tones of relief, "a steamer—and, what's more, she flies the American flag. Good luck."

Under the command of her captain, Hardin, the Princess had steamed back into the rain of living fire to rescue whom she might.

On the forward deck of the steamer stood Captain Hardin—and beside him his small son—to welcome refugees. And there were many refugees to welcome. Captain Hardin soon saw he must discriminate.

Finally he shook his head. "Ben," he told his mate, "we're filling up. Pick your crowd from now on—only the helpless—children, women, old men. Reject all others."

Welcher, with two of the crew behind him—both armed with a crosby—all armed with capstan bars—raised all his bludgeons.

"No more—no more!" he cried. "I'll brain the first man who tries to get aboard."



Ponto's Eyes Reddened; His Face Flushed Suddenly. He Fingered the Hilt of His Knife and Glanced Toward Hernandez.

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"I die—you take baby—some day papa come—very rich—"

She said no more. The captain bent over her, rose and glanced at Welcher significantly. Then he turned to his young son Neal.

"Take the little girl into our cabin, Neal," he said. "Give her to your mother."

Neal clutched the warm bundle in his arms and staggered with it aft.

As Mrs. Hardin unwound the shawl something dropped clinking to the cabin floor. Neal seized it and handed it to his mother.

"It's a bag of gold," he said.

No sooner had he said it than another object fluttered to the floor— an oilskin packet sealed with sealing wax. Captain Hardin placed the two upon a small stand set into the side wall of the cabin. She continued to unwind the shawl. Again they started. Pinned to the child's dress was a crumpled piece of paper, and upon the piece of paper was a hastily penciled scrawl. Mrs. Hardin read it. This is what it said:

"I am Annette Ilington, heiress of the lost Isle of Cinnabar. I will be very rich some day. Save my clothes and the oilskin packet until my father comes for me or until I am eighteen. I must look out for a man with a saber cut upon his face. For God's sake keep me safe."

CHAPTER IV.

After a Night of Fear.

The three men—Ilington and his two companions—sat doleful in their badly leaking boat and watched Captain Hardin's vessel fade away into the distance. Hernandez watched her keenly as she disappeared. Into the innermost recesses of his mind he tucked away the fact that she was the steamer Princess of New York. Some day that knowledge would be of use to him. Hot ashes brushed against Ilington's cheek; some rested on his shoulders. He shook himself like some huge mastiff. He seized the oars.

"Come," he said, "we've got to get out of this—right away. This boat is filling fast."

"Go to it, senior," said Hernandez. "Row."

It was not a request; it was a command. It was a strange thing that as long as Ilington had borne the child in his arms, Ilington had been the leader of the three. Now his independence seemed to leave him.

For hours he rowed—he forgot he was a human being. His oars rose and fell with the regularity of machine.

He reached the beach and darted size-up father and thither, always babbling, always cackling.

There was reason for this. Somewhere in his skull there was a dent—a deep depression—made by the billet of wood that had struck him down. Ever and anon as he went he stroked the wound with the right hand and drew the hand away, covered with blood.

"Red—red—" he babbled and went on.

CHAPTER V.

A Night With Flame.

Young Neal Hardin was proud of his father's boat, the Princess. He never ceased admiring her. There was no part of her he didn't love. He was well assured that she must hold the same fascination for other people as she did for him. He concluded that little Annette Ilington would fall desperately in love with his huge boat and he escorted that young lady to all parts of the vessel—in fact, he walked her little legs off.

They explored the lifeboats, the forward quarters of the crew; they visited the pilot; they climbed the bridge. Finally, they visited the hold. It was well lit.

Something had happened—and had happened on the day before while the Princess lay off Martinique. Cinders had fallen by the hundreds—a condition of affairs that the captain and his crew had well prepared for. It was impossible to be everywhere at once and a cinder—a live, red messenger of death—had taken advantage of this condition of affairs, had wormed its way unnoticed into the cotton cargo, and like a red-hot cancer had eaten its way into it with flame.

With just the slightest trace of excitement Neal drew the little girl to the deck and with her at his side sought and found his father and whispered to him.

The captain stiffened as with shock; his face turned pale. He held up a hand and three members of the crew rushed to him. He gave hasty, whispered orders.

In ten minutes the fire hose was laid out—men were working at the pumps. But in ten minutes something else had happened—the hold was filled with smoke. Huge tongues of flame were leaping heavenward, and in that same ten minutes panic took command—pandemonium reigned.

"Abandon ship," Hardin cried. "All hands to the boats! Women and children first."

Two days later a boatload of half-starved refugees parched with thirst, chilled by the cold night and baked by the heat of day, were sighted by a cruiser of the navy. Half an hour afterwards its exhausted passengers clambered wearily but gratefully up the cruiser's side.

The last of the refugees to leave the lifeboat and last of all save the lifeboat's crew to reach the cruiser's deck was young Neal Hardin. Clutched in his arms was the recumbent sleeping figure of little Annette Ilington.

Mrs. Hardin was offered the commander's cabin. She accepted with gratitude. She tucked Annette Ilington and Joey Welcher into their berths, but when she came to look for Neal, her young son, she found him missing. She searched for him. A seaman touched her on the arm.

"You'll find him there, ma'am," said the sailor.

He pointed toward a group in a corner of the sleeping deck. The crew

were swinging hammocks ready for the night. Mrs. Hardin listened. She heard the clear tones of her young son Neal. She hastened to the group and caught her offspring by the hand.

"Mom," he pleaded, "don't." He pointed toward a hammock high above his head. "That's where I'm going to sleep—just once—tonight."

A seaman touched his cap and grinned. "He's a sailor from the ground up, ma'am," he said. "You can't make him anything else if you was to try a hundred years."

All through that long night a woman lay, wide-eyed, with dumb agony within her heart. She didn't know—she couldn't know—that Capt. John Hardin was exploring the depths unknown with a knife sunk between his shoulder blades by his mate, Welcher. But she knew that she would never lay eyes upon him more—never feel the clasp of his hand, nor his kiss upon her lips, nor his strong arms about her—never in this world again.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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Hatched From Unlaid Eggs. Three chickens, hatched from eggs that were never laid, composed the interesting part of a window display of poultry remedies in a drug store recently, says a writer in Farm and Fireside.

Three laying hens, a white Orpington, a Rhode Island red and a black Minorca, were killed. I obtained an egg from each hen. The shell of the white Orpington egg was not fully developed, so I used gum arabic and adhesive plaster to finish the shell.

The three eggs were placed in an incubator, and hatched out three chicks, a white one, a black one and a red one. The chicks are roosters and are now large enough to crow.

Net the Soldier's Fault. A certain army officer took in to dinner at a Washington party a young lady who had just returned from England.

"The young soldiers," she said, "are having it all their own way with the girls over there now. Too much their own way, in fact. I know of a young lieutenant in the Blues who is said to be engaged to seven girls simultaneously."

"Oh, well," said the officer, with a deprecatory smile—"oh well, Cupid, of course, is using a machine gun these days."—Washington Star.

Some Weight. Redd—How much does his automobile weigh? Greene—You mean with the mortgage?

Well Acquainted. "Do you know the nature of an oath, madam?" "Well, I ought to, sir. We've just moved and my husband has been laying the carpets."

A plant has been discovered in Cuba bearing fruit like figs in which flies lay their eggs, to be hatched by the sun.

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Ponto in a Sudden Frenzy Lifted High the Billet in His Hands and Brought it Down.

He reached the beach and darted size-up father and thither, always babbling, always cackling.

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NAPOLEON AS HERO

reason to fear the vengeance of the mob. Instead, he was greeted more as a hero than as an enemy.

When the English man-of-war Belsham arrived at Turin, a most brave and impressive scene greeted the eyes of the Corsican prisoner. On his arrival more than one thousand men, including every available craft of the city, lined the streets of the Belsham.

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When the deposed monarch of Europe appeared on deck the officers and seamen, without orders and moved by a common impulse, uncovered their heads.

When Napoleon advanced to the starboard gangway to view the spectators before him, a great cheer went up, and in the thunderous acclamation there was not a single note of hatred or anger.

Practically all of the spectators uncovered and remained so as long as Napoleon was in sight. For days thereafter these scenes were repeated, and people gathered from all

over England to cheer the celebrated personage.

Napoleon was very cheerful in those days, for he believed the popular applause was a good omen for the future, and he yielded to the illogical hope that the British government would permit him to remain in England under some strict but not oppressive surveillance.

The demonstrations had just the opposite effect, however, for they proved that Napoleon's power over the imaginations of men which as strong an appeal as ever. Of

ficial England was alarmed by these popular manifestations of good will, and sent Bonaparte into exile on St. Helena rock.—Exchange.

Light of Other Days. A very common form of light among the Jews—and which we are told by antiquaries is more often than not invented by the word "lamp" in our Bible—consisted of a sort of advanced torch made of iron or potter's earth, around which was wrapped old linen which required to be moistened from

time to time from the vessel of oil carried by the person using it.

This was the light used by Gideon and his 300 men. It was also the "lamp" of the wise and foolish virgin and will explain the reference to oil in the parable.

Deftness Required. "How would you like your hair brushed?" asked the solicitous barber. "Well," answered his patron. "As I have only one on top, suppose you lay it out to the best advantage."