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croaking of frogs. Swinging here and there in erratic circles, like fairies of the jungle carrying lighted lanterns, went the fireflies on aimless journeyings, not a few but many thousands of them, as if in a wild dance of curiosity, looking through the night to learn what manner of things these were that had come upon them so suddenly, ripped away their forests, and built strange mansions in their solitudes.

It was not this, however, that chained her attention. High up over this mushroom city where all had been silent and darkening when she went below, now gleamed myriad lights strung as by a genii of the lamp while others rested from their toil. White, flaring streaks of brilliance thrust spearlike rays into the gloom, illuminating below them the creation of a day. From the distance came the steady hum of steam driven dynamos, telling with monotonous insistence that there would be no cessation until the last spike was driven, the last machine set, and the last belting hung. Into this spot of the night began to come black figures answering the call of the siren. On a sudden, as if by preconcerted signal, the echoes again awoke to the clang of hammers on steel and the hum of voices in command. Like weird pygmies doomed to twist their thews in never ending effort, she saw them resume their uncompleted task, exerting themselves unceasingly for its accomplishment.

A launch which had come alongside on some errand was sputtering spasmodically at the foot of the ladder below as if impatient to be off. She boarded it, and in a few minutes a smart young naval officer stepped into the stern, gave a curt order, and they raced away toward the shore.

"Ah, good evening, Miss Roberts," he said, suddenly spying her. "Looking for your father, who went ashore awhile ago, I presume? I'm going right in his direction, and will be glad to guide you." He seemed too busy for further conversation, and almost before the boat had come to a stop sprang to the shingle and offered his hand.

Through steadily working groups of men,

past unfinished buildings, and over lighted floors where machinists wrought with levers and wrenches, they went to the far side of the camp. Here were officers with coats cast off and sleeves rolled up, and laborers in overall intent on setting a huge blast furnace; and in the very heart of this activity, besmudged with dirt, his hat discarded, and his shirt thrown open, she found her father. Not even he with all his weight of years could resist this terminal call of energy. She stood and watched for a few minutes, while he, the master spirit of the group, directed the work. It seemed to have passed its critical point, and after some final instructions to the engineer in charge he straightened up and looked round.

"Hello, here's the assistant," he said, walking toward her and looking fondly into her eyes. She besought him to rest, and her appeals were seconded by those of the officers who feared for the physical strength of the man on whom so much depended, and who would have guarded him as a precious jewel of untold worth. He protested at first, and then, like one waking from a dream and suddenly conscious of a great weariness, made no objection when the Rear Admiral, who now looked like a workman, put his hat upon his head and tendered him his coat. He permitted them to throw it over his shoulders, and finally with a look of infinite satisfaction at the grating structure before him, took his daughter's arm and tramped away. He was an old man again, yielding the tribute of age to the toll of youth.

They boarded the boat and sought their cabins; but even as they retired there came to them through the open portholes, like a lullaby, the sounds of unremitting labor intermingled with the lap of waves on the coral beach. The first creative step toward a national victory and supremacy had been taken in a day, even while the war cloud across western seas was gathering strength for its overcast; and, waiting, wondering, and expectant, the world was unaware.

To be continued next Sunday

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters

A MOST astounding apathy prevailed in the United States when this country was threatened with war with Japan. Although the conflict had been impending for several weeks, and the Japanese had been mobilizing their navy and obviously getting ready to make a belligerent move, the Government had complacently and supinely gone on its way, even stopping work on its fortifications in the Philippines; and indeed, when war was finally declared and Japanese warships appeared off Manila, the Stars and Stripes were lowered from the fort and the white flag of surrender run up, notwithstanding that not a shot had been fired. The same procedure was followed at Hawaii.

The administration replied with indifference and evasion to all requests from the press and foreign representatives for information, and to cap the climax of its amazing action ordered all the principal warships in the Pacific to report at once to Baltimore, and then announced mysteriously that there probably would not be any fighting on land.

Guy Hillier, secretary of the British Embassy at Washington, was ordered to London to lay before the Foreign Office such things as he knew. He was in love with Norma Roberts, daughter of "Old Bill" Roberts, an eccentric inventor who maintained close relations with the Government.

Upon the outbreak of hostilities, Norma, to whose ability her father said had been due the perfection of his inventions, started on a secret trip to Florida, in company with several of the highest officials of the United States navy.

The Government suddenly issued a call for volunteers, and established a line of communication across the borders of Canada and Mexico. Warships were ordered to patrol both coasts, the cables were cut, and wireless stations destroyed, and the foreign representatives in Washington were told that after forty-eight hours they would not be permitted to send or receive any outside communications.

Count Seigo, a prominent young Japanese, remained in the United States after the beginning of the war as the secret agent of his Government; and, adopting the guise of a Chinese laundryman, soon discovered enough to convince him that the administration was engaged in mysterious prepara-

tions of tremendous importance. When spying upon a conference of high officials in a deserted field on the outskirts of Washington, he suddenly saw something that made him shreek in despair. "Only the gods can save Nippon!" He learned that he was watched, and traveled as a tramp in Puget Sound, hoping to be able to cross to Canada and warn his Government; but just as he was about to succeed he was overtaken and shot.

Japan sent the most formidable fleet of warships ever mobilized to attack the Western coast of the United States; but this fleet disappeared from the face of the sea, without leaving even the slightest information. England sent a war-squadron across the Atlantic to pacify Canada, and this also disappeared.

Hillier was sent back with a message to the President of the United States, which he was instructed to get to Washington at all hazards. But the Embassy secretary, despite all his subterfuges, was unable to get through the lines from Canada, or to get his message transmitted to the President.

Without her navy and helpless, England was almost immediately drawn into a complicated web with Germany; but just at the critical moment the warlike Kaiser and his Chancellor also disappeared, and, to add to the mystery, they were found to have last been seen in the carriage of the American Ambassador to Berlin.

Admiral Robert Bevis of the United States navy suddenly appeared before King Edward in London, and asked that the King, the Prime Minister, and the first Lord of the Admiralty accompany him on a mysterious journey. Then, as they wavered, he suddenly brought in Admiral Field, who had been in command of the British fleet at the time he disappeared; and, yielding to the latter's persuasions, they departed with the American.

The next morning the battleship Dreadnought was found resting peacefully on a part of the Thames impossible to be reached except by the smallest tugboats. Her upper works were smashed in; but she showed no signs of having been in battle, and the British flag still floated from her stern. Simultaneously with her discovery it was found that the King, Prime Minister, and first Lord of the Admiralty had mysteriously disappeared.

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THE EDGE OF THE PIT

Continued from page 5

Wickerson was playing with the beautiful girl in gray, whose name, it seems, was Virginia Martin. I took innumerable snapshots of everyone in sight, but more particularly of those situations which brought Miss Martin into the closest and most familiar attitude toward the other guests.

I must confess that it was with much pleasure I saw how cheerfully my old friends warmed toward the exquisite beauty and gracious manner of the girl. Landon too was much less peevish than I had expected, and in the excitement of the tennis battle forgot his troubles and banged the balls about with the enthusiasm of a real sport. So far I had succeeded in not meeting him alone; indeed, I must confess that since I had indirectly informed him of his engagement I had not looked fairly into his eyes. But well I knew that the breaking of the storm was delayed only for the moment. Furthermore, I knew it had arrived, when, just before I had finished dressing for dinner, a servant came to my room and said that Landon wished to see me alone, and, if possible, it must be at once.

In his manner there was nothing of the approaching tempest. I was arranging my tie at the moment in front of the mirror, and when I had said, "Come in!" in answer to his knock, and had heard the door click behind him, I turned round and found him looking not only entirely reserved and calm in his evening clothes, but I thought really very well conditioned and athletic and attractive.

them over there on the shelf over the fireplace. You won't mind my finishing dressing, will you?"

"When he had lit a cigarette, he pulled a few long whiffs, and then took his stand in front of the empty hearth, with his legs apart and his hands stuck in his trousers pockets. I went on fixing my tie; but could see him across the room in my mirror.

"How did you like the court?" I asked.
"Do you think," he said, "this is quite fair to your cousin, whose guests we really are—all of us?"

"How fair it is to my cousin," I said, "I really had not considered. His position in the community is pretty well established. The only thing that worried me was the girl's position."

"But I can't see why this particular girl's position should worry you. I don't imagine you can know her very well. Certainly, in all the time I have ever known her, she has never spoken about you."

"There comes a time," I said,—"and I noticed with regret that my tie had reached a near state of perfection."—"there comes a time, I think, when a man has beaten even his wife sufficiently black and blue that the veriest stranger is justified in interfering, even though they both turn on him, which is what they usually do. A meddler, I don't imagine, gets his honest reward, one time out of ten; but it has always seemed to me that the one time made the pastime worth while." My tie was no longer an excuse; so I too lit a cigarette