

SERIAL STORY

THE VANISHING FLEETS

By ROY NORTON

ILLUSTRATED BY A. WEIL

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SYNOPSIS.

"Vanishing Fleets," a story of "what might have happened," opens in Washburn with the United States and Japan on the verge of war. Guy Hillier, secretary of the British embassy, and Miss Norma Roberts, chief aide of inventor Roberts, are introduced as lovers. At the most inopportune moment Japan declares war. Japan takes the Philippines. The entire country is in a state of turmoil because of the government's indifference. Guy Hillier starts for England with secret message and is compelled to leave Norma Roberts, who with military officers also leaves Washington on mysterious expedition for an isolated point on the Florida coast. Hawaii is captured by the Japs. All ports are closed. Jap fleet is fast approaching western coast of America. Siego, Japanese spy, discovers secret preparations for war. He follows auto carrying presidential cabinet. He uncovers source of great mystery and flees, murmuring: "The gods save Nippon." Fleeing to Pacific coast, Siego is shot down just as journey to get awful news to Japan seems successful. Japan announces intention to attack seaports. Tokio learns of missing Japanese fleet and whole world becomes convinced that United States has some powerful war agency. England decides to send a fleet to American waters as a Canadian protection against what the British suppose is a terrible submarine flotilla. Hillier is also sent to Canada to attempt to force his way through American lines with a message to the president in order that protection for the fleet may be assured.

CHAPTER VIII.—Continued.

The people of England were much divided in opinion as to the advisability of the government's move when it became public. A strong conservative element feared the danger of Great Britain being involved in the war through this action, while the liberal partisans and jingoes asserted that it was the only method of upholding the country's dignity, demonstrating to America that England would do her best, and at the same time assuring Canada that the mother country intended to support her in case of attack along her border line. That Britannia still ruled the waves was generally doubted; for if the Americans had in their possession means of so easily overcoming a fleet as important as that which Japan had lost, there was almost a certainty that she could conquer any adversary sent against her on the water. It was no longer a question of warfare on land; for all the transports in the world would be powerless against such submarines as the nations now conceded the United States must possess.

Before sailing, the fleet commanders had been called into a council and given positive instructions that they were not to permit themselves to be drawn into action in any event before reaching Canada. On their arrival they were at once to co-operate with the dominion government in whatever way seemed advisable at that time, and follow such orders as might be given from London.

The clearance, however, unlike the sailing of that fleet from Japan, was not accompanied by any gala demonstration. It was rather with dire misgivings that the public witnessed this departure, which were to a certain extent shared in by those aboard the vessels; and it was fully realized that the flower of England's navy might never return from its voyage into an unknown danger.

The conservative press lent a funereal attitude to the occasion in its treatment of the situation, one journal declaring that "England is sending to magnificent martyrdom men who had better have been retained at home for their country's good." Another paper characterized it as a "useless sacrifice." This became the general public opinion within a few days, as reports from Canada continued gloomy and showed no prospect of a rift within the clouds.

The music halls, always an index to the popular view, found their greatest hits in topical songs which were generally of the tenor that the great grand, glorious and gorgeous British tar had sailed away to do or die—with the accent on the "die." A general air of melancholy prevailed over all England, and as the days went on and the fleet itself got beyond reach of the wireless telegraph stations and far out on a desolated ocean, the sentiment was one of acute expectancy. The admiralty was advised of the

arrival without incident of Hillier, and apprised of the fact that he had decided to make his attempt to cross into the forbidden land unaided. There was a certain sense of satisfaction in the knowledge that a good and efficient man was on the ground with at least a chance for success in his endeavors.

This beatific state of mind was dispelled one bright afternoon, and England thrown into a furore that scarcely could have been greater had one of the mysterious submarines appeared off its shores and begun bombarding the nearest city. It was like an intimation of disaster delivered in advance of more terrible news.

The black hull of a South American tramp steamer hove into sight beyond Fastnet, and instituted a rapid interchange of signals. The men on shore, as these advanced, looked at each other with blank dismay, and then, fearing that there had been a misunderstanding, and failing to grasp suddenly a significance so terrible in its import, requested that the signals be repeated. There could be no doubt of their correct interpretation. In one hour all England knew beyond cavil that her fleet had met the same fate as that which had overtaken Japan's. The message in brief was that the Esperanta had picked up in mid ocean, floating on a life raft torn from its moorings, a sailor wearing the uniform of the Dreadnought. The man was almost dead from exposure, and had not yet recovered sufficiently to give a coherent account of what had taken place.

No ship ever sailed into Southampton that attracted the attention given

by an American cruiser to take a more easterly tack. She had done so, thus bringing her into a less frequented path of travel.

At ten o'clock in the morning, five days previous to her reporting at Fastnet, the man on the lookout had sighted an object which drew his attention, which at first he believed to be a mere piece of unattended wreckage tossing on the swell. He had notified the captain, who altered the ship's course and bore down upon it, only to learn that it was a life raft on which was a man. A boat was lowered, and it was found that the inanimate form was that of a British sailor, on whose cap, which had been thrust beneath a cleat of the raft, were the words "H. M. S. Dreadnought." The man evidently had lashed himself securely before his strength had failed, knowing how small were his chances for rescue, and how certain his coming weakness. When picked up by the Esperanta he was thought to be dead; but being taken aboard he showed some signs of life, and after hours of work recovered sufficiently to give some slight hope of survival.

So terrible had been his sufferings from privation that his mind seemed uninged, and they had been unable to gather any information from him save that of some overwhelming disaster. He was now in the throes of brain fever, and talked only the speech of the delirious. His fragmentary mumblings were beyond all understanding; his mind seemed to be a confused jumble of hallucinations, in which he cried for water and made absurd comments on what was passing in his dreams. There were strangely



The Man on the Lookout Had Sighted an Object.

to the Esperanta. Trainload after trainload of excursionists, farmers within a day's drive, and pedestrians from near by swarmed to Southampton, forming an excited and almost uncontrollable gathering. Tugboats hastened out to meet the incoming steamer, which carried the only living link between reality and the terrible unknown, and long lines of constables strove to hold back the excited crowd, the noise of whose mutterings filled the air with an ominous drone.

Between these ranks of blue-clad men there came four surgeons, carrying on a stretcher a wreck of humanity who laughed insanely and rolled his head from side to side.

The crowd fell into an awed hush as the litter passed to the special train which was to convey this most important witness to a hospital. Next in public interest were the officers and men of the Esperanta, who, feeling themselves in the limelight, became each the center of great crowds, to whom they recounted as best they could the story of how the man was found.

The exact details of this as given by the captain of the Esperanta to the ministers of the cabinet who were summoned threw meager light upon the case. The Esperanta had gone out of her usual course, following the Gulf stream to the northward, until warned

interwoven babblings of submarine boats, sea serpents and unheard of monsters which harried the ship and sent her to her doom. Pitiful exclamations of helplessness and fear, interjections of overwhelming dread, and brief snatches of prayer came from his lips throughout all the days in which they had attended him. The strangest part in all the incident of picking up the castaway was that the captain of the Esperanta, seeking other survivors, had cruised for hours in the vicinity; but had found no other sign of wreckage or of humanity. He had coursed to the northward, thinking it possible that the trend of the wind had driven this lone mariner away from the scene of catastrophe; but the ocean itself was a blank. The crest of no wave carried even a piece of flotsam, nor was there anywhere a clew to the mystery.

The rocking of the foundations of the world could have created no more suspense or terror than did the fear of this unknown agent of destruction which threatened the downfall of governments and the eradication of boundary lines. England suffered the woes of the bereaved in the certainty that thousands of men who were fathers, brothers, husbands or friends had been annihilated by this terrible republic across the sea. From every throat came a despairing cry for re-

taliation; but England, rich, mighty and powerful, felt herself without means of appeasing it. It was well enough to talk of revenge when the means were at hand; but the country in the face of this dread enemy was helpless, and so it was that the bitterness of defeat gave way to the hopelessness of terror when a calm and more judicial spirit prevailed. It was beginning to be comprehended that the full that not only Great Britain in all her strength, but the combined forces of the world, would stand no chance of conducting even a defensive war against the United States—now become a swordfish ravaging and depopulating the seas.

In the meantime, while all this consternation prevailed and the heads of nations, fearful and trembling, speculated as to the outcome, the sailor from the Dreadnought was being watched and cared for by the most distinguished savants and specialists of the old world. There hovered over his bedside through every minute of the day men dispatched by every European power, who were doing all that science might suggest to bring this lone and stricken mariner back to sanity and let him give tongue to what he knew of this scourge of the waters. Hourly bulletins of his condition were posted on street corners, and round these stood men and women in suspense. His least word was recorded as of monumental importance, in the hope that from some cranny of his wrecked mind might come some elucidating phrase, however slight. The most important thing that apparently could be relied upon was that whatever the form of attack had been, it was observed before the blow was struck. This was shown by his repeatedly exclaiming: "It's coming! it's coming! It'll get us, sure, and we can't fight back!"

And so the nations watched by the bedside of a common sailor. From Japan came long messages of condolence to her ally, which were received in a spirit of fellow suffering.

The peculiarities of the situation were in nowise lessened by reports from Canada, where the troops still massed along the border maintained a friendly spirit, committed no acts of encroachment, showed no apprehension of war, and seemed as ignorant of their own government's plans or what it had done as were the Canadians themselves. Indeed, their mystification over the disappearance of the Japanese and British fleets was as complete as that of the most humble farmer on the Canadian frontier. Their officers, shocked by the terrific news, hastened to give statements to the effect that their instructions were to avoid giving offense, as the United States had no intention of engaging in war with Great Britain. Coupled with the loss of the fleet, these interviews seemed singularly inconsistent, it being impossible to reconcile annihilation on the sea and a cry for peace on land.

It was generally admitted in England that Canada was now in a helpless position and completely at the mercy of a well-drilled and well-equipped army along her borders, which was undoubtedly within constant reach of supplies and reinforcements. The futility of any attempt either to relieve or to aid her by sending more men across the Atlantic, now absolutely under the control of the Americans, was obvious. It began to appear to the British government that the United States was deliberately planning to take the dominion of Canada whenever she deemed the time opportune. That she could now do so at her own convenience was unquestioned.

An exasperating condition was the attitude of the Canadians themselves, who, as far as appearances went, were in a state of the utmost placidity. Indeed, the farmers along the border were prosperous and thriving through the increased demand for their supplies, which the American quarter-masters purchased liberally, and for which they invariably paid American gold. It actually seemed as if an era of good feeling was being established across the boundary. The loss of the fleet threatened a rupture for a brief time; but the province, now convinced of the hopelessness of taking an active side either way, showed an inclination to stand aloof and remain absolutely neutral. It was agreed between the officials of the dominion and those of Great Britain that Canada could do nothing but endeavor as best she might to remain passive pending further developments.

This lack of partisanship proved anything but an assistance to Hillier in his attempt to break through the cordon, and it was this as much as anything else that hampered him in his mission.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Long Have Been Right-Handed. According to authorities from 85 to 95 per cent. of the men in civilized lands are right-handed and have developed the low right shoulder. This, however, is no new phenomenon, for even the ancient Greek sculptors had noticed it and posed their subjects so as to make them appear more symmetrical.

COUGHS AND COLDS.

I Took Per-u-na.



Mrs. JOSEPH HALL CHASE, 804 TENTH ST. WASHINGTON, D. C.

Peruna Drug Co., Columbus, Ohio. Gentlemen:—I can cheerfully recommend Peruna as an effective cure for coughs and colds.

You are authorized to use my photo with testimonial in any publication. Mrs. Joseph Hall Chase, 804 Tenth St., Washington, D. C.

Could Not Smell Nor Hear. Mrs. A. L. Wetzel, 1023 Ohio St., Terre Haute, Ind., writes:

"When I began to take your medicine I could not smell, nor hear a church bell ring. Now I can both smell and hear."

"When I began your treatment my head was terrible. I had buzzing and chirping noises in my head."

"I followed your advice faithfully and took Peruna as you told me. Now I might say I am well."

"I want to go and visit my mother and see the doctor who said I was not long for this world. I will tell him was Peruna that cured me."

Peruna is manufactured by The Peruna Drug Mfg. Co., Columbus, Ohio. Ask your Druggist for a Free Peruna Almanac for 1909.

"CALLING" THE PITCHER.



The captain—See here, you've give seventeen men bases on balls! Dis here's a ball game, not no six-day walkin' match!

Cut Off in His Prime.

That the negro residing in the north has the fondness for euphonious words—regardless of their meaning—that characterizes his brother in the south was illustrated by a remark overheard a few days ago.

Two colored women stood chatting at the corner of Eighth avenue and One Hundred and Twenty-fifth street. One of them, ostentatiously clad in mourning, said with a doleful shake of the head in reply to a query from the other:

"Yas, he died in de height of his sen-ith."—Washington Star.

Waiting for His Little Airship.

The birds were flying south. Presently they espied a lone robin perched on a lofty limb.

"Come on," they cried, "and join the bunch."

But the robin perked his head on one side and shook it vigorously.

"What are you waiting for?" they cried.

"I'm waiting," replied the robin, "for one of these daffy little airship chappies to blow along and then mebbe I can sneak a ride."

THEN AND NOW

Complete Recovery from Coffee Ills.

"About nine years ago my daughter, from coffee drinking, was on the verge of nervous prostration," writes a Louisville lady. "She was confined for the most part to her home."

"When she attempted a trip down town she was often brought home in a cab and would be prostrated for days afterwards."

"On the advice of her physician she gave up coffee and tea; drank Postum, and ate Grape-Nuts for breakfast."

"She liked Postum from the very beginning and we soon saw improvement. To-day she is in perfect health, the mother of five children, all of whom are fond of Postum."

"She has recovered, is a member of three charity organizations and a club, holding an office in each. We give Postum and Grape-Nuts the credit for her recovery."

"There's a Reason." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich. Read, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs.

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.