the dark ships

BY HULBERT FOOTNER

SYNOPSIS: Neill, a young federal agent, quarrels with Janet, a comely Baltimore girl, because she won't break a date with Prescott Fanning. Neill suspects him of being a crook. To check up, he finds Fanning at his hotel bar and they get acquainted. Next day Neill wakes up, realizing he's been doped. Janet, Fanning and Fanning's yacht are gone. A mysterious phone call tells him Janet's in trouble on the yacht at Absalom's Harbor. Neill rushes to the fishing village and rows to the Nadji after dark. In a locked cabin he finds Fanning shot dead and Janet unharmed, but in a faint with a gun beside her.

Chapter Nine

A Hideout For Janet

NEILL set his jaw and considered. He was on the other side now. He was hunted instead of the hunter. Quite a different thing. No powerful department to back him up now. Strictly on his own.

Where could he find Janet a hideout? The obvious thing was to hire a car and drive to town; but a car could be traced and in that case his usefulness as her defender would be over. He must be on the spot in order to discover the truth of this affair. Where could he put her under cover in this unfamiliar neck of the woods? Suddenly he thought of the dark ships up river.

"Take me away! Take me away!" murmured Janet.

"Okay, Jen. We're getting out."

Running back into the after cabin, he snatched up her velvet wrap where it lay on a chair. It was a flimsy garment. Apparently that and the gauzy evening dress were all she had. Not enough to keep her warm in an open boat. He picked up a traveling rug that lay folded on a seat locker and, returning to the saloon, wrapped her in it. She clung to him. Carrying her up on deck and down the ladder, he deposited her in the stern seat of the skiff.

He paused to make sure that everything was straight in his mind. Must take food. He started back aboard the yacht.

Janet raised up, instantly wild with terror. "Don't leave me!"

"Only to get something to eat. Back in a jiff."

In the pantry adjoining the dining saloon on deck he found a refrigerator stocked with cooked food of various sorts. He packed everything hastily in a tin bread box along with the bread and ran but on deck again.

"Hurry! Hurry!" murmured Janet in the skiff alongside.

"Half a moment!"

He gave a hasty glance in the direction of the shore. All quiet there. Remembering a flashlight he had seen on the book-case in the saloon, he ran down to get it. While below he thought of something else. In the after cabin he dropped to his knees beside the dead man and went through his pockets. Finding the little photograph of Janet that Fanning had taken from him the night before, he transferred it to his own pocket, and hastened up on deck.

Casting off the painter of his skiff, he ran out the oars and pulled towards the open water.

Sounds From Shore

AS NEILL rowed along with the lights of the village on his left, it was still only about nine o'clock and there was plenty of life in the place. He could see shadowy figures passing under the street lights, while the sounds of dogs barking, motor horns and male laughter from the porch of Longcope's store reached his ears. Further along he could hear music coming through the open windows of the moving picture theater.

At Absalom's Point he lay on his oars for a moment debating whether it might not be better to row across the bay. It was a calm night and he could have made it in safety. Nobody would think of looking for Janet over there. But it was 15 miles and he couldn't possibly get back before daylight. Nor visit her there. No. Better the ships. So he turned the point and rowed on up the wide river, passing along the other side of the village.

The sight of Janet bowed and silent under her blanket wrenched him with pain. After what she had been through what could he say to her? To have tried to make light talk would sound like mockery. In the end it was Janet who spoke.

"Where was Fanning when you came aboard the yacht?"

Neill thought her mind was wandering. "Never mind him," he said gruffly. "He won't trouble you any more."

"Did you kill him?" she asked simply.

"Don't want to talk about it," said Neill.

"All right," she said, perfectly docile. "Nothing matters as long as we are together."

He hated to think of leaving her alone in her present condition. But there was no help for that. It would be impossible to trust anybody he didn't know to take care of her. Travis county, Maryland, was a peninsula remote from the great world and he judged that its people at best were inclined to be suspicious of strangers. Somehow or other he must take care of Janet and save her too.

"I'm so thirsty!" she presently murmured like a child.

Neill's heart sank for he had forgotten water. He looked along the village front. It would not be too easy for a stranger to obtain water. If he went to somebody's well it would lead to awkward questions. And he had nothing to carry water in.

The main and only road into the village came down along the river shore before striking across the neck to the harbor in front of Longcope's. Midway along this road he distinguished the lighted front of a store. One could always buy something to drink. In front of the store the usual little pier ran out into the river. The water was shallower on this side and it was a long pier. Janet could remain hidden in the dark at the end of it.

He hesitated. There was a terrible risk in landing now. If he were seen, he would be remembered. However, it had to be taken. He rowed in and tied the skiff to the end of the pier.

"What's this for?" she asked nervously.

"I'm going to get water for you."

"No, no. I don't want water."

"We've got to have water."

"Can't I come with you?"

"Your dress would attract too much attention."

"Ah, don't be long," she said with a catch in her breath.

He walked in over the creaking planks, climbed the bank, crossed the road, and entered the store. It was a much smaller and tidier store than Longcope's and business was not so good. The little old man who kept it was grateful to the unlooked-for customer. Neill bought two bottles of carbonated water.

On his way out of the store a sedan coming from the direction of town passed rapidly and slid to a quick stop a short distance beyond. Neill had an uncomfortable feeling that this stop was in some way connected with himself. Somebody was looking out of the back window, the face merely a grayish blur through the glass.

There was nothing he could do about it. He hastened down the bank and out over the pier. Janet let out a shaking breath of relief at the sight of him. The car went on and turned the corner. Presently a car came back, but Neill couldn't tell if it was the same one.

Who Could It Be?

THEY went on, and finally passed the last houses of the village. Now there was a dark field between the road and the river. Neill had rowed upwards of two miles, but he was still only some hundreds of yards from the yacht across the neck of land. Suddenly from the dark shore a light flashed out over the water and searched the river up and down. It was evidently a strong electric torch held in somebody's hand.

Neill pulled the skiff's head around and rowed further out into the river. He couldn't be sure whether the light had picked them up, and a nasty anxiety attacked him. Why should anybody stand on the shore casting his light over the water unless he were looking for them? And who could be looking for them? Who could guess that they were about to pass that spot? The light went out, and nothing came of it then, but Neill's anxiety remained.

He rowed on, keeping about a furlong off shore. The opposite shore was invisible in the dark. Here and there at long distances a dim light showed in the window of a farmhouse, and up river the red light of a gas buoy twinkled off and on, marking some shoal. With every pull of Neill's oars, two little eddies of phosphorescence swirled astern. A soft breeze from the south sprang up.

Janet exclaimed: "What's that?"

Looking over his shoulder, Neill saw the masts and the funnels of the four great ships rising against the stars. "The German ships turned over to us after the war are moored here," he said.

"Who would expect to find them here!" she murmured.

Neill thought it over. It was a desperate chance to take, but any way you looked at it their situation was desperate. If there were only four men aboard, it was not enough to keep a close watch at night. In one of the cabins below he could make Janet comfortable. Where could he hope to find a better hiding place?

"Jen," he said, "what would you say to going aboard one of the empty ships to hide until we can decide what's best to be done? Would you be afraid?"

"Not if you were with me, Neill."

He pulled up to the outermost ship. Her smooth steel side rose towering over their heads like a cliff, ghostly and awe-inspiring in the night. No sound came from aboard her.

"How could we get on?" whispered Janet.

"That's just the question," said Neill with a brief laugh.

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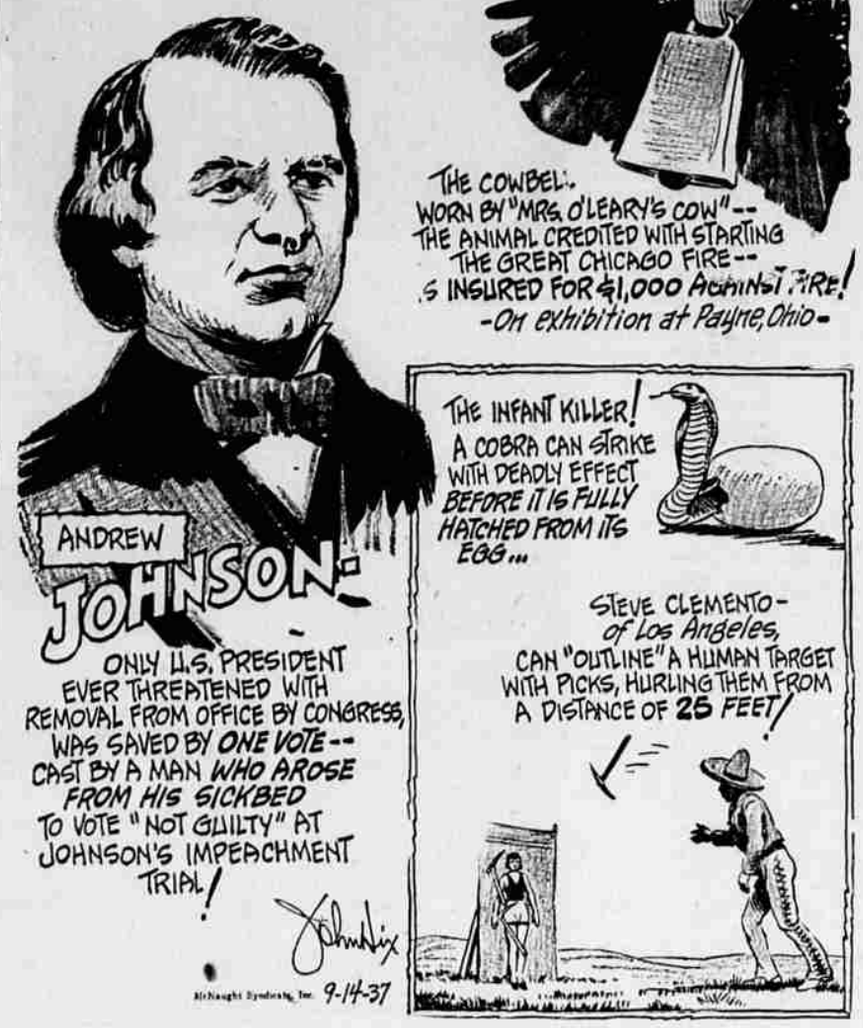
Neill finds a watchman on the dark ships, tomorrow.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

For further proof address the author, inclosing a stamped envelope for reply. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.



Sick Man's Vote.

On the eve of the judgment in Andrew Johnson's impeachment trial, the President's expulsion from office was thought to be a foregone conclusion. Johnson himself believed his conviction was a certainty and packed his belongings in preparation for leaving the White House. Ben Wade, senator from Ohio, was equally confident of Johnson's removal from office. As president protempore of the senate and next in line for the Presidency because there was no vice-president, he is said to have had his inaugural address already written. Mrs. Wade had her gown made up for her husband's inauguration and had her friends all summoned for the event.

Good grounds did everyone have for believing that Johnson was to be removed from office. Strange as it seems, this, the only attempt ever made to expel a president of the United States from his post, was frustrated by the act of a sick man, who rose from his bed to cast a vote of "not guilty!" The man was James Grimes, U. S. senator from Iowa.

Suffering from partial paralysis, Senator Grimes struggled to his feet on the morning of May 16, 1868, and went to the senate to cast his vote on the momentous case. To convict a president according to law, it required a vote of two-thirds of the senators. Of the 54 senators who voted, 35 cast their votes for Johnson's conviction, the remaining 19 voting "not guilty." One more vote against him would have resulted in the president's being found guilty. Had not Senator Grimes risen from his sick bed to vote for acquittal, Andrew Johnson would have been expelled from office!

The O'Leary Cow Bell.

Whether or not Mrs. O'Leary's cow really did kick over a lantern and start the great Chicago fire of 1871 has never been definitely determined, but the cow bell that once jangled from the famous animal's neck is still preserved. It was found in the O'Leary barn immediately after the fire by a young man named P. G. Pearson who gave Mrs. O'Leary 25 cents for it. Today it is owned by Lamb's Wholesale, Inc., Payne, Ohio, and is insured for $1000 against fire.

Tomorrow: Where Is Insect Fighting a National Sport?

Motorist Rescued

GRANTS PASS, Sept. 14. (AP)—Motorists pulled a Long Beach, Calif., driver from his car yesterday after it slid over a Sexton mountain grade, pinned him inside, and started to burn. The garage which repaired his car said he was not seriously hurt but did not learn his name.

THE DALLES, Sept. 13.—(AP)—One hundred and fifty CCC youths will occupy the abandoned civilian soil conservation camp at Condon this winter. The troopers will plant drought resisting grasses and construct dams to prevent erosion.

Use Mail Tribune want ads.

GRANTS PASS, Sept. 14. — (AP) — Boyd Jackson, Jr., and Delmar Colegrove, Klamath Indians halted at the California quarantine station on the Redwood highway early this morning, were returned to Klamath Falls by state police to face charges of taking horses off the reservation without a permit.

HOME-COMING

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

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S'MATTER POP

By C. M. PAYNE

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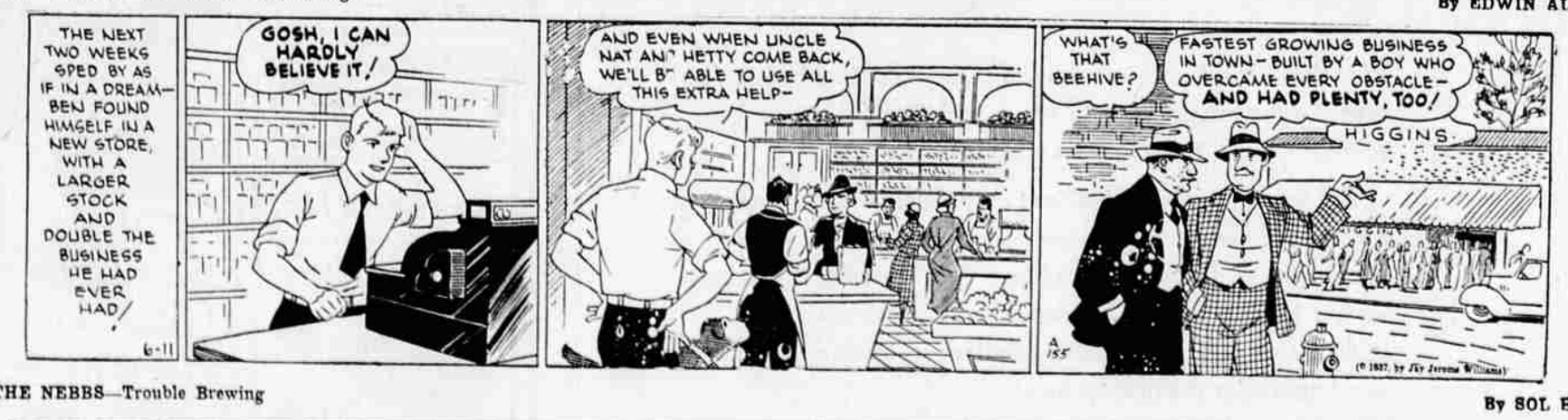
TAILSPIN TOMMY—Another Convert to Aviation!

By HAL FORREST

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—The Stranger

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—Trouble Brewing

By SOL HESS

I. O. O. F. of Oregon Picks Delegates

PORTLAND, Sept. 14. — (AP) — The I. O. O. F. of Oregon announced delegates today to the sovereign grand lodge session at Milwaukie Wis., next week as Francis M. Sexton, The Dalles; Roy H. Gibbs, Gresham; Joseph Schweitzer, Portland, and Carl Engstrom, Salem.

William A. Merand, Portland, will attend in interest of the Oregon Association of Secretaries and Scribes and accompanying the delegates will be Edythe P. Kelly, Roseburg, Chas. P. Poole, Eugene, and N. R. Gilbert, Bend.

The Morse Libby house in Portland, Me., is one of the most sumptuous Victorian American residences remaining. It was built about 1859 by a Portland citizen who made a fortune in the New Orleans hotel business.

Russ Plane Falls On Arctic Search

BARROW, Alaska, Sept. 14.—(AP)—Reports to this northernmost outpost today said Basil Zadkoff crashed his flying boat somewhere in the Arctic ocean north of here while seeking the six lost Russian transpolar fliers.

Meager advices reaching this icebound station said Zadkoff's plane was lost but the flier was safe. Two other planes, an Amphibian and a flying boat from the Russian icebreaker Krassin were said to be stormbound somewhere among the jagged floes of the Arctic ocean.

Tientsin is one of the most important foreign sources from which American manufacturers obtain bristles used in producing high-grade brushes.

Closing time for Too Late to Classify Ads is 1:30 p. m.