

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 and they get acquainted. Fanning dopes Neill's whiskey. Next day, Janet, Fanning and Fanning's yacht are gone. A mysterious figure calls Neill and tells him that Janet is in trouble at Abasco's Harbor. Neill rushes to the village and boards the yacht after dark. In a locked cabin he finds Fanning shot dead and Janet unharmed, but in a faint, a gun beside her. He rouses her to the old liners taken from Germany.

Chapter 10 A Skiff Steals Up

NEILL rowed softly on around the bottle. The big ships lay side by side and staggered; that is to say, the first pointing downstream, the second upstream and so on. Each was double anchored at the bow, and further secured at the stern by steel cables running to groups of piles driven deep into the river bottom. There were no openings in the hulls, no protruberances to climb up by, no convenient ropes left dangling. The sheer bulk of the silent vessels was overpowering.

About 200 yards separated the inside vessel from the shore. This ship had a wooden stairway let down over her side with a platform at the bottom having several skiffs tied to it. Neill dared not use the stairway for if a watch was kept anywhere on board it would certainly be at the head of it. High above their heads there was a light showing in the captain's quarters on the bridge. All else was dark.

Neill rowed on until he had com-

plotted a full circuit of the ships. He saw that he could not climb aboard by the anchor chains. They disappeared into hawse-holes in the bows and from these holes there was no way of reaching the deck. His best bet appeared to be one of the steel cables on the third ship from the shore. This cable passed under the rail of the lower deck stern, an out-of-the-way part of the ship where no watchman was likely to be lurking.

"Will you stay in the skiff while I climb aboard?" he asked.

"Can't I come with you?"

"You couldn't climb over this cable."

She drew a long breath to steady herself. "Very well, I will wait."

Neill tied the skiff to the bunch of piles and, diving himself of jacket and boots, stood on the seat and sprang for the cable over his head, his legs kicking in the air. The way seemed endless and he slowed down more and more as his arms tired. It required a powerful effort of the will to cover the last few yards. Finally he was able to grasp the rail and draw himself up.

He found himself on a little working deck aft, much cluttered with coiled hawsers and the steam steering gear of the vessel. In order to get forward, he had to climb a ladder. This brought him to the upper promenade deck. It was an endless and ghostly promenade now, lined with dark windows that were like watching eyes. He tried every door that opened on the deck, but all were locked. He crossed over to the outermost vessel.

Had anybody approached, there was no cover anywhere in the promenades, and he ascended by a deck ladder to the boat deck. Here, with the boats hanging from the davits, the ventilators and innumerable other objects, he had plenty of cover. In his stocking feet he went noiselessly from shadow to shadow.

This vessel was the largest of the

four and from the boat deck he overlooked the other ships. He searched the decks for any glimpse of light that might reveal a watchman on his rounds. Nothing showed. The windows in the captain's quarters on the first ship were now as dark as the rest. The four great hulks lay under the stars like ships of the dead.

At the forward end of the boat deck he descended two ladders to the main deck, and explored as well as he was able in the dark. There was no sound except the endless gentle lapping of the water against the steel hulls. From this deck there was a wooden gangway over to the next vessel.

Returning to the promenade deck, Neill was able to search along the port side with his flashlight since he was hidden here both from the other ships and the shore. On a ring-buoy hanging from the rail he read her name: Abraham Lincoln. He saw several odd-shaped bundles against the wall and found to his joy that they were Jacob's ladders. A way of getting Janet safe aboard.

But first he felt he must satisfy himself as to how much watching was done aboard these ships at night. He crept across the gangway to the next ship and explored the deck, watching and listening, taking advantage of every bit of cover; then to the next, and finally to the last, the one nearest shore. He knew this vessel was inhabited. She was of an older type of construction and had two promenade decks, upper and lower. From the lower deck, the stairway led down to the small boats. Neill crouched at the corner and, peeping around, stretched his ears to listen.

He heard a gentle snoring. He crept forward, pressing his body against the wall, pausing between each step to listen. Dimly he made out the shape of a deck chair be-



"Somebody is watching us!" she whispered.

fore him with a man's body in it relaxed. The watchman.

Another Skiff

NEILL'S skiff backed away around the corner, and made haste to return across the four decks joined by gangplanks. He figured that he could have Janet aboard in a few minutes, and certainly he would get no better opportunity than now while the watchman was taking a nap.

He unrolled the Jacob's ladder and, lashing the end to the rail, lowered it overboard. Stripping to his underclothes, he stuffed shirt and breeches behind the other ladders, and went overboard. At the bottom of the ladder he let himself noiselessly into the water, and struck out towards the spot where he had left the skiff.

When the little boat loomed before him a sudden fear gripped him because he couldn't see Janet's figure outlined against the night sky. The skiff seemed empty. He caught hold of the gunwale and pulled himself up. "Janet!"

She answered him from the bottom of the skiff in a scarcely audible voice: "Neill! ... Oh, Neill!"

He hastily climbed in. "What's the matter, Jen? ... I can't touch you because I'm dripping wet! Did anything happen?"

"Somebody is watching us!" she whispered.

"How could that be out here in the dark? What makes you think so?"

"I saw him Neill. ... Another skiff stole up. It came so quietly I didn't hear anything. I turned my head and there it was. Quite close. With a single figure in it. Watching. I thought maybe you had got a boat somewhere and I spoke your name. ... He never answered. ..."

"Did he speak at all?"

"No. Just faded into the darkness. ... I thought you would never come!"

(Copyright, 1937, by Hulbert Footner)

Janet and Neill board and explore the black ship, 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.



BATTERS' HOLIDAY!
51 HITS WERE MADE IN ONE GAME BETWEEN PHILA. N.L. (26) AND CHICAGO (25), 1922... AN ALL-TIME BIG LEAGUE RECORD...

THE WINNER OF A CRICKET FIGHT—CHINESE NATIONAL SPORT—HAS TO CHIRP IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE BOUT OR BE DISQUALIFIED...

THE FIRST FRENCH RAILROAD WAS BUILT BY A RELIGIOUS CULT--THE SAINT SIMONIAN, WHO REGARDED THE WORK AS A SACRED DUTY... -1830's-

Religious Railroad.
Founder of the Saint Simonian cult was Claude Henri Saint-Simon, a French nobleman and reformer who in his youth served with the American army in the Revolutionary war. The latter part of his life was chiefly devoted to philosophy and the formation of the religious cult named after himself.

One of the Saint Simonian's main objectives was the advancement of modern science and the production of useful things. It was his doctrine that brought about the building of the first all-steam French railroad. The railroad company was organized in the Saint Simonian Church of Menilmontant in Paris and on August 24, 1837, its first line was completed, the Paris-St. Germain railroad. Members of the religious cult that constructed it were trained in the various departments of railroad operation on this line and soon put France on a footing with the most advanced railroading nations in the world.

Cricket Fighting.
Fortunes are won and lost on cricket fighting, one of the most ancient and popular of Chinese sports. The insects, captured when young, are trained to become as ferocious as possible before engaging in battle. Battle it really is. With their powerful mandibles, the cricket warriors thrust and bite with a savagery that usually ends up with the death of one of the combatants or at least a few amputated limbs. The fights are conducted in boat-shaped ivory baskets. When the battle is over the winning cricket must chirp in token of victory. Otherwise he is disqualified.

A good fighting cricket brings as high as \$95 when sold—but the fortunes they bring to their owners make them a good investment. One famous insect-warrior of Canton, Ghengis Khan, won about \$90,000 for his backers. At death, champion fighters are given elaborate funeral ceremonies and buried in silver coffins.

Tomorrow: The Most Expensive American Flag.

Crippled Children School Is Set Up
PORTLAND, Ore., Sept. 15.—(AP)—Ralph E. Dugdale, Portland school superintendent, announced establishment of a new school for physically handicapped children as the first step in modernizing the city's system of educating crippled youngsters.

The new school, where children will study one-half of each school day, will eliminate home teaching except where students actually are bed-ridden. Dugdale said. Teachers now visit homes of the crippled for two hours each week. Considerable saving to the school district is expected under the new system.

the money to be paid to his wife. The court termed the latter arrangement "fraudulent."

JO JOHNSON teaching popular piano playing Baldwin Piano Shoppe Tel. 335

Phone 542. We'll haul away your refuse. City Sanitary Service.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—And Tommy's Hunches As Usually Right!



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Back Home!

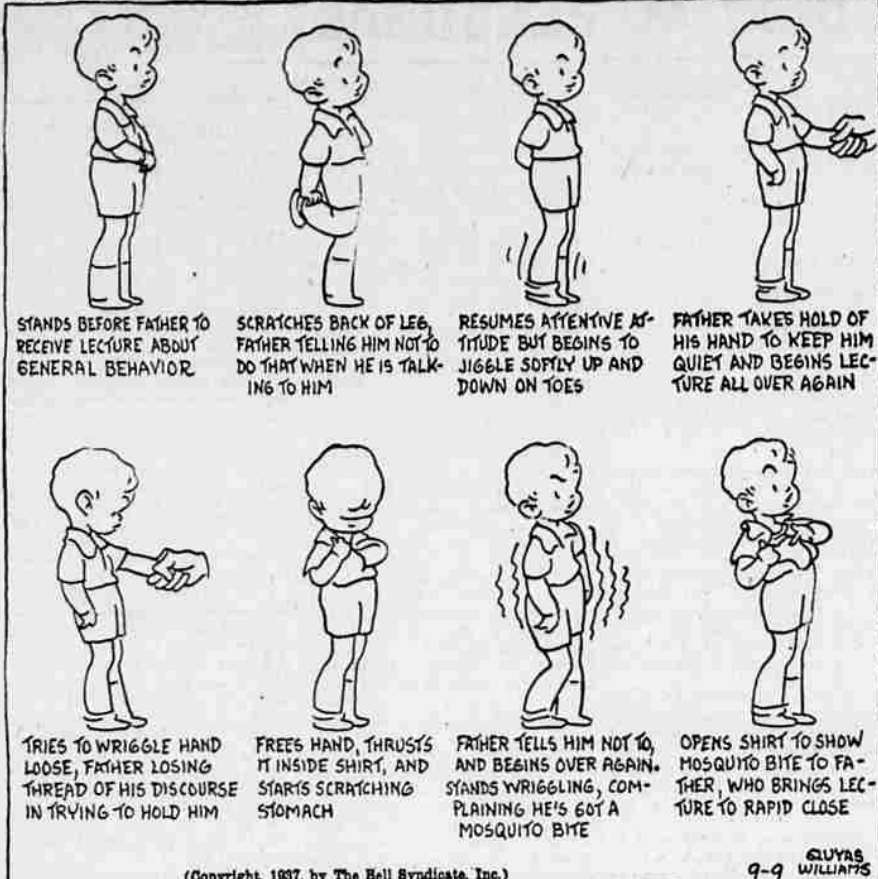


THE NSBBS—Oh, My—Oh My



THE LECTURE

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



(Copyright, 1937, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

S'MATTER POP



(Copyright, 1937, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)



(Copyright, 1937, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)



(Copyright, 1937, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)



(Copyright, 1937, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)



(Copyright, 1937, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

WILLAMETTE GRAD IS WASHINGTON JUSTICE

OLYMPIA, Sept. 15.—(AP)—Governor Clarence D. Martin placed Judge George B. Simpson of Clark county on the state supreme court today to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Justice Warren W. Tolman.

Judge Simpson, 56-year-old resident of Vancouver, will assume his new duties at the beginning of the fall term of the supreme court, September 20.

Simpson was graduated from Willamette university in 1907, and the same year was admitted to practice law in both Oregon and Washington.

Use Mail Tribune want ads.

HIGH COURT UPHOLDS CLAIM OF PHYSICIAN

SALEM, Sept. 15.—(AP)—The state supreme court Tuesday ruled in favor of Dr. Mabel Akin, Portland, in her suit for the \$25,000 insurance policy of W. A. Tyler, who committed suicide on July 13, 1937.

The court, in its first opinion after the summer recess, denied the petition for rehearing of the Security Savings and Trust Co. and Susan B. Tyler, widow of Tyler and executrix of his estate.

The court found that Tyler owed Dr. Akin \$21,875 and agreed to make her the beneficiary of his insurance, but shortly before his death he made the trust company the beneficiary.

THE NSBBS—Oh, My—Oh My



By SOL HERR