

the dark ships

BY HULBERT FOOTHER

NEIL, a young federal agent, and Janet in Baltimore. She soon breaks a date with Prescott Fanning whom Neil considers a crook. Trying to check on Fanning, Neil is doped by him. Next day a mysterious phone call tells Neil that Janet is in trouble on Fanning's yacht at Abasco's Harbor. Rushing there, he finds in a locked cabin, Fanning shot dead and Janet in a faint, a gun beside her. Seeking a hideout, Neil rows her to the disused lingers kept up the river. They manage to get aboard, dodge a watchman and locate the "royal white."

Chapter 12

'I Didn't Shoot Him!'

NEIL suddenly remembered that he had not eaten anything during the past strenuous 12 hours. They spread out their provender on the cabin table and he hung the flashlight upside down from the ceiling to give them light. They feasted on cold meat, bread and butter, pickles and salad, and because they were young and in love they forgot danger for a time.

"I wonder if any couple before us ever had a whole 25,000-ton ship to themselves," said Neil.

When he looked in Janet's clear eyes he was relieved of the fear that her mind was deranged. Still some of the things she said rang queerly, as when he told her he would leave her his gun and she said:

"I wouldn't know how to use it." Neil made no comment.

Later she said tremulously: "You are so good to me, Neil!" "Why the hell shouldn't I be good to you?" he growled.

"Not one word of reproach!" "I'm so darn glad to get you back, there's no room for reproaches."

When they had finished eating and cleared away, Neil unrolled his coil of light rope. Even had they been able to bring it down from the deck, the Jacob's ladder was too heavy for Janet to haul up after he had gone, or to lower for him when he came again, and he planned to make a rope ladder to take its place. Cutting off short lengths for the cross pieces, he showed her how to knot them so they wouldn't slip, and the two of them worked away together under the light.

"You haven't asked me what happened," Janet said with her head down.

"You don't have to tell me now unless you feel like it."

"Certainly. You have to be told. Fanning was just what you said he was. I was a fool."

"We all are."

"He actually planned to carry me down to Cuba on his yacht. He said that before we got there I..." She blushed deeply.

"You would become reconciled to your fate and wouldn't leave him?" put in Neil.

"Yes."

"He had a hell of a good conceit of himself, didn't he?" How did he inveigle you about it?"

"He said that the yacht had been offered to him at a great bargain, and suggested that we have dinner aboard and look her over. There were some other people coming, Mr. and Mrs. Westbrook, so it seemed all right."

"Decoy," put in Neil.

"We had dinner and afterwards when Fanning wanted to show me over the yacht the Westbrooks said it was too nice sitting on deck, so we left them there and went below. When we had looked at everything and came back on deck, they weren't where we had left them, but I thought they were somewhere about the ship. I suspected nothing. Fanning suggested that we take a little run down the harbor to see how she worked. He said I could steer her and I was as pleased as a child. Oh, what a fool I was!"

"Never mind that," said Neil. "Go on."

"His Manner Changed"

WE WERE tied up to the oil dock in Canton taking fuel oil. The sailors cast off the ropes and we went down to Fort Carroll. When I said we must turn back, Fanning's manner changed. He took me away from the wheel and a sailor steered. Fanning said we weren't ever going back any more. At first I thought he was joking. When I saw that he meant it, I looked for the Westbrooks. It was then that I found they had slipped ashore while we were below.

was all talk, however, he gave me the after cabin to myself, and there was a key in the door so that I could lock myself in. But, oh, Neil! what a terrible night!

"There was some kind of accident in the engine room. We were stopped for a long time, and then went on slowly. When it became light, I saw that we had run into a harbor alongside a village, but I didn't know where it was. Fanning was in an ugly temper because the accident had upset all his plans. He told me I would have to stay below as long as we lay in harbor."

"How did you get word to me?" asked Neil.

"McGee, the engineer, had to take up part of the cabin floor to look at the propeller shaft. He was a decent sort of man; he looked as if he was sorry for me. Fanning was with him, watching. When I learned from their talk that McGee had to go to Baltimore, I wrote your room number at the Stafford on a piece of paper. I knew you were registered under an assumed name, and slipped it to him when Fanning wasn't looking."

"Good trick!"

"All day I stayed below. They brought me my meals in the saloon. In the evening Fanning sent the rest of the crew ashore to go to the movies. Through the port-hole I saw them rowing away. Shortly after that Fanning came into my cabin without knocking, and I saw that he had turned ugly."

He locked the door behind him. He looked the door behind him. Janet began to shake pitifully.

"That's all I can remember," she faltered. "I must have fainted through terror. The next thing I knew I was out in the saloon and you were speaking to me."

"Did you have a gun?" asked Neil.

"Yes, I forgot that. After McGee had left my cabin I found it under the sofa. I supposed that he had left it there for me."

"Where was the gun when Fanning came in?"

"Lying on the table in my cabin. Why are you asking me questions about the gun?" she added nervously.

"When I broke in the door of your cabin Fanning was shot dead," said Neil.

"She stared at him in horror. 'Oh, my God! What are you saying?' I didn't shoot him, Neil! I swear it!"

He kissed her. He didn't believe her. Most likely the truth was that she had snatched up the pistol, mad with terror, and had shot the man without knowing what she was doing. Anyway, he loved her, and what difference did it make? In fact, he hoped that she had shot Fanning.

"Back To The Hotel"

HE could not bring himself to question her further in her present shaken state. He said lightly:

"Hold up a minute until I measure off how much ladder we've got. It was 42 feet from the rail of the promenade deck to the water, and I figure we'll need 33 here."

When the ladder was finished, he contrived a simple signal for the purpose of letting her know when to let it down to him. He fastened the twine to the catch of a wall cabinet and, leading it out across the little deck and through a window, let it hang outside. A single strand of brown twine would never be noticed. When it was pulled, the door of the cabinet flew open. They laughed at the simplicity of the gadget.

Wrapping Janet in the rug, Neil laid her on the dusty sofa and sat on the floor, soothing her like a child until her eyes grew heavy and finally closed. After kissing her to make sure that she slept, he went out on the little deck and, stripping off his clothes, wrapped them in the oilskin coat and tied it securely.

Slinging this bundle over his back, he climbed out of the window, went down the rope ladder and slipped into the water. Janet could pull up the ladder when she woke.

When Neil emerged from the water, he saw a dim light a couple of hundred yards off to his left. After dressing and hiding the oilskin coat in the brush, he walked along the beach to investigate. It proved to be a night light in the upper window of an old farmhouse on the river bank. Below the bank was a little wharf and tied to the wharf was a skiff with oars in her. Neil noted it with satisfaction. This would be convenient for the coming night.

Making a detour around the house, he gained the driveway that served it, and was led out to the state road at a point about a mile from the village. The first faint streaks of dawn were beginning to appear in the east when he reached the hotel. The outer door was unlocked and he stole up to his room without meeting anybody.

Neil chafed desperately with the captain of the dark ships, Monday.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



DREAM INVENTOR—
THE HALF-TONE PROCESS WHICH FIRST MADE POSSIBLE THE REPRODUCTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS IN NEWSPAPERS WAS INVENTED BY THE LATE FREDERIC E. IVES IN HIS SLEEP!

—Ithaca, N.Y., 1878—



THE RELIGIOUS SPANKING... HINDU MOTHERS SPANK THEIR CHILDREN WHEN SOMEONE PRAISES THEM--SO THE GODS WON'T GET JEALOUS...



AN ANT NAMED AFTER A KING! THE CANONOUS CRISTOPHEI WAS FIRST DISCOVERED ON THE TOMB OF HENRY CRISTOPHE, KING OF HAITI--HENCE ITS NAME...



MASTER ROBERT WON THE FIRST ENGLISH GRAND NATIONAL STEEPLECHASE HE EVER ENTERED... 1924... AFTER SPENDING SEVERAL YEARS PULLING A PLOUGH AND A MILK WAGON!

Boy Nearly Scalped By Hit-Run Driver
WOODBURN, Ore., Sept. 17.—(AP)—The scalp of Robert Emmert, 17-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Evan Emmert of Molalla, was almost torn from his head when he was struck by a hit-skip driver yesterday afternoon. The boy was playing marbles and had run into the street to get a marble that rolled away when the vehicle

operation. Before noon of that day I had produced a conclusive result, and before night had written out a description of the process.

Though he received world-wide recognition and acclaim for this invention and others that followed, Ives made but little money on them, having neglected to take out patents which would have brought him millions of dollars. Throughout his life he referred to himself as an "amateur inventor," showing no interest in making money with his work.

Plough Horse Wonder
Master Robert was 11 years old

terday, shortly after Swanson had entered the tunnel to cover the dynamite preparatory to blasting.

Tuna Still Running
DEPOE BAY, Sept. 17.—(AP)—Fishermen hauled in 4500 pounds of tuna last week and predicted the phenomenal run off the Oregon coast will continue for at least two more weeks. Canneries are paying eight cents but "over the counter" trade at resorts pays 19 to 28 cents.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Flash Earns His Ride!



ANY ROAD NEAR HERE, SONNY? NOT A GOOD ONE KIND OF A CART TRACK OVER THERE BEYOND TH' WILLOWS.

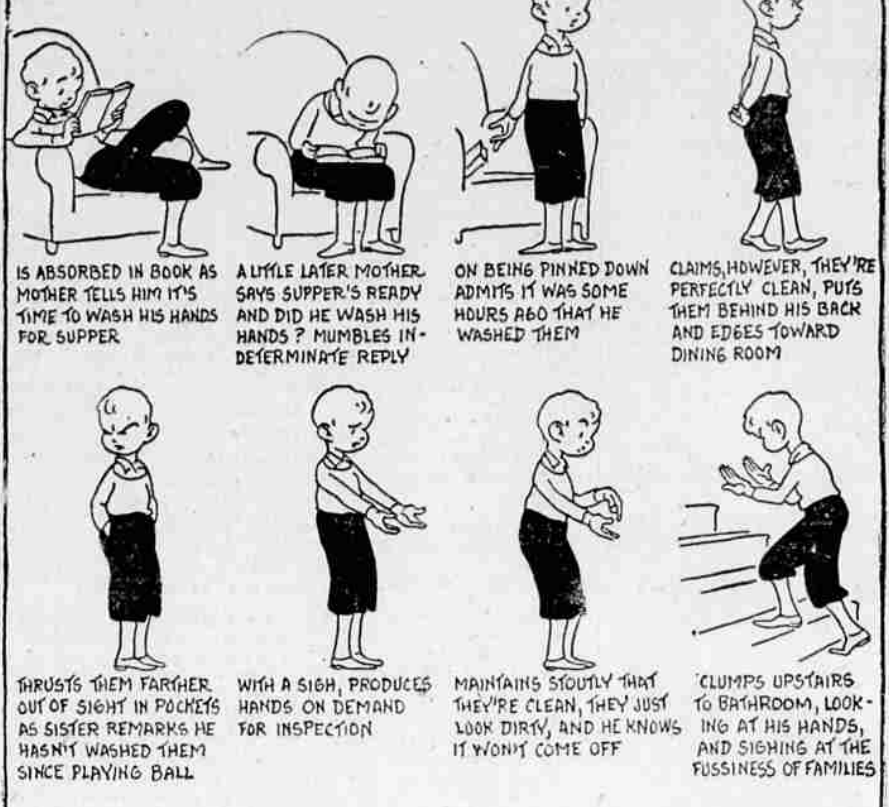


LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT IT, BETTY.

HANDS

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

9-11



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S'MATTER PO?

By C. M. PAYNE



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BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—The Stranger



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THE NEBBS—Her Romeo



9-15

Is It News When Boy Bites Mouse?



9-15

Helen Keller Has Serious Operation



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Chinese Girl Crashes



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