

the dark ships

BY HUBERT FOOTNER

SYNOPSIS: Wealthy, Prescott Fanning kidnaps Janet, a Baltimore girl, aboard his yacht. She sends word to Neill, a young federal agent who loves her. Raising to Absalom's Harbor, he boards the yacht and finds, in a locked cabin, Fanning shot dead and Janet in a faint, a gun beside her. Neill rouses her to the disused liners up the river and hides her in the best suite. Back at the village he resumes his fisherman role to watch developments. The townfolk are wildly excited over the murder. Button Billings, justice of the peace, takes charge, moves the body and holds an inquest.

Chapter 16

Neill's Adversary

CAR after car arrived at Absalom's bringing newspaper men from Washington and Baltimore, and later from more distant cities: Norfolk, Richmond, Philadelphia and even New York. The reporters spread around asking questions. Other cars brought curiosity-seekers from all the adjacent counties and even from the city. Motor-boats from across the bay were coming into the harbor as if for a regatta. Neill wondered angrily what these people did for a living. The villagers gave up their usual occupations and took up good points of vantage to watch the arrivals and to pass the latest news. All this hubbalooboo made Neill feel pretty grim. The whole world, it seemed, was aroused against him and Janet.

Shortly after 4 o'clock an ear-splitting chorus of sirens was heard approaching from up the river road and a car bearing the Maryland coat-of-arms swept around the corner with an escort of 10 state police on motor cycles. They pulled up in front of the store. In the car rode a stern-looking man that Neill knew must be Bonniger, and beside him the sergeant of police in command of the detachment.



The villagers stopped work and stood around passing the latest news.

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On the store porch Mr. Button Billings was waiting with his whiskers idly swaying in the breeze. A little behind him stood Virgil Longcope grinning and chewing a cigar.

"How do you do, gentlemen?" said Mr. Billings with dignity. "I am the representative of the law here."

"How are you, Mr. Billings?" said Bonniger, and Neill saw that he had a sense of humor.

The police officer was introduced as Sergeant Wilson.

"The deceased is over in the shed," said the justice of the peace mysteriously. "Will you step over and take a look at him?"

"In the shed?" put in Sergeant Wilson sharply. "We were told he was not aboard his yacht."

"Well, he was. But we sat on him in the shed."

Virgil stood by enjoying every word of this. The cigar of the moment rolled merrily over and over.

"And do you mean to say you have moved him?" said Wilson. "You have changed everything about it?"

"It's our custom to sit on a corpse," said Mr. Billings firmly. "You could have waited until we got here, couldn't you? What good did the inquest do? Did it establish anything?"

"The verdict was: Unknown man shot to death at the hands of person or persons unknown."

"My God!" said the sergeant. "The crowd, ladies, Virgil, the loudest of any, Mr. Button Billings glared around him and the laughter increased."

"I wash my hands of this case," he announced crushingly, and marched away with unshaken dignity, followed by laughter.

Investigators Get To Work

FROM that moment the comedy element was eliminated, and the investigation got to work in grim earnest. Constables were told off to establish police lines, and to direct traffic, while others went in

foot and of nearby waters by boat were organized, each under the command of a constable, and sent off. The latter party struck an ugly fear into Neill, but there was nothing he could do about it. He hung around on the wharf watching the preparations and listening. The villager whose skill had been stolen was describing his craft to them. Luckily that skiff was at the bottom of the river.

Neill, chafing at his exclusion, had to watch messengers being despatched in various directions, and different individuals being taken into the back office for questioning. He would have given a lot to be at Bonniger's side.

On the outskirts of the crowd he ran into Horace Kettering in his old clothes with a row of fish hooks caught in his hat-brim. Kettering, it appeared, had just heard of the crime on returning from fishing.

"What's this? What's this?" he demanded of Neill.

Neill told him the main facts. Kettering looked comically disgusted. "It's hard enough for me to get a few days' holiday, and now my fishing will be spoiled by this uproar! My boy and I caught 30 fish today. That's more important to me than a murder!"

"Oh, sure," said Neill. "What do these Hicks propose to do about solving the crime?" asked Kettering.

"Virgil Longcope has got the governor to appoint Mark Bonniger as a special investigator."

"But he's a country gentleman, not a detective."

"Well, they seem to think he's the best they've got."

"I've met the man casually in town. I must go and say how-de-do to him."

"What about this Bonniger?" asked Neill.

"Oh, he's a fine fellow," said Kettering. "Come on. I'll give you an introduction."

This was better luck than Neill had expected.

Neill finds the little man who has been watching his movements, 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.



Winged Missionaries

Combining a study of bird migration with a unique method for distributing quotations from the Bible, Jack Miner, Canadian naturalist, bands and releases thousands of wild geese annually.

Jack Miner, bird lover and protector, was Jack Miner, bird hunter, until 1903. In that year he stored his gun in the attic and converted his 200-acre farm near Kingsville, Ontario, into a bird sanctuary, now one of the most famous in the world. Starting with half a dozen wing-clipped geese to attract others, by 1908 he had hundreds of birds dropping in daily. Today the Jack Miner sanctuary is utterly over-run with

birds. Government land grants have increased the sanctuary to a circle with a four-mile diameter.

As many of the wild fowl visitors as possible are tagged with aluminum bands. On each band is the inscription, "Write Jack Miner, Kingsville, Ont., Canada," along with an excerpt from the Scriptures.

Throughout Canada and many states of the U. S. the Miner bird band is well known to sportsmen. Thousands of the tags have been acknowledged in accordance with the instructions on their inscriptions.

Whenever a tag is acknowledged, Miner marks the spot where the bird was shot down and thus has a well-established chart of the migrations of Canadian fowl.

The Indians and Eskimos of the Far North who come into possession of Miner's bird tags usually take them to their missionaries and Hudson Bay agents for interpretation. After reading them to the finders, the interpreters give the finders a Bible picture with which they are supplied by Jack Miner, in exchange for the tags.

The tags are then sent to Miner. It is not unusual to find the interior of an Eskimo or Indian hut almost completely papered with Biblical pictures. It is not unusual either, to find a native proudly wearing one of Miner's tags as an ear ring.

Tomorrow: The Shadow Boxing Bird!

University Expects Attendance Record

EUGENE, Sept. 22.—(AP)—Although no check of returning students is possible at the university as yet, due to the fact preliminary examinations will not be completed till this evening, university officials estimated to-

day that new students will total 1,200 and that the total for all classes will exceed 2100. Both figures exceed those set last year.

Actual registration of all students will open Thursday and is expected to be completed Saturday noon.

False Alarm—Fly Spray. PAINESVILLE, O.—(UP)—The fire

department has been called out several times lately on false alarms turned in by persons who mistook clouds of vaporous fly spray for smoke.

Students Good Spenders. BERKELEY, Cal.—(UP)—A survey of the students of the University of California show that they spend \$1,000,000 annually.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Skeeter Explains!



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—New Job?



By EDWIN ALCO



By SOL HESS

Roseburg To Enjoy Reduction In Levy

ROSEBURG, Ore., Sept. 22.—(AP)—Roseburg taxpayers will enjoy a reduction in the 1938 city levy of two and one-half mills, if the budget committee's recommendations made at a meeting last night are finally adopted. City Recorder A. J. Geddes said today. Rejecting all requests for salary increases, the committee increased the operating budget only \$330 above that of 1937. The amount required for debt service was reduced more than \$10,000 as a result of payment of more than \$54,000 on bonded principal, together with retirement of all outstanding warrants during the past year.

Loyal to Postoffice. TOLEDO.—(UP)—Local industries and merchants have purchased more than 350,000 stamps, commemorating Toledo's centennial.

Aviatrix Betters Air Speed Record

DETROIT, Sept. 22.—(AP)—Jacqueline Cochran, New York aviatrix, averaged 233.05 miles an hour in four flights over a three-kilometer course today, bettering the women's land plane speed record of 216.257 miles an hour established in 1934 by the late Helen Boucher, of France.

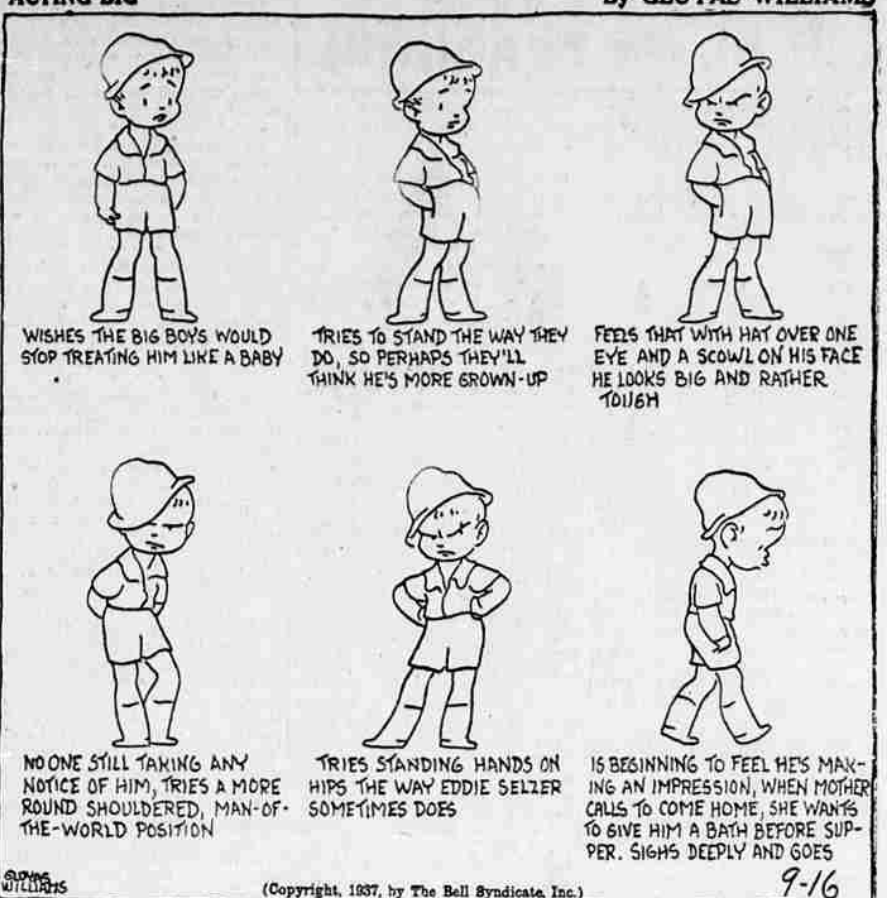
Miss Cochran made six flights. She was timed at 304.62 miles an hour in her fastest dash. Her speed on the slowest flight was 232.06 miles an hour.

She flew a Seversky military pursuit demonstrator, with a 1,200 horsepower engine.

British Trade Soars. LONDON.—(UP)—Great Britain's total trade during July was \$130,000,000 greater than in July, 1936, figures just issued by the board of trade show.

ACTING BIG

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



S'MATTER POF

By O M PAYNE



By HAL FORREST



By EDWIN ALCO



By SOL HESS

