

the dark ships

BY HULBERT FOOTNER

SYNOPSIS: Neill, a young federal agent, finds his beloved in a locked cabin aboard Prescott Fanning's yacht at Absalom's Harbor. Fanning is shot dead and Janet in a faint, a gun beside her. Neill hides her nearby in a disused liner, then joins Mark Bonniger, keen local investigator, to keep tabs on developments. He thinks Janet shot Fanning until he learns a man was hiding on the yacht. Then he suspects queer little Eyster, who hated Fanning. Also in the picture are Kettering, a Baltimore lawyer down to fish, and Ira Buckless, a tough who trails Neill. Eyster's tip enables Neill to find wealthy old Miss Rayner in Baltimore.

Chapter 27
A Cool Million

"DON'T you read the newspapers, Miss Rayner?"

"Certainly not. I've something better to read."

"Mr. Fanning is dead?"

"He was found dead on his yacht in Absalom's Harbor."

"I didn't know he had a yacht."

"Murdered."

"Bless my soul! Why do you come to me about that?"

"Neill endeavored to soften his story. 'We can't find out anything about him. Who his folks are, and so on. We thought perhaps you could help.'

"I liked the man," said Miss Rayner, "but I was having what you would call a friend. We had some business dealings."

"This was what Neill was after. 'Who brought him to you?'

"My estate agent, Edward Barney. I have a house for sale on Linden avenue. Mr. Fanning was thinking of buying it for a speculation, but he thought I was asking too much for it. So he persuaded Mr. Barney to bring him here. I wouldn't come down in my price but, as I said, I liked the man. He stayed on here chatting after Mr. Barney left and he came to see me a number of times after that."

"Have you confidence in Mr. Barney?" asked Neill.

"Absolute. A good, faithful creature. He's too dumb to be crooked. He's only my renting agent. He knows nothing about my affairs."

"Well, about Fanning...?"

"He was a man of large means. He went on, 'and we had a common interest in our investments. He told me that he had established an investing trust in New York which paid 6 per cent and over on its stock. I was getting less than three on my government bonds. I am interested in many philanthropies and I need all the income I can get. He had a few shares and I exchanged my bonds for stock in Mr. Fanning's trust. I took a little at first, and as the price continued to rise, I got more.'

"Without any investigation?"

"Certainly not! I investigated it thoroughly. I received very fine references and testimonials on Mr. Fanning's behalf from New York people. I'll show them to you."

"Didn't you consult with any Baltimore business men, or with your lawyer?" he asked.

"No. I prefer to act on my own initiative."

"Do you know a man here called Horace Kettering?"

"The name is familiar."

"He's a lawyer in town."

"I've never seen the man nor had anything to do with him."

"Did Mr. Fanning ever speak of him?"

"No."

"Did Mr. Fanning introduce you to any of his friends or associates?"

"No."

"Did you ever hear the names Ira Buckless or David Eyster?"

"No."

"Of course, they might have gone under other names. They are peculiar looking men. They are described Eyster and Buckless."

"I don't know any men of that sort," she said scornfully. "Is all this leading up to the suggestion that there is something crooked about Fanning?"

"Neill didn't answer."

"That's ridiculous on the face of it!" said Miss Rayner. "He only promised me 6 per cent. A swindler would have guaranteed 10 or 15."

The Fake Certificates

IN SPITE of her confident talk, Neill had roused an ugly doubt in the old lady's mind. Hoisting herself out of her chair, she tottered to a safe that stood open against the wall. Taking from it a portfolio, she brought it to him.

Opening it, Neill thumbed over a sheaf of beautifully engraved certificates. Not worth the paper they had spoiled.

"Aren't they all right? Aren't they all right?" she demanded.

He had not the heart to deliver the blow. "I reckon so," he said. "I know nothing about such matters. How much did Fanning charge you for the stock?"

"It sells at par over the counter," she eagerly explained. "That's 10. He let me have it for 15."

The certificates in the portfolio represented 125,000 shares. So

Fanning had raked her for over a million dollars. Neill inwardly gaped at the thought of such a sum. What had become of it? He handed back the portfolio.

"The first dividend was paid on the mail," said Miss Rayner.

"Naturally!" thought Neill.

She brought him a sheaf of letters. "These will tell you all about Mr. Fanning. Who his associates are, and so on."

Neill took down names and addresses in order to satisfy her, and got out as soon as he could. It made him feel a little sick to think of the brutal awakening that was in store for the frail little old lady.

In the street he thought things over. Beyond establishing the identity of Fanning's victim, he had not got very far. The manner of Fanning's introduction to the old lady suggested that the estate agent was in no wise implicated and Miss Rayner had confirmed it.

Neill drove back downtown and called at Mr. Osgood's office. He found him a conservative specimen of the genus Family Lawyer. Impossible to suspect such a one. Mr. Osgood claimed not to have met Fanning. He was deeply shocked to learn that Fanning had been a frequent caller on his client.

"I must look into this," he muttered.

Neill didn't envy him that job. Mr. Osgood said that his acquaintance with Kettering was very slight. He made it clear that he did not care for the man. "A successful criminal lawyer, I understand," he said condescendingly.

Before returning to Absalom's, Neill had himself carried over to Washington. In the treasury department he cashed a check for all he had coming to him in order to be ready for anything. He looked in on his chief.

"Having a good time?" asked the latter.

"Well," said Neill. "If you knew the rest of it, I think grimly."

"I'll have an assignment for you on Monday."

As he started out of town, Neill bought the latest papers and found, as he had foreseen, that they were now playing up the theory that but, as I said, I liked the man. He stayed on here chatting after Mr. Barney left and he came to see me a number of times after that."

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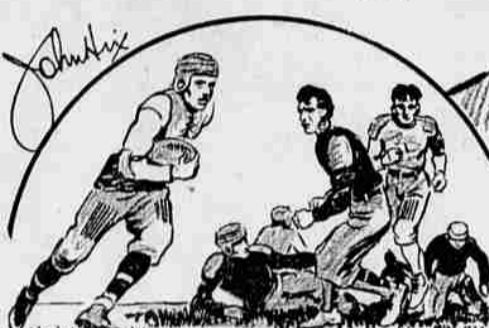
The certificates in the portfolio represented 125,000 shares. So

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



JOHN C. CALHOUN
RESIGNED AS VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE U.S. TO BECOME A SENATOR... THE ONLY U.S. VICE PRESIDENT EVER TO RESIGN... -1832-



COME BACK!
TULANE U. FAILED TO SCORE A SINGLE POINT AGAINST THEIR OPPONENTS' 142 IN THE 1899 FOOTBALL SEASON--YET THE NEXT YEAR SCORED 105 POINTS TO THEIR OPPONENTS' ZERO!

10-5-37

Turkey Crop Early In Central Oregon
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The Redmond-Prineville section

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President Roosevelt, officials said, probably will launch the campaign with a "fireside chat."

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Use Mail Tribune want ads.

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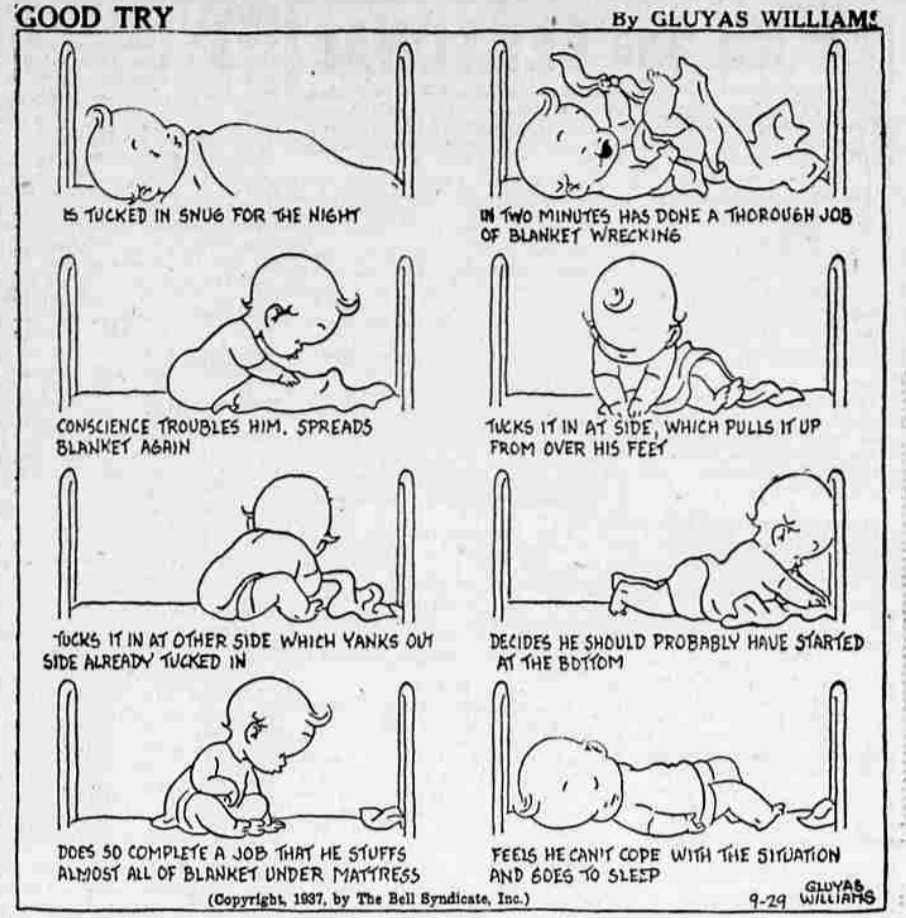
He addressed the International Association of Chiefs of Police after Chief Leon V. Jenkins, of Portland, Ore., in the president's address, had taken the members to task for "trial and error" methods in handling strike disorders.

WINDOW GLASS—We sell window glass and will replace your broken windows reasonably from Bridge Cabinet Works.

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

THE NEBBS—Just As Expected

GOOD TRY By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



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S'MATTER POF By O M PAYNE



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BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—"Does Without!"



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