

The VANISHING FLEETS

By ROY NORTON
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ILLUSTRATED BY A. WEIL

SYNOPSIS.

"Vanishing Fleets," a story of "what might have happened," opens in Washington with the United States and Japan near war. Guy Hillier, secretary of the British embassy, and Miss Norma Roberts, chief aide of inventor Roberts, are introduced as lovers. Japan declares war and takes the Philippines. Guy Hillier starts for England. Norma Roberts leaves Washington for the Florida coast. Hawaii is captured by the Japs. All ports are closed. Tokyo learns of missing Japanese fleet and whole world becomes convinced that United States has powerful war agency. England decides to send a fleet to American waters as a Canadian protection against what the British suppose is a terrible submarine flotilla. Hillier is sent with a message. Fleet mysteriously disappears. The Kaiser is missing. King Edward of England is confronted by Admiral Bevis of the United States. The Dreadnaught, biggest of England's warships, is discovered at an impassable point in the Tiamas. The story now goes back to a time many months before the war breaks out, and inventor Roberts visits the president and cabinet, telling of and exhibiting a metal production. This overcomes friction when electrified and he is applied to vessels to increase speed to over 50 miles an hour. A city for the manufacture of the mysterious discovery is built on the coast of Florida. Dr. Roberts' first attempt to electrify plates proves a failure. In a second effort Norma is knocked unconscious, but the mystery of true levitation is solved, making the most important discovery of centuries. Roberts evolves a great flying machine, rendering warships useless. The cabinet is taken for a visit and plans for a radioplane war against Japan are started.

CHAPTER XVII.—Continued.

The president in a reverie found himself contemplating them. Here, he thought, was the personification of that anomaly the American workman: Oftentimes turbulent, frequently dissatisfied, sometimes waging warfare with employer and capital and cursing political parties; but when country and home were endangered, courageous as a lion guarding whelps, reckless of life, and unheeding wounds, plunging to the front in a frenzy, and asking no reward save the satisfaction of seizing the invader by the throat and throttling him to the death. "God save the enemy who underestimates the temper and patriotism of the American workman!" he muttered as he returned to the long motionless line of radioplanes.

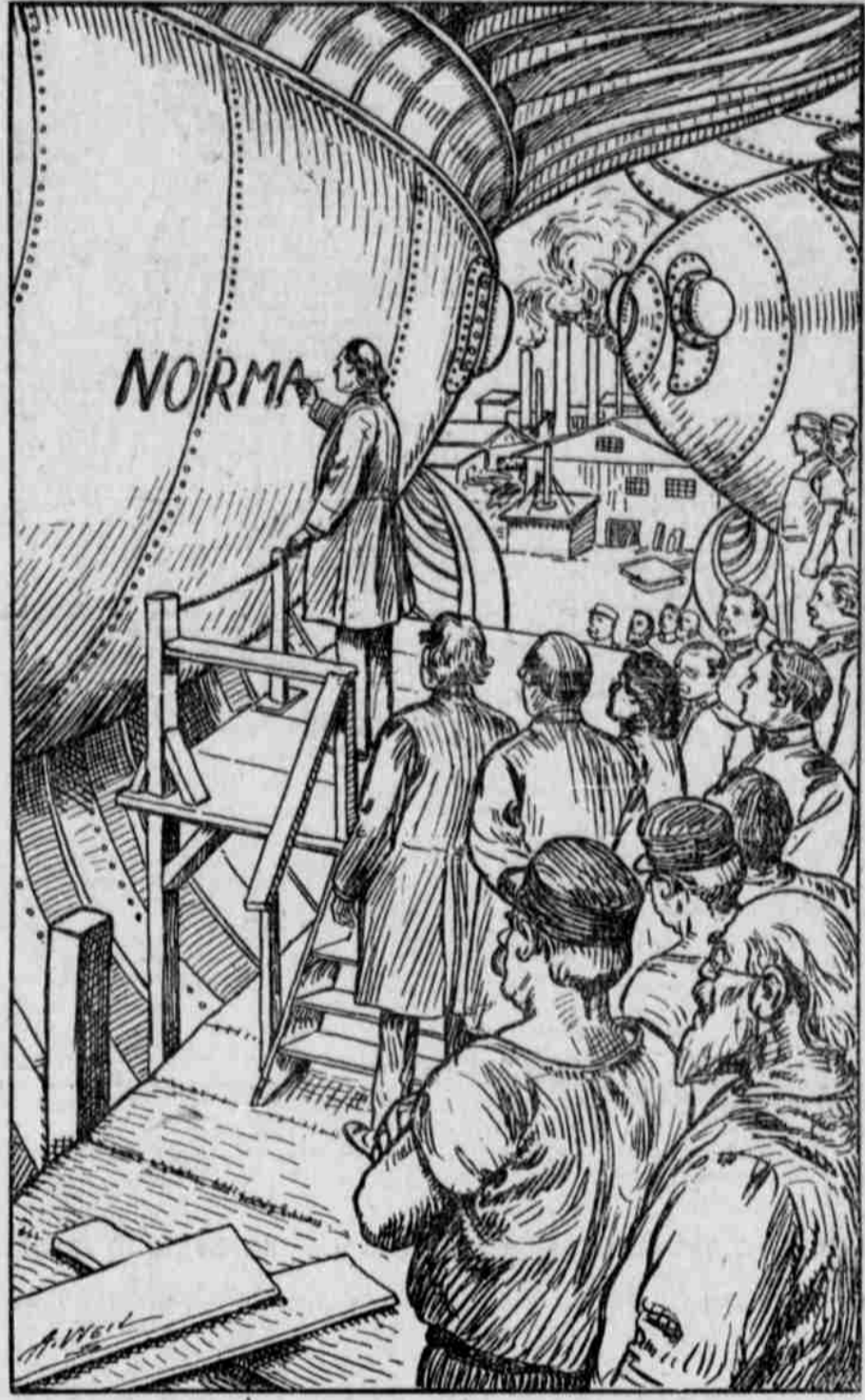
The ray of light, broad, steady and clear, was still there, and as the visitors entered its borders the quick, sharp blast of a whistle in the rear, as if by preconcerted signal, caused every wheel to come to an abrupt stop. From the buildings and quarters men came running to the scene and surrounded the guests, who were grouped together in the fan of white and immediately in front of the monster which had given them passage. That they were not to depart without some further attention was obvious. "Old Bill" Roberts made the meaning of the call plain when he addressed his friend in the old term of intimacy.

"Paul, we have left to you the honor of christening the first radioplane ever built. She isn't named yet. The boys here wanted to call her the Roberts; but I forbade them. I guess you know who I wanted to call her after," he said, laying his hand on the president's arm and looking up into his face; "but then I wasn't sure you would like that, so we have compromised by leaving it to you."

The president had in his hand a piece of carpenter's chalk which he had idly picked up from one of the floors he had traversed. He stood raring it over between his long rough fingers which bore evidences of hard physical labor in early youth, and looked affectionately down into the inventor's eyes. He turned from him and looked at those around him. In the edges of the light and stretching back into the darkness behind he could discern the faces of the workmen, the reflection giving them a singularly pallid look and making them seem like visages dismembered, their bodies being absorbed into the blackness of the background. They expected a speech; but he felt a paucity of words when he thought of their endeavors and achievements. He started to address them, but choked with the fullness of his heart. Without such work as they had given, what would be the condition of the nation to-night?

"Men," he said, using the strongest of appellations, "no words of mine can add to the honors you merit, nor detract from what you have done. Duty well performed requires no praise; but as president of the United States I thank you. I am the one who is honored in being privileged to call you countrymen."

He faltered, and in the strong light upon him they could see the muscles of his face twitching with repression. He turned from them as if to hide his emotion, and took a few steps which brought him to the side of the radioplane. His long arm reached out, and slowly and in silence he chalked upon its metal side in big white letters, N-O-R-M-A.



In Silence He Chalked Upon Its Metal Side in Big White Letters—N-O-R-M-A.

nity of his position, and crowded round him, talking as man to man. Norma tried to make her protests heard; but they were unavailing. The men were elated, and her father was satisfied.

With little delay the party boarded the craft, the president being the last to say good-by. The big metal door was closed, and the Norma rose into the air on its return journey, while the men stood with hats off and watched it disappear before returning to their work.

The radioplane was making its last flight before the war, because it was deemed that all risk of discovery should be obviated, even though other methods of transportation were comparatively snaillike.

And so the months went on with activity at the key, placidity in the administration, and preparations for an onslaught on Japan. As the work of construction advanced, Norma found respite to make occasional brief visits to Washington, where her time was monopolized by Hillier, who did not dream of his forthcoming trip to London; but "Old Bill" Roberts came no more to the capital.

Now began that series of orders which subjected the men at the head of the government to their greatest trial. Work was stopped on all fortifications, beginning with those in the Philippines. It was accepted by the public as a foolish curtailment of expense. Before this had ceased to rankle in the public mind construction ceased in nearly all the navy yards; but the clamor then arose to such a pitch that outwardly it was resumed, being done for appearance's sake only and to prevent a revolution.

So dangerous was the pitch of indignation that some of the president's advisers quailed before the show of wrath, and feared that an army of Americans might march on Washington. They besought the president to alter his plans and make broadcast announcement of the state of defense; but he, his Americanism exceeded only by his humanitarianism, stood steadfast. His answer was characteristic: "If our secret becomes known, there will be no war, and war is a necessity for our purpose. In our hands has been given by a miracle the most deadly engine ever conceived, and we should be delinquent in our duty if we failed to use it as a means for controlling and thereby ending wars for all time. Let us bear with fortitude whatever reproaches may be heaped upon us, for we are the instruments of God, and the trial will last only a little longer. Let no man speak!"

His eyes flamed with inspiration, and, like a prophet of old, he led his followers in his own footsteps. In those trying times he was very near to the God in whom he believed, and only the walls of his room knew how often he appealed for light and guidance, trembling in spiritual agony,

and, like the martyrs of all ages, crucified by his fellows.

Events began to move with lightning like rapidity as May approached. Secret orders had been given to all the principal ships in Pacific waters to withdraw into neutral harbors, it being the wish of the men who were playing the stern game that all possible loss of life through accidental meetings might be obviated. Pacific commerce withdrew from the western seas, believing itself unprotected and the administration mad. From all sources of information came the certain reports that Japan was about to attack. Her communications became daily more insolent; but were invariably treated with suave contempt. And then came a day which brought the most portentous news.

The first was a message from the key that Dr. Roberts had broken down. It was from Brockton, who made a pitiful appeal to the secretary of the navy to find Norma and either give permission for her to be brought back by a radioplane, or to have her sent at once by special train to Miami, inasmuch as she, being the sole sharer of her father's secret, was now the only one who could be depended upon for the metamorphosis of the plates. The message added that the inventor was not in a serious condition, but that overwork, overstudy and overstrain had so taken toll that the surgeons declared he was coming down with brain fever and that his very life depended on his taking absolute rest.

To hazard another trip of a radioplane was out of the question, because the administration was aware that spies were still in the capital. The president himself sent messengers to find the girl on whom so much depended, only to learn at a late hour that she had not yet reached Washington, but was expected to arrive that night. He preferred to communicate his tidings to her in person, and therefore left word that she should call at the White House the following morning. In the meantime advance preparations were made for her conveyance to the island, together with the grim old fighting admiral, Bevis, who was now to assume command of the aerial forces of America, and those officers who from time to time had been called home from various ships.

And then, when night fell and the president's cup seemed full, came the swift and unexpected announcement that the Japanese had fallen upon the Philippines. War was on, and the long expected gauntlet lay in the lists, while the nation heaved and rocked in turmoil, quivered with insult, and cried aloud for vengeance.

When Norma appeared at the White House she was told of her father's condition by the president himself, who was plainly harassed to the limit by anxiety. "You can go at once," he said; "but

what then? Are there any who can work the radioplanes?"

"Yes, by nightly flights we have trained crews for all and more than we have built."

"But there should be some expert guiding mind who knows the secret of the craft."

"Father had intended to accompany them and himself direct the leading radioplane in case of attack."

The president threw up his hand in a gesture of hopelessness. The time for attack was fast approaching, and could not be postponed on account of the inventor's illness. Norma, who had been standing beside a window, confronted the worried head of the nation.

"You forget," she said, "that I have youth, strength, will and knowledge. Neither my father's nor my country's cause shall suffer."

He walked across the room, towering above her in ungainly strength, took both her hands in his and looked deeply into her eyes. "You mean—" "That if my father is too ill to go, I myself will fight the Japanese. I myself will give what expert advice is needed, and will demonstrate to the others what must be done in battle." Inflamed by the thought of what was dependent upon her, pride in her father, and Americanism, she was ready to accept the responsibility, even though it might cost her life.

They stood in silence, holding each other's hands. He stooped over her, his sad eyes filled with an admiration which was akin to veneration, and kissed her.

"Joan of Arc! Joan of Arc!" he whispered, and said no more.

She had been told that a train awaited. Together they walked to the door of the president's study through the halls, and to the outer portal. Unheeding those who were near, he caught her hand and held it to his breast, looking once more into her eyes.

"God bless and keep you, my child!" he said, and abruptly turned back to his seclusion, his head dropped forward between his massive shoulders and his arms swinging loosely at his sides.

The day was not yet done, and before the next had dawned came the announcement that the Hawaiian islands had also been surrendered to the foe. The coterie of men within the secret held their meeting and congratulated each other that orders had been obeyed, no defense made, and loss of life obviated. But the public must be pacified. The swift convening of congress, its authorization of the administration to act, and the appealing notice to the public that a well-defined policy was being pursued, followed one after the other, but still were not understood.

Night and day now the president and his associates toiled and planned. Report after report came to them, until they knew that the hour to act had come. The spell of seeming lethargy was at an end, and with unprecedented swiftness the cordon was thrown round the nation, its ports closed, and its communication shut off save through channels of the secret service, which was intensely active. Time was computed to the minute, and when the fleet of conquest sailed from Japan the very latitude and longitude of the point where it was to be met were communicated to the headquarters in Florida, where had been renewed energy.

Hence it was that, as darkness once more mantled that isolated spot, a strange scene was witnessed. It was the departure of that invincible squadron of the air for the scene of battle. Night after night they had maneuvered, till those who manned them were masters of their craft and of the new form of signals which were to be used in case of emergency. Every detail was complete, every possible precaution was taken to avert accident.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A Very Odd Clock.

An extraordinary addition has been made to the exhibition of inventions now being held in Berlin. A shoemaker named Wegner, living in Strasburg, has sent in a clock of the grandfather shape, nearly six feet high, made entirely of straw. The wheels, pointers, case and every detail are exclusively of straw. Wegner has taken 15 years to construct this strange piece of mechanism. It keeps perfect time, but under the most favorable circumstances cannot last longer than two years.

A Noble Lover.

"Darling," said the American heiress, "it is not true, is it, that you want to marry me for my money?" "No, dearest," answered the duke de Ragges et Patchez, "but I don't hold it against you."—Baltimore American.

WESTERN CANADA'S HAPPY PROSPECTS.

In no year since the development of Western Canada began has spring brought a brighter outlook than it brings this year. In no preceding spring has there been greater assurance of advancing development and prosperity. The movement of immigration has already assumed large proportions, and in as desirable a character as it is satisfactory in volume; from across the Atlantic sturdy, industrious and thrifty newcomers are arriving in large numbers, homeseekers from Ontario and the other older Provinces are coming in a steady stream, and from across the international boundary a movement is already in full flow, which, it is confidently predicted, will beat the records of all previous years; special settlers' trains are crossing the line, loaded with effects, actual material wealth being thus brought into the country at the rate of millions of dollars' worth monthly.

The movement is so unprecedentedly large that extra Dominion immigration officials have had to be provided at both North Portal and at Emerson, and it is estimated that the total number of new settlers from the United States this year will be 70,000, at least, and may run well up toward 100,000. Last year's total of new settlers from the South was 53,723; thus the area that will be placed in wheat and other grains this year will greatly exceed that of last year. Settlers are making extraordinary efforts to get on their lands and begin seeding operations. The price of wheat now, away above the dollar mark, is incentive enough, and when one has in view the splendid results that the past few years have shown, it is not to be wondered at that the present will be the banner year for immigration to Canada. Ask your nearest Canadian Government Agent for rates of transportation, and he will also send you illustrated pamphlets.

Impending Strife.

"I want to buy a clarinet," said the man with a steely look in his eye.

"Ah," said the dealer in musical wares, "here is a perfect instrument, absolutely true in tone."

"I don't want it. I want one that'll produce nothing but blue notes. There's a man next door who is studying the trombone. I'm going to play the clarinet in self-defense."

There will be disappointment with the music of heaven unless mother's songs are sung there.



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Another Operation Avoided. Chicago, Ill.—"I want women to know what wonderful medicine, Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, has done for me. Two of the best doctors in Chicago said I would die if I did not have an operation, and I never thought of seeing a well day again. I had a small tumor and female troubles so that I suffered day and night. A friend recommended Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, and it made me a well woman."—Mrs. ALYONA SPERLING, 11 Langdon St., Chicago, Ill.

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The grain crop of 1908 will net many farmers \$20.00 to \$25.00 per acre. Grain-raising, mixed farming and dairying are the principal industries. Climate is excellent; social conditions the best; railway advantages unequalled; schools, churches and markets close at hand. Land may also be purchased from railway and land companies.

For "Last Best West" pamphlets, maps and information as to how to secure lowest railway rates, apply to Superintendent of Immigration, Ottawa, Canada, or the authorized Canadian Government Agent.

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