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. England's fleet mysteriously disappears. The kaiser is missing. King Edward of England is confronted by Admiral Bevins of the United States. The Dreadnaught, biggest of England's warships, is discovered at an impassable point in the Thames. The story now goes back to a time many months before the war breaks out. Inventor Roberts exhibits a metal production. This overcomes friction when electrified and is to be applied to vessels. Roberts evolves a great flying machine. The cabinet plans a radioplane war against Japanese. The start is made for the scene of conflict. After maneuvering the airships descend, and by use of strong magnets lift the warships, one by one, from the sea. The vessels are deposited in the United States. The British fleet accepts American hospitality and is conveyed to the United States. The kaiser is taken on a trip—his first visit to America—thus accounting for his disappearance. King Edward is brought to America on a radioplane for conference with the president. They agree to work for world peace. Announcement of the secret of the radioplane is made in Central park, New York, to the wonder of millions. The king meets his men.

CHAPTER XXII.—Continued.

The British officers exchanged quick side glances of relief. Barr alone had the temerity to break into an open smile of satisfaction. They were not, then, to be censured by their country, and the situation would bear no disgrace. His majesty continued:

"You have unwittingly assisted in reuniting the Anglo-Saxon race, I hope, after its separation of nearly a century and a half. You have been made involuntary guests by a man whose friendship I esteem, and whom I honor above all men. I refer to the president of this nation, and I ask that you remember him as kindly as I do. Your countrymen will have no just cause for criticising you or your actions. Instructions will be sent you in due time through the admiralty. Until then you are to maintain patience. I wish you good night."

With dignified grace he bowed to them, took a step backward, turned on his heel, and was going before they grasped the significance of his speech or awakened from the wonder of his unexpected visit to this alien land. The clang of an elevator door recalled them and stirred them to action. They ran after him, rang for and surged into the elevators, to debouch on the street a minute later a group of hatless men craving further explanations and wishing to honor their ruler. They crowded to the edge of the pavement beside which the motor car was humming in readiness for its start.

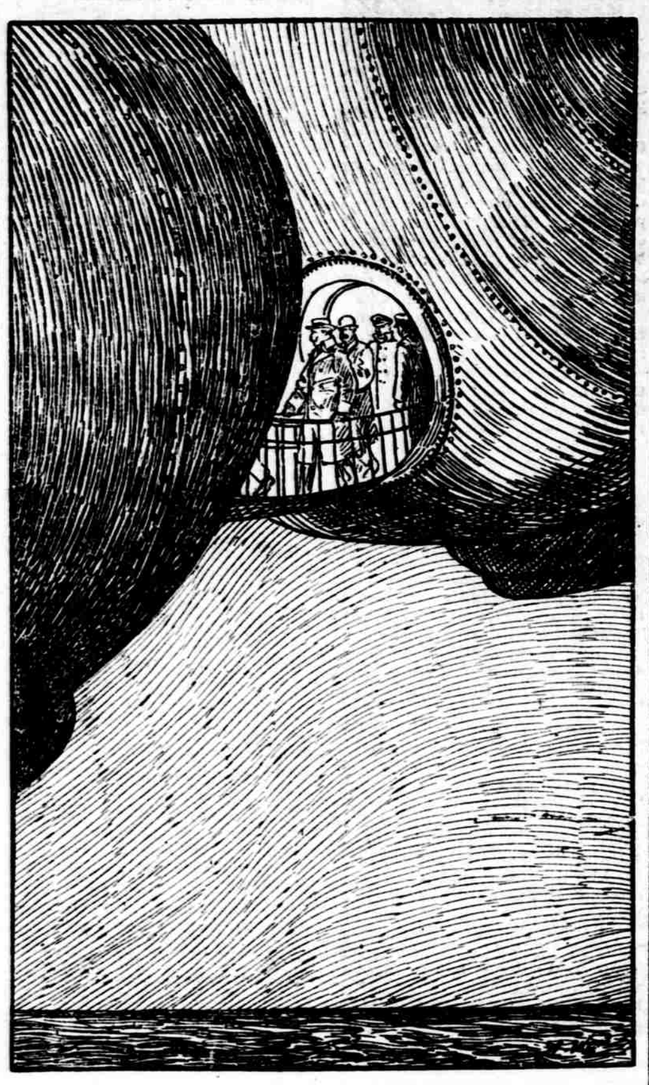
The king saw them coming, smiled at their eagerness, and turned to Bevins with a question which they could not hear. The American admiral gave a laughing reply, and the monarch leaned over to Jimmy Barr, who was standing on the curb close at hand.

"My host, the admiral," the king said, "says lack of time prevents your accompanying us. Otherwise we should ask you to witness our embarkation. We are returning to London on a radioplane to-night, and the world's mystery is at an end. We must say good night."

The lights of the hotel entrance were full upon them, bringing out in detail to the curious guests who were gathering on the marble steps the men with bared heads and the gray-bearded English gentleman in the machine. They saw him nod to the chauffeur, who was looking back, saw the latter turn to his work, and then the machine leaped away into the broad drive toward the nearest park entrance. And to the amazement of the onlookers the men in uniform stood at salute until the machine had disappeared. Not even then did they disperse, but stood there silently watching the skies. Pedestrians joined the group, speculating as to the cause of this uniformed gathering.

Several minutes elapsed, and then from one and another came startled exclamations. Up from the silent park, soaring above the trees and shrubbery with stately sweep, came a strange row of brilliant lights. The secret was out at last, and the American officers gave a frantic cheer, which was joined in by the Englishmen, and taken up by the crowd. As if to recognize their parting shouts, the searchlights of the Roberts in dazzling ripples of color flared suddenly upward and round in fan-shaped sweeps, which were finally directed full upon the streets below. At a comparatively low altitude the craft went slowly across the city and headed toward the Atlantic, while men upon the pavements beneath took up the cry, until from all sides windows opened and the people rushed into the streets for a sight of this mysterious aerial visitor. Reaching the lower edge of the city, the radioplane shot up and up until it was a speck of light against the stars, took one last circling flight, and with marvelous speed disappeared in the east. And while America was gaining her first knowledge of this incredible flying machine, the Roberts was shooting away in a long straight track for the old world.

The king had watched the sights below as long as they were visible. Through his glasses he had seen the streets become filled with excited men, women and children, and their shoutings had come to him faintly above the hum of the dynamos. The glimmerings of the great harbor dimmed and died away, and here and there could be descried the lights of the slow steaming patrol ships keeping the outpost watch upon the sea. When the last sign of life had vanished, he turned to his companions in silence, thinking of all that had taken place within the few recent hours.



"The Soldierly Form of the Kaiser Appeared."

Only a short time ago they had entered this aerial chamber, standing in dread of the unknown terror of the waters and the menacing silence of this western continent they were leaving behind. Only a few hours past they had trembled at the powerlessness of their nation and shudderingly awaited the shock of invasion.

Now they were going back to England bearing news that would upset old ideas, remove all fear for the future, and ally her with the most powerful nation history had ever known. They had sailed away furtively with darkened ports, and were now returning in a glare of white light, careless of who might observe. Events had followed each other in such remarkable sequence, with such astounding rapidity, that it wearied the mind to follow them. The king was pondering over the new situation when with no preliminary notice every light in the radioplane went out and they were left in darkness.

From without and through the open door came the voices of the admiral and engineer in conversation:

"It can't be an enemy."

"Hardly; but we dare take no chances."

"What do you think it is?"

"I don't know. A minute or two will tell if they have seen us."

The king and his countrymen fumbled for their glasses in the darkness, found them, and lined themselves up against the transparent port which had not been closed. The cause of the sudden cautionary measures was apparent. There, comparatively far away, and high up against the starlit sky, they saw the blazing line of a searchlight thrust up into the darkness. It wavered uncertainly for an instant, and then slowly, as if feeling its way, approached them. It seemed uncertain and for a moment disappeared. Their own machine had come to a halt.

For an instant nothing was visible, and then there leaped into the air a vertical beam of red. Beside it came another steady ray of brilliant white, and then to complete the color trio a vivid shaft of blue arrayed itself beside the other two. Outside in the hood they heard a wild unrestrained burst of cheering, and the cabin was again flooded with light. The old admiral stepped hurriedly in, his face aglow, and his cap in his hand.

"We have sighted the Norma, your majesty, the craft which disappeared with his imperial majesty, the emperor of Germany."

Before he had finished speaking the signal calling hearers to the wireless telephone buzzed insistently, and he turned to answer. From the dome above they could see answering lights playing rapidly from their own craft. They heard Bevins talking to some one excitedly, and peering once more through the side ports saw they were rushing onward to meet this other traveler of the spaces. With decreasing speed the two approached each other, retaining their altitude high above and beyond sound of the sea. Now they were floating abreast, and finally, after a moment's tensity, they came to a stop. Their metal sides came together with an almost imperceptible jar, and they adjusted themselves for further communication.

Simultaneously their great ports slid open, and the king, who had gone to the companionway, saw the interior of the other radioplane. Bevins and Brockton in delight were shaking hands and congratulating each other. They talked for a moment, and then the rear admiral retired from view. Bevins turned to the king and said: "Your majesty, the emperor of Germany wishes to come aboard."

Before the king could give his assent the soldierly form of the kaiser appeared outlined in the light of his own port, took a cautious step across the threshold, and stood before the men of England. Whatever doubts he may have had of his reception were set aside by the hands outstretched to receive him and the words of welcome which the king hastened to give him. The bulky form of the chancellor came behind, and then, conducted by the king, they turned and entered the cabin. Brockton and Bevins brought up the rear. At one end of the table stood the American secretary of state, and beside him were the prime minister of England and the lord of the admiralty. The chancellor ponderously edged his way forward until he was near them, leaving the king and his imperial nephew on the opposite side of the table.

The visitors greeted and were presented to the others, and then, for the fraction of a minute, they all stood confronting and expectant until the king with his usual tact put an abrupt end to the restraint by inviting all to be seated, and asking for an explanation of the accident. The kaiser curbed his anxiety for news of developments, and briefly recounted his adventure, appealing now and then to Brockton for details which he did not understand. He concluded, and hesitated for an instant in embarrassed silence. Before he could formulate the opening question in a delicate subject the king had again stepped into the breech.

"The world will soon be at peace," he said meaningly, looking at his kinsman. "We have come from a meeting in America with the man who has so decreed it, and I have had the honor of joining him in plans for the future."

"And Germany?"

"Will be glad."

"But her allotment?"

"The privilege of being one of the foremost in the movement."

"With dignity and honor?"

"Yes, and with an opportunity to play her part voluntarily."

England's king, grave and gray and reading men from the serene heights of long life and philosophy, had expected a tempestuous outburst; but to his contentment none came. He studied the face of the ruler who had gained a world-wide reputation for warlike ambitions and constant truculence, whose mailed fist had long been clenched in readiness for a blow, and was surprised. No sign of storm was apparent, but instead a calm and placid pair of eyes stared back at him.

In rapid sentences he told of the president's design, which Great Britain would accept and which she had helped outline in detail, and closed by predicting the results which would follow. He talked low and earnestly, leaning his elbows on the table before him and addressing himself only to the emperor. His summary concluded, he straightened back into the hollow of his chair and waited for the others to speak.

The chancellor, who had been so intent that he had never changed attitude or expression, shifted his gaze from the king to his sovereign, who for a time sat wrapped in thought. As if he had come to a quick conclusion, he looked up and in three words expressed his views. "It looks perfect," he said. The chancellor smiled, the king looked satisfied and the prime minister with a sigh of relief gave a quick sidelong glance at the American secretary of state. The lord of the admiralty was rubbing his hands.

"Germany asks nothing more than fairness," the emperor said, "and I think she will gladly accept and enter into the conclave. It will upset her more than any other nation perhaps, because she is founded on military form; but the whole world shall understand that she permits no nation, race or people to go beyond her in enlightened methods." His stern expression changed to one of warmth. He smiled at some thought of his own and continued:

"We all change, I suppose, as we advance. I have learned that one may have his ideas enlarged by accident. I have known for many days what it is to be free to think, to learn profound lessons in philosophy from the forest and streams, and have come nearer to men of the American nation than I had ever hoped. I have formed new friendships, and by the camp fires at night have been given other views of life, of men and humanity, by a most admirable teacher."

He nodded his head toward Brockton, paused for a moment and then laughed aloud. "I caught a trout that weighed nearly four pounds and shot four caribou!" he chuckled.

At this incongruous termination of his speech his hearers gasped, and then waited for him to continue, which he did in humorous vein, interspersed with comments of graver trend. And in this recountal of adventure they read of his broadening. By suggestion he conveyed to them that he had gone away on a strange journey wrapped in the cares and dignities of position to be taught many lessons in democracy.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Is Ashamed of Nation's Debt

English Woman Mortified at Huge Sum Owed by Country.

An English gentleman rather plaintively confides to the London Outlook that he no sooner flatters himself that he has turned his otherwise perfectly satisfactory wife into something approaching an economist than he finds out that he has done nothing of the kind.

He had, or he so believed, firmly implanted in her mind the fact that England has the greatest revenue ever known, when she learned, through a lecturer at her club, the figures of the national debt.

"John," she said, on her return, "didn't you tell me that England has the greatest revenue ever known?"

"Yes," he said.

"Then how is it,' she said, keenly, "that we have such an enormous debt? Do we really owe that terrible sum?" She named it with great deliberation and awe.

He admitted that the figures were correct.

"Well, if that is so," his wife said, firmly, "I will never again admit abroad that I am an Englishwoman. I could not travel in comfort known as one of a nation so shamefully indebted."—Youth's Companion.

Reward for Kind Act.

Seven thousand dollars left to him by a man whom he had lost all track of for nearly 40 years has come to Rev. Richard B. Dilworth of Oxford, Pa., as a result of kind acts done long ago. At that time Mr. Dilworth was a missionary to the Indians and the testator was a struggling ranchman. He was desirous of an education, and Mr. Dilworth helped him with his studies. The two men drifted apart, and Mr. Dilworth heard nothing whatever of him until he was notified that he had been left a beneficiary in his will.

The testator did not know his whereabout, and the bequest was made simply to R. B. Dilworth, so detectives have been searching for him for several months.

"FAITH" ALL THAT WAS LEFT

Symbols of "Hope" and "Charity" Had Got Away from Unfortunate Sunday School Scholar.

A young Philadelphia Sunday school teacher tells this story of the result of an attempted application of the principles of economics:

For some time she had endeavored to impress upon the minds of one of her charges the names of the three qualities, faith, hope, and charity. One Sunday she presented the pupil of the poor memory with three new shining coins, a penny, a five-cent piece, and a dime.

"The penny," she said, "represents faith, the five-cent piece hope, and the dime charity. Keep these coins and every time you look at them think of what they stand for."

The Sunday following the teacher reviewed the lesson of the week before, and called upon the holder of the coins to produce them and give their names in proper sequence. The youngster shuffled from one leg to the other, stammered, blushed and seemed altogether overcome with mortification. Finally he burst out with:

"Please, Miss Fanny, I ain't got nuthin' left but faith. Baby swallered hope, and mamma took charity and bought ten cents' worth of meat ter make hamburg steak out uv."

EXPRESSIVE REPLY.

Freddie—Your father told me that I was the black sheep of the family.
Gertrude—What did you say?
Freddie—Bah!

A Test of Friendship.

Just before Artemus Ward's death Robertson poured out some medicine and offered it to the sick man, who said: "My dear Tom, I won't take any more of that horrible stuff."

Robertson urged him to swallow the mixture, saying: "Do, now—there's a dear fellow—for my sake. You know I would do anything for you."

"Would you?" said Ward, feebly, grasping his friend's hand for the last time.

"I would indeed," said Robertson.

"Then you take it!"

Ward passed away a few hours afterward.—Recollections of the Bancrofts.

Help for the Artists.

The comic supplements are filled these days with pictures representing some of the foolish questions that people ask. Here is a suggestion for one:

A man was walking hastily through the rain yesterday afternoon, his umbrella raised and his head bent. An acquaintance, standing in a doorway, hailed him:

"Say," he shouted, "are you going to use that umbrella? If you're not, lend it to me!"

Doesn't that capture the icing?