The VANISHING FLEETS

BY ROBERT W. 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 the 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 now ter ously 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 Timmes. The story now goes back to a time many months before the war breaks out, and Inventor Roberts visits the president and, after telling of and exhibiting a metal production. This overcomes friction, is electrified and is to be applied to vessels to increase speed to over 50 miles an hour. A fifty foot model boat of the new mysterious discovery is built on the coast of Florida. Dr. Roberts' first attempt to electrify plates proves a failure.

CHAPTER XV.—Continued.

"It's all right this time," the inventor assured him. "Wild current and wet floor before, badly insulated handle too. All fixed up now. Won't be any accident this time," and so on, making the final inspection of his apparatus as he talked. Norma reviewed her father's work, to be certain that all was well, and then at a nod from him took her station at the other motor which had not been used hitherto. There was a simultaneous movement on their part, and, as if suddenly endowed with a soul, the lights once more flashed here and there, glaring at them with sinister contempt—Frankenstein under control!

The admiral, fascinated by the mystery of science, stared at the white haired old man who was calmly watching his play of colors, and then at the girl who, with equal self-possession and coolness manipulated the strange currents beneath her hands. They were animated as by one mind, throwing their levers and switches to and fro at identically the same moment without looking at each other, and the click of the closing currents came in unison. Not until then did they step back from their stations and with a quick change what seemed to the admiral mutual glances of congratulation.

"That assistant of mine is a wonder!" was all the old man said as he came over, dragged a stool up beside that on which the officer sat, and gleefully rubbed his hands together. "She thinks more clearly than I do."

Brockton, who had been tense as a violin string and had almost forgotten to breathe, drew a long breath and loosed at the girl, who had been leaning against the wall as though exhausted, but was now watching the slowly cooling metal. He would have asked questions; but the inventor turned to him and with an air of triumph said:

"I wish you would invite all those who were here when we made the last test. Then you will have the explanation unless I am again mistaken."

The admiral obeyed, and even as the cooling sprays were sifting over the great pieces of metal they came trooping in from the work which they had reared. There were men from the draughting rooms with pencils behind their ears, engineers from the outside with shirt sleeves rolled up and forgotten diagrams under their arms, and one man came from the laboratory absentmindedly carrying a test tube, balancing it so that he might spill none of the liquid which it contained. Norma was now resting calmly against one of the huge dead machines.

In a tone or unusual gravity Roberts addressed them. "Boys," he began—they were all boys to him—"you have witnessed the accidental discovery, I believe, of the most powerful force the world has ever known. You have been fortunate. In more than 70 years of life I, who have spent the time in strange studies and stranger work, have had no privilege so great. You have all been kind to my daughter and to me, and I am glad you are here now." He paused for a moment, seeing with introspective eyes all the great events of his life. Then, recalling himself from this review, he turned to Jenkins as a kindred spirit, and to a boyish officer who stood near, at hand.

"You two," he said, indicating them with his hand, "may have the honor of picking up those plates."

There was an instant of breathless astonishment. Jenkins was the first to recover, and unheedingly walked forward. The younger man drew back as though he had received an order from an insane man consigning him to inglorious death. The voice of the admiral put an end to the wait.

"Go ahead!" he said quietly. "Those plates may weigh tons; but if Dr. Roberts tells you to pick them up, you go and try it."

With the absolute precision of training, the officer's heels came together and his hand to his cap in quick salute. He strode to the plates, and stood opposite Jenkins, while the spectators craned forward, speculating as to what freak of madness was to be demonstrated. Jenkins, grave and unquestioning, looked across at his companion, nodded to him, and together they stooped and caught a handhold. Together they gathered their muscles as if for some prodigious exercise of strength, and simultaneously strained upward.

To the amazement of those within the room the great masses of metal came up with such ease that they were lifted breast high without perceptible effort.

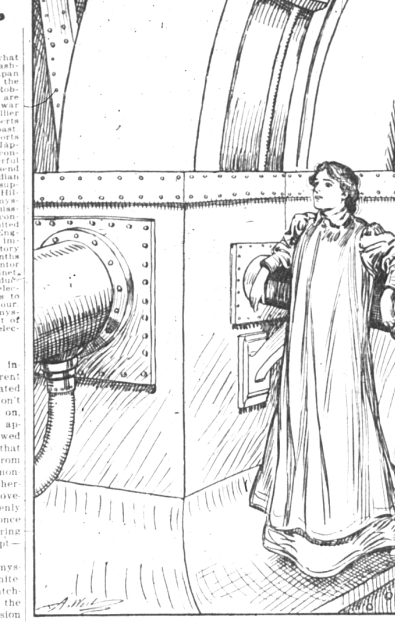
"Higher, higher!" called the old inventor, springing toward them and gesturing with his hands. The plates rose until they were held with finger tips, and breathless suspense enchained the spectators.

"Now stand from under! Let go of them! Let go of them!" yelled Roberts, dancing up and down in excitement, but the men still held on as if rendered powerless by astonishment.

"Stand from under!" commanded the admiral, and discipline again mastering them they obeyed, springing back in the apprehension that the two immense plates might by some necromancy come crashing down and dissipear through the floor. With something almost like a sob, so great had been his mental strain, Jenkins staggered backward. The admiral gave a gasp and with one hand poised in the air stood like a statue. A hammer fell from the hand of one of the engineers standing behind, and the man who had been tightly clutching the test tube tipped his fingers and let it crash to the floor. In this tinkling sound of broken glass on cement, another gave a sharp ejaculation and took an involuntary step forward.

They had witnessed the first positive exhibition of true levitation, a solid body suspended in the air without support. They had seen in times past, with complacency, knowing that it was dependent upon artificial illusion, the conjurer's trick, mystifying to the outward sense but readily explainable in the light of investigation, but here before them, beyond the range of charlatanry, a perversion of all known physical laws, there hung motionless in the air, dependent upon itself for its flotation, a great mass of metal that but a short time before would have been beyond the power of their combined strength to lift.

And standing placidly beneath it, enjoying their surprise and supremely triumphant, stood a quiet little old man smiling up at his daughter, whose hand he was holding.



Norma Was Now Resting Calmly Against One of the Huge Dead Machines

CHAPTER XVI.

An Invincible Arm.

The officers, still doubting their senses, stood before this uncanny manifestation like men in a world of unreality. From without, for some unaccountable reason, the varied clamor of industry had subsided to silence, and the soldiers' song was finished. Even the yellow light of the afternoon which filtered through the window panes appeared strange, spectral, and unearthly. In the shadow of that massive thing which hovered above them, Nature seemed bent on the revocation of her laws, and for an instant their senses reeled in the struggle for comprehension.

"Old Bill" Roberts broke the spell. He reached up and touched the tip of a finger to the mass and moved it gently toward them with no more exertion than would be necessary to push a toy balloon. There was no levity in him when he addressed them, but rather the simple grandeur of one who has wrested from Nature one of her greatest powers, and was now preparing to harness it for all time, a slave to peace, progress and the welfare of his fellows.

"My friends," he said, "by the discovery of an alloy of metal and metalloids we have created a new substance, which when an electrical current of certain potentiality is passed through it becomes intensely radioactive, infinitely more so than radium. Through these machines," and here he waved his hand at the twin apparatus in the rear, "my daughter and I have produced electrical manifestations hitherto unsuspected and unknown. The metal itself, while radioactive to a certain degree, does not become intensely so without the application of the excitant current. He pulled the plate down till it rested on the floor, and stood upon it, while they still awed, waited for his further exposition.

"This morning, by an accidental contact which lasted until the plate had torn itself loose and broken the current, I saw to the full the possibilities it contained. The impact of the emanations or radioactive corpuscles against the sheet of insulation and lastly of the bottom drove it through the floor and into the ground, because the corpuscles which flew off in the other direction were unimpeded, free and harmless. Had the excitant current been maintained, the plate would have buried itself indefinitely toward the center of the earth."

The officers gave a gasp of something almost approaching incredulity, with the exception of Jenkins, who nodded his head and excitedly rubbed his hands.

Roberts picked up a scrap at his feet and held it toward them. "For years I experimented upon and perfected this," he said. "It is an insulation which will pass no current of electricity, and which no known heat can destroy. Today by accident I learned that it was also an impervious screen to radioactive emanations. In the second experiment I so charged the alloy in my lower plate that it merely offsets gravitation and put my sheet of insular substance between; and there we have levitation. Those two plates are working against each other with nearly equal force, the balance being disturbed only in ratio to gravitation.

"The solution of the flying machine!" Jenkins shouted excitedly, and Roberts, appreciating the engineer's quick understanding, smiled and responded:

"Yes, just that."

"But what will furnish its propulsion?" asked Jenkins, whose mind was traveling over the possibilities of rapid flight. The others evinced their interest by craning forward.

"It will furnish its own," the scientist answered, because by the use of the apparatus behind it we can excite its radioactivity to any degree that might be safe. More plainly, the moment the current excites and therefore increases the power of the lower plate, a lifting energy could be exerted which would destroy the equilibrium of levitation and leave the plates into the air with a force corresponding to the strength or character of the current. Or, on the other hand, if the upper plate was similarly excited, thus liberating its corpuscles, the plate would be driven toward the earth."

The admiral, who had been slowly following this dissertation, seemed suddenly to have grasped its entire meaning, and thrust himself out from the group with both hands extended and gesticulating rapidly. "Then all you have to do," he said, "is to put on sufficient speed to your airship a freeboard made of this metal, capable of excitation and insulated on its inner surface, and you would thereby be able to drive your craft in either direction at any speed you might wish."

"That's it exactly," answered Roberts and Jenkins in unison. The inventor continued:

"I can beat a freehand, however, because I shall apply my electrical current in such a way as to send all the corpuscles of radioactive matter in any direction I may choose. I could with this alone, even create masses of unknown power. I can built a craft in sections whose magnets and radio active surfaces will alternate.

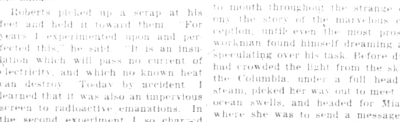
He was growing excited as the magnitude of the scope of his discovery dawned upon his imagination. Norma calmed him, but the admiral, infected with these visions, forgot the strain and enthusiastically expatiated to his companions. To him the skies were already filled with flying ships that were to swoop down over an enemy, drop terrific bombs of high explosives, and then sweep the seas. But future events, he was to learn, cannot be predicted with certainty.

"Well, well!" he said, briskly. "What next?"

"Your engineers must assist me in drawing plans. We shall want great quantities of new material and electrical equipment, and must have them soon, because when we get well under way we should be able to create two or three of these radioplanes each day.

"The great plates were locked in, and the group repaired to one of the offices where Roberts, the inventor, elaborated his scheme of control, the mechanical means of which were to be worked out and drawings made by the engineers. And as they toiled over their plans, there spread from mouth to mouth throughout the strange outside world the story of the Matchless exploit, until even the most prosaic workman found himself dreaming and speculating over his task. Before dusk had crowded the light from the skies, the Columbia, under a full head of steam, pitched her way out to meet the ocean swells, and headed for Miami, where she was to send a message to Washington, calling for strangely assorted supplies and notifying the anxious naval men that the dry dock would not be needed.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



NO MUSIC IN THE JAPANESE

As a People They Are Not Moved by Melodious Sounds.

There is no music in Japan except that made by the birds, the wind, the running streams and the roaring waterfalls, says a writer in the Milwaukee Sentinel. The people have no music in them, they do not sing or even whistle, or play any musical instrument worthy of the name. They are not moved by the "concord of sweet sounds." They have a few rude instruments, but the sounds they give forth are harsh, inharmonious and altogether unmusical. There is a dinner band at the Grand hotel, Yokohama, and there was a brass band at the imperial garden party, the only bands I have heard in all Japan. Even at the geisha dances, the most popular in Japan, the music is primitive and discordant. And the dances are worse than the music. It is not in any sense dancing as we know it, it is simply a series of posturings, accompanied by the flirting fans, flags, or handkerchiefs, but lacking the motion and inspiration that thrills and fascinates in the merry mazes of the cotillion and the waltz. The religious dances are slow, dignified and impressive, but they have none of the life and intoxication that gives interest and charm to the participant or beholder.

Could Find the Way.

The lecturer was in an unfashionable, cold-water part, and the visitor from afar had much difficulty in finding it. "Is the man in the box office he made complaint. "You have no direction painted up to point the way. At the exit of this villainous street is a notice, 'To the Hapitat Chapel,' but never a word as to your theater." The man at the pay box weighed his words. "The chapel-goers may need directing; our patrons find the way easily enough." There may or may not be a moral to the tale.

Ins and Outs.

"What's that noise?" asked the visitor in the apartment house.

"Probably some one in the dentist's apartment on the floor below getting a tooth out."

"But this seemed to come from the floor above."

"Ah! then it's probably the Popleys' baby getting a tooth in."

BOREAS PLAYED WITH THE SNOW

BLIZZARD SWEPT FROM OCEAN TO OCEAN, MAKING TIE UP GENERAL.

JUMPED ABOUT LIVELY

Disasters in Other Countries That Caused Death and Destruction Are Briefly Noted.

The storm which began Sunday seems to have spotted with the whole country, causing great trouble to steam and electric roads, in some cases stopping traffic almost entirely. It reached the Atlantic Tuesday and the tail of it was frisking over the Mississippi, while width-wise it sprawled from the gulf to the great lakes. It was central over Pennsylvania, and caused all kinds of trouble in Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, eastern Missouri, northern Kentucky, Ohio and the eastern states.

The storm was out seeing something of the country, too. Sunday night it came with bag and baggage to Cairo, but only stopped long enough to rifle the inhabitants, then made a bee-line for Detroit, but before it got far changed and struck south to New Orleans, where it shed its snowy robe and came down in wet bathing togs After furnishing a liberal supply during Monday, it headed back north again.

From the whole section of the state comprised in that district north and east of a line drawn from Battle Creek to Bay City came reports of a continued heavy fall of snow, much drift and consequent delay of traffic Trains are away off the schedules the Flushing district faring the worst The Interurban lines are keeping the way open by constant and vigorous use of snow plows, but the service is irregular. In the western part of the state does not appear to be getting much snow, except in the extreme north section, around Traverse City Jackson reported that freight trains were not moving.

Three Hundred Perished.

Roasted alive, crushed, mangled to death with none to help were the fates meted out Sunday night to 300 or more members of the best families of Acapulco, 233 miles southwest of the city of Mexico, when fire broke out in the midst of a performance in the Principal theater given in honor of Gov. Damian Flores, of the state of Guerrero, of which Acapulco is the capital and chief city.

Nothing more terrible ever happened in Mexico, and the disaster ranks in horror with the worst theater fire in history.

Earthquake Takes Thirty.

A number of houses and government buildings in Sivas, the capital of a vilayet of the same name in Asiatic Turkey, collapsed Tuesday as the result of an earthquake. The loss of life has not been ascertained, but reports say that 30 persons have been killed and others injured. Many of the inhabitants are without shelter.

Sivas, sometimes spelt Seevas, has a population of about 6000 families.

Four Killed, Twenty Hurt.

Illinois Central train No. 995, south bound from St. Louis to New Orleans was wrecked six miles east of Mur freesboro, Ill., Tuesday. Four persons were killed and 20 injured.

The accident was caused by a broken rail. The engine and two first cars passed safely over, but the next four were overturned.

The Peaceful Japs.

"Japan will not allow a purely local question, such as the status of Japanese residents in California to disturb the feeling of friendship toward the United States which has been growing ever since Perry's expedition half a century ago." Baron Kozu Takahira Japanese ambassador to the United States, declared upon his return to Japan. Japanese hostility toward the anti-race troubles on the Pacific coast Japan will consent to any action the United States government may take, he continued the baron. She has never in any way, through me or any other official representative, protested to the United States government. I must not be forgotten that when discussions was shown in this country in the matter of Japanese immigration, Japan herself took steps to effect immigration to the minimum figure.

The Japanese are educated to patriotism. They are proud of their country, but they are not forgetful of the rights of other nations."

Knocks Knox.

The house of representatives, by a vote of 179 to 122 rejected the senate bill removing the constitutional bar to Senator Knox serving as secretary of state. The action by the house does not make the confirmation final. The senate bill is to reduce the salary of the secretary of state to $8,000. There is a bill still pending in the house to remove the barrier against Knox entering the cabinet, but its phraseology differs from the senate bill. It was thought that a settlement of the matter could be hastened by the house taking favorable action on the bill passed by the senate. The house bill is meeting with the objection of some representatives.

The effort of Borough President Bird S. Coler, of Brooklyn, to get the evidence of President Roosevelt orally or by deposition in his libel suit against a Brooklyn newspaper has been futile. Judge Lacombe of New York refused to the request with a curt telegram to the effect that the president of the United States does not testify in court nor give evidence by deposition."

The New York, New Haven & Hartford railway threatens to quit Massachusetts declaring it is impossible to obey all the laws affecting them and survive.

Wisconsin university was praised by Ambassador Bryce, of England, speaking in Milwaukee, as the most progressive in the union. He said the importance of applying science to farming had been brought home to the rural population through the university. Bryce is so bad as President Eliot, of Harvard who, forgetting all about the university of Michigan, called Wisconsin the leading state university.

Delegates from 12 towns on Lake Michigan, in Wisconsin, Illinois and Indiana, met in Chicago and decided to take steps to prevent the dumping of sewage into the lake.

"BOBBY" WAS SO NERVOUS.

He Was Not to Be Agitated, Even by "Percy, Dear."

It was moving day for the summer colony along the North shore of Massachusetts. On the morning train from Rockport, bearing many well-known Bostonians to their town houses for the winter, rode a stormy old gentleman from the west. At Pride's crossing a family of three—father, mother and daughter—boarded the train, bearing respectively the family treasures: One pet poodle, one gray cat in a blue blanket, and one traveling clock in a much worn leather case. The party had no sooner found seats across from the westerner, than it became apparent that the excitement of boarding the train had caused a commotion among the pets. The cat was chided for talking aloud. "Calm yourself, Bobby," said his mistress. "Be yourself once more—we are now on our way home." Whereupon Bobby grew calm.

The poodle became restless in the company of his master on a seat in front and signified his yearning for Bobby's company by climbing up the back of the seat and casting goo goo eyes at the Tabby. The sympathetic mistress understood at once and said:

"You may come over here and sit with us, Percy, dear, on one condition —you must not agitate Bobby."

This was too much for the stormy westerner. With a loud snort he reared up, pawed his hand-bag from the rack above his head, and pranced into a coach ahead.

$33.00 PERSONALLY CONDUCTED EXCURSIONS.

Colonists' one-way tickets Chicago to the Pacific coast, via the Chicago, Union Pacific and Northwestern Line, are on sale daily during March and April at the rate of $33.00. Correspondingly low rates from all points. Double berth in tourist sleeping car only $7.00, through without change to San Francisco, Los Angeles and Portland. No extra charge on our personally conducted tours. Write for itinerary and full particulars to S. A. Hutchison, Manager Tourist Department, 212 Clark Street, Chicago, Ill.

Remarkable Thermometer.

Some curious thermometers were made Otto de Guericke, burgomaster of Magdeburg, made one which was 20 feet long and gorgeous with blue paint and gilt stars. It consisted of a large globe fastened to a tube, both of copper. The tube was bent upon itself to form a very narrow U, in which was placed the requisite amount of alcohol. One arm of the U was shorter than the other and open at the top. On the liquid was a float, to which was attached a cord passing over a pulley. At the other end of this cord was hung a gilt angel, its finger pointing to a scale on which the degrees were painted.

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The Doctor—Your wife is threatened with pneumonia, and she'll die if she attends that party.

The Hubby—Then I shall not advise her either way. She'll die if she has to miss it.

The best part of all fortitude is patience, which lies at the root of all pleasures as well as all powers. Hope herself ceases to be happiness when impatience accompanies her.—Ruskin.

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That is LAXATIVE BROMO QUININE. Look for the signature of E. W. GROVE. Used the World over to Cure a Cold in One Day. 25c.

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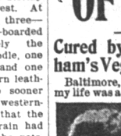
Baltimore, Md. — "For four years my life was a misery to me. I suffered from irregularities, terrible dragging sensations, extreme nervousness, and that all gone feeling in my stomach. I had given up hope of ever being well when I began to take Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. Then I felt as though a new life had been given me, and I am recommending it to all my friends."—Mrs. W. S. Evans, 1016 Lansdowne St., Baltimore, Md.



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If you are suffering from any of these ailments, don't give up hope until you have given Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound a trial.

If you would like special advice write to Mrs. Pinkham, Lynn, Mass., for it. She has guided thousands to health, free of charge.

HEADING OFF THE CALLER.

Plan for Getting Rid of Life Insurance Agents Not Patented.

The bell rang three times, and the man at the desk hastily reached for a flannel bandage. This he put round his neck. Then he arranged a sling, in which he put one arm, disarranged his hair, drew down the corners of his mouth, got out of his chair, and painfully limped toward the door.

"Mr. Jones?" inquired the well-dressed caller, who opened it at that moment.

The man with the bandage half suppressed a groan.

"Yes, that's my name. What can I do for you?"

"You appear to be suffering," said the intelligent caller.

"Suffering!" returned the other. "Do you think I'm doing this for fun? But what is your business, sir?"

"Er—pardon me," stammered the caller, "I think I'll drop in some other time—eh?"

"It's some trouble," soliloquized the man with the bandage, as he removed the paraphernalia and returned to his desk. "But I really think the quickest way to get rid of these life insurance agents. That man will never trouble me again."—London Tit-Bits.

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