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 Bevins of the United States. The Dreadnaught, biggest of Britain's warships, is discovered off an impassable point in the Thames. The story now goes back to a time many months before the war broke out, and Inventor Roberts visits the president and cabinet, telling of and exhibiting 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. The Japanese fleet, believing Nippon supreme, suddenly discerns the radioplane fleet. 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 a mountain lake in the United States to await peace. The British fleet accepts American hospitality and is conveyed to the United States by the wingless terrors. To show the kaiser their wonderful invention, that ruler is taken on a flying trip—his first visit to America—thus accounting for his mysterious disappearance from Berlin. The radioplane breaks down.

CHAPTER XXI.—Continued.

It was noon before the workers saw him again. They came out of the dark hull for a cold luncheon, and were joined by the emperor, who sat silently through the meal. Again they resumed work, and this time it was dusk when they emerged. There before them was a camp fire, and studiously broiling trout, caught with and prepared by his own hands, was the kaiser. On huge pieces of birch bark before the coals he had spread his catch, and with a boy's jubilation laughed at their surprise. His fatalistic philosophy had conquered, and the sovereign had become a democrat in truth. As a boy he recounted his adventures of the day, and as a tired boy he went to rest. The next day was given up to the rifle, and hunting such as he had never dreamed of having was before him. Indeed, he had turned camp hunter, and with success. So ended the second day, and so passed many others.

And each day brought him nearer to those round him, each night brought him better rest, and every hour added to the broadening of his serenity. He was now merely a man among men, playing his part in his own way, enjoying it, and finding the worries of empire dropping away in this spot where all his crown of rulership availed him nothing. What was the need to fret when his hands were tied? Why not dismiss it all from his mind? The great federation would pass on and on long after his bones had gone to dust. Here in these Canadian woods, which he had never dared hope to invade, was life such as he had dreamed of, freedom such as he had never known, and absence of all formality. Here were men who were learning to love him for himself, and for whom he was forming an affection that would last him to the end.

Strange as it seemed, the cloud which had disturbed him on the night of the accident had taken another form. Then it had been because he was to be detained for an indefinite time. Now it was because the detention was to be so short, and he haw with regret that the time for his departure was nearly at hand. He foresaw the reluctance with which he would enter that craft of the air and hear its metal door close him in for homeward flight, but as a prison door shutting him out forever from the forests and hills, the pools and brooks, which he had learned to love. Only now and then, as he tramped beside some stream or followed some game trail cut through the fallen leaves by countless caribou, he would smile ironically at the amazement and alarm which must have been caused by his absence, not only in his own empire, but in the United States where were those who had caused his disappearance.

And in both surmises he was correct; but the distress in the American republic was perhaps the most keen. Not since the beginning of hostilities had the president and his associates suffered such grave apprehensions as when it became known to a certainty that Brockton's endeavor had met with accident or disaster.

On the first day when the expedition failed to return from its voyage of conciliation no undue alarm was occasioned, it being considered entirely possible that it had been compelled to return directly to the key to avoid observation. Another 24 hours of silence caused comment; but again it was regarded as tenable that a barrier in the first quest had required a second trip. The third day passed with anxious expectations but no news. The fourth, however, was a memorable one; for then it became known to the entire civilized world that the heads of a nation had been abducted, and the situation in Washington grew almost unbearable.

In response to an urgent message to the plant, "Old Bill" Roberts, Norma, and Bevins appeared on the fifth night, utilizing the new radioplane for their visit. The gravity of the consultation which followed was intense; but the faith of the inventor in his work afforded some measure of relief.

He Had Turned Camp Hunter.

"It would be almost impossible," he asserted, "for anything worse to befall them than delay. They may have been cast away in the air or on the land by an accident to their steering gear, which would require flight in straight lines. Nothing but a blow such as was sustained by Seventeen in battle could even temporarily stop both dynamos; hence it is improbable that they lost their lives."

Step by step he reasoned out the course which would be pursued, and at last gave it as his opinion that the Norma had come to ground in Canadian woods. He suggested searching expeditions, even though it entailed the exposure of the secret, the abandonment of the Oriental campaign, and the opportunity to establish permanent peace. The president alone stood steadfast for the latter hope, and was quick to offer a new plan. It was that the people of Great Britain themselves should have a conclusive and final demonstration, and, yielding to his arguments, it was agreed upon.

The project was no less daring than those which had been executed before. The Dreadnought was to be deposited in the Thames under cover of darkness, and in an apparently impossible position, where the people of London might look upon it as an object lesson. Immediately afterwards the king and his most powerful officials were to be shown the working of the radioplane, that they might be in a position to advance measures for peace and disarmament, fortifying their arguments by their own observations. The utmost secrecy was to be maintained, because in the meantime the Chinese armada might have sailed. In case it had not, the secret would be given out and search begun actively for the missing Norma and her distinguished passengers; but in any event British support would have been assured.

Bevins, foreseeing the difficulty of his task, asked and obtained permission to invite the British admiral to accompany him, the wisdom of which was evidenced. Favored by the difference in time, the speedy Roberts on that very night crossed the Atlantic and deposited letters to secret service agents in London, instructing them to obtain positive knowledge of where the king might be found the following evening. On her return she conveyed Fields and the Dreadnought to the key, preparatory to the momentous journey.

That flight which was again to disturb the thrones of Europe was accomplished without incident, but not without difficulty. The Roberts swooped down from the heights of air, untenanted save by her, to find spread between the earth and sky a blanket of fog, thick and impenetrable. Into it she slowly dropped, groping this way and that over the unsuspecting city, whose sounds came up to her but gave no hint as to locality. Aimlessly she wandered here and there in the murk, taking desperate chances in her quest. Suddenly something loomed directly below the open port, from which Bevins was leaning and peering down, and only a quick change of course avoided a collision. Fields joined him, and identified the dome of Saint Paul's. It was a narrow escape, but enabled them to set their course and gain the deserted greens of Saint James' Park, where Bevins was lowered by ropes to the earth.

He stood for a moment while the bulk of the radioplane and the Dreadnought which she was carrying rose into the air and disappeared from view. He felt alone in an unfriendly city, but set his teeth and stumbled out to a street, where he enlisted the services of a constable and a hansom, and was conveyed to the Cecil, whose lighted doors stared out upon the fog washed courtyard leading from the Strand. His message of the previous night had met with instant response, and no one would have suspected that the two men who lounged in the hotel entrance in seeming idle conversation, smoking and watching passersby, were important agents in the hands of fate. As nonchalantly as they had met they parted, one returning within doors, and the other sauntering back to the waiting hansom which was to convey the admiral to the hippodrome and a daring audience with the king.

The fog deadened bells of the ancient city marked only an hour's time before he had emerged and returned to the park entrance, where the wondering driver was dismissed, shaking his head and marveling at the idiosyncrasies of the Americans, who seemed never to have a reasonable destination. Once more the grim old admiral limped through the paths to his rendezvous and gave the whistled signal to his waiting craft, which during his absence had released its burden near Westminster bridge and above Blackfriars, where her position would be both accessible and impressive to the people on the following morning.

Up into the air for a short distance, then down again in hovering silence, the Roberts went, and landed her commander in the garden behind Buckingham. The fog was no longer an enemy; for now she remained motionless only a few feet above the roof which had sheltered so many kings and queens. This nearness aided the quick visit of the British officer to his sovereign when called, and prevented delay when the monarch and his companions appeared for their journey. The fog had become an ally.

Those who sit upon England's throne may never show surprise—so runs tradition—but on this night an expression of astonishment burst from one of her sovereigns as he entered the yawning portal of the strange machine. Up to that moment neither he nor his companions had entertained a belief that the American engine of destruction could be other than some powerful, speedy, and invincible submarine. Now in the cloak of fog and darkness, within sound of the roar of traffic past his palace gates, in the midst of his own garden, he found a formidable monster with undreamed of might.

With his companions he was ushered through a shadowy compartment without hearing the stealthy closing of the port through which he came. Nor was he aware as he entered the brilliantly lighted drawing room amidships, that already he had been lifted into the light of stars and was flying through space over the Atlantic ocean at a speed of 600 miles an hour. It was incomprehensible that before his first questions had been answered the ribbon of the channel had been passed and Ireland had lost itself in the eastern horizon. Gravely interested and steadily courteous, he inspected the radioplane under the guidance of the inventor and his daughter, who made known to him its capabilities, and it was his own suggestion that the trip might be extended to the Chesapeake, where the fleet of the Lion was moored. For once the first lord of the admiralty showed eagerness, and was visibly pleased when Bevins said there could be no objection to the king's desire.

Between the inventor and the king, as they sped westward, there was established a friendship. Gruff and querulous "Old Bill" Roberts, democratic to the core, and respecting men only for their real worth, found in this quiet, self-contained guest one whom he could admire. And to the monarch the scientist was the most interesting man he had ever met, considering that his past achievements had gained world-wide fame, to be capped with the surprising creation of this aerial masterpiece. From time to time he glanced at the stately American girl, who sat silently beside the prime minister. He found himself puzzled by the brooding wistfulness of her eyes and speculating as to what yearning had mirrored its sadness in their depths.

Not until Bevins had recounted the tale of the western battle did the king realize that on occasion the supple hands of the girl might become things of steel, and that within her was a soul of flame. She begged permission to retire before the admiral had fairly begun his story, and was not there to hear that stern old veteran of the seas conclude with the trenchant statement: "It was not I, your majesty, who won the battle that day; it was that slip of a girl who led the cohorts of the Eagle down upon them. It was she who clasped the flag in her arms when the battle was done."

The men in the room leaned forward in silence when Bevins ended. They had been carried away into the realm of imagination to picture the stirring clash of mighty arms and valorous deeds. Before anyone could speak an officer appeared at the door.

"I have to report that we are above the Chesapeake, sir," he said to his superior.

It was the breaking of reverie, the sharp call from the past to the present, and the king rose expectantly. The lights of the Roberts flashed out and left them in darkness. The ports below opened, and they grouped themselves round them, with night glasses tendered by their host.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

KEEP THE ROOSTERS MUZZLED

Simple Contrivance That Means Much to Light Sleepers.

They were like fairy helmets—little wire helmets no bigger than a walnut.

"They are rooster muzzles," said the city farmer, as he led the way past the pea beds on the window sills, the potato field on the back porch and the flourishing mushroom crop under the outhouse.

"Even so. Muzzles, not to prevent roosters from biting—for even the gamest fowl has never been known to snap—but to prevent them from crowing. See here."

They had reached the tiny chicken run. The city farmer caught a rooster and gently slipped a muzzle over its fierce head.

"Now," said he, "it can't crow. It can't wake the neighbors with its crows at daybreak. Hence, thanks to this muzzle, it is at last possible to keep chickens in the most crowded city quarters.

"Harrison Weir invented the rooster muzzle. A rooster, to crow, you see, stands erect, flaps his wings, throws back his head and opens his beak wide. If he can't open his beak no crow can come from his little red throat."

Settled the Whole Question.

Rev. William Carter discussed at a dinner in New York his successful experiment of conducting services in the Belasco theater. "One of my theater auditors," he said, "was a Scot from Peebles. This Scot told me that the sight of a clergyman in a theater reminded him of an experience he once had in London. He went to a melodrama at Drury Lane. A man in front of him looked familiar. To his surprise he recognized in this man his minister at Peebles. He leaned forward and laid his hand on the minister's black coat. 'Oh, Dr. Saunders McIntosh,' he whispered, 'what wad the people in the auld kirk say if I tell't them I saw ye here?' 'Deed, they wadna believe ye,' Dr. Saunders answered quickly, 'and ye needna tell them.'"

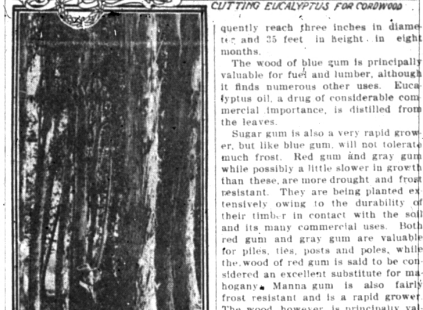
Give Mother Earth a Rest.

In India there are certain days when it is unlawful to plow. Mother Earth is supposed to sleep six days in every month, and on such days she refuses to be disturbed in her slumber.

HOPE in the EUCALYPTUS

GOVERNMENT TO TRY PLANTING TREE IN SOUTHERN TEXAS

CUTTING EUCALYPTUS FOR CORDWOOD



MADEAU GROVE OF EUCALYPTUS PLANTED FROM SEEDLINGS

Plans are being made to have a special study undertaken by a representative of the United States forest service in the near future to determine the feasibility of the culture of the Eucalyptus tree in the lower Rio Grande valley and along the gulf coast of Texas.

The importance of Eucalyptus culture from a commercial standpoint in California has within the past few months aroused general interest throughout the country concerning these rapid growing trees and the district office of the forest service at Albuquerque receives almost daily inquiries as to the feasibility of planting Eucalypts in the southwest, particularly in the state of Texas.

Eucalypts are native to the coast region of Australia and Tasmania, where at least 150 distinct species are recognized. They were introduced into California about 1830 and first planted near San Francisco for ornamental purposes. The extremely rapid growth of certain species, their value for fuel, lumber and special products have resulted in the undertaking of extensive investigations concerning the habits of these trees and their commercial uses and possibilities. Fully 100 species have been introduced into the United States.

Among the most important species at present planted in this country are blue gum, sugar gum, gray gum, red gum and manna gum.

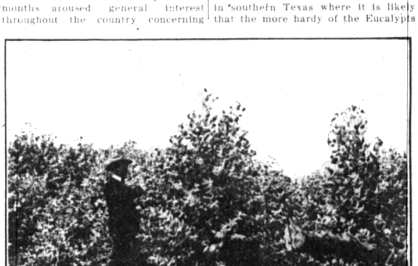
Blue gum is one of the largest and most rapid growing trees in the world. In California under favorable conditions trees have attained a height of 175 feet and a diameter of five feet in 25 years, while in exceptional instances individual trees have reached a height of 425 feet and a diameter of three feet in nine years. Sprouts from the stumps of Eucalyptus trees frequently reach three inches in diameter and 35 feet in height in eight months.

The wood of blue gum is principally valuable for fuel and lumber, although it finds numerous other uses. Eucalyptus oil, a drug of considerable commercial importance, is distilled from the leaves.

Sugar gum is also a very rapid grower, but like blue gum, will not tolerate much frost. Red gum and gray gum while possibly a little slower in growth than these, are more drought and frost resistant. They are being planted extensively owing to the durability of their timber in contact with the soil and its many commercial uses. Both red gum and gray gum are valuable for piles, ties, posts and poles, while the wood of red gum is said to be considered an excellent substitute for mahogany. Manna gum is also fairly frost resistant and is a rapid grower. The wood, however, is principally valuable for fuel.

The Eucalypts are adapted to a subtropical climate, and the limits within which they may be planted for commercial purposes in this country may be broadly defined as that bounded by the frost lines. They are, therefore, adapted for planting in the warmer portions of California and in parts of southern Arizona and Texas. It is not likely that they can be grown with any degree of success in New Mexico. Few of the Eucalypts can survive a temperature lower than 20 degrees Fahrenheit, and none of them a temperature less than 12 degrees Fahrenheit. Blue gum and sugar gum may be planted where the temperature does not fall below 26 and 28 degrees Fahrenheit, respectively, while red gum has been known to stand a drop to 12 degrees Fahrenheit.

There is considerable area, however, in southern Texas where it is likely that the more hardy of the Eucalypts can be successfully planted. A case has been reported where blue gum has been successfully grown to a height of 35 feet in Cameron county, Texas, near the gulf, but it is probable that red gum and gray gum will give the best success in this region under average conditions.



Eucalyptus Sprouts, Two Months Old, Height Eight Feet.

Why Louis Didn't Come.

The attention of the principal of one of the New York schools was called to the fact that a certain pupil in one of the lower grades was keeping back the entire class by his frequent absences and more than frequent tardiness. The teacher had tried in vain to solve the problem before appealing to the principal. The latter sent for the mother of the child and talked with her earnestly about the matter. For a time matters went better, and then little Louis failed to appear one morning. Two days passed and no word was received from his parents. On the third the principal received this astonishing communication:

"Dear Teecher, excuce Louie been absent and tardy, he is ded.

"Mrs. B."

"The plot thickens," said the old lady, as she sowed grass seed for the third time.—Yale Record.

Something Missing.

The new arrival from Kentucky had succeeded in getting through the pearly gates. He had donned his halo, his harp was in readiness, and his celestial robe hung loosely from his broad shoulders. Still he seemed ill at ease. At intervals he would furtively fumble at the back of his flowing garment and look puzzled.

"Anything wrong, my friend?" asked the kindly Peter, noticing the actions of the new arrival.

"I was just feeling for the hip pocket," sighed the shade from Kentucky.

Let Sleeping Dogs Lie.

Professor—I think from the utensils about him that this mummy must have been an Egyptian plumber.

Student—It would be interesting to bring him back to life.

Professor—But too risky. Who's going to pay him for his time?

The Light of the House.

Mr. Rich—I suppose you find that a baby brightens up the house?

Mr. Benedict—Yes; we burn nightly twice the gas we used to.

Took Lives of Whole Family.

A terrible domestic tragedy occurred recently at Johannisthal, just outside Berlin. A locksmith named Musslick, a steady and industrious man, had been brought to the verge of bankruptcy in consequence of continued bad trade. In addition to this both he and his wife were delicate, the latter being ill in bed, while their two children were down with measles. This combination of misfortunes so preyed upon Musslick's mind that he determined to make an end of everything. His apprentices arrived in the morning as usual, but as their master did not appear for some time the door of his bedroom was burst open, revealing a terible spectacle. On one bed lay Musslick with a bullet through his heart, and his little son of three with his throat cut. On the other bed were the bodies of the wife, aged 30, and the daughter, aged eight. The pulse arteries of both had been severed, and they bled to death.

Whiskers may conceal a receding chin, but there is no help for a flattened brow.

HARDSHIPS OF ARMY LIFE.

Left Thousands of Veterans with Kidney Trouble.

The experience of David W. Martin, a retired merchant of Bolivar, Mo., is just like those of thousands of others. Mr. Martin says: "I think I have had kidney disease ever since the war. During an engagement my horse fell on me, straining my back and injuring the kidneys. I have been told I had a floating kidney. I had intense pain in the back, headaches and dizzy spells, and the action of the bladder were irregular. About three years ago I tried Doan's Kidney Pills and, inside of a comparatively short time was entirely rid of kidney trouble."

Sold by all dealers. 50 cents a box. Foster-Milburn Co., Buffalo, N. Y.

NOT A HERMIT OF ROMANCE.

Man's Reasons for Living in Solitude, Though Excellent, Somewhat Surprised Young Lady.

The beautiful young lady stood at the mouth of the cave in the mountain and addressed the ragged and long haired hermit.

"So you are a real, live hermit! I have never seen a real hermit before, although I have read all about you many times. I suppose you had a very sad love affair in your youth and the loss of your beautiful sweetheart drove you to this wilderness to live alone. Was she so very beautiful? You have tomato cans filled with money hid in the ground, haven't you?"

"Not at all, not at all," interrupted the hermit. "I have no money buried—it is all in four per cent government bonds. My first love affair was altogether too successful, and that's the real reason I'm here. You didn't see a square-built, red-headed woman on the trail looking for a husband, did you? It's about time I moved again, anyhow, since so many people are coming here. 'Tain't safe to stay."—Puck.

NO NEED TO TAKE CHANCES

There Is a Sure Way of Knowing Good Paint Material.

There is really no need whatever for any property owner to take chances in the selection of his paint materials. It doesn't cost a cent to learn how to be on the safe side. Certainly every property owner has enough at stake to find this out.

A complete painting guide, known as Houseowner's Painting Outfit No. 49, can be had free by writing National Lead Company, 1902 Trinity Building, New York. This company is the largest maker of pure white lead in the world. Its Dutch Boy Painter trademark is famous as a guarantee of purity and quality. The outfit includes a book of color schemes, for either interior or exterior painting, a book of specifications, and a simple little instrument, with directions for testing the purity of paint materials.

WHY, OF COURSE.

"Oh, Willie! You're going to fall!"

"Naw, I ain't! I'm tryin' a new fancy style of skatin'—dat's all."

Cleanliness.

This church, like many another one, had had trouble about pumping the organ, and the plan of using water power was gladly adopted. Connection was made with the pipes of the rectory, which stood on the adjoining lot. All the preliminary tests were satisfactory. On the Sunday morning when the apparatus was to be used for the first time at a regular service the organist arrived early for a final trial. There was not a hitch.

The congregation generally knew of the innovation, and awaited the opening strains of the processional with uncommon interest. Not a sound came from the organ, however, and the choir had to march in singing the hymn as best it could, unaccompanied. Of course the disappointment was keen.

The rector's wife was resourceful. A clergyman's wife usually has to be. She slipped out by a side door and returned in five minutes with a note. This she forwarded to her husband. It read: "It's all right now. Cook was taking a bath."

SICK DOCTOR

Proper Food Put Him Right.

The food experience of a physician in his own case when worn and weak from sickness and when needing nourishment the worst way is valuable:

"An attack of grip, so severe it came near making an end of me, left my stomach in such condition I could not retain any ordinary food. I knew of course that I must have food nourishment or I could never recover.

"I began to take four tablespoonfuls of Grape-Nuts and cream three times a day and for 2 weeks this was almost my only food; it tasted so delicious that I enjoyed it immensely and my stomach handled it perfectly from the first mouthful. It was so nourishing I was quickly built back to normal health and strength.

"Grape-Nuts is of great value as food to sustain life during serious attacks in which the stomach is so deranged it cannot digest and assimilate other foods.

"I am convinced that were Grape-Nuts more widely used by physicians, it would save many lives that are otherwise lost from lack of nourishment."

Absolutely the most perfect food in the world. Trial of Grape-Nuts 10 days proves. "There's a Reason."

Look in pkg. for the little book, "The Road to Wellville."

Does read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.