

NEAL of the NAVY

By William Hamilton Osborne,
AUTHOR OF "RED MOUSE," "RUNNING FIGHT,"
"CATSPAW," "BLUE BUCKLE," ETC.

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SYNOPSIS.

On the day of the eruption of Mount Pelée Capt. John Hardin of the steamer Princess rescues five-year-old Annette Hington from an open boat, but is forced to leave behind her father and his companions. Hington is assaulted by Hernandez and Ponto in a vain attempt to get papers which Hington has managed to send aboard the Princess with his daughter, papers proving his title to and telling the whereabouts of the lost island of Cinnabar. Hington's injury causes his mind to become a blank. Thirteen years elapse. Hernandez, now an opium smuggler, with Ponto, Inez, a female accomplice, and the mindless brute that once was Hington, come to Seaport, where the widow of Captain Hardin is living with her son Neal and Irene Hington, and plot to steal the papers left to Annette by her father. Neal tries for admission to the Naval academy, but through the treachery of Joe Welcher is defeated by Joey and disgraced. Neal enlists in the navy. Inez sets a trap for Joey and the conspirators get him in their power. Annette discovers that heat applied to the map reveals the location of the lost island. In a struggle for possession of the map Hernandez, Annette and Neal each secure a portion. Annette sails on the Coronado in search of her father. The crew mutiny, and are overcome by a boarding party from U. S. Destroyer Jackson, led by Neal. In Martinique Annette and Neal are captured, but are rescued by a sponge diver. Inez forces identification papers for herself as Annette, in an insurrection Neal and Annette are again captured, carried to the Sun City and Annette is offered as a sacrifice to the sun god. They are rescued by marines from the Albany. Landed in Tortugas Annette and Neal are captured and exposed to yellow fever infection by Hernandez, but are rescued by sailors from the Albany.

TENTH INSTALLMENT THE ROLLING TERROR

CHAPTER XLIV.

Across Country.

Early next morning, out of that pathless mire, strode back the Brute, picking his perilous way with the instinct of some cunning, cautious animal, and guiding—in fact, bearing on his shoulders half the time—the luckless Ponto. That individual, his ugliness enhanced by the clotted blood that dressed his disheveled hair, and decorated his countenance, was still dazed. He had vague recollections as to what had happened. He knew that at the command of Hernandez, his aide partner in crime, he had plunged once more into the deadly morass for the purpose of finishing by violence the deed that had commenced in cunning. He had followed the Brute—he remembered that.

He dozed off into satisfaction. He woke with a jolt. It was a heavy jolt. When his eyes opened he was on the ground, supine. He started to leap to his feet, then sank back again, heavy with the pain of his wound.

A laugh behind him startled him and brought him to his senses. He turned swiftly, feeling for his knife—the knife that wasn't there.

There was another laugh—the laugh of his side partner, Hernandez.

"Fool," said Hernandez, addressing Ponto.

Ponto changed his demeanor. He drew himself up to his squatly height and folded his arms.

"Did I not as you said?" replied Ponto. "I went into that hell and killed them both—I did it single-handed—I, Ponto."

His answer was a sneer. Hernandez stretched forth a hand and clutched Ponto by the shoulder.

He dragged his lieutenant to the edge of the clump of trees and underbrush, where they were standing. He parted the branches of a tree. He handed Ponto a pair of binoculars.

"Take one swift look, my Ponto," he sneered, "only one."

Ponto took more than one—he held his eyes glued to the glasses. Then he fell back in amazement.

"They live!" he cried. "Both of them!"

He stared at Hernandez almost in affright. "What does it mean?" he repeated.

"It means," said Hernandez, grimly, "that I sent a boy to do a man's job. You were quite right. I should have gone myself."

Down on the wharf Annette Hington and her party were about to embark in one of the launches of the cruiser Albany that lay still anchored in the harbor. In Annette's party were Mademoiselle Irene Courtier, Mrs. Hardin, Neal's mother; Neal Hardin himself, a warrant officer upon the Albany, and the surgeon of the cruiser. There were one or two other men in uniform, an assistant surgeon possibly, and an ensign. There were bluejackets.

But above all, there were natives galore. Natives by the dozens, by the hundreds, and all in rags. The whole village had turned out to do homage. "The little white angel," murmured grateful mothers, sinking down in Annette's path and kissing her dress as she went by.

Pushed by any of the party—save by Joe Welcher, Inez swooned aside and slipped a note into the hands of a native, and handed him a coin. Then she leaped lightly into the launch and the launch steamed away, followed by the cheers and the tears of the Tortuzans on the wharf.

Back in the jungle three men waited for advice. They had not long to wait. A treacherous looking native

slipped through the undergrowth and advanced swiftly toward Hernandez.

"The epistle, Senior Captain," he said. It was the note from Inez Castro. Hernandez seized it eagerly and read:

"We are bound for La Plaza. Meet me there. Meantime I shall do my best to secure Annette's precious locket and the map. Your route lies across the country. Adios. I. C."

CHAPTER XLV.

Inez Shows Her Hand.

"First and foremost, Miss Hington," said the captain of the Albany after Annette's party had boarded the cruiser, "how that you are once more safe, permit me to return to you the map of the Lost Isle, which I have examined with interest. Following your directions, I subjected it to heat, and I brought out the hidden latitude and longitude—18 degrees 30 minutes north and 123 degrees and 40 minutes west." He paused a moment. "Do you know," he said, "there's something about that location that sticks in my mind—some vague rumor."

"The Isle contains quicksilver mines," said Annette.

"It's not that," returned the commander, "it was merely the locality. I traced it on our map. It was about there that the government—He broke off, checking himself quickly. "Ah, yes, I remember now," he said, "well, never mind. But, here also is your locket. Now you've got them, have you—all safe."

"Thanks for keeping them safe," said Annette, secreting them in the bosom of her dress.

"So far, so good," went on the captain. "I have to say further that the officers' quarters have been placed at your disposal until we reach La Plaza. There you can get a train."

"It's a short ride on that road to Chantillo," went on the captain, "and at Chantillo you can catch the boat for most of the Lower California and California ports."

Across country Hernandez, Ponto and the Brute were traveling hard. The indomitable will of Hernandez kept them ever going on and on.

"You understand," cried he, "we must make La Plaza before the Albany gets there. We go cross-country—she goes by shore. I'll knife you both if you fail me at this time."

Finally, on a moonlight night, Hernandez halted at a forest opening that looked down toward shore. He glanced across the sea.

"It is she—the Albany," he cried; "look, Ponto. She is at hand. It is a matter of hours now, one would say, rather than days."

After a rest he reconnoitered. In the valley he saw a light or two, filtering through the foliage. Again they mounted and descended the hill into civilization. They knocked on the door of an adobe hut. A native opened and shambled out, gun in hand, to meet them. Seeing the Brute, he drew back in terror.

"It is nothing, friend," said Hernandez, "here is a coin. Where lies La Plaza?"

"But five miles farther on—close to shore," returned the native.

"A bagatelle," said Hernandez, "come on."

Meantime Inez Castro, on board the Albany, had become unusually active. She had ascertained the time of arrival of the Albany at La Plaza—the schedule time.

Joe Welcher bunked in with Neal—in the quarters of the warrant officers. It was nearly evening when Inez Castro, using Joe as usual to do her bidding, whispered in his ear.

Joe, like a whipped dog, did, through fear of her, what he otherwise would have been afraid to do. He slipped into Neal's quarters, and laid his hands upon an object or two, twisted them into a little bundle and took them back to Inez. Inez took them to her cabin.

Over at La Plaza—La Plaza by the Sea—Hernandez sought the shore and found what he wanted—it was a fishing boat with a kicker in it—the only motorboat in the place. It was well manned, with a crew of six of the most disreputable-looking characters that ever drew the breath of life. Hernandez talked to them—with money.

"No lights," he cautioned, "and muffle that kicker. And be quick about it now."

"It is all right, senior," said the man at the tiller; "we are about all hours of the night. No one thinks of us, one way or the other." He pointed out to sea. "You perceive," he said, "there are other fisher boats."

"Good," said Hernandez, "the more the merrier."

Without lights they kicked with in almost halting distance of the Albany. Then Hernandez, showed a light. It was immediately answered from the deck. "It is good," he said, "we understand each other."

Inez hastened from the deck and entered her cabin. Her cabin was Annette's as well. Her plans well laid—and she had felt they were the only plans to make—she retired for the night, but not to sleep.

At three o'clock she rose, and untwisted the bundle that Joe had bled for her. She sighed with satisfaction as she took it out of its folds. It was a uniform—one of Neal's. She donned it swiftly—hurriedly—silently. There was no light in the cabin, save the moon, sitting in through port holes. Annette's face was bathed in light. But Annette was fast asleep.

She was totally oblivious to the presence of the prowling figure in male uniform who stole near and ever nearer—who now groped about her neck.

Suddenly, with one quick and final tug Inez wrenched at the chamouis bag.

Annette woke with a scream upon her lips. But the hand of Inez was quicker than Annette's voice. Inez's hand closed over Annette—her knee crushed down her breast.

The wildcat in Annette rose. She was a fine fighter. She quirmed with one twist out of the grasp of this unseen foe, and grappled with her assailant. Inez was no match for her, and soon found it but.

Annette dragged her to the ray of moonlight and looked at her. She gasped and dropped her hold.

"You—Irene Courtier," she cried. "But Irene—Inez Castro if you please—was no longer there. In that instant—and that was the instant for the last few seconds she had waited for—in that instant she had leaped to her feet and made her getaway."

And Inez knew the Albany—every part of that huge battleship she had studied with the care of an engineer. She knew just what to do and where to go, and how to elude pursuit. She rushed to one spot where safety lay, reached the rail, leaped over it, and with the agility of a professional diver struck the water with scarcely a splash.

"Now," said Hernandez to his helmsman, "like mad for that spot of white." Inez, fresh and supple notwithstanding her struggle—in fact the struggle had nerved her up—swam toward the fishing boat and the boat steamed toward her. Within a short time—almost less time than it takes to tell it—Ponto was once more kicking the Brute. And the Brute in turn leaned over the side of the kicker, and with the sweep of one powerful hand and arm, drew a dripping object from the water. It was Inez, gasping for breath.

"Now, like the devil for the shore," whispered Hernandez.

They obeyed. But if Inez now gasped for breath, Annette had ceased to gasp for breath. Her first coherent thought was to feel for her chamouis bag. It was safe. Her next effort was speech. She screamed at the top of her lungs. Her third was action. She darted to the deck and gave the alarm.

Within a moment a launch was manned and had put off from the cruiser—Neal in command.

Suddenly one of Neal's men pointed toward the shore. The searchlight of the cruiser was playing upon a kicker making full speed south.

"That's our boat," said Neal. "Like the devil now."

In five minutes they caught her. Neal saw at a glance she showed no lights. It convinced him. Without a word he swung his launch alongside and his men leaped across the gunwale. Every jack tar either had his man by the throat, or was tickling his ribs with a knife.

"We've got 'em all," said somebody.

"Where's the woman?" queried Neal. But there was no woman—no Inez Castro. What's more there was no Hernandez, no Ponto, no Brute.

"No use," said Neal, "the birds have flown. No use chasing them," he conceded, "when those birds fly, they fly. We've got to give 'em credit."

"Annette," he told that young lady later, "I think now we're safe. The job all along has been an inside job—Irene Courtier has been handing you—yes and me—over to the enemy. That was the game—and the game is ended. That's the way it looks to me."

CHAPTER XLVI.

A Hold-Up.

The captain of the cruiser Albany had his men scour the country round about, but—as had ever been the case with Hernandez and his nimble-footed crew—without result.

"At any rate," he said, "the rascals have run away—they've probably shown us their heels for all time. You go to Chantillo, Miss Hington. You take that one-horse train here—we'll escort you to the train. Over at Chantillo lies the Missouri, a first-class battleship. I'll give you a note to her commander. He'll see you safe on board the South Carolina boat."

Neal and a small guard of marines constituted Annette's escort.

Annette laughed when she saw the station—laughed more when she saw the train. It consisted of the sorriest engine she had ever seen—also the most diminutive and battered coach.

"Look here," said Neal to Annette, "come inside the station. I want to show you something."

Annette knew . . . inside she broke down and cried like a child.

"It's good-by now, Neal," she said, "I don't know what I'm going to do without you. . . I feel like . . . almost going back . . ."

"By George," said Neal, "I wish . . . but no. You'll stick it out. I know you will. I'm sure. But, if it's tough on you—think of me. I feel like chucking up my job . . ."

A tin horn blew outside. "W-what's that?" cried Annette.

Mrs. Hardin and Joe Welcher rushed into the station. "The train—the train," they cried.

They were quite right. The engineer was already pulling his rusty lev-

er. The train actually was starting up, stationary though it had seemed. "Go ahead little one," said Neal. "good luck."

Half a mile farther down the track, out of the jungle crept two figures—each with gun in hand, each with a black mask upon his face. Across the track they piled a tree or two—these trees had been plucked up by the roots by one of these masked men.

After completing this self-appointed task, they crept back into the jungle and waited patiently.

Finally one of the men prodded the other. "Now," he commanded, "here she comes."

A faint tin horn whistle was heard around the curve. The fast mail of the Chantillo line approached. She approached, but seeing the obstruction on the track, she hesitated, halted, came to a full stop. The two masked men leaped upon the engine and held up the crew with their ever-ready guns.

Hernandez stepped into the car behind. He fired three shots. He aimed at no one. The shots had their effect—on two persons at least. Joe Welcher ducked at once. Mrs. Hardin followed suit. No one was hit. Annette alone retained her nerve.

"So," she said fearlessly, "it's you again. And where is your charming friend, Miss Irene Courtier?"

"Brute," cried Hernandez, throwing off his mask, "bring those two men here."

The Brute brought them. "Take the bell cord," said Hernandez to the train crew, "and tie this young girl up."

Hernandez, still with his gun on guard, bent over the girl. He pugged his hand into her breast, and with a jerk tore the chamouis bag from her neck.

"I'll tie this man myself," said Hernandez, approaching Joe Welcher. He leaned over Joe, and wound some cord loosely about his hands.

"I'll need you," he whispered, "but make no mistake. Mistakes are fatal when I'm around."

He left the Brute on guard and marched the crew back to the engine. "How near are we to the nearest station?" he queried, "tell me truth."

"Not far miles, senior," they gasped, "only a little farther on in a deserted station, Montrada. No trains stop there. It is discontinued."

"Any occupants?" queried Hernandez.

"None—it is deserted. It is even haunted, senior."

"How—haunted?"

"Something there goes click—click—click—click—always when we pass."

STATE NEWS.

Samuel W. Stockman was killed Saturday afternoon near Lexington when he jumped from a buggy in which he was riding with J. D. Montz, a young white man, while the horse, which young Montz was driving at the time, was going at a pretty rapid gait, the animal having become frightened when a hold-back strap on the breeching broke, causing the buggy to run upon the horse. The force of the fall caused a fracture of the skull at the base and death was instantaneous.

The fall term of Court of General Sessions for York will convene on November 22. The outlook is that it will be one of the longest terms held in several years, as there are a larger number of prisoners in jail than at any time in years, as well as quite a number out on bond; besides the case of the state against those charged with the killing of Sheriff Hood and others, at Wimsboro last summer, is scheduled to be tried.

T. L. Carter, of Columbia, learned last week that his son, Ira Carter, was one of those who perished when the steamer Arabie, was torpedoed by a German submarine off the Irish coast on August 19. Carter, who was about 30 years of age, had been in Europe and Africa for several years.

J. L. Shuler, an experienced intensive farmer, of Bowman, has made a splendid crop of cotton on his farm near town—his entire crop yielding one and a half bales per acre. He will also harvest a good crop on his farm about five miles from town, his entire crop producing more than a bale per acre, which is supplemented with an abundant grain crop, including a lot of good hay.

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