

An O. HENRY Story a Day

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THE RANSOM OF RED CHIEF.

(Concluded from Friday)

By and by, Bill sits up and feels behind his ear, and says: "Sam, do you know who my favorite Biblical character is?"

"Take it easy," says I. "You'll come to your senses presently."

"King Herod," says he. "You won't let me go and leave me here alone, will you, Sam?"

I went out and caught that boy and took him until his freckles rattled. "If you don't behave," says I, "I'll take you straight home. Now, are you going to be good, or not?"

"I was only funny," says he sullenly. "I didn't mean to hurt Old Hank. But what did he hit me for? I'll behave, Snake-eye, if you won't send me home, and if you'll let me play the Black Scout today."

"I don't know the game," says I. "What do you and Mr. Bill do?"

"I'm your playmate for the day. I'm going away for a while, on 'business.' Now, you come in and make friends with him, and you are sorry for him, or home you go at once."

I made him and Bill shake hands, and then I took Bill aside and told him I was going to Poplar Cove, a little village three miles from the cave, and found out what I could about how the kidnapping had been regarded in Summit. Also, I thought it best to send a peremptory letter to old man Dorset that day, demanding the ransom and stating how it should be paid.

"You know, Sam," says Bill, "I've stood by you without batting an eye in earthquakes, fire and flood—in poker games, dynamic outrages, police raids, train robberies and cyclones. I never let my nerve yet till we kidnapped that two-legged skyrocket of a kid. He's got me going. You won't leave me long with him, will you, Sam?"

"I'll be back some time this afternoon," says I. "You must keep the boy amused and quiet till I return. And now we'll write the letter to old Dorset."

Bill and I got paper and pencil and worked on the letter while Red Chief, wrapped in a blanket wrapped around him, snuggled up and down, guarding the mouth of the cave. Bill begged me to make the ransom fifty or a hundred dollars instead of two thousand. "I ain't attempting," says he, "no deary the celebrated moral aspect of parental affection, but we're dealing with humans, and it ain't human for anybody to give up two thousand dollars for that 40-pound chunk of freed wildcat. I'm willing to take a chance at fifteen hundred dollars. You can charge the difference up to me."

Bill is puffing and blowing, but there is a look of ineffable peace and growing content on his rose-pink features.

"Bill," says I, "there isn't any heart disease in your family, is there?"

"No," says Bill, "nothing chronic except malaria and mumps. Why?"

"Then you might turn around," says I, "and have a look behind you."

Bill turns and sees the boy, and loses his complexion and sits down plump on the ground and begins to pluck aimlessly at grass and little sticks. For an hour I was afraid of his mind. And then I told him that my scheme was to put the whole job through immediately and that we would get the ransom and be off with it by midnight if old Dorset fell in with our proposition. So Bill braced up enough to give the kid a weak sort of a smile and a promise to play the Russian in a Japanese war, except I had a few dollars to spare.

I had a scheme for collecting that ransom without danger of being caught by counterplots that ought to commend itself to professional kidnapers. The tree under which the answer was to be left—and the money later on—was close to the road fence with big bare fields on all sides. If a gang of constables should be searching for any one to come for the note, they could see him a long way off crossing the fields or in the road. But no siree! At half-past eight I was up in that tree as well hidden as a tree toad, waiting for the messenger arrive.

Exactly on time, a half-grown boy rides up the road on a bicycle, locates the pasteboard box at the foot of the fence-post and slips a folded piece of paper into it and pedals away again back toward Summit.

I waited an hour and then concluded the thing was square. I slid down the tree, got the note, slipped along the fence till I struck the woods, and was back to the cave in another half an hour. I opened the note, got near the lantern and read it to Bill. It was written with a pen in a crabbed hand, and the sum of substance of it was this: Two Desperate Men.

Gentlemen: I received your letter today by post, in regard to the ransom you ask for the return of my son. I think you are a little high in your demands, and I hereby make you a counter-proposition, which I am inclined to believe you will accept. You bring Johnny home and pay me two hundred and fifty dollars in cash, and I agree to take him off your hands. You had better come at night, for the neighbors believe he is lost, and couldn't be responsible for what they would do to anybody they were bringing him back. Very respectfully,

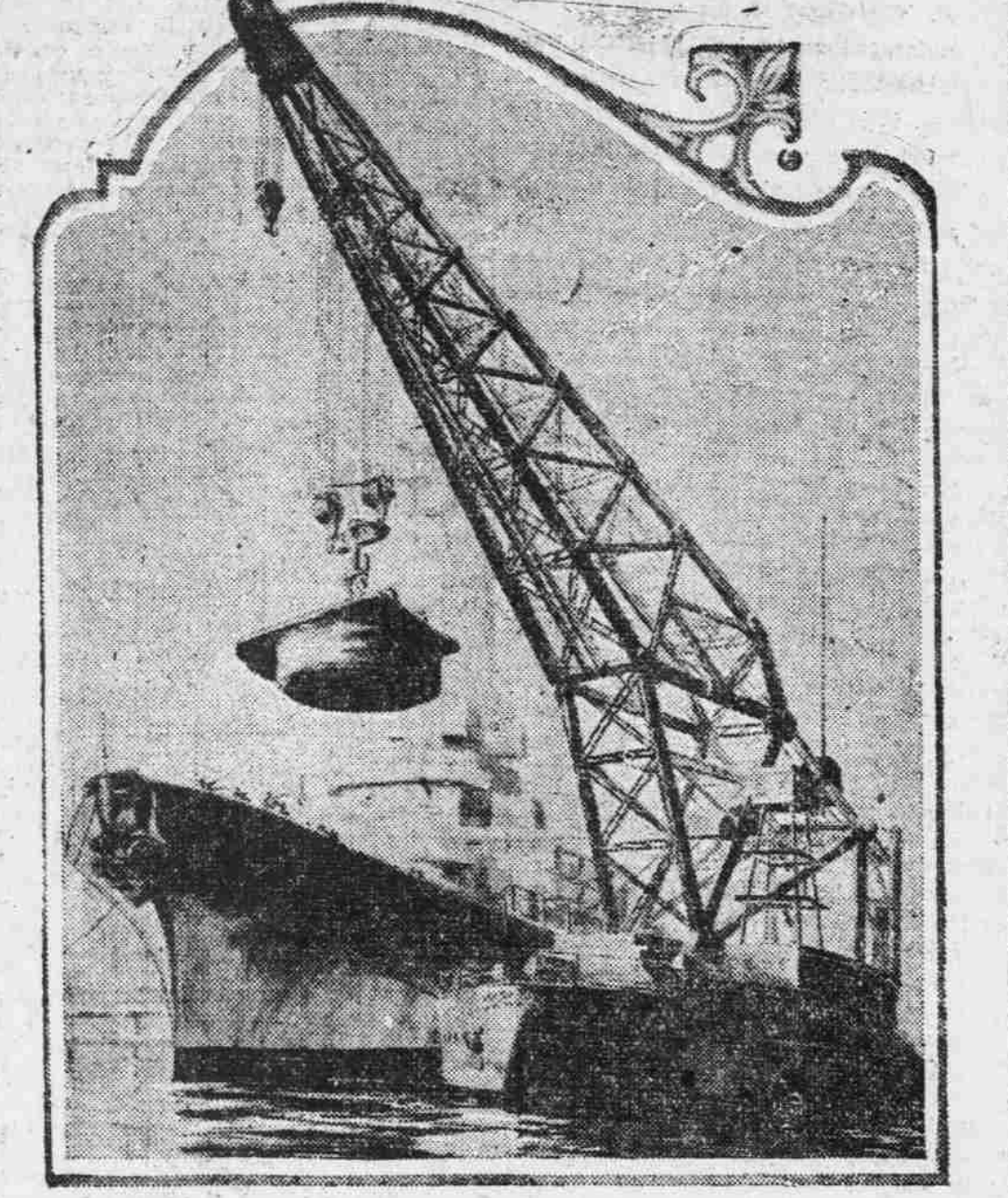
EBENEZER DORSET.

"Great pirates of Penzance!" says I, "of all the impudent!"

But I glanced at Bill, and hesitated. He had the most appealing look in his eyes I ever saw on the face of a dumb or a talking brute.

"Sam," says he, "what's two hundred and fifty dollars after all? We've got the money. One more night of this kid will send me to a bed in Bedlam. Besides being a thorough gentleman, I think Mr. Dorset is a splendid fellow for making us such a liberal offer. You ain't going to let the chance go, are you?"

Most Powerful Crane Ship In World For American Navy



By HARRY L. ROGERS, International News Service Staff Correspondent.

Washington, Feb. 12.—Most most powerful crane-ship in the world is to be the next addition to the United States navy's growing list of super-craft, the Navy Department announced today.

Already the navy has in commission or under construction the world's biggest battleship, biggest battle-cruiser, biggest rigid-type airship and biggest seaplane, and Secretary Daniels has announced that the navy itself will be the biggest in the world by 1923.

The monster crane, which is to be mounted on the old battleship Kearsarge now being refitted at the Philadelphia navy yard, will have a lifting capacity of 312 tons, or 624,000 pounds. In other words, it will be able to whisk about with the ease of a Solomon twirling his club weights equal to that of 4,160 moderately plump men, 624 medium-sized horses, or a slightly smaller number of "tin lizzies."

The duty of the crane-ship will be to proceed under its own power from port to port and handle guns, turrets, armor-plates, boilers and other heavy material in the various shipbuilding yards. Its primary purpose is to lift turrets from their building cribs into battleships.

Sections of a modern triple 16-inch gun turret, which must be assembled aboard a warship, weigh 200 tons or more. As this weight is beyond the crane capacity of some navy yards and most of the private yards now building battleships, it is essential for the Navy Department to have a large crane that can be moved from yard to yard to supply this deficiency.

Alteration of the Kearsarge for her new duty will include removal of all guns, ordnance equipment, turrets and most of her armor. Quarters also must be rearranged to accommodate the vessel's complement of officers and crew as a crane-ship.

The crane itself is being built under contract by the Wellman Seaver Morgan company, of Cleveland, Ohio, and will be shipped to Philadelphia in parts for assembling. It will be of the revolving, hinged, jip type, electrically operated and capable of rotating 360 degrees, and it will be capable of hoisting a load from 40 feet below the base of the crane to 103 feet above. By luffing the jip without rotating the crane, the load can be moved through a horizontal airway range extending from 72 to 101 feet from the center of rotation.

Two Giant Hooks. It will also be provided with an auxiliary trolley hoist of 40 tons capacity, having an outreach of 114 feet and a vertical lift of 175 feet. With these characteristics, the crane will be capable of reaching any part of any United States naval vessel now building or contemplated.

The main hoist consists of two hooks of 125 tons each, which are fitted to take an equalizer when lifting 250 feet. The plant for supplying power for the crane will be located in the hold of the vessel. As refitted the Kearsarge will be able to transport at one time two triple 16 inch gun turrets with their guns, foundation for this purpose being provided forward and aft under the main deck.

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A PUNCTURED DREAM OF WEALTH RELATED

Washington, Feb. 12.—A punctured dream of wealth in which racing green goods men at Miami, Fla., a mythical hotel in Pittsburg and a vanished bank roll of \$16,000 played a part, was related to the police here by Frank P. Reiss, a retired merchant of New York.

Reiss, the police said, reported that, while in Miami for his health, he had met certain strangers of pleasing presence and convincing tongue who told him how much money could be made in the racing game. He entrusted to them \$16,000 in real cash, he reported, agreeing to meet his allies in a Pittsburg hotel they named.

But there was no such hotel in all Pittsburg, Reiss found, and he stopped off to tell the police here about it before again seeking the trail of the \$16,000 in Miami.

PRESIDENT WILSON ARRANGING BOOKS

Washington, Feb. 12.—President Wilson spent several hours yesterday at the house where he will make his home after his retirement from office on March 4.

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