

GERVASE CRANE, the wireless operator on Sable Island, was standing by the shore close to the lighthouse. "He hears something," said one of the lighthouse men doubtfully.

"But there ain't a sail in sight."

"There don't seem to be."

Crane turned slowly in their direction, and they saw that his face was ghastly. He began to wave to them and all the time he kept looking over his shoulder at the water.

"There's something wrong," said one of the men, and with one accord they plunged out of the lighthouse to help him.

He ran to meet them. "There's voices coming over the sea," he said. "Voices and the clanking of chains over by the Eastern Bar."

The only vessel in sight was the San Cristobal, the derelict that had come ashore twenty years ago. She lay on the sandpit with her stern half submerged, and the tattered rags that had once been sails, flapping in the breeze. Except for this the surface of the sea was unbroken: it was a sheer waste of water, thundering restlessly under a canopy of sunshine.

The lighthouse men pushed out the boat that lay high and dry on the beach, tumbling in it as it floated. Crane stayed behind. They rowed about the San Cristobal and then held up their oars for a moment. "There's nothing there," said one contemptuously.

But even as he spoke, his body stiffened into a sudden horror. His companions, turning towards him, were struck instantly by the same rigidity, their eyes staring wildly. One man moistened his lips furtively with his tongue.

All about them amid the empty waters they heard the sound of stealthy whispering. They heard the creaking of chains and cordage and all the thousand and one noises of life aboard ship. And then their boat, drifting idly forward, struck against some unseen obstacle and was instantly seized by human hands and pulled forward.

Then a rope ladder seemed to fall out of the sky. Down it there clambered half a dozen sailors in uniform who overpowered the islanders at once and herded them up the ladder.

The prisoners mounted slowly, with their nerves utterly broken. They climbed through a mist of invisibility, and it led them to the deck of a huge battleship where the sun blazed on their white faces again. All around them they could see the artificial mist lying about the sides of the ship.

There were hundreds of soldiers and sailors about the deck, and on the lower deck, where the lighthouse men were presently taken, there were hundreds more. They crowded so thickly there was scarcely any free way, but the prisoners were pushed through and fetched up before a pair of folding doors with the flag of Germany emblazoned on either side.

They were taken through these doors into a long saloon, where a number of naval officers, evidently of high rank, were seated round a table. The leader listened to the story of their capture in grim silence. "See," he said suddenly, "one of you must go back and tell your wireless man to send a message from the Northern Station. I will write it. But remember, it must go from the Northern Station."

"Can't be done," growled one of the men. "The wireless is only at the main station in the south-east of the island."

"And no other part has communication with the mainland? The nearest coast is Nova Scotia, seventy miles away?"


The men maintained a stubborn silence.

"Fools!" he cried harshly. "You have told me all I needed to know." He made a gesture to one of his officers. "You will land with two boats. Use the Invisibility Rays until you have control of the wireless. If they try to send a message, shoot them down. Send me a signal of three volleys when your task is completed."

The Captain saluted and was gone. The Admiral stared sullenly at the prisoners, drumming his fingers on the table. Then he sprang to his feet and hurried on deck, arriving there just as the signal

The Invisibility Rays

by Frank Wall



came booming over the water.

The effect was electrical. A string of pre-arranged signals was passed swiftly about the great fleet of warships that lay hidden behind the Invisibility Rays and out of the mist there steamed slowly a number of captured barges, heading for the shore. They were stacked high with sacks of coal, bulged up far above the deck gear.

The work of unloading began as soon as the boats grounded. The coal was removed from the barges and stacked in an empty building near the shore, and then another three volleys were fired as a signal to the fleet.

The Admiral turned to his staff. "That is well done," he said. "The enemy have always spoiled our plans to get a coaling-station, but now we have one. First we take the coal and now we take the station. And now we go to destroy their shipping."

Soon afterwards the Armada sailed away, taking a northerly course. The Admiral intended to prowl about the entrance to the Gulf where he might intercept the shipping passing to and fro from Canada. Their departure was made behind the strange veil of invisibility that had shrouded their arrival, and from which the Germans hoped to achieve tremendous results. The men who stood on guard on the island heard the boom of a gun, and then saw the sea cut into long strips of foam, but there was not a ship to be seen as far as the eye could reach.

II.

WHEN the fleet had gone, the German Captain turned back to his work with a sigh. He would have very much preferred to have been treading the good deck of his own ship rather than be marooned on this Desert of Sahara, but he accepted his lot with true Teutonic calmness.

The lighthouse men had already been disarmed and those whose turn it was for duty had been sent to their respective posts. The wireless operator was also permitted to return to his room, but the Captain went with him, and two German soldiers stood on guard at the door.

Captain Von Freundelin spoke excellent English, and the Canadian operator was apparently disposed to accept the fortune of war, so it was not long before the two became quite friendly. The German had all the scientific curiosity of his race and showed a particular interest in the installation, which he already understood to a great extent.

"Ach, mein freund!" he cried: "You are better than the Englishmen we took off a boat just before your five men ran into our flagship. I think he also was from your island. He was insolent. He would not answer what we asked him."

"What became of him?"

The German kicked and beat an imaginary enemy until he had him standing against the wall, then stalked to the other end of the room and signalled to a firing party to shoot the prisoner. "What else could we do?" he said laughingly.

The Canadian stared at him in silence.

"You are wiser, eh? You will show me how to operate this wireless. You will not throw away your life?"

"No!" said the Canadian with a sudden grit of his teeth. "That man was a fool. He threw away his life for nothing. If he could not help there was no need for him to die."

"Ach! That is the right spirit!" cried the German. "SSO— Now, you show me this. How do you send the messages?"

The explanation was long and detailed, but the German plodded laboriously after his guide, asking numerous questions which were willingly answered.

The operator caught the German fleet almost at once and got a reply to his message, which he read out with a strange smile twisting his thin lips.

"They come back!" cried the Captain. "Ach! I will tell you why they come, mein freund. There is a British fleet in the Gulf, and our Admiral, I think he will come here and wait until they have gone away."

"They will be here after sunset."

"Jawohl!" he laughed discordantly.

"The British will wonder where they have gone, if even they have seen them at all. It is a wonderful invention, these Invisibility Rays. Your British ships will only waste coal if they try to pursue."

The Canadian put out a trembling hand. "Do you think the British will be here after that?" he asked hoarsely. "Are they close behind your fleet, do you think?"

"Gott in Himmel!" snarled the German. "The British have lost them in the Invisibility Rays. They will be seeking them between Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, while our Admiral is creeping down the Atlantic."

"You are sure of that?"

The German laughed offensively.

"You have nothing to do with the British fleet, mein freund. It cannot help you. If you try any treachery I will have you shot like a dog."

"Bah! I tell you I am glad they are not coming. We understand each other, you and I, but what would a British Admiral say if he knew I had shown you the secret of our wireless?"

The German shrugged his shoulders. "What are you doing now?" he said suddenly.

The Canadian was working furiously at his instrument. He swung round for a moment and cried out that he had forgotten to warn the German Admiral of the current of the St. Lawrence.

"What of it? What is the danger?"

"It would drive the whole fleet on the sandbanks. It is the most dangerous current of the world. We have hundreds of wrecks through it."

The German was biting his lips, stirring clumsily about his companion. "You must find them again," he cried wildly. "Tell them where to steer. If you save them you shall be rich as long as you live."

The Canadian scarcely seemed to hear him. He had fallen back in his chair, his hands trembling helplessly as he pointed to his instrument.

"It isn't too late!" screamed the German.

"They will not answer. They are afraid our messages might reach the British Fleet in the Gulf." But even as he spoke, he uttered a hoarse cry of delight. "I have them! Oh, I have them!" And then at last he got his message through and turned his white face to his companion, nodding mutely.

"Ach Himmel! You do well! You have saved ten thousand lives!"

The Canadian gave a sudden lurch in his chair, and fell to the floor, unconscious.

III.

"It is going to be a stormy night," said the German restlessly. "I do not like those black clouds."

"There is no harm in the clouds."

"No. It is my nerves that are troubled. I am restless. I don't know what is the matter with me."

"Ach! It is you!" he cried suddenly. "Your face is like the face of a dead man. It is you who frighten me."

The Canadian stared at his companion, his thoughts evidently far away. "I am not well after that fainting fit," he muttered.

"It is not that. Your eyes are blazing, and your face is gray. You have become an old man."

"It is weakness," said the other doggedly. "My heart is not strong."

The German turned impatiently towards the window. The wind had risen with the sunset and was whipping the sea into a restless fury. Everywhere there were long lines of tossing foam as though the waters were being ploughed up for the storm. Overhead an army of black clouds deployed across a

(Continued on page 23.)