

The Free Press' Short Story

SHIPS OF TARSHISH

DELIA MORRIS STEPHENSON

"AND now for California!" said Janet Stiles, just graduated from Oaklawn Hospital. "They wanted me to go on special right away, but I have waited a whole year for this trip, and I am going to have it."

"You have earned it, Janet," said her father. "All those pneumonia cases pouring in the last few days! I'm glad you are getting off before you come down with it yourself. That whole floor, thirty-six beds, and you on duty alone nights, at that. I'd have taken you home if you had not been so nearly through."

"It couldn't be helped, Father. So many of the nurses were sick. I know I really ought to be there now, instead of here, getting ready to leave on the 'Alexander' Saturday night for the orange groves. Won't they be delicious after smelling antiseptic all these years I've been in training! One side of me feels so free, like a cat turned out to pasture; but I wish the other side of me did not feel so much like the prophet who was ordered to go down to clean up the mess in Nineveh but hunted up a nice ship to Tarshish, instead!"

"Nonsense! Enjoy your vacation, dear. A nurse's life is hard enough at best," counseled her mother. "I want you to sleep until noon to-morrow and then we will shop for your trip. Oh, dear! Answer that, will you, Warren?"

Mr. Stiles turned from the telephone. "For you, Janet. If it is the hospital, tell them you are not available for at least two months."

Janet took the receiver and her family frankly listened. "Miss Stiles speaking. Oh, yes, Doctor Lynn. Yes, I heard there was a lot of it up there. . . . Why, I don't see how I can, doctor. . . . Why, I am leaving for San Francisco with my aunt Saturday night. Been planning on it for a year. . . . Where's Angelo Brown? . . . She has! I didn't know that. What about Phyllis Logan, then? Oh, I remember! She's specializing that old man. But, doctor—"

"Tell him you simply are not on call," urged her father. "Let me talk to him." Janet shook her head. A nurse must handle her own calls and make her own decisions. She spoke again. "Well, this is Wednesday. If I go out for Thursday and Friday, you'll simply have to relieve me then. . . . I just can't stay. When? . . . Eight to-morrow morning. I'll be ready. She hung up and spoke to her family. "I'd better get to bed and sleep while I can. These flu cases have rather played me out."

"Now what?" demanded both parents. "Doctor Lynn wants me to go up on Jim Creek to a family all down with flu—pneumonia, some of them. There's a baby only a month or so old, and besides the flu, the mother isn't doing very well in other ways. Been threatened with appendicitis several times and of all times in the world, it is bothering her again. He thinks maybe I can quiet her down by keeping ice packs on her and starving her. I'll have to go. There's not another nurse free, but I will just stay until Friday night. He thinks Phyllis can surely leave her old man, then."

"A charity case?" Janet shrugged her shoulders. "Not a doubt in the world, but entitled to a chance to live. You will have to shop for me, Mother. Lucky we are the same size, and I can rest on board ship."

"Well, I'll be glad when you are safely on the high seas out of reach of that telephone!" spluttered her father. "Suppose there are nine children and a man, all of them in bed and nobody to do the work about the house! I wasn't keen on your being a nurse anyway, but since you are, I do wish you would stick to the hospital, and let general practice alone. I'll be there for you Friday night, relief or no relief, and you'll come home, too! What does the man expect for nothing!"

Janet looked over her bag to see that

all was in order before creeping into bed. On an impulse, she slipped into her mother's room and took three or four kitchen aprons from the drawer. One or two old probationer's uniforms of blue and white striped gingham followed her starchy white uniforms. There might be things to do out there that would play havoc with the immaculate white of the graduate nurse. She snatched her bag about and went to bed.

Out on Jim Creek the next day the young nurse blessed her forethought. The house was a three-room shack on ten acres of logged-off land. It had not a single convenience of any sort. The kitchen was equipped with an old-fashioned cookstove, one small table and a larger one, and some shelves on the wall for dishes. That was all, except a chair and an apple box for the water pail. There was no sink, no bathroom, and for light a kerosene lamp. On one of the two beds in the bedroom lay two sick children; on the other, the mother and baby. On a cot in the living room was Mr. Skaggs. The doctor had brought up an army cot for Janet and set it in the kitchen. If she slept at all it must be on that. She looked about her in dismay.

The doctor came back from the car with a block of ice and a bundle of other articles to be found in any hospital but painfully absent from this poor house. Janet watched an ice bag from the bundle and began to fill it. She had not had time to take off her coat yet, but she was definitely in charge. "Wrap up the rest of that ice in these old newspapers and that old piece of carpet and put it in that tub out on the porch," she ordered.

"Aye, aye," responded the doctor. Janet fixed an ice bag for the mother, a bottle for the baby, who was wheezy and did not want to eat, and then took a look at the two children in the other bed. "Did you bring out some tincture of benzoin?" she demanded.

"I did, Miss Stiles! And all the rest of the croup tent paraphernalia. Think I don't know my business?" responded the doctor, rigging up the contraption with deftness and dispatch. "Now, youngsters, what about camping out a while? Miss Stiles will even put a camp fire in your tent!"

"What about Mr. Skaggs here?"

"Oh, he's coming out of the woods. But you'll have to keep him in bed a week or so."

"A week!" gasped Janet, who had followed Doctor Lynn out to the car. "You promised to relieve me to-morrow night! You had better do it or my father will carry me off by force."

"Oh, so I did! Well, I'll try. Phyllis' old man isn't quite so frisky this morning, though."

"I can't help it if he isn't. He's in a hospital with other nurses around. He can get along. You bring Phyllis, no matter how he is."

"Um-um. Yes, I heard you. I'll be out again to-night and in the morning, too, if I can. No phone or I would not have to come so often." He threw in his clutch and started. "Remember, I would have chosen you if all the others had been free. I can depend on you."

He was gone. Janet turned and went back into the house. The day was hectic. Nursing seemed the least of it. The cow had not been milked since the day before. Janet had once learned to milk while summering at Grandfather Stiles', but she had never expected to have to use the accomplishment. It was the first task on the program now. On the way to the barn she noticed a strange commotion in the chicken yard. As one hen, the whole two hundred white leghorns raced madly along the fence that paralleled the path to the barn.

Janet hunted for grain and fed them. She then went on to her milking. That baby and the duck must have milk. There was wood to carry, water to

carry, patients to feed and bathe, floors to sweep, baby clothes to wash, and supposedly four clinical charts to keep up. Janet decided that time was too precious for so many charts, so kept only one for the mother, whose side seemed worse.

Eggnog! What a blessing to have an unlimited supply of fresh milk and eggs. She only wished the wood supply were as ample, for it was cold and growing colder. The stove was insatiable.

When Doctor Lynn came that night she approved all Janet had done but was too weary herself to see how tired she was. "Keep close watch to-night. The man is doing as well as can be expected and these children are a lot better; but I don't like this threat of appendicitis. I wish, I could get Mrs. Skaggs into the hospital."

Janet scented release. "Why don't you?" she asked eagerly.

"I can't get an ambulance over this road. It's little better than an old skid road. It's all I can do to get my smaller car up here in one piece, and I would not dare jolt Mrs. Skaggs over it now even if they would try to come. I think we had better fight it off, for the present, with ice and rest. When she's better, we can take her in—if she'll go. Watch her pretty closely to-night. I've got to get back. Phyllis' old man isn't a bit better. If I am up too much with him to-night, I may not be able to come back out here until to-morrow night."

Janet wished he would stay to help her. What did it matter about the old man? He was rich and able to send for all the specialists he wanted if Doctor Lynn was gone; but the little car was already bumping over the rough road.

The woman moaned. Janet applied ice tirelessly and went from bed to bed. Her old striped uniform and kitchen apron were dirty. Imagine her in white on this job! Well, to-morrow was Friday and Janet would get her out of this, if the doctor did not.

The doctor did not come next morning. Well, he had warned her that he might not be able to do so, but would surely come that night. So would Dad! Janet hurried out to milk and feed during the fitful morning sleep of her patients.

Mrs. Skaggs clung to her when Janet went in to take temperature. "You have saved those children," she cried. "God surely sent you. You will see us through, won't you? Oh!" Her face was contorted with pain. Janet was worried. That appendix was surely worse.

"I'll do my best," promised Janet. "Is my wife better?" asked Mr. Skaggs when she got around to him. He was far from being well enough to bear the truth so she put him off by saying she could hardly tell yet. His eyes followed her about the bare little room. "I feel as if I dared let go and rest now. It gives me confidence just to look at you."

So that was what being a nurse meant! Like a well in the desert, or the shadow of a rock in a weary land, the evidence of things not seen! Janet tried to answer lightly. "I've succeeded too well with young James. I'll probably have to spank him before the day is over to keep him in bed."

By dusk the young nurse was desperate. The cow was loving and the chickens had gone to bed hungry. She gathered up the last of the wood that Mr. Skaggs had split with the final desperate remnant of his strength before he took to his bed. It was not going to be enough and the air was sharp with frost. Surely Doctor Lynn would come soon. There was a change in Mrs. Skaggs' condition, but it was not a favorable one.

Janet had forgotten all about her father. She was putting the baby into a fresh gown and heating his milk when the doctor came. He had his instrument case with him. Had he then, feared this all the time? Phyllis was not with him!

"I've wondered about Mrs. Skaggs all day," he said. "Phyllis' patient nearly passed out on us, but she's got him now to where he has a show. He clings to me."

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+ FACTOGRAPHS +

Scientists say there are at least 10,000 earthquakes a year, or one every hour. Practically all of them are, of course, minor disturbances.

A man weighing 150 pounds should have a parachute 24 feet in diameter, having an area of 652 square feet. In still air he will drop at the rate of speed of from eight to ten feet per second.

Among talking birds are the cockatoo, cockatiel, lory, parakeet, turquoisine, love-bird, kea, lorikeet, macaw, conure, amazon, electus and parrot.

According to the United States shipping board, the weight ton in the United States and in British countries is the English long or gross ton of 2,240 pounds.

In plumbing, the term "seven-pound lead" is used to indicate sheet lead of such thickness that one square foot would weigh seven pounds.

During the early period of Washington Irving's writing career, he used the pseudonyms Jonathan Oldstyle, Launcelet Langstaff, Diedrich Knickerbocker and Geoffrey Crayon.

RINGSIDE ROMANCING IN HOLLYWOOD



A new spot for romancing, so far as screen people go, is the circus—but here, Rochelle Hudson and Richard Cromwell, both of them film players, try it at the Al G. Barnes circus in Los Angeles.

HON. ALISTAIR BUCHAN AT BEAGLE HUNT



Hon. Alistair Buchan, son of Lord Tweedsmuir, governor-general, is seen here as he took part in the season's first beagle hunt at Toronto and North York Hunt club. With him are Mrs. Aemilius Jarvis and Huntsman Pilcher. The hunt gathered at the Emerson Bateman farm.

Fires Follow in Wake of Southern Tornado

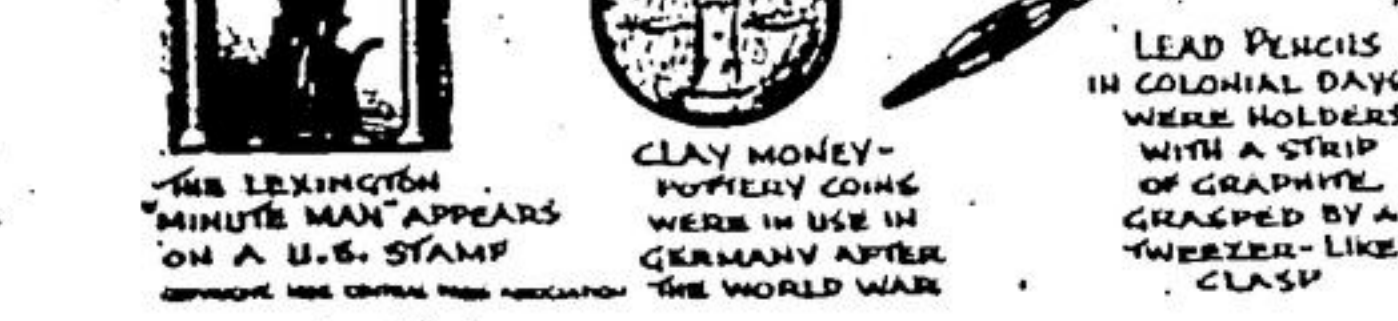


Broken gas mains, and electric their lives in the wind storm; and 1,000 more were injured. Property damage, that was greatly increased by the fires, will probably reach \$5,000,000. This picture shows a ground.

SCOTT'S SCRAPBOOK by R. J. SCOTT



THE WOOD ALONE OF THE CYPRESS 'EL TOLU' IN SANTA MARIA DEL TALE, MEXICO, WEIGHS 604 TONS - THE TREE IS FROM 5,000 TO 10,000 YEARS OLD AND IS CONSIDERED THE OLDEST LIVING ORGANISM ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH



LEAD PENCILS IN COLONIAL DAYS WERE HOLDERS WITH A STRIP OF GRAPHITE, GRASPED BY A 'WEEZEEL'-LIKE CLASP

THE LEXINGTON 'MINUTE MAN' APPEARS ON A U.S. STAMP

CLAY MONEY - NOTELY COME WERE IN USE IN GERMANY AFTER THE WORLD WAR

THE RIVER IN MONGOLS

ORANGE PEKOE BLEND "SALADA" TEA

AFTER EVERY MEAL WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT GUM THE PERFECT GUM AIDS DIGESTION

THEY JUST SEEM TO TASTE BETTER! Kellogg's CORN FLAKES

CROSS WORD PUZZLE with grid and clues for ACROSS and DOWN.