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About 2,400 words FHS-24

FOR THE WANT OF A THREAD THE SHIP WAS LOST

One glance into the main salon was enough for the Coast Guard officer, who had come up on the double when he heard, half distinctly, the word Fire! over the ship's P. A. system; the place was all in flames, but so far, the fire was confined to the salon itself. What puzzled him was that although there were people everywhere, no one was doing anything about it -- at least, anything effective.

He took a quick look around and saw a fire-hose, complete with nozzle, lying at his feet. Well -- this was a break! He scampered back along the hose, to find the hydrant-valve and turn on the water. He was there in seconds, and was more than mildly annoyed to discover that the hose was not connected to the big brass valve. Muttering something about stupid people, he grabbed up the end of the hose, jammed its ~~brass~~ coupling against the outlet of the valve and began to twist. It caught, went about a quarter of a turn -- and jammed. Thoroughly angry at what he thought now was his own clumsiness, he twisted the coupling to the left, re-set it and tried once more. Again it jammed -- and there dawned upon him the chilling, frightening truth: A French ship, with its hose cut to so many threads to the centimeter, in an American port where hose-couplings were measured at so many to the inch. By now, twisting ~~xxxx~~ streamers of fire and smoke were roaring out through openings into the salon, rapidly igniting everything combustible in their path.

All of this took place shortly after 2:30 p.m. of Feb. 9, 1942, at Pier 88, New York; the ship was the 80,000-ton French liner Normandie, just taken over by the United States government for conversion into a troop ship. *the world's second biggest ship*
She \$4,000,000 conversion would have been completed, but...
They knew that French and American hydrants and hose-couplings would not fit, and adapters had been specified -- but when the fire broke out, *transport. 1942*
ABANDONED TO THE SEA
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
WASHINGTON, D.C.