THE LAST VOYAGE OF THE DONNA ISABEL

BY RANDALL PARRISH
AUTHOR OF "DON HANNIFAN OF FLACER, ETC."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DEARBORN REEVILL

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SYNOPSIS.

The story opens with the introduction of John Stephens, adventurer, a Massachusetts man marooned by authorities at Valparaiso, Chile. Being interested in mining operations in Bolivia, he was denounced by Chile as an insurrectionist and as a consequence was hiding. At his hotel his attention was attracted by an Englishman and a young woman. Stephens rescued the young woman from a drunken officer. He was thanked by her. Admiral of the Peruvian navy confronted Stephens, told him that war had been declared between Chile and Peru and offered him the office of captain. He desired that that night the Esmeralda, a Chilean vessel, should be captured. Stephens accepted the commission. Stephens met a motley crew, to which he was assigned. He gave them final instructions. They boarded the vessel. They successfully captured the vessel supposed to be the Esmeralda, through strategy. Capt. Stephens gave directions for the departure of the craft. He entered the cabin and discovered the English woman and her maid. Stephens quickly learned the wrong vessel had been captured. It was Lord Darlington's private yacht, the lord's wife and maid being aboard. He explained the situation to her ladyship. Then First Mate Tuttle laid bare the plot, saying that the Sea Queen had been taken in order to go to the Antarctic circle. Tuttle explained that on a former voyage he had learned that the Donna Isabel was lost in 1753. He had found it frozen in a huge cage of ice on an island and contained much gold.

CHAPTER X.—Continued.

The change in the man speaking held me breathless; his cant, his usually oily method of utterance had merged into an earnestness full of fascination:

"Well, that was about all, sir," his voice sinking back into commonplace. "In two hours we were out o' sight, an' feelin' our way through a blindin' snow squall. But it was such a runthing, discoverin' them islands out there all uncharted, with that queer ghost ship perchin' on 'em, that I wrote down the latitude an' longitude an' the hooker's name in my log-book. We was about three weeks makin' the West Falklands, where I shipped a few more hands, an' then bore away north for home."

He drew a plug of tobacco from out his coat-tail pocket, cut off what he needed, and stowed it away in his cheek. He ran his fingers through his thin hair, and resumed:

'About 18 months later I was back with the ol' Betsy in the South Pacific. One night, with the moon shinin', hardly a ripple anywhere, my mate run her nose onto a rock, a couple o' hundred miles south o' Easter island, an' in less than 20 minutes the bark had gone down like a stone. We made Easter island in the boats without much trouble, but it wa'n't so easy to get away. I had six weeks of it before I got a chance, an' then I shipped afore the mast on a sandal-wood trader. De Nova here was mate, an' finally, huntin' goods to peddle among the islanders, we sailed into Valparaiso, an' the most of us shipped out. Well, by that time I wasn't thinkin' very often about that ice-ship down in the Antar'tic; I was hustlin' for some sort o' berth to take me back to the States. But one night, down in Rodrigues' back room, where I hung out, I got to talkin' with a gambler named Francisco—the same smooth duck who introduced himself as De Castillo to you, sir. He was an educated man, an' seemed to like to hear me talk, an' among other sea yarns I happened to tell him this one. He seemed mighty interested, although he wasn't never given to seafarin', an' asked me a whole pile o' fool questions. Finally he wanted to meet me again alone the next day.

"Well, having nothin' better to do, I was there when he came, an' he showed up with a queer-lookin', big, ol' book, the cover half ripped off, under his arm. Then he made me tell him that yarn over again, and describe the ship jest exactly as I remembered it. Then, when I'd got through, an' told him everything I could dig out o' my memory, he opened up that book o' his on the table, an' damme, sir, if he didn't show me a picture of that same ol' hooker, plain as life, only everything was trim an' shipshape on board, with the masts up an' the sails drawin'. The name was printed underneath, too—Donna Isabel, Cadiz.

"That book he showed me was printed in Spanish—not just like what you see to-day, sir, but the letterin' all rough, as though it had been cut out o' wood, but the fellow showed me the date when it was printed, an' it read 'Seville, 1779,' plain enough. Francisco wrote out in English what he said was printed there about this Donna Isabel; an' there it is, sir, in his own hand-writin'."

He took the paper out of his inner coat pocket and spread it open on the table before us. De Nova and Anderson leaned forward eagerly to look at it, but Tuttle shoved it along toward me.

"Read it out loud, sir," he said, his voice trembling. The writing was not clear, and I held it up to the light.

"Galleon Donna Isabel, ship-rigged, 950 tons, Amador, Master, built 1730, home port Cadiz. Sailed Guayaquil for Valencia, June 11, 1753; crew numbered 32, passengers 17, including five women; carried treasure, in gold ingots and pieces of eight, valued at 3,000,000 pesos, consigned by Candamo, presidente, to department of the west, receipted for by Salvatore, government agent. Spoken by ship Conquistador, Sanchez, master, July 16, 1753, 80 degrees 20 minutes west and 47 degrees 15 minutes south; all well. Lost at sea; no report."

I put down the paper, and looked across at Tuttle; he sat motionless, his head in his hands. I confess the tale had affected me strangely, and I could not doubt that the man honestly believed every word he had uttered. Yet it was far too marvelous ever to

He Drove His Sheath Knife Half to the Hilt Into the Table.

be true; too impossible; too wildly romantic. It must have been a hallucination, an optical illusion born from a mirage of fog and sun in those frozen seas. Over 3,000,000 pesos, locked within the eternal ice for 126 years! Over 3,000,000 pesos, guarded by the dead for a century amid that grim desolation of crested sea! God! it was simply unthinkable, and I even ventured to smile at the credulity of the men about me; yet I did it with set jaws and lips parched and dry. What if it was all true? I felt the blood boiling up through my veins, every extremity tingling with the fever of it. Over 3,000,000 pesos! Merciful mother! it was the ransom of a king; it was the temptation of hell! I know not how I controlled my voice, so as to question calmly, for, even as I first spoke, I noticed how my hands trembled where they rested on the outspread map.

"Is that all?"

Tuttle nodded his head, uplifting his eyes questioningly to mine.

"That's the whole of it, sir. What do you think?"

"That's more than I know, Mr. Tuttle. Perhaps you dreamed, perhaps Franciscco lied. I should have liked to see that book."

I bent lower over the chart, staring at the red cross.

"What was it you men wanted me for?"

"To operate the steamer, sir; the rest of us aboard only understand sailin' vessels."

"Yes, of course; but why did you happen to choose a steamer for the job? There were plenty of sailing craft lying in the harbor easier to steal than this yacht."

"Very true, but it happened to be steam power we wanted. Here is about how we figured it, sir. First place, we had to get away quickly out of those portions of the sea where they'd be most likely to hunt for us. We're outlaws, an' every ship sailin' under a flag is an enemy. Well, sir, what chance would a sailin' vessel have in such a chase? We needed somethin' that would show 'em a clean pair o' heels—somethin' that would give 'em a run for their money. That's what this yacht can do; she's pokin' it now at sixteen."

"Yes; you've got the advantage," I confessed, "so long as your coal lasts. But you can't put in anywhere for a new supply—what then?"

He turned partially about, and winked at De Nova; the fellow grinned back at him, but burst in eagerly:

"Oh, we're not quite so green as all zat, Mons. Stephens, an' I think we got de thing part out jus' 'bout right. We steam so till we get maybe far enough south w'ere zey quit look for us. How it be 130 degrees west an' 40 degrees south? Nobody think we go zere—non, non. We got coal plenty for zat, an' zen have bunch left. I know, I try it. No more need push her eizer after we leave ze Ferdandez—we be well ahead zen. Zen we rig up ze schooner sails, an' make ze next Cousan' mile without burn a pour. You see how it do? Ze danjaire was not, for in zat ocean we meet nossing but maybe ze whale ship."

"You understand what he means, sir!" went on Tuttle, as the creole paused for breath. "Once well ahead we can fall back on canvas, and save the coal. But we'll need the steam power down there to hold her off an' on by the island while we do the job. It's a mighty nasty bit o' water, an' a sailin' vessel is apt to get pinched in the ice. But with a steamer we can hold her to it, however the wind blows."

I looked at the fellow with greater respect. Evidently he had considered every angle of the desperate game he was playing.

"Your scheme certainly sounds reasonable enough," I admitted, almost reluctantly. "And the chances are you will get there all right. But suppose you do; suppose you discover this mysterious island; suppose you find there the galleon as you say; suppose you even succeed in getting aboard, and into possession of the treasure—what then? Don't you know you're bound to be caught the minute you come out of the Antarctic into any ocean patrolled by the fleets of the world? You have committed piracy—a crime against the nations—and the civilized world will unite to hunt you down."

"That's another reason why we had to have a steamer," he explained, calmly. "You just remarked that they'd be lookin' for the Sea Queen to come back. Well, let 'em look; they won't never see her, sir. Once we get that gold under hatches, an' back as far as that rock they call Dougherty island—an' that's only a run o' maybe 500 miles—I'll engage to make over this here Sea Queen so that her own captain wouldn't know her 50 feet away. How? I'd strip the engines out o' her, h'ist the stack overboard, tear down the bridge an' wheel-house, rig her as a barkentine, change every line o' paint fore an' aft, an' then wreck her somewhere along the east Patagonian coast, or maybe the Falklands. It would be nothin' but a bloomin' whaler gone ashore, an' afore anybody finds out different, we'll be scattered to hell an' back."

I was obliged to acknowledge to myself that it was not an impossible plan. Eliminating the chance of accident or some unusually bad luck, success appeared not only possible, but probable.

"Did you think all that out yourself, Mr. Tuttle?"

"Well, Francisco suggested considerable, but we did it together."

"Where is he? on board?"

The mate laughed, his eyes expressive of contempt.

"Not much, he hadn't the nerve. He's a schemer all right, but a blame coward."

"But suppose he gets to talking back there in Valparaiso?"

It was big Bill Anderson who answered me, disgusted with our long controversy.

"Oh, to hell wid Francisco!" he broke in, gruffly. "It's wat you're goin' to do we want to know. Francisco'll hold his gaff well enough. He expects a bit of the swag, an', besides, I let him know what was comin' to him if he let his tongue wag. I had him right, let me tell ye. An', damme, Mr. Stephens," the bully in him breaking all bounds, "if it ain't comin' the same way to any other duffer who goes back on us this trip. That's what talks!" He jerked his sheath-knife from his belt, and, with one fierce lunge, drove it half to the hilt into the table, his brute eyes scowling threateningly into mine.

CHAPTER XI.

In Which I Explain to Her Ladyship.

I gazed directly into his bullying eyes with a depth of contempt I made no slightest effort to disguise. Then I arose deliberately to my feet.

"Anderson, pluck that knife out and put it back in your belt."

"I'm damned if—"

"Do as I say quick, you surly brute," I interrupted, sternly. "Not another word. I'm in command here yet, and you'll obey orders, or I'll make you."

He understood I meant it, with his innate cowardice plainly apparent, yet did not yield until Tuttle interfered with a sarcastic laugh.

"The captain isn't exactly the sort to be handled in that kind o' way, Bill," he said, smoothly. "He's a deep-water sailor, not a land-shark, but I guess he's likely ready enough by this time to say what he's willin' to do."

The entire situation seemed to unroll before me like a panorama as I stood there, hastily making up my mind for action. I was afloat on the high seas, absolutely powerless to resist the set purpose of these men surrounding me, all rendered desperate by greed. Much as I despised Anderson, I comprehended that his threat was no idle one; nor did I possess a single comrade on board who would stand at my back. I was utterly alone; nay, worse even than alone—with two women dependent upon me. If I outwardly agreed with those rascals, and thus retained semblance of command over them, I might possibly preserve all our lives; I could, at least for the the present, protect the women from insult, perhaps from danger.

"Well, Mr. Tuttle," I said, quietly, "I may as well return you my answer one time as another. I don't give a tinker's damn for Anderson's threats, and I don't altogether put much faith in your yarn. But perhaps it's worth taking a chance at. What is to be my authority on board, providing I agree to go with you?"

"You're the captain."

"Absolutely in command?"

He shifted about, appearing a trifle disconcerted under my rapid questioning.

"Well, yes; in everything concernin' the discipline an' sailin' of the yacht," he explained. "There won't be no fuss about that job, sir. But we ain't a regular articled crew, bein' that we're all here on shares in the enterprise, an' so, as regards the purposes of the voyage, it'll have to be decided by majority vote. However, that don't need make no trouble."

"What is to be my share if you find the treasure?"

He thrust his head out of the window nearest him, looking up and down the deck; then he leaned across the table toward me, lowering his voice until it was little more than whisper.

"You get one-fifth, sir; the four of us here get one-fifth each; the other fifth is to be divided among the crew. Ain't that fair enough, sir?"

"It would appear so; yet there is still another matter of some importance to be decided first. There are two women on board; how about them?"

"What!" The vibrant excitement of his high-pitched nasal voice was echoed by the others.

"This steam-yacht we have stolen was the property of the earl of Darlington," I explained. "Lady Darlington and her maid are still on board, in the cabin aft."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Not a Dealer in Flattery

African Native Gave Straight Answer to Straight Question.

The negroes of Africa are simple and direct in speech. It never occurs to them, writes Mr. R. H. Milligan in "The Jungle Folk in Africa," that the purpose of language is to conceal thought, and to commiserate the African for his color is a waste of sympathy. In illustration of this Mr. Milligan gives an amusing conversation with one of his pupils.

One day when I was talking to Bolodi, something in the course of the conversation prompted be to ask him whether he would like to be a white man. He replied respectfully but emphatically in the negative. I wished to know his reason. He hesitated to tell me, but I was insistent, and at last he replied:

"Well, we think we are better-looking."

I gasped when I thought of the vastly ill-looking faces I had seen in the jungles, and in apology for myself, I said:

"But you have not seen us in our own country, where there is no malaria, and where we are not yellow and green."

He quietly asked what color we were in our own country, to which I promptly replied, "Pink and white."

Looking at me steadily for a moment, he remarked:

"Mr. Milligan, if I should see you in your own country I don't believe I should know you."—Youth's Companion.

True and False Friendship.

False friendship is like the ivy, which decays and ruins the wall it embraces; but true friendship gives new life and animation to the object it supports.—Burton.

THE BOY APPETITE

WHY MEN OF MILLIONS ENVIED COMPANION.

All of Them Had Cash to Buy Anything That the World Could Produce, But Not That One Thing.

Simmons is private secretary to a well-known business man, and he had just explained to a couple of friends that the reason he had been unable to see them during the previous week was that his evenings had been occupied in taking down the minutes of a couple of important conferences in which his boss figured.

"And I'll bet," said Huntley, enviously, "that they didn't do a thing but talk money, and that they threw around the millions the same as we would nickels."

"No," said Simmons slowly, "the money talk wasn't very enthusiastic. Of course the business was important, but it consisted mostly of considering and disposing of reports. I wished lots of times I was home in my bed before it was over. Probably they did, too, for the only time they grew at all animated was the last evening, when the discussion drifted into the matter of eating. That was after the business was concluded."

"And of course," said Huntley, "it was nothing but terrapin and truffles and champagne and French messes that cost a dollar a minute to look at. That's all those fellows eat. They wouldn't enjoy it unless it cost a lot of money."

"You're away off," said Simmons. "The talk about eating wasn't confidential and wouldn't bring them into conflict with the interstate commerce act, so I can tell you what it was. The old man started it by saying: 'Boys, I was up-state recently and I had a feed that would knock your eye out.'"

"Don't give us that," said Huntley, contemptuously, "that old fellow wouldn't eat anywhere except in the Plazteria or some such place."

"Well, he did this time, and when he spoke the others sat up and listened. He said: 'Yes, I had a regular old-fashioned feed. Hot boiled ham, hot corn bread with lots of good butter, apple sauce and tea. I ate 'till I was ashamed of myself, and I don't know when anything tasted better, slipped down easier, or digested so soothingly. I'd like to have an appetite like that every day and the same kind of good grub to satisfy it.'"

"And they gave him the laugh for being a vulgarian, I suppose?" said Huntley.

"They kind of didn't," said Simmons decidedly. "Old Cash the banker shook his head enviously and said: 'You lucky dog! I'd like to be up against the same thing in a country farmhouse right now.'

"That's where the boss got it, you know. He was a country boy and he was eating, probably, the very thing that appealed to him when he was a kid. The thing the others envied was that his boy's appetite came back to him and he had the very thing to satisfy it. But they knew, also, that the appetite and the food can't be had in combination in New York."

Greece Remembers Byron.

The centenary of Byron's arrival in Greece was celebrated at Missolonghi with great solemnity, the town being decorated for the occasion. All the local authorities, the archbishop and the clergy, the troops of the garrison, and a great crowd from all the neighboring districts, assembled in the public garden in the afternoon, where the students from the gymnasium and the children from all the schools marched in procession to the poet's statue, on which they deposited a wreath. Speeches were delivered, and a hymn to Byron by the Greek poet, Solomos, was sung. The mayor addressed a dispatch to the British minister in Athens expressing the deep gratitude of the inhabitants for the immortal benefactor, whose remains repose in their keeping.

Portuguese Conspiracy.

The murder at Cascaes of a man engaged in stealing cartridges from the Lisbon custom house has led to the discovery of a vast conspiracy to overthrow existing institutions in Portugal. A number of secret clubs are said to be implicated, and quantities of masks, long cloaks, and disguises, as well as explosives, daggers, and other arms, have been seized. Several arrests have been made, and some of the prisoners have made significant confessions. In the course of their investigations the police learned that the murdered man and others belonged to the Republican clubs, which are divided into secret societies for the purpose of overthrowing existing institutions.

Houseless Embassies.

Frederick Townsend Martin, at a dinner in Washington, said of the movement toward the governmental purchase of embassy buildings for its ambassadors:

"France, I see, has just bought the Farnese palace in Rome for her embassy. Spain, little Spain, owns that magnificent palace in the Plazza di Spagna, near Pinle's library. And we—what have we?

"After all," said Mr. Martin, smiling, "it isn't true that it makes no difference where a man resides. How many of us know a single thing about Diogenes except that he lived in a tub?"

In Conflict with Critics.

Between the whole press of Copenhagen and all the theatrical managers, a curious contest has started because the managers want to garnish the critics to write only favorable notices. The contest began when the board of theatrical managers forbade the admission of one critic representing a special theatrical paper.

About Aviation.

"Do you know anything about the cost of flying?"

"No, but I can tell you all about the cost of not flying."

"The cost of not flying?"

"Yes, I was introduced to a widow yesterday, and instead of flying I stopped to talk to her; now I am engaged."

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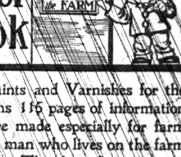

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