THE LAST VOYAGE OF THE DONNA ISABEL

BY RANDALL PARRISH
AUTHOR OF "BOB HAMPTON OF PLACER," ETC.

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There Was a Smile Upon Her Lips and a Mist of Tears in Her Eyes.

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 case of ice on an island and contained much gold. Stephens consented to be the captain of the expedition. He told Lady Darlington. She was greatly alarmed, but expressed confidence in him. The Sea Queen encountered a vessel in the fog. Stephens attempted to communicate. This caused a fierce struggle and he was overcome. Tuttle finally squaring the situation. Then the Sea Queen headed south again. Under Tuttle's guidance the vessel made progress toward its goal. De Nova, the mate, told Stephens that he believed Tuttle, now acting as skipper, insane because of his queer actions. Stephens was awakened by crashing of glass. He saw Tuttle in the grip of a spasm of religious mania and overcame him. The sailor upon regaining his senses was taken ill. Tuttle committed suicide by shooting. Upon vote of the crew Stephens assumed the leadership and the men decided to continue the treasure hunt, the islands being supposed to be only 200 miles distant. Tuttle was buried in the sea, Lady Darlington pronouncing the service. Stephens awaking from sleep saw the ghost, supposed to have formed the basis for Tuttle's religious mania. Upon advice of Lady Darlington, Stephens started to probe the ghost. He came upon Lieut. Sanchez, the drunken officer he had humbled in Chile. He found that at Sanchez' inspiration, Engineer McKnight played "ghost" to scare the men into giving up the quest. Stephens announced that the Sea Queen was at the spot where Tuttle's quest was supposed to be. The crew was anxious to go on in further search. De Nova and Stephens conquered them in a fist fight. Lady Darlington thanked him. The Sea Queen started northward. She was wrecked in a fog. Stephens, De Nova, Lady Darlington and her maid being among those to set out in a life boat. Ten were rescued. Stephens saw only one chance in a thousand for life. Lady Darlington confessed her love to Stephens and he did likewise. Lady Darlington told her life story; how she had been bartered for a title, her yearning for absent love. She revealed herself as the school chum of Stephens' sister. She expressed a wish to die in the sea rather than face her former friends and go back to the old life. A ship was sighted. The craft proved to be a derelict. They boarded her. She was frozen tight with hundreds of years of ice. The vessel was the Donna Isabel, lost in 1753, 126 years previous. The frozen bodies of the former crew were removed.

CHAPTER XXIV.—Continued.

That breakfast was the first warm meal any of us had enjoyed for five days, and we ate it together, sitting about on the galley deck. The men were unusually silent, even the voluble Kelly holding his tongue. No doubt their thoughts were with their perilous situation and the grewsome task confronting them; yet they partook heartily of the food, and I endeavored by every means in my power to arouse their courage and cheerfulness. To that end I dwelt on the possibility of the wealth that might be concealed between decks, promising an early search. But I spoke most to Lady Darlington, admiring greatly the easy manner in which she bore herself amid such rude surroundings and adapted herself to the necessities of our situation. All semblance of pride and exclusiveness had vanished, and she was a simple-hearted woman, bearing her trials with silent fortitude. Only once did she even refer to our discoveries aft, and then only to appear perfectly satisfied when I explained that the cabin was in such disorder it would have to be cleaned before fit for occupancy. Rough as the experience of the previous night had been, her dress soiled, her hair ruffled, never had she appeared more attractive than when, sitting in the midst of us on that galley deck with the gray daylight streaming in through the broken roof, the ruddy flames of the fire flickered across her face. I saw the men glance toward her in respectful admiration as they filed out one by one, and thus left us for a moment alone. No matter what words I whispered in the brief time before I joined them, but as I glanced back where she remained standing, there was a smile upon her lips and a mist of tears in her eyes. As for myself, I was prepared for the work of the day.

The urgent need of getting some form of sail up and of releasing the rudder was indeed imperative; any approach of storm would have found us utterly helpless. Yet we could not live on board with those frozen bodies aft. I left Dade busied in the galley, and took the others with me. They went reluctantly, grumbling among themselves, yet I permitted them no opportunity for open revolt, driving them to the work I had decided upon, and shaming them by leading the way myself.

I need not dwell upon the unpleasant details. The most disagreeable portion fell to me, although Johnson took hold like a man after the first few moments of reluctance. The others devoted themselves diligently to scraping off the ice, gathering up and casting overboard the accumulation of litter about the main cabin and the various staterooms, and assisting us only as we passed the heavy, rigid bodies through the stern-ports. We performed this unpleasant task of burial hastily, but with all gentleness; there was little to do except to wrap the stiffened figures as best we might, weight them, though they were themselves like stone, and consign them to the gray sea. Not heartlessly, but with unspoken prayers upon our lips, we watched them sink silently into the depths they had resisted so long. Never shall I forget the face of the child, as it was to be buried, nor the sickening feeling with which I sank back upon a bench, staring about the vacated cabin when the awful task was finally accomplished; yet the realization that it was over with, the cabin cleared and habitable, made new men of all of us. The bedding was brought forth and aired before the open ports, the furniture restored to position, and a fire started in the huge box-stove. This quickly warmed the icy interior and yielded a new aspect of cheerfulness. De Nova and Kelly explored the steward's pantry, discovering a quantity of frozen biscuit, several hams rigid as rock, together with numerous flasks of some liquid turned into solid ice. We found candles, also, hard as nails though they burned fairly well after a period of sputtering, and we fitted six of them into the great lantern. By noon we had completed the work, and had brought Lady Darlington and Celeste aft for dinner.

CHAPTER XXV.

In Which We Learn the Story of the Donna Isabel.

The short Antarctic day left us little opportunity for the work on deck. However, I kept the men employed as long as possible, first setting them at hauling up the longboat and stowing it safely away under shelter, and then at untangling some of the raffle forward. They went at this last task rather unwillingly, for it was carried on in full view of that ice-casketed figure guarding the forecastle, yet they got out two fairly serviceable spars and a considerable amount of cordage so protected by the ice coating as to be still of value. When we finally knocked off and started aft in a body, a dark, cloudy night was about us, the snow falling so thickly as to make it impossible to see across the deck. Dade was busily preparing supper in the wrecked galley, the red glare of his fire shining forth through the drifting flakes, while glimpses of light stole out in welcome from the forward cabin windows.

The latter appeared shipshape and cheerful enough as we slid back the door and stepped within. Scarcely a reminder was left of that horrible interior dominated by death which had been revealed to me a few hours before by the smoky glare of the torch. While we were laboring forward to clear the deck, Doris and Celeste evidently had also been diligently employed, and with womanly intuition had given to the desolate interior a home-like touch which was irresistible. I could only come to a pause—gazing about, and wondering if we could really be afloat upon a century-old wreck, tossed helplessly on the waters of the Polar sea. The odd, old-fashioned swinging lantern threw violet-hued rays over the snug scene, while in the center the table, covered by a spotless cloth, was fairly glistening in a brilliant display of ancient silver, newly polished, and of decorated glass. Doris, who had been engaged in giving the arrangement some final deft touches, turned instantly at the sound of our entrance, her sweet face brightening with interest as she read the amazement pictured in my eyes.

"You have actually worked a marvel!" I exclaimed, admiringly. "Where in the world did you unearth such a display?"

"From a locker behind the steward's pantry," she replied, smilingly. "But, oh," with a shiver, "it was most bitterly cold in there when we first opened the door. I actually had to wait half an hour before venturing in. Yet you should have seen what we found; this is not half—the silver service was simply magnificent; and see—every piece is beautifully engraven with a fac-simile of the ship, and a masterpiece of art."

I gazed at the bit of plate handed me, weighing it in my hand, and studying the decidedly elaborate scroll.

"I have read that these old galleons were often furnished regardless of expense," I said, "and the Dons were high livers. Did you make any other discoveries?"

"Only several cases of liquor, but all were frozen solid. The lazarette opens from the pantry, and we succeeded in lifting the trap-door, but the cold of the air which came up was so intense that we were compelled to drop it again immediately. I never imagined such an atmosphere possible."

"It is the breath of 126 years of polar winter," I explained. "This very cabin was of that same temperature when we first broke through its ice covering."

She pressed her palms to her temples, staring about her at the gray, gold-decorated interior.

"Do you actually mean to tell me that—that this wreck has been drifting and tossing about all that time?" she questioned unbelievingly.

"No, not drifting and tossing about, but solidly imbedded within the ice far south of this. This vessel is the Donna Isabel—the same one Tuttle saw—and her log-book lies in that farthest state-room yonder. Its last entry was made in September, 1753."

She sank down upon the bench, her eyes upon my face, and I heard her lips repeating softly: "September, 1753, September, 1753," as though the conception could hardly find acceptance in her mind. The men were grouped close beside the entrance, while De Nova and Celeste had gone forward to assist Dade in bringing his supper from the galley, so that for the moment we were comparatively alone. As I bent over, wondering what I had best say, she questioned quickly, with a little sharp indrawing of the breath:

"And—and the people, Jack,—the—crew? What became of them?"

"Dead more than a century ago," I answered solemnly. "I did not stop this morning to read the log, and so I know little of their story. But the vessel itself tells of storm and of long struggle in the ice; probably most of those on board perished from exposure and cold."

Her hands clasped mine, her cheeks white from apprehension.

"Were—were there any—any bodies—here?"

"Yes," I replied reluctantly, not daring to say otherwise.

"How—how many?"

"Four men, a woman, and a child."

An instant she stared into my face; then swept her eyes about the lighted cabin, only to bury them within her hands, her whole body trembling.

"A—a woman and child! Here! here! for 126 years! Oh, merciful God!" she lifted her eyes again, filled with horror, her hands clenched. "They—they were actually here, appearing natural? looking as they did in life?"

"Yes; they seemed to be sleeping, for they had been solidly frozen in the very attitudes in which they died. The woman rested on the couch yonder. She had beautiful dark hair and eyes, and must have been about 30 years of age. The child was in a bunk, a little flaxen-haired girl of three or four."

"And—and you buried them?"

"As best we could. We wrapped them in blankets, and consigned them to the deep, with a prayer for their souls." I bent closer. "Doris, dear, don't let this rest so heavily upon you. I wish I might have kept it all hidden. It was only the end of one of the innumerable tragedies of the sea. We must face our own needs now, and that task will require all our courage."

I thought she did not hear me, the tears continuing to fall between her fingers, half-suppresed sobs shaking her form. Yet as I rested my hand upon her shoulder, she looked up at me out of moistened eyes, her lips firmly set.

"Yes—yes; I know, Jack, but—but it is all so terrible, and—and has come to me with such a shock. I can not comprehend it—that they should have actually been here—here, all those years—waiting! But I will not think of it any longer; I—I will do something to make me forget."

We all messed together, sitting upon the long benches drawn up about the table, Dade waiting upon us, with Doris and Celeste occupying places between De Nova and myself. At the beginning we spoke little, the strangeness of our surroundings holding us silent, but the minds of all being busy with the same thought, we insensibly drifted into conversation regarding our chances of rescue, and the history of the old vessel in whose cabin we floated. Once De Nova introduced the subject of the treasure which might be stored away below deck, and the men exhibited their interest by numerous question; but I gave them little encouragement along this line, realizing that for the present our earliest effort should be to transform the wreck into some degree of safety—a sail first, and a clean rudder; these attained, the search for treasure might begin.

What a scene and group that was!—the wintry night without, the drifting fog of snow, the helpless hulk rising and falling upon the treacherous heave of the sea, that odd, violet-colored light gleaming over us. The faces are even before me—the girlish looking Celeste, with her dark curls and white teeth; Lady Darlington, her gray eyes still moist as she glanced about the interior, unforgetful of its memories; De Nova, jaunty as ever, with no thought beyond the present, recalling to my mind with every movement the face of that dead Spaniard who for more than a century had sat where he was sitting; Sanchez, pale and with that hunted look, a counterpart no doubt of some seaman this ship had known in other days; McKnight, burly and red-necked; Kelly, his blue eyes filled with the merriment of old Ireland; Johnson, broad-shouldered, and sober-faced, eating steadily, with never a lift of his shaggy brows; and Dade, fluttering about like a waiter ashore, with his eternal smirking and suggestion of a tip.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Ancients Loved Oysters.

That the oyster was in common use by primeval man has been conclusively shown by the discovery in the "kitchen middens" of Denmark of many thousands of oyster shells, showing every evidence of having been artifically opened. In ancient Greece, also, the oyster apears to have been a recognized delicacy, for Dr. Henry Schliemann, the eminent German archaeologist—who, it will be remembered, became an American citizen during the great California gold rush—in his historic search for the ancient and somewhat mythical city of Troy, found many oyster shells in the ruins of the five prehistoric settlements of Hissarlik.

But it was Rome in the height of her power and opulence that, by singling out the oyster as the piece de resistance of the Roman banqueting halls, conferred upon the oyster its just title as one of the most delicious and appetizing foods within the grasp of man.—National Magazine.

Something to Fall Back On

Thoughtful Wife Had Provided Husband with a Sample.

He stood irresolutely in front of the woman's stocking counter for a few minutes, then, with a determined expression on his face he elbowed his way between two women shoppers and accosted the saleslady.

"Have you any light blue stockings?" he said; "you see I—"

"Gents' furnishings, third counter to the left," drawled the girl, as she reached for a box on the upper shelf.

"No, I don't want them for myself," said the man, getting red. "You see, my wife is in the country and she wants me to get two pair of light blue silk stockings for her."

"Oh, what size?" asked the girl, with a foolish smile.

"Well, that's what I have been trying to figure out," confessed the man, growing nervous. "Don't they all come about the same size? You see, she told me the size, but I can't recall it."

"Oh, no; they run in half sizes, from 6 to 14," giggled the girl.

"Huh," said the man; "well, I suppose I will have to do it," and he reached in his inside pocket and slowly drew out a dainty light blue stocking.

"She gave me this in case I forgot," he said, in confusion.

ONE REASON FOR STATUES

Not Altogether Devoid of Common Sense Was Answer Given to Inquisitive Child.

A Washington dentist praised enthusiastically the respect paid to the memory of Horace Wells by the French government. It has erected recently a statue of him in the Place des Etats Unis, in Paris, and the unveiling ceremony in March was attended by distinguished scientists from all over the world.

"Professor Wells," said the dentist, "was born in Hartford in 1815. He was a pioneer in the use of nitrous oxide gas in dental operations to prevent pain, and for his discoveries in anaesthesia he may be regarded as a benefactor to mankind.

"Wells has been dead 50 years, and France is the first—a tardy first—to acknowledge the importance of his discovery, and raise a tribute to his almost forgotten memory. This case reminds me of a conversation between a little boy and his father.

"'Why are statues erected to famous men, father?' said the child.

"'So that they may become known, dear,' was the answer."

LOADED TO THE GUARDS.

Jiggs—What makes Boozer have such a vacant look?

Jaggs—I guess he's full.

GNAT CAUSES PELLAGRA.

Committee on Disease in Europe Says Corn Is Not to Blame.

London, May 14.—Dr. Sambon, a member of the Field committee which has been investigating the disease pellagra, telegraphs from Rome that the committee has definitely proved that maize or Indian corn is not the cause of pellagra.

The committee finds that the parasitic conveyor of the disease is the "simulium repans," a species of biting gnat.

At the Bovine Faucets.

"I sent my little boy on his first visit to the country last week," said a Washington Heights milk dealer. "Although my boyhood was passed on the old farm, Willie has grown to the age of eight in the city. He had been watching Uncle Hezekiah milk the cow on his first evening, and when he returned to the house his aunt asked him:

"'Is Uncle Hezzie through milking yet, Willie?'

"'Not yet,' answered Willie. 'He has finished two faucets and has just begun on the other two.'"

Casey at the Bat.

This famous poem is contained in the Coca Cola Baseball Record Book for 1910, together with records, schedules for both leagues and other valuable baseball information compiled by authorities. This interesting book sent by the Coca Cola Co., of Atlanta, Ga., on receipt of 2c stamp for postage. Also copy of their booklet "The Truth About Coca Cola" which tells all about this delicious beverage and why it is so pure, wholesome and refreshing. Are you ever hot—tired—thirsty? Drink Coca Cola—it is cooling, relieves fatigue and quenches the thirst. At soda fountains and carbonated in bottles—5c everywhere.

Made His Reputation.

Harker—That fellow Bilkins is an enthusiast, isn't he?

Parker—That's what! You know he likes to speak of himself as a sportsman?

Harker—Yes.

Parker—Well, the only thing he ever did in that line was to go on a wild goose chase three years ago.

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"D' know as he does," confessed the Squam Corners merchant, "but his views on the criminal rapacity of the trusts are a whole lot sounder."—Puck.

Still a Chance.

"Have you ever loved and lost?" asked the sweet young thing.

"Not yet," replied the man who had been divorced three times.

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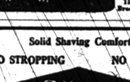

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