SPANISH DOUBLOONS

By

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Jane Harding, respectable and conservative old spinster—but never too old to think of marriage—with more money than brains, is inveigled by a strong-minded spinster, Miss Higglesby-Browne, into financing an expedition to hunt for buried treasure on Leeward Island. Her niece, Virginia Harding, undertaking to stop her, gets on the vessel engaged for the hunt, and in the confusion is unwillingly carried along.

CHAPTER II.—By no means concealing her distaste for the expedition and her contempt for its members, Virginia makes the acquaintance of the Honorable Cuthbert Vane, and is somewhat impressed.

CHAPTER III.—Talking with Dugald Shaw, the leader of the expedition, Virginia very frankly expresses her views, practically accusing Shaw and the other members of the party, including a somewhat uncertain personage, Captain Magnus, and a shady "financier," Hamilton H. Tubbs, of being in a conspiracy to defraud Miss Jane Harding. Their relations, naturally, are somewhat strained.

CHAPTER IV.—Landing on the island is a matter of some difficulty, Virginia being carried ashore in the arms of Cuthbert Vane, to her disquietude. The landing, however, is safely effected.

CHAPTER V.—Led by Miss Higglesby-Browne, the party draws up an agreement whereby Virginia Harding is barred from participation in the profits of the expedition. Believing the whole thing to be a fraud, Virginia is not greatly worried. Cuthbert Vane alone votes against the exclusion of Virginia.

CHAPTER VI.—Wild pigs abound on the island, and "Cookie," the colored member of the party, insists he has seen a "hant," in the form of a white pig. During a walk Virginia meets the "hant," a white bull terrier, and proudly brings him into camp.

CHAPTER VII.—On the island is the hut of a copra gatherer, and the presence of the dog, named "Crusoe" by Virginia, is thus accounted for. Rambling about, and feeling herself not to be a regular member of the expedition, Virginia comes upon a sand-imbedded sloop, the Island Queen. Returning to the camp, she is intercepted by Captain Magnus, who accosts her unpleasantly. She escapes him, with the aid of "Crusoe."

CHAPTER VIII.—Fired with the idea of herself discovering the treasure, Virginia pays a visit to the cave which has been singled out as the most likely place in which it has been concealed, and there she is caught by the tide and rescued by Dugald Shaw, from certain death. Thinking her unconscious, Shaw whispers words of endearment, which she treasures.

CHAPTER IX.—In idle curiosity Virginia, dabbling about the wreck of the Island Queen, finds a diary, identified only as having been kept by "Peter," a former seeker of the treasure. In it he tells of his finding of the hidden wealth and there her reading is interrupted.

The descent of the gully proved an easy matter, and soon I was on the sand beside the derelict. Sand had heaped up around her hull, and filled her cockpit level with the rail, and drifted down the companion, stuffing the little cabin nearly to the roof. Only the bow rose free from the white smother of sand. Whatever wounds there were in her buried sides were hidden. You felt that some wild caprice of the storm had lifted her and set her down here, not too roughly, then whirled away and left her to the sand.

Crusoe slipped into the narrow space under the roof of the cabin, and I leaned idly down to watch him through a warped seam between the planks. Then I found that I was looking, not at Crusoe, but into a little dim inclosure like a locker, in which some small object faintly caught the light. With a revived hope of finding relics, I got out my knife—a present from Cuthbert Vane—and set briskly to work widening the seam.

I penetrated finally into a small locker or cubby-hole, set in the angle under the roof of the cabin, and, as subsequent investigation showed, so placed as to attract no notice from the casual eye. I ascertained this by lying down and wriggling my head and shoulders into the cabin. In other words, I had happened on a little private depository, in which the owner of the sloop might stow away certain small matters that concerned him intimately. Yet the contents of the locker at first seemed trifling. They were an old-fashioned chased silver shoe-buckle, and a brown-covered manuscript book.

The book had suffered much from dampness, whether of rains or the wash of the sea. I seated myself on the cabin roof, extracted a hairpin, and began carefully separating the close-written pages. The first three or four

I Made Out a Word Here and There.

were quite illegible, the ink having run. Then the writing became clearer. I made out a word here and there:

"....directions vague....my grandfather——man a ruffian but....no motive....police of Havana....frightful den....grandfather made sure....registry....Bonny Lass...."

And at that I gave a small excited shriek which brought Crusoe to me in a hurry. What had he to do, the writer of this journal, what had he to do with the Bonny Lass?

Breathlessly I read on:

"....thought captain still living but not sure....lost....Benito Bon...."

I closed the book. Now, while the coast was clear, I must get back to camp. It would take hours, perhaps days, to decipher the journal which had suddenly become of such supreme importance. I must smuggle it unobserved into my own quarters, where I could read at my leisure. As I set out I dropped the silver shoe-buckle into my pocket, smiling to think that it was I who had discovered the first bit of precious metal on the island. Yet the book in my hand, I felt instinctively, was of more value than many shoe-buckles.

Safely in my hammock, with a pillow under which I could slip the book in case of interruption, I resumed the reading. From this point on, although the writing was somewhat faded, it was all, with a little effort, legible.

THE DIARY.

"If Sampson did live to tell his secret, then any day there may be a sail in the offing. And still I cannot find it! Oh, if my grandfather had been more worldly wise! If he hadn't been too intent on the eternal welfare of the man he rescued from the Havana tavern [illegible] about his story. A cave on Leeward Island—nearby a stone marked with the letters B. H. and a cross-bones—'I told the captain,' said the poor dying wretch, 'we wouldn't have no luck after playing it that low down on Bill!' So I presume Bill lies under the stone.

"Well, all I have is in this venture. The old farm paid for the Island Queen—or will, if I don't get back in time to prevent foreclosure. All my staid New England relatives think me mad. A copra gatherer! A fine career for a minister's son! Well, when I get home with my Spanish doubloons there will be another story to tell. I won't be poor crazy Peter then. And Helen—oh, how often I wish I had told her everything! It was too much to ask her to trust me blindly as I did. But from that moment I came across the story in grandfather's old, half-forgotten diary—by the way, the diary habit seems to run in the family—a very passion of secrecy has possessed me. If I had told Helen, I should have had to dread that even in her sweet sleep she might whisper something to put that ferret, her stepmother, on the scent. Oh, Helen, trust me, trust me!

"December 25. I have a calendar with me, so I am not reduced to notching a stick to keep track of the days. I mark off each carefully in the calendar. If I were to forget to do this, even for a day or two, I believe I should quite lose track. The days are so terribly alike!

"My predecessor here in the copra-gathering business, old Heintz, really left me a very snug establishment. It was odd that I should have run across him at Panama that way.

"Christmas Day! I wonder what they are all doing at home?

"December 28. Of course the cave under the point is the logical place. I have been unable to find any stone marked B. H. on the ground above it, but I fear that a search after Bill's tombstone would be hopeless. Under circumstances such as those of the mate's story, it seems to me that all the probabilities point to their concealing the chest in the cave with an opening on the bay. To get the boat, laden with the heavy chest, through the surf to any of the other caves—if the various cracks and fissures I have seen are indeed properly to be called caves—would be stiff work for three men. Yes, everything indicates the cavern under the point. The only question is, isn't it indicated too clearly? Would a smooth old scoundrel such as this Captain Sampson must have been have hidden his treasure in the very place certain to be ransacked if the secret ever got out? Unless it was deeply buried, which it could have been only at certain stages of the tide, even old Heintz would have been apt to run across it in the course of his desultory researches for the riches of the buccaneers. And I am certain placid old Heintz did not mislead me. Besides, at Panama, he was making arrangements to go with some other Germans on a small business venture to Samoa, which he would not have been likely to do if he had just unearthed a vast fortune in buried treasure. Still, I shall explore the cave thoroughly, though with little hope.

"Oh, Helen, if I could watch these tropic stars with you tonight!

"January 6. I think I am through with the cave under the point—the Cavern of the Two Arches, I have named it. I peered into every crevice in the walls, and sounded the sands with a drill. I suppose I would have made a more thorough job of it if I had not been convinced from the first that the chest was not there. Shall I ever forget the feeling that stirred me when first I turned the pages of my grandfather's diary and saw there, in his faded writing, the story of the mate of the Bonny Lass, who died in Havana in my grandfather's arms? My grandfather had gone as supercargo in his own ship, and while he did a good stroke of business in Havana—trust his shrewd Yankee instincts for that—he managed to combine the service of God with that of Mammon. Many a poor drunken sailor, taking his fling ashore in the bright, treacherous plague-ridden city, found in him a friend, as did the mate of the Bonny Lass in his dying hour. Oh, if my good grandfather had but made sure from the man's own lips exactly where the treasure lay! It is enough to make one fancy that the unknown Bill, who paid for too much knowledge with his life, has his own fashion of guarding the hoard. But I ramble. I was going to say, that from the moment when I learned from my grandfather's diary of the existence of the treasure, I have been driven by an impulse more overmastering than anything I have ever experienced in my life. It was, I believe, what old-fashioned pious folk would call a leading. All my life I had been irresolute, the sport of circumstances, trifling with this and that, unable to set my face steadfastly toward any goal. Yet never, since I have trodden this path, have I looked to right or left. I have defied both human opinion and the obstacles which an unfriendly fate has thrown in my way. All alone, I, a sailor hitherto of pleasure-craft among the bays and islands of the New England coast, put forth in my little sloop for a voyage of three hundred miles on the loneliest wastes of the Pacific. All alone, did I say? No, there was Benjy the faithful. His head is at my knee as I write. He knows, I think, that his master's mood is sad tonight. Oh, Helen, if you ever see these lines will you realize how I have longed for you—how it sometimes seems that my soul must tear itself loose from my body and speed to you across half a world?

"February 1. Since my last record my time has been well filled. In the Island Queen I have been surveying the coasts of my domain, sailing as close in as I dared, and taking note of every crevice that might be the mouth of a cave. Then, either in the rowboat or by scrambling down the cliffs, I visit the indicated point. It is bitterly hard labor, but it has its compensations. I am growing hale and strong, brown and muscular.

"So far I have discovered half a dozen caves, most of them quite small. Any one of them seemed such a likely place that at first I was quite hopeful. But I have found nothing. Usually the floor of the cave beneath a few inches of sand is rock. Only in the great cave under the point have I found sand to any depth. I go always on the principle that Captain Sampson and his two assistants had not time for any elaborate work of concealment. Most likely they laid the chest in some natural niche. Sailors are unskilled in the use of such implements as spades, and besides, the very heart of the undertaking was haste and secrecy. They must have worked at night and between two tides, for few of the caves can be reached except at the ebb. And I take it as certain that the cave must have opened directly on the sea. For three men to transport such a weight and bulk by land would be sheer impossibility.

"February 10. Today a strange, thing happened—so strange, so wonderful and glorious that it ought to be recorded in luminous ink. And I owe it all to Benjy! Little dog, you shall go in a golden collar and eat lamb-chops every day! This morning—"

Across my absorption in the diary cut the unwelcome clangor of Cookie's gong. Right on the breathless edge of discovery I was summoned with my thrilling secret in my breast, to join my unsuspecting companions. I hid the book carefully in my cot. Not until the light of tomorrow morning could I return to its perusal. How I was to survive the interval I did not know. But on one point my mind was made up—no one should dream of the existence of the diary until I knew all that it had to impart.

CHAPTER X.

Miss Browne Has a Vision.

Perhaps because of the secret excitement under which I was laboring, I seemed that evening unusually aware of the emotional fluctuations of those about me. Violet looked grimmer than ever, so that I judged her struggles with her mundane consciousness to have been exceptionally severe. Captain Magnus seemed even beyond his wont restless, loose-jointed and wandering-eyed, and performed extraordinary feats of sword-swallowing. Mr. Shaw was very silent, and his forehead knitted now and then into a reflective frown. As for myself, I had much ado to hide my abstraction, and turned cold from head to foot with alarm when I heard my own voice addressing Crusoe as Benjy.

A faint ripple of surprise passed round the table.

"Named your dog over again, Miss Jinny?" inquired Mr. Tubbs. Mr. Tubbs had adopted a facetiously paternal manner toward me. I knew in anticipation of the moment when he would invite me to call him Uncle Ham.

"I say, you know," expostulated Cuthbert Vane, "I thought Crusoe rather a nice name. Never heard of any chap named Benjy that lived on an island."

I tried to rally from my confusion, but I knew my cheeks were burning. Looks of deepening surprise greeted the scarlet emblems of discomfiture that I hung out.

"By heck, bet there's a feller at home named Benjy!" cackled Mr. Tubbs shrilly, and for once I blessed him.

Aunt Jane turned upon him her round innocent eyes.

"Oh, no, Mr. Tubbs," she assured him, "I don't think a single one of them was named Benjy!"

The laughter which followed this gave me time to get myself in hand again.

"Crusoe it is and will be," I asserted. "It happens that a girl I know at home has a dog named Benjy." Which happened fortunately to be true, for otherwise I should have been obliged to invent it. But the girl is a cat, and the dog a miserable little high-bred something, all shivers and no hair. I should never have thought of him in the same breath with Crusoe.

(To Be Continued.)

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The Caroline County Bank,
Greensboro, Md., December 29, 1921
This bank will close all day on Monday, January 2d, it being a legal holiday. All notes payable here and maturing on that day may be paid on the day following.
T. CLAYTON HORSEY, Cashier

The Farmers & Merchants Bank,
Denton, Md., December 29, 1921
This bank will close all day on Monday, January 2d, it being a legal holiday. All notes payable here and maturing on that day may be paid on the day following.
HERMAN E. HIGNUTT, Cashier

The Denton National Bank,
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This bank will close all day on Monday, January 2d, it being a legal holiday. All notes payable here and maturing on that day may be paid on the day following.
W. I. NORRIS, Cashier

The Peoples Bank,
Denton, Md., December 29, 1921
This bank will close all day on Monday, January 2d, it being a legal holiday. All notes payable here and maturing on that day may be paid on the day following.
T. J. JOHNSON, Cashier,

FIFIELD—FLUHARTY

Mr. Raymond Fifield and Miss Mildred Fluharty were married at the home of the bride on Sixth Street at four o'clock, Sunday afternoon, December 25th. The bride was becomingly attired in blue georgette and carried a bouquet of bride's roses. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. V. E. Hills, pastor of the M. E. Church.

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"The time is ripe," the walrus said,
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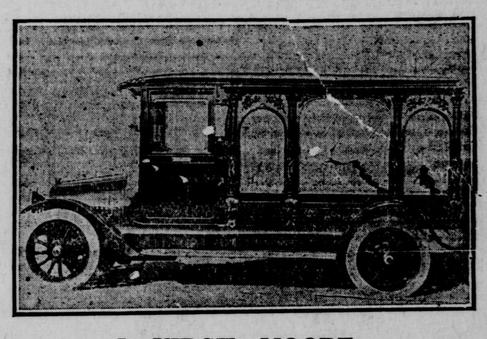

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