

The Trail of the Dead:

THE STRANGE EXPERIENCE
OF DR. ROBERT HARLAND

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CHAPTER XX.—(Continued.)

The Irishman vanished and again came the murmur of voices. Then he reappeared, unlocking the grating and descending the ladder. At the edge of the hole I could see the faces of several members of the crew and caught the gleam of drawn knives. Evidently they did not trust us.

When it was over, we followed Blake up the ladder and waited quietly while he laid out Graden's revolver and our few belongings on the flap of a central table behind which the captain was standing. A short speech by the worthy, and the Irishman began again:

"The skipper wud have ye know," he said, addressing Graden with a growing dignity that would have been comic enough at a less unfortunate moment. "that ye stand accused iv carrying off the ould gint yonder and committin' burglary on his person. Fwhat do ye say to that, sorr?"

"It is absolutely untrue."

"Wan for him, thin. But O'm to ask ye how ye account fer th' possession iv that pocket-book the skipper is holding so loving in his hand. He says that there's close on five hundred pounds in it. Is ut yours?"

"No—it belongs to the ould gentleman."

"The mischief it does! Then how did ye come by ut?"

I feel certain that if my cousin could have told his story directly to the captain, the honesty of his manner and the simplicity of his narration would have had effect. But this pleading at second-hand was a sorry business. From his long pauses and facial contortions I soon gathered that Blake was not the linguist that he claimed to be. Indeed, the version which the captain received from him must have been something astounding. The tale was scarcely concluded when the captain raised his hand, and the floundering of the interpreter ceased abruptly.

Thus was his decision translated. He would touch at Southampton, where the case could be fought out in the English courts. In the meanwhile, as the evidence was overwhelmingly against us, we should be placed in irons and confined in the cabin where we then were.

He was a just man. Angry though I was at the time, I have come to think he did the right thing. The harmless appearance of Marnac, his ability to plead his cause, our obvious endeavor to keep him from communicating with the crew, our possession of so valuable a pocketbook belonging to him—no, we cannot blame the captain if he decided in his favor.

To attempt resistance would have been absurd. The men about us carried knives, and the butt of a heavy revolver showed warningly from the captain's pocket. For the first time in either of our lives the handcuffs snapped at our wrists. They moved out one by one; the door was closed and barred upon us. In another three minutes we were both asleep. Our ill-fortune, the doings of our worst enemy, the irons at our wrists—we forgot them all in the dead, still sleep that Nature grants to the very weary.

It was Blake who woke us with our midday meal. He was in his most talkative mood. Guilty or innocent, it made small difference to him, after he had decided upon the fact of our gentility. He was agog with the manner of Marnac's escape from us. The lad who was servant to the captain had been down in the lazarette, and from pure curiosity had poked up the trap in the cabin floor. With promises of money, Marnac had persuaded the youngster to guide him to the captain. In their haste they had forgotten to close the trap and grating behind them, though they had secured those at the head of the second ladder. Marnac had waited in the captain's room while the lad went forward to find his master. It was doubtless their interview that Graden had observed from the bridge. When the supposed victim of our plot had told his story, they had armed themselves and come to arrest us, calling the Irishman and two more of the crew in case of resistance. They had found us below—a source of delight to the Portuguese sailors, who had a healthy terror of Englishmen; and the rest we knew.

"Come, my man," said my cousin after he had concluded, "for yourself, now—do you believe us guilty?"

"Faith, sorr, 'tis a quare business entirely," he answered, scratching his red pole indecisively. "For whether 'tis you or the ould gentleman that they'll lay by the heels in Southampton Water, it's not fer me to be after saying. Sure 'tis wan of the two—which is all Oi knows."

"Now, listen to me, Tim Blake," said my cousin. "My name is, as I told you, Sir Henry Graden, and I am a rich man. I am not asking you to neglect your duty, which is to keep us in; but if you will have an eye to the door so as to keep that ould gentleman out, there'll be five and twenty pounds in your pocket."

Whatever the Irishman may have thought of our characters, there was no doubt as to his belief in the genuine nature of the offer. He beamed upon us with a childlike jubilation that was quite comic in its enthusiasm.

"Indade, sorr, indade, and I will!" he cried.

"Have you the key?"

"I have, sorr. Wud your honor like to kane it? You can turn the lock whin

I knock fower times."

"That will hardly do," said my cousin, laughing. "We might have the captain visiting us, which would mean a change of jailers. Now, as to the trap door—is that also secured?"

"The lad we spoke of—he has the key, sorr. May the mischief seize him!"

"We can't leave it like that. See if you can fix it up to better advantage."

Blake raised the outer block of wood which fitted level with the flooring, and inspected the grating below. It was secured by a padlock—a precaution necessary enough, for honesty is not the prevailing characteristic of a Portuguese crew. After a moment's thought, he drew his pocket a handful of rubbish from which he extracted a large nail. Graden's boot served as a hammer, and with this he drove it into the keyhole.

"'Twill hold it foine!" cried he, regarding his work with exultation.

And so, with fresh assurances of watchfulness, he left us.

CHAPTER XXI.

The wind rose again that afternoon, and by four o'clock it was blowing very hard. The seas drove against the sides of the old ship in thunderous murmurs; now and again they sprang the bulwarks, crashing down upon the deck above us and shaking the iron fabric in convulsive tremors. In the confined cabin my nausea visited me again. Enough that I was supremely miserable.

At six, Blake had brought us a supper. His presence irritated me; and when he pressed food upon me, I spoke my mind strongly on the lamentable want of tact general amongst sailors. He gave us the comfortable news, however, that we were expected to reach Southampton by three next morning.

The night crawled on. Blake had helped us into bunks and covered us with rugs. I found the handcuffs of small inconvenience. I could hear Graden snoring. For myself, I could not go to sleep, but lay in the lowest misery, staring at the opposite partition, that rose and fell at the ship's rollings with a sickening regularity. Just before midnight, the lamp—that had probably been injured when Graden fell in the lazarette—smoked, flared, and expired. I was too unwell to care, except for the smell.

Yet it was the darkness which saved our lives.

It was about half an hour later that I first noticed it—a faint ray of illumination winking in the center of the cabin floor. At first I imagined that the nausea had affected my eyes, and so peered into the black of the night, rubbing them impatiently. But the rays steadied and, if anything, increased in volume. It was a ghostly thing to witness, this white knife-edge of light stabbing up from the solid planking without cause or explanation. I was about to shout to Graden when I remembered the trapdoor. Someone was below in the lazarette!

For some moments I remained staring at the crevice through which the rays passed up to me. After all, it might be some member of the crew; but if not—if it were old Marnac! What then? He was an old man; he could not force the grating, even if he had obtained the key. We had seen to that.

I do not pretend to say that I was unafraid. There were devilish possibilities in a hatred such as that in which the mad professor held us. Yet after a while my curiosity overcame my fear, just as my fear had put aside my sickness. I rolled from my bunk—noisily enough, I dare say, but all sound was dulled by the turmoil without. The pitchings of the vessel made it impossible for me to stand, so I crawled forward to where the edge of the trap was outlined. I felt for and found the ring, gripped it with my teeth, and slowly, for the irons hampered my balance, raised the edge. Then with my hands I thrust the edge of the boot, which I had removed for that purpose, into the crack. Flat on my face, I peeped below.

It was indeed Marnac. The light of a ship's lantern, jammed between two barrels, drew streaks of silver from his white hair as he bent to his labor. Seated astride one of the steel cylinders that we had noticed, he was unscrewing the last of the nuts which secured its iron cap. What he intended I had no idea.

He was fingering the nut which the spanner had loosened, when I saw a face creep out of the shadow behind him. It was the captain's boy. With infinite caution he moved forward, with a blending of alarm and curiosity in his manner and showed he was no party to what was proceeding. Probably the key to the lazarette had been purloined from him, and he had discovered its loss. When scarcely two yards from Marnac, the lurch of the ship threw him from his balance. As he stumbled forward, Marnac spun round with a scream of the most violent passion. Swinging the heavy hammer, he brought it down upon the bent head with a scorching blow. The lad had dropped upon the floor face downwards; nor did he try to rise again.

"Murderer!" I cried down upon him, in horror at so fearful a spectacle.

Marnac dropped his weapon and started back, his fingers twitching, his eyes searching wildly round for a sight of his accuser. Yet when, at last, he saw my face above him, he drew himself together without a sign of trepidation—save that the hand with which he

gripped the stairs still shook slightly.

"Ach! but it is you," he whispered up. "For a moment I thought—but it was the folly of a child. And so, Mr. Harland, you come again to trouble me. Well, it is for the last time—mark you that—for the very last time."

He sat himself across the cylinder. As he did so I felt a hand upon my shoulder, and knew that Graden was awake.

"You might have spared the lad," he said very quietly.

Marnac looked up with one of the

beast-like glances that showed the disordered brain.

"It was a necessity," he said. "He would have prevented my act of justice upon you—upon you who have tried so hard to hinder me in my revenge upon my enemies who are also the enemies of science. Do you understand what I am about?"

"Perhaps," answered my cousin grimly, and at the word he jerked away my boot, letting the trap fall into its place.

"To the door, Robert," he whispered.

"To the door and shout for help, or it is all over with us. He must have noticed the ammonia cylinder this afternoon. If he turns the tap, that stuff will choke the life out of us. The gas is under immense pressure and will pour up into this den like water from a fire-hose. Run, man, run!"

I staggered across the heaving cabin to the door and dropped upon my knees, hammering with my irons and screaming for aid. It seemed to me that the thunders of the storm redoubled in violence, as if Nature was conspiring to shout me down. Once I looked round and saw that the light about the trap had gone. Graden had smothered the spot with blankets. Presently he came groping to me, raising his voice in hoarse bellows.

And then it happened.

There came an acrid, piercing scent to my nostrils, that grew and grew until my lungs seemed to contract, so that I fought for very breath. My cries ceased. I struggled to my feet, with my head raised like a bird shot through the lungs. Brilliant lights flashed in my eyes; there were hollow drumming in my ears. And then it seemed that the air left me in a vacuum. I fell, and forgot it all.

It was daylight when I remember facts again. The motion of the ship had ceased, and there was an English stranger by my side. My chest felt bruised and battered, and my eyes still watered freely. Also I was very weak and ill.

"My cousin?" I faltered.

"We have got your friend round," said the doctor—for so I felt that he must be, "also the other man."

"What man?"

"The man who pulled you out after the cylinder exploded. A red-headed fellow—Blake, I think his name is. You owe your lives to him. You had both fainted when he opened the door."

"Then he heard us, after all! Tell me—what became of Marnac?"

"I really don't know about him. I don't think he was injured. Oh! perhaps you mean the ould gentleman who bolted?"

"Bolted?"

"Yes, of course there was great excitement over the accident. The captain was dreadfully cut up over the death of his servant. He could not imagine how it came about. When the ship arrived here, Mr. Marnac, or whatever his name was, slipped away by a shore-boat, while everyone was fussing over you. Your friend has gone to inquire about him, I fancy. The ould man had something against you both, hadn't he? Or was it you against him?"

"Both, doctor, both," I whispered, shutting my eyes.

(To be continued.)

Too Great a Risk.

He desired to take out a life policy for \$50,000.

Smiling eagerly, the agent drew forth the blank form and began the usual series of questions.

"Query six," he said at length—"are you an automobilist?"

"No," was the ready rejoinder, "I am not."

"Motor cyclist, perhaps?"

"No."

The agent, with a sigh, laid down his pen.

"I am sorry," he said, "but we no longer insure pedestrians."—*Minneapolis Journal.*

The Worm Turned.

A village doctor whose most troublesome patient was an elderly woman practically on the free list, received a sound rating from her one day for not coming when summoned the night before.

"You can go to see your other patients at night," said she, "why can't you come when I send for you? Ain't my money as good as other people's?"

"I don't know, madam," was the reply, "I never saw any of it."—*Lippincott's.*

Thanks to Carnegie.

"Carnegie is the greatest man that ever lived."

"Tell that to the marines."

"What have you against the owner of Skibo?"

"Why, he made me lose my girl. Wrote a letter to her in the phonetic language, she thought I couldn't spell and gave me the shake."

Square with the World.

"Thank goodness," said Bunkum, "I can once more look the world in the face."

"Because why?" queried Winkum.

"Because the last of my debts was outlawed yesterday," explained Bunkum.

Modern Buccaneers of the Pacific



Within a few weeks the Pacific has yielded two stories of pirates, at a time when piracy was generally believed to have become one of the lost professions. Developments have shown that the black flag, metaphorically speaking, still flies over craft in the Pacific ocean, although the times of those captivating gentry who scoured the Spanish Main of the Atlantic have indeed passed away forever.

Compared with the Pacific Ocean, the Atlantic is a narrow body of water, but the Pacific, the romantic old South Sea famed for financial "bubbles" and for the adventures who have sought it for their country's good, is almost boundless in its extent. The combined navies of the world could not properly police the great sea, and it has innumerable islands, charted and uncharted—spots of land which appear and disappear in the immense depth of its waters in the most erratic and unexpected manner.

But the commerce on the Pacific is considerable and constantly growing. Great ships, some of them the equal of the trans-Atlantic "greyhounds," with the regularity of a suburban train, ply between the continents. Rich materials, bullion, money are coming and going in the ships. Millions of money are always being conveyed upon its waves. Here, then, is the scene prepared for the pirates. All that is necessary is the

buccaneer himself. He is there, too. Generally speaking, he is a Chinese. But there are men from the Occident willing "to take a chance" to turn the golden flood rolling their way.

Almost every port on the Pacific has its quota of adventurers. Most of them must have grown tired of their own names, for they use others, and usually their means of support are not ostentatious. These human wrecks are to be found from San Francisco to Sydney. The Hawaiian Islands are not free from their presence; they can be found upon the beach at Apia, but in the treaty ports of China they congregate in numbers.

At Shanghai is collected the flotsam and jetsam of the world. There are many mysterious Englishmen, Americans and others stranded there. The secret of their means of existence is shown occasionally in the consular police court. They keep dives, they league themselves with notorious natives in smuggling transactions, and now and then during a dispute with a Chinese whom they were endeavoring to cheat in a dubious business scheme somebody is murdered. The lawless, the embezzlers, the welchers who have been forced to abandon connection with their home towns find a refuge in Shanghai, where "something always is turning up" for a man who rises superior to his conscience.

These modern buccaneers are "captains of industry." They organize raids, plan piracies, but it is the wily native who is entrusted with the execution of the schemes. Most of the master minds do not care to risk their precious lives, while there are plenty of disreputables in the native quarters willing for a few dollars to cut a throat or lead an attack upon a liner. Some of the adventurers live by blackmail, others by giving tips to native pirates and robbers of where loot may be found. Hong Kong, Macao, Nagasaki and Singapore all have their quota of these cosmopolites.

NEW ENGLAND ECONOMY DISPLAYED ON TOMBSTONE.



In a cemetery at Granby, Mass., stands a curious tombstone. It was erected by Gad C. Preston, and he had to use both sides of the stone to record the names of his dead wives, of whom there were six. The inscriptions are as follows:

ON FRONT OF TOMBSTONE.
Erected to the Memory of
Electa Barton, died March 14, 1824, aged 26 years.
Theodocia Church, died April 2, 1840, aged 45 years.
Mary Wood, died Sept. 26, 1813, aged 45 years.
Lucy W. Alden, died Aug. 20, 1844, aged 40 years.
Olive L. Arnold, died Sept. 13, 1848, aged 35 years.
All Wives of Gad C. Preston.
Ephraim A., son of Gad C. and Olive L. Preston, died July 25, 1847, aged 9 months.

ON BACK OF TOMBSTONE.
Gad Clark Preston, died Feb. 14, 1876, aged 81.
Mary B. Dimick, died June 7, 1870, aged 68 (a wife).
Clarissa Preston, died Nov. 30, 1859, aged 21.

DOOM OF THE FARM HORSE.

Agricultural Motor Car May Supercede Doblin in the Fields.

Good-by Doblin, the faithful and sturdy old farm horse. No longer will "the plowman homeward plod his weary way." Instead he will simply turn on the second speed of his agricultural motor car and go dashing up the lane to the farmhouse at the rate of twenty miles an hour.

In the early months of 1902 what proved to be the first successful gasoline agricultural motor appeared, contesting at nearly all of the great agricultural competitions of the season in England and carrying off the gold medals from the horse in every contest.

Plowing proved to be the first phase of farm labor to which the agricultural motor was introduced and at which four years ago it made its initial reputation. Steam engines had proven too heavy for the soft land being plowed and here the agriculturists expected to mire the internal combustion motor, but they signally failed. For a plowing

test among horses, steam power and the gasoline motor two and three-quarter acres of very heavy clay soil were selected. It was a condition that the furrows were to be nine inches wide and six inches deep. In doing the work nine horses, three to a plow, with three drivers and three boys, did the work at a total cost of \$8.25, or at the rate of \$3.68 an acre. By steam power the total cost of plowing the same area amounted to \$9.80, or at \$4.08 an acre, and with the gasoline motor the cost totaled \$4.44, or at \$1.97 an acre. For plowing purposes a three-furrowed plow is invariably used except in heavy clay soils where a couple of furrows prove sufficient. — *Technical World.*

Fast.

The Soubrette—You say you're not on speaking terms with the manager? The Comedian—Precisely. I always require a written contract.—*Puck.*

"Another nice day," said a citizen today, to a well known grunt. "When was the other one?" the grunt inquired.