

PIECES OF EIGHT

BEING THE AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE OF A TREASURE DISCOVERED IN THE BAHAMA ISLANDS IN THE YEAR 1903—NOW FIRST GIVEN TO THE PUBLIC.

Richard Le Gallienne

Book I.

CHAPTER I.

Introduces the Secretary of the Treasury of His Britannic Majesty's Government at Nassau, New Providence, Bahama Islands.

During the summer of 1903 I was paying what must have seemed like an interminable visit to my old friend John Saunders, who at that time filled with becoming dignity the high-sounding office of secretary of the treasury of his majesty's government, in the quiet little town of Nassau, in the island of New Providence, one of those Bahama Islands that lie half lost to the world to the southeast of the Caribbean sea and form a somewhat neglected portion of the British West Indies.

Time was when they had a sounding name for themselves in the world; when the now sleepy little harbor gave shelter to rousing freebooters and tarry pirates, tearing in there under full sail with their loot from the Spanish Main.

But those heroic days are gone, and Nassau is given up to a sleepy trade in sponges and tortoise shell, and peace is no name for the drowsy tenor of the days under the palm trees and the scarlet poincianas.

Here a handful of Englishmen, clothed in the white linen suits of the tropics, carry on the government after the traditional manner of British colonies from time immemorial, each of them, like my friend, not without an English smile at the humor of the thing, supporting the dignity of offices with impressive names—lord chief justice, attorney general, speaker of the house, lord high admiral, colonial secretary and so forth.

My friend the secretary of the treasury is a man possessing in an uncommon degree that rare and most at-

tractive of human qualities, companionableness. As we sit together in the hush of his snugger of an evening, surrounded by guns, fishing lines and old prints, there are times when we scarcely exchange a dozen words between dinner and bedtime, and yet we have all the time a keen and satisfying sense of companionship. It is John Saunders' gift. Companionship seems quietly to ooze out of him, without the need of words.

And occasionally we have as third in those evening conclaves a big, slow-smiling, broad-faced young merchant of the same kidney. In he drops with a nod and a smile, and takes his place in the smoke cloud of our meditations, radiating without the effort of speech that good thing—humanity; though one must not forget the one subject on which now and again the good Charlie Webster achieves eloquence in spite of himself—duck shooting.

John Saunders' subject is shark fishing. Duck shooting and shark fishing. It is enough. Here, for sensible men, is a sufficient basis for life-long friendship, and unwearied, inexhaustible companionship.

It was in this peace of John Saunders' snugger one July evening in 1903, the three of us being duly met and ensconced in our respective armchairs, that we got onto the subject of buried treasure. It was I who started us off by asking John what he knew about buried treasure.

At this John laughed his funny little quiet laugh. "Buried treasure!" he said; "well, I have little doubt that the islands are full of it—if one only knew how to get at it."

"Seriously?" I asked. "Certainly. Why not? Weren't these islands for nearly three centuries the stamping ground of all the pirates of the Spanish Main? Morgan was here. Blackbeard was here. The very governors themselves were little better than pirates. This room we are

sitting in was the den of one of the biggest rogues of them all—John Tinker—the governor when Bruce was here building Fort Montague at the east end yonder; building it against pirates, and little else but pirates at the Government house all the time. A great old time Tinker gave the poor fellow. You can read all about it in his 'Memoirs.' Nassau was the rendezvous for all the cutthroats of the Caribbean sea. Here they came in with their loot, their doubloons and pieces of eight; and John's eyes twinkled with enjoyment of the rich old romantic words, as though they were old port.

"Here they squandered much of it, no doubt, but they couldn't squander it all. Some of them were thrifty knaves, too, and these, looking around for some place of safety, would naturally think of the bush. The niggers keep their little hoards there to this day."

"It is their form of stocking," put in Charlie Webster.

"Precisely. Well, as I was saying, those old fellows would bury their hoards in some cave or other, and then go off—and get hanged. Their ghosts perhaps came back. But their money is still here, lots of it, you bet your life."

"Do they ever make any finds?" I asked.

"Nothing big that I know of. A Jug full of old coins now and then. I



"Those Old Fellows Would Bury Their Hoards."

found one a year or two ago in my garden here—buried down among the roots of that old fig tree."

"Then," put in Charlie, "there was that mysterious stranger over at North Cay. He's supposed to have got away with quite a pile."

"Tell me about him," said I.

"Well, there used to be an old eccentric character in the town here—a halfbreed by the name of Andrews. John will remember him—"

John nodded.

"He used to go around all the time with a big umbrella, and muttering to himself. We used to think him half crazy. Come so brooding over this very subject of buried treasure. Better look out, young man!"—smiling at me. "He used to be always grubbing about in the bush. Well, several years ago there came a visitor from New York, and he got thick with the old fellow. They used to go about a lot together, and were often off on so-called fishing trips for days on end. Actually, it is believed, they were after something on North Cay. At all events some months afterward the New Yorker disappeared as he had come and has not been heard from since. But since then they have found a sort of brick vault over there which has evidently been excavated. I have seen it myself. A sort of walled chamber. There, it's supposed the New Yorker found something or other. That's the story for what it's worth."

As Charlie finished John slapped his knee.

"The very thing for you!" he said; "why have I never thought of it before?"

"What do you mean, John?" we both asked.

"Why down at the office I've got the very thing. A pity I haven't got it here. You must come in and see it tomorrow."

"What on earth is it? Why do you keep us guessing?"

"Why, it's an old manuscript that came into my hands a short time ago. Charlie, you remember old Wicks—old Billy Wicks—'Wrecker' Wicks, they called him—"

"I should say I do. A wonderful old villain—"

"But the document, for heaven's sake," I said. "The document first; the story will keep."

"Well, they were pulling down Wicks' own house just lately, and out of the rafters there fell a roll of paper—now I'm coming to it—a roll of paper, purporting to be the account of the burying of a certain treasure, telling the place where it is buried, and giving directions for finding it—"

Charlie and I exclaimed together; and John continued, with tantalizing deliberation:

"It's a statement purporting to be made by some fellow on his deathbed—some fellow dying out in Texas—a cyan-fam pirate, anxious to mak-

his peace at the end and to give his friends the benefit of his knowledge."

"Oh, John!" said I. "I shan't sleep a wink tonight."

"I don't take much stock in it," said

John. "I'm inclined to think it's a hoax. Someone trying to fool the old fellow. . . . But, boys, it's bed-time, anyhow. Come down to the office in the morning and we'll look it over."

So our meeting broke up for the time being, and taking my candle I went upstairs, to dream of caves over-flowing with goldpieces, and John Tinker, fierce and mustachioed, standing over me, a cutlass between his teeth and a revolver in each hand.

CHAPTER II.

The Narrative of Henry P. Tobias, ex-Pirate, as Dictated on His Death-bed, in the Year of Our Lord 1856.

The good John had scarcely made his leisurely, distinguished appearance at his desk on the morning when I entered by one door and Charlie Webster by the other.

"Now for the document," we both exclaimed in a breath.

"Here it is," he said, taking up a rather grimy-looking roll of foolscap from in front of him, which, as he pointed out, was evidently the work of a person of very little education and began to read as follows:

County of Travis, State of Texas, December 1853.

Feeling my end is near, I make the following statement of my own free will and without solicitation. In full exercise of my faculties, and feel that I am doing my duty by so doing.

I was born in the city of Liverpool, England (on the 15th day of December 1784). My father was a seaman and when I was young I followed the same occupation. And it happened, that when, on a passage from Spain to the West Indies, our ship was attacked by free-traders, as they called themselves, but they were pirates.

We all did our best, but were overpowered, and the whole crew, except three, were killed. I was one of the three they did not kill. They carried us on board their ship and kept us until next day when they asked us to join them. They tried to get us to join them willingly, but we would not, when they became enraged and loaded their cannon and blasted each one of us before the mouth of each cannon and told us to take our choice to join them as they would touch the guns and that damn quick. It is useless to say we accepted everything before death, so we came one of the pirates' crew. Both of my companions were killed in less time than six months, but I was with them for more than two years, in which time we collected a vast quantity of money from different ships we captured and we buried a great amount in two different lots. I helped to bury it with my own hands. The location of which it is my purpose to point out, so that it can be found without trouble in the Bahama Islands. After I had been with them for more than two years, we were attacked by a large warship and our commander told us to fight for our lives, as it would be death if we were taken. But the guns of our ship were too small for the warship, so our ship soon began to sink, when the man-of-war ran alongside of our vessel and tried to board us, but we were sinking too fast, so they had to haul off again, when our vessel sank with everything on board, and I escaped by swimming under the stern of the ship, as our ship sank, without being seen, and holding on to the ship until dark, when I swam to a portion of the wrecked vessel floating not far away. And on that I floated. The next morning the ship was not seen. I was picked up by a passing vessel the next day as a shipwrecked seaman.

And let me say here, I know that no one escaped alive from our vessel except myself and those that were taken by the man-of-war. And those were all executed as pirates—so I know that no other man knows of this treasure except myself and it must be and is where we buried it until today and unless you get it through this statement it will remain there always and do no one any good.

Therefore, it is your duty to trace me up and get it for your own benefit, as well as others, so delay not, but act as soon as possible.

I will now describe the place, locations, marks, etc., so plainly that it can be found, without any trouble.

The first is a sum of one million and a half dollars (\$1,500,000).

At this point John paused. We all took a long breath, and Charlie Webster gave a soft whistle and smacked his lips.

"A million and a half dollars. What ho!"

Then I, happening to cast my eye through the open door, caught sight of a face gazing through the ironwork of the outer office with a fixed and glittering expression, a face anything but prepossessing, the face of a half-breed, deeply pockmarked, with a coarse hook nose and evil-looking eyes, unnaturally close together. It was evident from his expression that he had not missed a word of the reading.

"There is someone in the outer office," I said, and John rose and went out.

"Good morning, Mr. Saunders," said an unpleasantly soft and cringing voice.

"Good morning," said John, somewhat grumpily, "what is it you want?"

It was some detail of account, which, being dispatched, the man shuffled off, with evident reluctance, casting a long, inquisitive look at us seated at the desk, and John, taking up the manuscript once more, resumed:

The other is a sum of one million and one half dollars—buried at a cove known as Dead Men's Shoals, near Nassau, in the Bahama Islands. About fifty feet (50 ft.) south of this Dead Men's Shoals is a rock, on which we cut the form of a compass.

And twenty feet (20 ft.) East from the cove is another rock on which we cut a cross (X). Under this rock it is buried four feet (4 ft.) deep.

The other is a sum of one million dollars (\$1,000,000). It is buried on what was known as Short Shift Island; on the highest point of this Short Shift Island is a large cabbage wood stump and twenty feet (20 ft.) south of that stump is the treasure, buried five feet (5 ft.) deep and can be found without difficulty. Short Shift Island is a place where passing vessels stop to get fresh water. No great distance from Nassau, so it can be easily found.

The first pod was taken from a Spanish merchant and it is in Spanish silver dollars.

The other on Short Shift Island is in different kinds of money, taken from different ships of different nations—it is all good money.

Now friends, I have told you all that is necessary for you to know to recover these treasures and I leave it in your hands and it is my request that when

you read this, you will at once take steps to recover it, and when you get it, it is my wish that you use it in a way most good to yourself and others. This is all I ask.

I am, truly your friend,

HENRY P. TOBIAS.

"Henry P. Tobias?" said Charlie Webster. "Never heard of him. Did you, John?"

"Never!"

And then there was a stir in the outer office. Someone was asking for the secretary of the treasury. So John rose.

"I must get to work now, boys. We can talk it over tonight." And then, handing me the manuscript: "Take it home with you, if you like, and look it over at your leisure."

As Charlie Webster and I passed out into the street I noticed the fellow of the sinister pockmarked visage standing near the window of the inner office. The window was open, and anyone standing outside could easily have heard everything that passed inside. As the fellow caught my eye he smiled unpleasantly and slunk off down the street.

"Who is that fellow?" I asked Charlie. "He's a queer-looking specimen."

"Yes! he's no good. Yet he's more



"Who is That Fellow?" I Asked Charlie.

half-witted than bad, perhaps. His face is against him, poor devil."

And we went our ways till the evening. I to post home to the further study of the narrative. There, seated on the pleasant veranda, I went over it carefully, sentence by sentence. While I was reading, someone called me indoors. I put down the manuscript on the little bamboo table at my side and went in. When I returned a few moments afterward the manuscript was gone!

Continued next week

Best of All Holidays

TAKING it all in all, it may be safely asserted that Christmas is the merriest and the best of all holidays, and which is likely to be observed in ages yet to come. Nativity, rise and fall, new beliefs, religions may sweep away, but that would seem dreary and empty brought no merry Christmas. Its annual round, other Time long day to mauling the hearts of all with and may each Christmas still merrier than the last.

An Ancient Christmas Dish

An indispensable Christmas dish of ancient times was "frumenty" or "frumante." Here is the recipe for making the dish according to a faithful old chronicler: "Take clean wheat and bray it in a mortar until the hulls be all gone off, and seethe it until it burst, and take it up and let it cool; and take clean, fresh broth and sweet milk of almonds or sweet milk of kine and temper it all; and take the yolks of eggs. Boil it a little and set it down and mess it forth with fat venison or fresh mutton." Frumenty was often served alone without venison or mutton. When served by itself it was well sweetened.



A BIG JOKE

Duck: Now I hope I won't get a treatise on "How to Swim" for a Christmas gift.

Up in the Air.

The Magistrate—What's the charge against his man, officer?

The Air Cop—He was speeding in a high-power racing plane and ran down a child's goplane.



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