

SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.-Jane Harding, respect able 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 alece, 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 Cuth-bert 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.

The Isle of Fortune.

I dropped my book and ran on deck. Everyone else was already there. The great gleaming orb of the tropic moon was blinding as the sun. Away to the faint translucent line of the horizon rolled an infinity of shining sea. Straight ahead rose a dark conical mass. It was the mountainous shape of Leeward Island.

Everybody was craning to get clearer view. "Hail, isle of Fortune!" exclaimed Miss Browne, I think my aunt would not have been surprised if it had begun to rain doubloons upon

"I bet we don't put it over some on them original Argonaut fellers, Ley?" cried Mr. Tubbs.

Higher and higher across the skyline cut the dark crest of the island as the freighter steamed valiantly ahead. Sheer and formidable from the sea rose a line of black cliffs, and above them a single peak threw its shadow far across the water. Faintly we made out the white line of the breakers foaming at the foot of the

We coasted slowly along, looking for the mouth of the little bay. Meanwhile we had collected our belongings, and stood grouped about the deck, ready for the first thrilling plunge My aunt nto adventure Browne had tied huge green vells over their cork helmets, and were clump ing about in tremendous hobnailed boots. All the luggage I was allowed to take was in a traveling bag and a gunny-sack, obligingly donated by the cook. Speaking of cooks, I found we had one of our own, a coal-black ne-gro with grizzled wool, an unctuous voice and the manners of an old-school family retainer. So far as I know his name was Cookie. I suppose he had received another once from his sponsors in baptism, but if so, it was bur-

ied in oblivion. Now a narrow gleaming gap ap peared in the wall of cliffs, and the freighter whistled and lay to. There began a bustle at the davits, and shouts of "Lower away!" and for the first time it swept over me that we were to be put ashore in boats. Aunt Jane burst out in lamentation. She would not, could not go in a boat. She had heard all her life that small boats were most unsafe. Why didn't the captain sail right up to the island as she had expected and put us ashore? Even at Panama with only a little way to go she had felt it suicidal -here It was not to be thought of.

But the preparations for this desperate step went on apace, and no one heeded Aunt Jane but Mr. Tubbs, who had hastened to succor beauty in distress.

Then Aunt Jane clutched at Mr. Shaw's cont lapel as he went by, and he stopped long enough to explain patiently that vessels of the freighter's size could not enter the bay, and that there really was no danger, and that Aunt Jane might wait if she liked till the last boat, as it would take several trips to transfer us and our baggage. I supposed of course that this would include me, and stood leaning on the rail, watching the first boat fade to a dark speck on the water, when Mr. Vane appeared at my albow.

"Ready, Miss Harding? You are to go in the next boat with me. I

asked especially."
"Oh, thanks!" I cried fervently. He would be much nicer than Mr. Tubbs to cling to as I went down-indeed, he was so tall that if it were at all a shallow place I might use him as a stepping-stone and survive. I hoped drowning men didn't gurgle very much -meanwhile Mr. Vane had disapfeet on the strands of the ladder.

"Good-by, auntie [" I cried, as I be- I promised mysel"

can the descent. Don't blame yourself too much. Everybody has got to go some time, you know, and they say

With a stifled cry Aunt Jane forsook Mr. Tubbs and flew to the rail. I was already out of reach. "Oh, Virginia!" she wailed. "Oh.

drowning's easy."

my dear child! If it should be the last parting!"

"Give my jewelry and things to Bess' baby!" I found strength to call back. Then the arms of the Honorable Mr. Vane received me. The strong rowers bent their backs and the boat shot out over the mile or two of bright water between us and the Great slow swells lifted us. We dipped with a soothing, cradlelike motion. I forgot to be afraid, in the delight of the warm wind that fanned our cheeks, of the moonbeams that on the crest of every ripple were splintered to a thousand dancing lights. I forgot fear, forgot Miss Higglesby-Browne, forgot the harshness of the Scotch character.

"Oh, glorious, glorious!" I cried to Cuthbert Vane.

"Not so dusty, eh?" he came back in their ridiculous English slang. Now an American would have said: "Some little old moon that!" We certainly have our points of superiority.

All around the island white charging lines of breakers foamed on ragged half-seen reefs. Now our boat felt the lift of the great shoreward rollers, and sprang forward like a liv ing thing. The other boat, empty of all but the rowers and returning from the island to the ship, passed us with a hail. We were in the little bay under the shadow of the frowning cliffs.

At the head of the bay, a quarter of a mile away, lay a broad white beach shining under the moon. the edge of dark woods beyond a fire burned redly. It threw into relief the black moving shapes of men upon the

Straight for the sand the sailors drove the boat. She struck it with a jar, grinding forward heavily. The sprang overboard, wading halfway to the waist. And the arms of the Honorable Cuthbert Vane had snatched me up and were bearing me safe and dry to shore.

Mr. Shaw approached and the two men greeted each other in their off hand British way. As we couldn't well, under the circumstances, maintain a fiction of mutual invisibility. Mr. Shaw, with a certain obvious hes itation, turned to me.

"Only lady passenger, eh? Hope you're not wet through. Cookie's making coffee over yonder."

"I say. Shaw," cried the beautifu youth enthusiastically, "Miss Harding's the most ripping sport, you know! Not the least nervous about the trip, I assure you."

"I was," I announced, moved to de flance by the neighborhood of Mr Shaw. "Before we started I was so afraid that if you had listened you might have heard my teeth chattering. But I had at least the comforting



Bearing Me Safe and Dry to Shore.

thought that if I did go to my end it would not be simply in pursuit of sordid gain!"

"And indeed that was almost waste of noble sentiment under the peared over the side, and a sailor was circumstances," answered the dour lifting me and setting my reluctant Scot, with the fleeting shadow of an

enraging smile.

day I would find the weapon that would penetrate the Scotchman's armor-and would use it mercilessly.

Cookie received us with unctuous

warmth. "Well, now, 'clar to goodness if it aint the li'le lady! How come you git ashore all dry lak you is? Yes, immejusly." He wafted me with stately gestures to a seat on an overturned head lay in the grass. iron kettle, and served my coffee with an air appropriate to mahogany and plate. It was something to see him wait on Cuthbert Vane. As Cookie told me later, in the course of our rapidly developing friendship, "daty young gemmun am sure one ob de quality." To indicate the certainty of Cookle's instinct, Miss Higglesby-Browne was never more to him than "dat pusson."

On the beach Mr. Shaw, Captain Magnus and the sailors were toiling, unloading and piling up stores. Rather laggingly. Apollo joined them. I was glad, for a heavy fatigue was stealing over me. Cookie, taking note of my sagging head, brought me somebody's dunnage bag for a pillow. I felt him drawing a tarpaulin over me as I sank into bottomless depths of sleep.

I opened my eyes to the dying stars. The moon had set. I heard men shouting, "Here she comes!" by to lend a hand!" In haste I scrambled up and tore for the beach. I must witness the landing of Aunt

Through the dawn-twilight that lay upon the cove the boat drew near that bore Mr. Tubbs and his fair charges. I saw the three cork helmets grouped together in the stern. Then the foaming fringe of wavelets caught the boat, hurled it forward, seemed all but to engulf it. Out leaped the sailors. Out leaped Mr. Tubbs, and disappeared at once beneath the waves. Shrill and prolonged rose the shrieks of my aunt and Miss Higglesby-Browne. Valiantly Mr. Shaw and Cuthbert Vane had rushed into the deep. Each now appeared staggering up the steep, foam-swept strand unler a struggling burden. Even after they were safely deposited on the sand, Miss Browne and my aunt con-

tinued to shriek. "Save, save Mr. Tubbs!" implored Aunt Jane.

But Mr. Tubbs, overlooked by all but this thoughtful friend, had cannily saved himself. He advanced upon us dripping.

"A close call!" he sang out cheerfully. "Thought one time old Nep had got a strangle-hold all right. Thinks I, I guess there'll be something doing loud. when Wall Street gets this news that old H. H. is food for the finny denizens of the deep!"

"It would have been most-most shocking!" quavered poor Aunt Jane with feeling. She was piteously striving to extricate herself from the folds of the green veil.

I came to her assistance. The poor from head to foot.

"It was a most—unusual experishe told me as I unwound her. Probably extremely-unifying to the soul-forces and all that, as Miss Browne says, but for the momentunsettling. Is my helmet on straight. lear? I think it is a little severe for my type of face, don't you? There was a sweet little hat in a Fifth avenue shop-simple and yet so chic. I thought it just the thing, but Miss Browne said no, helmets were always worn-Coffee? Oh, my dear child, how thankful I shall be!"

And Aunt Jane clung to me as of yore as I led her up the beach.

CHAPTER V.

The Captain's Legacy. When in my tender years I was taken to the matinee, usually the most thrilling feature of the spectacle to me was the scene depicted on the rop-curtain. Directly I was seated -in the body-and had had my hat taken off and been told not to wriggle, I vaulted airily over the unconscious audience, over an orchestra enraged in tuning up, and was lost in he marvelous landscape of the dropcurtain. The adventures which I had here put to shame any which the aising of the curtain permitted to e seen upon the stage.

I had never hoped to recover in this prosaic world my long-lost paradise of the drop-curtain, but morning revealed it to me here on Leeward island. Here was the feathery foliage, the gushing springs, the gorgeous flowers of that enchanted land. And here were the soft and intoxicating perfumes that I had imagined in my curtain landscape.

Leeward island measures roughly four miles across from east to west by three from north to south. The core of the island is the peak, rising to a height of nearly three thousand feet. At its base on three sides lies a plateau, its edges gnawed away by the sea to the underlying rocky skele-On the southeastern quarter the peak drops by a series of great precipices straight into the sea.

All the plateau and much of the peak are clothed with woods, a beautiful bright green against the sapphire of sea and sky. High above all other growth wave the feathery tops of the cocoa-palms, which flourish here luxuriantly.

The palms were nowhere more abundant than in the hollow by the cove where our camp was made, and

Mr. Vane toward the fire, that some their size and the regularity of their order spoke of cultivation. Guavas, oranges and lemons grew here, too, and many beautiful banana-palms.

At the side of the clearing toward the stream stood a hut, built of cocoa palm logs. Its roof of palm-thatch had been scattered by storms. Nearer the stream on a bench were an old sah, Cookie'll git you-all some'n hot | decaying washtub and a board. A broken frying-pan and a rusty ax-

In the hut itself were a rude bedstead, a small table and a cupboard made of boxes. I was excited at first, and fancied we had come upon the dwelling of a marooned pirate. Without taking the trouble to combat this opinion, Mr. Shaw explained to Cuthbert Vane that a copra gatherer had once lived here, and that the place must have yielded such a profit that he was only surprised to find it deserted now. Behind this cool, emphatic speech I sensed an ironic zest in the destruction of my pirate.

After their thrilling experience of being ferried from the Rufus Smith to the island, my aunt and Miss Browne had been easily persuaded to dispose themselves for naps.

The boats of the Rufus Smith had departed from the island, and our relations with humanity were severed. The thought of our isolation awed and fascinated me as I sat meditatively upon a keg of nails watching the miracle of the tropic dawn. The men were hard at work with bales and boxes, except Mr. Tubbs, who gave advice. It must have been valuable advice, for he assured everybody that a word from his lips had invariably been enough to make Wall Street sit up and take notice. But it is a far cry from Wall Street to Leeward island. Mr. Tubbs, ignored, sought refuge with me at last, and pointed out the beauties of Aroarer as she rose from the embrace of Neptune.

"Aroarer Borealis, to be accurate," he explained, "but they didn't use parties' surnames much in classic times."

The glad cry of breakfast put an end to Mr. Tubbs' exposition of mythology.

So does dull reality clog the feet of dreams that it proved impossible to begin the day by digging up the treasure. Camp had to be arranged, for folk must eat and sleep even with the wealth of the Indies to be had for the turning of a sod. The cabin was reroofed and set apart as the bower of Aunt Jane and Miss Browne. I declined to make a third in this sanctuary. You could tell by looking at her that Violet was the sort of person who would inevitably sleep out

"Hang me up in a tree or anywhere," I insisted, and it ended by my having a tarpaulin shelter rigged up

in a group of cocoa-palms. Among our earliest discoveries on the island was one regrettable from the point of view of romance, though rich in practical advantages; the woods were the abode of numerous plump little woman was trembling wild pigs. You should have seen how clean, how seemly, how self-respecting were our Leeward island pigs to realize how profoundly the pig of Christian lands is a debased and slandered animal. These quadrupeds would have strengthened Jean Jacques' belief in the primitive virtue of man before civilization debauched him.

> Aunt Jane had been dreadfully alarmed by the pigs, and wanted to keep me immured in the cabin o nights so that I should not be eaten. But nothing less than a Bengal tiger would have driven me to such extrem-

"Though if a pig should eat me," I suggested, "you might mark him to avoid becoming a cannibal at second hand. I should hate to think of you, Aunt Jane, as the family tomb!" "Virginia, you are most unfeeling," said Aunt Jane, getting pink about

the eyelids. "Ah, I didn't know you Americans went in much for family tombs," remarked the beautiful youth interested-

"No, we do our best to keep out of them," I assured him, and he walked off meditatively revolving this.

If the beautiful youth had been beautiful on shipboard, in the informal costume he affected on the island he was more splendid still. His white cotton shirt and trousers showed him lithe and lean and muscular. His bared arms and chest were like cream solidified into flesh. With his striped silk sash of red and blue about his waist, and his crown of ambrosial chestnut curls-a development due to the absence of a barber-the Honorable Cuthbert would certainly have been hailed by the natives, if there had been any, as the island's

Camp was made in the early hours of the day. Then came luncheon, prepared with skill by Cookle, and eaten from a table of packing cases laid in the shade. Afterward everyone, hot and weary, retired for a siesta. Always around the island blew the faint cooling breath of the sea. No marsh or stagnant water bred insect pests or fever. Every day while we were there the men worked hard, and grew lean and sun-browned, and thrived on it. Every afternoon with unfailing regularity a light shower fell, but in twenty minutes it was over and the sun shone again, greedfly lapping up the moisture that glittered on the leaves.

On this first day we gathered in the cool of the afternoon about our table of packing-boxes for an event which



of Them."

even I, whose role was that of skeptic, found exciting. Miss Browne was at last to produce her map and reveal the secret of the island. So far, except in general terms, she had imparted it to no one. Everybody, in coming along, had been buying a pig in a poke-though to be sure Aunt Jane had paid for it. The Scotman, Cuthbert Vane had told me incidentally, had insured himself against loss by demanding a retaining fee beforehand. Somehow my opinion, both of his honesty and of his intelligence, had risen since I knew this. As to Cuthbert Vane, he had come purely in a spirit of adventure, and had paid his own expenses from the start.

However, now the great moment was at hand. But before it comes, I will here set down the treasure story of Leeward Island, as I gathered it later, a little here and there, and pleced it together into a coherent whole through many dreaming hours.

In 1820, the city of Lima, in Peru. being threatened by the revolutionaries under Bolivar and San Martin, cautious folk began to take thought for their possessions. To send them out upon the high seas under a foreign flag seemed to offer the best hope of safety, and soon there was more gold affoat on the Pacific than at any time since the sailing of the great plate-galleons of the Seventeenth tury. Captain Sampson, of the brig Bonny Lass, found himself with a passenger for nowhere in particular in the shape of a certain Spanish merchant of great wealth, reputed custodian of the private funds of the bishop of Lima. This gentleman brought with him, besides some scanty personal baggage-for he took ship in haste-a great fron-bound chest Four stout sallors of the Bonny Lass staggered under the weight of it.

The Bonny Lass cruised north along the coast, the passenger desiring to put in at Panama in the hope that word might reach him there of quieter times at home. But somewhere off Ecuador on a dark and starless night, the merchant of Lima vanished overboard-"and what could you expect" asked Captain Sampson in effect, when a lubber like him would stay on deck in a gale?" Strange to say, the merchant's body-servant met the fate of the heedless also.

Shrugging his shoulders at the carelessness of passengers, Captain Sampson bore away to Leeward island, perhaps from curiosity to see this old refuge of the buccaneers, where the spoils of the sack of Guayaquil were said to have been buried. Who knows but that he, too, was bent on treasureseeking? Be that as it may, the little brig found her way into the bay on the northeast side of the Island, where she anchored. Water was needed, and there is refreshment in tropic fruits after a diet of salt horse and hardtack. So all hands had a holiday ashore, where the captain did not disdain to join them. Only he went apart, and had other occupation than swarming up the palms for coco-

One fancies, then, a moonless night, a crew sleeping off double grog, generously allowed them by the captain; a boat putting off from the Bonny Lass, in which were captain, mate, and one Bill Halliwell, able seaman, a man of mighty muscle; and as freight an object large, angular and ponderous, so that the boat lagged heavily beneath the rowers' strokes.

Later, Bill, the able seaman, grows presumptuous on the strength of this excursion with his betters. It is a word and a blow with the captain of the Bonny Lass, and Bill is conveniently disposed of. Dead, as well as living, he serves the purpose of the captain, but of that later.

Away sailed the Bonny Lass, sailing once for all out of the story. As for Captain Sampson, there is a long gap in his history, hazlly filled by the story of his having been lieutenant to Benito Bonito, and one of the two survivors when Bonito's black flag was brought down by the British frigate Espiegle. But sober history knows nothing of him until he reappears years later, an aged and broken man, in a back street of Bristol.

Here was living a certain Hopperdown, who had been boatswain on the Bonny Lass at the time that she so regrettably lost her passengers overpoard. He saw and recognized his old skipper hobbling along 'the Bristol quays, and perhaps from pity took the shabby creature home with him. Hopperdown dealt in sailors' slops, and had a snug room or two behind the shop. Here for a while the former Captain Sampson dwelt, and after a swift illness here he 'died. With the hand of death upon him, his grim lips at last gave up their secret. With stiffening fingers he traced a rough map, to refresh Hopperdown's memory after the lapse of time since either had seen the wave-beaten cliffs of Leeward Island. For Captain Sampson had never been able to return to claim the treasure which he had left to Bill Halliwell's silent guardianship. If he had, indeed, sailed with Bonito, he had kept his secret from his formidable commander. Even as he had dealt with Bill Halliwell, so might Bonito deal by him -or at least the lion's share must be yielded to the pirate captain. And the passion of Captain Sampson's life had come to be his gold-his hidden hoard on far-off Leeward Island. It was his, now, all his. The only other who knew its hiding place, his former mate, had been killed in Havana in a tavern brawl. The secret of the bright unattainable treasure was all the captain's own. He dreamed of the doubloons, gloated over them. longed for them with a ceaseless gnawing passion of desire. And in the end he died, in Hopperdown's little shop in the narrow Bristol by-

street. Hopperdown, an aging man himself, and in his humble way contented, fell straightway victim to the gold-virus. He sold all he had, and bought passage in a sailing ship for Valparaiso, trusting that once so far on the way he would find means to accomplish the rest. But the raging of the fever in his thin old blood brought him to his bed, and the ship sailed without him. Before she was midway in the Atlan-

tic Hopperdown was dead. The old man died in the house of a niece, to whom by way of legacy he left his map. For years the map lay among other papers in a drawer, and here it was at length discovered by her son, himself a sailor. He learned from her its history, and having been in the Pacific, and heard the tales and rumors that cling about Leeward island like the everlasting surf of its encompassing seas, this grand-nephev of old Hopperdown's, by name David Jenkins, became for the rest of his days a follower of the ignis fatuus. All his restless, hungry life he spent in wandering up and down the seas, ever on the watch for some dimly imagined chance by which he might come at the treasure. And so at last he wandered into the London hospital where he dled.

And to me the wildest feature of the whole wild tale was that at the last he should have parted with the cher-Higglesby-Browne.

In a general way, every one of us knew his history. Even I had had an outline of it from Cuthbert Vane. But so far nobody had seen the map. And now we were to see it; the time that intervened before that great event had already dwindled to min-

But no; for Miss Browne arose and began to make a speech. The beginning of it dealt in a large and generalizing manner with comradeship and loyalty, and the necessity of the proper mental attitude in approaching the business we had in hand. I did not listen closely. The truth is, I wanted to see that map. Under the spell of the island, I had almost begun to believe in the chest of doubloons.

Suddenly I awoke with a start to the fact that Miss Brown was talking about me. Yes, I, indubitably, was the Young Person whose motives in attaching herself to the party were so at variance with the amity and mutual confidence which filled all other breasts. It was I who had uttered words that were painful and astounding to one conscious of unimpugnable motives. In the days of toil to come, we were reminded, the Young Person to wit, myself, would have no share. She would be but skeptic, critic, drone in the busy hive. Thus it was obvious that the Young Person could not with any trace of justice claim part or lot in the treasure. Were it not well, then, that the Young Person be required to make formal and written renunciation of all interest in the golden hoard soon to reward the faith and enterprise of the Harding-Browne expedition? Miss Browne requested the sense of the meeting on the matter.

Aunt Jane was quivering, her round eyes fixed on Miss Higglesby-Browne like a fascinated rabbit's on a serpeat. Mr. Hamilton Tubbs had pursed his lips to an inaudible whistle, and alternately regarded the summits of the palms and stole swift ferret-glances at the faces of the company. Mr. Vane had remained for some time in happy unconsciousness of the significance of Miss Browne's oration. It was something to see it gradually penetrate to his perceptions, vexing the alabaster brow with a faint wrinkle of perplexity, then suffusing his cheeks with agonized and indignant blushes. "Oh, I say, really, you know!" hovered in unspoken protest on his tongue. He threw imploring