

To My Kind Friends:

Unable, by reason of my affliction, to write, I take this method of replying to the friends who have sent to me in my helplessness a flood of sympathetic and cheering words by mail, and of saying to them that words are impotent to express my appreciation of their kind thoughtfulness.

The self-denying helpfulness of those volunteers who have ministered in the sickroom, and all who have visited me and spoken words of love and hope, will also have a sacred place in my memory. Thank you, friends. Thank you

MRS. A. A. WHEELER.

SPANISH DOUBLOONS



By CAMILLA KENYON

PICTURES BY A. WEIL

SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Jane Harding, respectable and conservative old spinster—never too old to think of marriage—

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-imbued sloop, the Island Queen. Returning to the camp, she is intercepted by Captain Magnus, who accuses 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.

What Crusoe and I Found.

When after those poignant moments in the boat I met Dugald Shaw in commonplace fashion at the table, a sudden, queer, altogether unprecedented shyness seized me. I sat looking down at my plate with the gaudier of a silly child.

During the meal Mr. Shaw asked Captain Magnus if he had had good sport on the other side of the island. Captain Magnus, as usual, had seemed to feel that time consecrated to eating was wasted in conversation. At this point-blank question he started confusedly, stuttered, and finally explained that though he had taken a rifle he had carried along pistol cartridges, so had come home with an empty bag.

At this moment I happened to be looking at Cookie, who was setting down a dish before Mr. Tubbs. The negro started visibly, and rolled his eyes at Captain Magnus with astonishment depicted in every dusky feature. He said nothing, although wont to take part in our conversation as it suited him, but I saw him shake his great grizzled head in a disturbed and puzzled fashion as he turned away.

After this a chill settled on the table. You felt a disturbance in the air, as though wireless currents were crossing and recrossing in general confusion.

As I passed Cookie at his dishpan, after dinner, a sudden thought struck me.

"Cookie," I remarked, "you had a frightfully queer look just now when Captain Magnus told about having taken the wrong cartridges. What was the matter?"

...umber 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 wringing 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 Hon..."

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 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

...all in the doing. And still I cannot find it! Oh, if my grandfather had been more worldly-wise! If he had not been too intent on the eternal welfare of the man he rescued from the Havana tavern brawl to question him about his story. A cave on Leeward island—nearly 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 Helitz, 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 able to hide 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 Helitz would have been apt to run across it in the course of his desultory searches for the riches of the buccaniers. And I am certain placid old Helitz 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 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

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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 but 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.

That evening Mr. Shaw addressed the gathering at the camp-fire—which we made small and bright, and then sat well away from because of the heat—and in a few words gave it as his opinion that any further search in

the cave under the point was useless. (If he had known the strange confirmatory echo which this awoke in my mind!) He proposed that the shore of the island to a reasonable distance on either side of the bay entrance should be surveyed, with a view to discover whether some other cave did not exist which would answer the description given by the dying Hopper-down as well as that first explored.

Mr. Shaw's words were addressed to the ladies, the organizer and financier, respectively, of the expedition, to the very deliberate exclusion of Mr. Tubbs, but he might as well have made up his mind to recognize the triumvirate. Enthroned on a camp-chair sat Aunt Jane, like a little goddess of the Dollar Sign, and on one hand Mr. Tubbs smiled blandly, and on the other Violet gloomed. You saw that in sacred council Mr. Shaw's announcement had been foreseen and deliberated upon.

Miss Browne, who carried an invisible rostrum with her wherever she went, now alertly mounted it.

"My friends," she began, "those dwelling on a plane where the Material is all may fail to grasp the thought which I shall put before you this evening. My friends, this expedition was, so to speak, called from the Void by Thought. Thought it was, as realized in steamships and other ephemeral forms, which bore us over rolling seas. How, then, can it be otherwise than that Thought should influence our fortunes—that success should be unable to materialize before a persistent attitude of Negation? My

friends, you will perceive that there is no break in this sequence of ideas; all is remorseless logic.

"In order to withdraw myself from this atmosphere of Negation, for these several days past I have sought seclusion. There in silence I have asserted the power of Positive over Negative Thought, gazing meanwhile into the profound depths of the All. My friends, an answer has been vouchsafed us; I have had a vision of that for which we seek. Now at last, in a spirit of glad confidence, we may advance. For, my friends, the chest is buried—in sand."

With this triumphant announcement Miss Higglesby-Browne sat down. A heavy silence succeeded. It was broken by a murmur from Mr. Tubbs.

"Wonderful—that's what I call wonderful! Talk about the eloquence of the ancients—I believe, by gum, this is on a par with congressional oratory!"

"A vision, Miss Brown," said Mr. Shaw gravely, "must be an interesting thing. I have never seen one my-



This Expedition Was Called From the Void by Thought.