

SPANISH DOUBLOONS

By CAMILLA KENYON

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Jane Harding, respectable and conservative old spinster—never too old to think of marriage—was more money than brains. She is invited by a strong-minded spinster, Miss Higlesby-Browne, into financing an expedition to hunt for buried treasure on Leeward Island. Her niece, Virginia Harding, underlarking 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 dislike 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 disgust. The landing, however, is safely effected.

CHAPTER V.—Led by Miss Higlesby-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 "bant," in the form of a white pig. During a walk Virginia meets the "bant," 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. Hambling about, and feeling herself not to be a regular member of the expedition, Virginia comes upon a sand-imbued food, 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.—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.

CHAPTER X.—Opinions as to the proper methods of prosecuting the search for the treasure are divided, and a wide divergence is apparent in the councils of the little party. Virginia's interest in the leader of the expedition increases.

CHAPTER XI.—The diary which Virginia has found in the remains of the Island Queen reveals the fact that the existence of the treasure was known to others, and an active and successful search for it carried on. The record tells of the finding of the treasure and its transportation to the small boat, but it is evident the finder never left the island with his wealth. Virginia, of course, believes it to be on the Island Queen, and so within her reach. For various reasons she decides to say nothing of her discovery until she has investigated further.

CHAPTER XII.—Led by directions in "Peter's" diary, Virginia finds a highly important clue to the hidden treasure, but her courage fails when it comes to pushing her investigations.

CHAPTER XIII.

Mr. Tubbs Interrupts.

I had determined as an offset to my pusillanimous behavior about the cave to show a dogged industry in the matter of the Island Queen. It would take me a long while to get down through the sand to the chest, but I resolved to accomplish it, and borrowed of Cookie, without his knowledge, a large iron spoon which I thought I could wield more easily than a heavy spade.

But that afternoon I was tired and hot—it really called for a grimmer resolve than mine to shovel sand through the languor of a Leeward Island afternoon. Instead, I slept in my hammock, and dreamed that I was queen of a cannibal island, draped in necklaces made of the doubloons now hidden under the sand in the cabin of the derelict.

Later, the wailing of Cookie was heard in the land, and I had to restore the spoon to free Crusoe of the charge of having stolen it. I said I had wanted to dig with it. But of course it occurred to no one that it was the treasure I had expected to dig up with Cookie's spoon.

A more serious obstacle to my explorations on the Island Queen presented itself next day. Instead of putting to sea, Mr. Shaw and Captain Magnus hauled the boat up on the beach and set to work to repair it. The preceding day had been filled with hardship and danger—so much so that my heart sank a little at the recollection of it. You saw the little boat threading its way among the reefs, tossed like seaweed by the white teeth of gnawing waves, screamed at by angry gulls whose

homes were those clefts and caves which the boat invaded. And all this, poor little boat, on a hopeless quest—for no reward but peril and wounds. Cuthbert Vane had a sprained thumb which could not be ignored, and on the strength of which he was dismissed from the boat-repairing contingent, and thrown on my hands to entertain. So of course I had to renounce all thoughts of visiting the sloop. I should not have dared to go there anyway, with Mr. Shaw and the captain able more or less to overlook my motions from the beach, for I was quite morbidly afraid of attracting attention to the derelict. It seemed to me a happy miracle that no one but myself had taken any interest in her, or been inspired to ask by what chance so small a boat had come to be wrecked upon these desolate shores. Fortunately in her position in the shadow of the cliff she was inconspicuous, so that she might easily have been taken for the half of a large boat instead of the whole of a small one, or she must before this have drawn the questioning notice of the Scotchman. As to the captain, his attention was all set on the effort to discover the cave, and his intelligence was not lively enough to start on an entirely new tack by itself. And the Honorable Cuthbert viewed derelicts as he viewed the planetary bodies; somehow in the course of nature they happened.

So, dissembling my excitement and anxieties, I swung placidly in my hammock, and nearby sat the beautiful youth with his thumb carried tenderly in a bandage. Was it merely my being so distrustful, or was it quite another reason that led him to open up so suddenly about his Kentish home? Strange to say, instead of panting for the title, Cuthbert wanted his brother to go on living, though there was something queer about his spine, poor fellow, and the doctors said he couldn't possibly—Of course I was surprised at Cuthbert's views, for I had always thought that if there were a title in your family your sentiments toward those who kept you out of it were necessarily murderous, and your tears crocodile when you pretended to weep over their deaths. But Cuthbert's feelings were so human that I mentally apologized to the nobility. As to High Staunton manor, I adored it. It is mostly Jacobean, but with an ancient Tudor wing, and it has a chapel and a ghost and a secret staircase and a frightfully beautiful and wicked ancestress hanging in the hall—I mean a portrait of her—and quantities of oak paneling quite black with age, and silver that was hidden in the family tombs when Cromwell's soldiers came, and a chamber where Elizabeth once slept, and other romantic details too numerous to mention. It is a little bit run down and shabby, for lack of money to keep it up, and of course on that account all the more entrancing.

The present Lord Grasmere lived up to his position so completely that he had the gout and sat with his foot on a cushion exactly like all the elderly aristocrats you ever heard of, only when I inquired if his lordship cursed his valet and flung plates at the footmen when his foot hurt him, his son was much shocked and pained. He did not realize so well as I—from an extensive course of novel-reading—that such is the usual behavior of titled persons.

It was delightful, there in the hot stillness of the island, with the palms rustling faintly overhead, to hear of that cool, mossy, ancient place. I asked eager questions—I repeated glistening fragments of description—I wondered enviously what it would be like to have anything so old and proud and beautiful in your very blood—when suddenly I realized that, misled by my enthusiasm, Cuthbert was saying something which must not be said—that he was about to offer the shelter of that ancient roof to me. To me, whose heart could never nest there, but must be ever on the wing, a wild bird of passage in the track of a ship.

I sat up with a galvanic start. "Oh—listen—didn't you hear something?" I desperately broke in. For somehow I must stop him. I didn't want our nice jolly friendship spoiled—and besides, fancy being cooped up on an island with a man you have refused! Especially when all the while you'd be wanting so to pet and console him!

But with his calm doggedness Cuthbert began again—"I was a bit afraid the old place would have seemed too quiet and dull to you—when the day was saved and my interruption

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strangely justified by a shrill outcry from the camp. I knew that high falsetto tone. It was the voice of Mr. Tubbs, but pitched on a key of quite insane excitement. I sprang up and ran, Crusoe and the Honorable Cuthbert at my heels. There in the midst of the camp Mr. Tubbs stood, the center of a group who were regarding him with astonished looks. Mr. Shaw and the captain had left their tinkering. Cookie his saucers, and Aunt Jane and Violet had come hurrying from the hut. Among us all stood Mr. Tubbs with folded arms, looking round upon the company with an extraordinary air of complacency and triumph.

"What is it, oh, what is it, Mr. Tubbs?" cried Aunt Jane, fluttering

he don't let on to be a hero. Jest a plain man o' business. That's old H. H. Consequence is, he leaves the other fellers have the brass band, while he sets out on the q. t. to run a certain little clue to earth. And, ladies and gentlemen, he's run it!"

"You have found—you have found the treasure!" shrieked Aunt Jane.

Contrary to his bland custom, Mr. Tubbs frowned at her darkly.

"I said I found the clue," he corrected. "Of course, it's the same thing. Ladies and gentlemen, not to appear to be a hot-air artist, I will tell you in a word, that I have located the tombstone of one William Halliwell, deceased!"

Of course. Not once had I thought of it. Bare, stark, glaring up at the sun, lay the stone carved with the letters and the cross-bones. Forgetting in the haste of my departure to replace the vines upon the grave, I had left the stone to shout its secret to the first comer. And that happened to be Mr. Tubbs. Happened, I say, for I knew that he had not had the slightest notion where to look for the grave of Bill Halliwell. This running to earth of clues was purely an affair of his own picturesque imagination.

I wondered uneasily what he had made of the uprooted vines—but he would lay them to the pigs, no doubt. In the countenance of Mr. Tubbs, flushed and exultant, there was no suspicion that the secret was not all his own.

Miss Higlesby-Browne had a closed umbrella beneath her arm, and she drew and brandished it like a saber as she took a long stride forward.

"Mr. Tubbs," she commanded, "lead on!"

But Mr. Tubbs did not lead on. "Oh, no indeed," he said. "Old H. H. wasn't born yesterday. It may have struck you that to possess the sole and exclusive knowledge of the whereabouts of a million or two—ratin' it low—is some considerable of an asset. And it's one I ain't got the least idea of partin' with unless for inducements held out."

Aunt Jane gave a faint shriek. I had been silently debating what my own course should be in the face of this unexpected development. Suddenly I saw my way quite clear. I would say nothing. Mr. Tubbs should reveal his own peridy. And the curtain should ring down upon the play, leaving Mr. Tubbs felled all around, bereft both of the treasure and of Aunt Jane.

Little I dreamed what surprises ensuing acts of the play were to hold for me, or their astounding contrast with the farce of my joyous imagination.

I took no part in the storm that raged round Mr. Tubbs. His face adorned by a seraphic, buttery smile, he stood unmoved, while Miss Higlesby-Browne uttered cyclonic exhortations and reproaches, while Aunt Jane sobbed and said, "Oh, Mr. Tubbs!" while Mr. Shaw strove to make himself heard above the din. He did at least succeed in extracting from the traitor a definite statement of terms. These were nothing less than fifty per cent of the treasure, secured to him by a document, sealed and delivered into his own hands. To a suggestion that as he had discovered the all-important tombstone, so might some one else, he replied with tranquillity that he thought not, as he had taken precautions against such an eventuality. In other words, as I was later to discover, the wily Mr. Tubbs had contrived to raise the boulder from its bed and push it over the cliff into the sea, afterward replacing the mass of vines upon the grave.

As to the entrance to the tunnel, it



"Eureka! He Repeated, 'I Have Found It!'"

with the consciousness of her proprietorship.

But Mr. Tubbs glanced at her as indifferently as a sated turkey-buzzard at a morsel which has ceased to tempt him.

"Mr. Tubbs," commanded Violet, "speak—explain yourself!"

"Come, out with it, Tubbs," advised Mr. Shaw.

Then the lips of Mr. Tubbs parted, and from them issued this solitary word:

"Eureka!"

"What?" screamed Miss Higlesby-Browne. "You have found it?"

Solemnly Mr. Tubbs inclined his head.

"Eureka!" he repeated. "I have found it!"

Amidst the exclamations, the questions, the general commotion which ensued, I had room for only one thought—that Mr. Tubbs had somehow discovered the treasure in the cabin of the Island Queen. Indeed, I should have shrieked the words aloud but for a providential dumbness that fell upon me.

"Friends," Mr. Tubbs began, "it has been known from the start that there was a landmark on this little old island that would give any party discovering the same a line on that chest of money right away. There's been some that was too high up in the exploring business to waste time looking for landmarks. They had rather do more fancy stunts, where what with surf, and sharks, and bangin' up the boat, they could make a good show of gettin' busy. But old Ham, Tubbs,

was apparent to me that Mr. Tubbs had not yet discovered it. Even if he had, I am certain that he would have been no more heroic than myself about exploring it, though there was no missing Peter to haunt his imagination. But with the grave as a starting point, there could be no question as to the ultimate discovery of the cave.

I was so eager myself to see the inside of the cave, and to know whatever it had to reveal of the fate of Peter, that I was inclined to wish Mr. Tubbs success in driving his hard bargain, especially as it would profit him nothing in the end. But this sentiment was exclusively my own. On all hands indignation greeted the rigorous demands of Mr. Tubbs. With a righteous joy I saw the fabric of Aunt Jane's illusions shaken by the rude blast of reality. For where was the Tubbs of yesterday—the honey-tongued, the suave, the anxiously obsequious Tubbs? Gone, quite gone. Instead, here was a Tubbs who cocked his helmet rakishly, and leered round upon the company, deaf to the claims of loyalty, the pangs of friendship, the voice of tenderness—Aunt Jane's.

Manfully Miss Higlesby-Browne stormed up and down the beach. She demanded of Mr. Shaw, of Cuthbert Vane, of Captain Magnus, each and severally, that Mr. Tubbs be compelled to disclose his secret. You saw that she would not have shrunk from a regimen of racks and thumbscrews. But there were no racks and thumbscrews on the island. Of course we could have invented various instruments of torture—I felt I could have developed some ingenuity that way myself—but too fatally well Mr. Tubbs knew the civilized prejudices of those with whom he had to deal. With perfect impunity he could strut about the camp, sure that no weapons worse than words would be brought to bear upon him, that he would not even be turned away from the general board to browse on coconuts in solitude.

Long ago Mr. Shaw had left the field to Violet and with a curt shrug had turned his back and stood looking out over the cove, stroking his chin reflectively. Miss Browne's eloquence had risen to amazing flights, and she already had Mr. Tubbs inextricably mixed with Ananias and Sapphira, when the Scotchman broke in upon her ruthlessly.

"Friends," he said, "so far as I can see we have been put a good bit ahead by this morning's work. First, we know the grave which should be our landmark has not been entirely obliterated by the jungle, as I had thought most likely. Second, we know that it is on this side of the island, for the reason that this chap Tubbs hasn't nerve to go much beyond shouting distance by himself. Third, as Tubbs has tried this hold-up business, I believe we should consider the agreement by which he was to receive a sixteenth share null and void, and decide here and now that he gets nothing whatever. Fourth, the boat is now pretty well to rights, and as soon as we have a snack Bert and Magnus and I will set out, in twice as good heart as before, having had the story that brought us here confirmed for the first time. So Tubbs and his tombstone can go to thunder."

"I can, can I?" cried Mr. Tubbs. "Say, are you a human iceberg, to talk that cool before a man's own face? Say, I'll—"

But Cuthbert Vance broke in.

"Three rousing cheers, old boy!" he cried to the Scotchman enthusiastically. "Always did think that chap a frightful boulder, don't you know? We'll stand by old Shaw, won't we, Magnus?" Which comradely outbreak showed the excess of the beautiful youth's emotions, for usually he turned a large cold shoulder on the captain, though managing in some mysterious manner to be perfectly civil all the time. Perhaps you have to be born at High Staunton manor or its equivalent to possess the art of relegating people to immense distances without seeming to administer even the gentlest shove.

But unfortunately the effort of the Honorable Cuthbert's cordiality was lost, so far as the object of it was

concerned, because of the surprising fact, only now remarked by any one, that Captain Magnus had disappeared.

CHAPTER XIV.

Some Secret Diplomacy.

The evanishment of Captain Magnus, though quite unlooked for at so critical a moment, was too much in keeping with his eccentric and unsocial ways to arouse much comment. Everybody looked about with mild ejaculations of surprise, and then forgot about the matter.

Whistling a Scotch tune, Dugald Shaw set to work again on the boat. In the face of difficulty or opposition he always grew more brisk and cheerful. I used to wonder whether in the event of a tornado he would not warm into positive geniality. Perhaps it would not have needed a tornado, if I had not begun by suspecting him of conspiring against Aunt Jane's pocket, or if the Triumvirate, inspired by Mr. Tubbs, had not sat in gloomy judgment on his every movement. Or if he hadn't been reproached so for saving me from the cave, instead of leaving it to Cuthbert Vane.

But now under the stimulus of speaking his mind about Mr. Tubbs the Scotchman whistled as he worked, and slapped the noble youth affectionately on the back when he came and got in the way with anxious industry.

As I wanted to observe developments—a very necessary thing when you are playing Providence—I chose a central position in the shade and pulled out some very smudgy tanning, a sort of Penelope's web which there was no prospect of my ever completing, but which served admirably to give me an appearance of occupation at critical moments.

Mr. Tubbs also had sought a shady spot, and was fanning himself with his helmet. From time to time he hummed, in a manner determinedly gay. However he might disguise it from himself this time Mr. Tubbs had overshoot his mark. The truth was, since our arrival on the island Mr. Tubbs had felt himself the spotted child of fortune. Aunt Jane and Miss Higlesby-Browne were the joint commanders of the expedition, and he commanded them. The Scotchman's theoretical rank as leader had involved merely the acceptance of all the responsibility and blame, while authority rested with the petticoat government dominated by the bland and wily Tubbs.

But now, faced with the failure of his coup d'etat, Mr. Tubbs' situation was, to say the least, awkward. He had risked all and lost it. But he maintained an air of jaunty self-confidence, slightly tinged with irony. It was all very well, he seemed to imply, for us to try to get along without H. H. We would discover the impossibility of it soon enough.

Aunt Jane, drooping, had been led away to the cabin by Miss Higlesby-Browne. You now heard the voice of Violet in exhortation, mingled with Aunt Jane's sobbing. I seemed to see that an ear of Mr. Tubbs was cocked attentively in that direction. He had indeed erred in the very wantonness of triumph, for a single glance would have kept Aunt Jane loyal and prodigal of excuses for him in the face of any treachery. Not even Violet could have clapped the lid on the up-welling font of sentiment in Aunt Jane's heart. Only the cold contemplating eye of H. H. himself had congealed that tepid flow.

The morning wore on with ever-increasing heat, and as nothing happened I began to find my watchful waiting dull. Crusoe, worn out perhaps by some private nocturnal pig hunt, slept heavily where the drip of the spring over the brim of old Heintz's kettle cooled the air. I began to consider whether it would not be well to take a walk with Cuthbert Vane and discover the tombstone all over again. I knew nothing, of course, of Mr. Tubbs' drastic measures with the celebrated landmark. As to Cuthbert's interrupted courtship, I depended on the vast excitement of discovering the cave to distract his mind from it. For that was the idea, of course—Cuthbert Vane and I would explore the cave, and then whenever I liked I could prick the bubble of Mr. Tubbs' ambitions, without relating the whole strange story of the diary and the Island Queen.

But meanwhile the cave drew me like a magnet. I jealously desired to be the first to see it, to snatch from Mr. Tubbs the honor of discovery. And I wanted to know about poor Peter—and the doubloons that he had gone back to fetch.

But already Captain Magnus had forsaken the post of duty and departed on an unknown errand. Could I ask Cuthbert Vane to do it, too? And then I smiled a smile that was half proud. I might ask him—but he would refuse me. In Cuthbert's simple code, certain things were "done," certain others not. Among the notes was to fall in standing by a friend. And just now Cuthbert was standing by Dugald Shaw. Therefore nods and becks and wreathed smiles were vain. In Cuthbert's quiet, easy-mannered, thick-headed way he could turn his back calmly on the face of love and follow the harsh call of duty even to death. It would not occur to him not to. And he never would suspect himself of being a hero—that would be quite the nicest part of it.

And yet I know poor Cuthbert was



"Tubbs and His Tombstone Can Go to Thunder!"

lost, so far as the object of it was