

# 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—with more money than brains, is inveigled by a strong-minded spinster, Miss Higgleby-Browne, into financing an expedition to hunt for buried treasure on Leeward Island. Her niece, 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 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 Higgleby-Browne, the expedition sets 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 "Cruise" by Virginia, is thus accounted for. Rumbling 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 "Cruise."

**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 then 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 gold 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 transference 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**—Interrupting a fervent declaration of love by Cuthbert Vane, Virginia is startled by the announcement of Mr. Tubbs that he has found the clue to the whereabouts of the treasure. He demands, as the price of his secret (she supposes) a half of the wealth found. The party declines to accept his terms and decides to continue the search without his aid. During the excitement Captain Magnus disappears.

**CHAPTER XIV**—In view of the discovery made by Mr. Tubbs, a new agreement is drawn up, entirely favorable to Virginia. Turning from the document, the party is surprised by the appearance of an armed force, against whom there could be no effective resistance.

**CHAPTER XV**—Captain Magnus, it turns out, has "double-crossed" his treasure-seeking companions, and with four other desperadoes plans to carry off the gold, which he believes Tubbs' discovery has made practical.

**CHAPTER XVI**—Tubbs goes over to the winning side, and, leaving Shaw and Cuthbert Vane securely bound, Magnus and his friends make their way to the treasure cave, returning with two bags of gold, which they had taken from the grip of a skeleton, whom Virginia alone knows is the unfortunate Peter, the real discoverer of the hidden wealth.

**CHAPTER XVII**—Magnus and a companion, "Chris," left to guard Shaw and Vane, are made intoxicated by the faithful "Cookie," and Virginia releases her friends.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Young Person Scores.

My first memory is of voices, and after that I was shot swiftly out of a tunnel from an immense distance and opened my eyes upon the same faces which I had left at some indefinite period in the past. There was Aunt Jane's, very tearful, and Miss Higgleby-Browne's, very glum, and the honorable Cuthbert's, very anxious and a little dazed, and Cookie's, very, very black. The face of Dugald Shaw I did not see, for the quite intelligible reason that I was lying with my head upon his shoulder.

As soon as I realized this I sat up

suddenly, while every one exclaimed at once, "There, she's quite all right—see how her color is coming back!"

The penknife that I had lost in my struggle with Captain Magnus had fallen at the Scotchman's feet. Wrenching himself free of his all but severed bonds he had seized the knife, slashed through the rope that held him to the tree, and flung himself on Captain Magnus. It was a brief struggle—a fist neatly planted on the ruffian's jaw had ended it, and the captain, half dazed from his potatoes, went down limply.

Throughout the fray Chris slumbered undisturbed, and he and the unconscious Magnus were now reposing side by side, until they should awake to find themselves neatly trussed up with Cookie's clothes-lines.

But my poor brave Cruise dragged a broken leg, from a kick bestowed on him by Captain Magnus, at whom he had flown valiantly in my defense.

So far so good; we had signally defeated our two guards, and the camp was ours. But what about the pirates who were still in the cave and would shortly be returning from it? They were three armed and sturdy ruffians. It would mean a battle to the death.

Our best hope would be to wait in ambush behind the trees of the clearing—I mean for Dugald Shaw and Cuthbert Vane to do it—and shoot down the unsuspecting pirates as they returned. This desperate plan, which so unpleasantly resembled murder, cast gloom on every brow.

"It's the women, lad," said the Scotchman in a low voice to Cuthbert. "It's—it's Virginia." And Cuthbert heavily assented.

Seeing myself as the motif of such slaughter shocked my mind suddenly back to clearness.

"Oh," I cried, "not that. Why not surprise them in the cave, and make them stay there? One man could guard the entrance easily—and afterward we could build it up with logs or something."

Everybody stared. "A remarkably neat scheme," said Mr. Shaw, "but impossible of application, I'm afraid, because none of us know where to find the cave."

I shook my head. "I know!"

There was a lengthy silence. People looked at one another, and their eyes said, "This has been too much for her!"

"I know," I impatiently repeated, "I can take you straight there. I found the tombstone before Mr. Tubbs did, and the cave, too. Come, let's not waste time. We must hurry—they'll be getting back!"

Amazement, still more than half incredulous, surged round me. Then Mr. Shaw said rapidly:

"You're right. Of course, if you have found the cave, the best thing we can do is to keep them shut up in it. But we must move fast—perhaps we're too late already. If they have found the chest they may be now be starting for camp with the first load of doubloons."

Again I shook my head. "They haven't found the gold," I assured him.

The astonished faces grew more anxious. "It sh' have told on little Miss Jinny's brain," muttered Cookie to himself.

"They haven't found the gold," I reiterated with emphasis, "because the gold is not in the cave. Don't ask me how I know, because there isn't time to tell you. There was no gold there but the two bags that the pirates brought back last night. The—the skeleton moved it all out."

"My Lawd!" groaned Cookie, staggering backward.

"Virginia! I had no idea you were superstitious!" quavered Aunt Jane.

"I say, do take some sleeping tablets or something and quiet your nerves!" implored Cuthbert with the tenderest solicitude.

In my exasperation I stamped my foot.

"And while we are arguing here the pirates may be starting back to camp! And then we'll have to kill them and go home and give ourselves up to be hanged! Please, please, come with me and let me show you that I know!" I lifted my eyes to the intent face of Dugald Shaw.

"All right," he said tersely. "I think you do know. How and what, we'll find out later." Rapidly he made his plan, got together the things needful for its execution, looked to the bonds of the still dazed and drowsy prisoners, posted Cookie in their neighborhood with a pair of pistols, and commanded Aunt Jane to dry her tear and look after Miss Higgleby-Browne who had dismayed every one by most inopportune toppling over in a per-

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fectly genuine swoon. Then the Scotchman, Cuthbert Vane and I set off through the woods. The men were heavily armed, and I had recovered my own little revolver and restored it to my belt. Mr. Shaw had seen to this, and had said to me, very quietly:

"You know, Virginia, if things don't go our way, it may be necessary for you to use it—on yourself."

And I nodded assentingly.

We went in silence through the green hush of the woods, moving in single file. My place as guide was in



We Went in Silence Through the Green Hush of the Woods.

the van, but Mr. Shaw deposited me from it and went ahead himself, while Cuthbert Vane brought up the rear. No one spoke, even to whisper. I guided Dugald Shaw, when needful, by a light touch upon the arm. Our enterprise was one of utmost danger. If we met the pirates it was their lives or ours—and I recall with incredible resolution to lashed five of my six bullets in a pirate before I turned the sixth upon myself.

We passed the grave, and I saw that the vines had been torn aside again, and that the tombstone was gone. We came to the brink of the cliff, and I pointed silently downward along the ledge to the angle in which lay the mouth of the cave. My breath came quickly, for at any instant a head might be thrust forth from the opening.

Mr. Shaw and Cuthbert dropped down upon the ledge. Though under whispered orders to retreat I could not, but hung over the edge of the cliff, eager and breathless. Then with a bound the men were beside me. Mr. Shaw caught my hand, and we rushed together into the woods.

A quake, a roar, a shower of flying rocks. It was over—the dynamite had done its work, whether successfully or not remained to be seen. After a little the Scotchman ventured back. He returned to us where we waited in the woods—Cuthbert to mount guard over me—with a cleared face.

"It's all right," he said. "The entrance is completely blocked. I set the charge six feet inside, but the roof is down clear to the mouth. Poor wretches—they have all come pouring out upon the sand—"

All three of us went back to the edge of the cliff. Seventy feet below,

on the narrow strip of sand before the sea-mouth of the cave, we saw the figures of four men, who ran wildly about and sought for a foothold on the sheer face of the cliff. As we stood watching them, with, on my part, at least, unexpected qualms of pity and a cold interior sensation very unlike triumph, they discovered us. Then for the first time, I suppose, they understood the nature of their disaster. We could not hear their cries, but we saw arms stretched out to us, fists frantically shaken, hands lifted in prayer. We saw Mr. Tubbs flop down upon his unaccustomed knees—it was all rather horrible.

I drew back, shivering. "It won't be for long, of course," I said uncertainly. "Just till the steamer comes—and we'll give them lots to eat—but I suppose they think—they will soon be just a lot more skeletons—" And here I was threatened with a moist antilimax to my late Amazonian mood.

Why should the frequent and natural phenomena of tears produce such panic in the male breast? "It's been too much for her!" exclaimed the once dour Scot in tones of anguish. "Hurry, lad—we must find her some water—"

"Nonsense," I interposed, winking rapidly. "Just think of some way to calm those creatures, so that I shan't see them in my dreams, begging and beseeching—" For I had not forgotten the immensity of my debt to Tony.

So a note was written on a leaf torn from a pocketbook and thrown over the cliff weighted with a stone. The captives swooped upon it. Followed then a vivid pantomime by Tony, expressive of eased if unrepentant minds, while Mr. Tubbs, by gestures, indicated that though sadly misunderstood, old H. H. was still our friend and benefactor.

It was an attentive group to which on our return to camp I related the circumstances which had made possible our late exploit of imprisoning the pirates in the cave. The tale of my achievements, though recounted with due modesty, seemed to put the finishing touch to the extinction of Violet, for she wilted finally and forever, and was henceforth even bullied by Aunt Jane. The diary of Peter was produced, and passed about with awe from hand to hand. Yesterday's discovery in the cave had rounded out the history of Peter to a melancholy completion. But though we knew the end we guessed in vain at the beginning, at Peter's name, at that of the old grandfather whose thrifty piety had brought him to Havana and to the acquaintance of the dying mate of the Bonny Lass, at the whereabouts of the old New England farm which had been mortgaged to buy the Island Queen, at the identity of Helen, who waited still, perhaps, for the lover who never would return.

But even our regrets for Peter did not chill the exultation with which we thought of the treasure-chest waiting there under the sand in the cabin of the Island Queen.

All afternoon we talked of it. That, for the present, was all we could do. There were the two prisoners in camp to be guarded—and they had presently awakened and made remarks of a strongly personal and unpleasant trend on discovering their situation. There was Cruise invalidated, and needing petting, and getting it from everybody on the score of his romantic past as Benjy as well as of his present virtues. The broken leg had been cleverly set by Dugald—somehow in the late upheaval Miss and Mister had dropped quite out of our vocabularies—with Cuthbert as surgeon's assistant and me holding the chloroform to the patient's nose. There was the fatigue

and reaction from excitement which everybody felt, and Peter's diary to be read, and golden dreams to be indulged. And there was the delicate question to be discussed, of how the treasure should be divided.

"Why, it all belongs to Virginia, of course," said Cuthbert, opening his eyes at the thought of any other view being taken but this obvious one.

"Nonsense!" I hastily interposed. "My finding the diary was just an accident; I'll take a share of it—no more."

Here Miss Browne murmured something half inaudible about "—confined to members of the expedition—" but subsided for lack of encouragement.

"I suggest," said Dugald, "that, our numbers having most fortunately diminished and there being, on the basis of Peter's calculations, enough to enrich us all, we should share and share alike." And this proposal was received with acclamations, as was a second from the same source, devoting a certain percentage of each share to Cookie, to whom the news of his good fortune was to come later as a great surprise.

Shortly before sundown Cuthbert and Cookie were dispatched by Dugald Shaw to the cliff above the cave with supplies for the injured pirates. These were let down by rope. A note was brought up on the rope, signed by Mr. Tubbs, and containing strangely jumbled exhortations, prayers and threats. A second descent of the rope elicited another message, neatly folded and addressed in the same hand to Miss Jane Harding. Cuthbert gave this privately to me, but its contents must forever be unknown, for it went, unread, into Cookie's fire. I had no mind to find Aunt Jane, with her umbrella as a parachute, vanishing over the cliffs to seek the arms of a repentant Tubbs.

The fly in the ointment of our satisfaction, and the one remaining obstacle to our possession of the treasure, was the presence of the two pirates in our midst. They were not nice pirates. They were quite the least choice of the collection. Chris, when he was not swearing, wept moistly, and so touched the heart of Aunt Jane that we lived in fear of her letting him go if she got the opportunity.

What to do with the pirates continued for a day and a night a knotty problem.

It was Cuthbert Vane who solved it, and with the simplicity of genius.

"Why not send 'em down to their chums the way we do the cats?" he asked.

Dire outcries greeted the decision. Aunt Jane wept, and Chris wept.



The Remarkable Program Was Triumphantly Carried Out.

Oaths flowed from Captain Magnus in a turgid stream. Nevertheless the twins were led away, firmly bound, and guarded by Dugald, Cuthbert and the negro. And the remarkable program proposed by Cuthbert Vane was triumphantly carried out. Six prisoners now occupied the old cave of the buccaners.

With the camp freed from the presence of the pirates all need of watchfulness was over. The prisoners in the cave were provided with no implements but spades, whereas dynamite and crowbars would be necessary to force a way through the debris which choked the mouth of the tunnel. A looking-over of the ground at the daily feeding time would be enough.

Tomorrow's sun would see our hopes crowned and all our toil rewarded by the recovery of the treasure from the Island Queen.

CHAPTER XIX.

Twixt Cup and Lip.

Next morning an event occurred sufficiently astonishing to divert our thoughts from even the all-important topic of the Island Queen. Cookie, who had been on the high land of the point gathering firewood, came rushing back to announce that a steamer had appeared in the offing. All the party dropped their occupations and ran to look. That the Rufus Smith had returned at an unexpectedly early date was of course the natural explanation of the appearance of a vessel in these lonely seas. But

through the glass the new arrival came out to be not the tubby freighter, but a stranger of clean-cut, rakish build, lying low in the water and designed for speed rather than carrying capacity.

A mile offshore she lay, and a boat left her side. Wondering and disquieted, we returned to the beach to await her coming. Was it another pirate-boat? What possible errand could bring a steamer to this remote, unvisited, all but forgotten little island?

As the oarsmen drove the boat upon the beach the man in the stern sprang agilely ashore. Dugald Shaw stepped forward, and the stranger approached, doffing his helmet courteously.

"You are the American and English party who landed here some weeks ago from the Rufus Smith?"

His English was easy and correct, though spoken with a pronounced Spanish accent. His dark high-featured face was the face of a Spaniard. And his grace was the grace of a Spaniard, as he bowed sweepingly and handed Mr. Shaw a card.

"Senior Don Enrique Gonzales," said Dugald, bowing in his stiff-necked fashion, "I am happy to see you. But as you represent an expedition, the president of the republic of Santa Marina I suppose you come on business, Senior Gonzales?"

"Precisely. I am enchanted that you apprehend the fact without the tiresomeness of expatulations. For business is a cold, usually a disagreeable affair, is it not so? That being the case, let us get it over."

"First do us the honor to be seated, Senior Gonzales."

Comfortably bestowed in a camp-chair in the shade, the Spaniard resumed:

"My friend, this is a matter of course you are aware, to the republic, of which I have the honor to be a citizen. All rights and privileges such as harvesting the copra crop are strictly conserved by the republic. All persons desiring such are required to negotiate with the minister of state of the republic. And how is it possible when it is a question of treasure, a very large treasure, senior?"

The Scotchman's face was dark.

"I had understood," he replied, "without looking in the direction of Miss Higgleby-Browne, who seemed in the last few moments to have undergone some mysterious process, that negotiations in the proper quarter had been undertaken—and brought to a successful conclusion—that in short we were here with the express permission of the government of Santa Marina."

This was a challenge which Miss Browne could not but meet.

"I had," she said hoarsely, "I had the assurance of—a person high in the financial circles of the United States, that through his influence with the government of Santa Marina it would not be necessary—in short, that he could fix the president—I employ his own term—for a considerable sum, which I—which my friend Miss Harding gave him."

"And the name of this influential person?" inquired the Santa Marinese, suavely.

"Hamilton H. Tubbs," croaked Miss Browne.

Senior Gonzales smiled.

"I remember the name well, madam. It is that of the pretended holder of a concession from our government, who a few years ago induced a number of American school teachers and clergymen and other financially innocent persons to invest in imaginary coffee plantations. He had in some doubtful fashion become possessed of a little entirely worthless land, which formed the basis of his transactions. His frauds were discovered while he was in our country, and he was obliged to leave between two days, according to your so picturesque idiom. Needless to say his application for permission to visit Leeward Island for any purpose would instantly have been refused, but as a matter of fact it was never made."

In a hushed silence we met the blow. The riches that had seemed within our grasp would never be ours. We had no claim upon them, for all our toil and peril; no right even to be here upon the island. Suddenly I began to laugh; faces wearing various shades of shocked surprise were turned on me. Still I laughed.

"Don't you see," I cried, "how ridiculous it all is? All the time it is we who have been pirates!"

The Spaniard gave me a smile made brilliant by the gleam of smoldering black eyes and the shine of white teeth.

"Seniorita, with all regret, I must agree."

"What's in a name?" remarked Dugald Shaw, shrugging. "We were after other people's property, anyway. I am very sorry about it, Senior Gonzales, but I would like to ask, if you don't mind telling, how you happened to learn of our being here, so long as it was not through the authentic channels. On general principles, I tried to keep the matter quiet."

"We learned in a manner somewhat—what do you say?—curious," returned the Spaniard, who, having presented the men with cigars and by permission lighted one himself, was making himself extremely at home and appeared to have no immediate intention of halting us away to captivity in Santa Marinese dungeons. "But before I go further, kindly tell me whether you have had any—ah—visitors during your stay on the island?"

"We have," Mr. Shaw replied, "very