

# PIECES OF EIGHT

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

Richard Le Gallienne

## CHAPTER V.

### Old Friends.

Next morning I did as the "king" had told me to do. The whole program was carried out just as he had planned it. I made my goodbyes in the settlement, as we had arranged, not forgetting to say "Dieu et mon Dieu" to Sweeney, and watching with some humorous interest how he would take it. He took it quietly, as a man in a signal box takes a signal, with about as much emotion and with just the same necessary seriousness.

"Tell the boss," he said—of course he meant the "king"—"that we are looking after him. Nothing'll slip through here, if we can help it. Good luck!"

So I went down to the boat—to old Tom once more, and the rest of our little crew, who had long since exhausted the attractions of their life ashore and were glad, as I was, to "Hit Up the John B. Sall."

Down in my cabin I looked over some mail that had been waiting for me at the post office. Amongst it was a crisp, characteristic word from Charlie Webster—for whom the gun will ever be lighter than the pen:

"Tobias escaped—just heard he is on your island—watch out. Will follow in a day or two."

I came out on deck about sunset. We were running along with all our sails drawing like a dream. I looked back at the captain, proud and quiet and happy there at the helm, and nodded a smile to him, which he returned with a flash of his teeth. He loved his boat; he asked nothing better than to watch her behaving just as she was doing. And the other boys seemed quiet and happy too, lying along the sides of the house, ready for the captain's order, but meanwhile content to look up at the great sails and down again at the sea.

We were a ship and a ship's crew all at peace with one another, and contented with ourselves—rushing and banging and spraying through the water. We were all friends—sea and sails and crew together. I couldn't help thinking that a mutiny would be hard to arrange under such a combination of influences.

Tom was sitting forward plaiting a rope. For all our experiences together he never implied that he was anything more than the ship's cook, with the privilege of waiting upon me in the cabin at my meals. But of course he knew that I had quite another valuation of him, and as our eyes met I beckoned to him to draw closer to me.

"Tom," I said, "I have found my treasure."

"You don't say so, sir?"

"Quite true, Tom." I continued; "you shall see my treasure tomorrow; meanwhile read this note." Tom was so much to me that I wanted him to know all about the details of the enterprise we shared together, and in which he risked his life no less than I risked mine.

Tom took out his spectacles from some recess of his trousers and applied himself to Charlie Webster's note, as though it had been the Bible. He read it as slowly, indeed, as if it had been Sauerbrat, and then folded it and handed it back to me without a word. But there was quite a young smile in his old eyes.

"The wonderful works of God," he said presently. "I guess, sir, we shall soon be able to ask him what he meant by that expression."

Soon the long dark shore loomed ahead of us. I had reckoned it out about right. But the captain announced that we were in shoal water.

"How many feet?" I asked, and a boy threw out the lead.

"Sixteen and a half," he said.

"Go ahead," I called out.

"Do you want to go aground?" asked the captain.

For answer I pushed him aside and took the wheel. I had caught the smallest glimpse, like a night light, floating on the water.

"Drop the anchor," I called.

The light lashed over the dark, and near at hand, about one hundred yards away, and there was the big murmur and commotion of the long breakers over the dancing shoals. The tide was running out very fast, and the white sand coming ever nearer to our eyes and the moonlight; and Samson's light, there, was keeping white and steady. With the thought of my treasure and the "king" so near by it was hard to resist the temptation to plunge in and follow my heart ashore. But I managed to control the boyish impulse, and presently we were all snug, and some of us snoring below decks, rocked in the long arc of the shoal water that glomed dimly like an animated nonexistence under the stars—old Sallie curled up at my feet, just like old times.

## CHAPTER VI.

### An Old Enemy.

Charlie Webster's laconic note was naturally our chief topic over breakfast. "Tobias escaped—just heard he is on your island. Watch out. Will follow in a day or two." The "king" read it out, when I handed him the note across the table.

"Your friend writes like a true man of action," he added, "like Caesar—and also the electric telegraph. We must send word to Sweeney to be on the lookout for him. I will send Samson the Redoubtable with a message to him this morning. Meanwhile we will smoke and think."

Then for the next hour the "king" thought aloud; while Calypso and I sat and listened, occasionally throwing in a parenthesis of comment or suggestion. It was evident, we all agreed, that Calypso had been right. It had been Tobias and none other whose evil eye had sent her so breathless back to us, waiting in the shadow of the woods; and it was the same evil eye that had fallen vulture-like on her golden doubloon exposed on Sweeney's counter.

It was clear that there were such coins on the island in somebody's possession. Then, when he had watched Calypso on her way home—and without any doubt being the spectator of our meeting at the edge of the wood though we had been unable to catch sight of him—there would of course be a suspicion in his mind that my quest might at least be approaching success, and that his ancestral millions might be almost in my hands. That there might be some other treasure on the island with which neither he nor his grandfather had any concern would not occur to him, nor would it be likely to trouble him if it did.

His presence was enough to prove that the treasure was his—was it not his treasure that I was after? Logic irrefutable! How was he to know that all the treasure so far discovered was that modest hoard—unearthed, as I heard, in the garden—the present whereabouts of which was known only to Calypso. The "king" interrupted himself at this point of argument.

"By the way, Calypso, where is it?" he asked unexpectedly, to the sudden confusion of both of us. "Isn't it time you revealed your mysterious Aladdin's cave?"

At the word "cave" the submerged rose in Calypso's cheeks almost came to the surface of their beautiful olive. "Cave!" she cooered manfully. "Who said it was a cave?"

"It was merely a figure of speech, which—if I may say so, my dear-

plain prose, we were almost certainly being watched. Unless—unless, indeed, my bogus departure for Nassau had fooled Tobias as we had hoped. But, even so, with that furo of Calypso's doubtless ever before him, it was too probable that he would not leave the neighborhood without some further investigation—an investigation," the "king" explained, "which might well take the form of a midnight raid; murdered in our beds, and so forth."

That being so, being in fact almost a certainty—the "king" spoke as though he would be a much disappointed man otherwise—we must look to our garrison. After all, besides ourselves, we had but Samson and Marcus and their dark brethren of doubtful courage, while Tobias probably had command of a roomful of doughty desperadoes. On the whole, perhaps, it might be best to avail ourselves of the crew of the Flamingo—"under cover of the dark," he repeated with a smile.

While we had been talking Samson had long since been on his way with the word to Sweeney to look out for Webster, and as he had been adamant to hurry back it was scarcely noon when he returned, bringing in exchange a verbal message from Sweeney.

"The pockmarked party," ran the message as delivered by Samson, "had left the harbor in his sleep that morning. Yes, sir!"

"Ha! ha!" laughed the "king," turning to me. "So two can play at that game, says Henry P. Tobias, Jr. But if we haven't fooled him let's make sure that he hasn't fooled us. We'll bring up your crew all the same—what do you think?"

"Under cover of the dark," I assented.

The "king's" instructions to me were that I was not to show my nose outside the house. I must regard myself as a prisoner with the entire freedom of his study—a large, airy room on the second floor, well furnished with all manner of books, old prints, strange fishes in glass cases, rods, guns, pipe racks, curiosities of every kind from various parts of the world.

And then I came upon a photograph hanging over the writing desk—a tall, Spanish-looking young woman of remarkable beauty. It needed but one glance to realize that here was Calypso's mother, and as was natural I stood a long time scanning the countenance that was so like the face which, from my first sight of it, had seemed the loveliest in the world. This was a flower that had been the mother of a flower. It was a face more primitive in its beauty, a little less touched with race than the one I loved, but the same fearless natural nobility was in it, and the figure had the same wild grace of pose, the same lithe strength of carriage.

Two or three days went by, but as yet there was no news of either Charlie Webster or Tobias. Nothing further had been heard of the latter in the settlement, and a careful patrolling of the neighborhood revealed no signs of him. Either his sailing away was a bona fide performance or he was lying low in some other part of the island—which of course would not be a difficult thing for him to do, as most of it was wilderness—and, also, there were one or two coves on the deserted northern side where he could easily bide his time. Between that coast and us, however, lay some ten miles of scrub and mangrove swamps, and it was manifestly out of the question to patrol them too. There was nothing to do but watch and wait.

At last there came a message from Charlie Webster, another of his Caesarian notes: "Sorry delays few days longer. Any news?"

That seemed to decide the "king." "What do you say, Ulysses," he said, "if we begin digging tomorrow? There are ten of us—with as many guns, four revolvers and plenty of maches—not counting Calypso, who is an excellent shot herself."

I agreed that nothing would please me better—so an early hour the following morning found us with the whole garrison—excepting Samson, whom it had been thought wise to leave at home as a bodyguard for Calypso—lined up at the old ruined mansion with picks and shovels and maches, ready to commence operations.

We had worked for a week before we made a clearance of the ground floor. Then at last we came upon a solidly built stone staircase, winding downward. After clearing away the debris with which it was choked to a depth of some twenty or thirty steps, we came to a stout wooden door studded with nails.

"The dungeon at last," said the "king."

"After some battering the door gave way with a crash, a molting breath as of the grave met our nostrils, and a cloud of bats flew in our faces and set the negroes screaming. A huge cavernous blackness was before us. The "king" called for lanterns.

As we raised these above our heads and peered into the darkness, we both gave a laugh.

"To—ho—ho—and a bottle of rum," sang the "king."

For all along the walls stood or lay prone on trestles, a silent company of household gods, festooned with cobwebs like huge black wings. It was the pirates' wine cellar!



It Was the Pirates' Wine Cellar.

"king" observed, that if a man should start to dig for gold in the center of Sahara, with no possible means of communicating with his fellows, on the third day there would not fall to be someone to drop in and remark on the fitness of the weather. So it was with us. As a general thing not once in a twelvemonth did a human being wander into that wilderness where the "king" had made his home. There was nothing to bring them there, and, as I have made clear, the way was not easy. Yet he had hardly begun work when one and another idle slogger strolled in from the settlement and stood grinning his curiosity at our labors.

Toward evening of the third day we came upon a passage leading out of one of the cellars; it had such a promising appearance that we kept at work later than usual, and the sun had set and night was rapidly falling as we turned homeward.

As we came in sight of the house we were struck by the peculiar hush about it, and there were no lights in the windows.

"No lights!" the "king" and I exclaimed together, involuntarily hurrying our steps, with a foreboding of what we knew not what in our hearts. As we crossed the lawn the house loomed up dark and still and the door opening onto the loggia was a square of blackness in a gloom of shadows hardly less profound. Not a sound, not a sign of life!

"Calypso!" we both cried out, as we rushed across the loggia. "Calypso! where are you?"—but there was no answer; and then I, being ahead of the "king," stumbled over something dark lying across the doorway.

"Good heaven! what is this?" I cried, and bending down I saw that it was Samson.

The "king" struck a match. Yes! it was Samson, poor fellow, with a dagger firmly planted in his heart.

Near by something white caught my eye attached to the lintel of the doorway. It was a piece of paper held there with a sailor's knife. I tore it off in a frenzy, and the "king" striking another match—we read it together. It bore but a few words, written all in capital letters with a coarse pencil:

"WILL RETURN THE LADY IN EXCHANGE FOR THE TREASURE," and it was signed "H. P. T."

## CHAPTER VII.

### In Which I Lose My Way.

"The audacity of the fellow!" exclaimed the "king," who was the first to recover.

"But Calypso!" I cried.

The "king" laid his hand on my shoulder reassuringly.

"Don't be afraid for her," he said.

"I know my daughter."

"But I love her!" I cried, thus blurting out in my anguish what I had designed to reveal in some tranquil chosen hour.

"I have loved her for twenty years," said the "king," exasperatingly calm.

So before me up that I ran on through the brush like a madman, my clothes clutched at by the devilish vines and torn at every yard.

I fled past the scene of our excavations, looking more haunted than ever in the flashing gleam of the lantern. With an oath I left them behind, as the accused cause of all this evil; but I cannot have gone by them many yards when suddenly I felt the ground giving way beneath me with a violent jerk. My arms went up in a wild effort to save myself, and then, in a panic of fright, I felt myself shooting downward as one might fall down the shaft of a mine. Vainly I clutched at rocky walls as I sped down in the earth-smelling darkness. I seemed to be falling forever, and for a moment my head cleared and I had time to think of the crash that was coming at the end of my fall—a crash which, I said to myself, must mean death.

I had hardly felt my lantern when its rays revealed something which it seemed impossible for anyone with eyes, however weary, to have overlooked.

In the right-hand corner of the little cavern, five or six feet above my head, was a dark hole, like the entrance to a tunnel, or, more properly speaking a good-sized burrow—for it was scarcely more than a yard in diameter. It seemed to be something more than a mere cavity in the rock, for, when I flashed my lantern up to it I could see no end. To climb up to it at first seemed difficult; but providentially, I had a stout clasp knife in my pocket, and with this I cut a step or two in the porous rock, and so managed it. Lying flat on my stomach, I looked in.

It was as I had thought, a narrow natural tunnel, snaking through the rocks—as often happens in those curious fantastic coral formations—for all the world, indeed, as if it had been made ages ago by some monstrous primordial serpent, a giant wormhole, no less, leading—heaven alone knew where.

There was just room to crawl along on all fours, so I started cautiously, making sure I had my precious matches and my jackknife all safe.

I progressed, I should say, for some twenty or thirty yards, when, to my inexpressible relief, I came out, still on all fours, onto a spreading floor; then, standing up, I perceived that I was in a cave of considerable length and some forty feet or so across. It was good to breathe again such comparatively free air; yet, as I looked about and made the circuit of the walls, I saw that I had but exchanged one prison for another. There was this difference, however: whereas there had only been one passageway from the cave I had just left, there were several similar outlets from that in which I now stood. Two or three of them proved to be nothing but alcoves that ran a few yards and then stopped.

But there were two close by each other which seemed to continue on. There was not much choice between them, but as both made in the same direction, so far as I could judge the direction in which I had so far progressed, I decided to take the larger one. It proved to be a passage much like the tunnel I had already traversed, only a little roomier, and therefore it was easier going, and it, too, brought me out, as had the other, on another cavern—but one considerably larger in extent.

I had stumbled on something like a Monte Cristo suite of underground apartments. And here for a moment I released my imagination from her blinders, and allowed her to play around these strange halls. And in one of her suggestions there was some comfort. It was hardly likely that caverns of such extent had waited for me to discover them. They must surely have been known to Teach, or whatever buccaner it was who had occupied the ruined mansion not so very far above ground.

I set about the more carefully to examine every nook and corner. Two iron staples imbedded in one of the walls, with rusting chains and manacles attached, were melancholy proof of one of the uses to which the place had once been put. Melancholy for certain unhappy souls long since free of all mortal chains, but for me—need I say it?—exceedingly joyous. For if there had been a way to bring prisoners here it was none the less evident that there had been a way to take them out. But how and where? Again I searched every nook and cranny. There was no sign of entrance anywhere.

Then a thought occurred to me. What if the entrance were after the manner of a medieval subterfuge—through the ceiling? There was a thought indeed to send one's hopes soaring. I ran in my eagerness through one cavern after another, holding my lantern aloft. That must be the solution. There could be no other way. I sought and sought, but alas! it was a false hope, and I threw myself down in a corner in despair, deciding that the prisoners must have been forced to crawl in as I had—though it was hardly like jokers to put themselves to such inconvenience.

I leaned back against the wall and rested listlessly upward. Next moment I had bounded to my feet again. Surely I had seen some short, regular lines running up the face of the rock, like a ladder. I raised my lantern. Sure enough, they were iron rounds set in the face of the rock, and they pointed up till I lost them in the obscurity, for the cave here must have been forty feet high. Blessed heaven! I was saved!

(Continued Next Saturday.)

New York—Charles Wilson, the "most married man in the world," is being brought here from Waupun, Wis., to answer to the charge of marrying eight New York women.

Cleveland—When Mrs. Harry White testified that her husband's "high temperature" caused him to beat her regularly, the judge sent Harry to the cooler for ten days.



Drop the Anchor!" I Cried.

I woke just as dawn was waking too, very still and windless; for the threatening nor'easter had changed its mood, and the world was as quiet as though there weren't a human being in it. As the light grew I scanned the shore to see whether I could detect the entrance of the hidden creek; but, though I swept it up and down again and again, it continued to justify the "king's" boast. There was no sign of an upping anywhere. Nothing but a straight line of brush, with mangroves here and there stepping down in their fantastic way into the water. And yet we were but a hundred yards from the shore. Certainly "Blackbeard"—if the haunt had really been his—had known his business; for an enemy could have sought him all day along this coast and found no clue to his hiding place.

But presently, as my eyes kept on seeking a figure rose, tall and black, near the water's edge, a little to our left, and shot up a long arm by way of signal. It was Samson; and evidently the mouth of the creek was right there in front of us—under our very noses, so to say—and yet it was impossible to make it out. However, at this signal, I stirred up the still sleeping crew, and presently we had the anchors up, and the engine started at the slowest possible speed.

The tide was beginning to run in, so we needed very little way on us. I pointed out Samson to the captain, and, following the "king's" instructions, told him to steer straight for the negro. Samson stood there and called:

"All right, sir. Keep right on. You'll see your way in a minute."

Aud, sure enough, when we were barely fifty feet away from the shore, and there seemed nothing for it but to run dead aground, low down through the floating mangrove branches we caught sight of a narrow gleam starting inland, and in another moment or two our decks were swept with foliage as the Flamingo rustled in, like a bird to cover, through an opening in the bushes barely twice her beam; and there before us, snaking through the brush, was a lane of water which immediately began to broaden between palmetto-fringed banks, and was evidently deep enough for a much larger vessel.

"Plenty of water, sir," hallowed Samson from the bank, grinning a huge welcome. "Keep a-going after me," and he started trotting along the creek side.

Samson went trotting along the twisting banks, we cautiously feeling our way after him, for something like a quarter of a mile; and then, coming round a sudden bend, the creek opened out into a sort of basin. On the left bank stood two large palmetto shrubs. Samson indicated that there was our anchorage; and then, as we were almost alongside of them, the cheery halloos of a well-known voice hailed us. It was the "king," and as I answered his welcome the morning suddenly sang for me—for there, too, was Calypso at his side.

The water ran so deep at the creek's side that we were able to moor the Flamingo right up against the bank, and when I had jumped ashore and greeted my friends, and the "king" had executed a brief characteristic fantasia on the manifest advantages of having a hidden pirate's creek in the family, he unfolded his plans, or rather that portion of them that was necessary at the moment.



Isn't It Time You Revealed Your Mysterious Aladdin's Cave?"

might apply with equal fitness, say—to a silk stocking.

And Calypso laughed through another tide of rose-color.

"No, dad, not that, either. Never mind where it is. It is perfectly safe, I assure you."

"But are you sure, my dear? Wouldn't it be safer, after all, here in the house? How can you be certain that no one but yourself will accidentally discover it?"

"I am absolutely certain that no one will," she answered, with an emphasis on the last three words which sent a thrill through me, for I knew that it was meant for me. "Of course, dad," she added, "if you insist—you shall have it. But seriously, I think it is safer where it is, and if I were to fetch it, how can I be sure that no one—she paused, with a meaning which I, of course, understood—"Tobias, for instance, would see me going—and follow me."

"To be sure—to be sure," said the "king." "What do you think, Friend Ulysses?"

"I think it more than likely that she might be followed," I answered, "and I quite agree with Miss Calypso. I certainly wouldn't advise her to visit her treasure just now—with the woods probably full of eyes. In fact," I added, smiling frankly at her, "I could scarcely answer for myself even for I confess that she has filled me with an overpowering curiosity."

"So he it then," said the "king," "and now to consider what our friend here graphically speaks of as those eyes in the woods."