

THE LAST VOYAGE OF THE DONNA ISABEL

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SYNOPSIS.

The story opens with the introduction of John Stephens, an American sea captain, who is in Valparaiso, Chile, being introduced in mining operations in Bolivia. He was denounced by Chile as an insurrectionist and as a consequence was hiding. At his hotel his attention was attracted by a young woman, Miss Balm, and a young man, Mr. Tuttle. Stephens rescued the young woman from a drunken officer. He was thanked by her. Admiral of the Peruvian navy confronted Stephens, told him that war had been declared between Chile and Peru and offered him the office of captain. He desired that that night the Esmeralda, a Chilean vessel, should be captured. Stephens accepted the commission. Stephens met a native crew, to which he was assigned. He gave them final instructions. They boarded the vessel. They successfully captured the vessel supposed to be the Esmeralda, through strategy. Capt. Stephens gave directions for the departure of the craft.

CHAPTER VII.

In Which I Suspect Evil.

Early dawn reached us in sudden gray, the sun a shapeless blob of dull red, with no vestige of its golden light forcing passage through those dense clouds of misty vapor closing us in as between curtained walls. The swell of the sea was not heavy, but the pervading gloom gave to the surrounding water a peculiarly sullen appearance, through which we tore, reckless of accident, at full speed. A new hand was at the wheel, Johnson having gone below an hour since, but I still clung to the bridge, my eyes heavy from peering forth into the fog-bank, my clothing sodden with the constant drip.

Only a few of the men were visible, three or four grouped about the captain on the forecastle head, and as many more gathered along the lee side of the chart-house. Evidently regular watches were already chosen, and a portion of the crew had been turned in for their trick below. Tuttle himself, clad in wet, glistening oil-skins and looking gaunt and cadaverous, his chin beard forking straight out over the high collar, was standing aft, beside the fellow who still kept guard over the companion. I moved across to the starboard end of the bridge, and, when he glanced around, made signal for him to join me.

"Not very much chance of any one overhauling us in this fog, Mr. Tuttle," I said, pleasantly. "It would be like hunting a needle in a haystack."

"This as the Lord will," he returned, rather sourly. "Ain't no proposition, but God disposes. The sun will lift that whole outfit in another hour. How far do you figure we're off shore?"

"Figure it for yourself. We're doing all of 16 knots, and have been for four hours at that speed. With another to be added, even our smoke ought to be below the horizon. We've given them the slip all right, and from now on it's merely a question of steaming to keep ahead. I can't recall anything in the Chilean navy that can overhail us. What discoveries have you made below?"

He turned his cratty, glittering eyes toward me, twisting the lump of tobacco under his tongue. In some way, beneath the revealing daylight, I became even more distrustful of the man, more conscious of his hypocrisy.

"Not a great deal," his mouth attempting a grin; "except that we've got the crew caged. Everybody was ashore but the harbor watch."

"Then you found the forecastle empty?"

"Nothin' there but dunnage and bilge water; regular sea-parlor, sir."

"And no officer on board?" I asked, scarcely believing it possible.

"None, barring the engineer, so far as I know. The cabin was locked up by your orders, so I let that alone."

"And that, then, is all you have discovered, is it, Mr. Tuttle?"

He shifted his long legs, but made no effort to turn and face me.

"Well, I guess that's about the whole of it," he answered, slowly, as though deliberating over the choice of words. "Only I'm a bit puzzled about some things that don't look just right. We started out, as I understand it, to run off with a Chilean warship named the Esmeralda, a schooner-rigged steam yacht. That was the contract, wasn't it, sir?"

I nodded, gravely, wondering what the man could possibly be driving at.

"That was my understanding," his nasal tone becoming more pronounced and disagreeable. "And somehow what we've got here looks just a bit odd. This here is a schooner-rigged steam yacht all right, an' I guess the tonnage ain't very far out of the Esmeralda class, but we haven't found a Chilean on board—two Swedes, a Dutchman, two Kanakas, an' a bloomin' English engineer."

"Well, what of that?" I broke in impatiently. "You know as well as I do that the entire Chilean navy is filled with foreigners."

"Sure," he coincided, with a swift, questioning glance toward me; "that's all true enough, sir, but I never saw a whole crew of those beggars an' no Chilean bossin' 'em. But then that's only a part of it. Every one of them small boats down there, an' the life-



"See Here, Mr. Tuttle, Kindly Explain What You Are Driving At."

preservers hangin' in front of the cabin, have got the name Sea Queen painted on them. Dam' if it ain't, here, too, on this tarpaulin."

I bent over the rail looking down at the lettering he pointed out, yet with no feeling of uneasiness.

"Beyond doubt, that was the yacht's name before the Chilean government purchased her and renamed her Esmeralda for their service. She was bought from English parties, I've heard. Probably the new owners have found no opportunity to repaint the name."

Tuttle drew forth a red bandanna and blew his nose, his voice more sullenly insolent as he resumed speech.

"Glad ye take it so cool, an' maybe yer right. However, it looks dam' odd to me."

I glanced aside at the wheelman apprehensively. The fellow was gazing straight ahead of him into the rapidly thinning fog. It was the manner of the mate more than his words that impressed me.

"See here, Mr. Tuttle," and I dropped my hand rather heavily on his sleeve, "kindly explain exactly what you are driving at. Do you intend to insinuate that we have made a mistake in the dark, and run off with the wrong vessel? Why, man, that is impossible. We are sailors, not landlubbers. Both of us have had chances to see the Esmeralda, and you certainly knew where she was moored yesterday."

"Well, when I come to think it over, I don't feel quite so everlastingly sure about that. The mind of a man is mighty deceitful," he admitted, slowly. "You see, I never saw her any closer than maybe a mile, an' even then she was half hid behind other shippin'. Of course I took notice of her outline an' rig, but I didn't pay much attention to details. To-night we was all of us excited, an' colors don't show up much in the dark! Now, her funnel is painted red, an' unless I'm a liar the Esmeralda's was black with a yellow stripe round the top. You see, Mr. Stephens, we kept in pretty close under cover all yesterday, an' maybe they hauled the Esmeralda up to the government docks, and ran another boat into her anchorage."

I laughed aloud, not in the least impressed with his argument.

"A very likely story that there were two vessels in that harbor so near alike as to deceive all of us."

He remained stubbornly silent, evidently unconvinced, plucking at his chin-beard.

"There is a certain way of settling the matter," I went on, decisively, "that is, by an examination of the papers in the cabin. Take charge of the bridge, and I'll run down and clear up this affair beyond any further controversy. We may even have one of the ship's officers stowed away there, sleeping off his late celebration. If there is, he's due for a rude awakening. Keep the yacht's head as she is, and I'll be back directly."

I was aware that he watched me closely as I descended the steps, but felt little interest in such surveillance. That we could have been guilty of so

serious an error as he suggested was beyond possibility. Nevertheless the mere suspicion was irritating, leaving me filled with a vague unrest. It was quite true that I might have been deceived. I realized that, because I had enjoyed no opportunity to observe the Esmeralda in daylight, and no occasion to study her lines with care at any time. To me she had appeared merely as an extremely graceful vessel, interesting to the eye of a seaman. But Tuttle and his crew must have known the truth. If we were, indeed, on board the wrong vessel, it was from no innocent mistake of the darkness, but rather the result of deliberate plan, the full purpose of which was beyond my comprehension. I swore savagely under my breath, even as I laughed sarcastically at the vague suspicion, aroused largely, as I well realized, by my increasing dislike of the ex-whaleman. The wrong ship? Why, the very conception of such an accident was grotesque, ridiculous, beyond belief! It was the hallucination of a fool. One of the men assisted me to unbar the slide across the companionway, and, bidding him stand by ready for a fall, I started below, my fingers on the brass rail, my feet firm on the rubber-lined stairs.

These led into as handsome a sea-parlor as ever I remember gazing upon. Everything was effective and in elaborate taste, evidencing an expenditure that made me stare about in amazement. So deeply did it impress me that I remained there grasping the rail, gazing about in surprise, hesitating to press my investigations further. Yet this feeling was but momentary, the very desolation and silence quickly convincing me that the cabin contained no occupants. The movement of the vessel, the tramping of men on the deck, and the ceaseless noise of the screw were more noticeable here than forward, and no seaman, however overloaded with liquor he might have been the night before, could have slept undisturbed through the hubbub and changes of the past few hours.

Inspired to activity by this knowledge, and eager to settle the identity of our prize, I began closer examination of that impressive interior, although not entirely relieved from the spell of its royal magnificence. Six doors, three upon each side, opened off from the main cabin. The full-length mirrors occupied the spaces between, and the doors themselves were marvels of decoration and carving. Another, beneath the stairs, led directly into the steward's pantry, and revealed, besides, a passageway leading forward, probably to the lazarette amidships. The others, as I tried their brass knobs, exhibited merely comfortable staterooms, fitted up for officers' use; three contained two bunks each, the others only one. Four of the beds had been carefully made, but the remainder were in disorder, as though quite lately occupied. Everything impressed me as unusually clean and neat, evincing strict discipline. The only desk I noticed was a roll-top affair, securely locked, and with no litter of papers lying anywhere about.

This, I figured, was probably the berth of the first officer; the captain's room would naturally be the one farthest astern.

The upright piano, with the high-backed cushioned chairs surrounding it, blocked my view aft, but on rounding these I observed a closed door, which apparently led into a room extending the entire width of the cabin. Never suspecting that it might be occupied, I grasped the brass knob, and stepped within. Instantly I came to a full stop, dazed by astonishment, my teeth clenched in quick effort at self-control. The entire scene burst in upon my consciousness with that first surprised survey—the draped portholes opening out upon the gray fog-bank, the brass bed screwed to the deck, the chairs upholstered in green plush, the polished table with a vase of flowers topping it, the glistening front of a book-case in the corner, the tiger rug into which my feet sank. All these things I perceived, scarcely realizing that I did so, for my one true impression concentrated itself upon the living occupants.

There were two present. At a low dressing table, her back toward me, fronting a mirror, yet with eyes fastened upon an open book lying in her lap, sat a woman. The lowered head yielded me only an indistinct outline of her features, yet the full throat and rounded cheek gave pledge of both youth and beauty. Standing almost directly behind her chair, with short, curly locks, crowned by a smart white cap, her hands busied amid her mistress's tresses, was a maid, petite, roguish, fluttering about like a humming-bird. The latter saw me at once, pausing in her work with eyes wide open in surprise, but the preoccupied mistress did not even glance up. She must have heard the sound of the door, however, for she spoke carelessly:

"I thought you were never coming. What caused you to sail so suddenly?"

These unexpected words, uttered so naturally, served partially to arouse me from the dull torpor of surprise. I clenched my hands, wondering if I was really awake, and stared back into the frightened eyes of the maid, who appeared equally incapable of articulation. Suddenly she found voice:

"It is not ze one, madame," she cried, shrinking back. "Non, non; it is un homme étranger."

"What is that you say, Celeste?" and the other arose swiftly to her feet, the open book dropping to the floor as she turned to face me. Instantly I recognized her, in spite of the long hair trailing unconfined far below her waist—recognized her with a sudden leap upward of my heart into my throat. There was no semblance of fear, only undisguised amazement, in the dark gray eyes that met mine.

"What—what is the meaning of this strange intrusion? Are you a member of the crew?"

Instantly my cap came off, the thought occurring to me of what a rough figure I must be making in my soaked jacket, with the glistening peak of my cap shadowing my face.

"No, madame; and I bowed before her. "I am not one of your crew. My entrance here was entirely a mistake."

She leaned forward, one white hand grasping the back of her chair, the expression in her eyes changing as she read my face, perplexity merging into faint recollection.

"I—I do not quite comprehend," she confessed at last, changing her speech to a slightly broken Spanish. "You—you are Señor Estevan?"

CHAPTER VIII.

In Which I Begin Discovery.

Stunned by this abrupt disclosure of the extremely dangerous predicament we were in, I found no immediate voice for reply, merely standing there as if petrified, staring at them both, cap in hand, grasping the edge of the door. Their faces swam before me in the gray light streaming through the stern ports; the maid already attempting a smile, as though her fears had subsided, the mistress viewing me in wondering perplexity. She it was who first succeeded in breaking the embarrassing silence.

"But, señor, what does this all mean? Why are you here on board the yacht?"

With strong effort at control I brought my senses together, desperately fronting the disagreeable situation, feeling myself scarcely less a victim than she. If all that I now dimly suspected proved true, about us both were being drawn the cords of treachery.

"I cannot explain, madame," I began lamely enough. "At least not until I comprehend the situation better myself than I do now. It is all dark. I have reason to believe a most serious mistake has been made—one it will be very difficult to rectify. Perhaps I could see more clearly if you would consent to answer a few questions. May I ask them of you?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Rival Romancers

"Why, she must be crazy!" declared Shackleton. He even laid down his newspaper in his interest.

"No, she's entirely sane," said Mrs. Shackleton. "No crazy woman could be such a good seamstress as Miss Balm! That lavender gown she has just finished for me looks as though it came from Paris and she made it in three days at \$2.50 a day! I guess it's just her vivid imagination!"

"It's something vivid and spectacular!" observed Shackleton. "Maybe she does it to keep you amused."

"Oh, my, no!" replied his wife. "Sometimes she will sew along and not say a word and then other days she will just begin to talk. I don't believe I told you about the lettuce, did I? Well, once when she lived in St. Paul, Miss Balm was sewing for a woman whose husband and brother were scientists. She didn't know just what brand of science they made a specialty of, but at any rate they were fond of lettuce salad for luncheon and insisted on having it fresh. So they had a brass traylike dish on the table filled with a specially prepared earth. There were chemicals or something in that earth, you know, and when they would come in to luncheon the woman's husband would take a handful of lettuce seed from his pocket and carelessly scatter it over the earth and the brother would pick up the water bottle and sprinkle it and then they would sit down to their soup and chops and things, and by the time the salad course was due that lettuce would be just right to pick."

"Now, Evangeline!" interrupted Shackleton, "stop right there! I expect this was the point where Miss Balm burst into maniacal laughter and attacked you with the shears, wasn't it?"

"She did not!" said his wife. "She went right on talking in the seams in my pink waist. And another time when the natural gas supply in the range failed and there was company coming to dinner the scientist husband just said: 'Oh, never mind a little thing like that!' And he went out and packed a lot of snow and ice hard and they did their baking and boiling on that. Miss Balm said he explained that intense heat and intense cold had just the same effect, so—"

"Why," demanded Shackleton, sternly, "do you encourage her to relate these atrocious impossibilities?"

"Why, I don't!" declared Mrs. Shackleton. "It wouldn't be polite to interrupt, so I just let her go on. Besides, I am always wondering what she will say next. She had an uncle once, who was a wonderful man. He was fond of animals and he had trained the chickens so that if he played 'The Palms' on his cornet in ordinary time they would march by in single file to the place where he fed them corn—and if he played it in ragtime they would fall over themselves getting to the corneal mush bag. The cows—"

"See here!" expostulated Shackleton, "that woman ought to be broken of the habit of romancing!"

"Well, you do it," suggested Mrs. Shackleton, sarcastically. "I'd like to see you."

That was why Shackleton made a point of coming home to luncheon the next day. He was curious about the remarkable Miss Balm and anxious to meet her. Miss Balm proved to be an entirely inoffensive, mild-looking person and it was some time before Shackleton got a chance to begin the cure.

"Yes," he said at last, "I certainly believe it is better for children to have something regular to do. When I was a kid each of us had our tasks. I remember how my brother Tom hated his. His work every morning was to take a bushel basket and go around the house collecting the family diamonds, which he carried to the woodshed. There was a big pile of sawdust there and after dumping them into a washtub of soapy water he would dry and clean them in the sawdust. He particularly hated mother's diamond rope because it was 25 yards long and it took him so long to brush out the sawdust from the settings. Please pass the rolls, Evangeline."

Miss Balm was staring at him.

"This weather," went on Shackleton, reminiscently, "reminds me of the time Tom and I walked 125 miles one afternoon on a wager. The snowbanks were so deep that when we broke through you couldn't see the tops of our heads and it was cold—28 degrees below zero. We got along rapidly, though, because we wore our truck suits—something like bathing suits, you know—and so we weren't weighted down. They gave us a banquet that night and then we danced till morning. Oh, those were great days!"

When Shackleton came home that evening he found his wife in tears.

"Miss Balm," she wept, "says she can't come to me any more, not even to finish up! You—you scared her with your wild talk this noon!"

"Pooh!" scoffed Shackleton, joyously, "she's just jealous of my superior inventive abilities! That's all! You take your things to the most expensive dressmaker you can find if you want to, Evangeline! It was worth it!"

There are 1,000 electric lights in the streets of the ancient city of Damascus.

WANTS HER LETTER PUBLISHED

For Benefit of Women who Suffer from Female Ills

Minneapolis, Minn.—"I was a great sufferer from female troubles which caused a weakness and broken down condition of the system. I read so much of what Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound had done for other suffering women I felt sure it would help me, and I must say it did help me wonderfully. My pains all left me. I grew stronger, and within three months I was a perfectly well woman."

"I want this letter made public to show the benefit women may derive from Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound."—Mrs. JOHN G. MOLDAN, 2115 Second St., North, Minneapolis, Minn.

Thousands of unsolicited and genuine testimonials like the above prove the efficiency of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, which is made exclusively from roots and herbs.

Women who suffer from those distressing ills peculiar to their sex should not lose sight of these facts or doubt the ability of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound to restore their health.

If you want special advice write to Mrs. F. Pinkham, at Lynn, Mass. She will treat your letters strictly confidential. For 30 years she has been helping sick women in this way, free of charge. Don't hesitate—write at once.

Encouraging Signs of Life

Liberal Contribution in United States and Canada for Work of the Foreign Mission

In spite of the financial depression the offerings of the United States and Canada for foreign missions increased last year \$602,000. The increase of income from the foreign field was even more remarkable, being \$1,360,000. The total gifts on the foreign field was \$4,844,000, and this amount was 48 per cent. of the total amount contributed for foreign missions by the Protestant churches of North America.

The increase of native converts last year was 164,674, or over 450 a day. The cumulative effects of the foreign mission enterprise is shown by the fact that it took 109 years to gain the first million converts. The second million were secured in 12 years, and they are now being added at the rate of a million in six years. The percentage of the increase of the church membership of America was one and one-half, while the increase of American missions abroad was 12 per cent. Two members were added in America for each ordained minister, while 41 were added in the foreign field for each ordained American missionary.—The Missionary Review of the World.

An Educational Problem.

Little Margery has just begun to go to the kindergarten, and is filled with a due sense of the importance of her studies there and the solemn value of the attainments that have thus been put within her reach. The other afternoon, after coming home from school, she remained in a brown study for a time, and then said: "Mamma, do I know as much now as I don't know?"

There is no conversation so agreeable as that of a man of integrity, who hears without any intention to betray, and speaks without any intention to deceive.—Plato.

HARD TO DROP But Many Drop It.

A young Calif. wife talks about coffee: "It was hard to drop Mocha and Java and give Postum a trial, but my nerves were so shattered that I was a nervous wreck and of course that means all kinds of ails.

"At first I thought bicycle riding caused it and I gave it up, but my condition remained unchanged. I did not want to acknowledge coffee caused the trouble for I was very fond of it. At that time a friend came to live with us, and I noticed that after he had been with us a week he would not drink his coffee any more. I asked him the reason. He replied, I have not had a headache since I left off drinking coffee, some months ago, till last week, when I began again, here at your table. I don't see how anyone can like coffee, anyway, after drinking Postum!"

"I said nothing, but at once ordered a package of Postum. That was five months ago, and we have drank no coffee since, except on two occasions when we had company, and the result each time was that my husband could not sleep, but lay awake and tossed and talked half the night. We were convinced that coffee caused his suffering, so he returned to Postum, convinced that coffee was an enemy, instead of a friend, and he is troubled no more with insomnia.

"I, myself, have gained 8 pounds in weight, and my nerves have ceased to quiver. It seems so easy now to quit coffee that caused our aches and ails and take up Postum."

Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pgs. "There's a Reason."

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.