

THE LAST VOYAGE OF THE DONNA ISABEL

BY RANDALL PARRISH
AUTHOR OF "DASH HAMPSON OF FLORIDA, ETC."

SYNOPSIS.

The story opens with the introduction of John Stephens, adventurer, a Massachusetts man marooned by a storm at Valparaiso, Chile. Being interested in mining operations in Bolivia, he was denounced by Chile as an adventurer and as a consequence was hiding. At his hotel his attention was attracted by an Englishman and the young woman, 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 *Emeralda*, a Chilean vessel, should be captured. Stephens accepted the commission. Stephens met a motley crew, to which he was assigned. He gave them final instructions. They boarded the vessel. They successfully captured the vessel supposed to be the *Emeralda*, through strategy. Capt. Stephens gave directions for the departure of the craft. He entered the cabin and discovered the English woman and her maid. Stephens quickly learned the wrong vessel had been captured. It was Lord Darlington's private yacht. The lord's wife and maid being aboard. He explained the situation to her ladyship. Then First Mate Tuttle laid bare the plot, saying that the *Sea Queen* had been taken in order to go to the Antarctic circle. Tuttle explained that on a former voyage he had learned that the *Donna Isabel* was lost in 1703. He had found it frozen in a huge mass of ice on an island and contained much gold. Stephens consented to be the captain of the expedition. He told Lady Darlington. She was greatly alarmed, but expressed confidence in him. The *Sea Queen* encountered a vessel in the fog. Stephens attempted to communicate. This caused a fierce struggle and he was overcome. Tuttle finally squaring the situation. Then the *Sea Queen* headed south again. Under Tuttle's guidance the vessel made progress toward its goal. De Nova, the mate, told Stephens that he believed Tuttle, now acting as skipper, insane because of his queer actions. Stephens was awakened by cracking of glass. He saw Tuttle in the grip of a spasm of religious mania and overcame him. The sailor upon regaining his senses was taken ill. Tuttle committed suicide by shooting. Upon vote of the crew Stephens assumed the leadership and the men decided to continue the treasure hunt, the islands being supposed to be only 200 miles distant. Tuttle was buried in the sea, Lady Darlington pronouncing the service. Stephens started to probe the ghost. He came upon Lieut. Sanchez, the drunken officer he had humbled in Chile. He found that at Sanchez' inspiration, Engineer McKnight played "ghost" to scare the men into giving up the quest. Stephens announced that the *Sea Queen* was at the spot where Tuttle's quest was supposed to be. The crew was anxious to go on in further search. De Nova and Stephens conquered them in a fist fight. Lady Darlington thanked him. The *Sea Queen* started northward, she was wrecked in a fog. Stephens, De Nova, Lady Darlington and her maid being among those to set out in a life boat.

CHAPTER XXI.

In Which Love Speaks.

No one uttered a sound after that first wild cry. We sat there stunned into silence by the horror of the situation, every eye staring blindly into the mist, the long-boat tossing like a chip on the swell caused by the engulfing of the yacht. The crippled *Sea Queen* had evidently gone down like a shot. Twice I endeavored to speak, but something choked me, and my voice failed. I reached down into my pocket, held close to my eyes the small compass I always carried, and swung the boat's head northward. Even this slight effort at action gave me back some measure of self-control.

"You had better step the mast, Mr. De Nova, and get out what canvas you can spread. There is not much wind, but we'll make the best of what little there is."

They went at the task as though glad to have work given them, but I could see nothing but the dim outlines of their forms.

I bent down toward Lady Darlington; she glanced around and directly into my eyes.

"Are you warm enough?"

"Oh, yes; but—but I hardly know how I am. This has come so suddenly. I—I am not frightened, but dazed, horrified. Were all the others on board drowned?"

"They must have been. I will question the men in a moment. Only I beg of you do not permit your courage to give way."

She rested her hand upon my knee. "You need not fear for me," she said firmly. "I will not fail you."

The mainsail belled out, catching whatever breeze there was, the boom swinging free and the long-boat leaning well over, as it leaped forward into the fog. The swift motion brought new heart to all of us.

"Pass back the provisions, lads, and we'll stow them away here in the stern-lockers."

This task required only a few moments, and when it was completed I was able to discern the mate, seated next to Celeste.

"Now tell me just what occurred, Mr. De Nova," I said. "What was it we bumped into,—an iceberg?"



"Please Tell Me. I—I Wish to Know the Very Worst."

"Not come more quick. I get most to ze companion, when bang! we hit ze iceberg! Zat all I know for ze next minute, only zere be hell for'ard, an' ze ship up on end."

"Is that all you can tell? Is there any one else here able to explain?"

"Well sir," said a deep rumbling voice forward, "I was just aft o' the main-hatch when the rumpus happened, a-hangin' on to a life-line. I couldn't see much, but I figure it out like this. We hit a big berg bows on; a lot o' ice caved off on us, an' smashed in the for'ard deck like it was paper, crushin' down everything as fur aft as the engine-room. Both boilers blew up, an' then nothin' held the stern in the air but the after bulkhead. When that finally gave way the hooker dropped to Davy Jones. There wasn't a man ahead o' the main-hatch that had a chance even to run for it."

I caught my breath, feeling a shiver shake me.

"I am unable to make out who are on board," I said at last. "Name yourselves, beginning at the bow."

"Jem Cole, sir." It was the voice of the negro.

"Next. Speak up, men!"

"Johnson."

"Kelly."

"McKnight."

"Dade."

"Sanchez."

There was a pause, the last voice sounding just abaft the mast-but.

"Is that all?"

"That's all, sir."

"With De Nova, myself, and the two women it makes the count ten. Well, we sha'n't be crowded for room. This is going to be a hard cruise, lads, but we'll make a stiff fight for it. We're sailors, with a stanch boat under us, and a chance to win out."

There was a faint cheer, rumbling, as if it had caught in their throats, and the negro asked:

"How much of a run is it, boss?"

"I am unable to tell you, Cole," I answered, endeavoring to make my voice sound hopeful, "because I have not had any observation for three days. There is no use lying to you fellows. There is a mighty long stretch between us and any land worth trying after. We are out of the track of ships, and our only hope is to keep the long-boat right side up, and get out of her all the speed possible. Two of you stand by to watch the running gear; the others had better lie down and get some sleep while the wind is light. Turn in with them, De Nova; you will have to relieve me at the tiller later."

The breeze perceptibly freshened, but not sufficiently to require any reefing of canvas, and the fog began drifting away like a great white cloud, leaving revealed the vista of cold gray sea stretching about us. Lord, but it did look barren and desolate, that ceaselessly heaving expanse of water, amid which we were but the merest speck, scarcely more important than those floating cakes of ice, tossed by the waves through which we sought passage.

At six o'clock we took careful stock

of our supply of provisions, and served out a small ration all around, afterward arranging the several watches for the night and distributing, as equally as possible, the blankets and extra clothing. The wind felt colder, the sea coming up a bit, and Dade and Kelly fixed up a piece of spare canvas at the stern to protect the steersman from the dash of icy spray. De Nova took the tiller, and seeing no signs of a bad night I lay down amidships, though not until I had compelled Lady Darlington to seek rest also. Whether she found it or not I can not say, but I was asleep instantly, and knew nothing until Johnson called me at midnight.

There was no great change in conditions as I stumbled sleepily aft to take the tiller. The boat was sailing free, but with a reef in the mainsail, owing to a marked stiffening of the wind. The intense loneliness of the scene cast an even stronger spell over me now,—those awful wastes of solitude above and below; the far-off steely glitter of stars; the near-by white crested waves; the little, insignificant dot of a boat in which we tossed. I thought upon those leagues upon leagues of barrenness stretching away to the north, east, west, south, the vast fields of ice, the extent of storm-lashed seas, the seeming hopelessness of our efforts at escape, and choked in my throat, my lips pressed tight, my eyes staring blindly out into the smother.

Suddenly the blanket at my feet stirred, and Lady Darlington sat up, her back against the gunwale and face upturned to mine. The cold gleam of the moon revealed her features, clear cut as a cameo, framed by the darkness of her hood. I could distinguish the delicate tracery of her lashes, and beneath that light, the gray of her eyes appeared black.

"I have been studying your face, Mr. Stephens," she said quietly, "and have read there the helplessness of our situation."

I rallied instantly, endeavoring to speak lightly.

"You translate wrongly. That was only the depression of the scene yonder; the awful loneliness of sea and sky affected my spirits. You should not draw hasty conclusions."

"Nor have I. Even such a sea and sky never gave you that look of despair. I know you too well to believe that. You consider our situation desperate."

I looked at her closely, but it was not fear I saw in the uplifted face. "It is certainly serious enough," I admitted, believing it useless to attempt any deceit, "but not hopeless. We have a stanch boat under us, sufficient food for all our probable needs, and a favorable wind. While there is life there is hope."

She made a little eloquent gesture of the hands.

"Please do not say that. Those words are always the last effort to bolster up courage. Keep them for the men, but trust me with the exact truth."

"Ask and I will answer."

"What chance have we of rescue?"

I turned my eyes away before venturing to reply, yet I dared not utter an untruth.

"Two: the being picked up by some passing vessel, or the attaining of inhabitable land."

"Are there any vessels in this sea at this season?"

"It is hardly probable there are, unless it should be some whaler blown from her course around the Horn."

"Then our only practical hope lies in reaching land by our own efforts?" She leaned forward, her hand touching mine as it grasped the tiller, her earnest eyes compelling me to look at her.

"Yes."

"How—how far away is this land?" I hesitated, actually afraid myself to speak the answer, but her hand-clasp merely tightened.

"Please tell me. I—I wish to know the very worst. Such knowledge will be easier to bear than this awful doubt."

"But I hardly know myself," I confessed desperately. "I have had no observation for several days, and can only guess the rate of progress of the *Sea Queen*, or our drift during the storm. I will be perfectly honest with you, though, and give you my best judgment. I believe we must be between four and five hundred miles to the east and north of Dougherty island, and not yet beyond the limit of drift ice. There would be no use in our attempting to turn back for that point of land, as it is nothing but a rock, and we could never find it by the mere guidance of a compass. Our only chance is to bear away to the northeast toward land and the track of ships."

"How far? What land?"

"The western coast of South America; at least 1,500 miles."

I felt her shudder, and scarcely realizing that I did so, or the significance of the action, impelled by an impulse beyond all control, I drew her hand within both my own as though in pledge of protection.

"It can be done," I insisted. "Such boat voyages have been accomplished."

She made no effort to draw away, her eyes still upon mine.

"Not through such a sea as this; not at this season of the year."

I could not answer, my lips dry, my throat parched.

"You know the utter hopelessness of it," she went on, stimulated by my silence. "You know we can never survive the cold, the closing in of the ice, the certainty of storm. You are a sailor, and a brave man—trust me with the whole truth."

"It would be almost a miracle," I faltered, the words fairly forced from my lips by her insistence. "This is the beginning of winter in the stormiest ocean on the globe. God could do it, but not man."

Her head sank, the white cheek touching my sleeve, but the fearless gray eyes were still open, gazing straight into mine.

"Then it is the certainty of death," she said soberly. "Death together."

My heart leaped as though it had received an electric shock.

"Together! you mean—"

"That I should rather be here, facing death with you, than anywhere else alone," she exclaimed swiftly. "Oh, I can say it frankly now; say it here before you and God; say it in all purity and honor. Perhaps to-night, perhaps to-morrow, somewhere amid this awful waste of waters we will go together into eternity. What are the dictates of men to us now? What meaning is there any longer to the hideous requirements of the world? We are beyond them all. Here, now, we can be ourselves, ourselves. To-night we are free: to-night I can hear you speak what I have already read in your eyes, and am not afraid to hear it."

"You—you love me?"

"With all my heart and soul."

With everything else blotted out, with all else forgotten, I sat speechless, gazing down through the mist of tears into her eyes.

CHAPTER XXII.

In Which I Understand My Lady. She rested motionless, her cheek barely touching my sleeve, her eyes filled with love, her hands in mine. Then I heard her voice, soft as a whisper, the breath of her lips on my cheek.

"You will not misjudge me; surely you can not. Those words would never have been uttered in any other circumstances. Not that I am afraid, but that I am ashamed or regretful; but nothing else could ever have set me free. Now we must know, understand each other—we must die with our hearts open, our souls clean. You really love me? trust me? believe me to be a worthy woman?"

"With all my soul I do."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

CANADA FORGING AHEAD

Thomas C. Shotwell, one of the greatest market reporters in America, writes from New York, under date of March 20th, and says:

"The Tariff tangle with Canada which President Taft has taken in hand is of importance chiefly because of the multitude of American farmers that are crossing into the Canadian northwest. Most conservative estimates of their number place it at 150,000 for 1910. Some say as many as 250,000 will cross. These are all expert farmers and their places in the United States are being filled by untrained men from Europe and from the cities. Canada is gaining rapidly in agricultural importance and within a few years the United States will have to call on the Dominion for wheat. Production of wheat in the United States is not keeping pace with the population. A tariff war would complicate the problem of getting food. Even now Canadian farmers are getting higher prices for their cattle on the hoof and Canadian housewives are paying less for meat in the butcher shops than farmers and housewives are receiving and paying in the United States. The tariff on cattle and wheat must be removed as between the two countries before long."

TOO INTERESTING.



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"Yes," answered the cook who was busy kneading dough. "Just lay 'em under the refrigerator."

"I ain't Hen; I'm the other boy," shouted the lad from the grocery.—Chicago Post.

Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup. For children teething, softens the gums, reduces inflammation, allays pain, cures wind colic. See bottle.

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Constipation causes many serious diseases. It is thoroughly cured by Doctor Pierce's Pleasant Pellets. One a laxative, three for cathartic.

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Delicately formed and gently reared, women will find, in all the seasons of their lives, as maidens, wives or mothers, that the one simple, wholesome remedy which acts gently and pleasantly and naturally, and which may be used with truly beneficial effects, under any conditions, when the system needs a laxative, is—Syrup of Figs and Elixir of Senna. It is well known to be a simple combination of the laxative and carminative principles of plants with pleasant aromatic liquids, which are agreeable and refreshing to the taste and acceptable to the system when its gentle cleansing is desired.

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Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, made from roots and herbs, has proved to be the most successful remedy for curing the worst forms of female ills, including displacements, inflammation, fibroid tumors, irregularities, periodic pains, backache, bearing-down feeling, flatulency, indigestion, and nervous prostration. It costs but a trifle to try it, and the result has been worth millions to many suffering women.

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