

THE LAST VOYAGE OF THE DONNA ISABEL

BY RANDALL PARRISH
AUTHOR OF "BOB HAMPTON OF FLORIDA," ETC.

SYNOPSIS.

The story opens with the introduction of John Stephens, an American, a Massachusetts man marooned by the natives at Valparaiso, Chile. Being interested 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 an Englishman and a young woman. Stephens rescued the young woman from a drunken officer. He was thanked by her. Admiral of the Peruvian navy contacted Stephens, told him that war had been declared between Chile and Peru and offered him the office of captain. He declined that that night the Esmeralda, a Chilean vessel, could 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 Esmeralda, 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 1783. He had found it frozen in a huge case 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 crashing 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 20 miles distant. Tuttle was buried at sea. Lady Darlington pronounced the service. Stephens awaking from sleep saw the ghost, supposed to have formed the basis for Tuttle's religious mania. Upon advice of Lady Darlington, Stephens started to probe the ghost. He came upon Lieut. Sanchez, the drunken officer he had humbled in Chile. He found that at Sanchez's inspiration, Engineer McKnight played "ghost" to scare the men into giving up the treasure hunt, 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 flat 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. Ten were rescued. Stephens saw only one chance in a thousand for life. Lady Darlington confessed her love to Stephens and he did likewise. Lady Darlington told her life story; how she had been bartered for a title, her yearning for absent love, the revelation of herself as the heiress of Stephens' sister. She expressed a wish to die in the sea rather than face her former friends and go back to the old life. A ship was sighted. The craft proved to be a derelict.

CHAPTER XXIII.—Continued.

Yet, little by little, my mind began to apprehend the truth, my reason to grasp the details. Mist or reality, there directly before us floated what appeared to be the outlines of a ship—battered, wrecked, odd in form—yet a ship, moving upright upon the surface of the water. Good God! what a mad dream of the past was represented yonder! Those round, blunt bows, the broken bowsprit, heavy as a mast, forking straight upward; the great carven, shapeless figurehead beneath; the wide, elevated forecastle deck; the seemingly tremendous thickness of the bulwarks; the strange slope of deck and rail amidships; the immense remnant of a foremast towering in splinters; the broad, square stern, even over-topping the height of the peaked forecastle. That was a grim thing to meet with in those waters.

"Stand by, men!" I called, the tremble still in my command. "If the thing yonder be wood and iron we'll board her."

Not a voice responded, their bodies tense and motionless, every eye still on that dim, phantom gleam. With clenched teeth I pressed the tiller hard down, and the bows of the long-boat headed straight in. Suddenly De Nova leaped to his feet.

"Ship ahoy!" he yelled, the note of fear sounding shrilly.

In the intense silence I could plainly hear the heavy breathing of the excited men.

"There will be no use halting," I said, strengthened by the sound of my own voice. "If that be a vessel, her crew are dead a hundred years."

"And by God, it is, sir!" ejaculated Johnson, who was on his knees in the bow. "It's a real ship, all right. That's ice that glitters; she's sheeted in it from stem to stern."

I saw it myself then, every doubt of the real character of this drear visitant vanishing; my courage came back in a rush.

"Ay, ay, lads, Johnson has hit it right. That's a ship for us, and now we'll see what she looks like on deck. Get a grip with your boat-hook, Johnson, on that raft of stuff trailing from the forechains, when I ay her alongside. Strike the wood if you can, the cordage is likely to be rotten."



"Don't Lose Your Nerve, Man, You've Seen Dead Men Before."

upon something sufficiently firm and held on, the fellows starting up silently at the bulging side, and touching the thick sheathing of ice as though half demented.

"Make fast. Break the ice out of that ring, Kelly, and pass a stout rope through it. Now furl the sail, the rest of you. Fend her off, Cole; that's all right, keep your oar there. Mr. De Nova, you will remain in charge of the boat. I'll see what she looks like aboard; Johnson, come along with me."

I picked my way forward into the bows and stood up, striving to obtain some kind of a grip on the forechains which would enable me to haul myself up. Everything I touched was ice, so thick as to render objects shapeless.

"Give me a lift, Kelly; easy, now, until I get a handhold. There, that will do, my lad."

It was a slippery, dangerous perch, the vessel plunging somewhat, but the upper ice was slightly powdered with snow, yielding a little purchase, and I finally discovered a brace for my feet which enabled me to reach down and assist Johnson to scramble up beside me. Fortunately the bulwarks were not so high proportionately as wide, and we succeeded in sliding over them, coming down rather heavily on the solid deck. Here the snow made walking possible, although underneath the ice was thick and smooth, compelling caution. All forward was a terrible raffle of wreckage, a jumbled mass of tangled spars, with the great topmast and all its hamper right where it had fallen, a portion of the port bulwark smashed flat. A hummock of ice rose like a great hill from about the butt of the foremast, which stuck up maybe 30 feet, clear over the forecastle deck, leaving everything shapeless and grotesque. Where the slope was steepest, the wind had swept away the snow leaving the ice beneath clear; and there, frozen completely in, like a painted picture, was the fully revealed body of a man. I never saw any sight more gruesome than that ice-shrouded figure; the arms outstretched, the short, black beard rendering more ghastly the white, dead face. I gripped my hands onto Johnson's shoulder, and he was shaking like an aspen, his own face colorless in the moonshine. I wheeled him about savagely.

"Don't lose your nerve, man. You've seen dead men before. Come, there's nothing to do here; we'll try how she looks aft."

He followed me like a dog, casting uneasy glances backward over his shoulder. The deck was clearer of raffle beyond the foremast, a great gap in the port-bulwarks amidships showing where the wreckage had probably been swept overboard. The mainmast had been ripped out, leaving a great, ugly gash in the deck plank, and in falling had so smashed flat one corner of the cook's galley that we could look in through the jagged opening thus left. All the front portion was snow and ice, but the further extremity appeared dry enough, revealing a brick oven, a table screwed to the wall and an overturned scuttle

of coals littering the deck. It was not a desirable spot, yet would afford protection from the frosty night wind, and be much better than the open boat. Besides, I realized how those others must feel down there, bobbing up and down against those ice-caked sides.

"Johnson," I said, my eyes wandering toward the dimly revealed front of the after-cabin, which appeared utterly shapeless under its mantle. "We've got quite a job ahead of us to break through this wreckage. I'm for having the rest of the crew up to help us. Climb over into the main-chains and cut out some steps with your knife. We'll have them drop back there and unload. Then the women won't be obliged to see that dead man's face."

He was some minutes at the task, and I occupied the time in kicking aside some of the litter in the galley and making the dreary interior a bit more decent, having the men pass up some spare blankets, and spreading them out on deck. Finally Kelly and the negro scrambled up, and between us we succeeded in lifting Lady Darlington and Celeste over the icy bulwarks. The latter clung sobbing to De Nova, but my lady gazed about her wondering, her eyes full of questions. Without speaking we stowed them away under shelter.

"She is certainly a relic," I paused long enough to say, "one of the old-timers in these seas. From the look of her she must have been locked up in the ice south there for a century."

"Do you expect to sail her northward?"

"I hardly know yet what to expect; that remains to be seen. She seems to ride the water stanchly enough and there is fully 30 feet of mast standing yonder. Anyhow, this deck at present is better than an open boat."

"But—but it is all so ghastly, so ghost-like—Celeste is fairly crazy from the horror."

"It is merely the effect of the moonlight glimmering on the ice; everything is ice wherever your eyes turn. But you are safe enough here, and with daylight the ghostliness of it will vanish."

"Where are you going now?"

"To break into the cabin; then we will have a decent place in which to stay—perhaps a chance for a fire. It is not likely to prove a long job, and I will be back to you shortly. Don't let the night shadows frighten you so."

She smiled back into my eyes bravely enough, although I realized the effort of will that it cost; and so I left her endeavoring to cheer the girl, who was sobbing wildly, with her face buried in her hands.

The men joined me as I stepped without, crunching the light snow under their heavy boots, and staring uneasily about them as though the whole adventure was a dream. Lord! and no more could I shake off that same impression as I surveyed the scene aft. A boat, bottom up, the planks smashed beyond repair, lay against the starboard rail. The after-cabin, built like a house, extended the entire width of the deck, a lumping affair, overhung with huge, projecting tim-

bers, topped by ornate carvings, and having two companionways leading up, one of them crushed into splinters. The forward shutters were tightly closed, and the whole front appeared a solid mass of glittering ice, so obscured by frozen particles of snow as to render any discovery of the door an impossibility. We began hacking at it with our knives, judging the opening would naturally be at the center, but the sheathing of ice proved so thick and solid that we made little impression.

"It will take us a week to cut our way in with these things," I said at last. "De Nova, I think I saw an ax frozen in at the left of the galley. Take a man with you and pry it out."

It proved an odd-looking instrument—a meat-cleaver, I imagine—but was sufficiently strong and heavy. Kelly swung it vigorously, cleaving off the ice in cakes, until we were finally able to trace the fitting of the door. Suddenly, striking at the upper panel, he dislodged a considerable chunk, thus revealing half a dozen letters painted across the front. Dade pried off a few inches more with his knife-blade, and we stared up incredulously at the words:

Donna Isabel
Cadiz

"Holy Mother of God!" and De Nova, in his excitement, danced about recklessly, forgetting the slipperiness of deck underfoot. "It was ze treasure ship! It was ze 'tree million pesos! Sacre dame!"

It does not appear possible that I perceived it all, but now, looking back, I can recall the attitude of every man as this revelation of the vessel's identity was swiftly borne in upon his consciousness. Sanchez sank affrightedly to his knees, fingering the beads of a rosary, his lips muttering inarticulate fragments of prayer; Dade stared, white-faced and trembling, his mouth wide open; Kelly jerked his cap from off his red hair and swung it over his head with a wild yell; Johnson never stirred, a motionless statue, his lips compressed; the negro joined De Nova, his eyes rolling, his great feet pounding the snow; while McKnight grabbed the ax from Kelly's heedless fingers and began slashing at the door. As for myself, at the instant everything was chaos. Tuttle was right, then; he had seen all that he said; our voyage had not been causeless, a search after a will-o'-the-wisp; the sacrifices, suffering, loss of these past months, were not all in vain. Out of Antarctic solitudes, released from the merciless grip of the ice by some marvel of deliverance, this treasure galleon of Old Spain, this ancient tomb of dead sailors, had come drifting down to us, a veritable gift of God. The knowledge stunned me; dazed my perceptions. It seemed a miracle. I could only press my hands to my eyes, stare blindly at that inscription, and struggle back to a conception of reality. It was Kelly's wild shout and McKnight's blow that aroused me, recalling me as instantly to command.

"Stop that!" I shouted, catching the latter roughly by the arm. "We shall need that cabin door. If there indeed be a treasure down below, we can hunt for it like men and not maniacs. McKnight, if you strike another blow I'll drop you where you stand. Take knives and dig the ice out of the cracks. Get down on your knees at the bottom, Dade, and don't stand there like a fool. De Nova, see if you can locate the front windows—there must be two of them—and cut the ice away from the shutters."

As they labored feverishly, their breath steaming in the frosty air, the moonlight silencing them and gleaming weirdly on the scattered ice-fragments, the haunting mystery of that hermetically sealed cabin brought to me a feeling of unutterable horror. Heaven! how long had it been thus frozen in? What awful tragedy of another century was about to be revealed? What years of loneliness, of darkness, of polar night and cold had this derelict of the grim Antarctic experienced? Where had it been? What of those who had sailed on board out of Guayaquil that fair June day of 1753, dreaming of the glad welcome awaiting them in sunny Spain? What of the crew, hardy seamen all, black-bearded, the gold loops in their ears? What of the passengers? What of the five women who had walked these decks? Where had they died, and how?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

In Distress.
Mrs. Newwed—Charlie, where is that hot water bag? Baby has the colic.

Mr. Newwed—Well, baby will have to wait until I finish thawing out these pipes.

HEADS USUALLY EMPTY.



Ella—I think those fellows are getting their heads together over something.
Stella—Yes; I guess there's something in it.
Ella—Which one?

BABY WASTED TO SKELETON

"My little son, when about a year and a half old, began to have sores come out on his face. I had a physician treat him, but the sores grew worse. Then they began to come out on his arms, then on other parts of his body, and then one came on his chest, worse than the others. Then I called another physician. Still he grew worse. At the end of about a year and a half of suffering he grew so bad that I had to tie his hands in cloths at night to keep him from scratching the sores and tearing the flesh. He got to be a mere skeleton, and was hardly able to walk."

"My aunt advised me to try Cuticura Soap and Cuticura Ointment. I sent to a drug store and got a cake of Cuticura Soap and a box of the Ointment and followed directions. At the end of two months the sores were all well. He has never had any sores of any kind since. I can sincerely say that only for Cuticura my child would have died. I used only one cake of Cuticura Soap and about three boxes of Ointment."

"I am a nurse and my profession brings me into many different families and it is always a pleasure for me to tell my story and recommend Cuticura Remedies. Mrs. Egbert Sheldon, Litchfield, Conn., Oct. 23, 1909."

Really a Serious Dilemma.

"The chap who works on one side of me," said an office man, "has been married six weeks and he sneaks to the telephone about four times a day and calls up his wife, and then I hear him saying: 'Dear, how is your headache now? I hope you are feeling better.' Then pretty soon he comes back to his desk and goes to work again as' smiling."

Truth is said to be stranger than fiction, yet it is only in fiction they get married and live happily ever after.

Shows Value of Steel Car.

That the steel car is of great value as a protection to passengers in the event of collision was demonstrated in a recent clash of two trains in the Hudson tunnel, New York city. There was no such telescoping as would probably have occurred with wooden cars, and the injuries were merely such as resulted from the passengers' being thrown down by the shock of the collision.

Nesley Nuisances.

Ill-fitting doors and windows represent a happy hunting ground for the disturbing winds. In fact, so annoying does the constant rattle of these openings become that many determined individuals, who resolve to admit the fresh air, choose the lesser of two evils and close the openings in preference to sleepless nights. This can be remedied if a small wedge of wood be driven in at the side of an open window; a door can be prevented from rattling if a pad or strip of thick felt be nailed on the edge of the door.

The annoyance of creaking drawers can be eliminated by rubbing common soap upon the top, sides and bottom of each.

Creaking hinges on anything should be well oiled, while the grating, irritating noise of a sewing machine can be overcome in a similar manner.

The little noises wear away the patience that is required for other things. It were foolish to dissipate energy through the channels of irritated nerves when a little time will obviate the nuisances.

PROMINENT FARMER SET FREE

United Doctors Release Mr. Pfug From Disease After Five Years of Suffering.

Jacob Pfug, one of the most prosperous and influential farmers of eastern Nebraska, makes a statement in regard to the United Doctors, those expert medical specialists who have their Omaha institute at 232 Nevada block, that is worth the attention of every sick person. Anyone who is in doubt about this matter should write to Mr. Pfug, or to the bank at Papillion, to ask about Mr. Pfug's standing and reliability. Here is his statement:

Papillion, Neb., July 20, 1909.
I want to say to sick people that for fifty years I was a farmer living near Sarpy Mills. Five years ago I began to run down, got rheumatism, and it got so bad I couldn't walk. My stomach would not digest the food I ate. I was bloated all the time; my liver would not do its work properly, and I was dizzy and sick to my stomach. I was so nervous that I could not sleep nights. The muscles all over my body would jerk, and finally I became so bad that I was unable to attend to any of my business.

I had taken treatment during all this time from the best physicians I could find in Omaha and the towns surrounding my home, all of whom did me no good and I continued to get worse until finally my wife helped me to the office of the United Doctors in the Nevada block, corner Sixteenth and Harney streets. This was on the eighteenth day of April. The doctor gave me a thorough examination and told me he could not make me a boy again, but would make me lots better. I commenced treatment at once. Within four weeks I had begun to improve, and now, at the end of three months, I am feeling well in every respect and do all the work about the farm. Yesterday I dug potatoes and painted six rods of fence in half a day, and my wife and I put up two tons of alfalfa by ourselves.

I cannot say enough in praise of the United Doctors and what they have done for me. Jacob Pfug.

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Postum Cereal Co., Ltd., Battle Creek, Mich.