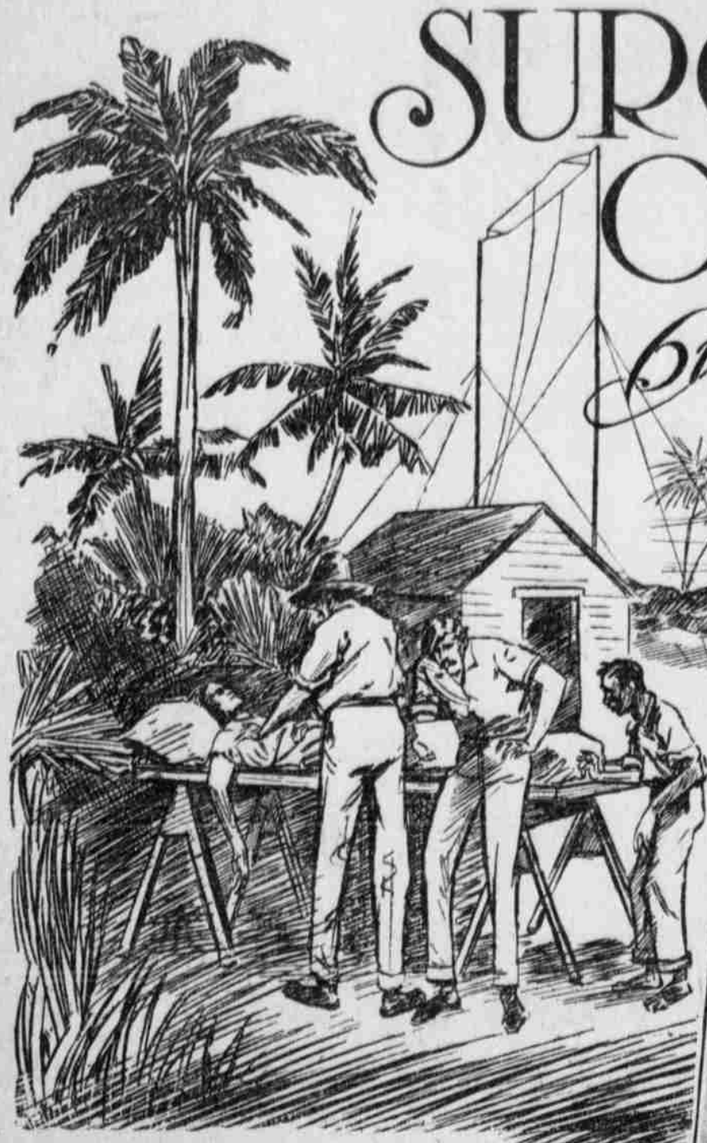
SURGICAL OPERATION by WIRELESS



WIRELESS ON A TROPICAL ISLAND

THE wireless spark that cries to the shore for help when night and terror settle down on the doomed steamship, and the wild moment of thanksgiving as the message of deliverance drums in the weary operator's ear, has furnished many a thrill, but the cry from shore, searching the sea and finding the white speck on its bosom that means hope and life, is rare, and to put it mildly, reversing the order of things.

Of course, in story books the hero often finds himself cast away and is put to no great shift to rig a wireless whose uncouth putterings turn the great steamship from her path and bring the right girl in the bargain.

But this is a story of Swan Island. Despite the name you would not care to live on Swan island. There are no swans, nor are there any dainty ox-eyed Junos or peroxide Junos to marry the castaway earl.

Swan Island lies in the tropics, some hundred miles off Honduras—if you insist on getting out your atlas—and by common report is the most forsaken thing in the Caribbean sea, which is saying much.

It would be hard to imagine a more dreary place or one less suited for the local color to a story with a thrill. A few huts scattered over the swampy ground, some palms, some cocoanut trees, and the tally is complete, all but the wireless station.

Commerce must be served, and the United Fruit company has erected on Swan island a little station that keeps in touch with steamships passing 500 miles out to sea. The station also relays messages from Port Limon, Costa Rica (see your map again), over to Jamaica.

Nothing else remains in the summing up of Swan island but scorpions, trantulas and a multitude of carnivorous insects whose execution would drive the New Jersey product to envious suicide.

Thither at the close of a sweltering day in autumn came a new wireless operator and a visitor. Necessity brought the operator, curiosity brought the visitor. The same steamship deposited both on the white beach, to call a month later with another operator. Keenan, the wireless man, was in luck, for after a month alone on Swan island—that is, alone so far as white companions are concerned except for a single "beach comber," which is deemed sufficient by the company—men show the beginnings of a line of self-addressed conversation which would not entitle them any too firmly to the major premise, "Man is a rational animal."

Curiosity and scorpions brought the visitor, one Warren Carew, who hailed from New York and should have known better. Carew had money and troops of friends, picked up in odd parts of the globe, but he preferred to list scorpions. He was a naturalist, he told the wireless man, and Keenan, accustomed to strange men and strange places, shrugged his shoulders and was glad for the companionship the naturalist brought.

At daylight, before the heat of the sun made life a burden, Carew collected his ugly specimens, and later he talked with Keenan, who furnished gossip of the world snatched from the passing craft. Two weeks passed in desultory fashion, with morning searches and afternoons looking over the hot blue sea before and the lagoon behind, that lay like a spot of tarnished silver showing through the scrawny palms.

Carew was careless and one morning it happened. The lobster-like claws of the scorpion nipped and Carew went off balance. The nip was not dangerous, but the sprawl threw him into line for the stinging tail of the holder of venom that meant death—death unless heroic measures were adopted. Whatever else Carew was he was not a coward. The report of Keenan and all information that can be gathered shows he acted with Spartan courage but again he was careless.

The small spot in the calf of the leg where the poison entered was bared by him and a common jackknife brought into play. Quickly Carew cut at the place, and slashed until there was a free flow from a wound three inches long. He bound up the leg with strips of clothing and hobbled back to his hut.

Keenan saw him and hurried to his assistance. Carew was made comfortable in a bunk, and sweltered cheerfully through the afternoon, believing he had saved himself. Copious doses of brandy muddled his senses and Keenen returned to his post. There were no signs of the swift death that follows the sting of the scorpion.

Two days passed and on the evening of the third Keenan noticed the mat curtains drawn in Carew's hut. A group of natives gesticulated before the door, but none would enter. The wireless operator pushed aside the drawn matting, wondering why Carew should have closed himself in when the slightest breath of sultry air was a blessed relief. Carew sat in a corner of the hut laughing. He had lighted the lamp, which added to the almost unbearable heat of the hut.

The wireless man gasped out: "What's the matter? Don't you want any air? You'll suffocate." He started to draw aside the curtains, when the naturalist stopped him.

"Don't," he said. "It's cold. My leg will catch cold."

Swiftly Keenan had him by the shoulders, and there in the stifling room examined the wounded leg. It took but a glance to not the swelling and the coming of the first mortification around the wound. Gangrene would set in, if it had not come already. The end was certain death.

More brandy and water thrown on him despite protest, brought from the naturalist the story of the cutting. He had used an unclean blade, and this was the result. Both men returned to the wireless station, Keenan helping the now frightened hunter of scorpions.

A grim silence settled over them, and while Carew sat dumbly awaiting the outcome Keenan thought hard.

It was nearly midnight when the idea came.

Away out at sea, hundreds of miles, were vessels passing. If he could only summon one and persuade the captain to turn in to save a life.

"I'll wireless a doctor, old man!" Keenan shouted, joyfully clapping the inert Carew on the shoulder. The naturalist was too amazed for the time being to grasp the idea, but after he caught the spirit his anxiety was pitiful.

"But the steamship would not turn so far," he wailed. Then he cried out: "Promise them anything. I can pay."

His dynamos running smoothly, Keenan fingered the key and the blue sparks crackled. He repeated at intervals and waited. There was no answering click in the receivers. Through the night the crackling kept up while the awakened natives and the comber hurried to the station to watch the blue spark that snarled out into the tropical night.

Toward morning Port Limon answered, but here was no help. At daylight the swelling had increased, and with the approach of what he believed the end the New York man became calm.

"I am sorry, friend," he said, "but I think it's pretty near over. We are too far from help, and, besides, it is all impossible. No ship would turn. I promise not to break down again. If I do become crazy and there is no hope, I depend on you to—" and he nodded significantly toward his revolver.

Keenan did not answer. Somewhere out on the Caribbean he knew the Santa Marta was ploughing along, so he plied the wireless unceasingly.

The answer came about nine o'clock in the morning from the Santa Marta, which reported her position exactly 420 miles to the southeast. Rapid exchanges brought a refusal to turn to Swan island. The ship's surgeon, Dr. W. S. Irwin, standing beside the wireless, said it would be useless. And the message was sent to Keenan, who dared not look at the doomed young man.

That seemed to to be the end for a moment. Then there came a new sputtering in the receiver.

"The doctor says to perform the operation yourself."

"How can I?" the spark from Swan island questioned the Santa Marta at sea.

Back came the instructions.

"Get him ready," said the wireless. "You have Warren's medical book there and you can go on the pages I mention. Describe the symptoms."

Keenan told the condition of the wound and the circumstances, but he insisted on his fears when it came time to amputate.

"No amputation necessary," came back the message. "A lot of cutting according to direction and your man is saved."

Keenan howled this message to the trembling man and made ready for further directions.

"Take a tourniquet," said the wireless. It was hard to believe that out of sight beyond the horizon a trained mind at another instrument was directing through space the way to save a human life.

With the aid of the beach comber the tourniquet was applied and a knife—Carew's own, which had caused the trouble—plunged in boiling water to make it clean. More brandy was served to him by the wireless man and everything was ready for the operation. A native boy who acted as Herman's helper ran after articles as directed.

By turning to the page he had been directed Keenan found a chart of the leg.

"Ready," he flashed to Dr. Irwin.

The first direction came, he repeated it back and it was verified, so there could be no mistake. Each part of the lancing was gone over carefully under repeated instructions. Meantime the Santa Marta continued to plunge along on the blue Caribbean.

And when the cutting was over there came the query from the ship to shore:

"Have you any tar?"

Keenan had, and the instruction came to boil it and pour it on the now clean wound. It was rough surgery, but the best thing under the circumstances. Carew fainted under it and was revived.

"Tell him he's safe now," came the wireless.

The tourniquet was removed and the numbed leg, still horribly painful under the searing tar, was bandaged.

"Got plenty of brandy?" asked the spark.

"About the only thing we have," Keenan pounded back.

"Let him have enough to forget his troubles," ordered the surgeon, and the message was sent.

Now by rights all should have been over with the saving of Carew. But there remained the one touch that will be a long time finding its duplicate.

The following day the young naturalist appeared dragging himself along with a cane in defiance of orders. He stopped by the wireless man who had taken his instrument out under the trees.

"Forget it," he said when the other began to remonstrate. "I feel great. It's wonderful to know you're going to live after all. I want to thank that doctor."

So Keenan raised the Santa Marta again and the surgeon was called to the wireless room.

"Tell him I can't operate the key so it means anything," said Carew, "but if he will sit down at the instrument I'll make some dots with the thing and that will serve for the present. You know our hands will really touch when his has one key and I the other and the air between."

And so it happened that through the air over the blue Caribbean there passed sundry dots that meant nothing and everything.

THE SURPRISE.

"Well, what's the verdict, doctor?"

"You are worn out. The best thing for you to do is fix up your business affairs and take a month's vacation."

"Why, confound it, doctor, I just got back!"—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

HE SOLVED IT.

"Talking about the servant problem, I know one man who got a woman to do his cooking, washing, ironing, housework, mending and cleaning, just for her board."

"Where did he get a prize servant like that?"

"She's his wife."

ITS ADVANTAGES.

"There is one good thing about the stock of that irrigating enterprise."

"What is it?"

"They ought to be able to water it extensively."

OUT-OF-ORDINARY PEOPLE

JOSEPH C. S. BLACKBURN

Joseph C. S. Blackburn of Kentucky, who was recently appointed to succeed former Senator Shelby M. Cullom of Illinois as the resident commissioner in charge of the construction of the Lincoln memorial in Washington, is one of the best story tellers in the country.

Speaking of the penchant of politicians to hold office once the germ gets into the blood, Mr. Blackburn told one of "Private John" Allen's stories recently to illustrate his point. Allen of Tupelo, Miss., was one of the historic wits of congress. A number of years ago Allen went to visit the plantation of his grandfather and rising early in the morning went out into the garden, where he found "Aunt Betsy," a negro servant of his grandfather, whereupon the following conversation took place:

"Marse John, ebery time I sees you I kyan't help thinking how much yuh looks like yuh ole grandfahtah. Yuh looks like him, yuh talks like him and yuh walks like him."

"Well, Aunt Betsy, what office did he ever hold?" inquired Allen.

"Jes' de same office you hold, Marse John," replied Aunt Betsy. "As long as Ah kin disremember, he was a candidate."

REPRESENTATIVE HUMPHREY'S FIRST CASE

When Representative W. E. Humphrey of the First district of Washington isn't in congress he practices law for a living—but he has been in congress for 11 years. However, he spent long years at the bar, but they and the subsequent service in congress, have failed to dim the recollection of his first case. He doesn't tell it; one has to get Mrs. Humphrey to do that. Here it is:

It was back in Indiana, the state of the nativity of most far western statesmen, where they breed politicians as Massachusetts breeds highbrows. Mr. Humphrey had just hung out his shingle when he was retained in a small case before a county justice of the peace.

This justice was an old friend. Mr. Humphrey and he had sat on the same bench in country school and gone swimming together in the ol' swimming hole.

"Will," said the justice, seeking him out privately, "this is the first case I ever tried as justice, and I don't know a blamed thing about law. You've just got to help me out. See?"

The young advocate saw. And so, through the trial, he hammered vigorously, mostly on the table. But when he hammered on the book he got the ruling. The score at the end stood: Rulings against Humphrey, 12; rulings in favor of Humphrey, 5; percentage against Humphrey, .294. Nevertheless, Humphrey won.

TREADWAY'S WASTED ENERGY

"I think I'm rightfully entitled to the presidency of the Wasted Energy club," remarked Representative Allen Treadway of Massachusetts at Washington, the other day. "In closing my campaign last fall with a tour through my district I sallied forth gayly one morning, after telephoning my lieutenants at the town of B—— that I would arrive there punctually at three o'clock that afternoon to deliver an address.

"An hour later, as my car topped a hill, I saw a most charming valley stretched off to my right. Turning down into it I commenced my electioneering work.

"Never had I met such genial folk. Every one seemed ready to listen to me with a smile as soon as I made known my mission. Charmed with this reception, I forgot the flight of time until I suddenly found it was after four o'clock and I was a dozen miles from B——.

"When I chugged into it I found the remnants of a reception committee awaiting me.

"'I'm late, boys,' I said, cheerfully, 'but I've done a capital day's work back in the country here.'

"'Have you been electioneering up that road you just came down?' inquired the committee spokesman in sour tones.

"'Yes,' I replied, 'and I've got that section solid. Every man of them promised that, at least, he would not vote against me.'

"'I guess not!' rasped the spokesman. 'You've been electioneering all day across the state line over in Vermont.!'"

MRS. MORRIS SHEPPARD OF TEXAS

The woman in public life who remains enthusiastic and unwearied throughout a Washington season, with its round of official and private entertaining, is rare. The woman who not only accomplishes this feat, but who finds time to read with her husband the good old books that a certain Mr Dickens, a Mr. Thackeray and other gentlemen of their time used to write, is a paragon. She has achieved both poise and a sense of leisure.

One finds on the library table of Mrs. Morris Sheppard, the young wife of Senator Sheppard of Texas, not only these standard works of fiction that show she treads the conventional and well worn paths of literature. Besides these, there is always some rarer volume at hand, such, for instance, as an "Autobiography of Benevuto Cellini," or it may be, an exquisite brochure by some little known, little read author, which proves its owner and reader to be a connoisseur of books.

"My husband and I," says Mrs. Sheppard, "are fond of society, but we do not allow it to interfere with our favorite recreation, that of reading together. I don't know just how we accomplish it, but we do find time to enjoy together a great many of those standard books which are so much more enjoyable when read aloud then when read to one's self."