

The Last Voyage of The Donna Isabel

By Randall Parrish

Author of Bob Hampton of Placer.

Illustrations by Deaborn Melvill

the presidente dispatched a steam launch to convey the party to the wharf, they decided it would be most discourteous not to attend. Lord Darlington's membership in the house of lords gives him a certain official recognition abroad which he does not care to have lapse. The yacht's captain accompanied them, and no dream of evil befalling those left behind ever occurred to any one of us. O senior, tell me, what does it all mean? What has happened?"

"I presume I must explain," I said, regretfully, "although it is not an easy task by any means. You will have confidence in me, Miss Doris?" "I shall endeavor to do so," she returned, an increasing coldness in her voice. "But I am Lady Darlington."

"Your pardon; I supposed you to be that gentleman's daughter."

The color swept in a wave of rich crimson into her cheeks, the gray eyes becoming darker.

"Nevertheless, senior, I am Lord Darlington's wife."

Even in that moment of embarrassment and perplexity, when I was scarcely less agitated than herself, this unexpected announcement of such a relationship came to me as a shock. Why it should, what difference it could possibly make, I did not in the least realize, yet I was instantly conscious of the disappointment, of deep regret. The revelation, thus calmly, proudly made, was so unexpected, so destructive of all my previous conceptions, as to seem an impossibility. Could this young, clear-eyed woman be indeed the wife of that grim, inactive, ancient peer of the realm?

"You apparently question the truth of my words," she remarked, coldly observant.

"It was only the natural surprise of a moment, Lady Darlington," I hastened to apologize. "The thought of your marriage had never before occurred to me."

She looked directly into my eyes, her own plainly indignant, yet her words strove to overcome the bluntness of my speech.

"I do not feel, senior, that there can be any necessity for discussing my private affairs with you at present. Enough that I am Lady Darlington, and that I have patiently answered the rather impudent questions you have seen fit to ask. Now, senior Estevean, kindly enlighten me as to the cause of your intrusion into this apartment, and your presence on board the yacht."

Her tone had changed to imperiousness. This was plainly a command, and, back of the fair face fronting me, I read strength of character and a proud insistence long accustomed to control. It was not fear but disdain that darkened her gray eyes. Her manner begged nothing—it pictured dominant command, the attitude of one who addresses a servant, expecting implicit obedience.

"Lady Darlington," I began, standing directly before her, and reverting to the use of English, so as to be certain of making my meaning sufficiently clear, "whatever explanation I may make cannot be pleasant, but it shall be truthful. It is far better that you comprehend fully the situation we are in—your own peril, as well as my responsibility."

Her expression changed from arbitrary defiance to an amazement not untinged by a sudden development of fear as her hands grasped the chair-back convulsively; but I went on steadily to the end.

"I am not, as you naturally supposed, a Chilean, but a native of North America. My name is Stephens. I was in Valparaiso under most unpleasant circumstances, seeking vainly to escape from the country, and hounded by the secret police because of my connection lately with a revolutionary movement along the Bolivian frontier. The merits of that affair need not now be discussed, but I had become involved in it through certain business connections, and had attained Valparaiso after much hardship, seeking escape by sea. There I discovered every avenue closed against me, and was reduced to a desperate plight. I was in hiding from the governmental authorities when I risked almost certain discovery—last evening. A little later—after you left the hotel—a man who I was led to believe represented the Peruvian government, approached me with a strange proposition, which, however, promised immediate release from my dangerous predicament, and, likewise, a suitable reward for the successful performance of a certain service. I am a sailor, and the particular duty required of me was to be performed upon the sea. I was asked to assume the position of a Peruvian naval captain, incapacitated by sudden illness, on the surprise and capture of a Chilean war vessel, the steam yacht Esmeralda, then supposed to be lying at anchor, poorly guarded, in the outer harbor off the government docks. For that purpose I was presented with a Peruvian naval commission."

My glance wandered from the motionless woman fronting me in such

white silence to Celeste, who had sunk back upon the bed, her blue eyes staring at me across the brass rail, evidently experiencing difficulty in translating my rapid English speech.

"I had enjoyed but little opportunity of examining the particular vessel we were thus employed to capture, as I dared not leave the hotel except after nightfall," I continued, more slowly. "Yet I knew her place of anchorage, and that she was a steam yacht of some 700 tons burden, schooner-rigged, with lines promising great speed. Otherwise I relied entirely upon the knowledge of the officers under me. We boarded what I believed to be the Esmeralda soon after midnight, overcame the small harbor watch with little difficulty, captured the engine room, and, by holding a gun at his ear, persuaded the engineer to operate his machinery in our service. The very audacity of the attempt brought comparatively easy success. The main cabin had been secured by my orders when we first arrived aboard, and I came below just now, after all danger seemed far astern, to learn if any officers were hidden away here. I had examined all the other staterooms, finding them empty, and at last opened this door in my quest. Not until I saw you did I in the slightest realize that we were on board the wrong vessel, nor that we were engaged in anything except an honorable adventure of war."

That the hasty details of my story both startled her and impressed her with its truth, was evident enough, yet her lips curled with contempt, and her eyes remained unbelieving.

"How many men accompanied you?"

"A crew of 20, with two officers."

"Peruvians, I presume?"

"No, madam," reluctantly, "hotch-potch dragged from the seven seas."

Her expressive face darkened, her fingers clenching again nervously about the chairback.

"And you really expect me to believe that preposterous tale!" she burst forth, indignation shattering all ordinary bounds of speech. "You must, indeed, think very highly of my intelligence. You—why, you are a sea-robber, a pirate!"

My cheeks flushed at the harsh words. I could feel the surge of blood, yet I met her gaze quietly.

"I have told you the exact truth, Lady Darlington, as I promised," I returned, seeking to speak calmly, "without any real hope that you would believe. Yet I want you to try. It is all bad enough as it stands, without endeavoring to make it appear worse."

She leaned slightly forward, clearly impressed to some extent by the gravity of my manner.

"Then prove it."

"How?"

"By steaming directly back to Valparaiso and delivering up this stolen vessel to its lawful owners."

"That sounds simple enough, but do you realize what our probable fate would be?"

She clasped her hands tightly, pressing them against her breast.

"What do I care!" the contempt in her voice grown bitter. "You have done the evil, by your own confession; now you should pay the price. You rescued me once from insult, and I



"You—Why, You Are a Robber, a Pirate!"

hold the remembrance of that act in your favor. Prove yourself worthy a woman's respect by making amends for this wrong. Take the Sea Queen back now, before it is forever too late, and all I can do, or that my husband can accomplish, shall be done to save you from punishment. Prove to me that your words are not false."

I hesitated, doubt and suspicion rendering me totally incapable of clear thinking before her insistent demand. Her face grew whiter as she marked my silence.

"So you—yes, then!" the cruel words faltered from between her lips almost unconsciously.

"No, I spoke the truth," I answered, gripping myself sternly, "but I question my power."

"Your power? Why, you just informed me you were in command."

I advanced a step forward, my manner respectful enough, yet she half shrank back from my approach and brought the protection of the chair between us.

"Perhaps I may never succeed in making you clearly comprehend my present position," I said, soberly, "yet I intend to try, because, in truth, I

need your assistance. I am as you need mine. Twenty minutes ago, Lady Darlington, it was true I believed myself to be in absolute command of this vessel. Now I gravely suspect whether I may not be a mere puppet, helpless in the hands of others. As I have already endeavored to explain, it was comparatively easy for me to mistake this yacht for the Esmeralda. They are very much alike, and I had enjoyed no opportunity for closely observing either. But it is impossible for me to conceive how the others of my party could have innocently made such an error. What project they may have had in mind I cannot even guess, but I believe now the Sea Queen was deliberately captured, and that I have been decoyed into the leadership of an act of piracy. If so, then I am only one man pitted against 20. What I may accomplish I have at present no means of knowing. I must see the others, endeavor to discover their secret purpose, and learn whether or not I possess any real authority on board. Lady Darlington, do you at least comprehend what I mean? Do I make it clear to you that I am in a position scarcely less perilous than your own?"

With lips parted and hands clenched over her heaving breast she stood silent, apparently deeply aroused by my earnest appeal, yet totally unable to repose full confidence in me. Yet her very hesitancy was to me an encouragement.

"You certainly have every reason to doubt me at present, madam," I urged, with increased confidence, "yet I mean to prove myself worthy your trust by deeds rather than words. Will you consent to do as I wish, at least for the moment?"

She did not appear to know what she had better do or say, her glance wandering in uncertainty from my face to the questioning eyes of the maid. The latter leaned forward with some eagerness.

"Surely it is best to say out, madame; ze man has ze look honorable," her hands gesticulating despair. "An' on ze whol' ship zere was no one else to help us."

"As you say, Celeste, there is no choice," and Lady Darlington's gray eyes again sought mine reluctantly. "I sincerely desire to repose complete confidence in you; to believe you worthy. What is it you wish us to do?"

"Merely to remain where you are, beyond the observation of others, until I can ascertain the exact truth of our situation. So soon as I learn this, I shall return with the information. Will you accede to this?"

She lowered her head slightly, in silent acquiescence, and, still facing them both, I backed out of the room and closed the door.

CHAPTER IX.

In Which I Learn Our Port.

I sank down into the depths of an upholstered divan without, rested my head within my hands, and endeavored earnestly to collect thought and nerve for the coming struggle. The terrible-ness of our situation only became more apparent as I considered it in the light of the discoveries already made, and in my understanding of the nature of those with whom I was now associated. Neither Tuttle nor De Nova had ever mistaken the Sea Queen for the warship Esmeralda. It was impossible to conceive that these two trained seamen could have made such an error, or that the men under them could have been so utterly deceived. Tuttle's boat came up directly beneath the bows, with the riding lamps burning brightly and revealing the name; every man aboard must have seen it plainly. Yet what object could have led to so desperate an act of piracy? What part was I destined to play in the final working out of their lawless scheme?

The longer I studied over the problem the more thoroughly did I become mystified and confused. What could these men ever hope to accomplish in this lawless fashion? They must be fools or madmen. This was not the age of piracy; every league of sea was patrolled; every port protected by telegraphic communication. Where could they sail? Where could they expect to land? Where on all the round globe could they hope to go to escape the vengeance of British power on the high seas? What object could possibly inspire them to so reckless an act?

Difficult as my own situation undoubtedly was, apparently helpless among this crew of sea devils, without a man on board in whom I could put trust, it was rendered a thousand times harder by the presence of those two women. In what way could I protect and serve them? I wondered if all the crew forward were in the plot, or were the leaders alone involved? Could I count on finding a single honest sailor in all that riffraff who would stand by me in revolt? There were others on board—the three seamen and the engineer of the yacht's crew, the Chilean officer captured on shore—but they were prisoners, far more helpless even than myself. The longer I thought the darker grew the prospect, the closer the cords of Fate pressed about me. There was nothing to do except to face the conspiracy

(To Be Continued)

More Evidence in Murder Case

(Continued from page 1.)

use of profanity by Clarence when he called Thacker back was sought to be disproved by Mr. Clark and he cited Lee Thacker's testimony before the coroner's jury when he stated what Clarence had said at the time and he did not state he heard any profanity.

Mrs. Ed. Mitkiff called. Lived near Union in the Thacker-Clarence neighborhood. Knew them. Saw them the evening before. Saw them at the supper table talking and joking over which could eat the most. This was at her mother-in-law's. A check was given Mr. Clarence for his work. Witness wrote the check. Check identified. Could not remember who asked Clarence to witness the mark on the check. She was at Mr. Darrough's next day. Check offered to show friendly relations of Thacker and Clarence. Sam Redmon told her of the shooting. This was at Darrough's in the house. Redmon had been in the house before and out a short time. She saw defendant after the shooting at the house. He got on the pony not long after the shooting—could not say how long after. Witness could not say how long after the shooting Clarence came to the house. Clarence was riding east toward the road. Also saw Carter Albin. He came to the house, carrying a monkey wrench. He phoned for the doctor. Witness could not remember whether this was before or after Clarence got on his horse. This witness had a poor memory throughout, although willing enough to testify.

Mr. Gering cross-examined. He went to Darrough's house in the forenoon, and helped wash the dishes. Saw Sam Redmon and he was telephoning for a short time. Could not remember whether he was there when Clarence came up. He had left the house and came back before Clarence did. He told her of the trouble. Her husband was a cousin of defendant.

By Mr. Clark. Redmon said there had been trouble there and Clarence had shot John Thacker.

Mrs. James Darrough called. Wife of James Darrough. Trouble was at their place. Witness named the men who took dinner there that day. They started out to work about one o'clock. Heard of shooting about 2:30 or 3 o'clock from Sam Redmon who was standing about half way between the house and the shelter. He had been gone from the house about five minutes. Could not remember just how long it was until Clarence came up. Carter Albin came to the house before Clarence left. Clarence was close behind him. He left before they left with Mr. Thacker. Clarence said he had shot John Thacker; he was sorry but he couldn't be helped and he was going to give himself up. He got on his pony and started east. Did not see him turn north. Clarence pumped water after dinner for the tank. She had heard a statement of what purported to be the facts of the trouble from Sam Redmon. This statement was made about one hour later. The defendant withdrew these answers about the statement.

Cross-examined by Mr. Gering. Did not hear shots. Redmon had been calling up men to haul corn in the same room with witness. Clarence appeared sorry at the time; he said he was after he had learned how serious the trouble was. Witness knew defendant carried a revolver at all times. Witness and Redman were in the court room yesterday. Witness said Redmon had been living with witness and her husband since last October on the farm and in Plattsmouth. He was employed by Mr. Darrough to drive a team and the like. He roomed with them. She was present at a conversation between Mr. Ramsey and Sam Redmon. Redmon did not go into details of the trouble when he told her of it. Redmon did not say he had seen the entire trouble. He had been in Missouri and back a week.

G. R. Olson called. He was a photographer as shown heretofore and was shown photographs he had taken at the Darrough farm. He identified the viewpoint from which they were taken. Witness shown the several photographs and he identified the several parties shown on the photographs with their location thereon. Some of the photographs were taken from the inside of the corn crib. The photographs were shown the jury.

Cross-examined by Mr. Ramsey. Witness could not recall who told him what position to put his camera in to take several of the photographs nor did he know who several of the men shown in the photograph were.

Mr. Clark then produced photographs taken from the inside of the corn crib. The camera was placed as near the west side of the crib as possible. Witness had looked through the cracks of the crib and the camera was in practically the



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same position. The view was alike and the objects shown in the photographs would be visible to the naked eye, the same as shown on the photograph.

Mr. Ramsey cross-examined. The closer a camera is placed to a crack between two boards, the larger the opening appears. The photographs showed the several measurements of the various openings but they were so minute that a magnifying glass would be necessary to read them.

J. C. Petersen called. Lived in Plattsmouth since 1882; 37 years old knew John Clarence a number of years ago. Met him about Jan. 15. Knew who he was. Met him on Chicago Avenue, north of the Will Adams place about one mile. He seemed to be nervous and excited and was on horseback coming fast. The horse was warm and sweating. Clarence said to Petersen "Come over and see me tonight. I've shot a man." This was about four o'clock. His horse was loping. Defendant went on.

Verl Kennison called. Lived at Union; 29 years old. Knew Clarence for five years. Had a conversation about one year ago in February and March. He was subpoenaed by the state. Met Clarence near the M. P. railroad. He was driving a grey mule at the time and it was kicking and cutting up. An attempt by Mr. Clark to show by the witness that Clarence carried a gun to protect himself from fractious animals, aroused a discussion between the counsel over its admissibility. The objection of the state to the conversation was sustained at this time.

Witness had seen gun on Clarence several times. He was a very valuable witness and willing to tell all he knew, apparently.

Ed. Mitkiff called. Aged 28; lived near Union. Knew John P. Thacker. Witness described Clarence and Thacker being at his mother's house on Jan. 14, and sawing wood. They also had supper together and laughed and joked together. Their relations were friendly apparently. Had seen Clarence breaking horses of bad habits, such as kicking etc., and breaking them to ride. Witness described Clarence's methods in doing this work and the period of time he had known of it. Did not know of his breaking horses for Thacker. Clarence wore a gun around his waist. Had seen it outside his coat. Wore it when breaking colts and horses. Witness heard Clarence and Thacker talking over the phone. Clarence wanted to borrow a wagon of Thacker, but the latter could not lend it. Did not know what name each called the other.

Cross-examined by Mr. Gering. Heard the conversation from his own home. It was not his habit to listen to conversations of other people. Clarence broke Western horses which were shipped in. He was daring in the work. He was an adept in the work. He broke the horses before he quit. His physical condition did not prevent him doing this work. Witness did not know why defendant used the revolver. Mr. Gering also cross-examined witness on the method of breaking horses. When witness saw Clarence

with a revolver it was always on the outside. He did not regard it as unusual for Clarence to carry his gun under his coat.

Re-direct. Clarence had told witness he carried the revolver so if he got in a tight place he could get out. He was then breaking horses. He knew Clarence was a cripple and walked with a cane. Witness was a blood cousin of defendant. Clarence was crippled when a young man. Witness also testified that Clarence used a brace on his leg while shocking corn. Two of them shucked fifty bushels per day.

Elmer Parks called. Lived east of Union. Knew defendant and J. P. Thacker. Present when Thacker weighed 230 pounds about a year and a half ago. Witness lived within two miles of Thacker in the last three years. Mr. Clark sought to show Mr. Thacker's reputation for being a hasty tempered man and counsel argued the admissibility of the testimony at length.

A recess was taken at 11:50 until 1:30 p. m. during which time Judge Travis asked counsel in the case to furnish him any authorities they might have bearing on the admissibility of testimony as to Mr. Thacker's hasty temper.

The afternoon session found a large crowd in the court room. There were as before many ladies present and the deepest interest was manifested in the case. The expectation that the defendant would take the stand served to bring interest and curiosity to fever heat. Clarence occupied his usual seat long before the session opened. He still keeps his confident air and faith in his ultimate acquittal was manifested in his countenance.

It was 1:40 p. m. before Judge Travis ascended the bench. At the same time the jury was brought in. Judge Travis announced he would sustain the objection of the state.

Mr. Parks recalled. Knew Thacker's reputation in the community as a peaceable or quarrelsome man. Thought him quarrelsome. He was quick tempered. Had seen defendant preparing to break wild horses. Once five miles west of Union on the road on August 15 or 16, 1908. He was preparing to ride the horses. Tied it to a gentle mare and went from it to the wild horse. Put on his coat and buckled his gun on the outside.

Mr. Gering cross-examined. Defendant's coat was off. He put it on and buckled the gun around his waist. Witness related to brothers of defendant. Reputation was what the people say. Mr. Clark had told witness what reputation was. Character is what witness thinks of a person. Other people had talked about Mr. Thacker's reputation as a quarrelsome man. He named Frank Albin and Walter Thacker. Walter Thacker a brother of deceased who had received the bulk of his father's estate. Frank Albin father of Earl Albin. Did not know of J. P. Thacker ever being arrested. He had run for office of county commissioner.

By Mr. Clarence. John Clarence had run for office of road overseer and been elected, defeating Lee

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