THE LAST VOYAGE OF THE DONNA ISABEL

BY RANDALL PARRISH
AUTHOR OF BOB HAMPTON OF PLACER ETC.

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

SYNOPSIS.

The story opens with the introduction of John Stephens, a venturer, a Massachusetts man marooned by authorities 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 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 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 1753. 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 200 miles distant. Tuttle was buried in the sea, Lady Darlington pronouncing 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' 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. Ten were rescued. Stephens saw only one chance in a thousand for Lady Darlington continuing 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. She revealed herself as the beloved chum of Stephens' sister. She expressed a wish to die in the sea rather than face her former friends and the life they led her. 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 overtopping 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 longboat 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 hailing," 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 lay her alongside. Strike the wood if you can, the cordage is likely to be rotten."

He missed it at the first attempt, the hook slipping on the ice; but as I brought the longboat around once more, he succeeded in getting a grip upon something sufficiently firm and held on, the fellows staring 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 abaft 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 grewsome 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 that 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 for'ard."

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 wonderingly, 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 timbers, 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:

Dona 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 t'ree million pesos! Sacre dam'!

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 silvering 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.)

The Worst Noises.

The shriek of the whistle, the call of the newsboy, the rattle of the milk cart are all "trialsome," as a certain old lady used to say of her children, but perhaps the most unforgivable noise for a sensitive person is one which recurs at slightly irregular intervals and for a long period. The drip of a water pipe, the whine of a dog, the slam of a blind—these are the noises which destroy temper and sleep, even for well women. When one has struggled through a night tortured by such objectionable clamors, one realizes the full meaning of the poet's dream of peace, where "Silence like a poultice comes to heal the blows of sound!"—Youth's Companion.

Jane Was Sensitive.

Jane is an athletic girl, and her feet are not of the Cinderella type.

"I see that Sizer, the shoe man, is having a sale," said Jane's mother. "Perhaps you could find something there to suit you."

Jane frowned.

"I certainly shall not enter Sizer's store," she said with much firmness.

"And why not?"

"Because the sign over his door says 'Big Shoe Sale!'"

BROUGHT FORTUNE TO FAMILY

The Refrigerator Car the Invention of a Cape Cod Yankee.

Gustavus Franklin Swift, the first of this commercial dynasty, was a Cape Cod Yankee who bought a steer now and then and peddled the meat from the back of a certain go-cart which has since become famous.

He moved to Albany and went deeper into meats, discarding one after another partners who had not the foresight and daring which he possessed. He located in Chicago at the beginning of those days of great possibilities in bringing into touch the new west and the older east.

It was he who invented the first refrigerator cars. This was the one revolutionary act which put his sons and a few other sons in very fair control of half of the meat of America.

He saw the market for dressed beef extended only after the hardest of fights. All great revolutions are fought against. All the east, all England, all Europe, fought the idea of dressed beef and then accepted it. I doubt if we could do without it now.—Cosmopolitan.

DEFEAT AMENDMENT

CUMMINS' PLAN REGULATING INCREASE TURNED DOWN.

TAKES POWER OF COMMISSION

Iowa Senator Sought to Prohibit Raises Until Same Was Approved by the Board.

Washington.—Through the defeat in the senate of a number of amendments offered by "insurgent" republicans and democrats, the way was paved for an early vote on the administration railroad bill. It is expected this will come at once.

The regular republicans maintained a firm hold upon the situation during several votes on important features, notwithstanding the fact that the insurgents and democrats united their votes on several occasions. More was accomplished during the closing hours of the session than in any one week during the three months the bill has been the pending business.

Not until 3 o'clock was anything done beyond listening to discussion of the measure, but when at that time Senator La Follette concluded his two days' speech in opposition to the bill the voting proceeded rapidly, with the following results:

The Cummins amendment requiring the approval of the Interstate Commerce commission of all increases in railroad rates before they become effective was voted down, 29 to 43.

The Martin amendment requiring the committee to reach a final decision on increases within six months was defeated, 18 to 54.

An amendment by Mr. Clarke of Arkansas to defer increased rates until passed upon by the commission, but putting them into effect after six months, pending a final decision, was reejcted, 35 to 40.

An amendment composed of propositions by Senators Jones and Paynter was accepted. This provision provides for the extension for a period of six months of the 120-day suspension of new rates and regulations for the hearing as to their reasonableness if not concluded in that time and for refunding of the difference between rates if the new rate is found to be unreasonable. This amendment was adopted unanimously.

An amendment by Senator Hughes striking out the capitalization clause of the bill was adopted with practical unanimity, Senator Burton casting the only negative vote.

Of all the votes of the day the one on the Cummins amendment was by far the most important. The vote on this amendment was by no means so close as had been predicted by its friends and feared by its opponents. Three days ago the advocates of the bill, as suggested by the administration, had been apprehensive of the success of the Cummins provision, but during that time they had been extremely active, with the result that while they made important concessions they scored the defeat of the provision.

PRESIDENT TAFT'S EXPENSES.

Sharp Debate Over Same in the House.

Washington. — President Taft's traveling expenses and the fact that he has already overdrawn his allowance of $25,000 a year voted by congress led to acrimonious debate in the house Thursday and to a refusal to permit him to use the next year's allowance to meet the deficiency.

As reported from the house committee on appropriations the item of $25,000 for the fiscal year beginning July 1 next would become immediately available except for the protests of democratic members. The words "immediately available" finally were stricken out by the action of Mr. Mann of Illinois, the occupant of the chair, in sustaining a point of order made by Mr. Macon of Arkansas, a democrat.

It was the western and southern trip made by Mr. Taft last fall that exhausted the White House traveling fund.

Miss Harriman Weds.

Arden, N. Y.—Miss Mary Harriman, daughter of the late E. H. Harriman, and one of the wealthiest young women in the country, was married here Thursday to Mr. Charles Cary Rumsey of Buffalo.

Miners Returning to Work.

Kansas City.—Fifteen coal operators and representatives of about 3,500 coal miners of District No. 14, embracing all of Kansas, except Leavenworth, came to a working agreement here and in Pittsburg, Kas.

Bleached Flour Case.

Kansas City—Attorneys for the millers in the "bleached flour cases," filed a petition in the United States district court to have that portion of the governments' allegation charging false branding stricken out, on the grounds that even if the flour was bleached by the Alsop process, that calling this "high patent" flour does not constitute false branding. The petition was filed by Edward P. Smith of Omaha, and Bruce S. Eliott of Kansas City, representing the Lexington Mill and Elevator company.

Bank Bill Caucus.

Washington.—The republican house caucus on the postal savings bank bill struck the expected snag when it reached section 9 of the Gardner bill, having to do with the disposition of deposits of savings banks. Reaching no disposition on this feature, the caucus, after some deliberation, adjourned until Friday night. The Gardner bill, on which the caucus was working, would permit 17½ per cent of the deposits to be withdrawn by the board of trustees and invested in government bonds or other securities.

A MINISTER'S CONSTIPATION

Rev. Kemp Tells of His Digestive Troubles and How He Overcame Them—You Can Do So Free.

The lack of exercise in a minister's life makes him very prone to constipation—but for that matter, most everybody is constipated now and then. It is the national disorder. Many already know that a sure way to cure constipation and other stomach, liver and bowel troubles is with Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin, which church people have been buying for twenty years. Rev. R. A. Kemp of Rising Sun, Ind., Secretary of the Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, says in part:

Dr. W. B. Caldwell
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ALONE, ALL ALONE.

Mrs. Proudmar—I tell my daughter that her voice is a gold mine!

Professor Schnickelfritz (going)—Ach, zah, vat you call an abandoned mine, aind't it?

A SOLDIER'S EXPERIENCE.

Hardships of Army Life Brought On a Severe Case of Kidney Trouble.

H. N. Camp, 1356 Delaware St., Denver, Colo., says: "During the Spanish-American war, I contracted a severe kidney trouble. After returning home, I was under a physician's care for months, but grew gradually worse. Finally I got so bad I could not hold the urine at all. I also had intense suffering from back pains. Doan's Kidney Pills made improvement from the first, and soon I was well and strong."

Remember the name—Doan's.

For sale by all dealers. 50 cents a box. Foster-Milburn Co., Buffalo, N. Y.

An Instance.

"The rubber industry ought to be able to solve one financial problem."

"What problem?"

"That of elastic currency."

I love everything that is old; old friends; old times; old manners; old books.—Goldsmith.

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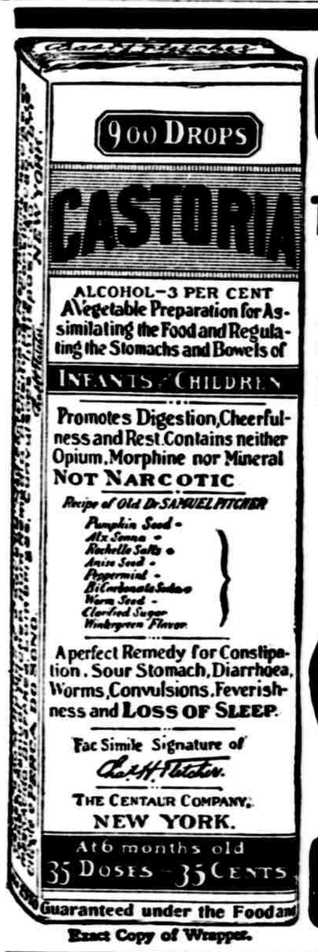

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