

RONALD FLETCHER—CASTAWAY.

Story of a Lad Wrecked on a Sand Island, Who Found the Treasures of a Spanish Galleon Buried in the Sand.

By PERCIE W. HART.

Leaning on the general's arm an hour in 1763 the ship Godly Hope was thrown upon one of the many shifting bars of Sand Island. The sea broke over her. The hungry, restless, and howling winds, but she was not particularly novel. This island monster of the North Atlantic ocean had merely swallowed another tid-bit. Of all that gallant crew only a single soul escaped to shore.

A young lad of good family, Ronald Fletcher by name, had been washed to the wooden grating by some rough seaman. The vagrant eddies swept the grating well into a shallow cove. As soon as he was able the boy cleared himself from the saving fetters and waded thankfully to the dry land.

But a brief survey of the wrecked waste debased his new home. As far as his eye could see was a vast, level, and unbroken expanse of rolling sand dunes, with but an occasional patch of rank grass to vary the monotonous landscape.

Seabirds, with their eggs, and an occasional drowned fish tossed upon the strand, furnished Ronald's only food for many days. He hunted and cooked his food, but he secured a crude shelter by creeping underneath them; but nevertheless, he suffered terribly from exposure to the never-ending procession of storms. His clothing was soon worn to tatters. His hair grew long and matted. His skin became frightfully tanned and his eyes were very painful from the result of the unnatural food he was compelled to eat.

In one of his excursions about the island he found the hull of an old-fashioned ship standing upon an even keel, between two sand hillocks. Ronald eagerly clambered all over her, hoping to find something that would be useful to him. But she was apparently an old wreck, clean-stripped by the remorseless years. In further searching the lad scraped away the sand and opened a small hatch which showed itself in the floor of the after cabin. Little daylight could find its way below deck, but he discerned several rows of wooden chests. With a piece of loose timber he managed to smash in the end of one of them. Out tumbled a stream of discolored metal pieces. They were coins of silver and gold, and ornaments and trinkets in the same precious metals. The craft undoubtedly had been a treasure ship, perhaps a Spanish galleon, bringing her riches from the Indies. Before he left the hull the lad took a heavy gold chain and fastened it around his waist. The thing served to bind his tattered clothes together.

During the frequent storms Ronald was compelled to remain beneath pieces of wreckage. The loud roar of flying water at such times was overpowering. His harter was so ill-supplied that he frequently endured the pangs of hunger along with the confinement. Upon one such occasion in particular his fasting had been exceedingly protracted. With the first signs of the storm's abatement he hastened to a great stretch of salt swamp, much affected by the gulls, where he gathered an armful of eggs. Crouching down upon the soggy grass, unmindful of the noisy birds circling overhead or anything else, he commenced to crack the shells and swallow their contents. In the midst of this poor feast he heard an exclamation of surprise. He looked up, scarcely believing that he had heard aright. A big red-bearded man, attired in rough

discoloration in places and brought out the yellow luster of the rich metal. With trembling, nervous fingers Ronald fastened the trinket and laid it at the stranger's feet, meaningly adding out his discovery of the stranded galleon, with its chests of treasure in the afterhold.

"Now, this is something like," chuckled the red-bearded one, snatching up the trinket and examining it greedily. "The brave lad. All will be well so you. Fear nothing. Bear me company to the shore. Why would you not have mentioned this matter first and left the other tale for idle hours? My merry comrades will break up their ears mightily when they find that their captain brings them reward, even though trifling. Live, boy; play me no tricks. Try to do as I say, and—tremble not. You will find me as gentle as a fond father if your own duty is performed with a good grace.

So saying, in earnestly alternating accents of harshness and forced gentility, the newcomer started away at a lively speed, half pushing, half dragging the boy along with him. They soon reached the same cove which had received Ronald so hospitably. Some thirty or forty yards from the shore was a ship's boat, manned by six repulsive-looking fellows. They were engaged in hoisting sails and did not at first note the approach of the pair.

"Hi!" said the man, "shouted the red-bearded man excitedly, but nevertheless, keeping fast hold of the willing Ronald. "Is this the fashion in which you obey the orders of your commandant? Did I not bid you await my return? Would desert an old shipmate? Shame upon you for fair weather sailors!"

"Easy all, Cap'n Rogers," replied one of the men in the boat. "Your watch is done with us. Me and my mates have figured that this boat is too small for seven."

"You don't mean it, Bully Ned," cried the captain, with a hoarse laugh. "See if you don't!" several of the crew retorted angrily.

"Where might you have come across the young shaver?" inquired one whom the captain had addressed as Bully Ned. "He'll be a nice mesmate for you, if there is anything to mess with on such a sandbar."

"What do you make of this, lad?" called the captain, holding up the precious chain which Ronald had so freely turned over to him.

"There was a dead silence in the boat, but the men all stared eagerly.

"I'll tell you what I make of it," went on the captain, impressively. "It is all gold, and, better still, there's a whole shekel of the same and finer back among the bits."

"Who says so?" bellowed one of the sailors.

"This poor, shipwrecked lad, who we are going to take away with us. The gold pays his passage, went on the red-bearded skipper, with a curious intonation that hardly pleased Ronald. "You'll come ashore lively," the captain continued, addressing the men, "and maybe we'll sail off together with doublets instead of sandbags for ballast."

The sailors in the boat consulted together, but the sight of the chain, with its attendant promises, was a strong argument. The unhappy Ronald heard the captain cursing at his men in an undertone, while they were making up their reluctant minds. But he could not help and pushed the boat back to the beach the crafty skipper received them with an assured smile.

"You'd have only gone to Davy Jones' locker without me, lad," he said to them. "Who would have laid a course? I'm the only one that can pilot in these waters. As for being a pilot, I'm a pilot, and I would have pleased me better. Some ship would have taken me off in good time and I'd have had the best part of the treasure to myself. But I'm honest. Share and share alike among gentlemen-adventurers is my motto."

"Helay! We ain't no lubbers to be gammoned by a sea-lawyer," growled Bully Ned. Captain Rogers' eyes flashed fire at this ungracious interruption, but he knew better than to waste words.

"Put him on the galleon, boys," he ordered, giving Ronald a by no means gentle shove.

Up and down, across the billowy sand-dunes went the lad, closely followed by the little band of tyrants. From their conversation and appearance Ronald quickly realized that he had met nothing more than a bunch of buccaners. Such gentle infested the seas in those days. The poor lad knew that he could expect but little kindness from them. However, he thought that the sight of the treasure might render them more generously disposed toward him than if he came empty-handed. As he lay along, with a heart heavy enough, to be sure, yet still not completely downcast.

But a sad blow awaited him. The storm which had wrecked the buccaners' craft had also changed the surface of the island considerably. He could not now find the galleon. From hillock to hillock he hunted, but the rough crew ever growing more impatient, without catching a sight of the hull which some days before had reared itself aloft above the sand. At last he had to admit his search was useless. He tried to explain the incessant movement of the island and that the galleon must have been covered up, but the buccaners were in no mood to listen to excuses. Captain Rogers, perhaps from motives of selfish policy, was particularly aggressive. He led the rest in cursing and threatening vengeance upon the unlucky crew. Finally the whole party came to a halt upon the summit of a sand hill.

"Put him where he can keep looking for the boat while we have fair weather," announced one of the men.

"Aye, aye, that's the talk. It's breezing up now," growled another.

Sure enough, in the excitement of the search they had not noticed it, but the distant roar beginning to roar in a fashion that presaged another blow.

"How about this young shaver with his lying tale of chests of treasure to be taken away for the carrying?" cried Bully Ned, with a volley of profanity.

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Before he could well comprehend their intention, the boy's arms were bound fast to his sides by some pieces of lanyard, and the trembling lad roughly placed thereon. The crew then filled up the excavation and heaped the sand about, until only his head protruded. Ronald shrieked, screamed and pleaded with his captors, but his muffled cries were of no avail. Not until the calmed ruffians had marched away unheeding did he realize his true position. He tried to squirm. In vain, the cruel sand kept him absolutely immovable. In fact, he found to his horror, that he was being buried. His muscles caused him to sink lower. The sand now came to his chin. He gave up all hope. He prayed. He became more composed and resolved if he must die to meet death bravely. To this period of resignation succeeded a sort of stupor. Later on he became entirely unconscious. Several hours passed.

Meanwhile the wind had steadily been gathering force. It soon blew a gale. Through some caprice it eddied about the hillock in which Ronald was very nearly entombed. At first a few minute grains shifted. Then whole layers were carried off. Slowly but surely the work went on until at last the boy lay all exposed. Not

ill then did he completely recover consciousness. It was now night, pitch dark and stormy. He managed to relieve himself of his bowels, but knew not how to find a way to shelter. And so he stood where he was (not forgetting to return a fervent prayer to heaven for his well-nigh miraculous deliverance) and braved the elements as best he could. After long hours of suffering, the storm subsided and the sun came up on a cloudless blue sky. Within a few feet of him lay the galleon's hull, once more almost entirely exposed!

Poor Ronald was well nigh out of his wits. He argued that the buccaners were too experienced sailors to have ventured putting to sea in their frail craft, in the teeth of a raging gale. If he could come to them with practical proof of his sincerity in regard to the treasure he imagined that they would relent. And so he clambered down into the after hold of the hull, and, utilizing the greater part of his wretched clothing for the purpose, made up a bundle of the tarnished gold and silver coins. The package was not large, but it was very heavy and all he could well carry. In fact, he made but slow progress with it shoreward, having to put it down repeatedly and rest his arms. During one of these pauses he saw something which looked familiar at a distance. It was the wooden cap that Captain Rogers had worn. Coming nearer, Ronald noticed that it lay in the very center of a boggy spot. The lad was cautious. He extracted several coins from his bundle and threw them near the buccaners' cap. The pieces of metal lodged innocently beside it. Then Ronald approached a little nearer and tossed the heavy package in the same direction. It landed close alongside of the cap and sank out of sight in two seconds! The spot was a "cup hole." In other words, a quicksand or treacherous morose, another common attribute of this hungry ocean island.

The buccaners had probably walked into it for what it was. A huge painted dragon in the center of the flag was given on a recent occasion to the two countries represented. It is the first flag used in Manchuria in connection with the great trans-Siberian railroad now being built. From the beginning of the project it has been necessary to protect the workmen along the route. A Cossack guard was established and made to wear a uniform, part Russian and part Chinese. For a banner they were given another combination of Russia and China, and now for thousands of miles through Siberia and Manchuria this strange flag may be seen, carried and used by the Cossack guards.

Perhaps this is the first instance of a flag made from the standards of two nations and used to carry out a peaceful project for the benefit of both. This flag is indeed playing a great part in the development of Siberia and the linking of the east and the west.

PRATTLE OF THE YOUNGSTERS.

"And do you always try to behave like a gentleman?" asked the visitor.

"No, sir," replied little Tommy. "I'm not old enough for that, but I always behave like a gentleman."

"Why can't the chickens swim, mamma?" asked 4-year-old Ethel.

"Because they don't know how, I suppose," was the reply.

"Well, then," continued the little miss, "why don't they get the ducks to teach them?"

"Yes," said Aunt Matilda, "when I was a little girl old General Scott kissed me."

"Dear me, auntie," cried wretched Tommie, "was it only General Scott? Why, I told the minister it was George Washington!"

"My boy," said a gentleman to a youngster who was eating some green fruit, "you should not eat those apples; they are not good for you."

"Guess you don't know much about it, mister," replied the urchin. "Why, three of those apples will keep me out of school for a whole week."

A little fellow of 6 was reproached by his teacher for his slowness. "When I was your

age, I said the teacher, 'I was at least a year further advanced than you are.'"

"Perk you had a better teacher than I have," replied the incorrigible youth.

"It's a shame, that's what it is!" exclaimed the boy wrathfully. "I can't have any fun at all."

"What's the matter?" asked the sympathetic neighbor.

"Ead says he'll lick me if he ever hears of me fighting with a boy smaller than I am, an' I darsen't fight with a bigger one."

When Grandma Comes to Our Home.

Chicago Times-Herald.

When grandma comes to our house I'm always awful glad. Because she always takes my part when I've done something bad. She makes my papa please not to begin and punish me.

And when she comes when she says 'How did he use to be?'

And she says 'I was a little boy when I was a little boy.' And she says 'I was a little boy when I was a little boy.'

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to see her birds said, when told a certain brown bird was a bobolink. "Why, I never saw a bobolink look like that." He had not recognized this very common bird, because he had changed his color. In the eastern states, in the spring and summer, the bobolink is jet black, streaked with white, and has a bright yellow neck, but in the autumn he goes down to Florida and his bright plumage is doffed for a sober brown one.

Many an interesting story this little girl can tell of the doings of her pets, of their sagacity and bright, mischievous ways. This same bobolink is very tame and used to be allowed to fly over the whole house, developed incendiary propensities. He delighted in opening match boxes, striking matches, holding them in his bill a little while to enjoy the blaze and then drop them. Another naughty trick of this bird was to break vases or glasses. He would watch for any that might have been placed on the mantle, take them up in his bill and deliberately drop them on the hearth just for the pleasure, apparently, of hearing them smash. So mischievous is he that he is no longer allowed the freedom of the house.

THE RUSSO-CHINESE FLAG.

First Seen in This Country During the Dewey Celebration.

Of the many thousand flags flung to the breeze in New York city during the recent celebration in honor of Admiral Dewey's homecoming, there was one, in many respects the most unique banner, used in the campaign by the "Wideawake" or Lincoln party; also a horn used by the party during the two campaigns. A silk tite of the vintage of the early 60's is something to cause a smile, even though it was once worn by Abraham Lincoln, for it makes a strange appearance after all these years.

The letters, many of them, display the kindness and the simple graciousness of the man, for many of them are recommendations for money, and others speak good words for some one in need of a position or aid. Many curious fables of the Lincoln campaign are exhibited, some of them yellow with age and their designs well nigh obliterated by time. Among the most curious articles is a fence rail said to have been split by Lincoln, which was carried in the campaign by the "Wideawake" or Lincoln party; also a horn used by the party during the two campaigns. A silk tite of the vintage of the early 60's is something to cause a smile, even though it was once worn by Abraham Lincoln, for it makes a strange appearance after all these years.

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RELICS OF LINCOLN'S TIME

Articles Associated with the Martyr President of the United States.

OLD FURNITURE FROM THE WHITE HOUSE

Many Things Recalling Some Critical Periods in the History of Our Country Are on Exhibition in Omaha.