

ep his mouth shut, too. What do you say? Shall we let him in?" "By all means. From what I've seen Mac I like him very much; and, as you say, we need all the assistance we can safely get."

Halstead sent one of the quarter-masters below for McPherson, and in a few minutes he appeared in the doorway. Glancing along the deck to see that no one was within hearing, the captain closed the door and said:

"Mac, I've known you and Stevens so long that I thought you should be better acquainted with each other. We were talking of the voyages you and I have sailed together, and thought we'd like to have you join with us in a little speculation. Whether there will be much of anything in it or not we can't say; in fact, it wouldn't be fair to raise your anticipations by going into the particulars. But we are willing to agree that if the scheme should be successful we'll do what's right. I guess you know me pretty well, and I'll answer for Stevens. Now, are you willing to help us with no more of an explanation than that?"

"Aa think ye needna' ask me thit, Halstead. Ye kin mak' yersel' easy thit Aa'll do anything ye saay wif little adoo about it. We be three among fairiners out in this part o' the world, an' Aa fancy we'd best pull tagither." "That's what I thought you'd say, Mas. Now, it seems to me necessary that Stevens should get to Guajan as soon as he possibly can. He will go ashore there and start things moving. Whether he will be able to communicate with him again this trip is rather doubtful; but if we don't, you and I have got to put it up for another voyage out here when we see Ramirez. If the compania happen to have the other boat ready, it'll be no fool of a job, either. The question just now is, how are we going to change our course without getting into trouble with the government? With some ironclad, reasonable excuse, we might do it. How much coal have you?"

"Saemthing onder a thoosan' ton. The government 'ill pay for but nine knots an' hour, an' thit'll leave a plenty for emairgencies, cover an' above what Aa'll burrn in the four wiks."

"Then you could safely shove her up to 12 or 13 knots, if we wanted to hustle a little, without running short?"

"Ay, ye can have mair of necessary. She's made her fourteen in smooth water."

"Well, the Yap people are the only ones who would really kick. Even they would stand five or six days all right as far as leaving for Manila goes. But if we happen to have any sea-sick passengers, they'll never forgive the extra days of unpleasantness as long as they live; and I don't remember whether any of them are going to Tomil or not—"

"There's but one for Yap—the curia—the youngest of the two padres."

"And one padre is fifty times worse to deal with than the ordinary passenger; the chances are that he can turn the whole machinery of government against a fellow if he chooses."

"Ay, thit's verra true. But ef ye've the padre's enfluence wif ye, it's quite another matter. Aa've a thocht in ma haid thit ye may arrange it wif these twa."

"Let's have it, Mac. That's what we want to get at."

"Weel, the oold padre's a verra essential mon. Aa'm toold thit he's tae be the haid o' all the Ledrones, an' he's verra ainxious tae reach Saipan at once; he's bezziness there on Padre Julian's account. Tha yoong one says but little, yet Aa nootice thit he's verra deferential whin th' ither's around. Noo, Aa'm thinkin' thit ef Aa wair tae stop th' aingine—say three days from this—an' gaive oot thit ma shaft wair cracked, ye might say ye wair forced tae put in at Apra, where ye'll get a couple o' rings from the wrickaige o' the Dutch tramp thit wair cast ashore there twa year ago. Aa kin serratch the shaft sae 'twill hae th' appearance o' a crack tae ma Spennish aingineers, an' there's na ither pless where ye'll be laik tae find a bit o' macheenery. Then ye'll aiplain the seetuation tae the padre, an' saay thit ef he'll gie a report in Maneela hoo tha chenge o' the coorse kem about, ye'll carry him tae Saipan—that he'll not hae tha treep tae mak' on a prooa."

Halstead and I looked at each other. McPherson's idea seemed practical and plausible. There was no question whatever that a padre of sufficiently good standing could smooth over about anything he pleased, and, if an obligation to himself were part of the irregularity, it seemed very likely that he would see there were no questions asked. While we were discussing the matter, I couldn't help mentioning my instinctive dislike to Padre Sebastian. He was one of your plausible, fat and oily men, who study human nature almost from their infancy and read your thoughts in spite of you. In fact, my acquaintance with the Jesuits in the east had given me a wholesome respect for that marvelous penetration which is so important a factor in the influence they exert upon all classes. Both the captain and the engineer agreed with me that the padre was a dangerous man in more ways than one, but could see no reason why his peculiar influence should be exerted against us.

Having come to a definite understanding that we would investigate the wreck of the galleon as far as lay in our power, it was difficult to get the matter out of our minds. Several times we were on the point of taking McPherson more fully into our confidence, but, while we trusted him as one of ourselves, it seemed that matters were scarcely ripe for that yet; and I don't think he had the faintest suspicion as to the exact nature of the scheme. What the tie was between him and Halstead I never knew, but it was sufficiently strong to make

the engineer follow my friend's suggestions blindly; and his assurance that Mac should be squarely treated if the speculation proved successful seemed to have all the weight of a bond. We agreed that it would be unwise for us to be seen in frequent conversation; so, beyond an occasional inspection of the machinery in his company, I saw very little of McPherson.

### CHAPTER III.

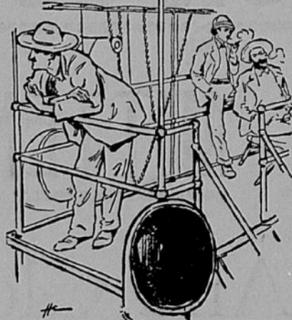
Cultivation of the Padre Sebastian, in a quiet way, seemed an obvious policy in the light of our recent determination; but we found it necessary to be constantly on our guard against his subtle questioning. He seemed unwarrantably curious to ascertain my business on the steamer, and, thinking the bare truth might be the safest thing I could give him under the circumstances, I frankly detailed the severing of my connection with Lantine & Co. and the overworked condition which had induced me to take the voyage with my friend. These facts he could easily verify, and, for various reasons, I preferred not to be caught lying.

Among the other passengers were a rich old wine merchant and his daughter, from Seville, who were making a tour of the Spanish colonies and intended returning to Manila on the steamer. They were delightful people, the Senorita Gracia especially, and, mustering my very best Spanish, I began to cultivate their acquaintance. She was a beautiful girl, and she plied me with all sorts of questions concerning my countrywomen, our American customs, and the differences between our respective countries. Halstead seemed quite taken with her, and, as captain of the steamer, his attentions were highly appreciated. The only other woman, aside from the stewardess, was going to Pouynipete with her husband; but, being of Philippine birth, she was scarcely in the same caste with the Palacios. So, beyond a marked courtesy to each other—a prominent East Indian trait, by the way—the two girls had little to say.

We sat over our dinner for quite awhile, discussing various subjects; then, excusing ourselves upon the plea of being responsible for the navigation, Halstead and I climbed to our quarters on the hurricane deck. We were then passing Banton island, in the open strait, and could dimly make out its 2,000 feet of rock in the starlight. The whole voyage from Manila Bay to the San Bernardino passage is one grand panorama of precipitous volcano peaks and rocky islands, covered along their bases with luxuriant tropical foliage, which takes on an indescribably rich coloring in the sunlight and fills the air with fragrant odors that lull the senses into an oriental semi-consciousness which is simply delightful. Even in the half-darkness it seemed like a dream of enchantment as the steamer slipped through the motionless water, softly purring black smoke from her funnel and hissing gently as the spray rippled alongside. It was so still that echoes of voices floated from all parts of the ship; liquid, blackguard patois from the crew, lounging about the foc'sle head; limpid Andalusian laughter, with now and then a snatch of song in a clear girlish voice, from somewhere down on the main deck; muffled echoes from the stoke-hold ventilators.

We had made ourselves comfortable at the starboard end of the bridge, and Diaz, the mate, was lounging over the rail to port, humming a love ditty to himself. Had we grounded on a rock or run into another ship, he probably would have plumped down on the gratings and pattered out prayers to the saints; but outside of emergencies he seemed to be a pretty fair officer.

Dick not only had good taste in the way of cigars, but he knew just whereto



Diaz, the mate, was lounging over the rail.

get them, and the box we had opened that afternoon were a little ahead of anything I had ever smoked,—neither too heavy nor too damp, but of exquisite flavor and thoroughly seasoned.

Almost every one has experienced the rest and momentary inaction which come between periods of excessive mental or physical effort, especially upon the eve of some decisive attempt that is likely to be a severe tax upon the energies. It was something of this feeling which gave additional relish to the tobacco as we sat there in the starlight, thinking, planning, speculating. Diaz understood but little English, and, with the full length of the bridge between us, there was scarcely a possibility of his comprehending what we said; so now and then we ventured a remark which showed the drift of our thoughts. At first the possibilities and obstacles of the undertaking filled our minds; but after awhile the narcotic influence of the tobacco and our silent gliding along through the tropic night set us to castle-building. I've been often told by men who are now beyond the possibility of want of the relief and overconfidence which come with the first

small successes in fortune-building. They are rays of light which brighten the years of weary effort and discouragement; and the eternal, irrepressible hope that they bring with them often stimulates a belief in continued success which leads to many a bad cropper in the struggles yet to come; yet what would humanity ever accomplish without those same rays of hope and sunshine?

Halstead's tastes, like those of most seafaring men, ran to snug country places on shore, racing studs, and good company, though all within sight and sound of the ocean. Mine, on the contrary, like most men who sail the sea for its witching pleasure and know nothing of tops' reefing or foc'sle hellishness, were centered upon thousand-ton steam yachts, alternations between delightful cruises and months in a perfectly equipped town house.

He would mutter, between the puffs of smoke, "Gad, old chap, a fellow could have one of the finest places in Surrey and keep house parties going all the year round on the income of a million!" To which I would grunt an appreciative assent, followed by, "And think of the clipper yacht, triple-expansion and celluloid bottom, that a man could keep in commission; yes, and the town house, too. I could build one in the middle of Mayfair, with electric lights, modern plumbing, marble baths, and plenty of ground around it, for a hundred and fifty thousand." By which you will see that the captain and I were counting our chickens not only before they were hatched, but even while the eggs lay at the bottom of the western Pacific. This realization came to us after awhile with crushing force, along toward midnight, when the air had become pretty damp and we had smoked too many cigars. I could feel my heart sink down, down, like a lump of lead. But, before turning in, I thought: "Well, the voyage will make a new man of me, anyhow, and the excitement of the attempt will be something worth remembering, whether we succeed or not,"—in which my friend quite agreed with me.

Shortly after four o'clock I heard him tumble out of his bunk, and, being too restless to sleep, I soon followed. It was not yet daylight, but the gray shadows in the east were tinged with a rosy reflection against which were outlined the bold promontories of Point Bugui, the northwesterly limit of Masbate island and Point Sur, on Burias, the passage between being about eight miles in width. As we gradually altered our course around Point Sur, heading northeast toward Port Sorsogon, on Luzon, in order to clear San Miguel islet at the northerly end of Ticao, great flames of red shot up across the eastern horizon. The grayness overhead lifted, like a fog bank. There was a fresh and exhilarating dampness in the air. Then, as the top rim of the sun appeared, a broad gleam spread across the heavens, tingeing every line of the steamer's rigging and the sides of her funnel a deep crimson. Down on the main deck, the barefooted second mate, Moreno, was directing a stream from the hose over everything in sight, while his men of the starboard watch scrubbed and holystoned the planking.

Although there is plenty of water all through the San Bernardino passage, it has been but imperfectly surveyed and is thick with submerged rocks, navigation among which is rendered still more dangerous by a rapid current setting in from the Pacific; and a feverish desire to be at work made us doubly anxious to reach open water without accident. Halstead had been through the strait several times and knew his bearings perfectly, but we were well around the end of Ticao before he ventured below for breakfast.

Sailing over smooth water between the different islands, there had been no suggestion of sea-sickness among our passengers, and the ladies had been on deck since sunrise, watching the magnificent scenery; so when we put in an appearance the captain was plied with all sorts of inquiries concerning the different headlands, when we would be finally clear of the shore, whether it would be very rough outside, etc., etc.

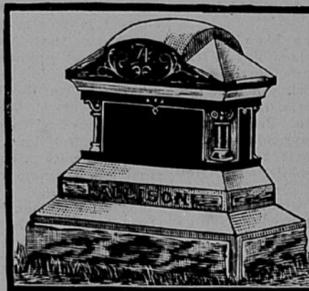
At noon we were in the outer passage, between Calantas Rock and Capul, and by dinner-time were standing due east in the open sea north of Espiritu Santo. As on the previous evening, we stopped to chat with the passengers, the two padres and the Palacios especially, for an hour or so after the meal, then went on deck to size up the situation.

"To begin with," said I, when we were finally secure from interruption in our quarters, "where am I least likely to attract attention when I go ashore at Agana? Will it be advisable to take lodgings in a private house, or had I better go to the best hotel?"

Halstead's eyes opened in amazement, then a broad grin appeared through his beard:

"Oh, I should stop at the best hotel, by all means, if there were such a thing within a thousand miles. You would be far more likely to attract attention in any of the private houses, which are made of bamboo thatched with cocoa leaves and have a pounded mud floor; there's usually but one room, you know, and the whole family live in that quite sociably. Say, old man, what kind of a metropolis did you think you were going to? Why, besides the forts, the church, and government quarters, there aren't a dozen stone buildings in the town. No; being a white and presumably wealthy stranger, you will find yourself a big gun in Agana. And ordnance of your caliber are usually quartered upon the governor himself—free of charge, mind you. Fortunately, I happen to know Col. De Garma; Ferdinand Jose Felipe Jesus de Garma y de Lopez is his every-day name. You want to commit it to memory, too; because if you happen to get it De Something-or-other wrong, it might make considerable

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