

pressure increased I was better able to use my arms. My strength was going fast, however, and nothing but the animal instinct to fight for life saved me. Approaching the surface, I became weaker—or it required more strength to haul the extra weight—and when I finally got my arms across the gunwale and outtrigger it was impossible to move another inch. The supply of air had given out, and my last conscious motion was to unscrew the helmet lens.

In a few moments the fresh air revived me, and I succeeded in crawling into the proa. Then I got out of the diving suit, took a strong pull at the brandy flask, and hauled in my line. It had run out so rapidly, after fetching loose from the mast, that a snarl had caught the other steel bar and jammed it under the outrigger. Otherwise—well, I didn't like to think of that.

It is curious what an affection one will sometimes feel for inanimate objects. I petted that coquina anchor as if it had been a living creature. You see, we had gone down into the valley of the shadow together, and but for a direct interposition of Providence would have been likely to remain there. I must have been altogether upset by the experience, for, after hauling the rock on board, I held it in my lap and almost cried over it.

The position of the proa, over deep water, was explained by the light puffs of wind, which for an hour or two had shifted to the westward, as it will sometimes do shortly before the change of monsoon. But in half an hour it was again blowing steadily from the northeast, and I started on my return to Agana.

It was then two o'clock. Having the breeze well forward, I calculated that it would take me at least six hours to get back; but the witch of a boat made good headway within five points of the wind, and I sighted Tiniguio, bearing a little north of east, at four o'clock. Holding on the same course for half an hour, Agana then lay to the southeastward; and I put the proa about for a straight run in.

When about ten miles off shore, however, I discovered that I had company; for bearing down from the northward was the biggest catamaran I ever saw. The hull must have been at least a hundred feet long, and the sail looked like a gigantic balloon. The instant I noticed it, two words flashed through my mind—"Padre Sebastiano"—and I was convinced that my oleaginous shipmate was coming to pay Guajan a visit.

Now, any companions, native or Spanish, who might accompany the padre were likely to be either in his confidence or under his influence; and it struck me that the sea chest might excite more curiosity than was really safe. So I did considerable hard thinking over what had been told me about the sparsely settled portions of the island, in the effort to decide upon a safe place for the concealment of both chest and treasure if it should become necessary. There was but one spot that I felt sure about—Port Tarofoto, on the southeast coast. This was a land-locked bay, surrounded by bold, rocky bluffs, and was uninhabited. In an air line, it was 9½ miles south of Agana; but, as the islanders never walked or rode that distance when they could travel in proas, there was but one chance in a thousand of any boat's being seen beating in—especially as the place had the unsavory reputation of being haunted. On the land side there had been an old sugar plantation known as Mount Tarofoto farm, but the gobernador had mentioned it as being abandoned; and the mountain, or bluff, shut out all view of the sea.

The more I thought of it, the more it seemed exactly the place I wanted. It needed but the falling off a few points to head for the Cocos island instead of Agana, and by half-past six I passed it as close in shore as it was safe to go. By seven o'clock I had reached sufficiently to the eastward for a straight run into Tarofoto, and, going about, rounded Point Paicoupe just at dusk. As the depth of the water and the exact bearing of the bluffs were accurately shown upon my chart, I had no difficulty in running ashore at the westerly head of Paicoupe cove, which I judged to be completely sheltered from observation on the land side. After lowering the sail, I noticed that the rocks descended abruptly into the water at the spot I had selected, and was on the point of running along to where the chart showed a small creek, when a slight opening attracted my attention. The precipice was so close that I could have tossed a pebble against it, and the spot so perfectly sheltered that I felt safe in using my lantern. Outlines were becoming indistinct in the gathering darkness, but the moment I turned on the current it revealed a fissure, about four feet wide, which led diagonally into the face of the rock. There was a good three feet of water right up to the opening, and upon throwing the light inside I could see that it ended in a cul de sac with perpendicular walls.

If I had searched the entire archipelago it would have been difficult to find a place more perfectly suited to my requirements; when I came again, in broad daylight, the fissure was invisible 100 feet away. It was something of a task to unload the contents of the big chest, but in a short time I had them stowed away under a tarpaulin, 60 feet from the opening, and was ready to leave the cove. The moon was not yet up, but the starlight was sufficient to navigate by, and I reached Agana by 11 o'clock. As the big proa I had seen was of too heavy draught to run across the shoal in front of the town, I was not surprised at her absence. The lights about the gobernador's quarters were sufficient indication that visitors had arrived, and I managed to sneak up the back steps to my room without attracting attention. It was well that I did so, for my

face was a sight. Little rivulets of clogged blood covered the lobes of my ears and my upper lip; my eyes looked like burnt holes in a blanket; and, altogether, I presented a most dissipated appearance.

Padre Sebastiano was cordiality itself, but I could see that lay brother Felipe's miracle was working in his mind, and that he was trying to figure it out upon natural grounds. I was upon the point of asking him how he happened to find the big proa so conveniently forthcoming when he decided to proceed down the islands, but reflected in time that, if I had been fishing to the eastward, as I had explained, it would have been obviously impossible to see his flagship; so I pumped him dry upon Ladrone data instead.

The Agana padres regarded his visit as complimentary in the highest degree, respectfully swallowing his yarn about collecting materials for island history; but I couldn't help chuckling to myself when I pictured his examination of Fray Ignacio's mummy and its precious charge. Sebastiano and I were adversaries; there now seemed but little doubt of this fact. And the more I thought of it the more certain I felt that my motions were likely to be watched during every hour of the 24. Every time I went sailing alone, there was a strong probability that the big proa would keep me well in sight. Making me the cat's paw to secure his chestnuts would comfort Sebastiano's very liver.

CHAPTER XI.

That the combination against me had strong odds in its favor seemed obvious; and I began to speculate upon how far it was safe to trust Senorita Dorotea. Strolling down to the beach with her, before retiring—just to throw Sebastiano off his guard—I learned with intense satisfaction that she both feared and detested the man. She whispered also that her father had reason to suspect the padres Julian and Sebastiano of using their influence against him in Manila. For a moment or two I had a suspicion that she and the gobernador might be under the padre's influence and trying to work themselves into my confidence with the intention of betraying me afterward. But the more I thought of this the more improbable it seemed. In the first place, relations between the educated classes and the priesthood in Spain are rapidly approaching those which obtain in Italy—neutrality on the surface, distrust beneath. Then, it seemed as though the senorita must know too much to look upon Sebastiano in other than his priestly character; and if the friendship between us was warming as rapidly as I thought, it was reasonably safe to stake her woman's heart against her head.

Finally, deciding to risk it, I asked her if she cared to spend Monday upon the water with me; and she accepted the invitation with such evident pleasure that I shoved all worry about the padre clear of my mind for the time.

When Monday morning came, we breakfasted in the patio and made an early start before Sebastiano appeared, sailing leisurely around Cocos reef as if we had the day before us and were disposed to take things easy. When I asked Dorotea if she had ever sailed into the bays on the east side, she said that, as it was usually rough and windy there, few of the islanders cared about it, only remaining in the little villages during the wet monsoon or while they were gathering rice and sugar crops. She was willing to go anywhere I chose to take her, however, and had no suspicion of my object until we headed into Paicoupe cove for the instruments and diving apparatus. Then, before taking them from the fissure, I told her of my intention to search for something under the sea at Santa Rosa reef, and asked if she would help me. Looking straight into my face for a moment, she said:

"Does not Senor Enrique know of a reason why I would do anything in the world for him?"

"Nothing more than the evidence of your friendliness, senorita mia."

"So! But you do have the bad memory. It may seem nothing that you try to give great pleasure to the senorita whom you never have seen. I suppose men do think it matters little to a woman whether she does appear like other women or like una barbara? Yet you must have known, Enrique, or you would not have tried to do me la gran benevolencia on el vapor, when mis primas despreciables did me defraudar ignominiosamente."

"Why, how the dickens did you find out? Who told you?"

"Yourself, senor."

"I? How? Impossible!"

"You did just tell me, by your exclamation. I but guessed before. True, Senorita Palacios did say that you were un generoso—that you did like my picture all of the time—also that if I did find anything which I could not understand, you all about it would know. Then, mis primas in Manila did write the letter about the trimming they did have put upon las vestidas. Y contemlar! they were as described. But there were others, not of the style antiguo. And of them there is no explanation in the letter."

"Oh, well, don't say any more about it. You caught me nicely, I must say. It was the senorita's generosity, not mine. She was very kind, and it was all her doing. Now make yourself comfortable, and we'll try to find Santa Rosa."

The dress business was dangerous ground, and I didn't want to discuss it; there was the possibility of her resenting an implication that her appearance in the picture wasn't perfect. Then, again, I couldn't tell how the other girl's having made such a present, merely from the desire to please Halstead and myself, would strike her.

A return to Point Orote, to get my bearings, would have cost a good hour and a half; so I determined to trust the

chart, which was laid out on a scale of three sixty-fourths of an inch to the mile, and make a straight run from Tarofoto. Knowing as I now did the exact position of the reef, it was a simple matter to figure the distance exactly—49 miles, south-southwest quarter west—and steer accordingly.

My calculations proved correct, the lead touching bottom at about half-past eleven. With my former dangerous experience in mind, I determined to locate the wreck, if possible, before going down, and steered directly along the precipitous face of the shoal with a firm grip on the sounding-line, which told the instant that we edged off over deep water. Proceeding in this way, the lead was pretty sure to strike the wreck and drag when we came to it; but, as an extra precaution, I lowered away the rock anchor and let it hang six feet under water. This experiment was an entire success, for in a few moments it caught so sharply against the perpendicular side of the hull as almost to snap its line; had there been more than a rag of the sail up, it would have done so.

As we needed all the time there was, I told Dorotea to turn around and gaze upon the wonders of the vasty deep while I got into that diving suit. It was just as well, however, that curiosity got the better of her before I put on the helmet, or my appearance might have scared her into a fit. The rig certainly made an uncouth monster of me, but it didn't frighten her half so much as did the idea of my remaining under water in it. She clung to me for several moments, letting me kiss her as much as I pleased, before I could bottle myself up. Her nervousness was contagious; but I impressed upon her mind the necessity of keeping a sharp lookout for other proas, and showed her how to signal with the line if it should be necessary.

The descent was accompanied by the same uncomfortable sensation that had been a feature of my former experience; but, regaining confidence a little more quickly I carefully examined the wreck with the electric lantern. I dreaded to use dynamite, lest it might dislodge the stern and send it crashing down to unfathomable depths; but there was no choice in the matter. It would have taken all the afternoon to cut through the coral and timbers. So, fixing one of the cartridges in a hole drilled by the steel bar, I arranged the line so as to detach a heavy sledge hammer, which we had brought, and drop it upon the mercury capsule.

There was considerable doubt in my mind whether the thing would explode; but when I ascended to the proa and, after paddling a hundred feet away, pulled the line, the doubt was removed. Two or three square rods of water rose in a gigantic bubble, as if from a boiling spring, accompanied by a rumbling which sounded very like "un terremoto," as Dorotea said.

I lost no time in descending again when the commotion subsided, and found a gaping eight-foot hole in the hull. For a moment or two I hesitated about entering. All the stories about divers who had been caught and suffocated in old wrecks flashed through my mind. But, finally, mustering courage enough to crawl inside, I began to investigate. The space evidently had been an afterhold in the galleon, for it was filled with packages done up in hides; they and their contents were now hard as coral rock, but had once been indigo bales, without doubt. A number of them must have been stove through the planking when the galleon struck, for I could almost stand upright without touching the deck-beams overhead.

Cautiously making my way aft, I came to a bulkhead separating the hold from a lazaretto directly beneath the captain's cabin. This I feared would be solid, in order to prevent communication from the forward part of the ship; and so it proved. As it presumably fenced in the strong room, or treasure chamber, there was nothing to do but force an opening through it without delay. (It must be understood that even a diver who has spent years at the business, and has an attendant pumping fresh air down to him, cannot afford to waste an instant of time or undertake anything requiring violent exertion while he is inside of a wreck, under water. The slightest miscalculation, the displacement of some heavy object, may cause him either to lose his head or to become entangled beyond the possibility of escape.) I hated to use another cartridge; the chances were even that it might blow the treasure into Father Neptune's subcellar. But the effects of the first explosion appeared to be merely local, there being no indication of radial splits in the coral incrustation; and that decided the question.

The sledge had disappeared, so the shorter steel bar had to take its place as an explosive agent. Calculating that the force would be mostly inside, I descended as soon as the rumbling had ceased; but the water in the hull was still violently agitated, and the current forced me back when I attempted to enter. After this had subsided, I crawled into a place so changed in appearance that it made me feel queer. The great lumps which had once been indigo were hurled in all directions, mostly forward. In some places they were piled even with the deck timbers; toward the after bulkhead they were scooped away to a depth of six feet, and the planking beyond was completely crushed through, leaving a large hole into the lazaretto.

I was exceedingly careful where I stepped, but lost no time in crawling in. The moment had come at last when our hopes were destined to be realized or finally destroyed. I cast the light slowly about the place. Along the after side there were several tiers of small boxes, piled one above the other, and there seemed to have been an even larger number against the bulkhead; but the explosion had thrown them all about the place. Wondering why none of them had smashed open, I presently

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