

# THE MYSTERY

BY STEWART EDWARD WHITE AND SAMUEL HOPKINS ADAMS  
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### CHAPTER XV.—(Continued.)

Next we half buried some long hatchets, and up, to serve as bits for the lines, hatched our cables to them, and joyfully commenced the task of pulling the Golden Horn piece by piece up the side of the cliff.

The stores were badly damaged by the wet, and there was no liquor, for which I was sincerely grateful. We broke into the boxes, and arrayed ourselves in various garments—which speedily fell to pieces—There were some arms, but the ammunition had gone bad. Perdosa, out of forty or fifty mis-fires, got one fizzle blow up, a tremendous bang which blew up his piece, leaving only the stock in his hand. A few tinned goods were edible, but all the rest were destroyed. A lot of hard woods, a thousand feet of chain cable, and a fairly good anchor might be considered as prizes. As for the rest, it was foolishness, but we hauled it up just the same until nothing at all remained. Then we shut off the donkey engine, and put on dry clothes. We had been quite happy for the eight months.

It was now well along toward spring. The winter had been like summer, and with the exception of a few rains of a week or so, we had enjoyed beautiful days. The seals had thinned out considerably, but were now returning in vast numbers ready for their annual domestic arrangements.

Our Sundays we had mostly spent in resting, or in fishing. There were many deep-sea fish to be had, of great palatability, but small gamefishes; they came like so many leaden fishes. A few of us had climbed some of the hills in a half-hearted curiosity, but from their summits saw nothing to tempt weariness. Practically we knew nothing beyond the mile or so of beach on which we lived.

Captain Selover had made a habit of coming ashore at least once during the day. He had contented himself with standing aloof, but I took pains to seem to come with him, so that the men might suppose that I, as mate, was engaged in carrying out his directions. The dread of him was my most potent influence over them.

During the last few days of our wrecking, Captain Selover had omitted his daily visit. The fact made me uneasy, for that at my first opportunity I scullied myself out to

resolution to stay aboard. His drinking habit was growing on him, and at about ashore he was now little more than a figurehead, so that my chief asset as far as he was concerned, was rather his reputation than his direct influence. In contact with the men, I dreaded lest sooner or later he do something to lessen or destroy the awe in which they held him. Of course Dr. Schermmerhorn had been mistaken in his man. A real captain of men would have risen to circumstances wherever he found them. But who could have foretold? Captain Selover is besides a rascal always, but a successful and courageous rascal. He had run desperate chances, dominated desperate crews. Who could know that a crumple of island beach and six months ashore would turn him into what he had become? Yet I believe such cases are not uncommon in other walks of life. A man and his work combine to mean something; yet both may be absolutely useless when separated. It was the weak link.

I put in some time praying earnestly that the eyes of the crew might be blinded, and that the doctor would finish his experiments before the cauldron could boil up again.

My first act as real commander was to announce holiday. My idea was that the island would keep the men busy for a while. Then I would assign them more work to do. They proposed at once a tour into the interior.

We started up the west coast. After three or four miles along the mesa formation where often we had to circle long detours to avoid the gullies, we came upon another short beach, and beyond it a series of ledges on which basked several hundred seals. They did not seem alarmed. In fact one old bull, scamed by many battles, made toward us.

We left him, scaled the cliff, and turned up a broad, pleasant valley toward the interior.

Then the later lava flow had been deflected. All that showed of the original eruption were occasional red outcroppings of rocks. Soil and grass had overgrown the mineral. Scattered trees were planted throughout the flat. Cacti and semi-tropical bushes mingled with brush on the rounded hills. A number of brilliant birds flitted at our approach.

Suddenly Handy Solomon, who was in advance, stopped and pointed to the east.

"That's a fine view," he said, and he

marvellously coloured, like all the volcanic rocks of this island. In addition some small deep blue patches were scattered among low gauzy streamers of white. We rowed in as far as the faintest daylight lasted us. The occasional reverberating boom of the surges seemed as distant as ever.

This was beyond the seal rookery on the beach. Below it we entered an open cleft of some size to another squarer cave. It was now high tide; the water extended a scant ten fathoms to end on an interior shale beach. The cave was a perfectly straight passage following the line of cleft. How far in it reached we could not determine, for it, too, was full of seals, and I would have to abandon my attempt to invoke the authority of Captain Selover. To do the latter would be to destroy it. The master had become a stuffed figure, a bogie with which to frighten, an empty bladder that a prick would collapse. With what grace I could muster, I had to give in.

"You'll have to have it your own way, I suppose," I snapped.

Thrackles grinned, and Pulz started to say something, but Handy Solomon, with a perceptory gesture, and a black scowl, stopped him short.

"Now that's what I call right proper and handsome!" he cried admiringly.

CHAPTER XVII.  
Change of Masters.

The next day we continued our explorations by land, and so for a week after that. I thought it best not to relinquish all authority, so I organized regular expeditions, and ordered their direction. The men did not object. It was all good enough fun to them.

The net results were that we found a nesting place of sea birds—too late in the season for eggs, and so far from being useful, and that was about all. The sheep were the only animals on the island, although there were some more suspicious, but no more useful. The sea was as I have described it—either volcanic or overlaid with fertile earth. In any case it was canon and hill. We soon grew tired of climbing and turned our attention to the sea.

With the surf boat we skirted the coast. It was impragmatic to skirt the seal rookery on the south side of the island. We landed at each one of these places. But returning close to the coast we were guarded by an outlying rock.

The day was calm, so we ventured in. At first I thought it merely a gorge in the bay, but even while peering for the end wall we slipped under the archway and found ourselves in a vast room.

Our eyes were dazzled so we could make out little at first. But through the still, clear water the light filtered freely from below, showing the bottom as through a pane of glass. In general, the country was coral and sea growths of marvellous vividness. They waved slowly as in a draught of air. The medium in which they floated was absolutely invisible, for, of course, there was no reflection from its surface. We seemed to be suspended in mid-air, and only when the dipping oars made rings could we realize that anything sustained us.

Suddenly the place fell loose in pandemonium. The most fendish cries, groans, shrieks, broke out, confusing themselves so thoroughly with their own echoes that the volume of sound was continuous. Heavy splashes showed things that we had broken into facets.

We shrank, terrified. From all about us glowed hundreds of eyes like coals of fire.

Below us the bottom was clouded with black figures, darting rapidly like a school of minnows beneath a boat. They darkened the coral and the sands and the glistening sea growths just above us. The temporarily darkens the landscape—only the occultations and brightenings succeeded each other more swiftly.

We stared stupefied, our thinking power

after we had driven them back a hundred feet or so care their eyes away from us. We did not care if I roved out to the Laughing Lass and got a rifle. I found the captain asleep in his bunk, and did not disturb him. Perdosa came up to see whether I killed one. We found the mutton excellent. The hunting was difficult, and the quarry, as time went on, more and more suspicious, but nevertheless we did not lack for fresh meat. Furthermore we soon discovered that fine trolling was to be had outside the bay. We rigged a hand line, and went out to an indeter-

mine time at the sport. I do not know the names of the fish. They were very many indeed, and of many sizes, from a pound or so up to twenty or thirty pounds. Above fifty pounds our light tackle parted, so we had no means of knowing how large they may have been.

This we spent very pleasantly the greater part of two weeks. At the end of that time I made up my mind that if we were to stay in the bay, we should be disobeyed. There would then have been one less to deal with in the final accounting, which strangely enough I now for the first time considered. The man was not to be named, but I had not before aimed at a man's life, so you can see to what tensely the baffling mystery had struck me.

I pulled the saw-barreled Colt's 45 and raised it slowly to a level with my breast. "Perdosa," I repeated, "drop that knife."

The crisis had come, but my resolution was fully prepared for it. I should not have cared greatly if I had to shoot the man if he had not done as he was ordered. He disobeyed. There would then have been one less to deal with in the final accounting, which strangely enough I now for the first time considered. The man was not to be named, but I had not before aimed at a man's life, so you can see to what tensely the baffling mystery had struck me.

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more. Handy Solomon felt the defence carefully.

"A man would think, sir, it was a canibal island," he observed. "All so tight and tidy-like here. It would take a ship's guns to batter her down. A man might dig under these here two gate logs, if no one was against him. Like to try it, sir?"

"No," I answered gruffly.

From that time on I was virtually a prisoner, yet so carefully was my surveillance accomplished that I could place my finger on nothing definite. Someone always accompanied me on my walks; and in the evening I was herded as closely as any cattle.

Handy Solomon took the direction of affairs off my hands. You may be sure that I was not much pleased to walk down a little wood, carried up a few pails of water—that was all.

Lacking incentive to stir about, they came to spend most of their time lying on their backs watching the sky. This turned back a languor which is the sickest, most soul and temper-destroying affair invented by the devil. They could not muster up energy enough to walk down the beach and back, and yet they were wearied to death of the inaction. After a little they became irritated toward one another. Each suspected the other of doing less than he should. You who know men will realize what this meant.

The atmosphere of our camp became sultry. I recognized the precursor of its becoming dangerous. One day on a walk in the hills I came on Thrackles and Pulz lying on their stomachs gazing down fixedly on Dr. Schermmerhorn's camp. It was nothing extraordinary, but they started guiltily to their feet under their breaths.

All this that I have told you so briefly, took time. It was the eating through of men's spirits by that worst of corrosives, idleness. I conceive it unnecessary to weary you with the details of that time. The situation was as yet uneasy but not alarming. One evening I overheard the beginning of an absurd plot to gain entrance to the valley—that was as far as detail went. I became convinced at last that I should in some way warn Percy Darrow.

"That seems a simple enough proposition, does it not? But if you will stop to think one moment of the difficulties of my position, you will see that it was not as easy as it first appears. Darrow still visited us in the evening. The men never allowed me even the chance of private communication while he was with us. One or two took pains to stretch out with us. Twice I arose when the assistant doctor resolved to accompany him part way back. Both times men resolutely escorted us, and as resolutely separated us from the opportunity of a single word apart. I never attempted to visit her again. The men were not anxious to do so; their awe of the captain made them only too glad to get never treated me as my only hope. It shielded the arms and ammunition.

"As I look back on it now, the peril seems to me to be one of merely potential trouble. The men had not taken the pains to crystallize their ideas. I really think their compelling emotion was that of curiosity. They wanted to see. It needed a definite impulse to change that desire to one of greed.

"The impulse came from Percy Darrow and his idle talk of voodooos. As usual he was directing his remarks to the Nigger."

"Voodooos?" he said. "Of course there are. Don't fool yourself for a minute on that. There are good ones and bad ones. You can tame them if you know how, and they will do anything you want them to." Pulz chuckled in his throat. "You don't believe it?" drawled the assistant doctor to him. "Well, it's so. You know that heavy box we are so careful of? Well, that's got a tame voodoo in it."

The others laughed.

"What he likes?" asked the Nigger gravely.

"He's a fine voodoo, with wavy arms and green eyes, and red gloves." Watching narrowly the effect he swung out into one of the genuine old crooning voodoo songs, once so common down South, now so rarely heard. No one knows what the words mean—they are generally held to be charm words only—a magic gibberish. But the Nigger sprang across the fire like lightning, his face altered by terror, to seize Darrow by the shoulders.

"Doan you! Doan you!" he gasped, shaking the assistant violently back and forth. "Dat he King Voodoo song! Dat call him all de voodoo—all!"

He started wildly about in the darkness as though expecting to see the night thronged. There was a moment of confusion. Eager for any chance I hid myself behind the wall. "Danger! Look out!" I could not tell whether or not Darrow heard me. He left soon after. The mention of the chest had focused the men's interests.

"Well," Pulz began, "we've been here on this spot o' hell for a long time."

"A year and five months," roared Thrackles.

"A man can do a lot in that time."

"If he's busy."

"They've been busy."

"Wonder what they've done?"

There was no answer to this, and the sea lawyer took a new tack.

"I suppose we're all getting doubt-s'wags?"

"That's so."

"And that's say four hundred for us and Mr. Eagen here. I suppose the Old Man don't let the schooner go for nothing."

"Two hundred and fifty a month," said I, and then would have had the words back.

They cried out in prolonged astonishment.

CHAPTER XVIII.  
The Crocodile.

That evening I smoked in a splendid isolation while the men whispered apart. I had nothing to do but smoke, and to chew my cud, which was better. There could be no doubt, however I may have saved my face, that command had been taken from me by that rascal, Handy Solomon. He was in two minds as to whether or not I should attempt to warn Darrow or the doctor. Yet what could I say? and against whom should I warn them? The men had grumbled, as men always do grumble in idleness, and had perhaps talked a little wildly; but that was nothing.

"It's only indisputable fact I could adduce was that I had allowed my authority to slip through my fingers. And adequately to excuse that, I should have to confess that I was a writer and no handler of men."

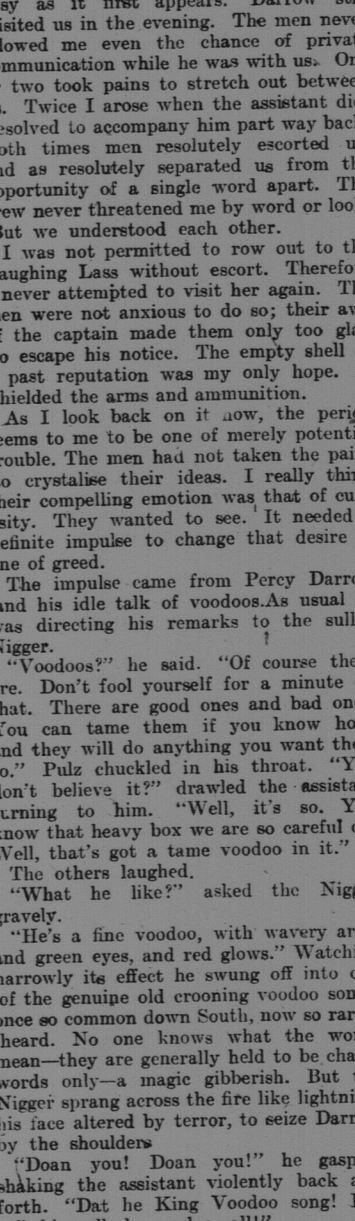
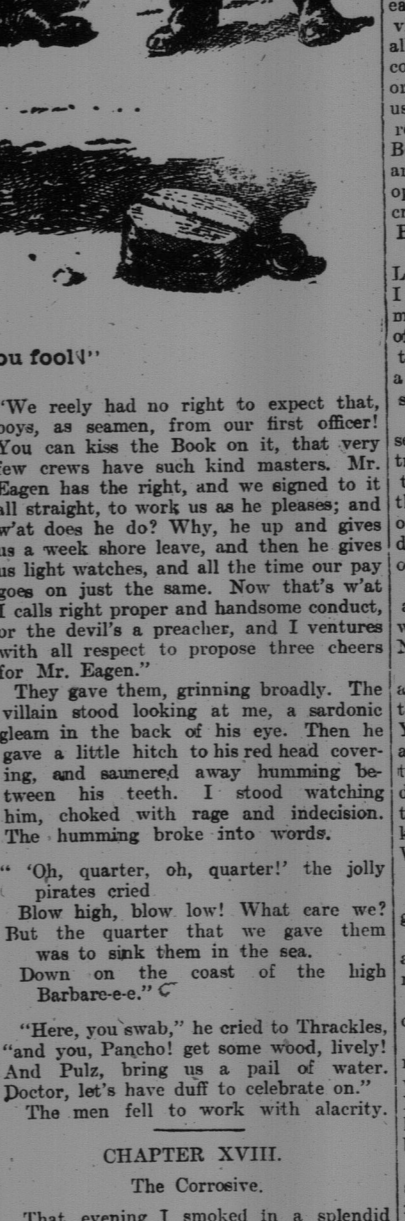
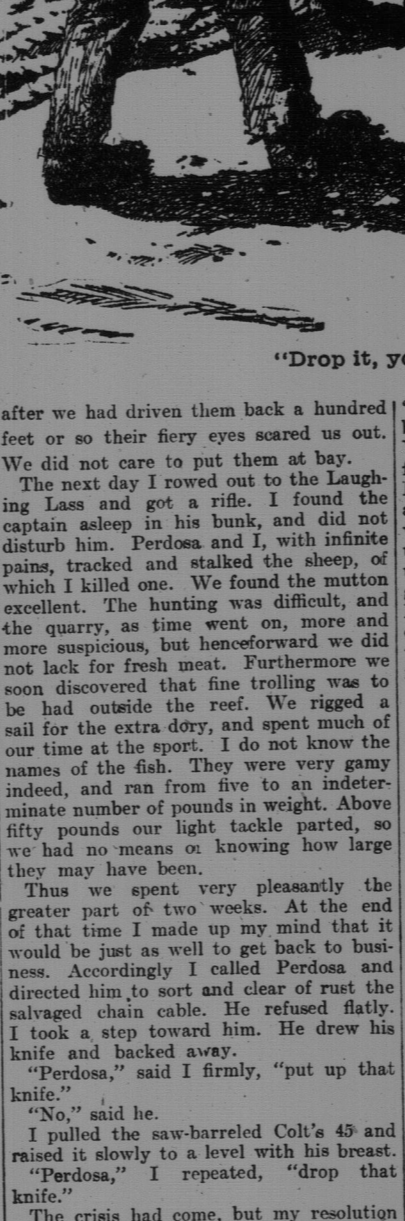
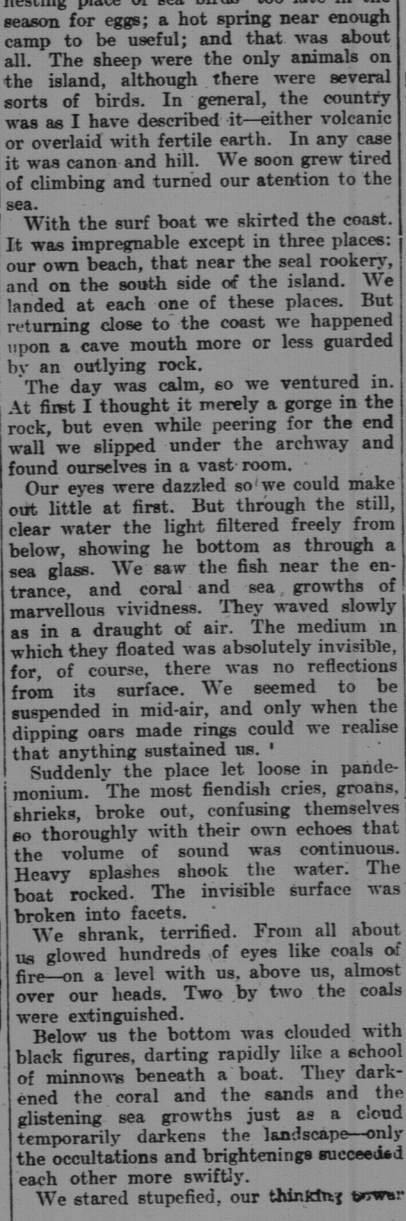
I abandoned the unpleasant train of thought with a snort of disgust, but to ponder the trouble. The day had been a by-product, a utilization of what life offered me. I had set sail possessed by the sole idea of forcing out Dr. Schermmerhorn's investigations, but the gradual development of affairs had ended by absorbing my every faculty. Now, cast into an eddy by my change of fortunes, the original idea regained its force. I was out of the active government of affairs, with leisure on my hands, and my thoughts naturally turned with curiosity again to the laboratory in the valley.

Darrow's "devil fire" was again pointing the sky. I had noticed them from time to time, always with increasing wonder. The men accepted them easily as only one of the unexplained phenomena of a sailor's experience, but I had not as yet hit on a hypothesis that suited them. They were not allied to the aurora; they differed radically from the ordinary volcanic emanations; and scarcely resembled any electrical displays I had ever seen. The night was cool; the stars bright. I resolved to investigate.

Without further delay I arose to my feet and set off into the darkness. Immediately one of the group detached himself from the fire and joined me.

"Going for a little walk, sir?" asked Handy Solomon sweetly. "That's quite right and proper. Nothing like a little walk to get you fit and right for your bunk."

He held close to my elbow. We got just as far as the stocks in the bed of the arroyo. The lights we could make out now across the zenith; but owing to the precipitance of the cliffs, and the rise of the arroyo bed, it was impossible to



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**FREDERICTON WOMAN COMMITS SUICIDE**

Mrs. R. L. Black Took Carbolic Acid and Died Shortly After

Her Second Attempt at Self-Destruction Succeeded - Had Been Married Only a Few Weeks, and Was Generally Esteemed.

Fredericton, March 13.—Mrs. R. L. Black took her life this morning by drinking carbolic acid in considerable quantities at the boarding house on Queen street conducted by a Mrs. McIntyre.

For years, Mrs. Black, who was formerly Miss Blackmer, daughter of Mrs. Campbell, a widow lady living on Saunders street, was employed as stenographer at the office of A. R. Slipp, lawyer, and later at the same offices when business was conducted under the firm name of Slipp & Hanson. Through her steadfast and earnest manner at her work and her energetic endeavors in the interest of St. Paul's Presbyterian church of which her brother, Fred Blackmer, is a trustee, she had earned for herself the highest esteem and the general respect of a very large circle of friends.

About a month ago she remained away from her work at the office and at the home of her mother a baby boy was born to her.

Some days later, R. L. Black, who conducts a ladies' furnishing store on York street, and who had been engaged to marry Miss Blackmer for a number of years, was quietly married to the young woman at her mother's home.

The ceremony was followed soon afterwards by an attempt on the part of the young mother to commit suicide by drinking carbolic acid. This attempt proved fruitless.

Then Mrs. Black moved from the residence of her mother to Mrs. McIntyre's boarding house, where they took up their residence, intending to remain there until May 1st, when they were to have moved to a house on Charlotte street west, owned by J. Ladd, and commencing housekeeping.

Mr. Black had arranged to go with his wife to one of the city stores this morning to purchase some carpets for the house, which they intended to occupy later on. His wife was late in arriving at his store and Mr. Black, who had to go to the bank and one or two other places, went to his boarding house to get Mrs. Black. On arriving at their room, he forced the door open and found his wife lying across the bed with the baby on the bed and her partly lying on it.

Mrs. McQuinn, G. J. McNally and Crockett were summoned, and found his wife lying across the bed with the baby on the bed and her partly lying on it.

Mr. Black called to the door and found his wife lying across the bed with the baby on the bed and her partly lying on it.

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Fredericton, Mar. 12.—Hon. Mr. LaBoulaye, in the house today, in reply to Mr. Robertson's inquiry, said:

Wm. Hildebrandt, an engineer of New York, a highly recommended expert of wide experience in cable bridge construction, has made a careful examination of the St. John suspension bridge, in consultation with the provincial engineer, and submitted a voluminous detailed report thereon.

Recapitulating all paragraphs of the report, the following conclusions are summarized:

1st. The structure is well preserved and in its present condition, continues five or six years longer to do the same service it has done hitherto.

2nd. With some repairs, consisting in oiling the cables and removing some decayed woodwork, the bridge can be made safe for years to come to accommodate the same traffic it has carried in former years.

3rd. The floor system is not strong enough for supporting electric street cars.

4th. The bridge can be strengthened and made permanently safe for trolley cars, travel (adhering to its present width) as well as for any emergency of highway traffic, at an expense probably not exceeding \$45,000.

5th. The bridge can be widened to accommodate two street cars and one wagon, side by side, and have separate sidewalks, making detail plans, only be guessed at but in the expert's opinion it will probably cost about \$75,000.

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