

Treasure Trove

—OR—

THE GOLDEN GOOSE

A romance of stirring adventure and startling surprises.

CHAPTER VI.—SIGNOR ISHMAEL MACARONI.

He stood at the extreme end of the peculiar vessel, grasping an iron steering wheel, which he turned incessantly. Like a man of wax, his white locks blown off from his ashen forehead, he never twitched or turned a muscle save when manipulating this wheel. A long white beard blew over his breast, and his sunken eyes peeped out through a thick glass window. Of a sudden he veered sharply about and addressed them.

"Gentlemen," he began, in a voice that seemed to Master Redbuckle full a thousand years old, so high and squeaky it was. "Gentlemen, you do not realize the exquisite, aye, exquisite, joy it gives me to drive you through the dark undiscovered caves of the ocean at the rate of thirty leagues a minute, gentlemen, thirty leagues a minute."

Here he coughed rackingly and wiped the stray strands of his hair from some machinery above, into which they had become tangled. "Gentlemen," he continued, "you doubtless do not realize, though perhaps you are aware of the monstrous fact that you, and you only, gentlemen (save me) are at present, at present, gentlemen, in the only submarine boat in existence!"

"Wonderful!" gasped Dick and Jerry in a breath. "Who'd 'a thought it?"

By this time the old man was speaking again. "Yes, it's true, my dear sirs, you are the first, the very first, to ride in this wonderful, I use the word wonderful advisedly, wonderful invention of mine. Yes gentlemen it is a submarine boat! But I will explain: I was peacefully oiling my carberator this evening, gentlemen, when I was aroused by the sound of a body striking the window at the top of my vessel. I thought 'twas a fish, gentlemen, and drew it inside by my new Press-the-crank-and-force-the-air-down-a-

vertical-vacuum-and-thence-to the-up-right-cylindrical-lubricating-whatsher-name, for, sure enough, gentlemen, I was very hungry. But it was not a fish, gentlemen, it was you. I mean one of you, er—what did you say your name was? Er—it was Mr. Jerry Bowes, gentlemen, and I drew him in through the top window. Well, the next fish I caught was—er, I beg your pardon—it, er—I mean you, er—he was you! See? And here I am—I mean, here you are; we are here, see?"

"He's mad as a hatter, sir. I'm sure of it," whispered Jerry in Dick's ear. "But he's a most amiable gent, sir, and as we're hungry, let's ask him for something to eat." This they did, and the three were soon seated at a raw meal of eels' oysters, and raw blowers, and other deep-sea fish equally unappetizing.

"We're awfully indebted to you, sir," quoth Master Dick.

"You're right there, you are," answered the old man, with abruptness. "You both would have been drowned if it hadn't been for me and my boat. I tell you it's dangerous around these waters. Now, a grandson of mine, he was caught by pirates, by Monsieur Alva and shot through a cannon. Now, what d'ye think of that for harsh treatment? Yes, gentlemen, he was a very brave lad. He was cool and collected to the very last; and even after the cannon was fired he was collected. But then he went all to pieces. As he soared through the air he felt soar. You see he was discharged, and that made him soar. Gosh, I felt sorry for that boy. He was cut off, I mean fired off in the prime of his youth, just 73, gentlemen, just 73." And the old man went on. He talked and talked. Went over his life experiences, so-called, though it was plainly seen that these were merely frenzied imaginings of his disordered brain. He was mad, raving mad, and his early life was lost in the oblivion of his crazy mind; he was at a loss as to what it really was or was not. But there was a stage in it, he said, where he could think of nothing about which he knew naught—could tell them naught. He averred having been in a wreck off the coast of the Indies many years past,