IN A TREASURE SHIP

BY OWEN HALL.

CHAPTER I.

We had been cruising for four months in the waters of the Eastern Archipelago, and for nearly a week we had been among the Ladrones, a group of islands with perhaps as bad a reputation as any even in that part of the world. The group is a considerable one. We had already visited two trading stations belonging to the owners of our brig, and on that evening we found ourselves drifting rather than sailing between two romantic-looking islands, whose peaks, rising sharp and sudden, separated by deep and narrow valleys, cheked with masses of tropical vegetation, sufficiently proclaimed their volcanic origin.

Tom Yadison and I were seated idly on the bulwark, our eyes wandering lazily—we had just finished a good supper—from the purple tints of the shore past which we were drifting, to the still more wonderful colours of the sea and sky, now bathed in the light of the almost level sun. I had been asking Tom, who was an old hand in these waters, having acted as supercargo for the owners for years, how this particular group of islands had gained so bad a reputation as to be named "The Robbers" hereabouts, where all natives seemed to be thieves.

"Thieves," said Tom; "well, I don't know that for that matter they deserve it either better or worse than their neighbors. It's only a question of opportunity, I take it, with any of them, as it is with a good many other people who don't hail from the Ladrones."

"But surely there must have been some reason," I said, "why they got the name from the Spaniards, or whoever it was that gave it them?"

"Oh, yes, of course; though very likely it originated in a mistake, and it's just as likely as not they may have been the victims of a slight misunderstanding. By-the-bye, the whole thing took place close by here, if I'm not mistaken."

"Tell us the yarn, Tom," I said; "it's the very time and place for a good tough old yarn such as nobody could tell much better than these old Spanish navigators."

"Well, it's not much of a yarn, after all. It was somewhere about 1578 that it happened, I believed. One of these so-called treasure-ships put in close by here at Illolo Bay on its way across the Pacific, and she never got any farther. Only a single boat's crew are said to have escaped, and they said the great galleon was taken and destroyed for the sake of robbery, but, of course, we have only their word for that, and it's more than likely the native account of the business might have been different, if there had been any special reporters in those days to interview the chief actors in the tragedy. All that is known for certain is that the treasure-ship was burnt and sunk, and that ever since then the islands have gone by the name of "The Robbers" as a kind of set-off for the loss of the galleon."

"Whereabouts was it, Tom?" I asked, my imagination fired by the idea of the sunken treasureship.

"Well, the story goes that it was just inside the bay round the next point; but, of course, nobody can tell for certain at this time of day."

It was with a strange feeling of excitement that I watched the deep bay of Illolo slowly open to our view, splendid in all the glories of a tropical sunset. Few places could be more beautiful in themselves, and when seen in the magic of that gorgeous light, it was a scene to drive a great artist to despair. At another time I might have been content to admire, but not now. The story, vague, and merely suggested as it had been, had awakened a hundred memories of tales of sunken treasure-ships and their fortunate recoverers, and as we turned slowly into the bay, my eyes were eagerly fixed on the glassy waters, now gleaming with a thousand tints reflected from the sky overhead.

We drifted round the point and into the bay, our sails hardly lifting to the scarcely perceptible evening breeze, and our course marked only by the faintest ripple on the glassy water. Neither of us spoke, and my eyes were fixed on the water in the effort to penetrate the secrets which that transparent liquid, glowing with the colors of the dying day, had kept so safely and so long. As I leaned over and gazed fixedly downwards into the depths below, I felt my eyes grow more and more accustomed to the new medium, till I seemed to see almost as clearly through the crystal water as I could through the upper air. It was more than twenty fathoms deep, and yet I could see the bottom plainly. Great branching corals spread their boughs of crimson and blue, of green and white—a rich ocean shrubbery, of form and color more splendid than any garden of earth. Beneath the branches the silver sands glittered and sparkled with a thousand shells, and fish of dazzling gold and deepest tinted blue swam in and out, and nibbled the tender shoots of the coral that seemed to stir softly with the movement of the tide.

Suddenly as I gazed in breathless admiration a shadow seemed to rise in the very midst of Nature's flower garden—was it a rock? It too was incrusted with coral that grew out of it at every angle, while long-haired medusae spread their long tendrils to each motion of the water; yet as I looked it somehow seemed to take a shape that was familiar though strange—the shape of a vessel. I started up.

"The galleon, Tom!" I exclaimed. "The sunken treasure-ship!"

"Nonsense, man, you've got a strong imagination," said Tom, "that's what's the matter with you."

I pointed downwards over the side. "Look!" I said.

Tom leaned over the bulwark and looked down. I glanced upwards at the sails. They hung motionless against the masts. I looked around. There was not a ripple on the water; we were becalmed. Tom stared for a minute or two into the glassy depths without speaking; then he looked up.

"Well," he said, "it's queer, certainly, and I'm not sure but you may be right. But if you are, it's one of the strangest coincidences I ever came across. I've been here a dozen times, and I never heard of anybody that had seen it."

"Get them to anchor, Tom," I said, breathlessly.

"What for?" he asked.

"Why, don't you see what a chance it is? It's a treasure-ship." Tom looked at me for a moment doubtfully.

"Well," he said, "it's as good a place as any, I suppose, and we can talk it over afterwards."

He went aft and spoke to the skipper, who glanced round him and nodded, and in less than five minutes more the rattle of the chain announced that we had dropped anchor within a very few yards of the spot where I had seen the strange shadow of what looked like a Spanish ship of three hundred years ago.

That night Tom and I discussed the treasure-ship. At first he was disposed to laugh at my idea of examining her, but, gradually, I think my enthusiasm affected him a little. After all, it was a small matter to make the trail. We had several suits of diving-dresses on board, and as we were to lie here for a couple of days, there was no real difficulty about the matter. I was wild to make the experiment in person and as Tom's principal objection seemed to be the risk of being laughed at by the captain and crew, we hit upon the idea of making it appear to be only my personal curiosity to explore the wonders of the coral beds we had seen from the deck.

At breakfast we broached the subject to the captain and mate, and I was surprised to find that the former, at any rate, received the proposal with uneasiness.

"The fact is," he said at last, "I don't half like these diving experiments, in these waters anyhow, for ye never know what'll happen. So far as I've seen, they've a way of turning out badly. You'd hardly believe how many seem to get lost at the game. You take my advice, sir, and see all ye can from the deck, then you'll know where ye are, which ye don't, not when ye get hitched up amongst these thundering corals below."

The skipper, if not an educated man, had years of experience, and I couldn't help feeling that we should have been wise to listen to his advice; but then, of course, he knew nothing of the real object Tom and I had in view, and that was surely worth running some small risk for. As it was, both Tom and I argued the matter with him for some time, until at last he gave way, as he had no very definite reason to urge against our making the trial. Even then, however, he didn't like it, for he said at the very last: "Oh, well, sir, if ye must try it, I suppose ye must. Take your own way, only I hope Mr. Madison will bear me out with the owners that it wasn't by none of my advice ye went, in case any harm comes of it."

After breakfast we set to work to prepare for the expedition. By that time, however, the brig was surrounded by canoes, and the decks invaded by as many natives as could persuade the guard of seamen on any pretext to allow them on board. The time was clearly unpropitious for our purpose, and we reluctantly postponed it for a few hours. I paced the deck in a fever of impatience all the morning, wholly unable in my excitement to find the amusement which I ordinarily did in the manners and customs of our visitors, and only anxious to get rid of them that I might begin my adventure in peace. After a twelve o'clock dinner a boat's crew was ordered out to take the skipper ashore to the nearest village, and he was quickly followed by all but one or two of the canoes. Now was the opportunity for which we had been waiting so impatiently, and in a very few minutes all was ready, and I stood at the gangway arrayed in the ungainly diving suit and ready to make the descent.

"Here," said Tom as he cast a final and critical glance over my equipment, "you had better take this with you. It may be a shade troublesome, but I fancy you'll find it none too easy to get about through the coral when you're once among it." He handed me a small but sharp and serviceable-looking tomahawk as he spoke. "Besides," he added in a lower tone, "if it should by any chance turn out to be the galleon, it'll take you all your time to get aboard, I fancy, and you'll be glad of this."

"All right," I said, as I grasped the handle rather clumsily in my heavily gauntleted hand; "now I think I'm about ready for a start."

The sailors, who, having nothing else to do, had taken a lively interest in our proceedings, had let down a rope ladder over the side, which hung some feet into the water and swayed gently in the tideway. I scrambled over the bulwark and began to descend slowly, hampered as I was by the stiff leather dress and the weights attached to my legs to insure my speedy descent feet foremost. I had reached the water, and even descended as far as the latter went under water, when I looked up once more overhead before making the plunge. Tom's face, looking over the bulwark, was just above me, and he called out, "Good luck! Mind you pull the cord hard three times running if anything goes wrong, or you want us to haul you up."

I waved the tomahawk by way of farewell, drew my feet clear of the ladder, and let go. I had experienced the sensation before, but not often enough to render it familiar, and I confess it was with a strange feeling of novelty and sense of mysterious expectancy that I found myself sinking through the softly transparent water, till suddenly my feet felt the ground once more, and I stood amongst the coral beds at the bottom of Illolo Bay.

(To Be Continued.)

HOW SHE WAS WOOED AND WON.

"Well," quoth George, "you must remember that this took place many years ago, when I was young and foolish. I don't say I should do the same now, you know.

"When I was a young man, Fishponds was a typical country village. I don't suppose there were more than a dozen good farm houses and cottages besides in all the county.

"The belle of Fishponds at that time was Marjory Jones, the Miller's daughter. She was a pretty girl, too, I can tell you. As you may suppose, she had plenty of sweethearts.

"There was Jack Smith, the larkiest fellow in the village. Wasn't he wild! In our opinion Jack stood the best chance with the fair Marjory. Jack was a lawyer then; Bill Smith, his cousin, Ted Whereat and I were farmers and Tom Rumins was a dealer.

"We five reckoned that Marjory ought to belong to one of us, and we formed a league offensive and defensive.

"One night Jack and I had stayed till old Jones turned us out, and as we stood outside the gate we heard her silvery laugh as the old man growled at being 'kept out o 'bed by a passel o' young wosbuds.'

"'George,' said Jack Smith, 'I've got an idea, 'You come to my rooms tomorrow night, and I'll get Ted and Bill and Tom to come in. Then, if they are agreeable, we'll just make that young woman come to a decision.'

"After filling our glasses with 'headache,' a cheerful compound of sugar cider and rum—we settled down to hear what Lawyer Jack had to say.

"Are you all in love with Marjory?"

"A unanimous cry of 'Yes' followed.

"'Look here,' said Tom Rumins, 'we must settle this matter somehow, or some other fellow will be cutting us all out. Let us each write her a proposal and send it at the same time.'

"'Right,' said Jack, 'and let's start fair; let them all be put in the same words.'

"'We had better call for our answers ourselves.'

"'What, all at once?'

"'Not exactly. One after another, and we'll draw lots who goes first, and so on.'

"'You fellows will talk all night, and do nothing after all,' cried Jack; 'you leave it to me. I know more about it than you do.'

"'Dear Marjory: Knowing, as you do, the warm affection I have for you, you will not be surprised if I ask you to be mine, and mine alone.'

"'Will you marry me, dearest; will you be the bride of your devoted lover,—?'

"'P. S.—I will come around to the mill on Tuesday evening at ( ) o'clock, to know my fate.'

"'There!' he continued, triumphantly, 'there I think that ought to fetch her. I've left the name and the hour blank, you see.'

"'We were not quite so satisfied with the letter as its author, but, as we did not feel we could improve upon it, we at length decided to adopt it, and forthwith sat down to copy it off. Next we drew lots to see who should go first, and, as luck would have it, we came out in the following order: Myself 7:30 Bill 7:45, Ted 8, Tom 8:15, Jack 8:30.'

"'Just my luck!" said Jack, with a groan, 'not a ghost of chance for me!'

"'Why not? said I. 'She knows you're coming and—hang it all!—I wish I wasn't first!'

"I was quite serious when I said I was sorry I was first, and I sat thinking it over with the help of a pipe when I got home. Suddenly a thought struck me. I jumped up and cried: 'George, my boy, she's yours!' Then I went to bed.

"I spent a good while after tea that Tuesday in adorning myself, and wasn't ready till seven. It was only ten minutes' walk to the mill, but then I had some work to do before I showed up there. It was in the early spring, and the days were still short.

"I must explain that all five of us lived on the Fishponds side of the river, and so we all had to cross the foot-bridge, unless we went a mile out of our way to cross the stone bridge at Broom Hill. At that time there was only one railing to the bridge, and it was so rotten that it was not safe to trust to it. The bridge itself consisted of three planks resting on some piers, and these planks were somewhat insecure.

"Now, this was my scheme. I would cross the bridge and then remove the middle plank. In the dark, any one who came after me would not notice the gap, and would go flop into the water. It only meant a ducking, and that was what I proposed to treat my rivals to.

"I was completely successful in displacing the already loose plank, and at 7:30 precisely marched boldly into the mill.

"'Evenin', Marjory,' said I. I could see she wasn't in the best of tempers, but I didn't appear to take any notice of it. 'Evenin', Marjory, Did—'

"'Look here, George Hamborook,' said she, interrupting me. 'What does this mean? Do you boys think you're going to make a fool of me by writing a lot of love letters and making a conspiracy against me? Is that a thing to be proud off? Is it manly? Is it—,' and here she burst into tears.

"'Now, now, Marjory,' I said, 'don't be angry. We don't mean any harm—'

"'Harm,' she broke in, stamping her foot on the floor. 'Harm!, How dare you—you mean fellows!'

"After awhile she grew calmer, and said she would hear what the others said when they came. I had hard work to keep from laughing at this, but just then I heard a splash.

"'What's that?' asked Marjory.

"'Sounds like a big pike jumping,' said I, and went on talking.

"By and by I heard another splash, but this time Marjory did not notice it. So the time went on, and none of the suitors put in an appearance—you would not yourself if you were wet through, would you?"

"No," said I, laughing.

"Well, by and by the miller came home and wanted to know what I was doing there, so I told him I wanted to marry his daughter. Well, to make a long story short, I made things right with the old man, and left the house as Marjory's accepted suitor. Mad with joy I was rushing home, when—splash; I had forgotten the missing plank, and had fallen into my own trap."

"Served you right!" I said.

"It was a good thing for me, too. I had rheumatic fever, and was in bed three months. When I got about again they told me that Marjory had married a man in ——. He didn't get the best of the bargain.

"But I never told any one about the plank."

NEW WAY TO MAKE A TOWN.

Russia Is Building It First and Will Supply the Inhabitants Later.

An engineer and some workmen have been busy for months near the Arctic Ocean making a little town. They have not bothered their heads about the inhabitants, for the Russian Government will see to that. The usual order of events in making a town is being reversed in this case. Instead of a lot of persons settling in the same place and making a town, the town is being built and the residents will come later.

The town has also been provided with a name before anybody lives in it. Its name is Jekaterinograd, and the most imposing thing about the town, as yet, is this name. There was nothing there a year ago to show that a white man had ever seen the site, but now it is beginning to look something like a town, needing only inhabitants to make it quite a go-ahead place.

The town is in the bay of Kola, near the Arctic coast of Russian Lapland, a flat and uninteresting region, in a large part of which scarcely a shrub, much less a tree, will grow. In August last year the Russian Government sent to the site of the proposed town, which had already been selected, a civil engineer named Olsen, whose speciality is harbor improvements, and soon twenty men under his direction were hard at work building a couple of piers out into the bay for the use of the fishing craft, which will give the town all its importance.

Last winter fifty wooden buildings were constructed at Archangelsk, on the other side of the White Sea. It is probable that the work is now going on of transporting them to the coast of the Arctic Ocean, where they will be hammered together and set up for the people who are going to live in the new town; and as soon as everything is ready the town of Kola, further south, will be abandoned, everybody there will be transferred at the expense of Russia, and Jekaterinograd will be all ready to begin business.

The thing that will make the town is the Arctic fisheries in the neighborhood, which employ about 1,500 men every summer. For the purposes of these hardy toilers the new town is much more conveniently situated than Kola, and that is the reason why Kola is to be deserted and a new town has sprung up nearer the sea.

SPORT OF PRINCES.

An Elephant Fight Over Which Many Rupees Changed Hands.

When an Indian prince pines for excitement, he orders an elephant fight. This is a sport not permitted in English territory, and can only be witnessed in the native States; then only by invitation from the rajah, a favor rarely procured by a white man without the exercise of considerable influence. The fight shown herewith took place a short time ago near Jeypore, in the stone-walled inclosure around Ni Tsam's elephant stables. The monsters had been starved for some days before the encounter, and were goaded to madness by their daring riders. There is always a stone wall between the combatants, to give the riders a chance to save their lives, for they are the only ones in any real danger, and are often killed by being hurled from the necks of the infuriated beasts and dashed to death against the stone wall or trodden to pulp under their massive feet.

Elephants are naturally valuable creatures, and care is taken to have them too well matched for the contest to result fatally for either. It is a case of endurance, the one who weakens first being declared the vanquished. The majority of those who witnessed this particular fight preferred to do so from the flat roof of the stable, well out of harm's way, but Ni Tsam, in a European frock coat, and jewelled turban, looked on from the stable yard, in dangerous proximity to the trampling feet of the beasts inside the wall.

No blood was spilled, but a fierce light glowed in the eyes of the combatants, and the fierce grinding of flesh, as the muscular trunks knotted over and under each other with terrific force, was intensely disagreeable, and like no other sound on earth. Many rupees changed hands when the fight was over. Ni Tsam is a very wealthy rajah, and has fifty or more elephants moored by chains around his palace.

HIS OPINION.

Jones—Women are the queerest creatures in the world. My wife and I went to a reception last night. Met a Mrs. Green there. When we got home it took my wife three hours and a quarter to tell Mrs. Smith what Mrs. Green wore, and she wore, so little that I hardly dared to look at her.

BUOYANT.

You never hear of a warship going to the bottom on her trial trip.

I suppose the excitement keeps her up.

WHY HE WAS SILENT.

First Boarder—I don't hear this new man complaining any more. Is he satisfied?

Second Boarder—No; he's subdued.

A LEGAL SECRET

A Legal Secret

Returning home that summer evening towards sunset, Sidney went through the grounds in search of Rosa. He walked along deep in thought. He had seen so little of her during the last twelve months; he had been overwhelmed with work, which had frequently kept him very late into the night at Lincoln's Inn. And Rosa was occupied too; her education had been all but entirely neglected; and no one had been more quick to realize the need of making up for lost time—for twelve years of comparative idleness. Her mother superintended her studies; and Rosa had made such rapid progress that Mrs. Pilkington had good reason to be proud of her daughter's talent as well as her beauty. Sidney had indeed found for her a loving companion. Was it surprising that she and Rosa were seldom out of each other's sight?

Thinking of these things—while still searching in the grounds for Rosa—all that Mr. Pilkington had told him crossed Sidney's mind. He had told him about the black deed-box marked "Rosamond Gage," which had stood in the octagonal room many years. For it belonged to a beautiful client, little more than twenty years of age, who had one day paid a professional visit to Mr. Pilkington. It was a prolonged interview, that first one; for Rosamond Gage had a lengthy secret to confide. She had married when eighteen years of age; and after two years—years of domestic trouble and ill-treatment—her husband, Captain Gage, had left her. She possessed, however, a great deal of property; and through Mr. Pilkington's legal assistance, most of it had been saved. Her gratitude towards the lawyer was unbounded; and when, some four or five years afterwards, news reached her of Captain Gage's death, she became Mr. Pilkington's wife. She had brought to her new home her little daughter, Rosa, then barely six years of age.

Sidney now entered the grove where he and Rosa had met upon the evening of her return to her old home. They had not met here since. But to-day an irresistible impulse to speak with her seized him. Glancing around, as he entered the pathway, he caught sight of Mrs. Pilkington. She left the bench where she was seated and came towards him.

"Where is Rosa?" were almost his first words.

Mrs. Pilkington gave him a bright glance. "She went to meet you, Sidney, a moment ago. Are you not all in all to her?"

Sidney's face grew serious. "I may speak to her now, may I not?"

"Dear Sidney, there is no need to ask me that," said Mrs. Pilkington tenderly; "my one thought is for her happiness and yours."

Rosa now coming in sight among the trees, Sidney went towards her with a quick step. "Wouldn't dad come and see me?" said the girl with something of her old peevish way. "You promised to bring him, Sidney, this afternoon. How unkind!"

"It is useless, Rosa," was Sidney's reply. "He prefers ink and parchment to sunshine and green leaves." And he told Rosa all that Abel Norris had said. "You must go and talk to him yourself," he added. "But I fear nothing—not even your voice—will move him."

The year that had passed—a year in which so much care and cultivation had been bestowed upon her—had wrought a change in Rosa. She seemed taller, more dignified, more sedate. The wild dark eyes had lost none of their brightness, but they were kept under more control; the black lashes drooped more frequently now when Sidney was by.

"Rosa," said he as they walked along side by side among the trees, "do you remember asking me, a whole year ago, if well-bred people came here to suppress their sentiments?"

"Ah, what a long year," said Rosa evasively, "it has seemed to me!"

Sidney persisted: "Do you remember?"

The whisper came from Rosa's lips: "Yes."

"And my answer to your question was," Sidney continued, "that I came here to indulge the wildest dreams. Shall I tell you what they were?"

A flash of the dark eyes was Rosa's only answer.

"My dreams were mostly," said Sidney, "about my boyhood: my dreams were mostly about a little girl who played with me in a shady wood on summer evenings such as this. I called her—I still call her so in thought—my little sweetheart. Her real name was Rosamond Gage."

Still no word came from Rosa; but she drew her breath more quickly, and a number of little sighs escaped her. The lashes were quivering too, but they were stubbornly cast down.

"It was a child's romance," Sidnay resumed—"a romance that is seldom finished as children would have it end in after-years. I wonder how this one will end? Rosa, are you still my sweetheart? Will you be my wife?"

There was still no answer; but Sidney felt a little hand sliding softly into his own. He pressed it gently; and so in years—walked on in silence through in years—walked on in silence thhrough the wood as they had done in bygone days.

(The End.)

CASHLESS.

Vokes—Why aren't you going to spend the summer in Europe?

Carson—Because I have nothing besides the summer to spend.

RURAL REPARTEE.

Hi Hayrake—Yes, this is a fine rain, an' I'd like ter see it rain fer two days more. It would help the crops a heap.

Si Haymow—What are ye raisin'—bullfrogs or waterlilies?