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TABLE TOP

by
Eden Phillpotts

You can start this interesting story here and enjoy it from beginning to end. For convenience, if you have missed the opening chapters, the following synopsis of previous chapters is given:—

Synopsis of Previous Chapters
Tom Aylmer is the manager of a peruvian silver mine owned by his father. He gets word that his father has died and knows that the mine is bequeathed to him. Tom decides to go to the Old Country and take his friend Angus Maine, with him. Before leaving Peru, they purchase a gift for Tom's fiancée. On the boat Jacob Fernandez, a rich man who has made a special study of birds is greatly interested in the parrot and particularly in the birds repeated reference to "Benny Boss". Fernandez says he once knew a man named "Benny Boss", a fellow part English and part Peruvian, who tried to sell him jewels. Later he learned that Benny had been engaged in dredging work on Lake Titicaca, where jewels were said to have been strewn at the time of the spanish conquest. Fernandez advises that the bird be taken to an expert linguist to see if he can interpret the words used by the parrot. The linguist is baffled, but Jane Bradshaw, Tom's fiancée eventually solves the puzzle by discovering that most of the words are English spelled backwards which make the sentence:—"Table Top on Equator west Galepegos Cache Maneater Gorge at Geyser." This is construed as a direction to the hiding place of the jewels in which Benny Boss was interested.
Now read on!

VISION OF ADVENTURE

"I feel perfectly certain he did," she answered. "It was the inevitable starting place if he meant to follow the equator till he reached his island. You can see that on the map. To find an uncharted island in the heart of the Pacific would have been like looking for a needle in a haystack; but his seaman's knowledge embraced the fact that it lay on the equator, so he had only to go ahead due west till he picked it up, went ashore with his treasure, hid it, came back to the ship, and probably said that the island was no use, or something like that. Then he came home again."

"He lies low for a bit, lives an innocent life, and waits for the clouds to blow away. They blow away. One Garcia brother dies, and the other sells his fruit farm leaves Peru, and goes to Cuba. Benny Boss now feels that the coast is clear, so off he goes again to Tabletop to get his hoard, and no doubt turn it into money. But this time he doesn't come back. He vanishes, and we can only assume that something happened to prevent him from coming back. His wife never heard any more news of him, and his end is unknown. Probably it wasn't peaceful, being the sort of a man he was. He may have liked tabletop so much that he decided to stop there. There may have been cannibals on Tabletop who liked him so much they felt they couldn't part from him. They may have eaten him, or they may have made him their king and thought the world of him. Or he may just have died a natural death before he got back to his treasure, and been buried at sea. In that case no doubt the cache is still intact."

"He would have hardly chosen a cannibal island," said Tom. "He wouldn't have liked the idea of a lot of poking, prying cannibals watching him bury his treasure. I'll bet it was an uninhabited island, Jane."

"Against that, however, you must set the fact that a district of Tabletop is called Maneater Gorge, Tom," said Gregory Barbour. "To me that has a distinctly anthropophagous connotation."

"Where do you find these beautiful words, Greg?" sighed Jane. "But I believe Tom's right."

"It can't be uninhabited my dear child, if there are man-eaters in it," argued Gregory. "The place does not get its sinister name for nothing, and many other creatures are quite ready—nay, even willing—to eat men beside his fellow men."

"It doesn't matter," declared Jane. "It's a detail. Benny found the island in the first place and called it 'Tabletop'. Feminine intuition is dead certain there is a Tabletop, and priceless Inca treasure lying snugly concealed upon it."

Nicholas Bradshaw made a suggestion.

"You ought to charter a low, racking, hang-dog schooner with a grim captain and a cut-throat crew," he said.

"That's the way to tackle Pacific islands. Then when you've lifted the booty and set sail for home, the men mutiny and do you all in, and you are never heard of again. Probably that's what happened to Benny Boss."

"Coward!" answered Jane. "You can stop at home now, Nick, and look after the birds."

"I haven't the slightest intention of coming," he said.

"Will you come, Greg?" she asked.

"We don't want a crowd, of course. This is a matter of business, not a picnic. But if you like to share in the expenses—"

"Maneater Gorge," answered Mr. Barbour. "No, Jane."

"You don't waste much time, do you?" asked the Scot.

"If it's going to be our honeymoon trip, Jane, we shan't want to bother Angus to come, shall we?" asked Aylmer. "It isn't," she answered. "My idea is a treasure recovery company on a purely financial basis. It's a gamble, possible against the probable."

"With what result?" asked Gregory.

"With the result that the possible turns the scale," she assured him. "It is frankly possible that we might draw a blank. As far as I can see it is purely a matter of expense. One doesn't want to go exploring de luxe or anything silly like that; but against the cost of the expedition we may fairly set the probable returns."

"And what do you estimate the eggs in the basket to be worth, Jane?" inquired Angus.

"I am counting on them before they're hatched, no doubt," she admitted. "but we have to consider Benny Boss again. He was a very able man, whatever he wasn't in other directions, and he wouldn't have fled and taken all this prodigious trouble for anything small. The thing is in a nut shell, Tom; you have only got to enquire roughly for what we can charter a small steamer at the Galapagos, take it for say three months, and set along the equator to hunt down the island. A few thousand pounds perhaps—absolutely nothing against the probable result."

They chatted, but found Jane meant all she had said. Indeed she was exceedingly firm.

"There is one other who will certainly have to come," said Tom, "and that's Felice Pardo."

Jane Bradshaw reflected.

"It was a man called Felice Pardo that Julia Boss married." She said.

"Do you remember? How queer!"

"That need not detain us," declared Tom. "There are Hundreds of Pardos at Lima alone and dozens of Felices—a very common name and Christian name in Peru. Felice would never forgive us if we took a jaunt like this without him. He's a keen photographer and will be able to immortalize the island."

"And he certainly ought to have his share," declared Angus.

They both regarded Jane, but she offered no objections.

"Then that leaves four," she said.

"A nice easy number."

CHAPTER VII

NO RETREAT

Jane was not to be shaken from her purpose, and somewhat to his surprise, her sweetheart found that Angus Maine supported her strongly. Calmer reflection had decided Tom that such an enterprise must be nonsense, but none the less he instituted inquiries, and decided that he would be guided and by another opinion.

"Felice has got more horse sense than Angus and I put together," he told Jane, "and I have written a full account of the whole fantastic business to him. If he thinks it's good enough and I find the probable expenses fairly reasonable, we'll go and meet him down South; but if he says we're mad then it's off."

"It isn't off in the least," she promised. "Angus is game, and if you're going to show the white feather, Tom, we'll go without you. I'm going anyway, and I've told your mother so—much to her surprise."

"Perhaps she'd like to come?" he suggested.

"No—she's far too busy. You can simply see your remarkable mother's ideas expanding day by day."

Tom had indeed, endured some unsettling conversation with Mrs. Aylmer. At first she protested against the proposed adventure, but after Jane had come to luncheon and converted her, she supported her.

"I was never one to interfere with the enterprises or amusements of young people," she told her son. "I remember too well how the youthful mind soars, and can never forget all my own bitter experiences from the past, when I wanted to soar, but was not allowed to do so. Your dear father always seemed to know by curious instinct the natural bent of my girlish spirit and invariably intervened at the critical moment. He had a strange and complete insensibility over clothes for example. He didn't seem to think that an elementary thing like clothes mattered as long as the human form was adequately covered."

"He never cared what he put on—the old dad."

"I know. That was trying enough; but he never cared what I put on—quite another matter. It left a scar, dear Tom, because it meant so much. When a man becomes indifferent to his wife's clothes, you may say that the rift in the lute has a set in, or whatever a rift does exactly. You will no doubt tell me that it is late in life to begin to dress; but I'm certainly going to do so. I owe it not only to myself, but my acquaintances."

"I see you've started," he said. "You look ripping nowadays."

"Black always suited me. It ages some people; others it makes look younger than I am of course. And since we are on this subject, I will talk about Jewellery, Tom. You're always so patient and understanding. So's Jane. I'm not going to pretend that

she and I always see alike, and when she decides that she would not share my roof, because I know, of course, that fatal decision was hers—since she declined to meet a mother in the matter of her only son, I admit frankly that I cannot feel quite the same to her. But she is blessed with plenty of common-sense, and she knows Jewellery when she sees it, though she never wears any. Well my Jewellery, so to call it, is practically worthless. The trifling decorations your father allowed me are very little better than the sort of things you can buy at any cheap stores—the sort of things no doubt, that you'll take out to delight the savages when you go abroad. I'd go so far as to say that I have a piece that is worth more than five-and-twenty pounds and many a time at a bridge party, where you sit so near people and give them their opportunity, I have almost blushed to see cold eyes upon my wretched little adornments."

(To be Continued)

Toronto Telegram: Few mosquitoes have appeared yet, notes a writer. No, they prefer us fried or boiled.

SIFTING THE NEWS

By Hugh Murphy

"They are O.K."—is the verdict of the people of the United States. They have been captivated by the quiet naturalness of the King and Queen as Canadians were. The formality necessary at the meeting of the heads of two states was taken care of in Washington. The King and the President met and apparently liked each other. The charm of the bonnie Scottish lassie who is the Queen, sent the Americans into raptures which were released in column after column of newspaper type and pictures.

That the visit of the King and the Queen to their long lost Dominion will have a very important effect on British-American relations is an accepted fact. It will quite likely greatly assist the President in his effort to wean the American people away from the policy of isolation. The United States still has the power to ensure peace in the world by throwing in her lot wholeheartedly and without compromise, on the side of the democracies.

Russia still remains deaf to ardent British wooing. The bear which walks like a man still turns a frigid shoulder on every new advance made by Britain. It is doubtful if the U.S.S.R. will ever be brought into the anti-aggression pact with Britain and France.

There are many countries in Europe at present amicable with Britain, who are not eager to see the alliance go through. They are friendly with Britain but very suspicious of Russia. Poland is not at all friendly with Russia, Hungary remembers the bloody

Communist rule of Bela Kun after the war; Roumania keeps an eye cocked suspiciously in Russia's direction. The Vatican, which wields a powerful influence in world affairs, has come out against the alliance. It points out that it could never look with favour on an alliance in which countries which profess to believe in a God would be standing side by side with a nation which has materialism as its only divinity.

Possibly because they anticipated further demands and raids by Hitler, Great Britain's Premier, Mr. Chamberlain and the Foreign Minister, Lord Halifax, have made the position of Britain clear. In recent speeches both definitely indicated that so far as they and their government is concerned, Britain is through with appeasement. The velvet glove has been stripped off and the iron hand, which is growing bigger and stronger daily, is poised ready to strike.

It would seem to be the only way to curb the ambition of Hitler and his stooge, Mussolini. They fashioned their own states by use of power and since have been buttressing their own positions by means of the display of might. It seems reasonable that the only argument they would understand from another nation or group of nations would be display of sheer power.

Although both Chamberlain and Halifax expressed the wish that Hitler would be prepared to settle his territorial ambitions around a council table, they both nonetheless, made it clear that if he would not he would be resisted by force.

Thousands of Polish Jews have been ordered by the Nazi government to leave Germany. It is said that 4,000 have already received orders to get out before July 1. Refugees would

arrive in Poland without funds and in a country unable to take care of them because of its own financial troubles. It is an acute problem. The Polish government is afraid of an outbreak of anti-Semitism if too many Jews are allowed in. There also is the possibility that wholesale emigration to Poland would bring Jews other than Polish Jews.

Wedding on Tuesday Last at Smooth Rock Falls

At St. Gertrude's church, Smooth Rock Falls on Tuesday, June 6th, 1939, by Rev. O. Forget, Gemma Labarre, daughter of Mr. N. Labarre and the late Mrs. Labarre to Mr. Wm. Cahill, son of Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Cahill.


After the reception at the home the bridal couple left on a motor trip to Timmins. Showers were held at the homes of Mrs. August Beauvais and Mrs. A. McMillan on Wednesday and Friday evenings, respectively, the bride being the recipient of many beautiful and useful gifts. A party was also held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. A. Parisee

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on Monday night in honour of the groom, who was presented with a purse of money.

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