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TABLE TOP

by
Eden Phillpotts

CHAPTER IV "YOUR ISLAND"

The friends found it possible at La Floreana to secure weapons—a rifle, a shot gun and four automatics. They practised with them at sea.

Their voyage began without event and they found that Captain Costa's description of his vessel was correct as to her comfort and sea-worthiness but a little over-generous concerning her speed. Her engines were of an ancient pattern, and Carlos Paz, the engineer loved them all and declined to push them at any time. He had lived his life with them for thirty years.

"They are grand machinery," said old Carlos, "but I have never asked them to do impossible things, and so there is always a little might hid in them to respond if the call should come."

"Meantime we jog along at eight knots," said Tom.

"And who that is sane desires to go faster upon the sea?" asked Carlos.

"They carried a wireless, yet felt the new sensation of being separated from civilization so completely. Felice appreciated this and Jane declared such an experience worth having; but Tom and Angus did not share their satisfaction.

The prospect of gigantic and novel vegetation attracted Aylmer more than any possible treasure, while Maine's interest, centred in the approaching island itself. Felice had brought his photographic apparatus and professed to be principally interested in such records as he might make. Jane declared that some birds would have to be shot if it proved impossible to catch them.

Already the question arose as to which one of them would write an account of the voyage, and it was decided that while Felice illustrated it, the other three would contribute the letter-press between them. They kept industrious diaries and compared notes.

Such close companionship awoke common discoveries as to character, and both Tom and Angus found their third friend had in reality changed. Each doubted at first, then they talked together and the suspicion was confirmed.

"Couldn't tell you what it is, but there's something," decided Maine. "He's himself by fits and starts, and one allows for his funny moods which are familiar; but he's different, too radically different. I'd say he has got something on his mind—not just the old sense of injustice with the world at large but something inside him that you can't get him to talk about."

"He has altered," admitted Tom, "and the biggest symptom is that he prefers to be alone and give us all a miss when he conveniently can. That's not like him for he was always by nature a sociable chap."

"What does Jane think of him?" asked Angus.

"She thinks a lot of him and, at the same time, doesn't know what to think

of him," answered the other. "That sounds rather mad; but it's true. Much that he says and hopes may happen some day sounds very noble and fine to her; but there's always a fly in the amber. Jane finds Pardo a tremendous egotist, and like all egotists, he hates people to think differently from what he does himself. He's always out to convince her, and he makes almost a personal matter of it, so that when he can't convince her and she tells him so, he gets rusty—even rude sometimes. They have long yarns, as we all do one with another, living this idle ship life; but they differ as often as they agree."

"You wouldn't say she liked him exactly then?" asked Angus.

"She doesn't like him—not as you and I do. He makes her uncomfortable—not because his ideas are bigger than hers, or his ideals different, but because he's always making things personal to himself."

Jane herself threw some light on the mystery when the three were together and Pardo had turned in. For he spent much time by himself in his cabin.

"He's sizes bigger than any of us," she said, "but his ideas and the thought of the greatest good to the greatest number don't seem to comfort him as much as you'd expect. He appears to look that he was born to put things right, yet can only help on the good work by putting himself wrong. He talks about 'divided loyalties,' but who they might be divided between he doesn't say. I told him that his trouble was really a form of selfishness and that he was worrying about his own soul a great deal more than the bodies of other people. That annoyed him very much. All the same, if he's not worrying about that, what is he worrying about? He's got some secret up his sleeve and would rather like to let me have a peep at it; but he's frightened to."

"I'll bet he's not frightened," said Angus. "He doesn't know the meaning of fear. Tom will tell you that, Pardo is physically braver than any chap we ever saw."

"He is said Aylmer. "And it's a sort of bravery that nothing can shake. I could tell you things."

"He's frightened all the same," she answered. "It must be something—answered him—something he can't see how to fight perhaps. No doubt what he calls 'divided loyalties' might be jolly difficult, because he's great on right and wrong, and justice and so on; but—well, there it is; conscience makes a coward of the bravest man or woman sometimes."

"What are these loyalties he harps upon I wonder?" asked Tom.

"You never know exactly a person's deepest loyalties," she answered. "Loyalties are queer things. Often we couldn't put a name to them ourselves though we feel them deep down in us."

"All very difficult and tiresome," declared her lover, "and I wish he'd chuck it."

Sometimes the whole party would meet and talk far into the tropic night, when day was done and the 'Iguana' ploughed her steady way through seas that glittered with the white light of phosphorescence.

Angus Maine was chiefly interested in the natural questions that awaited them, and especially as to what significance might be revealed by the "Maneater Gorge."

"It's interesting to remember what Darwin had to say a hundred years ago," he told them. "On his voyage in the 'Beagle,' he was tremendously impressed with certain facts. In the Pampean formation he discovered many fossils remains of gigantic extinct creatures, and marked how closely allied animals seem to emerge from each other and replace each other. He worked in the Galapagos archipelago

and no doubt studied the giant tortoises and their kin as they were never studied before. And he found a queer thing; that every island in the group had something distinctive of its own."

"A brand new island might have brand new beasts and plants in it at that rate," said Tom. "And since the equator seems to have suited enormous monsters uncommonly well, we may find ourselves up against something not only equal to the Galapagos Tortoise but uglier customers altogether—not so amiable and a good deal quicker on their paws."

"If the island is old enough, we might certainly find monsters of the prime upon it," continued Angus. "Conditions there in the eternal heat if abundant water also existed could have supported the life of old saurian creations that have perished off the rest of the earth in the struggle for existence. And shot-guns would be rather futile against them. But that doesn't seem very probable, because these volcanic outlets in mid-ocean are probably not very long-lived, speaking geologically. Since 1570—only yesterday you may say—there have been nearly four score big earthquakes on the mainland, and the worst of all was in 1745, when Callao went down under a tidal wave the like of which was never known in historical time. These fearful catastrophes haunt the coast and are called meridional; but the earthquake line is known to jut out into the Pacific at right angles to the great mountain chains and the centres of many huge convulsions probably lie in mid-ocean far out of sight of land. Such things may explain the mysterious disappearance of not a few great ships, for any vessel caught in a sea-quake would never live to tell the tale."

"Always cheerful and hopeful," said Jane.

"We trust a blaze on the equator isn't due for the minute," added Tom but Angus continued to take rather a sombre view.

"As a matter of fact it is over-due," he said. "The Pacific is beginning to earn its name and lull mankind into security; but nature will go its way."

"On another night they all clustered round the chart and studied it together that they might mark their progress after a week at sea. Only two steam-ship lanes cut across the lone cruise of the Iguana, and they had already passed the route from Panama to New Zealand, but seen no sail; while that followed by vessels running between Salina Cruz and Melbourne and Sydney, lay yet far ahead of them."

The little ship steamed on an average some two hundred knots in twenty-four hours, but it seemed a very tiny distance charted on the waste of the ocean. Then came three consecutive days of strong head wind that slowed progress considerably. It was the first rough weather they had been called to face and the fierce, fiery storm showed the boat's quality for, slowed down a little, she rode like a seagull. Ten men manned her and the voyagers had made good friends with most of them.

"Best," said Jane, "I love Costa and the cook; but only because they know English, more or less. I should like the rest just as much, for they are most engaging and kind; but we can't understand each other Carlos Paz may not be so wise as he looks, but probably he is. Engineers are generally pretty deep."

Pelice continued to be enigmatic; but then it seemed that the black monkey haunting his shoulders suddenly departed and he became more like himself.

Three days later they awoke to their supreme experience, and out of the brief blaze of a setting sun came a good landfall at last.

Captain Costa called them up to his little bridge, swept off his cap, and pointed into the sunset.

"Your island, lady and gentlemen!" he said, as though he were a conjurer and had just summoned Tabletop from the depths of the Pacific.

CHAPTER V ARE THEY SIGNALS?

The island looked like a small black snag crawling with lifted horns along the edge of a purple sea. But above the twin peaks that ascended to the south there hung a heavy cloud of vapour spreading fanwise and dimming the glory of the western sky. The watchers exclaimed at the minute size of the place, but Captain Costa reminded them that it was still five-and-twenty miles distant.

"It is small without doubt," he said. "Perhaps seven or eight of your English miles long. Save where the mountain ascends to its summit, the place is not more than three or four hundred feet above sea level; but the great plateau, that made Benny give the name to it, is higher than the rest. That is where the smoke rises, and you are looking at a burning mountain."

Night quickly hid Tabletop, but significant phenomena attended the darkness. The island revealed its own pharos, for, like some lighthouse might be uplifted, a dull red glare outlined the crown of the crater when night fell. It was no steadfast solitary gleam, but a pervasive glow cast up from the

black earth into the starry sky—a light such as blazes from the furnace door door when it is flung open.

The Iguana slowed down and crept forward through the nocturnal hours, as she approached, the inner blaze from Tabletop's cup of fire burned brighter.

Then came dawn. Stars and flame-light from earth alike vanished and the squat island stood revealed as the sun climbed swiftly into heaven. All the travellers came on deck at dawn to find their ship at anchor a couple of miles from shore, and the first thing they noted was a sulphurous tang in the morning air. A dense black cloud capped the tableland and threw curious shadows upon the plain table beneath; but the sun penetrated its fringes and revealed the formation of the islet. Everything above sea level appeared to be black or heavy green, save where her peaks and crags ascended and shone palely gold in the morning light.

"All cinders and pumice and heaped up lava," said Felice. "Just a spot of dry mud on the nozzle of hell."

"There must plenty of water," declared Tom. "Look at that sheet of vegetation where the forest runs east to the brink of the sea."

"Water no doubt," said Angus, "but it will be hot—how hot we don't know. Old Pedro Floris said the water under the woods was wholesome but not cold."

"There are birds anyway—I can see them with the naked eye," said Jane. "So they must be pretty big. And I believe they're yellow."

Air more fiery than any they had yet breathed drifted to them from the land, and Tom noted it.

"This is going to be a Turkish bath," he said. "The heat ashore must be terrific; but we're tuned up to high temperatures by this time. Only we shan't feel tremendously energetic when we land."

The forest spread over the entire eastern fringes of the island in one uniform sheet of sulky green touched here and there with colour. It extended to within a hundred yards of the sea and intervening space was cinder black.

Beyond the forest, ruled in a harsh, stark line across the rising ground, was a band that marked the end of any vegetation; but while beneath it the green persisted, growing denser as it reached sea level, above it only livid crags and precipices of volcanic rock arose to the central tableland of the island. Maine judged the crater to be four miles in diameter.

"A tremendous vapour rises out of it," he said, after a survey through Costa's telescope, "but there's no lava moving on this side anyway. It may have a vent to the westward."

They spent that day in cruising slowly around the varied shores of Tabletop. The prevailing silence of the islet impressed Jane and also depressed her.

"The yellow birds on the tops of the trees flit about slowly, but they are dumb," she said. "Everything seems to be dumb and silent, as if invisible life was listening and hiding and hardly daring to move."

"I will fire a gun," answered Pardo. He fetched a rifle and fired towards the land. The explosion woke sharp echoes from the cliffs. A cloud of large birds rose above in a flock together, like yellow mist, across the green foliage. Then they sank down again without uttering any sort of call or cry.

"They look like pigeons but must be as big as peacocks," said Jane.

Soon they went below for the noon-day meal and something to drink. But they were quickly on deck again and all desirous to land. Tom, however, stuck to his intentions.

"We'll just get a clear idea of the hang of the place," he said, "and drop anchor when we come abreast of the gorge. My only fear is that the heat ashore is going to knock us out."

"To work by night will be best, once we locate the cache," thought Pardo. The gorge must soon show up."

As they steamed slowly west, a chasm opened in the low precipices and a black pathway penetrated amid the overhanging rocks. It struck into the heart of the hills and was quickly lost under their shadow. Above it towered the volcanic crags and from its depth there came a definite sound at last. Through the cleft, at intervals of about five minutes, burst a hollow hissing rattle that rose to a roar, belted like a steam hooter then sank away into silence only to break out again a little later.

"That's the geyser," said Angus, "just the row a geyser would make."

They took soundings every few minutes and crept inshore. Then a steam became visible emerging from the cleft and running out to sea, while steam hung over its passage.

"It's boiling anyway," said Jane, "but probably no good for a cup of tea. You can smell the sulphur even out here."

They went upon their way westward where the highest elevations of Tabletop towered above them in twin peaks. And then, when the sun began to near the horizon and shoot final, dazzling rays upon the islands face, a strange and startling thing happened, and all four of the watchers simultaneously marked it.

Already the base of the great cliffs had lost the sun and a dark shadow began to creep up from the sea level to hide the land, but still the upper crags and turrets shone red as blood, and while the 'Iguana' moved slowly south a great plane of the cliffs was opened revealing something new.

Upon this region appeared a definite design that, at first glance, could only have been placed there by man's hand. Two great, eight-pound stars were set aloft in perfect alignment. Even at the distance of half a mile they appeared of no great size, but the regularity of their shape indicated plan and purpose. They stood out very clearly twin stars, pitch black in colour against their sun-lit back ground and visible to any eye. Costa joined them while they stared and soon shared their astonishment. But he expressed no doubt as to what they saw.

"A signal," he said. (To be Continued.)

The characters in this story are entirely imaginary. No reference is intended to any living person or to any public or private company. (Copyright: Publishing Arrangement with N. P. L.)

Appointment Announced for Two New North Bishops
Announcement was made at Toronto last week that the Apostolic Delegate to Canada, the Most Rev. Hildebrand Antoninutti on Thursday night announced the appointment of two new Canadian bishops. Most Rev. Alcee Desmarais, auxiliary bishop of St. Hyacinthe, Que., has been elevated to the bishopric of the new See of Amos. Most Rev. Monsignor Joseph Charbonneau, Vicar-General of Ottawa, has been elevated to the bishopric of the new See of Hearst.

Exchange:— If it wasn't for the weather lots of people would have no excuse for talking.



That Body of Yours

(by James W. Barton, M.D.)

THE X-RAY BEST SINGLE TREATMENT FOR ACNE — PIMPLES

I write frequently about acne—pimples—because this skin eruption occurs when the boy and girl are entering manhood and womanhood, and, particularly in case of girls, when their appearance means so much to them. It is estimated that about 60 per cent of boys and about 50 per cent of girls, have some pimples, which may last until they are 25 or 30 years of age, certainly a most important time in life from the standpoint of social and business life.

Now what are pimples and what causes them?

The skin needs oil to keep it soft and pliable and at this age—puberty—there is increased action of the skin surface, particularly about these little glands that make the oil for the skin. However, at puberty, the little hard skin cells about the openings of these glands on the skin become harder and thicker (like the hard tissue in a corn), so that the little openings from the oil glands get crowded, the oil thickens and can't pour out onto the skin. Instead of being in a fluid state it becomes solid so that if the little oil well is pressed a white, wax-like thread or "worm" comes out. As the skin gets dusty or dirty, this white stuff has a black top and so it is called a "black-head." As this white oil is really a "plug" to the opening of the gland, the oil behind it, ready to come out on the skin, doesn't move and becomes infected by little pus-making organisms.

Dr. L. Orecklin, Detroit, in Medical World, says, "An imbalance of the glands, lack of balance among the various gland systems—thyroid, sex, pituitary and others) is considered to be the underlying cause of acne. Because of this imbalance, these little oil glands become irritated by substances that normally should cause no irritation."

In the treatment of acne, the general health is important as many acne patients are constipated, may eat too much of the wrong foods—candy, chocolate, cheese, nuts—may have thin blood, or

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may have some low infection present. Although many physicians have considerable success with the use of viosterol, pituitary and other gland extracts, Dr. Orecklin, in agreement with most physicians, states that any case of acne that does not improve within a few months under the usual treatment should have x-ray treatment. The x-ray acts by preventing this overacting of the oil glands and the pus and organisms are gradually cleared away by the circulation of the blood.

Health Booklets Available
Eight helpful booklets by Dr. Barton are now available for readers of the Advance. They are: Eating Your Way to Health; Why Worry About Your Heart, Nerves; The Common Cold; Overweight and Underweight; Allergy or Being Sensitive to Foods and Other Substances; Scourge (Gonorrhoea and Syphilis); and How Is Your Blood Pressure? These booklets may be obtained by sending Ten Cents for each one desired to The Bell Library, 247 West 43rd St., New York, N.Y., or to The Advance Timmins.

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Treasurer's Sale of Land for Taxes

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To Wit:

By virtue of a warrant issued by the Mayor of the Town of Timmins bearing date the ninth day of March, 1939, sale of lands in arrears of taxes in the Town of Timmins will be held in the Council Chamber, Municipal Building, Timmins, at the hour of two o'clock in the afternoon on the sixth day of July, 1939, unless the taxes and costs are sooner paid. Notice is hereby given that the list of lands for sale for arrears of taxes is being published in the Ontario Gazette on the first day of April, 1939, on the sixth day of May, 1939, and on the third day of June 1939, and that copies of the said list may be had at my office.

Treasurer's Office, this 18th day of March 1939.

A. L. SHAW, Treasurer

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