

The Adventures of Captain Henry Hale*

A TALE OF TREASURE AND PIRACY

By John Fleming Wilson

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ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE E. WOLFE

XIV

WE laughed like children over the solving of our puzzle. Give us dynamite, we said to each other, and the world is ours; but we were soon in a pocket. There *had* been explosive, plenty of it, on the sloop. Lois was certain of this. It had been a matter of much discussion among Grimes and his partners. Pomfret had said briefly that it would be needed to blast a sufficiently deep channel through the reef to float the *Arethusa* out.

"But it's not here now," I said, after a prolonged search.

"It wasn't used," she responded. "Uncle Pomfret must have hidden it."

This explanation was so simple, and fitted in so exactly with our theory that he intended to return alone to secure the booty, that I accepted it instantly. The dynamite was close by—buried somewhere in the sand on the island.

The atoll that enclosed the *Arethusa* was almost oval in shape, about two miles in circuit, and its extreme width from lagoon to ocean beach was nowhere more than a hundred yards. The entrance was to the westward, and almost at the tip of one end of its egg-shaped figure.

The wreck lay in the larger bight to the east. As I have already said, there was no spot in the entire extent of it which rose over eight feet above high-water mark, and the keenest eye would have been at fault to detect a landmark. What few elevations

there were consisted merely of shifting coral sand, and were wholly impermanent.

So I determined that Pomfret must have chosen the hiding-place for his dynamite without reference to any mark. The sloop, Lois told me, had been anchored continuously right above the wreck. To bury the explosive, he must have carried it ashore himself at night. He would most certainly never fetch it far away from the place he intended to use it. The hull of the *Arethusa* was the base from which to make our search.

I have no intention of telling of the vicissitudes of that heart-breaking quest. We had few tools, and those not of the best. The sand was caked, sharp, and difficult. In some spots, we found ourselves digging into the unbroken coral. In others we were soon down to seepage water. That night we gave over only when it was too dark to see.

"We have got to work to-morrow on a regular plan," I told Lois.

But this proved as illusive as desultory digging, and by mid afternoon we were stumped. The schooner was now due at any hour, and our position was becoming precarious in the extreme; but I refused to give up. I set a hand on shore, to keep a strict watch for sign of a vessel, while I continued my search and Lois prepared a long-forgotten meal.

I believe that I finally gave up. I know that I had relaxed and lit my pipe, and was sitting miserably in the full glare of the

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sun, when my attention was caught by a large turtle crawling up out of the lagoon. It struck me that here was a chance for a change of diet and fresh meat; but I was too dulled to move at that moment, and presently I became interested in watching



"BIG BOSSEE MAN, LIL
BOSSEE MAN, BOSUN, ALL
GONE LIL PIECEE BOAT,"
HE TOLD ME

the unwieldy animal's odd maneuvers.

The turtle paid no heed to me at all, but seemed bent on business of its own. It awkwardly examined several spots, now and again lifted its plated head as if to sniff the air, and each time went on, always

up toward the low crest between the beach and the lagoon. At last, apparently, it found what it sought, and began to dig with its powerful feet. A moment later I had run madly up to it, and was dragging on its heavy bulk with both hands.

I found my strength insufficient, and shouted for help. Lois was the first to respond, and she leaped into the dingey to come to my assistance; but by now I had my senses, and I warned her away. The heavy beast was too much for me. It drew out of my grasp and shuffled off, its jaws set in a stick of what looked like yellowish wax.

It was headed for the open sea-beach. It gained a dozen yards—two dozen yards—on its way. I saw that it would soon reach the surf and be lost to us; so I jerked out my revolver and fired.

Instead of the sharp report of the shell, a terrific explosion flattened me on my back, and a huge cloud of white dust rose into the air. I picked myself up and turned to the sloop. It rocked wildly at its anchorage, but Lois was safe. I saw her white face turned to me in a panic.

"What an ass I am!" I said ruefully. "I found the dynamite—or, rather, that turtle did. Both gone, now!"

A hurried search discovered only a huge basin in the coral where the turtle had been. My shot had evidently been marvelously accurate.

"But that is only one stick," Lois assured me. "There must be more where he found that."

I promptly went back to the place where the animal had been digging, and with Lois's injunction to be careful in my ears, I started to excavate further. Before many minutes had passed I knew not only that we had found the one thing we needed, but that Pomfret had, as usual, prepared a trap for the unwary. However, I uncapped his little mine and proceeded to collect the dynamite.

"The fact remains," I told Lois, "that we are lucky not to have blown ourselves to pieces. Pomfret set his trap neatly, and if it hadn't been for the turtle betraying his cache, we might too easily have come on it carelessly."

When I had finished I had six boxes of the explosive, besides a number of sticks which had composed Pomfret's mine. I was now master of the situation; and while I was sure that there was more concealed in some other spot, I saw no use in hunting for it.

The next job I insisted on doing alone. I first removed the yacht to the extreme limit of the lagoon, and anchored it just inside the pass. I knew that dynamite is

tricky stuff. I had no intention of having a premature blast hurt Lois or spoil her chance of getting back to civilization. I then warned the Kanakas to keep clear of the region of the wreck, and proceeded to my final task.

It was now sundown, and an excellent time of day for what I had to do. I worked swiftly, but with care. I mined that hull so thoroughly that I knew it would be completely broken up by the explosion. I then prepared my master fuse and connected it to the others.

It was quite dark when I finished. I was confident that I had done a neat bit of work. I carefully erased the marks where I had buried the long fuse in the dry sand, and went back to the yacht.

"We will set it off at daylight," I told Lois over our tea. "That is, if the schooner hasn't come up into sight. I haven't had so much experience in explosive as some, but I have no notion of spending to-night in such close neighborhood to a volcano. We'll go outside and wait for sunrise there."

"But you will have to set it off, won't you?" she asked anxiously.

"I have a long fuse running from the wreck clear to a point midway between it and the pass. I figure that the fuse will burn six minutes. My plan is to land in the dingey, touch it off, and make back through the pass before the blast goes up. Then we can come in and see what we shall see."

I followed this plan, and brought the sloop to a couple of miles off shore for the remainder of the night. It was fine weather, with little wind and no sea. Lois and I sat in the cockpit and drowsed, while one of the hands stood watch forward. I intended to be ready for any emergency. It was certain that the schooner would soon arrive, though with the flat calm prevailing she could not possibly fetch the atoll without giving us ample warning.

At three o'clock one of the Kanakas wakened me.

"Small boat," he murmured, and pointed into the darkness.

I peered out in the direction he indicated, and presently discerned, some distance off, a shadow moving over the smooth swells.

"By thunder!" I whispered to Lois. "Pomfret nearly stole a march on us!"

Now the question was, would the people

in this boat observe us? We lay without a light, and very low in the water. It was to our advantage, too, that Pomfret had no reason to suspect us of being outside. I felt better when the men in the boat—there were three—raised their voices in an angry dispute. It was evident they had no notion of our nearness.

It was still out of the question to start the engines; so we maintained a steady quiet. Before long they drew away in toward the atoll. While I had not distinguished what they were saying, I had recognized the voices of Pomfret, Grimes, and Fosdick.

Now what were we to do? The night would last but two more hours, and when the sun rose they would inevitably discover, first, that we had been before them; second, that we had left. I knew that a brief investigation would show Pomfret that the wreck had been tampered with. He would almost certainly find out that his dynamite was gone.

My first impulse was to go for the open sea. By dawn we should be far out of sight and safe. But what good would that do? It simply meant an abandonment of the quest—surrender. Not to be thought of for an instant!

On the other hand, no sane man would follow them in. They were desperate, armed to the teeth, and three to my one.

In my quandary I put the puzzle before Lois. She listened, and made no answer for a little. Then she moved closer to me.

"I hate to think of what may happen," she whispered; "but I fancy we must fight for what we want. I can use a revolver."

"You mean to go in and attack them in the dark?" I demanded in amazement.

"No," she said. "Uncle Pomfret is with them. The schooner can't be far off—probably barely out of sight of the island. There are only two men left on her—Grimes's partners. Why shouldn't we seize our chance, and run out and recover the Spindrift? We ought to be able to find her before dawn and surprise them. Then we have Uncle Pomfret and Grimes at our mercy. They will have no vessel at all. Even if they get the treasure, they can't leave the island, or get fresh water, or do anything but—die."

So sensible a suggestion settled the matter. We got under way and headed for the spot where I reckoned the schooner to be hove to.

In an hour we sighted her, lying becalmed with sails brailed up. I stopped the engines and let the sloop drift along till we were within half a mile.

"You stop here," I told Lois. "Be ready for any emergency. Leave the rest to me."

I told her what signals I should show when I was successful. Then I took the dingey and a single hand. We made it almost into the schooner's shadow without discovery; but I saw that men were awake. Two lights burned brightly, one in the cabin aft, one in the galley. I heard no voices, however.

I decided to wait. Presently a figure emerged from the galley and came to the rail. We were almost beneath this man, and I held my breath for fear of discovery and an alarm. I was poised to make a jump for the rail and trust to luck. To my astonishment, the man above looked down directly at us and made no sound. His eyes glittered.

I fingered my revolver. Then I laughed to myself. It was Woy!

I waved my hand, and the Chinese answered with a flourish. I made the deck beside him in a single scrambling jump.

"Big bossee man, lil bossee man, bosun, all gone lil piecee boat," he told me.

"Pomfret, Fosdick, and Grimes," I said, nodding. "That leaves two to deal with."

Woy wagged a wise head. The two remaining members of Captain Pomfret's party were drunk in their cabins.

"What luck!" I told myself.

I ordered the Kanaka aboard, and told him to call his mates. Woy I directed to lock the afterguard in their rooms. When he had reported with the keys, I signaled Lois that all was well.

At sun-up the yacht lay astern of the schooner, riding to sea painter, while she and I stood on the quarter-deck of the Spindrift, once more masters of our fate.

"They can't see us from the island," I told her; "but sooner or later Pomfret is going to come back for the schooner."

"Probably these men were to sail on in when a breeze came," she suggested.

"If this is so, Pomfret will soon find out that something is amiss. He isn't going to stop on the atoll while his source of supplies, and his single chance of getting back to places where gold is useful, is out of sight," I assured her. "Meanwhile we are going to tow farther off shore. There is

nothing we can do to-day, and we might as well make certain we sha'n't be disturbed."

This took a couple of hours. The schooner was then twenty-five miles east-northeast of the island—distance enough to warrant that Pomfret would have plenty of trouble in finding us in the whaleboat. The next problem was to dispose of the two prisoners.

My plan was to put them in a small boat, with water and food for a week, tow them fifty miles still farther off shore, and set them adrift. Under the circumstances it was a wise thing to do. I knew them to be utterly untrustworthy, unscrupulous, and desperate.

Lois fought this scheme gallantly. She brought forward no pleas for mercy or humanity; but she asserted that it was both useless and inexpedient.

"But we can't have them aboard," I urged upon her. "In the first place, we have two vessels now. There are only two of us. If we try to keep them here, we shall have to guard the sloop night and day, for they will try every means to escape and seize it. There is but one thing to do—be rid of them for good."

"Why not send them to Uncle Pomfret?" she pleaded. "They can do him no good and us no harm."

"That may be so in present circumstances," I replied; "but my notion is to make sure of what we have. If we sent them off to the island, then the whole story is out, and no mystery about what has become of the schooner. If we keep Pomfret and Fosdick in ignorance of what has become of the Spindrift, we are so much to windward. Furthermore, you can put it down that Pomfret is going to move all hell to regain possession of either the schooner or the yacht. Why give him more men? Then, too, I have gone so far that I'm willing to go farther to lay hands on that treasure."

Lois was silent a long time. Then she said simply:

"Maroon them."

We picked out a small island sixty miles to the westward as the proper place. It had water on it, according to the "Pacific Directory," and a clump of trees. It was a dire spot on which to abandon human beings, but it had to be.

I wasted little time in ordering a boat made ready with water, food, oars, sail, and anchor. When it was swung out, I roused

the men, still stupid from their liquor, and tumbled them into it, with a couple of hands to guard them. I then took them in tow of the sloop and started away.

I do not believe they comprehended their fate till the schooner had vanished astern and they saw the little eminence of a small island rising above the sea ahead. Then they begged me for their lives. I kept my head and closed my ears. In hot mid afternoon I took my own men aboard the sloop and cast off the small boat.

"There is your nearest land," I told the two ruffians curtly. "Be careful how you land through the surf."

The yacht made a great turn in the sea and headed back for the Spindrift, leaving them tossing on the swells, their haggard faces set on me like the visages of dead men.

When I regained the schooner, I found that nothing had occurred during my absence. The closest watch had been kept, but nothing had been sighted.

"To-night Pomfret is going to hazard something," I told Lois. "He must be desperate by now."

"But it has been a flat calm," she replied. "He would know the schooner couldn't sail in."

"But he would also know that she couldn't sail away from where he left her," I answered. "He'll row back to that position, and then be sure something is wrong. I tell you, I know how absolutely wicked he feels this minute!"

Later I added my fear that Pomfret would set off my mine.

"In that case he will have the treasure," I said.

Lois, I saw, was hoping against hope that immediate action would be needless; but she did not shirk.

"I think we gain nothing further by keeping him in the dark," she told me. "After all, we've got to face it."

I knew what "it" meant—what fate were we going to measure out to Pomfret? That was the question in Lois's mind, and a hard one it was.

I saw that I had my work cut out for me. I might, of course, have laid emphasis on the fact that as the murderer of her father and mother, as well as of others, he deserved no better end than to die of thirst on a desert island; but that was neither here nor there, for Lois was, I knew, not the woman to settle any real problem by

quoting excuses for the easiest way out of it. She had thrown light on several perplexing matters in the past few days, and I was sure she had some scheme in her mind whereby Pomfret would quietly vanish and cease from troubling.

Meanwhile there was a grim truth in her suggestion that delay in making Pomfret realize his plight would do little good. Let him once understand that his schooner was in other hands, his two men forever out of the play, and he himself reduced to a choice between death on the atoll and entire surrender, we should at last be down to trumps.

And yet, while obeying Lois's suggestion, I went to extraordinary pains to prevent putting the schooner or the sloop within peril of capture. Pomfret was treacherous, always. I would trust no oaths of his.

XV

By midnight a light breeze had sprung up. I got sail on the schooner, and, with the yacht in tow, headed for the atoll. Just before dawn, having seen nothing, I brought her to about three miles from the beach.

I was in the main rigging with the telescope when the sun rose. I fixed my gaze on the lagoon. All seemed as we had left it. The entire extent of the islet was plainly under my eyes, and I breathed a sigh of relief. My mine was still intact. The treasure was untouched. But—where were the whale-boat—Pomfret—Fosdick—Grimes?

I returned to the deck and told Lois that there was no one on the atoll.

POMFRET, IT WAS PLAIN,
COULD MAKE NOTHING
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BEHAVIOR



"They are somewhere at sea," she suggested. "They found the schooner gone and went to look for it. Trust Uncle Pomfret! They may be spying on us now."

"Nonsense!" I retorted. "We can see in every direction. Nothing is in sight."

But the thought of the three men slinking on my trail stuck in my head all morning; and in the afternoon I gave up my notion of going ashore and cracked on all sail for the outer sea. Under a spanking breeze we logged handsomely till midnight, at which time I wore ship and made for the Arethusa's hiding-place once more.

This time our scrutiny of the beach was rewarded by sight of the three men. The telescope made them leap before me, and I could even see the expressions on their faces.

Pomfret, it was plain, could make nothing out of the schooner's behavior. When we hove to, a cable's length off the breakers, plunging bows under in the roaring swells, he summoned his companions to man the whaleboat and come out to us.

"We don't want them to come too near," I told my companion. "The whaleboat can sail almost as fast as the schooner in this breeze, what with the sloop in tow and close quarters. We are too weak to defend ourselves in a pinch. I don't know whether they are aware of the truth or not. At any rate, they see the yacht."

"Possibly they think the other men captured it," she said.

"Hardly," I returned. "But at any rate, we have our choice—to risk losing the sloop, or to pay off the sheets and run. In case we do the latter, I vote we stay away a week. By that time starvation will have made its own terms with them."

"We cannot be murderers," she retorted, much shaken. "I know all you can urge against them; but they are human beings with immortal souls. They should be given a chance to repent."

"They will have plenty, if I have my way," I replied with some heat. "Not one of them would ever quit this island except as a ghost!"

"But they are helpless!" she pleaded. "Surely they will know that, and come to terms."

"Would you believe any promise Pomfret made?" I demanded.

There we were, at an impasse, like to become bitter over the business, and I wanting nothing so little as any unkindness between the girl and myself; but it has always been my belief that good brains never lacked fair means, and I fell to studying the situation again.

It came over me that during these days I had let a most important matter go, and that was to determine the character of my companion, the girl whom fate had so oddly brought into my adventure. The future depended on whether she and I held the same purpose.

I believe that a vast deal of misunderstanding between men, and between men and women, lies in the reluctance of most active and busy men to deal plainly with and about women. It is rarely that we consider them as equally interested with ourselves in an affair of business.

Part of this may be set to the account of civility. We are taught from earliest boyhood not to let the rough side of the world rasp our women. It is reported of a husband that he is hardly the gentleman if he opens all his troubles to his wife; and Heaven knows that many a partner in a knotty matter gets the worse of it because a woman he never saw is a silent shareholder in the business.

Take this very undertaking into which I had gone with Fosdick. Neither of us had ever mentioned a woman's name, nor did I know whether he was married, or a bachelor, or in love; yet the truth is that it stood near to my interests to know that.

And in this last entanglement, when Pomfret and Fosdick were arrayed against me, and I was alone except for the girl, what did I know of her concern except that she had been badly used and her interests made no account of? After all, she and I were partners by stress of events. It behooved me to treat her as I would a man, and to come to an understanding as to what she expected out of the whole affair.

Frankness is the hardest point in honest dealing. Every man draws back from putting his pet plan into clear speech, on the chance that it will die in argument. To go to Lois and have a straightforward clearing-up of all disputed points was contrary to my inclination; but we had to be sure of each other when life and death swung in the balances.

She had already given me hints that she looked at the future with other eyes than mine. The treasure, and punishing Fosdick, and avenging the poor folk on the Arethusa, were my purposes. They fitted in together like the fingers of my hand. It would never enter my head that I could do one without achieving the other. If I got the treasure, it was over Pomfret's dead

body. If I managed to do him in, Fosdick was next. With them out of the way, I went at getting the booty without a care before me.

On the other hand, I perceived that Lois did not lump these three things together and try for them all. The treasure she was willing to struggle for; but when it came to putting Pomfret—the murderer of her parents—out of the way, she demurred on the ground of mercy due a fellow man.

I think that at the same time she did not hold Fosdick so tenderly. She knew him only as a stranger, and disesteemed him. She would make little argument for his life. Grimes, because he was a brute and without any touch of civility, was doomed. She would not lift a hand in his behalf, I was sure. Her instinct told her that he deserved no mercy, for the reason that he had none for women.

I made no mistake, either, in supposing that Lois's opposition to a scheme she did not approve of would be inactive. She was quite capable of suddenly turning on me, if I pressed Pomfret too hard, and of saving him, even if she damned me. All I might allege of expediency, of my own single-hearted desire to serve her, and of plain common sense, would not avail. Before I made one step further I must be sure where she stood, and how far we two could work together.

When I put the matter before her, in blunt language, Lois met me squarely. I can do no better than relate what she told me. The words seem to carry very little of what they meant to me at the time; but what with remembering her lonely life, her sorrows, the mysterious perils that hung over her, and the way a woman turns to God, I understood her far better when she had finished than I ever thought to discern the secrets of any woman's heart.

"I won't willingly see you disgrace us both," she said to me. "I have been shamed enough since I was a child. Since father and mother died, I've never had a man related to me who didn't have to look aside when it was a matter of conscience—nor a woman, either; but I have always held myself better than my surroundings, and I have sworn that if I was put to the test money should never buy me as it bought others. And what would it be but money outweighing conscience if we killed Pomfret? How would we feel when it was done and past? I know how men argue;

but it doesn't affect the issue at all. After all, I have nothing to live for. Money can do nothing for me. And I should hate you if you could look at me and whisper, 'You are as bad as I am.' What if we do lose the treasure? Isn't it better to go scot-free of remorse than to have blood-money on our souls?"

"Then you refuse to go into any scheme that will make us quits of Pomfret and Fosdick?" I questioned. "How do you expect to fetch clear of all this, then? Pomfret would murder us both, and smile to do it. In fact, he is planning it now. I will warrant my best chance of seeing San Francisco again that before he and his whaleboat reach us the plot will be ready in his mind."

She merely shook her head. I ventured further:

"What if I tell you it's a toss-up between Pomfret's life and mine?"

She would not answer.

"All right!" I said doggedly. "I am a fool, I suppose; but you and I seem to be partners, and I never yet went back on any one who was with me in a deal. Don't say I didn't warn you!"

By this time the whaleboat had cleared the pass, and was coming along the line of breakers under a sail. Pomfret was at the steering-oar, while Grimes and Fosdick sat on a thwart and stared at us. There was sheer murder in the men's faces, and I raked my mind for some scheme to save us.

A glimmer of an idea finally penetrated my head. Pomfret's character I knew to a degree; the treasure and nothing but the treasure was his single thought. The other two were scoundrels, but with a strong liking for their own skins. I would play on this. Grimes was my man. He was a brute, with little intelligence. He could be worked on by a shrewd man.

When the boat was almost within ear-shot, I ordered Lois below, and gave a couple of rifles to Kanakas whom I could trust. Then I picked up the megaphone and cried to Pomfret to keep clear.

He tried to cover his oncoming by hot protests; but I soon showed him I was ready to shoot, and he lowered the sail and brought his craft head on to the swell twenty yards from the schooner.

"If you come a foot nearer I'll swing the booms and be off," I told him.

He stared up at me with a contemptuous and hateful expression; but he was cool



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and sensible. He knew his plight, of course, and he proposed terms. They were, in brief, a fair division of the treasure and no hard feelings.

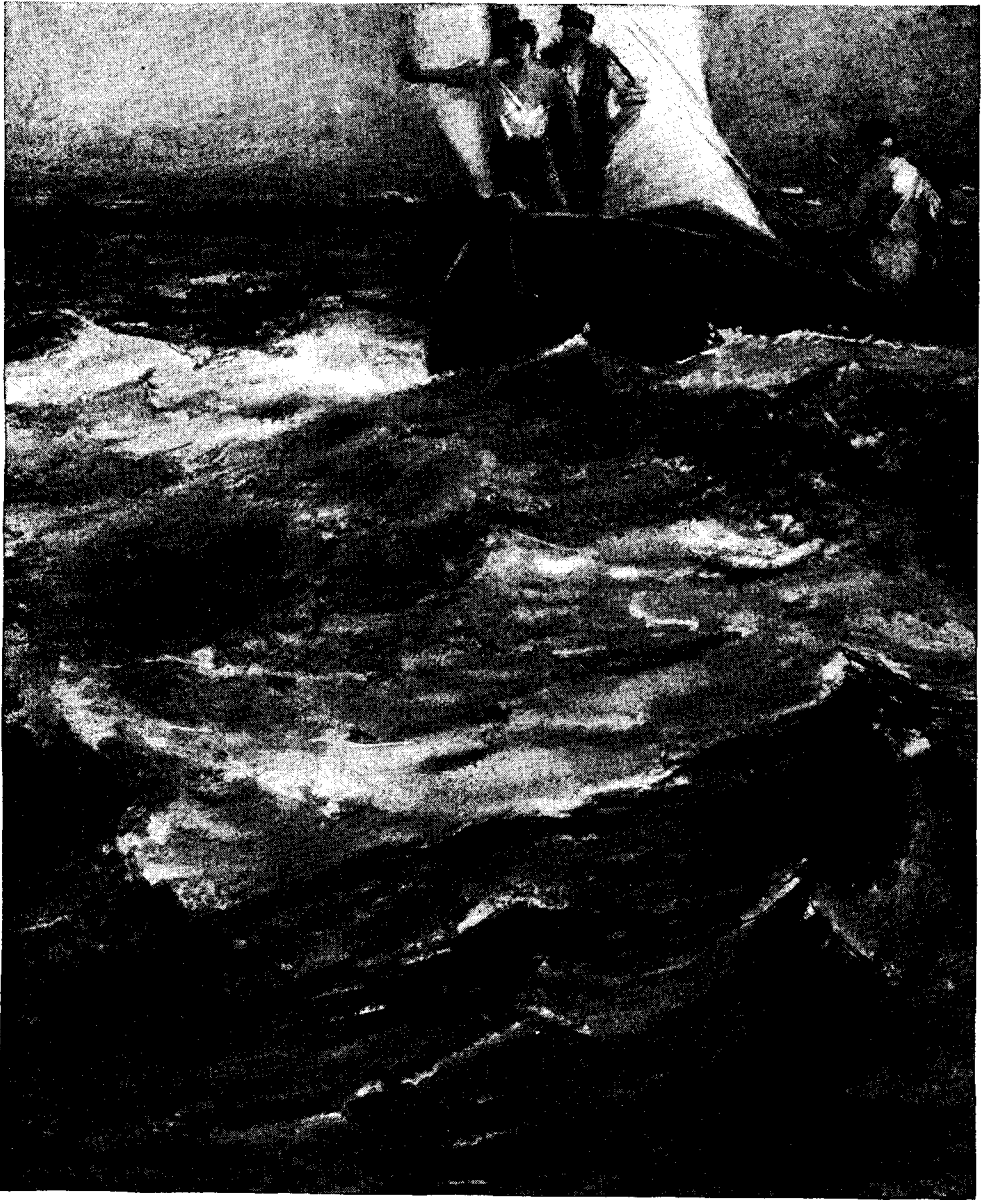
I perceived my chance to make Grimes and Fosdick take sides against him. By the look on their countenances I knew they smelled death ahead.

"That sounds fine," I returned; "but will you tell me why we should divide the stuff into equal parts? You have played me for a fool and turned my partner

against me. I have no reason to think that you are entitled to any of the money. If one looks at it squarely, you should be thankful if I consent to take you off the island and see you back to civilized parts."

I did not think that a human face could display so much malignancy as did Pomfret's. He was nonplused. He had nothing to answer.

"If your two associates knew as much as I do about you," I went on, "you would be begging for your life this minute, instead



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of trying to lord it over them. What did you do with Mr. Grimes's two partners? Eh? Was Grimes to get their shares? I think not!"

The old man lifted his clipped mustache as a cur lifts its lip; but I gave him no time.

"That was a nice trick to play," I continued; "but it wasn't new to you. Mr. Grimes knows how you rid yourself of men you fear. That was shrewdly done, I must say. Now you are planning to leave Mr.

Grimes and Captain Fosdick to suck their thumbs."

A roar from Grimes burst in on me.

"Where are the other two?"

I smiled down on him.

"In hell," I said. "Mr. Grimes, you play a lone hand against Captain Pomfret from this on."

My cards were played, and I lifted my hand as a signal to my crew. Instantly they leaped to their places. The wheel went over, the booms swung, and the

schooner drew away. The whaleboat was directly to leeward and helpless. I leaned over the rail and bellowed my last words to them:

"Go back to your island and think this over! I'll be here to-morrow at the same time to hear what you have to say!"

Pomfret wiped the sweat from his white forehead with his handkerchief, and began to plead. I saw that he was in straits; but it was not my purpose to let him feel the hook yet.

I kept on my way. The seas creamed along the schooner's planks, the yacht curtsied astern, and we left them staring at us with queer, strained faces.

"Mark me," I told Lois, "this morning was easy, because they had no assurance of how the land lay; but to-morrow you'll see the inwards of their plot." Then I tried her again. "What do you say if we crack on all sail for the coast, and leave them here?"

She shook her head mournfully.

"We could never sleep at night," she responded in a low tone. "To dream of them!"

I swung away and went by myself and tasted the word she used—"we." By gad, the game was worth while!

I began to believe that I could make even Pomfret an ally, and so fulfil the bargain I had struck with Lois. Foolish dreams were those I had on the old schooner, when I cast my accounts with no eye on what destiny might write in on the ledger.

XVI

THE next morning I brought the schooner once more to the atoll and waited for the whaleboat to come out the pass. Pomfret was soon at the rendezvous—in an altered mood, I thought. He wasted no time in asking for supplies of food and water.

"By gad," I told him, with every appearance of regret, "I can't risk it. The truth is, Captain Pomfret, that I don't speak for myself alone. We've been consulting what to do, and the upshot is that we can't trust our safety to you. Three men is too many. You see for yourself that the danger is too great for us to risk. So there you are. Settle it among yourselves. I don't care a penny either way. My only condition is that you fix some kind of arrangement among the three of you that will make it secure for us."

With that I was away. The men in the

boat seemed wholly at a loss. It was only when the schooner was several miles on her outward course that I saw them slowly put out the oars and make back into the lagoon.

"To-morrow," I told Lois, "I think we shall have a show-down."

The wind died during the night, and it was a dead calm in the morning. After some discussion we decided to leave the schooner in charge of the hands, and to proceed to the island in the sloop. On our way Lois asked me what I supposed the upshot of the affair would be.

"Pomfret will see to it that he doesn't have two against his one," I told her. "I hope he and Fosdick will go partners. Like as not Grimes has already found out what it is to be in a minority."

We waited some time before the whaleboat came out, all three at the oars. I could see that lack of food and water was telling on them. I steamed to meet them.

Grimes was spokesman this day. He stood up on a thwart and demanded to know what had become of his mates.

"I told you once," I replied. "What I want from you fellows is straight talk."

"We can't and won't talk without supplies," Pomfret put in.

"I've brought them," I said, and threw out a case of biscuit and a keg of water. The three eagerly went for them, and got them aboard the boat. Then Pomfret inquired my terms. He gave me plainly to understand that they three stood as one.

I did not like the looks of this. Pomfret seemed entirely too self-satisfied. Grimes appeared content to sit in silence, since his one outburst. Fosdick only was ill at ease.

"One man hasn't been heard from," I remarked meaningly; "and that's the man whom I trusted with my money and my schooner. Let's hear what Captain Fosdick has to say."

He got to his feet unsteadily and stared at me in a curious manner. Then he cleared his throat.

"I haven't anything to say but this!" he cried, and dived overboard.

He came up between the whaleboat and the yacht, swimming strongly. I instantly started the sloop ahead. The two men left in the boat seemed utterly dazed, looking at the swimmer with glassy eyes.

"Are you going to let me drown?" called Fosdick.

Lois clutched me by the arm, and I heard her whisper in my ear:

"No! Save him!"

I threw the engines into reverse, and a moment later had Fosdick by the wrist. His eyes were starting out of his head. He choked out two words in a ghastly voice:

"Quick! Quick!"

The yacht leaped ahead as I opened the throttle and pulled Fosdick over the rail. Just as I had succeeded I heard Lois scream. I drove my fist into Fosdick's face, and over his toppling body jumped to her rescue.

The whaleboat was coming toward us, with Pomfret at the oars. Grimes was standing up, one arm drawn back as if to throw. He did throw, and a small, dark object whirled aloft and circled down.

I flung Lois behind me. Luck was with us, for Grimes's home-made bomb fell short. The explosion seemed to lift the shock out of the sea.

I wiped the brine out of my eyes and looked around. We were all safe. Fosdick rose, his face covered with blood, and glared at me savagely.

"I tried to warn you," he growled, "and you fair killed me!"

"My mistake," I told him. "I didn't know what was happening."

I then looked at Pomfret and Grimes. They gaped at us, dumfounded by the ill-success of their filthy plot. I thought I saw on Pomfret's handsome old face a tinge of terror. Fosdick, beside me, shook his fist at them.

"I've stood a lot," he muttered, "but not cold murder!"

"Where did they get that stuff?" I demanded.

"Pomfret told us he had a few sticks buried in the sand," Fosdick told me. "He dug them up yesterday."

On the way back to the Spindrift I learned much. According to Fosdick, Pomfret and Grimes had joined hands against him when he argued for complete surrender. He had sickened of his two companions long before, and bitterly regretted his betrayal of me. One piece of news he gave me was gratifying—no one had discovered that I had mined the Arethusa. A few discreet questions made me sure that neither Fosdick nor the others had any notion of what I had accomplished. Moreover, they had not uncovered my long fuse.

"Lois," I said, when we were once more on the schooner's deck, "I am going to trust Fosdick. I don't like to; but, after

all, the man did save our lives this morning. And with him aboard it doesn't much matter whether we really put confidence in him or no. He is in a position to do us great injury; but to put him under guard is impossible."

She drew me out of ear-shot of even Woy, who was setting the table for tea.

"I don't like Captain Fosdick," she told me. "I can't trust him."

"But what the deuce can we do?" I inquired. "It was you who insisted that I should pull him aboard. Now he's here, much as I dislike the notion, I have an idea we're saddled with him."

"Couldn't you take him and maroon him with the other two?" she suggested.

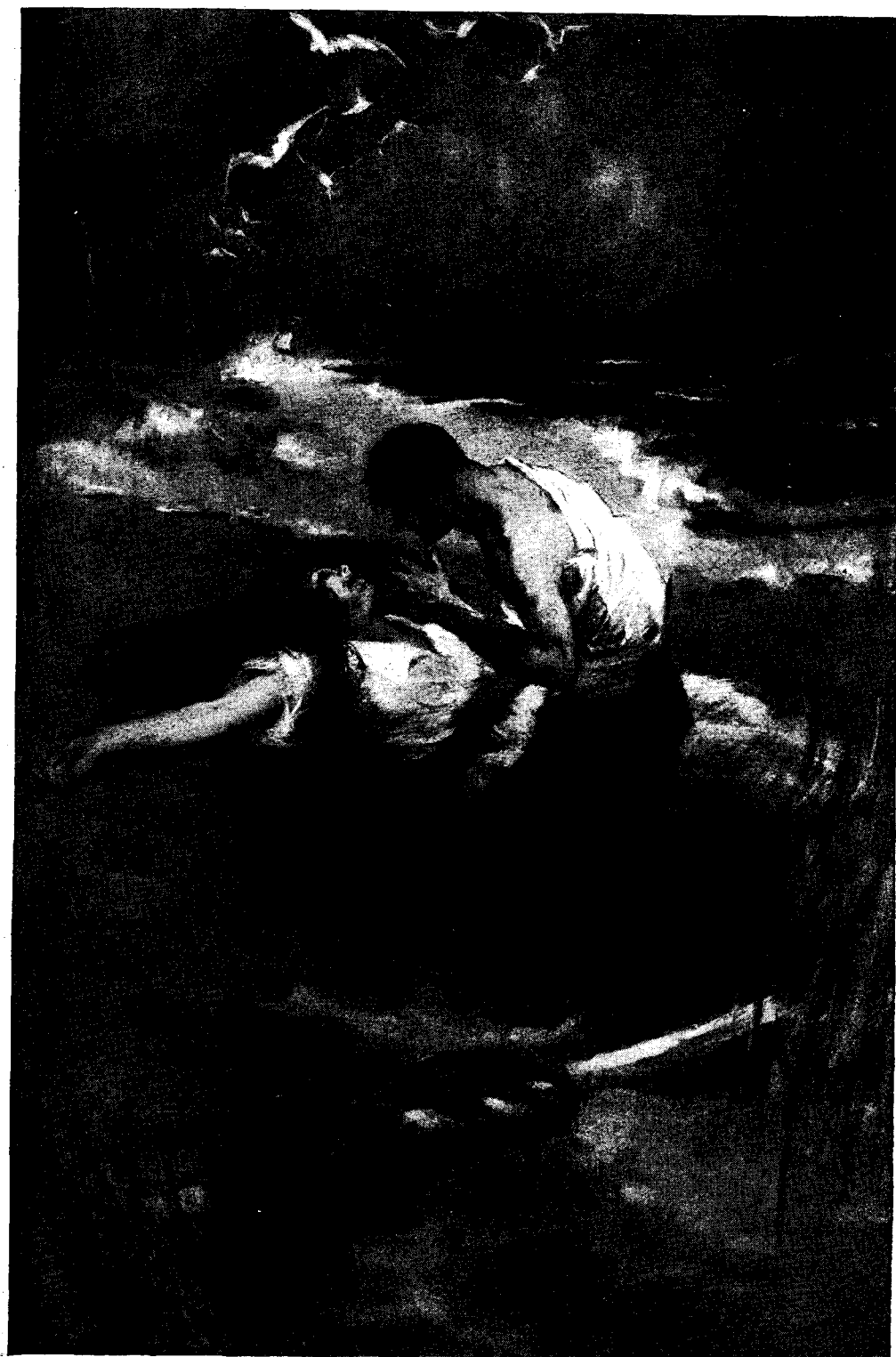
"That would be pure insanity," I assured her. "The two men we landed on that desert island are neither seamen nor navigators. Fosdick is both. Within three days he would have them safe ashore by the Arethusa wreck."

I thought it best to have a talk with Fosdick later. I got little satisfaction out of him. Now that he was away from the atoll, I could see that his mind reverted to the treasure with double greed. He hinted to me that Pomfret's medicine might be good for both the men on the island. When I rejected this suggestion with scorn, he fell sullen and moody.

I kept a bright watch that night. I did not intend that any surprise should be sprung by Fosdick, or by any man he might suborn from his duty to the schooner. Nothing occurred.

In the morning Lois and I held another consultation in the Spindrift's cabin. The question was what we were to do. My advice was to let three or four days go by. The case of biscuit and the keg of water would be far gone in that time, and Pomfret might be ready for parley.

"I have another plan," Lois murmured, her fine eyes filled with distress. "I see nothing ahead but misery for us all. I know Uncle Pomfret. He will never give up. Of course, we can simply sail away and leave him to his fate, as well as the two other men we marooned. But what does that mean? Simply that we shall be torn with fear that they may escape and track us, or we shall believe ourselves murderers. I can't bear the thought of either. I believe we have a solution forced on us by circumstances. I do hope you will agree to it."



I BARELY HAD STRENGTH TO DRAG MYSELF AND HER BEYOND THE WAVES THAT WERE
IRREGULARLY WASHING TO AND FRO

"Why shouldn't I?"

"Because it means giving up the treasure—forever," she faltered.

"But Pomfret wouldn't agree to that!" I said.

"Oh, let him and the others have it!" she cried. "What do we want of it?"

I said nothing for a moment; but I made up my mind once and for all.

"Well, suppose that's settled—you and I don't want it. What then?"

"Give Captain Fosdick this schooner. We will take the yacht and two boys for crew."

"I see!" I replied. "Fosdick can then make his own terms with Pomfret, after getting the two men on the other island. Meanwhile we can put a few hundred miles between us and them. They can fight it out themselves. I doubt whether Fosdick would agree, after all. It will leave him one against four; and he ought to know what kind of shipmates those four will be to him."

"Make him agree," she urged.

It struck me that I had a good argument for Fosdick, supposing he demurred; but that argument must never come to Lois's ears. It was simply that I would show Fosdick how he held trumps. There was only one other man besides himself capable of navigating the schooner—Pomfret. I would hint to him that by getting rid of the old man he would assure himself the loyalty of the other three—till he made port.

I was about to go on deck and put this to Fosdick when an odd sound struck my ears. I glanced out of an open port. The Clarice was driving rapidly away, with Fosdick at the wheel.

I laughed and pointed him out to Lois.

"The man couldn't stand it to be away from that treasure," I said cheerfully; "and as a consequence he has saved us the trouble of arguing with him. But—now that your plan is in operation, we have one unforeseen obstacle ahead of our own efforts for safety. Instead of the sloop, which can go anywhere in any weather, we are on the schooner—becalmed!"

The more we thought over the plight Fosdick had left us in, the darker and gloomier grew our thoughts.

"It's certain that we can't help ourselves," I remarked. "Those three now have a perfectly seaworthy craft with plenty of speed. It's well provisioned with fuel, food, and water. They have the treas-

ure, too; so our only hope is to get a favoring breeze and disappear into the open ocean before they can find time to catch us up."

Both of us gazed at the white reflection in the sky that marked the position of the atoll. I think that to us, at that moment, it stood like a sign in the heavens. I know that for my part I was in the temper for any desperate measure. A stiff dash in the night, a few moments' fighting—so I kept thinking—and it's all ours.

Lois's sharpened senses perceived my hesitation, and with that whole-hearted disregard of self which sometimes makes women divine, she flung away all that she had gained.

"If you think—if it's possible, you think—" she stammered.

"The arguments," I said quietly, "are all on the side of a quick escape to safety. It's utterly certain that Pomfret is going to stop us, if he can. His secret would be disclosed, he thinks, and he daren't let us go. That is the situation from his point of view, and it tells us just one thing—get away while we can."

"Do you think we can get away?" she demanded, now as hot on the other side as she had been cold before. "He would follow us. I know him well enough to know that he'll stop at nothing. The yacht can catch us anywhere."

"Then in God's name let's set all sail and be after Fosdick!" I cried. "Here comes the wind. It's touch and go, there will be bullets flying, and dead men on the beach, but faint heart never added a day to a man's life!"

"Nor won fair lady," Lois added with sudden audacity.

I caught her glance, and my troubles vanished into air. The course was laid for better or for worse, and no matter what I met in the way of foul weather, my heart was light. The treasure on the old Arethus—a all those stolen, hidden jewels—were nothing to the prize that was within my reach.

With all quickness I stirred the hands into nimble activity and got all the canvas on the schooner. The breeze was freshening fast, and was fair. Unless Fosdick knew how to make the most of the sloop's engines, we might run him a close race for the atoll.

When I had everything shipshape, the schooner was doing her best, and we were

foaming along at full thirteen knots. I joined Lois near the wheel, and found her flushed with excitement. While she had no inkling of my plan, plainly she was ready for anything.

Once she impulsively put out her hand and touched mine, instantly withdrawing it. I pretended not to notice it, but that touch did its work. I ceased to hesitate and to argue and to boggle. I was free to be adroit and masterful. I cast aside all intricate schemes and weak subterfuge. I loosened my revolver in my belt and laid out rifles abaft the wheel-box.

XVII

WITHIN an hour the wind had increased to smart gale. We were now in full sight of the sloop, but the chance of overtaking her before she reached the pass was small. At any rate, however, we should be on Fosdick's heels. It was evident that he saw us and suspected our purpose. He drove the yacht without mercy.

When we sighted the atoll at about six miles' distance, the sea was beginning to run heavily before the gale. The sky was dimming in the easterly quarter, with promise of still more weather and a shift. The island was ringed with flying foam and spray.

"The pass will be a boiling caldron," I told Lois, who was steadying the telescope to her eye.

"I think the sloop is in trouble," she responded. "Fosdick is out of his course."

The Clarice was now within a short mile of the beach, and our schooner was beginning to labor.

"I hope he is in trouble!" I snapped. "We'll have to shorten sail in a moment."

I picked up the glass. I saw the yacht still driving along, yawing perilously, and not far from the entrance to the lagoon.

"The man is insane!" I cried. "His only chance is to make directly for the pass. Instead, he's trying to stand along the beach!"

Neither of us could make anything of this. The Spindrift was coming up hand over hand, and the atoll seemed to rise like magic from it surf-ringed base. Another five minutes and we should be between Fosdick and the entrance to the lagoon.

"He's gone mad," I told Lois. "Why doesn't he run for the lagoon? He'll be in the tide-rips off the beach in a little while, and helpless."

Lois nodded, and swung herself into the rigging and up to the maintop. She gazed under the shade of her hand for a minute, and then turned her face down. I saw it was strained by some emotion.

"Fosdick can't get in—Pomfret and Grimes are shooting at him!" she called down. "They're right on the beach at the entrance."

"By thunder, they think it's us!" I roared. "Stay where you are! We've got 'em now!"

I gave the wheel a couple of spokes. The straining schooner slid swiftly down a huge comber, and in a crashing tumult of breaking seas and singing foam headed straight for the narrow entrance.

With the tail of my eye I could see the yacht a half-mile away, pitching and plunging on the crested swells, and I knew that Fosdick, in a panic, was trying to head out to sea again against the sweep of the tide and thrust of the wind. Enough of him! I whipped my glance to the slight point of coral that marked the northerly headland of the pass. On it I saw two figures—Pomfret and Grimes, holding rifles in their hands. They were going to defend the atoll at all cost.

"The fools!" I laughed. "If they had only known that it was Fosdick, and safety for them, in the sloop!"

I called to Lois to cling tightly in the shrieking rigging, assured myself that she understood, and steadied the helm. My maneuver was desperate, and might end in disaster.

I braced myself. The Spindrift, with every foot of sail resounding to the tremendous pressure of the gale, lifted her bows high above the bristling seas on a mountainous comber, drove on irresistibly with the thunder of breaking water underfoot, and crashed into the pass, now heaped high with towering surges.

At the very lip of the entrance, where the coral rose sheer from the depths, a prodigious swell tripped under us and flung us almost on the beach, and I stared down on Pomfret's upturned face. We had taken him utterly by surprise. The rifle in the crook of his arm was useless. Beyond him Grimes was braced, knee-deep in foaming water, his weapon to his shoulder. I thought he aimed at our rigging—at Lois. I threw my whole weight on the wheel as he fired.

The schooner had been checked for an

instant, right between the two low headlands; but her momentum was great. She rose on the shoulder of the next hurrying comber and shot into the lagoon in a wild turmoil of broken water, flying spume, and stinging spray. Crouched by the now useless wheel, I peered upward through the blowing curds. Lois was staring down at me, a look of exultation on her face.

With a lurch the Spindrift recovered, slipped on a few fathoms, and swung around with bellowing canvas. With a cry to the crew to make all snug, I grasped a rifle and leaped to the rail. Pomfret and Grimes were running desperately up the beach, their heads between their shoulders, their legs moving jerkily. I raised my weapon, sighted swiftly, and fired to hasten their pace. A puff of sand spat up ahead of Grimes, who was farthest on.

I threw another round into the chamber, and was on the point of firing again, but a cry from Lois stopped me. I looked up. She was leaning far over, her arms outstretched, her lips apart, her eyes blazing. I made a run for the shrouds, and was beside her in an instant, just as the mainsail was hauled down and the foresail filled. I forgot the busy crew below me.

The two men were still running through the white sand, each step marked by a whiff of dust; but along their path, closer to the lagoon, other whiffs of dust arose, spurting up in quick succession, as if from a chain of minute explosions.

At first I was puzzled. Then I saw Grimes dive toward the line of small puffs and grasp at something; but the puffs went on, sputtering just in advance and out of his reach.

"By thunder, the fuse to my mine is burning!" I roared. "Quick, Lois, get down!"

But the girl never moved. She was too intent.

Pomfret, it was plain, began to comprehend, as Grimes did, what was happening. He shouted something to Grimes, and the latter redoubled his efforts. He cried something back, and leaned far forward as he tried to get ahead of the telltale puffs of smoke. If he could only once get ahead of the fire racing along the fuse, he might stop it.

I found myself strangely calm on a sudden.

"Lois," I said, "that is a six-minute fuse. We are drifting down toward the

Arethusa slowly but surely. I put enough dynamite in the wreck to empty this lagoon and blow the island to flinders. Pomfret had more hidden, as well. You and I aren't likely to see the end of this affair."

"I hope Grimes will succeed," she answered quietly. "How he runs!"

For the moment it appeared that the two men were at last overtaking the fire that traveled along under the surface of the sand. Twice Grimes's hand seemed to clutch the furthestmost puff; twice another shot up ahead of him. Then Pomfret swerved toward the inner beach. He knew that close to the wreck the fuse must enter the water, and this was the spot he was making for.

Grimes stumbled and fell. I groaned. He was up again, dazed, rubbing his eyes to clear them of sand. Captain Pomfret still panted along the inner shore, but the betraying puffs were far ahead, swiftly nearing the wreck, circling where I had coiled the slack. They sent up a score of lively whorls of dust, and ticked off toward the water's edge. The race was lost!

I rose with a single movement to Lois's side and put my arm about her. She turned and hid her face on my shoulder.

In that last instant I glanced around. The slight ring of the atoll lay in the midst of a strangely desolate sea that fledged it with chilly foam. The lagoon brimmed like sweet wine below us. Far beyond the outer beach a great surge held the Clarice up-tossed on its crest, like a toy caught in blowing crystal. Above us the thundering sky darkened. I bent over the girl's sweet hair.

My ears were cracked by a single booming note. The rigging shrilled and slackened under my grasp. Something whirled at a great height, whining to the zenith. Then I was flung with my burden into space, and great waters thundered over us.

I came to the surface at last, and found that I was in a wild raffle of wreckage. Freshly riven planks swam round me, with the paint hanging to them like gray threads; other timbers continually emerged, like things coming up to breathe. I held Lois tightly, and fended them off while I made for the beach.

I barely had strength to drag myself and her beyond the waves that were irregularly washing to and fro, tumbling more debris about us. As I laid her down, I saw that she was conscious. Her eyes opened.

"I'm all right," she whispered.

"Thank God!" I sobbed.

Presently I helped her to sit up, and we both looked around. Our schooner had disappeared. The lagoon was scummed with débris, splintered and smashed beyond recognition. Up where the Arethusia had lain a crater had been scooped out many fathoms deep into the solid coral. Above the lip of

"There is still the yacht—perhaps," she comforted me.

I had forgotten. I jumped to my feet and stared seaward. I shouted. The sloop was just outside the pass.

SHE BROUGHT OUT
A LEATHERN SACK,
WHICH SHE EMPTIED
ON THE TABLE

this a few broken beams lay crosswise.

I felt the full force of the disaster in that moment. Water, food, shelter, ship—all gone! We were left, the two of us, bruised and shaken, to die.

"Lois," I said, "I made a terrible failure of it all. I thought to get the better of Pomfret, but I never foresaw this!"

She smiled at me girlishly. I perceived that she was not without hope, and I was suddenly amazed at the stout-heartedness of women.

Fosdick entered at last, not from choice, but from stress of weather. It was with difficulty that by motions and cries and gestures I induced him to bring the Clarice close to the beach. I waded out to swimming depth and made her rail in a dozen strokes. He shook with a chill and demanded news of Pomfret and Grimes.

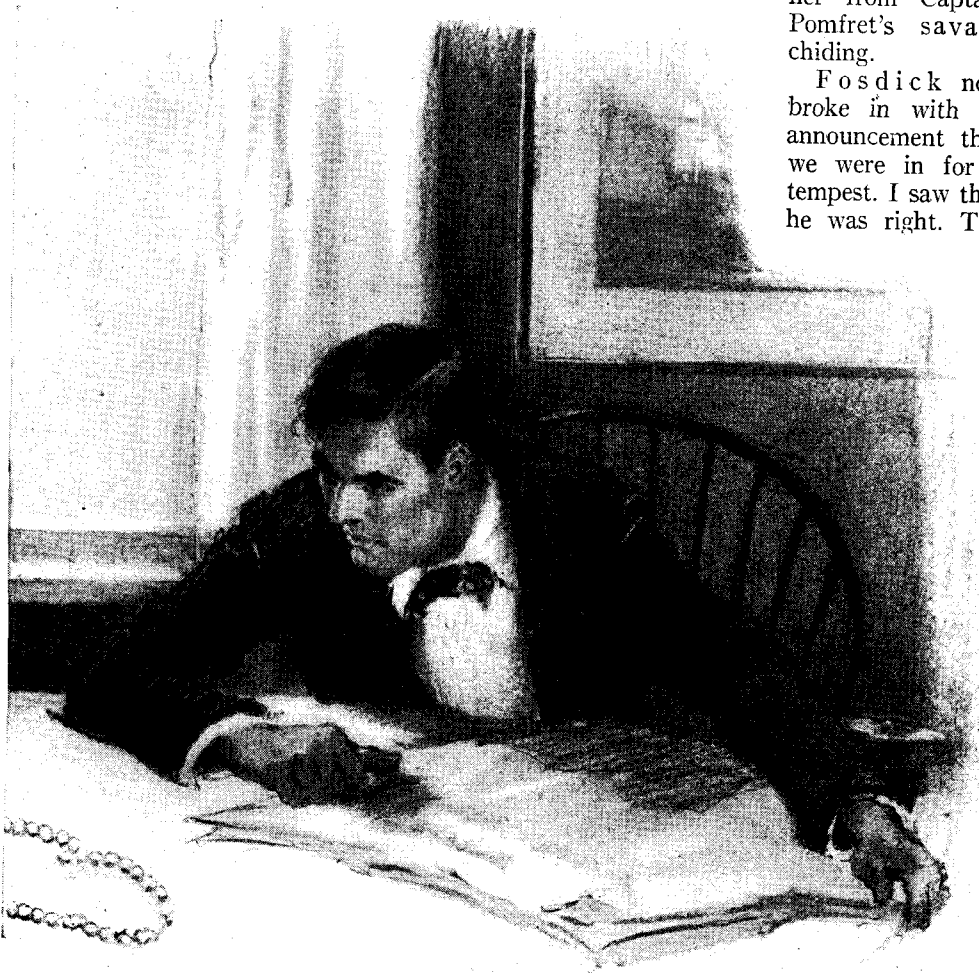
"Both are gone," I assured him.



I disarmed him easily and anchored the sloop. As the dingey had been swept overboard by a sea, I had to bring Lois aboard by swimming. By this time she had recovered from the shock of the explosion, and

She remembered him tearfully. He had been a servant in the house where she had passed happy days. He was, she told me, a whimsical character; faithful, arrogant, kindly, and tender-hearted. He had more than once saved her from Captain Pomfret's savage chiding.

Fosdick now broke in with an announcement that we were in for a tempest. I saw that he was right. The



"WHERE DID YOU GET THESE?" I DEMANDED WITH A GASP. "THEY ARE WORTH A FORTUNE!"

I enjoined upon her to keep a strict watch on Fosdick.

"The man is fair sick with terror," I told her, "and he'll not give you trouble, I fancy; but I'll not be far away."

Then I set about my task of collecting the dead, and before long I was sure that there were no survivors. The one man I chiefly wished for—the cook—was not to be found. I returned to the sloop and told Lois my news.

"Woy is gone," I said.

sky was rapidly becoming wholly overcast, the sea was rising steadily, and the atoll shook to the thunder of the breakers on the outer beach. We hastily secured the sloop at her anchorage as well as we could. I then set out to salvage what I could find before the storm and darkness made such work impracticable.

I first explored the place where the *Arethusa* had been. Of that ill-omened ship there was little left—a few ribs upthrust from the coral, and a portion of her stern-

post. Then I crossed the central ridge to the outer beach. Here I picked up several articles, among them a few that would come in handy.

I determined to search as thoroughly as I could, and went on. It occurred to me that it was more than possible that the sea would finally overrun the entire atoll—meaning that the sloop would stand small chance of surviving. I hoped to find the dingey somewhere on the beach.

The dusk was settling, and I was almost in despair. I was about to retrace my steps when I saw something stirring in a depression in the coral. There I found Woy, bruised and drenched, but alive. I roused him and helped him to his feet.

He soon saw our plight, and did his best to trudge along with me. He gave me to understand that he had been shot many miles into the air, had descended thence many leagues under the sea, had swum for hours, and finally, after traversing a vast expanse of sand, had achieved shelter. I comforted him with the information that the yacht was safe.

Lois betrayed much emotion when Woy came back to her. She shook his hand vigorously and would, I believe, have kissed him, had not the excellent Chinese, with native stolidity, displayed anxiety as to nothing but the galley. From this vantage-point he assured us that all would be well "bimeby"—an optimism which I did not share.

By nightfall we four survivors on the sloop had prepared for the worst. We had eaten what Woy had cooked, and Lois, at my urgent request, had retired to her little cabin. Fosdick and I would stand watch. Neither of us expected to see another day dawn, for the seas were now combing over the highest crest of the windward side, and the whole extent of the lagoon seemed likely to be swept before long.

But we survived, and faced a new morning with undiminished fortitude. I had to agree with Lois, afterward, that Captain Fosdick showed a better side during these frightful hours than he had ever done in easier days. He proved himself resourceful, good-humored, and adroit. He was tireless and vigilant; but when the storm was past he made no bones of his intentions for the future. He demanded to know what search I was going to make for the treasure.

"It's still here," he added significantly.

"Miss Hansom and I are weary of the very thought," I told him.

"Then it's mine?" he asked eagerly.

"It's yours," I replied, "if you can lay hands on it; but I warn you that the Clarice sails to-morrow for the Coast."

"In that case, of course, I will go with you," he said promptly. "Up there I can make arrangements for another vessel and come down again. I'll pick up those two men you marooned, too."

So we left the atoll, with small regrets, and made a quick passage. When we were but a couple of days from the Golden Gate, Fosdick opened his heart to me.

"I want to be sure of that treasure, Hale," he told me. "You have played square all along; but Miss Hansom—I'm afraid of her. She's dangerous. Even Pomfret was afraid of her—and look what happened to him in the end! I wish I knew how to make sure that she wouldn't bother a man who only wants his share."

"I get your meaning," I said. "I know her plans. I promise you that neither she nor I will ever worry you. In fact, we'll both thank God to be quit of you!"

"Even if I come ashore some day with a man to carry my grip, and cash in the bank, and people waiting to see me about investing my money?" he persisted slyly.

"I tell you Miss Hansom and I want nothing you can give us, and that's flat," I retorted.

Captain Fosdick had departed, and Lois and I were arranging our new home in San Francisco, when I told her of the man's childish fear that we would grudge him a share in the treasure.

My wife smiled, went to her room, and brought out a small leathern sack, which she emptied on the table before me.

"Where did you get these?" I demanded with a gasp. "They are worth a fortune!"

"Woy gave them to me as a wedding-present," she replied. "He assured me that he had always had my interests at heart. Aren't they dear, the Chinese? I love Woy!"

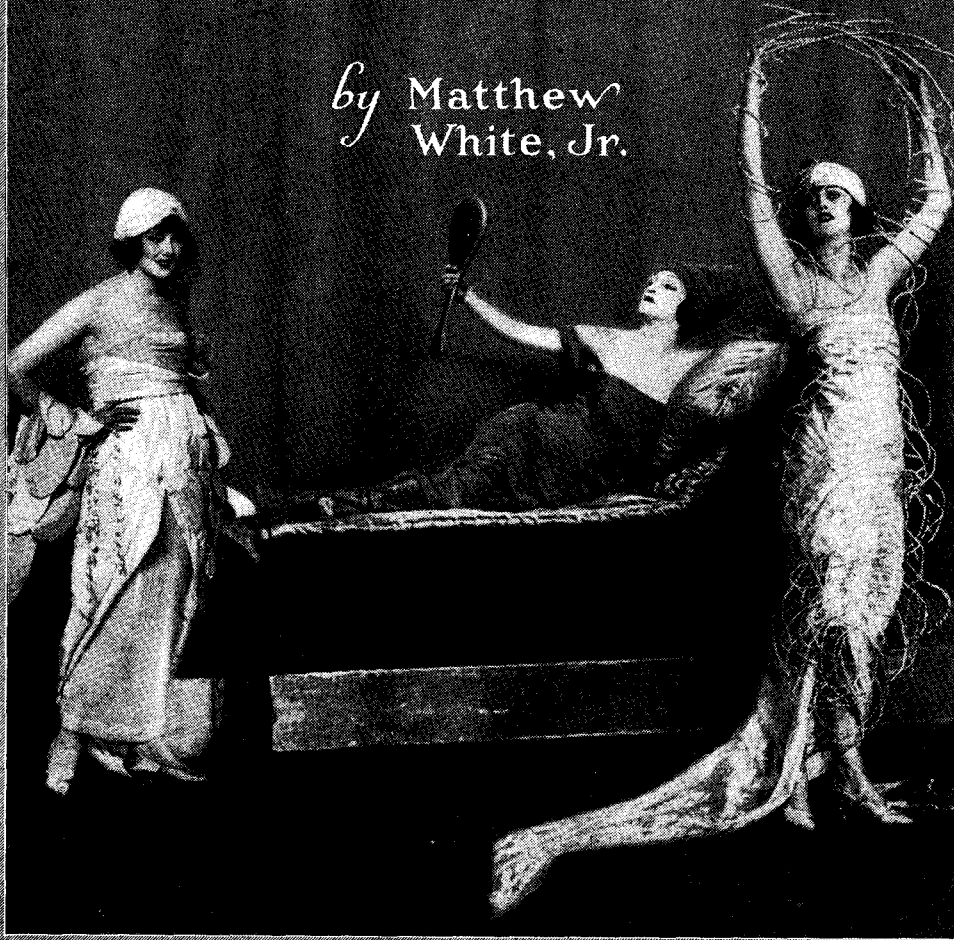
"I verily believe they are part of the Arethusa treasure," I said. "I—wonder what Pomfret would say if he knew that Woy and I got his jewels, after all?"

I caught the light in Lois's eyes, and forgot the gems.

THE END

The STAGE

by Matthew
White, Jr.



THE "JEWELS OF PANDORA" NUMBER IN "WHAT'S IN A NAME?"—A UNIQUELY BEAUTIFUL MUSICAL OFFERING

AT one of the notable performances of the present notable theatrical season I remarked to a woman in the audience:

"I suppose you know that this production is backed by one of the big motion-picture concerns."

Her surprise was genuine, and yet she is a confirmed theatergoer and a stanch friend of the profession.

"Why, how can that be?" she exclaimed. "The manager is one of the leaders in the younger set, the star ranks among the first,

and the author has no superior in France. It seems incredible!"

"It is even so," I assured her, adding that another new piece brought out in the same week under the sponsorship of a name to conjure with among the theater folk, with a star whose triumphs have not been few, and a play by one of England's literary lights, was also financed by cinema money.

"But how can these things be?" she wanted to know.

Whereupon I proceeded to elucidate,