

DOUBTFUL ISLAND!

*A Magnificent Story of
Adventure in the South Seas*

BY DUNCAN STORM

THE FIRST CHAPTER

The Whale's Tooth

"**H**I, Bud!" shouted an American sailor, who was lounging at a table outside one of the numerous cafés overlooking the wide expanse of Sydney Harbour. "Give us a 'Bulletin'!"

Harry Lytton turned. He had just one copy of his sheaf of "Sydney Bulletins" left, and he handed it to the sailor, whilst his brother George stood in the background, hoping that the sailor would be generous, as sailors often are. Then they would be certain of a supper as well as their bed.

The American sailor turned up trumps.

He took a long look at Harry, and was evidently pleased by the frank expression of the boy's face.

"Say, Bud," said he, "you are not one o' these Sydney wharf rats. You look more like a Johnny Bull gone astray from your moorings!"

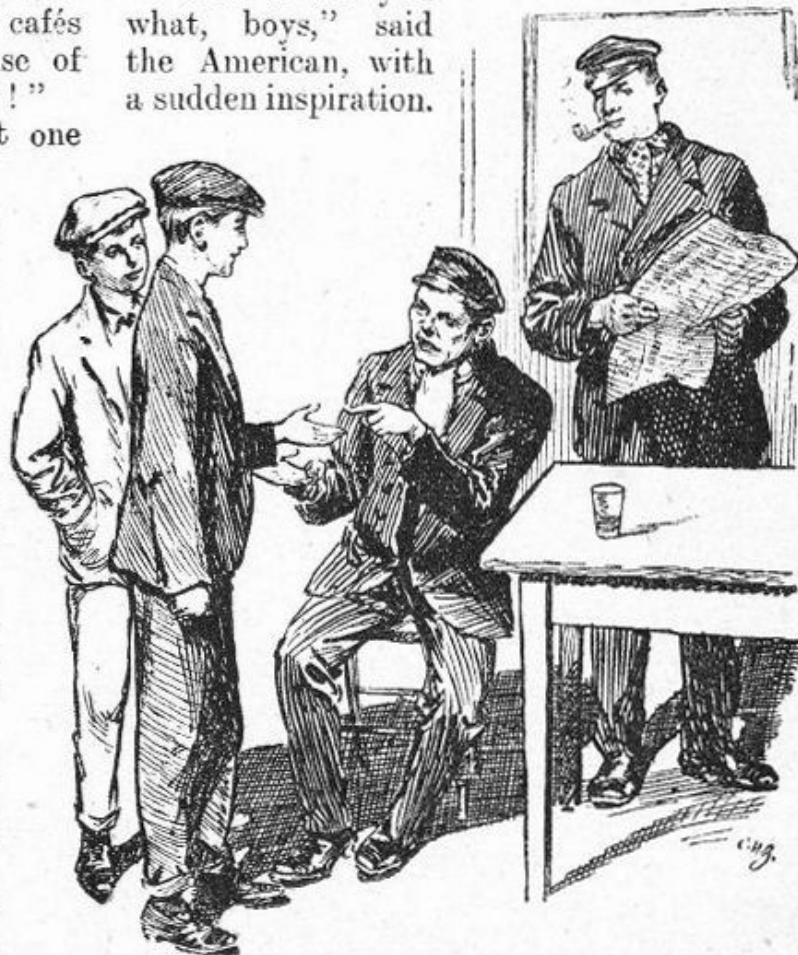
"We are English, sir," replied Harry. "We came out with dad a year ago. But dad died, and we've been selling papers since."

"Down on your luck, eh?" asked the sailor. "Never mind, Bud. Better days will come. Here's a dollar for your paper, and you can freeze to the change."

And he gave Harry a heavy American dollar that would fetch over four shillings at the money-changers' on the wharf.

Then he turned to a queer-looking sailor who sat at the same table smoking a queer, carved pipe, and gazing at the boys with strange, glassy eyes. This sailor was clean-shaven, his face was burned nearly black, and he reminded the boys of an Egyptian mummy they had seen in the Sydney Museum.

"And I tell you what, boys," said the American, with a sudden inspiration.



Ole Luk gazed at the boys' palms with his queer eyes for some time without saying a word. At last he spoke. (See page 104)

"As you are down on your luck, Ole Luk shall tell your fortunes. He's a real Finn, and, like all the Finns, he's a wizard and a warlock. I've seen him call up calms when the skipper has crossed him, and I've seen him call up gales when the first mate's started to haze him. First mates don't like gales—they give 'em too much work—an' the las' gale Luk called up blew our topmasts to t'other side o' Jericho. Come on, Luk," he added, "wake up from your dream, old chap. Come out of your trance!"

But Luk still gazed at the boys with those strange, glassy eyes.

"Leave him alone for a minute or two, boys," said the American. "He's away in one o' his pink dreams. Presently he'll come back to earth, and he'll tell you your fortunes. He can tell the future by the wind and by the stars, and by the cup and by the black ink pool in a man's hand. He's a right wizard, an' the finest harpooner out o' Nantucket. An' it takes a wizard to find the whales these days!"

The boys understood then that these two sailors were American whalemens belonging to the Star of Portland, the steam whaler that was refitting in Davis's Basin.

They gazed at Ole Luk with interested eyes, for he represented a class of sailor which is regarded by all the boys of Sydney with great reverence, for they are true adventurers of the sea, and their adventures and tales are many and wonderful.

Presently Ole Luk spoke.

"Gif me your hands, boys!" said he in a queer, mechanical sort of voice that sounded like a phonograph. "Left hands—for the right hand he is no good for der fortune. Der future is written in a man's lef' hand, und der past in his right hand, aindt it?"

The boys half-laughingly gave the Finn their hands. They did not believe in wizards and warlocks or in the reading of the future.

Ole Luk gazed at their palms with his queer eyes for some time without saying a word.

At last he spoke.

"Now dot vos strange!" said he. "Dere vos two fortune, one in each hand, und dey come quick, aindtit? Und dere is a mother away in England who wait her boy. She is

very, very poor, und she is very, very sad because her husband, he is dead, und her boys dey are far away und dey can't get home!"

"We won't go home until we have made our fortunes!" replied Harry stoutly. "That is what we came to Australia for. Dad came for his health, and we came to help him get well by earning money!"

The Finn shook his grey head.

"Many men und boys dey have come to Australia, und dey haf not made deir fortune. But you two boys shall be rich beyond all avarice, und you are goot boys, und you shall take der money home to your lady mother, und she will be glad. But dere are many dangers. Der nigger man he is a good friend, but beware of der man who laugh all der time, und, mos' of all, beware of der man mit der eyes dat shine like black diamond. Und take dis, boys. I do not gif you money, but I gif you dat which will bring you safe through all de biggest hurricane dot blow. It vos der toot' o' de whale engraved mit magic runes, for I, Ole Luk, am der seventh son of der seventh son und a wizard. Und all my grandfather und great-grandfather, dey too were wizard!"

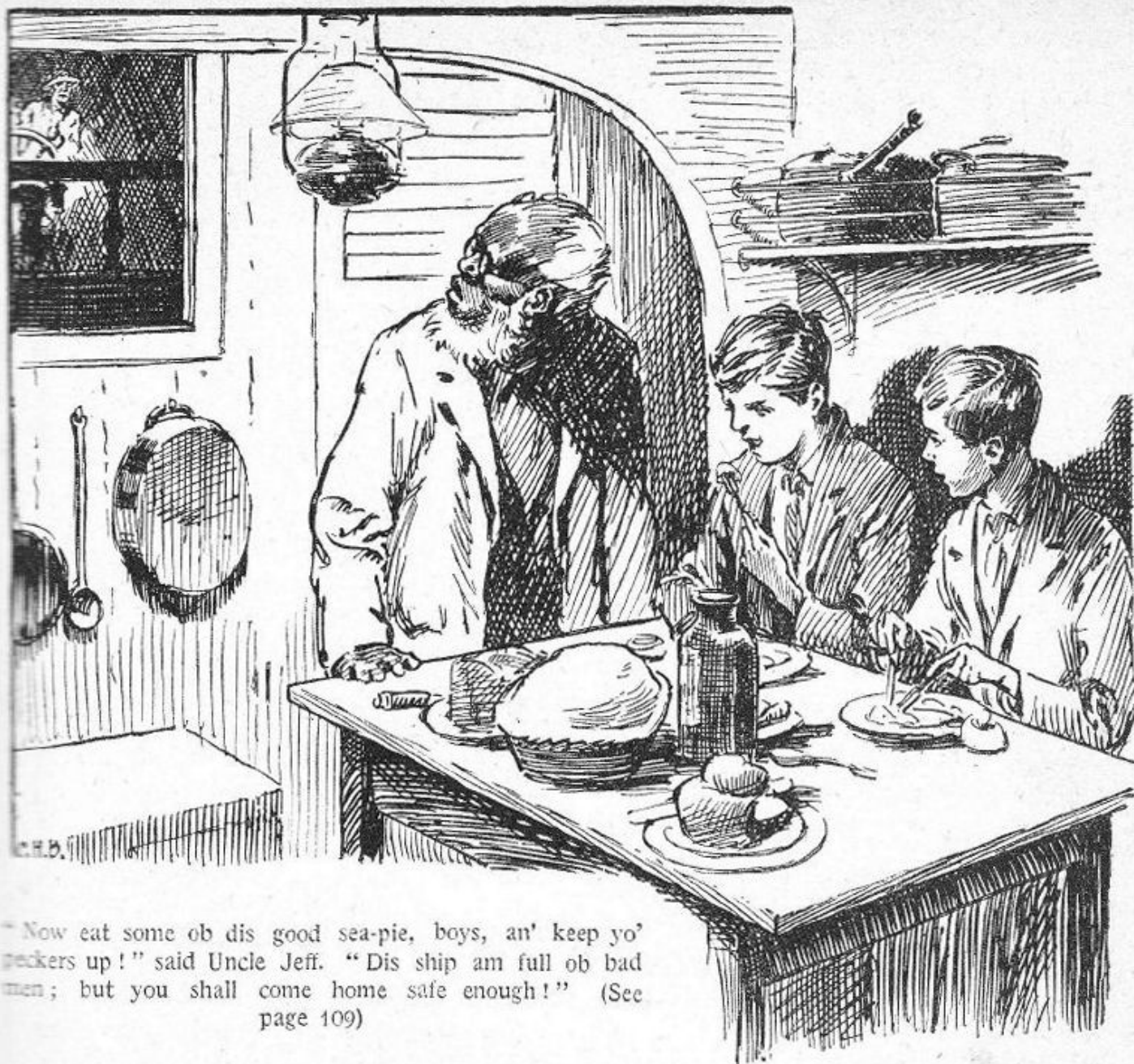
Harry took the whale's tooth and thanked the wizard politely. He had not expected to meet a real live wizard on the wharfs of Sydney. But he had learned by now that by the shores of Sydney Harbour you may meet many strange men.

A silence fell on the two sailors as a shadow passed across their table.

The man who passed glanced casually at the two boys, and half hesitated, as though he would speak to them. But he thought better of this and moved on, heading for the harbour-master's office.

Ole Luk turned his glassy eyes on the figure of the passing stranger. He was a tall, slender, but powerfully built man, neatly dressed in clean white duck and wearing a wide-brimmed Panama hat.

"Und dat vos der firs' man dat you beware of, boys!" said he. "You go mit him where he want you. But he is der same as der vicked uncle in der story of 'Aladdin.' You keep your eye on dat uncle. Now I go aboard!"



"Now eat some ob dis good sea-pie, boys, an' keep yo' peckers up!" said Uncle Jeff. "Dis ship am full ob bad men; but you shall come home safe enough!" (See page 109)

He rose from the table, and the American followed with a careless nod to the two boys.

"What do you think he meant, Harry?" asked George. "I know that fellow who passed us. It's Captain Ray Leeuwien, of the schooner Magellan Cloud, the one that lies out yonder."

And he pointed to a beautifully modelled little island schooner which rode at her moorings about a quarter of a mile from the wharf.

"I know him by sight," replied Harry. "I've seen him coming off from the schooner in shore boats. His crew of Kanakas never leave the schooner. There's four of them, all Kingsmill boys, and one old nigger cook, who

looks like Uncle Tom out of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'?"

He pulled up with his hands in his pockets, and looked up at a shabby and wind-torn bill that was pasted up on a timber of the wharf.

The boys had often looked at this bill in the last fortnight. It was a police advertisement, offering a reward of £10 for the recovery of the body of a sailor called Myles Stanton who had mysteriously disappeared, and was supposed to have fallen into the harbour.

"Not much good advertising for that chap's body!" said Harry, "the sharks will have had him long ago, and——"

"Hi, you boys!"

Harry's remarks had been cut short by a harsh grating voice behind them.

They both turned, and found themselves facing none other than Captain Ray Leeuwin of the Magellan Cloud. It was the first time that they had had a really good look at this personage, of whom many queer tales were told along the water front.

He was a youngish man about thirty, and his yellow face bore something of a trace of Japanese blood. His eyes were narrow and turned at the corners obliquely, which enhanced this Oriental appearance. The boys noticed that the whites of the eyes were yellow, like those of a man who has had many bouts of fever, but the iris was nearly as dead black as the pupil which glittered like a black diamond.

Captain Leeuwin was scowling at the advertisement of the marks of the dead man—a crown and anchor tattooed on the wrist.

He put up the point of his neat cane, and ripped the half torn advertisement through:

"Dead men tell no tales" he muttered as though to himself; "and dead men in Sydney Harbour tell less than most. The sharks look to that!"

Then he turned smartly on the boys.

"You chaps on the beach?" he asked curtly.

"Yes, sir!" replied Harry and George in one breath.

"Age?" demanded Captain Leeuwin.

"Sixteen," responded Harry.

"Fifteen," added George on his own behalf.

"You were the two boys who brought that shore boat in from the Lorna Doone, in the squall yesterday?" added Captain Leeuwin.

"Yes, sir," replied the boys. "It's old Daddy Mercer's boat, but sometimes we do a job for him."

"Well, you can handle a boat all right!" replied Captain Ray Leeuwin, his strange black eyes gazing at the boys, as though he would read them through and through. Then, with a sudden tone of suspicion, he added, "What are you reading this police notice for?"

"Nothing!" replied Harry frankly and truthfully enough. "Everybody on the wharf has read it hundreds of times!" he added.

"Don't read police notices," snarled Cap-

tain Leeuwin. "They get you into more trouble than you get out of in a hurry! Want a job?" he added swiftly.

"Yes sir!" replied both the boys eagerly.

"Like to see the Islands—the Low Archipelago?" demanded Captain Leeuwin almost fiercely.

The hearts of the two boys bounded against their ribs with eagerness. They were sick of Sydney, which had no place for them. They were afraid of its dusty streets and the hand-to-mouth life they led in these. And Captain Leeuwin was offering them a trip to the magic fairyland of the Paumotu, the great coral island archipelago and wonder-world of the South Seas.

"Please take us, sir!" urged Harry, turning almost pale, at the delightful notion of sailing away in that beautiful little schooner.

"Well, keep your mouths shut!" replied Ray Leeuwin. "I'm off on a quiet trip, and I don't want any waterside talk. Besides, you are both under age, and I can't ship you through the shipping office. You borrow a boat and get your dunnage and bring her off, to be alongside the Magellan Cloud at exactly eleven to night. And don't let anyone see you. I'll return the boat to the waterside!"

He turned away.

"Thank you, sir!" gasped Harry gratefully.

But Ray Leeuwin took no notice of the boys, and did not turn his head as he strode swiftly away and called a cab in which he drove off from the wharf.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

On Board the Magellan Cloud

THE boys had little enough in the way of gear at the humble lodging which gave them shelter.

Their slatternly landlady was out somewhere up the town, and they knew that she would not be back till late, but they waited for her till ten. Then Harry put their week's money under the candlestick with a note to say that they had got a ship and were going off to sea. He knew that she would find the money all right.

They had only sixpence in their pockets

when they stole out into the dark street with all their belongings done up in a small piece of sacking.

At half-past ten they were on the waterside, and they did not take long in finding Daddy Mercer's boat in the shadows under the wharf.

Nobody noticed them taking it, for they often borrowed Daddy's boat to go fishing in at night's in order to eke out their scanty means, and Daddy Mercer, who was a good old chap, never refused them.

Away they rowed out into the darkness of the great harbour, heading for the Magellan Cloud. They knew well enough where to find her in that crowd of schooners, and, just as the city clocks were striking eleven, their boat bumped alongside.

Ray Leeuwin was evidently waiting them, for he looked over the bulwark and rolled down a little ladder, to which Harry made the boat fast and then climbed on deck, closely followed by George.

The sails were unstowed ready for hoisting, and the crew were already waiting with the anchor hove short.

"You are all we are waiting for. Get on to the anchor and break it out!" he snapped.

"But what about the boat, sir?" asked Harry.

"I'll tend to that," replied Ray Leeuwin calmly; and, unhitching the painter of the boat from the ladder, he coolly cast her adrift.

"But, sir!" began Harry in protest, as he saw this wanton act, "that's not our boat. It's Daddy Mercer's!"

The boat was drifting away rapidly down the harbour on the tide.

"They'll think we are drowned!" added Harry.

Ray Leeuwin turned fiercely on the boy, and Harry felt the cold muzzle of a small pistol pressed against the back of his ear.

"You are as good as dead if you don't get that anchor out in three minutes!" snarled Leeuwin.

The four Kingsmill Islanders looked on timidly at this scene. There was nothing to be done but to obey.

Harry and George went to the windlass, and the anchor was broken out. Then up went the foresail and jibs of the Magellan Cloud.

Leeuwin went to the wheel, smoking, and, as sail was made, the Magellan Cloud beat the race down the great harbour towards the Heads, soon leaving that lonely drifting little boat of Daddy Mercer's far behind.

Soon the winking lights of the Heads let them by, and the Magellan Cloud began to dip and curtsey to the ocean swells.

"Go to the galley, you cubs!" snarled Ray Leeuwin from the wheel. "You are entitled to your grub, but you shall earn it. And mark you, I'm skipper aboard here, and what I say goes all the time. If you want to see home again, keep that in your mind, and never let it out. Now quit!"

And this was the introduction of Harry and George to that strangest of strange ships, the Magellan Cloud.

In the galley they found the old negro who looked so much like Uncle Tom.

He was wearing a big pair of horn-rimmed spectacles, and was reading a huge family Bible by the dim light of an oil lamp. But when he saw the boys standing at the galley door he laid the Bible aside.

"Captain says we are to have something to eat," said Harry.

"Bress my soul an' so you shall, young gemmen!" said the old nigger, jumping up and bustling into his little larder. "So long as Uncle Jeff hab got anyting to give you."

He brought out a huge joint of salt beef and a large plate of boiled carrots, and set these on a small table with a bottle of pickles that was the largest the boys had ever seen. Then he gave them a loaf of bread, and produced a big apple-pie, as though by a conjuring trick, from a little cupboard in the wall of the galley.

"Dar you are, young gemmen!" said he. "Eat hearty, an' gib der ship a good name. She need it," he added, in a lower tone, glancing uneasily through the window of the galley to the spot where Ray Leeuwin's sinister face was lighted by the lamp of the binnacle. "Dis am a mighty bad ship, boys!" he whispered. "But say no mo'. De grub am all right. Uncle Jeff see to that!"

And Uncle Jeff went back to his Bible and said no more.

The boys put him no questions. There was time enough before them to find out the

mystery of the Magellan Cloud, for there was a wide space of sea between them and the jewelled islands of the Paumotus.

And they were very hungry. So they fell to on the boiled beef and carrots and pickles, whilst Uncle Jeff gazed over his glasses at them with undisguised approval.

Then he showed them to a stuffy little cabin in the stern where they could sleep. And sleep they did, cradled in the rocking of the long-backed Pacific swells.

For a whole month the Magellan Cloud sailed eastward without raising a sight of land. The boys knew that they had passed to the south of the Friendly Islands, but Ray Leeuwin never spoke to them, save to give an order, and never spoke of the errand of the schooner.

Harry's job was to assist on deck and to steer the schooner at intervals, relieving another member of the crew whom they had not seen when they arrived on board. This was Ching, a Chinaman.

Ching never spoke, for he was dumb. The boys soon found this out when they spoke to him, for Ching only made a clicking noise in his throat by way of reply.

"You can't talk to that chap, and he can't talk to you!" snarled Ray Leeuwin. "He got talking too much once—in China—and they cut his tongue out for him. Now he's a

useful man—sort of man I like—a man who holds what's left of his tongue and gives nothing away!"

And Ray Leeuwin had turned on his heel whilst Ching had grinned at the boys evilly. And this was the longest speech to which their captain treated them all over those two thousand five hundred miles of dreary blue sea.

The weather was glorious, the seas were

sapphire blue, and the boys, although they did not like the cut of the jib either of the Magellan Cloud or her master, were happy enough, bathing themselves in the bright sunshine, and delighted to get away from the dusty city.

Uncle Jeff fed them like fighting cocks, and they soon discovered that he knew as little of the ship as they did, having shipped only the day before they had. All Uncle Jeff could tell them was that Ray Leeuwin was a bad man—and this they suspected pretty well already.

But they were in the highest spirits, for soon they were to see the islands and their wonders.

Ching appeared to be a sailor, for he could take an observation both of the sun and the stars, and always looked to the navigation of the ship when Leeuwin was sleeping. And at nights he would show on deck, flitting round like a shadow, as though he were spying.



"Hang on! Here's another!" yelled Harry, as a second comber roared down on them, burying the stern of the little schooner in a mass of white foam. (See page 112)

Uncle Jeff gave it as his opinion that Ching had been an officer in the Chinese navy, for he had heard of such a Chinese amongst the islands—a Chinese who had been broken for cowardice in the fight at the Yalu, between China and Japan, and who later on had turned pirate.

Uncle Jeff said that Ching was this man, and nothing would alter his opinion.

The four Kingsmill boys who were the crew came from the island of Apamama, in the Kingsmill or Gilbert Islands. Therefore they were British subjects. But they all went in fear of Ray Leeuwin and Ching. And Ching they specially hated, for he often hit them with the rattan cane that he always carried.

There came a day at last when they did sight land. It was a real low island, lying awash in the sea like a green emerald set on a sapphire.

The graceful coco-palms seemed to rise from the very sea itself, so low was the coral bank enclosing the lagoon, and the trees were wrapped in a golden mist from the surf which thundered on the white coral beaches which lay dazzling in the sun as the schooner drifted slowly by on a strong current.

Leeuwin seemed glad to see this low-lying atoll, for he unbent enough to tell the boys that it was one of the Duke of Gloucester or Four Crown Islands.

The boys gazed at the lovely island spell-bound. And Ray Leeuwin looked sideways at them with an evil smile in his glittering black eyes.

"You'll see enough coral islands before you've done with 'em, my lads!" said he. "And don't you think that we are going to land on this one. Our island is called Doubtful Island, and it's mighty doubtful if those who get there ever get away again!"

He said no more, and the boys watched the island as it seemed to drift astern of them and disappeared swiftly in a golden haze.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

A Strange Discovery

THE boys soon learned that this haze meant islands, and their look-out increased, for these low-lying atolls were swiftly raised from the sea.

They passed another two lovely islands that afternoon, one of which they heard was called "All in the Way," whilst the other was called "Right in the Road." They were now in a sea of swift currents, and such islands, whose wide, stretching reefs have gained this remote corner of the Pacific the name of the Dangerous Archipelago.

And Jeff, who knew something of these parts, told them that there was nigh a thousand miles of this sea, where the currents ran all ways, and no mariner ever knew exactly where he was.

"Dis am de ships' graveyard, young gemmen!" said he. "And it is der mos' dangerous an' mos' beautiful sea in der worl'. And it is full ob der worst men. We hab got some ob dem on board, specially dat Chineec. But eat some ob dis good sea-pie, boys, and keep yo' peckers up. You shall come home safe enough!"

But, two days after this, Uncle Jeff began to have his doubts as to whether any of them would see home again, for the barometer dropped with a suddenness that betokened a hurricane, and the blue all went out of sky and sea, leaving them livid.

Except for the swell, the sea was as calm as glass, and the Magellan Cloud rolled on it with a sickening monotony, the pitch bubbling out of the seams of her decks, and every block creaking as she rolled.

"From der look ob de sky dar am gwine to be a big harry-cane, young gemmen!" said Uncle Jeff when a coppery sunset had given place to night, "and dis am a bery bad sea in which to catch a harry-cane. But come you an' have yo' supper. It am no good gettin' drowned on an empty stomach, and dere's waffle cakes an' syrup, same as yo' likes 'em!"

The hurricane opened with heavy lightning, without thunder, which lit the night as bright as day, and showed them a ghostly island sliding away under their lee, its tall palms quivering as though in anticipation of the coming storm.

Then the great ragged clouds tore over the sky, blotting out the dim stars, and a low wailing started in the air, though it was so windless that a candle was burning naked on deck.

The few storm sails that were set in anticipation of the coming blow quivered and slatted now and then, and the boys saw that it was a tremendous sea current that was bearing them clear of the island. And they were very glad to see it wearing away astern, for they thought that under the circumstances they would sooner have its room than its company.

Then the candle puffed out under a fitful gust of wind, and a squall of rain came roaring over the sea. The tiny little storm sails filled with a bang, and the hot rain roared down on deck in a deluge that flooded the scuppers.

Then away they went before the storm, Ray Leeuwin and the Chink hanging to the wheel looking like a couple of evil spirits as they were lit by the lightning flashes.

The sea started to get up, and soon great hills of water were chasing the flying schooner. The boys took shelter in the little cabin aft, and busied themselves with cleaning the brass of the glass racks, for they had no mind to turn in. Harry had been warned that he might be wanted to help at the wheel. But it was evident that, just at this stage of the storm, Ray Leeuwin preferred to have Ching as his second hand at the wheel.

For a couple of hours the boys

worked in the cabin, cleaning and polishing. They could hear the rising seas thundering along the sides of the little vessel as she raced through the storm, and their voices were nearly drowned in the howling of the wind in the rigging.

George had stepped into the little lazarette aft to get some fresh cotton waste for cleaning, when he suddenly came to a standstill.

"Help! Help!" cried a voice that sounded almost under his feet.

George called to Harry, who came out of the cabin.

"What is it?" he asked his brother.

George lifted his finger, with an awe-stricken look on his boyish face.

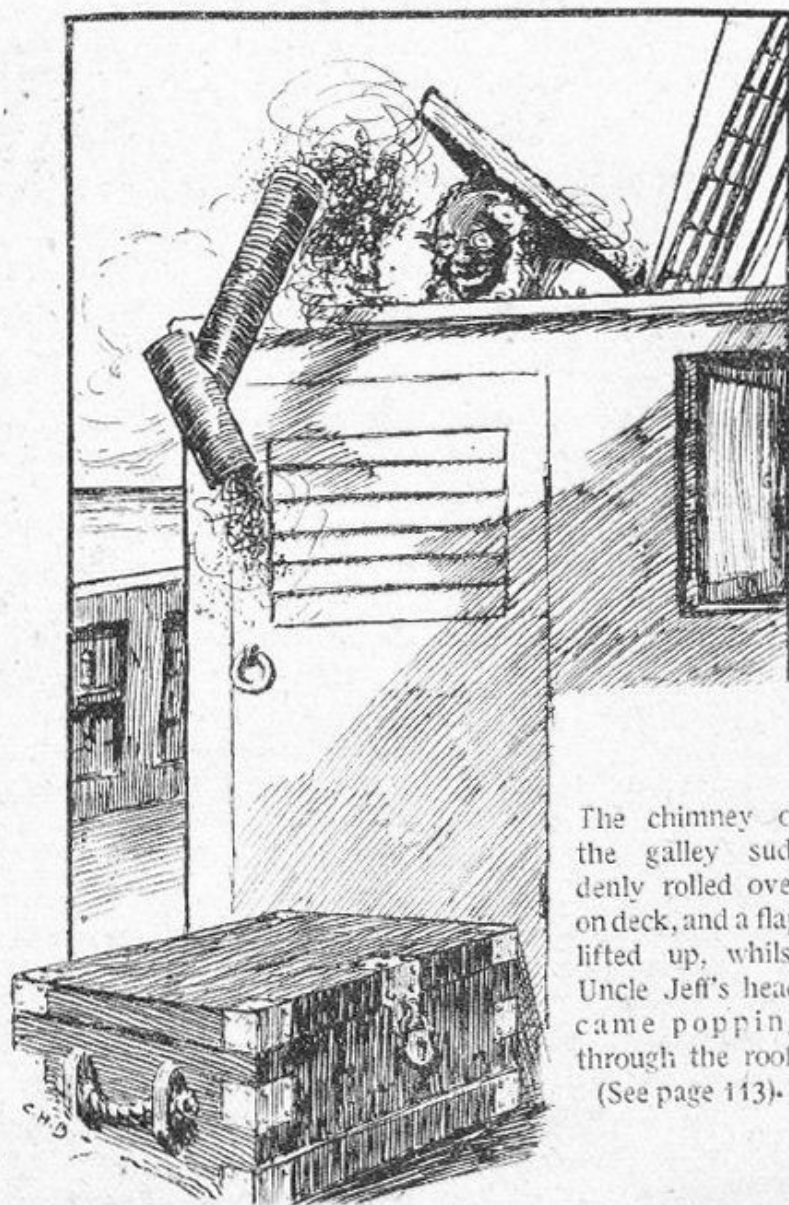
"Listen! I thought I heard someone calling just now!" he cried. Again the cry for help sounded, audible even above the howling voices of the storm outside.

The boys looked down at the floor of the lazarette. The sound certainly came from under their feet.

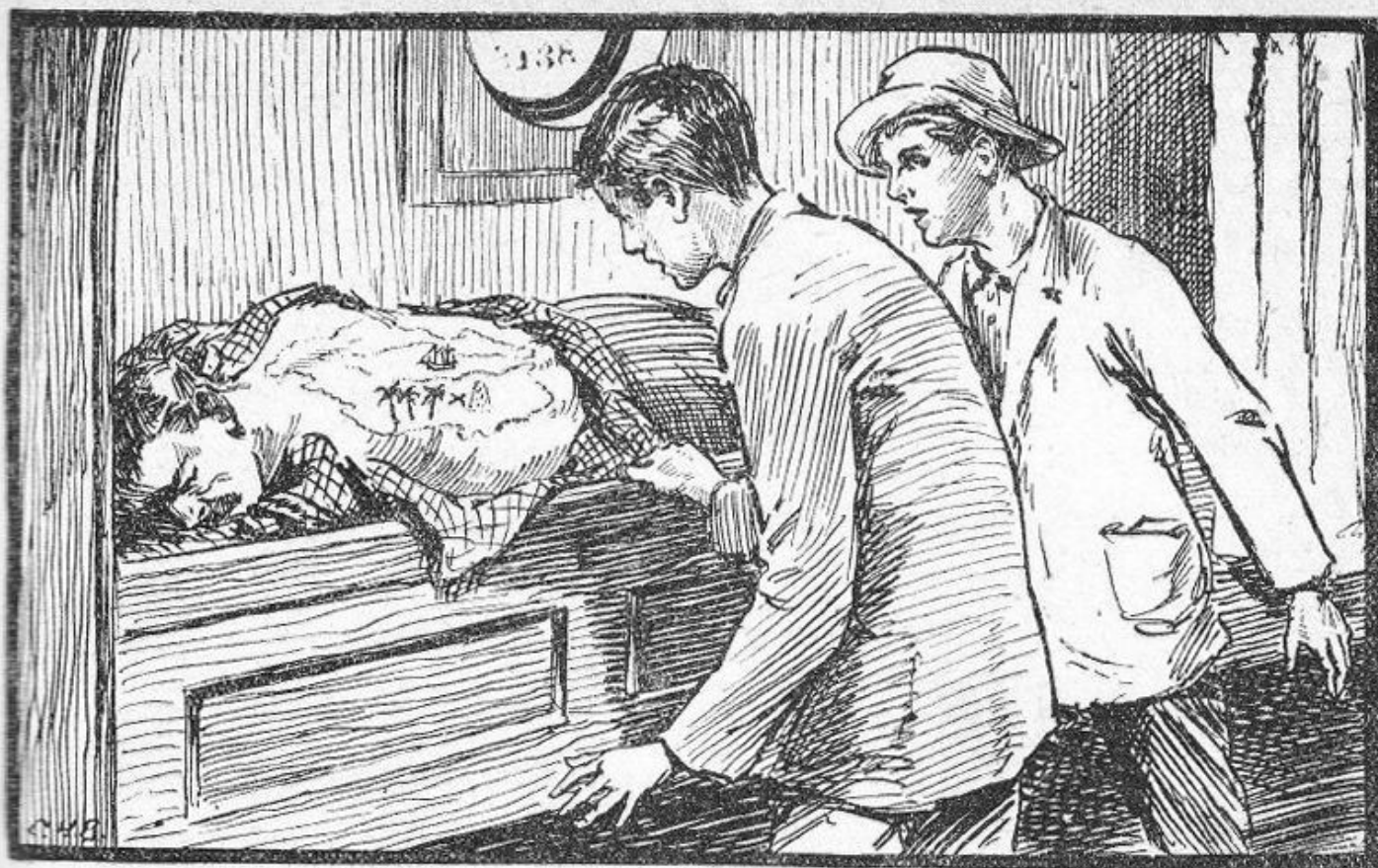
Harry stooped and pulled back a small length of carpet, and there, in the deck, was a teak-framed trap fitted with a sunk brass ring.

"Give us a hand to hoist this up, George!" said he.

The two boys, stooping, put their fingers in the ring and pulled together, lifting the trap. Down below they had a glimpse



The chimney of the galley suddenly rolled over on deck, and a flap lifted up, whilst Uncle Jeff's head came popping through the roof. (See page 113).



Harry gave a cry of astonishment. For on the back of Myles Stanton was tattooed in clear blue lines the perfect map of a large island. (See page 114)

of a dark hold filled with cases of wood, and now to their ears came plainly the call:

"Help, you chaps! Help!"

Then, suddenly, they were both taken by the scruff of the neck from behind and hurled right and left against the panelling with a heavy bang that nearly knocked the wind out of them.

"What are you doing here, you young ruffians!" demanded Ray Leeuwin, who stood behind them, his face absolutely convulsed with rage. "I'll teach you to get spying round my ship!"

"We were not spying!" replied Harry indignantly. "My brother heard a cry for help down below, and we naturally opened the trap to see what it was. And we heard the cry plainly when we opened the trap!" added Harry. "There is a stowaway down there amongst the cases. Maybe he is being crushed to death now that the schooner is pitching about so!"

Ray Leeuwin kicked down the trap hatch savagely.

"Get out of this!" he snarled. "I'll put

you two on the wheel for a bit. You'll soon have the buck out of you. And don't you listen for any more stowaways, or I'll treat your ears as they treated Ching's tongue!"

And he kicked viciously at the boys with his heavy sea boots, at the same time drawing his pistol from his pocket.

"Out on deck with you!" he cried.

They climbed out on the reeling deck and staggered aft to the wheel.

The schooner was scudding almost under bare poles before the gale, for two out of three of her little storm trysails had been blown clean out of the weather ropes.

"Give the wheel to these kids!" cried Ray Leeuwin to Ching. "I want you below to have a look over the chart. You know this blessed labyrinth better than I do!"

Harry and George took the wheel, and he stood a few minutes watching them as they steered the flying Magellan Cloud before the hurricane.

The steering was tricky, but both the boys were excellent sailors, for they had learned their craft in Sydney Harbour, where the

gusts are strong and frequent. And there was little difficulty to them in steering this flying schooner.

Leeuwin gave a grunt and a nod of satisfaction when he saw how well the boys tackled the job, for his crew of four Kanakas were paralysed with fear and almost useless.

"I did right to ship a couple of white hands," he muttered to himself. "Come along, Ching!"

And away he went with his Chinese mate, staggering with the sickening lurches of the little vessel.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Victims of the Storm

THE boys were left quite alone to manage the schooner as, chased by the tremendous seas that were knocking up before the hurricane, she tore through the night.

Luckily the sea was running with the strong ocean current, so the great rollers were large and unconfused. But the boys knew well enough what it would be like if they should encounter one of the many cross currents of this restless ocean. Then the Magellan Cloud would have to fight for her life.

For two hours they clung to the wheel, soaked by the spray, and their faces stinging in the flying spindrift.

Ray Leeuwin was down below in the cabin, drinking with Ching and poring over the charts of these troubled seas. He seemed to have forgotten all about the boys, though two hours' trick at the helm in that weather was more than enough for the most experienced sailors.

And during this time the sea grew worse and worse, the huge rollers stiffening as they reared up like great sea hills behind the little craft.

Then of a sudden Harry gave a cry.

"Hang on, George!" he yelled. "We are pooped!"

Sure enough, with a rush and a roar, a great comber came roaring down in tons of foam close behind the Magellan Cloud, whose bow, even now, was rising to another wave.

Harry knew what it was. Here they had struck an eddy in the great ocean current,

and the sea about them was whipping into a whirlpool of confused breakers.

But he had no time to tell his brother what was happening.

With a roar and a crash the sea tore on board, pouring over the poop and filling the waist till all they could see of the Magellan Cloud were her masts sticking out of the water.

For a few seconds the gallant little vessel seemed to lie still as though crushed by that burden of water on her decks. And the boys, gasping and panting from the blow of the sea, wondered to find themselves still clinging to the spokes of the wheel.

Then the sea roared off through the scuppers, whilst the schooner tore on through the white water smother left by the toppling of the breaker.

"Another!" yelled Harry, as a second comber roared down on them, burying the stern of the little schooner in a mass of white foam.

Harry and George, half stifled as they hung desperately to the wheel, saw the mass of water rush forward, and, as it poured over the break of the poop in a huge fall, Ray Leeuwin and Ching attempted to climb up to the poop. The two ruffians had been brought out from their carouse in the cabin by the thunder of the previous sea on deck, and, doubtless thinking that the exhausted boys had allowed the schooner to broach to, were hurrying to the wheel.

But the full force of the sea caught them on the steps, burying them breast deep and tearing their hands away from the side ropes of the ladder.

The boys heard a faint yell as the two figures were rolled over in the welter of white water and washed along the decks, banging with tremendous force against the foremast. Then the Magellan Cloud, with a huge roll, emptied the water off her deck over the low rail, and the boys saw those two grim figures, still supported by their oilskin coats, sliding past on the tormented sea.

They could do nothing for them. Doubtless that crashing blow against the foremast had stunned them both or killed them. Ray Leeuwin and his evil mate had gone to their

last account. And somehow it seemed to the boys that the Magellan Cloud, rid of these two evil souls, found a new lightness. No more seas overtook her, but she flew before the hurricane like a sea bird.

The boys could only keep her going. They were lost in the labyrinth of the Pacific, for they had no knowledge of navigation. They could expect no relief, for the Kanakas were shut in the fo'c's'le, half dead with fear, whilst Uncle Jeff was imprisoned in his galley against which the sea had washed a heavy chest of tools that held the door closed.

So to the wheel they clung all night, and when the first of the grey dawn broke over the wild sea, it seemed to them that the weather was moderating.

"Do you think you can manage her alone for a minute, George?" shouted Harry. "If so, I will rouse out the Kanakas and get them on the wheel. I am sure the poor chaps were as much afraid of Leeuwin as they were of the hurricane."

George nodded, and Harry staggered forward along the deck and called out the four Kingsmill boys, telling them that the captain and the mate were washed overboard and that they must come and steer.

Soon four very miserable figures crawled out of the swamped fo'c's'le. The four Kanakas were turned to ashy grey in place of their usual coppery-olive complexion, and they looked round the sea with anxious eyes.

"Get on the wheel, boys!" cried Harry. "There's nothing to be afraid of now."

Luleo, one of the boys who had more character and stuffing in him than the rest, looked round at the sky.

"Capten Looey, 'im gone?" he asked.

"Yes, and the Chinees as well," replied Harry.

Luleo gave a great sigh of relief.

"Den gale him blow out," he said with decision. "Dat Chinees man him Jonah man. Him no luck man."

Then a bright thought struck Harry. He thrust his hand in his pocket and produced the engraved whale's tooth which the Finn sailor had given him, showing the natives the magic runes that were engraved thereon.

"We can't go to Davy Jones's locker with

this on board, boys!" cried Harry. "It's big magic."

The faces of the natives brightened at the sight of the tooth. They knew what this charm was, for they had all sailed on whalers, and there a whale's tooth, engraved in this manner, was looked on as a certain charm against hurricanes. Indeed, at that moment any one of the four would have given a year's pay for that tooth.

Harry stuffed it in the pocket of Luleo's oilskin.

"There you are," said he. "You can have it between you. Then you can't come to any harm, and you'll keep the schooner going!"

The grey faces of the whole four brightened at once. Their fears fell away from them, and soon they were shouting and heaving on the wheel, meeting the veering of the schooner like a crowd of happy schoolboys.

The boys, hanging on to the pin-rail, watched them, and saw that they knew their job. Then a shout of laughter went up from them, for the chimney of the galley suddenly rolled over on deck and a flap lifted up, whilst Uncle Jeff's head came popping through the roof.

Uncle Jeff, finding himself in prison, had sawn a hole through the roof, and soon, climbing out of his cell, he crawled up on the roof and dropped down on to the heavy carpenter's chest.

The boys called to him, and they led the way to the cabin.

"Captain's gone, and the Chinees!" said Harry. "But come along, Uncle Jeff, there's a mystery aft here that we've got to look into at once."

"De Capten gone?" demanded Uncle Jeff, rolling his eyes. "And dat Chinees, too?"

"They were washed overboard by that second sea that pooped us in the night," said Harry briefly, as he led the way into the cabin.

"Bress my soul!" exclaimed Uncle Jeff. "Den our bad luck he am gone. Dose were two Jonah men. Dey was wicked enough to sink any ship!"

Harry led the way to the lazarette and lifted the trap in the deck.

"Ahoy!" he cried.

"Help!" came the answer in a faint voice.

"Where are you?" asked Harry, whilst Uncle Jeff rolled his eyes in wonderment.

"Bress ma soul, it am a stowaway!" he exclaimed. "Now what chile would wan' to stowaway on Ray Leeuwin's ship?"

"I'm not a stowaway," gasped the faint voice from below. "I'm a prisoner, shut up in a box like a dog. I've been shut up here six weeks, and I'm dying."

"Quick!" gasped Harry. "An axe, crow-bars, and a lamp!"

All were quickly forthcoming, and Harry, climbing down amongst the cases of trade in the hold, attacked a large square case from which the voice issued. It was a huge packing case, bored with air holes, and stoutly clamped with iron bands and rivets. In the top was a trap for the passage of food, which was secured by a stout lock.

Harry tore this open, and then started to saw away the lid of the case.

And, to their horror, lying in this awful den was a man—a white man—too far gone to move.

"You don't belong to that devil Leeuwin?" he asked feebly, as he looked up at the horror-stricken faces of the boys and the old negro peering into the case.

"Ray Leeuwin has gone overboard—him and his Chinees!" responded Harry. "Come, we'll break up the rest of the case, mate, and get you out of this. What is your name?"

"Myles Stanton!" whispered the man.

The boys looked at one another. So this was the sailor for whose body the police had been advertising in Sydney! Sure enough, on the man's emaciated wrist, in which the bones stuck out like the bones of a skeleton, they could see the tattoo marks set out by the police advertisement—a crown and an anchor.

"Why," exclaimed George, "you are the man whose body the police are advertising for in Sydney. There is a £10 reward for you, and you are supposed to be drowned in the harbour."

Just a glimmer of a smile played on the face of the exhausted man.

"It would be cheap at that, boys," said he. "My body is worth the right side of three

million pounds, and that's why that scoundrel, Ray Leeuwin, shanghied me like this! It didn't matter to him if I was alive or dead. But my body was worth it alone!"

The boys lifted him gently, but so weak was the prisoner that he fainted as they carried him to Ray Leeuwin's bunk in the little state-room.

They spooned weak brandy and water between his lips, and Jeff went off to make some soup warm for him.

Then the boys washed their patient. He was conscious now, but too weak to speak. Yet he looked up at them gratefully as they washed him and made him comfortable.

And as they turned him over, cutting away the shirt from his back, Harry gave a cry of astonishment.

For on the back of Myles Stanton was tattooed in clear blue lines the perfect map of a large island enclosing a lagoon of some size. In the map figured a ship and three tall palm-trees, and a cairn of stones, close by which was tattooed a bright red cross.

"Jiminy!" exclaimed Harry. "Why, the poor chap is a walking atlas!"

And Myles Stanton smiled feebly at Harry's words.

He pointed to the brandy, and Harry spooned some more of the weak mixture through his shrunken lips.

"It's a map that I am, boys!" said he. "The map of the biggest treasure in the world—the treasure of Diego Valdez, the pirate, which he hid on Doubtful Island from his galleon the San Christoval. And it's share and share alike when we get it!"

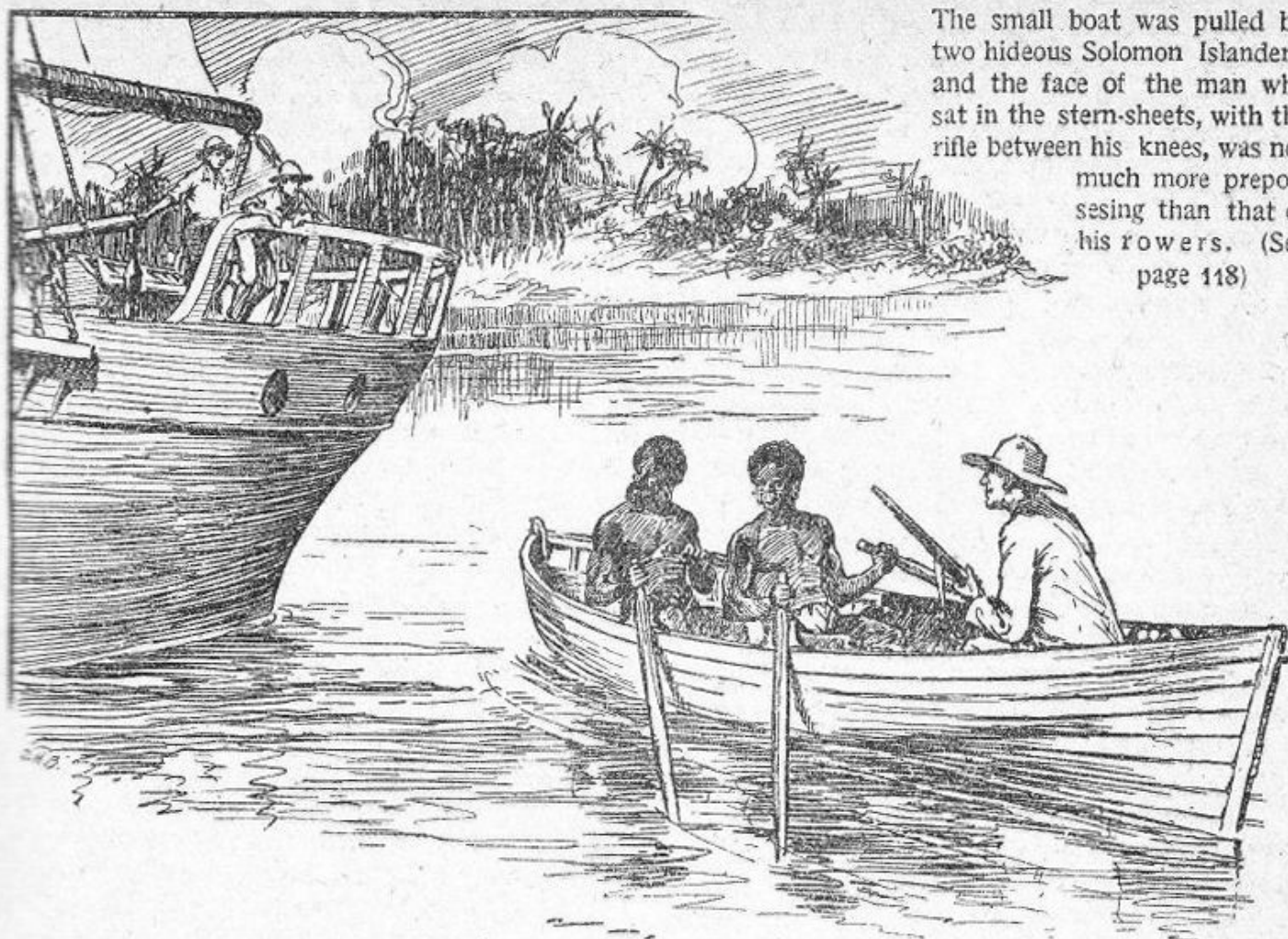
And Myles Stanton had no strength to tell them more.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Doubtful Island

FOR the next twenty-four hours the schooner flew before the storm, and the boys had a busy time nursing Myles Stanton, and taking their turns at the wheel to relieve the natives.

But the hurricane was blowing itself out, and, though the Magellan Cloud was badly knocked about, her hull was still tight.



The small boat was pulled by two hideous Solomon Islanders, and the face of the man who sat in the stern-sheets, with the rifle between his knees, was not much more prepossessing than that of his rowers. (See page 118)

In the noontide of the following day, the sky broke, showing a vivid streak of blue, and that night the wind went down with the sun, leaving only a great glassy swell under-running the sea.

Myles Stanton had told them his story. He related how, four years before, he had escaped from the schooner *Golden Hope* when her cargo of dried copra or coco kernel was afire. With three shipmates in the schooner's whaler he had reached a lonely and uninhabited atoll which they had called Doubtful Island.

Here they had lived for six months on coconuts and the shellfish which they had gathered amongst the rocks, and in their exploration of the island had stumbled on the treasure of Diego Valdez. The four shipwrecked sailors had agreed between them that they would come back for the treasure if they ever got away from the island, for well they knew the character of the few craft that used those lonely seas.

They were perfectly certain that if they

revealed the existence of the treasure, they would have to pay three millions for a passage from the island, or it might well happen that those who found them would rob them of their find and leave them on the island.

One by one Myles Stanton's friends had died of the hardships of their life, leaving their shares of the treasure to him. And, before the last one died, he pricked the chart of the treasure on Myles' back so that it might not be lost.

Then Myles had been left alone on the island. And the loneliness of the place had sent him mad. For six months he had sat by the lagoon with the gulls screaming round his head. And he had got to thinking that the gulls were shouting at him and mocking him.

"I used to think they were mocking me, young gentlemen," said Myles, relating his story, "I used to think they were shouting, 'Hi, hi, Myles! You are going to die and we are going to eat you!' And, sometimes, I would manage to knock one over with a stone,

and I would eat him as a change from the lagoon clams. Then I went right mad, and the American warship that took me off found me sitting on the edge of the lagoon jibbering at the gulls. And I didn't come to my senses till I was put ashore at Sydney. And after that they kept me in the asylum for a long time, so that it was near a year before I was discharged as cured, though the doctors said that I must not think or jabber about the treasure, which they thought was my illusion. My nerves were all gone, you see, young gents," added Myles, "and when I thought of that treasure hidden on Doubtful Island and me a penniless man and thought to be loony, it used to excite me till all the blood ran to my head, and I was nearly loony indeed."

Myles Stanton sighed at this.

"Then I went to try and get some of the people in Sydney interested in my story. But none of them would believe me. They knew that I'd come out of the asylum, and that I was supposed to be crazy over a lost treasure, and no shipowner was going to risk a thousand pounds to get a madman's three millions. There was only one who listened, and that was Ray Leeuwin. He owned his own schooner, and he cruised about these seas, and it was nothing much to him to look in on one of the deserted islands. And, in proof, I agreed to give him the position of the island where the treasure was hidden for a start. Then, if he found the island, and was satisfied about my story, we were to go halves, and he was to take me as a passenger with him this trip. I know that he found the island all right, for he left his brother there to hold the claim if there should be any treasure on the island.

"Then he came back for me," Rod Leeuwin carefully measured and studied the blue map on the back of the insensible Myles Stanton. (See page 120)

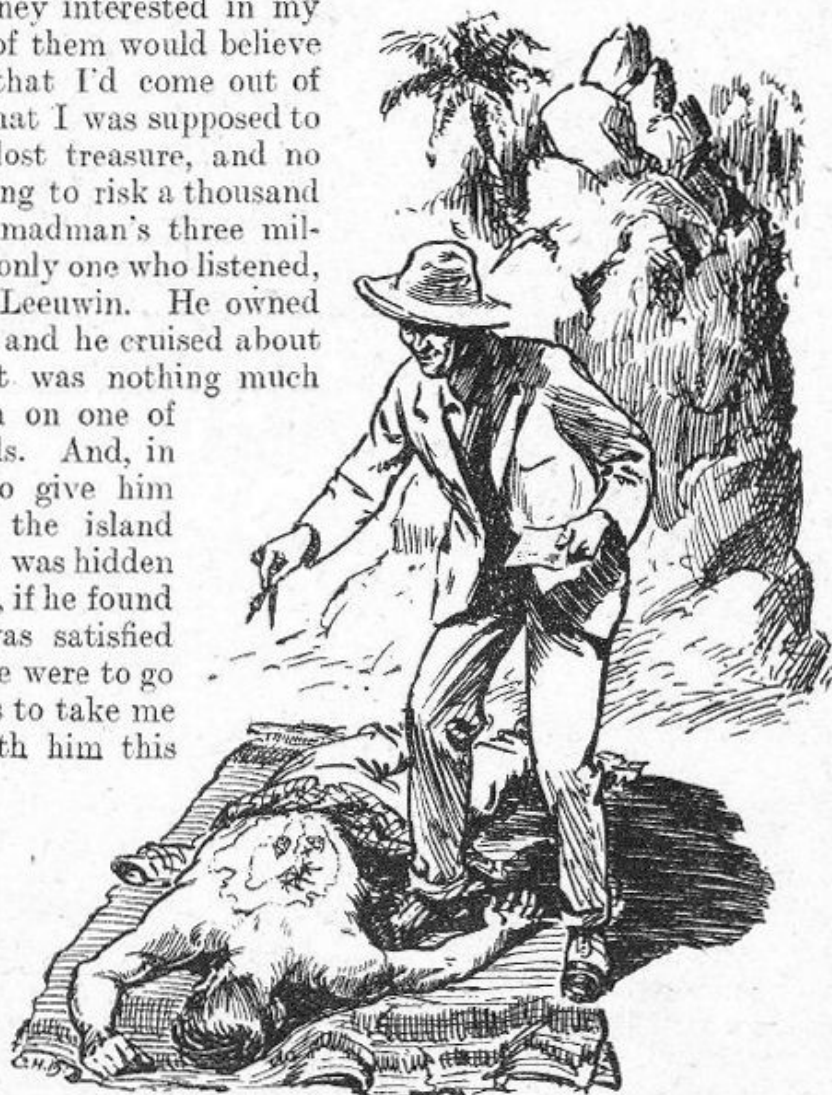
added Myles bitterly. "And this is how he gave me my passage. Got me aboard quietly one night, gave me a cup of coffee that was hocussed with opium, and shut me up in the box where you found me.

"He wanted all the treasure to himself, you see, young gentlemen, and he had discovered that I had the chart of it printed on my back. And what did it matter to him whether he had me alive or dead? All that he wanted was that they should think in Sydney that the poor loony sailor had slipped over the edge of the wharf one night and had been drowned. And it was for the same reason that he shipped you, young gentlemen. The scoundrel knew that you had no belongings who would ask questions after you. You were good enough to help him navigate the schooner

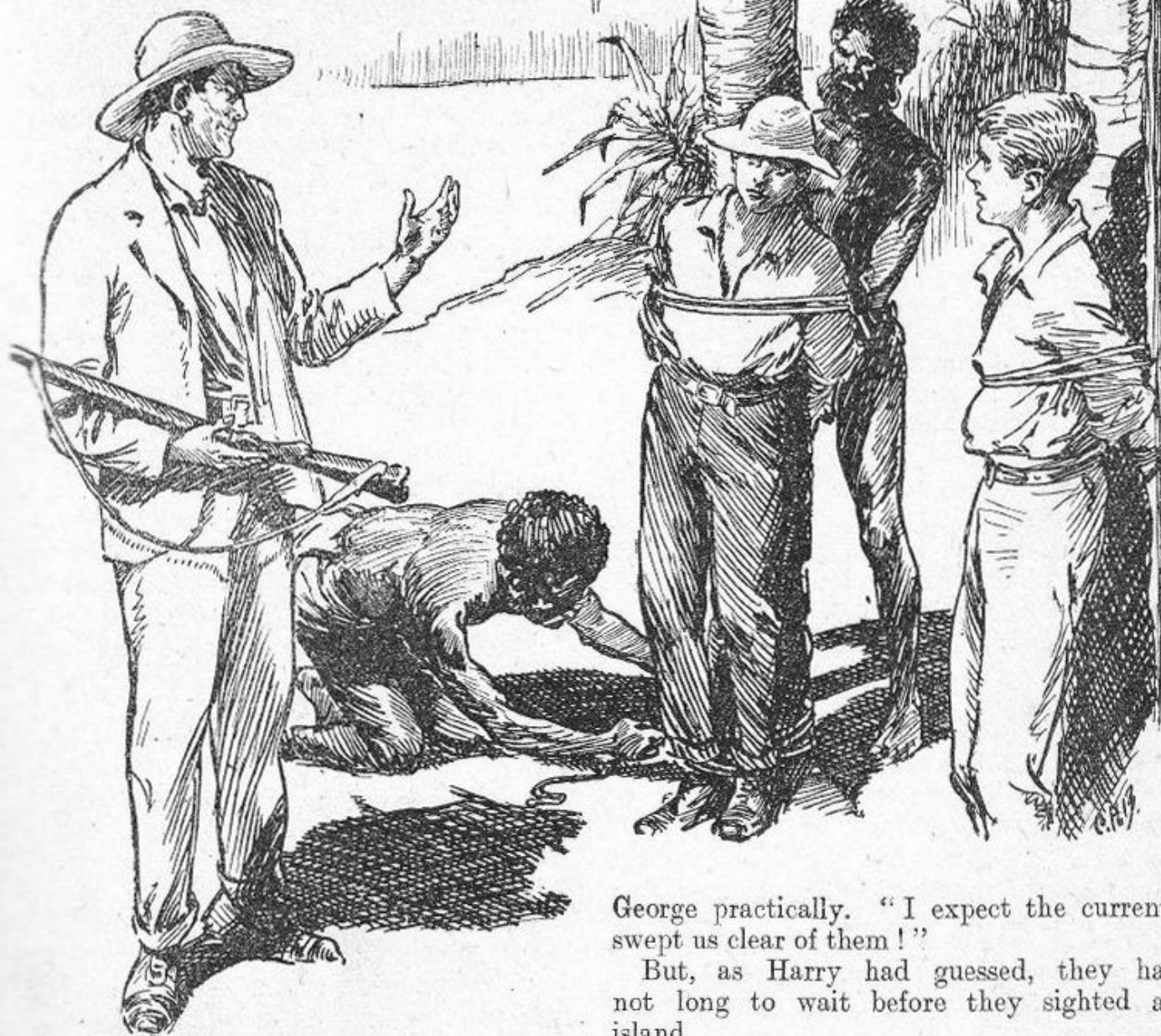
to Doubtful Island. But he did not mean you to come back again alive. 'Dead men tell no tales' was Ray Leeuwin's motto, and now he will carry it out himself!"

Such was Myles Stanton's story, and it hung together with all that they knew of the evil adventurer who had lured them aboard the Magellan Cloud.

They talked of it that night as they steered together. Sail had been made on the Magellan Cloud, and she was now forging steadily ahead under a star-spangled sky, the great smooth sea hills rolling her gently.



"I thought I'd have you boys safe before I opened my prize packet," cried Black Rod. "I'm taking no chances. Ho, ho! Not me! Dead men tell no tales!" (See page 122)



They were anxious and worried about their new friend.

"He seems very weak!" said Harry. "That brute Leeuwin has nearly killed him. I'm for putting in at the first lagoon we see. He'll do better on shore than in that stuffy cabin. And maybe," added Harry, "it won't be long before we sight an island. We must have passed fifty of them in the hurricane."

"Good job we didn't hit one!" replied

George practically. "I expect the currents swept us clear of them!"

But, as Harry had guessed, they had not long to wait before they sighted an island.

Just as the sky was turning rose colour with the dawn, the native Luleo, who was on the look-out, gave a shout of "Land ho!"

There, about five miles distant and straight ahead, rose, from a mist of fine spray with which the breakers surrounded it, the palm tops of a small island.

The current was setting the Magellan Cloud straight for it, and soon the palms rose up above the horizon so that the boys could see their long shafts. They seemed to stand up

in the white surf that was beating on the outer reefs of the island like lines of soldiers.

As the sun rose clear of the night wrack, casting long shadows along the deck, the schooner drew up to the island, and now the boys could see the long white line of the coral beach gleaming like snow under the palms.

There was not much wind as they slowly drifted along this shore, the Magellan Cloud bowing and curtsying in the long-backed, sapphire-blue rollers that went racing inshore to crash into foam on that enchanted beach.

And, as they were watching this shore, which was but a mile distant, Myles Stanton came crawling out on deck, for he had heard the cry of "Land ho!"

The boys ran to him and supported him, for he was almost too weak to stand. Then George ran and got a deck-chair and laid him in it, covering him with blankets from the state-room.

The eyes of the sick man were shining with excitement.

To the boys the island looked exactly like any one of those fairylike islands which they had passed on their voyage. But it was not so to Myles Stanton.

"It's Doubtful Island, young gentlemen!" he stammered. "I know every tree of the place. The entrance to the lagoon is round the other side, beyond that point where the spouter shows. Tell the boys to carry me, chair and all, up to the fo'c's'le. I'll con the passage for you through the reefs. Luleo can stand by me to shout the orders!"

The natives carried him forward, and Luleo stood by the sick man, who could barely speak above a whisper, to shout his orders to the boys at the wheel.

Myles lay in the deck-chair looking out over the bows. He made the boys steer away out to sea, giving the spouting reef a wide berth. Then under his direction, Luleo shouting the directions all the time, the Magellan Cloud hauled her wind and headed in for that fairylike shore.

To the boys it seemed as though they were steering the schooner straight to destruction, for around them white creaming reefs of jagged coral began to crop up through the water.

But a fresh catpaw of morning breeze blew

true and fair as the schooner headed in to this dangerous shore.

She had plenty of steerage way, and she needed it, for it was starboard and port all the time as she twisted and turned in the narrow deep-water passage through the reefs.

Then amongst the palms two poles came into view, from which fluttered a red rag, the remnant of a strip of bunting. Between these there was an opening in the palms, and shooting through this the sails of the schooner emptied as she ran into a great glassy, calm lagoon, which lay like a sheet of mother-of-pearl under the morning sun.

This great sea pond, protected from the ocean by the low banks of coral rock and palms all round it, was about three miles long and a mile wide. The boys could see a rough shack or two ashore, made of palm thatching, which looked more like copra sheds than human habitations. But on the beach close by this they saw a small, white whaler hauled up, and as the schooner glided towards this, a man in white duck clothes, followed by two natives, made his appearance at the door of one of the shacks.

He shaded his eyes against the morning sun as he looked at the schooner. Then he dodged into the shack and came out again carrying a rifle, walking swiftly over the beach to the boat.

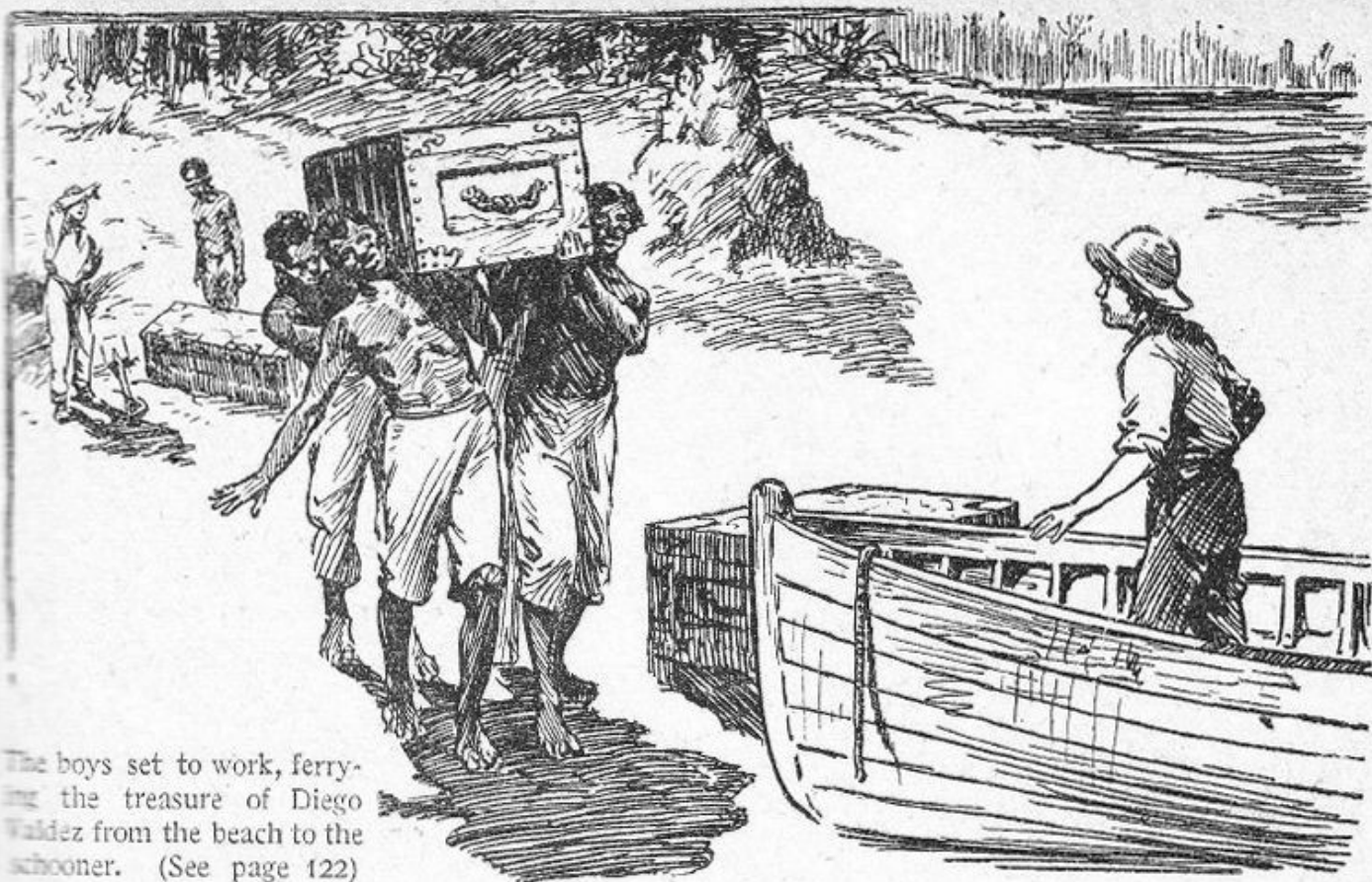
The sails were lowered, and the boys let go the anchor. Then they turned to Myles.

"Who will this chap, be Myles?" asked Harry. "Is it Leeuwin's brother?"

But Myles Stanton gave no answer, the strain of piloting the schooner into the lagoon had been too much for him, and he was insensible.

The boys dragged bedding out of the cabin and made up a bed on deck for him under the awning; then they laid him on it, and set one of the natives to fan him whilst they went to the rail to watch the boat that was rowing off to them.

It was pulled by two hideous Solomon Islanders, at whom their own native crew were looking askance and, as the boat drew near, the man who sat in the stern-sheets with the rifle between his knees became visible. And his face was not much more



The boys set to work, ferrying the treasure of Diego Valdez from the beach to the schooner. (See page 122)

prepossessing than that of his rowers. Harry's question was answered as the boat came alongside, and the evil face of the steersman looked up at the boys. He was the double of the dead Ray, save that a knife slash across his face had twisted his face into a smile that was perpetual.

But there was no smile in his evil, black eyes as he looked up at the boys.

"Where's my brother?" he asked, as he sprang lightly aboard. "My name is Rod Leeuwin—Black Rod they call me!"

Harry hesitated at breaking the bad news.

The jet black eyes of Rod Leeuwin turned on the two boys coldly. He did not show the slightest grief at the news of his brother's death. Then they turned on Myles Stanton, who was lying white and insensible under the blankets on deck.

"You mean that you murdered my brother and the Chinees and slung them overside into the ditch, eh?" he demanded, the evil, twisted smile of his face deepening.

"I have told you the truth!" replied Harry proudly.

"Keep your temper, boy," answered Rod

Leeuwin, tapping the barrel of his rifle meaningly. "I've got a cure for temper here. There's only one that's allowed a temper on Doubtful Island. That's me! Now, how did you find this island?" he added.

"We didn't find it," replied Harry. "It found us, and Mr. Stanton piloted us in. He is very ill, as you see, and it has been too much for him."

"So you have brought that loony with you!" sneered Rod. "He's the chap I want. Well, well! So Ray's gone," he added as though speaking to himself. "So much the better—the dog would have swindled me out of my share of the boodle if he had lived!"

And with this unbrotherly remark Rod Leeuwin strode across the deck to the sick man, his grinning face full of malevolence.

He turned the insensible man over with his rubber-shod foot roughly, then drawing his pocket-knife, he cut down the neck of Myles' shirt, laying the cloth aside so that he could see his back.

"That's the chap I want!" said he. "Sling him over into the boat, and I want you

youngsters, too. The rest can stay aboard and keep ship till I want 'em."

The boys hesitated, appalled by the brutality of this scoundrel. Ray Leeuwin had been bad enough. But this brother was a thousand times worse!

But, with a snarl, Rod Leeuwin swung his rifle forward and presented the muzzle at Harry's breast.

"Get that man into the boat!" he snarled. "Don't you know enough to take an order?"

"But the man is sick, sir!" protested Harry.

"You'll be twice as sick, my lad, if you don't jump to it!" snarled Leeuwin, his evil face still grinning, but convulsed with sudden anger. "I've got business to do that's got to be done quick. The tide sets out o' this lagoon at noon, and there's a British cruiser nosing around this part of the sea. So the Magellan Cloud sails at noon."

The boys called to the crew, and between them they lowered the insensible form of Myles Stanton into the whaler, where the two ruffianly looking Solomon Islanders were squatting and chattering in low tones.

These rolled their eyes at Rod Leeuwin and at his rifle as though they were deadly afraid of him, and at his bidding they pulled swiftly ashore.

Rod Leeuwin said nothing till the keel of the whaler grated on the coral.

Then he turned to the boys.

"Swing that walking map in the blankets!" said he. "The niggers can help you hoist him ashore."

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

The Hidden Treasure

THE boys twisted the ends of the blankets that were wrapped around Myles, making a sort of hammock of them. Then, assisted by the two natives, they carried the insensible man along the glaring coral sands, staggering under his weight.

Rod Leeuwin marched by their side, his rifle ready in the hollow of his arm. He had turned away from the thatched hut, and he led them for half a mile along the beach. Then he motioned to them to lower their burden.

"Drop him there, and turn him over on his face," said he briefly.

Harry's eyes blazed.

"Lay the poor chap out in this blazing sun, face down!" he exclaimed. "Not me, you brute! You'll kill him!"

For a moment there was murder in Leeuwin's smiling face.

He half lifted his rifle as Harry boldly faced him. But there was something in the boy's eye that seemed to hold him in check.

"Very well, young gentleman," he answered. "Since you are so squeamish, I'll do my work myself. I only want to consult the plan that is tatooed on this gentleman's back."

He muttered a few words in their native tongue to the two staring Solomon Islanders, who at once raced off along the sands full pelt for the huts.

Soon they came running back, shouldering picks and shovels.

It was plain, to judge by the way they moved, that Rod Leeuwin had his own way of getting obedience from his servants.

They came panting and breathless over the sands, gazing at their master like a couple of dogs, half cringing, half hoping for favourable notice.

But Rod Leeuwin did not look at them. He was smoking a cigarette, and, with a compass laid out on the sands, was measuring off a line from a half effaced cairn of piled coral rock.

He sat absorbed for a while, pencilling a lot of figures on a sheet of paper.

With his own hands he had turned the insensible Myles Stanton over on his face, leaving the poor fellow exposed to the glaring sun whilst he carefully measured and studied the blue map on his back, measuring distances with a pair of compasses.

At last he strode out on to the dry sands.

"Take shovels and dig there!" he ordered the boys. "Or——"

And he broke off and tapped his rifle significantly.

The two Solomon men also took shovels, and between them they opened a deep hole in the sand, whilst Leeuwin stood there watching them work.



C.H. BLAKE

The perspiration poured down the boys' faces, and they could feel their arms blistering in the sun. And their souls shrank within them as they wondered what was to be fate of their poor friend who lay there callously exposed to the biting rays of the tropic sun.

At last Harry straightened his back and faced Leeuwin.

"Look here!" said he boldly. "You can shoot if you like; but we are going on strike. We are not going to dig any more till you have put our pal in the shade, and have given him some water from that bottle!"

Rod Leeuwin hesitated. It was evident that he did not want Myles to live. At the same time, he did not want to have a charge of murder against him.

"All right!" he said grudgingly. "Move him to the shade of the palms. I don't want to kill him, but he's going to die, anyway!"

The boys shifted their friend to the shade, and forced some water between his lips. Then they went on digging, but without result.

Rod Leeuwin began to look anxious. The hole in the sands was full five feet deep. He took a shovel himself now, and started to make the sand fly.

But it was plain that hard work was not his line. Soon he was panting and puffing, and stood back from the hole, cursing the boys and the Solomon men for not digging faster.

But the words were still on his lips when he staggered back. The sand under his feet had given way, and he was standing nearly knee deep in the loose white coral dust.

Quick, all of you! Dig here!" he gasped eagerly, pointing to the spot where the subsidence had taken place, which was about three yards from the hole they had been digging.

The boys dug, and soon a rotten old plank, dried and bored by toredo worms, was lifted up; then another, and another.

"It's the treasure!" screamed Rod Leeuwin. "It's the treasure, and it's all mine now! Ray's gone—and it's all mine!"

With his eyes starting from his head, like the eyes of a maniac, he was grabbing in the sands now. There were golden coins mixed in it; great golden coins that bore the arms of Castille and Aragon. These were Spanish

doubloons. And mixed with these were small English rose nobles, coins the shape of a half-sovereign but lighter, for they were the third of a guinea in value.

"Six and eight every time!" cried Leeuwin, dusting the sand from a handful of these olden coins. "Six and eight—a lawyer's fee!"

The boys looked at one another. Rod Leeuwin was plainly mad. He threw each of them one of the small coins of the date of Henry VIII. There's your share," he mocked.

The boys let the coins lay where they fell. They were digging them out of the sand by the shovelful, the coins increasing in the sand as they dug down to the level where the canvas treasure sacks of Diego Valdez had mouldered away, releasing their golden load.

Then they came upon several huge chests of teak, bound with bronze, and with huge locks of chased bronze.

"That's the stuff!" screamed Leeuwin. "That's the real treasure. Rubies and pearls, and emeralds and sapphires. All mine! All mine!"

It took the united strength of five of them to lift the smallest of these chests out of the treasure hold. And, considering the hundreds of years during which it had been hidden away, the great chest was in wonderful preservation.

There was a huge key attached to the lock, and Leeuwin made them drag the chest up under the shade where its real owner lay still and silent, his face turned up to the whispering palms.

"This is the prize packet for me," snarled Rod Leeuwin, looking furtively round him like a dog with a bone.

Then his evil gaze fell upon the boys, and the furtive look in his eyes deepened.

Suddenly he grabbed his rifle and covered Harry. At the same moment he muttered a few words to the Islanders, who threw themselves on George, who, though he struggled desperately, was but as a child in their powerful grasp.

They bound George to the shaft of a coco palm; whilst Harry, with his hands up, looked straight into the barrel of that threatening rifle.

Then the three threw themselves on Harry,

and he, too, was bound hand and foot to a palm trunk with lashings of strong sinnet.

Leeuwin chuckled.

"I thought I'd have you chaps safe before I opened my prize packet," said he. "You settled Ray, but Rod's taking no chances. But before you die you shall see the treasure of Diego Valdez. Dead men tell no tales. Ho, ho! Dead men tell no tales!"

The ruffian thrust the bronze key into the lock, kneeling by the great chest. But, with all the force of his powerful, monkey-like hands, he could not turn it.

Then he spoke to one of the natives, who ran off and returned with a can of oil. With this and the feather of a sea bird Leeuwin oiled the locks and hasps and hinges carefully.

Then again he struggled with the key which turned and moved the tumblers of the lock with its powerful wards.

Then Leeuwin turned to the boys with a look of unspeakable cunning in his eyes.

"Look whilst you may!" he cried. "It is the treasure of Diego Valdez! The treasure—the treasure!"

His voice rose to a scream as he threw up the heavy lid with a jerk, revealing a shimmering mass of glittering jewels, that lay in the chest in greens and reds and brilliant flashes of white, like liquid fire.

But Leeuwin's scream of delight died away as the lid crashed back with the weight of a full hundredweight. His head drooped, and he fell forward, with his face over the dazzling load of gems.

The boys looked on amazed, and the two natives, with a yell of fear, took to their heels, and raced away along the beach.

Diego Valdez had had the last word. As that heavy lid had gone back with a crash, by a simple bit of wicked, old-fashioned mechanism, it had driven out at the side of the lock a sharp Toledo blade, which, unrusted beneath its secret polish, had driven straight through the black heart of Rod Leeuwin.

In his fever Myles Stanton moved and muttered uneasily. Then he rolled over.

"We've found it, boys! We've found it!" he muttered. "Share and share alike!"

Then he opened his eyes slowly, and winced as he saw the boys each bound to a tree.

"I was dreaming we'd found the treasure," he muttered.

"The treasure is found, Myles!" gasped Harry. "And that scoundrel Leeuwin is dead. Do you think you can crawl over here and loose my knife from my belt and cut me away from this tree?"

Myles pulled himself together, gazing with dazed eyes at the dead miscreant. Then slowly crawling on his hands and knees, he detached the clasp knife that hung at Harry's belt, cutting through the bonds that held the boy's hands to the tree.

"That's enough," said Harry, unwilling to overtax his strength. "I'll get myself and George free now."

With a few slashes of the knife he cut away the bonds about his legs; then he freed his brother.

Myles seemed to take no more notice of the box of shimmering jewels; he laid down again where he had crawled.

Then the boys, running to the shore, shouted to Uncle Jeff to send ashore the boat.

Uncle Jeff and the native crew had been wondering spectators of the scene ashore, and, when they heard Harry's voice shouting across the lagoon that Rod Leeuwin was dead, something like a cheer of relief went up from them.

In a few minutes they had the whaler of the Magellan Cloud in the water, and were racing for the beach as hard as they could row.

And it did not take them long to lift Myles tenderly and carry him down to the boat, by which he was swiftly ferried on board again, where a comfortable bed was made up for him on deck.

Then the boys and the natives set to work ferrying the treasure of Diego Valdez from the beach to the schooner.

For a moment or two they wondered how they were going to free that Toledo blade from the dead man. But as they closed the lid the fatal sword that was hidden in the mechanism of the box drew back like the tongue of a serpent.

Then covering Rod Leeuwin's body with branches, they proceeded with the removal of the treasure.

They took very good care not to try to

open any other of the huge cases and boxes that filled that treasure pit in the white sands of Doubtful Island. It was enough to get the load out to the ship and to hoist it on board.

They could get no help from the two Solomon Islanders in this work. These had seen the fatal stiletto work of the chest of Diego Valdez, and had declared that it was white man's magic which they could not touch. They hid themselves a mile up the beach amongst the coco palms, watching with furtive eyes the removal of the treasure.

It was past one o'clock, and the tide had turned in the lagoon when the boys learned the cause of the hurry of the dead Rod Leeuwin, for in the entrance of the lagoon there was a shrilling of a steam syren, and a moment later the grey hull of a small British cruiser came gliding round the corner of the lagoon entrance.

She dropped anchor close by the Magellan Cloud, and the boys hailed her for a surgeon.

And soon her duty steamboat came racing alongside, bringing a Navy lieutenant and the cruiser's surgeon, who at once attended to Myles.

"Look here!" said the lieutenant to the boys. "We've come here to arrest a fellow called Rod Leeuwin, part-owner of this very schooner, and we are looking to nab his brother Ray."

"You won't get Ray, sir," replied Harry. "He was washed overboard from this very schooner a few nights back in the hurricane; and as for Rod, there he lies under the palm-trees yonder on the beach."

And he told the astonished lieutenant of the marvellous death of the two evil brothers.

"Well, that'll save the hangman a job, anyway!" replied the lieutenant."

So it happened at sunset that night, after a burying party had been sent ashore to commit the body of Rod Leeuwin to the sands of Doubtful Island, H.M.S. Undine steamed out from the lagoon, bearing with her the boys and Myles and old Uncle Jeff, and the treasure of Diego Valdez.

The native crew were left with enough gold to set them up as rich men for the rest of their lives, and the Solomon Islanders were not forgotten, for they were awarded two large wooden boxes of real Navy plug tobacco, which counted far more to them than all the treasure of the Spanish pirate.

And, thanks to the surgeon's ministrations, Myles was up and about again before they sighted Sydney Heads, and with the boys he eagerly counted out two huge bags of gold—one for Uncle Jeff, and the other to buy Daddy Mercer a new boat.

There was enough there to buy Daddy Mercer a whole fleet of new boats, for the boys were millionaires now, and they were going home to their mother heavy laden with treasure.

And before they sailed for England they searched the harbour for the Finn sailor. He was not to be found, and no one knew where his ship had gone.

"It's no good looking for a chap like that," said the waterman of whom they made inquiries. "But hurry up, if you're for the London River packet. There she is, with the Blue Peter atrip, and the tender's going off now. Good-bye, young gents, and a pleasant voyage home. Good-bye, Mr. Stanton," he added. "You're lookin' better than when you landed. Good-bye!"

