

THE ISLAND OF THE STAIRS

A True Account of Certain Strange and Wonderful Adventures of Master John Hampdon, Captain, and Mistress Lucy Berforce, Gentlewoman, In the Great South Seas.

By JESSE TOWNSEND BRADY

1912, by Cyrus Townsend Brady

SYNOPSIS

Story of Sir Geoffrey Wilberforce, a sailor, Hampdon quarrels Duke of Arcester. Lucy breaks the news to Lucy Wilberforce and delivers a letter found on her body. Lucy has the other half of a map of a treasure and directions for finding the treasure.

Hampdon and Lucy start in a boat to the island of the stairs.

Lucy has a vision, and Lucy has a vision in a cabin. Desperate crew mutiny.

Lucy and Glibby demand the map of the island, who pretends to be asleep. Hampdon demands possession of the map.

Lucy offers to help the mutineers. The pair escape to the island of the stairs.

The mutineers become intoxicated, and Lucy leaves the ship for the island nearby.

CHAPTER IX. We Plan to Escape Together From the Ship.

No idea that it was morning yet, the night had passed so quietly. The eastern sky was gray, and although the fair to be an unpleasant one, already light enough to distinguish off to starboard. We were near it in the night. It too gray to make out much of the existence of the land. I thought I saw beyond the land others rising. At any rate it was where it ought to be, it made any doubt but that the island which we had been seeking weary months at sea.

The crew was on deck. I saw signs of Captain Maty, although I looked hastily at it. I learned later that they had him overboard without a word after they had killed him on the head. Pimball, and one or two others of the crew were on the quarterdeck, looking along the leeward side staring at the island. The men were at the wheel. The shouting and laboring heavily, I tried two hands to hold her

The night they had taken a whole lot of blowing. Everything topsy-turvy had been turned. The Rose of Devon was a sea way, and she was very weather out of it. One thing with satisfaction, evidently not thought it wise to break open the arms to force the key from me, I could easily have done, if them was armed.

I began, as I climbed over the railing and turned aft, "For you, Hampdon," began solemnly, and his failure to give me any title for present relations, "best," and he pointed to the island. "What land?" "I don't know," I answered. "I've been in these seas before." "You took an observation yesterday?" "No."

"Where were we?" "A latitude and longitude, what I had worked out. I didn't want these know exactly where we pulled out the chart as I compared its figures with the given them. He could not read letters.

"I said," he said, after studying the map for a little time, "far from the point we are at?"

"I said," he replied, "I don't know."

"Another shot at the sun, the latitude about right, the longitude?"

"I can't get no spot at the sun, can you?" "Unceremoniously," Glibby, casting a long look toward where the sky was cloudy already.

"I get an observation then have clear weather." "I can't get no spot at the sun, can you?" "Unceremoniously," Glibby, casting a long look toward where the sky was cloudy already.

"I can't get no spot at the sun, can you?" "Unceremoniously," Glibby, casting a long look toward where the sky was cloudy already.

act" what course to take and just what's best to be done." The advice was so self evidently good, in fact the only practicable advice, that there was no hesitation in accepting it. The boatswain stepped up to the horseblock, grabbed the trumpet and shouted his orders. Presently the ship was hove to with the island well under her lee, distant perhaps a league and a half or maybe two leagues. Personally I should not have hove to a ship on a lee shore. I should not have advised it, and indeed would have protested against it had I not suddenly developed a plan—a plan as desperate as ever came into man's head. But



"That is not far from the point we are making for, is it?"

then the situation required desperate remedies. And for the accomplishment of the plan the ship was now in the very best position I could have put her.

I was minded to desert the ship with my lady, get ashore and trust ourselves to the tender mercies of whatever natives there were rather than stay with the vessel. I took no stock in the sailors' promises and agreements. Once they got the treasure it would follow that they would kill me and take her.

When we got the Rose of Devon safely hove to the men all knocked off work at once, leaving the decks in a state of confusion. Indeed, save to clear up the gear, there was nothing to do but wait. Two or three men were stationed on watch, and the rest were given the freedom of the ship. I was in doubt as to what to say about the cabin; but, strangely enough, nobody made any effort to take advantage of the mastery of the ship to quarter himself there. Indeed, their quarters forward were almost as good as ours, and they evidently preferred to be together. The ship was generously provisioned, and the fare of the men had been unusually good. They did, however, break into the lazarette and help themselves to whatever they liked out of the cabin stores, including a case of bottled spirits.

I brought out other liquor and let them have as much as they wanted. A little liquor would make them ugly and intractable, I reasoned; a lot would make them drunk, and enough would render them completely helpless. I even joined them in their carousal. It was easy enough to spill my liquor and make a pretense at drinking, which soon deceived them. They took to the liquor like ducks to water.

The men on watch kept reasonably sober for a time, but even they were not too abstemious. I saw that. Later on the cook, who was not yet too drunk, fixed them up a regular banquet out of the cabin stores, and there was no objection to my taking a portion to my lady in the stateroom below, where she kept close and remained out of the way by my urgent entreaty.

My communications that long day with my sweet charge were necessarily intermittent and short. I did not dare to be long away from the men on deck. I still wore my sword, and I searched through the captain's cabin and found two heavy pistols, which I carefully charged, concealing them in the deep pockets of my pea jacket. I passed among the men freely, handing out the spirits, opening fresh bottles and handing rough jests, but took care never to be in any position where I could not command the companion hatch, which led to the cabin.

Our drift was slowly but surely in the direction of the island. Indeed, I think we had made half a league or more to leeward since we had last hove to. From time to time I searched the shore with a glass, seeing that the land was protected and completely enclosed by a reef, on that side at least, which agreed with the chart, but the sky continued overcast, and the mist grew thicker. So I couldn't make out much more than that. It was dark, and that was enough. It was big enough to support life, and I thought that I detected green patches here and there that betokened vegetation, and it so, water and life.

Nobody took any care to strike the bells, but when darkness fell I heard ed noisily that I would go below and turn in. All but the most seasoned and hardy drinkers were by this time dead drunk. There was evidently some little excitement on board, for no one yet conscious made any objection. I finished, using saltpetre on the deck, and Glibby, who was in no better case, with drunken effusiveness assured me that they would take care of the ship, and I went below, having provid-

ed all of them with a fresh supply of drink just before.

I sometimes wonder if I would not have been justified in killing them all while they were rendered thus helpless. But I could not bring myself to such wholesale murder, richly as they deserved it and little as I was inclined to mercy. I also thought of clapping them in irons and stowing them below. But there were not irons enough aboard for that purpose, and Mistress Lucy and I could not work the ship unaided. We could not even feed and water our prisoners. Yet if I could have counted on three or four true men's assistance I would have risked it.

How Mistress Lucy had passed the dragging, anxious hours of that awful day you can better imagine than I can describe. And my occasional visits had scarcely reassured her greatly. Yet in an emergency I have never known a woman who had more spirit.

She had left her noon meal practically untouched, and she was sitting there in the cabin nervously clutching the pistol, frightened half to death. Poor girl! I don't blame her. Whatever may have been the cause of it, she was genuinely glad to see me when I came in and lighted the cabin lanterns.

"Oh," she cried, "I have been in agony the whole day. Every sound has caused me to seize this weapon, and when I have not been watching the door I have been on my knees praying for you and for myself. I do not think I can stand another day like this."

"Please God, dear lady, you shall not," I said, smiling reassuringly at her.

"What do you mean? Have you a plan?"

"I have. The men are all drunk. I am going to leave the ship and take you with me."

"But how—when?"

For answer I threw open the stern window of her cabin. On a level with it swung a small boat, a whaleboat. Now I had taken occasion during the day to lower that boat little by little, a few inches at a time and then a few inches at another time, as I had opportunity to get near the falls and to manipulate them unobserved, but I had brought it down to the level of the cabin windows. Its sea lashings were cast off, and I had no doubt, if conditions on deck were as I expected them, I could lower it all the way later with impunity.

"What do you mean?" she asked, starting out of the window and into the empty boat.

"I mean that you and I are going to embark in that boat tonight and leave this ship."

"But where are we going?"

"There is land not a league and a half under our lee. It seems to be the most easterly of a cluster of islands."

"Is it the island we seek, do you think?"

"We are in exactly the latitude and the longitude of the chart if my calculations are correct."

"The island was uninhabited when my ancestor was cast away upon it."

"Yes," said I, "but there may be natives there now, but no savages of the south seas could be more cruel and ruthless than the men on this ship."

"Let us go," she said, shuddering.

"What is your plan?"

"I want you to dress yourself in your stoniest clothes, with your heaviest shoes, wrap yourself up in a boat cloak and take with you a change of clothes and some few necessities for your comfort. I will go and rummage the lazarette for provisions, and I will see if I can turn up any more weapons in the captain's room. I dare not go to the arms chest—it was below in the hold anyway, and I could not waste the time to hunt it out—we must hurry."

"Why, you said they were insensible."

"They'll recover their senses before we know it. I want as long a start as possible."

"Wait a moment," she said. She opened a drawer under her berth and drew out a leather case, which she opened and placed before me. There were two ivory handled silver mounted pistols in it. "They belonged to my father," she said. "With one of them he—her voice broke. I nodded. I knew what he had done with one of them. She rummaged further and drew out an exquisite sword, quite unlike my heavy one, but if I could judge anything about weapons, of fine temper and strength and with its hilt studded with diamonds. "This was my father's too," she said. And I recognized it also. It was that I had taken from Arcester.

The pistols were smaller than my huge barkers, better suited for my hand, and to load them from the flasks which accompanied them was the work of a few minutes. I thrust my own heavy weapon back into my belt. I then buckled her two pistols around her waist and bade her take the sword also. We might need all these weapons.

Then I left her and went out on deck. The men were in a profound drunken stupor. Pimball was snoring as deep as Glibby was nodding. He leered at me as I drew abreast of him.

"Everything a-all r-right?" he hiccupped.

"Everything," I answered. "The old bark doesn't need much watching tonight."

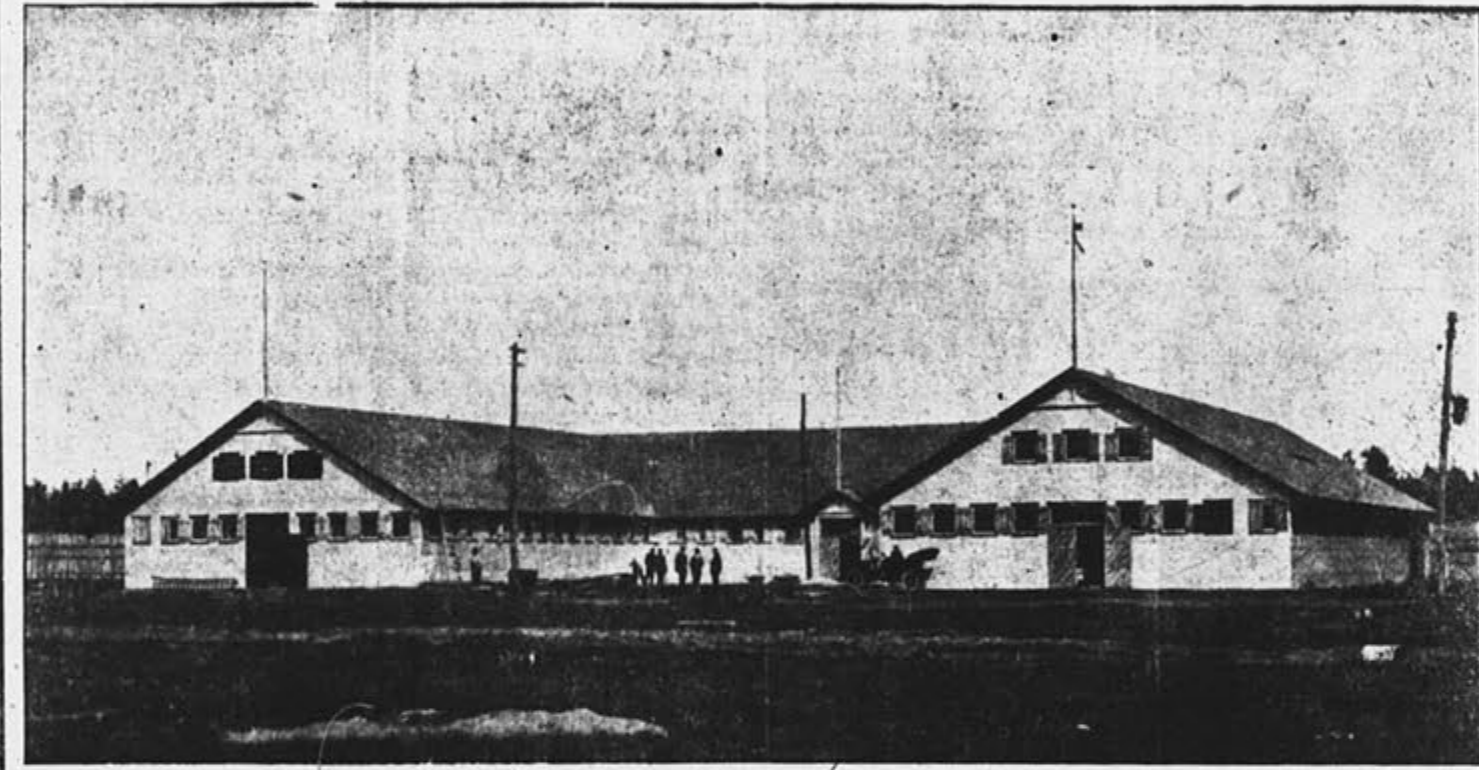
I yawned extravagantly. "I will go and turn in, I think. If you need me call me."

As I went below into the cabin I saw that in a few moments he would be like the rest.

(To Be Continued.)

Many ills come from impure blood. Can't have pure blood with faulty digestion, lazy liver and sluggish bowels. Burdock Blood Bitters is recommended for strengthening stomach, bowels and liver and purifying the blood.

THIRD ANNUAL NORTHERN MICHIGAN STATE FAIR ESCANABA, MICHIGAN SEPTEMBER 16-17-18-19, 1913



MAIN EXHIBITION BUILDING

Display of Cloverland's Bumper Crops and Choice Live Stock

Exhibit Entries Free to all Residents of the Upper Peninsula

Entries Can Be Made September 13th, 15th, and until noon of the 16th

MILITARY BANDS

Fine Concerts and Music

CORDIAL WELCOME

A Genuine Home-Coming

Numerous Free Attractions

Open-Air Shows that Tickle

A GOOD TIME

All the Time---Fair Time

Have you asked your best girl to go? You better, or the other fellow will

Street Entertainment Down Town

Each Evening

