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Austen

The Lost Island

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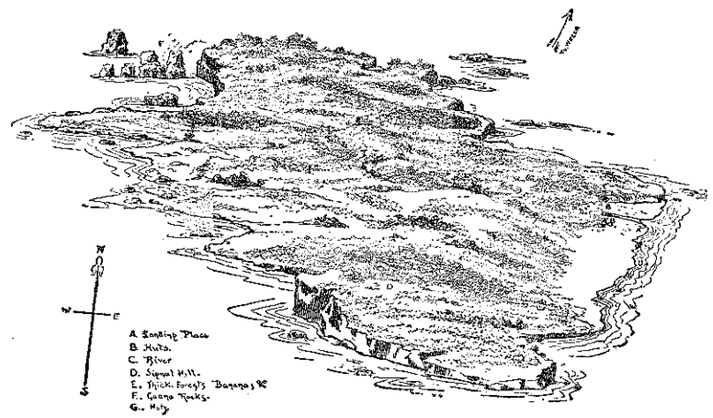
THE LOST ISLAND



BY
EDWARD J. AUSTEN
AND
LOUISE VESCELIUS SHELDON

Illustrated By
Edward J. Austen

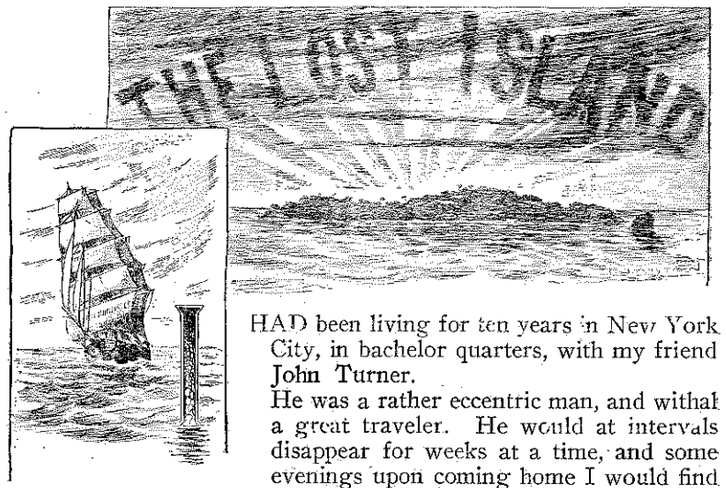
Published by
FELS FUND OF AMERICA
Cincinnati, Ohio

THE MOTIVE OF

THE LOST ISLAND

Was Suggested By

MR. THOS. H. POTTER



HAD been living for ten years in New York City, in bachelor quarters, with my friend John Turner.

He was a rather eccentric man, and withal a great traveler. He would at intervals disappear for weeks at a time, and some evenings upon coming home I would find him in his favorite chair, with a cigar and book, taking his ease. A stronger grasp of the hand, or a merrier twinkle of his eye, would probably be the only departure from his usual greeting.

I had indulged in no let-up from business cares for several years, no outing for more than a day at a time, until I became aware that I was slowly reaching the limit of my strength. One evening on returning to my apartments I felt particularly weary and jaded. Turner gave me a sharp look, and said: "If you want to live out half your days, you must drop all business at once."

"What would you propose that I should do?" I asked. He sat reflecting for a moment before replying.

"Why can't you take a six months' vacation?"

"Impossible!"

"Not at all. You only think so, and six months is none too long for a man in your condition. I have some Australian interests which need my attention. If I could induce you to go out with me, I would take the trip, if for nothing more than the voyage. What do you say to going with me?"

The idea of cutting l ose from my present surroundings f r so long a period of time was rather startling, but I had decided before he had finished speaking.

"I'll go with you."

"Good!" exclaimed Turner, enthusiastically, and immediately began making arrangements for a speedy departure, little thinking that before the trip which he suggested should be completed the following events would be seen and chronicled by his friend, the middle-aged, unromantic business man.

CHAPTER I.

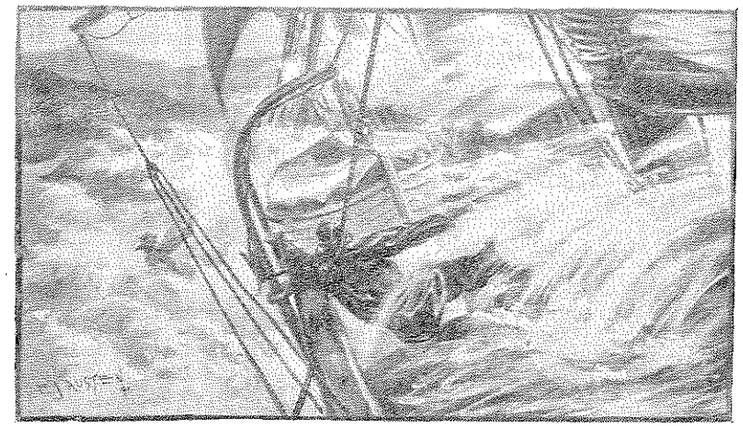
We sailed from New York City in the ship *Sea Gull,* Captain Young commanding.

Light winds carried us along until we were south of the line. Three days after rounding Cape Horn the barometer began to fall steadily and we encountered a gale from the southeast. So persistently did it blow that the captain altered his course, preferring to run rather than fight, even at the expense of losing time by being driven out of his direct course.

He knew that by steering northeast he would have plenty of sea-room and hoped soon to run out of the track of the storm. But it was of greater extent than he had calculated, for we were exposed to its fury for nearly three days and were driven still farther out of our course. The rain fell in sheets, and tremendous seas broke over the decks. When the gale was at its height a furious sea struck us amidships and threw the vessel nearly on her beam ends, sweeping the decks from stem to stern.

During one of those pitchings of the vessel Captain Young was thrown down and received internal injuries, together with several cuts on the head. He was carried below in a dazed and bleeding condition, and his injuries proved to be fatal, for he soon became unconscious and died the same night.

In the early morning, with the sea lashing itself into a fury, we buried him. The impressive ceremony lost none of its solemnity as old ocean gathered the body in its arms, and then rose in greater majesty, as if to sing a mighty requiem over the dead captain.



"TREMENDOUS SEAS BROKE OVER THE DECKS."

The first mate assumed command. For four days the storm was upon us. He kept the ship running before the wind, or literally away from it, while the storm lasted. The fore topgallant mast had been carried away by the fury of the tempest, and, what with the flapping of cordage and litter of ropes in the lee shrouds, the ship, to a landsman's eye, had the appearance of being in a well-nigh hopeless condition.

On the morning of the fifth day the storm had expended its fury. The wind gradually died away, and by evening the sea, while running high, had lost its terrible aspect. Our new skipper announced that it would probably take six or seven days to get back to our course. About ten o'clock that night I went on deck. A dense fog had settled over everything adding to the gloom of the night.

As I groped my way to the side of the first mate, I thought I heard a long, low boom! boom! Thinking it might be fancy, I did not mention it.

"Well, officer," I said, "are we in any danger?"

"Guess not," he replied. "If it were not for this blamed fog, I think I could take a star."

THE THIRD OFFICER.

Again I heard the boom! boom! Turning, I asked: "What is that booming in the waters?"

He stood motionless for some time before answering: "I have been listening to it for some time."

"Is it a signal gun of a ship in distress?" I asked anxiously.

"No," he answered coolly, "I think we are near land. It

sounds like breakers on the beach. But I don't know of any land hereabouts.

I listened once more, and again came that low, dull, booming sound.

"Don't you think by the sound of those breakers that we are a long distance from shore?"

"Yes, two miles at least. We are in deep water, for I have just cast the lead. But don't say anything about it below."

The uncertaintly of our position made me restless. There was danger in remaining on deck, there was danger in going below; but I returned to the cabin, and lay down in my bunk, wishing devoutly that we were in snug quarters.

I had lain thus for some time, feeling the ship sink down, down, down, it seemed fathoms deep, and then give a little shiver before slowly rising, higher and higher, out of the trough of the sea. Suddenly there came a violent concussion; I heard a great shouting and tramping, and the rushing of water on deck, and through it all a horrid grating sound along the ship's keel.

CHAPTER II.

I have no recollection of anything further until I found myself on deck, where all was excitement. The heavy fog was still upon us, and we could not see the ship's length ahead. The mate was shouting orders to the men, who rushed about confusedly in the darkness, while the watch below came pouring out in the forecastle. The ship was bumping terribly and all around were the ceaseless swish and roar of the breakers. Just as I reached the mainmast, the vessel gave one lurch to port, and settled down.

A great sea came tearing over the side, to deluge everything fore and aft, and sweep the second mate and two of the sailors overboard. I expected every moment to see the bark go to pieces, but the ship was staunch, and, although she shook and shivered at every blow, stood firm.

In this perilous position we lay for hours. At last the day broke. The storm had abated and the fog began slowly to lift. Then the full extent of our disaster was revealed. We were stranded on a long, low bar, which extended east and west.

Off in the northwest we saw what seemed to be a point of reef, but which, as the light increased, proved to be an island. The booming sound which we had heard in the night was, as the first mate had said, the breakers on the beach of this distant island. And this treacherous bar had worked our ruin; a disaster no one could have averted. With much difficulty the boats were lowered. The sailors were soon at work getting provisions out of the ship, and into them. We, however, did not give much thought to the matter of provisions or other necessities as might be supposed, for our sole, overpowering desire was to get away from the ship as quickly as possible. The dingy was in good condition, and was also well provisioned. There were twenty-six of us, all told—four passengers, Turner, Travers, Moore and I, and the crew.

After embarking in the small boats, we made for the shore, and as the waves rolled us inward to the land, we turned and looked at the old ship. It was evident she might hold together for days, but the first heavy sea would dislodge her, and she would immediately break up. As we approached the island we saw that it was covered with vegetation, while long lines of treacherous-looking reefs edged the shore.

It appeared to be about a mile long, but proved, upon further survey, to be over three and a half miles from east to west, and one and a quarter miles wide. The first mate directed the boats to make a circuit toward the east. As we turned the point of the island we entered a quiet bay with a white, shelving beach.

As our boat grated on the sand a shout went up, and one after another of the party leaped ashore. The mere feeling of land—solid, hard land—under our feet was a delight, after the weary weeks of the shifting deck of the *Sea Gull*. The boats had been dragged up on the beach, out of reach of any possible encroaching sea. We set immediately about getting the supplies we had brought out of them.

From the forest which fringed the beach a little creek of beautifully clear, limpid water ran down into the sea almost at our feet. Less than a hundred yards from the shore the water was fresh, and the knowledge that we had an abundance of this requisite was cheering. After a hasty meal we separated into

groups of three or four and started off in different directions to explore the island. At the end of three hours all had returned. No one had discovered signs of wild animals or natives, and, from all the indications, we assumed that we were the first people that had ever set foot on the island. We were just south of the tropics, and all the fruits of the semi-tropical climate grew there in abundance, so that we were relieved from any anxiety as to food.

The climate was so delightful that we could sleep on the ground with very little covering. Beds were extemporized from the sails of the boats, and we were soon sleeping the sleep of the weary.

CHAPTER III.

Next morning the third officer, named Hiram Slawker, took four seamen with him in the dingy and went out to the ship. They found the vessel fast breaking up, but managed to save a number of valuables; and on the second and third trips, which they made in one of the quarter boats, they brought back with them quite a cargo.

Saws, hatchets, axes, cooking utensils, etc.; nautical instruments, a quantity of sail cloth and bedding; a few of the passengers' and seamen's effects were thus secured, and last, but not least, as you will see, Hiram Slawker's chest.

The *Sea Gull* continued to settle until the following day, when a great wave rolled in: the ship was lifted high on its crest and carried farther out and broadside on the bar, where she rolled over into the deep sea. Every eye was upon her, and a great shout went up as she disappeared from sight.

We immediately erected a shelter on the high cliff, which we called "Lookout Hill." To the top of the tallest tree we rigged our largest boatsail, in the hope of being sighted by some passing vessel.

Turner very unceremoniously established himself there as watchman. He had rescued his silk umbrella from the wreck, and it was a source of considerable amusement to us, for at almost any hour of the day the umbrella could be seen outlined against the sky, with Turner under it scanning the horizon with the ship's telescope.

TO THE TOP OF THE TALLEST TREE WE RIGGED OUR LARGEST BOAT-SAIL."

The contemplation of the ocean seemed to suit his mood. He had his men detailed for duty when he wanted a change, and so we felt certain that no sail could pass unobserved.

As day after day went by with no sign of an approaching vessel, we concluded that we were out of the immediate course of ships; and there seemed a possibility of our having to pass the approaching rainy season on the island. Our thoughts, therefore, turned to the erection of suitable protection against the elements. One of the passengers, Mr. Travers, early developed a genius for directing and building of the rude huts, which we dignified among ourselves by the name of houses, and very soon after our arrival, he, Mr. Moore and myself were looked upon as the architects and builders for the islanders.

We erected twelve small houses and one large house, which we chose to call the "Town Hall." Moore drew a map of our primitive township, which I preserved, and from the sketch you will see that we did not go far from our first landing-place to establish the village. Our building operations kept the four of us, with six of the seamen, quite busy for several weeks.

There were those who fished, while the others gathered fruit and berries. Thus we found no difficulty in getting a variety on our bill-of-fare, by exchange with our neighbor. We naturally sought the society of congenial spirits, so that in a short time our community was represented by eight or ten groups of two or three people who lived together in a house by themselves.

Travers and Moore had chummed with Turner and myself since our arrival. Travers was an artist. His erect carriage and keen, observant, dark eyes attracted me from the first moment that I saw him on board the ship. His father's family belonged to the early settlers of New Jersey, and in the course of time he had fallen heir to considerable wealth, consisting largely of real estate in the northern part of that State. He had taken this voyage for the opportunity which it afforded of studying marine subjects. His companion, Moore, an architect by profession, was a clever, versatile, ambitious fellow, and had the faculty of adapting himself to circumstances.

Hiram Slawker had impressed all very favorably during the voyage. In appearance he was the typical raw-boned Yankee

of herculean stature, with an air of force and determination that easily made him a leader among the men. His father had been born in England, but, when a boy, had come to America and settled in Massachusetts. There he had married into a family whose

BUILDING HUTS.

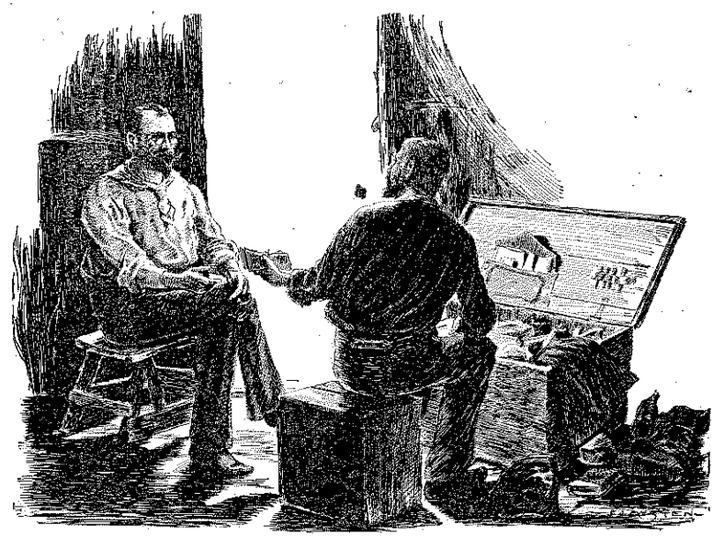
boast was that they were farming the same land that had been cleared by their Puritan ancestors. Their farm encroached on the sea on one side, while it took in rich timber land on the other. So it happened that Hiram had been attracted to the life of a sailor.

He had proved himself an excellent navigator and a man on whom we could depend in an emergency at sea.

At first we thought that he would be of great assistance to us in our dismal condition on the island. But later it dawned on us that he was disposed to be extremely dogmatic, in enforcing his ideas of how things should be done.

The first month of our life on the island passed pleasantly enough. Indeed there is no doubt that many of the crew were almost glad the ship had foundered, so great was the change from the severe labor of a sailor's life to the delightful ease of the shore. But I suppose that even counting these men no one was absolutely contented.

After all, contentment is a purely relative term, and may have very different meanings under different circumstances.



"ONE DAY IN A BURST OF CONFIDENCE HE SHOWED ME SOME MANUSCRIPTS."

CHAPTER IV.

Wheelock, the ship's carpenter, was a particularly intelligent fellow. I had often talked with him about possible chances of getting away from the island. We agreed that we were considerably out of the track of ships that skirt the coast.

But what was to prevent us from taking the small boats and trying to find land out there to eastward?

"Will the boats hold all the party, with provisions enough for so long a voyage? and how are we to know where we are going to land?" said Moore, one night, when several were discussing the subject.

"And then we should probably have to make our way along a rock-bound and dangerous coast for leagues, before we could reach any inhabited parts," added Travers.

"The scheme is too dangerous," said Turner quietly. "Don't forget that all the provisions we have are fruits and fish, which are not only perishable, but exceedingly bulky, and that when we have stowed enough half ripe fruit to keep twenty-five people for a fortnight, there will be very little room left for passengers."

Meanwhile Slawker had taken the bearings of the island. His box which he had saved from the wreck was examined by him, and from that moment strange things occurred. One day, in a burst of confidence, he showed me some manuscript papers, which he had found in his chest. They proved to be a very interesting package of documents.

He explained that, four days before the ship sailed, his father had given him these papers, with instructions that he should read them as soon as possible. The handwriting was crabbed and scarcely legible. Slawker had no time to look at them before embarking, nor could he find leisure to read them during the voyage, and he could not quite decipher their contents now. The package consisted of six papers—three in Spanish, and translations of them in English. The longest one in English was an account of Don Carlos in Spain in 1832, and his attempt to dethrone Queen Isabella. Slawker's grandfather had been a colonel in the English legion of that army, for which services he had received, the same as the rest, very little food and no pay. For Don Carlos had no money and supported his army by robbing

the villagers. Now and then the colonel grew tired of waiting and would tell the don his opinion of affairs, in very rough language. On one occasion, Carlos, to conciliate him, offered to

DISCOVERING GUARDIVEDO.

make him a duke. But the colonel would have none of his empty titles and pressed for something more substantial, whereupon the

don offered him the title of count, with an estate. On investigation, the estate turned out to be an island in the Pacific; but this seemed to the colonel better than nothing, so he accepted it and became Count of Guardivedo.

The MS. went on to describe the history of the island and how the title of it came to be in possession of Don Carlos. It appeared that Captain Agramento, who commanded the Spanish frigate *Ferdinand and Isabella,* sailed round the world in search of new territory and for the honor of the flag.

While in the Southern Pacific, in latitude so-and-so and longitude such-and-such, the doughty captain sighted through his glass what distinctly appeared to him an island, some ten miles off on the starboard bow. He was somewhat pressed for time, being engaged just then in a sportsmanlike effort to keep his ship well to the front of two warships belonging to a nation with whom Spain was not on speaking terms, so he was obliged to indefinitely postpone a personal visit to the spot; but to avoid mistakes, he carefully entered the bearings of the island in his log-book, and formally took possession of the same in the name of Spain.

To be sure, no one else on board sighted the place (but this, no doubt, was on account of their not having the captain's glass), and one very illnatured lieutenant openly declared that the only land thereabouts was in the captain's eye. However, the Spanish government gravely accepted the captain's report, and concluded that if it were an island it would be much better to have it recognized as a Spanish possession than to have it lying about in the ocean, subject to capture by some wandering pirate.

Colonel Slawker, on his death, bequeathed the patent of nobility and the title deeds of the possible island to his son, a worthy New England farmer, who, very wisely, kept quiet about it, thinking, no doubt, that the neighbors might judge it to be somewhat incongruous that a count should do his own ploughing. But he evidently had some faith in the value of the possessions, for, believing himself dying, he handed the papers to his son.

Together with this document were the title deeds of the island and the patent of nobility.

Now, according to the log-book, Hiram Slawker had been wrecked on his own island!

You can imagine that the news caused considerable surprise in our little community when Slawker gravely announced the contents of his mysterious package and gave the result of his own observations as identical with that registered by the old Spanish captain.

No one, of course, dreamed of its making the slightest difference to us or to our mode of life, and beyond being a fruitful

"WE ALL LEFT HIM TO HIS SOLITARY GRANDEUR."

theme for comment and affording an opportunity for every one in the party who had a story to tell about a strange coincidence immediately to tell it, no one gave it a second thought.

For a day or two some one would chaffingly address Slawker as "Count," but finding he did not relish our jokes as pleasantly as we intended them, we gradually dropped it. But though the rest of us had no thought of the documents having any effect upon our life on the island, it soon became evident that Slawker

was doing a great deal of thinking. He would wander away by himself for hours, and we could see that he had been greatly affected by the finding of the title deeds.

As appeared later, the drift of Slawker's thoughts was not only that he had been wrecked on his own island, but that—we had been wrecked on Hiram Slawker's island!

The result of his cogitations was, for a time, only noticeable in his manner and temper, which became so moody that we all left him to his solitary grandeur. At night, as we would lie down on the beach, smoking our pipes (for we had been fortuate enough to secure a plentiful supply of tobacco from the ship), Slawker's changed character was usually the principal topic of conversation.

He would occasionally join our group and talk on general matters, as he had been used to doing; but it was easy to see that the character of the man was altered.

One of his strongest characteristics had been his intense republicanism, which had shown itself in fierce denunciations of the monied classes. Now all was different. He talked about the "rights of property," the "power of capital" and the good that could be derived from the wise direction of it.

CHAPTER V.

One morning we were in our hut talking over our changed condition and wondering when we would be rescued. The matter of getting away from the island did not seem to interest Turner.

"I say," he began, "I have been hunting for this island all my life! My money has been of less annoyance to me during the past few months than ever before. I have not had a tenant complain of a broken water-pipe or a noisy neighbor all this time. No architect," he continued, turning to Moore, "has bored me to build on those vacant lots of mine. And no speculator has proposed to buy them with a loan which I myself am to furnish."

"This must be paradise to you," said Moore, laughingly.

"Paradise, indeed! And until I am tired of this sort of life I shall not be eager to advise a change."

The freedom of the life and the change from the exciting whirl he had been accustomed to living in had quite a marked effect upon Turner. Instead of being the quiet conservative I had always known, he was now the life of our party, the first to suggest and the first to act, and his opinion on matters was held at a high estimate by us all.

While Turner had been talking, Slawker came in, looking particularly happy and as if he were on good terms with himself.

"Hiram Slawker," said Travers, "when are we going to get away from this island?"

"If you are anxious to reach an inhabited country," drawled Slawker, "you stand a better chance of doing so in a month or six weeks from now, when the rainy season is over."

"What's the matter with the island, anyway?" chimed in Turner. "We can just as well wait. A ship is sure to run into this latitude and pick us up. It's my theory in life that you only have to wait; sit still and let the world revolve; watch it intently; then, when the spot you want turns to you, put your foot on it and turn with it."

"I think we can sum up your idea of life by simply calling you lazy," said Moore.

"Lazy, if you will. But I tell you that there is entirely too much exertion made in life for the results obtained."

After this unusual burst on Turner's part, there was a lull in the conversation, which was broken by Slawker:

"Do you know that I have found one way out of our trouble?"

"Why, what's happened, Count? Have you discovered a ship at the bottom of your wonderful chest, as well as an island and a title?"

"I mean to return to civilized ways of living."

"Travers," said Moore, "Mr. Slawker wants to run for alderman"——

"No, no, interrupted Hiram. "I don't mean politics."

"No one would be more delighted than Yours Truly. Now, for instance, in the way of dress. My wardrobe is somewhat limited, but I shall be very glad to inaugurate a reform club, and abolish my razor, tile hat"——

"Nothing of the kind," broke in Hiram. "I refer to the method of dividing our labor. Of course we can't do it all at once, but we can make a start. I thought it would be a good idea

to keep a store of general exchange, where everything could be brought. Those who picked berries could bring their surplus to the store, and the same with those who fished, or caught turtles, or got eggs or birds. Then, by crediting each with what they brought, the men who had too many berries could get fish, and those who had fish and wanted bananas could get them."

"But where do we come in, my Lord?"

"Easy enough, Mr. Travers. You're working on Mr. Wheelock's house, ain't you? Very well. I'll give you credit on account for labor done on that house—see?"

"A capital idea!" said Turner, with an immovable face. "Splendid! But how will it work? Supposing, for instance Mr. Stevens wished to rest for a week, and Moore should get sick, why I could do all their share of labors and so keep their accounts even."

Hiram looked at Turner and his white hands, and said, hesitatingly: "Yes, that's just it; you could be partners."

Turner evidently wished to humor Hiram, and continued talking enthusiastically over the plan. He hunted up some old log-books which belonged to the ship, and insisted on showing Hiram on the blank leaves how to keep double-entry, and rattled on until Hiram was quite wild with his talk.

Turner introduced the scheme to the others in a most plausible manner. A general laugh was the result, but we nevertheless brought all food to Hiram's hut for division that night, and the next day as well.

And so Hiram's store was started.

CHAPTER VI.

It must be confessed that this book-keeping seemed to us more like a huge joke than anything else. But it was evident that Slawker looked upon it as a very serious matter, and he soon had an elaborate debit and credit account with each one. The store become a headquarters or lounging room. Hiram's manner gradually changed. He assumed the air of a superior being to us all.

Now and then there would be a scarcity of articles at the store, when Hiram would sing out to the sailors:

"Come now, you must get me three or four dozen eggs to-day," or "you must be off early and bring me a good load of fish;" or perhaps it would be "you must let me have more berries and figs than these to-morrow, there is hardly enough to go around."

But the real meaning of Slawker's conduct did not appear until one morning Moore came running up to the store, where most of us were standing, and called out: "Say, fellows, do you

"MOORE CAME RUNNING UP TO THE STORE WHERE MOST OF US WERE STANDING."

know that there are tons upon tons of guano on those high rocks at the western end of the island?"

"Well, what of it?" said Slawker.

"Why, man alive, don't you know what the stuff is worth?" said Moore.

Hiram was silent.

"Just think," continued Moore, "if, when some ship comes along, we had a lot stacked convenient to the landing so that it could easily be loaded, we could make a fortune out of a ship-load!"

"I could, you mean," remarked Slawker quietly.

"What!"

"I say you mean that I could. This is my island you know. And, of course, everything on it is mine, too, and I want you to remember it." His voice had risen to a shout. Pulling out the title of the island and exposing its seals, he waved the papers in the air, exclaiming: "You fellows might just as well know now as any time that I will not have any more fooling about this island of mine."

There was a dead silence until Turner said:

"That's so, Count. This is your island, and if any one in this company proposes to carry it off we shall arrest him for grand larceny," and, raising his umbrella in the air, continued, "and then run him through. Won't we, Hiram?"

We left Turner noisily sympathizing with Slawker on the scandalous way in which the islanders looked at the situation. He told us afterward, with a very sober face, that he had made an agreement with Slawker that whenever we were rescued he would charter a ship to go to the island and carry the guano to market, and divide the profits.

It had never occurred to any of the party to dispute Hiram's clear title to the island. At first no one cared a straw whether the island belonged to him or to King Cetawayo. But somehow it seemed now as if it were going to make quite a difference to us. Still, as I say, no one disputed the abstract justice of the claims. Having once declared himself, Hiram lost no time in making his position clear. Next morning, as I was passing the store, I saw two of the sailors talking with him. Hearing high words, I waited at the door before going in. Slawker was saying quite pompously:

"I don't care about having any more of my berries picked for a few days."

One of the men retorted: "Oh, hang your berries. They are anyone's who wants to pick 'em!"

Catching sight of me, Hiram pointed to the sailors and insisted that they should not pick any more berries—that he would not take them. This was just a little too presumptuous on Slawker's part, as the sailors were evidently bent on picking berries for themselves, and not for the store. I could see that Slawker was talking for effect, with some ulterior motive in view.

"I mean just what I say," continued Hiram. "I want you all to thoroughly understand that this is my island; these are my berries; my bananas; my turtles and my fish." Then turning to Travers and Moore, who had just entered, he added "and while you are here, Mr. Moore and Mr. Travers, I want to tell you that, according to my books, your party has been eating a good deal more than what you have earned by building or picking lately. So I would like you to fix a few shelves and build out the veranda so's anyone that wants to can sit around outside."

"Certainly," exclaimed Travers, "my soul is just yearning for such a job. But I did not know that I was indebted to your highness to any extent! Pray name the sum and I will pay you in the coin of the realm. For you will no doubt be issuing money soon, with your beautiful face on it;" and he winked at me as Slawker's face darkened.

But Hiram would not be beaten. He straightened himself in a moment and, turning to the crowd which had by this time gathered, said:

"Mr. Travers has told me that he owns land in New Jersey."

"Well, what if I do?" said Travers, amazedly.

"I suppose you like to have something to say about what the people living on it shall do with it?"

"What's that got to do with this island?"

"This much Mr. Travers. I propose to do with this island just what I choose—to have my berries picked, or not, just as I say. I have exactly the same rights on this island as you have to your land in the States. You got it from your father, who bought it of some one else, and so on back to Lord Carteret, or the Duke of York, who got it from the King of England—just the same as my grandfather got this from the King of Spain!"

"The only difference is in your titles," said Turner, who had caught the last words as he came in; "the only difference is that

King Charles got his title by the 'grace of God,' and Don Carlos *'par la gracia de Dios.'* Slawker," continued Turner, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I will give you half an acre of good city property, if you won't say anything more about this island belonging to you for one week."

This roused Slawker's ire. Taking a few steps forward and raising his fist, he shouted:

"You fellows cannot talk to me! You are in the same boat. You don't let everybody ride over you and do what they want to with your land. And I propose to enforce my rights here!"

"What do you propose doing?"

"Just this: I have guano here, which I can sell when a vessel comes this way, provided it is moved down to the beach. What I want is for you all to take a hand and move it. That's what I want for using my island. You all see that it's reasonable? This is a good island, and we are here. Now, all we have to do is to go to work and improve its natural advantages, and though, of course, the island is mine, still, if I allow every man a fair share —or fair wages, if you like—for what he does, there's no reason why each one should not make a good thing of it."

I think that they all saw by this time the futility of any further argument. As for myself, I knew by past experience how useless it was to try to reason with Slawker, who had proved himself absolutely incapable of seeing more than one side (his own) of any question.

CHAPTER VII.

We had been on the island between four and five months, and though we had kept a constant lookout for a passing ship, not a sail had appeared, and the hope that most of us had cherished, that we were, perhaps, not quite out of the track of ships, was gradually dying out in our breasts. The duty of keeping a lookout was religiously observed at first, in a systematic way, but after the first few weeks, though the anxious watch was never neglected, the plan of daily telling off some one for this duty had been abandoned, and it had come to be almost everybody's business to spend an hour or two of the day on the lookout.

A day or so after the stormy interview with Slawker, Travers, Turner and I were lying on the sand, looking up at the sky, which, of late, had about developed into our sole occupation.

We were wondering whether we had been doomed to spend the remainder of our lives on this island, when we were aroused by a shout, and on jumping to our feet to see the cause of the commotion we found everybody rushing up the beach towards the signal hill. Glancing up to the bluff, we saw three of the sailors frantically waving their arms shouting and pointing to some object to the westward.

"A sail! A sail! A sail!"

Could it be possible? A ship at last! Even from the bluff, nothing could be distinguished with the naked eye, but with the ship's glass a faint glimmering of a sail was seen far down on the eastern horizon. Would she see us? Oh, that it were night, that we could light our bonfire!

Her deck was well below the horizon, and we had no hope that she could sight the island, unless she came nearer.

How we laughed and talked and cried, and shook one another by the hand!

We were to be rescued at last!

The minutes seemed hours, the hours days. Twelve o'clock came, and the white speck of sail had enlarged enough for those of us who had good eyes to see it, as the sun glinted upon it. She was still too far off to see us; but she was coming—that was sure. One o'clock! Two o'clock passed! Still the white sail shone; but it was impossible to tell whether she was coming nearer or whether the ship was sailing due south and would not see us. About half past two Slawker came out of the store with a paper in his hand and climbed up the bluff. He had been back and forth several times during the day. When he reached the summit, he took the glass from the man who held it, and, after taking a long look at the sail, turned round, faced those of us who were standing together on a little knoll and said:

"The ship is coming nearer. If the wind holds, she will probably stay on the port tack, which she is now on, and will sight the island some time before dark. Now, before we leave, I want to draw your attention to one point which has been overlooked. This is my island, as you know. For nearly five months

"A SAIL! A SAIL!"

you have all been living on it. I won't say that you have been eating my berries and my bananas, and so on; but that's true all the same. However, I suppose I must allow you all something for the labor you have done, although you must admit it would be hardly fair for you to expect to live rent free all that time. Now, I have a paper here which I want you to sign agreeing to pay me a fair rental for the houses and land during the time you have been on my island and using my houses, for, of course, as it was my

material of which they were built, they are my houses."

We were all so excited, looking out for the ship, that we could scarcely listen to Hiram. But the nature of his communication was very peculiar, and I could not help paying some attention to his remarks. I need hardly say that, though many of us would have been delighted to have signed away three years' income if we could have been assured of being rescued, those who heard what he said greeted it with derisive laughter. No one volunteered his signature; but I have the document, and if any of them are inclined they can sign it yet!

Three o'clock! The sail was no bigger. Four o'clock! The sail was manifestly less.

"She has gone off on the starboard tack," said Hiram, with a chuckle that savored strongly of satisfaction. "We've seen the last of that ship!"

And to show that he, for one, gave up all expectation of being rescued for that day, he started down the hill, remarking:

"I am going to eat my dinner, and I advise you all to do the same."

But we couldn't leave the hill. It was not possible to believe! Was there no means by which we could make those on the ship see us? Strong men wept, and cursed, and wept again and bewailed their fate. Some one thought of lighting the bonfire. In ten minutes a great volume of black smoke was rolling far into the air. Why hadn't we thought of this before? Too late! Too late! The fast receding sail became smaller and smaller, until at last the sharpest eye could discover nothing of the ship—and she was gone.

We were once more alone on the island. Only the limitless, shining, remorseless sea, stretching far, far away in every direction to where the blue of the ocean melted into the blue of the beautiful, cloudless, pitiless sky. Sadly and silently we descended the hill. I cannot pretend to describe the agony of that night.

CHAPTER VIII.

The next morning Slawker was standing at the door of his store, trying to look as if he sympathized with the prevailing sentiment of disappointment which was in everybody's demeanor.

Travers and I were strolling down to the mouth of the creek, intending to take the dingy and try our luck for an hour at fishing. Travers could not resist having a shot at Hiram as he passed.

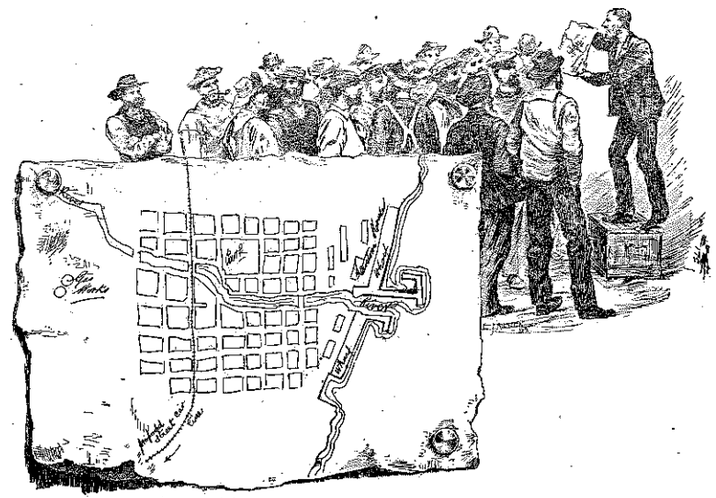
"So, Mr. Hiram Slawker, Count of Guardivedo, you want to charge us rent for the use of our huts, do you? I think you are about the most ideal specimen of a man that ever walked the face of the earth. I suppose that your next move will be to evict us from your island unless we pay you rent?"

"Well," drawled Slawker, "I told you fellows that it was all mine, everything—the island, the fruit, the berries, the turtle eggs—and I can show you in the books that most of you are a good deal in my debt for the food you've had."

"WE SHOVED OFF FOR OUR FISHING."

"Yes, I realize," said Travers, "we came to this island expressly for your benefit, and our highest ambition was to build huts so as to be allowed to pay you for the pleasure of living in them?"

"Well, Mr. Travers, isn't that what some of your tenants in America do for you? You pay them wages to build houses, and then you charge them rent to live in them—and it's quite right,



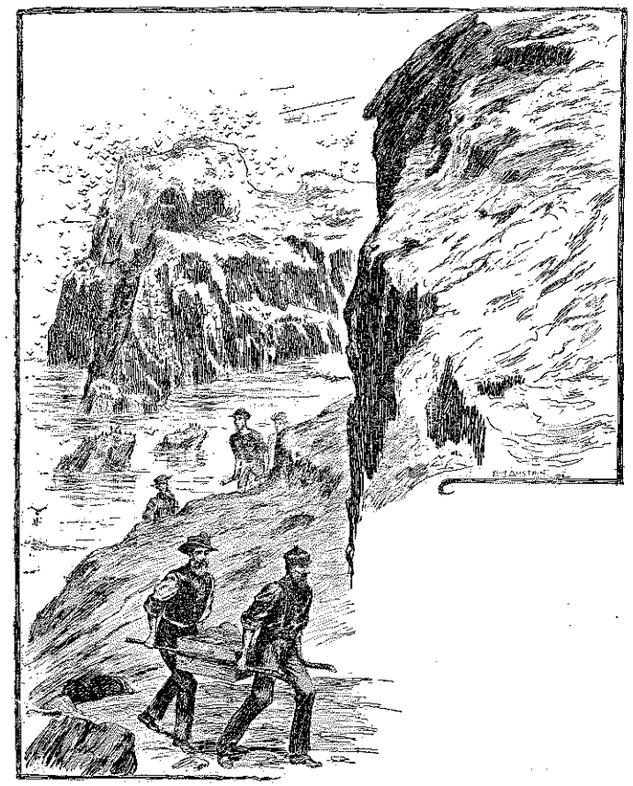
"WHAT I PROPOSE IS, THAT WE ALL GO TO WORK AND IMPROVE THE ISLAND."

too," said Slawker. "It's your material and your land, and so is this my material and my land, while the berries, and fruit you've been eating and the use of the island I put against the wages. That's fair, isn't it?"

Travers turned to me with the weariest smile I ever saw. The disappointment of the day before had taken such a hold on him that I feared the consequences of any further argument with Slawker. I bundled him into the dingy and we shoved off for our fishing. He was very quiet all the morning, and when we came ashore, after landing our fish, he took me by the arm and strolled down the beach. We walked in silence until suddenly he stopped and, placing his hand heavily on my shoulder, said:

"Stevens, I believe I was wrecked on this cursed island for the sole purpose of having my eyes opened. Here we are, thrown on this spot against our will and unable, except by committing suicide, to leave it. We are told by this man that he is the owner of the land, and by all the laws that we are taught to respect he is

the owner of this island. Backed by a piece of paper, bearing an official seal two hundred years old, he actually holds in subjection twenty-five human beings! And so strong is the force of early



PAYING RENT.

prejudices that not one of us really dares to dispute his right to do so. All we can do is to protest against the manner of enforcing it. Then, does that give him alone the right to live here?

If so, what is to become of us? Work for him? Pay him for the privilege of existing?"

He was deeply affected. The position which Hiram had assumed had appealed strongly to his sense of justice. He took two rapid strides and resumed:

"The analogy is perfect. This island and the world. The great mass of beings born into the world are in just the same condition as we are here on this island. They grow to manhood and are told that they must work for some one for the privilege of living on the earth and eating the fruits thereof which nature has provided for the use of all!"

He stood still and looked over the great waters before slowly resuming;

"I haven't thought it all out yet, but you know in all reason, as well as I do, that we should have as much interest in this island as Slawker. And I don't know how an old Spanish captain, dead or alive, is going to have anything to say in the matter. Do you?"

There was no use in answering him at that moment.

"The whole system is wrong," he cried, "monstrous! It is a libel on the Almighty to think that some men have for their private gain what we can see was meant for the benefit of all."

CHAPTER IX.

In all the proposed endeavors of the islanders for leaving the place, Slawker had never opposed anyone's taking the best of any such purpose.

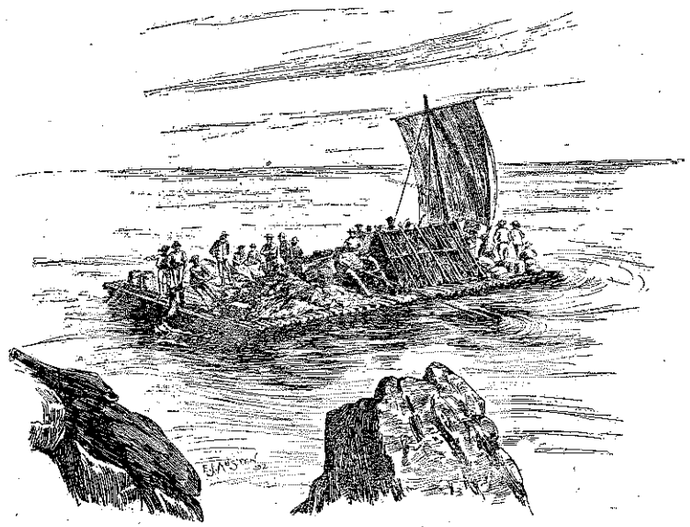
The earnestness of Slawker, his evident conviction that he was in the right, and his persistent demands, no less than the forcible personality of the man, had its effect upon several of the seamen, who finally agreed to help move the guano to the beach, and they were soon hard at work under Hiram's supervision.

Turner found considerable amusement in watching them, and haunted Slawker like a shadow, forever harping on the time when they should be rescued and they could sell the guano, which would give them both a small fortune. Slawker, not satisfied with the result of his persistency, tried to induce others to assist in the work.

"What I propose," said he, "is that we all go to work and improve the island as much as we can with the material we have. Make roads; lay out streets, etc. Then go to work and stack all that guano on the beach ready for shipment on the first vessel that comes this way Then with the money I get for it we can build up a town."

"I'm with you on the corner lots," chimed in Turner. Hiram continued as if he had not heard him:

"A line of ships will soon be running between my island and



LEAVING THE ISLAND.

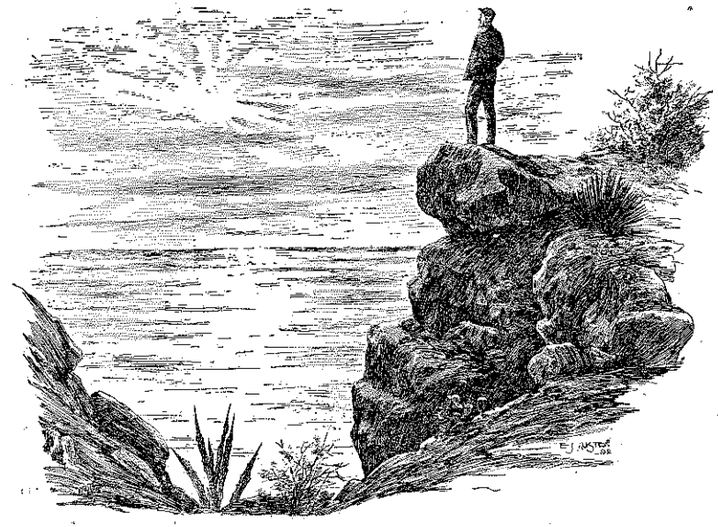
the mainland. Immigrants will be attracted, and you, even those who at present have no money, will have saved enough out of your wages to buy land. So that you will be the aristocracy of Guardivedo."

"You can go on the mainland and import the first batch of slaves you can bring," stormed Travers.

Hiram's face darkened. He glared for one minute savagely at Travers and shouted:

"Well, you all owe me for rent, and I propose that you pay me by stacking the guano ready for shipment!"

"The others may, of course, do as they please," said Travers, now thoroughly roused; "but I can tell you, Senor Don Hiram Slawker, Count of Guardivedo, and Prime Minister to His Majesty the Devil, that, so far as I am concerned, I will see you



THE COUNT IN POSSESSION.

and your island and your guano buried 40,000 leagues under the tallest mountain between here and the North Pole before I will move a handful of it."

"I'm another," said Moore.

"I don't see how you're going to make out to live if you don't," yelled Hiram. "You are living on my island, and you have to depend on my fruits, and my berries, and my turtle eggs!"

"My dear senor," said Turner in his blandest tones, "pray,

desist. You may as well make up your mind that we are going to eat those fruits, those berries and those turtle eggs, until we are forced to leave this happy island, which you wish to make so attractive for us."

"And thank your stars that we have hitherto been content with vegetable diet." As Travers said this we all moved on by mutual consent.

The weather was perfect, for the nights were getting cooler. However, we began to fear that if we did not get away from the island at once, the following season would find us in a more wretched condition. The ship's carpenter was as anxious to get away as any of us, but still feared Hiram.

"Of course," said he, "Hiram will oppose our going with all his might, and he will claim the boats for debt, and will refuse to give them up."

"I guess you can chance that part of it," said Turner; "but you will find it difficult to get the entire party to consent to the risk of going; and the next question will be about provisioning the boats."

"Why not build a large raft?" cried Moore.

All turned to Wheelock and asked in chorus, "Can it be done?" After reflecting a moment he slowly replied:

"It seems plausible enough. Yes, we could cut down some of those big trees out there near the beach. They are straight and light as cork. I'll undertake that if eight or nine of us work on it we can build a raft, if need be, within three weeks, which will be able to carry our party with provisions for a month."

"What if we should meet a storm?" said some one.

"We must take our chances on that. Any of the sailors will tell you that we are pretty safe in these latitudes for a month at least."

All were consulted, and the decision was to build the raft.

We began on the very next day, and in ten days we had her afloat. In four days more we had built a deckhouse, and had begun to provision her. Hiram was furious when he saw what we were doing. He stormed, and raved, and threatened. Travers had a little difficulty in overcoming the fears of some, but by the time we were ready to leave everybody had agreed to come along.

We fitted a mast to our raft, and made a big sail of the sail-cloth we had saved from the ship.

On the morning we were ready to leave, Turner and I went to Slawker, who had all along refused to go with us. Turner made a last appeal.

"Here's your only chance to get back to civilization and sell you island. You'll be able then to find some one who will want to take it off your hands; and you can get more for it in America than you can by staying here."

"No," said Hiram, "no, this is my island. I shall stay on it. I don't know what might happen to this island if I should leave it; some one else might come and steal my guano."

"Oh, your guano will keep. Come along, or you will starve to death."

"No, no. I will look out for myself. You needn't argue the question. I won't go with you." Saying this, he turned abruptly and went up the beach.

It took us the entire morning to get all the passengers on the raft and ready to push off. As Travers and myself were about to leave, the others having already gone aboard the raft, Slawker came out of his store with a paper in his hand.

"Mr. Stevens," he said, I want to give you this paper. On it I have drawn an account of my island—a sort of prospectus, so that any one can see what advantages there would be in coming here to settle. I wanted to get copies of it printed and distributed. All you people owe me rent, and this is not much to ask in return. Besides, you have made a raft of my timber and are carrying it away. I shall call on you for further payment."

I promised to have the circular printed as he desired. He shook hands with Turner and myself, but refused to do so with any one else. As we sailed away to the eastward we saw the figure of Hiram Slawker standing motionless on Lookout Hill. It seemed awful to leave him there; but what were we to do? He stood "like a monument of landlordism," said Travers. Our raft sailed steadily, but very slowly. On the sixth day after leaving the island we encountered a lively breeze, which threatened at one time to develop a gale and knock our frail craft to pieces. On the eleventh day we sighted the Richard Gates, bound for San Francisco.

The captain treated us royally, and offered to go to the island and take off Slawker, but, after hearing our story, concluded it would be a waste of time.

It was not until then that we made a surprising discovery. In making out his prospectus, Hiram Slawker had left blank the bearings of the island.

He had evidently intended to make very careful calculations and insert the bearings, but had, by some strange fatality, forgotten to do so.

The storm we encountered upon our raft had so tossed us about that nobody could give more than a vague idea of its position on the chart. And so Hiram Slawker is the only man in the world who knows the exact location of his island.

I have a little more to add. Turner is with me in San Francisco, our fellow-passengers having all departed their several ways. He is a changed man.

He is worried by Slawker's perilous situation, and he has several times announced his decision of personally going in search of him. But the great uncertainty of finding the island, and the risk of fitting out a ship for making what would seem to be a useless attempt, have so far dissuaded him from starting.

I have shared his feelings in the matter, and in publishing the facts of this remarkable voyage sincerely trust as soon as all these details are known, some intelligent effort will be made toward the discovery of the Island of Guardivedo, for I fear an extended delay may prove fatal to the rescue of Hiram Slawker.

I append his prospectus:

I AM THE OWNER OF THE ISLAND OF GUARDIVEDO,

Situated in the Southern Pacific ocean; latitude * * * longitude * * * My island possesses a most delightful climate, capable of producing the very best results with the least labor.

I will give work to all mechanics and laborers of every description who will come and bring tools with them and build houses, make roads and such other improvements as I want. I will give them in payment lots of ground at low prices. I will make this land very valuable as the community enlarges, and as rents increase, and I will always give plenty of work to my people.

In course of time I will need bankers, storekeepers, hotel men and others, for I propose to immediately erect the city of Slawkerville.

Those who wish to know anything about this island of mine can write me direct.

HIRAM SLAWKER,

Count of Guardivedo,

On the Island, Guardivedo.

CONCLUDING CHAPTER BY

WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON

It is ever an ungracious task to attempt to point the moral of a story. It implies either a lack of clearness in the author or of perception in the reader. The story of The Lost Island is certainly luminous enough to make an explanatory chapter little else than impertinent. I attempt it only because my judgment has been overborne by the persuasion of the authors. This was the determining reason: While the story conveys to every reader a suggestion of the wrongfulness of individual land-ownership, as illustrated by the preposterous claim of Hiram Slawker to the island of Guardivedo, (his title resting on the fact that a pretender to the Spanish crown, "who had no money and supported his army by robbing villages," had bestowed it upon his grandfather,) it gave no intimation that the universal wrong of land monopoly could be cured, or of the great reform which is now asking the attention of the world to its remedy, the Single Tax.

The narrative of The Lost Island ends by leaving the holder of the bogus title in triumphant possession, his landless comrades sailing away in their extemporized boat to find a larger freedom elsewhere. Alas! since the islands and the continents of the earth have all passed into the hands of Slawkers, there is no escape for the disinherited by merely fleeing, because the superabundance of unused land, although in "wasteful and ridiculous excess" of population, is covered by parchment deeds that pretend to convey legally the Lord's land to the landlord. The departing boat must at length touch upon the possession of some other Slawker and, after all their peril, the deserters will simply exchange landlords, not acquire freedom. Tennyson, in his masterly poem, makes Ulysses say:

> " 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
> Push off, and sitting well in order smite
> The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
> To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
> Of all the western stars, until I die."

Under our present civilization, however courageous the voyagers or lengthy the voyage, it will hardly be possible to find a world so new that the landlord has not already pre-empted it and established there his metes and bounds.

Until now the authors of The Lost Island have been unknown to me, but my gratitude to them has been lively ever since I read the story in the pages of The Cosmopolitan; for it furnishes such an entertaining, effective and concrete example of the evil system that is responsible for so much social disorganization and unnecessary poverty. A young student at Harvard College said to me recently, "I have heard the single tax theory discussed, but no argument has touched me like the story of The Lost Island, which seems to me convincing." Thrice happy are they who, through the charm of imagination, can convey truths which the didactic logician labors in vain to inculcate! Uncle Tom's Cabin outweighed a library of argument and eloquence.

It is proposed to circulate this story widely, for the sake of the single tax cause, trusting that it may reach minds impervious to ordinary appeals. My part is to explain how the race of Slawkers may be changed from idlers and owners of other people's labor to useful workers. How, instead of a successful evasion of the sweating process, an evasion which procures men the key to monopoly's treasure-house, the moisture of their own brows must precede the enjoyment of labor's fruits.

As the island was large enough to demonstrate the injustice of one man owning the sole opportunity for sustenance and employment, forcing the other inhabitants to accept his arbitrary terms or leave, so is it of sufficient extent to illustrate the working of the single-tax method the world over. Had that beneficent law been recognized and adopted in Guardivedo, it is doubtful whether John Turner and his companions would have been in haste to get back to New York city, where five per cent. of the dwellers are Slawkers and the other ninety-five per cent. in the same plight that the islanders found themselves. On the contrary, would they not have devised means to allure their New York friends to join them and enjoy the benefits of a society founded on conditions of true equality?

I assume that the island possessed sufficient area and natural advantages to support a population vastly larger than the shipwrecked crew. With ample choice of position, each new comer would instinctively select the spot most advantageous to his work and dwelling, where the least exertion would bring the largest return. For men seek not work, but the products which it brings. Of course, the value of the different positions would vary in proportion to their desirability and to the demand for them, the demand producing what is called land-value or economic rent. Whoever pays his rent pays for a privilege. Rent exists and is collected wherever society and governments exist. The grievous trouble is that it is collected by the wrong parties. On the island rent could have been produced only by the community collectively. It was made by Turner, Travers, Moore, Slawker, and the crew of the Sea Gull. It belonged to them. If collected for the common treasury to be expnded for the benefit of all, justice and equity would have been served, but when Hiram Slawker appropriated it, barring a stipend for their living, no wonder that the rest rebelled and seceded. As it would have been an outrage for the community to take for its own use Slawker's private proerty, it was not less unjustifiable for him to rob them.

The Single Tax is a simple device for the true protection of property, its advocates never confusing land, which is the only original source of property, with property itself. The failure to make this clean distinction accounts for the popular delusion which calls the plan to restore what has been unjustifiably taken from mankind, "spoliation" or "confiscation." It is, however, satisfying to know that when the people sailed away from the island they left behind them no rent for the landlord to collect. He had the land, it is true, but his occupation of living on the labors of others, which he took in the form of rent, was gone. With no privilege to sell, Hiram contemplated with sadness the disappearing boat, with which his exemption from work also vanished.

There was more land, or natural opportunity for labor, on the island than the people could use, as there is on the main land No country is so crowded that men and women could

not find a chance to work for themselves if unused land were not held out of use for speculative purposes. If Hiram Slawker had owned only a portion of the valuable land of the island, he could not have forced his companions to work for him. They would have gone at once to the unowned parts and worked for themselves, instead of for him. Should the single tax be put in operation in any country on the globe, the landlord (i. e., the lord of the land) would be as powerless to extract rent from the people as Slawker was when he found himself the lonely occupant of Guardivedo.

The moral of the island tale will be badly pointed if the reader is thereby led to expend his indignation upon the Sea Gull's mate. Not Slawker, the product, but Slawkerism, (or landlordism), the producing cause, is the sole object of reprobation. Had any one of the passengers or crew, instead of the mate, discovered himself to be the legal owner of Guardivedo, he would have similarly asserted what seemed his right. Indeed, Travers, brought to confession by Slawker's question, was forced to acknowledge by his silence the unsuspected parity of his own control of New Jersey land with the mate's sovereignty of the island. Slawker's retort, although hardly "the retort courteous," was unanswerable: "You fellows cannot talk to me! You are in the same boat. You don't let everybody ride over you and do what they want with your land. And I propose to enforce my rights here!" The noxious creatures of a swamp are not to be blamed for their natural qualities. The swamp must be drained.

The story of The Lost Island might have been developed still more effectively had not the authors' forbearance or the limitation of the Cosmopolitan's space intervened. A less intelligent and enterprising community might have sunk into hopeless acquiescence. Other unfortunates might have joined them, and a populace of dependents occupied the land exactly as on the island of Sicily to-day. But Hiram Slawker, following the world-wide example of large landlords, would have ceased to live at Guardivedo, preferring the gay capitals of Europe or the allurements of New York. His agent would have sufficed to extract from his island-bound subjects the last cent of their

earnings, except enough for their bare existence. Behold in the imaginary island the birth of landlordism! In the actual island of Sicily can be seen the inevitable result of the unnatural system. Favored with fertile and abundant soil and a climate that is the delight of travellers, it presents one of the saddest social pictures in the world. The direct poverty and suffering are to be found on a territory blessed by nature and cursed by the greed of man. More than Ireland it is the consummate poison-flower of land monopoly and absentee spendthrifts.

It is easier to show by fiction the injustice of land ownership than to explain the single tax and its practical application. People prefer to look at pictures rather than submit themselves to "the intolerable toil of thought." The wish to acquire a foreign language in six easy lessons is a universal trait. One who tries to make plain a new reform is quickly made to feel the impatience of those who would master in an hour a subject that has for years taxed the brains of its advocates. Upon the Single Tax not only volumes, but, one might truthfully say, a library has been written. Its gospel is found in the luminous and masterly works of Henry George, especially in Progress and Poverty. A multitude of other pens have volunteered their aid in its elucidation. Its discussion has been exhaustive.

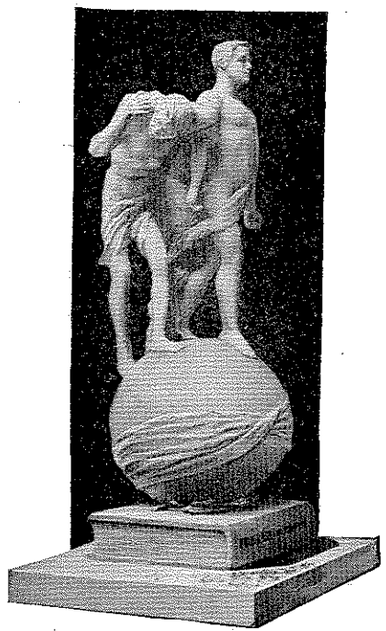
Strange that a simple thing should involve so complex a consideration! Yet, while a child could understand the wrongfulness of American slavery, more than forty years and a civil war were required to persuade mature minds that abolition was justifiable. One reading of The Lost Island will convince many of the righteousness of the principle underlying "the equal right to the use of the earth," but the tacit acceptance of a principle by no means implies faith in its active application. In this day of unbelief in primal laws the practice of a truth is held to be dangerous to social order. The common and atheistic defence of established wrongs is the concession that the reformer while "right in theory is impracticable." Against this barrier reforms must beat their tired wings.

The Single Tax is to proclaim a new emancipation, the

emancipation of the land. Stated concisely, wherever a community is populous enough to need civil government, on that spot a corresponding land value or ground rent will be found. The latter is the natural fund to defray the expenses of the former. The abolition of all taxes and the appropriation of ground rent, in the form of a single tax, for public use, is the goal sought. Simple incident of taxation though it seem, it is essential to social progress, material prosperity, the banishment of poverty-breeding conditions, equality of opportunity, the uplifting of the race.

The justification of the hopes cherished by land restorationists, though ridiculed as visionary by interested or unthinking people, will, "in the good time coming," be plain to all mankind. To speed the dawn of that golden day, The Lost Island has been written. May its fitting sequel, "The Continent Regained," find due expression when this cause of justice touches its triumph!

"In seeds of laurel in the earth
The blossom of its fame is blown,
And somewhere waiting for its birth,
The shaft is in the stone."



THE SINGLE TAX

WHAT IT IS AND WHY WE URGE IT

By Henry George

I shall briefly state the fundamental principles of what we who advocate it call the Single Tax.

We propose to abolish all taxes save one single tax levied on the value of land, irrespective of the value of the improvements in or on it.

What we propose is not a tax on real estate, for real estate includes improvements. Nor is it a tax on land, for we would not tax all land, but only land having a value irrespective of its improvements, and would tax that in proportion to that value.

Our plan involves the imposition of no new tax since we already tax land values in taxing real estate. To carry it out we have only to abolish all taxes save the tax on real estate, and to abolish all of that which now falls on buildings or improvements, leaving only that part of it which now falls on the value of the bare land, increasing that so as to take as nearly as may be the whole of economic rent, or what is sometimes styled the "unearned increment of land values."

That the value of the land alone would suffice to provide all needed public revenues—municipal, county, state, and national—there is no doubt.

To show briefly why we urge this change, let me treat (1) of its expediency, and (2) of its justice.

From the single tax we may expect these advantages:

1. It would dispense with a whole army of tax gatherers and other officials which present taxes require, and place in the treasury a much larger proportion of what is taken from the people, while by making government simpler and cheaper, it would tend to make it purer. It would get rid of taxes which necessarily promote fraud, perjury, bribery, and corruption, which lead men into temptation, and which tax what the nation can least afford to spare—honesty and conscience. Since land lies out-of-doors and cannot be removed, and its value is the most readily ascertained of all values, the tax to which we would resort can be collected with the minimum of cost and the least strain on public morals.

2. It would enormously increase the production of wealth—

(*a*) By the removal of the burdens that now weigh upon industry and thrift. If we tax houses there will be fewer and poorer houses; if we tax machinery, there will be less machinery; if we tax trade, there will be less trade; if we tax capital, there will be less capital; if we tax savings, there will be less savings. All the taxes therefore that we should abolish are those that repress industry and lessen wealth. But if we tax land values there will be no less land.

(*b*) On the contrary, the taxation of land values has the effect of making land more easily available by industry, since it makes it more difficult for owners of valuable land which they themselves do not care to use to hold it idle for a larger future price. While the abolition of taxes on labor and the products of labor would free the active element of production, the taking of land values by taxation would free the passive element by destroying the speculative land values, and preventing the holding out of use of land needed for use. If any one will but look around to-day and see the unused or but half-used land, the idle labor, the unemployed or poorly employed capital, he will get some idea of how enormous would be the production of wealth were all the forces of production free to engage.

(*c*) The taxation of the processes and products of labor on one hand, and the insufficient taxation of land values on the other, produce an unjust distribution of wealth which is building up in the hands of a few fortunes more monstrous than the world has ever before seen, while the masses of our people are steadily becoming relatively poorer. These taxes necessarily fall on the poor more heavily than on the rich; by increasing prices, they necessitate a larger capital in all businesses, and consequently give an advantage to large capitals; and they give, and in some cases are designed to give, special advantages and monopolies to combinations and trusts. On the other hand, the insufficient taxation of land values enables men to make large fortunes by land speculation and the increase in ground values—fortunes which do not represent any addition by them to the general wealth of the community, but merely the appropriation by some of what the labor of others creates.

This unjust distribution of wealth develops on the one hand a class idle and wasteful because they are too rich, and on the other hand a class idle and wasteful because they are too poor—it deprives men of capital and opportunities which would make them more efficient producers. It thus greatly diminishes production.

(*d*) The unjust distribution which is giving us the hundred-fold millionaire on the one side and the tramp and pauper on the other, generates thieves, gamblers, and social parasites of all kinds, and requires large expenditure of money and energy in watchmen, policemen, courts, prisons, and other means of defense and repression. It kindles greed of gain and a worship of wealth, and produces a bitter struggle for existence which fosters drunkenness, increases insanity, and causes men whose energies ought to be devoted to honest production to spend their time and strength in cheating and grabbing from each other. Besides the moral loss, all this involves an enormous economic loss which the single tax would save.

(*e*) The taxes we would abolish fall most heavily on the poorer agricultural districts, and tend to drive the population and wealth from them to the great cities. The tax we would increase would destroy that monopoly of land which is the great cause of that distribution of population which is crowding the people too closely together in some places, and scattering them too far apart in other places. Families live on top of one another in cities because of the enormous speculative prices at which vacant lots are held. In the country they are scattered too far apart for social intercourse and convenience, because, instead of each taking what land he can use, every one who can, grabs all he can get, in the hope of profiting by its increase of value, and the next man must pass farther on. Thus we have scores of families living under a single roof, and other families living in dugouts on the prairies afar from neighbors—some living too close to each other for moral, mental, or physical health, and others too far separated for the stimulating and refining influences of society. The wastes in health, in mental vigor, and in unnecessary transportation result in great economic losses which the Single Tax would save.

Let us turn to the moral side and consider the question of justice.

The right of property does not rest on human laws; they have often ignored and violated it. It rests on natural laws—that is to say, the law of God. It is clear and absolute, and every violation of it, whether committed by a man or a nation, is a violation of the command, "Thou shalt not steal." The man who catches a fish, grows an apple, raises a calf, builds a house, makes a coat, paints a picture, constructs a machine, has, as to any such thing, an exclusive right of ownership which carries with it the right to give, to sell or bequeath that thing.

But who made the earth that any man can claim such ownership of it, or any part of it, or the right to give, sell or bequeath it? Since the earth was not made by us, but is only a temporary dwelling place on which one generation of men follow another; since we find ourselves here, are manifestly here with equal permission of the Creator, it is manifest that no one can have any exclusive right of ownership in land, and that the rights of all men to land must be equal and inalienable. There must be an exclusive right of possession of land, for the man who uses it must have secure possession of land in order to reap the product of his labor. But his right of possession must be limited by the equal right of all, and should therefore be conditioned on the payment to the community by the possessor of an equivalent for any special valuable privilege thus accorded him.

When we tax houses, crops, money, furniture, capital or wealth in any of its forms, we take from individuals what rightfully belongs to them. We violate the right of property and in the name of the state commit robbery. But when we tax ground values we take from individuals what does not belong to them, but belongs to the community, and which cannot be left to individuals without the robbery of other individuals.

Think what the value of land is. It has no reference to the cost of production, as has the value of houses, horses, ships, clothes, or other things produced by labor, for land is not produced by man, it was created by God. The value of land does not come from the exertion of labor on land, for the value thus produced is a value of improvement. That value attaches to any

piece of land, means that that piece of land is more desirable than the land which other citizens may obtain, and that they are more willing to pay a premium for permission to use it. Justice therefore requires that this premium of value shall be taken for the benefit of all in order to secure to all their equal rights.

Consider the difference between the value of a building and the value of land. The value of a building, like the value of goods, or of anything properly styled wealth, is produced by individual exertion, and therefore properly belongs to the individual; but the value of land only arises with the growth and improvement of the community, and therefore properly belongs to the community. It is not because of what its owners have done, but because of the presence of the whole great population, that land in New York is worth millions an acre. This value therefore is the proper fund for defraying the common expenses of the whole population; and it must be taken for public use, under penalty of generating land speculation and monopoly which will bring about artificial scarcity where the Creator has provided in abundance for all whom his providence has called into existence. It is thus a violation of justice to tax labor, or the things produced by labor, and it is also a violation of justice not to tax land values.

These are the fundamental reasons for which we urge the Single Tax, believing it to be the greatest and most fundamental of all reforms. We do not think it will change human nature. That, man can never do; but it will bring about conditions in which human nature can develop what is best, instead of, as now in so many cases, what is worst. It will permit such an enormous production as we can now hardly conceive. It will secure an equitable distribution. It will solve the labor problem and dispel the darkening clouds which are now gathering over the horizon of our civilization. It will make undeserved poverty an unknown thing. It will check the soul-destroying greed of gain. It will enable men to be at least as honest, as true, as considerate, and as nigh-mindd as they would like to be. It will remove temptation to lying, false swearing, bribery, and law breaking. It will open to all, even the poorest, the comforts and refinements and opportunities of an advancing civilization. It will thus, so we reverently believe, clear the way for the coming of that kingdom of

right and justice, and consequently of abundance and peace and happiness, for which the Master told His disciples to pray and work. It is not that it is a promising invention or cunning device that we look for the single tax to do all this; but it is because it involves a conforming of the most important and fundamental adjustments of society to the supreme law of justice, because it involves the basing of the most important of our laws on the principle that we should do to others as we would be done by.

The readers of this article, I may fairly presume, believe, as I believe, that there is a world for us beyond this. The limits of the space has prevented me from putting before them more than some hints for thought. Let me in conclusion present two more:

1. What would be the result in Heaven itself if those who get there first instituted private property in the surface of Heaven, and parceled it out in absolute ownership among themselves, as we parcel out the surface of the earth?

2. Since we cannot conceive of a Heaven in which the equal rights of God's children to their father's bounty is denied, as we now deny them on this earth, what is the duty enjoined on Christians by the daily prayer; "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, *on earth,* as it is in Heaven"?

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