



**Luis Senarens**

*The Transient Lake;  
or, Frank Reade,  
Jr.'s Adventures  
in a Mysterious  
Country*



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# **The Transient Lake; or, Frank Reade, Jr.'s Adventures in a Mysterious Country**



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He swung to and fro over the chasm, liable at any moment to be precipitated to an awful death. It required but a moment for Frank to recognize the unfortunate man. It was Barney O'Shea.

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THE TRANSIENT LAKE;

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By "NONAME."







# **CHAPTER I.**

## **THE CAPTAIN'S STORY.**

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“Stranger than the tales of the Arabian Nights—indeed, almost Munchausen-like in its seemingly improbable character is the tale I am about to give you in truth,” said Captain Nicodemus Beere as he hitched up his trowsers and shifted his quid.

Frank Reade, Jr., drew a deep, quick breath and looked keenly at his visitor.

“That is a sweeping statement,” he declared; “but you are a truthful man, Captain Beere, and of course you mean what you say.”

“I certainly do,” said the doughty captain in his most positive manner. “What is more, I stand ready to furnish undisputed proof of it.”

The captain cleared his throat and began his story. But before we follow him through its thread let us take a closer look at him.

It could be seen at a glance that he was a man much out of the ordinary.

In figure he was stout and well built, with fair features and a heavy, full beard. His blue eyes twinkled with honesty but a certain irascibility of temper peculiar to sea-faring men.

For many years he had sailed the seas and weathered many a hard voyage in all quarters of the world. But two



years previous he had retired with the purpose of spending the rest of his days in ease and comfort on shore.

He had been a warm friend of Frank Reade, Sr., long since passed away, and when he heard of the success of Frank Reade, Jr., the son of the famous inventor, he conceived the notion of paying him a visit.

Frank Reade, Jr., received him hospitably in his beautiful Readestown home.

"My father's friends are mine," he declared. "I have often heard him speak of you, Captain Beere."

The captain visited the great machine shops of Frank Reade, Jr., and inspected his various inventions. Among them the one which claimed his deepest interest was the new air-ship, the Spectre.

And as he studied and admired it an idea came into his brain. He at once was determined to broach it to the young inventor.

This idea was to be embodied in the tale which he now proposed to give Frank, and with this explanation let us follow him.

"Ten years ago," declared the captain, "I was master of as fine a ship as ever rounded Cape Horn. We were south of Panama and somewhere off the coast of Peru when a storm struck us.

"For four days and nights it roared and howled and bellowed. We were buffeted and driven hither and thither, half the time running before the wind. We could not tell where we were nor what would be the end of it all. It seemed as if we must go to the bottom.



“On the fourth day the climax came. The foremast went by the board and carried the maintop with it. Later the main also went and we were almost dismasted. Moreover, the ship began to make water at a fearful rate.

“However, by working sharp we kept her afloat until the morning of the fifth day, which broke clear and bright. On our weather bow we saw land.

“There was no hope of saving the ship, so we worked her down under a jury rig until we found a good place to beach her. Then we went ashore in a long-boat.

“It was a rough, wild coast, with terrible high cliffs and reaches of sand. Of course we climbed the highest cliff to see what was about us.

“Westward was the sea. North and south the rough shore, but eastward was a mountainous country with fearful mountain passes and gorges. There was something weird and mystic about the whole region. But we knew that it was death from starvation to stay by the shore, so we kept on looking for signs of human settlement.

“Before we knew it we were deep in the heart of the strangest region any of us had ever seen. Every cliff or precipice seemed to have the shape of a fiend or a hobgoblin or an elf. The trees were fantastic in shape, there were hideous plants and snake-like vines. At times we came to sluggish streams and deep pools with strange, black depths, apparently bottomless.

“The animals were of an unknown species. There were birds of a talking species, yet unlike parrots. I cannot half describe to you the wonders of this mysterious country.



“For months we wandered through it. Then we came upon the ruins of a city and all the signs of a former civilization. We also discovered that the mountains were haunted by a race of giants, wild barbarians, out of whose way we took care to keep.

“After a time we came to a mighty inland sea or lake, the farther shore of which was so far distant that we could not see it. By the shores of this we sojourned many days.

“But one morning we arose to view a strange state of affairs. Where a few hours before there had existed a mighty lake, we saw now naught but a deep, rocky and sandy basin.

“The water had disappeared and hills and valleys lay in its place. It was a mighty surprise to us. All sorts of theories were advanced.

“That some subterranean channel had opened and carried the water away looked logical. Or perhaps a chasm or barrier at some far end had given way, and the mighty volume had been diverted into another and lower basin.

“Any or all of these theories looked plausible enough, and were accepted without further question. We spent a number of days exploring the basin. By some strange instinct we returned each night from the basin to our camp. To this we owed our lives.

“One day while wandering about the basin, one of our party came upon a curious object.

“It was a structure of rocks closely fitted together with cement. It was half imbedded in a plain of sand. That it was the work of human hands there could be no doubt.



“Of course we were all interested, for it showed that at some time other human beings than ourselves had visited the spot. We at once began to curiously examine the structure.

“This resulted in a thrilling discovery. It was undoubtedly hollow and our first mate, Bill Langley, discovered a movable stone at its summit. He displaced this, and a great cavity was revealed.

“Our first thought, of course, was that it was a tomb or burial place of some extinct race. In looking into the place we would not have been surprised to have come across a heap of old bones or other such evidence.

“But what we did see was far different. Bill leaned over the aperture a while and rubbed his eyes repeatedly. Then he slid down, and said:

“‘By jingo, mates! I’m a gallivantin’ old shark, if there ain’t a heap of gold in that ere place!’

“‘Gold!’ I exclaimed.

“‘With submission, sir!’

“‘You are dreaming, man!’ I exclaimed somewhat excited. ‘Do you mean it?’

“‘Every word, skipper,’ replied Bill, solemnly. And I saw that he meant just what he said.

“This was enough for me. So I climbed upon the mound and looked in also. Something bright and yellow struck my gaze. I gave a gasp and then I cried:

“‘Give me a rope, mates. Steady me while I go down there!’

“And with a rope around my waist I slid down into the mound. It did not require but a few moments to satisfy me



that we had discovered buried treasure.

“Yes, sir, gold! Yellow, glittering stuff, enough to make us all millionaires. I own that I was near crazy at the time. There it lay in bars and ingots. All that was left was to take it away to civilization.

“I crawled out of the mound and then we all sat down and discussed the matter. There were fifteen of us.

“Bill Langley proposed a fair division. Of course this was satisfactory. Then it was decided to take the gold out of the mound.

“The gold fever was upon us; we worked like badgers at it. In a few hours we had a heap of the stuff piled up beside the mound. Then nightfall began to threaten. We suspended work, and it was decided not to return to camp, but remain on the spot until morning. There was not the remotest chance of anybody’s purloining the gold, yet all wanted to stay there.

“However, much of our necessary utensils were at the old camp. It was about three miles distant. At length Bill Langley and I decided to return for them and come back in the morning.

“So we set out for the old camp, and reached there an hour later, much fatigued. We lit a fire and sat down by it; but we could not sleep.

“All we could do was to talk about the treasure and what golden plans we could lay for the future. Midnight came and passed.

“Then I began to feel a bit drowsy, and suggested turning in; but the words hadn’t left my lips when Bill gave a quick start.



“‘Great gunnels, mate!’ he exclaimed; ‘what in the Old Harry was that?’

“The same sound came to my ears. It was a distant, monotonous boom like rolling thunder. The ground actually shook under our feet.

“Only once had I heard a similar frightful sound, and that was once during an earthquake in Panama. But was this an earthquake?

“We sprang to our feet. Bill picked up a fire brand and held it high. But we could see nothing but a few faint stars overhead. It was the blackest kind of a night.

“For a space of thirty minutes the same dull roaring and trembling continued. Then came a dead silence.

“We had about given up interest in the matter, thinking it some inexplicable phenomenon of a tropical clime, when a sudden, startling thing happened.

“A terrific boom, and a swirling, rushing mass came whooping down through the lake basin. The next moment we were picked up as if in giant arms and carried clean to the summit of the eminence beyond us, and there we clung to palm trees, wet as drowned rats.”