
E. F. KNIGHT
THE CRUISE OF THE 'ALERTE'

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The narrative of a search for treasure on the desert island of Trinidad

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CHAPTER I.

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THE HISTORY OF THE TREASURE.

In the course of a long cruise in the South Atlantic and up the South American rivers, in the years 1880 and 1881, with my little yacht the 'Falcon,' I found myself, more by accident than intention, in the neighbourhood of the small desert island of Trinidad. We were bound from Montevideo to Bahia, and, after running before a heavy pampero off the River Plate, we fell in with strong head winds, and had to thrash our way to windward for upwards of a thousand miles of choppy seas and boisterous weather, while the rain poured down upon us almost without cessation, as it not unfrequently does during the season of the northerly Brazilian monsoon.

We steered a course away from the land to the eastward, hoping to meet with more favourable winds when we had obtained an offing of some four or five hundred miles. Vessels bound north from the Plate during the season of the northerly monsoon invariably pursue this plan, sailing as much as seven hundred miles close hauled on the port tack before they go about and make their northering. Thus it was that our course brought us in the vicinity of Trinidad, which lies in latitude 20° 30′ south and longitude 29° 22′ west, distant about seven hundred miles from the coast of Brazil, and my curiosity being aroused by the description of the islet in the 'South Atlantic Directory' I decided to land and explore it.

We came to an anchor off this desolate spot on December 8, 1881, and we remained there for nine days. Our adventures of various sorts, the perils of landing, the attacks made on us by the multitudes of hideous land-crabs and ferocious sea-birds, our difficult climb over the volcanic mountains, and finally our anything but regretful departure from one of the most uncanny and dispiriting spots on earth, are fully set out in my book, 'The Cruise of the "Falcon."' On turning to that book I find that I state there that I had had more than enough of Trinidad, and would on no account set foot on its barren shores again—a rash resolution which I was destined to break nearly ten years after my first visit to the island.

The descriptions of Trinidad in the 'South Atlantic Directory' are all of an old date, and were supplied at different times by captains of vessels in want of water or with crews stricken with scurvy, who effected a landing in order to procure water or the purslain and other greens which abound on some portions of the shore. Halley in 1700, Amaso Delano in 1803, and Commodore Owen in 1822 visited the island, and it is from their accounts that most of the information concerning it has been gathered. All describe the landing as extremely difficult, and often quite impracticable, on account of the almost perpetual surf which breaks on the iron-bound coast. Consequently mariners avoided the coral reefs and sea-worn crags, and, though the masters of homeward-bound vessels from around Cape Horn often sighted the island from a safe distance in order to correct the rate of their chronometers, it was rare indeed that the foot of a human being trod its shores.

But now the land-crabs and sea-birds of Trinidad must be becoming almost familiarised with the sight of man, for the report of a vast treasure that is supposed to have been

buried here some seventy years ago, has induced no less than five different bands of adventurers in the course of the last twelve years to fit out vessels for the purpose of seeking their fortunes among the volcanic ash.

This is an account of the most recent of these ventures, and I think it will be the last of them; for whereas all the previous explorers—in consequence of mutiny, the difficulty of landing, and other causes—failed to make any real attempt at digging into the landslip which now covers the spot where the treasure is supposed to lie, and, losing heart in the presence of the preliminary perils and discomforts, abandoned the island after a few days' stay, we succeeded in landing by degrees our tents, tools, and stores, and established quite a comfortable little settlement, while the digging was steadily carried on for three months, and many thousands of tons of earth and rock were removed.

We worked on until we were satisfied that further search was useless. We failed to find the treasure, but we did what our predecessors did not—we had a very good try for it; and we have, I think, at any rate proved that it is not worth the while of any other adventurers to go in search of this too carefully concealed hoard.

When I visited Trinidad in 1881 I was not aware that a treasure was supposed to be buried there, else I should most probably have prosecuted some preliminary search with the small crew—we were five all told—and the inadequate tools I had on board, so as to ascertain whether it would be worth while to organise a properly equipped expedition on my return home. It was not until the year 1885 that my attention was directed to paragraphs in the newspapers which spoke of the departure from the Tyne of the barque 'Aurea' with a considerable company, including

navvies, and well provided with the tools that were considered necessary for the recovery of the treasure.

These adventurers started full of hope, but were doomed to disappointment, as is shown in the following extract which I cut from a daily paper some months later:—

'Further information has been received regarding the unfortunate expedition of the "Aurea," the vessel chartered by a number of Tynesiders for a voyage to the small island of Trinidad, off the coast of Brazil, where it was reported a large amount of treasure was concealed. The last letter is from one of the seamen, a young man named Russell, to his parents in North Shields. Russell states that it is with *"the greatest pleasure" that he has an opportunity of writing, and continues to say that the "Aurea" left the island on April 29, and, he was sure, the crew were not sorry at leaving. He states that eight seamen were ashore fourteen days, and at the end of that time they were so exhausted with the want of water and provisions, and with the scorching heat, that they had all to be carried on board. As a consequence eight of them were laid down with fever, and out of the eight two seamen died. The expedition was thus unfortunate in more than one respect. The "Aurea," according to the writer of the letter, was at Trinidad in the West Indies, and was expected to leave for England. Russell says nothing about treasure; the burden of his letter is that the crew left the island with the greatest satisfaction.'*

This ill-fated expedition of the 'Aurea' was, so far as my information goes, the last before that of the 'Alerte.'

In the autumn of 1888, I happened to meet some South Shields people who knew the history of the treasure and of the previous expeditions. They told me that there had been some talk lately of fitting out another vessel to renew the quest, and that many undeniably shrewd Tynesiders had a

complete faith in the existence of the treasure, and were willing, despite former failures, to risk their money and lives in order to discover it. My informant gave me an outline of the evidence on which this faith was based, and I heard enough to so interest me that I forthwith took train to South Shields and put myself into communication with the heads of the 'Aurea' expedition, with the view, in case I should consider the prospects of securing the treasure to be not too remote, of fitting out a small yacht and sailing away once more to Trinidad.

The following is the substance of the story as I heard it from Mr. A——, who was the prime mover of the last venture, and who himself sailed in the 'Aurea,' and passed fourteen days on the island.

'There is now living, not far from Newcastle, a retired sea captain, Captain P——, who was in command of an East Indiaman engaged in the opium trade in the years 1848 to 1850. At that time the China seas were infested by pirates, so that his vessel carried a few guns, and a larger crew than is usual in these days. He had four quartermasters, one of whom was a foreigner. Captain P—— is not sure of his nationality, but thinks he was a Russian Finn. On board the vessel the man went under the name of the pirate, on account of a deep scar across his cheek, which gave him a somewhat sinister appearance. He was a reserved man, better educated than the ordinary sailor, and possessing a good knowledge of navigation.

'Captain P—— took a liking to him, and showed him kindness on various occasions. This man was attacked by dysentery on the voyage from China to Bombay, and by the time the vessel reached Bombay he was so ill, in spite of the captain's nursing, that he had to be taken to the hospital. He gradually sank, and when he found that he was dying, he

told Captain P——, who frequently visited him at the hospital, that he felt very grateful for the kind treatment he had received at his captain's hands, and that he would prove his gratitude by revealing a secret to him that might make him one of the richest men in England. Captain P—— says that he appeared very uneasy about this secret, and insisted on the door of the ward being closed, so that there might be no listeners. He then asked Captain P—— to go to his chest and take out from it a parcel. The parcel contained a piece of old tarpaulin with a plan of the island of Trinidad on it.

'The man gave him this plan, and told him that at the place indicated on it—that is, under the mountain known as the Sugarloaf—there was an immense treasure buried, consisting principally of gold and silver plate and ornaments, the plunder of Peruvian churches which certain pirates had concealed there in the year 1821. Much of this plate, he said, came from the cathedral of Lima, having been carried away from there during the war of independence when the Spaniards were escaping the country, and that among other riches there were several massive golden candlesticks.

'He further stated that he was the only survivor of the pirates, as all the others had been captured by the Spaniards and executed in Cuba some years before, and consequently it was probable that no one but himself knew of this secret. He then gave Captain P—— instructions as to the exact position of the treasure in the bay under the Sugarloaf, and enjoined him to go there and search for it, as it was almost certain that it had not been removed. The quartermaster died shortly afterwards.'

Now this story, so far, bears a strong family resemblance to many other stories of pirate treasure, mythical or otherwise,

and, though there can be no doubt that great stores of valuable plunder are still lying hidden away in this fashion on many a West Indian cay and desert ocean island, the dying quartermaster's deposition was hardly enough by itself to warrant the expense of fitting out an expedition for Trinidad. But on making researches it was found that his story was corroborated in many remarkable ways.

In the first place the archives of Cuba were inspected, and a record was discovered which showed that a gang of pirates who had plundered Spanish vessels sailing from Lima had been hanged at Havannah at the time mentioned.

The probability of the story is further strengthened by the actual history of Peru during the war of independence. It appears that the Spanish population of Lima entertained a wholesome dread of the liberators of their country, and deposited large sums of money and a vast amount of plate in the forts for security. Lima was then a city extremely rich in gold and silver plate, and the value of the property lying in the fortress alone was estimated by Lord Dundonald as at least six millions sterling.

Lord Dundonald, who was at the time in command of the Chilian fleet which had been sent to the assistance of the liberators of Peru, endeavoured to obtain possession of this fortress by negotiations, and offered the Spanish governor to permit his free departure with two-thirds of this treasure on condition of the remainder, together with the fortress, being given up to the Chilian squadron. The admiral hoped by means of this one-third to abate the mutinous spirit of his men, who had received no pay for a long period, and who were, moreover, in a state of actual destitution. But, to Lord Dundonald's disgust, the Peruvian Protector, San Martin, for purposes of his own, allowed the garrison to evacuate the fortress, carrying away with them the whole of these riches.

Later on, however, Lord Dundonald took the responsibility on himself of seizing the Protector's yacht at Ancon, and discovered that it was entirely ballasted with silver coin and uncoined gold. With this he paid his sailors some of their arrears of pay and prize-money.

During the first few years of their liberty the unhappy Limenos must have occasionally regretted the old Spanish misrule, bad as it was; for their liberators plundered them in the most shameless fashion, and most of the wealthy citizens of Lima were reduced to a state of abject poverty. The tyrannical Protector inflicted great hardships on the Spanish inhabitants, and among other of his decrees one was passed confiscating to the public treasury one-half of all their property. When some of these unhappy people, driven to desperation, took to sea and endeavoured to escape with the remaining half of their possessions, the Republican officers boarded their vessels and, wholly regardless of the decree, appropriated this half also.

The wealth of Lima, the richest city of Spanish America, was soon scattered far and wide, and disappeared for ever; but it is probable that only a small proportion of it fell into the hands of the liberators; for the executive was not sufficiently well organised to carry out fully the decrees of confiscation. I do not think that the property to the value of six millions sterling which was carried away by the Spanish garrison has been all traced, but the records of the day show that the Spaniards took every opportunity of escaping to sea in any sort of vessel they could procure, carrying with them all the property they could collect, in the hope of reaching the mother country or some neutral port.

It must have been a glorious time for adventurous persons not overburdened with scruples; for it seems that all the gold and precious stones of Peru were travelling about

recklessly by sea and land without any proper protection. The pirates who then swarmed in those seas were not slow to avail themselves of this rare opportunity, and carried on a flourishing business until such time as they were caught and hanged by that terrible English admiral.

Numbers of piratical craft hovered around the Peruvian ports, and the badly equipped vessels of the Spanish fugitives fell an easy prey to them. But Lord Dundonald, on the other hand, was ever pursuing the pirates with great energy. He captured many of them, and, later on, he was able to boast that he had swept the West Coast clean of these scourges of the sea.

It is known, however, that several of these vessels escaped his vigilance, and that enormous quantities of cathedral plate and specie were never recovered from their hands.

The pirate vessel that succeeded in reaching the islet of Trinidad is supposed to have been one of these.

Captain P——, on leaving Bombay after the death of his quartermaster, had intended to land on Trinidad and examine the spot indicated on the pirate's plan; but as he had a rather unruly crew, and was himself crippled with a broken arm, he thought it prudent not to make the attempt then, and so passed the islet and sailed home.

On his return to England he told the pirate's story to many people, but of course preserved the secret of the exact position of the hiding-place. Nothing, however, seems to have been done towards recovering the treasure until 1880, when Captain P—— persuaded a shipping firm at Newcastle to allow one of their vessels trading to the Brazils to visit the island. It was arranged that the barquentine 'John' should call at Trinidad on her way from Santos to Bull River, and

that Captain P——'s son should go with the vessel so as to identify the spot and act on his father's behalf.

The 'John' reached the islet, but, after beating about off it for a week, no landing-place could be found, and the captain decided to give up the attempt. But young P—— was very disinclined to return without having effected a landing, and persuaded the captain to allow him to swim ashore from a boat. The ship's longboat was therefore put out, and was pulled as close to the long roll of furious breakers as was considered safe. Then young P—— plunged into the sea, and contrived, after a narrow escape from drowning, to reach the land. The surf became more furious while he was on shore, so that it was impossible for him to swim off again that day. He had, consequently, to pass the night on the sands without either clothes or provisions, and was, moreover, in danger of being eaten alive by the land-crabs.

On the following morning the captain succeeded in casting the end of a line on shore, and the young man was dragged through the surf to the longboat, and carried on board the vessel. He reported to the captain that he had discovered the spot described by the pirate; but that a great landslip of red débris had fallen on the treasure, which could not be removed without great labour. He said the place tallied exactly with the description furnished by his father, and that he firmly believed the story to be true and that the treasure was still there; but that he would not spend such another night on the island even if he could get the whole treasure for himself by doing so.

The captain of the 'John,' on hearing the young man's story, considered that any further attempt to land would involve great danger, which he would not be justified in risking, and, declining to lend further assistance in the matter, set sail at once for his destination.

The next expedition was organised by my informant, Mr. A —— of South Shields. The 'Aurea,' a barque of 600 tons burthen, was chartered. She was provided with lifeboats suitable for surf work, and an ample supply of picks, shovels, timber, blasting powder, and other stores. She was partly ballasted with a cargo of steam coal, which it was intended to sell in some foreign port, so as to pay part of the expenses of the expedition. The necessary funds were subscribed by several gentlemen, most of whom, I believe, accompanied the expedition. Proper agreements were drawn up, and were signed by the officers and members of the expedition, setting forth the proportion of the treasure each was to receive, should the search be successful.

This party also found the island to be almost inaccessible, on account of the surrounding circle of savage breakers, and experienced great difficulty in landing.

The following extract from the letter of one of the expedition describes only the commencement of their perils and adventures:—

'We sighted the island on March 23, 1885, but, as it was very squally weather, we could do nothing until the next morning, when we got out the lifeboat, fitted her with mast and sail, and loaded her with provisions and baggage. The ship towed us as near to the shore as was deemed prudent, and then left us to make the best of our way there, while she stood on her course. The weather was very wet and squally, and, with our deeply-laden boat, we found we made no progress, either with the sails or oars, and, after toiling until after sunset, we found ourselves in a most deplorable position. We were all wet to the skin, and exhausted with pulling, and the seas were continually on the point of swamping our boat. Darkness then set in; our vessel was out of sight, and we scarcely knew what to do. However, I

took a lantern from among the stores, and got one of the men to light it and hoist it at our boat's masthead as a signal to our vessel. It blew out almost as soon as it was up, but we succeeded at last in sighting the vessel's port light, and got safely on board. The next day we determined to take the ship's boat and small dinghy with us, and tow the lifeboat ashore. We started early in the morning, the ship towing the three boats as close as possible to the Sugarloaf, and as the weather was now fine we soon got into South-west Bay, but found that the surf was much worse than we anticipated. We anchored the lifeboat with her cargo of stores close to the edge of the surf, and then Mr. D——, the mate, myself, and two hands, pulled along the weather side of the island, seeking a landing-place; but found a heavy surf at all points, and the bottom sown with sunken rocks. We then pulled back to South-west Bay, to consult with the others as to the best course to pursue. At last the mate volunteered to scull the dinghy ashore through the surf, if one man would go with him. One of the crew agreed to go, so they partly undressed, and took their places in the dinghy. A line was made fast to the stern, and as they pulled towards the shore we paid out, intending to haul the dinghy back again when they had reached the shore. All went well for a time, but when near the beach a tremendous roller caught the stern of the dinghy, drove the bow under, and turned her right over. The two men managed to get clear of the boat, and with some difficulty swam ashore.'

Eventually Mr. A—— and seven other men succeeded in landing, carrying with them a limited quantity of provisions and some of the tools. They remained on the island from March 25 to April 17, during which time the vessel had been blown out of sight. Insufficient food and exposure to rain dispirited the men, and their imaginations were dismayed by the dismal aspect of these barren volcanic crags, and by

the loathsome appearance of the land-crabs, which swarmed everywhere and continually attacked them.

They found what they considered to be the spot described by the pirate, but do not appear to have been quite so certain on this point as was young P——. Very little digging was actually done, 'for,' says Mr. A——, 'we had few hands on shore capable of standing the heavy work under such a burning sun.' They had only dug a small trench four feet deep into the landslip when the 'Aurea' was sighted; then the sick and disheartened band refused to stay any longer on this accursed island, and insisted on being taken on board. So, leaving all their tools behind them—for in their anxiety to get away safely they would not be burdened with these—they were carried off to the vessel, so emaciated, weak, and ill that the captain came to the conclusion that he would lose most of his men if he landed them on so uninhabitable a spot, and, abandoning the search, he set sail for the West Indies.

This expedition, therefore, practically accomplished nothing. The problem as to whether the treasure was or was not lying under the landslips in South-west Bay was as far from solution as ever.

Before the departure of the 'Aurea' expedition from South Shields, a good deal had been written concerning it in the English papers, with the result that some other adventurous spirits, having had their attention drawn to this possible El Dorado, hurried away to Trinidad in order to anticipate the Tynesiders. The following letter appeared in an English paper on May 14, 1885. The 'Aurea' people, of course, knew nothing of this rival expedition, until they returned to England:—

TRINIDAD IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC.

The Hidden Treasure Expedition.

[From a Correspondent.]

Kiel, May 11, 1885.

'Under this heading I have just now noticed a paragraph sent to the editor of a Danish daily paper, which, in its bearing on the well-known search-for-treasure expedition, may prove of interest to your readers, being in the shape of a letter sent from New York:—

'New York, April 17, 1885.

'On my arrival in New York from Aracaju, I read in your paper of January 14, 1885, about an expedition to be started from Newcastle, to proceed to the island of Trinidad in the South Atlantic, with the object in view of finding a treasure buried there some time ago by pirates: and I am in a position to furnish some particulars which, in all probability, are connected with this affair. On January 13, 1885, I was chartered with my vessel in Rio de Janeiro to take over to the above mentioned island an American captain and four Portuguese sailors, together with a number of pickaxes, spades, &c., and a whale-boat. I was told that these people intended to go to this island to investigate if any "guano" was to be found. A voyage of eleven days brought us there, but we had to keep off the shore on account of breakers for over three days. The men were then put ashore, and remained on the island for four days, during which time they were occupied with boring and digging, whereupon we sailed back to Bahia, and landed them there. I believe that these men, either by telegram from England or by other means, had heard of the existence of a treasure on this island, and that they meant to anticipate the English expedition. However, they found nothing. I noticed very well

that the American captain, as well as his men, were highly disappointed. Let me take this opportunity to dissuade all masters of vessels to search in this uninhabited island for fresh water. It is a matter of great difficulty and danger to put boats on shore, through coral reefs. The indications on the charts for casting the lead should be a good deal further from the shore. During the time we were there the wind was N.N.E. and the current to S.W., upon a speed of from 12 to 15 quarter-miles in 24 hours. In South-west Bay, two cable-lengths from the shore, there is a reef not mentioned on the charts.

'H. N. ANKERSEN,
'Master of sailing vessel from Fanoe.'

I found that the correspondent who sent this letter was correct in his information. When I called at Bahia with the 'Alerte,' my ship-chandler, Mr. Wilson, told me the whole of this story as it was related to him by the American adventurer on his arrival at Bahia from Trinidad. It is somewhat strange that the excavations made by this party were not seen by the 'Aurea' people, who landed on the island within two months of the departure of the Americans; but this islet has been so shaken to its foundations by earthquake shock and volcanic action, that it is brittle from its mountain-tops to the beach, and is in a state of perpetual change. Gigantic landslips are frequent, and I should not be surprised to find that all traces of our three months' hard digging have by now been entirely obliterated.

There might have been some fun, by the way, had the 'Aurea' and the American arrived off the island at the same time.

Since my return, I have heard of two other expeditions which started from the other side of the Atlantic in search of the hidden treasure of Trinidad, but, as with the former expeditions, nothing was accomplished. The loss of men and boats in the surf, sickness, and the numerous difficulties and dangers encountered, disheartened the men, and the attempt was abandoned before any serious work was done. It would seem as if this was one of those forlorn islands of which one reads in the old romances of the sea, on which the bloody deeds of the pirates have left a curse behind, so that the treasure is protected by evil spirits; and the great roaring seas which roll up seemingly without any natural cause, even after days of windless weather, and the ever-tottering crags, and all the forces and terrors of nature are made to keep man off from the inviolate hoard; while the loathsome land-crabs might well be the restless spirits of the pirates themselves, for they are indeed more ugly and evil, and generally more diabolical-looking, than the bloodiest pirate who ever lived.

CHAPTER II.

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THE 'ALERTE' IS FITTED OUT.

Such is the story of the Trinidad treasure, a story that seemed to me to bear the stamp of truth, and it was difficult to conceive that—allowing Captain P——'s narrative to be correct, and there is every reason to believe it as such—so many coincidences could have collected round a mere fabrication.

It is highly improbable that the foreign quartermaster evolved the whole matter from an imaginative brain, especially on his deathbed, when he was professing to confide a valuable secret to a friend as a token of his gratitude; neither can his statements be considered as being the ravings of a sick man, for they were far too circumstantial and compatible with facts.

In the first place, his carefully prepared plan of the island, the minute directions he gave as to the best landing, and his description of the features of the bay on whose shores the treasure was concealed, prove beyond doubt to myself and others who know Trinidad that he, or if not himself some informant of his, had landed on this so rarely visited islet; and not only landed, but passed some time on it, and carefully surveyed the approaches to the bay, so as to be able to point out the dangers and show the safest passage through the reefs. This information could not have been obtained from any pilot-book. The landing recommended by

previous visitors is at the other side of the island. This bay is described by them as inaccessible, and the indications on the Admiralty chart are completely erroneous.

And, beyond this, the quartermaster must have been acquainted with what was taking place in two other distant portions of the world during the year of his professed landing on the desert island. He knew of the escape of pirates with the cathedral plate of Lima. He was also aware that, shortly afterwards, there were hanged in Cuba the crew of a vessel that had committed acts of piracy on the Peruvian coast. It is scarcely credible that an ordinary seaman—even allowing that he was superior in education to the average of his fellows—could have pieced these facts together so ingeniously into this plausible story.

It is needless to say that one like myself—who knew Trinidad, and who had personally sifted the evidence, and was constantly coming across numbers of incidents not mentioned here, trifling in themselves, but, taken together, strongly corroborative—would be more impressed by the coincidences, and consequently be more inclined to give credence to the story than one who merely reads the narrative in the pages of this book.

Hence the result of my interview with Mr. A—— was that I decided to sail to Trinidad and search for the treasure. I knew, of course, that the chances were greatly against my finding anything. I was quite prepared for complete failure; but I considered that there was a sufficient possibility of success to make the venture worth the undertaking.

I, of course, saw that the great impediment was the landslip, which might have covered the landmarks, and so altered the features of the ravine as to render recognition of the exact spot extremely difficult; for it is quite possible that young Mr. P—— was somewhat over-sanguine, and that the

grounds for his so readily identifying the pirate's hiding-place were inadequate.

The former adventurers seem to have considered that the difficulties of landing constituted almost as great an obstacle to success as the landslip itself; but I was confident that these difficulties were anything but insuperable, and that, by taking proper precautions, it would be quite possible to land a working-party with all necessary stores and tools, and even, if necessary, heavy machinery as well. I had myself, nine years previously, landed at three different points of the island, and had passed several days on shore, so I quite realised what was before me.

There is no doubt that the former adventurers failed from precipitancy. Patience is a necessary quality for those who wish to land on Trinidad. One must not expect to sail there and forthwith disembark with one's baggage as if it were on Southsea Pier. It appears, too, that the captains of the square-rigged vessels which carried the expeditions to the island were largely responsible for the failure of the former quests; they would not approach the islands within several miles; they became anxious as to the safety of their boats and men, were fidgety to sail away again to the safety of the broad ocean, and hurried the adventurers off the shore before they had had scarce time to look around them. The captains, no doubt, were quite right from their point of view; but it is also certain that the treasure could never be recovered by this way of going to work. To dig away the landslip would involve many months of labour, and during that time the captain of the vessel must be prepared to stand off and on, or heave to off the island—for to remain at anchor for any length of time would be dangerous. And again, there must be no hurry in landing: the working-party may have to remain on board the vessel for weeks at a stretch gazing at that wild shore, before it be possible for

them to attain it. I have seen the great rollers dashing on the beach with a dreadful roar for days together, and the surf—as the 'South Atlantic Directory' observes without any exaggeration—'is often incredibly great, and has been seen to break over a bluff which is two hundred feet high.'

Notwithstanding this, if one is patient and bides one's opportunity, there are days when landing can be accomplished without any difficulty whatever.

When I visited Trinidad with the 'Falcon' I discovered one especially safe landing-place on the lee side of the island, where a natural pier of coral projects into the sea beyond the breakers. I knew that it was possible to effect a landing here ten times to once that this could be done on the more exposed beach of the bay under the Sugarloaf, where the 'Aurea' party landed. A considerable and, I believe, perennial stream of water runs down as a cascade into the sea close to my landing-place, and I knew that it would be easy to disembark here a quantity of provisions, and establish a depot to which the working-party in Sugarloaf Bay could repair in the case of their stores falling short and their communication with the vessel being cut off by bad weather. I had myself crossed the lofty mountains which separate this landing-place from the bay under the Sugarloaf, and knew that, though difficult, they were not inaccessible.

My negotiations with Mr. A—— terminated in his furnishing me with the bearings of the hidden treasure, and handing over to me the copy of the pirate's plan of the island, which the 'Aurea' people had taken with them. This plan merely indicated the safest landing-place in the bay.

Mr. A——'s account of his own experiences were of great service to me in fitting out this expedition. He told me that there was no constant stream of fresh water on the shores

of this bay, or anywhere near it; but that a little water of an inferior quality could be collected after rain. There was, however, according to him, an abundance of dead wood on the hill-sides, which served admirably as fuel; so I took note that a condensing apparatus would be an indispensable addition to our stores. He told me that I should find the 'Aurea' tools lying on the beach, which if not too corroded, might be of use to us. We did eventually find some of these, and employed them in our operations: I have now in my possession an 'Aurea' pick which I brought away with me. I have to thank Mr. A—— for a variety of valuable hints, which I did not neglect.

Having decided to go, the first thing to be done was to find a vessel, a fore-and-after which could accommodate thirteen or fourteen men on an ocean voyage, and which could yet be easily handled by two or three while hove to off the island.

I went down to my old headquarters, Southampton, and explained what I was in search of to Mr. Picket, of West Quay, who had been my shipwright from my earliest yachting days, and who fitted out the old 'Falcon' for her long voyage. With his assistance I soon discovered a very suitable vessel, the cutter-yacht 'Alerte,' of fifty-six tons yacht measurement, and thirty-three tons register. This was, therefore, a considerably larger vessel than the 'Falcon,' with which I had made my first voyage to Trinidad, for she was twenty-four feet shorter than the 'Alerte,' and was only of fifteen tons register.

The dimensions of the 'Alerte' are as follows:—length, 64.3 feet; beam, 14.5 feet; depth, 9 feet. She was built by Ratsey of Cowes in 1864, so she is rather an ancient vessel; but she was constructed in a much stronger fashion than is usual in these days, of thoroughly seasoned teak. There had been no