

**THE ISLAND: OR, AN  
ADVENTURE OF A  
PERSON OF QUALITY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649616770

The Island: Or, An Adventure of a Person of Quality by Richard Whiteing

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**RICHARD WHITEING**

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AN ADVENTURE OF A PERSON OF QUALITY

BY

RICHARD WHITEING

Author of "No. 5 John Street."

CHICAGO:

CHARLES H. SERGEL COMPANY

1899



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## THE ISLAND.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### OUT OF FOCUS.

Lat. 25° 4' S.; long. 130° 8' W.: August 18.

REST, peace, the sounds of a summer noon, and the murmur of waves. The calm of a peak in the Pacific thirteen thousand miles away from the dome of St. Paul's, and completely out of sight of it, if only by reason of the curvature.

I hardly know how I came here. When last I took stock of myself, I was standing on the steps of the Royal Exchange, on another summer afternoon, and looking down. I was busy as usual. I am playing with my little pocket agenda now (perhaps the last I shall ever buy) as I lie here on the broad of my back, and I turn to the entry for that day: "8, Gallop, Row; 9.30, letters, coffee; 10.30, article for 'Quarterly'; 12.30, City (I wanted Staples to put something on Turks, and

thought I had better be on the spot); 1.30, lunch; 2.30 to bedtime, horse sale, chrysanthemums, calls, club, early dinner, address Working Men's Constitutional Association—'Social Harmonies,' dance at Mrs. G.'s, club again, Daudet, bed."

A mosaic like this is all very well, but a trifle throws it out. When I had done with Staples, I had no further business at the Royal Exchange. I had certainly nothing to do on the steps; yet I lingered there. It was only for ten minutes, but it spoiled my day, and perhaps changed my destiny.

It was such a sight—civilisation in a nutshell—that was what made me pause. I was a part of it, and Apollo was taking a peep at his own legs. Why not? we all seemed to be going on so beautifully; we were all busy, all doing something for progress. What a scene! The Exchange I had just left, with its groups of millionaires gossiping Bagdad and the Irrawaddy, Chicago and the Cape; dividend day over at the Bank yonder, and the well known sight of the Blessed going to take their quarterly reward; a sheriff's coach turning the angle of the Mansion House (breakfast to an African pro-consul, I believe), a vanishing splendour of satin and plush and gold; dandy clerks making for Birch's, with the sure and

certain hope of a partnership in their easy grace; shabby clerks making for the bun shops; sly brokers going to take the odds against Egyptians, and with an appropriate horsiness of air; a parson (two hundred and fortieth annual thanksgiving sermon at St. Hilda's to commemorate Testator's encounter with Barbary pirates, and providential escape); itinerant salesmen of studs, pocket combs, and universal watch keys; flower girls at the foot of the statue, a patch of colour; beggar at the foot of the steps, another patch, the red shirt beautifully toned down in wear—Perfect! We want more of this in London—giant policeman moving him on; irruption of noisy crowd from the Cornhill corner (East-End marching West to demonstrate for the right to a day's toil for a day's crust); thieves, and bludgeon men, and stone men in attendance on demonstration; detectives in attendance on thieves; shutters up at the jewellers' as they pass; probable average of 7s. 6d. to the hundred pockets; with a wall only to divide them from all the turtle of the Mansion House, or all the bullion of the Bank! And, for background, the nondescript thousands in black and brown and russet and every neutral hue, with the sun over all, and between the sun and the thousands the London mist.