

SIR HENRY MORGAN, BUCCANEER

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"Give it back to me!" he shouted. "You have tasted it; I drain it. Now the lesson. Say after me, 'Harry Morgan!'"

"Harry Morgan," gasped the girl. "I love thee."

With a swift inward prayer she uttered the lying words.

"You have learned well and art an apt pupil indeed," he cried. "D'ye know there are few women who can resist me when I try to be agreeable? Harry Morgan's way!" he laughed again. "There be some that I have won and many I have forced. None like you. So

"Say 'Harry Morgan, I love you!'"



you love me? Scuttle me, I thought so. Ben Hornigold was right. Woo a woman, let her be clipped willingly in arms—yet there's a pleasure in breaking in the jades, after all. Still, I'm glad that you are in a better mood and have forgot that cursed Spaniard rotting in the dungeons below in favor of a better man, Harry—no, I'll say, Sir Henry—Morgan on this occasion, at your service!" he cried, rising again and bowing to her as before.

She looked desperately at the clock. The hour was close at hand. So great was the strain under which she was laboring that she felt she could not continue five minutes longer. Would Alvarado never come? Would anybody come? She sat motionless and white as marble, while the chieftain stared at her in the pauses of his monologue.

He came around the table and approached her. Notwithstanding the quantity of liquor he had taken he was physically master of himself, she noticed with a sinking heart. As he drew near she sprang to her feet and backed away from him, throwing out her left hand to ward him off, at the same time thrusting her right hand into her bosom.

He was right upon her now. She thrust him, unsuspecting and unprepared, violently from her, whipped out the dagger that Hornigold had given her and faced him boldly.

It was 10 o'clock, and no one had yet appeared. The struck hour reverberated through the empty room. Would Alvarado never come? Had it not been that she hoped for him she would have driven the tiny weapon into her heart at once, but for his sake she would wait a little longer.

"Nay, come no nearer!" she cried resolutely. "If you do, you will take a dead woman in your arms. Back, I say!" menacing herself with the point. And the man noted that the hand holding the weapon did not tremble in the least.

"Thinkest thou that I could love such a man as thou?" she retorted, trembling with indignation, all the loathing and contempt she had striven to repress finding vent in her voice. "I'd rather be torn limb from limb than feel even the touch of thy polluting hand!"

"Death and fury!" shouted Morgan, struggling between rage and mortification. "Then hast lied to me then?" "A thousand times—yes! Had I a whip I'd mark you again! Come with in reach, and I will drive the weapon home!"

She lifted it high in the air and shook it in defiance as she spoke.

It was a frightful impudence, for which she paid dearly, however, for the hangings parted, and Carb, who had heard what had gone on, entered the room—indeed, the voices of the man and woman filled with passion fairly rang through the hall. His quick eye took in the situation at once. He carried at his belt a long, heavy knife. Without saying a word, he pulled it out and threw it with a skill born of long practice, which made him a master at the game, fairly at the woman's uplifted hand. Before either Morgan or Mercedes was aware of his presence they heard the whistle of the heavy blade through the air. At the same moment the missile struck the blade of the dagger close to the palm of the woman and dashed it from her hand. Both weapons rebounded from the wall from the violence of the blow and fell at Morgan's feet.

Mercedes was helpless.

"Well done, Carb!" cried Morgan exultantly. "Never has that old trick of thine served me better. Now, you see devil, I have you in my power. Didst prefer death to Harry Morgan? Thou shalt have it, and thy lover too. I'll tear him limb from limb, and in thy presence too."

"Oh, God! Oh, God!" shrieked Mercedes, clattering herself against the wall, shrinking from him with wide outstretched arms as he approached her. "Mercy!"

"I know not that word. Wouldst cozen me? Hast another weapon in thy bodice? I'll look."

Before she could prevent him he seiz-

ed her dress at the collar with both hands and, in spite of her efforts, by a violent wrench tore it open.

"No weapon there!" he cried. "Ha! That brings at last the color to your pale cheek!" he added as the rich red crimsoned the ivory of her neck and cheek at this outrage.

"Help, help!" she screamed. Her voice rang high through the apartment with indignant and terrified appeal.

"Call again," laughed Morgan.

"Kill me, kill me!" she begged.

"Nay, you must live to love me! Ho, ho!" he answered, taking her in his arms.

"Mercy! Help!" she cried in frenzy, all the woman in her in arms against the outrage, though she knew her appeal was vain, when, wonder of wonders—

"I heard a lady's voice," broke upon her ears from the other end of the room.

"De Lussan!" roared Morgan, releasing her and turning toward the intruder. "Here's no place for you. How came you here? I'd chosen this room for myself. I wish to be private. Out of it, and thank me for your life!"

"I know not why you should have Donna de Lara against her will and when better men are here," answered the Frenchman, staring with bold, cruel glances at her, beautiful in her disarray, "and if you keep her you must fight for her. Mademoiselle," he continued, baring his sword gracefully and saluting her, "will you have me for your champion?"

His air was as gallant as if he had been a gentleman and bound in honor to rescue a lady in dire peril of life and honor instead of another ruffian inflamed by her beauty and desirous to possess her himself.

"Save me! Save me," she cried, "from this man!"

She did not realize the meaning of De Lussan's words. She only saw a deliverer for the present. It was ten minutes past the hour now. She welcomed any respite; her lover might come at any moment.

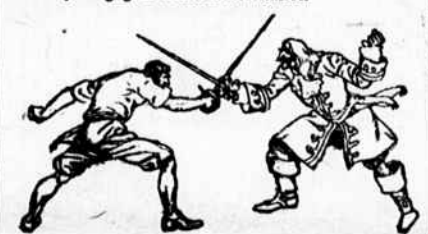
"I will fight the both of you for her," cried the Frenchman—"you, Black Dog, and you, Master Morgan. Draw, unless you are a coward."

"I ought to have you banded, you mutinous hound," shouted Morgan, "and hanged you shall be, but not until I have proved myself your master with the sword, as in all other things. Watch the woman, Carb, and keep out of this fray. Lay hand on her at your peril! Remember, she is mine."

"Or it may be mine," answered De Lussan as Morgan dashed at him.

They engaged without hesitation, and the room was filled with the sound of ringing, grating steel. First pulling the pins from her glorious hair, Mercedes

They engaged without hesitation



shook it down around her bare shoulders and then stood, fascinated, watching the fencers. She could make no movement from the wall, as the negro stood at her arm. For a space neither of the fighters had any advantage. De Lussan's skill was marvelous, but the chief buccaneer was more than his match. Presently the strength and capacity of the older and more experienced swordsman began to give him a slight advantage. Hard pressed, the Frenchman, still keeping an inexorable guard, slowly retreated up the room.

Both men had been so intensely occupied with the fierce play that they had not heard the sound of many feet outside, a sudden tumult in the street. The keen ear of the half breed, however, detected that something was wrong.

"Master," he cried, "some one comes. I hear shouts in the night air—a shot, shrieks, groans! There! The clash of arms! Lower your weapons, sir!" he cried again, as Spanish war cries filled the air. "We are betrayed. The enemy is on us!"

Instantly Morgan and De Lussan broke away from each other.

"Tomorrow!" cried the buccaneer captain.

"As you will," returned the other.

But now Mercedes, staring all upon her hope, lifted her voice, and with tremendous power, begot by fear and hope, sent ringing through the air that name which to her meant salvation:

"Alvarado! Alvarado!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE highway between La Guayra and Caracas was exceedingly rough and difficult and at best barely practicable for the stoutest wagons. The road wound around the mountains for a distance of perhaps twenty-five miles, although as the crow flies it was not more than five miles between the two cities. Between them, however, the tremendous ridge of mountains rose to a height of nearly 10,000 feet. Starting from the very level of the sea, the road crossed the divide through a depression at an altitude of about 6,000 feet and descended

thence some 3,000 feet to the valley in which lay Caracas.

This was the road over which Alvarado and Mercedes had come and on the lower end of which they had been captured. It was now barred for the young soldier by the detachment of buccaneers under young Teach and L'Ollonais, who were instructed to hold the pass where the road crossed through or over the mountains. Owing to the configuration of the pass, those fifty could hold it against a thousand. It was not probable that news of the sack of La Guayra would reach Caracas before Morgan descended upon it, but to prevent the possibility or to check any movement of troops toward the shore it was necessary to hold that road. The man who held it was in position to protect or strike either city at will. It was, in fact, the key to the position.

Morgan, of course, counted upon surprising the unfortified capital as he had the seaport town. It was the boast of the Spaniards that they needed no walls about Caracas since nature had provided them with the mighty rampart of the mountain range, which could not be surmounted save in that one place. With that one place in the buccaneer's possession, Caracas could only rely upon the number and valor of her defenders. To Morgan's onslaught could only be opposed a rampart of blades and hearts. Had there been a state of war in existence it is probable that the viceroy would have fortified and garrisoned the pass, but under present conditions nothing had been done. As soon as a messenger from Teach informed Morgan that the pass had been occupied and that all seemed quiet in Caracas, a fact which had been learned by some bold scouting on the farther side of the mountain, he was perfectly easy as to the work of the morrow. He would fall upon the unwalled town at night and carry everything by a coup de main.

Fortunately for the Spaniards in this instance, it happened that there was another way of access to the valley of Caracas from La Guayra. Directly up and over the mountain there ran a narrow and difficult trail, known first to the savages and afterward to wandering smugglers or masterless outlaws. Originally and until the Spaniards made the wagon road it had been the only way of communication between the two towns, but the path was so difficult and so dangerous that it had long since been abandoned even by the classes that had first discovered and traveled it. These vagabonds had formerly kept it in such a state of repair that it was fairly passable, but no work had been done on it for nearly 100 years. Indeed, in some places the way had been designedly obliterated by the Spanish government about a century since. By nearly all the inhabitants its very existence had been forgotten.

It was this trail that Alvarado determined to ascend. The difficulties in his way even under the most favorable circumstances might well have appalled the stoutest hearted mountaineer. In the darkness they would be increased a thousandfold.

Along the base of the mountain the trail was not difficult, although it was pitch dark under the trees which, except where the mighty cliffs rose sheer in the air like huge buttresses of the range, covered the mountains for the whole expanse of their great altitude. Alvarado made his way upward without trouble or accident at first, and he made good progress for several hours in spite of darkness.

It had been long past midnight when he started, and it was not until daybreak that he passed above the familiar and not untrodden way and entered upon the most perilous part of his journey. The gray dawn revealed to him the appalling dangers he must face.

Sometimes clinging with iron grasp to pinnacles of rock he swung himself along the side of some terrific precipice, where the slightest misstep meant a rush into eternity upon the rocks a thousand feet below. Sometimes he had to spring far across great gorges in the mountains that had once been bridged by mighty trunks of trees, long since moldered away. Sometimes there was nothing for him to do but to scramble down the steep sides of some dark canyon and force himself through cold torrential mountain streams that almost swept him from his feet. Again his path lay over cliffs green with moss and wet with spray, which afforded most precarious support to his grasping hands or slipping feet. Sometimes he had to force a way through thick tropic undergrowth that tore his clothing into rags.

Had he undertaken the ascent in a mere spirit of adventure he would have turned back long since from the dangers he met and surmounted with such hardship and difficulty. With the pale, beautiful face of Mercedes to lead him, and by contrast the hateful, cruel countenance of Morgan to force him, ever before his vision, the man plunged upward with unnatural strength, braving dangers, taking chances, doing the impossible—and Providence watched over him.

It was perhaps 9 o'clock in the morning when he reached the summit—breathless, exhausted, unhelmed, weaponless, coatless, in rags; torn, bruised, bleeding, but unharmed—and looked down on the white city of Caracas set in its verdant environment like a handful of pearls in a goblet of emerald. He had wondered if he would be in time to intercept the viceroy, and his strained heart leaped in his tired breast when he saw, a few miles beyond the town on the road winding toward the Orinoco country, a body of men. The sunlight blazing from polished helms or pointed lance tips proclaimed that they were soldiers. He would be in time, thank God!

With renewed vigor he scrambled

down the side of the mountain—and this descent fortunately happened to be gentle and easy—and, running with headlong speed, he soon drew near the gate of the palace. He dashed into it with reckless haste, indifferent to the protests of the guard, who did not at first recognize in the tattered, bloody, wounded, soiled specimen of humanity the gay and gallant commander. He made himself known at once and was confirmed in his surmise that the viceroy had set forth with his troops early in the morning and was still in reaching distance on the road.

Directing the best horse in the stables to be brought to him, after snatching a hasty meal while it was being sad-

The slightest misstep meant death



dled and not even taking time to reclothe himself he mounted and galloped after. An hour later he burst through the ranks of the little army and reined in his horse before the astonished viceroy, who did not recognize in this sorry cavalier his favorite officer, and stern words of reproof for the unceremonious interruption of the horseman broke from his lips until they were checked by the first word from the young captain.

"Morgan and his buccaneers have taken La Guayra and sacked it!" gasped Alvarado hoarsely.

"Morgan! That accursed scourge again in arms? And my daughter?"

"A prisoner! For God's love, turn back the men!"

"Instantly!" cried the viceroy. He was burning with anxiety to bear more, but he was too good a soldier to hesitate as to the first thing to be done. Raising himself in his stirrups, he gave a few sharp commands, and the little army, which had halted when he had, faced about and began the return march to Caracas at full speed. As soon as their maneuvers had been completed and they moved off, the viceroy, who rode at the head with Alvarado and the gentlemen of his suit, broke into anxious questioning.

"Now, captain, but that thou art a skilled soldier I could not believe thy tale."

"And you left Donna Mercedes a prisoner?" interrupted De Tobar, who had been consumed with anxiety even greater than that of the viceroy.

"Alas, 'tis so!"

"How can that be when you are free, senior?"

"Let me question my own officer, De Tobar," resumed the viceroy peremptorily, "and silence, all, else we learn nothing. Now, Alvarado, what is this strange tale of thine?"

In his eagerness the viceroy reined in his horse, and the officers and men, even the soldiers, stopped also and crowded around the narrator while he told the tale of the sack of La Guayra and the capture of Mercedes and himself.

"And how came you here, after leaving my daughter on the word of the buccaneer?" asked De Lara when Alvarado had finished.

"Straight over the mountain, sir."

"What! The Indian trail? The English way?"

"The same."

"What next?"

"At 10 tonight the sailor who released me will open the city gate, the west gate, beneath the shadow of the cliffs. We must be there!"

"But how? Can we take the pass? It is strongly held, you say."

"My lord, give me fifty brave men who will volunteer to follow me. I will lead them back over the trail, and we will get to the rear of the men holding the pass. Do you make a feat at engaging them in force in front, and when their attention is distracted elsewhere we will fall on and drive them into your arms. By this means we open the way. Then we will post down the mountains with speed and may arrive in time—nay, we must arrive in time! Hornigold, the sailor, would guarantee nothing beyond tonight. The buccaneers are drunk with liquor, tired out with slaughter. They will suspect nothing. We can master the whole 350 of them with fivescore men."

"Alvarado," cried the viceroy, "thou hast done well. I thank thee. Let us but rescue my daughter and defeat these buccaneers and thou mayst ask anything at my hands—saving one thing. Gentlemen and soldiers, you have heard the plan of the young captain. Who will volunteer to go over the mountains with him?"

Brandishing their swords and shouting with loud acclaim, the great body of troopers pressed forward to the service. Alvarado, who knew them all, rapidly selected the requisite number, and they fell in advance of the others. Over them the young captain placed his friend De Tobar as his second in command.

"Tis bravely done!" cried the viceroy. "Now prick forward to the city, all. We'll refresh ourselves in view of the arduous work before us and then make our further dispositions."

The streets of Caracas were soon full of armed men preparing for their venture. As soon as the plight of La Guayra and the viceroy's daughter became known there was scarcely a civilian even who did not offer himself

for the rescue. The viceroy, however, would take only mounted men, and of these only tried soldiers. Alvarado, whom excitement and emotion kept from realizing his fatigue, was provided with fresh apparel, after which he requested a private audience for a moment or two with the viceroy, and together they repaired to the little cabinet which had been the scene of the happenings the night before.

"Your excellency," began the young man slowly, painfully, "I could not wait even the hoped for happy issue of our plans to place my sword and my life in your hands."

"What have you done?" asked the old man, instantly perceiving the seriousness of the situation from the anguish in his officer's look and voice.

"I have broken my word, forfeited my life."

"You promised to say nothing, to do nothing."

"That promise I did not keep."

"Explain."

"There is nothing to explain. I was weak; it was beyond my strength. I offer no excuse."

"Twas deliberately done?"

"I told her that I loved her, again!"

"Thou double traitor! And she?"

"My lord, condemn her not. She is young, a woman."

"I do not consider Captain Alvarado, a dishonored soldier, my proper mentor. I shall know how to treat my daughter. What more?"

"Nothing more. We abandoned ourselves to our dream, and at the first possible moment I am come to tell you all—to submit."

"But your reason? Why do you tell me these things? If thou art base enough to fall, why not base enough to conceal?"

"I could not do so, your excellency. I am not master of myself when she is by. 'Tis only when away from her I see things in their proper light. She blinds me. No, sir," cried the unhappy Alvarado, seeing a look of contempt on the grim face of the old general, "I do not urge this in defense, but you wanted explanation."

"Nothing can explain the falsehood of a gentleman, the betrayal of a friend, the treachery of a soldier."

"Nothing; hence I am here."

"Perhaps I have estimated you too highly," went on the old man musingly. "I had hoped you were gentle, but base blood must run in your veins."

"It may be," answered the young man brokenly, and then he added, as one detail not yet told, "I have found my mother, sir."

"Thy mother! What is her condition?" cried the viceroy in curious and interested surprise that made him forget his wrath and contempt for the moment.

"She was an abbess of our holy church. She died upon the sands of La Guayra by her own hand rather than lend aid to the sack of the town."

"That was noble," interrupted the old De Lara. "I may be mistaken after all. Yet 'twere well she died, for she will not see."

He paused significantly.

"My shame?" asked Alvarado.

"Thy death, senior, for what you have done. No other punishment is meet. Did Donna Mercedes send any message to me?"

Alvarado could not trust himself to speak. He bowed deeply.

"What was it?"

The young man stood silent before him.

"Well, I will learn from her own lips if she be alive when we come to the city. I doubt not it will excuse thee."

"I seek not to shelter myself behind a woman."

"That's well," said the old man. "But now what is to be done with thee?"

"My lord, give me a chance, not to live, but to die honestly. Let me play my part this day as becomes a man, and when Donna Mercedes is restored to your arms—"

"Thou wilt plead for life?"

"Nay, I will not live dishonored. Life is naught to me without the lady. I swear to thee."

"You have given me your word before, sir," said the old man sternly.

"On this cross—was my mother's."

He pulled from his doublet the silver

"On this cross"



crucifix and held it up. "I will yield my life into your hands without question then and acclaim before the world that you are justified in taking it. I swear if I survive the day I will go gladly to my death at your command!"

"I will trust you once more thus far. Say naught of this to any one. Leave me!"

"Your excellency," cried the young man, kneeling before him, "may God reward you!"

He strove to take the hand of the old man, but the latter drew it away. "Even the touch of forsworn lips is degradation. You have your orders. Go!"

Alvarado buried his face in his hands, groaned bitterly and turned away without another word.

CHAPTER XX.

IT was nearing 11 o'clock in the morning when, after a hurried conference in the patio with the viceroy and the others, Alvarado and De Tobar marched out with their fifty men. They had discarded all superfluous clothing; they were unarmored and carried no weap-

ons but swords and pistols. In view of the hard climb before them and the haste that was required they wished to be burdened as lightly as possible. Their horses were brought along in the train of the viceroy's party, which moved out upon the open road to the pass at the same time. These last went forward with great ostentation, the forlorn hope secretly, lest some from the buccaneers might be watching.

The fifty volunteers were to ascend the mountain with all speed, make their way along the crest as best they could until they came within striking distance of the camp of the pirates; then they were to conceal themselves in the woods there, and when the viceroy made a feigned attack with the main body of his troops from the other side of the mountain they were to leave their hiding place and fall furiously upon the rear of the party. Fortunately they were not required to ascend such a path as that Alvarado had traversed on the other side, for there were not fifty men in all Venezuela who could have performed that tremendous feat of mountaineering. The way to the summit of the range and thence to the pass was difficult, but not impossible, and they succeeded after an hour or two of hard climbing in reaching their appointed station, where they concealed themselves in the woods unobserved by Teach's men.

The viceroy carried out his part of the programme with the promptness of a soldier. Alvarado's men had scarcely settled themselves in the thick undergrowth beneath the trees, whence they could overlook the buccaneers in camp on the road below, before a shot from the pirate sentry who had been posted toward Caracas called the fierce marauders to arms. They ran to the rude barricade they had erected covering the pass and made preparation for battle. Soon the wood was ringing with shouts and cries and the sound of musketry.

Although Teach was a natural soldier and L'Ollonais an experienced and prudent commander, they took no precaution whatever to cover their rear, for such a thing as an assault from that direction was not even dreamed of.

Alvarado and De Tobar, therefore, led their men forward without the slightest opposition. Even the noise they made crashing through the undergrowth was lost in the sound of the battle and attracted no attention from the enemy. It was not until they burst out into the open road and charged forward, cheering madly, that the buccaneers realized their danger. Some of them faced about only to be met by a murderous discharge from the pistols of the forlorn hope, and the next moment the Spaniards were upon them.

The party holding the pass were the picked men, veterans, among the marauders. They met the onset with tremendous courage and crossed blades in the smoke like men, but at the same instant the advance guard of the main army sprang at the barricade and assaulted them vigorously from the other side. The odds were too much for the buccaneers, and after a wild melee, in which they lost heavily, the survivors gave ground.

The road immediately below the pass opened on a little plateau, back of which rose a precipitous wall of rock. Thither such of the buccaneers as were left alive hastily retreated. There were perhaps a dozen men able to use their weapons. Among them Teach was the only officer. L'Ollonais had been cut down by De Tobar in the first charge. The Spaniards burst through the pass and surrounded the buccaneers. The firearms on both sides had all been discharged, and in the excitement no one thought of reloading. Indeed, with the cumbersome and complicated weapons then in vogue there was no time, and the Spaniards, who had paid dearly for their victory, so desperate had been the defense of the pirates, were fain to finish this detachment in short order.

"Yield!" cried Alvarado, as usual in the front ranks of his own men. "You are hopelessly overmatched!" pointing with dripping blade to his own and the viceroy's soldiers as he spoke.

"Shall we get good quarter?" called out Teach.

A splendid specimen he looked of an Englishman at bay in spite of his wicked calling, standing with his back against the towering rock, his bare and bloody sword extended menacingly before him, the bright sunlight blazing upon his sunny hair, his blue eyes sparkling with battle lust and determined courage. Quite the best of the pirates, he!

"You shall be hung like the dogs you are," answered Alvarado sternly.

"We'd rather die sword in hand. Eh, lads?"

"Aye, aye!"

"Come on, then, seniors," laughed the Englishman gallantly, saluting with his sword, "and see how bravely we English can die when the game is played and we have lost."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

PERT PARAGRAPHS.

Youth is said to be egotistical, but the man of forty sometimes makes you weary telling how much more he knows than he did at twenty.

The woman with a new hat thinks that if all the world is not looking at her it is missing something.

Almost Human Intelligence. Mrs. McBryde—John, I'm simply disgusted. While I was out this morning the cat got into the pantry and ate every single thing except a cake I had just baked. Mr. McBryde—What a wonderful thing animal instinct is, to be sure!—Cleveland Leader.

When a boy with a baseball guide for the current year deigns to speak to his fellows they thoroughly appreciate the honor.