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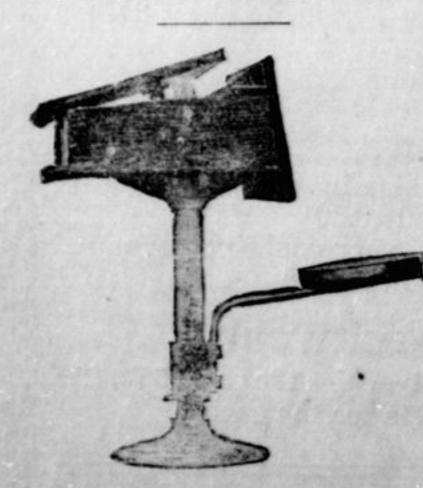
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# BUCCANEER

By CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY. Author of "The Southerners," "For Love of Country," "The Grip of Honor," Etc.

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gether side by side.

"Aye, with men it is different," said the girl, and the sound of a sob in her voice cut him to the heart, "and these things are above love, above everything. I do not-I cannot understand. I cannot comprehend. You have rejected me. I have offered myself to you a second time after the refusal of last night. I, too, am a slave. I love you. Nay, I cannot marry Don Felipe de Tobar. 'Twere to make a

"Thy father"-"I have done my best to obey him. I can no more."

"What wilt thou do?" "This!"

The road at the point they had arrived wound sharply around the spur

His instant promptness saved her



of the mountain which arose above them thousands of feet on one side and fell abruptly away in a terrific precipice upon the other. As she spoke she struck her horse again with the whip. At the same time by a violent wrench on the bridle rein she turned him swiftly toward the open cliff. Quick as she had been, however, Alvarado's own movement was quicker. He struck spur into his powerful barb and with a single bound was by her side in the very nick of time. Her horse's forefeet were slipping among the loose stones on the edge. In another second they would both be over. Alvarado threw his right arm around her and with a force superhuman dragged her from the saddle, at the same time forcing his own horse violently backward with his bridle hand. His instant promptness had saved her, for the frightened horse she rode, unable to control himself, plunged down the cliff and was crushed to death a thousand

CHAPTER XIII.

feet below.

" God!" cried the young soldier hoarsely, straining her to his breast, while endeavoring to calm his nervous and excited horse. "What would you have

"Why didn't you let me go?" she asked, struggling feebly in his arms.

would all have been over then." "I could not. I love you."

The words were wrung from him in spite of himself by her deadly peril. by her desperate design, which he had only frustrated by superhuman quickness and strength. He was pale, shaking, trembling, unnerved, for her.

As he spoke those words, "I love

you," so blissful for her to hear, she slipped her arm around his neck. He forgot everything-honor, duty, his word-everything he threw to the winds. Before the passion which sought death when denied him his own powers of resistance vanished. He strained her to his breast and bent his head to kiss her. Again and again he drank at the upturned fountain of affection, her lips. The shock had been too much for him. He had seen her upon the verge of eternity. She thought nothing of that in her present joy. She



only realized that she was in his arms again, that he had kissed her, and bethat were even greater caresses.

tween the kisses he poured out words The others were far behind. They were alone upon the mountain side, with the rocks behind and the great sapphire sea of the Caribbean before them. He held her close to his breast, and they forgot everything but love as they gently pricked along the road. It was near noon now, and, as the road a furlong farther debouched into an open plateau shaded by trees and watered by a running brook which purled down the mountain side from some inaccessible cloud swept height, it was a fitting place to make camp, where the whole party, tired by a long morning's travel, could repose themselves until the breeze of afternoon tempered the heat of the day. Here he dismounted, lift-

"You have drawn me back from the death that I sought. God has given me to you. We shall never be parted." "I am a false friend, an ungrateful servitor, a forsworn man, a perjured soldier!" he groaned, passing his hand over his pale brow as if to brush away the idea consequent upon his words. can take "But thou hast my love," she whispered tenderly, swaying toward him

"Yes-yes. Would that it could crown something else than my dishonor." "Say not so."

"You have saved me," she whispered.

"I had been faithful," he went on as if in justification, "had I not seen thee on the brink of that cliff, and then thou wert in my arms-I was lost"-

"And I was found. I leaped to death. I shut my eyes as I drove the horse toward the cliff, and I awakened to find myself in your arms-in heaven! Let nothing take me hence."

"It cannot be," he said. "I must go to the viceroy when he returns from the Orinoco war and tell him that I have betrayed him." "I will tell him," she answered, "or

wilt thou tell him what I tell thee?" she went on. "Surely."

"Then say to him that I sought death rather than be given to Don Felipe or to any one else. Tell him you saved me on the very brink of the cliff and that never soldier made a better fight for field or flag than thou didst make for thy honor and duty, but that I broke thee down. I had the power, and I used it. The story is as old as Eden-the woman tempted"-

"I should have been stronger; I should not have weakened. But I shall fight no more. It is all over."

"Ah, thou canst not," she whispered, nestling closer to him. "And tell my father that should harm come to theeif in their anger he or De Tobar lay hand upon thee-it will not advantage their plans, for I swear, if there be no other way, I will starve myself to death to follow thee!"

"I cannot shelter myself behind a

"Then I will tell them both myself," she cried. "You shall know, they shall know, how a Spanish woman can love."

"And thou shalt know, too," answered Alvarado firmly, "that though I break my heart I, an unknown, can expatiate my guilt with all the pride of most ancient lineage and birth highest of them all."

It was a brave speech, but he did not release his hold upon Mercedes, and in spite of his words when, confident that whatever he might say, however he might struggle, he was hers at last, she smiled up at him again. He kissed

"When go you to my father, Senor Alvarado?" she asked.

"When he returns from the Orinoco."

"And that will not be until"-"Perhaps a month."

"Wilt love me until then?" "I shall love thee forever."

"Nay, but wilt thou tell me so, with every day, every week, every hour, every moment, with kisses like to these?" "Oh, tempt me not!" he whispered. But he returned again and again her

"Ah, my Alvarado, if you have once fallen, what then? Is not one kiss as bad as a thousand?"

"Be it so. We will be happy until

"One month, one month of heaven, my love. After that let come what may," she answered, her cheeks and

the exquisite pain in her breast. "Some one approaches!" he said at last. And at the same moment the rest of the party came around the bend of the road. The poor duenna was con-

eyes aflame, her heart throbbing with

sumed with anxiety and remorse. "Bernardo," said Alvarado to the ser-

geant, "we will take our siesta here. Unsaddle the horses and prepare the noonday meal under the trees. Send one of the troopers ahead to bid Fadrique stop on the road until we rejoin him, keeping good guard. Senora Agapida, you must be tired from the long

ride. Let me assist you to dismount." "The Senorita Mercedes?" she asked as he lifted her to the ground. "Where

is her horse?" "He slipped and fell," answered the girl promptly.

"Yes; over the cliff. Captain Alvarado lifted me from the saddle just in "I shall make a novena of devotion to St. Jago for thy preservation, sweet

Mercedes," cried the duenna, "and you, young sir, must have a strong arm"-"It is ever at your service," answered Alvarado gravely, bowing before

The old woman's heart went out to the gallant young man, so handsome, so brave, so strong, so distinguished "Why," she mused under her breath,

"could he not have been the one?" By this time the little place was filled with soldiers, attendants and muleteers. Some kindled fires, others unpacked hampers loaded with provisions, others prepared a place where the party might rest, and as, to restore order out of this confusion, Alvarado

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turned hither and thither he was followed in all his movements by the lovely eyes of the woman who had broken him and who had won him.

During the interval of repose the young man allowed his party the two lovers were constantly together. Alvarado had made a faint effort to go apart and leave Mercedes to herself, but with passionate determination she had refused to allow it. She had thrown prudence to the winds. Careless of whoever might see, of whoever might comment, heedless of the reproving duenna, indifferent to ancient practice, reckless of curious glances, she had insisted upon accompanying the captain,

and he had yielded. They abandoned themselves with all the fervor of youth and passion to their transports of affection. They wandered away from the others and by the side of the brook beneath the shelter of the

trees remained together and whisper-Today they lived and loved



ed all the love that bent within their freed breasts. They might die tomorrow: today they lived and loved. Fain would they have prolonged the Elysian dream forever, but the descending sun of the afternoon at last warned Alvarado if they would reach La Guayra that night they must resume their journey. Reluctantly he gave the order to This time, utterly indifferent to th

Senora Agapida, Mercedes, mounted on one of the led horses, rode openly by Alvarado's side. Sustained by his presence, constantly in touch with him, she made the way down the difficult wanderings of the rocky mountain trail. They watched the sun set in all its glory over the tropic sea. The evening breeze blew softly about them, riding side by side. Then the night fell upon them. Over them blazed the glorious canopy of the tropic stars, chief among them the fiery Southern Cross, emblem of the faith they cherished, the most marvelous diadem in the heavens. There below them twinkled the lights of La Guayra. The road grew broader and smoother now. It was almost at the level of the beach. They would have to pass through the town presently and thence up a steep rocky road which wound around the mountain until they surmounted the cliff back of the city and arrived at the palace of the governor upon the hillside, where Mercedes was to lodge. An hour would bring them to their destination. There was nothing to apprehend. The brigands in the fastnesses of the mountains or the savages, who sometimes strayed along the road, never ventured already gained in the ship, although so near the town.

Fadrique, by Alvarado's orders, had fallen back nearer the main body, so as to be within call.

"We shall be there in a little while. See yonder the lights of the town," said the captain.

"While thou art with me," said the girl, "it matters little where we are. There are but two places in the world

"And those are?"

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beat upon her sides with overwhelming force, came just in the nick of time for Morgan. Had the disaster been delayed a second longer the furious buccaneers would have cut him down where he stood. Even the officers were angered beyond measure at him for their present situation, which threatened the loss of the vast treasure they had consented to Morgan's proposition to attack La Guayra and Caracas, and the captain was in no way responsible for the storm and the wreck which jeoparded their booty and their future. Therefore it is probable that none of them, unless it were Teach, would have interfered to save Morgan, and he would have been swept from his feet by the savage men and instantly killed in spite of all that he or Carib or any one else could have done. But the violence of the shock when the ship took ground threw them to the deck, and they forgot for the instant their bloody purpose of vengeance in the inevitableness of their approaching danger. They were checked in their mad anger for a few seconds and given a moment for reflection. That moment convinced them that they could not yet dispense with the services of their captain. With black rage and white fear striving for mastery in their hearts, they rose to their feet and confronted him with menacing faces and threatening gestures.

"What's to be done now?" questioned one bolder than the rest.

"Now's the time," roared the undaunted Morgan, striving to make himself heard by all above the thundering seas, "to show your courage, lads!" He had quickly observed that the force with which she had been driven on the shoals had shoved the galleon's nose firmly in the sand. She had been

caught just before she took ground by a tremendous roller and had been lifted up and hurled far over to starboard. Although almost on her beam ends, her decks inclining landward, the strongly built ship held steady in spite of the tremendous onslaughts of the seas along her bilge. "Take heart, men!" he cried. "Ob-

serve. She lies still and secure. 'Tis a stout hulk and will take a tremendous battering before she breaks. We may yet save ourselves." "And the treasure?" roared one.

"Aye, and the treasure."

"I think the storm has about blown itself out," interposed old Hornigold, shouting out at this instant. "Look you, mates!' he cried, pointing to westward. "It clears! The sun'll set fair tonight." "The bo's'n is right," cried Morgan.

"But first of all we must take no chances with our lives. Even though we lose the ship we can seize another. The world is full of treasure, and we can find it. Now I want some one to carry a line ashore through the breakers. Who will volunteer?" "I," said Carib instantly.

"I need you here," answered Morgan, who did not purpose to be deprived of that bodyguard upon whose watchfulness his life had so often depended.

"I'll go," exclaimed young Teach, breaking through the crowd. "That's a brave heart!" said Morgan. "A line here!"

Instantly a light line was forthcoming. Teach tore off his jacket, laid aside his weapons, kicked off his shoes, took a turn of the line around his waist, made it fast, wrung Morgan's

hand, watched his chance, leaped overboard, was caught by an onrushing wave and carried far toward the shore. The ebb of the roller carried him back seaward some distance, but he swam forward madly, and the next wave brought him a little nearer the beach. He was driven backward and forward, but each time managed to get a little nearer the shore line.

LTO BE CONTINUED.

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