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

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"Sir Harry Morgan," answered the horseman, bowing low over the saddle, "a free sailor, at your service, madam." "My God!" cried Alvarado, who had listened attentively. "The buccaneer?" "The same," answered Morgan, turn-

ing to him. "Sir Harry Morgan! Were you not governor of Jamaica last year?" asked Mercedes in astonishment.

"I had that honor, lady." "Why are you now in arms against

"A new king, Mistress de Lara, sits the English throne. He likes me not. I

and these gallant seamen are going to establish a kingdom in some sweet island in the south seas with our good swords. I would fain have a woman to bear me company on the throne. Since I saw you in Jamaica last year I have designed you for the honor"-"Monster!" screamed the girl, appall-

ed by the hideous leer which accompanied his words. "Rather anything"-"Sir," interrupted Alvarado, "you are

an Englishman. Your past rank should warrant you a gentleman but for this. There is no war between England and Spain. What is the meaning of this outrage? This lady is the daughter of the viceroy of Venezuela. I am his captain and the comandante of yonder city of La Guayra. You have waylaid us, taken us at a disadvantage. My men are killed. For this assault his excellency will exact bloody reparation. Meanwhile give order that we be unbound, and let us pass."

"Ho, ho!" laughed the buccaneer. "Think you I fear the viceroy? Nay, not his majesty of Spain himself! I came here with set purpose to take La Guayra and then Caracas and to bear away with me this pretty lady, upon whom, I repeat, I design to bestow the honor of my name."

As he spoke he leaned toward Mercedes, threw his arm around her waist and before she was even aware of his intention kissed her roughly on the

"Lads." he cried, "three cheers for the future Lady Morgan!"

The proud Spanish girl turned white as death under this insult. Her eyes flashed like coals of fire. Morgan was close beside her. She was without weapon save a jeweled whip that hung at her wrist. Before the first note of a cheer could break from the lips of the

men she lifted it and struck him violently again and again full in the face. "Thou devil!" cried the captain in fury, whipping out his sword and menacing her with it.

"Strike," cried Mercedes bravely. "and let my blood wash out the insult that you have put upon my cheek!" She raised her whip once more, but

this time young Teach, coming on the other side, caught her hand, wrested the jeweled toy from her and broke it in the struggle.

"Thou shalt pay dearly for those stripes, lady!" roared Morgan, swerving closer to her. "And not now in honorable wedlock"-"I will die first!" returned Mercedes.

gling desperately to free himself. By the exercise of superhuman strength, just as Morgan again menaced the woman he loved he succeeded in freeing himself from his loosely tied bonds. His guards for the moment had their attention distracted from him by the group on horseback. He wrenched a drums were beaten, the ramparts were sword from the hand of one, striking sent him reeling as he did so, and then flung out his other arm so that the heavy pommel of the sword struck the was clear for the moment. He sprang forward instantly, seized Mergan's horse, forced him away from Mercedes by a wrench of his powerful arm and stood at bay in front of the woman he loved. He said no word, but stood with his sword up on guard, panting heavily from his flerce exertions. "Alvarado, you will be killed!"

screamed the girl, seeing the others | termined enemies at that. Under covmake for him.

"This is the secret of your refusal. He his men. is your lover." "Seize him?" cried Teach, raising his sword, as, followed by the others, he

made at Alvarado, who awaited them undaunted.

is a better way." Rudely shoving Senora Agapida aside, he seized Mercedes from behind. "Do not move, mademoiselle," he said

in French, in his excitement, which fortunately she understood. "That's well done!" cried Morgan. "Captain Alvarado, if that be your name, throw down your sword if you

would save the lady's life." "Mind me not, Alvarado," cried Mercedes, but Alvarado, perceiving the situation, instantly dropped his weap-

"Now seize him and bind him again! How's that leg of yours?" And you, dogs," Morgan added, turning to the men who had allowed the prisoner to slip before, "if he escape Teach, you shall take the walls under you again you shall be hanged to the nearest tree!"

"Hadst not better bind the woman, let the curtain between be your point. too?" queried the Frenchman gently, I shall be with the first to get over. still holding her fast in his fierce grasp. "Aye, the wench as well. Oh, I'll C. SMITH & SONS break your spirit, my pretty one," an-

young woman's cheek. "Wilt pay me blows for kisses? Scuttle me, you shall crawl at my feet before I've finished with you!"

"Why not kill this caballero out of hand, captain?" asked Hornigold, savage from a slight wound, as he limped up to Morgan.

"No. I have use for him. Are the rest silent?" "They will tell no tales," laughed

L'Ollonois grimly.

"Did none escape back up the road?" "None, Sir Henry," answered the other. "My men closed in after them and drove them forward. They are all gone."

"That's well. Now for La Guayra. What force is there, Senor Capitan?" Alvarado remained obstinately silent. He did not speak even when Morgan ruthlessly cut him across the cheek with his dagger. He did not utter a sound, although Mercedes groaned in anguish at the sight of his torture. "You'd best kill him, captain," said

L'Ollonois. "No, I have need for him, I say," answered Morgan, giving over the at-

Thou devil!



tempt to make him speak. "Is any one here who has been at La Guayra recently?" he asked of the others.

"I was there last year on a trading ship of France," answered Sawkins.

"What garrison then?" "About 250."

"Was it well fortified?"

"As of old, sir, by the forts on either side and a rampart along the sea wall." "Were the forts in good repair?" "Well kept, indeed, but most of the

guns bore seaward."

"Have you the ladders ready?" cried Morgan to Braziliano, who had been charged to convey the rude scaling ladders by which they hoped to get over

"All ready, captain," answered that

"Let us go forward, then. We'll halt just out of musket shot and concert our further plans. We have the governor in our hands, lads. The rest will be easy. There is plenty of plunder in La Guayra, and when we have made it our own we'll over the mountains and into Caracas. Hornigold, you are lame from a wound. Look to the prisoners."

The rising moon flooding the white strand made the scene as light as day. They kept good watch on the walls of La Guayra, for the sound of the shots in the night air had been heard by some keen eared sentry, and as a re-

Alvarado meanwhile had been strug- sult the garrison had been called to arms. The firing had been too heavy to be accounted for by any ordinary circumstances, and officers and soldiers had been at a loss to understand it. However, to take precautions were wise, and every preparation was made as if against an immediate attack. The manned, the guns were primed, and him a blow with his naked fist that such of the townspeople as were not too timid to bear arms were assembled under their militia officers.

The watchers on the west wall of the second guard in the face, and the way fort were soon aware of the approach of the buccaneers. Indeed, they made no concealment whatever about their motions. Who they were and what they were the garrison had not discovered and could not imagine. A prompt and well aimed volley, however, as soon as the buesaneers came within range apprised them that they were dealing with exemies, and deer of the confusion caused by this un-"Here we have it," sneered Morgan. expected discharge Morgan deployed

"Lads," he said, "we'll board you fort with a rush and a cheer. The ladders will be placed on the walls, and under cover of a heavy fire from our musketry we'll go over them. Use only "Stay!" shouted De Lussan. "There the cutlass when you gain the parapet and ply like men. Remember what's on the other side!"

"Aye, but who'll plant the ladders?" asked one.

"The priests and the abbess," said Morgan grimly. "I saved them for A roar of laughter and cheers broke

from the ruffianly gang as they appreclated the neatness of the old buccaneer's scheme. "'Tis an old trick," he continued; "we did the same thing thirty years

since at Porto Bello. Eh, Hornigold?

"Stiff and sore." "Bide here then with the musketeers. the cliff yonder. L'Ollonois, lead your men straight at the fort. De Lussan, New, charge your pieces all, and Hornigold, after we have started, by slow and careful fire do you keep the

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Spaniards down until you hear us cheer. After that hold your fire." "But I should like to be in the first rank myself, master," growled the old

boatswain. "Ha, ha!" laughed Morgan, "That's a right spirit, lad, but that cut leg holds you back, for which you have to thank this gentleman," bowing toward Alvarado with a hideous countenance. "You can be of service here. Watch the musketeers. We would have no firing into our backs. Now bring up the priests. And, Hornigold, watch Senorita de Lara. See that she does not escape. On your life, man, I'd rather hold her safe," he muttered

under his breath, "than take the whole city of Caracas." With shouts of fiendish glee the buccaneers drove the hapless abbess and priests, who had been dragged along in the rear, to the front. The Spaniards were firing at them now, but with no effect so far. The distance was great and the moonlight made aim uncertain, and every time a head showed itself over the battlement it became a target for the fire of the musketeers, who, by Hornigold's orders, ran forward under the black shadow cast by the high cliff, where they could not be seen, and from this point of concealment, taking deliberate aim, made havoc among the

"Now, good fathers," began Morgan, "you have doubtless been curious to know why you were not put to death. I saved you not because I loved you, but because I needed you. I had a purpose in view. That purpose is now apparent."

"What would you do with us, senor?" saked Sister Maria Christina, the ab-

"A little service, my sister. Bring up the ladders, men. See, there are seven all told. That will be four apiece to four ladders, with one priest over for good measure and to take the place of any that may be struck down." "And what are we to do with them,

senor?" asked the leader of the priests, Fra Antonio de las Casas, drawing nearer to the captain.

fruity flavor."

"You are to carry them to yonder wall and place them against it."

"You do not mean," burst out Alvarado painfully, for he could scarcely speak from his wounded cheek, "to make this holy woman and these good priests bear the brunt of that fire from the fort?"

"Do I value the lives of women and priests, accursed Spaniard, more than our own?" questioned the captain, and the congenial sentiment was received by a yell of approval from the men. "But if you are tender hearted I'll give the defenders a chance. Will you advise them to yield and thus spare these "I cannot do that," an wered Alvara-

do sadly. "'Tis their cuty to defend the town. There are twenty here; there are hundreds there." "D'ye loar that, mates" cried Mor-

gan. "Up with the ladders!" "But what if we refuse?" cried one

of the prests. "You shall be given over to the men,"

answered Morgan feroclously, "whereas if you do as I order you may go free-those who are left alive after the storm. Do ye hear, men? We'll let them go after they have served us,' continued the chief, turning to his men. "Swear that you will let them go! There are others in La Guayra." "We swear, we swear!" shouted one

after another, lifting their hands and brandishing their weapons. "You hear!" cried Morgan. "Pick up

the ladders!" "For God's sake, sir, unsay your words! We cannot place the ladders which will give you access to yonder

helpless town!" "Then to the men you go!" cried Morgan ruthlessly.

"Death," cried the abbess, snatching a dagger from the nearest hand and driving it into her breast, "rather than dishonor!"

She held herself proudly erect for a moment, swayed back and forth and then fell prostrate upon the sand, the blood staining her white robe about the hilt of the poniard. She writhed and shuddered in agony where she lay, striving to say something. Fra Antonio sprang to her side and before any one could interfere knelt down.

"I-I-I have sinned," she gasped. "Mercy, mercy!"

"Thou hast done well. I absolve thee!" cried the priest, making the sign of the cross upon her forehead.

"Death and fury!" shouted Morgan, livid with rage. "Let her die unshriven! Shall I be balked thus?" He sprang toward the old man,

stooping over the woman, and struck him across his shaved crown with the blade of his sword. The priest pitched down instantly, a long shudder running through him; then he lay still. "Harry Morgan's way!" cried the

"Have you had lesson enough? Pick up those ladders, or"-"Mercy, mercy!" screamed the fright-

buccaneer, recovering his blade. "And

you?" turning toward the other priests.

ened ecclesiasts. "Not another word! Drive them for-

The buccaneers sprang at the terrified priests with weapons out. First

Death rather than dishenor!



one and then another gave way. The only leader among them lay upon the sand. What could they do? They picked up the ladders, and, urged forward by threats and shouts of the buccaneers, under cover of a furious discharge from Hornigold's musketeers, they ran to the walls, imploring the Spaniards not to fire upon them.

When the Spanish commander perceived who were approaching, with a mistaken impulse of mercy he ordered his men to fire over their heads and so did little danger to the approaching buccaneers. A few of them fell, but the rest dashed into the smoke. There was no time for another discharge. The ladders were placed against the walls, and the priests were ruthlessly cast aside and trampled down. In a little space the marauders were upon

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the ramparts, fighting like demons. Morgan, covered by Black Dog, with Teach, De Lussan and L'Ollonois, was in the lead. The desperate onslaught of their overwhelming numbers, once they had gained a foothold, swept the defenders before them like chaff. Waiting for nothing, they sprang down from the fort and raced madly through the narrow streets of the town. They brushed opposition away as leaves are driven aside by a winter storm. Ere the defenders on the east forts could realize their presence they were upon them also.

In half an hour every man bearing a weapon had been cut down. The town was at the mercy of this horde of human tigers. They broke open wine cellars, they pillaged the provision shops, they tortured without mercy the merchants and inhabitants to force them to discover their treasures, and they insulted the helpless women. They were completely beyond control now. Drunk with slaughter, intoxicated with liquor, mad with lust, they ravaged and plundered. To add to the confusion, fire burst forth here and there, and before the morning dawned half of the city was in ashes.

The pale moon looked down upon a scene of horror such as it had never before shone upon even in the palmiest days of the buccaneers.

CHAPTER XVI.

HE musketeers under Horni-

gold, chosen for their mastery with the weapon, had played their parts with cunning skill. Concealed from observation by the deep shadow of the cliffs and therefore immune from the enemy's fire, they had made targets of the Spanfards on the walls and by a close, rapid and well directed discharge had kept down the return of the garrison until the very moment of the assault. Hornigold was able to keep them in hand for a little space after the capture of the town, but the thought of the pleasure being enjoyed by their comrades was too much for them. Anxious to take a hand in the hideous fray, they stole away one by one, slinking under the cliff until they were beyond the reach of the boatswain. then boldly rushing for the town in the open, until the old sailor was left with only a half dozen of the most dependable surrounding himself and

from him so easily had he not been so intensely occupied that at first he had taken little note of what was going on. Mercedes and Alvarado had only opportunity to exchange a word now and then, for extended conversation was prevented by the guards. Alvarado strove to cheer the woman he loved, and she promised him she would choose instant death rather than dishonor. He could give her little encouragement of rescue, for unless word of their plight were carried to the viceroy immediately he would be far

The rest would not have got away

on the way to the Orinoco country before any tidings could reach him, and by the time he returned it would be too late. Again and again Alvarado strove to

break his bonds in impotent and helpless fury, but this time he was securely bound, and his captors only laughed at his struggles. In the midst of their grief and despair they both took notice of the poor abbess. Fra Antonio had not moved since Morgan had struck him down, but there was life still in the weman, for from where they stood, some distance back, the two lovers each marked her convulsive trembling. The sight appealed profoundly to them in spite of their perilous situation. "The brave sister lives," whispered

Mercedes.

"'Tis so," answered Alvarado. "Senor," he called, "the sister yonder is alive. Wilt not allow us to minister to

"Nay," said Hornigold brusquely, "I will go myself. Back, all of ye!" he added. "She may wish to confess to me in default of the worthy father."

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