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SIR HENRY MORGAN, BUCCANEER

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

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CHAPTER XVIII.

THE day after the sack of the town had been a busy one for the buccaneers. First of all, Morgan had striven, and with some success, to restore some sort of order within the walls. By the aid of his officers and some of the soberest men he had confiscated all of the liquor that he could come at and had stored it under a strong guard in the west fort, which he selected as his headquarters. The governor's palace on the hill above was a more fitting and luxurious residence, and it had been promptly seized, the few defenders having fled in the morning, but for the present Morgan deemed it best to remain in the city and in close touch with his men.

The Spanish soldiery had been cut down to a man the night before, and the majority of the hapless citizens had been killed, wounded or tortured. The unfortunates who were yet alive were driven into the church of San Lorenzo, where they were kept without food, water or attention.

The gates of the town and forts were closed, and some slight attempt was made to institute a patrol of the walls, although the guard that was kept was negligent to the point of contempt. As no enemy was apprehended, Morgan did not rigorously insist upon strict watch. Many of the buccaneers were still sodden with liquor and could be of no service until they were sobered. They were dragged to the barracks, drenched with water and left to recover as best they could.

Fortune favored them, too, in that late in the afternoon a handsome frigate, bringing dispatches from Cartagena, ran in and anchored in the roadstead. Her officers at once came ashore to pay their respects to the commandant of the port and forward their papers to the viceroy. Before they suspected anything they were seized and ruthlessly murdered. To take possession of the frigate thereafter was a work of no special difficulty. The crew were disposed of as their officers had been, and the buccaneers rejoiced greatly at the good luck that had brought them so fine a ship. On the next morning Morgan intended to march toward Caracas, whence, after plundering that town and exacting a huge ransom for the lives of those he spared, he would lead his band back to La Guayra, embark on the frigate and then bear away for the isthmus.

During the day Hornigold, whose wound incapacitated him from active movement, remained in command of the fort, with special instructions to look after Mercedes. By Morgan's orders she and her companion were removed to the best room in the fort and luxuriously provided for. He had not discovered the escape of Alvarado, partly because he took no manner of interest in that young man and only kept him alive to influence the girl and partly because Hornigold had assured him that the prisoner was taking his confinement very hardly, that he was mad with anger, in a raging fever of disappointment and anxiety and was constantly begging to see the captain. The boatswain cunningly suggested that it would be just as well to let Alvarado remain in solitude without food or water until the next day, by which time, the boatswain argued, he would be reduced to a proper condition of humility and servitude. Morgan found this advice good. It was quite in consonance with his desires and his practices. He would have killed Alvarado out of hand had he not considered him the most favorable card with which to play the game he was waging with Mercedes for her consent to marry him.

So far as he was capable of a genuine affection he loved the proud Spanish maiden. He would fain persuade her willingly to come to his arms rather than enforce her consent or overcome her scruples by brute strength. There would be something of a triumph in winning her, and this vain, blood-stained old brute fancied that he had sufficient attractiveness for the opposite sex to render him invincible if he set about his wooing in the right way. Here again Hornigold, upon whom, in the absence of Teach, he depended more and more and in whom he confided as of old, advised him.

"I know women," said that worthy, "and all you want is to give her time. Wait until she knows what's happened to the rest of them and sees only you have power to protect her, and she will come to heel right enough. Besides, you haven't given her half a chance. She's only seen you weapon in hand. She doesn't know what a man you are, captain. Sink me, if I'd your looks, instead of this old, scarred, one-eyed face, there'd be no man I'd give way to and no woman I'd not win! She'll be so anxious to talk to you in the morning that you can make her do anything. Then if you can starve that Spanish dog and break his spirit so that she'll see him crawling at your feet she'll sicken of him and turn to a man."

"Scuttle me," laughed Morgan, "I didn't know you knew so much about the sex. Well, I'll stay away from her till the morning. I shall be busy anyway trying to straighten out these drunken sots, and do you put the screws on that captain and leave the

lady alone, but see that she lacks nothing."

"Aye, aye; trust me for them both."

Hornigold found means during the day—and it was a matter of no little difficulty to elude the guards he himself had placed there—to inform Mercedes of the escape of Alvarado and to advise her that he expected the return of that young man with the troops of the viceroy at 10 o'clock that night. He

"I didn't know you knew so much!"

Mercedes most thankfully received the weapon and promised to respect the confidence.

As far as creature comforts were concerned, the two women fared well. Indeed, they were sumptuously, lavishly, prodigally provided for. Senora Agapida was still in a state of complete prostration. She lay helpless on a couch in the apartment, and ministering to her distracted the poor girl's mind, yet such a day as Mercedes de Lara passed she prayed she might never again experience. The town was filled with the shouts and cries of the buccaneers wandering to and fro, singing drunken choruses, now and again routing out hidden fugitives from places of fancied security and torturing them with ready ingenuity whenever they were taken. The confusion was increased and the noise diversified by the shrieks and groans of these miserable wretches. Sometimes the voices that came through the high windows were those of women, and the sound of their screams made the heart of the brave girl sink like lead in her breast.

For the rest, she did not understand Hornigold's position. She did not know whether to believe him or not, but of one thing was she certain—whereas she had been defenseless, now she had a weapon, and she could use it if necessary. With that in hand she was mistress at least of her own fate.

As evening drew on, everything having been attended to, Morgan began to tire of his isolation, and time hung heavy on his hands. He was weary of the women whom he had hitherto consorted with. The other officers, between whom and himself there was no sort of friendship, were busy with their own nefarious wickednesses in the different parts of the fort or town, and he sat a long time alone in the guard-room drinking, Black Dog, as usual, pouring at his side. The liquor inflamed his imagination, and he craved companionship. Summoning Hornigold at last, he bade him bring Donna Mercedes before him. The old man attempted to expostulate, but Morgan's mood had changed, and he brooked no hesitation in obeying any order given by him. There was nothing for the boatswain to do but to comply.

Once more Mercedes, therefore, found herself in the guardroom of the fort in the presence of the man she loathed and feared above all others in creation. She glanced at the clock, a recent importation from Spain, hanging upon the wall, as she entered and saw that it was half after 9. Ten was the hour Hornigold had appointed to meet Alvarado at the gate. She hoped that he would be early rather than late, and, if she could withstand the buccaneer by persuasion, seeming compliance or by force for a short space, all would be well, for she never doubted that her lover would come for her. Even if he had to come single handed and alone to fight for her, she knew he would be there. Therefore, with every nerve strained almost to the breaking point to ward off his advances and to delay any action he might contemplate, she faced the buccaneer.

He was dressed with barbaric magnificence in the richest and plunder he had appropriated, and he had adorned his person with a profusion of silver and gold and stolen gems. He had been seated at the table while served by the

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maroon; but, as she entered, with unusual complaisance he arose and bowed to her with something of the grace of a gentleman.

"Madam," he said, endeavoring to make soft and agreeable his harsh voice, "I trust you have been well treated since in my charge."

He had been drinking heavily, she saw, but as he spoke her fair she would answer him accordingly. On his part he had determined to try the gentler arts of persuasion, and, though his face still bore the welts made by her riding whip the night before, he strove to forget it and play the gentleman. She answered his question calmly without exhibiting resentment or annoyance.

"We have been comfortably lodged and provided with food and drink in sufficiency, senor."

"And what more would you have, Donna Mercedes?"

"Liberty, sir!"

"That shall be yours. Saving only my will when you are married to me, you shall be as free as air—a free sailor or his free wife, lady. But will you not sit down?"

In compliance with his request, she seated herself on a chair which happened to be near where she stood. She smiled with relief that the table was between them.

"Nay, not there," said the captain indignantly. "Here, madam; here at my side."

"Not yet, Senor Captain. It were not

fit that a prisoner should occupy so high a seat of honor. Wait until—"

"Until you are Lady Morgan?" he cried, his face flaming.

She buried her face in her hands at his suggestion, for she feared her horror in the thought would show too plainly there, and then, because she dare not lose sight of him, she constrained herself to look at him once more. Her cheeks were burning with shame, her eyes flashing with indignation, though she forced her lips into the semblance of a smile.

"That surprises you, does it?" continued the man, with blustering condescension. "You did not think I designed so to honor you after last night, madam? Scuttle me, these"—pointing to his face—"are fierce hot taps, but I like you none the less for your spirit, madam. Fore God, it was your beauty. You are silent," he continued, staring at her with red, drunken suspicion. "You do not answer."

"My lord," cried Mercedes, "I know not what to say!"

"Say 'Harry Morgan, I love you, and I am yours.'"

"There is another present, senor."

"Where? Another? Who has dared?" roared the buccaneer, glaring about him.

"Thy servant, the negro."

"Oh," he laughed, "he is nothing. Black Dog we call him. He is my slave, my shadow, my protection. He is always by."

An idea had swiftly flashed into the young girl's mind. If she could get rid of the slave she could deal more easily with the master. She was tall, strong, and Morgan, it appeared, was not in full possession of his faculties or his strength from the liquor he had imbibed.

"Still," she urged, "I do not like to be wooed in the presence of another, even though he be a slave. 'Tis not a Spanish maiden's way, sir."

"Your will now, lady," said the buccaneer, with a hideous attempt at gallantry, "is my law. Afterward—'twill be another matter. Out, Carib, but be within call. Now, madam, we are alone. Speak you the English tongue?"

The conversation had been carried on in Spanish heretofore.

"Indifferently, senor."

"Well, I'll teach it you. The lesson may as well begin now. Say after me, 'Harry—I permit that, though I am a belted knight of England, made so by his merry majesty King Charles, God rest him. Drink to the repose of the king.'" He cried, showing a cup across the table toward her.

Resisting a powerful temptation to throw it at him and divining that the stimulant might be of assistance to her in the trying crisis in which she found herself, the girl lifted the cup to her lips, bowed to him and swallowed a portion of the contents.

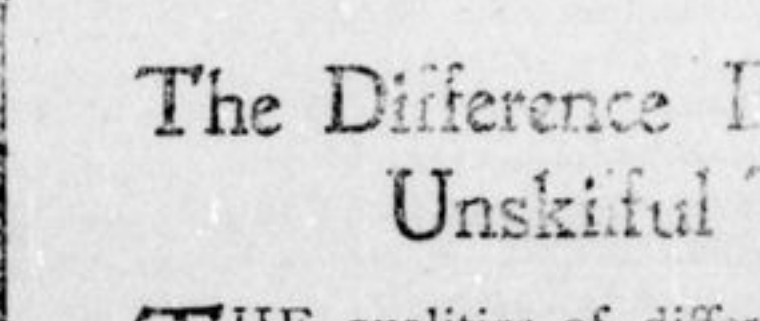
"Give it back to me!" he shouted. "You have tasted it; I drain it. Now the lesson. Say after me, 'Harry Morgan!'"

"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!'"



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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 also 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. "Thou hast lied to me then?"

"A thousand times—yes! Had I a whip I'd mark you again! Come within 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 imprudence, for which she paid dearly, however, for the hangings parted, and Carib, 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 of 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, Carib!" cried Morgan exultantly. "Never has that old trick of thine served me better. Now, you she 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, flitting herself against the wall, shrieking from him with wide outstretched arms as he approached her. "Mercy!"

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



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[CONTINUED]