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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. COPYRIGHT, 1905, BY G. W. BILLINGHAM COMPANY

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



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." "My lord, I swear it is true!" "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?"

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 of 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."

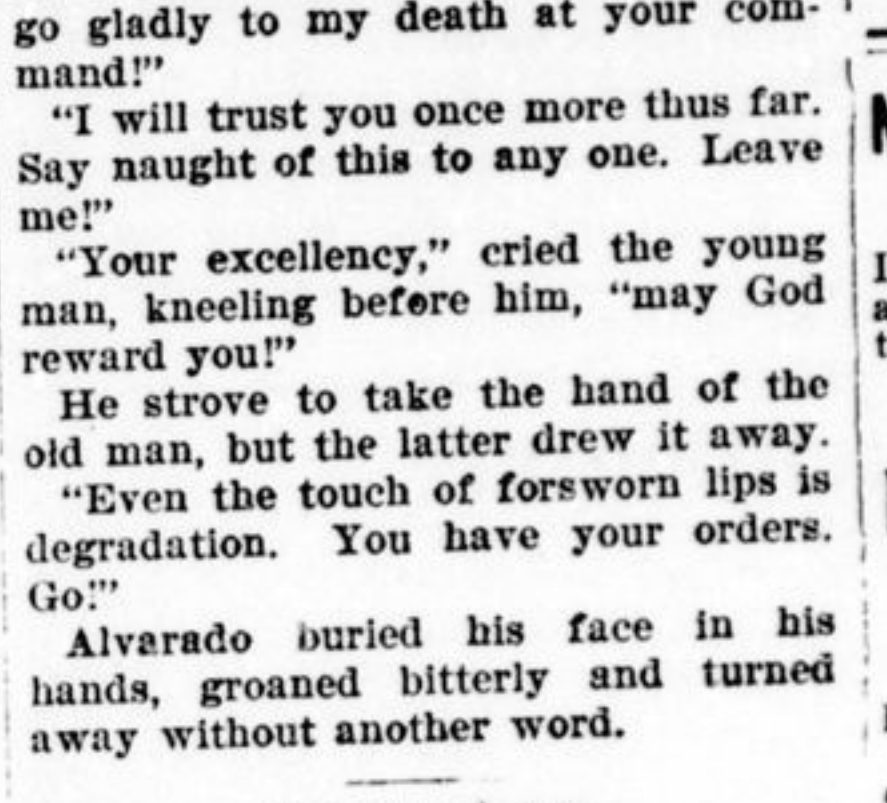
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"There is nothing to explain. I was weak; it was beyond my strength. I offer no excuse." "Twas deliberately done?" "I told her that I loved her, again!" "Thou double traitor! And she?" "My lord, condemn her not. She is young, a woman." "I do not consider 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 want 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 I become 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—it 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 forsown 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 unarmed and carried no weapons 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 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.

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