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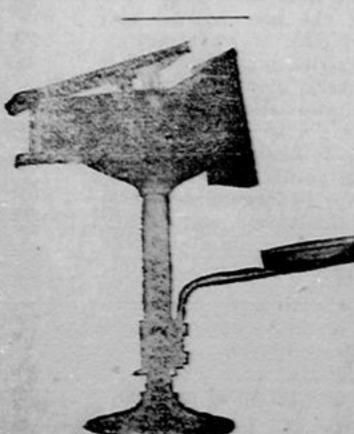
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BUCCANEER

By CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY. Author of "The Southerners," "For Love

of Country," "The Grip of Honor," Etc.

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"Sirs, there came to me a young brother of mine, not such as I, a rude, unlettered sailor, but a gentleman, and college bred. There are quarterings on my family scutcheon, sirs, back in merry England, had I the wit or care to trace it. He was a reckless | ment sweep over the face of the old youth, chafing under the restraints of sailor; "he will not escape lightly. that hard religion to which we had Would God he had blood enough in his been born. The free life of a brother body to pay drop by drop for all he of the coast attracted him. He became, like me, a buccaneer. I strove to dissuade him, but without avail. He was the bravest, the handsomest, the most He shall have time to repent and to gallant of us all. He came into my think upon the past. You may glut old heart like a son. We are not all yourself with his suffering and feed brute, gentlemen. I have waded in fat your revenge. 'Twill be a meet, blood and plunder like the rest, but in a fitting punishment so far as our poor every heart there is some spot that minds can compass. We have already beats for things better. I divided my love between him and my captain. This man"-he pointed to his old master with his blunted finger, drawing himself up until he looked taller than he was, his one eye flashing with anger and hatred as with a stern, rude eloquence he recited his wrongs, the grim indictment of a false friend-"this man betrayed us at Panama. With what he had robbed his comrades of he bought immunity, even knighthood, from the king of England. He was made vice governor of Jamaica, and his hand fell heavily upon those who had blindly followed him in the old days, men who had served him and trusted him, as I-men whose valor and courage had made him what he was.

"He took the lad I loved and because his proud spirit would not break to his heavy hand and he answered him like the oold, free sailor he was he hanged him like a dog, sirs! I-Istooped for his life. I, who cared not for myself, offered to stand in his place upon the gallows platform, though I have no more taste for the rope than any of you, if only he might go free. He laughed at me! He mocked me! I urged my ancient service. He drove me from him with curses and threats like a whipped dog. I could have struck him down then but that I wanted to save him for a revenge that might measure my hate, slow and long and terrible-not mere sudden death; that would not suffice-some-

"Treachery? My lord, his was the first. I played his own game and have overcome it with the same. D'ye blame me now? Take your treasure! I want none of it. I want only him and my revenge! Liberty's dear to all of us. I'll

give mine up. You may take my life with the rest, but first give me this man. Let me deal with him. I will revenge you all, and when I have finished with him I will yield myself to you." He was a hideous figure of old hate

and rancor, of unslaked passion, of monstrous possibilities of cruel torture. Even Morgan himself, intrepid as he was, shrank from the awful menace of the mordant words.

"My lord," shouted the unfortunate captain, "give him no heed. He lies in his throat; he lies a thousand times. 'Twas a mutinous dog, that brother of his, that I hanged. I am your prisoner. You are a soldier. I look for speedy punishment-certain death, it may bebut let it not be from his hand."

"Think, senors," urged the boatswain. "You would hang him, perhaps. It is the worst that you could do. Is that Maracaibo a Spanish woman, Maria punishment meet for him? He has despoiled women, bereft children, tortured men, in the streets of La Guayra. A more fitting punishment should await | raged there after the sack. She fell him. Think of Panama, of Maracaibo, | ill and as she lay dying besought me to | the best end." of Porto Bello. Recall what he did save the boy. I sent Hornigold to her there. Is hanging enough? Give him with instructions to do her will, and to me. Let me have my way. You he carried the baby to the village of have your daughter, safe, unharmed, Cuchillo with that cross upon his breast within the shelter of her lover's arms. The town is yours. You have won the fight. 'Twas I that did it. Without me your wives, your children, your sub-Caracas, and this dog would have been | to him. 'Tis not meet that the father free to go further afield for prey. He coveted your daughter-would fain make her his slave in some desert is-

land. Give him to me!" "Old man," said the viceroy, "I take | viciously springing forward, knife in back my words. You have excuse for your betrayal, but your request I cannot grant. I have promised him to Alvarado. Nay, urge me no further. My word is passed."

"Thank you, thank you!" cried Morgan, breathing again.

"Silence, you dog!" said the viceroy, with a look of contempt on his face. "But take heart, man," he added as he saw the look of rage and disappointhath shed. His death shall be slow, lingering, terrible. You have said it. and you shall see it, too, if you will. planned it. Take him away and hold him safe. Tomorrow he shall be punished. Alvarado, art ready for duty?"

"Ready, your excellency," answered the young man, "and for this duty." "Take him, then. I give him into your hands. You know what is to be done; see you do it well."

"Aye, my lord. Into the strong room with him, men!" ordered the young Spaniard, stepping unsteadily

As he did so the crucifix he wore. which the disorder in his dress exposed to view, flashed into the light once more. Mergan's eyes fastened upon it for the first time.

"By heaven, sir!" he shouted. "Where got ye that cross?"

"From his mother, noble captain," interrupted Hornigold, coming closer. He had another card to play. He had waited for this moment, and he threw back his head with a long, bitter laugh. There was such sinister, such vicious mockery and meaning in his voice, with not the faintest note of merriment to relieve it, that his listen-

this is"-"The boy I took into Cuchillo when we were at Panama," said Hornigold

"His mother?" cried Morgan. "Then

ers looked aghast upon him.

in triumph "And my son!" cried the old buccaneer, with malignant joy.

A great cry of repudiation and horror burst from the lips of Alvarado. The others stared with astonishment and incredulity written on their faces. Mercedes moved closer to her lover and strove to take his hand.

"My lords and gentlemen, hear me," continued the buccaneer, the words rushing from his lips in his excitement,

Where got ye that cross?"



in the new relationship he so promptly and boldly affirmed he thought he saw a way of escape from his imminent peril. "There lived in Zerega, who loved me. By her there was a child-mine-a boy. I took them with me to Panama. The pestilence and left him. We lost sight of him. There the next day you found him. He has English blood in his veins. He is my son, sirs, a noble youth," sneered jects, would have been slaughtered in | the old man. "Now you have given me should suffer at the hands of the son You shall set me free," added the man, turning to Alvarado. "Rather than that"- cried Hornigold,

bold yet cunning appeal of his former

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it hath been appointed." "Can this be true?" groaned Alvarado, turning savagely to Hornigold.

"I believe it to be." "Why not kill me last night, then?" "I wanted you for this minute. 'Tis a small part of my revenge-to see him die and by his son's hand-a

worthy father, noble son"-

"Silence!" shouted De Lara. "Art thou without bowels of compassion, man? Alvarado, I pity thee, but this makes the promise of the hour void. Nay, my daughter," as Mercedes came forward to entreat him, "I'd rather slay thee with my own hand than wed thee to the son of such as yon!"

"My lord, 'tis just," answered Alvarado. His anguish was pitiful to behold. "I am as innocent of my parentage as any child, yet the suffering must be mine. The sins of the fathers are visited on the children. I did deem it yesterday a coward's act to cut the thread of my life, but now-I cannot survive-I cannot live-and know that in my veins runs the blood of such a monster. My lord, you have been good to me. Gentlemen, you have honored me. Mercedes, you have loved me-O God! You, infamous man, you have fathered me! May the curse of God, that God whom you mock, rest upon you! My mother loved this man once. it seems. Well, nobly did she expiate. I go to join her. Pray for me. Stay not my hand. Farewell!" He raised his poinard.

"Let no one stop him!" cried the old viceroy as Alvarado darted the weapon straight at his own beart. "This were

Merce les had stood dazed during this conversation, but with a shrick of horror as she saw the flash of the blade she threw herself upon her lover and strove to wrench the dagger from him. "Alvarado," she cried, "whatever thou art, thou hast my heart! Nay, slay me first, if thou wilt!"

> CHAPTER XXIII. YE, strike, Alvarado," cried the

viceroy, filled with shame and surprise at the sight of his daughter's extraordinary boldness, "for, though I love her, I'd rather see her dead than married to the son He was greatly surprised at the of such as he. Drive home your weapon!" he cried in bitter scorn. "Why stay your hand? Only blood can wash "Back, man!" interposed the viceroy. out the shame she hath put upon me

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before you all this day. Thou hast a dagger. Use it, I say!"

"Do you hear my father's words, Alvarado?" cried Mercedes, sinking on her knees and stretching up her hands to him. "'Tis a sharp weapon. One touch will end it all, and you can fol-

"God help me!" cried the unhappy young captain, throwing aside the poniard and clasping his hands to his eyes. "I cannot! Hath no one here a point for me? If I have deserved well of you or the state, sir, bid them strike

"Live, young sir," interrupted Morgan. "There are other omen in the world. (me with me and"-

"If you are my father, ou have but little time in this world." interrupted the Span ard, turning to Morgan and gnashing his teeth at h. a. "I doubt not but you were cruel to my mother. I hate you! I loathe you! I despise you for all your crimes, and most of all for bringing me into he world. I swear to you, had I the power, I'd not add another moment to your life. The world were better rid of you."

"You have been well trained by your Spanish nurses," cried Morgan resolutely, although with sneering mockery and hate in his voice, "and well you seem to know the duty owed by son to sire."

"You have done nothing for me," returned the young soldier. "You abandoned me. Such as you are, you were my father. You cast me away to we wouldn't dare make such an offer. shift for myself. Had it not been for these friends here"-

"Nay," said Morgan, "I thought you dead. That cursed one eyed traitor there told me so, else I'd have sought you out."

"Glad am I that you did not, for I have passed my life where no child of yours could hope to be-among honorable men, winning their respect, which I now forfeit because of thee."

"Alvarado," said the viceroy, "this much will I do for thee. He shall be shot like a soldier instead of undergo- that you attend the Besting the punishment we had designed

for him. This much for his father-

"My lord, I ask it not," answered the young man.

"Sir," exclaimed Morgan, a gleam of relief passing across his features, for he knew, of course; that death was his only expectation, and he had greatly feared that his taking off would be accompanied by horrible tortures, "you, at least, are a father, and I thank

"And were you a thousand times his "Yes, I am a father, and a most unfather, were you my brother, my own happy one," groaned De Lara; turning father, you should nevertheless die, as toward Alvarado. "Perhaps it is well you did not accomplish your purpose of self destruction after all, my poor friend. As 2 said before. Spain hath need of you. You may go back to the old country beyond the great sea. All here will keep your secret; my favor will be of service to you even there. You can make a new career with a new name."

"And Mercedes?" asked Alvarado. "You have no longer any right to question. All, well, it is just that you should hear. The girl goes to a convent. The only cloak for her is in our holy religion-and so ends the great race of De Laras!"

"No. no." pleaded Mercedes: "send me not there! Let me go with him!" She stepped nearer to him, beautiful and beseeching. "My father," she urged, "you love me." She threw her arms around his neck and laid her head upon his breast. Upon it her father tenderly pressed his hand. "You loved my mother, did you not?" she continued. "Think of her. Condemn me not to the living death of a convent-away from him. If that man be his fatherand I cannot believe it; there is some mistake; 'tis impossible that anything so foul should bring into the world a man so noble-yet I love him! You: know him. You have tried him a thousand times. He has no qualities of his base ancestry. His mother at least died like a Spanish gentlewoman. My lords, gentlemen, some of you have known me from my childhood. You have lived in our house and have fol-

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"God help me!" cried the



lowed the fortunes of my father; you have grown gray in our service. Intercede for me!"

"Your excelleney," said old Don Caesar de Agramonte, a man who, as Mercedes had said, had literally grown gray in the service of the viceroy and who was of birth scarcely inferior to his own, "the words of the Lady Mercedes move me profoundly. By your more leave. I venture to say that the help of the well and notify. and the day of Alvarado, where we have seen in places that my mea's souls to the extreme, both always comported himself as a Spanish gentleman should. This may be a lie. Will you not reconsider your words? Give the maiden to the man. I am an old soldier, sir, and have done you some service. I would cheerfully stake my life to maintain his honor and his gentleness at the sword's point."

"He speaks well, Don Alvaro!" cried Captain Gayoso, another veteran soldier. "I join my plea to that of my comrade, Don Caesar."

"Gentlemen, I thank you," said Alvarado gratefully, looking at the little group. "This is one sweet use of my adversity. I knew not I was so befriended"-

"You hear, you hear, my father, what these noble gentlemen say?" interrupted Mercedes.

"But," continued Alvarado sadly, "it is not meet that the blood of the prince-De Laras should be mingled with mine. Rather the ancient house should fall with all its honors upon it than be kept alive by degradation. I thank you, but it cannot be."

"Your excellency, we humbly press you for an answer," persisted Agra-

"Gentlemen-and you have indeed proved yourselves generous and gentle soldiers-I appreciate what you say. Your words touch me profoundly. I know how you feel, but Alvarado is

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