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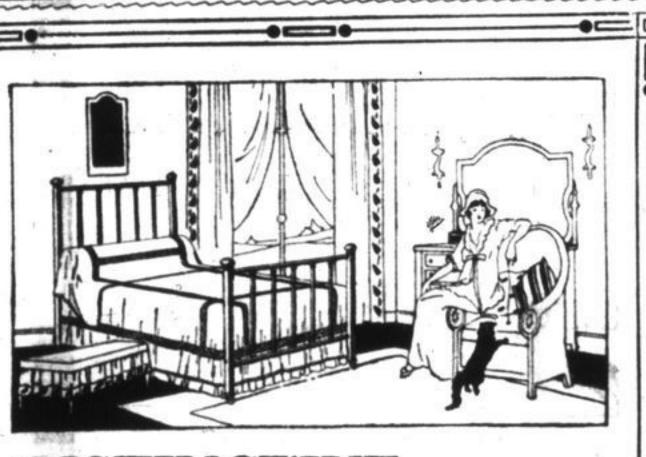
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# The Whig's New Serial Story



CHAPTER III.

The Village by the Lagoon. TEVER before nor since have 1 looked upon such a variety of equipment as strewed the decks and cabins of that ship. A great majority of the passengers knew nothing whatever about out of door life and less than nothing as to the conditions in California and on the way. Consequently they had bought liberally of all sorts of idiotic patent contraptions. India rubber played a prominent part. And the deck was cumbered with at least forty sorts of machines for separating gold from the soil, some of them to use water, some muscular labor, and one tremendous affair with wings was supposed to fan away everything but the gold. Differing in everything else, they were alike in one thing-they had all been deveed by men who had never seen any but manufactured gold. I may add that I never saw a machine of the kind actually at work in the diggings.

Just new, however, I looked on the owners of these contraptions with envy and thought ourselves at a disadvantage with only our picks, shovels and axes.

As we drew southward the days became insufferably warm, but the nights were glorious. Talbot and I liked to sleep on deck and generally camped down up near the bitts. The old ship rolled frightfully, for she was light in freight in order to accommodate so many passengers, and the dark blue sea appeared to swoop up and down beneath the placid tropic moon.

there, but in them all I learned nothing, absolutely nothing, of my compan- Far, far from it. But you seem to

"If you had broken my arm that time I should not have taken you," he remarked suddenly one evening.

"Shouldn't blame you," said I. "No! I wouldn't have wanted that kind of a man," he continued, "for I should doubt my control of him. But you gave up."

This nettled me. "Would you have had me or any it?" I demanded.

And, after all, if you had broken my ic term to the southern wing of venal not yours."

Imagination alert to catch fire. The the boy by this very quick and unso- emies. phisticated bubbling of candid youth, while the boy most evidently worshiped his older companion as a symbol of the mysterious frontier. The northerner was named Rogers, but was invariably known as Yank. The southerner had some such name as Fairfax. but was called Johnny and later in California, for reasons that will appear, Diamond Jack. Yank's distinguishing feature was a long barreled "pea shooter" rifle. He never moved

ten feet without it. Johnny usually did most of the talking when we were all gathered together. Yank and I did the listening and Talbot the interpellating. Johnny swarmed all over himself like a pickpocket and showed us everything he had in the way of history, manners, training, family, pride, naivete, expectations and hopes. He prided himself on being a calm, phlegmatic individual, unemotional and not easily excited.

and he constantly took this attitude. It was a lovely joke. "Of course," said he, "it won't be necessary to stay out more than a year. They tell me I can easily make \$1,100 a day. But, you know, I am not easily moved by such reports"- his neighbor. be was at the time moving under a high pressure, at least ten knots an

bour-"I shall be satistied with three hundred a day. Allowing 300 working days to the year, that gives me about 190,000-plenty!"

"You'll have a few expenses," sug

"Oh-yes-well, make it a year and half, just to be on the safe side." Johnny was eagerly anxious to know everybody on the ship with the exception of about a dozen from his own south. As far as I could see, they did not in the slightest degree differ except in dress from any of the other thirty or forty from that section, but passengers crowded around in a dense, Johnny distinguished. He stiffened as clamoring mob. We arose, shouldered though Yank's gun barrel had taken the place of his spine whenever one to the corresponding boat on the other

of these men was near, and he was so coldly and pointedly courteous that I would have slapped his confounded face if he had acted so to me.

"Look here, Johnny," I said to him one day, "what's the matter with those fellows? They look all right to me. What do you know against them?" "I never laid eyes on them before in my life, sir," he replied, stiffening per-

"Take that kink out of your back," I warned him. "That won't work worth a cent with me!" He laughed.

"I beg pardon. They are not gentle-

"I don't know what you mean by gentlemen," said I. "It's a wide term. But lois of us here aren't gentlemen.



We had many long, quiet talks up "If you had broken my arm I should not have taken you."

He knit his brows. "I can't explain. They are the class of cheap politician that brings into dis-

repute the chivalry of the south, sir." Talbot and I burst into a shout of laughter, and even Yank, leaning attentively on the long barrel of his pea rifle, grinned faintly. We caught Johnny up on that word, and he was game enough to take it well. Whenever man brute enough to go through with something particular had happened to be also southern we called it the chiv-"Well"-he hesitated-"it was agreed alry. The word caught hold, so that that it was to be fight, you remember. later it came to be applied as a generarm it would have been my fault and politicians that early tried to control the new state of California.

Two young fellows used occasionally I must confess that if I had been to join us in our swooping, plunging Johnny I should have stepped more perch. They were as unlike as two carefully with these men. They were men could be, and yet already they a dark, suave lot and dressed well. In had become firm friends. One was a fact, they and a half dozen obviously slow, lank, ague stricken individual professional men alone in all that ship from somewhere in the wilds of the wore what we would call civilized great lakes, his face lined and brown clothes. I do not know which was as though carved from hard wood, his more incongruous, our own red shirts speed slow, his eyes steady with a or the top hats, flowing skirts and light veiled sardonic humor. His companion pantaloons of these quietly courteous was scarcely more than a boy, and he gentlemen. They were quite as well came, I believe, from Virginia. He armed as ourselves, however, wearing do we eat?" was a dark, eager youth, with a mop their revolvers beneath their armpits of black shiny hair that he was always or carrying short double pistols. They tossing back, bright glowing eyes, a treated Johnny with an ironically exgreat enthusiasm of manner and an aggerated courtesy and paid little attention to his high airs. It was obvibackwoodsman seemed attracted to ous, however, that he was making en-

Talbot Ward knew everybody aboard, from the captain down. His laughing, half aloof manner was very taking, and his ironical comments on the various points of discussion somehow conveyed no sting. He was continually accepting gifts of newspapers-of which there were a half a thousand or so brought aboard-with every appearance of receiving a favor. These papers he carried down to our tiny box of a room and added to his bundle. I supposed at the time he was doing all this on Moliere's principle, that one gains more popularity by accepting a favor than by bestowing one.

In the early morning one day we came in sight of a round, high bluff with a castle atop, and a low shore running away. The ship's man told us this was Chagres.

This news caused a curious disintegration in the ship's company. We had heretofore lived together a good humored community. Now we immediately drew apart into small suspiclous groups. For we had shortly to land ourselves and our goods and to obtain transportation across the isthmus, and each wanted to be ahead of

Here the owners of much freight found themselves at a disadvantage. I began to envy less the proprietors of those enormous or heavy machines for the separation of gold. Each man ran about on the deck collecting busily all his belongings into one pile. When he had done that he spent the rest of his time trying to extract defi-

Talbot and I sat on our few packages and enjoyed the scene. The ship came to anchor and the sailors swung the boat down from the davits. The our effects and quietly slipped around

side the smp. Sure enough, that also was being lowered. So that we and a dozen who had made the same good guess, were, after all, the first to fand We beached in the mud and were at once surrounded by a host of little, brown, clamorous men. Talbot took charge and began to shoot back Spanish at a great rate. Some of the little men had a few words of English. Our goods were seized and promptly disappeared in a dozen directions. I tried to prevent this, but could only collar one man at a time. All the Americans were swearing and threatening at a great rate. I saw Johnny,

Finally Talbot plowed his way to me. "It's all settled." said he. "I've made bargain with my friend here to take us up in his boat to Cruces for \$15 apiece for four of us."

tearing up the beach after a fleet na-

tive, fall flat and full length in the

mud, to the vast delight of all who be-

"Well, if you need two more, for heaven's sake rescue Johnny," I advised. "He'll bave apoplexy."

We hailed Johnny and explained matters. Johnny was somewhat put to it to attain his desired air of imperturbable calm.

"They've got every blistered thing I own and made off with it!" he cried. "Confound it, sir, I'm going to shoot every saddle colored hound in the place if I don't get back my belongings!" "They've got our stuff, too," I add-

"Well, keep calm," advised Talbot. "I don't know the game down here, but it strikes me they can't get very far through these swamps, if they do try to steal, and I don't believe they're stealing anyway. The whole performance to me bears a strong family resemblance to hotel runners. Here. compadre!"

"That's right." he told us then.

'Come on!" We walked along the little crescent of beach, looking into each of the shore. They were queer craft, dug out low roof of palmetto leaves amidships. By the time we had reached the end of the row we had collected all our effects. Our own boatman stowed them in his craft.

Thereupon, our minds at rest, we re- him?" asked Talbot. turned to the landing to enjoy the scene. The second ship's boat had ness," he replied. beached, and the row was going on. worse than before. In the seething, cursing, shouting mass we caught sight of Yank's tall figure leaning imperturbably on his rifle muzzle. We made | Our bargain was for only \$15, and our way to him.

"Got your boat yet?" Talbot shouted

"Got nothin' yet but a headache in the ears." said Yank. "Come with us, then. Where's your

plunder?" Yank stooped and swung to his shoul-

der a small bundle tied with ropes. "She's all thar," said he. These matters settled, we turned with

considerable curiosity to the village itself. It was all exotic, strange. Everything was different, and we saw it through the eyes of youth and romance as epitomizing the storied tropics.

Johnny and I wandered about completely fascinated. Talbot and Yank did not seem so impressed. Finally

"This is all very well. If you kids like to look at vellow fever, blackjack and corruption, all right," said he. "But we've got to start pretty soon after noon, and in the meantime where

CHAPTER IV. A Tropical River.

YE returned through the town. It was now filled to overflowing with our compatriots. They surged everywhere, full of comment and curiosity. The half naked men and women with the cigars and the wholly naked children and dogs seemed not in the least disturbed nor enlivened.

Talbot's earnest inquiries finally got us to the Crescent hotel. It was a but exactly like all the rest save that it had a floor. From its name I suppose it must have been kept by a white man, but we never got near enough through the crowd to find out. Without Talbot we should have gone hungry with many others, but he inquired around until we found a native willing to feed us. So we ate on an upturned hencoop outside a native but. The meal consisted of pork, bread and wa-

We strolled to the beach at the hour appointed with our boatman. He was not there, nor any other boatman. "Never mind," said Ward. "I'll know

him if I see him. I'll go look him up. You fellows find the boat with our things in it." He and I re-entered the village, but

fifteen minutes' search failed to disclose our man. Therefore we returned to the beach. A crowd was gathered close about some common center in the unmistakable restless manner of men about a dog fight or some other kind of a row. We pushed our way in.

Johnny and Yank were backed up against the palmetto awning of one of the boats in an attitude of deadly and quiet menace. Not two yards away Nobody as yet displayed a weapon, exnite promises from the harassed ship's | cept that Yank's long rifle lay across officers that he should go ashore in the hollow of his left arm instead of butt to earth, but it was evident that lightnings were playing. The boatman, who had appeared, alone was saying anything, but he seemed to be supplying language for the lot.

Johnny's tense, siert attitude relaxed a little when he saw us. "Well?" inquired Ward easily. "What's the trouble?"

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"Yank, and I found our goods dumped out on the beach and others in their

place," said Johnny. "So you proceeded to reverse matters. How about it?" he inquired

pleasantly of the four men.

"I know nothing about it," replied He talked a few moments with his one of them shortly. "We hired this boat, and we intend to have it, and no whippersnapper is going to keep us

"I see," said Talbot pleasantly. "Well, excuse me a moment while I boats in the long row drawn up on the talk to our friend." He addressed the man in Spanish and received short, from the trunks of trees, with small sullen replies. "He says," Tabot exdecks in bow and stern, and with a plained to us, "that he never saw us before in his life and never agreed to take us up the river." "Well, that settles it," stated the

"How much did you offer to pay

The man stared. "None of your busi-"They're askin' \$20 a head," volun-

teered one of the interested spectators. "Exactly. You see," said Talbot to us. "we got here a little too early. now this worthy citizen has made a better rate for himself." "You should have had the bargain

immediately registered before the alcalde, senor," spoke up a white dressed Spaniard of the better class, probably from the castle.

(Continued Next Saturday.)

China Next.

Pekin, May 23.-President L! Yuan Hung has issued a mandate dismissing Premier Tuan Chi Jiu from office and naming Dr. Wu Ting-Fang, former Ambassador to the United States, as acting premier, and empowering him to form a new Cabinet

This action probably will end the deadlock in Parliament and make possible declaration of war by China against Germany.

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