

**ДЖЕК  
ЛОНДОН**

HEARTS OF  
THREE

Джек Лондон  
**Hearts of Three**

«Public Domain»

**Лондон Д.**

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# Jack London

## Hearts of Three

### FOREWORD

I hope the reader will forgive me for beginning this foreword with a brag. In truth, this yarn is a celebration. By its completion I celebrate my fortieth birthday, my fiftieth book, my sixteenth year in the writing game, and a new departure. “Hearts of Three” is a new departure. I have certainly never done anything like it before; I am pretty certain never to do anything like it again. And I haven’t the least bit of reticence in proclaiming my pride in having done it. And now, for the reader who likes action, I advise him to skip the rest of this brag and foreword, and plunge into the narrative, and tell me if it just doesn’t read along.

For the more curious let me explain a bit further. With the rise of moving pictures into the overwhelmingly most popular form of amusement in the entire world, the stock of plots and stories in the world’s fiction fund began rapidly to be exhausted. In a year a single producing company, with a score of directors, is capable of filming the entire literary output of the entire lives of Shakespeare, Balzac, Dickens, Scott, Zola, Tolstoy, and of dozens of less voluminous writers. And since there are hundreds of moving pictures producing companies, it can be readily grasped how quickly they found themselves face to face with a shortage of the raw material of which moving pictures are fashioned.

The film rights in all novels, short stories, and plays that were still covered by copyright, were bought or contracted for, while all similar raw material on which copyright had expired was being screened as swiftly as sailors on a placer beach would pick up nuggets. Thousands of scenario writers – literally tens of thousands, for no man, nor woman, nor child was too mean not to write scenarios – tens of thousands of scenario writers pirated through all literature (copyright or otherwise), and snatched the magazines hot from the press to steal any new scene or plot or story hit upon by their writing brethren.

In passing, it is only fair to point out that, though only the other day, it was in the days ere scenario writers became respectable, in the days when they worked overtime for rough-neck directors for fifteen and twenty a week or freelanced their wares for from ten to twenty dollars per scenario and half the time were beaten out of the due payment, or had their stolen goods stolen from them by their equally graceless and shameless fellows who slaved by the week. But to-day, which is only a day since the other day, I know scenario writers who keep their three machines, their two chauffeurs, send their children to the most exclusive prep schools, and maintain an unwavering solvency.

It was largely because of the shortage in raw material that scenario writers appreciated in value and esteem. They found themselves in demand, treated with respect, better remunerated, and, in return, expected to deliver a higher grade of commodity. One phase of this new quest for material was the attempt to enlist known authors in the work. But because a man had written a score of novels was no guarantee that he could write a good scenario. Quite to the contrary, it was quickly discovered that the surest guarantee of failure was a previous record of success in novel-writing.

But the moving pictures producers were not to be denied. Division of labor was the thing. Allying themselves with powerful newspaper organisations, or, in the case of “Hearts of Three,” the very reverse, they had highly-skilled writers of scenario (who couldn’t write novels to save themselves) make scenarios, which, in turn, were translated into novels by novel-writers (who couldn’t, to save themselves, write scenarios).

Comes now Mr. Charles Goddard to one, Jack London, saying: “The time, the place, and the men are met; the moving pictures producers, the newspapers, and the capital, are ready: let us get together.” And we got. Result: “Hearts of Three.” When I state that Mr. Goddard has been

responsible for “The Perils of Pauline,” “The Exploits of Elaine,” “The Goddess,” the “Get Rich Quick Wallingford” series, etc., no question of his skilled fitness can be raised. Also, the name of the present heroine, Leoncia, is of his own devising.

On the ranch, in the “Valley of the Moon,” he wrote his first several episodes. But he wrote faster than I, and was done with his fifteen episodes weeks ahead of me. Do not be misled by the word “episode.” The first episode covers three thousand feet of film. The succeeding fourteen episodes cover each two thousand feet of film. And each episode contains about ninety scenes, which makes a total of some thirteen hundred scenes. Nevertheless, we worked simultaneously at our respective tasks. I could not build for what was going to happen next or a dozen chapters away, because I did not know. Neither did Mr. Goddard know. The inevitable result was that “Hearts of Three” may not be very vertebrate, although it is certainly consecutive.

Imagine my surprise, down here in Hawaii and toiling at the novelization of the tenth episode, to receive by mail from Mr. Goddard in New York the scenario of the fourteenth episode, and glancing therein, to find my hero married to the wrong woman! – and with only one more episode in which to get rid of the wrong woman and duly tie my hero up with the right and only woman. For all of which please see last chapter of fifteenth episode. Trust Mr. Goddard to show me how.

For Mr. Goddard is the master of action and lord of speed. Action doesn’t bother him at all. “Register,” he calmly says in a film direction to the moving picture actor. Evidently the actor registers, for Mr. Goddard goes right on with more action. “Register grief,” he commands, or “sorrow,” or “anger,” or “melting sympathy,” or “homicidal intent,” or “suicidal tendency.” That’s all. It has to be all, or how else would he ever accomplish the whole thirteen hundred scenes?

But imagine the poor devil of a me, who can’t utter the talismanic “register” but who must describe, and at some length inevitably, these moods and modes so airily created in passing by Mr. Goddard! Why, Dickens thought nothing of consuming a thousand words or so in describing and subtly characterizing the particular grief of a particular person. But Mr. Goddard says, “Register,” and the slaves of the camera obey.

And action! I have written some novels of adventure in my time, but never, in all of the many of them, have I perpetrated a totality of action equal to what is contained in “Hearts of Three.”

But I know, now, why moving pictures are popular. I know, now, why Messrs. “Barnes of New York” and “Potter of Texas” sold by the millions of copies. I know, now, why one stump speech of high-falutin’ is a more efficient vote-getter than a finest and highest act or thought of statesmanship. It has been an interesting experience, this novelization by me of Mr. Goddard’s scenario; and it has been instructive. It has given me high lights, foundation lines, cross-bearings, and illumination on my anciently founded sociological generalizations. I have come, by this adventure in writing, to understand the mass mind of the people more thoroughly than I thought I had understood it before, and to realize, more fully than ever, the graphic entertainment delivered by the demagogue who wins the vote of the mass out of his mastery of its mind. I should be surprised if this book does not have a large sale. (“Register surprise,” Mr. Goddard would say; or “Register large sale”).

If this adventure of “Hearts of Three” be collaboration, I am transported by it. But alack! – I fear me Mr. Goddard must then be the one collaborator in a million. We have never had a word, an argument, nor a discussion. But then, I must be a jewel of a collaborator myself. Have I not, without whisper or whimper of complaint, let him “register” through fifteen episodes of scenario, through thirteen hundred scenes and thirty-one thousand feet of film, through one hundred and eleven thousand words of novelization? Just the same, having completed the task, I wish I’d never written it – for the reason that I’d like to read it myself to see if it reads along. I am curious to know. I am curious to know.

*Jack London.*

Waikiki, Hawaii,

*March 23, 1916.*

## **Back to Back Against the Mainmast**

Do ye seek for fun and fortune?  
Listen, rovers, now to me!  
Look ye for them on the ocean:  
Ye shall find them on the sea.

### **Chorus:**

Roaring wind and deep blue water!  
We're the jolly devils who,  
Back to back against the mainmast,  
Held at bay the entire crew.

Bring the dagger, bring the pistols!  
We will have our own to-day!  
Let the cannon smash the bulwarks!  
Let the cutlass clear the way!

### **Chorus:**

Roaring wind and deep blue water!  
We're the jolly devils who,  
Back to back against the mainmast,  
Held at bay the entire crew.

Here's to rum and here's to plunder!  
Here's to all the gales that blow!  
Let the seamen cry for mercy!  
Let the blood of captains flow!

### **Chorus:**

Roaring wind and deep blue water!  
We're the jolly devils who,  
Back to back against the mainmast,  
Held at bay the entire crew.

Here's to ships that we have taken!  
They have seen which men were best.

We have lifted maids and cargo,  
And the sharks have had the rest.

**Chorus:**

Roaring wind and deep blue water!  
We're the jolly devils who,  
Back to back against the mainmast,  
Held at bay the entire crew.

– *George Sterling.*

## CHAPTER I

Events happened very rapidly with Francis Morgan that late spring morning. If ever a man leaped across time into the raw, red drama and tragedy of the primitive and the medieval melodrama of sentiment and passion of the New World Latin, Francis Morgan was destined to be that man, and Destiny was very immediate upon him.

Yet he was lazily unaware that aught in the world was stirring, and was scarcely astir himself. A late night at bridge had necessitated a late rising. A late breakfast of fruit and cereal had occurred along the route to the library – the austere elegant room from which his father, toward the last, had directed vast and manifold affairs.

“Parker,” he said to the valet who had been his father’s before him, “did you ever notice any signs of fat on R.H.M. in his last days?”

“Oh, no, sir,” was the answer, uttered with all the due humility of the trained servant, but accompanied by an involuntarily measuring glance that scanned the young man’s splendid proportions. “Your father, sir, never lost his leanness. His figure was always the same, broad-shouldered, deep in the chest, big-boned, but lean, always lean, sir, in the middle. When he was laid out, sir, and bathed, his body would have shamed most of the young men about town. He always took good care of himself; it was those exercises in bed, sir. Half an hour every morning. Nothing prevented. He called it religion.”

“Yes, he was a fine figure of a man,” the young man responded idly, glancing to the stock-ticker and the several telephones his father had installed.

“He was that,” Parker agreed eagerly. “He was lean and aristocratic in spite of his shoulders and bone and chest. And you’ve inherited it, sir, only on more generous lines.”

Young Francis Morgan, inheritor of many millions as well as brawn, lolled back luxuriously in a huge leather chair, stretched his legs after the manner of a full-vigored menagerie lion that is overspilling with vigor, and glanced at a headline of the morning paper which informed him of a fresh slide in the Culebra Cut at Panama.

“If I didn’t know we Morgans didn’t run that way,” he yawned, “I’d be fat already from this existence... Eh, Parker?”

The elderly valet, who had neglected prompt reply, startled at the abrupt interrogative interruption of the pause.

“Oh, yes, sir,” he said hastily. “I mean, no, sir. You are in the pink of condition.”

“Not on your life,” the young man assured him. “I may not be getting fat, but I am certainly growing soft... Eh, Parker?”

“Yes, sir. No, sir; no, I mean no, sir. You’re just the same as when you came home from college three years ago.”

“And took up loafing as a vocation,” Francis laughed. “Parker!”

Parker was alert attention. His master debated with himself ponderously, as if the problem were of profound importance, rubbing the while the bristly thatch of the small toothbrush moustache he had recently begun to sport on his upper lip.

“Parker, I’m going fishing.”

“Yes, sir!”

“I ordered some rods sent up. Please joint them and let me give them the once over. The idea drifts through my mind that two weeks in the woods is what I need. If I don’t, I’ll surely start laying on flesh and disgrace the whole family tree. You remember Sir Henry? – the old original Sir Henry, the buccaneer old swashbuckler?”

“Yes, sir; I’ve read of him, sir.”

Parker had paused in the doorway until such time as the ebbing of his young master's volubility would permit him to depart on the errand.

"Nothing to be proud of, the old pirate."

"Oh, no, sir," Parker protested. "He was Governor of Jamaica. He died respected."

"It was a mercy he didn't die hanged," Francis laughed. "As it was, he's the only disgrace in the family that he founded. But what I was going to say is that I've looked him up very carefully. He kept his figure and he died lean in the middle, thank God. It's a good inheritance he passed down. We Morgans never found his treasure; but beyond rubies is the lean-in-the-middle legacy he bequeathed us. It's what is called a fixed character in the breed – that's what the profs taught me in the biology course."

Parker faded out of the room in the ensuing silence, during which Francis Morgan buried himself in the Panama column and learned that the canal was not expected to be open for traffic for three weeks to come.

A telephone buzzed, and, through the electric nerves of a consummate civilization, Destiny made the first out-reach of its tentacles and contacted with Francis Morgan in the library of the mansion his father had builded on Riverside Drive.

"But my dear Mrs. Carruthers," was his protest into the transmitter. "Whatever it is, it is a mere local flurry. Tampico Petroleum is all right. It is not a gambling proposition. It is legitimate investment. Stay with. Tie to it... Some Minnesota farmer's come to town and is trying to buy a block or two because it looks as solid as it really is... What if it is up two points? Don't sell. Tampico Petroleum is not a lottery or a roulette proposition. It's bona fide industry. I wish it hadn't been so almighty big or I'd have financed it all myself... Listen, please, it's not a flyer. Our present contracts for tanks is over a million. Our railroad and our three pipe-lines are costing more than five millions. Why, we've a hundred millions in producing wells right now, and our problem is to get it down country to the oil-steamers. This is the sober investment time. A year from now, or two years, and your shares will make government bonds look like something the cat brought in..."

"Yes, yes, please. Never mind how the market goes. Also, please, I didn't advise you to go in in the first place. I never advised a friend to that. But now that they are in, stick. It's as solid as the Bank of England... Yes, Dicky and I divided the spoils last night. Lovely party, though Dicky's got too much temperament for bridge... Yes, bull luck... Ha! ha! My temperament? Ha! Ha!.. Yes?.. Tell Harry I'm off and away for a couple of weeks... Fishing, troutlets, you know, the springtime and the streams, the rise of sap, the budding and the blossoming and all the rest... Yes, good-bye, and hold on to Tampico Petroleum. If it goes down, after that Minnesota farmer's bulled it, buy a little more. I'm going to. It's finding money... Yes... Yes, surely... It's too good to dare sell on a flyer now, because it mayn't ever again go down... Of course I know what I'm talking about. I've just had eight hours' sleep, and haven't had a drink... Yes, yes... Good-bye."

He pulled the ticker tape into the comfort of his chair and languidly ran over it, noting with mildly growing interest the message it conveyed.

Parker returned with several slender rods, each a glittering gem of artisanship and art. Francis was out of his chair, ticker flung aside and forgotten as with the exultant joy of a boy he examined the toys and, one after another, began trying them, switching them through the air till they made shrill whip-like noises, moving them gently with prudence and precision under the lofty ceiling as he made believe to cast across the floor into some unseen pool of trout-lurking mystery.

A telephone buzzed. Irritation was swift on his face.

"For heaven's sake answer it, Parker," he commanded. "If it is some silly stock-gambling female, tell her I'm dead, or drunk, or down with typhoid, or getting married, or anything calamitous."

After a moment's dialogue, conducted on Parker's part, in the discreet and modulated tones that befitted absolutely the cool, chaste, noble dignity of the room, with a "One moment, sir," into the transmitter, he muffled the transmitter with his hand and said:

“It’s Mr. Bascom, sir. He wants you.”

“Tell Mr. Bascom to go to hell,” said Francis, simulating so long a cast, that, had it been in verity a cast, and had it pursued the course his fascinated gaze indicated, it would have gone through the window and most likely startled the gardener outside kneeling over the rose bush he was planting.

“Mr. Bascom says it’s about the market, sir, and that he’d like to talk with you only a moment,” Parker urged, but so delicately and subduedly as to seem to be merely repeating an immaterial and unnecessary message.

“All right.” Francis carefully leaned the rod against a table and went to the ‘phone.

“Hello,” he said into the telephone. “Yes, this is I, Morgan. Shoot, What is it?”

He listened for a minute, then interrupted irritably: “Sell – hell. Nothing of the sort... Of course, I’m glad to know. Even if it goes up ten points, which it won’t, hold on to everything. It may be a legitimate rise, and it mayn’t ever come down. It’s solid. It’s worth far more than it’s listed. I know, if the public doesn’t. A year from now it’ll list at two hundred ... that is, if Mexico can cut the revolution stuff... Whenever it drops you’ll have buying orders from me... Nonsense. Who wants control? It’s purely sporadic ... eh? I beg your pardon. I mean it’s merely temporary. Now I’m going off fishing for a fortnight. If it goes down five points, buy. Buy all that’s offered. Say, when a fellow’s got a real bona fide property, being bulled is almost as bad as having the bears after one ... yes... Sure ... yes. Good-bye.”

And while Francis returned delightedly to his fishing-rods, Destiny, in Thomas Regan’s downtown private office, was working overtime. Having arranged with his various brokers to buy, and, through his divers channels of secret publicity having let slip the cryptic tip that something was wrong with Tampico Petroleum’s concessions from the Mexican government, Thomas Regan studied a report of his own oil-expert emissary who had spent two months on the spot spying out what Tampico Petroleum really had in sight and prospect.

A clerk brought in a card with the information that the visitor was importunate and foreign. Regan listened, glanced at the card, and said:

“Tell this Mister Senor Alvarez Torres of Ciudad de Colon that I can’t see him.”

Five minutes later the clerk was back, this time with a message pencilled on the card. Regan grinned as he read it:

“Dear Mr. Regan,

“Honoured Sir: —

“I have the honour to inform you that I have a tip on the location of the treasure  
Sir Henry Morgan buried in old pirate days.

“*Alvarez Torres.*”

Regan shook his head, and the clerk was nearly out of the room when his employer suddenly recalled him.

“Show him in – at once.”

In the interval of being alone, Regan chuckled to himself as he rolled the new idea over in his mind. “The unlicked cub!” he muttered through the smoke of the cigar he was lighting. “Thinks he can play the lion part old R.H.M. played. A trimming is what he needs, and old Grayhead Thomas R. will see that he gets it.”

Senor Alvarez Torres’ English was as correct as his modish spring suit, and though the bleached yellow of his skin advertised his Latin-American origin, and though his black eyes were eloquent of the mixed lustres of Spanish and Indian long compounded, nevertheless he was as thoroughly New Yorkish as Thomas Regan could have wished.

“By great effort, and years of research, I have finally won to the clue to the buccaneer gold of Sir Henry Morgan,” he preambled. “Of course it’s on the Mosquito Coast. I’ll tell you now that it’s not a thousand miles from the Chiriqui Lagoon, and that Bocas del Toro, within reason, may

be described as the nearest town. I was born there – educated in Paris, however – and I know the neighbourhood like a book. A small schooner – the outlay is cheap, most very cheap – but the returns, the reward – the treasure!”

Senor Torres paused in eloquent inability to describe more definitely, and Thomas Regan, hard man used to dealing with hard men, proceeded to bore into him and his data like a cross-examining criminal lawyer.

“Yes,” Senor Torres quickly admitted, “I am somewhat embarrassed – how shall I say? – for immediate funds.”

“You need the money,” the stock operator assured him brutally, and he bowed pained acquiescence.

Much more he admitted under the rapid-fire interrogation. It was true, he had but recently left Bocas del Toro, but he hoped never again to go back. And yet he would go back if possibly some arrangement...

But Regan shut him off with the abrupt way of the master-man dealing with lesser fellow-creatures. He wrote a check, in the name of Alvarez Torres, and when that gentleman glanced at it he read the figures of a thousand dollars.

“Now here’s the idea,” said Regan. “I put no belief whatsoever in your story. But I have a young friend – my heart is bound up in the boy but he is too much about town, the white lights and the white-lighted ladies, and the rest – you understand?” And Senor Alvarez Torres bowed as one man of the world to another. “Now, for the good of his health, as well as his wealth and the saving of his soul, the best thing that could happen to him is a trip after treasure, adventure, exercise, and ... you readily understand, I am sure.”

Again Alvarez Torres bowed.

“You need the money,” Regan continued. “Strive to interest him. That thousand is for your effort. Succeed in interesting him so that he departs after old Morgan’s gold, and two thousand more is yours. So thoroughly succeed in interesting him that he remains away three months, two thousand more – six months, five thousand. Oh, believe me, I knew his father. We were comrades, partners, I – I might say, almost brothers. I would sacrifice any sum to win his son to manhood’s wholesome path. What do you say? The thousand is yours to begin with. Well?”

With trembling fingers Senor Alvarez Torres folded and unfolded the check.

“I ... I accept,” he stammered and faltered in his eagerness. “I ... I ... How shall I say?.. I am yours to command.”

Five minutes later, as he arose to go, fully instructed in the part he was to play and with his story of Morgan’s treasure revised to convincingness by the brass-tack business acumen of the stock-gambler, he blurted out, almost facetiously, yet even more pathetically:

“And the funniest thing about it, Mr. Regan, is that it is true. Your advised changes in my narrative make it sound more true, but true it is under it all. I need the money. You are most munificent, and I shall do my best... I ... I pride myself that I am an artist. But the real and solemn truth is that the clue to Morgan’s buried loot is genuine. I have had access to records inaccessible to the public, which is neither here nor there, for the men of my own family – they are family records – have had similar access, and have wasted their lives before me in the futile search. Yet were they on the right clue – except that their wits made them miss the spot by twenty miles. It was there in the records. They missed it, because it was, I think, a deliberate trick, a conundrum, a puzzle, a disguise, a maze, which I, and I alone, have penetrated and solved. The early navigators all played such tricks on the charts they drew. My Spanish race so hid the Hawaiian Islands by five degrees of longitude.”

All of which was in turn Greek to Thomas Regan, who smiled his acceptance of listening and with the same smile conveyed his busy business-man’s tolerant unbelief.

Scarcely was Senor Torres gone, when Francis Morgan was shown in.

“Just thought I’d drop around for a bit of counsel,” he said, greetings over. “And to whom but you should I apply, who so closely played the game with my father? You and he were partners, I understand, on some of the biggest deals. He always told me to trust your judgment. And, well, here I am, and I want to go fishing. What’s up with Tampico Petroleum?”

“What *is* up?” Regan countered, with fine simulation of ignorance of the very thing of moment he was responsible for precipitating. “Tampico Petroleum?”

Francis nodded, dropped into a chair, and lighted a cigarette, while Regan consulted the ticker.

“Tampico Petroleum is up – two points – you should worry,” he opined.

“That’s what I say,” Francis concurred. “I should worry. But just the same, do you think some bunch, onto the inside value of it – and it’s big – I speak under the rose, you know, I mean in absolute confidence?” Regan nodded. “It is big. It is right. It is the real thing. It is legitimate. Now this activity – would you think that somebody, or some bunch, is trying to get control?”

His father’s associate, with the reverend gray of hair thatching his roof of crooked brain, shook the thatch.

“Why,” he amplified, “it may be just a flurry, or it may be a hunch on the stock public that it’s really good. What do you say?”

“Of course it’s good,” was Francis’ warm response. “I’ve got reports, Regan, so good they’d make your hair stand up. As I tell all my friends, this is the real legitimate. It’s a damned shame I had to let the public in on it. It was so big, I just had to. Even all the money my father left me, couldn’t swing it – I mean, free money, not the stuff tied up – money to work with.”

“Are you short?” the older man queried.

“Oh, I’ve got a tidy bit to operate with,” was the airy reply of youth.

“You mean...?”

“Sure. Just that. If she drops, I’ll buy. It’s finding money.”

“Just about how far would you buy?” was the next searching interrogation, masked by an expression of mingled good humor and approbation.

“All I’ve got,” came Francis Morgan’s prompt answer. “I tell you, Regan, it’s immense.”

“I haven’t looked into it to amount to anything, Francis; but I will say from the little I know that it listens good.”

“Listens! I tell you, Regan, it’s the Simon-pure, straight legitimate, and it’s a shame to have it listed at all. I don’t have to wreck anybody or anything to pull it across. The world will be better for my shooting into it I am afraid to say how many hundreds of millions of barrels of real oil – say, I’ve got one well alone, in the Huasteca field, that’s gushed 27,000 barrels a day for seven months. And it’s still doing it. That’s the drop in the bucket we’ve got piped to market now. And it’s twenty-two gravity, and carries less than two-tenths of one per cent. of sediment. And there’s one gusher – sixty miles of pipe to build to it, and pinched down to the limit of safety, that’s pouring out all over the landscape just about seventy thousand barrels a day. – Of course, all in confidence, you know. We’re doing nicely, and I don’t want Tampico Petroleum to skyrocket.”

“Don’t you worry about that, my lad. You’ve got to get your oil piped, and the Mexican revolution straightened out before ever Tampico Petroleum soars. You go fishing and forget it.” Regan paused, with finely simulated sudden recollection, and picked up Alvarez Torres’ card with the pencilled note. “Look, who’s just been to see me.” Apparently struck with an idea, Regan retained the card a moment. “Why go fishing for mere trout? After all, it’s only recreation. Here’s a thing to go fishing after that there’s real recreation in, full-size man’s recreation, and not the Persian-palace recreation of an Adirondack camp, with ice and servants and electric push-buttons. Your father always was more than a mite proud of that old family pirate. He claimed to look like him, and you certainly look like your dad.”

“Sir Henry,” Francis smiled, reaching for the card. “So am I a mite proud of the old scoundrel.”

He looked up questioningly from the reading of the card.

“He’s a plausible cuss,” Regan explained. “Claims to have been born right down there on the Mosquito Coast, and to have got the tip from private papers in his family. Not that I believe a word of it. I haven’t time or interest to get started believing in stuff outside my own field.”

“Just the same, Sir Henry died practically a poor man,” Francis asserted, the lines of the Morgan stubbornness knitting themselves for a flash on his brows. “And they never did find any of his buried treasure.”

“Good fishing,” Regan girded good-humoredly.

“I’d like to meet this Alvarez Torres just the same,” the young man responded.

“Fool’s gold,” Regan continued. “Though I must admit that the cuss is most exasperatingly plausible. Why, if I were younger – but oh, the devil, my work’s cut out for me here.”

“Do you know where I can find him?” Francis was asking the next moment, all unwittingly putting his neck into the net of tentacles that Destiny, in the visible incarnation of Thomas Regan, was casting out to snare him.

The next morning the meeting took place in Regan’s office. Senor Alvarez Torres startled and controlled himself at first sight of Francis’ face. This was not missed by Regan, who grinningly demanded:

“Looks like the old pirate himself, eh?”

“Yes, the resemblance is most striking,” Torres lied, or half-lied, for he did recognize the resemblance to the portraits he had seen of Sir Henry Morgan; although at the same time under his eyelids he saw the vision of another and living man who, no less than Francis and Sir Henry, looked as much like both of them as either looked like the other.

Francis was youth that was not to be denied. Modern maps and ancient charts were pored over, as well as old documents, handwritten in faded ink on time-yellowed paper, and at the end of half an hour he announced that the next fish he caught would be on either the Bull or the Calf – the two islets off the Lagoon of Chiriqui, on one or the other of which Torres averred the treasure lay.

“I’ll catch to-night’s train for New Orleans,” Francis announced. “That will just make connection with one of the United Fruit Company’s boats for Colon – oh, I had it all looked up before I slept last night.”

“But don’t charter a schooner at Colon,” Torres advised. “Take the overland trip by horseback to Belen. There’s the place to charter, with unsophisticated native sailors and everything else unsophisticated.”

“Listens good!” Francis agreed. “I always wanted to see that country down there. You’ll be ready to catch to-night’s train, Senor Torres?.. Of course, you understand, under the circumstances, I’ll be the treasurer and foot the expenses.”

But at a privy glance from Regan, Alvarez Torres lied with swift efficientness.

“I must join you later, I regret, Mr. Morgan. Some little business that presses – how shall I say? – an insignificant little lawsuit that must be settled first. Not that the sum at issue is important. But it is a family matter, and therefore gravely important. We Torres have our pride, which is a silly thing, I acknowledge, in this country, but which with us is very serious.”

“He can join afterward, and straighten you out if you’ve missed the scent,” Regan assured Francis. “And, before it slips your mind, it might be just as well to arrange with Senor Torres some division of the loot ... if you ever find it.”

“What would you say?” Francis asked.

“Equal division, fifty-fifty,” Regan answered, magnificently arranging the apportionment between the two men of something he was certain did not exist.

“And you will follow after as soon as you can?” Francis asked the Latin American. “Regan, take hold of his little law affair yourself and expedite it, won’t you?”

“Sure, boy,” was the answer. “And, if it’s needed, shall I advance cash to Senor Alvarez?”

“Fine!” Francis shook their hands in both of his. “It will save me bother. And I’ve got to rush to pack and break engagements and catch that train. So long, Regan. Good-bye, Senor Torres, until we meet somewhere around Bocas del Toro, or in a little hole in the ground on the Bull or the Calf – you say you think it’s the Calf? Well, until then – adios!”

And Senor Alvarez Torres remained with Regan some time longer, receiving explicit instructions for the part he was to play, beginning with retardation and delay of Francis’ expedition, and culminating in similar retardation and delay always to be continued.

“In short,” Regan concluded, “I don’t almost care if he never comes back – if you can keep him down there for the good of his health that long and longer.”

## CHAPTER II

Money, like youth, will not be denied, and Francis Morgan, who was the man-legal and nature-certain representative of both youth and money, found himself one afternoon, three weeks after he had said good-bye to Regan, becalmed close under the land on board his schooner, the *Angelique*. The water was glassy, the smooth roll scarcely perceptible, and, in sheer ennui and overplus of energy that likewise declined to be denied, he asked the captain, a breed, half Jamaica negro and half Indian, to order a small skiff over the side.

“Looks like I might shoot a parrot or a monkey or something,” he explained, searching the jungle-clad shore, half a mile away, through a twelve-power Zeiss glass.

“Most problematic, sir, that you are bitten by a *labarri*, which is deadly viper in these parts,” grinned the breed skipper and owner of the *Angelique*, who, from his Jamaica father had inherited the gift of tongues.

But Francis was not to be deterred; for at the moment, through his glass, he had picked out, first, in the middle ground, a white hacienda, and second, on the beach, a white-clad woman’s form, and further, had seen that she was scrutinising him and the schooner through a pair of binoculars.

“Put the skiff over, skipper,” he ordered. “Who lives around here? – white folks?”

“The Enrico Solano family, sir,” was the answer. “My word, they are important gentlefolk, old Spanish, and they own the entire general landscape from the sea to the Cordilleras and half of the Chiriqui Lagoon as well. They are very poor, most powerful rich ... in landscape – and they are prideful and fiery as cayenne pepper.”

As Francis, in the tiny skiff, rowed shoreward, the skipper’s alert eye noted that he had neglected to take along either rifle or shotgun for the contemplated parrot or monkey. And, next, the skipper’s eye picked up the white-clad woman’s figure against the dark edge of the jungle.

Straight to the white beach of coral sand Francis rowed, not trusting himself to look over his shoulder to see if the woman remained or had vanished. In his mind was merely a young man’s healthy idea of encountering a bucolic young lady, or a half-wild white woman for that matter, or at the best a very provincial one, with whom he could fool and fun away a few minutes of the calm that fettered the *Angelique* to immobility. When the skiff grounded, he stepped out, and with one sturdy arm lifted its nose high enough up the sand to fasten it by its own weight. Then he turned around. The beach to the jungle was bare. He strode forward confidently. Any traveller, on so strange a shore, had a right to seek inhabitants for information on his way – was the idea he was acting out.

And he, who had anticipated a few moments of diversion merely, was diverted beyond his fondest expectations. Like a jack-in-the-box, the woman, who, in the flash of vision vouchsafed him demonstrated that she was a girl-woman, ripely mature and yet mostly girl, sprang out of the green wall of jungle and with both hands seized his arm. The hearty weight of grip in the seizure surprised him. He fumbled his hat off with his free hand and bowed to the strange woman with the imperturbableness of a Morgan, New York trained and disciplined to be surprised at nothing, and received another surprise, or several surprises compounded. Not alone was it her semi-brunette beauty that impacted upon him with the weight of a blow, but it was her gaze, driven into him, that was all of sternness. Almost it seemed to him that he must know her. Strangers, in his experience, never so looked at one another.

The double grip on his arm became a draw, as she muttered tensely:

“Quick! Follow me!”

A moment he resisted. She shook him in the fervor of her desire, and strove to pull him toward her and after her. With the feeling that it was some unusual game, such as one might meet up with on the coast of Central America, he yielded, smilingly, scarcely knowing whether he followed voluntarily or was being dragged into the jungle by her impetuosity.

“Do as I do,” she shot back at him over her shoulder, by this time leading him with one hand of hers in his.

He smiled and obeyed, crouching when she crouched, doubling over when she doubled, while memories of John Smith and Pocahontas glimmered up in his fancy.

Abruptly she checked him and sat down, her hand directing him to sit beside her ere she released him, and pressed it to her heart while she panted:

“Thank God! Oh, merciful Virgin!”

In imitation, such having been her will of him, and such seeming to be the cue of the game, he smilingly pressed his own hand to his heart, although he called neither on God nor the Virgin.

“Won’t you ever be serious?” she flashed at him, noting his action.

And Francis was immediately and profoundly, as well as naturally, serious.

“My dear lady...” he began.

But an abrupt gesture checked him; and, with growing wonder, he watched her bend and listen, and heard the movement of bodies padding down some runway several yards away.

With a soft warm palm pressed commandingly to his to be silent, she left him with the abruptness that he had already come to consider as customary with her, and slipped away down the runway. Almost he whistled with astonishment. He might have whistled it, had he not heard her voice, not distant, in Spanish, sharply interrogate men whose Spanish voices, half-humbly, half-insistently and half-rebelliously, answered her.

He heard them move on, still talking, and, after five minutes of dead silence, heard her call for him peremptorily to come out.

“Gee! I wonder what Regan would do under such circumstances!” he smiled to himself as he obeyed.

He followed her, no longer hand in hand, through the jungle to the beach. When she paused, he came beside her and faced her, still under the impress of the fantasy which possessed him that it was a game.

“Tag!” he laughed, touching her on the shoulder. “Tag!” he reiterated. “You’re It!”

The anger of her blazing dark eyes scorched him.

“You fool!” she cried, lifting her finger with what he considered undue intimacy to his toothbrush moustache. “As if that could disguise you!”

“But my dear lady...” he began to protest his certain unacquaintance with her.

Her retort, which broke off his speech, was as unreal and bizarre as everything else which had gone before. So quick was it, that he failed to see whence the tiny silver revolver had been drawn, the muzzle of which was not presented merely toward his abdomen, but pressed closely against it.

“My dear lady...” he tried again.

“I won’t talk with you,” she shut him off. “Go back to your schooner, and go away...” He guessed the inaudible sob of the pause, ere she concluded, “Forever.”

This time his mouth opened to speech that was aborted on his lips by the stiff thrust of the muzzle of the weapon into his abdomen.

“If you ever come back – the Madonna forgive me – I shall shoot myself.”

“Guess I’d better go, then,” he uttered airily, as he turned to the skiff, toward which he walked in stately embarrassment, half-filled with laughter for himself and for the ridiculous and incomprehensible figure he was cutting.

Endeavoring to retain a last shred of dignity, he took no notice that she had followed him. As he lifted the skiff’s nose from the sand, he was aware that a faint wind was rustling the palm fronds. A long breeze was darkening the water close at hand, while, far out across the mirrored water the outlying keys of Chiriqui Lagoon shimmered like a mirage above the dark-crisping water.

A sob compelled him to desist from stepping into the skiff, and to turn his head. The strange young woman, revolver dropped to her side, was crying. His step back to her was instant, and the

touch of his hand on her arm was sympathetic and inquiring. She shuddered at his touch, drew away from him, and gazed at him reproachfully through her tears. With a shrug of shoulders to her many moods and of surrender to the incomprehensibility of the situation, he was about to turn to the boat, when she stopped him.

“At least you...” she began, then faltered and swallowed, “you might kiss me good-bye.”

She advanced impulsively, with outstretched arms, the revolver dangling incongruously from her right hand. Francis hesitated a puzzled moment, then gathered her in to receive an astounding passionate kiss on his lips ere she dropped her head on his shoulder in a breakdown of tears. Despite his amazement he was aware of the revolver pressing flat-wise against his back between the shoulders. She lifted her tear-wet face and kissed him again and again, and he wondered to himself if he were a cad for meeting her kisses with almost equal and fully as mysterious impulsiveness.

With a feeling that he did not in the least care how long the tender episode might last, he was startled by her quick drawing away from him, as anger and contempt blazed back in her face, and as she menacingly directed him with the revolver to get into the boat.

He shrugged his shoulders as if to say that he could not say no to a lovely lady, and obeyed, sitting to the oars and facing her as he began rowing away.

“The Virgin save me from my wayward heart,” she cried, with her free hand tearing a locket from her bosom, and, in a shower of golden beads, flinging the ornament into the waterway midway between them.

From the edge of the jungle he saw three men, armed with rifles, run toward her where she had sunk down in the sand. In the midst of lifting her up, they caught sight of Francis, who had begun rowing a strong stroke. Over his shoulder he glimpsed the *Angelique*, close hauled and slightly heeling, cutting through the water toward him. The next moment, one of the trio on the beach, a bearded elderly man, was directing the girl’s binoculars on him. And the moment after, dropping the glasses, he was taking aim with his rifle.

The bullet spat on the water within a yard of the skiff’s side, and Francis saw the girl spring to her feet, knock up the rifle with her arm, and spoil the second shot. Next, pulling lustily, he saw the men separate from her to sight their rifles, and saw her threatening them with the revolver into lowering their weapons.

The *Angelique*, thrown up into the wind to stop way, foamed alongside, and with an agile leap Francis was aboard, while already, the skipper putting the wheel up, the schooner was paying off and filling. With boyish zest, Francis wafted a kiss of farewell to the girl, who was staring toward him, and saw her collapse on the shoulders of the bearded elderly man.

“Cayenne pepper, eh – those damned, horrible, crazy-proud Solanos,” the breed skipper flashed at Francis with white teeth of laughter.

“Just bugs – clean crazy, nobody at home,” Francis laughed back, as he sprang to the rail to waft further kisses to the strange damsel.

Before the land wind, the *Angelique* made the outer rim of Chiriqui Lagoon and the Bull and Calf, some fifty miles farther along on the rim, by midnight, when the skipper hove to to wait for daylight. After breakfast, rowed by a Jamaica negro sailor in the skiff, Francis landed to reconnoiter on the Bull, which was the larger island and which the skipper had told him he might find occupied at that season of the year by turtle-catching Indians from the mainland.

And Francis very immediately found that he had traversed not merely thirty degrees of latitude from New York but thirty hundred years, or centuries for that matter, from the last word of civilisation to almost the first word of the primeval. Naked, except for breech-clouts of gunny-sacking, armed with cruelly heavy hacking blades of machetes, the turtle-catchers were swift in proving themselves arrant beggars and dangerous man-killers. The Bull belonged to them, they told him through the medium of his Jamaican sailor’s interpreting; but the Calf, which used to belong to them for the turtle

season now was possessed by a madly impossible Gringo, whose reckless, dominating ways had won from them the respect of fear for a two-legged human creature who was more fearful than themselves.

While Francis, for a silver dollar, dispatched one of them with a message to the mysterious Gringo that he desired to call on him, the rest of them clustered about Francis' skiff, whining for money, glowering upon him, and even impudently stealing his pipe, yet warm from his lips, which he had laid beside him in the sternsheets. Promptly he had laid a blow on the ear of the thief, and the next thief who seized it, and recovered the pipe. Machetes out and sun-glistening their clean-slicing menace, Francis covered and controlled the gang with an automatic pistol; and, while they drew apart in a group and whispered ominously, he made the discovery that his lone sailor-interpreter was a weak brother and received his returned messenger.

The negro went over to the turtle-catchers and talked with a friendliness and subservience, the tones of which Francis did not like. The messenger handed him his note, across which was scrawled in pencil:

"Vamos."

"Guess I'll have to go across myself," Francis told the negro whom he had beckoned back to him.

"Better be very careful and utmostly cautious, sir," the negro warned him. "These animals without reason are very problematically likely to act most unreasonably, sir."

"Get into the boat and row me over," Francis commanded shortly.

"No, sir, I regret much to say, sir," was the black sailor's answer. "I signed on, sir, as a sailor to Captain Trefethen, but I didn't sign on for no suicide, and I can't see my way to rowin' you over, sir, to certain death. Best thing we can do is to get out of this hot place that's certainly and without peradventure of a doubt goin' to get hotter for us if we remain, sir."

In huge disgust and scorn Francis pocketed his automatic, turned his back on the sacking-clad savages, and walked away through the palms. Where a great boulder of coral rock had been upthrust by some ancient restlessness of the earth, he came down to the beach. On the shore of the Calf, across the narrow channel, he made out a dinghy drawn up. Drawn up on his own side was a crank-looking and manifestly leaky dugout canoe. As he tilted the water out of it, he noticed that the turtle-catchers had followed and were peering at him from the edge of the coconuts, though his weak-hearted sailor was not in sight.

To paddle across the channel was a matter of moments, but scarcely was he on the beach of the Calf when further inhospitality greeted him on the part of a tall, barefooted young man, who stepped from behind a palm, automatic pistol in hand, and shouted:

"Vamos! Get out! Scut!"

"Ye gods and little fishes!" Francis grinned, half-humorously, half-seriously. "A fellow can't move in these parts without having a gun shoved in his face. And everybody says get out pronto."

"Nobody invited you," the stranger retorted. "You're intruding. Get off my island. I'll give you half a minute."

"I'm getting sore, friend," Francis assured him truthfully, at the same time, out of the corner of his eye, measuring the distance to the nearest palm-trunk. "Everybody I meet around here is crazy and discourteous, and peevishly anxious to be rid of my presence, and they've just got me feeling that way myself. Besides, just because you tell me it's your island is no proof –"

The swift rush he made to the shelter of the palm left his sentence unfinished. His arrival behind the trunk was simultaneous with the arrival of a bullet that thudded into the other side of it.

"Now, just for that!" he called out, as he centered a bullet into the trunk of the other man's palm.

The next few minutes they blazed away, or waited for calculated shots, and when Francis' eighth and last had been fired, he was unpleasantly certain that he had counted only seven shots for the stranger. He cautiously exposed part of his sun-helmet, held in his hand, and had it perforated.

"What gun are you using?" he asked with cool politeness.

“Colt’s,” came the answer.

Francis stepped boldly into the open, saying: “Then you’re all out. I counted ‘em. Eight. Now we can talk.”

The stranger stepped out, and Francis could not help admiring the fine figure of him, despite the fact that a dirty pair of canvas pants, a cotton undershirt, and a floppy sombrero constituted his garmenting. Further, it seemed he had previously known him, though it did not enter his mind that he was looking at a replica of himself.

“Talk!” the stranger sneered, throwing down his pistol and drawing a knife. “Now we’ll just cut off your ears, and maybe scalp you.”

“Gee! You’re sweet-natured and gentle animals in this neck of the woods,” Francis retorted, his anger and disgust increasing. He drew his own hunting knife, brand new from the shop and shining. “Say, let’s wrestle, and cut out this ten-twenty-and-thirty knife stuff.”

“I want your ears,” the stranger answered pleasantly, as he slowly advanced.

“Sure. First down, and the man who wins the fall gets the other fellow’s ears.”

“Agreed.” The young man in the canvas trousers sheathed his knife.

“Too bad there isn’t a moving picture camera to film this,” Francis girded, sheathing his own knife. “I’m sore as a boil. I feel like a heap bad Injun. Watch out! I’m coming in a rush! Anyway and everyway for the first fall!”

Action and word went together, and his glorious rush ended ignominiously, for the stronger, apparently braced for the shock, yielded the instant their bodies met and fell over on his back, at the same time planting his foot in Francis’ abdomen and, from the back purchase on the ground, transforming Francis’ rush into a wild forward somersault.

The fall on the sand knocked most of Francis’ breath out of him, and the flying body of his foe, impacting on him, managed to do for what little breath was left him. As he lay speechless on his back, he observed the man on top of him gazing down at him with sudden curiosity.

“What d’ you want to wear a mustache for?” the stranger muttered.

“Go on and cut ‘em off,” Francis gasped, with the first of his returning breath. “The ears are yours, but the mustache is mine. It is not in the bond. Besides, that fall was straight jiu jiutsu.”

“You said ‘anyway and everyway for the first fall,’” the other quoted laughingly. “As for your ears, keep them. I never intended to cut them off, and now that I look at them closely the less I want them. Get up and get out of here. I’ve licked you. *Vamos!* And don’t come sneaking around here again! Git! Scut!”

In greater disgust than ever, to which was added the humiliation of defeat, Francis turned down to the beach toward his canoe.

“Say, Little Stranger, do you mind leaving your card?” the victor called after him.

“Visiting cards and cut-throating don’t go together,” Francis shot back across his shoulder, as he squatted in the canoe and dipped his paddle. “My name’s Morgan.”

Surprise and startlement were the stranger’s portion, as he opened his mouth to speak, then changed his mind and murmured to himself, “Same stock – no wonder we look alike.”

Still in the throes of disgust, Francis regained the shore of the Bull, sat down on the edge of the dugout, filled and lighted his pipe, and gloomily meditated. Crazy, everybody, was the run of his thought. Nobody acts with reason. “I’d like to see old Regan try to do business with these people. They’d get his ears.”

Could he have seen, at that moment, the young man of the canvas pants and of familiar appearance, he would have been certain that naught but lunacy resided in Latin America; for the young man in question, inside a grass-thatched hut in the heart of his island, grinning to himself as he uttered aloud, “I guess I put the fear of God into that particular member of the Morgan family,” had just begun to stare at a photographic reproduction of an oil painting on the wall of the original Sir Henry Morgan.

“Well, Old Pirate,” he continued grinning, “two of your latest descendants came pretty close to getting each other with automatics that would make your antediluvian horse-pistols look like thirty cents.”

He bent to a battered and worm-eaten sea-chest, lifted the lid that was monogrammed with an “M,” and again addressed the portrait:

“Well, old pirate Welshman of an ancestor, all you’ve left me is the old duds and a face that looks like yours. And I guess, if I was really fired up, I could play your Port-au-Prince stunt about as well as you played it yourself.”

A moment later, beginning to dress himself in the age-worn and moth-eaten garments of the chest, he added: “Well, here’s the old duds on my back. Come, Mister Ancestor, down out of your frame, and dare to tell me a point of looks in which we differ.”

Clad in Sir Henry Morgan’s ancient habiliments, a cutlass strapped on around the middle and two flintlock pistols of huge and ponderous design thrust into his waist-scarf, the resemblance between the living man and the pictured semblance of the old buccaneer who had been long since resolved to dust, was striking.

“Back to back against the mainmast,  
Held at bay the entire crew...”

As the young man, picking the strings of a guitar, began to sing the old buccaneer rouse, it seemed to him that the picture of his forebear faded into another picture and that he saw:

The old forebear himself, back to a mainmast, cutlass out and flashing, facing a semi-circle of fantastically clad sailor cutthroats, while behind him, on the opposite side of the mast, another similarly garbed and accoutred man, with cutlass flashing, faced the other semi-circle of cutthroats that completed the ring about the mast.

The vivid vision of his fancy was broken by the breaking of a guitar-string which he had thrummed too passionately. And in the sharp pause of silence, it seemed that a fresh vision of old Sir Henry came to him, down out of the frame and beside him, real in all seeming, plucking at his sleeve to lead him out of the hut and whispering a ghostly repetition of:

“Back to back against the mainmast  
Held at bay the entire crew.”

The young man obeyed his shadowy guide, or some prompting of his own profound of intuition, and went out the door and down to the beach, where, gazing across the narrow channel, on the beach of the Bull, he saw his late antagonist, backed up against the great boulder of coral rock, standing off an attack of sack-clouted, machete-wielding Indians with wide sweeping strokes of a driftwood timber.

And Francis, in extremity, swaying dizzily from the blow of a rock on his head, saw the apparition, that almost convinced him he was already dead and in the realm of the shades, of Sir Henry Morgan himself, cutlass in hand, rushing up the beach to his rescue. Further, the apparition, brandishing the cutlass and laying out Indians right and left, was bellowing:

“Back to back against the mainmast,  
Held at bay the entire crew.”

As Francis’ knees gave under him and he slowly crumpled and sank down, he saw the Indians scatter and flee before the onslaught of the weird pirate figure and heard their cries of:

“Heaven help us!” “The Virgin protect us!” “It’s the ghost of old Morgan!”

Francis next opened his eyes inside the grass hut in the midmost center of the Calf. First, in the glimmering of sight of returning consciousness, he beheld the pictured lineaments of Sir Henry Morgan staring down at him from the wall. Next, it was a younger edition of the same, in three dimensions of living, moving flesh, who thrust a mug of brandy to his lips and bade him drink. Francis was on his feet ere he touched lips to the mug; and both he and the stranger man, moved by a common impulse, looked squarely into each other's eyes, glanced at the picture on the wall and touched mugs in a salute to the picture and to each other ere they drank.

"You told me you were a Morgan," the stranger said. "I am a Morgan. That man on the wall fathered my breed. Your breed?"

"The old buccaneer's," Francis returned. "My first name is Francis. And yours?"

"Henry – straight from the original. We must be remote cousins or something or other. I'm after the foxy old niggardly old Welshman's loot."

"So'm I," said Francis, extending his hand. "But to hell with sharing."

"The old blood talks in you," Henry smiled approbation. "For him to have who finds. I've turned most of this island upside down in the last six months, and all I've found are these old duds. I'm with you to beat you if I can, but to put my back against the mainmast with you any time the needed call goes out."

"That song's a wonder," Francis urged. "I want to learn it. Lift the stave again."

And together, clanking their mugs, they sang:

"Back to back against the mainmast,  
Held at bay the entire crew..."

## CHAPTER III

But a splitting headache put a stop to Francis' singing and made him glad to be swung in a cool hammock by Henry, who rowed off to the *Angelique* with orders from his visitor to the skipper to stay at anchor but not to permit any of his sailors to land on the Calf. Not until late in the morning of the following day, after hours of heavy sleep, did Francis get on his feet and announce that his head was clear again.

"I know what it is – got bucked off a horse once," his strange relative sympathised, as he poured him a huge cup of fragrant black coffee. "Drink that down. It will make a new man of you. Can't offer you much for breakfast except bacon, sea biscuit, and some scrambled turtle eggs. They're fresh. I guarantee that, for I dug them out this morning while you slept."

"That coffee is a meal in itself," Francis praised, meanwhile studying his kinsman and ever and anon glancing at the portrait of their relative.

"You're just like him, and in more than mere looks," Henry laughed, catching him in his scrutiny. "When you refused to share yesterday, it was old Sir Henry to the life. He had a deep-seated antipathy against sharing, even with his own crews. It's what caused most of his troubles. And he's certainly never shared a penny of his treasure with any of his descendants. Now I'm different. Not only will I share the Calf with you; but I'll present you with my half as well, lock, stock, and barrel, this grass hut, all these nice furnishings, tenements, hereditaments, and everything, and what's left of the turtle eggs. When do you want to move in?"

"You mean...?" Francis asked.

"Just that. There's nothing here. I've just about dug the island upside down and all I found was the chest there full of old clothes."

"It must have encouraged you."

"Mightily. I thought I had a hammerlock on it. At any rate, it showed I'm on the right track."

"What's the matter with trying the Bull?" Francis queried.

"That's my idea right now," was the answer, "though I've got another clue for over on the mainland. Those old-timers had a way of noting down their latitude and longitude whole degrees out of the way."

"Ten North and Ninety East on the chart might mean Twelve North and Ninety-two East," Francis concurred. "Then again it might mean Eight North and Eighty-eight East. They carried the correction in their heads, and if they died unexpectedly, which was their custom, it seems, the secret died with them."

"I've half a notion to go over to the Bull and chase those turtle-catchers back to the mainland," Henry went on. "And then again I'd almost like to tackle the mainland clue first. I suppose you've got a stock of clues, too?"

"Sure thing," Francis nodded. "But say, I'd like to take back what I said about not sharing."

"Say the word," the other encouraged.

"Then I do say it."

Their hands extended and gripped in ratification.

"Morgan and Morgan strictly limited," chortled Francis.

"Assets, the whole Caribbean Sea, the Spanish Main, most of Central America, one chest full of perfectly no good old clothes, and a lot of holes in the ground," Henry joined in the other's humor. "Liabilities, snake-bite, thieving Indians, malaria, yellow fever –"

"And pretty girls with a habit of kissing total strangers one moment, and of sticking up said total strangers with shiny silver revolvers the next moment," Francis cut in. "Let me tell you about it. Day before yesterday, I rowed ashore over on the mainland. The moment I landed, the prettiest girl in the world pounced out upon me and dragged me away into the jungle. Thought she was going to

eat me or marry me. I didn't know which. And before I could find out, what's the pretty damsel do but pass uncomplimentary remarks on my mustache and chase me back to the boat with a revolver. Told me to beat it and never come back, or words to that effect."

"Whereabouts on the mainland was this?" Henry demanded, with a tenseness which Francis, chuckling his reminiscence of the misadventure, did not notice.

"Down toward the other end of Chiriqui Lagoon," he replied. "It was the stamping ground of the Solano family, I learned; and they are a red peppery family, as I found out. But I haven't told you all. Listen. First she dragged me into the vegetation and insulted my mustache; next she chased me to the boat with a drawn revolver; and then she wanted to know why I didn't kiss her. Can you beat that?"

"And did you?" Henry demanded, his hand unconsciously clinching by his side.

"What could a poor stranger in a strange land do? It was some armful of pretty girl –"

The next fraction of a second Francis had sprung to his feet and blocked before his jaw a crushing blow of Henry's fist.

"I ... I beg your pardon," Henry mumbled, and slumped down on the ancient sea chest. "I'm a fool, I know, but I'll be hanged if I can stand for –"

"There you go again," Francis interrupted resentfully. "As crazy as everybody else in this crazy country. One moment you bandage up my cracked head, and the next moment you want to knock that same head clean off of me. As bad as the girl taking turns at kissing me and shoving a gun into my midrif."

"That's right, fire away, I deserve it," Henry admitted ruefully, but involuntarily began to fire up as he continued with: "Confound you, that was Leoncia."

"What if it was Leoncia? Or Mercedes? Or Dolores? Can't a fellow kiss a pretty girl at a revolver's point without having his head knocked off by the next ruffian he meets in dirty canvas pants on a notorious sand-heap of an island?"

"When the pretty girl is engaged to marry the ruffian in the dirty canvas pants –"

"You don't mean to tell me –" the other broke in excitedly.

"It isn't particularly amusing to said ruffian to be told that his sweetheart has been kissing a ruffian she never saw before from off a disreputable Jamaica nigger's schooner," Henry completed his sentence.

"And she took me for you," Francis mused, glimpsing the situation. "I don't blame you for losing your temper, though you must admit it's a nasty one. Wanted to cut off my ears yesterday, didn't you?"

"Yours is just as nasty, Francis, my boy. The way you insisted that I cut them off when I had you down – ha! ha!"

Both young men laughed in hearty amity.

"It's the old Morgan temper," Henry said. "He was by all the accounts a peppery old cuss."

"No more peppery than those Solanos you're marrying into. Why, most of the family came down on the beach and peppered me with rifles on my departing way. And your Leoncia pulled her little popgun on a long-bearded old fellow who might have been her father and gave him to understand she'd shoot him full of holes if he didn't stop plugging away at me."

"It was her father, I'll wager, old Enrico himself," Henry exclaimed. "And the other chaps were her brothers."

"Lovely lizards!" ejaculated Francis. "Say, don't you think life is liable to become a trifle monotonous when you're married into such a peaceful, dove-like family as that!" He broke off, struck by a new idea. "By the way, Henry, since they all thought it was you, and not I, why in thunderation did they want to kill *you*? Some more of your crusty Morgan temper that peeved your prospective wife's relatives?"

Henry looked at him a moment, as if debating with himself, and then answered.

“I don’t mind telling you. It is a nasty mess, and I suppose my temper was to blame. I quarreled with her uncle. He was her father’s youngest brother – ”

“Was?” interrupted Francis with significant stress on the past tense.

“Was, I said,” Henry nodded. “He *isn’t* now. His name was Alfaro Solano, and he had some temper himself. They claim to be descended from the Spanish *conquistadores*, and they are prouder than hornets. He’d made money in logwood, and he had just got a big henequen plantation started farther down the coast. And then we quarreled. It was in the little town over there – San Antonio. It may have been a misunderstanding, though I still maintain he was wrong. He always was looking for trouble with me – didn’t want me to marry Leoncia, you see.

“Well, it was a hot time. It started in a *pulqueria* where Alfaro had been drinking more mescal than was good for him. He insulted me all right. They had to hold us apart and take our guns away, and we separated swearing death and destruction. That was the trouble – our quarrel and our threats were heard by a score of witnesses.

“Within two hours the Comisario himself and two gendarmes found me bending over Alfaro’s body in a back street in the town. He’d been knifed in the back, and I’d stumbled over him on the way to the beach. Explain? No such thing. There were the quarrel and the threats of vengeance, and there I was, not two hours afterward, caught dead to right with his warm corpse. I haven’t been back in San Antonio since, and I didn’t waste any time in getting away. Alfaro was very popular, – you know the dashing type that catches the rabble’s fancy. Why, they couldn’t have been persuaded to give me even the semblance of a trial. Wanted my blood there and then, and I departed very pronto.

“Next, up at Bocas del Toro, a messenger from Leoncia delivered back the engagement ring. And there you are. I developed a real big disgust, and, since I didn’t dare go back with all the Solanos and the rest of the population thirsting for my life, I came over here to play hermit for a while and dig for Morgan’s treasure... Just the same, I wonder who did stick that knife into Alfaro. If ever I find him, then I clear myself with Leoncia and the rest of the Solanos and there isn’t a doubt in the world that there’ll be a wedding. And now that it’s all over I don’t mind admitting that Alfaro was a good scout, even if his temper did go off at half-cock.”

“Clear as print,” Francis murmured. “No wonder her father and brothers wanted to perforate me. – Why, the more I look at you, the more I see we’re as like as two peas, except for my mustache – ”

“And for this...” Henry rolled up his sleeve, and on the left forearm showed a long, thin white scar. “Got that when I was a boy. Fell off a windmill and through the glass roof of a hothouse.”

“Now listen to me,” Francis said, his face beginning to light with the project forming in his mind. “Somebody’s got to straighten you out of this mess, and the chap’s name is Francis, partner in the firm of Morgan and Morgan. You stick around here, or go over and begin prospecting on the Bull, while I go back and explain things to Leoncia and her people – ”

“If only they don’t shoot you first before you can explain you are not I,” Henry muttered bitterly. “That’s the trouble with those Solanos. They shoot first and talk afterward. They won’t listen to reason unless it’s post mortem.”

“Guess I’ll take a chance, old man,” Francis assured the other, himself all fire with the plan of clearing up the distressing situation between Henry and the girl.

But the thought of her perplexed him. He experienced more than a twinge of regret that the lovely creature belonged of right to the man who looked so much like him, and he saw again the vision of her on the beach, when, with conflicting emotions, she had alternately loved him and yearned toward him and blazed her scorn and contempt on him. He sighed involuntarily.

“What’s that for?” Henry demanded quizzically.

“Leoncia is an exceedingly pretty girl,” Francis answered with transparent frankness. “Just the same, she’s yours, and I’m going to make it my business to see that you get her. Where’s that ring she returned? If I don’t put it on her finger for you and be back here in a week with the good news, you can cut off my mustache along with my ears.”

An hour later, Captain Trefethen having sent a boat to the beach from the *Angelique* in response to signal, the two young men were saying good-bye.

“Just two things more, Francis. First, and I forgot to tell you, Leoncia is not a Solano at all, though she thinks she is. Alfaro told me himself. She is an adopted child, and old Enrico fairly worships her, though neither his blood nor his race runs in her veins. Alfaro never told me the ins and outs of it, though he did say she wasn’t Spanish at all. I don’t even know whether she’s English or American. She talks good enough English, though she got that at convent. You see, she was adopted when she was a wee thing, and she’s never known anything else than that Enrico is her father.”

“And no wonder she scorned and hated me for you,” Francis laughed, “believing, as she did, as she still does, that you knifed her full blood-uncle in the back.”

Henry nodded, and went on.

“The other thing is fairly important. And that’s the law. Or the absence of it, rather. They make it whatever they want it, down in this out-of-the-way hole. It’s a long way to Panama, and the gobernador of this state, or district, or whatever they call it, is a sleepy old Silenus. The Jefe Politico at San Antonio is the man to keep an eye on. He’s the little czar of that neck of the woods, and he’s some crooked *hombre*, take it from yours truly. Graft is too weak a word to apply to some of his deals, and he’s as cruel and blood-thirsty as a weasel. And his one crowning delight is an execution. He dotes on a hanging. Keep your weather eye on him, whatever you do... And, well, so long. And half of whatever I find on the Bull is yours: ... and see you get that ring back on Leoncia’s finger.”

Two days later, after the half-breed skipper had reconnoitered ashore and brought back the news that all the men of Leoncia’s family were away, Francis had himself landed on the beach where he had first met her. No maidens with silver revolvers nor men with rifles were manifest. All was placid, and the only person on the beach was a ragged little Indian boy who at sight of a coin readily consented to carry a note up to the young senorita of the big hacienda. As Francis scrawled on a sheet of paper from his notebook, “I am the man whom you mistook for Henry Morgan, and I have a message for you from him,” he little dreamed that untoward happenings were about to occur with as equal rapidity and frequency as on his first visit.

For that matter, could he have peeped over the out-jut of rock against which he leaned his back while composing the note to Leoncia, he would have been startled by a vision of the young lady herself, emerging like a sea-goddess fresh from a swim in the sea. But he wrote calmly on, the Indian lad even more absorbed than himself in the operation, so that it was Leoncia, coming around the rock from behind, who first caught sight of him. Stifling an exclamation, she turned and fled blindly into the green screen of jungle.

His first warning of her proximity was immediately thereafter, when a startled scream of fear aroused him. Note and pencil fell to the sand as he sprang toward the direction of the cry and collided with a wet and scantily dressed young woman who was recoiling backward from whatever had caused her scream. The unexpectedness of the collision was provocative of a second startled scream from her ere she could turn and recognize that it was not a new attack but a rescuer.

She darted past him, her face colorless from the fright, stumbled over the Indian boy, nor paused until she was out on the open sand.

“What is it?” Francis demanded. “Are you hurt? What’s happened?”

She pointed at her bare knee, where two tiny drops of blood oozed forth side by side from two scarcely perceptible lacerations.

“It was a viperine,” she said. “A deadly viperine. I shall be a dead woman in five minutes, and I am glad, glad, for then my heart will be tormented no more by you.”

She leveled an accusing finger at him, gasped the beginning of denunciation she could not utter, and sank down in a faint.

Francis knew about the snakes of Central America merely by hearsay, but the hearsay was terrible enough. Men talked of even mules and dogs dying in horrible agony five to ten minutes after

being struck by tiny reptiles fifteen to twenty inches long. Small wonder she had fainted, was his thought, with so terribly rapid a poison doubtlessly beginning to work. His knowledge of the treatment of snake-bite was likewise hearsay, but flashed through his mind the recollection of the need of a tourniquet to shut off the circulation above the wound and prevent the poison from reaching the heart.

He pulled out his handkerchief and tied it loosely around her leg above the knee, thrust in a short piece of driftwood stick, and twisted the handkerchief to savage tightness. Next, and all by hearsay, working swiftly, he opened the small blade of his pocket-knife, burned it with several matches to make sure against germs, and cut carefully but remorsefully into the two lacerations made by the snake's fangs.

He was in a fright himself, working with feverish deftness and apprehending at any moment that the pangs of dissolution would begin to set in on the beautiful form before him. From all he had heard, the bodies of snake-victims began to swell quickly and prodigiously. Even as he finished excoriating the fang-wounds, his mind was made up to his next two acts. First, he would suck out all poison he possibly could; and, next, light a cigarette and with its live end proceed to cauterize the flesh.

But while he was still making light, criss-cross cuts with the point of his knife-blade, she began to move restlessly.

"Lie down," he commanded, as she sat up, and just when he was bending his lips to the task.

In response, he received a resounding slap alongside of his face from her little hand. At the same instant the Indian lad danced out of the jungle, swinging a small dead snake by the tail and crying exultingly:

"Labarri! Labarri!"

At which Francis assumed the worst.

"Lie down, and be quiet!" he repeated harshly. "You haven't a second to lose."

But she had eyes only for the dead snake. Her relief was patent; but Francis was no witness to it, for he was bending again to perform the classic treatment of snake-bite.

"You dare!" she threatened him. "It's only a baby labarri, and its bite is harmless. I thought it was a viperine. They look alike when the labarri is small."

The constriction of the circulation by the tourniquet pained her, and she glanced down and discovered his handkerchief knotted around her leg.

"Oh, what have you done?"

A warm blush began to suffuse her face.

"But it was only a baby labarri," she reproached him.

"You told me it was a viperine," he retorted.

She hid her face in her hands, although the pink of flush burned furiously in her ears. Yet he could have sworn, unless it were hysteria, that she was laughing; and he knew for the first time how really hard was the task he had undertaken to put the ring of another man on her finger. So he deliberately hardened his heart against the beauty and fascination of her, and said bitterly:

"And now, I suppose some of your gentry will shoot me full of holes because I don't know a labarri from a viperine. You might call some of the farm hands down to do it. Or maybe you'd like to take a shot at me yourself."

But she seemed not to have heard, for she had arisen with the quick liveness to be expected of so gloriously fashioned a creature, and was stamping her foot on the sand.

"It's asleep – my foot," she explained with laughter unhidden this time by her hands.

"You're acting perfectly disgracefully," he assured her wickedly, "when you consider that I am the murderer of your uncle."

Thus reminded, the laughter ceased and the color receded from her face. She made no reply, but bending, with fingers that trembled with anger she strove to unknot the handkerchief as if it were some loathsome thing.

"Better let me help," he suggested pleasantly.

“You beast!” she flamed at him. “Step aside. Your shadow falls upon me.”

“Now you are delicious, charming,” he girded, belying the desire that stirred compellingly within him to clasp her in his arms. “You quite revive my last recollection of you here on the beach, one second reproaching me for not kissing you, the next second kissing me – yes, you did, too – and the third second threatening to destroy my digestion forever with that little tin toy pistol of yours. No; you haven’t changed an iota from last time. You’re the same spitfire of a Leoncia. You’d better let me untie that for you. Don’t you see the knot is jammed? Your little fingers can never manage it.”

She stamped her foot in sheer inarticulateness of rage.

“Lucky for me you don’t make a practice of taking your tin toy pistol in swimming with you,” he teased on, “or else there’d be a funeral right here on the beach pretty pronto of a perfectly nice young man whose intentions are never less than the best.”

The Indian boy returned at this moment running with her bathing wrap, which she snatched from him and put on hastily. Next, with the boy’s help, she attacked the knot again. When the handkerchief came off she flung it from her as if in truth it were a viperine.

“It was contamination,” she flashed, for his benefit.

But Francis, still engaged in hardening his heart against her, shook his head slowly and said:

“It doesn’t save you, Leoncia. I’ve left my mark on you that never will come off.”

He pointed to the excoriations he had made on her knee and laughed.

“The mark of the beast,” she came back, turning to go. “I warn you to take yourself off, Mr. Henry Morgan.”

But he stepped in her way.

“And now we’ll talk business, Miss Solano,” he said in changed tones. “And you will listen. Let your eyes flash all they please, but don’t interrupt me.” He stooped and picked up the note he had been engaged in writing. “I was just sending that to you by the boy when you screamed. Take it. Read it. It won’t bite you. It isn’t a viperine.”

Though she refused to receive it, her eyes involuntarily scanned the opening line:

*I am the man whom you mistook for Henry Morgan...*

She looked at him with startled eyes that could not comprehend much but which were guessing many vague things.

“On my honor,” he said gravely.

“You ... are ... not ... Henry?” she gasped.

“No, I am not. Won’t you please take it and read.”

This time she complied, while he gazed with all his eyes upon the golden pallor of the sun on her tropic-touched blonde face which colored the blood beneath, or which was touched by the blood beneath, to the amazingly beautiful golden pallor.

Almost in a dream he discovered himself looking into her startled, questioning eyes of velvet brown.

“And who should have signed this?” she repeated.

He came to himself and bowed.

“But the name? – your name?”

“Morgan, Francis Morgan. As I explained there, Henry and I are some sort of distant relatives – forty-fifth cousins, or something like that.”

To his bewilderment, a great doubt suddenly dawned in her eyes, and the old familiar anger flashed.

“Henry,” she accused him. “This is a ruse, a devil’s trick you’re trying to play on me. Of course you are Henry.”

Francis pointed to his mustache.

“You’ve grown that since,” she challenged.

He pulled up his sleeve and showed her his left arm from wrist to elbow. But she only looked her incomprehension of the meaning of his action.

“Do you remember the scar?” he asked.

She nodded.

“Then find it.”

She bent her head in swift vain search, then shook it slowly as she faltered:

“I ... I ask your forgiveness. I was terribly mistaken, and when I think of the way I ... I've treated you ...”

“That kiss was delightful,” he naughtily disclaimed.

She recollected more immediate passages, glanced down at her knee and stifled what he adjudged was a most adorable giggle.

“You say you have a message from Henry,” she changed the subject abruptly. “And that he is innocent...? This is true? Oh, I do want to believe you!”

“I am morally certain that Henry no more killed your uncle than did I – ”

“Then say no more, at least not now,” she interrupted joyfully. “First of all I must make amends to you, though you must confess that some of the things you have done and said were abominable. You had no right to kiss me.”

“If you will remember,” he contended, “I did it at the pistol point. How was I to know but what I would get shot if I didn't.”

“Oh, hush, hush,” she begged. “You must go with me now to the house. And you can tell me about Henry on the way.”

Her eyes chanced upon the handkerchief she had flung so contemptuously aside. She ran to it and picked it up.

“Poor, ill-treated kerchief,” she crooned to it. “To you also must I make amends. I shall myself launder you, and...” Her eyes lifted to Francis as she addressed him. “And return it to you, sir, fresh and sweet and all wrapped around my heart of gratitude...”

“And the mark of the beast?” he queried.

“I am so sorry,” she confessed penitently.

“And may I be permitted to rest my shadow upon you?”

“Do! Do!” she cried gaily. “There! I am in your shadow now. And we must start.”

Francis tossed a peso to the grinning Indian boy, and, in high elation, turned and followed her into the tropic growth on the path that led up to the white hacienda.

Seated on the broad piazza of the Solano Hacienda, Alvarez Torres saw through the tropic shrubs the couple approaching along the winding driveway. And he saw what made him grit his teeth and draw very erroneous conclusions. He muttered imprecations to himself and forgot his cigarette.

What he saw was Leoncia and Francis in such deep and excited talk as to be oblivious of everything else. He saw Francis grow so urgent of speech and gesture as to cause Leoncia to stop abruptly and listen further to his pleading. Next – and Torres could scarcely believe the evidence of his eyes, he saw Francis produce a ring, and Leoncia, with averted face, extend her left hand and receive the ring upon her third finger. Engagement finger it was, and Torres could have sworn to it.

What had really occurred was the placing of Henry's engagement ring back on Leoncia's hand. And Leoncia, she knew not why, had been vaguely averse to receiving it.

Torres tossed the dead cigarette away, twisted his mustache fiercely, as if to relieve his own excitement, and advanced to meet them across the piazza. He did not return the girl's greeting at the first. Instead, with the wrathful face of the Latin, he burst out at Francis:

“One does not expect shame in a murderer, but at least one does expect simple decency.”

Francis smiled whimsically.

“There it goes again,” he said. “Another lunatic in this lunatic land. The last time, Leoncia, that I saw this gentleman was in New York. He was really anxious to do business with me. Now I meet him here and the first thing he tells me is that I am an indecent, shameless murderer.”

“Senor Torres, you must apologize,” she declared angrily. “The house of Solano is not accustomed to having its guests insulted.”

“The house of Solano, I then understand, is accustomed to having its men murdered by transient adventurers,” he retorted. “No sacrifice is too great when it is in the name of hospitality.”

“Get off your foot, Senor Torres,” Francis advised him pleasantly. “You are standing on it. I know what your mistake is. You think I am Henry Morgan. I am Francis Morgan, and you and I, not long ago, transacted business together in Regan’s office in New York. There’s my hand. Your shaking of it will be sufficient apology under the circumstances.”

Torres, overwhelmed for the moment by his mistake, took the extended hand and uttered apologies both to Francis and Leoncia.

“And now,” she beamed through laughter, clapping her hands to call a house-servant, “I must locate Mr. Morgan, and go and get some clothes on. And after that, Senor Torres, if you will pardon us, we will tell you about Henry.”

While she departed, and while Francis followed away to his room on the heels of a young and pretty *mestiza* woman, Torres, his brain resuming its functions, found he was more amazed and angry than ever. This, then, was a newcomer and stranger to Leoncia whom he had seen putting a ring on her engagement finger. He thought quickly and passionately for a moment. Leoncia, whom to himself he always named the queen of his dreams, had, on an instant’s notice, engaged herself to a strange Gringo from New York. It was unbelievable, monstrous.

He clapped his hands, summoned his hired carriage from San Antonio, and was speeding down the drive when Francis strolled forth to have a talk with him about further details of the hiding place of old Morgan’s treasure.

After lunch, when a land-breeze sprang up, which meant fair wind and a quick run across Chiriqui Lagoon and along the length of it to the Bull and the Calf, Francis, eager to bring to Henry the good word that his ring adorned Leoncia’s finger, resolutely declined her proffered hospitality to remain for the night and meet Enrico Solano and his tall sons. Francis had a further reason for hasty departure. He could not endure the presence of Leoncia – and this in no sense uncomplimentary to her. She charmed him, drew him, to such extent that he dared not endure her charm and draw if he were to remain man-faithful to the man in the canvas pants even then digging holes in the sands of the Bull.

So Francis departed, a letter to Henry from Leoncia in his pocket. The last moment, ere he departed, was abrupt. With a sigh so quickly suppressed that Leoncia wondered whether or not she had imagined it, he tore himself away. She gazed after his retreating form down the driveway until it was out of sight, then stared at the ring on her finger with a vaguely troubled expression.

From the beach, Francis signaled the *Angelique*, riding at anchor, to send a boat ashore for him. But before it had been swung into the water, half a dozen horsemen, revolver-belted, rifles across their pommels, rode down the beach upon him at a gallop. Two men led. The following four were hang-dog half-castes. Of the two leaders, Francis recognized Torres. Every rifle came to rest on Francis, and he could not but obey the order snarled at him by the unknown leader to throw up his hands. And Francis opined aloud:

“To think of it! Once, only the other day – or was it a million years ago? – I thought auction bridge, at a dollar a point, was some excitement. Now, sirs, you on your horses, with your weapons threatening the violent introduction of foreign substances into my poor body, tell me what is doing now. Don’t I ever get off this beach without gunpowder complications? Is it my ears, or merely my mustache, you want?”

“We want you,” answered the stranger leader, whose mustache bristled as magnetically as his crooked black eyes.

“And in the name of original sin and of all lovely lizards, who might you be?”

“He is the honorable Senor Mariano Vercara è Hijos, Jefe Politico of San Antonio,” Torres replied.

“Good night,” Francis laughed, remembering the man’s description as given to him by Henry. “I suppose you think I’ve broken some harbor rule or sanitary regulation by anchoring here. But you must settle such things with my captain, Captain Trefethen, a very estimable gentleman. I am only the charterer of the schooner – just a passenger. You will find Captain Trefethen right up in maritime law and custom.”

“You are wanted for the murder of Alfaro Solano,” was Torres’ answer. “You didn’t fool me, Henry Morgan, with your talk up at the hacienda that you were some one else. I know that some one else. His name is Francis Morgan, and I do not hesitate to add that he is not a murderer, but a gentleman.”

“Ye gods and little fishes!” Francis exclaimed. “And yet you shook hands with me, Senor Torres.”

“I was fooled,” Torres admitted sadly. “But only for a moment. Will you come peaceably?”

“As if – ” Francis shrugged his shoulders eloquently at the six rifles. “I suppose you’ll give me a pronto trial and hang me at daybreak.”

“Justice is swift in Panama,” the Jefe Politico replied, his English queerly accented but understandable. “But not so quick as that. We will not hang you at daybreak. Ten o’clock in the morning is more comfortable all around, don’t you think?”

“Oh, by all means,” Francis retorted. “Make it eleven, or twelve noon – I won’t mind.”

“You will kindly come with us, Senor,” Mariano Vercara è Hijos, said, the suavity of his diction not masking the iron of its intention. “Juan! Ignacio!” he ordered in Spanish. “Dismount! Take his weapons. No, it will not be necessary to tie his hands. Put him on the horse behind Gregorio.”

Francis, in a venerably whitewashed adobe cell with walls five feet thick, its earth floor carpeted with the forms of half a dozen sleeping peon prisoners, listened to a dim hammering not very distant, remembered the trial from which he had just emerged, and whistled long and low. The hour was half-past eight in the evening. The trial had begun at eight. The hammering was the hammering together of the scaffold beams, from which place of eminence he was scheduled at ten next morning to swing off into space supported from the ground by a rope around his neck. The trial had lasted half an hour by his watch. Twenty minutes would have covered it had Leoncia not burst in and prolonged it by the ten minutes courteously accorded her as the great lady of the Solano family.

“The Jefe was right,” Francis acknowledged to himself in a matter of soliloquy. “Panama justice does move swiftly.”

The very possession of the letter given him by Leoncia and addressed to Henry Morgan had damned him. The rest had been easy. Half a dozen witnesses had testified to the murder and identified him as the murderer. The Jefe Politico himself had so testified. The one cheerful note had been the eruption on the scene of Leoncia, chaperoned by a palsied old aunt of the Solano family. That had been sweet – the fight the beautiful girl had put up for his life, despite the fact that it was foredoomed to futility.

When she had made Francis roll up the sleeve and expose his left forearm, he had seen the Jefe Politico shrug his shoulders contemptuously. And he had seen Leoncia fling a passion of Spanish words, too quick for him to follow, at Torres. And he had seen and heard the gesticulation and the roar of the mob-filled courtroom as Torres had taken the stand.

But what he had not seen was the whispered colloquy between Torres and the Jefe, as the former was in the thick of forcing his way through the press to the witness box. He no more saw this particular side-play than did he know that Torres was in the pay of Regan to keep him away from New

York as long as possible, and as long as ever if possible, nor than did he know that Torres himself, in love with Leoncia, was consumed with a jealousy that knew no limit to its ire.

All of which had blinded Francis to the play under the interrogation of Torres by Leoncia, which had compelled Torres to acknowledge that he had never seen a scar on Francis Morgan's left forearm. While Leoncia had looked at the little old judge in triumph, the Jefe Politico had advanced and demanded of Torres in stentorian tones:

"Can you swear that you ever saw a scar on Henry Morgan's arm?"

Torres had been baffled and embarrassed, had looked bewilderment to the judge and pleadingness to Leoncia, and, in the end, without speech, shaken his head that he could not so swear.

The roar of triumph had gone up from the crowd of ragamuffins. The judge had pronounced sentence, the roar had doubled on itself, and Francis had been hustled out and to his cell, not entirely unresistingly, by the gendarmes and the Comisario, all apparently solicitous of saving him from the mob that was unwilling to wait till ten next morning for his death.

"That poor dub, Torres, who fell down on the scar on Henry!" Francis was meditating sympathetically, when the bolts of his cell door shot back and he arose to greet Leoncia.

But she declined to greet him for the moment, as she flared at the Comisario in rapid-fire Spanish, with gestures of command to which he yielded when he ordered the jailer to remove the peons to other cells, and himself, with a nervous and apologetic bowing, went out and closed the door.

And then Leoncia broke down, sobbing on his shoulder, in his arms: "It is a cursed country, a cursed country. There is no fair play."

And as Francis held her pliant form, meltingly exquisite in its maddeningness of woman, he remembered Henry, in his canvas pants, barefooted, under his floppy sombrero, digging holes in the sand of the Bull.

He tried to draw away from the armful of deliciousness, and only half succeeded. Still, at such slight removal of distance, he essayed the intellectual part, rather than the emotional part he desired all too strongly to act.

"And now I know at last what a frame-up is," he assured her, farthest from the promptings of his heart. "If these Latins of your country thought more coolly instead of acting so passionately, they might be building railroads and developing their country. That trial was a straight passionate frame-up. They just *knew* I was guilty and were so eager to punish me that they wouldn't even bother for mere evidence or establishment of identity. Why delay? They *knew* Henry Morgan had knifed Alfaro. They *knew* I was Henry Morgan. When one knows, why bother to find out?"

Deaf to his words, sobbing and struggling to cling closer while he spoke, the moment he had finished she was deep again in his arms, against him, to him, her lips raised to his; and, ere he was aware, his own lips to hers.

"I love you, I love you," she whispered brokenly.

"No, no," he denied what he most desired. "Henry and I are too alike. It is Henry you love, and I am not Henry."

She tore herself away from her own clinging, drew Henry's ring from her finger, and threw it on the floor. Francis was so beyond himself that he knew not what was going to happen the next moment, and was only saved from whatever it might be by the entrance of the Comisario, watch in hand, with averted face striving to see naught else than the moments registered by the second-hand on the dial.

She stiffened herself proudly, and all but broke down again as Francis slipped Henry's ring back on her finger and kissed her hand in farewell. Just ere she passed out the door she turned and with a whispered movement of the lips that was devoid of sound told him: "I love you."

Promptly as the stroke of the clock, at ten o'clock Francis was led out into the jail patio where stood the gallows. All San Antonio was joyously and shoutingly present, including much of the neighboring population and Leoncia, Enrico Solano, and his five tall sons. Enrico and his sons fumed and strutted, but the Jefe Politico, backed by the Comisario and his gendarmes, was adamant. In vain,

as Francis was forced to the foot of the scaffold, did Leoncia strive to get to him and did her men strive to persuade her to leave the patio. In vain, also, did her father and brothers protest that Francis was not the man. The Jefe Politico smiled contemptuously and ordered the execution to proceed.

On top the scaffold, standing on the trap, Francis declined the ministrations of the priest, telling him in Spanish that no innocent man being hanged needed intercessions with the next world, but that the men who were doing the hanging were in need of just such intercessions.

They had tied Francis' legs, and were in the act of tying his arms, with the men who held the noose and the black cap hovering near to put them on him, when the voice of a singer was heard approaching from without; and the song he sang was:

“Back to back against the mainmast,  
Held at bay the entire crew...”

Leoncia, almost fainting, recovered at the sound of the voice, and cried out with sharp delight as she descried Henry Morgan entering, thrusting aside the guards at the gate who tried to bar his way.

At sight of him the only one present who suffered chagrin was Torres, which passed unnoticed in the excitement. The populace was in accord with the Jefe, who shrugged his shoulders and announced that one man was as good as another so long as the hanging went on. And here arose hot contention from the Solano men that Henry was likewise innocent of the murder of Alfaro. But it was Francis, from the scaffold, while his arms and legs were being untied, who shouted through the tumult:

“You tried me! You have not tried him! You cannot hang a man without trial! He must have his trial!”

And when Francis had descended from the scaffold and was shaking Henry's hand in both his own, the Comisario, with the Jefe at his back, duly arrested Henry Morgan for the murder of Alfaro Solano.

## CHAPTER IV

“We must work quickly – that is the one thing sure,” Francis said to the little conclave of Solanos on the piazza of the Solano hacienda.

“One thing sure!” Leoncia cried out scornfully ceasing from her anguished pacing up and down. “The one thing sure is that we must save him.”

As she spoke, she shook a passionate finger under Francis’ nose to emphasize her point. Not content, she shook her finger with equal emphasis under the noses of all and sundry of her father and brothers.

“Quick!” she flamed on. “Of course we must be quick. It is that, or...” Her voice trailed off into the unvoiceable horror of what would happen to Henry if they were not quick.

“All Gringos look alike to the Jefe,” Francis nodded sympathetically. She was splendidly beautiful and wonderful, he thought. “He certainly runs all San Antonio, and short shrift is his motto. He’ll give Henry no more time than he gave us. We must get him out to-night.”

“Now listen,” Leoncia began again. “We Solanos cannot permit this ... this execution. Our pride ... our honor. We cannot permit it. Speak! any of you. Father – you. Suggest something...”

And while the discussion went on, Francis, for the time being silent, wrestled deep in the throes of sadness. Leoncia’s fervor was magnificent, but it was for another man and it did not precisely exhilarate him. Strong upon him was the memory of the jail patio after he had been released and Henry had been arrested. He could still see, with the same stab at the heart, Leoncia in Henry’s arms, Henry seeking her hand to ascertain if his ring was on it, and the long kiss of the embrace that followed.

Ah, well, he sighed to himself, he had done his best. After Henry had been led away, had he not told Leoncia, quite deliberately and coldly, that Henry was her man and lover, and the wisest of choices for the daughter of the Solanos?

But the memory of it did not make him a bit happy. Nor did the rightness of it. Right it was. That he never questioned, and it strengthened him into hardening his heart against her. Yet the right, he found in his case, to be the sorriest of consolation.

And yet what else could he expect? It was his misfortune to have arrived too late in Central America, that was all, and to find this flower of woman already annexed by a previous comer – a man as good as himself, and, his heart of fairness prompted, even better. And his heart of fairness compelled loyalty to Henry from him – to Henry Morgan, of the breed and blood; to Henry Morgan, the wild-fire descendant of a wild-fire ancestor, in canvas pants, and floppy sombrero, with a penchant for the ears of strange young men, living on sea biscuit and turtle eggs and digging up the Bull and the Calf for old Sir Henry’s treasure.

And while Enrico Solano and his sons talked plans and projects on their broad piazza, to which Francis lent only half an ear, a house servant came, whispered in Leoncia’s ear, and led her away around the ell of the piazza, where occurred a scene that would have excited Francis’ risibilities and wrath.

Around the ell, Alvarez Torres, in all the medieval Spanish splendor of dress of a great haciendado-owner, such as still obtains in Latin America, greeted her, bowed low with doffed sombrero in hand, and seated her in a rattan settee. Her own greeting was sad, but shot through with curiousness, as if she hoped he brought some word of hope.

“The trial is over, Leoncia,” he said softly, tenderly, as one speaks of the dead. “He is sentenced. To-morrow at ten o’clock is the time. It is all very sad, most very sad. But...” He shrugged his shoulders. “No, I shall not speak harshly of him. He was an honorable man. His one fault was his temper. It was too quick, too fiery. It led him into a mischance of honor. Never, in a cool moment of reasonableness, would he have stabbed Alfaro – ”

“He never killed my uncle!” Leoncia cried, raising her averted face.

“And it is regrettable,” Torres proceeded gently and sadly, avoiding any disagreement. “The judge, the people, the Jefe Politico, unfortunately, are all united in believing that he did. Which is most regrettable. But which is not what I came to see you about. I came to offer my service in any and all ways you may command. My life, my honor, are at your disposal. Speak. I am your slave.”

Dropping suddenly and gracefully on one knee before her, he caught her hand from her lap, and would have instantly flooded on with his speech, had not his eyes lighted on the diamond ring on her engagement finger. He frowned, but concealed the frown with bent face until he could drive it from his features and begin to speak.

“I knew you when you were small, Leoncia, so very, very charmingly small, and I loved you always. – No, listen! Please. My heart must speak. Hear me out. I loved you always. But when you returned from your convent, from schooling abroad, a woman, a grand and noble lady fit to rule in the house of the Solanos, I was burnt by your beauty. I have been patient. I refrained from speaking. But you may have guessed. You surely must have guessed. I have been on fire for you ever since. I have been consumed by the flame of your beauty, by the flame of you that is deeper than your beauty.”

He was not to be stopped, as she well knew, and she listened patiently, gazing down on his bent head and wondering idly why his hair was so unbecomingly cut, and whether it had been last cut in New York or San Antonio.

“Do you know what you have been to me ever since your return?”

She did not reply, nor did she endeavour to withdraw her hand, although his was crushing and bruising her flesh against Henry Morgan’s ring. She forgot to listen, led away by a chain of thought that linked far. Not in such rhodomontade of speech had Henry Morgan loved and won her, was the beginning of the chain. Why did those of Spanish blood always voice their emotions so exaggeratedly? Henry had been so different. Scarcely had he spoken a word. He had acted. Under her glamor, himself glamoring her, without warning, so certain was he not to surprise and frighten her, he had put his arms around her and pressed his lips to hers. And hers had been neither too startled nor altogether unresponsive. Not until after that first kiss, arms still around her, had Henry begun to speak at all.

And what plan was being broached around the corner of the ell by her men and Francis Morgan? Her mind strayed on, deaf to the suitor at her feet. Francis! Ah – she almost sighed, and marveled, what of her self-known love for Henry, why this stranger Gringo so enamored her heart. Was she a wanton? Was it one man? Or another man? Or any man? No! No! She was not fickle nor unfaithful. And yet?.. Perhaps it was because Francis and Henry were so much alike, and her poor stupid loving woman’s heart failed properly to distinguish between them. And yet – while it had seemed she would have followed Henry anywhere over the world, in any luck or fortune, it seemed to her now that she would follow Francis even farther. She did *love* Henry, her heart solemnly proclaimed. But also did she love Francis, and almost did she divine that Francis loved her – the fervor of his lips on hers in his prison cell was inerasable; and there was a difference in her love for the two men that confuted her powers of reason and almost drove her to the shameful conclusion that she, the latest and only woman of the house of Solano, was a wanton.

A severe pinch of her flesh against Henry’s ring, caused by the impassioned grasp of Torres, brought her back to him, so that she could hear the spate of his speech pouring on:

“You have been the delicious thorn in my side, the spiked rowel of the spur forever prodding the sweetest and most poignant pangs of love into my breast. I have dreamed of you ... and for you. And I have my own name for you. Ever the one name I have had for you: the Queen of my Dreams. And you will marry me, my Leoncia. We will forget this mad Gringo who is as already dead. I shall be gentle, kind. I shall love you always. And never shall any vision of him arise between us. For myself, I shall not permit it. For you ... I shall love you so that it will be impossible for the memory of him to arise between us and give you one moment’s heart-hurt.”

Leoncia debated in a long pause that added fuel to Torres' hopes. She felt the need to temporise. If Henry were to be saved ... and had not Torres offered his services? Not lightly could she turn him away when a man's life might depend upon him.

"Speak! – I am consuming!" Torres urged in a choking voice.

"Hush! Hush!" she said softly. "How can I listen to love from a live man, when the man I loved is yet alive?"

*Loved!* The past tense of it startled her. Likewise it startled Torres, fanning his hopes to fairer flames. Almost was she his. She had said *loved*. She no longer bore love for Henry. She *had* loved him, but no longer. And she, a maid and woman of delicacy and sensibility, could not, of course, give name to her love for him while the other man still lived. It was subtle of her. He prided himself on his own subtlety, and he flattered himself that he had interpreted her veiled thought aright. And ... well, he resolved, he would see to it that the man who was to die at ten next morning should have neither reprieve nor rescue. The one thing clear, if he were to win Leoncia quickly, was that Henry Morgan should die quickly.

"We will speak of it no more ... now," he said with chivalric gentleness, as he gently pressed her hand, rose to his feet, and gazed down on her.

She returned a soft pressure of thanks with her own hand ere she released it and stood up.

"Come," she said. "We will join the others. They are planning now, or trying to find some plan, to save Henry Morgan."

The conversation of the group ebbed away as they joined it, as if out of half-suspicion of Torres.

"Have you hit upon anything yet?" Leoncia asked.

Old Enrico, straight and slender and graceful as any of his sons despite his age, shook his head.

"I have a plan, if you will pardon me," Torres began, but ceased at a warning glance from Alesandro, the eldest son.

On the walk, below the piazza, had appeared two scarecrows of beggar boys. Not more than ten years of age, by their size, they seemed much older when judged by the shrewdness of their eyes and faces. Each wore a single marvelous garment, so that between them it could be said they shared a shirt and pants. But such a shirt! And such pants! The latter, man-size, of ancient duck, were buttoned around the lad's neck, the waistband reefed with knotted twine so as not to slip down over his shoulders. His arms were thrust through the holes where the side-pockets had been. The legs of the pants had been hacked off with a knife to suit his own diminutive length of limb. The tails of the man's shirt on the other boy dragged on the ground.

"Vamos!" Alesandro shouted fiercely at them to be gone.

But the boy in the pants gravely removed a stone which he had been carrying on top of his bare head, exposing a letter which had been thus carried. Alesandro leaned over, took the letter, and with a glance at the inscription passed it to Leoncia, while the boys began whining for money. Francis, smiling despite himself at the spectacle of them, tossed them a few pieces of small silver, whereupon the shirt and the pants toddled away down the path.

The letter was from Henry, and Leoncia scanned it hurriedly. It was not precisely in farewell, for he wrote in the tenour of a man who never expected to die save by some inconceivable accident. Nevertheless, on the chance of such inconceivable thing becoming possible, Henry did manage to say good-bye and to include a facetious recommendation to Leoncia not to forget Francis, who was well worth remembering because he was so much like himself, Henry.

Leoncia's first impulse was to show the letter to the others, but the portion about Francis with-strained her.

"It's from Henry," she said, tucking the note into her bosom. "There is nothing of importance. He seems to have not the slightest doubt that he will escape somehow."

"We shall see that he does," Francis declared positively.

With a grateful smile to him, and with one of interrogation to Torres, Leoncia said:

“You were speaking of a plan, Senor Torres?”

Torres smiled, twisted his mustache, and struck an attitude of importance.

“There is one way, the Gringo, Anglo-Saxon way, and it is simple, straight to the point. That is just what it is, straight to the point. We will go and take Henry out of jail in forthright, brutal and direct Gringo fashion. It is the one thing they will not expect. Therefore, it will succeed. There are enough unhung rascals on the beach with which to storm the jail. Hire them, pay them well, but only partly in advance, and the thing is accomplished.”

Leoncia nodded eager agreement. Old Enrico’s eyes flashed and his nostrils distended as if already sniffing gunpowder. The young men were taking fire from his example. And all looked to Francis for his opinion or agreement. He shook his head slowly, and Leoncia uttered a sharp cry of disappointment in him.

“That way is hopeless,” he said. “Why should all of you risk your necks in a madcap attempt like that, doomed to failure from the start?” As he talked, he strode across from Leoncia’s side to the railing in such way as to be for a moment between Torres and the other men, and at the same time managed a warning look to Enrico and his sons. “As for Henry, it looks as if it were all up with him – ”

“You mean you doubt me?” Torres bristled.

“Heavens, man,” Francis protested.

But Torres dashed on: “You mean that I am forbidden by you, a man I have scarcely met, from the councils of the Solanos who are my oldest and most honored friends.”

Old Enrico, who had not missed the rising wrath against Francis in Leoncia’s face, succeeded in conveying a warning to her, ere, with a courteous gesture, he hushed Torres and began to speak.

“There are no councils of the Solanos from which you are barred, Senor Torres. You are indeed an old friend of the family. Your late father and I were comrades, almost brothers. But that – and you will pardon an old man’s judgment – does not prevent Senor Morgan from being right when he says your plan is hopeless. To storm the jail is truly madness. Look at the thickness of the walls. They could stand a siege of weeks. And yet, and I confess it, almost was I tempted when you first broached the idea. Now when I was a young man, fighting the Indians in the high Cordilleras, there was a very case in point. Come, let us all be seated and comfortable, and I will tell you the tale...”

But Torres, busy with many things, declined to wait, and with soothed amicable feelings shook hands all around, briefly apologized to Francis, and departed astride his silver-saddled and silver-bridled horse for San Antonio. One of the things that busied him was the cable correspondence maintained between him and Thomas Regan’s Wall Street office. Having secret access to the Panamanian government wireless station at San Antonio, he was thus able to relay messages to the cable station at Vera Cruz. Not alone was his relationship with Regan proving lucrative, but it was jibing in with his own personal plans concerning Leoncia and the Morgans.

“What have you against Senor Torres, that you should reject his plan and anger him?” Leoncia demanded of Francis.

“Nothing,” was the answer, “except that we do not need him, and that I’m not exactly infatuated with him. He is a fool and would spoil any plan. Look at the way he fell down on testifying at my trial. Maybe he can’t be trusted. I don’t know. Anyway, what’s the good of trusting him when we don’t need him? Now his plan is all right. We’ll go straight to the jail and take Henry out, if all you are game for it. And we don’t need to trust to a mob of unhung rascals and beach-sweepings. If the six men of us can’t do it, we might as well quit.”

“There must be at least a dozen guards always hanging out at the jail,” Ricardo, Leoncia’s youngest brother, a lad of eighteen, objected.

Leoncia, her eagerness alive again, frowned at him; but Francis took his part.

“Well taken,” he agreed. “But we will eliminate the guards.”

“The five-foot walls,” said Martinez Solano, twin brother to Alvarado.

“Go through them,” Francis answered.

“But how?” Leoncia cried.

“That’s what I am arriving at. You, Senor Solano, have plenty of saddle horses? Good. And you, Alesandro, does it chance you could procure me a couple of sticks of dynamite from around the plantation? Good, and better than good. And you, Leoncia, as the lady of the hacienda, should know whether you have in your store-room a plentiful supply of that three-star rye whiskey?”

“Ah, the plot thickens,” he laughed, on receiving her assurance. “We’ve all the properties for a Rider Haggard or Rex Beach adventure tale. Now listen. But wait. I want to talk to you, Leoncia, about private theatricals...”

## CHAPTER V

It was in the mid-afternoon, and Henry, at his barred cell-window, stared out into the street and wondered if any sort of breeze would ever begin to blow from off Chiriqui Lagoon and cool the stagnant air. The street was dusty and filthy – filthy, because the only scavengers it had ever known since the town was founded centuries before were the carrion dogs and obscene buzzards even then prowling and hopping about in the debris. Low, whitewashed buildings of stone and adobe made the street a furnace.

The white of it all, and the dust, was almost aching intolerable to the eyes, and Henry would have withdrawn his gaze, had not the several ragged *mosos*, dozing in a doorway opposite, suddenly aroused and looked interestedly up the street. Henry could not see, but he could hear the rattling spokes of some vehicle coming at speed. Next, it surged into view, a rattletrap light wagon drawn by a runaway horse. In the seat a gray-headed, gray-bearded ancient strove vainly to check the animal.

Henry smiled and marveled that the rickety wagon could hold together, so prodigious were the bumps imparted to it by the deep ruts. Every wheel, half-dished and threatening to dish, wobbled and revolved out of line with every other wheel. And if the wagon held intact, Henry judged, it was a miracle that the crazy harness did not fly to pieces. When directly opposite the window, the old man made a last effort, half-standing up from the seat as he pulled on the reins. One was rotten, and broke. As the driver fell backward into the seat, his weight on the remaining rein caused the horse to swerve sharply to the right. What happened then – whether a wheel dished, or whether a wheel had come off first and dished afterward – Henry could not determine. The one incontestable thing was that the wagon was a wreck. The old man, dragging in the dust and stubbornly hanging on to the remaining rein, swung the horse in a circle until it stopped, facing him and snorting at him.

By the time he gained his feet a crowd of *mosos* was forming about him. These were roughly shouldered right and left by the gendarmes who erupted from the jail. Henry remained at the window and, for a man with but a few hours to live, was an amused spectator and listener to what followed.

Giving his horse to a gendarme to hold, not stopping to brush the filth from his person, the old man limped hurriedly to the wagon and began an examination of the several packing cases, large and small, which composed its load. Of one case he was especially solicitous, even trying to lift it and seeming to listen as he lifted.

He straightened up, on being addressed by one of the gendarmes, and made voluble reply.

“Me? Alas senors, I am an old man, and far from home. I am Leopoldo Narvaez. It is true, my mother was German, may the Saints preserve her rest; but my father was Baltazar de Jesus y Cervillos é Narvaez, son of General Narvaez of martial memory, who fought under the great Bolivar himself. And now I am half ruined and far from home.”

Prompted by other questions, interlarded with the courteous expressions of sympathy with which even the humblest *moso* is over generously supplied, he managed to be polite-fully grateful and to run on with his tale.

“I have driven from Bocas del Toro. It has taken me five days, and business has been poor. My home is in Colon, and I wish I were safely there. But even a noble Narvaez may be a peddler, and even a peddler must live, eh, senors, is it not so? But tell me, is there not a Tomas Romero who dwells in this pleasant city of San Antonio?”

“There are any God’s number of Tomas Romeros who dwell everywhere in Panama,” laughed Pedro Zurita, the assistant jailer. “One would need fuller description.”

“He is the cousin of my second wife,” the ancient answered hopefully, and seemed bewildered by the roar of laughter from the crowd.

“And a dozen Tomas Romeros live in and about San Antonio,” the assistant jailer went on, “any one of which may be your second wife’s cousin, Senor. There is Tomas Romero, the drunkard.

There is Tomas Romero, the thief. There is Tomas Romero – but no, he was hanged a month back for murder and robbery. There is the rich Tomas Romero who owns many cattle on the hills. There is...

To each suggested one, Leopoldo Narvaez had shaken his head dolefully, until the cattle-owner was mentioned. At this he had become hopeful and broke in:

“Pardon me, senor, it must be he, or some such a one as he. I shall find him. If my precious stock-in-trade can be safely stored, I shall seek him now. It is well my misfortune came upon me where it did. I shall be able to trust it with you, who are, one can see with half an eye, an honest and an honorable man.” As he talked, he fumbled forth from his pocket two silver pesos and handed them to the jailer. “There, I wish you and your men to have some pleasure of assisting me.”

Henry grinned to himself as he noted the access of interest in the old man and of consideration for him, on the part of Pedro Zurita and the gendarmes, caused by the present of the coins. They shoved the more curious of the crowd roughly back from the wrecked wagon and began to carry the boxes into the jail.

“Careful, senors, careful,” the old one pleaded, greatly anxious, as they took hold of the big box. “Handle it gently. It is of value, and it is fragile, most fragile.”

While the contents of the wagon were being carried into the jail, the old man removed and deposited in the wagon all harness from the horse save the bridle.

Pedro Zurita ordered the harness taken in as well, explaining, with a glare at the miserable crowd: “Not a strap or buckle would remain the second after our backs were turned.”

Using what was left of the wagon for a stepping block, and ably assisted by the jailer and his crew, the peddler managed to get astride his animal.

“It is well,” he said, and added gratefully: “A thousand thanks, senors. It has been my good fortune to meet with honest men with whom my goods will be safe – only poor goods, peddler’s goods, you understand; but to me, everything, my way upon the road. The pleasure has been mine to meet you. To-morrow I shall return with my kinsman, whom I certainly shall find, and relieve from you the burden of safeguarding my inconsiderable property.” He doffed his hat. “Adios, senors, adios!”

He rode away at a careful walk, timid of the animal he bestrode which had caused his catastrophe. He halted and turned his head at a call from Pedro Zurita.

“Search the graveyard, Senor Narvaez,” the jailer advised. “Full a hundred Tomas Romeros lie there.”

“And be vigilant, I beg of you, senor, of the heavy box,” the peddler called back.

Henry watched the street grow deserted as the gendarmes and the populace fled from the scorch of the sun. Small wonder, he thought to himself, that the old peddler’s voice had sounded vaguely familiar. It had been because he had possessed only half a Spanish tongue to twist around the language – the other half being the German tongue of the mother. Even so, he talked like a native, and he would be robbed like a native if there was anything of value in the heavy box deposited with the jailers, Henry concluded, ere dismissing the incident from his mind.

In the guardroom, a scant fifty feet away from Henry’s cell, Leopoldo Narvaez was being robbed. It had begun by Pedro Zurita making a profound and wistful survey of the large box. He lifted one end of it to sample its weight, and sniffed like a hound at the crack of it as if his nose might give him some message of its contents.

“Leave it alone, Pedro,” one of the gendarmes laughed at him. “You have been paid two pesos to be honest.”

The assistant jailer sighed, walked away and sat down, looked back at the box, and sighed again. Conversation languished. Continually the eyes of the men roved to the box. A greasy pack of cards could not divert them. The game languished. The gendarme who had twitted Pedro himself went to the box and sniffed.

“I smell nothing,” he announced. “Absolutely in the box there is nothing to smell. Now what can it be? The caballero said that it was of value!”

“Caballero!” sniffed another of the gendarmes. “The old man’s father was more like to have been peddler of rotten fish on the streets of Colon and his father before him. Every lying beggar claims descent from the conquistadores.”

“And why not, Rafael?” Pedro Zurita retorted. “Are we not all so descended?”

“Without doubt,” Rafael readily agreed. “The conquistadores slew many – ”

“And were the ancestors of those that survived,” Pedro completed for him and aroused a general laugh. “Just the same, almost would I give one of these pesos to know what is in that box.”

“There is Ignacio,” Rafael greeted the entrance of a turnkey whose heavy eyes tokened he was just out of his siesta. “He was not paid to be honest. Come, Ignacio, relieve our curiosity by letting us know what is in the box.”

“How should I know?” Ignacio demanded, blinking at the object of interest. “Only now have I awakened.”

“You have not been paid to be honest, then?” Rafael asked.

“Merciful Mother of God, who is the man who would pay me to be honest?” the turnkey demanded.

“Then take the hatchet there and open the box,” Rafael drove his point home. “We may not, for as surely as Pedro is to share the two pesos with us, that surely have we been paid to be honest. Open the box, Ignacio, or we shall perish of our curiosity.”

“We will look, we will only look,” Pedro muttered nervously, as the turnkey prized off a board with the blade of the hatchet. “Then we will close the box again and – Put your hand in, Ignacio. What is it you find?.. eh? what does it feel like? Ah!”

After pulling and tugging, Ignacio’s hand had reappeared, clutching a cardboard carton.

“Remove it carefully, for it must be replaced,” the jailer cautioned.

And when the wrappings of paper and tissue paper were removed, all eyes focused on a quart bottle of rye whiskey.

“How excellently is it composed,” Pedro murmured in tones of awe. “It must be very good that such care be taken of it.”

“It is Americano whiskey,” sighed a gendarme. “Once, only, have I drunk Americano whiskey. It was wonderful. Such was the courage of it, that I leaped into the bull-ring at Santos and faced a wild bull with my hands. It is true, the bull rolled me, but did I not leap into the ring?”

Pedro took the bottle and prepared to knock its neck off.

“Hold!” cried Rafael. “You were paid to be honest.”

“By a man who was not himself honest,” came the retort. “The stuff is contraband. It has never paid duty. The old man was in possession of smuggled goods. Let us now gratefully and with clear conscience invest ourselves in its possession. We will confiscate it. We will destroy it.”

Not waiting for the bottle to pass, Ignacio and Rafael unwrapped fresh ones and broke off the necks.

“Three stars – most excellent,” Pedro Zurita orated in a pause, pointing to the trade mark. “You see, all Gringo whiskey is good. One star shows that it is very good; two stars that it is excellent; three stars that it is superb, the best, and better than beyond that. Ah, I know. The Gringos are strong on strong drink. No pulque for them.”

“And four stars?” queried Ignacio, his voice husky from the liquor, the moisture glistening in his eyes.

“Four stars? Friend Ignacio, four stars would be either sudden death or translation into paradise.”

In not many minutes, Rafael, his arm around another gendarme, was calling him brother and proclaiming that it took little to make men happy here below.

“The old man was a fool, three times a fool, and thrice that,” volunteered Augustino, a sullen-faced gendarme, who for the first time gave tongue to speech.

“Viva Augustino!” cheered Rafael. “The three stars have worked a miracle. Behold! Have they not unlocked Augustino’s mouth?”

“And thrice times thrice again was the old man a fool!” Augustino bellowed fiercely. “The very drink of the gods was his, all his, and he has been five days alone with it on the road from Bocas del Toro, and never taken one little sip. Such fools as he should be stretched out naked on an ant-heap, say I.”

“The old man was a rogue,” quoth Pedro. “And when he comes back to-morrow for his three stars I shall arrest him for a smuggler. It will be a feather in all our caps.”

“If we destroy the evidence – thus?” queried Augustino, knocking off another neck.

“We will save the evidence – thus!” Pedro replied, smashing an empty bottle on the stone flags. “Listen, comrades. The box was very heavy – we are all agreed. It fell. The bottles broke. The liquor ran out, and so were we made aware of the contraband. The box and the broken bottles will be evidence sufficient.”

The uproar grew as the liquor diminished. One gendarme quarreled with Ignacio over a forgotten debt of ten centavos. Two others sat upon the floor, arms around each other’s necks, and wept over the miseries of their married lot. Augustino, like a very spendthrift of speech, explained his philosophy that silence was golden. And Pedro Zurita became sentimental on brotherhood.

“Even my prisoners,” he maundered. “I love them as brothers. Life is sad.” A gush of tears in his eyes made him desist while he took another drink. “My prisoners are my very children. My heart bleeds for them. Behold! I weep. Let us share with them. Let them have a moment’s happiness. Ignacio, dearest brother of my heart. Do me a favor. See, I weep on your hand. Carry a bottle of this elixir to the Gringo Morgan. Tell him my sorrow that he must hang to-morrow. Give him my love and bid him drink and be happy to-day.”

And as Ignacio passed out on the errand, the gendarme who had once leapt into the bull-ring at Santos, began roaring:

“I want a bull! I want a bull!”

“He wants it, dear soul, that he may put his arms around it and love it,” Pedro Zurita explained, with a fresh access of weeping. “I, too, love bulls. I love all things. I love even mosquitoes. All the world is love. That is the secret of the world. I should like to have a lion to play with...”

The unmistakable air of “Back to Back Against the Mainmast” being whistled openly in the street, caught Henry’s attention, and he was crossing his big cell to the window when the grating of a key in the door made him lie down quickly on the floor and feign sleep. Ignacio staggered drunkenly in, bottle in hand, which he gravely presented to Henry.

“With the high compliments of our good jailer, Pedro Zurita,” he mumbled. “He says to drink and forget that he must stretch your neck to-morrow.”

“My high compliments to Senor Pedro Zurita, and tell him from me to go to hell along with his whiskey,” Henry replied.

The turnkey straightened up and ceased swaying, as if suddenly become sober.

“Very well, senor,” he said, then passed out and locked the door.

In a rush Henry was at the window just in time to encounter Francis face to face and thrusting a revolver to him through the bars.

“Greetings, camarada,” Francis said. “We’ll have you out of here in a jiffy.” He held up two sticks of dynamite, with fuse and caps complete. “I have brought this pretty crowbar to pry you out. Stand well back in your cell, because real pronto there’s going to be a hole in this wall that we could sail the *Angelique* through. And the *Angelique* is right off the beach waiting for you. – Now, stand back. I’m going to touch her off. It’s a short fuse.”

Hardly had Henry backed into a rear corner of his cell, when the door was clumsily unlocked and opened to a babel of cries and imprecations, chiefest among which he could hear the ancient and invariable war-cry of Latin-America, “Kill the Gringo!”

Also, he could hear Rafael and Pedro, as they entered, babbling, the one: “He is the enemy of brotherly love”; and the other, “He said I was to go to hell – is not that what he said, Ignacio?”

In their hands they carried rifles, and behind them urged the drunken rabble, variously armed, from cutlasses and horse-pistols to hatchets and bottles. At sight of Henry’s revolver, they halted, and Pedro, fingering his rifle unsteadily, maundered solemnly:

“Senor Morgan, you are about to take up your rightful abode in hell.”

But Ignacio did not wait. He fired wildly and widely from his hip, missing Henry by half the width of the cell and going down the next moment under the impact of Henry’s bullet. The rest retreated precipitately into the jail corridor, where, themselves unseen, they began discharging their weapons into the room.

Thanking his fortunate stars for the thickness of the walls, and hoping no ricochet would get him, Henry sheltered in a protecting angle and waited for the explosion.

It came. The window and the wall beneath it became all one aperture. Struck on the head by a flying fragment, Henry sank down dizzily, and, as the dust of the mortar and the powder cleared, with wavering eyes he saw Francis apparently swim through the hole. By the time he had been dragged out through the hole, Henry was himself again. He could see Enrico Solano and Ricardo, his youngest born, rifles in hand, holding back the crowd forming up the street, while the twins, Alvarado and Martinez, similarly held back the crowd forming down the street.

But the populace was merely curious, having its lives to lose and nothing to gain if it attempted to block the way of such masterful men as these who blew up walls and stormed jails in open day. And it gave back respectfully before the compact group as it marched down the street.

“The horses are waiting up the next alley,” Francis told Henry, as they gripped hands. “And Leoncia is waiting with them. Fifteen minutes’ gallop will take us to the beach, where the boat is waiting.”

“Say, that was some song I taught you,” Henry grinned. “It sounded like the very best little bit of all right when I heard you whistling it. The dogs were so previous they couldn’t wait till tomorrow to hang me. They got full of whiskey and decided to finish me off right away. Funny thing that whiskey. An old caballero turned peddler wrecked a wagon-load of it right in front of the jail – ”

“For even a noble Narvaez, son of Baltazar de Jesus y Cervillos è Narvaez, son of General Narvaez of martial memory, may be a peddler, and even a peddler must live, eh, senors, is it not so?” Francis mimicked.

Henry looked his gleeful recognition, and added soberly:

“Francis, I’m glad for one thing, most damn glad...”

“Which is?” Francis queried in the pause, just as they swung around the corner to the horses.

“That I didn’t cut off your ears that day on the Calf when I had you down and you insisted.”

## CHAPTER VI

Mariano Vercara e Hijos, Jefe Politico of San Antonio, leaned back in his chair in the courtroom and with a quiet smile of satisfaction proceeded to roll a cigarette. The case had gone through as prearranged. He had kept the little old judge away from his *mescal* all day, and had been rewarded by having the judge try the case and give judgment according to program. He had not made a slip. The six peons, fined heavily, were ordered back to the plantation at Santos. The working out of the fines was added to the time of their contract slavery. And the Jefe was two hundred dollars good American gold richer for the transaction. Those Gringos at Santos, he smiled to himself, were men to tie to. True, they were developing the country with their *henequen* plantation. But, better than that, they possessed money in untold quantity and paid well for such little services as he might be able to render.

His smile was even broader as he greeted Alvarez Torres.

"Listen," said the latter, whispering low in his ear. "We can get both these devils of Morgans. The Henry pig hangs to-morrow. There is no reason that the Francis pig should not go out to-day."

The Jefe remained silent, questioning with a lift of his eyebrows.

"I have advised him to storm the jail. The Solanos have listened to his lies and are with him. They will surely attempt to do it this evening. They could not do it sooner. It is for you to be ready for the event, and to see to it that Francis Morgan is especially shot and killed in the fight."

"For what and for why?" the Jefe temporised. "It is Henry I want to see out of the way. Let the Francis one go back to his beloved New York."

"He must go out to-day, and for reasons you will appreciate. As you know, from reading my telegrams through the government wireless –"

"Which was our agreement for my getting you your permission to use the government station," the Jefe reminded.

"And of which I do not complain," Torres assured him. "But as I was saying, you know my relations with the New York Regan are confidential and important." He touched his hand to his breast pocket. "I have just received another wire. It is imperative that the Francis pig be kept away from New York for a month – if forever, and I do not misunderstand Senor Regan, so much the better. In so far as I succeed in this, will you fare well."

"But you have not told me how much you have received, nor how much you will receive," the Jefe probed.

"It is a private agreement, and it is not so much as you may fancy. He is a hard man, this Senor Regan, a hard man. Yet will I divide fairly with you out of the success of our venture."

The Jefe nodded acquiescence, then said:

"Will it be as much as a thousand gold you will get?"

"I think so. Surely the pig of an Irish stock-gambler could pay me no less a sum, and five hundred is yours if pig Francis leaves his bones in San Antonio."

"Will it be as much as a hundred thousand gold?" was the Jefe's next query.

Torres laughed as if at a joke.

"It must be more than a thousand," the other persisted.

"And he may be generous," Torres responded. "He may even give me five hundred over the thousand, half of which, naturally, as I have said, will be yours as well."

"I shall go from here immediately to the jail," the Jefe announced. "You may trust me, Senor Torres, as I trust you. Come. We will go at once, now, you and I, and you may see for yourself the preparation I shall make for this Francis Morgan's reception. I have not yet lost my cunning with a rifle. And, as well, I shall tell off three of the gendarmes to fire only at him. So this Gringo dog would storm our jail, eh? Come. We will depart at once."

He stood up, tossing his cigarette away with a show of determined energy. But, half way across the room, a ragged boy, panting and sweating, plucked his sleeve and whined:

“I have information. You will pay me for it, most high Señor? I have run all the way.”

“I’ll have you sent to San Juan for the buzzards to peck your carcass for the worthless carrion that you are,” was the reply.

The boy quailed at the threat, then summoned courage from his emptiness of belly and meagerness of living and from his desire for the price of a ticket to the next bull-fight.

“You will remember I brought you the information, Señor. I ran all the way until I am almost dead, as you can behold, Señor. I will tell you, but you will remember it was I who ran all the way and told you first.”

“Yes, yes, animal, I will remember. But woe to you if I remember too well. What is the trifling information? It may not be worth a centavo. And if it isn’t I’ll make you sorry the sun ever shone on you. And buzzard-picking of you at San Juan will be paradise compared with what I shall visit on you.”

“The jail,” the boy quavered. “The strange Gringo, the one who was to be hanged yesterday, has blown down the side of the jail. Merciful Saints! The hole is as big as the steeple of the cathedral! And the other Gringo, the one who looks like him, the one who was to hang to-morrow, has escaped with him out of the hole. He dragged him out of the hole himself. This I saw, myself, with my two eyes, and then I ran here to you all the way, and you will remember...”

But the Jefe Politico had already turned on Torres witheringly.

“And if this Señor Regan be princely generous, he may give you and me the munificent sum that was mentioned, eh? Five times the sum, or ten times, with this Gringo tiger blowing down law and order and our good jail-walls, would be nearer the mark.”

“At any rate, the thing must be a false alarm, merely the straw that shows which way blows the wind of this Francis Morgan’s intention,” Torres murmured with a sickly smile. “Remember, the suggestion was mine to him to storm the jail.”

“In which case you and Señor Regan will pay for the good jail wall?” the Jefe demanded, then, with a pause, added: “Not that I believe it has been accomplished. It is not possible. Even a fool Gringo would not dare.”

Rafael, the gendarme, rifle in hand, the blood still oozing down his face from a scalp-wound, came through the courtroom door and shouldered aside the curious ones who had begun to cluster around Torres and the Jefe.

“We are devastated,” were Rafael’s first words. “The jail is ‘most destroyed. Dynamite! A hundred pounds of it! A thousand! We came bravely to save the jail. But it exploded – the thousand pounds of dynamite. I fell unconscious, rifle in hand. When sense came back to me, I looked about. All others, the brave Pedro, the brave Ignacio, the brave Augustino – all, all, lay around me dead!” Almost could he have added, “drunk”; but, his Latin-American nature so compounded, he sincerely stated the catastrophe as it most valiantly and tragically presented itself to his imagination. “They lay dead. They may not be dead, but merely stunned. I crawled. The cell of the Gringo Morgan was empty. There was a huge and monstrous hole in the wall. I crawled through the hole into the street. There was a great crowd. But the Gringo Morgan was gone. I talked with a moso who had seen and who knew. They had horses waiting. They rode toward the beach. There is a schooner that is not anchored. It sails back and forth waiting for them. The Francis Morgan rides with a sack of gold on his saddle. The moso saw it. It is a large sack.”

“And the hole?” the Jefe demanded. “The hole in the wall?”

“Is larger than the sack, much larger,” was Rafael’s reply. “But the sack is large. So the moso said. And he rides with it on his saddle.”

“My jail!” the Jefe cried. He slipped a dagger from inside his coat under the left arm-pit and held it aloft by the blade so that the hilt showed as a true cross on which a finely modeled Christ

hung crucified. "I swear by all the Saints the vengeance I shall have. My jail! Our justice! Our law! – Horses! Horses! Gendarme, horses!" He whirled about upon Torres as if the latter had spoken, shouting: "To hell with Senor Regan! I am after my own! I have been defied! My jail is desolated! My law – our law, good friends – has been mocked. Horses! Horses! Commandeer them on the streets. Haste! Haste!"

Captain Trefethen, owner of the *Angelique*, son of a Maya Indian mother and a Jamaica negro father, paced the narrow after-deck of his schooner, stared shoreward toward San Antonio, where he could make out his crowded long-boat returning, and meditated flight from his mad American charterer. At the same time he meditated remaining in order to break his charter and give a new one at three times the price; for he was strangely torn by his conflicting bloods. The negro portion counseled prudence and observance of Panamanian law. The Indian portion was urgent to unlawfulness and the promise of conflict.

It was the Indian mother who decided the issue and made him draw his jib, ease his mainsheet, and begin to reach in-shore the quicker to pick up the oncoming boat. When he made out the rifles carried by the Solanos and the Morgans, almost he put up his helm to run for it and leave them. When he made out a woman in the boat's sternsheets, romance and thrift whispered in him to hang on and take the boat on board. For he knew wherever women entered into the transactions of men that peril and pelf as well entered hand in hand.

And aboard came the woman, the peril and the pelf – Leoncia, the rifles, and a sack of money – all in a scramble; for, the wind being light, the captain had not bothered to stop way on the schooner.

"Glad to welcome you on board, sir," Captain Trefethen greeted Francis with a white slash of teeth between his smiling lips. "But who is this man?" He nodded his head to indicate Henry.

"A friend, captain, a guest of mine, in fact, a kinsman."

"And who, sir, may I make bold to ask, are those gentlemen riding along the beach in fashion so lively?"

Henry looked quickly at the group of horsemen galloping along the sand, unceremoniously took the binoculars from the skipper's hand, and gazed through them.

"It's the Jefe himself in the lead," he reported to Leoncia and her menfolk, "with a bunch of gendarmes." He uttered a sharp exclamation, stared through the glasses intently, then shook his head. "Almost I thought I made out our friend Torres."

"With our enemies!" Leoncia cried incredulously, remembering Torres' proposal of marriage and proffer of service and honor that very day on the hacienda piazza.

"I must have been mistaken," Francis acknowledged. "They are riding so bunched together. But it's the Jefe all right, two jumps ahead of the outfit."

"Who is this Torres duck?" Henry asked harshly. "I've never liked his looks from the first, yet he seems always welcome under your roof, Leoncia."

"I beg your parson, sir, most gratifiedly, and with my humilious respects," Captain Trefethen interrupted suavely. "But I must call your attention to the previous question, sir, which is: who and what is that cavalcade disporting itself with such earnestness along the sand?"

"They tried to hang me yesterday," Francis laughed. "And to-morrow they were going to hang my kinsman there. Only we beat them to it. And here we are. Now, Mr. Skipper, I call your attention to your head-sheets flapping in the wind. You are standing still. How much longer do you expect to stick around here?"

"Mr. Morgan, sir," came the answer, "it is with dumbfounded respect that I serve you as the charterer of my vessel. Nevertheless, I must inform you that I am a British subject. King George is my king, sir, and I owe obedience first of all to him and to his laws of maritime between all nations, sir. It is lucid to my comprehension that you have broken laws ashore, or else the officers ashore would not be so assiduously in quest of you, sir. And it is also lucid to clarification that it is now your wish to have me break the laws of maritime by enabling you to escape. So, in honor bound, I must

stick around here until this little difficulty that you may have appertained ashore is adjusted to the satisfaction of all parties concerned, sir, and to the satisfaction of my lawful sovereign.”

“Fill away and get out of this, skipper!” Henry broke in angrily.

“Sir, assuring you of your gratification of pardon, it is my unpleasant task to inform you of two things. Neither are you my charterer; nor are you the noble King George to whom I give ambitious allegiance.”

“Well, I’m your charterer, skipper,” Francis said pleasantly, for he had learned to humor the man of mixed words and parentage. “So just kindly put up your helm and sail us out of this Chiriqui Lagoon as fast as God and this failing wind will let you.”

“It is not in the charter, sir, that my *Angelique* shall break the laws of Panama and King George.”

“I’ll pay you well,” Francis retorted, beginning to lose his temper. “Get busy.”

“You will then recharter, sir, at three times the present charter?”

Francis nodded shortly.

“Then wait, sir, I entreat. I must procure pen and paper from the cabin and make out the document.”

“Oh, Lord,” Francis groaned. “Square away and get a move on first. We can make out the paper just as easily while we are running as standing still. Look! They are beginning to fire.”

The half-breed captain heard the report, and, searching his spread canvas, discovered the hole of the bullet high up near the peak of the mainsail.

“Very well, sir,” he conceded. “You are a gentleman and an honorable man. I trust you to affix your signature to the document at your early convenience – Hey, you nigger! Put up your wheel! Hard up! Jump, you black rascals, and slack away mainsheet! Take a hand there, you, Percival, on the boom-tackle!”

All obeyed, as did Percival, a grinning shambling Kingston negro who was as black as his name was white, and as did another, addressed more respectfully as Juan, who was more Spanish and Indian than negro, as his light yellow skin attested, and whose fingers, slacking the foresheet, were as slim and delicate as a girl’s.

“Knock the nigger on the head if he keeps up this freshness,” Henry growled in an undertone to Francis. “For two cents I’ll do it right now.”

But Francis shook his head.

“He’s all right, but he’s a Jamaica nigger, and you know what they are. And he’s Indian as well. We might as well humor him, since it’s the nature of the beast. He means all right, but he wants the money, he’s risking his schooner against confiscation, and he’s afflicted with *vocabularitis*. He just must get those long words out of his system or else bust.”

Here Enrico Solano, with quivering nostrils and fingers restless on his rifle as with half an eye he kept track of the wild shots being fired from the beach, approached Henry and held out his hand.

“I have been guilty of a grave mistake, Senor Morgan,” he said. “In the first hurt of my affliction at the death of my beloved brother, Alfaro, I was guilty of thinking you guilty of his murder.” Here old Enrico’s eyes flashed with anger consuming but unconsumable. “For murder it was, dastardly and cowardly, a thrust in the dark in the back. I should have known better. But I was overwhelmed, and the evidence was all against you. I did not take pause of thought to consider that my dearly beloved and only daughter was betrothed to you; to remember that all I had known of you was straightness and man-likeness and courage such as never stabs from behind the shield of the dark. I regret. I am sorry. And I am proud once again to welcome you into my family as the husband-to-be of my Leoncia.”

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