

JOHN TOPP, PIRATE

By Weatherby Chesney and Alick Munro.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

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"Hello!" cried Alec, somewhat taken back at this unexpected meeting. "By all the wickedness in Spain, Don Miguel del Cassamoro in the flesh!"

"As you'll soon find to your cost, sea robber. You've overshot your mark this time, Senior Captain Ireland."

"Perhaps so," said Alec unconcernedly. "But pardon my surprise, senior. I hoped you were a ghost long ago. Too wicked to be drowned, eh?"

The Spaniard whipped out a venomous oath and yelled to his men to fire again. A broadside crashed over our deck, too high fortunately to do much injury to the low lying hull, but our long gun was dismantled and our bowsprit snapped off short just outside the gunnison.

Then indeed for awhile the battle raged in grim, red earnest. With the forestay carried away we could do nothing but lie head to wind parallel to our antagonist until a fresh headwind was rigged. Had it been blowing fresh we might have had her round before the wind and so run to a distance to refit. But the firing had flattened down the light breeze almost to a dead calm, so we had perforce to stay where we were.

In a strait like this we had counted upon being able to row the Scourge out of danger, as we had already rowed her up alongside a prize in a calm, but now, as fortune would have it, an unlucky round shot entering in at an open port had hit the six sweeps as they lay lashed on the deck and had broken every one of them into two. And so, with the decks becoming more of a shambles every minute, we stood our ground and fought the guns like furies, and though our pieces were outnumbered by more than two to one we hoped by serving them twice as quickly to return as good or even better than we got. Besides, every shot of ours found a billet somewhere in the Spaniard's hull, while many of his, through the greater elevation of his guns, flew harmlessly over the little Scourge. Had it been otherwise we could never have hoped to keep her afloat.

While we were still a cable's length from the enemy's stern a strange thing happened. A sailor ran on to the poop, leaped overboard and swam as though for his life toward us. Spanish shot pitted the water round him like thunder drops in a pond, but as he held up his hand as if appealing to us for assistance we engaged his assailants and made them think rather of their own skins.

The swimmer meanwhile came up alongside and, getting his fingers into the main chains, scrambled on board. Though vastly changed by the hardships of warfare and captivity, we recognized him as Saul Dickory, one of the Bristol Merchant's crew, and hot though the fight raged around us we snatched a moment to press the hand of a comrade of the old days.

He had, so he said, been serving in Spanish ships ever since his capture at the mountain ravine, leading a dog's life, while doing two men's work, and until now had never seen a chance of escape. Further, he had an offer to make us. Give him a light line, and he'd jump overboard again and make it fast to a ringbolt on the don's stern, and then we might warp ourselves up and board through the cabin window.

"But for the love o' heaven," he implored us, "keep the Spanish sharpshooters busy while I swim. I can hear the splash o' their bullets round my ears now."

Alec, however, refused to allow him to make this attempt for fear of the sharks, observing that we should be able to do as much for ourselves with the grappling iron in half an hour's time at our present rate of drifting. "But," he added, "I am afraid that Don Miguel has still too many men for my small handful to tackle."

"Aye, captain," replied Dickory, "that he has. There are nigher 300 than 200 aboard your galleon who can still hit a good heavy blow, though there's near as many besides w' their toes turned up. But once get inside the big cabin, an you can clear it an hold it ag'in the lot o' 'em."

"But I want the whole ship, sirrah." Saul Dickory shook his head. "You can't do it, captain," he declared decidedly. "An if you try the big waves will be rolling over every man o' us tomorrow. But you do what's as good—you can lay your hands on the store o' dollars."

"Without taking the ship? How?"

"The hatch of the treasury is in the cabin floor, an you can strike out the cargo into this queer craft of your'n without a blessed don o' 'em being able to stop you."

And this in the end was what we did. The mermen, or Neptune, or the current, or whatever agency had charge of our heels, swept the two vessels nearer and nearer together till at last a couple of cleverly thrown grapples caught hold and our bulwark ground against the galleon's square stern.

Her crew had no intention of letting us set foot in their stronghold without a tussle and did what they could with fireballs and grenades, cold shot and naked steel to stop us. But with a ladder of boarding axes driven into their timbers we scrambled up and soon had a footing in the cabin.

Hemmed in by the packed masses

behind, the front rank had the alternative of fight or fall. They fought long and desperately, and then they fell, for they expected no quarter and asked none. We on our side fought as furiously as they, stabbing with shortened weapons where there was no room to swing them and thrusting many a foe through the open portholes into the sea. It was a bloody conflict, for not until two-thirds of the cabin's defenders lay dead and dying did the Spaniards suffer themselves to be driven out into the waist.

We ourselves had lost Jan Pengony, his friend George and three others killed outright, and two more were so sorely wounded that they died there on the cabin floor. Scarce a one of us but had his red gash to show.

But it was no time to groan or lick our wounds. The two doors under the poop were closed and barred with furniture piled up against them, loaded patarees were thrust through the loopholes to command the waist, and the hatch of the treasure room was cleared of bodies and thrown open. The pieces of eight we found snugly stowed in oak chests, and while half a dozen of us stood ready by the swivel gun the rest made all haste they could to hand up the treasure and lower it through the windows on to the Scourge's deck below.

But rapid as were our movements Don Miguel had no notion of allowing us to spoil his ship unmolested.

Scarcely had we got into the swing of work than he and a strong party with him mounted the poop again and commenced annoying the little craft whose bulwarks were grinding against his ship far below. They hurled down everything weighty and unpleasant that came to hand, and finally they dropped a barrel of powder, which on bursting scorched several of our lads so severely that they cried to us in the galleon's cabin that the deck was too hot to hold any longer.

At this Alec, leaving me in charge of the cabin, returned to his own vessel and hailed the poop above.

"Don Miguel, ahoy!"

The tall Spaniard appeared above, gritting his yellow teeth with rage.

"Don Miguel, if you do not cease from annoying my people you shall have something else to think about. I swear to you that if you do not permit me to finish my task unmolested I'll sweep your crowded waist with a hurricane of pataree balls, and that the survivors may not want employment to keep them out of mischief I'll fire your galleon's hold before I leave her. There's a keg of spirits under the table that will help her to burn."

"And if I permit you to carry off your robber's booty in peace?"

"Measure your words, Don Miguel! If you permit me to carry off my lawful prize—"

The Spaniard interrupted him with a harsh laugh of impotent rage.

"—my lawful prize, I say, taken from my country's enemy," went on Alec calmly, "and if you offer no further annoyance to my men, I, on my part, faithfully promise to do you and yours no further injury for the present. Fortune will, I hope, grant us another meeting on some future day, when accounts may be settled. Meanwhile, senior, your answer is awaited."

Don Miguel, who seemed almost beside himself with suppressed fury, was evidently about to hurl a defiance at us and raised his hand to clinch his refusal with a pistol bullet. But his officers and underlings had had all the fighting they wanted. Though each might have a stake in the golden cargo below, each remembered that with another throw of the dice he would lose not only that, but life as well. And choosing, like wise men, the lesser of the two evils, they laid violent hands on their reckless commandant and dragged him down. Then one of them jumped up into his place and signified that they agreed to the armistice. They promised, he said, not to molest us further, and they looked to us to keep a like faith with them. With a ringing cheer our lads set to work again on the gold chests, but none the less we kept the swivel gun trained on the crowd in the galleon's waist, for he is a worthy fool who trusts a penny's worth to a Spaniard's word.

They dared not break faith with us, however, because of the gun, and so we were able to tranship the golden harvest without further loss of life.

While the party in the galleon's cabin bustled merrily among the booty another party refitted our damaged head-sails, and when the last chest of gold-pieces had been dumped upon our deck we raised an ironical cheer for the wealth of Golden Spain, and as the rising breeze slowly belled her sails the little Scourge sheered slowly off from her whipped and sullen adversary.

Aye, we were victorious, and while the red blood still flowed from our wounds we recked little of the heavy price we had paid. But when the mad frenzy of fighting is over gaping cuts tingle and grow stiff, and then it is that men begin to count the cost and spare a thought for those who have fallen, comrades who were alive and full of hope a few short hours before. We had a dreary account taking. It was clear that the Scourge could no longer hold her own in these seas of the new world.

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The galleon's gold had cost us very dear. Out of our slender ship's company 13 had been killed outright, four had hurts that they would die under, and of the rest there was no man who could not show the color of his own blood.

When the excitement of the battle had passed away and the grim fever of slaying had become a memory, not one stood on our decks in whose body there was not some deadly throb or sickening ache—not one who was not stiff from angry, rainbow colored bruises or faint from loss of blood. Our captain lay pale and helpless in his bunk, brought to death's very door by a bullet wound under the shoulder, which he had borne undressed through half the long fight. The back of the boatswain's bald pate was burned black with powder, and he had more ribs stove in than the pain would let him count. And of the others one allied this and another that; one by the blow of an ax had lost the fingers of his hand, another by the crack of a gunstock had lost the sense of his hand.

The active watch on deck consisted of two persons. There was Job Trehallon, with the old scar on his face crossed by a fresher seam, and John Topp, with a pike thrust through the calf of one leg and a dagger wound in the foot of the other.

We had remained in melancholy silence for I know not how long, when suddenly Job Trehallon got up without a word and went down the companion. Returning presently, he gave me a handful of biscuit and a lordly dram of cordial, and these, being sent on their errand, revived me wonderfully. So, after adjusting the bloody bandages round my leg and instep, I told Job that he and I must lay our heads together and consider where to steer to.

Job was all chuckles and grins in a moment. It was not often that he was called into council by any one save the old man, and him he affected to despise, and so he considered his confidence no compliment.

"One thing is sure," said I, looking at the battle havoc round me, "we can't keep the seas in this plight."

"No, Master Topp," chuckled Job, "that we can't. Let alone having no crew to reef or haul the sails, the hull an spars has sich a-many wounds in 'em that the first good squall'll send us all to Davy Jones' locker double quick. No, no; we've winged, Master Topp, an winged birds has to lie quiet for awhile afore they tries to fly again."

"There should be abler heads than ours, Job, to settle matters in a plight like this, but the abler heads are all sadly battered just now, so you and I must do our best to decide a course without them."

A look of solemn importance struggled hard to drive the grin from Job's face. But habit was strong, and the grin conquered.

"We might go back to the old harbor on Cave island, Master Topp. It were snug enough, an them huts on the hill above be a rare place for sick men to lie in."

"But the Spaniards, Job! You forget the Spaniards."

"Asking pardon," replied Job, screwing up his face with such a grin that the wound across it began to trickle afresh, "but one o' them Spaniards that we left behind has got off. And if one, maybe all!"

"What!" I cried. "One got off? Where did you hear of him?"

"Seed him an' felt him, Master Topp, which is better than hearing o' him. It was his iron as wrote this fresh mark across my face. That comes o' sparing Spaniards," he added sagely.

"Captain Ireland's whim, Job," said I, shrugging my shoulders. "But are you sure of your man?"

"Sure as I am o' you, Master Topp, or o' uncle, or o' Captain Ireland, or o' any one else noticeable. This un was a short, cheery kind o' little chap, w' bandy legs an a bright steel bassinet on his head. Now, sea armor is always blacked, so a man as wears his bright is nat'rally a man you notice."

"Why, I remember him!" said I. "A merry, cowardly little wretch named Sancho something or other. Your uncle gave him a pretty scare in the Serpent's temple."

"That's him, Don Sancho! An if this blow he gave me had been driven home 'stead o' failing half hearted through the frightened trembling o' the don's arm I should have gone down sure enough. As it was, I stood an' toppled him into the sea for cumbering my way. Saul Dickory maybe could tell us how bandy legs came to be on the galleon."

"Fetch him," said I. And Job went. If Job was right and the Spaniards



"You and I must do our best," had really succeeded in leaving Cave island, nothing could be more fortunate for us in our present crippled state. There we could recruit our war weary bodies and refit our wounded ship at our leisure, and when our

pauses beat full and strong again we could be ready for another throw with Don Miguel, for I, for one, felt sure that we had by no means seen the last of that yellow fanged grin of rage. But if our late slaves were still on the island it would be madness to attempt the landing. Heaven grant they had escaped!

"Aye," said Saul Dickory when I eagerly questioned him, "they've got off, sure enough. I've seed a-many o' them, an, what's more, through them I've heard all about your doings on the island."

"How did they get away?"

"Sighed a trading snow the day after you left, signaled her w' a smoke from that 'ere Sarpint hill I've heard tell of, an got took off. The snow set them ashore at Barcelona. From there some o' 'em took ship to Cartagena, where, as we was short handed, they joined our galleon."

"Then," said I cheerily, "our course is clear. We'll run to the old harbor to recruit and refit." And with the decision I felt more hopeful and light hearted than I had since first my wounded leg began to tingle.

When we rounded the bluffs at the harbor's mouth and the foreshore in front of the cave opened out to view, it was with anxious gaze that those of us who were hale enough to stand on deck or to lean against mast or bulwark scanned the beach and the heights above the cave for sign of human habitation. The island was a pleasant enough spot to dwell in, and some of the Spaniards might have elected to stay and plant a colony there.

But not a trace of man did we see. Our old fortifications lay ruined and decayed, and in places the quick growing tropical vegetation had almost hidden them from sight. The heavy door with which we had closed the cave's mouth lay half covered with sand, and the doorposts from which it had once hung had fallen shantwise across the opening.

No, there was nothing to fear. The island had returned to the possession of the pigs and the gulls and the parakeets, its original owners.

To reach the huts on the high ground above was for the most seriously wounded an impossibility, and so we had to turn the cave itself into our hospital. We regretted this, because we had hoped much from the healing virtues of the flower scented breeze of the uplands, but there was no help for it.

Ah, it was a time to make the greediest plunderer sicken of his trade! The angel of death was hovering round us and claiming now one good sailor and true comrade and now another as part payment of the price of plunder. Not that we were cheerless company, for the old man's caustic wit and Willie Trehallon's cumbersome attempts to reply to him raised many a smile from the weaker ones and many a loud guffaw from the stronger. And Job Trehallon's grin we had always with us.

But the summons of death came all too often, and the tale of sandy rounds on the yellow harbor grew sadly long in spite of all that the old man's skillful surgery and John Topp's tireless nursing could do to shorten it. All that man could do we did, but our enemy was too strong for us.

The end of our nursing came at last. Some conquered their wounds, and some their wounds conquered, and when the last grave had been dug and filled there were but 12 men left out of the two and thirty who had been hale and strong when the fight for the galleon's gold began.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

The "King of Rome."

What became of Napoleon's son is a question often asked, as little mention is made in history of the young prince, the desire of his father's life, who was born March 20, 1811, amid great rejoicing in Paris and hailed as the "king of Rome." In January, 1814, Napoleon embraced his wife and child for the last time, and this really ended the reign of the little king "who never saw his kingdom." He was reared in the Austrian court under the name of Duke of Reichstadt and grew to be a handsome young fellow and quite a brilliant scholar. He had one short year of military life and then contracted pulmonary disease, from which he died in his twenty-second year. He worshipped the memory of his father and always spent the anniversary of his death, July 22, in his own rooms. He is buried in the Carthusian monastery of Vienna, which is the Austrian Westminster abbey.

How Masks Are Made.

Paper masks are made by doubling one sheet of a specially prepared paper, wetting it and molding it by hand over a face form. It is then dried by artificial heat. Openings are cut for eyes, nose and mouth, and it is painted and decorated by hand as desired.

Wire masks are made by stamping a piece of wire netting about a foot square over a face mold in a large machine, inclosing the rough wire edges in a narrow strip of lead. Then it is painted. The painting is done by hand in all colors.—Cincinnati Enquirer.

Must Discriminate.

"For mercy's sake, Mildred," exclaimed Mrs. Highmore, shocked at the negligee attire of her youngest daughter, who had gone to the front door to look at a fire on the other side of the street, "don't you know you never ought to appear in public with your collar unbuttoned and your sleeves rolled up except when you are playing golf?"—Chicago Tribune.

Table Talk.

"They say the late departed," said the first cannibal, indicating the dish before them, "was a very learned man."

"Indeed," replied the other, helping himself for the third time. "Then this is truly what the white men call an 'intellectual feast.'"—Philadelphia Press.

LUNCHES.

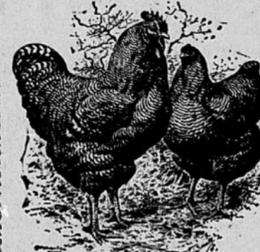
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