

# PORTO BELLO GOLD

## SYNOPSIS

The story opens in New York about the middle of the Eighteenth century. Robert Ormerod, who tells the tale, is talking to Peter Corlaier, chief of fur traders, and man of enormous strength, when Darby McGraw, Irish bonded boy, brings news that a pirate ship is off the Hook. An old sea captain announces he has been chased by a notorious pirate, Captain Rap. The older Ormerod is Robert the pirate's Andrew Gray, his (Robert's) great-uncle, commanding the pirate ship, the Royal James. Murray is an ardent Jacobite. Next day he and Darby encounter a legged sailor, John Silver. Darby conducts to a tavern. Robert meets a young man from a Spanish frigate who is seeking her father, Colonel O'Donnell. He takes her to a place she designates. Murray with a force of sailors visits the Ormerod house. He announces his intention of carrying off Robert, by force, if necessary, promising him a great future. The father is powerless. Peter Corlaier insists upon accompanying Robert. Robert and Peter are taken aboard a brig.

## CHAPTER III—Continued

"Fist! that man, if you must," called Murray. "But use your cut-throats, if possible."

"Neen," said Peter again. "We don't fight."

"We might as well be killed now as let them carry off Bob," said my father with a sob in his voice.

"Neen," said Peter a third time. "Deadly, you stay dead. Perhaps Bob gets away from them some time. Better he be with Murray than he be dead."

"Intelligently logical," commented Murray. "I commend the sentiment you, Nephew Robert."

Peter's little eyes glistened toward us.

"I go with Bob," he said.

"No, no," denied Murray quickly. "You were not invited, friend Peter."

"If I don't go, Robert don't go," roared Peter. "And you don't go, rhaps I don't kill you, but if there shooting you don't get away. Ja!"

Murray contemplated this speech.

"Your proposition then," he said, "is that you insist upon sharing my nephew's new career or else will endeavor to secure the deaths of all of us, including his and your own?"

"Ja!" answered Peter.

"You may come," decided my great-uncle. "Your muscles should prove useful. John, I fancy we shall require triple bonds on this prisoner."

"Aye, aye, sir," assented Silver. "We ha' plenty o' stout manna. One o' you lads run back and get those coils I left by the stove. That's the proper spirit, Darby. Always willin'. You'll make a rare hand, you will. And how about makin' fast that gentleman as is goin' to stay behind, captain?"

Murray looked at my father, and from him to me.

"Have you reconciled yourselves to what I nisy justly style the inevitable?" he inquired suavely.

My father collapsed into his chair with a groan.

"If you will not suffer the boy to be hurt!" he exclaimed.

"My word of honor to that," returned my great-uncle very seriously. "His comfort and safety rank ahead of my own, Ormerod, for I anticipate that he is to achieve all those triumphs which fate denied me. 'Tis but I hope to sample them briefly, but—and for the first time a shadow clouded his face—"I am, as you doubtless know, in my sixty-fourth year, and a fickle Providence, regarding the divinity of which I am inclined to share the skepticism of the French philosophers, is scarce likely to indulge me in a very prolonged extension of life's span. Nor indeed would I have it otherwise. I feel no inclination for the senility of extreme age. Do you submit?"

My father bent his head.

"Yes—for his sake—you! Robert, no violence. We are in a cove we cannot escape for the present; but rest assured I will do everything I can to secure your release."

My great-uncle motioned Silver forward.

"Make Master Ormerod as comfortable as possible, John," he instructed. "Yes, the him in his chair. Ormerod, accept my advice, and leave well enough alone. Within a year, possibly—two, at most—the boy will be safe and advanced in fortune beyond your wildest dreams."

"Let me have him back as he is—'tis all I ask," groaned my father.

Murray took snuff.

"A highly correct attitude, sir," he remarked. "Have you more to say? Very well, John; you may affix the gag. No, not that gunnysacking. Here is a silken kerchief will do. And now, friend Peter, we turn to you—and you, Nephew Robert. I would these precautions were unnecessary. Let us trust your inclinations will become more friendly toward me upon closer acquaintance."

## CHAPTER IV

**An Inkling of the Plot**

My poor father's face, with the tears standing in his eyes, was the last object I saw in the wan light of the guttering candles. The next moment my captors lugged me into the darkness of the garden and pushed me

upon a hand-cart such as was used to fetch up the frailer kinds of merchandise from the docks. Peter's immense body already occupied most of the cart's cramped space, and I was squeezed precariously between him and the near side, the which Silver perceiving he prodded Peter into a more restricted compass and then spread a tarpaulin over both of us.

"Proceed, John," ordered my great-uncle's voice. "You remember the way? The Green lane," 'tis called. Four men should be sufficient to accompany you. I will go on by another street with the rest of our party."

"Don't ye worry yourself, captain," returned Silver.

Footsteps thudded away on the gravel, and I heard the scratching of the one-legged man's crutch as he stumped in front of us and the cart jolted forward. We emerged into the Green lane, heading toward the East river, and a thrill tickled my spine as I heard the chanting tones of old Digory Leigh, our ward watchman.

"Ten o'clock of a clear, dark night, and the wind in the northwest. And all's well!"

"Easy, all!" whispered Silver's voice. "Push on, ye swabs; push on! But hold your gab. I'll do the talking."

The steel piece on the butt of his crutch tinkled on the cobbles as he stumped ahead of the cart.

"Ho there, shipmate," he hailed cordially. "And does you do this the whole, livelong night?"

Digory's lantern-stave jingled on the ground.

"I do," he returned in pompous tones. "What keeps you abroad so late? Y'are seafaring men, I judge."

"Now I calls that clever," protested Silver "with unconcealed admiration. 'You sees us in the dark, and straight off you says, 'seafaring men.' I can see you're a vigilant watchman, shipmate. I'd hate to be a nefarious fellow in your town. Blow my scuttle-butt, I would!"

Digory's appreciation of this tribute was mirrored in his voice.

"'Tis essential that our citizens be protected," he answered. "Yet there are those who have accused me of sleeping on watch."

"Skulkers, they be—low-lived skulkers as ever was," Silver assured him. "I know how you feel. Here we've been a-workin' since sunup, a-shiftn' cargo and stowin' it aboard, and I'll lay you a piece of eight 'the captain never so much as sarves out a extr' noggin' o' rum."

Digory's stave jingled again as he sloped it over his shoulder.

"The wisest men are not always those in authority, friend," he said. "Ye might think, from the way some of the corporation talk, 'twas they bar the night-walkers and wasters from the city's streets! Bah!"

And his wailing voice receded into Pearl street.

"What are you night-walkers and wasters a-sniggerin' about?" demanded Silver of his following. "George Merry, I'll lay into you with my crutch. Put some heft behind this here blessed cart. Ain't ye ashamed o' yourselves, a-laughin' at a brave, hard-workin' watchman as keeps wicked pirates from liftin' your goods?"

A few hundred feet farther on we rattled off the cobbles onto the planked surface of a wharf.

"That you, John?" growled a voice.

"Aye, aye, Bill. Where's the captain?"

"Gone off in the jollyboat. That 'ere Spanish Irisher is a-waitin' him aboard."

Silver pulled the tarpaulin from over our heads.

"Here, George Merry, can't you and your mates handle the big fellow? Two to his head and two to his feet—and drop him easy or he'll stove in the boat. Now, my gentleman—this to me—we'll pass you down, too. You must pull a strong oar with the captain for him to be so anxious to get you offshore safe and whole. It'll be place and rank for you, mesmate, or a chance to swim w' the sharks."

"Where's the red-headed little Irisher, Bill?"

"I sent him off with the captain," replied Bones. "Down w' you, John. We'll cast off."

From where I now lay, propped up in the bow with my head resting on Peter's huge stomach, I could see the wharf a few feet above and the vague figures of the pirates and behind them the shadowy outline of the warehouses and an occasional dim light. Silver lowered himself to a seat upon the stringpiece of the wharf, dropped the butt of his crutch to the forward thwart, felt about with his one leg and came to rest in front of Peter and me. The crutch he allowed to slip to the bottom of the boat, and in its place he took an oar. Bill Bones found a seat in the stern sheets.

"All clear," muttered Bill. "Give way."

The oars fended off from the wharf, and the boat crept out into the stream, where it felt the full strength of the tide, just beginning to turn. The bow bounced up as the first wave hit it, and Peter, beneath me, emitted a dismal groan through his gag. Silver, bending diligently to his oar, looked over his shoulder.

"You would come, mesmate," he said. "'Tis nobody's fault but your own."

"Another groan from Peter, and he lay still.

"Look sharp," called Bones. "The brig's just ahead."

A riding light gleamed high above us in the velvet gloom. I heard the

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faint slap-slap-slap of water against an anchored hull.

As we rounded under her counter a couple of ropes rattled down to us, and I heard the creaking of tackle and hoist.

"Make fast the young 'un first," rasped Bones.

"Aye, aye, Bill," answered Silver, and I became conscious that the one-legged man and another were knotting a loose rope beneath my arm-pits.

"All right, above there?" called Silver presently.

The block began to whine. The rope tautened; the unseen block whined louder; and I rose involuntarily from my position across Peter's belly. My feet were jerked from a thwart, and I kicked the air. The grunts of men hauling in unison floated from the brig's deck, and as I rose faster I commenced to swing like a pendulum. Inside of a minute I was dangling over the bulwarks, feet kicking frantically for standing room. A man caught me by one arm and drew me aboard, shouting the while to "slacken away!" and so I came down again with a bump that was like to crack my knee-caps, deposited as so much cargo upon the pitchy deck.

Dazed by treatment I had never sustained before, I stood heedless as the ropes were unfastened beneath my arm-pits, my bonds slipped off and the gag extracted from my aching jaws. I was just beginning to take in the aspect of my surroundings when Corlaier's cask of a body topped the bulwarks, swung with ludicrous



"Look Sharp," Called Bones. "The Brig's Just Ahead."

unconcern for an instant as I dare say mine had done, and then lurched in and crashed to the deck. The Dutchman was purple in the face, with white spots dotting the congested area of his cheeks, and gasping for breath. His stomach heaved tumultuously as the gag was removed.

"What ails you, Peter?" I cried.

"Der water," he moaned. "It makes me sick."

And sick he was—violently.

I heard Bones continuing to shout orders; and there was a constant bustle of men running back and forth over the decks, a clattering of ropes and shrieking of falls and blocks. For'ard sounded an ordered tramping of feet and a chorus of rough voices bellowing the wild season: I had heard in the Whale's Head tavern:

Fifteen men on the Dead Man's Chest— Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum! Drink and the devil had done for the rest— Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!

Corlaier, weak as a rag, sank in a heap of buxskin in a dark corner by the bulwarks.

"Neen, neen," he answered when I would have helped him. "Not'ings, Bob. I get better by and by. Der salt water—it is always so with me."

"I'll get you some rum," I said firmly.

And, rising, I was on the point of seeking the nearest man to ask where a drink might be obtained when foot-steps clicked on the deck behind me.

"They are a dangerous company," said a voice with an unmistakable brogue to it.

"What would you?" returned my great-uncle. "We could not employ his majesty's people in such a business. And all things considered, my fellows can handle it far better and more expeditiously."

They passed through the rays of the lantern which swung from the mainyard. Aye, the first speaker was Colonel O'Donnell. The little Irish maid! His daughter. My father had been right in his suspicions.

But what could be the tie of interest between a colonel in the army of the king of Spain and an outlaw who had defied the whole structure of civilization? A Jacobite plot? It seemed preposterous!

"'Tis my daughter I was thinking of," explained O'Donnell as they reached the starboard gangway close by where I stood over Peter's prostrate form. "A woman on a pirate ship!"

"My dear sir, Rule Four of the Code of Articles under which our company

is governed—does it surprise you that we have our own laws?—forbids the taking and keeping of women as spoil aboard our ships. We have had experience in the past of the evils which flow in the wake of a struggle for women's favors."

"Shall you not flout your own rule if my daughter comes aboard?" pressed the Irishman.

"She will not come as a prisoner, but as a guest," returned Murray blandly. "After all, colonel, the Royal James is my ship—and in that respect differs from most outlaw craft which are held by the entire crew as a community. No, no; you need not concern yourself."

"I like it not, I say!" persisted O'Donnell. "Why did you bid me bring her? You were hot for her coming so soon as you heard I had a daughter."

"Would you have left her by her lone in a strange country?" answered my great-uncle impatiently. "Tut, man, be sensible. Who would suspect a man who had his daughter with him? 'Tis true this enterprise is fraught with danger, but no maid can go through life without sniffing peril. We will guard her as we shall the treasure."

"I'll hold you to that," rapped O'Donnell as he climbed over the bulwarks and felt for the ladder. "I am not proud of myself when I think of her innocence. Holy saints, what a coil! Well, well, no matter. I must be going, for the night wanes."

"Yes," assented Murray. "And stir your frigate's captain to a swift passage."

The Irishman nodded.

"If necessary we'll pass by the Havana. Luckily Porto Bello is the indentee's chief worry. You'll hover, then, off Mona passage?"

"Aye, from the south tip of Hispaniola to the north of Porto Rico, save it storms, when we'll run for shelter in the bay of Samana, where the old buccaneers were wont to lie. Diego can find us. He has done it before. Just give him ample time."

"So soon as the Santissima Trinidad has her orders Diego shall know."

He started to descend and then climbed back.

"She has heavy metal, Murray. Are you certain?"

My great-uncle laughed.

"Be at ease upon that point, chevalier. We could take two Spaniards of the Santissima Trinidad's metal. I fear I must bid you good evening, though. Hark!"

The bell of the Spanish frigate rang out eight times.

"Midnight!" exclaimed O'Donnell.

"Can you be gone by dawn?"

"My dear sir," returned my uncle lightly, "this brig will never be seen again—anywhere—by anybody."

O'Donnell shivered.

"Good night," he said abruptly, and his head vanished behind the bulwarks.

I heard the rattle of oars, a low order in Spanish, the steady splash and spatter of rowers as the boat pulled away. My great-uncle watched it for a moment, then turned toward where I stood.

"Well, Nephew Robert, what did you make of us?" he inquired.

I contrived to keep my voice level, for I would not give him the satisfaction of supposing he had startled me.

"That you are engaged in deeper villainy even than my father feared."

"You have a narrow-minded view of life," he remarked. "However, 'tis a defect can be remedied by experience. By the way, do not jump to conclusions from what you overheard. You shall have the whole tale anon, but until you possess a more intimate knowledge of the situation you are better off in ignorance."

"To me you are a singularly bloody pirate, and that is all."

"The injustice of youth!" he commented evenly. "I was the uncle and tender guardian of the mother you never knew, Robert."

"I share my father's feelings upon

that point," I cried, and raised my hand in a threatening gesture.

He did not stir.

"Your conversion will be quite as difficult as I had foreseen," he said. "No, you would gain naught by striking me. Impartially I may recommend you to adopt an attitude which will secure you the maximum of liberty and opportunity. Of what avail for you to force yourself into confinement?"

"Sir," I returned, "be convinced of this: The day you attack a defenseless ship I will slay as many of you as I can and contentedly die."

It has a sound of theatricalism now, but I meant it at the time.

"I purpose nothing of that sort for you," answered my great-uncle. "And while I am tempted to argue you out of a position founded upon a false ethical basis, I shall content myself with the observation that you would do well to hold your temper in leash until you find a need for its employment."

He glanced overside.

"I see we are under way. I must ask you to excuse me for the present, Robert. I am constrained to serve as pilot."

He raised his little silver whistle, and its shrill call fetched several of the crew aft.

"Aye, aye, captain," it was Bones. "What's your wish, sir?"

"Have this poor fellow"—Murray gestured toward Corlaier's recumbent form—"carried to one of the state-rooms. Use him gently. Bid the Irish boy—what's his name? Oh, Darby!—bid Darby tend him and fetch him what he requires."

"This gentleman, here"—he indicated me—"is my great-nephew, Master Bones. It may be he will succeed me in command of the Royal James some day, although he is not with us of his own wish as yet. He is to have complete freedom except he undertake to achieve aught to our disadvantage. Pass the word to me men, if you please."

"That's a queer lay," growled Bones. "Is he friend or enemy, captain?"

"An intelligent question," replied my great-uncle. "We may call him an enemy who is to be treated as nearly as possible as a friend."

"Blasted if I see any sense in it," affirmed Bones. "But whatever you says, captain."

"Exactly," said my great-uncle. "Stir your stumps, ye lousy swabs," roared Bones to his men. "Hitch on to this here land-whale. — my lights and gizzard if I ever see such a monstrous heap o' human flesh! We'd ought to take him to the South seas and sell him to the canneybats. That's all he's good for. Come on, young gentleman, you may be the captain's nevy or by-blow or whatever 'twas he called ye, but everybody works on this ship. Lend a hand."

I obeyed him in silence, while he and the others cursed and blasphemed with a fluency defying description. What a company! Except in Murray's presence they owned no discipline, accepted no restraint. Palpably they hated as well as feared him, and I found myself wondering how secure a hold he had upon their passions. Let them once cast off the spell of his magnetism and superior wickedness, and they would become so many irresponsible agents of lust and destruction.

I shuddered and was glad of the hooded cabin-lamp as we stowed Peter's limp body into the constricted space of a bunk; gladder still when they tramped away and left me alone with the Dutchman.

Through a porthole the lights of New York winked farewell to me. I was as frightened as a child by himself for the first time in the dark.

Next week — "Aboard the Brig."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## Couldn't Really Call Inn Ancient Building

We had paddled through Ghent's complex waterways and were wondering where we could leave our canoe in safety, when some racing shells shot past, a boathouse pennant fluttered, and a cheery voice invited us to utilize the Royal Club Nautique for as long as we wished. So we stored our canoe in the club's "garage," then drove through the town to a quaint inn whose leaded panes looked out upon a row of shops built into the outer walls of a great Gothic church, Melville Chater writes in the National Geographic Magazine.

The sight of people flocking to service, while others slipped drinks, got shaved or bought curios, all under the eaves of a sacred edifice, hinted that we were in an ancient quarter of the town.

"Is this an old inn?" we inquired of our Flemish host. He was a singularly literal man. He replied gravely: "Not so very. Probably when built in the Thirteenth century it was some wealthy man's home. In the Sixteenth century, about the time Albrecht Durer stopped here, it was the house of the Grocers' guild. Later it was privately owned for a couple or more centuries. No, as an inn I wouldn't call it particularly old."

After that we reverentially used the doormat, and refrained from striking matches on the woodwork.

## Best Basis for Love

The more wheels there are in a watch, the more trouble they are to take care of. The movements of exaltation which belong to genius are egotistic by their very nature. A calm, clear mind, not subject to spasms and crises which are so often met with in creative or intensely perceptive natures, is the best basis for love or friendship. Observe, I am talking about minds. I won't say the more intellect, the less capacity for loving; for that would do wrong to the understanding and reason; but, on the other hand, that the brain often runs away with the heart's best blood, which gives the world a few pages of wisdom or poetry, instead of making one other heart happy. I have no question.—Oliver Wendell Holmes.

## Some Family

Buddy went to a dog show and came home all excited. Bred meant nothing to him and blue ribbons less, but the puppies delighted him beyond measure.

"Oh, mother!" he exclaimed. "I saw five puppies with their mother. Two of them were brothers and the other three were twins."

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