

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

(Pirate song)

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 today!  
Let the cannon smash the bulwarks!  
Let the cutlass clear the way!

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!

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.

*George Sterling*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *George Sterling* (1869—1926) — American poet and playwright, Jack London's friend.

## 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<sup>1</sup>, 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.

<sup>1</sup> *New Latin World* — Latin American countries.

"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 over-spilling 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 mustache 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<sup>1</sup>? — 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.

<sup>1</sup> *Sir Henry* — Henry Morgan (1635—1688) — Welsh navigator, pirate and, later, Lieutenant General of Jamaica.

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 a 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 pipelines 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-by, 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-by."

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.