# The Doom Trail

Arthur D. Howden Smith Author of PORTO BELLO GOLD, Etc.

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#### THE STORY

CHAPTER I.—Harry Ormerod, proscribed traitor to King George as a Stuart partisan, returning from France to London, rescues Alderman Robert Juggins from a band of assassins. Juggins proves to be the grandson of a former steward of Ormerod's father, to whom Juggins feels himself indebted. Ormerod tells Juggins he has abandoned the Stuart cause.

CHAPTER II.—Juggins tells Ormerod of a Jacobite plot in the American colonies to weaken England by forwarding French interests. Their aim is the return of King James to the English throne. At its head is one Andrew Murray, a Scotsman, and a Frenchman, De Veulle, deadly enemy of Ormerod. The two are in London furthering their schemes. Ormerod sees them. Anticipating the plotters' early return to America, Juggins arranges for Ormerod to go there with letters to Governor Burnet, friend of Juggins, and work to foil Murray.

CHAPTER III.—Disguised as Juggins' servant, Ormerod takes passage to America. He meets a Scottlish girl daughter of Murray, and ardent Jacobite. De Veulle recognizes him, and their enmity flames. The Frenchman denounces Ormerod to the girl as a traitor to the Stuart cause. Believing him, she repulses Ormerod's proffer of friendship. He is thrown into the sea by an unseen assailant.

#### CHAPTER IV

### A Truce

I came to the surface, fighting for breath, my hands battling fruitlessly at the slimy side of the ship, which slid past as relentlessly as the passage of time. I tried to cry out, but the salt water choked me. Not a sound came from the decks above. The blackness was absolute, except for the mild gleam of a watch-lanthorn on the poop.

Death was only a brace of minutes away-not death from drowning, but death from the bitter cold that paralyzed my limbs and smote my heart In the mad desperation of my fear I heaved myself waist-high out of the water, hands clutching and clawing for the support which reason must have denied me to expect.

I was sinking beneath a smoothrunning wave along the counter when my fingers came in contact with a dripping rope, which slipped through their geip and lashed me in the face. My hands possessed themselves of it again, and I rove a loose knot in the

With 'eeth clenched I drew mysel'

upward along the rope, thrusting forward with my feet for purchase against the side. Sometimes I slipped on the wet planks, and then I was put to it to hold my position. But after I withdrew my body from the water. what with the urgency of my effort and the stimulation of the exercise. some degree of my strength returned : and presently I was able to pull my self up the rope, hand over hand, until I reached a small projecting structure at the level of the deck to which was fastened the starboard rigging of the mainmast.

On this bit of a platform I rested myself, below the level of the bulwarks, one arm thrust round a tautened stay. I suppose that at the most not more than five minutes had elapsed since I had been heaved overboard, and obviously no one had witnessed the incident, for the deck was as quiet and deserted as it had been when I

Who had done it? I accepted as a primary fact the impossibility that it could have been one of the crew. No, I must seek the assailant in the camp of my known enemies, and those immense, twining arms could belong only to the apelike negro. I scrambled over the bulwark in a flash, and crouched down upon the deck to survey the situation. It was one against three-no, four, I reflected bitterly; for I made no doubt the girl would array herself against me. I must have some weapon.

I looked around me, noting that the watch were all ensconced upon the forecastle or the poop. Then I remembered that ranged around the bottoms of the masts were long handbars of wood, fron-tipped, which were used in making fast the sall-ropes. I ran across to the mainmast and tore one

Nobody had yet seen me in the pitch darkness, and I stole across the deck to the door which gave entrance to the poop, my water-soaked shoes quite soundless. The door was ajar, and I opened it very carefully, listening to the murmur of voices in the main cabin. Murray and De Veulle were sitting on the bench which ran across the stern, the table in front of them littered with cards. So much I saw when the entrance into the main cabin was darkened by the body of the ne-

gro, Tom.

He saw me descending the stairs, and apparently took me to be one of the officers coming off watch. At any rate, he stepped back into the cabin and stood there, waiting to give me room. The passage was not more than fifteen or sixteen teet long, and as I approached him I smelled again that rancid, musky odor—the body smell, as I afterward discovered, of the sav-

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age, black or red-which had overwhelmed my nostrils just before I was pitched over the side.

'Twas that decided me. I took a firm grip on my improvised club and, stepping into the pool of light in the main cabin, swung square around, face to face with Tom. He threw up both hands and staggered back with a wild scream of terror, eyes popping from his ashen-gray face.

I gave him no time for recovery, but brought down the iron-tipped end of the handbar with all my force against his skull. The blow would have killed any save a black man. I meant to kill



him. As it was, he dropped like a slaughtered ox, and lay in a crumpled heap of tawdry finery on the floor.

Doors banged in the passage, and I stepped to one side, setting my back to the bulkhead, the while I fastened my eyes upon the startled amazement with which Murray and De Veulle regarded me. 'Twas Murray recovered

"Zooks," he remarked, taking snuff with his usual precision. "It seems that Tom is growing in the way of making mistakes,"

"Aye, and such mistakes are like to react upon others," I replied flercely. "If I were a refugee from justice, I

should be careful how I threatened law-abiding subjects," he answered calmly. "Well, well, it seems we have more company." I followed his glance to the passage,

where stood the girl, whilst over her shoulder peered the square, puzzled features of my silent cabin mate, Master Ringham. "What hath happened?" he asked

"Is the negro dead?"

"I think so," I said. He—"
"Not he," corrected Murray cheer fully, "You know not Tom, good Master Ormerod. He bath a skull on him can be only be opened with blasting-

powder.' "It matters little," I returned. "The rascal attacked me above, Master Ringham. I pursued him down here There is naught more to be said. I

will settle with his master." The second mate looked question-

ingly toward Murray I hated to com promise so, but I had not missed the veiled threat he had addressed to me nor his use of the name Ormerod. Remember, I was still known to the crew as Juggins.

I was uncertain what attitude the captain might take if he was told that I was a political refugee. There might be a reward at stake-and sailors were human like other men.

"Why, that is fairly spoken," rejoined Murray, somewhat to my surprise. "I know naught of the circumstances, Master Ringham, but perhaps I may settle with our friend here. As for the negro, I will attend to him."

"There must be no more violence," warned Ringham, his eyes on me, his words addressed to all of us.

"Violence," rejoined Murray jovially. "Let us reject the idea altogether. Why should we disdain sweet reason's rule? Eh? Master Orm-er-Jug-

I bowed fronically.

Ringham nodded and clumped back to his bunk. But the girl stood her ground, her eyes accusing all of us. "Well, Marjory," said Murray pleas-

antly, "and do you plan to join in our

That was the first time I heard her name, and-why, I cannot say-I heard It without surprise, as if I had always known it to be hers. It suited her, as names sometimes express the character and appearance of their posses

"What hath happened?" she asked in the same words the second mate

"You have heard," said Murray. She shook her head.

"That is not all. This-" she hesitated-"gentleman's clothes are wet. Tom does not attack people without

Murray shrugged his shoulders. De Veulle answered her, leaning across the table, his eyes burning with hatred for me.

"You know what this man hath done, mademoiselle," he cried. "You know his record in the past. You know that omes with us to spy out our plans, to thwart, it may be, what we under take to do. Is any fate too hard for him? Why should you concern your-

"Then there has been fighting?" she asked.

I could stand it no longer.

"Fighting?" I snapped. "And, if you call assassination fighting. An attack in the dark upon an unarmed man, throwing him overboard to drown as you might a blind puppy, never a chance for his life!"

"Yet you are here, sir?" she said

"Tis only by the intervention of Providence that I was saved-or the untidiness of our captain, who left a rope trailing over the side. God hath protected me against your father's-" tioningly.

"Well, what is he?" I returned cuttingly. "Mayhap you have some pet name for a parent who practices assassination. Did not you yourself say Tom never acted without orders?" "But-

"And, furthermore, if this case is not enough, let me tell you that this man here"—I pointed to Murray; for for some reason I disliked to call him her father, even in wrath-"set a gang of rufflans to murder a friend of mine in London."

Murray rose from his seat behind

"Your proof, sir?" he asked coldly "Proof?" I answered weakly. "Why. I was there!"

"Aye, sir," he rejoined with dignity. "But your proof that I hired assassins? Could you prove before the captain or any court of law?"

I saw the twinkle in his eyes and knew that he was playing with me. "No," I said shortly; "I could not

prove it. I have no witnesses." "And you could not even go into a court of law." he pursued, "for you are an outlaw, denied benefit of law or clergy."

"Yes," I flared in answer; "and you sir, what think you might be your fate in New York if I denounce you to Governor Burnet for attempted murder? Would he make use of the opportunity-or no?"

The realization of this trump card ! held had come to me in a flash of inspiration. Now it lay face up for all to see, and there could be no doubt it gave my enemies cause for uneasiness.

"I do not think I am so weakly situated as you had supposed," I mocked him. "Aye, you may denounce me to the captain for a Jacobite conspirator, and it may be he will see fit to believe you. You are three to my one. But when we reach New York, and I am brought before the officers of the Crown, I may have a different story to tell. Think you the governor would be loath to implicate a French officer and the man who is leading the fight against his struggle to control the fur

Murray nodded his head slowly, and sank back in his seat.

"Sure, you are a lad after my own heart," he said. "That was well thought of. 'Tis checkmate-for this present. We must have a truce.

But he reckoned without Marjory. She stood forward in the center of the cabin, passionate indignation shaking her whole figure.

"Oh, why do you talk like this?" she exclaimed. "Are we criminals that we must bargain with a criminal?" I had not made any headway in re-

gaining her good opinion, 'twas evident, and that must be the excuse for my barbed retort. "You show unwonted sensibility, my

tady," I said. "Sure, no men with good consciences would stoop to bar gain with such as 1."

"I fear me, Marjory," said Murray gently, "that you have no appreciation of the tangled path which must be trod by those who concern themselves with affairs of state. The good and the bad are strangely intermingled. Some times we must consort with those we despise in order to gain a good cause. his not we who count, who are but pawns; but the cause we serve.

He turned to me. "It seems, then, Master Ormerod, that we must proclaim a truce for the time being. But the truce holds good only for the period of our voyage to-

gether?" "That is understood," I agreed.

His eyes hardened. "Did you ever hear of the Red Death

and the Black Death, Master Ormerod?" "I shook my head, puzzled.

"You have met the Black Death. You have yet to meet the Red Death And you may meet the Black Death again," he added as Tom groaned where he lay on the floor. Marjory shuddered.

"Enough of this!" she exclaimed. "Is it understood there is to be no killing on this ship?

"It is, my dear," Murray responded. "And now I think you had best withdraw. This has been a trying interview for you, I fear."

She looked from one to the other of us, as if half in doubt-; and then gathered her cloak around her. We all three, as with one accord, bowed low as she stepped into the passage.

(Continued Next Week.)

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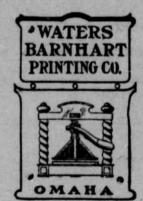
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