

A Romance of the Spanish Main CAPTAIN BLOOD

By RAFAEL SABATINI

CHAPTER XVII—Continued.

"And the girl? Did he say the girl was present, too?"

"Yes. She was a witness of the encounter. Blood carried her off when he had disposed of his brother-in-law."

"And the dead man's followers allowed it?" He caught the note of incredulity in her voice, but missed the note of relief with which it was blent. "Oh, I don't believe the tale. I won't believe it."

"I honor you for that, Miss Bishop. It strained my own belief that men should be so callous, until this Captain Blood explained the explanation. Blood purchased their consent, and he paid them in pearls that were worth more than 20 pieces of eight." His lordship laughed again with a touch of contempt. "A handsome price!"

"Your Chahusc seems to have been accurate enough. Alas!"

"You are sorry, then?"

"As we are sorry to hear of the death of one we have esteemed. Once I held him in regard for an unfortunate but worthy gentleman. Now such a man is best forgotten."

And upon that she passed at once to speak of other things.

The friendship which it was her great gift to command in all she met grew steadily between those two in the little time remaining, until the event befell that married what was promising to be the pleasantest stage of his lordship's voyage.

The marplot was the mad-dog Spanish admiral, whom they encountered on the second day out. He had half way across the Gulf of Gonavos. A shot from the Milagrosa got among some powder stored in the Royal Mary's forecastle and blew up half the ship almost before the fight had started. Before the men of the Royal Mary had recovered from their consternation, their captain killed and a third of their number destroyed with him, the ship, vanishing and rocking helplessly in a crippled state, the Spaniards boarded it.

In the captain's cabin, under the poop, to which Miss Bishop had been conducted for safety. Lord Julian was seeking to comfort and encourage her, with assurances that all would yet be well, at the very moment when Don Miguel was stepping

aboard. Fortunately, Miss Bishop did not appear to be in desperate need of the poor comfort he was in case to offer. The cabin door flew open and Don Miguel strode in. Lord Julian span round to face him and clapped a hand to his sword.

The Spaniard was brisk and to the point.

"Don't be a fool," he said in his own tongue, "for you'll come by a fool's end. Your ship is sinking. Come, all of you, aboard my ship." Don Miguel invited them, and strode out.

As for the survivors in that ghastly shambles that had been the Royal Mary, they were abandoned by the Spaniards to their own resources. Let them take to the boats, and if those did not suffice them, let them swim or drown. If Lord Julian and Miss Bishop were retained, it was because Don Miguel perceived their obvious value. He received them in his cabin.

Lord Julian commanded himself with difficulty to supply them. Then haughtily he demanded to know, in his turn, the name of the aggressor.

"Continued in our next issue."

"I am Don Miguel de Espinosa," he answered. "Admiral of the navy of the Catholic king."

"Will you tell me, then, why you behave like a damned pirate?" Lord Julian asked. "It will cost you dear!"

"All things are possible. Meantime it is your own lives that will cost you dear. Colonel Bishop is a rich man and you, milord, are no doubt a rich man. I will consider and fix your ransom."

"And you have the impudence to call yourself the admiral of the navy of the Catholic king?" stormed his lordship.

"It is that I treat you English heretic dogs just as you English heretic dogs have treated Spaniards upon the seas, you robbers and thieves out of hell! I have the honesty to do it in my own name, but you, you perfidious beast, you send your Captain Blood, your Hagthornes and your Morgans against us and disclaim responsibility for what they do."

"Captain Blood and the rest are not admirals of England!" cried Lord Julian.

"Are they not? How do I know? How does Spain know? Are you not here all you English heretics?"

"Sir!" Lord Julian's voice was harsh as a rasp, his eyes flashed. Instinctively he swung a hand to the place where his sword habitually hung. Then he shrugged and sneered: "Of course," said he, "it sorts with all I have heard of Spanish honor and all that I have seen of yours that you should insult a man who is unarmed and your prisoner."

"The admiral's face flamed scarlet. He half raised his hand to strike. And then, restrained, perhaps, by the reproving insult, he turned on his heel abruptly, and went out without answering.

The Milagrosa, with its consort, the Hidalgo, rolling after it, steered a south by westerly course, then veered to the southeast, round Cape Tiburon, and thereafter, standing well out to sea with the land no more than a cloudy outline to leeward, it headed directly east, and so ran straight into the arms of Captain Blood, who was making for the Winward Passage. That happened early on the following morning. After having systematically hunted his enemy in vain for a year, Don Miguel chanced upon him in this unexpected and entirely fortuitous fashion. It was also the way of fortune that Don Miguel should thus come upon the Arabella at a time when, separated from the rest of the fleet, it was alone and at a disadvantage. It looked to Don Miguel as if the luck which so long had been on Blood's side had at last veered in his own favor.

Miss Bishop, newly risen, had come out to take the air on the quarter-deck, with his lordship in attendance, when she beheld the big red ship that had once been Cinco Ligas out of Cadiz. The sight thrilled her curiously; it awoke in her an uplifting sense of pride that took no account of danger to herself in the encounter that must now be inevitable.

Beside her on the poop stood Lord Julian. But he shared none of her exultation. He had been in his first sea fight yesterday, and he felt that the experience would suffice him for a very considerable time.

"Look," said Miss Bishop, pointing. "Did she realize, he wondered, what was about. He knew the sentence resolved his doubt. "It is English, and it comes resolutely on. It means to fight."

"God help it, then," said his lordship gloomily. "The captain must be mad. If they could so easily blow the Royal Mary out of the water, what will they do to this vessel? Look at that devil Don Miguel. He's uttering disgusting in his side."

Of necessity now, under diminished

smoldering matches, looking up impatiently at the admiral. But the admiral solemnly shook his head. "Stub me!" said his lordship. "The Englishman may be gallant enough to accept battle against such odds. But there are times when discretion is a better quality than gallantry in a commander. Presently you will suffer me to place you under cover."

"I can see best from here," she answered him. And added quietly: "I am praying for this Englishman. He must be very brave."

The Arabella was advancing, now, along a course which, if continued,

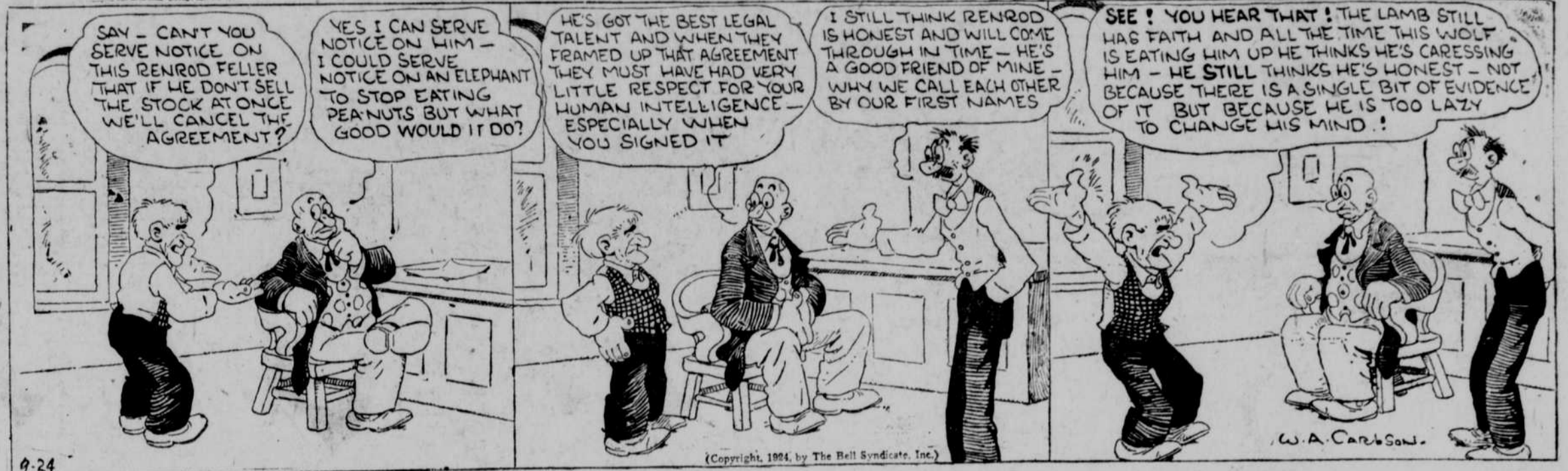
must carry it straight between the two Spanish ships.

But even at that moment the admiral raised his hand; in the waist, below him, a trumpet blared, and immediately the runner on the poop touched off his guns. As the thunder of them rolled out, his lordship

saw, ahead, beyond the English ship and to leeward of it, two heavy splashes. Almost at once two successive spurts of flame leapt from the brass cannon on the Arabella's beakhead, and scarcely had the watches on the poop seen the shower of spray where one of the shots struck the water near them than with a rending crash and a shiver that shook the Milagrosa from stern to stern, the other came to lodge in its forecastle. To avenge that blow, the Hidalgo blazed at the Englishman with both its forward guns.

(To Be Continued Tomorrow.)

THE NEBBES



IS THERE NO HOPE?

Directed for The Omaha Bee by Sol Hess

Barney Google and Spark Plug

Barney Doesn't Have to Toss a Coin to Change His Mind.

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Billy DeBeck



BRINGING UP FATHER

Registered U. S. Patent Office

SEE JIGGS AND MAGGIE IN FULL PAGE OF COLORS IN THE SUNDAY BEE

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by McManus



JERRY ON THE JOB

JUST THE THING FOR HERMAN.

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hoban



Me and Mine

By Briggs ABIE THE AGENT

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hershfield

The merriest bunch of optimists I have encountered in a long while was the all-Japanese orchestra that plays at tea time. This afternoon they were rendering with great vigor, "California Here I Come." Evidently they have not been reading the papers.

A group of us thrown together at a table in the ballroom tonight began discussing waters. One lady led in the conversation. She spoke high praise of Ring Lardner, Edna Ferber, Scott Fitzgerald and a long list of others. Finally a gentleman with a sense of pity ventured: "You know Mr. McIntyre writes?"

"Is that so?" said the lady. "What have you ever written?"

And I couldn't think of a single thing.

However, I am not without an admirer on the boat. The hallboy who takes care of our deck side delivered a pair of freshly shined shoes today. "Are you the McIntyre who writes for a Washington newspaper in Washington, D. C.?" he asked. "I admitted the soft impeachment. "Well, I read it," he said, "and it's rather good." Of course, "rather" is rather a slighted praise, but is better than nothing.

The committee on arrangements has asked me to appear as one of the artists at the ship's concert. With so much talent on board I have declined. To appear before such a distinguished gathering one so obscure should have publicity beforehand. I had thought of reserving advertising space on the left wing of Louis Mann's collar, but I understand both wings have been taken up by Lew Cody and Blanche Sweet.

There are several congressmen aboard—looking important, but getting nowhere. All eyes follow the movie and stage stars. We had tea with "Mickey" Neilan and Blanche Sweet today. "Mickey" has been in for five weeks, but has not lost his sense of humor.

(Copyright, 1924.)

