

# JOHN TOPP, PIRATE

By Weatherby Chesney and Alick Munro.

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## CHAPTER IV.

Three days had passed since our adventure in Don Miguel's house, and as I had heard no more of the broken crucible I began to hope that if there had been a storm it had blown over.

But on the fourth morning, after breakfast, my father told me to follow him into his study, and I guessed that an uncomfortable half hour was in store for me. I was not wrong.

"John," said my father, "what were you doing at Don Miguel's house three nights ago?"

"I went to see Inez," I replied, trembling, but defiant.

"Do you often go?"

"Yes, father."

"Why?"

He was looking at me so gravely, and he spoke so quietly, I knew he was very angry. I thought, however, that the boldest course was the best, so I spoke the plain truth.

"Because Inez is my sweetheart."

"Your sweetheart? H'm!" and he stared at me harder than ever.

"Yes, father," I said, twirling my cap in my fingers nervously, "and I want to marry her."

"Oh, is that so? How old are you?"

"I'm in my nineteenth year."

"Quite true, quite true. Your statements are generally reliable, John. It is your one good point. But I may remind you that it is also true that you celebrated your eighteenth birthday just a month ago. You'd forgotten that for the moment!"

"No, father."

"No? Well, just for the sake of argument, we will say you are 18. Rather young to marry, isn't it?"

"Yes, father," I answered, "but—"

"Never mind the 'but,' John. You are too young to marry, and that's one point against you. How do you propose to support a wife? Pardon my asking; it's a very pertinent question."

"I thought perhaps that you—"

"Well, out with it, John. You thought perhaps that I—"

"That you would set me up in some business."

"Good! I was afraid that you were going to suggest that I might share my income with you, but I'm glad to find that I misjudged you. Let me see. What sort of business should you prefer? A fisherman's? You shake your head. A poacher's? No? Well, I'm afraid I can't think of anything else for which you are suited. It is very sad, but really I don't think you can support a wife at present. Point number two, John!"

"But, father—"

"Wait a minute. I have two more points to urge yet, and then you can have your say. Point number three—the lady is a foreigner. Point number four—I have other views for you. Now let me hear what you have to urge on your side."

"I love Inez."

"Ah! And—"

"She loves me."

"And—"

"Nothing else."

"Well, John, they are both, no doubt, very cogent reasons. I shouldn't advise you to trust too much to the second, by the way, but I am afraid they are not sufficient. Now, sir, listen to me. You are an idle, good for nothing scamp, and from every side I hear nothing but bad reports of you. You and your companion in mischief, Alexander Ireland, are a disgrace to the town. Don Miguel tells me that you utterly ruined an experiment of his which had taken months of constant work and had cost him a large sum of money. He had just brought it to a successful conclusion when you caused him to spill his precious liquid on the floor, and he demands that I shall make good the damage. What do you say to that?"

"That you won't do it," I answered, for I knew my father.

"Well, no. I don't consider that he was engaged on lawful work, so I shall refuse to pay. But that is not the point. Your conduct is simply disgraceful, and I have resolved to put a stop to it. I have obtained a sizarship for you at Clare Hall, Cambridge, and you shall start off there in two days."

"But I want to go to sea," I cried.

"I choose that you shall not."

"Am I to be a parson, then?"

"Certainly. Have you any objection?"

"I hate the work!" I said sullenly.

"Oh, that's unfortunate, but I'm afraid I can't alter my decision. Now go and remember I forbid you to speak to Don Miguel's daughter."

"But, father—"

"This discussion is at an end."

Thus it happened that two days after the conversation with my father I was on my way to Cambridge, condemned to fit myself by hard study for the calling of a parson.

My father was inexorable. The life, he said, had proved a congenial one to my ten brothers and must, therefore, be the best for me too. I combated the theory vigorously, but without producing any effect on his mind, so I had to submit and go.

My father bought me a rough little galloway and having escorted me to the town boundaries and seen me fairly started on the road to York gave me a paternal blessing and a not too heavy purse and then turned back home.

It was the last time I saw him, for

when years afterward I returned to Whitley he was dead. He was a good father to me, though in those days I used not to think so. But he lived by rule himself, and so he would have had the rest of us do the same, and from that effort on his part arose whatever there was of his trouble among us. From what I have seen in the case of other families I should imagine that we were not in this respect unique.

It was with a heavy heart thumping beneath my jacket that I rode slowly along the queen's highway. I was separated from my sworn shipmate; I was going to a life that in the prospect I loathed, and I had not been allowed to see my sweetheart even to say goodby; sufficient reasons, all of them, for gloomy thoughts.

My meditations, however, received a somewhat rude interruption. I had let the reins fall on my horse's neck, and he was jogging along quietly with very little guidance from me, when the



"But I want to go to sea," I cried, sound of something moving in the hedge at the side of the road made him swerve violently to the other side and start suddenly forward. I was taken unprepared, and, being an unskillful horseman at the best of times, was deposited with more violence than grace on my back in the middle of the road. I lay there for a few seconds dazed with the shaking, and when I got up and looked about me to see what had caused my uncomfortably rapid dismount, there was Alec standing looking at me, with his face all twisted up in the effort to look concerned, when as a matter of fact he was shaking with laughter at my undignified maneuver.

"Hurt, Jack?" he asked at length, with exaggerated solemnity.

"No," I answered shortly. "Was it you who frightened my horse?"

"I suppose so, but as you're not hurt it does not matter."

"Doesn't it? It only means that I shall have a pretty chase before I catch him again. That's nothing, is it?"

"Willie has caught him," said Alec.

"Willie Trehallon here too?"

"Yes. Oh, Jack, you did look ridiculous. To see your big, lumbering carcass roll over the horse's tail was a sight for little fishes. Don't be angry, but I can't help laughing."

"Oh, pray go on," I answered loftily and turned to take my horse from Willie Trehallon, who had come up while we were talking.

When I saw that his face, too, wore a comically deprecating look of amusement, I was just beginning to lose my temper with them both, when the thought of the ludicrous figure I must have presented struck me forcibly. My anger suddenly melted, and I laughed as heartily as either of them.

"Come, Master Topp," said Willie when we found our breath again; "better to laugh even if the joke's ag'in' yourself than to wear that grim face you were carrying before we came an upset your gravity. You might have been attending your own funeral by the look o' you."

"Did you give Inez my message?" I asked, turning to Alec.

"Yes, and very nearly fell foul of the Spaniard in doing it."

"What did she say?"

"She cried."

"But the message. Didn't she send me a message?" I asked impatiently.

"No," said Alec innocently. "Did you expect one?" And then, seeing my look of disappointment, he added quickly: "There, Jack, I won't tease you longer. She didn't send a message, but she did better; she gave me a letter for you."

Now, I don't intend to tell what was in that letter. It was the first one I ever received from my sweetheart, and it kept me happy for the rest of the journey. Need I say more?

They waited patiently till I had finished reading, and then Alec asked me what my plans were.

"Cambridge, I suppose," I answered ruefully.

"Parson?" he asked, with a mischievous grin.

"So my father says."

"Are you quite resigned to your fate?"

"Resigned!" I cried impetuously. "No, but now that I'm separated from Inez and you I don't much care."

"I am your sworn shipmate, Jack. Don't forget that."

"I don't forget it, Alec," I said, taking his hand.

"Pardon me; I think you do."

"How?"

"You say that we shall be separated."

"Well, so we shall. Cambridge and Whitley are surely far enough apart."

"I'm coming with you."

"Alec! Do you mean it?" I cried in delight.

"Never desert a sworn shipmate. Master Topp," put in Willie Trehallon sententiously.

"Yes, I'm coming," said Alec, "but I don't mean to turn parson for all that."

"Wish I needn't," I grumbled.

"Why need you?"

"Father's commands. What else takes me to Cambridge?"

"Why go to Cambridge at all? I don't mean to."

"What?" I cried. "I thought you said you were coming with me."

"So I am, but not to Cambridge."

"Where, then?"

"London."

"To London! What for? I don't understand you, Alec."

"London is a port."

"Well?"

"Ports contain ships. Ships go to sea. We go to sea. It's simple enough. Why, Jack, you don't mean to say you are willing to give up our plan of a seafaring life without a struggle?"

"No," I said, "but I hadn't thought of running away to sea."

"Why not? You'll never get in any way if your father is set on putting you into the church. Now is the time to take our fortunes into our own hands."

"But, Alec—"

"Will you do it?"

I thought for a moment before I answered. A vision of the dull round of books and lectures that was waiting for me at Cambridge rose before my eyes. I had just succeeded in throwing off the bondage of one schoolmaster, and it seemed to me that I was on my way to put myself into the power of seven others worse than the first.

"That thought decided me. 'Yes,' I said. 'I will go with you.'"

Now, during this discussion Willie Trehallon had been darting questioning glances at us out of his solitary eye and rubbing his fur cap reflectively backward and forward on his bald pate with his hook, a habit he had when anything exercised his mind. Now he spoke.

"Masters," he said, shaking his head vigorously, "it won't do. 'Tis ten thousand shames that a lad like you, Master Topp, should be made a parson as never wear iron except to cut his meat with, but don't go ag'in' your father, lad. No good ever came o' doing that. You'll be a gould hunter some day, sure enough, an' Master Ireland here a Spaniard killer, but wait till the proper time comes. Making a scholar o' yourself'll do you no harm, though they do say, 'Better go to sea on a Friday than sail under a captain as has book learning.' Seems to me, though, that it's the man as is to blame an' not the learning, an' nobody can deny that scraps o' Latin scattered through a bold speech'll do a lot to hearten men up when they're down. So Willie Trehallon's advice to you is to obey your father's orders just now, an' if you keep up a stout heart an' wait for your chance to come to you you'll slip the caskoon an' live to rob the Spaniard yet."

This speech of Willie's was a damper on our enthusiasm. We knew that he was thoroughly loyal to both of us, and his advice was on that account worth consideration. We argued the matter out, and in the end it was decided that I should continue on my road to Cambridge, while the other two went back to Whitley. I promised to wait a day or two at York, and Alec would meanwhile try to get his guardian's consent

to accompany me to Cambridge. If he succeeded, well and good; if not, he would still join me at York, and we would carry out our original plan of going to sea.

Willie demurred to this, but in the end he agreed to the compromise. And then we parted. He gave me to wear round my neck a charm which he had brought from the Barbary coast, a certain preventive, he assured me, against witchery of all kinds. Then we stood in the road, joined hands and sang three times the verse of Willie's sea song:

Sail away,  
Hock away,  
Plunder! (Stamp with foot.)  
Gather all the valuables you can, etc.

And thus we parted.

On the third day after this Alec joined me at York and announced that his uncle, who was his guardian, had given him leave to accompany me. So to Cambridge we went, and the paternal authority was not defied.

In the end, however, it made little difference, because, though Alec made good use of his opportunities for acquiring knowledge, I did nothing but amuse myself in the town, with the result that by a prolonged course of rioting and idleness made Clare Hall too hot to hold me in.

I had not been in Cambridge two months when the inconvenient attention of the university proctors made it necessary for me to leave hurriedly, and as I had to go Alec said he would not stay either, so one night we fled, with the proctors' men after us. We eluded them, however, by swimming

across the river and without getting into more than an average number of scrapes on the road made our way to London. Three days in this city sufficed to exhaust our small stock of money, and there was only one course left open to us. Fortunately, it was the one we both most wished to follow.

In a low rented tavern parlor in Wapping we entered into conversation with a grizzled old shipmaster, whom we found drinking strong ale with a toast in it and crunching raw onions as though they were aromatic sweetmeats. To him we confided our wish.

"Want to go to sea, eh?" he growled. "Well, it's a dog's life at first and not much better after; rancid salt pork to eat, and not a savory morsel like this here onion to be had for love or money; hard work, hard knocks and scurvy; that's what you'll get. If you're extra strong, you may stand it; if not, better steal a sheep and get comfortably hanged ashore."

And so he went on mauling us. But finally, as he was short handed, he agreed to take us as ordinary seamen, promising promotion when we deserved it.

On that very night we were entered on the books of the brig Surrey Higgins, and our life of adventure was begun.

(To be Continued Next Week.)

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## OUR STATUS IN CUBA.

Neely Case Comes Up Before the Supreme Court—Defendant Sets Up a Broad Claim.

Washington, Dec. 11.—The Neely extradition case was argued yesterday in the supreme court. All the judges were present. The argument developed interesting and important questions of law with reference to the right of the United States to extradite a fugitive criminal in the absence of an extradition treaty, and especially with reference to the right of the president since the ratification of the treaty of Paris to maintain a military form of government in the island of Cuba. The latter feature of the argument made it the first of the arguments which bring up for final decision by the supreme court the constitutional relations between this country and the territorial acquisitions which it has gained as a result of the Spanish-American war. The Neely case referred exclusively to the character of these relations so far as the island of Cuba was concerned, and thus presented an independent question from that which will be argued on Dec. 17, when the character of these relations with Porto Rico and the Philippines will be under consideration.

The defendant sets up the broad claim that the United States has no right to be in the island of Cuba, while the government insists on the right to sustain treaty obligations.

## CLAY AGAINST SUBSIDY.

Georgia Senator Makes First Speech in Opposition to Shipping Measure.

Washington, Dec. 12.—The first speech in opposition to the ship subsidy bill in the senate was delivered yesterday by Clay (Ga.), one of the minority members of the committee on commerce, which reported it to the senate. He is recognized as one of the most vigorous opponents of the bill in the senate and during nearly two hours was accorded close attention by senators on both sides. Hanna, who expects to reply to Clay's argument, gave him a particularly attentive hearing. In the early part of the session a lively colloquy was precipitated over the reference to the committee of the Grout oleomargarine bill, just passed by the house. It finally went to the committee on agriculture. This was a victory for the friends of the bill.

There also was a sharp debate over the Montana senatorial case, but no action was taken, the matter, by consent, going over temporarily. Today no business session of the senate will be held, as the day will be devoted to the celebration of the centennial of the establishment of the seat of government at Washington.

## Marconi's Latest Scheme.

London, Dec. 10.—Marconi claims to have completed a scheme by the erection of wireless telegraphy instruments along the coasts to keep in continuous touch with ships practically the whole way between Australia and the far east at 4 cents a word, compared with \$2.40, the toll now paid to the Antipodes.

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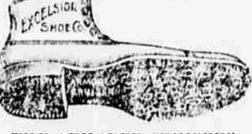
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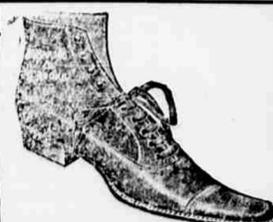
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