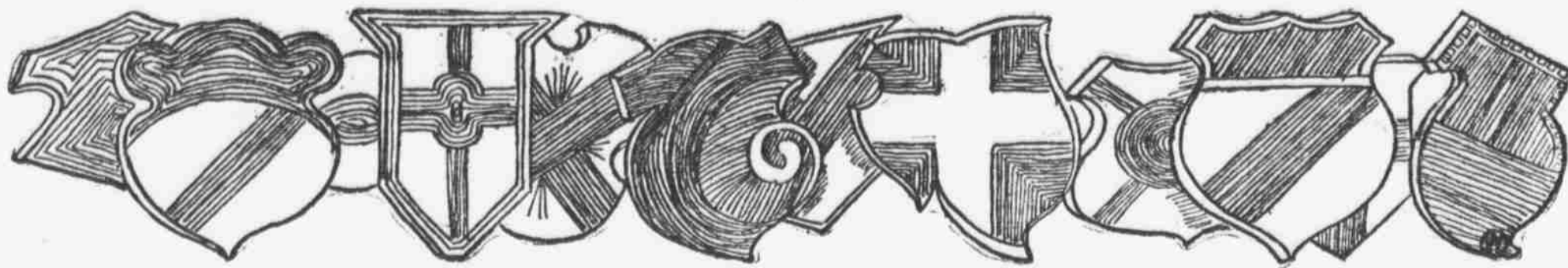


Romance: A Chronicle of the Adventures of John



Kemp in England and Jamaica—By Joseph Conrad

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CHAPTER TWO—PART IV.—Continued.

AFTER the seamen had formed a wide ring he looked at me and talked confidently to himself.

"Escaped—the Ingles! Then thou art doomed, Domingo. Domingo, thou art doomed. Dom— Senor!"

The change of tone, his effort to extend his hands toward me, surprised us all. I looked away.

"Hold hard! Hold him, mate!"

His voice was extremely harsh—not his own. Apparently he believed that he was going to be cut to pieces there and then by the sailors. He seemed to read it in their faces, shuddering and shrinking whenever he raised his eyes. But all these faces gaped with good-natured wonder, except the faces of his two guardians, and these expressed a state of conscientious worry. They were ridiculously anxious to suppress his sudden contortions, as one would some gross indecency. In the scuffle they hissed and swore under their breath. They were scandalized and made unhappy by his behavior.

"Are you ready down there?" roared the bo'sun in the waist.

"Olla raight! Olla raight! Waita a leetle." I heard Castro's voice coming, as if from under the ship. I said coldly a few words about the certain punishment awaiting a pirate in Havana and got on to my feet stiffly. But Manuel was too terrified to understand what I meant. He attempted to snatch at me with his imprisoned hands, and got for his pains a severe jerking, which made his head roll about his shoulders weirdly.

"Pity, senior!" he screamed. And then, with low fervor, "Don't go away. Listen! I am profound. Perhaps the senior did not know that? Mercy! I am a man of intrigue. A politico. You have escaped, and I rejoice at it." He bared his fangs, and frothed like a mad dog. "Senior, I am made happy because of the love I bore you from the first—and Domingo, who let you slip out of the Casa, is doomed. He is doomed. Thou art doomed, Domingo! But the excessive affection for your noble person inspires my intellect with a salutary combination. Wait, senior! A moment! An instant! A combination!"

He gasped as though his heart had burst. The seamen, open-mouthed, were slowly narrowing their circle.

"Can't he gabble!" remarked some one patiently.

He hung on my lips breathless, with a face so distorted that, although it might have been death alone he hated, he looked, indeed, as if impatient to set to and tear me to pieces with his long teeth. Men clutching at straws must have faces thus convulsed by an eager and despairing hope. His silence removed the spell—the spell of his incredible loquacity. I heard the boatswain's hoarse tones:

"Hold on well, ma'am. Right! Walk away steady with that whip!"

I ran limping forward.

"High enough," he rumbled; and I received Seraphina into my arms.

CHAPTER III.

I said: "This is home, at last. It is all over." And she stood by me on the deck. She pushed the heavy black cloak from over her head and her white face appeared above the dim black shadow of her mourning. She looked silently round her on the mist, the groups of rough men, the splatterings of light that were like violence, too. She said nothing, but rested her hand on my arm.

She had her immense griefs, and this was the home I offered her. She looked back at the side. I thought she would have liked to be in the boat again. I said:

"The people in this ship are my old friends. You can trust them—and me."

Thomas Castro, clambering leisurely over the side, followed. As soon as his feet touched the deck he threw the corner of his cloak across his left shoulder, bent down half the rim of his hat, and assumed the appearance of a short, dark conspirator, overtopped by the stalwart sailors who had abandoned Manuel to crowd, bare-armed, bare-chested, pushing and craning their necks, round us.

She said, "I can trust you; it is my duty to trust you, and this is now my home."

She disappeared in the brilliant light of the cabin. The door closed. I remained standing there. Manuel, at her disappear-

ance, raised his voice to a tremendous, incessant yell of despair, as if he expected to make her hear.

"Senorita * * * proteccion del opprimido; oh, hija de piedad * * * Senorita."

His lamentable noise brought half the ship round us; the sailors fell back before the mate, Sebright, walking at the elbow of a stout man in loose trousers and jacket. They stopped.

"An unexpected meeting, Captain Williams," was all I found to say to him.

"What shall we do with that yelping Dago? He's a distressful beast to have about the decks."

"Put him in the coal hole, I suppose, as

"And, by the way, Kemp," Williams said, with sudden annoyance, recollecting himself, as it were, "you never turned up for that dinner—sent no word, nor anything."

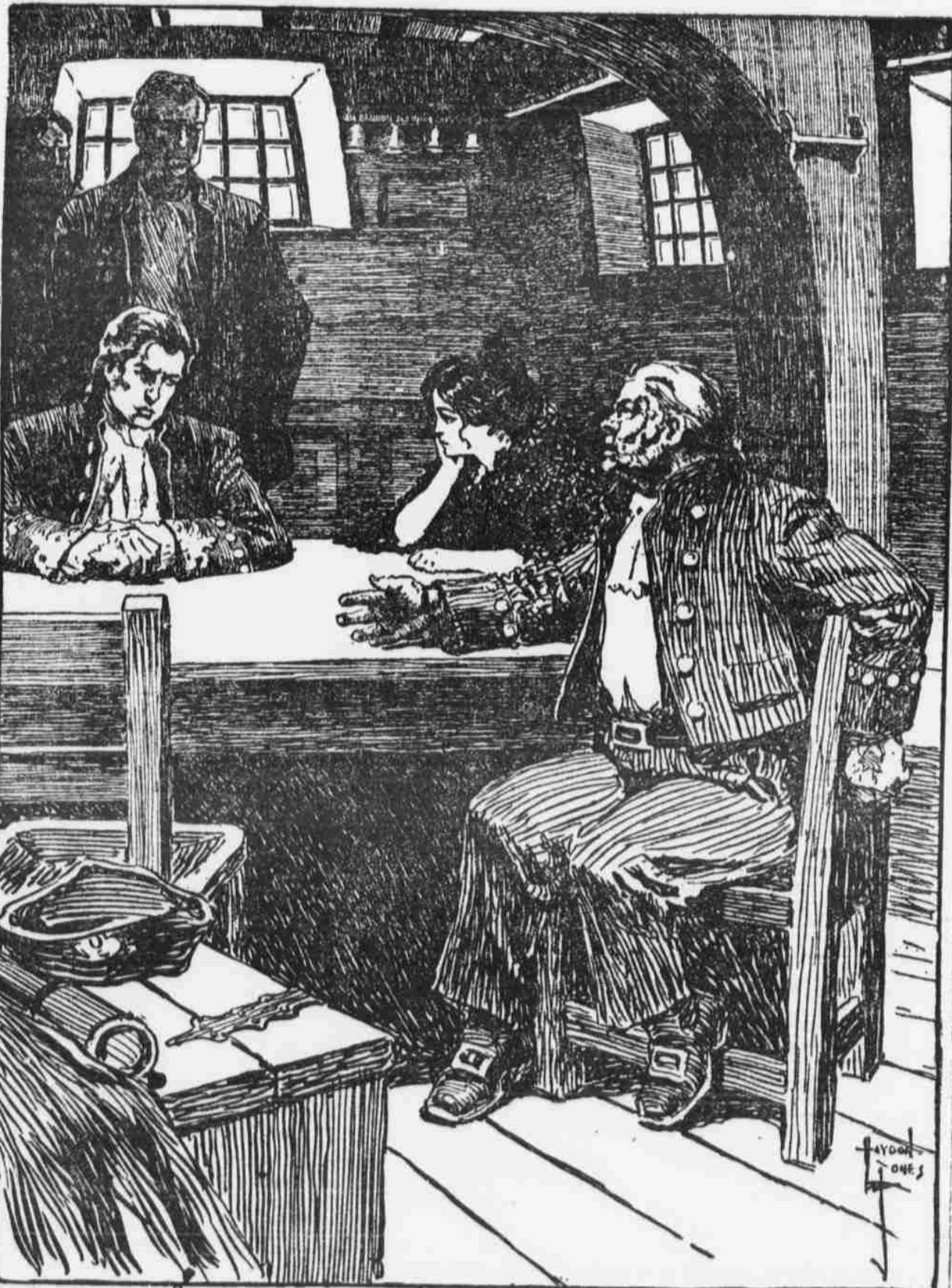
The young mate of the Lion stood by, quiet, listening, with a capable smile. Now he said, in a tone of dry comment:

"Jolly sight more useful turning up here."

"I was kidnaped away from Ramon's back shop, if that's a sufficient apology. It's rather a long story."

"Well, you can't tell it on deck, that's very clear," Sebright had to shout to me. "Not while this infernal noise—what the

deck all round in a black cone surmounted by a peering, quivering head. Quick as thought he hopped and sank low again. Everybody watched with wonder this play, as of some large and diabolic toy. For my part, knowing the deadly purpose of these preliminaries, I was struck with horror. Had he chosen to run on him at once, nothing could have saved Manuel. The poor wretch, vigorously held in front of Castro, was far too terrified to make a sound. With an immovable sailor on each side, he scuffled violently, and covered by starts as if tied between two stone posts. His dumb, rapid panting was in our ears. I shouted:



"AS TO MISSING HAVANA THIS TRIP, EVEN IF YOU, MR. KEMP, WERE TO GIVE A POT OF MONEY, THE CAPTAIN COULD NEVER SHOW HIS NOSE IN THERE AGAIN AFTER BREAKING HIS CHARTER PORT TO HELP STEAL A YOUNG LADY."

far as Havana. I won't rest till I see him on his way to the gallows. The captain-general shall be made sick of this business, or my name isn't Williams. I'll make a breeze over it at home. You shall help in that, Kemp. You ain't afraid of big-wigs. Not you. You ain't afraid of anything. * * *

"He's a devil of a fellow, and a dead shot," threw in Sebright. "And jolly lucky for us, too, sir. It's simply marvelous that you should turn up like this, Mr. Kemp. We hadn't a grain of powder that wasn't caked solid in the canisters. Nothing'll take it out of my head that somebody had got at the magazine while we lay in Kingston.

deuce's up? It sounds more like a dog fight than anything else."

As we ran toward the main hatch I recognized the aptness of the comparison. It was that sort of vicious, snarling, yelping clamor which arises all at once and suddenly dies.

"Castro! Thou Castro!"
"Malediction! My eyelids!"
"Thou! Englishman's dog!"
"Ha! Porco."

CHAPTER IV.

The voices ceased. Castro ran tiptoeing lightly, mantled in ample folds. He assumed his hat with a brave tap, crouched swiftly inside his cloak. It touched the

"Stop, Castro! Stop! Stop him, some of you! He means to kill the fellow!"

Nobody heeded, my shouting. Castro flung his cloak on the deck, jumped on it, kicked it aside, all in the same moment as it seemed, dodged to the right, to the left, drew himself up and stepped high, paunchy in his tight smalls and short jacket, making all the time a low, sibilant sound which was perfectly blood curdling. "He has a blade on his forearm!" I yelled. "He's armed, I tell you!"

No one could comprehend my distress. A sailor, raising a lamp, had a broad smile. Somebody laughed outright. Castro planted himself before Manuel, nodding menacingly, and stooped ready