On the Spanish Main

A Story of the Buccaneers

By EVAN MAC HUGH

One evening about a century and a half ago a British ship, the Helen Dole, rode at anchor in a bay on the southern coast of Jamaica island. She had come down through the Windward passage bound for Kingston, but had been blown by a hurricane past that port and had drifted into the bay that lies beyond, for the wind had ceased as suddenly as it had come, and, being disabled, the ship was uncontrollable.

Another vessel had met the same experience as the Helen Dole. This was a small schooner, the Pelican, under the command of a young New Englander, Harry Spencer. He was on his way to Vera Cruz with a cargo of blasting powder to be used in the mines there. He, too, had suffered from the storm and put into the bay to

TOSSED IT ON THE PIRATE'S DECK.

fix a new rudder post, the old one being full of seams and liable to be twisted apart.

A third ship of a very different shape from the other two was standing eastward before a very light breeze. She was low on the water, and her masts leaned astern. This and the abundance of sail she carried indicated that she had been built for fast sailing. Suddenly she veered to the northward and stood directly in to the bay where the two vessels were lying.

The crews of the anchored ships could read only too plainly what was in store for them. During a long sea war between England and Spain British privateers had preyed on the Spanish galleons carrying gold from the Mexican mines to Spain. The war had ceased, and privateering had degenerated into piracy. Every one on board the Dole and the Pelican knew that the incoming vessel had sighted them and was intending to destroy them. They looked upon her as flies caught in a web would regard the spider advancing to devour them.

And that was the intention of Captain Crocker of the pirate. But, unfortunately for his purpose to carry out his design at once, he could not get near enough to either of them. The wind was so light that darkness fell before he came within range of them, and then it failed altogether. But Crocker was not troubled; his glass had shown him that both ships were disabled, and he saw no chance of their escaping him during the night. In the first place, there was no wind, and even if a breeze should spring up and they could take advantage of it he could hear the raising of the anchors. So he dropped his own not far from either of them to wait for morning.

On board the Dole was no such quiescence as on the pirate. There were men, women and children passengers who had come from England to settle in Jamaica. For them as well as the officers and crew was every prospect of death as soon as day came. Men were praying; women were hugging their children to their breasts; the sailors were standing about gloomily. There was not a cannon aboard. They had some muskets and cutlasses, but what would these avail? At any show of resistance the pirate could stand off and sink the ship by broadsides.

Nevertheless Captain Seymour of the Dole ordered the men to bring up what arms there were, with a view to repelling those who might attempt to board him, his object being to force the pirate to sink the ship with her guns and thus save the women from any worse fate than death. He divided the arms among the men and assigned each man to his station.

The night was still, and both the pirates and those on the little Pelican could hear the sounds of distress that came from the Dole. Now it would be a prayer, now a wail, now the cry of a child. None of these moved the pirates, who were hardened to them, but they caused the crew of the Pelican to forget their own coming death in sympathy with these defenseless beings on the neighboring ship.

Spencer, who was but twenty-five years old, heard the wails, and they incited his brain to action. But what could he do to avert the calamity? He had some armament, but not enough to protect his own vessel, to say nothing of the Dole. He had two six-pounder guns, one on the port, the other on the starboard bow, and he had painted his ship's side to represent openings for ordnance, his object being to make it appear that he was armed with twenty guns instead of two. But the pirate would soon discover his deficiency, and with more guns than Spencer feigned to have and of higher caliber he could make short work of the Pelican.

"We'll fight him, boys," said Spencer to his crew, "and we have one advantage—we won't have to walk the plank. As soon as one of her shots strikes our blasting powder we'll go to Davy Jones' locker."

But his active Yankee brain during the whole of that fearful night never ceased trying to find some way to circumvent the pirate that he might save all the lives that were to be sacrificed on the morrow. When daylight came all of the crew of the Dole and many of the passengers were on deck. There was a ghost of a hope for them in the Pelican, for they had been deceived by her painted ports. The first object that stirred on the pirate was a man walking to the stern. When he reached it he hauled up a ball of bunting and broke the skull and crossbones. Those on the Dole shuddered. Then men appeared here and there, some of them carrying arms from point to point. One of them, who appeared to be the captain, stood on the poop deck giving orders.

The Pelican lay perfectly still, but presently men were seen raising her anchor. This evidently attracted the pirates' attention. Suddenly a puff of smoke broke from her bow, and a shot went skipping toward the schooner. A gun boomed on the latter ship. Exclamations denoting hope came from those on the Dole. Would there be a fight? But no. The pirate fired several shots and elicited no reply. The only comfort for those on the Dole was that the Pelican would be first destroyed.

The Pelican's single shot was in accordance with a plan laid by Captain Spencer after midnight—a plan yet little more than a hope. His object in firing at the pirate was simply to indicate that he had better dispose of the Pelican before attending to the Dole. Such was Captain Crocker's decision. Having got up his anchor and having failed to elicit any more firing from the schooner, he prepared to go to her and take possession.

Those on the Dole saw with agony that the Pelican must soon be taken. All on board would be dispatched or forced to walk the plank, and then the pirate would do the same by those on the British ship. Some went below to tell the others that there was no hope; others remained to see a slaughter that would soon be visited upon themselves.

The pirate hoisted a jib and foretopsail, which gave her headway enough to take her to her victim. The latter had raised her anchor, but did not hoist a sail. The crew stood in a group, apparently waiting to die without resistance. One man was in the rigging. Had it not been for the hopelessnes, of the situation perhaps his being there might have excited attention. Captain Seymour noticed an arm extending from where the man was located, from the outer end of which a rope dropped to the deck, but so full of anguish was he that it made but little impression upon him.

On went the pirate, like a great bird on its way to pounce upon a fish. On the doomed vessel not a man moved. On the poop deck stood the captain, now and again diverting his glance from his coming enemy to the man in the rigging.

Suddenly Seymour gave an order, and the crew ran to the halyards. Up went the sails and the Pelican began to move.

Then for a few minutes followed a maneuvering, the pirate trying to get near enough to his enemy to board her, the Pelican aiming to keep her off. The latter had an advantage in having up more sail. The pirate, being sure of its victim, did not add to its own canvas. Presently, when the two vessels were but half a dozen yards apart, those on the Dole saw the arm that has been mentioned by means of the rope attached swung outward by men on deck so that it was turned toward the pirate. Then the man in the rigging, holding something in his hand that looked like a glass carboy, climbed out on the arm and, swinging what he held, tossed it on to the pirate's deck.

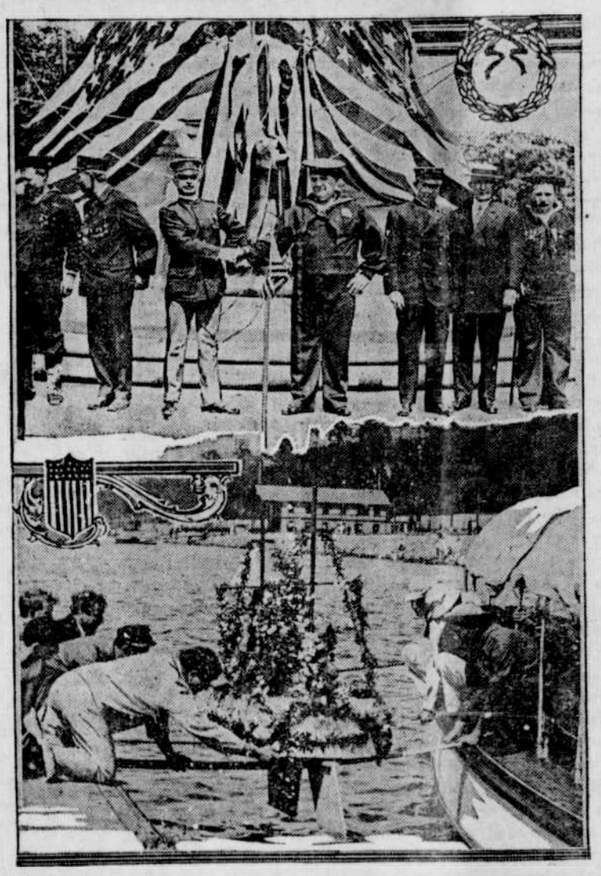
The passengers on the Dole saw a sight that filled them with a delirium of surprise and joy. They flew to each other's arms, laughing and weeping.

The pirate was blown to atoms!

A few minutes later she went down, and from the deck of the Dole arose a shout that was echoed from the Pelican. The pirate had taken the place of its intended victims.

Captain Spencer had laid his plan well, though there were many chances against its success. Had he lain quiet when his enemy came down on him, instead of maneuvering, he would probably have blown up his own ship as well as the pirate. During the night he had thrown overboard all his cargo of blasting powder except what he needed for defense, and his own vessel suffered but little from the explosion. As for the crew of the Pelican, when they saw the big bomb swing off every man dropped to the deck.

Survivors of Ill Fated Maine; Floral Ship In Honor of Victims



Photos by American Press Association.

SURVIVORS of the old battleship Maine, which was blown up in Havana harbor in 1898, took part in the unveiling of the Maine memorial monument in New York. The picture shows them standing in front of the national memorial shaft, which was erected in their honor as well as in honor of their comrades who went down to death with the ship. Another interesting feature of the unveiling celebration was the setting adrift in the Hudson river of a floral boat. It drifted out to sea as a pretty memorial token on the part of the sailors of the north Atlantic fleet.

Oil For Country Roads.

A most interesting experiment is being conducted in central Illinois near Springfield. The state highway commission is making a test of oil on country roads. While oil roads are no novelty in many parts of the United States, they are not known on the heavy black soil of central Illinois. The top soil of the road is being mixed with an asphalt oil to the depth of six inches. In many parts of the Sucker State stone roads are out of the question. Without the material near at hand the great prairie states cannot expect to save stone pikes, as do some of the eastern states. Good roads must be secured by drainage, special care and possibly by the use of oil. This experiment will be watched with a great deal of interest.

How I Came to Marry

By ALLAN G. LAMOND

In the gold hunting days I went out to the gold fields to make a fortune. I fell in with a young man of my own age, Elliot Mansfield, and we agreed to prospect together. Mansfield had left a mother and sister, to whom he was much attached. Unfortunately his mother had received an injury to one of her eyes, and since her son's departure for the west it had extended to the other eye, and she was gradually becoming blind.

The letters she wrote Mansfield were pathetic. She hoped that he might be with her again, but she did not hope to see him. His sister wrote him that, if possible, he should come home that his mother might see him once more before losing her sight. But he had no money for the journey, and if he could get home he would not be able to get back again. He was a resolute fellow and averse to giving up what he had undertaken—namely, to go back, if ever he did go back, with a fortune.

I was no better off than Mansfield. We wandered about with picks on our shoulders wherever we believed there might be gold and at last succeeded in striking dirt that promised to pay. While we were getting it into shape to secure capital with which to work it Mansfield was taken sick. He was ill a long while, and during this time I wrote letters for him to his mother and sister. In these letters, at his request, I forged his handwriting that they might not suspect that he was unable to write them himself. Furthermore, he charged me to tell them that he had struck a mine of value and would soon go east with a view to forming a company to work it.

The poor fellow did not recover. He asked me before he died to make over his share in our mine to his mother and sister and if possible go east, as he had hoped to do, and either sell the mine or organize a company, as I might be able. Dreading the shock of his death on his mother, he asked me to keep up the deception till I should go east and arrange with his sister for breaking the sad news to his mother.

I found an opportunity to sell out for $50,000 and availed myself of it. If I had held on the property would have made me very rich, but I was tired of the deception I was practicing and knew my late partner's mother and sister were very poor. Taking their share of the proceeds with me, I went at once to the town in which they lived. On my arrival I sent a messenger to Miss Mansfield to tell her that her brother's partner had arrived with news of him, but cautioning her to say nothing about me to her mother until I had had an opportunity to see her. She appointed a meeting with me at the home of one of her friends. I went there and told her the bad news I had for her.

To her grief was added the fact that her mother, who had now become quite blind, was looking for her son every day. Her daughter—Mildred was her name—was in agony at the idea of imparting the news to her. She could not think of doing so at the time, for the old lady was not in a condition to bear it. So we arranged between us that until she was better I was to write letters as before, putting off the son and brother's arrival.

Mildred Mansfield was a very lovely girl. I sympathized with her deeply, and it was a matter of satisfaction that I was enabled to turn over to her her brother's share in what I had realized for the mine.

One day, desiring to consult with Mildred, I went to her house to see her. I could see no risk of revealing the true situation in doing so. But the old lady, who was in her room above, heard my voice below and got it into her head that I was her son. The idea occurred to Mildred of permitting her mother to believe me to be her son, and I saw no objection to the plan. So I went upstairs and submitted to a hugging and weeping that were almost hysterical.

"The mine is sold, mother," I said, "and my share is $25,000. It's all in bank right here in this town."

"I'm very happy," she said through her tears, "though I can't see you. You must stay here always, and so long as I live neither you nor your sister must marry, but live here for me and each other."

Mildred was too embarrassed by this to make a reply, so I was obliged to make it myself.

"Yes, mother. We will live only for you and each other."

I was looking at Mildred when I said this, and she raised her eyes and blushed. Then she said, "You'd better give mother time to recover from her excitement," and I went downstairs.

Well, we were in for it now deeper than ever. Of course I was obliged to take up my quarters in the house, and since Mrs. Mansfield was blind as a bat she was not available for a chaperon. We talked over the matter of telling her the truth, and finally I said:

"Why not let her remain in ignorance? We can be married, and that will make it all right for me to live here. After your mother's death, if you wish it, I will help you to get the marriage annulled."

So we had a wedding ceremony performed, just to enable us to deceive Mrs. Mansfield for her own good, and when she died we concluded to let the marriage stand. And that's the way I came to be a married man today and the father of seven children—just to avoid giving an old lady on the brink of the grave a shock.

Have you paid the printer?