



**Jack London**

*Hearts of Three*



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## CHAPTER I

**E**vents happened very rapidly with Francis Morgan that late spring morning. If ever a man leaped across time into the raw, red drama and tragedy of the primitive and the medieval melodrama of sentiment and passion of the New World Latin, Francis Morgan was destined to be that man, and Destiny was very immediate upon him.

Yet he was lazily unaware that aught in the world was stirring, and was scarcely astir himself. A late night at bridge had necessitated a late rising. A late breakfast of fruit and cereal had occurred along the route to the library—the austere elegant room, from which his father, toward the last, had directed vast and manifold affairs.

“Parker,” he said to the valet who had been his father’s before him, “did you ever notice any signs of fat on R.H.M. in his last days?”

“Oh, no, sir,” was the answer, uttered with all the due humility of the trained servant, but accompanied by an involuntarily measuring glance that scanned the young man’s splendid proportions. “Your father, sir, never lost his leanness. His figure was always the same, broad-shouldered, deep in the chest, big-boned, but lean, always lean, sir, in the middle. When he was laid out, sir, and bathed, his body would have shamed most of the young men about town. He always took good care of himself; it was those exercises in bed, sir. Half

an hour every morning. Nothing prevented. He called it religion.”

“Yes, he was a fine figure of a man,” the young man responded idly, glancing to the stock-ticker and the several telephones, his father had installed.

“He was that,” Parker agreed eagerly. “He was lean and aristocratic in spite of his shoulders and bone and chest. And you’ve inherited it, sir, only on more generous lines.”

Young Francis Morgan, inheritor of many millions as well as brawn, lolled back luxuriously in a huge leather chair, stretched his legs after the manner of a full-vigored menagerie lion that is over-spilling with vigor, and glanced at a headline of the morning paper, which informed him of a fresh slide in the Culebra Cut at Panama.

“If I didn’t know we Morgans didn’t run that way,” he yawned, “I’d be fat already from this existence... Eh, Parker?”

The elderly valet, who had neglected prompt reply, startled at the abrupt interrogative interruption of the pause.

“Oh, yes, sir,” he said hastily. “I mean, no, sir. You are in the pink of condition.”

“Not on your life,” the young man assured him. “I may not be getting fat, but I am certainly growing soft... Eh, Parker?”

“Yes, sir. No, sir; no, I mean no, sir. You’re just the same as when you came home from college three years ago.”

“And took up loafing as a vocation,” Francis laughed. “Parker!”

Parker was alert attention. His master debated with himself ponderously, as if the problem were of profound importance, rubbing the while the bristly thatch of the small toothbrush moustache he had recently begun to sport on his upper lip.

“Parker, I’m going fishing.”

“Yes, sir!”

"I ordered some rods sent up. Please joint them and let me give them the once over. The idea drifts through my mind that two weeks in the woods is what I need. If I don't, I'll surely start laying on flesh and disgrace the whole family tree. You remember Sir Henry?—the old original Sir Henry, the buccaneer old swashbuckler?"

"Yes, sir; I've read of him, sir."

Parker had paused in the doorway until such time as the ebbing of his young master's volubility would permit him to depart on the errand.

"Nothing to be proud of, the old pirate."

"Oh, no, sir," Parker protested. "He was Governor of Jamaica. He died respected."

"It was a mercy he didn't die hanged," Francis laughed. "As it was, he's the only disgrace in the family that he founded. However, what I was going to say is that I've looked him up very carefully. He kept his figure and he died lean in the middle, thank God. It's a good inheritance he passed down. We Morgans never found his treasure; but beyond rubies is the lean-in-the-middle legacy he bequeathed us. It's what is called a fixed character in the breed—that's what the profs taught me in the biology course."

Parker faded out of the room in the ensuing silence, during which Francis Morgan buried himself in the Panama column and learned that the canal was not expected to be open for traffic for three weeks to come.

A telephone buzzed, and, through the electric nerves of a consummate civilization, Destiny made the first out-reach of its tentacles and contacted with Francis Morgan in the library of the mansion his father had built on Riverside Drive.

"But my dear Mrs. Carruthers," was his protest into the transmitter. "Whatever it is, it is a mere local flurry. Tampico Petroleum is all right. It is not a gambling proposition. It is

legitimate investment. Stay with. Tie to it... Some Minnesota farmer's come to town and is trying to buy a block or two because it looks as solid as it really is... What if it is up two points? Don't sell. Tampico Petroleum is not a lottery or a roulette proposition. It's bona fide industry. I wish it hadn't been so almighty big or I'd have financed it all myself... Listen, please, it's not a flyer. Our present contracts for tanks is over a million. Our railroad and our three pipelines are costing more than five millions. Why, we've a hundred millions in producing wells right now, and our problem is to get it down country to the oil-steamers. This is the sober investment time. A year from now, or two years, and your shares will make government bonds look like something the cat brought in..."

"Yes, yes, please. Never mind how the market goes. Also, please, I didn't advise you to go in in the first place. I never advised a friend to that. But now that they are in, stick. It's as solid as the Bank of England... Yes, Dicky and I divided the spoils last night. Lovely party, though Dicky's got too much temperament for bridge... Yes, bull luck... Ha! ha! My temperament? Ha! Ha!.. Yes?.. Tell Harry I'm off and away for a couple of weeks... Fishing, trout lets, you know, the springtime and the streams, the rise of sap, the budding and the blossoming and all the rest... Yes, good-bye, and hold on to Tampico Petroleum. If it goes down, after that Minnesota farmer's bulled it, buy a little more. I'm going to. It's finding money... Yes... Yes, surely... It's too good to dare sell on a flyer now, because it mayn't ever again go down... Of course, I know what I'm talking about. I've just had eight hours' sleep, and haven't had a drink... Yes, yes... Good-bye."

He pulled the ticker tape into the comfort of his chair and languidly ran over it, noting with mildly growing interest the message it conveyed.

Parker returned with several slender rods, each a glittering gem of artisanship and art. Francis was out of his chair, ticker flung aside and forgotten as with the exultant joy of a boy he examined the toys and, one after another, began trying them, switching them through the air till they made shrill whip-like noises, moving them gently with prudence and precision under the lofty ceiling as he made believe to cast across the floor into some unseen pool of trout-lurking mystery.

A telephone buzzed. Irritation was swift on his face.

“For heaven’s sake answer it, Parker,” he commanded. “If it is some silly stock-gambling female, tell her I’m dead, or drunk, or down with typhoid, or getting married, or anything calamitous.”

After a moment’s dialogue, conducted on Parker’s part, in the discreet and modulated tones that befitted absolutely the cool, chaste, noble dignity of the room, with a “One moment, sir,” into the transmitter, he muffled the transmitter with his hand and said:

“It’s Mr. Bascom, sir. He wants you.”

“Tell Mr. Bascom to go to hell,” said Francis, simulating so long a cast, that, had it been in verity a cast, and had it pursued the course his fascinated gaze indicated, it would have gone through the window and most likely startled the gardener outside kneeling over the rose bush he was planting.

“Mr. Bascom says it’s about the market, sir, and that he’d like to talk with you only a moment,” Parker urged, but so delicately and subduedly as to seem to be merely repeating an immaterial and unnecessary message.

“All right.” Francis carefully leaned the rod against a table and went to the ‘phone.

“Hello,” he said into the telephone. “Yes, this is I, Morgan. Shoot, What is it?”

He listened for a minute, then interrupted irritably: "Sell—hell. Nothing of the sort... Of course, I'm glad to know. Even if it goes up ten points, which it won't, hold on to everything. It may be a legitimate rise, and it may not ever come down. It's solid. It's worth far more than it's listed. I know if the public doesn't. A year from now it'll list at two hundred ... that is, if Mexico can cut the revolution stuff... Whenever it drops, you'll have buying orders from me... Nonsense. Who wants control? It's purely sporadic ... eh? I beg your pardon. I mean it's merely temporary. Now I'm going off fishing for a fortnight. If it goes down five points, buy. Buy all that's offered. Say, when a fellow's got a real bona fide property, being bulled is almost as bad as having the bears after one ... yes... Sure ... yes. Goodbye."

Moreover, while Francis returned delightedly to his fishing rods, Destiny, in Thomas Regan's downtown private office, was working overtime. Having arranged with his various brokers to buy, and, through his divers channels of secret publicity having let slip the cryptic tip that something was wrong with Tampico Petroleum's concessions from the Mexican government, Thomas Regan studied a report of his own oil-expert emissary who had spent two months on the spot spying out what Tampico Petroleum really had in sight and prospect.

A clerk brought in a card with the information that the visitor was importunate and foreign. Regan listened, glanced at the card, and said:

"Tell this Mister Señor Alvarez Torres of Ciudad de Colon that I can't see him."

Five minutes later the clerk was back, this time with a message pencilled on the card. Regan grinned as he read it:

*"Dear Mr. Regan,*

*"Honored Sir:—*

*"I have the honor to inform you that I have a tip on the location of the treasure Sir Henry Morgan buried in old pirate days.*

*"Alvarez Torres."*

Regan shook his head, and the clerk was nearly out of the room when his employer suddenly recalled him.

"Show him in—at once."

In the interval of being alone, Regan chuckled to himself as he rolled the new idea over in his mind. "The unlicked cub!" he muttered through the smoke of the cigar he was lighting. "Thinks he can play the lion part old R.H.M. played. A trimming is what he needs, and old Grayhead Thomas R. will see that he gets it."

Señor Alvarez Torres' English was as correct as his modish spring suit, and though the bleached yellow of his skin advertised his Latin-American origin, and though his black eyes were eloquent of the mixed lusters of Spanish and Indian long compounded, nevertheless he was as thoroughly New Yorkish as Thomas Regan could have wished.

"By great effort, and years of research, I have finally won to the clue to the buccaneer gold of Sir Henry Morgan," he preambled. "Of course it's on the Mosquito Coast. I'll tell you now that it's not a thousand miles from the Chiriqui Lagoon, and that Bocas del Toro, within reason, may be described as the nearest town. I was born there—educated in Paris, however—and I know the neighborhood like a book. A small schooner—the outlay is cheap, most very cheap—but the returns, the reward—the treasure!"

Señor Torres paused in eloquent inability to describe more definitely, and Thomas Regan, hard man used to dealing

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