

Spaniard's Gold

Louis Arthur Cunningham

Illustrated by

R. M. Brinkerhoff

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SPANIARD'S GOLD

By Louis Arthur Cunningham

ILLUSTRATED BY R. M. BRINKERHOFF

*The humorous yarn of four seafaring men
and a widow who knew her doubloons*

"I see," said Captain Jonas Hallan, squinting at a crumpled copy of the morning paper that someone had left in the pilot rooms, "how they're diggin' for buried treasure down along the south shore o' Nova Scotia. Great thing that—buried treasure, doubloons an' pieces of eight. Tons o' them lyin' along the coast down in these parts."

"Have you ever," I ventured rashly, "had to do with any treasure hunting expeditions or the like, captain?"

"Yes," said he. "Oh, yes. Haven't ye ever heard? But, no; you're pretty young an' this were back in '87, the year Tom Haskins, while in his cups, fell down the after-hatch aboard the ship *Laura K. Galley* an' broke his neck, an' left behind him one o' the prettiest widders ever seen in these parts an' a tidy bit of money. That was the year o' the big treasure hunt for what they called the hoard on Hogan's Point. Hogan's Point bein' a place up the coast a bit toward St. Martin's. I'll tell ye about that treasure hunt, which were by far one o' the most important ever engaged in down here: important both from the angle of the men, sea captains all, as engaged in it, an' from the angle o' what came outen it."

First off (said the captain) it started with Kitty Haskins, or Mrs. Tom Haskins, the widder I just mentioned—as trim a little craft, what with her bright black eyes and curly black hair and dimples, as you'd lay eyes on in the course o' several v'yages. No sooner had Tom Haskins fell down that hatch and met a unhappy end than the suitors was swarmin' around Kitty seekin' her hand in marriage, with an eye, o' course, to the little legacy Tom had left to her.

Suitors ye never see the like of it, mister. Retired mariners, they was, for the biggest part. Have ye ever noticed how these old lads, once they're ashore for good, will be looking for a snug berth and a warm kitchen in

which to smoke their pipes, drink their grog and toast their toes by the fire? Well, that's the way it was. Lazy as sin, I'm tellin' ye, they were, with only enough gumption to know a good thing when they saw it. They pestered Kitty Haskins nigh to death, what with their oglin' and hintin' and chuckin' of her under the chin. And many times they came to blows over her down in the bar parlor of Haney's grog shop in Drury Lane.

There was four main suitors, four who stood out, head and shoulders, above the dozen or so smaller fry. First an' foremost was Cap'n Art Gilligan who used to command the ship *Prince of Egypt*. Captain Art was the fav'rite, account of his good looks and self-confidence. Next came George Malarkey, who used to be master of the brig *Cantyre*, a no-account vessel and a no-account skipper save for the fact that Cap'n George could play on the concertina an' sing what was alleged to be Spanish love songs. The widder kinda liked Cap'n George's singin', so he was looked upon as a dangerous rival.

Then there was Cap'n Marvin Watts, who wasn't much to look at on account of his Adam's apple stickin' out like a ostrich's neck that has swallowed a doorknob, and account of his upper lip hangin' down like a motherless foal. But Cap'n Marvin Watts had a persuasive voice and was a great talker, and could bring the blushes to Kitty Haskins' plump cheeks. So Cap'n Marvin, with his voice, was a rival to George Malarkey's concertina and Spanish love songs.

Last an' least was Cap'n Peter Whipple, who was sort o' scorned by all the rest, due to his havin' a wooden leg and a slight implement in his speech that made him gulp at most orkard moments. None of the others worried about Cap'n Peter Whipple. Cap'n Peter's big purpose in life were to retire to some farm or other he were always blattin' about and raise turmuts and sheep and the like. But he'd been talkin' farm fer years now and nothin' ever came of it. The only thing that let Peter Whipple into the class of dangerous rivals for Kitty Haskins' hand were his persistence. He hung around as much as anyone, stompin' about on his wooden leg and gulpin' away at Kitty whenever he could waylay her.

Well, sir, ye never see such luffin' and tackin' and backin' of tops'ls and manœuvrin' as them four now proceeded to execute. What with hemmin' and hawin' and hintin' and beatin' about the bush, they had poor Kitty worn to a shred. There they was, all proposing to her and all expecting to marry her and immedjutly settle down in the house Tom Haskins had left her, and then sit up and be danced attendance on, hand and foot, as if they was

nabobs or shipowners or something. An' the way they took on at each other were a cryin'-out scandal.

"You old weasels ain't got a chanct," said Cap'n Art Gilligan down in Haney's one night. "Not a chanct, I tell you!" An' he hammered the table for emphasis. "So back yer tops'ls an' give up the race to a faster vessel. Kitty's my prize, me buckos, and don't forget it. We're sailin' together."

"Hope Kitty can steer, then," grunted Cap'n George Malarkey, a taunt directed at the fact that Cap'n Gilligan 'ad once run the *Prince of Egypt* on to Trinity Ledges on a sunny day.

"That'll do ye!" roared Cap'n Art. "That'll be enough from you, ye ruddy 'cordeon player. Get a monkey and sit him on your shoulder, an' maybe you will be able to make your first honest penny."

"Gentlemen," says Captain Marvin Watts, pourin' the oil of his smooth voice on the troubled waters of love. "Gentlemen, you forget yourselves, and forget, too, the virtue and grace and dignity and—and pulchritood of her whose name you mention so unworthily in this here, now, rum shop. Be quiet!"

"Well, I'm tellin' ye," mumbled Cap'n Gilligan, fixing George Malarkey with a fierce eye and scowlin' horriblelike. "I'm a-tellin'you. Stand clear!"

"I guess we all—gulp, gulp—got a word to—gulp say," gulps Cap'n Peter Whipple, sipping his rum and root beer. "I guess—gulp—that's so, eh, m' lads? The wind blows—gulp—free fer all on us. Good—gulp—sturdy, speedy crafts—gulp—all on us. Depends on skill, me hearties, on—gulp—seamanship that's—gulp—what."

"Bilgewater," sneers Cap'n Gilligan. "Bilgewater—that's what that is. And you with your gulpety-gulp and peg leg going around lying to her that it was a shark bit it off when you was seekin' to rescue a shipmate that had fallen over down in Barbados waters." Cap'n Gilligan sniffed. "A hee-ro, a hee-ro! We know how you lost the leg. Peter Whipple—blood p'isin, that's how. And ye got it when, after succeeding in kickin' a bottle off a bar, ye lost yer balance and fell on the broken bottle, and they was pickin' pieces of glass outen ye for days after."

"It's a—gulp, gulp—lie, ye bletherin'—!"

So it went on till closing time, and Mike Haney blew the lights out an' left them wranglin' in the dark. These grog-shop sessions, as ye can imagine, were getting them nowhere. Each and all, directly and indirectly, they had proposed their heads off to Kitty Haskins, but Kitty, wise girl that

she was, didn't give them any satisfaction. Never one of them mentioned providing a home for her. All proposals implied that she should do the providing. And no comely woman, such as the dark-eyed Mrs. Haskins were, likes to be made a provider for some retired mariner or other.

It was to Cap'n Peter Whipple, as he carried her basket of eggs and butter home from the market for her one Sattiday morning, that she explained how the land lay.

"I'd like to have hens to give me eggs of my own," says she. "An' cows to give cream for butter. And I don't like the city. I'm tired of bein' hedged in by houses and crowds of people and all—"



*"The dogs and the cats.
The mice and the rats.
They're all gettin' married but me—Ta-ra!"*

"Ye like the country'?" says Cap'n Whipple, stopping in his stompie stride. "Lord—gulp—bless me, mum, ye say ye like the country?"

“I do,” says she. “A little white cottage with vines a-growing up the sides, and roses all red, and lilacs, and the perfume in the air, and the bees buzzing around the larkspur, and the birds singing in the early morning when the grass glistens with dew, all like jewels.”

Cap’n Peter Whipple’s mouth fell open and stayed open and all he did was gulp. So that was it. She loved the country! Well, well—the bees and the birds, the flowers and trees. He left her at her doorstep, only his eyes speaking eloquentlike of his adoration of her beauty. And he stomped away down Jeffrey’s Hill, a-singing,

“The robins and wrens.
The roosters and hens,
The fishes that swim in the sea.
Ta-ra.”

“The dogs and the cats.
The mice and the rats.
They’re all gettin’ married but me.
Ta-ra-ra.”

And, because Cap’n Peter Whipple were a poor man with only pension enough to buy his grub an’ grog an’ baccy, he went to his room and seated himself in his easy-chair, set his peg leg on the table, lighted up his cuddy pipe and, with furrowed brow, abandoned himself to his thoughts. Out of his silent musings there shaped a beautiful picture of a white-walled cottage with flowers growing all about, and a neat clamshell walk leading up to the door, and Kitty standing there, awaiting for him. And then, in the same way as history tells us the idea came to Demosthenes in the bathtub, Cap’n Peter Whipple were smitten, and up he jumps, claps his hand to his brow and shouts, “Arrica!”—meanin’, “Hurrah, I got it!”

Forthwith, Cap’n Whipple got busy. A good hand with the pen and brush he was, and could draw ye a sea serpent or a mermaid or most anything ye might mention. Also, he an’ Mike Haney a hot actor, Mike was—had always been great friends, for Mike had little use for the other three sea captains, who, in turn, had little use for Peter Whipple.

When, that night, Peter Whipple appeared in Haney’s grog shop, the others knew all about Kitty Haskins’ ideas of a cottage in the country with flowers and all. There was general gloom among the suitors and they frowned thoughtfully into their beer mugs, for not one of them save Cap’n Marvin Watts had anything like money enough to provide so much as the

clamshell walk, let alone the front door. And Cap'n Watts had the first dollar he ever made and wasn't spending any on cottages or the like. Cap'n Peter Whipple joined in the depression and there were few insults exchanged, each one being too busy with his own thoughts. And they went home as soon as Mike dowsed the lights.

They went home, all save Cap'n Peter, who had a little business to transact with his friend. Mike Haney. Queer business, for at first Mike scowls and shakes his head and says something about all mariners being good customers o' his although they had big bills long overdue, and about its bein' years since he'd trod the boards in amatcher shows, and about its bein' too risky. But Peter wore him down with his arguin', and finally Mike says, "It's worth tryin'."

It was on the Monday night followin' that the Spanish sailor staggered into Haney's. There he were, like somethin' that 'ad stepped from the pages o' a storybook. He had a red bandana on his head an' brass earrings hanging from his ears, an' his bare chest were tattooed with mermaids an' snakes an' rope ends tied in knots. Cap'n Gilligan. Cap'n Watts an' Cap'n Malarkey was there in quiet conference. Cap'n Whipple had not yet arrove, consequence of having to stomp it all the uphill way from St. Paul Street in the Walley.

The Spanish sailor—Cap'n Watts opined that he were from the ship *Hidalgo* up from Vera Cruz took a chair at the next table an' began to guzzle Demerary rum, at the same time porin' over an old yellowed chart that he'd dug from his buzzum, all the while mutterin' in his queer lingo and a-tuggin' at his mustache.

The mariners was curious. They gaped at him with their mouths open, an' finally Cap'n Gilligan gets up and strolls past the table where the stranger's sitting ostensibly to speak with Larry Moyce who tended bar it bein' Mike Haney's night off but actually so's he could take a peek over the Dago's shoulder and see what's on that there chart. He came back to the other two, and he was shakin' with excitement. He sits down, glances cautiouslike about, and, beckonin' them close to him, he whispers:

"It's a treasure chart he has there, lads. Strewth! I seen the markin's and all. Spanish gold galloons!"

"No!" whispers they.

Well, sir, that Spaniard fills himself to the neck with Demerary and gloats over his chart. Presently, he ups and rolls over to where the three hearties was sitting, planks himself into a chair, slaps the chart on the boards, an' growls:



“Mooch gold, sig-nors. Thees map, my grandfather he leave it. But there ees curse on dis gold.”

“Gold—money—mooch money, sig-nors. Thees map, my grandfather he leave it. Say up here in Fundy Bay is mooch gold buried. I nevaire look, me. Ees curse on dis gold—carramba, yes! I don’ look for thees gold.”

“Sure,” says Cap’n Gilligan. “But let’s have a look at it, sig-nor. Up here in the Bay o’ Fundy, sez you?”

“*Si*, sig-nor,” says the Spaniard. “Ees up here, down deep. Ees curses on eet. Look at heem.”

Them three mariners gapes at the chart, covetous gleams in their eyes. Their mouths is open wide, and simultaneous-like they raises their heads and stares at each other.

“Hogan’s Point!” says Cap’n Watts. “The hoard’s on Hogan’s Point. See, it marks the spot! Ye have to dig like a air shaft twelve foot down, then dig up a big square of ground forty by twenty. I’ll wager there’s a million buried down there on Hogan’s Point, lads. This here chart is an old and yaller one. It’s bona fido; there ain’t no shadow of doubt on it.”

“*Si*,” grins the Spaniard, nodding his head a dozen times. “Ees what you say. But ees curses on heem.”

“Bilgewater,” says Cap’n Art. “That is, sig-nor, I mean we don’t mind curses. We know ’em all. Now how would ye like for us three practical and skilled mariners to locate this here treasure and divvy up, share and share alike?”

“Sure,” says the Spaniard. “You don’t care a curse, eh? You look honest men. We do that. My ship sails at dawn. My name ees Manuel Gomez, ship *Hidalgo*. When I come back you geeve me, yes, one quarter all thees treasure?”

“You bet,” says they.

By the time Peter Whipple arrove they was rid of the drunken Spaniard, had the chart tucked away, an’ had unanimously decided to leave Peter out of it.

“Him with his peg leg,” sneers Cap’n Gilligan. “He wouldn’t be worth a bosun’s cuss on this here treasure expedition. Leave him out of it, says I, and when we get the treasure we’ll draw lots to see who weds the Widder Haskins. Fair enough?”

“Fair enough,” says the other two.

Now Peter Whipple sees there’s something goin’ on behind his back, but them three keeps their mouths shut, charters a schooner quietlike, loads her with picks and shovels, block an’ tackle, dinnamite and all kinds of treasure-huntin’ gear. Then, lettin’ it be known that they’re off to Deer Island, down Quoddy way, for a week or so of pollock fishin’, they slips their moorings and sails away one night, leavin’, in their greed for gold, a clear field for Peter Whipple’s courting of the widow Haskins.

Instead of goin’ to Deer Island, of course, they point the schooner’s nose up the bay past Black Point and Cape Spencer, and drop anchor in a little bight near Hogan’s Point. In my time and in my father’s before me, and in your time and your children’s time, folk along the Fundy shore will swear up and down that there’s treasure buried in various places: and no place has a stronger claim to treasure bein’ buried there than St. Martin’s and Quaco. Why, every one around St. Martin’s has seen the blazing galleon that sails past that there headland they call the Teapot, sending forked tongues of flame and showers o’ sparks right up to the stars.

So be it then, when the treasure hunters went ashore at dawn, not being able to sleep all night, what with arguin' an' beginning to distrust one another and studying the chart that had sea horses an' Indians and all kinds o' hierglyphies on it, they was fired with high hopes of makin' their fortune by a few hours diggin'.

Up the shore they goes, each lugging a pick and shovel and racin' to see who'd be first on the ground. Well, they come to a level bit o' ground, and in places it's cleared and in others covered pretty thick with second growth. They finds without much difficulty an oak tree that it speaks about in the chart and from which measurements is to be taken.

“First,” says Cap'n Gilligan, who had elected hisself head of the expedition and had been issuing all kinds of orders since they left Saint John, “first off, we'll start and dig that there airshaft. Them pirates, ye know, was up to all kinds of tricks, and who can tell but what the treasure chamber be full of poison gas or them wasps or whatever it was that sting people to death when they're digging up Egyptian mamalukes outen the pyramids. Ye gotta go most careful, lads, death might lurk under every shovelful of earth ye turn.”

They fell to, right away, having with a tape measure staked off the part where they're going to dig.

“Must be a mighty treasure,” says Cap'n Watts. “We got a lot of diggin' ahead.”

“Goes down like a funnel,” says Cap'n Malarkey. “It'll get easier as we go along. It means lots of work, but whadda we care? Look what it will mean if we make our fortunes. It means that me and Kitty—”

“You and Kitty?” says Cap'n Gilligan, spittin' on his hands. “That remains to be seen, m' lad. Anyways, let's forget about Kitty now and fall to with a hearty will, and then, as the buccaneers used to say, ‘with a yo heave ho an' a fare ye well,’ we'll sail off with all them Spanish galloons.”

“Doubloons,” says Cap'n Watts.

“No matter,” growls Cap'n Gilligan. “Galloons. I says, and galloons it is. Strike me, what are ye allus arguin' for, Marvin? If—”

“Let's dig,” says Cap'n Malarkey.

They begun to dig between two young maples, and no sooner is the pick in the ground than they turn up a pointed stake that looks like it's been driven in there in the long ago.

“Boys!” cries Cap’n Art. “It’s the place.”

Well, sir, you nor me nor them three mariners never see in our lives so many rocks, roots and obstacles as was there encountered. They wasn’t down two feet when they comes to a rock that looks just like a cannon ball at first but resists all efforts to dislodge it, and when they clear away around it. Holy Moses! if it isn’t sittin’ atop a boulder twict as big as that one the Loyalists lugged with them and set in front of the Market Slip to show where they landed.

Rocks and roots, blisters and bad tempers. They had to rig up a block and tackle to h’ist the boulders out, but they gets the hole down twelve feet or so and Cap’n Gilligan is taking his trick at the diggin’ when—whoosh!—up gushes a big spout o’ muddy water that lifts the cap’n off his feet an’ then tries to drown him. He grabs hold o’ the rope an’ bids the others heave. They heave away, an’ get him about halfway up when, whether through accident or design, him having been somewhat overbearing and doin’ a bit of loafing on the job, the rope slips, an’ back again he goes kerplow into the mud hole, which was all it was.



“That there water,” says Cap’n Watts, “Came from the treasure chamber.”

Such cursin’ you never did hear. Well, they got him out and held a council o’ war.

“That there water,” says Cap’n Watts, “it’s clear to me as the nose on your face, came from the treasure chamber, which now no doubt is all clear. So now to unearth this hoard and waller in more riches than ye ever dreamed on.”

Believe me, mister, whatever them three was goin’ to get at the end wouldn’t be any too much for the work they had to do a-digging it. The shaft were just small stuff compared to the hole they had to dig now when the tide went out. Big enough, this hole were, to bury one of them mastodents that ye see their skeletons in museums. Four days them men dig there men who had allus looked on work coldly and treated it with proper dignity. The heat roasted them an’ the flies ate them.

They’d built a shack for themselves, to save running back an’ forth to the schooner. And the third night they was snorin’ away with a noise like rusty windlasses when Cap’n Malarkey heard a strange noise, like someone chucklin’ and laughin’. His hair stands on end, and he grabs Cap’n Gilligan by the nose and wakes Cap’n Watts.

“Do ye hear it?” he whispers. “It’s a ghost! It’s the curse the Spaniard spoke on.”

“Bilgewa—” begins Cap’n Gilligan, when he, too, hears it, and ducks his head under the blanket, prayin’ like mad.

They decides not to go and chase the ghost, and by-an’-by the awful chucklin’ ceases and all is still.

The very next day, the treasure hunt came to a finish, for the reason they couldn’t dig any more because, tide or no tide, the water was floodin’ in all the time.

“Boys,” says Cap’n Gilligan. “We failed. Either the chart were wrong or we didn’t read it right. There’s no treasure. Me, I’m so ruddy well relieved to be through with this here business that I don’t give a Spanish Gipsy’s warning for all the buried gold from here to Halifax. I’ll be in Haney’s tonight.”

“So,” agreed the others wearily, “will we.”

“No one need ever know about this,” advised Cap’n Watts. “Nice fools we’d look if it leaked out. We can say the pollock wasn’t biting, so we just cruised along the Maine coast and had a rest.”

“Yes,” says Cap’n Gilligan. “A rest.”

They made harbor that very evening, an' went forthwith to Mike's grog shop and orders three of the best, with more to follow. Mike is there, smilin' and genial, but there's no sign of Cap'n Peter Whipple.

"Where," says Cap'n Gilligan with a sneer, for by this time his sangfroyd is returning, "where is Peg-leg, the hee-ro what had his member chawed off by a ravenous shark while savin' a shipmate's life? Has he died a natural death, or did maybe a lie stick in his throat an' strangle the goat?"

"Now, now, cap'n," smiles Mike. "Ye will have yer little joke, you and Cap'n Malarkey an' Cap'n Watts. If I didn't know what I know. I'd be takin' ye serious, though sure the four of ye has been allus like brothers. And, faith, only brothers'd do for a brother what you three has done for Cap'n Whipple."

"Done for—! What the—!" roars Cap'n Gilligan. "Whadda ye mean. Mike Haney? What'd we do for the lyin'—"

But Mike just laughs an' pats Cap'n Gilligan's shoulder.

"Sure it's all over town," says he, "how you three went down to Peter's bit o' land there on Hogan's Point, an' dug the cellar for the cottage him and Kitty Haskins is going to occupy. A noble deed, that's what it was; a deed worthy of the fine traditions o' Bluenose shipmasters like yourselves, sirs."

"Hmm! Argh!" coughs Cap'n Gilligan, smiling very sickly but amicably. "So it's out, eh? We didn't want it known. Well, well, Marvin! Well, George ah, let's be gettin' along to call on Peter, the lucky dog."

"No use, gentlemen," says Mike. "Him an' Kitty was married this noon and is off on the river steamer to Jemseg for a honeymoon. They're a happy pair. Cap'n Peter furnished the land, you gents furnished the great part o' the labor, an' Kitty will furnish the lumber and the house. I'll wager many's the happy hour you four old shipmates will spend down to Hogan's Point, eh?"

"Aye," says Cap'n Gilligan. "We loves it down to the Point. We know every inch o' ground there, don't we, shipmates?"

"We does," says they heartily.

"By the way, Mike," says Cap'n Malarkey. "Did you see that Spaniard off the ship *Hidalgo* what was around here a while back?"

"Spaniard?" Mike scratches his head an' scowls, and when he scowls a chord of memory vibrates in the three mariners' buzzums.

“Haney!” Cap’n Gilligan thumps the board. “You—you grandson of a sea lawyer! You know—”

“No, sig-nor,” grins Mike. “I do not know mooch, and if all overdue bills is settled forthwith, I know not’ing. Savvy?”

“Aye,” says they. “We savvy.”

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Illustrations have been relocated due to using a non-page layout.

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