

LEGISLATURE

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A SET
OF ROQUES

BY FRANK BARRETT

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CHAPTER V.
Promising to make his story as short
as he possibly could, Don Sanchez be-
gan:

"On the coming of our present king
to his throne, Sir Richard Godwin was
recalled from Italy, whither he had been
sent as ambassador by the protector. He
sailed from Livorno with his wife and
daughter Judith, a child 9 years old at
that time, in the Seahawk."

"I remember her," says Evans. "As
stout a ship as ever was put to sea."

"On the second night of her voyage
the Seahawk became parted from her
convoy, and the next day she was pur-
sued and overtaken by a pair of Bar-
bary pirates, to whom she gave battle."

"Aye, and I'd have done the same,"
cries Evans, "though they had been a
score."

"After a long and bloody fight," con-
tinues Don Sanchez, "the corsairs suc-
ceeded in boarding the Seahawk and
overcoming the remnant of her com-
pany."

"Poor hearts! Would I had been there
to help 'em!" says Evans.

"Exasperated by the obstinate resist-
ance of these English and their own
losses, the pirates would grant no mer-
cy, but trying to bring the living to the
deck they cast all aboard save Mrs. God-
win and her daughter. Her lot was even
worse, for her wounded husband, Sir
Richard, was snatched from her arms
and flung into the sea before her eyes,
and he sank crying farewell to her."

"These Turks have no hearts in their
bodies, you must understand," explains
Evans. "And naught but venom in their
veins."

"The Seahawk was taken to Algiers,
and there Mrs. Godwin and her daugh-
ter were sold for slaves in the public
market place."

"I have seen 'em sold by the score
there," says Evans, "and fetch but an
onion a head."

"By good fortune the mother and
daughter were bought by Sidi ben Mou-
la, a rich old merchant who was smit-
ten by the pretty, delicate looks of Ju-
dith, whom he thereupon treated as if
she had been his own child. In this con-
dition they lived with greater happiness
than falls to the lot of most slaves until
the beginning of last year, when Sidi
died, and his possessions fell to his
brother, Bare ben Moula. Then Mrs.
Godwin appeals to Bare for her liberty
and to be sent home to her country,"

saying that what price (in reason) he
chooses to set upon their heads she will
pay from her estate in England—a thing
which she had proposed before to Sidi,
but he would not hear of it because of
his love for Judith and his needling no
greater fortune than he had. But this
Bare, though he would be very well
content, being also an old man, to have
his household managed by Mrs. Godwin
and to adopt Judith as his child, being
of a more avaricious turn than his
brother, at length consents to it on con-
dition that her ransoms be paid before
she quits Barbary. And so, casting
about how this may be done, Mrs. God-
win finds a captive whose price has
been paid about to be taken to Mag-
shire, and to him she intrusts two let-
ters." Here Don Sanchez pulls two
folded sheets of vellum from his pocket,
and presenting one to me he says:

"Mayhap you recognize this hand,
Mr. Knight?"

And I, seeing the signature Elizabeth
Godwin, answer quickly enough, "Aye,
'tis my dear cousin Bess, her own hand."

"This," says the don, handing the
other to Evans, "you may understand."

"I can make out 'tis writ in the
Moorish style," says Evans, "but the
meaning of it I know not, for I can't
tell a great A from a bull's foot, though
it be in printed English."

"'Tis an undertaking on the part of
Bare ben Moula," says the don, "to de-
liver up at Dellys in Barbary the per-
sons of Mrs. Godwin and her daughter
against the payment of 5,000 gold ducats
within one year. The other writing
tells its own story."

Mr. Hopkins took the first sheet from
me and read it aloud. It was addressed
to Mr. Thomas Godwin, Hurst Court,
Chislehurst, in Kent, and after giving
such particulars of her past as we had
already heard from Don Sanchez she
writes thus: "And now, my dear neph-
ew, as I doubt not you (as the nearest
of my kindred to my dear husband after
my two poor relics) have taken posses-
sion of his estate in the belief we were
all lost in our voyage from Italy, I do
pray you for the love of God and of
mercy to deliver us from our bondage
by sending hither a ship with money for
our ransom forthwith, and be assured
by this that I shall not dispossess you
of your fortune (more than my bitter
circumstances do now require), so that
I but come home to die in a Christian
country and have my sweet Judith
where she may be less exposed to harm
than in this infidel country. I count up-
on your love—being ever a dear nephew
—and am your most hopeful, trusting
and loving aunt, Elizabeth Godwin."

"Very well, sir," says Mr. Hopkins,
returning the letter. "You have been to
Chislehurst."

"I have," answers the don, "and
there I find the estate in the hands of a
most curious, puritanical steward, whose
honesty is rather in the letter than the
spirit. For though I have reason to be-
lieve that not one penny's value of the
estate has been misemployed since it
has been in his hands, yet will he give
nothing—no, not a maravedi—to the re-

demption of his mistress, saying that
the letter is addressed to Thomas God-
win and not to him, etc., and that he
bath no power to pay out money for
this purpose, even though he believed
the facts I have laid before him, which
for his own ends doubtless he fains to
misobey."

"As a trader, sir," says Mr. Hop-
kins, "I cannot blame his conduct in
that respect, for should the venture
fall through the next he might call
upon him to repay out of his own pocket
all that he had put into this enter-
prise. But this Mr. Thomas Godwin,
what of him?"

"He is nowhere to be found. The
only relatives I have been able to dis-
cover are these two gentlemen."

"Who," remarks Mr. Hopkins, with
a shrewd glance at our soiled clothes,
"are not, I venture to think, in a posi-
tion to pay their cousin's ransom."

"Alas, no, sir," says Jack. "We are
but two poor shopkeepers of London un-
done by the great fire."

"Well, now, sir," says Mr. Hopkins,
fetching an inkpot, a pen and a piece
of paper from his pocket, "I may con-
clude that you wish me to adventure
upon the redemption of these two ladies
in Barbary upon the hazard of being re-
paid by Mrs. Godwin when she recovers
her estate." And the don making him
a reverence he continues: "We must
first learn the extent of our liabilities.
What sum is to be paid to Bare ben
Moula?"

"Five thousand gold ducats—about
£3,000 English," says Mr. Hopkins.
"Two thousand," says Mr. Hopkins.
"Then, Robert Evans, what
charge is yours for fetching the ladies
from Dellys?"

"Master Hopkins, I have said £1-
500," says he, "and I won't go from
my word, though all laugh at me for a
madman."

"That seems a great deal of money,"
says Mr. Hopkins.

"Well, if you think £1,500 too much
for my carcass and a ship of 20 men
you can go seek a cheaper market else-
where."

"You think there is very small like-
lihood of coming back alive?"

"Why, comrade, 'tis as if you should
go into a den of lions and hope to get
out whole, for though I have the duke's
pass, these Moors are no fitter to be
trusted than a sackful of serpents. 'Tis
ten to one our ship be taken, and we
fools all sold into slavery."

"Ten to one," says Mr. Hopkins—
"that is to say, as you would make this
voyage for the tenth part of what you
ask were you sure of returning safe."

"I would go as far anywhere outside
the straits for £200 with a lighter heart."

Mr. Hopkins nods his head, and set-
ting down some figures on his paper,
says:

"The bare outlay in hard money
amounts to £3,500. Reckoning the risk
at Robert Evans' own valuation (which
I took to be a very low one), I must see
reasonable prospect of winning £25,000
by my hazard."

"Mrs. Godwin's estate I know to be
worth double that amount."

"But who will promise me that re-
turn?" asks Mr. Hopkins. "Not you, Sir
(The don shook his head.) "Not you?"
turning to us, with the same result.

"Not Mrs. Godwin, for we have no
means of communicating with her. Not
the steward—you have shown me that.
Who then remains but this Thomas God-
win, who cannot be found?" If, adds
he, getting up from his seat, "you can
find Thomas Godwin, put him in pos-
session of the estate, and obtain from
him a reasonable promise that this sum
shall be paid on the return of Mrs. God-
win, I may feel disposed to consider
your proposal more seriously. But till
then I can do nothing."

"Likewise, masters all," says Evans,
fetching his hat and shawl from the
corner, "I can't wait for a blue moon,
and if you can't settle this here busi-
ness in a week I'm off of my bargain
and might glad to get out of it so
cheap."

"You see," says Don Sanchez when
they were gone out of the room, "how
impossible it is that Mrs. Godwin and
her daughter shall be redeemed from
captivity. Tomorrow I shall show you
what kind of a fellow this steward is
that he should have the handling of
this fortune rather than me."

Then, presently, with an indifferent,
careless air, as if 'twas naught, he gives
us a purse and bids us go out in the
town to furnish ourselves with what
disguise was necessary to our purpose.
Therewith Dawson gets him some sea-
man's old clothes at a Jew's, and a
very neat, presentable suit of cloth, etc.,
and the rest of the money we take back
to Don Sanchez without taking so much
as a penny for our other wares, but he,
doing all things very magnificently, would
have none of it, but bade us keep it
against our other necessities. And now,
having his money in our pockets, we felt
"would be more dishonest to go back
from this business than to go forward
with it, lead us whither it might."

Next morning off we go betimes,
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account books and papers protected by
a grating of stout wire secured with
sundry padlocks. And here, behind a
tableful of papers, sat our steward, Sir
Simon Stout in faith, a most withered,
lean old man, clothed all in leather,
wearing no wig, but his own rusty gray
hair falling lank on his shoulders, with
a sour face of a very jaundiced complex-
ion, and pale eyes that seemed to swim
in a yellowish gleam, which he was
fellowshiping with a rag.

"I am come, Mr. Steward," says Don
Sanchez, "to conclude the business we
were upon last week."

"Aye," cries Dawson, for all the
world in the manner of Evans, "but ere
we get to this dry matter let's have a
bottle to ease the way, for this riding
of horseback has parched up my vitals
confoundedly."

"If thou art abstinent," says Simon,
"Peter shall fetch thee a jug of water
from the well, but other liquor have we
none in this house."

"Let Peter drown in your well," says
Dawson, with an oath; "I'll have none
of it. Let's get this matter done and
away, for I'd as lief sit in a leaky hold
as in this here place for comfort."

"Here," says Don Sanchez, "is a
master mariner who is prepared to risk
his life, and here a merchant adventurer
of London who will hazard his money
to redeem your mistress and her
daughter from slavery."

"Praise the Lord, Peter," says the
steward, whereupon the sturdy fellow
with the cudgel fell upon his knees, as
likewise did Simon, and both in a
snuffing voice rendered thanks to heaven
in words which I do not think it proper
to write here. Then, being done, they
got up, and the steward, having dried
his eyes, says:

"So far our prayers have been an-
swered. Put me in mind, friend Peter,
that tonight we pray these worthy men
to prosper in their design."

"If they succeed," says Don Sanchez,
"it will cost your mistress £27,000."

The steward clutched at the table as
if at the fortune about to turn from
him. His jaw fell, and he stared at

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lihood of coming back alive?"

"Why, comrade, 'tis as if you should
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better enlightened. So prithee, friend,
give me time to commune with my
conscience."

Don Sanchez hunches up his shoul-
ders and turns to us.

"Why, look here, master," says Daw-
son. "I can't see that you need much
enlightenment to answer yes or no to a
fair offer, and as for me I'm not going
to hang in a hedge for a blue moon. So
if you won't clasp hands on the bargain
without more ado I throw this business
overboard and shall count I've done the
best day's work of my life in getting
out of the affair."

Then I made as if I would willingly
draw out of my share in the project.

"My friends," says he, "there can be
scarce any hope at all if thou wilt not
hazard thy money for such a prodigious
advantage." Then turning to Peter as
his last hope he asked in despair, "What
shall we do, my brother?"

"We can keep on a-praying, friend
Simon," replies Peter in a snivelling
voice.

"A blessed thought," exclaims the
steward in glee. "Surely that is more
righteous than to lay faith in our own
vain effort. So do thou, friend," turn-
ing to me, "put thy money to this use.
For I will none."

"I cannot do that, sir," says I.
"Without an assurance that Mrs. God-
win's estate will be safe charge."

With wondrous alacrity Simon fetches
a book with a plan of the estate, where-
by he showed us that not a building on
the estate was untenanted, not a single
house in arrears with his rent, and that
the value of the property with all de-
ductions made was £25,000.

"Very good, sir," says I. "Now you
must give me a written note, stating
what you have shown, with your sanc-
tion to my making this venture on Mrs.
Godwin's behalf, that I may justify my
claim hereafter."

But this Simon strongly refused to
do, saying his conscience would not al-
low him to sign any bond clearly with
the hope that he might in the end end
de out of paying anything at all, until
Don Sanchez, losing patience, declared
he would certainly hunt all London
through to find that Mr. Richard God-
win who was the next of kin, hinting
that he would certainly give us such
sanction as we required if only to prove
his right to the succession should our
venture fail.

This put the steward to a new taking,
but the don holding firm he at length
agreed to give us this note upon Don
Sanchez writing another to the effect
that he had seen Mrs. Godwin and her
daughter in Barbary and was going
forth to fetch them, that should Mr.
Thomas Godwin come to claim the es-
tate he might be justly put off.

And so this business ended to our
great satisfaction, we saying to our-
selves that we had done all that man
could to redeem the captive, and that
it would be no harm at all to put a cheat
upon the miserly steward. Whether we
were any way more honest than he in
shaping our conduct according to our
inclinations is a question which trou-
bled us then very little.

(To be continued.)

VENEZUELAN BOUNDARY.

LONDON, Feb. 5.—Clements Markham,
F.R.S., president of the Royal Geo-
graphical Society, contributed a two-
column letter to the Times this morning,
minutely describing all the cartographic
evidence obtainable in the society's
possession to the treaty of 1814, which
settlement of the boundaries of Guiana from 1870