

# GEORGE B. BOYNTON, "THE WAR MAKER," TELLS HIS ADVENTURES

**A** FEW months ago the newspapers published the death of Capt. George B. Boynton, the soldier of fortune, adventurer, pirate, and pirate hunter. A man who has flitted through their columns for forty years in a vague and indefinite way that left no impression on the public mind except that he was a combination of D'Artagnan, Jack Harkaway, and Capt. Kidd.

What was known of him the newspapers gathered together in the column obituary sketches, and it was sufficiently blood-thirsty and thrilling to make every properly constituted mind long for more. What little was made known then put Capt. Mayne Reid, Dumas, Gustave Aimard, and Jules Verne to the blush.

And now the "more" has come. Boynton prepared his memoirs before he died, and, edited by Horace Smith, they have just been put forth by A. C. McClurg & Co. under the title of "The War Maker." While a majority of the adventures he describes have at one time or another in the last forty years gotten an edge into the papers, such projections were mere hints of the real story, which is now unfolded. And Boynton tells it with a complete and cynical indifference to what prosaic people may think of him.

His editor says, what was known, that Boynton was not his real name, but all that is known of his origin is that "he was born in Fifth Avenue, near Fourteenth Street, May 1, 1842, and that his father was a distinguished surgeon, with an estate on Lake Champlain." He adopted the name Boynton, because it had been in his family, and the name George merely because he liked it.

The story begins with his service in the Union Army, which he entered because it was easier to get into than the Confederate Army. This is the most prosaic part of his history. He was wounded at Shiloh, and after his recovery was in charge of a detachment sent into Tennessee to intercept contraband. While there his command captured a fine-looking young man, who was arrested as a spy. Boynton discovered that she was a woman, and to the day of his death believed that she was Belle Boyd.

"I was born with a fondness for women," says he, "which then was strong within me. Therefore, it is without apology that I say I arranged things so that she escaped the next night through a window in the shed in which she was confined." We believe Miss Boyd tells a story something like this in her reminiscences.

Disgusted with the routine of warfare, and preferring the Confederate cause anyhow, he resigned, and some time later went into the more exciting business of blockade running. His ship he bought on a gambler's chance, and with her he had some exciting adventures, she once being shot full of holes by a Federal squadron while running into Charleston.

Then he went into partnership with Jim Fisk, and after that started filibustering for the Cubans, who had raised the standard of revolt against Spain. On one occasion he took out the famous Virginus,

the capture of which nearly brought about war between this country and Spain. And then, going to London, he undertook the job of delivering munitions of war to Don Carlos, then in revolt in Spain. Here a gypsy girl saved him from an attempt by Don Carlos to have him assassinated, and then he began his career of furnishing arms and supplies to South American revolutionists.

In this there were intermissions, as for instance when he embarked on the profitable career of robbing the pirates of the China seas and sinking their ships, taking with him a fleet of three vessels to do it. This of course was not to be distinguished from piracy itself.

Another intermission was when some Young Egypt conspirators hired him to rescue Arabi Pasha from captivity and bring him back to start a new revolution against England, an adventure in which he failed because his inveterate fondness for a pretty face led him astray from the job for a week, and this inspired his employers with distrust of his staying powers.

A third was when President Peixotto of Brazil employed him to blow up the flagship of Admiral Mello, then heading a revolution, with a new torpedo he had invented, and when he was captured by a British ship. Another was when he became a slave trader. But in the main he stuck pretty consistently to his job of fomenting revolutions in South American States.

His pirate hunting in the China Sea was the result of a cold-blooded calculation that money could be made by lying in wait for pirates and looting them. Incidentally, however, he was of benefit in helping to rid the seas of these pests. Of course, his business was as much under the ban of the law as theirs, and to avoid capture he posed as "Dr. Burnet," a rich Englishman traveling in a yacht.

He learned of the presence in those waters of another prey on pirates like himself, this one being a woman whom the Chinese pirates called "The Beautiful White Devil." The two finally met and Boynton fell in love with her. She, however, was seized with an attack of conscience on account of the business she was in, and refused to marry him until after she had gone to England, made a clean breast of her career and received a pardon. She died, however, before she could apply for it. Subsequently Boynton told Guy Boothby, the novelist, this story, and Boothby "subsequently wove a romance about her, using her sobriquet as a title for the story."

There are some good pen pictures in the book. One of them is Don Carlos, who tried to have him assassinated. "I am compelled to admit that in personal appearance he had a great advantage over any real King I have ever seen. Perhaps 40 years old, he was in the full glory of physical manhood, six feet tall, powerfully built and unmistakably a Spaniard. He had a full beard and mustache as black as his hair, large dark eyes, a Grecian nose, and a broad, high

## Memoirs of the Mysterious New Yorker Who Made Fighting His Profession Read Like a Dumas Romance.

forehead which suggested a higher degree of intellectuality than he possessed.

"But his cold face was cruel and unscrupulous and I felt—what I afterward found was a fact—that his adherents followed him chiefly from principle and were dominated much more by fear than by personal loyalty."

Seven years after the gypsy girl had saved him from Don Carlos's plot the two met at Claridge's Hotel, in London. "He recognized me, and after pausing a second offered me his hand, but I refused it."

"What do you mean?" he demanded angrily.

"I mean, Your Royal Highness," I replied with some sarcasm, "that if I am here to shake hands with you it is through no good will of yours, for you tried to have me assassinated in your mountains." He looked at me hard for a moment, shrugged his shoulders, and passed on.

Once, in the service of Guzman Blanco of Venezuela, he delivered some arms to Gen. Pulgar of Guzman's army, and found himself a prisoner—Pulgar having just started a revolution. He had no recourse but to become a Colonel in Pulgar's army or be shot, and he took the office, with an Indian servant whose secret orders were to shoot him in the back if he should attempt to escape. In the first battle the Indian servant tugged at his trousers leg and said, "Follow me, Colonel," and the two escaped into a boat, where they drifted for three days without anything to eat or drink, and were finally rescued by some Curacoa fishermen. He finally got back to Guzman with his story.

"Guzman," he says of that great South American, "was the handsomest man I have ever known; tall and as straight as a sword, with long black beard and black eyes, sharp as needles, that could flash fire or friendship. He was magnetic and winning to the last degree and every inch a ruler of men, without the faintest notion as to what fear meant." He believed that if Guzman had been able to hold on he would have made Venezuela the first of South American countries, instead of the most backward, and have done for her what Diaz did for Mexico.

He had not been long in Guzman's service when Pulgar was brought in a prisoner. Guzman put him on parole and detailed Boynton to watch him. Presently Boynton reported that Pulgar had said he would kill Guzman at the first opportunity. "Well, he'll have plenty of opportunity," laughed Guzman when Boynton made this report.

"There was," relates Boynton, "a reception at the Yellow House a few nights later. Pulgar was invited and was pres-

ent. Guzman soon found an opportunity to engage him in conversation. 'I have already found that being President of Venezuela has its objectionable features,' sighed Guzman, after they had chatted lightly for a few minutes. 'One has to listen to so many ridiculous tales. For instance, I have heard so many foolish stories about you, one of them being an alleged threat to kill me the first time you have a chance.'

"I don't know about the others, but I did say that," replied Pulgar.

"Guzman shrugged his shoulders, as though wearied. 'How often,' he responded, 'we say we are going to do things which we may think we will do but which we never do.'

"When I get an opportunity that a gentleman can take advantage of I intend to kill you, Gen. Guzman," said Pulgar, still smiling.

"Let that be the understanding then," answered Guzman as he walked away, without displaying the slightest concern.

"The very next day Guzman sent Pulgar an invitation to come to the palace at 3 o'clock and go driving with him. Contrary to his custom, he ordered that no guards accompany them. They had not gone a quarter of a mile when one of the front wheels came off and both of them were thrown out in a heap. As they disentangled themselves Pulgar drew a revolver, but it was not well out of his pocket before Guzman had him covered with his pistol.

"Ah, you were prepared for me, I see, General," said Pulgar.

"I am always prepared for friends and enemies alike," replied Guzman.

"They put up their weapons and walked back to the palace.

"I am sorry our ride was so short," said Guzman.

"It was long enough," was Pulgar's reply, "to convert an enemy into a friend."

"In that case it has been truly delightful," responded Guzman. They shook hands and that was the end of the Pulgar revolution."

"They were friends ever afterward. Dumas never told a better story.

Boynton tells a grisly tale of the marooning of a traitor who had tried to betray him into the hands of the English when he was starting for the China Seas to carry out his rôle of pirate hunter, and, of course, pirate. But he says that he left the punishment of the traitor to the crew, and kept his own hands off.

"The treachery of Donovan," said he to his men, "has not only endangered your extra pay and bonus, but placed your freedom in jeopardy." (The English officer who had searched the ship had just departed.) "As he was one of your num-

ber I will turn him over to you for such punishment as you think his case deserves. I, of course, reserve the right to review your verdict, but I do not believe you will be too lenient with him."

The court-martial, headed by the boatswain, sentenced the traitor to run the gantlet and then be marooned. He was put on a small island with a flag to signal any ships that might pass by, and enough provisions to last two weeks. "There was not a great deal of travel down that way in those days," says Boynton, indifferently, "and he may still be there, doing a repetition of the Robinson Crusoe act, though the island was not very large and the boat's crew that landed him reported that they saw no goats. Donovan was helpless from fear when he was lowered into the boat to be rowed to the island, and begged for mercy, but that was something our cargo did not contain."

The head of the Chinese pirates was a man named Moy Sen, who posed as a respectable merchant in Canton. Both Boynton and the woman known to the pirates as "the Beautiful White Devil" had so interfered with their trade that Moy Sen himself took to the sea. He was afraid of the woman, but not so much so with Andrew Lang's collection of famous fights. It is too long to quote in full here, but a few paragraphs from it will give an idea.

Boynton has fought and defeated Moy Sen's consort and now is boarded by the men from the pirate chief's own ship. "It was such a fight as one gets into only in years, perhaps only once in a lifetime. The butchery was dreadful, but the excitement of it set one's blood ablaze. A disarmed Chinkie seized me around the waist and dragged me in among his blood-stained fellows, but we were so closely wedged together that they could not chop at me without striking each other, and they never thought of stabbing me.

"Norton and the mighty Lorenson, swinging an enormous Chinese sword which he had taken from one of his victims, came to my assistance, and in a twinkling I was free, with dead and maimed pirates piled up around me in a circle. I could feel sword cuts now and then, but they seemed like pin pricks. All of us were so covered with blood that there was no telling whether it came from our own wounds or those we had inflicted.

"A Chinkie who had lost his sword seized my empty pistol from its holster, pressed it over my heart, and pulled the trigger. I let him go that far and then laughed at him as I backed away and cut his head half off. I saw Norton go down and fought my way to him, to find that he had only slipped in a red pool.

"We kept the pirates in front of us and steadily forced our way forward. The Chinkies cut and slashed with all their desperate savagery, but it was impossible for them to stand before the fury of our men, and though they outnumbered us four or five to one, they finally began to give way.

"We followed them to their own deck, and piled them up on top of each other. Finally a lot of them took to the hold and the rest, perhaps a hundred of them,

jumped overboard. Those that foolishly fled to the hold."

And so on. It is a great battle-picture, too long to quote.

His story about slave trading is a grizzly thing, told without much touch of shame, though once he does admit the business was a little "revolting." It is difficult to think that this idea would ever have occurred to him if his pursuit by the British had not made it impossible for him to keep on with it. That pursuit grew so fierce that he finally had to destroy his ship.

Then he started dealing with Peru in her war against Chile, (he had previously been engaged in the Russo-Turkish war,) and finally got the itch to go back to the China Seas. This time he stole a British ship and was caught, and the story of how he hired a double to go to prison for him is such a narrative as Charles Reade would have gloried in. In the course of this conspiracy he hid in a grave for three weeks, with a kindly Dutch girl renewing his store of canned stuff, bread, and reading matter, while his double was undergoing trial in his place. The double, a poor man, was amply repaid by a fortune when he came out of prison.

Then he went to Haiti. "Hippolyte was one of the ugliest negroes I have ever known—and my estimate of him as here set down is in no way influenced by the fact that some years later he arranged to have me carefully murdered. With his bloodshot eyes and white whiskers, which latter reminded one of dirty lace curtains, his cruel face was suggestive of some wild animal. He was abrupt and sneering in his manner and there was not a forgiving drop of blood in his veins.

Hippolyte, he says, was a voodoo worshipper.

His story of how he was commissioned to rescue Arabi Pasha and start a new revolution in Egypt against the English Government is one of his best, the more so as he frankly admits that a pretty face was probably his undoing.

When Mello started his revolution in Brazil Peixotto, who had heard of the wonderful torpedo invented by Boynton, gave him a commission as Colonel in the Brazilian Army and assigned him to blow up Mello's flagship, the Aquidaban. He was captured in the act by Capt. Lang of the British ship Sirius and held in duranceville until our great and valliant fighter, Admiral Benham, put an end to the revolution by threatening to blow Mello out of the water if he interfered with American shipping. Boynton tells a fine story about how Capt. (now Admiral) Brownson put down the revolt with one shot from the Detroit.

Then Boynton got restless and went to Venezuela, and was promptly arrested. He sent this word to President Crespo: "Present my compliments to Gen. Crespo and tell him, if you please, that I was his friend when my friendship was worth having. Tell him, too, that if this is the way he treats his friend he is a contemptible snake."

He was released the next day. About three weeks later, visiting the house of a friend of his, he was astonished to be ushered into the presence of Gen. Crespo. The General extended his hand and then showed him a circular saying that a man named Boynton was leaving New York ostensibly to sell munitions of war, but that his real purpose was to assassinate President Hippolyte of Haiti and President Crespo.

"What would you have done if you had been in my place?" asked Crespo. "Precisely what you did."

"Then, with that explanation, I apologize for the trouble I caused you."

"That removes the last sting," said Boynton.

When Boynton referred to his previous friendship with Crespo he meant that when he had been in the service of Guzman that President had been suspicious of the young officer and had asked Boynton to watch him. Boynton's report was that Crespo was a man to be trusted.

"Crespo was very different in appear-

ance from the slender young aid I had known in the old days, and was now a big, tall, well-developed man. He had been President before, from 1884 to 1886, as a dummy for Guzman, so he knew something of both the responsibilities and the dangers of the office.

Crespo, who had been much impressed by what he had learned of the Pinkerton Detective Agency, in a visit to the United States, asked Boynton to organize a similar force in Venezuela, and he did. In that capacity Boynton twice saved his life.

He had gone for an outing to an hato, or ranch, twenty miles from Guacara, which was near Valencia, where General Ignacio Andrade was then stationed. The night after he left Caracas I learned through one of my agents that 200 men were to start at midnight ostensibly for Santa Lucia, but when part way there they were to proceed diagonally across the plains to the ranch at which Crespo was stopping, where they planned to capture and shoot him.

"I employed a daredevil nephew of Guzman, whom I knew I could trust, to gallop at top speed to Andrade with a letter in which I told him of the plot. He immediately sent a messenger to the President to warn him of his danger, and followed him with 500 troops. Crespo was found two or three miles out on the ranch, and by his order the soldiers were hidden in and around the farm building. When the rebels came up they were surrounded before they knew what had happened.

Their leader was shot on the spot and his lieutenants were imprisoned. Andrade did just what any other good soldier would have done, yet it was this act more than anything else, I have always believed, that caused Crespo to select him as his successor, with tragic results. Though deeply grateful to me, he considered that he owed his life to Andrade.

Several other plots against Crespo's life were discovered and frustrated by the effective secret service I had created and most of those who were implicated in them were properly punished. One of these murderous schemes, which proved to be more serious than I at first supposed, involved the telephone in Crespo's private room.

"The plan was to substitute for the regular receiver one which looked like it, but was not insulated, and then, when the President had answered a call, and was holding the receiver against his ear, switch into the telephone the full current from an electric light dynamo in the hope that the shock would be strong enough to kill him. My first inkling of this came from an American electrical engineer, and while I satisfied myself that such a plot had been laid I never was able to get to the bottom of it though I had an intelligent suspicion as to who was responsible for it.

Crespo rewarded Boynton with a big concession. When Castro came into power he revoked the concession and sent an army to enforce the revocation. Boynton repulsed it with a private army of his own. Finally he was forced to leave Venezuela, and he came back to New York. He lived here five years, and then died.

"My best fight," he concludes, "was with old Moy Sen, the pirate King, in the China Sea, and my closest call was when I was sentenced to be shot at sunrise in Santo Domingo. These events supplied the most delightful feasts of the excitement which my nature has ever craved, yet I have lived well in that respect all along.

"I have no disappointments and no regrets, except that this existence is too short. If I had my life to live over again it would be lived in the same way, though I would hope for a still greater share of excitement, because it was for just such a life that I was created. What the purpose of it was I neither know nor care, nor am I in the least concerned as to what my destiny next holds in store for me."