

Emilio Salgari in English

Emilio Salgari, Italian writer of adventure and science fiction stories for readers of all ages, has authored 80 novels and 150 short stories regarded as classics and still in print many years after their initial publication. Besides Italy, they are especially popular in the Spanish-speaking world, but virtually unknown in the English-speaking world. Translated by Michael Amadio and edited by Paolina Amadio, this is the very first publication of *The Son of the Red Corsair* in English. Enjoy the First Chapter of this captivating mix of adventure, comedy, and romance. The book is available at Amazon.com and other major online bookstores, or at the publisher, iuniverse.com.

1. The Marquise of Montelimar

“The Count of Miranda!”

The name, announced in a loud voice by a servant with skin as dark as coal and dressed in a blue silk uniform with large yellow flowers, caused a great deal of commotion among the many guests that crowded the luxurious rooms of the beautiful Marquise of Montelimar, famous on land and at sea among all the buccaneers and officers of the island of San Domingo.

The dancing, very lively until that moment, stopped suddenly. Everybody, ladies and gentlemen, rushed to the entrance of the large ballroom, seemingly attracted by irresistible curiosity to see, up close, this Count that people rumored had turned many heads in the few hours since he had shown himself in the streets of San Domingo.

The black doorman had barely pulled up the rich damask curtain with long, gold fringe, when the person so introduced appeared. He was a very handsome, tall, young man, twenty-eight or thirty years old, with an elegant demeanor that bespoke of high rank. He had fiery black eyes, a black moustache, and very light skin, something unusual for a commander used to sailing under the hot sun of the Gulf of Mexico.

This strange and intriguing man was oddly dressed in red silk, for no known reason. Red was the coat, red were the buttons, the pants and the hat with a large brim adorned by a long red feather. Red, also, were the lace trim, the gloves and the tall boots. Even the sword scabbard was red.

The Count, looking at everyone observing him so intently, frowned a little.

He bravely eyed the men, as if upset by their curiosity, and then gracefully removed his hat with a charming sweep, the feather brushing the floor, and he bowed slightly, always keeping his left hand on the hilt-guard.

The Marquise of Montelimar had moved quickly through the guests and approached him graciously. Rightfully called the beautiful widow of San Domingo, she was a stunning Castilian, still young, not yet twenty-five years old, tall, slender, with a graceful body, bright almond-shaped eyes, dark black hair and alabaster skin, the very color of a Creole from the Gulf of Mexico.

She had been a widow for a few years, having lost her husband, an elderly Marquis, in a battle against the filibusters of Tortuga. She was wearing a magnificent dress of white damask silk, decorated in front by small, artistically grouped emeralds and, around the neck, a double necklace of priceless California pearls. She stopped before the Count, made a gracious bow, gave him an adorable smile, and, offering her right hand, said, “I am glad, Count, that you have accepted my invitation.”

“Sailors may be rough, Marquise, but we never refuse an invitation, especially when it comes from a beautiful lady like you.”

Many frowned at his words, and there was whispering among the Marquise’s admirers.



Top: First Edition Cover
(Alberto della Valle)
Left: English Edition Cover
(Paolina Amadio)

The Count of Miranda turned around with interest and, keeping his left hand on guard and his right hand by his side, said in a clear voice, “It seems someone didn’t like what I said. Let it be known that we, sons of the ocean, know how to skipper and how to deliver a good hit as well.”

“You are wrong, Count,” the Marquise said. “We all think very highly of the men that face storms and perils to defend us from the filibusters of Tortuga.”

Nobody dared breathe and everyone’s faces relaxed, except for a captain of Granada’s halberdiers, a big man taller than the Count, who was still frowning.

“Count,” the Marquise said, “could you please give me your arm? I’d be proud to lean against a strong seaman.”

“And one that will always place his sword and his life at your service,” the young man answered, boldly watching the guests that were showing some dislike for the preference accorded by the beautiful widow to that complete stranger.

“I am not asking for much, Count. Shall we dance?”

“Yes, Marquise, but in the way of the French as I learned in Provence.”

“How come? Are you not a Spaniard? If I'm not mistaken, the de Miranda family is Castilian.”

“Trueborn, but my father's wife was French and I have been brought up by my mother's parents since I was a small child.”

“Ah, I had noticed you have a different accent.”

“Seamen visit so many countries they lose the accent of their native language. Beside, I also spent a lot of time in Italy.”

“That is why you speak so gently. Yes, Italy! I have been there, too. And now, where are you coming from?”

“From Vera Cruz, Marquise.”

“After who knows how many adventures?”

“No, Marquise...only one storm and the boarding of a couple of pirate ships.”

“That you scuttled, I imagine.”

“No, Marquise, we towed them after capturing the crew.”

“And now, where are you going?”

“I am staying right here, to defend San Domingo.”

“Are we under threat?”

“Rumor has it the buccaneers and the filibusters are getting together to assail this city, but they will find on their path the forty cannons of my ship, the Nueva Castilla, Marquise, and I swear I will...”

The Count stopped suddenly and turned sideways.

A captain of the halberdiers, the same who earlier had grumbled a little more than anybody else, a handsome man of about forty, tall like a grenadier, with a large mustache drooping like that of a Chinese, was standing a few steps away as if he wanted to overhear the Count.

When the young man interrupted himself so suddenly, the captain quickly turned around, tugging impatiently at his long sword and approaching a lady that in that moment was crossing the room.

“Who is that?” the Count asked, frowning.

“The Count of Santiago, the captain of the halberdiers of the Granada regiment,” the Marquise of Montelimar answered, smiling. “Does he interest you?”

“Not at all, my lady. I had the impression

he was following us to hear what we were saying.”

“He is one of my admirers.”

“A beautiful lady like you must have many admirers.”

“Why, Count!” the Marquise interjected, hitting him playfully on the hand with her rich fan made of golden sticks.

“Is he in love with you?”

“Maddeningly. Last week he killed a Navy lieutenant with a fierce thrust of his sword because he believed I had some feelings for the poor man.”

“So, the captain is jealous?”

“And a good blade, for what they say,” the Marquise added.

“I would like to put his skills to test,” the Count said with irony in his voice.

“Don't try, Count de Miranda!”

“Why, Marquise? Do you think I'm afraid of that captain?”

“No, Count, but I wouldn't want you to...”

“What?”

“...get into an accident.” the Marquise concluded, suddenly speaking with a voice broken by emotion.

The young captain broke off from her arm and looked at her in surprise, “You wouldn't want me to get into an accident? You, who have known me only five minutes?”

“I admire gentlemen as courageous and amiable as you are, Count.”

The young man suppressed a sigh, then said in a low voice, “Strange, my uncle, too...”

But immediately he stopped himself, tightening his lips.

“What did you say, Count?” the Marquise of Montelimar asked.

“That the music is excellent, and we should dance this beautiful fandango.”

“That's exactly what I was going to propose we do.”

“At your service, Marquise.”

The dancing had already started again. Ladies and gentlemen were whirling in the beautiful rooms of the palace of Montelimar, inspired by a dozen players hidden behind a garden of sorts, made of banana trees that reached to the golden ceiling with their very large leaves.

The Count took hold of the Marquise and, with great agility, threw himself in the middle of the dancing couples. A few stopped to admire the handsome young man and his beautiful companion, astonished by his lightness and gracefulness. Never before had they seen a seaman dance in such a manner.

The fandango had just finished, and the Count had brought the Marquise back to her place when he heard a voice at his back

saying, “Indeed, you dance very well. Do you gamble equally well?”

The young captain of the Nueva Castilla turned around briskly and could not hide his surprise at finding the captain of the halberdiers of the Granada regiment facing him.

The Count looked straight at him for a moment and then answered sarcastically, “A gentleman must know how to dance, how to gamble and, given the occasion, how to use his sword as well.”

The captain of the halberdiers said, “For the moment, I have only asked you to play a game of chance.”

“If that's your pleasure, I am at your disposal, Count of Santiago.”

“How do you know me?” the captain exclaimed with a gesture of surprise.

“Just...by chance.”

The Marquise of Montelimar, a little pale, stood up.

“Count of Santiago what do you want of the Count de Miranda?” she asked.

The captain answered, “My lady, I only wanted to propose we play a game of montes. Seamen prefer gambling to dancing. Isn't that true, Count?”

“At times,” the young man answered tersely.

“Besides, you've already had one dance with the queen of the festivities.”

“Yet, if the Marquise wanted to take another spin, I would not hesitate to give up the game you are proposing, no matter what the outcome.”

“The night is young, you'll have time to exercise your legs as much as you want,” the captain of the halberdiers said with light sarcasm.

“Don't play, Count,” the Marquise said.

“Oh, we'll play only one game!” the young captain answered. “People that live at sea like these diversions. Let's go, Lord of Santiago.”

He kissed the Marquise's hand formally and followed the brusque captain of the halberdiers, but not before gesturing slightly to the beautiful widow as if to tell her, “Don't worry about me.”

They walked across the large brightly lit room where captains of land and sea were dancing happily with the most attractive women of San Domingo and entered a small room where a dozen officers, mostly old,



where playing and smoking large cigars without paying any attention to the ball.

Single and double doubloons were on the tables, and the players handled dice and cards with indifference more ostentatious than natural.



The captain of the halberdiers asked, "Count, do you prefer cards or dice?"

The young commander appeared to think about it for a moment and then said, "Dice. I believe they are more thrilling, which fits better with warriors used to sword blows and cannon shots. Don't you agree, Lord of Santiago? We don't deal with untroubled sugar canes or plantations!"

"You have a good sense of humor, Count."

"Born of the sea and spiced with a lot of salt," the young man said, smiling. "We seamen are very salty."

"We, on the other hand, have a sweet scent," the captain of the halberdiers answered.

"Why?"

"Because we live in the woods, where we always chase buccaneers."

"And do you kill many of those villains?"

"At times, someone gets in the way of a gun of ours, but seldom do they fall under the ax of our guards. As soon as they hear the shots of a gun, instead of charging, they run away like wild rabbits."

"Who runs away, the buccaneers or the people on our side?"

"Those on our side, Count."

"Are they that afraid?"

"At times a well hidden buccaneer can scare away many halberdiers, and they never put themselves in the open unless there are at least fifty of them."

"What courage!" the Count de Miranda said with a slightly sarcastic grin.

"Goodness! I would like to see you in

their shoes!"

"I would attack them leading my sailors."

"I have seen what the sailors of your galleons can do!" the captain observed with scorn. "After the first cannon shot they lower the flag of Spain and give those villains of Tortuga the bars of gold they carry in the hold."

"Actually, my men..." the Count de Miranda started, then regretting his words, stopped and said, "So, do we want to play or not, captain?"

"That's what I invited you for. We'll see if love brings you good or bad luck."

"What do you mean?"

Rather than answer, the Count of Santiago signaled a black servant dressed in a silk uniform and ordered, "The dice. We want to play."

"Right away, Count."

After a moment, the servant returned with a finely engraved silver plate on which rested a small gold cup with two ivory dice.

"What are we betting, Count de Miranda?" asked the captain of the halberdiers.

"Anything you want."

"Watch what you say."

"Why, Count of Santiago?" the young man asked, feigning indifference.

"Goodness!"

"My Lord! You are swearing, Count."

"You too, it seems."

"Well, I'm a seaman! On the other hand, nobody stops you from swearing. Men of land and sea, they sometimes both agree, when it comes to this."

"You have some nerve, Count."

"At times."

"What's your bet?" asked the captain.

"I already told you...anything you wish."

"A living body?"

The young man looked at the captain in surprise.

"I don't understand. What could such a living body be? The body of a shark, perhaps?"

The captain of the halberdiers of Granada brought his hands to his sides in an arrogant posture and said in a serious tone, "When we grow tired of playing for gold, we soldiers on land bet our own lives."

"Is that so?" the Count de Miranda asked calmly.

"The loser blows his head off with a handgun shot."

"Bad game!"

"On the contrary, it's very interesting to gamble a person's life."

"I'd rather risk my doubloons," the young man answered. "I find it more convenient."

"And when they're all gone?"

"You quit playing and retire to your cabin. At least that's the custom at sea."

"Not among us!"

"Hell! You can't be that different, Count!"

"Maybe!" the captain answered tersely.

"You have very bad taste."

"Are you trying to offend me?"

"Me? Not at all, captain, I came here for a game and not to get mad or create a scandal. What would people say of me?"

"Perhaps you are right."

"Then forget living bodies or corpses and let's play doubloons or piasters. At least those don't have a body to kill or sell."

"Your bet?"

"One hundred piasters," the young gentleman replied.

"Do you intend to ruin me?"

"No, because I'm a terrible player, Lord of Santiago. Besides, I've never been lucky, neither with cards nor dice."

"You must be lucky with women, especially with the likes of the Marquise," the captain said, almost with rage.

"On the high seas I only run into ships, mostly manned by pirates, and those don't blow me kisses. Rather, I assure you, they return my greetings with big caliber cannons that make my men sweat with fear."

"On shore, yes, however."

"Lord of Santiago, I've come into to this room to play a few thousand piasters and not to chat. You should know that seamen don't much like to talk. One hundred piasters?"

"So be it!" the Count of Santiago replied with an arrogant gesture.

"Do you want to go first?"

Rather than respond, the captain took the golden dice box, shook it, and turned it over, throwing the dice on the table.

"Thirteen!" he said. "Here is a number to bring good luck."

"Are you superstitious?"

"No, yet this thirteen made my heart jump."

"You jump for so little? Then you'll die soon," the Count de Miranda said laughing.

"Who will kill me?"

"I've never been clairvoyant."

"A rival?"

"Possibly."

"I don't think so. I killed one last week just because he offended me."

"You are too quick of hand, Lord of Santiago."

"And I always kill when I hold a sword in my hand."

"Well, my hand is not slow either," the young man rebutted.

The captain of the halberdiers gazed at

him as though trying to understand the meaning of his words and then said, "Your turn."

The Count de Miranda took the dice box and rolled the dice on the table.

"Fourteen! What a coincidence!" he cried. "Caramba! Thirteen and fourteen."

"What is the meaning of these two numbers so close to each other?" The captain of the halberdiers had run one hand over his furrowed forehead. His face was showing signs of worry.

"What do you think, Lord of Santiago?" the young man asked.

"I think you won and got my one hundred piasters."

"I'm not concerned with those. I'm talking about the numbers."

"I also am not clairvoyant."

"Are you continuing?"

"Yes, I want to see what's going to happen to the numbers next. I'm proposing three hands with stakes of five hundred piasters each."

"I accept. Your turn."

The captain grabbed the dice box and, after shaking it nervously, threw the dice on the table.

He swore as beads of sweat formed on his forehead. "Thirteen, again!" he cried. "Am I playing with the devil?"

"Actually, I am dressed like him!" the Count de Miranda said, always cheerful.

"Play, por Dios!"

"Twelve!" the young man cried.

The captain was startled. "Thirteen flanked between twelve and fourteen!" he said, banging a fist on the table. "Don't you find this kind of strange, Count?"

"Indeed, it is something that makes you wonder."

"And I'm the one with the fateful number!"

"But you won and will get my five hundred piasters, an amount that should console even a captain of the halberdiers."

"I would have preferred to lose the money and see a different number."

"Neither I nor you can control the dice. Let's go on."

The game started again, and the Count de Miranda won the remaining thousand piasters with a fifteen and a seventeen against the captain's fourteen and sixteen.

The captain stood up in a bad mood, right as the servant announced it was midnight and the party was over.

"I'll send your win of one thousand and one hundred piasters to your ship tomorrow, Count," the Lord of Santiago said in a sharp voice.

"You don't have to rush," the young man replied.

"You'll grant me another chance, I hope."

"Any time you wish."

"But not here."

"Why?"

"I have bad luck in this house."

"And you cannot argue freely. True, captain?" the Count asked with irony.

"Perhaps," the captain replied. "Goodnight, Count."

This said, he left the room and entered the ballroom where the guests were crowding around the Marquise to say their goodbyes. The commander of the Nueva Castilla stayed behind, however, leaning against the doorframe waiting for the other guests to leave. His expression showed he was no less preoccupied than the Count of Santiago. With his left hand, he was fiddling with the guard of his sword, and with his right, he was playing with his mustache. When the splendid ballroom was almost empty, he moved toward the Marquise who appeared to be looking for him.

"My lady," he said with a bow, "forgive me if I never came back to dance with you again, but I was engaged in a serious game of dice."

"With the captain of the halberdiers?" the Marquise asked with a certain anxiety.

"Yes, Marquise."

"You didn't argue with him?"

"Not at all."

The Marquise let out a breath.

"Be watchful, Count," she said. "He is a dangerous man."

The young man touched the guard

of his sword and said, "When I have this blade at my side, I don't fear any captain of the halberdiers of Spain, France, or Italy! Marquise, when can I see you again? I need to ask you something that is of interest to me."

"Ask me?"

"Yes, you, Marquise."

"Then come tomorrow, and we'll eat together."

"Tomorrow," the Count said, as a shadow seemed to obscure his forehead, "may be too late."

"Are you planning to leave so soon? You just arrived today."

"True, Marquise, but there are times when you cannot control your own schedule. I would like to stay, but I may need to leave on a moment's notice, and I don't want to leave before meeting with you."

"Didn't you come to protect San Domingo against an attack from the pirates of Tortuga and the buccaneers?"

"I cannot answer your question, Marquise."

"Yet, you should not leave so soon. Do you know how to ride a horse, Count?"

"Yes, Marquise."

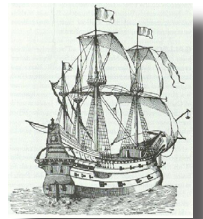
"Tomorrow there will be a rooster race and I would like for you to participate."

"Why?"

"The prize is a kiss...that I will give and receive from the winner."

The Count de Miranda was slightly startled. "Whatever happens," he said after a pause, "I will be at the race. Good evening, Marquise, we will see each other again, for it is imperative that we do."

He kissed the hand of the beautiful widow and left accompanied by a mulatto page who struggled to hold a heavy silver two-branched candlestick. At the same time, the last few guests were leaving the magnificent palace of Montelimar as well.



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