

HENTY GEORGE ALFRED

UNDER DRAKE'S FLAG: A
TALE OF THE SPANISH
MAIN

George Henty
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G. A. Henty

Under Drake's Flag: A Tale of the Spanish Main

Chapter 1: The Wreck on the Devon Coast

It was a Stormy morning in the month of May, 1572; and the fishermen of the little village of Westport, situate about five miles from Plymouth, clustered in the public house of the place; and discussed, not the storm, for that was a common topic, but the fact that Master Francis Drake, whose ships lay now at Plymouth, was visiting the Squire of Treadwood, had passed through the village over night, and might go through it again, today. There was not one of the hardy fishermen there but would gladly have joined Drake's expedition, for marvellous tales had been told of the great booty which he, and other well-known captains, had already obtained from the Dons on the Spanish Main. The number, however, who could go was limited, and even of these the seafaring men were but a small proportion; for in those days, although a certain number of sailors were required to trim the sails and navigate the ship, the strength of the company

were the fighting men, who were soldiers by trade, and fought on board ship as if on land.

Captain Drake was accompanied by many men of good Devon blood, for that county was then ahead of all England in its enterprise, and its seamanship; and no captain of name or repute ever had any difficulty in getting together a band of adventurers, from the sturdy population of her shores.

"I went over myself, last week," said a finely-built young sailor, "and I prayed the captain, on my knees, to take me on board; but he said the tale had been full, long ago; and that so many were the applicants that Master Drake and himself had sworn a great oath, that they would take none beyond those already engaged."

"Aye! I would have gone myself," said a grizzly, weatherbeaten old sailor, "if they would have had me. There was Will Trelawney, who went on such another expedition as this, and came back with more bags of Spanish dollars than he could carry. Truly they are a gold mine, these Western seas; but even better than getting gold is the thrashing of those haughty Spaniards, who seem to look upon themselves as gods, and on all others as fit only to clean their worships' boots."

"They cannot fight neither, can they?" asked a young sailor.

"They can fight, boy, and have fought as well as we could; but, somehow, they cannot stand against us, in those seas. Whether it is that the curse of the poor natives, whom they kill, enslave, and ill treat in every way, rises against them, and takes away their

courage and their nerve; but certain is it that, when our little craft lay alongside their big galleons, fight as they will, the battle is as good as over. Nothing less than four to one, at the very least, has any chance against our buccaneers."

"They ill treat those that fall into their hands, do they not?"

"Ay, do they!" said the old sailor. "They tear off their flesh with hot pincers, wrench out their nails, and play all sorts of devil's games; and then, at last, they burn what is left of them in the marketplaces. I have heard tell of fearsome tales, lad; but the Spaniards outwit themselves. Were our men to have fair treatment as prisoners of war, it may be that the Spaniards would often be able to hold their own against us; but the knowledge that, if we are taken, this horrible fate is certain to be ours, makes our men fight with a desperate fury; and never to give in, as long as one is left. This it is that accounts for the wonderful victories which we have gained there. He would be a coward, indeed, who would not fight with thumbscrews and a bonfire behind him."

"It is said that the queen and her ministers favor, though not openly, these adventures."

"She cannot do it openly," said the old man, "for here in Europe we are at peace with Spain—worse luck."

"How is it, then, that if we are at peace here, we can be at war in the Indian Seas?"

"That is more than I can tell thee, lad. I guess the queen's writ runs not so far as that; and while her majesty's commands must be obeyed, and the Spanish flag suffered to pass unchallenged, on

these seas; on the Spanish main there are none to keep the peace, and the Don and the Englishman go at each other's throats, as a thing of nature."

"The storm is rising, methinks. It is not often I have heard the wind howl more loudly. It is well that the adventurers have not yet started. It would be bad for any craft caught in the Channel, today."

As he spoke, he looked from the casement. Several people were seen hurrying towards the beach.

"Something is the matter, lads; maybe a ship is driving on the rocks, even now."

Seizing their hats and cloaks, the party sallied out, and hurried down to the shore. There they saw a large ship, driving in before the wind into the bay. She was making every effort that seamanship could suggest, to beat clear of the head; but the sailors saw, at once, that her case was hopeless.

"She will go on the Black Shoal, to a certainty," the old sailor said; "and then, may God have mercy on their souls."

"Can we do nothing to help them?" a woman standing near asked.

"No, no," the sailor said; "we could not launch a boat, in the teeth of this tremendous sea. All we can do is to look out, and throw a line to any who may be washed ashore, on a spar, when she goes to pieces."

Presently a group of men, whose dress belonged to the upper class, moved down through the street to the beach.

"Aye! there is Mr. Trevelyan," said the sailor, "and the gentleman beside him is Captain Drake, himself."

The group moved on to where the fishermen were standing.

"Is there no hope," they asked, "of helping the ship?"

The seamen shook their heads.

"You will see for yourself, Master Drake, that no boat could live in such a sea as this."

"It could not put out from here," the Captain said; "but if they could lower one from the ship, it might live until it got into the breakers."

"Aye, aye," said a sailor; "but there is no lowering a boat from a ship which has begun to beat on the Black Shoal."

"Another minute and she will strike," the old sailor said.

All gazed intently at the ship. The whole population of the village were now on the shore, and were eager to render any assistance, if it were possible. In another minute or two, a general cry announced that the ship had struck. Rising high on a wave, she came down with a force which caused her mainmast at once to go over the side. Another lift on the next sea and then, high and fast, she was jammed on the rocks of the Black Shoal. The distance from shore was but small, not more than three hundred yards, and the shouts of the sailors on board could be heard in the storm.

"Why does not one of them jump over, with a rope?" Captain Drake said, impatiently. "Are the men all cowards, or can none of them swim? It would be easy to swim from that ship to the

shore, while it is next to impossible for anyone to make his way out, through these breakers.

"Is there no one who can reach her from here?" he said, looking round.

"No one among us, your honor," the old sailor said. "Few here can keep themselves up in the water, in a calm sea; but if man or boy could swim through that surf, it is the lad who is just coming down from behind us. The Otter, as we call him, for he seems to be able to live, in water, as well as on land."

The lad of whom they were speaking was a bright-faced boy, of some fifteen years of age. He was squarely built, and his dress differed a little from that of the fisher lads standing on the beach.

"Who is he?" asked Captain Drake.

"He is the son of the schoolmaster here, a learned man, and they do say one who was once wealthy. The lad himself would fain go to sea, but his father keeps him here. It is a pity, for he is a bold boy, and would make a fine sailor."

The Otter, as he had been called, had now come down to the beach; and, with his hands shading his eyes from the spray, sheets of which the wind carried along with blinding force, he gazed at the ship and the sea, with a steady intentness.

"I think I can get out to her," he said, to the fishermen.

"It is madness, boy," Captain Drake said. "There are few men, indeed, so far as I know, in these climes—I talk not of the heathens of the Western Islands—who could swim through a breaking sea, like yonder."

"I think I can do it," the boy said, quietly. "I have been out in as heavy seas before, and if one does but choose one's time, and humor them a bit, the waves are not much to be feared, after all.

"Get me the light line," he said, to the sailors, "and I will be off, at once."

So saying, he carelessly threw off his clothes. The fishermen brought a light line. One end they fastened round his shoulders and, with a cheerful goodbye, he ran down to the water's edge.

The sea was breaking with tremendous violence, and the chance of the lad's getting out, through the breakers, appeared slight, indeed. He watched, however, quietly for three or four minutes, when a wave larger than usual broke on the beach. Following it out, he stood knee deep, till the next great wave advanced; then, with a plunge, he dived in beneath it. It seemed an age before he was again seen, and Captain Drake expressed his fear that his head must have been dashed against a rock, beneath the water.

But the men said:

"He dives like a duck, sir, and has often frightened us by the time he keeps under water. You will see, he will come up beyond the second line of waves."

It seemed an age, to the watchers, before a black spot appeared suddenly, beyond the foaming line of breakers. There was a general shout of "There he is!" But they had scarce time to note the position of the swimmer, when he again disappeared. Again and again he came up, each time rapidly decreasing the distance

between himself and the shipwrecked vessel; and keeping his head above the waves for a few seconds, only, at each appearance.

The people in the vessel were watching the progress of the lad, with attention and interest even greater than was manifested by those on shore; and as he approached the ship, which already showed signs of breaking up, a line was thrown to him. He caught it, but instead of holding on and being lifted to the ship, he fastened the light rope which he had brought out to it, and made signs to them to haul.

"Fasten a thicker rope to it," he shouted, "and they will haul it in, from the shore."

It would have been no easy matter to get on board the ship; so, having done his work, the lad turned to make his way back to the shore.

A thick rope was fastened, at once, by those of the crew who still remained on the deck of the vessel, to the lighter one; and those on shore began to pull it rapidly in; but, ere the knotted joint reached the shore, a cry from all gathered on the beach showed that the brave attempt of the Otter had been useless. A tremendous sea had struck the ship, and in a moment it broke up; and a number of floating fragments, alone, showed where a fine vessel had, a few minutes before, floated on the sea.

The lad paused in his course towards the shore and, looking round, endeavored to face the driving wind and spray; in hopes that he might see, among the fragments of the wreck, some one to whom his assistance might be of use. For a time, he could see

no signs of a human being among the floating masses of wreck; and indeed, he was obliged to use great caution in keeping away from these, as a blow from any of the larger spars might have been fatal.

Presently, close to him, he heard a short muffled bark; and, looking round, saw a large dog with a child in its mouth. The animal, which was of the mastiff breed, appeared already exhausted. The Otter looked hastily round and, seeing a piece of wreck of suitable size, he seized it, and with some difficulty succeeded in bringing it close to the dog. Fortunately the spar was a portion of one of the yards, and still had a quantity of rope connected to it. He now took hold of the child's clothes, the dog readily yielding up the treasure he had carried, seeing that the newcomer was likely to afford better assistance than himself.

In a few moments the child was fastened to the spar, and the Otter began steadily to push it towards the shore; the dog swimming alongside, evidently much relieved at getting rid of his burden. When he neared the line of breakers the lad waved his hand, as a sign to them to prepare to rush forward, and lend a hand, when the spar approached. He then paddled forward quietly and, keeping just outside the line of the breakers, waved to those on shore to throw, if possible, a rope. Several attempts were made to hurl a stone, fastened to the end of a light line, within his reach.

After many failures, he at last caught the line. This he fastened to the spar, and signaled to those on shore to pull it in; then, side

by side with the dog, he followed. Looking round behind him, he watched a great breaker rolling in and, as before, dived as it passed over his head, and rode forward on the swell towards the shore.

Then there was a desperate struggle. At one moment his feet touched the ground, at another he was hauled back and tossed into the whirling sea; sometimes almost losing his consciousness, but ever keeping his head cool, and striving steadily to make progress. Several times he was dashed against the beach with great force, and it was his knowledge that the only safe way of approaching shore, through a heavy surf, is to keep sideways to the waves, and allow them to roll one over and over, that he escaped death—for, had he advanced straight towards the shore, the force of the waves would have rolled him heels-over-head, and would almost certainly have broken his neck.

At last, just as consciousness was leaving him, and he thought that he could struggle no more, a hand grasped his arm. The fishermen, joining hand in hand, had gone down into the surf; and after many ineffectual efforts, had at last seized him, as a retiring wave was carrying him out again, for the fifth time.

With the consciousness of rescue all feeling left him, and it was some minutes before he recovered his senses. His first question was for the safety of the child on the spar, and he was glad to hear that it had come to shore without hurt. The dog, too, had been rolled up the beach, and seized before taken off again, but had broken one of its legs.

The Otter was soon on his feet again and, saying, "I must make my way home, they will be alarmed about me," was about to turn away, when a group of gentlemen standing near advanced.

"You are a fine lad," one of them said to him. "A fine lad, and an honor to the south of Devonshire. My name is Francis Drake, and if there be aught that I can do for you, now or hereafter, I shall be glad, indeed, to do my utmost for so gallant a youth as yourself."

"Oh, sir!" the boy exclaimed, his cheek flushing with excitement. "If you are Master Francis Drake, will you let me join your ship, for the voyage to the Indies?"

"Ah! my boy," the gentleman said, "you have asked the only thing, perhaps, which I should feel obliged to refuse you. Already we have more than our number, and to avoid the importunity of the many who wish to go, or of my powerful friends who desired to place sons or relations in my charge, I have been obliged to swear that I would take no other sailor, in addition to those already shipped.

"You are, however, young," he said, as he marked the change in the boy's face; "and I promise you that if I come back, and again sail on an expedition like that on which I now start, that you shall be one of my crew. What is your name, lad? I hear them call you Otter, and truly the beast is no better swimmer than you are."

"My name, sir, is Ned Hearne. My father is the schoolmaster here."

"Will he consent, think you, to your taking to a seafaring life?"

"Methinks he will, sir. He knows that my heart is set upon it, for he hath often said if I loved my lessons with one-tenth of the love I bear for the sea, I should make a good scholar, and be a credit to him."

"I will not forget you, lad. Trust me, and when you hear of my return, fail not to send a reminder, and to claim a place in my next adventure."

Ned Hearne, delighted at the assurance, ran off at full speed to the cottage where his father resided, at the end of the village. The dominie, who was an old man, wore the huge tortoise-shell rimmed spectacles of the time.

"Wet again," he said, as his son burst into the room in which he was sitting, studying a Greek tome. "Truly thou earnest the name of which thou art so proud, Otter, hardly. What tempted thee to go into the water, on a day like this?"

Ned briefly explained what had taken place. The story was no unusual one, for this was the third time that he had swum out to vessels on the rocks between Westport and Plymouth. Then he related to his father how Captain Francis Drake had spoken to him, and praised him, and how he had promised that, on his next trip to the West Indies, he would take him with him.

"I would not have you count too much upon that," the dominie said, dryly. "It is like, indeed, that he may never come back from this hare-brain adventure; and if he brings home his skin safe, he will, methinks, have had enough of burning in the sun, and fighting the Spaniards."

"But hath he not already made two or three voyages thither, Father?" the boy asked.

"That is true enough," said his father; "but from what I gather, these were mere trips to spy out the land. This affair on which he starts now will be, I wot, a very different matter."

"How is it, Father," the boy said on the following morning, resuming the conversation from the point which they were at when he went up to change his wet clothes, the day before, "that when England is at peace with Spain, our sailors and the Spanish do fight bloodily, in the West Indies?"

"That, my son, is a point upon which the Roman law telleth us nothing. I have, in my shelves, some very learned treatises on war; but in none do I find mention of a state of things in which two powers, at peace at home, do fight desperately at the extreme end of the earth."

"But, Father, do you think it not lawful to kill the Spaniard, and to take the treasures which he robbeth from the poor heathen of the West?"

"I know not about lawful, my son, but I see no warrant whatsoever for it; and as for heathen, indeed, it appears to me that the attacks upon him do touch, very closely, upon piracy upon the high seas. However, as the country in general appeareth to approve of it, and as it is said that the queen's most gracious majesty doth gladly hear of the beating of the Spaniards, in those seas, it becometh not me to question the rights of the case."

"At any rate, Father, you would not object when the time

comes for me to sail with Mr. Francis Drake?"

"No, my boy; thou hast never shown any aptitude whatever for learning. Thou canst read and write, but beyond that thy knowledge runneth not. Your mind seems to be set on the water, and when you are not in it you are on it. Therefore it appears, to me, to be flying in the face of Providence to try to keep you on shore. Had your poor mother lived, it would have been a different thing. Her mind was set upon your becoming a clerk; but there, one might as well try to make a silk purse from the ear of a sow. But I tell you again, count not too much upon this promise. It may be years before Mr. Francis Drake may be in a position to keep it."

Had Ned Hearne watched for Captain Drake's second voyage, he would, indeed, as his father had said, have waited long. Three days after the conversation, however, a horseman from Plymouth rode into the little village, and inquired for the house of Master Hearne. Being directed thither, he rode up in haste to the gate.

"Here is a letter!" he cried, "for the son of the schoolmaster, who goes by the name of the Otter."

"I am he," Ned cried. "What is it, and who can have written to me?"

"It is a letter from His Honor, the Worshipful Mr. Francis Drake."

Seizing the letter, Ned broke the seal, read a few lines, threw his cap into the air with a shout of joy, and rushed in to his father.

"Father," he said, "Captain Drake has written to acquaint me

that one of the boys in his ship has been taken ill, and cannot go; and that it has pleased him to appoint me to go in his place; and that I am to be at Plymouth in three days, at the utmost, bringing with me what gear I may require for the expedition."

The schoolmaster was a little taken aback at this sudden prospect of departure, but he had always been wholly indulgent to his son, and it was not in his nature to refuse to allow him to avail himself of an opportunity which appeared to be an excellent one. The danger of these expeditions was, no doubt, very great; but the spoils were in proportion, and there was not a boy or man of the seafaring population of Devon who would not gladly have gone with the adventurous captains.

Chapter 2: Friends and Foes

Three days after the receipt of the letter, Ned Hearne stood with his bundle on the quay at Plymouth. Near him lay a large rowboat from the ships, waiting to take off the last comers. A little way behind, Captain Francis Drake and his brother, Captain John Drake, talked with the notable people of Plymouth, who had come down to bid them farewell; the more since this was a holiday, being Whitsun Eve, the 24th May, and all in the town who could spare time had made their way down to the Hove to watch the departure of the expedition; for none could say how famous this might become, or how great deeds would be accomplished by the two little craft lying there. Each looker on thought to himself that it might be that, to the end of his life, he should tell his children and his children's children, with pride, "I saw Mr. Drake start for his great voyage."

Small, indeed, did the fleet appear, in comparison to the work which it had to do. It was composed of but two vessels. The first, the Pacha, of seventy tons, carrying forty-seven men and boys, was commanded by Captain Francis Drake himself. By her side was the Swanne, of twenty-five tons, carrying twenty-six men and boys, and commanded by Captain John Drake. This was truly but a small affair to undertake so great a voyage.

In those days the Spaniards were masters of the whole of South America, and of the Isles of the West Indies. They had

many very large towns full of troops, and great fleets armed to carry the treasure which was collected there to Spain. It did seem almost like an act of madness that two vessels, which by the side of those of the Spaniards were mere cockleshells, manned in all by less than eighty men, should attempt to enter a region where they would be regarded, and rightly, as enemies, and where the hand of every man would be against them.

Captain Drake and his men thought little of these things. The success which had attended their predecessors had inspired the English sailors with a belief in their own invincibility, when opposed to the Spaniards. They looked, to a certain extent, upon their mission as a crusade. In those days England had a horror of Popery, and Spain was the mainstay and supporter of this religion. The escape which England had had of having Popery forced upon it, during the reign of Mary, by her spouse, Philip of Spain, had been a narrow one; and even now, it was by no means certain that Spain would not, sooner or later, endeavor to carry out the pretensions of the late queen's husband. Then, too, terrible tales had come of the sufferings of the Indians at the hands of the Spaniards; and it was certain that the English sailors who had fallen into the hands of Spain had been put to death, with horrible cruelty. Thus, then, the English sailors regarded the Spaniards as the enemy of their country, as the enemy of their religion, and as the enemy of humanity. Besides which, it cannot be denied that they viewed them as rich men, well worth plundering; and although, when it came to fighting, it is probable

that hatred overbore the thought of gain, it is certain that the desire for gold was, in itself, the main incentive to those who sailed upon these expeditions.

Amid the cheers of the townsfolk the boats pushed off, Mr. Francis Drake and his brother waving their plumed hats to the burghers of Plymouth, and the sailors giving a hurrah, as they bent to the oars. Ned Hearne, who had received a kind word of greeting from Mr. Drake, had taken his place in the bow of one of the boats, lost in admiration at the scene; and at the thought that he was one of this band of heroes, who were going out to fight the Spaniards, and to return laden with countless treasure wrested from them. At the thought his eyes sparkled, his blood seemed to dance through his veins.

The western main, in those days, was a name almost of enchantment. Such strange tales had been brought home, by the voyagers who had navigated those seas, of the wonderful trees, the bright birds, the beauties of nature, the gold and silver, and the abundance of all precious things, that it was the dream of every youngster on the seaboard some day to penetrate to these charmed regions. A week since, and the realization of the dream had appeared beyond his wildest hopes. Now, almost with the suddenness of a transformation scene, this had changed; and there was he on his way out to the Swanne, a part of the expedition itself. It was to the Swanne that he had been allotted, for it was on board that ship that the boy whose place he was to take had been seized with illness.

Although but twenty-five tons in burden, the Swanne made a far greater show than would be made by a craft of that size in the present day. The ships of the time lay but lightly on the water, while their hulls were carried up to a prodigious height; and it is not too much to say that the portion of the Swanne, above water, was fully as large as the hull which we see of a merchantman of four times her tonnage. Still, even so, it was but a tiny craft to cross the Atlantic, and former voyages had been generally made in larger ships.

Mr. Francis Drake, however, knew what he was about. He considered that large ships required large crews to be left behind to defend them, that they drew more water, and were less handy; and he resolved, in this expedition, he would do no small part of his work with pinnaces and rowboats; and of these he had three fine craft, now lying in pieces in his hold, ready to fit together on arriving in the Indies.

As they neared the ships the two boats separated, and Ned soon found himself alongside of the Swanne. A ladder hung at her side, and up this Ned followed his captain; for in those days the strict etiquette that the highest goes last had not been instituted.

"Master Holyoake," said Mr. John Drake, to a big and powerful-looking man standing near, "this is the new lad, whose skill in swimming, and whose courage, I told you of yesternight. He will, I doubt not, be found as willing as he is brave; and I trust that you will put him in the way of learning his business as a

sailor. It is his first voyage. He comes on board a green hand, but I doubt not that, ere the voyage be finished, he will have become a smart young sailor."

"I will put him through," John Holyoake, sailing master of the ship, replied; for in those days the sailing master was the navigator of the ship, and the captain was as often as not a soldier, who knew nothing whatever about seamanship. The one sailed the ship, the other fought it; and the admirals were, in those days, more frequently known as generals, and held that position on shore.

As Ned looked round the deck, he thought that he had never seen a finer set of sailors. All were picked men, hardy and experienced, and for the most part young. Some had made previous voyages to the West Indies, but the greater portion were new to that country. They looked the men on whom a captain could rely, to the last. Tall and stalwart, bronzed with the sun, and with a reckless and fearless expression about them, which boded ill to any foes upon whom they might fall.

Although Ned had never been to sea on a long voyage, he had sailed too often in the fishing boats of his native village to have any qualm of seasickness, or to feel in any degree like a new hand. He was, therefore, at once assigned to a place and duty.

An hour later the admiral, as Mr. Francis Drake was called, fired a gun, the two vessels hoisted their broad sails and turned their heads from shore, and the crews of both ships gave a parting cheer, as they turned their faces to the south.

As Ned was not in the slightest degree either homesick or seasick, he at once fell to work, laughing and joking with the other boys, of whom there were three on board. He found that their duties consisted of bearing messages, of hauling any rope to which they were told to fix themselves, and in receiving, with as good a face as might be, the various orders, to say nothing of the various kicks, which might be bestowed upon them by all on board. At the same time their cheerful countenances showed that these things which, when told, sounded a little terrible, were in truth in no way serious.

Ned was first shown where he was to sling his hammock, and how; where he was to get his food; and under whose orders he was specially to consider himself; the master, for the present, taking him under his own charge. For the next ten days, as the vessel sailed calmly along, with a favoring wind, Ned had learned all the names of the ropes and sails, and their uses; could climb aloft, and do his share of the work of the ship; and if not yet a skilled sailor, was at least on the high road to become one. The master was pleased at his willingness and eagerness to oblige, and he soon became a great favorite of his.

Between the four boys on the ship a good feeling existed. All had been chosen as a special favor, upon the recommendation of one or other of those in authority. Each of them had made up his mind that, one of these days, he, too, would command an expedition to the West Indies. Each thought of the glory which he would attain; and although, in the hearts of many of the elder

men in the expedition, the substantial benefits to be reaped stood higher than any ideas of glory or honor; to the lads, at least, pecuniary gain exercised no inducement whatever. They burned to see the strange country, and to gain some of the credit and glory which would, if the voyage was successful, attach to each member of the crew. All were full of fun, and took what came to them, in the way of work, so good temperedly and cheerfully, that the men soon ceased to give them work for work's sake.

They were, too, a strong and well-built group of boys. Ned was by a full year the youngest, and by nigh a head the shortest of them; but his broad shoulders and sturdy build, and the strength acquired by long practice in swimming and rowing, made him their equal.

There were, however, no quarrels among them, and their strength they agreed to use in alliance, if need be, should any of the crew make a dead set at one or other of them; for even in an expedition like this there must be some brutal, as well as many brave men. There were assuredly two or three, at least, of those on board the *Swanne* who might well be called brutal. They were for the most part old hands, who had lived on board ship half their lives, had taken part in the slave traffic of Captain Hawkins, and in the buccaneering exploits of the earlier commanders. To them the voyage was one in which the lust of gold was the sole stimulant; and, accustomed to deeds of bloodshed, what feelings they ever had had become utterly blunted, and they needed but the power to become despotic and brutal masters.

The chief among these was Giles Taunton, the armorer. He was a swarthy ruffian, who hid, beneath the guise of a jovial bonhomie, a cruel and unfeeling nature. He was ever ready to cuff and beat the boys, on the smallest provocation.

They soon gathered together, in a sort of defensive league, against their common oppressors. All four were high-spirited lads. The other three, indeed, were sons of men of substance in Devon, whose fathers had lent funds to Captain Drake for the carrying out of his great enterprise. They therefore looked but ill on the kicks and curses which, occasionally, fell to their lot.

One day they gathered together round the bowsprit, and talked over what they should do. Gerald Summers, the eldest of the party, proposed that they should go in a body to Captain Drake, and complain of the tyranny to which they were subject. After some talk, however, all agreed that such a course as this would lower them in the estimation of the men, and that it would be better to put up with the ill treatment than, to get the name of tell tales.

Ned then said to the others:

"It seems to me that, if we do but hold together, we need not be afraid of this big bully. If we all declare to each other and swear that, the first time he strikes one of us, we will all set upon him; my faith on it, we shall be able to master him, big as he is. We are all of good size, and in two years will think ourselves men; therefore it would be shame, indeed, if the four of us could not master one, however big and sturdy he may be."

After much consultation, it was agreed that this course should be adopted; and the next day, as Reuben Gale was passing by Giles, he turned round and struck him on the head with a broom. The boy gave a long whistle, and in a moment, to the astonishment of the armorer, the other three lads rushed up, and at once assailed him with fury. Astonished at such an attack, he struck out at them with many strange oaths. Gerald he knocked down, but Ned leaped on his back from behind, and the other two, closing with him, rolled him on to the deck; then, despite of his efforts, they pummeled him until his face was swollen and bruised, and his eyes nearly closed.

Some of the men of his own sort, standing by, would fain have interfered; but the better disposed of the crew, who had seen, with disgust, the conduct of the armorer and his mates to the boys, held them back, and said that none should come between.

Just as the boys drew off, and allowed the furious armorer to rise to his feet, Captain John Drake, attracted by the unusual noise, came from his cabin.

"What is this?" he asked.

"These young wild cats have leapt upon me," said Giles Taunton furiously, "and have beaten me nigh to death. But I will have my turn. They will see, and bitterly shall they have cause to regret what they have done."

"We have been driven almost weary of our lives, sir, with the foul and rough conduct of this man, and of some of his mates," Gerald said. "We did not like to come to tell you of it, and to gain

the name of carry tales; but we had resolved among ourselves at last that, whoever struck one of us, the whole should set upon him. Today we have carried it out, and we have shown Giles Taunton that we are more than a match for one man, at any rate."

"Four good-sized dogs, if they are well managed," said Captain John Drake, "will pull down a lion; and the best thing that the lion can do is to leave them alone."

"I am sorry to hear, Master Taunton, that you have chosen to mistreat these lads; who are, indeed, the sons of worthy men, and are not the common kind of ship boys. I am sure that my brother would not brook such conduct, and I warn you that, if any complaint again on this head reaches me, I shall lay it before him."

With angry mutterings, the armorer went below.

"We have earned a bitter foe," Ned said to his friends, "and we had best keep our eyes well open. There is very little of the lion about Master Taunton. He is strong, indeed; but if it be true that the lion has a noble heart, and fights his foes openly, methinks he resembles rather the tiger, who is prone to leap suddenly upon his enemies."

"Yes, indeed, he looked dark enough," Gerald said, "as he went below; and if looks could have killed us, we should not be standing here alive, at present."

"It is not force that we need fear now, but that he will do us some foul turn; at all events, we are now forewarned, and if he plays us a scurvy trick it will be our own faults."

For several days the voyage went on quietly, and without adventure. They passed at a distance the Portuguese Isle of Madeira, lying like a cloud on the sea. The weather now had become warm and very fair, a steady wind blew, and the two barks kept along at a good pace.

All sorts of creatures, strange to the boys, were to be seen in the sea. Sometimes there was a spout of a distant whale. Thousands of flying fish darted from the water, driven thence by the pursuit of their enemies beneath; while huge flocks of gulls and other birds hovered over the sea, chasing the flying fish, or pouncing down upon the shoals of small fry; whose splashings whitened the surface of the water, as if a sandbank had laid below it.

Gradually, as the time went on, the heat increased. Many of the crew found themselves unable to sleep below, for in those days there was but little thought of ventilation. The boys were among these, for the heat and the confinement were, to them, especially irksome.

One day the wind had fallen almost to a calm, and the small boat had been lowered, to enable the carpenter to do some repair to the ship's side, where a seam leaked somewhat, when the waves were high. When night came on, and all was quiet, Ned proposed to the others that they should slip down the rope over the stern into the boat which was towing behind; where they could sleep undisturbed by the tramp of the sentry, or the call to pull at ropes and trim sails.

The idea was considered a capital one, and the boys slid down into the boat; where, taking up their quarters as comfortably as they could, they, after a short chat, curled themselves up and were soon sound asleep, intending to be on board again, with the earliest gleam of morn.

When they awoke, however, it was with a start and a cry. The sun was already high, but there were no signs whatever of the ship; they floated, alone, in the mid-ocean. With blank amazement they looked at each other.

"This is a stroke of misfortune, indeed," Gerald said. "We have lost the ship, and I fear our lives, as well.

"What do you say, Otter?"

For the lad's nickname had come on board ship with him, and he was generally known by it.

"It seems to me," said Ned, "that our friend the armorer has done us this bad turn. I am sure that the rope was well tied, for I was the first who slipped down it, and I looked at the knot well, before I went over the side and trusted my weight to it. He must have seen us, and as soon as he thought we were fairly asleep must have loosened the knot and cast us adrift. What on earth is to be done, now?"

"I should think," Gerald said, "that it will not be long before the ship comes back for us. The boat is sure to be missed, in the morning, for the carpenter will be wanting it to go over the side. We, too, will be missed, for the captain will be wanting his flagon of wine, soon after the day has dawned."

"But think you," Tom Tressilis said, "that the captain will turn back on his voyage, for us?"

"Of that I think there is no doubt," Gerald said; "the only question is as to the finding us, but I should say that of that there is little fear; the wind is light, the ship was not making fast through the water, and will not be more than fifty miles, at most, away, when she turns on her heel and comes to look for us. I expect that Master Taunton knew, well enough, that we should be picked up again; but he guessed that the admiral would not be pleased at losing a day, by our freak, and that the matter is not likely to improve the favor in which we may stand with him and his brother."

"It is going to be a terrible hot day," Ned said, "and with the sun above our heads and no shade, and not so much as a drop of water, the sooner we are picked up the more pleasant it will be, even if we all get a touch of the rope's end for our exploit."

All day the boys watched anxiously. Once they saw the two vessels sailing backward on their track, but the current had drifted the boat, and the ships passed fully eight miles away to windward of them, and thus without seeing them. This caused the boys, courageous as they were, almost to despair.

"If," argued Gerald, "they pass us in the daylight, our chance is small, indeed, that they will find us at night. They will, doubtless, sail back till dusk; and then judge that they have missed us, or that we have in some way sunk; then, putting their heads to the west, they will continue their voyage.

"If we had oars, or a sail, we might make a shift to pull the boat into the track they are following, which would give us a chance of being picked up when they again turn west; but as we have neither one nor the other, we are helpless, indeed."

"I do not think," Ned said, "that Captain John or his brother are the men to leave us, without a great effort; and methinks that, when they have sailed over the ground to the point where, at the utmost, we must have parted from them, they will lay by through the night, and search back again, tomorrow."

And so it proved. On the morrow, about midday, the boys beheld one of the ships coming up, nearly in a line behind them; while the other, some six miles away to leeward, was keeping abreast of her.

"They are quartering the ground, like hounds," Gerald said; "and, thanks to their care and thoughtfulness, we are saved, this time."

By the time that, three hours later, the ship, which was the Pacha, came alongside, the boys were suffering terribly from the heat and thirst; for thirty-six hours no drop of water had passed their lips, and the sun had blazed down upon them with terrible force. Therefore when the vessel hauled her course, and laid by for a boat to be lowered to pick them up, their plight was so bad a one that Captain Francis, although sorely vexed at having lost near two days of his voyage, yet felt that they had been amply punished for their escapade.

Chapter 3: On the Spanish Main

The four boys, upon gaining the Pacha's deck, were taken below; and after drink and food had been given them, were called to the captain's cabin. He spoke to them gravely, and inquired how it was that they had all got adrift, together. They told him the circumstances, and said that they thought there was no chance of any mishap occurring; the knot was well fastened, the night was calm, and though they regretted much the pains and trouble which they had given, and the delay to which they had put the fleet, yet it did not appear to them, they said frankly, that they had been so very much to blame, as they could hardly have believed that the boat would have broken afloat; and indeed, Ned said plainly, they believed that it was not the result of chance, but that an enemy had done them an evil turn.

"Why think you so?" Captain Drake said sharply. "How can boys like you have an enemy?"

Gerald then detailed the account of their trouble with Master Taunton.

"He is a rough man," Captain Drake said, "and a violent man, maybe, but he is useful and brave. However, I will have reason with him. Of course it is a mere suspicion, but I will speak to my brother."

When the boat had first come in sight, the Pacha had made the signal to the Swanne that the boys were found, and that

she was to keep her course, drawing gradually alongside. Before dark the vessels were within hailing distance, and Captain Drake, lowering a boat, went himself on board the Swanne with the four lads. Captain John was at the top of the ladder, and was about to rate them soundly.

Captain Francis said, "Let us talk together, John, first;" and he repaired with him to his cabin, while the crew swarmed round the boys, to gather an account of how they got adrift.

Then Captain John appeared at the door of his cabin, and called for Master Taunton, who went in and remained, for some time, in converse with the two captains. Then he came out, looking surly and black, and Captain Francis soon after issued out with his brother, walked round the ship, said a few cheery words to all the crew; and, with a parting laugh and word of advice to the boys, to be more careful where they slept in future, descended the side and went off to his ship again.

Opinions were much mingled, on board the Swanne, as to whether the slipping of the knot had been the effect of accident or of an evil turn; however, the boys said little about it, and endeavored, so far as might be, to let it pass as an accident. They felt that the matter between themselves and Master Taunton had already gone too far for their safety and comfort. They doubted not that he had been reprimanded by the admiral, as well as by Captain John, and that they had earned his hatred; which, although it might slumber for a while, was likely to show itself again, when a chance might occur.

Not wishing to inflame farther his fury against them, they abstained from giving such a complexion to their tale as might seem to cast a suspicion upon him. Nevertheless there was a strong feeling, amongst many of the crew, that Master Taunton must have had a hand in the casting adrift of the boys; or that if he did not himself do it, it had been done by one of the party who always worked with him.

Whatever the feelings of Giles Taunton might be, he kept them to himself. He now never interfered with the boys, by word or deed, working sullenly and quietly at his craft as armorer. The boys felt their lives much lightened thereby, and now thoroughly enjoyed the voyage.

Although as boys it was not a part of their duty to go aloft, which was done by the regular sailors who were hired for the purpose, yet they spent no small part of their time, when not engaged—and their duties truly were but nominal—in going aloft, sliding down the ropes, and learning to be thoroughly at home among the sails.

Every day, too, there would be practices with arms. It was of the utmost importance that each man should be able to use sword and axe with the greatest skill; and on board each ship those who were best skilled would exercise and give lessons to those who were less practiced with their arms; and, using wooden clubs in place of boarding axes, they would much belabor each other, to the amusement of the lookers on. The boys were most assiduous at this kind of work. It was their highest ambition to become good

swordsmen, and to have a chance of distinguishing themselves against the Spaniards; and so they practiced diligently, with point and edge. The knowledge of singlestick and quarterstaff still lingered, in the country parts of England. They had all already some skill with these, and picked up fast the use of the heavier, and more manly arms.

It was the end of July before they sighted land. Great was the delight of all; for, cooped up in what were after all but narrow quarters, they longed for a sight of the green and beautiful forests, of which they had heard so much. They were still far from the destination which the admiral had marked as his base of operations. They cruised along for days, with the land often in sight, but keeping for the most part a long distance out; for they feared that the knowledge of their coming might be carried, by the natives, to the Spaniards in the towns; and that such preparations might be made as would render their journey fruitless.

Near, however, to some of the smaller islands, which were known to be uninhabited by Spaniards, the vessels went closely, and one day dropped anchor in a bay. They observed some natives on the shore, but the white men had so bad a name, caused by the cruelty of the Spaniards, that these withdrew hastily from sight. The captain, however, had a boat lowered; which, pulling towards shore, and waving a white flag in token of amity, met with no resistance. There were on board some who could speak Spanish, and one of these shouted aloud to the Indians to have

no fear, for that they were friends, and haters of the Spaniards; whereupon the natives came out from the woods, and greeted them.

They were a fine race of men, but gentle and timid in their demeanor. They were copper in color, and wore headdresses of bright feathers, but the men had but little other clothing; of which, indeed, in such a climate, there is but slight necessity.

In exchange for some trifles from the ship they brought many baskets of fruits, such as none of those who had fresh come from England had ever before seen. Great was the joy on board ship, especially among the four boys, at the profusion of strange fruits; and they were seen, seated together, eating pineapples, bananas, and many other things of which they knew not so much as the name, but which they found delicious, indeed, after so long a voyage upon salted food.

Then, sailing on, they dropped anchor in the bay which Captain Drake had himself christened, during his last voyage, Port Pheasant; for they had killed many of this kind of bird there. Here the admiral purposed waiting for a while, to refresh the crews and to put the pinnaces together. Accordingly the anchors were put out, and all was made snug.

A boat's crew was sent on shore to see that all was safe, for there was no saying where the Spaniards might be lurking. They returned with a great plate of lead, which they had found fastened to a tree, close to the water's edge. Upon it were these words:

"Captain Drake, if it is your fortune to come into this part,

make haste away; for the Spaniards which were with you here, last year, have betrayed the place; and taken away all that you left here. I departed hence on this present 7th July, 1572. Your very loving friend, John Garrett."

"I would I had been here a few days earlier," Captain Drake said, when he read this notice, "for John Garrett would assuredly have joined us, and his aid would have been no slight assistance in the matter in which we are about to engage. However, it will not do to despise his caution; therefore, lest we be attacked while on shore by the Spaniards, we will even make a fort; and we shall be able to unload our stores, and put our pinnaces together, without fear of interruption."

The crew were now landed; and set to work, with hatchet and bill, to clear a plot of ground. Three quarters of an acre was, after three days' work, cleared; and the trees were cast outwards, and piled together in such form as to make a sort of wall, 30 feet high, round it. This hard work done, most of the crew were allowed a little liberty; the carpenters, and experienced artificers, being engaged in putting the three pinnaces together.

The boys, in pairs, for all could never obtain leave together, rambled in the woods, full of admiration for the beauties of nature. Huge butterflies flitted about upon the brilliant flowers. Long trailing creepers, rich with blossom, hung on the trees. Here and there, as they passed along, snakes slipped away among the undergrowth; and these, in truth, the boys were as ready to leave alone as the reptiles were to avoid them, for they were told

that it was certain death to be bitten by these creatures. Most of all the boys admired the little birds, which indeed it was hard for them to believe not to be butterflies, so small were they, so rapid their movements, and so brilliant their color.

On the 7th day from landing the pinnaces were finished; and, the vessels being anchored near the shore, the crews went on board for the last time, preparatory to making their start the next day.

There was one tall and bright-faced sailor with whom the boys had struck up a great friendship. He had sailed before with Captain Drake; and as the evening was cool, and there was naught to do, they begged him to tell them of his former visits in the Caribbean Seas.

"My first," he said, "was the worst, and might well have been my last. Captain John Hawkins was our captain, a bold man and a good sailor; but not gentle as well as brave, as is our good Captain Francis. Our fleet was a strong one. The admiral's ship, the *Jesus*, of Lubeck, was 700 tons. Then there were the smaller craft; the *Minion*, Captain Hampton, in which I myself sailed; the *William and John* of Captain Boulton; the *Judith* with Captain Francis Drake; and two little ships, besides. We sailed later in the year. It was the 2nd October, five years back; that is, 1567. We started badly, for a storm struck us off Finisterre, the ships separated, and some boats were lost.

"We came together at Cape de Verde, and there we tried to get slaves; for it was part of the object of our voyage to buy slaves

on the coast of Africa, and sell them to the Spaniards, here. It was a traffic for which I myself had but little mind; for though it be true that these black fellows are a pernicious race, given to murder, and to fightings of all kinds among themselves, yet are they human beings; and it is, methinks, cruel to send them beyond the seas into slavery, so far from their homes and people. But it was not for me, a simple mariner, to argue the question with our admirals and captains; and I have heard many worshipful merchants are engaged in the traffic.

"However that be, methinks that our good Captain Francis did, likewise, turn himself against this kind of traffic in human flesh; for although he has been three times, since, in these regions, he has never again taken a hand in it.

"With much to do at Cape de Verde, we succeeded in getting a hundred and fifty men; but not without much resistance from the natives, who shot their arrows at us, and wounded many; and most of those who were wounded did die of lock-jaw, for the arrows had been smeared in some poisonous stuff. Then we went farther down the coast, and took in two hundred more.

"Coasting still farther down, to Saint Jorge de Mina, we landed; and Captain Hawkins found that the negro king there was at war with an enemy, a little farther inland. He besought our assistance, and promised us plenty of slaves, if we would go there and storm the place with him. Captain Hawkins agreed, cheerfully enough; and set off, with a portion of his crews, to assist the king.

"The enemy fought well, and it was only after a very hard fight on our part, and a loss of many men, that we took the town. Methinks the two hundred and fifty slaves which we took there were dearly paid for; and there was much grumbling, among the ships, at the reckless way in which our admiral had risked our lives, for meager gain. It is true that these slaves would sell at a high price, yet none of us looked upon money, gained in that way, quite as we do upon treasure taken in fair fight. In the one case we traffic with the Spaniards, who are our natural enemies; and it is repugnant, to a Christian man, to hand over even these poor negroes to such willful masters as these; in the other we are fighting for our queen and country. The Spaniards are the natural enemies of all good Protestants, and every ship we see, and every treasure bag we capture, does something to pare the nails of that fierce and haughty power.

"Having filled up our hold with the slaves which we had captured at Saint Jorge de Mina, we turned our back upon the African coast, and sailed to the West Indies. At Rio de Hacha, the first port at which we touched, the people did not wish to trade with us; but the admiral was not the man to allow people to indulge in fancies of this kind. We soon forced them to buy, or to sell, that which we chose; and not what they had a fancy for.

"Sailing along, we were caught in a storm; and in searching for the port of Saint Juan d'Ulloa, where we hoped to refit, we captured three ships. In the port we found twelve other small craft, but these we released; and sent some of them to Mexico,

to ask that victuals and stores might be sent.

"The next day thirteen great ships appeared off the harbor. In them was the Viceroy of Mexico. We had then only the *Jesus*, the *Minion* of 100 tons, and the *Judith* of 50 tons, and this big fleet was large enough to have eaten us; but Captain Hawkins put a good face on it, and sailed out to meet them, waiting at the mouth of the harbor. Here he told them haughtily that he should not allow their fleet to enter, save on his terms. I doubt not that Hawkins would have been glad enough to have made off, if he could have done so; for what with the sale of the slaves, and the vessels we had captured, we had now 1,800,000 pounds, in silver and gold, on board of the ships. The Spanish admiral accepted the terms which Captain Hawkins laid down, and most solemnly swore to observe them.

"So with colors flying, both fleets sailed into the harbor together. It is true, however, that the man who places faith in a Spaniard is a fool, and so it proved to us. No sooner had they reached the port than they began to plot, secretly among themselves, how to fall upon us. Even then, though they had thirteen big ships, the smallest of which was larger than the *Jesus*, they feared to attack us openly.

"Numbers of men were set to work by them on the shore, secretly, to get up batteries by which they might fire into us; while a great ship, having 500 men on board, was moored close alongside the *Minion*.

"I remember well talking the matter over with Jack Boscowan,

who was boatswain on board; and we agreed that this time we had run into an ugly trap, and that we did not see our way out of it. Englishmen can, as all the world knows, lick the Spaniards when they are but as one to five; but when there are twenty of the Dons to one of us, it is clear that the task is a hard one.

"What made it worse was that we were in harbor At sea, our quickness in handling our ships would have made us a match for the Spanish fleet; but at anchor, and with the guns of the port commanding us, we did not truly see how we were to get out of it.

"The fight began by the Spaniards letting their big ship drift alongside the Minion; when, suddenly, 500 men leapt out on our decks. We were beaten below in no time, for we were scarce prepared for so sudden an onslaught. There, however, we defended ourselves stoutly, firing into the hull of the ship alongside, and defending our ports and entrances from the Spaniards.

"For a while our case seemed desperate. The Jesus was hard at work, too; and when she had sunk the ship of the Spanish admiral, she came up, and gave a broadside into the ship alongside of us. Her crew ran swiftly back to her; and we, with much rejoicing, poured on deck again, and began to pay them hotly for their sudden attack upon us.

"It was a great fight, and one that would have done your heart good, to see the three English ships, two of them so small as to be little more than boats, surrounded by a whole fleet of Spaniards, while from on shore the guns of the forts played upon us. Had

it not been for those forts, I verily believe that we should have destroyed the Spanish fleet. Already another large vessel had followed the example of their admiral's ship, and had gone to the bottom. Over 540 of their sailors we had, as they have themselves admitted, slain outright.

"We were faring well, and had begun to hope that we might get to find our way out of the toils, when a cry came from the lookout, who said that the Jesus was hoisting signals of distress, and that he feared she was sinking.

"Close as she was lying to a battery, and surrounded by enemies, our bold captain did not hesitate a minute; but sailed the Minion, through a crowd of enemies, close to the Jesus. You should have heard the cheer that the two crews gave each other. It rose above all the noise of the battle, and would assuredly have done your heart good. The Jesus was sinking fast, and it was as much as they could do to tumble into the boats, and to row hastily to our side. We should have saved them all, but the Spaniards, who dared not lay us aboard, and who were in no slight degree troubled by the bravery with which we had fought, set two of their great ships on fire, and launched them down upon us, preferring to lose two of their own ships for the sake of capturing or destroying our little bark. The sight of the ships coming down, in flames, shook the hearts of our men more than all the fury of the Spaniards had been able to do; and without waiting for orders, they turned the ship's head for the mouth of the port.

"The admiral, who had just come on board, cursed and

shouted when he saw what was being done; but the panic of the fire ships got the better of the men, and we made off, firing broadsides at the Spaniards' fleet as we passed through them; and aided by the little Judith, which stuck to us through the whole of the fight.

"When we cooled down and came to think of it, we were in no slight degree ashamed of our desertion of our comrades in the Jesus. Fortunately the number so left behind was not large; but we knew that, according to their custom, the Spaniards would put all to death, and so indeed it afterwards turned out, many of them being dispatched with horrible tortures.

"This terrible treatment of the prisoners caused, when it was known, great indignation; and although Queen Elizabeth did not declare war with Spain, from that time she gave every countenance she could to the adventurers who waged war, on their own account, against her.

"The Minion suffered severely, packed close as she was with all her own crew, and a great part of that of the Jesus, vast numbers of whom were wounded. However, at length a hundred were, at their own request, landed and left to shift for themselves, preferring to run the risk of Indians, or even of Spaniards, to continue any longer amid the horrors on board the ship. I myself, boys, was not one of that number, and came back to England in her.

"Truly it was the worst voyage that I ever made, for though fortune was for a time good to us, and we collected much money;

yet in the end we lost all, and hardly escaped with our lives. It has seemed to me that this bad fortune was sent as a punishment upon us, for carrying off the negroes into slavery. Many others thought the same, and methinks that that was also the opinion of our present good admiral."

"Did you come out with him, in his further voyages here?" Ned asked.

"I was with him in the Dragon, two years ago, when with the Swanne she came here. Last year I sailed with him in the Swanne, alone."

"You did not have any very stirring adventures?"

"No, we were mainly bent on exploring; but for all that we carried off many prizes, and might, had we been pilgrims, have bought farms in Devonshire, and settled down on our share of the prize money; but there, that is not the way with sailors. Quick come, quick go, and not one in a hundred that I have ever heard of, however much he may have taken as his share of prizes, has ever kept it, or prospered greatly therefrom."

It was now evening, and many of the men had betaken themselves to the water, for a swim. The heat had been great all day, and as it was their last, they had been pressed at work to get the stores, which had been landed, again on board ship; and to finish all up, ready for the division of the party, next day.

"I do not care for bathing here," Ned said, in reply to a sailor, who asked him why he too did not join in the sport. "I confess that I have a dread of those horrible sharks, of which we have

heard so much, and whose black fins we see from time to time."

"I should have thought," said the harsh, sneering voice of Giles Taunton, "that an Otter would have been a match for a shark. The swimmers of the South Isles, and indeed the natives here, attack the sharks without fear. I should have thought that anyone who prides himself, as you do, upon swimming, would have been equally willing to encounter them."

"I do not know that I do pride myself on my swimming, Giles Taunton," Ned said composedly; "at any rate, no one has ever heard me speak of such abilities as I may have in that way. As to the natives, they have seen each other fight with sharks, and know how the matter is gone about. If I were to be present a few times, when such strife takes place, it may be that I should not shirk from joining in the sport; but knowing nothing whatever of the method pursued, or of the manner of attack, I should be worse than a fool, were I to propose to venture my life in such a sport."

Many sailors who were standing round approved of what Ned said.

"Aye, aye, lad," one said, "no one would think of making his first jump across the spot where he might be dashed to pieces. Let a man learn to jump on level ground; and then, when he knows his powers, he may go across a deep chasm."

By this time a good many of the men were out of the water, when suddenly there arose the cry of, "Shark!" from the lookout on the poop. There was a great rush for the ship, and the

excitement on board was nearly as great as that in the water. Ned quietly dropped off his jacket and his shoes and, seizing a short boarding pike, waited to see what would come of it.

It chanced that his friends, the other boys, were farther out than the men; having, with the ardor of youth, engaged themselves in races, regardless of the admonition that had frequently been given them to keep near the ship; for the terror of these water beasts was very great.

The men all gained the ship in safety, but the shark, which had come up from a direction in which it would cut them off, was clearly likely to arrive before the boys could gain the side. At first it seemed, indeed, that their fate was sealed; but the shark, who in many respects resembles a cat with a mouse, and seems to prefer to trifle with its victim to the last, allowed them to get close to the ship; although, by rapid swimming, it could easily have seized them before.

The nearest to it, as it approached the ship, was Tom Tressilis, who was not so good a swimmer as the others; but he had swum lustily, and with good heart, though his white face showed how great the effect of the danger was upon him. He had not spoken a word, since the shark first made its appearance. As he struck despairingly to gain the ship, from which the sailors were already casting him ropes, his eye caught that of Ned, who cried to him cheerily:

"Keep up your spirits, Tom. I will be with you."

As the huge fish swept along, at a distance of some four

yards from the side of the ship, and was already turning on its back, opening its huge mouth to seize its victim, Ned dived head foremost from the ship onto him. So great was the force and impetus with which he struck the creature, that it was fairly driven sideways from its course, missing by the nearest shave the leg of Tom Tressilis. Ned himself was half stunned by the force with which his head had struck the fish, for a shark is not so soft a creature to jump against as he had imagined; however, he retained consciousness enough to grasp at the fin of the shark, to which he held on for half a minute.

By this time the shark was recovering from the effects of the sudden blow, and Ned was beginning to be able to reflect. In a moment he plunged the half pike deep into the creature's stomach. Again and again he repeated the stroke; until the shark, rolling over in his agony, and striking furiously with his tail, shook Ned from his hold. He instantly dived beneath the water, and came up at a short distance. The shark was still striking the water furiously, the sailors on board were throwing down upon him shot, pieces of iron, and all sorts of missiles, and some of the best archers were hastily bringing their bows to the side.

The shark caught sight of his opponent, and instantly rushed at him. Ned again dived, just before the creature reached him; and, rising under him, inflicted some more stabs with the pike; then he again swam off, for he was in no slight fear that he might be struck by his friends on board ship, of whose missiles, indeed, he was more in dread than of the shark himself.

When he rose, at a short distance from the shark, he was again prepared for a rush on the part of his enemy; but the great fish had now had enough of it. He was still striking the water, but his movements were becoming slower, for he was weakened by the loss of blood from the stabs he had received from below, and from the arrows, many of which were now buried to the goose quill in him. In a minute or two he gradually turned on one side, and floated, with his white belly in the air.

A shout broke from the crew of the Swanne, and also of the Pacha, who had been attracted to the side by the cries. When he saw that the battle was over, and that the enemy had been vanquished without loss of life, or hurt to any, Ned speedily seized one of the ropes, and climbed up the side of the ship; where he was, you may be sure, received with great cheering, and shouts of joy and approval.

"You are a fine lad," Captain John Drake said, "and your name of Otter has indeed been well bestowed. You have saved the life of your comrade; and I know that my old friend, Mr. Frank Tressilis, his father, will feel indebted indeed to you, when he comes to learn how gallantly you risked your life to preserve that of his son."

Ned said that he saw no credit in the action, and that he was mightily glad to have had an opportunity of learning to do that which the negroes thought nothing of; for that it shamed him to think that these heathens would venture their lives boldly against sharks, while he, an English boy, although a good swimmer, and

not, he hoped, wanting in courage, was yet afraid to encounter these fierce brutes.

This incident acted, as might be expected, as a fresh bond between the boys; and as it also secured for Ned the cordial goodwill of the sailors, they were, in future, free from any persecution at the hands of Master Taunton, or of his fellows.

Chapter 4: An Unsuccessful Attack

It should have been said, in its proper place, that upon the day after the arrival of the Pacha and Swanne in Pheasant Bay, a barque named the Isle of Wight, commanded by James Rause, with thirty men on board, many of whom had sailed with Captain Drake upon his previous voyages, came into the port; and there was great greeting between the crews of the various ships. Captain Rause brought with him a Spanish caravel, captured the day before; and a shallop also, which he had taken at Cape Blanco. This was a welcome reinforcement, for the crews of the two ships were but small for the purpose which they had in hand, especially as it would be necessary to leave a party to take charge of the vessels. Captain Drake made some proposals to Captain Rause, which the latter accepted, and it was arranged that he and his crew would be, for a time, under the command of Captain Drake.

When the division of the crews was made, it was decided that James Rause should remain in command of the four ships at Pheasant Bay; and that Captain Drake, with fifty-three of his own men and twenty of Rause's, should start in the three pinnaces and the shallop for Nombre de Dios.

The first point at which they stopped was the Isle of Pines, on the 22nd July. Here they put in to water the boats and, as the crews had been cramped from their stay therein, Captain Drake

decided to give them a day on shore. Ned and Reuben Gale were of the party, the other two being, to their great discontent, left behind in the ship.

After the barricades had been filled with water, the fires lit for cooking, and the labors of the day over, Ned and Reuben started for a ramble in the island, which was of a goodly extent. When they had proceeded some distance in the wood, picking fruit as they went, and looking at the butterflies and bright birds, they were suddenly seized and thrown upon the ground by some men, who sprang out from the underwood through which they had passed. They were too surprised at this sudden attack to utter even a cry; and, being safely gagged and bound, they were lifted by their captors, and carried away into the interior of the island.

After an hour's passage they were put down in the heart of a thick grove of trees and, looking round, saw they were surrounded by a large number of natives. One of these, a person evidently in authority, spoke to them in a language which they did not understand. They shook their heads, and after several times attempting to make them comprehend, Ned caught the words *Espanolos*.

To this he vehemently shook his head in denial, which caused quite an excitement among his hearers. One of the latter then said "English," to which Ned and his companion nodded.

The news evidently filled the natives with great joy. The bands were taken off the boys, and the Indians endeavored, by gestures, to express the sorrow that they felt for having carried them off.

It was clear that they had taken them for Spaniards, and that they had been watched as they wandered inland, and captured for the purpose of learning the objects and force of the expedition. Now, however, that their captors understood that the ships were English, with great signs of pleasure they started with them for the seashore.

It had already darkened when they arrived there, and the crews of the boats jumped hastily to their feet, at the sight of so many persons approaching. Ned, however, called to them just as they were about to betake themselves to their arms, and shouted that the natives were perfectly friendly, and well disposed. Captain Drake himself now advanced, and entered into conversation with the leader of the natives, in Spanish. It seemed that they had met before, and that many, indeed, of the natives were acquainted with his person. These were a party of Simeroons, as they were then called; i.e., of natives who had been made slaves by the Spaniards, and who had now fled. They afterwards came to be called Cameroons, and are mostly so spoken of in the books of English buccaneers. These men were greatly pleased at the arrival of Captain Drake and his boats, for their own had been destroyed, and they feared taking to the sea in such as they could build.

After much talk, Captain Drake arranged to put them on shore, so that they would go on to the Isthmus of Darien, where there were more of them in the forests; and they promised to prepare these to assist Captain Drake, when he should come there. The natives, some thirty in number, were soon packed in

the boats, and were ready to cross to the mainland; and the party then going forward, entered the port of Nombre de Dios at three in the morning.

As they sailed in, being yet a good way from the city, they came upon a barque of some 60 tons. It was all unprepared for attack, and the boats got alongside, and the crews climbed on to the deck before their presence was discovered, or dreamt of. No resistance whatever was offered by the Spaniards against the English. All were, indeed, asleep below.

A search was made, and it was found that the ship was laden with Canary wine, a circumstance which gave great pleasure to the English, who looked forward to a long bout of good drinking. While they were searching the ship, they had paid but little attention to the Spanish crew. Presently, however, they heard the sound of oars at some little distance from the ship.

"What is that?" said Captain Drake.

Ned ran to the stern of the vessel.

"I think, sir," he said, "that one or two of the Spaniards have got off, with their boat. I saw it towing to the stern, when we boarded."

Captain Drake leant over the side, and at once gave orders to one of the boats whose crew had not boarded the vessel, and was lying alongside, to pursue; and to strain every nerve to catch the boat, before she came near the town. The sailors leapt to the oars, and pulled with a will, for they knew as well as their captain how serious a matter it would be, were the town alarmed; and indeed,

that all their toil and pains would be thrown away, as it was only by surprise that so small a handful of men could possibly expect to take a large and important town like Nombre de Dios.

Fortunately the boat overtook the fugitives before they were within hailing distance of the town, and rapidly towed them back to the ship. All then took their places in the pinnaces, and pushed off without further delay. It was not yet light, and steered by one who knew the town well, they rowed up alongside a battery, which defended it, without the alarm being given. As they climbed up over the wall the sentry fired his piece, and the artillerymen, who, there having been some rumors of the arrival of Drake's fleet in those waters, were sleeping by the side of their guns, sprang to their feet and fled, as the English leapt down into the battery. There were six large guns in the place, and many small, and bombards.

"Now, my lads," Captain Drake said, "you must lose no time. In five minutes, yonder artillerymen will have alarmed the whole town, and we must be there before the Spaniards have managed to get their sleepy eyes open.

"Advance in three parties, and meet in the marketplace. It is good that we should make as much show as possible. There can be no more concealment and, therefore, we must endeavor to make the Spaniards believe that we are a far stronger force than, in truth, we are."

It was not until the three parties met in the marketplace that any real resistance on the part of the Spaniards began, although

windows had been opened, and shots fired here and there. The alarm bells were now ringing, shouts and screams were heard through the town, and the whole population was becoming fairly aroused. As they entered the marketplace, however, a heavy fire was opened with arquebuses and guns. The English had taken with them no firearms, but each man carried his bow and arrows, and with these they shot fast and hard at the Spaniards, and silenced their fire.

At this moment, however, it happened, sadly for the success of the enterprise, that a ball struck Captain Drake, and inflicted a serious wound. Ned was standing near him, and observed him stagger.

"Are you hit, sir?" he asked anxiously.

"Tush, my boy," he replied, "it is a scratch; say nothing of it.

"Now, forward to the Treasury. The town is in your hands, my lads. It only remains to you to sack as much treasure as you can carry; but remember, do not lose your discipline, and keep together. If we straggle, we are lost.

"Now, light at once the torches which you have brought with you, and shout aloud to the inhabitants, you that can speak Spanish, that if any more resistance is offered, we will burn the whole town to the ground."

This threat mightily alarmed the inhabitants, and the firing ceased altogether; for as these were not regular soldiers, and knew that the object of the English attack was to plunder the public treasuries, rather than private property, the townsmen

readily deemed it to their interest to hold aloof, rather than to bring upon their city and themselves so grievous a calamity as that threatened by the English.

In the advance, two or three Spaniards had fallen into the hands of the men and, these being threatened with instant death if they hesitated, at once led the way to the governor's house, where the silver, brought down on mules from Panama, was stored. A party were placed at the door of this building, and Captain Drake, with the rest, entered.

The governor had fled, with his attendants. The house was richly furnished; full of silk hangings, of vessels of gold and silver, and of all kinds of beautiful things. These, however, attracted little attention from the English, although Ned and his young comrades marveled much. Never had they seen, in England, anything approaching to the wealth and beauty of this furnishing. It seemed to them, indeed, as if they had entered one of the houses of the magicians and enchanters, of whom they had read in books during their childhood.

Captain Drake, however, passed through these gorgeous rooms with scarce a glance and, led by the Spaniards, descended some steps into a vast cellar.

A cry of astonishment and admiration burst from the whole party, as they entered this treasury. Here, piled up twelve feet high, lay a mighty mass of bars of silver, carefully packed. This heap was no less than 70 feet long and 10 feet wide, and the bars each weighed from 35 to 40 pounds.

"My lads," Captain Drake said, "here is money enough to make us all rich for our lives; but we must leave it for the present, and make for the Treasury House, which is as full of gold and of precious stones as this is of silver."

The men followed Captain Drake and his brother, feeling quite astonished, and almost stupefied at the sight of this pile of silver; but they felt, moreover, the impossibility of their carrying off so vast a weight, unless the town were completely in their hands.

This, indeed, was very far from being the case, for the whole town was now rising. The troops, who had at the first panic fled, were now being brought forward; and as the day lightened, the Spaniards, sorely ashamed that so small a body of men should have made themselves masters of so great and rich a city, were plucking up heart and preparing to attack them.

Ill was it, then, for the success of the adventure, that Captain Francis had suffered so heavy a wound in the marketplace. Up to this time he had kept bravely on, and none except Ned, all being full of the prospect of vast plunder, had noticed his pale face, or seen the blood which streamed down from him, and marked every footstep as he went; but nature could now do no more and, with his body well nigh drained of all its blood, he suddenly fell down fainting.

Great was the cry that rose from the men, as they saw the admiral thus fall. Hastily gathering round him, they lifted his body from the ground, and shuddered at seeing how great a pool

of blood was gathered where he had been standing. It seemed almost as if, with the fall of their captain, the courage which had animated these men, and would animate them again in fighting against ever so great odds, had for the moment deserted them.

In spite of the orders of Captain John, that four or five should carry his brother to the boats; and that the rest should seize, without delay, the treasures of gold and diamonds in the Treasury, and carry off as great a weight as they might bear, none paid attention. They gathered round the body of Captain Francis and, lifting him on their shoulders, they hurried to the boats, careless of the promised treasures, and thinking only to escape, and bear with them their beloved commander from the forces of the Spaniards; who, as they saw the party fall back, with great shouting fell upon them, shooting hotly.

The swoon of the admiral had lasted but a few moments. As cordial was poured down his throat he opened his eyes and, seeing what the men were minded to do, protested with all his force against their retreat. His words, however, had no weight with them and, in spite of his resistance, they carried him down to the battery; and there, placing him in a pinnace, the whole took to their boats, and rowed on board ship.

Wonderful to relate, although many were wounded, but one man, and he Giles Taunton the armorer, was killed in this attack upon the great city, in which they only missed making themselves masters of one of the greatest treasures upon earth by the accident of their commander fainting, at a critical moment,

and to the men being seized by an unaccountable panic. Some of the crew had, indeed, carried off certain plunder, which they had snatched in passing through the governor's house, and in such short searches as they had been able to make in private dwellings; but the men, in general, had been so struck with amazement and sorrow at the sight of their general's wound, that although this wealth was virtually at their mercy, they put off with him without casting a thought upon what they were leaving behind.

The boats now rowed without pausing to the isle, which they called the Isle of Victuals; and there they stayed two days, nursing their wounds, and supporting themselves with poultry, of which there was a great abundance found in the island, and with vegetables and fruits from the gardens. There was great joy among them when it was found that Captain Drake's wound, although severe enough, was yet not likely to imperil his life; and that it was loss of blood, alone, which had caused him to faint. At this news the men all took heart, and rejoiced so exceedingly that a stranger would have supposed that they had attained some great victory, rather than have come out unsuccessful from an adventure which promised to make each man wealthy.

Upon the second day after their arrival at the Isle of Victuals, they saw a boat rowing out from the direction of Nombre de Dios. As they knew that there was no fleet in that harbor which would venture to attack them, the English had no fear of the approaching boat; although, indeed, they wondered much what message could have been sent them. On board the boat was an

hidalgo, or Spanish noble, who was rowed by four negroes. He said that he had come from the mainland to make inquiries as to the gallant men who had performed so great a feat, and that he cherished no malice, whatever, against them. He wished to know whether the Captain Drake who commanded them was the same who had been there before, and especially did he inquire whether the arrows used by the English were poisoned; for, he said, great fear and alarm reigned in the town, many believing that all who had been struck by the English shafts would certainly die.

Upon this head he was soon reassured; and the English were, indeed, mightily indignant at its being supposed that they would use such cowardly weapons as poisoned arrows.

Then the hidalgo inquired why the English had so suddenly retreated from the town, when it was in their hands, and why they had abstained from carrying off the three hundred and sixty tons of silver which lay at the governor's house, and the still greater value of gold in the treasure house—the gold, indeed, being far more valuable than the silver, insomuch as it was more portable. The answers to all these questions were freely given, for in those days there was a curious mixture of peace and war, of desperate violence and of great courtesy, between combatants; and whereas, now, an enemy arriving with a view merely to obtain information would be roughly treated, in those days he was courteously entertained, and his questions as freely answered as if he had been a friend and ally.

When he heard of the wound of Captain Drake he expressed

great sorrow; and, after many compliments were exchanged, he returned to Nombre de Dios; while, the next day, Captain Drake and the English rowed away to the Isle of Pines, where Captain Rause was remaining in charge of the ships. He was mightily glad to see them return, as were their comrades who had remained, for their long absence had caused great fear and anxiety, as it was thought that Captain Drake must have fallen into some ambuscade, and that ill had come to the party.

Although there was some regret at the thought that the chance of gaining such vast booty had been missed, yet the joy at the safe return overpowered this feeling; and, for a day or two, the crews feasted merrily and held festival. Captain Rause then determined to continue the adventure no further, but to separate with his ship and men from Captain Drake. He was of opinion, firmly, that now the Spaniards had discovered their presence in the island, such measures of defense would be taken, at every port, as to place these beyond the hazard of attack by so small a body as those carried by the three ships. He therefore, receiving full satisfaction for the use of his men and for guarding the ships, sailed away on the 7th August, leaving the Swanne and the Pacha to proceed upon the adventure, alone.

Captain Drake sent his brother and Ellis Hickson to examine the river Chagres; and on their return Captain Drake, with his two ships and three pinnaces, sailed for Carthagena, where he arrived on the 13th day of August. While on the voyage thither he captured two Spanish ships, each of 240 tons, with rich cargoes,

neither of them striking so much as a blow in resistance.

At evening he anchored between the Island of Cara and Saint Bernardo, and the three pinnaces entered the harbor of Carthagena.

Lying at the entrance they found a frigate, which in those days meant a very small craft, not much larger than a rowing boat. She had but one old man on board, who said that the rest of the company had gone ashore, to fight a duel about a quarrel which they had had overnight. He said, too, what was much more important to the English—that, an hour before nightfall, a pinnace had passed him, and that the man who was steering had shouted out that the English were at hand, and that he had better up anchor and go into the port. He said, moreover, that when the pinnace reached Carthagena guns were fired, and he could see that all the shipping hauled in under shelter of the castle.

This was bad news indeed, and there was much hard language among the sailors, when they heard it. It was clear that the castle of Carthagena, if prepared, was not to be carried by some thirty or forty men, however gallant and determined they might be. There was, too, but little hope that the old man had spoken falsely, for they had themselves heard guns, shortly before their arrival there. With much bitterness, it was determined to abandon the plan of attack; and thus Carthagena, as well as Nombre de Dios, escaped from the hands of the English.

They did not, however, go out empty handed; for they succeeded in capturing, by boarding, four pinnaces, each laden

with cargo; and as they turned their heads to go out to sea, a great ship of Seville came sailing in. Her they laid alongside and captured easily, she having just arrived from Spain, having no thoughts of meeting a foe, just as she reached her port of destination.

This lightened the hearts of the crew, and with their prizes in tow, they sailed out in good spirits. The ship contained large stores of goods from Spain, with sherries, and merchandise of every kind. They went back to the Isle of Pines, their usual rendezvous, and on adding up the goods that they had taken from various prizes, found that, even now, they had made no bad thing of their voyage.

They were now much reduced in fighting strength by illness, and Captain Drake determined in his mind that the crews were no longer strong enough for the manning of two ships, and that it would be better to take to one, alone. He knew, however, that even his authority would not suffice to persuade the sailors to abandon one of the vessels, for sailors have a great love for their ships. He therefore determined to do it by a sudden stroke, and that known only to himself and another. Therefore he called to him Thomas Moore, the carpenter of the Swanne; and, taking him aside, told him to make auger holes in the bottom of that ship. Moore, who was a good sailor, made a great resistance to the orders; but upon the admiral assuring him that it was necessary, for the success of the enterprise, that one of the ships should be destroyed, he very reluctantly undertook the task.

Previous to this Captain Drake had ordered all the booty, and a considerable portion of the stores of both ships, to be hauled on shore; so that they might lose nothing of value to them.

The next morning, Ned and his friends were sitting on the bulwark of the vessel, watching the fish playing about in the depths of the clear blue water.

"We seem to be lower in the water than usual," Ned said. "Does not it seem to you that we are not so high above the sea as we are wont to be?"

The others agreed that the vessel had that appearance; but as it seemed clearly impossible that it should be so, especially when she was lighter than usual, they thought that they must be mistaken, and the subject was put aside. Half an hour later Captain Drake himself, rowing alongside, called to his brother, who came to the side.

"I am going to fish," he said; "are you disposed to come, also?"

Captain John expressed his willingness to do so.

"I will wait for you," his brother said.

Captain John was turning to go into his cabin to get his cap and cloak, when Captain Francis cried out:

"Is not your ship very low in the water this morning?"

"The same as usual, I suppose," Captain John said, laughing; but looking over the side himself, he said, "Methinks she does lie deep in the water;" and, calling the carpenter, he bade him sound the well.

The latter, after doing so, cried out loudly that there were four

feet of water in the ship.

A great astonishment seized upon both officers and crew, at this unexpected news. All hands were at once set to work, the pumps were rigged and, with buckets and all sorts of gear, they strove manfully and hard to get rid of the water. It soon, however, became plain that it entered faster than they could pump it forth, and that the vessel must have sprung a bad leak.

When it was clear that the Swanne could not be saved, the boats of the Pacha were brought alongside, and all the goods that remained in her were removed, together with the arms and ammunition. Then the crew, taking to the boats, lay by, until in a few minutes the Swanne sank, among the tears of many of her crew, who had made three voyages in her, and loved her well.

It was not, for a long time afterwards, known that the loss of this ship was the effect of the orders of the admiral; who, indeed, acted with his usual wisdom in keeping the matter secret; for assuredly, although the men would have obeyed his orders, he would have lost much favor and popularity among them, had the truth been at that time known.

The next day the news was spread, among the men, that it was determined to fill the Pacha with all the stores that were on shore; and, leaving a party there with her, to embark the crews in the pinnaces, for service in the river Chagres and along the coast; until, at any rate, they could capture another ship to replace the Swanne. Next day they rowed on into the Gulf of Darien. There the ship was laid up in a good place, and they remained quiet for

fifteen days, amusing and refreshing themselves. By this means they hoped to throw all the Spaniards off their guard, and to cause a report to be spread that they had left the island.

The Simeroons living near had been warned, by those who had been landed from the Isle of Pines, of their coming; and received them with good cheer, and promised all aid that could be required. Then the pinnaces were sent out, to catch any passing ships which might be cruising along the coast.

It happened, one day, that two of them had set off in pursuit of a great ship, which they saw passing in the distance. The wind was light, and they had little doubt that they should overhaul her. Ned, who was one of those who remained behind, was much angered at missing so good an enterprise; but some four hours afterwards another ship was seen to pass along.

The remaining pinnace was at once manned, Captain John Drake taking the command; and, with fourteen men, she set out to take the Spanish galleon. Gallant as are the exploits which have been performed in modern times by British tars, in their attacks upon slavers, yet in none of these cases does the disparity of force at all approach that which often existed between the English boats and the Spanish galleons; indeed, the only possible reason that can be given, for the success of the English, is the fear that their enemy entertained for them. Both the Spanish captains and crews had come to look upon them as utterly invincible, and they seemed, when attacked by the English buccaneers, altogether paralyzed.

As the boat rowed up towards the great ship, her size became gradually more apparent, and her deck could be seen crowded with men; even Ned, who was not greatly given to reflection, could not but feel a passing doubt as to the possibility of one small boat, with fourteen men, attacking a floating castle like this.

Presently the boom of a cannon from the forecastle of the vessel was heard, and a ball whizzed over their heads; then shot after shot was fired, and soon a rattle of small arms broke out, and the water all round was cut up by bullets and balls. The rough seamen cared little for this demonstration. With a cheer they bent their backs to the oars and, although some were wounded, they rowed up to the side of the ship without hesitation or doubt. Then from above a shower of missiles were hurled upon them—darts, stones, hot water, and even boiling tar.

It would have gone hard with the English, had not the Spanish carelessly left a porthole open near the water level; through this the English clambered, eager to get at their foe, and many of them raging with the pain caused by the boiling materials. As they rushed on to the deck, the Spaniards were ranged, in two ranks, on either side of the hatchway; and fell upon them at once; but so great was the fury of the English that, facing either way, with a roar like beasts springing on their prey, they fell with axe and sword upon the Spaniards.

It was the wild rage with which the English buccaneers fought that was the secret of their success. The Spaniards are a people given to ceremony, and even in matters of battle are somewhat

formal and pedantic. The combat, then, between them and the English, was one which presented no familiar conditions to their minds. These rough sailors, hardened by exposure, skilled in the use of arms, were no doubt formidable enough, individually; but this alone would not have intimidated the Spaniards, or have gone any great distance towards equalizing the tremendous odds between them.

It was the fury with which they fought that was the secret of their success. It was as when a cat, furious with passion, flies at a dog many times larger and heavier than itself. The latter may be as brave, in many matters, as the cat; and ready to face a creature much larger even than itself, under ordinary circumstances. It is the fury of the cat which appalls, and turns it into a very coward.

Thus, when the band of English fell upon the Spaniards in the galleon—who were some six times as numerous as themselves—naked to the waist, with hair streaming back, with all their faces wild with pain, brandishing their heavy axes, and with a shout rushed upon their foes drawn up in regular order; the latter, after a moment or two of resistance, began rapidly to fall back. Their officers, in vain, shouted to them to stand firm. In vain they taunted them with falling back before a handful of men. In vain even turned their swords against their own soldiers.

It was useless. Those in front, unable indeed to retreat, were cut down by the heavy axes. Those behind recoiled, and after but a few minutes' fighting, some began to leap down the hatchways; and although the fight continued for a short time, isolated groups

here and there making resistance, the battle was virtually won in five minutes after the English appeared on deck. The captain and his two principal officers were killed, fighting bravely; and had their efforts been in any way backed by those of their men, they would have made short work of the assailants.

Captain Drake's voice was heard, high above the din, as soon as the resistance ceased. He ordered the prisoners to be all brought upon deck, and disarmed, and at once forced into their own boats, and obliged to row away from the vessel; for he knew that, were his men once to begin to plunder, and to fall upon the liquors, the Spaniards, even if unarmed, would be able to rise and overpower them.

No sooner was the last Spaniard out of the ship, than the men scattered to look for plunder. Ned was standing on the poop, watching the boats rowing away, and thinking to himself that, so crowded were they, if a breeze were to spring up there would not be much chance of their reaching *Nombre de Dios*. Suddenly he heard below him a scream, followed by a splash; looking over, he saw the head of a woman appear above the water, and without hesitation dived at once from the side. For a moment the girl, for she was little more, struggled with him as if she would have sunk; but Ned, grasping her firmly, in a few strokes swam with her alongside the ship to the boat; and two or three sailors, running down, assisted him to pull her into it. Then, dripping wet, she was taken to the deck, where the captain, in kind tones, assured her that she would receive the most courteous treatment, and that

she need be under no fear, whatever.

She was the daughter of a wealthy Spaniard, at Nombre de Dios, and was now coming out from Spain to join him. Frightened by the noise of the fighting, and by the terrible reputation of the English buccaneers, she had, when the sailors rushed into the cabin with loud shouts, been so alarmed that she had jumped from the stern windows into the sea.

Captain Drake assured her courteously that, rough as his men might be, they would, none of them, lay a finger upon a woman. He then hoisted a flag and fired a gun, as a signal to the Spanish boats, which were yet within a quarter of a mile, to return. For a moment they rowed on, but a ball, sent skimming across their bows, was a hint which they could not disregard; for, full as they were of men, they could not have hoped to avoid the English pinnace, should it have put off after them.

When the boats came alongside, some of those on board were ordered to ascend the side of the ship; and, plenty of accommodation having been made, the young Spanish lady and her maid, who had remained in the cabin, descended into the largest boat; handed down by Captain Drake, with a courtesy equal to that which a Spanish hidalgo himself would have shown.

Before she went, the young lady turned to Ned, who was standing near, and expressed to him her deep thanks for the manner in which he had leapt over for her. Ned himself could understand only a few words, for although many of the sailors spoke Spanish, and sometimes used it among themselves, he had

not yet made any great progress with it, although he had tried to pick up as many words and phrases as he could. The captain, however, translated the words to him; and he said to her, in reply, that there was nothing for her to feel herself under any obligation to him for, for that any dog would have jumped out and done the business, just as well.

The young lady, however, undid a bracelet of gold on her arm, and insisted upon herself fastening it round Ned's wrist, an action which caused blushes of confusion to crimson his face.

In a few minutes the Spanish boats were again off. The captain added, to that in which the young lady was placed, some food, some bottles of liqueur, and other matters which might render her voyage easy and pleasant. He promised that the Spaniards who had been transferred again to the ship should be landed, at the earliest opportunity.

The vessel was now searched, regularly, and was found to contain much treasure in goods; but as she was on her way from Europe, she had, of course, none of the gold and silver which was the main object of their search. However, they consoled themselves with the thought that the ship which had been chased by their comrades, earlier in the day, was homewards bound; and they hoped, therefore, that a rich cargo would there be secured.

They were not mistaken, for when the ship sailed up to the rendezvous they found another alongside, and the cheers of their comrades told them that the prize had been a handsome one. They found that they had secured nearly half a million in gold

and silver; and, transferring the cargo of the one ship into the other, they set the first on fire, and sailed back to the spot where their camp was formed, on the isthmus.

Several other ships fell into their hands in this way, but after this they hindered no more vessels on their way from Europe. They had ample stores and, indeed, far more than enough to supply them with every luxury; for on board the Pacha the richest wines, the most delicate conserves, the richest garments of all kinds were already in such abundance as to become common to them all. Down to the common sailor, all feasted on the best, and drank wines that an emperor might have approved. Captain Drake, in this way, gave his men when on shore much license; insisting, however, that they should abstain from drunkenness. For, as he said, not only would they be at the mercy of any small body of the enemy which might find them, but drunkenness breeds quarrels and disputes, and as between comrades would be fatal, indeed. Thus, although enough of good liquor was given to each man to make him merry, none were allowed to drink beyond this point.

The reason why the ships coming from Europe were allowed to pass, unmolested, was that Drake wished not that, each day, some fresh tale of capture should be brought to Panama by the crews set free in the boats; for it was certain that the tale so told would, at last, stir up such fear and indignation at the ravages committed by so small a body, that the governors of the Spanish towns would combine their forces, and would march against them

with a veritable army. While only the ships starting from Darien were overhauled, and lightened of their contents, the tale was not brought back to Darien; for the crews were allowed to sail on with their ships to Europe, as Drake had already more vessels than he knew what to do with; and as for prisoners, they were, to him, quite useless.

Captain John did, indeed, at one time propose to him that he should take out of each ship all the principal men, so as to hold them as hostages, in case of any misfortune happening to the English; but the admiral said to him, that so great was the enmity and fear of them, that did they fall into the hands of the Spaniards, these would not exchange them and let them go, even if as many kings were set free in return.

In all, five vessels were seized and plundered while lying at Darien. All was not, however, going well; for while they lay there, a terrible sickness broke out among them. Whether this was from the change of life, or from any noxious thing which they ate, or merely from the heat, none could say; but, very shortly, the illness made great ravages among them. First died Charles Clift, one of the quartermasters.

Then one day, when the pinnace in which Ned always sailed returned, they were met with the sad news that Captain John Drake was also dead. He had fallen, however, not by the fever, but by the ball of the Spaniards. He had gone out with one of the pinnaces, and had engaged a great Spanish ship; but the latter had shot more straight and faster than usual, and the captain

himself and Richard Allen, one of his men, had been slain in an unsuccessful attempt to capture the ship. His sad end was not the result of any rashness on his part; for he, indeed, had told the men that the vessel carried many guns, and that it was too rash an enterprise. The sailors, however, had by this time become so accustomed to victory as to despise the Dons altogether, and insisted upon going forward.

It was with bitter lamentation and regret that they returned, bringing the body of the admiral's brother. They were now at the end of the year, and in this week no less than six of the company died, among whom was Joseph Drake, another of the admiral's brothers. These losses saddened the crew greatly, and even the treasures which they had amassed now seemed to them small, and of little account. Even those who did not take the fever were much cast down, and Captain Drake determined, without any further loss, to attempt the expedition on which he had set his mind.

On February 3rd, being Shrove Tuesday, he started with eighteen English and thirteen Simeroons for Panama. He had now, since he sailed, lost no less than twenty-eight of the party which set out from Plymouth.

In a few days they reached Venta Cruz, but one of the men, who had taken too much strong liquor, made a noise; and the alarm being given, much of the treasure was carried out of the place, before they could effect a landing. They followed, however, one of the treasure parties out of the town, and pursued

them for some distance. On their way they came across another large convoy, with gold. This they easily took and, having sent the Spaniards away, unloaded the mules and buried the gold, desiring to press on further.

As they went, one of the chief Simeroons took the admiral apart from the road they were traversing, and led him to the foot of a lofty tree. Upon this steps had been cut, and the Indian told the admiral to ascend, and see what he could observe from the top. Upon reaching the summit, the admiral gave a shout of joy and astonishment. From that point he could see the Pacific Ocean, and by turning his head the Atlantic, which they had just left.

This was a joyful moment for the great sailor, and when he descended, one by one most of the men climbed to the top of the tree, to see the two oceans.

Drake was the first Englishman who had seen this sight. To the Spaniards it was, of course, familiar; indeed, Vasco Nunez had stood upon the spot and had seen the Pacific, and taken possession of it, in the name of Spain, in the year 1513.

They now retraced their steps; for, with the force at their disposal, Captain Drake thought it would be madness to cross the isthmus, with any view of attacking the Spaniards on the other side. He had now accomplished his purpose, and had learned the nature and geography of the place; and proposed, on some future occasion, to return with a force sufficient to carry out the great enterprises on which he had set his mind.

On their return, they were sorely disappointed at finding that the Spaniards, having captured one of the party, had extorted from him the hiding place of the gold, and had lifted and carried it off. They now prepared to re-embark in their pinnace. Reaching the seashore, however, they were surprised, and in some way dismayed, at seeing seven Spanish vessels nearing the coast. The Spaniards had at last determined to make an effort, and had arrived at a time more unfortunate for the English than could have been supposed. The pinnace, after landing the party, had sailed away, in order to prevent the Spaniards seizing upon those on board; and when Captain Drake reached the shore she was not in sight, having indeed hauled her wind, and made off, on the approach of the Spanish fleet.

The situation seemed bad, indeed, for it was certain that the Spaniards would land their troops and search the shore; and it was of the highest importance that the pinnace should be discovered first.

There was a counsel held, and the men were well-nigh despairing. Captain Drake, however, bade them keep up their courage, and pointed out to them the four lads, all of whom had escaped the effect of fever and disease, their constitution, no doubt, being strengthened by the fact that none of them indulged in too much liquor; indeed, seldom touching any.

"Look," said Captain Drake, "at these four lads. Their courage is unshaken, and they look cheerful and hopeful on all occasions. Take example from them, and keep up your hopes. I propose to

make a raft upon which I myself will embark, and by making out from this bay into the open sea, may succeed in catching sight of the pinnace, and bringing it hither to your rescue."

The proposal seemed a desperate one, for it was far more likely that the Spaniards' ships would come along, and descry the raft, than that the latter should meet with the pinnace. However, there seemed no other resource. The materials for the raft were scanty and weak; and when Captain Francis, with three companions, got fairly out of the bay, the raft sank so deeply in the water that they were completely standing in the sea.

For some hours they beat about; and then, to their great joy, they descried the pinnace in the distance, making for land. The wind had now risen, and it was blowing hard, and their position on the raft was dangerous enough. They found that it would be impossible for them to keep at sea, and still more impossible to place themselves in the track of the pinnaces, which were making for a bay behind a projecting headland.

Painfully paddling the raft to the shore, Captain Francis landed; and they made their way, with much toil and fatigue, over the hill which divided them from that bay; and, towards morning, got down to the pinnace, where they were received with much joy. Then they at once launched the boat, and made for the spot where they had left their comrades. These received them as if risen from the dead, for they had all made up their minds that their admiral, and his companions, had been lost upon the frail raft on which they had embarked.

They now put to sea, and had the good fortune to escape the ken of the Spaniards, who had sailed further up the coast. So, thanking God for their escape, they sailed back to the bay where the Pacha and her prizes lay, and then all hands began to make great preparation for return home.

Chapter 5: Cast Ashore

It was time, indeed, for the little band of adventurers to be turning their faces towards England. Their original strength, of eighty men, was reduced to fifty; and of these, many were sick and weak. They had gained a vast store of wealth, although they had missed the plunder of Nombre de Dios and of Carthagena. Their doings had caused such consternation and alarm that it was certain that the Spaniards would, ere long, make a great and united effort to crush them; and fifty men, however valiant, could not battle with a fleet. The men were longing for home, looking forward to the delight of spending the great share of prize money which would fall to each. The sudden death which had stricken many of their comrades had, too, cast a chill on the expedition, and made all long more eagerly to be away from those beautiful, but deadly, shores.

When, therefore, on the day after the return of Captain Francis, the word was given to prepare for the homeward voyage, the most lively joy prevailed. The stores were embarked; the Simeroons, who had done them good service, dismissed with rich presents; and all embarked, with much joy and thankfulness that their labors and dangers were overpast.

They were, however, extremely shorthanded, and were scattered among the three or four prizes which were the best among the ships which they had taken. Ned and Gerald, being

now able to give good assistance, in case of need, to the sailors, were put on board one of the prizes with four seamen. Captain Drake had determined to keep, for a time, the prizes with him; for as it might well be that they should meet, upon their way, a great Spanish fleet, he thought that by keeping together, with the flag of Saint George flying on all the ships, the Spaniards would believe that the Pacha had been joined by ships from England, and so would assuredly let her and her consorts pass at large. At the last land at which they touched Captain Drake intended to dismiss all but one of the prizes, and to sail across the Atlantic with her and the Pacha.

This, however, was not to be.

One day, shortly after their departure, Ned said to Gerald:

"I do not like the look of the sky. It reminds me of the sky that we had before that terrible hurricane, when we were moored off the Isle of Pines; and with our scanty crew we should be in a mightily unfavorable position, should the wind come on to blow."

In that wise the sailors shared Ned's apprehensions, and in the speediest possible time all sail was lowered, and the ship prepared to meet the gale. It was not long before the whole sky was covered with black clouds. Captain Drake signaled to the vessels that each was to do its best; and, if separated, was to rendezvous at the spot before agreed upon. Then, all having been done that could be thought of, they waited the bursting of the storm.

It came at last, with the suddenness and almost the force of an

explosion. A faint rumbling noise was first heard, a white line of foam was seen in the distance; and then, with a roar and a crash, the hurricane was upon them. The vessel reeled over so far under the blow that, for a time, all on board thought that she would capsize. The two sailors at the helm, however, held on sturdily, and at last her head drifted off on the wind, and she flew along before its force.

The sea rose as if by magic. Where, for weeks, scarcely a ripple had ruffled the surface of the water; now great waves, with crested tops, tore along. The air was full of blinding foam, swept from the tops of the waves; and it was difficult for those on board even to breathe, when facing the force of the wind.

"This is tremendous," Ned shouted in Gerald's ears, "and as there seem to be islands all over these seas, if we go on at the rate we are doing now, methinks that it will not be long before we land on one or another. We are, as I reckon, near Hispaniola, but there is no saying which way we may drift; for these storms are almost always changeable, and while we are running south at present, an hour hence we may be going in the opposite direction."

For twenty-four hours the storm continued, with unabated fury. At times it seemed impossible that the vessel could live, so tremendous were the seas which struck and buffeted her. However, being light in the water, and buoyant, she floated over it. During the next night the wind sensibly abated, and although still blowing with tremendous force, there was evidence, to the accustomed eyes of the sailors, that the storm was well-nigh

blowing itself out. The sea, too, sensibly went down, although still tremendous; and all began to hope that they would weather the gale, when one of the sailors, who had crawled forward to the bow, shouted:

"Breakers ahead!"

It was now, fortunately, morning; although the darkness had been so intense, since the storm began, that the difference between night and day was faint, indeed. Still it was better, if danger were to be met with, that there should be as much light as possible.

All hands looked out over the bows and saw, before them, a steep coast rising both to the right and left.

"It is all over with the ship," Gerald said to Ned, "and I do not think that there is a chance, even for you. The surf on those rocks is terrible."

"We must do our best," said Ned, "and trust in God. You keep close to me, Gerald, and when you want aid I will assist you as far as I can. You swim fairly, but scarce well enough, unaided, to get through that surf yonder."

The men, seeing that what appeared to be certain destruction stared them in the face, now shook hands all round; and then, commending their souls to God, sat down and waited for the shock.

When it came, it was tremendous. The masts snapped at the board, like rotten sticks. The vessel shivered from stem to stern and, drawing back for an instant, was again cast down with

terrible force; and, as if struck by lightning, parted amidships, and then seemed to fall all to pieces, like a house of cards.

Ned and Gerald were standing, hand in hand, when the vessel struck; and as she went to pieces, and they were precipitated into the water, Ned still kept close to his friend, swimming side by side with him. They soon neared the edge of the line where the waves broke upon the rocks. Then Ned shouted to Gerald to coast along, outside the broken water; for that there was no landing there, with life. For upwards of an hour they swam on, outside the line of surf. The sea, although tremendously high, did not break till it touched a certain point, and the lads rose and fell over the great billows. They had stripped off the greater portion of their clothing, before the ship struck; and in the warm water had no sensation of chill, and had nothing to fight against, but fatigue.

When they were in the hollow of the waves their position was easy enough, and they could make each other hear, by shouting loudly. When, however, they were on the crest of one of the mountainous waves, it was a hard struggle for life. The wind blew with such fury, taking the top of the water off in sheets, and scattering it in fine spray, that the boys were nearly drowned; although they kept their back to the wind, and held their breath as if diving, except when necessary to make a gasp for air.

Gerald became weak and tired, at the end of the hour; but Ned kept up his courage, and aided him by swimming by his side, and letting Gerald put his hand upon his shoulder, every time that they were in the hollows of the waves, so that he got a complete

rest at these periods.

At last, Ned thought he saw a passage between two of the big rocks, through which it might be possible, he thought, that they might swim, and so avoid the certain death which seemed to await them at every other spot.

The passage was about 40 feet wide, and it was no easy matter to calculate upon striking this, in so wild a sea. Side by side with Gerald, Ned made for the spot, and at last swam to the edge of the surf. Then a great wave came rolling in, and the boys, dizzy and confused, half smothered and choking, were hurled with tremendous force, through the great rocks, into comparatively calm water beyond. Ned now seized Gerald's hair, for his friend was nearly gone; and, turning aside from the direct line of the entrance, found himself speedily in calm water, behind the line of rocks. A few minutes' further struggle and the two boys lay on the beach, well-nigh insensible after their great exertions.

After a while they recovered their strength and, with staggering feet, made their way further inland.

"I owe you my life, Ned," Gerald said. "I never could have struggled ashore; nor, indeed, kept myself up for half that time, had it not been for your aid."

"I am glad to have been able to help you," Ned said simply. "We may thank heaven that the storm had abated a little, in its force, before the vessel struck; for had it been blowing as it was yesterday, we could not have swum five minutes. It was just the lowering of the wind that enabled us to swim without being

drowned by the spray. It was bad enough, as it was, on the top of the waves; but, yesterday, it would have been impossible."

One of the first thoughts of the boys, upon fairly recovering themselves, was to kneel down and thank God for having preserved their lives; and then, having rested for upwards of an hour, to recover themselves, they made their way inland.

"Our dangers are by no means over, Gerald," Ned said. "If this island is, as I believe, a thickly cultivated one, and in the hands of the Spaniards, it will go hard with us, if they find us, after all the damage to their commerce which we have been inflicting, for the last year."

Upon getting to some rising ground, they saw, to their surprise, a large town lying on a bay in front of them. Instinctively they paused at the sight, and both sat down, so as to be out of view of any casual lookers on.

"What are we to do, Ned?" Gerald said. "If we stay here, we shall be starved. If we go into the town, we shall have our throats cut. Which think you is the best?"

"I do not like either alternative," Ned said. "See, inland there are many high mountains, and even close to the town there appear to be thickets and woods. There are houses, here and there, and no doubt plantations. It seems to me that if we get round to that side we may conceal ourselves; and it is hard, in a country like this, if we cannot, at any rate, find fruit enough to keep us for some time. And we had better wait till dark. Our white shoulders will be seen at too far a distance, by this light."

Creeping into a thicket, the lads lay down and were soon sound asleep; and it was night before they awoke, and looked out. All signs of the storm had passed. The moon was shining calmly, the stars were brilliant, and seemed to hang like lamps in the sky, an effect which is only seen in tropical climes.

There were lights in the town, and these served as a sort of guide to them. Skirting along at the top of the basin in which the town lay, they passed through cultivated estates, picking some ears of maize; thus satisfying their hunger, which was, when they started, ravenous; for, during the storm, they had been unable to open the hatchways, and had been supported only by a little biscuit, which happened to be in the caboose on deck.

Towards morning they chose a spot in a thick plantation of trees, about a mile and a half from the town; and here they agreed to wait, for a while, until they could come to some decision as to their course.

Three days passed without any change. Each night they stole out and picked maize, pineapple, and melons in the plantations for their subsistence; and as morning returned, went back to their hiding place. Close to it a road ran along to a noble house, which stood in some grounds at about a quarter of a mile from their grove. Every morning they saw the owner of this house, apparently a man of distinction, riding towards the town; and they concluded that he was one of the great merchants of the place.

One day he came accompanied by a young lady, carried in a litter by four slaves. The boys, who were weary of their solitude,

pressed to the edge of the thicket to obtain a clear view of this little procession, which broke the monotony of their day.

"Gerald," Ned exclaimed, grasping him by the arm, "do you know, I believe that the lady is the girl I picked out of the water, the day we took that ship three months ago."

"Do you think so?" Gerald said. "It is too far, surely, to see."

"I do not know for certain," Ned answered, "but methinks that I cannot be mistaken."

"Perhaps she would help us, or intercede for us," Gerald suggested.

"Perhaps so," Ned said. "At any rate, we will try. Tonight we will make a move into the gardens of the house she came from, and will hide there till we see her alone in the garden. Then I will sally forth, and see how she takes it."

Accordingly, that night, after obtaining their supply of fruit, the boys entered the enclosure. When morning broke there was speedily a stir, negroes and negresses went out to the fields, servants moved hither and thither in the veranda outside the house, gardeners came out and set to work at their vocations.

It was evident that the owner or his family was fond of gardening, for everything was kept with beautiful order and regularity. Mixed with the cactus, and other gaudy-flowering plants of Mexico and South America, were many European plants, brought out and acclimatized. Here fountains threw up dancing waters in the air, cool shady paths and bowers afforded protection from the heat of the day; and so carefully was it

clipped, and kept, that a fallen leaf would have destroyed its perfection.

The point which the boys had chosen was remote from the house, for it was of importance that there should be no witnesses of the meeting. Here, in a spacious arbor, were chairs, couches, and other signs that some of the family were in the habit of taking their seats there; and although the boys knew that it might be days before they succeeded in carrying out their object, yet they determined to wait, and watch patiently, however long it might be.

Their success, however, surpassed their expectations; for it was but an hour or two after they had taken up their post, and soon after the sun had risen, that they saw, walking along the path, the young lady whom they so desired to meet. She was not alone, for a black girl walked a little behind her, chatting constantly to her, and carrying some books, a shawl, and various other articles. When they reached the arbor the attendant placed the things there, and then, as she took her seat, the young lady said to the girl:

"Go in and fetch me my coffee here. Say I shall not come in until breakfast time, and that if any orders are required, they must come here for them."

"Will you want me to read to you?"

"No," the young lady said. "It is not hot. I shall take a turn round the garden, first, and then read to myself."

The black girl went off at a trot towards the house, and the

young lady strolled round and round that portion of the garden, until her black attendant returned, with a tray containing coffee, lemonade, and fruits. This she placed on the table, and then in answer to the "You need not wait," of the lady, again retired.

Now was the time for the boys, who had watched these operations with keen interest, and anxiety. It was uncertain whether she would keep the black attendant by her side, and all depended upon that.

As soon as she was alone, Ned advanced from their hiding place. The boys had agreed that it was better, at first, that he should approach alone; lest the sudden appearance of the two, especially as Gerald was nearly as tall as a man, might have caused alarm; and she might have flown away, before she had identified Ned as the lad who had jumped into the water to save her.

Ned approached the arbor with hesitating steps, and felt that his appearance was, indeed, sorely against him. He had no covering to his head, had nothing on, indeed, but a pair of trousers. He was shoeless and stockingless, and presented the appearance of a beggar boy, rather than the smart young sailor whom she had seen on board the ship.

The lady started up, with a short exclamation, on seeing a white, ragged boy standing before her.

"Who are you?" she exclaimed, "and by what right do you enter these gardens? A white boy, and in rags, how comes this?"

"Our ship has been wrecked," Ned said, using his best

Spanish. "Do you not remember me? I am the boy who picked you up when you fell overboard, on the day when the English captured the ship you came out in, some four months ago."

"Are you, indeed?" the young lady said, in surprise. "Yes, and now that I look close at you, I recognize your face. Poor boy, how have you got into a strait like this?"

Ned understood but little of what she said, as he only knew a few words in Spanish. It was with difficulty that he could understand it, even when spoken slowly; while, spoken as a native would do, he scarce gathered a word. He saw, however, from her attitude, that her meaning was kind, and that she was disposed to do what she could for him.

He therefore, in his broken Spanish, told her how a ship, on which he and five of his comrades were embarked, had been driven ashore in the hurricane; and all lost, with the exception of another boy, and himself.

"It is lucky, indeed," the girl said to herself, when he had finished, "that I found that my father had left Nombre de Dios, and had come down to his house here; for, assuredly, the people would have made short work of these poor lads, had I not been here to aid them. But, after all, what can I do? My father would, I know, do anything for my sake; and I have told him how this lad jumped overboard, to save my life; but there is one here greater than he, that terrible Inquisition. These boys are heretics, and it will be impossible to conceal, for any time, from the priests that they are here. Still, at any rate, for a time we might hide them;

and in gratitude only, I would do all in my power for them."

Ned watched her face, as these thoughts passed through her mind. He saw at once that she was willing to do all in her power, but saw also that there were difficulties in the way.

"Poor boy," she said, looking at him kindly; "you must be hungry, indeed," and, taking an ivory mallet, she struck a gong which hung in the arbor, and made signs to Ned to retire for the present.

The little black girl came running out.

"I have changed my mind," her mistress said. "Let my breakfast be sent out here to me, instead of indoors. And I am hungry. Tell the cook to be sure and let it be a good one, and as soon as possible."

Much surprised by these orders, the black girl again left her.

"My father has gone to town," she said to the boys, when they joined her. "When he comes back, I will ask him what can be done. It will not be easy to hide you, for these negroes chatter like so many parrots; and the news will spread all over the town that some English boys are here, and in that case they will take you away, and my father would be powerless as I to help you."

The black cook was, indeed, astonished at the demolition of the breakfast effected by her young mistress; but she put it down to the fact that she must have given a large portion of it to her dogs, of which one or more were generally her companions, in the garden.

Fortunately, on the present occasion, the great bloodhound

Zeres had gone down into the town with his master. Of this, however, the cook knew nothing; and muttered to herself somewhat angrily, as she saw the empty dishes which were brought back to her, "that it was a sin to give, to that creature, a meal which was sufficient for five noblemen."

When Senor Sagasta returned to his beautiful villa, in the afternoon, his daughter at once confided to him what had happened. He entered warmly into her scheme for the aid and protection of the lads, and expressed himself willing to do anything that she could suggest.

"But," he said, "you know as well as I do that, if the news gets about that two boys of Captain Drake's band are here, nothing will save them from the rage of the population; and indeed, if the people and the military authorities were disposed to let them alone, the Inquisition would be too strong for them, and would claim its own; and against the Inquisition even governors are powerless. Therefore if they are to stop, and stop they must, at least for a time, it must be done in perfect secrecy.

"There is no possibility of disguising two English boys to look like negroes. The only plan I can suggest is that they should have that gardeners' hut. I can remove the man who lives there at present, and will send him up the country to look after my place there. Then you must take old David into our confidence. He and his wife Floey are perfectly faithful, and can be trusted to the death. It is lucky that she is cook, for she will be able to prepare food for them. The hut must be kept, of course, locked up at all

times; but as it is close to the fence, and the window indeed looks into the garden, you can go there of a day and speak to them, and take them books, and lighten their captivity.

"When it gets dark I will go with you down the garden, and will see these brave lads. In the meantime, old David shall get some shirts, and shoes, and other necessaries for them. We have a plentiful store of things in the magazine, and he can rig them up there, perfectly. I will at once get the gardener out of the house, and will give David instructions to carry the things there, as soon as it is empty."

That evening after it was dark the boys, who had been anxiously listening for every movement, saw in the dim light the white figure of the girl advancing, with her father beside her. When she came to the arbor, she raised her voice.

"Are you here?" she cried. "You can come out without fear."

And, as they advanced, "My father will do all in his power to protect the savior of his daughter."

The merchant shook the hands of the boys, with the stately ceremony of the Spaniard, and assured them that he was their servant, indeed, for their treatment of his daughter; and that his house, and all that it contained, was at their disposal. Ned and Gerald understood little enough of what he was saying, but his manner and gestures were sufficient, and they thanked him heartily for his kindness.

He now led the way, along many winding paths, till they reached a low fence forming the border of the garden, and distant

a long way from the house. A light was already burning in it, and a black servant was at work within. There was a break in the fence, by which they passed through without difficulty; and on entering the hut, they found everything prepared for them.

On a table stood a dainty supper. The rooms were swept, and fresh furniture had been placed in them. In these countries furniture is of the slightest kind. A hammock, to swing in by day or sleep in by night; a couple of cane chairs; and a mat, of beautifully woven straw, for the floor. This is nearly all the furniture which is required, in the tropics.

First the negro beckoned the boys into an inner room, and there, to their intense delight, they saw a large tub full of water, and two piles of clothes lying beside it.

Don Sagasta and his daughter, after a few more words, left them; assuring them that they would be safe from observation there, but that they must not stir out, during the day; and must keep the door securely fastened, and must give no answer to anyone who might come and knock, or call, unless to themselves, to the black who was now with them, or his wife, who would accompany him, perhaps, the next evening. Donna Anna herself promised that she would come and see them the next morning, and that she hoped to find that they were comfortable.

When left alone, the boys luxuriated in the bath; and then, having put on fresh suits, they felt clean and comfortable once again. The clothes were those used by the upper class of slaves, employed as overseers. Don Sagasta had determined to get them

some clothes of a superior class; but he felt that it was better that, so long as they were in hiding, they should be dressed in a costume which would, should anyone perchance get a distant look at them, excite no curiosity or surprise.

The boys ate a hearty supper; and then, throwing themselves into the swinging hammocks, were soon fast asleep. They were up with dawn, next morning, tidied up their room, and made all ready for the visit of Donna Anna.

She soon appeared, having got rid of her little black maid, as upon the morning before. She brought them a store of books, and among them a Spanish dictionary and grammar. She told them that she thought it would be of assistance, to pass away their time; and be of the greatest use, for them to learn to speak as much Spanish as possible; and that she was willing, when she could spare time, unobserved, to teach them the language. Very gratefully the boys accepted her offer; and, day by day for the next month, the young lady came every morning, and for an hour taught them the meaning and pronunciation of the words, which during the day they learnt by heart.

They found that the island upon which they had been cast ashore was Porto Rico, an island of considerable size, not far from Hispaniola.

Chapter 6: In the Woods

In the evening Senor Sagasta visited the lads, and had long conversations with them. He promised them that, upon the very first opportunity which should occur, he would aid them to escape; but pointed out that, at present, there was no possibility of their getting away.

"Captain Drake," he said, "has left the seas and, until he comes back again, or some other of your English filibusters, I see no chance of your escape. As soon as I hear of an English ship in these waters I will have a small boat, well fitted up with sails and all necessaries, conveyed to a creek on the coast. To this you shall be taken down, and make your way to the point where we hear that the vessel is accustomed to rendezvous."

This appeared to the boys to be the only possible plan, and they warmly expressed their gratitude to their host for his thoughtful kindness.

Another month passed; and then, one evening, Don Sagasta came to the hut with a certain anxiety in his face.

"Is there anything the matter?" Ned, who now began to speak Spanish with some fluency, asked.

"I am much disturbed. Since you have been here, I am sure that no one has got a sight of you; and I can rely so implicitly upon David, and Flora, that I am sure the secret has not leaked out there. But from what I hear, it seems that you must have

been seen, during the time that you were wrecked, and before you came here. I hear in the town today that a rumor is current, among the people, that two white men were seen, near the sea, upon the day after the great storm. Someone else, too, seems to have said that he caught sight of two white men, not far from this house, just before daybreak, two days afterwards. This report has, it seems, been going from mouth to mouth; and has at last reached the ears of the governor. The portions of a wreck, which were driven ashore, seem to confirm the story; and unfortunately, the board with the name of the ship was washed ashore, and it is known to be that of one of those captured by Captain Drake. Putting the two things together, it is supposed that misfortune overtook a portion of his fleet, and that two of his men managed to save their lives, and are now lurking somewhere about the neighborhood I hear that the governor has ordered a strict search to be set on foot, and that a large reward is to be offered for the discovery of any signs of the fugitives."

The next day, the boys heard that the persons to whom the story had been traced had been taken before the governor, and strictly examined, and that he was fully convinced of the truth of the story. Three days afterwards, Don Sagasta brought them a copy of a notice which had been placed in the marketplace, offering a reward of 1000 dollars for any news which would lead to the capture of the English pirates, and announcing the severest punishment upon any who should dare to conceal, or to assist them.

Gerald at once said that, rather than be a cause of anxiety to their kind host and his daughter, they would give themselves up. This offer was, however, indignantly refused by Don Sagasta.

"No, no," he said; "this must not be. I might take you into the house, but I fear that with so many servants, some of whom are as bigoted as any of us whites, you would be sure to be discovered; and they would either reveal in confession, or disclose to the authorities, the fact of your concealment. The only plan which promises to offer safety, that I can suggest, is that you shall take to the mountains. There are many runaways there, and although sometimes they are hunted down and slain; yet they have caverns, and other places of concealment, where you might remain for years. I will speak to David about it, at once."

David, on being questioned, said that there was an old native woman, living at a hut a little way off, who had the reputation of having the evil eye, and who was certainly acquainted with the doings of the runaways. If any slave wished to send a message, to one of his friends who had taken to the hills, the old woman would, for a present, always convey, or get it conveyed, to the man for whom it was intended. He thought that it would be absolutely necessary that some such means should be taken of introducing the boys to the runaways; otherwise, hunted as these were, they would either fly when they saw two whites approaching, or would surround and destroy them.

Don Sagasta at once accepted the suggestion, and David was dispatched to the old woman, with offers of a handsome present,

if she would give a guide to the boys, to the mountains. David was instructed, especially, to tell her that they were English, and the natural enemies of the Spaniards; that they had done them much harm at sea; and that, if caught by the Spaniards, they would be killed.

He returned an hour later, with news that the old Indian woman had, at once upon hearing these facts, promised to get them passed up to the hiding places of the natives.

"You think," Don Sagasta said, "that there is no fear of her mentioning the fact that she has seen my friends, to any of the searchers?"

"Oh, no," David said. "She is as close as wax. Over and over again, when she has been suspected of assisting in the evasion of a slave, she has been beaten and put to torture; but nothing was ever extracted from her lips, and it is certain that she would die, rather than reveal a secret."

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