

English Steel and Spanish Passion

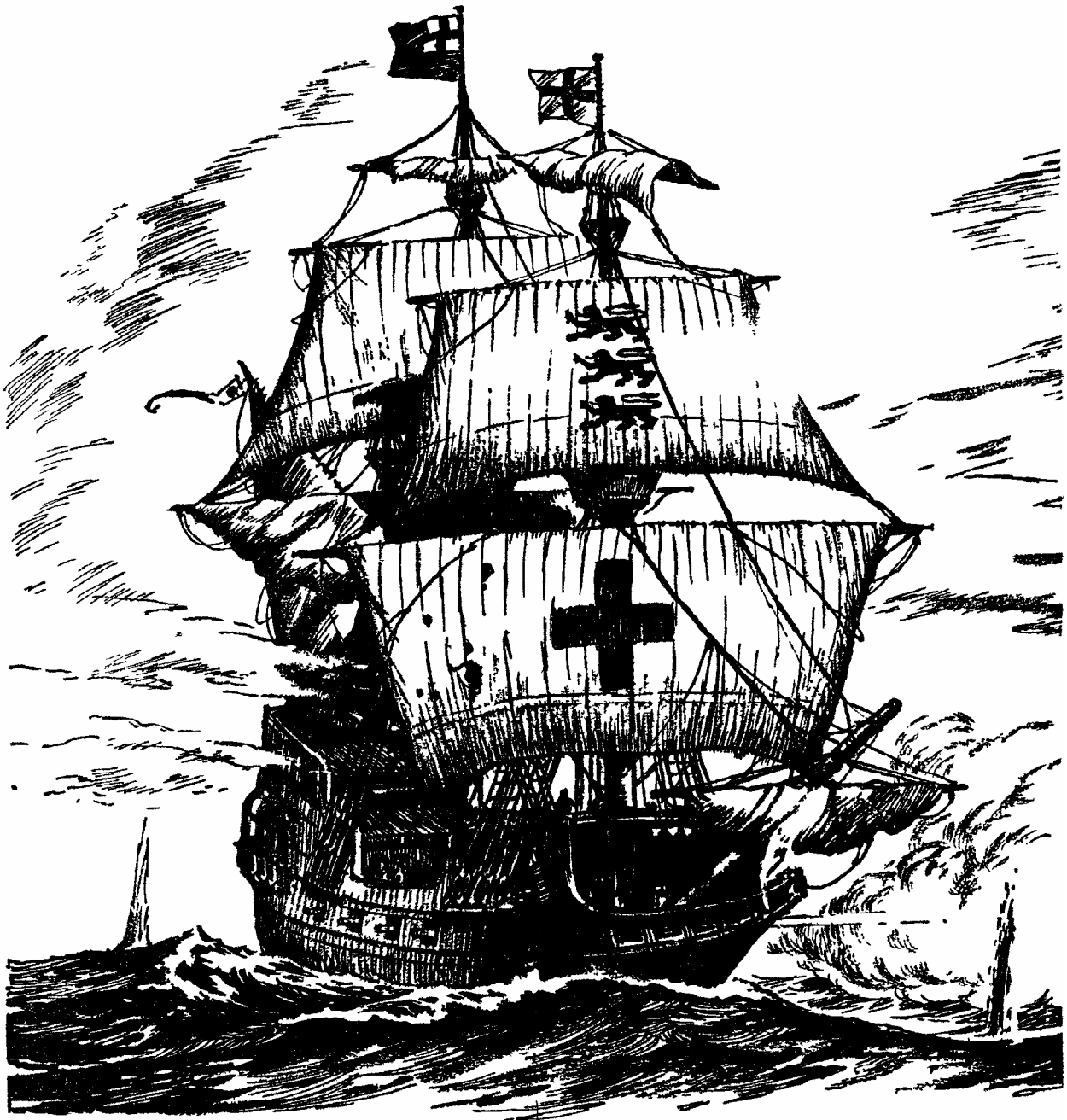
**by
Drake Williams and Warren Geiger**

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ENGLISH STEEL AND SPANISH PASSION

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*Don Alvarez de Perona de Sadista, thought the Spanish Main a
Spanish lake until he met Terror's English steel!*



THE gods frowned as Edward Terror and the Maid of Avon beat through the Mona Passage off the green land mass that was Hispaniola. The sea was sparkling blue and the sky was azure as the little Dutch-built merchantman bowled merrily over the waves. Her hold was fat with spices and cane and her destination was home, Cardiff, Wales.

“Aye, Duggley, a few more weeks and we’ll be back home for good.” With satisfaction in his black eyes and a smile on his tanned face, the master of the Maid of Avon spoke to his Somersetshire navigator.

“We’ve all made enough to settle us for life and live like barons, Edward,” the massive,

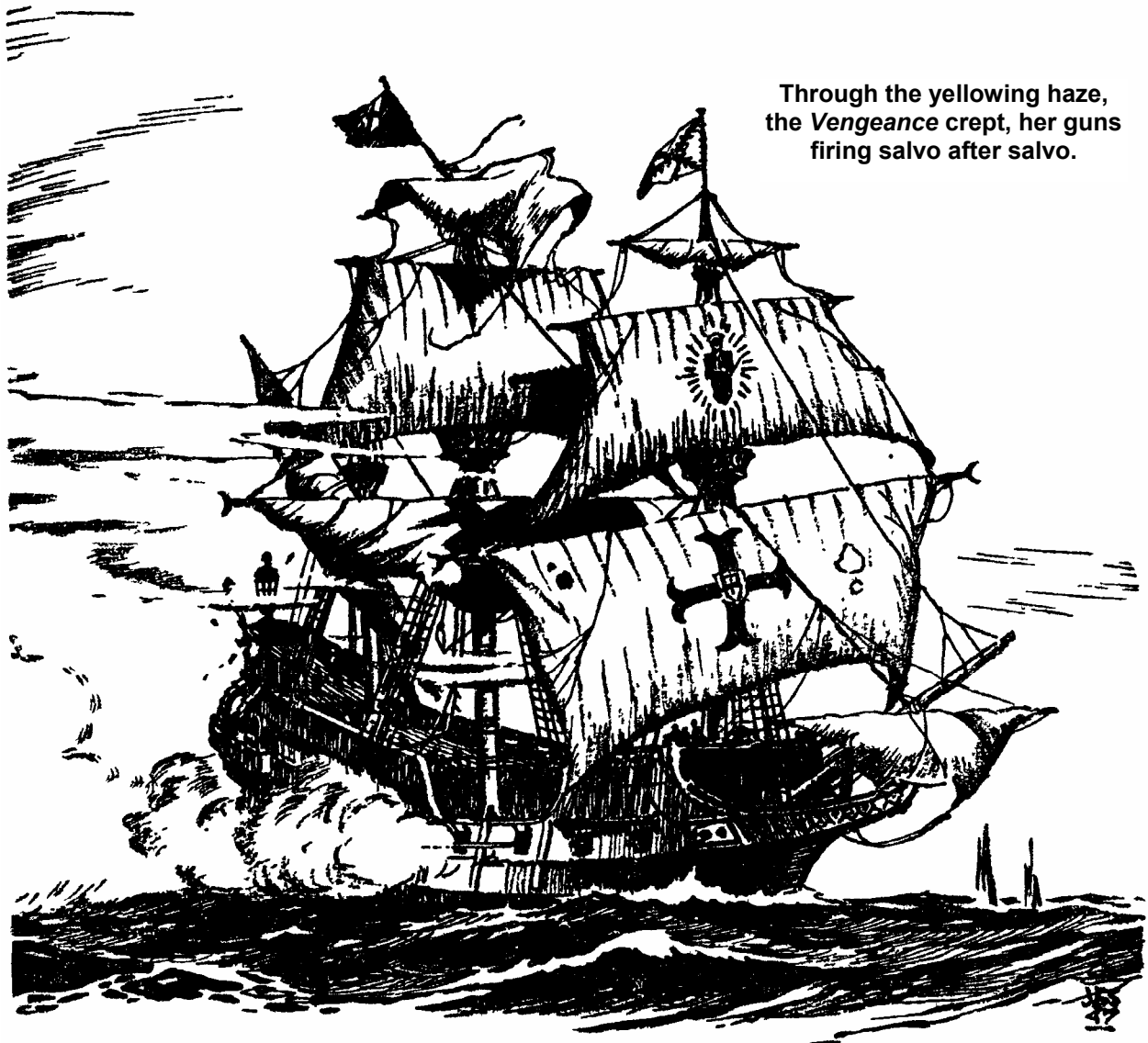
muscular navigator replied. “Although, to be truthful with you, I’m going to miss the tang of the sea and the good fortune that always seemed to be yours.”

“We have been lucky in our voyages and now all that we need is for Lady Luck to hold with us across the Atlantic and, Duggley, we’ll have never a need to press her again.”

At that moment, from a stripe-shirted seaman high in the rigging there came a hail.

“Sail ho, three points off the starboard bow!”

The tall, lean figure of Edward Terror straightened up from its recline against the taffrail. From the side pocket of his greatcoat, a thing of beauty in silver and blue, he withdrew a glass and



**Through the yellowing haze,
the *Vengeance* crept, her guns
firing salvo after salvo.**

mounted the mizzenmast ratlines. Hand-over-hand, he scrambled up the hemp to the crosstrees and slapped the eyepiece open. Bearing down upon them under a mighty press of sail was a large three-master. By her cut, and not by her ensign for she showed none, the Welshman saw that she was of Spanish build and her open gunports revealed sixteen cannon to a flank.

"I don't like her looks, Duggley," Edward said as he leaped to the poop deck. His heavy black brows were knit in thought as he slipped off his coat and flung it to one of his men. "She flies no flag and her gunports are open. These are pirate waters so let's clear for action until we can better understand her motive in bearing down upon us so."

In a trice the Maid of Avon was cleared of gear on her upper two decks and her puny armament of ten demi-culverins was run out. Cutlasses and pistols were readied on the quarterdeck and the equipage of the guncrews, rams, powder, balls, buckets, and fuses, was placed by the open ports.

"She's got the weather gauge of us, Edward," the blonde Duggley noted to his captain. "And, by the great bear, I believe she means us foul play."

Edward glanced at the rippling Cross of St. George flying at his own gaff and wondered what manner of foe this stranger on the seas could be. It would do him no good to flee because it was evident that the mighty scarlet stranger was more fleet of sail than his smaller vessel. Bought at Plymouth, the Maid of Avon was a captured prize from the great battle at Texel in 1653. She was fine for trade but even the renowned Dutch Admiral De Ruyter could never have made of her a formidable or speedy man-of-war. He must trust to luck and hope for the best.

"There's a flag running up her main-truck," the clear call of the lookout shrilled forth. "'She's Spanish!'"

There brazenly slapping in the easterly breeze was the red and yellow banner of Castile. At that very moment a cotton-like puff of white blossomed from the Spaniard's bow and later the clap of a cannon shot carried across the rippled skin of the sea as a ball plummeted into the water beneath the Englishman's bowsprit and kicked up a miniature waterspout.

"The dog!"

Knowing her now for what she was, the temper of Edward Terror burnt red hot. He knew that Charles II of Spain felt that the Caribbean was, by Divine Right, the sole property of Spain; he also knew that any lone Englishman was fair bait for the greed of these pompous scavengers of the Main. But why, in God's name, should he, of all men, have to find himself target for these cruel hounds of the sea just when his whole future seemed assured? Blast their parents' passion, he could choose no other course but to fight and that might end eventually in defeat and destruction.

"Bring her more to starboard, Duggley," he shouted above the creak of the rigging and the pounding of the seas. "Lay her as close-hauled as possible on a line with that Spanish dog's bowsprit."

The Maid of Avon heeled around with her port flank deep in the rolling blue waves and with her yardarms almost parallel with her keel line. She bore straight as an arrow for the approaching foe.

"What do you intend, Edward?" The perplexed Duggley asked as he placed twin pistols in his greatbelt and thrust a vicious looking cutlass into his baldric.

"Nothing more than bravado, old fella. It might serve to confuse their slow witted Castillian minds and give us a fair break to make a run for it if we can weather their first broadside."

When the powerful thirty-two gun foe swung around, as she must eventually do to bring her guns to bear, Edward Terror could then change his course to suit Fortune and, mayhap, break away before the Spaniard could again pick up speed. It was a long dangerous chance—but chance it was.

THE foam piled up at the bows of the two approaching vessels and then bubbled and trailed away on their flanks. The white wakes thus formed appeared to the wheeling hurricane birds overhead like unto twin arrows approaching one another. Inexorably the two mountains of sail pounded closer and closer. The masts and white expanse of her sheets grew enormous as the scarlet ship of Spain drew near. Her ratlines and foredeck were crowded with the corseleted figures of a numerous crew and the black snouts of

cannon juttred ominously forth from the scroll work on her flanks.

“By the saints, Edward,” Duggley exclaimed aghast. “The knave flies the pennant of the Vice-Admiral of the Caribbean Squadron!”

Indeed it was true and served to add fuel to the fires of hate that burned in the hot-tempered Welsh captain’s mind. There, at her foremast tip, the sword and dragon of the Spanish West Indian Squadron Vice-Admiral flowed. It was a pennant whose import could well mean war between Spain and England if ever report of this coming action were received in the British Admiralty. It meant too that the Spaniard figured the battle as well as won and the English heretics already put to the sword.

“Duggley, this is as fine a sample of Spanish treachery as you’re apt to ever see.”

At last the Spaniard heeled around to starboard and the long gleaming line of her cannon revealed themselves yawning hungrily toward the smaller Maid of Avon. Then, with a thunderous crash, her flank erupted in orange flame and billowing white clouds of smoke. The Maid of Avon shuddered in every timber from the broadside. Ratlines parted, red swathes of destruction swirled across her decks and Edward Terror was dashed against a capstan.

As he arose, his left arm limp and bleeding at his side, he realized that all opportunity for escape was gone. The Maid of Avon shuddered to a stop upon the seas that were now turning lavender in the rays of the setting sun. Her mainmast had crashed to the deck and her waist was a mass of broken spars and tangled cordage,

“Fire!”

He heard Duggley’s command ring out and then came the answer, a paltry coughing of four demi-culverins. As he stumbled across the mangled bodies of several of his crew and the ripped and scarred boards, a sudden thought occurred to him. The swine of Castile would never board his ship alive. Into the hold he raced, a demonic looking son of battle.

In the powder magazine he planted a long trailing fuse and ran it up to the poop deck hatch combing. There he passed it through and soon came from below himself. His broad-brimmed hat had been torn from his black head and his long

curling hair flowed in the breeze as, hunched over and with right hand on rapier, he shouted for Duggley.

“I’ve run a fuse to the powder magazine and mean to blast the Maid of Avon to kingdom come before yonder Hell’s children can ever board her.”

The grim faced and soot-smearred Somersetshireman was taken aback.

“Aye, Edward, but what of us?”

“We’ll take to the longboat—what’s left of us—and put our faith in the open sea rather than in the Spaniard’s evil heart.” He waved his hand toward the red ball of the setting sun. “Night will be upon us in a matter of minutes and, mayhap, we can make an island hereabouts afore the Spaniard can overtake us.”

DUGGLEY went to prepare the long-boat on the starboard side away from the prying eyes of the foe and the one-sided battle thundered on. The great Spaniard had come up again on a different tack through the dispersing smoke and was presenting her unfired starboard guns for the coup-de-grace. This puny English heretic would get a second dose of Hell for his impudence in not surrendering to the Vice-Admiral of the Caribbean Squadron, Don Alvarez de Perona de Sadista. Then would come the boarding and each and every surviving English dog would feel the cold blade of the sword upon his neck. There should be some valuable cargo and, mayhap, some gold or other treasure aboard.

Night was falling fast as it is wont to do in the Indies when the San Nicolas, for that was the name of the scarlet Spaniard, bore in for another rain of lead. Duggley and Edward Terror could see her rails packed with grinning faces and could hear the vile mouthings and insults of the enemy’s crew through the shattered larboard rail and bulwarks. The demi-culverins fired first and it was with glee that the men of the Maid of Avon saw a gunport below decks burst into livid flame and death. Then a great rolling roar swallowed every other sound in its enormity and four hundred pounds of lead tore into the shattered Englishman. Both the mizzen and the fore masts came rattling down with a tearing of sails and snapping of ropes. There were screams as more of Edward Terror’s men fell to the reddened decks and the

rolling clouds of smoke from the enemy's broadside swept and swirled around the stricken vessel.

"Edward, your chest," Duggley coughed through the smoke as he pointed to the Welshman's breast.

A Spanish ball had slashed across his front and left a raw gash six inches wide from nipple to nipple. The navigator hastily bound the bleeding chest with a huge strip of torn sail cloth and helped the begrimed merchant captain to his feet.

"I'll be all right, Duggley," he said as he arose, his face twisted in pain. "If the longboat's ready, let's set the fuse and be away. It's dark enough and those scum will soon be back to board."

The remainder of the crew, eight men, joined Duggley and their captain. Duggley lit the fuse at the poop deck hatch and the ten Englishmen slid down the ropes to the waiting and bobbing longboat. The skies were now black but the flames from the Maid of Avon's fires lighted the sea for many yards around. The powder-begrimed men in their tattered clothing, burdened with bandaged heads, arms and legs, pushed off from the hull of the once proud merchantman.

"Put up the sail, Gallat," the huge, blonde Duggley ordered as Edward Terror, wracked with pain from his torn left arm and bloody chest, lay silently in the sternsheets. "For the present, let's only try to keep the Maid of Avon between us and that Spanish hellhound. Once we're away in the night, we'll set our course by the stars for Puerto Rico. There should be some islands in that direction."

Meanwhile, the Spaniard had turned once again and was drawing alongside the shattered and burning hulk. She hove to at a safe distance and launched some cockboats with picked crews to board the vanquished Englishman. Although all was silent from the riddled merchantman but the crackling of her fires, the Spaniards were wary, for these Englishmen might still have strength enough to lay in wait for a bitter boarding fight with cutlass, pistol and pike. As the foe approached in the fire reddened night, aboard the ravaged Maid of Avon a slender powder train burned onward creeping slowly and steadily toward the end.

AT LAST the cockboats banged into the sides of the burning vessel and the steel jacketed soldiers of Spain, led by a young captain, scrambled up the sides that were tattered and splintered from their own metal. As they crawled over the railing onto the waist deck they were tense and held their weapons at the ready. All that met their gaze was the ruin and the wreckage of spars and sails, the twisted and contorted bodies of the dead and, by some freak of battle, the shattered gaff standing from amidst the wreckage and ruin with her cocky flag, the red and white Cross of St. George, impudently waving in their faces.

"Virgin Santisima!" The young captain of Castile screamed—but too late.

A great roaring gust of flame leaped skyward and tore the entire stern—works heavenward with it. The very bowels of the ship burst upward and enormous blasts of heat and flame and rubble exploded outward and over the sea. The powder magazine had gone off.

As the great explosion lit the night sky and reflected in shimmering lines from the water in yellow, orange and red streaks, Edward Terror pulled himself up over the gunwales of the Maid of Avon's longboat. With a twisted pain-wracked smile on his blood and sweat-encrusted face, he shook his fist toward the flames and cried forth in hate.

"Carrion of Spain, let that be your first taste of terror. For, by the carnal devils of Stonehedge, I'll make you pay for this night's doings and sink my name into your hearts if I have to trail you to Panama."

THE longboat and her crew of survivors escaped into the darkness of the night as the light of the explosion died down and the remains of the Maid of Avon slid beneath the waves. Taking his bearings from the stars, Duggley headed due east into a heavy breeze. The little boat heaved and bucked on the running seas and there was not much comfort for any of the men.

With the coming of the dawn the crew was tense for the Spanish man-'o-war might still be in the vicinity; in which case there would be a speedy end to their sufferings, for the Vice-Admiral would not care to have a report of his

part in the affair come before the British Admiralty. The golden yellow light of the new day revealed an empty sea and they were alone with the blue-green rollers and the squawking gulls overhead.

“How did the men fare during the dark hours, Duggley?” Edward Terror questioned.

“Well enough,” the muscular navigator answered as he attended to the raw reddish gash on his captain’s chest. “We’ve got water and biscuit enough for a few days. With those gulls overhead as an indication, land must be near.”

“If the breeze holds, we should sight a landfall before another twenty-four hours.”

All through the day the longboat painfully bowled her way over the pitching seas. The sun beat down unmercifully on the men and the sea-spray added its salty sting to their sufferings.

“Land! Land! I can see it faintly in the distance on each rise of the boat.” The keen eyes of the young seaman named Gallat at length caught a glimpse of what they all had been waiting for.

“Aye, you’re right, lad,” the broad face of Duggley beamed as he stood up at his position by the tiller. “Nightfall will find us safe ashore.”

It was a small island but, none the less, to them a green jewel of beauty sitting amidst the blue rollers of the Caribbean. As the longboat, her occupants filled with anticipation and exhilaration, piled through the ring of thundering combers and hissing foam-specked breakers, they saw a shimmering golden beach stretching back to a veritable cliff of tropical vegetation.

The longboat grooved her way into the wet sand’s edge and the crew leaped out. Edward Terror, his arm limp and swollen and his chest aching miserably, was the last to get out. As the men ran and frolicked on the warm sand like so many London waifs, his voice arose in command.

“Men, we may have to make this our home for many days, so let’s be about preparing a shelter afore the chill of another night falls upon us.”

AS IT turned out there were only four cutlasses, five knives, two pistols, and Edward Terror’s own jewel-handled rapier among them. Using knives and cutlasses, the men soon

had erected a palm frond lean-to well back on the beach. There now arose the problem of supplying food for the men.

“This island is a paradise of game, my hearties,” Edward Terror addressed them. “But I’m afraid that we don’t have the wherewithal to get any of the fat birds or wild pigs unless some of you are fleet of foot enough to run them through with a cutlass.”

The young, eager looking Gallat stepped forth.

“If I might offer a suggestion, Captain Terror why don’t we make some longbows? My father’s trade is that of bow making back in Bridgetown and, methinks, there’s both strong wood and hardy vines enough in yonder wood to try his trade right here.”

The lad’s suggestion was a good one and soon the men of the ill-fated Maid of Avon were handling the roughly fashioned, but nonetheless accurate longbows with growing proficiency. Using stones for arrow heads and gull feathers on their shafts, the castaway archers had soon mastered the technique and were garnering an ample supply of fresh meat and fowl.

As the days stretched into weeks, the new found life of the men proved to be an enjoyable one. Recovered from their wounds and basking in the burning sun and frolicking in the rolling surf, they soon regained their strength and confidence. The island was explored from end to end and a deepwater cove of remarkable shipworthiness was located on the opposite side of the isle.

As one day Captain Terror, Gallat, and Duggley stood on a foliage covered promontory that dropped straight into the deep basin of this cove, Gallat pointed out to sea and exclaimed:

“By the saints, Captain Terror, if my eyes don’t mistake me, that’s a ship setting her course for this island.”

Duggley and the captain squinted in the brilliant daylight and soon they made out the lines of a mighty three-master pursuing a tack that would bring her to the island in a few more hours.

“Your eyes are keen, Gallat, my lad.” Captain Terror fingered the hilt of his rapier, and his black eyes, beneath their heavy brows, gleamed as he turned to Duggley. “Stab me, Duggley, but if yonder vessel makes a landing

here, she may turn into the weapon of our deliverance.”

“What do you mean, Edward? Shouldn’t we light a fire to attract her attention?”

“No, my friend, I’ve had too much experience with unknown ships—and you should have had also—to attract them to us in these pirate-infested waters.”

It was certain within another hour that the stranger was indeed heading for the island. As she smoothly sailed closer to the cove her sleek lines proved to be of French design. Under stud sails this French cut vessel was truly slashing a speedy track in the blue waters. She was pierced for thirty-six cannon and was one of the most beautifully designed vessels that Edward Terror had ever seen.

The three castaways dropped into the thick underbrush as the great brown and white vessel slipped majestically into the palm fringed cove. With a great stir of motion, her sails furled and she glided to rest on the tranquil waters as her anchor chain rattled into the clear depths.

“**L**OOK at her gaff,” the tense grip of Duggley’s hand squeezed his captain’s arm. “She flies the Jolly Roger!”

Limply drooping in the air hung a black flag with a great skull and crossbones fashioned on its fabric. This beauteous stranger was a pirate vessel!

The trio lay silent in the bush while the curses and shouts of the crew below could be heard about their work of making their ship secure. At length, as the late afternoon sun began to slip toward the western horizon, the yells and murmurings became more raucous. The pirates were in their cups.

“Captain, look there in the stern-works.” The voice of Gallat directed Edward Terror’s gaze toward the heavily gilded and beautifully wrought stern of the pirate ship.

A jollyboat was trailing from the cabin window out of which a figure was now crawling. Behind him came another and the two of them could be seen lifting between them a mighty sea-chest. They dropped their cargo into the jolly boat and were soon joined by a third pirate whose figure was clothed in fine style and upon whose

head sat a wide brimmed hat with a long trailing green feather.

“How do you like that, Duggley old man?” Captain Terror smiled as he turned to his navigator. “Three of the lads seem to have secret plans afoot. This will bear watching.”

Once in their jollyboat, the three pirates headed for shore. The fancily dressed one sat pompously in the sternsheets. The remainder of the crew were evidently well on out of the world if their shouts and curses and bawdy songs were a fair indication of their intoxication.

“Come on, men. Follow me.”

Captain Terror arose from his concealment and beckoned to his companions. They slid down the bank from their position of vantage and, at length, found themselves near the spot where the jollyboat should hit the shoreline. Into the bushes they once more slipped as the pirate trio ran their small vessel ashore.

The great bulky figure of their evident leader was first out of the boat and he directed his two mates as they struggled and grunted under the weight of the iron bound chest.

“Get a move on, you scum,” the lazy hulking figure hissed in a low coarse voice. “Do you want the rest of those drunken sea rats to discover us gone? If we’re smart about it, the fatheads will never realize that we’ve taken the cream of the treasure when we divide what’s left in the morning.”

“Aye, Captain Marion,” one of the rogues in calico drawers and a dirty red striped cotton shirt replied, “but if LeSandrassa discovers this night’s work, he’ll have the crew in mutiny in an instant.”

“Blast LeSandrassa, you cowardly dog. I intend to run him through before we leave Dragon’s Tooth Cove at any rate. He’s only a mutinous pig who’ll be better for a sticking!”

The trio moved away from the shore into the luxuriant foliage which was now darkening with the approach of nightfall. Captain Terror and his two men followed, making sure to keep in the bushes and well out of sight. The pirates struggled for some distance into the undergrowth until they came to a small clearing. Captain Marion ordered them to stop, pointed out a suitable spot and, within a matter of minutes, his two underlings were digging in the soft sod, the sweat rolling off

them in great globules of moisture.

AS CAPTAIN TERROR watched them in the dim light of dusk, his mind turned over the possibility of joining these scavengers of the seas. He knew instinctively, however, that their lawless rough life of piratical deeds was not for him nor his men. There was, nevertheless, the chance that they might—. He had time to reflect no longer.

Captain Marion had withdrawn two pistols from his belt and was aiming them at the backs of the men struggling with their spades in the deepening hole.

“No you don’t, you——!” Captain Terror exclaimed as he leaped from the concealment of the underbrush and slashed at the pirate chieftain’s hands with the slender shank of his drawn rapier.

“Bang!”

The crash of one pistol resounded through the glade and one of the men in the treasure pit crumpled with a great spreading red stain across his back. Captain Terror’s slash, nevertheless, had caused the treacherous captain to drop his second weapon as the second pirate in the hole looked up and Duggley and Gallat burst into the clearing.

“Where have you come from, you scum?” His swarthy, evil face contorted, the pirate captain snarled in his rage as he wiped the blood from the back of his hand. “What manner of man are you to dare interfere with Captain Marion?”

“What manner of man are you,” said Captain Terror, “a treacherous Judas who pistols his own men in the back without a word?”

The pirate captain snarled another curse and drew his blade as he backed away from the crouching wild-looking half-clad man before him. Duggley and Gallat had seized the other pirate and watched eagerly while the two duelists circled one another warily.

“You stinking woods’ rat, I’ll have your life’s blood for that interference!”

“Actions speak louder than words,” the smiling Welshman said as he lunged forward.

The pirate parried the thrust and the woodland began to ring and echo with the clash of steel upon steel as the two antagonists bitterly parried and thrust at one another. Back and forth across the glade they danced and the faint half-

light of dusk cast eerie long shadows on the verdant foliage around them. The pirate chieftain was skillful with his weapon and soon he had driven the more agile Edward Terror back toward a half-hidden fallen log.

“Here’s for your trouble!” the sweating, panting pirate screamed in derision as his antagonist fell backwards over the unseen obstacle.

His lunge was like lightning, but Edward Terror rolled away in the very nick of time and Captain Marion found his point buried in nothing more than the earth.

“And here’s for your trouble.” Captain Terror had arisen and he viciously slashed his rapier across the sweating, straining face of the pirate.

“Dog!” screamed the maddened man through the blood streaming down his visage, as he threw himself at the sardonic fiend before him.

HOTTER and hotter waxed the fight but Edward Terror could feel his opponent weakening. At length, the pirate dropped his guard too long and, with one smooth lunge, Captain Terror slid his blade into the rogue’s chest to the very hilt. He stepped back and the gasping, dying pirate crumbled into the grass.

“Neatly done Edward!” Duggley cried as he moved to his captain’s side. When he received a grin in answer, the blonde navigator continued. “That was as pretty a dispatching of a rogue as ever I’ve seen.

“What’ll we do with this one?”

Captain Terror turned at Gallat’s question and beheld the frightened figure in the red striped shirt and the calico breeches. Instantly a plan occurred to him. He could use this pirate knave to help the three of them, and the rest of the survivors of the Maid of Avon who were now on the other side of the island, to escape this island prison.

“This man was your leader, wasn’t he?” Captain Terror questioned as he prodded the dead pirate from whose chest the rapier protruded.

“Aye, that he was, but LeSandrassa will take over now.”

“Who’s LeSandrassa?”

“He was Captain Marion’s first mate. Ever since we raided Caracas, LeSandrassa has been

waiting for a chance to take over. Now you have given it to him.”

“Don’t be too sure of that, mate,” Captain Terror said cryptically and then, laying his finger on the pirate’s chest, he continued. “You’re free to return to your ship but the treasure stays with us. You can tell this rogue LeSandrassa that, if he wants the treasure, he’s to meet me on the spit of sand that forms the northern side of the channel into Dragon’s Tooth Cove, tomorrow at dawn. Understand?”

“Aye, but he’ll have it anyway even if he has to comb the whole island for you.”

“We’ll see, my smart friend,” Captain Terror grinned. “Now begone with you, else I change my mind and add you to the pile that your two friends will make.”

The rogue disappeared along the trail to the cove and Captain Terror withdrew his bloody rapier from the lifeless form of the pirate leader.

“Men, we’ll throw this corpse in with the other, bury ‘em and move the treasure deeper into the woods.”

“What have you got in mind, Edward?” Duggley’s brow was wrinkled as he helped.

“I’ll tell you the way back to our encampment. If you and the rest agree to my plans, we may well be out of here within a matter of days and on our way to revenge.”

More he would not say. They moved the treasure chest and, as night became complete in its blackness, the trio stalked through the underbrush to their encampment. They had a deal of news to spread to their seven other castaway mates.

THE long golden fang of the sand spit stretched out into the sea. As the light of the morning sun shimmered across the sea and flashed from the foam tips of the thundering breakers, around from the cove came two boatloads of pirates and buccaneers. The masts of their anchored ship could be seen reaching skyward above the roof of palms as their oars chopped the waters with a regular beat.

In the fore of the lead boat stood a tall hawkish buccaneer with a great scarlet and golden coat covering his thin sinewy body. His oily black hair was held back by a dirty orange bandana and, in his pierced ears, two heavy rings flashed with

the light’s reflection. As garish a bunch of rogues as the seven seas could sweep up were the two score picaroons and pirates that accompanied him. Clothed in multicolored and dirty calico, cotton and satin finery and rags, the white and black skinned men were armed with every weapon of the times, cutlasses, pistols, pikes, and knives of every variety but of an evil and dangerous looking similarity withall.

The boats pulled through the fresh surf and their crews, jabbering and laughing like a tribe of monkeys, leaped into the backwash and pulled them high and dry on the hot sand. Led by the hawk-like rogue, they ascended the sandy beach and, at length, came to a spot before the fringe of jungle foliage. Here they stopped their trudging through the warm sands for before them stood a lone, almost naked man.

Captain Terror’s foot rested on an open sea-chest which sparkled with the richness of its jeweled and golden content. His hands rested on his slim hips from which dangled a needle thin rapier. His lips, within the parchment brown of his face, were spread in a wide grin and his white teeth flashed in the morning light.

“A good morning to you, my hearties,” he greeted the suddenly silent mob.

The greedy eyes of the pirates were upon the sprawling treasure, but the gaze of their leader rested on the muscular suntanned figure who so nonchalantly rested his bare foot on the gleaming wealth.

“So you’re the one that did for the captain?” The voice of the tall buccaneer was surly and impudent. “Well, we’ve come for our treasure.”

“Have you now? There’s a bit of a deal that we’ll settle first before I can let you have it.”

At this the surly leader opened his great gash of a mouth and, holding his sides as if they might split from the exertion, he laughed and pointed at Captain Terror in derision.

“Mates, did you hear that? We must deal with him afore we can have our treasure. He stopped his laughter and waved his cutlass before him. “Seize the impudent scum and we’ll be away to the ship afore this farce can go any further.”

The band of pirates shouted their approval of the hawkish leader’s decision and moved ominously forward. Suddenly nine arrows

whistled from behind Captain Terror's back and thudded deeply into the sand. They quivered for a moment before the toes of the foremost rogues and brought the garish mob to an instant stop.

"You see, my smart friend, I have the wherewithal to stop you within the trees at my back," smiled Captain Terror as the knaves looked incredulously behind him toward the unseen Bowman of the forest. "Now will you deal with me or would you rather have those fuzzy tailed things growing from your chest?"

A look of hate and frustration lit the leader's face and, for an instant, he considered a headlong charge to do for this sardonic woodsman impudently standing before him. He thought better of it and spoke in a voice thick with frustrated rage.

"What's your deal, scum?"

Captain Terror did not answer him immediately but reached instead into the treasure chest and withdrew a leather bag, filled to the brim with gleaming round pearls. Unloosening the leather thong about the bag's neck, he flung it into the midst of the buccaneers.

"THERE'S a sample of what you'll be sharing in a few moments."

Like warfside waifs, the motley band scrambled and fought with one another to obtain part of the flashing cascade of richness that rolled onto the golden sands. The pirate leader stood stolid and tense before him.

"Now for the deal, LeSandrassa—that is your name, is it not?" The hawkish buccaneer nodded his head and Captain Terror continued. "Last night I killed your captain in a fair fight and thus saved for you this treasure. In return for the treasure, which I claim no share of, you will make me your new captain."

There was complete silence for a moment and then, having retrieved all the pearls from the sand and now paying him attention, the pirates spoke up.

"Aye, that's fair enough."

"He did for Captain Marion and, by the rules of the brotherhood, his claim is just."

LeSandrassa turned around in anger and eyed his disloyal crew.

"Shut up, you rats. We'll have the treasure

anyway. How do you think this knave could lead you? Remember what I did for you at Caracas, at Blackman's Bluff, and the attack on Pinar del Rio. You need a fighting man, not a landlubberly jack-a-napes." He paused and an evil grin lit his thin face. Winking to his men, he turned and faced the smiling Welshman before him. "Howsomever, I'm a fair and just man. If yonder fop can best me in fair fight, why I'm more than willing to let him take charge."

Now, with their minds whetted for a good fight, the men shouted their approval of LeSandrassa's offer.

"Good enough."

"If the stranger's tough enough to make a good captain, he's hardy enough to beat the Frenchman."

"Let's have the fight."

Captain Terror withdrew his rapier and stepped forward over the glittering treasure.

"All right, my cocky friend. That's fair enough."

"Aye, but discard your pig-stabber," LeSandrassa said with an evil smirk. "My mates have a better liking for knives."

With that he withdrew a long gleaming shaft of steel from his waistband and threw off his coat and kicked off his seaboots. Another pirate, seeing that the half-clad stranger carried no similar weapon, threw a second knife at Captain Terror's feet. Eagerly now the buccaneers crowded around in a semi-circle to watch the bloodletting.

Back amidst the covering foliage Gallat grasped Duggley by the arm. Around about the seven other members of the Maid of Avon's crew stood ready with their longbows and full arrow quivers on their backs.

"This is getting dangerous, Duggley."

"Aye, but we'll wait awhile here. Edward seems to know what he is about. Keep the men ready for instant action."

Captain Terror picked up the knife from the sand and, running his thumb the length of its shaft, found the blade more than sharp enough. The hawkish LeSandrassa had stripped to the waist and his wiry muscles rippled in the warm morning air. The two adversaries circled one another and the Welshman noted that his opponent was left-handed. This would indeed be a

dangerous fight. The crew closed in, shouting for action and blood.

SUDDENLY the pirate leaped forward and slashed upward at the stomach of the chestnut-brown figure of Captain Terror. The Welshman leaped backward and the deadly blade missed by a hair's breadth. Before he could slash in turn, LeSandrassa had fallen to the ground, rolled over and was on his feet again a half dozen yards away. No wonder he wanted to use knives, thought the half clad woodsman. He was a past master at the deadly game.

Again LeSandrassa lunged, expecting the stranger to leap back. This time, however, Captain Terror, risking all, stepped forward and glided to the right. He felt the pain of a slash as the pirate's turning knife raked his left side but he sunk his own knife deeply into the upper arm of his attacker.

"Aye-e-e-e-e—"

The pirates were now screaming madly as the red stain of blood flowed over the antagonists. LeSandrassa was enraged, and his left arm, the one that wielded the bloody blade, was streaming red—Captain Terror knew that its speed had been hindered. He closed with the pirate just as a knee shot into his groin. His body exploded into a white hot bundle of burning nerves with the pain of the unexpected kick and he collapsed onto the sand. In a trice the pirate was upon him, slashing at his stomach. Captain Terror kicked out as the blade dug into his thigh and LeSandrassa fell backward.

Pained and mad with rage himself, the Welshman leaped on the prostrate buccaneer and plunged his dagger into the rogue's heart just as LeSandrassa's knife buried itself inch deep in his shoulder.

Gasping and wracked with pain he rolled off the dead pirate's form as Duggley and his men burst from the woods. He crumbled to the ground senseless as Gallat tenderly removed the knife from his shoulder.

WHEN he finally came to his senses, Duggley was standing over him in an ornate beamed cabin. The beams flickered and wavered in the light reflecting from the water through the open cabin window.

"You're safe aboard your new ship, Edward," the smiling blonde navigator spoke. "You lost a deal of blood but you gained many supporters. Those men of LeSandrassa's have been dividing the treasure on the beach and we've been taking over the ship."

Duggley patched up Captain Terror's many wounds from a medicine chest that he had found in the stern locker as the Welshman looked his new surroundings over. The cabin clothes locker was filled with finery, satins and taffetas, greatcoats and lace shirts and leather boots, periwigs, baldrics, and buckles. Charts of the Caribbean waters lay strewn on a huge oaken table and a fine heavy silverware set lay in its box by an open cabin window.

"By the saints, Duggley," laughed the pale, wounded Welshman, "we're going to live like kings and look like kings even if we do act like pirates."

"Now let us see the contents of this good ship's galley," he continued, "for, faith, my belly touches my backbone from hunger."

"Sure, and you must be near starved," Duggley answered, a solicitous look on his face. "I'll have the cook get you a fine dinner right away."

WITH this he hurried out, leaving Edward to ruefully contemplate his wounds and his white, haggard face in the cabin mirror.

Soon Duggley returned, carrying a tray laden high with steaming delicacies.

"This Captain Marion believed in keeping a fine table," he grinned as he set the tray down in front of Edward. "There is food below fit for Charles of Spain himself."

Edward fell to with a will under the paternal eye of his brawny navigator. After the sharp edge of his hunger had been dulled somewhat, he said to Duggley:

"My lad, on this bloody ship with its cut-throat crew we will be walking on treacherous ground indeed. I must have men around me whom I can trust. Now, I have in mind yourself for first mate. What think you of young Gallat for second?"

"Aye, Edward," Duggley answered. "He is a fighting-cock if ever I saw one; and, if you lead,

he would follow into Hell itself.”

“He may have to,” laughed Captain Terror, his spirits revived by the hot food and the fine Madeira. “I have been thinking to myself, Tom, of what use is it to pile up wealth by honest toil, only to lose it to the arrogant Dons of Spain? From this day on, I mean to be the hunter instead of the prey.”

“Well said, Edward,” enthused the usually stolid Somersetshireman. “Once, now, have we been wiped out by the bloody Dons; and fortunate indeed have we been to escape with our lives.”

Edward was about to answer, when he was interrupted by the roar of many voices coming from the deck below.

“What is that,” he asked intently. “What is the matter with the crew?”

“They have had their spot of grog and I imagine they’re having a turn with the dice,” Duggley answered. “You know how noisy they can be at times.”

“I don’t like the sound of it,” Edward persisted, “methinks it has a strange ring.”

“I’ll have a look,” Duggley promised, hurrying out. Soon he came back, his face grave. With his eyes cast down he informed slowly:

“They have dragged a wench up from the hold—they mean to have cruel sport with the poor thing.”

Captain Terror leaped up, overturning the table with a crash.

“What!” he shouted. “Not on my ship—”

He lurched painfully toward the door. Quickly the mate barred his way.

“No, Captain,” he pleaded. “I like it no better than yourself but the men are in an ugly mood and to deprive them of their cruel play would be but to invite mutiny—she is probably only a bawd, the kind you find in every port.”

Captain Terror pushed him roughly aside.

“She is a woman and defenseless,” he proclaimed. “Now, out of my way!”

He flung open the door and stamped out onto the deck, his face like a thundercloud. Duggley followed, with worry etched on his own features.

As quickly as his wounds would permit, Edward led the way down onto the deck. He let out a string of crackling oaths when he saw the tableau spread out before him.

Tied to the mainmast, her hands stretched above her, surrounded by a ring of hooting, blaspheming, buccaneers, was a lovely, white-faced Spanish girl.

HER clothes were in tatters and her brown hair hung down over her shoulders in rippling waves. Her eyes were closed and her lips moved regularly as if she were praying.

A huge black bearded ruffian went mincing up to her.

“Don’t ye have a little kiss for good old Shark?” he leered.

With this he thrust his hideous face forward and fastened his bearded lips on her mouth. She struggled frantically, twisting her head from side to side and writhing in her bonds, as he pressed his body against hers and held her in his foul embrace.

He laughed as at last he stood back from her shrinking form.

“We’ll let all of these handsome lads take turns,” he bellowed. “But first we’ll show them something to keep them interested.”

With this, he put a grimy paw inside her bodice and with a savage tug ripped her dress open.

There was an instant, dreadful silence as the women-starved men stared at the exquisite body so suddenly revealed. Then, there was a vicious roar and the passion-crazed crew began to mill about the terrified girl. One had fastened his hand in her hair and was cutting her bonds with his knife, preparatory to dragging her to the deck, when Edward leaped into action.

Cursing wildly, he stormed through the milling mob of men, tearing a cutlass from one as he went. Belaboring heads and backs as he forced his way through he finally got to the mast.

Shielding the girl with his body he roared:

“Back, you filthy sons-of-dogs!—back, or by Neptune, the fish will feed well this day!”

As the defiant men fell slowly back, nursing their cracked heads and aching backs, Edward turned to the sobbing girl. Her clothes had nearly been torn from her body, and, in spite of his rage, Edward could not resist the instinctive thrill which ran through him.

Her face was lovely and patrician, the skin an

ivory white, the eyes a deep blue, the nose finely molded and slightly upturned, the lips full and delicately curved, all crowned by an incredibly long mass of rich brown hair.

As Captain Terror's eyes traveled on along her torn clothing, his heart began to pump strangely. Resolutely forcing his gaze upward, he saw that she was watching him fixedly, the look of a trapped rabbit upon her face.

He quickly drew his knife and sliced the ropes which bound her wrists to the mast. He heard her labored breathing in his ear as he sawed at the ropes about her slim waist. A gust of air blew a silky strand of scented hair across his face and, as he bent down to free her ankles, he discovered that his hands were trembling so that he could barely hold the knife.

THE Devil! He swore silently to himself.

As he straightened up, she ineffectually tried to hold the tattered remnants of her dress together. Captain Terror motioned for her to follow him and she took a tentative step forward. Tottering, she almost fell and saved herself only by clutching the mast for support.

"I—I cannot stand," she murmured in a sweet, faintly husky voice. "Those ropes—they were so tight."

Her English was perfect, spoken with a delicious, slurred accent. Once more Captain Terror felt the blood pound in his temples as he put his arm around the waist of the lovely girl. Steadying her, he led the way slowly through the crowd of glowering men.

As they set foot on the poop deck, the muttering of the pirates burst into a roar. The bearded Shark pushed his way from amidst the crew and confronted his new captain. His rugged face was contorted in an expression of mixed frustration and hate.

"What right have you to deprive us of our sport with this Spanish bawd?" he spat. "If her men-folks or the black-robed monks of the Inquisition had ye tied to that mast, they'd have the flesh off your bones in small pieces!"

With a full-arm sweep Captain Terror struck him full in the mouth. Shark went down like a felled tree. After a minute, he arose to one knee, shaking his head slowly.

"Save your passion for the waterfront sluts to whom you are accustomed." Captain Terror said coldly.

"You want her for yourself!" the prostrate buccaneer hissed.

Catlike, Captain Terror leaped across the deck. Drawing his knife he bent down and grasped the surly pirate by his dirty shirt.

"One more word out of you, my Beauty," he said sweetly, "and I'll nail your lying tongue to yonder mast!"

The sullen crew was silent. Duggley and Gallat stood tensely ready before the cowering figure of the Spanish girl. The moment passed and Captain Terror arose, deliberately turned his back upon the hushed crew and joined his two friends and the girl.

"You must run this ship with an iron hand, Edward, if ye expect these devils to follow you," Duggley whispered with a sigh of relief.

"And why do you think I handled yonder knave so abruptly?" Captain Terror answered. "'Twill give the crew something to think about."

As Duggley accompanied his captain and the captive girl to the greatcabin, his eyes watched the dark Welshman with a mixture of silent admiration and wonderment. The change from peaceful merchantman to rugged pirate leader was coming with ease to this amazing man.

Captain Terror followed the girl into the cabin and turned to close the door. It was blocked by Duggley, who was following close upon his heels. Captain Terror put his hand upon Duggley's broad chest and gently pushed him out again.

"I will call you if I need you, friend," he said reprovingly.

AS HE closed the door, the last thing that he saw was the navigator's grinning face, one eye closed in a broad wink. Swearing softly under his breath, Captain Terror slammed and bolted the door. He turned to his fair hostage who was huddled in the corner on the window seat and was trying vainly to arrange her torn dress so that it would cover the more obvious of her many charms.

"You will be bothered no more, my lady," he said gallantly. "Now tell me how you fell captive to this mangy crew."

He walked over to her, pulled up a stool and sat down. To his amazement she shrank back from him, fear and loathing showing plainly on her pale face. Edward stared at her nonplussed. Then he threw back his head and roared with laughter, showing his even, white teeth.

"No wonder you fear me," he chuckled. "Faith, I must look a sight to receive such a fair visitor. Forgive my appearance for I just arose from a sick bed. At that," he went on, "I should think that you would prefer me to Shark."

She looked at him coldly.

"Prefer any murdering pirate who plunders honest men of the sea to another?" she spoke with disdain. "Indeed, there seems little choice—your men, at least, do not mask their intent behind a lot of pretty phrases."

Edward's face grew grave as the girl continued passionately.

"You shall have short sport of me—I shall throw myself over the side at the first opportunity!"

"Aren't you being ungrateful?" Edward asked her sternly. "If you think that I desire you, or that you are in any way attractive to me, you flatter yourself no end."

The Lord forgive me for that lie, he thought, keeping his face stern.

"Then what do you propose to do with me?"

"First, tell me who you are and where you come from," the Welshman countered.

"My name is Dolores de Vayo. My father is Don Sebastian de Vayo, governor of Panama."

Captain Terror whistled soundlessly as the girl moved closer.

"My father wanted me to marry a much older man," she continued. "A great admiral and nobleman. I refused, but he insisted. So I fled from Porto Bello aboard a small vessel for Jamaica and some English friends of mine. Just two days ago the ship was sunk and I was captured and thrown in your filthy hold—as you well know!"

"But I did not know," Edward told her. "You see, this was not my ship."

He explained to her the recent incidents attendant to his seizure of Captain Marion's pirate frigate. When he had finished, she looked at him with open admiration.

"*Madre de Dios!*" she breathed. "You are a man!"

"I will put you off at the first English possession that we come to," he said. "Until then, I am your servant."

For the first time he saw her smile. She slipped gracefully to her feet and made a low curtsy. The dark-haired girl was indeed breathtaking in her charm.

"Just one thing more, Captain," she smiled. "A tub of hot water, an hour's privacy and some clean clothes."

"They will have to be seaman's clothes, Donna Dolores," Captain Terror replied. "I will bring you the smallest that I can discover."

WITH that, he arose and left the cabin. He gave instructions to the cook to send up the clothes and a tub of heated water and then he ordered Duggley to pipe the crew on deck.

"Men," Captain Terror addressed the still somewhat sullen pirates, "Duggley, here, is to be your new mate and navigator; Gallat, your second mate. As for the other officers, I'll choose them when I know you better. Now it has been called to my attention that this vessel is in a sad state of repair, her cannon rusty, her 'tween decks filthy, much of her rigging frayed and dangerous, and her bottom foul with barnacles. So, we'll dismantle her in the lagoon, careen her on the beach and make her ship-shape and seaworthy." The men grumbled as Captain Terror paused and then continued coldly. "The first one who molests the Spanish lady by as much as a word will hang from the yardarm—within an hour. Is that clear?"

The savage faces of the buccaneer band reflected the uncertainty that they felt regarding their new captain. The incident of the Spanish girl was still fresh in their minds. But yet not a dissenting word was spoken in the face of the determined Welshman.

At length, after a few moments of lingering silence, Captain Terror turned from the men and addressed his eager young mate.

"Gallat lad, ever since you fashioned your equipage on yonder island and obtained our food for us, I've had it in the back of my mind to have a company of archers aboard deck in action."

"Aye. We could operate from the shrouds

and do fearful close-in execution in battle.” Gallat’s eyes shone with anticipation. “Can I form a company, Captain Terror?”

“That you can, lad. Take any twenty that you want and make yourself captain of the company. Methinks that your archers with their rapid fire will be not only an innovation but a deadly added implement to our fighting power.”

Gallat left, scarcely able to contain himself, and Edward strolled on up to his cabin. He paused in front of the door and ran his fingers through his thick, black hair. Taking a deep breath he knocked.

“Come in,” the husky voice murmured.

As Edward walked in he saw in the middle of the room what appeared to be a small, waterfront urchin. Her brown hair was tucked under a seaman’s cap and she was dressed from head to boot in seaman’s garb. The only discordant note to the ensemble was the suspicious swelling of the faded blue shirt-front.

“Do I look enough like one of your men, Captain Terror?” she said, pirouetting about before him.

“Donna Dolores, you could not look like a man if you wore a suit of mail,” Edward answered gallantly.

She quickly lowered her eyes.

“How soon can you put me ashore?” she asked, looking up again.

“Perhaps a month, perhaps six weeks.”

“Dios! So long!”

“But yes, Donna Dolores. The ship must be repaired and I have a score to settle with a certain Spanish Vice-Admiral.” His voice was tinged with bitterness as he paused. “I will leave you here on the island, however, with a guard of trustworthy men—for I have no desire to subject you to the dangers of possible naval action.”

“Never!” she interposed hotly. “I will not stay here—I want to come along with you.”

“Very well,” Captain Terror returned. “I have warned you. Surely you would not care to see a ship of your own Spain destroyed?”

She laughed scornfully.

“I have no love for Charles of Spain,” she said heatedly. “Remember, I am an exile because I refused to marry that pig of a de Sadista!”

“De Sadista!” Captain Terror exclaimed.

“Not the Vice-Admiral of the Caribbean Squadron?”

“Yes,” she said in bewilderment. “Do you know him?”

“Know him?” laughed Captain Terror bitterly. “Let me tell you a story—a long story.”

HAVING previously told her of the events leading from his forced sojourn on the island, he now told the girl of the events leading to his castaway life. When he had finished his tale of the treacherous attack on the Maid of Avon, the Spanish girl surveyed him breathlessly.

“Santa Maria!” she cried, clutching him by the shoulder passionately. “How I will bless you if you send that devil to the bottom!”

Something snapped within Captain Terror. Her beauty and the added incentive of her own hatred for the Spanish Vice-Admiral combined to overwhelm his senses. He reached out and swept her into his arms. Holding her tightly against him, he kissed her surprised mouth.

“Bless me again, Dolores,” he said tenderly, “and I would bring you Charles of Spain himself!”

With surprising strength she wrenched away from him.

“How dare you!” she cried, her cheeks scarlet. Her eyes blazed and she balled up her small hands and struck the Welshman on the chest.

Edward looked down from his great height on the dainty creature so busily engaged in pounding on his broad chest. There was a ludicrous expression of surprise on his handsome face and the Spanish girl paused. She looked up at him and her anger passed as suddenly as it had appeared.

“You great hulking fool,” she laughed. “If you could only see your silly expression.”

Edward flushed.

“I did not realize that I was so amusing,” he said stiffly. “It will not happen again.”

“Now you are angry,” she mocked. “Perhaps I have wounded your pride.”

Edward suddenly reached for her again but she quickly pushed a chair between them and skipped nimbly away.

“No, Captain,” she protested, backing away. “Please!”

Edward pulled up short, realizing what a fool he was making of himself. He glared at her.

"This cabin is yours," he growled. "I will bunk with the mate. If you need anything, you may call for Duggley!"

He turned and stamped toward the door.

"Captain Terror."

"What do you want?" he tossed over his shoulder.

"I'm sorry I laughed at you—but you did look amusing."

With an oath Edward rushed out and slammed the cabin door behind him. When he had regained his temper, he called Gallat and told him to see to it that the crew commenced the needed repair work—at once.

The crew grumbled at the unaccustomed labor but was, nevertheless, soon at work on the dismantled ship. A camp was made on the golden sand of the beach. A single tent had been pitched for the Spanish girl and Edward resolutely ignored her. Extra spars were cut from the forest growth and before many days had gone by the ship was once again afloat and new rigging was beginning to grow in her upper works.

GALLAT formed his company of bowmen who daily increased their skill with the longbow and Captain Terror whipped the remainder of the crew in shape with gunnery drills and sword and pike fighting practice. For already he had in mind many things for this new found crew and ship; the most important of which was the exacting of vengeance from the Spaniard, De Sadista. A hankering for this vengeance seemed to gnaw at his bones like some nauseous disease.

One fine day, Duggley, Gallat and Von Tromp, a Dutch buccaneer who had been a gunner under the great De Ruyter, were standing over the oaken table which stood in the sand on the spit. The table was covered with charts, and Captain Terror was resplendent in black and scarlet taffetas with a curling black periwig falling on his shoulders and his face shielded from the burning sun by a black broad-brimmed hat whose red feather trailed rakishly over his shoulder.

"My lads, it's nigh onto time for some action," the lean Welshman said. "If I only knew what the Spanish squadron was about, I could

make up my mind in a trice."

"Pardon, Captain Terror," the gruff, throaty voice of the stubby Von Tromp spoke up. "But this is their usual time for taking their yearly haul of pearls from Rio de la Hache back to Spain."

"Is that so now," said the Captain as his eyes narrowed in thought. "And where do they usually come through, the Windward or the Mona Passage?"

"Always the Mona Passage, Captain, but we dare not attack them. They're six men-of-war, two of which are forty-four gun ships. Even Morgan at his strongest would never have dared that. There are other ways of bleeding the men of Castile."

Captain Terror stood thoughtful for a moment. That Spanish cur must pay for his treachery. What's more, this island itself lay on the eastern edge of the Mona Passage.

"Gentlemen, we slip out with the tide in the morning. We're going to see the Spanish Squadron."

The other three looked at one another aghast. He certainly couldn't be considering the possibility of attacking the most formidable force in the entire Caribbean?

When the others left Von Tromp approached the elegant figure in silver and scarlet.

"Captain, you must reconsider what is in the back of your head."

"You fought with De Ruyter in '73 off the Texel, didn't you?"

"Aye, but—"

"He was a brave admiral and he usually fought against odds."

"I know, Captain Terror, but—"

"But nothing, Von Tromp. You take me for an utter fool before I've proven else. Bide your tongue and time and, mayhap, Fortune will present us with an opening."

The Dutchman shrugged his shoulders and walked off. This mad Englishman was beyond him.

With the ebbing of the tide in the morning, the Vengeance, for such was the new name of Captain Terror's great brown and white ship, slipped out of Dragon's Tooth Cove and gayly cleared the sand spit point. It was good to feel the flow of the breeze and be aboard the rocking boards of a fine vessel again, thought the black-

browed Welshman. As the *Vengeance* gained steerage and her sheets billowed to the southerly breeze, he knew that underfoot was a vessel of speed and agility. Lacking the sturdiness of the English and Dutch built ships, the *Vengeance*, nonetheless, incorporated all the grace and speed that only a French builder could impart to a sailing vessel.

WITHIN a few days the *Vengeance* had taken up her station off Cape Engano on the western tip of the Mona Passage. At a conference in his cabin over some fine Canary wine, Captain Terror, Duggley, Von Tromp, and Gallat bent over the charts. If they reckoned correctly from the date of his former ill-fated meeting with the *San Nicolas*, the Spanish Squadron should be bearing through the straits within the week, her hulls full of pearls for the coffers of Charles II, King of Spain.

The wind strengthened from the south and chopped the sea up in the straits. If the Spanish Squadron beat through the passage now she would come hell-bent with a strong wind at her stern. Captain Terror had no more of an idea as to what he was going to do in the event of meeting the cursed Spanish foe than he had knowledge of the priesthood, but his Welsh blood gave him a trust in fortune that the others were wont to openly criticize.

"I tell you, my lads, I won't be content until I see this great fearsome fleet that I've heard so much about, even if it ends in our showing them our heels."

The breeze had slackened again but it was still blowing up a bit of lace on the rollers when the lookout sighted some specks on the horizon riding the southerly breeze through the straits. As time gained and distance lessened, it proved to be indeed the fleet of the Spanish Caribbean Admiral. In twin columns the six vessels, under a full press of sail, were wearing through the Mona Passage. Our Blessed Mother and other renderings from the Holy Book decorated the mainsails of the galleons. Bringing up the tail of the closer westernmost column was none other than the *San Nicolas*, with her Vice-Admiral's pennant smartly fluttering at her foremast tip.

"The sight of that pennant burns me like the

fires of perdition," exclaimed Captain Terror venomously to Gallat as the two stood in the crosstrees. "But friend Fortune has placed them in our very laps, my hearty. Get your men in the rigging, Gallat, and carry out my bidding for I think that we shall have action."

With that he dropped down the shrouds and ratlines to the waist. He called Duggley and the crotchety Von Tromp to his side.

"Mates, I've got a plan that may cause untold trouble to yonder proud gentlemen of Castile. Listen carefully to what I have to say for there is a mite of danger to be experienced."

There on the deck of his fine ship, Captain Terror told them of his plan of action and also beat off the arguments of that former ace gunner of De Ruyter's, Von Tromp. When he had finished, he glanced toward his cabin and saw the slight figure of the Spanish girl in the doorway.

Quickly he went up to her.

"You must go to the hold below," he told her sharply. "It will not be safe up here—we are about to attack yon fleet."

They were the first words he had spoken to her since the day in the cabin, many days past, when he had kissed her.

"Attack?" She stared at him in wonderment. "Are you mad?"

"Get below," he said, ignoring her remarks, "and hurry."

"I shall stay where I am," she told him, lifting her head proudly and looking him full in the eye. "Whatever our faults, we Spanish are not cowards."

Edward could hardly restrain his admiration as he looked at the beautiful, proud face.

"Very well," he returned briefly. "But keep under cover."

May the Good Lord keep her safe, he thought somberly to himself as he rejoined the men, his ardor for the coming battle somewhat dampened by his concern for her safety.

SO IT was that Don Berona de Fecento, Admiral of the Caribbean Squadron, saw the approach of a fine looking ship of Spain, with the gold and scarlet emblem of Castile at her main-truck, beating close-hauled into the wind that was at his own stern. This fine ship approached head-

on towards his squadron midway between the two columns.

“Shall I run open our ports, Admiral?” his conscientious gunner said as he stood beside him on the forty-four gun San Felipe.

“What for, you foolish son of a pig? She’s Spanish and she doesn’t show her own guns.”

“I perceive that, Admiral, but it might be a trick. These are buccaneer waters.”

“Tell me, Carlos, do you jump at your own shadow?” The great man was sarcastic. “Do you really believe that a single ship would dare attack the Caribbean Squadron? Why, that foul knave Morgan wouldn’t dare it with a fleet. Go back to your post. You need a rest for your nerves.”

The brown and white ship had now come closer and many waving men could be discerned lining her yardarms.

“Look, Captain, they are thrilled by the sight of so much Spanish might.” The great Admiral beamed as he spoke to the master of the San Felipe standing beside him.

“I see, sire, but their impudence in sailing amidst our formation should be reported. I don’t like it.”

Don Berona de Facento condescended to only a smile at this nervous ship’s master. His own egotism was in for quite a shock, however, for aboard the Vengeance the guns were loaded, the sparks were lit and the buccaneer guncrews waited tensely behind closed ports.

“Look, Duggley,” eagerly Captain Terror spoke to his navigator, “Gallat’s company waving in the rigging, our Spanish flag and the closed gunports have completely deceived them. Those poor fools.”

Captain Terror stood in the waist and the gunners watched him as the Vengeance moved into the hostile center. He waited until the San Felipe and the Infanta, forty-four guns, were on either side. Then he brought his arm down.

“Pay ‘em our compliments, men!”

In a trice the ready gunports snapped open and thirty-six thirty-two pounders lunged forth, eighteen on the starboard side pointing at the San Felipe and the port guns pointing at the Infanta.

“Crash!”

The two broadsides pounded forth in one terrific blast. At once the guns were run back,

swabbed, reloaded, and rammed. As the monstrous clouds of gunsmoke rolled away to her rear, the men on the Vengeance let out a scream of derision and joy. The broadsides had caused great damage and consternation to the unsuspecting Spaniards. The mizzenmast of the Infanta had come rattling down and great holes and gaps in both shrouds and hulk appeared on the San Felipe.

“Crash!”

Once again the twin broadsides let go as the Vengeance slid swiftly through the seas to a position between the next two of the Spanish Squadron, both forty gun galleons, the Santisima Cadiz and the Santa Ana. The dumbfounded men of Castile had no more time than to run out but a few of their guns when the broadsides crashed into them. The Santisima Cadiz lost her bowsprit and the Santa Ana dropped her foremast. Both received additional damage and casualties in the rigging and among their crews and both looked like shambles.

“Run down that stinking flag of Spain,” Captain Terror shouted to one of his hands, “and send aloft the Cross of St. George.”

MEANWHILE, Vice-Admiral Don Alvarez de Perona de Sadista stood open mouthed in awful amazement on the high poop deck of his scarlet ship, the San Nicolas. The affair had come to pass within the brief space of a few minutes and already the two lead ships in the twin columns were wallowing sorely stricken in the blue seas. He crossed himself and screamed at his gunners and first mate. This great blasphemer of his Catholic Majesty’s Fleet, the brown and white ship now flying the cursed English ensign, was between his ship and the Valencia, last ships in their respective columns.

“Crash!”

A third twin broadside erupted from the flanks of the daring Englishman but this time there was a desultory and hasty return fire. The air eddied with swirling clouds of gunsmoke and the Englishman was hidden in the haze from her guns. Her third twin broadsides had not done the damage of the first two, but yet the San Nicolas suffered rents in her rigging and loss of life on her decks while the smaller twenty-two gun Valencia

showed great gashes in her larboard railing and stern works.

“What did I tell you, Duggley,” Captain Terror laughed as he slapped his blonde navigator’s broad back. “Smack down the center we bore and blasted each and every one of them, with aught but one stinking ball in our starboard flank for the trouble.”

“Aye, Edward, and by the time those heavy lead ships wear around on a fair tack into this head wind, we’ll be safely away.” The navigator’s eyes flashed. “By the great bear, it was brilliant. You’ve tweaked the beard of the most powerful force on the Main and now we’re safe away.”

“Not quite, lad,” the elegantly clad captain said and pointed over the taffrail.”

If the signal system of the Spanish Navy could only have incorporated some of the choice epithets that the Castillian tongue is famed for, the top shrouds of Admiral de Fecento’s San Felipe would that day have flown them all, such was the rage in which he found himself. As it was, all that he could do was to order the speedier San Nicolas and the Valencia to turn about and pursue this foul treacherous fiend of England. These two ships had made about and were straining their last ounce of seamanship and skill in the pursuit of the Vengeance.

“Shall I pour on more sheet, Edward? Our slick bottom will enable us to outdistance those two bilge drinkers.”

“No. Pull in some of the top sheets, Duggley lad. We’ll let them chase us for yet awhile and, in time, catch up—but only after we’re safe away from interference from their larger sisters.”

The pursuit bowled on over the running seas and the remainder of the Spanish Squadron was left behind. Captain Terror had had his crew served with rum and, walking among the garish but well-disciplined pirates, he received their unreserved praise and coarse compliments. Never had any of them served under such a daring and skillful commander.

“You see those two eager hounds that pursue us, my hearties?” He addressed a gathering of buccaneers in the waist. “Well, lads, their holds are bulging with choice pearls that I greatly fear the King of Spain will never fondle. I mean to have them for you.” A great roar of approval went

up. “Remember it well when the time comes for fighting.”

VON TROMP stood beside him at the quarterdeck rail, his sour countenance dismayed at the thought of further unnecessary danger.

“Von Tromp, you Dutch rascal, you’ve handled the guns with a touch that De Ruyter would have been proud of. I’ve further tests of your ability shaping up, however.”

The stubby Dutch pirate shrugged off his captain’s friendly pat and spoke petulantly.

“Captain, these two pursuers outgun us. Your first brilliant success may cause you to tempt Lady Fortune too much. We’d better be out of these waters with all speed.”

“Von Tromp, I sometimes wonder what misfortune ever made you take to the pirating trade,” said Captain Terror good-naturedly. “Your Dutch reticence and mathematical mind calculate only the risks against an operation. Why, man, you do not think me fool enough to buck them both together, do you? Their own eagerness will be their downfall.” With that he pointed over the rail where it was plain to see that the speedier Valencia had outdistanced the San Nicolas and was coming up at a goodly rate. “Yonder Spaniard thinks that, because we flee for the moment, we do not consider suddenly turning upon him before his consort can come to his aid.”

Von Tromp’s eyes widened as he understood the captain’s plan. Indeed, the Englishman was not the fool that he, Von Tromp, had thought him.

Captain Terror stood beside Duggley on the poop deck and watched his men climb into the rigging. The moment had almost arrived. He would have preferred it if the Valencia had outdistanced the Vice-Admiral further—but such was not the case. He issued his orders with a wave of his hand to Gallat in the upper works.

The Vengeance suddenly seemed to halt in midstride as the sails furled, the yardarms shifted, and Gallat’s men tumbled the wind out of her sheets. The brown and white ship slipped around broadside to the oncoming Valencia before the Spaniard knew what was about and her starboard guns roared out a broadside.

“Crash!”

The weight of her load caught the twenty-two gun vessel in the bowsprit, sheared it away with the foremast stays and ratlines and cut swathes of destruction the length of her deck. The Vengeance, under the tricky and skillful handling of Gallat's men, swung further around until her unfired port guns came into line. By now the Spaniard had turned to larboard to bring his own guns to bear and the two broadsides crashed out as one.

Von Tromp's skill was not to be denied and the heavier weight of the pirate vessel's metal tore down the main and mizzenmasts, blasted the Valencia's gunports and rails and left her a smoking demi-hulk of ruin.

The smoke of the battle hid the two ships from view as the thirty-two gun San Nicolas slid into the battle mist, her eager Spanish gunners waiting tensely to obtain the vengeance that they felt they so richly deserved from this English heretic.

Aboard his vessel Captain Terror had stripped to the waist, thrown off his periwig and donned a red speckled bandana. In his waist sash he had thrust a brace of pistols and the silver needle of his rapier was bared. There would be hand-to-hand fighting ere this day's work were finished. Gallat's bowmen were in the rigging, Von Tromp commanded the guns and Duggley stood by the helmsman. The Vengeance had taken some damage as the bloodstained boards attested and hands were busy repairing the parted ratlines, shattered rails, burst cannon, and splintered timbers.

“**T**HERE are the topworks of the Vice-Admiral,” Duggley pointed to the spars and upper shrouds of the San Nicolas ploughing through the hazy fog of smoke roundabout.

“Fire through the smoke, Von Tromp. They're not certain yet as to who's who.”

The Spaniard, however, had seen the English ensign at their main-truck, towering through the fast dispelling smoke. She turned and, as the screen of smoke lifted enough for the bucaniers to see her steel studded flank, a blistering broadside ploughed into the Vengeance. Von Tromp answered and the battle became a horrible confusion of smoke, flame, screams, and falling

spars.

Cooly Captain Terror directed his vessel in closer to the game and bitterly fought San Nicolas. The Valencia lay now out of the fight, crippled, flaming and licking her many wounds. Through the yellowing haze the Vengeance crept with her guns firing continuously. She had taken much damage but, so far, her masts stood intact as did those of the Spaniard.

Gallat and his bowmen, in the ratlines above the thickest of the smoke, could at last pick out targets and soon unexpected shafts were whistling down upon the Spaniard's deck and doing fearful execution. This sudden attack from above their heads unnerved the hard pressed Spaniards as claw-like grappling hooks swung out from the Vengeance and the two ships ground together, side-by-side and securely bound. Von Tromp continued his gunnery as did the Spaniard and the execution below decks was frightful at such point blank range.

“Follow me, lads,” Captain Terror shouted.

He grabbed a ratline and swung onto the Spaniard's deck with his rapier between his teeth. At his heels swarmed the buccaneer crew, the most deadly and ferocious hand-to-hand shipboard fighters that the world has ever known.

Edward Terror dropped to the deck with a thrill of strange joy racing through his veins. The final accounting with this treacherous sea-wolf for the rape of the Maid of Avon was at hand. All the hate and rage that had boiled within him for so many days was now free, and, like a fiend possessed, he slashed and pistoled his way through the struggling mob until, at last, he stood before the final knot of surviving Spaniards in the aft of the waist. A wild savage look was in his black eyes and his blade was bloody when he confronted the red and white pantalooned figure of the Vice-Admiral.

Don Alvarez de Perona de Sadista stood erect in his steel corselet and helmet. He knew that his end was at hand but, like a true son of Spain, he would die fighting. His sword crossed with that of this wild looking rogue in the red speckled bandana before him. On the blood-slippery deck the two duelists slashed at one another as the end of the fight drew nigh around about them.

Captain Terror knew, in a moment, that he

crossed swords with no less than the Vice-Admiral:

“You know me not, Spanish cur, but this is a debt that I’m repaying.

His blade flickered out, twirled and flashed and the Spaniard’s sword spun through the air. It is doubtful that Vice-Admiral Don Alvarez de Perona de Sadista ever knew what debt he was atoning for but, in a trice, his body was run through and he lay spread eagled and dead on his wreckage strewn deck.

The battle was over.

CAPTAIN TERROR wiped the sweat from his brow and, for the first time in many weeks, he felt an inner contentment. It was as if a great overbearing load had been lifted from his shoulders. The hate had been cleansed from his body and soul and vengeance was his.

The joyous crew overran the San Nicolas and soon brought forth her chests of pearls. The disabled Valencia ran down her flag and Captain Terror led a picked crew aboard her.

Elegantly attired once more, the Welsh pirate preserved the niceties and bowed gallantly to the bloodstained Spanish captain, refusing, however, to speak to him directly.

“The captain says that you need have no further worries for your life, sire,” a roguish, Spanish speaking buccaneer translated Captain Terror’s word to the thoroughly whipped Spaniard. “All we desire is your pearl cargo and then you may have your ship and begone.”

Captain Terror smiled broadly, revealing his flashing teeth as the Spaniard, with a mournful look, surveyed his battered vessel. The pearls were turned over to the lean buccaneer and it was not long thereafter that Captain Terror mounted the accommodation ladder and met the nervous Duggley on deck.

“We had better get out of these waters while we are still able, Edward. The remainder of the squadron may come up at any moment.”

“Aye,” Captain Terror said, ruefully surveying the damage to his vessel. “Pour on the sheets and we’ll be away.”

Suddenly his mind reverted to the Spanish girl. Where was she? He hastily searched the tangled aftermath of the battle. She was nowhere to be seen. With a strange feeling of worry, he hurried to his cabin and flung open the door.

The girl was stretched out face down on the window seat, her body shaking with sobs. He paused on the threshold of the cabin and the exhilaration of his vengeance drained from his like bilge water from a tapped hold.

In the heat of the battle he had forgotten her and the effect it must have upon her sensitive being. He had just killed her suitor and had wracked a bloody vengeance from her countrymen. The double realization that he loved this girl and that his rash actions must now have turned her feelings to hatred for him suddenly hurt him. Her previous behavior had only been reaction to a dangerous situation. The reality of his deeds must now make her hate him.

“Dolores,” he whispered as he walked over to her prostrate figure and tenderly placed his hand upon her shoulder. “I’m sorry. I know how you feel but it was something I had to do.”

Suddenly she raised her tear-stained face and looked at him. A smile appeared as if by magic and she leaped to the floor.

“I was not crying for them,” she smiled shyly. “I was afraid for you, Edward. For you see, I love you.”

With that she buried her head on his chest and Edward Terror embraced her in his arms.

And thus it was that, at one and the same time, Spain acquired her most relentless enemy and a certain lady of Spain acquired her most devoted lover.

THE END