

CHAPTER XVI

LAS CASAS

THE Conquistadores, despite their romantic renown, were villainous desperadoes. Bad as was Pedrarias, and it would be hard to exaggerate his crimes, his brutalities were exceeded by his successors. The daring of these men, which was immense, was surpassed by their cruelty. Their religious devotion in no way interfered with their vices. The hardships they endured without flinching were tremendous, but their treachery was as incredible. They were engaged in a race for the Palms of Infamy and the finish was close.

The history of those days would be too depressing to study if it were not illumined by the noble life of Don Fray Bartholomé de Las Casas.

“His career affords perhaps a solitary instance of a man, who, being neither a conqueror, a discoverer nor an inventor, has, by the pure force of benevolence, become so notable a figure, that large portions of history cannot be written, or at least cannot be understood, without the narrative of his deeds. . . . In early American history Las Casas is, undoubtedly, the principal figure. . . . He was an important person in reference to all that concerned the Indies, during the reigns of Ferdinand the Catholic, of Philip the Handsome, of his son Charles the Fifth, and of Philip the Second. . . . Take away all he said, and did, and wrote, and preserved (for the early historians of the New World owe the records of many of their most notable facts to him), and the history of the conquest would lose a considerable portion of its most precious materials.

“It may be fearlessly asserted, that Las Casas had a greater number of bitter enemies than any man who lived in his time. . . . During his lifetime there was always one person to maintain that strict justice should be done to the Indians. . . .

“In the cause of the Indians, whether he upheld it in speech, in writing, or in action, he appears never for one moment to have swerved from the exact path of equity. He has been justly called ‘The Great Apostle of the Indies.’”

Las Casas was in the City of Panama in February, 1532, and probably again two years later. But even if he had never set foot on the Isthmus, he would, as Sir Arthur Helps states in the above quotation, be a necessary part of its history.

Born in Seville in 1474, he studied theology in the University of Salamanca and became a licentiate at eighteen. When he was twenty-four he accompanied Columbus on his third voyage. Two years after his return, in 1502, just before the Great Admiral set sail on his last cruise, Las Casas went out to Santo Domingo in the train of Nicolas de Ovando, who had been appointed governor to replace Bobadilla.

He was the first priest ordained in the Indies, and seems to have led a quiet and unobserved life until he was thirty-six, at which time he accompanied the expedition of Diego Velasquez which went out to conquer Cuba.

The Clerigo, as Las Casas always calls himself, developed a marked talent for conciliating the natives. One tribe after another submitted through his mediation, without recourse to arms. The common soldiers, however, viewed these humane measures with open disgust. Conquest without plunder was not to the liking of these freebooters. In the village of Caonao, where many natives had gathered to treat with Las Casas, one of the Spaniards suddenly

drew his sword and a massacre was started before the Clerigo could interfere. The sight of the dead bodies, piled "like sheaves of corn," was, Las Casas tells us, the thing which set him thinking.

The work of pacification had to be begun over again. With infinite patience the Clerigo was able to regain the confidence of the Indians. But it was of course impossible for him to protect them against the brutality of his countrymen. His work came to naught so far as the benefit of the natives was concerned. However, as it is much easier to massacre natives who have been pacified than to fight tribes who are hostile, the officials appreciated the Clerigo's activity and rewarded him with a "repartimiento" near Havana.

This institution became so large an issue in the life of Las Casas, that a few words of explanation are necessary. After the conquest of a territory the land and natives were divided by the governor among his friends by deeds of gift called "repartimientos," which said that so many Indians, under such a cacique, had been given to such a person to command (encomienda) and which always ended with the phrase, "and you are to teach them the things of our Holy Catholic Faith." Of course the hardened soldiers of the Conquest very rarely allowed this final clause to interfere with the work of gold mining. They baptized their Indians and made slaves of them. Las Casas accepted his repartimiento without question. Indeed, in the third book of his "Historia de las Indias," he confesses that he "took no more heed than the other Spaniards to bethink himself that his Indians were unbelievers, and of the duty that there was on his part to give them instruction, and to bring them to the bosom of the Church of Christ."

He was forty years old when the light came to him. In the year 1514, while preparing a sermon for the feast of

Pentecost, he came across the thirty-fourth chapter of Ecclesiasticus. He especially speaks of these verses as having opened his eyes.

“He that sacrificeth of a thing wrongfully gotten, his offering is ridiculous; and the gifts of unjust men are not accepted.

“The Most High is not pleased with the offering of the wicked: neither is he pacified for sin by the multitude of sacrifices.

“Whoso bringeth an offering of the goods of the poor doeth as one that killeth the son before his father’s eyes.

“The bread of the needy is their life; he that defrauded him thereof is a man of blood.

“He that taketh away his neighbor’s living slayeth him; and he that defraudeth the laborer of his hire is a blood-shedder.”

A truer “conversion” has never been recorded in history. Something in those words, which he had probably read many times before, changed the worldly-minded priest into an ardent apostle. Inevitably one compares this to the conversion of Count Tolstoi. Any social organization by which some live idly from the forced work of others is in conflict with the fundamental ethics of the Bible. It was as true four centuries ago as it is to-day. Las Casas felt the system of repartimientos to be un-Christian, and, like Tolstoi, he decided to be a Christian.

First of all, it was necessary for him to surrender his own Indians. Although he knew that they would be given to someone else who would work them to death, the answer to any sermon of his would be his own repartimiento. So he gave them up.

Las Casas was not one to allow rust to accumulate on his resolution. Helps describes the beginning of his ministry as follows:

“When preaching on the day of ‘The Assumption of Our Lady,’ he took occasion to mention publicly the conclusion he had come to as regards his own affairs, and also to urge upon his congregation in the strongest manner his conviction of the danger to their souls if they retained their *repartimientos* of Indians. All were amazed; some were struck with compunction; others were as much surprised to hear it called a sin to make use of the Indians as if they had been told it was sinful to make use of the beasts of the field.

“After Las Casas had uttered many exhortations both in public and in private, and had found that they were of little avail, he meditated how to go to the fountain-head of authority, the King of Spain. The Clerigo’s resources were exhausted: he had not a *maravedi*, or the means of getting one, except by selling a mare which was worth a hundred *pesos*.”

The Clerigo was assisted by Pedro de Renteria, the one friend who remained true to him—in the face of his subversive attacks on private property. At Santo Domingo, Las Casas was hospitably received by Pedro de Córdoba, the prelate of the Dominicans in America. This order, which we most often think of as the fanatical advocates of the Inquisition, became notable in the New World for their humane interest in the natives. Father de Córdoba, knowing the ways of the world better than the Clerigo, could give him little encouragement of relief from the king, but he gave him his blessing. In September, 1515, accompanied by two Dominican brothers, Las Casas sailed for Spain.

About Christmas time the Clerigo arrived at Court and was received by the old king. His fervid earnestness made so strong an impression that he had been granted another interview. It was prevented by the death of the king. It is surprising how often Las Casas won over some powerful ally and then, just when things looked most hopeful, was defeated by death and forced to begin all over again.

He was not so successful in his effort to secure the favor of the powerful Bishop of Burgos. Of this prelate, Helps writes:

“The Bishop of Burgos was one of those ready, bold, and dexterous men, with a great reputation for fidelity, who are such favourites with princes. He went through so many stages of preferment, that it is sometimes difficult to trace him; and the student of early American history will have a bad opinion of many Spanish bishops, if he does not discover that it is Bishop Fonseca who reappears under various designations. He held successively the Archdeaconate of Seville, the Bishoprics of Badajoz, Córdoba, Palencia, and Conde, the Archbishopric of Rosano (in Italy), with the Bishopric of Burgos, besides the office of Capellan mayor to Isabella, and afterwards to Ferdinand.”

His interview with the bishop was stormy. Unable to move the smug courtier by his eloquence, he, as a last effort, told him how seven thousand Indian children had perished in three months.

“How does all this concern me or His Majesty, the King?” the cynical Fonseca asked.

Las Casas told him that all these infant souls would rise up against him on the Day of Judgment, and left in a rage.

The king died in January, 1516, and Las Casas immediately went to Madrid to lay his case before the Cardinal Ximenes and the Ambassador Adrian, who had been appointed regents until Charles should reach his majority. Luckily for the Indians, the death of the old king excluded the ubiquitous Fonseca from the councils for a time, and the Clerigo was able to obtain an unprejudiced hearing from the regents. Ximenes seems to have desired to rule the colonies wisely. Shocked by the stories of the outrages committed on the Indians, which the Clerigo told, he called

a Junta, or special council, to consider the affairs of the Indies.

An incident occurred in one of these meetings which is typical of Las Casas. The cardinal, wanting to know the existing conditions, ordered a secretary to read the laws which had been drawn up by the preceding council. The clerk happened to be a retainer of Fonseca, and when he came to a section which was patently unjust, he wilfully misread it to shield his patron. Las Casas knew the law by heart and protested that the clerk was wrong. Ximenes ordered the man to reread it. He repeated his distortion. Las Casas jumped up and exclaimed, "The law says no such thing." The cardinal was vexed by the incident and told Las Casas not to interrupt. But the man was not born who could still the voice of the Clerigo when he thought he was right.

"Your Lordship, you can hang me, if the law says that!"

One of the councillors took the law and read it. Las Casas was right.

"You can imagine," he writes, "that the clerk (whose name, for his honor's sake, I will not give) wished that he had never been born." And he adds, "the Clerigo lost nothing of the regard in which the Cardinal held him nor in the credit which he put in his word."

The Junta drew up a code of laws for the Indies, practically at the dictation of Las Casas. This in itself was a remarkable result to be accomplished by an unknown colonial priest, who had no aristocratic prestige, little learning and no friends but those he could win by his own fervor. But while the framing of good laws is easy under an autocratic government, where the reformer has to convince only a small group, the enforcement of good laws is very difficult to achieve. In this case the administration was intrusted to four fathers of the Jeronimite Order, who were sent out to Santo Domingo with full powers.

This code was long and complicated; the gist of it was the abolition of slavery. It did not go as far in that direction as the Clerigo wished, but it was a long step forward. Naturally it encountered opposition. It attacked the pocket-books of many of "the best people" of the day. When the "colonial lobby" at Madrid found that they could not reach the Cardinal Ximenes, they turned their attention to the Jeronimite fathers. Las Casas boldly asserts that the "interests" succeeded in fixing them.

Certain it is that the good fathers proceeded very cautiously in the enforcement of the laws. They arrived in Santo Domingo in December, 1516. Whether or not they were actually bribed it is impossible to determine. They were men of peace. If they had been of one of the sterner and more militant orders they might have done their duty. As yet the conquests had not been broad enough to firmly establish the system of *repartimientos*. It might have been stamped out on the islands before it gained a foothold on the continent. But brought up in the seclusion of their cloisters, disciplined in humility, accustomed to bow down before the mighty, these fathers proved unequal to their great task. They made friends with the mammon of unrighteousness.

Las Casas, who had been given the title of "Protector of the Indians," but no powers, arrived in Santo Domingo shortly after them. He, of course, was outraged at their ineffectiveness. In order to force them to action, he brought an impeachment against the judges of the colony, who were among the worst offenders. He called it "una terrible acusacion." What the outcome of this proceeding was we do not know. But it forever branded Las Casas as a "disturber of the peace." The Jeronimite fathers said he was a torch which threatened to set everything afire. . . . He had definitely placed himself with the "muck-rakers"

and "undesirable citizens." Hopeless of accomplishing anything in Santo Domingo, he returned to Spain in May, 1517—only to find his good friend the Cardinal Ximenes at the point of death.

The government, for Charles V was still a minor, now fell into the hands of two Flemish nobles, William, Lord of Chièves and Jean Salvage, whom the Spaniards called Selvagus. These ministers, although accused of taking small interest in Spanish affairs, the poorest province of all the vast domains of the Spanish crown, gave considerable attention to colonial matters. Las Casas received a hearing. As usual, his ardent eloquence won their respect. The Chancellor, Selvagus, took up the matter with the young king and received authority to draw up more laws.

The Clerigo was a man who was always learning. He had come to realize that there was an imperative need for laborers in the colony. No laws could alter that. Either the colonies must be abandoned or laborers found for the mines, the fields and for transportation. The only way to get work out of the nomadic Indians was to enslave them. If he wished to rescue them it was necessary to find other labor.

With this idea in mind he drew up an elaborate scheme for the chancellor. The main feature was the stimulation of peasant immigration from Spain. So far the colonists were of three classes, gentlemen adventurers, mercenary soldiers and common sailors. None of them furnished a reliable labor force. Every year famine killed hundreds of peasants in Spain. It was an ambitious emigration scheme—they were to be transported free, given fields and tools; but the wealth flowing into the royal treasury from the colonies certainly warranted the expense.

But Las Casas was always unexpectedly running up against "vested interests." He looked directly to his goal of justice and was always surprised to find that "property rights" stood

above "human rights." That the whole feudal aristocracy of Spain would rise as a body in indignation against a scheme which offered their starving serfs a chance to escape from villainage never occurred to him. The peasants were eager to go. In one village of two hundred souls, Berlanga, seventy applied for permission. Many of them gave as their reason their desire to escape from the seignors and bring up their children "in a free land under royal jurisdiction." The outcry of the nobility against this incendiary priest was so great that the scheme fell through.

The Bishop Fonseca had again come into power after the death of Ximenes. He was only too glad to grasp this opportunity to thwart his old enemy, Las Casas.

Among other recommendations in the Clerigo's project to relieve the Indians was one which has been often cited against him by his enemies. He advocated the importation of negro slaves. This was certainly borrowing from Peter on behalf of Paul. It is well to remember, as mitigating circumstances, that negro slavery existed in these United States up to fifty years ago. Four centuries ago no voice had been raised against it. While Las Casas had with his own eyes seen the horrors of the enforced mine labors of the Indians, the brutality of their conquerors, their speedy death, most of the negro slaves he had seen were body or house servants. The suggestion did not originate with him. His recommendation was rather to regulate the slave-trade, than, as is often asserted, to create it.

The surprising thing is not that he proposed this measure, which does not seem to have shocked any of his contemporaries, but that he repented of it. Years afterwards he wrote: "This advice, that license should be given to bring negro slaves to these lands, the Clerigo Casas first gave, not considering the injustice with which the Portuguese take them, and make them slaves; which advice, after he had

apprehended the nature of the thing, he would not have given for all he had in the world. For he always held that they had been made slaves unjustly and tyrannically; for the same reason holds good of them as of the Indians."

Of all the proposals of his elaborate programme of reform, most of which was farsighted and wise, only the one which was utterly bad was accepted.

Absolutely defeated in all his efforts by the influence of greed, Las Casas tried to think out some remedy which, while benefiting the Indians, would at the same time be attractive to the mercenary people who possessed the powers of government. His scheme took the form of a plan of colonization. He wanted to create a lay order of Christian Knights who would be willing to settle some portion of the mainland and while primarily interested in bringing the natives to Christianity would also be able to guarantee an attractive income to the Crown. He thought it would be possible to make a missionary crusade produce dividends.

His project, noble in its conception and compounded with considerable common-sense, seems bizarre and unpractical as we read of it to-day. But it was a bizarre age. It excited a great deal of violent discussion. Among others who approved of it were the new Premier, Gattinara, an intensely practical and worldly man, and Pedro de Córdova, the Dominican prelate of Santo Domingo, than whom no more spiritually minded churchman ever came to America. However, anything suggested by Las Casas was sure to be attacked. The Clerigo seems to have ignored the ribald jokes with dignity. But in his history he tells of one criticism which seems to have wounded him deeply. The licentiate Aguirre, a man renowned for his godliness, who had always been an able supporter of Las Casas, was shocked when he heard of all these business negotiations, and said, Las Casas tells us, "that such a manner of preaching the

Gospels grieved him deeply, for it showed an interest in temporal affairs, which he had not before suspected in the Clerigo." Helps gives an almost literal translation of the incident as recorded by Las Casas:

"Las Casas, having heard what Aguirre had said, took occasion to speak to him one day in the following terms: 'Señor, if you were to see our Lord Jesus Christ maltreated, vituperated, and afflicted, would you not implore with all your might that those who had him in their power would give him to you, that you might serve and worship him?' 'Yes,' said Aguirre. 'Then,' replied Las Casas, 'if they would not give him to you, but would sell him, would you redeem him?' 'Without a doubt.' 'Well, then, Señor,' rejoined Las Casas, 'that is what I have done, for I have left in the Indies Jesus Christ, our Lord, suffering stripes, and afflictions, and crucifixion, not once but thousands of times, at the hands of the Spaniards, who destroy and desolate those Indian nations, taking from them the opportunity of conversion and penitence, so that they die without faith and without sacraments.'

"Then Las Casas went on to explain how he had sought to remedy these things in the way that Aguirre would most have approved. To this the answer had been, that the King would have no rents, wherefore, when he, Las Casas, saw that his opponents would sell him the gospel, he had offered those temporal inducements which Aguirre had heard of and disapproved.

"The licentiate considered this a sufficient answer, and so, I think, would any reasonable man."

In this, as in every project of the Clerigo's, the Bishop Fonseca was an active opponent. The plan might never have been approved of were it not that the news of many recent scandals came to court at this time. A letter came from Fray Francisco de Sant Roman, a monk in Panama,

telling of the infamous raid of Pedrarias's Alcalde, Espinosa, in which 40,000 Indians had been killed.

Oviedo, the historian who had gone out to Castilla del Oro with Pedrarias, had returned to court and was protesting against the crimes of that governor. Not long afterwards, Quevedo, the Bishop of Darien, arrived with fresh charges.

Las Casas, who like his Master had an especial talent for baiting the Pharisees, soon came to an argument with this oily prelate. Words ran high, and the Clerigo, who was by no means afraid of a bishop, brought the quarrel to a close by saying that unless Quevedo returned all the money he had wrung from his flock he had less chance of salvation than Judas Iscariot.

The king, hearing of this tilt, and dearly loving the scholastic disputations of the day, wherein the subtlest arguments joined hands with the crudest invectives, summoned them both before him to have it out. The bishop spoke first, and among other things said that five years in the colonies had convinced him that the Indians were by nature slaves.

The Clerigo's speech is too long to reproduce, and the style of oratory then in vogue is no longer fashionable. But Las Casas had that rare gift of eloquence, shared by such men as Savonarola, which can for a time lift the most worldly man to an appreciation of spiritual values. He completely won his hearers.

When he finished, a Franciscan father, who had just returned from the Indies, spoke.

"My lord," he said, "I have been certain years in the island of Hispaniola, and I was commanded with others to go and visit and take the number of Indians in the island, and we found that they were so many thousand. Afterwards, at the end of two years, a similar charge was again

given to me, and we found that there had perished so many thousands. And thus the infinity of people who were in that island has been destroyed. Now, if the blood of one person unjustly put to death was of such effect that it was not removed out of the sight of God until he had taken vengeance for it, and the blood of the others never ceases to exclaim *Vindica sanguinem nostrum, Deus noster*, what will the blood do of such innumerable people as have perished in those lands under such great tyranny and injustice? Then, by the blood of Jesus Christ and by the wounds of St. Francis, I pray and entreat Your Majesty that you would find a remedy for such wickedness and such destruction of people, as perish daily there, so that the divine justice may not pour out its severe indignation upon all of us."

It was a short speech, but so fervent and impressive that Las Casas says that it seemed to all present as if they were listening to words from the Day of Judgment.

The king was deeply touched and ordered the Council of the Indies to do all in their power to further the project of Las Casas. The necessary decrees received the royal signature on the 19th of May, 1520. Very shortly Las Casas sailed to Santo Domingo, where he hoped to recruit the knights for his crusade. But when he touched at Porto Rico, en route, he found that once more his hopes were shattered. War had broken out on the coast of Venezuela, the very territory which had been assigned to him. Arrived in Santo Domingo, his old enemies again attacked him. This time they declared that his ship was unseaworthy and kept him a practical prisoner until the slaves, which the expedition into his territory were capturing, began to appear in the market of Santo Domingo. Then, when it was too late for any chance of success for his scheme of friendly colonization, they let him go. He arrived at Cumaná at last to find the country round about devastated.

Broken in spirit, he returned to Santo Domingo and entered the Dominican Monastery in 1522. He was forty-eight years old when he became a monk. His retirement from the world seemed a surrender and there was joy in the camp of his enemies.

We know very little of his life during these years of seclusion. It is probable that he began work on his great "Historia de las Indias." Certainly he spent much time in study, for when after eight years he emerged from his retreat he was a learned man. Too learned, anyone is apt to say, who reads his writings, for they are cluttered up with endless quotations from the Classics and from the Church Fathers. But barren as this scholastic philosophy seems to us to-day, it was the dominant mode of thought in his age. In the famous controversies of his old age his intimate knowledge of the works of St. Thomas Aquinas was an immensely powerful weapon.

Sir Arthur Helps calls attention to one significant fact. It is the only thing we know with certainty about his years in the monastery. He was not allowed to preach. Even the Dominicans, the most fearless and the most friendly to the Indians of all the orders in America, did not dare to let this firebrand occupy their pulpit.

During these eight years great things happened outside the cloister walls. Cortes completed his conquest of Mexico. Pedrarias and his captains overran Nicaragua. Alvarado subdued Guatemala. Pizarro had embarked on his Peruvian enterprise.

After eight years of seclusion, Father Las Casas suddenly reappeared in Court. Once more on behalf of the Indians,—this time in an effort to save the Indians of Peru. But he reached Spain in 1530, just after Pizarro had sailed back to the Isthmus. He secured the passage of some protective laws and returned to Santo Domingo, where two friars

joined him in his effort to overtake Pizarro and restrain his cruelty. They went by way of Mexico to settle some disputes in the Dominican Chapter there, and then overland to Puerto Realejo on the Pacific, where they found a ship sailing for Peru.

The Clerigo gives very little information about this journey. I have been unable to find any record of the dates. But it seems to have been fruitless. Probably the Conquistadores were in the interior beyond their reach. The monks returned and stopped a few days in Panama City in February, 1532.

Las Casas and his two companions then went to Leon in Nicaragua and founded a monastery. Here he spent two years in peaceful missionary work among the natives. He again set out for Peru, but his ship was driven back by storms and he changed his plan, going again to Spain to plead his cause in Court.

Returning to his monastery in Nicaragua, he found troubles nearer at hand which needed his righting. The new governor, Rodrigo de Contreras, was beginning his murderous career. By his vehement opposition Las Casas was able to prevent a slave-stealing raid. That he had good reason to oppose the governor no one who reads his treatise, "Brevissima Relacion de la Destruycion de las Indias," can doubt. He cites one instance when, of a body of 4,000 Indians impressed as carriers in a Nicaraguan expedition, only six of them returned alive. The slaves were chained together by means of collars about their necks. When one of them gave out and could march no farther, the slave-drivers would cut off his head and so, releasing the chain, allow the gang to go on without loss of time. "Imagine," he writes, "what the others must have felt."

The hostility of the bandit Contreras at last drove him out of Nicaragua and he went to Guatemala, where together

with three brothers, Luis Cancer, Pedro de Angulo and Rodrigo de Ladrada, their names deserve mention for they were as noble a group of missionaries as the Church has ever produced, he founded a monastery. They were fortunate in finding in the Bishop of Guatemala a man worthy to be their comrade. A man of great scholarship in the classics, he had humbled himself to master the Utlatecan language of the natives. Las Casas and his monks sat at his feet and also learned the language. "It was a delight," an old chronicler comments, "to see the bishop, as a master of declensions and conjugations in the Indian tongue, teaching the good fathers of St. Dominic." In a preface to a tract which the bishop wrote in the native tongue, he says that perhaps some people may think that it is below the dignity of a prelate to occupy himself with such matters "solely fitted for the teaching of children," but he adds, "if the matter be well considered, it will be seen that it is baser not to occupy oneself with such seeming trifles, for such teaching is the very marrow of our Holy Faith."

Some time previous to this, Las Casas had written a paper called "*De unico vocationis modo.*" Although it was not printed, it was translated from the Latin into Spanish and had a wide circulation among the colonists. In it the Clerigo developed two propositions. The first was that men must be brought to Christ by persuasion and not by force. The second was that war against the infidel was not justified unless some specific injury had been sustained. These do not seem very radical conclusions to-day, but they made a sensation when written. It is in fact remarkable that the first proposition did not involve Las Casas with the Inquisition. The second more nearly concerned the mass of the colonists. The Indian slaves died with discouraging rapidity. The only way to keep up the labor supply was by incessant conflicts with the native tribes,

which were generally justified as wars against the unbelievers.

The Conquistadores were not only angry at these doctrines of Las Casas, they made sport of them. "Try it," they taunted. "Try with words only and without force to bring the Indians into the Church." Las Casas was only too glad to accept the challenge of these practical men who said he was a dreamer.

The nearby province of Tuzulután was called by the Spaniards "*Tierra Guerra*"—The Land of War. Three different expeditions which had set out to subdue this territory had returned defeated—as the historian Remesal says, "*Las manos en la cabeza*"—holding their heads in their hands.

The Clerigo entered into a formal contract with the acting governor, Alonzo Maldonado—it was signed the 2nd of May, 1537—by which he undertook to proselyte this *Tierra Guerra*. If he succeeded in pacifying these tribes, who, as they had resisted conquest, were said by the Spaniards to be in revolt, and in persuading them to recognize the sovereignty of the King of Spain, the government pledged itself to make the territory a direct appendage of the Crown, not to give any *repartimientos* to private persons, and not to allow any layman to enter the district for five years.

One can "easily imagine"—to use a favorite phrase of the Clerigo—the guffaws of derisive laughter with which the soldiers heard of this compact. The four Dominican monks were to attempt the work which had defeated three armies. Well—at last they would be rid of this trouble-maker, Las Casas.

For several days the Dominicans retired to their cells for severe fasting, mortifications and prayers. And then, having consecrated themselves, they set to work. Their project seemed even more fantastic than those of the Clerigo which



HITTING THE TRAIL.



COCOANUT PALMS.

had already failed. They composed a long ballad in the Utlatecan language, which, beginning with the Hebrew story of the Creation and Fall, contained all the Bible narratives and the principal dogmas of the Church. Unfortunately this remarkable literary work has been lost. While some of the monks labored at versifying the Scheme of Salvation in this unfamiliar tongue, others set it to music so that it might be accompanied on the crude instruments with which the natives were familiar. Undoubtedly they worked in many of the accepted melodies of Spain, but they strove to follow as nearly as possible the form of chant which the Indians had developed. To realize the proportions of the task we must think of some such unfamiliar language and theory of music as that of China or Egypt. The missionaries had been only a few years in Guatemala; they were old men when they came, yet so diligent had been their application that they were able to compose poetry and music acceptable to the natives!

Having finished this part of their undertaking, they secured the services of four native peddlers who were in the habit of making annual trips into the *Tierra Guerra*. With infinite care the monks taught them the words and music. They were rehearsed and rehearsed—it must be remembered that all this was done by word of mouth, for the merchants were illiterate—until they were letter perfect.

The most amazing thing about it all is that the work, both the composition and teaching, was completed in three months! By the middle of August the peddlers were ready to start. Las Casas, who combined a knowledge of worldly motives with his intense spirituality, had seen to it that besides their missionary poem, they were loaded down with more attractive packs of goods than any native merchant had ever carried before.

After their emissaries had departed, the four monks, by

means of relays, kept up almost continual prayer for the success of the venture. As far as the limited means of communication permitted they had notified all their brothers of their momentous undertaking. All throughout the Indias the Dominican Order was uniting in fervent prayer for its success.

And it did succeed.

The peddlers arrived safely at the village of the cacique and during the first day drove a thriving trade with their Spanish knives and hatchets and beads. At night, before the camp-fire, where, as is always the custom among savage people, the strangers were expected to entertain their hosts with song or story, they asked for instruments and chanted the wonderful story of the Christ. The strange music—on the whole like their own, but sometimes breaking out into an unfamiliar melody—attracted the villagers. They sat intent, until the poem was finished.

For seven days they stayed in the village and every night were invited to repeat their bizarre sermon. The cacique was deeply interested and asked many questions about the strange poem. The peddlers, being ignorant men, said they knew nothing except what they had heard. The poem had come to them from certain Spaniards, who were different from all others—whose heads were shaven, who wore strange robes of black and white, who ate no meat, had no desire for gold and who lived a life of abstinence. Who, instead of rioting with women and wine, spent their days and nights singing praises to the God of this poem, and whose only interest was to teach their faith to all men.

The upshot of it was that the cacique sent his brother back with the peddlers to see if such strange things could be true. Above all he told his envoy to watch these padres and see if they fought for gold and silver like the other Spaniards and had slave women in their houses.

"It can easily be imagined," Las Casas writes, "with what joy the monks of St. Dominic received this savage ambassador." So favorable an impression did their piety make on him that he asked one of them to return with him to preach to his brother the cacique and the people. Father Luis Cancer was chosen for this mission.

There is no space here to trace all the steps by which these four monks, from this beginning, converted the natives of "The Land of War." Having brought peace and prosperity to Tuzulutlan, they learned other native languages and gradually extended their sway to the neighboring tribes.

In this little corner of Guatemala, alone in all the vast Spanish colonies, the Indians learned to think of the word "Christian" as meaning something different from "Devil."

While Las Casas was in "The Land of War," teaching its people of the Prince of Peace and instructing them in the ways of material prosperity, unexpected aid came from the Court of Rome. Pope Paul III (Alexander Farnese) issued his Bull "*Euntes docete omnes gentes*," in which he said that the Indians were to be considered "as veritable men not only capable of receiving the Christian faith, but, as we have learnt, most ready to embrace it." He followed this brief by a letter to the Archbishop of Toledo, the primate of Spain, in which he wrote:

"It has come to our knowledge that our dearest son in Christ, Charles, the ever august emperor of the Romans, king of Castille and Leon, in order to repress those who, boiling over with cupidity, bear an inhuman mind against the human race, has by public edict forbidden all his subjects from making slaves of the Western and Southern Indians, or depriving them of their goods."

He closed this letter with a sentence of absolute excommunication against all who should make slaves of the Indians.

The delight of Las Casas on the receipt of these papal letters can "easily be imagined." He translated them into Spanish and saw that they were widely circulated in the colonies.

In 1539 Las Casas went to Spain to plead for the sending of more missionaries to Guatemala. He was as usual favorably received, and his requests were granted. He was detained at the Court to assist in the deliberations of the Council of the Indies. It was during this time that he wrote two of his most important treatises, "The Destruction of the Indies," and his even more important "Veynte Razones," in which he gives twenty reasons to prove that the system of *repartimientos* was iniquitous and un-Christian.

These pamphlets and his verbal arguments before the council resulted in the framing of "The New Laws," which, while the pretext for Gonzalo Pizarro's rebellion in Peru and of insurrections in other places, on the whole were enforceable and succeeded in preventing the absolute extermination of the Indians.

"The New Laws," writes Helps, "had been a signal triumph for Las Casas. Without him, without his untiring energy and singular influence over those whom he came near, these laws would not have been enacted. The mere bodily fatigue which he endured was such as hardly any man of his time, not a conqueror, had encountered. He had crossed the ocean twelve times. Four times he had made his way into Germany, to see the emperor. Had a record been kept of his wanderings, such as that which exists of the journeys of Charles the Fifth, it would have shown that Las Casas had led a much more active life than even that energetic monarch. Moreover, the journeyings of Las Casas were often made with all the inconvenience of poverty."

In recognition of his untiring public service, the emperor offered him the bishopric of Cusco, in Peru. For many reasons, principally a distaste for lofty positions, the Clerigo refused this, the richest see in America. But after much urging he accepted the episcopal office in the newly conquered province of Chiapa, a district near the scene of his successful labors in the Tierra Guerra of Guatemala. He was consecrated in Seville and on the 4th of July, 1544, he sailed, with forty-five Dominican monks, to proselyte his frontier diocese.

He was exceedingly ill-received when he stopped in Santo Domingo. Unquestionably he was the best hated man in the New World. Imagine Wendell Phillips in Richmond, just after Appomattox Court House. For Las Casas had won his long fight against greed. The maltreatment of the Indians of course continued, but it was no longer legal. The Bishop of Chiapa was now seventy years old. He had commenced his mission at forty. The thirty years of devoted agitation had resulted in the pope's bull which pronounced slavery un-Christian and the New Laws which made it illegal. All his long journey to Ciudad Real, the capital of Chiapa, was a Via Crucis. In some places he was stoned.

"The hatred to Las Casas," writes Sir Arthur Helps, "throughout the New World, amounted to a passion. Letters were written to the residents in Chiapa, expressing pity for them as having met the greatest misfortune that could occur to them, in being placed under such a bishop. They did not name him, but spoke of him as 'That Devil who has come to you for a bishop.' The following is an extract from one of these letters. 'We say here, that very great must be the sins of your country, when God chastises it with such a scourge as sending that Antichrist for a bishop.'"

Arrived at his new post the godly bishop had the audacity to take the pope's bull literally. He refused absolution to all Spaniards who held slaves. The officials not enforcing the laws to suit him, he journeyed to Honduras to lay the case before the Audiencia. Unable to get redress he threatened to excommunicate the judges if they refused to do their duty. He tells how one of them whose conscience troubled him mightily lost his temper and heaped abuse on him in court. "You are a scoundrel," he shouted, "an evil man, a bad monk, a worse bishop—a shameless scoundrel—you ought to be flogged." Las Casas replied, "The Lord will punish me for my sins, which are many."

By his fearless persistence he at last forced the Audiencia to send an officer to Chiapa to enforce the laws. When the inhabitants of Ciudad Real heard of the bishop's triumph they determined to resist his entry into the city.

Las Casas writes that although he came "unguarded and on foot, with only a stick in his hand, and a breviary in his girdle," they strapped on their armor and loaded their arquebuses.

On the way he stopped at a Dominican monastery. The monks urged him to turn back, saying that the infuriated populace would surely kill him. But he insisted on going on.

"For," he said "if I do not go to Ciudad Real, I banish myself from my church; and it will be said of me, with much reason, 'The wicked fleeth; and no man pursueth.' . . . If I do not endeavour to enter my church, of whom shall I have to complain to the king, or to the pope, as having thrust me out of it? Are my adversaries so bitter against me that the first word will be a deadly thrust through my heart, without giving me the chance of soothing them? In conclusion, reverend fathers, I am resolved, trusting in the mercy of God and in your holy prayers, to set out for my

diocese. To tarry here, or to go elsewhere, has all the inconveniences which have just been stated."

He indeed had a stormy reception. But his simple manner prevailed over the mob. When one of them reviled him, he said, "I will not answer you—for your insults are addressed, not to me, but to God." By his fearless non-resistance he won the ascendancy over his flock and after a few hours of turbulence they came to him on their knees, asking for pardon.

The Peruvian Rebellion had forced the emperor to reduce the rigor of the "New Laws." All Spaniards who held *repartimientos* were to be allowed to keep them during their lives, but no new grants were to be made. This let-up was undoubtedly a severe disappointment to Las Casas. But although he seemed to have been defeated, his work bore, in reality, marvellous fruit. Although temporarily revived, the brutal system had received its death blow. In 1547, he resigned from his bishopric and returned to Spain where he felt that he could have greater influence in Indian affairs.

About this time a learned doctor of laws, Juan Ginés Sepulveda, wrote a treatise, "De Justis Belli Causis." It was an elaborate argument in favor of Indian slavery. Las Casas at once commenced a polemical discussion with him. In 1550, when he was seventy-six years old, he met Sepulveda in an open debate before the emperor. For five consecutive days he read an argument which was afterwards printed under the title "Historia Apologética." A referee condensed this long treatise into twelve propositions, to which Sepulveda returned twelve counter-propositions. Las Casas was allowed to present twelve answers. One selection from his argument will do as a sample of the whole disputation.

To Sepulveda's proposition in favor of the right of conquest, Las Casas replied:

"The doctor founds these rights upon our superiority in

arms, and upon our having more bodily strength than the Indians. This is simply to place our kings in the position of tyrants. The right of those kings rests upon their extension of the Gospel in the New World, and their good government of the Indian nations. These duties they would be bound to fulfil even at their own expense; much more so considering the treasures they have received from the Indies. To deny this doctrine is to flatter and deceive our monarchs, and to put their salvation in peril. The doctor perverts the natural order of things, making the means the end, and what is accessory the principal. The accessory is temporal advantage: the principal, the preaching of the true faith. He who is ignorant of this, small is his knowledge; and he who denies it, is no more of a Christian than Mahomet was."

The result of the controversy was a Scotch verdict; the learned jury concurred in the opinions of Sepulveda, but the king and his councillors, convinced by the eloquent logic of Las Casas, prohibited the circulation of the doctor's book in the colonies. In a private letter Sepulveda wrote of his aged opponent as "most subtile, most vigilant, and most fluent, compared with whom Ulysses of Homer was a tongue-tied stutterer."

The reclining years of the Apostle to the Indians were spent in writing. Besides many controversial treatises, he produced a monumental history of the Discovery and Conquest. When ninety years old he published a treatise on Peru—one of the most forceful things which ever came from his pen. This was apparently his last literary work. But two years later, hearing from the Dominican Fathers in Guatemala of some abuses in the administration of justice, he left his monastery in Valladolid and travelled to Madrid. So ably did he present the matter to the king that the necessary reforms were granted.

go forth with his life in his hand, relying only on the protection that God will vouchsafe him, and depending neither upon civil nor military assistance. In fact, his works should, even in the present day, form the best manual extant for missionaries. . . .

“He lived in most stirring times; he was associated with the greatest personages of his day; and he had the privilege of taking part in the discovery and colonization of a new world.

“Eloquent, devoted, charitable, fervent, sometimes too fervent, yet very skilful in managing men, he will doubtless remind the reader of his prototype, Saint Paul; and it was very fitting that he should have been called, as he was, the ‘Apostle of the Indies.’

“Notwithstanding our experience, largely confirmed by history, of the ingenuity often manifested in neglecting to confer honour upon those who most deserve it, one cannot help wondering that the Romish Church never thought of enrolling Las Casas as a saint, amongst such fellow-labourers as Saint Charles of Borromeo, or Saint Francis of Assisi.”

CHAPTER XVII

THE DAYS OF THE GREAT TRADE

ONE of the most interesting phases in the history of the Isthmus is the sudden development of an immense trade. For about a century the rough trail from Panama City across to the Atlantic towns of Nombre de Dios and Puerto Bello was the richest trade route in the world.

Even after the wrought gold had been stripped from the temples and palaces of the Incas, the rich silver mines of Potosi continued to produce great wealth. Dye woods from the west coast of Central America furnished also a valuable merchandise. There were pearls from the islands and many kinds of precious stones from the Andes. In exchange for this home-going wealth many commodities had to be brought out for the colonists. The commerce of Panama even crossed the Pacific. In the third volume of the "Hakluyt Voyages" is given a letter from a merchant which is dated from Panama, August 28th, 1590:

"Here I haue remained these 20 dayes, till the shippes goe for the Philipinas. My meaning is to carie my commodities thither: for it is constantly reported, that for every hundred ducats a man shall get 600 ducats cleerely. We must stay here till it be Christmase. For in August, September, October and November is it winter here and extreme foule weather upon this coast of Peru, and not nauigable to goe to the Philipinas, nor any place else in the South sea. So that at Christmase the shipes begin to set on their voyage for those places."

This letter indicates a considerable traffic with the Spice Islands and the Orient via Panama. In the same year more than ninety ships from Spain called at the Atlantic ports, an average of almost two ships a week. Even to-day that would indicate a large commerce.

But Spain held her colonial business in the tightest kind of a monopoly. No outsiders were to be allowed to share in it. Mr. Haring, in his "The Buccaneers in the West Indies in the XVII Century," which, in spite of its thrilling title, is a doctor's thesis, gives much interesting information about this commercial development.

"The first means adopted by the northern maritime nations to appropriate to themselves a share of the riches of the New World was open, semi-piratical attack upon the Spanish argosies returning from those distant El Dorados. The success of the Norman and Breton corsairs, for it was the French, not the English, who started the game, gradually forced upon the Spaniards, as a means of protection, the establishment of great merchant fleets sailing periodically at long intervals and accompanied by powerful convoys. During the first half of the sixteenth century any ship which had fulfilled the conditions required for engaging in American commerce was allowed to depart alone and at any time of the year. From about 1526, however, merchant vessels were ordered to sail together, and by a cedula of July, 1561, the system of fleets was made permanent and obligatory. This decree prohibited any ship from sailing alone to America from Cadiz or San Lucar on pain of forfeiture of ship and cargo. Two fleets were organized each year, one for Terra Firma going to Cartagena and Porto Bello, the other designed for the port of San Juan d'Uloa (Vera Cruz) in New Spain. The latter, called the Flota, was commanded by an "*almirante*," and sailed for Mexico in the early summer so as to avoid the hurricane season and the "northers" of the

Mexican Gulf. The former, usually called the galeones (anglice "galleons"), was commanded by a "*general*," and sailed from Spain earlier in the year, between January and March. If it departed in March, it usually wintered in Havana, and returned with the Flota in the following spring. Sometimes the two fleets sailed together and separated at Guadaloupe, Deseada or another of the Leeward Islands.

"The galleons generally consisted of from five to eight war-vessels carrying from forty to fifty guns, together with several smaller, faster boats called '*patchers*,' and a fleet of merchantmen varying in number in different years. In the time of Philip II often as many as forty ships supplied Cartagena and Porto Bello, but in succeeding reigns, although the population of the Indies was rapidly increasing, American commerce fell off so sadly that eight or ten were sufficient for the trade of South and Central America. The general of the galleons, on his departure, received from the Council of the Indies three sealed packets. The first, opened at the Canaries, contained the name of the island in the West Indies at which the fleet was first to call. The second was unsealed after the galleons arrived at Cartagena, and contained instructions for the fleet to return in the same year or to winter in America. In the third, left unopened until the fleet emerged from the Bahama Channel on the homeward voyage, were orders for the route to the Azores and the islands they should touch in passing, usually Corvo and Flores or Santa Maria. . . .

"The fleet reached Cartagena ordinarily about two months after its departure from Cadiz. On its arrival, the general forwarded the news to Porto Bello, together with the packets destined for the viceroy at Lima. From Porto Bello a courier hastened across the Isthmus to the President of Panama, who spread the advice amongst the merchants in his jurisdiction, and, at the same time, sent a dispatch boat

to Payta, in Peru. The general of the galleons, meanwhile, was also sending a courier overland to Lima, and another to Santa Fe, the capital of the interior province of New Grenada, whence runners carried to Popayan, Antioquia, Margarita, and adjacent provinces, the news of his arrival. The galleons were instructed to remain at Cartagena only a month, but bribes from the merchants generally made it their interest to linger for fifty or sixty days. To Cartagena came the gold and emeralds of New Grenada, the pearls of Margarita and Rancherías, and the indigo, tobacco, cocoa and other products of the Venezuelan coast. The merchants of Guatemala, likewise, shipped their commodities to Cartagena by way of Lake Nicaragua and San Juan river, for they feared to send goods across the Gulf of Honduras to Havana, because of the French and English buccaneers hanging about Cape San Antonio. Meanwhile the viceroy at Lima, on receipt of his letters, ordered the Armada of the South Sea to prepare to sail, and sent word south to Chili and throughout the province of Peru from Las Charces to Quito, to forward the King's revenues for shipment to Panama. Within less than a fortnight all was in readiness. The Armada, carrying a considerable treasure, sailed from Callao and, touching at Payta, was joined by the *Navio del Oro* (golden ship), which carried the gold from the province of Quito and adjacent districts. While the galleons were approaching Porto Bello the South Sea fleet arrived before Panama, and the merchants of Chili and Peru began to transfer their merchandise on mules across the high back of the Isthmus.

“Then began the famous fair of Porto Bello. The town, whose permanent population was very small and composed mostly of negroes and mulattoes, was suddenly called upon to accommodate an enormous crowd of merchants, soldiers and seamen. Food and shelter were to be had only at

extraordinary prices. . . . Merchants gave as much as 1,000 crowns for a moderate-sized shop in which to sell their commodities. Owing to overcrowding, bad sanitation, and an extremely unhealthy climate, the place became an open grave, ready to swallow all who resorted there. In 1637, during the fifteen days that the galleons remained at Porto Bello, 500 men died of sickness. Meanwhile, day by day, the mule-trains from Panama were winding their way into the town. . . . While the treasure of the King of Spain was being transferred to the galleons in the harbor, the merchants were making their trade. There was little liberty, however, in commercial transactions, for the prices were fixed and published beforehand, and when negotiations began exchange was purely mechanical. The fair, which was supposed to be open for forty days, was in later times generally completed in ten or twelve. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the volume of business transacted was estimated to amount to thirty or forty million pounds sterling."

Fortunately we have a good description of the Isthmus during the days of its commercial prosperity from the pen of an Englishman. The Spanish government carried its policy of excluding foreigners from the Indies to such an extent that almost no one but Spaniards saw the colonial cities except by stealth or as conquerors. But in the quaint old volume "*The English-American, his Travail by Sea and Land, or a new Survey of the West Indies . . . As also of his strange and wonderful Conversion and Calling from those remote Parts to his Native Country—By the true and painful Endeavours of Thomas Gage, now Preacher of the Word of God at Acris in the County of Kent*"—we get a most interesting inside view. Thomas Gage had a rare opportunity to visit the colonies and he had an equally rare gift of description.

Born in England, he had been taken to the Continent at an early age and was raised in the Catholic faith. He entered the priesthood and in that capacity went to the Indies. Passing through Mexico, he at last settled in Guatemala.

François Coreal, who visited the colonies as a smuggler and has left a very vivacious account of his adventures, wrote:

“J’ avouie qu’il y a des Missionaires de bonne foi, qui ont a coeur la gloire de Dieu & le salut des àmes des Idolâtres. Ceux-la sont en petit nombre. Tous les autres cherchent dans les conversions l’augmentation de leurs revenus & leurs profit temporal.”

Thomas Gage was of the “petit nombre” “de bonne foi.” With true missionary zeal he had followed in the footsteps of Las Casas and mastered the native dialects. He seems to have known very little about Protestantism, but there alone in the Central American jungle he had a little Reformation all by himself. Full of doubts about some of the dogmas he was expected to teach, he resolved to go to Rome, and, at the fountain head of his religion, find the truth.

But he had become so valuable to his superiors as an interpreter that they would not grant him permission to leave. For some months—with great travail of soul—he remained at his post. Then he ran away. He made his way on foot to the Pacific coast, after almost incredible adventures; he got on shipboard in the Golfo de Salina, “hoping to have been at Panama within five or six days. But as often before we had been crossed, so likewise in this short passage wee were striving with the Wind, Sea and Corrientes, as they are called (which are swift streams as of a River) foure full weeks.”

From Panama he crossed to Puerto Bello, and finally got ship for Europe. He left the Catholic Church and settled

in England. He dedicated his book, which was published in 1648, to "His Excellency S^r Thomas Fairfax, Knight, Lord Fairfax of Cameron, Captain-General of the Parliament's Army; and of all their Forces in England and the Dominion of Wales."

It is a remarkable book, the most interesting description of the Indies I have found. Side by side he records shrewd, almost scientific, observations of nature and the customs of the Indians and gives vivid narrative of his manifold adventures and hair-breadth escapes. Interwoven through it are theological discussions, and fascinating discourses they are, for they are illumined by the soul-tragedy of this honest, simple man, struggling desperately towards what he thought to be salvation.

But the book interests us especially here, as it contains the one reliable account which was written in our own language of Panama and Puerto Bello in the Days of the Great Trade. I have taken a few liberties with the arrangement of his text to avoid tedious repetitions:

"Castella del Oro is situated in the very Isthmus, and is not very populous by reason of the unhealthfulness of the aire, and noisome savour of the standing pooles. The chief places belonging to the Spaniards, are first Theonimay or Nombre de Dios on the East, the second which is six leagues from Nombre de Dios is Portobel, now chiefly inhabited by Spaniards and Mulattoes and Black-mores, and Nombre de Dios almost forsaken by reason of its unhealthfulness. . . . As I have before observed, the aire being here very unhealthful, the King of Spain in the yeare 1584 commanded that the houses . . . be pulled downe and to be rebuild in a more healthy and convenient place: which was performed in . . . Portobel. . . .

"The ships which were wont to anchor in Nombre de Dios, and there take in the King's treasure which is yeerly brought

from Peru to Panama, and from thence to the North Sea, now harbour themselves in Portobel; which signifyeth . . . a faire and goodly Haven, for so indeed it is, and well fortified at the entrance with three Castles which can reach and command one another . . .

“The third and chiefe place belonging to the Spaniards in Castilla del Oro is Panama . . . upon the South Sea.”

After describing his life in the Guatemalan monastery, his escape to the Golfo de Salina, and the “four full weeks” of desperate storms at sea he tells how at last they cast anchor off the old town of Panama.

“I, being now well strengthened made no stay in that frigit . . . but went to land, and betook myself to the Cloister of the Dominicans, where I stayed almost fifteen daies, viewing and reviewing the City; which is governed like Guatemala by a President and six Judges, and a Court of Chancery, and is a Bishops sea. It hath more strength towards the South Sea, than any other Port which on that side I hath seen, and some Ordinances planted for defence of it; but the houses are of the least strength of any place that I had entred in; for lime and stone is hard to come by, and therefore for that reason, and for the great heat there, most of the houses are built of timber and bords; the President’s house, nay the best Church walls are but bords, which serve for stone and bricke, and for tiles to cover the roof. The heat is so extraordinary that a linnen cut doublet, with some light stufte or taffetie breeches is the common cloathing of the inhabitants. Fish, fruit and herbage for sallets is more plentifull there than flesh; the coole water of the Coco is the womens best drinke, though Chocolate also and much wine from Peru be very abounding. The Spaniards are in this city much given to sinne, loosenesse and venery . . . It is held to be one of the richest places in all America, having by land and by the river Chiagre (Chagre) commerce with

the North Sea, and by the South, trading with all Peru, East Indies, Mexico and Honduras. Thither is brought the chief treasure of Peru in two or three great ships, which lie at anchor at Puerto Perico some three leagues from the City . . . It consisteth of some five thousand inhabitants, and maintaineth at least eight Cloisters of Nuns and Friars. I feared much the heats, and therefore made as much haste out of it as I could."

It was in 1637 that Gage made this visit to Panama. An earlier description of the city was translated into English and published by Hakluyt:

"Relation of the ports, harbors, forts, and cities in the West Indies which have been surveied, edified, finished, made and mended, with those which have been builded, in a certaine survey by the king of Spaine, his direction and commandment: Written by Baptista Antonio, surveyor in those parts for the said King. Anno 1587."

After Sir Francis Drake's raids, this man Baptista Antonio was sent out to advise the King about fortifying his colonial possessions. The following passages are from his report:

"Panama is the principall citie of this Dioces: it lieth 18. leagues from Nombre de Dios on the South sea, and standeth in 9. degrees. There are 3. Monasteries in this said city of fryers, the one is of Dominicks, the other is of Augustines, and the third is of S. Francis fryers: also there is a College of Jesuits, and the royall audience or chancery is kept in this citie.

"This citie is situated hard by the sea side on a sandy bay: the one side of this citie is environed with the sea, and on the other side it is enclosed with the arme of the sea which runneth up into the land 1000. yards.

"This citie hath three hundred and fiftie houses, all built of timber, and there are sixe hundred dwellers and eight hundred souldiers with the townesmen, and foure hundred

Negros of Guyne, and some of them are freemen: and there is another towne which is called Santa Cruz la Real of Negros Simerons, and most of them are employed in your majesties service, and they are 100. in number, and this towne is a league from this citie upon a great rivers side, which is a league from the sea right over against the harbour of Periocos. But there is no trust nor confidence in any of these Negros, and therefore we must take heede and beware of them, for they are our mortall enemies. . . .

“Upon the East side of this citie there are your majesties royall houses builded upon a rocke joyning hard to the Sea side, and they doe as well leane towards the sea as the land. The royall audience or chancerie is kept here in these houses, and likewise the prison. And in this place all your majesties treasure is kept. There dwelleth in these houses your majesties Treasurer, the Lord President, and 3. Judges, and master Attorney. All these doe dwell in these houses, and the rest of your majesties officers: which are sixe houses beside those of the Lord President, the which are all dwelling houses, and all adjoyning together one by another along upon the rockes. And they are builded all of timber and bourdes, as the other houses are. So where the prison standeth and the great hall, these two places may bee very well fortified, because they serve so. fitly for the purpose, by reason they are builded towards the sea. . . .

“And forasmuch as the most part of these people are marchants, they will not fight, but onely keepe their owne persons in safetie, and save their goods; as it hath bene sene heretofore in other places of these Indies.

“So if it will please your majesty to cause these houses to bee strongly fortified, considering it standeth in a very good place if any sudden alarms shoulde happen, then the citizens with their goods may get themselves to this place, and so escape the terrour of the enemy: and so this will be a



Photo, by Fishbaugh.

PUERTO BELLO — THE GRAVE OF SIR FRANCIS DRAKE.

good securitie for all the treasure which doth come from Peru. . . .

“Here in this harbor are alwayes 10 to 12 barks of 60 or 50 tunnes apiece, which do belong to this harbor.”

It will be seen by a comparison of the two quotations how rapidly the city had grown from 1,900, including the “sime-rons,” to 5,000 in fifty years. Apparently Gage is in error in saying that even the best church was built of wood, for the Cathedral of St. Anastasius must have been well under way, if not already completed, when he wrote.

Esquemelin, in describing the city as it was in 1671, writes:

“There belonged to this city (which is also the head of a bishopric) eight monasteries, whereof seven were for men and one for women; two stately churches and one hospital. The churches and monasteries were all richly adorned with altar-pieces and paintings, huge quantity of gold and silver, with other precious things; . . . Besides which ornaments, here were to be seen two thousand houses of magnificent and prodigious building, being all of the greatest part inhabited by merchants of that country, who are vastly rich. For the rest of the inhabitants of lesser quality and tradesmen, this city contained five thousand houses more. Here were also great numbers of stables, which served for the horses and mules, that carry all the plate, belonging as well unto the King of Spain as to private men, towards the coast of the North Sea. The neighbouring fields belonging to this city are all cultivated and fertile plantations, and pleasant gardens, which afford delicious prospects unto the inhabitants the whole year long.”

These are the three best accounts of the old city of Panama by people whom we know to be giving first-hand accounts.

There is some doubt as to whether François Coreal saw the city before Morgan's Raid. But having first come to the Indies in 1666, five years before the destruction of the place,

he must at least have received his information from people who had been there. He writes:

“This city had seven or eight thousand houses, most of which were of wood and thatch. The streets were quite beautiful, large and regular. The great merchants occupied the most beautiful houses of the city and nothing was lacking in the magnificence of these gentlemen. There were eight convents, a beautiful Cathedral Church and a Hospital maintained by nuns. The Bishop was, as is still the case, suffragant to the Archbishop of Lima and Primate of Tierra Firme. The fields there were well cultivated. The suburbs of the city were decorated by beautiful gardens and farms. . . . As all the commerce of Chili and Peru has its terminal port at Panama, the stores of the city are always filled and the harbor is never without some ships.”

One must make certain allowances for the imagination of these early chroniclers. With equal seriousness they often tell of Griffins and Sea Monsters. But on the whole they were amazingly accurate in their descriptions of what they actually saw.

Mr. Charles Francis Adams recently read a paper before the Massachusetts Historical Society (Proceedings for May, 1911) in which he attempts to demolish the “Myth” of the grandeur of old Panama City. He quotes several rather exuberant descriptions of the place from modern writers and picks them to pieces. For example, gives the following from a recent book by Mr. Forbes-Lindsay:

“In its palmy days Old Panama was the seat of wealth and splendor such as could be found nowhere else in the world than the capitals of the Orient. At the court of the Governor gathered noblemen and ladies of gentle birth. There were upwards of seven thousand houses in the place, many of them being spacious and splendidly furnished mansions. The monasteries, convents and other ecclesiastical edifices were

numerous, and contained vast amounts of treasure in their vaults. There were fine public buildings devoted to various purposes, among them pretentious stables in which were housed the 'King's horses.'"

And makes this comment on it:

"But, as a matter of fact, a remark might here not improperly be interjected to the effect that the horses in question were in reality mules, and the stables—Latin-American shacks!"

He gives in extenso the report of Baptista Antonio, from which I have quoted, which, by the way, was written nearly a century before the burning of the city. On the basis of this account and his personal visits to the ruins, he concludes:

"In the first place, the topography of the site and surroundings is as Antonio described it four centuries ago; but the foundations and ruins still remaining of the structures—fortifications, ways, bridges and edifices—are at variance with the statement that that town, as such, was ever of considerable size. Limited to an area of at most two hundred and fifty to three hundred acres, the ruins now remaining and the scattered fragments of tile show conclusively that Panama Viejo never could have contained within its limits either the buildings and dwellings, or the avenues, streets and ways described. Both the public edifices and the private houses were limited in size—of modest dimensions, as we would phrase it—and, apparently, packed closely together. In place of the fifty thousand sometimes credited to them, they never, on any reasonable estimate, could have sufficed to accommodate a population in excess of seven thousand. Ten thousand would be a maximum. The foundations of 'the royal houses builded upon a rock' are still there; so also those of the 'audience or chancerie,' as likewise the prison; all 'adjoining together one by another along upon the rocks.' But those foundations afford proof

positive of the dimensions of the superstructures. By their proximity to each other, also, they show that there never could have been any 'broad streets' or wide thoroughfares in the town or approaching it; and the bridge, of which we are informed that 'two or three piers' only remain, never had but a single span, both short and narrow, thrown across a contemptible mud-creek, almost devoid of water in the dry season or at low tide; and that single span—a very picturesque one, by the way—is still there. That a great store of wealth for those days annually passed through Old Panama, there can be no question. The place, was, however, merely a channel; and, after a fairly close inspection, I do not hesitate to repeat that the stories of its art, its population and its treasures—generally of its size and splendor—constitute about as baseless an historic fabric as the legions that fought at Marathon or the myriads that followed Xerxes. Old Panama, as seen through the imagination of modern investigators, bears, I believe, just as much resemblance to the sixteenth century reality as Francis Drake's *Golden Hind* would bear to a present-day Atlantic liner, say the *Lusitania*."

No one can doubt the justice of much of this. But after all Mr. Adams is attacking a straw man of his own creation. No one who has written of "broad streets" in the old metropolis meant to compare them to the Champs Elysées. Nor is it contended that the houses were of magnificent proportion in comparison with St. Peter's.

I am, however, inclined to question his conclusion when he so positively limits the extent of the city. The site to-day is overgrown with a dense tangle of tropical vegetation. It would take amazing activity, and a host of machetemen to reach—in two short visits—definite conclusions on this point. Within less than a century after its abandonment, François Coreal visited the site of Nombre de Dios, and "de son ancienne magnificence" he writes he could find

nothing but its name. More than twice that time has passed since Panama Viejo was deserted. Only the ruins of some of the stone structures are visible above the ground. Excavations into the sub-soil might possibly—if they were extensive enough—definitely determine the limits of the old town. And until archæologists have seriously investigated the matter we can not put much weight on the opinions of chance travellers as to how far a city of frame houses, which decay so rapidly in the Tropics, extended.

Judged by the New York or London of to-day old Panama was an insignificant place. But there were very few cities of Europe which in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had streets so broad and regular. There was certainly none in the New World which could compare with it for commerce or wealth. It is easier to believe that the court of the Governor was a magnificent medieval pageant of high colors, fine Oriental silks and barbaric jewelry than to conceive of the place through which so much wealth passed as a contemptible group of hovels. Although, in our own day, the best houses of the Klondike towns were frame shacks, the courtesans wore gowns from Paris. And the ruined, but stately tower of the Cathedral of St. Anastasius shows beyond dispute that the metropolis of the Americas had reached a stage of civilization far in advance of an Alaskan mining camp.

After all, grandeur is a relative term, and no one who speaks of the sordid Italian rapsallion as "The Magnificent Borgia" can deny the same adjective to the "*muy leal y muy noble Ciudad de Panama.*"

Gage says, when he had decided to leave Panama: "I had my choice of company by land and water to Portobel. But considering the hardnesse of the mountaines by land, I resolved to goe by the river Chiagre; and so at midnight I set out from Panama to Venta de Cruzes, which is ten or

twelve leagues from it. The way is thither very plaine for the most part, and pleasant in the morning and evening.

“Before ten of the clock, we got to Venta de Cruces, where lived none but Mulatto’s and Black-mores, who belong unto the flat-boates that carry the merchandize to Portobel. There I had very good entertainment by the people, who desired me to preach unto them the next Sabbath day and gave me twenty Crownes for my Sermon, and Procession. After five days of my abode there, the boats set out, which were much stopped in their passage downe the river; for in some places we found the water very low, so that the boats ran upon the gravell; from whence with poles and the strength of the Black-mores they were to be lifted off againe . . . Had not it pleased God to send us after the first week plentifull raine, which made the water to run downe from the mountains and fill the river (which otherwise of itself is very shallow) we might have had a tedious and long passage; but after twelve days we got to sea, and at the point landed at the Castle to refresh ourselves for halfe a day. . . .” After telling of the dilapidated condition of the Castle San Lorenzo at the mouth of the Chagres, “which in my time wanted great reparations, and was ready to fall downe to the ground,” he continues, “The Govenour of the Castle was a notable wine-bibber, who plyed us with that liquor the time that we stayed there, and wanting a Chaplain for himselfe, and Souldiers, would faine have had me stay with him; but greater matters called me further, and so I tooke my leave of him, who gave us some dainties of fresh meat, fish and conserves and so dismissed us. We got out to the open sea, discovering first the Escuedo de Veragua, and keeping somewhat close unto the land, we went on rowing towards Portobel, till the evening which was Saturday night; then we cast anchor behind a little Island, resolving in the morning to enter in Portobel. The Black-mores all that night kept watch for

fear of Hollenders, whom they said did often lie in wait there abouts for the boats of Chiagre; but we passed the night safely and next morning got to Portobelo, whose haven we observed to be very strong with two Castles at the mouth and constant watch within them, and another called St. Miguel further in the Port . . .

“When I came into the Haven I was sorry to see that as yet the Galeons were not come from Spaine, knowing that the longer I stayed in that place, greater would be my charges. Yet I comforted myselfe that the time of year was come, and that they could not long delay their coming. My first thoughts were of taking up a lodging, which at that time were plentiful and cheape, nay some were offered me for nothing with this caveat, that when the Galeons did come, I must either leave them, or pay a dear rate for them. A kind Gentleman, who was the Kings Treasurer, falling in discourse with me promised to help me, that I might be cheaply lodged even when the ships came, and lodgings were at the highest rate. He, interposing his authority, went with me to seeke one, which at the time of the fleets being there, might continue to be mine. It was no bigger than would containe a bed, a table, a stoole or two, with roome enough beside to open and shut the doore, and they demanded of me for it during the aforesaid time of the fleet, sixcore Crownes, which commonly is a fortnight. For the Towne being little, and the Souldiers, that come with the Galeons for their defence at least four or five thousand; besides merchants from Peru, from Spain and many other places to buy and sell, is cause that every roome, though never so small, be dear; and sometimes all the lodgings in the Towne are few enough for so many people, which at that time doe meet at Portobel. I knew a Merchant who gave a thousand Crownes for a shop of reasonable bignesse, to sell his wares and commodities that yeer I was there, for

fifteen daies only, which the Fleet continued to be in that Haven. I thought it much for me to give the sixcore Crownes which were demanded of me for a room, which was but as a mouse hole, and began to be troubled, and told the Kings Treasurer that I had been lately robbed at sea, and was not able to give so much, and bee besides at charges for my diet, which I feared would prove as much more. But not a farthing would be abated of what was asked; where upon the good Treasurer, pitying me, offered to the man of the house to pay him threescore Crowns of it, if so be that I was able to pay the rest, which I must doe, or else lie without in the street. Yet till the Fleet did come I would not enter into this deare hole, but accepted of another faire lodging which was offered me for nothing. Whilst I thus expected the Fleets coming, some money and offerings I got for Masses, and for two Sermons which I preached at fifteen Crownes a peece. I visited the Castles, which indeed seemed unto me to be very strong; but what most I wondered at was to see the requa's of Mules which came thiether from Panama, laden with wedges of silver; in one day I told two hundred mules laden with nothing else, which were unladen in the publicke Market-place, so that there the heapes of silver wedges lay like heaps of stones in the street, without any feare or suspition of being lost. Within ten daies the fleet came, consisting of eight Galeons and ten Merchant ships, which forced me to run to my hole. It was a wonder then to see the multitude of people in those streets which the weeke before had been empty.

“Then began the price of all things to rise, a fowl to be worth twelve Rialls, which in the mainland within I had often bought for one; a pound of beefe then was worth two Rialls, whereas I had in other places thirteen pounds for half a Riall, and so of all other food and provisions, which was so excessively dear, that I knew not how to live but by fish and

Tortoises, which were very many, and though somewhat deare, yet were the cheapest meat I could eate."

Once more the testimony of François Coreal concurs with that of the English writer.

"At the time of the arrival of the Galleons," he writes, "provisions rise to an extraordinary price, and lodgings are so dear during the twenty or twenty-five days when they load and unload the merchandise that the citizens who rent apartments make as much or more profit than those who come to trade."

"It was worth seeing," Gage continues, "how Merchants sold their commodities, not by the Ell or yard, but by piece and weight, not paying in coined pieces of money, but in wedges, which were weighed and taken for commodities. This lasted but fifteen dayes, whilst the Galeons were lading with wedges of silver and nothing else; so that for those fifteen daies I dare boldly say and avouch that in the world there is no greater Fair than that of Portobel, between the Spanish Merchants and those of Peru, Panama, and other places there about."

Here Gage breaks off his narrative for a long theological discourse. One might say that having given a description of the physical aspects of Puerto Bello, he adds a picture of the psychology of the town in his times.

The point, about which most of his own religious doubts centered, was the doctrine of Transubstantiation. This dogma of the church had long troubled him and it was especially on this matter that he hoped to find light in Rome, in the hope of which he had risked the anger of his superiors and a so dangerous journey.

During the course of a mass which he celebrated during these fifteen days an incident occurred which he discusses at length and which was the cause of his conversion to Protestantism. Just before the climax of the mystery, the priest

steps back from the altar and repeats a prayer of self-consecration called the "Memento." At this point in the ritual, Gage heard a slight noise on the altar and opening his eyes he saw a mouse running away with the consecrated wafer.

Gage tells us that for a moment he was immensely frightened for his own safety. As an Englishman he was tolerated on account of his calling, but there were many Spaniards in those superstitious days who firmly believed that England was an annex of Hell and that all men of that race were lineal descendants of the Father of Lies. To make known what had happened would surely cause a great sensation, and very likely the fanatical mob might hold him responsible for the incident which all would regard as an appalling sacrilege. On the other hand, the one sin which the Inquisition held to be the most heinous was any tampering with the sacraments. In such matters they were frigid formalists and no excuse counterbalanced the slightest violation of the letter of the ritual. If Gage had gone on with the ceremony and anyone had seen the accident, he would run a very good chance of the stake. He decided that the populace was less to be feared than the Inquisition. He stopped the mass and calling for aid gave chase to the mouse. The frightened animal dropped the "hostie" and escaped. The sacred wafer was found on the floor of the chancel.

As Gage had foreseen there was a great hue and cry. There were fasts and special services to propitiate the wrath, which every one felt the Most High must feel at this sacrilege. However Gage escaped with his life and had time to think the thing out. He concluded: "Now here I knew that this Mouse had fed upon some substance, or else how could the markes of the teeth so plainly appear? But no Papist will be willing to answer that it fed upon the substance of Christs Body, *ergo*, by good consequence it followes that it fed upon the substance of bread: and so Transubstantiation



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NATIVE VILLAGE ON THE SITE OF THE OLD TOWN OF SAN LORENZO.

here in my judgment was confuted by a Mouse; which mean and base creature God chose to convince mee of my former errours, and made mee now resolve upon what many yeeres before I had doubted, that certainly the point of Transubstantiation taught by the Church of Rome is most damnable and erroneous."

While Gage's logic will not be very convincing to the modern mind, it gives us an interesting insight into how the men of his day thought. He changed his religious faith because a miracle did *not* happen. A skeptic of our day might be converted if he saw lightning come down from Heaven and blast such an impious mouse. Gage's mind worked in a manner exactly opposite. His whole philosophy was changed, and his book shows that he thought earnestly, because the "Natural Order" was not interfered with as he thought he had a right to expect.

Having described his conversion, he returns to the narrative:

"Don Carlos de Ybarra, who was the Admirall of that Fleet, made great haste to bee gone; which made the Merchants buy and sell apace, and lade the ships with silver wedges; whereof I was glad, for the more they laded, the lesse I unladed my purse with buying deare provisions, and sooner I hoped to be out of that unhealthy place, which it-selfe is very hot, and subject to breed Feavers, nay death, if the feet bee not preserved from wetting when it raineth; but especially when the Fleet is there, it is an open grave ready to swallow in part of that numerous people, which at that time resort unto it, as was seene the yeare that I was there, when about five hundred of the Soldiers, Merchants, and Mariners, what with Feavers, what with Flux caused by too much eating of fruit and drinking of water, what with other disorders lost their lives, finding it to bee to them not Porto bello, but Porto malo."

CHAPTER XVIII

PRIVATEERS AND PIRATES

THE effort of the Spanish government to exclude all foreigners from any share in this fat traffic was, of course, foredoomed to failure. In fact, the rigor with which they enforced the prohibitions against interlopers was the immediate cause of great loss.

Early in the latter half of the sixteenth century an English trading vessel approached the harbor of Vera Cruz in Mexico. They sent a request to the governor for permission to enter and sell their cargo. That worthy gentleman, believing that if he refused to admit them, they would surely smuggle their goods ashore, invited them to drop anchor, and, having them under the guns of his fort, confiscated their ship and merchandise and for a while held the crew in prison.

One of the English sailors—the son of a Protestant minister and the oldest of twelve brothers—was Francis Drake. He finally made his way back to Europe and spent considerable time in trying to get some restitution from the Spanish government. Failing in this, he decided to collect what was due him—and all possible interest—and at the same time revenge himself for his foul treatment, by force.

He made two piratical trips to the Indies in a small, fast vessel, the *Swan*. His prizes were insignificant. He made so little noise on these cruises that it is hard to find any record of them. But his main object was to secure information.

In 1570 he secured recognition in the English Court and

Queen Elizabeth granted him "Letters of Marque" to cruise against the Spaniards. It is possible that he may have had similar commissions for his earlier cruises—the point is uncertain—but from now on he was a reputable "privateer" and not a "pirate." It is a distinction with no difference except of social position. A "privateer" could be a national hero, while a "pirate" could be the hero only of "the lower classes." The former had the entree to Court, the latter had to be contented with the adulation of cheap ale-houses.

What England thought of Drake is shown by a little volume published in 1653 entitled "Sir Francis Drake Revived, Who is or may be a Pattern to stirre up all Heroicke and active Spirits of these Times, to benefit their Country and eternize their Names by like Noble Attempts. . . . Calling upon this Dull and Effeminate Age to follow his Noble Steps for Gold and Silver."

Backed by his new commission he fitted out a more formidable expedition. A small one, indeed, for the work in hand, but well planned. In the spring of 1572, he was ready to sail, having his old ship, *The Swan*, and a new one, *The Pascha*.

"Having in both of them," writes the author of the book already referred to, "of men and boyes seventy-three, all voluntarily assembled, of which the eldest was fifty, all the rest under thirty. . . ." The ships were "both richly furnished, with victuals and apparell for a whole yeer; and no lesse heedfully provided of all manner of Munition, Artillery, Artificers, stufte and tooles, that were requisite for such a Man of war in such an attempt, but especially having three dainty Pinnases, made in *Plimouth*, taken asunder all in peices and stowed aboard, to be set up as occasion served."

They sailed without mishap to an uninhabited harbor on the coast of the Isthmus about half way between Nombre

de Dios and Cartagena, which they reached on the 12th of July. Drake had visited the place on one of his former cruises in the *Swan* and had chosen it for a base of operations. But on landing they found a sheet of lead nailed to a tree "greater than any four men, joyning hands, could fathom about." On this piece of lead was scratched this message:

"Captain Drake, if you fortune to come to this Port, make hast away: For the Spanyards, which you had with you here the last year, have bewrayed this place, and taken away all that you left here. I departed from hence this present 7. of Iuly, 1572.

"Your very loving friend

"Iohn Garret."

This warning caused Drake to hunt out some other secluded cove—the coast abounds in them—and there he took out his "three dainty Pinnases" and had them "set up" by his artificers.

Very little time was lost before he was under way for his famous attempt on Nombre de Dios. It must be remembered that this was the first enterprise of its kind. The English had not yet become accustomed to attacking fortified Spanish towns with a handful of men. These young men—all "under thirty," however stout their hearts, must have felt it an exceedingly desperate venture.

During the night the three Pinnases—most of the crew hiding in the bottom—slipped into the harbor. One of their number who could speak Spanish answered the hail from the fort saying that they were from Cartagena. And so, getting safely past the cannon, they attacked the town. A small number of them stayed to guard the boats and the main body quickly mastered the place. There was very little fighting. The only resistance was in the Plaza where, our

author writes, "the Souldiers and such as were joyned with them presented us with a jolly hot volley of shot." But the first charge dispersed this force.

It is hard from the chronicles to determine who were more afraid, the townspeople or the invaders. The English apparently could not believe that they had taken the city so easily. As they met no large portion of the garrison, they supposed that they were lying somewhere in ambush. A rumor started that an attack was being made on the boats and that their retreat was cut off. Only with great effort could Drake prevent a stampede. He alone kept his head and, having gone to so much trouble, he was not going to be frightened into dropping his booty. Sending some of his men to support the guard on the water front, and posting sentries in various places, he led the main body of his men to the king's treasure house, which they broke open and there "we saw a huge heape of silver, . . . being a pile of bars of silver, of (as neere as we could guesse) seventy foot in length, of ten foot in breadth, and twelve foot in height, piled up against the wall, each barre was between thirty-five and forty pound in weight."

But at this juncture, Drake, who had been wounded in that "jolly hot volley of shot," fainted from loss of blood. Panic at once fell on the privateers and, carrying their unconscious leader to the boats, they made off. Their retreat was so hurried, in fact, that they forgot some of the sentries, who had to swim out to their boats. The Spanish garrison, instead of having rallied to attack them, had not yet stopped running.

What Drake said to his men when he recovered consciousness and found that they had let this rich booty slip through his fingers is not recorded.

They returned to the secret harbor where they had left their ships, and very shortly set out again, this time for

Cartagena. But that city, much more strongly fortified and garrisoned than Nombre de Dios, had been warned, and Drake's force was not strong enough to attempt to take it by assault. He contented himself with cutting out some of the shipping from under the guns of the fortress and sailed away. For a while he lay quiet in his secluded headquarters hoping that the Spaniards would think he had left the coast and so relax their vigilance.

But the fame of his attack on Nombre de Dios had spread through the Isthmus and gained him unexpected allies. The Indians of the eastern end of the Isthmus had never, since the days of Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, been at peace with the Spaniards. The English were evidently enemies of their enemies, and therefore their friends. Another element of the population, as bitter against the Spaniards as the Indians, were the "Cimarrones." The origin of this word has not been satisfactorily explained. It is spelt in a dozen different ways in the old books. It was the name given by the Spaniards to the escaped negro slaves, who lived banded together in the jungle. The Indians seem to have welcomed these fugitives from the Spanish injustice and to have helped them in establishing villages and in planting bananas and plantains. These groups of freed slaves were even a greater menace to the colonists than the Indians. Their chiefs visited Drake's headquarters and entered into an alliance with him.

Together with these negroes, Drake planned an adventure even more daring than his assault on Nombre de Dios. The native spies brought word that a ship had come from Peru to Panama loaded down with treasure. Drake, with eighteen Englishmen and a mixed company of Indians and Cimarrones started inland to intercept the treasure train on its way across the Isthmus.

It was on this trip that Drake got his first sight of the

Pacific. A Cimarrone brought him to a hilltop, very probably within the limits of our Canal Zone, from which by climbing a tall tree he could see the Ocean to the south. The chronicle says that he fell on his knees and prayed Almighty God to grant him life until he could sail in those waters on an English ship. One of the men who was with him at this time and who also saw the Pacific was John Oxenham, of whom we will hear more.

Near this place there was a large fortified camp of the Cimarrones. Drake and his men stayed there while one of the negroes, passing himself off as a slave, entered Panama and secured definite information about the time set for the departure of the treasure train. On the appointed night—most of the transportation was done at night to avoid the excessive heat—Drake ambushed his men on both sides of the trail. They had all put their shirts on outside their breast plates so as to be easily distinguishable in the dark. The instructions were to lie quiet until the mule train had passed and so cut off any chance of its retreat to Panama. The force was strung out for a considerable distance, each white man accompanied by two or three natives. And so they sat in the obscurity of the jungle and waited. Doubtlessly the mosquitoes made things uncomfortable for them. And in their armor they must have found the heat oppressive.

Presently the tinkle of mule-bells came from the direction of Panama. In a few minutes a man on foot came into the sight of the first Englishman. This cut-throat seems to have drunk too copiously of the insidious liquor which the Indians brew from sugar-cane. Instead of obeying orders, he abruptly stood up. His Cimarrone comrades pulled him down again, but it was too late. The Spaniard, scared by the apparition beyond the power to cry out, ran full speed back toward the city. The tinkling of the mule-bells ceased. The convoy halted to listen to the wild story of a

white-robed ghost who had suddenly faced the foot passenger. The Spanish captain did not believe in ghosts, but still he could not explain a white-robed figure on the hillside. He probably did not suspect that Drake would have the audacity to come so near Panama, but anyhow discretion was an easy virtue; there was a train of mules loaded with grain behind him. It would be just as well to let them go first. So he ordered them to pass on, and the tinkling of mule-bells was heard again.

Meanwhile Drake and those of his followers who were sober had no idea of what had happened. This time everything took place according to schedule. The mule-train was allowed to proceed until the last one's retreat was cut off. Drake gave the signal. "St. George and Merrie England" rang out through the jungle and almost without a blow these doughty warriors of Good Queen Bess had captured several dozen bushels of fodder.

One almost hopes that Drake hung the drunken fool who spoiled it all. Such a daring venture—even if it was robbery—ought not to be defeated by such a banal blunder.

Balked once more of his loot Drake returned to his headquarters and knowing that now the country would be thoroughly aroused, he threw off the mask. He went again to Cartagena, cut up some more shipping in that harbor, exchanged insulting pleasantries with the governor, and cruised up and down the coast, doing all the damage he could.

But he was not willing to leave without striking some big game. In March, 1573, he was joined by a crew of French corsairs and, once more in alliance with the Cimarrones, he planned to intercept some of the treasure coming across the Isthmus. This time, instead of penetrating so far into the interior, he laid his ambush just outside of Nombre de Dios. I quote the narrative from another Drake book, "The English Hero," published in 1756.

“Coming within a Mile of the Highway they refresh’d themselves all Night, hearing many Carpenters working on the Ships (because of the great Heat by Day) at Nombre de Dios; next Morning, April 1, 1573, they extreamly rejoiced to hear the Mules coming with a great Noise of Bells, hoping, though they were formerly disappointed, they should now have more Gold and Silver than they could carry away, as accordingly happened, for soon after there came three Recoes, one of fifty Mules, and two more of seventy in each Company, every one carrying three hundred Pound Weight of Silver, amounting in all to about thirty Tun; they soon prepared to go into the Highway hearing the Bells, and seized upon the first and last Mules, to try what Metal they carried. These three Recoes had a Guard of about forty-five Soldiers, fifteen to each, which caused the Exchange of some Shot and Arrows at first, wherein the French captain was sorely wounded with Hail Shot in his Belly, and one Symeron slain; but the Soldiers retiring for more Help, left their Mules, and the English took pains to ease some of them of their Burdens and, being weary, contented themselves with as many Bars and Wedges of Gold as they could well carry away, burying above fifty Tun of Silver in the Sands, and under old Trees: having in two Hours ended their Business, they prepared to return.”

It is considerable of a tax on the imagination to understand how, when the mules only carried thirty tons of silver, the English buried fifty tons of it. The story is further complicated by the fact that if they were within sound of the carpenter’s hammers in the harbor it is hardly probable that they were allowed two solid uninterrupted hours for their “business.” It would further be an amazing feat to bury two hundred mule loads of anything in so short a time. This is a fairly good sample of some of the gush which the English pass out as history of their naval heroes.

However, although most of the details of this story as given in "The English Hero" are incredible, the fact is well established that Drake made this raid successfully and that his company, after many more adventures, regained their ships with all the gold they could carry.

For three months more he hung about in those waters and early in August, 1573, started back for Plymouth. Besides his raids on the mainland he had captured over a hundred Spanish merchant vessels. His reception in England was enthusiastic.

He at once set about organizing an expedition into the Pacific. But his wish to be the first Englishman to sail in that Ocean was forestalled by Oxenham, who had been with him when he first saw the new sea. Oxenham collected a crew of adventurers in 1575 and sailed again to the Isthmus. With the aid of the Indians and Cimarrones he crossed the mountains by very nearly the same route as Balboa, and, launching out on the Gulf of San Miguel in native dug-outs, soon captured a small sailing-vessel; getting aboard of their prize they cruised about until they encountered a larger ship. They repeated the process several times, until at last they captured the famous "*navio del oro*," the "ship of gold," which brought up the bullion from the Peruvian mines. This was the first time an enemy had threatened the Spaniards in the Pacific, and they were entirely unprepared to protect themselves. So at first Oxenham had easy success. But finally, stirred up by the loss of their richest treasure ship, the Spaniards rallied. Oxenham had a series of mishaps, bad weather and sickness, his overbearing manner had alienated the native allies, and his raid came to a disastrous end. Those of his company who did not die of famine or disease were captured and either executed in Panama or sent in chains to Spain. Most of the treasure was recovered.

On November 15, 1577, Drake sailed from England again.

He cleared the Straits of Magellan, ten months later—September, 1578—sacked half a dozen towns on the west coast of South America—why he did not “attempt” Panama is not clear—collected an immense amount of booty, and sailed up the Californian coast to the 43° North. Then turning south again he crossed the Pacific and rounding the Cape of Good Hope, brought the *Golden Hind* to anchor in Plymouth in September, 1580.

Five years later war was declared with Spain, and Drake—now an admiral in the regular navy—sailed from Plymouth with twenty-five warships. He landed at Santo Domingo and spared the city in consideration of 25,000 ducats. He then visited Cartagena and extracted a ransom of 145,000 pesos.

Here news of the outfitting of the great Armada in Spain caused him to be called home. So, after only six months of pillage in the West Indies, he returned reluctantly to England. It was two years before the Armada really materialized.

For several years after this Drake was idle, but in 1595 he again went to sea. On August 28th he set sail with six government warships, twenty-one privateers and 2,500 men. He met his first serious repulse in Puerto Rico. A desperate attempt to capture the fortress of San Juan failed disastrously, and he sailed to the mainland. On the whole it was an unsuccessful voyage. The cities he captured could not or would not pay the ransoms he demanded. One after another he was forced to burn Rancheria, Rio de le Hacha, Santa Marta and Nombre de Dios. They were all scantily fortified and helpless before his strong armament. The captains of his men-of-war may have been satisfied with the glory, but it was very poor picking for his twenty-one privateers. Another setback came to him on the Isthmus. From Nombre de Dios he tried to send a land force across to sack Panama. They became hopelessly entangled in the

jungle and were beaten back more by the dense vegetation and swamps than by the Spaniards, who did little beyond butchering the stragglers.

From Nombre de Dios Drake sailed to Puerto Bello. The fortifications of that harbor were not so formidable as at San Juan de Puerto Rico, but still there was a chance for a real fight. But on the 28th of January, 1596, just as the English were about to attack the city, Sir Francis Drake died in his cabin. He was buried in the mouth of the harbor. The fleet having lost its leader, lost heart as well, and sailed back to England.

Drake was a great sea-captain. He seems to have succeeded somewhat better in the adventures he undertook with small forces than when acting as admiral of a large fleet. He was entirely free from the wanton cruelty which clouded the brilliant achievements of the buccaneers. He was not at heart a pirate. Although he always harbored a bitter resentment against the Spaniards for their mistreatment of him at Vera Cruz, still he seems to have generally treated his captives as prisoners of war. Some of his raids were committed in times of nominal peace between his sovereign and the Spanish throne, but he seems to have always thought of himself as engaged in honorable warfare. When a man has so many real achievements to his credit, it is rather distressing to read of the fantastic and unreal adventures ascribed to him by his countrymen.

But it is impossible to exaggerate the fear which his name carried throughout the Spanish colonies.

Mr. G. Jenner has translated some interesting sections relating to him from the works of a Spanish historian, Fray Pedro Simon. This author is very much more temperate in his language than most of the Spaniards who mention Drake, and the quotations give a good example of what the more intelligent people of Latin-America thought of him.

After the raids on the Isthmus in 1572 and 1573, this writer says: "Drake returned to London, where he arrived with much plunder after a prosperous voyage. He was received there with the applause that commonly gratifies wealth, and even the queen favored him with excessive demonstrations and greater courtesy than became her royal person. After all, however, that was woman-like and due somewhat to her covetousness and to the desire of putting her arms up to the elbow into the great plunder brought home by the Protestant."

After having made his voyage of circumnavigation, Fray Simon says that Drake bought an estate and attempted to settle down, "but all this was like drinking salt water, for, as we shall see, the thirst of his covetousness was in no way quenched. . . ."

"Considering the condition of man degraded by sin and incapable of resisting temptation of greed, we need not wonder that the acquisition of goods should lead to the desire to add to them, especially amongst those who know neither law nor God. . . ."

Of the 1586 expedition he writes: "For thirty days the heretical pirate held the city (Santo Domingo), his Lutheran ministers preaching their creed, and constant festivities going on. The Protestant would send from time to time for some of the fugitives, with whom he conversed in jovial and conceited tones, jeering at the fear of our people, who had allowed his fatigued and harassed soldiers to take possession of their town without resistance, and attacking our Christian religion to justify his heresies and robberies." During the occupation of Cartagena, on the same expedition, he writes that "the images painted on the walls of these churches were exposed to pitiful insults, and the tenets of Luther were preached on the terraces of the Government House."

When he gets to the last expedition of Drake, the good father becomes even more indignantly eloquent. After describing the burning of Rio de la Hacha, Santa Marta and Nombre de Dios, he says: 'Of all his wickedness the one he indulged in with especial satisfaction was the use of fire, as if he were preparing himself for the flames that would torture him in hell. . . .' Describing his death before Puerto Bello, which he, apparently without any reason, ascribes to poison, he writes: "Then his tongue congealed: his mouth became scarlet and distorted, giving issue (if that be the exit) to that lost soul that hastened direct to hell."

But the death of Drake by no means relieved the Spanish colonies from the terror of the "heretical pirates." In a very rare book published in London in 1740 called "A geographical Description of Coasts, Harbors and Sea Ports of the Spanish West Indies" by D. G. Carranza, there is an appendix in which Captain William Parker describes his assault on Puerto Bello. He was one of the first upon whom fell the mantle of the great Sir Francis.

He sailed from Plymouth in 1601 with two ships, two shallops, a pinnace and two hundred men. He touched the mainland first in what is now Venezuela, near the spot where Las Casas tried to found his knightly colony; here Parker picked up a load of pearls valued at 2,500 pesos. Then off the Cape de la Vela he overhauled a Portuguese slave-ship for which he accepted a ransom of another 2,500 pesos.

On the 7th of February, 1602, he reached Puerto Bello. This large harbor was protected by two formidable forts on each side of the entrance which, as Thomas Gage said, could with their cannon "reach and command one another." "The Place where my Shippes roade," says Parker, "beinge the rock where Sir Francis Drake his coffin was throwne overboard."

By the time-worn trick of hailing the sentries in Spanish

he got his little fleet past the forts during the night and at once began the attack. The first party ashore met with an even jollier "hot volley of shot" than that which was presented to Drake in Nombre de Dios. It killed or wounded all but nine of the English.

"But," says the Captain—and he seems to have been a very pious man—"God did prosper our Proceedings mightilie, for the first two shott which went out from us shot Malendus (the Governor of Puerto Bello) through his Targett, and went throughe both his Armes, and the other Shott hurted the Corporall of the Fielde, whereupon they all retired to their House, which they made good untill it was almost daie."

But when all his men had come up, Parker was able to drive them out of their last stronghold and was free to sack the city. They gathered 10,000 ducats worth of spoil. If they had arrived a week earlier they would have captured a far richer prize, for on the 1st of February a treasure ship had left the port carrying 120,000 ducats in bullion. To get away with their plunder they had to run the forts, which were much too strong for their small force to assault.

"But God so wrought for us," he says, "that we safely gott forthe againe contrarie to the expectations of our Enemies."

Although Parker, like Drake, was more of a privateer than pirate, it soon became impossible to distinguish between the "profession" and the "trade." As early as 1531, French corsairs began to infest the Caribbean Sea. When their own country was at war with Spain they flew the French flag. But once having tasted the wild life of privateering, it was difficult for them to settle down to quiet industry when a temporary peace interfered with their lucrative enterprises. They got into the habit of switching their allegiance to whatever country was embroiled with Spain. Every really enter-

prising sea-rover had at least four or five commissions from different countries in his chest. And as the spell of their adventurous life grew upon them they became less and less careful to preserve the forms of honorable war. What was true of the French privateers was equally true of the English.

The "heretical pirates" of the sixteenth century were honored war-dogs of the Good Queen Bess, carrying on the desperate war for national existence and religious freedom against the archenemy. Drake and Parker—according to the standards of their day—were gentlemen. The "heretical pirates" of the next century were a decidedly lower order of men.

CHAPTER XIX

THE BUCCANEERS

THE etymology of the word "buccaneer" has led many historians astray.

The Indians called the meat which they preserved by smoking "buccan." Just as the Spanish horse developed into wild herds on our Western plains, so their cattle multiplied very rapidly on the islands of Santo Domingo and Cuba. "Buccan" was in great demand for victualling the ships. And gradually a trade grew up, of men, almost as wild as the cattle they hunted, who went out into the uninhabited savanahs and jungle to kill and cure meat to supply the towns. The French, who had settled on one end of Santo Domingo—using their regular suffix—coined the word "buccaneer" as a name for these cattle hunters.

It was not a remunerative trade. The men who followed it were the jetsam of colonial society; criminals, who feared the justice of the towns; misanthropists, who preferred the open solitude beyond the frontiers to the press of their fellow men. From what we know of them they seem to have been vagabonds rather than desperadoes. The name came to be used like our American word "tramp." If anyone missed a silver spoon, or if the washing was blown off the line, it was blamed on these irresponsible cow-hunters. And it was the same when a derelict burnt down to the water's edge was encountered at sea; the respectable people shook their heads and said, "Surely it was the Buccaneers."

But the chroniclers of the sea-rovers, Exquemelin, Wafer,

Dampier, Ringrose and the others, do not show that the crews of buccaneer ships were to any large extent recruited from these men who killed the wild cattle and peddled the "buccan" in the towns. These poor devils did nothing much for the pirates but give them a name.

The men who sailed with Mansfield, Morgan and Sharpe had very few of them done such an innocent thing as kill cattle since they had reached the age of sixteen.

It would take us too far afield to analyze the character of the population in the colonies. Spain, alone of the European nations, made any effort to send a substantial class of people to the Indies. It was a perfunctory effort, no doubt, but the other countries frankly made the New World a dumping-ground for criminals. The French, Dutch and English, all had penal colonies in the Antilles. The indentured servants were notoriously a wild lot. And very many of the free citizens had left home in haste—just in time to preserve their freedom.

It was not difficult to gather half a hundred cut-throats in any American port; more than one pirate ship in later years sailed from Plymouth colony. The privateers, the heroes of the British navy, showed the way. The habit of applauding rapine on the Spanish Main had become so deep-seated in England that no serious effort was made to check the piracy which had its headquarters in Jamaica until well along towards the close of the seventeenth century.

But piracy was by no means confined to one nationality. As a general proposition it was considered legitimate for any Protestant to prey on the subjects of His Most Catholic Majesty. This gave free license to practically all Englishmen and Hollanders. And a great many Frenchmen on their arrival in the Indies decided that it would be profitable to become *Hugueneaux*.

"These 'corsarios Luteranos' as the Spaniards sometimes

called them," Haring writes, "scouring the coast of the Main from Venezuela to Cartagena, hovering about the broad channel between Cuba and Yucatan, or prowling in the Florida Straits, became the nightmare of Spanish seamen. Like a pack of terriers they hung upon the skirts of the great unwieldy fleets, ready to snap up any unfortunate vessel which a tempest or other accident had separated from its fellows. When Thomas Gage was sailing in the galleons from Porto Bello to Cartagena, in 1637, four buccaneers hovering near them carried away two merchant-ships under cover of darkness. As the same fleet was departing from Havana, just outside the harbor two strange vessels appeared in their midst, and getting to the windward of them singled out a Spanish ship which had strayed a short distance from the rest, suddenly gave her a broadside and made her yield. The vessel was laden with sugar and other goods to the value of 80,000 crowns. The Spanish vice-admiral and two other galleons gave chase, but without success, for the wind was against them. The whole action lasted only half an hour.

"The Spanish ships of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were notoriously clumsy and unseaworthy. With short keel and towering poop and forecastle, they were an easy prey for the long, low, close-sailing sloops and barques of the buccaneers. But it was not their only weakness. Although the king expressly prohibited the loading of merchandise on the galleons except on the king's account, this rule was often broken for the private profit of the captain, the sailors, and even of the general. The men-of-war, indeed, were sometimes so embarrassed with goods and passengers that it was scarcely possible to defend them when attacked. The galleon which bore the general's flag had often as many as seven hundred souls, crew, marines and passengers, on board, and the same number were crowded upon those carrying the vice-admiral and the pilot. Ship-masters

frequently hired guns, anchors, cables, and stores to make up the required equipment, and men to fill up the muster-rolls, against the time when the "visitadors" came on board to make their official inspection, getting rid of the stores and men immediately afterward. Merchant ships were armed with such feeble crews, owing to the excessive crowding, that it was all they could do to withstand the least spell of bad weather, let alone out-manceuvre a swift-sailing buccaneer."

Henry Morgan, the most famous of the buccaneers, was typical. When a young boy he was kidnapped in the streets of Bristol—it is claimed that he came of a good English family—and was sold as an indentured servant to some colonist in Barbados. When his time had expired he made his way to Jamaica and soon fell in with the buccaneers who infested that island. Before very long he became the captain of a ship. At first he seems to have had but moderate fortune. He took part in several raids but did not rise to prominence until he joined forces with Mansfield—the first of the buccaneers who succeeded in rallying enough pirates under one command to make himself formidable to fortified coast towns. Morgan became his principal lieutenant, and when this chief passed over became the acknowledged leader of the buccaneers.

In June, 1668, when he was thirty-three years old, Morgan collected a fleet of nine or ten small ships and perhaps four hundred men. With them he attacked Puerto Bello and wrote his name alongside that of Sir Francis Drake in the record of Englishmen whom the Spaniards feared and hated.

In his company was a young Dutch apothecary, named Exquemelin, who afterwards wrote one of the most popular books of the century. His history of the Sea-Rovers, first printed in his own language, was soon translated into half a dozen others and edition after edition was printed. Almost

every book on the buccaneers which has appeared since is based on Exquemelin.

“Captain Morgan,” he says, “who knew very well all the avenues of this city, as also all the neighboring coasts, arrived in the dusk of the evening at the place called Puerto de Naos [probably the present Colon Harbor], distant ten leagues towards the west of Porto Bello. Being come unto this place, they mounted the river in their ships, as far as another harbor called Puerto Pontin, where they came to anchor. Here they put themselves immediately into boats and canoes, leaving in the ships only a few men to keep them and conduct them the next day into the port. About midnight they came to a certain place called Estera longa Lemos, where they all went on shore, and marched by land to the first posts of the city. They had in their company a certain Englishman, who had been formerly a prisoner in those parts, and who now served them for a guide. Unto him, and three or four more, they gave commission to take the sentry, if possible, or to kill him upon the place. But they laid hands on him and apprehended him with such cunning as he had no time to give warning with his musket, or make any other noise. Thus they brought him, with his hands bound, unto Captain Morgan, who asked him: ‘How things went in the city, and what forces they had’; with many other circumstances, which he was desirous to know. After every question they made him a thousand menaces to kill him, in case he declared not the truth. Thus they began to advance towards the city, carrying always the said sentry bound before them. Having marched about one quarter of a league, they came to the castle that is nigh unto the city, which presently they closely surrounded, so that no person could either get in or out of the said fortress.

“Being thus posted under the walls of the castle, Captain Morgan commanded the sentry, whom they had taken

prisoner, to speak to those that were within, charging them to surrender, and deliver themselves up to his discretion; otherwise they should be all cut to pieces, without giving quarter to any one. But they would harken to none of these threats, beginning instantly to fire; which gave notice unto the city, and this was suddenly alarmed. Yet, notwithstanding, although the governor and soldiers of the said castle made as great resistance as could be performed, they were constrained to surrender unto the pirates. These no sooner had taken the castle, than they resolved to be as good as their word, in putting the Spaniards to the sword, thereby to strike a terror into the rest of the city. Hereupon, having shut up all the soldiers and officers as prisoners, into one room, they instantly set fire to the powder (whereof they found great quantity), and blew up the whole castle into the air, with all the Spaniards that were within. This being done, they pursued the course of their victory, falling upon the city, which as yet was not in order to receive them. Many of the inhabitants cast their precious jewels and money into wells and cisterns or hid them in other places underground, to excuse as much as possible, their being totally robbed. One party of the pirates, being assigned to this purpose, ran immediately to the cloisters and took as many religious men and women as they could find. The governor of the city not being able to rally the citizens, through the huge confusion of the town, retired into one of the castles remaining, and from thence began to fire incessantly at the pirates. But these were not in the least negligent either to assault him or defend themselves with all the courage imaginable. Thus it was observed that, amidst the horror of the assault, they made very few shot in vain. For aiming with great dexterity at the mouths of the guns, the Spaniards were certain to lose one or two men every time they charged each gun anew.

“The assault of the castle where the governor was continued very furious on both sides, from break of day until noon. Yea, about this time of the day the case was very dubious which party should conquer or be conquered. . . . Captain Morgan, seeing this generous defense made by the Spaniards, began to despair of the whole success of the enterprise. Hereupon many faint and calm meditations came into his mind; neither could he determine which way to turn himself in that straitness of affairs. Being involved in these thoughts, he was suddenly animated to continue the assault, by seeing the English colours put forth at one of the lesser castles, then entered by his men, of whom he presently after spied a troop that came to meet him proclaiming victory with loud shouts of joy. This instantly put him upon new resolutions of making new efforts to take the rest of the castles that stood out against him; especially seeing the chief citizens were fled unto them, and had conveyed thither great part of their riches, with all the plate belonging to the churches, and other things dedicated to divine service.

“To this effect, therefore, he ordered ten or twelve ladders to be made, in all possible haste, so broad that three or four men at once might ascend by them. These being finished, he commanded all the religious men and women whom he had taken prisoners to fix them against the walls of the castle. Thus much he had before hand threatened the governor to perform, in case he delivered not the castle. But his answer was: ‘He would never surrender himself alive.’ Captain Morgan was much persuaded that the governor would not employ his utmost forces, seeing religious women and ecclesiastical persons exposed in the front of the soldiers to the greatest dangers. Thus the ladders, as I have said, were put into the hands of religious persons of both sexes; and these were forced, at the head of the

companies, to raise and apply them to the walls. But Captain Morgan was deceived in his judgment of this design. For the governor, who acted like a brave and courageous soldier, refused not, in performance of his duty, to use his utmost endeavours to destroy whosoever came near the walls. The religious men and women ceased not to cry unto him and beg of him by all the Saints of Heaven he would deliver the castle, and hereby spare both his and their own lives. But nothing could prevail with the obstinacy and fierceness that had possessed the governor's mind. Thus many of the religious men and nuns were killed before they could fix the ladders. Which at last being done, though with great loss of the said religious people, the pirates mounted them in great numbers, and with no less valour; having fireballs in their hands and earthen pots full of powder. All which things, being now at the top of the walls, they kindled and cast in among the Spaniards.

“This effort of the pirates was very great, insomuch as the Spaniards could no longer resist nor defend the castle, which was now entered. Hereupon they all threw down their arms, and craved quarter for their lives. Only the governor of the city would admit or crave no mercy; but rather killed many of the pirates with his own hands, and not a few of his own soldiers because they did not stand to their arms. And although the pirates asked him if he would have quarter, yet he constantly answered: “By no means; I had rather die as a valiant soldier, than be hanged as a coward.’ They endeavoured as much as they could to take him prisoner. But he defended himself so obstinately that they were forced to kill him; notwithstanding all the cries and tears of his own wife and daughter, who begged him upon their knees he would demand quarter and save his life. When the pirates had possessed themselves

of the castle, which was about night, they enclosed therein all the prisoners they had taken, placing the women and men by themselves, with some guards upon them. All the wounded were put into a certain apartment by itself, to the intent their own complaints might be the cure of their disease; for no other was afforded them.

“This being done, they fell to eating and drinking after their usual manner; that is to say, committing in both these things all manner of debauchery and excess. . . . After such manner they delivered themselves up unto all sort of debauchery, that if there had been found only fifty courageous men, they might easily have retaken the city, and killed all the pirates. The next day, having plundered all they could find, they began to examine some of the prisoners (who had been persuaded by their companions to say they were the richest of the town), charging them severely to discover where they had hidden their riches and goods. But not being able to extort anything out of them, as they were not the right persons that possessed any wealth, they at last resolved to torture them. This they performed with such cruelty that many of them died upon the rack, or presently after. Soon after, the President of Panama had news brought him of the pillage and ruin of Porto Bello. This intelligence caused him to employ all his care and industry to raise forces, with design to pursue and cast out the pirates from thence. But these cared little for what extraordinary means the president used, as having their ships nigh at hand, and being determined to set fire unto the city and retreat. They had now been at Porto Bello fifteen days, in which space of time they had lost many of their men, both by the unhealthiness of the country and the extravagant debaucheries they had committed.”

In regard to the diseases which carried off some of the pirates, Mr. Haring gives a note in which he quotes an old

book called "The Present State of Jamaica, 1683," which says that Morgan brought the plague back from Puerto Bello, "that killed my Lady Modyford and others."

"Hereupon they prepared for a departure," Exquemelin continues, "carrying on board their ships all the pillage they had gotten. But, before all, they provided the fleet with sufficient victuals for the voyage. While these things were getting ready, Captain Morgan sent an injunction unto the prisoners, that they should pay him a ransom for the city, or else he would by fire consume it to ashes, and blow up all the castles into the air. Withal, he commanded them to send speedily two persons to seek and procure the sum he demanded, which amounted to one hundred thousand pieces of eight. Unto this effect, two men were sent to the President of Panama, who gave him an account of all these tragedies. . . ."

The President of Panama was unable to relieve the stricken town, and so "the miserable citizens, gathered the contribution wherein they were fined, and brought the entire sum of one hundred thousand pieces of eight unto the pirates, for a ransom of the cruel captivity they were fallen into. But the President of Panama, by these transactions, was brought into an extreme admiration, considering that four hundred men had been able to take such a great city, with so many strong castles; especially seeing they had no pieces of cannon, nor other great guns, wherewith to raise batteries against them. And what was more, knowing that the citizens of Porto Bello had always great repute of being good soldiers themselves, and who had never wanted courage in their own defence. This astonishment was so great, that it occasioned him, for to be satisfied thereon, to send a messenger unto Captain Morgan, desiring him to send him some small pattern of those arms wherewith he had taken with such violence so great a city.

Captain Morgan received this messenger very kindly, and treated him with great civility. Which being done, he gave him a pistol and a few small bullets of lead, to carry back unto the President, his master, telling him withal: 'He desired him to accept that slender pattern of arms wherewith he had taken Porto Bello and keep them for a twelvemonth; after which time he promised to come to Panama and fetch them away.' The governor of Panama returned the present very soon unto Captain Morgan, giving him thanks for the favour of lending him such weapons as he needed not, and withal sent him a ring of gold, with this message: 'That he desired him not give himself the labour of coming to Panama, as he had done to Porto Bello; for he did certify unto him that he should not speed so well here as he had done there.'

"After these transactions, Captain Morgan (having provided his fleet with all necessaries, and taken with him the best guns of the castles, nailing the rest which he could not carry away) set sail from Porto Bello with all his ships. With these he arrived in a few days unto the Island of Cuba, where he sought out a place wherein with all quiet and repose he might make the dividend of the spoil they had gotten. They found in ready money two hundred and fifty thousand pieces of eight, besides all other merchandise, as cloth, linen, silks and other goods. With this rich purchase they sailed again from thence unto their common place of rendezvous, Jamaica. Being arrived, they passed here some time in all sorts of vices and debauchery, according to their common manner of doing, spending with huge prodigality what others had gained with no small labour and toil."

The fame of this exploit made it easy for Morgan to muster a larger force for the carrying out of his threat against Panama. In October, 1670, he sailed from Kings-

ton to a rendezvous where he gathered between twenty-five and thirty English vessels and five or ten French.

“The President of Panama, meanwhile, on 15th December, had received a messenger from the governor of Cartagena with news of the coming of the English,” writes Haring. “The president immediately dispatched reinforcements to the Castle of Chagre, which arrived fifteen days before the buccaneers and raised its strength to over 350 men. Two hundred men were sent to Porto Bello, and 500 more were stationed at Venta Cruz and in ambushes along the Chagre River to oppose the advance of the English. The president himself rose from a bed of sickness to head a reserve of 800, but most of his men were raw recruits without a professional soldier amongst them. This militia in a few days became so panic-stricken that one-third deserted in a night, and the president was compelled to retire to Panama. There the Spaniards managed to load some of the treasure upon two or three ships lying in the roadstead; and the nuns and most of the citizens of importance also embarked with their wives, children and personal property.”

After severe fighting and considerable loss of life, the buccaneers captured Fort San Lorenzo at the mouth of the Rio Chagres and started up the river in canoes. From the very first they encountered great hardships from the difficult and unfamiliar trail. The Spaniards had been careful not to leave anything edible in their way and after the first day they ran out of provisions. On the fourth day they came to a little village where they expected that “they should find some provisions wherewith to satiate their hunger, which was very great. Being come unto the place, they found nobody in it, the Spaniards who were there not long before being every one fled, and leaving nothing behind unless it were a small number of leather bags, all empty, and a few crumbs of bread scattered upon the ground where they had

eaten. Being angry at this misfortune, they pulled down a few little huts which the Spaniards had made, and afterwards fell to eating the leather bags, as being desirous to afford something to the ferment of their stomachs, which now was grown so sharp that it did gnaw their very bowels, having nothing else to prey upon. Thus they made a huge banquet upon those bags of leather, which doubtless had been more grateful unto them, if divers quarrels had not risen concerning who should have the greatest share. By the circumference of the place they conjectured five hundred Spaniards, more or less, had been there. And these, finding no victuals, they were now infinitely desirous to meet, intending to devour some of them rather than perish. Whom they would certainly in that occasion have roasted or boiled, to satisfy their famine, had they been able to take them.

“After they had feasted themselves with those pieces of leather, they quitted the place, and marched farther on, till they came about night to another post called Torna Munni. Here they found another ambuscade, but as barren and desert as the former. They searched the neighbouring woods but could not find the least thing to eat. The Spaniards having been so provident as not to leave behind them anywhere the least crumb of sustenance, whereby the pirates were now brought to the extremity aforementioned. Here again he was happy, that had reserved since noon any small piece of leather whereof to make his supper, drinking after it a good draught of water for his greatest comfort. Some persons who never were out of their mother’s kitchens may ask how these pirates could eat, swallow and digest those pieces of leather, so hard and dry. Unto whom I only answer: That could they once experiment what hunger, or rather famine, is, they would certainly find the manner, by their own necessity, as the pirates did. For these first took the leather and sliced it in pieces. Then did they beat it

between two stones and rub it, often dipping it in the water of the river, to render it by these means supple and tender. Lastly they scraped off the hair, and roasted or broiled it upon the fire. And being thus cooked they cut it into small morsels, and eat it, helping it down with frequent gulps of water, which by good fortune they had nigh at hand."

On the next day "they found two sacks of meal, wheat and like things, with two great jars of wine, and certain fruits called plantanos. Captain Morgan, knowing that some of his men were now, through hunger, reduced almost to the extremity of their lives, and fearing lest the major part should be brought into the same condition, caused all that was found to be distributed amongst them who were in greatest necessity. Having refreshed themselves with these victuals, they began to march anew with greater courage than ever. Such as could not well go for weakness were put into the canoes, and those commanded to land that were in them before. Thus they prosecuted their journey till late at night, at which time they came unto a plantation where they took up their rest. But without eating anything at all; for the Spaniards, as before, had swept away all manner of provisions, leaving not behind them the least signs of victuals.

"On the sixth day they continued their march, part of them by land through the woods, and part by water in the canoes. Howbeit they were constrained to rest themselves very frequently by the way, both for the ruggedness thereof and the extreme weakness they were under. . . . This day, at noon, they arrived at a plantation, where they found a barn full of maize. Immediately they beat down the doors, and fell to eating of it dry, as much as they could devour. Afterwards they distributed great quantity, giving to every man a good allowance thereof. Being thus provided they prosecuted their journey."

On the eighth day, according to Exquemelin, they met with some resistance. Although the Spaniards would not stop to give battle, the Indians were bolder, and there were two or three sharp skirmishes.

On the ninth day, having had nothing to eat but scraps of leather, some dry maize and the two sacks of meal and a few plantains, they came to a high mountain, which, "when they ascended, they discovered from the top thereof the South Sea. This happy sight, as if it were the end of their labours, caused infinite joy among the pirates. From hence they could descry one ship and six boats, which were set forth from Panama, and sailed towards the islands of Tavoga and Tavogilla. Having descended this mountain, they came unto a vale, in which they found great quantity of cattle, whereof they killed good store. Here while some were employed in killing and flaying of cows, horses, bulls and chiefly asses, of which there was the greatest number, others busied themselves in kindling of fires and getting wood wherewith to roast them. Thus cutting the flesh of these animals into convenient pieces, or gobbets, they threw them into the fire and, half carbonadoed or roasted, they devoured them with incredible haste and appetite. For such was their hunger that they more resembled cannibals than Europeans at this banquet, the blood many times running down from their beards to the middle of their bodies.

"Having satisfied their hunger with these delicious meats, Captain Morgan ordered them to continue the march."

It is needless to describe the battle before the city. Exquemelin goes into great detail, but very little of his account is convincing. Morgan, in his report to Gov. Modyford of Jamaica, says that the Spaniards had more than two thousand infantry and six hundred cavalry. The President of Panama, in his report to the Spanish Court, says that he had but twelve hundred in all, mostly negroes, mulattoes

and Indians. His men were for the most part armed with fowling-pieces, and his artillery he claims was made up of three wooden guns bound with hide. The buccaneers, while greatly outnumbered, were very much better soldiers than the crude militia which protected the town. Morgan claims that he only lost five men killed and ten wounded, and that the Spanish loss was about four hundred. Exquemelin says there were six hundred Spaniards "dead upon the place besides wounded and prisoners." The buccaneers met more formidable resistance when they entered the city.

"They found much difficulty in their approach unto the city. For within the town the Spaniards had placed many great guns, at several quarters thereof, some of which were charged with small pieces of iron, and others with musket bullets. With all these they saluted the pirates, at their drawing nigh unto the place, and gave them full and frequent broadsides, firing at them incessantly. Whence it came to pass that unavoidably they lost, at every step they advanced, great numbers of men. But neither these manifest dangers of their lives, nor the sight of so many of their own as dropped down continually at their sides, could deter them from advancing farther, and gaining ground every moment upon the enemy. Thus, although the Spaniards never ceased to fire and act the best they could for their defence, yet notwithstanding they were forced to deliver the city after the space of three hours combat. And the pirates, having now possessed themselves thereof, both killed and destroyed as many as attempted to make the least opposition against them. The inhabitants had caused the best of their goods to be transported to more remote and occult places. Howbeit they found within the city as yet several warehouses, very well stocked with all sorts of merchandise, as well as silks and cloths as linen, and other things of considerable value. As soon as the first fury of their entrance into the city was over,

Captain Morgan assembled all his men at a certain place which he assigned, and there commanded them under very great penalties that none of them should dare to drink or taste any wine. The reason he gave for this injunction was, because he had received private intelligence that it had been all poisoned by the Spaniards. Howbeit it was the opinion of many he gave these prudent orders to prevent the debauchery of his people, which he foresaw would be very great at the beginning, after so much hunger sustained by the way. Fearing withal, lest the Spaniards, seeing them in wine, should rally their forces and fall upon the city, and use them as inhumanly as they had used the inhabitants before."

"Exquemelin accuses Morgan of setting fire to the city and endeavouring to make the world believe that it was done by the Spaniards," Haring writes. "Wm. Frogge, however, who was also present, says distinctly that the Spaniards fired the town, and Sir William Godolphin, in a letter from Madrid to Secretary Arlington on 2nd June, 1671, giving news of the exploit which must have come from a Spanish source, says that the President of Panama left orders that the city if taken should be burnt. Moreover, the President of Panama himself, in a letter to Spain, describing the event, which was intercepted by the English, admits that not the buccaneers but the slaves and the owners of the houses set fire to the city. The buccaneers tried in vain to extinguish the flames, and the whole town, which was built mostly of wood, was consumed by twelve o'clock midnight. The only edifices which escaped were the government buildings, a few churches, and about 300 houses in the suburbs. The freebooters remained at Panama twenty-eight days seeking plunder and indulging in every variety of excess. Excursions were made daily into the country for twenty leagues round about to search for booty, and 3,000 prisoners were brought in."

It was a barren raid for the pirates. The ships which they had seen in the harbor as they descended the mountains had carried off most of the wealth of the city. Although they cruised up and down the coast and captured a few small boats and some booty the treasure ships escaped.

“Captain Morgan used to send forth daily parties of two hundred men, to make inroads into all the fields and country thereabouts, and when one party came back, another consisting of two hundred more was ready to go forth. By this means they gathered in a short time huge quantities of riches, and no less number of prisoners. These being brought into the city, were presently put unto the most exquisite tortures imaginable, to make them confess both other people’s goods and their own. . . . After this execrable manner did many of these miserable prisoners finish their days, the common sport and recreation of these pirates being these and other tragedies not inferior to these.

“They spared in their cruelties no sex nor condition whatsoever. For as to religious persons and priests, they granted them less quarter than unto others, unless they could produce a considerable sum of money, capable of being a sufficient ransom. Women themselves were no better used. . . . Captain Morgan, their leader and commander, gave them no good example in this point. . . .

“On the 24th of February of the year 1671, Captain Morgan departed from the City of Panama, or rather from the place where the said City of Panama did stand. Of the spoils whereof he carried with him one hundred and seventy-five beasts of carriage, laden with silver, gold and other precious things, besides 600 prisoners, more or less, between men, women, children and slaves.”

All through his narrative, Exquemelin is venomous in his references to Morgan. Of course he wrote his book after his return to Europe where piracy, although a good subject

for a "best-seller," was not considered a reputable profession, so it was necessary for him every few pages to express his own abhorrance for such deeds. He goes to considerable length to tell how he was captured and forced to join the expedition because the pirate needed an apothecary. But I think the real reason for his rancor against Sir Henry crops out in a passage towards the end of his book.

After describing the trip back across the Isthmus to Fort San Lorenzo at the mouth of the Chagres, Exquemelin says that "the dividend was made of all the spoil they had purchased in that voyage. Thus every company and every particular person therein included received their portion of what was gotten; or rather what part thereof Captain Morgan was pleased to give them. For so it was, that the rest of his companions, even of his own nation, complained of his proceedings in this particular, and feared not to tell him openly to his face, that he had reserved the best jewels to himself. For they judged it impossible that no greater share should belong unto them than two hundred pieces of eight per capita, of so many valuable purchases and robberies as they had obtained. Which small sum they thought too little reward for so much labour and such huge and manifest dangers as they had so often exposed their lives unto. But Captain Morgan was deaf to all these and many other complaints of this kind, having designed in his mind to cheat them of as much as he could."

After having risked not only his life but also his reputation on this piratical adventure, one can hardly blame Exquemelin for harboring a grudge against the man who cheated him out of the just proceeds of his robbery.

The scandal caused by the sack of Panama City—England was then at peace with Spain—was so great that the British Government was forced to suppress buccaneering in Jamaica. It was a hard thing to do, for just as the corrupt

political rings of our cities say that a "wide-open town" makes for prosperity, so in Jamaica almost every colonist was directly or indirectly interested in the success of the buccaneers. At last the English Government decided to set a thief to catch the thieves, and knighted Henry Morgan and gave him the work of wiping out his old trade. On the whole he did a pretty fair job of it.

Although the old habits persisted for many decades it was no longer anything but open piracy. The Spaniards were no longer the only prey.