

# Brethren of the Coast

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE—THE ADVENTURES OF TOM HEYLIN,  
WHO FELL AMONG THE BUCCANEERS OF THE  
WEST INDIES AND TOOK PART IN  
THEIR GREATEST EXPLOIT

By Norman J. Bonney

IT was dawn in the tavern. Daylight, filtering through the cracks between closed shutters, stole gradually into the farthest corner of the taproom, where, shining feebly upon the ale-soaked tables, a single tallow dip slowly sputtered to death in a congealing pool of its own grease. At the opposite end of the room the smoldering embers of an open fire gave forth a shower of sparks as Lombard, the inn-keeper, stirred them to life with an iron hook. A pungent smoke filled the room, causing Tom Heylin, who had been sleeping beside one of the long tables, to awake with a violent fit of coughing.

In the half light of early day, objects assumed weird shapes to the sight of the newly wakened youth. Where the flames of the fire, now springing into a blaze, cast the shadow of the grate across the tiles, he seemed to see a row of gibbets, from which hung distorted, dancing forms. The phantasm recalled an unpleasant memory, and Tom shuddered, brushing an arm across his eyes to dispel the gloomy vision.

Ten hours before, footsore and weary, he had eagerly crossed the height of land beyond which lay the great city of Bristol. He had climbed the hill with his senses alert for first impressions of the famous seaport, with its landlocked harbor crowded with shipping from all quarters of the world. As his eyes sought out the city, which he had been told could be seen from this vantage point, a sight of horror revealed itself to his startled gaze. Between him and the low-lying town, dangling from a newly erected scaffold, seven limp and lifeless bodies outlined themselves against the

blood-red glow of the setting sun. With necks stretched horribly, and with toes pointing earthward, their forms swung gently in the faint breeze.

The ghastly sight had frozen Tom with horror, for he was young, and little used to scenes of violence. Now, in the firelight, the shadows on the floor recalled the grim gibbet with startling vividness.

Like all the inns of Bristol in the seventeenth century, the tavern of the Three Crowns thrived. At that period the city was the foremost port of England, a town filled with adventurers, where sailors squandered or gambled away the hard-earned wages of weary voyages, where merchants trafficked in the wares of the whole world. It was the Mecca of those sturdy English lads who, their spirits filled with the passionate love of adventure that was to colonize the islands of the sea with an Anglo-Saxon race, left farms and shops to seek fame and fortune in far distant lands.

Recovering with an effort from his shock at sight of the gallows, Tom had passed down from the hill of execution into the streets of the city. Everywhere the inns were crowded, and refused him shelter. Hungry, dejected, and angry at his discourteous reception, he came at last to the Three Crowns, at the water's edge. Here, too, there was no bed, but in return for a portion of the rapidly dwindling contents of his purse he obtained food and permission to sleep at one of the tables in the taproom. After seven hours of broken slumber he now stretched his limbs, cramped by their awkward position, and rubbed his sleepy eyes. About him, the

room filled with guests of the inn, who clamored noisily for an early breakfast.

Tom had never seen such a motley crowd. There were sailors, leathery-visaged and watery-eyed, with profane tongues and unquenchable thirsts; bargemen, with pockets lined with the proceeds of their trade down the river; peddlers and traders come to Bristol to reload their packs, preparatory to shrewd bargaining with the frugal housewives of the rural districts; and, among the company, one or two fresh-faced lads whose cheeks, like his own, were ruddy as apples.

In one respect all were alike. From the peddlers, with their gnarled hardwood cudgels, to the sailors, each with pistol and cutlass, every man in the company was armed. A white-haired Scotsman, conversing in low tones with the innkeeper, carried in his belt the claymore of his race. Standing at a respectful distance behind the Scot, a West Indian mulatto toyed with the jeweled hilt of a Spanish broadsword, wrested, no doubt, from the clenched fingers of a dead hidalgo at the sack of some Spanish town.

Tom's glance fell with pride on his own rapier of Toledo steel, a weapon the equal of any in the room. Unlike the dueling swords of a generation later, its blade was razor-edged, and could slash as well as thrust. The rapier, nobly wielded in the service of King Charles during the civil war, was the only heritage left to young Heylin by his father, dead on the battlefield of Naseby.

During the rule of Cromwell, Tom had grown to manhood, gaining, with his mother, a bare existence from the well tilled English soil. Like other Cavalier families, the Heylins had greeted the restoration of the Stuarts with joy, hoping that their estate would be restored; but, except in the cases of a few favorites, Charles II did nothing to rebuild the shattered fortunes of his father's staunch supporters. Too proud to beg favors from the selfish monarch, the good Lady Heylin died poor, leaving to her son her husband's sword, an upright character, and an inherited zest for romantic adventure.

Like many another youth of the period, Tom believed that fortune awaited him in the fabulous lands beyond the sea. With a few gold pieces, the proceeds of his mother's scanty estate, he made haste to quit the quiet countryside for Bristol, the

city of opportunity. The dawn of his third day away from home found him in the tavern of the Three Crowns, with life before him—his assets, youth and a sword.

Among the noisy crew in the taproom one man stood out conspicuously. Six feet and three inches tall, John Middleton wore high-heeled boots that added at least another inch to his stature. His broad shoulders and powerful chest were out of all proportion to his long, slender thighs and calves, giving him the appearance of being top-heavy.

Because of the narrowness of his waist, bound tightly with a broad leather belt, and also because of the sting that was reputed to dwell in the thrust of the long rapier that hung at his side, Middleton was known to his companions as the Wasp—a title of which he was immoderately vain. Dressed in Cavalier style, with embroidered cloak and ruffled shirt, an ostrich plume nestling in the curled brim of his velvet hat, his gaudy presence seemed incongruous in the sordid company of the inn. A black mustache and equally black beard could not successfully hide the vertical scar across his lips and chin, where the thrust of a boarding pike had found a conspicuous mark in his cruel mouth.

Crossing the floor with a swinging stride, this man was hailed with a shout by a group of sailors at the table next to Tom's. Seating himself among the seamen, the Wasp began to speak in a low tone. His voice, slightly lisping because of two missing front teeth, was nevertheless sufficiently penetrating to reach Tom's ears.

"At eight to-night, on the ebb tide," were his words, evidently referring to the sailing time of some vessel.

The faces of the men lighted with enthusiasm. They lifted their ale mugs, which had just been filled.

"Good luck to L'Ollonois!" toasted the Wasp.

"Death to all Spaniards!" chorused the group, and drained their tankards.

These words, spoken in low tones, were none the less heartfelt, and impressed Tom as being a sort of ritual. He leaned forward with sparkling eyes, and encountered the fierce glance of the Wasp.

The giant rose from his bench, towering above the youth.

"Who set you there to spy on honest men?" he demanded, in a voice full of authority despite its lisp.

Boldly Tom returned the big man's stare. "I am no spy," he asserted fearlessly.

The Wasp's brow wrinkled into a frown. He laid hand on the hilt of his long sword. At the gesture, his men scrambled from their seats and for a moment Tom expected a concerted attack. He started back from the table, catching at the hilt of his rapier; but the Wasp suddenly relinquished his own weapon, and burst into a peal of loud laughter, doubly startling because it was entirely unexpected. With his clenched fist he smote the table before him a blow that made the ale mugs dance.

"Your pardon, lad," he said. "I took you for a bumpkin that would handle a sword as he would a hoe, and did but try you to see your spirit. Now that I know your temper, I am satisfied. Come, join me in a mug of ale!"

With a wave of his hand the giant indicated a vacant seat at his table.

This sudden change of attitude bewildered Tom. He was at a loss whether to accept or refuse the proffered hospitality, and hesitated, with his hand still grasping his sword hilt.

"Come, lad!" urged the Wasp, who marked Tom's hesitation. "Surely you hold no ill feelings for a hasty action!"

The harsh voices of the Wasp's companions seconded his invitation. Tom took note of these men. They were not of a class that he would voluntarily choose for his associates. There were six in the group, all fierce-faced and ugly, but varying in stages of dirty disreputableness.

One, in particular, repelled Tom by his appearance. This was an undersized, wizened-faced, black-bearded man, fifty years old or thereabouts, whose fierce little eyes and protruding lower teeth gave him the look of a rat. Instinctively Tom shuddered at the fellow's cruel expression. Then, determined to adjust himself as best he might to his surroundings, he thrust aside his feelings of repulsion, forced a smile, and nodded acceptance to the Wasp's invitation.

He found a place between two of the men, and seated himself, while the leader ordered ale for the company. As they drank to the toast: "Our new comrade," the Wasp leaned forward and whispered in Tom's ear.

"Lad, would you like to join the Brethren?" he asked.

"What brethren?" inquired Tom, perplexed; for the only brethren he could

think of were those of the cowl, and he had no aspirations for the cloister.

"My comrades and I are of the company known as Brethren of the Coast," continued the Wasp, in a still lower tone. "It is of them that I speak."

Tom's glance fell dubiously upon the assembled group. Never had he seen companions that he fancied less. They seemed agreeable enough for the moment, but he felt that their good behavior was assumed for his benefit. The Wasp surmised the trend of Tom's thought, and, without allowing him an opportunity to speak, continued his questioning.

"Have you never heard of L'Ollonois?" he asked.

Tom shook his head.

"L'Ollonois is our commander. A Frenchman born, he hates the Spaniard worse than we English. Under his flag there is fame in plenty and gold for the asking. I am gathering a crew to join his fleet, and there is still room aboard for a likely lad such as yourself. What say you? Good food, little work, a tilt with the Don, and your purse lined with money—a great chance for you, boy!"

At the thought of fighting the Spaniard, England's natural foe, Tom's face brightened. Then he remembered that just at present England and Spain were at peace. He recalled the seven men whom he had seen hanging by the roadside, and shuddered a little.

"I do not care for a piratical cruise!" he exclaimed.

The Wasp's brow darkened. He drew a crackling parchment from beneath the folds of his cloak, and extended it toward the lad.

"Look," he said. "I hold the king's commission!"

Tom looked, and saw the great seal of England. With awe he read the magic words:

CHARLES THE SECOND, by the grace of God King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, etc., To our trusty and well beloved Captain John Middleton, commander of the ship Willing Mind, or to any other, commander for the time being, greeting.

The youth's enthusiasm began to kindle. If Captain Middleton had the king's permission to prey on Spanish commerce, there could be no harm in joining the expedition. Here was adventure thrusting itself upon him. He looked again at the Wasp's com-

panions, and they appeared less villainous than before.

John Middleton well knew the unfavorable impression that his sailormen had made upon the youth, and with all the skill at his command he strove to win Tom's favor. Employing a natural gift of eloquence, he painted a glowing picture of that strange group of men, the buccaneers of the West Indies.

He admitted that they were rough and uncouth—attributes which he blamed upon the harshness of their calling; but he softened his admission by dwelling upon their acknowledged bravery, their skill with sword and pistol, their loyalty to one another. He pointed out that they were voluntary followers of their captains, and that their leaders could be deposed whenever a majority of the men demanded a new chief. He explained their code of ethics in a manner to please the fancy of his listener, and had little difficulty in bringing Tom to believe that their primary motive was war on the hated Spaniard.

He called them the Brethren of the Coast, and represented them as a patriotic organization banded together to promote the welfare of England in the Spanish colonies. According to him, plunder was only incidental. He described L'Ollonois as a hater of the Spaniard and as one who held the respect of his men by courage and ability. He neglected to mention the acts of cruelty that had so blighted the career of the fierce Frenchman.

The Wasp saw that his words allured the lad, and he made haste to drive them home.

"To-night, at the hour of eight, the good ship Willing Mind weighs anchor on the ebb tide," he said eagerly. "What say you? Will you be on board?"

Tom hesitated. His native caution warned him against believing all the glowing words in the Wasp's invitation. He must not leap at the first opportunity that presented itself.

Middleton saw that the youth was deliberating, and allowed him time in which to make his decision. Turning to the seamen, the captain pointed them out in turn as Rolfe, Marlowe, Cox, Henshaw, Paisley, and Luscombe.

"Englishmen all," he said. "Good men and true!"

Luscombe—he of the ratlike countenance—impressed Tom as being the most intelligent of the lot, also the most un-

scrupulous. He acknowledged the Wasp's pointing finger with an evil wink and an impudent pull at a scraggly forelock that dangled down over his brow from an unkempt mass of tangled hair. The rest with one accord accepted Tom as one of themselves, and called for another round of drinks. Once more they drank to the toast of the Wasp.

"L'Ollonois!" he whispered.

And, with Tom looking on, sorely tempted to join them, the men repeated the phrase:

"Death to all Spaniards!"

## II

THE rattle of pots and pans and the odor of cooking announced the preparation of breakfast, and Tom, for one, was not sorry to know that his hunger would soon be appeased. By this time the taproom was filled with men. They crowded at the tables, jostling elbows and exchanging curses, all the while stamping impatiently as they waited for the meal.

At the table that Tom had abandoned when he accepted the Wasp's invitation, eight new arrivals were now seated. They were a mixed company, six mulattoes and two whites. The older white man, a broad-shouldered Scotsman named Rawlinson, was a planter from Jamaica, and the black-haired youth at his side resembled him so closely that their relationship would at once be set down as that of father and son. In his ship, the *Royal Hope*, Rawlinson had brought from the West Indies a cargo of sugar—the first that had ever been imported in quantity from the New World.

For some time he and his son had been talking together in low tones, and the subject of their conversation was the Wasp.

"I like not the manner in which yonder big fellow seeks to lure the lad into his clutches," the boy was saying to his father.

Young Rawlinson was a slender youth, and could not have been more than eighteen or nineteen years of age. His wider experience made him look older than Tom, although in reality Heylin was the senior by two years.

The white-haired Scot shrugged his shoulders at the youth's remark. He was less sympathetic than his son.

"Let him take care of himself," he said. "My hands are full watching over my own offspring in this foul city!"

"But, father, you need men for honest



employment as much as that pirate needs them for his ill trade. Why not offer him a berth with us?"

The father shook his head.

"Meddle not with the Wasp," he warned. "He has an evil reputation."

But the lad was not satisfied. He contrived to push his stool nearer to Tom's, and in a low whisper tried to make Heylin realize his danger.

"Watch thyself!" he murmured.

At the moment Tom was absorbed in listening to a tale told by one of the mariners, and he did not hear the warning; but it did not escape the keen ears of the Wasp. He leaned toward young Rawlinson with fury in his eyes, and breathed an obscene threat into the boy's ear. A flush of blood suffused the young Scot's face, and he laid hand on the hilt of his rapier. The father grasped the son's elbow, but the youth shook off the restraint and drew his sword with lightninglike speed. Instantly the Wasp leaped to his feet.

Knowing his son's skill with the rapier, the planter would have felt little fear had the boy been pitted against a swordsman of ordinary ability; but the strength and size of the Wasp, and his reputation as a duelist, alarmed the old Scot. He sprang from his seat, with the intention of preventing the threatened encounter; but a passage of arms between skilled swordsmen offered a pleasing diversion to the guests of the tavern, and, before he could act, the men, eager to see the duel, had pushed back the tables and formed a living ring around the Wasp and his youthful adversary. Rawlinson sighed in resignation, but drew his claymore and stood alert, ready to interfere should an opportunity offer.

At the first sign of a brawl, Lombard, the innkeeper, rushed forward from his place in front of the fire.

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" he shouted, vainly trying to prevent the encounter.

Half a dozen strong arms thrust him to one side, as the spectators crowded against the tables to allow the swordsmen room.

At the outset the crowd divided itself into two factions. Tom, considering himself a member of the Wasp's party, took sides with the giant at first; but when he saw how unequal was the impending combat, his partisanship unconsciously shifted to young Rawlinson.

The first fierce rush of the Wasp cramped the youth back against the tables, and he

fought entirely on the defensive, parrying the big man's deadly thrusts with quick movements of the wrist, impossible for the eye to follow. It seemed as if at any moment the Wasp's darting rapier would transfix the skillful young Scot, whose cheeks were flushed through their tan, and whose black eyes sparkled with the excitement of combat.

Tom had never seen a real duel, and he edged in close to the fighting pair, breathless with interest. There came a lump into his throat as he saw the slender lad's danger, and suddenly he found himself hating the Wasp with a black and deadly hatred. The duel was unfair—a mere boy against a man!

A murmur of admiration arose as the young Scot continued his impenetrable defense. The Wasp, who had thought to end the quarrel in half a dozen quick passes, was angered by his inability to score, and continued to press the fighting; but such a pace could not long be maintained even by one of his powerful physique. After a few moments of furious attack, he began to slow down.

To the astonishment of the onlookers, the lad began to counter at once. A gleam of pride appeared in the old Scot's bright eyes as he saw his son take the offensive. Young Rawlinson's lightning thrusts darted like an adder's tongue, and from their fury the giant backed away in dread.

Tom found himself shouting with the planter's men as he witnessed the brilliancy of the lad's attack. Back and still back, until he in turn was forced against the tables, the Wasp gave ground. Suddenly the point of the young Scot's rapier flashed through the big man's guard, and a fleck of blood appeared on the Wasp's breast.

A shout from the planters greeted the crimson stain, but the wound was a scratch only, and, cursing with rage, the giant closed in once more. A single spark flashed from the steel as the rapiers clashed. The two swords seemed to unite in a fierce embrace of exchanging thrusts.

And then, suddenly, that which the elder Rawlinson had feared came to pass. The boy's wrist lacked the strength to withstand a sudden wrench of the captain's arm, and his rapier, torn from his fingers, hurtled across the width of the room. So great was its propulsive force that the slender blade passed between two men in the circle and stuck point foremost in the wainscoting,

where, like a blackbird on a reed, the hilt swayed slowly up and down.

With triumph in his eye and murder in his heart, the Wasp leaped on the defenseless youth, to spit him like a fowl. Old Rawlinson uttered a cry that was almost a scream, and sprang forward, but he was too far away to foil the cowardly thrust. But for Tom, the duel would have had a tragic ending.

More and more, as the fight progressed, Tom's favor had shifted to the side of the young Scot. He had shouted when the lad's sword drew blood, and his heart had skipped a beat when young Rawlinson was disarmed. Now, as the Wasp rushed murderously upon his helpless adversary, Tom leaped forward. There was no time to draw his rapier, but with the sheathed weapon he dashed the blow aside.

At the sudden approach of death the Scottish youth's face had paled, but he did not give ground. Rather he presented his breast to the thrust. Now, as the danger passed, he flashed a look of gratitude at Heylin that made Tom thrill with pleasure.

Enraged at Tom's interference, the Wasp turned upon the lad with his naked rapier. Then, thinking better of such an action, he sheathed his sword and shrugged his shoulders. His passion vanished as quickly as it had risen.

His men, however, angered by the sight of their leader's blood, were eager for revenge. They began to crowd roughly against the planter's followers. Loud words passed, and hands were laid to sword hilt and cutlass. A general brawl threatened; but here the innkeeper interfered.

"John Middleton," he shouted, trying to make his voice authoritative, "cease thy quarrel, or I will call the watch!"

The threat was an empty one, for the watch would have gone to the other end of the city had they suspected a fight in the Three Crowns; but it had the effect of quelling for a moment the rising blood lust that was creeping into the hearts of the angry men. Knowing that he had stopped the danger for an instant only, Lombard took advantage of the lull to cry: "Breakfast, gentlemen!"

Such was the nature of his guests that they forgot their quarrel in the desire to satisfy their hunger. In the manner of wolves the men devoured their food, washing it down with copious drafts of old-fashioned English ale. There was no sound

in the taproom save the clash of knives and crockery, the rattle of ale mugs and pewter platters.

### III

THE excitement of watching the duel had given zest to Tom Heylin's appetite. He ate the coarse food on his platter as if it were of the best, scarcely noting that the meat lumps in his stew were half cooked and salty, or that his bread was soggy with moisture. From time to time he glanced toward the youth at the next table whose spectacular swordsmanship had filled him with admiration.

Young Rawlinson had retrieved his rapier from the wainscoting, and now sat beside his father, with whom he conversed in low tones. Save for the slight flush of excitement that reddened his cheeks beneath their tan, he seemed to have forgotten his recent encounter with the Wasp. In repose, the lad appeared to Tom a mere child. His slender figure, graceful but undeveloped, his jet-black hair, worn longer than was usual, gave him an appearance that was almost girlish. Tom had never seen a handsomer youth.

The planter, like his son, was tall and straight, with a skin darkened by the tropical sun, but his shoulders were broader than the boy's, and his hair was snow-white. The slight smile that dwelt in the corners of his mouth as he bent toward the lad at his side was so kindly that it won Tom's heart. He unconsciously contrasted Rawlinson with the Wasp, deciding in that moment his answer to the giant's invitation without realizing the reasons that drove him to his choice.

At the same instant the leader of the Brethren turned away from his empty platter, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

"Well, lad, have you decided?" he asked in a friendly manner, as if certain of Tom's reply.

"I have," answered Tom.

"And what is the decision?"

"I thank you, but I will not ship with you."

A wave of angry blood darkened the giant's face. He had already lowered himself in his own estimation by spending so much time in trying to interest this youth in his proposition, and to be rebuffed awoke his darkest passions. He sprang to his feet, kicking away his stool. Partly prepared

for the Wasp's burst of temper, Tom leaped back, drawing his sword.

Still smoldering in the fiery glances that passed from time to time between the seamen and the planters, hatred between the two factions had grown steadily stronger during the progress of the meal. It needed only a spark to fan the embers of mutual hate into a blaze of conflict.

The elder Rawlinson, especially, fumed at the result of his son's duel. He smarted over the boy's defeat, regretting that he himself had not taken up the quarrel for the honor of the family. Out of the corner of his eye he had watched the Wasp's movements as a cat watches a mouse. Now, when the giant leaped up and rushed at Tom, the planter sprang from his stool and shouldered the Wasp aside.

Snarling with rage, the buccaneer turned on his new adversary. He stood five inches taller than the veteran Scot, but the naked claymore in the older man's grasp, and the glint of fire in his eye, somewhat curbed the Wasp's impetuosity. He remembered the skill of the son, and hesitated to attack the father.

As before, a ring of spectators instantly formed around the prospective combatants. The Wasp's eye, hastily traveling the circumference of the circle, saw in the eager faces of his companions that he would lose caste should he attempt to avoid the threatened encounter.

Rawlinson's lip curled scornfully as he marked the giant's hesitation.

"What?" he taunted. "Do you fight only with children?"

Stung by the words, the Wasp leaped forward, and his rapier struck fire from the edge of the Scot's broad claymore.

Tom, who considered himself fully competent to care for his own quarrels, was ill pleased at the planter's interference, but, shouldered aside by eager spectators, he was powerless to prevent it. With drawn rapier he stood on the inner edge of the circle and watched the progress of the fight.

Rawlinson's skill and the weight of his sword more than offset the long reach of the Wasp, and twice his claymore drank of the seaman's blood. Goaded to a reckless fury by his wounds, the giant began to force the fighting, pressing savagely forward. At the fierce attack, Rawlinson gave ground, and the circle of spectators swayed back to allow the swordsmen room.

A luckless sailor stumbled over a stool

that came sliding across the floor from beneath the feet of his companions. He pitched forcefully against a dark-skinned mulatto — one of Rawlinson's men — who, with neatness and despatch, inserted a long knife between two of the seaman's ribs. The thrust was deadly. With a scream of mortal agony the wretched man staggered back against the wall, both hands clutching his breast, a crimson stream spurting out between his fingers. He swayed unsteadily for a moment, and then, his face horribly distorted by pain, he collapsed like an empty sack on the tiled floor.

In retaliation, the keen edge of a cutlass slashed deep into the face of the man who had struck the knife blow. Some one fired a pistol, and in a moment seven deadly combats were being waged in the narrow spaces between the taproom tables.

Landlord, peddlers, and traders fled at the moment the fight became general, leaving the field clear to the two factions, which were evenly divided. Much against his will, Tom found himself arrayed on the side of the Wasp, being forced to parry the furious attack of the mulatto with the Spanish broadsword who had singled him out at the beginning of the fray.

Another pistol exploded, and this, together with the shouts of the combatants and the clangor of steel on steel, like the hammering of blacksmiths on a dozen anvils, filled the room with a bedlam of noise. The heavy cutlasses of the seamen, glancing on the fine steel of rapiers, struck forth showers of sparks. A table fell with a crash, and from behind this defense two of the planter's men thrust fiercely into the faces of the buccaneers. The taproom filled with powder smoke, and its acrid fumes gave the flavor of hell to the uproar.

All his life Tom had practiced with the rapier. To become a master of fence he had fought with buttoned point against any and all swordsmen who could be induced to devote a moment to his instruction; but this was the first time he had ever fought with naked sword, and he found it far different from a practice bout.

The sight of blood, the smell of gunpowder, and, above all, an uncontrollable impulse to return the stare of the dead seaman's glazing eyes from the spot where the wretch's body lay crumpled against the wall, prevented him from putting forth his best skill. Not until a scratch on the shoulder warned him of the seriousness of the

affair did he begin to make use of his fencing knowledge. Then his wrist stiffened, and his rapier suddenly became a thing of life.

The light of victory died out of the mulatto's eyes as he found himself placed on the defensive. Beneath a shower of blows, a hurricane of thrusts, he retreated to the wall, with Tom's writhing sword threatening every instant to pierce his dark-skinned body. A fierce thrust was barely turned, and the needle point of Tom's rapier slashed his forearm from wrist to elbow. The mulatto shrieked with pain and dropped his sword, crying for mercy.

With the disarming of his adversary, the combat was over as far as Tom was concerned. He had fought in self-defense, and was greatly relieved that the encounter with the mulatto had ended without more serious result.

It was plain that Rawlinson had taught swordsmanship to his men as well as to his son, for the slender swords and the superior skill of the planters had worsted the buccaneers. Of the seamen's party only the leader himself continued the struggle. The rest, with the exception of Tom, had asked and received quarter, and now nursed their wounds, painfully watching the subjugation of the Wasp. Bleeding from half a dozen desperate cuts, the chief fought on, but he fought a losing fight, which Tom saw could not long be continued. Threatened with surrender or death, he was saved by an interruption.

The hostelry of the Three Crowns, while no worse than most taverns of its day, bore an unsavory reputation with the magistrates of Bristol. In the sudden outbreak of violence Lombard saw the possible suppression of his place of business, and, in order to put himself on record as having done all that he could to keep the peace, he fled from the taproom at the beginning of the *mêlée*, to inform the watch. Although none knew better than he the cowardice of Bristol's police force, he hoped that a display of authority might restore order.

The innkeeper stepped into the narrow, ill paved street before the tavern door at the same moment that a dozen sailors entered it from the water front, where a forest of masts and spars outlined itself against the gray of the morning sky. The sight of Lombard running from the inn was enough to inform the group of seamen that

something out of the ordinary was afoot. As the innkeeper turned away from his door and began to flee toward the center of the city, the sailors broke into a run, racing with their best speed over the uneven cobblestones.

From the tavern doorway, left open by Lombard in his flight, came the sounds of conflict. The sailors, eager to stand by their fellow seamen regardless of the justice of the quarrel, burst into the taproom just in time to save the Wasp from the planter's claymore.

In the face of this reinforcement the planters were compelled to forego their victory. Abandoning their wounded prisoners, they retreated in good order to the stairs that led to the sleeping rooms above, falling back with reluctance, for they were flushed with success. But for Rawlinson's wise counsel, they would have stood their ground and met the Wasp's new allies with defiance.

At the head of the stairs one of the mulattoes turned suddenly. From the folds of a crimson sash, worn around his waist, he snatched a loaded pistol, and, resolved to have the last shot, discharged it in the general direction of the crowd in the doorway. Poor Tom Heylin, standing in the line of fire, saw a blinding burst of light. Then blackness descended upon him, and he knew no more.

#### IV

In the seventeenth century the crown of maritime supremacy, long disputed by Spain, was gradually becoming more firmly fixed upon the fair brow of Britain. The little island off the coast of France was growing into a giantess upon whose empire the sun would never set; and, in the beginnings of her world-wide trade, Bristol, standing at the gateway to the western ocean, was her bright and morning star.

Bristol's commerce was with the ports of the seven seas. In her harbor gathered the fleets of the world. Crowding her wharves, the fishing sloop from the Orkneys bumped bows with its Norwegian rival. In her roadstead anchored the merchant fleet of Portugal. Even Venice, once Queen of the Adriatic, but now sinking into maritime oblivion, was there represented by more than one stately galleass; but the bulk of her trade was with the New World, and British vessels, British-manned, formed the mass of her shipping.



Among the ships in Bristol harbor it would have been hard to find a more disreputable vessel than John Middleton's Willing Mind. She lay at anchor in mid Severn, with her bow pointing down the broad estuary, and on either side the tide water slipped sluggishly past. Where the muddy flow touched her hull, a dark line encircled the vessel, as if mere contact with its timbers caused pollution. More than one cargo of crudely tanned hides had rotted in her hold, and a horrible smell still clung to her every part. Her sails had been torn and patched, and retorn and re-patched, in so many places that it was hard to tell where old canvas left off and new began. Her spars and rigging hung awry, and slackly coiled rope littered her slimy deck. She offended the eye and the nose; and yet, beneath her veneer of dirt and filth, the graceful lines of her build proclaimed to the seaman redeeming qualities of speed and stanchness.

Near at hand, swinging lightly at her anchor, Rawlinson's ship, the Royal Hope, with white canvas stowed neatly on her trim yards, and with decks well scrubbed, plainly illustrated the difference between the masters of the two vessels. Could Tom Heylin have contrasted the ships as he had their captains, his choice would have been more easily formed. It was well for his peace of mind that he was still unconscious when the Wasp's men brought him aboard and dumped him, like a bundle of hides, through a hatchway into a miserable corner of the crowded hold.

The bullet from the mulatto's pistol had glanced along his skull and made an ugly wound, painful, but, with proper care, not serious. A strip of coarse cloth did service as an improvised bandage around his head, but the shock of his fall into the hold had jarred it loose, and the wound had started to bleed afresh.

For an hour Tom lay where he fell, and dreamed age-long dreams. He dreamed that he was being hanged for piracy, and stood in fancy beneath a gibbet, watching with fascinated eyes while a noose was adjusted about his throat with the exact nicety that would make it pull properly when the cart in which he stood was driven out from under him. He came to his senses before the driver whipped up the horses, but so startlingly vivid was the dream that he could still feel the rough fiber of the rope around his neck.

He lifted a trembling hand and touched the misplaced bandage, stiff with dried blood. An army of rats, which were investigating Tom from curiosity, not hunger, scampered away as he stirred and awoke.

His bewildered fancy led him slowly from dream to reality. The vision of the gibbet gone, he imagined himself still in the tavern of the Three Crowns. For a moment the intangible darkness filled with a confused mass of fighting men, as the brawl in the taproom flitted through his wandering mind. His temples ached and throbbed, preventing him from thinking coherently. He groaned and murmured, in a voice that he could barely recognize as his own, the old, old exclamation of returning consciousness:

"Where am I?"

The timbers of the ship gave back no reply. He sat up, and the effort redoubled the pounding in his brain. He had been lying on a pile of moldy canvas sacks that had once contained salted beef, and the stench of the filthy rags in the foul air of the hold nauseated him. Beneath his body the planking seemed to move erratically—a fact which he at first attributed to his dizziness. Then, suddenly, the conviction swept over him that he was on shipboard and at sea.

A thousand times in the past he had lain awake at night, or had daydreamed in the fields, visioning the golden future, when he would be embarked on some stanch ship. Always his dreams had been rosy-hued. In fancy he had enjoyed the calm nights that would be his when his dreams were realized, with the bright stars of the Southern Cross, which had been described to him, but which he had never seen, shining gloriously overhead. In fancy he had delighted in the fresh breeze bringing the salty fragrance of spray to his nostrils.

In all his daydreaming the sky had been a soft blue, the only clouds those banks of fleece that foretell fair weather. Not once had he imagined darkness as absolute as that in which he now found himself. Never, in his worst nightmares, had he dreamed that a ship could smell like this. He felt for his sword. It was gone.

He grew sick in heart as well as in body, and despair, that black phantom of solitude, almost overwhelmed him. He fought to regain the mastery of himself, and struggled weakly to his feet. His groping hands touched the rounding side of the ship.

Slowly he moved forward, counting the vessel's ribs. Four paces, and he brought up against an insurmountable barrier of bales and packages.

He turned at right angles and staggered on a few steps more, until his extended fingers encountered the smooth, round surface of a mast. Here the tiers of bales forced him to make another abrupt turn. Again four paces to a wall of boxes. Another sharp angle, and the circuit of his gloomy prison was completed. The place could not be more than twelve feet square, and as far as he could conjecture there was no way out.

He stretched a hand upward, standing on tiptoe, but touched nothing. The act of reaching up dizzied him, and he dropped to his original position upon the pile of bagging. As he leaned back on one elbow, his shoulder struck against an upright timber standing in the exact center of the open space where he lay. He turned quickly, and investigated the obstacle with eager fingers. The sense of touch told him that he had found a sort of ladder, a rough makeshift of wooden crosspieces nailed firmly to a single spar.

Summoning all his strength, Tom drew himself upright, and attempted to place a foot on the lowest cleat. At the effort his head swam with nausea, and bright specks of light began to dance before his eyes. He sank to his knees, still clasping the ladder with both arms.

Tom's situation would have caused many an older man's heart to quail. Painfully wounded, cramped into dismal quarters in the hold of an unknown ship, with the frightful odor of rotting leather rank in his nostrils, and with seasickness coming on, he faced the darkest moment that he had ever known. Cowardice resigns to despair. Bravery fights on. Tom had lost his father's sword—a loss that was in itself dishonor; but youth, his chief asset, remained. He recalled a saying of his mother's.

"The only irreparable loss is the loss of courage," she had often told him; and hope revived in his breast.

From the deck above there came to his ears the sound of scuffling feet. Then the hatch slid back with a harsh grating, and a flood of sunshine poured downward, blinding the prisoner with its sudden glare. Loud voices rose in profane altercation. There came the sound of a blow, and a fall-

ing body swept Tom backward to the polluted canvas. The hatch closed suddenly, and darkness impenetrable settled once more over the gloomy hold.

Darkness, but not silence, for a man's voice, shrill with passion, cursed long and fluently. Tom listened in amazement to the tirade, for the burst of profanity continued until the blasphemer must have been black in the face. When the flow of words ceased as abruptly as it had begun, Tom spoke.

"What ship is this?" he asked.

An inarticulate exclamation answered Tom's question. The newcomer was evidently gasping for breath.

"What ship?" he repeated at last, when he had recovered voice. His tone was somewhat softer than what he had just been using, but its inflection was scornful and full of bitterness. "What ship? Why, you misguided fool, you are in the same boat with me, Job Stanton, who thought he knew enough of the wiles of these sailormen to keep clear of their clutches! To think that I should fall into their hands like the veriest bumpkin, such as yourself! I saw you carried between them like a sack of oats, and truly it is a judgment on me that I put forth no hand to offer rescue. Did I call *you* fool? Nay, you are not the fool, for you knew no better; but I—I am the greatest fool since Jonah!"

Again he began to curse and to swear. When this second storm of profanity blew itself out, Tom spoke once more.

"But where are we?" he asked.

Stanton's look of scorn was wasted on the darkness.

"Where do you think?" he asked.

"On some ship," ventured the lad.

"*On some ship!* Ye gods, what an idiot! On some ship! Aye, that we are, and like to spend many a weary day at the task of sailing ere we see Merry England again. We have been jugged, kidnaped, impressed by a rascally long-legged fellow that calls himself the Wasp. Indeed it is a fitting name, for we have been well stung!"

At mention of the Wasp, Tom brightened. He recalled the giant's promises, and the situation seemed to clear.

"I know the Wasp," he said.

"So do I, lad, and a miserable buccaneer he is, too!"

"Buccaneer?" queried Tom.

The term was a new one to him, and meant nothing.

Stanton uttered an impatient exclamation. Then, as if the full ignorance of the country-bred youth had just dawned on him, he went on to explain.

"Buccaneer is the term the French give to those fellows in the West Indies who cure beef by smoking it over a fire of green twigs. Curing beef and selling hides was not profitable enough for John Middleton, so he turned pirate."

"He is no pirate," protested Tom. "He has the king's commission to fight against the Spaniards."

Stanton laughed a disagreeable laugh.

"The king's commission amounts to nothing. Why, look you, I'll wager my chances of escape against yours that he will attack an English ship as quickly as he will a Spaniard, if he thinks there will be booty enough, and if the crew do not defend themselves too well. I have known this man for years, and he is the most dishonest trader out of Bristol!"

Tom was convinced that what the stranger said was true, but he did not like to back down too easily. He made one more effort to speak a good word in favor of the Wasp.

"His men are called the Brethren of the Coast," argued the youth. "They swear eternal friendship one to another, and when one dies he makes the rest his heirs."

"I see that the Wasp has talked to you, my lad. He has a smooth tongue, but for a handful of coppers he would slit your throat, and mine into the bargain. I love gold well enough to have joined the Brethren before this, had I not known that they are everything save what their name should imply."

Tales of the buccaneers were familiar enough to Stanton. The exploits of Pierre le Grand and Bartholomew Portuguez were at his tongue's end. The facts and the fables of L'Ollonois's career were well known to him, and he proceeded to give Tom such a picture of the real character of those strange and lawless men that the youth shuddered at their deeds of blood.

"However," said Stanton, in conclusion, "we are with them now, and there is little chance of escape. Unless we join their ranks and agree to pay them a fat ransom from our share of the booty, they will sell us like sheep or cut our throats without a quiver. A far better fate to be a pirate, and earn freedom in a single cruise, than die beneath the knife or sweat out a lifetime

under the lash of some dog of a sugar planter!"

Poor Tom, suffering from weakness caused by loss of blood, was in no condition to argue or decide a question of ethics. Stanton's bloody tale sickened him of the sea. All that he longed for was the feel of firm ground beneath his feet and the freshness of unpolluted air in his nostrils. He vowed to himself that, once ashore, he would never venture upon the sea again.

After his elucidation of their predicament, Stanton fell silent, and Tom, his head throbbing with every pulse beat, felt no inclination to disturb the quiet of the hold. From time to time noises overhead came faintly to their ears, but for the most part all was still.

As the day wore on without further interruption, Tom felt an increasing lassitude creep over him. Making no effort to fight off his drowsiness, he fell at length into a sort of stupor that could hardly be called sleep, but which resembled it so closely that he had no conception of the flight of time. This period of semiconsciousness lasted throughout the greater part of the afternoon, and he was only faintly aware of his surroundings when the hatch was once more removed and a supply of food thrown into the hold, much as an animal trainer tosses the daily ration to his caged lions.

Had Tom been more fully awake, he might have taken note that his companion was a man of thirty-five or forty years of age, thin, but wiry-framed, with shrewd eyes and the pale face of one who spends many hours of the day indoors. Selfish and sly, a born stool pigeon, Job Stanton was already scheming to make use of his peculiar talents to the best benefit of himself, and of himself alone; but even he was moved to pity the unfortunate condition of his comrade in misery. Taking advantage of the moment's light when the hatch cover was removed, he bent over Tom's fever-flushed countenance and adjusted the blood-stained bandage that had slipped down over his face.

As the hatch was replaced, Tom stirred restlessly.

"Water!" he murmured.

There was a supply of brackish liquid with the food that had been thrown down, and Stanton tilted the jug to Tom's parched lips. The youth drank, and fell back into his stupor.

Later—how much later he did not know

—Tom was aroused by the rattling of blocks, hoarse calls of command, and the noise of feet scraping on the deck overhead. He heard the creaking of anchor chains, and felt the freer movement of the ship as yards squared away and she headed slowly into the stream. A sudden spasm of seasickness added itself to the totals of his ills as the vessel rolled slightly to the tidal swell. In the darkness he heard Stanton muttering to himself. The words "Willing Mind," followed by a snort of disgust, reached the youth's ears. The bitter travesty of the ship's name forced itself upon him. Willing Mind, indeed!

## V

HOURS passed. To Tom it seemed a decade since he had seen the light of day. Out of the darkness came strange sounds, meaningless to his inexperienced ears. The scampering of rats, which he had heard at first, was succeeded by the swish and splash of bilge water as the ship got under way. Timbers creaked. Ropes, tightening under some sudden strain, protested raspily. The cargo, settling more firmly into place, squeaked like a hundred rusty hinges.

Invisible confusion seemed to emanate from all parts of the vessel. Adding to Tom's discomfort, the floor beneath his feet took on a pronounced slant.

And then, suddenly, the hatch slid back. This time no welcome sunlight shone down into the hold, for it was now dark night; but far overhead gleamed a myriad of stars, glittering like jewels of promise to Tom's aching eyes.

A harsh voice called downward:

"Tumble up here lively, knaves, or I'll strip the skin from your backs with this!"

Although they could not see it, "this" was a length of heavy rope with a knotted end. The threat was accompanied by a series of well measured blows on the cover of the hatchway—blows calculated to strike terror into the hearts of the listeners below.

It needed no admonition to send Stanton flying up the cleats, but Tom never knew just how he managed to scramble to the deck. As his head emerged into the fresh air, a rough hand seized the collar of his homespun jerkin and hauled him savagely through the hatch. A violent shove, accompanied by a blow from the rope's end, sent him sprawling upon the sloping boards. A lantern, held aloft by one of a group of men that surrounded the hatchway, showed

Tom the ratlike features of Luscombe grinning with pleasure at the result of the sailor's brutality.

Hot, bursting rage filled the youth's heart at such cruel treatment. He forgot that he was unarmed and faint from sickness and loss of blood. For a moment he gathered his strength, and then, like a wild cat, he sprang from the boards and launched himself at Luscombe's face.

The sudden attack took the seaman by surprise, and he staggered back, dropping his rope and losing his footing. But for the restraining arm of Stanton, both Tom and Luscombe would have fallen down the open hatch. As it was, Luscombe's falling body, with Tom on top, struck the deck a few inches away.

The advantage of surprise gave Tom all the best of the struggle at first, but his failing strength was not equal to the task of subduing the ratlike sailor. Besides, Luscombe did not long go without help. As the two men rolled over on the slippery deck, strong arms plucked the youth from his would-be victim, and he found himself securely pinioned in the powerful grasp of two muscular men.

Cursing with rage, Luscombe sprang to his feet, seized the rope's end, and began to belabor the helpless lad without mercy. The vicious blows raised a red welt wherever they struck, but Tom's physical endurance had been already strained to such a point that he scarcely felt their sting. He hung limply in the arms of his captors and made no outcry as the knotted cord descended thrice on his trembling body.

How long this punishment would have lasted without interference it is impossible to say, for Luscombe's ungovernable rage would doubtless have kept him at it until he was forced to pause from pure exhaustion. At the third blow, however, Watkins, the quartermaster of the Willing Mind—or, as he would be called on a vessel of to-day, the mate—interfered.

"That's enough, Luscombe," he ordered.

As the sailor, paying no attention to the command, raised his arm for another blow, the quartermaster followed up his order with a back-handed swing of his closed fist that struck Luscombe on the breast and sent him sprawling to the deck.

As the seaman fell, he dropped the rope, and his face, flushed with anger, paled suddenly under the glare of the upheld lantern. Like a cat he scrambled from the deck,



one hand clutching the handle of a long knife that protruded from the sash around his waist. He hesitated for a moment, with vengeful eyes fastened upon the quartermaster, and then let his hand drop empty to his side. He stooped and recovered the rope from the deck at his feet, hiding a look of hatred as he did so.

After the ill quarters of the hold, the fresh night air was a tonic to Tom, clearing his brain and restoring some of his strength. The grasp of his captors loosening, he looked up with curiosity upon the scene about him.

Under the influence of the land breeze, the ship moved briskly on a southerly course. To the eastward Tom could see the dark outlines of the shore, and for a moment he gazed longingly at the distant hills. Crowding on all sail, the *Willing Mind* careened sharply to starboard. In the taut rigging the wind sang a song new to Tom's ears. Above the deck, the bulging canvas showed white, all its imperfections lost in the shrouding night. Overhead, numberless stars studded the moonless sky. This was far more in accord with his dreams of life at sea than the gloomy prison of the hold had been.

By command of the *Wasp*, the crew were gathering about the foremast, and Tom, supported by Stanton, moved forward to the outskirts of the group. Temporarily his fever had departed, leaving him faint with only a single spot of color in each cheek. Buoyed up by excitement, he forgot his bodily discomforts in the interests of the moment.

Beneath the fitful glare of three lanterns that swung precariously from the rigging, the crew of the *Willing Mind* made a weird picture. One hundred and eighteen men—more than three times the number necessary to man the ship—clustered about the foremast and awaited the words of their commander. Drawn by the prospects of plunder, pickpockets and footpads mingled with the ungentlemanly sons of the lesser nobility, with ordinary seamen, and with buccaneers, to augment the crew of the *Willing Mind*. Some few had sailed with the *Wasp* before, but the majority were under his flag for the first time.

He stood, half leaning against the mast, in the center of a group of his most experienced seamen, with whom he held counsel in low tones. The marks of the morning's affray were still visible on his per-

son. One arm hung in a sling, and a broad bandage across his breast gleamed white through the open throat of his homespun shirt.

He had discarded his finery of the morning, and was dressed more in keeping with his position as captain of a privateer. In place of his Cavalier hat, with its white plume, his head was now covered with a black skullcap, close-fitting, and more serviceable for a ship's deck. Save for the authority of his carriage and his greater height, he might have been mistaken for a member of the crew.

As he turned to speak to the assembled men, Tom saw that he was armed to the teeth. Besides the long rapier at his side, his belt concealed the barrels of a brace of pistols and the blade of a silver-hilted knife. In addition to this, which should have been armament enough for one man, six small pistols, loaded and primed, hung suspended from his shoulders by ribbons of canvas.

Such a display of deadly weapons was astonishing, but it was also impressive. Thus armed, standing a head taller than any of his men, the *Wasp* looked a most warlike figure as he leaned against the mast and scanned with fiery eyes the faces of his motley crew. A respectful silence settled over the men as their captain began to speak.

"Brethren," he commenced, "like Drake, we sail to a world where Spanish gold is to be had for the taking. In Jamaica, doubloons and pieces of eight are as common as are pennies in Bristol. Good fortune awaits us. A single galleon, and we are rich. One expedition to the coast, and we load ourselves with gold and glory. Under L'Ollonois, Spanish blood will flow like water, to our great fame and the satisfaction of King Charles."

At mention of their sovereign's name, a shout ascended from the crew. The *Wasp* paused, well pleased at the effect of his harangue.

"Look!" he continued, pointing theatrically toward the receding coast line. "Yonder stand the hills of old England. While they are still in sight, we must sign the compact that shall make us truly brethren!"

Beside the mast stood an upended cask, and, as the *Wasp* spoke the word "brethren," two seamen dragged it beneath the fitful light of the swinging lanterns. A

third sailor appeared from the shadows with a horn of ink and a dozen newly pointed quills. A fourth, with a courtly genuflection that betrayed a knowledge of knightly mannerisms, extended to his captain a roll of crackling parchment.

The Wasp accepted the document and held it to the light. In his lisping but authoritative voice he began to read.

The compact, couched in high-sounding phrases, consisted of sixteen articles, and provided, or attempted to provide, for all contingencies that might arise among the so-called Brethren of the Coast. It prohibited quarrels, forbade the presence of women on board the ship, outlined the duties of officers and men, and provided for a fair distribution of the spoils of war. It sentenced those who broke its commandments to a stipulated number of blows with the lash, to marooning, or, in the most serious cases, to the more spectacular punishment of walking the plank.

The reading finished, the Wasp placed the document upon the head of the cask, which he used as a desk, dipped a quill in the inkhorn, and, with a flourish, affixed his signature to the covenant. The quartermaster, Watkins, stepped forward and signed his own name beneath the captain's.

One by one, the crew came forward, and those that could write inscribed their names, or the names that they bore at present, below the closely written wording of the sixteen articles. The illiterate—and they formed by far the larger part of the crew—scratched the parchment with rude crosses, beside which the quartermaster, acting now as clerk, inscribed their names.

As he stood on the outskirts of the group, Tom's false strength slowly slipped away. Long before it came his turn to sign the document, his fever returned, and he collapsed suddenly upon the deck. Stanton, attempting to enlist aid for the youth, was ordered to keep silence, and the signing continued. Last of all to sign, Job concealed his reluctance under a careless manner, and wrote his name with his most clerkly flourish, as if the signing of such a paper were an everyday affair to him.

Then, and then only, was notice taken of Tom. Watkins, bending over the lad to see if he were shamming, was suddenly touched by pity—an emotion that he had thought long dead in his hardened heart. Tom's white face recalled to the old buccaneer his own beginning in the pirate

trade. As a lad, he, too, had been kidnaped out of Bristol. In a softer voice than usual he ordered two men to carry Tom down into the forecabin.

The wind freshened, swaying the lanterns in the rigging, and threatening at any moment to clash them together. Flying spin-drift began to whip slantwise into the faces of the crew, as white-crested waves buffeted the vessel's bows. Black water gleamed treacherously in the yellow lantern rays, as the Willing Mind alternately rode the lifting swells and buried her nose in the rising seas. It was growing uncomfortable on deck, and the men began to murmur. The Wasp lifted his hand for silence.

"Brothers," he called, "let us drink to success!"

At his words, Watkins stepped forward, and with a single blow stove in the head of the cask upon which the articles had been signed. The cask was half filled with rum, and a generous allowance was served to each man. Holding aloft his brimming cup, the tall captain called the toast.

"To L'Ollonois!" he cried.

"Death to all Spaniards!" came the men's boisterous shout in response.

The crew scattered quickly to their quarters, some to the forecabin, others to the watch on deck. The Wasp retired to his cabin, to nurse his wounds. Watkins, with an eye to the threatening gale, shortened sail, and the routine of duty settled down on the privateer.

At that very moment, on the coast of Nicaragua, the wide open eyes of the pirate L'Ollonois stared out across the tossing waters of the Gulf of Mexico, his pallid lips parted in a grim mockery of the Brethren's recent toast. The chieftain's bloody head was mounted on a pike, and the scattered ashes of his tortured body mingled with the combers that broke ceaselessly upon the inhospitable shore.

## VI

IN the forecabin of the Willing Mind a single lantern, swaying to the motion of the ship, cast its fitful light over the narrow bunks where the members of the crew snored and slept. Creeping up from the hold, the rank odor of rotting hides mingled here with other smells to give to the place an atmosphere that was horribly vile.

In such squalor the life of Tom Heylin would have gone out during the night that

followed the signing of the compact, if it had not been for Watkins, the quartermaster. The sight of Tom's face awoke in the veteran buccaneer memories of an almost forgotten youth—memories that crowded from his mind the scenes of a crime-filled life. Pity softened the lines of the old buccaneer's mouth into the ghost of a tender smile. It was a strange angel of mercy that descended the fore-castle companion-way and stood beside Tom's bunk, watching the restless tossing of the fever-stricken lad.

After the fresh air on deck, the foul atmosphere oppressed the quartermaster. He placed a rough hand on Tom's hot, dry forehead. The lad moaned. Watkins shook his head. He realized that in this reeking place Tom's chances for recovery were few. With a rough hand he stirred two men from their slumber, and gave orders that Tom should be carried to the after cabin of the ship.

Grumbling unwillingly, the men complied, and placed the fever-ridden boy in the quartermaster's own berth. Here Watkins took charge, appointing himself the sick lad's nurse.

For three days Tom moaned and tossed in delirium. The Wasp, faintly amused at his quartermaster's solicitude for the welfare of an unknown youth, looked in upon the two from time to time, and made scornful suggestions relative to the behavior of wet nurses in general and Watkins in particular—all of which coarse banter Watkins received without apparent notice.

On the night of the third day Tom's life hung in the balance. For hours he had been talking in delirium, seemingly begging for something; but the mate, bending over the lad, strove in vain to comprehend his unintelligible words. After a time there came a moment when the boy grew calmer. In a faint whisper, barely audible to the listener's ears, Watkins thought that he distinguished two words—"sword" and "father."

From a wooden peg beside the Wasp's bunk Tom's rapier hung suspended, and quickly Watkins secured it. The youth's twitching fingers were opening and closing spasmodically, and the quartermaster placed the sheathed rapier's polished hilt in the nervous hand. The closing fingers tightened on the grip, and remained quiet. A fleeting smile stole across the boy's white face, and a sigh escaped his half closed lips.

Like a tired child, he fell into a dreamless sleep.

At daybreak, when Tom awoke, his fever had departed, leaving him weak, but in possession of his faculties. Beside him lay his sword, and he smiled with pleasure, for he faintly remembered that he had had difficulty in its recovery.

Attempting to lift the rapier, he was surprised at its weight. It seemed to have grown heavy during the night. He tried to sit up, but dizziness overwhelmed him, and he fell back on the bunk, closing his eyes. A harsh voice roused him.

"Feeling better, lad?"

Watkins's nursing had made its impression upon Tom's subconscious mind, and, looking up into the fierce face that bent above him, he was not in the least repelled by its unprepossessing aspect. He smiled with friendliness into the quartermaster's bearded visage, and murmured a weak reply.

Tom's recovery was rapid. His youthful strength returned quickly, and, sword in hand, he was ready to face the world once more.

And now there began for Tom an interesting if not particularly happy period. Life on the *Willing Mind* had settled into a regular routine during his time of sickness. In knowledge of his new duties, therefore, Tom found himself far behind other newcomers who had boarded the ship as ignorant as he; but the vessel was overmanned, and the work was light. In a few days he was sufficiently familiar with his new tasks to be assigned to the quartermaster's watch, and to take his place as a regular member of the crew.

His companions, whom he had expected to dislike and fear, he found to be after all very human individuals, coarser in their speech than he would have liked, less fastidious than he in the matter of personal cleanliness, but nevertheless with hopes and ambitions which, in the last analysis, were very similar to his own.

At first Tom's appetite suffered because of the quality of rations served on the privateer. Before the days of canned goods, beans and salt pork were the principal food staples of the sea, and he soon sickened of the monotonous diet. Then, too, the *Willing Mind*, having been a carrier of hides, was overrun with a particularly disgusting species of worm, which, besides inhabiting all parts of the vessel, dwelt more especially

in the ship's stores. Nauseated more than once, Tom learned to look before he ate.

In addition to the worms, rats and vermin infested the ship; but disease, which one would have thought impossible to exclude under such conditions, was practically nonexistent. With the exception of scurvy, which only appeared late in the voyage, and which the crew accepted as a matter of course—a malady to be rid of soon as they reached land—there was no sickness on the *Willing Mind*.

Watkins's treatment of Tom during his sickness had given the youth an impression that the quartermaster took a kindly interest in him; but after his recovery no such interest was apparent. Like the captain, the quartermaster held himself aloof from the men. Officers and crew had no interest in common, save the sailing of the ship and the hope for plunder. The democracy that Tom had looked for—because of the covenant which all but he had signed—did not in reality exist.

The Wasp was absolute master of the vessel, exercising his authority by ordering a flogging for the most trivial breach of the ship's discipline. On such occasions Luscombe, chosen by the captain to apply the lash, was in his glory. He delighted in causing pain, never easing the force of his blows, even when the victim was one of his own mates with whom he had been most friendly.

Among the Brethren practice with the sword was a favorite occupation, and in this exercise Tom joined with delight. At straight fence he more than held his own against the best swordsmen of the ship, but with the cutlass at close quarters, where cut and slash alternated with quick thrusts, he was outclassed. The bouts were fought with blunted weapons, but the buccaneers fought fiercely, and wounds were frequent. Tom's skin was broken more than once as the result of too eager participation in such play.

On one occasion he crossed swords with Luscombe, and by a sharp attack brought the ratlike buccaneer to his knees. Since the rope's end episode, Tom had been in Luscombe's ill favor, and this public humiliation only succeeded in deepening the man's ill will. The evil glitter in his eye as he scrambled to his feet warned the youth to be on his guard.

Next to the cutlass, the pistol was the most popular weapon among the Brethren.

Hitherto Tom had looked upon this as the tool of cowards, classing it in his mind with the knife and the bludgeon, fit only for highwaymen and assassins; but as he made its acquaintance among the buccaneers, the weapon gained favor in his sight. Ashamed of his ill success in shooting at a mark, he practiced marksmanship whenever the opportunity offered, and as the days passed he was pleased to note a steady improvement in his skill.

Nearly all the crew carried one or two pistols, but the Wasp's display of eight surpassed them all. At first Tom considered this show as mere braggadocio; but one day, when the captain condescended to show his skill, the youth's opinion changed.

On the day in question Luscombe had been practicing knife-throwing. On the lee bulwark of the ship he had erected a board marked off in circles, like an archer's target. From a distance of eight paces—all that the build of the vessel would allow—he had thrown six knives with such good aim that they all clustered closely in the center of the target. The Wasp, who had been standing on the after deck, an interested spectator of Luscombe's exhibition, stepped down into the waist of the ship, looked to the priming of his pistols, and, lifting them in turn, fired six shots in quick succession. At each report a knife disappeared from the target, glittered for an instant in the sunshine beyond the rail, and then hurtled into the sea.

Thirteen days out of Bristol the *Willing Mind* sighted, low down on the southwestern horizon, a distant sail. As befitted her character, the privateer altered her course half a point, in the hope of overtaking the strange ship; but throughout the day the unknown vessel kept her lead, hull down on the far horizon. Shortly before nightfall a faint haze rose slowly out of the west, and, spreading over the surface of the water, blotted out all view of the distant quarry.

With the approach of darkness the breeze freshened into a gale that sang ominously through the taut cordage. At dusk the quartermaster, with an eye to safety, ordered all hands aloft to shorten sail.

On board the overmanned vessel this order applied only to the seamen. Tom, loitering near the foremast, watched them double-reef the heavy sails, in silent appreciation of their skill. Keeping an eye on the gathering blackness ahead, he was un-



aware of a dim form that skulked in the shadows behind him until a whirling object brushed his throat and a long knife buried its point, with a sharp thud, in the mast near his head.

He whirled like a flash, but everywhere the seamen, their work finished, were sliding from the rigging to the deck, and in the momentary confusion he could see no one to suspect. He turned again to the mast, and, with a hand that trembled slightly, drew the knife from the wood. As he did so, he noted the vibratory quiver of the haft, which told as plainly as words the vindictive strength with which the blade had been thrown.

Tom's suspicions turned to Luscombe as the would-be assassin, but there was no distinguishing mark upon the knife to identify him as its owner, and wisely the youth held his peace. Nevertheless, thereafter he kept a watchful eye upon the goings and comings of the ratlike seaman.

In three days the storm blew itself out and was succeeded by calm weather, irksome to the Wasp and equally so to his men. Time dragged. The buccaneers grew ugly. To occupy their minds, the captain instigated practice with the boarding pike; but this was dangerous play at best, and under the existing conditions severe wounds resulted.

The calm lasted for a week, and then, out of the east, a fair breeze sprang up. Once more the Willing Mind ran before the wind. Gladdened by the song of the gale as it hummed in the stays, the temper of the Brethren improved.

The character of Job Stanton, with whom Tom, because of the similarity of their misfortunes, had hoped to find a bond of sympathy, remained an enigma. With the captain Job had become a favorite, spending hours in the Wasp's cabin. When jealously questioned by the buccaneers as to the nature of his conferences with their leader, he would smile pleasantly and reply that he was keeping the log. This answer satisfied Tom, but some of the Brethren scornfully shook their heads, knowing that John Middleton was fully qualified to keep the log himself.

Job attempted to ingratiate himself into the men's hearts by a show of friendliness, and by promises of generosity when he should receive his share of the prospective plunder; but he only succeeded in disgusting Tom Heylin, who might have been his

friend, without in any way gaining favor with the crew.

Thirty-five days on the water, and now every morning the Brethren were eagerly scanning the western horizon for the first sight of land. According to the quartermaster's reckoning, they were in the track of Columbus and in the direct line of Spanish trade.

On the thirty-seventh day the lookout saw floating vegetation—a sure sign of the proximity of land. On the morning of the thirty-eighth day, while night hesitated before the rush of coming dawn in that faint light that precedes the leaping of the tropical sun from the ocean's bed, a loud hail awoke the ship.

"Sail, ho!" shouted the lookout.

At the same instant the sudden burst of glorious day revealed to the eyes of the watch on deck a large ship off the starboard bow, proceeding across their quarter only a scant half mile away.

## VII

At sight of the strange vessel, which was deeply laden, and was moving sluggishly in the light breeze, a shout of fierce anticipation rose from the privateer's deck. To the practiced eye there was no mistaking the stranger for anything but a Spanish galleon homeward bound. Even Tom, unfamiliar with the lines of shipping, marked the outlandish slant of the strange ship's yards and her queer, high stern, like that of a Chinese junk.

On board the galleon all was activity. Her course, which would have taken her across the bows of the Willing Mind, was shifted at right angles. For a moment her sails hung limply, and then, suddenly, they filled on the new tack. She was in full flight.

At the first hail of the lookout, the Wasp appeared on deck, as if by magic. His tall form raced forward, and sharp orders fell from his lips—orders that boded ill for the Spanish ship.

Then Tom saw the result of the weeks of discipline. Automatically the buccaneers took their stations. Boarding pikes passed from hand to hand. Pistols were loaded and primed. Cutlass and rapier flashed in the sunlight, and sinister sounds of steel whispered in the morning air. England's Great Union flag streamed to the masthead, and broke open like a ball of fire in the rays of the rising sun.

In answer to the challenge, a second British ensign whipped out above the galleon's snowy sails. From the buccaneers a shout of derision greeted this obvious subterfuge on the part of their quarry.

"No Englishmen ever sailed a ship with the cut of that one!" muttered the Wasp, with a harsh laugh.

In the bow of the Willing Mind a group of seamen unlashed a dingy tarpaulin, disclosing to view a brass bound cannon. From the galley Watkins appeared, waving a slow match into a glow.

"Don't sink her!" warned the Wasp.

In shifting her course, the galleon had lost headway, and now not more than two hundred yards separated the two vessels. At such a distance she offered a fair mark.

Watkins, over the dispart sight, aimed long and carefully. From the cannon's mouth burst a fan of white smoke, followed by a sudden deafening report. The Willing Mind trembled from stem to stern as the gun leaped back like a maddened beast against its lashings. The smoke, blown by the breeze, shut out for an instant all view of the Spaniard; then, dissolving like mist, the smoke cloud vanished.

To the disappointment of the Brethren and the discomfiture of the gunner, the galleon seemed to have suffered no damage. The Wasp's brow wreathed itself with a black scowl. Hurriedly the gun crew made haste to reload.

The sight of the British ensign still flying from the galleon's peak nettled the pirate chieftain. He turned to Luscombe, who stood at his side and whispered:

"Give her the Roger!"

Luscombe nodded and made haste to obey. A square of black leaped skyward and fluttered in the breeze beside the cross of St. George. A cheer from the crew greeted the appearance of the flag of L'Ollonois, but Tom's heart sank. Beneath the British ensign he was ready to give his heart's blood, but the black flag chilled and shamed him.

Aboard the Spaniard, however, efforts to crowd on sail redoubled. The somber emblem waving like a crow's wing from the privateer's masthead told the crew of the galleon what to expect if they were captured, and they labored accordingly.

But now the cannon flared again. A wild yell swept across the water to the doomed ship as a shower of splinters spat-tered from the galleon's mainmast. Like

a stately pine stricken by the woodman's ax, the tall spar crashed by the board, carrying the foremast with it in a hopeless tangle of rope and canvas. Flight was out of the question now. With only a desultory attempt to clear away the wreckage, the crew of the galleon made ready for a stubborn defense.

As the distance between the two ships lessened, a significant silence descended upon the buccaneers. Their fierce eyes appraised the galleon. Their eager minds were already at work dividing the spoil.

In the excitement of the moment Tom forgot the dread flag that waved ominously overhead. With the rest of the boarding party he hugged the rail, clutching his unfamiliar half-pike doubtfully, and almost resolving to cast it aside and to depend entirely upon his rapier. Under the nervous strain his muscles tightened until they pained him, and his nostrils quivered like those of a thoroughbred stallion about to enter battle.

Watkins had abandoned his cannon and taken his post at the helm, to guide the privateer's course. In a wide arc the Willing Mind bore down upon the galleon. There came a splintering crash and the grinding rasp of oaken timbers as the vessels fouled. With a wild shout the buccaneers leaped upward for the overhanging bulwarks of the treasure ship.

The sloping sides of the Spaniard checked the rush of the pirate crew for an instant only. Everywhere the Brethren scaled the bulwarks like swarming bees. A volley of pistol bullets and musket balls tore through them, but so poor was the Spanish marksmanship that the fusillade did little damage, even at such close quarters. From the throats of the Spaniards issued supplications to the Virgin and appeals to the saints. Yells of ferocity, shouts of "St. George!" and "L'Ollonois!" sacrilegiously mingling, answered them. Above the cries rose the clash of steel and the fierce sounds of deadly conflict.

Tom, unconsciously dropping his boarding pike at the last moment, leaped with the rest for the Spaniard's rail. Instinctively, by a quick movement of his nimble body, he avoided the downward thrust of a Spanish pike and gained the galleon's deck. The next instant he had drawn his rapier and was warding off the fierce assault of a tall, steel-corseleted Spaniard.

Tom had never fought against defensive

armor before, and for a time his hands were full. Twice he thought that his swift thrusts had gone home, but his rapier glanced from his adversary's polished breastplate, disconcerting his attack, and both times the Spaniard's following lunge almost caught Tom off his guard. Bewildered, the youth gave ground.

Foremost in the fray, the tall figure of the Wasp led the assault. With a heavy cutlass, which he had chosen as better fitted to the work at hand than the more graceful rapier, he laid about him with a giant strength that beat down the Spanish broadswords as if they were willow wands. Overcome by the fury of the attack, outnumbered two to one, the defenders fell back across the deck, leaving Tom and his tall Spaniard alone on their side of the ship.

Where the two fought a man had fallen, and the dark stain of his blood sullied the galleon's deck. As Tom retreated, he inadvertently stepped into the crimson pool. He slipped, and dropped to one knee.

The Spaniard thrust with triumph. His long blade darted at Tom like a crossbow bolt. Momentarily helpless, the youth saw that he would be unable to avoid the blow. In anticipation he felt the sharp steel enter his flesh. Fast as the sword moved, it seemed to his suddenly heightened perception to be standing still. He closed his eyes. The quillons of the hilt thudded against his breastbone, driving him back against the rail, and a sharp pain made him open his eyes.

By all the laws of chance the Spaniard's rapier should have thrust Tom through and through, but a strange chance had saved him. From the deck of the *Willing Mind*, Watkins had watched the progress of the struggle for the galleon. He had marked Tom's inexperienced attack upon the corseleted Spaniard. Twice he had lifted his loaded pistol to shoot, but each time the youth was in the line of fire.

When Tom slipped, the quartermaster's opportunity came, and he fired. He was less proficient in marksmanship than the Wasp, and his bullet went astray. He had aimed at the Spaniard's throat, just above the steel corselet, but the speeding missile found a different target, snapping the man's rapier close to the hilt. The jagged remnant of the blade barely punctured the skin on Tom's breast.

"*Santa Maria!*" ejaculated the astound-

ed Spaniard, staring stupidly at his useless rapier.

Recovering quickly from the surprise of his miraculous deliverance, Tom sprang to his feet. Expecting instant death, the Spaniard let fall his broken weapon and crossed himself devoutly; but it was not in Tom's nature to take his adversary's life in cold blood. Satisfied that he himself had escaped alive, Tom lowered his rapier point, letting his gaze stray to the other side of the deck, where the carnage still continued.

Clustering about the stump of the galleon's mainmast, the survivors of the Spanish crew fought on against hopeless odds. Knowing that quarter would not be given, they did not ask it. Their fight had been one of desperation. They had had to win or die, and in most cases they had died. Tom's heart filled with pity at the slaughter of brave men.

Intent on the fighting, no one had observed that the galleon's deck, which had at first been high above that of the privateer, had gradually settled until now it was below the rail of the *Willing Mind*. Watkins was the first to note the fact, and on the instant he shouted a warning. At the hail, the Wasp looked back, and comprehended at once that the galleon was sinking. No doubt the falling masts had loosened the ship's timbers, and she was going down rapidly.

A frightful torrent of curses poured from the Wasp's lips as he saw his rich prize about to slip literally through his fingers.

In the hold the cargo shifted suddenly, and the galleon rolled away from the *Willing Mind*. A wild scramble for safety began. Back over the side came the pirate crew, swearing in disappointment. As the distance between the two vessels was short, all who returned made the leap in safety; but two of the Brethren, severely wounded, could only drag themselves to the galleon's rail and beg for help.

Then occurred one of those instances of useless cruelty that so marred the struggles for supremacy between Spaniard and Englishman in the early days of their colonization of the New World. As the wounded buccaneers called to their comrades, the galleon's survivors rushed upon them and thrust them savagely to death. A yell for vengeance greeted the act, and the Wasp had difficulty in preventing his men from swarming back to the Spaniard's deck.

Lower and lower settled the doomed galleon. The remnants of her crew gathered about one of their number, who seemed to be exhorting them. An arm was raised above the group, and a silver crucifix gleamed in the sunlight. As if this were the signal for which she had been waiting, the treasure ship lifted her stern high in the air and plunged like a plummet into the depths. Where she vanished, a whirling vortex of greenish water marked her grave.

After a few moments a spar floated to the surface. A human face, white as wax, eddied into view, circled for a moment, and then was gone.

### VIII

A SPIRIT black as the pirate flag brooded over the Willing Mind. Twelve of the Brethren had been lost in the morning's battle, and as many more had wounds that festered in the heat of the tropical sun. For the most part the wounded men bore their pain in silence. When now and then the silence was broken by a torrent of futile curses, it was disappointment rather than suffering that caused the outburst of profanity.

Even the proximity of land could not compensate the buccaneers for the loss of the galleon. Throughout the day the Wasp, as morose as his men, alternately sulked in his cabin and paced the deck in sullen rage.

At nightfall came the long-expected hail: "Land, ho!"

It stirred the Brethren from their ugly mood into one somewhat more cheerful. Tom, eagerly searching the far horizon, marked the faint haze lying low in the west. His hopes, shattered by the tragedy of the morning, revived. Called to identify the distant shore, Watkins named it as one of the Caicos group; but darkness shut down before identification could be certain.

Tom's watch on deck began at midnight. To his nostrils came the warm fragrance of earth, the delicate perfume of flowers. Overhead gleamed the stars of the tropics, constellations not yet entirely familiar to his eyes. This was adventure more in keeping with past dreams. In the beauty of the night he forgot for a time the bloody scenes of the morning.

In the seclusion of his cabin, the Wasp held counsel with his quartermaster. Over a rude chart — his own handiwork — Wat-

kins attempted to point out the privateer's position.

"If this isle be Caicos, or even Grand Turk, there will be water and fresh fruit," he said. "The scurvy is bad," he added, as the Wasp scowled at his remark.

"But the breeze is fair," the captain said, after a pause. "If your reckoning prove true, three days or less will find us within sight of Jamaica."

"Jamaica!" exclaimed the quartermaster. "But L'Ollonois—"

"L'Ollonois should be at Tortuga," interrupted the Wasp. "I know that, but before I join him I have a score to settle with a planter in Jamaica — that fellow Rawlinson."

Watkins saw the plan now. Private revenge was the driving power behind the Wasp's desire to reach Jamaica. The quartermaster expostulated once more.

"Can you depend on the crew?" he asked. "There is little spoil to be gained from a sugar planter."

"Sail the ship," snapped the Wasp. "Leave the men to me!"

Daybreak found the privateer flying before a freshening breeze. To leeward, at a distance of about two miles, rose a small island, verdure-clad to the water's edge, where a line of tumbling surf gleamed like silver in the sunlight. A shout of delight greeted the appearance of land.

The Wasp, at the helm, smiled into his beard and shifted the privateer's course, bringing her parallel to the shore. Half an hour passed, and it became apparent to the crew that their leader did not intend to anchor here. From the lips of the group on deck a murmur arose, sullen, almost threatening. The Wasp shook his head.

"Water bad here!" he shouted.

The murmuring ceased, but as the day wore on, and the Brethren found opportunity to compare notes with those of their number who had been in the West Indies before, the chieftain's statement aroused comment. Rolfe, a swarthy buccaneer with huge gold earrings, voiced the opinion of the majority of the Brethren when he remarked, after a long discussion:

"We'll make Tortuga to-morrow. The Wasp is anxious to join L'Ollonois."

But it was evening of the second day before the Willing Mind sighted in the southwest the Blue Mountains of Jamaica. Through the Windward Passage, within



sight of the shore of Hispaniola, the murmurs of the Brethren had deepened into sullen threatening, veiled as yet, but not without certain menace. Like a hawk the Wasp watched his crew, waiting for an opportunity to make an example of some offender; but no opportunity came, and now, with the coast of Jamaica in sight, harmony was restored.

At daybreak the privateer was close inshore, with the lofty hills of the fertile isle shadowing its course. For an hour the Willing Mind skirted the coast, at a distance that spoke well of the quartermaster's knowledge of the waters. Flowers, vivid in their coloring, mingled with the deep green of foliage that grew to the water's edge. Stately palms, rising a hundred feet above their lesser neighbors, waved their crests like monarchs of the forest jungle. In the distance towered the Blue Mountains, a regal background for the tangle of luxurious vegetation.

About mid forenoon the pirate ship rounded a green promontory and slipped into a wide lagoon. A beach of silver sand bordered the water's edge, and beyond this a gentle slope led upward to a clump of palms. The slope had been cleared of vegetation, and a well-defined path marked its center. At the palm cluster the jungle began again, effectually hiding any habitation that might lie beyond. Only the path and the clearing indicated the handiwork of man.

"No sign of the Hope," remarked Watkins to his captain.

The Wasp scowled his disappointment.

"She sails faster than we do. She should be here before us," was his only comment.

The ship cast anchor and swung slowly to her chain as the crew made slovenly work of furling the sails. Empty casks appeared like magic from the hold. A boyish enthusiasm took possession of the Brethren. They crowded about the Wasp, begging permission to be the first ashore.

Two boatloads made the first trip, taking the men who were suffering most from the scurvy. Watkins remained in charge of the ship, and quelled the protests of those who were left behind by the promise that all should have their turn before the Willing Mind quitted the lagoon.

The two boats raced to the beach, and a shout reached the ears of the watchers on the privateer as the keel of the winner grated on the sand. The second boat was

only an instant behind, and both crews waded ashore almost together. For a time they capered like schoolboys, rolling in the sand, running and dancing on the beach. Tom, from the rail of the Willing Mind, watched them enviously.

After a few moments the Wasp called his party together and warned them against straying. Thus cautioned, he dismissed them, and they soon scattered into the jungle, foraging for fruit. While the men romped in the thicket, the water casks, temporarily forgotten, rolled sluggishly on the gentle swell that broke in miniature waves upon the beach.

The Wasp and Luscombe, together with Stanton, who had attached himself as a sort of body servant to the captain, lingered behind the rest, conversing in earnest tones. Tom, watching the trio, was filled with disgust for the intriguing Job, who seemed to have forgotten his hatred for the Wasp, so violently expressed when he first came aboard the Willing Mind.

Had Tom been able to overhear the conversation of the three men, his disgust would have deepened.

"I must find some one to tell us the whereabouts of Rawlinson and his ship," the Wasp was saying.

"Where is the plantation, captain?" asked Stanton.

"On the plateau beyond those tall palms," answered the Wasp, pointing with his finger.

"It should be easy to capture one of the niggers," suggested Stanton.

The chieftain nodded.

"A good thought," he said.

In accordance with the suggestion, the trio started slowly forward along a path which the Wasp designated as likely to lead them to the plantation. Contrary to expectation, the plateau did not begin at the palm cluster. Instead, the path continued upward, no longer in the center of a clearing, but banked on either hand by a wall of tropical jungle. The air became heavy with the fragrance of blossoming plant life. The hum of myriad insects, the buzz of pollen-laden bees, together with the sweet notes of a solitary song bird, contrasted pleasantly with the discordant cries of raven and wild parrots.

The path twisted, but led steadily upward. Once the three Brethren paused beside a bubbling spring, and quenched their thirst with the sweetest water that they had

tasted since leaving Bristol. Then, climbing again, the jungle began to thin out. Tall palms took the place of mangrove and palmetto.

At a spot where the path divided, Luscombe, who led the trio, plunged suddenly into the thicket. There came the sound of a struggle, and the beginning of a cry, throttled instantly. Before his startled comrades realized what had happened, the seaman reappeared, dragging by the throat a struggling negro.

"Is this what you want?" demanded Luscombe in triumph, shaking his prisoner until the unfortunate captive's teeth chattered like castanets.

The Wasp drew a pistol and thrust its muzzle against the negro's ribs. The black stopped struggling, and his eyes rolled in terror. The Wasp asked a question in Spanish. Luscombe removed his throttling hand from the negro's throat, to allow him to reply, but the frightened prisoner could only shake his head negatively.

Then Luscombe spoke in English, and the trembling black's face lighted with hope.

"Ye-es, massa, dis Marse Rawlinson's place," he said.

"Where is Rawlinson, you black rascal?" demanded the Wasp fiercely, emphasizing his question by jamming the pistol muzzle more tightly against the negro's ribs.

"He—he done gone, sah. He done gone to Spanish Town."

The prisoner's kinky hair threatened to uncurl as he stammered his reply.

"Who's up there at the house, nigger? Who's he left in charge? Where's his boy?"

Each question was punctuated by a poke of the pistol, and the captive's words tumbled over themselves in his eagerness to answer quickly.

"Marse Rawlinson, sah. He's up to de house."

"You black liar!" roared the Wasp. "You said he had gone to Spanish Town!"

"He am—he am," eagerly expostulated the prisoner. "Dis Marse Rawlinson am young Marse Rawlinson. Old marse, he gone. Dis chile tole trufe, sah!"

"Aha! So young Rawlinson is at the plantation, is he?"

The negro nodded his head, and the chieftain's face lighted with satisfaction.

"Look here, nigger!" he said. "How many men you got up there at the house?"

"'Bout thirty, sah."

"Black boys?"

"Mostly, sah, mostly."

The Wasp replaced his pistol in his belt, and the captive breathed more freely; but his terror returned as Luscombe drew a knife from his sash.

"Shall I kill him now?" asked the buccaneer in unemotional tones.

"No," replied the Wasp indifferently. "Bring him along."

The captain turned, to lead the way back to the ship. The negro's teeth were chattering with fright, but he managed to voice a protest against the Wasp's command.

"Ah can't go, marse," he asserted. "Ah'm workin' to-day."

"Never mind your work," growled Luscombe. "Just come along, or I'll slit your black throat!"

With this threat hanging over him, the poor black made haste to obey.

On the beach, the Brethren were at work filling the water casks. Another boatload of buccaneers came ashore to assist at the loading, and by mid afternoon a fresh water supply was safely stored in the hold of the privateer. During the day every member of the crew had an opportunity to stretch his legs on shore.

While the loading of the casks went on, the Wasp elicited some startling information from his prisoner. No longer threatened with immediate death, the negro talked volubly, imparting to the Brethren the gossip of the island and recent happenings among the buccaneers. The story of L'Ollonois's horrible death chilled his listeners; his account of the rise of Henry Morgan restored their enthusiasm.

Morgan's name was not unknown to the veterans. They recalled him as a young and brilliant lieutenant of the pirate Mansvelt. Morgan's capture of Puerto del Principe, as told by the negro captive, thrilled the Brethren.

"Cap'n Morgan don't eat Spaniards, like L'Ollonois," said the prisoner. "He makes them pay a ransom."

Soon the crew were all eagerness to sail at once and join the new leader, an Englishman like themselves, who was, according to the negro, already preparing another expedition of greater scope and with more prospects of plunder than any previous cruise had ever offered; but the Wasp was not yet ready. The men's proposal that the Willing Mind should sail for the ren-

devious at once, he hushed with the promise that they should start at daybreak.

### IX

At dusk a mysterious activity commenced on board the privateer. In groups of three and four, about twenty of the Brethren were called to the cabin for secret conference with the Wasp. Emerging from their consultation with the chieftain, these chosen few maintained a verbal silence as to the nature of the discussion, but their acts were more illuminating.

Luscombe, exercising an ingenuity worthy of a better cause, manufactured out of twisted flax soaked in tallow, a score or more of fairly serviceable torches. The rest of the conspirators reloaded and reprimed their pistols. Such secrecy was no secrecy at all, and soon it became noised throughout the ship that the Wasp contemplated a midnight attack on the sugar plantation.

To Tom, the fact that he was not selected to make one of the raiding party came with relief. He had no desire to participate in a murderous foray against helpless blacks, who were, as far as he could ascertain from the rumors current among the Brethren, the human chattels of a Scotsman loyal to the king; but the rest of the crew were less scrupulous. Those who were to be left behind considered themselves unfairly treated. In little groups about the deck, or in the seclusion of the forecabin, they commented jealously upon the muster roll of the attacking party.

Rolfe, who considered himself one of the elect, because he had sailed with the Wasp before, was especially disgruntled at being left behind. With some success he attempted to stir up sedition among his comrades; but all of them feared the Wasp, and about an hour before midnight, when the chosen twenty pulled ashore, nothing in the way of a hostile demonstration was attempted.

Standing by the rail of the ship, Tom watched the phosphorescent ripple of the oar blades as the boat receded across the surface of the lagoon. His thoughts were on the island, whence came the fragrance of ripening fruit, the sweet smell of flowers. A hand grasping his arm startled him.

"What think you of the Wasp, lad?"

The voice was that of Rolfe, who had approached with catlike tread.

Before replying, Tom considered the man and his question. He remembered

Rolfe as a member of the Wasp's party on that morning in the tavern, when he first met with the Brethren, but this was the first time the buccaneer had attempted to become friendly. He wondered what motive lay behind the question. Diplomacy might have dictated an evasive answer, but Tom was never diplomatic. He gave an honest reply.

"I like him none too well."

"Nor I," agreed Rolfe. "He has not kept the compact. We should be seeking Morgan, not helping the Wasp to a private revenge."

The buccaneer paused, awaiting a comment. As Tom kept silent, however, he began again.

"I should have been chosen for this raid," he said. "I fought against the planter. So did you, for that matter; but he could not take you. You were the cause of it all."

Tom realized that Rolfe's words referred to the brawl in the Three Crowns, but it astonished him to have the responsibility for the disturbance placed upon his shoulders.

"I was the cause?" he questioned.

"Why not? Young Rawlinson befriended you against the captain. 'Twas plain enough. He saw you listening to the Wasp, and tried to warn you against him; and then they fought. You saw them fight."

"But I did not know they were fighting about me."

"Well, 'tis true; and now we have come four hundred miles out of our course because the Wasp must settle a score against a miserable planter and his son!"

"Is this planter that the Wasp means to attack the same who fought against him in the tavern?"

"Who else?"

But Tom did not answer. His mind was busy with conjecture.

"There are some who think there should be a new captain, and there are some who have selected me," continued Rolfe. "How does that choice suit you?"

In the darkness Tom smiled. So Rolfe aspired to captain the Brethren! But Tom was more interested in the seaman's explanation of the duel in the Three Crowns than in his ambition for leadership.

"I will think over what you have said," he answered, after a momentary pause.

"And keep your tongue between your teeth," warned Rolfe, moving away across the deck.

Left alone, Tom's mind was busy. He had never dreamed that the young planter's fight with the Wasp had been in his behalf. Rolfe's information threw a different light upon the whole tavern affair. It became plain to Tom that he owed a debt of gratitude to the Scottish planter's son.

He glanced toward the shore, where the boat of the landing party had already grounded upon the beach. Suddenly he made a decision. He unbelted his rapier, and placed the leather-scabbarded blade between his teeth. Nimbly he climbed the ship's rail and lowered himself over the side, and with only a slight splash he dropped into the water.

Using an easy breast stroke, he struck out for the beach. A strong swimmer, he had no doubt of his ability to reach the shore. The water caressed his skin, cooling his body. But for the sword between his teeth, the swim would have been a delight.

As his moving arms disturbed the placid surface of the lagoon, he became aware of the same phosphorescent ripple about him that had marked the play of the boat's oars. He was alarmed lest the telltale glow should be noticed from the ship; but fortune favored him, and he reached the shore without detection.

As his feet encountered the slope of the beach, he stood upright and removed the rapier from between his aching jaws. He paused for a moment on the sands, and glanced back at the Willing Mind. The vessel rode at anchor, without lights, and only her spars and cobwebbed rigging, black against a starry background, betrayed her presence in the lagoon.

The shore was deserted, and, save for the noises of night life, no sounds came from the jungle; but Tom knew that somewhere in the thicket twenty buccaneers were creeping forward to assault the hidden plantation. Turning toward the interior of the island—where, in the distance, the Blue Mountains stood motionless against the starlit sky—he began to climb the slope. Despite the jungle blackness, the path, walled in on either hand by the dense thicket, was easy to follow.

The buccaneers with the Wasp were all picked men. All had seen service against the Spaniard. Memories of more than one Spanish ambushade made them approach the plantation with caution. Their wary advance, conducted in single file, was so slow that Tom, hastening in their footsteps,

nearly stumbled upon the rearmost before the leaders deployed upon the plateau.

Warned in time, the youth paused, and then, following at a distance, became himself the rearguard of the column. As the seaman ahead joined his comrades, and was tallied by the Wasp, Tom stopped, awaiting the next action of the Brethren.

A wide plain, fairly distinct in the half light of the tropic stars, stretched beyond the edge of the jungle, where the group of buccaneers clustered to await the further orders of their leader. Slave cabins, squat shapes in the darkness, bordered the clearing. Across the fields, barely discernible where it nestled against the opposite slope, loomed the larger bulk of the planter's home. The cabins were dark, mere shadows upon the plain. Beyond the deserted fields the hacienda crouched close to the mountain wall, lifeless and indistinct.

The silence of the plateau did not deceive the Wasp. He knew that his coming had been foreseen. The appearance of the Willing Mind in the lagoon, and the activities of the buccaneers ashore, would have warned the young Scot of probable hostilities, even without the kidnaping of the slave to confirm suspicion. Unquestionably the youthful planter was aware of the presence of the buccaneers upon the plateau.

It was conceivable that young Rawlinson had withdrawn his men to the shelter of the jungle, in which case it would be out of the question to attempt pursuit; but it was the Wasp's shrewd theory that the Scotsman's spirit would not tolerate flight. If the buccaneer captain had judged the youth rightly, the lad would defend his father's property to the last.

Lifting one of his pistols, the pirate chief-tain fired a random shot at the dark shape of the nearest cabin. There came no answering reply. Disappointed, the Wasp forgot caution and stepped boldly out into the dim starlight of the clearing. Instantly from one of the cabins a musket shot rang out, and a ball sang past the chief-tain's head.

With a grim smile he dodged back into the thicket. He was right—young Rawlinson was prepared to resist his attack.

Had the planter himself been on hand, with his mulattoes, the Wasp's plan would have been more pretentious. Instead of twenty men, he would have brought to the attack the entire force of the Willing Mind;



but, relying upon the information he had extracted from his prisoner, twenty chosen buccaneers had seemed to him a force amply strong enough to overcome the resistance of thirty negro slaves.

Quick orders passed from the Wasp to his men. Spreading out like skirmishers, the Brethren began to creep forward from the shelter of the thicket. Tom, watching their advance, was surprised to note how quickly they melted from his sight, losing themselves like Indians in the thin cover afforded by the plateau.

Never had he felt more helpless. With drawn rapier, he stood at the edge of the clearing, and found himself utterly powerless to do anything that would assist the defense of the young man who had befriended him in the tavern of the Three Crowns.

For a time nothing happened upon the plateau. Strain his eyes as he would, Tom could detect no movement. Then, suddenly, a muffled pistol shot reached his ears. Undiscovered, Luscombe had gained the nearest cabin. Thrusting the muzzle of his pistol into the tinderlike material of the grass-thatched roof, the buccaneer had fired.

Ignited by the burning powder, the dry straw flamed up like a torch. The blaze mounted across the slanting roof, instantly illuminating the entire surface of the plateau.

In the light of the burning cabin, advance by stealth was no longer possible. With one accord the buccaneers sprang to their feet and charged upon the cabins with a ferocious yell. A scattering volley greeted their rush. The frightened negroes, firing without aim, succeeded only in spattering the surrounding thicket with a shower of wasted lead.

From the blazing cabin, six of the defenders fled in terror. Like sheep the rest joined them, running madly for the shelter of the distant hills. Without having fired a shot, the buccaneers suddenly found themselves masters of the plateau.

Out of the darkness appeared sudden tongues of flame, as the first of Luscombe's torches, kindled at the burning cabin, communicated its blaze from brand to brand. Led by the Wasp, the Brethren began their march across the plain, firing the cabins as they advanced.

Confident that in the excitement he would be mistaken for one of the attacking

party, Tom slipped from the shelter and followed after, sword in hand.

## X

IN the glare of the burning cabins the planter's home stood boldly outlined against the dark background of the hills. Admirably situated on a slight knoll that commanded the approach from the plateau, the hacienda overlooked the entire plantation.

A compact building of a single story, with a wide veranda extending entirely around it, the dwelling was strongly built. Properly defended, it might have withstood the buccaneers' attack. Now, as they approached, it crouched before them, black and silent, apparently deserted.

At two rods' distance the Wasp halted his men. His hail was answered almost instantly by an echo from the mountain slope—an echo so startlingly clear that it seemed for an instant that some one within the hacienda had mocked him. He shouted again, and again the repetition of his own voice was his only reply. He cursed and strode forward. The Brethren followed.

At the edge of the veranda he paused again. There was a vague menace about the squat dwelling that disconcerted him. Its absolute silence was alarming. Behind him he could hear the loud breathing of his men, a minor accompaniment to the distant roar of the flames that devoured the slave quarters.

With an effort he shook off his feeling of alarm, and stepped up on the veranda. In a single stride he crossed to the hacienda door, the Brethren following at his heels. With the butt of a pistol he hammered loudly against the portal. The panels cracked beneath the blow. Once more he thundered with the pistol butt, and then, with a savage kick, he drove the barrier inward. Like wolves the hangdog crew poured across the threshold.

The glare of Luscombe's torches fell upon the interior of the hacienda with an ominous light, revealing to the searching gaze of the buccaneers a home of cheerful simplicity. No lavish wealth had been squandered to decorate the square living room where the Brethren stood, but nevertheless an air of comfort pervaded it to the farthest corner.

Mats of woven rushes covered the floor. A low couch, draped with a robe of native manufacture, hugged the wall opposite the door. On a table in the center of the room

stood a three-branched candlestick of silver.

The candlestick, a desirable piece of plunder, attracted the cupidity of the buccaneers. With its seizure the pillage began. At a wave of permission from the Wasp, the Brethren scattered through the house. Following the tread of their heavy feet came the crash of breaking furniture, scuffling sounds, shouts, laughter, curses. There was the sharp report of a pistol shot as the Wasp fired into a tall cupboard, with the hope that his random bullet might find a mark in the body of some wretch hiding within. Cutlasses were thrust savagely beneath the beds. Doors shattered under the blows of sword hilt and pistol butt.

Tom, who had lingered on the veranda, turned away, sick at heart. He had hoped to be of service to the young Scot. Instead, he found himself helplessly watching the sack of the planter's home.

By this time the blazing cabins were roaring furnaces, mere shells of fire. Their light illumined the whole plateau. In the glare the peaceful plantation resembled an inferno. Sorrowfully Tom marked the progress of destruction. The slave quarters were doomed.

"How soon will the fiends fire the hacienda?" he thought.

He turned sadly toward the beach. Since he had failed in his mission, he had best look to his own welfare by attempting to regain the Willing Mind unobserved.

Before him a narrow path led into the thicket. Without thinking that there might be other pathways to and from the plateau than the one he had previously followed, he strode blindly into the comparative darkness of the dense shrubbery. Within three rods the path turned suddenly to the left. The beach lay to the right, and Tom knew that he was on the wrong trail. He paused.

From the path ahead he heard voices. Listening, he distinguished the frightened tones of a negro's voice and harsher accents which he recognized at once as belonging to Luscombe. He suddenly remembered that he had observed the ratlike seaman among the Brethren in the hacienda. What meaning lay behind his presence here in the jungle?

Tom meant to find out. He stole silently forward between the dark mangrove walls, rounded a bend in the path, and paused. Before him, distinct in the yellow

flare of a high-held torch, Luscombe bent over the body of a negro, who lay prostrate on the ground. The black was a very old man. A crown of snow-white hair surmounted his face, which was ashen gray in the torchlight.

As Tom paused, trying to grasp the meaning of the scene, Luscombe spoke.

"Get up, you dog!" he ordered.

The old man attempted to comply. He half raised himself upon one elbow, and, as he did so, Tom saw that he was crippled. His right leg, shorter than the left, was deformed and useless.

The buccaneer was grasping a stout cudgel, which he had used as a cane. Tom sensed what was about to happen, and gathered his muscles to spring forward; but before he could move, Luscombe struck the old man a terrible blow in the chest. Then, his lust for cruelty satisfied, he turned and strode on down the path.

Tom followed at his heels, pausing beside the negro only long enough to satisfy himself that he could do nothing to alleviate the old man's suffering. The black was incapable of speech, cowering against the ground, where he whimpered like a bruised animal. Mentally Tom chalked another score against the pirate's account.

The path turned again, and beyond Luscombe's torch a fixed light gleamed from the thicket. The seaman paused, extinguishing his flare by grinding it beneath his heel. Tom, straining his eyes to peer ahead, made out a small cabin that terminated the pathway. From the door, slightly ajar, came the ray of light that had attracted his attention.

After a moment's hesitation, Luscombe again stole forward. At the cabin door he halted, and looked within. Tom, lingering in the background, was consumed with curiosity. He was convinced that Luscombe had discovered the hiding place of the planter's son. His heart beat rapidly with excitement. He drew his sword.

At the same instant Luscombe stepped back, fumbling in the sash about his waist. There came the sound of the cocking of a pistol. As Tom sprang from the thicket, Luscombe pushed the door wide open and stepped into the cabin. Two pistol shots followed in quick succession.

The buccaneer staggered back from the doorway, tripped, and fell heavily to the path. With difficulty he regained his feet and began to walk erratically round and

round. His shoulders sagged, and his head hung upon his breast as if bowed by age. A gurgling sound issued from between his parted lips.

The ghastly walk ended abruptly. Luscombe stumbled suddenly to his knees, drooped forward like a withering plant, fell head first to the ground, and lay still. Tom knew that he was dead.

Beyond the body of the buccaneer the cabin door stood wide. Ignoring the corpse at his feet, Tom approached and peered within. Through a mist of powder smoke he saw a bare-walled room, its floor the bare, brown earth. A cot, a stool, and a low table were the only furnishings. Three lighted candles stood in a row at the table's edge.

On the cot, half raising her gaunt form from the pillow, an aged negress stared out through the open door. Her eyes, deep-sunken in her emaciated face, gleamed like live coals in the candlelight. Her skin was the color of lead; her forehead glistened with sweat. Tom recalled tales of African voodoo women that he had heard on ship-board, and he shuddered involuntarily.

The negress was speaking in an unintelligible jargon, and, as she spoke, she pointed in his direction. It seemed incredible that she could see out into the darkness where he stood, but she suddenly crooked her finger, beckoning.

Drawn by an irresistible influence, Tom stepped forward into the room. A youth who had been standing beside the cot turned suddenly to face him, and Tom recognized the planter's son.

The young Scot was clothed as Tom had seen him last—in satin coat and velvet doublet; but in some intangible manner he seemed changed—older, perhaps, and more mature. His face, paler than Tom remembered it, showed traces of recent tears, and a frill of lace at the throat accentuated its whiteness.

Young Rawlinson stood with his left foot slightly advanced, his left arm out-flung, and his rapier poised in readiness for either attack or defense. In the candle-light the sword glittered like polished silver.

The unconscious grace of the youth's attitude awoke in Tom's mind memories of his own mother. In the outlines of the form that faced him he fancied that he saw the figure of a woman. His thoughts raced back to the tavern of the Three Crowns. He recalled how he had been thrilled by

the lad's look of gratitude after he had saved him from the rapier of the Wasp. The realization swept over him that the planter's child was not a son, but a daughter in boy's clothing. In the two months that had elapsed since the affair in the tavern she had reached an age where her sex could no longer be concealed by the habiliments of masculine attire.

Tom lifted his eyes to the face opposite his own, and found confirmation of his discovery there. From throat to forehead a blush swept over the girl's face.

Suddenly embarrassed, Tom became aware of his disheveled appearance. With his garments wrinkled and wet, and his hair disordered by his swim, he knew that he presented a sorry figure. There was no reason why the planter's daughter should not class him with the rest of the pirate crew. She had received Luscombe with a bullet. A rapier thrust was the least that Tom could expect.

He was mistaken, however, for the girl smiled faintly at his confusion, and lowered her sword point. Evidently she recognized him as a friend. He sheathed his rapier, therefore, and bowed low in his best Cavalier manner.

From the cot the negress spoke again, still in the language that Tom did not understand. One word was distinguishable from the jargon—the girl's name, "Anne." The planter's daughter dropped to her knees beside the bed, and, with one arm encircling the old woman's neck, partly raised her head from the pillow. Tom's fears of voodooism vanished as he marked the friendly relation that existed between Anne and the negress, and when the latter again beckoned for him to approach he obeyed without hesitation.

The old woman's eyes, more brilliant than ever, sought his own, seeming to search his very soul. With a quick motion she seized his hand, and, before he could foresee her intention, she had placed Anne's soft fingers in his grasp. The meaning of the act was unmistakable. She was placing the planter's daughter in his care.

Thrilled by the warm clasp of the girl's fingers, Tom's blood quickened in his veins. His confusion increased. He wished to declare himself by accepting the responsibility of the negress's charge in words of such eloquence that there would be no doubt in his hearers' minds of the sincerity of his intentions; but his tongue refused to

function. He could only press the soft fingers reassuringly.

The glitter died out of the old woman's eyes. They filmed suddenly. She opened her mouth to speak, but no words came forth. Instead, her jaws remained fixed. She choked. Her body went suddenly limp, and she fell back on the cot, dead.

Anne slipped her hand from Tom's grasp and began to stroke the black face on the pillow. After a time of silence, broken only by the sputtering of one of the candles, the girl raised her tear-stained face and looked up at Tom.

"She was my mammy," she said, "my only mother since my own mother died."

Tom nodded in sympathy. There was a lump in his throat, and he could not trust himself to speak.

"She told me that you were a friend," continued Anne, rising from the ground and brushing away the traces of her tears.

"How could she know that?" asked Tom, surprised into finding his tongue at last.

"She knew many things. She told me of you before ever I saw you in Bristol. She told me that I should see you again to-night."

Afterward, Tom was to speculate upon the blush that accompanied Anne's words, but at the moment he was too much bewildered to do more than stand in astonishment at her simple statement. The girl spoke as one might speak of any casual fact that came beneath one's notice, without seeming to regard the negress's gift of prophecy as in any way startling.

"Some have called her a witch, but they did not know her as I did."

"And she told you that I would be here to-night?"

Anne nodded.

"She said that before daybreak three men would enter that door. The first I shot." Anne shuddered at the remembrance, and her eyes dropped to the floor at her feet, where Tom for the first time saw her discarded pistol. "The second was you. You saw that I recognized you as a friend?"

Tom shook his head affirmatively. He was still bewildered.

"And the third?" he asked, as Anne hesitated.

From the path outside the door came the sound of footsteps, and the huge form of a man loomed in the doorway. The can-

dlelight gleamed on the steel of his naked rapier. It was the Wasp.

The pirate chieftain paused, surveying the scene before him. His sharp eyes made the same discovery that Tom had made, and they filled suddenly with fire.

"Very pretty!" he sneered, and stepped forward into the room.

Tom's rapier leaped from its scabbard. The Wasp paused and shot a menacing look at the young man.

"Do you want to hang from the yard-arm?" he threatened.

From beyond the door came the sound of running feet. Torches gleamed from the thicket. The Brethren, having paused behind their leader only long enough to fire the hacienda, were now at his heels.

"Quickly!" cried Tom, lifting his sword point, with the intention of driving the Wasp back and escaping through the open door while the way was yet clear.

"It is useless," said Anne.

A group of faces gathered in the doorway. The Wasp turned to his men. His eyes gleamed with triumph.

"A prize!" he shouted, pointing at Anne.

Tom burned with rage. But for the girl's restraining hand on his arm, he would have thrown himself on the cutlasses of the buccaneers.

"Your sword, boy!" demanded the Wasp, taking a stride nearer.

For answer, Tom sheathed it and folded his arms. A flush of anger glowed in the chieftain's face.

"Remember the yardarm!" he threatened. "Seize him!" he added, turning to his men.

The Brethren crowded into the cabin, and rough hands were laid on Tom's shoulders. But for thoughts of Anne, he would have died on the seamen's cutlasses; but then his friendship would be of no avail. Alive, there was still hope that he might be of service.

"To the ship!" ordered the Wasp, and led the way out through the open door. Beside the body of Luscombe he paused. "Who is responsible for this?" he demanded, stirring the corpse with the toe of his boot.

"I am!" Anne answered boldly. "I shot him!"

The Wasp bent a look of vindictiveness upon the girl. In the glare of the torches his scowl was full of menace.



"The score against you is heavy," he said, after a moment; "but the payment that I shall demand will suffice," he added significantly.

In silence the procession began its march back to the plateau.

## XI

THE tops of the Blue Mountains were tipped with gold as the buccaneers emerged from the thicket, and a moment later the abrupt dawn of a new day bathed the plateau with light. Where the slave cabins had stood, pale wisps and spirals of smoke rose like columns of dust in the morning air. Charred timbers littered the ground. Here and there fire-ravaged corner posts stood like black skeletons, to mark the site of the negro homes.

Beyond the cabins, the stouter walls of the hacienda still blazed, although its roof had long since fallen in. Anne's face paled as she saw the ruins, but she would not give pleasure to the Wasp by allowing him to see her grief.

Without pausing at the plantation, the pirate chief led the way back to the beach and the ship. He was well satisfied with the result of the night's expedition. A revenge far beyond what he had contemplated had fallen to his hand. The old Scottish planter's son was in reality a daughter! The Wasp smiled with evil satisfaction.

Less pleased than their leader, the rest of the Brethren marched in moody silence. Their plunder was hardly worth the trouble that they had expended in obtaining it. The excitement of burning a hacienda and a few cabins was pleasurable but profitless. Without booty, the buccaneers felt that they had been deprived of their just due. The Wasp was not living up to the spirit of the compact.

Tom followed in Anne's footsteps, his mind troubled by conflicting emotions. He regretted that he had not forced the issue back there in the cabin, where he could have sold his life gloriously against overwhelming odds. Now he faced the prospect of walking the plank, or the equally unpleasant alternative of hanging at the yardarm; for he well knew that the captain fully intended to carry his threat to execution.

His hand stole to his sword belt, and tightened on the hilt of his rapier. There was comfort in its touch. He was thankful

that the Wasp had not insisted upon its surrender.

From the jungle the Brethren emerged upon the cleared slope that led downward to the beach. The morning was brilliant and already warm, with the promise of great heat before midday. From the thicket came the buzz of insects, and the air was filled with the song of a thousand birds.

With the warmth and the sunshine, and the cheering sounds of bird life, Tom's courage revived. He looked down across the slope to the lagoon, where the Willing Mind swung broadside to the beach, lazily tugging at her anchor chain. Then he blinked his eyes in astonishment. Beyond the tall palms of the promontory that formed the outer barrier of the harbor where the privateer lay, he saw the topmasts and skysails of a fleet of ships. The strange vessels moved slowly under the influence of the light breeze, but even as he watched, the bow of the foremost appeared at the lagoon's entrance.

The Wasp shouted an order, and began to run down the slope. The Brethren followed like sheep, and for a moment Tom hoped that in the confusion he and his fellow prisoner might be overlooked. The cold touch of a pistol muzzle pressed against his neck warned him that he was mistaken, and he quickened his pace.

On reaching the boat, the confusion increased as the buccaneers crowded aboard; but the prisoners' guard was efficient, and Tom and Anne found themselves herded into the bow, out of the way of the oarsmen. The Wasp shoved off, and sprang in the last of all. Standing in the stern sheets, he drove the rowers to a frenzy. The water boiled under the boat's bow, and the stout blades of the oars bent like marsh grass as the men settled down to their work.

By this time the foremost of the strange vessels had rounded to and let go her anchor. She swung broadside to the shore, and from her ports the mouths of a dozen cannon frowned upon the Willing Mind. A hail echoed across the water, and was answered by the watch on the privateer. A ball of bunting leaped up the stranger's halyards, and the red cross of St. George broke suddenly from her masthead. A small boat appeared from beneath her counter, and moved swiftly toward the Willing Mind.

Anne and Tom knelt side by side in the bow of the Wasp's boat, anxiously awaiting the outcome of events. As the two row-boats approached the privateer, it became apparent that the Wasp would reach his ship first. A slight trace of disappointment showed in Anne's face.

"I had hoped that we would be a bit late," she murmured in Tom's ear, as the certainty grew that the Wasp would win the race. "If I mistake not, yonder craft is commanded by one friendly to my father."

With new interest Tom sought out the figure in the stern sheets of the oncoming boat. He saw a man broad of shoulder and erect of carriage—a man who bore himself as one born to command. Before Tom could study the stranger's features, further observation was cut off, as the two crafts were suddenly separated by the hull of the Willing Mind.

The boat's gunwale grated along the ship's side, and the Wasp leaped for the mizzen chains. He scrambled to the deck, leaving the rest of the crew to follow as best they could. By the time Tom had clambered aboard and lent a hand to assist his fellow prisoner, the strange boat had drawn alongside, and the big man whom he had noticed in the stern sheets was climbing over the rail. From the ranks of the Brethren a hoarse whisper reached Tom's ears—a whisper that conveyed startling intelligence.

"Morgan" was the name that ran from mouth to mouth.

Of all the pirates of the Spanish Main, none climbed the pinnacle of power to such a height as Captain Henry Morgan. In the Antilles he was a king. Given a wider field of operation, he might well have written his name large upon the page of history, for he possessed to a marked degree the qualities of leadership that make men great. His men worshiped him, and followed blindly wherever he led.

Among the buccaneers his rise to fame had been sensational. As a lad, the son of a Welsh farmer, his restless spirit sickening of the tilling of the soil, he had run away from home. At Bristol he had shipped before the mast on a vessel bound for Barbados. Sold there as a slave, he had served his time, earned his freedom, and joined the buccaneers. Mounting by sheer ability from fore-castle to quarter-deck, he soon became master of a ship. The deaths of

Mansvelt and L'Ollonois had given him his opportunity. He had taken command of their combined fleets.

Now, with seven ships and four hundred men, Morgan commanded the largest expedition that had yet sailed against a Spanish stronghold of the Gulf. The blind loyalty of his men is proven by the fact that of them all he alone knew the destination of the fleet. At the sack of Puerto del Principe, his first exploit, some of the plunder had slipped through his fingers because the Spaniards, warned of his attack, had had time to hide a portion of their treasure. In this foray he meant to fall upon his victims as falls the wrath of God, terrible and unannounced.

Throughout the previous afternoon the captured negro had regaled the Brethren with tales of Morgan's daring, and it was with a feeling akin to awe that they stood in silence while the man himself confronted the Wasp upon the deck of the Willing Mind.

"We are saved!" Anne whispered in Tom's ear. "Morgan is a friend."

With added interest Tom scanned the leader's face. At that instant Morgan spoke.

"Well, Middleton," he said, "L'Ollonois is dead."

The sentence, spoken with a rising inflection at the end, was at once a statement of fact and an interrogation. With the brevity for which he was noted, Morgan had made a proposition. It was as if he had said:

"Well, Middleton, your former leader is dead. What are your plans?"

The Wasp, understanding the implied question, answered accordingly.

"I was but now preparing to join you," he said. "If you need a ship and men, the Willing Mind is yours to command."

A murmur of approval rose from the Brethren at their leader's words. Morgan himself smiled with pleasure. He needed just such a fighting force as this to round out the personnel of his expedition; but before extending too hearty a welcome to Captain Middleton he wished to know the reason for the captain's presence here in the lagoon. He had seen the reflection of flames in the sky during the early morning hours, and suspicion pointed an accusing finger at the Wasp.

Already looking beyond the mere sack of a Spanish city and the precarious leadership of lawless men, Morgan's far-seeing

ambition was fixed upon the possibility of political advancement through the favor of the crown. Counting upon the fame of his exploits against the Spaniards to bring him to the attention of the British monarch, he let pass no minor opportunity to show his zeal for the king's cause in the Antilles. If the Wasp had burned the plantation of a loyal subject of King Charles, Morgan meant to see to it that his own skirts were clear of responsibility.

"I saw a fire last night?" he said, and again the statement asked a question.

"A few slave cabins were burned," answered the Wasp. "I have this moment come from an investigation."

"And the cause?"

The Wasp shrugged his shoulders.

"How should I know? The slaves scattered to the hills."

Anne stepped forward suddenly.

"He lies, Captain Morgan! He burned our plantation."

Surprised, Morgan turned toward the speaker. Recognizing the planter's daughter, he bowed ceremoniously. His mind, quick to draw conclusions, saw in Anne's presence on the privateer a plausible explanation for the Wasp's deed. His lips curled in a half amused smile.

"So Middleton had designs on the planter's daughter!" he observed.

Anne blushed.

"He did not know that I was the planter's daughter," she said. "He attempted to settle a private grudge, and in the settling he stumbled upon me."

And then, in a few words, she told of the affair in the tavern. When she had finished, Morgan turned to the Wasp.

"As an admiral of the governor of Jamaica and a representative of his authority, I should arrest you, John Middleton, for this unwarranted assault upon a British planter."

The Wasp scowled. He had hoped to be far from the island before news of the plantation's destruction came to the governor's ears. In the Antilles, justice moved slowly; frequently it did not move at all. Knowing the feebleness of constituted authority, he had considered himself immune from punishment.

It angered him that Morgan, whom he considered a pirate like himself, should take him to task for burning a few slave cabins. For a moment he contemplated resistance; but the odds were against him. A stone's

throw from the Willing Mind he could see the frowning mouths of Morgan's cannon. Beyond the lagoon's entrance Morgan's ships patrolled the shore.

Morgan himself was confronted with a situation of some delicacy. His needs of the moment conflicted with his ambitions for the future. As a pirate, he needed for his expedition just such a crew as that of the Willing Mind; as a self-appointed administrator of British affairs in the West Indies, he felt called upon to execute judgment for the burning of the plantation. Steering a middle course called for the exercise of much diplomacy. He must secure justice for the planter without antagonizing the Wasp too far. After a moment's consideration he spoke again.

"Middleton," he said, "you have offered your ship to my command, and because I need men I have accepted. With your force added to my own, the success of my expedition is certain; but the burning of this plantation is a serious affair. You must make Rawlinson's loss good. If, out of your share of our spoil, you will repay the planter for the damage you have done, I, in the name of the governor, will grant you pardon."

The Wasp hesitated. He surmised that Morgan had no real authority either to pardon or to punish, and the thought of a reduction in his portion of the plunder was irksome; but, after all, Morgan had asked only for his word. A promise, with the Wasp, was merely an expedient. It could be kept or broken as circumstances might subsequently dictate. His scowl vanished, and he agreed. Morgan extended his hand, which the Wasp clasped, and the compact was sealed.

"And the girl?" asked the Wasp.

"She sails with me. I accept the responsibility of her protection."

"But, Captain Morgan," protested Anne, "why not put me ashore? My father will return within the week."

"I will do better than put you ashore here. The fleet sails immediately, and we should be off Spanish Town before night-fall. If I land you there, you can rejoice your father at once."

The words were fair-spoken, and the thought of seeing her father so soon enticed Anne; but she wondered how far she could trust the pirate chieftain. His friendship with Rawlinson was of recent standing. It had resulted from the old Scot's

last voyage to England, with his cargo of sugar. For that enterprise the planter had been personally complimented by King Charles, and Anne, knowing that the monarch's favor was better than a patent of nobility in Morgan's eyes, surmised that personal ambition was partly responsible for his sudden interest in her welfare. On the other hand, to refuse his offer would unquestionably arouse his anger.

Her hesitation lasted only a moment.

"I thank you, Captain Morgan," she said, "and I accept your offer gladly. Can I also enlist your protection for a friend?" She turned, as she spoke, and indicated Tom. "This young man befriended me against the Wasp, who has threatened to hang him from the yardarm. Will you say a word to save him?"

Morgan scowled. He had already antagonized the Wasp. To further humiliate him before his men was contrary to the chieftain's policy; but, to prove his friendship for the planter's daughter, he once more called upon his powers of diplomacy.

"Dead men are useless," he said, turning toward the Wasp. "Flog a man, but, unless you fear him, never hang him. Let this man be flogged."

The Wasp ground his teeth at this further usurpation of his authority, but Morgan's words were a command, and he must obey.

"Forty lashes!" he ordered.

Anne touched the pirate admiral's arm and looked appealingly into his eyes. Morgan shrugged his shoulders, and then, as the girl's grasp tightened, he frowned; but he had committed himself to protect Tom, and he would go through with it now.

"Forty lashes are too many," he said reluctantly. "Twenty lashes will be a sufficient punishment."

The Wasp swore under his breath.

Emboldened by Morgan's attitude, Rolfe, the prospective mutineer, stepped forward from the group of Brethren and addressed the pirate chief.

"Admiral," he said, trying to hide his trepidation beneath a swaggering manner, "we are tired of this man, and we think we should have a new captain."

With cold eyes Morgan appraised the mutinous buccaneer. His mind, quick to grasp details, sized up the situation at once. He saw that Rolfe's boldness was the result of petty ambition. A lightning glance at the faces of the other men told him that the

dissatisfied seaman's words were a surprise to most of them. Had Rolfe been supported by the crew, the Willing Mind would have had a new captain then and there, for Morgan disliked the Wasp, and would have welcomed the chance to depose him. As matters stood, however, Rolfe's words furnished him with an opportunity to restore harmony between himself and Captain Middleton.

No man saw the start of Morgan's blow, but all heard the impact of his fist on Rolfe's face, and all saw the luckless buccaneer fall like a stricken ox.

"A lesson in disciplining, Middleton!" said the pirate leader, as he turned carelessly away.

The Wasp snarled inarticulately and kicked the prostrate seaman savagely in the ribs.

"Now, then, flog your man, and let us away!" ordered Morgan.

As a candidate for hanging, Tom had watched with eager interest the byplay between Anne and the pirate chieftain. He realized that her intervention had saved his life; and, to his surprise, the prospect of a flogging troubled him not at all.

In the first place, the punishment was many degrees removed from the hanging that the Wasp had threatened. He expected to suffer, but his suffering would be for Anne's sake, since it was in her behalf that he had incurred the wrath of his captain. Being unmerited, the flogging would in a way atone for his failure to repay the planter's daughter for the good turn she had done him back there in the tavern of the Three Crowns. Then, too, he was comforted by the thought that under Morgan's protection Anne was safe.

All things considered, Tom was experiencing the happiest moment of the whole voyage. Until the present instant his plans for the future had been nebulous, mere chaotic schemes contingent upon his success in parting company with the crew of the Willing Mind. Now his ambitions suddenly centered upon a definite future. Surely, upon a sugar plantation, there must be useful employment for the strong and willing hands of youth!

Tom made no resistance as two of the Brethren came forward, at the Wasp's direction, and made his wrists fast to the mizzen shrouds. One of the two—Paisley by name—who had formed a sort of attachment for Tom, contrived to thrust a small



leaden slug into the lad's mouth as he brushed a hand in front of him.

"Close your teeth on that," he whispered. "It will ease the pain."

Tom found himself wondering who would administer the flogging, since the services of Luscombe were no longer available. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the Wasp roll back his right sleeve. With the loss of the rat-eyed seaman, the leader of the Brethren had become his own executioner.

Standing on the break of the deck, a few feet away from his victim, and a little above him, where he could get the full swing of his long arm into play, the Wasp flourished a short length of heavy rope.

"Take off his shirt!" he ordered.

The command was speedily obeyed by the ruthless stripping of the garment from Tom's back. The Wasp swung half round, to give the blow his full strength. Then followed the sickening sound of the rope on the lad's soft flesh. Anne's clenched fingers went to her mouth, and tears glistened in her eyes. Tom set his teeth into the slug of lead. The rope rose and fell.

Morgan, impatient of the delay, tarried no longer. The sight of a flogging was nothing new to him.

Helpless to avert Tom's punishment, Anne followed the chieftain down the fore chains to his boat. Five minutes later the signaling roar of a cannon reverberated from the hills. As Tom, bent almost double with pain, crept forward to the fore-castle, Watkins ordered the seamen aloft; and within a quarter of an hour the Willing Mind slipped out of the lagoon in the bubbling wake of Morgan's flagship.

In his bunk, flat on his face, with his arms stretched above his head, Tom tried to forget the pain in his back by concentrating his thoughts on Anne. As the hours passed, broken only by the monotony of the changing watches, he pictured her reunited to her father, and his heart was glad within his bruised body.

He could not know that at noon the wind freshened, shifting to the northwest, and that this change in its direction made it impossible for the fleet to gain Spanish Town without a long series of tacks. He could not know that Morgan's men murmured at the prospects of such delay, that Anne protested, and that Morgan apologized, but did not stop. Had he known, it is doubtful if the troubled sleep that

closed his eyes at dusk would have come to him at all that night.

## XII

At dawn of the sixth day after Tom's flogging the pirate fleet arrived off the Costa Rican mainland, and Morgan called a council of war. To the several petty chiefs who gathered in the cabin of his flagship he outlined his plans, the audacity of which made the boldest tremble.

He proposed nothing less than an assault on Porto Bello, the slave and silver mart of Panama, and one of the three strongest Spanish fortresses on the coast of the New World. Two supposedly impregnable castles, amply garrisoned, commanded the approach from the sea. On the land side, wide areas of swamp and forest surrounded the city with an almost impenetrable jungle. Thus protected, the inhabitants had always considered themselves immune from the depredations of the buccaneers; but as yet they did not know Morgan. It was later in his career that Spanish mothers learned to hush their children's cries by the terror of his name.

With studied arguments Morgan laid bare the details of his scheme. He pointed out the fact that he, and he alone, had known the destination of his fleet. Consequently the Spaniards could have no knowledge of his designs. Taken by surprise, they would probably surrender without resistance. The very boldness of the enterprise would insure its success.

To their chieftain's proposal the more timid made reply that their numbers were insufficient to reduce a city of such strength; but Morgan, in characteristic manner, thrilled them to the issue by the fire of his own enthusiasm.

"If our number is small," he said, "our courage is great. The fewer men we are, the more closely united we shall be, and the better shares we shall have in the spoil."

Stimulated by the thought of plunder, the more venturesome shouted agreement. The timorous, carried away by the zeal of their bolder comrades, swallowed their fears, and it was unanimously decided to venture the assault.

Continuing southward along the coast of what is now Panama, the fleet arrived about dusk at the bay of Santa Maria, near the mouth of a small river ten leagues to the westward of Porto Bello. Without pausing, Morgan led his ships up the river to a

small settlement, Puerto Pontin. Here the buccaneers took to the boats, leaving behind only enough men to pilot the larger vessels to Porto Bello on the morrow.

By this time it was night, and the dark river, bordered on either hand by marsh and morass, was barely indicated by the faint light of a crescent moon that hung low over the swamps to the westward. Pale vapors, blue in the moonlight, rose from the slime at the river's edge. Deadly fevers lurked on the shore. The grim specter of pestilence, unseen but none the less terrible, stalked the flotilla on its way up the river.

Only the steady swish of oars and the accompanying rattle of tholepins disturbed the stillness of the swamp. Morgan had threatened death to any buccaneer who spoke aloud.

To Tom, crouching in the bow of the Willing Mind's longboat, came thoughts of Anne. He wondered if her father had returned to rebuild his ruined home. He wondered if he would ever see the girl again.

An hour before midnight the flotilla paused. The character of the river banks had changed. Instead of low-lying swamp, the shore was lined with great trees, whose limbs overhung the water. The moon had long since disappeared, but the night was clear, and long streamers of Spanish moss swung above the boats like pale ghosts in the starlight. In the absolute stillness it was hard for Tom to realize that the dim shapes ahead and astern were boats crowded with armed men, or that within a few hours he would be marching to the assault of a fortified city, whose garrison probably outnumbered the buccaneers two to one. There was excitement in the thought, and his heartbeats quickened.

A whispered order passed from boat to boat, and the oars dipped again. The shadows deepened. Keels grated on sunken logs. The low banks of the stream brushed the boats' gunwales. As noiselessly as cats, the buccaneers scrambled ashore.

Morgan was fortunate in having with him an Englishman who had once been a prisoner in Porto Bello. Escaping, this man had lived for some time in the swamps that surround the city before making his way to the coast. He now undertook to guide the buccaneers through marsh and jungle to the place of his captivity.

The march that was to end in uproar began in silence. Underfoot the ground was

treacherous. Without torches, progress was slow. An hour passed.

To Tom, the tread of marching feet sounded like the tramp of an army. He could not believe that such a force could steal upon a military outpost without discovery. He wondered if, somewhere ahead in the jungle, an ambush were not already prepared for the pirate horde.

Suddenly the band halted. From the front of the line came confused sounds. The vanguard of the buccaneers, stealing upon the outermost Spanish sentry, had captured him so cleverly that he had been unable to give the alarm. He had been brought bound to Morgan, and now, a few paces beyond where Tom stood, the lad could hear the chieftain questioning the captive in the Spanish tongue.

After a time the advance began again—slower now than before. The ground grew firmer, rising toward the east in a gradual slope. The trees thinned out, and Tom became aware of stars gleaming overhead. Before him a battlemented wall loomed suddenly against the midnight sky. The expedition had reached the castle that formed the chief western defense of the town.

From the rampart above there came a sudden challenge. By Morgan's command the captured sentry answered the hail, demanding, in the buccaneer chieftain's name, instant surrender of the fort. A short parley ensued, Morgan threatening to cut the garrison to pieces unless the keys of the castle were instantly delivered.

Within the fort all was confusion. Some of the defenders advised resistance, while the rest advocated surrender. Morgan, impatient of delay, knowing that every wasted moment gave the Spaniards a better opportunity to mobilize their forces for defense, ordered the assault.

With a fierce shout the buccaneers rushed forward, dividing into two columns, to surround the fort. Tom found himself swept onward in the midst of the Brethren, crowded by their impetuosity against the main gateway. From a high bastion on his right there came the flash of a falconet, and he heard the crash of breaking bones as the cannon ball plowed through the struggling mass of humanity at his side.

From within the castle, cries of protest followed the discharge of the cannon. The eager gunner, seeing an opportunity to do execution, had fired without orders. The

gate in front of Tom was suddenly thrown wide, and the gleam of a torch disclosed the white flag of truce in the aperture. True to Morgan's prophecy, the garrison, disclaiming responsibility for the act of their impetuous gunner, had capitulated without a struggle.

Spreading through the fort, the buccaneers, at their leader's direction, herded the Spanish soldiery into the guard room. The unfortunate wretches, still stupefied by sleep, could not realize from the calmness of Morgan's face the fate to which they had been consigned. Because the discharged cannon had taken the lives of six of his men, the buccaneer chieftain had condemned the entire garrison to death.

Beneath the place where the soldiers stood was the powder chamber, freshly stored. Wasting no time, Morgan bolted the doors of the guard room, soon to become a tomb, and set a train to the magazine. The order to advance followed.

Abandoning the fort, the buccaneers pushed on toward the city, where the clangor of alarm bells told them that citizen and soldier were rallying to the defense of the remaining fortifications. Five minutes later a frightful roar shook town and forest. The mine had exploded, blowing the captured castle, together with its garrison, into the air.

Before advancing to the assault of the second fort, where the governor of the city had taken refuge, and where, from all indications, he was preparing a stubborn defense, Morgan consolidated his position. He surrounded and captured two churches, a convent, and a monastery—all of them substantial structures which might later become embarrassing if left unsubdued in his rear. Priests, monks, and nuns having yielded without resistance, Morgan left them under a scanty guard and marched at daybreak to attack the other castle.

At a pistol shot from the walls he halted, demanding the surrender of the fort, and announcing to the garrison that they need expect no quarter if they attempted resistance. To this demand the governor made answer that he would never surrender alive, and ordered his musketeers to fire a volley at the Englishmen.

Through a storm of bullets the pirates rushed for the walls. With hand grenades of Morgan's invention, a detail of men attempted to blow up the gates of the castle; but the Spaniards from above hurled down

earthen pots filled with powder, which exploded among the pirates, driving them back in disorder.

Elsewhere, too, the defenders, inspired by their governor, fought valiantly, raining down stones upon the heads of the buccaneers, and overturning all the scaling ladders as fast as they were placed. Repulsed on all sides, the horde was compelled to retreat.

Having neither siege guns nor muskets, and being forced to attack arquebus with pistol and cannon with cutlass, Morgan fought under a heavy handicap. He saw that without strategy there was little hope of reducing the fortress. The Spanish cannon, in particular, harassed him by their enfilading fire. Hoping to prevent the discharge of the guns, he detailed a score of sharpshooters to pick off the gunners, and for the second time he led his men against the walls.

The marksmanship of the English began to tell. After a time none of the Spaniards dared to approach the embrasures to load or fire their pieces, and the advantage of their artillery was to a certain extent nullified; but the stubborn defense of the walls continued. The second assault was repulsed, and so were the third and fourth. Morgan's forces, having been without sleep all night, began to show traces of fatigue. Their situation was becoming desperate.

The sun at the zenith proclaimed the hour of noon, and the fortress still held out, its strength apparently unimpaired. Morgan's anxious glance, roving across the city, was suddenly arrested by the gilded cross that surmounted one of the churches. In the rays of the sun it gleamed like fire. The pirate chief was reminded of his prisoners.

With all possible haste he ordered the construction of a dozen ladders, so broad that each of them would enable three or four men to climb abreast. He also commanded that the priests and nuns should be brought before him.

His preparations occupied an hour. At the end of that time the buccaneers advanced to the assault for the fifth time; but now they were preceded by a thin line of men and women carrying ladders. When the line wavered, it was straightened by the cutlass point. Within the fort the musket firing diminished.

A spear's length from the wall Morgan halted and again demanded the surrender of the castle; but the governor proved reso-

lute. Regardless of the presence of the holy men and women in the vanguard of the pirates, he commanded his men to continue their fire.

Thrust ahead by the cutlasses, the priests and nuns moved forward, crying piteously upon the governor to surrender the fort and thus spare their lives. True to his word, he continued his defense, raining down great stones upon the unprotected heads of the unfortunate men and women below, and blowing them to pieces with his pottery bombs. They fell like sheep, but the buccaneers, using their bodies as human shields, planted their scaling ladders, and the fierce horde swarmed upward.

The walls gained, the rest was easy. The Spanish soldiers threw away their muskets and begged for quarter. The governor alone continued to fight. On their knees at his side, his wife and daughters begged him to give up, and Morgan assured him bodily safety if he would surrender; but, bleeding from a dozen cuts, his steel corselet dented by many blows, he shook his head, and through bloody lips protested that he would rather die as a brave soldier than hang as a coward. Seeing that he would not be taken alive, Morgan turned away, and the brave man was quickly despatched.

With the death of the governor, pillage began. The boasted discipline of the buccaneers disappeared. The horde broke up into little groups that raced through the city, battered down doors, seized the citizens, and with dire threats made them divulge the hiding places of their property. In the quest for plunder, fatigue and famine were forgotten, but the victors' thirst was amply satisfied. Three hours after the surrender of the citadel, two-thirds of the pirates were hopelessly drunk. If the Spanish citizenry who had taken to the woods could have been formed into an organized band, they could have recaptured the town with ease.

Deserted by every one, Tom wandered through the streets of the city alone. Tired in body, he became sick in soul. He had no desire to pillage. Spanish gold, with which the Wasp had tempted him back there in Bristol, had lost its glitter when he found it stained with the blood of helpless priests and nuns.

In his depression he had almost forgotten his hunger. A she-goat wandering the streets, bleating piteously to be milked, attracted his attention. The appearance of

the goat recalled his appetite. Here was supper at his hand. He smiled. Both his needs and those of the goat were satisfied.

As darkness descended upon the city, the sounds of revelry increased. Wherever Tom turned, the shouts of the buccaneers pursued him. He paused at last in front of the church where the priests and nuns had been confined during the morning. Deserted now, its communion plate and ceremonial robes long since added to the pirates' spoil, the sacred structure loomed darkly inviting to the tired lad.

He pushed wide the door, which stood ajar, and entered the nave of the church. It was quiet there. Filtering through the long, narrow windows, the moonlight cast tall shadows down the pillared aisles. The candles before the high altar, neglected for the first time since the church's consecration, had expired.

On a wide wooden bench at the rear of the church Tom spread his cloak, and, having unclasped his sword, lay down to rest. The whole atmosphere of the place was conducive to slumber, and in a short time he fell asleep.

Outside, the sounds of wild carousal continued throughout the night.

### XIII

FOR six days Tom wandered through the streets of Porto Bello trying to close his eyes and ears to sights and sounds that he knew would cling to his memory as long as he lived. Frightful tortures invented by the buccaneers to make the Spaniards divulge the hiding places of their treasure filled the city with screams of anguish. Bruised and maimed creatures that had once been men crawled and hobbled about the town, living testimonials of pirate cruelty.

Amid these scenes of horror Tom's waking hours passed like evil dreams. Even in the comparative quiet of the church, his nights were haunted by the ghosts of murdered priests. He longed to be away. More than once his eyes rested hopefully upon the fleet, now anchored in the roadstead. Never before had the Willing Mind appeared so attractive.

Among the buccaneers all authority had disappeared. In its place was license. The pirates swarmed through the city, subject only to the discipline of their own desires. The pestilence that had stalked them through the swamps descended upon them



with feverish hands, and death rapidly thinned their ranks; but the search for plunder continued.

When torture failed to produce treasure, the tormented Spaniards were held for ransom. The town itself was threatened with the torch unless one hundred thousand pieces of eight were paid for its deliverance.

Since the taking of the citadel Tom had seen nothing of the Wasp, but he could surmise the reason for the captain's absence. Morgan himself was no more adept than Middleton in making reluctant Spaniards part with their gold. Undoubtedly the Wasp was busy with some plain and fancy looting.

Like his leader, Job Stanton had been missing since the capitulation of the city; but for weeks Tom and Job had had little in common, and the man's absence caused the youth no particular disturbance of mind. Since the beginning of the voyage these two had been drifting apart. Because of the similarity of their misfortunes, they might easily have been comrades; but Job's hypocrisy, his fawning upon the Wasp, and the politic manner in which he tried to gain the good will of the Brethren, had disgusted Tom.

When Job, after his long absence, suddenly appeared and made new overtures of friendship, Tom should have been on his guard; but the startling nature of Job's disclosure drove all thought of caution from the other's mind.

It was evening of the sixth day in Porto Bello. Tom, as had become his custom, had strolled down to the water's edge, and stood looking out over the shallow harbor to the ships at anchor, a bowshot from the shore. On his left lay the ruins of the fort that had been blown to a heap of rubbish by Morgan on the night of the first assault.

From behind this pile of crumbled masonry there came a low hiss, so faint at first that Tom scarce heard it. The sound was repeated. Startled, Tom glanced toward the shadows and saw Stanton.

Job stood at the edge of the thicket, beyond the outermost line of the fortifications, beckoning for Tom to approach. Mystified, the lad obeyed. As he advanced, Job retreated toward the margin of the bay, pausing at last just above the high-water mark, where a clump of palms grew straight out over the water. Between two tree trunks, drawn well up on the shore, nestled a longboat, very much like that be-

longing to the Willing Mind. Hidden by the palms, the little craft was well screened from observation, and Tom saw that it was plentifully stocked with fresh fruit and water.

"What does this mean?" he asked in wonder.

"It means escape," answered Job.

"Escape?"

"From the Wasp. Do you wish to be a pirate all your days?"

Tom shook his head. He was bewildered to learn that Stanton, whom he had considered a partisan of the Wasp, was now planning to run away.

"But where shall we flee?" he asked.

"To Jamaica. I have it all thought out. Listen! The Wasp has bagged his booty—five times more than his proper share. Tonight, two hours after sundown and one hour before moonrise, he plans to slip away, leaving behind all the Brethren save twenty, just enough to sail the ship. He hopes to escape Morgan's pursuit by sailing southward, to make Magellan's Straits, and so to reach Madagascar, the headquarters of all the Pacific pirates. Once there, he will recruit the ship, cruise north along the African coast, gather booty, and return to Madagascar; then around Good Hope and home with enough treasure to end his days. A two years' cruise!"

The audacity of the Wasp's proposed voyage took Tom's breath away for a moment. Before he could comment, however, Job continued:

"He expects me to sail with him, but I have sickened of pirate life. If he puts his plan into operation, and Morgan catches him, he will hang higher than Haman. For my part, the danger is too great. I have decided to become a planter."

"A planter!" cried Tom.

The sentiment was his own, and to hear it from Job's lips astonished him.

"Yes—an honest life, and fairly profitable. What I propose is that in this boat we sail to Jamaica and take service with Rawlinson. He has other plantations besides the one that was burned by the Wasp."

"But neither of us can handle the craft," protested Tom.

Job smiled.

"We will have a pilot," he answered.

"But suppose Rawlinson refuses to receive us?"

"The pilot will see to that."

"I don't understand. Who is this pilot?"

"The planter's daughter."

Tom gasped. Job's statement was the first intimation he had received that Anne was not safe with her father at Spanish Town.

"Where is she?" he demanded, as the meaning of Job's words swept over him.

"On the flagship. She is not harmed. Morgan could not put her ashore, on account of the change in the wind. She has lived like a princess, with a cabin to herself, two negro wenches to wait on her, and the freedom of the ship. Morgan has treated her like a queen."

"How do you know all this?"

"I talked with her less than two hours ago."

Tom was silent. Job's news dumfounded him.

"She is safe for the present," continued Stanton; "but suppose Morgan's attitude should change? Or, worse yet, suppose something should happen to Morgan?"

The prospect made Tom shudder.

"Unless we flee with the Wasp," continued Job, "we may be in this fever hole a month longer. Guzman, the governor of Panama, has organized a relief expedition, which he is sending across the isthmus to attack us here at Porto Bello. Morgan plans an ambush, which will probably be successful. Then, with all danger of attack gone, he will linger on here until the blood of every Spaniard in the city has been turned to gold. By fleeing with the girl we shall escape it all."

"What does Anne Rawlinson say?"

"She is ready. An hour after sundown she will be in the starboard fore chains, prepared to step aboard as we drift past. Once at Jamaica, we are safe, for Rawlinson has the protection of Governor Modyford, as well as that of the king, and Morgan will never molest us. As for the Wasp, he will be far away."

The prospect of rescuing Anne allured Tom. He did not see that Job was keeping something back. He did not know that Anne's consent to Stanton's suggestion had been contingent upon Tom's making a third member of the escaping party. Nor could he know that the real reason behind Job's desire to flee from the Wasp was a rope of pearls worth a king's ransom, which Stanton had wrapped around his waist next to his skin.

In his desire to be of service to Anne, Tom's only regret was that Job, instead of himself, was engineering the escape. Stanton breathed a sigh of relief when, after a few moments' consideration, Tom agreed to join him.

"It will be dark soon," said Job. "We should start within the hour."

"I will be ready," answered Tom. "All that I have to do is to milk my goat."

Five minutes later, when Tom and Job had disappeared beyond the ruins of the fort, a dim shape emerged from the thicket and followed in their footsteps. It was Rolfe, the buccaneer. As he reached the streets of the town, he began to run. He was searching for the Wasp.

The execution of Job's plan was simplicity itself. Tom and Job met as agreed, launched the longboat, and began their voyage of deliverance. The night favored them, the sky being slightly overcast with scurrying wind clouds. Near the shore, especially, it was dark as a pocket.

Using their oars like paddles, and taking advantage of the ebbing tide, Tom and Job half paddled, half drifted, toward the flagship, whose hull loomed before them as motionless as a stranded derelict. The vessel swung at anchor, her bow toward the shore; and as the longboat crept nearer Tom began to strain his eyes for a glimpse of the figure which he knew should be clinging in the fore chains.

The bow of the boat glided slowly past the stem of the ship. They were alongside now. A soft hiss from above was the first indication that they had been seen. A boyish figure appeared for an instant, outlined against the sky, and a soft hand grasped Tom's extended forearm. The boat rocked gently. Job cautiously shoved away from the ship's side. A thwart creaked. The grasp on Tom's arm tightened, and then let go altogether.

Tom's heart beat rapidly. The rescue was accomplished.

For half an hour no word was spoken. Tom and Job dipped their oars like paddles, while Anne sat silent and did not stir. A soft breeze blew from the land, inviting them to hoist their sail; and Stanton—who, having planned the escape, was nominally commander of the longboat—suggested the advisability of stepping the mast.

And now the value of Anne's experience appeared. Under her direction the mast

was rigged and the sail spread to the breeze. Then, taking her place at the tiller, she set a course toward the northeast. Behind the boat the indistinct shore line soon disappeared in the darkness.

To Job, troubled by fear, the gloom was oppressive; but Tom, thrilled by the magic of Anne's presence, was well content with his lot. He crouched at the foot of the mast and constructed Anne's image from the silhouette of her form as he saw it outlined against the sky at the stern of the boat. His debt of friendship, long overdue, was being paid at last.

Of the trio, Anne alone realized the difficulties that threatened the success of their voyage. Seven hundred miles separated them from Jamaica—seven hundred miles to be traversed in an open boat, across a waste of waters as treacherous as any in the world. It was true that the season of the year favored them. The boat, according to Job's statement, was provisioned for fourteen days. With favorable winds they might make Jamaica in a week; but against a storm—

Along with the supplies, Job had provided the longboat with a Spanish compass. Despite the fact that with such an instrument Columbus had discovered a new continent, Anne dared not trust it too implicitly. The age was one of conquest and discovery, rather than of invention, and its mechanical devices were unreliable. She had more faith in her knowledge of the stars as an aid to navigation than in all the compasses in Christendom.

The silence that had prevailed since the hoisting of the sail was broken, at last, by Anne.

"We should stand watch during the night," she said.

Tom, roused from his reverie, sat up with a start. Job stopped brooding, and became suddenly alert. In the discussion that followed, it was decided that Anne should stand the first watch, and that Tom should relieve her an hour before her time was up, in order that she might instruct him in the sailing of the boat. He, in turn, was to impart her instructions to Job.

Eventually this arrangement worked out well enough, but for the first night Tom could not sleep. He wrapped himself in his cloak and curled up in the bottom of the boat, at the foot of the mast, but his eyes refused to stay closed. Job had moved forward into the bow, and Anne sat mo-

tionless at the tiller. The longboat, running before the breeze, rode on an even keel. Only the soft rippling of water beneath the bow disturbed the absolute stillness of the night.

The moon, long hidden behind a low bank of clouds, revealed itself at last. Tom could really see Anne now, and for a long time he watched her through half-opened eyelids. Her face, in the moonlight, looked unnaturally pale, her form ethereally slender. It was hard for him to realize that so slight a figure had once faced the giant commander of the Willing Mind, and had returned his rapier strokes thrust for thrust.

He recalled the second time that he had seen her—at the cabin on the island, where her black mammy had joined their hands, appointing him the girl's protector. He smiled whimsically to himself. So far in their acquaintance Anne had protected him more than he had protected her. For his sake she had fought against the Wasp, and she had begged his life from Morgan; but he did not know that she had agreed to the present plan of escape as much in his behalf as in her own.

"Are you awake?" Anne's voice called softly.

In reply, he rose and seated himself on the wide thwart at her side. For half an hour she instructed him in the sailing of the boat, pointing out a star by which to set his course, and showing him how to trim the sheet to meet any slight change in the direction of the wind. Once, as she gave him the tiller, their hands touched. The contact thrilled him.

"Tell me," he asked suddenly, "what did you mean, back there at the plantation, when you said that your black mammy had foretold that we should meet in Bristol?"

Tom could not see Anne blush, but he marked a slight tremor in her voice as she replied:

"Exactly what I said. She told me that I would see you for the first time in Bristol, and that you would be in danger."

"But why should she tell you of me? Why should she think that I would interest you?"

"When a girl inquires into the future, she asks questions that men seldom think of. It is possible that I may have asked about the people that I should meet in England—the king, for instance. Hester told me that I should meet King Charles."

"And did you?"

"His gracious majesty granted my father and myself a special audience."

"I can understand your interest in royalty, but it is a far cry from King Charles to a country lad like myself!"

"Perhaps old black Hester saw that some day you and I would become comrades in adventure. We are comrades, are we not?"

"We are," answered Tom; and the fervor of his tone left no doubt in Anne's mind as to his sincerity.

The moon climbed higher in the heavens, making a path of silver across the waters to the southeast. The breeze freshened, and the lapping of the waves under the bow grew louder. The sound was music in Anne's ears. The longboat was away to a fair start.

#### XIV

PROVIDENTIALLY the voyage was accomplished without mischance. Fair weather and fair winds favored the expedition, and the morning of the ninth day revealed the Blue Mountains of Jamaica on the northern horizon. Afternoon brought the longboat within sight of Rawlinson's lagoon. As a pilot, Anne had fulfilled all Job Stanton's predictions.

To Tom the prospect of the journey's end brought regrets that the time had passed so quickly. Doubts as to the reception he and Job might expect from Anne's father began to assail him.

Anne had said that there would be a place for them in the work of the plantation, and Tom pictured himself filling an important niche in the life of the island. Along with this imaginary vision was another and a more romantic one, in which he and Anne figured in a relationship that he scarcely dared to dream of. He wondered if the far-seeing Rawlinson had ever made plans for a son-in-law. Would he, Tom Heylin, a penniless adventurer, appeal to the Scottish planter as a fit mate for his daughter?

With such thoughts as these Tom's mind had been busy of late. He was recalled to reality by an exclamation from Anne.

The longboat had approached within an eighth of a mile of the wooded shore of the little cape on the southern side of the lagoon. Above the palms the topmasts of a vessel stood out against the sky.

"The Royal Hope!" exclaimed Anne, pointing beyond the tops of the trees.

As the bow of the longboat crept past

the end of the promontory, Job cried out suddenly.

"The Wasp!" he shouted.

The terror in his tones communicated itself to Anne and Tom. It was true—the vessel which Anne had thought to be her father's ship was in reality the privateer. The Wasp, with characteristic cunning, had fitted the Willing Mind with new top spars.

As the momentum of the longboat brought it within the sheltered bay, two boats shot out from either side of the entrance, shutting off all hope of escape to the sea. In the bow of the one bearing down upon them from the right stood the Wasp. His lips were parted in a drunken grin. His arms were folded across his broad breast, and each hand held a loaded pistol.

Job, leaping to his feet, plunged suddenly into the water. Tom drew his rapier. Anne let go the tiller and folded her arms. The courses of the three boats were bringing them rapidly together.

Spluttering and floundering, Job came to the surface almost alongside the Wasp's longboat. Unable to swim, in terror of drowning, for a moment he forgot his fear of the buccaneer.

"Help!" he cried frantically.

Rolfe, in the stern of the Wasp's boat, snatched at the drowning man, securing a hold on the back of Job's homespun shirt; but the cotton fabric tore away, allowing the man to drop back into the water. A second attempt was more successful, and Job was lifted bodily into the Wasp's boat.

Through the tear in his shirt the pearls wrapped around his waist were plainly revealed. From the buccaneers a shout went up. Cowering at Rolfe's feet, Job clutched at his loot like a miser about to be robbed of a lifetime's golden hoard.

With one foot on the forward thwart, his rapier point raised in readiness for the attack that he knew must come, Tom Heylin waited in silence. Swiftly he measured the lessening distance between himself and the Wasp, and already his blood tingled in anticipation of the coming encounter; but the Wasp's plan of action provided for no death struggle with an adversary of Tom's skill. Too often he had watched the lad at fence with the Brethren to care to measure swords with him unnecessarily.

A biscuit's toss away, the chieftain raised his hand, and his men stopped rowing. Beyond the reach of Tom's rapier, he commanded the situation.



"Put up your sword!" he ordered, leveling one of his weapons.

Tom hesitated. It is one thing to die fighting, point to point; another to be shot down in cold blood like a helpless dog. Resistance meant a pistol bullet; and a pistol bullet at that distance meant death. Tom sheathed his rapier.

Anne had stepped forward to his side. Her hand touched his shoulder. She looked up into his face and smiled courageously. Tom bent his head.

The Wasp's scornful laugh echoed across the water.

"Look!" he said, pointing toward the Willing Mind. "There is the yardarm. Save your kisses until after the dance!"

Anne blushed, and Tom's hand again tightened on his sword hilt; but the boats' gunwales touched now, and the Wasp's pistol at his breast told the folly of resistance. At the pistol's point he allowed himself to be disarmed. Two of the Brethren clambered into the longboat and picked up the oars, and the flotilla began to move toward the Willing Mind.

On board the privateer, the thinness of the Brethren's ranks was at once apparent. The bravest men of the crew were missing. Tom looked in vain for Watkins and Paisley. Whether they had been killed at Portobello or had been abandoned by the Wasp, he could not tell.

Tom's hands were tied behind him with stout ropes. He was thrust into the fore-castle, and two men were detailed to guard against his escape. Then for an hour he was compelled to listen to the shrieks of Job—terrible, soul-piercing cries that made his flesh creep. He wondered if Job's agony presaged some hideous form of torture for himself.

At last the screams ceased. Had death put an end to Stanton's suffering? With all his strength Tom struggled with his bonds. Once or twice he thought he felt a rope give, but his wrists were so sore that he could not be sure.

An hour had passed since Job's last scream before Tom was dragged to the deck. Night had descended, and a circle of torches placed at short intervals along the rail lighted the ship with a carnival brilliance.

A debauch was in progress. At the foot of the foremast stood an open cask of liquor, where the Brethren came and went at will. All of them were drunk.

The Wasp, standing on the quarter-deck, swayed unsteadily on his feet as with fumbling fingers he prepared a loop in the end of a rope. The rope hung from the cross-jack yard, and, following it with his eyes, Tom saw that after crossing the yard it hung down on the other side, where a group of Brethren in the waist of the ship clustered about its free end.

Somehow, to Tom, these preparations for a hanging did not seem to concern himself. He was more interested in learning what had become of Anne. At that moment, led by two seamen, she appeared from the cabin. Her face was pale, but she faced the Wasp proudly.

"Bring her here!" ordered the Wasp. "Here, where she can see our bold Heylin dance! When his dance is over, ours begins, eh, pretty one?"

Tom's blood boiled, and he wrenched at his bonds. At that instant, out of the corner of his eye, he saw Job, who was about to provide amusement for the group in the waist of the ship. The Wasp saw Stanton at the same time, and halted his preparations, to watch the fun below.

The unfortunate Job was walking slowly aft, with hands outstretched before him, as if feeling his way. Tom shuddered as he suddenly realized that the man was blind. The Wasp had put out both his eyes.

As Job approached the group at the rope's end, one of the Brethren snatched a torch from the rail and held it so that the blind man's outstretched hand would touch the flame. Job screamed suddenly, closed his fingers on the brand, and snatched it from the seaman's grasp. The men laughed drunkenly.

Some one pricked the blind man with a cutlass point. Job cried out again and began to run, holding the torch outstretched before him. He forgot that he could not see, and ran rapidly. At his feet yawned an open hatch. A cry of warning rose to the tip of Tom's tongue; but, before he could shout, Job's running feet carried him into the void. There came a crash from below, and a bellow of merriment from the men.

Tom clenched his teeth, and again strained desperately at his bonds. To his surprise, they suddenly seemed to give.

No sound came from the opening where Job had vanished. Dazed by his fall, he had struggled to his knees, still clutching the torch, which was unextinguished. Hold-

ing it extended before him, as if its light could guide his way, he began to creep slowly forward, toward the bow of the ship. Crazed by pain, he had no conception of what he was doing. Had there been any one there to observe, he would have seen only the glow of a torch preceding a kneeling figure which moved slowly forward through the gloom, toward an open bulkhead on the lower deck.

The entertainment over, the Wasp issued grim orders. Tom was escorted to the quarter-deck. His two captors became assistant hangmen. They stepped forward to adjust the noose around Tom's throat. A futile protest from Anne delayed proceedings for a moment. That moment was just sufficient to give Tom time to finish with the lashings that bound his arms. The steady straining at his bonds had gained result at last, and his hands were free.

The Wasp and the two men beside Tom were now the only buccaneers on the quarter-deck, Anne's captors having joined their fellows, in order to haul on the other end of the rope. The two assistants, as well as their leader, were befuddled with drink. Tom believed himself a match for all three.

Dropping his loosened bonds, which he had held taut by spreading his arms, he whirled suddenly and struck the seaman on his left a terrible blow with his clenched fist. The man dropped like a log. The Wasp, dazed by alcohol, barely had time to reach for a pistol before Tom was upon him. The youth's blow was a glancing one, but the weight of his body was behind it. The buccaneer captain staggered back, tripped on the rise of the deck, and tumbled headlong into the group below.

Rolfe, the other man at the noose, leaped forward. Tom heard rather than saw his approach. He turned halfway to meet the rush, grasped Rolfe's extended arm, and wrenched forward. Catapulted by its own weight, the seaman's body described a half circle in the air and vanished down the open hatch where Job had fallen a few minutes before.

"Now!" cried Tom, turning to Anne.

With his arm around her waist, he half lifted her to the rail. They poised for a moment, distinct in the flare of the torches, and then disappeared into the waters below.

The flame of the torches cast a wide circle of light upon the surface of the lagoon beyond the shadow of the ship.

"Once past that, and we are safe!" Tom whispered, as they struck out for the shore.

Side by side they reached the illumined belt of water. A voice from the rail hailed them. Tom looked back. In the waist of the ship, completely sobered by his fall, the Wasp leaned over the bulwark, and a torch gleamed upon a pistol barrel that pointed out over the water. Into Tom's vision flashed a picture of Luscombe's knives hurtling into the sea. At such a distance the Wasp could not miss.

Under the water, Tom's hand touched Anne's. He meant the contact to say goodbye, for he felt that the end had come.

On either side of the Wasp other faces appeared at the rail. Before shooting, the Wasp paused a moment to enjoy his triumph. Two huge gold earrings in the leader's ears fascinated Tom. In all the swift-moving events of the night, nothing made so deep an impression upon him as that long moment while the earrings sparkled in the torchlight.

Suddenly the Wasp vanished. He was obliterated by a flash of light so brilliant that Tom was blinded. There was no sound—at least, Tom heard no sound; but he received a frightful blow in the face, which drove him gasping beneath the surface of the water. When his head emerged, the lagoon was in darkness—a darkness punctuated by a falling rain of fiery fragments. The Willing Mind had disappeared.

What had happened? Vaguely Tom comprehended a catastrophe. What kind of a catastrophe, he asked himself—a phenomenon of nature? No, an explosion. The fire from Job's torch had found the powder magazine.

Tom called to Anne, and her voice answered him. After a time they began swimming again. The calm waters were agitated, and the surface of the lagoon was strewn with debris. Through circling eddies and little wavelets they reached the shallows, and waded ashore.

Anne's hand clasped Tom's. It was trembling. He pressed it reassuringly, and together they moved up the slope of the beach.

Suddenly a light gleamed in the thicket before them. Anne could control her overwrought nerves no longer. She screamed.

A deep voice shouted orders. There came a rush of feet from the thicket. By the light of a high-held torch Tom saw the

gleam of steel. Anne threw herself upon his breast. Over her shoulder he saw a circle of faces. The torchlight gleamed on the black and swarthy skins of negro and mulatto. A babble of tongues assailed his ears. In the tumult he heard Anne's voice crying:

"Father!"

He suddenly realized that friends, not

enemies, surrounded him. A firm hand clasped his own, and beneath a crown of white hair he recognized the face of the planter Rawlinson. The dark faces about him wore smiles of welcome.

Tom was suddenly content. He had brought Anne safely home, and his adventure with the Brethren of the Coast was ended.

THE END

### I HAVE BEHELD A GOD

*Horace, Book II, Ode xix*

*But I have seen Bacchus; I tell you I saw him!  
Believe it or not, as you will, who come after—  
These eyes, not immortal, have looked on a god!*

It was deep, it was deep, in the dusk of the forest;  
The high rocks were round him, the nymphs and the satyrs,  
The goat-footed satyrs, with prick ears uppointed,  
Were gathered there, learning the strains of his music;  
And there I beheld him! With awe I am shaken—  
I am stirred, I am filled, I am drunken with wonder!

But spare me, divine one, thy terrible thyrsus!  
Count not sacrilegious the eyes of a poet!  
For now I have seen, I can sing of thy glory.  
Yes, mine, now, to tell of thy raptured Bacchantes,  
Thy milk-flowing rivers, thy wine-running fountains;  
Of honey that drips from the trees that are hollow.  
Of bright Ariadne, thy spouse, who is added,  
A white constellation, to high stars of heaven;  
To relate the dark doom of the palace of Pentheus,  
Destroyed by thy wrath, and the fate of Lycurgus,  
The proud Thracian ruler thou broughtest to ruin!

O dread Dionysus, thou turnest the rivers;  
The strange seas thou tamest! On far, lonely mountains  
Thy power can restrain the wild Bistonid women;  
Thou bindest their tresses with knots made of vipers!  
When the dread band of giants defied thy great Father,  
It was thou, in the horrible guise of a lion,  
Hurled Rhoetus, the rebel, down, down from Olympus!

Oh, let them who will, then, declare thee more suited  
For drinking and feasting and dancing than combat—  
I, I who have seen thee, O Bacchus, dispute them,  
Protesting thy prowess in war as in peace!  
Did not even Cerberus crouch down before thee  
Adorned with thy golden, thy far-sounding trumpet,  
And lick at thy feet with his thrice dreadful tongue?

*Yes, I have seen Bacchus! I saw him, I tell you!  
These eyes, not immortal, have looked on a god—  
Believe it or not, as you will, who come after!*

*Roselle Mercier Montgomery*