

But William Frost was lying senseless in the bottom of the boat. There was no explanation. After all, none was needed.

"And I have three wounds from stones, and this man behind me as many more, beside a shot through his shoulder. Now, sir, be we cowards?"

"You have done your duty," said Amyas, and sank down in the boat, and cried as if his heart would break; and then sprang up, and, wounded as he was, took the oar from Evans' hands. With weary work they made the ship, but so exhausted that another boat had to be lowered to get them alongside.

The alarm being now given, it was hardly safe to remain where they were; and after a stormy and sad argument, it was agreed to weigh anchor and stand off and on till morning; for Amyas refused to leave the spot till he was compelled, though he had no hope (how could he have?) that Frank might still be alive. And perhaps it was well for them, as will appear in the next chapter, that morning did not find them at anchor close to the town.

However that may be, so ended that fatal venture of mistaken chivalry.

## CHAPTER XX.

### SPANISH BLOODHOUNDS AND ENGLISH MASTIFFS.

"Full seven long hours in all men's sight

This fight endured sore,

Until our men so feeble grew,

That they could fight no more

And then upon dead horses

Full savorily they fed,

And drank the puddle water,

They could no better get.

"When they had fed so freely

They kneeled on the ground,

And gave God thanks devoutly for

The favor they had found;

Then beating up their colors,

The fight they did renew;

And turning to the Spaniards,

A thousand more they slew."

THE BRAVE LORD WILLOUGHBY. 1586.

WHEN the sun leaped up the next morning, and the tropic light flashed suddenly into the tropic day, Amyas was pacing the deck, with dishevelled hair and torn clothes, his eyes red with rage and weeping, his heart full—how can I describe it? Picture it to yourselves, picture it to yourselves, you who have ever lost a brother; and you who have not, thank God that you know nothing of his agony. Full of impossible projects, he strode and staggered up and down, as the ship thrashed close-hauled through the rolling seas. He would go back and burn the villa. He would take Guayra, and have the life of every man in it in return for his brother's. "We can do it, lads!" he shouted. "If Drake took Nombre de Dios, we can take La Guayra." And every voice shouted, "Yes."

"We will have it, Amyas, and have Frank too, yet," cried Cary; but Amyas shook his head. He knew, and knew not why he knew, that all the ports in New Spain would never restore to him that one beloved face.

"Yes, he shall be well avenged. And look there! There is the first crop of our vengeance." And he pointed toward the shore, where between them and the now distant



peaks of the Silla, three sails appeared, not five miles to windward.

"There are the Spanish bloodhounds on our heels, the same ships which we saw yesterday off Guayra. Back, lads, and welcome them, if there were a dozen."

There was a murmur of applause from all around; and if any young heart sank for a moment at the prospect of fighting three ships at once, it was awed into silence by the cheer which rose from all the older men, and by Salvation Yeo's stentorian voice.

"If there were a dozen, the Lord is with us, who has said, 'One of you shall chase a thousand.' Clear away, lads, and see the glory of the Lord this day."

"Amen!" cried Cary; and the ship was kept still closer to the wind.

Amyas had revived at the sight of battle. He no longer felt his wounds, or his great sorrow; even Frank's last angel's look grew dimmer every moment as he bustled about the deck; and ere a quarter of an hour had passed, his voice cried firmly and cheerfully as of old—

"Now, my masters, let us serve God, and then to breakfast, and after that clear for action."

Jack Brimblecombe read the daily prayers, and the prayers before a fight at sea, and his honest voice trembled, as, in the Prayer for all Conditions of Men (in spite of Amyas' despair), he added, "and especially for our dear brother Mr. Francis Leigh, perhaps captive among the idolaters;" and so they rose.

"Now, then," said Amyas, "to breakfast. A Frenchman fights best fasting, a Dutchman drunk, an Englishman full, and a Spaniard when the devil is in him, and that's always."

"And good beef and the good cause are a match for the devil," said Cary. "Come down, captain; you must eat too."

Amyas shook his head, took the tiller from the steersman, and bade him go below and fill himself. Will Cary went down, and returned in five minutes, with a plate of bread and beef, and a great jack of ale, coaxed them down Amyas' throat, as a nurse does with a child, and then scuttled below again with tears hopping down his face.

Amyas stood still steering. His face was grown seven years older in the last night. A terrible set calm was on him. Woe to the man who came across him that day!

"There are three of them, you see, my masters," said he, as the crew came on deck again. "A big ship forward, and two galleys astern of her. The big ship may keep; she is a race ship, and if we can but recover the wind of her, we will see whether our height is not a match for her length. We must give her the slip, and take the galleys first."

"I thank the Lord," said Yeo, "who has given so wise a heart to so young a general; a very David and Daniel, saving his presence, lads; and if any dare not follow him, let him be as the men of Meroz and of Succoth. Amen! Silas Stavely, smite me that boy over the head, the young monkey; why is he not down at the powder-room door?"

And Yeo went about his gunnery, as one who knew how to do it, and had the most terrible mind to do it thoroughly, and the most terrible faith that it was God's work.

So all fell to; and though there was comparatively little to be done, the ship having been kept as far as could be in fighting order all night, yet there was "clearing of decks, lacing of nettings, making of bulwarks, fitting of waist-cloths, arming of tops, tallowing of pikes, slinging of yards, doubling of sheets and tacks," enough to satisfy even the pedantical soul of Richard Hawkins himself. Amyas took charge of the poop, Cary of the fore-castle, and Yeo, as gunner, of the main-deck, while Drew, as master, settled himself in the waist; and all was ready, and more than ready, before the great ship was within two miles of them.

And now, while the mastiffs of England and the bloodhounds of Spain are nearing and nearing over the rolling surges, thirsting for each other's blood, let us spend a few minutes at least in looking at them both, and considering the causes which in those days enabled the English to face and conquer armaments immensely superior in size and number of ships, and to boast, that in the whole Spanish war, but one queen's ship, the *Revenge*, and (if I recollect right) but one private man-of-war, Sir Richard Hawkins' *Dainty*, had ever struck their colors to the enemy.

What was it which enabled Sir Richard Grenville's *Revenge*, in his last fearful fight off the Azores, to endure for twelve hours before she struck, the attack of eight Spanish armadas, of which two (three times her own burden) sank at her side; and after all her masts were gone, and she had been boarded three times without



success, to defy to the last the whole fleet of fifty-four sail, which lay around her, waiting for her to sink, "like dogs around the dying forest king?"

What enabled young Richard Hawkins' Dainty, though half her guns were useless through the carelessness or treachery of the gunner, to maintain for three days a running fight with two Spaniards of equal size with her, double the weight of metal, and ten times the number of men?

What enabled Sir George Cary's illustrious ship, the Content, to fight single-handed, from seven in the morning till eleven at night, with four great armadas and two galleys, though her heaviest gun was but one nine-pounder, and for many hours she had but thirteen men fit for service?

What enabled, in the very year of which I write, those two "valiant Turkey Merchantmen of London, the Merchant Royal and the Tobie," with their three small consort, to cripple, off Pantellaria in the Mediterranean, the whole fleet of Spanish galleys sent to intercept them, and to return triumphant through the Straits of Gibraltar?

And lastly, what in the fight of 1588, whereof more hereafter, enabled the English fleet to capture, destroy, and scatter that Great Armada, with the loss (but not the capture) of one pinnace and one gentleman of note?

There were more causes than one: the first seems to have lain in the build of the English ships; the second in their superior gunnery and weight of metal; the third (without which the first would have been useless) in the hearts of the English men.

The English ship was much shorter than the Spanish; and this (with the rig of those days) gave them an ease in manœuvring, which utterly confounded their Spanish foes. "The English ships in the fight of 1588," says Camden, "charged the enemy with marvelous agility, and having discharged their broadsides, flew forth presently into the deep, and leveled their shot directly, without missing, at those great ships of the Spaniards, which were altogether heavy and unwieldy." Moreover, the Spanish fashion, in the West Indies at least, though not in the ships of the Great Armada, was, for the sake of carrying merchandise, to build their men-of-war flush-decked, or as it was called "race" (*razés*), which left those on deck exposed and open; while the English fashion was to

heighten the ship as much as possible at stem and stern, both by the sweep of her lines, and also by stockades ("close fights and cage-works") on the poop and fore-castle, thus giving to the men a shelter, which was further increased by strong bulkheads ("cobridgeheads") across the main-deck below, dividing the ship thus into a number of separate forts, fitted with swivels ("bases, fowlers, and murderers") and loop-holed for musketry and arrows.

But the great source of superiority was, after all in the men themselves. The English sailor was then, as now, a quite amphibious and all-cunning animal, capable of turning his hand to everything, from needlework and carpentry to gunnery or hand-to-hand blows; and he was moreover one of a nation, every citizen of which was not merely permitted to carry arms, but compelled by law to practice from childhood the use of the bow, and accustomed to consider sword-play and quarter-staff as a necessary part and parcel of education, and the pastime of every leisure hour. The "fiercest nation upon earth," as they were then called, and the freest also, each man of them fought for himself with the self-help and self-respect of a Yankee ranger, and once bidden to do his work, was trusted to carry it out by his own wit as best he could. In one word he was a free man.

The English officers, too, as now, lived on terms of sympathy with their men unknown to the Spaniards, who raised between the commander and the commanded absurd barriers of rank and blood, which forbade to his pride any labor but that of fighting. The English officers, on the other hand, brought up to the same athletic sports, the same martial exercises, as their men, were not ashamed to care for them, to win their friendship, even on emergency to consult their judgment; and used their rank, not to differ from their men, but to outvie them; not merely to command and be obeyed, but like Homer's heroes, or the old Norse Vikings, to lead and be followed. Drake touched the true mainspring of English success when he once (in his voyage round the world) indignantly rebuked some coxcomb gentlemen-adventurers with—"I should like to see the gentleman that will refuse to set his hand to a rope. I must have the gentleman to hale and draw with the mariners." But those were days in which her Majesty's service was as little overridden by absurd rules of seniority, as by that



etiquette which is at once the counterfeit and the ruin of true discipline. Under Elizabeth and her ministers, a brave and a shrewd man was certain of promotion, let his rank or his age be what they might; the true honor of knighthood covered once and for all any lowliness of birth; and the merchant service (in which all the best sea-captains, even those of noble blood, were more or less engaged) was then a nursery, not only for seamen, but for warriors, in days when Spanish and Portuguese traders (whenever they had a chance) got rid of English competition by salvoes of cannon-shot.

Hence, as I have said, that strong fellow-feeling between officers and men; and hence mutinies (as Sir Richard Hawkins tells us) were all but unknown in the English ships, while in the Spanish they broke out on every slight occasion. For the Spaniard, by some suicidal pedantry, had allowed their navy to be crippled by the same despotism, etiquette, and official routine, by which the whole nation was gradually frozen to death in the course of next century or two; forgetting that, fifty years before, Cortez, Pizarro, and the early Conquistadores of America had achieved their miraculous triumphs on the exactly opposite method; by that very fellow-feeling between commander and commanded by which the English were now conquering them in their turn.

Their navy was organized on a plan complete enough; but on one which was, as the event proved, utterly fatal to their prowess and unanimity, and which made even their courage and honor useless against the assaults of free men. "They do, in their armadas at sea, divide themselves into three bodies, to wit, soldiers, mariners and gunners. The soldiers and officers watch and ward as if on shore; and this is the only duty they undergo, except cleaning their arms, wherein they are not over curious. The gunners are exempted from all labor and care, except about the artillery; and these are either Almaines, Flemings or strangers; for the Spaniards are but indifferently practiced in this art. The mariners are but as slaves to the rest, to moil and to toil day and night; and those but few and bad, and not suffered to sleep or harbor under the decks. For in fair or foul weather, in storms, sun or rain, they must pass void of covert or succor."

This is the account of one who was long prisoner on board their ships; let it explain itself while I return to my

tale. For the great ship is now within two musket-shots of the Rose, with the golden flag of Spain floating at her poop; and her trumpets are shouting defiance up the breeze, from a dozen brazen throats, which two or three answer lustily from the Rose, from whose poop flies the flag of England, and from her fore the arms of Leigh and Cary side by side, and over them the ship and bridge of the good town of Bideford. And then Amyas calls—

"Now, silence trumpets, waits, play up! 'Fortune my foe!' and God and the Queen be with us!"

Whereon (laugh not, reader, for it was the fashion of those musical, as well as valiant days) up rose that noble old favorite of good Queen Bess, from cornet and sackbut, fife and drum; while Parson Jack, who had taken his stand with the musicians on the poop, worked away lustily at his violin, and like Volker of the Nibelungen Lied.

"Well played, Jack; thy elbow flies like a lamb's tail," said Amyas, forcing a jest.

"It shall fly to a better fiddle-bow presently, sir, and I have the luck——"

"Steady, helm!" said Amyas. "What is he after now?"

The Spaniard, who had been coming upon them right down the wind under a press of sail, took in his light canvas.

"He don't know what to make of our waiting for him so bold," said the helmsman.

"He does though, and means to fight us," cried another.

"See, he is hauling up the foot of his mainsail: but he wants to keep the wind of us."

"Let him try, ther," quoth Amyas. "Keep her closer still. Let no one fire till we are about. Man the starboard guns: to starboard, and wait, all small arm men. Pass the order down to the gunner, and bid all fire high, and take the rigging."

Bang went one of the Spaniard's bow guns, and the shot went wide. Then another and another, while the men fidgeted about, looking at the priming of their muskets, and loosened their arrows in the sheaf.

"Lie down, men, and sing a psalm. When I want you, I'll call you. Closer still, if you can, helmsman, and we will try a short ship against a long one. We can sail two points nearer the wind than he."

As Amyas had calculated, the Spaniard would gladly enough have stood across the Rose's bows, but knowing



the English readiness, dare not for fear of being raked; so her only plan, if she did not intend to shoot past her foe down to leeward, was to put her head close to the wind, and wait for her on the same tack.

Amyas laughed to himself. "Hold on yet awhile. More ways of killing a cat than choking her with cream. Drew, there, are your men ready?"

"Ay, ay, sir!" and on they went, closing fast with the Spaniard, till within a pistol-shot.

"Ready about!" and about she went like an eel, and ran upon the opposite tack right under the Spaniard's stern. The Spaniard, astounded at the quickness of the manœuvre, hesitated a moment, and then tried to get about also, as his only chance; but it was too late, and while his lumbering length was still hanging in the wind's eye, Amyas' bowsprit had all but scraped his quarter, and the Rose passed slowly across his stern at ten yards' distance.

"Now, then!" roared Amyas. "Fire, and with a will! Have at her, archers: have at her, muskets all!" and in an instant a storm of bar and chain-shot, round and canister, swept the proud Don from stem to stern, while through the white cloud of smoke the musket-balls, and the still deadlier cloth-yard arrows, whistled and rushed upon their venomous errand. Down went the steersman, and every soul who manned the poop. Down went the mizzen topmast, in went the stern-windows and quarter-galleries; and as the smoke cleared away, the gorgeous painting of the Madre Dolorosa, with her heart full of seven swords, which in a gilded frame, bedizened the Spanish stern, was shivered in splinters; while, most glorious of all, the golden flag of Spain, which the last moment flaunted above their heads, hung trailing in the water. The ship, her tiller shot away, and her helmsmen killed, staggered helplessly a moment, and then fell up into the wind.

"Well done, men of Devon!" shouted Amyas, as cheers rent the welkin.

"She has struck," cried some, as the deafening hurrahs died away.

"Not a bit," said Amyas. "Hold on, helmsman, and leave her to patch her tackle while we settle the galleys."

On they shot merrily, and long ere the armada could get herself to rights again, were two good miles to windward, with the galleys sweeping down fast upon them.

And two venomous-looking craft they were, as they shot through the short chopping sea upon some forty oars apiece, stretching their long sword-fish snouts over the water, as if snuffing for their prey. Behind their long snout, a strong square fore-castle was crammed with soldiers, and the muzzles of cannon grinned out through port-holes, not only in the sides of the fore-castle, but forward in the line of the galley's course, thus enabling her to keep up a continual fire on a ship right ahead.

The long low waist was packed full of the slaves, some five or six to each oar, and down the centre, between the two banks, the English could see the slave-drivers walking up and down a long gangway, whip in hand. A raised quarter-deck at the stern held more soldiers, the sunlight flashing merrily upon their armor and their gun-barrels; as they neared, the English could hear plainly the cracks of the whips, and the yells as of wild beasts which answered them; the roll and rattle of the oars, and the loud "Ha!" of the slaves which accompanied every stroke, and the oaths and curses of the drivers; while a sickening musky smell, as of a pack of kenneled hounds, came down the wind from off those dens of misery. No wonder if many a young heart shuddered as it faced, for the first time, the horrible reality of those floating hells, the cruelties whereof had rung so often in English ears, from the stories of their own countrymen, who had passed them, fought them, and now and then passed years of misery on board of them. Who knew but what there might be English among those sun-browned, half-naked masses of panting wretches?

"Must we fire upon the slaves?" asked more than one, as the thought crossed him.

Amyas sighed.

"Spare them all you can, in God's name; but if they try to run us down, rake them we must, and God forgive us."

The two galleys came on abreast of each other, some forty yards apart. To outmanœuvre their oars as he had done the ship's sails, Amyas knew was impossible. To run from them was to be caught between them and the ship.

He made up his mind, as usual, to do the desperate game.

"Lay her head up in the wind, helmsman, and we will wait for them."



They were now within musket-shot, and opened fire from their bow-guns; but, owing to the chopping sea, their aim was wild. Amyas, as usual, withheld his fire.

The men stood at quarters with compressed lips, not knowing what was to come next. Amyas, towering motionless on the quarter-deck, gave his orders calmly and decisively. The men saw that he trusted himself, and trusted him accordingly.

The Spaniards, seeing him wait for them, gave a shout of joy—was the Englishman mad? And the two galleys converged rapidly, intending to strike him full, one on each bow.

They were within forty yards—another minute and the shock would come. The Englishman's helm went up, his yards creaked round, and gathering way, he plunged upon the larboard galley.

"A dozen gold nobles to him who brings down the steersman!" shouted Cary, who had his cue.

And a flight of arrows from the fore-castle rattled upon the galley's quarter-deck.

Hit or not hit, the steersman lost his nerve, and shrank from the coming shock. The galley's helm went up to port, and her beak slid all but harmless along Amyas' bow; a long dull grind, and then loud crack on crack, as the *Rose* sawed slowly through the bank of oars from stem to stern, hurling the wretched slaves in heaps upon each other; and ere her mate on the other side could swing round, to strike him in his new position, Amyas' whole broadside, great and small, had been poured into her at pistol-shot, answered by a yell which rent their ears and hearts.

"Spare the slaves! Fire at the soldiers!" cried Amyas; but the work was too hot for much discrimination; for the larboard galley, crippled but not undaunted, swung round across his stern, and hooked herself venomously on to him.

It was a move more brave than wise; for it prevented the other galley from returning to the attack without exposing herself a second time to the English broadside; and a desperate attempt of the Spaniards to board at once through the sternports, and up the quarter was met with such a demurrer of shot and steel, that they found themselves in three minutes again upon the galley's poop, accompanied, to their intense disgust, by Amyas Leigh and twenty English swords.

Five minutes' hard cutting, hand to hand, and the poop was clear. The soldiers in the fore-castle had been able to give them no assistance, open as they lay to the arrows and musketry from the *Rose's* lofty stern. Amyas rushed along the central gangway, shouting in Spanish, "Freedom to the slaves! death to the masters!" clambered into the fore-castle, followed close by his swarm of wasps, and set them so good an example how to use their stings, that in three minutes more there was not a Spaniard on board who was not dead or dying.

"Let the slaves free!" shouted he. "Throw us a hammer down men. Hark! there's an English voice!"

There is indeed. From amid the wreck of broken oars and writhing limbs, a voice is shrieking in broadest Devon to the master, who is looking over the side.

"Oh, Robert Drew! Robert Drew! Come down and take me out of hell!"

"Who be you, in the name of the Lord!"

"Don't you mind William Prust, that Captain Hawkins left behind in the Honduras, years and years ago? There's nine of us aboard if your shot hasn't put 'em out of their misery. Come down, if you've a Christian heart, come down!"

Utterly forgetful of all discipline, Drew leaps down, hammer in hand, and the two old comrades rush into each other's arms.

Why make a long story of what took but five minutes to do? The nine men (luckily none of them wounded) are freed, and helped on board, to be hugged and kissed by old comrades and young kinsmen; while the remaining slaves, furnished with a couple of hammers, are told to free themselves and help the English. The wretches answer by a shout; and Amyas, once more safe on board again, dashes after the other galley, which has been hovering out of reach of his guns; but there is no need to trouble himself about her; sickened with what she has got, she is struggling right up wind, leaning over to one side, and seemingly ready to sink.

"Are there any English on board of her?" said Amyas, loth to lose the chance of freeing a countryman.

"Never a one, sir, thank God."

So they set to work to repair damages; while the liberated slaves, having shifted some of the galley's oars, pull away after their comrade; and that with such a will, that