

His Excellency, the Vulture

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I

The testimony of Master Thomas Moone, of the ship GOLDEN HIND, as to the mutinous bearing of Sir James Falconer, leader of her Majesty's gentlemen, in the Great South Sea, in the year 1578. Which explains how the general came to visit the port of Lima, to the great gain of her Majesty, the Queen of England.

Master Thomas Moone finished reading the day's entry in the log of the GOLDEN HIND, written in the hand of the general commanding the expedition to the South Sea. Since Master Moone, although a navigator of rare skill, knew

naught of letters and words, he interpreted the entry in the log in his own fashion to the helmsman who was his companion on the quarter deck of the ship.

"A fair wind, an' a fair sea. The coast of the Spanish New World on our quarter. A goodly cargo o' Spanish silver i' the hold. There, I reckon that be all for today."

Moone closed the book carefully.

"Look-ee, lad; you bear too far to sea. Has Spanish silver dazzled you, that you can not see the shore?"

The man addressed, a full-muscled, bronzed seaman, gave over the helm a ways, with a glance at the compass in front of him, then jerked his thumb over his shoulder at a brass culverin that poked its nose from an embrasure on the poop.

"I did naught, Master Thomas Moone," he said stoutly, "but follow the general's command, which being inspired by book science and the secret arts of navigation, did seem to me more rightly trusted than my eyes, when the shore began to fall away to leeward. For by the chart it does seem true that the land be to nor'west, when by my eyes it be to nor'east."

Thomas Moone planted his stocky form beside the cannon and scanned the two hemispheres of the Old and New World which were engraved thereon. Scanty and rude as the details were, they formed the only charts available for the mariners who directed the course of the GOLDEN HIND, and by the outline of the chart inscribed on the cannon, Moone saw that the coastline ran slightly to the west, whereas he could plainly see that it tended to the east.

"A fair wind makes a fair sea, 'tis said," went on the helmsman, moodily, "yet here we be with a fair wind as ever blessed the channel, and foul danger lurking nigh us. Have we not come through the cursed Straits of Magellan, where a thousand devils send a wind no ship can stand against, when the return trip is to be made? Here we be, a bare hundred men, in one ship in the Great South Sea, with the Spanish men-at-arms watching for us on land, and not a friend to turn to afloat. For food there is but salt penguin meat, and for drink—"

"Good *botijas* of Chili wine, lad," roared Moone, "with silks from Cathay, taken from the galleons, for cloth, and bars of silver for ballast."

"What good avail these, when the charts are evil, and we know not the lay of the rocks along the coast? How may we return to England?"

"By the devil's back door, if needful," retorted Moone. "Our good general will discover some path, 'tis safe to venture. That is, if the tender-skinned and silken-clothed gentlemen in the cabin beneath us will cease their mutterings against him, for the reason that he, a sailor, is in command over them. Where should a sailor command, if not on the deck of his ship?"

A sound from the waist of the ship caught Moone's quick ear, and he thrust his red face into that of the helmsman.

"Hold your tongue, lad," he whispered hoarsely, "concerning what we've said, an ye fear my fist, for here comes the general himself, and the leader of the queen's gentlemen, Sir James Falconer."

Whereupon, with a poke of a knotty finger in the helmsman's ribs to enforce his words Master Moone betook himself to the rail of the poop, and, leaning on the brass cannon, pretended to be interested in the coat-of-arms painted on the stern which bore the insignia of Elizabeth, Queen of England, although really his ear was cocked to what went on behind him.

Two men stepped from the ladder to the poop, one tall and yellow of hair, the other stocky and ruddy of cheeks. Both were bearded in the fashion of the day, and elegantly clad, with plumes in their hats, and satin cloaks over their shoulders, and silver ornaments on belt and shoes.

The tall man, more carefully dressed than his companion, was Sir James Falconer, the other was the general of the expedition, Mr. Francis Drake. His short figure was alert and powerful, and his eyes flickered rapidly over the poop, while he played carelessly with the sword at his belt—the arm as finely tempered as the steel blade.

While Sir James leaned indolently against the rail and watched, the general produced a telescope and scanned the shore ahead of them for several moments.

“Beyond the next headland, Sir James,” he observed after a pause, “must lie the port of Arica for which we search. Then we shall see whether our hosts, the Spaniards, have prepared more treasure craft for us to have the spoiling of! How like you the thought of more silver bars?”

“More like they have carried off all the riches of the town to the woods,” objected the soldier, with a shrug. “Word of our coming has outsped the GOLDEN HIND up the coast, and robbed us of our booty. If this be truly the port of Arica, we had best land and search the town, for the shipping will be bare of silver.”

“Not so, Sir James,” replied Drake, putting down the telescope, “if you venture ashore ’twill be short shrift the Dons will give you. At sea, we are safe; ashore our enemies outnumber us, an’ they are plagued treacherous.”

“Bah! One Englishman can fight twenty Spaniards. And as for trickery, I am not the man to be caught asleep. A sailor’s heart clings to his ship and ordnance, but a soldier has a love for battle—a smoking pistol and a flashing blade.”

There was more than a little contempt in the voice of the leader of the queen’s gentlemen. Drake he considered to be an excellent pilot, and a worthy handler of sails and cordage, but Sir James had never admitted that Drake held rank over himself. All sailors were upstarts, a breed scarce better than laborers.

The general cast a keen glance at his second-in-command. It might have been seen that there were lines of weariness on the brow over the sharp eyes and sunburnt cheeks. The months since leaving Plymouth had been full of trouble—losses among the men at the hands of Indians, a vessel lost to sight in Magellan Straits, another gone down with all hands at the same spot, and lack of good provisions beyond what they could take from the Spanish towns. Greater than all these in the general’s mind was the mutinous spirit of Sir James and his gentlemen.

Alone in the Great South Sea, surrounded by Spanish craft, with the way of return by the straits well-nigh cut off by the enemy, and the way to China an unknown path, the plight of the GOLDEN HIND was little short of desperate. And now the band of men on the ship was divided, the mariners in one faction, in the other the soft-handed gentlemen who had sailed to cross swords with the cavaliers of Spain for the glory of God and to win gold ducats for themselves.

Patiently, Drake had made every effort to mend the breach, only to see it grow until the two factions were on the point of drawing sword to settle the question of leadership.

“Several years ago,” said Drake calmly, “my adventure, in attacking Nombre de Dios, in Panama, and carrying off a rich treasure in silver aroused the anger of his Excellency, the Viceroy of Mexico, who swore that if I showed myself within Spanish waters again I should be taken and dealt with as a pirate. Which meant that my head would hang in one of his Excellency’s ropes.

“When word of this oath was brought to my ears, I swore likewise that I should return, and make my way to the South Sea where I should exact toll from his Excellency. I have carried out my vow, in the name of our sovereign lady, the queen, but I intend to give his Excellency no chance to make good his oath. Unless there is need, neither I nor my men shall set foot ashore.”

“If our general,” purred the smooth voice of the yellow-haired Falconer, “would fain be pent aship for fear of the Spaniard, I will lead my men ashore and give the Dons a taste of English steel and powder. After all, it is the good blood that wields the blade; the mongrel ever snaps and snarls but flees the combat.”

The general’s bronzed cheeks flushed. He made no movement, but shot a warning glance at Thomas Moone whose mottled face was black with anger.

“Not so, Sir James,” he corrected, “for fighting blood knows no coat-of-arms.”

“Aye, in men-at-arms. It is the leaders who own the mark of nobility, such as—” Falconer bowed ceremoniously—“your pardon, General, I remembered not you lacked a coat-of-arms.”

“Your memory mistakes, Sir James,” said Drake quickly, “for I have a coat-of-arms.”

“Of honorable name? The crest is ancient?”

“As the world, Sir James. It is here.”

Drake placed his hand on the breech of the brass culverin wherein was engraved the twin hemispheres of the world, not unlike armorial bearings. Thomas Moone grinned broadly and shot a glance at the soldier.

“And your commission as general?”

A smile twisted the soft mustache of Falconer. He knew the queen had given Drake no written commission, owing to fear of the Spanish monarch.

“Here!”

Drake drew his sword.

“This is my commission, blessed by the queen herself, who declared the man accursed who should betray it. She gave it me with her own hand.”

Sir James smiled and drew his blade with a flourish.

“A worthy commission!” he cried, “in the hand of a man who is not worthy. Would it not be better to surrender it to one who could use it?”

“God’s life!” swore Drake who had reached the limit of his patience.

At that instant the burly figure of Thomas Moone stepped between them.

“Looke, masters,” he growled, “an ill time to quarrel when a rich port lies open to our hand, and the Spaniards are making away with all their silver. It lies there, on the starboard bow.”

“Arical!” cried Drake.

Both men wheeled and scanned the harbor. The GOLDEN HIND had already been seen, and the crews of the vessels anchored in the bay were pulling ashore in small boats. Few people were to be seen in the town itself which consisted of no more than a score or more buildings grouped together a little ways from the shore.

If the GOLDEN HIND was not to lose all the advantage of surprise in appearing suddenly before the town, the English would need to act at once. Falconer knew this as well as Drake, and both sheathed their swords. The soldier laughed lightly, but the general's ruddy countenance was aflame with anger.

"Think not, Sir James," he said, "that you escape settlement because you lead a party ashore to take the silver from the Spanish vessels. The moment you set foot on this ship you shall be tried in the name of her Majesty, on charges of treason and mutiny, for you drew sword against me. Go, now, and lose no time about your business!"

Already a boatswain, several sailors and a score of musketeers, with a dozen gentlemen, thronged the waist of the ship, while the great boat was dragged up from its position astern of the ship. At a signal from Drake the helmsman prepared to bring her head to the wind. Sir James, with a glance ashore at the deserted shipping and town, leaped from the poop to the waist of the ship, to be greeted by a shout of acclaim from his men.

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There was cause for the eagerness of the English to set foot in Arica. Inland from the port were the great mines of Potosi, and from Arica the treasure ships bearing silver to Panama set out. They had heard from Spanish captives that it was time for the SANTA MARIA, a ship carrying the annual tax of silver of King Philip of Spain, to leave Arica, and they hoped to catch it in the act of loading.

Such a vessel would be a prize richer than any they had taken. Its value would be inestimable in poverty-stricken England. To capture the treasure ship of the king of Spain was a feat that warmed the hearts of the men on the GOLDEN HIND, and those who had not gone ashore with Falconer sought points of vantage along the deck of the vessel to watch what passed in the town.

On the quarter-deck Master Moone stood alone with the helmsman, the telescope glued to his eye. Drake had gone below to his cabin, troubled by the scene with his second-in-command. As the day was clear and the telescope of good quality Moone could make out plainly what his companions in the great boat were doing.

They had landed where the half-dozen ships were moored, and the soldiers swarmed over the craft. Shortly, they appeared on deck again and Moone swore his disgust, for he could guess that no silver was to be had from the galleons in the harbor of Arica.

Again, thought Moone, the Spaniards, warned of their coming, had managed to make away with their riches in time. Probably the SANTA MARIA had sailed some time before, leaving the port barren of silver.

Suddenly Moone gave a whistle of surprise, and gripped the telescope tightly to his eye. Disappointed in finding nothing on the ships, the English boat had pulled to shore, where the soldiers, with Sir James Falconer at their head, entered the town.

At first everything was quiet in the streets of Arica, without a trace of living Spaniard. In landing, Falconer had broken Drake's command. The general had ordered that no one was to go ashore when he himself was not with the expedition. But his superior's caution chafed on the leader of the soldiers, and this was

heightened by the quarrel on the poop of the GOLDEN HIND, and by disappointment at losing the SANTA MARIA. The town appeared to be deserted, and this confirmed Falconer in his determination to land and wrest some spoil from the buildings.

What had attracted Moone's attention was a movement in a wood at one side of the town, near the shore. He caught the glint of steel through the trees, and in a moment the cause was plain to view. A troop of Spanish cavalry, ambushed in the wood, trotted out into the open and started at a rapid pace for the town.

So intent were the party in Arica on searching the houses that they did not see the advancing line of horsemen until the latter were halfway to the town. Then it was too late to gain the boat in safety. Moone cursed under his breath as he saw this, then gave vent to a grunt of approval. The soldiers under the orders of Falconer greeted the cavalry with a hot fire from their arquebuses, so hot that the wave of horsemen split in two and rolled around the town, giving the little body of Englishmen a wide berth.

But meanwhile other bodies of Spaniards appeared on the hills above the town, while tiny puffs of white showed Moone where their arquebuses were searching the streets of Arica. Several Englishmen dropped under the fire, and more were lost in the retreat back to the boat.

Not all escaped from the town. Sir James with three companions were quitting the place after their companions by one of the side streets, when they were pursued and cut off by a troop of horsemen. For a moment Moone saw the blade of Sir James flashing in his long arm, until a blow from a pike disarmed him and he and his men were made prisoners by the Spaniards.

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No ill place was the cabin of Mr. Francis Drake. The panes in the square portholes were of good English stained glass, the beams that supported the deck overhead were curiously carved, and Flemish tapestries hung from the walls. A ladder in one corner led to the poop, while a small door at one side gave into the general's sleeping quarters.

Following the ill-omened landing of his men, Drake was seated in his shirt sleeves on a bench that ran beneath the ports, stroking a violin softly. His sword was thrown carelessly on the small table by his side. Idle and light-hearted as he appeared, Thomas Moone, who had sailed with him on many voyages, noted the line of care drawn across the brown forehead, and the pain back of the searching eyes. Moone was seated by his leader, without formality, as was their custom.

Wrinkling his nose in disgust, the sailing master spat out of an open port.

"Good riddance it be, sir," he growled, "for Sir James was ever of mutinous mind. If the Spanish dog hang him to yardarm, 'twill be but cheating us of the pleasure. Pah! Silk-coated vermin!"

"The man is brave, Tom," mused the general, "and he was outspoken. Nevertheless he did breed mutiny and treason among our people, and if he lives, he shall answer for it. Tell me again the words of the Spanish leader at Arica."

"I heard them not," explained the sailor, "those who came off in the great boat say that one of the Dons on horseback came within earshot on the shore as they

were pulling away. He cried to them in Spanish, which several of the company knew—

“Tell your corsair chief that his men shall be tried and hung at Lima, and his Excellency bids him come and attend the trial.”

Drake threw back his head and laughed long.

“So the Vulture invites us to come to his lair, Tom. What think you, man—shall we do as he bids?”

“Ar’t not serious, sir? No doubt but his Excellency would gladly welcome us ha! He’ll see little of us save good cannon shot. Yet why put in at Lima when the treasure ship sails north to escape us? We may overtake it, for we have the legs of the Spanish craft.”

“How long since did the SANTA MARIA put to sea, Tom?”

“Three days ago, sir. It would be a simple matter to make up the time.”

“Too simple, for the Spanish trust cunning where they fear sails.”

Drake plucked at the violin strings thoughtfully.

“Nay, the SANTA MARIA will not be found where we look for it. But we will find it, by my faith, Tom. The Spaniards shall pay for their treatment of Sir James Falconer. He is an Englishman. Since when have Englishmen been taken at sight as pirates? The man offended but with his sword—a good blade.”

“He is foul with mutiny.”

“Then shall he be tried on the GOLDEN HIND in the queen’s name. Nay, no other than his general will try him. His Excellency, the Vulture, will find his prisoners slipped through his claws, and the black lepers of the Inquisition will lose their prey.

The honest mariner scratched his head thoughtfully and sighed.

“How may that be, sir? Sir James travels overland in the hands of many armed caballeros of Spain, who take him to the presence of the viceroy at the great town of Lima, where are no less than three thousand soldiers, as I have heard, and many cannon. Were the viceroy afloat we might lay him aboard with a good heart. Ashore, we be a scant ninety men against three thousand. How could we land, in the face of such odds?”

“The task is beyond us, Tom,” smiled the general. “Our boats could never put ashore in the town held by such number of soldiers.”

“’Twere madness to think on’t sir. Besides, there is the treasure ship that flees us. We can not squander time in trying to barter for the lives of the mutineers at Lima.”

“No silver shall buy the lives of Sir James Falconer and his men,” declared the general. “Yet they shall stand free—”

“But how, in God’s name—”

The general ran the fiddle bow caressingly over the strings.

“When Sir James went to the port of Arica he carried in a pocket of his cloak a letter to the viceroy, written in an excellent conceit, in goodly Spanish—”

“The traitor!”

“Nay, you wrong him. The letter was from my hand. Perchance your Spanish caballero on horseback opened it when Sir James was made prisoner, and made answer as he did. For my letter was word that I was coming to pay the viceroy a

call in person at his palace. Now that he bids me, by his caballero to come to the trial, I shall pay my respects—”

“With good cannon shot and powder!”

Drake put down his violin and smiled at Moone.

“At the court of justice,” he amended.

II

The testimony of one Fray Raymundo of Lima, as to the events connected with the visit of the notorious corsair El Francisco Andrequé to that town, as forwarded to his Majesty, King Philip the Second of Spain, upon occasion of the inquiry into the most strange circumstances that did there befall his Excellency the Governor of Peru.

When the shadows lengthened along the plaza of El Callao de Lima, a certain Fray Raymundo emerged from the doors of his church. On the threshold he paused to gaze at the unwonted activity of the plaza.

Silk banners hung from the windows facing the square. Along the streets leading to it trotted mounted caballeros, their accouterments bright with silver and jewels. From the windows and balconies veiled women did not scorn to show their pretty heads, and their dresses which were of the costliest material and workmanship. By the side of the women, often mestizos, or halfbreeds, loitered Spaniards who had been poorer than the soldiers in the streets a year ago, and now owned silver enough to buy them a dukedom in Spain.

The soldiers themselves had pockets filled with gold and silver which they squandered in the shops for a *botija* of wine or a throw at the dice. Shouts, songs and laughter echoed from wine-shop to wine-shop through the streets. Money was theirs to spend as they wished, for more was to be had from the mines worked by the enslaved natives, and the occasion was gala.

As he saw the holiday throng, Fray Raymundo remembered that it was the last day of the trial of the four Lutheran dogs who had been taken by the caballeros of Arica. Moreover the English corsair was somewhere off the coast, and rumor said that the corsair captain, El Francisco Andrequé, had boasted that he would land and meet his Excellency the Governor face to face. Nothing had been seen of the devil ship, as it was called, but every preparation had been made to welcome it fittingly if it should have the insolence to come to the port of El Callao de Lima.

Into the crowd that had moved along the plaza to the Royal Audencia where the trial was taking place pressed Fray Raymundo, while the soldiers, adventurers and women made way respectfully before his gray robe and pale face. It was his purpose to reach the Royal Audencia in time to see the arrival of the viceroy, and in this he was successful.

Just as the last rays of the sun were touching the silk hangings in the windows, and glittering on the silver trees and ornaments that stood in front of the houses, there was a stir in the throng that filled the plaza, and the governor was

seen advancing to the Audencia where the court waited his presence, in company with several of his captains and advisors.

The Most Excellent Lord, Don Francisco de Toledo, Viceroy, Governor, and Captain-General of the Spanish realms in the New World, was no less a monarch in America than was King Phillip II, ruler of Spain, Portugal and Flanders, in the Old World. The gold cloth and velvet of his attire, the emerald clasp that held in place his black cloak, made the appearance of his Excellency no less splendid than that of the Incas who had fallen under his rule.

With the power of the Inquisition which knew no laws at his command, a conquered race enchained to do his bidding, and the mines of the New World at hand to yield enormous riches, there was little wonder that his Excellency's pride matched that of the only man who could call him servant.

As he pushed through the crowd his Excellency's dark eyes held recognition for few he met—a distinguished captain of cavalry, a wealthy owner of one of the Potosi mines, a brilliantly dressed woman of his court. The native chiefs who, catching the spirit of the celebration, appeared in the streets in the splendor of their state garments, the governor ignored completely. Fray Raymundo, who had reached a point quite near the path of his Excellency was about to bow, in company with others around him, when something arrested him.

An Indian, who had entered the plaza from one of the streets leading directly to the hills behind the town, ran to the governor and prostrated himself.

"A message, oh, chief of chiefs," he cried, in Quichua.

Those who were watching the scene saw the governor, before the Indian could speak again, place a foot on the brown, muscled back lying before him. Then his Excellency, well content, wiped his shoes on the Indian and passed on to the Audencia.

A shout of laughter greeted this display of amiability on the part of the governor, and a few curious glances were cast at the native, who picked himself up with a scowl and vanished in the crowd, but not before Fray Raymundo had recognized him as a friendly Indian from a tribe which was hostile to the Spanish rule. Anxious to learn the cause of the man's act, the priest pushed after him.

The Indian did not linger in the plaza which had been the scene of his disgrace, but entered one of the side streets. The priest was close enough to see him disappear into one of the wine-shops. When he stepped into the place, which was filled with half-caste mine workers, drunken sailors and Peruvians, he found the native he sought in company with several of his tribe, drinking heavily.

To the priest's civil question about his message the man would make no answer beyond a sullen stare, and a gesture that revealed the mark of his Excellency's feet on his back. Troubled by the occurrence—for he knew the native to be friendly to the Spaniards—Fray Raymundo was leaving the wine-shop when a half-caste nudged his elbow and whispered hurriedly in his ear.

"I can tell you the man's message, Fray," muttered the other, rum thick on his breath. "He says he has seen the devil ship along the coast. There is more that he knows, but the man is angered and will not spit it out until good wine loosens his tongue."

"The corsair!" exclaimed the fray. "That is news for his Excellency."

"His Excellency is too ready with his feet, Fray," retorted the half-caste.

“That is a pity. Still, he should know. I will go to the Audencia. Do you stay by the Indian until he speaks further, and then seek me out at the trial.”

With a gesture of benediction the priest gathered up his robe and turned away. He reflected that the Indian might have been mistaken, and determined to proceed cautiously in relating what he had heard to the authorities. Once more the priest made his way across the plaza, now shrouded in dusk.

Torches in every street scattered the gloom in Lima, and especially along the waterfront every detail of the moving groups of mail-clad soldiers, the whispering Indians in their holiday purple and gold could be seen. Fray Raymundo breathed deep of the fresh night air, and noted with approval that armed forces were guarding the town on each of the roads leading to it, and at the shore, where cannon had been stationed to await the expected coming of the corsair that had visited Arica.

The priest was no believer in steel and cannon to inflict pain on men, but he briefly blessed the hardy soldiers with the gallant captains who made safe the port of Lima from the Lutheran pirate who had stripped the altar cloth from the church of Arica, to give, so the prisoners had declared at the trial, a suitable cloth to their own outlaw priest.

So great was the crowd at the doors of the Audencia that the good fray was able only by persistent effort and frequent requests to allow him to pass, to make his way to where he could command a view of the interior.

At the end of the room farthest from the door sat his Excellency, wearing his customary black cloak, and black velvet cap, with a white ruffle at the throat. On one side stood several of his captains, bronzed, swaggering caballeros who were veterans of jungle warfare. At the other side were grouped the servants of the Inquisition, black-robed slaves of his Excellency. At a long table near these priests sat several scribes who were making note of the proceedings, for the records were to be sent to Spain with the tax of silver in the SANTA MARIA.

In the cleared space before the governor stood the prisoners, stripped of their arms and accouterments, under guard of halberdiers. They had been brought forth to listen to the conclusion of the trial. Even now, Fray Raymundo heard one of the clerks of the court reading the indictment against the prisoners.

“Whereby it does appear,” the high voice of the clerk reached his ears, “that these four men be servants of this Francisco Andrequé who is no other than a heretic, offending against the grace of his Majesty and his Excellency, the Viceroy of Peru and Mexico. And it is not less certain that they did land at Arica, despoiling the town and defiling the church of most fair vestments, according to their custom, when taken by our brave soldiers of Arica. And this is but one of their insolences whereby it does appear that the English dogs are pirates of the lowest order.”

A buzz of excitement circulated in the crowd. The pallid faces of the followers of the Inquisition gleamed, and beautiful mestizos raised inquiring glances to their attendant caballeros. Only the governor made no sign.

“It is the just opinion of the court,” Fray Raymundo heard the clerk conclude, “that the English prisoners be chastised in the way most fitting to their crime, by order of his Excellency, Don Francisco de Toledo, Governor of Peru.”

Before the governor could speak a tall figure stepped before him, and the priest recognized the man who had been pointed out to him as the leader of the English.

"Would you condemn a soldier to the fate of a villain, señor?" said this man in halting Spanish. "My faith, that were a crime greater than aught we are charged with. Did you not take us prisoner in fair fight?"

The black head of the governor bent slightly, while a smile curled his thin mouth.

"I will hear what you have to say, Señor Falconer. Yet it does not bear the ring of truth to me that you claim to be honorable prisoners of war, when you were taken in act of plunder and lawless despite."

Fray Raymundo was swept nearer the governor's seat by the eager crowd which pushed and jostled to catch what was said. Seldom had such an attraction offered, for in one day there was rumor of the presence of the corsair off the coast who had promised in writing to pay a visit to no less a person than his Excellency himself, and four of the English dogs were to be executed. Surely, the Englishman was foolhardy who dared to match words with the governor.

"It is true that I did take some silver vessels and altar cloth from the church," admitted Falconer bluffly, "but they were for the use of Master Fletcher, our minister, who lacked such things. As for plunder, we took nothing from the coast but silver bars and the cargoes of certain ships. No vessel did we sink with men aboard."

"Señor," said the governor, and the priests of the Inquisition nodded, assent, "that were a greater offense than to rob the church gain. Do you pretend that you came not here of your own will, being pirates in the truest sense, since our countries are not at war?"

"We came," replied Falconer quickly, "in the service of the queen, our sovereign lady, who bade us find a passage to the South Sea, and we could. Our orders were to take toll of the silver that flows from here to Spain and enriches our enemies."

"Yet, señor," repeated the governor with a hard smile, "you came to Spanish waters and took toll of Spanish ships, a dishonorable voyage—"

"An honorable voyage, señor," retorted Falconer, shaking his yellow head, "at her Highness's command. The silver we take is not for us, but for our country. Spanish silver, forsooth! Wrested, rather, from the people of the New World by despite. Show me the will of Adam which gave the world to Spain, and I will say that we are pirates!"

"You grow scurrilous, señor," answered the governor coldly. "And you blaspheme without shame in speaking thus of holy matters. And you desire proof of your crimes, I have it here, taken from your person the day you were made prisoner at Arica."

He produced a roll of parchment from under his cloak and tapped it against his knee.

"This was given me by a worthy captain who found it in your belt. It is in the hand of your master, the corsair chief, who declares that he is coming to Lima to pull my beard for me, and to take what jewels he may. Call you that the letter of a gentleman?"

"My faith," muttered Falconer, "I knew not the contents of the letter. I was told to leave it in the town where it would be found. 'Tis like my general, in truth—"

“Enough of this,” commanded the governor. “Is there aught to be said relating to the trial?”

Fray Raymundo considered the opportunity good to tell what he had heard about the English ship being sighted near the port. He edged forward to the front of the crowd. As he did so, he was conscious of another pushing in his tracks, and as he raised his hand for attention, this other stepped past him to the clear space before the governor. And Fray Raymundo saw a strange thing.

The newcomer, in spite of the purple robe tucked about him, was the native who had prostrated himself before the governor in the plaza and endured the humiliation of his Excellency’s foot. The priest thought he caught a gleam of hate in the Indian’s eyes, and a brown hand slipped from a fold in the robe.

But the Indian held out nothing more than a slip of parchment to his Excellency, who recognized him not, as he had not seen his face before. All eyes were on the governor as he tore open the parchment and scanned the contents of the letter. As he did so his pale face flushed and the blue veins showed in his forehead.

“What deviltry is this!” he snapped, glaring at the Indian. “A letter, señors, from the pirate chief who says that he is coming to the trial in person this night, and that if a finger of his men be touched before he comes, two thousand Spaniards shall die!”

A silence of amazement fell on the crowd. A laugh rose from a few throats, then stifled. Who was this corsair, to say he would come to Lima through two thousand soldiers and a score of cannon, and to the presence of his Excellency, who, as was well known, had vowed the death of El Francisco Andreque should the latter ever come within reach? Fray Raymundo crossed himself as he thought of the captured towns further down the coast and the ravaged shipping. Surely El Andreque had concourse with the devil, no less!

He caught a few words of the governor, as the latter spoke in a low tone to his captains.

“Where got you the letter?” demanded one of the soldiers of the Indian.

“Chief, I found it upon a table at an inn in the town,” muttered the native.

The captain shrugged his shoulders, and the Indian seized the chance to slip out through the crowd. As he did so, Fray Raymundo saw him shoot a venomous glance over his shoulder at the governor.

“...lights the entire water-front,” one of the soldiers was saying. “No one could land from a vessel without being seen. To make doubly sure, we have ordered all the crews ashore, but some watchmen, from the sixteen vessels at anchor. Another is expected tonight, from Panama. The harbor is quiet, and patrols of the custom-house are out in small boats. Nothing is reported.”

“The roads leading to Lima?” inquired the governor sharply.

“All guarded by men with torches, your Excellency.”

“The streets?”

“Are patrolled and quiet, your Excellency. Two thousand men bear arms tonight in your service, and were El Andreque the devil himself he could not invade Lima now. His ship would be seen entering the harbor.”

“Yet he sends me this missive,” mused the governor. “It is, in truth, in the same hand as the other.”

“A bit of bravado, your Excellency. The English dog barks out of fear, not bravery.”

Without warning the governor tore the parchment in two and stamped the pieces underfoot. His face twisted into a pale mask of rage.

“Fools, idiots!” he snarled, “the man is here in town. Look,” he held up one hand, which was stained with black spots, “the ink upon the parchment is not yet dry!”

The thick ink was in truth still wet upon the parchment, which had not been sanded—the Indian could have received it but a short time before.

* * * * *

What came to pass within the next hour occurred with such swiftness that the good fray scarce had time to cross himself and mutter a prayer as protection against the black art which brought the letter to the hand of his Excellency.

Stooping over, he picked up one of the pieces of parchment, and found that the governor had spoken truly when he said the ink was still wet. The parchment had not been sanded, and when the fray rubbed one of his fingers against it, it made a dark smear. The writing must have been done, thought the priest, within the quarter hour. If so, and if it was truly by the hand of the corsair, El Andrequé must be now within the limits of the town.

There was little doubt that the soldiers, dispatched by the governor on the instant, would take their quarry prisoner, in a search of the town. All trace of the Indian in the purple robe who had brought the letter had disappeared.

Swift questions by his Excellency of the captains and custom-house officials made clear the following facts. No man had landed from the shipping in the harbor—seventeen vessels, now that the ship from Panama had been seen to enter the port. No one save some natives from the mines had passed the guards on the roads since nightfall. The soldiers had not observed any strangers in the streets. If El Andrequé was in hiding in the town, he must be in the residence of one of the inhabitants.

The priest thought otherwise. To him a man who accomplished the deeds of the corsair was without doubt in league with Satan. What followed upon the words of the governor convinced him of the truth of his belief. For a miracle, to the mind of the fray, was reported by the custom-house officer who burst into the Audencia with a drawn sword and eyes wide with amazement of what he had to tell.

“The harbor!” snapped the governor. “What is toward?”

“The ships are drifting out to sea, your Excellency,” cried the man. “They have slipped their cables! Name of the devil, it is witchcraft. In spite of the watchers we left on the galleons, they are loose from their moorings and drifting away from the town like frightened sheep.”

“Send out small boats and work them back to anchorage,” commanded the governor. “Has a wind sprung up of a sudden?”

“No, your Excellency, there is little air stirring. The ships seem to be moving out of their own accord. All the seventeen are in motion. It is clear starlight, and we can see them passing well from the shore.”

The governor gestured angrily for silence and whispered to one of his captains who started and clapped hand to his sword. Slowly at first the buzz of whispered

tidings spread around the hall. To Fray Raymundo the rumor came as he was repeating his prayer against heretic black arts. The corsair was in the harbor! What the guards had taken to be the vessel from Panama was no other than the devil ship of El Andrequé. It had slipped in among the other vessels and begun its work of evil unnoticed.

It was now too late for the priest to tell his tidings, and he stepped back from his position before the governor to seek the harbor and learn the truth of what was happening. He had scarce taken a step when the buzz of whispers in the hall were broken by the sound of a cannon in the harbor. And when the echo had died away, no one spoke. The priest went no further toward the door.

For he saw, quite clearly by the torches held by the halberdiers at the entrance, three Englishmen walk into the Audencia, and advance through the crowd toward the governor. The leader of the trio was a stocky man with red checks and a fair beard, and eyes that seemed to take in everything in the hall with a single glance. Behind him came two tall gentlemen who curled their beards and cast sidelong glances at the mestizos.

The unexpectedness of their entrance cleared the way for the Englishmen, when the halberdiers stopped them in the open space before the governor. The leader of the English prisoners, Falconer, gave a cry of surprise which was drowned in the uproar of the crowd.

Soldiers, officials and populace, once they were sure that no more of the English dogs were in the street, gazed open-mouthed at the trio who stood calmly in the midst of the Audencia. Although armed, their weapons were sheathed, and they showed no disposition to use them. Above the confusion the voice of the English leader reached the ears of Fray Raymundo.

"I have come, señor," he began, in very fair Spanish, "to pay you a promised visit, and to see that my men whom you hold prisoners, are released without ado."

Not until then did Fray Raymundo realize that before him stood the notorious El Andrequé, corsair and heretic. Surely, he thought, the man was stricken with madness to come to the trial as he had done, with two companions and swords sheathed.

Only by a slight lift of the eyebrows did that astute personage, his Excellency Don Francisco de Toledo, show his astonishment and gratification.

"You come at an excellent time, Señor Andrequé," he responded, his mouth twitching into a smile, "for we were sitting in judgment upon other pirates and robbers of your breed. Now it will be possible to hang seven instead of four. You remember the vow that I made after your sack of Nombre de Dios? Tomorrow it will cease to be a vow, because its purpose will be fulfilled."

El Andrequé swept off his hat in a bow which would not have discredited a Spanish courtier.

"I also made a vow, señor," he said in his hearty voice, "that goads me to fulfilment. I have sworn that I would make my way to the waters of the South Sea, if I lived, and I have done so. Even have I come to your court, which, I am told, is the second richest in the world."

"As you may see," the governor swept his hand gracefully around the room, while a slight frown crossed his brow as he considered the English captain. "Yet

tomorrow, I regret, señor, that you will not see it, for vultures will be pecking at your eyes, and your body will hang upon our gibbet.”

Whereupon Fray Raymundo saw Falconer start forward as if to speak, being checked by a quick word from El Andrequé. The two spoke together in English briefly, while his Excellency’s glance wandered from one to the other and darkened when Falconer threw back his yellow head in a hearty laugh.

“You will not laugh,” he said harshly, “when your bones crack in the grip of the rack tomorrow. Enough of this play, my men will see that you have good entertainment in irons and shackles. How came you here?”

“Through the courtesy of an Indian, señor,” returned the visitor calmly, “who met us when we landed on the shore further south, where we learned from a tribe hostile to you that the trial was to be ended tonight, with other things. We encountered this same Indian at the outskirts of Lima, and he consented to smuggle us into an inn where the patrons were so deep in wine, they would not have noticed had we been Neptune himself. It was there I wrote my letter, a few minutes ago to advise you of my coming.”

Fray Raymundo’s thoughts flew to the native who had been insulted by the governor. He might well have come to the town to inform the Spaniards of the arrival of the English, being friendly to them before his encounter with the governor. After that, with a Peruvian’s deep hatred of injury, he had lent his aid to El Andrequé. If the priest had been able to make friends with the Indian in the tavern, different events might have followed. But God, he considered, had willed otherwise.

Meanwhile El Andrequé had stepped to the side of Falconer, and drawn his sword to cut the cords which bound him, when two Spanish soldiers grasped him. At once he turned to the governor.

“Release me, señor,” he cried, “and my companions, including the prisoners. God’s truth, they are worthless mutineers, but they are Englishmen, and such shall not hang from a gibbet. Give us a guard of safe conduct down to the waterfront, with a pinnacle to leave the shore, in order to reach our ship.”

“Rather a safe conduct to the devil and a pinnacle to sail in purgatory, señor,” retorted the governor. “I have no mind to release you here hence, save in that fashion.”

“An you do that,” warned El Andrequé, “all Lima will grieve, and your life as governor will have short shrift.”

“How mean you?” questioned his Excellency, biting his beard, for he saw that there was something held back in the words of the Englishman. Yet he was surrounded by two thousand men with swords in their hands, and the corsair was distant from the town by the length of the harbor. Surely, there could be no danger from the English. The man’s words were bred of madness.

El Andrequé waved his hand good-naturedly. “An you would know how matters stand,” he said, “conceive that my ship has cut your craft from their moorings, and now sixteen sail are in our hands, drifted by the wind, out of the harbor. Not a vessel of size remains on the waterfront of Lima. An you see not what this means, conceive that without ships you can not reach another port, nor will other craft come to you, for we shall take and sink those that we meet up the coast. Lima will

be barred from the rest of the world by the loss of sixteen sail, if we are not returned unharmed to my ship by dawn.”

There was a stir at these words, and Fray Raymundo saw the governor’s hands writhe together in anger.

“Dog!” shouted his Excellency. “Think you to deceive me with a threat? Your life will need a greater price than that. What if Lima is cut off from the outside for months? We can live. Better that than to surrender to you on such terms.”

“A higher price?” smiled El Andrequé. “Well, I will be generous, and give it you. The SANTA MARIA, with the king’s treasure is with the other ships in port, as I learned from the Indians. She is, in truth, in our hands. How like you the thought of losing the king’s tax?”

The priest saw how heavy these tidings lay on his Excellency, for the SANTA MARIA was loaded with thousands of bars of silver. For a moment there was silence in the Audencia while the governor stared at the Englishman, and the hands of the Spanish captains itched to the swords they feared to use.

“The gun you heard,” went on El Andrequé, “was a signal to me that my ship had done what I planned. The guards of your vessels—too few, forsooth—were crowded into one galleon, and all the cables were cut. The forts on shore are helpless. They can not see one ship from another in the darkness. In the hands of my men there is a ransom for a dozen dukes, the price of a kingdom.”

His Excellency winced and shot a black look at the unfortunate customs guards.

“Our ransom, the sixteen ships, including the SANTA MARIA,” resumed El Andrequé carelessly, “will be paid, on my word, when we reach our ship. Otherwise, you will not see the ships again, and the SANTA MARIA will make the trip to England as a present to our sovereign lady, the queen. By my faith, King Philip will reward you well when he hears how his tax slipped through your fingers, señor.”

There was a murmur of agreement from the crowd who knew the value of the cargo of the galleon, but his Excellency bared his teeth in rage.

“Your word!” he snarled. “The word of a pirate and thief—how can I know it will be kept?”

“My faith,” answered the Englishman, and Fray Raymundo marveled to see him smile, as at a good jest. “I have kept the vow I swore at Nombre de Dios, while yours has slight chance of honor. Am I not a man of my word?”

“Your life lies in my hand.”

“Slight avail would it be to you, señor, if you lose all your shipping. Ships are uneasy to make from the trees on this coast, and none come from Spain.”

“I could send a thousand men out in small boats to take your ship under cover of darkness. What is to prevent?”

“Naught save that there are no small boats. Pinnace and cockboat alike have been stove in by my men, save a half-dozen that lay on the shore.”

“The forts can fire on all the shipping in the harbor. Perchance—”

“The first ship to be sunk would be the SANTA MARIA, señor.”

And Fray Raymundo knew that the governor could do naught but yield his prisoners safe conduct. There were some words between the caballeros, who found the remedy not to their liking, but his Excellency waved them to silence and

ordered the guards to take the English to the shore and put them in a small boat. When the tall Falconer bowed before his Excellency and said—

“I warrant your Excellency’s beard is chaffed to a turn, and as for your jewels, you will know more presently.”

Whereupon the English left the Audencia, making courteous farewells to the governor, and swaggering from the door. Fray Raymundo said a prayer of thanksgiving that no man had been hurt on either side, and blessed the happy chance that rid the shores of the English, and especially El Andrequé.

Which ends his testimony, except for the remark that when the Santa Maria was returned to port with the other ships, when the English ship sailed the next morning, she floated strangely high in the water. Officials of his Excellency who boarded her found, pinned to the mast in the hold a receipt for two hundred and fifty thousand pounds in silver, paid by his Majesty, King Philip II of Spain, to Elizabeth, Queen of England.

