The background of the cover is a detailed historical map, likely a 17th-century nautical chart. It features a grid of latitude and longitude lines, a prominent compass rose with a sunburst design, and various geographical labels in Latin and Spanish. A pair of dividers is positioned on the left side of the map, and a circular compass is visible on the right. The overall aesthetic is that of an old, weathered document.

# THE SEA ROVER'S PRACTICE

PIRATE TACTICS AND TECHNIQUES, 1630–1730

**BENERSON LITTLE**

THE  
SEA ROVER'S  
PRACTICE

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PIRATE TACTICS AND TECHNIQUES,  
1630–1730

BENERSON LITTLE



Potomac Books, Inc.  
Washington, D.C.

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*For Courtney and Bree  
who love the sea,  
and for my parents  
who raised me by the sea.*



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## Preface

WHEN I WAS TEN YEARS OLD I RECEIVED AN ANNOTATED COPY OF *Treasure Island*, a grocery store promotion as I recall. Through this small gift my interest in sea roving, in pirates and privateers and Spanish galleons, was made permanent. The sea had already had me: I was born in Key West, and my father serving in the U.S. Navy, I was already fascinated with all things maritime. I soon discovered Exquemelin's *Buccaneers of America*, Sabatini's *Captain Blood*, then Rogers's and Dampier's journals, and quite accidentally Henry Pitman's tale of rebellion, escape, and buccaneers, untouched for years deep within a university library. I immediately recognized Sabatini's inspiration.

Between fact and fiction will always be some distance. But as my interest in both literature and history grew, I found the journals of rovers and mariners as exciting as anything told in a tale, revealing a world long gone, only hinted at or profoundly and inaccurately exaggerated. Soon, I wanted to test the waters, to find the common ground between truth and image. Perhaps I did this unconsciously, for I had other reasons for becoming a naval officer and volunteering for Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL training. Family tradition, the lure of adventure, and the allure of the sea had as much to do with my decision.

Besides the obvious parallels of the sea rover's practice and my own profession—raiding on or from the sea, boarding ships by stealth, landing silently on beaches at night, moving through jungles—I quickly noticed those parallels of tactical principals and mentality. We emphasized surprise, and we were trained to make quick sudden assaults and exfiltrations. Planning and intelligence were vital, as was accurate and overwhelming small arms fire. Leaders led from the front, not the rear. We improvised; we adapted; we worked as one. Teamwork was everything. In this special world all must lead by example, all must pull their weight, all must stand together. It was a hazardous profession of arms and ships,

of high risk and high gain, and at its center lay the sea with all its perils and wonders. For us, only greed was absent, replaced by duty.

Yet it is the crews themselves who stand out, those of the SEAL platoons and Teams. In character, motivation, perseverance, attitude, loyalty, willful independence, and even in their cursing, irreverence, and gallows humor, they are exactly as were their sea-roving forbears. They are shaped by their environment, by tactics and the sea. What historians explain by social forces and patterns, I experienced simply out of a sense of duty and maritime adventure. I know the rovers of the past by their written word, but I know they exist today from my service with them.

Many have contributed to the making of this book, directly or indirectly, over many years. My parents have always stood by me, and I thank them for their love and support in everything. My mother has always done whatever she could and more to help, and my father was the first sea-going adventurer I ever knew of.

I thank my daughters for their love and support as well, and especially for their patience during the last four weeks of writing and editing. Our schedules were the most hectic we've ever known together, yet neither of them complained. Instead, they each used their rapier wit (usually on me) to keep us going.

My fencing masters gave me my first real introduction to tactics. They have not only my great thanks but my enduring friendship, respect, and admiration, for both are gentlemen, scholars, swordsmen, and humanitarians: Dr. Francis Zold and Dr. Eugene Hamori. Sadly, Dr. Zold passed away in 2004, a few weeks shy of his one hundredth birthday.

Certainly my experience as a Navy SEAL influenced the writing of this book, and I thank all with whom I served, for I learned from them all. I'd particularly like to thank the students and instructors of BUD/S classes 120 and 121, the crews of SEAL Team THREE and SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team ONE, and the training cell of SEAL Team ONE.

Finally, I'd like to thank the many people who have encouraged me in this project, including Major Gary Leopold, USA (Ret.), for allowing me to pick his brain regarding period firearms and tactics and for taking a look at the manuscript. My thanks to Tim Ricks for his theoretical and practical assistance with the use of period swords, the cutlass in particular, as well as for his insight into many subjects in general.

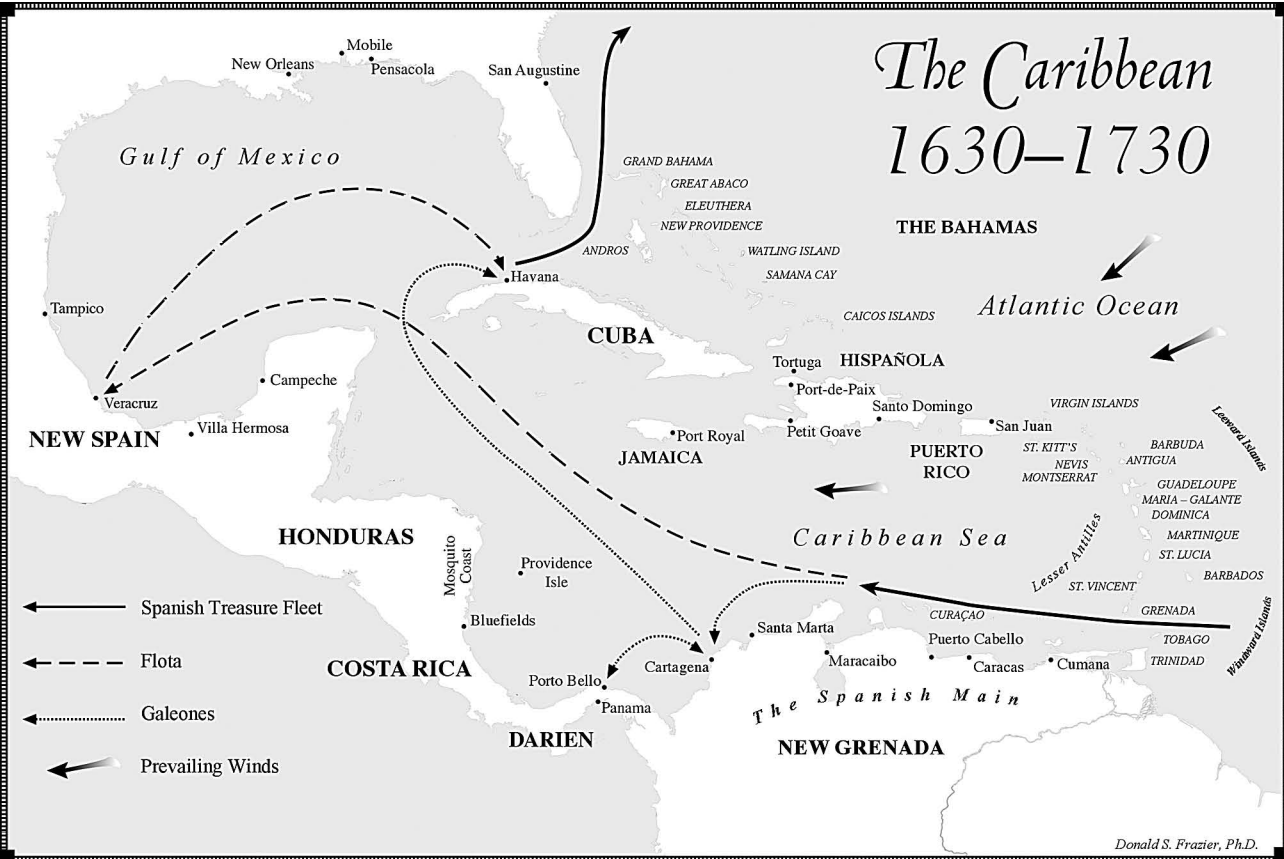
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Books, to Kathleen Dyson and Donald Frazier, and to the Potomac staff in general, my many thanks for seeing this book through publication. All have been wonderful to work with.

Alexander Exquemelin, buccaneer surgeon and writer, wrote that we should not judge people by their appearance, but by their spirit. The salient characteristic of the best of all I've known, in the SEAL Teams or out, is spirit, an indomitable will in the best and worst of circumstances. Looking beyond the ethics and morality of warfare, this was also the salient characteristic of many sea rovers, most of whose names are lost to history forever.

# The Caribbean 1630-1730



Donald S. Frazier, Ph.D.







## CHAPTER

# 1



## The Perils of Wealth by Stratagem and Force of Arms, Part I

### *Of Greed and Desperation*

SHORTLY BEFORE THE END OF JANUARY 1680, OLD STYLE, THERE lay near the town of Arica on the Chilean coast a galleon of 400 tons burthen named *La Santissima Trinidad*, captured from the Spanish. She was the same ship Henry Morgan missed when he sacked Panama nine years past. A party of Morgan's buccaneers and filibusters under the command of the venerable John Searles had let the richest prize of the great raid escape while they distracted themselves with various pillage, debauchery, and rapine. Then, the *Trinidad* had been filled with the wealth of king, Church, and merchant—not to mention "1500 Souls"—yet she carried only "the uppermost sails of the main mast" and was armed with only six or seven cannon and a few small arms. A prize that could only be missed by a gang of drunks, indeed. Unfortunately, the *Trinidad* did not hold such wealth when captured these ten years later, and in spite of her size and importance, she now has no great guns mounted: no teeth wait behind her gunports.<sup>1</sup>

Aboard are approximately 140 sea-roving men-at-arms of various nations, most of various British extraction and pretending allegiance to England, the majority of the French having parted company long since. These bold skullduggerers have sacked Porto Bello to little profit, crossed the Isthmus of Darien, blockaded Panama, captured a few vessels including the *Trinidad*, raided other Spanish holdings in the South Sea, and fought several desperately vicious actions along the way.<sup>2</sup>

In general, the cruise has gone as most sea-roving ventures did, fed meagerly on greed and desperation, the senses benumbed, the spirit kept alive by draughts of hope. One of the final hopes imbibed on this voyage is the town of Arica.

Arica, a desert town on a desert coast below a silver-lined and shrouded desert mountain, is the *embarcadero* or "Tradeing Port for Potocia from whence that vast quantity of Bullion comes that Supplies almost the world."<sup>3</sup> It is the point of departure by sea for the silver produced at the principal source in the world, Potosí, mined by Native Americans who are little more than slaves and who chew coca leaves to inure themselves to backbreaking labor and the lung disease caused by mercury poisoning. Potosí is the principal source of the world's most common currency, the *peso de ocho reals* or piece-of-eight, the Spanish *dólar* that will one day lend its name to the currency of the United States of America.<sup>4</sup>

After Panama, arid Arica is thus one of the most tempting targets on the Pacific coast of the Spanish Main. At the moment, it is under threat of attack by the most formidable sea raiders of the Western world since the Vikings.

Centuries later, raised on images of Hollywood and of Stevenson, Sabatini, and Disney, we know what we should expect as sea rovers approach their prey at sea: aboard a ship under full sail on scene-setting placid high seas, the sudden cry of "Sail ho!" alerts crew and passengers. Excitement and fear surge from bow to stern. The arrogant but hapless Spanish captain, naturally in armor under the hot sun, pulls his spying glass and identifies the Jolly Roger flying from the main truck of the distant galleon. "Clear for action!" he shouts anachronistically, or likewise, "Beat to quarters!" Soon, two ships—still under full sail—pound each other broadside to broadside. The sea rovers' careful gunnery dismasts its prey, grappling irons bite into timbers, and bloodthirsty pirates swing aboard the hapless ship. After a few minutes of flailing cutlasses, interspersed with an occasional pistol shot and the obligatory rapier play between captains, the battle is over and the despoiling begins.

This is a stirring image, and seen through the rose lenses of classic romantic adventure, it might seem plausible. There is a pirate galleon, after all, rare as it might have been in reality, and paradoxically the picaresque imagery of Hollywood often captures a sense of the reality. But the image's truth is by halves, and many of its details are incorrect when examined closely. Romance, whether defined as the overcoming of obstacles in love, as in *Captain Blood*, or merely as an adventure, always ultimately subordinates detail and obscures the historical truth. The image

suffices. But while the essence of romance and adventure remain forever unchanged, their setting changes with time and place, and thus change the critical details of their practice.<sup>5</sup>

In this book, it is the setting, the environment, the actual practices that interest us. We are concerned with tactics, with the *how* in a particular environment, with the lessons learned from doing, with the manner in minute detail of taking wealth—or pretending to—by force of arms at sea and along its shores during the Great Age of Sea Roving, the century from 1630 to 1730. But before we attempt a detailed description and analysis of sea-roving tactics, we need to consider an example of tactics in the broader context of chance and human nature.

It is vital to remember that tactics, although they may be distilled and described and catalogued, are never employed in the abstract, save by theorists and novelists. In practice, tactics are always subject to the immediate situation: when executed they exist as part of a unique set of circumstances, never again to be identically repeated. In other words, they are subject to the moment and to the circumstances leading up to the moment, and to the physical, psychological, and environmental situations of those implementing them and those against whom they are employed.

The tactics of these extraordinary rovers off Arica are no different, subject to all the strengths and weaknesses of natures both human and elemental. Theirs is typical of sea-roving enterprises, both common and unique. But because these particular gentlemen of fortune left seven journals, the most journals left behind by sea rovers of any sea-roving venture of this period, we will use them to examine the external influences on tactics before going on to the meat of this book, the tactics themselves.

Thus now we stand on *Trinidad's* gently rolling quarterdeck as she rides at anchor near Arica.

Calling themselves variously buccaneers and privateers, and quite rightly considered pirates by Spaniards as well as those Englishmen who care to concern themselves with the law and peaceful relations among nations, these men-at-arms epitomize the narrow and tenuous distinctions between the men of their trade. Lacking a lawful commission, they are not privateers, although their methods, tactics, and intentions differ not at all from those of many lawful privateers. The colors they figuratively and unlawfully sail under are those of England, and they direct their sanguinary greed only at the wealth of Spain.

If in reality the *Trinity*, as her new crew calls her, flies colors other than the bloody red battle flag, they are likely those of Spain and they are

flown only to deceive. There are English colors aboard, possibly made by the buccaneers themselves or carried across Darien, but there is no flag bearing a death's head upon black. (This nationless symbol of terror will not appear for two more decades, and the men who will fly it will have formally rejected any pretense at legitimacy. They are but common pirates.<sup>6</sup>)

But these who scan the arid Chilean coast do not consider themselves pirates. Pirates, after all, are *hostis humani generis*, enemies of the human race.<sup>7</sup> They are “vicious and ill principled men” who set out “on purpose to robb and seize the shippes of all nations.”<sup>8</sup> And pirates can be hanged for their crimes, so these men must distance themselves, at least in appearance, from acts of piracy. Basil Ringrose, buccaneer surgeon and writer, and one of those “tiny minority of distinguished eccentrics in a vast host of criminal brutes and villains,” added just the right note of denial when he wrote of being “descried and known to be the English pirates, *as they called us*”<sup>9</sup> (author's emphasis).

Although these rovers call themselves “privateers” to distinguish themselves from common pirates, their preferred term is “buccaneers.” This word defines their origins as English-associated sea rovers derived from the West Indian colonies, who raid the Spanish in their New World. Yet the term says more than this. It implies that they are indeed privateers, at least in spirit. It lends a nostalgic and patriotic sense of stalling the Spanish Empire, although the empire is itself already in decline. Perhaps most importantly, it sharply defines their identity by character. Buccaneers see themselves as sea-roving men of true fortitude and courage, men who display valor in battle against a legitimate and redoubtable Spanish enemy. Such valor is expected. John Coxon, a previous commander who returned to the North Sea after the attack on Panama, was severely reproached for showing “himself more like a coward than one of our profession, that is to say a true Buccaneer.”<sup>10</sup>

Finally, these men also call themselves “soldiers.” They refer to a bold and venerable buccaneer as “an old experienced Soldier and Privateer, very brave and just in all his actions.”<sup>11</sup> They are more than common thieves, or even uncommon ones. Rather, they are men engaged in legitimate military action against an enemy on land, even if statesmen pretend and merchants desire that the two nations be at peace. To refer to the rovers as pirates is to insult them. After all, men have been knighted for similar acts—witness Peter Drake and Henry Morgan, for example, although technically theirs were entirely legitimate (or at least royally condoned) acts of violence in support of material and political gain. Likely enough, these men off Arica do not give a damn anyway, excepting

only where the distant law and its executioners might leave them “turned off and sun-dried.” For some it inevitably will.<sup>12</sup>

A brief background is in order, for it is this interplay of circumstance, personality, and social psychology that often determines not only the tactics used, but their success or failure. The storms of circumstance and personality have ravaged and shaped these buccaneers.

They are commanded for the moment by an old salt named John Watling, newly elected and described as an “old privateer” who has “gained the esteem of being a stout seaman,” and “a stout rugged fore man.”<sup>13</sup> That is, he is a captain who has spent years “before the mast.” He is an old hand at the trade and is well-known among his peers: Watling Island in the West Indies is said to be named for him.<sup>14</sup>

By a vote of the company, his predecessor Captain Bartholomew Sharp was recently and democratically deposed—and in spite of the democratic process, temporarily put in irons—while they wooded, watered, and provisioned at Juan Fernandez Island (later known for its role in the inspiration of Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*). Sharp is “ill beloved” by some in the company, notwithstanding that he has promised to put 1,000 pounds in the hands of each man from the fruits of the voyage, were he their leader. Except in one case—his own—he has failed to fulfill his promise. The buccaneers have gambled rabidly at dice, Sharp as much as any, and perhaps too often victoriously. Many have lost much or most of their hard-fought shares, and now these comprise the majority. The minority of “thrifty men” are ready to return to England or her American colonies but the rest are “resolved nott to goe home by Sea before they had more money.”<sup>15</sup>

Some have called Sharp’s courage into question. Others claim that mere greed, not competence, was the primary problem. But this is of little consequence: any leader is bound to see his crew turn against him if he takes their material gains, whatever their degree of consent or participation in the process.<sup>16</sup>

The division came to a head while the majority were ashore cutting wood. One of them, John Cox—“a true-hearted dissembling *New England Man*,” according to Sharp, and a man much interested in advancing his own cause—led them to call a vote to depose the experienced buccaneer and pirate.<sup>17</sup> So it turned out on January 6. The “men were all in a mutiny against each other,” and the majority “protested they would obey [Captain Sharp] no longer.” The election might have turned violent but for the intervention of “prudent men” who advised the minority to be patient, for they had money to lose. This comes as no surprise: violence is never far from disputes over money.<sup>18</sup>

Events grow curious. William Cook, servant to Captain Edmund Cook—yet another former commander—is found with “a paper with all our names written in it, which it was suspected he designed have given to the Spanish prisoners.” He confesses that Captain Cook had “often buggered him in England, leaving his wife and coming to bed to him.” He makes accusations of similar acts in Jamaica and once in the South Sea on this voyage. Based on the paper, Watling orders the servant Cook into the bilboes, and on his confession, the former captain Cook as well for having “several times acted the Sodomite.”<sup>19</sup>

Personal and political machinations are apparent. Watling appears to have acted as the prudent commander in confining William Cook, but putting Captain Cook in irons for sodomy may have been the practice of the common morality of the time or an invented pretense to remove a potential rival for command. Sharp believes both the accusation and punishment of Captain Cook unjust and undeserved (although Cook’s servant never recants) and castigates Watling for it, but then Sharp has nothing good to say about his successor. What these incidents illustrate is that these buccaneers were anything but unified as they cruised far from home, alone among enemies.<sup>20</sup>

This leadership crisis handled for the moment, Watling gives orders to keep the Sabbath, or at least keep the first one after his election, probably to return ship and crew to a more structured, reassuring footing after its near-violent division, and to contrast his command with that of Sharp.<sup>21</sup>

Soon after, one of the *Trinity*’s two man-of-war canoes approaches, firing guns and making visual signals: they have sighted three sail coming about the island. Without doubt, these are Spanish men-of-war, but they are not crewed by the buffoonish Spaniards in corset and morion of modern fairy-tale pirate fiction and film. The buccaneers have already fought desperate bloody battles against valiant Spanish commanders and their multiracial crews, and they know well what may lie ahead. The *Trinity* brings her shore party aboard, gets one anchor up, slips the other’s cable, and sets sail, leaving a Mosquito Indian striker named William behind, having been unable to find him in time. William’s stay will be a long one, and along with a subsequent marooner on the same island, Alexander Selkirk, will become the inspiration for *Robinson Crusoe*. The buccaneers also leave behind 150 goats, all intended as provisions.<sup>22</sup>

The *Trinity* sails from the harbor. We expect to see bold buccaneers bear down upon hapless Spanish galleons, which may or may not have been galleons (and perhaps not even Spanish-built); we expect to see the Spaniards attempt to flee in fear from the dreaded enemy flying the flag of death; we expect to see cannon blaze and sails shred and masts fall.

This is not what happens. Captain Blood's fictional forty-gun red-sided frigate is nowhere to be found. What we do see ahead is a duel of wit and wind, of limited resources pitted against the defenders of perceived wealth.

The three Spaniards soon come within sight of those on deck, so close that they can see a weapon flourished—a signal to strike again, to surrender—on the quarterdeck of the largest ship, perhaps 500 yards away but still out of range.<sup>23</sup> The admiral is the *El Santo Christo* of 800 tons and at least sixteen guns, the vice admiral the *San Francisco* of 600 tons and twelve guns, and the rear admiral of 350 tons and eight guns. But there can be no ship-to-ship duel of broadsides, and even an attack with small arms and boarding must be carefully executed with fortune on the side of the buccaneer intruders, for the Spaniards may well outnumber them.<sup>24</sup>

Watling quickly gets the *Trinity* to windward of the Spaniards, who put out their red flags to indicate a willingness to fight without quarter, or at least to defend themselves boldly. The buccaneers likewise put out their own bloody flags to prove they are undaunted. Spaniard, beware: the buccaneers are of a mind to kill. The rovers' initial strategy is to keep close under the wind and maneuver until they can board the admiral before the other ships come up. The *Trinity* is the best sailer in the South Sea, her buccaneer crew its best seamen, and she can "sail by or large" at her pleasure. But the Spanish ships wisely remain in a "knot together," leaving the buccaneers unable to attack them except as a group. An attack on any one of the Spaniards while the others are within range will be suicidal. Failure today may leave the buccaneer survivors too weakened to fight or sail their way back from the South Sea.<sup>25</sup>

Buccaneer and Spaniard play cat and mouse for "a day and a night," until the buccaneers lose the weather gauge, that is, until the Spaniards come between them and the wind. By unanimous consent the buccaneers sail away without firing a shot. The risks are too great, and neither adversary seems to have been much of a mind to engage the other. The Spaniards refused to attack even when the buccaneers lay by for them. Some of the crew blame Watling for showing himself to be "faint-hearted" at the appearance of the Spaniards; others blame some of the crew for the same while claiming that Watling was all for making a fight of it. Again, most accounts are colored by personal enmities. Perhaps Sharp provides an objective view: "But well knowing under our present Circumstances, how likely they were to overmatch us, we endeavoured to give them the slip, which succeeded accordingly." Ringrose likewise says they "gave



them handsomely the slip." William Dick, however, is perhaps the most truthful when he says "we thought fit to run for it."<sup>26</sup>

This tactical meandering dashes hopes of immediate plunder and raises questions about Watling's leadership and courage. Watling now must prove himself worthy of his command: a second failure, no matter the fault, will bring him down. Destitute buccaneers elected him to put more silver into their hands, and they expect him to do this quickly. In council the buccaneers decide to attack the town of Arica forthwith for reasons of wealth and proximity, not to mention revenge, the Spaniards having repulsed them there once before. The pretense of revenge likely serves to encourage those who are reticent about attacking Arica again.

Approximately eighteen leagues from Arica lies Iqueque, a fishing key. The buccaneers set a course for it to seek intelligence of Arica, keeping all the time out of sight of land. In the vicinity of the key they send their two man-of-war canoes in search. Eventually one finds the island and returns with four prisoners described variously as an old white man and a mestizo, both of about seventy-five years, and two Indians. The buccaneers interrogate the old men; they give conflicting stories. The old mestizo says Arica is well provided for and will know of the buccaneers; the old Spaniard disagrees. Arica, he implies, is not well provided for and will not expect an attack.<sup>27</sup>

Under Watling's orders John Duill, one of the two quartermasters, shoots the old mestizo. This is not the first such murder. Off Guayaquil the buccaneers captured a bark and the next day shot—"punished," they said—a Spanish friar who was aboard it. They had thrown him overboard before he was dead. Some in the company do not approve of such acts, but they are in the minority and unable or unwilling to act against the majority. Ringrose hated the murder of the friar but kept quiet. Sharp, however, vehemently deplores the murder of this old man of Iqueque. Whatever his personal motivation, he takes water and washes his hands, then warns the company: "Gentlemen, I am clear of the blood of this old man; and I will warrant you a hot day for this piece of cruelty, whenever we come to fight at Arica." Biblical dramatics and self-interest aside, Sharp no doubt believes the old man has told the truth.<sup>28</sup>

The buccaneers make haste to Arica. These are veterans, tired, blooded, dangerous men ready to fight for survival and riches. By night they set forth in four canoes, a launch, and a just-captured bark, leaving only a sailing crew aboard the *Trinity*. Through the dark hours they sail and row. Near dawn they land about five leagues from Arica, near Quebrada de San Vitor. All day they lie hidden among the rocks. Night comes. They put to sea again, and at sunrise on the following day they

land on a rocky shore a few miles south of Arica. It is January 30, 1680, King Charles Day, the day of the king's martyrdom, a Sunday, a day usually kept in celebration aboard English ships at sea. Ninety-two men march toward Arica. They are each armed with a musket, pistol, cutlass, and cartouche box with perhaps thirty cartridges. They have but ten grenades among them. They carry no water. Fifteen buccaneers remain behind to guard the boats and bring them to Arica after the town is taken, but also to keep them for a safe retreat just in case the attack does not succeed.<sup>29</sup>

The buccaneers march swiftly upon the town, seeing no one as they advance. Each step increases their hopes that they will catch the town "unprovided" for or at least unalarmed, a tactical precept for the buccaneers, except in desperate situations or when a town is poorly defended.<sup>30</sup>

They have no such fortune, and their fate today will be influenced not only by their immediate decisions and tactics, but also by the many personal, social, and environmental dynamics that influence behavior, and by the most significant influence of all, that of the fundamental goal of sea roving itself: plunder.

Before we complete this narrative, we will look closely at who sea rovers were, look at their tactics in great detail, and perhaps then we will have a better understanding of why events would unfold as they did on a violently dry seaside desert day, a day whose thirsts no amount of blood could quench.

## CHAPTER

# 2



## Sea Rovers

### *Freebooters, Filibusters, Cruisers, Corsairs, Buccaneers, Privateers, and Pirates*

STRICTLY SPEAKING, A SEA ROVER WAS A PIRATE. HOWEVER, GIVEN Charles Johnson's comment that the privateering account "is something like pirating," the term "sea rover" is taken more broadly here to include both privateers and pirates. It may be construed to include letter-of-mart ships and cruisers or seekers as well—that is, to include any boat that cruised the sea for prey, purchase, or plunder.<sup>1</sup> To some degree we can sort these rovers into fairly distinct categories as long as we are aware of the limitations of strict definitions. The term "pirate," like "privateer," is at its core a term of law. If a sea rover was lawfully commissioned by the state, in English he was called a privateer, in French a *corsaire*, and he was legally subject only to imprisonment as a prisoner of war upon capture, providing he had committed no crime. If he lacked a commission, he was a pirate, in French a *forban*, and he was subject to hanging upon capture and trial. Simple? Perhaps.

Buccaneers and filibusters are what many think of when they think of sea rovers. These were the pirates of the Caribbean, the scourge of Spanish Main during the second half of the seventeenth century. The buccaneer was the English-derived sea rover of the region, the filibuster or *flibustier* the French-derived, although the English often used buccaneer to refer to all West Indian sea rovers, as did the French with filibuster. Sea roving against the Spanish in the West Indies had gone on since the sixteenth century, with the English, Dutch, and French all trying to steal

their share of New World plunder already stolen by the Spaniard from the Native American through conquest.

The great age of West Indian sea roving began with the French encroachment on the western part of Hispaniola, then called San Domingue and now Haiti, in the first half of the seventeenth century. The poorly protected and far-flung Spanish New World empire was soon fringed by aggressive fortune hunters placed there by accident, social forces, or personality. By 1650 the French had a constantly changing melange of *habitans* (planters), *boucaniers* (hunters), and filibusters located on the western part of the island and on Tortuga just off its northern coast. Mostly men, among them were the naval or merchant deserter, the shipwrecked, the bonded or escaped *engagé*, the slave. They could be of French, English, Dutch, Basque, Portuguese, Spanish, African, or Native American extraction. The *habitans* worked the soil, generally planting tobacco, various vegetables, and later sugar. The *boucaniers* were of two sorts, those who hunted wild cattle with packs of dogs, and those who hunted *sangliers* and *cochons marrons*, or wild boars and wild pigs, although both often also planted tobacco and vegetables as well. Alexander Exquemelin, buccaneer surgeon and bestselling author, noted in all his various editions that those who hunted cattle were the true *boucaniers*, dismissing the pig hunters as mere *chasseurs* or hunters, but other writers of the period use the term to describe both sorts of hunters.<sup>2</sup>

Be that as it may, those who hunted cattle sold the hides and sometimes the meat as well. Those who hunted pigs smoked the meat, a process learned from the Caribs, who according to Exquemelin had used the technique to prepare human flesh. Jean Baptist Labat, a French priest who had observed *boucaniers*, filibusters, and Caribs closely, noted that such human flesh was smoked only for ceremonial consumption or preservation as a trophy.<sup>3</sup>

*Boucaniers*, however, used pig flesh cut into strips and spread upon a frame or grill called a *barbacoa* (or barbecue, a Haitian word), slowly smoking it for several days and sometimes curing it with salt to last longer. They sold this *boucan* (a Tupi word carried to Hispaniola and in use by Europeans since the early seventeenth century) or *cochon boucanée* (boucaned pig) to *habitans* and passing vessels. *Boucan* was the name for the place where the meat was smoked, the grill or barbecue, and the flesh so cured.

As for the filibusters, their trade was that of attacking the Spanish by sea, as well as occasional interloping and smuggling. Filibuster is the English form of *flibustier*, said by Exquemelin to be the French corruption of the English word “freebooter,” itself derived from the Dutch *vryjbuiter*,

although there has been some debate on these derivations. The warlike trade itself was called *la fibuste*.<sup>4</sup>

From 1630 until roughly 1660, or until Jamaica became a haven for fortune hunters, the trade of adventurers in the West Indies consisted of various small ventures at sea roving and “trading by stealth.” Through a Puritan company’s venture, the English established bases at Providence Island (as in God’s Providence) and Tortuga for trading and raiding. The Dutch similarly traded, thieved, and thrived. Here men such as Willem Blaeuvelt, still around in the 1660s, established the foundation from which future sea-roving enterprises would spring.<sup>5</sup> Around the same time *boucaniers* and filibusters joined forces to defend San Domingue from Spanish raids, establishing a cooperation that would harry the Spanish for years to come.<sup>6</sup>

The truly great age of sea roving in the region began with the English capture and settlement of Jamaica by Cromwellian soldiers and seamen. C. H. Haring called this conquest the first of the great buccaneering expeditions—made in time of peace and without provocation—and it set the tone for the next three decades.<sup>7</sup> Raids on sea and main escalated; according to one scholar the great encouragement began in 1655, when the English recruited *boucaniers* to help flush out the last Spanish guerrilla holdouts on Jamaica.<sup>8</sup> Doubtless the English policy to force trade on the Spanish, quite literally by force of arms, had as great an effect. Soon after, the English recruited French filibusters to help defend the fledgling Jamaican colony, and began auctioning off Spanish prizes to local fortune hunters and granting them letters of marque. Jamaica was an ideal base from which to raid the Spanish, and the English and French tacitly encouraged such raids, often with legitimate commissions, although just as often the French and English sailed under false commissions or those of Portugal.<sup>9</sup>

English sea rovers sailing out of Jamaica soon came to be called buccaneers from the French *boucaniers* who sailed in their company. Both buccaneers and filibusters attacked prey on land and sea, and great large-scale raids ashore were characteristic of these sea rovers, distinguishing them from their contemporaries and successors. The raids were doubtless influenced by the opportunity created by the poorly defended Spanish towns, as well as by previous French and English experiences of land warfare in the West Indies. These adventurers were a variety of buccaneers, filibusters, former soldiers, transported criminals, poor English planters, French *habitans*, militia, *boucaniers*, and others derived from the detritus of the West Indies. These adventurers not only roved on their own account, but provided the first line of defense for the English and French

in the region. This was the period of L'Ollonais, Mansfield, Henry Morgan, Portuguese, Roche Brasiliano, and those many others described by Exquemelin. It was a savage and largely ungoverned period, yet one in which many men were rewarded politically for their bloodthirstiness and brutality. L'Ollonais was a savage and met a savage end; Morgan, not quite as savage but more successful, was knighted.

The final period of the buccaneer and filibuster arose soon after Morgan had stolen many of his men's rightful shares of Panamanian plunder, and after he'd been knighted and made lieutenant governor of Jamaica. Technically, the region was at peace for ten years, from the Treaty of Nymwegen in 1678 until King William's War began in 1689, and thus buccaneering declined. As William Dampier put it, "after Jamaica was well settled by the English, and a Peace established with Spain, the Privateers who had hitherto lived upon plundering the Spaniards, were put to their shifts." Peace had grown more profitable, and sea roving ran counter to the development of trade. Buccaneers and filibusters shifted to other trades, including logwood cutting, interloping or smuggling, slaving, and often piracy. They made a few great raids during this period, such as the French sack of Veracruz, but in general practiced their natural trade on a more reduced scale as compared to previous years, yet as a greater nuisance to all nations, and often as pirates, although they still saw themselves as privateers. When "they resolved to turn pirates," it was to take a prize other than of Spain.<sup>10</sup>

Thus the appellation of pirate is perhaps a harsh one, at least as compared to the pirates yet to come. Buccaneers and filibusters preyed for the most part only upon the Spanish, and public sentiment was on the side of these sea rovers. Because they did not prey indiscriminately, to apply the term "pirate" to these sea rovers was not commonly well received, except by Spaniards, politicians, and merchants, and might have been hard for many to justify except in an entirely legal sense. Nevertheless, these men were careful about returning to English colonies for fear of being arrested for piracy. This was the age of Sharp and his ilk, of the Sieur de Grammont, Laurens de Graff, Nicholas Van Horn, and Jean du Casse, as well as of the great journals of Dampier, Ringrose, Raveneau de Lussan, and Lionel Wafer, and in the final days of the filibuster, of the French priest Labat. It was the age of the great buccaneer and filibuster raids into the South Sea, enterprises that also depleted forces required for the maintenance and defense of the colonies, as a form of escape from the suppression of buccaneering and *la flibuste*.<sup>11</sup>

For a decade, King William's War (1688–1697) returned these rovers to their trade as legitimate privateers. Some buccaneers deserted to the

French, but generally buccaneer and filibuster fought against each other. The war ended with the great raid by French corsairs, soldiers, militia, and filibusters on Cartagena, led by Baron de Pointis and Jean du Casse. By war's end the true buccaneer was essentially no more, killed off by the rise of legitimate trade. The filibuster, on whose trade much of the local French economy relied, survived a little longer, perhaps into the early part of the 1710s, generally as a privateer and auxiliary in French naval raids on English holdings in the West Indies, but seldom as the freebooter beholden to none but his comrades.<sup>12</sup> Financed by *armateurs*, these expeditions were often very much a part of major government and business interests. After the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, the remnants of the buccaneers and filibusters who chose to still rove became mere pirates. In all, these buccaneers and filibusters were perhaps the greatest sea rovers of any age, although some disputed their actual martial abilities. Even Woodes Rogers, himself a successful privateer against the Spanish in the South Sea, considered their published tales to be "romantic Accounts" designed to make themselves "pass for Prodigies of Courage and Conduct" but "scarce shew'd one Instance of true Courage or Conduct." Nevertheless, bearing only small arms and grenades, these buccaneers and filibusters attacked and captured hundreds of Spanish vessels and dozens of Spanish towns.<sup>13</sup>

The Anglo-American pirates (circa 1690 to 1730) were the bastard offspring of these buccaneers. They filled a similar niche, but lacked any sense of legitimacy as well as any general equality in courage and skill at arms, notwithstanding modern romantic revisionism. The range of these piratical heirs was primarily the West Indies and along the North American coast, although there were significant forays along the Brazilian and African coasts and, especially profitable, into the Red Sea. With the formal but temporary end of large-scale European wars, the "multitude of men and vessels employed in privateering" had been set free from their natural trade. The Spanish were doing their best to flush out logwood cutters, a natural sideline of West Indian privateers in time of peace. Add to this an enormous commerce by sea, the failure of navies to adequately protect it even in peacetime, colonial governors and merchants willing to trade in illicit goods, and the existence of numerous coves in which to hide and keys at which to careen, and piracy in its most degenerate form flourished. Peace was a significant factor: "In war time there is no room for any, because all those of a roving, adventurous disposition find employment in privateers, so there is no opportunity for pirates." These pirates pretended neither lawful commission nor nationalistic justifica-

tion and preyed on the vessels of all nations at their whim. They were “a declared enemy to Mankind.”<sup>14</sup>

Although there were such pirates throughout the second half of the seventeenth century, this golden age of Anglo-American pirates had its first great leap during the 1690s when several of them, among them most notably Henry Every and Thomas Tew, plundered ships of the Indian Mogul in and near the Red Sea. These Red Sea pirates found encouragement, support, and protection under the political and economic structures of the colony of New York, and some of them even founded petty empires in Madagascar. The attacks caused considerable political and economic difficulties for English interests in the region, and were the inspiration for the bumbling voyage of William Kidd (who was not the first pirate hunter to turn pirate).<sup>15</sup>

This was the time of Blackbeard, Anne Bonny and Mary Read, Bartholomew Roberts, Samuel Bellamy, Charles Vane, and many others. Unlike the buccaneers, these men and women left no journals: it was best to leave no evidence behind. Their tales are told primarily through extensive legal records, a few journals of captives, and Charles Johnson’s early eighteenth-century *History of the Pirates*. Johnson and Defoe, who might have been one and the same, romanticized these pirates, but Exquemelin had already romanticized the buccaneers—the audience awaited. Johnson merely created the template for a popular literature to come. Stevenson, followed by other writers and then by Hollywood, leaped almost entirely from fact to fiction, leaving us with a permanently romanticized imagery.<sup>16</sup>

No doubt the courage of these pirates was occasionally as great as their cruelty, but as seagoing soldiers they were but a shadow of their buccaneer forebears. They had neither the great safe havens such as Port Royal and Petit Goäve in which to provision and recruit, nor the quantity or quality of men necessary to capture heavily defended towns and cities, nor the experience in land warfare, and no need at any rate to test their skill at arms against well-defended prey. The Spanish empire was in decline: pirate prey were now the lightly-armed English, French, Dutch, and Portuguese merchantmen in the New World and the mogul’s ships in the Red Sea, and pirate tactics were fairly simple and based on terror. By 1730 this pirate generation had spent itself, too angry and alone to be self-sustaining. The noose had done what it could as well.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the period, in time of war there were numerous colonial privateers outfitted by the English, French, Spanish, and Dutch. These ranged from buccaneers and filibusters operating under legitimate commissions to the more conventional privateers operating from the North



American colonies. Captain William Kidd was one such privateer, outfitted in New York and operating in the West Indies during King William's War, at least until his crew mutinied, turned pirate, and left him behind, foreshadowing his infamy to come.<sup>18</sup> "Country sloops" were privateers commissioned by a colonial government as guard ships or local men-of-war, often in response to a specific local threat.<sup>19</sup>

The eighteenth century's golden age of legitimate privateering had its origins in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries during the endemic European warfare afflicting the times and with the rise of a merchant class capable of financing these ventures. King William's War saw an incredible surge of private men-of-war in both the New World and the Old. The opportunity, in the form of trade by sea and protected bases of operation, existed on a grand scale, and there are always some who are willing to put mind and money to work, and body in harm's way, to seize just such an opportunity.<sup>20</sup>

Legitimate privateering was raised to a high art as much by accident as by design in the late seventeenth century and continued as such throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Most seagoing European nations encouraged what later came to be called commerce raiding, known by the French as the *la guerre de course*. Although various men-of-war called cruisers were often put to this purpose, it was primarily private investors and private seamen (and in many cases, landmen) who charged themselves with the task of reaping profits by capturing enemy shipping and then selling or ransoming the captured vessels and cargo. Governments encouraged privateers through various incentives, primarily by granting the majority of the profits from the captured vessels to the investors, officers, and crew, for it was private investors or *armateurs* who outfitted vessels, raised crews, sought commissions, and posted bonds.<sup>21</sup> Some of these French corsairs operated not only in European waters, but in African and New World waters as well.<sup>22</sup>

During King William's War the French took the strategy a step further. When his fleet became largely bottled up, and with the expenses of major land campaigns eating up his treasury, Louis XIV permitted *armateurs* to outfit French warships for privateering expeditions, in effect encouraging French men-of-war to cruise as privateers.<sup>23</sup>

France produced some of its greatest corsairs during this period, among whom were René Duguay-Trouin, Jean Bart, the Comte de Forbin, and Jacques Cassard. Of lesser fame but equal courage and daring was Jean Doublet, who followed several other trades besides, including some cloak-and-dagger. Duguay-Trouin, Forbin, and Doublet left fascinating memoirs of their often epic adventures, while Cassard and Bart left no published

journals. Cassard ended his days in the Bastille after tweaking noble French noses in his quest for compensation owed him for service as a corsair.<sup>24</sup>

Last among the European sea rovers were the great legitimate South Sea privateers. Woodes Rogers commanded one eminently successful voyage. William Dampier and George Shelvocke commanded others, both failures, one miserably. However, several excellent journals of these voyages were published, providing fascinating insight into the life of the privateer cruising in the South Sea.<sup>25</sup>

The foregoing descriptions by no means include all contemporary sea rovers who derived from a European background or operated in European or colonial waters. North African pirates, also known variously as corsairs, Sally Rovers, Saletins, Salley Men, Moors, Turks, and Algerines, cruised the Mediterranean and Atlantic. They were feared by Europeans more than any other sea rovers, for prisoners were usually sold as slaves in North Africa; with few exceptions, only the wealthy could afford the ransom. Spanish *guarda costas* and pirates, often one and the same, operated in the West Indies. Most seagoing nations commissioned privateers and had mariners turn pirate. In the East, Malabar pirates ruthlessly attacked European shipping. Even Native Americans sometimes attacked vessels at sea.<sup>26</sup>

Although these sea-rover categories may seem distinct, it is vital to point out they were by no means homogenous, nor purely lawful or unlawful in their intentions. Most ships' crews of this period were composed of men of many nations. Edward Coxere, a seventeenth-century English mariner, has been quoted many times as typical of the shifting nature of maritime service:

Next I served the Spaniards against the French, then the Hollanders against the English; then I was taken by the English out of a Dunkirker; and then I served the English against the Hollanders; and last I was taken by the Turks, where I was forced to serve against English, French, Dutch, and Spaniards, and all Christendom. Then, when I was against the Spaniards, I was got in a man-of-war against the Spaniards, till last I was taken prisoner by the Spaniards.<sup>27</sup>

William Funnell described privateers dispersing "some for Goa to serve the Portugueze, some to Benjar to the English, and others to serve the Mogull" after they arrived at Macao. A French corsair might have a crew that consisted largely of "Flammands." Jean Doublet had two Jacobite Englishmen for officers. Admiral Sir George Byng was greatly offended at

a Spanish privateer “manned mostly with French and Genoese” with whom the English were not at war.<sup>28</sup> Woodes Rogers had a variety of English seamen and landsmen aboard his *Duke* privateer, as well as “a mix’d Gang of most European Nations.” Some of William Dampier’s Royal Navy crew were once mistaken for pirates partly because they were *men of many nations*. Stede Bonnet’s pirate crew included not only Englishmen, but also Scots, Irish, Portuguese, and Dutch; John Bowen’s carried forty-three English, more French, plus Danes, Swedes, Dutch, and seventy Indians for “drudgery”; and Don Benito’s piratical *guarda costa* shipped sixty Spaniards, eighteen French, and eighteen English.<sup>29</sup> Former African American slaves served aboard the *Duke* in the South Sea. African Americans and Native Americans also served, sometimes involuntarily, aboard other privateers and pirates, and accounted for as much as 50 percent of some crews.<sup>30</sup> Willem Blauvelt, an experienced old Dutch freebooter for whom Bluefields on the Mosquito Coast is named (or perhaps for his father) had a mixed crew of English, Dutch, and Native Americans.<sup>31</sup> The pirate La Bouse’s crew was half French and half African American, and Shelvocke’s crew at one point included seventy-three Europeans, eleven African Americans, and two Native Americans.<sup>32</sup> Several mulatto buccaneers, *guarda costa*, and pirate captains are known as well, and their crews were probably also heterogeneous.<sup>33</sup> The actual degree of equality among racially mixed crews is unknown—sea rovers routinely engaged in the African and Native American slave trades, for example—but it was certainly greater than among society in general at the time. Necessity has always been one of the significant forces in equal rights.

Nor was this lack of homogeneity restricted to nationality or to religious, ethnic, or racial distinctions. With the general exception of the New World pirates, the crews of sea rovers were seldom composed solely of men raised from youth to the sea. French corsairs often included nonmariners as musketeers and in other capacities. Woodes Rogers had “Tinkers, Taylors, Hay-makers, Pedlers, Fidlers, Etc.” among his crew. Buccaneers in 1686 included men who had originally been “Sawyers, Carpenters, Joiners, Brickmakers, Bricklayers, Shoemakers, Taylors, Etc.” Morgan’s attack on Panama included “2,000 fighting men, besides mariners and boys.”<sup>34</sup> Michel Camus has noted that the *boucaniers* and filibusters of Tortuga were by no means a homogenous group and were in a state of continual renewal. Indeed, the French use of *aventuriers* to refer to seventeenth-century buccaneers and filibusters is often a far more appropriate term for these sea rovers.<sup>35</sup>

Nor were these rovers all of a single social class, although the majority

were drawn from the working classes and trades, and from the poor and indentured. Even so, gentlemen or pretended gentlemen, both great and petty, such as the Sieur de Grammont and the Comte de Forbin, became filibusters and corsairs.<sup>36</sup> Sons of rich shipping merchants such as Duguay-Trouin became privateer officers, and some of them eventually captains. A naval officer like Thomas White might one day become a pirate, as might other well-educated men.<sup>37</sup> Many an indentured servant to a *boucan* hunter worked and fought to become a filibuster commander, later retiring from sea roving as a well-off merchant or planter, as did Captain Kercoue.<sup>38</sup> Only piracy in its purest sense, that is, men seeking to take all flags, could be considered a fairly homogenous group of practitioners, and then only in so far as its trade of origin, that is, mariners, and even then there were significant exceptions, such as transported criminals recruited from prizes and the dilettante Stede Bonnet.<sup>39</sup>

Landmen signed with privateers to seek their fortunes, some becoming seamen, some remaining only volunteer adventurers. Farmers and small planters sought the sea to escape the hardship and drudgery of the soil. Transported criminals sought a hopefully more lucrative way of life on the margins in the New World. Some merchant seamen became pirates as a form of rebellion against the patriarchal and often despotic order of a ship at sea, and others perhaps “just because.” Some were forced to serve as pirates, eventually joining this bloodthirsty brotherhood of their own volition, while others never yielded the mantle of being “forced” men and thus saved themselves from hanging. Many came involuntarily to situations that led them to the sea, having been transported as criminals, or “spirited” away as indentured servants, or sent as slaves after abortive rebellions, and perhaps they saw sea roving as both rebellion and opportunity. And many simply needed to make a living, with sea roving as perhaps their only real opportunity to escape poverty. This variety of trade, class, and origin brought the flexibility of a rich skill set to sea-roving ventures.

With the exception of the Anglo-American pirates, none of these groups could be described as entirely either privateer or pirate, as entirely either lawful or unlawful in their predation. Although the distinction between piracy and privateering might seem to be readily apparent, if we look at piracy as pure greed combined with a rejection of national identity and privateering as pure greed under the guise of patriotism, it is easy to see that the distinction between the two might not always be easily made. This murkiness is important, for it often permitted the pretense of privateering to paper over actual acts of piracy. The practical distinction between piracy and privateering was many times something a cynic could

simply not discern. According to Charles Johnson, piracy as compared to privateering was “but the same practice without a commission,” and those who engaged in one or the other often made “very little distinction betwixt the lawfulness of one and the unlawfulness of the other.”<sup>40</sup> Buccaneers and filibusters, for example, were technically sometimes pirate and sometimes privateer, shifting from one to the other with each change in European politics.

Even during entirely legitimate and conventional privateering operations in European waters, many captains engaged in acts that were entirely unlawful as well as unpatriotic, if not deemed actual piracy. G. N. Clark listed a number of such typical acts by privateers during King William’s War: some flew enemy colors to attack friendly ships; others stole prizes from allies or from privateers of their own nation; some plundered their own prizes, failing to report the entire cargo to the authorities; some smuggled; and some traded with the enemy. Others mistreated prisoners and in other ways violated the laws of war and wartime commerce.<sup>41</sup>

Finally, and most importantly, there was significant movement of rovers from one group to another, and significant interaction between them. William Dampier made his first voyages aboard a merchantman and a man-of-war, then was twice a buccaneer, or more technically twice a pirate, then he became an English navy captain, and was also twice a legitimate privateer sailing to the South Sea. Jean du Casse, the famous filibuster and governor of San Domingue, later served as a French naval commander escorting the Spanish treasure fleet from the New World to Corunna in Spain. Jacques Cassard was present at the siege and capture of Cartagena in 1697, where filibusters, *habitans*, and colonial militia under du Casse fought more or less side by side with French soldiers and corsairs. He returned in 1712 to raid the English and Dutch in the West Indies, with local militia and *boucaniers* or filibusters in his company. The Comte de Forbin, naval officer and corsair, met the Sieur de Grammont, filibuster, in Petit Goëve in 1680, and spent much of his time there among the filibusters who had just returned from sacking Maracaibo. Jean Doublet doubtless met filibusters at San Domingue and was even present during an attack by one of Admiral Benbow’s squadrons seeking to capture the filibuster leader Jean du Casse. The Canadian explorer, soldier, and mariner Pierre Lemoyne d’Iberville also conducted military operations in the West Indies in conjunction with filibusters, and his pilot to the Mississippi was the famous filibuster de Graff. Henry Morgan learned his trade as a privateer captain under Sir Christopher Mings, a British naval commander.<sup>42</sup>

Desertion was another means of exchange. Doublet's two English Jacobite deserters were noted earlier; some English, or perhaps more correctly, Irish, buccaneers deserted to the French filibusters during King William's War, and some filibusters deserted to the English in the early eighteenth century. Buccaneers and filibusters went back and forth as allies and enemies. Men like de Graff deserted from the Spanish, and others, the English captains Bond and Beare for example, deserted to them.<sup>43</sup>

These interactions served a critical purpose: they were a conduit for tactical lessons learned in battle, and permitted the formal and informal movement of tactical knowledge and experience. Lessons learned in combat passed not only among buccaneers, but on to filibusters, corsairs, other privateers, common pirates, and even to navies in general. In many cases, a fairly obvious path of experience can be traced. Pierre le Picard served under L'Ollonois when he attacked Maracaibo, and he and L'Ollonois would have learned some of their trade from old-timers like Willem Blauveldt. Le Picard later served under Henry Morgan, advising him to attack Maracaibo, and was still roving two decades later. Bartholomew Sharp, whom we met in the first chapter, was a buccaneer at this time, and carried some of Morgan's tactics with him on the voyage to the South Sea. John Coxon, who left this same voyage early on, was another of Morgan's cohorts, as were John Watling, Peter Harris (whose nephew also became a buccaneer), and others. William Dampier was another member of this same South Sea venture and later of another voyage among whose volunteers was an old buccaneer named Swan, a tough eighty-four year old who had served first under Cromwell in Ireland, then later in Jamaica in Cromwell's time, staying on to become a buccaneer. Dampier later served as pilot aboard the *Duke* under Woodes Rogers in a privateering voyage to the South Sea and around the world from 1708 to 1711. An officer named Hatley served at the same time aboard the *Duchess*, the consort of the *Duke*, and later served as second captain on the disastrous voyage of George Shelvocke's *Speedwell* privateer to the South Sea in 1719, a voyage known today for its role in the inspiration of Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Hatley, whom Shelvocke rightly despised, shot an albatross.<sup>44</sup>

These lines of descent were rich and unbroken, with tactical experience and intelligence passed from rover to rover. The variety of experience is also important to note: in this genealogy were buccaneer, filibuster, soldier, merchant captain, privateer, and naval officer. The experience of the Anglo-American pirates is similarly interwoven: for example, the notorious Lewis served under Joseph Bannister, a buccaneer and pirate contemporary of Sharp, Coxon, and Watling. Bannister was

hanged from one of HMS *Drake's* yardarms in 1687, but Lewis, then only a boy, was simply hung by his middle from the mizzen-peak and apparently pardoned.<sup>45</sup> Pirate crews of the early eighteenth century included former privateers and also old buccaneers.<sup>46</sup> Marcus Rediker has described the relations among the Anglo-American pirates of the early eighteenth century to be of two main lines of "genealogical" or cultural descent.<sup>47</sup>

Tactical lessons and experiences pass in similar fashion today. For example, modern close quarter battle (CQB or CQC) tactics originally developed by military counterterrorist units for hostage rescue have eventually filtered over three decades, both formally and informally as well as officially and unofficially, into other special operations units and federal hostage rescue teams, and into conventional military units and mainstream law enforcement SWAT teams.<sup>48</sup>

In spite of these degrees of heterogeneity, sea rovers were also unified by several obvious commonalties. The sea, naturally, was one: the ocean and all it touched was the sea rover's territory, and all upon it and all near it were his likely prey. Traditions and practices of the sailor are embedded in the sea rover's behaviors. Sea rovers were also unified in that most who followed the trade were given to risk-taking. There is a strong sense of individuality, antiauthoritarian rebellion, and social marginality running through most sea-roving journals. And finally, sea rovers were an opportunistic lot, even if theirs was a calculated opportunism; all those who hazard their lives on ventures of "high risk high gain" are.

However, perhaps the most significant commonality, and the principal one in terms of tactics, was that the sea rover sought personal, material gain by force of arms upon the sea.

## CHAPTER

# 3



## Wealth by Force of Arms

### *Of Purchase as Purpose*

“WEE RESOLVEING NOW TO CRUISE THESE SEAS, FOR WEALTH,” wrote an anonymous buccaneer at the beginning of a South Sea cruise.<sup>1</sup>

“But now, our great expectations of taking a huge booty of gold at this place being totally vanished, we were unwilling to have come so far for nothing, or to go back empty-handed, especially considering what vast riches were to be had at no great distance. Hereupon we resolved to go to Panama [in] which place, if we could take [it], we were assured we should get treasure enough to satisfy our hungry appetite for gold and riches,” wrote Basil Ringrose of the same cruise.<sup>2</sup>

Even pirates, often described as seeking some form of utopian freedom or venting rage at an unjust society, sought money first. As a pirate gunner put it, “I, as I believe most of the company, came here to get money, but not to kill, except in fight, and not in cold blood, or for private revenge.”<sup>3</sup>

And when men—even those who preferred a life at sea to that ashore—grew weary and had respectable shares of plunder, they wanted to go home, or at least ashore, at least for a while: “Some of them being for going home towards England or our foreign plantations,” as Ringrose later puts it. In the case of our South Sea buccaneers, those who had money wanted to go home. Those who had lost theirs at dice wanted to stay in the South Sea until they had some again.<sup>4</sup>

Claims of legitimacy and patriotism as a privateer were but secondary motives, or even mere pretenses. No matter how patriotic, sea rovers did not seek plunder in order to gain strategic, military, or political



advantage. Quite the contrary. These advantages were the strategic intention of privateering, or the *guerre de course*, and were often recognized as the ultimate purpose to which privateers were put—for example, to “demoralize the Dutch people, and destroy its merchant fleet and fishing boats,” as one corsair put it. Yet the individual sea rover engaged in his trade primarily and often solely for profit. His *raison d'être* was “plunder and riches” while avoiding the briny deep and the gallows dance. Geoffrey Symcox noted that the French *guerre de course*, or privateering war, might have been more effective had not “the incentive of private gain naturally eclipsed the long-range political and military interests of the state.” As G. N. Clark, referring to privateers in general, put it: “Devotion to their country’s cause was a secondary motive for men and commanders alike.”<sup>5</sup>

As for using force of arms—violence, often in the form of terror—as a means to wealth, Paul Butel argued that filibusters and *boucaniers* were long acculturated to violence as a means to an end.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, violence was a long-standing element of life at sea in general, if perhaps not quite to the degree that it occurred in the West Indies in the seventeenth century. Although the Great Age of Sea Roving was no more violent than our modern world, it was still a time in which day-to-day firsthand exposure to violence and its effects was far more common and perhaps more acceptable than in today’s industrialized world. Criminal punishments were often unconscionably cruel, dueling was a socially acceptable (if unlawful) means of conflict resolution between individuals, and disease and trauma manifested themselves obviously and routinely, rather than being hidden away in hospitals. It is doubtful any sea rover gave the common violence of his trade a second thought. Only in the degree of humanity toward those who asked for quarter, were taken prisoner, or were “noncombatants” did sea rovers vary.

Whatever the reasons someone went roving—and the reasons were many—the ultimate purpose of the pursuit of wealth by force of arms rarely changed. Even when William Dampier wrote of his fanciful “Golden Dreams” of privateers fortifying Santa Maria on the Isthmus of Darien, he dreamed not of establishing a privateer’s utopia, but of capturing and controlling the great gold mines of the region.<sup>7</sup> All such utopias, dreamed or real, were not idyllic or piratically pastoral, but tenuous and ultimately commercial. At their core was a desire for freedom from all nations so that theft might be pursued as legitimate business, even for those who wanted to live far from conventional civilization. To retire and live “as sovereign princes among the inhabitants” required considerable spoils and a far-flung haven such as Madagascar, as well as a willingness

to accept a diminished standard of wealth and princely accoutrements.<sup>8</sup> No matter how democratic or communist such “pirate utopias” might be described, they existed at the expense of others. They were neither self-sustaining nor peaceful in their trade. While some might legitimately describe piracy as a “terror of the weak against the strong,” in practice this “terror of the weak” was often directed against the even weaker.<sup>9</sup> Even sea roving in general subsisted upon an often murderous thieving or taking.

It is important to distinguish between the reasons someone took up a trade and the purpose itself of the trade, for the latter often held the greatest sway over one’s behavior. Many men and women, for example, join the armed services for a variety of personal reasons or are perhaps induced by social forces to do so, but the mission exerts the greatest influence not only on tactics, but also on the individual’s daily routine, shaping much of his or her ultimate perspective. Psychological, sociological, and cultural factors certainly influence behavior, but it was the sea rover’s purpose or mission to which much of his behavior was directed. Historians might write and describe from a perspective of social forces, but the individual lived and learned and acted from a personal one. From the rover’s perspective, his purpose was based on a desire to take, for personal profit, wealth from others on and near the sea.

The influences were several. Wealth drew a variety of men to the trade. It often led governors, customs officers, and juries to look the other way when confronted with plunder and contraband, or even to engage themselves actively in the illicit trade—need and greed are powerful influences. But most importantly, the greatest influence of the purpose of taking wealth by force of arms was on tactics.

This point was well recognized during the period. “That our Business was indeed Fighting when we could not help it, but that our main Affair was Money, and that with as few Blows as we could . . .” answers a pirate in Daniel Defoe’s *Captain Singleton* to a sharp-edged question about what a sea rover’s business truly was—“Is it not to get Money?” And what would they have by choice—“Money without Fighting, or Fighting without Money?”<sup>10</sup>

Although a fictional account, the exchange accurately reflects what successful sea rovers were: clever practitioners of a literally cutthroat business, preferring stratagem and calculated force to head-to-head confrontation. Boteler made a similar point almost a century earlier: “the roving pirate assaults not where he expects a firm resistance.”<sup>11</sup> This purpose of purchase and plunder had a profound effect on tactical principals.

First, it emphasized the surprisal, or surprise attack. Surprise provided a significant advantage over a larger force, changing the odds so that a

small force had a fighting chance. Surprise also minimized losses and usually preserved both predator and prize from serious damage. Surprise prevented inhabitants from fleeing with their valuables.

Second, it emphasized the ruse or stratagem as the preferred method of surprise. Not all could be intimidated into surrender, nor could all be ambushed or surprised by night or cover. A ruse was an effective way to surprise the prey.

Third, it mandated effective use of limited resources, often by improvisation. A sea rover might make a canoe serve as a man-of-war, or a musket as a cannon, all to limit the waste of resources, even when plentiful. Sea roving was a venture for profit. It served neither investor nor crew well to be unnecessarily profligate, not to mention that resources were often limited by circumstance. Seamanship was critical, for prizes at sea could not be had without it. Often it was the clinching factor, with most prizes striking when a rover came within hailing distance.

The sea rover emphasized the best use of limited resources in other ways as well. In Exquemelin's words, "their genius made up for any default in their means."<sup>12</sup> A rover was a firm believer in the collection and use of intelligence, often the critical factor in his success. He emphasized courage in battle and believed every man should do his part. He emphasized leadership from the front and rewarded leaders only for victory, not defeat.

Fourth, the rover's purpose emphasized speed and mobility. The ability to move and change direction rapidly permits an attacker to strike with a smaller force. At its most fundamental, mobility is about speed, and speed in battle can be improved only in a few ways: by using technology to increase raw speed (designing or sailing a faster vessel), by simplifying logistics (traveling lightly through the jungle), by simplifying tactics (using simple ambushes as opposed to complex assaults on multiple fronts), by improving communications (a technically difficult proposition during the period under study), by actively anticipating the enemy (gathering and using intelligence), or by slowing the enemy down, thus increasing the attacker's relative speed (using deception, such as misleading information, or physically hindering him). Speed is inextricably linked to tactical execution: it was worthless if the sea rover could run down his prey but could not defeat him long enough to plunder him. Simplification can have its drawbacks, too, of which predictability is the most serious.

Fifth, in spite of the emphasis on stratagem, the sea rover's ideal of minimizing risk and maximizing profit often required great risk or daring, for great riches were well protected. The sea rover did not object to risk, but usually made only a calculated risk in exchange for a correspondingly

high gain. Duguay-Trouin, the French corsair who perhaps epitomized the concept of warfare as legitimate business, said that “fortune often aids valor that is a bit reckless.”<sup>13</sup> The sea rover took pride in his courage and daring, was scornful of prizes taken with little valor, and often took pride in a defeat if it was suffered in the face of great odds and with great valor. Yet he knew to not waste valor on unprofitable ventures. He and his brethren might be capable of extraordinary feats of arms in the face of overwhelming numbers, but there was no sense in exhibiting these martial virtues merely for their own sake. In sum, he was not wont to shed his own blood for the sake of futile purpose. To put his usually limited resources to best use, as well as to preserve both his own life and the plunder he desired, he invariably sought victory along the path of least resistance, taking other routes only in desperation. Likewise, he had no scruples about walking away from a fight he considered unprofitable or otherwise pointless, even if a military commander might label him a coward.

Still, most sea rovers were not merely businessmen or merchants who took to the sea to steal by force of arms instead of through law and capital. Sea roving was a difficult and dangerous trade, and its riches often temporary or illusory. Most merchants preferred to sit at home and invest their money while others took the risks, but the sea rover put his body in harm’s way in the service of his greed. At best, merchants had but the “Courage to adventure” their “Estates on an Undertaking, which to Men less discerning seem’d impracticable.”<sup>14</sup> Only rarely did the merchant venture his own skin.

As far as mortality goes, sea roving had the disadvantages not only of the sea’s perils, but also of deliberate battle. It was especially hazardous for commanders, all of whom were expected to lead: they were expected at the front amidst the fighting, in the thick of it, leading by example. Indeed, rovers saw the ideal commander in battle as one who commanded sword in hand and head held high, ranging under fire from bow to stern to exhort his men, musket balls passing through his clothes and hat as he did.<sup>15</sup>

The manner of the sea rover’s stratagems and surprise attacks also set him apart from other men at arms, often running counter to conventional military thinking. Of course, sea rovers were neither the originators of unconventional tactics nor the only ones to use such tactics during this period. Native Americans attacked from surprise and concealment, and then quickly withdrew. Colonial militias quickly learned to use similar unconventional tactics against them.<sup>16</sup> After the defeat of the French and Irish at the Battle of the Boyne, Irish rapparees used tactics identical to

those of modern guerrillas, right down to making swift attacks and then hiding arms to appear to be nothing more than members of the local civilian populace.<sup>17</sup> Sicilian partisans in 1719 sniped at German and Hungarian soldiers, and Hungarian Hussars “with their usual custom and dexterity, struck off their heads with their sabers.”<sup>18</sup> “Skulking” and other such tactics, even those of sea rovers, were often frowned upon by the conventional establishment. Never mind that the vainglorious butchery of the conventional battlefield was appalling, and the distress it visited upon the local population often just as bloody and brutal.

Many conventional commanders had their own set of ideas about how all warfare should be conducted, and disdained anything different, much as many conventional military commanders today often frown on special operations forces (except, of course, when they need them). Jeremy Roch, captain of the *Charles Galley* man-of-war, wrote of being “reprimanded for my Lieutenant’s good actions, who had played some buccanneer tricks with three of the men belonging to the three prizes we brought in here formerly.” Roch does not further identify these “tricks” but they were doubtless some form of mistreatment of the three prisoners, probably in regard to interrogation. This scorn went beyond any perceived brutality; it extended to the very nature of some of the tactics themselves as not being chivalrous or honorable, or at least not worthy of a gentleman of valor. Woodes Rogers’s scorn toward the buccaneers has already been noted, and he was himself a privateer. When Sir Christopher Mings, a man well known for his unconventional stratagems, prepared to attack Campeche, “he was advised by the *Jamaica* Privateers, to take it by Stratagem in the Night,” yet “he replied, that he scorned to steal a Victory; therefore when he went against it, he gave them warning of his Approach, by his Drums and Trumpets; yet he took the Fort at the first Onset.”<sup>19</sup>

Only a desperate sea rover would attempt such an attack against a strong enemy, yet this desperation in the service of greed and transient riches was the second great influence on the sea rover’s tactics. It gave Henry Morgan the city of Panama and a knighthood. What it gave John Watling will be seen.

## CHAPTER

# 4



## Roving Spirits, Charter Parties, and Stout Commanders

### *The Recruiting, Organization, and Leadership of Adventurers*

“I CONCEIVED THE IDEA OF JOINING THE BUCCANEERS, SAILING away with them, seizing what money I could from the Spanish and, in this way, paying my debts,” wrote Raveneau de Lussan. “Forced loans like these . . . carry no obligations . . . and they masquerade as open warfare.”<sup>1</sup> At some point, many wished to set sail for plunder, even in our modern age. There were always some willing to answer the call of the sea, or of the recruiting broadside plastered to the wall of a tavern, or of the scuttlebutt of rum-drunk wench-fondling adventurers that Captain Laurens sought volunteers for a raid upon the main.

Cliché though it be, the image was a powerful one. Yet long before Samuel Johnson suggested that “being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned,” John Donne had written that “to mew me in a Ship, is to intrhall Mee in a prison, that were like to fall. . . . Long voyages are long consumptions, and ships are carts for executions.” And these conditions aboard ships at sea were common knowledge. So why answer the sea’s call in spite of this?

Because the temptation was overwhelming. The lures of opportunity, rebellion, need, greed, and travel, combined with the allure of the sea and a roving itch for adventure, clinched it for most. “Having now been at home about five months, and the itch of roving not yet laid,” wrote Francis Rogers.<sup>2</sup>

### Entering a Crew

In the case of legitimate privateers, including buccaneers and filibusters with lawful commissions, recruiting typically began with the commander, for he was or would be so-named in the commission. Owners or *armateurs* often approached a captain with an offer to arm and outfit a ship for him, but just as often, he might approach investors with an offer to command on their behalf.<sup>3</sup> In the case of the noncommissioned forays of buccaneers and filibusters, the crew usually elected the captain unless he happened to be the owner of the cruising vessel. Pirates likewise elected their commanders.<sup>4</sup>

A commission authorized a private ship for “the Seizing, Surprising, and Taking of Ships and Vessels” belonging to the enemy. Some authorized attacks on land as well. The commission named the commander, his vessel, and often its armament.<sup>5</sup>

Although a privateer and a letter-of-mart ship were each granted a letter of mart (or marque), also called a commission (or commission of mart and reprisal), in common usage the privateer captain usually used the term “commission,” while the commander of a letter-of-mart ship used “letter of mart,” although technically these were the same thing. A privateer was a “private man-of-war,” while a letter-of-mart ship was a merchantman, more heavily armed and manned than one usually was and granted permission to make prizes of the enemy during the course of a trading voyage.<sup>6</sup> The purpose of the privateer was prey, not trade. The privateering commission permitted him to do this lawfully, and instructions often strictly enjoined him from trade. Further, the collective term of “letters of marque and reprisal” referred to two distinct authorizations. A letter of marque was permission to attack the enemy in time of war. A letter of reprisal, rare in Britain after the restoration of Charles II, was permission “to individuals in time of peace” to make a reprisal “to redress their own grievances.”

A commission also named the authority under which it was granted, its duration, and specifically against whom the privateer could proceed, and was often accompanied by a letter of instruction laying out the details of the law as regarded privateering. Commissions also often required a substantial bond, at least among legitimate privateers. The granting and authentication of commissions was a practice much abused, especially in the European colonies. In the seventeenth century some colonial governors granted them unlawfully or failed to examine them closely when rovers brought prizes into port. A superficial appearance of legitimacy often sufficed. Buccaneers and filibusters were notorious for “prolonging

the commission by their own authority,” by forgery or other pretense. Some pretended a commission meant to last three months was instead for three years. Others pretended that a commission to fish, fowl, and hunt on Hispaniola permitted cruising against the Spanish, because the commission allowed for retaliation if attacked.<sup>7</sup> A common term for piracy was “making their own Commissions on the Capstane.”<sup>8</sup>

After the commander, a roving voyage required seamen and sea artists foremost. Depending on the size of the crew, the length of the voyage, and its nature, the various officers and sea artists ranged from few to many, as given in appendix 2. Legitimate privateers on long cruises tended to carry more, as well as a greater variety of, officers, while pirates relied on far fewer. Long voyages, particularly those into the South Sea or the Red Sea, required large crews and a complete set of sea artists. Rovers in general carried large crews to offset attrition from battle, disease, and prize crews.

The principal officers of a small English privateer were typically the captain and lieutenant or master, or sometimes all three.<sup>9</sup> Lesser officers and mates were entered as required. The pirate Phillips’s officers were captain, master, carpenter, boatswain, and gunner, while Lowther’s numbered a captain, master, doctor, mate, gunner, and boatswain.<sup>10</sup> Of special note among pirates is the quartermaster. On most English vessels, a quartermaster’s chief duties were to assist the master or mate with the watch and to assist with conning the helm. Woodes Rogers entered four aboard the *Duke* privateer.<sup>11</sup> However, aboard a pirate ship of the early eighteenth century, the quartermaster was the crew’s representative, as well as the principal authority at all times except battle. He was to speak for and look after the crew’s interest, a “trustee for the whole . . . a sort of civil magistrate on board a Pirate ship . . . a humble imitation of the Roman Tribune of the people.” In time of battle, a pirate quartermaster’s appointed station was the helm.<sup>12</sup> Among buccaneers and filibusters, the quartermaster was second in the chain of command and would succeed to command upon the death of the captain, provided the ship’s company consented.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, some conventional privateers permitted the crew to elect a representative, also called a quartermaster, to carry their requests and grievances to the officers.

Out of necessity, many commanders recruited nonmariner volunteers or *reformados* (volunteer officers) in addition to a crew of seamen, using them in specialty positions and as musketeers, boarders, and soldiers. These volunteers, as well as cooks, owners’ agents, linguists, and surgeons required no seafaring experience, although doubtless such would have been helpful. Along the Spanish Main, buccaneers recruited



Moskito strikers: Native Americans whose job it was to “strike” or spear fish, turtle, and manatee for food, although they were called upon to fight as well. Captain Quierroret recruited the aforementioned Peter Drake as a linguister, or translator, for “he had fifty resolute men, full of spirits, who feared no danger, and he wanted nothing to complete him but a person who could speak English.” The captain assured Drake that he “should not be troubled with sea business,” and that he thought him “capable of heading a parcel of brave fellows in boarding a ship,” desiring him also to be captain of volunteers. Jean Doublet helped sign “120 volontaires pour la mousqueterie” for two frigates, in addition to 400 seamen to handle the ships, guns, and prizes.<sup>14</sup> A privateer commander may have had no choice but to ship landmen, his commission restricting him in the number of seaman he could carry, often not more than half of a ship’s complement or even fewer. Four-fifths of the 101 men of Shelvocke’s privateer crew were landmen.<sup>15</sup>

Recruiting was fairly straightforward. Word of a roving venture was posted in the form of broadsides—large bulletins or notices—plastered on a wall or advertised in a “News-Letter”: “Captain Peter Lawrence is going a Privateering from Rhode Island, in a good Sloop, about 60 tons, six guns and 90 men for Canada and any Gentlemen or Sailors that are disposed to go shall be kindly entertained.” A captain might also post his articles as advertisement.<sup>16</sup>

Just as effective was the informal word-of-mouth network. Before the advent of modern communications, information passed more quickly than we might imagine. Peter Drake fought a duel two days after signing with Captain Quierroret. By nightfall it was already common knowledge around Dunkirk, a fair-sized seaport, that a man had been killed in a duel.<sup>17</sup> Word of other events passed just as quickly.

Recruiting was centered around taverns, ordinaries (taverns or eating-houses where meals were served at a fixed price), and coffeehouses. In these places of refreshment a captain could seek out his crew, and vice versa. Here one got information about cruises and ships, about commanders and men, and here mariners found the best information and opportunities.<sup>18</sup> And here was where the recruiting officer spent money in entering crew: six pence “Spentt att a house where I shipped two men.”<sup>19</sup> And, being a tavern, and the recruits deep in their drinks, they would have been permitted to sober up before signing.<sup>20</sup>

In such a tavern, the *Soleil d’Or* or Sun of Gold on rue du Puits, Jean Doublet found a captain who had come to Honfleur to recruit.<sup>21</sup> In Dunkirk, Peter Drake sought employment: “Here I inquired if any privateer

was fitting out, and in order to be better informed, I went to an ordinary, where most of the officers of those ships of war resorted." Once they "agreed with" the terms, the prospective hand or officer "signed the articles." The articles were read to common seamen and landmen, and if they chose, they signed them.<sup>22</sup> They generally had no room for negotiation. Buccaneers and pirates signed new articles with each change in commander.

What a commander looked for when "shipping" or "entering" his officers and crew, and what they looked for from him, was experience and trustworthiness.<sup>23</sup> Renown played a major part in a commander's ability to recruit. Drake sought out Quierroret based on his being "reputed brave, and no less fortunate."<sup>24</sup> The condition or repute of the vessel itself, the length of the cruise, and the possibility of great riches were factors as well. Men might ship for a lengthy cruise based on the "prospect before them," balancing this against the hazards of such voyages.<sup>25</sup> Some commanders considered it vital that officers and owners be acquainted and familiar with each other before a cruise, in order to minimize possible "disagreements and unaccountable prejudices amongst Officers in these distant Expeditions."<sup>26</sup>

A commander rarely shipped a crew overnight. Jeremy Roch, commanding the *Charles Galley*, recruited and entered 200 men in three weeks, pressing none. The swift ship (by nature a cruiser), its captain, and the likelihood of prize money probably served as powerful inducements.<sup>27</sup>

In the early days of buccaneering and *la filibuste* such recruiting was usually unnecessary, various adventurers having already gathered together to rove on the account in small groups in a piragua. A filibuster with a ship would send "word to all who wished to sail with him." Only later, as these rovers pursued large scale operations against the Spanish, was word sent out as "divers letters to all the ancient and expert Pirates there inhabiting, as also to the Governor of the said isle, and to the planters and hunters of Hispaniola, giving them to understand his intentions, and desiring their appearance at the said place, in case they intended to go with him."<sup>28</sup>

Pirates of the eighteenth century were more circumspect, their nature limiting them largely to mutiny or more commonly to the crew and passengers of a captured vessel.<sup>29</sup> Pirate volunteers were often young and no doubt caught up in the idea of rebellion against society, their enthusiasm often waning at the prospect of battle: "for the new-entered men had little courage."<sup>30</sup> The pressure on male prisoners, especially those young and unmarried, to sign with their pirate captors could be life-threatening

and psychologically unrelenting. “They used once a Week, or Fortnight, as the Evil Spirit moved them, to bring me under Examination, and anew demand my Signing their Articles, and Joining with them; but Blessed be GOD, I was enabled to persist in a constant refusal to become one of them, tho’ I was thrashed with Sword or Cane, as often as I denied them,” wrote Philip Ashton of being a prisoner of the pirate Ned Low.<sup>31</sup> Only at one of the rare pirate havens such as New Providence, St. Thomas, or St. Mary’s Island could men be openly recruited. Anywhere else required a reasonable degree of circumspection. Pirates often “forced” prisoners, particularly those with critical skills—masters, navigators, surgeons, and carpenters—to sign.<sup>32</sup>

Difficulties did arise. Captain Tongrelou of the *New York Galley* had to compete for crewmen with three other privateers also fitting out in New York for cruising voyages, delaying his cruise.<sup>33</sup> Captain Uring had trouble recruiting in Port Royal for his letter-of-mart ship: the local sailors were more interested in privateering and the “sloop trade” than in serving aboard a real ship, letter-of-mart or not.<sup>34</sup> Limitations imposed by a government—for example, “that two third parts of the whole company of every such ship or vessell so fitted out as aforesaid shall be landsmen”—could cause delays or leave a crew shorthanded or too inexperienced to make a good fight.<sup>35</sup> Competing privateers might try to lure recruits away.<sup>36</sup>

### The Charter Party

Sea-roving vessels, privateers in particular, relied on several vital documents. The commission and accompanying instructions, “Orders of the Owners to the Captains,” ship’s muster, ship’s quarter bill, ship’s log, and accounts of plunder were essential to a successful cruise. However, with the exception of a privateer’s commission, none was as important to any sea rover as the ship’s articles of agreement. Also called a “charter party” (a maritime term for the contract or charter between the owners of a vessel and the merchants hiring the vessel), and in French a *chasse partie* (a contract for the hunt or chase) or *charte partie*, the articles defined the conditions under which the cruise would be conducted. Privateer commanders and investors usually stipulated the articles beforehand in terms such as “the following Proposals are made by the Owners to all such as shall enter themselves, and serve on Board the said Ships.”<sup>37</sup> The captain or one of his officers was to read the articles out loud to the recruits and crew, and post them in a conspicuous place, such as the great cabin door.<sup>38</sup>

Pirates, buccaneers, and filibusters generally determined the articles by a democratic vote held by the commander and five or six representatives chosen by the crew, although in some crews all sat in council. Articles addressed the division of spoils, compensation for injury, and occasionally reward for valor or discovery, as well as disciplinary matters. It should also be noted that articles, although derived from the same roots and often very similar, were drawn up specifically for each enterprise and thus varied in some ways from cruise to cruise and crew to crew.<sup>39</sup>

The most important articles concerned the division of spoils. Sea rovers were paid on shares determined after investors, the disabled, and other debts were paid. Pirate, buccaneer, and filibuster voyages were invariably “No prey no pay,” also known as “No purchase no pay” and “a Roving on the Account,” with account referring to payment on actual profit.<sup>40</sup> Nor were all legitimate privateering voyages made solely on the account. Many times “the Agreement between the Owners and the Men” established a system of shares and wages, the individual officer or seaman choosing to be paid “wholly on Shares” or “Part on Shares, and Part on Wages.” In 1708 the articles of the *Duke* and *Duchess* privateers granted eight shares to the third lieutenant, but only four if he were also paid wages of two pounds. A captain was granted twenty-four shares with no option for wages, and “Sailors each” were to be paid two and a half shares, or with wages one share and eight shillings, leaving a rough ratio of ten shares for the ship’s commander to one for a common seaman. Individual shares were granted after investors received their portion, those of the *Duke* and *Duchess* being the usual two-thirds of the profits.<sup>41</sup> These articles of shares and wages are almost identical to those of fishermen on the Grand Bank in 1663.<sup>42</sup>

In France a system of wages and shares was established for the king’s ships, merchantmen, and *corsaires*. According to Jean Merrien, a French *corsaire*, captain’s shares were often twelve, more if he were a noted commander, while a lieutenant would have eight shares and a common seaman one or two based on his merits. Wages were less equitable than shares. A captain made two to three times more than his lieutenant, and his lieutenant roughly five times more than a skilled seaman, and ten times more than an ordinary seaman. These wages were in addition to shares.<sup>43</sup> Not all corsairs followed this practice, each port city apparently having its own custom.<sup>44</sup> Peter Drake signed an agreement in Dunkirk at four shares, with no mention of wages. His captain’s shares were six.<sup>45</sup> Letter-of-mart crews might sign for half wages, with equal shares of any plunder they might take, and with shares allotted as with privateers.<sup>46</sup>

One of the advantages of a combination of shares and wages might

have been a reduced likelihood of mutiny should the search for prey be barren, especially on long voyages. On short voyages wages ensured an income, however small, especially important to those who had a family to feed. On the other hand, a system of wages alone favored the owner, and such systems in the maritime community had a long history of exploitation and fraud.<sup>47</sup> Accustomed to the prospect of riches, rovers would never have tolerated a wages-only agreement.

Insurance against injury was a vital part of the agreement, almost as important as the shares themselves. The articles of the *Duke* and *Duchess* privateers gave to those who "shall in Fight lose Limb or Limbs, or be so disabled, as not to get a Livelihood," thirty, forty, or fifty pounds, depending on their rank. Privateer articles also variously specified the division of plunder for ships operating in concert, the responsibility for costs and charges of ship and arms and provisioning, and payment to widows. Separate instructions governed councils of war, replacement of officers in case of illness or death, and the cruising grounds, although such details were not always included.<sup>48</sup>

Among seventeenth-century buccaneers and filibusters, captains were "allotted five or six portions to what the ordinary seamen have; the Master's Mate only two; and other officers proportionable to their employment." Common seamen received one share; boys received a half. The carpenter or shipwright who made the vessel seaworthy was paid 100 or 150 pieces-of-eight, the surgeon 250 for salary and medicine chest, and 200 pieces-of-eight were provided for provisioning. Concealing plunder was forbidden, and an oath required that none would. The owner of the vessel was appropriately compensated as well, and if the crew owned the vessel, plunder was divided entirely among the crew. If owners provided and outfitted a filibuster vessel, they received one-third of the profit; the usual practice among privateers was two-thirds.<sup>49</sup> If the captain owned the vessel or had interest in it, the articles specified what he would have "for the use of his vessel" or for its loss. (Filibusters referred to owners as the "bourgeois."<sup>50</sup>) Not all buccaneer commanders were so well compensated. In 1689, one piratically inclined buccaneer captain had but two shares, as well as the common two votes in council.<sup>51</sup>

As with privateers, the disabled and seriously injured were compensated for their suffering and disability: 500 pieces-of-eight or five slaves for the loss of a right leg, for example. Exquemelin's French edition provides similar articles: for a wound requiring the insertion of a cannula to drain fluid: 200 *écus* or two slaves. For the loss of a foot or leg, 200 *écus*.<sup>52</sup> The piece-of-eight was roughly equivalent to a French *écu* or crown and was often referred to as a Spanish *écu*, a *piastre*, or a *piastre gourde*.<sup>53</sup>

Articles also addressed reward for initiative leading to the capture of a prize, or “unto him that in any battle should signalize himself, either by entering the first any castle, or taking down the Spanish colours and setting up the English.” The articles of Morgan’s expedition against Panama increased the compensation to the injured, probably as a recruiting tool: the loss of a leg now was worth 600 pieces-of-eight or six slaves, although the loss of an eye remained the same at 100 pieces.<sup>54</sup>

Other articles were inferred by the “custom of the coast” or “as we have always practiced in the South Sea.” These might include elections or plebiscites (such as that which turned Bartholomew Sharp out of office), and common consent required before an attack, as well as for the change in strategy of a cruise.<sup>55</sup> *Ordonnances*, or modifications or additions to articles, might be added during a voyage.<sup>56</sup>

Filibuster articles changed little from the 1660s to the turn of the eighteenth century. Captain, quartermaster, surgeon, and pilot shares were equal to crew shares, although the crew did provide a gift to these officers, three or four shares in the case of the captain. Thus all are equal by the articles, even though in reality officers still had higher shares—but only at the pleasure of the crew. An extra half share went to the man first sighting a sail that became a prize. The loss of a limb earned 600 *écus*. A wounded man received one *écu* per day while in the surgeon’s hands, but only for the first sixty days. The wounded and disabled were compensated first, and on a voyage of meager plunder there might be nothing left after this were done. And if there were not enough to do this, the custom among filibusters was to seek plunder until there was.<sup>57</sup>

According to various scholars, these buccaneer and filibuster articles probably derived from several influences: the Caribs, Cuna, and other Native Americans; *boucaniers*; the emphasis on merit and democracy in the Cromwellian army and passed to the West Indies via General Venables’s forces at the capture of Jamaica; and various maritime and privateering conventions, including the French Judgments of Oléron and the survival of the Medieval practice of shares in lieu of wages in a voyage.<sup>58</sup> By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century the articles had evolved into what came to be known as the Jamaica Discipline, which in turn influenced the pirate articles of the day. In the version drafted by Shelvocke’s mutineers in 1720, the captain received six shares, certain officers two, and everyone else one. Shelvocke’s crew reminded him to be thankful that they permitted him six shares instead of the four normally allotted under the discipline.<sup>59</sup> Other authorities give the division as two shares for the captain, one and a quarter to one and a half for officers, and one share for everyone else.<sup>60</sup> The mutineers also added that in all

attacks by land or sea, "the people's consent was to be asked in general," the captain having two votes, everyone else one.<sup>61</sup>

Pirate articles were much similar, captains receiving one and a half to two shares.<sup>62</sup> Johnson recorded the articles of Bartholomew Roberts and company "as taken from the Pirates' own information." Among them all men had a vote "in affairs of the moment." Each was allowed a "shift of clothes" on board a new prize. A man stealing the value of a dollar or more from the plunder would be marooned, although if he stole only from another he might merely have his ears and nose slit. There was no gambling, lights out at eight, and drinking afterward only on the open deck. "Pistols and cutlass clean and fit for service." Neither boy nor woman were to be found among the crew. Marooning or death were the punishments for desertion in battle; no fighting was allowed aboard ship, and quarrels would be settled ashore by duel. Eight hundred dollars for the loss of a limb or being crippled. Captain and quartermaster had two shares, master, boatswain, and gunner one and a half, everyone else one. And so on. Roberts left his personal touch on the articles, initiating new recruits to the articles by having them swear an oath on a Bible, and denying the articles to Irishmen in memory of his Irish lieutenant who had run away with his ship and prize.<sup>63</sup> There was not always honor among thieves, nor were the rovers always brethren bound by a common purpose. Nor was their hierarchy even a democracy: some pirate articles provided immediate death for any of the crew who might "advise, or speak anything tending to the separating or breaking of the company, or shall by any means offer or endeavour to desert or quit the company."<sup>64</sup>

### Commanding Men

"Because our Men being Privateers, and so much more wilful, and less under Command, would not be so ready to give a watchful Attendance in a Passage so little known. For altho' these Men were more under Command than I had ever seen any Privateers, yet I could not expect to find them at a Minute's call in coming to an Anchor, or weighing Anchor," wrote William Dampier of his reservations about buccaneer plans to sail the Straits of Magellan.<sup>65</sup> Such willfulness, derived from the adopted attitude of princes among equals, could lead to sloppy seamanship and slackness in preparation, in turn leading to losses of prizes, battles, and roving vessels that could well be avoided.

Sea rovers in general were not men easily commanded. At best, they might be described as those who permitted command not for the duration

but for the moment, and only for the sake of the common goal—and provided they perceived fairness and competence in their commander and anticipated success in their venture. In battle, they expected leaders to lead by example and would accept nothing less from them than leadership and courage from the front. Outside of battle, they expected fairness and a sense of equality as men, even if rank were unequal. Shared dangers, with the leader shouldering more than the common burden, earned such respect. Rovers were often that rare breed, difficult to lead but highly motivated when well led, rebellious independent individuals willing to subordinate their egos to the mission at hand. It is well to remember that it was the rover's ego, his sense of pride in himself and in his ability, that not only made him willful but gave him the backbone to do what others could not or would not.

Bound together by the common goal of riches, a camaraderie of arms and of the sea, and often a sense of unity in rebellion, rovers were capable of tactical brilliance and a desperate courage that often succeeded where tactics failed. Yet with these strengths came weaknesses. Discipline ranged from relatively strict among most European privateers, where the captain's command in all matters was near absolute, to almost nonexistent among pirates, where the captain's command was absolute only in battle.<sup>66</sup> However, even among the strictest privateers, discipline was never up to the standard of men-of-war, or even of many merchantmen, and instances of outright insubordination were common. Always a possibility, mutiny was least likely on short legitimate cruises, but invariably a greater danger on long cruises of any sort, particularly into the South Sea or Indian Ocean. On such long voyages buccaneer and pirate captains might find themselves democratically deposed by dissatisfied crews, and legitimate privateer commanders even violently so. The reality was that the farther from perceived authority a sea rover was, the more likely a democratic reappraisal of wealth and authority might occur. Constant turnovers in command would more often than not lead to a degradation in a crew's overall fighting qualities.

Friction among crew or officers led to similar problems. Naval officers and former naval officers often looked down upon all officers with other backgrounds, whether merchant, privateer, or buccaneer, with contempt that was mutual. Mariners often saw little to respect in officers who lacked sea experience, while officers in turn saw mariners merely as those responsible for ferrying them from place to place. Many conflicts among officers trace directly to these differences, with a significant portion of ego thrown in for good measure. Perhaps the worst breeding grounds for these conflicts were the committees of officers aboard some privateers,



whose approval was required prior to taking action. Among pirates, buccaneers, and filibusters, worst was the democratic process of electing commanders, a process often subverted or manipulated.

Binding this all together—willfulness, ego, courage, and greed—were the articles. A legal or social guarantee, the articles were legitimate no matter what their origin by virtue of their being written, at least in the eyes of those who signed them. This written guarantee bound commander and crew as one. It ensured reward should the cruise be profitable; without it, a crew might not fight at all. Working hand-in-hand with the articles was leadership. It was the commander's job to ensure the provisions of the articles, and, by leading his crew to a profitable cruise, prove their value. If the crew perceived the articles as unfair or the commander incompetent, mutiny could result. The articles were thus vital for cohesion: there would be reward for victory and compensation for injury, and thus rovers would strive voluntarily and willingly against the longest of odds.

But not to be forgotten was discipline: “for I was sensible that Discipline in Privateers was the only Method to support my self and the other Officers, and keep up our Authority, which is so essential towards acting with Success and Vigour on all occasions.”<sup>67</sup>

It was a precarious balance.

## CHAPTER

# 5



## Piraguas, Sloops, and Ships

### *Tools of the Trade, Part I*

AS A NAVY COMMANDER WHOSE NAME I NO LONGER RECALL SAID, “the difference between us and them is the sea.” He was comparing Navy SEALs to other special operations forces, and his comment also points out the difference between sea rovers and others whose martial acts were primarily land-bound. It was not simply a matter of pasting tactics from one environment to another, but instead one of adapting and creating tactics specific to a complex environment. Simply put, those who fight on the sea or from the sea must know the sea, or fight alongside those who do. Through its unpredictability, the sea demands an understanding that can develop only over time and through much experience. And the sea means business.

To a rover the ship beneath his feet was the means of seeking and taking prey on the sea. As such, certain tactical considerations and realities governed its use.

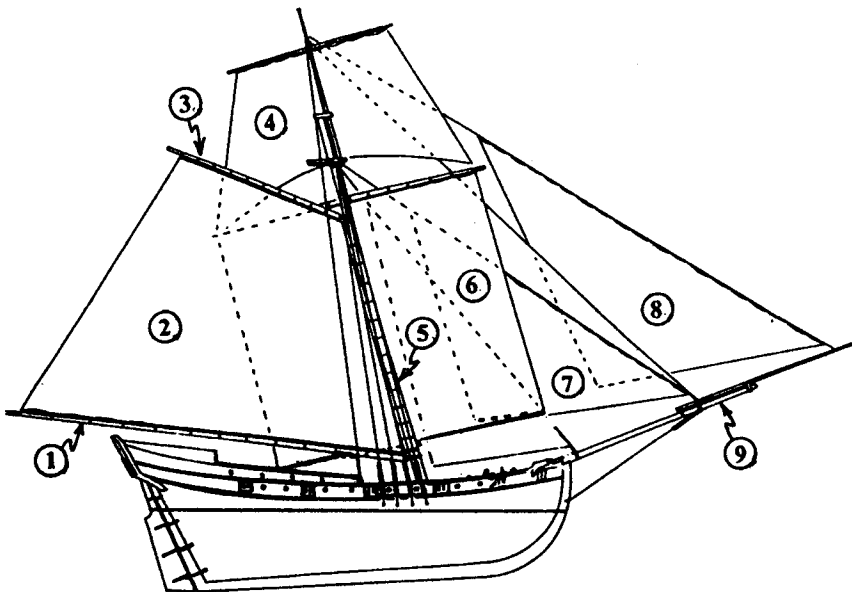
In a perfect world a sea-roving vessel was fast, light, clean, stiff, and weatherly. She could outsail her prey and outrun her enemies. She was armed sufficiently to inspire submission in her prey, and no more. She would “look as little and defenseless” and conceal her “powers as much as possible, until there is a real occasion for it.”<sup>1</sup> Being clean meant she had fine lines, being stiff meant she did not roll as far as her crankier sisters, and being weatherly meant she made little leeway when close-hauled.<sup>2</sup> Speed was the key quality, for without it cruising was made much more difficult and usually much less profitable.

Often, the practical economy of the sea rover required using the vessel

at hand, improvising and improving, for a vessel's characteristics dictated strategy and tactics. Rovers removed carved works and cut down the roundhouses and quarterdecks of large merchantmen and galleons to make them snug for rough passages, as well as lighter and more weathery.<sup>3</sup> They fitted canoes and small boats with sideboards to keep the sea out, letting them range relatively safely into open waters.<sup>4</sup> They adapted slow leeward ketches to the tactics of ruse instead of the open chase.<sup>5</sup>

Purpose drove design. Short wide hulls made for cargo were not as swift or weathery as long narrow ones. Strong ships with closely spaced timbers to support heavy guns and resist cannon fire were heavier than those with fewer, wider-spaced timbers. Lighter ships were more vulnerable to cannon fire and the stresses of guns in heavy seas, and many privateers were lightly constructed for both speed and economy.

Smaller was the norm when it came to sea-roving vessels, and vessels from 60 to 250 tons usually served the purpose admirably. They were tactically suited to most tasks, easier and less expensive to maintain, easier to acquire through legitimate purchase or capture, and less of a financial



### Sloop

1. Boom   2. Mainsail   3. Gaff   4. Topsail   5. Mast   6. Course  
7. Staysail   8. Jibsail   9. Bowsprit

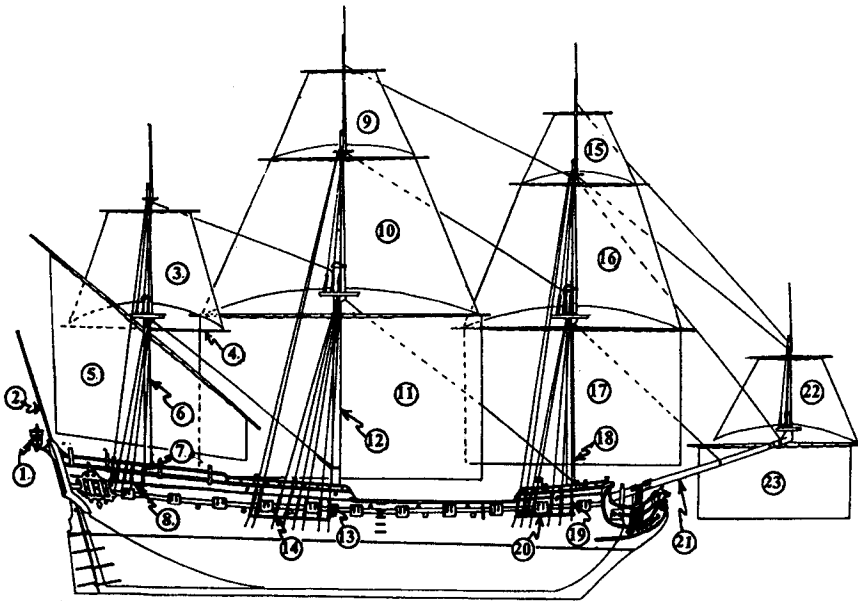
risk. Labat listed three reasons filibusters used small vessels, even keeping to them after capturing powerful ships: larger ships required too much work, were too expensive, and required large crews, which in turn decreased the amount of booty per share. Ships did not sail as well as the filibusters' smaller craft, particularly "on a bowline," that is, close-hauled.<sup>6</sup>

Although formulae for measuring tonnage or "burthen" varied during the period, Sir Anthony Deane's of 1677 will serve as a yardstick: keel, measured from sternpost to touch of stem, multiplied by greatest breadth, multiplied by half breadth, the product then divided by 94.<sup>7</sup> Thus a keel of 76 feet and a breadth of 23 will measure out at roughly 214 tons. The gun deck might be only 86 feet long.

In *Bristol Privateers and Ships of War*, Commander J. W. Damer Powell listed 128 Bristol privateers commissioned during the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1713), ranging from thirty to 400 tons. Of them only fifteen, or 12 percent, were 300 tons or greater. Most—86 percent—ranged between 100 and 200 tons, ten to twenty guns, and twenty-four to sixty men.<sup>8</sup> Similar statistics are seen among French privateers, and Spanish picarons of 1658 ranged from snows of four guns to ships of thirty.<sup>9</sup> Sea rovers so commonly used such vessels that a captain seeing two small ships of twenty guns apiece in pursuit would automatically assume them to be privateers, not men-of-war.<sup>10</sup>

Buccaneers and filibusters naturally tended toward small vessels, using them quite successfully. The nine at Samballos in 1680 ranged from fourteen to 150 tons; six were thirty-five tons or less.<sup>11</sup> Of the nine sailed by Jamaica privateers attacking the gold mines at Darien in 1702, most were sloops of no more than ten guns.<sup>12</sup> Morgan's fleet against Panama included thirty-seven vessels, the largest boasting twenty-two guns, the smallest four.<sup>13</sup> Even among the well-armed filibuster vessels cruising out of San Domingue in 1684, flush with booty from Veracruz, two-thirds were of twenty guns or less, making it likely that many were under 200 tons, not larger but poorly armed ships.<sup>14</sup>

Small vessels, especially those under thirty tons, had drawbacks. They could not carry the large crews required to overwhelm larger prey by boarding, and were too weak to fight ship to ship against the well-armed and well-manned merchantmen found in European waters. In France there was an effort to suppress these tiny privateers, as it was more likely their cruises would result in net losses, not gains.<sup>15</sup> Although rovers sailing the smallest of vessels and boats did occasionally capture powerful ships at sea, it was not the norm.



### Ship

1. Lantern 2. Ensign Staff 3. Mizzen Topgallant 4. Crossjack Yard  
 5. Mizzen Sail 6. Mizzenmast 7. Mizzen Shrouds 8. Mizzen Chains  
 9. Main Topgallant Sail 10. Main Topsail 11. Mainsail or Main Course  
 12. Mainmast 13. Main Shrouds 14. Main Chains 15. Fore Topgallant  
 Sail 16. Fore Topsail 17. Foresail or Fore Course 18. Foremast 19. Fore  
 Shrouds 20. Fore Chains 21. Bowsprit 22. Sprit Topgallant 23. Spritsail

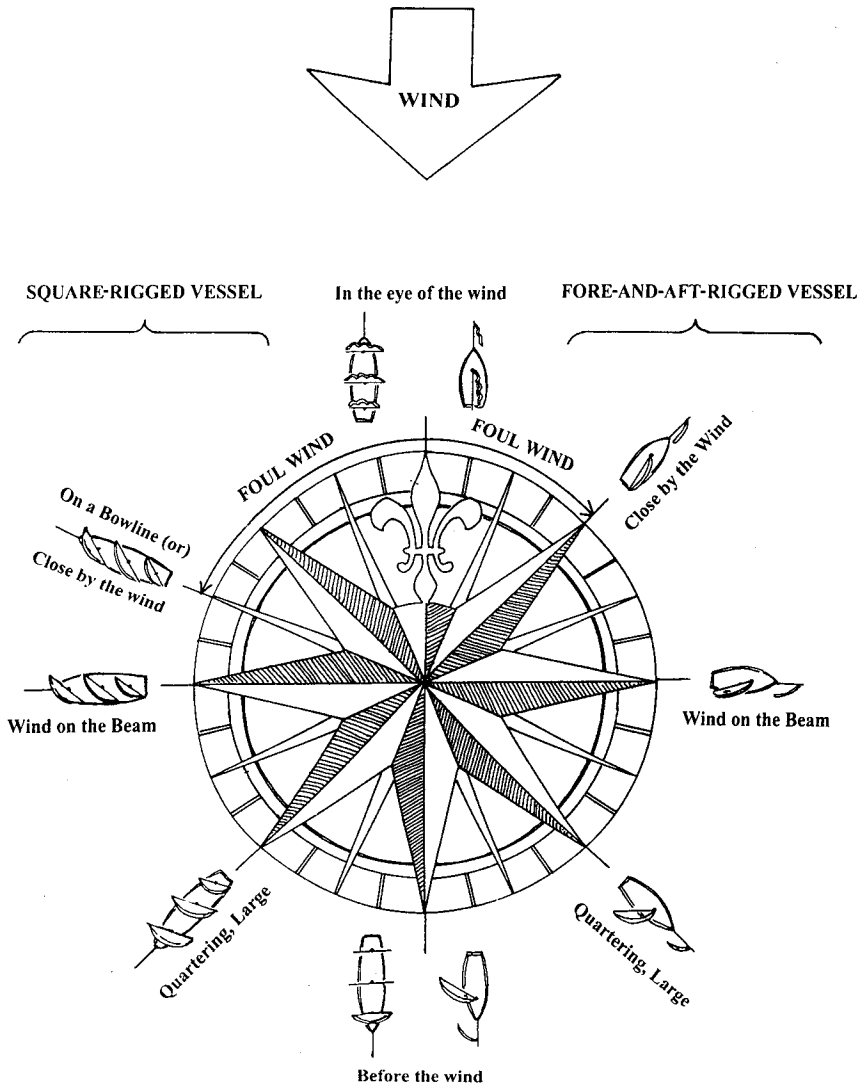
On the other hand, the extensive use of smaller vessels does not mean that large ships did not find profitable sea-roving action. But when they did, it was at the behest of wealthy investors seeking profit in a target-rich wartime environment, or in the hands of sea rovers who had captured them and transferred their colors to the larger vessel. The French made particular use of large privateers, although their smaller vessels still outnumbered these grand ships.<sup>16</sup> The Baron de Pointis's expedition of corsairs, soldiers, and filibusters against Cartagena in 1697 included heavily gunned ships of the first and second rate.<sup>17</sup> Corsairs of Dunkirk and St. Malo often sailed ships of fifty or more guns.<sup>18</sup> Three of the seventeen filibuster vessels listed on the coast of San Domingue in 1684 possessed forty-four, fifty-two, and fifty-four guns, although these numbers may have included patereroes or other swivels.<sup>19</sup>

Pirates particularly relished the prestige of heavily armed ships, Howel Davis mounting his *Rover* with thirty-two cannon and twenty-seven swivels, Bowen his *Defiance* with fifty-six guns, and Booth armed his *Speaker* with fifty-four.<sup>20</sup> However, two drawbacks of large pirate ships were the scarcity of port facilities open to them, and the limited number of safe shores on which to careen deeper-draft ships. Pirates sailing these vessels had to remain in an active posture, constantly deployed. To retreat into the safety of creek and inlet haunts, they had to return to shallow-draft vessels like sloops.<sup>21</sup> Notwithstanding the cachet of heavily armed ships, smaller vessels like sloops, *barque longues*, and galley-ships were the sea rover's principal vessels.

It goes without saying that in the Age of Sail, ships of any size had to be sailed. Seamanship determines how well a ship sails, given a vessel's hull, trim, sails, rigging, and crew, and this is a subject far too broad to be discussed in any detail here. However, certain characteristics were critical to the chase and fight.

Vessels of the period were either square-rigged or fore-and-aft-rigged, although most square-riggers carried some fore-and-aft sails, and some fore-and-afters carried a square sail or two. Square-rigged vessels could sail only within six points of the wind, a point being eleven and a quarter degrees, with thirty-two points on the compass card. Fore-and-aft rigs could sail a point or two closer, giving them an advantage in chasing or escaping to windward. On the other hand, square sails permitted "backing astern": a square-rigged vessel could turn up into the wind to get sternway (to move astern instead of forward). A skillful commander could thus fire one broadside, then, by backing astern and filling his sails, quickly maneuver to bring the opposite broadside to bear.<sup>22</sup> Many fore-and-aft-rigged vessels intended as seekers or fighters probably carried square topsails for this reason, among others.

Steering was critical to such maneuvers, and a classic image of searoving cinema is the helmsman at the wheel in storm or battle. Unfortunately for the image, the wheel did not make its appearance until the early eighteenth century, coming into common use on English men-of-war around 1715. Until this date larger vessels steered with a whipstaff, and those up to 250 tons usually with a tiller of wood, or occasionally of iron.<sup>23</sup> While the ship's wheel was a highly efficient steering mechanism, so much so that nearly all but the smallest of sea-going vessels took to it, it left the helmsman or helmsmen exposed to enemy fire. So too did the tiller and, if exposed, the whipstaff. Some vessels carried an emergency tiller in the great cabin in case the deck above grew too hot from enemy fire, surely better than trying to hide behind the mizzen sail from a withering fusillade "which obliged me to order the People to steer in the



Cabbin, we having an Iron Tiller there for that purpose; but the Wind blowing strong, the Tiller in the Cabin, would not command her . . . and therefore was obliged to steer upon Deck again.”<sup>24</sup> However, this tiller provided less leverage, by virtue of its being shorter than the main tiller on deck.

Oars, also known as sweeps or “wooden topsails,” were common on

many vessels of 250 tons and smaller, particularly merchant galleys or small one- and two-masters designed for their use.<sup>25</sup> They were much more rare on larger vessels. One sixty-gun ship circa 1730 may have carried oars, and a number of seventeenth-century English fourth-rate galley-frigates and early eighteenth-century sixth-rates, ranging from roughly 400 to 500 tons, did.<sup>26</sup> The French made good use of these galley-frigates as well; even ships of forty-four guns might carry as many as thirty oars.<sup>27</sup>

Oars gave the ability to pursue, maneuver, and run during calms or light airs, and were of exceptional value to both rovers and those seeking to escape them.<sup>28</sup> They were difficult to use in heavy seas or if the vessel were heeling significantly, and rowing against headwinds might be fruitless.<sup>29</sup> Of his pursuit by French corsairs, Captain Tolsen wrote that “the French make great use of their owsr,” and likewise used his own oars to escape them.<sup>30</sup> Conditions were seldom favorable to use both oars and sails, although they were famously used together in the meeting between Edward Barlow’s *Scepter* and Captain Kidd’s *Adventure* Galley. In a “very little wind” the latter “presently made what sail he could from us, getting out his oars and rowing and sailing, we firing what we could at him, our men shouting, which I believe he heard, and judge he took us for one of the King’s ships.” Kidd, the valiant pirate-hunting pirate, fled from an English merchantman and her courageous commander.<sup>31</sup>

Oar ports were located between the gunports on the upper deck, or in the case of larger vessels, on the deck below. The crew would run out the oars (often stowed on gallows amidships or along the main chains), and also haul up the sails to reduce drag. Doubtless the boatswain or a mate called the measure or “yo hope” to time the oar strokes.<sup>32</sup> Others may have done as Captain Hutchinson did in the mid-eighteenth century: he ran a line spliced with grommets from oar to oar, permitting his crew to pull in unison. Additional men could pull on the line between the oars, adding power.<sup>33</sup> Because a vessel needed fine lines to row well, the average round-bellied merchantman did not bother with oars, and typically only men-of-war, rovers, and letter-of-mart ships had crews large enough to man them for anything other than simple maneuvering. The *Charles* Galley, a man-of-war of 500 tons, made three knots with three men apiece at forty-two oars, while the *Mary* Galley, a small letter-of-mart merchant-galley of 140 to 170 tons, eight oars, and a crew of twenty-five, made two in a calm. A twenty-five-ton Spanish South Sea bark made three knots at the hands of privateers, and the *Greyhound* man-of-war out-rowed Harris and Low’s pirate sloops. The *Charles* Galley rowed well into Plymouth Sound, but it is doubtful the *Mary* Galley’s small crew could have kept



two knots for long.<sup>34</sup> Even true galleys with large crews at the oars could only make a maximum of four to five knots, and then only for an hour before the oarsmen were exhausted.<sup>35</sup> If a crew were large enough, it could man both oars and boats, "rowing and towing."

Regarding the seagoing vessel as a fighting platform, size mattered when it came to armament. Smaller vessels carried fewer guns and only those of smaller caliber. Minions and sakers or similar guns of three- and six-pound shot were typical of the average sea rover. Twenty guns of six-pound shot were as many as a 200 ton ship could carry without becoming too crank, but such small guns were sufficient only against vessels of similar size and armament. Larger guns were too heavy and required more room to recoil than available on smaller vessels. Crews made up for this deficiency by adding patereroes or other swivel guns in stanchions on the weather decks, and by relying on small arms, muskets in particular.

In heavy seas the great guns, their muzzles lashed to eyebolts in the hull, placed great strain on a light ship, weakening timbers and working caulking loose, and might eventually turn a ship, particularly an old one, into a sieve. Guns could be lashed parallel or sideways to the hull, but in this position they took far too long to put into action. Carrying guns run out with the carriages pressed against the sills of the ports also decreased the strain. However, this manner required the nuisance of "half ports" that fit around the barrels to close the ports to the sea, and the gun port lids themselves were kept open. Guns carried run out, their ports up, would catch or "hold wind" to windward, creating drag, and in a running sea they would dip and drag in the water to leeward, slowing the ship and often wetting the powder within the gun barrels.<sup>36</sup>

Gunports placed too low could not be opened safely in heavy weather, and a number of ships and crews went to their graves when they were ordered open anyway. At the very least the entering sea might prevent gun crews from working their guns. Small vessels with their battery carried on the main- and quarterdecks left many or all guns and gun crews exposed to weather and enemy fire.

Most vessels had chase ports or some manner of rigging cannon to fire bow and stern (called "bow chase" and "stern chase"), although rovers were most concerned with bow chase. Aboard smaller vessels the cabin lights (windows) could serve astern, while larger ships carried the usual gunports astern at each armed deck, and some as well at the bow on the main deck and forecastle. Shelvocke added stern ports only under fire when he suddenly found he needed them.<sup>37</sup>

Although ordnance fashions and technology in general changed little between 1630 and 1730, those of ships did. Prows shortened, sterns

shrank, and lines grew cleaner. Sheer and tumblehome flattened. Around 1700 the spritsail topmast disappeared from smaller ships, and by 1730 from larger ones, replaced by the jib and jib boom. The driver and gaff began to replace the lateen mizzen in the early eighteenth century. The whipstaff disappeared with the coming of the wheel. Carved works, so popular on men-of-war and great merchantmen during the mid to late seventeenth century, diminished or disappeared entirely by the early eighteenth, and many vessels, particularly the practical working sort, had never carried any at all.

### Pirate Ships and Rakish Sloops

The list of types of vessels sailed by rovers is as broad as is the list of their heroics and infamies. These vessels and many others are briefly described in appendix 3, but those most commonly sailed are described here in detail, beginning with perhaps the most versatile of them all in the New World.

“They are withal so swift,” wrote Exquemelin, “as for that very property they may be called ‘Neptune’s post-horses.’”<sup>38</sup> Light, swift, easily made, Native American dugout canoes and piraguas were prolific in the New World on lakes, rivers, and the sea, and Europeans quickly adopted them as all-purpose craft. They were of two sorts. Often difficult to distinguish, Dampier described the piragua, or *pirogue*, as larger, heavier, sharp at the bow and blunt at the stern, unlike the canoe which was sharp or pointed bow and stern, and “nothing but the Tree it self made hollow Boatwise, with a flat bottom.”<sup>39</sup> Even so, piraguas were often described simply as large canoes, and Labat described them as pointed and turned up at each end, while canoes were sharp at the bow but flat-sterned, exactly opposite to Dampier’s description.<sup>40</sup> Lionel Wafer wrote that canoes differ from piraguas in the same way “Lighters and small Barges differ do from Wherries.”<sup>41</sup> De Lussan mentioned “ten ‘grandes’ pirogues and four light canoes,” defining the extremes.<sup>42</sup> Canoes, being lighter, generally rowed faster than piraguas.<sup>43</sup>

A seagoing Carib piragua examined by Labat was about thirty-one feet long, four and three quarter wide amidships, and roughly twenty inches wide at bow and stern. It had nine thwarts, holes drilled for cords to secure belongings, steered with a large paddle, and carried two masts and two square sails.<sup>44</sup> Its rigging was probably of the maho tree (sea hibiscus, *Hibiscus tiliaceus*), a plant also used by buccaneers for the same purpose.<sup>45</sup> Most Native Americans did not fit their canoes with thwarts, yet sailed

and paddled them on journeys of up to a hundred leagues.<sup>46</sup> The largest French canoes of the Carolina rivers were made of bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) molded, dug, sawed in two pieces, a plank placed between them, and had a small keel to protect against oyster beds. They were rigged with two masts and Bermuda sails and capable of carrying fifty to sixty barrels.<sup>47</sup>

The best canoes and piraguas were of cedar (probably Spanish cedar, *cedrella odorata*), being resistant to worm and rot. Native Americans also made them from the "Cotton Tree" (the silk-cotton tree, *Ceiba pentandra*, also called the kapok tree), a wood easy to work, and from other trees as well.<sup>48</sup> A canoe was made by cutting down a tree, sometimes as tall as sixty or seventy feet, hewing its upper surface flat, then rolling it over and carving it out. Workers bored three holes in the bottom to judge thickness, later plugging them, leaving the bottom three inches thick, the sides two, and the gun'ls (gunwales) an inch and a half.<sup>49</sup> Native Americans hollowed out their canoes by burning and carving with tools of flint or stone, or with iron tools depending on the region, while European cultures invariably used iron.<sup>50</sup> At Gibraltar the Spanish built piraguas from cedars of eight feet in circumference, able to carry one great sail. Some cedars were claimed to have been as much as forty feet in circumference, from which piraguas large enough to carry a topsail were carved.<sup>51</sup>

Labat also contracted for a canoe, giving us a good sense of their construction. Built by two mulatto craftsmen in fifteen days, it was approximately thirty-one feet long and four and a quarter wide, with five thwarts, and "en pirogue" with pointed bow and stern. Labat paid fifteen *écus* to the craftsmen's owner for the canoe, as well as one *écu* plus meals to each worker.<sup>52</sup> Filibusters at Boca del Toro cut and hewed their own canoes in three weeks.<sup>53</sup> Buccaneers pausing among the keys around the Isle of Quibo made canoes and hauled them a mile to the water, two of them quite large: one of thirty-six feet in length and five or six in breadth, the other of thirty-two and a similar breadth.<sup>54</sup>

The average buccaneer canoe might carry fifteen to twenty-five men, a large one forty-five, and a man-of-war piragua as many as 120.<sup>55</sup> Swan and Davis's buccaneers traveled the South Sea in thirty-one canoes, averaging seventeen men apiece; Sharp and company landed at Santa Maria in sixty-eight small Native American canoes carrying a total of 357 men; Morgan's men crossed Darien in thirty-two canoes, averaging thirty-three men apiece.<sup>56</sup> Narrow abeam and of shallow depth, the canoes were cramped and confining, and after a few days Morgan's men were "almost crippled with lying too much crowded in the boats." Nathaniel Uring similarly complained of his canoe being cramped and leaky, of his having

to sleep with his head in the stern sheets, his back on a thwart, and his feet on an oar placed crosswise.<sup>57</sup>

Although Native Americans paddled canoes and piraguas, Europeans fitted them with thwarts and rowed them with oars just as they did their boats, using straps of manatee hide fitted to the sides of the craft for oarlocks instead of the usual pegs or thole pins. "These canoas were fitted with thoats [thwarts] or benches, straps and oars fit for service."<sup>58</sup> Oar looms were usually of lancewood (*Nectandra coriacea*), or occasionally of white mangrove (*Laguncularia racemosa*). Sea rovers paddled when they required silence for approaching a ship or town at night, a technique they learned from the Caribs, and those seen paddling a canoe from afar were invariably assumed to be Native Americans.<sup>59</sup> Labat argued that although paddling was more fatiguing, two or three times as many men could paddle as row.<sup>60</sup> Rowing also required deeper water (the oars biting more deeply), while paddling required only that the canoe not touch bottom.<sup>61</sup> However, buccaneers usually kept to rowing, reserving paddling for stealth or ruse, or when using the smaller, narrower Native American canoes.<sup>62</sup>

Steering was by paddle or rudder. According to Labat, canoes with flat sterns often had rudders, while those *en pirogue* steered with a paddle, a technique requiring much more effort. After being shipwrecked, Nathaniel Uring cruised more than a hundred miles along the Mosquito Coast in a canoe and remarked on the difficulty of steering with a paddle. He eventually added a rudder (and for what it's worth, a small fire-hearth).<sup>63</sup> Steering any craft, whether a canoe or rubber boat, from the stern by paddle requires a certain knack. If he can sit at the edge of the canoe's stern, the steersman can grasp the paddle with one hand at the "grip" or top of the shaft and at the loom just above the blade with the other, using his hip or the stern as a pivot point for purchase, which is critical in surf or swift waters. To make a canoe or piragua more suitable to open waters, rovers raised the sides with boards.<sup>64</sup> Labat considered canoes built *en pirogue* to be more seaworthy with their pointed and elevated bow and stern, and less likely to ship water astern.<sup>65</sup>

The tactical virtues of canoes and piraguas were several. Simple craft often used as ship's boats, many were small enough to be hoisted aboard instead of being towed, and some ships carried two or more.<sup>66</sup> They were swift under oar or sail, and they had a low profile, allowing them disappear in the trough of the sea, as well as making them more difficult to spot, day or night. They were good for "the more convenient and speedy landing of their men."<sup>67</sup> Rovers could paddle them quietly under cover of darkness, without the creak and whine of oar on thole. Rovers could

easily hide them, drawing them ashore or tucking them beneath mangroves, and sallying out suddenly to attack nearby ships before they could get themselves in a “posture of defense.”<sup>68</sup> Neither provided much in the way of cover from weather or enemy fire, although there was nothing to get in the way of rovers bringing all small arms to bear.

“Their Craft is no bigger than Petty-Oagers, but they have done a great deal of Mischief, both to the *Spaniards* and all other Nations they could Master,” wrote Nathaniel Davis of the filibusters living among the Native Americans at Darien.<sup>69</sup> With these simple craft buccaneers and filibusters successfully attacked Spanish men-of-war in open battle on the sea and raided their possessions ashore. And often the canoe was only the beginning of a long successful roving venture.<sup>70</sup>

Boats were almost as common among sea rovers, serving two purposes, one as a vessel's utility boat, the other as a raiding craft. Longboats and launches, the largest of ships' boats, were normally towed. They were stowed aboard only on the largest ships, although towed boats were often lost in storm, chase, or battle. Smaller boats were stowed amidships on a cradle, or on spars laid between a pair of galleys or between a galleys and the aft end of the forecabin. Only whalers slung boats from davits. Invariably, a ship's boat carried mast and sails in addition to oars.<sup>71</sup>

Rovers used boats for the routine tasks: fetching wood and water, ferrying stores, laying out a kedge anchor or a cable for a warp, recovering a lost anchor, catting an anchor, clearing the hawse, searching for a man overboard (recovery was often doubtful), communicating with other vessels and with those ashore, and ferrying crew and passengers to and from shore.<sup>72</sup>

Tactically, rovers used boats to chase and attack small prey, to tow in calm seas during a chase, to board prizes that had struck their colors, to ferry plunder and prisoners from a prize, to prevent a chased vessel from running ashore, to ferry men ashore to attack a town, to harass more powerful prey during a calm until the main vessel could come up, to make a reconnaissance or serve as a picket boat to prevent surprise attacks at night, to attack prey at anchor at night, and for cruising, to give word of prey to the mother vessel.

The advantages of boats over canoes lay in seaworthiness and armament. Having a higher profile and curved hull, boats managed well in rough seas, as opposed to flat-bottom canoes. Boats also provided more cover to attackers, and could be armed with one or two patereroes or other swivel guns at the bow or stern—only the largest of canoes could be so armed. Under sail with a small crew, they could cruise for weeks and leagues, fitted with an awning for protection from the sun, and sometimes

possessing a small half deck for their better management at sea. On the other hand, like canoes and small vessels they could not keep a large crew at sea for long, and were vulnerable in a fight should the prey bring great guns or significant numbers of small arms to bear. At times, boats were no more comfortable than canoes: "It blowed fresh, was very dark, with a small rolling Sea, and the Boat being deep laden and cram'd with Men, I had rather be in a Storm at Sea than here," wrote Woodes Rogers.<sup>73</sup> Anyone who has bragged of his sea legs in a small craft pounding for several hours through a sea of short white-capped swells, only to lose them a minute after cutting his engines will appreciate this sentiment.

The *barca longa* or *barque longue* and its various incarnations was a common, if at times confusing, class of craft. Not only do contemporary descriptions usually lack detail, but the same vessel might be described in several different terms, for example as a *barque longue*, *double-chaloupe*, and snow.

Instead of picking various nits of naval architecture, it might be better to group as a class several similar two-masted vessels that served well in the chase under sail or oar.

The *barque longue* was a long narrow open-decked vessel with a sharp bow, single- or double-masted, and swift under sail or oar. It was a common privateer craft among the French and Dutch, and a common utility vessel throughout Europe. The Spanish in the New World used it for coastal trade and for *armadillos*, or men-of-war, and rovers seized upon them for their own use. On average it might be up to forty feet long, nine feet broad, three or four deep, of twenty to fifty tons, and carry as many as a dozen oars. Matthieu de Wulf commanded the *Revenge*, a *barque longue* of twenty tons "or thereabouts."<sup>74</sup> Decked versions were more commonly called *double-chaloupes* or "double-shallops," and sometimes "sloops," the terms all having the same linguistic origin. The typical rig was some form of square sails on two masts, the mainmast usually carrying a topsail. The English brigantine falls into this class, as does the French corvette.<sup>75</sup> The Flemish snow or *senau* was a smack-rigged *barque longue*.

The snow and brig, or *brigantin*, are related vessels, each carrying a gaff sail on the mizzenmast.<sup>76</sup> A brig's gaff sail was hooped to the mizzenmast, but the snow's was instead attached to a small "trysail" mast just abaft the mizzenmast, allowing the crossjack (mizzen) yard to be struck (lowered). Both vessels carried square foresails and usually a main topsail. The snow carried a square sail on the crossjack yard as well, a rare practice that distinguished the snow visually from the brig, as could the size of the gaff sail.<sup>77</sup> Tolson was chased by French snows, noting they sailed and rowed well.<sup>78</sup>

All of these swift two-mast vessels were ideal for the chase against merchantmen with small crews, providing they had enough arms and men to overpower the prey they caught. They also served well as consorts of larger vessels, intended to nip at the heels of the prey until the other came up.<sup>79</sup> They were ideal for the West Indies: shallow-drafted, easily careened, and swift, and those with fore-and-aft sails could more easily beat against the prevailing easterly winds. Labat listed the *corvette* and *brigantin* as two of the three common filibuster vessels.<sup>80</sup> Of the eight vessels at Samballos in 1684, four were *barcolongos*, two of them mounted with four guns each and forty and sixty men, respectively. Captain Sawkins sailed a four-gun brigantine at Boca del Toro in 1680.<sup>81</sup> Unless the guns were swivels, the *barcolongos* were decked and not open craft, and some carried as many as ten guns. Either way, armament was obviously too small to permit an attack on any vessel of moderate size and armament, except by boarding. Labat suggested that filibusters used these vessels because they were lazy, but the entire philosophy of sea roving was one of economy in the chase and excess in the tavern.<sup>82</sup>

The tartane, another often small shallow-draft vessel, was common to the West Indies and Mediterranean, its lateen sails and long sharp spur at the prow making it appear a truly rakish, exotic craft. Ranging from a few tons to 300, it carried one to three masts, the foremast raked well forward, the main vertical, and it required only a small crew.<sup>83</sup> How well it might have sailed compared to other craft is somewhat conjectural: Captains Wright and Yanky in *barcalongos* each out-sailed a tartane in pursuit of a Spanish prize.<sup>84</sup>

The true rake of the West Indies, though, was the sloop, particularly the Bermuda sloop. Literally that, rakish, its single mast cocked arrogantly, swashbucklingly aft like a shark come to prey, its long bowsprit thrust forward like a sword about to pierce an enemy. Ranging from thirty to one hundred tons, of shallow draft, with an enormous gaff mainsail plus a staysail, jib, and often two square sails, the Bermuda sloop epitomized its predatory purpose.<sup>85</sup>

Called a *barque* or sometimes “simply *bateau*” (boat) by the French and by the Spanish a *balandra* (bilander), the best Bermuda sloops were made in Bermuda of cedar (*Juniperus bermudiana*). Labat wrote that those made in Jamaica (*Juniperus lucayna*) were not up to the standard of the Bermuda, lacking their perfection and speed. Sloops were also built in the North American colonies, of Atlantic white cedar (*Chamaecyparis thyoides*) at the Chesapeake. Rovers invariably replaced the old sails and cordage of captured sloops in order to make the best advantage of the sloop's speed, which was exceptional.<sup>86</sup> Some sails might have been of

cotton instead of linen, as cotton was a common fabric for sails in the Spanish West Indies and South Sea.<sup>87</sup> Cotton sails were whitish, while linen were more brown or gray.

A sloop's armament was light, never more than fourteen guns and usually fewer. English sloops commonly carried eight to ten, the French, never more than six. Crews averaged sixty to eighty men. According to Labat, the French equipped their sloops with fewer guns in order to give greater play to the *mousqueterie* on which they relied heavily, believing four muskets to be worth more in battle than one cannon. The English, on the other hand, gave greater regard to their cannon than muskets. Labat went on to make a sly dig, claiming the English were too attached to their stern cabins and other luxuries to tear them down and make room for more musketeers, as the French did.<sup>88</sup>

Slower vessels were also employed by sea rovers. The ketch was one such, "a strongly-built, beamy, flush-decked, round-sterned vessel" of twelve to seventy tons, with either a square or fore-and-aft rig.<sup>89</sup> Dampier's ketch was a particularly sluggish sailer, one that would not work to windward and so made long voyages longer. It sailed well in chase only with the wind directly astern.<sup>90</sup> Labat agreed, and described a ketch as having two masts, a bowsprit, the mainmast set with two square sails, the mizzen only with a lateen. They were mediocre for the chase, he said, yet he knew filibusters who cruised successfully in one. Their prey invariably let them approach, not fearing such an "ox-cart" but soon finding themselves duped and captured.<sup>91</sup>

Less sluggish was a Dutch design, the flute (or *fluyt*, also in English a flyboat and in Spanish an *urca*). Three-masted, shallow-drafted, round at the bow, flat at the bottom, it had a length-to-width ratio of four-to-one or better, with a high narrow stern, and was immediately recognizable. Many were short-masted (they carried no topgallants nor mizzen topsail), as were many ship-rigged merchantmen, making them easier to handle with a smaller crew. Blackbeard's *Queen Anne's Revenge* (recently under excavation by marine archaeologists) was probably a flute. A versatile merchantman, whaler, and tender, the flute appears to have generally been a poor choice for the chase, so most sea rovers avoided it: a Salley rover of eighteen or twenty guns easily out-sailed the *Loire*, a French man-of-war flute pierced for forty guns but carrying only twenty.<sup>92</sup> René Duguay-Trouin once commanded the *Profond*, a thirty-two-gun *flûte du roi*; for three months he took no prizes because the "*Profond* went [sailed] very badly." Eventually he captured a Spanish ship loaded with sugar, the only prize among the many possible ones encountered during the cruise.<sup>93</sup> Pirates captured the ships and kept them for their size and armament,



many of their prizes being taken not after a long chase, but by ruse or by swifter consorts. Even so, Labat said the flute *Tranquille* was a very good sailer when captured from the Dutch, although the French later overmastered her, turning her into an ox-cart.<sup>94</sup> Flutes could carry large armaments, and if well manned might make a good fight: Blackbeard and crew fought off the thirty-gun *Scarborough* man-of-war, and Duguay-Trouin fought a night combat against a forty-gun Swedish man-of-war that had taken him for an Algerian pirate, the fight lasting until dawn.<sup>95</sup>

The English pink was similar in design and construction to the flute, but smaller, often under a hundred tons. The pirate Lewis Guittar commanded the pink *La Paix*, “an Extraordinary good sailer.”<sup>96</sup>

Last of all, and perhaps the best all around sea-roving vessel, was the galley, also called a galley-frigate, galley-ship, and merchant-galley. These were nothing more than three-masters with fine lines, permitting them to be rowed for short distances. Some were frigate-built, some galley-built; some had guns and oar ports on the upper deck, others on the deck below, or “between decks.” Depending on its size, a galley carried from eight to forty-two oars, the average for a 200-ton ship being between fourteen and eighteen. Most ranged from 150 to 250 tons, although men-of-war galley-frigates were invariably of greater burthen. Runners or running ships, exceedingly swift vessels designed to sail as independent merchantmen and packet ships, were often galleys. Galleys were common: of nine merchant vessels in the company of the *Duke* and *Duchess* privateers in 1708, five were galleys.<sup>97</sup> Many were fast for the time. Kidd’s *Adventure* Galley was built as a galley-frigate, and also carried sprit and mizzen topgallant sails, something quite unusual.<sup>98</sup> Other galleys were short-masted, carrying only courses (mainsails) and topsails, and were of simple construction, even lacking beak, head-rails, and figure-head.<sup>99</sup> Twelve to twenty cannon of three- to six-pound caliber were a typical armament, along with swivels on stanchions at the rails.

Rovers sailed other vessels as well: common merchant ships, galleons, simple barks—just about anything a rover took that served better than what was previously at hand. Yet any vessel, no matter how swift or well suited to the chase, was worthless unless it could bring arms to bear.

## CHAPTER

# 6



## Of Small Arms and Fireworks

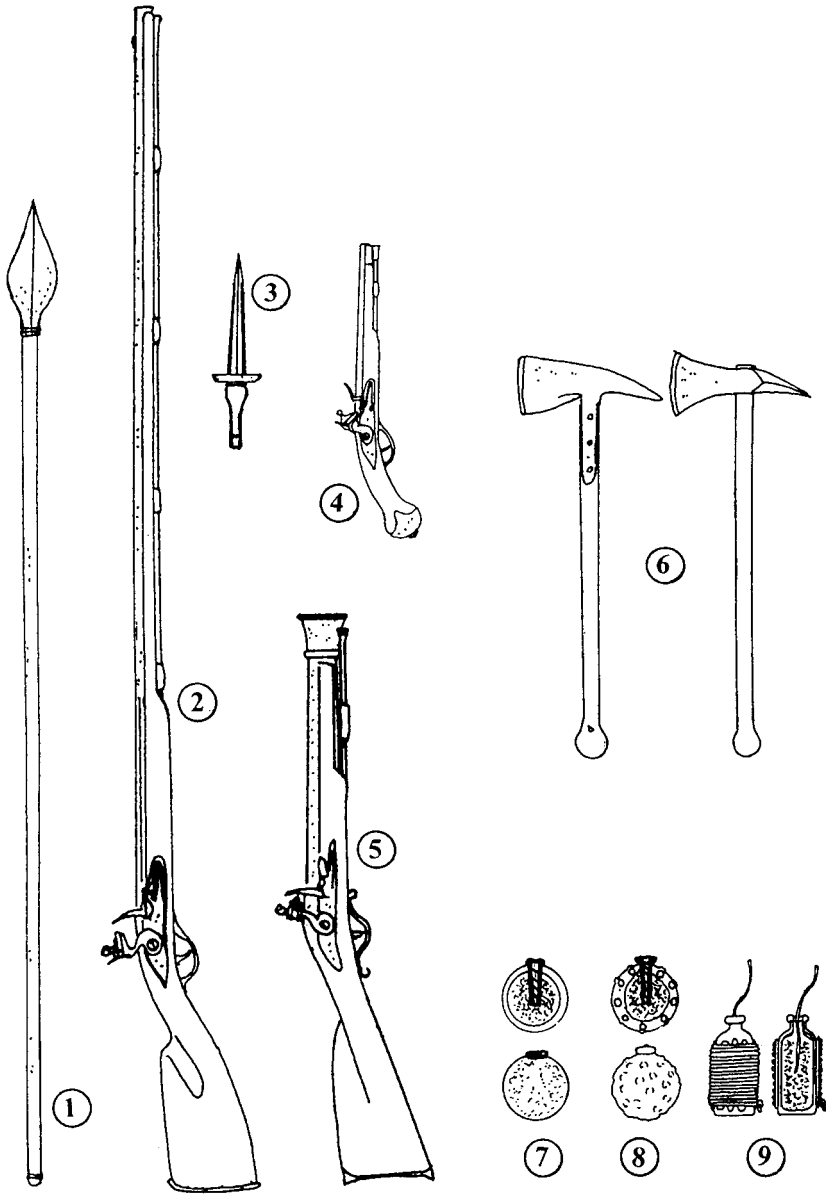
### *Tools of the Trade, Part II*

“THEY NAME THE MUSKET THEIR ARM,” WROTE EXQUEMELIN OF filibusters and buccaneers. Not the cutlass or cannon, but the musket, or more specifically, the *fusil boucanier*, a long-barreled, large-bored, club-butted flintlock musket. It was a reminder of their origins as hunters, reflecting a reliance on marksmanship and their ability to use “their ingenuity to make up for their lack of resources.”<sup>1</sup>

The musket was ideal for the rover who had no cannon, whose vessel was too small to mount cannon, any for whom economy was desired or necessary, and for those in general who wished to harass the enemy and clear his decks before boarding. It helped even the odds against a stout enemy, and overwhelmed a weaker one. It had good range, and compared to swivel guns and cannon was particularly economical in powder and shot, giving large tactical gains at relatively little expense *if fired effectively*. Twenty men with muskets might do more damage to the prey’s crew than a single six-pound round shot, something far more expensive than twenty cartridges of powder and ball. This was especially critical when tactical resources were limited.

Further, flintlock arms were far superior to matchlocks: they were loaded more quickly, they were less cumbersome, and they had no dangerous match to deal with. Lit match could also give away an attacker at night. The matchlock was truly suited only for the conventional line of battle. Flint arms were preferred at sea and in the American colonies from the latter half of the seventeenth century onward.

As heavy caliber muskets go, the *fusil boucanier* or “buccaneer gun” is a sturdy, elegant arm. The French examples still extant are immediately



**Typical Pirate Weapons**

1. Boarding Pike    2. Musket    3. Plug Bayonet    4. Pistol    5. Blunderbuss  
6. Boarding Axes    7. Iron Grenade    8. Cast Clay Grenade    9. Improved Grenade

recognizable: long with clean, distinctive lines. Buccaneer guns are reminiscent of earlier Dutch arms to such a degree that they may have originally been Dutch. This would not be surprising, given that the Dutch were omnipresent suppliers and traders to both the French and English in the seventeenth-century West Indies.<sup>2</sup>

The “buckaneering gun” soon passed into the hands of filibusters and buccaneers, colonial privateers, French corsairs, colonials and mariners in general, slave traders, and Native Americans.<sup>3</sup> Both Exquemelin in the latter seventeenth and Labat in the early eighteenth centuries described the *fusil boucanier* similarly: a barrel of four and a half feet, a bore to fire a ball of sixteen to the pound, and fittings of brass or iron, along the lines of a *fusil ordinaire de chasse*, or ordinary hunting gun. This was a working gun that could see hard use. It had a large lock (the lockplate rounded in the seventeenth century, flat by the eighteenth) without engraving, and a sideplate with three screws. For simple aiming, it had a small front sight, and no rear sight. Translated from French *pouces* to English inches, this gave it a barrel roughly fifty-seven and a half inches long and a bore of approximately .75 caliber. A French caliber of sixteen balls to the pound is exactly that: a barrel whose bore shoots a ball of sixteen to the pound, not a bore of a diameter equal to a ball of this size. The caliber takes windage into account, for musket balls were not tightly loaded. A ball that fit tightly on the first shot might not fit in the barrel for the second due to fouling—gunpowder residue—left inside the barrel. Tight-fitting musket balls were also difficult and slow to load. Windage added to the acceptable manufacturing tolerance in bore diameter gives a bore ranging from .732 to .777 caliber, and a ball of .681. Given windage, barrel wear, and the tolerance allowed due to the imprecise manufacture of barrels, there was much overlap in French calibers. The upper limit of an 18-gauge gun is equal to the lower limit of a 16-gauge, for example.<sup>4</sup>

According to Exquemelin the best guns were made by Brachie in Dieppe and Gelin in Nantes.<sup>5</sup> Labat, writing later, said that the best came from Dieppe and La Rochelle and that good ones came from Nantes, Bordeaux, and other seaports of the realm.<sup>6</sup> The corsair Jean Doublet had seventy buccaneer guns proofed at Nantes, and de Pointis’s expedition from France to Cartagena included 400 buccaneer guns.<sup>7</sup> By the late seventeenth century, the Tulle arms factory had taken over most of the *fusil boucanier* contracts for the French government, although such arms were also produced at St. Etienne.<sup>8</sup> These guns were standardized at eighteen balls to the pound, or roughly .70 caliber with a .65 ball.<sup>9</sup>

Nonetheless, we do not know precisely what the original guns of Exquemelin’s *boucaniers* looked like. Although a buccaneer gun was readily identifiable, the variations of French, Dutch, English, and colonial guns were almost infinite, with a variety of furniture.

In spite of its length and weight, the buccaneer gun was easy to aim and fire from the shoulder, although, as with any long arm, for best accuracy firing from a rest was ideal. The tapered barrel gave a reasonable balance, not so muzzle-heavy as to require great strength to hold the barrel up and keep the sight on target, nor so light that the sight moves easily off target.

Loading and firing any musket was a simple process, yet it required much practice to do so under pressure; inattention to detail would result in a misfire. The procedure was essentially the same, whether by the formal drill of the French *Compagnies franches de la marine* in 1704 or the simplified version of an eighteenth-century privateer. The shooter half-cocked the hammer, the safety position. He withdrew a cartridge from the cartouche box with his right hand, tore it open with his teeth, primed the pan with a small amount of powder, and closed the frizzen. He set the butt behind him to his left, poured the powder down the barrel, pushed the paper cartridge and ball into the barrel, withdrew the ramrod, turned it around, pushed it against his belly to shorten it in his hand if necessary, rammed the ball home three times, making certain the ball was seated against the powder. This he judged by the depth of the ramrod. He withdrew the ramrod, turned it around, returned it to the musket, brought the musket to waist height, drew the hammer back to full-cock, raised the musket to the shoulder, aimed, and fired. This could take a well-trained shooter roughly twenty seconds, although in action a shooter might load faster or slower depending on his skill and state of mind. Well-aimed shooting was naturally slower, as was shooting from a canoe or other confining environment.<sup>10</sup> (The author test-fired a replica seventy-three-inch-long buccaneer more than 300 times under a variety of conditions, including from a canoe and a small boat, all without a hitch other than the occasional misfire.<sup>11</sup>)

Labat, who observed *boucaniers* firsthand, described a loading sequence they claimed was three times faster, letting them get off six shots, as opposed to two made in the conventional manner. The *boucanier* would tear open a cartridge, prime his gun, pour the powder down the barrel, shove ball and paper cartridge into the barrel, then bang the butt on the ground, letting the weight of the ball seat it against the powder. He then full-cocked and fired. Labat noted that if the gun was older and heavily used, the vent would be large enough to “self-prime.” That is, the *boucanier* would omit the priming step, merely half-cocking the hammer and closing the frizzen, the gun priming itself when powder fell through the vent into the pan as the gun was banged on the ground.<sup>12</sup> (The author was unable to reproduce this unless the ball were squeezed from the paper cartridge [which was tossed aside]. If the ball remained in the cartridge it

would hang in the barrel unless the windage was very large, significantly decreasing muzzle velocity and accuracy. Another viable and likely option, based on a period loading technique, was to tear open the cartridge at the ball end, taking the ball into the mouth, then prime, load with powder, take the ball from the mouth and load it, then bang the gun butt on the ground. Otherwise, the loading process worked well and was as fast as Labat noted.) Assuming both guns were already loaded and the adversaries fired their first shots simultaneously, under ideal circumstances the *boucanier* would get off four shots in twenty seconds, his enemy perhaps two, or seven in forty seconds, his enemy three.

This might be all the rover could get off with the procedure (*charger à la boucanière*), and perhaps not even as many as that. Fouling built up quickly, and at some point the ramrod would be required to ram the ball down the barrel. In the author's experience, depending on windage and charge (the amount of powder used), a shooter could fire five to twelve shots before he had to use the ramrod to seat the ball. Soon after, again depending on windage and charge, the shooter *had to* scour the barrel or it would become so fouled that not even a ramrod would seat the ball. He might get more than twenty shots with large windage and poor accuracy, but in avoiding scouring the barrel he risked a jammed ball. One or two passes with worm and tow wetted with plenty of water, saliva, or urine sufficed to clear the way. On the other hand, half a dozen quick but well-aimed shots from forty or fifty buccaneers might be sufficient to suppress the enemy's fire long enough for the attackers to board a vessel or breach a palisade.

The procedure Labat cited required a well-trained shooter: the ball would roll out of the barrel if he was not careful, and reliance upon this method could conceivably result in a burst barrel if the ball was not seated on the powder charge, but instead hung in the barrel.

Musket range must be put in perspective. Maximum range for the average musket was 400–500 yards. At 300 yards the average musket ball was spent, although it might in some cases still seriously injure: there are stories of musket shots killing at half a mile. Effective range, or the range at which the musket would invariably cause serious injury or death, was no more than 250 yards for the average musket, although buccaneer guns were reputed to have a greater range. The impact of a large musket or pistol ball within its effective range was severe: “a man hit by it would almost invariably have been incapacitated if not killed.”<sup>13</sup> Still, some men did survive multiple gunshots long enough to run or fight for a few moments more, the pirates Blackbeard and Davis among them: “Captain Davis, though he had four shots in diverse parts of his body, yet continued running towards the boat, but being closely pursued, a fifth shot made

him fall, and the Portuguese being amazed at his great strength and courage, cut his throat that they might be sure of him.”<sup>14</sup> The immediate effect of damage produced by a bullet was, with a few exceptions (a shot to the brain, for example), impossible to predict. In some cases a person shot through the heart could still consciously and deliberately return fire for several seconds.

The third factor was the shooter's accuracy, which often determined a weapon's practical range. Exquemelin wrote that many times he had seen *boucaniers* hold shooting competitions to shoot twigs to bring the oranges down, seeing how close they could come to the oranges without hitting one, or “bringing down birds with a single bullet.”<sup>15</sup> However, their accuracy could be only be the result of a combination of skill and luck—skill to get the ball in the right area, and luck to hit the twig or bird. Muskets simply were not accurate enough to hit a targeted twig, even at twenty yards. In a *boucanier's* hands a musket would hit its target far more often than in the hands of an average marksman, but no one can make up for the variation introduced by windage, a smooth bore, and an imperfect ball. The fall of the cock and the delay in ignition between priming and charge also affected accuracy. Further, due to a musket's low muzzle velocity (roughly 1,000 fps), a ball dropped quickly after firing: five feet over 120 yards for an average musket, perhaps less for the buccaneer gun.<sup>16</sup> To aim at targets beyond one hundred yards, the barrel had to be elevated above the target, again decreasing accuracy; the sight could not be put on the target at these ranges. Ashore, at ranges of up to a hundred yards, a *highly skilled* shooter could probably hit the mass of a man most of the time using a cartridge with a single ball.<sup>17</sup> For the average experienced shooter, the range could have been no more than forty to sixty yards, especially under stress, contrary to tales of accuracy at hundreds of yards.

At sea, accuracy was worse, notwithstanding experience and allowing for the motions of the vessels. Afloat, both shooter and target were moving and thus concerned for their own balance and safety. The slight lag between ignition in the pan and in the breech had to be timed with the motions of both vessels, smoke from guns great and small often obscured the target, and by chance of sea and ship, a target might shift out of the bullet's path. A French privateer officer fired seven shots at Captain Nathaniel Uring over the course of a chase, probably with a buccaneer gun at an approximate range of one hundred yards. He missed every time.<sup>18</sup>

On the other hand, Dampier described a buccaneer in a canoe outside of a large surf zone that prevented landing—and caused the canoe to roll significantly—who took a shot at a mounted Spaniard on the beach, perhaps as many as one hundred yards or more distant: “[He] snatch'd up his

Gun, and let drive at him, and kill'd his Horse.”<sup>19</sup> Not bad shooting, all things considered.

Exquemelin described thirteen *boucaniers*, or filibusters, passengers aboard a ship in 1688, who fired three discharges (thirty-nine shots) at an attacking Ostender, killing or wounding twenty-nine of her Spanish crew. This was entirely possible, particularly if the enemy approached within one hundred yards, her crew were massed on deck, and the filibusters fired muskets loaded with multiple shot.<sup>20</sup>

Loading with multiple shot improved the likelihood of hitting the target; three of the cartridges recovered from the Phips wreck were loaded with double ball. Single ball gave the best overall accuracy in the author's test firings, but double and triple ball and especially ball-and-“swan shot” (large buckshot, in essence) increased the likelihood of a hit. Multiple ball or ball-and-shot was probably the best load when firing at a moving target or from a moving vessel, as well as at long ranges and at targets in dense vegetation or cover. Native Americans fired multiple shot, William Gilkerson described attackers firing buccaneer guns loaded with eight or ten musket balls, and loading both muskets and pistols with a combination of ball and swan shot was common.<sup>21</sup> The fact that buccaneers competing to shoot oranges down were limited to a single ball suggests they often fired multiple shot to increase the likelihood of a hit.<sup>22</sup>

Ball and shot came in several forms. Round was the most common, but tumbled and cylindrical were also common throughout the period. A cylindrical projectile, similar to a modern shotgun slug, was described by Labat as a *bastonnade* (probably because in this case it struck its victim in the foot): “a cylinder of lead twelve to fifteen *lignes* long and its diameter equal to the caliber of the *fusil*,” that is, roughly an inch to an inch and a half in length.<sup>23</sup>

For all muskets, maintenance was critical. They were prone to rust in the best of circumstances; black powder readily absorbed moisture, and a bore not scoured clean, dried, and well-oiled would quickly rust. Tow, or linen wrapped around the tow worm and soaked with water, were sufficient to clean a barrel, but it was a messy and time-consuming process. Sea-service muskets often had a coating of black “japanning” to discourage rust, and the barrel, lock, and other iron parts of muskets in anyone else's hands were usually browned or “Sanguind or otherwise fited the best way to keep them from Rust.”<sup>24</sup> *Boucaniers* and other hunters, as well as those accustomed to the New World warfare of ambush and hit and run, would have left brass fittings to tarnish, leaving nothing shiny to catch the eye of the prey, man or beast. Over time and many firings, the frizzen steel of a musket lock would grow soft and require hardening again, in order to spark properly. Because it made a “clear strong Fire,”



buccaneers used logwood (*Haematoxylum campechianum*) to harden their frizzens, and “Grape Tree” (the sea grape, *Coccoloba uvifera*) or “Burton wood” (buttonwood, *Conocarpus erectus*, also called false mangrove) if logwood was unavailable.<sup>25</sup> The process required heating the frizzen to the proper color (temperature), then quenching it to the proper hardness.

Ramrods were of wood, usually ash, or hickory in the New World. As such they could break, especially when trying to ram a jammed ball down a fouled barrel or extracting a ball lodged in such a barrel. Buccaneers preferred to make their ramrods from lancewood (*Nectandra coriacea*) because “it is very hard, tough and heavy, therefore the privateers esteem it very much, not only to make looms for oars, but scowring-rods for their guns; for they have seldom less than three or four spare rods for fear one should break.”<sup>26</sup> Ramrods were tapered and often had a tow worm pinned to the distal end. Under fire, a barrel can be swabbed more quickly of fouling if the worm is already attached to the ramrod. Given that many sea-roving attacks on towns were protracted affairs, attackers would have scoured their barrels briefly on several occasions during an engagement.

Sea rovers spent a great deal of time maintaining their small arms. “The buccaneers’ main exercises are target shooting and keeping their guns clean,” wrote Exquemelin.<sup>27</sup> Likewise the articles of a pirate read: “That man that shall not keep his arms clean, fit for an engagement” would lose his share and be otherwise punished as captain and crew saw fit.<sup>28</sup> These arms were essential to their trade. The midst of battle was not the time to discover that the lock had rusted and the hammer would not fall.

Although some sea rovers loaded from a powder horn, bandoleer, or paper cartridge loaded only with powder, most used paper cartridges loaded with powder and a ball or balls, a method far superior both for speed and economy, and at sea for ease of loading on a pitching deck. Horns were slow; bandoleers were noisy, slow, a nuisance in dense vegetation, and dangerous. Practical colonials and mariners began using cartridges in the mid-seventeenth century and earlier, long before most conventional armies did; the French army did not do so until the turn of the eighteenth century, and often kept the ball separate from the cartridge.<sup>29</sup> Labat described the *boucaniers* as using a wooden dowel (a former) slightly less than muzzle diameter as a form for making a cartridge. Cartridges were twisted or tied shut, or even glued at one end and at the sides. Labat also described *boucaniers* measuring powder by placing a ball in the palm or on a flat surface and pouring powder over the ball until it was covered. This needed be done only once, for the powder measurement for subsequent cartridges could be measured by the height of pow-

der in the first. However, this way of measuring seems more of a “field expedient” method. Powder measures were common, so a serious shooter needed not rely on such a method.<sup>30</sup>

The quality of powder was vital. Poor powder gave lower muzzle velocity and shorter range, misfired more often, and might not burn at all. *Boucaniers* preferred powder from Cherbourg in Basse Normandie, which they stored in calabash gourds covered with leather, stocking up to twenty pounds, the rough equivalent of 1,000 to 1,300 charges. Assuming *boucaniers* stayed a year or more in the field, as Exquemelin described, this was three shots per day.<sup>31</sup> Some armies used a finer powder to prime, it being more likely to catch a spark. Wet powder would not fire, but could be dried and used. However, once-wet powder might not burn as well, and if soaked the powder corns would break down into a fine powder which would need to be mixed well. Lionel Wafer, a buccaneer surgeon, was burned to the bone at the knee when someone’s drying powder suddenly took fire. He was left behind to heal among the Darien.<sup>32</sup>

On a belt, a *boucanier* wore a *gargoussier* or “cartouche box,” often simply called a “cartouche.” Other adventurers wore it on a belt or from a shoulder strap. From 1630 to 1730, cartouche boxes were usually made of leather, with tin inserts or linings of wood to protect the “cartridges.” One of two cartouche boxes recovered from the Phips wreck was made of leather with wooden inserts sewn inside. It was small, roughly six inches wide and four inches tall. Labat gave dimensions of eight to ten inches (*pouces*) wide and five to six tall. Divers recovered another cartouche from the wreck of Bellamy’s pirate ship *Whydah*, this one square in height and width, and strengthened inside with wood. By the early eighteenth century wood inserts with holes bored in them had made their appearance, giving much more protection to the paper cartridges. Thirty cartridges seems fairly standard, at least among rovers in the West Indies. On longer expeditions ashore, rovers also carried extra shot and powder.<sup>33</sup>

In the cartouche box, knapsack, snapsack, or elsewhere, rovers would have carried extra flints, perhaps a dozen or more (flints lasted only eight to twenty “snaps”), a powder measure or “charger” of brass or horn, a “form” and paper for making cartridges, a horn or flask of powder (also used to reprime the pan), a tow worm if none were pinned to the ramrod, tow or linen for cleaning and sweet oil for the barrel and lock, extra balls in a ball bag, probably some swan or other smaller shot, a “tomkin” or tompion for the muzzle to prevent water from entering it, a “case” or lock cover to protect the lock from rain and weather, a priming wire to keep the vent clear of fouling, beeswax, a ball screw for removing a musket ball from the barrel, perhaps a priming brush, a “small leather stall” or frizzen cover for safety in drills, and a turn-screw (screwdriver, although a knife

blade would serve in pinch to tighten the cock screw). Some would have carried a shot mold and lead. Beeswax served to wax down the musket lock, particularly by sealing the vent: "Our arms were fast lashed to the inside of the boat, and our locks were as well cased and waxed down as was possible; so were also our cartouche-boxes and powder-horns."<sup>34</sup>

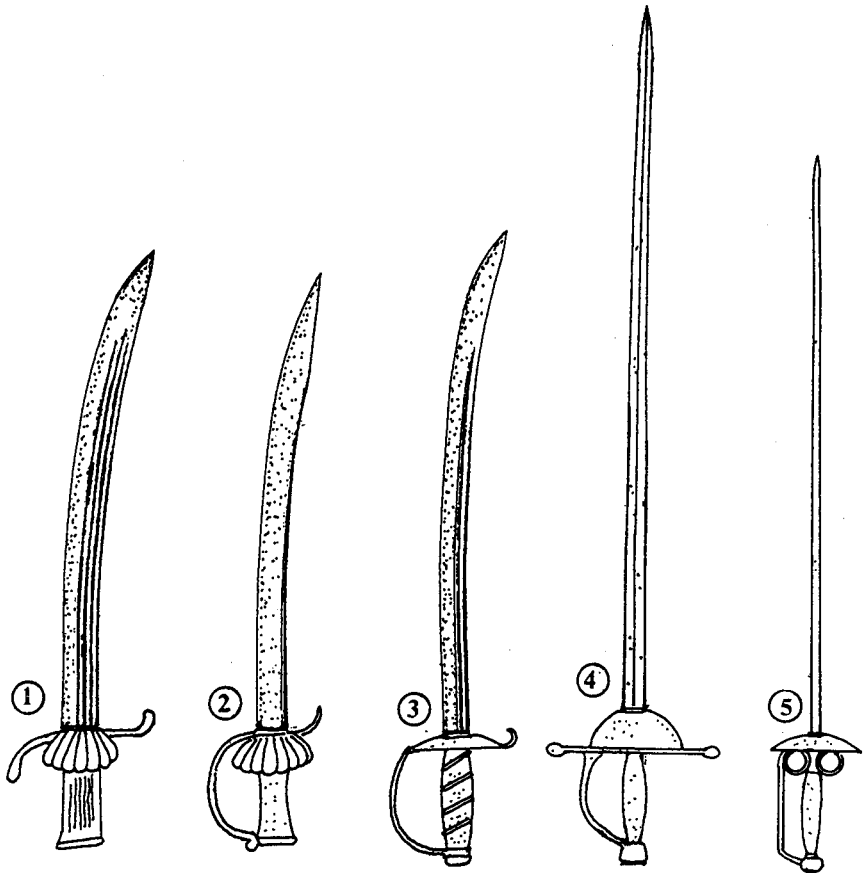
Buccaneer guns were by no means the only long arms in use. Sea rovers took practically any musket available to sea, including other flintlock muskets, matchlocks, fowling pieces, musketoons, and Spanish *escopetas*, although they preferred heavier caliber arms. With the exception of the occasional fowling piece, all were much shorter than the *fusil boucanier*. The blunderbuss, effectively a short-barreled flintlock shotgun with a wide pattern and a barrel of iron or brass, was common as well, particularly in boarding and in defending a ship from closed quarters.

Muskets were often still in use many decades after their manufacture. Personal decoration and marks of ownership on firearms were common, ranging from carved or scratched initials to elaborate patterns of tacks.

All in all, it required as much training and experience to maintain, load, and fire a flintlock musket accurately and effectively as it does a modern assault rifle, and perhaps even more.

### Arms for a Close Fight

"Having no pistols or cutlasses," grumbled Shelvocke, "which are the only weapons for a close fight."<sup>35</sup> Pistols were as common as muskets: "every man with a good musket and a cartouche at his side . . . together with a pistol or two and a good cutlass" is the gist of every description of sea-rover arms. Usually with barrels of a foot or more and a belt-hook, the pistol was a close-range weapon, fired once and then of no more use in a close fight except as a club. Experts recommended it be fired at no more than two or three yards, close enough to "sing the doublet," at least on horseback.<sup>36</sup> Loaded with a ball or two and a few swan shot, it was an incredibly deadly weapon at this range. Caliber varied: French pistols carried by filibusters were of twenty to twenty-four balls to the pound, and most men hit by a .60-caliber ball fired at close range went down almost immediately.<sup>37</sup> Some rovers carried several pistols: Blackbeard wore "a sling over his shoulders, with three brace of pistols, hanging in holsters, like bandoliers," and another pirate was noted with four in his girdle.<sup>38</sup> Shooters usually loaded pistols from cartridges, sometimes from a horn or flask, with tow used as a wad to keep the ball in place.<sup>39</sup> Tow usually burns and smolders when fired from a pistol or musket and may travel up to several yards; a wad of tow fired from a pistol set Peter Drake's coat afire.<sup>40</sup>



**Typical Pirate Swords**

1. Double Shell Guard Cutlass with Falchion Blade    2. Double Shell Guard Cutlass with Knuckle Bow    3. Round Guard Cutlass with Flat Knuckle Bow  
4. Cup-hilt Rapier    5. Smallsword

The cutlass, or hanger as it was sometimes called, served as the primary boarding *arme blanche*. Its virtue lay in its serviceability in confined and cluttered decks among a press of boarders after pistols had been discharged, and certainly before they could be reloaded. With its short sturdy blade and strong protective hilt, it was the weapon for a *coup de grace* as the smoke cleared.

Cutlass hilts, often ornate, were of iron or cast brass. Shell hilts were common, some with a shell only on the outside of the hilt, some on both

inside and outside. Some had thumb rings, most had recurved quillons or a knuckle bow. Blade length ranged from fourteen to twenty-eight inches.<sup>41</sup>

Almost nothing is known of cutlass technique among sea rovers in the late seventeenth century, but some can be accurately inferred. The cutlass was suitable for the basic cuts, thrusts, and parries of broadsword, backsword, and spadron taught by masters of the period, which might have been similar to the German Düsach technique. Donald McBane—soldier, swordsman, duelist, prize fighter, fencing master, whore master—had practical experience with the falchion, a weapon similar to the cutlass: “Whoever understands the Back Sword, must be Master of them.” But he went on to say that “fauchions are weapons that no person can get any credit by,” a criticism of the falchion’s lack of a knucklebow or other protection to the hand and fingers, a deficiency not found in the cutlass. Many seamen, the English in particular, were adept with the cudgel, and basic cudgel technique, as was the case with some other short-stick styles, transferred well to the cutlass. In the mid-eighteenth century one English privateer captain kept a case of foils on the quarterdeck for his officers to practice with, and he kept cudgels on the main deck for his crew. Duguay-Trouin employed a fencing master aboard his ships. However, these commanders might have been enlightened exceptions.<sup>42</sup>

Fencing with any weapon in any style or tradition is (or should be) governed by the maxim of hitting without being hit, it being better to give than to receive. Ultimately there are only two ways to do this (other than backstabbing): control your adversary’s blade while you cut or thrust, or strike “in tempo” or “time” your adversary, for example, thrust just as your opponent withdraws his arm. The former is by far the safest technique. The latter requires an immediate covering action and leaves open the very likely possibility of a counterthrust or cut, deliberate or accidental, even after the fact. No matter a swordsman’s skill or technique, anytime he is within range he takes a risk, thus distance and its keeping are the foundation of all fencing technique and tactics. By keeping proper distance, with a blade of thirty to thirty-four inches, against a single adversary, a swordsman can make an elegantly aggressive study of technique, tactics, and timing.

Unfortunately, a ship’s deck was not the open ground of a field of honor, but a small, tight, cluttered place with little room to maneuver among cannon, bits, masts, rigging, coamings, hatches, and scuttles, not to mention the many minor implements and accessories of war strewn about. Small barks were often undecked. Between decks the area was even tighter. Further, boarders did not board alone, but rather en masse, leav-

ing even less room to maneuver body or sword, and perhaps no room at all to retreat. There was simply no room in which to engage in sophisticated bladework, footwork, or tactics in any depth.

Putting all of this together, it is easy to see that the cutlass was the ideal sword for battle in a confined environment, particularly where the distance separating combatants was short. While skill at any sword would be invaluable to a boarder armed with a cutlass, there was neither time nor space for calculated swordplay. Instead, the boarder had to attack or defend immediately, powerfully, and often at very close range and against enemies who attacked simultaneously. Based on practical work and experiment, it is impossible to conceive that the unarmed hand would not often be brought into play at the distance of “handy grips” in order to control the adversary’s blade (by grasping his hilt, not his hand or arm). While the cutlass blade was less effective at controlling the adversary’s blade because of its shorter length, it was ideal for close combat and surprisingly effective at counteractions at this distance. Hilt and pommel were useful for punching, smashing, and pummeling, and with the weapon hand drawn close, low, or behind, the boarder could still bring point or edge to bear even when grappling, something much more difficult to do with longer blades.

Of course, the best tactic might have been simply to bear down the enemy before you, and let one of your shipmates cut him down or shoot him from the back or side.

### **Other Edged Weapons**

Sea rovers did use other swords besides the cutlass. Some carried the smallsword, officers or other gentleman in most cases, although just as many carried a fine-hilted hanger or hunting sword (basically a more elegant version of the cutlass). Contemporary portraits show sea-roving gentlemen wearing both. Although the smallsword required significant training, in the hands of a skilled swordsman it could be effective against most other edged weapons.

From 1630 to 1660 or so, some rovers might have been armed with rapiers, and the Spanish and Portuguese of all social classes had an affinity for rapiers throughout the period. Primarily a thrusting weapon, the Spanish sort were often cup-hilted and usually quite long-bladed. Although much too long for practical work in a confined space, they were still dangerous. Their long blades gave them a pike-like reach, and their cup-hilts provided excellent protection to the hand. However, once an

attacker was “within the blade” they were a liability. Bartholomew Sharp wrote scornfully of how they entered a Spanish bark: “But I had no occasion to put myself to that Trouble, for he had no Arms to defend himself with, save only Rapiers.”<sup>43</sup> Shelvocke, upon recovery from his shipwreck and loss of supplies and arms, exchanged a silver ladle for a dozen “Spadoes” (*espadas* or rapiers) so that his crew might at least have some sort of sword.<sup>44</sup>

Light cut-and-thrust swords like the spadron were probably used to some extent, and given the trade and plunder to the east, some rovers may have carried a scimitar, of which there are general references. The backsword was also known at sea. Other rovers, particularly the Spanish, might have used Spanish broadswords with cup-hilts or bilbo-hilts, although broadswords were not the norm for most seamen. Rovers used other sorts of broadswords as well, again but rarely except perhaps for volunteers: Blackbeard was said to have been killed aboard a small sloop, probably by a Highland or other basket-hilt broadsword or backsword, used as it was by a Highlander who failed to take his head off with the first stroke, but did with the second.<sup>45</sup> The broadsword was a fairly heavy sword, typically used from horseback, although Highlanders used it afoot, often in conjunction with a targe, or shield. In skilled hands it was quite capable of cutting “through the scull and neck, to the very breasts.”<sup>46</sup> Although an outstanding battlefield weapon, the broadsword was more difficult to wield in confined areas. Even so, James Griffin, a forced man serving under the pirate Cocklyn, carried a broadsword with which he might, of an offending party, “cleave his head asunder.”<sup>47</sup>

As for other edged arms, the boarding ax, hatchet, and tomahawk were as much tools as weapons. A boarding ax had a spike, often curved, opposite its cutting edge; a hatchet did not. Rovers used the boarding ax to break into closed quarters during a boarding action, in particular to create a breach in which to toss grenades, to “cut all clear away” of debris in battle, and to cut loose the lashings when one ship tried to board and enter men into another.<sup>48</sup> It was also useful ashore in pioneering, breaking into buildings, and other common tasks. The handles were often drilled for a lanyard.

The machete was a common tool and weapon among the Spanish in the New World, as well as among the Native Americans in contact with them. Its weakness was its lack of hilt.

The knife was a tool, and a weapon only *in extremis* or perhaps as a parrying dagger or backup weapon held in the nondominant hand. As a weapon the knife's best quality was that it could be easily concealed. Even plug bayonets seem to have been more commonly used as utility knives

than as a short weapon in the hand, or a long one in the musket barrel. The knife was a poor choice against any longer weapon, including a club, and knife against knife could be a matter of luck as much as skill. For rovers it was best reserved for situations requiring concealment or for use against the unarmed, and even in the latter case there were better choices for murder. McBane considered the knife a “scandalous way of butchering,” and points to the Dutch as its advocate.<sup>49</sup> Johnson described how the soon-to-be pirate John Smith, alias Gow, and six hands planned to murder their captain and officers, three of them in their sleep. The idea was to cut their throats, and so they did, but so ineffectively that all four lived. They then shot the officers and threw them overboard. So much for acquiring cutthroat reputations.<sup>50</sup>

The boarding pike was primarily a defensive weapon effective at warding off boarders attempting to clamber over gunwales, to force their way into closed quarters or down scuttles and hatches, or to climb through gunports, although it could serve in boarding as well. It was a highly effective weapon, but only as long as the enemy did not get within its point. At close distances the user had to shorten his grip, and it was difficult to wield within a confined space. Also called half-pikes or javelins, boarding pikes ranged in length from eight to twelve feet and were tipped with a spike or leaf-bladed head, usually secured to the shaft with langets, and without a crossbar.<sup>51</sup> Rovers could also use muskets with fixed bayonets.

Early in the period a few rovers might have worn armor, although some did not recommend it: “If a musket shot hit him full upon his proof head-piece it will go very near break his neck, though it pierce not the skull. . . . If it strike him full on his breast, it will lay him on the ground.”<sup>52</sup> There is evidence that some officers, including John Paul Jones, wore back and breast well into the eighteenth century, although there are no specific references to rovers doing so. The theory was that the captain’s position was important enough to merit the extra protection, although the proud and relatively egalitarian buccaneer, filibuster, and pirate commanders and crews likely would have scorned it. More likely they donned only a skull cap or *calotte*, a protective iron shell or bands of iron worn in the hat to protect the head from cuts and blows.<sup>53</sup> Steel pots were so rare as to merit comment in the late seventeenth century: Doublet once saw a Portuguese wearing one.<sup>54</sup>

### Swordsmen at Sea

In spite of the predominance of the musket, there was nonetheless at least one true sea-roving swashbuckling swordsman: René Duguay-Trouin. The



extraordinary French corsair was also known as a swordsman and duelist who constantly refined his study of swordsmanship. His attitude might be attributed to his early boarding experiences, in which his skill with the sword proved invaluable. He was often the first to board, and once, in the greatest swashbuckling tradition, he wounded an enemy captain and captured his ship at swordpoint. No doubt, once ashore he used a small-sword for dueling, but in boarding actions he described himself as using a “saber”—that is, a cutlass or cutting sword—or more generally, an “epee” (sword).<sup>55</sup>

Swashbuckling aside, it should be noted that while skill with the sword was certainly useful to a sea rover, it was subordinate to the far more critical skills of seamanship, gunnery, and marksmanship. In battle, sea rovers emphasized iron and lead first, using steel only in the final action at close range. A sword cannot parry a musket or pistol ball, and never a round shot, except by freak accident.<sup>56</sup>

### Fireworks

Commonly hurled by sea rovers at an enemy and vice versa, fireworks were of three sorts: “granadoes” or grenades, fire pots or carcasses, and stink balls. Rovers lit and threw them just prior to boarding to “cut up the decks” and distract, wound, or kill the enemy. The typical grenade was made of cast iron and was three to five inches in diameter, round, sometimes with a dimple on the bottom so it could rest safely without rolling. A wooden cylinder filled with a slower-burning powder for a fuse stuck up above the body of the grenade, with a leather cover over the fuse.<sup>57</sup>

Grenades might have been stored on deck in budge barrels, baskets, or boxes, although grenadiers kept their grenades “in pouches; and match hanging at the girdle, on the contrary side.” A grenadier might also have kept his slow match, used to light the grenade, wrapped around his opposite wrist. The lit end of slow match was usually secured in a match case (a small brass tube bored with air holes) pinned to the clothing until needed. The basic procedure to throw a grenade was simple but required careful attention to each step lest the grenade detonate prematurely: with your left side facing the target, reach into your pouch and withdraw a grenade, thumb on top of the fuse; tear open the fuse with your teeth and put your thumb back on top of the fuse; take your match between thumb and first two fingers and blow on the match; bring the match to the grenade and light the fuse, bending your right knee as you do; throw the

grenade with a stiff arm, stepping forward and bringing your right foot to your left as you do.<sup>58</sup>

Rovers also made their own grenades by covering a mold of twine and paper with musket balls cut in half, dipping it in pitch, and when dry, removing the twine from inside and filling the space with powder, for example.<sup>59</sup> Grenades were also made of tin, wood, and pasteboard.<sup>60</sup> Blackbeard's men used a "new-fashioned sort of grenadoes, viz., case bottles filled with powder and small shot, slugs, and pieces of lead or iron," although there appears little new about the design, such improvised munitions being quite common.<sup>61</sup> Filibusters and corsairs tossed bottles filled with gunpowder and wrapped with a lit slow match to fire the powder when the bottle broke.<sup>62</sup> Grenades thrown from closed quarters were sometimes called "quarter shells" and might have been smaller than usual in order to pass through the typical loopholes. Or, "large look-holes may be made, and good store of hand-granadoes left to toss through them."<sup>63</sup>

Among rovers, a carcass or fire-pot was a small vessel, perforated shell, or spherical frame stuffed or filled with combustibles. Often made of clay, with "ears" for attaching fuses or wicks, they were thrown onto the prey's deck to set fires and distract and confuse the enemy. On wooden ships, that also used cordage, pitch, and linen, a fire was no mere distraction. Clay fire-pots might also serve as grenades, impregnated with half-bullets on the outside.<sup>64</sup>

A stink ball was exactly that, a cloth impregnated with a fetid mix of stinking combustibles. The cloth was made into a ball, dried, and when needed, lit and thrown. This device, like the carcass and fire-pot, was designed to be difficult to extinguish with water, and its stench might last for days.<sup>65</sup>

### Silken Slings

One final note on small arms: buccaneers, filibusters, and pirates were responsible for providing and managing their own arms, and often their powder as well, while owners usually provided the arms, shot, and powder used aboard many legitimate privateers. Some owners charged those for whom they provided arms, for example "to pay 1/2 of a 1/4 share for a Gun and Cartouch."<sup>66</sup> This difference in ownership of small arms was probably much of the origin of the silk slings worn by pirates in the early eighteenth century to hang their pistols. Charles Johnson described the slings, and the recovery of a pistol from the wreck of the pirate ship *Whydah* has confirmed their existence.<sup>67</sup> At least in the late eighteenth

century, after firing their pistols, naval boarders threw them at the enemy, but a pirate or any sea rover would not throw his prized pistols away except in extreme emergency. The silk slings were a fancy way to prevent the loss of personal arms, and a picaresque addition to our romantic image of the sea rover “dressed in a rich crimson damask waistcoat and breeches, a red feather in his hat, a gold chain round his neck, with a diamond cross hanging to it, a sword in his hand and two pair of pistols, hanging at the end of a silk sling, flung over his shoulders according to the fashion of pirates.”<sup>68</sup>

## CHAPTER

# 7



## Cruising for Purchase

### *Forewarned Is Forearmed*

“IT WOULD BE NEEDLESS TO GIVE THE READER AN ACCOUNT OF THE many difficulties we met with in equipping our ships from *England*,” wrote Shelvocke.<sup>1</sup> His voyage was to the South Sea and in the best of circumstances would take two or three years. Such cruises required a well-found vessel, seaworthy and with significant supplies, tools, and provisions, not to mention powder, arms, and a crew who would work well together. A failure anywhere at this level might mean the failure of the cruise. On the other extreme were the early voyages of the *boucaniers* and filibusters, often in canoes by night to steal small Spanish vessels at anchor, the voyages seldom lasting more than eight days and often provisioned by swine-stealing.<sup>2</sup> The former required dozens of workers and suppliers, and much paper, pen, and ink. The latter required perhaps a carpenter and a page or two for the articles. Most sea-roving cruises fit somewhere in between.

Beyond arming, fitting, and recruiting were perhaps the most critical elements of all: planning a cruising strategy and acquiring the intelligence to support it. While many sea-roving enterprises of the West Indies appear ad hoc, they were anything but. As one historian has pointed out in the case of de Lussan and his South Sea comrades-in-arms, voyages were meticulously planned “in the taverns of Tortuga and Jamaica.”<sup>3</sup> The corsair Quierroret and his officers spent a week proposing “several plans of operation” until they finally settled upon one intended to seize a single prize.<sup>4</sup> Planning was a vital routine.

Hand in hand with planning was secrecy: dissimulation regarding plans was “common and necessary.”<sup>5</sup> Morgan kept his designs on Porto

Bello secret from all until they neared their destination. De Grammont told his filibusters before attacking Veracruz that to succeed, “we must have courage, diligence, and secrecy,” although he was less successful than Morgan in keeping secrets, for “all the governors in America [knew] of this very design for four or five months.”<sup>6</sup>

However, the real problem with planning—then or now—was not resources or secrecy, but the natural reality that few adventures ever go exactly as planned, and often enough not at all as planned. Planning, preparation, and patience must dominate in the beginning, but as course meets crisis the qualities of innovation, flexibility, and boldness must reign.

### Cruising Strategies

At sea, all attention went to finding the prey, yet this was no easy task. Exquemelin wrote scornfully of those new to exercises of piracy, “who had imagined at their setting forth from Tortuga that pieces-of-eight were gathered as easily as pears from a tree.”<sup>7</sup>

Rovers cruised in two broad fashions: opportunistically, or by design with a specific target in mind. They cruised a certain area or region and attacked as prey presented, or they cruised or lay in wait off a certain point or along a certain trade route until their specific prey was sighted, seizing other prey opportunistically along the way. The former required less in the way of specific intelligence, relying more on the general knowledge of the likelihood of merchantmen passing through a certain area, for example that vessels from Campeche set out for Caracas, the Trinity Isles, and Margarita only in winter, and returned at the beginning of summer, all according to the prevailing winds.<sup>8</sup>

Seeking a specific target required accurate intelligence, and without it this strategy usually failed. Variables such as wind, weather, quantities of provisions, wood, or water, and simple timing could make or break this strategy. Weather and maritime conditions were often a hindrance to the best-laid plans. Currents and easterly winds prevented English buccaneers from attacking Trinidad in 1682, for example.<sup>9</sup>

Both strategies were simple to implement in theory, typically requiring little more than cruising off of a known landfall, or at a known latitude near a destination or *embarcadero*, or along a known trading route. Latitude sailing (sailing to the destination’s latitude well short of the actual destination, then sailing along the latitude until arrival) virtually guaranteed that ships trading from the same region to a known destination

would sail similar routes. Many trade routes had various straits and bottlenecks through which potential prizes had to pass: the English and Irish Channels, the Straits of Dover, Gibraltar, and Malacca, the Bahama Channel, and the Windward Passage, for example. Rovers naturally favored ports near trade routes and bottlenecks: Vlissingen, Ostend, Dunkirk, St. Malo, San Sebastian, Salé, Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli, Tortuga, Petit Goëve, Port Royal, both Providences, and St. Mary's. Geography, wind, current, and season dictated sea trade routes in the Age of Sail.<sup>10</sup>

The open seas were not particularly profitable, in spite of fairly well-established trade routes. Even though most ships with similar departures and destinations could be expected to follow similar routes, this was no guarantee of ship sightings. A ship crossing from England to the New York colony might sight many sail during the voyage, or none at all.<sup>11</sup> Further, the open seas gave greater opportunity for a potential prize to escape. For practical reasons rovers preferred coastal waters, and many trade routes passed through them. Although generally far more dangerous than the open seas, in view of navigational hazards and the potential for interception by cruisers and other ships of force, it was here that prizes were most easily and most often found.

Seeking a specific prize was the most difficult strategy, but could be the most profitable. The Manila galleon was the epitome of untold riches aboard a single vessel and the most sought after of all treasure ships. Those intending to make a prize of it cruised off the American coast north of Acapulco, especially at Cabo Corrientes, knowing that the galleon made landfall at northern California, and then hugged the coast until arrival at Acapulco. Woodes Rogers captured the lesser of two Manila galleons in this manner. Shelvocke and Clipperton waited off Acapulco itself for the ship to sail, but failed to take the galleon. Other rovers sought the Manila galleon among the Philippine Islands, as Read, among whose crew was William Dampier, rather feebly tried and failed to do in 1687. Anson, the great circumnavigating English admiral, captured the galleon here in 1743.<sup>12</sup>

Readers must dismiss any notions of ships arriving and departing according to a specific schedule. A ship came and went largely as wind, current, trade, and the captain pleased. Lading a full cargo took weeks or even months. Even fully provisioned and laded, a ship might not put to sea for weeks while waiting on weather or a convoy, and arrivals could be anticipated only within weeks or months.

Unless a prize were very rich, most rovers would not wait for more than a few weeks. Some might not wait at all, unless they had very good intelligence. Knowing that vessels would be setting sail was not the same thing

as knowing *when* they would actually sail. And rover crews who saw time and provisions squandered were often given to thoughts of mutiny.

Even with good intelligence, patience, and plenty of provisions, rovers might miss a prize. De Lussan wrote of missing Spanish ships when the vessels slipped into Panama via a passage over which the filibusters had not posted a watch. Shelvocke missed the Manila galleon at Acapulco when his consort ship deserted him, perhaps in part because he did not wish to spare Shelvocke any water. Shelvocke soon ran low on water and had to steer away. A week later, the Manila galleon sailed from port.<sup>13</sup>

Cruising strategies were supported by specific manners of sailing that increased the likelihood of finding prey. Along known trading routes where the wind usually blew along the cruising route (the Mediterranean, for example), a rover could simply steer before the wind with no sail set or under courses (the foresail and mainsail) alone. In most cases the prey would not sight the rover until too late. If no sail were seen at sunset, the ship could run five or six more leagues until laid up for the night, “to prevent ships a stern coming up and passing us out of sight before the morning.”<sup>14</sup>

Along coastlines, rovers would remain just over the horizon, largely invisible to observers ashore. With only low sails set, this was a viable method of cruising undiscovered. To make a reconnaissance while at sea, rovers would send a smaller vessel or boat to “see if there were any ships there, under the covert of the night, since I could not venture in with the ship in the dark.”<sup>15</sup> Often these reconnaissance vessels were local prizes or similar in construction to those of the prey or enemy.<sup>16</sup> A ship could also lie by under courses, the sails above furled to prevent being discovered, and keep a closer watch for ships coming in and out of a port.<sup>17</sup>

Sailing in consort increased the likelihood of taking a prize. Commanders who intended to “propose an union [*sic*] of our two ships companies” signed an agreement (often called a memorandum of agreement, articles of agreement, or an agreement of gentlemen privateers) variously stipulating the purpose of the “consortship,” the division of plunder, any particular strategy or plan of attack, locations of rendezvous, signals between the ships, and so forth.<sup>18</sup> To dissolve the agreement was to “break consort.”<sup>19</sup> Consortship permitted a broader search range as well as increased force in an attack. Boats could also assist in this fashion.

Established signals between rovers in consort were mandatory to prevent mistakes or enemy ruses. The *Duke* and *Duchess* privateers designated specific recognition signals for each day of the week. If the ships lost company and then sighted each other again on a Wednesday, “she to Windward is to hale up all her Sails, and lower her Top-sails, with her

flying Jyb loose; and she to Leeward is to answer with making what Sail she can, her Ensign in her Fore-shrouds, and fire a gun.”<sup>20</sup> The memoirs of French corsairs repeatedly note the use of recognition signals to determine friend or foe.<sup>21</sup>

If separated for a certain period by accident or design, a rover sought its consort at a predetermined location. Rovers could not arrange a rendezvous down to a specific day, because the vagaries of weather, wind, tide, and accident did not permit such accuracy. Rovers were expected to pursue prey or intelligence of plunder at all times, so delays were not unusual.<sup>22</sup> Upon arrival at the rendezvous, a consort waited a predetermined time then proceeded as agreed if the other vessel or vessels failed to show. A commander might send a boat ashore to search for or leave a message buried in a bottle at a designated spot, or use some similar method of communication. This was a common means for all sorts of vessels to pass information, although rovers naturally needed to be circumspect about both the message and its hiding place: *“Should a powerful Enemy attempt us in your Absence, we’ll be certain to leave a Glass Bottle buried at the Root of the Tree whence the Fore-mast was cut, to acquaint you, then Quibo is the Place we will wait for you at, if we are well, and you must leave a Glass Bottle at this place in case we return hither again.”*<sup>23</sup>

### Forewarned Is Forearmed

Cruising was always easier if good intelligence could be had, and local familiarity was its foundation. This meant having accurate nautical charts, information on local navigation hazards and shipping routes, a knowledge of local customs, and sites at which to wood, water, and careen. Specific intelligence about potential targets (towns, vessels, cargoes) told the rover what was worth attacking and how to attack it, or whether he could attack with the resources at hand.

While common seafaring knowledge of cruising grounds might have been sufficient in many instances, specific intelligence was usually required in order to seize great prizes or provide a chance of success in any high-risk venture. Most sea rovers collected every bit of information they could about anything that might affect their business. No detail was too small: they noted information on wind, weather, and navigational hazards; they collected and inspected waggoners, charts, pilot-books, and “Letters, Papers, Bookes, Certificates and Cocquits” from captured vessels and persons ashore; and they interrogated all prisoners.<sup>24</sup> Nations often tasked their privateers with taking notice “of the station, motion, and



strength of the enemy, as well as he can discover by the best intelligence he can get," and of transmitting this intelligence to authorities.<sup>25</sup> Privateers—buccaneers, that is—were a principal source of intelligence for the English government in the West Indies.<sup>26</sup> The capture of a South Sea waggoner (a book of charts and sailing directions) could be an intelligence coup not only for sea rovers, but for the state as well.<sup>27</sup>

William Dampier provided the best description of the intelligence practices of sea rovers, in this instance regarding towns that might be targets of buccaneers:

For the privateers have an account of most towns within 20 leagues of the sea, on all the coast from Trinidad down to La Vera Cruz; and are able to give a near guess of the strength and riches of them: for they make it their business to examine all prisoners that fall into their hands, concerning the country, town, or city that they belong to; whether born there, or how long they have known it? How many families, whether most Spaniards? Or whether the major part are not copper-colour'd, as Mulattoes, Mustesoos, or Indians? Whether rich, and what their riches do consist in? And what their chiefest manufactures? If fortified, how many great guns, and what number of small arms? Whether it is possible to come undescrib'd on them? How many look-outs or centinels; for such the Spaniards always keep? And how the look-outs are placed? Whether possible to avoid the look-outs, or take them? If any river or creek comes near it, or where the best landing; with innumerable other such questions, which their curiosities led them to demand. And if they have had any former discourse of such places from other prisoners, they compare one with the other; then examine again, and enquire if he or any of them are capable to be guides to conduct a party of men thither: if not, where and how any prisoner may be taken that may do it; and from thence they afterwards lay their schemes to prosecute whatever design they take in hand.<sup>28</sup>

This is sophisticated intelligence gathering—many modern forces would give their eyeteeth for such detailed intelligence prior to an operation. Cover stories were just as sophisticated. Of a French-speaking English privateer who might be put ashore as a spy: "If it should be Demanded of Him who he is and where he came from, That he is a Conotur [*canoteur*] and that he comes from Dechonse and is a Seeking to put himself In partnership with Some person to go a fishing."<sup>29</sup>

The sea rover's principle source of information was people. Prisoners were a common source, but only one of many. Other sea rovers, crews of friendly merchantmen and men-of-war, neutral vessels, native peoples, fishermen, turtlers, logwood cutters, renegades, *boucaniers*, smugglers, those engaged in the "sloop trade" in the West Indies, and illicit traders

of any nation were all prime source material. Those engaged in the “sloop trade”—the contraband trade with Spain—in the West Indies were an excellent source of intelligence on Spanish ports and defenses, and many of these seamen were former buccaneers and filibusters. Friendly merchantmen provided information on vessels encountered, men-of-war could give a fair account of the local naval situation if they had not spent most of their time laid up or at anchor in port, and fishermen and turtlers saw many comings and goings. Smugglers provided valuable specific information on towns and local threats. Indigenous peoples were an important source of information, often in the form of guides who could avoid lookouts and ambushes on the way to a town or city.

Particularly valuable in the West Indies were Spanish merchants engaged in the *contrabanda* trade. Purchase, trade, bribery, elicitation, interrogation, observation, and the use of “intelligencers” or spies were all practical means of gathering information, and most rovers and mariners in general used some form of active intelligence gathering. This could be as simple as spending one shilling six pence “upon a Commander and his mate to Learn the Conveniency of a harbour on Fyall,” probably by taking them to an tavern to eat and drink.<sup>30</sup> Bribery was popular. Shelvocke noted that because Spanish governors held their posts for only a few years, “a round sum of *Piasters* will make them wink at anything.”<sup>31</sup> A Spanish sea captain could be bribed to pilot privateers by promising him the next vessel captured, having sunk his.<sup>32</sup>

Collecting from Spanish sources was made easier because many West Indian rovers spoke Spanish. A linguist, or linguister as those who could translate were called, was also highly valued in other waters, including European and Asian.<sup>33</sup> Given the hodgepodge makeup of most European crews, it was usually not difficult to find someone aboard who spoke the required language or a trade pidgin well enough to get by.

Most sea rovers used the techniques of “interrogation”—the asking of direct questions—and “elicitation”—the more subtle attempt at obtaining information by concealing the true nature of the information desired. Interrogation always involved some form of intimidation, subtle or overt, and Morgan’s interrogation of a prisoner was probably typical: “After every question, they made him a thousand menaces to kill him, in case he declared not the truth.”<sup>34</sup> Filibusters captured the lookouts of Leon in order to determine the force in the city and whether the inhabitants had hidden their wealth, and later they interrogated prisoners to learn where they were and if anyone expected them.<sup>35</sup> Watling interrogated prisoners as to the fortification and preparedness of Arica and compared their answers, the correct procedure. Unfortunately, he accepted the answer he wanted to hear, and murdered as a liar the man who told the truth. This

was a common problem with interrogation. The subject could deliberately provide false information out of a sense of patriotism, defiance, or spite; or he could provide what he thought his interrogators wanted to hear; or he could give false information by mistake; or he could tell the truth and not be believed simply because he looked like he was lying by appearing nervous or afraid. Worse, interrogators were often inclined to seek the answers they wanted to hear and to deny those they did not, effectively granting their subjects a license to lie, and in extreme cases consciously or unconsciously inducing them to lie.<sup>36</sup>

Further, interrogation was useless in a setting in which physical intimidation or threat of consequences were absent and the subject had no interest in cooperating. Torture, interrogation's most extreme form, appears to have been primarily reserved for the search for plunder, probably because it produced immediately verifiable results. Even so, rovers did use torture when tactical information was required immediately. In most situations, however, the mere threat of force during interrogation probably induced most prisoners to talk, and their statements could later be compared with those of others. But some would not talk, having as they said sworn on the Bible not to divulge secrets, even if staying quiet cost them their lives.<sup>37</sup>

On the other hand, in contrast to such straightforward and often harsh methods, some rovers used elicitation to obtain the information they desired. Many modern intelligence officers prefer it over interrogation, even with prisoners. Elicitation was a classic technique, exceedingly useful because it appeared nonthreatening. The Age of Sail was also the age of "human" intelligence gathering, for the technology of most other means did not exist. Intelligence gatherers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were probably far more proficient in elicitation than most, with their extreme reliance on technology as opposed to human interaction, are today.<sup>38</sup>

At the beginning of King William's War, Jean Doublet, a sly fox of a sea rover, anchored his small corvette under Ostend colors at the mouth of Plymouth harbor and went ashore to seek information that might lead to a prize. Dressed as a common sailor, he intended to discover if there were any Dutch vessels in nearby ports ready to sail. Although war had recently been declared between England and France, Doublet's commission had been issued prior to the declaration, and was valid only against the Dutch.<sup>39</sup>

He disclosed his intentions to a father and son whom he knew well. They suggested a Dutch *houcre* of six guns, recently come from Spain and richly laden, lying at anchor in nearby Cape West, noting that it would

not sail without a convoy. They also suggested a *grande pinasse* of 600–700 tons and forty guns but few men in proportion, lying at Saltash. They noted that the cannon on the lower deck could not be used because the deck was loaded with Spanish wool, but then advised Doublet that he had too few men to capture this ship.<sup>40</sup> Such detailed intelligence was vital to the success of the capture of a ship in a well-protected harbor.

Doublet made his way to Saltash at the north end of the harbor, and in a tavern he encountered the pinnace's captain, Jean Stam, recognizing him by his exceedingly long nose, having drunk with him previously in Portugal. The captain did not recognize Doublet, who introduced himself by saying he was a seaman from Bruges who had been aboard a *belandre* laden with wine and brandy, but had been shipwrecked and now sought passage home. The captain replied that he did not know when he would sail, for his cargo was worth more than 400,000 florins and he needed a convoy for protection. Doublet noted that the captain's ship had many cannon. The captain replied that this was true, but that his strongest were encumbered with cargo and anyway he had but thirty-eight men in his crew. Now having the information he needed, Doublet turned his attention to seizing these ships (an action discussed in chapter 17).<sup>41</sup>

A common failure in intelligence gathering and analysis was the verification or validation of information by other sources. Buccaneers and filibusters routinely interrogated prisoners about rumors, and even captured prisoners specifically to confirm or deny such rumors.<sup>42</sup> This was a vital process not only for confirmation, but to root out mistakes and deliberate misinformation, or disinformation. Planned or made on the spur of the moment, disinformation was a common tactic to lead an enemy into a trap or route him elsewhere, something always to guard against. Again Dampier: "He pretended to be well acquainted in the Bay of *Campeachy*; therefore I examined him in many particulars concerning that Bay, where I was well acquainted my self, living there three Years. He gave very true and pertinent answers to all my demands, so that I could have no distrust of what he related."<sup>43</sup> Dampier did not let on that he himself had lived there.

The rover was not the only one seeking tactical information; his enemy also did so, just as aggressively. The Spanish were well known for their thorough interrogations of prisoners, for example. Captain Quierroret was captured because his vessel had been closely observed in France by the crew of an English vessel making a prisoner exchange, who then passed this information on to English authorities. After Quierroret put to sea and anchored among an English merchant fleet, his vessel was recognized by a pair of small vessels who quickly sent for help. Quierroret and crew, becalmed and surrounded, stood no chance.<sup>44</sup>

## CHAPTER

# 8



## Baptisms, Pissdales, and Dog Watches

### *The Routine at Sea*

AMONG SEA ROVERS, AS AMONG ALL FIGHTING MEN ASHORE OR AT sea, less time was spent on battle than on any other activity. Preparation, routine maintenance, weeks at sea, the common necessities of life, even recreation took up far more time. For the seaman, this meant a long list of duties depending on his particular “room” or place. Although much organization and culture at sea were similar across regions, much also varied not only by nation but by locality. For example, Dunkirk, a port in Flanders, belonged to Spain for many years, passed briefly to England in 1658, soon after to France, yet retained its own culture distinct from all three. Although there are similarities between practices, there was no standard form of routine at sea. Much of the information presented here, while typical, varied considerably among national and local sea-going cultures. Unless otherwise specified, descriptions in this chapter refer to the English tradition at sea.

The sea was better experienced than described, in this case by a Jesuit, for “until I sail’d the Seas, it was not possible for me to understand the intolerable Labours of Seamen, nor is it credible to him who has no Experience of it; neither does such an one [sic] understand what is suffer’d in a prolong’d Voyage, with Storms, contrary Winds, Want of Victuals, Drink, and the Rest.”<sup>1</sup> The common seaman bore the brunt of these labors.

Youngers were the younger of the foremast men (so called because they were typically berthed “before the [main]mast” while the officers were

berthed “abaft the mast”) and therefore in theory the most vigorous seamen. Their job was to work aloft to set and furl sails, to sling yards, and to complete other similar tasks. Older seamen had duties on deck, hoisting sails, handling sheets and tacks, steering, and so on.<sup>2</sup> Landmen who entered as musketeers or in similar nonmariner capacities were still instructed on the rigging so that they could lend a hand, although they were not expected to go aloft.<sup>3</sup>

Seamen, and probably landmen as well, were expected to “chuse his Mate, Consort, or Comrade” to share berthing, one to each watch so both would never be off duty at the same time, thus more space in which to hang a hammock.<sup>4</sup> This was one reason for the custom of *matelotage* (the pairing of seamen, from the French *matelot*, sailor), another being that a partner could act as heir and executor, and a third being that each could watch the other’s back. “Hot bunking,” or the sharing of a berth between two sailors on different watches, is still practiced aboard some submarines. Pairings for security are common in the military, law enforcement, and other hazardous professions, two always being safer and more secure than one. French *habitans*, *boucaniers*, and adventurers in general also followed this practice as a form of security and assistance. Indeed, French adventurers followed it so closely that if a pair in *matelotage* found a woman they both wanted they would throw dice for her. The winner would marry her, but the loser “would still be received at the house.”<sup>5</sup>

There was never a lack of work aboard a ship; but smaller vessels were always less labor. Three masts of sails and rigging plus a larger hull kept a crew busy and, with luck and good leadership, also out of trouble. Idleness was ever a breeding ground for discontent. Routine tasks included weighing or letting go an anchor, setting, reefing, furling, and drying sails, striking topmasts, scrubbing and scraping decks, cleaning the head, tallowing masts and strakes, pulling or picking oakum, wetting the planking in dry weather to keep the caulking tight, and shifting provisions. In addition, there were the more specialized tasks of mending sails and rigging, steering, navigating, and heaving the lead. Learning these tasks was routine at sea, and many spent much time studying ship-handling and navigation.

Aboard all but the smallest of vessels a crew was divided into two watches, the larboard under the master’s charge and the starboard under the first mate’s. Sometimes the crew of each watch were subdivided into two “squadrons” with a quartermaster in charge of each, under the charge of the master or mate.<sup>6</sup> The day at sea was divided into four-hour periods or watches running from noon to noon.<sup>7</sup> At least since the late sixteenth century, the watch from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. was broken into two watches of two hours, called dog watches, to permit a rotation so that the same

seamen did not stand watch at the same time day after day.<sup>8</sup> The first dog watch might have been called the lookout watch.<sup>9</sup> Artisans such as the sailmaker, gunner, and cooper were excused from watch-standing.

Seamanship is the art and science of ship-handling and navigation, plus an intangible grasp of the sea, and was the province of all. There has been debate about the quality of seamanship, generally of a high standard among sea rovers, among the rovers of the West Indies. Both Father Labat and Captain Uring noted the reticence of West Indian "privateers" to enter themselves aboard ships "because there is more Work." Not even a letter-of-mart ship could induce Jamaican rovers or seamen to serve, and they avoided like the plague a ship bound for Europe, "for fear of being imprest into the Publick Service."<sup>10</sup> If seamanship is fundamentally the ability to keep keel from bottom, then sailing a canoe required less skill than sailing a ship. Many adventurers were not brought up to the sea. Even so, a desire to avoid unnecessary labor was not the same as laziness, nor was a desire to promote economy, and thus profit, by using suitable small vessels as opposed to ships. Many buccaneers and filibusters were outstanding seamen, sailing from Pacific to Atlantic by way of Cape Horn or crossing the Pacific from East to West, either being no mean feat, then or now.

Similarly, pirate seamanship was often criticized as below standard, with vessels lost "by intolerable neglect," although this might have been due as much to intemperance and a lack of discipline as to any deficiency in seamanship.<sup>11</sup> Again, many rovers saw themselves foremost as men-at-arms who sailed the sea. James Griffin was forced aboard a pirate as a navigator, perhaps indicating their seamanship was something less than excellent.<sup>12</sup>

For all who bore arms, seaman and volunteer alike, being at sea meant keeping arms fit for service: free of rust, well-oiled, and in the case of edged weapons, "bright" as well as sharp, both edge and point.<sup>13</sup> Sea air was bad on iron and steel; rust was ever present no matter the precaution. Rust was even worse in tropical seas: "This moisture of the air, causes all our Knives, Etweese [*sic*], Keys, Needles, Swords, and Ammunition, to rust."<sup>14</sup>

Discipline was more lax aboard privateers and pirates than aboard men-of-war and merchantmen, punishment usually limited to confinement in irons or bilboes, or occasionally flogging. Lacking military discipline, punishments perceived as unjust often led to mutiny and piracy. Yet pirates, for whom severe discipline was anathema, sometimes inflicted severe punishments, including marooning and death, upon their own.<sup>15</sup>

But vessels were not merely fighting platforms. They were living quar-

ters as well, and by modern standards they were filthy. Lice, weevils, and rats were endemic, and in the West Indies cockroaches would infest vessels from bow to stern, although they turned white and died within two or three days once a ship reached the colder Northern European waters.<sup>16</sup> Poultry was kept in coops often located by the taffrail on the quarterdeck, and some livestock was kept in the manger (an area just abaft the hawseholes). But pigs and goats often had free reign of the decks: "Yesterday our Captain bought three Spanish hogs: the roughness of the weather made them so seasick that no man could forbear laughing to see them go reeling and spewing about the decks."<sup>17</sup> Suckling pigs running and playing on the decks in a calm was a sure sign of a wind to come.<sup>18</sup>

Ideally the crew relieved themselves from the lee fore or main chains, in the head (thus the modern name for a vessel's toilet), or in a pissdale (a primitive urinal mounted on the bulwarks below the gunwale) if the vessel had one. Otherwise they leaned or hung over the stern or gunwales, or used a chamber pot or bucket (as officers and women did). This being said, in foul weather some sailors relieved themselves anywhere. It was too easy to get drenched in the water or even lost overboard trying to squat from the lee chains in a rolling sea, and the head could be just as hazardous. No doubt the lazy relieved themselves wherever they could.

These and other wastes found their way into the bilge, a place sometimes so foul that it is best described by those who experienced it: "This night 2 of our carpenter's crew being sent down to search the well were struck dead with the damp, as they call it, but being hoisted up again speedily, they recovered with much difficulty. The occasion of these damps is the tightness of a ship and, lying still a long time, the bilge water corrupts and stinks, so that it is enough to poison the Devil, and all the little plate and silver I had hath been turned black with the vapours of our bilge water in a night's time."<sup>19</sup>

Cleanliness among crewmen varied. For some, three days in the same shirt was much too long.<sup>20</sup> For others, who required a storm, a swim, or a ritual dunking at sea to "recover the Colour of their Skins which were grown very black and nasty,"<sup>21</sup> three days was minimal at best. Clothing was at times similarly washed by accident, then dried in the rigging.<sup>22</sup> Some seamen were too lazy to change out of wet clothing in the tropics even when laying in their hammocks, "so that when they turn'd out they caus'd an ill Smell where-ever they came, and their Hammocks would stink sufficiently."<sup>23</sup> This had long been common among seamen: "there is nothing more unwholesome at sea than to sleep in wet clothes."<sup>24</sup>

At sea, a sailor's clothing was functional and varied somewhat by period and nationality. In general, it consisted of some form of short



wide-legged breeches, often tarred; a shirt, often checked; a waistcoat; a frock; a neck-cloth; a hat or head cover according to period, clime, and nationality (English seamen wore fur caps in cold weather, for example); and stockings and shoes, although many went barefoot in warm weather and climes. Short tarred "jackanapes" coats were usual, as were sea coats made of pilot cloth, that is, peacoats. Petty officers and officers tended toward more conventional attire, or a mixture of conventional and nautical. French sailors often wore a long stocking cap on the head and a sash around the waist. A foremast man's hair was usually kept in a queue and often tarred or "clubbed" not only for convenience and hygiene but for safety: long loose hair could not only interfere with eyesight in hazardous situations, but was dangerous if pulled into a block as a line was hauled through it.

Landmen's dress was determined by shipboard purpose. Those becoming seamen dressed as such; those carried as musketeers or idlers would dress as they would ashore in the common dress of the time. Ashore, *boucaniers* dressed in a coarse shirt, rude breeches, shoes of hide, and a hat whose brim was cut to a point in front (a baseball cap, essentially), and they might have dressed similarly aboard ship, although this costume had evolved for the hunt and the abattoir. Additionally, in the field, *boucaniers* carried several knives for butchering, and a lightly woven cloth folded or rolled and wrapped around the waist and used as a mosquito net.

In theory one of the ship surgeon's duties was to keep the crew fit and healthy, such as he could or was inclined, but in practice the surgeon tended to react more than anticipate. He spent most of his time setting bones, treating wounds, pulling teeth, giving medicines of dubious efficacy (particularly for sexually transmitted diseases), bleeding men to death, giving "clysters," and idling away his time. A ship at sea was a dangerous place to work and live, even when activities were limited to the mundane. Traumatic injury was common. Drowning was always a possibility, for most seamen were poor swimmers at best, although some were excellent swimmers, even underwater. Thermal injuries were common as well: sunburn, heat exhaustion, sun stroke, hypothermia, exposure, and frostbite. Scurvy and other diseases of dietary shortcomings were common, as were malaria (the ague) and yellow fever (*le mal de Siam* or *el vomito negro*).<sup>25</sup> Crews traveling far from home often fell ill, not being acclimatized or "seasoned" to the diseases of the new environment, especially the ague.<sup>26</sup> Far more seamen died from disease than battle or accident.

Most seamen slept in hammocks, officers and passengers sometimes in beds or "cradles" as they were more commonly called, having sides to keep the sleeper from being tossed onto the deck. In tropical waters sea-

men often slept on deck, and the Anglo-American pirates appear to have done so routinely although it was not considered a normal practice by common seamen: “Every one lay rough, as they called it, that is, on the deck—even the captain himself not being allowed a bed.”<sup>27</sup> Other pirates reserved hammocks and cabins for but a few—captain, master, steward, and gunner—the “rest kennelling like hounds on deck.”<sup>28</sup> Cabins were few, reserved for the various officers, sea artists, and passengers, usually with bulkheads of canvas or light boards, and taken down in time of battle. Most were very small: three feet by five feet, with as little as five feet of headroom, was typical.<sup>29</sup>

Food was vital not only as sustenance, but for morale: “For it is generally seen among Privateers, that nothing emboldens them sooner to Mutiny than Want.”<sup>30</sup> Diet varied, and the traditional English seaman’s menu of “Beefe, Porke, Pease, Fish, Oyle, Bisket, Beere,” butter, brandy, and oats varied according to region and availability of provisions, and adventurers of other nations were similarly influenced by region and native preference.<sup>31</sup> At sea, buccaneers and filibusters ate *boucan* or freshly salted pork or sea turtle, this making up much of their diet. Turtle was considered quite healthy, but some believed that a diet heavy in pork contributed to the pox.<sup>32</sup> Potatoes were common ashore, but did not last long at sea. Cassava bread and cornbread were common in the New World, for wheat flour was not always available. Tropical fruits such as bananas, plantains, pineapples, and avocados were popular, as were oranges and other citrus, although many Europeans did not care for tropical fruit.

Spanish crews ate well, their healthier diets including olive oil, olives, fish, vinegar, garlic, onions, cheese, and fresh vegetables, besides the common issue of biscuits and dried meat and fish.<sup>33</sup> The Portuguese ate similarly. A Dutch letter-of-mart crew returning from the West Indies might eat a mean diet of “water, gruel, rusty pork and sad beef, filthy peas and Cascan India bread [cassava bread], made of roots of trees.”<sup>34</sup> The daily ration of an English privateer in the South Sea, her English provisions spent, might be “each man having a quart of chocolate, and 3 ounces of very good rusk [bread sliced in small pieces and re-baked to be hard and crisp] to breakfast every morning, and fresh meat, or fresh fish every day, of which we had such a plenty about the ship, that we could almost always take our choice of Dolphin or Albicore.”<sup>35</sup> Officers usually ate much better than their crews. In desperate times rovers would eat anything, including horseflesh, leather, and tallow.

Food preparation was kept simple, most fire-hearths able to handle only a single kettle. A ship’s crew was usually divided into messes of four, sometimes as many as seven, with three meals per day, and a knife and

bare hands were generally the only utensils. Both watches seem to have eaten at once, a small sailing crew handling the vessel.<sup>36</sup> Spanish seamen and soldiers—“*Signores Marineros, y los signores Soldados*,” all pretending to be gentlemen—did not eat in messes but individually, as did the Portuguese.<sup>37</sup> *Boucaniers* and filibusters at sea ate two meals per day, as much as they liked, at least in the early years and if well provisioned. If provisions ran short, crews were cut back to one meal per day.<sup>38</sup> Otherwise, rations were usually measured and doled out carefully. Long voyages often led to short rations for survival or as a preventative measure.

Spirits in one form or another were the principal drink at sea: brandy and beer in Northern European waters, rum and beer in the New World, and arrack in Eastern waters. Various wines—canary, sherry (from Xeres, Spain), Madeira, claret, Rhenish—were popular among officers. The French were fond of cider; the English drank punches and flip in celebration at sea. Neither cider nor beer kept well in the tropics, nor did most wines. (See appendix 6 for more information on food and drink.)

“*Brandy and Tobacco are the Soul of a Seaman*,” wrote Ned Ward. Clay pipes were the norm but cigars occasionally found their way aboard, often as part of the cargo of a Spanish prize. Smoking was usually prohibited below deck or in cabins, and often buckets or tubs of water were placed specifically for smokers to dump their ash. Some articles did permit smoking below deck but required the smoker use a cap on his pipe to prevent errant ashes and sparks. Likewise, candles were dangerous, and a lantern usually required a shield for the flame. When loading powder all fires were to be extinguished.<sup>39</sup>

Nearly all sea rovers were men. Women aboard roving vessels were usually passengers, prisoners, prostitutes, or wives, the latter two usually aboard only in port or while the ship prepared for a voyage. Occasionally a few women might be aboard as “Landresses, Cooks and Semstresses.”<sup>40</sup> Otherwise, ships were routinely cleared of “all our ladies” before cruising, some of the wives in tears, at least until out of sight.<sup>41</sup> Pirates eschewed women aboard their vessels—sometimes. In their articles many stated categorically that women were not permitted, “this being a good political rule to prevent disturbances amongst them, it is strictly observed,” as a one-time prisoner of pirates put it.<sup>42</sup> Even so, the woman was often blamed: “I gave her a strict Charge to be modest, with Threats of severe Punishment, if she was found otherwise. One of the *Duchess’s* black Nymphs having transgressed this Way, was lately whip’d at the Capston.”<sup>43</sup> He with whom she “transgressed” was not.

A handful of women pirates and privateers are known, Mary Read and Anne Bonny being the two most notorious. Others may have served in

disguise as men aboard privateers or pirates. One such woman might have been Captain Beare's wife, "a strumpet that he used to carry with him in man's apparel."<sup>44</sup> A more redoubtable, and probably more typical, woman served aboard the *Hannibal* letter-of-mart ship and slaver as a Royal Africa Company soldier until she was discovered when ill; the surgeon had tried to give her an enema or suppository with a "clyster." Captain Phillips "in charity" gave her some women's clothing and put her to work washing his linen, no matter that she had been as "handy and ready to do any work as any" man.<sup>45</sup> Very likely she served in action in some capacity when the *Hannibal* soon made its bloody fight against a French privateer.

Any concern among rovers regarding women aboard seems based more on sexism or perceived issues of discipline or distraction than on any superstition. Seamen were generally much less superstitious than is commonly believed, or at least no more so than many persons are today, even with the advantages of modern science and education. Superstitions that did influence behavior usually concerned natural phenomena taken as an omen or portent, for example St. Elmo's Fire, the deathwatch beetle, or a man falling into the sea and drowning were taken as bad signs before beginning a dangerous passage.<sup>46</sup> Others might worry about events prior to a voyage: a black cat (and a female at that) coming on board or a landlady's curse when sailors did not pay their lodging.<sup>47</sup>

Many sailors believed in spirits or ghosts: the specter of a boat at night might be Charon come to ferry a dying man across the Styx, and a cry of "Come help, come help, a Man over Board" for which no man was missing might be the "Spirit of some Man that had been drowned in the Latitude by accident."<sup>48</sup> Some rovers, including the well educated, believed in astrology and had horoscopes made and read.<sup>49</sup> Spanish seamen would tie an image of Saint Anthony to the mizzenmast when the wind failed, and might bite its head off in spite when the wind did not come. Other rovers promised to marry the first poor woman they met ashore if they survived a danger at sea.<sup>50</sup>

Ceremonies, rites of passage, and holidays, accompanied invariably by much drinking and often by the firing of volleys of great guns or small arms, were times to bond as a crew. Rovers variously celebrated many holidays, including Christmas and Saint Valentine's Day (with a discussion of the intrigues of women, followed invariably by a storm). After the Restoration, King Charles Day was celebrated among the English.<sup>51</sup> The French celebrated the Eve of the Epiphany and drank repeatedly on the Day of Kings to the health of the king.<sup>52</sup> The Spanish and Portuguese strictly kept the Roman Catholic holy days. Rites of passage at dangerous

or notable places were a long-standing tradition of the sea, and still are. When crossing the Tropic of Cancer or passing through the Straits of Gibraltar, for example, all who had not gone that way before had to pay "his dollar or half-crown or must be ducked at the yard-arm," the proceeds often to be "levy'd and spent at a publick Meeting of all the Ships Companys, when we return to *England*." Some asked to be ducked several times.<sup>53</sup> The Dutch likewise ducked or extracted payment, saluting the first with a gun, the "ancient seamen" drinking the profits. Ships also ducked according to local custom at the equator and other locations as well. Barlow asked a payment of a bottle of "strong waters" for those who had not crossed the equator; the seamen who had already done so got to drink it.<sup>54</sup> Exquemelin celebrated the crossing with a baptism complete with costumed master's mate inking a cross and giving a blow with a wooden sword to all who had not passed, followed by a bucket of water over the head and payment of a bottle of brandy.<sup>55</sup> Others might be dunked into a tub of water or, if unpopular, soaked with a deluge of buckets of water.<sup>56</sup> Some French ships ducked instead into the sea, as the Dutch and English did.

Gambling was another diversion, often forbidden because of the disruptive effect it could have on officers and crew. Music was a vital part of life at sea, and musicians were invariably among the crew: fiddlers, Jew's harpers, pipers, drummers, and trumpeters. Seamen, or at least the French, also composed and sang songs, often humorous (even making fun of officers). They played games, and talked and discussed and debated, not to mention grumbled and griped. Seamen's language was almost a dialect of its own with its multitude of technical terms, many of which were incorporated into the seaman's culture itself, and many eventually into our modern English. It was surely a salmagundi of words and phrases of many languages. Cursing and swearing were a great part of the seaman's vernacular, pirates being the most abusive of all. A Jesuit priest complained of seamen cursing: "O shame of Catholicks, Spaniards, and Portugueses, who are unruly, impudent and scandalous in this particular! . . . How horrid it is to hear a Portuguese swear by a Ship-load of consecrated Hosts, and a Spaniard by the Wounds of Christ, and by the Blessed Virgin!" Yet, himself a Spaniard, he said French seaman seldom cursed, either a falsehood or an instance limited to a single captain and crew.<sup>57</sup> Most seamen curse, then and now, some with quite a turn of phrase.

Religion among rovers is a difficult question. Exquemelin described the English adventurers as reading a chapter of the Bible or New Testament and reciting Psalms before each meal, and the French conducted a Roman Catholic equivalent.<sup>58</sup> This may very well be accurate, especially as many of the early English rovers of the West Indies derived from Crom-

wellian forces ostensibly steeped in religion. Spanish and Portuguese mariners piously maintained religious ceremony, and so did the French but perhaps less vigorously. During the voyage described in the first chapter Captain Watling gave orders to keep the Sabbath, and a previous commander, Sawkins, threw dice overboard when he found them used on a Sunday. The filibuster Captain Daniel was well known for killing a crewman who blasphemed during Mass, but this murder smacked more of retribution for insubordination than capital punishment for insulting the Almighty.<sup>59</sup> Religious services or formal prayer, however brief, reinforced a sense of God and State, of attachment to society even if very distant, and of order in general. Even so, most seamen of the period were typically irreligious and even blasphemous. Although there were notable exceptions, the function of Sabbath and prayer was to many probably more of a mere formality or reassuring social ritual as opposed to a sincerely professed religious practice. No matter the nationality or religion, there seems more than a hint of hypocrisy in the piety of sea rovers. It is unknown whether religion served to fortify the courage of rovers; doubtless for some it did. Others appear to have viewed religion as a crutch or interference with duty or independence. As Marcus Rediker pointed out, religion “could be dangerous if allowed to stand between a seaman and the task at hand.” Contemporary mariners put it bluntly: “All Hands in a *Calme* to *Pray* or *Pick Okum*; but to work in a *Storm*, serve God serve Devil.” Many seamen probably viewed the observation of prayer or the Sabbath as did Ned Ward’s Royal Navy boatswain as he roused the crew: “Get up, all Hands to prayers, and be damned.”<sup>60</sup>

To what degree the melange of cultures—national, ethnic, religious, trade, martial, and social class—aboard the typical sea rover influenced the roving trade and its customs needs further study. Cultures have a habit of borrowing from each other, and without doubt the variety encountered among rovers subtly influenced them beyond the mere exchange of practical knowledge. Considering the relative democracy of a buccaneer crew of English, Irish, French, Spanish, African, Portuguese, Dutch, Scottish, Native American, and Danish, both seamen and landmen, the potential for exchange and change is astounding.

Beyond this cultural melange was the sea itself. The sea mandated teamwork as no other environment of man or nature could. “No Man can have a greater Contempt for Death,” wrote Ned Ward of the seaman, “for every Day he constantly shits upon his own Grave.”<sup>61</sup> In the emergency of a storm or fire, all had to know their duty and work together as a team—or all would drown or broil together. The sea required that teamwork be both rigid and flexible, permitting for immediate adaptation

to the situation. This teamwork under life-threatening stress gave rise not only to a close camaraderie, but also to a dark and shared sense of humor that served to inure a crew to the dangers of the sea. These same qualities of teamwork, strength, endurance, discipline, and flexibility, of following the rules but breaking them when necessary, were (and still are) perfectly and naturally appropriate to raids on the sea and from the sea.

## CHAPTER

# 9



## Riches and Dangers at Sea

### *Pirate Prey and Pirate Hunters*

MERCHANTMEN WERE THE PREY. THEIR BELLIES LOADED WITH THE commerce of the world, their best protection was in convoy, escorted by one or more warships. Where such riches were, so were those who would take them, within or without the law.

Ships in convoy were under the protection of one or more men-of-war, or occasionally privateers or heavily armed merchantmen. The term “convoy” also referred to the ship of force protecting the convoy. In war-time most nations convoyed their merchant fleets, and some, such as the East Indies and Spanish treasure fleets, always convoyed. Even ships of different nations often sailed together for mutual protection, sometimes making these arrangements after incidental meetings at sea. A convoy might be as strong as seventeen men-of-war and eighty merchantmen, or as weak as one or two fifth-rate men-of-war and a few East and West India ships.<sup>1</sup> In a large convoy, the admiral usually sailed at its head, the vice admiral at the rear, and other men-of-war to windward.<sup>2</sup> By keeping to windward, a convoy man-of-war or privateer could quickly run down upon rovers approaching from leeward. If the guard ships kept to leeward, it might take too long to beat to windward to come to the aid of an attacked merchantman. But winds veer and calms come, and sometimes a convoy man-of-war sometimes could do nothing to prevent a capture.

Convoy commanders expected their charges to follow orders and keep good order, and if a ship did not keep up with its convoy it might very well be left behind. Signals were mandatory: the *Instructions for Keeping Company with Her Majesty’s Ship the Hastings, August 30, 1708*, included



at least thirty-seven signals divided into *Signals by Day*, *Signals by Night*, *Signals in a Fog*, and *Line of Battel Signals*. These consisted of various combinations of firing one or more guns, hauling certain sheets home, lowering main or fore topsails, loosing various sails, hoisting various sails with the clews hauled up, spreading or showing ensigns or other flags at various places, showing lights, ringing bells, beating drums, and so forth. Captains were reminded that failure to obey signals or keep together would result in fines in the amount of the shot and powder fired to force compliance.<sup>3</sup>

Convoys were vulnerable, but usually only to strong fleets or flotillas, or to rovers preying on stragglers and on those foolish enough to keep to windward of their convoys—and such fools were common. Although rovers and men-of-war did capture merchant fleets, the capture of stragglers was more usual. In 1637 an English ship took a Spanish straggler to windward from a fleet of fifty-two ships. In half an hour, within sight of the fleet, the rover did its business and sailed away with its prize, leaving Spanish observers to rage and swear impotently.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Captain Quierroret was taken amidst a convoy by the English while attempting the capture of a merchantman.<sup>5</sup>

Guard ships and guard fleets were another means of general protection. They ranged from small men-of-war to fairly large flotillas: at one point Portugal's East Indian Armada do Norte consisted of seven "good ships, one Hoy, and half a dozen Proes."<sup>6</sup> Assigned to a particular colony, coast, or region, they were usually as ineffective as effective. A ship or flotilla can only be at one place at one time, and many were kept in port because crews or ships were unfit for sea, problems often exacerbated by conflicts between local governors and the guard-ship commander's orders.<sup>7</sup> Dividing a flotilla broadens its range but weakens its force. Facing a guard ship, pirates showed no fear publicly, although privately many obviously did fear these men-of-war, "for they were prodigiously afraid of meeting with any of His Majesty's ships, nor could they endure to hear any talk of them."<sup>8</sup> A few, however, fought and even forced these men-of-war to show their heels. Blackbeard did, and John James did in 1699, fending off the undermanned *Essex* prize.<sup>9</sup> Still, most of these small fifth- and sixth-rate guard ships won their fights against pirates, in the unlikely event that they faced them. Indeed, Charles Johnson criticized the English Royal Navy for doing little to solve the pirate menace of the early eighteenth century. He noted the guard ships' overall lack of success and suggested that they should, like pirates, lie in the latitudes where prizes would be found. As he said, "Where the game is, there the vermin will be." He also suggested that men-of-war stationed in the American colonies shift

to the West Indies in winter, just as the pirates did, instead of “lying up all the winter useless.”<sup>10</sup> The criticism appears in large part justified, although colonial governors might balk at losing their guard ships.

Colonial governors occasionally commissioned private men-of-war, often called “country sloops” or vessels in the “Country Service” to pursue pirates or protect ports or coasts as the need arose. Again, like guard ships these men-of-war were often as ineffective as they were effective, many preferring not to fight: “General Park examining how the Sloop’s Company, and those that were with him were appointed, and not finding Things to his Satisfaction, he returned again into the Harbour, without exchanging a single Shot.”<sup>11</sup>

Privateers often fell afoul of each other although there was better prey to be had than the hard knocks of a fellow rover.<sup>12</sup> Many of these privateer-versus-privateer engagements were unintended, each thinking the other prey. Other engagements were deliberate. In 1702 the commander of an English privateer sloop challenged the filibuster Bréart, his former captor during the previous war, to a duel of sloops at sea off Martinique. The Englishman lost the fight and his sloop, suffering a hundred killed and wounded.<sup>13</sup> French records claim that the filibuster de Grammont was sent in peacetime to chastise a truculent English privateer or man-of-war cruising between Tortuga and Port-de-Paix; they claim he slaughtered the crew, leaving only the captain alive.<sup>14</sup> However, most attacks of rover on rover or rover on cruiser were by accident, or for profit, or in hope of profit. Privateers and merchantmen both had investors to think about and this was a powerful influence on tactical decision making.<sup>15</sup> Even so, many of these engagements were brutal, the defeated rover often refusing to strike until shattered and dismasted.

Facing a rover one-on-one, a merchantman could run, fight, pretend to be a stout ship ready to fight, retreat to closed quarters, or try to run his vessel ashore, hoping later to float it off or otherwise retrieve its cargo. Some carried wooden cannon in addition to iron ones “to make a show.”<sup>16</sup> Occasionally running ships, galley-ships, and heavily armed merchants sailed alone, hoping to outrun or intimidate any rovers crossing their paths. Most were built for cargo, not speed, and were seldom armed or manned well enough to fight effectively. Yet some could if necessary, even arming and manning themselves as letter-of-mart ships to take prizes along the way. In order to ensure that not just any vessel was commissioned, a letter of mart might mandate a minimum standard in tonnage, men, and arms. In 1695 the letter-of-mart *Caermarthen* Galley was held to the standard of at least of 200 tons, twenty or more guns, and at least half its crew landmen.<sup>17</sup> Such ships might stand up well to the

average rover, as well as make prizes of smaller merchantmen. The letter-of-mart ship *Hannibal* fought off a powerful French cruiser in 1693, the battle lasting six hours, each ship hammering the other. The *Hannibal* sailed away, her cargo to trade for slaves safe, her crew terribly mauled.<sup>18</sup>

Still, merchantmen were manned by sailors, not privateers or men who went to sea to fight for plunder, an important distinction. And more important, merchantmen were cargo carriers first, fighting ships only by foul circumstance, and their decks often so cluttered with goods that anything under an hour was considered excellent for making a ship clear for engaging.<sup>19</sup> One whose guns had been stowed in the hold to make room for cargo or to ease a rough passage might take hours to make ready for a fight. This was an effort many merchant captains preferred to avoid unless absolutely necessary, for often it entailed throwing cargo overboard to make room to work the guns. Aboard merchantmen decks above and below were usually “lumbered,” that is, encumbered with goods and stores.

Further, many merchant crews were not only often poorly manned for a fight, but poorly trained as well. Much of the information in mid-eighteenth-century manuals for merchantmen fighting at sea is so basic as to make one wonder if many crews had any experience with small arms or great guns. One vessel, attacked by Malabar pirates, was unable to manage “our small gun, the gunner running away at Goa after sluts in brothels: one of the factors undertaking it, was blown up by a cartridge of powder, and squenched his cloaths a-flame in the ocean.”<sup>20</sup> The manuals presented arguments as to why a merchantman *should* fight. No doubt many merchant captains preferred surrender and life to a fight and possible death or lost limbs, and most did not seem eager for a fight.<sup>21</sup> Even a skillful, aggressive captain might not be able to convince his crew and passengers to fight a French privateer, thus turning a trading voyage into a “French voyage.” Captain Nathaniel Uring found himself alone on deck, braving the small arms of 200 Frenchmen, and Captain Joseph Tolson, abandoned by many of his own crew, found his orders disobeyed after he was wounded on deck and taken below. Both were captured, and both believed that had their crews stood by them or their orders, they would have escaped.<sup>22</sup>

The merchantman's typical light armament did not help matters. Tolson's 170 ton *Mary Galley* mounted only six old cannon probably firing three-pound shot, two each of brass and iron swivels, and a few small arms; the cannon jumped out of their carriages when fired.<sup>23</sup> Owners, after all, sought profit in trade and might have seen little need for an expensive armament the crew probably could not handle effectively any-

way. To balance this inequity in arms and men were the “closed quarters” to which a crew retreated, hoping to stave off the attackers until they were perchance rescued or the attackers gave up. This was a merchantman’s last defense other than running ashore. A vessel run ashore was easier to defend, for a rover would have to send a boat and boarders to take it. The crew could also burn it to prevent capture, or even booby-trap it with a powder train and a musket or pistol rigged to fire it.<sup>24</sup>

### Along the Spanish Main

But of all the treasures and riches upon sea or shore, those of Spain were the most envied—and who could take them, would. The problem for the Spanish crown was how to protect its vast New World empire, and the solution a simple one: Spain did nothing, other than look after the great cities and treasure fleets. The rest “in practice were left largely to their own devices.”<sup>25</sup>

The treasure fleets were most vulnerable in the New World, and to protect them there, the Spanish crown authorized *armadas de guarda*. At the turn of the eighteenth century the responsibility of convoying the treasure fleet to Europe was turned over to the allied French, Jean du Casse of filibuster fame being one of the principal commanders. In the South Sea, Spain’s wealth had much less naval protection on the assumption that the sea was a Spanish lake inaccessible to *ladrones* and foreign navies, an assumption that proved seriously flawed several times. In both regions local governors commissioned *armadilloes* or armed vessels as required, often upon the occasion of a threat. Last were the Manila galleon and its *patache* or tender, their strong hulls, high bulwarks, and Pacific isolation their best protection.

Spain intended the Armada de Barolvento, or Windward Fleet, as a powerful deterrent to any who might dare to attack the treasure fleets or Spain’s grand New World cities. Its grand moment came when it trapped Morgan at Maracaibo—and its moment went sour when Morgan destroyed the armada, setting Spanish seaborne defenses in the region back for decades.<sup>26</sup>

Our old friend Labat once found himself in the hands of the Spanish, alive by luck after a pistol pressed against his body misfired. New allies of the French, the Spanish treated him well after first plundering his personal property—Labat pretended to be a priest of the Holy Inquisition, quickly getting their attention. The attacking craft were boats (*chaloupes*)

attached to ships of the Armada de Barlovento, each with a pair of swivels (*pierriers*) bow and stern, a basket of grenades, sixteen oars, and at least thirty-five men. Of note is Labat's comment that the Spaniards' powder was of poor quality, constantly missing fire.<sup>27</sup>

His captors eventually carried him aboard the *Sainte-Trinité*, pierced for sixty guns but mounting only fifty-two ranging in caliber from four- to twelve-pound shot. The *Santísima Trinidad y Nuestra Señora de Atocha*, a *fragata* of six hundred tons and built of cedar in the New World, was the flagship of the armada, and, except that she was not a galleon, was exactly what was expected of a Spanish flagship. She was beautiful, well ornamented, and smelled richly of cedar. Her crew turned out for a grand Mass on deck, and she had a small shrine centered on San Diego (Saint James) tied head to foot to the mizzenmast so as to be unrecognizable. The armada's commander or "governor" was a courtly, gouty old gentleman, and the sentry at the cabin used an old matchlock musket rest as his badge of office, he and his relief bowing and kissing the fork solemnly. Their bark tied up alongside the flagship, the captured French crew and its filibuster commander sold most of their cargo illegally to the Spanish at night. In the *Trinidad's* company was another ship of the armada, the *Nuestra Señora de Rosario* of forty or forty-two guns. The entire armada was no more than three *fragatas*, two *urcas*, a *patache*, and a *balandra*.<sup>28</sup>

Most apparent about the armada was the size of its vessels. Most were as always far too large to effectively pursue the small roving vessels in the region. In 1674, after years of refusal, the Spanish crown finally authorized local governors to issue orders and letters of mart, in this case for piraguas.<sup>29</sup> Exquemelin described them as two-mast half galleys of 120 men and thirty-six, forty, or forty-four oars, ninety feet long, sixteen to eighteen feet wide, four and half to five feet deep, drawing a foot and a half of water, and likewise armed with four swivels astern and a great gun in the bow. The masts could be dropped in contrary winds or when a low profile was desired. The Spanish would draw these half galleys ashore, camouflage them with vegetation, then put them to sea at night to surprise nearby vessels.<sup>30</sup> Dampier remarked on a garrison of forty soldiers at Cabo Corrientes, "who have a large periago, well fitted with oars and sails, and are ready to launch out, and seize any small vessel, and seldom spare the lives . . . of those that fall into their hands for fear of telling tales." Such *guarda costas*, intended against logwood cutters on the main and against the French on Hispaniola, also took those trading with local Spanish merchants.<sup>31</sup>

In practice, however, many of these local privateer *guarda costas* were pirates under the perhaps understandable guise of seeking to make retri-

sals, and pirate hunters only on or by accident. They were the predominant threat to buccaneers and filibusters during their heyday, particularly after Henry Morgan's destruction of the Armada de Barlovento in 1669, and by the eighteenth century they were the principal means of protecting the coasts and enforcing trade regulations.<sup>32</sup> The Spanish crown also commissioned Biscayers in the 1680s to hunt pirates in the West Indies, but many preferred the easy pickings of merchantmen.<sup>33</sup> These "Old Spain Men" were well known and highly respected as privateers and seamen, even among the Native Americans of Darien, so much so that buccaneers pretended to be Biscayers in order to gain their assistance. They had "the repute of being the best mariners and also the best soldiers amongst the Spaniards."<sup>34</sup>

Henry Pitman's companions were captured in 1689 by the crew of a *guarda costa* sloop armed with thirty-five men (some had been sent aboard prizes), eight cannon, and six swivels. The *guarda costa* attacked French, English, and Dutch indiscriminately, but not always successfully: the seven- or eight-man crew of a French sloop resisted fiercely until they could run their sloop ashore at night. Had they not, the Spanish crew would have murdered them for their infuriating impudence.<sup>35</sup>

Charles Johnson remarked on a Puerto Rican *guarda costa* commanded by an Italian, Matthew Luke, later hanged in 1722 with most of his crew for capturing four English vessels and murdering their crews. Another *guarda costa* of 1724 carried a crew of sixty Spanish, eighteen French, and eighteen English, and had two captains, Don Benito, a Spaniard, and Richard Holland, an Englishman. A *guarda costa* sloop of 1729, the *Santa Rita*, carried six cannon, six patereroes, seventy muskets, and eighty men.<sup>36</sup>

Luke and Holland were not the only foreign commanders of Spanish cruisers. French vessels held commissions to patrol for interlopers and enemies along Spanish coasts in the early eighteenth century. Some were as large as forty guns and 350 men.<sup>37</sup> Several buccaneers turned renegade, seeking their former comrades. Helles de Lecat, also known as Yellows, was Brasiliano's lieutenant and was with Morgan at Panama. Later sought by the English for piracy, de Lecat went over to the Spanish and cruised against logwood cutters. Jan Erasmus Reyning, a buccaneer comrade, accepted an English commission to pursue de Lecat, but joined him instead.<sup>38</sup> Philip Fitzgerald, the Irish commander of a small Spanish man-of-war, hanged English seamen without trial.<sup>39</sup> The pirates Christopher Winter and Nicholas Brown accepted amnesty from the English government then went over to the Spanish, converted, and attacked the English in the West Indies. The Spanish refused to suppress their activities.<sup>40</sup>

Another foreign commander was Turn Joe, an Irishman experienced both as privateer and pirate. He too went over to the Spanish and actually attacked pirates, capturing three sloops in a single day.<sup>41</sup> The Spanish seem to have had no qualms about setting a thief to catch a thief, particularly if their thief were Catholic or soon became so. Nor for that matter did the English: Thomas Pound was a pirate later promoted to command as an English naval officer.<sup>42</sup>

Buccaneers at Darien and in the South Sea often referred to *armadillos*, armed vessels sent to seek them out or defend a port town or city; similarly, an *armadilla*, or little armada, was an armed flotilla. Unlike the *guarda costas*, most *armadillos* were commissioned for the occasion, much like the country sloops commissioned in the North American colonies in response to a specific pirate threat, although the word itself often referred to any Spanish seeker of any size.

In 1681, Spanish authorities sent a fourteen-oar piragua on a reconnaissance for buccaneers at Gorgonia, with orders to immediately bring word to Panama if they found them.<sup>43</sup> In 1686 filibusters were informed of a galley being built at Panama of fifty-two oars, five cannon, and forty swivels, to be accompanied by two piraguas and 400 men from Cartagena and Porto Bello. Its crew intended to slip out by night and catch the filibusters unaware.<sup>44</sup> Some South Sea *armadillos* were manned with Levantine mercenaries from the Eastern Mediterranean, usually referred to as Greeks. They were a variety of nationalities.<sup>45</sup>

In 1680, South Sea buccaneers fought an *armadilla* of five ships and three barks. Its three flagships were commanded by Spanish officers but divided by race: Biscayers, Africans or African Americans, and mulattos or *mestizos*, defeating them only a fierce and bloody resistance.<sup>46</sup> Some *armadillas* were heavily armed for the region: four ships of fifty-six, forty, twenty-eight, and eighteen guns, plus three fireships, for example.<sup>47</sup>

But none of these Spanish seaborne defenses were adequate. The Armada de Barlovento had the difficulties of all men-of-war sent to seek pirates and privateers, that of finding them and then getting them to fight. When the armada finally did trap a great expedition of pirates, it was destroyed. *Guarda costas* fared little better, at least in regard to removing the pestilence of rovers. On one extreme, guard ships were prone to idleness and disrepair, but the *guarda costas* fell to the other extreme, conducting piracy under the guise of enforcing trade regulations, a safer and far more lucrative trade than the responsibilities of pirate-hunting. The *armadillos* fought as they could, often as bravely as their enemies, but by choice or circumstances were just as often limited to lying in wait for an enemy who might or might not show.

A word on Spanish courage and leadership is necessary. The cliché for Spanish seamen is one of evil oily cowardly butchers, an image set for centuries in English sensibilities and later expanded to an international audience by popular fiction and cinema. Spanish *guarda costas*, as well as buccaneers, filibusters, and pirates, committed horrific, unconscionable cruelties against the innocent. Claims of Spanish cowardice abound, but as often as not, when the Spanish were retreating or refusing to engage, so were their attackers refusing to engage, both playing cautious games of cat and mouse. The argument, of course, is that as defenders of their lands and property, the Spanish ought to have fought instead of running, but fears of these rovers were exaggerated to extremes; merchants of any culture have never been known for their fighting prowess. Dampier put many of the easy buccaneer victories down to the Spanish having few small arms except near garrisons, and de Lussan suggested that the Spanish in the South Sea were simply unaccustomed to war.<sup>48</sup>

Yet the Spanish often did fight courageously, many of their officers and men refusing quarter and dying, sword in hand, at their posts, displaying a profound tenacity even when defeat was inevitable. Don Francisco de Peralta and his crew of seventy-seven African Americans fought stoutly against buccaneers near Panama, beating them off three times, “both giving and receiving death unto each other as fast as they could charge.” When powder exploded on the stern of Peralta’s vessel, killing, burning, or maiming much of his crew, and blowing many into the sea, Peralta leapt overboard and saved several, despite his badly burned hands and the buccaneers firing at him.<sup>49</sup> This was courage and leadership of the highest standard.

### Invaded Shores

Not to be forgotten among this list of pirate prey and predators are the native peoples of America and Africa. Although many times allied with sea rovers or part of their crews, both Africans and Native Americans were exploited by sea rovers, slavery being the rovers’ principal aim. Yet often these native peoples defended their shores against interloping Europeans and those allied with them, and made their own reprisals. Native Central Americans were particularly dreaded. L’Ollonois died deservedly at the hands of Darien *bravos*, who dismembered him alive and threw his limbs and body into a fire and his ashes to the wind.<sup>50</sup> Those at Boca del Toro treated with neither Spaniards nor privateers, and were known to decapitate Europeans as they slept ashore.<sup>51</sup>



The Marquis de Maintenon lost twenty of his crew ashore in an attack by Native Americans at Boca de Drago. Labat, who along with de Lussan provided a short description of the incident, suggested that because both living and dead men were carried off, they were taken for their flesh.<sup>52</sup> Native Americans along the Florida coast were similarly feared as cannibals. Edward Barlow, a well-traveled mariner, had heard reports of cannibals on the Florida coast, and Johnson said they killed and ate sixteen of the pirate Shipton's crew, and carried another forty-nine off to the Spanish.<sup>53</sup> Such stories of cannibalism haunted the thoughts of seamen stranded on wild shores. William Dampier, buccaneer, circumnavigator, and learned observer, did not believe the stories, having never seen evidence of cannibalism in the New World, nor did the man-of-war surgeon John Atkins believe similar tales of Africans.<sup>54</sup>

Africans also returned the Europeans' complement. Slaves aboard slave ships and on plantations attempted uprisings and escapes, and sometimes succeeded.<sup>55</sup> The Dutch once sent forty men ashore to chastise John Conny, the African caboceer at Axim on the Guinea Coast "who was rich, and a cunning Fellow," but found themselves ambushed instead. Conny lined the walkway to his palace with their skulls. Later, seeking to put malice to rest, he buried the skulls in a chest with some brandy, pipes, and tobacco, but strung the jawbones from a tree.<sup>56</sup>

The trick of course was to get rich on weak merchantmen while avoiding such brutal ends, deserved or not, at the hands of nature, native peoples, or the unknown sail on the horizon.

## CHAPTER

# 10



## “A Sail! A Sail!”

### *Descrying and Espying the Prey*

SO CAME THE COMMON CRY OF THE LOOKOUT AT THE MASTHEAD when he sighted another vessel. The words themselves described what he usually saw, a sail, not a ship, for the sails were the first part of a ship visible over the horizon.<sup>1</sup>

The following was typical of the exchange between lookout above and captain below. “A sail! A sail!” shouted the lookout. “Where?” “Fair by us.” “How stands she?” “To the Eastward, and is two points upon her weather bow, and hath her larboard tacks aboard.”<sup>2</sup> The French expressions were similar, as in “*Voile, voile à bord de nous!*” and “*Navire devant et au-devant de nous!*”<sup>3</sup> (“A sail, a sail close aboard us!” and “A ship ahead and standing toward us!”) If more than one vessel were sighted, the language was “one hundred sail of merchantmen” or “ten sail of ships,” or simply “ten sail” if they could not be identified as to type.<sup>4</sup> (As an aside, readers should note that the lookout’s cry upon sighting land was not “Land ho!” but “Land! Land!”<sup>5</sup>)

For a sea rover, the sighting of a sail was the call to action. The chase had begun. The rover’s immediate purpose was to set it by the compass, then close and identify it, or at least discover its strength. Cruisers and sea rovers routinely chased all unidentified sail, although this could be a hazardous practice. “Being about the latitude of Barbados, we met an English frigate, or privateer, who first began to give us chase; but finding himself not to exceed us in strength, presently steered away from us. This flight gave us occasion to pursue the said frigate, as we did, shooting at him several guns of eight-pound carriage.”<sup>6</sup>

However, a merchantman's master received these same words with a note of caution or wariness, if not outright suspicion or fear. Because news of war traveled so slowly, all at sea had to always be on guard, lest they find themselves trapped and forced to engage or submit to a ship of greater force. All were potential prey. Even in friendly peacetime waters prudent commanders usually regarded most vessels with suspicion. War-time was the worst, for it could mean three kinds of predators: men-of-war, privateers, and pirates. A supercargo aboard a merchantman put it well in 1704: "One of the sailors came down to the cabin and called 'A sail, a sail,' which is in these times of War but a melancholy noise on board a small merchantman as we were."<sup>7</sup>

Jonathan Dickinson, known for his journal of his shipwreck on the Florida coast in 1696, described how his vessel's captain ran from unknown lights at night and from an unknown sail during the day, and attempted to make it into Havana harbor in order to inquire about a French fleet said to be lurking at Cape Antonio.<sup>8</sup>

Friendly men-of-war often were feared as well, for they might board and press part of the crew or search the vessel for contraband. Even in peacetime, England expected its men-of-war to search foreign vessels for "his Majestie's subjects" and to search privateers, foreign or English, for English goods and get an accounting for their origin.<sup>9</sup> A man-of-war might even press part of a privateer's crew. On the other hand, meeting ships at sea was also an important way to receive news, send mail, and get vital supplies.

Having word of a seeker, a prudent captain or master would have already sent "hammocks and chests down" and would "keep a clear ship" until he felt the threat had passed. This meant that temporary cabin partitions, hammocks, and chests would be stowed out of the way, making a generally uncomfortable existence for the common seaman even more miserable (although better than being a prisoner). As Captain Woodes Rogers described his preparations, "Being informed at Bristol that the *Jersey*, a French man-of-war carrying 46 guns, was cruising betwixt England and Ireland, it oblig'd us to keep our hammocks up, and a clear Ship for a fight, all night."<sup>10</sup>

Often, one ship would "espy" or "descry" another long before the other did. The words are basically synonyms, "espy" meaning to "discover by looking out," and "descry" meaning to "catch sight of something from a distance."<sup>11</sup> Atmospheric conditions, the sails set on the distant vessel, the lookout's relative elevation above the waterline, the number of lookouts and their alertness, skill, and acuity determined when one ship sighted another. For example, in the northern hemisphere a ship to the

north of another was more easily spotted at noon on a sunny day than a ship to the south. The sun was on the sails of the northern ship, and its glare was in the eyes of the southern lookout.

The same applied anytime the sun was behind one of the ships: “The sun shining bright, we saw him long ever he espyed us, but at length they discerned us.”<sup>12</sup> Some ships were caught almost unaware by a solitary lookout’s lack of diligence, in at least one case due to fatigue: “[W]e being all tired with pumping, watching and labouring all night . . . were taking a little rest, leaving only one man to look out who did not see the Privateer till he was too near us to avoid him.”<sup>13</sup> In other cases, lookouts thought they saw ships where there were none. Domingo Fernández de Navarette, sailing from Acapulco to Manila, wrote that near the Marianas “they discovered four Sail from the Topmast-head, which caused great Consternation, but it was a mistake of the Sailor.”<sup>14</sup> None of this is surprising. Fatigue, hunger, thirst, glare, eye strain, heat, cold, and sleep deprivation can each diminish a lookout’s ability. In foul weather, lookouts might be busy trying to stay warm instead of keeping a weather eye out. Sleep deprivation could often cause a person to see things that were not there.

Visibility at sea was affected by atmospheric conditions and sea state, and could vary from a few feet in a dense fog to many miles on a clear day. A mist on the sea could make vessels appear closer, and great swells could hide vessels within their troughs. Fog, mist, and haze could disguise a vessel’s true nature. Duguay-Trouin wrote of descrying in a mist or haze fifteen large vessels, which he took to be the fifteen Dutch vessels he expected from the East Indies. When the mist lifted, he realized they were fifteen powerful Dutch men-of-war.<sup>15</sup> Shelvocke noted sighting a sail that at first appeared too large to be the *Mercury*, his consort, but soon proved to be her.<sup>16</sup> While traveling in a canoe along the Florida coast, Dickinson thought he spotted a brigantine offshore, but it turned out to be a two-masted canoe or boat.<sup>17</sup> A French officer in the West Indies once mistook a fleet of Carib canoes and pirogues for an English fleet come to attack.<sup>18</sup> Clouds, mist, haze, or land on the horizon could hide ships from the sight of even the most sharp-eyed lookout.

Modern navigators mathematically determine line-of-sight distance to the horizon by taking the square root of the observer’s height of eye above the water in feet, and multiplying it by 1.144, giving the distance to the horizon in nautical miles. By adding this number to that obtained by multiplying the square root of the height above water in feet of a distant object by 1.144, the observer can determine the distance at which the object will first be seen under *ideal* conditions.<sup>19</sup> Theory aside, Hutchinson

gave as an example based on experience that “three mast ships in fine weather, with all their lofty sails set, may be seen from each others mast heads seven leagues distance” or twenty-one nautical miles.<sup>20</sup> This was an ideal circumstance. Often only low sails were set, and sometimes none at all. A lookout aboard a ship under full sail might not sight a ship with all sail furled until within four leagues, when its hull appeared above a “clear horizon,” and in more adverse weather conditions he might not sight it until much closer. He might not sight a ship at all if it were anchored along a shoreline.

Espying a ship was naturally far more difficult in bad weather and at night. Visibility at night depended as much on the weather as it did on moonlight, and the lookout's eyesight and skill were often the difference between spotting another vessel and not even realizing one was there. Exposure to bright sunlight over a long period diminishes the eyes' ability to adapt to the darkness, making a lookout's night vision less sharp than if he passed the day below decks.<sup>21</sup> Many vessels reduced sail at night, making it more difficult to catch a glimpse of them. Even in fair weather at night, ships passing nearby might be missed. John Dann, a pirate, reported that a partnership of pirate vessels missed sighting the “Moors Shipp” one night, though they passed but two miles away.<sup>22</sup>

It was not unknown to mistake natural objects for ships. On several occasions buccaneers and privateers in the South Sea spotted “vessels” that turned out to be guano-covered rocks. (None of the accounts made clear whether the rocks were mistaken for the brownish tint of the linen sails of European ships or the brighter white of the local cotton sails.) One crew spotted what they thought was a ship's sail floating in the water but discovered a dead whale instead.<sup>23</sup>

Although there were lapses, rovers kept especially good lookouts, for every sail espied might mean a prize. The articles of the pirate Howel Davis and his gang awarded the best pair of pistols aboard a prize to the lookout who first spotted it, and Lowther's articles rewarded the best pistol or small gun aboard a prize. Shelvocke's provided “a reward of 20 dollars shall be given to him that first sees a prize of good value, or exceeding 50 tons burthen.” Others similarly gave a “good Sute of Apparel, or so much Money as it [sic] set down by order” for the discovery of a sail that turned out to be a prize.<sup>24</sup>

The key to action for both prey and predator was the identity of the unknown sail, which could remain unknown until vessels were so close a fight could not be avoided. To discern the details of armament and crew of an unknown vessel by naked sight alone—whether, for example, the crew were many or few, and how many ports or cannon the vessel might

have—it had to be no more than a few hundred yards away, and even then many details were obscure. And because most nations had other nations’ vessels in their naval and merchant fleets—a French privateer might be a Dutch-built flute—it was not possible to determine nationality solely from design or general characteristics. Even so, at close range vessels showed enough unique characteristics that it was difficult to disguise them.<sup>25</sup>

The greater the distance, the more likely a vessel was to be misidentified. Even so, many were misidentified at close range. Henry Teonge, chaplain aboard a fifty-six-gun cruiser near the Isle of Wight, wrote of sighting several ships: “We discover six sail far from us: supposing them Frenchmen; therefore we provide accordingly. Chests and hammocks go all down; our guns all ready; and we tack towards them. Coming near, they prove East India merchants.”<sup>26</sup> Similarly, HMS *Plymouth* chased a vessel in the Mediterranean which they “made to be a Turk, but proved a Frenchman bound for Tangier.”<sup>27</sup> A French flotilla originally thought to be merely a group of corsairs was soon identified by the height of their carved works and the “separation of their masts” as French warships of substantial force.<sup>28</sup> Serving as a volunteer, Duguay-Trouin once convinced his officers that fifteen apparent English men-of-war were actually merchantmen, and so they were. Duguay-Trouin’s telescope and youthful eyesight permitted positive identification. The Comte de Forbin correctly guessed that four English ships, although in appearance warships, were in behavior merchantmen. His consort disagreed, but Forbin turned out to be correct.<sup>29</sup>

When his lookout spotted a fleet and thought them fisher-boats, Jean Doublet sent an ensign aloft to be certain. The ensign also thought them fisher-boats, but noted that some appeared to be too large. Doublet went aloft himself with a telescope and discovered the vessels to be large enemy men-of-war advancing in good order. Shipboard telescopes (called spy glasses, spying glasses, and perspective glasses in English, and *lunettes* or *lunettes d’approche* in French) were not part of the lookout’s equipment. When one was used aloft it was usually at the hand and eye of an officer. Although modern lookouts use binoculars to help spot ships and aircraft, sea rovers did not use telescopes to spot sail on the horizon. Rather, they used them to discern the details of a vessel already sighted, in addition to their obvious use in navigation, particularly in landfalls and coastal navigation.<sup>30</sup>

Even telescopes could be deceived, and ultimately it was the commander’s judgment that mattered most. Jean Doublet was once suspicious of an unknown settee slowly rowing in a calm toward his small merchant

vessel. Although there was peace among European nations and war only with the Saletins, he assumed the worst, that any vessel approaching had to be considered a possible enemy—and this one had far too many men at the oars to be a merchantman. His own crew believed the vessel to be an Algerine, assuring Doublet that Saletins did not use the type of vessel approaching. A Spaniard in his crew dismissed his concern, saying that like Don Quixote, Doublet saw an adventure in everything. But Doublet was not to be dissuaded. He made his ship clear for engaging, and as he feared, the vessel was a Salley rover. Although much weaker in force, Doublet, aided by a brace of pistols, a lighted match, and a barrel of gunpowder, ordered his crew to fight, or die in flames where they stood. They fought.<sup>31</sup>

It was always best for a merchantman to assume a sail might be a rover, and for a rover to assume it might be prey, but these assumptions had to be made cautiously and carefully. After espying a sail standing toward the *Hannibal*, Captain Phillips “tacked off to the N. to have time to put our ship in a posture of defence, in case she prov’d an enemy.” It was a wise precaution, for the ship proved French and heavily armed. A long sharp fight ensued, and Phillips fought off the Frenchman, though with great damage to his own vessel.<sup>32</sup>

By now the reader may have noticed something missing from this chapter, something expected in every romantic and adventurous sea-roving image of the lookout decrying the prey: colors.

## CHAPTER

# 11



## Colors True and Colors False

### *In None We Trust*

“BUT FOR ALL HIS CHEAT WE KNEW WHAT HE WAS, AND WERE IN ALL kinds ready to give him his welcome,” wrote Captain Phillips, having fired a gun athwart the forefoot of a French cruiser flying English colors.<sup>1</sup>

Colors have long been associated with the romance of the Age of Sail, and films have made much use of the image. We are all familiar with the flag waving in the representation of a spy glass lens, an unknown sail now recognized. However, colors, whether represented in romance or reality, were often dangerously misleading.

For several reasons, the previous chapter made no mention of colors in identifying a vessel. First, although colors were intended as a means of identifying ships, in practice a lookout seldom saw colors when he espied a ship, even at closer ranges. Flags were expensive, they faded and wore out if flown continually, they could be damaged by strong weather, and flying them added nothing to the speed or handling of a ship. They were flown only for a good reason.

Even then, when commanders flew their colors at sea, they were prohibited from flying them in “windy weather.” Rovers usually flew their colors at anchor, and in celebration they might fly flags and pendants not only from trucks and staffs, but also from each of the yardarms. At anchor, colors were struck when “it blows hard, and the yards and top-masts are struck, in which case colours are not hoisted but when some vessel is coming in or passing.”<sup>2</sup>

Second, colors were often confusing even when flown honestly. Mere descriptions of various ancients, jacks, pendants, and vanes indicated the



potential confusion. The principal colors of any vessel were its "ancient" or ensign consisting of either the state colors or some variation thereof, usually flown from a staff at the stern. The design of the ancient could vary among the types of ship belonging to the same nation: a man-of-war, a common merchantman, and a merchant vessel of a major trading company might all fly different ensigns.

Sizes differed dramatically. In 1687 by far the largest of flags and pennants aboard a ship, a first rate's might be fourteen yards long (wide) and a fifth rate's eight yards.<sup>3</sup> Most vessels flew a jack, a smaller and more square flag from the jackstaff at the bowsprit, and they often flew other flags at the mastheads. Some flew vanes, or very small flags, at the mastheads instead, specifically the fore vane, main vane, and mizzen vane.<sup>4</sup> Men-of-war, privateers, and letter-of-mart ships flew a pendant or pennant, called a commission pendant, from the main truck indicating their status as commissioned warships. The English referred to the combination of colors of a commissioned ship as the "ancient, jack, and pendant."<sup>5</sup>

Until the union of the English and Scottish parliaments in 1707, English men-of-war and privateers flew a red ensign with the red cross of St. George on a white background in the canton, although some English men-of-war might fly a white or blue ensign if attached to the white or blue squadrons of the English fleet.

Although the law permitted English privateers to fly the king's colors, there were usually specific instructions in commissions as to how this was to be done. A privateer commission of 1693 prohibits privateers and letter-of-mart ships from flying their Majesties' colors in company with any English man-of-war, or so near an ally's man-of-war that it might fire a salute, or "in or near any port or road whatsoever," and similar instructions were issued in 1694, along with a "privateer jack" or "burgee jack" for privateers. This prohibition included flags made in imitation of their Majesties' colors, or that might be mistaken for them. It was common practice for merchantmen to "evade punishment" for flying their Majesties' colors by flying similar, but not exactly identical, flags and pendants.<sup>6</sup>

English merchant ships flew the red ancient from the staff at the stern, a cross of St. George on a white background (the true flag of England) at the sprit top or jackstaff, and flags, pennants, and vanes of choice at the fore, main, and mizzen. As was the case with English men-of-war after the union of the English and Scottish parliaments in 1707, the union device replaced the St. George's cross in the canton. Ships of the English East India Company flew a red and white striped ensign with as many as nineteen stripes, sometimes with the Cross of St. George in the canton,

and the Guinea Company flew a St. George's Cross with a checkered border as a jack.<sup>7</sup> Thus there was potential confusion enough among English colors.

And so it was with flags of other nations as well. French vessels flew the *pavillon blanc* or white ensign, sometimes referred to derisively by the English as the "white sheet," with or without gold fleurs-de-lys or royal insignia. Although the white ensign was prohibited to merchantmen, most seem to have flown it instead of the French merchant or port ensigns, of which there were several.<sup>8</sup>

Dutch ships flew the tricolor of red, white, and blue, although before 1660 orange was seen instead of red. However, there were as many different flags to be seen on Dutch ships as on English ones, or those of other nations. Many Dutch men-of-war flew the state's flag of a lion rampant on a yellow field in the early part of the seventeenth century, and in the latter part they flew the lion on a red field. Others flew a red battle ensign, or "bloody flag," with an arm holding a sword.

Spanish ships flew the red Cross of Burgundy on a white field as a jack, and often at mastheads as well; merchantmen often flew it as an ensign. Spanish ensigns varied but were usually white and emblazoned with the arms of Castile and Leon or other figures, some of which were religious. The traditional ensign of ships of the Spanish Armada, including that of the Armada de Barlovento, was of crimson damask emblazoned with the Spanish arms near the center, a figure of Christ crucified, the Virgin, and Saint John to the left, and a figure of an armed and mounted Santiago (Saint James) striking down a Moor to the right. De Lussan often referred to Spanish colors as "their Burgundian colors" or "*pavillon de Bourgogne*," and in one instance described a Spanish man-of-war flying a red *sans quartier* ensign and Spanish royal colors at the main truck.<sup>9</sup>

A red flag or banner was common among some men-of-war, privateers, and pirates. They often hoisted or unfurled the banner after the prey refused an offer of quarter, and sometimes from the outset as a refusal to give or receive any quarter, or as an indication of undaunted courage. When Barlow described his encounter with Kidd, he noted that the pirate showed no colors "but had only a red broad pennant out without any cross on it."<sup>10</sup> The red flag was variously referred to as the "bloody banner," "bloody flag," "bloody collours," or "blood red colloures" by English-speaking peoples, and the "*sans quartier*" or "*pavillon rouge*" by the French.<sup>11</sup> Doublet noted being chased by a large man-of-war flying "un pavillon rouge" at the mainmast.<sup>12</sup> However, even the red flag might be used in ways other than threatening, including as a distress signal. By the time of the American Revolution the red banner was limited largely to pirates.<sup>13</sup>

Biscayers flew a red ensign with a white Cross of Burgundy, and Ostenders flew the red Cross of Burgundy on a white field as an ensign and a yellow arm and sword on a red field as a battle flag.<sup>14</sup>

Buccaneers and filibusters usually flew the colors of the nations from which they had or pretended to have commissions. Morgan's two squadrons sailing for Panama had each a different set of colors. One flew the "royal flag" or union flag at the mainmast, the "Parliamentary" ensign of a white cross on a red field at the stern, and the union jack at the bowsprit. The other flew the "white flag, though English"—probably St. George's Cross—at the mainmast, a white ensign with "four small red squares in one of the quarters" (perhaps a white cross on a red field in the canton, the reverse of the red ensign), and the union jack at the bow.<sup>15</sup> Edward Davis, under a supposed French commission, flew a white flag painted with a hand and sword, while his consort Swan flew the St. George's Cross.<sup>16</sup> At times buccaneers made up their own colors for actions ashore, using them to distinguish companies. At the beginning of the voyage described in the first chapter, Sharp's company marched under a red flag with green and white ribbons, Sawkins's men under a flag striped red and yellow, Harris's under green, Coxon's under red, and Cook's with a banner of red and yellow stripes, emblazoned with a hand and sword.<sup>17</sup>

Of all the colors of the period, those of the pirate were the most notorious. However, until 1700 or so, the black flag with death's head apparently did not exist. Pirates usually flew the colors of their nativity, many pretending not to be pirates but privateers. Only with the Peace of Utrecht in 1713, and the subsequent rise of pirates whose rhetoric pretended no nationality did the black flag fly with any regularity. Pirates of this period used the flag as a means of group identity and also as a symbol designed to induce terror. The flags were of a wide variety, most incorporating a human skull, or "death's head," and related symbols of death or violence, although many were only black, without a figure of any sort.<sup>18</sup>

Even so, pirates fought under other colors as well. Davis once hoisted a dirty tarpaulin as his colors.<sup>19</sup> Bartholomew Roberts fought his last fight, in which he was killed, under several flags at the same time: "The colours they fought under, besides a Black Flag, were a red English ensign, a King's Jack, and a Dutch pendant." Roberts had earlier sailed into Whydah under a St. George's ensign, a black silk flag at the mizzen, a black silk pendant, and a black silk jack (colors were usually of wool). These last two accounts were Johnson's and were probably accurate, for a Boston newsletter described Roberts as sailing into Trepassi harbor in

Newfoundland with “English colours flying, their pirate flagg at the top-mast-head, with deaths head and cutlash.”<sup>20</sup>

Not all pirates might fly the black flag, even when they had such on board. The pirate John Russel sailed into “Currisal Road” at the island of St. Nicholas in the Cape Verdes, flying only an English ensign, jack, and pendant. He probably did so in order not to arouse suspicion, although it was unlikely his prey could have avoided him or his consorts, the pirates Low and Spriggs.<sup>21</sup>

In all, it seems a confusion of flags and usage, but the distinctions among them were enough that ships were generally recognizable by their colors when near enough to observe them closely and assuming they were flown honestly. It was best to look for the nation’s principal colors flying somewhere on the vessel, ensign or jack, for there were many occasions when mistakes were made. Thomas Baker, the English consul in Tripoli, described a Dutch man-of-war as “with a white ensigne (for they come to treat) and Dutch jack and pennant.”<sup>22</sup> Without the corresponding jack and pennant, the ship might have been taken for a Frenchman, for the white flag was commonly used as the flag of truce. The white flag, other than as a national ensign, was flown not only when a vessel came to treat in general, but also after a vessel had struck its colors but wanted to treat for terms of surrender or to make sure his enemy knew he had surrendered. When the pirate Louis Guittar was defeated in 1700, he “struck his bloody Collours and hoisted up a flagg of truce and then fired no more Gunns.”<sup>23</sup> As such, the white flag was to be respected and not used for deception, but this precept was violated at times.

Other nations flew white ensigns. In 1700 the Comte de Forbin chased down five Algerian corsairs and demanded by what right they flew the *pavillon blanc*, which by treaty with France was forbidden them. The corsairs replied that it was not the *pavillon blanc* of France that they flew, but that of Portugal. There was no doubt that the corsairs intended their ensigns to be taken for those of France, but this could not be proved.<sup>24</sup>

Flags and ensigns could also be misidentified merely through fault of eyesight: “For sometime in the wake of the sun we thought it had been a Spanish ensign . . . but running a little nearer we perceived her ensign was [Genoese].”<sup>25</sup> This same faulty eyesight in some situations could have even more disappointing results. In 1665, the English Admiral of the White, flying a white ensign with St. George’s Cross in the canton, captured a French ship of fifty-six guns when it mistook the English white ensign for a French ensign.<sup>26</sup> Depending on conditions of wind and visibility, the ensigns of Portugal, France, Genoa, Sicily, Sardinia, and Spain,

as well as the English St. George's Cross, might all be confused with each other.<sup>27</sup> In a calm, colors might be impossible to identify.

Long distances did not help. Hollywood images of a flag taking up the entire field of view of a spying glass notwithstanding, if a ship's ensign filled up the entire field of view, the ship was probably within two or three hundred yards—and also close to or within point blank range. Ensigns were large so that they could be recognized at long distances by the naked eye.

The third and most critical problem with relying on a ship's colors had little to do with confusions caused by similarities in design. It was due instead to the universal use of false colors as a principal means of deception at sea. Indeed, most men-of-war and privateers carried a variety of colors for deception. Called by the French the *pavillon de chasse* or *enseigne trompeuse*, the colors of the chase could be those of any other nation, but only commissioned vessels were permitted false colors.<sup>28</sup> Legitimate rovers were permitted to chase under any nation's colors, but were supposed to attack only under their own. French sea ordinances, typical of those followed by European nations, permitted a vessel to chase under any colors, but required that true colors be hoisted *before* the actual attack, that is, before firing a shot—although waiting until the last possible moment was entirely legitimate.<sup>29</sup> A cannon fired with a loaded shot was a demand for a vessel to show its true colors just as a cannon fired unshotted might be taken for a peaceful signal. However, this hoisting of true colors before firing was not always the case in practice.<sup>30</sup>

When the English captured Duguay-Trouin in 1694, they charged him with having fired upon the *Prince of Orange* before showing his true colors. He claimed he did so as a *fanfaronnade*, that is, a swaggering or boasting. His captors never held him to account: denied parole, he managed through the intrigues of an enamored merchant's wife and a Swiss sea captain (himself once enamored of the wife), to escape to France in a boat procured for the purpose.<sup>31</sup>

It was perhaps one thing to fire upon a powerful man-of-war commanded by an influential captain, especially if you later found yourself a prisoner. To fire upon a ship appearing to be a merchantman without first hoisting one's true colors was probably quite common. Captain Tolson noted without further comment of being fired upon by a French corsair sailing under Dutch colors: "When hee Came upon my quarters, he tacked and Fired 2 Shott att me under dutch Colers, butt I did nott intend to trust him."<sup>32</sup> Likewise, the Comte de Forbin described two vessels that came to the sound of cannon fire. They sailed within a half league of a flotilla of French ships, hoisted French colors, and fired a can-

non. One of the French ships then hoisted its French colors; the two vessels turned and fled. Forbin assumed from this behavior that they were Turkish corsairs or Flushing privateers.<sup>33</sup> None of the privateers described here seem to have had any qualms about firing a gun under false colors.

Legitimate deceptions, however, could be maintained until just before a ship opened fire.<sup>34</sup> Captain Phillips of the *Hannibal* once hoisted his English colors and fired a shot across the bow of an unknown, but probably French, ship. In return, the ship hoisted English colors, only replacing them with its true French colors an hour later when it opened its lower tier of guns to fire a broadside.<sup>35</sup>

Colors as evidence of nationality were thus almost worthless. Again, context was critical. Not only must a vessel's type or characteristics be considered—and many captured vessels were put to use by their captors—but also its location and behavior, and even so, it could still be impossible to determine nationality.

At any rate, a weak English merchantman should not necessarily have stood toward, nor should a privateer have ignored, a ship that flew English colors, looked English, and was where English ships were expected. In 1687, Henry Pitman and company bore up and waited after sighting a sail near the isle of Ash. The vessel, appearing to be a Jamaica sloop and flying “our King's Jack and ancient,” came to an anchor. Being hailed, the sloop replied, “From Jamaica.” Moments after anchoring near the sloop, Pitman and company were attacked and taken prisoner by Spanish privateers.<sup>36</sup> Edward Barlow noted several examples of French vessels sailing amidst English men-of-war, believing them by their colors and location to be French.<sup>37</sup>

In spite of these occasional foolish lapses, the use of false colors was so common that many captains were not deceived: “[They] showing us English colors, but that sham would not take.”<sup>38</sup> Likewise, an English slaver refused to trust the pirate Cornelius, “though he had English colours and pendant aboard” and pretended to be an English man-of-war. A ten-hour running fight ensued.<sup>39</sup> And another: “And having abroad English colours and King's Jack, had like to a cheated us.”<sup>40</sup> False colors were so prevalent and so often misused that identification according to colors was dubious at best. A fleet of vessels flying Swedish and Ostend colors, for example, would not necessarily be identified as vessels of those nations, but as “a fleet of Swedes and Ostenders, *by their colors*” (author's emphasis).<sup>41</sup> Edward Coxere noted that the Dutch rarely chased under their own colors—nor, it seems, did anyone else.<sup>42</sup>

Mistrust at sea was so commonplace that colors were rarely regarded, and if rovers or cruisers were about, they were not regarded at all. Edmond

Halley, the great astronomer who commanded the *Paramour* Pink in 1699, found himself fired upon by two ships whose passengers included a pair of ship's masters who had recently been captured by pirates. According to Halley, one "swore that ours was the very shipp that took him." They entirely disregarded Halley's king's colors, saying "colours were not to be trusted." He was again fired upon under similar circumstances in 1700.<sup>43</sup>

Indeed, in wartime it was notable when a privateer or cruiser *did* fly colors honestly. Jean Doublet described two English men-of-war coming to anchor and briefly trapping him and his consort near a neutral port. The English raised their colors, and Doublet raised the French. Here there was no doubt about who was who. In most other chases and actions in advance of a *rencontre*, Doublet noted the use of false colors.<sup>44</sup> Paradoxically, the lack of colors in some instances was just as disturbing. Robert Lyde wrote that the pilot boat at Lyme was afraid to come up with him because he did "not shew an English ancient."<sup>45</sup>

Because of the heightened mistrust of colors, they were most successful as a ruse when used with other indications that tended to confirm their legitimacy. For example, to attack two Spanish vessels, filibusters and buccaneers flew a Spanish flag from a recently captured Spanish ship, and from their boats as well. But they also flew English and French colors from the boats, giving a distinct impression that the Spanish ship had captured the French and English. The ruse succeeded. Of the two vessels that approached, one was sunk with grenades, and the other was captured. The filibusters then discovered packages of ropes cut into equal lengths to bind the prisoners the Spanish anticipated capturing, and a Spanish commission ordering the death of all captured filibusters, excepting only the surgeons. The infuriated filibusters gave no quarter.<sup>46</sup>

Not all deceptions in the use of colors were of immediate warlike intentions. An English privateer, for example, might sail into a Spanish port under French colors and use French and Spanish speakers among his crew to gather intelligence or trade for provisions.<sup>47</sup> Edward Coxere, in an English merchant ship with designs to trade with the Spanish in the Canaries even while England was at war with the Spanish, described how the ship jogged into harbor flying Leghorn (Livorno) colors, pretending to be an Italian. (The captain of an English man-of-war, hearing the plan, had wished Coxere to "Have a care!" yet otherwise seemed not to mind that an English ship went to trade with the Spanish. Obviously, war was no impediment to honest trade among enemies.) Another English ship, passing as a Hollander, lay at anchor nearby and assumed Coxere's ship

was a Spanish man-of-war. The Hollander prepared to fire a broadside into Coxere's ship in spite of the colors it flew, and held its fire only when the English ship came to anchor.<sup>48</sup>

It is almost worth wondering if colors ever meant anything at all, except when actually engaging the enemy.



## CHAPTER

# 12



## Stand to Her Forefoot

### *Giving Chase*

“AT SIX IN THE MORNING WE SAW A SAIL. . . . IT BLEW FRESH, WITH a great sea; and the chase being to Windward, we crouded extravagantly. Wind at northwest.”<sup>1</sup>

The prey sighted, the rover chased under as much sail as his vessel could bear, wanting its company. It was his business to go where the prey was and to examine closely every sail sighted—yet be ready to turn and run should he find his prey of a force significantly beyond his own. Speed was imperative for chasing prey and running from cruisers: the French “privateers taking and doing a great deal of mischief to our shipping, they sailing so well, our ships seldom taking but few of them.”<sup>2</sup>

Before going further, it is necessary to point out that the chase need not be so obvious. Indeed, many commanders considered the ruse the simplest and most effective way to chase. Why bother to chase the prey if the prey will come to you?

Mistake, foolishness, curiosity, or eagerness often brought the prey close aboard. The rover did nothing but wait or sail his course, pretending nothing—vessels simply ran mistakenly to him. Edward Barlow described several such incidents during his cruise aboard the *Royal Sovereign* in 1691, where French vessels filled with refugees or merchants hoping to trade discovered the French ships to be English.<sup>3</sup> The Comte de Forbin described how a Neapolitan bark under Spanish colors sent a boat to his ship, assuming it English. The boat called, “What news?” and Forbin replied, “Good!” The bark showed its heels but not before the French opened fire. The second shot fired the powder aboard, blowing the bark to pieces.<sup>4</sup>

Lying by and signaling to speak with another vessel worked at times. To lie by (or heave to) aboard a square-rigged ship, the yards on the fore- or mainmast were braced back. That is, the crew hauled the yards around until the wind took the sails back, counteracting the wind's action on the other sails. A fore-and-aft-rigged vessel would haul one of its sheets to windward.<sup>5</sup> Still, few captains were fools, and many would wonder whether a vessel lying by were friend or foe.

Signaling as if in distress also worked occasionally. Indeed, so suspicious were ships at sea that they might not approach a vessel in actual distress for fear it were a rover. A more subtle technique was to lure the chase by disguising the force of the ship and its sailing qualities, and sail the same course as the prey, or sail upon a wind (close-hauled), keeping most of the crew below deck. However, this tactic could lure not only curious merchantmen seeking to hail, but also rovers and cruisers. In fair weather, a rover could lower its topgallant masts to make it appear at a distance to be a "short-masted" ship, invariably a merchantman. The Sieur de Montauban on luring the prey: "I used all the art I could to amuse her; and for that end I hung out Dutch colors. . . . I took upon me to make a show of waiting for him, and sailed but very slowly, that I might make him believe my ship was heavy laden, or that I was encumbered for want of sails and hands."<sup>6</sup> To lure a Spanish picaroon, the *Constant Warwick* "put out Flushing colours to deceive them and hung a beam of timber and a grinding stone to the stern to make our ship seem a merchant ship by her dull sailing. We then hauled in all our guns and covered our [carved] work to conceal ourselves."<sup>7</sup> Only when near did the Biscayer discover what the prey really was. Hutchinson, an eighteenth-century privateer, considered this tactic of sailing "with stop-waters towed in the water" as a faster means of making an enemy come up than could be done by chasing.<sup>8</sup>

It was noted in chapter 5 how a ketch could work well in the chase, its nonthreatening appearance and poor sailing qualities working to its advantage. When Captain Van Horn of buccaneer fame began his roving career with a French commission in European waters, he and his crew of a couple dozen men or so cruised in a small boat disguised as a fishing craft, taking numerous prizes.<sup>9</sup>

Using prizes as lures or to ease suspicions worked well. Shelvocke often employed his local Spanish prizes in various deceptions to prevent the Spanish from recognizing his "Europe-built" ship as a privateer.<sup>10</sup> Duguay-Trouin, learning of three Dutch ships waiting to be joined by an English man-of-war, dressed his English-built ship with English colors in the manner in which he had seen them flown in similar circumstances. Two

of the Dutch vessels assumed the *Sans-Pareil* was their escort, and followed without question. The French easily captured them.<sup>11</sup>

Most of the time, however, the rover had to chase openly, and it will help to momentarily view the pursuit through the prey's eyes. Fighting was a last resort for a merchantman, the prey in this case. Espying a sail bearing down upon him, the merchant captain had to make a decision based on several factors: the relative positions of the two vessels; the present political situation; the likelihood of threats in the area; wind speed and direction; current set and drift; the location of nearby land, shoals, and other hazards to navigation; his need for assistance or news; his purpose; his ship's armament, crew, and disposition; his vessel's sailing qualities; whether the unknown sail had yet espied his ship; and the possible identities of the sail. In every case, these factors led to one of six conning decisions: sail the present course, cautiously alter course moderately to discover what the other might do, bear away to gain time to make the ship clear for engaging, lie by, stand toward the unknown sail, or show her heels—that is, run for it.

A merchantman, especially alone, was likely to show her heels or at least alter course until losing sight of a suspect sail. It took time for one ship to come up to another, and a captain had to balance the possible threat with his ability to turn and run or turn and fight. A ship "astern of us, crowding after us" warranted making all sail and possibly making a clear ship for a fight.<sup>12</sup> Ships of force, good heels, or outright courage had more options. However, if a cautious captain altered his course or showed his heels, a cruiser, privateer, or pirate would give chase or "stand to the forefoot" (alter course to intercept the fleeing ship). The merchantment should take action accordingly.

Likewise, if one vessel approached another and "she did not try to make off" or she kept "close upon our *Quarter*, not bearing off," she might be suspected "to be a ship of force."<sup>13</sup> A vessel closing under full sail was very likely a rover or man-of-war, as was one that closed or waited under fighting sail—under topsails and fore course, with main course and small sails furled, that is.<sup>14</sup> A vessel might be taken for a cruiser simply by its location: "We presently furled our Sails, and rowed in close under the shore, knowing that they were Cruisers; for if they had been bound to *Panama* this Wind would have carried them thither; and no Ships bound from *Panama* come on this side of the Bay."<sup>15</sup> Another captain, after sighting four vessels, reported that "we had great reason to believe them French, our frigats seldom or never cruising so far to the S. and W."<sup>16</sup> Conversely, a ship might be suspected as prey simply because it bore away

when sighted.<sup>17</sup> One with “a large Hull, and but small Sails” was not a seeker but a merchantman.<sup>18</sup>

Turning and sailing toward the unknown vessel was often a good tactic against smaller rovers, provided the prey appeared of sufficient force: “We conclude thus: if he be a Seeker he must sail very well, and having clear weather and a long Summer’s day before him, he would speak with us in spite of our teeth, if we run for it. Whereas, if he was a very little fellow, we might scare him by bearing down upon him.”<sup>19</sup> For this very reason the rover was advised to look every sail over very closely. Merchantmen had a variety of such tricks up their sleeves: “But seeing him a small ship, and ours a vessel of 400 tuns, 28 guns, and about 50 men, we furl’d our main sail with all our hands at once, as a stratagem to seem well man’d; put our top-sails aback, and lay by, to let ’em see we were *no more afraid than hurt*.”<sup>20</sup>

However, as soon as the merchant commander realized that showing his heels was the only possibility of escape, his job was to choose the best course to stay free until nightfall, hoping that circumstance (in the form of weather, a friendly cruiser, or some other incident) would save his vessel, and if not, then he hoped to escape under cover of darkness.<sup>21</sup> A chase usually lasted hours: four leagues apart and with the rover having a three-knot advantage in speed, the chase would still take at least four hours. Often the difference in speed was smaller, and the chase much longer.

The rover’s decision-making process and tactics were simpler and based on a single imperative: giving chase. Because speed in pursuit was so vital, the rover invariably ensured his best heels by keeping a clean hull. He careened as often as practical, “brooming” or “breaming” (burning) and scraping marine growth from the hull.<sup>22</sup> Between careenings he gave his vessel “a pair of boots and tops,” by heeling, scraping, and tallowing as many strakes below the waterline as possible on one side, then the other. The ship’s trim, adjusted at the beginning of a cruise and monitored throughout, was just as vital for the chase: ballast, cargo, and other weights needed appropriate distribution; masts must be set up to best advantage by shifting or raking them forward or astern by adjusting their wedges or partners, or stepping them higher or cutting them shorter as appropriate; and shrouds and stays must be properly set up more or less taut. A vessel whose hull, masts, and rigging were in trim could make its best speed, but out of trim even a ship with swift lines might wallow like hog in mud.<sup>23</sup>

A note to the reader before continuing: in period language, the “chase” was the vessel being chased and also the act of chasing; the “chaser” was the vessel doing the chasing. This can be confusing in a

simple description—and the tactics of chasing are complex. To help avoid confusion the following text describing chasing tactics refers to the vessel being chased as the “prey” and to the vessel doing the chasing as the “rover.”

After setting the prey by the compass—that is, taking her magnetic bearing—the rover observed the prey to see how she sailed, noting the sail she carried, her course, and how she behaved before and after discovering she was espied. If deeply laden the prey probably sailed best on a bowline (close-hauled), and if a light vessel or lightly laden, then she sailed best free or before the wind.<sup>24</sup> A fore-and-aft-rigged vessel could sail a point or two closer to the wind and, being smaller, could run in shallower water. As a general rule, if the rover sailed better on a bowline (close-hauled), he wanted to keep the prey on his weather bow. If he sailed better large, then he kept his prey on the lee bow.<sup>25</sup>

Chasing was an art. “In giving chase, or chasing, or to escape being chased, there is required an infinite judgment and experience, for there is no rule for it; but the shortest way to fetch up your chase, is the best.”<sup>26</sup> Art though it was, there were suggestions, considerations, and limitations. In a calm, vessels could row and thus chase and run in any direction, assuming no shoals or land nearby. Otherwise the wind limited a vessel’s course. None could sail directly into the wind. Square-rigged vessels could sail only within six points of the wind (67.5 degrees). In other words, twelve of the compass’s thirty points were unavailable. Fore-and-aft-rigged vessels might sail as close as four points (45 degrees) to the wind. Further, although all vessels could sail with the wind astern, only ketches and some square-sailed single-mast vessels sailed best before the wind.<sup>27</sup> Most others made better speed quartering or large.

In the case of prey to windward, especially in the afternoon, the rover chased immediately, because the pursuit to windward was invariably a long one. The rover got his tacks aboard (hauled close to the wind) and shaped his course to meet the prey at the nearest angle. However, the best the rover might be able to do was sail a course parallel to his prey, thus sooner or later he must tack to cross her bows, or more likely, come into her wake. Speed was not the only factor here. How weatherly a vessel was (how much it was pushed sideways by the wind) mattered almost as much. Even if both vessels could lie equally close to the wind and the rover were the faster sailer, the rover might still be “eaten out of the wind” if his vessel were not weatherly enough, that is, if it lost more ground to leeward than did his prey.<sup>28</sup> In this case the rover must sail more large (farther from the wind) until he could get ahead (if he could), then tack and stand to her forefoot to cut the prey off—and as soon as

he did, his prey would probably tack as well. On the other hand, if the prey were less weatherly, the courses of the rover and seeker would eventually intersect. In general, the prey was advised to keep her course if the rover tacked and stood to the prey's wake. However, if the rover sailed a parallel course on the same tack, the prey was advised to tack immediately. If the rover gained, the prey must prepare for a fight.<sup>29</sup>

Tacking (sailing a zigzag course in the direction of the wind), although often necessary, had disadvantages to prey and rover. A vessel lost way, time, and distance when it changed tacks: it took time to regain its speed. Further, if the tacking vessel missed stays—that is, if did not pass through the eye of the wind and onto the other tack—it was momentarily dead in the water, then fell off on the other tack again and had to wear, or sail the long way around to the other tack, losing much time and ground.<sup>30</sup> If the prey missed stays, the rover might have time to “fetch the chase up,” and if the rover missed stays, the prey might get away. Whether a vessel even could tack or instead had to wear depended on wind, sea, and the vessel's characteristics; every vessel and circumstance were different.<sup>31</sup>

Given enough daylight, in a windward chase a faster and more weatherly rover would gain ground eventually. Unfortunately, speed notwithstanding, the prey could still make the chase difficult. If the rover were standing on the opposite tack toward the chase's wake, the prey could steer a point larger, gaining speed and thus distance from the rover, who might not notice this at first.<sup>32</sup>

The chase to leeward was simpler. The basic rule was to bear directly down upon the prey, setting a course to cut her off. “But if the chased be to the leewards, the chaser hath nothing else to do but to make out all her sails and to stand in with her; and if she be the better sailer of the two, and hath sea-room sufficient, and daylight, she is sure enough to speak with her.”<sup>33</sup>

But again, the pursued ship had tricks up her sleeve. Square-rigged prey usually began by sailing quartering, that is, with the wind over one of the quarters, this being the fastest point of sail for most vessels. If the rover chased before the wind, heading for its quarry's wake, the prey might slowly bring the wind upon its beam—it would slowly turn more toward the wind. If the rover still chased astern for the prey's wake, the merchantman might then have a chance to clap on a wind and weather the rover, although if the prey were not careful the rover might get within range. But if the rover chased quartering, both vessels would be on a parallel course and the merchantman could only hope that the rover's course would “incline to the Windward,” as it might if its sails were cut more square for speed in sailing on a bowline, as often was the case with

eighteenth-century privateers.<sup>34</sup> But this was hoping for the best. If the rover had any heels at all it would not matter if his course inclined a point to windward. Eventually he would come up with his prey.

A chase with the wind directly astern was rare for reasons already noted, particularly in three-mast vessels. However, ketches and similar vessels might sail well before the wind. William Dampier was aboard a ketch with a cargo of logwood when she found herself chased by two Spaniards. The ketch "*even when light*, was but a dull Sailer, worse being deep laden." But the crew unbent the foresail and rigged it as a studding sail, and her commander put the ketch before the wind. At first the Spanish no longer gained, but as the wind freshened, the ketch made more ground from the pursuers, eventually escaping by crowding until night, then clapping on a wind.<sup>35</sup> With the wind astern only some of the sails of the three-masted seekers would draw. To get more speed they would need to sail quartering, unable to bear down directly on the prey. A ship dismasted in battle and seeking to escape might also run before the wind, hoping to sail better here than could her pursuer.<sup>36</sup>

If possible, the prey tried to run on a different point of the wind if the rover gained on one. Nathaniel Uring: "We found the chase out-sailed us . . . upon which I desired the Captain would let us haul upon a wind. . . . We trim'd our sails, unperceiv'd by the French, handed our small sails and were upon a wind in an instant, when the privateer least expected it."<sup>37</sup>

Again, the prey intended to prolong the chase until nightfall, or into thick weather, a calm, a friendly port, a shallow inlet, or until a friendly cruiser came up. The rover intended to shorten the chase if at all possible. With luck the press of sail might carry away a topmast, or a yard might break in the slings, giving the rover time to come up.<sup>38</sup> Of course, the same could happen to the pursuer. In a calm the prey had no choice but to row, and here she was at a disadvantage unless she had enough crew to man boats to tow or oars to row. A rover held the advantage here in crew size, and often his vessel was built for rowing. When towing, a rope made fast to the bowsprit end was good for maneuvering, while one lower was better for getting the most headway.<sup>39</sup>

The prey often took drastic measures to avoid capture. Crowding on sail to a dangerous degree was common, and the worst that might happen was capture if a mast went by the board. "I clapped on all the sail I could and crowded my ship's side clear under water to get from him."<sup>40</sup> To lighten ship, a crew threw as much overboard as possible: boats, spare yards and masts, guns, anchors. They might cut up cables, beams, decks, and gunwales above the ports, and heave this hemp and timber overboard, and cut loose any boat towed astern. Part of the cargo could go, and the

crew could stave casks of water in the hold and pump the water out.<sup>41</sup> If worse came to worst, a merchantman would run his ship aground if he could, if not by day then by night. Defending a ship ashore was much easier than it was at sea with a small crew—the rover would need to send a boat to take a grounded prey. The rover seldom considered such extremes in pursuit, although “in this chace our Pinnacle towed under Water; so we cut her loose.”<sup>42</sup>

When night came the odds turned significantly in the prey’s favor. The prey could alter course, and often this was enough to escape.<sup>43</sup> The prey could “strike a Hull,” that is, furl her sails and lie in the trough of the sea, hoping the rover would pass her by in the darkness.<sup>44</sup> Usually, both prey and rover extinguished all lights, the rover not to be anticipated and the prey to prevent the rover from steering “directly after them.”<sup>45</sup> Although it was considered negligent to show a light when running from a rover, the prey could do so anyway, then set a “false fire” adrift in a tub or boat, hoping the rover would chase it instead. The best tactic for finding the prey the next day was to crowd on as much sail as possible through the night in the direction the chase originally seemed bound, hoping she would eventually come back to her original course.<sup>46</sup> If the prey could get along the shore, she might furl her sails, and anchor or tow, hoping the rover would miss her along the background of the coast.<sup>47</sup>

In consort, rovers would spread out to give each other sea room, limiting the course the chase could take: “After speaking with our consort, we both chas’d. I gave the *Duchess* about a mile start of us, in order to spread the more.”<sup>48</sup> If land were nearby, one vessel was dispatched to prevent the chase from running ashore. If the prey were a pair, they would split up unless they were ships of force capable of taking on their enemy. Otherwise, with the rover to windward each of the prey would run quartering, one on one quarter, one on the other. With rover and prey all sailing with the wind abeam, one of the prey would haul within a point of the wind and the other would sail quartering. And if the rover were to leeward, each of the prey would “clap on a wind,” one with her larboard tacks aboard, the other with her starboard.<sup>49</sup>

Details mattered. Ideally at the rover’s helm was an experienced seaman, one who could steer by the chase itself and not merely by the conning of an officer.<sup>50</sup> This made for tighter steering, as the helmsman did not have to react to an officer reacting to the chase, but rather could anticipate the sea. Often the crewmen were ordered to “keep themselves quiet and sit still” to prevent subtle changes in the vessel’s trim that might affect her speed.<sup>51</sup> By shifting his crew around, a commander could adjust his ship’s trim. The sail a rover set depended on the point of wind



sailed, and on the force of the wind. Most roving ships were “tall ships,” carrying topgallants, as opposed to short-masted ships; a rover needed all the sail a ship could bear. Chasing to leeward a rover set all sail his vessel would bear, given the weather. To windward, he may have furled his “small sails.”<sup>52</sup> If his vessel were a three-masted ship and the wind were astern, he furled his mizzen and hauled up his mainsail to prevent it from blocking the wind to the foresail, perhaps the most important sail in the ship. This loss of sail area exposed to the wind was the reason most vessels did not sail well before the wind. Last, the rover trimmed his sails to best advantage to get the most out of the wind.<sup>53</sup> In light airs the rover set all sail, including studding sails, and often a small “water-sail” or “chasing sail” on the flag staff.<sup>54</sup>

But no matter what the stratagem of the pursued merchantman, with luck and skill the rover would approach close enough to engage. As he neared the prey he made his ship clear for engaging, particularly if the prey might resist. This was vital, for complacency could kill—a number of captains were caught unprepared for the prey’s sudden attack. Her enemy in range, the prey had three options: lie by and hail, make a running fight, or turn and fight. If the prey still showed her heels but fired her chase guns, or if she fired great guns or firearms out of range or at long range, she was weak and afraid.<sup>55</sup> A ship of force would turn and fight with her broadside. Stern chase guns added more headway to the prey, pushing the vessel forward, while in a close chase a rover often did not fire his bow chase because it momentarily slowed his way.<sup>56</sup>

Upon coming up with the prey, the rover usually fired a shot across her forefoot. A captain might also wave his sword at the chase, a traditional sign to strike and prepare to be boarded.<sup>57</sup> At this point most merchantmen struck, or at least lay by to be boarded. Very few fought. Those who struck amain or lay by in the lee could next expect a hail.

## CHAPTER

# 13



## Hailing and Showing Teeth

### *The Prey in Range*

“THEY WERE RESOLVED TO SHOW THE FRENCHMAN THEIR BLACK Flag, and if that would not do, they must seek out elsewhere. Accordingly they boldly ran up alongside of the sloop, with their piratical colours flying, and told them, if they did not strike immediately, they would give them no quarter; which so intimidated the Frenchmen that they never fired a gun.”<sup>1</sup>

So went the worst sort of hailing for the merchantman. For the rover, the hail had its desired effect: surrender without a fight. Traditionally, when one vessel came up on another, the inferior or submissive vessel passed or lay by in the lee, although occasionally some rovers would stand to the chase’s forefoot, then arrogantly lie themselves in the lee, almost daring the merchantman to challenge the rover’s obvious superiority.<sup>2</sup> “After the custom of the sea,” the lee was the traditional passage for any inferior vessel passing a superior with range of her cannon, especially if she were a man-of-war.<sup>3</sup> An inferior vessel was defined as one “inferior either in respect of strength, employment or the part where they meet.”<sup>4</sup>

The superior vessel hailed the inferior. “To hail a Ship is to call her Company to know whither they are bound, etc.”<sup>5</sup> A ship not answering a hail of a king’s ship or rover or refusing to “bring to or show his colours” was fired upon, even if it had not led a chase: “the *Eagle* having fired a gun to oblige her to show her colours, the Pirate hoisted the St. George’s flag at their topmast-head, as it were to bid defiance to her.” The rover also fired on the prey if she showed enemy colors, ran out her guns, refused to pass under the lee, or tried to work to the windward.<sup>6</sup>

Hailing was a commonplace at sea, a means of introduction, friendly at times and quite obviously not so friendly at others. Vessels were hailed in passing, at the conclusion of a chase (and thus often prior to an attack), and after a vessel struck its colors in battle. In general, the vessels would lie by at roughly half musket-shot (one hundred yards or so) or closer, close enough to hear each other through speaking trumpets. This was within effective musket range and well within point blank range of cannon. Vessels could also hail when making way slowly.

Hailing between unknown vessels was tentative and began with a word variously written in contemporary documents as “Ho!” “Haye!” “Hoa!” or “Hooe!”—ahoy, in modern parlance—usually shouted through a speaking trumpet.<sup>7</sup> “Ahoy!” or “Ahoy the ship!” was the established form, to which the hailed vessel returned the same. In many cases, trumpets (the musical sort) were used to get the attention of the other vessel.<sup>8</sup>

The exchange followed a fairly set procedure: “From whence came ye?” “From Genoa.” “Where are you bound?” “To Amsterdam,” followed by the same questions of the vessel that first hailed.<sup>9</sup> Another hail: “Whence your yacht?” “Of Plymouth.” “Whence came ye?” “From Plymouth.” “That’s a lie by G—.”<sup>10</sup> Another: “He stretched ahead of us, and hailed us; I answered him: He asked, *Where the sloop belonged to?* I answered, *To London.* He asked, *From whence we came?* I told him, *From Barbadoes.* He said, *It was very well; he knew that;* and so brought a-head of us, and bid me send my boat on board of him.”<sup>11</sup> Information exchanged was usually nationality, ships’ names, ports of origin, destination, and commanders’ names. Following a peaceful hail, one vessel might shout to another, “What news?” (*Quelle nouvelle?* in French).<sup>12</sup> Recent news—perhaps months old—was often exchanged: of war and peace, of ports and markets, as well as of the needs of the ship and of warnings of ships cruising for prizes.

Obviously, though, many hails began ominously, each captain expecting a fight. A hail answered with “From the seas!” “Of the Sea!” “Belonging to the Sea!” or even “Out of the sea you Doggs!” meant the vessel was a pirate, or at least a privateer who preferred to keep his nationality secret until he knew that of the other vessel.<sup>13</sup> A Hollander might hail an English vessel with “A mayne for the Prince of orange!” just as an Englishman might hail “Amain for King Charles!” or “Amain for the King of England,” and a Spaniard might hail “*Maina per el Ray de Spainea!*” (Amain for the king of Spain!) or “*Aviza la vela, cornuto!*”<sup>14</sup> (Lower your sail, cuckold!). An exchange between a Dunkirk *corsaire* and an unidentified vessel went thus: “*D’où est le navire?*” (Whence the ship?)

“*De la mer! Et d’où est le vôtre?*” (Of the sea! And whence yours?) “*De Dunkerque!*” (From Dunkirk!) “*Amène chien!*”<sup>15</sup> (Amain, dog!)

These were all variations of the order to lower topsails, or mainsails if the topsails were not set: “Strike amain!” Topsails were two of the principal fighting sails; lowering them was a sign of submission. As described by Edward Youreing, “Hee bid us a maine for the King of England, and I myselfe loured the maine sayle three or four foot doune.”<sup>16</sup> Traditionally, topsails were struck at “least half-mast high.”<sup>17</sup>

A wise commander who was prepared to defend his ship would hail with forceful directness. The pirate Lewis once answered the forceful hail of a French banker by replying that he was from Jamaica with sugar. Not believing him, the “Frenchman bid him go about his business; that a Pirate sloop was on the coast, and he might be the rogue; if he did not immediately sheer off, he would fire a broadside into him.” Lewis had to stand off, wait another day, and concoct a better plan, before he could defeat the stout French commander.<sup>18</sup>

But assuming there would be no fight, the superior vessel either boarded the chase or “commanded us to come on board of him” to answer questions.<sup>19</sup> The chase was invariably kept in the lee for security.<sup>20</sup> Sometimes ships voluntarily sent an officer and boat. To allay any suspicion, a captain might do so to assure the other vessel of its peaceful intentions, but even then many captains remained on their guards.<sup>21</sup> The rover examined the chase’s papers, including her cockets (bills of lading) and passes for safe passage. If the chase proved an ally or neutral, rovers still searched for contraband, and if they discovered any, they would seize the ship as a prize. The search invariably included questioning the officers and crew, and probably getting some of them drunk to loosen their tongues.<sup>22</sup>

For security while searching, it was wise to keep the chase’s captain or master and some of her crew aboard as hostages for those of the privateer’s crew making the search.<sup>23</sup> Traditionally, if the chase proved no prize, the chase gave a gift to the rover, “two hams, and some russt dry’d Beef,” for example, and often the rover gave a gift to the chase as well, amicably parting with a salute of a few guns each.<sup>24</sup> But not always. Sometimes the rover helped himself to a few bottles of wine and a few hens and went on his way. Without doubt the merchantman was glad to be “clear of them.”<sup>25</sup>

To avoid suspicion or evade capture when hailing, a commander might pretend his vessel was not what it was, and the manner in which a hail was answered could raise or ease suspicions. Duguay-Trouin and company, making their escape from England in a small boat, were hailed and

interrogated at night by a pair of English men-of-war. They replied as an English fisherman would and the warships sent them on their way. Jean Bart, the Comte de Forbin, a ship's surgeon, and two ship's boys made a similar escape from England. Departing amidst twenty ships who called out to or hailed the boat, Jean Bart replied, "Fisherman!" and all permitted the boat to proceed unmolested. Bart was not by birth a Frenchman, but a Dunkirker, who spoke French poorly; perhaps this accounted for the lack of suspicion. With only one long oar and one short, the small company traveled sixty-four leagues in less than forty-eight hours, coming ashore six leagues from St. Malo. Jean Bart took the long oar, the two ship's boys the short. According to Forbin, the intrepid crew rowed with an "indefatigable vigor" and without rest.<sup>26</sup>

In more peaceful encounters one vessel might send a boat to the other, often with officers and passengers who would dine, get drunk, and exchange gifts, usually of spirits but also of better quality meats and so forth. If a ship needed something—an anchor or sheathing boards, for example—it was often given if it could be spared. A brigantine that had lost its mast and bowsprit might be spared "mast, riggin and canvas" from a passing friendly privateer, and in return might give the privateer "a few flour Barrells with Sugar."<sup>27</sup> A privateer overhauling a ship that did not turn out to be a prize might receive a "Roll of Brazile Tobacco and some sugar," and in return receive a "Cheshire cheese and a barrell of white bisket."<sup>28</sup> A ship short on spirits was certain to hail the first available vessel, providing it were safe to do so. If the item were expensive, it might be exchanged for goods or a foreign bill to be redeemed when the ship came into a European or colonial port.

If there were little chance of vessels coming close enough to hail, one might signal the other by firing a gun or repeatedly raising and lowering topsails, although a wary vessel might consider these signals to be a rover's ruses and keep its distance to avoid being suddenly boarded, bloodied, and beaten.<sup>29</sup>

Stress was a way of life at sea, and all meetings there were tense until identities were known—and either relief or adrenaline in the form of fear or excitement, often both, took over. For a sea rover coming up to its prey, the next step hinged on the answer to its hail. Sea rovers were usually heavily manned, making resistance futile for many vessels once the rover was in range. However, hailing range was a danger zone not only for the pursued but for the pursuer—the rover might not be sure of his prey, of which more will be said in chapter 19.

As for the simple tactic of threatening the prey into submission, this required little more than the shot across the "forefoot" or hawse. Armed

men at the rails, ports open and guns run out, and perhaps the bloody flag or skull and bones at the masthead, made quite an impression. A merchant commander's reaction, knowing he was out-sailed, out-gunned, and out-manned, might vary from mere pragmatism (negotiate a surrender and try to ransom ship and cargo) to sheer terror (surrender and hope simply to survive).

But for those who refused to strike, battle was joined.

## CHAPTER

# 14



## Plucking a Crow

### *Small Arms and Great Guns*

“SO HOISTING THE BLOODY FLAG AT OUR MAIN TOP-MAST HEAD, with a resolution neither to give nor take quarter, we began the fight, and went to it as fast as we could load and fire.”<sup>1</sup>

So began the most extreme of ship-to-ship engagements. Ideally, the rover chased and threatened his prey into submission, while running from ships of too great a force. Unfortunately, although most merchantmen did not fight, some did—and so did privateers, as well as cruisers and other men-of-war. For the rover, the tactics for sea combat were of two sorts: capturing prey and escaping from a cruiser.

In captures, the rover desired the least damage to both vessels for several reasons. The common assumption that rovers preferred to avoid a broadside battle because it might sink the prey or damage its cargo is without much merit. Ships were difficult to sink by cannon fire, and their cargoes usually well protected in the hold. In fact, most privateers were lightly built and could not withstand the repeated broadsides of heavily armed ships, nor could their crews. However, merchant ships were usually stoutly built, and could better sustain the light cannon fire of many privateers. The real problem was that a protracted engagement might leave the rigging of both vessels damaged to the point that the prize might be in no condition to escape and the rover might no longer be in condition to fight were a cruiser to suddenly appear. The rover might also lose time in port repairing and refitting, time better spent seeking prizes. Even if the prey were not a stout and well-manned ship, the potential damage to the rover’s crew and vessel did not justify an engagement broadside to broadside *if there were other options*.

Often, there were. Recall that for many rovers the musket was the principal arm, and in a running fight, a rover's musketeers could clear the prey's decks and force her gunports closed long enough to come alongside and board. This was a favorite tactic of many sea rovers, particularly smaller ones, in both Europe and the West Indies, and was almost a trademark of the French.<sup>2</sup> A privateer crew of 200, half of whom were firing muskets at the prey's decks, could get off fifty to one hundred shots per minute, even when taking their time loading and aiming, and they could get off many more if they chose. By the standard of the day, this was a hornet's nest of lead, more than enough to clear men from the helm and run most merchant sailors below decks.

Nathaniel Uring was on the receiving end of such a fusillade: "The *Fortune* had 26 guns, and 200 men; who kept plying us very warmly with her great and small shot; we still kept on with all our sail. My boatswain was killed just by me, the carpenter wounded, two men shot at the helm, and several more killed and wounded . . . then we were forced to steer below again, which was a great Disadvantage to us, no one daring to take the Helm upon Deck; and not only so, but all the people fled off the deck and left me alone, where I staid to cun the Ship. . . . every creature we had upon deck was kill'd by the enemy's small shot, and every man that staid there any time was either kill'd or wounded, except my self, who came off safe."<sup>3</sup>

Even when great guns were brought to bear, muskets still had an important role, often as great a role as the cannon themselves. They were used to clear the prey's decks of crew, musketeers, and gunners, kill the helmsman and officers, and keep gunports closed. Volleys were common, especially among less-skilled marksmen as might be found aboard merchantmen, letter-of-mart ships, and some privateers, but individual aimed shots were preferred among skilled shooters. These reflect the two firing tactics—one a volley to attack men massed on deck and the other of a constant fire designed to harass, hinder, and suppress—although both were often used in the same engagement.

Particularly among or in regard to the French, references are filled with instances of the effective use of muskets. Forty-five to fifty musketeers aboard the French flute *Loire*, armed with stacks of loaded muskets, wounded nearly sixty Englishmen aboard a man-of-war in less than forty-five minutes.<sup>4</sup> A filibuster serving under Captain Pinel noted that their musketry was more than sufficient to harry the prey until they could come alongside and board.<sup>5</sup> Captain Daniel's filibusters would immediately send ten musket shots at the least movement of a port lid, a technique



recommended by the Englishman Boteler decades before.<sup>6</sup> Some filibusters were surprised by three Spanish vessels at anchor, and “though we had no other arms than our fusees . . . we hindered them, and no man could appear in the shrouds, but we brought them down, as well as their grenadiers from their round tops.”<sup>7</sup> Captain Phillips, of his engagement with a French ship, related that “of the running rigging few or none escaped their small shot, which flew very thick.”<sup>8</sup> The *Sieur de Montauban*, of his fight with an Englishman: “At last being come by degrees nearer, and finding him within the reach of my fusils, which for that end I kept concealed upon the deck from his sight, they were discharged upon him, and my men continued to make so great a fire with them, that the enemy on their part began quickly to flag.” “Fusils,” he stated, “are the chief arms in such ships as ours be.”<sup>9</sup>

Many rovers trained at shooting, emphasizing accuracy. Besides the common drill of loading, aiming, and firing by the numbers, some captains went a step further: “For you are to observe, I made it my continual care and business to teach my men to shoot: and my so frequent exercising them rendered them in a short time as capable of shooting and handling their arms as the oldest sea freebooters, or the best fowlers by land.”<sup>10</sup>

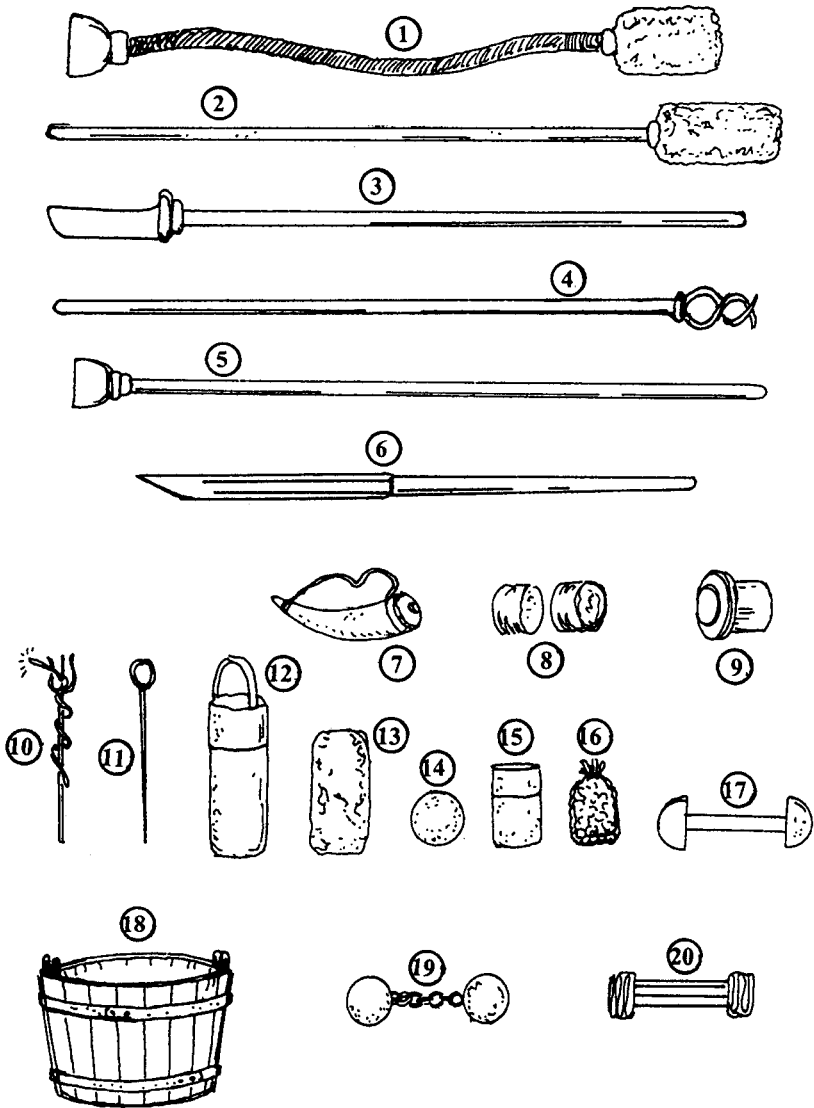
Range was usually not an issue. Engagements at sea were almost never fought beyond point blank, or the distance at which a cannon would shoot straight, requiring no elevation of the gun other than to point it directly at its target. Indeed, English sea manuals and fighting instructions routinely suggested or ordered that great guns never be fired beyond point blank and preferably at “point blank of musket shot,” and that small arms be shot at no more than “pistol” or “carbine shot,” or “within distance to do good execution.”<sup>11</sup> Musket shot (600–800 feet) corresponded well with the point blank ranges of lower caliber guns (see appendix 7), and many, if not most, engagements were fought at half-musket or pistol shot, or 300–400 feet. This half-musket range ensured that most cannon would find their mark, precluding wasted round shot and powder, and was well within the effective range of the musket.<sup>12</sup>

### Great Guns and Swivels

Cannon were manufactured in a variety of calibers varying among nations, and because cannon could last for decades or even centuries, older guns and calibers were mixed with new. In the early part of the period the smaller English guns were minions, sakers, demi-culverins, and

culverins, or guns firing four-, five-and-a-quarter-, nine-, and eighteen-pound shot. By the early eighteenth century, English guns were named by the weight of the round shot they fired, although the older pieces were still in use and so named. Among European nations in general were guns of three, four, six, eight, nine, twelve, eighteen, and twenty-four pounds, and even larger. Minions and sakers, and cannon of three-, four-, and six-pound shot were the most common among privateers; English fifth rates of 400 tons or more carried nothing larger than demi-culverins (nine pounders), as might a Guinea-bound letter-of-mart ship of 450 tons and thirty-six guns.<sup>13</sup> The heavier calibers were common among large men-of-war and some of the largest merchantmen. Cannon were of iron or brass (bronze, actually), the latter being very expensive and also seldom seen aboard rovers or merchantmen.<sup>14</sup>

Rovers fired a variety of shot, often a greater variety than men-of-war. Windage was large, approximately one-twentieth of the shot diameter, to allow gases to escape for safety and to prevent a shot from lodging in the barrel.<sup>15</sup> Round shot was the most common and was used against hulls and masts. At close range, cannon were often “double-shotted.” The smaller round shot used by most privateers was less effective against stout merchantmen and men-of-war; the *Duke’s* six-pound shot did no visible damage to the hull of the Manila galleon.<sup>16</sup> Some small rovers placed little faith in round shot. The filibuster Samson loaded his sloop’s two guns with *mitrailles* (scrap iron, or burrel) and musket balls, for he had only one round shot aboard—his crew used it for crushing mustard seed for eating with *cochon boucané*.<sup>17</sup> Many types of shot were intended to damage rigging, including double-head (a shot or half shot on either end of an iron bar) and chain shot (a shot or half shot on either end of a length of chain). Double-head was also effective against rudders.<sup>18</sup> Bar shot was made of iron bars tied together and served at each end with rope yarns to ensure a better fit in the barrel. Devastating against rigging and sails, it could also be used effectively against men.<sup>19</sup> Partridge, case, and burrel were primarily antipersonnel shot, and consisted of a tin or pasteboard case, or a leather or cloth bag, filled with musket balls or sometimes scraps of metal or small stones. Rovers used it against men in the open. This shot could also do great damage to rigging by volume alone.<sup>20</sup> Case shot fired from a six-pound field piece had an effective range of 250 yards, and the range was probably similar in the case of a sea service six pounder, although it was routinely used at half that range.<sup>21</sup> Case shot was often loaded on top of round, double-head, or chain, unless the enemy crew had retreated to close quarters or the ship’s sides were too tough, and



**Implements and Ammunition for Carriage Guns**

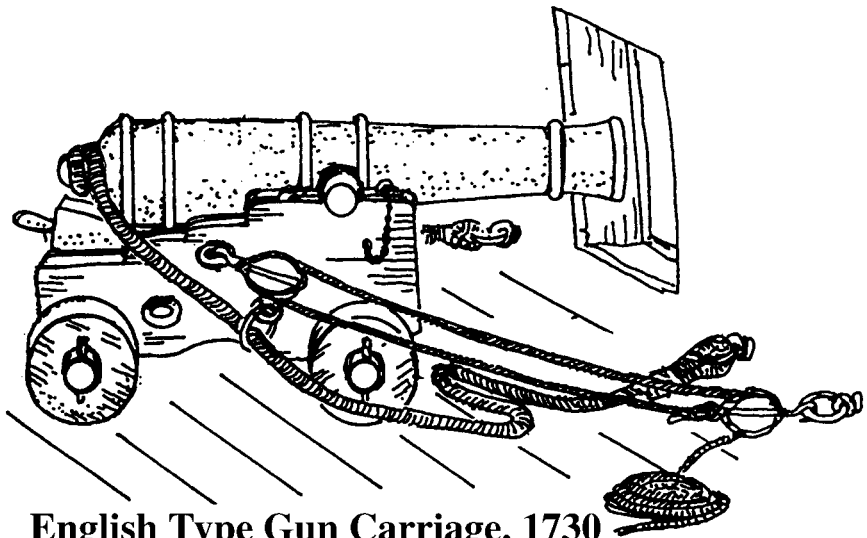
1. Combination Rammer and Sponge    2. Sponge    3. Ladle or Scoop  
 4. Wormer or Screw    5. Rammer    6. Handspike    7. Powder Horn    8. Shot  
 Wads    9. Tompion    10. Linstock with Slow Match    11. Vent or Pick  
 12. Cartridge Case    13. Cartridge    14. Round Shot    15. Canister or Case  
 16. Burrel or Partridge    17. Double-Head Shot    18. Tub    19. Chain Shot  
 20. Bar Shot

sometimes was loaded in a double-shotted gun.<sup>22</sup> On the carriage or above the port the gunner usually noted the size of the shot for the gun.<sup>23</sup>

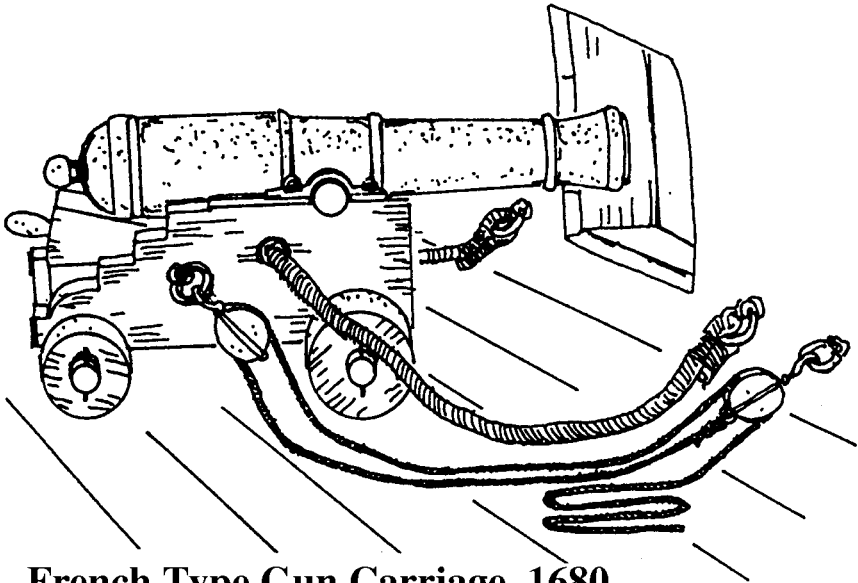
Cannon were mounted on bed carriages with trucks (wheels) of two sizes, with the smaller pair in the rear to make up for the camber of the deck and also to reduce recoil. A breech rope was spliced around the breech of English guns and secured to ringbolts on either side of the gunport, but in many continental navies, the breech rope was run through the gun carriage.<sup>24</sup> Guns of the period were probably managed with only two train tackles. When handling the weather guns, both tackles would be hooked from the carriage to eyebolts on either side of the port. When handling the lee guns, one tackle would be hooked from the carriage to an eyebolt at the port, the other to a ringbolt in the deck amidships.<sup>25</sup>

Cannon could also be fired without train tackles or breech ropes, their trucks stopped with wedges nailed to the deck, a practice good for neither the carriage nor the ship itself. In the South Sea, Dampier watched the Spanish fire cannon mounted this way—their gun crews had to stand on outboard platforms to load, leaving them exposed to enemy fire.<sup>26</sup> Shelvocke, having only one gun after being shipwrecked, and no carriage, laid it flat on the deck and fired it from there.<sup>27</sup>

Swivel guns—small cannon mounted in yokes in the rails or in stanchions mounted against the rails and used against personnel—were of three sorts and went by a variety of names: swivels, *pierriers* (the usual

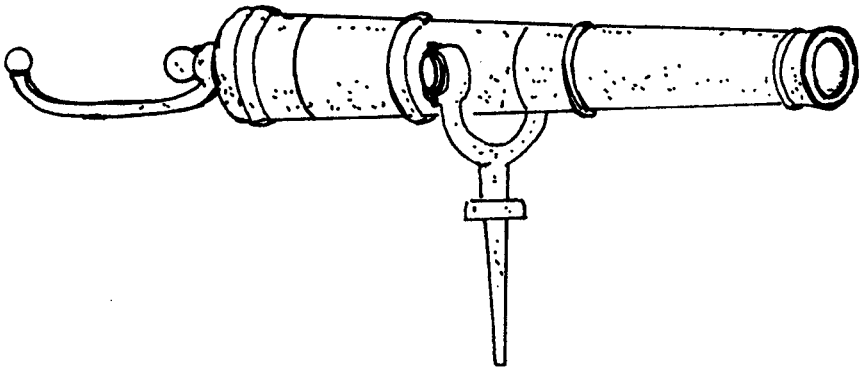


**English Type Gun Carriage, 1730**

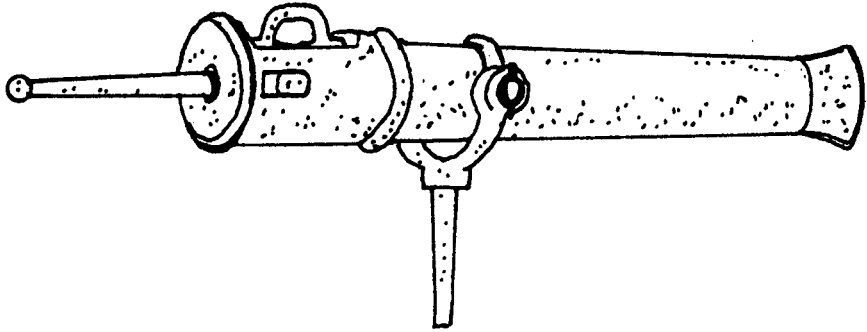


**French Type Gun Carriage, 1680**

**Muzzle-Loading Swivel Gun**



## Breech-Loading Swivel Gun



French term), patereroes, chambers, bases, *espoirs*, *espingardes*, falconets, fowlers, and murderers, among others. The first sort, commonly called swivels, were simply very small cannon, in shape identical to a great gun, and like them muzzle-loaded. The second sort, commonly called patereroes, chambers, or swivels, were similar in size, but breech-loaded, with a chamber containing powder and shot. Often two chambers were included for each gun, permitting them to fire twice in quick succession. Both types could be of iron or brass and were usually loaded with musket balls, but sometimes they fired a nasty mixture of nails and other metal scraps. A third sort of swivel gun was the *espingole*, basically a large blunderbuss mounted in a yoke.<sup>28</sup> Doublet referred to *gros mousquets* similar to falconets, firing a three-quarter-pound ball, mounted in yokes like swivel guns, and fired by match.<sup>29</sup> Many rovers and their prey mounted as many or more swivels as they did great guns.

In addition to great guns and swivels, some privateers in the latter decades of the period mounted a Coehorn mortar or two to lob grenades. A member of the *Duke's* crew was "mortally wounded aboard the *Bark*, occasion'd by a Cohorn Shell, which split as soon as fired out of our Cohorn Mortor."<sup>30</sup>

### A Clear Ship for Engaging

"Command was given by our Captain to prepare for a Fight; down Chests, up Hammocks, bring the small Arms upon the Quarter-Deck, and every Man directed to his Post, by orders fix'd upon the *Mizzen-mast* in the *Steerage*; the *Bulkhead* and *Cabins* knock'd down, the *Deck* Clear'd *Fore*

and *Aft*, for every man to have free access to his business.”<sup>31</sup> This is an apt description of the adrenaline-induced purposeful confusion of a crew ordered to make “clear and ready for an engagement.”<sup>32</sup>

There was much to do. Each officer and sailor would already have been assigned his quarters, and based on his assigned duties, each helped make the ship “clear for engaging.” First, they stowed hammocks in the hold or at the bulwarks or closed quarters bulkheads to help stop shot and splinters, and struck their sea chests into the hold to get them out of the way. They laid or prepared the closed quarters, reinforcing bulkheads as necessary and securing shutters at cabin lights (windows), or replacing them with stout dead lights. Old cable was a common material for barricades, and would be rigged before a ship made ready for engaging.<sup>33</sup> Many ships, particularly men-of-war, ran arming cloths, also called waist cloths or “fights,” along the rails from forecastle to quarterdeck, and often also at the headrails and in the tops, to help hide the crew from the enemy. The waist cloth was usually red, edged with white top and bottom.<sup>34</sup>

If the vessel used half ports, they were removed. Under the supervision of the lieutenants and the gunner, men quartered at the guns knocked gun ports loose if they had been caulked to keep out seawater. They cast loose the great guns and rigged their train tackles. The gunner checked the charges in each gun to make sure they were dry and ensured the axletrees were greased—a sticking wheel would throw a shot wide. To each gun they brought a rope rammer with sponge, crows and handspikes, a powder horn, and priming wire. They laid out worms and ladles for withdrawing unfired cartridges (ladles were also used for emergency loading with loose powder), perhaps a wood-staved rammer or two as well, and a budge barrel (a barrel with a leather liner and drawstring closure) for collecting spilled powder and broken cartridges. Between each two guns they set a sponge tub filled with sea water. Amidships between each four guns they set a match tub filled with water and, in its notches, a linstock with a lighted match for each gun. Near the guns they set cases of shot or laid garlands—often a small cable or hawser coil, although the term was also apparently used for cases or lockers in which shot were stored—and placed shot within. Cartridges were carried in individual cases and might also have been stored, hopefully in their individual cases, in tubs on deck as wads were, or in budge barrels. Usually a dozen or more cartridges were kept ready per gun in the powder room, and extra empty cartridges (of parchment) made up for ready loading. Only if cartridges ran out during the heat of battle would guns be loaded with loose powder, an extraordinarily dangerous practice. For fighting fires the gun crews set half hogs-

heads or cowls (large tubs) of water on deck and lashed them down, and set blankets and sheets next to them. They might set swabs by the tubs for wetting the decks to prevent fires and explosions from spilled powder, and might even swab the decks before action. In the powder room, the gunner ensured that enough cartridges were ready to be carried to the guns, usually by boys.<sup>35</sup>

Men appointed as musketeers or to man the swivels brought up small arms chests of muskets, pistols, cutlasses, as well as cartouche boxes, cases or bags of grenades, and ammunition for the swivels. Racks might have been provided for some arms, and loaded firearms would be covered with a tarpaulin for safety. If the swivels were stowed below, they were brought topside and mounted in their stanchions. Combustible fireworks, being a fire hazard, were not usually brought up from below until ready for use.<sup>36</sup>

Aloft, the boatswain had his small sailing crew sling the main and fore yards, and sometimes the crossjack yard, in chain to prevent their hal-yards from being shot away and the yards dropping to deck during battle. Beneath the slings, they rigged puddings and plattings to prevent chafing and wear on masts and rigging. The topsail yards were rarely slung unless the weather was perfect and the wind light, for otherwise it was too dangerous. The topsails needed to be quickly reefed or furled should a squall or other foul weather approach. The boatswain's crew "clapp'd on" stoppers for the topsail sheets, had other stoppers ready to clap onto damaged rigging, may have rigged preventer braces to the fore and main yards, and had marlinspikes ready to repair shattered rigging. If it were to be a running fight, a rover carried all sail it could, but if it were to be a real rencontre the crew set "fighting sail"—traditionally the fore and main topsails, but often including the fore course, mizzen, and a headsail. With the youngers they furled the mainsail, perhaps brailed up the foresail, and handed the small sails—the sprit, sprit topsail, fore and main topgallants, mizzen topsail, and staysails—so the vessel could be managed with only a few men. This sail plan also improved visibility. If the rover intended to board or considered it likely, the crew brought the sprit yard along the bowsprit, and if the vessel carried a sprit topsail, they brought its yard vertical along the sprit topmast.<sup>37</sup>

The carpenter prepared his shot plugs and lead sheets for stopping holes between wind and water, made sure that the pumps were rigged and working and that the ship's sides or "wings" in the hold were clear so he could find shot holes. After the crew laid the hatches, the carpenter lashed, bolted, or "forelocked" all hatches, scuttles, and gratings to make sure no one could desert his post and seek cover below, excepting only



access to the powder room and whatever space the surgeon lay waiting with his instruments and bandages.<sup>38</sup>

Gun crews were usually composed of two to a three pounder or minion and its opposite, three or four to a larger gun and its opposite, with a boy to fetch powder for each gun and its opposite. Typically an officer or petty officer commanded multiple guns, ten for example, five to a side.<sup>39</sup> On ships with large crews, one watch might handle the guns while the other rested.<sup>40</sup>

Hutchinson provided an example of an eighteenth-century privateer's quarter bill, probably no different than those of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. On the quarterdeck stood the captain, the master to "work the ship according to orders," a midshipman as messenger, a quartermaster to conn the helm, a man or more at the helm, gun crews if there were any great guns, one man to each swivel and its opposite, and an officer and his musketeers.<sup>41</sup>

On the gun deck were the gun crews, an officer to command each section of guns, the gunner to "assist and attend" all the great guns, two master's mates to handle the fore topsail braces and to work the forward part of the ship, the boatswain and two mates to repair the rigging and to help work the ship, the carpenter's crew to man the pumps, an officer and his musketeers, and men to fire the swivels, if any.<sup>42</sup>

Below were the carpenter and assistants to plug shot holes, and the surgeon and his mate were in the cockpit. In the powder room were the gunner's mate and assistant to fill cartridges and pass powder to the boys. On the forecastle were the boatswain and two seamen to work the ship and repair the rigging forward. If there were boats in the waist or on booms, there might be musketeers there as well, although boats were usually towed in a fight. In the main-top were a midshipman to observe the enemy and men with small arms and grenades, who would also repair the rigging as necessary. Men were similarly quartered in the fore and mizzen tops.<sup>43</sup>

Aboard a smaller vessel with a smaller crew of fifty men, arrangements were more economical. The captain commanded all, the first mate commanded the forward guns and worked the forward part of the ship, the second mate commanded the after guns, and the boatswain passed the captain's word and saw his orders executed. The carpenter stopped holes and saw to the pumps, the gunner was in the powder room, the surgeon in his cockpit, one man or more to the helm, gun crews to the guns, and the remaining crew to the small arms and duty as required.<sup>44</sup> Some ships routinely made clear for engaging if they thought an enemy might be about, and some pirates always kept their vessel clear for engaging.

For many crews, the last act of making a ship ready for engaging was

the captain's speech to inspire courage, then the drinking of a dram of whatever liquor was available to fortify their spirits and courage—rum, wine, flip, chocolate—and settle their nerves a bit and pick up where the speech might have left off.<sup>45</sup> The crew might pray as well.<sup>46</sup> When the ships came within range of each other, fiddler and piper might stir the blood, trumpeter might sound levets, and English and French crews would hurl “Huzzah!” and “*Vive le Roi!*” at each other. And then the shot would fly.

### Making a Shot into a Ship

To fire a great gun, the crew cast off the tackles and removed the tompion (stopper) that sealed the muzzle from the sea. They removed the lead apron that covered the vent, or touch hole, and removed the tallowed oakum that sealed the vent. Assuming the gun was already loaded, the gun captain pricked the cartridge with his priming wire, filled the vent with powder, pouring some behind the vent as well. He “bruised” or crushed this powder with his horn so it would take fire more easily, then hung his horn out of the way of the flash of the priming when he fired the gun. At this point, depending on how long it would be until the gun was fired, he might cover the vent with the apron. Now the gun crew opened the port (if necessary) and ran out the gun.<sup>47</sup>

Next the gun captain aimed the gun, taking the barrel's taper or “dispart” into account. The gun crew used handspikes or iron crows against the carriage to point the gun fore or aft to some degree, usually to take advantage of the ship's angle relative to the prey. They adjusted elevation with handspikes, raising the breech while the quoin beneath was moved farther in or out. The voice commands for elevation were “mount the muzzle,” and “let the muzzle fall,” but given the noise of battle, hand signals were apparently more common. The gun pointed and the order given to fire, the gun captain took his linstock, struck it against the match tub to knock any ash or small embers into the water, blew on the ember, timed the roll of the ship, and touched the match to the powder behind the vent, firing the gun. If he put the match directly to the vent, the flame of hot gases might extinguish the match, just as they might fire a powder horn if one were hanging in the line of recoil.<sup>48</sup>

Timing the movements of rover and prey was difficult, and made more so by the slow ignition. To fire at the deck or hull on the “up roll,” the gun captain touched the match to the vent as the gun pointed below the enemy's waterline and, on the “down roll,” above the enemy's gunwale.

In general, if the prey were to leeward the rover fired as his vessel began to rise; if the prey were to windward, then as the ship righted itself. In high seas it was best to fire as the prey ascended a swell, rather than when she lay "in the trough of the sea." Flat seas made for very effective broadsides, just as heavy seas made it practically impossible to place a shot, reduced as well the effectiveness of small arms fire, and might prevent the lower tier of guns from being used. Even the sea merely washing in could render the guns unserviceable, wetting priming while filling the deck with water. Rain could make an engagement impossible on vessels whose guns were on open decks or could limit their fire. Point of aim depended on whether rigging and crew (the rover's favorite targets) or the masts, hull, and rudder were to be attacked. A good helmsman was vital to accurate firing. If a ship were crank, often the captain ordered the sails "shivered"—braced just enough to spill the wind—as the guns fired.<sup>49</sup>

A gun's recoil brought it within board. In the case of a lee gun, a train tackle hooked to the carriage and to a ringbolt amidships was used to keep the gun hauled in, and the port was closed. The gun captain immediately placed his thumb over the vent to prevent the rush of air through the vent from igniting any smoldering remnant of powder while the gun was sponged. To ensure that any embers remaining in the gun were extinguished, particularly those in the "honeycombs" or flaws, the crewman designated as the rammer twisted the sponge handle around in the barrel as he worked it back and forth. A rope sponge and rammer (sponge on one end, rammer on the other) were more easily managed between decks, and could also be used while the port lid was closed. The handle was made from a length of small hawser tightly wrapped with marline to strengthen it. Embers had to be extinguished, otherwise a charge might ignite when rammed down the barrel.<sup>50</sup> One seaman discovered the effects of premature ignition the hard way: "Having put a cartridge of powder into a minion gun, on the quarterdeck that would not ram home, he took a javelin to break him, which striking fire, kindled the powder and blew him in the sea. . . . He swam some time and missed not his hand till he went to lay hold of the boat."<sup>51</sup>

Next, the sponge was withdrawn and banged on the side of the gun or carriage to shake off any fouling, and the sponge reversed so that the rammer end was ready. The loader took a cartridge from a boy who kept distant from the gun while it was fired, then placed the cartridge in the muzzle and shoved it in as far as he could. The rammer rammed it home, the gun captain inserting his priming wire to make sure. Next came the shot followed by a wad (usually made of oakum) rammed home, and the sequence began again.<sup>52</sup>

Most rovers trained at both small arms and great guns, usually putting a target in the water or, for musket practice, hanging a target from a stud-sail boom.<sup>53</sup> Woodes Rogers even mixed red paint to simulate wounded men, sending them below to the surgeon.<sup>54</sup>

### **The Engagement**

Ideally, the rover wanted the weather gage, that is, he wanted to be windward of his enemy. To windward he heeled toward the lee, so that he was better protected from shots between wind and water, unlike the ship in his lee, whose hull was exposed below the waterline. An enemy shot at the waterline was usually rendered ineffective by bringing the ship to an even keel, which brought the shot hole well above surface. A ship to the leeward hit between wind and water would put the hole below the waterline if she righted. Further, smoke from each vessel's guns, a hindrance in aiming and communicating, was carried to the lee and obscured the enemy's view. But most important, the weather gage granted control of the distance between the vessels and of their relative positions, especially if the vessel to windward were weatherly. The windward vessel could choose to fight on a bowline or before the wind and could stand off or in as she pleased. Whoever controlled distance, timing, and position also controlled the engagement. The weather gage was also critical to boarding. Practically speaking, it was difficult if not impossible in most cases to board from leeward.<sup>55</sup> The only drawback to the weather gage was that the windward vessel's decks were more exposed to fire, his enemy's less, and it was easier for his enemy to make a shot into his rigging.

In any sea fight, the tactical ideal was to rake the enemy bow or stern while avoiding the same. One eighteenth-century mariner estimated that a raking broadside across the enemy's stern did ten times as much damage as one on his broadside.<sup>56</sup> Strong bluff-bowed merchantmen and sturdy men-of-war stood a better chance against raking fire across the bow than did most lightly built rovers, but all vessels were weak at the stern. Further, when firing "athwart the hawse" or stern, the enemy could only bring its chase guns to bear. Firing on the bows and quarters held similar advantages, limiting the guns the enemy could fire in return. In other words, as in fencing, the ideal was to give and not receive—a difficult reality.

Fights at sea were usually of three sorts. The most typical was a running fight, one vessel seeking to escape the other. In the second, the adversaries

jogged along broadside to broadside, firing away, often the tactic of a large slow merchantman with the weather gage, its crew behind closed quarters, its hull able to take a battering. Last was the classic engagement, a true *rencontre*, one vessel seeking to keep the weather gage, the other seeking to gain it, both maneuvering to fire effective broadsides while trying to avoid the same from the enemy. Although all tactics were seen among rovers of all nations, some had preferences for some over others. The French tended to emphasize small arms and targeting the enemy's rigging and sails with great guns, while the English emphasized great guns, often targeting the hull. Even so, these are generalities; both made great use of small arms and great guns in action.

The running fight was often a stern chase, the merchantman (or rover, if running from a seeker) hoping to put the rover off until nightfall. This was the rover's weakest fight if the chase were almost as swift, at least until he could come up on the chase's quarter or alongside. The prey was recommended to load with round shot and cross bar until the rover came within pistol shot, then with double-head and case, making a constant fire upon the rover, who in turn might bring only a chase gun or two to bear, or none at all.<sup>57</sup> Often the prey could, by moving guns, make her stern "of equal Force with her Broadside" and could seriously gall the attacker.<sup>58</sup>

Were the chase to suddenly lie by, intending to rake her pursuer fore and aft, Hutchinson advised taking the broadside on the bow, for the target was small and the shape of the bows would deflect many of the shot. He then suggested the rover should run down on the prey's weather quarter, fire the lee broadside, then turn into the wind and back astern (boxhauling) and fire the opposite broadside. This maneuver could be repeated if the prey was damaged or otherwise still lay by. Hutchinson emphasized that a fore staysail was mandatory if the courses (main and foresails) were furled or brailed up.<sup>59</sup> However, in practice this tactic of running down upon enemy broadsides seems rarely used. Instead, the attacker usually approached in the chase's wake or sailed ahead out of range, then stood across the chase's forefoot (across her bow).

However, if the rover had a significant advantage in speed over the prey, he could with little risk "run close up and shoot or sheer . . . across their stern each way" with one broadside, then the other.<sup>60</sup> It helped to have the guns pointed as far forward as possible to minimize the degree the rover had to bear away to bring each broadside to bear. Of course, the chase could do the same, sheering and firing in each direction as she ran, although generally this was inadvisable, as the chase would lose considerable ground and might find herself boarded.<sup>61</sup> The more maneuverable

rover could mimic her movements in turn, sheering as she did and firing broadside for broadside, or the rover could bear the brunt of her broadsides and soon enough be upon her. The other option was to try to use small arms to force the enemy to close quarters, then board.

If the sea ran high and the chase were heeled to such a degree that she could not open her lower ports, the rover could “come up under his lee quarter and fire, and so back astern again.”<sup>62</sup> The chase could probably only ply her stern guns, and if she tried to bring her upper broadside to bear, the rover could take the opportunity to board. Such a running fight might last for hours until the chase was disabled in mast, rigging, or rudder.

Slugging it out broadside to broadside was not recommended, not unless the rover was vastly superior in hull, guns, and men. Yet many engagements went this way, either because of a lack of seamanship or the weather gage, or because the adversaries were equally matched. They were often the bloodiest, ending only when both ships bore away shattered or when one accidentally gained the advantage, for example when cartridges blew up on deck. If the prey were a stout ship with large guns, it was suicidal: “For our five pound shot, which was the biggest we had, signified but little against such a ship as she was; but any of her shot, which were 18 and 24 pounders, if any of them happened to strike us, our ship being very much decayed, it would drive in a piece of plank of three or four feet.”<sup>63</sup>

In general such engagements were best avoided, even if only for the danger of a lucky shot that might leave the rover “to lie a battery for the enemy,” unable to steer or make way—and vulnerable even to a much smaller vessel raking fore and aft.<sup>64</sup> With a good vessel and the weather gage, the rover could work as he pleased, bearing to and from the enemy and giving fire as the best opportunities presented, eventually moving in to board. The trick was to maneuver so as to fire one broadside, then turn into the wind, back astern, and fire the other, preferably raking the stern, without letting the enemy gain the weather gage.<sup>65</sup> Some vessels might fire one broadside, shoot ahead, bring to in the lee, and fire the other as the prey came up.<sup>66</sup>

Often, though, the rover had the lee gage. If the prey came within range, the usual practice was to aim at the exposed decks to kill men, and especially at the rigging to disable the enemy long enough to for the rover slip to windward. Firing a broadside athwart the hawse, then wearing under the enemy’s stern to bring the opposite broadside to bear was also common.<sup>67</sup> The prey, however, was likely to fire round shot at the rover’s waterline amidships, hoping to punch holes in the hull. To counter this,

the vessel in the lee could “shiver” her sails, momentarily bringing her to an even keel and protecting her hull below the waterline. All maneuvering in the lee was intended to gain the weather gage. In the case of a more powerful enemy with heavier guns, the lee was a very poor place to make a fight: “We endeavored to gain the wind all day, though to no purpose. All this time the Spaniards, under whose cannon we found ourselves, thundered at us incessantly.”<sup>68</sup> This was also the principal tactic used to negate rovers who relied on small arms: keep to windward and out of musket range, but fire the great guns to harass the rover. In some cases the rover had no choice but to be battered in the lee. A large ship in light airs could easily muzzle the rover’s sails, leaving them unable to get away. “Being under his lee, I endeavour’d to get into shoal water, but he becalm’d and confin’d me for the greatest part of an hour, handling me very roughly with his cannon.”<sup>69</sup>

Rovers occasionally used canoes and boats to openly attack ships at sea, either deliberately or because a ruse failed, but it was a dangerous practice against an enemy well-armed with great guns. The only real chance at victory was to come up astern, ideally in a calm, using muskets to kill the helmsman and suppress the enemy’s fire until close enough to board. “By this means we had time to come all up under his stern, and, firing continually into his vessel, we killed as many as came to the helm, besides which slaughter we cut asunder his main sheet and brace with our shot.”<sup>70</sup> Coming up astern, a rover could also wedge the rudder by hammering wedges between the rudder and rudder post, disabling the helm.<sup>71</sup> One of the fiercest and bloodiest buccaneer engagements was fought from canoes and piraguas against Spanish men-of-war at the Isle of Perico off Panama in 1680, each side fighting as never before. The buccaneers prevailed, a testament to their courage and skill at arms.<sup>72</sup>

Hotly contested engagements often lasted for hours and might leave both vessels so battered that each had to bear away for repairs, glad to bid farewell to its adversary. Officers might use sword or pistol to keep men at their stations, and it was not unknown for captains to shoot one of their own crewmen attempting to desert his post.<sup>73</sup> In general, gun crews and the crew in general were advised to keep under cover as much as possible. Gun crews opened gunports just before running the gun out, and let them drop back down as soon as the gun fired. They were also to keep back from the open gunport as much as possible, to avoid enemy shot.<sup>74</sup>

“Firing as quickly as possible” was still a fairly slow process given the loading procedure, maneuvering, and the desire to avoid overheating the guns. The *St. George* of twenty-six guns, commanded by William Dampier, fired 560 saker shot at a thirty-two-gun Spanish man-of-war that

returned only 110 or so over six and a half hours—fifty or more broadsides, or one every seven or eight minutes.<sup>75</sup> The *Duke* privateer also fired approximately fifty broadsides at a Manila galleon over the space of six or seven hours, or one every seven or eight minutes.<sup>76</sup> Ships seldom fired true broadsides in the sense of all guns fired at once. Guns were fired as they were brought to bear and aimed, and firing could be paced to keep up a constant fire.

Although men attempted to protect themselves by seeking cover below the bulwarks from obvious broadsides and volleys, wounds, many of them mortal, were inevitable.<sup>77</sup> Splinters, chunks of wood, small shot, and great shot would all penetrate, lacerate, or crush flesh and bone. Limbs were smashed and shattered by overturning guns, and skulls and bones by falling masts, spars, and tackle. Men were burned by the flame from a gun vent or from cartridges accidentally fired, a very common injury. Ears might ring for hours or even days. Captain Phillips's crew, after a six-hour engagement in which the French directed many of their shot at the sails and rigging, had five men killed and thirty-two wounded. The carpenter lost an arm, three men their legs, another had his skull fractured by a bullet, and five or six were badly burned by laying linstocks among cartridges that took fire and blew up. The remaining injuries were light by comparison: wounds of splinters and small shot (musket balls, that is), and bruises. Not long after, the surgeon amputated the piper's leg, and another man died of his wounds.<sup>78</sup> Even so, a ship with the upper hand in an engagement might have only one man shot in the ankle and another hurt by an overturning gun, or but two "thro' carelessness had their Hands and Faces blasted."<sup>79</sup> The dead might be shoved through gunports into the sea, or left on deck so that the enemy would not know how effective their attack or defense was.

Ships were often almost literally shot to pieces: hulled at the waterline, the pumps manned unceasingly, boats and spare masts and yards shot full of holes, multiple shot in the masts or even through them (yet the masts still remained standing), sails shredded and "spoiled," the rigging so badly mauled it had to be knotted, spliced, or stoppered just to hold the masts up and have something to work the sails with. Only when a topmast or mast went by the board, or when the rudder-head was shattered, might a ship bear away for repairs in a hard-fought action. One of the advantages of fighting large, as opposed to close-hauled, was that a ship steered more easily, almost under any sail, no matter how shattered the rigging and canvas would become in combat.<sup>80</sup>

The greatest danger to a ship in action, and thus to her crew, was not



from shots below the waterline but from spilled powder. Cartridges set afire, or even a linstock dropped to the deck, might fire a train of powder to the powder room, blowing up the ship.

However, as bloody as a duel between ships might be, it could grow even bloodier if one crew boarded another.

## CHAPTER

# 15



## Volleys, Grenades, and Cutlasses

### *Laying Her Aboard under Fire*

IN MARCH 1694 THE CORVETTE *VOLANTE*, OF SIX GUNS OF FOUR- and six-pound shot, arrived at Martinique. Her commander was Monsieur Pinel, and she was accompanied by two English merchant ships taken as prizes windward of Barbados.

The filibuster crew, scornful of the fight put up by the merchantmen, recounted the battle to Father Labat. Having sighted the ships, they said, the *Volante* had chased so swiftly that the nearest ship simply lay by, made clear for an engagement, and waited, knowing that running was futile.<sup>1</sup>

As the *Volante* came within range the battle began, a running fight with the other. The filibuster harried the merchantman with musket fire and chase guns for three quarters of an hour, keeping on her stern and quarter until Pinel deemed it time to board. They did so with seventy men, to face an enemy who had wisely retreated to closed quarters. Finding a scuttle left unlocked, the boarders opened it and hurled a bottle grenade into the forecabin where it smashed, took fire, and scorched seven or eight defenders, who immediately surrendered. In the meantime, the other merchantman fired upon the *Volante* but would not close the distance and board.<sup>2</sup>

Under small arms fire from loopholes in the steerage bulkhead, the boarders found a cannon still loaded and turned it against the steerage, just as boarders on the quarterdeck above the steerage fired their pistols into the powder chests arrayed on deck, piercing them so that they would have little effect if fired. If fired, the powder chests would explode, spraying the boarders with shrapnel. Other boarders destroyed the *grenades*

*lardées* (grenades fixed outboard on the bulwarks, held there by two crossed metal bands, their trains or fuses running into the closed quarters), and still others used boarding axes to cut a hole in the quarterdeck. The boarders at the forecastle took cover behind the ship's boat and kept up a merciless fire at the loopholes and gunports in the quarterdeck bulkhead. On the quarterdeck, the boarders threw conventional grenades, as well as glass-bottle grenades, into the port they had made into the deck, releasing a brief hellfire of flame, smoke, and shrapnel within the confined space. Shocked, wounded, and burned, the merchant crew surrendered immediately.<sup>3</sup>

This was a fairly easy victory and perhaps a typical boarding action against a merchantman with a respectably sized crew, fifty-five in this case. The filibusters had six wounded in action before coming alongside, and suffered four killed and five wounded after they boarded. The English lost fifteen men, plus twenty or so wounded, most of them by grenades of one sort or the other. Almost two-thirds of the merchant crew were casualties.<sup>4</sup>

The Comte de Forbin's description of boarding was similar: With part of the crew, man the great guns; arm the rest of the crew with muskets and grenades. Harass the prey as you approach, clearing her decks with musket fire and grenades. Have your grappling irons ready to throw (he advised from the ends of the yards), and use a length of chain attached to the irons for security. As you come alongside let fly your grapplings, then, under cover of grenades and musket fire and with the cry of "*Allons, enfants, à bord!*" board pell mell—and let the carnage commence. And understand one thing: it is now do or die.<sup>5</sup>

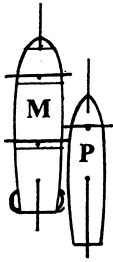
### Laying Her Alongside

Before attacking a crew in the open or within closed quarters, the rover had to get alongside, invariably from the weather gage: "for every man in chasing doth seek to get the Weather, because you cannot board him, except you weather him."<sup>6</sup> It was possible to board from the lee, but extremely difficult, although the vessel to windward could fall by accident upon the enemy in the lee. With the weather gage and a maneuverable vessel, boarding was not usually a significant problem, the attacker's commander merely waiting until he felt his crew had harassed, intimidated, or killed enough of the enemy to make boarding successful. In this case, the enemy's vessel was cleared for engaging, and her crew had prepared to make a fight. In some actions the rover intended to board immediately, before the prey could put itself in a posture of defense. Given that it

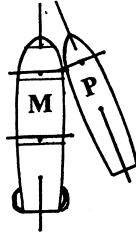
might take an hour or two for a heavily laden merchantman to make a clear ship for engaging, even having to toss “lumber” (goods, supplies, or anything else stowed between the guns or on the decks) overboard, this was a viable option, better than being pummeled by the merchant’s cannon. At times this might be the only option. “So we, being all provided, gave her several broad-sides, before she could get any of her Guns clear. . . . Captain Martin . . . a Prisoner on board us . . . advised to lay her aboard immediately, while they were in a hurry, and that this would be the only way to take her . . . [but] being delayed in quarreling, between those of us that would lay her aboard, and those that would not, the Enemy got out a tier of Guns, and then were too hard for us.”<sup>7</sup>

The three most common places for a rover to lay a ship alongside were the stern quarter, amidships, and the bow, and the four approaches were in the chase’s wake, on her quarter, broadside, and on the bow. In each case the attacker laid his bow at the point he intended to board, for “’tis usual for privateers to board ship’s, so that their heads may reach their enemy’s entring place.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, to board amidships, the bow was put alongside the enemy’s waist: “Bring your midship close up with her quarter, and so to enter her men by her shrouds.”<sup>9</sup> Many considered this the best place to board, and the stern quarter the worst because it was the highest point and often lay above the forecastle of the boarding vessel. The rover could also lay athwart the stern or athwart the hawse. Both were poor places to board, although the latter was a good position from which to batter with great guns. Men-of-war preferred this position for they could batter the enemy with a full broadside at close range but receive little in return. Boarding here, however, was dangerous. Attackers were forced to board one or two at a time over the enemy’s bows and were subject to a punishing fire focused on this single point. Rovers boarded here only by accident.<sup>10</sup>

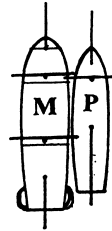
Good seamanship and a steady hand at the helm were required for effective boarding, for if her crew were alert and her vessel sailed well and answered the helm quickly, the prey might foil the attempt to board. Otherwise, if the rover sailed better he would sooner or later be aboard with his prey. In general, the prey was advised to try to force the attacker to board at the least convenient place; if the rover tried to board bow to bow and stern to stern, or amidships, the chase was advised to bear up and try to put the attacker at the stern. With the wind abeam, and the attacker trying to board alongside, the chase might suddenly bear up into the wind, hoping to find herself athwart the attacker’s hawse, with the attacker’s bowsprit tangled in the main shrouds, but this was difficult to do from the lee gage.<sup>11</sup>



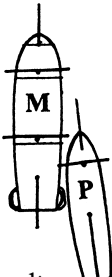
1. Boarding amidships



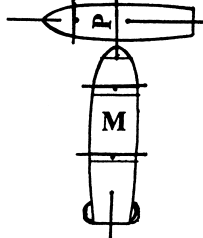
2. Boarding at the bow



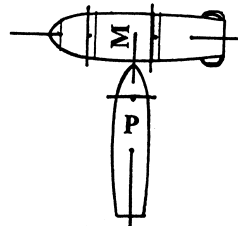
3. Boarding alongside



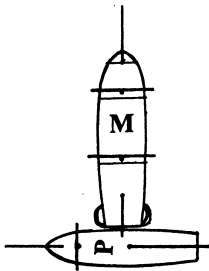
4. Boarding at the stern  
—poor choice



5. Boarding athwart the hawse  
—poor choice



6. Boarding bow to amidships  
—never to be done



7. Boarding athwart the stern  
—poor boarding but good for clearing the decks with cannon fire

**BOARDING POSITIONS** Key: P = Pirate M = Merchant

The chase had a few age-old tricks she could try. If she sailed well, she could keep her stern to the rover, keeping him from her sides and bow. In a tideway she could suddenly let fall an anchor just as the enemy was about to board, letting the tide carry him past, taking care that as she anchored she did not cast herself onto the enemy. The chase could also kindle a smoky fire to make the rover believe she were on fire, and so avoid boarding for fear of the fire spreading. On the other hand, if the chase's crew were at closed quarters and the rover were not fooled by the smoke, he might board under its cover.<sup>12</sup> These tactics only worked in exceptional circumstances.

For the rover, the actual tactics of putting men aboard the prey were fairly simple. The captain called his boarders, most armed with a pistol or two and a cutlass, and with perhaps an identifying cloth or scarf tied around an arm, on deck. Some would carry grenades, match, and boarding axes. Given the often protracted nature of boarding engagements, particularly if the enemy retreated to closed quarters—forty-five minutes was a quick resolution—boarders surely wore cartouche boxes as well. If the enemy had already retreated to closed quarters, some boarders probably carried muskets or blunderbusses for attacking gun ports and loop-holes. Some might carry wedges of wood for wedging gun ports open. Grappling hooks were readied fore and aft, and lashers were readied with rope to lash the vessels together. The sailing crew made sure the sprit yard was fore and aft, and the sprit topsail yard vertical. All was ready.<sup>13</sup>

Coming close aboard, the commander had three possible situations to face. The enemy could be in the open, could have retreated, could be retreating to closed quarters but was not yet secure within, or could be securely within closed quarters.

If the enemy was in the open, the commander would either order his crew to keep up a constant fire or to fire only when the grappling hooks were thrown, giving a final powerful volley of musket, swivel, and great gun—a hellish hail of musket balls and metal scrap. If the chase had powder tubs or jars hanging from the yardarms, ready to drop and explode on his decks, then musketeers needed to fire at them and break them up if possible, more easily done with clay jars than with wood barrels or tubs. As the ships came alongside, grenadiers threw grenades and fireworks onto the decks, while musketeers and grenadiers aloft split their fire between the enemy's decks below and the enemy's musketeers in the tops. Through the smoke the rover "entered" his men, fifty to seventy or even more, often from the forecastle, all charging furiously aboard the prey, pistol and cutlass in hand. If the volley and grenades were effective, the enemy would be so disorganized that they could not make a good defense

with pikes or other small arms, allowing the boarders to enter the breach in their ranks. If the enemy had rigged a boarding netting at the waist, boarders would have to cut it apart, exposing themselves to enemy fire, although a broadside of bar, chain, or double-head would ease its breach.

If the prey had retreated to closed quarters, the boarding process was essentially the same. The grenades would not kill men, but they would provide the cover of smoke, and more importantly, would “cut up the decks,” literally breaking up powder chests or cutting their trains so that the enemy could not fire them against the boarders. Likewise, a volley provided cover of smoke. Boarders needed to remember to clear not only the decks, but also the masts and spars aloft. A few men were assigned to cut critical running rigging, to prevent the ship from escaping if the vessels separated. Boarders would clear closed quarters as did Pinel’s filibusters.<sup>14</sup>

The simple act of leaping from one ship to another was dangerous, not only because of enemy fire, but because the two ships were working board and board. Duguay-Trouin was stunned during his first boarding action when the ship’s master fell between the two vessels and was crushed, part of his brains splattering the young officer. This gruesome death gave Duguay-Trouin even more pause, as he had not yet found his sea legs and wondered if he could get across without being similarly crushed. The French eventually took their prize “sword in hand” after three consecutive boardings.<sup>15</sup>

The battle on deck was usually an intense *melée*. Having boarded and cleared the steerage of an English ship with grenades, Jean Doublet turned his attention to the forecastle, four of his men with him. A blunderbuss was suddenly thrust out at him from a loophole. He quickly tried to warn the man next to him, who in turn fell dead at his feet. Two of his crew made busy trying to breach a door or port to the forecastle, when it popped open and Doublet found another blunderbuss in his face. He immediately slashed his enemy with his cutlass, right between the eyes, then finished the job “with point and edge.”<sup>16</sup>

At “handy grips” men would shoot, cut, stab, and if necessary, kick, punch, knee, elbow, head butt, wrestle, choke, and bite. Backstabbing was common, practical, and effective. Hand-to-hand techniques such as boxing, wrestling, and kicking were better understood than we assume, and in the most desperate boarding actions, doubtless played some role, probably minor overall but still vital to the individual fighting for his life. Again, lead and steel were the weapons of choice, for a reason.

Unfortunately, given a stout enemy, boarders could also expect harsh treatment just as they came alongside. The chase would fire her great guns, loaded each with two round shot and case shot on top, or double-head and case, or with crossbar and partridge, at the last moment. She

would drop her powder tubs, barrels, or jars (barrels or jars of gunpowder, wrapped with lighted match) onto the rover's deck to explode and destroy men. If her crew intended to retreat to closed quarters, they would do so now, springing (firing) the powder chests and *grenades lardées* on her sides as the enemy began to board. As the boarders reached her decks, her crew would spring the deck powder chests and open fire from loopholes and perhaps even from great guns moved fore and aft to fire through the bulkhead ports.<sup>17</sup> It was a bloody business.

Rovers in consort sometimes boarded together, as did the prey in self-defense. The most secure method was to board alongside the consort, and enter over her decks. Or, one could board athwart the hawse or stern, depending on where the consort had boarded. If at the waist, then the consort boarded athwart the hawse, for example.<sup>18</sup> Often one vessel boarded on the quarter, the other on the bow.<sup>19</sup> Mountaine suggested that if prey and predator lay alongside each other, the supporting consort should lay athwart the hawse of both.<sup>20</sup>

Boarding sometimes failed by accident. A helmsman putting the tiller to port instead of larboard or a ship missing the range in grappling or lashing could keep vessels from coming together. A sudden change in wind or rudder, particularly when one vessel's sails filled and drew it forward while they becalmed the other's, leaving it dead in the water, could separate ships, even those that were grappled together. The force of separation could easily break grappling lines, and worse, leave some boarders stranded and at the mercy of the enemy crew.<sup>21</sup> Occasionally, an attacker left boarders behind, fearing the attack had failed. Sometimes boarding was deliberately avoided, in one case because of the risk of pillage and often because the weather made it too dangerous or because the enemy's closed quarters were too strong.<sup>22</sup> Hutchinson considered it unwise to board if the enemy had retreated to closed quarters. Instead, he advised grappling them athwart the stern and raking them fore and aft "to drive them from their close quarters."<sup>23</sup>

High seas and a fresh gale always precluded boarding: "But the wind blowing hard and the sea running high, he could not board us."<sup>24</sup> It was far too dangerous: a ship's side might be stove in from the battering, and "no Man is so mad as to Board a Ship in a Sea-Gale."<sup>25</sup> Boarding an Algerine pirate in a strong wind and high sea, the *James Galley* lost her bowsprit, head, and "foregard," and the *Charles Galley* lost her bowsprit, head, and foremast.<sup>26</sup> Many rovers being lightly built as opposed to men-of-war or merchantmen, they would not chance boarding in heavy seas, no matter the prize before them.<sup>27</sup>



### Closed Quarters

Also called close quarters, this was the weaker enemy's best defense, and was even used by large well-manned merchantmen and Manila galleons, for it exposed few to enemy fire and diminished the rover's advantages in men and small arms. Mountaine, writing in the eighteenth century, provided an incredibly detailed description of preparing and defending by closed quarters. The bulkheads at the forecastle and steerage were reinforced with whatever was at hand, including old cables, and were pierced with loopholes high and low, as were the ship's quarters and even the hatch coamings, to enable defenders to fire at boarders in the rigging. Loopholes were of two sizes: one for muskets, the other for grenades. The French called loopholes *meurtrières* (murderesses).<sup>28</sup>

Bulkheads had gun ports so that adjacent cannon could be trained on the waist: "I got six guns fore and aft to clear our decks of them. . . . We barred the forecastle door, steerage door, and round-house door well fast, placed our men to the guns with lightmatches."<sup>29</sup>

All hatches, scuttles, gratings, and gun ports were locked or lashed down from within. Lights (windows) were replaced with stout shutters, often loopholed. A ship's sheets and tacks could even be rigged within board. Powder chests (explosive devices made of wood and filled with a large cartridge of gunpowder, musket balls, and scrap metal, with a fuse running from into closed quarters) were laid on deck and secured outboard as well. Cover on decks would be minimized; boats, for example, gave too much cover to boarders. Exposed guns might be spiked or even blown up as the enemy boarded. At the very least, they were never to be left loaded. Anything to hinder the enemy was done.<sup>30</sup>

It is now easy to see that the merchantman boarded by Pinel's filibusters failed to execute their closed quarters as they should have or to defend their ship as best they could. Others did.

### Seldom One More Bloody

Pinel's English prizes were merchantmen with respectably sized crews who probably could have put up a better fight, yet might have just as likely been defeated anyway. But not all boardings went so well for attackers or defenders. Many stout merchantmen, or even smaller ones with stout crews and brave captains, as well as letter-of-mart ships, privateers, pirates, and men-of-war were an entirely different enemy, one who might fight as long as there was any chance of escaping or prevailing, even boarded, and especially from close quarters.

But perhaps the rarest and bloodiest were battles fought upon the open decks. The Comte de Forbin, commanding a frigate of sixteen guns and 120 men, and transporting one hundred soldiers, described the boarding of a Dutch privateer of fourteen guns. The Dutchman secured his hatches so that none of his crew could retreat to closed quarters, forcing them to fight “to the last extremity.” In the open they fought desperately, outnumbered by French sailors and soldiers who were so incensed at the furious resistance and their own losses that they intended no quarter. Only Forbin’s physical intervention prevented the entire Dutch crew from being slaughtered.<sup>31</sup> Forbin wrote that he had seldom seen so bloody a boarding, the dead covering the deck. Perhaps the merchant crews who fought Pinel’s filibusters knew what a fierce resistance might mean in the end.

## CHAPTER

# 16



## Surprizals at Sea

*“Jesus! These Men Are Devils!”*

BROADSIDES AND BOARDINGS MAKE GREAT DRAMA AND IMAGES, BUT one of the safest ways to capture a ship was by “surprizal,” or surprise attack, for it avoided the obvious and turned the odds into the attacker’s favor.<sup>1</sup> The surprizals were outright sneak attacks, usually by boarding. In a harbor it might be too dangerous to seize a vessel in broad daylight unless a ruse were employed to conceal the attackers’ intentions. At sea, a rover might not have force enough to capture its prey in an open engagement, or might not be able to get close enough to attack using conventional tactics. The simpler the tactics the better, for simplicity in tactics reduced the chances of something going awry—and something almost always did.<sup>2</sup>

The classic example of a surprizal was the boarding of a Spanish ship by Pierre Le Grand, a French shipowner from Dieppe said to have been ruined by speculation and believed in some accounts to have been the first successful pirate or filibuster to sail from Tortuga. This action is often viewed as the nascent instance of buccaneering or *la flibuste*, for it supposedly inspired hunters and planters of Tortuga to take to the sea for Spanish prey. More likely, filibusters originally preyed on small coastal vessels at anchor on Hispaniola.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, several dates have been proposed for Le Grand’s attack, ranging from 1602 in Exquemelin, a date far too early, to the 1660s in a Spanish document, and at least one author has questioned whether the incident took place at all.<sup>4</sup> Still, the story is illustrative.

As described by Exquemelin, Le Grand’s company of twenty-eight had

been long at sea without purchase. They were short on food, and their barely seaworthy vessel was armed with only four small cannon.<sup>5</sup> Near starvation, the rovers resolved to take the great ship or die trying. They chased openly, yet were so unintimidating that the Spanish master, although warned of their presence and likely intentions, ignored the threat. He even refused even to prepare two cannon to repel the approaching vessel should it attack. Instead, he merely ordered that a heavy tackle be rigged, an act implying that the cannon were still in the hold, not an unusual situation near the end of a merchantman's long voyage. The norm was to stow cannon during the long passage, but mount at least some when approaching coastal waters or before making landfall. However, with cannon stowed, there was more room for goods, merchandise, and passengers, and stowing guns also often made most ships less crank and thus more seaworthy in a storm.<sup>6</sup>

Le Grand rightly surmised that the Spanish ship, said to be the vice admiral of the flota and of fifty-four guns, was unprepared for a fight, and at dusk ran his vessel quickly onto their prey. Just prior to boarding, Le Grand had the surgeon drill a hole in their boat, thus depriving his crew of any retreat. He and his men, each armed with a brace of pistols and a cutlass, boarded immediately and killed anyone who got in their way. Going directly to the great cabin, Le Grand put a pistol to the captain's breast as he was playing cards, and ordered him to deliver up his ship. Having captured the captain and secured the weather decks, Le Grand and his men stowed the prisoners in the hold. Exquemelin noted that the Spaniards were so surprised that many of them made the sign of the cross and said to each other, "*Jesus, son demonios estos!*"<sup>7</sup>

It may well be that this incident was exaggerated or invented "to point up the captain's arrogance."<sup>8</sup> However, the framework of the story, that of a ship's captain too arrogant to believe that a small force could capture his vessel, rings true. Navy SEALs, for example, have captured many vessels whose captains have been completely certain that a few men and a small boat or two could not breach their security, usually to their great embarrassment. These captains were not only aware that they might be attacked, but often they knew within a two-hour window when the attack would likely come and yet they were still taken by surprise. In one case, a cruiser's commander lined his weather decks with armed sailors and Marines at ten-foot intervals. Satisfied his vessel was secure, he held a large luncheon in the wardroom for a number of civilian guests—all of whom were quite disconcerted when armed men burst in and informed them that they were now their prisoners. Such successes are often due in part to the hubris that occasionally results from the absolute authority

and relative independence of naval commanders and merchant captains. Add to this the innovation, surprise, and unconventional tactics of a small but bold and determined force, and the result can be the capture of a vessel of significant size, if captain and crew are overconfident and do not remain alert.<sup>9</sup>

There are other cases in which rovers took advantage of this overconfidence and its price. Labat noted the filibuster ketch, its prey never suspecting a filibuster would use a vessel so ill-suited to the chase. These deceptions, relying on a vessel's nonthreatening appearance and the prey's complaisance, arrogance, or expectations, were the simplest of ruses employed by sea rovers. Labat also recalled a conversation with Captain Pinel and his crew just after they captured two English vessels. Because their vessel, a sloop, was small and lightly armed as compared to its prey, the English largely ignored it until too late. The filibusters were quite contemptuous of the attitude and their prey's defenses.<sup>10</sup>

Sometimes speed alone was the key to a successful surprisal, the rover simply attempting to run aboard his prey before its defenses were prepared. Henry Pitman wrote of "privateers" in 1687 waiting with their canoes on the Spanish Main "to seize some Spanish vessel that might come that way, which they designed speedily to board before the Spaniards could get themselves in a posture of defence."<sup>11</sup>

By towing stop-waters, a rover could slowly slip farther astern by day, then by night make his best speed, come alongside, and board, visibility permitting. Captain Quierroret, keeping all but three of his crew below deck, planned to slip unnoticed into an English merchant convoy, sail with the convoy and pick out a fine fast prize, and come up close at night to board and take it.<sup>12</sup>

However, chasing and boarding by night were easier said than done. Ships at sea were not easy to chase at night by sight alone, even with bright moonlight, and especially if they were not showing lights. Even if the prey showed lights at the stern or tops (and these lanterns were not as powerful as most modern running lights) the lights could still easily disappear among the swells or over the horizon, depending on the relative distances involved. Further, if suspicious the prey might change course.

Attacks under cover of darkness had to be made quickly, for potential prizes were even more likely to take action if they discovered another vessel nearby at night. Although running aboard each other was surely a concern, an even greater concern was that any vessel so close at night obviously had foul intentions. In 1704 the *William Galley* fired small arms at a small ship suddenly "turning up to windward just by us" around midnight. The small ship went on its way and turned out to be the packet

boat from Jamaica bound for England.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, a ship under full sail suddenly appeared near a French man-of-war as it sailed to Siam (Thailand). The French armed themselves and fired a cannon, but the approaching vessel did not change course. The French ship came about but was struck astern by the unknown vessel, which then continued on its way.<sup>14</sup>

Pierre Le Grand had chased quite openly, with the apparent expectation that his prey did not see him as a threat. In many cases, however, a more elaborate deception was necessary, for not all captains were as overconfident as Le Grand's unfortunate Spaniard. These ruses were employed by rovers who intended to board by day and whose vessels were canoes, boats, or small sloops, barks, or ketches with few or no carriage guns, but with a crew large enough or aggressive enough to quickly subdue the chase by boarding. In these cases, the rover in a boat or small vessel needed to get close enough to board, but without raising suspicion lest the chase open fire, especially with musketeers or with carriage guns loaded with case shot.

On rare occasions ships used such "boarding" ruses as well. In an outright act of piracy, buccaneers captured a Danish ship by keeping most of their crew below decks and pretending to be a simple merchantman. As the prey came near, the buccaneer captain loudly ordered his helm to bear away, but in reality he was giving the order to come alongside the Dane. The buccaneers boarded by surprise and took the ship, renaming her *Batchelor's Delight*.<sup>15</sup>

Associated stratagems involved the disguising of a vessel's good heels, hiding crew members below, flying false colors, and using a native speaker of the prey's language to answer a hail. In the case of prey swifter than predator, the rover used deception to get close enough so that force of arms could be brought to bear to keep the prey from showing its heels. As noted, many sea rovers took advantage of the prey's natural expectations, a fundamental tactical principal in all manners of warfare.

Duguay-Trouin once attempted a surprise boarding of a Portuguese man-of-war. Although circumstances precluded the initial boarding attempt, he still managed to deceive his prey by sailing under English colors and approaching as if he intended to speak to him, to ask for news in passing.<sup>16</sup> As discussed, ruses involving colors worked best in conjunction with other indications that tended to confirm their legitimacy.

In daylight a ruse was mandatory and preparation was vital. A lack of either could lead to failure, as it did in 1709 in the South Sea when the *Duke* and *Duchess* privateers hurriedly sent two boats in a calm to attack a Spanish ship. Upon coming up with the Spaniard the boat crews tried

to pretend to be friends until they “got out of the Way of their Stern-Chase” and could board her on each bow. Unfortunately the ruse failed, and the boats came under fire from five cannon mounted astern, a common tactic of merchantmen in a chase. In a hurry, the rover crews had mounted no swivels and could mount only a weak defense. Woodes Rogers’s brother was killed during this action.<sup>17</sup>

Boarding a ship underway from boats or canoes, day or night, was always difficult and hazardous, and provision had to be made to secure these craft to the prey while everyone boarded. A ship might sail along at several knots or more, and swells of only a few feet could make boarding dangerous. A man overboard in such circumstances was often a man drowned. Further, the sound of a man falling overboard might give away the attack. Keeping the craft alongside its prey was done by lashing to rings, rails, chain-plates, rudder pendants, boat or gust ropes, or deadeyes and shrouds, but it could also be done with boat hooks or grappels, or even by grasping and hanging on to rigging (sheets, for example). The more tentative the hold, the more likely the boat and its prey might be forced apart, perhaps stranding men aboard or losing them in the sea.

When boarding at sea the rover had two options, each largely dictated by the wind. If it were calm, the rover had to row, and this was actually an advantage over his becalmed prey. If he could approach under sail or oar, he had to choose whether to board to windward or leeward.

Although an approach from windward was easier than from the lee, it was usually easiest for a boat to come alongside a ship under sail in its lee, particularly in a rough sea, for it is usually quieter here. Also, the leeward movement of the attacked vessel tended to keep it in contact with the attacker. However, a boat under sail alone might lose its wind in the lee before it came alongside. In high seas it might be battered roughly by the ship pressing and rolling upon it, making boarding difficult or even swamping or capsizing the attacking craft. It might even be swept under the ship’s bow in the lee if the ship were lying by. Hutchinson, writing of pilots boarding from boats, noted just such a hazard when a stern line was not used to prevent the craft from slipping forward. A windward approach might thus be safer.<sup>18</sup>

Ideally, though, sea rovers made surprise boardings against the prey at anchor. This was the operation later known as “cutting out,” and it is a staple of sea-roving legend and fiction.

## CHAPTER

# 17



## Surprizals at Anchor

### *Quiet Waters, Quiet Oars*

RECALL OUR SLY FRIEND JEAN DOUBLET WHO HAD ELICITED THE information he needed. We find him back aboard his corvette as fishing boats return to the harbor. Doublet had one of his English officers ask the captain of one passing boat if he would sell them some of his catch. The old fisherman gladly agreed, and he and his son were invited aboard to drink. Doublet quickly had them stone cold drunk, vomiting, and then unconscious. He did the same with the third crewman still aboard the fishing boat.<sup>1</sup>

Doublet then took twenty-eight of his best men, armed them, ordered them to silence, boarded the fishing boat, and passed into Saltash Harbor with it, first being challenged by a sentinel near the castle at Rat Island. “Whence the boat?” came the cry. One of the English officers replied, “A fisher boat,” and on their way they went.<sup>2</sup>

They quickly came alongside the Dutch *pinnasse* and boarded at the main shrouds, leaving one man behind to man the fishing boat. Finding only one crewman on deck, they quickly overpowered him, although not before he broke the arm of one of the attackers with a handspike. The attackers immediately secured the doors and hatches. Using a hatchet, the carpenter broke into the *dunette*, or cabins beneath the poop, and the attackers seized the three officers sleeping there. In the *dunette* was a hatch leading down to the great cabin where the captain slept, and by “extraordinary good fortune” the carpenter fell through the hatch and landed at the feet of the ship’s captain. He immediately overpowered the captain, then groped around to find the door. Opening it, he shouted to



the others to bring water, and for none to approach with fire; the cabin deck was covered with gunpowder. The captain had been preparing to burn his ship rather than let the corsairs have it.<sup>3</sup>

Doublet and his men rounded up the crew they could find and locked them in the forecabin, leaving two sentries to guard them. The rest of the crew had hidden among the wool on the lower deck. Doublet suffered but two casualties: the crewman who broke his arm and one of the English officers serving with Doublet who received an accidental cutlass wound to the leg by one of his fellow corsairs. It took time for the attackers to get the *pinnasse* under way, but eventually they made sail and cut the cables. They took a risky passage out of the harbor, near a shoal of rocks, a passage that only moderately sized vessels normally took. They were challenged again by the sentinel: "Where are you going? Do you have your dispatches?" They responded affirmatively, saying that the current was forcing them to take the hazardous passage.<sup>4</sup>

Doublet left his prize in the hands of the two English officers and twenty men, taking the remainder of his men and the Dutch prisoners with him back onto the fishing boat. Arriving back at his corvette, he woke the fishermen, paid them well for their fish, then gave them each a glass of brandy and told them that his anchor and cable, which he had to leave, was theirs. Doublet later learned that three sentinels from the castle had been hanged, having been found guilty of complicity in the capture of the Dutch vessel. He claimed also that the old fisherman, his boat, and the recovered cable had been burned by the hangman, and the anchor thrown into the harbor. Upon Doublet's arrival at Dunkirk, everyone was surprised at how "a mouse had carried away an elephant."

Readers may note the similarity between Doublet's attack and that described by Daphne Du Maurier in *Frenchman's Creek*. Such raids were probably fairly common. In 1692 two French privateers, most likely manned by Irishmen serving the exiled King James II, carried away two English ships at anchor in Torbay.<sup>5</sup>

### Prey the Easy Way

Most surprise boardings took place not at sea or underway but at anchor, often at night, and for good reason. First, the crews of vessels at anchor generally felt more secure. Often only a limited watch was posted, and many of the crew were below decks or ashore. Vigilance was relaxed with the passing of the dangers of a ship underway. Second, even at night the target vessel could be located relatively easily. Not only did ships usually

show lights at anchor, but bearings could be taken during daylight to subsequently locate the vessel by night. Third, an attacker could approach in almost any craft or ship, provided his draft were not too great for the anchorage or road, and he could even approach by swimming. Having no need of mast or sail, the attacker in a boat could reduce his profile by furling his sail and unstepping his mast. An attacker could altogether avoid the friction-created noise of oar against thole pin and gunwale by simply using the oars as paddles.<sup>6</sup>

Even in slack water on a still night with modern illumination from shore, a boat or swimmer could often approach a vessel without being discovered, particularly if the watch was inattentive or distracted. Before the advent of electricity, nights were dark in a way that in this century can only be understood when an observer heads out to sea and over the horizon or into a true wilderness or deep countryside. Only the moon lends any significant light when artificial illumination is absent, and even then most nights still have a greater or lesser period of complete darkness. Darkness was the ally of the surprise attacker; it was the rover making an open fight at night who needed moonlight. If he lacked complete darkness, the surreptitious attacker might have the good fortune of clouds that obscured the moonlight—de Lussan and his filibuster comrades in the South Sea once waited until clouds hid the moon before making their final approach to their target. Even shipboard lights did not aid the defender. Instead, they aided the surprise attacker by destroying the defender's night vision and limiting the distance he could see into the darkness. Further, lights on a target gave the attacker something to steer to.<sup>7</sup>

Most surprizals against vessels at anchor were made at night, while the crew slept. Ideally, the approach could be made under oars, but it could also be made under sail. Whether under oar or sail, it was wise to devise a ruse in case of discovery. For example, when hailed by a Spanish man-of-war at night asking if they had seen the pirates, L'Ollonnois and his men replied that the pirates had been warned of the warship's coming and had fled.<sup>8</sup>

The approach by night was invariably slow and cautious. In 1685, Captain Townley and 140 buccaneers attempted to seize the Lima ship in Acapulco Harbor during the night. Traveling in canoes, they made their way several leagues along the coast, surviving a waterspout that moved from shore to sea and almost capsized their canoes. They laid over in Port Marquis, where they dried their clothing, arms, and ammunition. The next night they arrived at Acapulco. Entering the harbor they used their oars as paddles to minimize noise. Dampier noted that they "paddled as

softly as if they had been seeking Manatee.” The buccaneers found the Lima ship lying between a fort and a breastwork, about a hundred yards from each. Upon considering the situation they decided not to try to take the ship. Sea roving was foremost about profit, and they might have been paddling into a trap.<sup>9</sup>

In 1677 a French privateer of six guns commanded by Captain Pain sailed to the island of Aves, intending to careen and refit. Not long before, the Comte d’Estrees had arrogantly ignored warnings of unknown waters and shipwrecked most of his French fleet on a nearby reef, foiling his plans to attack the Dutch colony of Curaçao and littering the shores of Aves with “Masts, Yards, Timbers” and many other things Captain Pain needed. Unfortunately, before the French privateers had finished careening their vessel, a Dutch ship of twenty guns sent to recover guns from the reef spotted them and opened fire at a distance. Spotting a Dutch sloop coming to anchor at the western end of the island, the French commander sent two canoes to board her by surprise. They did, and in the end they came out better than if they still had their original vessel. The Dutch prize had considerable purchase aboard.<sup>10</sup>

### Considerations at Sea or at Anchor

Preparation was critical in any surprise boarding action. The prey’s expectations and likely actions had to be anticipated, intelligence gathered, plans laid, and vessel, arms, and men prepared for the action ahead. The sea-roving captain had to be a meticulous planner, a shrewd tactician, and a quick-thinking opportunist with the ability to both lead and compel under the threat of fire as well as under actual fire. Tactics should always be dictated by the situation at hand, and any competent leader must be capable of adapting the plan on the spur of the moment.<sup>11</sup>

Boarding a vessel by stealth, day or night, at sea or at anchor, was fraught with opportunity for failure. Rovers had to deal with four dangers in making a surprizal against a ship at sea or at anchor: First was the possibility of compromise before coming alongside the prey and of getting blown from the water soon after. Second was the possibility of encountering defenses or countermeasures aboard the prey. Third was the act of boarding itself, the most vulnerable moment. Last was that of a possible retreat in case of failure.

When preparing to make a surprizal on a ship at anchor, the rover selected a vessel to attack and learned what he could about it. He had to decide how to approach it, what vessel to approach it with—taking into

account capacity, seaworthiness, and the likelihood that it would be recognized as an attacker. A *corsaire* might choose to capture and use an English fishing boat to attack a ship at anchor in an English harbor because a fishing boat was a common craft in the area and would not raise suspicion. Similarly, modern naval commandos might capture an “indigenous craft” in order to approach closer to a hostile shoreline. After all, one of the principal roles of deception is to ease or preclude the prey’s suspicions.

The attacker also had to choose his weapons. Arms used in a surprise boarding had to be light and easily managed. Cutlasses could be sheathed or carried in a frog, slung by a lanyard, or simply carried in the hand if the climb were a short or easy one. Clenching a cutlass in the teeth was probably a good way to lose both teeth and cutlass if the boarder were not careful, although there are records of Barbary pirates boarding in this fashion, swords in teeth and pistols hooked into their belts. Pistols with belt-hooks could be hooked into the belt, and those without belt-hooks could be pocketed if small enough (and if the boarder had pockets) or stuffed into a belt or sash. Arms, particularly cutlasses, swords, and boarding axes, could also have been attached at the wrist by a lanyard or loop. Silence was vital; arms could not be banging against the hull.<sup>12</sup>

Pistols were probably carried at half-cock, the safety position. A boarder with one hand busy helping him climb could still full-cock a pistol by pressing back the hammer against the shoulder, wrist, or anything else handy, as both practice and contemporary documents demonstrate. On the other hand, boarding with a pistol at full-cock would permit the boarder to fire immediately should a defender appear, but this had to be balanced with the danger of an accidental discharge.

The typical weapons for a surprise boarding were a pistol or brace of pistols and a cutlass for most, and a few boarding axes distributed appropriately. If the arms had to be concealed, small pistols, short-bladed cutlasses, and knives were the only possibilities. The French corsair Jean Doublet provided the most detailed list of such arms for attacking a ship at anchor: eighteen pistols, as many “sabers,” twenty-four grenades, and six “good carpenter’s hatchets” for twenty-eight of his best men. How he distributed the weapons is unknown: a pistol and cutlass each for eighteen men, a hatchet for another half dozen, and eight grenades apiece for three men (one man remained with their boat) is one likely possibility.<sup>13</sup>

The boarding ax would have been particularly effective in quietly dispatching a sentinel or lone seaman on deck, and might have been the weapon of choice. A blow to the head with such a weapon could split or crush a skull. Boarding pikes and muskets could be used to provide

limited support from the attacking craft if the enemy counterattacked, and the pikes and muskets could be passed up to boarders. They could also be carried or slung by boarders when climbing, but this would be a fairly cumbersome process. These last two arms do not seem to have been much used for surprise boarding attacks during this period.<sup>14</sup>

The commander also had to choose how many men to board with. In general, in such attacks it was, and still is, best to go overboard (so to speak) in the number of men making the attack, whenever possible. Encouragement in the form of sinking the attacker's craft seems to be more the stuff of legend than common practice.

The commander also had to choose when to board. Wind, tide, visibility, and other opportunity affected this decision. Surprizals by day required a ruse, but by night they often required nothing more than silence, for darkness was the rover's best ally. Darkness not only helped conceal him, but its uncertainties often delayed an *All arm!* (alarm). During a pitch-black night on the water, approaching objects were difficult to identify until they were suddenly very close. The observer could think for several seconds or even minutes that he saw something, yet still be unsure until the object almost magically loomed up right before him.

The night played tricks on the eyes, and anyone who had spent any time at sea at night, especially in small craft, could attest to seeing things that might or might not really have been there, especially when the observer was in the throes of excessive fatigue or sleep deprivation. Often, other observers would confirm the sighting of "something." Francis Rogers described how he, his ship's captain, and others saw a boat off to starboard one night, seemingly sometimes very near and sometimes standing off. By the captain's reckoning his ship was more than 200 leagues from land, thus should not have been there. The captain called out the small arms, worried that his navigational reckoning might be off, and Rogers fired a pistol at the boat with no apparent reaction from it. Before long it was gone. Other observers, perhaps in not quite so dramatic fashion, could attest to similar odd sightings at night, real and imagined.<sup>15</sup>

Such "sightings" could aid the attacker by creating uncertainty and doubt. The observer came to expect the odd transient illusion at sea. Fatigue, drowsiness, boredom, inattention, and overconfidence on the part of a vessel's sentries and lookouts further contributed to the ability of an attacker to approach a vessel at night undetected.

As important as day and night were wind and tide. In a protected harbor, the rover needed to time the tides correctly in order to safely enter and escape. Capturing the prize only to become wind- or tide-bound

might well lead to being captured. Strong currents could prevent boats from rowing to the prey, and contrary currents or winds, or both, could prevent the rover from escaping with his prize. The attacker's launch point, usually outside of the harbor for a ship at anchor, also determined when an attack was launched. Knowledge of local tides, not to mention hazards to navigation, were critical to the success of a boarding at anchor.

The rover also had to develop his ruses, even those as simple as coming up with a plausible reply if challenged. A native speaker was naturally helpful in these situations. Other ruses might include disguising the crew. The boat crew belonging to a Turkish pirate, for example, attempted to deceive Jean Doublet by wearing hats and dressing "à la Provençal"—Turkish pirates generally wore turbans and went bare-armed.<sup>16</sup>

A rover commander had to choose where to board. Although this might have been planned, it depended on the immediate circumstances, especially at sea. The bow was a dangerous place to board, for a ship underway could overrun a boat or canoe, drowning its crew. If defenders discovered the boarders they could easily force them to board one at a time over the ship's head. In general, privateers did not board at the bow if there were a chance that the prey was alerted.<sup>17</sup>

Amidships was the most common boarding location from a boat. The freeboard, or distance from the water to the gunwale, was the lowest, it gave quick access fore and aft, and the main chains were there. Jean Doublet's men boarded there.<sup>18</sup> In terms of concealment the stern was perhaps the best place to board. However, it could be a long climb on some ships, and that usually meant very slow access to the deck unless the boarders could enter through the stern lights (windows).

Climbing anywhere on a vessel was assisted by wales, channels, shrouds, head rails, carved works, rings, anchor cables, sheets, tacks, and boat and gust ropes, all of which gave excellent hand or foot holds. Also assisting the climber was the significant tumblehome of many vessels of this period. Bulwarks narrowed toward the mid-line as they rose from the waterline, making the climb less than perfectly vertical.

Lastly, the commander had to decide how he would use his men. Would any be left behind in the boat to keep it secure? Would the company be divided into groups designated to attack different areas of the ship, or would they all just rush aboard as best they could, attacking anything in their path?

In the best of all possible tactical situations, the attackers gained the decks undiscovered. Crews tended to assume they would get some sort of

warning, and without it men on deck could be easily dispatched. The assumption of security was a weakness easily exploited.

Once aboard, the attackers had to immediately put down any resistance and secure doors, ports, hatches, and scuttles so that men trapped below could not sally forth. At anchor, boarders might encounter only an idle hand or two on watch, the rest being ashore or asleep below. Many caught unaware probably begged for quarter when they realized they were overpowered: "*Corte! Corte! Monsieur! moy allay pur Angleterre si vou plea!*" ("Quarter! Quarter! Sir! I go for England, please!") Self-preservation was a strong instinct in the face of what appeared to be an overwhelming assault, and only the strongest of will might make a fight and give alarm at the likely cost of his own life. On the other hand, given more equal odds or desperation, many might resist fiercely. Such assaults were brutal, and many men were not spared until the attackers felt secure.

Robert Lyde, the prisoner of a seven-man French prize crew aboard his own vessel, described in graphic detail his surprisal of his captors. With an iron handcrow, he attacked three sleeping members of the French prize crew, first striking one in the head and killing him. He struck another in the arm and head, then struck the ship's master in the cheek with the claws of the crow, then shoved the point of the crow an inch and half into the master's forehead as he tried to grapple. Meanwhile, the ship's boy struck the helmsman twice on the head with an iron drive-bolt, the blows so loud that Lyde could hear them some distance away. As he left the cabin, Lyde again struck the first sleeping man another blow, "thinking to leave no man alive aft of myself," tactically a wise move although perhaps repellent to some sensibilities. The battle then raged on deck, three against one, until Lyde managed to pull his knife and cut a throat. The others begged quarter. Most such combats were equally brutal.<sup>19</sup>

After sweeping the decks of resistance, rovers gave priority to capturing or, if he resisted, killing the vessel's commander, for given the often rigidly patriarchal nature of command at sea, the loss of the captain or the knowledge of his practical impotence was usually enough to halt any resistance, particularly aboard merchantmen. Equal priority was also given at this time to securing arms and powder.

These attacks were most successful when the prey's crew were asleep, distracted, unaware, or overconfident. But there were even more ways to attack the prey at anchor.

## CHAPTER

# 18



## More Surprizals at Anchor *Of Trade and Other Pretenses*

THE BOLDEST ATTACK, ALTHOUGH IF WELL-EXECUTED PERHAPS THE safest, was when the rover pretended to be a friend seeking news or trade, approached or even boarded the prey at anchor, and then attacked while the crew suspected nothing. Pretending amity, the rover could size up the prey, and then make a quick assault. This was a common pirate tactic among those seeking a vessel, or a better vessel, to cruise on the account.

Often this was as simple as rowing or paddling a canoe or boat to an anchored vessel, boarding as if a friend, and then informing master and crew that the sloop no longer belonged to them, as John Evans and company did in 1722 on the north shore of Jamaica. It was not uncommon to progress from canoe to piragua to sloop, or to take other small craft in a similar sequence.<sup>1</sup> L'Ollonais put to sea "in a small vessel he had obtained by trickery" and proceeded to capture a ten-gun Spanish man-of-war sent to capture him.<sup>2</sup>

Philip Ashton, whose *Memorial* is an excellent account both of being captured by pirates and of being marooned, was aboard a shallop taken in this simple manner in 1722. At anchor waiting among several fishing vessels "till the Sabbath was over," a brigantine stood in and sent a boat with four men to the shallop. Ashton and the other four crew members aboard, including a boy, suspected nothing except that the men were seeking news "till they drew their cutlashes and pistols from under their clothes, and cock'd the one and brandish'd the other, and began to curse & swear at us, and demanded a surrender of our selves and vessel to



them. It was too late for us to rectify our mistake." The brigantine was commanded by the notorious Ned Low.<sup>3</sup>

Johnson described a mutiny and similar surprizal aboard one of three sloops commissioned as traders by Providence governor Woodes Rogers (of privateering fame). Several sailors from one sloop came aboard another while all three were anchored at Green Key. While one man distracted the sloop's officers with tales of piracy and waved one of the officer's swords around, others quietly seized the sloop's arms and captured the vessel. All three sloops became pirates, and only one of the three captains refused to go a-pirating. The key to success, as with many such operations, was meticulous planning, including code phrases or other signals. In this case, the code was said to be the words of a song, "did not you promise me that you would marry me," signalling that the arms had been seized and the attack was commencing.<sup>4</sup>

Pretending a desire to trade was a common tactic, for it lent legitimacy to an approach. The more illicit the trade, the more likely that victims could be found. Indeed, the ruse of trade in *contrabanda* goods was a common one. Smuggling was a regular feature of trade in the Americas, perhaps even more so than it was in Europe.<sup>5</sup> Spanish merchants bought goods from buccaneers, even goods just stolen from the Spanish, and sold the buccaneers whatever commodities they required.<sup>6</sup> Often no coercion was involved. Dampier described Spanish merchants who "came, as by stealth, to traffick with us privately; a thing common enough with the Spanish merchants, both in North and South-Seas, notwithstanding the severe prohibition of the governours; who yet sometimes connive at it, and will even trade with the privateers themselves."<sup>7</sup> This greed could serve as a means by which to take prizes, or to "catch a Tartar" of which more will be said in the next chapter. Captain Rose, a French filibuster, once anchored in the Ache River and sent six Englishmen ashore in a small canoe to give notice to the Spaniards of a ship that came to trade by stealth with them, although his was no legitimate desire to trade. England was at peace with Spain, and the filibusters hoped the presence of English traders would help lure Spaniards aboard the filibuster at night, that they might be captured while going back and forth. The excessive noise created, perhaps by his putting thirty men ashore to capture Spanish craft, alerted the Spaniards to what was going on, and they would not take the bait. De Lussan noted wryly that the Spaniards had no taste for the merchandise the French hoped to trade in.<sup>8</sup>

Johnson described how in 1701 in the port of Maritan, Madagascar, John Bowen and four men pretended a desire to buy merchandise from the *Speedy Return*, a ship of the Scottish African and East India Com-

pany. The ship's captain, surgeon, and several others of the crew were ashore at the time. Coming aboard in broad daylight, Bowen and his men drew pistol and hanger and forced the ship's company into a cabin. Shortly afterward, they brought forty or fifty of their own men aboard.<sup>9</sup>

Other rovers, usually pirates, were even more duplicitous, often drinking freely and exchanging sea stories with their prey before attacking. According to Johnson, George Booth was a master of this technique.<sup>10</sup> It took no formal training in acting to carry out this kind of attack, although it certainly did not hurt. Barring a member of the company with stage fright (and even he needed but take his cues from bolder members), the attackers needed only be themselves. As mariners, they had a commonality with those they intended to attack, making it much easier to gain their confidence. They knew their target or were at least very familiar with its place in the order of things. There was a comfort level that made it easy to appear as nonthreatening fellow seamen, brothers of a common trade, men with common bonds of experience and language. Breaking bread and drinking spirits usually, though not always, eased the suspicions of most men. Most tended to look for reasons to find others nonthreatening. Providing that the attackers had a plausible reason not only to board a vessel but for any action they took while aboard, they should have been able to assuage any fears their prey might have had. Getting aboard was at least half the battle, and often most of it.

### **Cutting Cables**

A simple tactic, cutting cables was usually used to escape quickly or run a vessel aground, seldom to capture it. One could swim, row, or paddle out to a vessel to cut its anchor cable. Native American warriors in Acadia, allied with the French, took to their canoes one night in 1707 and seized two New England fishing vessels lying at anchor. Using one of the captured vessels, they took two more. The rest, alarmed, cut their cables and put out to sea.

This was not an exceptional event. Although little attention has been paid to the subject, many Native Americans were quite capable seamen who used both their indigenous craft as well as small craft of European design and build. Their vessels and associated skills were used not only for fishing and trade but also for warfare against Europeans. De Lussan held Native Americans to be the oldest filibusters in America. While his comment might have been in reference to their roving or "thieving" nature, as some contemporary Europeans might put it, he might have

made it in reference to a combination of roving tendencies and an associated ability in seamanship and warfare at sea. A complement, as it were.<sup>11</sup>

### Mutiny

An insidious yet relatively common method of taking a vessel at sea was to sign aboard a vessel, recruit other members of the ship's company, and execute a planned mutiny. Other mutinies were more or less ad hoc. Mutiny was almost exclusively the province of pirates or of those who intended to be pirates. Henry Every, having signed aboard an English ship commissioned by the Spanish to pursue French interlopers on the main, plotted a mutiny while at anchor in Corunna, called "the Groyne" by the English. John Dann, a member of the crew, later testified that the mutiny was due to their pay being eight months late. Every and his comrades weighed the anchor and got the ship under sail in broad daylight, as if nothing were up at all. When his captain woke, Every informed him that he was no longer in command and that their course was now for Madagascar, not the Spanish Main. The captain and five or six of the crew who would not join the pirates were put in a boat and sent on their way. Every went on to capture one of the Great Mogul's ships taking rich pilgrims to Mecca, the *Ganj-i-Sawai*, or *Gunsway*. Johnson said Every died poor in Bideford, though this story might just be an example of Johnson's poetic moralizing.<sup>12</sup>

On another occasion, Philip Roche and three accomplices engaged a Frenchman named Tartoue to carry them from Cork to Nantes, whither his vessel was bound. Roche was an experienced seaman and was permitted to conn the vessel on occasion when the master and mate slept. At a night agreed upon to perpetrate their crime, and after a moment's hesitation on the part of one of the conspirators, the four brutally murdered the six-man crew, beating out their brains or throwing them into the sea, as they did with the ship's boy. They bound the captain and mate back-to-back and threw them into the sea as well, disregarding their pleas for mercy. But Roche's career as a pirate, and his life as well, was short-lived, ended by the hangman's noose. William Fly was another such butcher. Shipping aboard the *Elizabeth* Snow of Bristol, he led a mutiny and threw the captain overboard. The captain managed to hang on by the main-sheet, and when Fly discovered this, he took a broad ax and chopped the captain's hand off, letting him fall into the sea to drown. Fly was later hanged in chains at the entrance to Boston Harbor.<sup>13</sup>

Throwing captains overboard alive seems to have been much in vogue

among the murderers who took up mutiny as a vehicle to piracy. More than likely, these murders were acts of open rebellion against the almost unlimited authority of a captain at sea, whether the rebellion were warranted or not. John Quelch, also hanged at Boston, threw the captain of the *Charles* overboard. Many captains were surprised in their sleep, a very practical way of seizing a commander and preventing him from making an immediate outcry or otherwise enlisting the aid of loyal crewmen while he was still free and capable of giving commands. Marcus Rediker noted that probably one in five mutinies resulted in the death of at least one of a ship's officers.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps as often as not, mutinies could be attributed to the officers aboard the ship, and not always because they treated their crew too harshly. Many times, officers simply paid too little attention to what was going on aboard their vessel or dismissed the possibility of mutiny out of hand. In 1673, after a crewman informed on a potential mutiny aboard the *Saint Anthony*, a Portugal-built ship, three of the four plotters were jailed in Lisbon. The fourth, a carpenter, was spared this fate, for a carpenter was a vital part of the ship's company. Two English and two Dutch seamen were added to the crew to replace the three in jail. Subsequently, the carpenter recruited the four new crewmen, plus another conspirator. After a week at sea, they mutinied and set those who would not join them into a boat upon the open water.<sup>15</sup>

Not all officers were willing to risk their cargoes by taking on a seaman with a history of mutiny or piracy. Many were well aware of the corrosive effect that even one of these men could have on a crew, particularly a small one, and would not take them aboard, nor in many cases do anything that might result in their being put aboard. For example, Captain Tolson, commander of the *Mary Galley*, refused to report two men, each a mutineer and pirate, to the authorities in Batavia. The men were among the crew who had helped pirates seize and run away with the merchantman *Prosperous*. Tolson decided not to report them, for he feared they might be placed back aboard his ship for transport to England for trial, "and fearing that iff I demanded justice of the Government they would have delivered them into my hands; and beleive my men to be verry honest and did not care to have them corrupted by villons."<sup>16</sup>

These examples of surprizals are by no means exhaustive. The prey could also be surprised by a broadside and volley of small arms into a ship and mass of men unprepared to receive a swarm of hot metal. In rare instances, instead of capturing a prize, a rover might need to destroy it by a surprise stratagem, in most cases by burning. But in some cases the supposed prey turned out to be predator instead.

## CHAPTER

# 19



## **Sending a Smoker and Catching a Tartar**

### *More Stratagems at Sea*

SURPRIZALS HAD ONE GREAT DISADVANTAGE: THEY WERE OFTEN risky. Failure could arise from flaws in execution or unhappy circumstance, leaving the attacker vulnerable to counterattack. Further, the surprise attacker could never be absolutely certain that he was not lured to be “trepanned” (tricked). That is, he could never be sure that his prey was not waiting to surprise him.

Tactics needed to be fluid, and adaptable, whether the contest was on a chessboard or in combat. Offensive actions could be defensive, and defensive actions offensive. Attack and counterattack were often indistinguishable, especially when the counterattack was prepared in advance and launched just as the enemy prepared his attack. A retreat or appearance of weakness might simply be the first part of a powerful surprise attack, just as an attack or pretense at strength might be the first part of a retreat or escape. Although often considered a defensive or reactive action, a counterattack remained an attack. It was wise to remember that the attacker, thinking to trap the enemy, might find himself trapped instead. Attacks rarely worked exactly as planned, sometimes they did not work at all, and occasionally, by accident or design, a predator could suddenly find himself the prey.

#### **Surprizal by Broadside**

Firing a surprise broadside was a fairly common tactic to capture prizes and trepanne an aggressor. The tactic could be as simple as lying by until

a ship came within point blank range, firing a broadside, and then capturing the surprised vessel or making an escape. The pirate Condent once came up to a Portuguese man-of-war of seventy guns, pretending to seek to speak in passing. Hailed by the Portuguese, he answered, "From London, bound for Buenos Aires" and immediately fired a broadside and volley of small arms, killing forty and wounding many others, for the Portuguese crew were thick in the shrouds and on the decks. Unfortunately the trick failed to give him the advantage he needed, and after an engagement of three glasses (an hour and a half) he bore off.<sup>1</sup>

However, the tactic could be just as useful against those who thought they had their prey or enemy on the run. An adversary could be caught off guard not only when not paying attention but also when paying too much attention. In 1658 the HMS *Adventure*, a swift man-of-war close-hauled, chased the Spanish picaroon *St. Michael* for two hours until close astern, certain of a quick victory. Suddenly the Biscayer "brought his ship about and poured in a broadside of great guns and a volley of small shot . . . and finding that he had shot away the head of his [*Adventure's*] foremast and mizzenmast and tore his rigging &c., he bore directly down on us."<sup>2</sup> Focus too much or too little, and it was all too easy to overlook the obvious.

To be the most lethal in these cases, a crew loaded its great guns with a combination of round shot and case shot, or double-headed shot and case. Men with small arms would stay out of sight until the time to fire. If lying by and the prey suspected nothing, the rover needed only wait until the vessel came alongside, then fire. If the rover approached an unsuspecting vessel lying by "like a log," he would bring to under the stern or on one of the quarters and open fire. If commander and crew were skillful enough, they could turn into the wind, fire one broadside, then back astern and bring the other broadside to bear. Firing at the adversary's broadside was intended to slaughter men and damage masts and rigging. Firing at the stern the targets were the crew, rudder head, and masts and rigging.<sup>3</sup>

If running on a bowline, the chase needed only wait until the adversary were close astern, then come about suddenly (turning from the wind) and fire, as the *St. Michael* did. Running with the wind quartering, the chase could "clap on a wind" close-hauled if the adversary were on the weather quarter or come about with the wind on the opposite quarter if the adversary were in the lee. Running with the wind astern, the chase could come about with the wind on either beam, depending on the adversary's location. In all cases it was imperative to fire the broadside as suddenly and close to the adversary as possible.

Having fired a surprise broadside, a ship now had two choices: continue

the fight if its enemy appeared disabled enough or show its heels. Against a ship of force the choice required a captain with nerves of steel. Edward Coxere once wished for such a commander: "But had the captain had drink in his head I think I may say, as sometimes is used, he would a fought the Devil. For had we a-fired into him at his first coming up with us, his men being so in heaps on the deck and he not expecting opposition, with this advantage we might a destroyed many men." But the captain polled his crew and they would not fight, preferring a future as prisoners of the Spanish.<sup>4</sup>

Occasionally, disagreements among various buccaneers, filibusters, and common pirates resulted in such tactics in retaliation. After a falling out with their English buccaneer consort of eight months, a mixed crew of French, Flemish, and English approached in their small frigate at dawn and without warning fired a broadside and volley into the body of buccaneers assembled on deck, then sailed away.<sup>5</sup>

### **Furled with Rope Yarns, the Anchor Apeake**

To appear to quietly lie at anchor and then suddenly get under way was a useful means of surprise. Normally only boats and canoes could get up their grapnels and make sail quickly. For a ship, getting an anchor or anchors up was a time-consuming process, and sails were furled to their yards with gaskets or furling lines that had to be cast off by hand when setting sail. Topsail and topgallant yards were kept lowered to the caps when sail was not set and had to be hauled up as sail was made. However, a rover could lie with anchor "apeake" and sails "furled with rope yarns." With the anchor "apeake" (the cable hauled in until it was vertical and the vessel's bow riding directly over the anchor), a few heaves at the capstan would break the anchor free and set the ship under way. Rope yarns would break when the sheets were hauled home, releasing the sails.<sup>6</sup> (Rope yarns were "spun" or twisted together from fibers, strands were "formed" from rope yarns, and rope was "laid" from strands—or in other words, "Rope yarns are the Yarnes of any rope untwisted.")<sup>7</sup> Anchor cables could also be slipped instead and recovered later. Anchor buoys would mark the site, or a boat could be "clapt . . . on our moorings" to do the same.<sup>8</sup>

A ship readied in this manner could get under sail very quickly, in minutes even, yet until it did it would appear to be quietly at anchor. The prey would believe it had plenty of time to get away if necessary. A Spanish vice admiral surprised filibusters with this technique: the Spaniard's

anchor was *à pic*, his sails were furled with light line, the wind was abaft, and he was *en un instant* upon the filibuster admiral.<sup>9</sup> The tactic was also an excellent means of escape when trapped at anchor. With it, Duguay-Trouin avoided capture by English warships as he lay at anchor in the lee of Lundy Isle during a storm, and Jean Doublet escaped the English when they sent boats after another vessel, assuming he was securely at anchor.<sup>10</sup> The pirate Cornelius once got quickly under way in a similar manner, and Defoe described the tactic in *Captain Singleton*, a work of fiction.<sup>11</sup>

### Fire

A strictly destructive surprisal was the tactic of burning. It was rarely employed by rovers for their intentions were almost always the capture of their prey. They used fire primarily to escape when trapped, and only when there was no other option. Rovers burned ships for other tactical reasons: to deny the prey the ability to pursue, to hurt their ability to trade or make war, to deny them the use of vessels left behind by rovers, to retaliate against similar actions, and sometimes just out of spite or as a final act of defiance. On at least two occasions buccaneers burned their vessels before crossing Darien to assure victory by denying retreat, taking a page from Cortés. Blackbeard burned a prize in order to destroy the evidence. Ships that could not be used or manned were often burned. But none of these were tactical engagements per se. More commonly, the tactic was attempted by the Spanish against their sea-roving enemies. They might burn a longboat left unguarded by a gang of buccaneers or send a fireboat against a buccaneer vessel lying at anchor.<sup>12</sup>

When the *Aventurière*, Labat's escort, was captured by the Armada de Barlovento, her crew intended to set fire to the flagship and escape in the commotion, and while they were at it, they planned to steal the governor of Puerto Rico's bark, filled with goods and supposedly 500,000 or 600,000 pieces-of-eight. At Labat's suggestion, the Spanish released them before they could execute their plan.<sup>13</sup>

Attacks by burning required surprise, for at the first sight of a fire-ship a vessel would slip its cable and bear away if not tide- or wind-bound. Seamen feared fire aboard a ship as they feared nothing else. Constructed largely of wood, cordage, and linen, and saturated with flammable pitch, tar, linseed oil, tallow, and oakum, and often carrying a large quantity of gunpowder, a ship was in essence a great floating explosive bonfire wanting only the right spark.

Edward Barlow listed several common ways a ship might accidentally be set afire: carelessness in smoking or cooking, forgetting to put out a



candle burning in a cabin, burning brandy and other “strong liquors,” as well as any spark or flame that might ignite the ship’s powder stores. He described a ship being largely destroyed and sixty or seventy men killed when barrels of powder hidden among “the seamen” by a gunner who was a “rogue and stealing the King’s powder” took fire. The gunner was hanged for “his truth and care of his charge.”<sup>14</sup>

In another example, someone pumped rum from a hogshead aboard the pirate Cocklyn’s *Windham* Galley. A candle spark fell into the bung-hole, setting the volatile liquor on fire. The fire spread to another barrel, and both exploded like small cannon. Only by luck the fire did not spread to the many other barrels of rum, pitch, and tar nearby.<sup>15</sup>

A ship afire struck so much terror into its crew that even those who could not swim would rather leap into the sea and drown than chance being trapped aboard and burned to death.<sup>16</sup> Coxere described how powder took fire in the gunroom of the *St. George*, leaving flame and smoke all about. Those who could swim jumped overboard to get to the boats towed astern. Coxere noted that it was “everyone shift for himself” and that “the captain was then no more regarded than the cook.” Coxere and his shipmates were lucky, for the fire was overcome before it reached the powder room.<sup>17</sup>

Others were not so fortunate. In 1669 the English man-of-war *Oxford*, Henry Morgan’s flagship of thirty-six guns, exploded as it lay at anchor off Ile á Vache. More than 300 men died, many being apparently too drunk to save themselves. Among the survivors was Morgan. If nothing else, the incident might have struck Morgan’s men as proof that he was indestructible. To the Spanish, however, it was a sign that God had visited his retribution upon the piratical infestation. Dampier wrote that the Spanish believed that the *Madre de Popa* of Cartagena “was aboard that Night the *Oxford* Man of War was blown up at the Isle of *Vacca* near *Hispaniola*, and that she came home all wet.”<sup>18</sup>

Robert Challe described the burning and exploding of an English merchantman in 1690 after a long, bloody fight with a French man-of-war while en route to Siam. He told of the horror of seeing a ship aflame and hearing the screams and cries of the men and beasts aboard her being burned alive. Challe wrote that iron leaving a furnace was not brighter than this ship afire, and left an anguished description of how the ship exploded and how it seemed as if hell had vomited flame and fire unto the heavens. The ship burned for more than three hours, the air was “on fire” for a quarter of an hour after the magazine exploded, and it took half an hour for the thick smoke to dissipate afterward.<sup>19</sup>

Forbin similarly described the horror of a ship exploding, of seeing a

hundred half-burned men hurled into the air, leaving the sea covered with debris and the dead. He was able to recover only seven survivors, while noting with satisfaction that one of them was a Frenchman.<sup>20</sup>

Fire aboard a ship was difficult to extinguish. To fight it the crew drew buckets of water, and if there was water in the hold, they manned the pumps. If the fire reached anywhere near the powder room, they covered its bulkhead with blankets and rugs and soaked them with water. Men attacking the fire were likely to be “scalded in a sad manner,” but all must lend a hand or receive a “brave blast to go to hell with” and “suffer for our villainies in hellfire.”<sup>21</sup>

Morgan’s attack on the Spanish Armada de Barlovento at Maracaibo in 1669 was the most significant sea-rover attack by fire. Trapped inside the bottle-shaped Lake Maracaibo by three Spanish ships anchored at its mouth (armed with forty, thirty, and twenty-four guns respectively), as well as by a castle heavily armed with great guns, Morgan improvised. He converted one of his prizes to a fire-ship, and sent it down upon the Spanish at night. Though with perhaps less refinement than a ship deliberately converted at a shipyard, the fire-ship was filled with gunpowder, pitch, tar, sulfur, and even palm leaves covered with tar. The buccaneers mounted fake cannon (drums, actually) in her gunports, and placed vertical timbers draped with caps, muskets, and bandoleers about the decks to represent men. They cut the ship’s timbers to weaken them and permit the venting of more force from the exploding gunpowder. Morgan’s flotilla weighed anchor at night, and by early morning was upon the Spanish *armadillo*, the fire-ship leading. It grappled with the largest Spanish vessel, destroying it. The Spanish sank the second to avoid its capture, and the buccaneers captured the third. Although the attack destroyed the *armadillo* and thus crippled the Armada de Barlovento for some time, the guns of the castle prevented Morgan’s escape, and he was forced to devise another stratagem to avoid capture.<sup>22</sup>

Others made similar attempts using fire-ships, usually with less success and often without any design but spite. Shelvocke contemplated burning a French ship and its insolent commander, but decided against this, England and France being at peace.<sup>23</sup> Edward England turned a prize into a fire-ship and tried to burn two ships seeking shelter under the guns of Cape Corso castle, but the castle’s guns drove him away. Charles Vane burned his pirate ship in Providence Harbor upon the arrival of Governor Woodes Rogers’s flotilla, first shifting into a shallow-draft vessel in order to escape by the harbor’s east passage. He loaded all of his ship’s guns with double-round shot and partridge, then set it afire, hoping some of Rogers’s ships or boats might be sent near. As the ship burned, the fire

heated and discharged the loaded guns. Vane made good his escape, but his burning ship apparently caused little if any damage to the other vessels.<sup>24</sup>

One of the virtues of a fire-ship was its ability to do great damage at relatively small risk. In 1685 at Perico near Panama, a Spanish merchant and his crew approached a buccaneer ship at night under an arrangement to engage in a private trading venture, but suddenly set the bark afire and boarded their canoes, leaving the buccaneers to cut their cables and make their escape from the flaming craft drifting down upon them. Fortunately the buccaneers had enough sea room to make their escape, for ideally a fire-ship was used against a ship that was tide-bound or at anchor under a lee shore. An English would-be rover and renegade named Bond had helped prepare the fire-bark. Dampier disparagingly noted that "after the first blast she did not burn clear, only made a smother, for she was not well made, though Capt. Bond had the framing and management of it." Prisoners later confirmed that Bond had commanded the fire-ship. One of them, admitting that he had been aboard the smoker, was hanged immediately.<sup>25</sup> Hanging a fire-ship's crew from the yardarms if captured after they had "lit the train" (set the fire-ship afire) was common practice among navies.<sup>26</sup>

At the same time, about a mile away, Captain Swan's ship was almost attacked by a swimmer using a float to ferry incendiary materials, intending to set the ship afire. Upon discovery the swimmer dove underwater and disappeared before he could make his attack. Swan, also spotting the attack by fire upon the other ship, cut his cables. Both vessels kept under sail for the remainder of the night to prevent further attacks.<sup>27</sup>

Captain Sharp had been similarly and somewhat more successfully attacked at Coquimbo in 1679 during negotiations with the Spanish. A swimmer using an inflated bladder made of a horse's hide or a hog skin ferried his fireworks to the ship, stuffed oakum and brimstone between the rudder and rudder post, and set them afire with a slow match. "Some fellow of a Spaniard had Venterd off and laid itt on the rudther and Stearn Post (itt stuffed with powder), sat itt on fier, and went away," wrote one buccaneer. The rovers discovered the incipient fire by its smell and quickly put it out "before it burst out into a flame." The float and a match lighted at both ends were discovered ashore, and it was this discovery that saved the life of some or all of the Spanish prisoners aboard the *Trinidad*, for the crew assumed the attack had been perpetrated by someone aboard.<sup>28</sup>

In spite of their failure to destroy the buccaneers, the attacks succeeded in hurrying them on their way and left subsequent South Sea

rovers nervous for years after: “We raised anchor and started on our way, fearing that by way of reply [to a verbal threat] he might send out a fire-boat like the one he had dispatched to the English [at Perico] two years ago.”<sup>29</sup>

Also on record is a defeated vessel set afire by its crew in the hope not only of denying the attacker his prize, but also of destroying him. Off the Guinea coast during King William’s War, Captain Montauban and his crew prepared to take possession of an English ship after a sharp fight, when suddenly its powder took fire and exploded, destroying both ships. Both Montauban and Exquemelin accused the English captain of deliberately setting a match to the powder so that he and his crew might escape in their boats. Montauban was hurled into the air but survived despite being badly burned, and eventually made it to shore with some of his crew. There they received succor from local Africans who knew Montauban, but only after he was able to convince them of his identity by revealing a scar, for burns had made his face unrecognizable.<sup>30</sup>

### **Defenses against Surprizals**

To prevent or forestall a surprizal a crew could employ several counter-measures. Most important was maintaining a proper watch of lookouts and sentinels around the clock to descry boats attempting to come alongside. A lookout aloft was particularly important. If a commander believed an attack likely, he could also task a picket boat to row around the ship. Ideally the boat’s lookout would not be tasked with rowing or steering; his only duty would be to watch for the enemy. At anchor, if he feared an attack by fire-boat or by a swimmer intent upon cutting the cable, a captain could post a boat or canoe at the anchor buoy. The crew could grease its vessel’s hull to make it difficult to climb. They could run out one or more great guns on each side, and place swivels loaded with case shot to fire upon attackers before they boarded, as well as sweep the waist of the ship if they did board. A boarding net rigged from the gun’l up several feet and running from the main shrouds to the fore shrouds would hinder boarders. A crew could place small arms ready for service in the great cabin or other defensible location, or the crew could remain “always in arms.” They could search visitors, bring them aboard a few at a time, and keep them under an armed watch, especially if the watch kept to the forecabin and quarterdeck, and the visitors to the main deck. If captain and officers feared a mutiny, they might sleep under arms on the quarterdeck, with trusted officers posted as a watch, rather than in the great cabin and steerage where they could be isolated and cut off.<sup>31</sup>

If the ship carried oars, the crew could run them out, making it difficult for fire-ships to come alongside.<sup>32</sup> To prevent a swimmer from cutting the ship's cable, a crew could "underrun" it by securing one end of a chain sling to the anchor cable several feet beneath the surface of the water, and the other end in the forecastle.<sup>33</sup>

A crew could warn attackers away by firing small arms occasionally, or beating ruffs on the drums and shouting "Huzzas!" at every turning of the glass during the night. Additionally, a ship might keep underway at night, making it difficult for an enemy to locate it and board.<sup>34</sup>

At anchor, a crew could rig out a spring in order to bring its broadside to bear against an attacker. A spring was a hawser rigged through an aft gunport for leverage and either bent to the riding (anchor) cable or to a kedge or stream anchor laid out by one of the ship's boats. The hawser was hauled taut and secured to the mainmast or to a fitting that could bear the strain. By veering the anchor cable, the ship would pivot about its stern, in the case of a spring bent to the riding cable, or about the kedge, or stream anchor if used instead, and bring its broadside to bear. Heaving on the riding cable or the hawser would move the ship in the opposite direction. A spring had other uses as well, including "casting" a ship in a particular direction as it weighed anchor.<sup>35</sup>

The buccaneer Abraham Cowley described the reception of the *Revenge* by a Dutch East Indiaman: "But seeing a strong ship standing in toward the Road, they instantly repaired all on board, clapping a [s]pring upon the Cable, heaved her broadside to us, strook out her Ports alow, and presently running out her lower tier of Guns, was ready to receive us." Wisely, the *Revenge* bore away and instead later seized a peaceful Danish ship of forty guns off the African coast near Sierra Leone.<sup>36</sup> The pirate Howell Davis received a broadside from the pirate Cocklyn, who "brought a spring upon her cable and fired a whole broadside." Had Cocklyn been a man-of-war, Davis might well have "caught a Tartar" and seen his career come to an end.<sup>37</sup>

### Catching a Tartar

When HMS *Swallow* approached to attack Bartholomew Robert's *Royal Fortune*, she was variously mistaken for a Portuguese ship, a French slaver, and the *Ranger*, another pirate. Only as it drew close was a deserter from the *Swallow* able to correctly identify it, and by then it was too late to avoid the fight in which Roberts was killed and his ship and crew captured. It did not help that most of Roberts's crew were "drunk, passively

courageous, unfit for service,” as Johnson’s inspired prose put it.<sup>38</sup> Roberts had caught a Tartar.

The expression is derived from the Tartar or Tatar, one the Asiatic peoples of Genghis Khan’s army. The name is believed associated with Tartarus (or hell), for this tribe had a fiercely savage reputation. A Tartar came to be known as any savage or severe person. Thus to catch a Tartar was “to get hold of one who can neither be controlled, nor quit.”<sup>39</sup>

A great many rovers “caught a Tartar” themselves in similar fashion, by chasing vessels they believed were prey. Occasionally the enemy tried to lure the rover to his destruction, and often great preparation went into the lure. Promising a “Greek” captain (a Greek perhaps, or a Corsican, “Slavonian,” or any Levantine) lavish reward, Spaniards at Panama sent him out to be captured by filibusters whom he was to lure into a harbor with false information—which he did. Four canoes of filibusters crept in, but held up two hours before dawn until clouds obscured the bright moon. Noticing that one of the vessels had already hoisted its sails as if ready to get under way, the filibusters steered toward it, intending to capture it first. However, they were distracted by another vessel departing the harbor, and upon capturing it and interrogating its crew, they discovered that both Greek and the ship with sails set were part of an elaborate ruse. The ship was but a few false planks, masts, and sails built on dry ground within pistol shot of the guns of the fort. De Lussan remarked that the filibusters’ canoes would have beached, leaving them at the mercy of the Spanish. Very likely the Spanish had already trained their guns on it so not to miss in the darkness. The similarity of this incident to Virgil’s line of verse about Greeks bearing gifts—*timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*—makes this story almost too poetic to be believed. The Greek captain, of course, was “paid for his pains by a prompt death.”<sup>40</sup>

## CHAPTER

# 20



## Houses, Towns, and Cities Sacked

### *The Sea Rover as a Soldier*

THE SEA WAS NOT THE ROVER'S SOLE HUNTING GROUND, FOR ITS shores offered bounties as well. Small raids or "descents" ashore were common among most rovers, for plunder, supplies, and information. Duguay-Trouin and his crew attacked and plundered a house belonging to the Count of Claire after a storm sent the French corsair into the Limerick River. They did this, he said, in spite of opposition from the garrison at Limerick and retired in good order.<sup>1</sup> In 1703 the crew of a Massachusetts privateer sloop attacked a Frenchman's house at Naskeag Point, killing its owner and assaulting some Native Americans, for which the commander was relieved of his commission.<sup>2</sup> A French privateer operating under an English commission raided Massacre Island at the mouth of Mobile Bay in 1710, robbing its warehouse of thousands of deerskins and other pelts, as well as of naval stores. They took the small place by ruse.<sup>3</sup> Pirates occasionally attacked small factories and fortifications on the African coast. But the greatest of raids ashore were those of the buccaneers and filibusters in the West Indies and the South Sea, and to a lesser degree those of some of the legitimate privateers who raided the Spanish in the South Sea. The lure of houses, towns, and cities was obvious: plunder, often in quantities greater than might be taken aboard almost any ship.

Raids on houses and small villages could be undertaken by the crew of a small rover and towns by the combined crews of a few rovers, but great cities required a fleet of vessels great or small, and hundreds or perhaps even a few thousand men. The largest and most profitable raid was the

siege and sack of Cartagena in 1697 by a combination of corsairs, soldiers, militia, filibusters, and adventurers, leading to the end of King William's War. But in the seventeenth century buccaneers and filibusters alone sacked dozens of Spanish towns and cities many of them suffering this fate repeatedly. Even Veracruz and Panama, cities perhaps second only to Havana and Cartagena, fell to the adventurers of the Caribbean.

### **Preparation and Movement**

When Nathaniel Davis and his privateers went ashore to raid the gold mines at Darien, they carried with them "burthen enough for a City Porter": a musket, pistol, cartouche box with thirty cartridges, plus spare shot, powder, and probably forty to sixty pounds of provisions carried in a snapsack or knapsack.<sup>4</sup> Some rovers carried calabashes for water.<sup>5</sup> Grenades were usually available, and often were critical to the capture of a fort or stockade. Cutlasses were common, and some raiders carried axes, primarily for pioneering or breaching locked or barricaded gates and doors.<sup>6</sup> Only occasionally did rovers haul cannon ashore, although Woodes Rogers did at Guayaquil, mounting them on field carriages.<sup>7</sup>

All amphibious operations had one thing in common: the passage from sea to shore, and back again. This required boats or canoes, and invariably meant getting wet. Getting wet might also mean wet arms and wet powder, and consequently being vulnerable to attack. Although rovers could attack some smaller towns in daylight directly from their harbors or anchorages, many times they had to make their approach by night or from a distant landing. Often this meant a surf passage and even greater chance of wet arms. Arms and cartouche boxes were waxed and cased against wetting, but this only protected them for a short while against immersion in the sea or a tropical downpour.<sup>8</sup>

Many towns had sentinels posted, and to prevent surprise, rovers often launched boats and canoes far at sea and cruised along coastlines until they reached their target, often hiding by day under mangrove branches.<sup>9</sup> Upon reaching the shore, rovers almost invariably left boats hidden on the beach, and with them a substantial guard force in case of a hasty retreat. It was difficult to signal to vessels at sea, and none could react in time to rescue retreating rovers anyway. As well, the rovers needed to ensure that they left not only a sailing crew behind on their vessels, but also enough to man at least a few guns and to guard prisoners, if any.<sup>10</sup>

Once safely ashore, rovers test-fired their arms whenever possible: "They all made clean their arms, and every one discharged his pistol or



musket, without bullet, to examine the security of their locks," wrote Exquemelin.<sup>11</sup>

Rovers had to move en masse to the target, a simple matter if they landed at the town's *embarcadero* and if the target lay just up the path. More difficult were towns or cities that lay some distance inland or were by the sea but had to be approached from some distance. In either case, rovers had to worry about being descried by sentinels or the local populace, while also giving thought to the weather. If they had to march some distance, they had to be wary of ambushes. To keep order rovers sometimes used flags, or even issued "tickets" with the name of each man's company so he might remember it.<sup>12</sup> Stragglers were always an issue, with men wandering off to look for plunder, wine, or women, or simply resting. The problem was not just that everyone was needed for an assault, but that stragglers might be taken as prisoners and give away the rovers' design. On at least one occasion buccaneers agreed that if "any Man faulted in the Journey over Land he must expect to be shot to Death."<sup>13</sup>

Sentinels were to be avoided or taken. Having good intelligence and updating it by interrogating prisoners, or even taking prisoners specifically for intelligence purposes, rovers usually knew where sentinels were. These watchers were of two sorts: those close by a town, and those set to descry attackers at sea. Rovers might capture them, kill them, or if they were close by the town to be attacked, deceive them, for example, by pretending to be fishermen and speaking Spanish.<sup>14</sup> A captured sentry was a valuable intelligence source.<sup>15</sup> Rovers often used ruses to take down a sentry. At Veracruz a filibuster approached a sentinel at a gate, climbed up his tower "under Pretence to beg Fire of the Centinel to light his Pipe, [then] with his Pistol he killed him, which was the Signal for seizing the Gate."<sup>16</sup>

Weather was always an unknown. The real danger was rain, for if heavy it would leave arms useless and delay an attack while powder and arms were dried.<sup>17</sup> If possible, rovers sought shelter in huts or houses to shield their arms.<sup>18</sup> Arms could not be fired in a heavy rain, and a deluge might leave raiders so vulnerable that "had but a troop of fifty men well armed with pikes or spears, they might have entirely destroyed the Pirates, without any possible resistance on their side."<sup>19</sup> River and stream crossings, typically made by one man swimming a line across and securing it and the rest following, were another danger. The buccaneer George Gayny drowned during such a crossing when he tried to swim a rope across. The 300 pieces-of-eight he carried with him probably did not help him to secure the line.<sup>20</sup> An easier solution to the water-crossing problem was to fell a tree to cross.<sup>21</sup> A journey of several days to reach a city was hard on

men sleeping cramped in canoes or on wet ground, and required significant amounts of endurance and perseverance.

Ambushes were best avoided, ideally by using an unexpected route. L'Ollonnois pretended to take the obvious route to Gibraltar, then crossed through the woods to take the Spaniards by surprise.<sup>22</sup> Guides were invaluable here, and in many cases mandatory, not merely to avoid ambushes but to navigate a path to the target, particularly if it lay any distance inland. Approaching by canoe, Native American guides might move ahead ashore to search for ambushes, usually set behind a man-made barricade or breastwork. Afoot, rovers sent an advance guard ahead, called the “forlorn,” or “forlorn hopes,” in French *les enfants perdues*—the lost children. Ranging from a few men to eighty or more, the purpose of the advance guard was to scout ahead, spring ambushes, engage advance parties of the enemy, and capture prisoners for intelligence, as well as to prevent an alarm.<sup>23</sup> Obviously the task of the forlorn was more than usually hazardous, often leading to the selection of its members by lot.<sup>24</sup> If rovers knew they were desecrated on their way to or from an attack on a town, they might protect their flanks by having men fire periodically into the woods or jungle.<sup>25</sup>

### By Force of Arms

Once rovers arrived at the town or city, their assault depended on whether or not the target was alarmed, and to what degree it was fortified. Towns with little or no fortifications and few defenders and those unprepared for an assault were often stormed immediately, often at dawn. The rovers poured in a volley of shot and then, if the defenders showed any inclination to falter or retreat, they rushed the town immediately.<sup>26</sup> On rare occasions, rovers might have one of their vessels fire cannon into the town and over the heads of the attackers as they made their approach, but this was more than a little hazardous to the assault party.<sup>27</sup> Even more rare was the cannonading of fortifications: unless the fortifications were very small, only large scale operations, with men-of-war of the first, second, and third rate, could cannonade effectively. Strong defenses required a sea-roving commander with skill in land warfare.

If the town were alarmed, the rovers might not attack. In Dampier's words, buccaneers “never attack'd any large Place after it was alarmed.”<sup>28</sup> Surprise was everything, to prevent inhabitants not only from hiding valuables, but from making an effective defense such that even if the raiders still captured the town, they might not be able to hold it or might be vulnerable to a counterattack while returning to their vessels. Often

rovers took an unexpected route not merely to avoid ambushes, but to facilitate surprise. Filibusters once deceived the Spanish by pretending to be camped, sounding trumpets and firing guns, while the majority slipped silently over treacherous terrain—such that the Spaniards would never expect them to cross—to arrive in the rear and attack the upper entrenchment.<sup>29</sup>

In spite of numerous references to buccaneers and privateers advancing in good order against the enemy, there is little to suggest that they actually fought in the open in tight files and ranks, as conventional forces did. Even among trained troops, volleys had a low percentage of actual hits because of the inaccuracy of the weapons, the space between men, their movements, and the usual fear, stress, and smoke of the battlefield.<sup>30</sup> Rovers might have exchanged a volley with the enemy, but if the enemy stood his ground, the rovers invariably sought cover, aimed, and fired quickly and accurately, often in pairs, one firing as the other loaded. Indeed, they preferred not to fight on open ground, particularly in front of a fortification armed with cannon: “They lost many of their men with the shot from the guns, they being in an open place where nothing could cover or defend them.”<sup>31</sup> Incidents of friendly fire were common as well.

For rovers, accuracy in musket fire was the foundation of their tactics ashore. References to the accuracy and superior firepower of rovers are extensive, and not just among true *boucaniers* but among buccaneers and filibusters in general. Hardly an account fails to point out this advantage. While a large area could not be denied to the enemy by musket fire—slow loading and the small volume of shot precluded this—a substantial, accurate fire could still quickly demoralize the local militia.<sup>32</sup>

Local forces were rarely well armed. Perez de Guzman, from whom Morgan took Panama, complained of a lack of good arms, including muskets.<sup>33</sup> Spanish lancers, armed with lance and shield, were effective against cattle but not against skilled shooters under cover and armed with good quality muskets. Only rarely did buccaneers or filibusters meet large numbers of well-equipped cavalry or dragoons, armed with pistols, carbine, and sword, in the field. In one case when they did have the misfortune to do so, the Spanish massacred fifty of their number.<sup>34</sup>

Fortifications ranged from ad hoc breastworks or *barricadaes* made in town streets, to breastworks of clay and bags of sand, to palisades and stockades, to fortalices or small forts, to great fortifications such as those at Cartagena, Panama, and Puerto Rico.<sup>35</sup> Large “castles,” as all great fortifications were called, could only be taken by siege, as was done at Cartagena. However, smaller defenses were often captured by buccaneers armed only with muskets, cutlasses, and grenades. The tactics were sim-

ple. Rovers—primarily of buccaneers and filibusters—engaged the enemy by doing their best to drive defenders from the barricades or walls, and in particular from the guns, with their musketry. Buccaneers aimed at the mouths of cannon so that the enemy were “certain to lose one or two men every time they charged each gun anew.”<sup>36</sup> This is a good indication of the accuracy of the musket: aiming at the mouth of a cannon might lead to a hit on a man close by. The preferred range was half-musket.

Firing from cover, rovers intended to suppress enemy fire long enough to get men close enough to make a breach, sometimes by mere muscle. An anonymous buccaneer wrote that “after wee had had about half an howers dispute with them, Capt. Rich Sawlking runs to the pallassado’s with 2 or 3 men more, and halls up 2 or 3 pallassados by maine strength, and enters in.”<sup>37</sup> Grenades were invaluable here, and rovers routinely used them; Morgan’s articles for the attack on Panama awarded five pieces-of-eight for each grenade a man threw at the enemy.<sup>38</sup> Grenades themselves were not too dangerous to the man throwing them, but he had to be very close to the enemy to use them, exposing himself to great danger from enemy fire, grenades, and firepots. Rovers sometimes made and used ladders to scale walls, and wooden fortifications might be burned as a means of assault.

In theory the process was simple but in execution it required great skill and courage under fire, and leaders with the will to lead from the front: to use accurate musket fire to suppress the enemy, to move boldly under his walls or palisade, to lob grenades to clear the way, to breach or climb the defenses, and then to close with the enemy. This was a tactic successfully repeated many times by the adventurers of the Caribbean.<sup>39</sup>

## CHAPTER

# 21



## Plunder and Prisoners

### *The Sanguine Spoils*

THE FIGHT IS OVER. THE PREY HAS STRUCK HER TOPSAILS AND COLORS in defeat and lies in the lee under the victor's guns. If the rovers have taken the prize by boarding, they will soon cast off lashings and separate the ships for security to defend against fire, a sudden uprising by the defeated crew, or damage from the sea working the two ships board and board.<sup>1</sup>

The terms and procedure for treating a vessel that had struck were usually a variation of the following: "Good Quarter is granted. Provided you will lay down all your Arms, open the Hatches, hawl down all your Sails and furl them . . . we will . . . hoise out our Shallop. . . . If you offer to make any Sail, expect no Quarter for your Lives. Go with the Shallop, and send aboard the Captain, Lieutenant, and Master and Mates, with as many more as the Shallop will carry."<sup>2</sup> Some commanders ordered the prize's officers to come aboard instead (if they still had a serviceable boat and the rigging to launch it), although it was more usual to send a boarding party aboard the prize immediately if it had not been boarded in battle.<sup>3</sup> The victor needed to keep an eye open at all times for treachery, and invariably kept the prize in the lee under his guns.<sup>4</sup>

Simultaneously, invariably, and often interfering with other critical tasks, boarders plundered or pillaged the prize. John Smith described it best: "If you surprise him, or enter perforce, you may stow the men, rifle, pillage, or sack, and cry a Prize."<sup>5</sup> And so they did. All rovers, no matter their origin or legitimacy, stripped the captured crew of their coats, hats, shirts, shoes, stockings, and valuables as part of their pillage. It was rare

not to be stripped: "The Dutch did not beat us, nor search us, so that I saved my plaster-box, two rings, two pieces-of-eight, and a seal."<sup>6</sup> Barlow had a somewhat similar experience with the Dutch.<sup>7</sup> Even so, most were now not only prisoners, but also deprived of the most basic necessities.

Rovers pillaged and plundered throughout the decks and cabins as well.<sup>8</sup> Pillage, or more specifically, the right of pillage, differed from prize goods and was a long-standing tradition, particularly when a prize or town was taken by storm.<sup>9</sup> Among privateers and men-of-war certain plunder or goods were considered pillage, that is, spoils permitted the crew and not counted as part of the actual plunder or prize goods to be shared with the Crown and investors. How pillage was defined in the articles was critical, for it could determine the ratio of profitability between owners and crew. Strictly speaking, pillage among men-of-war and privateers was unlawful, unless provided for in the articles. In legal terms such pillage was embezzlement, yet it was invariably observed to some degree in practice. Prisoners' clothing, jewelry, arms, instruments, and other "moveables" discovered between decks or above the gundeck, or in some cases almost anywhere except in a ship's hold or a town's storehouse, might be considered to belong to the crew alone, leaving much room for fraud and theft. Invariably there were limitations. Pillage above a certain value, for example, was often excluded.<sup>10</sup> Among pirates, buccaneers, and filibusters, stripping of prisoners was permitted, but valuable items were usually considered plunder to be divided by the company.

Pillage was so important as a means of personal profit that being the first to board was a position highly sought after: Doublet entered as coxswain of the captain's boat because he would thus be the first to board a prize, and buccaneers would cast dice to see which watch, larboard or starboard, entered first.<sup>11</sup> Profit was so fundamental to a crew's attitude that there was always the chance a crew might mutiny on a long voyage in order to incline the articles more toward their interests than those of the investors. Shelvocke's crew forced such modified articles on him, redefining plunder in such a way as to increase the size of their profits.<sup>12</sup>

Of course, if there were no owners or state to be paid, then all goods and valuables belonged entirely to the crew, and little distinction needed to be made between pillage and prize goods. In such cases among pirates, buccaneers, and filibusters, the division or "dividend" was made as soon as practical, each man collecting his booty in his hat. Certain items or prize goods might be sold to crew members "at the mast, by the voice of a crier."<sup>13</sup> Among privateers, only pillage was divided immediately. If ships roved in consort, each exchanged a crew member to keep track of plunder on behalf of his crew.<sup>14</sup> Articles often required that each

crewman be searched for hidden plunder. "Plunder books," or records of plunder, were kept diligently.

Notwithstanding the search for booty, the victor needed to immediately secure the enemy crew under guard. To prevent attempts at taking over the ship the boarders secured the prisoners below, often in the hold if there were many, and in bilboes or paired in irons if there were enough to go around.<sup>15</sup> Here they sometimes remained until set free, imprisoned ashore, or ransomed, and so were often not released from their shackles for weeks on end. "What seemed cruel was keeping us so long in chains, but that was necessary, for they were but 36 to our 16."<sup>16</sup> The danger of prisoners rising to take over a vessel from their captors necessitated such measures and was ever present: "All hands save three or four being on the forecastle, we conspired to run all into the steerage and keep them forward with the guns. To that end we had unlocked our bilboes and were just on the move, headed by our carpenter, Robert Knowles, a very stout fellow, when the boatswain, like a cowardly rascal, told us if we stirred he would make an outcry, and upon that we hushed."<sup>17</sup>

Robert Lyde was more successful. He and the ship's boy alone recaptured their pink, the *Friends' Adventure*, from a small French prize crew after a vicious hand-to-hand combat. Lyde had even taken the precaution of hiding a blunderbuss among some pipes of wine just before capture, but never had a chance to use it.<sup>18</sup> In this case, the prisoners had been given the freedom of the ship, the two of them regarded as too few to be a threat. Yet even if a crew outnumbered its prisoners several times over, it remained a dangerous practice to let them have the freedom of the ship. If most of the crew were aloft furling sails, for example, prisoners might manage a successful uprising.<sup>19</sup>

Conditions ashore might be even more harsh. In some cases vermin took their toll, prisoners starved, and jailers stripped the bodies of dying prisoners three or four days before they finally died. Lyde suggested that much of this cruelty was to "disable us for Their Majesties' service at our return."<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, a captain or officer might be released on his "Parole of Honour," and even permitted to travel from France to England to "procure an equal Exchange" in his place, or return after three months if he failed to do so.<sup>21</sup>

Simultaneous to the securing of prisoners, or as soon as practical, the surrendered captain or master was ordered to turnover his cockets or bills of lading, passes, logbook, and if he had one, his privateer commission or letter of mart. Victorious privateers, bearing the legal requirements of their commission, would immediately question captain and crew and inspect the vessel's papers and cargo to ensure they were legitimate.

Disposition of the captured vessel varied. Privateers usually put a prize crew aboard and sent it to the appropriate port to be condemned. Occasionally they kept a prize as a consort, either as another roving vessel or as a tender for supplies, or they sank it if it were unseaworthy or otherwise a liability. Pirates usually plundered their prizes and then burned them or set them free, keeping them only if they could dispose of their cargo or use them as consorts. Often when pirates, buccaneers, and filibusters set a prize and crew free, they first cut down a mast or masts, damaged the rudder, or otherwise damaged the vessel to hinder its progress and thus slow communication to authorities of the crime and the pirates' location.<sup>22</sup> Prisoners could also be kept securely in this fashion while rovers went raiding ashore.

Ransom was an occasional expedient in the management of prizes. If authorized by law or articles, some privateer and merchant captains negotiated the ransom of prizes; others did so anyway as a matter of convenience. Ransom served both rover and merchant well. The rover would not need to worry about putting a prize crew aboard, thus depleting his crew, nor would he need to keep and feed many prisoners. The merchant needed not lose everything either, for vessels were ransomed for only part of their total value and sent on under a safe conduct.<sup>23</sup> Invariably, a hostage was kept aboard the rover to ensure the prize kept its part of the bargain.<sup>24</sup> Barlow described the process well: "A French privateer among the fleet . . . had taken several of the Virginia ships, only taking the masters out of them, compounding for the ship and goods for such a sum, and keeping the master till the money should be sent over into France, making them to buy their own ships, but at reasonable rates, otherwise they would have burnt and destroyed the ships they had taken, and the least of evils cleverly chosen; and many times it happens that privateers are met with and taken by our frigates, by which means the hostages get their liberty and save ship and goods likewise, and many times arrive at home before their ships, when good luck attends them."<sup>25</sup>

In the West Indies or South Sea a rover could take a Spanish prize and ransom it back at any of the Spanish ports. But these merchants could drive a hard bargain: "[W]e plainly saw, unless they could have the Cargoes under a quarter Value, they would not deal with us."<sup>26</sup> The Spanish claimed these low values were due to the cost "in Bribes, to get a License to deal."<sup>27</sup>

Money from a prize cargo or from the value of the vessel itself might not been seen for months or even longer after a cruise was over, although in some cases rovers could circumvent such waiting periods. In the West Indies, they could sell a prize to a governor who asked no questions.



Captain Wright, a buccaneer, tried to sell a Spanish prize to the governor of Curaçao. He could not receive the prize openly because of Dutch trade with the Spanish but suggested instead they send it to St. Thomas and he would arrange to buy it there.<sup>28</sup> A small Danish free port, St. Thomas was a den of stolen goods and the place to sell a cargo a rover dared not bring into a port of England or France. In St. Thomas, Father Labat bought pirate goods carried there by Kidd in the *Quedah Merchant* two years before.<sup>29</sup> Even governors of English and French towns and colonies might look the other way. No questions were asked, and the money was quickly in the hands of rovers. But St. Thomas was not always the most profitable path for a legitimate cargo, for merchants did not scruple to pay for a cargo “scarce the twentieth part of what it was worth” if they could get away with it.<sup>30</sup>

While disputes over pillage were common, rovers occasionally disputed the ownership or right to a vessel or its cargo. Captains Wright and Yanky, buccaneers, argued over to whom a prize belonged. Wright had a commission, but Yanky had the “Law of Privateers” on his side. Put to a vote among the crew, Yanky won out. This example provides an excellent indication of buccaneer loyalty: not to the state and its laws and customs, but to themselves and their own.<sup>31</sup>

If the prize had been hard won, there were many other tasks. The dead must be buried, the wounded treated. Decks might be black and bloody, perhaps so much so that the scuppers ran red.<sup>32</sup> Both ships must be repaired and put in good order. If damage was extensive, repairs took time: “These twenty-four hours we have spent in knotting our shrouds, and fixing our other rigging as well as we could; knotted our main shrouds in fourteen places, and foreshrouds in nine, and after set them up very tort, to secure our poor shattered mast; we were forced to keep our chain-pump and both hand-pumps constantly going, to keep the ship free, she making a great deal of water, through four shot holes rec’d under water, which we could not come at to stop effectually by reason of the sea.”<sup>33</sup> The rover was vulnerable, and had to hope for a flat sea and no sudden appearance by a cruiser.

### Victory Ashore

The aftermath of a successful assault on a town differed in two critical respects: security and the search for plunder. Rovers usually established their *corps du garde*, or headquarters, in a church, particularly in Spanish towns and cities, where churches were invariably centrally located. Here

would French filibusters sing a *Te Deum* in celebration, offering their thanks to God for sparing their lives as they attacked and pillaged.<sup>34</sup> Rovers also felt it less likely that devout Spaniards would attack a church. The churches were often looted, causing considerable friction between English buccaneers and French Catholic filibusters, while providing yet one more reason for the Spanish to hate the raiders.<sup>35</sup>

Sentries were often placed in the church tower. Woodes Rogers described typical security when the enemy might counterattack: "Last Night we all lay in the Church, round which we kept Centinels within a Musket-shot; the Centinels, as customary, calling to each other every Quarter of an Hour, to prevent their sleeping, and our being surprized In the Night. Every Man kept his Arms and Ammunition in exact Order by him, and was strictly charged to rise at the least Alarm."<sup>36</sup> Sentries from all ages were notorious for drifting off on watch; to rest the head even for a moment was to fall asleep. Watchwords were selected, and sentinels were often ordered to shoot any who failed to respond correctly.<sup>37</sup>

A large force might occupy a town for some time, but a smaller force needed to loot and be gone. This haste in the search for plunder often led to ransom and torture. Ransom simplified the search, spared citizens from torture, and often spared the town from burning. Hostages in such a case were mandatory, either as security or as blackmail. Common problems with receiving ransom were delaying tactics used by town officials and merchants and the time it took to raise the ransom. If a party of rovers stayed weeks, disease might strike, weakening the occupiers to such a degree that they could be attacked and routed. Disease was a problem particular to European sailors and soldiers sent to the New World. To hasten and simplify the search for plunder, rovers sometimes made allowances for citizens to keep some of their wealth. The Baron de Pointis, commanding the expedition to Cartagena, permitted residents to keep 10 percent of their property, and granting them 10 percent of the property of any neighbor they informed on for not declaring all their property.<sup>38</sup>

A note on buried treasure: With only a handful of exceptions limited to unique circumstances, pirates did not bury treasure, nor did any other sea rovers. Instead, they divided their loot and spent it as soon as they could. On rare occasion, rovers might hide cargo and booty while they sought to avoid customs officers or other authorities, or while they sought a market for the cargo. The French pirate Dulaïen of the *Sans Pitié* was said to have hidden in a variety of places a cargo with the value of 160,000 livres before admiralty officers could search his ship on the Loire, and to have kept it hidden, spending it as he could.<sup>39</sup> A pirate soon to be

charged with piracy or other crimes might hide a few valuables or money in order to have access to them later, especially in anticipation of an escape or when other money had been confiscated. Captain Kidd was one of these latter cases.<sup>40</sup> However, burying money to conceal it from thieves was fairly common among all peoples and classes. Some did this as a general precaution, others in time of an attack. Although buried pirate treasure was so rare as to be virtually nonexistent, "land hoards" of pieces-of-eight and other coin buried by citizens attacked by buccaneers and filibusters were probably far more common.

### Vice and Crime

When unsupervised seamen found stores or a cargo of liquor soon after a prize was taken, drunkenness was invariably a problem, leading to a serious deficiency in security. Liquor could be quite useful as an aid to bonding within a group, but for those who must be ready to fight at a moment's notice its use in excess was entirely unacceptable. Aboard a rover it might lead to loss of life, liberty, or purchase, and aboard a man-of-war it could lead to a breach in national security. "Dutch courage," or spirits given to fortify courage, was one thing, but wanton drunkenness was quite another. Some pirates were drunk when captured, others were so drunk they could be easily captured. One group of French filibusters was so drunk that it failed in twenty attempts to board a Spanish vessel. The next day, the filibusters now sober, the Spanish ran their vessel ashore to avoid its capture.<sup>41</sup>

Gambling was rampant among buccaneers and filibusters, often degrading cohesion and morale (as discussed in chapter 1). Many commanders or articles, including those of most privateers, men-of-war, and even pirates, strictly forbade gambling in any form. Discipline among rovers was difficult enough to keep without the divisiveness introduced by dice.

Rape, especially by pirates and by some buccaneers and filibusters as well, was a tragic feature of the aftermath of many attacks at sea and ashore. It was associated particularly among the latter with the sacking of towns and cities. References to rape, both explicit and implicit, are extensive but rape might have been no more common among rovers than among soldiers in European armies. Those who have attempted to discredit some accounts of rape (putting forth theories based on romantic revisionism, homosexuality, propaganda, or lurid journalism) have failed to adequately discount both the evidence and the sense that such behav-

ior was not only probable given the circumstances, but almost certain in many cases. In battle or in its immediate aftermath, some men, fired with fear, blood, and greed, lacking discipline and strict supervision, perhaps drunk, among other men lacking inhibitions against assaulting women and willing to take or abuse anything in their way, would rape if they could get away with it. Even so, the majority of rovers appear to have treated women fairly well as judged by the mores of the time and place, although there are admittedly few instances on record of prohibitions against rape or of accountability for the crime. Some pirate articles punished a rapist with death and some filibuster articles punished rape with a loss of shares if convicted, but how often these punishments were meted out, if ever, is unknown.<sup>42</sup> Woodes Rogers was particularly proud that his crew behaved respectfully toward women at Guayaquil (pressing on their clothing or groping them to feel for hidden jewelry instead of stripping them naked), and filibusters broke the heads two of their own for the rape and murder of a young woman at Cartagena.<sup>43</sup> In the latter instance the rape might have mattered little if at all, the punishments probably being meted out to quell outrage as Cartagena had been sacked for the second time in days.

“If there be either young women or aged men, use them nobly,” recommended the author of *The Seaman’s Grammar and Dictionary*, hinting at the common likelihood of violence against them. The author neglected to suggest the same for old women and young men. Perhaps he believed the older women were safe by virtue of their age, and the younger could handle the abuse inflicted on prisoners.<sup>44</sup>

Torture of prisoners, particularly by buccaneers, filibusters, and pirates, was common. Methods ranged from burning a slow match between the fingers to hanging a man up by his testicles.<sup>45</sup> To make sure there were no hidden valuables aboard a prize (which often there were), buccaneers appear to have routinely tortured at least two prisoners, probably to compare their stories.<sup>46</sup> Although it might have seemed a matter of routine, there can be no doubt that some enjoyed inflicting pain solely for its own sake. Torture’s primary purpose in the aftermath of a successful assault was to intimidate prisoners into confessing their wealth, although it might have been as commonly used for gaining intelligence. However, pirates routinely abused prisoners out of spite or from a distorted or perverted sense of control, pleasure, or justice. Buccaneers and filibusters are often noted for similarly torturing prisoners out of revenge, and the Spanish might have tortured some buccaneer prisoners before killing them.<sup>47</sup> Men-of-war crews were expected to treat all prisoners fairly, while legitimate privateers fell somewhere in between the two extremes. One man’s

torture was another man's punishment, although to the victim there was doubtless no difference, and no strict distinctions can be drawn: there were pirates who treated their prisoners fairly well, and naval officers who played "buccaneer tricks" on prisoners.<sup>48</sup>

Beyond torture's pale were murder and mutilation. Buccaneers might "punish" a priest by murdering him. Filibusters might cut off the heads of Spanish prisoners to inspire fear or out of retaliation, even if "reluctantly," and they might threaten to "capture" wives, with the implication being rape, if their demands were not met.<sup>49</sup> Nor were they above mutilating bodies, usually out of an enraged sense of vengeance. The Spanish sometimes mutilated corpses as well, in some cases even digging up the bodies to do so.<sup>50</sup> Brutal mistreatment of prisoners was common, particularly among pirates and some of the early buccaneers and filibusters, with L'Ollonnois being perhaps the most notorious. He routinely hacked prisoners to pieces to inspire cooperation in others or because someone could not show him the treasure he had promised. In one case, he cut a living man's heart out and gnawed on it.<sup>51</sup>

### Death and Defeat

The situation of defeated rovers depended on two circumstances: who they were and who captured them. Legitimate privateers were treated as prisoners of war and could be ransomed or exchanged. Pirates were usually returned for trial, although they might be hanged at sea if the commander had the authority and inclination. A man-of-war returning to port with pirates hanging from the yardarms or with Blackbeard's head nailed to the bowsprit no doubt made quite an impression, as did a pirate's corpse tarred, wrapped in chains, and swinging in the breeze. Buccaneers and filibusters were often immediately "knocked in the head" or later hanged or garroted in retaliation for their pernicious raids on the Spanish. Others were only imprisoned or made to work, and might be given liberty, upon turning Catholic, to stay in Mexico or the South Sea. Some eventually did make it their home, and at least one did so after South Sea privateers found him serving aboard a captured bark.<sup>52</sup>

Death, an intersection of piety, martial respect, and cynical denial, was a common experience for rovers at sea or ashore. The men who died sea roving would number in the many thousands, and those crippled numbered many times more. Rovers generally treated their dead with great respect; buccaneers gave them "according to the usual custom" a volley, or sometimes three French volleys or two French volleys and one English

volley.<sup>53</sup> John Halsey, a pirate, was buried with “great solemnity and ceremony,” and the coffin of a man-of-war gunner buried ashore might be “covered over with one of the King’s jacks, and his bo’sun’s silver whistle and chain laid on top [to show his office] between two pistols crossed with a hangar drawn.”<sup>54</sup> At sea the dead were usually sewn up in a blanket or hammock and buried with a round shot, if the shot could be spared, at head and foot to sink them; sharks often “hankered about the ship for such another meal.”<sup>55</sup> When his brother died, Captain Phillips helped “commit his body to the deep” with prayer, drums and trumpets, and sixteen guns, one for each year of his life.<sup>56</sup> More common were three guns or three volleys, probably a single set for all sent that day to David Jones.<sup>57</sup>

### Yo Ho Ho: A Merry Life and a Short One

Life had its ups and downs. For the rover, there were not only plunder and occasional riches, but disease, wounds, imprisonment, poverty, and death. Nonetheless, the spirit of many rovers was one of sardonic optimism, of fatalism with a plain-speaking smile. Even shipwrecked, rovers seldom gave up trying. They were survivors. A shipwrecked crew could build a bark from the wreckage of a ship, could burn wood to make charcoal for an improvised forge, and could provision themselves with the wild plant and animal at hand. The marooned could yet survive along the shore.

Rovers made the best of their situation, no matter the circumstances, often with a devil-may-care attitude. Among those shipwrecked when the Comte d’Estrees lost his fleet at Aves was a crew of buccaneers and filibusters, or as Dampier calls them, privateers. Many of the French naval seamen perished:

but the Privateers who had been used to such Accidents lived merrily, from whom I had this relation: and they told me, that I they had gone to Jamaica with 30l. [A] man in their pockets, they could not have enjoyed themselves more: For they kept in a gang by themselves, and watched when ships broke, to get the goods that came from them, and though much was staved against the rocks, yet abundance of wine and brandy floated over the riff, where the privateers waited to take it up. . . . There were about forty Frenchmen on board in one of the ships where there was good store of liquor, till the after-part of her broke away and floated over the riff, and was carry’d away to sea, with all the men drinking and singing, who being in drink, did not mind the danger, but were never heard of afterwards.<sup>58</sup>

## CHAPTER

# 22



## Rum, Women, Dice, Turtle, and Honor

### *The Routine Ashore and Soon Another Venture*

“ALL WHO ARE ACQUAINTED WITH THE WAY OF LIFE OF A SUCCESSFUL Jamaica privateer know [it] is not an example of the greatest sobriety and economy,” wrote Charles Johnson.<sup>1</sup> Though this was an accurate statement, he probably had little firsthand experience of West Indian rovers. Less subtle was Alexander Exquemelin, filibuster: “According to their custom, [they] wasted in a few days in taverns and stews all they had gotten, by giving themselves to all manner of debauchery with strumpets and wine.”<sup>2</sup> George Roberts, mariner, also knew firsthand the “common vices, too common among seafaring men, especially those who have frequented these parts; to wit, swearing, drunkenness, debauchery, etc.”<sup>3</sup> And last, Woodes Rogers, privateer: “these Buccaneers . . . when they met with Purchase, they immediately squander’d it away, and they got Mony and Liquor, they drank and gam’d till they spent all.”<sup>4</sup>

Nor does sea roving in general appear as sober and thrifty after the fact. In 1634 Nathaniel Boteler commented on the “loose liberty and undisciplined life” of English privateers.<sup>5</sup> A trinity of strong spirits, loose women, and dice seldom lost their appeal, and tavern-keepers were quick to provide for and take advantage of returning rovers. First, however, the rover needed money, for recreation is never free.

Legitimate prizes had to be legally condemned by a court with the authority to do so, and this might take weeks or months, even longer if

the prize were contested—Labat observed that filibusters were paid quickly before *armateurs* took a serious interest in privateering in the West Indies.<sup>6</sup> Further, a crew might sue if they believed their proper shares were not duly accorded them; buccaneers sued Henry Morgan after Panama, filibusters sued the Baron de Pointis and his *armateurs* after Cartagena, and legal wrangling tied up profits of the *Duke* and *Duchess* privateers. As ever, the fees of lawyers and government clerks might mount, and officers took their shares, while the rover who ventured his skin might wait nearly penniless or spend in taverns a usurious loan advanced against his likely gains. Pirates, buccaneers, and filibusters usually divided what they could immediately, so that they had piastres at hand as soon as they went ashore, providing the cruise had been successful.

Now what to do with his riches, however great or petty? In a home port where a rover's wife or woman resided, it was often a joyfully sentimental homecoming.<sup>7</sup> Otherwise it was a debauched celebration, and seaports invariably had plenty of establishments in which to discard pieces-of-eight or other lucre. These "taverns and stews, according to the custom of Pirates, got the greatest part thereof, insomuch that soon after they were constrained to seek more by the same unlawful means they had obtained the preceeding."<sup>8</sup> When the Sieur de Montauban returned to France after a long and successful privateering cruise, his men "were not backward to refresh themselves after the fatigues they had endured." They spent an enormous amount of money, debauching themselves by night and "running up and down the town in masquerade, causing themselves to be carried in chairs, with lighted flambeaux" by day. A handful died of their debauched extravagances, and four more deserted.<sup>9</sup> After a typical liberty in the West Indies, the filibuster Captain Daniel was able to entice his crew back aboard their vessel only after they had spent all of their money and only after he and Father Labat had spread a rumor about an English merchantman ripe for the picking.<sup>10</sup>

The popular image of the pirate or privateer ashore is actually fairly accurate. Labat described filibusters dressing in fancy clothes taken from a prize, wearing good striped shirts with their seaman's trousers and bare feet, a fancy wig and plumed beaver hat on the head. Many filibusters, he says, went ashore dressed in a laced *justaucorps* and plumed hat but no shoes or stockings, or shoes but no stockings, or stockings but no shoes.<sup>11</sup> Pirate captains argued over who would wear gold- and silver-laced gentleman's coats ashore (one of them reaching to the ankles), then had them confiscated by the quartermaster—the captains had not asked permission to borrow the coats from the common chest.<sup>12</sup> Cutlasses? In the West Indies rovers often wore them ashore (but not routinely at sea), unless



port authority required they leave them behind.<sup>13</sup> Tattoos? Yes, but not to the degree of later centuries, nor was the word itself used. Even so, both Dampier and Ned Ward described the “*Jerusalem Cross . . . made in Mens Arms, by pricking the Skin, and rubbing in a Pigment,*” usually gunpowder.<sup>14</sup> Some who had lived among Native Americans were probably also tattooed, perhaps to a greater degree.<sup>15</sup> Earrings? Perhaps not, but this question remains open for debate. To date the author has found no credible evidence of earrings among European sea rovers of the period, although it should be noted that some African and Native American males did wear them then. Parrots and monkeys? “Here are also kept tame Monkeys, Parrots, Parrakites, &c. which Seamen carry home,” wrote Dampier, and others as well.<sup>16</sup> The image of the drunken spendthrift pirate dressed in an eclectic mix of seaman’s and gentleman’s clothing is almost as Howard Pyle painted it.

Most rovers, soon after a drink or a few drinks immediately upon going ashore, had a woman or a few women. Women have long had to survive on the margins as prostitutes, and seaports were a popular margin. James Yonge, surgeon aboard a cruiser, went with several of his shipmates to “mount Whoredom” in Lisbon after they were paid “pinch-gut money” of four months: “It’s a street on a hill and when you go through it they call *I am Englishman* and pull up their coats in the door of the street. When you go in . . . everyone will take up their coats and commend their privities as best and soundest. As soon as you kiss one woman all the rest leave her to you, and then it’s the fashion to bargain for a touch.” Thirty-seven of the crew “were clapt.”<sup>17</sup> Except for antibiotics, little has changed in three and a half centuries.

In Port Royal the captain and passengers of the *William Galley* “went ashore here to a tavern called Betty Ware’s, a noted house, as well as most of her neighbours (especially of her calling), being notorious for their wickedness and nicknames, often called ‘the new fashioned dram cup’ upon a very lewd occasion.” Again, little has changed, not even the occasions. At this time, Port Royal was home only to buccaneers, privateers, sloop traders, and those who provided services to them, and no doubt deserved its reputation. Ned Ward called Port Royal “The Dunghill of the Universe” and continued in this vein for a paragraph of scathingly witty hyperbole. He also provided the names of some of the town’s more popular ladies: Unconscionable Nan, Salt-Beef Peg, and Buttock-de-Clink Jenny, all for whom “Swearing, Drinking, and Obscene Talk, are the principal qualifications that render them acceptable to male conversation.”<sup>18</sup> If ever there were one, Port Royal was a sailor’s port.

Exquemelin described Tortuga in a similar vein, as a place where a fil-

ibuster might “give unto a common strumpet five hundred pieces-of-eight only that he might see her naked.” The pirate Worley captured a convict vessel and intended to land the “virtuous ladies . . . on one of the uninhabited Bahama Islands, where there was a proper port for these rovers to put in at any time, to refresh themselves after the fatigue of the sea.” Seeking prostitutes was always typical behavior of sailors with money to spend. London had an enormous trade in prostitution catering to mariners at all levels, from seaman to officer. A sailor found not only English women here, but Flemmings and Venetian courtesans. The West Indian ports were simply more notorious, located as they were on the margins of the “civilized” world.<sup>19</sup>

Regarding the sea rover’s sexual preferences, at least one scholar has proposed that English buccaneer and pirate crews were actually active homosexual communities.<sup>20</sup> In the author’s own research, he has come across little to support this view and much to oppose it. Very likely, as David Cordingly has already noted, the proportion of homosexuals to heterosexuals among pirates probably reflected that of the population in general.<sup>21</sup>

Hand in hand with the pleasures of the stew—the bawdy house, that is—were the pleasures of drink. Drunkenness was common. Roche Brasileiro would run drunk up and down the streets of Tortuga “beating or wounding whom he met, no person daring to oppose him.”<sup>22</sup> When Exquemelin was indentured to a *boucanier*, his master would often buy a pipe of wine (as much as 126 gallons, depending on the measure) or barrel of ale or beer and invite passersby at pistol point to drink with him.<sup>23</sup> Woodes Rogers noted that sailors preferred good liquor to clothing, and Ned Ward said that nothing made a sailor droop “like an empty Brandy-bottle.”<sup>24</sup> The drunken sailor was not only lyric and cliché, but fact.

Besides drink there was food, fresh and cooked well, a relief from a ship’s rations. In the West Indies turtle flesh was a common cure for everything, and although plentiful in the region, it was so very popular that it was even imported from the Canary Islands.<sup>25</sup> Turtle liver was “very wholesale, searching and purging,” and such purging was necessary. Between the diet of salt flesh and hard liquor at sea and the diet of fatty flesh, far too much hard liquor, and sexually transmitted diseases ashore, the sea might have been the healthier environment of the two. Besides the qualities of turtle liver, turtle oil was believed good for strains and muscle aches, and the flesh was not only a good antiscorbutic but also an “Antivenereal Diet.” For what it’s worth, eating the liver dyed one’s stool black, and the fat turned urine sea green.<sup>26</sup>

Gambling was as rabid ashore as it was aboard ship, articles permitting,

when men had plunder in hand. However, it was less of a problem ashore after a cruise was over, there being no crew to grow divisive. *Passe-dix*, popular in the seventeenth century, was probably the game of choice. The Comte de Forbin watched as the Sieur de Grammont, a filibuster, and the Comte d'Estrees, an admiral, played in Petit Goëve.<sup>27</sup> Called passage by the English, the game had two players and three dice. Play was simple. The first player rolled the dice. If he rolled a double (a *doublet*), he added its sum to the third die, and if the total were less than ten, he lost. If the total were equal to ten or more, he won. If he did not roll a double, he passed the dice to the other player.<sup>28</sup> The game was one more way to lose booty, grow angry, get drunk, and start a fight.

And where there were wine, women, and dice, there would always be arguments. Brawling was common, rioting was not uncommon, and if the parties involved were not too drunk and the disagreement was personal, a duel could result. In Europe, dueling was a formal affair and usually involved only the nobility, gentlemen, and those pretending to be gentlemen. A coat of arms, a university degree, an officer's commission past or present, or anything remotely resembling these usually sufficed as evidence that one could participate in a duel. The smallsword, ideal for one-on-one combat in open terrain against a similar weapon, was the typical dueling weapon from the latter seventeenth century onward. An elegant, deadly weapon of the thrust, it was kept warm at the hand of gentlemen, such as they were. The rapier was the gentleman's dueling arm in early seventeenth-century Europe and in Spain and Portugal until the nineteenth.

This is not to imply that all duels of the period were true affairs of honor. Honor was often a facade to hide a scoundrel. Many duels, or "rencontres" as they were sometimes called, were not duels at all but affrays—street fights with swords. Others were made to seem to be affrays to gain the protection of the law. A duel might be illegal but self-defense was not. Many of these duels or affrays were little more than attempts at backstabbing by at least one of the parties, particularly when there were no witnesses.

Donald McBane, a soldier but never a sailor, described and warned against this "gentleman's honor" better than any: "I mention these to caution you on all occasions to be on your Guard, and not to trust any man whatever who is your adversary. For many have been deceived by not taking care of themselves in these cases, tho' their adversaries have been men of strict honour, as they thought, and that they would not be so base and villainous as to be guilty of any thing below the character of Brave Men and Gentlemen. *Experientiæ Docet.*"<sup>29</sup>

The common privateer seaman or buccaneer arguably had a greater

sense of honor in practice than many a gentleman for whom theory often sufficed. Rovers shared a common goal, plus survival through unity tended to suppress dueling, at least until the cruise was over. Even so, an intended duel between pirates, as described by Johnson, was as typical of perfidy and cowardice as were many of those of gentlemen: the boatswain challenged his captain, then changed his mind and refused to go ashore to fight; his captain caned him for his cowardice. The boatswain in turn drew a pistol, shot his captain, and tried to flee but was captured. While the boatswain's fate was being deliberated, the gunner shot him. Not yet dead, the boatswain begged a week for repentance, "but another stepping up to him, told him, *That he should repent and be damned to him*, and without more ado shot him dead."<sup>30</sup>

The common privateer seaman was not as prone to dueling as were his officers, at least not in Europe, preferring instead to use his fists or a cudgel. In the West Indies and the Americas in general, dueling was the common way of settling disputes, a sense of independence and equality there granting the informal right of trial by combat.<sup>31</sup> Frances Rogers, writing of the inhabitants of Jamaica, provided the best description of the Creole temperament and its affinity for the duel: "These Creoles are generally of a fiery hot temper, haughty and apt to command and domineer. . . . They seldom want courage, being too forward in duelling on very slight occasions, standing much on their honour and scorning base litigious actions. Sword, or sword and pistol, is the common challenge to decide their affronts; except among the ordinary or sea-faring people there the fuzee or cutlass is the weapon."

Among buccaneers and filibusters the weapon of the duel was usually the musket, but occasionally the cutlass. Morgan hanged one of his buccaneers who, challenged by a Frenchman, stabbed him in the back with a sword before "he had put himself in a just posture of defense."<sup>32</sup> Among *boucaniers*, the musket duel required that the adversary be permitted to load his weapon. To duel otherwise was treachery, and if the perpetrator killed his adversary, he was "set against a tree and shot dead by the one whom he chooses."<sup>33</sup> Among the Anglo-American pirates, it was "pistols and sword, as is the custom amongst these outlaws."<sup>34</sup> The common sequence was pistols first, then swords if the antagonists were still standing and still intended to fight. De Graff and Van Horn fought a duel with cutlasses or swords; Van Horn was cut on the wrist and died some days later.<sup>35</sup> Basil Ringrose fought a duel with his quartermaster James Chappel on the Isle of Plate.<sup>36</sup>

And after these thirsts and appetites were sated, what now for the rover? For those for whom a visit ashore was but a gloriously welcome and

depraved interruption in a cruise, the Sieur de Montauban's sentiments would serve: "So that now, seeing I lost (some of) my men, notwithstanding all the care I had taken, and strict injunctions I had laid upon them, I thought it advisable for me to be gone from thence as soon as I could, that I might keep the rest together."<sup>37</sup> It was safer at sea than ashore, sometimes, and easier to keep an eye on the crew at sea as well.

For the buccaneer or filibuster at the end of a cruise, so long as he could get away with it, he usually returned to roving. With the demise of legitimate roving opportunities in the latter seventeenth century, many had to take their turn at other occupations: logwood cutting, turtling, slaving, and trading. Captain Samson, a former filibuster and commander of the sloop *Aventurière* transporting Father Labat, pursued trade with the Spanish. This "sloop trade" had great need of men who could handle a small vessel, who knew the Spanish coasts and customs, who could avoid an ambuscade, run from a *guarda costa*, and if necessary fight. Some invested well and came to other trades. Jamaica was well-known for its wealthy populations of former rogues, vagabonds, bankrupts, convicts, indentured servants, and sea rovers who "live so well now in Jamaica that they keep their coach and horses, being worth a thousand a year, which they get by good plantations, which they have got by their care and industry."<sup>38</sup> Others probably retired to Europe. Pierre Le Grand and his small crew were said to have sailed for France after capturing their rich prize, never to return to the West Indies.<sup>39</sup> Yet even many of those who seem to have invested well still often returned to the sea to seek prey for plunder. Captains Pinel, Lambert, and Kercou, filibusters all, are but three examples. Kercou had come to the trade as a *boucanier's engagé*, become a filibuster, advanced to command, married a confectioner's daughter in Martinique, visited his parents in France (whom he had not seen for thirty years), then returned to the West Indies with trade goods and an intention to seek again for plunder.<sup>40</sup>

The average privateer seaman also sought to continue his trade so long as war was waged, assuming he could avoid the press gang. When peace came, he was again a common seaman in the merchant service or navy. Perhaps if he remained addicted to his calling, he became a pirate. But of many thousands of seamen, few turned in this direction, and many of those that did would consider "how they should get off" a pirate ship when an amnesty was offered, hoping to return to legitimate privateering. Piracy was not self-sustaining and many pirates came to regret their crimes. Generally only those "who had been guilty of murder and other barbarous crimes" were not inclined to accept a pardon.<sup>41</sup> Yet of those who did, many eventually returned to the trade.

And the nonmariner? The *habitan* or planter returned to his land and tobacco and the *boucanier* to his hunting, assuming neither had been converted forever to the trade of acquiring wealth by force of arms. The soldier perhaps went back to being a soldier, the *reformado* to seek a regiment and purchase a commission. Of those who went to sea a lubber and returned a sailor, how many returned to their original trade is unknown. Some simply sought adventure, and a year or a few sufficed to sate the roving itch. Others stayed forever, or until death cut it short. Profit no doubt played a role, and a rover might make a living stealing from others on the sea, but few seem to have gotten rich or stayed rich. Those who did hopefully took the opportunity to live well and in peace, such as circumstance allowed.

In his impish satire, Ned Ward wrote that “Idleness at Sea is the worst of Slavery; and he that has nothing to do, is Buried Alive in a *Cabbin* instead of a *Coffin*.”<sup>42</sup> The rover understood, but also knew all too well its converse: idleness ashore was hell. The only cure was the sea.

CHAPTER

23



**The Perils of Wealth by Stratagem  
and Force of Arms, Part II**

*Dying by the Sword*

WE NOW RETURN TO OUR BUCCANEERS AT ARICA.<sup>1</sup>

Afoot and heavily armed, they approach the arid town. They spot three horsemen—they are discovered. The buccaneers rush onward, hoping to attack before the Spaniards are fully ready to mount a defense.

What the rovers suddenly see is a town already fortified against them. Perhaps only Captain Sharp is not surprised. Soon the acrid smoke of burned gunpowder will flavor the dry dusty air.

Around the town is an outwork, a breastwork backed by armed men. In every street there is a barricade backed by armed men, and on every rooftop are more armed men prepared to defend their homes. The murder of the old man has reaped what looks to be a deadly harvest. Above the city looms the specter of the innocent *viejo*, his truth now quite clear.

Arica is not only fully alarmed, but its citizens have been expecting the attack and have made all preparations to meet the hated *ladrones*. Yet the buccaneers are committed, and there is only one way to test the martial resolve and ability at arms of the Spanish defenders.

They attack.

They attack a town fully alarmed, they attack in spite of the precepts against such assaults, against the materialistic pragmatism of the sea rover, and against the survival instincts of the mariner.

The buccaneers advance in good order, as such among seamen and gentlemen of fortune ashore as you might expect, but the Spanish do not wait for them to come within range of the *barricados*. They too attack.

Whatever Watling's original plan was, he now issues new battle orders under fire. Any previous plan has gone by the board. The buccaneers have "caught a Tartar."

They split into two parties, one to take the fort, one the town. With small arms and grenades, forty buccaneers attack the fort to capture its twelve copper cannon and to secure their flank. The rest attack the town. The buccaneers come on fiercely, and storm each barricade before them. At the outworks, the defenders kill three and wound two.

On the Morro, the great hill that overlooks the town, the local governor watches the battle unfold and waves a handkerchief to signal to his men below. The buccaneers fire at him but miss; later they will wound him. The attackers are quickly swamped with prisoners they cannot manage, and as soon as they capture one barricade they lose control of another, which is quickly manned again by the Spanish. The rovers fight street to street, barricade to barricade, but in no way can they man all the barricades they have captured, and they are now in danger of being overwhelmed.

Nor have the forty taken the fort. They see their companions in danger of being overwhelmed by sheer numbers and turn to rush to their aid. Again the buccaneers gain the upper hand in the town. But the defenders rush into the fort, and the buccaneers now have an even more powerful enemy on their flank.

They call on the fort to surrender; the Spanish refuse. Desperate, the buccaneers attack the fort again, this time taking a page from Henry Morgan and putting prisoners in the vanguard. It is of no use, for the defenders fire upon their own as well as upon the buccaneers. The fort will not surrender, and the buccaneers cannot breach it. Some climb atop a roof overlooking the fort and shoot at the defenders inside, but still they will not surrender. And while the buccaneers attack the fort, defenders who had retreated from the town surge forth to man the barricades again.

For the second time, the buccaneers give up attacking the fort and attack the town. But by now they are tired, and the Spanish, emboldened and far outnumbering the buccaneers, begin to push them from the streets. From the Morro their general calls to them: "*Valiente soldados, buina Valienta Soldados.*" The buccaneers try to rally at the church originally selected for their hospital. The Spanish begin to surround them. Buccaneers continue to fall.

A Spanish bullet discovers Watling mortal. Retreat is now their only hope, but no one takes command. Buccaneers beseech Sharp to lead them from the fray. After a petty pause during which he refuses their entreaties, he finally takes command.



Sharp leads the buccaneers from the city. As they prepare to depart, they call to their three surgeons, the six guards with them, and the wounded in the church to join them if they can. The incipient retreat rallies the defenders, who vigorously renew their counterattack. One or two “that had good hearts gott up and rann to the Party” through a gauntlet of lead, but the three surgeons stay behind, although not from a sense of duty—all three are drunk. Although they looted apothecaries for drugs, they also looted liquor. The Spanish capture them, and five of the wounded as well. One account claims that the wounded are “all knocked on the head,” but another suggests that seven prisoners are spared, in addition to the surgeons who are spared to practice their trade among the Spanish—and who are well received by Spanish ladies.

Now only forty-two or forty-three buccaneers remain able to fight. Seventeen or eighteen of their own “desperately wounded” they carry with them; the rest are dead or captured. Under heavy fire, they make their way back to their boats. They fire upon the Spaniards so effectively that soon none dare attack them afoot—most of the Spanish remain under cover of their barricades. Horsemen fire continually at them from distant higher ground, their muskets reaching farther than those of the buccaneers.

For three or more miles, and for at least an hour or more, they retreat under fire to their boats. They carry their wounded; they load and fire their arms; they endure thirst, hunger, and fatigue. In their extremity, some of the buccaneers drink their urine, making their thirst worse.

As they reach the shore for their “better security” and to find their boats, Mestizos and African Americans surge forth and attack, hurling lances and rocks from above. Meanwhile, from the town come two white smokes at a distance from each other, the signal the buccaneers intended to use to bring the *Trinity* and boats into the harbor after they had captured the town. The Spaniards have discovered the signal from the buccaneer prisoners, probably by torture, as the buccaneers do on such occasions. They will bring the *Trinity* under the guns of the fort.

Embayed by a sea breeze, the *Trinity* will be at the Spaniards' mercy, and the retreating buccaneers will be denied their escape, and slaughtered. The buccaneers hurry along the beach, hoping each moment to find their boats, and they do, just in time. The *Trinity* wisely held off sailing into the harbor until its sailing crew saw the canoes, or it would have perhaps been lost under the guns of the fort. The buccaneers are now safely at sea again.

Poetic justice rules the day, but at a bitter cost. Sharp is vindicated. Watling and Duill, the murderers of the truthful old man, lie dead and probably mutilated in the dusty streets of Arica. Also left behind with

them are twenty-six more of their own, twenty-three of them probably dead. Basil Ringrose claims there were 700 defenders, and recites Spanish accounts of seventy or seventy-five killed and 107 or 210 wounded.

Had the buccaneers been in less of a hurry to secure Arica and get their hands on its booty before its inhabitants hid it, and focused instead on using their entire force to capture the fort, thus securing their flank and gaining the great guns they needed to really overpower the town, perhaps they would have captured Arica. The riches of Arica were no doubt already hidden away. Ultimately, though, the failure was one of leadership, driven by hubris and greed. Only rarely can courage alone succeed where leadership does not. Watling failed to adequately evaluate intelligence, or misread it, or worse, deliberately ignored it, hoping to succeed in spite of the obvious. He attacked an alarmed town, he divided his forces, and he had no one selected to succeed him when a Spanish bullet ended his roving career. But second-guessing is exactly that, guessing, and we will never know all that lead to defeat at Arica.

Another mutiny, without recourse to force of arms or bloodshed, soon follows. Half of the remaining company returns to the West Indies by way of Darien. Sharp and his followers sail on. They have a few more minor adventures, including the capture of the *Rosario*, a fairly rich prize whose papers include a valuable sea atlas of the Pacific coasts of North and South America.<sup>2</sup>

They return to the West Indies by way of Cape Horn, a passage so difficult that many mariners prefer to return to the Atlantic by a westward circumnavigation. On average, each buccaneer who returns with Sharp has about 200 pieces-of-eight, some less and some more, gained or lost at dice, but all far short of the 1,000 Sharp promised, and a pittance measured across their months and years of bloody cruising on the margins of the Pacific.

Eventually some are captured and held for piracy. Those tried in England, including Sharp, are acquitted, the prosecutors “wanting witnesses to prove what they intended.” Charged with capturing the *Rosario* and murdering her captain, the jury acquits the buccaneers because the Spaniard fired first. It does not matter to the jury that the *Rosario* legitimately fired first upon the buccaneers, knowing them to be pirates.<sup>3</sup> The acquittal is probably an instance of a jury’s discretion or, to use a more recent term, jury nullification. English juries have long been known for occasionally passing judgment in favor of obviously guilty defendants, if they feel the case warranted it for any reason, including popular sentiment.<sup>4</sup>

Whatever their vices, weaknesses, and moral ambiguities, these

buccaneers have in common with most sea rovers several tactical virtues, including innovation, loyalty, perseverance, adaptability, and courage. Collectively, they prove that a loose, uncentralized, and informal network can conduct significant, complex military operations. They show the effect that an irregular force can have on the resources of a powerful state, causing great economic damage and tying down significant forces. And, most importantly, they demonstrate that elements of broadly divergent and disparate cultures, races, nationalities, classes, professions, and personalities can act as one with a common goal. Their critical weakness, as the Arica example illustrates, is the influence of greed on leadership, discipline, and morale.

Not long after the return of the buccaneers from the South Sea, Sir Henry Morgan, apostate buccaneer and now lieutenant governor of Jamaica, writes to Sir Leoline Jenkins, English secretary of state and a judge of the High Court of Admiralty. He notes that he has already hanged three of Sharp's men and has had three more condemned, one of them "a bloody and notorious villain and fitt to make an exemple of." Yet, even as he in one breath condemns these men as pirates who have "molested the Spaniards in the South Seas" (doubtlessly trying to remind his correspondent of his own loyalty to the Crown), he also asks that two of the condemned men be spared. He goes on to praise the buccaneers' journey: "The passage of these people is extraordinarily remarkable, for in little more than four monthes they came from Coquimbo in Peru five degrees South Latitude, to Barbados in thirteen North."<sup>5</sup> High praise from master, indeed. Morgan the buccaneer knows just how skillful these men are, but Morgan the king's officer can only praise their navigation.

Yet it is not hard to read into his words praise for their deeds in general. England has its political expediency and Sir Henry his, and in the right circumstances many men are capable of praising and condemning others, even their brethren, in the same breath. Morgan may have hanged some to prove his continued loyalty and obedience to the Crown. Still, he also tries to spare a few, some by direct appeal and some by noting that they are "gone to England" and thus out of his hands. If he is impressed with anything these men did, it is with how they attacked and harassed the Spaniards, the skill in seamanship and arms they displayed, and their tenacious ability to carry their depredations to distant shores. It is a reminder that, whether they are privateers, buccaneers, or pirates, and no matter their virtues and enormities, sea rovers are adventurers far beyond the ordinary.

## A P P E N D I X

# 1



## Comparative Actions of Sea Rovers

MOST SEA-ROVING TACTICS CROSSED THE VAGUE BOUNDARIES between those of men-of-war, privateers, and pirates, but some actions and prizes were more likely in some environments than in others. The following are brief examples representative of various types of sea rovers.

1658–1659, the English cruiser HMS *Constant Warwick* in the seas around Britain. She captured two prizes, Spanish picaroons of twenty and four guns, respectively, each struck after a fight but before being boarded. She came up on the first prize by a sailing ruse, then made a running fight.

1667, the filibuster L'Ollonois, cruising the Spanish Main in a fleet of eight vessels. Alone, he captured a rich vessel after a fight, his fleet capturing another without a fight. He attacked and sacked Maracaibo, then Gibraltar; a rich cruise.

1679–1681, the English buccaneers Sharp, Sawkins, Watling, et al., from Porto Bello across the isthmus and into the South Sea. They captured Porto Bello and Santa Maria, were repulsed at Puebla Nueva and Arica, sacked Coquimbo, and were repulsed again at Arica. Of prizes, they captured a advice boat and bark, engaged and escaped from an *armadillo*, then fought another, capturing two of three vessels in a fierce engagement, the buccaneers starting in canoes. They took five ships at Panama, including the galleon *La Trinidad*, then a bark, an *armadillo* after a small action, two merchantmen, a small packet boat, and a good ship, the *Rosario*, after a fight. All prizes were taken by small arms, some by boarding.

1692, the French corsair Duguay-Trouin, cruising the English coast in consort with another corsair. He took a total of twelve prizes, at least two of which fought bravely. He first attacked and captured the two convoys

of a thirty-two-ship merchant fleet, while his consort captured twelve of the merchantmen. They were then attacked by five English men-of-war that recaptured two of the merchantmen and chased Duguay-Trouin into a refuge. Later forced by a storm under Lundy Isle, he escaped from an English man-of-war by the ruse of anchor apeak and sails furled with rope yarns. Eight days later, he captured two English merchantmen loaded with sugar from Barbados. He had a preference for boarding.

1694, the French corsair, the *Sieur de Montauban*, on a West Indies, Bermuda, and African cruise. He took six prizes of eleven that he chased or engaged, at least four of them after a fight, including two men-of-war or privateers. Two other ships slipped their cables and escaped, and another fought, then escaped under the guns of a coastal fort. Another ran aground and was broken up. He lured another ship by sailing sluggishly, engaged in hot action, leaving both ships destroyed, and Montauban and the survivors shipwrecked. He favored the heavy use of muskets.

1706–1707, a New York colonial privateer, Captain Tongrelou, cruising the Atlantic coast of North America and the West Indies in consort with a New York sloop after a successful previous cruise. Initially, he engaged a powerful French ship, but failed to take her and was forced into Bonaire to refit. He captured two Spanish sloops sent to take him, and also captured a richly laden Spanish ship. The Spanish sent a flotilla after him, but he escaped to New York.

1708–1711, the English privateers *Duke* and *Duchess*, Captains Rogers and Cooke, on a South Sea cruise. They took twenty prizes, ranging from twenty to 450 tons. All struck before being boarded, only two putting up much of a fight. They captured the smaller of the two Manila galleons after a fight; the larger escaped after a hard engagement. They also captured and ransomed Guayaquil.

1721–1722, the pirate George Lowther, on a West Indies cruise. He seized twenty-three prizes, four of them ships, the rest smaller vessels, all but one apparently without a fight, being terrorized into submission. One ship fought off the pirate, and another later destroyed Lowther's vessel while it lay careening.

## APPENDIX

# 2



## Privateer, Buccaneer, and Pirate

### *A Sea Rover's Lexicon, Part I*

SOME OF THE MOST PICARESQUE WORDS IN FOUR LANGUAGES CONCERN pirates, pirate ships, and other rogues, adventurers, and those associated with their realm. None of these words fail to evoke a world we almost feel we know instinctively. Those in the first section can refer to both vessels and persons, while those in the second and third generally refer only to persons.

#### Pirates and Pirate Ships

*Algerine, Algerian*: an Algerian privateer or pirate.

*Biscayer*: a ship from a Spanish port in the Bay of Biscay, often a reference to a rover. In the West Indies, this term referred to a privateer manned by Biscayers from Spain, who were often considered mere pirates by the English, French, and Dutch.

*booter*: short for freebooter; a pirate.

*buccaneer*: English or English-associated sea rover of the West Indies who preyed primarily on the Spanish. Also *bucanier*. Derived from *boucanier*.

*capèr* (Fr. *capre*): a pirate or privateer. A Dutch word, it was often used in reference to pirates or privateers in general. Specific references are to Dutch, Hanseatic, and Scottish rovers.

*corsair*: a North African pirate or privateer.

*corsaire* (Fr.): a privateer, who engages in *la course*, or cruising for purchase.

*corsario* (Sp.): a corsair, a privateer, a pirate.

*corsario Luterano* (Sp.): Literally "Lutheran corsairs," as opposed to Islamic corsairs. Protestant pirates or privateers, usually English or Dutch.

*cruiser*: a vessel cruising for prey on the sea. Often a man-of-war. Also *cruzal*.

*Dunkirker*: a Dunkirk privateer. Dunkirk was infamous for its privateers and its pirates as well. Also any Dunkirk vessel.

*écumeur de mer* (Fr.): a pirate, literally one who skims off the sea.

*filibuster*: English pronunciation of *flibustier*.

*Flessing, Flushing*: a person or ship from Flushing (Vlissingen). Often a synonym for a Flushing privateer or pirate.

*flibustier* (Fr.): a French sea rover of the West Indies who preyed primarily on the Spanish. A corruption of *freebooter*. Some claim the word is derived from flyboat.

*forban* (Fr.): a pirate.

*freebooter*: one who fights for booty; a pirate. Direct translation of the Dutch *vrybuitter*.

*guarda costa, guarda del costa* (Sp.): a Spanish coast guard in the West Indies, often synonymous with pirate.

*ladrones* (Sp.): literally, thieves. General term for pirates or privateers attacking the Spanish.

*Malouine* (Fr.): usually a *corsaire* from St. Malo.

*Moor*: a North African pirate or privateer.

*picaroon*: a pirate or privateer, from the Spanish *picarón*, a rascal. Often used by the English to refer to Spanish or Dutch vessels. A common mid-seventeenth-century term.

*pichilingues* (Sp.): pirates, usually used in the plural.

*pirate* (Fr. *pirate*, Sp. *pirata*): one who steals upon the sea.

*privateer*: a pirate, as in "privateering," a more common term.

*private*: a privateer.

*privateer* (Fr. *corsaire*, Sp. *corsario*): one authorized by the state to attack and plunder on or from the sea. Also used by buccaneers as a pretense to legitimacy when engaging in piracy. Derived from *private man-of-war*.

*rover, sea rover*: strictly speaking, a pirate. More generally, one who plunders on or from the sea. From the Dutch *roven*, to rob.

*Salley rover*: a North African pirate or privateer sailing from Salé. Also *Salleyman, Saletin, Sallee rover*.

*sea dog*: an Elizabethan privateer or pirate. More generally, any privateer or pirate. (Also a harbor seal.)

*seeker*: one who seeks for prey upon the sea. Often a man-of-war.  
*Turk*: a North African pirate or privateer.  
*vrybuit* (Dutch): a freebooter or pirate. From *vrijbuit*, free booty.  
*zee-roover*, *zeerover* (Dutch): a sea rover.

### Rogues and Others

*armateur* (Fr.), *armador* (Sp.): the investor, owner, or outfitter of a maritime voyage.  
*artillero* (Sp.): a gunner, especially one serving aboard ship to man the artillery. Not used in the sense of an officer or petty officer.  
*aventurier* (Fr.): an adventurer. Collective term for a *flibustier*, *boucanier*, buccaneer, or any other who would raid the Spanish in the New World.  
*boucanier* (Fr.): a hunter of cattle, perhaps of pigs, from San Domingue or Tortuga.  
*bravo*: a bully putting on a brave show. Also a Spanish word for a Native American warrior.  
*bretteur* (Fr.): a duelist or swashbuckler; a brawler with a sword.  
*caboceer*: broadly, the headman or chief of a West African village. Also an African middleman who sold Africans to Europeans.  
*canoteur* (Fr.): one who trades or fishes by canoe in the West Indies.  
*Carib*: a warlike tribe of the West Indies known among other things for their seamanship.  
*chasseur* (Fr.): a hunter.  
*complete soldier*: one skilled and experienced in all parts of the art of war.  
*coureur de bois* (Fr.): a French woodsman, living and trading with Native Americans. A ranger. Literally, a “runner of the woods.”  
*Creole*, *criolian* (Sp. *criollo*, *criolla*): a person of European descent born in the New World, especially in the West Indies and Spanish colonies.  
*Darien*: A Native American from the Isthmus of Panama. Known as fierce warriors, they were often allies of the buccaneers and filibusters.  
*engagé* (Fr.): an indentured servant, often for periods as long as three years.  
*ferrailleur* (Fr.): a swordsman who relies on brute force.  
*fine lame* (Fr.): a fine blade, an expert swordsman.  
*(the) forlorn*, also *les enfants perdues* (Fr., the lost children or lost babes): the advance guard, so named for the likelihood of springing ambushes and being slaughtered.  
*gamester*, *gentleman gamester*: a gambler by habit or trade.



- gens sans aveu* (Fr.): vagabonds, persons without a state, sometimes used as a synonym for pirates.
- gentleman adventurer*: usually a gentleman volunteer. Can be derisive or pejorative.
- gentleman of fortune*: a pirate or highwayman. A thief with airs or pretensions.
- Greek*: Levantine or other mercenary brought by the Spanish to the New World.
- habitan* (Fr.): a French inhabitant of the West Indies, specifically a colonial farmer or planter.
- indentured servant*: a bonded servant, often for four years in the English colonies. A virtual slave.
- intelligencer*: one who gives intelligence. A spy.
- interloper*: a ship or person trading in the territory granted to a trading company; not necessarily a smuggler.
- lancero* (Sp.): a Spanish lancer, one who fights with a lance from horseback.
- landman*: anyone not a seaman or mariner.
- linguister*: an interpreter or translator.
- lubber*: one not accustomed to the ways of the sea and ships.
- marinero* (Sp.): a sailor.
- maroon*: any person set ashore on a desert island or isolated shore, whether deliberately or by accident of shipwreck or inadvertent abandonment. One who is marooned.
- marrón, cimarrón* (Sp.): an escaped African American slave, living freely in an isolated community of *marróns*. Literally, wild or untamed.
- matador* (Sp.): a hunter of cattle. The matador, mounted on horseback, hunted with a pack of dogs and a lance. A Spanish *boucanier*.
- matelot* (Fr.): a sailor.
- mestizo, mestiza* (Sp.), *mustee*: the offspring of a European and a Native American. The Spanish, inflexible in their attention to social, class, religious, and racial distinctions, added *fino mustee*, *terceroon de Indies*, and *quarteroon de Indies*, each a subsequent generation of *mestizo* and Spaniard. Atkins, however, describes a *mustee* in Jamaica as the offspring of a mulatto and European, and a *castee* as the next such generation.
- montero* (Sp.): a *matador* in the sense of a hunter of cattle on Hispaniola. Literally, a hunter.
- Moskito*: a Native American of the Mosquito Coast. Moskitos often served as buccaneer strikers. They were redoubtable hunters and fighters.

*mousquetier* (Fr.), *musquetero* (Sp.): musketeer, one who fires a musket in battle.

*mulatto*, *mulatta* (Sp.): a person of mixed European and African heritage. Subsequent generations of were described as *quarteroon* and *terceroon de Negro*. See *mestizo*.

*new Turks*: the Anglo-American pirates.

*outlaw*, *outlyer*: one who has repeatedly failed to appear to answer a criminal indictment and has thus been judged an outlaw, or put out of any protection of the law. If the charge were a felony or treason, outlawry amounted to conviction and attainder.

*raffine* (Fr.): one who duels over nothing and anything; one so “refined” that anything will offend him.

*reformado*: a volunteer at land or sea serving as an officer, often having lost his commission when his regiment was “reformed.”

*renegade*, *renegado*: one who deserts from one side to the other and actively serves against the former side.

*rogue*: then as now, a scoundrel. Kidd claimed his mutinous piratical crew went “a roguing.”

*ruffian*: then as now, a brute.

*sloopman*: a seaman engaged in the “sloop trade.”

*smuggler*: a ship or person carrying contraband by night or other cover.

*soldado* (Sp.): a soldier.

*spadassin* (Fr.): a bravo or bully with a sword; an assassin with a sword. From *espada*, or sword.

*spadassin á gages* (Fr.): a hired assassin.

*swashbuckler*: a bully, bravo, or ruffian much addicted to swaggering, bragging, and boasting, invariably armed with a sword.

*tarpaulin*: an officer or captain who has come up through the ranks, often beginning as a common seaman.

*trader by stealth*: a smuggler, one who engages in the *contrabanda* trade.

*true artist*: an expert swordsman, one who understands and practices the art well. Also any expert, for example a brilliant navigator.

*volunteer*: one who volunteers to serve aboard ship or in a military company, often beneath his capacity. Sometimes a synonym for *reformado*. Aboard a man-of-war, a seaman serving voluntarily, not pressed into service.

*zambo*: a person of mixed African and Native American heritage.

### Sea Rover Officers, Petty Officers, and Seamen

(\* indicates core officers and sailors on most ships.)

\**boatswain*, *bos'n*, *bosun*: responsible for the rigging, hoisting boats in and

- out, and carrying out punishments. Carries a silver whistle and a bit of rattan to motivate sailors.
- \**captain*: the commander of a vessel.
- \**carpenter*: responsible for repairs to the deck, hull, bulkheads, and boats, and for plugging shot holes in action.
- \**cook*: greasy, often older or partly disabled. Larger ships sometimes carried two cooks, one for the crew, one for the officers.
- cooper*: one who makes and maintains barrels. Some rovers carried a cooper on long voyages to maintain barrels for water and provisions.
- \**coxswain, cox'n*: steers and commands a boat. A petty officer entered as such, or anyone who steers a boat.
- \**foremast man*: a sailor who works the ship. One berthed "before the mast" (the mainmast).
- \**grommet, ship's boy*: a boy who is a seaman-in-training, in action carries powder charges to the guns.
- \**gunner*: warrant or petty officer responsible for maintaining a vessel's great guns, small arms, and other ordnance and stores.
- \**lieutenant*: assistant to the captain.
- lieutenant of marines, of volunteers, of musketeers*: officer in charge of musketeers.
- \**master*: responsible for shiphandling and navigation, under the captain's direction.
- master at arms, ship's corporal*: places and relieves sentinels, keeps order, in action commands a party of musketeers.
- \**mate*: assistant to the master. If more than one, then first mate, second mate, and so on. Also an assistant to other warrant or petty officers: boatswain, gunner, carpenter, and surgeon, for example.
- midshipman*: usually a subordinate rank in a man-of-war for an officer-in-training. Aboard privateers, a messenger in time of action.
- musician*: trumpeter, fiddler, harper, piper, drummer, or other seaman charged with music for entertainment, in hailing, or in action.
- owner's agent*: a person designated to act on behalf or in the interest of the owners.
- pilot*: usually a local navigator who pilots a vessel into a harbor. Aboard a rover, someone with practical knowledge of the cruising grounds, could be a member of the crew, a prisoner, or a local recruit.
- purser*: officer who handles the ship's provisions and books.
- \**quartermaster*: assists with the watches and helm, and sometimes with the stowing of cargo and provisions.
- sailmaker*: sews and repairs sails.

*smith and armorer*: blacksmith who repairs ironwork and arms.

*striker*: Moskito or Darien serving as a hunter of fish, turtle, and manatee aboard a buccaneer.

\**surgeon (chyrurgeon)*: doctor, mender, and bleeder.

\**yunker*: a young seaman used aloft for setting and furling sail.

## APPENDIX

# 3



## Galley, Sloop, and Piragua

### *A Sea Rover's Lexicon, Part II*

AGAIN, MORE WORDS OF THE SEA. THIS APPENDIX IS INTENDED AS A quick reference to a complex subject. Vessel types and nomenclature change across regions, languages, and seas, and evolve over time. Often there is more than one correct definition of a vessel type, and many descriptions of vessel types are broad or vague. *Sloop* for example meant one thing in 1675 among the buccaneers in the Port Royal, Jamaica, and something else at the same time among the Royal Navy in Portsmouth, England; it meant one thing in 1630 and another in 1730. A flyboat might be a flute, or it might not. The same term in two languages might refer to different craft, or the same. Vessels were defined variously by rig, hull, purpose, origin, and destination, but never by all in a single word. The issue of vessel names is further complicated by the fact that many vessels were referred to by multiple names: bark, *barque longue*, and double shallop, for example. The reader is therefore advised not to place complete faith in any simple description. For general terms referring to sea-rovers and sea-roving vessels, see appendix 2.

*advice boat, advice ship*: a packet, messenger, dispatch, or news vessel.

*armada* (Sp.): a fleet of men-of-war.

*Armada de Barlovento* (Sp.): the Spanish guard fleet responsible for protecting Spanish possessions in the West Indies.

*armada de guarda* (Sp.): a guard fleet.

*Armada de la carrera de las Indias* (Sp.): the Spanish treasure fleet.

*Armada del Mar del Sur* (Sp.): the Spanish South Sea guard fleet.

*Armada del Mar Oceano* (Sp.): the Spanish Royal Navy.

*Armada del Nuestra Señora de Guía* (Sp.): a privately funded South Sea guard fleet, established in 1687.

*Armada do Norte* (Port.): the Portuguese guard fleet in the East Indies, north of Goa.

*Armada do Sul*, *Armada do Malavar* (Port.): the Portuguese guard fleet in the East Indies, south of Goa.

*armadilla* (Sp.): a flotilla or squadron for coastal defense. Literally, a small armada.

*armadillo*, *armadilla* (Sp.): In the New World, a Spanish vessel of any size armed for war, although more often than not it refers to smaller vessels. A term frequently used by buccaneers.

*Assiento ship* (Sp.): a slaver operating under contract (the *Assiento de Negros*) to deliver slaves to Spain's New World colonies.

*azogue* (Sp.): a mercury ship, a ship transporting mercury for the processing of silver. Literally, mercury.

*bacassa*: a seagoing Carib vessel more than forty feet long and seven feet wide, with a sharp prow, flat stern, and three masts.

*balandra* (Sp.): a bilander. In the West Indies a sloop, single-masted and fore-and-aft rigged.

*Banker*: a fisher-ship on the Grand Banks, usually a European ship fishing on the banks, salting, then returning home.

*barca longa*, *barco luengo* (Sp.): a *barque longue*.

*barco de armadilla* (Sp.): a large bark rigged as a "little" man-of-war or "pretty big bark" armed for war.

*barco de aviso* (Sp.): an advice bark.

*barge*: (1) a ship's boat, long but narrower than a longboat, rowed with ten or twelve oars and usually carried aboard larger English men-of-war. An admiral or captain's boat. (2) a simple craft for carrying cargo on a river.

*bark*: generally a single-decked, often round-sterned vessel of ten to one hundred tons, one or two masts. Generally a coastal trader. The term encompasses a variety of rigs and hulls. Smaller barks were often open, without a deck.

*bark log*: a raft, especially as used by Native Americans, of a variety of sizes ranging from tiny fishing rafts to large seagoing barges carrying mast and sail. Probably derived from "log bark," and reversed in a manner similar to *barca longa*.

*barkentine*: a small bark.

*barque* (Fr.): in the West Indies, a sloop, single-masted and rigged fore-and-aft. Otherwise, a bark.

*barque caravelle* (Fr.): a caravel-rigged bark; a caravel.

*barque de la douance* (Fr.): a customs boat.

*barque de marchandises* (Fr.): a merchant bark.

*barque longue* (Fr.): a general term for long narrow low vessel fitted both for sail and oar, one- or two-masted. Described variously as decked and undecked. Snows were sometimes referred to *barques longues*, as were corvettes and brigantines. Sometimes called a *double chaloupe*.

*bateau* (Fr.): a boat.

*bateau traversier* (Fr.): a *traversier*.

*beer belly*: derisive term for a Dutchman or Dutch vessel.

*Bermuda boat*: a two-mast boat rigged with triangular “Bermuda” sails.

*Bermuda sloop*: a sloop built in Bermuda, known for its timber. A fast sailer with a rakish mast favored by sea rovers in the West Indies and North America.

*bicoque* (Fr.): a tiny corvette.

*bilander* (Fr. *belandre*, Sp. *balandra*): a one- or two-masted hoy of up to eighty tons.

*Biscayer*, *Biscayan*: a Spanish longboat, very seaworthy. Also any vessel sailing from the Spanish ports on the Bay of Biscay.

*boat*: any very small craft other than a canoe; basically one that can be hoisted aboard a ship.

*bomb ketch*: a ketch mounted with a mortar or mortars used for bombing forts and towns. Two-masted, the vessel appears to be missing its foremast.

*bootschip* (Dutch): a ship of three masts with round bow and stern, broad abeam, its taffrail extending beyond its sides.

*boyer* (Dutch): a coaster with round bow and stern and usually a single mast. Also a type of yacht.

*brander*: slang for fire-ship.

*brandy barrel*: derisive term for a Dutch ship.

*Brasilman*: a merchant ship trading to Brazil.

*brig*: a two-mast vessel carrying square sails on the mainmast, and a gaff or lateen mizzen.

*brigantin* (Fr.): a brig.

*brigantine*: a long-hulled, fine-lined two-mast vessel carrying square sails and originally intended for sea roving. From *brigand*. See *corvette*.

*Bristolman*: a ship trading from Bristol, England.

*brûlot* (Fr.): a fire-ship.

*bumboat*: originally any small craft unloading filth from vessels anchored in the Thames. These craft also sold provisions and small goods. Later

the word came to mean any small craft selling to ships at anchor anywhere. From “boom-boat.”

*burner*: slang for fire-ship.

*buss*: a type of North Sea fishing boat, often three-masted, sometimes called a flyboat or small fluyt, sometimes described as derived from the flyboat.

*butter-box*: derisive term for a Dutch vessel.

*canoe* (Fr. *canot*, Sp. *canao*): a boat made from a hollowed tree. A great variety of trees were used, but most commonly cedar, cypress, and silk-cotton. Of many sizes, the canoe and piragua were probably the most common craft in the New World.

*canot* (Fr.): a small boat; also a dugout canoe.

*caravel* (Fr. *caravelle*): a lateen-rigged merchant ship, common in the Mediterranean. The term was still in use in the late seventeenth century.

*carrack*: a large Portuguese merchant ship, round-bellied with a high sterncastle. The word was still in use in the late seventeenth century.

*chaloupe* (Fr.): an undecked French boat, often used as a man-of-war's boat. Also *shallop* (Eng.), *sloep* (Dutch), and *chalupa* (Sp.).

*chatten*: according to Exquemelin, small merchant vessels armed with two iron great guns and four brass swivels. Used at Chagres for river traffic, and in coastal waters to Porto Bello and Nicaragua.

*coaster*: a coastal vessel.

*cock-boat*: a very small ship's boat, especially one towed behind a small coasting vessel.

*collier*: a coal carrier, often with a flute-like or pink hull.

*corvette* (Fr.): a long-hulled, fine-lined two-mast vessel carrying square sails on both masts. Often synonymous with brigantine.

*corvette d'avis* (Fr.): a corvette used as an advice boat.

*country ship*: a European-style ship built in the East Indies for service there. Also, any colonially built ship.

*country sloop*: in the English New World colonies, an armed sloop in the “Country Service” to protect trade against privateers and pirates. A locally commissioned guard vessel.

*Deal yawl*: A yawl built at Deal, England, with a reputation for seaworthiness.

*demi-battery ship*, *half-battery ship*: a ship with one deck with gunports along only part of its length.

*dogger*: a bluff-bowed fishing vessel, two-masted, also used as a coastal carrier and occasionally as a privateer.

*dory*: a small flat-bottomed boat, usually for fishing.



*double chaloupe*: a *barque longue*, especially if decked over. Also *double shallop*.

*Dutch pink*, *fishing pink*, *pink* (Sp. *pingue*): a small two-masted flat-bottomed fishing vessel.

*East Indiaman*: a merchant ship trading to the East Indies, usually English, French, Dutch, or Portuguese, generally large, well-armed, and part of a corporate fleet.

*Europe-built ship*: a ship built in Europe or in the European style.

*felluca* (Fr. *feloque*): a small two-masted sailing and rowing vessel, lateen-rigged. Also a similar but larger lateen-rigged ship.

*fire-bark*: a bark as fire-ship.

*fire-ship*: A ship filled with incendiaries and modified to burn well. Used as a weapon against other ships. Also *brander*, *burner*, *brûlot*, *smoker*.

*fisher-ship*, *fisher-boat*: a fishing vessel.

*fishing bark*: in the West Indies, a bark used for fishing or oyster diving.

*fleet*: a large number of vessels with a common purpose.

*Flemming*, *Flammand*: a ship from Flanders.

*flota* (Sp.): the part of the Spanish treasure fleet serving Vera Cruz. Literally, fleet.

*flotilla*: a small number of vessels with a common purpose. From the Spanish, literally little fleet.

*flûte de transport* (Fr.): a flute used to transport troops.

*flûte hospitalier* (Fr.): a flute used as a hospital ship.

*fluyt* (Eng. *flute*, Fr. *flûte*, *flutte*): a versatile square-rigged three-masted merchantman or whaler with round bows, flat bottom, and narrow stern, and a length to breadth ratio of four to one or greater. Originally Dutch, later built by other nations as well. Often short-masted. Some were smack-rigged with one or two masts and a sprit mainsail. Sometimes referred to as a type of flyboat, and in English sometimes as a flyboat. An important period merchant ship.

*flyboat* (Fr. *flibot*, Sp. *flibote*): a small round-hulled vessel, usually two-masted, sometimes synonymous with buss, which is sometimes called a small fluyt. In English, often the term for a flute. A flyboat is not always a flute: a French text may describe a flyboat and fluyt sailing together, for example.

*fragata* (Sp.): a frigate-built ship of finer, swifter lines than a galleon or typical merchantman, often used for war.

*frégatte* (Fr.): a light warship of the fifth rate in France. Or, any light warship.

*frégatte légère* (Fr.): a light and lightly armed French frigate-of-war.

*frigate*: usually in the sense of "frigate-built" ship, not necessarily a frigate

in the later sense of the word as a light man-of-war designed for cruising. A ship with its forecastle and quarterdeck raised above the main deck, and usually with finer lines than most merchantmen. Also a light three-masted man-of-war.

*frigatooton*: Venetian, a two-masted square-sterned vessel.

*gabarra* (Sp.): a lighter or barge.

*gabarra de azogues* (Sp.): a lighter or barge hauling mercury for processing silver on the Spanish Main.

*Galeones*: literally, galleons. The flotilla of galleons that served Cartagena and Porto Bello.

*galeota*, *galeotta*: a Mediterranean two-masted sailing and rowing vessel, lateen-rigged. A small galley with mast and sail, sometimes called a *half galley*. On the Spanish Main, a sailing barge.

*galiote des bombes* (Fr): a bomb galliot.

*galleas*: a true hybrid built equally for sail and oar, having a single bank of oars and three lateen-rigged masts.

*galleon* (Sp. *galeón*): a large Spanish or Portuguese ship for trade or war, with finer lines than a caravel, strongly built, with a lofty sterncastle, usually with open galleries and much decoration, up to the mid-seventeenth century. Afterward, any Spanish treasure ship.

*galley*: (1) a man-of-war primarily rowed by oars, with a sharp prow and a lateen rig. Not particularly seaworthy, they were largely restricted to the coastlines of the Mediterranean. (2) a ship intended primarily for sail, but which could also be rowed for short distances as required. A galley-ship or galley-frigate.

*galley-frigate* (Fr. *fregatte galère*): a sailing man-of-war that could also be rowed.

*galley-ship*: a ship capable of using oars for maneuvering and short transits. Not to be confused with a rowing galley.

*galliot* (Fr. *galiote*): a one- or two-mast vessel with round bow and stern, capable of ocean voyages. Originally a Dutch design.

*galliot hoy*: a galliot used as a coasting vessel.

*garde-côte* (Fr.): coast guard, guard ship.

*guard ship*: a man-of-war assigned to an area to protect it against pirates, interlopers, smugglers, privateers, and men-of-war. A coast guard.

*Guineaman*: a ship trading to the Guinea coast of Africa, invariably in slaves. A slaver.

*hackboat*, *hagboat*: a three-mast merchantman with a "Dutch stern," that is, the timbers curving up under the transom. Usually of shallower draft and flatter bottom.

*half galley*: a small rowing galley. Called *galleys* in the New World, they might carry eighty to 120 men.

*herring buss*: a buss used as a herring boat; a fisher buss.

*hired ship*: a private ship hired by the state as a transport or sometimes as a man-of-war.

*Hogen Mogen*: derisive term for a Dutchman or Dutch vessel.

*hooker* (Fr. *houcre*, Sp. *urca*): a Dutch vessel of fifty to 300 tons, single- or double-masted, with a fluyt-shaped hull. Sometimes referred to a three-mast vessel.

*hoy*: a coastal utility vessel of shallow draft, often used for hauling small cargoes, usually single-masted. A small bark.

*Indiaman*: an East Indiaman.

*jingadah*: a Brazilian seagoing barklog, made of four logs, the outboard logs longer, and carrying a triangular sail.

*jolly boat*, *jollywatt*: a ship's boat, smaller than a yawl. Often considered too small to be of much service.

*junk*: a Chinese vessel, stoutly built with distinctive lug sails stiffened by battens.

*ketch* (Fr. *caiche*, *caiche anglais*): a stout-hulled two-mast vessel, commonly square-rigged on the mainmast and carrying a lateen mizzen.

*lancha* (Sp.): a launch, a longboat.

*launch*: a ship's boat similar to a longboat, derived from *lancha*, a Spanish longboat.

*letter-of-mart ship*: a merchantman authorized by the state to take prizes during its trading voyage. Also *letter-of-marque ship*, *letter-of-marque man*, *letter-of-marque* (or *mart*).

*lighter*: a boat or barge used for ferrying goods and provisions to and from a ship.

*lofty ship*: a tall ship.

*longboat*: the largest of a ship's boats, usually towed astern except on the greatest of ships. Broader abeam and more heavily constructed than a pinnace, barge, or yawl.

*Madeiraman*: a ship trading to Madeira, usually for wine.

*Majorkeen*: a Majorcan vessel.

*Manila galleon*: the Spanish treasure ship of vast riches making the voyage across the Pacific from Manila to Acapulco and back again.

*Manila ship*: the Manila galleon or a ship supplying the Spanish in Manila with Asian goods to be shipped across the Pacific on the Manila galleon.

*man-of-war*: an armed ship of the state. A warship.

*merchantman*: a trading vessel.

*mercury ship*: a Spanish ship transporting mercury for silver processing.

An *azogue*.

*Mogul's ship*: a ship of the Indian Great Mogul.

*nao* (Sp.): a ship, vessel, or craft. Or, a three-mast ship.

*nao creolla* (Sp.): a ship built in the Spanish New World. Literally “creole ship.”

*navio* (Sp.): a ship, often distinguished from a *fregatta* and *galéon*.

*navio de aviso* (Sp.): an advice ship.

*navio de chine*, *nao de chine* (Sp.): the Manila galleon. Literally, ship from China.

*navio de permiso* (Sp.): a ship or craft sailing “with permission,” that is, without a convoy—small trading vessels, advice boats, supply ships, and so on.

*navio de registro* (Sp.): a ship from Spain authorized to trade independently of the treasure fleets.

*navire* (Fr.): a ship.

*navire de guerre* (Fr.): man-of-war.

*navire de registre* (Fr.): French term for Spanish registry ship.

*navire marchand* (Fr.): a merchant ship.

*Newfoundland ship*: a fisher-ship sailing from England to Newfoundland to fish the Grand Banks. Also called a Banker.

*Ostender*: a ship sailing or trading from Ostend in the Spanish/Austrian Netherlands (latter-day Belgium). Often a privateer.

*packet boat* (Sp. *paquebot*, *pachete*): a boat or small vessel carrying mail, dispatches, and small cargo. Also *advice boat*.

*packet ship*: a ship carrying mail, dispatches, and small cargo. Also *advice ship*.

*patache* (Sp.): a tender to a treasure ship, also an advice ship or dispatch boat.

*petach* (Fr.): a small Southern European two-masted coaster. Some also referred to as a *barque*.

*Philippine ship*: the Manila galleon.

*pinasse* (Fr.): a light man-of-war used for scouting. Also, a type of round-bellied, square-sterned merchant ship of up to 800 tons.

*pink*: a ship with round bows and a small high stern; derived from the flute and sometimes defined as a small flute. Some were excellent sailers with good speed.

*pinnace*: (1) a ship's boat with fine lines for sailing and rowing, larger than a yawl, narrower than a longboat. (2) a small swift Dutch man-of-war of the seventeenth century, lightly armed, for scouting and cruising.

*piperie* (Fr.): de Lussan's term for a bark log, or log raft.

- piragua* (Sp., Fr. *pirogue*): a large West Indian canoe. Might have been sharp or flat-sterned, and often carried mast and sail. Also *petti-oager*, *periagua*, *periager*.
- pitpan*: a small canoe of the Moskito Indians, carrying only two persons and drawing only four inches of water.
- polacre* (Fr.): a Mediterranean ship with a beaked prow and three pole masts, the fore lateen-rigged, the main square-rigged, and the mizzen with a lateen main and a square topsail. Sometimes referred to as a great barge.
- prize*, *prize ship*: a captured vessel.
- proa*, *proe*, *prow*: a Malay boat, fair-sized, sharp at the bow and stern, with a distinctive triangular sail.
- runner*, *running ship*: a ship designed for speed and intended to carry light cargoes and sail independently during wartime. Average 150 to 250 tons. Often used as a packet ship.
- saëtia*, *settee*: a Mediterranean vessel also seen in the Spanish New World, rigged with settee sails. Sometimes called a "great boat" or *flyboat*.
- sailing canoe* (Fr. *canot à la voile*): a canoe or *piragua* rigged with mast and sail.
- saïque*, *saik*: a two-masted Mediterranean vessel, the main square-rigged and the mizzen lateen-rigged.
- sand lighter*: a lighter used to haul sand dredged from a harbor.
- schooner*: a New World vessel, two-masted, gaff-rigged, with square topsails. The term was probably used only in the last three decades of the period, although the rig itself was around much earlier.
- separate stock ship*: an independent merchant ship trading legally in territory of a corporation, as opposed to an interloper.
- shallop* (Fr. *chaloupe*, Dutch *sloep*): in general, a double-ended strongly built utility boat. Often, any undecked utility boat. Also, a ship's boat of the early seventeenth century.
- ship*: a vessel of three masts, square-rigged, with a lateen or gaff mizzen.
- ship of force*: a ship well-armed and manned.
- skiff*: a light ship's boat of the seventeenth century.
- slaver*: a ship trading in slaves.
- sloop*, *sloop*: a Dutch man-of-war's boat. A shallop.
- sloop* (Fr. *barque*, Sp. *balandra*): (1) in the West Indies, a single-mast vessel with clean lines, a large gaff sail, one to three headsails, and often a square mainsail and topsail. Generally swift and maneuverable. (2) a small naval support craft of a variety of rigs.
- smack*: a type of small sturdy seaworthy fishing boat ranging from four to thirty tons, with one or two masts. Also used as a naval utility craft.

*smoker*: a fireship.

*snow* (Fr. *senau*): (1) a smack-rigged *barque longue* used by Flemmings for privateering. (2) a two-mast vessel with square mainsails, a square mizzen topsail, and a gaff sail set on a small mast just abaft the mizzenmast. Might have been called a brig in the seventeenth century. Well suited to the chase, usually carried oars.

*stout ship*: a strong, well-armed ship.

*striking dory*: small boat used for hunting turtle or manatee by “striking” (spearing).

*sugar drogher, sugar drover*: a small West Indian bark or sloop transporting sugar from plantation to port.

*tall ship*: a fair-sized ship with topgallants, perhaps of 200 tons or more, as opposed to “short-masted” ships carrying only main- and topsails. Also *lofty ship*.

*tartane* (Sp. *tartana*): a Mediterranean vessel also used by the Spanish in the New World, sharp and long-prowed, with two or three lateen-rigged masts, the foremast raked well forward. Also *tarteen*.

*tender*: a vessel carrying supplies for another.

*traversier* (Fr.): a small single-mast vessel, square-rigged, often used for fishing and short voyages but capable of Atlantic crossings.

*turtler*: a vessel taking turtle.

*urca* (Sp.): a ship-rigged merchantman or tender, round-hulled, flat-bottomed, narrow-sterned; a hooker or flute. *Armado en urca* is the Spanish equivalent of *armée en flûte*. Sometimes described as a large bark.

*vaisseau armée en course* (Fr.): a vessel armed for privateering, for *la guerre de course*.

*vaisseau armée en flûte* (Fr.): a *vaisseau de Roi* armed and used as a transport or tender, i.e., more lightly armed than one-armed “*en guerre*.” Not necessarily a flute.

*vaisseau armée en fregatte* (Fr.): a *vaisseau de Roi* armed as a light warship, usually of the fourth rate or smaller.

*vaisseau armée en guerre* (Fr.): a *vaisseau de Roi* armed as a man-of-war whose principal mission is to engage enemy warships.

*vaisseau de guerre* (Fr.): a man-of-war.

*vaisseau de Roi* (Fr.): a ship of the king, a man-of-war.

*vessel*: any seagoing ship or craft.

*Virginiaman*: a ship trading to Virginia.

*West countryman*: a vessel sailing out of the western ports of England.

*whale boat*: a small boat sharp-ended bow and stern for taking whale.

*whaler*: a ship taking whale, often a *fluyt* or *bootschip*.

*wherry*: a small swift rowboat, usually seen on rivers and bays.

*woodboat*: a boat ferrying wood.

*yacht*: a pleasure craft of Dutch origin, rigged fore and aft. In England often used as a king's pleasure craft, naval scout, and advice boat.

*yawl*: a small clinker-built ship's boat usually rowed with four to eight oars. Probably Scandinavian in origin. Versatile and seaworthy.

## A P P E N D I X

# 4



## Mariner's Language, 1630 to 1730

### *A Sea Rover's Lexicon, Part III*

PART OF THE FUN OF RESEARCHING THIS SUBJECT WAS THE LANGUAGE of the rovers and mariners themselves. As much as anything, their manner of speaking and writing lent a strong sense of their world. Included here are a few brief samples. First though, a short glossary of sea terms.

#### Glossary

*backing astern*: to turn into the wind such that the wind backs the vessel astern.

*bear up*: to turn from the wind and sail large or before the wind; to let the vessel fall to leeward.

*carved works*: a ship's wood carvings and decoration.

*clap on a wind*: to sail close hauled.

*closed quarters, close quarters*: barricaded bulkheads fitted with loopholes and gunports to defend against boarders.

*courses*: the lowest square sails (fore and main) of a ship.

*espy, descry*: to spot something, usually a sail.

*frigate-built*: a vessel with raised forecastle or quarterdeck.

*galley-built*: a flush-decked ship, as opposed to one with a raised forecastle and quarterdeck.

*head sails*: all sails forward of the foremast.

*heels, a good pair of or a light pair of*: fast.



*larboard*: port, the left. However, in conning the helm, the command was "Port your helm."

*lateen sail*: a triangular sail carried on a spar.

*leeward*: away from the direction from which the wind blows.

*lie by*: heave to.

*make a clear ship for engaging*: clear for action.

*mizzen sail*: on a three-master, usually a triangular lateen fore-and-aft sail, later a gaff fore-and-aft sail.

*on a bowline (bowling)*: close hauled.

*sheets*: the rigging drawing a sail's lower corners (clews) down or aft.

*show her heels*: run away.

*spring her loof, keep aloof*: keep close to the wind, keep the wind on the bow quarter.

*stand off, stand from*: to sail away from, to keep distance.

*stand to*: to sail toward.

*stand to her forefoot*: in a chase to leeward, to sail in the direction to cut the chase off.

*starboard*: the right.

*tack, tacking*: to sail in the direction of the wind by working back and forth from one tack to the other.

*tacks*: the rigging drawing a course's lower corners (clews) forward.

*topgallants*: the square sails immediately above the topsails.

*topsails*: the square sails immediately above the courses on the fore- and mainmasts, and above the mizzen.

*wearing*: to come to the opposite tack by turning the vessel around from the wind, as opposed to turning through it.

*windward*: in the direction from which the wind blows.

### **The Filibuster on Life**

Exposed as we are to an infinity of dangers, our destiny is very different from that of other men. Today we live, tomorrow we die, so what is it to us to save and be frugal? We count only on the day we live, and never on the days we have yet to live. (Filibusters, after spending the plunder of Veracruz.)

### **The Seaman on Life**

A merry life and a short one. Longest liver take all! Never let us want when we have it and when we have it not too. Large wind, large allow-

ance. *Hoy por mi, mañana por ti.* (Of fortune: Today for me, tomorrow for you.)

### Pirate Language

You dog! You speckled-shirt dog! Why did not you come on board with the boat, you son of a bitch? I will drub you, you dog, within an inch of your life, and that inch too. Ay, you dog, and I will teach you better manners.

No, no, that won't do, by God, your palavering won't save your bacon. *Muchas palabras no valen nada*, as the Spaniards say, so either discharge your trust like an honest man, for go you shan't, by God, or I'll send you with my service to the devil, so no more words, God damn ye.

### Practical Blasphemy

Pirates [have] no God but their money, nor Savior but their arms. (A pirate.)

*Mort Dieu, les Espagnols me le payeront!* (L'Ollonois: God's death, the Spaniards will pay me for this!)

### The Spanish in Praise of Rovers

*Hijos de puta! Borrachos! Infames ladrones! Perros Ingles! Cornudos ladrones!* (Sons of whores! Drunkards! Infamous thieves! English dogs! Cuckold thieves!)

### Seamanship in General

Came to an anchor. Weighed our anchor and set sail. Weighing our anchors. Let go an anchor. Steered our course. Lay under foresail and mizzen. So steering away North by East. Hauled up low sails in the brails. It blowing very hard at S. and being thick dirty weather. A very great sea, so we took in our spritsail. Being all light and clean ships, and good sailers. Appearing a fine long snug frigate.

### Chasing or Being Chased

We came up with a sloop.

We immediately clap'd upon a Wind, and made all the Sail we could to the Southward.

### A Fight at Sea

It oblig'd us to keep our Hammocks up, and a clear Ship for a Fight.

[I] order'd every man to their several quarters, to get them clear for an engagement.

I perceiv'd he was resolv'd to pluck a crow with me.

In Short, after we had carried away our Mayntopmast and found the Ship that Chac't us come up with us att a Great Rate, wee brought too, and made the Ship Clear for Engaging.

Come chearly my Hearts, It is a Prize worth fighting for.

Between Eleven and Twelve at Noon the *Fortune* ranged along our side, and gave us a Broadside with a Volley of small Shot. We run out our Guns between Decks, in order to return their compliment.

My lieutenant instead of observing my Orders, went upon Deck, and cowardly as he had behaved himself the whole Action, gave up the Ship.

But my design was to run him aboard and sink him or myself or both, but I judged he would a got the worst on't then, being a thin paper-sided Toole.

Come, Aboard him bravely; Enter, Enter, Are you lached fast?

À l'abordage! Or, À borde! À borde! (Board!)

## APPENDIX

# 5



## Roving Writers and Some I Wish Had Been

A SHORT LIST OF SEA ROVERS, MARINERS, AND OTHERS WHOSE WRITINGS or deeds influenced me in writing this book or of whom I wish we knew more. Several I feel I know well.

### Some Who Left Journals

Captain Edward Barlow, mariner: along with Uring, his is one of the great sea journals of any age. A stout, brave seaman, master, and commander, he chased after Captain Kidd and made him show his heels.

Captain William Dampier, buccaneer, naval commander, privateer, explorer, circumnavigator, and naturalist: the description says it all. His works set the standard for generations to come.

Captain Jean Doublet, mariner, corsair, secret agent: a sly rogue with a quick mind, nerves of steel, and a survivor's instincts. Perfectly suited to his trade, he survived seven shipwrecks.

Captain René Duguay-Trouin, corsair and naval commander: one of France's naval heroes, he and Jean Bart ravaged the English merchant fleet in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Over the course of his career, he captured more than 300 ships, including twenty men-of-war.

Alexander Exquemelin, filibuster surgeon: French author of the *Buccaneers of America*, he is the standard bearer of all pirate literature of fact and fiction, forever. The spelling of his name in his various editions is typical of the period: Exquemelin, Esquemeling, Oexmelin.

Father Jean Baptist Labat, Dominican priest, adventurer, naturalist: an

inquisitive man with an eye for detail, an appetite for good wine and good food, and a great sense of humor and compassion, he visited *boucaniers*, sailed with filibusters in action, and manned a cannon against English attackers. His book belongs on the shelf next to Dampier's works. A rum is named after him.

Basil Ringrose, buccaneer surgeon: an articulate and, by buccaneer standards, compassionate adventurer with the buccaneers in the South Sea. Killed in an ambush along with fifty of his shipmates.

Captain Jeremy Roch, naval commander: a bit of a rogue with an inclination to bend the rules, a trait many can identify with, but not always compatible with naval discipline.

Francis Rogers, supercargo: a man scratching the itch of roving with a sense of humor. He and his captain, both hungover, once hailed a Genoese merchantman. Asked why they had bore down on them, he replied, "We took you for a Spanish galleon." "Why, what if we had been so?" "We designed to have had some of your pieces-of-eight before we had left you." The Genoese, of sixty guns and 300 men, had a good laugh and invited them for dinner. Roger's ship was of eight guns and fourteen men.

Captain Woodes Rogers, mariner, privateer, and governor: his journal of his privateer cruise around the world was the second such work I read. Fraught with conflict but still successful, his voyage epitomized the reality of the privateer and proved the value of leadership and discipline, as well as the perils of committees.

Captain Bartholomew Sharp, buccaneer: a rogue if there ever were one, but also a master seaman and navigator. He was with the buccaneers in the South Sea. His roving career spanned two decades.

Captain Nathaniel Uring, mariner: a seaman par excellence whose journal is unsurpassed in maritime literature. He commanded merchantmen, packet ships, a slaver, and a letter-of-mart ship, survived smallpox in North Carolina, a shipwreck on the Mosquito Coast, and capture by the French after a classic sea chase.

Lionel Wafer, buccaneer surgeon: another South Sea buccaneer. Burned in the knee, he lived among the Darien Indians while he recovered. He was later arrested for piracy in Virginia, where some of his confiscated shares of plunder were used to establish the College of William and Mary.

### Some I Wish Had Left Journals

Captain Jean Bart, corsair and naval commander: a Dunkirker descended from fishermen-corsairs, best described by the Comte de Forbin as a man who "knew how neither to read nor write, except his name. His father was a simple fisherman, yet Bart made himself known by his actions,

without a patron, and without any other support than himself he rose through the ranks to command a squadron.” Indefatigable and commanding, Bart is said to have tied his son to a mast during his first action at sea to teach him to stand fire.

Captain Willem Blaeuvelt (Blewfield), freebooter: in the West Indies trading and raiding beginning in the 1630s, originally from the Puritan’s Providence Island, he was still roving in 1663 with a crew of English, Dutch, and Native Americans out of Cape Gracias de Dios.

Captain Jacques Cassard, corsair and naval commander: his was a history of courage and success coupled with the injustice of merchants and noblemen. Eventually he insulted the first minister of France and was made a prisoner in the Fortress of Ham. Perhaps his journal would compare the duplicities of warfare with those of business gentlemen and the courtiers of Versailles.

Captain Laurens de Graff, filibuster: the classic swashbuckler, he probably had neither time nor inclination to pen his memoirs. Nonetheless, as one of the foremost and successful of filibusters, leader of the sack of Veracruz, and guide to Iberville’s Mississippi expedition, his journal would make fascinating reading, and might be the only first-person description of a duel between buccaneers or filibusters.

Captain Diego (the Mulatto), filibuster: his journal would provide an invaluable perspective of someone on the margins of the margins of nations and the sea. He sailed a brigantine out of Tortuga.

Captain Jean du Casse, filibuster, governor, admiral: thorn in the side of the English at Jamaica during King William’s War, he led the filibuster contingent at the siege of Cartagena. He later escorted the Spanish treasure fleet.

Mary Read, pirate: her journal would be priceless, if only for her unique perspective. Along with Anne Bonny, she was one of the two most famous women pirates. I suspect Mary’s journal would be far more interesting than Anne’s.

Captain Alexander Selkirk, privateer, and William, a Moskito striker: Selkirk was self-marooned; William was marooned by accident on Juan Fernandez Island. Each survived alone. Daniel Defoe later appropriated their experience for *Robinson Crusoe*. Their journals would make an interesting comparison of reality to fiction, of fact to myth, as well as a fascinating story of solitary survival.

Swan, the ancient buccaneer: mentioned only in Dampier’s *New Voyage*, Swan was a soldier under Cromwell in Ireland, then a Cromwellian soldier in Jamaica, and a buccaneer afterward until his death at eighty-four, loaded pistol in hand, refusing to surrender to the Spanish. They shot him dead from a distance. What this “very merry hearty old man” must have seen and done!

## APPENDIX

# 6



## Spirits and Belly Timber

### *Some Culinary History and Recipes for the Adventurous*

“BEING VERY GLAD WE GOT SUCH GOOD BELLY TIMBER OUT OF HER,” wrote William Dick of the brandy, oil, wine, and fruit taken aboard the prize *El Santo Rosario* in the South Sea. Charles Johnson was more literary in his promise of victuals seized at sea: “A welcome cargo; they growing short in the sea store, and, as Sancho says *No adventure to be made without Belly-timber.*”

Food was critical to the rover, not only as one of the simple necessities of life, but also for keeping a crew from mutiny, a lack of provisions often breeding discontent. During my research I found a surprising number of descriptions of food and even recipes in the various journals of rovers and their witnesses, and in this appendix I have added some of the more interesting. I also discovered a book, *La Cuisine des Flibustiers* by Melanie le Bris, which I highly recommend.

### Spirits

*Rum.* Also called kill-devil, rumbullion, Barbados water, aqua-vitae, and eau-de-vie (by the French *rum*, *guildive*, and *tafia*, later *rhum* and *flibuste*), it was usually distilled from molasses, sometimes with cane juice added, and the residue skimmed from cane syrup boiled to make sugar. Molasses is the uncrystallized sugar and impurities that drain from the dark muscovado sugar. Those of all nations, races, and classes in the West Indies

drank rum, although it was considered a common liquor. Labat blamed his French countrymen for “using and abusing” several English liquors: “For they [the French] are always very ardent imitators of their neighbors’ bad habits.”

*Rum Punch.* Of all the English punches, the best was the simplest: rum, lime juice, and sugar. This was the favorite of buccaneers, filibusters, pirates, and other adventurers of the West Indies. Logwood cutters would drink it for days on end when a ship came to trade. Most recipes call for some variation on the modern classic of one of sour, two of sweet, three of strong, four of weak, usually with ice as part of the weak. Planter’s punch is essentially a rum punch. However, if you want historical accuracy use the juice of key limes, the cheapest young pot-stilled rum you can find, and dark muscovado sugar (available from specialty suppliers). Mix to taste. Be warned: the lime juice and sugar make the rum go down easily.

*Punch:* by whatever recipe, punch was the favorite drink of the English. Labat’s recipe is of two parts eau-de-vie (brandy, in the New World rum) to one part water. Add the same ingredients as in sangria below (except the wine): cinnamon, nutmeg, clove, a crust of toasted bread, but substitute egg yolks for the lime or lemon juice. Milk or cream may be substituted for the water. A very nourishing drink says Labat, and one with as many variations as salmagundi, each to his own taste. Some used wine instead of rum or brandy. John Fryar, a surgeon in the service of the East India Company, wrote that punch was named for the Hindustani word for five, there usually being five ingredients. The punch bowl was as common in the great cabins of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ships as it is today at weddings.

*Wine:* “Madeira,” wrote Francis Rogers in 1704, “is a racy strong-bodied noble wine, both red and white; ’tis chiefly drank in the West Indies and North America; it seems particularly adapted for the hot countries . . . ’tis the most wholesome and general liquor among our plantations in the West Indies.” According to John Atkins, Madeira, or “Red Sack,” was “limed” and would keep well in the West Indian climate when no other wines would. Sack in general was a popular wine although difficult to define exactly. Canary, Xerez (sherry, also called Sherry sack and Bristol milk), and Madeira were the most popular, although there were many others including claret and Rhenish. In the West Indies there were plantain, banana, and pineapple wines.

*Sangria* (Fr. *Sang-gris*): drunk by the English in the West Indies, Madeira was the main ingredient. Again Father Labat provided the recipe: in a crystal or earthenware bowl mix Madeira, sugar, lemon or lime



juice, a little ground cinnamon and ground clove, lots of nutmeg, and a crust of toasted bread, even a bit burned. Let the mixture set for a while for the flavors to blend, then strain through a linen cloth.

*English Lemonade* (*limonade à l'anglaise*): mix Canary sack, sugar, lemon or lime juice, cinnamon, nutmeg, clove, and “a small amount of essence of amber.” Labat says it is as delicious as it is dangerous.

“*Beveridge*”: from Richard Ligon, mix spring water, white sugar (light muscovado), and orange juice.

*Bomboo*: another word for punch, more or less, again of different recipes. In one, rum, sugar, nutmeg, and water. In Captain Kidd’s, water, limes, and sugar—and doubtless whatever liquor was available.

*Flip*: again, a liquor having as many recipes as persons mixing it. Generally, among English and colonial seamen it was strong beer mixed with sugar and rum and heated with a hot iron to give it a burned taste. Eggs, cream, and spices such as nutmeg were often added.

*Black Strap*: Charles Johnson described this as a combination of molasses, rum, and chowder beer (from *chaudière*, a copper cauldron), and much drunk by fisherman in Newfoundland and on the Grand Bank. Due to the harsh conditions some of these Topsham, Barnstable, and Bristol fishermen would on occasion steal a shallop and turn pirate. Chowder beer, also known as spruce beer, was made by boiling spruce twigs in water, then mixing with molasses and yeast, and fermenting. There were many variations. Recipes for spruce beer are available on the Internet, and occasionally a brewer will offer a spruce or spruce-flavored beer, usually during the holidays. Mix it well: plenty of molasses and rum might be needed to get the pine taste down if you use a true homemade spruce concoction. Beer in general was popular throughout the period, with colonial breweries established from the early seventeenth century.

## Belly Timber

*The Barbecue*: few realize this simple decadence originated with the *boucaniers* of Hispaniola. The term is from the Haitian *barbacoa*, another name for the *boucan* or frame upon which *boucaniers* cured the *cochon marron* and *sanglier*. A *cochon marron* was literally a “marooned pig” or more specifically a wild or feral domesticated pig, if you don’t mind the oxymoron. A *sanglier* was (and is) a wild boar. The word’s root means *singular*, as in a boar running alone from the pack, although it seems it should derive from *le sang* (blood) from the boar’s perfectly understandable habit of goring hunters. By the turn of the eighteenth century the

English term for *boucanned* pork, or roasted or broiled pork, was *barbecued pig*, while dried or lightly smoked meat was *jerk* or *jerked beef* (or pork). Boucan had two meanings: one as the place where pork was *boucanned* (smoked) to preserve it, and the other as slowly cured pig flesh, said to be as entirely unappealing until soaked in tepid water. A *boucan de cochon*, however, usually indicated roast pig as the center of a celebration including rum and other good things to drink and eat. By 1700, if not earlier, the *boucan de cochon* was no longer limited to *boucaniers* and hunters of San Domingue, but had also become a celebration in imitation of them. Likewise barbecue, the grill, and the celebration centered around it.

To be historically traditional, brush the pork with lime juice, salt, pepper, and crushed pimento (allspice); *boucaniers* filled a pig's belly with this marinade and later added game birds to it. In the fire they put the skin and bones of the pig. Make a sauce of lime juice, salt, pepper, and allspice for dipping. Labat said the law of the *boucan* required frequent drinking, and few ever broke this law.

*Turtle*: in Port Royal, meat of a sea turtle's under shell, called the *calipee*, was cooked with spice, dry herbs, and forced meat, and was considered an excellent dish. It was also baked or roasted with salt and pepper. The upper shell was the *calipach*, and its meat was usually boiled to make a broth, often with turtle eggs added. Sea turtles are now protected in many places, rightfully and thankfully so, but land turtle can still be had in specialty shops. *Boucan de tortue*, or barbecued sea turtle—baked in the shell in the sand under coals—was also a common dish in Hispaniola at the seaside. South Sea privateers boiled, roasted, fried, baked, and stewed sea turtle.

*Fish*: flying fish, dolphin (dolphinfish, mahi mahi, dorado), albacore, bonita, skipjack, cavallo, barracuda, kingfish, shark, and many others found their way to tables at sea and ashore. Taken with harping irons, fish-gigs, and hooks, seamen considered fish a refreshment from their salt provisions. Richard Ligon, a Barbadian sugar planter, suggested dolphin dressed and cooked with “Wine, Spice, and sweet herbs,” while Francis Rogers suggested boiling it with pork and oatmeal or rice. He also found it good fried or soused (pickled, especially with vinegar) and recommended bonita fried as a steak with pepper and salt, or soused when plentiful. William Dampier extolled shark boiled and squeezed dry, then stewed with vinegar, pepper, and other such seasonings as desired. Francis Rogers suggested frying shark with onions, or parboiling it.

*Salmagundi*: the dish not only of pirates but of everyone, and everyone with his or her own variation. “Solomon Gundy” is a heavy cold salad of any various meats, boiled eggs, salt fish or anchovies, olives, onions or

other vegetables, dressed with oil, vinegar, lime or lemon juice, salt, pepper, garlic, and so forth. Be creative, there are as many recipes as persons preparing it. The pirate Bartholomew Roberts had breakfasted on Solomon Gundy the day he was killed in action against the *Swallow* man-of-war.

## A P P E N D I X

# 7



## Ranges, Distances, Weights, and Measures

### Small Arms and Grenades

*musket*: Accurate at 40–60 yards for the average marksman, 100 yards or more for the more highly skilled. Effective range 200–250 yards, maximum range 400–500 yards.

*buccaneer gun*: As above, effective range perhaps 300 yards, maximum range 600–900 yards (conjectural).

*pistol*: Accurate up to ten yards.

*grenade*: Throwing range 60–100 feet. Effective fragmentation range probably no more than 5–10 yards.

### Swivels and Great Guns

Ranges depend on the quality of powder, gun, and shot, and vary greatly among documents. Abbreviations: SPB (shoots point blank, that is, the range at which the gun “shoots straight”), PBR (point blank range, that is, the maximum range when elevated point blank), MR (maximum range).

*swivel* (estimated): SPB 100 yards.

*three pounder, minion*: SPB 200 yards, PBR 490 yards, MR 3,000 yards.

*saker, six pounder*: SPB 266 yards, PBR 500 yards, MR 3,000 yards.

*demi-culverin, nine pounder, eight pounder*: SPB 290 yards, PBR 550–650 yards, MR 3,300 yards.

*twelve pounder*: SPB 300 yards, PBR 600 yards, MR 3,700 yards.

*culverin, eighteen pounder*: SPB 300 yards, PBR 550 yards, MR 4,000 yards.

*twenty-four pounder*: SPB 315 yards, PBR 535 yards, MR 4,500 yards.

### Distance and Length

*musket shot*: 600–800 feet. Of a buccaneer gun, perhaps 800–1,000 feet.

*carbine or caliver shot*: 450–600 feet.

*half-musket or pistol shot*: 300–400 feet.

*cable's length*: approximately 600 feet.

*fathom*: 6 feet.

*league*: In England, 3 sea miles of 6,000 feet.

*pouce*: 1.067 inches.

### Barrels

*anker*: approximately 8 gallons of liquid, especially brandy or wine. Liquid measure indicates wine or water unless otherwise specified.

*firkin*: half of a kilderkin or 8–9 gallons. Of butter, weighed 56 pounds.

*kilderkin*: 16–18 gallons. Of butter, weighed 112 pounds.

*rundlett*: 18½ gallons. Often used for gunpowder.

*barrel or half hogshead*: 31½ gallons. One barrel of beef weighed 225 pounds.

*tierce*: 42 gallons (36 of beer to allow for leakage and evaporation) or ⅓ pipe, often used for beef or pork. A tierce of bread weighed 265 pounds.

*hogshead*: 63 gallons (54 of beer). A hogshead of sugar weighed between 1,000 and 1,600 pounds.

*tertian or puncheon*: 84 gallons (or 72 of beer).

*pipe or butt*: 126 gallons of wine (or 108 of beer for leakage).

*leaguer*: a water barrel of 150 gallons.

*tunn*: 252 gallons.

### Other Weights and Measures

*bag of cocoa*: approximately 50 pounds.

*chaldron*: measure of coal and lime, 32–40 bushels.

*rove* or *roove*: 30 pounds.

*seam*: a horse load.

*serroon*: package wrapped in a hide, from Sp. *seron*. A serroon of cocoa weighed approximately 100 pounds.

*lap*: one quarter of a beaver skin.



# Notes

## Chapter 1

1. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 212–213; Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 86–87; Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 321–326; [Dick?], “Brief Account of Captain Sharp” (1684), 273; “Buccaneers on the Isthmus,” 100 and note 22; Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 162.
2. “Buccaneers at Portobello,” 88–91; Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 363; [Dick?], “Brief Account of Captain Sharp” (1684), 269, 274–275, 279.
3. Wafer, “Secret Report,” 135.
4. Tandeter, *Coercion and Market*, 37, 54–55; McCusker, *Money and Exchange*, 7–8.
5. It is for this reason that literature and cinema work, whether or not the details are correct. Universal truths need only mythic images.
6. Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 376; Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*, 117–119.
7. Sir Edward Coke quoted in Blackstone, *Laws of England*, 4:71; *Black’s Law Dictionary*, 5th ed., s.v. “hostes.”
8. Johnson, *General History*, 593; “Petition of the East India Company for Licence to Capture Pirates,” in Marsden, *Law and Custom*, 2:179.
9. Fraser, Introduction to *Captain Blood*, xvii; Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 363.
10. [Dick?], “Brief Account of Captain Sharp” (1684), 267.
11. Davis, *Gold Mines*, 156.
12. Sir Henry Morgan to Sir Leoline Jenkins, March 8, 1682, in Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy*, 133–135; [Dick?], “Brief Account of Captain Sharp” (1684), 282.
13. Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 398; “Buccaneers in the South Sea,” 112.
14. Ringrose, *Buccaneer’s Atlas*, 18.
15. “Buccaneers in the South Sea,” 103, 109, 111–112; Sharp, “Journal,” 45–46; Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 333–336, 398–399, 408; [Dick?], “Brief Account of Captain Sharp” (1684), 273.
16. [Dick?], “Brief Account of Captain Sharp” (1684), 273; “Buccaneers in the South Sea,” 112.
17. Sharp, “Journal,” 45–46.
18. “Buccaneers in the South Sea,” 103, 112; Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 334–336, 397–399; [Dick?], “Brief Account of Captain Sharp” (1684), 273; Dampier, *New Voyage*, 9; Wafer, *Isthmus of America*, 4.



19. Ringrose, "Captains Sharp . . ." (1699), 253–254; Ringrose, "Buccaneers" (1684), 398, 411; Sharp, "Journal," 33, 46; [Dick?], "Brief Account of Captain Sharp" (1684), 276.
20. Williams, *Great South Sea*, 89; Sharp, "Journal," 46; Ringrose, "Captains Sharp . . ." 263.
21. "Buccaneers in the South Sea," 102; Ward, *Wooden World*, 95; Ward, *Trip to Jamaica*, 4.
22. "Buccaneers in the South Sea," 112–113; Ringrose, "Buccaneers" (1684), 399; Dampier, *New Voyage*, 66–67.
23. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 295; Hughes, *Firepower*, 26.
24. [Dick?], "Brief Account of Captain Sharp" (1684), 273–274; "Buccaneers in the South Sea," 113; Ringrose, "Buccaneers" (1684), 399–400.
25. [Dick?], "Brief Account of Captain Sharp" (1684), 273–274; "Buccaneers in the South Sea," 100, 113; Ringrose, "Buccaneers" (1684), 352, 399–400.
26. Sharp, "Journal," 46–47; "Buccaneers in the South Sea," 113; Ringrose, "Buccaneers" (1684), 399–400; [Dick?], "Brief Account of Captain Sharp" (1684), 273–274.
27. "Buccaneers in the South Sea," 113–114; Sharp, "Journal," 47; Ringrose, "Buccaneers" (1684), 402–404.
28. "Buccaneers in the South Sea," 113–114; Ringrose, "Buccaneers" (1684), 402–405; Matt. 27:24 (King James). Such dramatics were perhaps fairly commonplace. See Earle, *Wreck of the Almiranta*, 61–62.
29. Ringrose, "Buccaneers" (1684), 405–408; [Dick?], "Brief Account of Captain Sharp" (1684), 274–275; "Buccaneers in the South Sea," 114–115; Sharp, "Journal," 47–48; Teonge, *Diary*, 125.
30. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 167.

## Chapter 2

1. Johnson, *General History*, 560.
2. Butel, *Les Caraïbes*, 82; Camus, *L'Île de la Tortue*, 47–51; Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1678), 38, 66–72; Haring, *Buccaneers in the West Indies*, 57–58.
3. Burney, *History of the Buccaneers*, 48; Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1678), 38, 66–72; Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 2:69–72, 2:116–117, 2:256–257. See also Bouchet, *Cannibal Encounters*.
4. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1678), 48; Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 44–45, 87, 99.
5. Means, *Spanish Main*, 164–197.
6. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1678), 27.
7. Haring, *Buccaneers in the West Indies*, 89.
8. Camus, *L'Île de la Tortue*, 48.
9. See Crouse, *French Struggle*; Haring, *Buccaneers in the West Indies*; and Means, *Spanish Main*.
10. Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 163; Pitman, "Relation," 463, 469.
11. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 55; Calendar of State Papers, vol. 1685–1688, no. 67.
12. See Hrodej, "La flibuste domingoise."
13. Butel, *Les Caraïbes*, 157–158; Crouse, *French Struggle*, 146–245; Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, xvi–xvii.

14. Johnson, *General History*, 6–8, 37.
15. Lydon, *Pirates, Privateers, and Profits*, 36–59; “Petition of the East India Company” in Marsden, *Law and Custom*, 2:179. See also Ritchie, *Captain Kidd*, and Rogozinski, *Honor among Thieves*.
16. In general, see Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*.
17. Johnson, *General History*, 480.
18. See for example Chapin, *Privateer Ships and Sailors*, and Lydon, *Pirates, Privateers, and Profits*.
19. Chapin, *Privateer Ships*, 8; Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 65–66.
20. Lydon, *Pirates, Privateers, and Profits*, 61–62.
21. Symcox, *Crisis of French Sea Power*, 207–208, 232.
22. Butel, *Les Caraïbes*, 220. See also Montauban, “Relation,” and Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 85, for an example of such corsairs.
23. Regarding the French *guerre de course*, see Symcox, *Crisis of French Sea Power*, and Clark, *Dutch Alliance*. King William’s War is also referred to as the War of the Grand Alliance, the Nine Years War, La Guerre de Dix Ans, and the War of the League of Augsburg. In New England it was sometimes referred to as the Second Indian War.
24. See Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*; Forbin, *Mémoires*; and Doublet, *Mémoires*.
25. Cooke, *Voyage to the South Sea*; Funnell, *Voyage Round the World*; Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*; and Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*.
26. Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 148–149; Haring, *Buccaneers in the West Indies*, 254–255; Pitman, “Relation,” 474–476. For a discussion of Native American sea warriors, see Beck, *American Indian*.
27. Coxere, *Adventures by Sea*, 37.
28. Byng, *Journal*, 166.
29. Johnson, *General History*, 75–76, 382, 20.
30. Kinkor, “Black Men,” 195–205.
31. “An account of the private ships of warr belonging to Jamaica and Turtudos in 1663” in Pawson and Buisseret, *Port Royal*, 220; Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy*, 10, note 4.
32. Johnson, *General History*, 150; Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 196.
33. Camus, *L’Île de la Tortue*, 47–51; Doublet, *Mémoires*, 153, 165, 111; Dampier, *New Holland*, 156, 158; Dampier, *New Voyage*, 15, 32; Funnell, *Voyage Round the World*, 296–297; 166; Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 5, 6, 12, 155, 247–248.
34. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 177; Dampier, *New Voyage*, 240; Doublet, *Mémoires*, 190; Drake, *Amiable Renegade*, 86; Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America*, all editions; “Instructions to Privateers” in Marsden, *Law and Custom*, 2:414–425; Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 8.
35. Camus, *L’Île de la Tortue*, 47–51. In general see Crouse, *French Struggle*.
36. See Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 331–332, and Gasser, “Mystérieuses disparitions.”
37. Johnson, *General History*, 423, 525.
38. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:23–24.
39. Johnson, *General History*, 497, 67–84.
40. *Ibid.*, 38, 560.
41. Clark, *Dutch Alliance*, 46–79.
42. Besson, *Scourge of the Indies*, 207–210, 219; Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*, 44; Crouse, *French Struggle*, 212–245, 306–308; Crouse, *Lemoyne d’Iberville*, 242–267;

Sir Albert Gray in Dampier's *New Voyage*, xxi–xl; Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 129–130; Doublet, *Mémoires*, 220–221; Forbin, *Mémoires*, 48; LeMoynes D'Iberville, *Gulf Journals*, 24.

43. Crouse, *French Struggle*, 191; Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 165; Dampier, *New Voyage*, 135.

44. Camus, *L'Île de la Tortue*, 128; Dampier, *New Voyage*, 155; [Dick?], "Brief Account of Captain Sharp" (1684), 3; Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1678), 147, 274; Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 6; Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, xxiv, 38; Williams, *Great South Sea*, 84.

45. Johnson, *General History*, 505; Pawson and Buisseret, *Port Royal*, 69–73; Calendar of State Papers, vol. 1685–1688, no. 1127.

46. Snelgrave, "Bloody-Minded Villain," 158.

47. Rediker, *Deep Blue Sea*, 267–268.

48. Author's experience.

### Chapter 3

1. "Buccaneers in the South Sea," 101.

2. Ringrose, "Buccaneers" (1684), 307–308.

3. Roberts, *Uncommon Events*, 85.

4. Ringrose, "Buccaneers" (1684), 398.

5. Doublet, *Mémoires*, 53; Symcox, *Crisis of French Sea Power*, 223; Clark, *Dutch Alliance*, 47.

6. Butel, *Les Caraïbes*, 102–109.

7. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 114.

8. Johnson, *General History*, 543–544.

9. See for example Ritchie, *Villains of All Nations*, 5–6.

10. Defoe, *Captain Singleton*, 153–154.

11. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 4.

12. Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 89.

13. Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 121. Compare with the British Special Air Services (SAS) motto: Who Dares Wins.

14. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, iv.

15. Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 74.

16. See Malone, *Skulking Way of War*.

17. Macaulay, *History of England*, 66.

18. Byng, *Journal*, 86.

19. Roch, "Journals," 114; Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 158.

### Chapter 4

1. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 35–36.

2. Rogers, "Diary," 199.

3. Doublet, *Mémoires*, 48, 197.

4. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 60.

5. An Act for Continuing the Acts for Prohibiting All Trade and Commerce with France, and for the Encouragement of Privateers, 5 W. & M.
6. Marsden, *Law and Custom*, 2:xvi–xvii, and various privateer commissions, 2:135–136, 139–141, and “Instructions for Privateers,” 2:403–435.
7. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 136–137; Johnson, *General History*, 525; [Dick?], “Brief Account of Captain Sharp” (1684), 257.
8. Davis, “Gold Mines,” 159.
9. Damer Powell, *Bristol Privateers*, 92.
10. Johnson, *General History*, 307, 274.
11. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 7.
12. Johnson, *General History*, 184–185, 400.
13. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 55, 88.
14. Drake, *Amiable Renegade*, 87–88; Doublet, *Mémoires*, 190; Dampier, *New Voyage*, 15.
15. Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 4.
16. Boston News-Letter of May 15–22, 1704, quoted in Chapin, *Privateer Ships*, 174; Seitz, *Tryal*, 115.
17. Drake, *Amiable Renegade*, 88–89.
18. *Ibid.*, 86–88; Merrien, *Vie des marins*, 67–69.
19. Temple, *Papers of Thomas Bowry*, 172.
20. “Journal of the Sloop Revenge,” 388.
21. Doublet, *Mémoires*, 41.
22. “Journal of the Sloop Revenge,” 385.
23. Cooke, *Voyage to the South Sea*, Introduction, vol. 1.
24. Drake, *Amiable Renegade*, 86.
25. Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 26.
26. *Ibid.*, xxix–xxx.
27. Roch, “Journals,” 112.
28. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1678), 58; Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 60, 174.
29. Rediker, “Seaman as Pirate,” 140–141; Johnson, *General History*, 497.
30. Snelgrave, “Bloody-Minded Villain,” 161.
31. Ashton, *Memorial*, 177–181.
32. Johnson, *General History*, 423.
33. Lydon, *Privateers, Pirates, and Profits*, 65.
34. Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 165.
35. “Instructions against France, 2nd May 1693” in Marsden, *Law and Custom*, 2:417.
36. “Journal of the Sloop Revenge,” 389.
37. Cooke, *Voyage to the South Sea*, Introduction, vol. 1.
38. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 60–61; Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 32.
39. Cooke, *Voyage to the South Sea*, Introduction, vol. 1; Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 90; Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 35.
40. Davis, “Gold Mines,” 159.
41. Cooke, *Voyage to the South Sea*, 1:2–4, and Introduction, vol. 1.
42. Yonge, *Journal*, 58.
43. Merrien, *Vie des marins*, 61, 260–261.

44. Bromley, "Outlaws at Sea," 172.
45. Drake, *Amiable Renegade*, 88.
46. Johnson, *General History*, 531.
47. Bromley, "Outlaws at Sea," 172.
48. Cooke, *Voyage to the South Sea*, Introduction, vol. 1.
49. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:99–100.
50. de Lussan, *Flibustiers*, 94; Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:100.
51. Pitman, "Relation," 462.
52. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1678), 58–59; Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 60–61; Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 91.
53. Labat, *Memoirs*, 177; McCusker, *Money and Exchange*, 286; Nerzic and Buchet, *Marins et Flibustiers*, 254.
54. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 59–60, 177–178; Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 91.
55. de Lussan, *Flibustiers*, 159; [Dick?], "Brief Account of Captain Sharp" (1684), 273; Ringrose, "Buccaneers" (1684), 398; Sharp, "Journal," 45–46.
56. de Lussan, *Flibustiers*, 147–148.
57. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:99–100.
58. See for example Bromley, "Outlaws at Sea," and Haring, *Trade and Navigation*, 317–318.
59. Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 219–224.
60. Dow and Edmonds, *New England Coast*, 356–358.
61. Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 223.
62. Johnson, *General History*, 184, 274, 307.
63. *Ibid.*, 178–184.
64. Roberts, *Uncommon Events*, 59.
65. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 63.
66. Johnson, *General History*, 185–186.
67. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 45.

## Chapter 5

1. Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 209.
2. Chapelle, *American Sailing Ships*, 130–133; Harland, *Seamanship*, 47, 58.
3. Johnson, *General History*, 38, 151, 436; Ringrose, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 344, 417.
4. Pitman, "Relation," 455.
5. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 2:417–418.
6. *Ibid.*, 1:250–251.
7. Deane, *Doctrine of Naval Architecture*, 48.
8. Damer Powell, *Bristol Privateers*, 91–102.
9. Symcox, *Crisis of French Sea Power*, 190; Yonge, *Journal*, 28.
10. Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 63.
11. Ringrose, "Buccaneers" (1684), 298.
12. Davis, "Gold Mines," 153–156; Haring, *Buccaneers in the West Indies*, 274.

13. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 177.
14. Haring, *Buccaneers in the West Indies*, 274.
15. Symcox, *Crisis of French Sea Power*, 192.
16. *Ibid.*, 193.
17. Nerzic and Buchet, *Marins et Flibustiers*, 242–245.
18. Symcox, *Crisis of French Sea Power*, 193.
19. Haring, *Buccaneers in the West Indies*, 274.
20. Johnson, *General History*, 152, 382, 429.
21. *Ibid.*, 49–50.
22. Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 235–236, 245–247.
23. Lavery, *Arming and Fitting*, 13–23.
24. Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 67–68.
25. Roch, “Journals,” 100.
26. Anderson, *Oared Fighting Ships*, 86–89; Goodwin, *Blandford*, 7.
27. László and Woodman, *Story of Sail*, 88; Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 85.
28. Chapelle, *History*, 23–24; Johnson, *General History*, 261.
29. Bamford, *Fighting Ships*, 33, 35.
30. Temple, *Papers of Thomas Bowry*, 127–128, 203, 208–209, 236.
31. Barlow, *Journal*, 2:485.
32. Johnson, *General History*, 202.
33. Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 242.
34. Johnson, *General History*, 294; Roch, “Journals,” 117; Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 123, 125, 163; Temple, *Papers of Thomas Bowry*, 127–128, 203, 208–209, 236.
35. Bamford, *Fighting Ships*, 39.
36. Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 211–213; Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 156.
37. Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 197.
38. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 31.
39. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 12, 29.
40. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:170.
41. Wafer, *Isthmus*, 52.
42. de Lussan, *Flibustiers*, 145.
43. Ringrose, *Buccaneers* (1684), 321.
44. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:170–173.
45. Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 35; Wafer, *Isthmus*, 57.
46. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 34.
47. Lawson, *History of North Carolina*, 4–5.
48. Wafer, *Isthmus*, 52.
49. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 29, 151.
50. *Ibid.*, 32, 60; Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 31; Wafer, *Isthmus*, 52.
51. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1678), 79; *Ibid.*, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 91.
52. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, vol. 1:343–344.
53. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 179.
54. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 152.
55. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 89; Sharp, “Journal,” 3–5.
56. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 152; Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 305, 77.

57. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 192; Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 124.
58. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 12, 33, 87–89; Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 77; Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:172.
59. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:172; Dampier, *New Voyage*, 172; Pitman, “Relation,” 452–453.
60. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:172.
61. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 120.
62. *Ibid.*, 172.
63. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:343; Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 124.
64. Pitman, “Relation,” 455.
65. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:343.
66. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 209; Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 118; Pitman, “Relation,” 475.
67. Pitman, “Relation,” 453.
68. *Ibid.*, 463.
69. Davis, “Gold Mines,” 157.
70. Johnson, *General History*, 496–497, 505.
71. See Lavery, *Arming and Fitting*, 218–224, and May, *Boats of Men-of-War*, 9–36.
72. Lavery, *Arming and Fitting*, 207–212.
73. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 166.
74. “French letter of marque” in Marsden, *Law and Custom*, 2:140.
75. Baker, *Colonial Vessels*, 78–110, 152; Baker, *Sloops and Shallops*, 20–45; Chapelle, *American Sailing Ships*, 16; Chapelle, *Search for Speed*, 36.
76. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:251.
77. Chapelle, *American Sailing Ships*, 15–16; Chapelle, *Search for Speed*, 97; Harland, *Seamanship*, 78.
78. Temple, *Papers of Thomas Bowry*, 208, 210.
79. *Ibid.*
80. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:250.
81. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 27; [Dick?], “Brief Account of Captain Sharp” (1684), 260.
82. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:250–251.
83. Casson, *Illustrated History*, 138–139, 194, 196.
84. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 27, 40.
85. In general see Baker, *Sloops and Shallops*; and Chapelle, *American Sailing Ships*.
86. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 29; Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:249–250.
87. Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 158.
88. Davis, “Gold Mines,” 153–154; Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:250.
89. Baker, *Colonial Vessels*, 152.
90. Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 140.
91. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 2:417–418.
92. *Ibid.*, 1:12–13.
93. Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 21–22.
94. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:22.
95. Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 21–22; Goodwin, *Blandford*, 8; Johnson, *General History*, 45.
96. “John and Adam Thorowgood to Captain Passenger. May 3, 1700,” in Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy*, 267.

97. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 2–3.
98. Barlow, *Journal*, 2:484.
99. Temple, *Papers of Thomas Bowry*, 126.

## Chapter 6

1. Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 89, 92.
2. Butel, *Les Caraïbes*, 93; Dampier, *New Voyage*, 41; Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 50; Gilkerson, *Boarders Away II*, 160.
3. Tattersfield, *Forgotten Trade*, 371.
4. Bouchard, *Fusil de Tulle*, 38–40; Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1678), 62; Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 67; Hamilton, *Colonial Frontier Guns*, 40–43, 51–56, 130–132; Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:290.
5. Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 67.
6. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:290.
7. Doublet, *Mémoires*, 190; Nerzic and Buchet, *Marins et Flibustiers*, 256.
8. Bouchard, *Fusil de Tulle*, 7.
9. Hamilton, *Colonial Frontier Guns*, 130–132.
10. *Exercice pour les Compagnies*, 35–46; Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 230–232, and Plate 11.
11. Author's experience. Navy SEAL “60 gunners” could fire a two round burst from the shoulder as quickly and accurately as they could a single round from an M-16; the *fusil boucanier* is a lighter weapon.
12. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:290–291.
13. Hughes, *Firepower*, 11, 26–27.
14. Johnson, *General History*, 54; Snelgrave, “Bloody-Minded Villain,” 173.
15. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1678), 62, 45–46.
16. Hughes, *Firepower*, 26.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 67–70.
19. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 176–177.
20. Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 181.
21. Gilkerson, *Boarders Away II*, 191–192; Malone, *Skulking*, 85–87.
22. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1678), 45–46.
23. See for example Waddell, “1996 Excavation,” 79; Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 2:97. Author's translation.
24. Peterson, *Colonial Arms*, 329.
25. Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 160–162, 166.
26. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 88–89.
27. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1678), 62.
28. Johnson, *General History*, 307.
29. Peterson, *Colonial Arms*, 62–65, 229–235.
30. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:290–291.
31. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1678), 45.
32. Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 67; Wafer, *Isthmus*, 4; Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 20.



33. Davis, "Gold Mines," 160; Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1678), 62, 82, 115; Houlding, *French Arms Drill*, 14–15; Peterson, *Colonial Arms*, 235–236, 325–330; Phips, *Weaponry Recovered* (1996), <http://www.mcc.gouv.qc.ca/pamu/champs/arceo/epaphips/wreck19b.htm> (20 April 2004), Culture and Communications Québec; photographs in Clifford, *Pirate Prince and Expedition Whydah*.
34. *Exercice pour les Compagnies*, 38; Houlding, *French Arms Drill*, 15; Peterson, *Colonial Arms*, 325–330; Ringrose, "Buccaneers" (1684), 312.
35. Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 263.
36. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1678), 82; Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 89.
37. Hope, *New Method of Fencing*, 141–142.
38. Johnson, *General History*, 57; Snelgrave, "Bloody-Minded Villain," 138.
39. Roberts, *Uncommon Events*, 43.
40. Drake, *Amiable Renegade*, 167.
41. Gilkerson, *Boarders Away I*, 69–77.
42. Castle, *Schools and Masters of Fence*, 188; McBane, *Expert Sword-Man's Companion*, 74; *Commodore Walker*, 158–159; Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, x.
43. Sharp, "Journal," 15.
44. Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 312.
45. Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*, 198.
46. Rector, *Highland Swordsmanship*, 12.
47. Snelgrave, "Bloody-Minded Villain," 138, 140.
48. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 300; Doublet, *Mémoires*, 133; Funnell, *Voyage Round the World*, 55; Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:99.
49. McBane, *Expert Sword-Man's Companion*, 74.
50. Johnson, *General History*, 324.
51. Gilkerson, *Boarders Away I*, 48–68.
52. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 262.
53. Peterson, *Colonial Arms*, 308–313.
54. Doublet, *Mémoires*, 201.
55. Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 18–19.
56. *Ibid.*
57. Gilkerson, *Boarders Away II*, 35–39.
58. Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 94–96.
59. Seller, *Sea Gunner*, 196–197.
60. Chandler, *Warfare*, 81.
61. Johnson, *General History*, 54.
62. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:99; Doublet, *Mémoires*, 132.
63. Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 113–114; Temple, *Papers of Thomas Bowery*, 294.
64. Gilkerson, *Boarders Away II*, 23–24; Seller, *Sea Gunner*, 197–199.
65. *Ibid.*; Cooke, *Voyage to the South Sea*, 1:333.
66. "Journal of the Sloop Revenge," 417.
67. Photograph in Clifford, *Pirate Prince*; Johnson, *General History*, 211.
68. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 59; Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 94; Gilkerson, *Boarders Away II*, 230; Johnson, *General History*, 211.

## Chapter 7

1. Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 1.
2. Camus, *L'Île de la Tortue*, 67; Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 59.
3. Patrick Villiers, ed., in de Lussan, *Flibustiers*, 110, note 3.
4. Drake, *Amiable Renegade*, 90.
5. Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 161.
6. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 136; Haring, *Buccaneers in the West Indies*, 243, note 1.
7. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 112.
8. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1699), 62.
9. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 13, 48.
10. For a thorough discussion of piracy and geography in the West Indies, see Galvin, *Patterns of Pillage*.
  11. For example see Dankerts, *Trip from Holland*.
  12. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 264–274. See also Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*; Cooke, *Voyage to the South Sea*; and Thomas, *True and Impartial Journal*.
  13. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 80; Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 327.
  14. Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 239–240.
  15. Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 185.
  16. Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 113.
  17. Funnell, *Voyage Round the World*, 30.
  18. Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 320–321; “Agreement: The Revenge and the Success,” in Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy*, 463–465; Chapin, *Privateer Ships*, 92.
  19. Cowley, “Voyage Round the Globe,” 12.
  20. Cooke, *Voyage to the South Sea*, 1:15–17.
  21. See for example Doublet, *Mémoires*, 179, 213.
  22. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 169.
  23. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 222.
  24. “Deposition of William Fletcher. May 2, 1700,” in Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy*, 263.
  25. “Warrant for issue of letter of margue,” in Marsden, *Law and Custom*, 2:247.
  26. Haring, *Buccaneers in the West Indies*, 112.
  27. See Ringrose, *Buccaneer's Atlas*.
  28. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 28–29.
  29. “Suggestions as to plundering Hispaniola,” in Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy*, 472.
  30. Temple, *Papers of Thomas Bowery*, 171.
  31. Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 154.
  32. Funnell, *Voyage Round the World*, 36.
  33. Coxere, *Adventures by Sea*, 60; Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 27.
  34. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 137.
  35. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 101, 175.
  36. Author's experience, and conversations with various intelligence gatherers.
  37. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 72.
  38. Author's experience, training, and conversations with various former U.S. intelligence gatherers.

39. Doublet, *Mémoires*, 115–119.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 175.
43. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 161.
44. Drake, *Amiable Renegade*, 90–92.

## Chapter 8

1. Navarrete, *Travels and Controversies*, 362.
2. Smith, *Seaman's Grammar*, 36, 38.
3. Corbett, *Fighting Instructions*, 56.
4. Smith, *Seaman's Grammar*, 38.
5. Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 92.
6. Smith, *Seaman's Grammar*, 34.
7. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 182–183; Smith, *Seaman's Grammar*, 38–39.
8. Waters, *Art of Navigation*, 582, citing Thomas Harriot; Spavens, *Memoirs*, 110.
9. Waters, *Art of Navigation*, 582, citing Thomas Harriot.
10. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:250–251; Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 165.
11. Johnson, *General History*, 261.
12. Snelgrave, “Bloody-Minded Villain,” 139.
13. Johnson, *General History*, 563.
14. Ligon, *History of Barbados*, 27.
15. Roberts, *Uncommon Events*, 59.
16. Yonge, *Journal*, 91.
17. Teonge, *Diary*, 233.
18. Navarrete, *Travels and Controversies*, 356.
19. Roch, “Journals,” 115.
20. Snelgrave, “Bloody-Minded Villain,” 150.
21. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 23.
22. Teonge, *Diary*, 190.
23. Dampier, *New Holland*, 66.
24. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 62.
25. In general see Friedenbergh, *Medicine under Sail*.
26. Lawson, *History of North Carolina*, 86–87.
27. Snelgrave, “Bloody-Minded Villain,” 139.
28. Roberts, *Uncommon Events*, 91.
29. Temple, *Papers of Thomas Bowery*, plate ix.
30. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 106.
31. Ligon, *History of Barbados*, 119.
32. Lawson, *History of North Carolina*, 14.
33. Rahn-Phillips, *Six Galleons*, 176–177.
34. Yonge, *Journal*, 91.
35. Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 203.
36. Funnell, *Voyage Round the World*, 28.

37. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 2:264; Merrien, *Vie des marins*, 158–159.
38. Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 93.
39. Corbett, *Fighting Instructions*, 54; Johnson, *General History*, 307.
40. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 279.
41. Teonge, *Diary*, 37.
42. Snelgrave, “Bloody-Minded Villain,” 159.
43. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 279.
44. See Eastman and Bond, *Pirate Trial*, 60, and in general. See also Stanley, *Bold in Her Breeches*; and Stark, *Female Tars*. Regarding Beare’s “strumpet,” see Calendar of State Papers, vol. 1685–1688, vol. no. 1382.
45. Phillips, “Voyage of the Ship *Hannibal*,” 41–42.
46. Merrien, *Vie des marins*, 181; Teonge, *Diary*, 50; Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 447.
47. Barlow, *Barlow’s Journal*, 1:258–259.
48. Cowley, “Voyage Round the Globe,” 41.
49. See Roch, “Journals,” and Yonge, *Journal*.
50. Navarette, *Travels and Controversies*, 357, and note 1.
51. Cowley, “Voyage Round the Globe,” 6.
52. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:19–20.
53. Teonge, *Diary*, 47; Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 23.
54. Barlow, *Barlow’s Journal*, 1:181.
55. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 10–11.
56. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:16–18.
57. Navarette, *Travels and Controversies*, 345, 357.
58. Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 93.
59. Labat, *Memoirs*, 222.
60. “Buccaneers in the South Sea,” 102; Ward, *Wooden World*, 95; Ward, “Trip to Jamaica,” 4; Rediker, *Between the Devil*, 169–179. The boatswain’s heirs are quite familiar to the author.
61. Ward, *Wooden World*, 91.

## Chapter 9

1. Rogers, “Diary,” 198, 218; Barlow, *Barlow’s Journal*, 2:328.
2. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 251.
3. Cooke, *Voyage to the South Sea*, 3–6. Also see Teonge, *Diary*, 34–36.
4. Gage, *Travels in the New World*, 97, 335–336.
5. Drake, *Amiable Renegade*, 91–92.
6. Fryar, *East India*, 1:153.
7. See in general Shomette, *Pirates of the Chesapeake*, 93–137.
8. Roberts, *Uncommon Events*, 91.
9. Shomette, *Pirates of the Chesapeake*, 105–106.
10. Johnson, *General History*, ix–x.
11. Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 65–66.
12. *Ibid.*, 383.

13. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 2:306–307.
14. Haring, *Buccaneers in the West Indies*, 247–248, note 2.
15. See Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 105.
16. Barlow, *Barlow's Journal*, 2:327.
17. Marsden, *Law and Custom*, 2:171–172.
18. Phillips, “Voyage of the Ship *Hannibal*,” 44.
19. *Ibid.*, 46.
20. Fryar, *East India*, 2:17.
21. See for example Johnson, *General History*, 505–506.
22. Temple, *Papers of Thomas Bowery*, 295; Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 70.
23. Temple, *Papers of Thomas Bowery*, 287.
24. Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 139–143.
25. Parry, *Spanish Seaborne Empire*, 264.
26. Torres Ramirez, *Armada de Barlovento*, 94.
27. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 2:260–261.
28. *Ibid.*, 2:260–269; Torres Ramirez, *Armada de Barlovento*, 170–171, 315.
29. Haring, *Trade and Navigation*, 256–257.
30. Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 183–184.
31. Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 148–149.
32. Parry, *Spanish Seaborne Empire*, 297.
33. Haring, *Buccaneers in the West Indies*, 254–255.
34. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 93; Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 322.
35. Pitman, “Relation,” 473–476. Henry Pitman’s story was the inspiration for Rafael Sabatini’s *Captain Blood*.
36. Johnson, *General History*, 17, 20; Marsden, “Translation of Spanish commission to a guarda costa,” in *Law and Custom*, 2:271.
37. Johnson, *General History*, 531.
38. Marley, *Pirates and Engineers*, 49–54.
39. Haring, *Buccaneers in the West Indies*, 206–207.
40. Johnson, *General History*, 18–20.
41. *Ibid.*, 571.
42. Dow and Edmonds, *New England Coast*, 54–69.
43. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 12.
44. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 171.
45. *Ibid.*, 75.
46. Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 321–322.
47. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 86–87.
48. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 169; de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 67.
49. Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 322–325.
50. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 116.
51. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 35.
52. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 49–50; Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 2:116; Camus, *L’Île de la Tortue*, 129.
53. Johnson, *General History*, 322; Barlow, *Barlow's Journal*, 2:316.
54. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 325–326; Atkins, *Voyage to Guinea*, 126–132.

55. See for example Barbot, “Slaving Voyage,” 92–93; Barlow, *Barlow’s Journal*, 2:314; and Montauban, “Relation,” 468.
56. Atkins, *Voyage to Guinea*, 77–80; Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 100.

## Chapter 10

1. Johnson, *General History*, 276; Rogers, “Diary,” 210.
2. Sturmy, “Mariner’s Magazine,” 87.
3. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:26.
4. Doublet, *Mémoires*, 156; Lyde, “True and Exact Account,” 482; Smith, *Seaman’s Grammar*, 81.
5. Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 153.
6. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 5.
7. Rogers, “Diary,” 210; Smith, *Seaman’s Grammar*, 59, 81; Sturmy, “Mariner’s Magazine,” 87; Thomas, *Journal of a Voyage*, 280.
8. Dickinson, *Journal*, 3–4.
9. “Extracts from Duke of York’s Instructions as to enforcing the salute; taking English seamen out of foreign ships; and searching privateers for English Goods,” Marsden, *Law and Custom*, 2:86–88; “Narrative of William Kidd. July 7, 1699,” in Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy*, 205; Shomette, *Pirates on the Chesapeake*, 172.
10. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 3.
11. *Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, 2d ed., s.v. “espY,” “descry.”
12. Yonge, *Journal*, 28.
13. Roch, “Journal,” 136.
14. Navarette, *Travels and Controversies*, 1:46.
15. Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 61.
16. Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 319, 161.
17. Dickinson, *Journal*, 19.
18. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:173.
19. Burch, *Emergency Navigation*, 203; Shufeldt and Dunlap, *Piloting and Dead Reckoning*, 37.
20. Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 240.
21. See *Lookout Training Handbook*.
22. “Examination of John Dann. August 3, 1696,” in Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy*, 168.
23. Cooke, *Voyage to the South Sea*, 118; Dampier, *New Voyage*, 124, 182, 186; Ringrose, *Buccaneer’s Atlas*, 60–61; Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 143.
24. Johnson, *General History*, 64, 275; Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 36; Smith, *Seaman’s Grammar*, 56.
25. See Chapin, *Privateer Ships*, 13–14.
26. Teonge, *Diary*, 40.
27. Baker, *Piracy and Diplomacy*, 92, 93.
28. Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 19, 102.
29. Forbin, *Mémoires*, 260.
30. Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 19; Doublet, *Mémoires*, 191.

31. Doublet, *Mémoires*, 69–71.
32. Phillips, “Voyage of the Ship *Hannibal*,” 42.

## Chapter 11

1. Phillips, “Voyage of the Ship *Hannibal*,” 42.
2. Fryer, *East India*, 154; Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 48; Spavens, *Memoirs*, 109; Teonge, *Diary*, 236. In general, see Wilson, *Flags at Sea*.
3. Wilson, *Flags at Sea*, 87.
4. Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 263–264 and plates 1 and 2, and Kenney, *Quadrant and the Quill*, plates 32 and 33.
5. Phillips, “Voyage of the Ship *Hannibal*,” 43.
6. “Instructions against France, 2nd May 1693,” in Marsden, *Law and Custom*, 2:414–418; “Proclamation as to the colours to be worn by privateers (1694),” in Marsden, *Law and Custom*, 2:162–164. See also Kendall, *Private Men-of-War*, 156.
7. See Wilson, *Flags at Sea*.
8. Doublet, *Mémoires*, 176; Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 87, 101; Phillips, “Voyage of the Ship *Hannibal*,” 43; Wilson, *Flags at Sea*, 62.
9. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 224; de Lussan, *Flibustiers*, 233, 119; Torres Ramirez, *Armada de Barlovento*, 296, and plate facing.
10. Barlow, *Barlow’s Journal*, 2:484–485.
11. “Deposition of Joseph Man. (June 11, 1700.)” in Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy*, 274, for example.
12. Doublet, *Mémoires*, 191.
13. Spavens, *Memoirs*, 92–93.
14. Wilson, *Flags at Sea*, 68–69.
15. Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 237.
16. Burney, *History of the Buccaneers*, 207–208.
17. Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 300.
18. Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*, 116–117.
19. Johnson, *General History*, 145.
20. *Ibid.*, 222, 202; “Extract from the Boston News-Letter. August 22, 1720,” in Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy*, 313–318.
21. Roberts, *Uncommon Events*, 34–36.
22. Baker, *Piracy and Diplomacy*, 158.
23. “Deposition of Joseph Man. (June 11, 1700.)” in Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy*, 274.
24. Forbin, *Mémoires*, 292.
25. Rogers, “Diary,” 211.
26. Roch, “Journals,” 62.
27. See Wilson, *Flags at Sea*, 68–69; and Apestegui, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, 154–155.
28. Gosse, *Pirate’s Who’s Who*, 111.
29. See for example Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 366.
30. Merrien, *Vie des marins*, 258.
31. Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 27–34.

32. Temple, *Papers of Thomas Bowery*, 210.
33. Forbin, *Mémoires*, 259.
34. Symcox, *Crisis of French Sea Power*, 69.
35. Phillips, “Voyage of the Ship *Hannibal*,” 42.
36. Pitman, “Relation,” 473–474.
37. Barlow, *Barlow’s Journal*, 2:413, 418–419.
38. Rogers, “Diary,” 213.
39. Johnson, *General History*, 510–511.
40. Roch, “Journals,” 135.
41. *Ibid.*, 62.
42. Coxere, *Adventures by Sea*, 25, 62.
43. Halley, *Three Voyages*, 205, 206, 279.
44. Doublet, *Mémoires*, 196.
45. Lyde, *True and Exact Account*, 506–507.
46. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 160–161; de Lussan, *Flibustiers*, 181.
47. Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 80–84.
48. Coxere, *Adventures by Sea*, 106–107.

## Chapter 12

1. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 11–12.
2. Barlow, *Barlow’s Journal*, 2:451.
3. *Ibid.*, 2:413, 418–419.
4. Forbin, *Mémoires*, 273–274.
5. Harland, *Seamanship*, 225–230. A well-written and thorough description of ship handling in the Age of Sail.
6. Montauban, “Relation,” 471.
7. Yonge, *Journal*, 28–30.
8. Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 241.
9. Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 174.
10. Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 282, 430.
11. Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 44–45.
12. Rogers, “Diary,” 157.
13. Ward, “Trip to Jamaica,” 11.
14. Johnson, *General History*, 150; Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 23.
15. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 13.
16. Phillips, “Voyage of the Ship *Hannibal*,” 39.
17. Johnson, *General History*, 150.
18. Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 63.
19. Rogers, “Diary,” 210.
20. Ward, “Trip to Jamaica,” 11.
21. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 289; Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 116; Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 241–242.
22. Smith, *Seaman’s Grammar*, 13.
23. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 107; Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 3, 5, 8–9.



24. Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 241.
25. Ibid.
26. Smith, *Seaman's Grammar*, 56.
27. Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 141; Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 2:417–418; Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 117.
28. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 289.
29. Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 118–119.
30. Johnson, *General History*, 515.
31. Harland, *Seamanship*, 181–182.
32. Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 119.
33. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 289.
34. Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 116–117.
35. Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 141–142.
36. Funnell, *Voyage Round the World*, 55.
37. Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 59–60.
38. Rogers, "Diary," 157; Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 60, 68.
39. Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 242.
40. Roch, "Journals," 135.
41. Chapin, *Privateer Ships*, 167; Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 61–66.
42. Funnell, *Voyage Round the World*, 25.
43. Ibid.; Rogers, "Diary," 157.
44. Smith, *Seaman's Grammar*, 56.
45. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 364.
46. Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 241–242.
47. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 13; Roberts, "His Voyage," 17–18.
48. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 12.
49. Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 132–133.
50. Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 241.
51. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 290.
52. Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 60; Harland, *Seamanship*, 186.
53. Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 59.
54. Teonge, *Diary*, 49, 54.
55. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 295; Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 244; Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 2:440.
56. Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 244.
57. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 295.

### Chapter 13

1. Johnson, *General History*, 308.
2. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 276; Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 235.
3. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 267.
4. Ibid., 277.
5. Smith, *Seaman's Grammar*, 77.
6. Johnson, *General History*, 282; Boteler, *Dialogues*, 292.

7. Ibid., 276; Smith, *Seaman's Grammar*, 60, 77; Sturmy, "Mariner's Magazine," 89.
8. Teonge, *Diary*, 85.
9. Rogers, "Diary," 211–212.
10. Roch, "Journals," 93.
11. Roberts, *Uncommon Events*, 36–37.
12. Forbin, *Mémoires*, 273–274.
13. Johnson, *General History*, 502; Shomette, *Pirates of the Chesapeake*, 130; Smith, *Seaman's Grammar*, 60.
14. Coxere, *Adventures by Sea*, 13; Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 2:260; Smith, *Seaman's Grammar*, 60; Sturmy, "Mariner's Magazine," 89.
15. Doublet, *Mémoires*, 151.
16. "Declaration of Edward Youreing. May 24, 1675," in Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy*, 79–80.
17. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 277.
18. Johnson, *General History*, 508.
19. Barlow, *Barlow's Journal*, 2:298.
20. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 301–302.
21. Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 19–22.
22. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 12.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Barlow, *Barlow's Journal*, 2:298.
26. Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 33; Forbin, *Mémoires*, 214–215.
27. Ligon, *History of Barbados*, 2.
28. "Deposition of Benjamin Franks. October 20, 1697," in Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy*, 191.
29. Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 154.

## Chapter 14

1. Funnel, *Voyage Round the World*, 55–56.
2. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:98.
3. Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 67–68, 70.
4. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:27.
5. Ibid., 1:98.
6. Ibid., 2:441; Boteler, *Dialogues*, 298.
7. de Lussan, *Voyage by the Freebooters*, 362.
8. Phillips, "Voyage of the Ship *Hannibal*," 43.
9. Montauban, "Relation," 468, 471.
10. Ibid., 466. See also Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 230–232; and Montaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 84–90.
11. See for example Boteler, *Dialogues*, 295; "Final Form of the Duke of York's Orders, 1673," in Corbett, *Fighting Instructions*, 159; Hall, *Ballistics*, 54; and Phillips, "Voyage of the Ship *Hannibal*," 43–44.
12. Hall, *Ballistics*, 53; Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 238.

13. Caruana, *English Sea Ordnance*, 157; Phillips, “Voyage of the Ship *Hannibal*,” 36, 44.
14. In general regarding naval guns and gunnery during this period, see Padfield, *Guns at Sea*.
15. Hall, *Ballistics*, 69.
16. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 301–302.
17. *Voyages aux Isles*, 2:255.
18. Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 109.
19. Phillips, “Voyage of the Ship *Hannibal*,” 43.
20. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 201; Lavery, *Arming and Fitting*, 136–137.
21. Hughes, *Firepower*, 34–35. Also see Phillips, “Voyage of the Ship *Hannibal*,” 44.
22. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 299.
23. Seller, *Sea Gunner*, 202.
24. Howard, *Sailing Ships of War*, 148.
25. Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 99.
26. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 135–136.
27. Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 262.
28. Gilkerson, *Boarders Away II*, 51.
29. Doublet, *Mémoires*, 69.
30. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 177.
31. Ward, “Trip to Jamaica,” 11.
32. Phillips, “Voyage of the Ship *Hannibal*,” 42.
33. Teonge, *Diary*, 226.
34. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 99, 239–240, 292–295; Corbett, *Fighting Instructions*, 58–59; Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 227–228; Labat, *Voyages aux Indes*, 1:25–26; Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 134–137; Phillips, “Voyage of the Ship *Hannibal*,” 39–44; Smith, *Seaman’s Grammar*, 58–60; Teonge, *Diary*, 92–93, 96; Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 227–228; Seller, *Sea Gunner*, 157–161; *Commodore Walker*, 177.
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*
38. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 292–293; Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 228; Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 135–136.
39. Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 226.
40. Funnell, *Voyage Round the World*, 55.
41. Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 224–226.
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*
45. Doublet, *Mémoires*, 183.
46. Phillips, “Voyage of the Ship *Hannibal*,” 43; Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 293.
47. Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 97–100; Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 228–230; “L’Exercice du canons” in Merrien, *Vie de marins*, 279; Seller, *Sea Gunner*, 158.
48. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 200, 204; Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 228–230; Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 97–100; Seller, *Sea Gunner*, 166–167.
49. Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 81; Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 237; Spavens, *Mémoires*, 91; Seller, *Sea Gunner*, 181–183; Yonge, *Journal*, 30.

50. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 206–207; Hall, *Ballistics*, 13; Hughes, *Firepower*, 17; Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 228–230; Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 97–100; Seller, *Seaman's Grammar*, 168–169.
51. Yonge, *Journal*, 48.
52. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 206–207; Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 228–230; Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 97–100; Seller, *Seaman's Grammar*, 168–169.
53. See for example Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 249–250, and Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 238.
54. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 249–250.
55. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 293; Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 156–158; Smith, *Seaman's Grammar*, 56.
56. Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 159.
57. *Ibid.*, 147.
58. *Ibid.*, 111; Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 123–124.
59. Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 247.
60. *Ibid.*, 237.
61. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 294; Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 157–159.
62. Yonge, *Journal*, 30.
63. Funnel, *Voyage Round the World*, 84.
64. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 301.
65. Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 237.
66. Phillips, “Voyage of the Ship *Hannibal*,” 43.
67. Cooke, *Voyage to the South Sea*, 1:331.
68. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 83.
69. Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 193.
70. Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 322–323.
71. *Ibid.*, 323; Chapin, *Privateer Ships*, 70.
72. Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 321–326.
73. See for example Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 29.
74. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 303–304; Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 81.
75. Funnel, *Voyage Round the World*, 56, 84.
76. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 301–302.
77. Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 237.
78. Phillips, “Voyage of the Ship *Hannibal*,” 44–50.
79. Funnel, *Voyage Round the World*, 56; Yonge, *Journal*, 30.
80. Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 158.

## Chapter 15

1. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:97–99.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. Forbin, *Mémoires*, 454.
6. Smith, *Seaman's Grammar*, 56.

7. Funnell, *Voyage Round the World*, 83–84.
8. Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 171.
9. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 299.
10. *Ibid.*, 298–299; Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 145–151.
11. Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 144–151.
12. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 305–306; Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 137–139; Duquay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 124.
13. Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 92; Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 147; Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 195; Sturmy, “Mariner’s Magazine,” 89.
14. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 298–299; Cooke, *Voyage to the South Sea*, 1:335; Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 38, 41; Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:98, 2:441; Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 194, 331; Smith, *Seaman’s Grammar*, 56–57; Sturmy, “Mariner’s Mirror,” 89.
15. Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 18.
16. Doublet, *Mémoires*, 133.
17. Cooke, *Voyage to the South Sea*, 1:335; Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 146–151; Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 330.
18. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 299–300; Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 169–171.
19. See for example Johnson, *General History*, 266.
20. Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 169–170.
21. Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 28, 93; Johnson, *General History*, 533.
22. Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 44.
23. Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 248.
24. Roch, “Journals,” 135.
25. Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 144.
26. Baker, *Journal*, 84–85.
27. Forbin, *Mémoires*, 258; Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 144; Roch, “Journals,” 135.
28. Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 106–115, 144–151.
29. *Ibid.*; Coxere, *Adventures by Sea*, 59.
30. Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 106–115, 144–151.
31. Forbin, *Mémoires*, 205–206.

## Chapter 16

1. “Declaration of Jeremiah Tay and Others. March 1691(?),” in Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy*, 147.
2. But simple tactics too often repeated can be anticipated.
3. Camus, *L’Île de la Tortue*, 47–48.
4. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1678), 56; Haring, *Buccaneers in the West Indies*, 135, note 1; Rogozinski, *Pirates!* 194–195.
5. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1678), 56–57; Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 55–57; Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 86–87.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.* “Jesus, these are demons!”
8. Rogozinski, *Pirates!* 194–195.
9. Regarding the exercises in question, the author has witnessed numerous such successful boardings.

10. Labat, *Voyage aux Isles*, 2:417–418.
11. Pitman, “Relation,” 8:463.
12. Drake, *Amiable Renegade*, 90–91.
13. Rogers, “Diary,” 225.
14. Forbin, *Mémoires*, 91–92.
15. Burney, *History of the Buccaneers*, 158–159.
16. Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 87.
17. Cooke, *Voyage to the South Sea*, 1:128–130; Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 158–159.
18. Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 181.

## Chapter 17

1. Doublet, *Mémoires*, 115–118.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*; Lyde, *True and Exact Account*, 511.
6. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 333; Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:171–172; Pitman, “Relation,” 8:449.
7. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 151.
8. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1678), 74–75.
9. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 172.
10. *Ibid.*, 44; Crouse, *French Struggle*, 120–121.
11. “The situation dictates” is a common expression used by U.S. Navy SEALs to express their emphasis on tactical flexibility and innovation—the situation at hand, not tactical dogma, drives tactics. Similarly a Japanese text of 1730, *Tengugeijutsuron*, rejects reliance on set forms or responses and instead emphasizes the “inspiration of freedom to adapt.” However, this freedom to adapt to the situation is derived from a very high degree of training and experience in fundamental combat techniques and tactics.
12. Gilkerson, *Boarders Away I*, 50; Gilkerson, *Boarders Away II*, 230; Johnson, *General History*, 211.
13. Ashton and Barnard, *Ashton’s Memorial*, 174, 175; Doublet, *Mémoires*, 116.
14. Doublet, *Mémoires*, 117, 133; Spavens, *Memoirs*, 46.
15. Rogers, “Diary,” 223.
16. Doublet, *Mémoires*, 69.
17. Mountaine, *Vade-Mecum*, 146.
18. Doublet, *Mémoires*, 116.
19. Lyde, “True and Exact Account,” 493–502.

## Chapter 18

1. Johnson, *General History*, 303, 505, 560.
2. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1678), 74–75.
3. Ashton, *Memorial*, 174–175.
4. Johnson, *General History*, 562–564.

5. See Clark, *Dutch Alliance*, 63–80, in regard to smuggling and trading with the enemy in Europe.
6. Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 330.
7. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 134.
8. de Lussan, *Flibustiers*, 50.
9. Johnson, *General History*, 374–375.
10. *Ibid.*, 425–430.
11. Dièreville, *Voyage to Port Royal*, 210–211. See also Beck, *American Indian*; and de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 49–50.
12. “Examination of John Dann. August 3, 1696,” in Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy*, 165; Johnson, *General History*, 23–36.
13. Dow and Edmonds, *New England Coast*, 328–337; Johnson, *General History*, 334–337, 489, 490, 495. In the author’s experience, such tactical deceptions come about naturally.
14. Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy*, 278, note 1; Rediker, *Deep Blue Sea*, 228. For a thorough discussion of rebellion among early eighteenth-century seamen, see Rediker, *Deep Blue Sea*, 205–253.
15. “Examination of John Tooly. June 17, 1673” and “Examination of William Forrest, October 20, 1673,” in Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy*, 68–73.
16. Temple, *Papers of Thomas Bowery*, 245–252.

## Chapter 19

1. Johnson, *General History*, 438–439.
2. Yonge, *Journal*, 29.
3. Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 235–236.
4. Coxere, *Adventures by Sea*, 63.
5. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 69, 70.
6. See Harland, *Seamanship*, 32, 97, 104–109, 131–132, 198, 272.
7. Ashley, *Book of Knots*, 23; Smith, *Seaman’s Grammar*, 24.
8. Funnell, *Voyage Round the World*, 25.
9. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 83; de Lussan, *Flibustiers*, 120.
10. Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 21; Doublet, *Mémoires* 197.
11. Johnson, *General History*, 515.
12. See for example Cowley, “Voyage Round the Globe,” 11; Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 159; de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 163; Johnson, *General History*, 49, 169, 203, 204; Sharp, “Journal,” 35–36.
13. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 2:261–275.
14. Barlow, *Barlow’s Journal*, 2:422.
15. Snelgrave, “Bloody-Minded Villain,” 167–168.
16. *Ibid.*, 416.
17. Coxere, *Adventures by Sea*, 7–9.
18. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 150–153; Dampier, *New Voyage*, 38.
19. Challe, *Journal Du Voyage*, 131–132.
20. Forbin, *Mémoires*, 274.
21. Snelgrave, “Bloody-Minded Villain,” 165–167.

22. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 167–181; Torres Ramirez, *Armada de Barlovento*, 90–94.
23. Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 173.
24. Johnson, *General History*, 87, 557, 558.
25. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 134–135, 141.
26. Spavens, *Memoirs*, 90.
27. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 135.
28. Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 388; “Buccaneers on the Isthmus,” 110; [Dick?], “Brief Account of Captain Sharp” (1684), 272; Sharp, “Journal,” 43.
29. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 162–163.
30. Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 154–158; Montauban, “Relation,” 464–484.
31. Cowley, “Voyage Round the Globe,” 18; Dampier, *New Voyage*, 134; Dampier, *New Holland*, 68.
32. Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 137.
33. Coxere, *Adventures by Sea*, 124.
34. Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 137.
35. Harland, *Seamanship*, 276.
36. Cowley, “Voyage Round the Globe,” 3–4.
37. Johnson, *General History*, 150–151.
38. *Ibid.*, 210–211.
39. *Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, millenium edition, s.v. “Tartar;” *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, 2d ed., s.v. “Tartar, Tatar.”
40. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 150–153; de Lussan, *Flibustiers*, 169–172; Virgil, *Aeneid* 2:49.

## Chapter 20

1. Duguay-Trouin, *Mémoires*, 20.
2. Chapin, *Privateer Ships*, 138.
3. Higginbotham, *Old Mobile*, 445–446.
4. Davis, “Gold Mines,” 160; Dampier, *New Voyage*, 15.
5. Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 310.
6. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 24; Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 181.
7. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 174.
8. Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 312.
9. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 77; Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 162.
10. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 160.
11. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 198.
12. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 160.
13. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 11.
14. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 77.
15. *Ibid.*, 137.
16. Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 149.
17. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 13.
18. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 202.
19. *Ibid.*, 157.



20. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 21–22.
21. *Ibid.*, 24.
22. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 152–153.
23. *Ibid.*, 195.
24. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 251.
25. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 168.
26. *Ibid.*, 175.
27. *Ibid.*, 174.
28. *Ibid.*, 167.
29. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 266–269.
30. Hughes, *Firepower*, 59–61.
31. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 186.
32. Hughes, *Firepower*, 26.
33. de Guzman, “Morgan Sacks Panama,” 87.
34. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 188.
35. Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 376. See Segovia Salas, *Las fortificaciones de Cartagena*, for a description of a great Spanish fort of the period.
36. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 138.
37. “Buccaneers on the Isthmus,” 97.
38. Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 236.
39. See for example Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 104, 138, 175.

## Chapter 21

1. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 276.
2. Sturmy, “Mariner’s Magazine,” 89.
3. Smith, *Seaman’s Grammar*, 62.
4. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 301–302.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Yonge, *Journal*, 90.
7. Barlow, *Barlow’s Journal*, 1:227.
8. See Barlow, *Barlow’s Journal*, 1:224–227.
9. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 30–31.
10. In general see Marsden, *Law and Custom*, 2:x; *Ibid.*, “Extract from a letter from the Prize Commissioners to the King . . .,” 2:65; *Ibid.*, “Wager to Burchett, as to embezzlement from prizes,” 2:266; *Ibid.*, “Orders in Council as to pillage . . .,” 2:95–99; Boteler, *Dialogues*, 38; Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 30–31; Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 34–36.
11. Doublet, *Mémoires*, 42; Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 365.
12. Shelvocke, *Voyage Around the World*, 31–44.
13. Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 366.
14. Funnell, *Voyage Round the World*, 46.
15. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 161.
16. Yonge, *Journal*, 90–91.
17. *Ibid.*, 91.
18. Lyde, “True and Exact Account,” 485.

19. Hutchinson, *Naval Architecture*, 248–249.
20. Lyde, “True and Exact Account,” 484.
21. Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 70–74.
22. For example Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 365, and “Buccaneers on the Isthmus,” 107.
23. Symcox, *Crisis of French Sea Power*, 90, 216.
24. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 222.
25. Barlow, *Barlow’s Journal*, 2:548.
26. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 222.
27. *Ibid.*, 223.
28. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 40.
29. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 2:283.
30. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 100.
31. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 40.
32. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 223.
33. Phillips, “Voyage of the Ship *Hannibal*,” 45.
34. de Lussan, *Flibustiers*, 151.
35. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 89; de Lussan, *Flibustiers*, 125.
36. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 182.
37. *Ibid.*, 181.
38. Nerzic and Bouchet, *Marins et Flibustiers*, 162.
39. Besson, *Scourge of the Indies*, 240–242.
40. Ritchie, *Captain Kidd*, 230–231.
41. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 215.
42. de Lussan, *Flibustiers*, 145–146; Johnson, *General History*, 308; Snelgrave, “Bloody-Minded Villain,” 159.
43. Burney, *History of the Buccaneers*, 373; Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 178–179; Nerzic and Bouchet, *Marins et Flibustiers*, 207; Besson, *Scourge of the Indies*, 195.
44. Smith, *Seaman’s Grammar*, 62.
45. See Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 152, 156.
46. See for example “Deposition of Simon Calderon. 1682,” in Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy*, 137.
47. “Buccaneers on the Isthmus,” 102.
48. Roch, *Journals*, 114.
49. de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 146–147, 163–164, 219–220.
50. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 188; de Lussan, *Voyage into the South Seas*, 244.
51. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 86, 102–103.
52. Dampier, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 140–141; [Dick], “Brief Account of Captain Sharp” (1684), 274; Funnel, *Voyage Round the World*, 36–37; Marley, *Sack of Vera Cruz*, 66–67. See also Uring, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 148.
53. Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 392, 397, 470.
54. Johnson, *General History*, 418–422, 506; Teonge, *Diary*, 97–98.
55. Rogers, “Diary,” 163.
56. Phillips, “Voyage of the Ship *Hannibal*,” 54.
57. Smith, *Seaman’s Grammar*, 61.
58. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 44.

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1. Johnson, *General History*, 530.
2. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 74.
3. Roberts, *Uncommon Events*, 87.
4. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, xviii.
5. Boteler, *Dialogues*, 35.
6. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:100–101.
7. Teonge, *Diary*, 36.
8. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 74.
9. Montauban, “Relation,” 466; Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 152–153.
10. Labat, *Memoirs*, 244.
11. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 2:419.
12. Snelgrave, “Bloody-Minded Villain,” 159–160.
13. de Lussan, *Flibustiers*, 89.
14. Dampier, *New Voyage*, 344; Rediker, *Between the Devil*, 12.
15. Wafer, *Isthmus*, 22.
16. Dampier, *New Holland*, 73.
17. Yonge, *Journal*, 48–49.
18. Rogers, “Diary,” 226; Ward, “Trip to Jamaica,” 13, 16.
19. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 75; Johnson, *General History*, 269; Cordingly, *Women Sailors*, 7.
20. See Burg, *Sodomy and the Pirate Tradition*.
21. Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*, 100–103.
22. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 73.
23. *Ibid.*, 75.
24. Rogers, *Cruising Voyage*, 10–11; Ward, *Wooden World*, 92.
25. Yonge, *Journal*, 86.
26. Ashe, *Carolina*, 153–154; Rogers, “Diary,” 230.
27. Forbin, *Mémoires*, 48.
28. Nelson, *Merry Gamester*, 65.
29. McBane, *Expert Sword-Man’s Companion*, 58.
30. Johnson, *General History*, 305.
31. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1678), 60.
32. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 133–134.
33. *Ibid.*, 59.
34. Johnson, *General History*, 305.
35. Exquemelin, *Flibustiers*, 173; Marley, *Sack of Vera Cruz*, 57–58.
36. Ringrose, “Buccaneers” (1684), 435.
37. Montauban, “Relation,” 466.
38. Ward, “Trip to Jamaica,” 13, 16; Barlow, *Barlow’s Journal*, 342–343.
39. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America* (1684), 57.
40. Labat, *Voyages aux Isles*, 1:23–24.
41. Snelgrave, “Bloody-Minded Villain,” 156.
42. Ward, “Trip to New England,” 5.

## Chapter 23

1. This account is drawn from “Buccaneers in the South Sea,” 114–115; Cooke, *Voyage to the South Sea*, 1:290–292; Dampier, *New Voyage*, 175–176; [Dick?], “Brief Account of Captain Sharp” (1684), 274–275; Ringrose, “Buccaneers of America” (1684), 404–409; Ringrose, *Buccaneer’s Atlas*, 18–19, 214, 216; Ringrose, “Captains Sharp . . .,” 259–262, 265–266, 279; Sharp, “Journal,” 47–48; and Wafer, *Isthmus*, 121.

2. See Ringrose, *Buccaneer’s Atlas*, for his copy of the Spanish sea atlas captured aboard the *Rosario*.

3. See the “Deposition of Simon Calderon,” in Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy*, 135–137; and Ringrose, *Buccaneer’s Atlas*, 26–28, 283–285.

4. See Green, *Verdict According to Conscience*.

5. “Sir Henry Morgan to Sir Leoline Jenkins, March 8, 1682,” in Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy*, 133–135.



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