

# Chapter 8

## *Harry Goes to Sea*



Campeche is located on the Upper Left of Map.

Fearing reprisals from Cuba, the Council of Jamaica ordered that five of the copper cannon captured at *Santiago* be sold and the proceeds applied to the completion of the fortification at Fort Charles (formerly known as Fort Cromwell). All revenue due to the Crown was called in, and forty men were set to work on the fort. It was small then, consisting only of a round stone tower surrounded by an embankment of sand. By the end of 1662, however, a new demilune battery was built, and in it, several guns were mounted.

Cruising was profitable, but Harry Morgan also had obligations on the island that needed his attention.

Harry owned land under cultivation, and he had duties to perform as an officer in the local militia. Unlike most buccaneers, he was careful with his prize money—more inclined to invest for the longer-term rather than to squander his money on short-term entertainment. Therefore, Harry welcomed a pause in Commodore Myngs's operations against the Spaniards.

By December 1662, however, concerns about retaliation for the *Santiago* raid had subsided, and Sir Charles Lyttleton and the Council of Jamaica—pressed by Myngs—authorized another expedition, which would be led by Myngs and Mansfield against Campeche in the Gulf of Mexico. The Royal Navy's *Centurion* and *Griffin* and several other vessels were fitted out and stocked with provisions, and men were quickly enlisted.

At any given time in those days, Port Royal had many men ready and able enough for any such undertaking. The smaller craft were mostly privateers manned by buccaneers and former English soldiers and included ships commanded by Edward Mansfield, Myngs's second-in-command, and Harry Morgan. Among the other captains sailing alongside Morgan was his friend John Morris.

Sources differ as to the numbers of ships and men. Still, all agree that several hundred volunteers set sail on 12 Jan

1663 in the *Centurion*—a 4th rate frigate of the Royal Navy, carrying 46 guns and a crew of 180 men—and at least eleven other ships. The fleet sailed for the coast of the Yucatán and around its northern coast into the Gulf of Mexico. Along the way, four French vessels from Tortuga and three Dutch privateers joined the Jamaican fleet. They sailed in dangerous waters, and three (some say four) privateer vessels became separated from the fleet. Assuming they were lost, the main force pressed on towards Campeche.

Six weeks after the fleet had left the Point, unsettling news reached Jamaica when a privateer returned from the Bay of Campeche with a report that three of the invading vessels had been wrecked, with much loss of lives. The report also stated that the Spaniards had been forwarned and had stationed lookouts along their coast. However, within a day or two, spirits were again buoyed when another privateer arrived at the Point with news of the expedition's success. However, because of unfavourable winds, the *Centurion* and most of the other ships did not return for more than a month.

When the flotilla had reached *San Francisco de Campeche*, the citadel protecting the town and harbour seemed strong and well-armed, but Myngs was not discouraged. Instead, he demanded that the governor surrender. After waiting in vain for the governor's reply for three days, Myngs launched boats filled with men and arms and boldly attacked the town—with Myngs himself leading

the charge. Some of his captains had recommended a night-assault, but Myngs replied that he would be ashamed to steal a victory in the dark and landed his men in broad daylight.

Three small batteries were taken quickly. Bloody fighting ensued with each of the town's many strongly-built, flat-roofed stone houses putting up a stiff defence. By night-fall, nevertheless, the Spaniards and their Indian allies were chased into the woods. Besides the town, fourteen heavily laden ships were taken. In all, thirty attackers were killed and many more wounded. One was captured and taken north to Merida, where he was closely questioned, "civilly treated," and released. The Spanish lost about fifty lives. Many Spanish prisoners were taken, but when the fleet left, they too were released.

Myngs received severe wounds to his face and thighs, and the buccaneer leader Edward Mansfield assumed command. This easy transference of leadership of an official English naval operation demonstrates how tightly integrated the privateers/buccaneers were with the Royal Navy forces—at least those stationed in Jamaica.

With the battle over and Campeche plundered, Myngs arrived back in Jamaica on 23 Apr 1663 with the captured ships<sup>[1]</sup> and boatloads of plunder. The booty allegedly amounted to 150,000 pieces of eight (£33,750, a very considerable sum in an era when a merchant ship could be

bought for about £300). In July 1663, Christopher Myngs sailed to England to recuperate from his wounds.

<sup>[1]</sup> Ships captured from the Spanish by the Royal Navy or by privateers were condemned as prizes of war by the Admiralty Court at Port Royal and were usually sold to private interests, providing a ready source of vessels for future privateering ventures.

Harry Morgan and four fellow privateer captains may or may not have returned with Myngs to Port Royal. They claimed later that they had not. They said they continued cruising for another two years. However, one might conclude they had to return to collect their share of the prize money and refit their vessels for such a long cruise.

The Council of Jamaica's 22 Aug 1664 minutes alludes to raids on Central America by Captain Thomas Morgan. However, Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Morgan (Harry's distant cousin) was occupied elsewhere at that time, so we assume it was Henry Morgan who was discussed at that meeting. In his *History of Jamaica* (1774), Edward Long states that in 1664 Henry Morgan made a cruise off Cartagena.

What is generally accepted is that four privateers accompanied Henry Morgan's sloop: Captain John Morris, Captain David Marteen, Captain Thomas Freeman and Captain Jacob Jackman. All possessed the commissions they had received from Governor Windsor and used them

as permission to carry out attacks against Spanish targets over a period of nearly two years following Myngs's Campeche raid. Their venture proved to be enormously profitable, making the five captains rich men. During this cruise, which had included taking the towns *Villahermosa de Tabasco* and *Granada*, Morgan emerged as the acknowledged leader of the group.

Being in ill health, Sir Charles Lyttleton obtained permission to return to England, and was instructed to authorize the Council to administer the island in his absence. Colonel Thomas Lynch, a wealthy planter in the parish of St. Thomas-in-the-East was elected president. He had come to Jamaica as an officer under Venables in 1655. Since then, he had held the office of provost marshal and had commanded the largest regiment of the militia. On his departure, Lyttleton gave him a commission to command all the military and naval forces and to act as Chief Justice.