

Chapter 16

Peace Beyond the Line



A Frigate by Dominic Serres | Similar to *The Satisfaction*

Morgan's fleet returned to the Point at Port Royal on 17 May 1669. A powerful storm had threatened his flotilla on the homeward voyage, for his ships were heavily laden and sparsely manned. Their adventures on Lake Maracaibo had taken a considerable toll in the loss of men through battle and by disease. Fortunately, however, his fleet of small ships did arrive safely.

Harry Morgan's latest raid on the Spanish Main was a remarkable success and was considered so by many. The Jamaican merchants, tavern-keepers and most of Port Royal residents and the neighbouring parishes welcomed his privateers warmly. The lavish spending habits of the privateers enriched them all.

Besides, Admiral Morgan had decisively defeated a far superior Spanish squadron, which had been sent to the West Indies for the express purpose of eradicating the Jamaican privateers.

Port Royal soon earned the reputation as one of the wealthiest and wickedest places in the world. Charles Leslie, in his 1740 *A New History of Jamaica*, tells how, after a successful cruise, some privateers had been known to spend 2,000 or 3,000 pieces of eight in a single night of debauchery at the Point's dens of iniquity. "*They used to bring a Pipe of Wine, place it in the Street, and oblige every one that passed to drink; at other times they would scatter it about in vast Quantities, thinking it excellent Diversion to wet the Ladies's cloathes [sic] as they went along and force them to run from the showers of Wine,*" he wrote.

Those buccaneers and *flibustiers* who hadn't joined Morgan's fleet at *Isla Saona* had not been as lucky in their own adventure. Apparently, they arrived at *Isla Saona* several days after his departure, and they had not found the letter telling of his intentions that Morgan had left for them. The latecomers numbered nearly 400 men in six small ships and a large boat. Having missed Morgan's main party, those privateers had elected Captain Charles Hatsell as commodore. This is the same Captain Hatsell who had taken part in the capture of Santa Catalina and Portobello. Hatsell was determined to attack the coastal town of Cumaná, Venezuela. It was one of the first settlements founded by Europeans in mainland America. However, when the unfortunate privateers landed near the town, they met with such resistance that they retreated in disorder after suffering many casualties.

Some of Morgan's men resented the failure of the latecomers to join them at *Isla Saona* as promised. These taunted their less fortunate comrades mercilessly, saying, "*Let us see what money you brought from Cumaná, and if it be as good silver as that which we took at Maracaibo.*" And according to William Dampier, Cumaná was

“the only place in the North Seas they attempted in vain for many years; and the Spaniards since throw it in their teeth frequently, as a word of reproach or defiance to them.”

The Caribbean was the North Sea; the Pacific Ocean was the South Sea.

Just days before Morgan’s return, Modyford had received orders from the English secretary of state. Lord Arlington had demanded that Modyford put an end to all hostilities with Spanish America. There would be peace beyond the line. These instructions disturbed Modyford, for he remained convinced that Jamaica’s safety depended on the privateers’ goodwill. Nevertheless, he knew it would be prudent for men like Morgan and his lieutenant, John Morris, to hang up their swords for a while.

Notwithstanding Morgan’s immense popularity both at the Point and far away in London, his ventures against Spain’s American colonies were not universally applauded. He did have enemies, some dating back to his earliest days on the island. Others were among the increasingly influential Port Royal merchants who followed Lord Arlington and the King’s line on peace with Spain and open trade with its American colonies. Moreover, there were many others of the highest ranks in London who wanted the same.

Sir Thomas Modyford’s worst fears were soon confirmed. Letters from his son in London arrived, affirming the King’s displeasure at the Jamaican invasions of the Spanish provinces. Though it should be noted, the King and his brother had accepted their share of the prize-money from privateering adventures without any show of scruples.

Believing he had no choice, Sir Thomas withdrew Morgan’s commission. He stated Morgan had exceeded his instructions. He also withdrew all other privateer commissions. So, on 14 Jun 1669—less than a month after Morgan’s triumphant return to Port

Royal—a proclamation to that effect was published at Port Royal “by beat of drum and the voice of the official crier,” by order of the governor. In his journal, William Beeston noted that “*nevertheless the privateers went in and out but not with commissions.*” Morgan remained at home, however.

At the end of November, the governor reported to his cousin George Monck, the Duke of Albemarle. He wrote that most of the privateers were turning to trade, hunting or planting, and that he hoped soon to reduce all to peaceful pursuits. He wrote that most of the privateers had “*turned merchants*” and were trading with the Indians on the coast of Central America for hides, tallow, turtle-shell, and logwood. Others had returned to their traditional pursuits of hunting wild cattle and boar in Cuba, while some of the “*best monied*” had become planters in Jamaica. A few “*knaves,*” he allowed, were still endeavouring to plunder Spanish ships, which he would try to prevent. If, suggested Modyford, he were permitted to continue the “*moderate remedies*” he had begun, he was confident that he would “*reduce the most part of them, for their ships will wear out, and then they must stay on shore and plant or starve.*”

Although the buccaneers are most frequently connected with the island of Hispaniola, they also hunted feral cattle and hogs in remote areas of Cuba. That island is much larger than Scotland and almost ten times the size of Jamaica. In the 17th century, except in Havana and a few other major centres and their surrounding area, Cuba was thinly populated. Besides, it had little in the way of a standing army to patrol its vast wildernesses. Immense herds of cattle roamed wild in the forests and savannahs; remote forests abounded with wild boar. As they did in Hispaniola, the buccaneers hunted these animals for their hides, tallow, and meat, which they dried in their traditional manner.

During this hiatus, captains John Morris, Lawrence Prince (Laurens Prins), and some of Morgan’s other privateer comrades returned to their plantations. Another, the famous English naval

officer and privateer, Captain Edward Collier, was granted more than a thousand acres of land in the Parish of Clarendon. Readers may remember Collier as captain of the ill-fated Oxford.

Morgan himself, now a happily married planter of substantial influence in island affairs, built a house on an 836-acre estate in Jamaica's Rio Minho Valley, also in the parish of Clarendon. The estate, a grant made to him on 30 Nov 1669, was by some accounts the first reward Harry Morgan had received from the Crown or the Government of Jamaica. It is likely, however, that Morgan would have received an earlier grant as an army officer under Edward D'Oyley's military governorship. D'Oyley and the Crown were encouraging all English officers to become settlers on the island. As discussed in earlier chapters, this practice began as early as 1656 and intensified after Charles II's restoration in 1661. Since many of the island's earliest official records were kept at Port Royal, records of some of these grants were probably lost during the events that occurred there in 1692.

Morgan's latest grant was registered in the Record Office at Spanish Town on 14 Feb 1670, and read as follows:

Know ye that we for and in consideration that Collo. [Colonel] Henry Morgan hath transported himself together with his servants unto our Island of Jamaica in pursuance of our proclamation before made and for his better encouragement for being one of our planters there and for divers other good causes and considerations as thereunto moving of Speciall Grace and certain knowledge have I given and granted and by these presents for us our heirs and successors do give and grant unto the said Henry Morgan his heirs and assigns

All that parcel of land meadow or pasture and Woodland and whatsoever land the same is Cont[aining] 836 acres situate

lyeing and being in Clarendon parish bounding northwest and north on Wast[e] Hilly Woodland & Easterly and Southerly on the river Minoe together with all edifices woods trees rents profits &c. [Source: Cruikshank, The Life of Sir Henry Morgan.]

Morgan's new property was located near the centre of the island in the Rio Minho valley near present-day Chapelton, a market town in Clarendon Parish. Jamaicans know the area as "Morgan's Valley." In 1669 it lay on the frontier of the island's settled areas, just to the south of a dense forest and rugged hills. Morgan later acquired the neighbouring estate, Danke's Lande (present-day "Danks") and the woods known as Morgan's Forest.

Conditions of Morgan's grant was the annual payment of "*a twentieth part of the clear yearly proffitt [sic] of all mines which now are or shall hereafter happen to be found within those premises,*" and that "*the said Henry Morgan his heirs and assigns shall upon any Insurrection mutiny or foreign invasion which may happen in my said Island of Jamaica during his or their residence there be ready to serve us and shall serve us in arms upon the Command of our Governor there.*"

At about that time, Charles Modyford, acting as his father's representative in London supplied the secretary of state with an account of the condition of the colony of Jamaica.

He stated that 165,564 acres of land had been transferred to private hands by patent from the King. Of men fit to bear arms, there was estimated to be 3,000, exclusive of 1,500 privateers and their 20 small ships. Also, there were 1,200 white women and children and 2,500 slaves in the colony.

"Nothing," he assured Lord Arlington, "*can now hinder the future thriving of that island but want of inhabitants, or the unsettlement of it with the Spaniards.*"

It was into that comfortable colonial existence that Harry Morgan now settled as a prosperous and much-respected planter. As commander of Port Royal's defences, it is unlikely that he retired there, however.



George Monck (1608–1670),
1st Duke of Albemarle | by Peter Lely

George Monck (1608–1670), 1st Duke of Albemarle died on 3 Jan 1670. Morgan and Modyford would sorely miss the man. Monck, as a member of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade and Foreign Plantations, had been involved in Jamaican affairs for several years. Besides, unlike the pro-Spanish Lord Arlington, George

Monck had been a supporter of Modyford's policy of using privateers to harass the Spaniards and thus defend Jamaica. One assumes the duke was also a supporter of Harry Morgan, due to his many years of military association and friendship with Morgan's uncle, Major-General Sir Thomas Morgan. (Harry Morgan later became a close friend of Monck's son, Christopher, who became the 2nd Duke of Albemarle.)

Governor Sir Thomas Modyford may have declared peace between the Jamaicans and their Spanish neighbours, but his withdrawal of privateering commissions came too late. Sir Thomas was soon to realize that the truce he had proclaimed applied only to his Jamaicans and that his Spanish neighbours had no intention of honouring it. In fact, it seemed as though roles had been reversed, with the Spaniards being the ones issuing commissions of war against England's West Indian settlements, while Jamaica remained restrained by the King's demand for peace with Spain, even here beyond the line.