THE GOLDEN AGE OF PIRACY: HENRY MORGAN

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ABSTARCT

They say a one man's hero is another man's source of terror and Captain Henry Morgan's case is a classic example. Endorsed by the British Government, Sir Henry Morgan terrorized Spanish naval assets forcefully. With a team of less than 540 people, Morgan attacked Spanish forces on multiple fronts, kept them off-balance and shook their morale until a victory for Britain was declared. History has it that England and Spain scrambled for control of the Americans, including the West Indies and unfortunately, the conflict of interests came to blows. Desperate situations call for desperate measures, so Britain attacked Spain using its teams of privateers.

Along the sea, pirates are always there fighting and looking bounties from other ships. That is how the fate of Henry Morgan opened a door for him. It was a huge gamble by Britain to send a son to a farmer to war, but it dearly paid off. England finally brought Spain to its knees.

The paper is not a retell of piracy in the Golden Age, but outlines the importance and hazards of armed conflicts. The battle fronts under the leadership of Captain Morgan were successful, but records on human loss are unbearable. Whether or not his actions are justifiable, Henry Morgan remains a historic figure of the Golden Age of Piracy. His bravery and war strategies are inspiration not only to the British military, but also to the entire world.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

The apprehension, sack, and scorching of the city of Panama in 1671 is one of the most discussed subjects in the history of military and piracy operations, especially in the Golden Age of Piracy. The invasion of Panama condemned the second biggest city in the Western Hemisphere to ruins and is something Henry Morgan was, is and will still be remembered for. And nothing makes the story more interesting than the fact that the Welsh pirate did not act on behalf of any country and his obsession for conquest had no religious or political agenda. The spirit of free enterprise is believed to be the motivation for Henry Morgan and his fighters (Hamilton, 2010; Reese, 2012; Graham, 2014).

The story is getting no better without running a quick background check on the man who toppled the city without a conventional army. Sir Henry Morgan was born in Llanrhymney, Wales to a farmer back in 1635. The man never wanted to be a farmer like his father, so he instead chose his own career path that began in disappointment when he was shanghaied, shipped off to the Caribbean and sold off in Barbados. At that time, labor was scarcely available in the West Indies; therefore, there was the need to import blacks from Africa and whites from Europe to help the tired and worn-out native and imported Indians. By no circumstance is anyone to enthuse that slave trade and slavery were uncommon in the Golden Age of Piracy (Hamilton, 2010). However, a system of indenture was established for Europeans. This system ensured that Europeans served as forced laborers for 15-20 years since most died in service due to fragility. This; however, is no proof blacks and Indians were treated any worse (Hamilton 2010; Graham 2014).

Background of the Golden Age of Piracy

The Pirates of the Caribbean is the first picture coming to mind whenever the word piracy is mentioned. Well, the act of robbing or conducting illegal violence at sea is what is referred to piracy. With that in mind, it is indeed imperative to investigate the aspects of the age. The Golden Age of Piracy began barely more than three centuries ago in the Caribbean (Graham 2014). The Caribbean peninsula comprises modern day Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Dominica, Virgin Islands, Montserrat, and Guyana, although the list can go beyond ten sovereign countries. West Indies is another name for the Caribbean Islands. Here gold and silver were the backbone of treasury. The region was a Spanish colony at that time and every pirate or privateer had reasons to stage resistance. Fighting Spain was not easy due to her military sophistication and the will to stay and continue to harness gold, silver and other treasures (Jenny 2010; Dana 2012).

The Commencement of the Golden Age of Piracy

The Golden Age of Piracy had many reasons to begin, with the end of war, decrying privateers and the need for economic reconstruction among them. Many activities were taking place, but the shipping of treasure convoys across the sea and the decapitation of illegal practices and industries that had prospered during the war stole the day.

As frequently asserted by environmentalists, humans are desperately in need of nature, but nature does not need us. Nature can build or destroy humanity, and unfortunately at that time Sir Henry Morgan and other privateers, plus the Spanish masters were swept away by a hurricane. The event occurred 300 years ago when a wave of enormous magnitude blew them toward the Florida coast (Dana 2012).

The end of the war of the Spanish succession contributed to the rise of the Golden Age. Spain ruled the Caribbean with brutal force and inhumanity. The European country depended heavily up on economic exploration and exploitation of countries and regions rich in natural resources; and for that matter, the invasion of West Indies was inevitable (Graham 2014).

After intense fighting, the war finally came to an end. Consequently, the peace of Utrecht in 1713 was signed. As expected, the war cost a lot and the unforgiving economic depression called for immediate restorative measures. Such necessities warranted something close to a revolution in the name of the Golden Age. By that time Henry Morgan was dead, though (Graham 2014).

The expulsion of Spaniards from the West Indies started power battles as to who should take the throne. Privateers such a Sir Henry Morgan, Captain Kid, and Henry Avery among others desired a common thing; the liberation, preservation and safety of the Caribbean peninsula. The Caribbean, the entire South America (except Brazil that belonged to Portugal), the entire Hispanic North America (Puerto Rico, Mexico, and other states along the Gulf of Mexico) and parts of Africa. Spanish might in warfare began to gradually wane due to frequent wars (Jenny 2010).

The Capture of Panama

Piatt (2012) maintains that the capture and sack of Panama in 1671 is the greatest raid even launched by Captain Morgan. This is not a retell of history, but a way of expressing gratitude and support for Henry Morgan's work of liberating countries from Spain. In the 1660's, Morgan and his men raided Central American towns that were under the Spanish rule. During those years, there was no United States as a superpower. It was all about Spain and Great Britain

scrambling for territories on a global scale. To be precise, the U.S. was ruled by Britain until 1776 (Earle 2007; Piatt 2012).

Spain and England were at constant war, so the Queen of England authorized Henry Morgan to attack Spanish ships. Unlike pirates who operate illegally, privateers operated under the authority and supervision of their government and regular military. Due to Spanish punitive expeditions on the Caribbean, Morgan had to abandon his residence in Jamaica to seek refuge in Panama. In Panama, regrouping and training military personnel under the stewardship of Captain Morgan began (Earle 2007; Piatt 2012).

In 1668, Captain Morgan recruited around 500 privateers, corsairs, pirates, buccaneers and other pro-England groups and launched an assault on Portobello, a town ruled by Spain. The raid became a success and Morgan and his men sang and laugh in celebration. The anti-Spain warriors killed, looted and torched houses belonging to Spaniards (Graham 2012).

In 1669, the Welsh hero again gathered 500 pirates with the view of raiding Gibraltar and Maracaibo towns on Lake Maracaibo. The Lake is currently in present day Venezuela. The 500-plus men team subdued three Spanish ships. This was the second most successful raid in Central America by Henry Morgan. This victory put Henry and his men into the books of history. The risk the men took was worth the rewards by the British government. However, the man ran out of lack when Britain and Spain signed a peace treaty. Considering his services were of no big use, Morgan had to retire from fighting to stay in Jamaica. This is where all his bounties and investments were (Graham 2014).

It did not take long before Jamaica government appointed Sir Henry Morgan as the army leader to liberate the country from Spain. The man was accorded unlimited liberties and

capabilities to take the fight to the Spanish forces. By then he was working with French, English and Jamaican soldiers to chorally neutralize Spain's aggression. The battle region was called Isla Vaca, off the coast Hispaniola (Piatt 2012).

Then Morgan mobilized his assets to attack Panama. That was in 1671. The privateers attacked Panama through the Chagres River. Accessing Panama was the hardest part of the mission as the offensive could not have taken place without crossing the Pacific side of the isthmus. Along the Chagres River, then overland through dense jungle, Captain Henry and his fighters encountered their first obstacle; the San Lorenzo Fortress. The battle at San Lorenzo Fortress was the toughest, with over 100 lives, including Colonel Bradley's claimed. Colonel Bradley was operating on Captain Morgan's command (Graham 2014).

Conclusion

The apprehension, sack, and scorching of the city of Panama in 1671 is one of the most discussed subjects in the history of military and piracy operations, especially in the Golden Age of Piracy; condemning the second biggest city in the Western Hemisphere to ruins and unbelievable ashes is something Henry Morgan was, is and will still be remembered for. The man gave out his all to topple Spain's military might in the world (Graham 2014).

Sometimes one might ask themselves was what Henry Morgan did worth it? Yes he was recruited by England to fight Spanish ships, but what happened in the end? Unfortunately, while he was fighting Spanish naval vessels, England and Spain began peace talks without his knowledge. The inking of the peace deal took place at the wrong time when Captain Morgan was fighting Spanish forces in Lake Maracaibo. The area was the richest in the Americans and Spain and England were not prepared to fight for long, leaving Morgan with no option but to turn to

Jamaica to protect his wealth. In general, a hero to England and a villain to Spain, Henry

Morgan became the most prominent privateer in the Golden Age of Piracy. It is his work that

Spain was weakened. He was a source of motivation for other countries to not fear Spain. He

made Spain look mortal and vulnerable, opposite to what most believed (Graham 2014).

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