WOLVES of the SEA

By RANDALL PARRISH

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I—Geoffry Carlyle, mariner, sentenced to twenty years of servitude in the American colonies for complicity in the Monmouth rebellion, is put aboard ship. He sees among the passengers Dorothy Fairfax of Maryland and a Spaniard calling himself Captain Sanchez.

CHAPTER II—Life on the prison ship.

CHAPTER III—Carlyle meets Dorothy, who informs him her uncle has bought his services. Carlyle and Sanchez clash.

CHAPTER IV.

Black Sanchez, Pirate.

I rested in my berth for a long time, staring blankly up at the dark deck above, unable to sleep, and endeavoring to figure out the true meaning of all these occurrences. I felt that I

"I Had Eight Months of It, Mate."

could understand the interest exhibited by Dorothy Fairfax, and, greatly as I already admired her, I was not egotist enough to even imagine that her effort to serve me had basis in any personal attraction. But what about Lieutenant Sanchez? Why was this unknown Spaniard already so openly my enemy? Could it be because of Dorothy Fairfax? I felt finally that I had the clue—jealousy, the mad, unreasoning jealousy of his race.

I had no false conception as to this; no vagrant thought that her interest in me was any more than a passing fancy, born of sympathy and a desire to aid. Nevertheless, as she had thus already served me, I now owed her service in return, and here was the first call. If conditions made it possible it was my plain duty to place myself between these two.

In the intensity of my feelings I must have unconsciously spoken aloud, for a shaggy head suddenly popped out from the berth beneath where I lay, and Haley's interested voice asked solicitously:

"Hy, thar; what's up, mate? Ye was mutterin' 'way thar an' not disturbin' me none, till ye got ter talkin' 'bout sum feller called Sanchez. Then I sorter got a bit interested. I know'd thet cuss onct," and he spat, as though to thus better express his feelings, "The d——d ornary pirate."

I laughed, my whole mental mood changed by this remark.

"Do you refer to 'Black Sanchez?' I've heard of him; were you ever in his hands?"

"Was I?" he laughed grimly. "I hed eight months of it, mate, and a greater demon never sailed. The things I saw done yer'd never believe no human orth could do. If ever thar was two people in one skin, sir, it's thet Black Sanchez. When he's playin' off ter good he's as soft an' sweet as a dandy in Piccadilly, an' when he's real he's like a devil in hell."

"Were you a prisoner—or did you sail under him?"

"Both, fer the matter o' thet. He give me the choice ter serve or walk the plank. I was eighteen, an' hev an o' mother at Deal."

"I see; but later got away?"

"Ay, I did thet," chuckling over the recollection. "But I hed ter wait eight months fer the luck." My neighbor went on to tell at great length the story of his escape.

"I had a companion once," I observed, interested to see Haley, "who claimed to have seen the fellow; he described him as being a very large man, with intensely black, bewitching eyes and a heavy black beard almost hiding his face."

"Maybe he looked like that when he saw him, but he ain't no bigger man than I am; he won't weigh as much by fifteen pound. Thet is he mighty seldom looks the same, fer thet's part o' his game. I've seen him in all sorts o' disguises. It's only his eyes he can't hide, an' thar's been times when I thought they was the ugliest eyes ever I saw. He's sure an ornary devil, an' when he gits mad, I'd rather be afront of a tiger. Besides fightin's his trade, an' no weakliu' ain't goin' ter control the sort o' chaap he's got ter handle. Most o' 'em would murder him in a minute if they dared. Oh, he's bad all right, but yer wouldn't exactly think so, just ter look at him."

"What, then, does he really look like?"

"Oh, a sorter swashbucklin' Spanish don—the kind what likes ter dress up an' play the dandy. He's got a pink an' white complexion, the Castilian kind, yer know, an' wears a little mustache, waxed up at the ends. I heard he was about forty-five; I reckon he must be thet, but he didn't look older than thirty."

Haley dropped off to sleep, but my mind continued to wander until it conjured up once again this West Indian pirate. His name and the story of his exploits had been familiar to me ever since I first went to sea. While only one among many operating in those haunted waters his resourcefulness, daring and cruelty had won him an infamous reputation, a name of horror. In those days, when the curse of piracy made the sea a terror, no ordinary man could ever have succeeded in attaining such supremacy in crime.

Black Sanchez—and Haley pictured him as a dandified, ordinary appearing individual, with white and red complexion, a small mustache and flashing dark eyes—a mere Spanish gallant, without special distinction. Why, that description, strangely enough, fitted almost exactly this fellow on board, this other Sanchez.

The suspicion which had crept into my mind was so absurd, so unspeakably silly and impossible that I laughed at myself and dismissed the crazy thought. Chuckling over it I finally fell asleep.

CHAPTER V.

The Namur of Rotterdam.

The brig, with all sails set and favored by a strong wind, drew rapidly in toward the point of landing. The great majority of the prisoners remained on deck, chained together and helpless, yet surrounded by armed guards, while the few who had already been purchased by passengers humbly followed their new masters ashore the moment the gangplank touched the soil of Virginia. There were five of us altogether thus favored, but I was the only one owing allegiance to Roger Fairfax. The rude landing wharf along which we lay was already densely crowded. Altogether it was a bustling scene, full of change and color, the air noisy with shouting voices, the line of wharves filled with a number of vessels, either newly arrived or preparing to depart. It was with no small difficulty we succeeded in forcing our way through this jostling throng until we attained to an open space ashore. I followed closely behind the three composing our party, Roger Fairfax and Sanchez, with the laughing girl between them for protection. Fairfax was evidently well known to a number present, for he was being greeted on all sides with hearty handshakes and words of welcome.

We boarded the Fairfax sloop. The baggage was transferred. I worked with the Fairfax servants and it cut my pride to the quick. Out in the bay I was sent to the wheel.

Not another sail appeared across that surface of waters, not even a fisherman's boat, the only other vessel visible along our course being a dim outline close in against that far-away headland toward which I had been instructed to steer. I stared at this object, at first believing it a wreck, but finally distinguishing the bare masts of a medium-sized bark, evidently riding at anchor only a few hundred yards off shore.

The Spaniard presently pointed out to Fairfax the position of the bark.

"Surely a strange place in which to anchor, Lieutenant," said Fairfax. "Bark rigged and very heavily sparred. Seems to be all right. What do you make of the vessel?"

The Spaniard twisted his mustache but exhibited little interest, although his gaze was upon the craft.

"Decidedly Dutch, I should say," he answered slowly. "The beggars seem quite at home there, with all their washing out. Not a usual anchorage?"

"No, nor a particularly safe one. Travers' place is beyond the bend. We'll pick up with him tonight. D——n you, Sanchez, I believe I'll hail the fellow and find out what he is doing in there."

Sanchez nodded, carelessly striking flint and steel in an effort to relight a cheroot.

We came about slowly. The distance to be covered was not great, and in less than ten minutes we were drawing in toward the high stern of the anchored vessel.

No evidence of life appeared on board, although everything looked shipshape aloft and alow, and a rather extensive awnin flapped to the wind forward, betokening a generous crew. A moment later my eyes made out the name painted across the stern—Namur of Rotterdam.

Fairfax leaned far out across the rail as we swept in closer, but the Spaniard exhibited no particular interest in the proceedings. A hundred feet distant I held the plunging sloop to mere steerage-way, while Fairfax hailed.

A red-faced man with a black beard thrust his head up above the after rail and answered, using English, yet with a faint accent which was not Dutch.

"We ran down to see if you were in any trouble. This is a strange place to anchor. What are you—Dutch?"

The fellow waved his hands in a gesture indicating disgust.

"Dat's eet. Ve're ov Rotterdam—you see ze name ov ze sheep. But ve not sail from thar dis time—no. Ve cum here from ze Barbadoes," he explained brokenly, "wiz cane sugar an' hides. Ve vait here for our agent."

"But why anchor in a place like this? Why not go on up to the wharves?"

"Vye not? For ziz—I no trust my crew ashore. Zay Vest Indy niggers, an' vud run avay ven ze chance cum. I know vat zay do."

In spite of my efforts the two vessels were drifting rapidly apart. Dorothy appeared at the door of the cabin and stood there gazing in surprise at the bark, while the moment he caught sight of her Sanchez went hastily forward, removing his hat with so peculiar a flourish as he approached as to cause me to notice the gesture.

Fairfax waved his hand to me to resume our course. Shortly after he crossed the deck to the wheel. There he stood watching the bark for some time.

"What do you make of her, Carlyle?" he asked finally. "I believe that fellow lied."

"So do I, sir," I answered promptly. "Whatever else he may be, he's no peaceful Dutch trader. That fellow got his accent from south Europe. If he was loaded with cane sugar and hides for market he wouldn't be nearly so high out of water. That bark was in ballast or I miss my guess. Besides if he was a trader where was his crew? I tell you the men on board that hooker had orders to keep down."

"I believe you are right," he admitted frankly. "There is something wrong there. I'll tell Travers and have him send a runner overland to give warning below."

CHAPTER VI.

The Mysterious Sail.

Where I leaned alone against the rail my eyes followed the Spaniard in doubt and questioning, nor could I entirely banish from mind Haley's description of that buccaneer bearing a similar name. Yet, in spite of my unconscious desire to connect these two together, I found it simply impossible to associate this rather soft-spoken, effeminate dandy with that bloody villain.

It was already quite dusk when we finally drew in beside Travers' wharf and made fast. Our approach had been noted and Travers himself—a white-haired, white-bearded man, yet still hearty and vigorous, attired in white duck—was on the end of the dock to greet us, together with numerous servants of every shade of color, who immediately hoisted themselves being luggage up the steep path leading toward the house, standing conspicuous amid a grove of trees on the summit of the bank. The others followed, four fellows tugging with difficulty an iron-bound chest, the two older men engaged in earnest conversation, thus leaving Sanchez apparently well satisfied with the opportunity alone to assist the girl.

Except to render the sloop completely secure for the night, there remained little work for us to perform on board. The four of us passed the early evening undisturbed smoking and talking together. So the time passed quickly, and it must have been nearly midnight before we brought out blankets from the forecastle and lay down in any spot we chose on deck.

It was a fair, calm night, but moonless, with but little wind stirring, and a slight haze in the air, obscuring the

Eyes Followed the Spaniard.

vision. The others must have fallen asleep immediately. At last, despairing of slumber, and perchance urged by some premonition of danger, I arose to my feet and moved silently off.

My startled eyes caught a glimpse of a speck of white emerging from the black shadows—the spectral glimmer of a small sail. The strange craft swept past, so far out that those on board no doubt believed themselves beyond sight from the shore, heading apparently for a point of land, which I vaguely remembered as jutting out to the northward.

CHAPTER VII.

The Lieutenant Unmasked.

Where the craft could be bound; for what secret purpose it was afloat; who were aboard, were not so many unanswerable questions arising in my mind. Where could it have come from, unless from that strange Dutch bark? If it really came from the Namur of Rotterdam had it been sent in answer to some signal by Sanchez? I could think of nothing else. I determined to assure myself as to the identity of these strangers. If they had actually landed it would require only a few moments to ascertain the truth. The distance proved somewhat greater than anticipated, because of the deep curve in the shore and I had nearly reached the conclusion that the boat must have rounded the point and gone on when suddenly I was brought to a halt by a voice speaking in Spanish—one of those harsh croaking voices never to be reduced to a whisper.

"Not the spot Manuel? Of course it is; do you not suppose I know? This is the place and now there is nothing to do but wait. The senor—he will be here presently."

"Ay, unless you misread the signal," a somewhat more discreet but piping voice replied doubtfully. "I saw nothing of all you tell about, Estada."

The two men went on to discuss plans evidently communicated to Estada by Sanchez from England. I was about to creep nearer, when a newcomer moved past me scarcely a yard distant, along the narrow strip of sand. Directly opposite my covert he paused.

"Estada." He spoke the name cautiously.

"Ay, captain," and another figure emerged noiselessly from the gloom. "We await you."

"Good. I rather questioned if you caught my signal. I was watched and obliged to exercise care. How many have you here?"

"Four, senor, with Manuel Estevan."

"Quite sufficient. How is it here? Are there suspicions?"

"None, senor. We have cruised outside most of the time. There is no warships in these waters. You said you were being watched on the sloop. Are you known?"

"A dog of a servant who came over with us—one of Monmouth's brood. The fellow watches me like a hawk. We had some words aboard and there is hate between us."

"May I ask your plans, senor?"

"Yes, I am here to explain. This planter, Fairfax, has returned from England with a large sum. It is in gold and notes. It represents the proceeds of the tobacco crop of himself and a number of his neighbors. Without doubt it will be upward of fifty thousand pounds. This still remains in his possession, but a part will be dispersed tomorrow; so if we hope to gain the whole we must do so now. Everything is ready, and there is not the slightest suspicion of danger—not even a guard set over the treasure."

"Then it is at the house?"

"In an iron-bound chest, in the room assigned to Fairfax for the night. Only two servants sleep in the main house, the cook and a maid, both women. Fairfax is vigorous and will put up a fight if he has any chance. He must be taken care of before he does have any. Travers is an old man, to be knocked out with a blow. All we have to fear are those fellows on the sloop, and they will have to be attended to quietly without any alarm reaching the house. I am going to leave that job to you—it's not your first."

"The old sea orders, captain?"

"Ay, that will be quicker and surer." The voice hardened to sudden ferocity. "But, mark you, with one exception—the Englishman is not to be killed, if he can be taken alive. I would deal with him."

"Then after that," Sanchez went on deliberately, as though murder was of small account, "you will follow me up the bluff. Who are the others with you?"

"Carl Anderson, Pedro Mendez and Cochose."

"Well chosen; Mendez is the least valuable, and we will leave him with the prisoner at the boat. The big negro, Cochose, together with Manuel, can attend to Travers and the two negresses—they sleep below. That will leave you and the Swede to get the chest. No firearms if they can be avoided. I have been over the house and drawn a diagram. You can look it over in the cabin of the sloop. The stairs lead up from the front hall. I will go with you to the door of Fairfax's room."

"And you, senor—the girl?"

"What know you of any girl?"

"That there was one on the deck of the sloop—an English beauty. It was when you turned to greet her that you gave me the signal. I merely thought that perhaps—"

"Then stop thinking," burst forth Sanchez enraged. "Thinking has nothing to do with your work. If there is a girl I attend to her. Let that suffice. Diablo! am I chief here, or are you? You have my orders; now obey them and hold your tongue. Bring the men up here."

The little band of men emerged from the concealment of the fog noiselessly. I could distinguish no faces, scarcely indeed the outlines of their separate forms in the gloom, but one was an unusually big fellow—Cochose.

"Lads," he said incisively, a sharper note of leadership in the tone "it has been a bit quiet for you lately; but now I am back again, and we'll try our luck at sea once more."

There was a savage growl of response, a sudden leaning forward of dark figures.

"We'll begin on a job tonight. There are fifty thousand pounds for us in that house yonder, and I waive my share. Estada will explain to you the work I want done. By daylight we shall be on blue water, with our course set for Porto Grande. How is it, boys, do you smell at the salt sea?"

"Ay, ay, captain."

"And see the pretty girls waiting and hear the chink of gold?"

"Ay, senor."

"Then do not tell me to-night—and remember it is to be so—no knife. Estada, I have forgotten one thing—Scuttle the sloop before joining me. The better to make all sure; and now, strong arms, and good luck. Go to your task, and if one fails me it will mean the lash at the mast-butt."

They moved off one by one, Estada leading, along the narrow strip of sand, five of them, on their mission of murder. The leader remained alone, his back toward where I crouched, his eyes following their vanishing figures until the night had swallowed them.

(Continued Next Sunday)

NOTICE TO CREDITORS.

In the matter of the estate of David L. Wylde, deceased.

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned has been duly appointed as the executor of the estate of David L. Wylde, deceased, and that all persons having claims against the estate of the said deceased, present them duly verified, to the undersigned, at his office at No. 1113 Adams avenue, La Grande, Oregon, within six months from the date of the first publication of this notice.

The date of the first publication is March 14th, 1919.

B. F. WYLDE, Executor.

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