Henry Morgan

Title: The King of All Pirates
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In the year 1655 England seized a weakly guarded Spanish Island: Jamaica, and converted it into an English colony. The guards defending the Island were generally taken from the streets, and represented the worst criminal elements. The guards were thieves, murderers, and cheats. From this band of criminals formed many groups of buccaneers who terrorized the region. At this time Henry Morgan began his overwhelming pirate career.

This gives the reader a background of what was to come of Henry Morgan: from an ordinary soldier, to a never crowned king of Jamaica. Morgan earned fame and respect among his friends and enemies alike thanks to his successful (and profitable) attacks on Vilahermosa (Capital of the Mexican province Tobasco), and Gran Granada (the silver mining center of Nicaragua).

Gran Granada, for those times considered a large and prosperous city, was located 200 kilometers inland on the shore of Nicaragua Lake. Access to the town was restricted by dense wild Jungle. Henry Morgan embarked on a difficult and daring escapade involving a long and dangerous journey through the unexplored jungle. This expedition was followed by a triumphant lightning assault on Gran Granada. The attack yielded enormous spoils, and was considered a great success for Henry Morgan.

Henry Morgan was pleasantly surprised upon his return to Jamaica: the island had a newly appointed commander of all English troops in the west Indies, this commander was Henry Morgan's uncle.

So the continuing pirate career of Henry Morgan was so secured. After the death of Henry Morgan's uncle (Edward Morgan), the governor of Jamaica chose Henry Morgan to become the commander of the militia in Port Royal. By 1668 Henry Morgan was already an English vice admiral of a fleet of 15 ships. At the same time pirates elected Henry Morgan to become the successor to Edward Mansfield (leader of all pirate activities in Jamaica). As an English officer and pirate general: Henry Morgan became the terror of all Spaniards in the West Indies.

In 1668 Morgan made two pirating ventures. Morgan's attack on the inland city of Peurto Principe (pwert-o PREEN-the-pay), Cuba, was considered his first Major attack. Unfortunately for Morgan, his crew of pirates were ambushed along the way, and only took the city with bitter struggle and great loss. Things got worse for Morgan when word came that the city's treasure had been hidden. Morgan and his crew were forced to settle for 50,000 pieces of eight in return for sparing their captives. Half of Morgan's crew quit after the attack on Puerto Principle. Morgan was not discouraged, and announced plans for attacking the great treasure city of Porto Bello, Panama. Experienced sea pirates scoffed at the plan: Porto Bello was larger, better fortified, and had an army troop when

compared to Puerto Principle. Morgan, however, had a plan. When he attacked Porto Bello, he arrived on canoes, silently, and under the cover of darkness, Morgan's men slipped into the harbor before anyone knew they were there. The first two forts of Porto Bello both fell quickly, but the third withstood each attack the pirates implemented. Morgan finally devised a sinister plan: he used captured catholic priests and nuns to shield his crew as they climbed the walls of the fort. It was only a matter of time before the city fell into the hands of Henry Morgan, along with 250,000 pieces of eight, and 300 slaves. When word of this attack spread, Morgan's force swelled to 15 ships and 900 men. Henry Morgan was quickly known by the nickname: Morgan "the terrible".

A year later Morgan led an expedition of 8 ships and 650 buccaneers to attack the Venezuelan cities of Marcaibo (a coastal city located at the mouth of an inland lake) and Gilbraltar (located on the other side of the lake). Compared with his last venture, the plunder was not comparable, and Morgan found the cities virtually deserted. The result: 50,000 English pounds, and slaves and goods of the same value. When the pirates tried to sail from the lake, they found that their exit had been blocked. Maracaibo's powerful fort had their gun trained on Morgan, and three huge Spanish men-o-war stood just outside the channel. Morgan offered the Spanish the option of surrender, instead of accepting, the Spanish laughed. Morgan decided to teach them a lesson they would, indeed, never forget. Morgan had his lead ship (a small sloop, covered with pitch, tar, and brimstone.) loaded with kegs of gunpowder, and had dummies (made of pumpkins and wood, dressed as buccaneers) placed at battle stations throughout his ship. While the Spanish still laughed the small vessel slowly approached them and suddenly burst into flames, it then exploded: sinking the first man-o-war, and burning the second to the hull. The remaining man-o-war was easily captured by the pirates. Once again Morgan offered the Spanish the option of surrender: once again the Spanish refused. Shrugging his shoulders Morgan had his crew embark for shore with longboats: upon seeing this the Spanish assumed the pirates were massing for a land attack. As a result the Spanish moved their cannon to the other side of the fort. Before the Spanish had a chance to move the cannon back into place, Morgan took advantage of the opportunity by safely sailing past the fort that night. Only then did the Spaniards finally realize that they had been tricked: instead of landing on the other side of the jetty, Morgan's men had simply crouched below the gunwale and returned to their ships. After this battle, Henry Morgan was the undisputed king of the buccaneers.

In January 1670, Morgan set out after the largest venture of his career, to plunder the gold of Panama. Answering his call, 2000 buccaneers on 36 ships assembled to prepare for an attack on Panama. Once Morgan took over Fort San Lorenzo, he led his crew on a rough 16-day journey through dense almost impassable Jungle. The Spaniards were prepared for Morgan, and six hundred cavalry swooped down on the pirates. Thousands of muskets fired; both sides took their loses, but the pirates held their ground. A stampede of 2,000 Spanish bulls did not deter the pirates, and the Spanish finally fled in retreat. The city belonged to the buccaneers, and yielded 100,000 English Pounds. Unfortunately, at that time, England was no longer at war with Spain. Morgan was recalled to England and thrown into the dungeons to stand trial as a pirate. However, King Charles II, learning

about Morgan's great deeds, knighted him instead in 1673, making him lieutenant governor of Jamaica. Morgan was ordered to rid the seas from all buccaneers.

Morgan had done well in executing the Kings orders. When he died in 1688 there were almost no buccaneers left.

Henry Morgan was one of the most ruthless of pirates, his daring, brutality, and intelligence made him the most feared, and respected buccaneer of all time. Henry Morgan really was the king of all pirates.