

A NEW VOYAGE AND
DESCRIPTION OF THE
ISTHMUS OF AMERICA,
BY LIONEL WAFFER

L. E. Elliot Joyce



THE HAKLUYT SOCIETY

ASHGATE EBOOK

A New Voyage and Description of the Isthmus of America, by Lionel Wafer

Surgeon on Buccaneersing Expeditions in Darien,
the West Indies, and the Pacific, from 1680 to 1688.

With Wafer's Secret Report (1698), and
Davis's Expedition to the Gold Mines (1704)

Edited by
L.E. ELLIOT JOYCE

ASHGATE

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Notes and Appendices, by
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PREFACE

THE *New Voyage and Description of the Isthmus of America* has been a favourite book from the time of its first publication in 1699. But since the issue of the second edition in the year 1704 it has never been reprinted as a whole in England until now.

I first became acquainted with Lionel Wafer upon the 'Isthmus of America' itself, after walking, somewhere about dawn, along the red floor of Culebra Cut, thence proceeding to Panama City; there, the little volume written two hundred years previously by the surgeon-buccaneer was given to me by that delightful poet of Panama, Tracy Robinson. The book was in my hand when I was strolling in the cool of the day along the stout, high-raised sea-wall. Noticeably aloof stood little groups of short, stocky, black-haired, brown-skinned youths, gazing out to sea; I learned that they were Cuna, and that this sea-wall is the traditional meeting-place, an hour or so before sundown every evening, of any 'Darien Indians' who chance to be in Panama City. This was in 1910. From that time the hope of editing Wafer's book was in my mind. The long and absorbing work of collecting material and annotating has often been interrupted, and even now there remain mysteries in Wafer's life which further research may reveal. Meanwhile, I owe debts of sincere gratitude to the officials of the Hakluyt Society, whose President and Honorary Secretary have spared so much time to the preparation of this volume; to the Marqués de Merry del Val, for help in connexion with the early Spanish Conquistadores; to Sir Claude and Lady Mallet; Mr. Philip Gosse; Father G. H. Joyce, S.J.; Mr. David Francis; Dr. C. Upson Clark, of New York; Don Narciso Garay, historian of Panama; Mr. Frank Cundall of Jamaica; Mr. George Wafer; and Mr. William Park, of the National Library of Scotland.

L. E. JOYCE.

LONDON, 1933.

INTRODUCTION

LIONEL WAFER AND HIS TIMES

I

THE claim of Lionel Wafer to fame rests upon his record of a brief episode of some four months spent among the 'wild Indians' of Darien; and so just is the claim that two hundred and thirty years after the *New Voyage and Description of the Isthmus of America* was printed his book remains the most authoritative source of information concerning the native folk of south-east Panama.

Between the hills where the Chagre river rises and the westerly banks of the Atrato lies the mistily defined region of Darien, frequently included in the ephemeral captaincy of Castilla del Oro—Golden Castile. An accurate small-scale map of Darien or of the adjacent San Blas archipelago is still lacking, although gallant efforts have been made during the last four hundred years by Spaniards, buccaneers, and later travellers and official bodies since Independence, to map certain routes across the belt. Difficulties become formidable as soon as an attempt is made to reconcile Spanish, piratical, and modern descriptions; and names of localities. Lucidity is not aided by the fact that the name Darien was applied after the Spanish entry to both the Gulf of Urabá and the Gulf of San Miguel; and that the Atrato, flowing north, and the Chucunaque-Tuira, flowing south, were each called the river of Darien. Two-thirds of the Darien region is covered with forest, deep and majestic on the Atlantic slope, lighter and more deciduous on the drier Pacific littoral. Above the tangled bush, fantastically adorned with orchids and vines, typical trees rise eighty or a hundred feet, holding their crowns, covered after the first rains with golden, rosy, and blue flowers, above the straight and buttressed trunks. The line of the central cordillera is fairly defined east of the Chagre valley until, bending south, it breaks into a mass of tangled crests and ridges, holding high plateaux between the ranges. No mountain pass is less than five hundred feet high; and in the San Blas region the

average pass has a thousand feet elevation. The massif of great south-easterly Panama is at least twelve miles wide. Rain falls for eight months of the year. On the north hundreds of little streams flow into the tideless Atlantic coast; on the south other hundreds join the Pacific, with its twenty feet or more of rise and fall. Where gorges break the mountain barriers, great rivers twist through the thickly forested complex of hills, the Chagre, the Atrato, the Chepo and the Chucunaque rivers forming ancient highways of travel that almost cut the Isthmus into sections. Here was the scene of the first successful attempt of the seventeenth century on the part of non-Spanish Europeans to break into the Pacific by way of the 'Isthmus of America' and to raid the ports of Central and South America on the west coast.

At the time when the adventure occurred, in 1680-1, Wafer was surgeon to a band of English buccaneers. Afterwards, he accompanied his friends in a series of piratical expeditions ending in 1688; was imprisoned in Jamestown, Virginia, for nearly two years on piracy charges; and, after being permitted to return to England in 1690, eventually recovered from the none too willing hands of the Admiralty the bulk of the meagre contents of his sea-chest, collected during the years of buccaneering. His book was published in 1699, nine years after his return to England.

Wafer's personality is known chiefly through the medium of his lucid, accurate, and modest writings. No portrait of Lionel Wafer is recorded. It is not known certainly when or where he was born, where he received his evidently fair education and knowledge of surgery, or when or where he died. The only relative of whom he speaks is 'a brother', employed in Jamaica; so far as is known, he never had either wife or child. References to Wafer on the part of other writers are few; he is mentioned as a fellow author by the more famous Dampier, a shipmate for some three years; Walter Herries of the Company of Scotland, and Herries' attacker in print, knew him, and each speaks of him in a friendly manner. None of the three tells us a word of his personal appearance or characteristics, manner of life, or family. This companion of pirates appears to have been an amiable and keenly observant young man,

gifted with a disposition that allowed him to live with Cuna Indians of the Panama forest, to sail with buccaneers, to deal with highly placed politicians, to experience great physical hardships, endure hostility, forget grievances, and to accept better fortune, with a serene face. He possessed an accurate memory; and, when he wrote of regions unknown to his readers, did not permit himself to enter the tempting path of exaggeration. Every test applied to his story of things seen in Darien renders his trustworthiness more obvious.

Wafer says in the *New Voyage*, as explanation of his knowledge of Gaelic speech, that during his boyhood he knew the Highlands of Scotland and also certain regions of Ireland. This acquaintance suggests that Wafer's father may have been a Scots soldier whose regiment was quartered in Ireland during troubled times; that the family was one of those 'planted' in Ireland, from Scotland, by James I or by Cromwell; or simply that the proximity of, and constant interchange between, Argyle and Ulster invited enterprising folk. Mr. George Wafer, a member of the family now living in England, but connected with south-east Ireland, says that the Wafers are traditionally of Huguenot descent, and that the name has sometimes been spelled Weaver or Weber¹ by branches of the Wexford groups. The patronymic used by Lionel when in Virginia in 1688-90 was 'De la Wafer' or 'Delawafer'; he signed his book simply as 'Lionel Wafer'. Documents sometimes record his name as 'Waffer' or 'Wasser'.

When he went to sea for the first time he was, he says, 'too young' to make any great observations on the voyage; he was actually an assistant to the ship's surgeon, a 'loblolly-boy', that is, one who administered the loblolly, water-gruel given to patients of the day. He is not likely to have been more than seventeen years old at the time. The vessel in which he obtained this modest post was the East India Company's *Anne* (also called the *Great Anne*), in command of Captain Zachary Browne. She left England in February or March 1677, and, reaching Bantam (Java) on 13 July 1677, was sent on to Jambi (Sumatra) to lade with pepper. She returned to Bantam with a good cargo at the end of November or beginning of

¹ 'Wafer' would be spelt 'Uebher' in Gaelic, says Keith Henderson.

December, and was dispatched to England in late January 1678, arriving in London some five months later.

But Wafer did not return in her. He was left ashore, as he tells us, when the *Anne* sailed, but got a passage home in another vessel. This was the *Bombay Merchant*, which, under Captain Roger Bennett, had left England in March 1677 for Surat (India) and Bantam, arriving at the latter port on 23 December of the same year. Wafer is wrong in thinking that Captain Bennett died during the passage; his death occurred after the *Bombay Merchant's* arrival, on 8 January 1678. The ship was sent to Borneo, and she sailed for England under her new captain, John White, according to instructions dated 6 September 1678, in company with the *Unity* and *Expectation*. The three ships reached the Downs on 19 and 25 March 1679. Wafer stayed ashore for a month or two, and then secured another post as assistant surgeon on a ship; he was probably less than twenty years old at the time.

On this second voyage the embryo surgeon sailed westward, in a vessel bound for Jamaica and commanded by Captain Buckenham, a trusted ship-master who frequently carried letters between the Council of Trade and Plantations and the English-settled West Indies. Port Royal was probably reached in the early autumn of 1679, for Buckenham decided that he had time enough, before the sugar harvest and milling began (about December), to sail to the coast of Yucatan for a load of log-wood. Wafer's 'chief inducement' in coming to Jamaica had been to visit a brother, employed on the 'Angels'¹ sugar estate a few miles north-west of Spanish Town, on the Cobre river, belonging to Modyford, ex-Governor of the island. Perhaps this brother was one of the enterprising settlers who had accepted the special benefits offered by Charles II to emigrants to Jamaica. It seems unlikely that he had been transported, although forced emigration to Barbados and Jamaica, in and after Cromwell's time,² was resorted to in order to get

¹ The 'Angels' was still listed as an estate in the official census of Jamaican properties of 1884; it then consisted of 1744 acres of woodland, and cattle pastures or 'pens'.

² In 1649 Bristol merchants had successfully asked for 500 Scots, defeated by Cromwell, to send as labourers in the North American and West Indian

rid of men who had taken up arms on the losing side; for his position on the estate was good enough for Lionel to be received as a visitor. This brother provided the capital, too, which enabled the young surgeon to set up for himself in Port Royal. There he might have stayed had not chance led him to the company of Edmund Cook and another sea-captain just going off 'on the account'.

Wafer is reticent concerning his reasons for leaving Jamaica and joining a band of buccaneers; but their object in inviting his company was plain enough. The presence of surgeons was a first necessity in expeditions where fighting was almost inevitable. Wafer says that he met with two privateering captains in Port Royal, and that they 'took me along with them' when they sailed out 'toward the coast of Cartagena', which was not, as a matter of fact, their destination. These two masters were Edmund Cook (or Cooke) and Captain Lynch, sometimes called Lynnon. Of the latter no more is known; but Masefield suggests that Cook may be identical with the Captain Edmund Cook(e) whose pink, the *Virgin* of London, was captured by Spaniards in Caribbean waters, in 1673; the cargo was seized, the crew turned adrift, and the captain, after vainly trying to get restitution in Madrid, sought letters of reprisal.

To them, as to other buccaneers in Port Royal, the news of the sack of Porto Bello in 1679-80 must have come like the sound of a trumpet to a war-horse. Some at least of the leading spirits in the raid, John Coxon, Bartholomew Sharp, Sawkins, Cornelius Essex, Robert Allison (Alliston, Aletson), and Thomas Mackett (or Maggott), familiar frequenters of Port Royal, were well-known. In the MS. in the British Museum attributed to John Coxon it is stated that the first intention of the Porto Bello raiders was 'to goe into the Bay of Hundorus to cutt Logwood [with permission] from his Majesty's reall subject the Earle of Carlisle', who, a Governor reputed lenient to adventurers, was then nearly at the end of his term of office.

plantations; two years later, after the battle of Worcester, thousands more Scots were thus transported; Irish were shipped, virtually slaves, in like manner in 1652. After Monmouth's rebellion, 1685, Jeffreys transported 850 men to the West Indies; and as late as 1699 the arrival of 200 white 'servants' from Scotland, and their sale in Jamaica, is recorded.

Any pretence of cutting logwood was, however, soon abandoned, for the party 'concluded to make Capt. John Coxon their chief and to wood and water at Porttammorant¹ and after make an expedition to take Portavella'. They landed twenty leagues east² of Porto Bello, walked through the woods for six days, with the guidance and help of Indians,³ attacked and looted the fortified port from the south, and carried off plunder and prisoners to a cay near the Bastimentos. The Spaniards took a measure of revenge by burning the nearest Indian village and killing twenty men. These native folk seem to have been Cuna; they impressed the buccaneers because they had 'doctors' who could 'raise the Divill att their pleasure', as Wafer thought his hosts did, a year later; and they spoke of the Spaniards 'by the name of walkers', that is to say, 'huaka', the word still used by modern Cuna for 'stranger', with an inimical implication.

To this group of natives, headed by 'Andreas', was due, according to more than one account, the first suggestion that the buccaneers should cross the Isthmus and raid the Spanish gold mines on the South Sea. They had other grievances besides the recent ruin of their village near Nombre de Dios. Basil Ringrose says that the original project urged by the Indians was an attack upon 'Tuckamore', i.e. the gold-washings on the Tumaco river, south of the Gulf of San Miguel. This objective was changed to the nearer Santa Maria, a fortified 'camp' on the Tuira, centre for gold collection from various riverine points; but it was equally desperate. To attain success, the buccaneers had to cross an unfamiliar region of tropical jungle and mountain, inhabited by a strange race; and to place themselves in the jealously guarded Pacific regions held by Spain against all other nations. The very lives of the buccaneers depended upon the good faith of the Cuna Indians; the expeditionaries were babes in the wood when once the shores of Darien were left behind. But no misgiving appears to have

¹ Port Morant, S.E. Jamaica.

² At Port Scrivan (Puerto del Escribano).

³ Dampier says that this welcome, and aid, offered by the formerly dreaded Darien Indians to the English was due to a new friendship established by Captain William Knight.

troubled Captain Bartholomew Sharp and his friends, the rumour of another raid drawing to them hundreds of volunteers. The raiders of Porto Bello could not return to Jamaica, where the authorities, assailed by Spanish complaints, were pricked into readiness for stern measures with pirates; so a venture far afield promised less danger than a reckoning at home.¹

II. *The Isthmian Crossing*

These were the ideas that, permeating Port Royal, led Captain Cook to engage Lionel Wafer for an expedition to join Sharp and Coxon. Slipping from harbour, Cook picked up the main body of the buccaneers under Sharp, who refreshed at Boca del Toro (Almirante Bay), repaired their vessels, received adherents, and on 23 March 1680 moved south to the region of Golden Island. Here they were met by the Indians who had, as agreed, waited for them for 'three moons',² and who now brought presents of venison and plantains. The buccaneer fleet, assembled amongst the islets of the 'Sumblers' at the height of Darien's dry season, included a number of armed vessels. Captain Peter Harris commanded a ship of 150 tons, carried 25 guns and a crew of 107 men; Coxon's ship was of 80 tons burden, with 8 guns and 97 men. Sharp commanded a ship of 25 tons, with 2 guns and 40 men; Richard Sawkins, a ship of 16 tons, 1 gun, and 35 men. Edmund Cook, (35 tons, 43 men), Alliston (18 tons, 24 men), and Mackett (14 tons, 20 men) were without guns. Two French privateers also joined the party. But the latter, Captains Burnanoe³ and Rowe (or Rose), with their French crews, 'declaring generally against a long march by land', stayed in the Caribbean.

¹ No foreign vessels had been seen off the Pacific coast of the Spanish-American colonies since Drake's day, a century previously. So secure were the Spaniards that all the guns guarding Panama City pointed landwards, defending the road to Venta de Cruces, by which Morgan had crossed to attack old Panama in 1671; none were turned seaward until after Sharp's expedition.

² Sloane MS. 48; Basil Ringrose's account, with decorations by Wm. Hack.

³ Capt. Burnanoe (Bournano) had crossed as far as Chepo in 1678; the famous La Sound (Lessone) had preceded him there in 1675. Neither found the experiment worth repeating.

Alliston and Mackett were left with the ships and a guard party; and on Monday 5 April, 1680, 336 men¹ were landed on the main opposite Golden island. Each man was given two pounds of flour, made up into four cakes (journey or 'Johnny' cakes) boiled in sea-water, for provision, and nearly all carried a musket, pistol, and hanger.

Sharp led the expedition, displaying a red flag with a bunch of green and white ribbons; Sawkins' men followed, with a red flag striped with yellow; Harris commanded two divisions, and had two green flags; the fifth and sixth divisions, including men from Alliston's and Mackett's ships, were led by Coxon, carrying red flags; next came Captain Cook, with a red flag striped with yellow, and a hand and sword for device. In undistinguished positions marched Dampier, Ringrose, and Wafer, future chroniclers.

The buccaneers took a Negro or two as servants, and a couple of those almost indispensable helpers of foreign adventurers off the Spanish Main, Indians from the Mosquito Coast (Nicaragua), fine watermen, expert in spearing fish. Guiding the party marched the Cuna Indian chief Andreas, his son Augustine, the 'Golden-cap' of the buccaneers, and his ally Antonio, accompanied by a considerable number of their people.

They marched all day through the woods, and on the first night, as for many others following, says Cox, the adventurers had 'the cold ground for our bedding and the spangled firmament for our covering'. On 6 April, after climbing a high hill, they beheld far below a river which, the Indians said, ran into the South Sea; probably, the Chucunaque or its tributary the Sucubti. They marched up hill and down dale, eighteen miles. On 7 April they made their way beside the tortuous river, crossing many times; the Indian houses, Ringrose noted (for the Cuna were sufficiently confident to allow this formidable party of over three hundred foreigners to enter their clan-group villages), were very large and well built, 'far more neat than ours in Jamaica', with many interior divisions. These were the typical family dwellings of the Cuna, where the patriarch exercises control over all the group, consisting of his

¹ Five men fell out in early stages of the march.

wife and daughters with their husbands and children, and, often, grand-daughters with their families.¹

On 9 April they waded the river fifty or sixty times, according to Sharp, following the tortuous Chucunaque towards its junction with the Tuira. By this time they were living on plantains, bananas, and wild hog (peccary or warree). Perhaps it was a consolation to see the 'Emperour', on 14 April, put on 'his mantle of pure gold', which was 'extraordinary splendid and rich', over his robe of white cotton; he also assumed a 'belt of Tygers teeth, and a hat of pure gold, with a ring and a plate like a Cockle Shell hanging at it of Gold in his Nose', says Cox.

On 15 April they attacked Santa Maria. The little town, guarded by a fort and surrounded by a stockade, had already received warning of the buccaneers' march; all the gold collected from the mines of the region had been removed two days previously. Sawkins seems to have been the hero of the day, rushing and breaking into the palisades ahead of the main party, who speedily mastered the feeble defence. The eclipse of Sharp's popularity began with this incident. Little loot was obtained, and the party decided to make a bolder bid for fortune in Pacific waters.

On 18 April they saw, for the first time, the 'South Sea'. In a flotilla of borrowed Indian canoes they reached the open sea by way of the Gulf of San Miguel, and, two days later, touched at Plantain island. Attacking and seizing a Spanish barque, they manned her with 130 of the buccaneers, and sailed her westward, seeking food; the rest of the party (two hundred, irrespective of Indians and Negroes) followed in the canoes. On 21 April they were within thirty miles of Panama City, landing at the island of Chepillo, opposite the mouth of the Bayano (Chepo) river. A skirmish with a Spanish ship ended in her escape and return to Panama; the Spaniards, however, were already aware of the presence of pirates in the Pacific. Three armed barques came to search for them, and

¹ Young men, upon marriage, live with the parents of the bride. This matriarchal rule applies even to important and elderly men; a widower may re-marry but must take a widow, to whose father he cheerfully subjects himself as though he were a young bridegroom.

on 23 May found the canoes apparently at their mercy, for the prize barque had gone seeking provisions; but the buccaneers boarded and captured first one and then another of the Spanish vessels, the third of the 'armadilla' escaping by flight. Eleven of the English had been killed, Captain Peter Harris receiving injuries from which he died two days later. The wounded needing more comfort than the barques afforded, the buccaneers sought and seized another larger vessel to serve as a hospital, and then lay before Panama City, hoping to capture a treasure ship coming from Peru. So far, the results of their enterprise, counted in gold, had been disappointing, and quarrels arose. Coxon,¹ criticized for his share in the battle of Perico, withdrew in anger, and 'with fifty of his men perswaded the Indians to return back, having no respect to the poore wounded men, carrying his Chirurgeon with the best of our medicines unknown to the major part of us', remarks John Cox,² adding cheerfully, however, 'This evening (25 April) we tooke a ship with 50,000 pieces of eight³ in her.'

Sawkins and Sharp now decided to refresh at the lovely island of Taboga, and there, within sight of Panama City, enjoyed the orchards and summer houses of the Spaniards. Sailing north, they made an unsuccessful attack upon the little town of Pueblo Nuevo, opposite Quibo island, and here Sawkins was killed, on 23 May 1680. Sharp was again left in command, and 63 of Sawkins's friends marked their regret by withdrawing from the expedition. Sharp's rule was short-lived, chiefly because booty was scarce. All the country near Panama City was in arms against the invaders, and shipping was warned all up and down the coast. But raiding might be profitable farther south; so, on 6 June, the pirate fleet stood due south for Peruvian ports, and although plans for attacking Guayaquil and Paita proved abortive since a keen look-out was

¹ For the next eighteen years Coxon spent an adventurous life, sometimes carrying a commission from Jamaica, sometimes raiding lawlessly, and sometimes peacefully cutting logwood in Campeche. He was more than once charged with piracy, but was always acquitted. Later he is said to have lived among the Mosquito (Mískito) Indians on the Wanks (Segovia) river, Nicaragua, and to have died there in 1698.

² Sloane MS. 49.

³ A 'piece of eight' was a Spanish coin divisible into eight 'reales': then worth about five shillings in English money.

kept, a small success was scored when they took the port-town of Ilo, on 28 October. Fresh water or food was the most important loot. Hence they steered farther south to Chile, reaching and landing at charming La Serena, in Coquimbo Bay, on 3 December. This town, too, yielded little but provisions. Leaving it, they sailed due west for the Juan Fernandez group, spending Christmas on Más a Tierra,¹ the fruitful island that sheltered a succession of marooned men. Quarrels about leadership punctuated the festivities, for, says John Cox, 'the former dissenters had not forgot their old Trade, but were every day for a New Broome'. Sharp was put in irons, Watling elected as commander, and the expedition set out to attack Arica. A party landed on 30 January 1681, but during the assault Watling was killed, and the buccaneers retreated in disorder, although rallied by Sharp; three surgeons were left behind among the captured,² but Wafer had remained with the fleet. Reduced and disappointed, the attackers sailed away north, eventually anchoring off 'Drake's Island', the Isla de Plata. Here disputes broke out again, and when Sharp was finally elected by the majority, forty-four men (with one Spanish-speaking Indian, two Mosquito Indians, and five captured Negroes) decided to break away and to return to the Caribbean. Dampier, John Cook, and Wafer were of these dissentients. The majority party under Sharp kept the remaining large ship, the *Santissima Trinidad*.³ John Cook's party were given the long boat and two canoes, with which to reach the Gulf of San Miguel. On 17 April 1681, when twelve leagues north-west of the Isla de Plata, the buccaneers parted company, Sharp sailing south while the three open boats steered north for the journey of six hundred miles and more.

The party of Sharp and Cox, (with whom was Basil Ringrose),⁴ reduced by three withdrawals and a number of deaths, cruised

¹ Más a Tierra, 'nearer land'. The other large island of the group, Más Afuera, 'farther away', to the westward, has never been inhabited.

² The lives of the surgeons were spared, on the condition that they remained in, and gave their services to, Peru.

³ A smaller vessel of 400 tons, commanded by Cox, had sunk off Guayaquil in August 1680.

⁴ Ringrose, with thirteen others, got passages home in the *Lisbon Merchant*, and landed at Dartmouth 26 March 1682.

in the South Pacific for the next six months, raiding where they could. Sharp's chief exploit was the taking of the *Rosario*, with a cargo of metal ingots, later said to be silver, but mistaken by the buccaneers for lead. Two or three ingots only were saved and taken to Bristol, where the error was discovered. The *Rosario*, plundered after a fight, was set adrift in July 1681; little might have been heard of the facts had not Sharp carried back to England with him one of the Spanish crew, Simón Calderón of Santiago, Chile. Calderón gave evidence in 1682 that after taking the *Rosario* Sharp went back to Plata island, and thence to Paita; and (the coast being now roused against him) made his way round the Horn and to Barbados. Hereabouts the spoil was divided, 400 pesos going to each of 64 men. Calderón says that eight of the chief buccaneers took passage in the *Comadreja Blanca* (Captain Howard) and that he left them at Plymouth. The *Holy Trinity* had been handed over at Antigua, says Cox, 'to seven men that had lost their Shares at Play'.¹ Four of Sharp's men got to Jamaica (Morgan, then Deputy Governor, reported to London in March 1682), and were arrested; for the news of the raid on Porto Bello, the Isthmian crossing, and attacks upon Spanish towns had caused great excitement in the West Indies, as in Europe.

Morgan had at once issued another warrant (following that of May 1680 calling for the apprehension of Sharp, Coxon, and others concerned in the taking of Porto Bello) warning residents against having any dealings with 'the said villainous pirates lurking in and about this island and concealed by some wicked-minded men of their wicked complices'. Writing to Lord Sunderland, Morgan spoke of the difficulties of putting down buccaneering, when French ships, always hanging about the harbour, were ready to shelter runaways; international marauders were encouraged, too 'by the security of the Spaniards and their pusillanimity under all their plenty. I spare no care

¹ John Cox, in Sloane MS. 49, says that they reached Barbados on 28 January (1682). But the English frigate *Richmond* was in the harbour, searching for pirates, and they proceeded in the *Holy Trinity* to Antigua. Here they were refused permission to land, but some men got ashore secretly, while Sharp and sixteen men went on to Nevis and there obtained passages to England.

to put down this growing evil', declared Morgan, adding that the privateers 'discourage the Spanish from private trade with us, which would otherwise be considerable.' In a later letter Morgan emphasizes his last point, referring to the permission given to the English to supply Negroes to the American colonies of Spain, this and the accompanying trade in merchandise promising to make Jamaica prosperous, 'for all the current cash that we now have is brought here by private trade with them'.

Lord Carlisle, arrived in England, pointed out the difficulties of the situation to the Lords of Trade and Plantations; so long as the Spanish Viceroy, he explains, when they catch the log-wood cutters or traders, continue to 'deal so roughly with these English, to make prize of their ships and goods, and prisoners of their men, no good understanding is possible between the two nations'. As far as the privateers are concerned, their depredations are committed by men outside the reach of the English government, but the injuries the English suffer from the Spaniards 'are from men in office and public employ'.

Carlisle had 'heard of the capture of Porto Bello before my departure, but none of the privateers returned to Jamaica, but sailed straight to the river of Darien, and by that King's assistance passed through to the South Sea, where for all I know two or three hundred of them still remain. Coxon alone, who went with them as their captain, with five and fifty more, left them in consequence of some drunken quarrel; and these I met with off Point Negril [west coast of Jamaica] on my passage home. We gave chase with the *Hunter* frigate in company for 24 hours, but he out-sailed us.' Don Pedro de Ronquillo, Spanish Ambassador in London, 'hearing Calderón's story, pressed for punishment of the buccaneers; Morgan's letters backed him up, and Lord Carlisle could do no less. So Sharp, roystering in London, was made the scapegoat. Arrested with as many of his comrades-in-arms as could be found, Sharp was tried at the Marshalsea Court of the Admiralty in Southwark. All the accused were acquitted 'after a fair trial', says the author of the story inserted into the 'corrected' version of the *History of the Buccaneers*. The authorities had nothing against them, had it not been for 'one or two villains of our company, amongst

whom were one or two negroes', who 'had a spleen against Captain Sharp and others that had profited more by the voyage than they had done'.¹

Set at liberty, Sharp 'wasted all his money in good fellowship', and then sought new pastures. An old vessel, lying derelict at London Bridge, was bought for £20, and when Sharp had put into her a crew of sixteen men, and provisions, including butter and cheese, he sailed to the Downs, seized a sea-worthy French ship, scuttled his own, and then, from Romney Marsh, stole cattle to meet the needs of a voyage. Thus equipped he sailed again westwards.

Perhaps we need not follow him farther. But it is interesting to note that in early 1684 Sir William Stapleton, Governor of Nevis, granted Sharp a commission to 'take and apprehend savage Indians and Pirates', a charge which was possibly taken seriously by the buccaneer; for a year later, when he sailed into the harbour of Bermuda and found the island in a ferment over the news of Monmouth's rebellion, he did not hesitate to place his services on the side of law and order. The Governor, Richard Cony, faced a revolt, and was glad to accept Sharp's assistance. In April 1686 Sharp wrote to the Earl of Sutherland 'to satisfy you further that there is rebellion against the King in all these islands', adding that 'people will not believe that any King but Monmouth is living'. The rebels had taken two forts, 'which, however, I and Captain Conway recovered. The country is still in arms and the Governor would be in danger of his life did we not at his request stay here to protect him'.

¹ Sharp took with him to England a portfolio full of maps and charts found in a captured Spanish vessel—perhaps, the *Trinity*; it is now among the Sloane MSS., No. 239. The maps show ports, harbours, and islands of the West Coast of South America, are rather crudely drawn, and coloured with ochre, indigo, and a few touches of vermilion.

Sharp probably took them himself to the able hands of Captain William Hack, fine draughtsman, map-maker, and friend of sea-rovers, who lived at Wapping. Hack copied and improved upon the originals; the Spanish charts bear very few topographical names. These, where they occur, have usually been inserted by an English pen. Hack's maps are full of names and other details, no doubt supplied by Sharp, Ringrose, and other observant buccaneers. A beautiful copy of Hack's maps, completed in 1684, was presented by Sharp to Charles II; another was sold to the South Sea Company in 1711 by one William Hill, then in prison for debt.

Sharp may have exaggerated the danger in order to achieve merit; but Jamaica at least had reason to sympathize, for hundreds of men of Monmouth's army, taken prisoner after Sedgmoor, were sent to Jamaica and Barbados to serve in the plantations for ten years, and some of these joining the 'maroons' had raised an abortive rebellion in August 1685.

Sharp 'pried earnestly' into the reasons for the rebels' actions, but could find only 'trivial objections' to the Governor. However, Sharp's activities did not save him from being tried for piracy in Nevis in February 1687. He was accused of illegal acts off Jamaica in 1684, and off Campeche and on the high seas in October 1685. No witnesses were forthcoming, Sharp was acquitted on all counts, and Sloane heard in 1688 that he was acting as Governor of Anguilla.

After parting from Sharp on 17 April 1681, the party in the canoes and long boat rowed cheerfully northward. The moving spirits were John Cook and William Dampier. The latter, twenty-nine years old at this time, held no important post among the raiders, but already displayed something of the qualities that later made him eminent. A dour and lonely man, superior in aims and intellect to most of his companions, the future writer, hydrographer, and navigator had the abiding characteristic of never suffering fools gladly. But Wafer evidently admired and respected him, and for this reason, and because he distrusted Sharp, accompanied him willingly back to Darien.

The party was just south of Cape San Francisco on 19 April 1681, and arrived without accident at the end of the month, when the dry season was approaching its close, in the Gulf of San Miguel. Here they had news of Spanish ships of war keeping watch for intruders in the entrance, and so crept past, northward, to a point of land on the west of the Gulf, where the boats were abandoned. Hiding in the light woodland of the Pacific, beside a river's mouth, they began, on the first day of May 1681, the journey whose incidents form the main subject of Wafer's book.

They followed the Congo river for a few days. On 5 May occurred the gunpowder accident that injured Wafer's knee. Five days later he was obliged to give up his attempt to march with the party, and remained in the woods with Richard

Gopson and John Hingson. The two latter were uninjured, but exhausted by the struggle through the jungle. Two more men, who had fallen out of the line of march on 4 May, presently joined the three, and all remained for some four months with the Indians of Darien. These Cuna folk cured Wafer's wound with native remedies, but showed an inhospitable and grudging spirit until two of the tribe, taken by Dampier to lead the way back to the Caribbean coast, returned loaded with presents. This tactful treatment, and Wafer's luck in finding an opportunity to show European medical skill in the case of 'Lacenta's lady', secured for the buccaneers the warm friendship of the Indians; Wafer says that the Chief, Lacenta, was anxious for him to remain permanently, promising his daughter to the surgeon in marriage. Wafer was obliged to seek an excuse to proceed to the coast, promising to return when he had procured English hunting dogs for the Chief. Protestations were probably, on both sides, no more than polite gestures, for the great characteristic of the Cuna throughout the four centuries during which the white man has been acquainted with these proud folk has been jealousy for racial purity, attained only by keeping out foreigners. Nearly two hundred years before Wafer's time Peter Martyr had recorded with some astonishment that the Darien natives were 'severe defenders of their patrimony'. 'A man would not think what great wrath and malice was kindled in their hearts against our men, and with what desperate minds they fought for the defence of their liberty, which they more esteem than life or riches.'

Wafer and his four companions were conducted to the coast by almost the same route as that by which Dampier had been guided, the party emerging, after a week's march, through wooded and mountainous country, at the mouth of the Concepción river. A few miles away, at La Sound's Key, buccaneer vessels were riding; they had come to look for the missing men, and within a few hours the five were greeting old companions, Dampier among them.

Several accounts of the Darien crossing of 1681, and of subsequent raids and adventures in the 'South Seas', together with many books of maps and charts of Caribbean and Pacific ports and islands of especial interest to buccaneers, are preserved

in the British Museum, among the manuscripts collected by Sir Hans Sloane and bequeathed to the nation. Sloane was in the West Indies in 1687-8, as physician to the Duke of Albemarle, and took advantage of opportunities to meet many seasoned sea-rovers. For Albemarle, who arrived in Jamaica in December 1687, immediately allied himself with the old band of pro-buccaneers, and abandoning temporarily the repressive measures of Lynch and Hender Molesworth, reappointed Sir Henry Morgan to membership of the Council—from which office he had been suspended, together with his brother-in-law, Robert Bindloss.

Sloane knew Morgan, and in fact seems to have attended him, for he includes notes on his case¹ in medical memoranda of the *Voyage to the Islands*. It is possible that in the favourable milieu of Port Royal Sloane began his collection of buccaneer narratives and maps, and made acquaintance with adventurers who later sent or brought documents to him in London. He was, subsequently, a friend of Dampier, and was instrumental in the painting of the great navigator's portrait by Murray.

Among the different relations of the Isthmian crossing, those of the 'ingenious' Basil Ringrose take precedence for lucidity and completeness (Sloane MS. 48); nothing had been said by Oexmelin himself concerning Darien, but a brief story of the adventure was printed at the end of Croke's first edition of the English version of the *History of the Bucaniers of America*² (1684). A long, detailed account was obtained later from Ringrose, as Croke explained, at the suggestion of 'Gentlemen living at Wapping', and printed as Part IV of succeeding editions. Interesting lights are also thrown upon what was a notable adventure even in the heyday of buccaneering by the journal, 'in a plain Tarpaylin Habbitt,' relating *John Cox his Travills over the Land into the South Seas: from thence Round the*

¹ 'Sir H.M., aged about 45, lean, sallow-coloured, his Eyes a little yellowish . . . much given to drinking and sitting up late.' The note proceeds to relate that the patient tried many doctors, including a 'Black, who plaistered him all over with Clay and Water, and by it augmented his Cough. He left his Black Doctor and sent for another, who promis'd his Cure, but he languished, and his Cough augmenting, died soon after.'

² Translated not from the Dutch original of Oexmelin (Esquemeling) but from the Spanish version of Alonso de Bonne-Maison.

South Parte of America to Barbados and Antegoe (Sloane MS. 49. Written for the Duke of Albemarle); by the manuscript attributed to John Coxon (Sloane MS. 2752); and by Sharp's various accounts, of which one (Sloane MS. 46a) begins briskly: 'Munday we landed at Golden Island with 330 men bound for the town of St. Amarya'.

A somewhat different account, written by Ringrose, with interpolations by Sharp in his own favour, was published in London in 1684, with a preface by Philip Ayres, entitled *The Voyages and Adventures of Captain Bartholomew Sharp*. The relation begins: 'Gold was the bait that tempted a Pack of Merry Boys of us near Three Hundred in Number . . . to list ourselves in the service of one of the Rich West Indian Monarchs, the Emperour of Darien,' and is throughout an amusing example of impudent journalism, coloured to please public taste for marvels, and to obviate accusations of piracy. Sharp's own 'Journal of the Voyage to the South Seas' (Sloane MS. 3820) is also worth comparing with other versions.

IV. Second Expedition to the South Sea

Again in the Atlantic, Wafer went at first to a vessel commanded by Captain Wright, with whom Dampier was sailing; but the French buccaneering vessels of their company were short of men, and the surgeon was presently transferred, with a number of other English, to the ship of Captain Yanky. The ships cruised, sometimes together, in Caribbean waters, until late in 1682, when Yanky and Wright parted company after a stay at Tortuga. Wright sailed north to Chesapeake Bay, where Dampier tried life ashore for the next nine months; Wafer remained as surgeon, and John Cook as quartermaster, with Yanky until the affair of the Spanish prize at the Isle de Vache. The incident reads like comedy. According to privateers' law, command of a prize could be claimed by the quarter-master of the victorious ship, for he stood next to the captain, holding a position equivalent to that of Chief Officer to-day. John Cook, therefore, asked for the captaincy, and when this was unwillingly ceded by the French, he took aboard with him a crew of English who had found life unsatisfactory

on a French vessel. Goods, prize money, and arms were shared out at the Ile de Vache. Captain Yanky, however, 'grutching the English such a vessel', seized her again, turned out the English¹ and put them ashore, took their goods and guns, and sailed the ship away to Petit Guaves. Captain Tristian, more kindly than 'Yanky Dutch', took a few of his English acquaintances, including Cook, Edward Davis, and Wafer, aboard his own vessel. When they arrived in the outer harbour of Petit Guaves, where Yanky and the prize already lay, the French captains went ashore; Cook and Davis promptly took possession of Tristian's ship, set the French crew ashore, and sailed her back to the 'Isle of Ash'. Before the French Governor realized what had happened, the marooned English had been taken aboard the vessel (presently renamed the *Revenge*) and a French ship just arriving from Europe with a cargo of wine was encountered and seized. Shortly afterwards the English buccaneers increased their embryo fleet by the capture of a 'ship of good force', a vessel sufficiently equipped to justify a new enterprise. As to the scene, anywhere would be better than the Caribbean at the moment; English ships of war, in close touch with the Governors of Jamaican and other West Indian havens, were on the watch for any man or vessel reported as having taken part in the attack on Porto Bello or the Panama crossing. Port Royal, with its seductive hospitality, was now a closed door; and not only English, French, and Spanish official hands were against them, but they had reason to expect reprisals from their former French buccaneer companions.

The best resort for the moment, while plans were made and provisions collected, was some part of the English colonies of North America where not too many questions were asked. A group of seasoned sea-rovers, including Dampier, was known to be living near Point Comfort. Perhaps on this account the *Revenge* was sailed into Chesapeake Bay one April day in 1683; and perhaps because they were tired of the green flats and tobacco plantations of Virginia, Dampier and his friends jumped at the chance of a new voyage. A bold stroke was decided upon, no less than a voyage round the Horn into the

¹ His only shadow of excuse was that Cook had no commission as a privateer.

South Seas, a route that was possibly suggested by the news of Sharp's return. Four months were spent in preparation, and on 23 August 1683 Cook, with Wafer as the only surgeon, raised anchor and set his course southward.

As pilot for the dangerous navigation of the toe of South America Cook carried William Ambrosia Cowley, whose account of this 'Voiage to the South Sea'¹ came into the hands of Sir Hans Sloane. Cowley says that he honestly believed that the ship was bound for the island of 'Petigauvoos', and if so he was speedily undeceived; for Cook made first for the African coast, and near the Cape Verde Islands captured a 'Holland shipp bound for Virginia with Negroes', an interloper, in fact. So they took 'six casks of Canary out of him with some Vittualls and Limmon, telling him they might as well rob him as he the King, he being bound to rob the King of his duties'.

Farther south, they anchored one night at the mouth of the 'Sirilione river' and saw, when day broke, 'a lovely ship', a sight to make sea-rovers covetous. She came from Denmark, carried 36 large guns, and 70 men. Cowley states that he was the inventor of the trick that made her theirs. The beautiful Danish ship was re-named the *Batchelor's Delight*, and faithfully served her new possessors for the next five years. But, before directing his course to Patagonia, Cook took a vessel belonging to the Duke of Brandenburg, carrying ten guns. Thus strengthened, the buccaneers burnt the *Revenge* at Sherborough, and left the African coast. Sailing past the 'Sibble d'wards',² and nearing the eastern entrance of the Strait of Magellan, a ship was sighted. It was the *Cygnat* of London, commanded by Captain Charles Swan, and aboard her was Basil Ringrose, lately of the Isthmian crossing. He had returned to London, written an account of the reverberating affair, and, perhaps in consequence of the resulting publicity, had helped to inspire a trading venture on the part of the owners of the *Cygnat*. He sailed in her as one of three super-cargoes, together responsible for merchandise worth five thousand pounds, to be traded, if all went well, to the Spanish colonies of the South American west coast.

¹ Sloane MS. 54.

² The Falkland Islands.