

8 WHEN LOVE CALLS MEN TO ARMS

will ye? Drunk and blaspheming, and they sailing to their graves!"

All at once a great sheet of flame leaped up from the high poop of the Spanish ship. At the same moment the oars stopped moving, save for a slackening and slapping as they fell, unmanned, into the sea, and scores of blackamoors suddenly appeared and ran about the decks. The laughter changed to shrieks of fright as the flames leaped higher and spread rapidly to other parts of the ship.

I remember the rapidity of that fire with a cold chill in my hair; how the lows lit up the many little windows, at first with a sputtering dimness, then with a steady glow that brightened and glared until the hot panes burst outward and fell, chinking and hissing, into the sea.

The Spanish ship was doomed. The crowds of men aboard her seemed to be casting about to save themselves. To me that was a simple matter, as the ship could not have been more than a hundred yards from the shore, and I was puzzled when I saw the Spaniards point landward and then throw up their hands or cross them on their breasts. I turned to look at the laird and, cruel man as I had heard he was, I do not think I ever saw an expression of such brutal mirth as glowed in his great, dour face. He was not overtall, but very broad and heavy. With his plaid and philabeg fastened at the shoulder with a big silver brooch, with his bare knees and his hands clasped over his claymore