
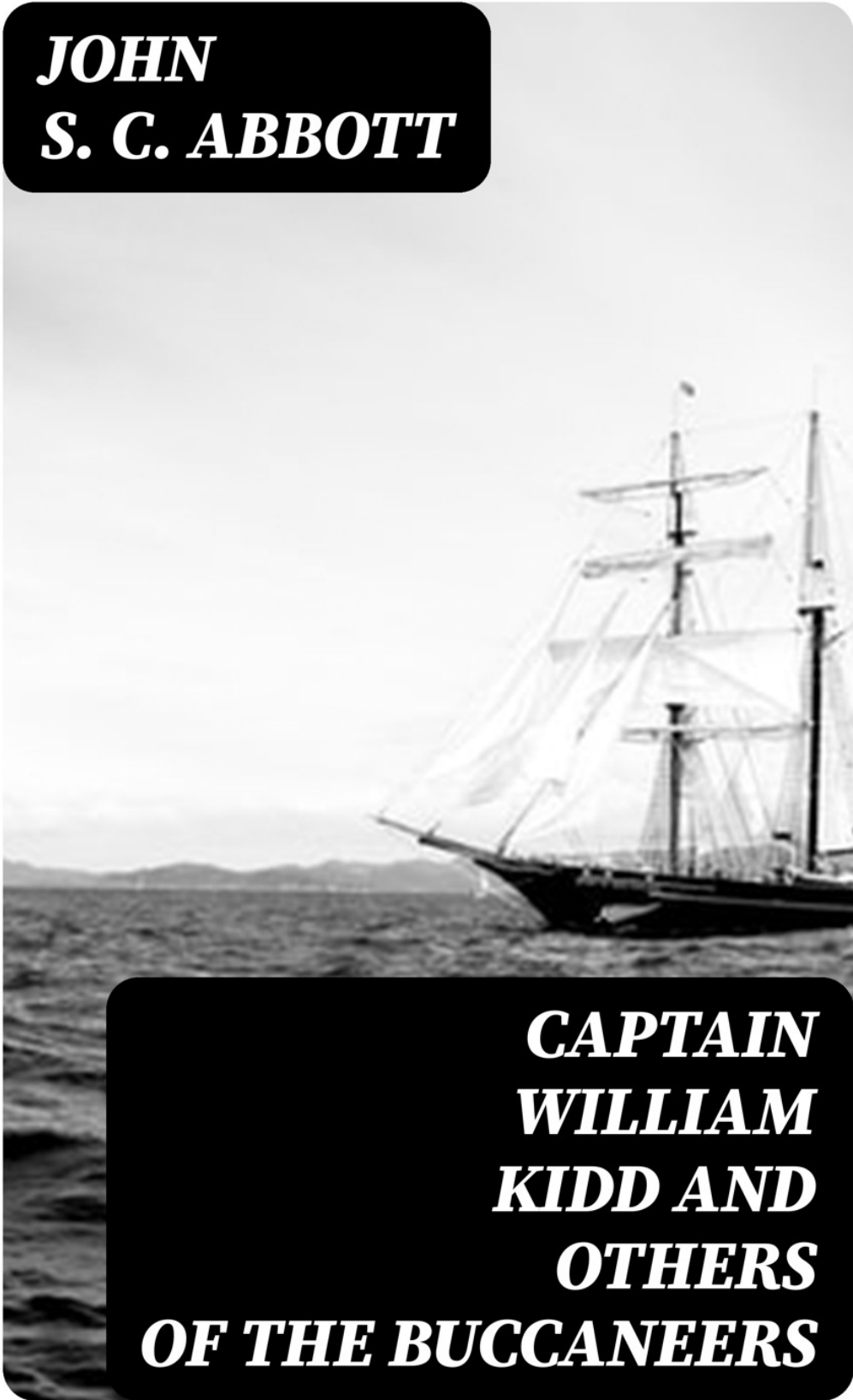


***JOHN
S. C. ABBOTT***



***CAPTAIN
WILLIAM
KIDD AND
OTHERS
OF THE BUCCANEERS***

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A black and white photograph of a three-masted sailing ship, likely a frigate or a large schooner, sailing on the ocean. The ship is viewed from a low angle, showing its hull and the lower parts of its masts. The sails are partially set, and the ship is moving towards the right. In the background, there are low mountains or hills on the horizon under a cloudy sky. The water is choppy with small waves.

***CAPTAIN
WILLIAM
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John S. C. Abbott

Captain William Kidd and Others of the Buccaneers

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PREFACE.

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THERE can scarcely anything be found in the literature of our language, more wild and wonderful, than the narrative contained in this volume. The extraordinary career of Captain Kidd, a New-York merchant, the demoniac feats of those fiends in human form, Bonnet, Barthelemy, and Lolonois; the romantic history of the innocent female pirate Mary Read, and of the termagant Anne Bonney; the amazing career of Sir Henry Morgan, and the fanaticism of Montbar, scarcely surpassed by that of Mohammed or Loyola, combine in creating a story, which the imagination of Dickens or Dumas could scarcely rival.

And yet these incidents seem to be well authenticated. The writer has drawn his facts from Esquemeling's *Zee Roovers*, Amsterdam, 4to, 1684; Oexemelin's *Histoire des Aventuriers*, 12mo, Paris, 1688; Johnson's *History of the Pirates*, 2 vols., London, 1724; Thornbury's *Monarchs of the Main*, 3 vols., London, 1855; *History of the Buccaneers of America*, 1 vol. 8vo, Boston, 1855; with many other pamphlets, encyclopædias, and secondary works.

In exploring this hitherto almost unknown field of research, the writer has been as much surprised at the awful scenes which have opened before him, as any of his readers can be. There are but few thinking men who will peruse this narrative, to whom the suggestion will not arise, "What a different world would this have been, and would it now be, were all its inhabitants conscientiously, prayerfully, with brotherly love striving to do right." And this is the

religion of Jesus. He has taught us to pray "Thy kingdom come on earth as in heaven."

JOHN S. C. ABBOTT.

FAIR HAVEN CONN

CAPTAIN KIDD.

CHAPTER I.

Origin of the Buccaneers.

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Renown of Captain Kidd.—Wild Legends.—Demands of Spain.—Opposition of the Maritime Powers.—The Rise of the Buccaneers.—The Pirates' Code.—Remonstrance of Spain.—Reply of France and England.—Confession of a Buccaneer.—Adventures of Peter the Great.

THERE are but few persons, in the United States, who have not heard the name of the renowned pirate, Captain Kidd. There are also but few to be found who have any intelligent conception of his wild and guilty career. The banks of the Hudson, the islands scattered through the Sound which skirts the southern New-England coast, and the wild rivers and craggy harbors which fringe the rugged shores of Maine, are all rich with legends of the exploits and hiding-places of this notorious buccaneer.

Thousands of fanatical people have employed themselves in digging among the rocks and sands, in search of treasure of gold and jewels supposed to have been buried, in iron-bound chests, by this chief of outlaws. It was well known that he had plundered many a rich Spanish galleon, laden with golden coin, bound to or from the colonies. Many a Spanish lady had been compelled to walk blindfolded the awful plank, until she was jostled into the sea, while her chests of golden ingots and diamonds fell into the hands of brutal assassins.

It was not always easy for the pirates to dispose of these treasures. They were sometimes pursued by men-of-war. Doubtless, as a measure of safety, they did at times bury their spoil, intending at a convenient hour to return and reclaim it. And it can hardly be questioned that, in some cases, pursued, harassed, cut up, they never did return. Therefore it may be that there is treasure still hidden in some secluded spot, which may remain, through all coming ages unless by some accident discovered. This belief has, in bygone days, nerved many a treasure-seeker to months of toil, all along our northern coast, from Passamaquoddy Bay to the Jerseys.

Half a century ago, when superstition exerted much more powerful sway than now, the wildest stories were told, around the fireside, of the complicity of the robber with the Archfiend himself, and of the agency of the Prince of the Power of the Air in protecting his subjects. Hundreds of parties, equipped with hazel rods, whose dip should guide them to the treasure, and with spades to dig, have gone to the most lonely spots at dead of night, in search of these riches. It was believed that not a word must be spoken, and particularly that Satan was so jealous, that if the Divine name were uttered, some terrible doom would befall them.

The writer remembers hearing, sixty years ago at the kitchen fireside, many of these wondrous stories. One or two may be given in illustration of them all. A fortune-teller had told some men where Captain Kidd had buried a chest. They were to go to the spot, in the darkness of a moonless midnight. Not one word was to be spoken. A lantern, dimly burning, was to guide their steps. One carrying a hazel rod

was to lead the party of four. When they reached the precise spot the hazel rod would bend directly down to indicate it. By digging they would find, five feet beneath the surface, an oaken chest, bound with iron, filled with doubloons.

They obeyed all the directions implicitly. The spot was found. In silence and with energy they plied their spades. At the depth of five feet they struck the chest. There it was, beyond all question, in its massive strength of oak and iron. The size of the chest and the difficulty with which it could be moved, proved that they had come upon an amount of treasure which would enrich them all beyond the dreams of romance. One thoughtlessly, in the excess of his excitement, exclaimed, "Thank God!" In an instant there was a flash of lightning which blinded them all; a peal of thunder which stunned them all. Those in the pit were violently thrust out, and every one was thrown helpless and senseless upon the ground.

After a time they recovered one by one. The darkness was like that of Egypt, which could be felt. The rain was falling in torrents. Their pit was entirely closed up, and replaced by a ledge of solid granite. Terrified, they crept to their homes, fearing ever again to seek the treasure which the pirate, as an emissary of Satan, had seized with bloody hands, and with bloody hands had buried.

Again, there was a young woman who had a sacred stone into which she looked and saw whatever she wished to have revealed. She could read the fortunes of others. She could foresee all future events. She could reveal any secrets of the past. Into this mysterious crystal she gazed, and saw a small vessel, under an immense cloud of canvas, flying

before a huge man-of-war. But the smaller vessel was the fleetest. The larger vessel was firing upon it with heavy cannon, and the balls were bounding over the waves. She looked upon the deck of the little schooner, and it was crowded with the fiercest-looking armed men. Among them stood a man, in rich uniform, with drawn sword, and pistols in his belt, who was evidently their leader. She at once recognized him as Captain Kidd.

It was in the evening twilight. The pirate ran in at the mouth of the Kennebec River. The man-of-war could not venture to follow amid the rocks and shoals. The commander, however, felt that the pirate was caught in a trap and that he could not escape. He decided to lay off and on until morning, carefully watching the mouth of the river. Then he would send his war-boats thoroughly manned, and the pirates would soon swing at his yard-arms, and their treasures would be transferred to his chests and his ship's hold.

Captain Kidd had a large amount of treasure on board his vessel, which he had plundered mainly from the rich argosies which carried on the commerce between Spain and her colonies. At the same time he was not at all particular in his inquiries as to what nationality the ship belonged to, if the cargo of goods or coin were valuable. His adventurous sail ran along the shores of both the Indies, and all richly freighted ships he encountered were doomed.

The swift-sailing schooner which had run into the mouth of the Kennebec was heavily laden with gold and silver coin, rich silks, and others of the most precious fabrics of the two Indies. To save these from capture, so the story goes, and to

lighten his vessel, so as to be able to creep away over the shallow waters out of reach of the man-of-war, he threw the heaviest and least valuable articles overboard. Then landing a portion of the crew in the night, he searched out a secluded spot, where he dug a deep hole, and placed in it an immense iron-bound hogshead. Here he carefully packed away his gold and silver coin in strong canvas bags. His silks and satins were wrapped in canvas envelopes, and then protected with tarred cloth, impervious to both air and moisture. Thus the cask soon held treasure amounting to countless thousands. This was carefully covered up and concealed, Captain Kidd taking notes which would enable him to find the place without difficulty!

Then in the darkness he again spread his sails, and stealing out of one of the unfrequented mouths of the river, crept along the shore unseen, and turning his course south, was soon again engaged in his piratic cruise among the islands of the West Indies. He never returned to regain his treasure.

The next morning the man-of-war sent up three boats well manned and armed to capture the pirate. But not the slightest vestige of his vessel could be found. It was believed that Satan had aided them to escape. Some of the sailors declared that in the night they had seen the schooner under full sail in the clouds, passing over their heads, and that they had heard shouts of merriment from the demoniac crew.

The girl, looking into her enchanted stone, saw all this. She informed those inquiring of her, of the precise spot where the treasure was buried. To obtain it they must go at

dead of night, and work in perfect silence. The utterance of a single word would bring disaster upon all their efforts.

They went, and worked with a will, in the darkness, by dim torchlight. Not a word was spoken. They reached the cask, spaded away the earth around it, and were just ready to open it and rifle it of its contents, when to their astonishment a little negro boy was seen sitting upon the head of the cask, entirely naked. One of them in his surprise thoughtlessly exclaimed, "Who are you?"

The spell was broken. Instantly one of the blackest of thunder-clouds enveloped them, with a tornado which wrecked the skies. Carousing fiends were seen with bat-like wings through the gloom. Shrieks of derisive laughter were heard. Every man was seized, and whirled through the air to distances several miles apart. Awaking from stupor, terror-inspired, they with difficulty found their way to their homes. Upon subsequently revisiting the spot they found no traces of their labor.

Such was the general character of the legends which were floating about very freely half a century ago. Captain Kidd was the hero of all these marvellous tales. It is not easy to account for the fact that his name should have attained such an ascendancy over that of all other buccaneers. Though there was nothing so very remarkable in his achievements, there was something strange in the highest degree, in his partnership with men in England occupying the most exalted position in rank and power.

After the discovery of the New World, Pope Alexander VI. issued a proclamation dividing all the newly discovered lands, in both the East and West Indies, between the crowns

of Portugal and Spain, to the exclusion of all other powers. This *bull* as it was called, excited great discontent throughout all Christendom. This was nearly two hundred years ago. France, England, and the Netherlands, the three remaining great maritime nations, combined against Spain and Portugal. These courts would give any man a commission to take a ship, fill it with armed men, and prey upon the commerce of Spain and Portugal. There was no court to decide upon the validity of prizes. The captors were responsible to nobody. They decided for themselves whether the prize they had taken was their legitimate booty. The whole spoil was divided among them according to their own agreement.

Very soon all seas swarmed with these adventurers. They sailed in fleets. In armed bands they landed and ravaged the coasts, battering down forts and capturing and plundering cities. They did not deem themselves pirates, but took the name of buccaneers. Though often guilty of great enormities, they assumed the air of legitimate privateersmen. With heads high uplifted they swaggered through the streets of England, France, and the Netherlands, with lavish hand scattering their ill-gotten gold. They were welcomed at every port they entered, for they proved very profitable customers. They sold their booty very cheap. They purchased very freely, regardless of price. In drunken frolics they had been known to scatter doubloons in the streets to see men and boys scramble for them. The merchants all welcomed them, not deeming it necessary to ask any questions for conscience' sake. Their numbers became so great and their depredations so audacious, that

no ship could sail in safety under any flag. The buccaneers were not careful to obtain any commission. Assuming that they were warring against the enemies of their country, even when there was no war existing between the two nations, they ravaged the seas at their pleasure.

Generally their bands were well organized and under very salutary discipline. The following articles of agreement, signed by the whole crew, were found on board one of these ships:

“Every man is entitled to a vote in affairs of importance, and to an equal share of all provisions and strong liquors which may be seized. Any man who defrauds the company in plate, jewels, or money, shall be landed on a desert island. If he rob a messmate, his ears and nose shall be slit, and then he shall be landed on a desert island. No man shall play at cards or dice for money. The lights are to be put out at eight o’clock at night. No woman is to be allowed on board. Any man who brings a woman to sea disguised shall be put to death. No man shall strike another on board, but quarrels shall be settled on shore with sword or pistol.

“Any one deserting, or leaving his quarters, during an engagement, shall be either landed on a desert island or put to death. Every man losing a limb or becoming crippled in the service shall have eight hundred dollars. The captain and quartermaster shall receive two shares of every prize; the master, boatswain, and gunner, one share and a half, and all other officers one and a quarter. Quarter always to be given when called for. He that sees a sail first is to have the best pistols and small arms on board of her.”

Thus it will be seen that these buccaneers were regularly organized bands, by no means ashamed of their calling. They were morally scarcely inferior to the robber knights and barons of the feudal ages, from whom the haughtiest nobles of Europe are proud to claim their lineage. They were not petty thieves and vulgar murderers. They unfurled their banners and waged open warfare on the sea and on the land, glorying in their chivalric exploits, and ostentatiously displaying, in all harbors, the trophies of their wild adventures.

These freebooters assumed the most gorgeous and extravagant dresses. Their favorite ornament was a broad crimson sash, of bright scarlet, passing round the waist, and fastened on the shoulder and hip with colored ribbons. This was so arranged that it formed a belt into which they could thrust three or four richly mounted pistols. These pistols were often sold at auction, on shipboard, for two hundred dollars each. Cocked hats, with a showy embroidery of gold lace, formed a conspicuous feature of their costume.

The captain, in time of battle, was invested with dictatorial power. He could stab or shoot any one who disobeyed his orders. His voice was generally decisive as to the treatment of prisoners. The large cabin was appropriated to his exclusive use. Often the freebooters combined, in several armed vessels, to attack some richly freighted fleet under convoy. Occasionally they landed, and captured and plundered very considerable cities.

These buccaneers were generally, as we have said, Englishmen, Frenchmen, or Germans. Still, adventurers from all nationalities crowded their decks. The Spanish Court

remonstrated with the several Governments of Europe against these outrages. France replied:

“The people complained against act entirely on their own authority and responsibility, not by any commission from us. The King of Spain is at liberty to proceed against them according to his own pleasure.”

Elizabeth, England’s termagant queen, with characteristic tartness replied:

“The Spaniards have drawn these inconveniences on themselves, by their severe and unjust dealings in their American commerce. The Queen of England cannot understand why her subjects, or those of any other European prince should be debarred from traffic in the West Indies. As she does not acknowledge the Spaniards to have any title to any portion of the New World by the donation of the Bishop of Rome, so she knows no right they have to any places other than those of which they are in actual possession. Their having touched only here and there upon a coast, and given names to a few rivers or capes, are such insignificant things as can in no ways entitle them to a property in those parts, any further than where they have actually settled and continue to inhabit.”

Some curious anecdotes are told illustrative of the great respect some of these adventurers entertained for religion and morality. In many cases all bolts, locks, and fastenings of any kind were prohibited, as implying a doubt of the honor of their comrades. Not a few men of noble birth became buccaneers. A captain of one of these bands shot one of his crew for behaving irreverently in church. Sir Raveneau de Sussan, being deeply involved in debt, joined

the freebooters because, he said, "he wished, as every honest man should do, to have withal to satisfy his creditors."

The French called the buccaneers *nos braves*. The English papers were filled with admiring accounts of their unparalleled exploits. A French buccaneer; Francois l'Olonnais, at the head of six hundred and fifty men, captured the towns of Maracaibo and Gibraltar, in the Gulf of Venezuela, and extorted half a million dollars for the ransom of those places. A French priest extolled the deed as one of chivalric heroism.

The pirates seized the Island of Tortuga, built a town there, and erected a strong fort on an eminence which commanded a view of the encircling sea to the horizon. This island is situated a few leagues north of the magnificent Island of San Domingo, then called Hispaniola. It is long and narrow, running east and west, and is about sixty miles in circuit. It is mainly a mountainous island of rock, but at that time was densely covered with a gigantic forest. The western part of the island was uninhabited. It was very rugged and barren, and had no harbor or even cove into which a vessel or boat could run. On the southeastern shore there was one good harbor, so landlocked that it could be easily defended. The island abounded with wild boars, and at some seasons, the very air seemed darkened with the flocks of pigeons which frequented its groves.

The buccaneers seized this island, and sent to the French governor of St. Christopher's to furnish them with aid to fortify it. The governor sent them a ship full of men, with all needful supplies. With this assistance they built a fort on a

high rock, which perfectly commanded the harbor. There was no access to the fort but by climbing a narrow passage, along which but two persons could pass at a time. With great difficulty two guns were raised and mounted. There was a plentiful supply of fresh water on the summit, from an abundant spring gushing from the rock.

One of these buccaneers, John Esquemeling, has given quite a minute account of the achievements of himself and comrades. His narrative, which is deemed authentic, was written in Dutch, but was translated and published in London in the year 1684. He had sailed from Havre-de-Grace, in France, for the New World, in the year 1666, to seek his fortune. He gives the following reason for joining the buccaneers:

“I found myself in Tortuga like unto Adam when he was first created by the hand of his Maker; that is, naked and destitute of all human necessities. Not knowing how to get a living, I determined to enter into the wicked order of pirates or robbers of the sea. Into this society I was received by common consent both of the superior and vulgar sort. I continued among them six years, until the year 1672. Having assisted them in all their designs and attempts and served them in many notable exploits, of which I here give the reader a full account, I returned to my own native country.”

We will give one incident illustrative of the mode in which these buccaneers operated.

There was at Tortuga a man born in Dieppe, Normandy. From his gigantic stature and his bold carriage he was familiarly called Peter the Great. He took a large boat, and

with twenty-eight companions, desperate men, thoroughly armed, set out from the harbor in search of booty. For a long time they sailed over those tropical seas, keeping a vigilant watch from the mast-head, but no vessel appeared in sight. Their food was rapidly disappearing, and they began to be in despair.

At length they espied, one afternoon, in the distant horizon, a sail. As they approached it, they found, somewhat to their alarm, that it was a huge Spanish galleon laden to the gunwales with treasure. It probably contained passengers and crew, and perhaps soldiers, three or four times outnumbering the buccaneers. The sagacious Peter immediately surmised that the galleon was one of a merchant fleet which had recently sailed from Spain under a strong convoy, and being heavily laden, had, in some storm, got separated from the squadron. It was one of the most desperate of enterprises to attack such a ship with their little boat. The ship, though a merchantman, had, without any doubt, some heavy guns, and the crew was well armed.

But they were desperate men; their provisions were exhausted; they were in danger of actual starvation. The captain assembled them all around him, and addressed them in a very glowing and inspiring speech. We cannot quote his identical words. But we have a record of the motives he urged to rouse his men to a frenzy of courage.

“Our cruise,” said he, “has been thus far a failure. We have no money. We have no food. We must soon perish by the most miserable of all deaths, lingering starvation. In that ship there is food in abundance, wine in abundance, gold in abundance. We are now beggars. Let us take that ship, and

we are princes. We can revel in luxury. Our fortunes are made for our lives. We can sail to any land we please, and there live in independence. Even if some of us must die, it is better to die suddenly than to starve. We can take the ship if we all do our duty. I call upon every one now to take a solemn oath either to capture the ship or to die in the attempt."

To this appeal the piratic crew responded with cheers, and the oath was promptly taken. The captain of the Spanish ship had been informed that there was a boat in sight, and that it probably was manned by pirates. He came upon deck, examined it carefully with his glass, and then, turning upon his heel, said contemptuously:

"We need not care for such a pitiful concern as that. It is a mere cockle-shell. If you wish, you may rig the crane out, and we will hoist the whole thing, crew and all, on board. We need fear no ship which is not bigger and stronger than our own."

The pirates had the advantage of the wind. They kept away until dark. Peter, or Pierre as they called him, informed them of his desperate plan. He would, in the gloom of night, put on all sail, and run his boat directly alongside of the galleon. Grappling-irons were immediately to be thrown over the gunwale of the ship, with ropes attached, by which the boat's crew were instantly to leap on board. The carpenter was to have tools ready and bore a large hole in the bottom of the boat, so as to sink it at once. He was then to leap on board.

Every man was to have three or four loaded pistols in his belt, and a sabre in his hand. Escape was impossible. If they

failed to capture the ship, and were captured themselves, their inevitable doom was death by hanging. The programme was carried out in full. The night was dark. There was no vigilance, no suspicion of danger on board the ship. The boat came alongside the huge bulk of the galleon so noiselessly that it was not perceived.

The pirates rushed pell-mell on board. With their sharp sabres they cut down the terrified crew on the right hand and on the left. Pierre, leading a party, plunged into the cabin. The captain with several of his officers was playing cards. He sprang from his seat exclaiming:

“Lord Jesus; are these devils?”

Pierre, presenting a pistol at his breast, demanded the surrender of the ship. Had the captain or any of his officers raised a hand in self-defence, death would have been their immediate fate. They were all disarmed and bound. Another party, sweeping the decks with sword and pistol, drove all whom they did not kill into the hold, and shut the hatches upon them. They then seized the gun-room, where all the arms and ammunition were stored.

In almost less time than it has taken to describe the scene, this majestic ship with its vast treasures was captured. Not a single pirate was killed or wounded. With three cheers the pirates proclaimed their astounding victory. They were nearly all seamen, and familiar with those waters. They turned the ship to sail to Europe. Coming in sight of an island, they landed the captain and all the ship's company in a cove, and giving them a small supply of provisions, left them to shift for themselves. Several of the crew remained on board the ship, enlisting in the service of

the pirates. This being done, they set sail for France, where they sold their ship, divided their immense booty, scattered, and were heard of no more.

The inhabitants of Tortuga soon received tidings of this brilliant achievement. It seemed to inspire them all with the intense desire to go and do likewise. All Tortuga was in an uproar. Every one applauded a deed which they deemed so glorious as well as so profitable. They saw that by a single enterprise, Pierre had made his fortune for life. In a few months, more than twenty piratic vessels were fitted out at Tortuga.

CHAPTER II.

William Kidd becomes a Pirate.

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Ravages of the Pirates.—The King's Interview with Earl Bellomont.—William Kidd, the New-York Merchant.—His Commission.—Sailing of the Adventure.—Recruiting in New York.—Circuitous Trip to Madagascar.—Perils and Sufferings.—Madagascar the Pirates' Home.—Murmurings of the Crew.—Kidd reluctantly turns Pirate.—His Repulses, and his Captures.

IN the year 1695, the King of England, William III., summoned before him the Earl of Bellomont, who had been governor of Barbadoes, and whom he had recently appointed governor of New York, and said to him:

“The buccaneers have so increased in the East and West Indies, and all along the American coast, that they defiantly sail under their own flag. They penetrate the rivers; land in numbers sufficient to capture cities, robbing palaces and cathedrals, and extorting enormous ransom. Their suppression is vital to commerce. They have possessed themselves of magnificent retreats, in Madagascar and other islands of the Indian Ocean. They have established their seraglios, and are living in fabulous splendor and luxury. Piratic expeditions are fitted out from the colonies of New England and Virginia; and even the Quakers of Pennsylvania afford a market for their robberies. These

successful freebooters are making their homes in the Carolinas, in Rhode Island, and along the south shore of Long Island, where they and their children take positions among the most respectable in the community.

“The buccaneers are so audacious that they seek no concealment. Their ships are laden with the spoil of all nations. The richest prizes which can now be taken on the high seas are the heavily laden ships of the buccaneers. I have resolved, with the aid of others, to fit out a private expedition against them. We have formed a company for that purpose. By attacking the pirates we shall accomplish a double object. We shall in the first place check their devastating operations, and we shall also fill our purses with the proceeds of the abundant spoil with which their ships are laden.”

This second consideration was doubtless the leading one in the movement. The king was in great need of money. His nobles were impoverished by extravagance. They were ready to resort to any measures to replenish their exhausted treasuries. This royal company was therefore organized, not as a national movement, sustained by national law, but as a *piratic* expedition against the *pirates*. The reclaimed treasure was not to be restored to its owners, nor to be placed in the treasury of the kingdom, but to be divided among the captors as their legitimate spoil. And still the king was to give the commission in his kingly name.

The king informed the Earl of Bellomont that he was about to invest him with the government of New York, and wished him to suggest the name of some suitable person, who was familiar with the North American coast and the

West Indian seas, to whom he could intrust the command of the frigate they were then fitting out. It so chanced that an illustrious Englishman, Mr. Robert Livingston, the first of that name who had emigrated to the New World, was then in London. The earl consulted with him. He was informed that just the man he needed had accompanied him from New York to London, leaving his family behind. He was a merchant, by the name of William Kidd, a man of tried courage and integrity.

In the last war with the French, Captain Kidd had commanded a privateersman, and had gained signal honor in many engagements. He had sailed over all the seas frequented by the buccaneers, and was familiar with their haunts. The commission which the king gave to Captain Kidd is a curious document. It is here given abridged of its excessive verbiage:

“William the Third, by the grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, to our true and well-beloved Captain William Kidd, commander of the ship Adventure. Whereas divers wicked persons commit many and great piracies, robberies, and depredations on the seas, upon the coasts of America and other parts, to the hindrance of trade and the danger of our subjects, we have thought fit to give to the said William Kidd full authority to seize all such pirates as you may find on the seas, whether our subjects or the subjects of other nations, with their ships, and all merchandise or money which shall be found on board, if they willingly yield themselves. But if they will not yield without fighting, then you are, by force, to compel them to yield. We do also require you to bring, or cause to be

brought, such pirates, freebooters, or sea rovers, as you shall seize, to a legal trial, to the end they may be proceeded against according to the law in such cases.

“We enjoin you to keep an exact journal of your proceedings, giving the names of the ships you may capture, the names of their officers and crew, and the value of their cargoes, and stores. And we command you, at your peril, that you do not molest our friends or allies under any pretence of authority hereby granted. Given the 26th of January, 1695.”

Captain Kidd at the same time received another document, which was called a commission of reprisals. This authorized him, as a privateersman, to take any French merchant ships he might chance to meet; for there was then war between France and England.

A ship was purchased, for thirty thousand dollars, called the Adventure. Of this sum, Captain Kidd and Mr. Livingston furnished three thousand each. The remainder was contributed by the Earls Bellomont and Romney, Lord Chancellor Somers, the Lord High Admiral, the Duke of Shrewsbury, and Sir Henry Harrison. The king, rather ingloriously, paid nothing. He purchased his share in the enterprise by the royal patronage.

It seems that Captain Kidd was a man of high reputation at that time. It was a large amount of property to be intrusted to his hands; for the vessel and its outfit must have cost at least fifty thousand dollars. Mr. Livingston became Kidd's security that he would faithfully discharge his duties and account for all his captures. It is said that Kidd was not pleased with this arrangement, as he was very

unwilling that Mr. Livingston should be his bondsman. He probably, even then, felt that it might prove an obstacle in his future course. The operations of the human mind are often inexplicable. He might wish to *steal* the ship and turn *pirate* on his own account. And he could not *honorably* do this while his friend was his bondsman. Such pressure was put upon him that he was constrained to yield.

Armed with the royal commission, and in command of the Adventure, Captain Kidd sailed from Plymouth, England, in May, 1696. The frigate had an armament of thirty guns, and a crew of eighty men. He was ordered to render his accounts to the Earl of Bellomont in New York. He sailed up the Narrows, into New York harbor, in July. His wife and children were in his home there. In crossing the Atlantic, Captain Kidd came across a French merchantman, which he captured. The prize was valued at but seventeen hundred dollars. This was considered a legitimate act of war.

Captain Kidd knew full well that the enemy he was to encounter would fight with the utmost desperation, and that he might meet a fleet of piratic ships, or a single ship, more powerful in men and armament than his own. He therefore sent out recruiting officers through the streets of New York, to enlist volunteers. The terms he offered were that every man should have an equal share of every prize that was taken, after reserving for himself and the owners forty shares. With these offers he soon increased his crew to one hundred and fifty-five men.

Sailing from the harbor of New York, he made first for Madeira, to lay in a stock of wine. Then he directed his course to the Cape de Verd Islands, for a supply of salt and

provisions. Having obtained these, he spread his canvas for a long voyage around the Cape of Good Hope, to the Island of Madagascar, on the eastern coast of Africa. This island had become renowned as one of the most important rendezvouses of the pirates.

Madagascar is larger than Great Britain. The pirates, by aid of their firearms, their desperate courage, and their superior intelligence, had gained possession of a considerable portion of the island. The natives were an inefficient race, copper-colored, with long, black hair. The pirates had treated them with such enormous cruelty, that the savages fled before them as if they had been demons.

In this retreat, so far distant from the abodes of civilization, the buccaneers had reared forts, and built mansions which they had converted into harems. From their voyages they returned here enriched with the plundered commerce of the world, to revel in all sensual indulgence. They made slaves of their prisoners; married, in their rude way any number they pleased of the most beautiful of the native females; "so that every one," writes one of their number, "had as great a seraglio as the Grand Seignior at Constantinople. At length they began to separate from each other, each living with his own wives, slaves, and dependants, like independent princes. As power and plenty naturally beget contention, they sometimes quarrelled, and attacked each other at the head of their several armies. In these civil wars many of them were killed."

These reckless men used their power like tyrants. They grew wanton in cruelty. Nothing was more common than, upon the slightest displeasure, to cause one of their