

JOHN ABBOTT

CAPTAIN WILLIAM KIDD
AND OTHERS OF THE
BUCCANEERS

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Others of the Buccaneers**

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John S. C. Abbott

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PREFACE

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

CHAPTER I

Origin of the Buccaneers

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. Awakening 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 necessaries. 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

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 dependants to be tied to a tree and shot through the heart. The natives combined for their extermination. The plan would have succeeded but for betrayal by a woman. They trembled in view of their narrow escape, and combined for mutual defence.

These ruffians assumed all the airs of the ancient baronial nobility. Their dwellings were citadels. They generally chose for their residence some dense forest, near running water. The house was surrounded by a rampart and a ditch. The rampart was so high that it could not be climbed without scaling-ladders. The dwelling was so concealed, in the dense tropical forest, that it could not be seen until you were very near it. The only approach was so narrow that two could not pass it abreast. It was contrived in so intricate a manner that, to all not perfectly familiar with it, it was a perfect labyrinth, with cross paths where one might wander for hours, lost in the maze.

All along these narrow paths, large and very sharp thorns, which grew in that country, were planted in the ground, so as to pierce the feet of the unshod natives. If any should attempt to approach the house by night, they would certainly be pierced and torn by those cruel thorns.

It was a long voyage to Madagascar. Before he reached the island nine months had elapsed since leaving Plymouth. Captain Kidd had expended all his money, and his provisions were nearly exhausted. Not a single prize had they captured by the way. This ill luck caused a general feeling of murmuring and contention on board. The most amiable are in danger of losing their amiability in hours of disaster. Rude seamen, but one remove from pirates, in such seasons of disappointment and chagrin become almost demons in moroseness.

One morning the whole ship’s crew were thrown into a state of the most joyous excitement by the sight of three ships in the distant horizon. They had no doubt that it was some buccaneer, with two prizes, heavily laden with the treasures of the Orient. Suddenly all became very good-natured. Eagerly they prepared for action. They had no fear that the pirate, with his prizes, could escape their swift-sailing frigate. The supposed pirate was apparently conscious that escape was impossible; for he bore down boldly upon them.

Terrible was the disappointment. Captain Kidd, gazing upon the approaching vessels through his glass, exclaimed, with an oath, “They are three English war-ships.”

Captain Warren was in command of the men-of-war. Meeting thus in mid-ocean, the two captains interchanged civilities, visited each other, and kept company for two or three days. It was in the month of February, 1696, that Captain Kidd, coasting along the shores of Madagascar, approached the harbor upon the island frequented by the pirates. Here he expected to find treasure in abundance. He had very decidedly exceeded his orders in leaving the waters of America for the distant shores of Africa and Asia. Triumphant success, which he was sanguine of achieving, might cause the disobedience of instructions not only to be forgiven but applauded. Failure would be to him disgrace and irretrievable ruin.

Again Captain Kidd and his crew were doomed to disappointment. It so happened that they arrived at the island at a time when every vessel was out on a piratic cruise. There was not a single vessel there. All were growing desperate. Captain Kidd had but very little money left, and nearly all

his provisions were consumed. As hastily as possible he replenished his water-casks, and taking in a few more stores, weighed anchor, and voyaged thirteen hundred miles farther east to Malabar, as the whole western coast of Hindostan was then called, from Cape Comorin to Bombay.

He came within sight of these shores in June, four months after his arrival at Madagascar. For some time he cruised up and down this coast unavailingly. Not a single sail was to be seen on the boundless expanse of ocean. There was universal discontent and murmurings on board the *Adventure*. The situation of the ship's company was indeed deplorable. One-half of the globe was between them and their homes. Their provisions were nearly all gone, and they had no means with which to purchase more. It was clear that unless Providence should interpose in their favor, they must either steal or starve.

And Providence did, for a time, singularly interpose. As they were one day sailing by a small island, called Joanna, they saw the wreck of a ship on shore. Captain Kidd took a boat and was rowed to the land, where he found that it was a French vessel. The crew had escaped, having saved quite a quantity of gold. The ship and cargo were a total loss. The Frenchman, so the narrative goes, *loaned* this gold to Captain Kidd. Perhaps he did. It is more probable that it was a forced loan. Captain Kidd had, as we have mentioned, a double commission, one against the pirates, and the other a regular commission as a privateersman against the French. Had he captured the ship before the wreck it would have been his lawful prize. It is hardly probable that he had any scruples of conscience in seizing the doubloons when transferred to the shore.

With this gold he sailed to one of the ports on the Malabar coast, where he purchased food sufficient for a few weeks only. There was, at that time, in Asia, one of the most powerful nations on the globe, called the Mongols. The emperor, who was almost divinely worshipped, was titled the Great Mogul. His gorgeous palaces were reared in the city of Samarcand, in the province of Bokhara. This magnificent city, thirty miles in circumference, glittered with palaces and mosques of gorgeous architecture, constructed of white marble. The empire was founded by the world-renowned Gengis Khan, and extended by the equally celebrated Tamerlane. The sails of Mongol commerce whitened all the East-Indian seas. Piracy then so abounded that this commerce was generally carried on in fleets under convoy. Upon this cruise of disappointment and anxiety, Captain Kidd passed several of the ships of the Great Mogul. He looked upon them with a wistful eye. They were merchantmen. With his force he could easily capture them. There could be no doubt that they contained treasure of great value.

There was loud murmuring among the crew. They could not understand those scruples of conscience which would allow them to plunder a few shipwrecked Frenchmen, and yet would turn aside from the rich argosies of the East.

But Captain Kidd, a respectable New-York merchant, held in high esteem by the community, and who had been sent on this expedition expressly to capture and punish the pirates, was not then prepared to raise himself the black flag, and thus join the robbers of the seas.

The struggle, in his mind, was probably very severe. He was daily growing more desperate. Starvation stared him in the face. His crew was growing mutinous. He had reason to fear that they would rise, throw him overboard or land him upon some island, and then, raising the black flag of the pirate, scour the seas on their own account, and join the riotous band defiantly established at Madagascar.

He had no doubt that the powerful company, who had sent him on this cruise, would overlook any irregularities in plundering wrong vessels, and would make no troublesome inquiries into his mode of operations, if he would only bring them home an abundance of gold. On the other hand, should he fail, he would be dismissed from their service in disgrace, an utterly ruined man.

He had learned that the Great Mogul was about to send from the Red Sea, through the Straits of Babelmandel, a richly freighted fleet of merchantmen, under convoy, bound to China. The Straits are but about fifteen miles wide. Consequently there could be no difficulty in intercepting the fleet.

Captain Kidd had probably, in his silent thoughts, decided to turn freebooter. Though as yet he had divulged his secret to no one, and had committed no overt act, he had passed the Rubicon, and was in heart a pirate. The change was at once perceptible. He ran his ship in toward the shore, and coasted along until he came in sight of a village of the natives, where herds were seen in the fields, and harvests were waving, and the boughs of the groves were laden with the golden fruit of the tropics. Doubtless he would have been glad to purchase these stores. But he had no money. He had reached that point in his career at which he must either steal or starve.

He sent several armed boats to the land, and robbed the unresisting natives without stint. He was not a man to pursue half measures. Having well revictualled his ship, he turned her bows toward the entrance to the Red Sea. Summoning his crew before him, he informed them of the change in his plans.

“We have been unsuccessful hitherto, my boys,” he said; “but take courage. Fortune is now about to smile upon us. The fleet of the Great Mogul, freighted with the richest treasures, is soon to come out of the Red Sea. From the capture of those heavily laden ships we will all grow rich.”

This speech was greeted with shouts of applause by the desperate men whom he had picked up in the streets of London and New York. He sent out a swift-sailing boat well manned to enter the Red Sea, and run along its eastern coast on a voyage of discovery. The boat returned after an absence of a few days, with the rather alarming intelligence that they had counted a squadron of fifteen large ships just ready to sail. While some of them bore the flag of the Great Mogul, at the mast-head of others floated the banners of England and of Holland.

England was in alliance with Holland, and on the most friendly terms with the Great Mogul. In the commission given to Captain Kidd by the king it was written:

“We command you at your peril, that you do not molest our friends or allies, under any pretence of authority hereby granted.”

Captain Kidd must have pondered the question deeply and anxiously before he could have made up his mind to become an utter outlaw, by attacking a fleet composed of ships belonging not only to England’s friend, and to England’s ally, but also containing England’s ships. Neither did he yet know how strong the convoy by which the fleet was guarded.

He, however, while weighing these thoughts in his anxious mind, sailed to and fro before the mouth of the Strait, keeping a vigilant watch at the mast-head. After the lapse of four days the squadron hove in sight, far away on the northern horizon. As the vessels approached, Captain Kidd carefully scrutinized them through his glass. His experienced eye soon perceived that the fleet was convoyed by two men-of-war, the one English, the other Dutch. This added to his embarrassment, and greatly increased his peril in case he should attempt an assault.

The fleet was much scattered; for, strong in its guard, no danger was apprehended. Kidd’s vessel was concealed from the general view behind a headland. His ship was a swift sailer, and he had an immense amount of canvas, which he could almost instantaneously spread to the breeze. There was a large, bulky Mongol ship, laden to the gunwales, slowly ploughing its way through the waves, approaching the point where the pirate lay concealed. The guard ships were at the distance of several miles.

Captain Kidd darted out upon the galleon like an eagle upon its prey. He probably hoped to capture it, plunder it, and make his escape before the war-vessels could come to its rescue. He opened fire upon the ship. But the convoy, instantly taking the alarm, pressed all sail, and bore rapidly down upon him, opening a vigorous fire from their heavy guns. Kidd could not think of contending with them. His chance was gone. He sheered off, and soon his cloud of swelling canvas disappeared beyond the southern horizon. The armed frigates could not pursue him. They were compelled to remain behind to protect the slowly sailing fleet.

Captain Kidd, embittered by constant failure, was now a disappointed, chagrined, exasperated, desperate man. He was ready for any enterprise, however atrocious, which would bring him money.

He ran back to the coast of Malabar. Cruising along, he soon came in sight of a native vessel. Kidd captured it without a struggle. It was called the Maiden, belonged to some merchants of Aden, but was commanded by an Englishman by the name of Parker. The mate, Antonio, was a Portuguese, familiar with the language of the country.

There was nothing of value on board. Kidd, having resolutely embarked on a piratic cruise, impressed the captain, Parker, as pilot in those unknown waters. The mate he retained as an interpreter. Vexed in finding no gold, and believing that the crew had concealed it, he treated them with the utmost cruelty to extort a confession of where they had hid the coin. They were hoisted up by the arms and beaten with terrible severity. But all was in vain. No amount of torture could bring to light gold which did not exist.

The pirate, having robbed the poor men of a bale of pepper and a bale of coffee, with a few pieces of Arabian gold, contemptuously turned them adrift, bleeding and almost helpless in their exhaustion. After continuing his cruise for some time without any success, Kidd ran into a small port, on the Malabar coast, called Carawar. There were several English merchants residing in that place. The tidings had already reached them of the capture of the Aden vessel, the impressment of the English captain and the Portuguese mate, and the cruel treatment of the crew.

As soon as Captain Kidd entered the port, it was suspected that he was the pirate. Two English gentlemen, Mr. Harvey and Mr. Mason, came on board, and charged him with the crime, asking him what he had done with his two captives, Captain Parker and the Portuguese mate. Kidd assumed an air of injured innocence, denied that he had any knowledge of the event, showed them his commission from the King of England as the head of a company of the most illustrious nobles to pursue and punish the pirates. Triumphantly he submitted the question if it were reasonable to suppose that a man who enjoyed the confidence of the king and his nobles, and was intrusted by them to lead an enterprise so essential to the national honor, should himself turn pirate.

The gentlemen were silenced, but not convinced. All this time Parker and Antonio the Portuguese were concealed in a private place in the hold. There he kept them carefully guarded eight days, until he again set sail. Just after he had left the port, a Portuguese man-of-war entered. The English merchants communicated to the commander their suspicions. He immediately put to sea in search of the Adventure, resolved, should he overtake her, carefully to examine the hold, hoping to find the captives on board, or at least some evidence of their having been there.

The two ships met. Kidd was by no means disposed to have his vessel searched. A fierce battle ensued which lasted for six hours. Neither vessel was disposed to come to close quarters until the other was disabled. Kidd at length, finding the Portuguese ship too strong for him, spread all his sails and escaped. With his vast amount of canvas he could run away from almost any foe. Ten of his men were wounded in this conflict, but none killed.

Again these desperate men found it necessary to run into the land for provisions. They entered a small port called Porco. Here they filled their water-casks, and “bought,” Kidd says, a sufficient number of hogs of the natives to victual the company. As it is known that Kidd had no money, it is probable that the swine were obtained by that kind of moral suasion which is found in the muzzle of a pistol and the edge of a sabre.

This suspicion is confirmed by the fact that the natives, in their exasperation, killed one of his men. The retaliation was characteristic of the crew and the times. Captain Kidd brought his guns to bear upon the village. With broadside after broadside he laid their huts in ruins. The torch was applied, and in an hour the peaceful village was converted into mouldering ashes.

One of the natives was caught. They bound him to a tree, and then a whole boat’s company, one after another, discharged each a bullet into his heart. Having achieved this exploit, which they probably thought chivalric, but which others may deem fiendish, Captain Kidd again spread his sails for a piratic cruise.

The first vessel he came across was a large Mongol ship richly freighted. Kidd gave chase, unfurling the French flag. The captain was a Dutchman, by the name of Mitchel. Seeing that he was pursued under French colors, he immediately ran up the banner of France. Captain Kidd at once spread to the breeze the flag of England. He was very exultant. He could lay aside the odious character of a pirate, and seize the ship in the less disgraceful capacity of a privateersman. He exclaimed with an oath, "I have caught you. You are a free prize to England."

A cannon-ball was thrown across the bows of the ship, and she was ordered to heave to. The ship was hailed in the French language, and some one replied in the same tongue. They were then ordered to send their boat on board. The boat came bearing the captain of the ship, who was a Dutchman, by the name of Mitchel, and a French gentleman by the name of Le Roy.

Kidd received them in his cabin, and upon inquiry ascertained that the ship and cargo belonged to Mongol merchants; that they had intrusted the command to a Dutch captain, as was not unfrequently the case in those days, and that the French gentleman was merely a passenger accidentally on board, passing from one port to another.

These tidings, to use a sailor's phrase, "struck him all aback." Holland, as we have mentioned, was England's ally. The Great Mogul was England's friend. Kidd must release the ship, or confess himself a pirate and an outlaw, and run the imminent risk of being hanged should he ever return to England. For a moment he seemed lost in thought, bewildered. Then his wicked mind, now rapidly descending into the abyss of sin and shame, rested in a decisive resolve.

CHAPTER III

Piratic Adventures

Audacity of Kidd. – Fate of the November. – Kidd kills William Moore. – The Renowned Ballad. – Kidd’s Compunctions. – Kidd at Madagascar. – Piratic Carousals. – The Artificial Hell. – Kidd’s Return to the West Indies. – Exaggerated Reports of Avery. – His wretched Career, and wretched End.

Captain Kidd, with a piratic frown upon his brow, and piratic oaths upon his lips, turned to Mr. Le Roy and said:

“Do you pretend that this is not a French ship, and that you are but a passenger on board?”

“It is so,” Mr. Le Roy politely replied. “I am a stranger in these parts, and have merely taken passage on board this native ship, under Captain Mitchel, on my way to Bombay.”

“It is a lie,” said the pirate, as he drew from his belt a pistol and cocked it. “This is a French ship, and you are its captain; and it is my lawful prize. If you deny this, you shall instantly die.”

The features of Kidd, and his words blended with oaths, convinced Mr. Le Roy that he was in the hands of a desperate man, who would shrink from no crime. He was silent. Kidd then added:

“I seize this ship as my legitimate prize. It belongs to a French subject, and is sailing under the French flag. I have a commission from his majesty the King of England to seize all such ships in his name.”

It seems strange that Kidd, after the many lawless acts of which he had already been guilty, should have deemed it of any consequence to have recourse to so wretched a quibble. But the incident shows that the New-York merchant, formerly of good reputation, still recoiled from the thought of plunging headlong into a piratic career. By observing these forms he could, in this case, should he ever have occasion to do so, claim the protection of the royal commission authorizing him to capture French ships.

Kidd took his prize, which he called the November, because it was captured in that month, into one of the East-Indian ports, and sold ship and cargo for what they would fetch. What the amount was, or how he divided it, is not known. Again he resumed his cruise. It was evident that he had become anxious to renounce the career of pirate, upon which he had barely entered, and resume that of privateersman. They soon came across a Dutch ship, unmistakably such, in build and flag and rigging. The crew clamored for its capture; Kidd resolutely opposed it. A mutiny arose. A minority of the ship’s company adhered to the captain. The majority declared that they would arm the boats and go and seize her.

The captain, with drawn sabre in his hand, and pistols in his belt, and surrounded by those still faithful to him, stood upon her quarter-deck and said to the mutineers, firmly:

“You may take the boats and go. But those who thus leave this ship will never ascend its sides again.”

One of the men, a gunner by the name of William Moore, was particularly violent and abusive. With threatening gestures he approached the captain, assailing him in the most vituperative terms, saying:

“You are ruining us all. You are keeping us in beggary and starvation. But for your whims we might all be prosperous and rich.”

The captain was by no means a meek man. In his ungovernable passion he seized an iron-bound bucket, which chanced to be lying at his side, and gave the mutineer such a blow as fractured his skull and struck him senseless to the deck. Of the wound the gunner died the next day. Not many will feel disposed to censure Captain Kidd very severely for this act. It was not a premeditated murder. It was perhaps a necessary deed, in quelling a mutiny, in which the mutineers were demanding that the black flag of the pirate should be raised, and which demand the captain was resisting. And yet it

is probable that this blow sent Kidd to the gallows. Upon his subsequent trial, but little evidence of piracy could be adduced, and the death of Moore was the prominent charge brought against him.

Kidd ever averred that it was a virtuous act, and that it did not trouble his conscience. It was done to prevent piracy and mutiny. He also averred that he had no intention to *kill* the man. Had he so intended he would have used pistol or sabre. In the ballad which, half a century ago, was sung in hundreds of farm-houses in New England, the lullaby of infancy, the event is alluded to in the following words:

“I murdered William Moore, as I sailed, as I sailed,
I murdered William Moore as I sailed;
I murdered William Moore, and left him in his gore,
Not many leagues from shore, as I sailed.”

We will give a few more verses to show the general character of this ballad of twenty-five stanzas, once so popular, now forgotten:

“My name was William Kidd, when I sailed, when I sailed,
My name was William Kidd when I sailed,
My name was William Kidd, God’s laws I did forbid,
And so wickedly I did when I sailed.

“Thus being o’ertaken at last, I must die, I must die,
Thus being o’ertaken at last, I must die;
Thus being o’ertaken at last, and into prison cast,
And sentence being pass’d, I must die.

“To Newgate now I’m cast, and must die, and must die,
To Newgate now I’m cast, and must die,
To Newgate now I’m cast, with sad and heavy heart,
To receive my just desert, I must die.

“To Execution Dock I must go, I must go,
To Execution Dock I must go;
To Execution Dock will many thousands flock,
But I must bear my shock, and must die.

“Come all ye young and old, see me die, see me die,
Come all ye young and old, see me die;
Come all ye young and old, you’re welcome to my gold,
For by it I’ve lost my soul, and must die.”

The Dutchman had no consciousness of the peril to which he had been exposed. The two ships kept company for several days, and then separated. Is it possible that all this time Kidd was hesitating whether to raise the black flag and seize the prize? It looks like it; for a few days after the Dutch ship had disappeared, quite a fleet of Malabar boats were met with, laden with provisions and other articles which Kidd needed. Unscrupulously he plundered them all. Probably he had no fears that tidings of the outrage would ever reach England. And even if a rumor of the deed were ever to reach those distant shores, he had no apprehension that England would trouble herself to punish him for a little harsh treatment of semi-savages on the coast of Malabar.

A few days after this robbery a Portuguese ship hove in sight. Kidd's moral nature was every hour growing weaker. He could no longer resist the temptation to seize the prize. He robbed the vessel of articles to the estimated value of two thousand dollars, and let her go, inflicting no injury upon the ship's company.

For three weeks they continued to cruise over a sailless sea, when one morning, about the middle of December, an immense mass of canvas was seen rising over the distant horizon. It proved to be a native ship of four hundred tons burden. The ship was called the *Quedagh Merchant*, was very richly laden, and was commanded by an Englishman, Captain Wright. The wealthy merchants of the East were fully aware of the superior nautical skill of the English seaman, and were eager to intrust their important ventures to European commanders.

Kidd unfurled the French flag, chased the ship, and soon overtook it. A cannon-ball whistling over the heads of the crew was the very significant hint with which the ship was commanded to heave to. Kidd ordered the captain to lower his boat and come on board the *Adventure*. The captain obeyed and informed the pirate that all the crew were East Indians, excepting two Dutchmen and one Frenchman, and that the ship belonged exclusively to East-Indian merchants.

Kidd took piratic possession of the ship. He had not the shadow of a claim to it on the ground of his commission as a privateersman. He landed the officers and the crew, in boatload after boatload, upon the shore, and left them to shift for themselves. One or two of the merchants who owned the ship and cargo were on board. They offered the pirate twenty thousand rupees, which was equivalent to about fifteen thousand dollars, to ransom the property. Kidd declined the offer.

His own ship, after such long voyaging, was leaky and much in want of repairs. The *Quedagh Merchant* was far superior to the *Adventure*. He therefore transferred all his stores to his prize. The torch was applied to the *Adventure*, and the ill-fated ship soon disappeared in a cloud of smoke and flame. Kidd, now a confirmed pirate, directed his course toward the great rendezvous of the pirates at Madagascar. Here the prize was valued at sixty-four thousand pounds, or about three hundred and twenty thousand dollars.

Still this strange man assumed that he was acting under the royal commission, in behalf of the London company; and these treasures were the legitimate plunder of a piratic ship. He therefore reserved forty shares for himself and the company. There were about one hundred and fifty men composing this piratic crew. Each man received about two thousand dollars. Kidd's portion amounted to nearly eighty thousand dollars.

In the pirates' harbor at Madagascar, Kidd found a large ship, the *Resolution*, belonging to the East India Company, which the captain, a man by the name of Culliford, with the crew, had seized and turned into a pirate. It was clearly Kidd's duty, under his commission, at once to attack and capture this piratic ship. When Captain Culliford saw him entering the harbor with his powerful and well-armed ship, he was terrified. The pirates had heard of Captain Kidd's commission, and had not yet learned that he had turned pirate himself. Captain Culliford, with the gallows in vision before him, and trembling in every nerve, for there was no possibility of escape, sent some officers, in a boat, on board the *Quedagh Merchant*, to ascertain Captain Kidd's intention.

It was testified at the subsequent trial of Kidd, that he stood upon his deck and received with open arms the piratic officers as they came up over the ship's side, that he invited them to his cabin, where they had a great carouse in drinking and smoking; and that in the frenzy of drink he offered for a toast:

“May damnation seize my soul if I harm a hair of the head of any one on board the *Culliford*.”

It was declared that he received large presents of bales of silk from the piratic captain, and sold him some heavy ordnance, with suitable ammunition, for two thousand dollars; and that he was on the most friendly terms with Culliford, exchanging frequent visits with him.

On the other hand, Kidd emphatically denied all these charges. He said, “I never stepped foot on board Captain Culliford's ship. When I entered the harbor and ascertained the character of the

craft, I ordered my men to prepare for action. But the mutinous crew, who had already compelled me to resort to measures against which my soul revolted, peremptorily refused, saying that they would rather fire two shots into my vessel than one into that of Captain Culliford. The mutiny became so menacing that my life was in danger. The turbulent crew rifled my chest, stole my journal, took possession of the ammunition. I was compelled to barricade myself in the cabin. The mutineers held the ship, and being beyond all control, acted according to their own good pleasure. I was in no degree responsible for their conduct.”

The captain’s statement was not credited by the court. At the same time it was quite evident that he had lost the control of his crew. His testimony was, however, in some degree borne out by the fact that ninety-five of his men in a body deserted him, and joined the piratic crew of Captain Culliford. This would seem to prove conclusively that Captain Kidd was not sufficiently piratical in his measures to satisfy the demands of the mutineers.

For several weeks these guilty and wretched men remained in the “own place” of the pirates, indulging in every species of bacchanal wassail and sensual vice, amidst their palaces and in their harems. Their revelry could not have been exceeded by any scenes ever witnessed in Sodom or Gomorrah. There were between five and six hundred upon the island. They were continually coming and going. Some of them were so rich that they remained at home cultivating quite large plantations by slave labor. They amused themselves by hunting, and in the wide meadows and forests found abundant game. The arrival of a ship in the harbor was the signal for an universal carouse. They endeavored to magnify the charms of their women by dressing them gorgeously in silks and satins, with glittering jewelry.

Often a pipe of wine would be placed upon the shore, the head taken out, and the community would drink of it as they pleased, as freely as if it were water. Drunken pirates reeled through the streets. Oaths filled the air. Knives gleamed, and pistols were discharged, and there were wounds and death. In the midst of all their revelry and wantonness and brawls, it is evident from the record we have of those days, that a more unhappy, wretched set of beings could scarcely be found this side of the world of woe. There was not a joy to be found there. There were no peaceful homes; no loving husbands and wives; no happy children climbing the parental knee and enfolded in parental arms; and in death nothing but a “fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.”

These wretched pirates were hateful and hating. Satiated with vice, they knew not where to turn for a single joy. Their shouts of laughter fell discordantly upon the ear like the revelry of demons. Satan never allows his votaries any happiness either in this world or in that which is to come. Wisdom’s ways only are ways of pleasantness, and her paths alone are those of peace.

How far Captain Kidd entered into these godless carousals is not known. But it is not probable that he was then able to throw off all restraint, and become hail-fellow with these vulgar, degraded, profane wretches, whom in heart he must have despised. Neither is it probable that one accustomed to the society in which an honored New-York merchant would move, could so soon have formed a taste for the drunken revelry of the lowest and vilest creatures on earth.

It is evident that these men had occasionally reproaches of conscience, and some faint sense of their terrible responsibility at God’s bar. Four of them decided one day to make a little artificial hell for themselves, that they might see who could stand its pains the longest.

A cloudless tropical sun blistered the deck with its blazing rays. The cabin was heated like an oven. In addition to this, they built a fire in the stove, till the iron plates were red hot. They then with blaspheming oaths entered this furnace, and sprinkled brimstone upon the fire till the room was filled with its suffocating fumes. One of these wretches, apparently as fiend-like as a man could be, bore the pains of this little artificial hell for five minutes. None of the others could endure them so long. The victor came out very exultant. One would have thought that the idea would have occurred to their minds that there was some considerable difference between five minutes and eternity.

We do not learn that any of these men were made better by the brief endurance of their self-inflicted tortures. The mind is appalled by the thought that these same men, when transferred to the spirit land, *may* be as persistent in their hostility to all God's laws as they were here.

Captain Kidd found himself abandoned by nearly all his crew. He remained in port only long enough to recruit sufficient men to navigate his ship, and then, spreading the sails of his stolen vessel, the *Quedagh Merchant*, he set out for the West Indies, with his ill-gotten treasure of eighty thousand dollars. The news of Kidd's piratic acts had been reported to the home government by the East India Company. Orders had accordingly been issued to all the governors of the American colonies to arrest him wherever he should appear.

The voyage from Madagascar to the West Indies was long and tempestuous. Not a single sail appeared in sight. Day after day the ocean was spread out in all its solitary grandeur before these guilty, discontented men. At length, in a very destitute condition, the ship reached Anguilla, or Snake Island, so called from its tortuous figure. This is the most northerly of the Caribbee Islands, and there was a small English colony here.

As Kidd dropped anchor in the little harbor he was greeted by the intelligence that he had been officially, in England, proclaimed a pirate; that his conduct had been discussed in Parliament; that a committee had been appointed to inquire into the character of the company which had commissioned him, and into the nature of the commission he had received; that a British man-of-war, the *Queensborough*, had been dispatched in pursuit of him, and that a royal proclamation had been issued, offering pardon to all who had been guilty of piracy, eastward of the Cape of Good Hope, before the last day of April, 1699, excepting William Kidd, and another notorious buccaneer by the name of Avery.

This Avery had obtained great renown, and the most extravagant stories were reported and universally believed in reference to his achievements. It was said that this pirate had attained almost imperial wealth, dignity, and power; that he had become the proud founder of a new monarchy in the East, whose sceptre he swayed in undisputed absolutism. His exploits were celebrated in a play called, "The Successful Pirate," which was performed to admiring audiences in all the theatres.

According to these representations, Avery had captured a ship, belonging to the Great Mogul, and laden with the richest treasures. On board the imperial ship there was a beautiful princess, the daughter of the Great Mogul. Avery had married her. The father, reigning over boundless realms, had recognized the union, and had assigned to Avery vast territories in the East, where millions were subject to his control. He occupied one of the most magnificent of Oriental palaces, had several children, and was surrounded with splendors of royalty quite unknown in the Western world. He had a squadron of ships manned by the most desperate fellows of all nations. In his own name he issued commissions to the captains of his ships and the commanders of his forts, and they all recognized his princely authority.

His piracies were still continued on a scale commensurate with his power. Many schemes were offered to the royal council of England for fitting out a squadron to disperse his fleets and to take him captive. Others affirmed that he was altogether too powerful to be assailed in that way. They urged the expediency of sending an embassy to his court, and inviting him and his companions to come to England with all their treasures, assuring him of a hospitable reception and of the oblivion of all the past. They feared that unless these peaceful measures were adopted, his ever-increasing greatness would enable him to annihilate all commerce with the East.

These rumors were so far from having any foundation in truth, that at the same time that such wondrous tales were told, the wretch was a fugitive, wandering in disguise through England, trembling in view of the scaffold, and with scarcely a shilling in his pocket. His career was sufficiently extraordinary to merit a brief notice here.

Avery was born in one of the western seaports of England, and from a boy was bred to the hardships and the degradation of a rude sailor's life. He was educated only in profanity, intemperance,

and vice. As he grew up to stout boyhood he became a bold smuggler, even running contraband goods on shore on the far-away coasts of Peru. The Spaniards were poorly provided with war-ships to guard from what they deemed illicit traffic their immense regions in the New World.

They therefore hired at Bristol a stout English ship, called the Duke. It was manned chiefly by English seamen. Captain Gibson was commander. Avery was first mate. The captain was a gambler, fond of his cups, and he often lingered many days in foreign ports, spending his time in haunts of dissipation.

Avery was a fellow of more cunning than courage. He despised the captain, and formed a conspiracy with the most desperate men on board, to get rid of the captain and any sailors who might adhere to him, run away with the ship, and crossing over to the distant waters of the East Indies, reap a harvest of wealth from the commerce which whitened those seas.

The ship was one day at anchor in a South American port. The plan had been, that night, when the captain was on shore, to weigh anchor, leaving the captain behind, and to set out on their cruise. But it so happened that the captain, that night, having drunk deeply, did not go on shore as usual, but, at an early hour, went to bed. All the crew, excepting the conspirators, were either on shore or had retired to their berths.

At ten o'clock at night the long-boat of the Duke came to the ship's side, bringing sixteen stout desperadoes, whom Avery had enlisted from the vagabonds of all nations who thronged the port. They were received on board; the hatches were closed; and then, everything being secure, the anchor was leisurely weighed, and the ship put to sea.

The motion of the ship and the noise of the running tackles awoke the drunken captain, and he rang his bell. Avery, with two sailors, entered the cabin. The captain was sitting up in his berth, rubbing his eyes, and evidently much alarmed.

"What is the matter?" he exclaimed in hurried Accents. "Something is the matter with the ship. Does she drive? What weather is it?"

"Nothing is the matter," said Avery coolly; "only we are at sea, with a fair wind and good weather."

"At sea!" said Gibson. "How can that be?"

"Don't be in a fright," Avery replied. "Put on your clothes, and I will tell you a little secret. *I* am now captain of this ship. This is my cabin, and you must walk out of it. I am bound to Madagascar, with the design of making my own fortune and that of all the brave fellows joined with me."

The captain was now completely sobered. In anticipation of immediate death his terror was pitiable. Avery endeavored to console him with the not very consolable words:

"You have nothing to fear, captain, if you will join us, keep sober, and do your duty. If you behave well, I may, perhaps, some time, make you one of my lieutenants. Or, if you prefer, here is a boat along side, and we will put you ashore."

The terror-stricken man begged to be landed. The rest of the crew were brought up, and all who wished to go on shore with the captain were permitted to do so. But five or six availed themselves of the privilege. All the rest joined the piratic crew. The captain and his few adherents were placed in the boat and turned adrift, to make their way to the land as best they could. The carousing pirates directed their course to Madagascar. Here they found two piratic vessels, with whose crews they entered into close alliance. The three vessels, under Avery as admiral, set out on a cruise.

Upon the Arabian coast, near the mouth of the Indus, the man at the mast-head cried out, "A sail." They ran down upon her, and fired a cannon-ball across her bows. But the vessel, instead of yielding at once, hoisted the Mogul's colors, and cleared her decks for battle. Avery kept at a distance, cannonading her with his heavy guns, and not approaching within reach of the shot of his foe. He thus lost greatly reputation with his men, who regarded him as a coward. The crews of the two accompanying sloops, with their decks swarming with pirates, ran one upon the bow and the

other upon the quarter, and clambering over the bulwarks of the heavily laden merchantman, took her by storm.

It is true, as the story had it, that the vessel belonged to the emperor, or Great Mogul, himself. His daughter was on board, as well as several of the most distinguished personages of his court. They were bound on a pilgrimage to Mecca, with the richest treasures to present at the shrine of Mohammed. They had costly silks, precious jewels, vessels of gold and silver, and large sums of money. The booty obtained from this prize was immense.

Having plundered the ship of everything they wanted, the pirates let her go. The Mogul, when he heard the tidings, was greatly enraged. He threatened to send an army, with fire and sword, utterly to exterminate the English in all their East-Indian colonies. The East India Company, in England, was greatly alarmed. They immediately dispatched an embassy to the Great Mogul to pacify him. They promised, in the name of the British Government, to pursue the pirates with the utmost vigor, and, if captured, to deliver them over into his hands.

In the mean time the successful buccaneers were making their way back to their rendezvous at Madagascar. There they intended to store their booty, erect a fortification for its defence, garrison it with men of desperate valor, and then to set out again on another cruise. As they were sailing along, with this design, each of the vessels having a portion of the plunder, the villanous Avery sent for the chief officers of each of the vessels to come on board the Duke. He then said to them:

“We have immense treasure, sufficient to enrich us all for life, if we can only get it to some secure place on shore. But we are in great danger of being separated by bad weather. In that case, should either of the sloops meet any ship of force, it would be captured. But the Duke, in build and armament, is superior to any ship to be encountered in these waters. My ship is so well manned that she can defy any foe; and moreover, she is such a swift sailer, that she can easily escape any other ship, if she does not wish to fight.

“I therefore propose, for our mutual safety, that we put all the treasure on board the Duke. We can seal up each chest with three seals, of which each vessel shall keep one. The chests shall not be opened until we open them together at the rendezvous.”

This proposal seemed so reasonable that they all agreed to it. All the treasure was transferred to the Duke. Avery then said to the villains who surrounded him:

“We have now the whole treasure at our own control. Let us, at night, give the rest a slip, and sail for unknown parts in North America. We can go ashore, divide our wealth, and with ample riches settle wherever we please.”

We have heard that there is honor among thieves. Among these thieves there was none. Not a dissentient voice was heard. All agreed to the plan. In the darkness of the ensuing night the ship changed her course, and in the morning the crews of the two sloops searched the horizon in vain for any sight of her. They knew by the fairness of the weather, and the course they were pursuing, that the flight had been intentional. The reader must be left to surmise the scenes of confusion and profanity which must have been witnessed on board these piratic crafts.

The first land the Duke made in America was the Island of Providence. Here Avery sold the ship, pretending that it had been fitted out as a privateer, but having been unsuccessful, the owners had ordered her to be disposed of, as soon as any purchasers could be found. With a portion of the proceeds a small sloop was bought, and the buccaneers sailed for Boston, New England. Avery, thief as he was, had concealed the greater part of the diamonds, of whose great value the crew were ignorant.

At Boston they landed. Many of the men received their shares, and scattered throughout New England. Avery was afraid to offer his diamonds for sale there, where diamonds were so unusual a commodity, lest suspicion should be excited. He persuaded a few of his companions to accompany him to Ireland. They landed at one of the northern ports and there separated. Avery went to Dublin.

He was still afraid to offer his diamonds for sale, lest inquiry should lead to the discovery of his manner of acquiring them. He thus found himself in poverty with all his wealth.

After remaining some time in Ireland under a feigned name, and ever trembling at his shadow he crossed over to Bristol. Here he fell in with some sharpers, who, getting a hint of the treasures he had to dispose of, took him under their especial care. They wormed most of his secrets out of him, and then recommended that he should dispose of his jewels to an established firm of wealth and credit, who, being accustomed to great transactions, would make no inquiries as to the way he obtained his treasure.

Avery, not knowing what to do, assented to this proposal. The sharpers brought some men whom they introduced to Avery as gentlemen of the highest standing in the jewelry business. Avery exhibited to them his diamonds and pearls, and many vessels of massive gold. They took them to sell on commission. This was the last he saw of his stolen wealth. To his remonstrances he received only the reply:

“If you speak a word out loud, we will have you hung for piracy.”

Utterly beggared, and terrified by these menaces, he again, in disguise, and under a feigned name, crossed over to Ireland. Here his destitution and distress became so great, for he was absolutely constrained to beg for his bread, that he resolved to go back to Bristol, and demand payment for his treasure at whatever hazard. He worked his passage in a small coasting vessel to Plymouth, and walked to Biddeford. Here, overcome with fatigue and suffering, both mental and bodily, he was seized with a fever, died, and, not one penny being found in his pockets, was buried at the expense of the parish as a vagabond pauper.

Such was the end of the pirate Avery, of whom such extravagant stories had been told. It was while he was in this extreme of poverty in England, and when it was supposed that he was rioting in successful piracy in the East, that the Government coupled his name with that of Captain Kidd, denouncing them as outlaws, and declaring that their sins were too great to be forgiven, and that if arrested, the gallows was their inevitable doom.

CHAPTER IV

Arrest, Trial, and Condemnation of Kidd

Appalling Tidings. – Trip to Curacoa. – Disposal of the Quedagh Merchant. – Purchase of the Antonio. – Trembling Approach toward New York. – Measures for the Arrest of Kidd. – He enters Delaware Bay. – Touches at Oyster Bay and Block Island. – Communications with the Government. – Sails for Boston. – His Arrest. – Long Delays. – Public Rumors. – His Trial and Condemnation.

Captain Kidd was greatly disturbed in learning at Anguilla that he had been denounced as a pirate, proscribed as an outlaw, and that he with the notorious Avery was expressly excluded from the pardon offered by the king to other buccaneers. He had thus far flattered himself with the hope that he could make it appear that all the prizes he had captured belonged to the French, and were legitimately taken under his commission as a privateersman. He also had placed much confidence in the support of the distinguished men composing the company by which he had been commissioned. The large wealth which he had expected to bring back to them, he thought, would unite their powerful influence in his support.

But instead of this, it now appeared that the company was disposed to make him their “scapegoat.” They had been so severely condemned, as if responsible for the conduct of their agent, that in self-defence they became the loudest of his assailants, denouncing him in the severest terms, and clamoring most loudly that all seas should be explored to catch and hang the miscreant. It was these political complications, united with the renown of the company of king and nobles, which gave the name of Captain Kidd prominence far above anything which his achievements would warrant. It was known that he had been scouring the East-Indian seas with one of the most powerful of English ships, and it was surmised that he had accumulated wealth sufficient to found an empire. What became of this boundless wealth? This was the question which agitated England and America, and which set the money-diggers at work in so many different places.

Captain Kidd and his crew, at Anguilla, were greatly alarmed. They kept a careful watch of the horizon from the mast-head, fearing every hour that they should see the flag of an English man-of-war approaching to convey them to trial and the scaffold. About a thousand miles south of Anguilla, there was, on the coast of Venezuela, the little island of Curacoa. It was but about forty miles long, and fourteen broad, and, belonging to the Dutch, was quite outside of the usual course of the British ships.

To this place Kidd repaired to lay in supplies, of which he was greatly in need. Though he had heard of his proscription, he was not fully aware of the strength of hostility which was arrayed against him. He still clung to the hope that no evidence could be brought to prove that he had acted in any other capacity than that of a privateersman.

But the very ship in which he sailed was evidence against him. The Quedagh Merchant, the property of the Great Mogul, was undeniably an East-Indian ship belonging to a friendly power, whom Kidd was expressly prohibited from assailing. He could not safely approach any English port in this ship. He accordingly purchased at Curacoa the small sloop Antonio, from Philadelphia. In this he placed his most portable treasures of doubloons, gold-dust, jewels, and vessels of silver and of gold, and with a crew of forty men set sail for New York. He kept the Quedagh Merchant in company with him as far as the southern coast of San Domingo. There he left the bulky ship, with a crew of twenty-two pirates, under command of a man by the name of Bolton. The ship had a very valuable cargo of one hundred and fifty bales of the finest silks, eighty tons of sugar, ten tons of junk iron, fifteen large anchors, and forty tons of saltpetre. The ship was also well provided with ammunition, had thirty guns mounted, and twenty more in the hold.

This was the division of the piratic plunder. The share which fell to Bolton and twenty-two of the men was the ship and this portion of the cargo. These wretches are heard of no more. It is to be hoped that the next storm which rose engulfed them all. It is more probable that for months they continued to range the seas, perpetrating crimes over which demons should blush, until, in drunken brawls and bloody fights, they one by one sank into the grave, and passed to the judgment-seat of Christ. Unreliable rumor says that Bolton transferred his cargo and crew to a more swiftly sailing ship, and then applied the torch to the *Quedagh Merchant*. Many other rumors were in circulation, but none worthy of credence.

Earl Bellomont was then in authority at New York. Kidd was hoping for his protection. But the earl felt that very active measures were requisite to exculpate himself, the king, and the ministry from all responsibility for the robberies of Kidd. He therefore, so soon as he heard of Kidd's arrival upon the coast, ordered out an armed sloop in pursuit of him.

It is evident that Kidd was then one of the most wretched of men. His reputation was ruined; his prospects in life were all blighted; his companions were bloodthirsty pirates, whom he could not but despise, and he was in imminent danger of an ignominious death upon the scaffold.

Tremblingly he approached New York. As his vessel needed some repairs, he ran into Delaware Bay, and tarried for a short time at Lewiston. This was early in June, 1699. It was from this place that Bellomont heard of his arrival. Here one of the pirates, a man by the name of Gillam, left, being in possession of a heavy chest, laden with the fruits of his robberies.

Kidd soon departed from the harbor, and thus escaped the sloop sent in pursuit of him. Instead of sailing directly to New York, in his perplexity he followed along the southern coast of Long Island, until he reached its eastern extremity, and then, turning into the Sound, crept cautiously along to Oyster Bay. From this place he wrote a letter to Bellomont, and also another very loving letter to his wife and children. In his letter to the earl he wrote:

“The reason why I have not gone directly to New York, is that the clamorous and false stories that have been repeated of me, have made me fearful of visiting or coming into any harbor, till I could hear from your lordship.”

In response to these letters, a lawyer by the name of Emot came from New York, and visited Kidd on board the *Antonio*. He brought the captain tidings respecting his family, and also the important intelligence that the Earl of Bellomont was then absent in Boston. Kidd employed Emot to repair immediately to Boston, to secure from the earl the promise of safety if Kidd should visit him there.

“Inform the earl,” said Kidd, “that unquestionable piracies have been committed by men nominally under my command. But this has never been by my connivance or consent. When these deeds have been performed, the men have been in a state of mutiny, utterly beyond my control. Disregarding my imperative commands, they locked me up in the cabin, and committed crimes over which I had no control, and for which I am in no sense responsible.”

To this the earl replied, “Say to Captain Kidd that I give him the promise of my protection if his statement can be proved to be true.”

Kidd was still in a state of pitiable agitation. It might not be easy to prove his declarations. There was no evidence which he could possibly bring forward but that of the pirates themselves. And it was not at all probable that they would be willing greatly to exaggerate their own guilt by exonerating him. He, however, ventured as far as Block Island. From that place he wrote to Bellomont again, protesting his innocence, and dwelling much upon the devotion with which he had consecrated himself to the interests of the owners of the *Adventure*. He also sent to Lady Bellomont a present of jewels, to the value of three hundred dollars. The earl's lady, for a time, retained these presents from the proscribed pirate and outlaw. When subsequently reproached with this, they were surrendered to the general inventory of Kidd's effects. The earl apologized for retaining them by saying that he

feared, if they were rejected, the giver would be so offended that the earl would not be able to get the developments he wished to obtain.

While at Block Island, Mrs. Kidd and the children joined Captain Kidd, under the care of Mr. Clark. They were all received on board the Antonio, and Kidd, with a pale cheek and a trembling heart, set sail for Boston. As Mr. Clark wished to return to New York, Kidd turned from his course and landed him at Gardiner's Island. Captain Kidd did not venture ashore at this place. But, for some unexplained reason, he deposited with Mr. Gardiner, the proprietor of the island, for safe keeping, a very considerable portion of his treasures. He then sailed for Boston, and entered the harbor on the first of July, 1699.

For nearly a week he remained in his vessel or traversed the streets unmolested. On the sixth of July, an officer approached him, placed his hand upon Kidd's shoulder, and said, "You are my prisoner." The pirate endeavored to draw his sword. It might have been an instinctive motion. It might have been that he deliberately preferred to be cut down upon the spot rather than undergo a trial. Others interposed. He was seized and disarmed, while his sword remained in its scabbard.

It is evident that there were very many chances that the trial might terminate in Kidd's favor. It is a maxim of law that every man is to be considered innocent until *proved* to be guilty. Kidd's piracies were perpetrated on the other side of the globe. None of his victims could possibly appear against him. There were none to be brought upon the witness's stand but his own sailors, who would be slow to admit that they had been engaged in a piratic cruise, which would condemn them to the gallows. It would seem, therefore, that there were insuperable difficulties in the way of his condemnation.

Mrs. Kidd, in coming from New York to Block Island with her children to join her husband, had brought with her a servant-girl, about three hundred dollars in money, and several valuable pieces of plate. These were all seized, together with all the effects on board the Antonio, and the treasure deposited at Gardiner's Island, which was brought to Boston by a vessel sent to the island for that purpose.

The whole amount proved much less than had been expected. There were eleven hundred and eleven ounces of gold, two thousand three hundred and fifty-three ounces of silver, fifty-seven bags of sugar, forty-one bales of goods, and seventeen pieces of canvas. Mrs. Kidd petitioned the governor and council to have her property restored to her, which was done.

The small amount of property found led to the suspicion, that as Kidd slowly passed over the waters of Long Island Sound, he must have buried, at Thimble Island and other places along the coast, a large amount of gold and jewels. And it is indeed difficult to account for what became of the vast treasures of that kind which it is supposed he found in the Quedagh Merchant. These rumors were intensified by the statement that while Kidd was at Block Island, three sloops came from New York and departed with a portion of his treasure. Kidd admitted this, but said that the goods belonged to his men and were shipped by them.

Immediately upon Kidd's arrival the earl sent for him, and held quite a long interview, though he was careful to do so in the presence of witnesses. A narrative was very carefully drawn up of his alleged proceedings. Mrs. Kidd took up her residence in a boarding-house kept by Mr. Duncan Campbell. The earl kept a close watch upon Kidd, fully intending, as he said, eventually to arrest him. But he thought it expedient to dally with him for a while, in order to discover the extent of his adventures, and the disposition he had made of the property acquired. Kidd sent to the boarding-house some gold-dust and ingots, which he said were intended as a present for the earl's lady. They were valued at about four thousand dollars. When searching the house they were found between two feather beds.

As Kidd did not seem disposed to unbosom himself very freely, and as the earl feared that some stormy night he might escape, he decided to hold him secure in prison. This led to his arrest, which we have already alluded to, on the sixth day after his arrival. The arrest took place in the streets of Boston, near the door of the earl's residence. At the same time some commissioners took possession

of his sloop. They seized and examined all his papers, and placed a guard over the property. Quite a number of his men were also arrested, twelve in all, under charge of piracy and robbery on the high seas. It is supposed that the others escaped.

On the seventeenth of July, Captain Nicholas Evertse arrived in Boston, with the statement to which we have referred, that Bolton, who was left in charge of the *Quedagh Merchant*, had transferred her cargo to another vessel, conveyed the goods to Curacoa, and set the *Merchant* on fire. He testified that he saw the flames of the burning ship as he was skirting the coast of San Domingo.

Kidd and his confederate pirates were held in close custody in Boston for several months. In the mean time intelligence of their capture was sent to London. The home government dispatched a ship of war to take them to England for trial. The excitement throughout Great Britain and in this country was intense, in consequence of the rumor which had so extensively prevailed of Kidd's partnership with the king and several of the ministry. Many months had already elapsed since his arrest, and yet he had not been brought to trial. The ship sent to transport him to London encountered a severe storm and put back. This caused an additional delay, and increased the excitement. It was said that the ministry, out of regard to their own reputation, were determined not to bring him to justice. Thus, throughout all England, he ceased to be regarded as an ordinary pirate, and was raised to the dignity of one entitled to a state trial.

Immediately upon Kidd's arrival, the House of Commons addressed a petition to the king, praying to have his trial postponed until the next Parliament. The question of his guilt or innocence had become so involved in political issues, that there was a strong party ready to make the greatest exertions to secure his condemnation. They urged the postponement on the ground that this length of time was requisite to obtain, from the Indies, documents and affidavits in reference to his transactions. Kidd and his companions were consequently confined in Newgate prison for a whole year.

At that very time the House of Commons had impeached the Earl of Oxford and Lord Somers, for their connection with Kidd, and for the extraordinary commission which they had been instrumental in placing in his hands. It was said that commission and grants had been conferred upon him, which were highly prejudicial to the interests of trade and dishonorable to the king. In accordance with this commission, Kidd could capture any ship, and, without referring the question to any court of inquiry, could, of his own pleasure, declare the ship to be a pirate. He could then confiscate ship and cargo to his own use, and dispose of the crew in any way which to him might seem best. This was the course which, under the commission, he did pursue.

These were certainly very extraordinary powers. It was contended that they were contrary to the law of England and to the Bill of Rights. To these arguments it was replied, by the friends of the impeached nobles, that pirates were the enemies of the human race; that as such any person had a right to destroy them, and seize the property they had so iniquitously acquired, and to which they had no legitimate title. It was also declared, though perhaps the royal commission would hardly sustain the statement, that Kidd was authorized to seize only that property for which no other owner could be found. Certainly there was no provision made for searching out such ownership. It was, however, urged, and very truthfully, that the commission contained the all-important clause:

“We do also require you to bring, or cause to be brought, such pirates, freebooters, or sea-rovers, as you shall seize, to legal trial, to the end they may be proceeded against according to the law in such cases.”

The fact that Kidd entirely ignored these instructions, constituting himself the court to try and condemn, could not justly be brought as a charge against the ministers who commissioned him.

Upon these questions popular feeling ran high. Parties took sides. Agitating rumors filled the air. It was confidently affirmed that the lords then on trial, with the connivance of the ministry, that they might escape the investigation which the trial of Kidd would involve, had set the Great Seal of England to the pardon of the pirate. This roused the anti-ministerial party to the highest state of exasperation. They resolved at all events to hang Kidd, hoping thus to prove that the ministers were

alike guilty with him. And on the other hand, the ministers themselves had come to the conclusion that any attempt to shield Kidd would redound to their own ruin. It had become essential to their own reputation that they should manifest more zeal than any others to bring Kidd to the scaffold.

Thus the wretched pirate had no chance of a fair trial. Undoubtedly he was guilty. But it is very doubtful whether he were proved to be guilty when called before the court. The bill of impeachment against the lords was not carried. Though their participation with Kidd in the profits of an expedition which was authorized only by their own official acts was deemed very censurable, when the vote was taken there were but twenty-three in favor of the impeachment, while there were fifty-six opposed to the bill.

The Earl of Bellomont, harassed by the procedure in the House of Commons, and knowing that measures were about to be instituted against him for his recall from the provincial government, and perhaps for his still more severe punishment, was taken sick and died in New York, in March, 1700. Thus he escaped from the further troubles of this ever-troubled world.

At the close of the year 1700, the papers which had been sent for arrived from the East Indies. A petition came from several of the East-Indian merchants, subjects of the King of Persia, giving a minute recital of the capture of the *Quedagh Merchant*, and praying that the property of which they had thus been robbed, and much of which had been conveyed to the North American colonies, might be restored to them. A very distinguished East Indian, by the name of *Cogi Baba*, came to London in behalf of the petitioners. He was summoned to appear before the House of Commons. At the same time Kidd himself was brought from his prison before the bar.

After an examination, a motion was made to the House to declare the grant made to the Earl of Bellomont and others of the company, of all the treasure taken by Kidd, to be null and void. But this motion was negatived. A vote was then taken requesting the king to institute immediate proceedings against Captain Kidd for piracy and murder. He was accordingly brought to trial, under this indictment, at the Old Bailey, in the year 1701.

Several of Kidd's confederates were tried with him. Some of them pleaded the king's pardon, saying that they had surrendered themselves within the time limited in the royal proclamation. The governor of New Jersey, Colonel Bass, then in court, testified to the truth of this assertion, the surrender having been made to him.

To this it was replied, "There were four commissioners named in the proclamation, Thomas Warren, Israel Hayes, Peter Delanoye, and Christopher Pollard. These commissioners were sent to America to receive the submission of such pirates as should surrender. No other persons were entitled, to receive their surrender. They therefore have not complied with the conditions of the proclamation."

They were condemned and hanged. One of the crew, *Darby Mullens*, made the following strong defence:

"I served under the king's commission. I could not therefore disobey my commander, without exposing myself to the most severe punishment. Whenever a ship goes out upon any expedition, under the king's commission, the men are never allowed to call their officers to account. Implicit obedience is required of them. Any other course would destroy all discipline. If anything unlawful is done, the officers are to answer for it, for the men, in obeying orders, only do what is imperiously their duty."

The court replied, "When a man is acting under a commission, he is justified only in doing that which is lawful, not in that which is unlawful."

The prisoner responded, "I stand in need of nothing to justify me in what is lawful. But the case of a seaman is very hard, if he is exposed to being scourged or shot if he refuse to obey his commander, and of being hung if he obey him. If the seaman were allowed to dispute the orders of his captain, there could be no such thing as command kept up at sea."

The court replied, "The crew, of which you were one, took a share of the plunder; they mutinied several times; they undertook to control the captain; they paid no regard to the commission; they acted in all things according to the customs of pirates. You are guilty, and must be hanged." He was hanged.

Kidd was tried for piracy, and for the murder of William Moore. He was not allowed counsel, but was left to make his own defence. On the whole, he appeared remarkably well while passing through this dreadful ordeal. In opening his defence, he said:

“I was a merchant in New York, in good repute and in good circumstances, when I was solicited to engage, under the royal commission, in the laudable employment of suppressing piracy. I had no need of embarking myself in piratic adventures. The men were generally desperate characters, and they rose in mutiny against me. I lost all control over them. They did as they pleased. They threatened to shoot me in my cabin. Ninety-five deserted at one time, and destroyed my boat. I was thus disabled from bringing the ship home. Consequently I could not bring the prizes before any court to have them regularly condemned. They were all taken by virtue of the commission, under the Broad Seal, and they had French papers.”

When the jury was impanelled, and he was invited to find cause, if he wished to do so, for the exclusion of any of them, he replied:

“I shall challenge none. I know nothing to the contrary but that they are all honest men.”

Kidd was greatly agitated during the trial, and frequently interrupted the court with his exclamations and explanations. He was first tried for the murder of William Moore. This indictment gave a very particular account of the event, stating that the gunner died of a mortal bruise received at the hands of the captain; that from the thirtieth day of October to the one-and-thirtieth day, he did languish and languishing did live, but that on the one-and-thirtieth day he did die; and that William Kidd, feloniously, voluntarily, and of malice aforethought, did kill and murder him.

To this Kidd replied, and probably with entire truth, as we have before said, that he had no intention of killing the man; that he struck him down to quell a mutiny, and to prevent the crew from engaging in an atrocious act of piracy; that his conscience never had condemned him for the deed, and that he then felt that for it he merited approbation rather than censure.

He told a very plain, simple story, which, if true, and its truth could not be disproved, would exonerate him in this affair from blame. The intelligent reader of this narrative will perceive that there were many corroborative circumstances to substantiate the accuracy of his account.

“I will inform the court,” he said, “of the facts precisely as they occurred in this case. We were within about three miles of the Dutch ship, when I perceived that many of my men were in a state of mutiny, clamoring for her capture. Moore, addressing the mutineers, said that he could propose a plan by which the ship could be captured, and yet all who were engaged in the enterprise might be perfectly safe.

“‘And how is that to be done,’ I inquired?”

“He replied, ‘We will hail the ship, and have the captain and officers invited on board to visit our officers. While they are in the cabin with our captain, we will man the boats and plunder the ship. The captain will shut his eyes and close his ears, and then he and the officers can testify that the ship was not captured.’”

“To this I said, ‘This would be Judas-like treachery, to rob the ship under the guise of friendship. I dare not do such a thing.’”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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