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**Pirates own book, or authentic narratives of the lives,
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robbers**

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Adventures and Exploits of Captain Avery.

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ADVENTURES AND EXPLOITS OF
CAPTAIN AVERY.

Containing an Account of his capturing one of the great Mogul's ship's laden with treasure: and an interesting history of a colony of Pirates on the island of Madagascar.



Captain Avery engaging the Great Mogul's Ship.

DURING his own time the adventures of Captain Avery were the subject of general conversation in Europe. It was reported that he had married the Great Mogul's

daughter, who was taken in an Indian ship that fell into his hands, and that he was about to be the founder of a new monarchy—that he gave commissions in his own name to the captains of his ships, and the commanders of his forces, and was acknowledged by them as their prince. In consequence of these reports, it was at one time resolved to fit out a strong squadron to go and take him and his men; and at another time it was proposed to invite him home with all his riches, by the offer of his Majesty's pardon. These reports, however, were soon discovered to be groundless, and he was actually starving without a shilling, while he was represented as in the possession of millions. Not to exhaust the patience, or lessen the curiosity of the reader, the facts in Avery's life shall be briefly related.

He was a native of Devonshire, (Eng.) and at an early period sent to sea; advanced to the station of a mate in a merchantman, he performed several voyages. It happened, previous to the peace of Ryswick, when there existed an alliance between Spain, England, Holland, and other powers, against France, that the French in Martinique carried on a smuggling trade with the Spaniards on the continent of Peru. To prevent their intrusion into the Spanish dominions, a few vessels were commanded to cruise upon that coast, but the French ships were too strong for them; the Spaniards, therefore, came to the resolution of hiring foreigners to act against them. Accordingly, certain merchants of Bristol fitted out two ships of thirty guns, well manned, and provided with every necessary munition, and commanded them to sail for Corunna to receive their orders.

Captain Gibson commanded one of these ships, and Avery appears to have been his mate, in the year 1715. He was a fellow of more cunning than courage, and insinuating himself into the confidence of some of the boldest men in the ship, he represented the immense riches which were to be acquired upon the Spanish coast, and proposed to run off with the ship. The proposal was scarcely made when it was agreed upon, and put in execution at ten o'clock the following evening. Captain Gibson was one of those who mightily love their bottle, and spent much

of his time on shore ; but he remained on board that night, which did not, however, frustrate their design, because he had taken his usual dose, and so went to bed. The men who were not in the confederacy went also to bed, leaving none upon deck but the conspirators. At the time agreed upon, the long boat of the other ship came, and Avery hailing her in the usual manner, he was answered by the men in her, "Is your drunken boatswain on board?" which was the watchword agreed between them. Avery replying in the affirmative, the boat came alongside with sixteen stout fellows, who joined in the adventure. They next secured the hatches, then softly weighed anchor, and immediately put to sea without bustle or noise. There were several vessels in the bay, besides a Dutchman of forty guns, the captain of which was offered a considerable reward to go in pursuit of Avery, but he declined. When the captain awoke, he rang his bell, and Avery and another conspirator going into the cabin, found him yet half asleep. He inquired, saying, "What is the matter with the ship? does she drive? what weather is it?" supposing that it had been a storm, and that the ship was driven from her anchors. "No, no," answered Avery, "we're at sea, with a fair wind and a good weather." "At sea!" said the captain: "how can that be?" "Come," answered Avery, "don't be in a fright, but put on your clothes, and I'll let you into a secret. You must know that I am captain of this ship now, and this is my cabin, therefore you must walk out; I am bound to Madagascar, with a design of making my own fortune, and that of all the brave fellows joined with me."

The captain, having a little recovered his senses, began to understand his meaning. However, his fright was as great as before, which Avery perceiving, desired him to fear nothing; "for," said he, "if you have a mind to make one of us, we will receive you; and if you turn sober, and attend to business, perhaps in time I may make you one of my lieutenants; if not, here's a boat, and you shall be set on shore." Gibson accepted of the last proposal; and the whole crew being called up to know who was willing to go on shore with the captain, there were only about five or six who chose to accompany him.

Avery proceeded on his voyage to Madagascar, and it does not appear that he captured any vessels upon his way. When arrived at the northeast part of that island, he found two sloops at anchor, which, upon seeing him, slipped their cables, and ran themselves ashore, while the men all landed and concealed themselves in the woods. These were two sloops which the men had run off with from the East Indies, and seeing Avery's ship, supposed that he had been sent out after them. Suspecting who they were, he sent some of his men on shore to inform them that they were friends, and to propose a union for their common safety. The sloops' men being well armed, had posted themselves in a wood, and placed sentinels to observe whether the ship's men were landed to pursue them. The sentinels only observing two or three men coming towards them unarmed, did not oppose them. Upon being informed that they were friends, the sentinels conveyed them to the main body, where they delivered their message. They were at first afraid that it was a stratagem to entrap them, but when the messengers assured them that their captain had also run away with his ship, and that a few of their men along with him would meet them unarmed, to consult matters for their common advantage, confidence was established, and they were mutually well pleased, as it added to their strength.

Having consulted what was most proper to be attempted they endeavored to get off the sloops, and hastened to prepare all things, in order to sail for the Arabian coast. Near the river Indus, the man at the mast-head espied a sail, upon which they gave chase; as they came nearer to her, they discovered that she was a tall vessel, and might turn out to be an East Indiaman. She, however, proved a better prize; for when they fired at her she hoisted Mogul colors, and seemed to stand upon her defence. Avery only cannonaded at a distance, when some of his men began to suspect that he was not the hero they had supposed. The sloops, however attacked, the one on the bow, and another upon the quarter of the ship, and so boarded her. She then struck her colors. She was one of the Great Mogul's own ships, and there were in her several of the greatest persons in his court, among whom, it was said,

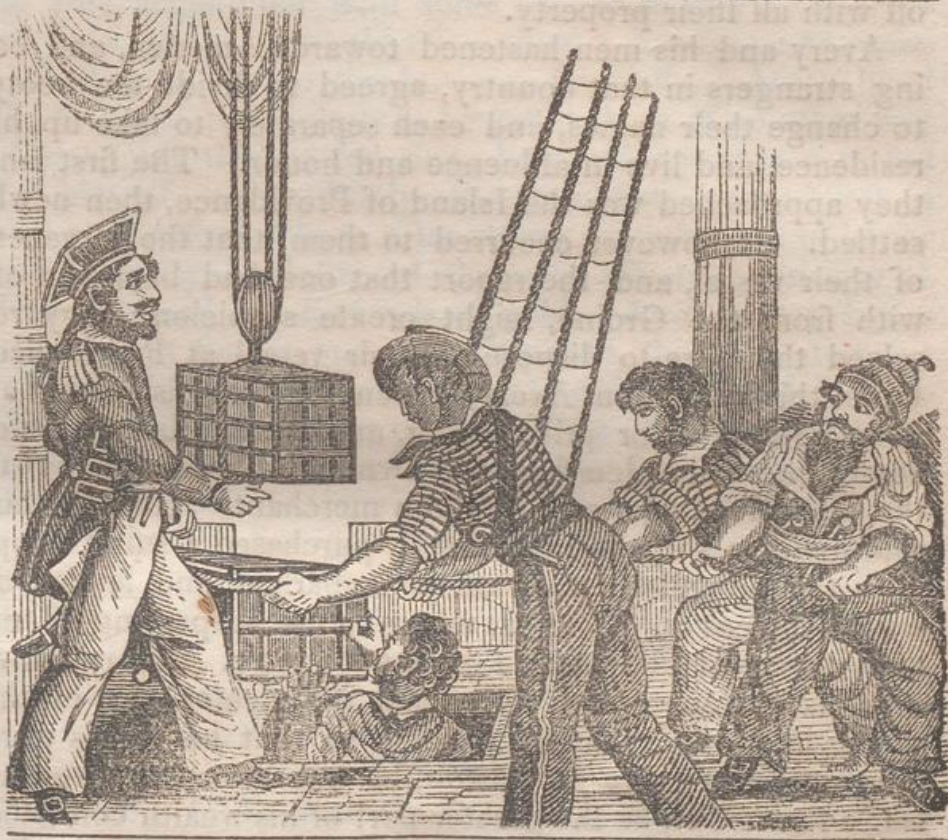
was one of his daughters going upon a pilgrimage to Mecca; and they were carrying with them rich offerings to present at the shrine of Mahomet. It is a well known fact, that the people of the east travel with great magnificence, so that these had along with them all their slaves and attendants, with a large quantity of vessels of gold and silver, and immense sums of money to defray their expenses by land; the spoil therefore which they received from that ship was almost incalculable.

Taking the treasure on board their own ships, and plundering their prize of every thing valuable, they then allowed her to depart. As soon as the Mogul received this intelligence, he threatened to send a mighty army to extirpate the English from all their settlements upon the Indian coast. The East India Company were greatly alarmed, but found means to calm his resentment, by promising to search for the robbers, and deliver them into his hands. The noise which this made over all Europe, gave birth to the rumors that were circulated concerning Avery's greatness.

In the mean time, our adventurers made the best of their way back to Madagascar, intending to make that place the deposit of all their treasure, to build a small fort, and to keep always a few men there for its protection. Avery, however, disconcerted this plan, and rendered it altogether unnecessary.

While steering their course, Avery sent a boat to each of the sloops, requesting that the chiefs would come on board his ship to hold a conference. They obeyed, and being assembled, he suggested to them the necessity of securing the property which they had acquired in some safe place on shore, and observed, that the chief difficulty was to get it safe on shore; adding that, if either of the sloops should be attacked alone, they would not be able to make any great resistance, and thus she must either be sunk or taken with all the property on board. That, for his part, his ship was so strong, so well manned, and such a swift-sailing vessel, that he did not think it was possible for any other ship to take or overcome her. Accordingly, he proposed that all their treasure should be sealed up in three chests;—that each of the captains should have keys,

and that they should not be opened until all were present ; — that the chests should be then put on board his ship, and afterwards lodged in some safe place upon land.



Captain Avery receiving the three chests of Treasure on board of his Ship.

This proposal seemed so reasonable, and so much for the common good, that it was without hesitation agreed to, and all the treasure deposited in three chests, and carried to Avery's ship. The weather being favorable, they remained all three in company during that and the next day ; meanwhile Avery, tampering with his men, suggested, that they had now on board what was sufficient to make them all happy ; "and what," continued he, "should hinder us from going to some country where we are not known, and living on shore all the rest of our days in plenty?" They soon understood his hint, and all readily consented to deceive the men of the sloops, and fly with all

the booty; this they effected during the darkness of the following night. The reader may easily conjecture what were the feelings and indignation of the other two crews in the morning, when they discovered that Avery had made off with all their property.

Avery and his men hastened towards America, and being strangers in that country, agreed to divide the booty, to change their names, and each separately to take up his residence, and live in affluence and honor. The first land they approached was the Island of Providence, then newly settled. It however occurred to them, that the largeness of their vessel, and the report that one had been run off with from the Groine, might create suspicion; they resolved therefore to dispose of their vessel at Providence. Upon this resolution, Avery, pretending that his vessel had been equipped for privateering, and having been unsuccessful, he had orders from the owners to dispose of her to the best advantage, soon found a merchant. Having thus sold his own ship, he immediately purchased a small sloop.

In this he and his companions embarked, and landed at several places in America, where, none suspecting them, they dispersed and settled in the country. Avery, however, had been careful to conceal the greater part of the jewels and other valuable articles, so that his riches were immense. Arriving at Boston, he was almost resolved to settle there, but, as the greater part of his wealth consisted of diamonds, he was apprehensive that he could not dispose of them at that place, without being taken up as a pirate. Upon reflection, therefore, he resolved to sail for Ireland, and in a short time arrived in the northern part of that kingdom, and his men dispersed into several places. Some of them obtained the pardon of King William, and settled in that country.

The wealth of Avery, however, now proved of small service, and occasioned him great uneasiness. He could not offer his diamonds for sale in that country without being suspected. Considering, therefore, what was best to be done, he thought there might be some person at Bristol he could venture to trust. Upon this he resolved, and going into Devonshire, sent to one of his friends to meet him at a town called Bideford. When he had unbosomed him-

self to him and other pretended friends, they agreed that the safest plan would be to put his effects into the hands of some wealthy merchants, and no inquiry would be made how they came by them. One of these friends told him, he was acquainted with some who were very fit for the purpose, and if he would allow them a handsome commission, they would do the business faithfully. Avery liked the proposal, particularly as he could think of no other way of managing this matter, since he could not appear to act for himself. Accordingly, the merchants paid Avery a visit at Bideford, where, after strong protestations of honor and integrity, he delivered them his effects, consisting of diamonds and some vessels of gold. After giving him a little money for his present subsistence, they departed.

He changed his name, and lived quietly at Bideford, so that no notice was taken of him. In a short time his money was all spent, and he heard nothing from his merchants though he wrote to them repeatedly; at last they sent him a small supply, but it was not sufficient to pay his debts. In short, the remittances they sent him were so trifling, that he could with difficulty exist. He therefore determined to go privately to Bristol, and have an interview with the merchants himself, — where, instead of money, he met with a mortifying repulse; for, when he desired them to come to an account with him, they silenced him by threatening to disclose his character; the merchants thus proving themselves as good pirates on land as he was at sea.

Whether he was frightened by these menaces, or had seen some other person who recognised him, is not known; however, he went immediately to Ireland, and from thence solicited his merchants very strongly for a supply, but to no purpose; so that he was reduced to beggary. In this extremity he was determined to return, and cast himself upon the mercy of these honest Bristol merchants, let the consequence be what it would. He went on board a trading-vessel, and worked his passage over to Plymouth, from whence he travelled on foot to Bideford. He had been there but a few days, when he fell sick and died; not being worth so much as would buy him a coffin!

We shall now turn back and give our readers some ac-

count of the other two sloops. Deceiving themselves in the supposition that Avery had outsailed them during the night, they held on their course to the place of rendezvous; but, arriving there, to their sad disappointment no ship appeared. It was now necessary for them to consult what was most proper to do in their desperate circumstances. Their provisions were nearly exhausted, and both fish and fowl were to be found on shore, yet they were destitute of salt to cure them. As they could not subsist at sea without salt provisions, they resolved to form an establishment upon land. Accordingly making tents of the sails, and using the other materials of the sloops for what purposes they could serve, they encamped upon the shore. It was also a fortunate circumstance, that they had plenty of ammunition and small arms. Here they met with some of their countrymen; and as the digression is short, we will inform our readers how they came to inhabit this place.

Captain George Dew, and Thomas Tew, had received a commission from the Governor of Bermuda to sail for the river Gambia, in Africa, that, with the assistance of the Royal African Company, they might seize the French Factory situated upon that coast. Dew, in a violent storm, not only sprang a mast, but lost sight of his companion. Upon this he returned to refit. Instead of proceeding in his voyage, Tew made towards the Cape of Good Hope, doubled that cape, and sailed for the straits of Babel-Mandel. There he met with a large ship richly laden coming from the Indies, and bound for Arabia. Though she had on board three hundred soldiers, besides seamen, yet Tew had the courage to attack her, and soon made her his prize. It is reported, that by this one prize every man shared near three thousand pounds. Informed by the prisoners that five other ships were to pass that way, Tew would have attacked them, but was prevented by the remonstrances of his quarter-master and others. This difference of opinion terminated in a resolution to abandon the sea, and to settle on some convenient spot on shore; and the island of Madagascar was chosen. Tew, however, and a few others, in a short time went for Rhode Island, and obtained a pardon.

The natives of Madagascar are negroes, but differ from those of Guinea in the length of their hair and in the blackness of their complexion. They are divided into small nations, each governed by its own prince, who carry on a continual war upon each other. The prisoners taken in war are either rendered slaves to the conquerors, sold, or slain, according to pleasure. When the pirates first settled among them, their alliance was much courted by these princes, and those whom they joined were always successful in their wars, the natives being ignorant of the use of fire-arms. Such terror did they carry along with them, that the very appearance of a few pirates in an army would have put the opposing force to flight.

By these means they in a little time became very formidable, and the prisoners whom they took in war they employed in cultivating the ground, and the most beautiful of the women they married; nor were they contented with one, but married as many as they could conveniently maintain. The natural result was, that they separated, each choosing a convenient place for himself, where he lived in a princely style, surrounded by his wives, slaves and dependants. Nor was it long before jarring interests excited them also to draw the sword against each other, and they appeared at the head of their respective forces in the field of battle. In these civil wars their number and strength were greatly lessened.

The servant, exalted to the condition of a master, generally becomes a tyrant. These pirates, unexpectedly elevated to the dignity of petty princes, used their power with the most wanton barbarity. The punishment of the very least offence was to be tied to a tree, and instantly shot through the head. The negroes, at length, exasperated by continued oppression, formed the determination of extirpating them in one night; nor was it a difficult matter to accomplish this, since they were now so much divided both in affection and residence. Fortunately, however, for them, a negro woman, who was partial to them, ran twenty miles in three hours, and warning them of their danger, they were united and in arms to oppose the negroes before the latter had assembled. This narrow escape made them more cautious, and induced them to adopt the following system of policy:—

Convinced that fear was not a sufficient protection, and that the bravest man might be murdered by a coward in his bed, they labored to foment wars among the negro princes, while they themselves declined to aid either party. It naturally followed, that those who were vanquished fled to them for protection, and increased their strength. When there was no war, they fomented private discords, and encouraged them to wreak their vengeance against each other; nay, even taught them how to surprise their opponents, and furnished them with fire-arms, with which to dispatch them more effectually and expeditiously. The consequences were, that the murderer was constrained to fly to them for protection, with his wives, children, and kindred. These, from interest, became true friends, as their own safety depended upon the lives of their protectors. By this time the pirates were so formidable, that none of the negro princes durst attack them in open war.

Pursuing this system of policy, in a short time each chief had his party greatly increased, and they divided like so many tribes, in order to find ground to cultivate, and to choose proper places to build places of residence and erect garrisons of defence. The fears that agitated them were always obvious in their general policy, for they vied with each other in constructing places of safety, and using every precaution to prevent the possibility of sudden danger, either from the negroes or from one another.

A description of one of these dwellings will both show the fears that agitated these tyrants, and prove entertaining to the reader. They selected a spot overgrown with wood, near a river, and raised a rampart or ditch round it, so straight and steep that it was impossible to climb it, more particularly by those who had no scaling ladders. Over that ditch there was one passage into the wood; the dwelling, which was a hut, was built in that part of the wood which the prince thought most secure, but so covered that it could not be discovered until you came near it. But the greatest ingenuity was displayed in the construction of the passage that led to the hut, which was so narrow, that no more than one person could go abreast, and it was contrived in so intricate a manner, that it was a perfect labyrinth; the way going round and round, with

several small crossways, so that a person unacquainted with it, might walk several hours without finding the hut. Along the sides of these paths, certain large thorns, which grew on a tree in that country, were stuck into the ground with their points outwards; and the path itself being serpentine, as before mentioned, if a man should attempt to approach the hut at night, he would certainly have struck upon these thorns.

Thus like tyrants they lived, dreading, and dreaded by all, and in this state they were found by Captain Woods Rodgers, when he went to Madagascar in the *Delicia*, a ship of forty guns, with the design of purchasing slaves. He touched upon a part of the island at which no ship had been seen for seven or eight years before, where he met with some pirates who had been upon the island above twenty-five years. There were only eleven of the original stock then alive, surrounded with a numerous offspring of children and grandchildren.

They were struck with terror upon the sight of the vessel, supposing that it was a man-of-war sent out to apprehend them; they, therefore, retired to their secret habitations. But when they found some of the ship's crew on shore, without any signs of hostility, and proposing to treat with them for slaves, they ventured to come out of their dwellings attended like princes. Having been so long upon the island, their cloaks were so much worn, that their majesties were extremely out at elbows. It cannot be said that they were ragged, but they had nothing to cover them but the skins of beasts in their natural state, not even a shoe or stocking; so that they resembled the pictures of Hercules in the lion's skin; and being overgrown with beard, and hair upon their bodies, they appeared the most savage figures that the human imagination could well conceive.

The sale of the slaves in their possession soon provided them with more suitable clothes, and all other necessaries, which they received in exchange. Meanwhile, they became very familiar, went frequently on board, and were very eager in examining the inside of the ship, talking very familiarly with the men, and inviting them on shore. Their design was to surprise the ship during the night.

They had a sufficient number of men and boats to effect their purpose, but the captain suspecting them, kept so strong a watch upon deck, that they found it in vain to hazard an attempt. When some of the men went on shore, they entered into a plan to seize the ship, but the captain observing their familiarity, prevented any one of his men from speaking to the pirates, and only permitted a confidential person to purchase their slaves. Thus he departed from the island, leaving these pirates to enjoy their savage royalty. One of them had been a waterman upon the Thames, and having committed a murder, fled to the West Indies. The rest had all been foremast-men, nor was there one among them who could either read or write.



Captain Avery's Treasure.