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**Pirates own book, or authentic narratives of the lives,
exploits, and executions of the most celebrated sea
robbers**

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Adventures and Heroism of Mary Read.

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THE
ADVENTURES AND HEROISM
OF
MARY REED.

THE attention of our readers is now to be directed to the history of two female pirates,—a history which is chiefly remarkable from the extraordinary circumstance of the softer sex assuming a character peculiarly distinguished for every vice that can disgrace humanity, and at the same time for the exertion of the most daring, though brutal, courage.

Mary Reed was a native of England, but at what place she was born is not recorded. Her mother married a sailor when she was very young, who, soon after their marriage, went to sea, and never returned. The fruit of that marriage was a sprightly boy. The husband not returning, she again found herself with child, and to cover her shame, took leave of her husband's relations, and went to live in the country, taking her boy along with her. Her son in a short time died, and she was relieved from the burden of his maintenance and education. The mother had not resided long in the country before Mary Reed, the subject of the present narrative, was born.

After the birth of Mary, her mother resided in the country for three or four years, until her money was all spent, and her ingenuity was set at work to contrive how to obtain a supply. She knew that her husband's mother was in good circumstances, and could easily support her child, provided she could make her pass for a boy, and her son's child. But it seemed impossible to impose upon an old experienced mother. She, however, presented Mary in the

character of her grandson. The old woman proposed to take the boy to live with her, but the mother would not on any account part with her boy; the grandmother, therefore, allowed a crown per week for his support.

The ingenuity of the mother being successful, she reared the daughter as a boy. But as she grew up, she informed her of the secret of her birth, in order that she might conceal her sex. The grandmother, however, dying, the support from that quarter failed, and she was obliged to hire her out as a footboy to a French lady. The strength and manly disposition of this supposed boy increased with her years, and leaving that servile employment, she engaged on board a man-of-war.

The volatile disposition of the youth did not permit her to remain long in this station, and she next went into Flanders, and joined a regiment of foot as a cadet. Though in every action she conducted herself with the greatest bravery, yet she could not obtain a commission, as they were in general bought and sold. She accordingly quitted that service, and enlisted into a regiment of horse; there she behaved herself so valiantly, that she gained the esteem of all her officers. It, however, happened, that her comrade was a handsome young Fleming, and she fell passionately in love with him. The violence of her feelings rendered her negligent of her duty, and effected such a change in her behaviour as attracted the attention of all. Both her comrade and the rest of the regiment deemed her mad. Love, however, is inventive, and as they slept in the same tent, she found means to discover her sex without any seeming design. He was both surprised and pleased, supposing that he would have a mistress to himself; but he was greatly mistaken, and he found that it was necessary to court her for his wife. A mutual attachment took place, and, as soon as convenient, women's clothes were provided for her, and they were publicly married.

The singularity of two troopers marrying caused a general conversation, and many of the officers honored the ceremony with their presence, and resolved to make presents to the bride, to provide her with necessaries. After marriage they were desirous to quit the service, and their discharge being easily obtained, they set up an ordinary

under the sign of the "Three Shoes," and soon acquired a considerable run of business.

But Mary Read's felicity was of short duration; the husband died, and peace being concluded, her business diminished. Under these circumstances she again resumed her man's dress, and going into Holland, enlisted into a regiment of foot quartered in one of the frontier towns. But there being no prospect of preferment in time of peace, she went on board a vessel bound for the West Indies.

During the voyage, the vessel was captured by English pirates, and as Mary was the only English person on board, they detained her, and having plundered the vessel of what they chose, allowed it to depart. Mary continued in that unlawful commerce for some time, but the royal pardon being tendered to all those in the West Indies, who should, before a specified day, surrender, the crew to which she was attached, availed themselves of this, and lived quietly on shore with the fruits of their adventures. But from the want of their usual supplies, their money became exhausted; and being informed that Captain Rodgers, in the island of Providence, was fitting out some vessels for privateering, Mary, with some others, repaired to that island to serve on board his privateers. We have already heard, that scarcely had the ships sailed, when some of their crews mutinied, and ran off with the ships, to pursue their former mode of life. Among these was Mary Read. She indeed, frequently declared, that the life of a pirate was what she detested, and that she was constrained to it both on the former and present occasion. It was, however, sufficiently ascertained, that both Mary Read and Anne Bonney were among the bravest and most resolute fighters of the whole crew; that when the vessel was taken, these two heroines, along with another of the pirates, were the last three upon deck; and that Mary, having in vain endeavored to rouse the courage of the crew, who had fled below, discharged a pistol amongst them, killing one and wounding another.

Nor was Mary less modest than brave; for though she had remained many years in the character of a sailor, yet no one had discovered her sex, until she was under the ne-

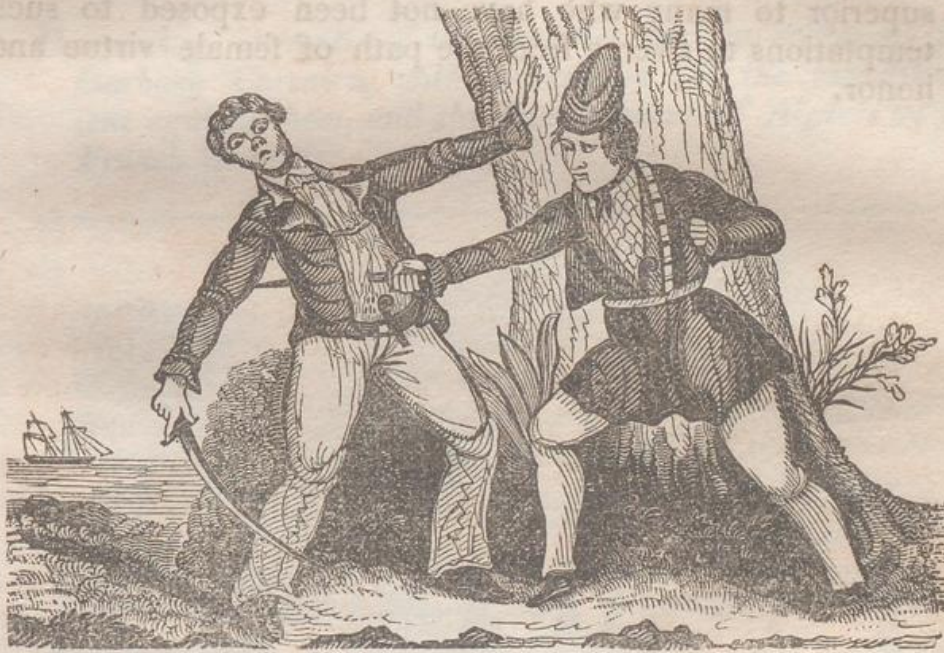
cessity of doing so to Anne Bonney. The reason of this was, that Anne, supposing her to be a handsome fellow, became greatly enamored of her, and discovered her sex and wishes to Mary, who was thus constrained to reveal her secret to Anne. Rackam being the paramour of Bonney, and observing her partiality towards Mary, threatened to shoot her lover; so that to prevent any mischief, Anne also informed the captain of the sex of her companion.

Rackam was enjoined to secrecy, and here he behaved honorably; but love again assailed the conquered Mary. It was usual with the pirates to retain all the artists who were captured in the trading-vessels; among these was a very handsome young man, of engaging manners, who vanquished the heart of Mary. In a short time her love became so violent, that she took every opportunity of enjoying his company and conversation; and, after she had gained his friendship, discovered her sex. Esteem and friendship were speedily converted into the most ardent affection, and a mutual flame burned in the hearts of these two lovers. An occurrence soon happened that put the attachment of Mary to a severe trial. Her lover having quarrelled with one of the crew, they agreed to fight a duel on shore. Mary was all anxiety for the fate of her lover, and she manifested a greater concern for the preservation of his life than that of her own; but she could not entertain the idea that he should refuse to fight, and so be esteemed a coward. Accordingly she quarrelled with the man who challenged her lover, and called him to the field two hours before his appointment with her lover, engaged him with sword and pistol, and laid him dead at her feet.

Though no esteem or love had formerly existed, this action was sufficient to have kindled the most violent flame. But this was not necessary, for the lover's attachment was equal, if not stronger than her own; they pledged their faith, which they esteemed as binding as if the ceremony had been performed by a clergyman.

Captain Rackam one day, before he knew that she was a woman, asked her why she followed a line of life that exposed her to so much danger, and at last to the certainty

of being hanged. She replied, that, "As to hanging, she thought it no great hardship, for were it not for that, every cowardly fellow would turn pirate, and so infest the seas; and men of courage would starve. That if it was put to



Mary Read killing her antagonist.

her choice, she would not have the punishment less than death, the fear of which kept some dastardly rogues honest; that many of those who are now cheating the widows and orphans, and oppressing their poor neighbors who have no money to obtain justice, would then rob at sea, and the ocean would be as crowded with rogues as the land: so that no merchants would venture out, and the trade in a little time would not be worth following."

Being with child at the time of her trial, her execution was delayed; and it is probable that she would have found favor, but in the mean time she fell sick and died.

Mary Read was of a strong and robust constitution, capable of enduring much exertion and fatigue. She was vain and bold in her disposition, but susceptible of the tenderest emotions, and of the most melting affections. Her conduct was generally directed by virtuous principles, while

at the same time, she was violent in her attachments. Though she was inadvertently drawn into that dishonorable mode of life which has stained her character, and given her a place among the criminals noticed in this work, yet she possessed a rectitude of principle and of conduct, far superior to many who have not been exposed to such temptations to swerve from the path of female virtue and honor.