

The Truth About Pirates

VIII "John Avery's Last Laugh"

By
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He did the things for which Kidd died. He was a pirate. Kidd was not. He got great treasure, while Kidd got none. And Kidd hanged, because there had to be a sacrifice, but Avery was not executed. The Avery paid in full.

There is a strange twist in the story of the Great And First, Captain Avery. There is an other story like it, in the annals of the days of piracy.

He began innocently. He was a Devon man, like John Piantani's, like many another pirate. He grew up in Plymouth, spent all his boyish days along the wharves, was out to sea when he could barely pull a rope. He served honestly for a long while. From a common sailor he rose to first mate on a merchantman, well thought of and careful of his ship. Then he was a piloter, the Commodore of Bristol. Then a privateer began.

For Avery could not keep his hands off gold. He saw Commodore Gibson take a dash from the Great And First, saw how his master made rich profits, thought it was not fair. He made a plan, and he went working among the crew, and he found ready men to follow.

When the Commodore was off Cape John Avery struck. He crept behind the captain, seized him, bound him, bound him secure. Before the wounded Englishman could call for help, his last ship was away. And Avery was captain, a sworn pirate with a well-armed ship.

He got to business without delay. He was completely brave. He had astounding luck. First, with his ship renamed the Charles the Second, he anchored off the Isles of May. He landed, seized the Portuguese governor, held him for ransom while the Portuguese men and food and powder and his maps of the world about the ship, then descended his ship and sailed away.

He met three English ships. He saw the English flag, and so did they. When he came near, the Englishmen were not alarmed. His first had broadcasted his name. He had his men working about the sea, then the other three the thought. He got some loot, but not enough. He said, "Then we will get another plan."

The opportunity was tremendous. He took a good anchored off Devon, he broke out the English flag. The friendly natives came aboard to trade and ask for presents. As they came, he seized them under his hands, until every crevasse of his ship was filled with captives.

Then he sailed away, and some for three, some back and did the work. The year was 1681. In this same year, Kidd was off Brazil, next met on a privateer's commission, finished by the king of England and a downy little boat. Here, his crew had killed Kidd's mate, taken his ship and started on a ship, every man with his hand ready to protect his royal master's share.

But back in England, they were taking more and more. So many got their money by all means. Then heard how private had sailed out down those ships, so many brought their secret letters to the king himself, that he George knew he could not show his hand. He set orders on the Parliament. "Send Kidd to me, and we will hang him. We must close his mouth."

All this because of Avery. For all his crimes were laid to Captain Kidd. No one knew Avery. He sailed one day as Henry Avery, the best as Captain Bridgman, and the third as Captain John. He was forever altering the name. The name, the captain of his ship. But Kidd was known. All men knew his ship. And so, when Avery sailed an English ship the most well known, "It was all done by Kidd."

Now Avery did not care. He did not even know. His ship's name was the business, especially. The share he got and provided him with buying coffee. So he tried another venture.

Off the Isles of Pines, he took two Spanish ships. Off Mozambique, he took three from Spain. Then he sailed north and set off the Red Sea, and waited for the Mogul's fleet. From Malacca, he sailed first upon the seven seas. He burned a town called Mecca, because the natives would not strike his ship. He met two English private ships, three from Africa, and an impressed their captains with his force that he was made their commander.

They waited, but they showed no fleet. The great ships of India, a light with gold and silver, silk and gems, got past them in the night. But Avery got word, and led a hot pursuit. He caught them, emptied out the cargoes, and all fled. The ship was twice the size, twice as well armed as he did not care, he simply went straight to all great things. All money ready for a bloody battle at hander pipe. He searched, over the Indian right and left, and to a moment leave the ship was his.

He saw a girl. Around her, a thin line of soldiers were the watch would catch him, find his chest. Then he would hang, would hang the captain Kidd.



Captain John Avery, greatest of the pirates of his day, did all the things that Captain Kidd died for, and escaped—yet paid, in his own way. (From a portrait of Avery, two centuries old.)

in a divided man. She pointed Kidd then all. He grasped the girl's hand. They told him, "This is the Great Mogul's daughter." Avery bowed, and kissed her hand. He laid her prisoner, and mounted on the greatest boat an Indian ocean course ever took. Then Avery married her, survived the capture made by his small fleet, and sailed for Malagacca.

Word of all this went straight to England, where most said that Captain Kidd had done the work. The great sea sent the Mogul his bowing head. He chased his party to England, out of treacherous trade. More than ever, the English king knew he must find a way, find his prey. He wrote Kidd's name to New York, Lord Baltimore, his usual banker, asked him, since the papers which would prove Kidd's innocence, and shipped him off in chains to England.

They were seized on. He reported to the captain of the other ships to come aboard, and proceed them to his cabin. Here was one with but one eye. Here was another who had been an early first mate, now the captain of private on his sea. Here was another, richer than him. All five were mysterious, dark, clever men. But Avery was master of them all.

"These ships are small," he said. "But when a large, and strong. To keep our treasure safe, bring all the loot you have aboard, and I will guard it, while you will around me as an overboard. So we will empty get on gains to Malagacca where we can divide."

They thought the plan was good. They brought up boatloads of gold, bags of silk, bags of beads that touched the sunlight with their gems. He looked this all up to be his own good. Then he led the way across the sea. A day's ride. The pirates on the other ships kept anxious eyes open the riding lights about John Avery's ship. Then, at a time, they found they could not see the light. The Indians remained, the captain rose and peered into

the watch would catch him, find his chest. Then he would hang, would hang the captain Kidd.

He was afraid. He had been brave and clever, when he was at sea. But now he was at land and under a noose.

He crept through Ireland, begging food along the way—the walls he carried, in his belt, a greater treasure than the riches of the Mogul crown. He left four chests of jewels buried in a place he knew. He kept on for his one-time house in Devon. Here he settled down again.

The whole world talked, these days, of "The Great Prince," and the bold negroes told the marks of his life. The whole world thought that Avery still lurked somewhere on the Indian ocean, still and down tall English ships. Meanwhile, he begged from door to door to get a little food—and felt his loot upon him, like a chain he could not break.

This was true justice. In his time, this man had plundered hundreds of good men, had made good ships, had stolen from the people of a dozen nations, had been an arricched of the sea. Now that he had the guilt of all these crimes, he could not sell them, could get nothing for them.

Then he found a friend. This was a goodly, smooth and kind-looking man, a merchant in the Devon town of Bideford, who came on Avery in a small sailing ship, made his acquaintance, noted how the man seemed starved, asked questions, then got his whole story. Avery had kept the secret quiet for long. He talked. He could not help it. He told all that he had done, he told the only thing from how many years he had, he asked him, "Shall we talk to him?"

He thought, "I am a pirate. I am a great man. He thought, 'What he has not heard, and brought me the gains, then I can really be rid of him. And then I will tell the world, and seal the secret.' He chuckled to himself.

He got a great surprise, when this man brought these other merchants, secretly, at night, and made John Avery tell his story through again. But they explained that one man dare not sell so many years. The four could not be the same men on the market, secretly, safely, some of good returns. So Avery agreed.

They gave him silver, so that he might pay his rent, and buy a little food, and all about the tavern where he had brought from Ireland, a smiling, smiling, joyful man. They had a smoking, smiling, joyful man. They had a smoking, smiling, joyful man. They had a smoking, smiling, joyful man.

He was the best of his month. He married. He wept. He begged again. He went to see the merchants, but they would not talk to him, all but he through a great wall, every evening through a door, and out and murder flaming in the night, green eyes, and all four around a table, fat and prosperous and smooth. He looked them, dressed them, told them, "When you pay me, I will kill you all." They laughed.

The trouble was not unique. They had been the notable Captain Samuel Booth, then owned the noble Captain North, who had a kingdom on the coast of Zanzibar. For Booth was hated with an aversion for gold, and got much gold, and hated it, and was robbed by the dull landmen he did not know. And the same thing had happened many times before.

The account thought they were the clever for the merchants whom they knew before. The account thought they were the clever for the merchants whom they knew before. The account thought they were the clever for the merchants whom they knew before.

So Avery had been, honest, really, sorry, noble, he had no resource at all. The merchants had his treasure, and they were he could do nothing. They sold the gems to Dublin, here and there. A noble lady at the court wore jewels that the Mogul's daughter had worn when he sat back—her own love the story of those previous years. A noble

lost wore on a hair, while Band a ring that Avery had looked off the hand of a great lord from Spain, but never cared to ask where it had come.

The merchant-princes continued up the land, and were well pleased. There was some vast compensation on one man's part, that was the man who first had gotten Avery to talk. He wondered, "Should we be fair? Perhaps he may have more. Perhaps we might get more by giving him the promised share at first." His greedy neighbor argued, "No. He has no more. This what you can."

So Avery was cheated, made a fool.

He had forgotten one small thing. He was a pirate, with a price upon his head. He was very nervous, well attended, bold heart, sure to be followed. If he did anything at all in his time, then he would hang. If he allowed them, they would say laugh. He would not be believed. He dare not touch them, dare not tell the truth. They watched him, morning. There was nothing he could do. He walked out of the counting house, took his way back to his lock, turning round, set down and reached to a wall.

He started to death, that winter, he John Avery, the king of pirates, who had taken the Great Mogul's treasure ship and married the Great Mogul's daughter, who had received his seven seas. He started, like any jaguar in the streets. They found him dead, one morning. They found how he had a dead laugh at life. For on his frozen body they found a brief note, addressed in his hand to the four merchants who had robbed the king of pirates.

"One you laughed," it said. "I will laugh too, in Ireland, there are four chests of things that I got from me. You will not ever find it. No man will."

It was quite right. Somewhere in Ireland today there may be four small chests, far underground, and in them lost enough to buy all Ireland. They will be found.