

## THE OLD SEA-DOG

(*TREASURE ISLAND*, by Robert Louis Stevenson, is one of the most popular stories ever written. The tale is related by a boy—Jim Hawkins—and it is crammed with exciting adventures—a stolen map—cruel and blood-thirsty pirates—thrilling incidents on board the “*Hispaniola*” while in quest of hidden treasure—the discovery of untold wealth and the final victory over the buccaneers.)

I TAKE up my pen and go back to the time when my father kept the “Admiral Benbow” Inn, and the brown old seaman with the sabre-cut first took up his lodging under our roof.

I remember him as if it was yesterday, as he came plodding to the inn-door, his sea-chest following behind him in a hand-barrow ; a tall, strong, heavy, nut-brown man ; his tarry pigtail falling over the shoulders of his soiled blue coat ; his hands ragged and scarred, with black, broken nails ; and the sabre-cut across one cheek, a dirty livid white.

I remember him looking round the cove and whistling to himself as he did so, and then breaking out in that old sea-song that he sang so often afterwards—

*“Fifteen men on the dead man’s chest—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum,  
Drink and the devil had done for the rest—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum.”*

He rapped at the door with a bit of stick, and when my father appeared, called roughly for a glass of rum. This, when it was brought to him, he drank slowly, and kept looking about him at the cliffs and up at the signboard.

“This is a handy cove,” says he at length, “and a pleasant grog-shop. Much company, mate?”

My father told him no—very little company, the more was the pity.

“Well, then,” said he, “this is the berth for me. Here you, matey,” he cried to the man who trundled the barrow, “bring up alongside and help up my chest. I’ll stay here a bit,” he continued. “I’m a plain man; rum and bacon and eggs is what I want, and that head up there, for to watch ships off. You may call me Captain. Oh! I see what you’re at—there!” and he threw down three or four gold pieces on the threshold. “You can tell me when I’ve worked through that,” says he, looking as fierce as a commander.

And indeed, bad as his clothes were, and coarsely as he spoke, he had none of the appearance of a man who had sailed before the mast; but seemed like a mate or skipper. The man who came with the barrow told us the mail had set him down the morning before at the “Royal George,” that he had enquired what inns there were along the coast, and hearing ours well spoken of, I suppose, and described as lonely, had

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chosen it from the others as his place of residence. And that was all we could learn of our guest.

He was a very silent man by custom. All day he hung around the cove, or upon the cliffs, with a brass telescope ; all evening he sat in a corner of the parlour next the fire, and drank rum and water very strong. Mostly he would not speak when spoken to ; only look up sudden and fierce, and blow through his nose like a fog-horn ; and we, and the people who came about the house, soon learned to let him be. Every day when

he came back from his stroll, he would ask if any seafaring men had gone by along the road.

At first we thought it was the want of company of his own kind that made him ask this question ; but at last we began to see he was desirous to avoid them. When a seaman put up at the "Admiral Benbow," he would look in at him through the curtained door before he entered the parlour ; and he was always sure to be as silent as a mouse when any such was present. For me, at least, there was no secret about the matter, for I was, in a way, a sharer in his alarms.

He had taken me aside one day, and promised me a silver fourpenny on the first of every month, if I would only keep my "weather-eye open for a seafaring man with one leg," and let him know the moment he appeared. Often enough, when the first of the month came round, and I applied to him for my wage, he would only blow through his nose at me, and stare me down ; but before the week was out he was sure to think better of it, bring me my fourpenny piece, and repeat his orders to look out for "the seafaring man with one leg."

How that personage haunted my dreams, I need scarcely tell you. On stormy nights, when the wind shook the four corners of the house, and the surf roared along the cove and up the cliffs, I would see him in a thousand forms. To see him leap and run and pursue me over hedge and ditch, was the worst of nightmares. And altogether, I paid pretty dear for my monthly fourpenny piece in the shape of these fancies.

But, though I was so terrified by the idea of the seafaring man with one leg, I was far less afraid of the

Captain himself, than anybody else who knew him. There were nights when he took a deal more rum and water than his head could carry ; and then he would sometimes sit and sing his wicked, old, wild sea-songs, minding nobody ; but sometimes, he would force all the trembling company to listen to his stories, or bear a chorus to his singing.

Often I have heard the house shaking with “ Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum ” ; all the neighbours joining in for dear life, with the fear of death upon them, and each singing louder than the other, to avoid remark. People were frightened at the time, but on looking back they rather liked it ; it was a fine excitement in a quiet country life ; and there was even a party of the younger men who pretended to admire him ; calling him a “ true sea-dog ” and a “ real old salt,” and such like names, and saying there was the sort of man that made England terrible at sea.

*From “ Treasure Island,” by Robert Louis Stevenson.*



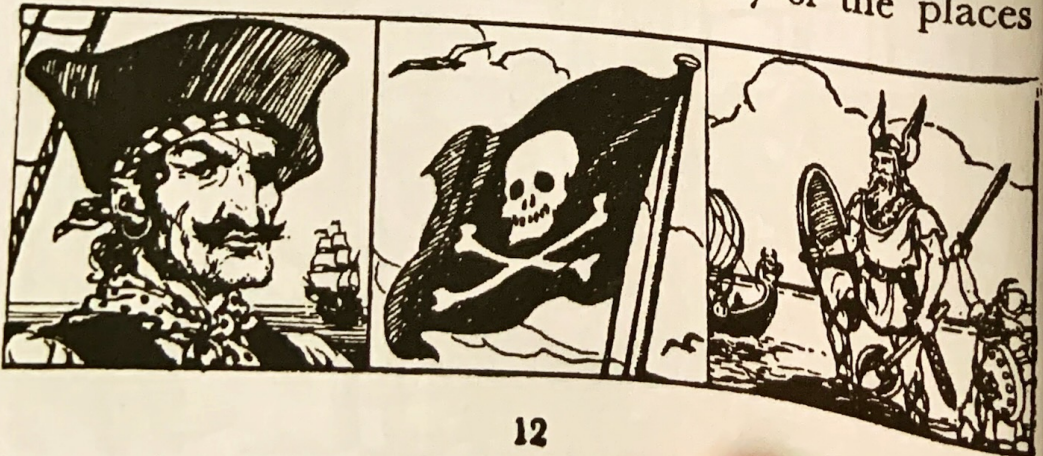


## INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT PIRATES.

1. Pirates, corsairs, sea-rievers, filibusters, freebooters and sea-robbers were the villains who plundered ships on the high seas. Buccaneers were originally hunters of wild cattle (French word—boucaniers) and they turned pirates, in seeking revenge upon the Spaniards. Later, they became a colony of freebooters, calling themselves "The Brethren of the Coast."

2. In the earliest days of piracy, the sea-robbers flew the flag of their own country. Some time afterwards, the "Jolly Roger" was introduced, and this dreaded banner consisted of a black flag with a white skull and crossbones in the centre.

3. The old Norse pirates were called Vikings and they ravaged and plundered nearly every coast in Europe. These rieviers settled in many of the places

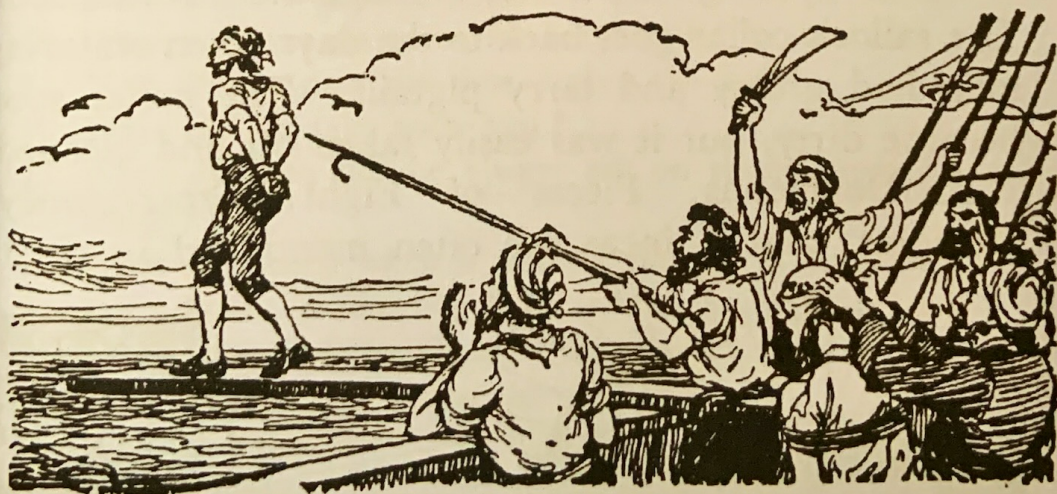


which they raided, and formed colonies in such countries as Iceland, Greenland, and the British Isles.

4. At one time the richest prizes for pirates were the ships trading in the Mediterranean Sea. The notorious Barbary Pirates came from the Berber States—Tunis, Algeria, Morocco—along the north coast of Africa. Prisoners taken by them were held to ransom or sold as slaves.

5. The greatest hunting ground of the pirates was the "Spanish Main," a name given to the land lying along the north coast of South America. Here, and in other parts of the New World, the Spaniards forced the native Indians to give up all their wealth. The pirate ships lurked among the many islands of the Caribbean Sea, and tried to capture the Spanish galleons laden with treasure.

6. Pirate ships were generally very fast vessels, as they had to pursue and overtake their victims, and be able to escape from stronger enemies. Apart from the heavy iron and brass cannon on board, a pirate's



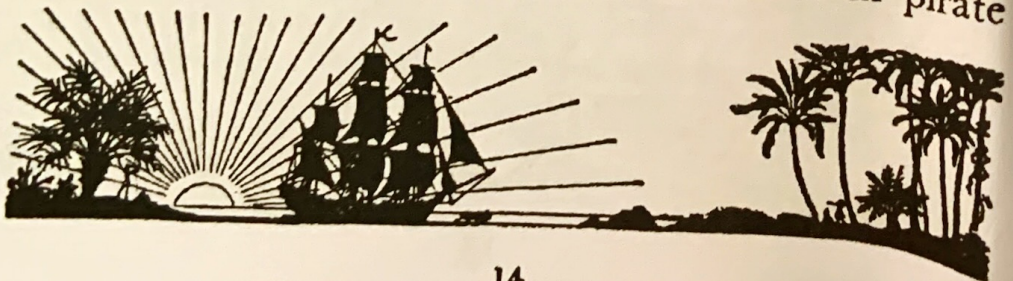
weapons consisted of the musket, pistol, dirk or dagger, and the cutlass (a heavy curved sword).

7. Pirates inflicted the most dreadful tortures on their prisoners. In "Walking the Plank," the victims were drowned by being compelled to walk on a plank, which was put out from the ship's side. In "Hanging from the Yard-arm," the prisoners were hanged from the high spars supporting the sails. The punishment of "Keel-hauling" meant dragging the captives from one side of the ship to the other under the keel.

8. When a ship was short of the necessary crew, a party was sent ashore to "Shanghai" men. They made men insensible by drink, drugs, or other methods, and when the victims recovered they found themselves far out at sea. The "Press Gang" was a party of sailors from a warship, who forced men to enlist in the navy.

9. "Davy Jones' Locker" was said to be the final resting-place of all sailors who were drowned at sea. The name "Jack Tar" is derived from the old habit of a sailor tarring his trousers to make them waterproof. The sailor's collar goes back to the days when seafaring men had greasy and tarry pigtails. The collar soon became dirty, but it was easily taken off and cleaned.

10. Doubloons, Pieces of Eight, Cross-money, Moidores, and Guineas are often mentioned in pirate



stories. A doubloon was a Spanish gold coin worth about £1.40. A piece of eight was a Spanish silver coin worth about 25p, and it is interesting to note that the sign for a dollar (\$) was obtained from the figure 8 used on this coin. Pieces of metal, cross-marked by the priests to show that they were genuine pieces of gold, were called Cross-money. A moidore was a Portuguese gold coin worth about £1.35. A guinea was an English gold coin worth £1.05. It received that name because the first coins were made from gold brought from Guinea, in Africa.

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#### QUESTIONS ON THE STORY.

1. From which famous story is this lesson taken?
2. Name the author.
3. What was the name of the Inn?
4. Who is the chief character in the lesson?
5. Describe in detail his appearance.
6. Where did he keep all his worldly possessions?
7. What other Inn is mentioned in the story?
8. Give as much as you can of the song.
9. Why did the Captain choose to stay at this particular Inn?
10. What advance payment for lodging did he make?
11. How did he pass the time during the day?
12. What did he take with him?
13. What question did he always ask on return from his daily strolls?
14. What happened when a seafarer put up at the Inn?
15. For whom was the boy told to keep a sharp look-out?
16. How much did the Captain promise to give the boy?
17. When was the reward to be paid to him?
18. What did the boy see in his nightmares?
19. What would the Captain sometimes force the company to do?
20. How did some of the younger folk describe him?

### QUESTIONS ON THE INTERESTING FACTS.

1. Give four different words for a pirate.
2. Name and describe the pirate flag.
3. Who were the Vikings?
4. Where did the Barbary Pirates operate?
5. What was the most famous hunting ground of the pirates?
6. With what weapons were pirates usually equipped?
7. Name three tortures inflicted by pirates on their prisoners.
8. What was the Press Gang?
9. What is meant by "Davy Jones' Locker"?
10. Name four coins often mentioned in pirate stories.

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### DEVELOPMENT EXERCISES.

1. Point out on a map of the world:—  
(a) The Home of the Vikings, (b) The Barbary Coast, (c) The Spanish Main.
2. "Fifteen men on the dead man's chest" was an old sea-song. What is the special name given to a sea-song? Do you know any such songs? When did the sailors sing them?
3. The Captain had his sea-chest trundled along in a handbarrow. Compare methods of modern road transport with those at the time of the story.
4. The Captain's hands were ragged and scarred and he had a sabre-cut across one cheek. How do you think he came by these marks?
5. Although it is very interesting and exciting to read about pirates, we do not admire them. Why not?
6. Now-a-days ships carrying valuable cargoes voyage from one part of the world to another without fear of being plundered. Can you give any reasons for this?
7. Compare a cargo ship of the time of the story with a present-day merchant ship.
8. Why are most sailors very interesting story-tellers? What do you understand by (a) a tall story, (b) a yarn, (c) a cock and bull story?