

CAPT. KIDD NOT SO BAD AS GENERALLY SUPPOSED

New York Authority Declares Freebooter Chief Detected Pirates and was with Difficulty Induced to go Privateering—Kidd Not First Wall Street Man Accused of Being a Pirate.

Richard Spillane, who used to make a New York Sunday paper, refreshingly different from the usual armful of deadwood, has been looking up the averages of the late Capt. Kidd, and finds that the Cap. wasn't such a bad sort after all—in fact, that he was a gentleman compared with most of the politicians with whom he associated and who finally handed him the double cross. From what Spillane says, it seems that Kidd's fatal error was in blundering through life without a press agent. With the right kind of publicity he might have lived long and died rich in bed instead of poor at the end of a rope. As it was, he never had a chance. And that's no kid. Here is what Spillane says about him in Commerce and Finance, a New York business newspaper:

Kidd's Home in Old New York.

An apartment house is to be built on the ground at 122 and 124 Pearl St., opposite the Cotton Exchange. This will be the first structure of the kind in the Wall Street district. On the mere announcement of the intention to build applications for apartments have been forthcoming and it is likely a fair number of the shabby, sombre old structures downtown, just outside the lively business sections, will be replaced by apartment houses that will return far more revenue.

The newspapers have made much of this affair, not because it marks any change in real estate conditions but because the site was part of what has been known as the homestead of Captain Kidd.

It is remarkable what an amount of misinformation there is about Captain Kidd. Thousands of stories have been written about him and he has been pictured as the greatest pirate that ever sailed the seas. There is about the same amount of truth in regard to his career as a pirate that there is in regard to the centuries-old belief that the land opposite the Cotton Exchange was his homestead.

The homestead of Captain Kidd was in Liberty St., near Nassau. The Pearl St. property was owned by the lady Captain Kidd married. The captain lived there for a month or two, possibly, while his home was being repaired, but that is all.

So, too, in regard to his career as a pirate.

He Hated Pirates.

In the latter part of the 17th century there was not a more highly respected seafaring man in New York colony than Captain Kidd. His brig, the Antigua, plied between London, the West Indies and New York. He was well to do, hated pirates and had the confidence and esteem of all the prominent men in New York. "No one thought more highly of him than did Robert Livingston, founder of the great Livingston family that has given to America some brilliant men and women."

There were many good people in New York at that time who did not look upon piracy with disfavor. In fact, New York did a glorious trade with the freebooters of the sea. It bought their plunder and it furnished them with men and stores. Many ships fitted out in New York preyed upon the commerce of not only Spain and France, but England too. Long Island was called Crooked Island, because its many bays offered refuge to the crooks of the ocean. But it was not altogether necessary for the pirates even to hide in the bays of Long Island to refit or to get rid of their plunder. The Governor of New York, in one of his reports to the home government, declared that the time of his writing there were nine pirate ships in New York harbor; that they had \$600,000 worth of stolen goods aboard, and that the pirate trade was so cherished by the people of New York that not one of the pirates was molested.

It was a time of lax morals on land and on sea, but a change was under way. So great had been the depredations of the pirates that it was thought necessary by William III. to call a halt. The King probably would not have been concerned particularly but for the losses the commerce of England had sustained. One of the cheapest and easiest ways of abating the nuisance was believed to be to fit out vessels to prey upon the pirates. This was considered not only a good but a profitable method of combating the evil, and so in January, 1695, a syndicate was formed in London to fit out a vessel to rob the robbers. The members of this syndicate were the King, the lord chancellor, the Duke of Shrewsbury, the Earl of Bellomont, Robert Livingston, William Kidd and various other gentlemen. It was Livingston who suggested Captain Kidd. He offered to furnish bond for Kidd's portion of the syndicate fund and he told of the glorious work Kidd had done for England in two sea fights with the French. In one of these his arrival saved a British ship from capture by six French vessels that were closing in on the lone Englishman.

When the proposition was made to Kidd in London to take command of the privateer he viewed it with disfavor. Only a few years before he had married. He was well to do, home loving, and had thought of giving up the sea, so he declined.

But the King and the King's friends, in the syndicate intimated to him that he must accept. Otherwise he would not be permitted to leave the Thames.

Hesitatingly and reluctantly he agreed. Livingston signed his bond and all the syndicators except the King put up their money to fit out the privateer. A staunch 30-gun vessel of 237 tons, the Adventure, was purchased, and in April, 1696, Kidd sailed in this for New York to complete his crew and make ready for business.

On his way over to New York he captured a French ship off the Newfoundland banks, and when he reached New York he was greeted as a conqueror. The provincial assembly voted £250 to him by way of testimonial.

If ever a man got a dave devil crew for a ship Kidd got one for the Adventure in New York. He signed his men on the contract of no prize, no pay, and he got as fine a collection of warship deserters, pirates and rogues as the western ocean could supply. His plan was to go to the East Indies, where pirates were numerous, and in September, 1696, he sailed out of New York bay with the good wishes of the people and the blessings of the Earl of Bellomont, governor of New York and Massachusetts.

The good captain had two commissions from the King. One was to seize pirates. The second was to "apprehend, seize and take ships, vessels and goods belonging to the French King and his subjects and such other ships, vessels and goods as are or shall be liable to confiscation."

This gave great latitude to Captain Kidd. As the undertaking was one of profit purely and the syndicators were looking to Kidd to fatten their purses, this commission might be taken by him in a rather broad light, especially in view of the way things were done on the sea in those days.

Apparently Captain Kidd tried to be a real good pirate-chaser for a year or so. He got into the Indian ocean and searched earnestly and faithfully for pirates, but luck was against him. Meanwhile he was having trouble of his own. That gallant band of rogues he had shipped in little old New York had various things to say to him.

There was no pay for them. No prize, no pay, was the contract. If anything will stir up the devil in a crew of rogues, illness surely will, and Captain Kidd's 150 or more rogues had been more or less idle for a year. Not only that, but the captain had another nightmare. Not a penny was he earning for his royal partner, or for the duke, or my Lord Bellomont, or good Mr. Livingston. To remain idle in the Indian ocean meant mutiny. To go home empty-handed meant disaster.

Many Stops on Coast.

From Curacao Kidd started for New

grace and ruin. What was Kidd to do?

Just what he did will remain a disputed point in history so long as time lasts. The captain's own report was that his mutinous crew locked him in his cabin, attacked and plundered merchant ships without regard to the flag under which they sailed, and even fought a drawn battle with a Portuguese man-o-war. This may be true or it may be false. But it is a fact that from out of the Indian Ocean came reports soon after that Mr. Kidd and his New York pirate chasers were the busiest pirates those piratical waters ever had known. And certain it is, too, that if the captain was locked in his cabin while the crew captured some vessels, he was not locked in the cabin when the richest prize of the cruise, the Quedah Merchant, was taken. This ship had a great store of merchandise, a lot of gold and silver, and a miscellaneous cargo such as would delight the heart of any pirate.

How many vessels Captain Kidd and his men plundered it is hard to tell. For a time they gave their attention to vessels only, and were scrupulously honest in their dealings with the merchants on shore from whom they had to purchase supplies and with whom they did all trading. The Adventure leaked so badly that Kidd had to abandon her and transfer his plunder to the Quedah Merchant. He divided the loot fairly with his men, but 100 of them deserted, and he decided to return home. As a final stroke of business he invited a lot of traders aboard the Quedah Merchant.

Robbed the Traders.

Ostensibly he wanted to sell some of the merchandise of the ship to them, and also he was desirous of purchasing precious stones from them. They brought money and they brought gems. After he had bargained long enough to discover what they had in the way of money and jewels he stripped them of their wealth, ordered them off his ship, and then he sailed away.

Possibly his departure was hurried by rumors that a squadron had been sent out by his friend the King to check his operations. He had been in the East two years, and had earned handsome profits for his partners, so he was not reluctant to leave.

He had no interference on his way back to America. He touched at two ports in the West Indies, but was refused stores as he had been proclaimed a pirate. He was in a desperate plight. He did not know the temper of Lord Bellomont and Mr. Livingston, and the Quedah Merchant was so foul he had no chance to escape in case a warship sighted him. An enterprising merchant of the sea named Bolton served him well at this juncture, selling him a vessel named the San Antonio, with which he went to Curacao for supplies after transferring most of the Quedah Merchant's cargo to her. The Quedah Merchant was run up one of the rivers in San Domingo and burned.

Many Stops on Coast.

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York. But his conscience troubled him. At several places along the route he stopped and put men ashore with messages to his wife, Lord Bellomont and Mr. Livingston. He stopped in the Chesapeake. He stopped in the Delaware. He stopped on the Jersey shore. If the vague stories that have been told are true he put ashore treasure every place the San Antonio stopped. He looted along. He was waiting for his messengers to reach New York and for his friends to have time to reach the rendezvous he had appointed. When he had waited what he believed to be a sufficient time he

sailed again. But he avoided New York. He skirted Long Island and off Gardiner's Island, at the eastern end of Long Island, he dropped anchor. He remained there several days. He got some pigs, a cask of cider, some sheep and other supplies.

He sent a treasure chest ashore, too. This treasure chest was buried near the mansion of John Gardiner, lord of the manor, by Gardiner himself. Kidd paid Gardiner for his trouble, not lavishly, but well. He gave gold and silk and sugar and linens to him. The silks and linens were damaged and the sugar was not at its best, but gold is gold the world over. From New York there came to Gardiner's Island a lawyer named Emmett to meet Capt. Kidd. They held long and earnest converse. The captain learned that Lord Bellomont was in Boston and was loud in his denunciation of Capt. Kidd.

The captain pulled up anchor and started for Boston town. He stopped at Block Island. There are 1964 different places on Block Island that the natives point out as the spot where Captain Kidd buried treasure. From Block Island Kidd made a short run down to Oyster Bay. If he buried any treasure in the Roosevelt grounds, it has not been found. Next he sailed for Narragansett Bay. There has been a lot of digging for the treasure he buried there. Then he looted along the coast a little more, and on July 1, 1699 he sailed into Boston harbor.

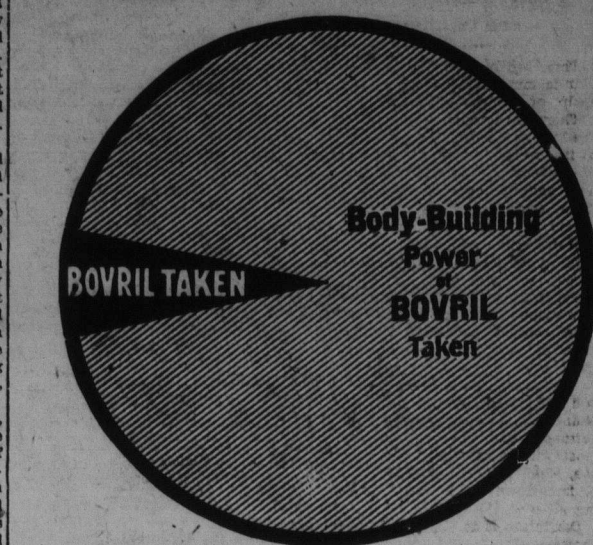
The earl of Bellomont received him, not cordially, but not hostilely. The captain reported as to the cruise of the Adventure and the Quedah Merchant, and said he was ready to turn over the proceeds if the earl would relieve Mr. Livingston from his (Kidd's) bond. The captain played fair, but the earl did not, for he refused to release Mr. Livingston.

For a week Captain Kidd occupied a house in Boston which stood on the ground now occupied by the Boston Globe. Then one day he was arrested. Lord Bellomont, immediately after putting the captain's bail, sent a vessel to Gardiner's Island. The treasure chest was dug up. Next, everything Mrs. Kidd had received from the captain was seized. Searches were made at every point where the San Antonio had stopped, but nothing had been buried, so far as could be learned, except at Gardiner's Island. The loot that Kidd brought to America aside from merchandise of small value, was listed as about 1100 ounces of gold, 2400 ounces of silver, and 17 ounces of precious stones. The total value was less than \$75,000.

From Boston Kidd was taken to London. There was a great political row on there, the Outs accusing the Ins of having sent Kidd out as a pirate to enrich themselves.

For a year they kept Kidd in prison. Then he was put on trial. It was nec-

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cessary, in order for the government to vindicate itself, that Kidd should hang. He did hang, but his trial was a farce. They found him guilty of first murder. He had hit a mutinous sailor-accused of being a pirate.

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