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**TREASURE
ISLAND**

ROBERT LOUIS
STEVENSON



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NEW YORK

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| PART I: THE OLD BUCCANEER | 1 |
| 1. The Old Sea Dog at the "Admiral Benbow" | 3 |
| 2. Black Dog Appears and Disappears | 11 |
| 3. The Black Spot | 18 |
| 4. The Sea Chest | 25 |
| 5. The Last of the Blind Man | 32 |
| 6. The Captain's Papers | 38 |
| PART II: THE SEA COOK | 45 |
| 7. I Go to Bristol | 47 |
| 8. At the Sign of the "Spy-glass" | 54 |
| 9. Powder and Arms | 60 |
| 10. The Voyage | 66 |
| 11. What I Heard in the Apple Barrel | 73 |
| 12. Council of War | 80 |
| PART III: MY SHORE ADVENTURE | 87 |
| 13. How My Shore Adventure Began | 89 |
| 14. The First Blow | 95 |
| 15. The Man of the Island | 101 |

PART IV: THE STOCKADE 109

16. Narrative Continued by the Doctor:
 How the Ship Was Abandoned 111

17. Narrative Continued by the Doctor:
 The Jolly-Boat's Last Trip 117

18. Narrative Continued by the Doctor:
 End of the First Day's Fighting 122

19. Narrative Resumed by Jim Hawkins:
 The Garrison in the Stockade 127

20. Silver's Embassy 133

21. The Attack 139

PART V: MY SEA ADVENTURE 145

22. How My Sea Adventure Began 147

23. The Ebb Tide Runs 154

24. The Cruise of the Coracle 160

25. I Strike the Jolly Roger 166

26. Israel Hands 172

27. "Pieces of Eight" 181

PART VI: CAPTAIN SILVER 189

28. In the Enemy's Camp 191

29. The Black Spot Again 199

30. On Parole 206

31. The Treasure Hunt—Flint's Pointer 213

32. The Treasure Hunt—The Voice Among the Trees 220

33. The Fall of a Chieftain 227

34. And Last 233

Questions for Discussion 239

About the Author 242

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PART I

THE OLD BUCCANEER

1

THE OLD SEA DOG⁵ AT THE
“ADMIRAL BENBOW”⁶

SQUIRE⁷ TRELAWNEY, DR. LIVESY, AND THE REST OF THESE GENTLEMEN having asked me to write down the whole particulars about Treasure Island, from the beginning to the end, keeping nothing back but the bearings of the island, and that only because there is still treasure not yet lifted, I take up my pen in the year of grace 17—,⁸ and go back to the time when my father kept the “Admiral Benbow” inn, and the brown old seaman, with the saber cut, first took up his lodging under our roof.

I remember him as if it were 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 saber cut across one cheek, a dirty,

5. An experienced or old sailor.

6. The namesake of the inn that Jim’s family owns is based on a real person. Admiral John Benbow lived from 1653 to 1702. He was a respected English naval admiral who became a folk hero after fighting the French forces at the Battle of La Hogue.

7. A country estate owner.

8. Within the 1700s C.E.; the exact year is not specified.

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 afterward:

*"Fifteen men on the dead man's chest—
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!"*

in the high, old tottering voice that seemed to have been tuned and broken at the capstan bars. Then he rapped on the door with a bit of stick like a handspike that he carried, and when my father appeared, called roughly for a glass of rum. This, when it was brought to him, he drank slowly, like a connoisseur, lingering on the taste, and still looking about him at the cliffs and up at our signboard.

"This is a handy cove," says he, at length; "and a pleasant sitty-ated grog⁹-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. What you mought call me? You mought 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 sailed before the mast;¹⁰

but seemed like a mate¹¹ or skipper¹² accustomed to be obeyed or to strike. 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 inquired what inns there were along the coast, and hearing ours well spoken of, I suppose, and described as lonely, had chosen it from the others for 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 round the cove, or upon the cliffs, with a brass telescope; all evening he sat in a corner of the parlor 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 foghorn; and we and the people who came about our 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" (as now and then some did, making by the coast road for Bristol),¹³ he would look in at him through the curtained door before he entered the parlor; 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 fourpenny¹⁴ 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

11. A naval officer.

12. The person who commands a boat; a captain.

13. A city, ceremonial county, and unitary authority in England.

14. A British coin or stamp worth fourpence.

9. Watered-down rum or other spirits.

10. A tall post that carries the sail of a ship.

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, and with a thousand diabolical expressions. Now the leg would be cut off at the knee, now at the hip; now he was a monstrous kind of a creature who had never had but the one leg, and that in the middle of his body. 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 abominable 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 would carry; and then he would sometimes sit and sing his wicked, old, wild sea-songs, minding nobody; but sometimes he would call for glasses round, and 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 neighbors joining in for dear life, with the fear of death upon them, and each singing louder than the other, to avoid remark. For in these fits he was the most overriding companion ever known; he would slap his hand on the table for silence all round; he would fly up in a passion of anger at a question, or sometimes because none was put, and so he judged the company was not following his story. Nor would he allow anyone to leave the inn till he had drunk himself sleepy and reeled off to bed.

His stories were what frightened people worst of all. Dreadful stories they were; about hanging, and walking the plank, and storms

at sea, and the Dry Tortugas,¹⁵ and wild deeds and places on the Spanish Main.¹⁶ By his own account he must have lived his life among some of the wickedest men that God ever allowed upon the sea; and the language in which he told these stories shocked our plain country people almost as much as the crimes that he described. My father was always saying the inn would be ruined, for people would soon cease coming there to be tyrannized over and put down, and sent shivering to their beds; but I really believe his presence did us good. 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.

In one way, indeed, he bade fair to ruin us; for he kept on staying week after week, and at last month after month, so that all the money had been long exhausted, and still my father never plucked up the heart to insist on having more. If ever he mentioned it, the captain blew through his nose so loudly, that you might say he roared, and stared my poor father out of the room. I have seen him wringing his hands after such a rebuff, and I am sure the annoyance and the terror he lived in must have greatly hastened his early and unhappy death.

All the time he lived with us the captain made no change whatever in his dress but to buy some stockings from a hawker. One of

15. A place situated in the Gulf of Mexico, that is known for its stunning natural beauty, wildlife, and beaches.

16. The *Spanish Main* was the territory of the Spanish Empire that consisted of parts of the Americas and the Gulf of Mexico.