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PURITANS, AND THE  
PERILS OF THE HIGH SEAS

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*PIRATES,  
PURITANS, AND THE  
PERILS OF THE HIGH SEAS*

*CAPTAIN CHARLES JOHNSON*

*PURITAN JOHN FLAVEL*

*EDITED BY R. A. SHEATS*

Pirates, Puritans, and the Perils of the High Seas

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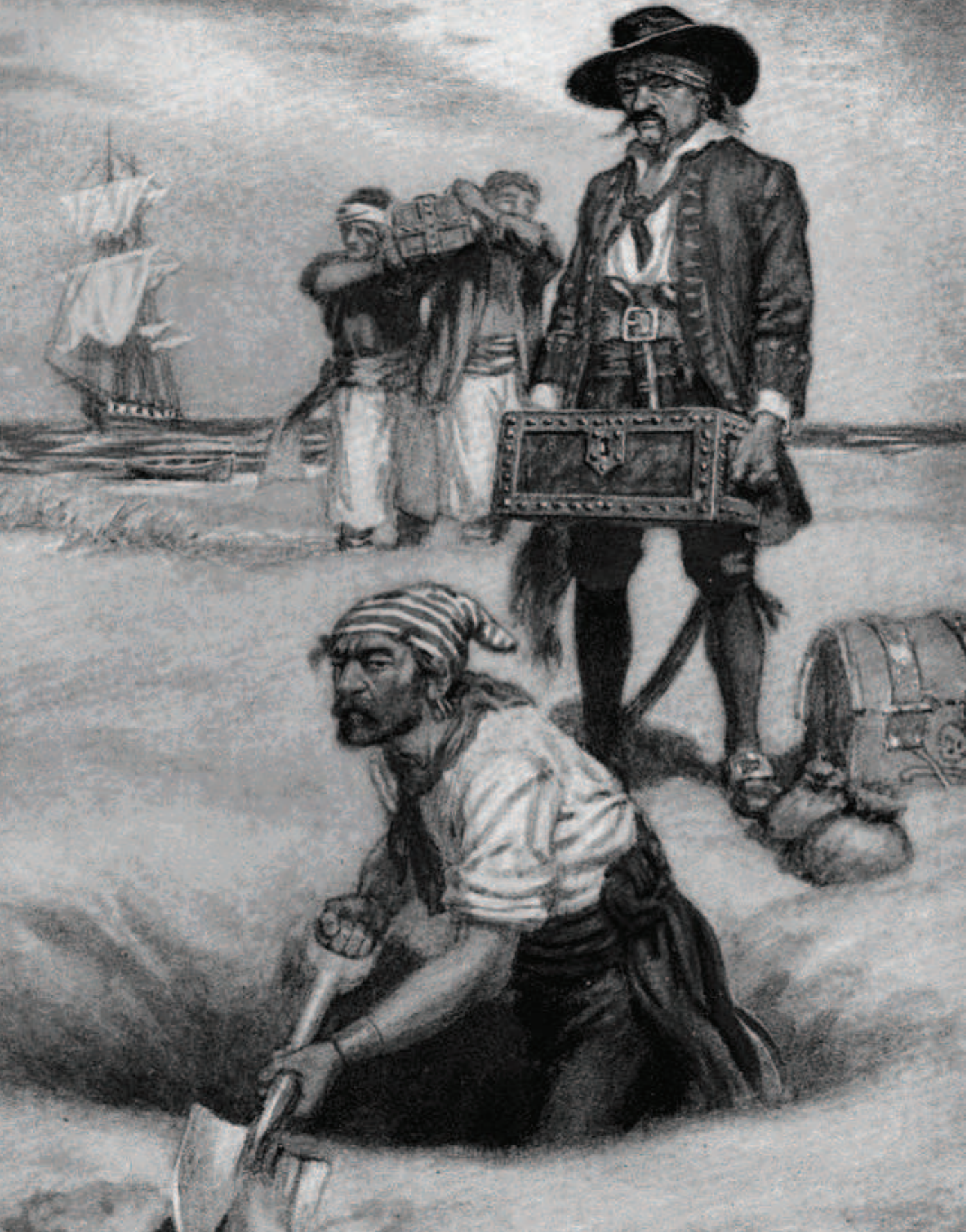
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## INTRODUCTION

# SEEKING THE PIRATES' TREASURE

Nothing captivates the mind quite like a buried treasure. There's something so exciting, so enthralling, and so absolutely enchanting about a hidden cache of gold and silver, precious stones, and every wonder imaginable. For centuries men have sought out maps, diligently walked the paths, and relentlessly dug up thousands of acres of land, all in search of pirate treasure. After all the years that have passed and the multitude of treasure-seekers, is there any wealth left to be discovered? Is there *any* chance of unearthing more today?

Did pirates bury their treasure? And is it still there for the taking? In a word, yes. 300 years ago pirates lived in these lands. They walked our shores, they stalked our harbors, they sailed our seas. And their treasure remains to be found. *Pirates, Puritans, and the Perils of the High Seas* is an effort to unearth this vast treasure trove for the next generation.

What is the pirates' treasure? Gold and silver? Hardly. It's worth far more than that. What these desperate villains have left us is a hoard of incalculable wealth, of treasure beyond compare, but it must be sought ought, searched after, and hunted with diligence. Hard work is needed, 'tis true, but the reward far outweighs the effort. This treasure is worth more than rubies, and is valued higher

than the finest gold:

*Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, "It is not in me," and the sea saith, "It is not with me." It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. (Job 28:13-17)*



What is this treasure? Wisdom. "For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it" (Proverbs 8:11). Though centuries have passed since Blackbeard and his fellow-marauders plundered and murdered along these shores, yet the wisdom to be gleaned from their lives is still as fresh today as it was when the sound of their booming cannon filled the air.

But what is the wisdom to be gained from pirates? And what can be learned from studying them? Like all history, the lives of these desperadoes declare to us the glory of God, and are set forth for our instruction. After all, "the LORD hath made all things for Himself;" even pirates, and He shall be glorified by them

(Proverbs 16:4).

One of the hidden gems in the history of the pirates is the revelation of the true nature of man. As Solomon stated, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Ecclesiastes 8:11). Pirates have a tendency to bring into crystal-clear focus the depravity of man and his consuming desire to be his own god.

The history of pirates also reveals to us the ways and workings of God. The psalmist declared, “I will remember the works of the LORD; surely I will remember Thy wonders of old” (Psalm 77:11). The stirring tales of eighteenth century piracy clearly display God’s wondrous working with His creation, the necessity of His precious Law, and the unfathomable wonders of His never-failing grace.

## A NOTE ON THE TEXTS

From the daring exploits of the dreaded pirate Roberts to the terrors of Blackbeard himself, the swash-buckling tales of pirates and piracy are here presented in a thrilling collection of the true stories of these desperate men. The accounts are written by Captain Charles Johnson, a man whose personal interviews with the pirates as well as his access to court records and other pertinent documents, lends life and accuracy to these exhilarating tales of pirates and those who hunted them.

Johnson’s accounts appearing within this work have been taken from two of his works originally published under the titles *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates*, and *The History of the Lives and Actions of the Most Famous Highwaymen, Street-Robbers, etc., etc., to which is Added a Genuine Account of the Voyages and Plunders of the Most Noted Pirates*. Johnson’s narratives comprise every odd-numbered chapter within the present work.

As the Scriptures declare, wisdom is often difficult to locate, and it must be sought out by those who desire it. To assist in mining the wealth of wisdom from these piratical accounts, a selection of writings of the Puritan pastor John Flavel has been added to this history of the pirates. Flavel, born in 1628, grew up in an England filled with the horrifying exploits of the vast bands of pirates that then roved the seas. A minister for several years to a seaport congregation, Flavel had ample opportunity to observe and converse with the sailors and hardened seamen

who frequented his town. With a desire to reach these men, Flavel published a work particularly written for sea-faring men entitled *Navigation Spiritualized, or A New Compass for Seamen*. Excerpts from Flavel's book have been interspersed throughout this volume, and appear in every even-numbered chapter.

Because both Captain Johnson and John Flavel penned their works over three hundred years ago, it has been deemed prudent to update various archaic words and phrases of the text and clarify highly-technical nautical terms. Certain words from the original have been left, and their definition given in footnotes. Chapter breaks and titles have been added, and Johnson's texts have also been abridged and purged of the more brutal aspects of piratical life.

Are you ready for a treasure hunt? Within the following pages, from the lives of the cunning pirate Avery and the bloodthirsty Roberts to the adventure-seeking Bonnet and the horrible Blackbeard, lies an incalculable wealth of wisdom. This is the treasure of the ages. This is the wealth awaiting us in the 'mines of history.'

Let us therefore "gird up the loins of our mind" and embark on a thrilling journey through the ages. Join the pirates and Puritans in this enthralling pursuit of the greatest treasure imaginable, while mining the depths of history and learning more and more of the Lord and "His wonderful works that He hath done" (Psalm 78:4).

R. A. Sheats



# CAPTAIN AVERY

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE PIRATE WHO WAS NEVER CAUGHT

*“For man also knoweth not his time:  
as the fishes that are taken in an evil net,  
and as the birds that are caught in the snare;  
so are the sons of men snared in an evil time,  
when it falleth suddenly upon them.”*

— Ecclesiastes 9:12

Captain Avery was born in the west of England, in Devonshire, and at an early period was sent to sea. He was advanced to the station of a mate in a merchantman,<sup>1</sup> as which he performed several voyages. He afterward served on a ship of thirty guns commanded by a Captain Gibson.

Avery was a fellow of more cunning than courage, and, gently and sneakily gaining the confidence of some of the boldest men in the ship (as well as the crew of another ship), he described to them the immense riches which were to be acquired upon the Spanish coast, and proposed to run off with the ship. The proposal was scarcely made when it was agreed upon, and carried out at ten o'clock the following evening.

---

<sup>1</sup> merchantman – a ship employed in trade



CAPTAIN AVERY





Captain Gibson was one of those who mightily love their bottle, and spent much of his time on shore. But he remained aboard ship that night. This did not, however, frustrate Avery's plot, because Gibson had taken his usual dose, and so went to bed. The men who were not in the conspiracy went also to bed, leaving none upon deck but the conspirators.

At the time agreed upon, the longboat of the other ship came, which Avery hailed in the usual manner, and was answered by the men in her, "Is your drunken boatswain<sup>2</sup> on board?" which was the password agreed between them. After Avery

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<sup>2</sup> **boatswain** – officer who superintends the sails, rigging, anchors, etc.



**CAPTAIN GIBSON MIGHTILY LOVED HIS BOTTLE**



replied in the affirmative, the boat came on board with sixteen stout fellows who joined in the adventure. They next secured the hatches, then softly weighed anchor and immediately put to sea without bustle or noise.

There were several vessels in the bay, and a Dutchman of forty guns, the captain of which was offered a considerable reward to go in pursuit of Avery, but he declined.

When Captain Gibson awoke, he felt the motion of the ship and rang his bell. Avery and another conspirator went into the cabin and found him yet half asleep. He questioned them, saying, "What is the matter with the ship?"

"Nothing," replied Avery.

"But something's the matter!" the captain exclaimed. "Is the anchor loose? What weather is it?" He supposed that it had been a storm, and that the ship was driven from her anchors.

"No, no," answered Avery. "We're at sea, with a fair wind and good weather."

"At sea!" exclaims the captain. "How can that be?"



“Come,” says Avery, “don’t be in a fright, but put on your clothes, and I’ll let you into a secret. You must now know that I am captain of this ship, and this is *my* cabin. Therefore you must walk out. I am bound to Madagascar, with a design of making my own fortune and a fortune for all the brave fellows joined with me.”

The Captain, having a little recovered his senses, began to understand the meaning of Avery’s words. However, his terror was as great as before. Avery perceived this, and asked him to fear nothing. “For,” says he, “if you have an inclination to join us, we will receive you. And if you turn sober and attend to business, perhaps in time I may make you one of my lieutenants. If not, here’s a boat, and you shall be set on shore.”

The Captain accepted of the last proposal. Then the whole crew was called up and asked who was willing to go on shore with the Captain. There were only about five or six who chose to accompany him.

Avery and his ship then proceeded on their voyage to Madagascar, and it does not appear that they captured any vessels upon their way. When they arrived at the northeast part of that island, they found two sloops<sup>3</sup> at anchor, who, upon seeing them, slipped their cables<sup>4</sup> and ran themselves ashore, while the men all landed and concealed themselves in the woods. These were two sloops which the men had stolen and run off with from the West Indies and, seeing Avery’s ship, they supposed that he had been sent out after them.

Suspecting who they were, Avery sent some of his men on shore



<sup>3</sup> **sloops** – sailing vessels, generally having two masts

<sup>4</sup> **slipped their cables** – left quickly by leaving their cables without taking time to weigh the anchor



to inform them that they were friends, and to propose a union for their common safety.

The sloop's men were well-armed, and had posted themselves in a wood and placed sentinels on guard to observe whether the ship landed her men to pursue them. But when the sentinels only observed two or three men coming towards them unarmed, they did not oppose them. After being informed that they were friends, the sentinels brought Avery's men to the main body, where they delivered their message. They were at first afraid that it was a plot to trap them, but when the messengers assured them that their Captain had also run away with his ship, and that a few of their men along with him would meet them unarmed to discuss matters dealing with their mutual advantage, confidence was at last established. The men onshore were well pleased with the idea, as it added to their strength.

After Avery and the men had discussed what was most proper to be done, they endeavored to get the sloop out of the shallows, and hastened to prepare all things in order to sail for the Arabian coast.

Near the river Indus the man at the mast head spied a sail. They began a chase, and as they came nearer to her they discovered that she was a tall vessel, and might turn out to be an East Indiaman.<sup>5</sup> She, however, proved a better prize.<sup>6</sup> For, when they fired at her, she hoisted Mogul (or Mongolian) colors, and seemed to be preparing herself for defense.

Avery only cannonaded at a distance, when some of his men began to suspect that he was not the hero that they supposed. The sloop, however, attacked the ship, one on the bow,<sup>7</sup> and another upon the side of the ship, and so boarded her. She then lowered her flag and surrendered.

It turned out that she was a ship belonging to the great Mogul, the emperor of Mongolia, and there were in her several of the greatest persons in his court (among whom, it was said, was one of his daughters going upon a pilgrimage to Mecca), and they were carrying with them rich offerings to present at the shrine of Mohammed. It is a well-known fact that the people of the east travel with great magnificence, and these people had along with them all their slaves and attendants, with a large quantity of vessels of gold and silver, and immense sums of money to cover their expenses by land. Therefore the spoil which the pirates received from

<sup>5</sup> **East Indiaman** – a ship employed in transporting merchandise for the East India Company

<sup>6</sup> **prize** – vessel captured at sea

<sup>7</sup> **bow** – front (of a ship)



that ship was a wealth that could scarcely be measured.

The pirates took the treasure on board their own ships, plundered their prize of everything they wanted or liked, and then allowed her to depart. But, as soon as the Mogul received news of this, he threatened to send a mighty army to exterminate the English from all their settlements upon the Indian coast. The East India Company was greatly alarmed, but they managed to calm the Mogul's resentment by promising to search for the robbers and deliver them into his hands.

In the meantime our adventurers made the best of their way back to Madagascar. They intended to make that place the deposit of all their treasure, to build a small fort there, and to always keep a few men there for its protection. Avery, however, interrupted this plan, and made it altogether unnecessary.

While steering their course, Avery sent a boat to each of the sloops,



requesting that the chiefs would come on board his ship to hold a conference. They obeyed and, being assembled, he suggested to them the necessity of making their newly-gotten wealth secure in some safe place on shore. He explained that the main difficulty was to get it safe on shore, because, if any of the sloops happened to be attacked alone, they would not be able to make any great resistance, and thus they would either be sunk or captured, with all the treasure on board.

To solve this problem, Avery declared that his vessel was so strong, so well-manned, and such a swift-sailing vessel that he did not think that it was possible for any other ship to catch or overcome her. Accordingly, he proposed that all their treasure should be sealed up in three chests—that each of the captains should have keys, and that they should not be opened until all were present—and that the chests should then be put on board his own ship, and afterwards secured in some safe place on land.

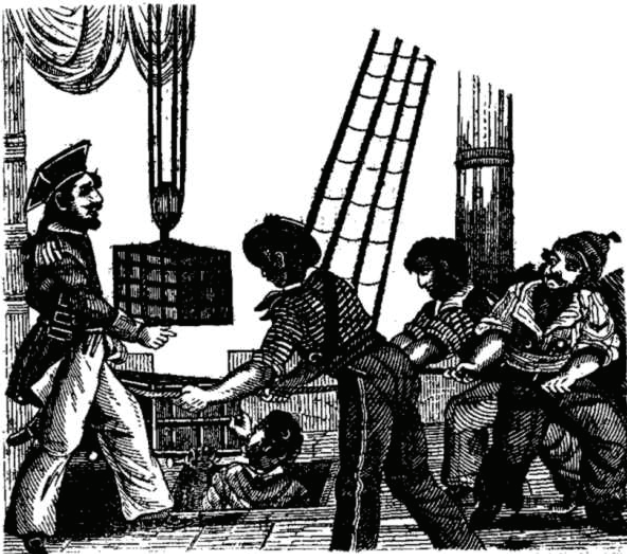
This proposal seemed so reasonable and so beneficial for the common good, that it was accordingly agreed to, and all the treasure was deposited in three chests and carried to Avery's ship.

The weather continued favorable, and all three vessels remained in company during that and the next day. Meanwhile Avery, secretly speaking with his men, suggested that, now that they had on board a treasure sufficient to make them all happy, he asked, "What now hinders us from going to some country where

we are not known, and living onshore all the rest of our days in wealth and luxury?"

Avery's crew soon understood his hint, and all eagerly agreed to deceive the men of the sloops, and to slip away with all the booty. They managed to carry this off during the darkness of the following night. The reader may easily imagine the feelings and indignation of the other two crews in the morning, when they discovered that Avery had made off with all their property.

Avery and his men hastened



## SECURING THE TREASURE CHESTS



towards America and, being strangers in that country, they agreed to divide their booty, to change their names, and separately to take up their residence and live in abundance of riches and honor.

The first land they approached was at the island of Providence, then newly settled. It however occurred to them that the largeness of their vessel would cause quite a stir, and the report that one had been stolen might create suspicion. Therefore they resolved to dispose of their vessel at Providence.

Upon this resolution Avery entered the port, pretending that his vessel had been equipped for privateering<sup>8</sup> and, having been unsuccessful, he had orders from the owners to dispose of her to the best advantage. Under this disguise he soon found a merchant interested in purchasing the vessel. Having thus sold his own ship, he immediately purchased a small sloop.

In this vessel he and his companions embarked, and landed at several places in America where, none suspecting them, they dispersed and settled in the country. Avery, however, had been careful to conceal the greater part of the jewels and other valuable articles, so that his riches were immense. Arriving at Boston, he was almost resolved to settle there, but as the greater part of his wealth consisted of diamonds, he was afraid that he could not dispose of them at that place without being arrested as a pirate.

Upon consideration, therefore, he decided to sail for Ireland, and in a short time arrived in the northern part of that kingdom, and his men dispersed into different places.

The wealth of Avery, however, now proved of very little use to him and caused him great uneasiness. He could not offer his diamonds for sale in that country without being suspected. Considering, therefore, what was best to be done, he thought there might be some person at Bristol he could dare to trust. After he had decided upon this he went into Devonshire, and sent to one of his friends to meet him at a town



<sup>8</sup> privateering – the act of cruising against an enemy in a private sailing vessel

called Biddiford.

When Avery had revealed his secret to his acquaintance and other supposed friends, they agreed that the safest plan would be to put his jewels into the hands of some wealthy merchants, and no inquiry would be made how they came by them.

One of these friends told him that he was acquainted with some merchants who were very fit for the purpose, and if Avery would allow them a handsome commission, they would do the business faithfully. Avery liked the idea, particularly

as he could think of no other way of managing this matter, since he could not appear to act for himself. Accordingly the merchants paid Avery a visit at Biddiford, where, after strong declarations of honor and integrity, he delivered to them his treasure, consisting of diamonds and some vessels of gold. After giving him a little money for his present needs, the merchants departed.

Avery then changed his name and lived very quietly at Biddiford; therefore there was no notice taken of him. In a short time, however, his money was all spent, yet he heard no word from his merchants. He wrote them repeatedly, and at last they sent him a small supply of money, but it was not sufficient to pay his debts. In short, the payments they



sent him were so trifling that it was with great difficulty that he could even exist. He therefore determined to go privately to Bristol and have an interview with the merchants himself.

But when he visited them, instead of money, he met with a humiliating rejection. For, when he demanded them to come to an account with him, they silenced him by threatening to reveal his true character. (Thus the merchants proved themselves to be as good pirates at land as Avery was at sea.)

Whether Avery was frightened by these threats or whether he had seen some other person who recognized him, is not known. However, he went immediately to Ireland, and from there desperately pleaded with his merchants for a supply, but it did no good. Soon he was reduced to beggary.

In this extreme distress he was determined to return and throw himself upon the mercy of these “honest” Bristol merchants, let the consequence be what it would. He therefore went on board a trading vessel and worked his passage over to Plymouth. From there he traveled on foot to Biddiford. But he had been there only a few days when he fell sick and died, not even having enough money to buy himself a coffin.

*“For man also knoweth not his time:  
as the fishes that are taken in an evil net,  
and as the birds that are caught in the snare;  
so are the sons of men snared in an evil time,  
when it falleth suddenly upon them.”*

— Ecclesiastes 9:12







## CHAPTER TWO

# THE TRAP IS SPRUNG

While you by skill the silly fish do kill,  
Perhaps the devil's hook sticks in *your* gill.

**T**here is skill in fishing. They that go to sea on a fishing voyage are accustomed to go provided with their *craft* (as they very fitly call it) without which they can do nothing. They have their lines, hooks of several sizes, and their bait. They carefully observe their seasons, and when the fish come in, then they steadily labor at their business day and night.

### APPLICATION

But how much more skilful and industrious is Satan to ensnare and destroy souls? The devil makes a voyage as well as you. He has his baits for you just as you have for the fish. He has his traps and snares to catch souls (2 Corinthians 2:11; Ephesians 6:11). He is a serpent, an old serpent (Revelation 12:9). Too cunning and deceptive for man in his state of perfection, how much more easily shall he entrap us in our collapsed and degenerate state, now that our mind is cracked by the fall, and all our understanding is poisoned and perverted!

Ministers observe four steps or degrees of Satan's tempting power:



*First*, he can find out the evils that best suit a man's frame of mind. He knows to what sins their natures are more especially prone to, and inclinable.

*Secondly*, he can offer and set forth suitable objects to those lusts. He can exactly and fully make use of every man's desire in order to more easily entice him to sin.

*Thirdly*, he can inject and cast ideas and desires into the mind, urging man to unite with those tempting objects. As it is said of Judas, the devil put it into his heart to betray Christ (John 13:2).

*Fourthly*, he can disturb, irritate, and provoke the heart, and by those continual disturbances and invitations, weary it. And by this he often induces men to commit such things as startled them when the idea first presented itself to their minds.

All this he can do, if he finds the work sticks and meets with rubs and difficulties; yet he does not act to the utmost of his skill and power at all times and with all persons; neither indeed need he do so. The very setting forth and revealing of an object is enough to some, without any further suggestions; the devil makes an easy conquest of them.

And, besides all this, he is very clever in choosing when, where, and by whom he introduces his temptations, and by this poor souls are caught, as fish in an evil net (Ecclesiastes 9:12).

The carnal man is led by sense, as the beast; and Satan handles and fits him accordingly. He uses all sorts of motives, not only internal and mental, but external and sensitive also; as the sparkling of the wine, when it gives its color in the glass, or the harlot's beauty, whose eye-lids are snares, hiding always the hook, and concealing the issue from them. He promises man gain and profit, pleasure and delight, and all that is tempting, with assurance of secrecy. By these he fastens the fatal hook in their jaws, and thus they are led captive by him at his will.



## REFLECTION

And is Satan so subtle and diligent to entice souls to sin? Does he thus cast out his golden baits and allure souls with pleasure to their ruin? Then how necessary is it for you, O my soul, to be careful and wary! How strict a guard should I set upon every sense! Ah, let me not so much regard how sin comes towards me in the temptation, as how it goes off at last. The day in which Sodom was destroyed began with a pleasant sun-shine, but ended in fire and brimstone. I may promise myself much happiness in the fulfillment of my lusts, but O how certainly will it end in my ruin!

Ahab doubtless promised himself much satisfaction in the vineyard of Naboth, but his blood paid for it in the portion of Jezreel. The harlot's bed was perfumed to tempt the simple young man (Proverbs 7:17). But those chambers of delights proved to be the chambers of death, and her house the way to hell.

Ah, with what a smiling face sin comes on towards me in its temptations! How it tickles the carnal desires and pleases the deceived heart! But what a dreadful catastrophe and end it has! The delight is quickly gone, but its guilt remains to horrify and terrify the soul with ghastly images and dreadful pictures of the wrath of God! Just as sin has its delights accompanying it to enter and fasten it, so it has its horrors and stings to torment and wound. And as certainly as I see those go before it to make a way, so certainly shall I find these follow after, and tread upon its heels. No



sooner is the conscience awakened, but all those delights vanish as a night vision, or as a dream when one awakes: and then I shall cry:

“Here is the hook, but where is the bait? Here is the guilt and horror, but where is the pleasure and delight that I was promised? And I, where shall I now go? Ah, my deceitful lusts! You have enticed and left me in the midst of all miseries!”



Copy



There's skill in fishing—that the devil knows,  
For when for souls Satan a-fishing goes,  
He fishes cunningly. He knows he must  
Exactly fit the bait unto the lust.

He studies man's affections, place, and time,  
He guesses what is his delight, what thine,  
And so accordingly prepares the bait  
While he himself lies closely hid, to wait,

To see when you'll latch on. Are you inclined  
To drunken meetings? Then he baits with wine:  
Is this the way? If unto this he'll smell,  
He'll shortly pledge a cup of wrath in hell.

To pride or lust is your vile nature bent?  
An object suitable he will present.  
O think on this, when you cast in the hook:  
Say, "Thus for my poor soul doth Satan look."

O play not with temptations, do not swallow  
The sugared bait—consider what will follow!  
If once he catch thee, then away he draws  
Thy captive soul, a pris'ner in his paws.

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