

THE  
ADVENTURES

OF

*Jack Okham & Tom Splicewell*

Two SAILORS who went a Pirating  
on the KING'S Highway.

How that TOM SPICEWELL was taken,  
and condemned to be hanged.

How his Messmate JACK, applied to the  
KING, and got him pardoned.

With a COPY of JACK'S Polite LETTER  
to HIS MAJESTY.



**A**T the conclusion of the war Jack Okham and Tom Splicewell two sailors, who had been some time on shore, and had spent the produce of their last voyage; after a small time, their Wapping Landlady who was called Mother Double-Chalk, began not only to look coldly upon them; but also according to custom, when their money was gone, to behave roughly towards them; and they not being entered again in any service, began to scheme how they should raise a little money for their present use; and, after several proposals made between them, that still met with some objections, one of them at length said,—Zoons! messmate, what think you of a trip or two for a venture, o' privateering about these coasts a little? In my mind, we might pick up a prize or two, without firing a shot. Ay, replied the other, but suppose we should be taken; will not a court-martial hang us for pirates? Zoons! said the other, we must take what care we can not to be taken; and be sure to trudge out of this latitude, lest we should be known by our rigging. And if we should chance to be chased, why, we must crowd all the sail that we can, and be sure never to strike as long as we can swim above water.

To be brief, after some little debate, they resolved upon a venture; and out they set, with no other weapons of offence, or defence, than a couple of great broomsticks. When they were got into the fields, a little way from town, one of them seeing a gentlemen coming towards them, pretty well dressed, says to the other, Damn me, Jack! this is a prize worth boarding; shall we bring him to?—He seems well rigged and loaded. So he does, replied the other; and with that they both

made ready for the attack. When the gentleman came up to them, they both brandished their weapons: and he who was commodore, saluted him as follows: Damn my blood, my boy, but we must have some money with you! or else, by G-d, you must have a broadside!—The gentleman, finding by their arms, manner, and language, that they were but young in their business, answered them thus: Well, gentlemen, as you seem to be sailors, and good hearty cocks, do not use me ill, and you shall be welcome to what money I have about me, with all my heart, was it ten times as much. With that he presented them with about three shillings and sixpence. Here, gentlemen, said he, is all the money I have at present, and with it were more for your sakes. The sailor, seeing the gentleman to be good natured, seemed quite satisfied; took the money, told him it was enough, and wished him a good voyage. But they had not gone far with their booty, before they were pursued; for the gentleman, telling the adventure just after, to some people that he met, the posse was soon raised; and in less than half an hour, one of them was taken; the other, by some means or other, made his escape.

The next sessions, at the Old Bailey, my young commodore was convicted of felony, and sentenced to be hanged; tho' the simplicity of his proceeding made many people be sorry for him.

After this misfortune, his fellow adventurer was in great perplexity, tho' he had escaped himself; for no body had yet enquired or sought for him about it. But Jack resolved to spare pains; and if possible, to spare his poor messin' life. And being one day at the rendezvous, talking about it, with another of their old shipm

after several methods had been proposed between them, and all fell to the ground: Jack boldly cries,—'Sblood, Tom! I have a good mind to write a letter for him to the King myself. I am bold, no body else can pardon him; and I fancy that would be the most likely way to do the business; only I cannot tell who to get to carry it, and deliver it to him. Zoons! cries the other, I like your scheme, Jack! and if you can write it, will go along with you, and we will carry it to him ourselves, and then we will be sure that he will have it, for I never saw the King in my life. For I neither, replies the other, and, by G—d, Tom, if you will go with me to him, I will write a letter immediately; the other consenting, Jack called immediately for a pen, ink, and paper; but as he was going to begin his polite epistle, a great blotch of ink dropped from his pen, upon the top of his paper. Jack never called for any more; but wiping it with his finger along the sheet, he began, and wrote as follows:

*An please your Kingship,*

*T H I S* is to let you no, that my messmate Tom Splice-  
*all*, is condemned to be hanged: for you must no, that  
 was foolish enuff to set out a privateering without  
 lying to the admirality for leave; and the first prize  
 took, gave some intelligence of his course; so that he  
 was chased by a hole squadron, and soon after taken and  
 carried into port. However, he's a very onest fellow, I as-  
 sure you, and by G—d, as good a seaman as ever stept be-  
 en stern and stern. He shall not splice reef and  
 mend a sail, steer and rig a ship, with nor a man in the  
 sea, and that's a bould word. And if youle be so kind  
 to order his discharge, I dare swear, heel never be guil-  
 ty of such a nother cryme, as long as he lives, which will  
 very much oblyge,  
 At the ship Alehouse. Wapping.  
 Yours, Tom. Fiiplove, Shipmate.

Your humble servant,

JACK OKHAM.

When Jack had finished the above letter, and the other had set his hand to it, as a proof of his approbation, and the truth of its contents, they sealed it up, and directed it as follows :

THIS FOR THE KING WITH SPEED.

As soon as this was done, without further delay, out they set, to deliver their letter as directed; and all the way they went, they enquired where the King lived. At last, when they came into the Strand, near Charing-Cross, a gentleman, who was just come from St. James's, hearing them enquire so earnestly after the King, and seeing they were sailors, stept up to them, and demanded thus: Hark ye, my lads, what do ye want with the King pray? have you an express! No! answers one of them, we have no express, nor do not know what you mean! but we have got a letter for him, and want to deliver it to him, if we can. What! replies the gentleman: to the King himself? King himself! ay. to the King himself; cried the sailor, suppose it was to the Lord High Admiral; What of that? Why, my lad, replied the gentleman, if it be a thing of consequence, you may very easily see the King, for he is now walking in the Mall; I saw him there within these ten minutes myself.—What, Sir, demands Jack, is he walking there alone? No, replies the gentleman, there are a great many of the nobility and gentry along with him. How may a body know when, cries Jack, which is he? Why, says the gentleman again, the King is a very well looking man, and you may know him by a star on his left breast, and a blue ribbon hanging from his neck. By this time, a great number of people were gathered about the sailors; and hearing what had passed betwixt them and the gentleman, as above,

after the sailors had thanked him, they proceeded; and the mob resolved to bear them company in their embassy. So, that by the time they were got to the Park their attendants were increased to several hundreds. But just as they came to the end of the Mall they happened to meet a nobleman, who in some measure answered the description which the gentleman had given of the King, being a Knight of the garter, with his star and ribbon. Jack no sooner saw him, but he roared out to his companion, by G—d, Tom here is the King! now for it! So after feeling for the letter, he stepped up to the nobleman, and saluted him thus: Your humble servant, Sir; pray, are you the King? No, friend, replied his lordship, I am not indeed. Pray, why do you ask me that question? Nay, Sir, returned the Sailor, I beg your pardon? hope no offence! but I was told just by a gentleman that saw the King within this half hour, that he is rigged in much the same trim as you are; so that I did not know but you might be him. Have you any dispatches for his Majesty, demands the nobleman, that you are in such quest of him? 'Spatches! yes, Sir, quoth Jack, I have; I have a letter for him; and must deliver it into his own hand, if I can find him.—The nobleman imagining that there must be something more than common in this rencounter, told them, that if they pleased, he would go back with them, and not only shew them the King, but would also introduce them to him. Upon which, the sailor thanked him for his good will, and away they went together. When they came to about the middle of the Mall, they met with his Majesty; and the nobleman going up to him, in a low voice acquainted him with what had

passed between him and the sailors ; and pointing to them, desired his Majesty would please to permit them to deliver their letter to him. By all means, my Lord, replied the King. With that he beckoned the sailors to approach. Here, my lads, said his Lordship, this is his Majesty, if you have any letter for him you may deliver it. Here Jack advanced with his hand to his hat, but without pulling it off, and having come pretty near the King, said to him, Prav, Sir, are you the King? Yes, Sir, answered his Majesty smiling, I believe so. Then, Sir, says Jack, there is a letter for you, and please you. The King looking hard at the fellow, could not help smiling at his blunt, uncourtly address ; but he took the letter from him, and looking upon the superscription, fell a laughing and shewed it all around to the nobles that attended him.

Jack seeing the King look so pleasantly, says to his shipmate, by G—d, Tom, I believe it will do ; the King seems to be in very good humour. And when his Majesty had read the letter, he delivered it to the nobleman who introduced the sailor to him. Look here, my Lord says he, read that letter, and learn a new direction. Upon my honour, this fellow has no deceit in him ; I dare say it is his own hand-writing, and his own dictating too. However, this I may say to his credit, that his stile and behaviour are both honest towards me ; for, he has not troubled me with compliments on the one, or ceremonies on the other. So turning to the sailors, he says to him who gave him the letter, Friend, as this is his first offence, upon the account of your kind letter here) you may let your friend know that I will pardon him this time, but let him take care

that he never transgress so again. Ant please you, Sir, quoth Jack, I dare swear he never will; and if you will take care that he shall not be hanged this time, I am sure Tom's a very honest fellow, and will be very thankful to you. Well, said his Majesty, you may assure yourself, that he shall not die for this crime; and you may let him know that I will save his life for the sake of your letter here. Ay, Sir, said the sailor, but how can a body be sure that you will not forget it? Why, replied the King, you may take my word for it, I will not forget it. Cause, if you should, quoth Jack, perhaps they may hang him, and you never be the wiser. But if once we should get him a shipboard with us, by the blood! but you must then ask the captain first, or a thousand of you could not hang him. Why then, replied the King, if you will take care, and get him a shipboard, as soon as he is set at liberty, I will take care he shall be discharged in a very few days. Sir, replied the sailor, I return your Kingship a great many thanks; and I am sure, poor Tom will be ready to hang himself for joy, that he is to go on board again: And by the mess! there is no good to be got staying so long on shore. Then he made the King a low bow, hitched up his trowsers, tacked himself about, and steered off in triumph, that his polite letter had saved his messmate's life.

And the story says, that the King and his attendants were no less delighted with the poor sailor's embassy, than they were with the success of it.