

Adventures on the American Frontier

PIRATES AND PRIVATEERS

Part Five

Stede Bonnet, Landlubber Pirate



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In the early 1700s, while pirates were bringing terror to the American coast, another pirate was getting his start. His name was Stede Bonnet, and he had never been to sea. In fact, he was a gentleman and a soldier and knew nothing about ships. But he would soon send shudders down the spines of the people of Carolina.

One day Stede walked out of his fine home in the West Indies and slammed the door behind him.





“Talk, talk, talk!” he said. “Must she talk all the time? She scolds and fusses at me as if I were a little boy instead of the husband who keeps her in fine silk dresses.”

So Stede, tired of his life at home, bought a sloop and hired a crew of seventy



men. People thought he was going into the shipping business, even after he had the name *Revenge* painted on his ship.

“When are you setting sail? What will your cargo be?” people asked him. But Stede wouldn’t say.

He set sail in the middle of the night. The first news people had of the *Revenge* was that it had attacked a ship at sea, that it was flying the *Jolly Roger*, and that—of all things—Stede Bonnet had become a pirate!

But becoming a pirate was not easy for Stede. He had a hard time at first. He was seasick for weeks on end. He also didn't know much about his ship, and his men knew it.

"He doesn't know a bowsprit from a jib," his men said, and they laughed behind his back. They were a tough lot, and most of them had sailed the seas for many years. They thought it strange that their captain had to trust his mate to give all the sailing orders, and some of the men began to plan



how they would get rid of the “landlubber.”

But as soon as Stede got over feeling seasick, he began to study. He had books on ships and sailing, and he had accounts of pirates. He wanted to do everything right. He hated the idea of making prisoners walk a plank, but if that was what pirates did, then Stede Bonnet would do it, too.

The men tried to mutiny, but only once. Stede pulled out his pistol and blew the brains out of the first man to step out of line. He ordered the rest whipped.