

A QUEST FOR HONOR AMIDST A SEA  
OF TREACHERY.

# THE ROSE OF PARADISE



HOWARD PYLE

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# The Rose of Paradise

*by*

HOWARD PYLE





“BOAT AHoy!” I CRIED OUT, AND THEN LEVELLED MY PISTOL AND FIRED

# THE ROSE OF PARADISE

*Being a detailed account of certain adventures that happened to Captain John Mackra, in connection with the famous pirate, Edward England, in the year 1720, off the Island of Juanna in the Mozambique Channel; writ by himself, and now for the first time published*



## I.

**A**LTHOUGH the account of the serious engagement betwixt the *Cassandra* and the two pirate vessels in the Mozambique Channel hath already been set to print, the publick have yet to know many lesser and more detailed circumstances concerning the matter;<sup>1</sup> and as the above-mentioned account hath caused much remark and comment, I shall take it upon me to give many incidents not yet known, seeking to render them neither in refined rhetorick nor with romantick circumstances such as are sometimes used by novel and story writers to catch the popular attention, but telling this history as directly, and with as little verbosity and circumlocution, as possible.

For the conveniency of the reader, I shall render this true and veracious account under sundry headings, marked I., II., III., &c., as seen above, which may assist him in separating the less from the more notable portions of the narrative.

1 A brief narration of the naval engagement between Captain Mackra and the two pirate vessels was given in the Captain's official report made at Bombay. It appears in the life of the pirate England in Johnson's book: "A Genuine Account of the Voyages and Plunders of the Most Notorious Pyrates, &c." London, 1742.

According to my log—a diary or journal of circumstances appertaining to shipboard—it was the nineteenth day of April, 1720, when, I being in command of the East India Company's ship *Cassandra*, billed for Bombay and waiting for orders to sail, comes Mr. Evans, the Company's agent, aboard with certain sealed and important orders which he desired to deliver to me at the last minute.

After we had come to my cabin and were set down, Mr. Evans hands me two pacquets, one addressed to myself, the other superscribed to one Benjamin Longways.

He then proceeded to inform me that the Company had a matter of exceeding import and delicacy which they had no mind to intrust to any one but such, he was pleased to say, as was a tried and worthy servant, and that they had fixed upon me as the fitting one to undertake the commission, which was of such a nature as would involve the transfer of many thousand pounds. He furthermore informed me that a year or two before, the Company had rendered certain aid to the native King of Juanna, an island lying between Madagascar and the east coast of Africa, at a time when there was war betwixt him and the king of an island called Mohilla, which lyeth coadjacent to the other country; that I should make Juanna upon my voyage, and that I should there receive through Mr. Longways, who was the Company's agent at that place, a pacquet of the greatest import, relating to the settlement of certain

matters betwixt the East India Company and the king of that island. Concluding his discourse, he further said that he had no hesitation in telling me that the pacquet which I would there receive from Mr. Longways concerned certain payments due the East India Company, and would, as he had said before, involve the transfer of many thousand pounds; from which I might see what need there was of great caution and circumspection in the transaction.

“But, sir,” says I, “sure the Company is making a prodigious mistake in confiding a business of such vast importance as this to one so young and so inexperienced as I.”

To this Mr. Evans only laughed, and was pleased to say that it was no concern of his, but from what he had observed he thought the honorable Company had made a good choice, and that of a keen tool, in my case. He furthermore said that in the pacquet which he had given to me, and which was addressed to me, I would find such detailed instructions as would be necessary, and that the other should be handed to Mr. Longways, and was an order for the transfer above spoken of.

Soon after this he left the ship, and was rowed ashore, after many kind and complacent wishes for a quick and prosperous voyage.

It may be as well to observe here as elsewhere within this narrative that the Company’s written orders to me

contained little that Mr. Evans had not told me, saving only certain details, and the further order that that which the agent at Juanna should transfer to me should be delivered to the Governor at Bombay, and that I should receive a written receipt from him for the same. Neither at that time did I know the nature of the trust that I was called upon to execute, save that it was of great import, and that it involved money to some mightily considerable amount.

The crew of the *Cassandra* consisted of fifty-one souls all told, officers and ordinary seamen. Besides these were six passengers, the list of whom I give below, it having been copied from my log-book journal:

Captain Edward Leach (of the East India Company's service).

Mr. Thomas Fellows (who was to take the newly established agency of the Company at Cuttapore).

Mr. John Williamson (a young cadet).

Mrs. Colonel Evans (a sister-in-law of the Company's agent spoken of above).

Mistress Pamela Boon (a niece of the Governor at Bombay).

Mistress Ann Hastings (the young lady's waiting-woman).

Of Mistress Pamela Boon I feel extreme delicacy in speaking, not caring to make publick matters of such a nature as our subsequent relations to one another. Yet this much I may say without indelicacy, that she was at that

time a young lady of eighteen years of age, and that her father, who had been a clergyman, having died the year before, she was at that time upon her way to India to join her uncle, who, as said above, was Governor at Bombay, and had been left her guardian.

Nor will it be necessary to tire the reader by any disquisition upon the other passengers, excepting Captain Leach, whom I shall have good cause to remember to the very last day of my life.

He was a tall, handsome fellow, of about eight-and-twenty years of age, of good natural parts, and of an old and honorable family of Hertfordshire. He was always exceedingly kind and pleasant to me, and treated me upon every occasion with the utmost complacency, and yet I conceived a most excessive dislike for his person from the very first time that I beheld him, nor, as events afterwards proved, were my instincts astray, or did they mislead me in my sentiments, as they are so apt to do upon similar occasions.

After a voyage somewhat longer than usual, and having stopped at St. Helena, which hath of late been one of our stations, we sighted the southern coast of Madagascar about the middle of July, and on the eighteenth dropped anchor in a little bay on the eastern side of the island of Juanna, not being able to enter into the harbor which lyeth before the king's town because of the shallowness of the

water and the lack of a safe anchorage, which is mightily necessary along such a treacherous and dangerous coast. In the same harbor we found two other vessels—one the *Greenwich*, Captain Kirby, an English ship; the other an *Ostender*, a great, clumsy, tub-shaped craft.

I was much put about that I could get no nearer to the king's town than I then was, it being some seven or eight leagues away around the northern end of the island. I was the more vexed that we could not well come to it in boats, other than by a long reach around the cape to the northward, which would increase the journey to wellnigh thirty miles. Besides all this, I was further troubled upon learning from Captain Kirby of the *Greenwich* that the pirates had been very troublesome in these waters for some time past. He said that having been ashore soon after he had come to that place, in search of a convenient spot to take in water, he had found fourteen pirates that had come in their canoes from the Mayotta, where the pirate ship to which they belonged, viz., the *Indian Queen*, two hundred and fifty tons, twenty-eight guns, and ninety men, commanded by Captain Oliver de la Bouche, bound from the Guinea coast to the East Indies, had been bulged and lost.

I asked Captain Kirby what he had done with the rogues. He told me, nothing at all, and that the less one had to do with such fellows the better. At this I was vastly

surprised, and that he had taken no steps to put an end to such a nest of vile, wicked, and bloody-minded wretches when he had it so clearly in his power to take fourteen of them at once; more especially as he should have known that if they got away from that place and to any of their companions they would bring the others not only about his ears, but of every other craft that might be lying in the harbor at the time. Something to this effect I said, whereat he flew into a mighty huff, and said that if I had seen half the experience that he had been through I would not be so free in my threats of doing this or that to a set of wretches no better than so many devils from hell, who would cut a man's throat without any scruples either of fear or remorse.

To all this I made no rejoinder, for the pirates were far enough away by this time, and I was willing to suppose that Captain Kirby had done what he judged to be best in the matter. Yet the getting away of those evil wretches brought more trouble upon me than had happened in all my life before.

But, as was said before, I was in a pretty tub of pickle with all those things; for I could not bring my ship to anchor in any reasonable distance of the king's town, nor could I leave her and go on such a journey as would take a day or more, lest the pirates should come along in my absence. Neither did I like to send any of the officers

under me to execute the commission, it being one of such exceeding delicacy and secrecy. At this juncture, and all of my passengers knowing that we could not leave that place till I had communicated certain papers to the Company's agent at the king's town, comes Captain Leach to me and volunteers to deliver the packet addressed to Mr. Longways. At first I was but little inclined to accept of his complacency, but having a secret feeling that I might be wronging him by my prejudice against him, I determined to give second thought to the matter before I hastily declined his offer of aid. Indeed, I may truthfully say I would have felt more inclined to refuse his assistance if I had entertained a more high opinion of his person. As it was, I could see no reason for not accepting his offer; he was regarded everywhere as a man of rectitude and of honor, and I had no real grounds to impeach this opinion; so the end of the business was that I accepted his aid with the best face that I was able to command, though that was with no very good grace, and gave him leave to choose ten volunteers as a boat's crew for the expedition.

## II.

(The reader will be pleased to observe that, in pursuance of the plan above indicated, I here begin a second part or chapter of my narrative, the first dealing with our voyage out as far as the island of Juanna, and matters of a kindred nature, whilst the following relates to an entirely different subject, namely, the nature of the trust imposed upon me, mention only of which has heretofore been made.)

**I**DO not now nor ever have believed that Captain Leach had any other designs in offering to execute my commission than that of seizing so excellent an opportunity to see a strange country and people after a long and tiresome voyage upon the sea. Nevertheless, my allowing him to go was one of the greatest mistakes in all of my whole life, and cost me dearly enough before I had redeemed it.

The expedition under him was gone for three days, at the end of which time he returned, in company with a great canoe manned by a crew of about twenty tall, strapping black fellows, and with two or three sitting in

the stern-sheets of the craft, bedecked with feathers and beads, whom I knew to be chiefs or warriors.

In the *Cassandra's* boat was a stranger who sat beside Captain Leach, talking very gayly, and who I knew could be none other than Mr. Longways, the Company's agent.

So soon as the *Cassandra's* boat had come alongside he skipped up the side like a monkey, and gave me a very civil bow immediately his feet touched the deck, which I returned with all the gravity I was able to command.

Mr. Longways was a lean, slim little man, and was dressed with great care, and in the very latest fashion that he could obtain; from which, and his polite, affected manners and grimaces, I perceived that he rarely had the opportunity of coming upon board of a craft where there were ladies as passengers.

After Mr. Longways came Captain Leach, and after him the three great, tall, native chiefs, half naked, and with hair dressed after a most strange, curious fashion. At first they would have prostrated themselves at my feet, but I prevented them; whereupon they took my hand and set it upon their heads, which was anything but pleasant, their hair being thick with gums and greases.

I presently led the way to my cabin, the chiefs following close at our heels, and Mr. Longways walking beside me, grimacing like a little old monkey in a vastly affected manner. Nor could I forbear smiling to see how he directed

his observations towards the ladies, and more especially Mistress Pamela, who stood at the rail of the deck above. Mr. Longways carried in his hand a strong iron despatch-box, about the bigness of those used by the runners at the Bank, and so soon as we had come into my cabin he clapped it down upon the table with a great noise.

“There!” says he, fetching a deep sigh; “I, for one, am glad to be quit of it.”

“Why,” says I, “Mr. Longways, is there then so much in the little compass of that box?”

“Indeed yes,” says he; “enough to make you and me rich men for our lives.”

“I wonder, then,” says I, laughing, “that you should bring it so easily to me, when you might have made off with it yourself, and no one the wiser.”

“No, no,” says he, quite seriously, without taking my jest, and jerking his head towards the black chiefs, who had squatted down upon their hams nigh to the table—”No, no. Our friends yonder have had their eyes on me sharply enough, though they do not understand one single word that we are saying to one another.”

While we had been conversing I had fetched out a decanter of port and five glasses, and had poured out wine for all hands, which the black men drank with as great pleasure as Mr. Longways and myself.

After Mr. Longways had finished, he smacked his lips

and set down his glass with a great air. "And now," says he, with a comical grimace of vanity and self-importance, "let us to business without loss of more time. First of all, I have to ask you, sir, do you know what all this treasure is for?"

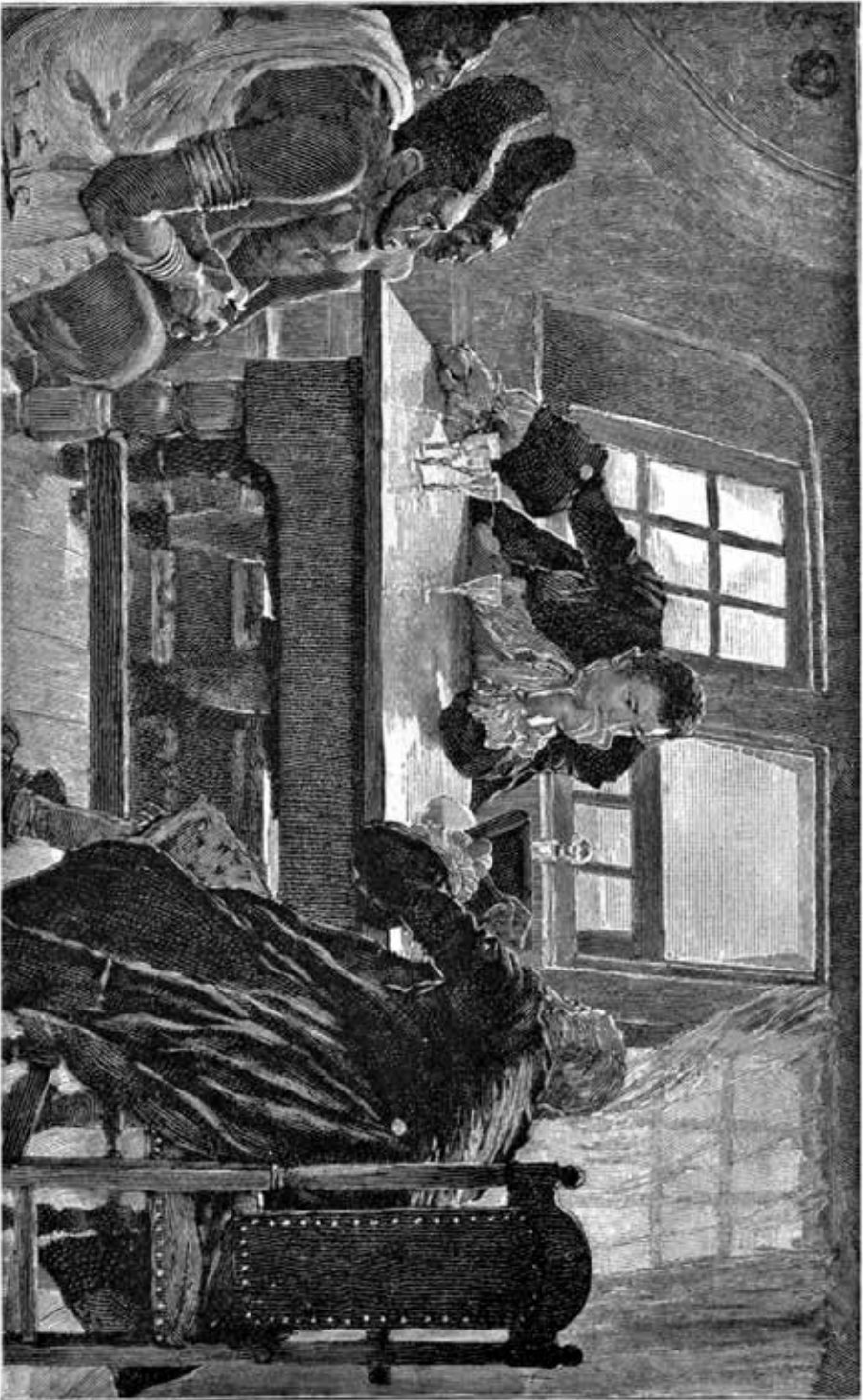
I told him yes; that Mr. Evans had informed me that it was as payment for certain aid which the East India Company had rendered to the king of that country.

"And how," says he, very slowly, and cocking his head upon one side—"and how do you think our King Coffee is to make such payments? By bills upon the Bank of Africa? No, no. The treasure is all in this box, every farthing of it; and I, sir, have been chosen by the honorable East India Company to have sole and entire charge of it for more than two weeks past." Here he looked at me very hard, as though he thought I would have made some remark upon what he had told me; but as I said nothing he presently resumed his discourse, after his own fashion. "I see," says he, "that you do not appreciate the magnitude of the trust that hath been imposed upon me. I shall show you, sir." And without more ado he fetched up a bunch of keys out of his pocket. He looked at them one after another until he found one somewhat smaller than the rest, and with very curiously wrought guards. "Look at this," says he; "there are only three in the world like it. I hold one, King Coffee the other, and the Governor of Bombay the third."

So saying, he thrust the key into the lock of the despatch-box. "Stop a bit, sir," said I, very seriously, and laying my hand on his arm. "Have you very well considered what you are doing? Mr. Evans, the Company's agent, said nothing to me concerning the nature of the trust that was to be imposed upon me further than it was of very great value; and without you have received instructions to tell me further concerning this business, I much misdoubt that the Company intended me to be further informed as to its nature."

"Why, look'ee, Captain Mackra," says he, testily, "Tom Evans is one man and I am another, and I tell you further that I am as important an agent as he, even though he does live in London and I in this outrageous heathen country. Even if I had not intended showing you this treasure before, I would show it to you now, for I do not choose that anybody should think that Tom Evans is a man of more importance than I." So saying, and without more ado, he gave a quick turn to the key, and flung back the lid of the box. I happened just then to glance at the three chiefs, and saw that they were watching us as a cat watches at a mouse-hole; but so soon as they saw me observing them they turned their eyes away so quickly that I hardly felt sure that I had seen them.

Inside of the box was a great lot of dried palm-leaf fibre wrapped around a ball of cotton, which Mr. Longways



MR. LONGWAYS LOOKED UP UNDER HIS BROWN EYES AT ME WITH A VERY CURIOUS LEER.

lifted very carefully and gently. Opening this, he came upon a little roll of dressed skin like the chamois-leather such as the jewellers and watch-makers use, and which was tied all about very carefully with a stout cord of palm fibre. Mr. Longways began laboriously to untie the knot in this cord, and, though I cannot tell why, there was something about the whole business that set my heart to beating very thickly and heavily within my breast.

Mr. Longways looked up under his brows at me with a very curious leer. "Did you ever hear," says he, "of The Rose of Paradise?"

I shook my head.

"Then I'll show her to you," said he; and he began unwinding the cord from about the roll of soft leather, the folds of which he presently opened. Then, as I looked down into his hand and saw what lay within the dressed skin, I was so struck with amazement that I could not find either breath or tongue to utter one single word.

### III.

*IT was a ruby, the most beautiful I had ever seen, and about the bigness of a pigeon's egg.*

**A**T the sight of this prodigious jewel I was so disturbed in my spirits that I trembled as though with an ague, while the sweat started out of my forehead in great drops. "For the love of the Lord, put it up, man!" I cried, so soon as I could find breath and wits.

There was something in my voice that must have frightened Mr. Longways, for he looked mightily disturbed and taken aback; but he presently tried to pass it off for a jest. "Come, come," says he, as he wrapped up the stone in the soft leather again—"come, come; it's all between friend and friend, and no harm done." But to this I answered not a word, but began walking up and down the cabin, so affected by what I had seen that I could neither recover my spirits nor regain my composure. The more I thought over the business the less I liked it; for if anything should now happen to the stone, and it should be lost, every suspicion would fall upon me, since I was possessed of the knowl-

edge of the value of that which was given into my charge. I could not but marvel at the foolish and magpie vanity of Mr. Longways that should thus lead him to betray to an unknown stranger what even I, though so ignorant of the value of such gems, could easily perceive was a vast incalculable treasure such as would make any one man rich for a whole lifetime; and even to this very day it is a matter of admiration to me why the East India Company should have put such a man in a place of important trust, the only reason that I can assign being that no better man could be found to take the agency in that place.

“Look ‘ee,” said I, turning to him suddenly, “have you told of this jewel, this Rose of Paradise, to any one else?”

“Why—” says he; and then he stopped, and began gnawing his nether lip in a peevish fashion.

“Come, come,” says I, “speak out plain, Master Longways, for this is no time for dilly-dallying.”

“Well,” says he, blurting out his words, “I did say something of it to Captain Leach, who, I would have you know, is a gentleman, and a man of honor into the bargain.”

“And tell me,” said I, paying no attention to his bragadocio air, “did you show the stone to him also?”

He looked up and down, as though not knowing what to say.

“Come, come, sir,” said I, sternly, after waiting for a moment or two and he not answering me—“come, come,

sir, I should like to have an answer, if you please. You will recollect that this trust now concerns not only you, but also myself, and if anything happens to the jewel I will be called upon to answer for it as well as yourself; so, as I said, you will answer my question.”

“Why,” says he, “Master Captain, and what if I did? Do you mean to impeach the honor of Captain Leach? I did show it to him one day when we stopped along the beach for water, if you must be told; but I can promise you that not another soul but yourself has seen it since I gave King Coffee my written receipt for it.”

I made no more comment, but began again to walk up and down the cabin, vastly disturbed in my mind by all that I heard. Nothing could be gained by blaming the poor fool, who all this time sat watching me with a mightily troubled and disquieted face. “Sir,” said I, at last, turning to him—“sir, I do not believe that you know what a serious piece of folly you have committed in this business. By rights I should have nothing more to do with the matter, but should leave you to settle it with the Company as you choose; but my instructions were to deliver the stone at Bombay, and I will undertake to do my part to the best of my power. I have nothing of blame to say to you, but I must tell you plain that I cannot have you longer about my ship; I do not wish to order you to leave, but I will be vastly obliged to you if you can return to the king’s town without longer stay.”

At this address Mr. Longways grew very red in the face. "Sir! sir!" he cried, "do you dare to order me, an agent of the East India Company, to leave one of that Company's own ships?"

"That," said I, "you must salt to suit your own taste."

"Very well!" cried he; "give me a receipt for the stone and I'll go, though I tell you plain that the Company shall hear of the fashion in which you have been pleased to treat me."

I made no further answer to his words, but sat down and wrote out the receipt, specifying, however, the manner in which The Rose of Paradise had been shown both to Captain Leach and to myself.

For a while Mr. Longways hotly refused to accept it in the form in which it was writ; but finding that he could get no better, and that he would either have to accept of it or retain the stone in his own keeping until some further opportunity offered for consigning it to Bombay, he was finally fain to take what he could get, whereupon he folded up the paper and thrust it into his pocket, and then left the cabin with a vast show of dignity, and without so much as looking at me or saying a word to me.

He and the chiefs got into the great canoe, and rowed away whence they had come, and I saw no more of him until above a week afterwards, of which I shall have more to say further on in my narration.