



Captain Blood

Rafael Sabatini

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Short Description: Peter Blood, an Irish physician and soldier in England in the 1680's, is wrongly convicted of treason and sentenced to indentured slavery in the Caribbean. He escapes and becomes the most feared pirate captain on the Spanish Main, but all the glory of his adventures cannot help him, for the woman he loves cannot love a thief and pirate. Even when he destroys England's enemies, even at his most triumphant...but wait! What's that... Long Description: Peter Blood, an Irish physician and former soldier is happily settled, in the 1680's, as the doctor in an English town, when the rebellion of the Duke of Monmouth catches him by accident. He saves a man's life, as a doctor must try to do, but the man is a rebel and the hanging Judge Jeffreys sentences him to ten years as an indentured slave in the Caribbean colonies. Once there, his knowledge as a physician is recognized, and thus he meets and falls in love with the daughter of the man who own his servitude; not likely to be a successful love story! A Spanish ship attacks the town, and while the Spaniards celebrate their victory he boldly steals their ship, and he and his fellow convicts sail off to become the boldest and most fearless of pirates among the islands and on the Spanish Main. But all the glory of his adventures cannot help him, for the woman he loves cannot love a thief and pirate. Even when he destroys England's enemies, even at his most triumphant...but wait! Is that... The classic novel of adventure and romance, and one of Sabatini's best.

Captain Blood Details

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Author : Rafael Sabatini

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From Reader Review Captain Blood for online ebook

Orient says

I have read this book so long ago that I nearly forgot some events in it and to my joy, I was reminded about this great book while stalking awesome updates of excellent **pirate captain Craig** and wonderful **pirate lady Dawn**. Thank you :) This book was a great find after the torture in Black Company and I fell into a nice BR with Craig. What attracted me some years ago and gave me pleasant moments in the reread, is that the story is written in old-fashioned English and the pace of action is just fabulous. Alongside with beautifully written descriptions of people, nature and sea battles, it's a great read :)

Characters. Remembering my first read of this book, I know I was stunned a bit as starting the book I imagined that I'll be thrown into the harsh sea battle times from the very start and instead I found a kind and calm gentleman, smoking a pipe and tending his flowers, who enjoys his life as a simple doc. I know that back then I checked the blurb at the back of the book a couple of times, to see if I'm still to have some piraty read :) But...

'Life can be infernally complex'

17th century, injustice, war, slavery.....that are the core factors to make life more complex to anyone. But this calm gentleman gets his share of various adventures, too. Experiencing all the struggle and making his new life aboard his ship, the Arabella, he remains true to himself, especially in doing the right things, protecting the innocent and helping others. Sometimes for too much as *'He's chivalrous to the point of idiocy'*. That leads me to conclusion that "Captain Blood" is quite a predictable story about a great hero gentleman as justice wins after all. I view it as an advantage and a disadvantage at the same time.

I'm not a great fan of romance, especially old-fashioned dragging one, so I had a couple eye-rolling moments when reading the passages about the eternal love. This led me to another trouble I found in "Captain Blood". A strong kick-ass heroine. I admit, Miss A is a strong female, she has great character features indeed, but what annoyed me a bit is that despite playing an important role in the story, she has only a couple of scenes for her personality to bloom. I'd have wanted her to kick some ass, make some plotting with unexpected twists. But I know that this book was written quite a long time ago, when kick ass heroines weren't very widely incorporated into books :)

Narrative. Choosing a playdate with Captain Blood you'll experience grand piracy, scheming, fab sea battles, near misses and some old-fashioned love. There's def a tasty treasure, a gulp of politics and a dash of romance for you in store in this fast-paced fun adventure. Mr. Sabatini really knows how to command words :)

'An intelligent observation of the facts of human existence will reveal to shallow-minded folk who sneer at the use of coincidence in the arts of fiction and drama that life itself is little more than a series of coincidences. Open the history of the past at whatsoever page you will, and there you shall find

coincidence at work bringing about events that the merest chance might have averted. Indeed, coincidence may be defined as the very tool used by Fate to shape the destinies of men and nations.'

To sum up, I can put Rafael Sabatini books with such masters of adventure like Alexandre Dumas and Robert Louis Stevenson. I admit this author present the story in his own, different way but his sea adventures and awesome pirates are definitely worth a playdate.

P.S. I just loved and laughed hard when I met one character, it was a short acquaintance but really fun one.

'You said you would show us some vine dings. Where are these vine dings?'

Mike (the Paladin) says

Many of you who've read some of my reviews know that there is another Sabatini book that is a long time favorite of mine. But while this one isn't my top all time favorite it's still excellent...well, it's Sabatini of course.

Rafael Sabatini is one of the great adventure writers of all time (though it's not all he wrote, it's what we're discussing here). While the sea genre and the pirate genre in particular isn't one I routinely seek out there are books of this "type" I like immensely. For instance I'm a huge fan of C. S. Forester's Horatio Hornblower books. Here we're discussing Captain Blood, possibly the premier pirate novel.

The book was not at the time it was first written Sabatini's most popular though it did ride the success he was currently enjoying (having been popular in Europe for a while and then being "discovered" by Americans). The book is today possibly his best known work largely because of the 1935 Movie starring Errol Flynn and Olivia de Havilland (justly by the way. This is one of those rare occasions when the movie comes close to doing the book justice. The book is better, but the movie is good. It follows the general story only collapsing one main plot point for time.) Today the movie still shows up regularly on Turner Classic Movies and is available to buy.

I think it's fair here to say that I can't recommend this book too highly. It's a good story told with a fairly solid historical background. If you've read Sabatini before you'll see some of the plot devices he likes to use, misunderstanding, judgmentalism backfiring...daring do.

Really this book has, "Fencing, fighting, torture, revenge, giants, monsters, chases, escapes, true love, miracles"...okay no giants per se and no obvious miracles, but there are people murdered by pirates. From the word go when Peter Blood is taken and wrongly condemned to the very final climax of the book it doesn't often slow down to take a breath. You get to know the characters and the book is driven by both them and it's plot. Peter may be a bit of an over achiever in the story...but hey doesn't the world need some over achievers?

So grab those flintlocks, strap on your sword, rapier or cutlas and pull on those swash top boots. Time to open this book and be part of high adventure. Enjoy.

Mick says

What a pleasure to read. Although I'm not very informed on these matters, I would hazard a guess that most readers would consider Captain Blood the definitive pirates tale - when told from the pirates perspective.

The story is one of war, slavery, love, conviction and morality whose plot I'll not cheapen by summarizing here. The language inside is easily as beautiful and inspiring as the appearance of the book itself. I'll quote a passage.

"Open the history of the past at whatsoever page you will, and there you shall find coincidence at work bringing about events that the merest chance might have averted. Indeed, coincidence may be defined as the very tool used by Fate to shape the destinies of men and nations."

I'll admit it took me a little while to get used to the voice of the author and the vocabulary he used. It was simply written long ago. However, once I found that voice it was almost impossible for me to put the book down.

Evgeny says

One bright day of the seventeenth century a former soldier turned physician Peter Blood was minding his own business taking care of his flowers. Those days very bored people entertained themselves by organizing yet another rebellion and one such swept across the small English town where our hero settled down. Peter Blood did his best to stay away from the troubles and almost - but not quite - succeed.

The rebellion was suppressed and now the victors got to punish the losers. Thanks to the King's need for cheap labor force in the Caribbean Peter Blood and some other unlucky people went straight there as slaves instead of gallows. What is the first thing that comes to mind if we think seventeenth century and Caribbean at the same time? Unicorns and rainbows? No. Cute kittens? No. Pirates aplenty, that is what.

This is a classic pirate book, make no mistake about it. While some might argue Robert Louis Stevenson's Treasure Island is **the** classic pirate tale, this one most definitely holds the second spot. Unlike Treasure Island it has everything you can ask from this kind of story: naval battles, deck melees, hidden treasure, storming of heavily armed sea forts, defense of said forts, romance, and everything else you can think of. Are you unsure about the difference between a pirate and a buccaneer? Read the book and find out.

This novel did and still does influence everything related to pirates in all art forms, especially noble romantic pirate image. While the following guy is not exactly noble and romantic, I am sure Johnny Depp had this story in mind when he portrayed Jack Sparrow as you can see some similarities.

I mentioned that the main character of the tale comes out as mostly good guy, but he still has enough shades of gray to look fairly realistic. His development makes up one of the greatest parts of the book.

The actual rating would be closer to 4 stars than 5, but I still remember the impression the book made on me when I read it during my teens. Hint: my parents literally had to force me away from it. So I upgrade the

rating to 5 stars considering its nostalgia factor. This book is a classic of genre even if a little forgotten now.

Stephen says

Old School, feel good, **swashbuckling** derring do, performed with **style** and **panache**, and featuring a **larger-than-lifer** whose battle **savvy** and **intrepidity** are matched only by his **integrity**, his keen **intellect**, and his imperturbable **grace**.

Captain Peter Blood...is the **MAN**...and the myth, and the legend, and the whole kit and caboodle, and he deserves VIP seating within the **inner sanctum** of literature's most **memorable heroic characters**.

No wonder Errol Flynn became a star playing this singular figure.

He's everything the hero should be, and this novel is adventure as it was born to be done.

If you haven't read this, do so.

If you have read this, may I suggest a re-read along while listening to the superb narration of Simon Vance, who performs the audio version to perfection.

PLOT SUMMARY:

Set in the 17th century, during the reign of James II, Peter Blood, Irish physician and former soldier, is wrongfully convicted of treason for providing medical attention to a rebel combatant. Kangaroo courted and sold into slavery, Blood quickly finds himself in Barbados as the property of the malicious Colonel Bishop. From there follows hardships...injustices...anger...seeds of romance...escapes...piracy...battles and strategy and tactics...blossoming romance...betrayals...booty...revenge...more battles...friendship...courage...more battles and more betrayals...a reckoning...and a final comeuppance that will have you whooping and fist pumping.

THOUGHTS:

I loved it and sprained my jaw from excess grinning at the pure joy wafting off the pages.

The writing is polished and absorbing and very clever. Foregoing any hint of pretension or the use of overly ornate language, Sabatini simply goes about telling his story, and he tells it with skill, with wit, and with an eloquence at which you can not help but be impressed.

The man's storytelling is fluid and flawless.

In addition, the story itself is so wonderfully deployed. The plotting is intricate and nuanced, yet remains inclusive and engaging throughout. True, Sabatini's characters are somewhat married to their roles of white hats and black hats, but this is hardly a cause for criticism in this kind of tale, and even in this regard, there are moments of shading where splashes of gray appear.

And, of course, there is Captain Peter Blood. An attention-captivating, envy-inducing, singular aggregation

of that which is cool. Sabatini never angers or disappoints the reader with Blood's decisions or actions. Blood never plays the patsy simply because he's the "good guy," he never makes you question his honor, he never makes you feel a twinge of uncertainty at the rightness of his cause.

He is the consummate hero.

4.5 stars. HIGHEST POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATION!

P.S. A big thank you to Richard for insisting that I read this, and hammering the order home by rudely sending me a copy. Well played, sir, you win this round.

Dawn says

Fantastic read! I liked it better than Treasure Island!

I honestly can't believe this was published in 1922. (In a good way.)

Not going into a huge review. Just want to say the writing was excellent for it's time. I actually felt emotions, passion...whereas others I have read from this era (1920's) seemed stiff and cartoonish.

Blood was an honorable Pirate and I loved him so much. (I also believe the book is based on actual events..or loosely based..not sure, not a history major)

Great history, not overdone, excellent battles and strategy and everything had logic..made sense.

Romance peeps: (view spoiler)

Linda says

The physician Peter Blood is unjustly arrested for treason under unfortunate circumstances, and sold into slavery in Barbados. In the beginning of the book, before the trial, he doesn't even take sides in the ongoing political debate, but the circumstances changes him. When he and the other slaves escape the sadistic Colonel Bishop, they are desperate and adapt to their new life.

Spoiler's alert!

This is pure entertainment, and I really like the main protagonist for his sharp-witted, arrogant and ironic manner and the way he treats his pompous superiors and other people of high rang who think themselves

important. When he loses his motivation, when Miss Bishop calls him a thief and a pirate, the only thing which will set him straight is a condescending glance from the M. le Baron Rivarol, and he is back in business. If he is going to be a thief and a pirate, he is going to be an excellent one.

One minor problem I found a little irritating is that the pirate museum in Nassau states that pirates had a certain codex to follow, and that included treating women gentlemanly. Either Nassau has it wrong, or Sabatini had a strong imagination, because most pirates in the book, except the main characters, seemed morally detached. Other flaws I found bothersome was in some of the encounters at sea where the victories seemed just a bit incredible. A third thing worth mentioning is Peter's somewhat naive characteristic, but this latter complaint might be a rather good description of a man, whose destiny forces him to change into someone he doesn't want to be. Peter isn't fit for piracy, but with a dominant authoritative manner and brains sharper than all the governors of the islands, he succeeds, never-the-less.

Even though Captain Blood is entertaining and adventurous, it has other qualities as well. It describes the social classes and conventions of the time, as well as the less fortunate states. Slavery and piracy were just different sides of the coin of unfortunate destiny back in the 17th century, the one not so different from the other. Both are a kind of imprisonment and detachment from the world, and when forced upon you, it's already too late to do anything about it to justify or redeem yourself. And despite Peter trying to come back to a normal life, prejudices, greed and jealousy in other men prevent him from reaching that goal, until the last chapter. What saves him in the end has ironically nothing to do with a change of mind by those men, or some agreement between them, but purely that the political alliances of the Glorious Revolution shift, and Peter goes from traitor to respectable in a matter of hours. This emphasizes the fact that our perception of the world, our view of right and wrong depends almost entirely on our surroundings. Peter is the exception, but it's only because he is open-minded, challenging and without much prejudice. This reminds me of Edmund Dantès in *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

What I like best in this adventure novel is that Peter Blood maintains his honor, dignity and moral throughout the book, despite being treated unjustly, and that his strong-minded persistence pays off.

Danielle The Book Huntress (Back to the Books) says

This is definitely a book to read if a reader likes pirate/swashbuckling novels. The setting, characters, scenes, and dialogue took me back to the 17th century in a time of political turmoil and wild seas and locales where the wars between countries play out in a very personal matter. And Peter Blood, the main character is one that claims your affection and doesn't let go. I sometimes find reading on the Kindle a chore, but with this story, I got so sucked in, that before I knew it, it was ending. And I had a smile on my face as I read the last sentence.

Captain Blood is not a predictable read, at least for me. I literally didn't know what was going to happen from one scene to the next. I loved reading about Peter rely on his wits and face each obstacle with courage and determination, always working towards the end goal, even when it didn't seem in sight. He is a charismatic character who kept me captivated, through his quick thinking, and his powerful manner of expressing himself. Although Captain Blood is a pirate, he is very much a man of honor, for his profession. He is, in my opinion, the preferred antihero. One who doesn't let go of his sense of honor, even if it doesn't necessarily follow the established rules. And because of that, I rooted for him.

The one part that didn't sit right with me as I read, was how a distinction was made between Peter Blood and

the English captives sold into slavery and the negro slaves. As though they were too good to be slaves when the negroes weren't. I realize that it was the ideas of race at the time, but that doesn't make it right. Slavery to me is wrong, period. It doesn't make it more wrong when the enslaved is a white man versus a black man. I wouldn't presume to call the author a racist. I think he was painting a realistic picture for the times, and I can't fault him for it. I personally find the idea of racial superiority offensive, and it can slap me in the face even in the context of a historical work. Overall it was a pebble in my shoe as I read, but not so much I couldn't read the book.

Otherwise, I enjoyed this novel. I've always had a yen for pirate stories, and it's great to go back and read a classic in the genre. Rafael Sabatini is an author who writes this type of story well, so I'll be back to read more of his books.

Henry Avila says

Blood!Blood!Blood!Captain Blood ,the fiercest pirate since Blackbeard.(But Blackbeard was real and Bl... never mind)After helping a wounded rebel in England ,in 1685,a bad decision,the losing side.Physician Peter Blood, narrowly escapes hanging, when captured.Sent to the West Indies instead, as a slave, dead men can't make money for the Crown! Peter was spotted by Arabella,the niece of the plantation owner ,who bought him and the games begin.Not liking the work, he leaves without permission ,with a group of friends.Before you know it, Blood becomes a pirate of the Caribbean.No Spanish ship is safe from these gentlemen.Making their base in Tortuga a French island off the coast of Haiti.The Frenchmen look the other way, for a piece of the action.When King James is overthrown , Peter can go back home with Arabella,if only he can locate the buried treasure. Dig ,dig, dig Captain!

Varlan Georgian says

My favourite book.

Black Elephants says

If you've been with B.E. since the beginning, then you're probably aware of how much I love a good novel full of pulp, specifically the kind that has aged so well that it masquerades as an example of "classic" literature.

Some of these books, I've reviewed for B.E., *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Tarzan of the Apes*. Why do I love them? I guess it's because they remind me of classic, B/W movies. In an era when heroes were heroes, damsels were damsels, and really dark and gruesome plots were candied like apples, these movies tend to be fun, adventurous, full of romance and ridiculous, and they still are now. And I <3 them.

This is why today's review is all about Rafael Sabatini's *Captain Blood*. If you ever find yourself in a wine and cheese mixer and in need of some knowledge of the pirate-fiction canon, then wow your friends with Sabatini's name and his book on Peter Blood.

Captain Blood tells the story of Peter Blood, a surgeon. He gets mixed up innocently in a rebellion, is falsely

charged with treason and shipped to Barbados to live 10 years as an indentured slave. However, fortune winks at him at a most timely moment. During a raid on the town, Peter steals a warship with a lot of other slaves and takes to the high seas as a pirate! Filled with bitterness for his past wrongs, things don't look good for our hero being...well, you know...a hero. But don't worry because when he was a slave, he fell in love! This lady love is the shining star of his life who helps him lead his buccaneers through raids, pillages and etc with honor rather than with....pirate honor. In the end, it all turns out well, and everyone who matters is happy.

Like with many of these other pulp classic adventure stories, I'm always fascinated with the way the author makes the hero and heroine "special." To prove that they can rise to the obstacles in their path, the authors must make them extraordinary in intelligence, perseverance, physical prowess, cunning, morals and everything. Take Peter Blood. Sabatini writes that Peter's unique in that he is an academic man with a military and wild adventurer's past. He's destined for great things, which is why the reader shouldn't be surprised that he gets shipped off to Barbados. He's a self-sufficient man, which according to Sabatini, gives him an inhuman level of calm, reason and foresight. He is attractive physically in appearance and dress. Sabatini doesn't let his hero waste away in a slave's garb for long because how else would he catch the eye of the lady?

But that's the thing! He does! Peter's so awesome that even standing in line with a bunch of slaves for sale, even after he's not looking too hot from crossing the Atlantic with a bunch of sick, indentured servants in a chained hold, he catches the eye of Arabella Bishop, whom Sabatini also takes care to make unique. Because if she isn't, how is she worthy of the hero?

Arabella Bishop, like so many ladies in these stories, is a lady of some means and rank, of intelligence greater than the average lady as well as the owner of strong nerves, fortitude, kindness, strength and etc. I was pleased that Sabatini points out Arabella's no girl. She's 25 (strange!), unmarried (strange!) and frank, direct and honest. She treats all men with an easy frankness, like a brother, which is why only the best man can catch her eye!

But here's the thing that cracked me up. The men in the book often are astounded by Arabella's calm in the face of danger, wit in the face of adversity, kindness in the face of societal disapproval. That isn't what cracked me up. What did is that Arabella's manners, speech and body were described as "boyish." That's right! She's so different from regular feminine damsel-in-distressedness, that Sabatini needs to go a step farther and make her mannish. That's not to say Arabella's lifting weights! God no! But what do you expect in pirate fiction? Screams, fainting, tears, pleading and heaving bosoms, but Arabella Bishop only almost faints once, lets a few tears fall about her lov-ah Peter, pleads without overpleading and (I crack up!) has a slight bosom! Sabatini describes it as such:

"A livelier colour crept into her cheeks. There was a perceptible heave of the slight breast that faintly swelled the flimsy bodice of white silk."

Another thing that's interesting about these pulp adventure novels is the idea of "breeding." In all these stories, you just can't beat an English man. They're the best. Therefore it's interesting that Peter is an Irishman who identifies as an Englishman. The same goes for Arabella. Even though she's grown up in the Caribbean, she's a native Englishwoman, which makes her worthy of the hero. Of all the slaves, the English rebels get top billing. Of all the other Europeans involved, the French and Spanish (especially) get painted as greedy, zealous buffoons who are no match for a clear-thinking, even lovesick, pirate captain like Peter Blood. Oh yeah, there are black slaves too, but who cares? Arabella takes an interest in Peter and his men at the slave auction because she feels for them, but she doesn't seem to have any qualms about using her black

slaves.

Sabatini also mentions how Peter releases some black prisoners when other captains would have taken them as loot. But otherwise, he seems to be cool with having black servants, too.

I loved this book. It's great fun. I also highly recommend the Errol Flynn and Olivia de Havilland movie of 1935. The sea battles are still nailbiters!

Other good pulpy adventure books:

The Scarlet Pimpernel by Baroness Orczy

Dracula by Bram Stoker

Sanjay Gautam says

9/10

Captain Blood by Rafael Sabatini is a riveting swashbuckling adventure novel which is very vivid in its depiction of pirates and their life at sea. It is not only a tale of misfortune, betrayal, treachery, and deceit but also of love, courage, allegiance, and friendship.

Captain Blood is the protagonist of the novel. He is a great man - a just man, with honor and integrity. Blood was a medical man by vocation who eventually, under desperate circumstances, turned into a pirate - that too a gentleman pirate. Peter Blood was his full name when he used to practice his medical profession. But a misfortune fell upon him one day - he was arrested for treason against King of England. He was tried in the court and was sentenced to 'hang till death'. But Blood's fate was better than this - due to some lucky circumstances he was sent to Barbados as a slave along with hundred rebel convicts. It was here when he met Arabella - his love. But again circumstances takes a swift course and he is forced to escape from Barbados. I don't want to spoil the plot, but it is from here he goes to Tortuga - the safe haven, an island, for the escaped rebel convicts and pirates. And from Tortuga start the the great adventures of the Captain Blood, which in no time makes him the greatest and the most famous Pirate (or rather a gentleman pirate) who has ever sailed the seas.

Highly recommended!

Mr. Matt says

When I picked up this book, I originally failed to make the connection with the 1935 classic black and white flick with Errol Flynn. That lasted about half of the first chapter.

Captain Blood is the story of Peter Blood, a former soldier, sailor, and doctor who settles down to practice his trade in obscurity in Ireland. Summoned in the middle of the night to help save a wounded rebel in the wake of the failed Monmouth Rebellion, Blood is arrested for treason against King James. The trial is a perfunctory and he finds himself sold into slavery in Barbados. Afforded special treatment due to his skills as

a physician, Blood and his fellow slaves escape and take up as Buccaneers - although not before Blood falls in love with the beautiful Arabella, the niece of his owner.

The remainder of the story basically recounts Blood's adventures as he is hounded by both the Spanish and the English. The Spanish because, well, that's where the money is and he's been raiding their shipping. The English because he humiliated his former owner who eventually becomes the Governor of Jamaica. It also, unfortunately, deals with the 'does he/she love me' relationship between Blood and Arabella. I confess that this type of stuff drives me nuts. Both Blood and Arabella deny their true feelings for one another but are oddly entranced by one another. They both draw and repel one another doing things that just made me shake my head.

All in all an enjoyable read. The language was not quite contemporary and lacked the crispness that I'm accustomed to, but that was OK. When it was good (mainly the scenes where Blood is being a rascal) the book was very good. It also offered a view into the world of Early Modern European politics - the end of the Stuart dynasty in England, and the recession of Spain as a world power.

Tree stars out of five. A fun book, but, honestly, it was kind of like watching the movie. I couldn't separate Blood from Flynn in my mind's eye.

Vivian says

My GR friend Evgeny so kindly informed that yes, this is the inspiration for the Errol Flynn adventure: Captain Blood. Sourcing my copy, now.

J.G. Keely says

Reading Scaramouche is one of those odd experiences where a genre book really surprises you with its depth and complexity. It's a swashbuckling story with only two swordfights, where political theory, masked theater forms, and the science of fencing all take center stage, and where the hero is strangely shy, introverted, and reluctant. But Captain Blood never strays as far from its genre boundaries.

We still have a somewhat quiet, humble, over-educated hero (Scarmouche is the lawyer-turned-actor, Blood the doctor-turned-pirate), but Blood is less complex, less conflicted. His depressive brooding is not as interesting as Scaramouche's wry frustration, in part because it's less active.

In both stories, the movements of the plot are dictated by misunderstandings, things left unsaid, assumptions made too quickly. For the audience, it's more satisfying to see a hero who is angered by these misunderstandings, and who wants to change them, rather than one who simply accepts them and gives into his woe, being saved in the end only by chance. It's more interesting to see a character win his love than to stumble upon it after a sufficient length of hardship.

The plot is made up of the expected parts: mutiny, sea battles, daring raids, swordfights, and rescues. The book is well-researched, and the pacing isn't bad, but it lacks a certain depth. The world is not complete, it is

a single view, with few insights or surprises, which is the danger of any genre piece that never strays from the bare bones of its form.

It's an exciting enough bit of adventure, with some thoughtfulness and characters who are not simple cardboard cliches, but in the end, there isn't much to it.

Maureen says

oh heavens. i dislike admitting that am not 100% cynical about things, that life with all its ignominy and disappointments, vacillations and cupidity has not yet extinguished my ability to dream of freedom and unfettered joy, that there might still be a heart under all this bravado... but there it is, that little squeak that i cannot suppress. oh, captain blood! how you have undone me!

captain peter blood is a little wild. he loves the poetry of horace. he's sharp-witted, and impudent; a cunning strategist. he cuts a fine figure in black clothes and flashing eyes. he has the misfortune to lose his liberty for doing the right thing, and his heart to the niece of the reprehensible man ostensibly made his owner, a woman never wooed because she was too companionable and frank with men. he stands by his word and turns himself inside out to protect the men who serve under him and the woman he loves. to satisfy his unattainable lady's ideas of honour, he tries to give up the pirate life that was the only option left him, only to find that men pursuing outwardly honourable professions are in fact privateers in sheep's clothing. he is surrounded by hot-heads, morons, and avaricious s.o.b.s who somehow have the world in the palms of their hands and try as he might, he sees no way to escape his sorry fate. he decides to give up and get really stinking drunk. but then it all changes on a dime, as fate is wont to do, and he gets a chance to turn it all around (view spoiler). and so i squeak.

and should you fear that i have become an utterly romantic fool, i proffer this, in quick strokes: this novel is a boisterous tale set in the 17th century concerned with pirates and adventures on the high seas. the book breaks down into three parts -- the creating of a pirate, his success, and then his end. it's dated and contains some vile racial descriptions i could have done without (not from captain blood, thank heavens!) but the book generally reflects the attitude of the time, and while there is prejudice and nationalism rampant on the spanish main, the book doesn't dwell on it, and it is easy enough to acknowledge, disparage, and move on from this into the spirit of the book, and the heart of its protagonist, whose charms it's clear that i for one, could not resist.

Dan Schwent says

In this tale of swashbuckling adventure, Peter Blood goes from being a doctor to a slave to a pirate captain and beyond. It is the measuring stick against which other pirate novels are measured.

So why did I only give it a three? It's pretty slow moving. Blood doesn't become a pirate until over a third into the book. The writing style didn't exactly thrill me either. Other than that, I enjoyed it.

Amy says

A swashbuckling tale full of adventure and romance in the traditional sense, well worth being read alongside Kidnapped and Ivanhoe. I probably would have given it 5 stars if it hadn't taken me over a year to actually finish. That's mostly on me, though.

What's more to say? It was fun. It was adventurous. It was classic. It is worth reading.

I found the last third particularly hard to put down. Very engaging and suspenseful!

Susanna - Censored by GoodReads says

This is a swashbuckling tale, and if I'd been a teenager reading it in the 1920s, when it was written, it would have gotten at least four stars.

I have to dock it, however, for the persistent casual racism about the "negroes" with whom he is enslaved, and for the comments about anyone not English. It's mentioned as extraordinary that his father was not a drunkard, because he was Irish, for example.

This novel was made into a movie in 1935, starring Errol Flynn and Olivia de Havilland, which is great fun.

The Pirate Ghost (Formerly known as the Curmudgeon) says

This review is written to satisfy a group read in the Action/Adventure Aficionados discussion group.

<http://www.goodreads.com/topic/show/8...>

The format fits the suggested format for discussion of this book. It may not be what you expect ...then again, if you read my reviews, you might like it better.

1. Plot/Storyline/Setting--was the historical flavor authentic?

The plot was more sophisticated than I had expected. The timeline was more complicated than expected to the point where Sabotini felt the need to come in and defend the way things turned out in his story because it involved a good deal of chance and luck. I haven't checked the history the history books to see how closely it followed actual events but I had the feeling that it followed actual events more accurately than most Rollins or Cussler books. There were parallels made by the author to Henry Morgan and even a case where Pitt, Sabotini's narrator, claims some things that had been attributed in the history books to Morgan, were actually Blood's exploits.

There were plenty of pirating adventures and misadventures. Blood and his crew were creative and interesting...on the other hand, this was also a love story, wrapped in an action adventure tale of pirates and privateers. The love story was sweet, joined with humor and a pleasant part of the story. It had echoes of Cyrano D'Bergerac, as our noble hero resigned himself to a loveless life if only his true love could be happy with another, safer man. Without the love story, this would have, one, been a lot shorter, and, two, the story would not have been nearly as interesting. (view spoiler)

I liked the setting, though, as is in keeping with the style prominent in Sabotini's day, I found the details sparse and generally wanted more of them. Still, here and there, likely out of character for a book of this style and era, Sabotini gives us brief glimpses of the beautiful Caribbean, be it a sunset here, or the description of a fort there, even a swamp and tidal lowlands on the South American coast that are romantic, if only, gentle gusts of fresh air. Along with the puffs of wind, where I'd rather have a steady sustained gale or half gale, Sabotini likely gives us a very realistic vision of what life was like in the New World, world from the basic daily routine of a "slave-doctor" to the stockade where they lived.

I read the pirate tales and combat at sea segments carefully and I can see both how these skirt the truth of what pirate's taking plunder at sea was like and builds the swaggering image of pirates blasting it out with ships at sea as they take their prizes. Though Sabotini does not inaccurately depict how these things worked for Blood, but, he did not challenge them. He also seemed to steal from the Jean Baptiste' legends which came a couple hundred years after the Blood stories and about 300 years after Morgan.

Ya-know? I couldn't care less about that. This was a fun, romantic story about a daring pirate with a noble heart and a genius for applying common sense to combat at sea. He afforded us a very classic pirate tale, with glimpses of what ordinary life was probably like here and there and took a few liberties with the pirate reality because the pirate legends made for better reading. So what if most merchant ships surrendered to pirates without a fight, Sabotini avoided any direct challenge of that fact and told us a few wonderful tales of combat at sea with Spanish Galleons and French Warships or amphibious warfare against Spanish forts and cities. He wove a strong weave of clandestine of deceit with a flare for politico-social maneuvering as he had for the rapier like verbal fencing between Blood and Arabella. The plot, story-line and historical setting, as told by Sabotini through Pitt worked very well for me.

2. Characters

Captain Peter Blood - in an era that had just outlived dime store novels that romanticized characters like Billy the Kidd and Wyatt Erp Sabotini's Captain Blood is an almost Hamlet like character filled with a near constant internal conflict between his very human, anger at how he had been treated and his love of humanity drawn on so heavily as a doctor. Even as the human touch that told him "the right thing to do is treat this wounded man despite his being a rebel against the Crown and a criminal," showed that Blood's moral compass had, at least once upon a time, been set on ideals that came from a higher power than Man's basic instincts or whim of King and crony. At his lowest, when he finally gives into his anger out of a desire to be free, his honorable love for Arabella Bishop steps in and keeps his conduct in check. He chose not to listen to what he knew to be right, out of fear that he might do something that would forever keep Arabella at odds with him and stand in the way of any relationship they might forge.

Only in his darkest moments, after he believes Arabella Bishop's heart has been lost irrevocably to a man he believes to be an honorable rival does he find the ultimate truth "if you truly love someone, set them free and, if their love is as true as yours, they will come back of their own accord." (or, if you love someone, you are empowered when you are able to act in their interest, even if it is not in yours.) As is usually the case in fairy-tales as it is in life, such a "surrender" to "things that I cannot change" allows him to recapture his humanity for himself, independent of Arabella Bishop's love, and Arabella still comes to him proving yet another long known, but also long forgotten truth of human nature. Character counts.

Still, I find Blood and Arabella to be almost too hard headed for their own entertainment value. Still, contrary to popular belief, love, not transistors or plunder is more powerful than gravity.

Arabella - For a female character written in the 1920s about an era where, frankly, women mattered little

beyond their dowry, and any linked titles that transferred with marriage, or as a trophy wife (their beauty) Arabella Bishop stood out as a strong independent character with her own distinct identity that did not define itself as a damsel in distress, even when she needed rescuing, or a pretty flower on display, even when talking about how attractive she was. I could see Lauren Bacall or Audrey Hepburn playing the role properly. Not that she didn't have her moments of weakness, where, somehow loving a man diminished her to a blushing girl in denial of her own feelings. Fairly enough, it seemed Blood suffered from the same weakness.

The Villainy - From the hot headed arrogant French Admiral, to Deputy Governor Bishop, to the Spanish Diegos and the disgruntled French Pirate the antagonists were all very unique and interesting. We never learned as much about them as we learned about Blood and Arabella but they were more than the average cardboard cutout. The twisted politics of war made up the third rail of villainy as much as any character. Perhaps Ares, the fickle God of war came into play in an unsubstantial yet noticeable presence.

The Crew of the Arabella - We never learned enough about Blood's fellow pirates. Pitt and the old Gunner figured most prominently but even they only had slightly more character than the others and, like the others, functioned to validate Blood's true nature more than establish any of their own personality like the villains had. This meant that I wanted more information about them, but, since they functioned as one of Blood's appendages the focus stayed on Blood's personal conflicts, over love, resentment of the crown, man's inhumanity to man and walking the fine line between piracy and survival.

3. Theme

This story had some wonderful themes woven together in a tight braid. On the surface, the story seemed to be all about love, yet, even older than that, in story time, lay the story of how, under the best of intentions, inhumane practices, such as kangaroo courts, political grudges, slavery, savage, brutal desires for power, glory and revenge stood at odds with what is right and just. The story challenged the rights of one man, be he king, judge or deputy governor of Jamaica, or jealous lover to label, or stand in judgement of the "worth" of another fellow human being. At the heart of that conflict, came the confrontation between the truly righteous and the self-righteous, self-determination vs. destiny and the rights of a man to liberty and freedom vs. Slavery. In this story, might did not make right and the strong could not overcome the determined. The story allowed the reader to determine their own level of involvement. Those who wanted a simple love story, or pirate story will not be disappointed, nor will those who like to delve into deeper conflicts of morality and philosophy.

4. Adventure elements--successful or not?

As we found out when we read Goldfinger by Ian Fleming a couple of months ago, there has been a huge shift in writing styles in action/adventure novels. This book, like many written before a certain period (I estimate to be in the mid 60s to late 70s), relied more on narration than detail and discussion of situations rather than allowing readers to experience those situations as they read. So, compared to Clive Cussler, James Rollins or Matthew Reilly the action sequences seemed a little flat.

Compared to contemporary books written as late as the early 1960s the battles at sea that we did get to experience in this book had a lot more to offer and brought the tension in the story to a higher level than most books. The daring rescue of Arabella where Blood drove his ship between two warships so quickly that the crossfire did more damage to themselves than to the Arabella and other battles were creative and, appropriately humorous. I even felt the urge to cheer as Blood turned the tables on his enemies through acts of heroism, just being plain sneaky. More than the average book from this era.

That begs the question "is it fair to compare a book written in 1920 to a book written in 2010?"

I am notoriously inconsistent on this count. To me, that's a call best made on a case by case basis subject to my personal circumstances when I read the story and circumstances of the era the book had been written in, as well as the shortfalls of the era the story is about.

I'm not going to do anything substantial in the way of answering this question, but, I will say this. For this book, I feel it mostly should be compared to other books written in the same era. Therefore, this book should get high marks. Strangely, it's more then complex mix of themes, and character issues, like Blood's sense of morality (what's right) that seems to be the engine behind decision to dive into combat or to avoid it that makes me want to be consistently inconsistent here and rate this aspect favorably high (as compared to contemporary works).

5. Overall thoughts on book. Rating out of 1-5 stars or 1-10?

Overall, this was a fun book to read. I had to work a bit to get some of the humor and, being able to imagine it all as the movie by the same name helped with visualization when the story felt short a few details. Generally, compared to works written in the same era, for me, this story seemed to have more life and vitality than others. Overall, a worthwhile read that, for those who desire a deeper story than what's on the face of it, this book addressed some moral issues that inspired internal thought and debate.

Overall, on a 1-10 scale, I'd give it a 7.5. It's not perfect, but what book is? That's a 3.75 on a scale of 1-5.

6. Similar books you'd recommend?

If you even liked this book, "a little-bit" you'll love Ramage by Dudley Pope, Captains Courageous by Rudyard Kipling and, though it is not a story of pirates, it is a story with a swashbuckling hero, The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard by Arthur Conan Doyle (the latter being a personal favorite thanks to the "Thurber - like humor and witty story development).
