In the interests of romance it would be pleasant to record that Sam Atkins's first action (after a bottle of wine and a good dinner) was to meet Sally Williams and renew his affair with her. Perhaps he did—contrite vows made in the shadow of death rarely last—but unlike his illustrious master, Sam kept no diary.

Sam should have been happy. He was free, God be thanked!—and good Mr. Pepys, who knew how much he owed to his clerk's stubborn courage, forgave him his sins, took him back into favor, and set him to work anew. His friends welcomed him back, and there were still convivial evenings at the Blue Posts and the Rose in Covent Garden. But there was no hero's welcome for him, no testimonial dinners or other rewards. The pawn who had blocked Lord Shaftesbury's plans and unwittingly saved Secretary Pepys and the Duke of York was still only a pawn. Sam was wiser, perhaps, after his painful experience—certainly he was more mature—but he was many pounds out of pocket and his health was impaired.

Moreover, the injustice of the court's proceedings, which had kept him from proving his innocence to the world and destroying Charles Atkins, still rankled. (Sam was always at his best when he had an audience for oratory.) To the London rabble he was still an object of suspicion, in spite of his acquittal. As one newswriter said, after announcing the convictions of Green, Berry, and Hill, "Mr. Atkins was also tried for the same murder, but the evidence not being clear against him he was acquitted."
"Not being clear!" What a scurvy, grudging, invidious statement!

The King's chief witnesses—Oates, Bedloe, and Prance—had written and published their "True Narratives," exposing all the horrors of the Popish Plot and the murder of Sir Edmund Godfrey. Why shouldn't Sam Atkins write and publish his own true narrative and so justify himself to the world while exposing Charles Atkins as a liar and a poltroon?

Much of the material he would need was already at hand. We can be sure that energetic Mr. Pepys had secured copies of Charles Atkins's depositions, plus various sworn statements from others about the captain's infamous conduct. From "the gentleman employed by my Lord Chief Justice on those occasions" Sam secured a stenographic copy of his trial. From John Child, now freed from Newgate but living in abject poverty, came a sworn statement that the sailor had never seen Sam Atkins until both appeared before the Secret Committee, and that Charles Atkins's story was a lie from start to finish. From a King's Messenger, John Bradley, and from two reputable merchants, John Aldridge and William Bowtell, all of whom had had dealings with Charles and could quote his very words, Sam secured "narratives" showing how Charles had swaggered, boasted, cheated, and lied.

Thus equipped, and boiling with indignation, Sam set to work. We have the original draught of his "Short Narrative," lacking depositions and the witnesses' "narratives." Evidently written at white heat in long, involved, and sometimes confused sentences, the document summarizes and refutes all the charges made against the writer (with frequent appeals to God to bear witness that he is telling the truth), and sets forth at length the story of Charles Atkins's cowardly conduct as captain of the Quaker. Clearly Sam was as much concerned with revenge—no small pleasure—as with vindication. He concluded with a sweeping summary and an unprovable charge against Charles Atkins:
"I think the irreparable injury I have received from this cursed story and invention of Charles Atkins (to the like of which every man in England was in this case with equal probability as subject as I, and is at this day in any other [case], while there be such a villain living) is evidently manifest, as well as the necessitous condition of Charles Atkins to put him upon it, the reward and other great advantages expected from it, the improbability of my being concerned, in that I am of another profession in religion and was never under any sort of necessity to invite me, the impossibility of my saying the words to Charles Atkins proved from my not having seen him in such a time, from my never having seen or heard of Child, and from the credit I hope my solemn asserverations and protestations made formerly to Dr. Tillotson and others under the circumstances I was then and repeat now here may find with honest men. To all which only take this one word of truth which I can unanswerably prove if anyone doubt it. I have evidence that this Charles Atkins was bred at St. Omers or some other part of Flanders in the Catholic religion, professed it all his life, and is at this day a Papist if he be anything."

The "Short Narrative of Samuel Atkins, his Case" was never published, perhaps because Mr. Pepys, preferring to let lying dogs sleep, thought it unwise. Charles Atkins went his swaggering way unpunished. Now Lieutenant Atkins of Sir John Fenwick's Regiment of Foot, he was never court-martialled for his cowardice; as an army officer and a King's witness, he was safely out of Mr. Pepys's reach. After Sam's trial he drops out of sight. We do not know the date of his death, but it must have been before 1688. After his name in a list of Naval officers from 1660 to 1688 appears this note, "Turned out for submitting himself to be towed in by the Turks. Dead." Let that be his epitaph.

Through 1679 the Popish Plot terror raged on unchecked. On February 21, Hill and Green were hanged at Tyburn; Berry was reprieved until the twenty-eighth. In
the election for members of the new House of Commons, the Opposition party swept the polls, and to avert civil war King Charles sent the Duke of York into exile on the continent. On March 6, Parliament convened, with a still greater republican majority in the House of Commons. On April 20, King Charles, discouraged by the failure of reason and moderation, dismissed his ministers and turned the government over to the Opposition, with Lord Shaftesbury as President of an enlarged Privy Council. (In fact, affairs were directed from the King's Head tavern in Fleet Street, where the republican Green Ribbon Club had its headquarters.) A fresh Admiralty Commission of seven men—all but one republicans—took over at Derby House. On May 8, Thomas Pickering, who had been convicted of high treason on December 17, 1678, was finally hanged, drawn, and quartered at Tyburn.

Lord Shaftesbury had not finished with Mr. Pepys. For some time the Secretary, badgered by his new Admiralty Board and by a Parliamentary Committee to enquire into miscarriages in the navy, wanted to resign. He did so on May 21, just one day before the rabid House of Commons committed him and a colleague, Commissioner Sir Anthony Dean, to the Tower. The Opposition grandees had paid a rascally informer who called himself Colonel John Scott to swear that Pepys and Dean had hired a privateer to prey on English shipping in the last Dutch war, and that both had sold naval secrets, including maps of English coasts and harbors, to the French. In addition, Mr. Pepys's former butler, John James (who had been dismissed when he was caught in bed with Pepys's housekeeper), was paid to swear that Pepys was a secret Catholic and that his musician, Morelli, was probably a Jesuit. Pepys was accused of felony, piracy, Popery, and treason.

While Pepys and Dean fretted in the Tower, and Sam Atkins labored on unhappily at Derby House under a new Secretary, Thomas Hayter, the republican politicians kept the fires of religious hatred flaming with new trials.
On June 13, Whitebred and Fenwick, who had been tried once before, and three new Jesuit victims, Gavan, Harcourt, and Turner, were tried at the Old Bailey and convicted. The next day Richard Langhorne, a Catholic barrister accused by Oates of raising a Papist army to invade England, was tried and, of course, convicted. On June 21 the five Jesuits were executed before an immense press of exultant Londoners. Langhorne was executed on July 14. Shaftesbury kept the London mobs happy with blood and carcasses.

From his cell in the Tower, Mr. Pepys launched a large-scale investigation of the lurid life of his accuser, "Colonel" John Scott. His agents soon discovered that Scott had an international reputation as bully, lecher, thief, liar, forger, bigamist, and swindler. On July 9, when the Attorney General, fearing what might come out about Scott if he appeared as a witness, failed to press charges, Pepys and Dean were admitted to bail in the amount of £30,000 each.

By now the Popish Plot terror had reached its high-water mark and was beginning to ebb. On July 18, when the Queen's physician, Sir George Wakeman, and three Benedictine brothers endured a tedious, nine-hour-long trial, all were acquitted, largely because Lord Chief Justice Scroggs, either suspecting that the tide had turned or fed to the teeth with Titus Oates, found fault with the Savior of the Nation and was almost impartial in his summing up to the jury.

Early in the summer of 1679, the new Admiralty Commission discharged Sam Atkins without reason and without a single complaint about his "want of faithfulness, diligence, or ability." Shortly thereafter, his constitution weakened by his months in Newgate, Sam fell sick of a virulent ague. Thanks to his physicians, whose treatment for a fever was regular and copious bleeding (plus occasional use of quinine—"the Jesuits' powder") Sam was out of action for the next thirteen months.
Tossing on his fevered bed, he missed all the excitement of the following autumn and winter: the great procession on November 17 when thousands of republicans—now called Whigs—carried a huge effigy of the Pope through the City streets and burned it at Temple Bar, with live cats in its belly to squall and scream in the flames; the furor in Parliament as the Whigs tried vainly to pass a bill excluding the Duke of York from the succession to the throne; the trial and conviction of six secular priests on January 17, 1680; and Shaftesbury’s dramatic disclosure in March of a Popish Plot in Ireland. Thoughtful men despaired of the future for an England bogged down in bigotry and torn by fear and faction.

Even in the midst of his own troubles, Mr. Pepys found time and energy to procure a pension for Betty Martin, his former mistress and Consul Martin’s widow. His efforts resulted (on July 22, 1680) in a Privy Seal warrant for £100 a year to “Elizabeth Martin, relict of Samuel Martin, Esq., deceased, late Consul at Algiers.”

But Mr. Pepys could do little for poor John Child, who sent him a begging letter, complaining that because of Charles Atkins’s false accusation Child had lost all his friends and had been reduced to great extremity and want. Knowing Mr. Pepys’s charitable inclinations, we can be sure that he sent Child a sum of money from his own straitened purse.

On June 30, 1680, Mr. Pepys and Sir Anthony Dean were finally discharged without a trial. Like Sam Atkins they never had a chance to prove their innocence; however, after fourteen months of persecution and fear, they were free men again, God be thanked!

By the summer of 1680, Sam Atkins, although still very weak, had recovered enough to worry about his future. On the advice of friends he petitioned the King for the office of Purveyor of the Petty Emptions—a minor clerk charged with the duty of providing small items for the navy. When that effort failed, he petitioned the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty for the post of Judge Advocate—the naval
equivalent of an attorney general. With his knowledge of Latin and of navy regulations, plus his recent experience with civil law, he was well qualified for the job. (The post paid ten shillings a day, or £182 10s. per year, a comfortable sum in those days.) He was willing, he said, to take on the duties of Petty Emptions as well, thus saving the navy £130 a year. That petition failed also—to the Admiralty Lords, Sam was still “Mr. Pepys’ clerk,” sharing his former master’s disgrace—and as the summer drew toward autumn, he faced a bleak and dreary winter. He was pale and emaciated, unemployed, and deeply in debt.

A good friend came to his rescue. Captain David Lloyd, appointed on October 20 to command the Crowne, a large frigate, was soon to sail for the Mediterranean and the never-ending war with Barbary pirates. He proposed that Sam go with him as a volunteer or “reformado,” a gentleman who ranked as an officer, but without pay and with very few duties. Thus Sam could learn all about the ways of the navy at first hand, and, with luck, after a voyage or two, could be appointed a lieutenant. In addition, Will Hewer, now Treasurer of Tangier, promised to do Sam “some good office in the Treasury” at Tangier.

On November 4, Sam wrote to Mr. Pepys, then at Brampton, detailing his plans and begging for the loan of £20 to provide a bed, linen, clothes, and other necessities for the voyage and for his expenses to Portsmouth. “Your favor in which,” Sam concluded, “will (I trust in God) be a means to put me in some condition ere long of overcoming the series of ill fortune I have been crushed with.”

To save time, Mr. Pepys wrote directly to Will Hewer in London, enclosing a copy of the letter from Sam Atkins, “whose hard fortune,” he wrote, “I do heartily bemoan and do think myself obliged to give my assistance and everything I can towards his relief.” He asked Hewer to give Sam the £20 in his behalf, “for I say again his case deserves all manner of compassion and above all from me; for certainly no youth of his wit and straitness of fortune ever withstood such temptations to have been a villain as that
poor creature has done, and I hope God will bless him accordingly.” On December 18, 1680, as Sam Atkins was about to sail, Mr. Pepys wrote also to his old friend Henry Shere, the great engineer then at Tangier, recommending Sam and asking Shere to give him all the help and friendship he could. He made it clear that Sam was seeking experience at sea, “hoping, it may please God, that before his return hither his country may be as well amended in its capacity of encouraging him as he is improved for the serving it.”

For the next four years Sam Atkin’s life was bounded by Tangier and the Mediterranean Fleet. He could only hear from afar of the gradual breaking up of the Popish Plot terror after the trial and execution of the Catholic Viscount Stafford; the defeat of the Exclusion Bill in the House of Lords (largely by the eloquence of Lord Halifax, who was no longer a member of the opposition); and the dissolution of the Oxford Parliament on March 28, 1681. For the next four years King Charles reigned without a Parliament.

Now, with the aid of subsidies from France and a nationwide reaction in England, the King turned the tables on the Whigs. He brought York back from the continent and sent him to govern Scotland, dismissed the leading Whigs from his Household, the Privy Council, and the Admiralty Commission, and lodged some of them in the Tower. Shaftesbury, freed by a packed London grand jury from a charge of high treason, fled abroad; he died in Holland in January, 1683.

Whig informers were out of fashion. Mr. Pepys’s ex-buttler, John James, died in March, 1680, confessing all his lies. Captain Bedloe, formed a harder metal, died unrepentant in August of that year. In 1681, Colonel John Scott fled from England to avoid trial for murdering a coachman. By 1683, Oates and his fellows were discredited and starving. Two years later Oates was convicted of perjury. He was fined, pilloried, whipped at the cart’s tail, and imprisoned, with the added proviso that he should
be pilloried five times in every year. The wheel had come full circle.

But none of these affairs mattered much to Sam Atkins. At twenty-three he had moved into a new world of shipboard fare, sailors' lingo, storms, and battles. Escaping from the gray skies and chill of an English winter to the warmth of the sunny Mediterranean, Sam recovered his health quickly. He found life pleasant and exciting as the Crowne ploughed the waves in search of Algerine galleys.

Unfortunately, his hopes of preferment in the navy were dashed by the fact that Admiral Arthur Herbert, commander of the Mediterranean Fleet, was one of Mr. Pepys's bitterest enemies. Herbert, a vicious, drunken, whoring courtier, extended his ill will to Mr. Pepys's former clerk and refused him an officer's commission. (In Mr. Pepys's opinion, "Of all the worst men living, Herbert is the only man that I do not know to have any one virtue to compound for all his vices.")

On February 15, 1681, Sam found some consolation in the fact that, through Will Hewer's influence, he was commissioned as an ensign in the Tangier Regiment of Foot. Now at least he had some standing and a small but sure income. His tolerant superior officers permitted him to continue his voyages as a volunteer in the Crowne with Captain Lloyd and his lieutenant, Thomas Leighton. On August 15, 1681, in a letter to Mr. Pepys, Sam complained about the admiral's biased behavior and added, "The whole satisfaction and quiet I have is in being in this ship with Lloyd and Leighton, who are much the best men of this sort I ever met with." He was enthusiastic about Captain Lloyd, "the best governed, soberest, reasonable man my conversation ever fell with," and about the discipline of his ship, "nor ever was the King master of so well disciplined, civil, and sober ship as this we swim in."

Mr. Pepys answered this letter on September 5. The master advised his former clerk to avoid conflict with Admiral Herbert, to improve his "sea-skill" as much as he could, and to add French to his Latin. He reminded Sam
that not only Mr. Hewer and he, but the King, the Duke, and the new Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty were well disposed toward him and would not forget his "sufferings and deservings." He concluded by recommending Sam to God's protection "in a virtuous pursuit of your better fortune." It was a kind, friendly letter; unfortunately it never reached Sam Atkins.

In his voyages with Captain Lloyd, Sam was several times under fire and behaved very well. On January 1, 1682, he enclosed with a letter to Mr. Pepys his account of a battle that resulted in the capture of an Algerine war ship, the Red Lion, with 175 men and 24 guns. Since its captors, the Crowne and the Sapphire, were large frigates with 42 guns each, it was hardly a great victory. The laconic, colorless quality of Sam's account suggests that it was a copy of the report he had written for Captain Lloyd to transmit to Admiral Herbert.

In spite of the admiral's enmity, Sam still hoped for a good post in the navy. When Captain Lloyd's lieutenant, Thomas Leighton, was given command of another Algerine prize, the Two Lions, the captain asked that Sam be appointed as his new lieutenant. The admiral flatly refused. On July 26, 1682, Sam wrote a long, angry letter to his old friend and former fellow clerk, John Walbanke, complaining about the admiral's conduct. Herbert had broken his promises, had ignored a letter from the Admiralty Lords urging Sam's preferment, and had appointed a man "under far less recommendations" than he. Insultingly the admiral had offered Sam a post in the undesirable James galley. Sam had refused with what dignity and moderation he could muster. In his desperation, Sam begged Walbanke to get him an appointment as a Midshipman Extraordinary in Lloyd's ship. He was too old for an ordinary midshipman's berth.

In his last letter to Mr. Pepys from Tangier, dated March 8, 1683, Sam complained that since he left England he had received not one word from either Mr. Pepys or Will Hewer, although he had written several letters to
each. His mood was somber. Peace with Algiers had been negotiated in April, 1682, and now that the dangerous sea action was over, he was limited to garrison duty at Tangier and could no longer hope for a post in the navy. After nearly three years abroad, longing for home, he was still in debt and was only an ensign in the Tangier Regiment of Foot, now under the command of the new governor, Colonel Percy Kirke, a brutal, profane, drunken libertine. There seemed to be no future for Sam on land or at sea.

A few months later the tide of his fortune turned. King Charles, in sore financial straits, decided to abandon costly Tangier, evacuate the garrison and all European residents, and destroy Shere's great breakwater, "the Mole." To do the work, he sent a fleet commanded by George Legge, Lord Dartmouth, with the titles of Captain-General of the Forces in Africa and Governor of Tangier. With Dartmouth in his flagship, the Grafton, went Mr. Pepys as his secretary and chief adviser, Will Hewer to disburse cash, Henry Shere to destroy his own work, and Dr. Thomas Ken to light the way to Heaven. The fleet reached Tangier on September 14, 1683.

Mr. Pepys was shocked at what he found in Tangier—"nothing," he said, "but vice in the whole place of all sorts, for swearing, cursing, drinking, and whoring." Governor Kirke was a notable tippler, who introduced every remark with "God damn me." He had a harem of whores, and when he was with them, his wife, Lady Mary, would disport herself with one of her gallants. With such examples it is no wonder that officers drank, swore, and kept mistresses, and that common soldiers and sailors frequented the brothels of Tangier when they were sober enough to navigate.

Mr. Pepys learned also that the outpost had "plainly been a place to find only pretense for the employment of our ships upon their own business and the governors', to Cadiz and up and down, to the debauching of all our commanders and others, and particularly my Atkins, I hearing, by themselves and others every day, fresh instances of their
debauchery." The "debauchery" consisted chiefly in making "good voyages," carrying goods and bullion for the profit of the officers. No doubt Sam Atkins had had a modest share in Captain Lloyd's illicit profits.

In spite of Sam's lapses from virtue, Mr. Pepys befriended him and got him a double appointment: as Judge Advocate for the fleet and as joint secretary to Lord Dartmouth. With his secretary's salary to eke out his ensign's pay, Sam was almost prosperous. Eventually the Treasury paid him £71 10s. for his work as Judge Advocate.

More good fortune was to come. On March 30, 1684, Dartmouth's fleet, with Colonel Kirke's regiment aboard, arrived in England. Two months later King Charles dismissed the incompetent Admiralty Commission, took the post of Lord High Admiral himself, and appointed Mr. Pepys Secretary for the Affairs of the Admiralty of England, at a salary of £2,000 a year—worth ten times that much today. Once again Pepys was master of England's far-flung navy. He brought Sam Atkins into his office and set about reforming and rebuilding the neglected navy, a herculean task but not beyond his powers.

Back in his proper environment, Sam Atkins's sturdy Puritan integrity became dominant again. For five years he had suffered humiliation and imprisonment, a trial for his life, unjust dismissal, prolonged sickness, battles, the spurns that patient merit took from the unworthy, and the temptations of Tangier. He had few illusions left.

Time had dulled his bitterness about his sixteen weeks in Newgate, and he rarely gave a thought to the now-extinct Popish Plot. But in April, 1686, a remarkable event reminded him of the murder of Sir Edmund Godfrey. Miles Prance, unable longer to endure the prickings of his conscience, voluntarily admitted that he had lied, that everything he had said about the murder was false. On May 14 he pleaded guilty to an indictment for perjury; he was pilloried and whipped. Shocked by the news, Sam Atkins was confirmed in his belief that there was no faith in man. However, he still trusted in God—and Mr. Pepys.
Through the last year of King Charles's reign and the four troubled years of bigoted, priest-ridden King James II, Mr. Pepys and his favorite clerk labored together. Sam Atkins was Mr. Pepys's righthand man, and (after Will Hewer became a Special Commissioner of the Navy) he became Pepys's chief clerk and head of his office, now at York Buildings in the Strand, when the Secretary was absent. Sam's years of training and his experiences in the Mediterranean stood him in good stead.

In February, 1689, after King James had fled to France and the dust of the Glorious Revolution had settled, Mr. Pepys, too intimately associated with James II to be kept as Secretary under King William and Queen Mary, resigned his office and retired to private life. Sam Atkins continued his career as a public servant, but his long association with Mr. Pepys was never forgotten. In April, 1700, when the House of Lords appointed five men to serve on a commission for army debts, Narcissus Luttrell reported that one of the five was "Mr. Sam: Atkins, formerly clerk to Secretary Pepys." On February 8, 1702, Sam was appointed a Commissioner of the Navy, perhaps through Mr. Pepys's influence.

Naturally enough, after the great Secretary resigned, master and clerk saw less of each other, but they remained good friends and sometimes dined together. On May 26, 1703, when Mr. Pepys died, full of years and honor, Sam Atkins was one of those who received both rings and mourning attire, and attended his beloved master to the grave.

Some time before June 19, 1696, when Sam Atkins made his will, he took a wife. In his will, after thriftily enjoining his wife to spend no more than ten pounds on his funeral, he left all his "goods and chattels, real and personal, and credits and estate whatsoever" to his "loving wife, Mary Atkins." Sam died in August, 1706, at the age of forty-nine. His will (now at Somerset
House) was probated on September 8; there is no mention of children.

Although Samuel Atkins, Mr. Pepys's clerk, became a considerable gentleman, known for integrity and industry, he was never considered among the great of his generation. At least, unlike most men, he had one moment of greatness.