



The Audacious Crimes of Colonel Blood: The Spy Who Stole the Crown Jewels and Became the King's Secret Agent

Robert Hutchinson

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One morning in May 1671, a man disguised as a parson daringly attempted to seize the Crown Jewels from the Tower of London. Astonishingly, he managed to escape with the regalia and crown before being apprehended. And yet he was not executed for treason. Instead, the king granted him a generous income and he became a familiar strutting figure in the royal court's glittering state apartments.

This man was Colonel Thomas Blood, a notorious turncoat and fugitive from justice. Nicknamed the 'Father of all Treasons,' he had been involved in an attempted coup d'etat in Ireland as well as countless plots to assassinate Charles II. In an age when gossip and intrigue ruled the coffee houses, the restored Stuart king decided Blood was more useful to him alive than dead. But while serving as his personal spy, Blood was conspiring with his enemies. At the same time he hired himself out as a freelance agent for those seeking to further their political ambition.

In *The Audacious Crimes of Colonel Blood*, bestselling historian Robert Hutchinson paints a vivid portrait of a double agent bent on ambiguous political and personal motivation, and provides an extraordinary account of the perils and conspiracies that abounded in Restoration England.

The Audacious Crimes of Colonel Blood: The Spy Who Stole the Crown Jewels and Became the King's Secret Agent Details

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Elisabeth says

Hard going, and not as exciting as it sounded. Plus the additional edits [square brackets] when quoting original texts where driving me mad... they seemed unnecessary [ie not necessary] in so many places...

Iris Blasi says

This book is fantastic — a stranger-than-fiction story of one of the most notorious turncoats in British history.

Hutchinson paints a vivid portrait of Blood as a truly slippery fellow, always seemingly able to avoid getting into trouble and end up on the right side of the situation, no matter how much lying and treachery it took. He was so deceitful, in fact, that the British government was forced to exhume his body from his grave because so many Londoners thought he had faked his own death as the ultimate escape.

I acquired U.S. rights for this book for Pegasus Books, and I cannot wait for American readers to get to read it in 2016!

Séimí says

Firstly the huge amount of research and material that was drawn together for this book should be acknowledged. Unfortunately however, the writing style and resultant reading experience is poor. It is quite repetitive in places especially towards the end. Also the flow is very confusing at the end. What is most frustrating though is that there are huge spoilers and the final outcome of each piece of intrigue is revealed before the narrative is given. There is also a tendency to speculate based on questionable evidence. Despite that there is a very useful description of each character at the back of the book as well as a timeline which is often lacking in many narrative history books with multiple characters

Emmanuel Gustin says

This is not a bad book, but I did not like or enjoy it much. Its promise to tell the life story of the audacious adventurer, and self-styled Colonel, Thomas Blood, remains somewhat unfulfilled. The "whizzing bullets and galloping hooves" promised by the back cover (of the paperback edition) are present, but form only a small part of the story.

There are a few incidents, such as Blood's notorious attempt to steal the Crown Jewels, his attack on the duke of Ormond, and his daring rescue of the co-conspirator Mason, that are vivid and reasonably well

documented. They make up about a quarter of this volume, not counting the substantial appendices. For the rest, however, this is a book about political conspiracies: Real conspiracies, wannabe conspiracies, and imagined conspiracies; often with evidence that amounts to little more than hearsay, and that becomes tedious. And Blood's role in them remains accordingly obscure.

It is no doubt in the nature of anti-government conspiracy, and secret service operations to combat it, that it may not leave much of a paper trail. Perhaps Hutchinson should have quoted more from whatever documents he has available, to bring the spirit of the times back to life. Maybe he should have provided more context (an appendix of fifteen pages is devoted to short biographies). Whatever the reason, I found it hard to care about the events described. It is like a spinning barrel full of names.

As a biography of a notorious adventurer, then, this disappoints, both because too much of his story consists of dots without lines to connect them, and because the man behind the notorious escapades remains entirely enigmatic.

Sarah says

won this through First Reads, can't wait to read it!

nikkia neil says

Thanks Pegasus Books and netgalley for this ARC.

I love to read about history especially well-written accounts that are outrageous enough to sound like fiction. Colonel Blood's life is a tale like no other.

Argum says

I wanted very much to read this book. I had heard the story of the theft of the crown jewels and thought this would be quite the adventure story of an interesting man with a bent for the criminal. Instead it was dry and somehow hard to follow the stream of interest. It maybe failed in trying to do too much or maybe it was just not as entertaining as I anticipated. But I know no more now than before about how or why this all came to be. Plus it just kind of ended I thought pages were glued together when his death started being discussed.

Alger says

Col. Blood was an interesting character at a crucial moment of England's history, but this book leaves open more doors than it closes. The promised thrills are few and spaced hundreds of pages apart in prose that borrows heavily from 17th century broadsides and records. The reader is also assumed to have a pretty good grasp of Restoration England and Ireland to follow the action. Over-detailed for the casual reader, the chapters tend to bog down in the details of aborted plots and the lives of people whom we meet only once or

twice. On the other hand, Hutchinson does not take pains to describe the political conditions of the Restoration, which of course is the focus of the action. That attention to detail is not carried over to setting the stage outside of naming the *dramatis personae* and how the events were described in source documents. I give Hutchinson credit; it is remarkably difficult to breath life into a slush pile of archival documents, and he has a good story here of an unlikely man. The story is worth the telling, but the primary feeling I was left with upon closing the book was that we are still missing most of the story.
