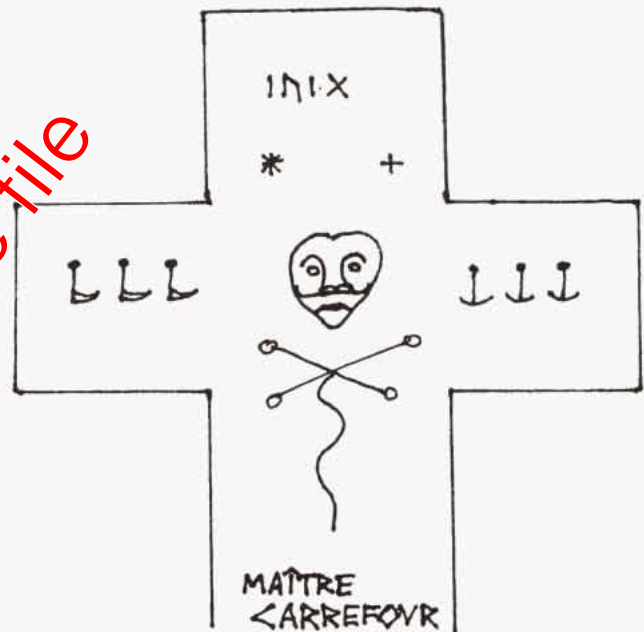


High Seas

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. NEW WORLD CHARACTERS	1
2.1 Basic Character Generation	1
2.2 New Backgrounds & Skill Choices	1
2.3 New Skills	2
2.4 New Martial Skills and Training	2
2.5 Advantages & Secrets	3
<i>Map of the New World</i>	3
2.6 Money and Equipment	4
3. PERSONAL COMBAT	4
3.1 Introduction	4
3.2 New Weapons	4
3.3 Special Situations	5
4. RANKS & POSITIONS IN THE NEW WORLD	5
4.1 Introduction to the New World	5
4.2 Colonial Military Forces	6
<i>Antilles Map</i>	6
<i>French North America</i>	6
<i>Hispaniola</i>	7
4.3 Shipboard Ranks	8
4.4 The Clergy in the New World	9
4.5 Colonial Bureaucracy	9
<i>The West Indies</i>	10
4.6 Colonial Clubs	11
4.7 Banking & Taxes in the New World	11
5. PIRATES & PRIVATEERS	11
5.1 Introduction	11
5.2 Pirate Articles	11
5.3 Letters of Marque	12
5.4 Ruthlessness RATING & The Jolly Roger	12
5.5 Pirate and Privateer Expeditions	13
5.6 Booty	13
6. SHIP BUILDING, TRADE & COMBAT	14
6.1 Ship Construction	14
6.2 Sea Travel	16
6.3 Sea Trade	17
Sea Trade Example	18
6.4 Ship-to-Ship Combat	19
Ship Combat Example	22
<i>Map of Port Royal Harbor</i>	23
SCAVENGER'S DAUGHTER	24
Being a mini-campaign involving the characters in the perils of piracy on the high seas.	
PIKE'S TROVE	27
Being an adventure wherein a treasure map leads to riches and to danger.	
GUEDE-JE-ROUGE	31
Being an adventure of rescue and intrigue wherein the secrets of voodoo are explored.	
PORTOBELO	36
Being an adventure of espionage and peril amidst the dons of the Spanish Main.	

Sample file



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1. Introduction

The best of swashbuckling adventure can be divided into two milieus: the France of old, rife with highwaymen, political intrigues, and constant duels, and the New World of the 17th Century, where desperate men fought at sea for Spanish gold. *High Seas* is a set of expansion rules for *Flashing Blades*, designed to allow Gamemasters to incorporate both milieus in their campaigns. Players must already be familiar with *Flashing Blades* in order to play *High Seas*.

High Seas provides basic rules for designing characters from the French colonies in the New World, characters in the French Navy, Marines, and 'Gentlemen of Fortune.' A section on special positions and shipboard ranks is also included, along with background material on the New World, pirates and privateers, and ships.

Because *High Seas* is set in the New World, primarily in the West Indies and on the Spanish Main, it includes basic systems for ship building, combat, travel and trade. These systems are brief and simple, however. The emphasis of *High Seas* is placed on character development and involved adventures. Several other games have been published which provide more detailed rules for 17th Century ships, and a list is included at the beginning of section 6.4 of *High Seas*. Game-

masters should gauge their campaigns to their players: if your players want a more complex system for ship-to-ship combat, feel free to substitute another for the one included herein.

High Seas may be played in its own setting, just using the *Flashing Blades* rules as a guide, or the two may be mixed. It is easy for a Gamemaster to find ways of bringing French-born *Flashing Blades* characters into *High Seas* adventures, and vice versa. French characters could be appointed to positions in the New World, transferred to Garrison Regiments, 'shang-haied' by Navy press gangs, or sent to New World plantations as convicts. Characters might also choose to go to the New World to escape enemies, debts, or the Law. Rich characters could even outfit French Privateers or Merchantmen, and sail to the Spanish Main in search of booty or profit. By the same token, rich colonials, pirates and privateers could go to France (perhaps with an assumed name or identity) to buy their way to power, or to redress old wrongs.

At the end of this booklet, a short campaign is included, entitled *Scenes from a Daughter*. It is composed of three 'Pirate' adventures. Characters from any background, and from either the New World or France may be used in this campaign.

2. New World Characters

2.1 BASIC CHARACTER GENERATION

Colonial and Naval characters are created in the same manner as French-born *Flashing Blades* characters, with a few small modifications. Attributes, Height, Build, Hit Points, Encumbrance Value and Skill Points are determined normally. Skill choices, Martial Skills, Advantages, Secrets, Money and Equipment may vary, depending upon Background.

2.2 NEW BACKGROUNDS & SKILL CHOICES

High Seas characters may choose from six possible backgrounds. Each of these differs from those of normal *Flashing Blades* characters as shown below.

COLONIAL ROGUE

A Colonial Rogue is similar to his French-born brethren. He is a criminal sort of person (perhaps an escaped convict from Europe). Colonial Rogues will tend to congregate in 'pirate havens,' where they rob, gamble, and sell 'tips' to pirates and privateers. Sometimes, they will be taken onboard pirate or privateer ships for special missions (those in which their special grab-bag of skills will be required).

Colonial Rogues may choose from the normal Rogue skills (listed in *Flashing Blades*). In addition, all Colonial Rogues are able to speak the 'Pirate Patois' (see below).

COLONIAL GENTLEMAN

A Colonial Gentleman may be the son of a New World plantation owner or merchant, or the black sheep of a wealthy or noble French family. Colonial Gentlemen, like French Gentlemen, are well educated (they may have had their schooling in France). If properly skilled, a Colonial Gentleman may start the game as a low-level Clergyman, Bureaucrat or Banker, as detailed in the *Flashing Blades* rules.

Colonial Gentlemen may choose from the normal Gentleman

skills. In addition, a Colonial Gentleman may choose the skill Pilot (at a cost of 2 Skill Points) which allows him to navigate on shipboard.

COLONIAL SOLDIER

A Colonial Soldier is a member of one of the two garrison regiments stationed to protect the French colonies in the New World. He may be a French-born Soldier transferred to the colonies, or a colonial recruit. Colonial Soldiers determine their starting rank as detailed in the *Flashing Blades* rules. Colonial Soldiers may also choose their garrison Regiment and Company (see section 4.21).

Colonial Soldiers choose from normal Soldier skills.

MARINE

A Marine is a Soldier in the Royal Marines Regiment. Marines are trained to fight at sea, and are stationed onboard warships and important government ships. Being a Marine is quite dangerous, especially since French Marines were expected to learn by experience. They had their initial training on land, although expected to serve at sea. Characters with this background are assumed to have spent enough time on ships to have 'learned the ropes.' Characters from other backgrounds who join the Royal Marines will always start as Recruits (not Troopers) and will be expected to fight at sea. Characters with Marine background are allowed to determine starting rank normally (just as Soldiers in *Flashing Blades*). The Royal Marines are recruited in both France and the Colonies.

Marines may choose from the skills shown below (those in capitals are bonus skills):



Marine Skills (Base Attribute)

Acrobatics (Dexterity)
 Bargaining (Wit)
 CAPTAINCY (Charm)
 CAROUSING (Endurance)
 Gambling (Luck)
 Pirate Patois (None)
 Seamanship (None)
 Stealth (Dexterity)
 STRATEGY (Wit)

SAILOR

A Sailor is a man trained to serve as a crew member on a ship. Most 17th Century Sailors grew up on ships, and were experienced by the time they reached adulthood. To reflect this, all Sailors start with Seamanship skill (without paying Skill Points for it). Sailors may come from France or the Colonies, but will be poorly educated either way (i.e. illiterate). At the beginning of the game, Sailors may choose the type of vessel they wish to sail on: a Merchantman, Warship or a Privateer.

Sailors may choose from the skills shown below (those in capitals are bonus skills):

Sailor Skills (Base Attribute)

ACROBATICS (Dexterity)
 Bargaining (Wit)
 Captaincy (Charm)
 CAROUSING (Endurance)
 Fine Manipulation (Dexterity)
 Gambling (Luck)
 LANGUAGES (Wit)
 Literacy (None)
 Pilot (Wit)
 Pirate Patois (None)
 Stealth (Dexterity)
 Strategy (Wit)

All Sailors will have a specific duty onboard their ship: Sail, Gunnery, or Helm. Pilot skill is required for those who wish to specialize in Helm. Shipboard duties are fully discussed in section 4.3.1.

PIRATE

A character who starts the game as a Pirate is a desperate individual who has taken up the most dangerous and criminal of all of the professions of the 17th Century. Although characters from other backgrounds may become Pirates at later times, a character from this background gains certain advantages. Pirates may choose their skills as if they were Sailors, except that they automatically speak the Pirate Patois (see below). They are, however, very poorly educated, and start the game not only illiterate (unless they buy Literacy skill), but also with one less Skill Point with which to choose general skills.

Pirates, like Sailors, have specific duties onboard their ships (discussed in section 4.3.1 of these rules).

NOTE:

There is no such Background as 'Colonial Nobleman.' This is because nearly all French nobles were born and educated in France. The colonials were, in majority, those who had little to lose by leaving France. To reflect this in *High Seas*, noblemen may only enter the game as French-born characters (created by using the normal rules from *Flashing Blades*) who find their way to the colonies. The Game-master or the players may suggest logical reasons for the move (i.e. to become a privateer, plantation owner, avoid debts, etc.).

2.3 NEW SKILLS

High Seas introduces three new skills to the list already compiled in *Flashing Blades*. The areas of ability governed by these skills, and their specific effects on the game are provided below:

PILOT

This skill represents training in 17th Century navigation, cartography, and meteorology. Pilot skill is necessary for characters who wish to specialize in Helm onboard ships. Pilots are able to accurately steer the helm (and may take the helm in an emergency situation), as well as read and make maps, predict weather, determine longitude and latitude with a sextant, etc. Only a character with Pilot skill may become a Pilot's Mate, Ship's Pilot or Captain of a ship.

PIRATE PATOIS

The pirates, smugglers, and other cutthroats of the Spanish Main

came from many different countries and cultures. When they mixed at sea, so did their languages. Pirate Patois is a gutteral mix of English, French and Spanish, with occasional Caribe and African words thrown in. It requires a Wit roll (at -5) for a character without the Patois to understand it. All Pirates and Colonial Rogues are familiar with Pirate Patois, and are able to communicate across normal language barriers with it. Marines and Sailors are allowed to buy Pirate Patois for 1 Skill point (it is only spoken, not written). This reflects chances they may have had to pick it up while in West Indian ports. All other colonials may learn Pirate Patois for 2 Skill points (with Language skill) or 3 Skill points (without Language skill).

SEAMANSHIP

This skill covers the basic knowledge and abilities necessary to be a sailor in the 17th Century. Characters with Seamanship skill are able to perform all the normal tasks of sailing tall ships (i.e. adjusting sails, loading and unloading ballast, sounding for depth, etc.). They also always have their 'sea-legs' and may move swiftly in rigging. Characters with Seamanship skill and a Dexterity of 8 or more, may specialize in Sail aboard ships. Only a Master in Seamanship may become a ship's Sailmaster, First Mate, or Captain.

2.4 NEW MARTIAL SKILLS & TRAINING**2.4.1 New Martial Skills**

High Seas introduces three new Martial Skills for characters with nautical backgrounds. Full descriptions of these are listed below:

FIGHTING WEAPONS

This skill represents expertise in the use of the most primitive naval weapons of the 17th Century, including hand axes, pikes (used for boarding) and fighting irons. These weapons, due to their crudity, start at Expertise 8, with normal modifiers.

GUNNERY

This skill represents expertise in the use of small cannon and swivel guns onboard ships. Characters must have Gunnery skill to specialize in Gunnery on a ship. Characters with Artillery skill may learn to use ship cannons with a little practice (just as Gunners may learn to use field artillery). After a few weeks onboard a ship, a character with Artillery skill may serve as a Gunner. Gunnery, like Artillery and Grenadier, has no Expertise rating, and advances like a normal skill. A character must be a Master in Gunnery in order to become a ship's Chief Gunner.

SHIPBOARD WEAPONS

This skill covers the use of standard shipboard weapons including daggers, cutlasses, and longswords. As a 'style' of fencing, shipboard combat depends heavily upon cuts and slashes (similar to those of the Cavalry Style). To reflect this, characters trained with shipboard weapons receive a +1 bonus to hit when using a slash attack. Shipboard weapons start at Expertise 10, with normal modifiers.

Expertise is calculated normally for Fighting Weapons and Shipboard Weapons (as detailed in *Flashing Blades*). Remember that characters may spend normal Skill Points to raise Expertise with various weapons, but not to buy Martial Skills.

2.4.2 Choosing Martial Skills

The choices of Martial Skills for colonial characters are slightly different from those listed in *Flashing Blades*. The New World could be a dangerous and brutal place, so colonial characters tend to be tougher than their French-born contemporaries. Exact Martial Skill choices are listed below, by background:

Colonial Rogues may choose any two of the following Martial Skills: Brawling, Firearms, Old Style Dueling, or Shipboard Weapons. In addition, Colonial Rogues receive 2 points of extra training with one weapon, reflecting early practice (these points may be added directly to Expertise).

Colonial Gentlemen are trained in the same way as French-born gentlemen, with two exceptions: Colonial Gentlemen may substitute Shipboard Weapons for a Dueling Style when training at a School, Fraternity, Academy, etc.; Colonial Gentlemen may not choose Archery School for martial training.

Colonial Soldiers are trained as Fusiliers (i.e. trained in Polearms and Firearms skills) and they may choose one additional skill: either Brawling or Shipboard Weapons. Colonial Soldiers also receive 1 point of extra training in one weapon.

Marines may choose any three of the following Martial Skills: Brawling, Fighting Weapons, Firearms, Old Style Dueling, Polearms,

or Shipboard Weapons. Marines also receive 1 point of extra training in one weapon.

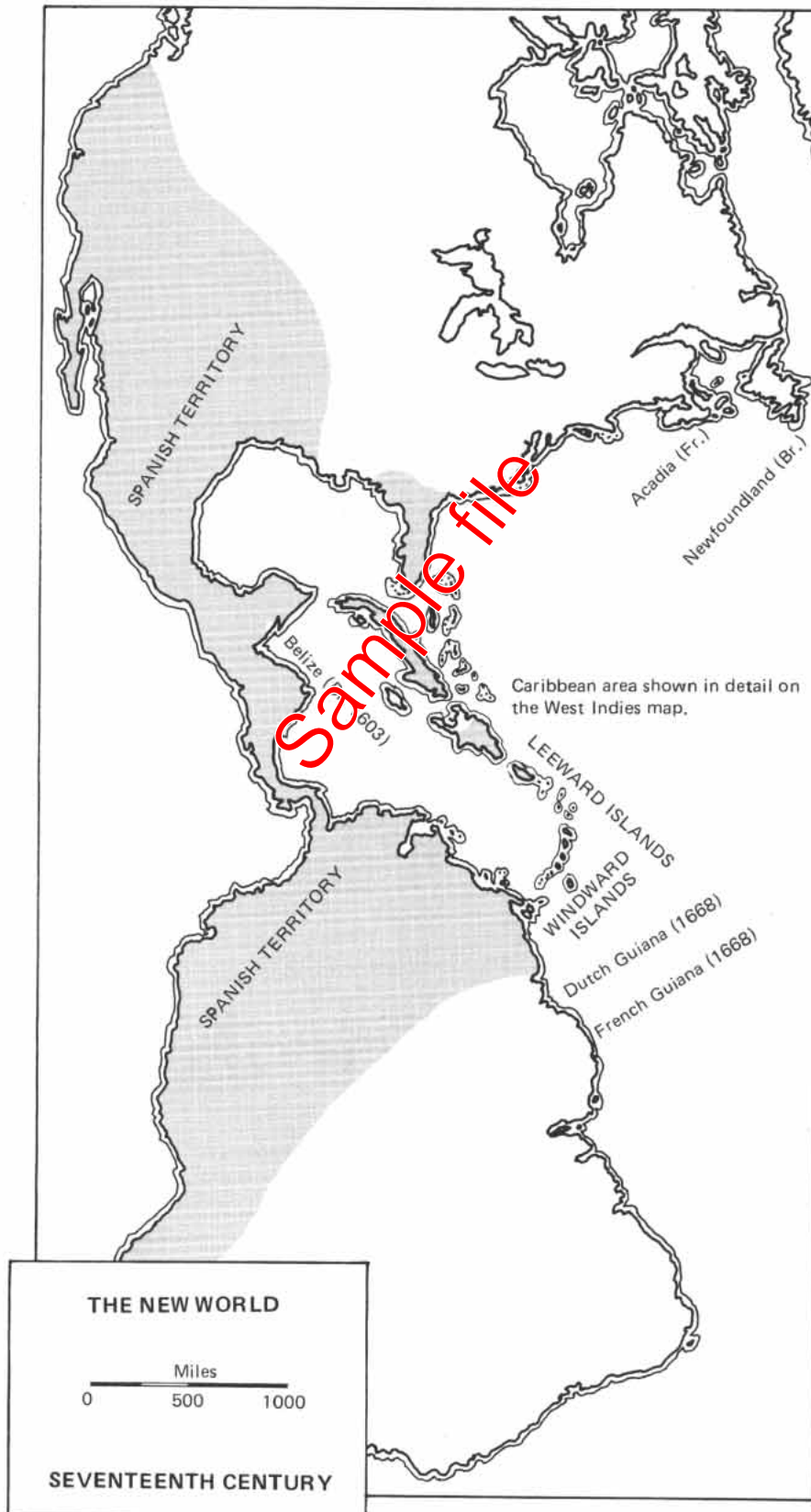
Sailors are trained in Shipboard Weapons, and may choose one additional Martial Skill: Brawling, Fighting Weapons, Firearms, or Gunnery. Sailors also receive 1 point of extra training in one weapon.

Pirates are trained in Shipboard Weapons, and may choose two additional Martial Skills: Brawling, Fighting Weapons, Firearms or Gunnery.

2.5 ADVANTAGES & SECRETS

Advantages and Secrets in *High Seas* are handled similarly to those in *Flashing Blades*, with the following exceptions:

- As no *High Seas* character may start as a 'colonial nobleman,' the advantage of 'Title' may not be chosen.
- Only Colonial Gentlemen may choose the advantage of 'Land,' and



even then, with a -2 modifier to the roll. A 'villa' or 'estate' on the table is assumed to be a colonial plantation. A plantation requires only half the normal money for upkeep (due to slave labor), but may require a great deal of the owner's time, keeping records, organizing harvests, etc.

- Only a Colonial Gentleman or Colonial Soldier may choose to have a 'Gentleman's Lackey.'
- Only a Colonial Gentleman may choose to be a Member of an Order. In this case, the result will always be a 'Gentleman's Club.' The list of New World clubs varies from that of France (see section 4.6 of these rules).
- Colonial Rogues, Marines and Pirates may not have 'Code of Honor' or 'Religious Fanatic' as their Secrets.

2.6 MONEY AND EQUIPMENT

2.6.1 Yearly Allowance

High Seas characters determine their Yearly Allowance at the start of the game. All Backgrounds receive a yearly allowance except for Pirates. A Pirate receives only a starting sum of money, and must fend for himself when it runs out.

Colonial Rogues, Soldiers, and Gentlemen roll to determine their Yearly Allowances on the same tables as their French-born counterparts (listed in *Flashing Blades*). Marines and Pirates roll 1D6 on the tables provided below:

Roll	Marine	Sailor	Pirate
1	100 L	75 L	50 L
2	100 L	100 L	75 L
3	150 L	125 L	75 L
4	150 L	150 L	100 L
5	200 L	150 L	100 L
6	250 L	200 L	150 L

2.6.2 Outfitting

High Seas characters outfit themselves normally at the start of the game, buying equipment with their first year's allowance. All of the normal equipment from the *Flashing Blades* rulebook may be bought. Prices in the New World, however, are 10% more expensive than those of France, due to the costs of shipping, and the unreliability of shipments. Only those goods which are commonly produced in the New World (as determined by the Gamemaster) will escape this price increase.

Support in the New World is normally 3 L x the character's Social Rank per month in a city or at a plantation. While garrisoned at a fort (for Soldiers and Marines) or at sea, support is free.

The two new weapons introduced in *High Seas* cost as follows:

- Hand Axe 8 L
- Fighting Iron 14 L.

As in *Flashing Blades*, characters from some backgrounds begin the game with starting gear. This gear must be replaced by characters if lost or broken. Starting gear is listed below:

Sailors and Pirates start with sailors' knives (which count as daggers for game purposes).

Colonial Soldiers start with Fusiliers' armor and weaponry (see *Flashing Blades*).

Marines start with Fusiliers' armor, a cutlass, and one other hand-weapon or matchlock musket (player's choice).

2.6.3 Monetary Conversions

The monetary system of *High Seas* is based on French currency (Sous, Pistoles, Livres, etc.) just like *Flashing Blades*. The New World swarmed with different currencies, however, and even French colonials commonly used Spanish, and sometimes, Dutch and English money. Pirates and privateers, of course, became used to all different currencies. Conversions were based on weight, and gold or silver content. Approximate conversion rates between 17th Century currencies are provided below for use in campaigns:

English Money:

- 1 Shilling = 2 French Sous
- 20 Shillings = 1 Pound
- 1 Pound = 2 French Livres

Spanish Money:

- 4 Reals = 5 French Livres
- 8 Reals = 1 Peso (a 'Piece of Eight')
- 1 Peso = 10 French Livres

Dutch Money:

- 1 Guilder = 10 French Sous (½ Livre)

2.7 COLONIAL SOCIAL RANK

High Seas incorporates the Social Scale used in *Flashing Blades*. Advancements in Social Rank may be attained as detailed in the rules of *Flashing Blades*, and in section 4.1.2 of these rules. *High Seas* characters have starting Social Ranks based on their backgrounds, as shown below:

Colonial Rogues and Pirates start at Social Rank 1.

Colonial Soldiers and **Marines** start at Social Rank 2 (although this may be greater, depending upon their starting military rank).

Sailors start at Social Rank 2.

Colonial Gentlemen start at Social Rank 6 (or Social Rank 7 for those who own plantations).

2.8 NOTES ON HIGH SEAS CHARACTERS

Excepting the additions and modifications listed above, *High Seas* characters are created and played exactly like their *Flashing Blades* brethren. In cases of doubt between these rules and those of *Flashing Blades*, always refer to the original rules (*Flashing Blades*) for clarification.

For extended campaigns, the Aging system (section 5.10.4), and Experience system (section 6.0) of *Flashing Blades* should be used.

3. Personal Combat

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The *Flashing Blades* system for personal combat remains basically unchanged in *High Seas*. Turn Sequence, Actions, Rolling to Hit and Parry, Damage, the Optional Rules, etc. all work normally. Two new sections have been added to expand the *Flashing Blades* combat system for adventures at sea.

The first section is comprised of new rules for two weapons introduced for shipboard combat: the hand axe (a short tomahawk-like axe used for cutting ropes or as a weapon) and the fighting iron (a flail-like weapon made up of three lengths of iron joined by chains). Although common in the New World and at sea, these weapons were not often used on the continent (and never in polite company). A normal *Flashing Blades* character would have to go to sea to learn how to use them.

The second section includes new rules for special shipboard combat situations. Some of these (such as the rules for Drowning) could be used in normal *Flashing Blades* adventures.

3.2 NEW WEAPONS

The hand axe and fighting iron are two typical, if brutal, shipboard combat weapons. Expertise in both is covered by the martial skill Fighting Weapons.

Hand Axe

A hand axe weighs 2 weight points and is about the same size as a cutlass. It may be used to make a Strike attack during the third phase of a combat turn (i.e. at the same time as foils, rapiers, long-swords, etc.). When hitting as a hand weapon, a hand axe gets +1 to hit. When thrown, a hand axe counts as a Thrown Brawling Weapon for range purposes. A hand axe may be used to parry at -1 (but only using the Parry action, not as a 'Reaction Parry'). A hand axe may also be parried by dueling weapons, daggers, and Two-Handed swords. A hand axe has a Weapon Strength of 4, and is useless if broken by a parry.

A hand axe does 3 points of damage on a Strike or Throw (+1D6

if it is a Serious Wound). Minimum Strength for a hand axe is 9; Advantageous Strength is 16. For fatigue purposes (using the optional combat rules) a hand axe subtracts one point from Endurance.

Fighting Iron

A fighting iron weighs 3 weight points and may range in size from 1.3 to 2 meters in length. It may only be used to make a Strike attack, and, due to its slowness, it strikes in the fourth phase of a combat turn (at the same time as daggers, clubs, and brawling weapons). When attacking, a fighting iron gets -3 to hit. A fighting iron may not be used to parry or block. It may be blocked by an improvised shield.

A fighting iron does 5 points of damage if it hits (+1D6 for a Serious Wound). Any character who is not wearing a helmet, and is hit on the head with a fighting iron, will be stunned for two turns automatically. Minimum Strength for a fighting iron is 14; Advantageous Strength is 19. For fatigue purposes a fighting iron subtracts 2 points from Endurance.

3.3 SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Fighting on shipboard may entail many special combat situations. For most of these, the Gamemaster must improvise rules. Five fairly common shipboard situations are dealt with below as a start:

LANDLUBBERS

Characters who are not used to fighting at sea will have difficulty at first. Only Pirates, Sailors and Marines are assumed to start the game with good 'sea-legs.' All others receive a -1 penalty to hit, and move at half speed when fighting onboard a ship. After a character has made three successful attacks while fighting at sea, he may attempt to make a roll against his Wit to develop good 'sea-legs.' Landlubbers will lose their 'sea-legs' after a few hours on land, but old salts are always at ease fighting at sea. A Landlubber may develop permanent 'sea-legs' if he learns Seamanship skill.

RIGGING

Characters with Seamanship skill may move up, down, and around rigging at a rate of two meters per turn (+1 for Dexterity 15+, +1 for Acrobatics skill, +1 for Master Seamen). This rate is doubled for long actions. Characters who rush through a ship's rigging during combat or during a storm must make suitable rolls against Dexterity to avoid falling (determined by the Gamemaster). Characters fighting in the

rigging receive -1 penalties on all attacks and parries, and must make normal Dexterity rolls each combat turn to avoid falling (+3 for Seamanship skill, +3 for Acrobatics skill). Master Seamen and Acrobats may swing on ropes from the rigging of one mast to another, or to a ship's deck. Swinging about in a ship's rigging requires various Dexterity rolls (determined by the Gamemaster).

SWIMMING

A character may swim in water at a rate of one meter per turn (+2 meters for Seamanship skill, +1 meter for Dexterity 15+). A character may also stay underwater for a number of combat turns equal to his Endurance. All attacks and parries in water have a -5 modifier, except for attacks and parries with daggers, and unarmed attacks and blocks (these have no modifiers).

DROWNING

A character in the water without any sort of support must make a roll to stay above the surface each turn in the following situations: (1) character does not have Seamanship skill; (2) character is swimming in rough water; or (3) character is fighting in the water. The roll to stay on the surface is made against Dexterity with a -1 modifier for each weight point of armor the character is wearing. When a character goes underwater, he may attempt to hold his breath for his Endurance in turns. Each turn, he may attempt to regain the surface. This requires a roll against Strength, -1 for each point of armor, -1 for each previously failed attempt to regain the surface, +2 for Seamanship skill. If a character is held under the water, the roll becomes a Strength vs. Strength resistance roll. If a character fails to regain the surface within his Endurance in turns, and is not fished out by friends, he will drown.

SHIPBOARD RECUPERATION

Recuperation at sea requires a special note because of the lack of medical care and sterile facilities. Unless there is a physician aboard, recovering characters have a +5 modifier when rolling for lasting effects of wounds which have reduced a hit location to 0 hit points.

Further special combat situations are discussed in section 6.4.8 under the heading of 'Heroic Actions.'

4. Ranks & Positions

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 The French Colonies

France, like the other colonial powers of its time, had numerous holdings in the New World. Each colony had its share of garrisoned troops, bureaucrats, and clergymen, providing ranks and positions for colonial characters. In *High Seas* campaigns, characters may pursue careers through the hierarchies of the colonies, just as French-born characters pursue theirs in the institutions of France.

A brief description of each of the major French colonies in the New World is provided below. Many of the names of towns, forts and geographic features have been kept in their original (17th Century) forms, and are followed in parentheses by their more modern titles.

The largest of the French colonies was New France, which included North American lands up and down the St. Lawrence (St. Lawrence) River, from St. Laurence (St. Lawrence) Bay to the Great Lakes. The settlements included Monreal (Montreal), Trois Rivieres, Quebec, Tadoussac, and Louisburg. These were guarded by forts, with garrison companies at Monreal (Montreal), Quebec and Louisburg. New France was protected from Indian and British colonial raids to the south by a garrison company at Fort La Salle.

New France was claimed for the French Crown in 1534 by Jacques Cartier, and quickly became a precious holding. The French traded with local Indians for valuable furs and pelts. A Colonial Governor, appointed by the King, governed the colony from Monreal (Montreal).

In 1682 Louisiana was claimed by La Salle as a new colony of France. The territory of Louisiana extended throughout the area now occupied by the states Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee,

Arkansas, Oklahoma, and parts of Texas and Florida. Settlements developed at St. Louis Bay, Ouacha, Bayogoula, Mobile, and Pensacola. Garrison companies were stationed at St. Louis Bay, and Fort Mobile. Later (in the early 18th Century) a string of forts, garrisoned by four new companies, were built to form a line of defense between Louisiana and New France.

Louisiana was of less importance to France in the 17th Century than New France. Because it was settled late in the Century, it may not come into play in early campaigns. The active exploration of the territory in the 1680s, however, makes Louisiana an interesting place in which to set wilderness adventures. After its settlement, Louisiana was controlled by a Colonial Governor (appointed by the King) at Mobile.

In the West Indies, the Antilles were peppered with French islands. These islands, although small, were important for their tobacco and sugar plantations, and as ports for French ships. The colonies in the Antilles were controlled by a Colonial Governor, stationed at Martinique, and his three Lieutenant Governors, on Dominica, Guadeloupe, and St. Lucia. Each island was fortified (to a greater extent on Martinique than the others) and garrisoned with a company of troops.

The most important French colony in the West Indies was French Hispaniola (Haiti). French Hispaniola was valuable for its sugarcane, and was settled at Geava (Port au Prince) and Tortuga. The island was controlled by a Colonial Governor, at Tortuga, and was garrisoned with two companies. Tortuga made huge profits for the French crown as a pirate den. Any and all ships (except those which had attacked